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**The nation as grand narrative: the
Nigerian press and the politics of
meaning**

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THE NATION AS GRAND NARRATIVE: THE NIGERIAN

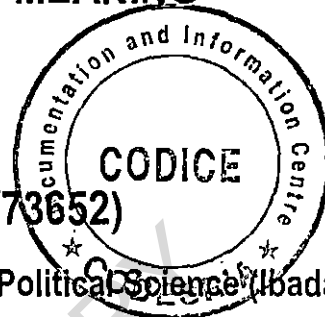
PRESS AND THE POLITICS OF MEANING

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By

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ABSTRACT

One of the central problems facing many post-colonial states is defining the terms on which the various ethnic nationalities within the polities will co-exist. The mass media are pivotal to contestations over defining these political identities and constructing the narratives of the nations in these post-colonial states, as well as the grand narrative of the emerging nation-state itself. This role of the media has not received sustained academic attention.

This research examines the contending narratives on the Nigerian 'nation' as reflected in the Nigerian press within the context of other narratives in the polity. It studies how meaning is deployed or mobilized in the press either to establish, nourish and sustain relations of domination/power or to counteract, subvert and deflect power within and among ethnic nationalities in the context of the evolving idea of the Nigerian nation.

The study uses the depth-hermeneutical framework to investigate how the interpretation of ideology – recast as meaning in the service of power – in the press serves to stimulate critical reflections on the relations of power and domination in the grand narrative. The nexus of nation, narratives, myth, discourse, power and

meaning against the backdrop of depth-hermeneutics is examined in the theoretical framework.

Four crises in the history of Nigeria are examined including the crisis on the date of independence and related issues, the post-independence crisis of statehood, particularly the vents before the civil war, the crisis following the annulment of the June 12 presidential election, and the crisis following the restoration of democracy in May 1999.

The findings outline how the media narratives provide the interpretative lens through which the ethnic-nationalities and meta-nation are viewed, defining identity and enacting discourses that supervene other arenas of power in society. The narratives explore the legitimacy of the myth of the grand nation, touching the nerve-centre of power through the mobilization or/and demobilization of specific meanings. In effect, the grand nation is narrated in the Nigerian press as an instrument in the relations of domination, the press being seriously polarized along the different axis of power.

The study points to the general modes through which meaning is used in the service or disservice of power in the narration of nations and grand nations. It

concludes by highlighting the limitations of the mobilization of meaning in the service of power and the inherent contradictions in the politics of meaning.

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DEDICATION

This one is for **Damilola Taylor** –
about whom James Baldwin could as well have been writing: “There are deaths and
there are deaths. There are deaths for which it is wrong and even ignoble to forgive
the world”.

It is the negation of your *nation* that drove you to your death.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*Imagine the silence of words in their materiality on paper....
But you can hear their voices*
- Ngugi Wa Thiong'o
(*Penpoints, Gunpoints and Dreams*)

*I am absent because I am the storyteller. Only the story is
real*
- Edmond Jabes (*Je batis ma Demeure: Poemes, 1943-
1957*)

*History stammers
Through its long tirade...
Never again will our story go
Without a proper telling*
- Niyi Osundare (*Missing Tongue*)

In many ways, life is narrative.

Once upon a time, I decided on a career in journalism that would end in old age in my seeking a place in the academia. But, then God had other plans. An amendment, in effect. I was not to wait till old age before I left journalism for the academia – even while remaining essentially a *reporter*, one for whom life and living are perpetual narratives waiting to be told. That Infinite Mercy that is the Creator could not have been more merciful. He led me to the *right* path just at a time when all I craved was an *environment* to re-engage with my *nation*.

In many ways, my life is a narrative. But that could wait. It is the impersonal abstraction that is my country and the passionate devotion to push her towards her manifest destiny that is the transcendental task of my present engagement. The reason for this devotion is at once enabling and ennobling. Enabling because the tragic romance of my *nation* with perfidy has translated to personal tragedies for we, *the sons of the soil*. I, for instance, am a *narrative of possibilities*, stunted, for the most part, like and by my *nation*, but now unbound - unlike my *nation* - to reach out to my possibilities, even beyond that *notion/nation-space*. And ennobling because of the latter

reason too. In this narrative of possibilities, many people have made light, in very significant ways, that almost unending burden of living in (and as a) Nigeria/n. I turn shortly to thank these people, but only after an attempt to engage with the *elementals* that have defined these possibilities in the midst of all the mess that the semi-evil, semi-criminal ruling elite have made of that *nation*.

*How can I say what I know
with words whose signification
is multiple?*

At the time I began this thesis, my *nation* was groaning under the violent enforcement of the logic of eternal and infernal rule, championed by perhaps the most incompetent and most gluttonous ruling elite on the continent. One of the worst members of this treasonable power group, the hideous infantry general, Sani Abacha, was in the middle of what was to become the worst experience that the *nation* has had under martial serial rapists. Abacha seemed to possess an incurable grudge against mankind, so much so that the impending death of the *nation*, which he dominated for five years, was the least of his lookout. It was in the middle of the attempts by genuine patriots to seize our country from this semi-evil, semi-criminal gang and the simultaneous struggle to re-validate the *nation idea* - which Wole Soyinka so competently captured in his book, appropriately sub-titled, *A Personal Narrative of the Nigerian Crisis* - that I began this doctoral work.

The newspaper where I worked, *Punch*, had been shut down by the maximum ruler and the anguish into which several people who worked in *Punch* and sundry other newspapers proscribed meant nothing to him and his gang. After 15 months at *home* during which I wavered between *singularity* and *solidarity*, I took up a job in *Tribune*, where I attempted to use my talent to savage that infernal order which was *closing off* the *Nigerian nation idea* and threatening to *close it up* completely. As it happened, this national tragedy was recreated at the lower level as Abacha's agents in *Tribune* saw to my exit and that of a few others who were engaged in this individual and collective fight against the negation of our personal and national *beings*.

At the close of Abacha's infamy, which, at *Omega Weekly*, we had dubbed, "end of an *Error*", I was hopeful that my *nation* would begin, with new possibilities, to work towards its

manifest destiny. I, like many other patriots, was mistaken. The members of the old order, contrary to our calculations, quickly regrouped, with General Ibrahim Babangida - the facilitator of Abacha's infamy, whose infamy was perhaps only bested by Abacha's - leading a crucial arm of that crusade to re-snatch our *nation* from our *infant hands*. They succeeded and therefore terminated our attempt at building a *nation under God*.

I have in my very humble ways devoted my talent to confronting this dilemma that democratic forces, particularly the young, face in this historic battle to deliver our motherland from the clutches of armed and unarmed gangsters.

What then is the role of this thesis in this humble effort? I am persuaded that the battle will be long and tortuous. Those we fight against have ranged on their side the most persuasive means of confiscating a system in its totality. For me, the challenge is to understand this *nation* better and in theorizing the crisis, to engage with it from a position of mental strength. Simply stated: *Praxis for national redemption*. It is to this task that I have had occasion to solemnly swear. I am therefore committed to transcending even this national space in order to seek for its redemption within a *Global Discourse* in which all mankind belong to a single family. No one is alone, or as I have had occasion to confess in the past, no one travels alone. I *carry my home* along with me wherever I go.

*Your solitude
is an alphabet of squirrels
at the disposition of forests*

By studying the narration of this attempt at *nation-being*, I can only re-arm myself to face the challenges ahead, in the hope that that Eternal Grace which has brought me thus far, will hold me strong in the confrontation with the *Grand Narrative* that is as much my *narrative* as it is of millions of my compatriots.

It would have been impossible to come this far – which is not *far* at all! – and to this resolve but for many people who have given of their life, time, resources and love in many ways to facilitate the completion of this work and the *possibilities* that define life.

What gratitude can I offer to God, the One who, the Yoruba, with the outpouring of gratitude, describe as *alewi lese!* He has showered me with what I consider as a grace that is *non pareil*. I am a living witness to His incomprehensible blessings. It is to this God that Niyi Osundare sings: "What is this which opens the day/ like the page of a solar book/ ... What is this which prompts/ Demand into Memory, Memory into Desire/ What is this which perfumes Truth into Beauty/ Beauty into an ecstasy of Masks/ Oh but this wonder which counts Silence/ in Digits of Seven!/ The Word named God". How can I pay Him back? Just how?

He has, in His infinite mercy given me wonderful parents. Between the unsparing rods of my parents, Revd. Paul and Mrs. Mary Adebani, I was *redeemed* from the path which I stubbornly clung in childhood and adolescence. My father particularly took the Biblical verse about the foolishness that dominated the child's mind too literally. Before he went away, he had ensured that wherever I took the family name, everyone who shared it could not but be proud. He so much loved to have a Ph.D. himself, in spite of the limitations which his *nation* had put on him. And I know how happy he would have been, were he here now in flesh, as I am certain he is in spirit. *Sleep on, beloved father.*

My mother has held on. With my father's exit, the order and stability that had been in my life, as it happened to Peter Abrahams in *Tell Freedom*, would have dissolved, but for my mother, whose direct gaze was until *now*, the weakest point in my life. I cannot be grateful enough to her, always urging me on with her gentle wish to also be the mother of a "Ph.D." Thank God she *made it!*

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I have been lucky to meet many wonderful people in my journey through life, which I have had occasion to describe as a 'journey of imagination'. In this journey of joy with its admixture of suffering – to which James Baldwin attests, following Whitman: '*I am the man; I suffered, I was there*' – these friends have made the journey smooth in their own ways: Olusegun Olatunji, now the Executive Director (Editorial) of the *Tribune* group, has been as solid as it is possible in his devotion to me. His *belief* in me has been as strong as to-be challenging, helping me live through the inanities of those terrifying but terrific days in *Tribune* and *Omega Weekly*. I thank his wife, Oyinlola, too. Dr. Adeolu Akande should be happy about this work. He set an example that I could not but follow in the face of all the adversity of our shared journalism career. At crucial moments in our lives, we have both shared a solidarity and loyalty that I still treasure. I thank his wife, Modupe, too. In Laolu Akande I have found a trusting friend. The way he values my friendship in spite of all the challenges that this has faced has been of particular delight to me. His wife and my friend, Olawunmi, has supported him every inch of the way in this. I can only continue to thank them for the way they threw open their house to me in my many visits to the United States. With their kids, Tomilola and Muffy, who are only too delighted to have me around always, their home could as well have been mine. I thank Lawunmi's mum, Mrs. Oladeji too. May God bless them. Bode Opeseitan has been my *accomplice* in many ways. In those dry days when we had nothing but *tomorrow* – that impervious abstraction against which there was no argument – he did his part to help live through the *tunnel vision* imposed on our generation. I thank his wife, Bimpe, too.

Ebenezer Obadare literally (I am due for a cliché here!) walked into my life when I was beginning to have very serious doubts about *the order, Other (and under!) of things*. With the *low quality prosperity* – with its attendant snares - that we have shared, it is difficult to imagine that we have been going only stronger in our shared devotion to the simplest of ambitions: Quality reading and Good writing. Ebino has thought me fundamental lessons in the essence of that unfolding drama that is life. May the wonderful palm of God make you blest. His wife, Kemi and son, Justice, and mother-in-law, treated me with such courtesy and warmth every time I visited London that it will be difficult to thank them enough.

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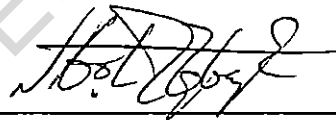
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CERTIFICATION

I certify that this work was carried out by ADEWALE NIYI ADEBANWI under my supervision in the Department of Political Science, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.



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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1. *General Statement of the Problem*

Most post-colonial states face the problem of the conditions under which the various ethnic groups and nationalities, which have been brought to live together within such post-colonial polities, will continue to do so¹. Two broad solutions have been expounded. The first sees society as being held together by the coercive power of dominant groups which maintain their interest through military force. The other emphasizes the crucial nature of common value system which binds people in a social contract². In practice, both overlap. As Doornbos³ advances, questions concerning state power and state capacity vis-à-vis national identity and unity have largely defined the debate about the nature and role of post-colonial state. These questions are also central to understanding the options for these troubled polities⁴

Before independence, many African nationalists emphasized the artificiality of colonial boundaries with the resultant push for self-determination among the

¹ Fred Casmir, ed., *Communication and Development*, Norwood, N.J.: Ablex, 1991: x.

² Ibid.

³ Martin Doornbos, "The African State in Academic Debate: Retrospect and Prospect", *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 28, no. 2, 1990.

⁴ Casmir, op. cit.

disparate ethnic nationalities trapped in colonial boundaries. But after independence, mostly in the 1960s and early 1970s, the emergent ruling elite insisted on the permanence of the colonial map⁵. They took on the logic of C.J. Fredrick, who shares Rupert Emerson's view in stating that, "both nation and state are incomplete when they are not linked".⁶ As one of the African leaders, Lepold Sedar Senghor, captures this sentiment, "the state is an expression of the nation, it is primarily a means to achieve a nation".⁷ Yet the nations that were being forged were defined essentially in their boundaries and character, by the preceding colonial states.⁸

As post-colonial states grew older, acquiring more capacities, they consolidated their influence in the arbitrary boundaries and became *sanctified* and *sacralized* with the Organization of African Unity declaring the boundaries as "definitive and immutable"⁹. However, since independence, it has not been smooth sailing, as the states frequently bumped into discomfoting realities¹⁰ produced by multiple crises centred on ethnic rivalry and competition. Given the fact that these

⁵ S.P.I. Agi, "Obstacles to Nation-Building in Africa", *Democracy and Nation Building*, Proceedings of the 20th Annual Conference of NPSA, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, 1994: 1; Young, Crawford, *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994: 241.

⁶ In Benyamin Neuberger,, "State and Nation in African Thought", in Hutchinson and Smith, eds. *Nationalism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994. : 231-232.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Anthony Smith, *National Identity*, Reno, Las Vegas, London: University of Nevada Press, 1991: 106.

⁹ Young, op. cit.: 241; Casmir, op. cit.

¹⁰ Casmir, op. cit.; Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities*, London and New York: Verso, 1983 (1991): 169;

boundaries were not the result of internal or local choices, the resultant problems were to be expected.¹¹ The fall-outs of the crises in the pseudo-nations or nation-states¹² have brought issues of nationalism, nation and nationhood to the front burners with a force denied them before now.¹³

When the mass media appeared as important factors (actors) in the peculiar history of the post-colonial state, they were seen as “the primary means of bringing together people who spoke different languages, had different value systems, different religious backgrounds, and different cultural histories”.¹⁴ Often however post-colonial states have failed to accomplish this task, where they are even desirable. The many and varied attempts to ignore or overcome cultural factors for the sake of political unification have been unsuccessful¹⁵. In all this, fundamental questions of political identity and political community are implicated in the wider framing of media-political (ethnic/nation) relations.¹⁶

¹¹ Ibid; Agi, op. cit.

¹² 'Pseudo-nation' is used here to point to a country that pretends that the project of “nation-formation” is complete and so is regarded as “nation”. Nation-state on the other hand connotes a state that either has congruity with nation, or one in which the different nations have resolved to subsume their nations to a State which is then invested with the status of nation.

¹³ See DeGoor, Loc Van, Rupesinghe, K. and Sciarone, P., *Between Development and Destruction: An Enquiry into the Causes of Conflict in Post-Colonial States*, London: Macmillan Press, 1996: 67-68.

¹⁴ Casmir, op. cit.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ See 'Editorial', *Media, Culture and Society* (Special edition), vol. 19, no. 3, July 1997.

In modern times, states have struggled to be invested with the *emotional* apparatus of nation¹⁷ or what Anderson¹⁸ calls 'imagined community'. The news media, Anderson argues, are pivotal to the *fabrication* of shared national identities.¹⁹ As Jayaweera²⁰ points out, 'national integration' or the *forced* construction of single nationhood from the multi-ethnic state, through the mass media, which, for many years, constituted the glorified norm and practice, is capable of leading to repression of cultural difference and the repression of minorities which are both undesirable and immoral.²¹

Nigeria is a typical example of these dynamics²². The idea of a Nigerian 'nation' can be said to have begun in 1914 when Lord Lugard, formerly the British colonial governor of the Northern Protectorate, on behalf of the Crown, amalgamated the Northern and Southern Protectorates to form a single political unit, named by his wife, Flora Shaw. Since then, much about Nigeria has been controversial²³. The

¹⁷ Kaplan, Richard, "The American Press and Political Community: Reporting Detroit, 1865-1920, *Media, Culture & Society*, Vol. 19, No. 3, July 1995: 331.

¹⁸ Anderson, op. cit.

¹⁹ Kaplan, op. cit.

²⁰ Jayaweera, 1988: 4.

²¹ Ibid.

²² See, A.H.M. Kirk-Greene, "Ethnic Engineering and the 'Federal Character' of Nigeria: Boon of Contentment or Bone of Contention?" *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 4, October, 1983: 458-478; and Anthony Smith, *National Identity*, op. cit.: 111-112.

²³ Joseph William A., Taylor, and Agbaje, "Nigeria"; in W.A. Joseph, Mark Kesselman, and Joel Krieger, eds., *Third World Politics At the Crossroads*, Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company.1996: 272.

period of colonialism empowered certain groups and collectivities and weakened others²⁴, reversing or changing in some cases, the hegemonic configurations organized around slave trade and later, commerce.²⁵ It also worsened the tension among competing collective identities. However, all the woes of the country cannot be blamed on colonialism, whether it is regarded as episodic or epochal in African history. As Smith captures it, "given the near-parity and rivalry of the three main ethnic communities, the Hausa-Fulani, the Yoruba and the Ibo, the construction of a Nigerian cultural and political identity was bound to be an arduous task".²⁶ This 'arduous task' involving the struggle to forge a nation out of this amalgam of competing nations, and the insertion of the press in this struggle – in exacerbating, deepening or responding to, or resolving, the crisis of *nation-being* - is the focus of this study.

The Nigerian press has been at the centre of the struggle for common nationhood and the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic battles of the disparate ethnic-nationalities or nations. Interestingly, this press predates the political

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Peter P. Ekeh, "Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 17, 1975; Peter P. Ekeh, "Political Minorities and Historically-Dominant Minorities in Nigerian History and Politics", in Oyeleye Oyediran, ed., *Governance and Development in Nigeria*, Ibadan: Oyeleye Consult International, 1996.

²⁶ Anthony Smith, *National Identity*, op. cit.: 112.

geography,²⁷ and has for many years constituted one of the most crucial sites of competing and clashing narratives on the idea and ideal of *Nigerian nation*. One significant pattern in this is the attempt to construct the Nigerian nation idea as a grand narrative that supersedes or that can impede 'lesser' narratives of nations²⁸ within the grand narrative (Nigerian 'nation'). As it would be expected, this grand narrative has been contested and is being contested. Meaning is deployed or mobilized in the press, either to establish, nourish and sustain relations of domination (power)²⁹ or to counteract, subvert or deflect same.

Essentially, this research aims at using the depth-hermeneutical framework to investigate how the interpretation of ideology in the press serves to stimulate critical reflections on the relation of power and domination³⁰ in the grand narrative - that is the idealized nation.

2. Research Questions

Using the Nigerian press as a case study, this work attempts to confront the following questions:

²⁷ The first newspaper, *Iwe Irohin fun Awon Egba ati Yoruba* (Newspaper for the Egba and Yoruba), was started in 1859. The amalgamation (of Southern and Northern Protectorates) which produced Nigeria was undertaken in 1914.

²⁸ There is an assumption that the narratives of ethnic-nationalities within an aspiring nation-state are "lesser" narratives.

²⁹ John B. Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990.

³⁰ Michael T. Gibbon, ed.,

- I. Does a single nation idea exist in the lexicon of the press in a typical multi-national post-colonial state?
- II. If not (1 above), how do the competing narratives of the multiple nations within the grand nation clash and contend with one another?
- III. How is meaning mobilized to sustain or contain the relations of power and domination in the grand narrative (meta-nation)?
- IV. How are the different narratives constructed and elaborated on the struggles and tensions over single nationhood?
- V. What implications do these have for relations among the ethnic nationalities (constructed as nations) within contemporary post-colonial polities?

3. *Research Objectives*

The objectives of the proposed research are:

1. To review the nature and character of grand narratives, nation and narratives, discourse, meaning and power as they pertain to efforts aimed at constructing a grand nation in a multi-ethnic, post-colonial state.

2. To examine the salient features and character of the Nigerian 'nation' and other disparate ethnic nations in the Nigerian press in the light of the theories of narration and meaning.

3. To examine how symbolic forms within the contexts in which they are produced, received and understood serve to establish and sustain or contest and counteract relations of domination in a multi-ethnic polity.

4. To examine what implications the above have for peaceful co-existence among the disparate ethnic nationalities in a multi-ethnic polity.

4. *Justification*

A survey of post-colonial states reveals a succession of situations that involve 'competing allegiances' to 'imagined communities' showing that the intuitive bond felt by people towards "informal or unstructured subdivisions of mankind"³¹ – ethnic nationalities – is far more profound and potent than the ties that connect them with 'formal and legalistic state structures' in which they find themselves³². The crisis of legitimacy which has plagued such Third World countries as Burma, Burundi, Chad,

³¹ Walker Connor, "A Nation is a Nation, is a State, is an Ethnic Group, is a ...", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 4, October 1978: 377.

³² *Ibid.*

India, Iraq, Kenya, Pakistan, Sudan, Uganda, Philippines and Nigeria to mention a few, shows the failure of central states in attracting loyalty from citizens over and above human groupings in the form of nationalities.

Since the amalgamation of 1914, the geographical political entity called Nigeria has grappled with the problem of attracting loyalty from citizens who are more attuned to the psychological needs of their nationality-groups. Efforts to ensure the transfer of this primordial loyalty³³, to the bigger 'nation' have not been successful. This failure has manifested in the several crises that Nigeria has witnessed in her journey to nationhood. This study is not merely timely, but the problems it hopes to grapple with have a current urgency that provides the purview into more enduring problems³⁴. In contrast to the received and orchestrated notions that concentrate the struggles within the grand narrative as solely efforts at legitimising the grand narrative, this work examines the dynamic relationship between the legitimacy of the existing narratives and the legitimacy crisis of the grand narrative. Against this backdrop, this thesis is aimed at theoretically and empirically understanding and analysing this crisis of nationhood as it is reflected and contested in the press as a contribution to efforts at understanding the

³³ Peter P. Ekeh, "Colonialism and Two Publics in Africa", *op. cit.*

³⁴ To paraphrase Pzeworski and Salamon.

construction of single national identity. Again, the Nigerian press has influenced – whether positively or otherwise – the pattern of interaction among disparate ethnic nationalities in Nigeria before and since the 1914 amalgamation. Given this situation, the justification of an attempt at uncovering how meaning is mobilized in the press in the service (or otherwise) of power cannot be over-emphasized.

More than this, there is no known work of this scope and length that examines how the Nigerian 'nations' are narrated, articulated and disarticulated in the Nigerian press. Finally, the mobilization of meaning in the service of power, in the context of interpretation and counter-interpretation – within a *narrativised* nation – raises stimulating theoretical questions, particularly within the ambit of a concept of ideology, as recast by Thompson³⁵. As a case study, the study of the Nigerian press in this context promises a major contribution to extant literature in these areas. These are the justifying factors for the study.

5. *Scope of Research*

The scope of this research will not be particularly periodic. It is focused more on specific issues, even though these issues fall into some rough periods. But they are approached as issues.

³⁵ Thompson, *op. cit.*

The first is the issue of the date of Nigeria's independence, which generated a lot of controversy in the pre-independence period, roughly between 1951 and 1953. The second issue is the crisis of confidence among the four regions concerning the fate of the Nigerian union leading to the Civil War, which broke out in 1967. The high point of the crisis, before the outbreak of the war, was in 1966. The third is the June 12, 1993 election annulment crisis covering roughly between 1992 and 1994. The fourth case study is based on the post-May 29, 1999 crisis of nationhood, which covers between May 1999 and June 2000. The issues that will be covered are the one that facilitate a deep understanding of the tone and tenor of the contestations over and around the concept and context of the Nigerian 'nation'.

All these issues and crises will be examined in the context of how they were narrated, counter-narrated, contested or constructed in the Nigerian press to tease out the mobilization of meaning in the service of power within the ambit of the relations of domination. While class consideration features in latent ways in some of these narratives, this work does not focus on class dimensions of the narratives.

The coverage of these issues is to enable us to identify these patterns and tendencies of construction of meaning in the service of power and key national themes constructed in the press so as to adequately capture the character of the

grand narrative of the Nigerian 'nation'. The diversity of the coverage is to allow for cross-section comparison, while the time-span is to allow for comparison across time. It must be noted that given the fact that this work involves the analysis of narratives, it is understandably long. It is important to present the narratives in their various dimensions, so as to capture the expressions and counter-expressions of power in them.

6. *Prior and Related Works*

Central to this study are six concepts. They are narrative, discourse, nation, power, meaning, and myth. This study seeks to examine how meaning is mobilized or demobilized in the service of power to construct or deconstruct grand narrative and other competing narratives in the Nigerian press. We therefore proceed to undertake a review of prior and related works in these areas so as to properly locate the present study in the spectrum of the literature.

6.1. *Narrative*

Narratives of the world are numberless.³⁶ Narrative is present in every age, every place and every circumstance. There have never been any group of people without their own narratives. A major part of the conventional wisdom of political

³⁶ Roland Barthes, "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives"; in T. Bennett, *et al.* eds., *Culture, Ideology and Social Process: A Reader*, UK: Open University Press, 1981: 79.

communication research is Plato's remark that those who tell the stories also rule society.³⁷ In the last four decades or so, story-telling has re-emerged as an important metaphor for political communication research: In this re-emergence, Fisher's "narrative paradigm" has emerged as a pivot for the re-examination of narrative.³⁸ Also in this context, narrative has become the paradigm of research not only in the literature departments of the academy, but also in other disciplines of the human sciences³⁹. What is responsible for this growing interest is captured by the submission that narrative represents a universal medium of human consciousness – what Hayden White⁴⁰ calls 'meta-code' – that provides the pathway for the transcultural transmission of "messages about shared reality".⁴¹

Given the tradition of poetic models of narrative constitution, the dominant theoretical explanation of narrative, Lucaites and Condit⁴² argue for a more complete and useful theory of narrative meta-code that requires a re-construction,

based upon a thorough-going account of the recursive interaction of the multiple forms and functions of

³⁷ Editorial, *Journal of Communication*, (Special Edition), Vol. 35, No. 4, Autumn, 1985: 73.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Amy Shuman, *Storytelling Rights: The Uses of Oral and Written Texts by Urban Adolescents*, New York: Cambridge University press, 1986: 127.

⁴⁰ Hayden White, *The Content of Form*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987.

⁴¹ Cf. Barthes, 1977, op. cit.; Fisher, 1984, op. cit.; Jamieson, 1991, op. cit.

⁴² John L. Lucaites, and Celeste M. Condit, "Re-constructing Narrative Theory: A Functional Perspective", *Journal of Communication*, (Special Edition), Vol. 35, No. 4, Autumn, 1985: 90-91.

narrative as they are materialized in the discourse of everyday life.⁴³

Against this backdrop, Lucaites and Condit render three functions of narrative, which are the poetic, the dialectical and the rhetorical. The last two functions are relevant to this study. For these writers, the primary goal of dialectical narrative is "the discovery, revelation and presentation of truth".⁴⁴ However, they caution that the use of the word 'truth' is not intended to resurrect the epistemological debate between relativists and objectivists, but to recall the common distinction between 'fact' and 'fiction':

The essential characteristic of a dialectical narrative therefore, is its content which is constrained by criteria of accuracy and external validity.⁴⁵

Rhetorical function is concerned with persuasion towards the achievement or consolidation of achievement:

The primary goal of rhetorical discourse is what...persuasion achieves, the enactment of interest, or the wielding of power. The wielding of that power relies on more than the fanciful use of tropes and figures or the mere display of truth.⁴⁶

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid: 93.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid: 93-94.

Rhetorical narrative exists not by form or content but by its function the purpose of which is beyond its own textuality. Consequently, it is a “story that serves as an interpretive lens thorough which the audience is asked to view and understand the verisimilitude of the propositions and proof before it”.⁴⁷

The usefulness of Lucaites and Condit’s analysis is however limited by the fact that they limit the understanding of “role in the evolution of social and political consciousness” to the rhetorical (function) perspective. This *role*, we argue, can be better explored by focusing on the interaction between dialectical and rhetorical functions of narrative; and using the emphasis on *content* (constrained by criteria of accuracy and external validity) in the dialectical function to contrast the emphasis of *function* (enactment of interest and/or the wielding of power) in the rhetorical function. This may throw up the intricate ways in which “accuracy” and “external validity” can be used to enact interests and/or wield power.

Bormann⁴⁸ uses the ‘symbolic convergence theory’ within the ambit of the construction of human beings as narrative beings – *homo narrans* – to explain what constitutes narratives. The symbolic convergence theory explains:

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Earnest G. Bormann, “Symbolic Convergence Theory: A Communication Formulation”, *Journal of Communication* (Special Edition on *Homo Narrans*), Vol. 35, No. 4, Autumn, 1985.

the appearance of a group consciousness, with its implied shared emotions, motives, and meaning, not in terms of individual day dreams and scripts, but rather in terms of socially shared narrations and fantasies.⁴⁹

Bormann's theory has a three-part structure. The first is concerned with the discovery and arrangement of forms of communication that constantly occur in a way that points to the evolution and presence of shared group consciousness. The second points to communicative patterns that explore the rise, continuation, decline and disappearance of group consciousness and their effects on meaning, motives and communication within the group⁵⁰ and outside of the group. The third part forms the basis for shared fantasies among a people. "Fantasy" in this context refers to "the creative and imaginative shared interpretation of events that fulfils a group's psychological and rhetorical need". Bormann submits that while in the rational world paradigm, 'myth', 'fantasy' and 'story' are untrue, narrative paradigm sees the three as central to understanding the world.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Ibid: 128.

⁵⁰ Ibid: 130.

⁵¹ Ibid: 136.

However, McGee and Nelson⁵² develop on this by jettisoning this false dichotomy between rationality and narrativity. They argue that the theory of narrative, approached from the political dimension, will help to dispel this 'false dichotomy' while putting narration on the side of 'truth' through the moral resources of culture.⁵³ McGee and Nelson also reject the negative connotation in which Fisher and Jameson, among others, cast narrative. They argue that the political dimensions of narrative must be confronted and recognized as inescapable parts of intellectual growth and social change.⁵⁴

Since few of the many usages of 'narrative' associate it with truth, the presumption, as McGee and Nelson put it, is that narrative has more to do with hiding sins than with revealing truths. But these two scholars raise the issue of "the real story" in order to "pull narrative into the territory of truth".⁵⁵ This account fails to take full care of the debate over what constitutes truth. If narrative is pulled into the territory of 'truth', what and whose truth would that be? Even the Quintilian

⁵² Michael McGee and John S. Nelson, "Narrative Reason in Public Argument", *Journal of Communication*, (Special Edition), op. cit.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*: 143.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

conception of narrativity, intertwined as it is with rationality, places emphasis on the subjectivity of the *truths* at stake.⁵⁶

Jacobs,⁵⁷ following Sherwood⁵⁸ and White⁵⁹, sees narrative as providing a moral dimension to reality, while also providing a *centering* function for experience. In this way, narrative structures the reception of the world by social actors. Smith⁶⁰ argues that:

Narratives provide for a set of contexts and character attributes and produce a tension that develops within a temporal sequence.

The ideological uses of narratives are evident in Said's work, *Culture and Imperialism*⁶¹, where he notes that hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses are central to narratives. Said argues that narratives are central to what 'others' say about strange cultures and other areas of the world, while also serving as pathway to asserting their own identity. Said emphasizes the crucial power of narratives in the

⁵⁶ Ibid: 148.

⁵⁷ Roland N. Jacobs, "Producing the News, Producing the Crisis: Narrativity, Television and News Work", *Media, Culture and Society*, Vol. 18, No. 2, 1996b.

⁵⁸ Sherwood, 1948, in Ibid.

⁵⁹ Hyden White, 1987, op. cit.

⁶⁰ Dorothy E. Smith, *The Conceptual Practices of Power: A Feminist Sociology of Knowledge*, Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1986: 100.

⁶¹ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, London: Vintage, 1994.

lives of peoples by noting that issues that are central to people's lives are reflected, contested, and even for a time, *decided*, in narratives.⁶²

Shuman⁶³ posits that narrative (what he calls "story telling right") has three components: *entitlement, tellability and storyability*.

Polkinghorne⁶⁴ defines narrative as "a story relating series of events, either true or false". He submits that while the keys to understanding are furnished by narrative, narrative construction and comprehension correspond to one of two kinds of human rationality. One is narrative rationality which "understands synoptically the meanings of a whole, seeing it as a dialectic integration of its parts"⁶⁵; while the other kind uses "formal logic and mathematics and dominates the sciences of the material and organic realms".⁶⁶ This account seemingly returns us to the duality debate, but it does so in a different way, because it locates the opposing accounts strictly within rationality as the other 'dualists' have failed to do. Even though Polkinghorne sides with those who believe that narrative accounts have a unique explanatory power, his

⁶² Ibid: xiii.

⁶³ Shuman, op. cit.: 1274-5. This is elaborated in Chapter two.

⁶⁴ Donald E. Polkinghorne, *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

account lacks the critical value of distinguishing the several basic ways through which meaning is expressive in narrative.⁶⁷

Fleischman⁶⁸ notes the limitations and subtractions from reality that she sees as the hallmark of narrative. She argues that:

To make a narrative...is to structure experience from the viewpoint of the speaker/writer, no two of which will organize that experience nor evaluate its component elements in precisely the same way...What transforms a straight chronicle of events into a narrative is, in part, evaluation.⁶⁹

To narrate therefore, for Fleischman, is in part to evaluate.

This standpoint has provided an insightful, if relatively unexplored, avenue for many researches. The framework has helped to nurture contemporary debates on the nature of the news media, its 'logic' and its relationship to wider structures of power.⁷⁰ Even if there have been strong debates and disagreements over the concept of 'ideology', 'discourse', and 'hegemony'⁷¹ as they relate to the media, these studies have a shared tendency to take news in and from their contexts

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Suzanne Fleischman, "Evaluation in Narrative: The Present Tense in Medieval 'Performed Stories' ", *Yale French Studies*, No. 70, 1988.

⁶⁹ Ibid: 204.

⁷⁰ Simon Cottle, "The Production of News Format: Determinants of Mediated Public Contestation", *Media, Culture and Society*, Vol. 17, 1995: 275.

⁷¹ Studies which have attempted to clarify this, include, Larrain, 1979, 1991: and Thompson, 1990, op. cit., among others.

towards theorizing, with varying sophistication and empirical understanding, on the ways in which the media relate with wider structures of power⁷².

Against this backdrop of the infinity of narratives and multiplicity of standpoints,⁷³ a researcher may find him/herself in a situation of confusion in terms of classification and central focus for description. Yet, this need not be the case. The different perspectives throw different shades of light – narratives in their own right too – on the theory of narrative. This study therefore uses the multiplicity of standpoints in analysing how narratives are used in the symbolic construction of meaning in the service of power.

Additionally and significantly, this study departs from the common practice in the literature by using narrative not just as a process of bringing a nation to *being*, but also as *the nation itself*. That is, the nation exists by and in its narratives. Viewed from this standpoint, the nation is the narrative and the grand nation is a - and *the* – grand narrative. Conversely, the narrative is the nation and grand narrative is also the grand nation.

⁷² Cottle, "The Production of News Format...", op. cit..

⁷³ Barthes, op. cit.: 166.

6.2 Nation

The word *nation* has its origin in Latin. When it was first coined it clearly conveyed the idea of common blood ties. It was derived from the past participle of the verb *nasci*, meaning to born.⁷⁴ When it was introduced to the English language in the late thirteenth century, it retained its primary connotation of blood related group in spite of the earlier differences in meaning. However, by early seventh century, one etymologist noted that *nation* was being used to mean inhabitants of a country, regardless of their ethnic differences, substituting thereby *nation* for *the people* or *the citizenry*.⁷⁵ In the contemporary sense of the term, nation is something fairly new in history.⁷⁶

One problem that is detrimental to the study of nation is its substitution for that territorial juridical unit, the state. Given the wide currency of the term, nation – and related concepts, nationality, nationalism and nation-ness⁷⁷ – the meaning of the term has become so blurred that Rupert Emerson⁷⁸ painfully points out that there is

⁷⁴ Walker Connor, "A Nation is a Nation..." op. cit.: 381.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation?" in Homi Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*, New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc., 1990: 9.

⁷⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, London and New York: Verso, 1991 [1983] uses these concepts interchangeably.

⁷⁸ Rupert Emerson, *From Empire To Nation*, Boston, 1969.

no consensus on what constitutes a nation.⁷⁹ Connor⁸⁰ avers that defining and conceptualising the nation is very difficult because nation's essence is intangible. No definition has been watertight enough to foreclose "ifs" and "buts" in its enumeration of what constitutes a nation as to distinguish it satisfactorily from other types of communities. This perhaps made Setor-Watson, acknowledged as the author of the best and the most comprehensive English language text on nationalism and heir to a vast tradition of liberal historiography and social science, to observe: "That I am *driven* to the conclusion that no 'scientific definition' of the nation can be devised; yet the phenomenon has existed and exists".⁸¹

In spite of this frustration however, Setor-Watson, in his *Nations and States*, states:

All I can find to say is that a nation exists when a significant number of people in a community consider themselves to form a nation, or behave as if they formed one.⁸²

Palno and Olton⁸³ see nation as:

⁷⁹ Anderson, op. cit. 3.

⁸⁰ Walker Connor, "A Nation is a Nation, is a State, is an Ethnic Group, is a...", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 1978: 379.

⁸¹ Anderson, op. cit.

⁸² Quoted in Ibid: 6.

⁸³ Quoted in Connor, op. cit.

A social group which shares a common ideology, common institutions and common customs, and a sense of homogeneity...(in which) there is also present a strong sense of belonging associated with a particular territory considered to be peculiarly its own.⁸⁴

Many other scholars have tried in different ways to solve the conceptual problem raised by the definition of nation. What Seton-Watson emphasizes is the crucial nature of emotions in the *feeling* and *formation* of a nation. If "a significant number of people consider themselves" or "imagine themselves"⁸⁵ as a nation, and "behave" accordingly, then they are a nation.

Tom Nairn⁸⁶, heir to a not less vast tradition of Marxist historiography and social science, submits that, "the theory of nationalism represents Marxism's great historical failure". Anderson notes that the concepts of nation and nationalism have provided an "uncomfortable *anomaly*" for Marxist theory, which has, rather than confront the concepts, eluded them.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Anderson, op. cit.

⁸⁶ Tom Nairn, *The Break Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*, 2nd Edn. London: New Left Books, 1977.

⁸⁷ Anderson, op. cit.: 3.

However, Anderson advances that both liberal and nationalist theories have been inadequate in "saving the phenomena". Subsequently, he constructs ... nation-ness, and nationalism as "cultural artefacts of a particular kind":⁸⁸

To understand them properly we need to consider carefully how they come into historical being, in what ways their meaning have changed overtime, and why, today, they command such profound emotional legitimacy.⁸⁹

There are three paradoxes, which, according to Anderson⁹⁰ are central to the above. These are:

(1) The objective modernity of nations to the historian's eye (versus) their subjective antiquity in the eyes of nationalists. (2) The formal universality of nationality as a socio-cultural concept in the modern world – everyone can, should, will 'have' a nationality, as he or she 'has' a gender – (versus) the irremediable particularity of its concrete manifestations, such that, by definition, 'Greek' nationality is *sui generis*. (3) The 'political' power of nationalism (versus) their philosophical poverty and even incoherence.⁹¹

Against this backdrop, Anderson proposes a definition in 'anthropological spirit'.

A nation, he advances:

⁸⁸ Ibid: 4.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid: 5.

⁹¹ Ibid.

is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.⁹²

This 'imagination' or more appropriately, *nation-imaginary*, is what Billing⁹³ takes up when he argues that it is defined by hegemonic battles.

While Buzan defines nation as “a large group of people sharing the same cultural and possibly the same ethnic or racial heritage”, De Goor, Rupesinghe and Sciarone⁹⁴ captures it as a “community of sentiment”.

Where this 'community of sentiment' is juxtaposed with struggles within, or struggle with, sovereign territorial boundary, then the concept of nation-state present new challenges. Nation-state connotes congruity of territorial boundaries of ethnic identity or nation with those of the state. This is hardly ever the case thereby causing crisis over the assertion of a single identity or multiple identities. Emerson captures this dilemma of the post-colonial state, which after independence needed desperately to construct a nationality:

Since the state is in modern times the most significant form of organization of men and embodies the greatest concentration of power, it is inevitable that there should have been, and should still be, a great revolutionary struggle to secure a coincidence between state and

⁹² Ibid: 6.

⁹³ Michael Billing, *Banal Nationalism*, London: Sage, 1995.

⁹⁴ De Goor, Rupesinghe and Sciarone, op. cit.: 14.

nation. The nation seeks to take over the state as the political instrument through which it can protect and assert itself.... The nation has in fact become the body, which legitimises the state.⁹⁵

It is the spiritual-cultural validity of the nation – or what is believed to be the spiritual-cultural validity of the nation - which, as Emerson points out, the state in post-colonial Africa seeks to appropriate in order to legitimise itself. This bid again shows that the nation as a concept is crucial to understanding the dilemmas of post-colonial state. In many cases, a single nation (or ethnic group) hijacks the control of the state and uses the power of the state to exercise control over other nations within the polity⁹⁶ and define this *totality* in the image of the dominant ethnic-nation.

One of the ways to understanding how a nation is constituted is in the continuous defining and re-defining of 'national identity'. Most of the illuminating works in this area have been done, not surprisingly, by historians and anthropologists.⁹⁷ Gellner's definition, which was an attack on intellectual theory of

⁹⁵ Emerson, quoted in Crawford Young, *op. cit.*

⁹⁶ Roger D. Wimmer, and Joseph R. Dominick, *Mass Media Research: An Introduction*, second ed., Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1987; De Goor, *et al.*, *op. cit.*: 15.

⁹⁷ Philip Schlesinger, *Media, State and Nation: Political Violence and Collective Identities*, London: Sage Publishers, 1991: 168.

the origin of nationalism espoused by Elie Kedourie,⁹⁸ sees nations as 'mythical' and as an 'invention'. He argues:

Nations as a natural, God-given way of classifying men, as an inherent, though long delayed political destiny, are a myth; nationalism, which sometimes takes pre-existing cultures and turns them into nations, sometimes invents them, and often obliterates pre-existing cultures. Those who are its historic agents know not what they do...⁹⁹

Schlesinger however argues that this is an overstatement given the fact that there is ample evidence to show that in the construction (invention, to use Gellner's word) of new national identities and the manipulation of existing ones, the historic agents know well what they do.¹⁰⁰ Hobsbawn and Ranger and others in their work, *The Invention of Tradition*¹⁰¹, provide empirical limitation to Gellner's overstatement. Hobsbawn advances that invented traditions, following the Industrial Revolution, flow from:

a sense of identification with a community and/or the institutions representing, expressing or symbolizing it such as a nation...most of the occasions when people conscious of citizenship as such remain associated with symbols and semi-ritual practices (for instance, elections), most of which are historically novel and

⁹⁸ Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism*, London: Hutchinson, 1960.

⁹⁹ Ernest Gellner, *Nation and Nationalism*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1983: 48-49.

¹⁰⁰ Schlesinger, *op. cit.*: 169.

¹⁰¹ Eric Hobsbawn, and Terence Ranger, eds. *Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

largely invented: flags, images, ceremonies and music.¹⁰²

What is worthy of note in Hobsbaw'n's articulation of the formation (or invention) of national identity is that historiography, 'viewed from the standpoint of producing interpretations of nationhood for broader diffusion and eventual collective consumption',¹⁰³ is capable of elaborating and sustaining conceptions of identity:

The element of invention is particularly clear here, since the history which became part of the fund of knowledge or the ideology of the nation-state or movement is not what has actually been preserved in popular memory, but what has been selected, written, pictured, popularised and institutionalised by those whose function is it to do so.¹⁰⁴

Karl Deutsch, Gross and Anderson,¹⁰⁵ among others, have written on the agency which functions to "select, write, picture, popularise, and institutionalise" what constitutes a nation. Deutsch's central thesis is that the nation is "a cultural entity with principles of coherence called 'complementarity' and 'relative efficiency'".¹⁰⁶

The essential aspect of the unity of the people...is the complementarity and relative efficiency of communication among individuals – something that is in

¹⁰² Hobsbaw'n and Ranger; *ibid*: 11-12.

¹⁰³ Schlesinger, *op. cit.*: 169

¹⁰⁴ Hobsbaw'n in Hobsbaw'n and Ranger, eds. *op. cit.*: 13.

¹⁰⁵ Karl Deutsch, 1963, 1966; Gross, Larry, *et al.* eds. *Image Ethics: The Moral Rights of Subjects in Photography, Film and Television*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988; Anderson, *op. cit.*

¹⁰⁶ Schlesinger, *op. cit.*: 157.

some ways similar to mutual rapport, but on a larger scale.¹⁰⁷

However, Deutsch's and Mackenzie's position, even though it is important in understanding the role of social communication in the construction of a nation, is inadequate because they offer no criteria of boundedness.¹⁰⁸ Anderson, on his part uses the term, 'print capitalism', to describe the location of various means of communication – particularly the (printing) press - at the heart of the construction of the imagined community, nation.¹⁰⁹ However, Anderson fails to push his argument beyond the Gutenberg era to try and examine the implications of post-Gutenberg media technologies on the consciousness of nationhood.¹¹⁰

This work will analyse the concept of the nation from these multiple perspectives, to see how each, or a combination of the perspectives, throw light, in specific empirical circumstances, on how the nation is constructed. However, even though the concept lacks a generally acceptable definition, there is a consensus in extant literature on what it captures. Here, a rough guide will be Emerson's definition,

¹⁰⁷ Deutsch, 1966, *op. cit.*: 188.

¹⁰⁸ Schlesinger, *op. cit.*: 188.

¹⁰⁹ Anderson, *op. cit.*: 122.

¹¹⁰ Schlesinger, *op. cit.*: 164.

because it establishes the crucial nature of the linkage between past and the future, which makes the present both important and transitory for a community of people:

A nation is a body of people who feel that they are a nation...a community of people who feel that they belong together in a double sense that they share deeply significant elements of a common heritage and that they have a common destiny for the future.¹¹¹

6.3 Myth

Myths are central to the construction of nation.¹¹² As Zelinger states, "the ground floor of a nation's identity is negotiated as much through what becomes a repeatable part of its national mythology as through that which gets conveniently shunted aside".¹¹³ Generally, myth is described as:

a story that is usually of unknown origin and at least partially traditional, that ostensibly relates historical events usually of such character or to serve to explain some practice, beliefs, institution...a story invented as a veiled explanation of a truth.¹¹⁴

Bullock, et al, in the *Dictionary of Modern Thoughts*, describe myth as " a 'sacred' narrative from which legends and fairy tales are not always clearly distinguishable. In a common tradition of analysis, myth is above all explanatory".

¹¹¹ Emerson, op. cit.: 90&102.

¹¹² Ben Yehuda, 1995; Zelinger, 1997.

¹¹³ Zelinger, Ibid: 159-160.

¹¹⁴ Webster's English Dictionary.

In the anthropological tradition represented by Malinowski, myths are characterized as justifications ("charters") while in recent anthropological debates led by Levi-Strauss, "the meaning of a myth lies below the narrative surface",

being detectable by a close analysis of the individual incidents and items in the narrative, by their regrouping, and by their study in the context of the transformations they undergo.¹¹⁵

Myth, Levi-Strauss argues further, is a "struggle with contradictions or paradoxes, as a syntagmatic mediation of paradigmatic oppositions".¹¹⁶ While being marked by an endless struggle to overcome 'contradictions', myth also unites many disciplinary perspectives (anthropological, psychological, literary, classical, political and sociological).

Breen and Corcoran in their study of television discourse, notes that myth functions in four ways: As part of the perceptual system of a culture through which new and unfamiliar occurrences are interpreted within old symbolic framework; a creation of exemplars for society by translating a single story into an archetype, a grand prism that should be imitated; as a powerful means for handling conflicts.

¹¹⁵ Zelinger, op. cit.

¹¹⁶ Raymond Corbey, "Ethnographic Showcases, 1870-1930", in Jan Nederveen Pieterse, and Bhikhu Parekh eds., *The Decolonization of Imagination*, London and New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd, 1995: 72.

within and outside a given culture; and as a means of reflection of events.¹¹⁷ The primary function of myth is therefore to organize meaning within a given culture.

Bennett underscores the capacity of myth to structure political processes. He advances that when ordinary events within a polity are connected to underlying myths, they often lose their initial 'ordinariness' and superficiality only to be interpreted as meaningful responses to complex political realities.¹¹⁸

Doty quarrels with twentieth century approaches to mythology which have tended generally to privilege either form or function in the analysis.¹¹⁹ He then presents a multi-dimensional definitional alternative, which is adopted here, because it stresses the importance of both form and function of socio-cultural and political myths in the construction and maintenance of individual and mass consciousness. A mythological corpus consists of:

a usually complex network of myths that are virtually important, imaginal stories, conveying by means of metaphoric and symbolic diction, graphic imagery, and emotional conviction and participation, the primal, foundational accounts of aspects of the real,

¹¹⁷ M. Breen and Corcoran, "Myth in the Television Discourse", *Communication Monograph*, Vol. 49, No. 2, June 1982: 127-136.

¹¹⁸ N.L. Bennett, "Myth, Ritual and Political Control", *Journal of Communication*, Vol. 30, No. 4, Autumn 1980: 166-179.

¹¹⁹ William G. Doty, *Mythography: The Study of Myths and Rituals*, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1986: 11.

experienced world and humankind's roles and relative statuses within it.¹²⁰

6.4. *Grand Narrative, Discursive Nation, Myth and Meaning in the Service of Power: A Nexus*

Central to all social sciences is the notion of power. Yet, the fashionable ways of conceiving power are very unsatisfactory.¹²¹ One major reason for the concept of power being intractable is that it encompasses seemingly unrelated ideas. As Dahl¹²² states, power is 'not a thing at all but many things'. Others share this view: Riker, for instance, submits that the concept should be banished; March states that the concept is disappointing, while Dahl admits that students of power feel that its study is a "bottomless swamp".¹²³ However, Wittman attempts to counter this nihilistic concerns by showing that a number of intuitive ideas about power can be defined in precise manners while some definitions can be applied in more situation than the authors originally thought possible.¹²⁴

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Donald Wittman, "Various Concepts of power: Equivalence Among Ostensibly Unrelated Approaches", *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 6, No. 4, October 1976: 449.

¹²² Robert Dahl, 1957 in Ibid.

¹²³ Wittman, Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

Power is linked with discourse, social cognition and social representation. The reproduction of power therefore, presupposes or involves the reproduction of social representation and their organizing ideologies, which sustain the reproduction of power.¹²⁵ Such reproduced social representations and cognitions are expressed, described, explained, prescribed, normalized, defended and legitimated in myriad discourses which form the symbolic framework of power (Ibid). As van Dijk puts it:

discourse in (...) society is the essential communicative dimension of power. Through discourse, people 'learn' how to acquire, maintain, or accept power. And even more crucially, through discourse they develop the social cognition that legitimise power.... Social group members need discourse and communication to learn about social structure, about their positions in social structure, and about their (lack of) power. And conversely, discourse allows them to express and persuasively convey such social understanding of positions of power.¹²⁶

Smith¹²⁷ in her work advocates the examination of power in the context of how texts are connected to relations of domination (ruling). Scott¹²⁸ also opens up new

¹²⁵ Teun A. van Dijk, "Social Cognition, Social Power and Social Discourse", Introduction to the Symposium on *Discourse and Social Psychology*, International Conference on Social Psychology and Language, Bristol, 1987: 16

¹²⁶ Ibid: 16.

¹²⁷ Dorothy E. Smith, op. cit.

¹²⁸ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1990.

avenues of study for social scientists in the area of the deeper complexities of power relationships¹²⁹.

Schudson, in his 1985 study of the *State of the Union* presidential address (United States) shows the power of news narratives in defining identity and constructing political discourse and more importantly, establishing the ground rules for the transaction of every other kind of power in society.¹³⁰

Central to the construction of power in the media is meaning. Thompson recasts the concept of ideology to refer to:

(W)ays in which meaning serves, in particular circumstances to establish and sustain relations of power, which are systematically asymmetrical (...) broadly speaking (...) meaning in the service of power.¹³¹

This position radically challenges the assumption that had for long dominated the literature which view ideology as a kind of 'social cement' which triumphs in

¹²⁹ Scribner, 1991: 862.

¹³⁰ Michael Schudson, *The Power of News*, Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1995.

¹³¹ Thompson, op. cit.: 7.

stabilizing societies by binding their members together in collectively shared values and norms.¹³² The interpretation of ideology in this Thompsonian sense,

Explicate(s) the connection between the meaning mobilized by symbolic forms and the relations of domination which that meaning serves to maintain¹³³ It is methodologically predisposed to stimulate a critical reflection on relations of power and domination... It touches the nerves of power, it highlights the position of those who benefit most and those who benefit least from existing social (and political) relations and it examines some of the symbolic mechanisms by virtue of which these asymmetrical social relations are established and sustained.¹³⁴

Meaning in this context can serve power in five general modes: Through *Legitimation (rationalization, universalization and narrativization)*, *Dissimulation (displacement, euphemization and trope)*, *Unification (standardization and symbolization of unity)*, *Fragmentation (differentiation and expurgation of the other)* and *Reification (naturalization, eternalization and normalization/passivication)*.¹³⁵

Analysing relations of domination in this sense does not admit of incontestable demonstration. We realize that meaning and power are in the "realm of

¹³² Ibid: 8.

¹³³ Ibid: 23.

¹³⁴ Ibid: 26.

¹³⁵ These are Thompson's classifications, which we have adopted here.

shifting sense and relative inequalities, of ambiguity and word-play, of different degrees of opportunity and accessibility, of deception and self-deception, of the concealment of the very process of concealment".¹³⁶

Homi Bhabha is one of the leading modern touch-bearers of the tradition of examining the nation through its narratives. In the celebrated work he edited, *Nation and Narration*,¹³⁷ Bhabha asks:

If the ambivalent figure of the nation is a problem of its transitional history, its conceptual indeterminacy, its wavering between vocabularies, then what effect does this have on narratives and discourses that signify a sense of 'nationness'?¹³⁸

The study of the nation through its narratives, Bhabha advances, not only draws attention merely to its language and rhetoric, it also attempts to change the conceptual object itself:

If the problematic 'closure' of textuality questions the 'totalisation' of national culture, then its positive value lies in displaying the wide dissemination through which we construct the field of meanings and symbols associated with national life.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Ibid: 71.

¹³⁷ Homi Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*, op. cit.

¹³⁸ Ibid: 2.

¹³⁹ Ibid: 3.

The power to narrate or in the alternative to block other narratives from coming into existence is central to the notion of a nation in post-colonial states.¹⁴⁰ To cast the nation as narration – what Foucault describes as 'discursive formations'¹⁴¹ - highlights the centrality of myths – as explanations - in the constructions of nations and the insistence of political power and cultural authority - which Derrida has described as the "irreducible excess of the syntactic over the semantic".¹⁴²

In place of a nation – fitting the generally acceptable conditions of nationhood – have emerged grand narratives (meta narratives, grand myths or meta fictions) in multi-national postcolonial polities that seek to impose the myth of common nationhood on disparate nations. We argue here that a nation in this context is not just a narrative, it is a grand narrative, in that it seeks to super-cede other narratives casting them as 'lesser' and 'surpass-able' narratives. There is therefore the need to go beyond the general trend in the literature that examines the idea of single nation (in a typical multi-national state) as a narrative to capture it as a grand narrative in which meaning discursively defines the relations of power.

¹⁴⁰ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, op. cit.: 11.

¹⁴¹ Timothy Brennan, *Salman Rushdie and the Third World: Myths of the Nation*, London: Macmillan, 1989: 4.

¹⁴² *ibid.*

This thesis hopes to fill this apparent vacuum in the literature. Linking narratives, discourse, nation and myth in order to elucidate the mobilization of meaning in the service and disservice of power within a grand narrative, knits the six central concepts – narratives, discourse, nation, myth, meaning and power – together.

7. Method

7.1. *Data Gathering Method*

The method of gathering data will be mainly through archival and library-historical method. Major 'national' and 'regional' English language newspapers and magazines were purposively selected with regard to their ownership, philosophy and editorial policy, which impacted on their coverage of events. Vernacular newspapers were not selected because, apart from the fact that they contained the same content as their sister publications in English, they also reflected the same positions as these sister publications. Again, the national narratives – as narrated by the elite - tended to be articulated in English language. The titles chosen are: for (i) *West African Pilot, Nigerian Citizen, Daily Service and Daily Times*; for (ii) *West African Pilot, Nigerian Tribune, Morning Post and New Nigerian*; for (iii) *TELL, The News, Guardian, Daily Champion and New Nigerian*; For (iv), *TELL, Weekly Trust, Guardian and Post*

Express. The data gathered include news reports, editorials, select opinion articles and features. Editorials constitute the main narratives examined because they are the most regular across the newspapers. News reports in newspapers and cover stories/special reports in newsmagazines are next, also because of their regularity across the newspapers and newsmagazines. Beyond the foregoing reasons, these items also receive greater attention because they are more expressive of the negotiation interests and power.

7. 2. *Data Analysis*

The data gathered will be subjected to discursive and narrative analysis. The narrative analysis will be organized around the Thompsonian typology of the mode of operation of ideology.

8. *Expected Result*

This research work seeks to study the dynamics of the Nigerian 'nation' as a grand narrative to show how meaning is mobilized in the service or disservice of power. The expected result is a confirmation of the outcome of preliminary investigation. Equally expected is the identification of the relations of domination evident in the intricate linkage of the network of meaning and power.

9 Value of Proposed Research

9.1. *Contribution to Theory:* This study involves three sub-disciplines of political science: Political theory, comparative politics and political communication. It is expected that the result will enrich extant literature in this area in the reformulation of the concept of ideology, which is scanty, if present, in contemporary social science. Another contribution is the relevance of the relations of domination evident in the narratives in understanding the crisis of 'nation-building' and inter-ethnic relations in multi-ethnic post-colonial polities.

9.2. *Contribution to Practice:* The Nigerian press, as stated earlier, predates the notion of Nigerian 'nation'. This work is aimed at appropriating the dynamics of this press in the context of narrating the idea of Nigerian 'nation'. This can help 'nation-builders' in understanding the interplay of forces. Also, media men can also understand better what they do when they engage in interpretation and counter-interpretation in the contestations among the varied ethnic-nationalities in Nigeria.

9.3. *Contribution to Method:* Bringing literary method, political analysis and communication perspective to bear on the analysis of media coverage of inter-ethnic relations in the way envisaged here could be a contribution to method.

10. *Outline of Research*

Chapter One (*Introduction*) provides the background to the study including statement of the problem, justification of study, research objectives, literature review, methodology and division of chapters. Chapter Two (*The Nation As Grand Narrative: The Press and the Politics Of Meaning*) is the theoretical chapter with five sub-sections: The theoretical overview, narratives, nations, myth and discourse. The concluding part links all these with meaning and power within grand narratives.

Chapter Three (*Background to Independence: 'Nations' in the Making of a 'Grand Nation' - 1952-1954*) focuses on the crisis over the date of Nigeria's independence and related issues and how they are narrated in the press. It includes qualitative analysis.

Chapter Four (*Countdown to Civil War: 'Nations' in the 'Breaking' of a 'Nation' - 1966*) focuses on the crisis that plagued the infant 'nation' as the disparate nations contested for hegemony and space. This was in 1966 before the Civil War broke out. It will also involve qualitative analysis of media content. Chapter Five (*Electoral Crisis and the Fall of the Third Republic – 1992-1994*) focuses on the June 12, 1993 Presidential election debacle with qualitative analysis of media content. Chapter Six (*Early Years of the Fourth Republic: The Wrath of Ages – May 1999 – May 2000*)

focuses on the post-May 29, 1999 era – after the restoration of civil democratic governance. It examines the narration of the crises that re-emerged on the question of the integrity of the Nigerian union and the terms of inter-ethnic relations. Chapter Seven (*Conclusion: The Limits and Space of Grand Narratives*) reviews the research, summarizes the major points and points out theoretical and empirical limits to the idea of grand narratives.

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CHAPTER TWO

THE NATION AS GRAND NARRATIVE: THE PRESS AND THE POLITICS OF MEANING

1. *Introduction*

Empirical social science must start from a properly articulated philosophical base if it is to be successful. The philosophy of the social sciences cannot be an optional activity for those reluctant to get on with the 'real' empirical work. It is the indispensable starting-point for all social science.

-- R. Trigg, *Understanding Social Science: A Philosophical Introduction to Social Sciences*

If empirical knowledge were not preceded by an ontology it would be entirely inconceivable, for we can extract objectified meanings out of a given reality only to the extent that we are able to ask intelligent and revealing questions.

-- Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*

This chapter dwells on the theoretical context in which the work is located. It explores the ontological, epistemological and methodological background to the theoretical framework – depth hermeneutics. It believes that concrete methodological issues can be and should be linked with theoretical problems. Thereafter, the chapter attempts to theorise relevant concepts including narrative, nation, myth and discourse, linking these with meaning and power within a grand

narrative. It concludes with an attempt to construct a theoretical statement on the press in the African post-colony, particularly Nigeria.

2. *Ontological, Epistemological and Methodological Overview*

The social sciences have been concerned for several years with basic, fundamental and functional questions concerning the *nature* of the *reality* of social life and how this is to be investigated. While some of these concerns, and the debates they have provoked, have been geared toward resolving ontological and epistemological dilemmas, others have focused on methodological challenges of the process of social enquiry.¹

¹ As A. Schutz captures it in 'Concept and Theory Formation in the Social Sciences', "(There) is a controversy which for more than half a century has split not only logicians and methodologists but also social scientists into two schools of thought. One of these holds that the methods of the natural sciences which have brought about such magnificent results are the only ones and that they alone, therefore, have to be applied in their entirety to the study of human affairs.... The other school of thought feels there is a basic difference in the structure of the social world and the world of nature. This feeling has led to other extreme, namely the conclusion that the methods of the social sciences are *toto coe/o* different from those of the natural sciences.... It has been maintained that the social sciences are ideographic, characterized by individualizing conceptualization and seeking singular assertory propositions, whereas the natural sciences are nomothetic, characterized by generalizing conceptualization and seeking general apodictic propositions. The latter have to deal with constant relations of magnitude which can be measured and can perform experiments, whereas neither measurement nor experiment is practicable in the social sciences. In general, it is held that the natural sciences have to deal with material objects and processes, the social sciences, however, with psychological and intellectual ones and that, therefore, the method of the former consists in explaining, and that of the latter in understanding". Quoted in Norman Blaikie, *Approaches to Social Enquiry*, Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 1993, p. 11.

Ontology and epistemology are central to the philosophy of science.² While ontology, 'the science or study of being', is concerned with "claims and assumptions that a particular approach to social enquiry makes about the nature of social reality", epistemology, the theory of knowledge, is concerned with "claims or assumptions made about the ways in which it is possible to gain knowledge of this reality, whatever it is understood to be; claims about how what exists may be known".³

Dilthey was pivotal to conceptualising a foundational framework to understand the 'human sciences' (*Geisteswissenschaften*) within the context of the ontological and epistemological debates that preceded his writings. He argued for a separation of the goals of human and natural sciences. The study of the former should be based on the method of understanding (*verstehen*) which will 'grasp the subjective consciousness of the participants', while the latter seeks causal explanation (*erklaren*).⁴ Following this polarity, Dilthey rejected the argument that the method of enquiry adopted in the natural sciences, thereby addressing his work to probing the possibility of objectivity in the human sciences. In his attempt to demonstrate a

² Blaikie, *Ibid*: 6. This section draws heavily from Blaikie's work.

³ *Ibid*: 6-7.

⁴ *Ibid*: 30.

methodology applicable across the human sciences – which could guarantee objectivity and validity – Dilthey positioned descriptive psychology, 'an empirical account of consciousness devoid of concerns with causal explanation', at the base of the human sciences.⁵ Descriptive psychology was, in the human sciences, supposed to match the role of mathematics in the natural sciences.

Dilthey later modified his argument by considering Husserl's phenomenology; but eventually he concentrated on socially produced systems of meaning, thereby transcending his earlier focus on the mental life of individuals. In this 'mind-created world' which is placed in social context,

every single human expression represents something which is common to many and therefore part of the realm of objective mind. Every word or sentence, every gesture or form of politeness, every work of art and every historical deed are only understandable because the person expressing himself and the person who understands him are connected by something they have in common; the individual always experiences, thinks, acts, and also understands, in this common sphere.⁶

⁵ Ibid: 31.

⁶ Dilthey, quoted in Blankie, Ibid: 31.

He criticized the approaches of philosophers such as Locke, Hume and Kant for decontextualizing human subjects, insisting that rational speculation or metaphysical theories are grossly inadequate, if not irrelative, to understanding human beings; an understanding grounded in life itself – life being the social, historical reality which supply the concepts and categories of understanding.⁷ It is the *lived experience (Eelebnis)* in which human beings enact themselves and create their world that they also come to have an independent existence of their own. These 'objectifications of life' are graspable only through understanding:

(W)e understand [*verstehen*] ourselves and others only because we introduce our own lived experience of life into every kind of expression of our own life and that of others. Thus the combination of lived experience, expression and understanding [*Erleben, Ausdruck, und Verstehen*] is the specific process whereby mankind exists for us as an object of the human sciences. Hence the human sciences are grounded in this connection of life, expression and understanding.⁸

⁷ Ibid: 31-32.

⁸ Diltthey, quoted in Ibid, p. 32. Habermas, (1988 [1997]) advances that the problem of *Verstehen* (understanding) is of methodological importance in the humanities and social sciences "primarily because the scientist cannot gain access to a symbolically prestructured reality through *observation* alone, and because *understanding meaning (Sinnverstehen)* cannot be methodically brought under control in the same way as observation". For Giddens, *verstehen* must be regarded "not as a special method of entry to the social sciences, but as the ontological condition of human society as it is produced and reproduced by its members". *New Rules of Sociological Method*, London: 1976, p. 151.

Heidegger, influenced by this perspective and also by the phenomenological tradition established by his mentor, Husserl, developed on Dilthey's work. Husserl had attempted to tackle the problematic of pure understanding. He argued that 'consciousness (when) liberated from the world will be capable of grasping the true meaning, 'not the contingent meaning, meaning as it happens to be seen – but meaning in its true, necessary essence'.⁹ Husserl's task was to "establish truth independent of what people in socio-historical situations happen to think it is". What this necessitated is 'transcendental *epoche*'. As Bauman¹⁰ explains it:

The act of *epoche* (...) differs essentially from supposedly similar operations accomplished by philosophers of the past. It doesn't mean denying the world (...) nor questioning its existence.... *Epoche* means simply a methodological limitation which allows us to make only such judgements as do not depend for their validity on a spatio-temporal world.... *Epoche* and transcendental reduction, the 'suspension' of everything empirical, historically transient and culture-bound, are the operations which have to be performed for this direct insight to

⁹ Z. Bauman, *Hermeneutics and Social Science*. London: Hutchinson, 1978, p. 11; Blaikie, *op. cit.*, p. 33. Husserl argued that positive sciences are not 'genuine ultimate sciences' because they are only one-sided sciences owing to the 'blindness imposed by their methods, as an inevitable consequences of the exclusive focusing of each (positive science) on its own particular province'. The 'theorizer', Husserl insisted, must in his 'theoretical producing' know the 'inwardness of that producing', live in it and have it living itself 'as a theme within his field of vision'. See Barry Hindess, *Philosophy and Methodology in the Social Sciences*, Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1977: 65.

¹⁰ Bauman, *op. cit.*: 119 and 123; cf. Barry Hindess, *Ibid*: 59.

become possible. As all the 'empirically given' data are to be disposed off on the way, they cannot be employed as steps leading to the final accomplishment: the capture of meaning.

While Husserl's work has been criticized for its unrealistic postulates¹¹, Heidegger recast his notion of a pre-conceptual method of social analysis. Instead of arguing for the disengagement of human beings and decontextualizing human action, Heidegger advanced that understanding is itself a mode of being in which ordinary human beings participated and are implicated, because it is the foundation of their existence.¹² The central idea in Heidegger's work is that understanding implies a "mode of being" rather than a "mode of knowledge" because it is about how human beings exist in the world: "Understanding is the basis of being human...(U)nderstanding is embedded in the fabric of social relationships and interpretation is simply making this understanding explicit in language."¹³

The ontological departure point in any process of social research may be concealed but it is eventually revealed. It is the meaning, which a particular ontology

¹¹ See Bauman, *op. cit.*, for instance.

¹² Blackie, *op. cit.*: 34.

¹³ *Ibid.*

gives, as expressed in Gestalt theory, that serves to “integrate the units of conduct” and brings to light the configurative context from which each observational element proceeds.¹⁴ From this, Manheim, in his project of exposing the social nature of all knowledge, argues that we must move to reconsider the received notions on epistemology, because knowledge in the social sciences is different from that of “formal mechanistic knowledge”. The difference is emphatic at the point in which knowledge in the social sciences transcends “the mere enumeration of facts and correlations” focussing on situationally determined knowledge.¹⁵

Manheim advances that once these ontological points are accepted, modern social sciences will proceed with entirely new insights with three main tendencies: modern social thinking will tend towards the self-criticism of the collective-unconscious motivations; a new type of intellectual history will be constructed, which will factor in changes in ideas vis-à-vis social-historical changes; and last, there will

¹⁴ Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, and New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1936; p.21.

¹⁵ Ibid: 49.

be a move towards revising our epistemology which had hitherto excluded the account of the social nature of thought.¹⁶ The rationale for this will be a,

clearer theoretical formulation of one and the same problem from different angles, and on the other, the elaboration of a method which will enable us, on the basis of increasingly precise criteria, to distinguish and isolate diverse styles of thinking and to relate them to the groups from which they spring.¹⁷

The methodological technique, which is privileged in positivist science, is produced from an evaluative-epistemology and ontological-metaphysical approach, which ultimately discloses itself as a *Weltanschauung* (worldview). Acknowledging this ensures that one realizes the metaphysical and ontological presuppositions or judgments that underlie knowledge¹⁸. Implicated in this position is the argument that

¹⁶ Ibid: 49-50.

¹⁷ Ibid: 50.

¹⁸ ¹⁸ Ibid: 88-89; cf. Hindess, op. cit. pp. 6-7, who advances that "(I)n the social sciences...methodological doctrines pertaining to the general character of knowledge as such are frequently combined with implicit or explicit ontological conceptions of the distinctive character of the object of investigation. These conceptions are ontological and therefore, philosophical, to the extent that the recognition of that distinctive character is thought to be not the *product* of scientific investigation but rather its *precondition*."

there are different ontologies for conflicting groups and classes in society that seek their reality in their thoughts and deeds.¹⁹

The critical issues raised by the idea of the sociology of knowledge ultimately supplant epistemological inquiry and cannot be fully addressed until received epistemological conceptions and prejudices are revised.²⁰ As Mannheim advances:

Under the dominant presuppositions of present-day philosophy, it will be impossible to utilize this new insight for epistemology, because modern theory of knowledge is based on the supposition that bare fact-finding has no relevance to validity.... With the peace of mind that comes from the *a priori* premise that epistemology is independent of the "empirical" special sciences, the mind is once and for all closed to the insight which a broadened empiricism might bring.²¹

This epistemology has been challenged as the only one specific kind of epistemology, which has 'stabilized the conception of knowledge' derived from a specific kind of ontology which therefore represents 'merely one of the many

¹⁹ Ibid: 98. Mannheim considers the differentiation of ontologies on the basis on the basis of social positions in his work, "Das Konservative Denken".

²⁰ Ibid: 287.

²¹ Ibid.

possible varieties of knowledge'²²This challenge raises a crucial perspective that revises the process of the theory of knowledge. It advances that 'conditions of collective life' produce new forms of knowledge which possibility does not depend on a theory of knowledge; consequently, they do not need to be first legitimised by an epistemology, because the relationship is in fact, the reverse.²³

Hindess points out that there are two consequences of the critique of the "inescapable circularity of epistemology". The first is that epistemological protocols of scientific practice and extra-scientific guarantees are no longer tenable; which translates to doubt over the knowledge that the sciences and other 'epistemologically approved disciplines' produce²⁴:

To the extent that the methodological doctrines are derived from epistemology, their rules and protocols have no rational or coherent foundation and methodology's claim to prescribe for scientific practice are vacuous.²⁵

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid, pp. 289-290. "(T)he development of theories of scientific knowledge takes place in the pre-occupation with empirical data and the fortunes of the former vary with those of the latter. The revolutions in methodology and epistemology are always sequels and repercussions of the revolutions in the immediate empirical procedures for getting knowledge...(There is therefore) the possibility of extending our field of vision by allowing newly discovered empirical evidence to throw new light upon our theoretical foundations."

²⁴ Hindess, op. cit.: 6.

²⁵ Ibid.

The second consequence is that it is no longer tenable to argue that knowledge involves a relation of 'abstraction' between knowledge on the one hand and the world on the other²⁶:

There can be no question of maintaining both a *distinction* and a *correlation* between real object located outside knowledge and an object of knowledge constituted within knowledge. It follows that the classical epistemological problems of knowledge concerning criteria for validity of knowledge, can no longer arise.²⁷

The foregoing, as Mannheim underscores, implicitly compels us to find an epistemological foundation that congeals with the variation in modes of thought. This also recommends a theoretical basis, which is sensitive to all the modes of thought that history has produced. The prevailing conflict amongst the 'various epistemologies' is resolved by "conceiving of each as the theoretical substructure appropriate merely to a given form of knowledge."²⁸ Therefore,

The next task of epistemologies is to overcome its partial nature by incorporating into itself the multiplicity of relationships between existence and validity (*Sein* and

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Mannheim, *op. cit.*: p. 292.

Geltung) as discovered by the sociology of knowledge operating in a region of being which is full of meaning and which affects the truth-value of the assertions. Thereby epistemology is not supplanted by the sociology of knowledge but a new kind of epistemology is called for which will reckon with the facts brought to light by the sociology of knowledge.²⁹

This critique of received notions of ontology, epistemology and methodology under-gird the following discussions of the theoretical and conceptual framework of this thesis.

3. *Interpretive Theory or Hermeneutics*

Positivist political science in its methodological monism argues that the same method that is used to study the natural world is appropriate for the study of social and political life³⁰. As Gibbons explains it:

Concepts must be redefined in order to eliminate the evaluative dimension and to ensure uniformity of measurement among researchers. In effect, the vocabulary of political inquiry must be made as transparent as possible in order to ensure that scientific explanation only represents the political world. From this perspective, the reconstruction of political concepts would

²⁹ Ibid: 294; cf., Steven Lukes, "On the Social Determination of Truth", in Michael T. Gibbons (ed.) *Interpreting Politics*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987, p. 65.

³⁰ See Michael T. Gibbons, ed. *Interpreting Politics*, Ibid, for further argument.

purge language not only of its evaluative dimension; it would purge it of ambiguity and imprecision as well.³¹

Interpretive social science – interpretive theory or hermeneutics – directly challenges this positivist approach to social and political inquiry.³² Many interpretive theorists including, among others, Schutz, in his *The Phenomenology of the Social World*, Husserl, Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Dilthey, Gadamer, Habermas and Winch, raise several critical problems with this mode of enquiry.

One is that the argument that this view demeans the relationship between social and political life and the language that is embedded in them.³³ Empiricist approach assumes that political life is not connected to the language that is used to appropriate it; therefore the reality of that political life exists independently of the language of the polity.³⁴ Contrary to this, it is argued that language is constituted and expressive of political life from which such language draws its essence and logic. As Charles Taylor captures it, political practices,

³² Ibid.

³² Ibid; Brian Fay, "An Alternative View: Interpretive Social Science", in Gibbons, ed., op. cit, pp. 82-83.

³³ Gibbons, Ibid, p1-2.

³⁴ Ibid. For a review of relevant perspectives on the central role of language in philosophical writings, see, Charles Taylor, "Language and Human Nature", pp. 101-132, in Gibbons, ed.

cannot be identified in abstraction from the language we use to describe them, or invoke them, or carry them out....The situation we have here is one in which the vocabulary of a given social dimension is grounded in the shape of social practices in this dimension; that is, the vocabulary wouldn't make sense, couldn't be applied seriously, where the range of practices couldn't exist without the prevalence of this or some related vocabulary....The language is constitutive of reality, is essential to being the kind of reality it is.³⁵

It must be conceded that empiricists sometimes agree that in explaining politics, the language of everyday life is the most useful, and that the process of operationalization of concept should be as sensitive as possible. They also often agree to the "undetermination of theory by evidence".³⁶ However, in practice, they have not demonstrated clearly the implications of this empirical explanation. But, interpretive theorists advance that, "the internal connections between language and political life and the undetermination of theory by evidence mean that the nature of explanation in the social sciences is radically different from what empiricists insist".³⁷ While empirical and quantitative methods are still regarded as useful, interpretive

³⁵ Charles Taylor, 'Interpretation and the Sciences of man', *Review of Metaphysics*, vol. XXV, no. 1, September, 1971, p. 24. Quoted in Gibbons, *Ibid*, p. 2.

³⁶ *Ibid*; notes, p. 28.

³⁷ *Ibid*.

theory insists that the explanation of social and political life "is at rock bottom an interpretation".³⁸ It is argued therefore that, explanation of political life "must delve deeper in an attempt to uncover those meanings and practices of language and political form that form the social matrix against which subjective intentions are formed."³⁹

What these 'basic inter-subjective and common meanings and practices' require surpasses the common rules of empirical method. It requires a depth-hermeneutics, because as practices and meanings informed by language, they are often inchoate, tacit and not clearly articulated; owing to this, there is the need to interpret those fundamental aspects of political and social life which ordinary empirical social science cannot explain.⁴⁰ Following from the view of man as a self-interpreting agent, such inquiry as this is value-laden.

From the viewpoint of analytical philosophy where it sprang, interpretive social science advances that much of the vocabulary of the discipline comprises of *action*

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid, p. 2.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p.2.

concepts whose logical implications are subsequently examined.⁴¹ Action concepts are geared towards describing purposive behaviour, which provokes questions on its point, aim, intent or the goal, desire or meaning. It is these that translate to the data, which the social scientist seeks to explain.⁴² Fay strengthens this argument by stating that the use of action concepts involves more than mere observation and requires *interpretation* on the part of the observer.⁴³

This task has been described historically as *Verstehen* explanation, a description, which has been mired in confusion and controversy.⁴⁴ It is sufficient here to state that such explanation has dwelt, at the level of individual actions, on showing the *rationale* for particular acts through contextualizing the acts in the larger whole in which they are enacted.⁴⁵ Thus, interpretive social science attempts to uncover the sense of given actions, practices and constitutive meanings by pointing to the intentions and desires of particular actors and the structures and contexts which inform not only the actions and practices, but also the understanding of these actions

⁴¹ Fay, *op. cit.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, p 83.

⁴³ *Ibid.* .

⁴⁴ As Fay, *Ibid.*, pp. 84-85 avers, dwelling on this confusion and controversy would necessitate delving into Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* and part of his *Zettel*, which is "much too difficult and complex to do here".

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

and practices by the social scientist. In this, the social scientist puts disparate experiences and practices into larger, more intelligible, contexts.⁴⁶

It becomes clear to people through this perspective, the nature and dynamics of what they and others do, by articulating the symbolic structures within which people in specific social contexts act, and by making clear the criteria of rationality which under-gird the chosen positions and their worldview.⁴⁷ As Habermas⁴⁸ argues, because the "object domain of social inquiry is symbolically pre-structured, antecedently-constituted by the interpretive activities of its members", the social scientist can access social objects only through interpretive understanding (*Sinnverstehen*) - whether such are social actions, texts, traditions or configured institutions, systems and structures.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 88. Thompson, 1990 (1994), op. cit., captures this process of "re-describing an act or experience" as "re-interpreting a pre-interpreted domain". For Habermas, "the social scientist encounters *symbolically pre-structured objects; they embody structures of the pre-theoretical knowledge with the help of which speaking and acting subjects produced these objects*". *The Theory of Communicative Action vol. 1 (Reason and Rationalization of Society)*, Thomas McCarthy, trans. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986 (1997), p. 107; Giddens describes this as "double hermeneutics", see, Habermas, p. 110. We shall elaborate on this later under the sub-section on depth-hermeneutics.

⁴⁷ Fay, op. cit, p. 89.

⁴⁸ Jurgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, vol. 1 (Reason and the Rationalization of Society)*, op. cit.: xvi.

Marxist theorists have illuminated the foregoing argument with their searing critique of the ontological backdrop of the relations of domination. Marxists criticize the bourgeois position of unmediated empirical world as a myth that invests a process of legitimation with the status of scientific validity.⁴⁹ Mediation as a real-historical process is regarded as part of the natural history of man.⁵⁰ Lucaks⁵¹ and Hegel⁵², against this backdrop, advance that "there is no such thing as unmediated knowledge. Unmediated knowledge is where we have no *consciousness* of the mediation; but even this is mediated." Hegel argues further that: "Thought, concrete thought, understanding is mediated knowledge".⁵³ However, unlike others, Marxists argue that mediation is borne by labour, which mediates the objective nature of the world.⁵⁴ Following Marx and Engels, Droge avers that consciousness is of similar origin and is therefore also mediated, given the fact that man works *with*

⁴⁹ G. Lukacs, (1967) in Frank Droge, "Social Knowledge and the Mediation of Knowledge in Bourgeois Society", *op. cit.*, p. 49; George Larrain, *Marxism and Ideology*, London: Macmillan, 1983.

⁵⁰ Droge, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

⁵¹ *Op. cit.*

⁵² Hegel, F. *Werke, Band16: Religionphilosophie*, 1971, p. 159.

⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 156.

⁵⁴ Droge, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

*consciousness as well as creating such consciousness.*⁵⁵ Labour mediates the level of knowledge and the development of consciousness.⁵⁶

This has important implications for group life in that original mediation which is borne through labour, conceived as it is at every stage in the historical trajectory, is believed to bring humanity into being, particularly on a collective basis. Knowledge is an object of communication - which in turn is one real aspect of real mediation – which has already been mediated⁵⁷. Dual mediation is intrinsic to communication:

The creative contribution of dual mediation in communication first brings this *an sich* of creation of the human race to the conscious *fur sich* of society as a whole, even if under capitalism it is necessary in order to maintain illusion of the independent naturalness of each living process that has been achieved. Both the formal shape and the substantive purpose of communication (are) always mediated by social labour.⁵⁸

Droge posits that labour and social relations determine each concrete form of mediation, which absorbs and overcomes older forms or traditional objectified knowledge such as classical literature, scientific knowledge of the past, myths,

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 50

⁵⁸ Ibid.

proverbs, etc. Furthermore, this process also becomes responsible for 'current' political consciousness and further addition to knowledge.⁵⁹

The overriding Marxist project – societal transformation expressed in historical/dialectical materialism – explains why the Marxian perspective on mediation of the world argues for some kind of interrelationship between knowledge and action. As Has Jurgen Helle argues, 'action mediates between the realm of things and the realm of knowledge'.⁶⁰ The two realms are united in action – 'productive activity' – in which knowledge is confirmed, maintained and renewed. Helle separates mediation into two sides of the same activity-process: material reality and the knowledge of this reality through labour.⁶¹

Helle's view, which is concerned with the constitution of knowledge in the social praxis of human beings, has been criticized for failing to analyse the 'domination-based institutionalisation of knowledge in the context of exploitative relations'.⁶² However, even with the phenomenological method employed by Helle, knowledge

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ H. J. Helle, *Soziologie und Symbol*, Cologne, 1969, in *Ibid*, p. 51.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² *Ibid*, pp. 51-51.

still represents a 'reflected totality', which 'acts reflectively to control praxis' and increases its control in proportion to further social accumulation of knowledge.⁶³ Such knowledge "is conceptually linked to a subject as bearer. This qualitatively exceeds the concept of role, even when the action component of its contradictory moments may be described as role-actions".⁶⁴

Consequently, a theory that merely builds of this will be purely phenomenistic with limited explanatory power given the fact that it fails to connect to the social totality which under-girds the segmentation of knowledge, norm and action.⁶⁵

Droge distills three social moments of knowledge from the unity that is present in the knowledge that mediates between individual and collective subjects - such as class, groups and organizations. These are *Factual knowledge*, *Value knowledge* and *Normative knowledge*. According to him, factual knowledge originates "in the sphere of primary experience of individual and collective labour"; value knowledge "makes it possible for individuals, groups and the entire society to make choices between alternative ends for their actions". It is here that "ideologies and definitions

⁶³ Ibid, p. 52.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

of reality are located, insofar as they represent the knowledge of society as a whole"; and normative knowledge, "decides the answer as to which of the alternative values contained within value knowledge is to be considered correct in a given situation and in a given society, and should be endorsed for action".⁶⁶

Factual and value knowledge form a dialectical unity through being absorbed by normative knowledge. This dialectic becomes historical and consequently flanks the domination-relationship in the realm of knowledge which had hitherto been objectively given through the relations of production under capitalism:

In this concept of normative knowledge, the positivist distinction between 'should' knowledge and 'is' knowledge, where only the latter is accessible to scientific inquiry, has been eliminated, while the interrelationship between science and social praxis have been preserved throughout as a result of its determining conditions. In this regard, of course, the substance of these interrelationships must be interpreted historically in terms of their variability within the given social domination-relationship.⁶⁷

In a class-based society therefore, mediating normative knowledge serves as a tool of domination, given the fact that it 'standardizes and naturalizes' a particular

⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 54.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

value knowledge so as to discriminate against and demean the 'remaining' value knowledge that is linked to the evolution of productive forces.⁶⁸

Social antagonism is therefore believed to produce hegemonic normative knowledge, which eventually hides its own hegemonic character and obstructs or limits the process of reflecting social totality.⁶⁹

However, as stated earlier, classical Marxism and some contemporary variants have come under attack from within and outside for insisting that mediation is borne exclusively by labour, which then mediates the objective nature of the world.⁷⁰ In spite of this valid criticism, Marxist theorists have provided such important critique of the thesis of the unmediated nature of the world. This critique has provided a rich discourse, which is captured by the idea of the sociology of knowledge which is considered next.

4. Ideology and the Sociology of Knowledge

⁶⁸ Ibid. Droge gives the example of communism, and even liberal-democratic knowledge that is "already regarded as illegitimate under certain conditions and is discredited by technocratic 'expertise'".

⁶⁹ See and cf. Ibid, p. 57.

⁷⁰ See, for instance, Klaus Kremer, "Fundamental Reflections on a Materialist Theory of the Mass Media", *Media, Culture and Society*, vol. 5, no. 1, January, 1983, pp. 37-47.

Since every assertion of a "fact" about the social world touches the interest of some individual or group, one cannot even call attention to the existence of certain "facts" without courting the objections of those whose very *raison d'être* in society rests upon a divergent interpretation of the "factual" situation.⁷¹
- Karl Mannheim.

Concern with the problem of objectivity in science is, to use the cliché, an age-long problem. Modern philosophy and science have been somewhat trapped in the concerted drive towards this kind of objectivity – which Mannheim⁷², describes as "the search for valid knowledge through the elimination of biased perception and faulty reasoning on the negative side and the formulation of a critically self-conscious point of view and the development of sound methods of observation and analysis on the positive side".⁷³

This concern with the basis and process of the search for valid knowledge has influenced the writings of Euro-American thinkers from Plato; Aristotle, Descartes and Bacon through Locke, Hume, Bentham, Mill, Adam Smith, Marx, Comte and Verba to

⁷¹ Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, Preface, with Louis Wirth, *op. cit.*, p. xv.

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. xv-xvi.

⁷³ See Mannheim, *Ibid.*, pp. xv-xxx, for the trajectory of this concern in intellectual history.

Popper, Kuhn, Mannheim, Max Scheler and the more contemporary thinkers and writers like Dilthey, Husserl, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida and the rest.⁷⁴

The epistemological dilemma, which these thinkers have grappled with and attempted to resolve, remains unresolved and has unfortunately and unnecessarily, but understandably, polarized social scientists. Still, the relationship between experience and reflection, fact and idea, belief and truth, the problem of the interconnection between being and knowing challenge thinkers of all persuasions.⁷⁵

The sociology of knowledge as articulated by Mannheim is a major intervention in this attempt to resolve the dilemma. First, Mannheim arrives at his conclusions through searching out the motives that underlie intellectual activity and how the thinker-in-society is implicated in his thought.⁷⁶ Related to that, he also reworks the data of intellectual history towards discovering the modes and methods of thought that dominated different social-historical epochs.⁷⁷ Furthermore, his analysis brings to

⁷⁴ For a review of the progression of the history of thought, see George Mckenzie's "The Age of Reason or the Age of Innocence", in G. Mckenzie, Jackie Powell and Robin Usher (eds.), *Understanding Social Research: Perspective on Methodology and Practice*, London and Washington D.C.: The Falmer Press, 1997, pp. 8-24; see also Mannheim, *op. cit.*, pp. xv-xxi.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. xxvii.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xxviii.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

light how the interests and purposes of particular groups are implicated in particular theories, doctrines and intellectual traditions.⁷⁸ Mannheim was challenged to offer his analysis given the fact that at the time he did, no one had offered an adequate theoretical explanation of the social organization of intellectual life.⁷⁹ He argues that,

In every society there are individuals whose special function is to accumulate, preserve, reformulate and disseminate the intellectual heritage of the group. The composition of this group, their social derivation and the method by which they are recruited, their organization, their class affiliation, the rewards and prestige they receive, their participation in other spheres of social life, constitute some of the more crucial questions to which the sociology of knowledge seeks answers.⁸⁰

Though even Mannheim fails to note this, the approach of the sociology of knowledge is both theoretical analysis - of social phenomenon - as much as a methodology.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid, xxix-xxx. This makes the sociology of knowledge indeed very relevant to our task in this study, given the different 'heritage of groups' which the different newspapers seek to protect and project. The question that the approach of the sociology of knowledge seeks to answer is therefore very important to understanding the different narratives.

⁸¹ Mannheim merely describes it as a "suitable method for the description and analysis of...thought". Op. cit., p. 2.

The principal thesis of this approach is that "there are modes of thought which cannot be adequately understood as long as their social origins are obscured".⁸² As a methodology for capturing, understanding⁸³ and explaining social phenomenon, the sociology of knowledge offers some important points:

- It comprehends thought concretely as a socio-historical phenomenon, which provides the context for individually differentiated thought. That is men (and women)-in-group think, based on and in response to the dynamics of their common environment.⁸⁴
- It links the "concretely existing modes of thought" with "the context of collective action" through which the world is discovered in an intellectual sense. Men-in-group do not exist merely as discrete individuals, neither does the world they encounter exist for them at the abstract level, rather

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ John B. Thompson cautions that the language of *explanandum* and *explanans* is inadequate for the methodology of the sociology of knowledge.

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 3.

they act and interact with and against diverse men-in-groups. While at that, they also think with and against one another.⁸⁵

Consequently, men-in-group strive to change the world or maintain it as a group or as groups. As Mannheim advances the “will to change or to maintain” this collective activity produces the “the guiding thread” which is responsible for their problems and forms of thought. Consequently, men see the world in accordance with the particular context of collective activity in which they partake.⁸⁶

This approach emphasizes the fact that knowledge is bound to group life; it is a cooperative project and process of group life, in which every member of the group makes his/her contribution to the common font of fate, activity and triumph over collective problems.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Ibid, pp. 3-4.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 29. Mannheim explicates this point more succinctly thus: “In principle it was politics which first discovered the sociological method in the study of intellectual phenomena. Basically (it) was in political struggles that for the first time men became aware of the unconscious collective motivations which had always guided the direction of thought. Political discussions is, from the very first, more than theoretical argumentation; it is the tearing off of disguises – the unmasking of those conscious motives which binds the groups existence to its cultural aspirations and its theoretical arguments. To the extent, however, that modern politics fought its battles with theoretical weapons, the process of unmasking penetrated to the social roots of theory”. Ibid, p. 39.

Central to the idea of collective-mode of thought – which also preceded the thesis of the sociology of knowledge – is ideology. The relationship between ideology and the sociology of knowledge and the reformulation of ideology, which constitutes the theoretical framework, will also be examined.

Ideology has been central to social and political thought in the last two centuries, even though its centrality has been largely captured in the negative.⁸⁸ It was originally introduced by Destutt de Tracy as a label for his proposed science of ideas – ‘which would be concerned with the systematic analysis of ideas and sensations, of their generation, combination and consequences’.⁸⁹ However, it became a linguistic weapon in political battles. Given this peculiar origin, the term was used in the social sciences in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries - and hopefully is being used in the twenty-first century – in different ways, even while retaining its central utility in political struggles.⁹⁰ Contemporary uses of the term – and the use of it here – carry the baggage of its peculiar rendering in different epochs and for different purposes.

⁸⁸ Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

Here, too many details about the development of the term from 1796 when de Tracy first used is avoided. Only significant changes in the meaning of the term over time are addressed.⁹¹

De Tracy's central argument was that things cannot be known in themselves, except through ideas that our sensations form; therefore, if we could analyse our ideas and sensations systematically, we will be able to come to a firm basis for all scientific knowledge and be well placed to draw inferences that have practical utility.⁹² He calls this process 'ideology', or literally, the 'science of ideas', which was to be 'positive, useful, and susceptible of rigorous exactitude'.⁹³ The Enlightenment faith which de Tracy inherited from Condillac and Bacon enables an understanding of human nature through ideology – 'the analysis of ideas and sensations' – and it also enable human beings to rearrange social and political order in accordance with their

⁹¹ For a more detailed account, see, Thompson, *Ibid*, pp: 29-60.

⁹² *Ibid*, p. 32.

⁹³ Destutt de Tracy, 'Memoire sur la faculte de penser', quoted in *Ibid*, p. 30. de Tracy defines the science of ideas thus: "The science may be called ideology, if one considers only the subject matter, general grammar, if one considers only the method, and logic, if one considers only the purpose. Whatever the name, it necessarily contains these three subdivisions since one cannot be treated adequately without also treating the two others. Ideology seems to be the generic term because the science of ideas subsumes both that of their expression and that of their derivation". Quoted in Mannheim, *op. cit.*, p. 71

needs and aspirations; thus placing moral and political sciences on a "strong foundation" that cures them of error and 'prejudice'.⁹⁴

This position became triumphant in late 17th century France. But the ascendancy of Napoleon Bonaparte produced mixed blessings. While he used some of the ideas of de Tracy and gave his (de Tracy's) followers some key political posts, he also detested the science of ideas and its adherents given their romance with republicanism. The fortune of these thinkers in the Napoleonic France was tied to the crisis of that period. As Napoleon suffered defeat after defeat, he accused the *ideologues* of undermining the French state, while he described ideology as "that shadowy metaphysics which subtly searches for first causes on which to base the legislation of peoples, rather than making use of laws known to the human heart and of the lessons of history".⁹⁵ Progressively, ideology became a curse-word imposed on all enemies of the crumbling regime. Even though de Tracy was restored to political influence after Napoleon's abdication in 1814, ideology had by then been compromised. It had entered fully into the political arena and thrown back at the

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

philosophers, referring to *ideas themselves* and no longer to the *science of idea*. The *ideas* to which it referred were assumed to be erroneous and impractical in political life.⁹⁶

From this period on, the meaning of ideology was split between the positive/neutral meaning and the negative/critical meaning.⁹⁷ Mannheim however notes a critical point that should not be overlooked. He argues that the condemnation of de Tracy and other philosophers as 'ideologists' by Napoleon has important theoretical implications in that the condemnation involved, at bottom, epistemological and ontological questions: "What is depreciated is the validity of the adversary's thought because it is regarded as unrealistic".⁹⁸ The question of what is real and how we know reality, from this period, never disappeared from the disputations from Napoleon to Marx and beyond.⁹⁹ Despite the fact that his writings on ideology are far from clear, Marx's writings constitute a crucial intervention in the history of the 'science of ideas'. He turned the concept into a critical tool and made it integral to a

⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 32.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Mannheim, op. cit., p. 72.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

new theoretical analysis of society.¹⁰⁰ Thompson has attempted to distil the different conceptions of ideology in Marx.

The first is the 'polemical conception' of ideology. Here ideology:

Is a theoretical doctrine and activity which erroneously regards ideas as autonomous and efficacious and which fails to grasp the real conditions and characteristics of social-historical life.¹⁰¹

Three assumptions under-gird this particular conception. The first assumption is that, "the forms of consciousness of human beings are determined by the material conditions of their life". The second assumption is that, "the development of theoretical doctrines and activities which regard ideas as autonomous and efficacious is made possible by the historically emergent division between material and mental labour." The third assumption is that, "the theoretical doctrines and activities which constitute ideology can be explained by means of, and should be replaced by, the scientific study of society and history".¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Thompson even goes ahead to argue that there are several distinct *conceptions* of ideology in Marx. Thompson, op. cit., p. 33.

¹⁰¹ This conception is indebted to Napoleon, as Thompson readily agrees. Ibid, pp. 34-35. It is contained in *The German Ideology* by Marx and Engels

¹⁰² Ibid, pp. 35-36.

The second conception of ideology in Marx is described as the 'epi-phenomenon conception',¹⁰³ which sees ideology – dependent as it is on and derived from economic conditions and class relations – as:

A system of ideas which expresses the interests of the dominant class but which represents class relations in an illusory form. Ideology expresses the interest of the dominant class in the sense that the ideas which compose ideology are ideas, which in any particular historical period, articulate the ambitions, concerns and wishful deliberations of the dominant social groups as they struggle to secure and maintain their position of domination.¹⁰⁴

Here also, Thompson distils three key assumptions. The first assumption of the epi-phenomenal conception of ideology is that, "in a given society we can distinguish between (i) the economic conditions of production, (ii) the legal and political superstructure and (iii) the ideological forms of consciousness". The economic conditions however constitute the most crucial agentic factor in social-historical change. The second assumption is that, "ideological forms of consciousness are not to be taken at their face value but are to be explained by reference to the economic

¹⁰³ While this conception is already evident in *The German Ideology*, it is elaborated in Marx's 1859 Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, *Ibid*, p. 37.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 37-38.

conditions of production". The third is that, "the development of modern capitalism creates the conditions for a clear understanding of social relations and for the elimination of the class antagonisms upon which ideology depends". The old ties of religion and ethnicity are believed to have broken down with the advent of capitalism while social relations, as dictated by the productive relations, became visible.¹⁰⁵

The last conception is described as the 'latent conception' of ideology¹⁰⁶, in which ideology is captured by Marx as:

A system of representation which serves to sustain existing relations of class domination by orienting individuals towards past rather than future, or towards images and ideals which conceal class relations and detract from the collective pursuit of social change.¹⁰⁷

However, Thompson argues that this latent conception does not fit neatly into Marx's theoretical framework on the idea of ideology as represented in the Preface of 1859 and the *Manifesto*. The phenomenon referred to here are not mere epi-

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, pp. 37-39.

¹⁰⁶ Thompson states that Marx does not use the term 'ideology' in the contexts from which this conception is derived. Instead, he uses such terms as 'illusions', 'fixed' ideas', 'spirits' and 'ghosts'. Ibid, p. 41.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

phenomena of economic and class relations, but symbolic constructions that are autonomous and efficacious to a certain degree¹⁰⁸. According to Thompson,

They constitute symbols and slogans, customs and traditions which move people or hold them back, propel them or constrain them, in such a way that we cannot think of these symbolic constructions as solely determined by, and fully explicable in terms of, the economic conditions of production.¹⁰⁹

This is a crucial point particularly where Thompson argues further that traditional symbols and values, rather than being swept away or being transcended by capitalist relations of production, are rather persisting and prevalent in modern society. As he states, "they live on, they modify and transform themselves, indeed they reappear as a potent reactionary¹¹⁰ force in the age of revolution. These symbolic constructions leverage or obstruct social change and social relations, particularly in society under-going social change".¹¹¹ A typical example of such is the African postcolonial state where the latent conception of ideology is

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Or, in fact, revolutionary force in a reactionary environment.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

demonstrated in practice given the resurgence and triumph of traditional values and symbols.¹¹²

On his part, Mannheim argues that there are two distinct and separable meanings of ideology. There is the *particular* and the *total* ideology.¹¹³

The particular conception of ideology is implied when the term denotes that we are sceptical of the ideas and representations advanced by our opponent. They are regarded as more or less conscious disguises of the real nature of a situation, the true recognition of which would not be in accord with his interests.... (While the total conception of ideology) refers to the ideology of an age or a concrete historico-social group, e.g. of a class, when we are concerned with the characteristics and composition of the total structure of the mind of this epoch or of this group.¹¹⁴

Both conceptions, for Mannheim, have some elements that run through them. One, they are both inclined to rely solely on what the opponent said in coming to a conclusion as to his real meaning or intention. Two, they both rely on the object – individual or group – in providing the backdrop or context – the social conditions or

¹¹² This has helped, in part, to give a lie to the modernization theory, among others.

¹¹³ Mannheim, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.

life-situations which produce the opinions, statements, proposition and system of ideas of the subject.¹¹⁵

There are nonetheless, some significant differences in the two conceptions. One, whereas the particular conception of ideology condemns only a part of the opponent's views as ideology, the total conception questions the total *Weltanschauung* (including the conceptual apparatus) of the opponent, capturing it as a function of the social-historical trappings of the group to which the opponent belongs.¹¹⁶

Two, the particular conception believes that common adversaries can share the same criteria of validity, even where one sees the other as lying, whereas the total conception does not query only the *thought-content* of an adversary who is lying, but the *thought-system* which produced his whole experience and interpretation.¹¹⁷

Three, the one operates with a 'psychology of interests', while the other operates with

¹¹⁵ If the interpretation of what is said relies exclusively on what is said, it is "immanent interpretation", whereas, if it transcends that to the life-situation of the subject, then it is "transcendental interpretation". *Ibid.*, p. 56, and footnote 1.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp 56-57.

¹¹⁷ Marx captures this in *The Poverty of Philosophy* (Chicago, 1910, p 119) by stating that, " the economic categories are only the theoretical expressions, the abstractions of the social relations of production.... The same men who established social relations conformably with their material productivity, produce also the principles, the ideas, the categories conformably with the social relations". *Ibid.*, p. 57.

a 'more formal functional analysis', so much so that while the particular conception assumes that a particular interest is the cause of a given lie or deception, the total conception links the lie or deception with the social situation and perspective of a given individual.¹¹⁸

Marxism was responsible for merging the particular and the total conception of ideology, and giving due emphasis, like never before, to the role of class in thought. Given its origin in Hegelism, Marxist thought transcended the mere psychological level of analysis to a more comprehensive and philosophical level of analysis.¹¹⁹

From then onwards, ideology became a dominant concept, not only in Marxism, but generally in the social sciences.¹²⁰ After Marx, however, the concept – which had been taken as negative and oppositional – was *neutralized*. The neutralization, particularly within Marxism, was not the result of an explicit drive towards such, but was produced by an implicit generalization of what has been described as the epiphenomenal conception of ideology.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Ibid, pp. 55-58.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p. 74.

¹²⁰ Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

¹²¹ Ibid, p. 45.

Mannheim's work represented the 'first systematic attempt' to conceptualise and elaborate a neutral conception of ideology outside of Marxism.¹²² He was familiar with Lukacs's writings on ideology in which he preserves the negative sense of ideology conveyed by Marx's writings.¹²³ Both Lukacs and Mannheim emphasize that "all thought is situated within history and is part of the social-historical process which it seeks, in turn, to comprehend".¹²⁴ But unlike Lukacs, Mannheim did not make the concerns of Marxism his departure point. His task was to develop and 'elaborate an interpretive method for studying socially-situated thought'. Mannheim believed that if he brought the 'social and activist roots of thinking' to the attention of scholars, the methodological approach he employed would produce a new type of objectivity in the social sciences that would confront the possibility of scientific guidance of political life.¹²⁵

However, while Mannheim recognizes Marx's genius in making a transition from the particular to the total conception of ideology, he notes a limitation in Marx's

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 47.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

analysis of the total conception. Mannheim consequently draws a distinction between Marx's *special formulation* of the total conception, and his own *general formulation* of the same conception.¹²⁶ For Mannheim, it is hardly possible to avoid this 'final transition'¹²⁷ to the general formulation of the total conception. With this transition, he argues, the simple theory of ideology translates into the *sociology of knowledge*. What was once the intellectual weapon of the party therefore becomes a method of research in the social sciences. The process is described as follows: A social group discovers the "situational determination" (*Seinsgebundenheit*) of the ideas of its opponent; this is enlarged as a principle to capture the emergence of the thought of every group from the life situation of the group. The analysis, without regard to party biases, of all factors present in actually existing social situations, then becomes the task of "sociological history of thought".¹²⁸

Mannheim posits that the *relationism* and not *relativism*, which the sociology of knowledge raises, is not at variance with epistemology *per se*, but it contests "certain historically transitory type of epistemology which is in conflict with the type of thought

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ Mannheim, *op. cit.*, pp. 77-78.

oriented to the social situation".¹²⁹ He explains that this problem – described as “the epistemological problems of radical historicism”¹³⁰ – is resolved by the relational character of knowledge. Thus, “a modern theory of knowledge which takes account of the relational as distinct from the merely relative character of all historical knowledge must start with the assumption that these are spheres of thought in which it is possible to conceive of absolute truth existing independently of the values and position of the subject and unrelated to the social context.”¹³¹

Consequently, *knowledge* conditioned by social-historical circumstances is not vitiated by this fact, rather it is the condition on which valid knowledge in the sphere is based.¹³² Thompson argues that at the epistemological level, the sociology of knowledge must be constructed as a “self-reflexive historicism, rather than constructed as a positive science in the mould of the Enlightenment”.¹³³

Thompson further points out that Mannheim's general formulation of the total conception of ideology is a ‘restricted conception’, which ultimately regards ideology

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 79.

¹³⁰ Thompson, *op. cit*, p. 49.

¹³¹ Mannheim, *op. cit*, p. 79.

¹³² Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

¹³³ *Ibid*, p. 51.

as “ideas, which are discordant with reality and unrealisable in practice”.¹³⁴ More concretely, Thompson advances that Mannheim’s restricted conception thus preserves the negative slant in the conception of ideology, and more importantly, he (Mannheim) ignores or neglects the phenomenon of domination, which is present in Marx’s conceptualisation of ideology. In Marx, ideas that consist ideology are interwoven with – “express, misrepresent, sustain” – relations of class domination.¹³⁵

Thompson recovers the phenomenon of domination lost in Mannheim’s elaboration of Marx’s analysis. He locates the possibility of this recovery in Marx’s latent conception of ideology,¹³⁶ which is however drained of all its negative features except the criterion of sustaining the relations of domination.¹³⁷

Against this backdrop, Thompson conceives of ideology as being primarily concerned with how symbolic forms conflates and conflicts with relations of power. That is ways in which meaning is mobilised in the social world to serve the interest of individuals and groups who have power. Sharply: the study of ideology is the study of

¹³⁴ Ibid, p. 50.

¹³⁵ Ibid, p. 52.

¹³⁶ Ibid: 56.

¹³⁷ Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

ways in which meaning serves to establish and sustain relations of domination".¹³⁸

Argues Thompson:

Ideological phenomena are meaningful symbolic phenomena *insofar as* they serve, in particular circumstances, to maintain relations of domination. *Insofar as*: it is crucial to stress that symbolic phenomena, or certain symbolic phenomena, are not ideological as such, but are ideological only *insofar as* they serve, in particular circumstances, to maintain relations of domination... We can grasp symbolic phenomena as ideological, hence we can analyse ideology, only by situating symbolic phenomena in the socio-historical context within which these phenomena may, or may not, serve to establish and sustain relations of domination.¹³⁹

Thompson's refreshing perspective can be described as the *symbolic conception of ideology*. The usefulness of this conception for empirical study is a very important feature of the conception in that it emphasizes the need to locate our understanding and analysis of ideology at the vortex of the interface of meaning and power and in particular social contexts. His conception overcomes the *a priori* assumption of the Marxian conceptions and that of Mannheim, by insisting that what

¹³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 56.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*.

ideology *does* – whether it services, establishes and sustains relations of domination – can only be discovered in specific conjectures in the social history of a people.

Unlike Marx, Thompson posits that it is not essential for ideology to be false, deceitful or to mask, conceal or obstruct social relations. These are only contingent possibilities. When we come to realise this and accept that ideology is not represented only in error and illusion, we will relieve ideology of some of the epistemological dilemmas in which it had been trapped since Napoleon.¹⁴⁰

What is crucial is the way symbolic forms – ideological symbolic forms – serve in particular contexts to establish and sustain power. This symbolic conception is more useful than Marx's conception because it is not trapped in class relations. While Marx considers class relations (of domination) as the major and most crucial form of domination and subordination, the symbolic conception points to several other types of domination, each which may be singly and severally more salient in different context in society. These include relations of sexual domination, relations of ethnic

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

domination, relations of regional domination, and so on.¹⁴¹ For the purpose here, this conception is very useful in that it makes it possible to analyse relations of ethnic domination and the attendant *conflictual* politics registered and played out at the symbolic level.¹⁴²

Another strength of this conception is that it emphasizes, unlike Marx's, how symbolic forms and the meaning they mobilise, constitute *social reality* thereby creating and sustaining relations of domination:¹⁴³

Symbolic forms are not merely representations which serve to articulate or obscure social relations or interests which are constituted fundamentally and essentially at a pre-symbolic level: rather, symbolic forms are continuously and creatively implicated in the constitution of social relations as such.¹⁴⁴

Yet another strength of this conception is that, in what Thompson calls the "era of mass communication" - or what is called here, cyber- or techno-age in which the new technologies of information have re-defined and are redefining the

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

means and volume of information - it is sensitive to the deluge of symbolic forms as they define and largely determine contemporary public life.

In this reformulation of the concept of ideology, there are three aspects that need to be elaborated. These are the notion of meaning, the concept of domination and the ways in which meaning intersect with relations of domination. The first will be dealt with in the concluding section of this chapter. In this section the second is briefly described and then the third is listed and described. Thompson's explication of the concept of domination, an explication that is integral to the reformulation of ideology is adopted here. 'Domination' occurs, Thompson advances, when,

established relation of power are 'systematically asymmetrical', that is, when particular agents or groups of agents are endowed with power in a durable way which excludes, and to some significant degree remains inaccessible to, other agents or groups of agents, irrespective of the basis upon which such exclusion is carried out.¹⁴⁵

Regarding how meaning intersects with power, Thompson draws up a typology (or taxonomy) which he calls general *modes of operation* of ideology,

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 59.

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¹⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 59.

which, while it does not exhaust all the modes there are, are yet as comprehensive as to be adequate for the task here.¹⁴⁶ The general modes then have some typical *strategies of symbolic construction* native – but not exclusively so – to them.

FIGURE 1

MODES OF OPERATION OF IDEOLOGY*

General Modes	Some Typical Strategies of Symbolic Construction
Legitimation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rationalization ▪ Universalization ▪ Narrativization
Dissimulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Displacement ▪ Euphemization ▪ Trope (e.g. Synecdoche, metonymy, metaphor)
Unification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Standardization ▪ Symbolization of Unity
Fragmentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Differentiation ▪ Expurgation of the Other
Reification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Naturalization ▪ Eternalization ▪ Normalization/Passivization

- From Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

¹⁴⁶ Thompson, *Ibid*, p. 60, states that his task is not “to provide a comprehensive account” of the ways in which meaning intersect with relations of domination, but to stake out a rich field of analysis.

There are three qualifications that Thompson emphasizes concerning the modes of operation of ideology: These are not the only ways in which ideology operates and they do not always operate independent of one another; two, the strategies identified with certain modes of operation of ideology are not *unique* to these modes, they are only *typical* of them; third, the typical strategies of symbolic construction are not *intrinsically* ideological, their ideological nature depends on whether they serve in particular contexts to sustain or subvert, to establish or undermine relations of domination.¹⁴⁷

Legitimation is the first mode. Following Max Weber, Thompson notes that relations of domination may be established or sustained, through its representation as legitimate; it may be regarded as a claim to legitimacy on three grounds, as distilled by Weber: "rational grounds (appealing to the legality of enacted rules), traditional grounds (appealing to the sanctity of immemorial traditions) and

¹⁴⁷ Thompson, *Ibid*, p. 61. Thompson warns that "examining typical strategies of symbolic construction can alert us to some of the ways in which meaning may be mobilized in the social world, can circumscribe a range of possibilities for the operation of ideology, but it cannot take the place of a careful analysis of the ways in which symbolic forms intersect with relations of domination in particular, concrete circumstances" as we essay to do in the following empirical chapters.

charismatic grounds (appealing to the exceptional character of an individual person who exercises authority)".¹⁴⁸

Such claims as these may be expressed in symbolic forms through the typical strategies of:

- i. *Rationalization*: Whereby the producer of a symbolic form constructs a chain of reasoning which seeks to defend or justify a set of social relations or institutions, and thereby to persuade an audience that it is worthy of support.¹⁴⁹
- ii. *Universalization*: (whereby) institutional arrangements which serve the interests of some individuals are represented as serving the interests of all, and these arrangements are regarded as being open in principle to anyone who has the ability and inclination to succeed within them.¹⁵⁰
- iii. *Naturalization*: (whereby) claims are embedded in stories which record the past and treat the present as part of a timeless and cherished tradition. Indeed traditions are sometimes *invented*¹⁵¹ in order to create a sense of belonging to a community and to a history which transcends the experience of conflict, difference and division. Stories are told...which serve to justify the exercise of power by those who possess it and which serve to reconcile others to the fact that they do not.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ This touches on a major debate in the literature of nation-formation, particularly the opposing arguments between those who see the nation strictly as an "invention" and those who see the nation as a "given". There are also "centrists", like Anthony Smith, who argue that the nation is both a given and sometime an invention. For perspectives on this debate, see the section on nations.

¹⁵² Thompson, *op. cit.*

Ideology can also manifest through *dissimulation*, which involves the concealment, denial or obscuring or the deflection of attention away from or glossing over existing relations of domination and their processes.¹⁵³

The strategies of dissimulation of the relations of domination include *displacement*, which involves using *one object or individual as a reference for another, consequently investing the object or individual with the positive or negative attributes of the referent*.¹⁵⁴ The second strategy is that of *euphemisation* which involves the *description and re-description of actions, institutions, attitudes, behavioural patterns or social institutions in ways that draws positive evaluation*,¹⁵⁵ and simultaneously erase the negative evaluation, which they would otherwise attract without the symbolic construction. The third cluster of strategies under dissimulation is called *trope*, which includes *synecdoche, metonymy and metaphor*. The first is the systematic conflation of part for whole. By conflating – confusing or inverting the relations of power between collectivities and their parts and between particular

¹⁵³ Ibid, p. 62.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. For example, the killing of several thousands of African and the destruction of their age-long institutions by the invading colonial powers was described as the “passification of Africa”.

groups and the broader social and political formations, dissimulation of social relations may take place.¹⁵⁶ Metonymy involves implicit reference without explicit statement or the positive or negative evaluation of something by association with something else.¹⁵⁷ Metaphor dissimulates relations of domination by:

Representing them, or the individuals and groups embedded in them, as endowed with characteristics which they do not literally possess, thereby accentuating certain features at the expense of others and charging them with positive or negative sense.¹⁵⁸

The third mode is *unification*. Here power may be established, nourished and sustained by the construction, symbolically, of a kind of unity in which individuals are bound to a collective identity in disregard of fundamental differences and divisions that separates them.¹⁵⁹ There are basically two strategies of unification: *standardization* and *symbolization of unity*. Standardization involves the construction of standard symbolic forms, which is subsequently promoted as the ideal, shared and

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 63. An example of this in Nigeria is when Hausa-Fulani and Northerner are used interchangeably to represent the part as the whole.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 64.

acceptable basis of symbolic exchange.¹⁶⁰ Symbolization of unity involves "the construction of symbols of unity, of collective identity and identification, which are diffused throughout the group or plurality of groups".¹⁶¹ Through this strategy collective identity is "created and continuously reaffirmed".

Fragmentation is the fourth mode. Fragmentation may be enacted where relations of domination is maintained:

Not by unifying individuals in a collectivity, but by fragmenting those individuals and groups that might be capable of mounting an affective challenge to dominant groups, or by orientating forces of potential opposition towards a target which is projected as evil, harmful or threatening.¹⁶²

The strategies here include *differentiation*, which is:

Emphasizing the distinctions, differences and divisions between individuals and groups, the characteristic that *disunite* them and prevent them from constituting an effective challenge to existing relations or an effective participant in the exercise of power.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid, p. 65.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

The next strategy is *expurgation of the other* in which an enemy is constructed or identified, within or without, and portrayed as so evil, harmful or threatening as to demand collective resistance or expurgation.¹⁶⁴ This strategy is akin to the mode of unification, since the attack on the constructed enemy or defence against the enemy's attack calls for unity.

The last mode of operation of ideology is *reification*:

Relations of domination may be established and sustained by representing a transitory, historical state of affairs as if it were permanent, natural or out of time. Processes are portrayed as things or as events of a quasi-natural kind, in such a way that their social and historical character is eclipsed. (It) thus involves the elimination or obfuscation of the social and historical character of social-historical phenomena.¹⁶⁵

The strategies of reification include *naturalization, eternalization and normalization/passivization*. Naturalization involves symbolically presenting or representing social and historical creation as natural and inevitable.¹⁶⁶ Eternalization involves abstracting social-historical phenomenon from their historical background,

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 66.

thus portraying them as “permanent, unchanging and ever-recurring” – investing them with “rigidity which cannot be easily disrupted” because the contingent has been eternalised.¹⁶⁷ Normalization is a syntactic device that turns “sentences or parts of sentences, description of actions and the participants involved in them” into nouns and therefore de-links the actor from the action.¹⁶⁸ Related to this is the device of passivization, which involves using verbs in passive forms:¹⁶⁹

Normalization and passivization focus the attention of the hearer or reader on certain themes at the expense of the others. They delete actors and agency and they tend to represent processes as things or events which take place in the absence of a subject who produces them. They also tend to elide references to specific spatial and temporal contexts by eliminating verbal constructions or converting them into continuous sense.¹⁷⁰

These five modes and thirteen strategies are not exhaustive, as earlier stated, but they constitute identifiable ways in which meaning intersects with power in

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. Thompson's example is the turning of a sentence like “the Prime Minister has decided to ban imports” to “banning of imports”.

¹⁶⁹ Like stating that “the suspect is being investigated”, rather than “the police officers are investigating the suspect”.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

political and social life, particularly where, as we are concerned in this study, nations clash and contend.

However, there are some crucial points that must be made regarding the criticisms that this kind of methodology raises. Where it is true that Thompson fails to constantly emphasize that both the thesis and the anti-thesis of relations of domination are simultaneously ongoing in symbolic construction without producing the terminal synthesis, he however notes that the existence of ideology invites its opposite. What is important to note here, for Thompson, is that those who contest or disclaim ideological constructions are not therefore necessarily engaging in a 'new ideology' but rather "in an insipient version of a form of critique which may be carried out in a more systematic way within the framework of a comprehensive interpretive methodology".¹⁷¹

The point of departure here is that, as it is already evident in the typology, the study of ideology should be defined following, yet transcending Thompson, as *the study of ways in which meaning serves to establish or invalidate, sustain or*

¹⁷¹ Ibid, p. 68.

demobilize, nourish or subvert relations of domination. Sharply, ideology, in this conception, is meaning in the service and disservice of power.

Another crucial point is to emphasize that the methodology adopted here does not admit of "incontestable demonstration" which is the pre-occupation of positivist science. In seeking to grasp the, complex interplay of meaning and power, "we are in the realm of shifting sense and relative inequalities, of ambiguity and word-play, of different degrees of opportunity and accessibility, of deception and self-deception. Of the concealment of social relations and the concealment of the very process of concealment".¹⁷²

What is next is to link this conception of ideology with the general methodological and theoretical framework for the analysis of symbolic forms, which is called depth-hermeneutics.

¹⁷² Ibid, p. 71.

5. *Depth-Hermeneutics*

Hermeneutics is an ancient tradition that arose two millennia ago in classical Greece.¹⁷³ Since then the concept has passed through different stages of evolution. Nineteenth and twentieth-century hermeneutical philosophers including Dilthey, Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricoeur have reformulated hermeneutics in ways that are of particular relevance to this work, in terms of their emphasis on the processes of understanding and interpretation.¹⁷⁴ These philosophers remind us that basically, the "study of symbolic forms is fundamentally and inescapably a matter of understanding and interpretation".¹⁷⁵

The arguments advanced by these and other philosophers whose departure point is hermeneutical run against the dominant legacy of nineteenth century positivism in the social sciences concerning the analysis of symbolic forms.¹⁷⁶ This tradition encourages the treatment of social phenomenon in general and symbolic forms in particular as natural objects, which can be analysed formally, statistically

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 274.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

and objectively. Where this is not totally misguided – as some radical writers of the interpretative school preach – it is argued that such analysis can at best be only seriously limited, 'partial' analysis of social phenomenon in general and symbolic forms in particular.¹⁷⁷ Hermeneutics draw our attention to the fact that many social phenomena are symbolic forms which are meaningful constructs, whose understanding and interpretation transcends the dictates of formal objective methods.¹⁷⁸ Hermeneutics tradition points to the fact that, in social inquiry, the way issues are related and combined are significantly different from that of the natural sciences, given the fact that " *the objects of our investigation is already a pre-interpreted domain.*" The social-historical world is thus, not just an object domain which exists to be observed, but it is also a *subject domain*. This *subject domain* is made up, in part, of subjects who "are constantly involved in understanding themselves and others, and interpreting the actions, utterances and events which take place around them."¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ Ibid

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 275

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

Thompson, in his path-breaking work, *Ideology and Modern Culture*, points out that the analysis of ways in which symbolic forms intersect with power can best be conceptualised in terms of 'depth-hermeneutics'. This framework emphasizes the fact that the object of analysis in the symbolic terrain demands interpretation.¹⁸⁰ Also, symbolic forms are embedded in social and historical contexts of different kinds, which, structure them in different ways.¹⁸¹ To come to terms with this therefore, other methods of analysis have to be employed. However, depth hermeneutics allows us to tie these methods together, while also providing a theoretical shell for them.¹⁸²

The works of Paul Ricoeur¹⁸³ and Jurgen Habermas, particularly the former, provide illuminating perspectives on depth-hermeneutics. Ricoeur has built upon the perspective of Heidegger and Gadamer in terms of philosophic reflection on being

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 272.

¹⁸¹ Cf. Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ricoeur's relevant works include, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, ed. And trans. John B. Thompson, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981; *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*, ed. Don Ihde, Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1974; *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*, Fort Worth: The Texas Christian University Press, 1976; *Time and Narrative* (Vol. 1) trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1984.

and understanding, yet he retains their concerns with methodology.¹⁸⁴ As Thompson elaborates it:

The idea underlying depth hermeneutics is that, in social inquiry as in other domains, the process of interpretation can be, and indeed demand to be, mediated by a range of explanatory or 'objectifying' methods. When dealing with a domain which is constituted as much by force as by meaning, or when analysing an artefact which displays a distinctive pattern through which something is said, it is both possible and desirable to mediate the process of interpretation by employing explanatory or objectifying techniques.¹⁸⁵

Consequently, it must be noted that 'explanation' and 'understanding' are not mutually exclusive or radically antithetical, but 'complementary moments in a comprehensive interpretative theory'.¹⁸⁶

Depth hermeneutics moves beyond taking account of the ways in which symbolic forms are structured, to accounting for the social-historical contexts in which they are embedded. This comprises of three phases or procedures.¹⁸⁷ As

¹⁸⁴ Thompson, *op. cit.*

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 278.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 280.

explicated by Thompson, (see Figure ii) these are the phases of *social-historical analysis, formal or discursive analysis, and interpretation/re-interpretation*.¹⁸⁸

The stage of social-historical analysis is concerned with "reconstructing the social and historical conditions of the production, circulation and reception of symbolic forms". There are various ways in which these may be examined.¹⁸⁹

- i. *Spatio-temporal settings* – the specific locales in which symbolic forms are produced and received.
- ii. *Fields of interaction* – space of positions and 'set of trajectories' which are responsible for the ways in which individuals relate and the advantages they can access.
- iii. *Social institutions* – 'relatively stable clusters of rules and resources, together with the social relations' which they establish.
- iv. *Social structure* – this is different from social institutions because of its focus on asymmetries. Differentials and divisions which are collective and desirable 'in terms of the distribution, and access to, resources, power, opportunities and life chances'.
- v. *Technical media of transmission* – this are the 'material substratum' through which symbolic forms are produced and transmitted.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 281.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 282.

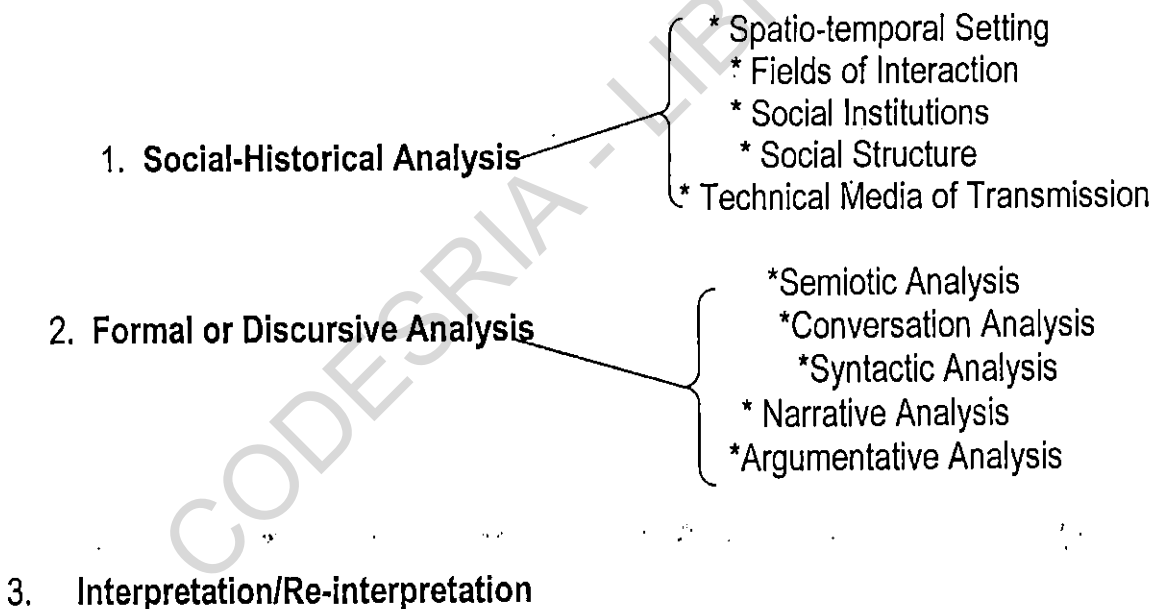
¹⁹⁰ Ibid, pp. 281-284.

Given the fact that the meaningful objects and expressions circulating in the social fields are also 'complex symbolic constructions which display an articulated structure', they call for *formal or discursive analysis*:¹⁹¹

It establishes the basis for a type of analysis which is concerned primarily with the internal organization of symbolic forms, with their structural features, patterns and relations.¹⁹²

Figure II

Methodological Framework of Depth Hermeneutics



¹⁹¹ Ibid, p. 281

¹⁹² Ibid, p. 284

However, since we are concerned strictly with the *narrative structure* of symbolic forms, we will discuss only this form of analysis briefly as we will dwell more on it in another section of this chapter. This kind of analysis is well established in the field of literary and textual analysis, but scant in the analysis of political discourse.¹⁹³ The study of narrative structure of symbolic forms seeks to "identify the specific narrative devices which operate within a particular narrative, and to elucidate their role in the telling of the story".¹⁹⁴

The final stage of the depth-hermeneutic approach is that of interpretation/re-interpretation which transcends the *analysis* of the second stage. While the stage of analysis breaks down, divides up, deconstructs, and unveils the patterns and devices constituted by and operating within symbolic, discursive forms, interpretation builds on this as well as on the results of social-historical analysis.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 288.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

What is most important here is that this stage proceeds by *synthesis*, that is the 'creative construction of possible meaning'.¹⁹⁶ It therefore delves into the problem of meaning of the symbolic constructs located as they are within particular practices and social contexts:

Symbolic forms represent something, they say something, and it is this transcending character, which must be grasped by the process of interpretation... (It is) simultaneously a process of *re-interpretation* (because) ... the symbolic forms which are the objects of interpretation are already interpreted by subjects who make up the social-historical world.¹⁹⁷

The process of re-interpretation and pre-interpretation of the object domain is a risky, conflict-laden terrain.¹⁹⁸

Against the backdrop of the reformulation of the study of ideology as ways in which meaning serves to establish or counteract the relations of domination, through the different phases of the depth-hermeneutical approach, the interpretation of

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 280.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, p.290.

ideology gets a critical inflection which helps in disclosing how meaning works in the service or disservice of power.¹⁹⁹

Interpretation of ideology therefore has a double task of not only creatively explicating meaning, but also a synthetic demonstration of how such explicated meaning serves in particular contexts to establish or counteract, sustain or demobilize relations of domination.²⁰⁰

What is left to be said is that while Thompson brilliantly highlights the methodological usefulness of depth-hermeneutics, he neglects the philosophical and theoretical utility of the concept rooted in the debates over the nature and structure of knowledge. This loss of the theoretical insight can be regained by going back to Heidegger and Gadamer. However, in proposing a return to Heidegger and Gadamer we need not embrace their attempt to turn hermeneutics away from deep concern with 'method'. It is their concern with providing a philosophical/theoretical reflection

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ cf. Ibid, p. 292.

on the 'character of being and the constitutive role of understanding' that is very useful here.²⁰¹

Ricoeur and Habermas, building on Heidegger and Gadamer, are also concerned with the theoretical aspect of depth-hermeneutics,²⁰² examining this method "for deciphering indirect meaning, (and) reflective practice of unmasking hidden meanings beneath apparent ones."²⁰³ This theoretical concern has been primarily based on the problems of meaning and understanding in the context of the social-historical world and 'acting individuals'. These writers have, in different ways, emphasized the constitution of the social-historical world as a *field of meaning* and *field of force* in which *meanings* clash and contend for power.²⁰⁴ As Crotty argues,

Because in the writing of the text so much is simply taken for granted, skilled hermeneutic inquiry has the potential to uncover meanings and intentions that are, in this sense, hidden in the text.²⁰⁵

²⁰¹ Ibid, pp. 293-294.

²⁰² Ibid, p. 277.

²⁰³ Crotty, Michael, *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process*, London: Sage Publications, 1998: 88.

²⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 278.

²⁰⁵ Crotty, op. cit.: 91.

Before tying these ontological, epistemological, theoretical and methodological insights together, a review and reflection on six concepts will be undertaken: narratives, nation, myth, discourse, meaning and power, with a view to theorizing the press in the post-colony.

6. *Narratology and Narrative Theory*

In the tale, in the telling, we are all one blood

- Ursula Le Guin

*There is always the threat that history will enslave us;
but if anything, we increase the threat when we attempt
to deny the role of narratives in politics*

- Joshua F. Dienstag

Narrative, as a multi-faceted object of inquiry, has, in the past few decades, become a major focus of research in the humanistic and social-scientific discipline.²⁰⁶ From Aristotle, through the relatively early literary-critical writers on narratives, to the works following the traditions of structuralist narratology and sociolinguistics and then

²⁰⁶ David Herman, "Narratology and Narrative Theory", (Course description) <http://www4.ncsu.edu/~dherman>, Fall, 1999 p. 1; L. Lucaites and C.M. Condit, "Reconstructing Narrative Theory", *op. cit.*, p. 90.

on to contemporary developments in narrative theory,²⁰⁷ stories have come to be recognised as a 'basic human strategy for coming to terms with time, process and change'²⁰⁸

Tzvetan Todorov was the first to use the term 'narratology' to capture the corpus of ideas which Propp had established using Russian fairy-tales as his materials.²⁰⁹ Others, following Propp, applied the method to similar objects. Dundes's work on folk tales is important in this trajectory, particularly at the theoretical level because he was the first to point to the similarities between the problems of narratives and those of descriptive linguistics, consequently introducing, in a systematic manner, linguistic concepts into the field of narrative analysis.²¹⁰

The Paris School of Semiotics, whose writers analysed texts, which were more complex than folk-tale, including novels and biblical narratives, effected a

²⁰⁷ Herman, *op. cit.*; cf. Joseph Foa Dienstag, who argues that in the revival of interest in narratives, writers have almost obsessively returned to Aristotle's account in the *Poetics*. *Dancing in Chains: Narrative and Memory in Political Theory*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1997, p. 18.

²⁰⁸ Herman, *op. cit.*

²⁰⁹ Thomas G. Pavel, "Some Remarks on Narrative Grammars", *POETICS* 8, 1973, pp. 5.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

significant extension of this. They helped in focussing on the necessity of explaining phenomena that characterize the written word.²¹¹

Bremond introduced the notion of 'narrative possibility' and 'choice', Kristeva that of phenomenological 'subject', and Barthes constructed a 'complex network of notions aimed at distinguishing phenomena which are specifically literary'.²¹²

As Gerald Prince²¹³ explains it, narratology:

(T)ries to account explicitly and systematically for the form and functioning of narrative or for what can loosely be termed narrative competence. It examines what all and only narratives have in common and what enables them to be different from one another and it attempts to explain how everybody – every human being – produces and understands them.... What is most specific to narrative, what is most narrative in it....

Narratives of the world are limitless;²¹⁴ narratives being a 'prodigious variety' of genres, which in turn have several substances. In the infinity of its forms, narrative is enacted in every age, every place, every society, from creation up to the present

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid, p. 6.

²¹³ Gerald Prince, "Narrative Pragmatics, Message, and Point", in *POETICS*, vol. 12, no. 6, December, 1983, p. 527.

²¹⁴ Barthes, "Introduction to the Structuralist Analysis of Narratives", *op. cit.*, p. 165.

times.²¹⁵ Every class, every human group, every people, have their narratives; "it is simply there, like life itself".²¹⁶

The infinity and universality of narratives however do not make it insignificant, rather these facts have conditioned the legitimacy of the interest in the study of narrative from Aristotle on.²¹⁷ Plato's remark on story-telling has consequently become a part of the conventional wisdom in social-scientific research.²¹⁸ Plato argued that those who tell stories also rule the society.²¹⁹

In the re-emergence of story-telling as an important metaphor of political communication research, Walter R. Fisher's formulation of "narrative paradigm" is considered as a touchstone for the re-examination of narrative.²²⁰ Fisher's narrative paradigm:

(S)ee people as story-tellers – authors and co-authors who creatively read and evaluate the texts of life and literature. It envisions existing institutions as providing "plots" that are always in the process of re-creation

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ "Homo Narrans: Story-Telling in Mass Culture and Everyday Life" (Editorial) Special Edition on Homo Narrans, *Journal of Communication*, Autumn, vol. 35, no. 4, 1985, p. 73.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid.

rather than as scripts, it stresses that people are full participants in the making of messages, whether they are agents (authors) or audience members (co-authors).²²¹

The resurgence of interest in narratology, narrative theory and narrative is largely occasioned by the general belief that 'narratives represent a universal medium of consciousness', which Hayden White describes as 'metacode', allowing for the trans-cultural transmission of "messages about shared reality".²²² Lucaites and Condit note that in spite of the pervasive influence of narrative in human understanding, the dominant theoretical explanations of narrative in the decades of the 1960s, 70s and 80s was almost exclusively Aristotlean in the privileging of "poetic" models with the attendant formalistic criteria of evaluation.²²³

While a focus on the poetic models of narration were not to be abandoned, exclusive focus on them promoted a limited and distorted view of the scope and function of narrative metacode.²²⁴ While ignoring the 'dialectical' and 'rhetorical'

²²¹ Ibid, p. 86.

²²² Lucaites and Condit, *op. cit.*, p. 90; see also, White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987.

²²³ Ibid, p. 91.

²²⁴ Ibid.

functions of narratives, this Aristotelean tradition did not focus on how narratives operate in specific contexts, rather it was concerned with the 'decontextualised structure'.²²⁵ Those works that link discourse to human action, on their part, relied on the 'literary heritage' of Kenneth Burke's notion of 'dramatism' as the appropriate prism of examining the socio-political implications of narrative.²²⁶ Lucaites and Condit argue that, "such formal, literary analyses provide insight into the formulation of narrative function in and act upon the meaning and structures of culture and society, especially in a mass-mediated era".²²⁷

They therefore provided a tentative theoretical account of narrative which is more 'complete and useful' and which required a:

re-construction based on a thorough-going account of the recursive interaction of the multiple forms and functions of narrative as they are materialized in the discourse of everyday life.²²⁸

²²⁵ Lucaites and Condit, *op. cit.*

²²⁶ See *Ibid* for a review of such works.

²²⁷ Also see *Ibid* for a review of such works.

²²⁸ For Smith's deconstruction of the "mechanistic dualism" in much of narrative theory of that era and McGee's critique of Burkean "dramatistic disengagement", see *Ibid*.

Thomas B. Farrel, arguing against the backdrop of the infinity of narratives, posits that it follows that no single perspective on narrative can be adequate. This then raises some important questions:

How do we construct and elaborate narratives about our collective burdens, struggles and destinies? Given several competing narrative frames, how do we reliably choose a preferable story to live through? In short, how do we distinguish between practical reason and wishful thinking?²²⁹

FIGURE III

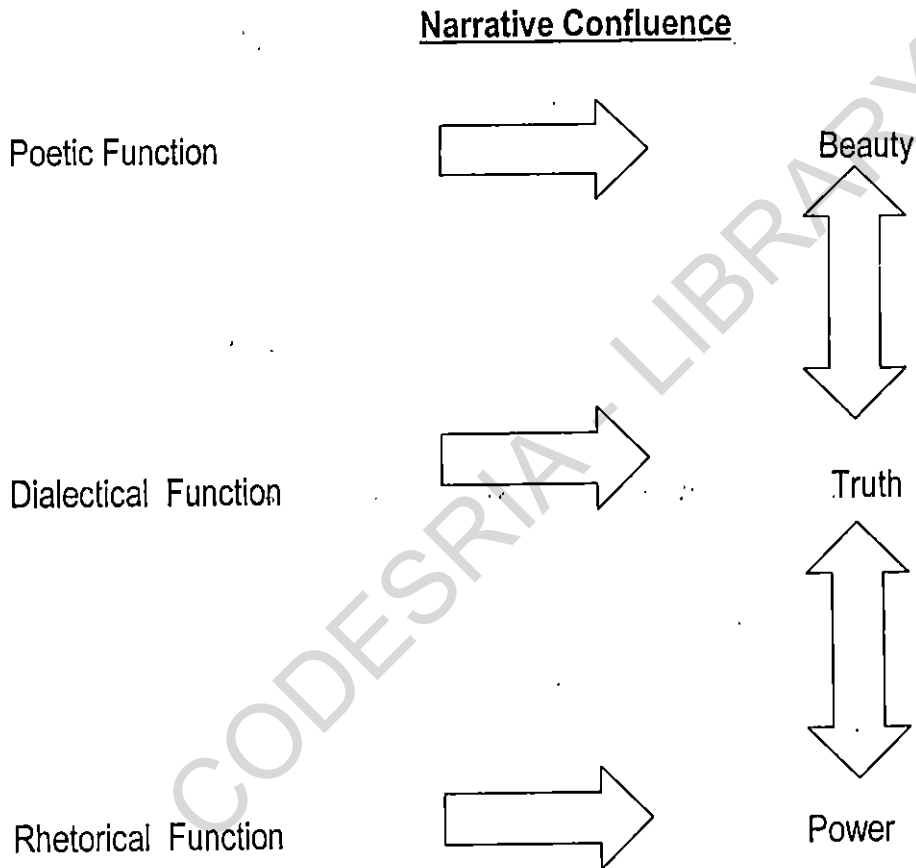
Narrative Functions

<i>Function</i>	<i>Salience (Primary End)</i>	<i>Implication</i>
Poetic Function	Display of beauty	Beauty is dependent on power & truth
Dialectical Function	Transmission of truth	Truth is portrayed as beautiful and useful in the service of power
Rhetorical function	Wielding of power	Power is expressive in truth and beauty

²²⁹ Thomas B. Farrel, "Narrative in Natural Discourse: On Conversation and Rhetoric", *Journal of Communication*, Autumn, vol. 35, no. 4, 1985, p. 10.

There is an age-long assumption that all narratives – sometimes conceived as discourse – are designed to achieve one or more of three goals. They are meant to *delight*, to *instruct*, or/and to *move*.²³⁰ The products of these three goals are

FIGURE IV



²³⁰ Lucaites and Condit, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

interpreted to constitute respectively, "the display of 'beauty', the transmission of 'truth' and the wielding of 'power' ". The age-long modes of narrative – that is the poetic, dialectical and rhetorical functions – address at least one, and sometimes three, of these products of the three goals of narrative, even though one of the products will be the primary end of a particular narrative function.²³¹

We have attempted in Figure III and Figure IV to provide a graphic account, following Lucaites and Condit's analysis,²³² of the ends and relationships of the three functions. Figure IV particularly captures the inter-connectedness of these functions, which Lucaites and Condit describe as the "complex combinations of (the) three purified aims" of narrative in their theory of narrative metacode.

Dialectical and rhetorical functions require focus, leaving aside any elaboration of the poetic function, since that function is primarily evident in works of *pure fiction*.

²³¹ Ibid

²³² Ibid.

Dialectical Function has the primary goal of the “discovery, revelation and presentation of truth”.²³³ Given the fact that this function depends on the “factual world”, its narrative code is “vastly different” from that of poetic discourse. Dialectical function is concerned about ontological and epistemological claims:

Dialectical narratives aspire to the status of fact. That is, the stories that they relate represent argumentative claims as to the nature of the universe, and they require empirical verifiability.²³⁴

The *content* of narrative is therefore important as it is “constrained by criteria of accuracy and external validity”.²³⁵ Dialectical narrative excludes purposeful fabrication, which is not the case with poetic narrative.

Rhetorical function is informed by the Aristotelean conception of rhetoric as “the faculty (power) of discovering in the particular case what are the available means of persuasion”. However, the function transcends this limited conception which “masks the material significance” of such process:

²³³It is important to note as the writers did, that the “the use of the word “truth” is not intended to resurrect the epistemological dispute between relativists and objectivists, but rather to recall the useful every day distinction between “fact” and “fiction” Ibid, p. 93

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Ibid.

The primary goal of rhetorical (narrative) is what persuasion achieves, the enactment of interest, or the wielding of power.²³⁶

The purpose of rhetorical narrative transcends its own textuality. While poetic narrative is governed by *form*, and dialectical narrative by *content*, rhetorical narrative is governed by *function*.²³⁷ As Quintilian²³⁸ pointed out, function connotes the “ability to prepare an audience (originally the ‘judge’ in a court of law) for the proof of an argument by characterizing the probability of the case upon which judgement is requested.” Conceived in the modern context – against the classical Roman tradition of *narratio*;

(R)hetorical narrative is a story that serves as interpretive lens through which the audience is asked to view and understand the verisimilitude of the propositions and proof before it. Both content and form of the rhetorical narrative are thus subservient to the demands of the relationship between the specific audience to which it is addressed, the specific context in which it appears, and the specific gain towards which it strives.²³⁹

²³⁶ Ibid, pp. 93-94.

²³⁷ This can also be described as “goal”.

²³⁸ Quintilian, *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian* (4 Volumes), Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966, in Ibid, p. 94.

²³⁹ Ibid.

Focussing on this 'function perspective', Lucaites and Condit argue, puts us at a 'critical vantage point' to explore the role of social and political consciousness.²⁴⁰

Two formal characteristics are integral to this function perspective:

Consistency and Brevity. Internal and external consistency is considered to be primary requirements of rhetorical narrative. It must be consistent with itself and with the larger discourse, and it must be consistent with the worldview of the audience. As Quintilian advanced, one, the 'fiction' must be within the bounds of possibility; two, it must tally with the facts – dates, persons, places – involved; and three, its character and sequence must not be outrageous.²⁴¹ As for brevity, it is expected that the audience is compelled to a 'favourable interpretation of the proof as a case without taxing its members to weariness or disinterest with digressions or unnecessary detail'.²⁴²

Given the fact that rhetorical narrative "typically operates in circumstances where there are *conflicting and competing interests at stake*" (emphasis added), they

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Quintilian, pp. 99-100, in Ibid, p. 95.

²⁴² Ibid, p. 96.

require two unique formal *unities*: *unity of direction* and *unity of purpose*.²⁴³ Since oppositionality is inherent in rhetorical contexts, unity of direction,

requires that advocates take one side or another in a dispute. The reasons and evidence that they offer must therefore be directed at proving a single interpretation of a claim to fact, value or policy.²⁴⁴

The *voice* of rhetorical narrative must be univocal because it compels an audience to a particular understanding of the facts of a case and a particular point of view.²⁴⁵

Given, on the other hand, the "act-centred quality" of rhetorical narrative, it requires that the stage of textual construction be translated into 'action'. Consequently, it encourages and enlists the audience's active participation in the resolution of a conflicting or conflictual situation. Unity of purpose, therefore, is captured in the 'response to the specific purpose of the larger discourse and context in which they operate':²⁴⁶

²⁴³ Ibid: 98.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Ibid: 100.

(They) describe a set of relations contributing to a conflict or problem and ask the audience to participate actively in the interest of the discourse to *bring about* the desired transformation.²⁴⁷

The two *unities* emphasize the fact that the “unified purpose” of rhetorical narrative is the enactment of interest that is however exhibited by and implicated in the text, but lies outside of *textualization*.²⁴⁸

Based on their thorough attempt to reconstitute narrative theory, Lucaites and Condit throw what they call “argumentative challenges” to those who are concerned with examining the role of narrative in human communication:

1. Narrative theory that focuses on form to the exclusion of function is inadequate, because it essentially “reifies a process of human communication and thus...distort(s) our understanding of its role in the creation and maintenance of social and political consciousness”.²⁴⁹
2. Narrative theory must account for the interaction of form and function of narrative through a full range of discourse genres, because

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid: 103-104.

"narrative does not constitute a unified or fixed set of options for either authors or audiences; like any pragmatic metacode, it offers a full range of options."²⁵⁰

3. Narrative theory must, in the final analysis, be "judged according to how useful they are in enhancing critical awareness of human interaction". This therefore compels a 'careful and sustained' focus on the social and political implication of particular narrative forms, 'as well as their intertextualization in particular narratives'.²⁵¹

While their analysis points out very important issues in the theory of narrative, Lucaites and Condit subtracted from the power of their analysis by limiting the understanding of 'role' in the evolution of social and political consciousness to the rhetorical (function) perspective. Yet as their explication of the dialectical function shows, the utility of their analytical perspective would have been better served by conflating the two functions – dialectical and rhetorical. *Role* is better explored by focussing on the interaction between the two functions, with *content* (constrained by

²⁵⁰ Ibid: 104-105.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

the criteria of accuracy and external validity) in the one and *function* (enactment of interest and/or wielding of power) in the other meshing to throw up the complex and interesting ways in which 'accuracy' and 'external validity' are in fact, defined by, linked to, and contingent upon the enactment of interest and/or wielding of power.

It is argued therefore, that a more useful theory of narrative metacode would emphasize the interaction of narrative content and function in the construction of social and political consciousness. This reformulation of Lucaites and Condit's reconstruction of narrative theory connects well with Ernest G. Bormann's 'symbolic convergence theory'.²⁵²

Within the general theoretical framework that constructs human beings as narrative beings – *homo narrans* – the symbolic convergence theory:

explains the appearance of a group consciousness, with its implied shared emotions, motives, and meanings, not in terms of individual daydreams and scripts but rather in terms of socially-shared narrations or fantasies.²⁵³

²⁵² Ernest G. Bormann, "Symbolic Convergence Theory: A Communication Formulation", *Journal of Communication*, vol. 35, no. 4, Autumn, 1985.

²⁵³ *Ibid*: 128.

Bormann could be read into Lucaites and Condit by arguing that socially-shared or socially-shareable narrations or fantasies are products of, and reproduces social and political consciousness of, group life. They are accurate and real (externally valid) to the extent that they reflect this social and political consciousness, which are in turn informed, by or reflective of, the interest and power of the group. This reading is further explicated in the three-part structure of the symbolic convergence theory:

- The first part is concerned with "the discovery and arrangement of recurring communicative forms and patterns that indicate the evolution and presence of a shared group consciousness".²⁵⁴
- The second part is composed of a "description of the dynamic tendencies within communication systems that explain why group consciousness arise, continue, decline and disappear and the effect of such group consciousness in terms of meaning, motives and communication within the group."²⁵⁵
- The third part involves "the factors that explain why people share the fantasies they do when they do". In this context, fantasy denotes "creative and imaginative shared interpretation of events that fulfils a group's psychological and rhetorical need".²⁵⁶

A people or group come to symbolic convergence when symbolic cues set-off common and shared meanings and emotions, and when they are able to fit new

²⁵⁴ *Ibid*: 130.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid*

²⁵⁶ *Ibid*.

experience comfortably into shared consciousness.²⁵⁷ The consequence of this at the level of ontology is that the rhetorical community achieves a level of 'symbolic maturity', which makes it possible for its members to make 'cryptic allusion' to a 'total coherent view of an aspect of their social reality'.²⁵⁸

The explanatory power of this theory compels an empirical search for the boundaries of rhetorical communities in particular time-space; even though some rhetorical communities, such as a nation, insist on the *immemoriality* of their existence.²⁵⁹ This point is acknowledged by a theoretical insight, which has been elaborated by Paul Ricoeur more than any other contemporary philosopher. Ricoeur argues that 'the world unfolded by every narrative work is always a temporal world':

Time becomes human time to the extent that it is organized after the manner of a narrative, narrative in turn, is meaningful to the extent that it portrays the features of temporal experience.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁷ Ibid: 132.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* (Vol. 1), trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984, p. 3.

Yet Ricoeur admits that a major tendency of modern theory of narrative is the “dechronologization” of narrative. Nonetheless, the push against lineal representation of time does not necessarily seek to turn narrative into “logic”.²⁶¹

Bormann returns to the oppositional debate between rational world theorists and narrative theorists. He notes that the narrative paradigm is set against the then dominant tradition of rational theory which conceives of the world that is consistently and adequately mirrored by communication which logic and argument can be tested and evaluated.²⁶² Like Fisher, Bormann does not advocate that the narrative paradigm supersedes the rational world paradigm, rather he sees the former as an alternative to the latter.²⁶³ Fisher makes three claims as regards this:

- a) There are at least two separate paradigms of human communication – the rational and the narrational.
- b) Experts need the rational paradigm to conduct or account for their special fields of argument, but experts and the rational paradigm pervert “public moral argument”.
- c) The narrative paradigm has no necessary place in special fields, but publics need it to conduct or account

²⁶¹ Ibid, p. 30.

²⁶² Ibid, p. 136, following Walter Fisher, “Narration as a Human Communication paradigm”, *Communication Monographs*, 51, 1984, pp. 1-22.

²⁶³ Bormann, *op. cit.*

for good moral argument about major decisions of the day.²⁶⁴

Michael C. McGee and John S. Nelson argue against this "false dichotomy" between narrativity and rationality. They advance that when we confront the "political dimension" of narrative theory, this false dichotomy is dispelled, as narration is put "on the side of truth in public argument by calling upon the moral resources of the culture".²⁶⁵ Against Fisher and Bormann's 'formalist antimony', McGee and Nelson proffer a "functional view" of narrative which conceives of it as "a moment of argument intrinsic to reason and practiced especially, but not exclusively, in politics".²⁶⁶

While noting the deconstructionist 'innuendoes' of Fisher and Fredric Jameson²⁶⁷ in their conceptualisations of narrative, McGee and Nelson argue, on the contrary that, their (McGee and Nelson's) purpose is to confront the "political dimension" of narrative:

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Michael Calvin McGee and John S. Nelson, "Narrative Reason in Public Argument", *Journal of Communication*, vol. 35, no. 4, Autumn, 1985, p. 139.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Jameson describes narrative as "a specific mode of thinking the world, which has its own logic and which is irreducible to other types of cognition" and then added that "much of what passes for conceptual or scientific writing is itself secretly narrative in character". Ibid, p. 142.

recognizing them as inescapable parts of intellectual growth and social change. At issue is the *competence* of the politics involved....How does narrative contribute to constructing truth?.... As a matter of political competence, therefore, we must settle the connection of truth and narrative if we want to lead away from scientism and toward discourse theory....²⁶⁸ For positive political reasons, narrative must be put on the side of truth by a persuasive account surpassing historical facts...²⁶⁹

These writers advance that reconstructing the Quintilian conception of narrativity which is intertwined with rationality – a striking feature of which is the 'subjectivity of truths at stake'²⁷⁰ – helps to close the dichotomy between rationality and narrativity. Linking narrative to mythic epistemology does this. For these writers, it is this linkage that integrates rationality with narrative.²⁷¹

W. Lance Bennett and Murray Edelman locate their account of narrative in the power continuum, emphasizing that narrative serves hegemonic power, without caring about the veracity of the plots in the narrative. Therefore, they argue that the popular appeal of stories – which "embody the fears, hopes and prejudices of the

²⁶⁸ Ibid, pp. 143-144.

²⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 145.

²⁷⁰ Ibid

²⁷¹ Ibid, p. 153.

cultures" in which they circulate – is more of a dramaturgical and cultural issue than an empirical one. Consequently, they advance that rather than looking for empirical evidence of proper claims, the dichotomy between "social vision" and "political action" directs attention to "hegemonic system of culture, mass communication and socialization"²⁷²:

The daily life stories that embody the truths of social elite and their publics seem objective because they are confirmed time and again by self-fulfilling selection of documentary detail. Information that doesn't fit the symbolic mould can be ignored, denied, or rationalized out of serious consideration. When a ruling group promotes its cherished ideals at the expense of critical evaluations of the actions taken in the name of those ideals, the telling...becomes comforting fantasy – escape from the otherwise unpleasant contradictions of life experience.²⁷³

What the hegemonies do, according to these writers, is to offer "formulaic stories" which dissolves ambiguity and uncertainty and presents "black/white" replays of the past and "either-or" poles of political battles.²⁷⁴ With the unverifiable yet *unfalsifiable* "facts" that it supplies, narrative constructs this black/white, either/or

²⁷² W. Lance Bennett and Murray Edelman, "Towards A New Political Narrative", *Journal of Communication*, vol. 35, no. 4, Autumn, 1985, 156-158.

²⁷³ *Ibid*, p. 158.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p. 158-159.

world in which people, nations, groups and events are classified. It even goes beyond this to shape "people's view of rationality, of objectivity, of morality and of their conception of themselves and others"²⁷⁵

Bennett and Edelman emphasize the ontological implications of different, differing and clashing narratives. "Objective narratives" or "truth of visions" of groups or collectivities generate corollary opposites with little basis for reconciliation.²⁷⁶

Based on a standard of evaluation which they constructed – including *descriptive adequacy, testability, openness to change based on challenge and feedback* – Bennett and Edelman consider how "standard narratives" establish their credibility and at what cost.²⁷⁷ Three features are noticed here:

- First: Many narratives accomplish a sense of realism by introducing selective documentation that supports a particular plot that discourages the recognition of other possibilities in a situation.
- Second: In conjunction with selective documentation, the storyteller often introduces only fragmentary plot outlines...
- Third: This stage is completed when people draw familiar beliefs and morals (i.e. ideologies and social norms) from the emerging docudrama.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁵ Ibid, 159.

²⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 162.

²⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 162.

²⁷⁸ Ibid, pp. 162-163.

Against this backdrop, the salient features of political narrative as include the following:

- Where deep-seated prejudices prevail, the supporting details of political positions are often "sparse and crudely extracted from context",²⁷⁹
- A particular political story implies wider and related stories and ideology, just as a term or single reference provokes a full-fledge story²⁸⁰:

*Narratives spring from pregnant references... Cues in a text set off similar resonance in people who share a common characteristic... Textual references that trigger diverse narratives therefore may reinforce or exacerbate social conflicts.*²⁸¹

- Political narratives also call attention to what is denied or excluded in discourse. Derrida²⁸² has pointed to the:

*impossibility of extinguishing meaning by erasing it from a text or by affirming something else. It remains present "under erasure".*²⁸³

- Political narratives are also often not fully or explicitly recounted so as to shield them from challenge:

²⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 163.

²⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 164.

²⁸¹ Ibid, p. 165.

²⁸² Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, Gayatri C. Spivak (trans.), Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

²⁸³ Bennett and Edelman, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

*Evocative references that permeate political and statutory language serve as Pavlovian cues for people who have been conditioned to use language to reinforce their ideologies rather than to challenge them.*²⁸⁴

- Also, fragments of real-life situations are converted to wholes, while the excluded part are neglected, rationalized away or dismissed.²⁸⁵

That “narrative authenticity” is directly linked to “political legitimacy” is a point which these writers demonstrate in this work. Making essentially the same overriding points and pointing to similar strategies of symbolic construction – though not as sharp and elaborate – as Thompson²⁸⁶, Bennett and Edelman argue that hegemonic narrations are conditioned by, “the incentives of the privileged to justify their advantages and augment them and the need of the deprived to rationalize their disadvantages or struggle against them.”²⁸⁷

The goal of narrative analysis therefore should be to capture and understand those diverse conditions that make the clash of narratives inevitable.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 165-166.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid*.

²⁸⁶ *op. cit.*

²⁸⁷ Bennett and Edelman, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p. 171.

Though some argue that everyone, every community, every nation have his/its narrative, or rather that, every one or every community narrate his/its own life, narration requires a *right*. Potentially, everyone, every community can narrate his/its lives, but only some persons do have and exercise the right to narrate collective experience. Such a right, which Amy Shuman²⁸⁹ described as 'storytelling right', has three components: *entitlement*, *tellability* and *storyability*.

Entitlement, which has the clearest linkage to political theory, is concerned with claims to legitimacy of discourse: Who is entitled to claim a topic as legitimate discourse?

Merely because a set of events happened, even if it could be agreed what these events were, not everyone with access to this information has the "right" to report it. This is crucial when the narrative focus is "sensitive" material.²⁹⁰

The second component of "storytelling right" is *tellability*. This is concerned with the right of the event to be recounted, its significance, what counts as

²⁸⁹ Amy Shuman, *Story Telling Rights: The Uses of Oral and Written Texts by Urban Adolescents*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

significance. The crucial question here is: Is a particular event the proper basis for a narrative? Is it worthy of 'note'?²⁹¹

Storyability deals with the appropriate stories for given encounter. It is concerned with finding out the kinds of narratives appropriate for given situated encounters.²⁹² Storyability can be viewed as a hybrid of entitlement and tellability.²⁹³ For Shuman, entitlement addresses *who*, tellability addresses *what* and storyability addresses *when*.²⁹⁴ However, Shuman seems to miss the point in her own analysis as regards storyability, because the question that this is concerned with is more of a question of *how* than *when*.²⁹⁵

The 'storytelling rights' of entitlement, tellability and storyability can be related to Ricoeur's²⁹⁶ elaboration of W. B. Gallie's concept of '*followability*'. To follow a story requires an understanding of the 'successive actions, thoughts and feelings in the

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

²⁹² *Ibid.*

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁵ Adebani, Wale, "The Nigerian Press and the Politics of Marginal Voices: The Narratives of the Experiences of the Ogoni and the Kataf", paper presented at the Conference on Nationalism, Identity and Minority Rights, Bristol University, Bristol, U.K., September 15-19, 1999.

²⁹⁶ Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, Vol. 1, *op. cit.*

story in as much as they represent a particular "directedness".²⁹⁷ The act of following (a) narrative, Ricoeur argues, particularly when history deals with currents, tendencies and trends, 'confers an organic unity' of the narratives.²⁹⁸

Here the notion of followability offers another face. Every story, we have said, in principle explains itself. In other words, narrative answers the question, "Why?" at the same time that it answers the question "What?" To tell what happened is to tell why it happened. At the same time following a story is a difficult, laborious process, which can be interrupted or blocked.²⁹⁹

Given this, even the most elementary narrative understanding – based on following a story – confronts and conflates with human expectations based on interests and those based on reason. Implicitly, 'critical discontinuity' is folded into narrative continuity.³⁰⁰ What results from this primacy of the concept of followability is that 'explanations (...) have no other affect than to allow us better to follow the story, when our capacity to accept the author's vision is carried to breaking point'.³⁰¹

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

'basic human strategy for coming to terms with time, process and change.'³⁰⁶ As

Bennett and Edelman advances:

The seedbed of creative use and creative reception of narrative lie [...] in learning to recognize and appreciate the inevitability of contradictory stories, the multiple realities they evoke, and their links to the conditions of people's lives.³⁰⁷

Here narrative is as much a process – of bringing a nation into *being* – as well as the nation *itself*. Nation, by this conception exists by and in its narratives and the narratives – or grand narrative – is the nation. The next task is to examine the notion of nation.

7. Nation

While the origin of the word *nation* has been easily traced,³⁰⁸ the origin of the *idea* of nation or the origins of the transition to nationhood are obscure.³⁰⁹ Here, the debate in the literature about these 'origins of transition' is transcended so as to focus

³⁰⁶ David Herman, *op. cit.*

³⁰⁷ Bennett and Edelman, *op. cit.*, p. 170-171.

³⁰⁸ Walker Connor, "A Nation is a Nation, is a State, is an Ethnic Group, is a..." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 1978:381; Ernest Renan, *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?* 1990:9; Anthony D. Smith, "Nationalism", *Current Sociology*, Vol. XXI, No. 3, 1973: 17; Hugh Selon-Watson, *Nations and States*, London: Methen, 1977.

³⁰⁹ Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origin of Nations*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999: 130. Smith, among others, attempts to trace it back to the 'gradual unification' by Saxon and Frankish kings in what later became 'England' and 'France' in the early Middle Ages.

on what can be regarded theoretically and conceptually as a nation – notwithstanding the absence of consensus on what constitutes a nation. This difficulty in defining and conceptualising a nation is, among other reasons, largely a result of the intangible nature of the notion of nation,³¹⁰ which led Seton-Watson to conclude that a 'scientific' definition of the concept was impossible to device, even while the phenomenon continues to exert a major influence on human life and human living.³¹¹ Seton-Watson consequently gives a conceptual definition – in frustration – which dissolves into empirical *reality*:

All I can find to say is that a nation exists when a significant number of people in a community consider themselves to form a nation, or behave as if they formed one.³¹²

Perhaps one thing that is settled here is that a once-for-all definition of nation is impossible.³¹³ Three paradoxes under-gird this frustration that results from this. These as explained by Anderson³¹⁴, include, one, "objective modernity" of the nation

³¹⁰ Connor, *op. cit.*: 379.

³¹¹ Seton-Watson, *Nations and States*, in Anderson, *op. cit.*: 3.

³¹² Quoted in *Ibid*: 6.

³¹³ Anthony Smith, *Nationalism*, *op. cit.*: 16.

³¹⁴ *Op. cit.*

to the historian as against its "subjective antiquity" to the nationalist; two, its "formal universality" as a socio-cultural concept as against the "irremediable particularity" in its manifestation; three, the 'political' power of the 'ism' that it engenders as against the "philosophical poverty" even incoherence of same – nationalism.³¹⁵

In spite of the foregoing points however, attempts to capture the idea of nation have not been lacking.

Smith³¹⁶ notes two distinct forms and concepts of the idea: territorial and ethnic. The territorial idea of a nation is informed by territoriality and the dynamics of the interactions within bounded geography. This boundedness within which a sovereign exists implies a form of inclusion and exclusion, which determines a community of citizens.³¹⁷ This is the sense in which Anderson posits an 'imagined political community' which is both inherently limited and sovereign. This is also the

³¹⁵ *op. cit.* "5.

³¹⁶ *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, *op. cit.*: 135.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.* For Anthony Giddens, a nation "exists only when a state has a unified administrative reach over the territory over which its sovereignty is claimed". *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism II. The Nation State and Violence*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985: 119; for Hegel, the 'final destination of nations is forming themselves into states', in Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1983: 48.

sense in which the 'grand nations' – the nations-to-be – in much of post-colonial Africa is understood.³¹⁸

Other strands of this territorial conception are the legal aspect, the citizenship aspect and the common culture aspect – in which the cultural boundaries of the nation exists “where (common) meanings, myths and symbols [...] strike a responsive chord”.³¹⁹

The ethnic concept of nation, as Smith explains it, exists:

on the basis of pre-existing *ethnie* and ethnic ties, so that it became a question of 'transforming' ethnic into national ties and sentiments through processes of mobilization, territorialization and politicization.³²⁰

This conception – which has been described as 'folkish'³²¹, 'organic'³²² or 'mystical'³²³ – emphasizes elements like genealogy, populism, customs, dialects, and nativism. It also tends to be 'demotic and plebeian', substituting customs and cultural

³¹⁸ *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, op. cit.

³¹⁹ *Ibid*: 135-136.

³²⁰ *Ibid*: 137.

³²¹ *Ibid*.

³²² Kohn and others in *Ibid*.

³²³ *Ibid*.

practices for legal codes and institutions.³²⁴ For every flag or coat of arms of the territorial nation, there is an icon of the ethnic nation that commands similar, if not greater, respect.³²⁵

While many states in Africa remain nations-of-intent³²⁶ in their struggle to become territorial nations, many of the ethnic nations within these states are also attempting to become territorial nations.

Some have made attempts to approach the definition of nation from a purely stipulative standpoint or an inductive approach.³²⁷ Both methods have limitations. The first can be "extremely narrow and arbitrary". The second can be difficult given the inconsistencies, and vagueness and contradictions of nationalist rhetoric.³²⁸ However, Smith prefers the inductive notion of nation because common elements can be deduced from the key principles in thinking about nations by nationalists and then tested against particular enactments in different contexts.³²⁹

Against this backdrop, he defines the nation as:

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ In Nigeria, for instance, there is the Arewa symbol in the north and the image of Oduduwa in the Yoruba West.

³²⁶ This captures the attempt to make nations of territorial states.

³²⁷ Smith, "Nationalism", *op. cit.*: 16.

³²⁸ Ibid: 16-17.

³²⁹ Ibid.

A cultural group occupying a given territory and possessing a common economic system and legal rights of membership for everyone. A nation is a special type of ethnic group, one in which the population is economically and politically homogeneous and territorially fixed. Conceptually, the nation fuses three dimensions: territory, culture and citizenship.³³⁰

Smith's definition has a major drawback when it is applied to the nations on the African continent – and, perhaps, Asia. The concept or idea of citizenship is problematic where it is taken as a dimension of nationhood – except in the context of nation-state. For nation qua nation, this dimension may be better captured as *nativity* rather than as citizenship. In traditional African *ethnie*, which transformed or metamorphosed (to use Smith's word) into nation, it is the *birth/soil* that parallels the modern concept of citizenship; so that one who is not *born of the soil* cannot be a member of the nation. A *citizen* of the nation thus can only be *native* to the nation.

Rustow places his definition at the level of 'super-loyalty':

A nation is a self-contained group of human beings who place loyalty to the group as a whole above competing loyalties.³³¹

³³⁰ Ibid: 18.

³³¹ D.A. Rustow, *World of Nations*, Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1967.

David Miller states that a nation is:

a belief that belongs together with the rest; that this association is neither transitory nor merely instrumental, but stems from a long history of living together which (it is hoped and expected) will continue into the future; that the community marked off from other communities by its members' distinctive characteristics.³³²

For Hertz, "fate" is the operative ideal, where he defines the nation as a:

Community of fate [...] a people possessing national consciousness, which consists in the combined striving for unity, liberty, individuality and prestige.³³³

Hertz points to the continued affirmation that is needed – to establish and nourish a nation founded on fate – when he notes the "combined striving for unity, liberty [...] and prestige". Where these combined – and, ostensibly, continued – striving are lacking, the nation ceases to exist.

Emerson agrees with Seton-Watson's take on the notion of nation, which emphasises the opinion of "a significant number in a community". For Emerson, beyond those features and elements that sign-posts a nation, the critical factor is:

³³² David Miller, *Market, State and Community*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989: 238.

³³³ L. Hertz, *Nationalism in History and Politics*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1944.

(W)hatever can get away with establishing its claim to be one.....(T)he largest community which, when the chips are down, effectively commands men's loyalty, overriding claims both of the lesser communities within it and those that cut across it or potentially enfold it within a still greater society. The simplest statement that can be made about a nation is that it is [...] a body of people who feel that they are a nation.³³⁴

It is obviously this element of continuous affirmation that Renan speaks to when he defined the nation as "a grand solidarity (and) an everyday plebiscite",³³⁵ and Walker Connor, when he argues that in what we define as nation, what counts is not *what is*, but *what people believe is*.³³⁶

Max Weber³³⁷ tended to have argued that a nation is 'inadequate' until it gets the 'outer shell' or 'husk' of a state.³³⁸ He defines the nation as:

a community of sentiment which would find its adequate expression only in a state of its own, and which *normally* strives to create one³³⁹ (emphasis added).

³³⁴ Emerson, R., *From Empire to Nation*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1960.

³³⁵ Renan, translated by Bhabha, Homi.

³³⁶ Connor, "A Nation is a Nation, is a State, is an Ethnic Group, is a..." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 1978.

³³⁷ David McCrone, "Explaining Nationalism: The Scottish Experience", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1, January 1984: 131.

³³⁸ R.I. Rotberg says that "their ideal must be to draw the real nation from the husk of the state", "African Nationalism: Concept or Confusion?" *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 4, 1967: 33-46.

³³⁹ Weber, in David McCrone, *op. cit.*

The caveat, 'normally', would imply that, all things being equal, every nation would seek to be coterminous with a state.

Karl Deutsch argued that communication is the most central factor in the transformation of a people into a community – or nation. According to Deutsch, common language, common history and other criteria are insufficient where there are no communication facilities "with enough complementarity to produce sufficient communication effectiveness to mark (a people) off from other peoples"³⁴⁰:

The community, which permits a common history to be experienced as common, is a community of complementary habits and facilities of communication. It requires, so to speak, equipment for a job. This job consists in the storage, recall, transmission, recombination, and reapplication of relatively wide ranges of information; and the equipment consists of such learned memories, symbols, habits, operations, preferences, and facilities as will in fact be sufficiently complementary to permit the performance of those functions. A larger group of persons linked by such complementary habits and facilities of communication we may call a people.³⁴¹

³⁴⁰ Colin Williams, "Social Mobilization and Nationalism in Multi-cultural Societies", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 3, July 1982; K. Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication*, 2nd edn., Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1966.

³⁴¹ Deutsch, K., *Ibid*: 96.

The past, the present and the future are crucial elements or conditions of nationhood, which can be distilled from the literature. However, *the past* can be problematic. What is the past and how long can the past be? Renan describes the past as “a rich legacy of remembrances”.³⁴² Stalin argues that it is “lengthy and systematic intercourse [...] as a result of people living together generation after generation”,³⁴³ Max Weber describes it as “historical attainment”,³⁴⁴ Seton-Watson points out that it is “a history”.³⁴⁵ William Connolly argues that: “Time must move slowly for a nation to be”.³⁴⁶ This problematic raises a question on the possibility of an emergent nation within a limited time-space period. Can an emergent nation be pronounced, for instance, on diverse people who have been forced to live under the same government; in a particular territory, say over a period of fifty years? If not, then how long would be sufficient? It appears that the question is as much *how* as well as *how long*.

³⁴² Renan, E., “Qu’ est ce qu’une nation?”, John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (eds.) *Nationalism*, Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1994: 17.

³⁴³ Stalin, Joseph, “The Nation”, in Hutchinson and Smith (eds.), *Ibid*: 19.

³⁴⁴ Weber, “The Nation”, in Hutchinson and Smith (eds.) *Ibid*: 21.

³⁴⁵ Seton-Watson, *op. cit*.

³⁴⁶ Connolly, Williams E., *Why I am Not a Secularist*, Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999: 75.

This is better understood when the question Connor raises is considered: 'When is a nation?'³⁴⁷ Connor points out that it is often forgotten that nation-formation "is a process, not an occurrence or event".³⁴⁸ It is very difficult if not impossible to find a formula to answer the question: 'At what point did a sufficient number/percentage of a given people acquire national consciousness so that the group merited the title of nation?'³⁴⁹

Whereas Connor argues that "the presence of even substantial number of intellectuals proclaiming the existence of a new nation is insufficient",³⁵⁰ it can be argued that it suffices in particular situations, particularly if a substantial number of intellectuals among the *Other*, say a rival nation/ethnic group, responds to such proclamation.

Paul Brass³⁵¹ lays out such a process of nation formation as explicated above. In his investigation of the role of language and religion, two major symbols that have acted as basis for the push for nationhood, he investigated 'the dynamic processes

³⁴⁷ *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1990.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*: 159.

³⁵¹ See Francis Robinson, "Nation Formation: The Brass Thesis and Muslim Separatism", *The Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, Vol. XV, No. 3, November 1977.

by which people come to identify their interests with their language or their religion, to build associations to pursue those interests, and to form bonds strong enough to build or to destroy states'.³⁵² Brass found that two stages are involved in the process.

The first is the transformation of an objectively conscious community:³⁵³

An elite takes the lead, infuses certain objective characteristics of a group with symbolic value, defines the boundaries, creates a myth of group history and group destiny, and tries to communicate this myth to the group, particularly to its socially mobilising segments.³⁵⁴

Such elite would depend very much on a 'pool of symbols' from which they will select, and which they will then transmit and standardise, a population that is sufficiently mobilised and invested with the symbols of group identity; and the *Other* from which the group can be differentiated.³⁵⁵

The second stage:

³⁵² Ibid: 215.

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Ibid. An empirical validation of this could be cited in the project that Obafemi Awolowo – and later his Action Group – pursued. As Awolowo articulated it, "the Yorubas were a highly progressive but badly disunited group. They paid lip-service to a spiritual union and affinity in a common ancestor – Oduduwa. But in their long history they waged wars against one another....I thought that it was in the best interests of Nigeria that the Yorubas should not be reduced to a state of impotence, into which they were fast degenerating....I decided, therefore, to do all in my power to infuse solidarity into the disjointed tribes that constitute the Yoruba ethnic group, to raise their morale, to rehabilitate their self-respect, and to imbue them with the confidence that they are an important factor in the forging of the federal unity of Nigeria". Awo: *The Autobiography of Chief Obafemi Awolowo*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1960: 166.

³⁵⁵ "Nation Formation: The Brass Thesis and Muslim Separatism", *op. cit.*: 215.

Involves the move from consciousness community to political action. The group makes political demands and takes political action.³⁵⁶

Two conditions underlie the success of the second stage. The elite must locate the unequal distribution of scarce value and then develop political organisation to respond to this.³⁵⁷ The overall aim of Brass thesis is to show that "men who (have) power can make nations".³⁵⁸

Nation here, then is an emotional or emotive affiliation that is expressive of a commonality or that is continuously expressed among a people – through different rituals of life and living, including, centrally, communication, and others like ceremonies and icons – that defines themselves above any other distinction as one people located in a distinct territory and answering or rising to common codes and

³⁵⁶ Ibid: 216.

³⁵⁷ Ibid. Awolowo for instance formed *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* (meaning, 'Society of the Descendants of Oduduwa'). Awo, op. cit. : 166-184. Anthony Smith notes "the role of the intelligentsia in furnishing the leadership and concepts of the emergent nation....They do indeed provide many of the initial narratives and imagery of the nation, even if they do not invent them *do novo*. But, if they are to succeed politically and if their concepts and images are to assume concrete shape, they must be taken up by movements and be turned into institutions", "The Nation: Invented, Imagined, Reconstructed?" *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 3, 1991: 353-368. Brass also argues that such "political organization (does) not simply reflect or transmit communal demands. They shape group consciousness by manipulating symbols of group identity to achieve power for their group. Moreover, the character of the political arena and the outcome of struggles for political power between competing elites within it may determine whether a communal group is mobilized for political action or not. Politics is not just the process in which nations are made, politics itself makes nations." "Nation-Formation", Ibid.

³⁵⁸ Ibid: 227.

symbols. This definition draws from the emphasis of Emerson,³⁵⁹ Seton-Watson,³⁶⁰ Connor³⁶¹ and Renan³⁶² on a constant affirmation of the "significant number" of the people on the existence of their nation, adding that such affirmation must be expressive or expressed through different rituals a central one of which is communication. And given the pervasive and powerful role of communication in the modern world, and given the fact that the elite or the intelligentsia are in charge of disseminating crucial symbols through the media of modern communication, they are well-placed in articulating, constructing, reconstructing, and deconstructing what is regarded as nation. It is with particular sensitivity to this that Foucault described the nation as a "discourse formation".³⁶³ It is this discursive formation that is rendered here as narrative. Therefore, above all, the nation is a narrative, one whose *actual* or *real* past or antiquity, is not as crucial as the narration of a *past* and the enactment of the relevance of that to a *present* and a *future*. Such a take on the notion of nation necessarily leads to an examination of the notion of myth, which is considered next.

³⁵⁹ Emerson, *From Empire to Nations*, op. cit.

³⁶⁰ Seton-Watson, in Anderson, op. cit.

³⁶¹ Connor, "A Nation is a Nation, is a State, is an Ethnic Group, is a...," op. cit.

³⁶² Renan, *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation*, op. cit.

³⁶³ Timothy Brennan, *Salman Rushdie and the Third World: Myths of the Nation*, London: Macmillan, 1989: 4.

8. *Myth: Vehicle of Nation's Power*

Myth means the telling word

- Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*

Martin Heidegger, the German philosopher provides an intellectually stimulating way to begin to encounter myth, particularly in political analysis. Myth, Heidegger argues, is a "telling word".³⁶⁴ He puts the idea of *telling* in the proper context of the Greek sense of the act, which is "to lay bare and make appear – both the appearance and that which has its essence in the appearance, the epiphany".³⁶⁵ The epistemology of myth therefore involves *giving accounts, narrating and comparing*.³⁶⁶

Myths do not just *tell*. They tell *what* counts and *how* it counts.³⁶⁷ Myths simultaneously take and give. They take accounts from the world and give accounts

³⁶⁴ Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?* in David Michael Levin, "Sanity and Myth in Affective Space", *Philosophical Forum*, 14, 1982-1983: 157-189.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁶ Micheal Calvin Mcgee and John S. Nelson, "Narrative Reason in Public Argument", *Journal of Communication*, Vol. 35, No. 4, Autumn 1985: 152.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

to the world.³⁶⁸ This element of *taking* and *giving* is conceived as “recounting” by McGee and Nelson and then linked to narrative:

The order of myth is narrative order, and the order of stories is the sequential of counting. Myths *recount* characters, events, rhythms, settings, and symbols in order to structure their significance. Myths are the moral, narrational [...] and political presentation of reality and possibility.³⁶⁹ (Emphasis added)

The 'structuring of significance ... (and the) political presentation of reality and possibility' can however not be in vacuum. McGee and Nelson link this with community, positing that 'the very character' of mythic narration is “to address community affairs from a popular standpoint.”³⁷⁰ Smith³⁷¹ argues that the evocation of myths and symbols of ('an ancient ethnic') core creates the 'best chance' of forming nations because of their “community-creating” potency. He avers that:

To turn a motley horde of people into an institutionalized nation, to give them a sense of belonging and identity, to unify and integrate them, to give them a sense of authenticity and autonomy and fit them to self-rule, all require a symbolic framework in and through which they

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*: 152-153.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*: 153

³⁷¹ Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, op. cit.: 200.

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³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ Ibid: 152-153.

³⁷⁰ Ibid: 153

³⁷¹ Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, op. cit.: 200.

generations". And the "explosive power (which they generate) goes far beyond the 'rational' uses which elites and social scientists deem appropriate".³⁷⁵

Myths also explain 'who we are' to us and to the Other, therefore demarcating and distinguishing what is 'ours' from what is alien.³⁷⁶

(Myth) is an instrument of self-definition, in that those who accept the beliefs encoded in myth also accept membership and the rules that go with membership, above all the particular world-view that the myth reflects. Myth attributes special qualities to the group, extends its distinctiveness and creates a boundary. It gives content, at the same time, to the self-perception of the community....³⁷⁷The outcome of this state of affairs is that myths of collective existence within the ethnic group are emphasized and a harder boundary is drawn against outsiders.³⁷⁸

While all these point to what myths do or can do, they avoid contending with the question, 'what *is* myth?' This is due largely to the fact that the category of myth is not easy to define.³⁷⁹ What is therefore defined as 'myth' "requires a judgement

³⁷⁵ Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, op. cit.: 201.

³⁷⁶ Ibid: 202; Cf. George Schopflin, "The Functions of Myth and a Taxonomy of Myths", Hoskins and Schopflin (eds.) *Myths and Nationhood*, London: Hurst & Company, 1997.

³⁷⁷ Ibid: 22.

³⁷⁸ Ibid: 24.

³⁷⁹ Joanna Overing, "The Role of Myth: An Anthropological Perspective, Or: 'The Reality of the Really Made-Up'", Geoffrey Hosking and George Schopflin (eds.) *Myths and Nationhood*, London: Hurst & Company, 1997: 1.

generations". And the "explosive power (which they generate) goes far beyond the 'rational' uses which elites and social scientists deem appropriate".³⁷⁵

Myths also explain 'who we are' to us and to the Other, therefore demarcating and distinguishing what is 'ours' from what is alien:³⁷⁶

(Myth) is an instrument of self-definition, in that those who accept the beliefs encoded in myth also accept membership and the rules that go with membership, above all the particular world-view that the myth reflects. Myth attributes special qualities to the group, extends its distinctiveness and creates a boundary. It gives content, at the same time, to the self-perception of the community....³⁷⁷The outcome of this state of affairs is that myths of collective existence within the ethnic group are emphasized and a harder boundary is drawn against outsiders.³⁷⁸

While all these point to what myths do or can do, they avoid contending with the question, 'what *is* myth?' This is due largely to the fact that the category of myth is not easy to define.³⁷⁹ What is therefore defined as 'myth' "requires a judgement

³⁷⁵ Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, op. cit.: 201.

³⁷⁶ Ibid: 202; Cf. George Schopflin, "The Functions of Myth and a Taxonomy of Myths", Hoskins and Schopflin (eds.) *Myths and Nationhood*, London: Hurst & Company, 1997.

³⁷⁷ Ibid: 22.

³⁷⁸ Ibid: 24.

³⁷⁹ Joanna Overing, "The Role of Myth: An Anthropological Perspective, Or: 'The Reality of the Really Made-Up'", Geoffrey Hoskins and George Schopflin (eds.) *Myths and Nationhood*, London: Hurst & Company, 1997: 1.

having to do with standards of knowledge or its organization" – whether functionalist, structuralist, or Marxist.³⁸⁰

The inheritance of the term is traced to the Greeks who came to view it as 'fictitious discourse' – after a period in which it had been used to express the "fundamental truths of existence".³⁸¹ By the Twentieth Century, myth was no longer denounced as absurd and illogical.³⁸²

For functionalists, influenced deeply by Durkheim, the "efficacy of myth" is that it provides "a necessary sticking plaster for social structure", reinforcing social cohesion and functional unity and reminding a community of its identity.³⁸³

Malinowski, a functionalist, emphasises the social power of myth and the potency in politically resonant issues concerning inequalities, status and privilege.³⁸⁴

On the other hand, structuralists, exemplified by Levi-Strauss, argue that the 'surface level' of myth – the level of narrative – has little value because it lacks

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² Ibid: 6.

³⁸³ Ibid: 7.

³⁸⁴ Ibid: 8.

meaning. Meaning, for Levi-Strauss, exists at the unconscious level.³⁸⁵ He denies the relevance of myth and neglects its 'performative' social, political and philosophical aspects.³⁸⁶ Others have tried to overcome and rectify the limitations of functionalism and structuralism in the analysis of myth, focussing on culture/context-specific understanding of what Taussig has called *the reality of the really made-up*.³⁸⁷

Overing, for instance, in his analysis, notes two basic rules: (i) myths "express and deal with a people's *reality postulates* about the world", and (ii) the truths of myth relate more to "a *moral universe of meaning* than to a 'natural' one."³⁸⁸ He finds that a people's "postulates about reality are not decontextualised from social, political and moral concerns" of the community.³⁸⁹ In emphasising the relation of myth to modes of power, Overing avers that:

The images of identity and alterity that play such an important role in myth have obvious political as well as social implications. Myths are usually expressive of specific political visions that distinguish the relative worth of an array of modes of power. Myths pertaining to a

³⁸⁵ Ibid: 9.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁷ Ibid: 10.

³⁸⁸ Ibid: 12.

³⁸⁹ Ibid: 13.

people's understanding of power and its moral worth cannot be detached from that people's knowledge and creation of a history of power.³⁹⁰

Myth is a way for collectivities – often nations – to “establish and determine the foundations of their being, their own systems of morality and values”.³⁹¹ In this context, myths function as narratives, ‘myth is the narrative’ – ‘a set of beliefs’³⁹² – held by a community about itself.³⁹³ Therefore, myths are centrally determined by perception rather than ‘historically validated truth’. Schopflin argue that myths are crucial for communities which have the duty of appropriating them in the service of community-building, given the fact that it establishes the sole way of ordering and defining the world.³⁹⁴

This reading of myth does not imply that myth is false or untrue, rather it emphasises that, for the community, while the story may not be accurate, they are not outright falsehood or deception.³⁹⁵

³⁹⁰ Ibid: 16 & 17.

³⁹¹ George Schopflin, “The Functions of Myth and a Taxonomy of Myths”, op. cit.: 19.

³⁹² Ibid.

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ Ibid: 20

Myth functions in a 'constructive' way. It can be used to build 'super-structures', super communities (grand nations) or new communities from existing ones, which then inherits the allegiances of the old identity. As Schopfling argues, following John Armstrong in the latter's *Nations before Nationalism*³⁹⁶:

Myth can be an instrument of identity transfer. It enables a new identity to be superimposed on an older one, so that the collectivity sustains itself by creating an identity homogeneous enough to let it live with, say, major social upheaval Myth is a means of transcending (gaps) by establishing an illusion of community.³⁹⁷

The simplifications of complexity which myths produce by bringing events into line with the standard practices, experiences and interests of a community make collective response feasible and binding.³⁹⁸

There are varieties of myths identified by Schopfling. These include:

- i. Myths of territory.
- ii. Myths of suffering and redemption.
- iii. Myths of unjust treatment.
- iv. Myths of election to civilizing mission.³⁹⁹

³⁹⁶ John Armstrong, *Nations before Nationalism*, Chapel Hill, NC, 1982.

³⁹⁷ Schopflin, op. cit.: 22 & 23.

³⁹⁸ Ibid: 23. Cf. M. Breen and F. Corcoran argue that, "myths function as part of the perceptual system of a culture through which unfamiliar situations originating inside or outside of the culture, are interpreted and fitted into old symbolic models". "Myth in the Television Discourse", *Communication Monographs*, Vol. 49, No. 2, June 1982: 127-136.

- v. Myths of military valour.⁴⁰⁰
- vi. Myths of rebirth and renewal.
- vii. Myths of foundation.
- viii. Myths of ethnogenesis and antiquity.
- ix. Myths of kinship and shared descent.⁴⁰¹

The political role of myth is perhaps its most crucial in society. While it is often denied in modern, rational society, myths in actual practice condition "the limits of the possible, in establishing the cognitive field and in underpinning the rule-boundedness which makes politics work."⁴⁰² This is more so in ethnically divided societies where it invariably enhances division and sometimes unites people across the divides.⁴⁰³

Given the crises that usually arise in such societies, myths can account for the failure of particular groups in their struggle for power and advantage against other competing groups, therefore solidifying the group in adversity.⁴⁰⁴

³⁹⁹ This was the myth on which the Afrikaner racism called Apartheid was based. See, "The Myth of Divine Election and the Afrikaner Ethnogenesis", Geoffrey Hosking and George Schopflin (eds.) *Myths and Nationhood*, op. cit.: 107-131. Also, Nigeria's first president and leader of the Igbo east, Dr, Nnamdi Azikiwe talked about the role of the Igbo "as preserver..." See, Coleman, James S., *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*, Benin City: Broburg and Wistrom, 1958: 347.

⁴⁰⁰ Azikiwe also, spoke to the "martial poweress of the Ibo nation at all stages of human history". Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid: 28-35. For instance, Awo emphasized the common ancestry of the Yoruba. Awo, op. cit.

⁴⁰² Ibid: 24.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid: 25.

Who controls and appropriates myths in society? It is those who "gain the ears of the community".⁴⁰⁵ These are the political and intellectual elite who controls the language of public communication.⁴⁰⁶ Which links the argument concerning who pronounces the birth or existence of a nation. Like the notion of the existence of a nation in a particular community, the elite in charge of public communication appropriates and disseminate the myths that bind – and are binding on – community and transform it into nation.

On the whole, the basic function of myth, whatever else it does in any given situation, is to organize and structure *meaning* within a culture or community. Myth, for us therefore, constitutes *meaning-creating* narration of particular versions of community with the goals and interests of the community folded into the tone and tenor of the narration of such a community. This necessarily links myth with narratives, nation and meaning and how all of these are expressive of power.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

performance of social activities and/or scaffold human affiliation within cultures and other groupings.⁴⁰⁸

Politics has its lifeblood in communications and the interactions they foster or block. As Ron argues, it is in the details of such *interactive communication* that “social goods are created, sustained, distributed and redistributed. It is there that people are harmed and helped”.⁴⁰⁹ Therefore, the discourses that constitute the vehicles for such interaction are crucial in the total organisation of community life.

As argued earlier, the nation can be read as a narrative and there are also narratives on the nation. Tzvetan Todorov links narrative to discourse and in fact, differentiates ‘narrative as discourse’ from ‘narrative as story’.⁴¹⁰ Narrative as story is purely a “succession of events”, while narrative as discourse constitutes an undertaking *to tell*. Discourse is an intermediary of sort between *story* (as succession of events) and *narrating* (the act of *telling*). Narrative can also be this same intermediary. It is the possibility of conflating both that has produced ‘narrative

⁴⁰⁸ Cf. Gee, op. cit: 1.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid: 2.

⁴¹⁰ Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, Jeane E. Lewin (trans.) Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980 (1995): 27.

discourse'. In this context, "the narrative (the narrated discourse) can only be such to the extent that it tells a story, without which it would not be narrative... and to the extent that it is uttered by someone, without which...it would not in itself be a discourse. As narrative it lives by its relationship to the story that it recounts; as discourse, it lives by its relationship to the narrating that utters it."⁴¹¹

Narrative discourse is therefore encountered as a web of relationships that manifests between narrative and story, between narratives and narrating, and between story and narrating.⁴¹²

Narrative discourse is social. This means that narrative discourse exists in social contexts, "(It) may be identified by the institutions to which it relates and by the position from which it comes and which it marks out.... That position does not exist by itself, however. Indeed, it may be understood as a standpoint taken up by the discourse through relation to another, ultimately an opposing, discourse."⁴¹³

⁴¹¹ Ibid: 29.

⁴¹² Ibid.

⁴¹³ Diane Macdonell, *Theories of Discourses: An Introduction*, Blackwell, Oxford and Cambridge: 1986 (1995): 2-3. Although Macdonell makes this point about strictly in regard to discourse, it goes for narrative discourse too since our conception here only conflate the two terms.

The conflict that is embedded in narrative discourse, particularly in the context of the validity of its existence in terms of its contradistinction from other narrative discourses, was captured by Barthes who argued that (narrative) discourse moves "in its historical impetus, by *clashes*".⁴¹⁴ Pecheux makes the same point in his *Language, Semantics and Ideology*, where he examined the relationship of discourses to ideological practices and language. He averred that discourses "are not peaceful; they develop out of clashes with one another, and because of this there is a political dimension to each use of words and phrases".⁴¹⁵ In these *clashes*, meaning becomes crucial.

In theorizing meaning, first, this work follows Groenendijk and Stokhof, in stating that such theory is one, which "describes and explains those phenomena concerning expressions and constructions of a language that according to the intuitions of the users of that language are related to the meaning of those expressions and constructions".⁴¹⁶ This translates to the fact that the theory of

⁴¹⁴ In *Ibid*: 3.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid*: 43.

⁴¹⁶ Jeroen Groenendijk and Martin Stokhof, "Semantics, Pragmatics and the Theory of Meaning", *Journal of Pragmatics* 2, 1978: 50.

meaning depends on intuitions about what constitutes meaning. While this says much about the content of meaning and it says nothing on its form.⁴¹⁷

In the preceding two centuries but one, two main theories of meaning prevailed.⁴¹⁸ Both assumed, however, that words represent pre-existing ideas.⁴¹⁹ The first affirmed that meanings came from things 'represented' in words. The other asserted that meanings derived universal ideas 'expressed' in words.⁴²⁰ Saussurean linguistics radically departed from this by arguing that meanings issue from language and do not exist *a priori*.⁴²¹ Saussure advanced that the possibilities of meaning are not determined within any language by positive elements; they are marked out only by negative relations. Structuralism of the 1960s in its concern with structures rather than systems essentially gave the impression that the story and characters of a narrative "derived from a general structure and do not 'express' ideas in the mind of

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

⁴¹⁸ Concern with the theory of meaning is regarded as the 'occupational disease' of Anglo-Saxon and Austrian philosophy. John Stuart Mill is believed to have provided the first discussion of the notion of meaning among modern logicians. His theory set the questions for different thinkers who eventually took him up. For Mill, to mean is to connote; while for his successors, to mean is to denote, or to denote and to connote. Gilbert Ryle, "The Theory of Meaning", in Charles E. Caton (ed.), *Philosophy and Ordinary Language*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1963: 130 & 138.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid: 9.

⁴²⁰ Ibid. Liberal humanist criticism in humanities continue to draw from elements of both.

⁴²¹ Ibid.

an author or 'reflect' experience".⁴²² The end of the 1960s brought into place a departure from structuralism and the concept of discourse and conflicting discourses.⁴²³ While they take up the historical conditions of meanings, work on discourse questioned the idea of an abstract and general system or structure of language. The argument was that, "to posit an overall system or structure of language is to make the conflicts of discourses, in their relation to class and other struggles, inconceivable". A crucial argument offered in relation to discourse was that "meanings are to be found only in the concrete forms of differing social and institutional practices: there can be no meaning in language".⁴²⁴

The literature of discourses therefore goes beyond and departs from structuralism. It also goes beyond and departs from the dominant views of ideology in classical Marxism. As argued earlier, following Thompson⁴²⁵, classical Marxist view of ideology is negative, critical and pejorative and therefore obscures a deep understanding of how ideology works in contemporary society. Against this

⁴²² Ibid: 10.

⁴²³ Ibid.

⁴²⁴ Ibid: 12.

⁴²⁵ *Ideology and Modern Culture*, op. cit: 52-57.

backdrop, the argument is that for a conception of ideology that captures it within the context of the ways in which symbolic forms intersect with relations of power, . . . ideology can be defined as "meaning in the service or disservice of power".⁴²⁶

Yet, meaning can be a perplexing concept, even though everyone in a sense knows what is talked about when the issue of meaning is raised.⁴²⁷ Theories of meaning have attempted to come to terms with this perplexing nature of the term in different ways.

The bearer-theory of meaning conceives of 'things' as bearing their names, like arbitrary labels. This is regarded as "meaning-as-the-thing-intended".⁴²⁸ The argument is that "any word having meaning does so because it stands for a certain 'thing', and its meaning is that thing."⁴²⁹ The strongest objection to this theory comes from its use of the word 'thing' in conceiving of meaning. If everything from the perceived, the measured to the described, the independently identified and the

⁴²⁶ Cf. *Ibid*: 56. Anthony Giddens points essentially to the same argument where he states that: "Ideology refers...to those asymmetries of domination which connect signification to the legitimation of sectional interests". Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984 (1986): 33.

⁴²⁷ Max Black, *The Labyrinth of Language*, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books: 207. See also, Gilbert Ryle, "The Theory of Meaning", *op. cit.*: 128.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid*: 207-208.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid*: 207.

independently discovered are reducible to things, then the theory is reduced to vacuity, confusing reference for meaning.⁴³⁰

Another theory captures meanings as ideas.⁴³¹ While many theories of meaning locate meaning in the 'world' (as something objective and independent of both writer and reader), ignoring the *indirectness* of meaning relations, it is argued that, in fact, it is mediation that gives meaning to the world. Many theorists, in spite of their disagreements, tend to have accepted the *triadic* character of meaning relation.

The basic structure is rendered as follows:

S means such and such to **P**, where **S** is a sign, symbol, word, or expression, and **P** is either a single person, or some group of persons (e.g., a speech-community).⁴³²

Therefore, meanings are taken to exist in 'ideas' or 'concepts', which occur in the mind. As Langer puts it in his *Philosophy in a New Key*:

Symbols are not proxy for their objects, but are *vehicles for the conception of objects*.... In talking *about* things we have conceptions of them, not the things themselves, and

⁴³⁰ Ibid: 209.

⁴³¹ Ibid.

⁴³² Ibid: 210.

*it is conceptions, not the things, that symbols directly "mean".*⁴³³ (Italics in original)

In spite of the arguments by 'methodological behaviouralists' against this *mentalistic* theory of meaning, idea is related to *image*. People associate words with some images. The only problem being that even images needs *interpretation*. Since image itself stands for something that has meaning the search for meaning would be pushed forth by adopting this theory.⁴³⁴

This leads to the causal theories of meaning or what some call the 'psychological theories of meaning':

Causal theories, like the 'mentalistic' theories (...) insist upon the importance of the 'mediational process' induced by perceiving the sign. The sign has meaning or signification only because, when perceived, *something happens in the receiving organism* (let us call it 'interpretation'): hence it is plausible to identify the meaning of the sign – or, more cautiously, an essential aspect or component of that meaning, with such 'interpretation'.⁴³⁵

⁴³³ Quoted in Ibid: 211.

⁴³⁴ Ibid: 213-214.

⁴³⁵ Ibid: 217.

The causal theorists differ from the 'mentalistic' theorists in that they reject the 'unscientific' location of interpretation in 'thought' or 'idea' while they attempt to provide theoretically observable patterns in an organism's brain, body or behaviour to validate '*tangible* interpretation'.

As Black argues, because there are many meanings of meanings - many theories of meanings too - it is difficult, and certainly, inadequate, to attach to a single meaning and abandon the others.⁴³⁶ This is due to the fact that, a word that means one thing - or has a particular 'referent' - in this context may mean another - or, have another 'referent' - in another context; it may in fact, mean different things - or have different 'referents' - in the same context. Therefore:

Any 'theory of meaning', any attempt to do reasonable justice to the ways in which 'meaning' is actually used, will need to take account of the extraordinary shiftiness of the word. Any monolithic, 'single-factor', analysis of meaning is implausible as to deserve little respect.⁴³⁷

⁴³⁶ Ibid: 223-230.

⁴³⁷ Ibid: 224.

Meaning can 'signify', it can 'show', it can 'refer', it can also 'intend'⁴³⁸ in different contexts. There are *factual meanings* – based on empirical facts, *personal meanings* – based on what an individual intends to signify, *standard meaning* – based on what something *generally* signifies. There is also *emotive meaning*, which has to do with the emotional investments in a particular word or phrase. There are *implicit* and *explicit meanings* – 'between what lies near to the surface and what needs to be teased out by reference to the ...unspoken intentions'.⁴³⁹ All of these offer 'tantalizing vistas' for research.

One way to contend with this complexity is to consider the connections between meaning and both *inference* and *understanding*.⁴⁴⁰

To know the meaning of something (in whatever sense) is often to be able to infer what otherwise would remain unknown – or again to understand what was previously mysterious or perplexing. Meaning might be said to provide the link between the seen and the unseen (or, more often, the heard and the unheard).⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁸ Ibid: 224-225.

⁴³⁹ Black argues that we ignore even crude distinctions at our peril. Ibid: 227.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

Yet this constitutes an epigram, and it is only through analysis that meanings can *emerge* or be adduced. As Wittgenstein stated after abandoning his earlier denotationist affiliation, "Don't ask for the meaning, as for the use".⁴⁴² It is by understanding the use in particular contexts that meanings can be encountered.

Recent works in the areas of discourse analysis, which have come to question the material and social construction of meaning have pointed to the range of meanings which are almost always present.⁴⁴³ Taking his cue from the radical analysis of ideology by Althusser in his "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses", Pecheux points to the 'politics of meaning in conflicting discourses', stating that, "words, expressions, propositions, etc., change their meanings according to the positions held by those using them".⁴⁴⁴

While classical Marxist position locates 'ideological apparatuses' in the realm of the state and captures them as apparatuses which function only to legitimise the state, capital and the status quo, it is argued here that in fact, the reverse is possible: That contradiction is inherent in the ideological apparatuses, particularly those

⁴⁴² Ryle, *op. cit.*: 144.

⁴⁴³ Macdonell, *op. cit.* : 24.

⁴⁴⁴ Quoted in *Ibid.*

outside the State, and that therefore, struggle is inevitable. Pecheux's concept of 'disidentification' is very helpful in capturing this argument.⁴⁴⁵ Pecheux argued that subjects might be viewed through three mechanisms. These include *identification*, *counter-identification* and *dis-identification*. 'Good subjects' who 'freely consent' to the image held out to them are grouped under the mode of *identification*. 'Bad subjects' who refuse this image and turn back the meanings are grounded under the mode of *counter-identification*. These two modes support each other.⁴⁴⁶

The third, *disidentification* is described as "an effect of working 'on and against' prevailing practices of ideological subjection".⁴⁴⁷ As Macdonell explains it:

Counter-identification can (...) be understood to come from a rejection of this identity that remains complicit with it. Disidentification, by contrast, comes from another position, one existing antagonistically, with the effect that the identity and identifications set up in dominant ideology, though never escaped entirely, are transformed and displaced. In other words, a disidentification can be brought about by political and ideological practices which work on and against what prevails.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid: 39-40.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid: 40.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

The limitations in the tradition of the analysis of ideology, particularly those preceding the Althusserian tradition, is that they tended to be reductive and therefore overlooked much of the politics of meaning.⁴⁴⁹ To reformulate Althusser's argument – transcending the limitations – human beings exist as subjects in ideology and are constituted there in a double sense: (i) "held to be responsible, centres of initiative, through being", and (ii) "subjected and tied to an imaginary identity". This advances essentially that "ideology installs each of us in an imaginary relation to real relations". And the relation is imaginary because it works through recognition and identification to "hail individuals into place".⁴⁵⁰ But, even within this and outside of this *interpellation*⁴⁵¹ of individuals, ideology can also be used to subvert whatever ideology constructs. Meaning, therefore, exists, both to serve, nourish and establish relations of power,⁴⁵² as well as to subvert and counteract the relations of power.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid: 27. Althusser makes the important point that "ideologies are systems of meanings that install everybody in imaginary relations to the real relations in which they live". The major limitation of this position however is that it preserves the negative connotation of ideology, which we have transcended here.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid: 37.

⁴⁵¹ The concept of *interpellation* "can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: 'Hey, you there!'... The individual will turn round..." Ibid: 38. Cf. Homi Bhabha who argues that "narrative performance interpellates a growing circle of national subjects". Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London and New York: Routledge, 1994: 145.

⁴⁵² Following Foucault, power is seen here as basically a relationship. Foucault's explication of the concept of power, in spite of its limitations, is particularly useful because, (i) it does view power as exclusively negative, (ii) because it

This is due, as advanced earlier, to the inherent contradiction of ideology, which makes struggles possible.

The foregoing arguments translate to a view of the politics of meaning which alerts us to the fact that words do not have a meaning of their own, discourses/narratives – discursive narratives – determine meaning. And there are many and conflicting narrative discourses, given that meanings exist antagonistically (within and around struggles which these discursive narratives ultimately speak to): “(They) come from positions in struggle, so that ‘words... change meaning according to the position’ from which they are used”.⁴⁵³

Where such struggles are enacted in the context of *nation being*, discursive narratives become, what Homi Bhabha has described as “the grim prose of power that each nation (...) wield”.⁴⁵⁴ The effects of the “conceptual indeterminacy” of the nation and the fact that it “wavers between vocabularies” have implications for the

also links power to discourse by noting that “relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the accumulation and functioning of a discourse”, (iii) it also notes that resistance is integral to power – “Resistances are the odd term in relations of. Power; they are inscribed in the latter as an irreducible opposite”. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, C. Gordon (ed.) Brighton: Harvester, 1980: 93&95.

⁴⁵³ Ibid: 47&51.

⁴⁵⁴ Bhabha, “Introduction: Narrating the Nation”, Bhabha (ed.) *Nation and Narration*, *op. cit.* : 1.

"narratives and discourses that signify a sense of 'nationness'⁴⁵⁵ – and the struggles that define this *sense* of nationness. To encounter the nation *as it is written*⁴⁵⁶ is to capture the nation *in* its myriad, and sometimes clashing, narratives; it is also (additionally) to capture the (grand) nation *itself as a narrative*. This departure point enables the examination of the subtle, but crucial exercise of power which are often overlooked:

Indeed the exercise of power may be both politically effective and psychically *affective* because the discursive liminality through which it is signified may provide greater scope for strategic manoeuvre and negotiation.⁴⁵⁷

Questions about power in society are questions about the very nature of politics and policy process.⁴⁵⁸ Although power can be at its most alarming and most horrifying when it is used as 'sanction of force', but it is usually at its 'most intense and most durable' when it is silently running through *repetitive institutionalised practices*.⁴⁵⁹ Such repetitive institutionalised practices, can and do, in fact, include, in

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid: 2.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁷ Homi Bhabha, "Dissemination", *The Location of Culture*, op. cit: 145.

⁴⁵⁸ Dowding, Keith, *Power*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996: 1.

⁴⁵⁹ Anthony Giddens, *The Nation State and Violence*, Beckley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987: 9

the reading here, *communicative practices*, such as the *negotiation and enactment of power through the mobilization of meaning in the press*.

Where the myth of 'nation' is an aspiration that seeks to override competing nations – based in their turn, on longer surviving myths - within a territorial boundary, the narratives of such a 'nation' – and the 'nation' itself - become a grand narrative.

In such a context,

We are confronted with the nation split within itself, articulating the heterogeneity of its population. The barred Nation *It/Self*, alienated from its eternal self-generation, becomes a liminal signifying space that is *internally* marked by the discourses of minorities, the heterogeneous histories of contending peoples, antagonistic authorities and tense locations of cultural difference.⁴⁶⁰

Grand narratives - (of) nations, like all narratives, invite counter-narratives that contest and "continually evoke and erase (the) totalizing boundaries (and) disturb those ideological manoeuvres through which 'imagined communities' are given essentialist identities".⁴⁶¹

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid: 148.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid: 149.

10. *Conclusion*

This section has examined narratives, nation, myth, discourse, meaning and power putting them in the context of an epistemological debate about the nature of reality and how it is encountered, concluding with an attempt to theorise the narration of the Nigerian 'nation' in the press.

The next chapter and succeeding chapters (four to six) examine, in some empirical contexts, the narratives of *nation* in the press in Nigeria.

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CHAPTER THREE

BACKGROUND TO INDEPENDENCE: 'NATIONS' IN THE MAKING OF A 'GRAND NATION' - 1952-1954

1. *Introduction*

In the years leading up to Nigeria's independence in 1960, the major power blocs in the country, primarily, the East, the North and the West,¹ organized essentially around the three major political parties, the National Council for Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC)², the Northern People's Congress (NPC) and the Action group (AG) respectively. This struggle to define the character and logic of the emergent state and hoped-for *grand nation*, through the leveraging of group interests within the larger context, was very evident in the major newspapers that represented each of these political persuasions and, by extension, their regions.

¹ There were some minority areas that also registered their presence in limited ways, like the Kanuri (Bornu) and the Bini (Mid-West), even though they were *submerged* in the overall struggles.

² This later became the National Council for Nigerian Citizens

The issue of the date for the attainment of self-rule is one of the principal controversial issues in this era. On March 31 1953, Honourable Anthony Enahoro tabled a motion before the House of Representatives praying acceptance "as the primary political objective the attainment of self-government for Nigeria in 1956".³ Stated the Action Group member:

...the bare idea of self-government is no longer attractive, is no longer enough. Whether it is expressed as 'self-government in our life-time' or 'self-government in the shortest possible time' or 'self-government as soon as practicable', it has seized to be a progressive view, because Nigerian nationalism has moved forward from that position. The question in the public mind since the end of the war has been, 'self-government, when? What time, what date?'⁴

The leader of the Northern People's Congress (NPC), and Sardauna of Sokoto, Ahmadu Bello, aborted this motion through a dilatory motion. He moved the

³ Quoted in "Leaders and Self-government for Nigeria", Special Review Section, *Vanguard*, January 14 2000: 20.

⁴ Quoted in Coleman, James S., *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*, op. cit.: 399.

adoption of an amendment substituting "as soon as practicable" for 1956.⁵ A "bitter and tempestuous" debate ensued and members of the NCNC and AG staged a walk out.

Bello clarified the position of northern delegates:

Before we commit ourselves, we must (...) seek a mandate from our people so that when we speak we know that we are voicing their feelings (so that) when self-government comes to that Region (North) it shall not be a matter of regret. (Motions like this) merely serve to destroy inter-regional unity which the (Richards) Constitution is building....⁶

Bello added that, "sixty years ago, there was no Nigeria but merely a collection of communities very different in outlook and mode of life".⁷ The events that followed almost ended the *Nigerian project* at that point given the fact that after the adjournment Northern members of the House were insulted and abused by Lagos

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ "North Not Ready for Self Rule in 1956 – Sardauna", *Vanguard*, Jan. 9 2000: 32.

⁷ Ibid.

crowds, and subsequently ridiculed and criticised by the southern press.

Consequently, when they returned to the North they swore never to endure such humiliation again. They then announced an Eight-Point programme the implementation of which would have signalled virtual secession of the Northern Region from Nigeria.⁸

The Sardauna who described the Lagos crowds as "bands of hooligans", stated:

A most unpleasant feature of our last three days in Lagos was the bands of hooligans who were organised by unscrupulous politicians to abuse anyone seen to be wearing Northern dress who appeared to be a member of the House of Representatives. The abusive language they used and their behaviour disgusted us and left us in no doubt as to the type of undemocratic tactics that were being used to attempt to frighten us Northerners.⁹

⁸ Coleman, *Ibid*; see also, Crowder, Michael, *The Story of Nigeria*, London: Faber and Faber, 1962 (1978): 234.

⁹ "North Not Ready for Self Rule in 1956", *op. cit.*

The decision by the southern parties, NCNC and AG to send delegates to the north to campaign for self-government in 1956 only worsened matter as the AG delegation, led by Samuel Ladoke Akintola provoked riots in Kano in which 36 people reportedly died. This crisis was only a manifestation of a deeper problem, which included the fear of southern domination in the north and the dissatisfaction of southerners with the 1951 constitution and the slow pace of the movement towards self-government. ¹⁰ As Nnamdi Azikiwe articulated the position of his party:

The issue of self-government is paramount in our political programme. In August, 1951, we decided at the Kano Convention of our Party to work strenuously and constitutionally to make self-government a reality in or before 1956. By this we meant and were understood to mean that, by 1956, Nigeria shall have a constitution conferring internal and external sovereignty on her.¹¹

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Quoted in, "Leaders and Self-government for Nigeria", op. cit.

But the alliance between the NCNC and AG over the issue of independence was to hit the rock when the issue of the status of Lagos again arose.¹²

The function of the newspapers, within the context of the struggles for ethno-regional validation and ascendancy and the attempts by each of the power-blocs and the political representation, to become the authoritative embodiment of the grand nation, present very interesting dimensions of the mobilisation of meaning in the service of power. The newspapers as mouthpieces of powerful groups, function to “accumulate, reformulate and disseminate the ... heritage of group(s)”¹³ and their interests. Given the fact that every narrative of the political world touches the interest of some group or individuals, it invites divergent interpretation and opposing narratives.

¹² Crowder, Michael, *The Story of Nigeria*, op. cit.

¹³ Mannheim, op. cit.: xxix

In this chapter, the narrations, by five newspapers, of the struggle towards independence, particularly regarding when and how, the status of Lagos and related issues, are examined. The newspapers include the *West African Pilot* owned by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, the leader of the NCNC (East), the *Nigerian Tribune*, owned by Chief Obafemi Awolowo, leader of the Action Group (West), the *Daily Service*, the official organ of the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM), the *Daily Times*, owned by the British Mirror Group, and the *Nigerian Citizen*, owned by the Northern region's colonial government.

The focus is based solely on *issue* rather than period. Yet, the controversial issues covered arose at a specific conjuncture in the history of the Nigerian 'nation'. Therefore, we can say that the period covered in this chapter falls roughly between 1950 and 1953.

2. *Narrating the Grand Nation*

As the emergent 'nation' meandered its way through the many *roadblocks* on the pathway to independence, two issues attracted the greatest attention of the newspapers of this period. The first is the date of independence and the second concerned the status of Lagos. Several other issues related to this two or bothering them, or more generally related to the dynamics of the contending *nations* and the *grand nation* were also narrated.

At what might be taken as the beginning of these narratives, the *Nigerian Citizen* does not devote much attention to the heated debates, which had been going on even before then, in the Southern newspapers. But there are a few narratives that either directly (and indirectly) reflect the pattern of the struggles for power or focus on the place of the north in the emergent equation.

It is evident that even the newspapers see one another as important vehicles and extensions of the struggle for power. The *Nigerian Citizen* (hereafter, *Citizen*) for instance reports Mr. Ladoke Akintola, former editor of *Daily Service*, and one of the leading members of the Action Groups as ridiculing Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe (NCNC leader, (popularly called Zik) who had announced that he might quit politics:

Mr. Akintola wondered how it would be possible for Zik to quit politics when he retained his interests in the *West African Pilot* and the Ibo State Union, two political organisations.¹⁴

This implies that anyone who was involved in the vehicles of narrating the relations of domination, as the newspapers were regarded, could not be taken to have withdrawn from politics.

The *Citizen* is concerned with other indices of development that are tied to political power. When Sokoto Province set a target of 10,000 new literates in a year

¹⁴ "Zik to Leave Politics: N.E.C. Leaders View", *Nigerian Citizen* (hereafter, *NC*), Jan. 19, 1952: 3.

in 1951, the paper describes it as "giving a lead to the rest of (the eleven provinces) in the North".¹⁵ Yet, the paper is unhappy with this:

Presumably, Sokoto's target has been set low because it is a target, which can be achieved. It is a pity that in *this year of great constitutional changes and elections*, the figure could not have been much higher for Sokoto as well as other Provinces¹⁶ (emphasis added).

First, the *Citizen* camouflages the reason for the "pity", stating that literacy is "only the beginning of the emancipation of the people of Nigeria".¹⁷ Its *real* concern is to later follow:

Without mass literacy, the prospect of the true development of the North in politics, commerce, agriculture and industry, are remote indeed.¹⁸

Even without this, the reference to the "year of great constitutional changes and elections" indicates the political implications of literacy for the North, particularly

¹⁵ "Literacy" (editorial) *NC*, Jan. 26, 1951.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

in relation to the "educational advantage" which the rival South enjoyed. It is understandable therefore that even in matters of scholarship, the political implications of the procedure of application is raised in a letter to the editor:

When the British Council announced in the *Citizen* that applicants from Kabba and Ilorin Provinces for scholarship should apply to the Western Provinces it seems that it was forgotten that under the new Constitution these two provinces are to *remain in the North. The majority of the people of these provinces want to stay in the North – then let us deal exclusively with the North on all matters*¹⁹ (emphasis added).

These areas of the country, Kabba and Ilorin provinces were historically Yoruba areas, which owing to the Fulani Jihad which started in 1804 and the power struggle in Yoruba land, were taken over by the Fulani and incorporated into the Sokoto Caliphate. One of the major struggles in this era was the attempt by the

¹⁹ "Points from Your Letters", *NC*, Feb. 2, 1951: 8.

Yoruba West to re-integrate these areas into the West, which was seriously opposed by the North.

Other areas in which political power is implicated in discourses seemingly unrelated to politics are arts and cattle rearing. The *Citizen* in its review of the Nigerian Festival of Arts, in which the North did not have "large scale entries", reminds its readers that the paper's staff writer had once asked, "Why not hold a Festival of Arts in the North?"²⁰ This had "unhappily"²¹ failed to elicit a "rush of *public spirited men* to form Northern Festival Committee".²² This is then narrated as dangerous for the preservation of the North's "way of life":

Surely, if the *peoples of the North* have any love for and faith in their own ways of life – which, after all, their culture and art should represent – they should themselves make an effort to preserve them.²³

²⁰ "Northern Art", (Editorial) *NC*, Feb. 16, 1951: 6.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

Unwittingly the idea of the 'peoples of the North' tends to contest an overriding image of "one North, one people". However, the image of a different "us" (North) against "them" (South) is still evident.

As regards livestock, *Citizen* refers to a report written by Mr. Thomas Shaw and Mr. Gilbert Colville, two British livestock experts who noted *inter alia* that:

No matter *how aesthetically attractive the race (Fulani) may be, or how deep its roots in history, they and their cattle must be settled if the large issue in Nigeria are to be solved* in the interest of the Nigerian people. There can be no question of their preservation as nomadic cattle owners, owing loyalty neither to the soil nor to the territory²⁴ (emphasis added).

In its reaction to this proposal, sections of which are quoted ostensibly deliberately to highlight some points – like the fair looks of the Fulani and their "deep

²⁴ "Reservation for Fulani Urged: Livestock Mission Proposal", *NC*, March 2, 1951, lead story (front page).

historical roots" – *Citizen* states that "there is something (almost) Machiavellian"²⁵ in the suggestion of the reports. The paper in particular, raises issue with the plan:

That the independent Fulani herds men should be lured away from his wandering life by his wife, who would be subjected to a propaganda campaign in which the good things money can buy will be dangled before her eyes.²⁶

The paper can be said to be defending the (Fulani) 'nation' against subversion by foreign logic – even where the foreign power is a friendly one or a partner with the power elite, which the paper represents.

In this same period that the *Citizen* focuses on all these, the *Nigerian Tribune* (hereafter, *Tribune*) focuses on the talks on self-government and the meetings being held. It compares the "performances of our Northern brethren" at the general conference held in Ibadan with the pre-independence Indian scene, where,

²⁵ "Nigerian Livestock Mission Report. And the Women", *NC*, March 2, 1951: 4.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

(T)he imperialist, like a drowning man clutching at a straw which might save him, made capital politics of communal difference which very nearly plunged that ancient country into chaos.²⁷

The *Tribune* presents 'the North' as the 'problem' in the attempt to drive British 'imperialists' out of Nigeria because the North is the "straw" – a *regrettable* saving grace – which the British held on to. The paper therefore puts the case "plainly and bluntly"²⁸ to Northerners:

Are they prepared or are they not to join hands with us in building one country and one Government?²⁹

If "they" are ready, the *Tribune* declares, they should de-link from their 'masters', their "imperialist shibboleth" and if they are not, "well, let them go *their own way* and we go *ours*"³⁰ (emphasis added).

²⁷ "Imperialist Trump Card", *Nigerian Tribune* (hereafter, *NT*), Feb. 16, 1951.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

Although *Tribune* does not state clearly who "we" are against the Northern "they", it can be safely assumed that it is the Southern "we", given the fact that the paper goes on to mention "communal antagonism –especially between North and South" which may "spell the doom of" the grand nation which the North is invited to join in building.

In spite of the fact that the *Citizen* did not initially devote much attention to the conference in Ibadan, it still sees the press as crucial in reporting the conference because of the election that was to follow the new constitution.³¹ Its position on this was therefore functional.

Simultaneous attempts are often made at *unification* and *fragmentation* through *differentiation* or *expurgation of the other*. While *Citizen* celebrates the opening of a new trunk line telephone system linking Kaduna with Enugu and Lagos which, "for the first time...enables the people of North, East and West Regions to talk

³¹ "The Press", (editorial), *NC*, March 30, 1951: 6.

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³¹ “The Press”, (editorial), *NC*, March 30, 1951: 6.

solidarity (grand nation – “Nigeria must come first”), it also speaks to difference indirectly when it asks for “closer contact” with the assumedly misunderstood, misrepresented ‘remote’ part of Nigeria – the North.

The paper, later begins to respond to the narratives of collusion with ‘imperialists’ as the one from *Tribune* above:

Nigerians must seriously consider whether those who are clamouring for immediate “release from imperialist bondage” are capable of leading the country to better things. “Imperialists” have at least *given the country stability*, expanding educational and medical services and some standing in the modern world to *name but a few advantages*³⁴ (emphasis added).

But for the *Tribune*,

British imperialism (...) has failed to fulfil the mission for which it set out. UNITY of the North, East and West they

³⁴ “Give and Take”, *NC* (editorial), April 27, 1951.

promised us. They have achieved, to our horror, DISUNITY³⁵ (emphasis in original).

Citizen contradicts the images of a "nation up in arms" against 'imperialists', presenting them as 'benefactors' of the country who had done so much that "only a few" could be named. In what follows however, the fact that the North was yet to "come to" like the South is betrayed, although this is shielded by focusing on all "our leaders" as if in every section of the country, the leaders were not yet ready for "heavy responsibility":

Until, under the new Constitution, our leaders can obtain experience in national affairs and become acquainted with the heavy responsibilities of government, proving themselves efficient administrators, it would be obviously unwise for the present Government in Nigeria to hand over completely to an unproved administration.³⁶

³⁵ "Hand in hand", *NT* (editorial), Feb. 2, 1050.

³⁶ "Give And Take", *op. cit.*

That the interest of the North is well served by the British colonial government is evident in the celebration of British "dominion" (not imperialism) on Empire Day by the *Citizen*. The *Citizen* rejoices that this power had served Nigeria well, better than any other Great Power would have:

There is little doubt that if the British had not acquired their vast empire, these territories would have fallen under the dominion of other Imperial Powers. Who can say that the colonies would have been given as *great a measure of justice*, under any other great power³⁷ (emphasis added).

Those fighting for independence from the British are "enemies and critics" of the British Empire who are "extremist nationalists and communists"³⁸. This legitimises the British colonial enterprise through rationalization "which seeks to defend or justify a set of social relations or institutions, and thereby to persuade an

³⁷ "Empire Day (editorial) *NC*, May 18, 1951.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

audience that it is worthy of support"³⁹. *Daily Times*, had earlier called on Nigerians to deal with such "extremists" as the ones *Citizen* points to:

What Nigerians must do therefore, is to remove (...) the present *gang of irresponsible communist-minded youths*⁴⁰ (emphasis added).

Thompson describes this type of symbolic construction as one in which an "enemy is constructed or identified within and portrayed as so evil and harmful or threatening as to demand collective resistance or expurgation".

These 'gang' of 'extremists' and the 'communist-minded', for the *West African Pilot* (hereafter, *Pilot*), a 'militant' newspaper, are "filled with fine moral and ethical concepts, each reflecting the sincere, profound beliefs of workers".⁴¹

Pilot constantly condemns any action by the government against labour, a major plank of the anti-colonial movement:

³⁹ Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture*, op. cit.: 61.

⁴⁰ "Workers Beware" (editorial) *Daily Times* (hereafter *DT*) Jan. 20 1951: 5.

⁴¹ "Labour in a Dependency", *West African Pilot* (hereafter, *WAP*), Jan. 1 1952, front-page analysis.

The attitude of government towards a union which did exercise its rights of collective bargaining and which when driven to desperation employed the strike weapon reveal a determined and obstreperous element in labour management....⁴²

The representation of individuals and groups embedded in relations of domination as endowed with some characteristics accentuates certain features at the expense of others for good or for ill, thereby making individuals and groups to take on positive or negative images. As a strategy of symbolic construction, metaphors can be used both ways. This is, for instance, evident in the charge in Southern newspapers that the 'moderation' of the North was a negative factor in the push towards independence. *The Citizen* counters this. First it reviews the state of affairs:

Whereas in other Regions at the moment, there is considerable political activity – *exaggerated, no doubt, by*

⁴² Ibid.

*the organs supporting the contesting parties*⁴³ – the North seems hardly yet to have awakened to the new constitution (emphasis added).⁴⁴

And then, it locates the problem:

In the East and West Regions, the political campaigns seem to be degenerating into little more than a slanging (sic) match between rival organisations.⁴⁵

The 'rival organizations' were obviously the NCNC and the AG. This reference in a way removes the North from the 'rivalry' or 'bickering' of these "slanging (sic) match". The North's 'aloofness' is then constructed as rather 'dignifying':

But there is one aspect of the Southern polemics which we must comment upon – the word "moderation" has been used as a taunt. Why this should be so we cannot understand.... The person who practices moderation in private life is generally to be respected. The same thing

⁴³ Ostensible, *WAP* (NCNC), *Daily Service* and *Nigerian Tribune* (AG)

⁴⁴ "Moderation", *NC*, June 1 1952: 6.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

we believe is true of public life and party politics. The opposite is excess – or extremism. People who go to extremes in private life, usually end in trouble. So it is in the affairs of parties and nations.... The *Citizen* believes in moderation, and is prepared to support those who proclaim it is politics, because we sincerely believe that the antonym – extremism – if carried into effect, ultimately means misery for the mass of the people.⁴⁶

The *moderation* of the Northerner, for the *Pilot*, makes him a "very patient imperialist pet":⁴⁷

The Northerner is *involuntarily bottled, corked and sealed* from all manner of outside interference by his *foreign caretaker*, the grand idea being to keep him unsoiled and undefiled by contact with his brethren down South. That has been the imperialist game for the last fifty years where the Southerner had been mercilessly maligned, stigmatised and luridly coloured⁴⁸ (emphasis added).

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ "The Bottled Northerner" (editorial) *WAP*, Nov. 24 1952: 7.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

But there is *hope* for this 'pet' as he will later be encouraged to join the 'grand nation' from which his *foreign caretakers* is preventing him:

With freedom of association, the Northerner will soon come to realise that *we must grow homogeneously as one nation*⁴⁹ (emphasis added).

Tribune argues that the North, "should not be blamed, but rather pitied",

because,

West and East, the places where the *healthy and enlightening sun rises and sets*, have received in great abundance, their showers of applause for a noble show....

The rest of Nigeria beckoned to the North to join in the march but there was no response⁵⁰ (emphasis added).

Yet the *Citizen* characterises these attributes as "the traditional quiet and orderly manner (of the Northerner)".⁵¹

⁴⁹ Ibid. Cf. "Surprise from the North", (editorial) *WAP*, Feb 19, 1952: "The Northern legislators are proving equal to the task before them.... Whatever may be the opinion in the North, it is nevertheless a sign of political awakening made more so by Southern influence. We wish the speed be accelerated to cover up the gap left by many years of lagging.... Northern conservatism is breaking. When that is consolidated, a free and more dynamic North will indeed emerge".

⁵⁰ "Hand in Hand", *op. cit.* The adjectives "healthy" and "enlightening" qualifying the sun could be regarded as speaking to the backwardness of the North with the attendant problems.

⁵¹ "Elections", (editorial), *Nigerian Citizen* (hereafter, *NC*) Aug. 23 1951: 8.

Where *Pilot* emphasises the "stigmatisation" of the Southerner in the North, it overlooks the constant 'stigmatisation' going on between the East and West (where *Tribune's* 'healthy and enlightening sun rises and sets') aided by *Service* and *Tribune*. Even in deriding the North in which the "imperialist has not yet been cornered in the race to perpetuate his rule in this country", *Pilot* attacks any politician – apparently Chief Obafemi Awolowo (hereafter, Awo), the leader of the Action Group – "who thinks Nigeria can be emancipated through political parties with tribal bias". The paper invites such politicians to visit Sokoto, Adamawa and Bauchi provinces in the North to witness the 'vice hold' of the imperialists:

In Sokoto Province today to be specific, the ordinary Northerner, let alone the Sultan and the Alkalis, will find it hard to understand what the NCNC, or even less, the Action Group, mean by the present struggle to break the shackles of imperialism to seek for freedom when to all appearances, he is the monarch of all he surveys⁵² (emphasis added).

⁵² "North and Our Freedom", (editorial) *WAP*, Nov 19 1952: 2.

This 'ignorant' Sultan - as a metaphor for the whole North – and his limited conception of freedom constitute such formidable 'stumbling block' in the path of freedom and progress that it can hardly be righted:

The Northerner has been completely imbued with a *false sense of security, misconceived idea of importance, or greatness, of unlimited authority and majesty* – that any attempt to win his support, to enlighten or educate him, to appreciate the fact that he is not that free, is bound to fail⁵³ (emphasis added).

Before dwelling on the rivalry in the South, which is, in the contexts above, presented as if it were a solid anti-thesis of a monolithic North, it is interesting to note that barely one year earlier, the same *Pilot* had noted the potential of the North to join the grand nation in progress. The doubts about the North's ability to do this is transposed to the "others" (political observers) as if it were not shared by *Pilot* and the NCNC:

⁵³ Ibid.

Political observers who for long had doubted the capability of our Northern brethren to don on (sic) the toga of maturity are fast jumping to the conclusion that with the restraining arm of the expatriate removed, the North can march abreast the South...⁵⁴(emphasis added).

This is a result of contact with the North's 'civilised Other':

The well-nigh seven months contact with the South through the meetings of the House of Representatives has helped to remove much of the clouds of despair which for long made the Northerner a forgotten brethren in the social milieu...⁵⁵

In this narrative of power, the North is not only presented as 'inferior', its readiness to join the rest of the grand nation is even rendered in very condescending manner:

...(T)he vocal section of the North is its youth. They have tomorrow and with the *temper of the nation clamouring for the rewards of the morrow*, no one will essay the hope that the Northern youth will watch unmoved *the advance*

⁵⁴ "Even the North is Ready", (editorial), *WAP*, Oct. 15, 1952:2.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*

of his Southern compeer without joining the stream of progress⁵⁶ (emphasis added).

Prior to the formation of the Action Group in 1951, the NCNC had achieved unrivalled prominence and credibility as the only nationalist party. The formation of the AG, after the crisis and eventual death of the organisation of activists and nationalists, and issuing from *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* (Society for Oduduwa Descendants – the Yoruba), meant that the NCNC could no longer enjoy its position without a fight. What was more, the two parties were led by the protagonists in the bitter battle for the soul of the Nigerian Youth Movement including Zik and Awo; which translated to the continuation of old rivalries and old accusations of 'tribalism'. The *Pilot* therefore regards the AG as "NYM-Oduduwa clique and reactionary group"⁵⁷ with "tribal tinge" and "Pakistan-like" goals.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ "Lagos Belongs to All Alike", (editorial) *WAP*, Jan. 14 1952.

Tribune argues in this vein that “background” – the past – would come into play in the ‘forthcoming elections’:

We have a sure rest of mind and pride that the leader of Action Group will score heavily over Dr. Azikiwe and his *train of mischief-makers*⁵⁹ (emphasis added).

The paper places on record past statements of a “notorious liar” – Zik, with his “nefarious acts and vile propaganda” over taxation – “for the present generation and posterity to read and judge what sort of politician-capitalist he is”.⁶⁰

The word ‘capitalist’ must be understood within the context of the time. This was a period in which socialism – communism – was very popular among activists; it was as much a word of praise to be called a ‘socialist’ among activists as it was a ‘swear word’ to be called a ‘capitalist’.

⁵⁸ “We Will Have no Pakistan” (editorial) Jan 12, 1952. Interestingly, *Pilot* had welcomed the AG when it was formally launched in March 1951: “its aims and objects are laudable and its programme of action is varied and wide. From all appearances it is an awakening consciousness in the West”. *WAP*, March 29, 1951.

⁵⁹ “A Notorious Liar”, (editorial), *NT*, July 30, 1951.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

The subject of Zik's 'sins' was his 'empty effusions called presidential address to the 'Ibo Nation' in 1949"⁶¹ where he reportedly said, "we (the Igbo) have been taxed without representation and our contributions in taxes have been used to develop other areas, out of proportion to the incidence of taxation in those areas".⁶²

Tribune states that:

In short, Zik indicated that the West and the North were living on the resources of the 'fabulous wealth' of the East... (and that) the East has never had amenities in proportion with (sic) her output.⁶³

The paper then narrates "*the truth* about the whole situation", according to Hick's Report on the old revenue allocation system:

In 1948-49, the East was entitled to spend 25.9 percent of the revenue, but record shows that it went beyond the provision and spent 34.6 percent. West was entitled to 30.6 percent, but spent 24.7 percent. North was entitled to

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

43.9 percent; but spent 40.7 percent. In 1950-51, the allocation for the East was 30.9 percent, but spent 36.4 percent. West had 27.4 percent, spent 27.9 percent; and North 41.7 percent but spent 35.7 percent.⁶⁴

That is not all:

Besides, the following records about the social amenities for the three regions show that East has been living *quite luxuriously on the resources of other regions*:

	<i>Per Million of Population</i>		
	<i>East</i>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>
Hospital Beds	590	235	215
Dispensaries	49	41	25
Primary Schools	654	821	106
Secondary Schools	20	6	4
Teacher Training Ins.	9	9	2 ⁶⁵

Tribune however does not tell its readers what formula was used in distributing the resources. What does it mean to say a region was "entitled" to an amount? Was it based on derivative principle or that of need or population?

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

For the *Pilot*, the AG was a party that represents all evil and should therefore not live. The AG is dangerous to Nigerian unity, peace and progress, all that the NCNC represents:

In their determination to remain difficult to Nigerian unity, in their rashness and utter disregard for the fate of millions of Westerners, in their undisguised problems to a balanced economy of the Western Region, the Action Group Government of the West *blindly gropes its way in a tragedy of horrifying complications*. Beset on all sides by the evils of regionalisation, it is at the moment confronted with the Lagos merger issue, the re-classification of Ilorin (...) all uniting to intensify the horror of the spectre haunting the party⁶⁶ (emphasis added).

This 'tragedy of horrifying complications' in which AG government 'blindly gropes' contrasts with the NCNC which 'nevertheless',

will not divert from its course of action, but will relentlessly continue to *pilot the nation* along our economic stability

⁶⁶ "What Blind Ambition Can Do!" (Editorial) *WAP*, July 19 1952: 2.

road to the beautiful sunny meadows where an independent Nigeria will thrive (emphasis added).⁶⁷

Placing the word *pilot*, which is the name of the paper, beside *the nation* has symbolic implications, in the way it seeks to link the fate of *the nation* with the efforts or activities of its *pilot*. The *Pilot* provides the pathway to saving 'the nation':

Things have come to such a pass that soon *the nation* will meet again to determine whether a halt must be called to these *expensive incursions into the heart* and stability of this country⁶⁸ (emphasis added).

The elaborate policy papers with which the AG was heralded, according to the *Pilot*, is a ruse as the party is only a "weakling (which) has no blue-print to execute":

In the spate of only nine months, the Action Group, on the national plane, has offered *students of history nothing new* in spite of its claim to "bold plans". It started off a parochial party to enable some "*political minions*" to rise

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

*into public gaze, and then begin simulating the NCNC's national policy*⁶⁹ (emphasis added).

Pilot's 'political minions' is a veiled reference to Awo – and his fellow travellers – whose name and image, at that point, did not compare to the towering name and image of Zik and could not therefore be tolerated in his challenges against the latter. Awo's emergence as an important figure in youth, Western and federal politics – in that order – through the NYM, *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* and AG to become a formidable rival of Zik was achieved through "questionable methods" as far as *Pilot* is concerned:

If to attain an objective, questionable methods must be employed and national solidarity and coherence sacrificed on the alter of *personal aggrandisement – only to change tactics and play the other way round to save our face – then the nation itself the nature of fickle lily-livered representatives it has unfortunately chosen*⁷⁰ (emphasis added).

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ "Members of One Family", *WAP* (editorial), October 7 1952.

The *political minions* and their party, for *Pilot*, constitute a danger to the Western Region in which the "great Yoruba race" is "penned in within...narrow confines". The race is,

yet to appreciate the full predicament in which it is placed through the Action Group('s) *tribalistic demarcation of the country*.... Already the *evils of Action Group ('s) parochial nationalism* is telling on the solidarity of its precious Western Region⁷¹ (emphasis added).

Service later responds to these attacks:

After he had been assisted to *find his feet*, Azikiwe turned round to attack *every Western leader* beginning with his benefactors.... *He created confusion among the Yorubas*.... Before Azikiwe came to Nigeria after he had been out of the Gold Coast, the Yorubas and the Ibos lived together happily. There was no hatred, no contempt, no bitterness between them. But as soon as he arrived he began to *preach his doctrine of tribal hate*.⁷²

⁷¹ "Evils of Narrow Nationalism", (editorial) *WAP*, October 1 1952.

⁷² "Confusion Goes East", (editorial) *Daily Service* (hereafter, *DS*) Jan 26 1953.

The *Service* ridicules the NCNC “hush-hush” special convention in which “top secret” decisions were said to have been taken to break the Macpherson Constitution – which provides for “regionalisation” which the NCNC and *Pilot* attack thoroughly:

Those who did not know the NCNC thought there was going to be a revolution or a constitutional crisis.... But we knew that Dr. Azikiwe will be the very last person to give up his 420 (pound) per annum seat in the Western House of Assembly for any idealism.... (W)hat will ensure the achievement of self-government is not the empty braggadocio for which the NCNC is notorious but *thorough and calculated planning and systematic execution*⁷³ (emphasis added).

Service did not need to add that the AG is noted, in contrast, for the latter. But for *Pilot*, those who chose regionalisation – the ‘Groupers’ – were “antipodes (...) sworn enemies of progress, of light and of freedom”.⁷⁴ *Pilot*’s NCNC, unlike

⁷³ “Empty Braggarts” (editorial) *DS*, Jan 8 1953.

⁷⁴ “Latest Fashion in Antipodes” (editorial), *WAP*, October 9 1952.

Service's NCNC (of 'empty braggadocio'), is "that force that strikes terror into the hearts of the enemies of one Nigeria".⁷⁵

The crisis of the NYM rears its head here again as J.O. writing in *Pilot* disagrees with Arthur Prest writing in *Service* that Zik destroyed the NYM. J.O. states that, the Movement (NYM) destroyed itself:

The edifice was nobly conceived and the designers and the architects were activated by patriotic and national motives. While the erection of this edifice was in progress, *some of the builders added very bad stones from a quarry which was owned and operated through tribalism.* The edifice shook and later collapsed with a crash on the tribe-barters' heads. The quarry was the *Daily Service* and the builders and stones I leave to the readers to decipher⁷⁶ (emphasis added).

The *bad builders* were obviously Awo and his colleagues, while the stones were *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* and Action Group.

⁷⁵ "Short Cuts to Independence", (editorial) *WAP*, Oct. 10 1952.

⁷⁶ "Unification of Nigerian Tribes" by J.O., (opinion article), *WAP*, Jan 3 1952.

Service takes on Zik as much as *Pilot* tasks Awo. It would seem that his (Zik's) moves or moves around him invite negative interpretation. Even the proposed cabinet reshuffle in the East is derided:

The proposal of the Azikiwe clique in the NCNC to reshuffle the Eastern Regional Government is an *eloquent evidence of opportunism and careerism*⁷⁷ (emphasis added).

The narrative of the consequences of Zik's 'politics of hate' continues:

Many unsuspecting Ibos and Easterners fell victims to (sic) his devilish doctrine especially when he propagated the theory that the Ibo nation was destined by God to lead the whole of Africa out of the bonds of the ages.⁷⁸

This kind of "absurdities" ostensibly by the *Service* among others, is narrated by *Pilot* as introducing issues of "entirely personal character", which, become exposed and all the more pronounced when they decry Zik, call him names and daub him a dangerous

⁷⁷ "Opportunism" (editorial) *DS*, Jan 10 1953.

⁷⁸ "Will the East Surrender?" (editorial) *DS*, Jan 27 1953.

character for *no other reason than that he stands for one Nigeria*, convinced that *tribal struggles* makes scientific objectivity a crime and in principle and practice, renders impossible any agreement and progress towards our goals.⁷⁹

The rivalry between the AG and NCNC could as well be said to have been conducted mainly on the pages of newspapers – at least in the intervening period between elections and even then, these sites become almost as crucial as the polling centres.

Service avers that "foolery" is intrinsic to membership of NCNC:

When does an NCNCer cease to be an NCNCer?

Answer: When he ceases to be fooled by newspaper stunts.⁸⁰

And the leader of the NCNC, Zik, is:

⁷⁹ "The Fallacy of Regionalisation" (editorial), *WAP*, Jan 12 1952.

⁸⁰ "An NCNCer", *Wit and Humour: By Spartacus, DS, and Jan.3 1953*.

(T)he *aspiring dictator* of Yaba (...) surrounded by *ragamuffins*, gutter snipes and *political rouges*⁸¹ (emphasis added).

But for *Pilot*:

(There) is a fundamental difference between the NCNC and the *gang of political careerists who call themselves Action Group*⁸²(emphasis added).

The narratives in the *Pilot* when Zik was defeated on January 10, 1952 at the Western House of Assembly in the election (by electoral college) to the Federal House of Representatives sounded the death-knell on the idea of Nigeria. The action, in which Dr. A.B.I. Olorun-Nimbe, of the NCNC stood against Zik and was supported by the AG members, provoked so much passion in the *Pilot*. The paper asked for a boycott of the House of Reps in the event of the "indication of the

⁸¹ "Reject Confusion" (editorial), *DS*, Jan 29 1953.

⁸² "A Fundamental Difference", (editorial) *WAP*, Jan 8 1953.

doctrine of tribalism preached by the Action Group".⁸³ Onitsha, Zik's hometown, is "shocked" by the news, while a "pall of gloom hovered over" it because of what happened to "Onitsha's gift to the West".⁸⁴ Zik's father said:

I've warned my boy long ago *not to cast pearl before swine*. It is up to him to realise that some *human beings are like pigs*, the more you want them to keep clean, the more they desire to remain in the sty⁸⁵ (emphasis added).

For Zik's father, Zik was the 'pearl' which was cast before the Yoruba "swine", "pigs" who have refused to "keep clean" by voting his son. This only collocates with the "consensus of opinion in the municipality" (Lagos) that the loss was not Zik's but the loss of the "electorates of Lagos and (the loss of) African prestige as a whole".⁸⁶ A strategy of *dissimulation – displacement* – then follows as Jesus Christ, Abraham Lincoln and Mahatma Ghandi are narrated as having earlier suffered a similar fate

⁸³ "Boycott of Centre as Way Out", *WAP*, front page, Jan. 14, 1952.

⁸⁴ "Zik's Father Speaks on the Western House Election Issue", *WAP*, front page, Jan. 14 1952.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

like Zik's, consequently investing Zik with the positive qualities of these referents.

Pilot then editorialises:

How can the fate of one man be of much concern to the majority?.... To *the majority*, this fact is a matter of indignation – indignation, in the sense that it was a plan by a *bunch of spiteful politicians* to have their *revenge on a man whose towering stature in national affairs has kept them in obscurity for long*⁸⁷ (emphasis added).

Tribune seems to answer the question concerning *the fate of one man in a majority*:

Commenting on the *spectacular overthrow* of Nnamdi Azikiwe, *perpetual president of the NCNC* at the Western Elections, an Eastern paper warned the *Yaba demagogue* that in modern democratic forms of government *no single individual is so powerful as to escape challenge, and no one can be regarded as indispensable*⁸⁸ (emphasis added).

⁸⁷ Ibid. The reference to those who Zik's stature held in "obscurity" can be read as a reference to Awo.

⁸⁸ "Why Inter-Tribal Antagonism", editorial, *NT*, Feb. 19 1952.

Pilot captures Zik's defeat as "thunder" that rocked the NCNC. Therefore, "the internal disintegrating forces in the NCNC (symbolised by Olorun-Nimbe) should be checked and *wiped out* in enough time to prevent permanent harm"⁸⁹ (emphasis added). For the avoidance of doubt, *Pilot* gives the example of the "Moscow Purge" in which highly placed people "considered undesirable elements and enemies of the people suffered; they were either *executed, imprisoned or banished to the wastes of Siberia*"⁹⁰ (emphasis added).

Thompson argues that *fragmentation* as a mode of establishing relations of domination may take place through the *expurgation of the other* which involves "orienting forces (...) towards a target which is projected as evil, harmful or threatening"⁹¹ thereby legitimising attacks on such targets.

Even the West, for the *Pilot*, is "ashamed of the AG action" in the House:

⁸⁹ "Time for a Shake Up", editorial, *WAP*, Jan. 16 1952.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Thompson, p. cit.: 65.

Most *nincompoops in the West* talk of *Ibo domination*; but the West is ashamed of their action and the *imperialists*, though happy, looks on the Groupers *with scorn*⁹² (emphasis added).

Yet, the 'nincompoops' in *Tribune* aver that:

In the Western Region where party politics *has been organised on the international standard*, Azikiwe found *himself like a straw in mid-ocean*, dejected and disserted, and ultimately failed to catch significant votes to take to the House of Reps because of *his unpopularity*⁹³ (emphasis added).

This allegation of "Ibo domination" made only by 'nincompoops in the West' contrasts with the condemnation of "stark Yoruba domination" by the Urhobos⁹⁴, over the "humiliation" of the Oba of Benin, leading to calls for "truncation" from the West. The narrative also refers to a description by the *Tribune* of the Yoruba people as "the great Yoruba people".

⁹² "West is Ashamed of the Groupers", editorial, Jan 22 1952.

⁹³ "Why Inter-Tribal Antagonism", op.cit.

⁹⁴ "Urhobos Condemn Action Group for Humiliating Oba of Benin: Truncation from West Demanded", WAP, front page, Feb. 4, 1952.

This can be understood as an attempt to 'reveal' a 'supremacist discourse' among the Yoruba – who are only to be deconstructed later as former “vassals” of the Oba of Benin.⁹⁵ The supremacist discourse is easily linked to the 'Hitlerite project':

...But what of the name – 'The Great Yoruba?' Did not Hitler begin that way with his “great Germany” and 'superior race' and when it failed to attract attention did he not resort to mass annihilation in order to effectively establish German superiority?⁹⁶

Lucaites and Condit⁹⁷ argue that a rhetorical narrative such as above “serves as interpretive lens through which the audience is asked to view and understand the verisimilitude of propositions and proof before it”. The content and form of this sort of narrative are conditioned by the specific audience for which they are meant, the

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Op. cit.: 94.

context in which they appear and the gain which it hopes to make.⁹⁸ Because such rhetorical narrative as this operates in conflicting and competing contexts, they have *unity of direction* and *unity of purpose*. It takes sides and offers 'evidence' and 'proves' a particular interpretation of Action Group's action; its *voice* is also *univocal* in orienting readers to a particular understanding of the situation. Then the narrative requires that the 'audience', in this case the people of Benin and Warri Provinces, fight for separation from the West:

In spite of *sincere* profession of leading Ibos, a *gang of Yorubas* who now *club together*, shielding themselves with Action Group umbrella, persisted in harping on the *Ibo domination stunt* thus making tribal relations to deteriorate Now that the *Groupers' stunt of one tribe dominating another* has spread to the Benins and Itshekiris who have *concrete, not imaginary, proof of domination* by the Action Group Yorubas, they are demanding a Central State, independent of the Yoruba Western Region....⁹⁹ Mid-Western State is the *one and*

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ "The Evil Gospel Spreads", editorial, WAP, Feb 4 1952.

only effective answer to this brass-faced political jugglery¹⁰⁰ (emphasis added).

Interestingly, *Pilot* does not see a parallel between the “great Yoruba people” and its report on the insult heaped on a “great people”¹⁰¹ – the Binis. Rather, it parallels the *righteous indignation* of the Binis to the national pride, which sustained the British against Hitler's attempt to come into the British Isle.¹⁰²

The *Service* returns all these to the “other”, describing Zik as the “evil man”¹⁰³ who disturbs the whole because of his own ‘ambition’:

...But does it matter to him (Zik) whose every act is dictated by his own personal ambition only. *The East must reject this evil man as unequivocally as the West has done*¹⁰⁴ (emphasis added).

¹⁰⁰ “Groupers To Study Democracy At Work in The Eastern Provinces. Binis React to National Insult”, front page, *WAP*, Feb 5 1952.

¹⁰¹ “Oh, Thou Shade of Overami”, editorial, *WAP*, Feb 5, 1952.

¹⁰² “Groupers to Study Democracy...”, *op. cit.*

¹⁰³ “The Evil Man”, editorial, *DS*, Feb. 2 1953.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

Service justifies the action that has provoked so much heated narratives from Pilot and the paper also recommends it to the East. Even the NCNC ministers who were asked to resign by Zik are encouraged by *Service* to stand firm against "an aspiring Hitler (Zik)"¹⁰⁵ - thereby turning the dense and dark metaphor of unspeakable hate embodied in Austwich back at Zik. The ministers are to spun Zik because,

They are fighting not just for themselves but for *the principle* that *one man* shall not impose his will on the *rest of the country* and stifle every other opinion¹⁰⁶ (emphasis added).

In pitching Zik discursively against the "rest of the country", he is presented as someone who is attempting to subordinate 'the nation' to his 'selfish ambition'.

The refusal of the NCNC ministers to resign in accordance with Zik's and the party's wish is narrated by *Service* as a refusal,

¹⁰⁵ "Stand Firm!", editorial, *DS*, Feb 2 1953.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

to mortgage their consciences to *one and only one individual* (...) refusing to cooperate with *evil*, and (...) standing firm against confusion and dishonesty: (thus they) have dealt a heavy blow on the *totalitarian ambition* of Nnamdi Azikiwe.... And *that is something for which posterity will long pay them deserving tribute*¹⁰⁷ (emphasis added).

The action of Jaja Wachukwu and others who fail to resign is tied to posterity and therefore given a timeless salience through with the assurance of the "eternal support of all decent men in all the Regions of Nigeria". Wachukwu is also narrated to be fighting against "evil influence, the evil (...) which has been menacing *the nation* for so long under a masquerade" (emphasis added).

In spite of all its own narratives of conflicts and the "otherness" of the other, *Service* accuses Zik of being responsible for the entire disharmony in the West, which he is now 'transferring' to the East:

¹⁰⁷ "Commendable Courage", editorial, Feb. 3 1953.

The tribal disharmony which Azikiwe caused in the West for over a decade is now being repeated in the Eastern Region. That is Azikiwe's trade and the trade of all *aspiring dictators*. If they do not create confusion and set *tribe(s) against one another* their chances of success are very narrowWe speak from experience and we know what *harm* Azikiwe can do if allowed too free a hand¹⁰⁸ (emphasis added).

The 'experience':

Here in the Western Region, the leaders and the people have learnt to put (Zik) in his right place. After he had been *assisted to find his feet*, (he) turned round to attack every Western leader beginning with *his benefactors*.... He created confusion among the *Yorubas and gathered round him the folsam (sic) and jetsam of Yoruba society*...And because Yoruba leaders would not brook any dictatorship, they were made subjects of abuse, malicious lies and destructive criticisms¹⁰⁹ (emphasis added).

¹⁰⁸ "The Dictators Trade", editorial, DS, Feb 9, 1953.

¹⁰⁹ "Confusion Goes East", editorial, DS, Jan. 26, 1953.

To Bennett and Edelman such narratives as these “that embody the truths of (political) elite and their publics seem objective” because they are confirmed repeatedly by the selective details that self-fulfil¹¹⁰:

Information that doesn’t fit the symbolic mould can be ignored, denied, or rationalized out of serious consideration. When a ruling group promotes its cherished ideals at the expense of critical evaluations of the actions, taken in the name of those ideals, the telling (...) becomes comforting fantasy – escape from the otherwise unpleasant contradictions of life experience.¹¹¹

When the NCNC and AG aligned in the fight for self-government by 1956, these “gang of political careerists” were transformed in the narratives of *Pilot*. They became “militant nationalists” who “(forgot) their differences and demonstrate(d) a united front against colonial status (...) in the House of Representatives”.¹¹² Anthony Enahoro, one of *Pilot*'s old “gang of political careerists” now moves a “classic

¹¹⁰ “Towards A New Political Narrative”, op. cit.: 158.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² “Motion on Self-Govt. Heralds New East and West Understanding”, (front page lead story), *WAP*, April 1 1953.

motion".¹¹³ Awo, the leader of the "gang", gives a "pungent and critical speech (...) spotlighting the iniquitous role of the British government and the Northern members of the house"¹¹⁴; while the resignation of the four ministers produced from the "gang",

will go down in the political history of this country as epoch-making for three reasons: First, it is a revolt against official hypocrisy; secondly, it is non-co-operation with bondage; lastly, it is an indication that Nigeria has arrived.¹¹⁵

Consequently,

*The nation must thank Messrs (Bode) Thomas, (Arthur) Prest, (Ladoke) Akintola and the Ooni of Ife for their moral courage and patriotism*¹¹⁶ (emphasis added).

Service shares this sentiment as it describes the resignation as "the greatest event in the political and constitutional history of Nigeria".¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ "NCNC and Action Group Stage Dramatic Joint Walk Out. Northern Majority is A Bogey", front page, *WAP*, April 1 1953.

¹¹⁵ "What is Right for Our Country?" front-page editorial, *WAP*, April 2 1953.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

A few days before the motion for self-government was moved on March 31 1953, a *rapprochement* of sort had started between the NCNC and AG and therefore between *Pilot* and *Service*, as they align against the North and the colonial government even while asking the North to take the "reasonable" course by joining the other regions. Argues the *Pilot*:

We believe that an issue of this nature on which outcome depends so much the future and solidarity of the great people's of this country transcends all political party rivalries. Nationalists must vote for it.¹¹⁸

Then a 'word' for the North from *Pilot*:

The present session has revealed one thing, and we care not whom we offend to say it. This session has seen the alliance of the Government and the Northern bloc. We hope this will not be repeated today.... There can be no reason for any Nigerian to vote against this motion today – or even to abstain from voting.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ "West Central Ministers Resign! No Compromise on Self-Govt", front page lead, *DS*, April 1, 1953.

¹¹⁸ "Self-Government in 1956", editorial, March 31, 1953.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

And from *Service*:

The North is the only one place in this country today where the forces of imperialism are still well entrenched. ... (T)he time has come when they (Northern leaders) must make a hard choice between Nigerian nationalism and British imperialism...¹²⁰ (so as not) give the impression that the bloc wants to constitute a stumbling block in our march to national independence. We ask our Northern brethren *to think and think again*¹²¹ (emphasis added):

When the North "failed to think and think again" and so opposed the motion for self-government in 1956, all narrative hell was let loose, even as the *faux pas* "heralds New East and West understanding".¹²² Here is the account of the *Pilot* of what happened at the Federal House of Representatives:

British civil servants and their minions presented opportunity to militant nationalists of this country to forgo

¹²⁰ "The Major Test", front-page editorial, *DS*, March 30, 1953.

¹²¹ "Let the North Think", editorial, *DS*, March 31, 1953.

¹²² "Motion of Self-Government. Herald New East and West Understanding", front page, *WAP*, April 1 1953.

their differences and demonstrate a united front against colonial status, yesterday in the House of Representatives...¹²³(emphasis added).

Given this 'conspiratorial combine' of *British Civil Servants* and their *minions* – a reductive combine which would have looked otherwise big if it was represented as a combine between "Her Majesty's Government and Northern Leaders" – the forces of light (militant nationalists) including leaders of the NCNC, Zik and Balogun and leaders of AG, Awo and Bode Thomas "shook hands heartily" after the House session, showing that "a *united front* is possible in the struggle for Nigerian freedom".¹²⁴ Consequently:

When this *unity becomes a reality* those responsible for debacle of yesterday will have themselves to blame, because of their *questionable diplomacy in pitting one brother against another*¹²⁵ (emphasis added).

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

Service pursues essentially the same line including the combination of the North and 'British imperialism' – ostensibly, an 'evil enterprise' – and the possibilities of 'national liberation' by *Pilot's* 'united front':

The historical events of yesterday (...) have given the signal for the beginning of the *struggle for national liberation*... The North has taken its place as the *dutiful ally of British imperialism* in Nigeria.... (T)he events of yesterday were a demonstration of the *evil which British intended to perpetrate* in our country¹²⁶ (emphasis added).

Both papers (*Pilot* and *Service*) in a new alliance that promotes and services the alliance of their parties, the NCNC and the AG, then provide the major basis for the 'demonstration of evil': Northern majority. This is not narrated as a 'fact' agreed to in 1950 at the Ibadan conference by these 'militant nationalists', rather it is narrated as an 'iniquitous imposition':

The Northern members not only opposed the motion but also sought by a dilatory motion, to prevent other people

¹²⁶ "The Struggle Begins", front-page editorial, *DS*, April 1, 1953.

from saying anything on it at all – *all because they have a fifty percent majority. We have been opposed to this undemocratic way of representation in a federal parliament. (It was a demonstration) of all the evil ... (of) this fifty percent representation which places the North in a position to impose its will on the whole country*¹²⁷ (emphasis added).

And this:

*History was made (...) yesterday, when the Northern members used their majority to vote en bloc to defer debate on a well-conceived motion (...) on the issue of self-government in 1956.... It is the tyranny of the majority that made it possible for the power-drunken and dumb-driven North not only to retard freedom for Nigeria and the Cameroons but to deny our representatives the right to debate such a motion*¹²⁸ (emphasis added).

The images presented by the “imposition of will” by a faction of the “whole country”, yet possessing the “tyranny of the majority” held by a “power-drunken” but

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ “The Tyranny of the Majority”, front-page editorial, WAP, April 1 1953.

"dumb" leaders, voting "en bloc" – and ostensibly in an "unthinking way"¹²⁹ – against a "well conceived" motion, with the intention to "retard freedom" have powerful consequences in the narration of national togetherness. This Other, on the whole, then becomes fitting for expurgation given the 'fact' that it exists outside of a *standard*, the 'promoted ideal', which, in this case, is "freedom for Nigeria". Conversely, this event also produces the *symbolisation of unity*, first, that of the East and West – "showing their *oneness* in the *sacred cause* of Nigerian freedom"¹³⁰:

The NCNC and Action Group may be as separate as the fingers in matters of details and procedure, but experience has shown that both are irrevocably committed to *the solemn pledge* of winning self-government for Nigeria in 1956....As for the Northern bloc¹³¹, we know that *they are being led by the nose by imperialists* who have no intension of releasing "what they have". Now therefore is

¹²⁹ A.B. Ahmed, former editor of the *New Nigerian*, was to capture the *meaning* of this view of the North when he wrote many years later that "once you mention the North, people go hysterical conjuring up images of one-minded horde of unthinking people perpetually following a long-turbaned king with or without reasonable cause". "Farewell to the North (1)", *The Guardian*.

¹³⁰ "The Tyranny of Majority", *op. cit.*

¹³¹ In a way, this *bloc* can be read as a "stumbling block".

the time for East and West to work and plan together
¹³²(emphasis added).

And now as that the whole *nation* of "brothers", with "common destiny"
separated from another Other – 'British imperialists':

Let us therefore make it plain to *our brothers in the North* that times have changed. The old form of *propaganda* which put a barrier between the Northerners and Southerners must now be exposed. Europeans may go and come, but *Northerners and Southerners will continue to live together, work together and face the same destiny now or in the future*¹³³ (emphasis added).

But this common destiny would not hold at least in the "now" as Hon. Mallam Sarduana of Sokoto, the "voice of the North" makes a speech "which brought to a climax the crisis in the House":

"The mistake of 1914 have now come to light", was the only sentence he made before sitting down with apparent grief. The mistake of amalgamating Northern and

¹³² "Now is the Time", editorial, *WAP*, April 12 1953.

¹³³ "North and Official Influence", editorial, *WAP*, April 1 1953.

Southern Regions in 1914 by Lord Lugard had, in his opinion, precipitated the crisis over the issue of political independence from Nigeria in 1956.¹³⁴

Service then narrates the speech in a similar vein but added that the logic should be followed through:

The very last sentence uttered by the Northern spokesman as the climax of his previous utterances in the House of Representatives was that (...) amalgamation was a mistake – a mistake which had now come to light. We admire *his frankness* in that statement... (I) f it is true that the amalgamation of Nigeria is a mistake then it is time we stopped deceiving ourselves...¹³⁵ (Emphasis added)

This is not all:

(W)hen the *Nationalists* of this country called on the central legislature to associate itself with our popular demand for self-government in 1956 the spokesman of the North repeated the threat to secede *if the other regions refuse to toe the Northern line...* As the Sardauna

¹³⁴ "Sardauna of Sokoto Recalls 1914 Issue", front page, *WAP*, April 2 1953.

¹³⁵ "The Mistake of 1914", editorial, *DS*, April 4 1953.

himself stated, there was no Nigeria 60 years ago. If the North want(s) to break away and *remain independent of the South* they may jolly well do so.... (If the present attitude of those who now happen to find themselves on the top in the North leads to a break *the South has nothing to lose*¹³⁶ (emphasis added).

The first joint official meeting of the NCNC and AG Parliamentarian Council at the "much-shaking up building"¹³⁷ of the House of Reps, "in which matters of common interests were discussed"¹³⁸ after the self-government motion is described by *Pilot* as one marked by the absence of the negative Other:

This time, there were *no Northerners there*, no NCNC expelled men, no rebels and no reactionaries.¹³⁹

These 'Northerners, NCNC expelled men, rebels and reactionaries' are no longer to be tolerated in the spatial boundaries of 'the free and the liberated'. They

¹³⁶ "These threats of Secession", editorial, *DS*, April 2 1953.

¹³⁷ "NCNC And AG Parliamentary Council Hold Joint Meeting. They Issued Statement of S.G.", front page lead, *WAP*, April 4 1953.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

are to be expelled as they have contacted a 'contagion' that is spreading and one that will end in 'doom':

Now that the struggle for self-government in 1956 has assumed an active form, our *infected* Northerner members and Eastern Ministers may have to *seek asylum in Britain* or in the *land of perpetual serfdom* where they may continue to "sit-tight" till *doomsday*.¹⁴⁰ (emphasis added).

When the Sardauna issued a press statement after the meeting of Northern federal legislators in Kaduna "deploring the attitude of the Lagos people who hooted, booed and jeered" at them, *Pilot* reports that "*he failed to call secession by name, but implied in his concluding sentences, that the Northerners would concentrate now on Northern development and pay less attention to the centre.*" But this attempt to sever the links with the rest of Nigeria over self-government is narrated as the opinion of a leadership disconnected from the mass of its following and failing to

¹⁴⁰ "The Contagion Spreads", editorial, *WAP*, April 4 1953.

reflect their aspiration for freedom and common destiny with the South. The *Pilot* reports:

Kaduna, April 6 – The clamour for fixing target date for self-government in this country *is as loud and consistent here in the North as it is in the East and West despite the attitude of the Northern representatives in the House of Representatives. The fact that the majority of those who represent the North in the central legislature today represents not the growing articulate masses of the North, but the fading class of chiefs and native administration officials who consider it "abominable sin" to depart from the advice and instruction of British District officers and Residents*¹⁴¹ (emphasis added).

In what this narrative presents as news, but which comes down more as opinion, this "old path" from which the youth of the North – none of whom is mentioned or quoted – are departing is presented as a path of divisiveness:

From the days of Lord Lugard, every effort has been made to keep the North and South poles apart in all

¹⁴¹ "Northern Youth React To Crisis in Central Legislature. They are for Freedom in 1956", lead story, front page, WAP, April 7 1953.

matters, social, political, educational and otherwise....
(But) *thanks to NCNC and Action Group heroes, militant nationalism has come into the North and will stay until freedom is won*¹⁴² (emphasis added).

Images of salvation and divine intervention in the crusade against the "hosts of hell" becomes necessary in the "warfare":

The *alliance of imperialism and feudalism* will henceforth be fought from every nook and corner (sic) and *Allah will surely protect the holy crusaders of the nationalist army* as they enter the first phase of psychological warfare. The *youth of the North stand for a united Nigeria and are prepared to die for it*, whatever may be the reaction of *pampered chiefs, reactionaries, imperialists and their stooge*¹⁴³ (emphasis added).

Service picks up this line, insisting that the "real North" which it neither defines nor points to, is joined with the South in a "national resolution" to be free, independent and united. This *grand solidarity*, above and beyond the position of the

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

"other North" collocates with universal ideals. While the "Sardauna Group" plans to "carry their threat to logical conclusion", this grand solidarity is summoned:

*We believe that this country must stand together in freedom as it has remained one in bondage. We cannot afford to break ourselves into bits and pieces. The **Daily Service** – and in this we claim to speak for the Action Group – firmly believes that the salvation of the whole of the black race lies in a powerful and united Nigeria. For this reason, we would oppose any attempt by any section to break away¹⁴⁴ (emphasis added).*

But *Service* would not mind allowing secession if it was the consensus of the people of the Northern region – which it takes to be the reverse:

If the desire to secede came from the people of the Northern Region it would have been understandable. There is nothing anyone can do if the North, the real North, wishes to secede. But, we know it does not.... The threat of secession is nothing but the product of the imagination of a few Fulani imperialists actively guided by

¹⁴⁴ "The Voice of the Real North", editorial, *DS*, May 15 1953.

their British counterpart. The north does not want to secede ¹⁴⁵(emphasis added).

Therefore, the grand *nation* will live:

The North and the South will remain one country and together we shall achieve complete self-government in 1956...¹⁴⁶

In many ways, the above is a good example of the typical strategies of *legitimation* of the relations of power. Through *rationalization* – the construction of a chain of reasoning defending or justifying a set of social relations and institutions persuading the audience of the desirability of supporting them¹⁴⁷, *universalization* - in which relations and institutional arrangements which serve the interests of some are represented as serving all and open to being acceded by anyone¹⁴⁸, and *naturalization* – in which claims are enfolded in stories that link past, present and

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Thompson, op. cit.: 61.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

future in a timeless tradition, inventing a community that transcends the experience of conflict, difference and division thereby justifying the power of those who hold particular position¹⁴⁹ within the socio-political totality.

The "real North" of the *Service* and *Pilot* comes out in *Pilot*:

(T)he actual determining factor is whether the Sardauna does carry the North with him or not.... The *real North as represented by NEPU, Askaniist Movement*¹⁵⁰ and the people of Middle-Belt have declared that they are prepared to *live or die with the South*, on the issue of self-

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ NCNC's allies. Before the NPC emerged, the *Citizen* did not think these parties, particularly NEPU, existed for the North. It hoped that 'the North may evolve an effective organization *more solid and enduring* than NCNC, Action Group, or any of the other parties classified as "national"'. "Not Indifferent", editorial, *NC*, July 12 1951: 8. And when the NPC was formed, the *Citizen* described it as "an act of major significance in the North", because "before last week, there was only one political party in the North, the Northern Elements Progressive Union (which the paper had earlier narrated out of existence by non-recognition) which *is now undergoing one of its periods of affilation* with Dr. Azikiwe's National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons. It is a matter of regret that the (NPC) could not have come out into the political arena three or four months earlier (emphasis added)". "A New Party", editorial, *NC*, October 11 1951: 8. *Citizen* at this point conveniently forgets that it had praised the absence of party politics in the North barely two months earlier (August): "Fortunately, the North has not become the victim of the inter-party mud-slinging, slander, and libel which is (sic) characterizing elections in some other parts of country". Yet, it wished in October that the party had been born three or four months earlier. "Elections", editorial, *NC*, August 23 1951: 8. Consequently, when NEPU, "quite unexpectedly", gained 17 seats in the Kano city elections (in alliance with the NCNC) with the implication that it might gain control of the Northern House of Assembly, *Citizen* averred that "red light is showing": "IF the *farical* position at Kano, where a *minority group* looks like getting control *against the declared interests of the overwhelming majority of people*, is repeated elsewhere in t

government in 1956.... The *Sardauna and his fellow aristocrats can certainly be left out* without any harm to *the cause*¹⁵¹ (emphasis added).

These attacks on "pampered chiefs", the "Sardauna and fellow aristocrats", and Emirs strike at the centre of the North's values and culture given the way these people are held the North as reflected by *Citizen*:

The people of the North, in particular, value these leaders who have devoted their lives to the well-being of the areas they serve and rule....¹⁵² (The Emirs) hold in their hands the *destiny* of the North ¹⁵³(emphasis added).

The Northern power elite which did not have a virile press¹⁵⁴ like its Southern Other, had to resort at times to the colonial Northern Broadcasting Service to counter the 'hegemonic' designs of the Southern power elite. Mallam Isa Kaita, the Northern

¹⁵¹ "The Truth is Out", editorial, *WAP*, May 14 1953. In the North, there must be the *most strident heart-searching* particularly at the top, to find the cause" (emphasis added). "Elections, editorial, *NC*, Oct. 25 1951: 6.

¹⁵² "Keeping in Touch", editorial, *NC*, June 14 1951: 6.

¹⁵³ "Education", editorial, *NC*, Sept. 13 1951.

¹⁵⁴ Even though there was the *Nigerian Citizen*, which however did not have the same reach and *dynamism* of the Southern press.

member of the House of Representatives who spoke on air to defend his party charging that the Southerners wanted to drive the British away so as to dominate the North, is taken up and dismissed as someone who at 41 has spent his life "towards the buttressing of feudal autocracy"¹⁵⁵ and telling "striking lies":

Mallam Kaita (...) has not shown gumption in bringing the freedom that he had seen abroad into his own country... He may succeed in deluding a few Northerners; but in the end he will have to *pay the price which stooges of his type have been compelled to pay throughout history*¹⁵⁶ (emphasis added).

The 'ultimate sanction' recommended for Kaita must be understood in the context of the fact that he was not just another Northern politician speaking out his mind, he was, as *Citizen* describes him, "one of the North's leading spokesmen".¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ "Isa Kaita's Lies on the Air", front page editorial, *WAP*, April 17, 1953.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ "Neglect of the North is Deliberate, Says Isa Kaita", front page lead, *NC*, March 20 1952.

The 1953 Constitutional Talks in London was however to tear apart, the alliance between NCNC (*Pilot*) and AG (*Service*) retuning the equation to a North-East alliance against the West. But, this was not before the *Pilot-Service* 'alliance' reached its *apogee* over the self-government issue in London. It was the status of Lagos that killed the alliance.

Before the delegates departed for the talks, *Service* had warned that "the very future of (Nigeria) is dangerously poised on the outcome of the conference", thereby calling on the delegates to "express in *univocal language, the true feelings* of the people of this country (emphasis added)"¹⁵⁸.

Following this, the *Service* focuses on the *big problem*, "the arch-opponent of self-government"¹⁵⁹:

The Sardauna and his party ought to know by now that *it is not in their own interest to fall prey to the machinations*

¹⁵⁸ "The Country's Fate", editorial, *DS*, July 21 1953.

¹⁵⁹ 'Sardauna and NPC Colleagues Rewarded for Services Rendered', *DS*, front-page news, June 1 1953.

*of imperialist limpets. If they allow themselves to be led by the nose as usual (...) they may live to regret their toying at a crucial moment with the fate of 33 million Nigerians*¹⁶⁰ (emphasis added).

For the *Tribune*:

The *Northern aristocrats* who seem to act as megaphones for imperialists see no possibility of self-government in 1956. Some say 1956 is too early (...) while *our-turbaned brothers from the fringe of the Sahara* believe in self-government when practicable....¹⁶¹ We (...) view with commiseration this *villainous conception* and interpretation of self-government by our *robed* legislators of the Northern Region.... If there is *any man who is still not ready for this objective, he is unfit to exist*¹⁶² (emphasis added).

The basic lines of narratives on the question of the status of Lagos as the federal capital and its relationship with the region (West) where it is located had been laid before the London Conference of 1953. The *Citizen* had earlier reported " a

¹⁶⁰ "The Country's Fate", op. cit.

¹⁶¹ "Self-Government in 1956", editorial, *NT*, May 8 1953.

¹⁶² "E-Stand By", editorial, *NT*, May 10, 1953.

storm in a tea cup (...) accompanied with thunderbolts and lightning"¹⁶³ which was capable of killing the Macpherson Constitution. Mallam Ibrahim Imam was scheduled to raise the storm by seconding a motion by an Eastern representative that Lagos should be made independent of the Western Region. Writes the *Citizen*:

There is no doubt that the Eastern Representatives will support the motion and so will the two NCNC representatives from the West.... *The balance of power lies with the North*.... But there is no doubt that there are many Northerners opposed to the idea¹⁶⁴ (emphasis added).

If the motion was tabled for discussion, *Citizen* expects to see:

(T)he Action Group representatives putting up a strong and bitter fight against the motion. The *extremist members* believe that if the motion is accepted, the West would ask that the capital be removed to another Region and should be "a no man's land". The moderates will ask the question to which there can be no effective reply: "What has Lagos

¹⁶³ "North Member May Throw Political Bomb in Lagos", March 13 1952: 6.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

suffered so far since it has been merged with the West?"¹⁶⁵ (Emphasis added.)

Kaita, the "emerging voice of the North" was one of the moderates as he

asked:

Why should Lagos people want the town to be independent of the Western Region? It is an unnecessary privilege. After all, nobody knows who comes from Lagos.¹⁶⁶

Shortly before this, the *Pilot* had attacked the slogan, "Lagos is for the Yoruba alone"¹⁶⁷:

In the first instance, Lagos, being the capital of Nigeria, is bound to, as all capital cities of other countries, open its gates to all irrespective of their places of origin within the country.... Will these *shameless gossellers* of "Lagos for Yorubas" not have claimed equal rights and privileges

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ "Lagos Belong to All Alike", editorial, *WAP*, Jan 14 1952.

with Ibo if Port Harcourt¹⁶⁸, for instance had been the capital or with the Hausa, if Kaduna were so?¹⁶⁹
(Emphasis added)

The case of Lagos is very contentious in these narratives for a number of reasons, both economic and political. The West needed Lagos essentially as addition to its size, population and power and so on, as well as for economic purposes as Awo repeatedly stated. Again, the AG did not have political control of Lagos City Council, which it would however indirectly if it controlled the Western House of Assembly. For NCNC, Lagos was one of its major areas of support and it did not desire to lose it to the AG if it is merged with the West. Related to this is the fact that given the population of the Igbo in Lagos, the NCNC obviously preferred not to have them under Yoruba control, apart from the economic benefits which could be shared by all but would go to the West only, if Lagos was not de-linked from the

¹⁶⁸ The Ikwerre, who claim Port Harcourt were later to validate their own identity separately from the Igbo – particularly after the Civil War – who still claim that the Ikwerres are Igbo and therefore the Igbo own Port Harcourt. But now, Port Harcourt is generally not regarded as Igbo city.

¹⁶⁹ "Lagos Belong to All Alike", op. cit.

region. At this point, the North had little or no interest in the status of Lagos until the politics of the push for independence dictated otherwise.

However, the Macpherson Constitution recognised Lagos as part of the Western Region, and this constituted one of the major reasons for NCNC-*Pilot* attacks on the Constitution:

The Macpherson Constitution has given us a *country without capital*. Lagos though *theoretically* recognised as the capital of Nigeria, really belongs to the West and henceforth she will be subject to legislations from the Western House of Assembly. *What an impudence. What a degradation in status!*¹⁷⁰(emphasis added).

Pilot therefore calls for the creation of a new capital:

We are no alarmists, neither do we intend to precipitate an unholy rivalry for supremacy among the three states that now constitute Nigeria. The *only solution* lies in the creation of a new capital unfettered by regional

¹⁷⁰ "Country Without Capital", editorial, WAP, Feb. 11 195: 2.

legislations. Meanwhile, *Nigeria remains without a capital*¹⁷¹ (emphasis added).

The *Pilot* throughout the period of the operation of the Macpherson Constitution never shifted its gaze from the Lagos issue which it argues would determine the “graph line of peace” among the peoples of Nigeria for centuries to come.¹⁷² It therefore pleads that:

(L)et us make this Atlantic City a *truly worthy capital of Nigeria*, one that will serve as a unifying force to make *three warring Nigerias impossible*. And the NCNC is dedicated to this *magnificent obsession*¹⁷³ (emphasis added).

'Magnificent obsession' indeed it is, as *Pilot* attacks AG's policies in Lagos:

To gratify the *personal ambition of certain disgruntled and interested individuals, a decadent and contemptible* indirect rule system is now being proposed. It will *retard the progress* of this metropolis. Shall Lagos citizens allow

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² "Symbol of Nigeria", editorial, *WAP*, July 16 1952: 2.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

this *retrogressive Action Group policy to jeopardise their communal interest on account of party politics?* Lagos has lost its *homogenous character* and should any attempt be made to revive that *lost heritage*, then the Central Government will be admitting our plea that *Lagos is no longer the capital of a federated Nigeria*¹⁷⁴ (emphasis added).

Still, the 'magnificent obsession' is 'irrevocably maintained':

The NCNC (...) *irrevocably maintains* that if Lagos is to remain the capital of Nigeria, it must also be placed on a status exactly similar to what obtains in many capitals all over the world; so that any *mischievous attempt* to merge Lagos with the West must be *vehemently opposed* as that would *automatically strip* Lagos of the *glory and privilege* it had hitherto enjoyed as capital of Nigeria¹⁷⁵ (emphasis added).

¹⁷⁴ "Native Authority in Lagos", editorial, *WAP*, July 16 1952: 2.

¹⁷⁵ "The Bone of Contention", editorial, *WAP*, August 4, 1952: 2. Yet, Azikiwe, the owner of *Pilot*, had written in the paper's edition of May 14, 1940: "When we speak of the Oba of Lagos we refer to the paramount Native Ruler of Lagos Township, although Lagos is peopled mainly by the Yoruba-speaking peoples and Lagos is part of Yoruba land. And since Yoruba is part of the Western Region, Lagos should remain in Yoruba land which is part of the West". "Zik Supports Lagos-West Merger – Odebisi", lead story, *DS*, Oct. 17, 1953.

However, once the NCNC and AG began working together on the set date for self-government, *Pilot*, *Service* and *Tribune* suspended the discourses of Lagos merger. This was sustained until the London talks of mid-1953 when the issue came up again and was resolved in favour of the NCNC and NPC. Even the attempt to bring the Lagos issue up in the months leading to the London talks was dismissed by *Pilot*, since it is "Lilliputian" compared with the "great issue of self-government".¹⁷⁶ This same matter had earlier been described by *Pilot* as one to which it is "irrevocably committed" given "where the country was heading" over the matter. But,

*What matters now is self-government first and above every other consideration. The present united front formed by the militant nationalists should therefore be maintained at all costs. It is not only the responsibility of the two leaders (Zik and Awo), but that of all their followers and admirers*¹⁷⁷ (emphasis added).

¹⁷⁶ "Canadian Expert and Lagos Merger", editorial, *WAP*, April 20 1953.

¹⁷⁷ "What matters Now!" editorial, *WAP*, April 21, 1953.

Service picks that up, first attending to the attempt by the North to "spite" the AG and Western Region for not showing "gratitude" to the North for saving it from losing Lagos in 1952.¹⁷⁸ The other reason is that:

(T)he NPC is frightened by the present understanding between the Action Group and the NCNC and hopes to create dissension between them by raising an issue on which both were known to disagree.¹⁷⁹

This could not succeed however because,:-

(A) top ranking member of the NCNC said yesterday; "The NPC may rest assured that they have misfired. The situation", he added, "is well in hand".¹⁸⁰

Given how both parties have reacted in the past to the Lagos merger issue, the 'situation' could not be "well in hand" for long. When the issue was raised at the

¹⁷⁸ "NPC Wants Lagos Off. Reason: TO Spite Action Group", front page lead, *DS*, June 9 1953.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

London conference, Awo and his colleagues staged a walk out. Service, against this backdrop, argues:

What should be the position of Lagos in a federal Nigeria?... The people of Nigeria have a right to say that their capital (not necessarily Lagos) should be independent. But, neither the NCNC (which represented the Eastern region at the conference) nor the NPC (which represented the North) has any right to say that the town of Lagos should be *truncated from the region to which it naturally belongs*. All they can do is to demand that that *capital of Nigeria be removed from Lagos to say, Kaduna or Port-Harcourt, which was bought with the money of Nigeria and which, in fact, should not belong to any one Region*¹⁸¹ (emphasis added).

Service warns that the people of Western Region (instructively, not the people of Lagos) are not prepared for any compromise. The economic and political implications of a separation are the crucial reasons for the West's opposition as the Service captures it:

¹⁸¹ "Lagos", editorial, DS< Aug. 20 1953.

(Economic:) To submit to the severance of Lagos from the West would amount to *economic and fiscal suicide* on the part of the people and Government of the Western Region. So declared Mr. Obafemi Awolowo....¹⁸²

(Political and Economic:) The population and revenue of the Western Region (will be) cut down by 270,000 people and millions of pounds.¹⁸³

This decision to "dismember" the Western Region for the sake of the "future of Nigeria" is then narrated as an unfair and indefensible decision:

Lagos, an *indisputable Yoruba City owned by the West*, is to remain a lone star.... And in arriving at his decision, Mr. Lyttleton *disregards all historical facts and constitutional precedent*¹⁸⁴ (emphasis added).

Not entirely so for *Pilot*, Lagos is not "indisputable":

There is hardly any Nigerian who does not regard Lagos with special sentimental feelings. To the Binis,¹⁸⁵ *it is part*

¹⁸² "West Cannot Submit to Separating Lagos", News, DS, Aug. 21 1953. See also "Economic Suicide", editorial, Aug. 25 1953.

¹⁸³ "Nigeria's Cinderella", DS, Aug. 21 1953.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ In fact, a letter published in the "Public Opinion" column of *Pilot* written by one D.V. Edebwin argues that, "the Binis are by historical fact, the owners of Lagos, and naturally they should be the most interested in the question of its future state". "We Own Lagos", WAP, Sept 15 1953: 2.

of their ancient empire; to the Northerner, it is not only a capital developed with the revenue from their tin, groundnuts and cotton but the life-blood of their economic existence with particular reference to their revenue but through their blood, sweat and tears¹⁸⁶ as well; while a section of Westerners feel that they have an exclusive attachment to the city because of historical and geographical connections ¹⁸⁷(emphasis added).

This narrative is very interesting in the way it negotiates the interests of *Pilot* in the Lagos issue. While the Binis can claim Lagos as part of their *ancient empire* – and therefore a *lost possession* – the North, whose inadequate resources necessitated amalgamation with the South, could now be said to have enough resources and more that was used in developing Lagos. The *Pilot's* East is totally bound to Lagos with “blood, tears and toil”, while only “a section” of Yoruba feel “exclusive attachment (to) historical and geographical connection”, not *ownership*.

¹⁸⁶ *Service* shoots back that, “The development of Lagos dates as far back as the days before the amalgamation of 1914 and even from that date the contribution which the North and East have made (...) is infinitesimal”. “Nigeria Funds in Lagos”, *DS*, editorial, Sept 8 1953.

¹⁸⁷ “Lagos is Dear to All”, editorial, *WAP*, Sept 10 1953.

The decision of Her Majesty's Government according to *Pilot* fits the "wishes of the majority" that:

...Lagos should serve as the central bound of unity. It should therefore be a source of pride to *all patriots* that Lagos is elevated to such an exalted position¹⁸⁸ (emphasis added).

Service argues that in fact, it is the West that "feeds" the rest with its excess rather than taking from the others, and this only adds to the "injustice" of the Lagos question:

(I)n the allocation of revenue although the Hick's Commission admitted that the West contributes most to the Nigerian exchequer and that it had not been receiving its due share, it did not recommend any compensation for the injustice which the West had suffered.... The West must find money to make it possible for other Regions to *exist*¹⁸⁹ (emphasis added).

And now:

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ "Nigeria's Cinderella", *op. cit.*

(I)t (Wèst) must be compelled to surrender one of its towns *against reason and justice* to the *pet jealousy* and covetousness (sic) of *certain malcontents* because Nigeria must be united¹⁹⁰ (emphasis added).

The *Tribune* affirms that this "inordinate bid" to make Lagos a no-man's land, would either be reversed or the West would secede from Nigeria:

Happily the Yorubas are alert to *the threat to dispossess them of their heritage*. One of the two ways is therefore imminent: Lagos must either remain with the West or the West *dismembers itself to preserve her pride*¹⁹¹.... Unless it is the intention of Her Majesty's Government to dispatch troops to this country to compel the West to remain in the Nigeria federation we do not see how Lagos can be separated from the Western Region.... *The fight may be long and arduous but the West will not budge one inch*¹⁹² (emphasis added).

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ "Case for Secession", editorial, *NT*, Aug. 26 1953.

¹⁹² "Troops?" editorial, *NT*, Oct 24 1953; see also "Lagos or Nigeria", editorial, *DS*, Sept. 13 1953.

While the *Pilot* reminds the West that no region sought to secede from Nigeria when Lagos was merged with the West in 1950 and restates the argument of the British Secretary of States on the severance of Lagos from the West – for a “united Nigeria”¹⁹³ – *Service* describes the decision as “against reason, history, logic and equity” and one which disregards “historic facts” while focusing on the “future of Nigeria”¹⁹⁴. Yet:

It is not difficult for any *fair-minded* person to see how the present position of Lagos is inimical to the future of Nigeria and how decision is conducive to a harmonious future.... For (him) to disregard these facts is *dangerous not only to the future but also to the very existence of Nigeria*....¹⁹⁵ The choice is between Lagos and Nigeria¹⁹⁶ (emphasis added).

¹⁹³ “No Region Sought To Secede in 1950”, *WAP*, Sept. 7, 1953.

¹⁹⁴ “Mr. Lyttleton's Decision”, editorial, *DS*, Aug 22 1953.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ “Lagos or Nigeria”, *DS*, editorial, Sept. 3 1953.

Later, the *Service* canvasses that if the "divine Island", as *Tribune* describes Lagos¹⁹⁷, could not be the federal capital while it remains in the Western Region, then the capital should be moved elsewhere:

The Western Region *is prepared to contribute its share to the building of an independent federal capital....* But to compel the West to surrender Lagos as a federal capital is to sow the seed of permanent disunity and bitterness between the West and the other regions.... If the other Regions are not prepared to allow *their federal capital* to remain in the Western Region, they *can remove the capital to any other place...*¹⁹⁸ (emphasis added).

The *Service* draws attention to the example of Australia where Melbourne, the former capital remains the commercial capital:

How then did Canberra become the political capital? The same situation that arises in Lagos arose in Australia. There were apostles of neutralisation and it was later decided that a new political capital should be founded and so the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales, passed

¹⁹⁷ "Whose Heritage", editorial, *DS*, Aug 22 1953.

¹⁹⁸ "A Neutral Capital", editorial, *DS*, Aug 24 1953.

a Bill in 1909 transferring the area known as Canberra to the federal government.¹⁹⁹

But the *Pilot* insists that:

The political capital of any country should also be its commercial capital as well as the principal mirror of its cultural and social progress.²⁰⁰

It is interesting that many years later when the North began to make moves to remove the capital to the North – as it had done in the 1920s – the West and its “megaphones”, including particularly *Tribune*, opposed it. Yet, these ‘megaphones’ had, more than any other medium, provided the pathways and reasons for the eventual relocation of the federal capital from Lagos.

For the NCNC (*Pilot*) and AG (*Service* and *Tribune*) the “party” was over in the heat of the Lagos controversy. *Service* states that,

¹⁹⁹ “The Missing Link”, editorial, *DS*, Sept 17 1953.

²⁰⁰ “Action Group Fails Again”, *WAP*, front page editorial, Sept. 2 1953.

...(T)here have been *rumours of underhand tricks*, one ally *stabbing* the other at the back at the London Conference.... (T)he recent activities of one of the parties to the alliance seem to confirm these rumours.... If indeed, the alliance has not broken (...) it is, at least, *certain that the NCNC is not being true to the spirit in which it (alliance) was born* (emphasis added).²⁰¹

Two days later, *Pilot* addresses the emergent problems:

Both the Action Group and the *Daily Service* have declared openly and have set out to demonstrate by means of statements and press articles that they will not compromise on the issue of Lagos. It is only fair, therefore, that the NCNC and its supporters should justifiably make it known that they too will not compromise.... This *does not* and should not affect the alliance or the *primary objective for which it was formed*²⁰² (self-government in 1956. Emphasis added)

It was too late to save the alliance however as even the *Pilot* begins to call the NCNC "the *only* nation-wide political organisation which holds the *balance of the*

²⁰¹ "Action Group-NCNC Alliance", editorial, *DS*, Sept. 10 1953.

²⁰² "NCNC-Action Group Alliance", editorial, *WAP*, Sept. 12 1953.

unity of the country in its hands", "*the hope of the nation*" which "reactionary elements are doing everything possible to smash"²⁰³:

With the Action Group unfortunately back to the *tribal shrine from which it emerged*, the NCNC has been left as the *only nationalist party* capable of carrying on the fight for a united Nigeria. The Action Group (...) has once again started to beat the *tribal drum* inviting (a)...return to the ugly old days of hate, rancour and disunity.²⁰⁴

Service states on the contrary that it was the alliance with AG that brought the 'much-vaunted' NCNC alive, and that still, this "does not mean that the truth should be suppressed and that fraud should replace honesty"²⁰⁵:

The NCNC has failed to put forth any *reasonable* argument to support their own contention that Lagos should be separated from the West. Let them admit failure instead of inventing imaginary stories in order to whip up the people against *what is right* ²⁰⁶(emphasis added).

²⁰³ "Secret of *Daily Times* Drive to Break the NCNC Revealed. Action Group Enters Its Trap", *WAP*, Sept. 21 1953. Emphasis added.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ "Dredging The Drains", editorial, *DS*, Sept. 23 1953.

²⁰⁶ "NCNC and Lagos", Oct. 6 1953.

hollowness of the vanity of the *office-seeking man and his band of corrupt and treacherous men*²⁰⁸ (emphasis added).

With their alliance gone, the NCNC and AG turned to the North, even while still narrating the other as undeserving of an alliance with the North. The "new" North for *Pilot*, is "remarkably quiet", bending "down to the urgent task of educating their people on the implications of the decisions of the London conference with particular reference to self-government in 1956"²⁰⁹, thus setting examples for the AG in "broadmindedness, tolerance and magnanimity of spirit in national affairs"²¹⁰. The Pilot, the AG,

Having *yelled and raved in vain* for a review of the decision to separate Lagos from the West (...) has temporarily submerged its *usual impulse to fulminate* against the NPC in an attempt to *hobnob* with Northerners...²¹¹ (emphasis added).

²⁰⁸ ??????

²⁰⁹ "The North Keeps Silent", editorial, *WAP*, Oct. 2 1953.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹¹ "Late Appeal to North", editorial, *WAP*, Oct. 31 1953.

This contrasts according to the *Pilot* with the NCNC, which "as is often the case has been received warmly in the North" ²¹². The location of "enemy" has therefore shifted from the earlier joint definition to those who are now "hobnobbing" while submerging their national inclination to fulminate":

The forces against Nigerian unity are no longer the North but some reactionary Southern politicians.... That is why the North and the NCNC should keep the spirit of oneness and direct their political onslaught against such enemies of Nigerian freedom ²¹³(emphasis added).

"Yelling" and "raving" are images of unbalanced conduct. When set discursively against the backcloth of the *Service's* apology over its description of a Northern town as "city of mad men" in the same *Pilot's* narratives, the interpretation of AG's conduct by *Pilot* comes into sharp relief. Evidently, adjectives used for political allies and enemies are usually empty of meaning except to the extent in

²¹² "NCNC Delegates Visit North", editorial, *WAP*, Nov. 4 1953.

²¹³ *Ibid.*

which they become useful in politics. *Pilot* and *Service*, for instance, have called virtually every opposing politician "reactionary". The two, who were earlier fighting against such "reactionaries", turned to "reactionaries" for each other too once they no longer agreed. It is interesting how in this context the relations of power determines the meaning of terms. The AG, whose members (Groupers), the *Pilot* had commended for their "patriotism" and "militant nationalism" during the debates on self-government in 1956, was described as an "inimical" ally and "devil" with which a break is "hailed in every part of Nigeria".²¹⁴ Within the space of three years, depending on where it stood with the NCNC, the Grouper had moved, for *Pilot*, from "a gang of political careerist" through 'militant nationalism' to "political irresponsibility".²¹⁵

²¹⁴ "No Alliance With The Devil", editorial, *WAP*, Nov. 18 1953.

²¹⁵ "Groupers and Irresponsible Gossip", editorial, *WAP*, Dec 1 1953.

Within the same period and depending on where it stood with the AG, the NCNCers moved, for *Service* and *Tribune*, from "Azikiwe and his train of mischief makers", and "nefarious liars", through militant nationalism to "sell-out to the British and North".

Given the depth and breadth of their representation of vested interests, it is not a surprise that the newspapers regularly attacked once another. These attacks are often more or less attacks on the political parties, persuasions or identities that they represented. It can be said that these are as much battles among the newspapers as much as they are proxy wars.

For *Pilot*:

Awolowo's *Ibadan newspaper*, the *Tribune* is going beyond bounds. It is descending to such depths of vulgarity that something must be done to redeem it²¹⁶ (emphasis added).

²¹⁶ "Tribune and Rank Incivility", editorial, *WAP*, Dec. 5 1953.

The description of *Tribune* as *Ibadan newspaper* is an attempt to present it as a 'provincial' paper compared to the Lagos-based *Pilot*. The paper continues:

A clear example of this vulgarity in its basest form is the editorial in its issue of December 3 which refers to Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, *National President of NCNC*, as "the rain Doctor".²¹⁷ That was not all. The editorial went further to employ such extremely vile language as "stupidity", "funny" and "little" in referring to the *National Leader*. It is most shameful that out of *sheer pettiness*, the perspective of *Tribune* could be so beclouded....²¹⁸ (emphasis added)

References to Zik's office and rank as "National President" and "National Leader" can be discursively seen as pitching *the institution* that Zik is against the "vile language" of the *Tribune* Other.

Pilot then explains why *Tribune* belittles Zik and attacks his 'valued degree':

It is *jealousy* and *spite*. After all, the *Tribune* would like to believe that *Dr. Azikiwe* and *Mr. Awolowo* are *academic, intellectual* and political equals, although the public are

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

better judges. That, no doubt, account for the *unnecessary fuss* made about a *so-called* LL.D. degree said to have been awarded to *Mr. Awolowo* by *somebody at Aba*. We are not surprised that he rejected it²¹⁹ (emphasis added).

Without emphasising it, *Pilot* shows that Zik was Awo's "intellectual superior" and a "better known politician who could not be reduced by the 'petty jealousy'" of the other who would wish to equal Zik."

Pilot describes *Daily Times* as being controlled by "a group of rascals"²²⁰ and "enemies of our freedom, (who have) persistently shown the seed of discord among Nigerians".²²¹ The *Tribune* and *Service* are "Groupers' fly sheets".²²² The "stock in trade" of the *Daily Service* or "Daily Annanias"²²³ – as it is sometimes called – "is

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ "Why is *Daily Times* Apprehensive?", *WAP*, front page, Jan. 24 1952.

²²¹ "Daily Times' Insinuation", editorial, *WAP*, Jan. 25 1952: 2.

²²² "Groupers To Study Democracy At Work. In The Eastern Promotes", *WAP*, Feb. 5 1952.

²²³ "Argument for A Central State" *WAP*, Feb 11, 1952.

imaginary articles, imaginary interviews, and everything imaginary"²²⁴. According to *Pilot*, the *Service* is a "newspaper which has no regard for decency of language, but believes that the end justifies the means (and) is indeed a curse to the nation".²²⁵

That is not all, *Daily Times* as the principal spokesman of "feudal and reactionary interests must always support what is ruinous"²²⁶ for Nigeria. The *Pilot* states that it has watched the "imperialist hand maid"²²⁷ (*Times*) move from "Government's Little Echo" to "self-made slave and principal spokesman of the Action Group".²²⁸ *Tribune*, for *Pilot*, is not just the 'newspaper in Ibadan', but also "the big noise from Ikenne".²²⁹

The standard charge against the *Times* is that it was an "imperialist lackey", one that was devoted to subverting or preventing the independence of Nigeria.

²²⁴ "Is this Not a Curse?" editorial, *WAP*, Feb. 23 1952.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

²²⁶ "Daily Times' Praises Groupers", *WAP*, Feb. 26 1952.

²²⁷ "Those Side Echoes of Imperialism", editorial, *WAP*, Feb. 25 1952.

²²⁸ "Is the *Daily Times* Neutral?" editorial, *WAP*, May 13 1952.

²²⁹ "University of Action Group", editorial, *WAP*, June 25 1954. Ikenne is the hometown of *Tribune's* founder, Awolowo.

Pilot's elaborate narrative of what the *Times* was founded to do in Nigeria gives an insight into this:

Founded with the sole aim of crushing Nigerian Nationalism, not counting the cost in terms of expenditure, only if it reaches us by any means of transportation, the *Daily Times* has elected to *colour*, when it chooses; *invent*, when it suits; and *interpret*, if it might embarrass, day to day occurrences which mark our temper as a *people in our march to freedom*.²³⁰

Times goal in this is defined as an attempt to present the picture of a divided country not suitable for independence, even while it supports the party that stands for division:

Especially when a situation might help it to convey to the world that Nigerians are incapable of self-rule, this *imperialist newspaper* in our midst has not failed to pitch sections of society against each other. In the *party which advocates a united country*, it does find *nothing to delight it, but in the party which preaches as many regions in*

²³⁰ "Daily Times and Nigerian Nationalism", editorial, *WAP*, October 1 1952.

*Nigeria as there tribes, the Daily Times finds the saving grace for a Nigeria out of chaos*²³¹ (emphasis added).

It is evident that the party, which advocates "united country" for Pilot is the NCNC while the AG, is the one advocating for fractionalisation.

When the *Times* and *Service* seem to enjoy a collocation in the ideas, issues, party or politicians they support, *Pilot* comes out to present itself as an excellent 'Other' in comparison to the 'gutter press' even without mentioning the names of such newspapers. But the raging divide over particular issue and *Pilot's* discourses point to the 'culprits':

When it comes of journalism – *pure, unadulterated and inviolate*, when it comes to the *proper observance of journalistic ethics*, when journalism – that *noble profession* – is *lifted from the gutter* into which a *section of the press* has dumped it and placed on a *pedestal worthy of its ancient history*, some newspapers will have no room and

²³¹ *Ibid.*

no readership for their gutter language²³² (emphasis added).

At other times, *Pilot* mentions their names:

(T)he Daily Times and the Daily Service (...) have entered into an *unholy conspiracy* to resort to all manner of wicked lies and subversive activities in the hope of causing a rift in the rank and file of the NCNC.... The Daily Times is in a *sly fox-like manner*, typical of its *despicable role* in Nigerian politics (...) persists in the type of *crazy, mean and deceitful publications* of which it has become so notorious.... (It is) a plague, and a pest which must be *exterminated*²³³ (emphasis added)

The *Daily Service* – the Apongbon street *rag*²³⁴ – is evil, politically. It is an organ which sets tribe against tribe.... That organ is now the *pet-rag* of Jaja Wachukwu in his bid for confusion.²³⁵

But, even these newspapers – *Times* and *Service* who have dumped the “*noble profession into the gutter*” are not always holding similar position on issues

²³² “The Bully Served Out”, editorial, *WAP*, Oct. 3 1952.

²³³ “Action Group Organ and Times Unholy Alliance is Doomed”, front page lead, *WAP*, Sept. 25 1952.

²³⁴ “Daily Service Hysteria”, editorial, *WAP*, Jan. 13 1952.

²³⁵ “Agent of Dis-Service”, editorial, *WAP*, Feb 14, 1953.

and often have occasion to take each other on. When this happens, *Times* almost always comes out still as "imperialist stooge". The following are *Service's* view of *Times* in early 1953:

Daily Times is conveying a threat to *our nation* and is trying to intimidate us....²³⁶(*Times* activities as) imperialist mouthpiece (...) where (the) interests of the imperialists are involved has ceased (to) impress us....²³⁷ The *Daily Times* is notorious for its wealth of cowardly commentators too ashamed of themselves and their role in Nigerian politics to write under their own names (emphasis added).²³⁸

In spite of the "mischief" and "sudden hysteria" of *Times* (which the *Pilot* describes as 'principal spokesman of Action Group) however,

(T)he *Daily Service* stands for a principle and nothing can frighten or lure us into giving up that principle²³⁹ (emphasis added).

²³⁶ "Deplorable Attitude of the Daily Times", front-page editorial, *DS*, Jan. 3 1953.

²³⁷ "The Simple Truth", *DS*, Jan. 3 1953.

²³⁸ "Cowardly Commentators", *Wit and Humour*, By Spartacus (itself a pen named) *DS*, Jan. 3 1953.

²³⁹ "The Freedom of the Press", *DS*, Jan 9 1953.

On its part, its "hired writers" betray the "depth of the ignorance" of the *Pilot*, which *Service* describes as a "yellow contemporary".²⁴⁰ The *Pilot*'s "blind attacks" and "irresponsibility"²⁴¹ surprises some. But for the *Service*, there is no surprise:

For experience has taught us that *ignorant, blind and stupid attacks* on institutions and personalities based on ill-founded informations (sic) are inseparable from the very nature of *our contemporary*²⁴²(*Pilot*, emphasis added).

For *Service* the expletives "ignorant, blind and stupid" only describe the "attacks" of *Pilot* on Western institutions and personalities, they do not also simultaneously describe the "attacks" of *Service* on *Pilot* and what the paper represents, given the fact that,

(I)t is often amusing to watch the *theatricalities* of the NCNC and the fun that the *moribund organisation* makes of itself on the pages of the *West African Pilot*²⁴³ (emphasis added).

²⁴⁰ "Ignoramuses", editorial, *DS*, Jan. 13 1953.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

²⁴² *Ibid.*

²⁴³ "Political Inconsistency", editorial, *DS*, Jan 4 1953.

But the *Pilot* is not surprised by the kind of discourses in the *Service* and what these discourses support and legitimise:

What account will the "*Daily Annanaias*"²⁴⁴ (Daily Service) give the people it *has been deceiving all these years*? A newspaper which has no regard for truth, no regard for *decency of language* but believes that the end justifies the means is indeed a *curse to our nation*²⁴⁵ Truly, this Ananias (*Service*) has *lied too long*.... For long the *temperamental Pravda of the Groupers* (...) fool (the Groupers)²⁴⁶ (Emphasis added).

The implication of *Service* being a curse to *our nation* is interesting, particularly when put in the context of its having been called "Daily Annanias", the man who in the Bible cheated the Church and God and was punished with instant death. The use of 'Pravda' to describe *Service* is metonymy, which involves an implicit reference without explicit statement of the negative evaluation, which it has

²⁴⁴ Describing the *Daily Service* as *Daily Annanias* could bring images of the Biblical Annanais, the husband of Saphira, who in tow with his wife cheated God and the Church in their titles and instantly collapsed and died of their sin.

²⁴⁵ "Is this Not a Curse?" op cit.

²⁴⁶ "Daily Ananias Must Lie", editorial, *WAP*, Nov. 27 1952.

for the *Service*. It is also *displacement*, involving using a thing as a reference for an institution, thereby investing that institution with, in this case, the negative attributes of the referent.²⁴⁷ The *Service* comes out as one cheating "our nation" without regard for truth and decency of language and therefore deserving of death.

However, *Service* avers that the *Pilot* is not to be taken serious because,

Sometimes it is useful to read the *West African Pilot* at *leisure hours* if only for the *amusement* which its *inconsistence and ignorance* provide²⁴⁸ (emphasis added).

Service states that in the *Pilot*, "ignorant hirelings of Azikiwe"²⁴⁹ regularly describes "every Yoruba leader who disagree(s) with him (Azikiwe) ... as a quisling, an Uncle Tom or an imperialist stooge."²⁵⁰

²⁴⁷ Thompson, *op. cit.*: 62.

²⁴⁸ "Economic Zikism", editorial, *DS*, Jan. 21 1953.

²⁴⁹ "Unprecedented", editorial, *DS*, Jan. 27 1953:2.

²⁵⁰ "Confusion Goes East", editorial, *DS*, Jan. 26 1953.

Perhaps in response to *Pilot's* description of *Tribune* as "the big noise from Ikenne", *Tribune* calls *Pilot*, the "West African Perversion"²⁵¹, and "Zik's vicious news-sheet (dedicated to) the fomenting of inter-tribal antagonism in Nigeria"²⁵²:

The "West African Perversion", a *veritable ass* in West African journalism, has consistently preached against the Yorubas. It accuses Action Group of being Yoruba-dominated. It incites Benin and Warri to break away from their *natural heritage*. Everywhere it seeks to destroy *the prestige* of the Yorubas in the midst of whom he (Zik) thrives.... Why (...) should the "West African Perversion", (...) seek to fan the flame of inter-tribal antagonism in Nigeria, simply because Azikiwe's *political growth was dwarfed* in the Western House of Assembly owing to *political malnutrition*²⁵³ (emphasis added).

The strength of these attacks on the *Pilot* and by extension, the NCNC and the Eastern Region, is reflected in a *Pilot's* report based on another report in an 'Eastern paper'. *Pilot* reports the reactions to the attacks as if it were not also

²⁵¹ "Why Inter-Tribal Antagonism", editorial, *NT*, Feb. 19 1952.

²⁵² *Ibid.*

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

implicated in reverse attacks on the *Tribune* and *Service* and by extension, the AG and the Western Region:

In view of the *relentless hostility of the Action Group Yorubas against Easterners*, as manifested in the pages of the *Daily Service* and *Nigerian Tribune*, Eastern opinion is becoming *aggressive* on inter-tribal relations²⁵⁴ (emphasis added).

This is because:

Many Yorubas are being fed on the propaganda that other tribes, particularly the Ibo tribe, are barbaric remnants of this country destined only to receive their purification of fire from the Yorubas.²⁵⁵

The story, which the *Pilot's* editor published "in good faith"²⁵⁶, is a reaction to *Service's* and *Tribune's* stories. Only a few days earlier, *Service* had also published a similar charge against *Pilot* entitled: "*Pilot* declares Open War Against the

²⁵⁴ "East Is Assuming The Aggressive Following Action Group Hostility. National Unity Seen As a Dream", front page, *WAP*, Feb 15 1952.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Yorubas".²⁵⁷ Perhaps to *enlighten* the "Action Group Yorubas", emphasising that this is only a fraction of the Yoruba nation, who accuse (all) Easterners of "barbarism", *Pilot* writes to congratulate Eastern representatives in the Federal House of Representatives who are "to shed their light (so) that Westerners might find the way", because,

The East has always been, *from the beginning of time*, a source of light, of inspiration, of hope and solace. The *earliest civilisation in the world known to mankind came from the East*.... Nigerian(s) too, as a whole, must seek wisdom and guidance from their Eastern *torch-bearers*²⁵⁸ (emphasis added).

This collocates in a way with the famous statement of Azikiwe on the role of the Igbo man from *time immemorial* as *preserver* and answers to the same charge made against the Yoruba by *Pilot*, only a few days earlier, that they (Yoruba) consider themselves as being on a "mission to civilize" the Igbo.

²⁵⁷ DS, Feb. 4 1952; "Argument for a Central State", by B.E. Ogunleye, WAP, Feb. 11 1952: 2.

²⁵⁸ "Our Wise Men From the East", editorial, WAP, Feb. 27 1952.

The *Pilot* perhaps gives what might be taken discursively as 'hints of Biafra' - or what it would ordinarily have described as "Pakistanisation", in another attack on *Daily Times* journalists ("a group of rascals who have come from Fleet Street (London) to make capital out of "rascality" in local journalism). This is a reaction to *Times* publication of a statement by a chief in the East who described the NCNC chieftains' fathers as his father's "subjects"²⁵⁹:

Daily Times should have made it clear to the Easterners that its avowed duty now is to carve an opening on the Eastern wall for an *imperialist lizard*...²⁶⁰ (T)he *East must surely live as a free nation*...²⁶¹ (Emphasis added)

The *Times* could be said to have stood in the *middle* of the two major warring camps/newspapers – *Pilot* versus *Tribune/Service* – as it occasionally suffers attacks from both sides for supporting the other – apart from the regular charge of supporting

²⁵⁹ "Why is *Daily Times* Apprehensive?" front-page editorial, *WAP*, Jan. 24 1952.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*

imperialism. While the *Pilot* sees *Times* as the "principal spokesman of a feudal and reactionary interest ... (and at other times the) principal spokesman of the Action Group"²⁶², *Service* regards it as "doing all in (its) power to tilt the scale of the political crisis in the Eastern Region in favour of Azikiwe and his gang"²⁶³.

The representations of Sir Adeyemo Alakija, the first president of *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* by *Service* and *Pilot* gives indications of how the individual who is seen as the symbol of nation can attract extreme emotions in the narratives that negotiate power between contending groups.

For *Service*, the late Alakija is the 'greatest Nigerian of his day' and 'father of Nigerian Nationalism' – not Herbert Macaulay, as popularly acclaimed:

Saint Adeyemo of Oduduwa land was the greatest Nigerian of his day.... If there is any individual to which the *nationalist movement* of today owes its inspiration, it is

²⁶² "Is *Daily Times* Neutral?" op. cit.

²⁶³ "Mere Proposals?" editorial, *DS*, Feb. 5 1953. Consequently, *Pilot* states that, "*Daily Times* proceeds to confuse issue, fan political vendetta, justify baseness and purvey political filth", "Daily Times and Our Mule-Headed Mayor", editorial, *WAP*, March 17 1952.

the late *father of Nigerian Nationalism* As the first Federal President of the *gigantic* Egbe Omo Oduduwa, he was the *very reincarnation of the great progenitor* of the Yoruba people²⁶⁴ (emphasis added).

Service perhaps could defend all these only on the grounds of Yoruba nationalism, as the *Pilot's* narrative of Alakija's role in Nigerian nationalism is in contradistinction to that of *Service*. In fact, *Pilot* celebrates Alakija's death as the work of 'Providence' to save Nigeria from disintegration. But the paper fails to mention his name specifically in linking the *Egbe* with AG²⁶⁵:

With the passing of *those once actively connected* with the formation and existence of the Egbe Omo Oduduwa, it was presumed that the country had been *providentially relieved of one of those disintegrating forces* which had militated so long against the unity of the various tribes

²⁶⁴ "Saint Adeyemo of Oduduwaland", editorial, *DS*, May 9, 1953.

²⁶⁵ But any student of the politics of that era would know that the *Pilot* was referring to Alakija. When the *Egbe* was formed, *Pilot* had commented: "But now that the Egbe has made it clear that its battle is not really against Dr. Azikiwe personally and even against the Ibos as a group, but against the aspirations of the 27 million Nigerians backing the NCNC, the time has come for real action.... Henceforth the cry must be one of battle against the Egbe Omo Oduduwa, its leaders, at home and abroad, up hill, and down dale, in the streets of Nigeria and in the residence of its advocates. The Egbe Omo Oduduwa is the enemy of Nigeria; it must be crushed to the earth... There is no going back until the Fascist organization of Sir Adeyemo Alakija has been dismembered". *WAP*, September 8, 1948.

comprising Nigeria – *this tribal fetish cult* having lost its popularity upon the emergence of Action Group, an *equally tribalistic organisation*, into the scene ²⁶⁶(emphasis added).

Pilot overlooks a similar charge, which can be laid on the Ibo State Union, which existed before the Egbe, and the *Jam'iyyar Mutanen Arewa*, which preceded the Northern People's Congress.²⁶⁷ The paper quarrels with the NPC's motto:

"One North, One People" ... (cannot) be (the) best motto for any Nigeria organisation, no matter to what section that organisation belongs. The easiest way to make it impossible for a true and united Nigeria to emerge in 1956 is to yield to the temptation of "One North, One People", "One West, One People", "One East, One People". *There is not and there can never be any such thing.... Nigeria is one country, one nation, and must under all*

²⁶⁶ "Tribalism Resurrected", editorial, *WAP*, Oct. 9 1952.

²⁶⁷ Ahmadu Bello noted in his autobiography that, "The Northern People's Congress grew out of a purely cultural society (*Jam'iyyar Mutanen Arewa*).... Curious enough, this is how the Action Group also started And they started at much the same time". *My Life*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962: 85. Awolowo also noted in his autobiography that, "It was absolutely impossible on nationalist grounds to reconcile Dr. Azikiwe's insensate hostility to the Egbe with his presidentship of the Ibo Federal Union and his obvious condonation of the existence of a similar organization founded in the Northern Region in May 1948 and called *Jamiyya Mutanen Arewa* (Northern People's Congress)." *Awo: An Autobiography*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960: 171.

circumstances share one destiny. It is colonial mentality to think one North, One people²⁶⁸ (emphasis added).

In spite of all this attacks and counter-attacks, in spite of all the charges against one another, the “nationalist section” of the press, which would despite their differences, be conceived at different points to have included *Pilot*, *Service* and *Tribune* – in the main (as against the “reactionary section”, including *Times* and *Citizen*) - *Pilot* argues, is responsible for creating a Nigerian (grand) nation and counteracting the subversion of this grand solidarity by imperialists:

Imagine what predicament this country would be in today if there were no *nationalist press* to give *the people the true facts*. What chaos would be caused here and what impressions would be given the outside world if the nationalist press were not here to counteract the *diabolical propaganda* of the imperialist²⁶⁹ (emphasis added).

The Nationalist press makes the grand nation possible:

²⁶⁸ “One North, One People”, editorial, *WAP*, May 20, 1953.

²⁶⁹ “Nationalist Press, Voice of the People”, editorial, *WAP*, May 21 1953.

It would be impossible to have any sort of a *nation*. It would be impossible to have any sort of unity.... *No nation, no group, no people can survive unless they can be heard. The nationalist press is the voice of the people of Nigeria* (emphasis added).

In spite of the narratives of division and *fragmentation*, narratives of *standardization* and *symbolization of unity*, were also not frequent speaking to the possibilities, or sometimes, the actual existence of a grand-nation, of a people with common destiny, above and beyond the fractious nations. Such a nation as the one these narratives construct, is one which Emerson has describes as, "a community of people who feel that they belong together in a double sense that they share deeply significant elements of a common heritage and that they have a common destiny for the future".²⁷⁰

Pilot sets the tone for this by using the Ghanaian 'nation' as exemplar:

²⁷⁰ Emerson, op. cit.: 102.

What is the chief factor responsible for the enormous political strides and achievement by *that small nation* in so *short a time* and with such startling rapidity? It is its *dynamism in action*. Its *power to get together*. Its *determination to subordinate* internal strifes (sic), internal dissensions, internal idiosyncrasies, to the commonweal....²⁷¹(emphasis added)

Such a grand nation as this, super-ceding lesser nations, as *Pilot* argues, could not be achieved in Nigeria unless the logic of it is followed:

Until Nigerians conscientiously realise that our destiny is *inseparably interlocked*, until they realise that they must *swim or sink together*, until they *brush aside or learn to circumvent* those *little snares* made to thwart our aspirations, until they *cease to know each other by tribal affiliation*, so long also will Nigeria continue to be a nation of *heartless, docile, thoroughly domesticated pets of imperialism*²⁷² (emphasis added).

²⁷¹ "Nigeria – A Nation of Barkers", editorial, WAP, July 9 1952.

²⁷² Ibid.

As Emerson argues, given the centrality of the state as the "greatest concentration of power" in modern times, the struggle to secure a coincidence between state and nation as the above is "inevitable".²⁷³

Even where the interests of the various sections – nations – are served in particular context, these are described as being in the service of the Nigerian nation. As *Citizen* argues when the Western Region lost its battle to reunite with the Yoruba parts of the Northern region:

We are trying to build "regions which are *integral part(s) of a single country*".... Yoruba in the North and Ibo in the West will make each Region feel it is a part of *a family*.... This is not a victory for the North. The *North had never engaged in the "battle"*. It is also not a Regional or tribal humiliation for the West. It is a victory in the fight for a *united country*²⁷⁴ (emphasis added).

²⁷³ Emerson, in Young, 1993, op. cit.

²⁷⁴ "Middle-West Settlement", editorial, *NC*, Sept. 4 1952: 6.

H.O. Davies avers in the *Times* that indeed, a Nigerian nation will shine more, given her potentials, than even the *Pilot's* (Ghanaian) exemplar:

(A)s an African country *endowed by nature and by history* with all the *requisite of a great nation* –economic potentialities, virile and teeming population and the love of freedom – Nigeria stands shoulder high among others. It is open to us to translate these potentialities into realities²⁷⁵ (emphasis added).

This grand solidarity is useful and crucial even beyond the Nigerian soil:

(A)strong and united Nigeria can offer a spiritual haven to the black people of the world.... (T)he unity of Nigeria (is) a sacred trust for the Negro world and civilisation.²⁷⁶

A nation such as Nigeria forgets:

(T)he fact of geography and economics has given us the *heritage of disunity* among the major tribes of Nigeria. Our duty as the leader of our people is not to heighten but to assist in *obliterating the differences*²⁷⁷ (emphasis added).

²⁷⁵ "The Common Sense of Nigerian Politics", by H.O. Davies, *DT*, Feb. 15 1951.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, *DT*, Feb 24 1951: 5

Not *what we were yesterday*, but where *we are going to be tomorrow*, should join us together as a state....²⁷⁸

The form of propaganda which put a barrier between Northerners and Southerners must now be exposed. Europeans may go and come, but Northerners and Southerners will continue to live together, work together and face the *same destiny now or in the future*²⁷⁹ (emphasis added).

A nation is an aspiration²⁸⁰:

Nigeria *must* be a nation. If the present-day leaders fail to make that possible, a new generation will rise to break the foundation of tribal hate to build a *great nation*....²⁸¹ We are *building a new nation*. We cannot be too careful. We cannot take anything for granted.... This last opportunity must be treated as a grand one and the best must be²⁸² (emphasis added). ...The North and the South will remain one country and together we shall achieve complete self-government in 1956....²⁸³ Let us strive, therefore, to work for a *unified nation*, realising that never before was the

²⁷⁸ "We Will Have No Pakistan", editorial, *WAP*, Jan 12 1952.

²⁷⁹ "North and Official Influence", editorial, *WAP*, April 1 1953.

²⁸⁰ Adebani, Wale, "Collapse Thesis and the Nigerian Dilemma", *Glendora* ?????

²⁸¹ "Tribalism", editorial, *DT*, Sept 8 195

²⁸² "Our New Deal: AN Opportunity", editorial, *DT*, Sept. 1 1953: 5.

²⁸³ "The Voice of the Real North", editorial, *DS*, May 15 1953.

adage "united we stand, divided we fall" more true than now....²⁸⁴

Indeed, the aspiration to nationhood can be put above even those conditions that elements or interests within the *nation-of-aspiration* count as fundamental. For instance, the issue of self-government in 1956, for the *Times*, would not be more important than nation-formation:

The "Daily Times" puts the importance of *Nigerian unity* and the *creation of a great and prosperous nation* as more important than self-government in 1956²⁸⁵ (emphasis added).

3. Conclusion

On the whole the different newspapers as representations and manifestations of the relations of domination (power) within the context of Nigeria in the *fabrications* and *negotiations* of group life deployed meaning either in the service or in the

²⁸⁴ "A Unified Nigeria", editorial, *DT*, Jan 6 1953:5.

²⁸⁵ "Unity", front-page editorial, *DT*, April 8 1953.

disservice of the contending nations and the grand nation. The discursive narratives examined here were primarily geared towards negotiating power and the discursive strategies employed provide interesting ways of understanding the interests at stake. The clashing nations come out in bold relief as much as the grand nation-of-aspiration, the Nigerian *nation*.

In the next chapter, we consider the narratives in the context of the struggles to save the grand narrative from breaking and how different narratives enabled or disenabled the breaking of the grand nation.

CHAPTER FOUR

BACKGROUND TO INDEPENDENCE: 'NATIONS' IN THE MAKING OF A 'GRAND NATION' - 1952-1954

1. Introduction

The last chapter focuses on the narratives that defined the struggles among the major blocs in Nigeria in the negotiation of power towards the achievement of independence for the 'nation-state' – Nigeria. After independence, as was to be expected, these struggles continued in much the same manner but with new contours especially because in this period, there was no longer an imperial power present within the national space to provide the 'distractions' from the near-fratricidal battles.

The Nigerian state after independence bumped into discomfoting realities¹ in the struggle to provide a *coincidence* between state and nation and to make the state an expression of the (grand) nation and a means to achieving same.²

The alliance between the Northern People's Congress (NPC) and the National Council for Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) produced the federal government with Alhaji

¹ Anderson, op. cit.: 169

² Neuberger, op. cit.: 232.

Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (NPC) as prime minister and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe (NCNC) as president in a Western parliamentary system of government. Chief Obafemi Awolowo (AG), who had been the premier of the Western Region in the self-government arrangement that preceded full independence left the West to become the leader of opposition at the Federal House of Representatives.

In the crisis that ensued within the Action Group in 1962, Awolowo's successor, Chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola and his supporters left the party and formed the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP), which entered into an alliance with the NPC. The NCNC –NPC alliance also broke down, and the NCNC and AG went into an alliance between 1964 and 1965 called the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA). The AG crisis led to widespread violence in the West, which occasioned a declaration of a state of emergency in the West. Eventually, Akintola returned to power on the platform of his NNDP in an election, which was marred by widespread malpractices, corruption and violence.

In the course of all these, Awolowo and his lieutenants were accused of planning to overthrow the federal government and were charged with treasonable felony and later jailed. The national anomie that all these provoked led to a coup

d'être by some young soldiers led by Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu. Nzeogwu declared that,

The aim of the revolutionary council is to establish a strong, united and prosperous nation, free from corruption and internal strife.³

The coup leader added that the enemies are those who "have put the Nigerian calendar back by their words and deeds".⁴

The young majors were later rounded up while the Senate president, Nwafor-Orizu, who was acting for President Azikiwe, handed over power to the head of the Army, Major-General J.T.U. Aguiyi Ironsi. Stated Nwafor-Orizu:

I have tonight been advised by the Council of Ministers that they had come to the unanimous decision voluntarily to hand over the administration of the country to the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic with immediate effect... It is my fervent hope that the new administration will ensure the peace and stability of the (country)...⁵

In his maiden broadcast, General Ironsi, announced the suspension of the constitution and some other measures while affirming the regime's readiness to honour the country's international commitments. He also asked for the cooperation of Nigerians in the task ahead:

³ Quoted in, "First Coup: Nzeogwu's Speech", "Special Review Section", *Vanguard*, Feb. 10, 2000: 30.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

The Federal Military Government call upon all citizens (...) to extend their full cooperation to the Government in the urgent task of restoring law and order in the present crisis, and to continue in their normal occupations.⁶

In the foiled coup, the Premier of the North, Ahmadu Bello, Prime Minister, Tafawa Balewa, Premier of the West, Ladoke Akintola, and some others had been killed. While there was widespread jubilation in the West and the East, the North was significantly shocked and unhappy with the loss of its paramount leader, Ahmadu Bello and the Prime Minister, Balewa. The introduction of the Unification Decree by the Ironsi government later led to rumours and debates of the return of the much-feared 'Igbo domination' of Nigeria, particularly, in the North. All efforts by the government to counter this and reassure the North that there were no plans to ensure Igbo hegemony in Nigeria proved abortive as Northern soldiers executed a counter-coup in July 1966, killing the head of state, Ironsi, and his host in Ibadan, Col. Adekunle Fajuyi, the military governor of Western Region. Subsequently, a northern officer, Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon was installed as head of state.

The East, in turn, felt a deep sense of loss and fear of the return of Northern domination, with the military Governor of the East, Lt. Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu, who was senior to Gowon, refusing to accept either that there was a central government

⁶ Ibid.

in Nigeria or that Gowon was head of state and supreme commander of the Armed Forces. Stated Ojukwu:

That question is such a simple one and anyone who has been listening to what I have been saying all the time would know that I do not see a Central Government in Nigeria today.⁷

The pogrom that followed this change of government in the North against the Igbo, was to precipitate a crisis that was hitherto unprecedented in Nigeria's history. This led to a mass migration of the Igbo, not only from the North, but from other parts of Nigeria, back to their homestead in the East.

Several attempts were made to resolve the crisis and bring the estranged Eastern Region back fully into the union. The most significant were the Aburi (Ghana) meetings where the military governors of the regions and Lagos together with the new head of state, Col. Yakubu Gowon, tried to come to a settlement on the crisis. While opening the negotiations, the Ghanaian leader, General Ankrah told the military chiefs that,

(I)n Nigeria now, the whole world is looking up to you as military men and if there is any failure to reunify or even bring perfect understanding to Nigeria as a whole, you will

⁷ Quoted in, "Attitudes at Aburi: How the Military Viewed Politicians", "Special Review Section", *Vanguard*, Feb 15, 2000: 32.

find that the blame will rest with us all through the centuries. There is no gainsaying this whatsoever.⁸

The role of the media in exacerbating the crisis was noted by the military leaders at the Aburi meetings. The following exchanges were recorded among them:

Lt. Col. Gowon: On the Government Information Media. I think all the Government Information Media in the country have done terribly bad (sic). Emeka (Ojukwu) would say the *New Nigerian* has been very unkind to the East...

Lt. Col. Ojukwu: And the (*Morning Post*) which I pay for.

Lt. Col. Gowon: Sometimes I feel my problem is not with anyone but the (*Eastern Outlook*).

Lt. Col. Ojukwu: All the other information media have done a lot. When the Information Media in a country completely closed their eyes to what was happening. I think it is a dangerous thing.

Major Johnson: Let us agree it is the situation.

Lt. Col Ejoor: All of them have committed one crime or the other.

Lt. Col. Hassan: The *Outlook* is the worst of them.

Lt. Col. Ojukwu: The *Outlook* is not the worst, the *Post* which we all in fact pay for is the worst followed closely by *New Nigerian*.⁹

Ojukwu sums up the situation by stating that, "the fact remains that in the year 1966, Nigeria has gone through a turmoil and as Jack (Gowon) said the basis of real unity is..." as Gowon cut in to say, "unitary system of government, please, not the

⁸ Quoted in, "Attitudes at Aburi: How the Military Viewed Politicians", Ibid.

⁹ Quoted in "Views and Counter Views at Aburi", *Vanguard*, Feb. 17 2000: 30.

question of unity”,¹⁰ defending his earlier rebuttal of a statement he was said to have made upon sacking the Ironsi regime that “the basis of unity (in Nigeria) is no longer there”.

All these preceded the Civil War, which broke out in May 1967. The narratives of four newspapers are analysed here. They include the *New Nigerian* (North), owned by the Northern Regional Government, the *West African Pilot* (which spoke for the East), the *Nigerian Tribune* (West) and the *Morning Post* (federal government-owned). While focus is really on the contestations immediately preceding the war, they also fall within the year 1966.

The main issues here include the change in government which occurred on January 15, 1966, the unification decree promulgated by the Aguiyi-Ironsi military regime, the counter-coup led by Northern officers in July 1966, the ‘intransigence’ of the Eastern Regional Government and the pogrom in the North.

2. Narrating the ‘Breaking’ of a Nation

The Nigerian crisis of the early post-independence years, which the press had helped in creating, presenting and/or combating necessarily put the various newspapers in different camps. Understandably, those whose principals had lost out

¹⁰ Ibid.

in the battle were eagerly awaiting a fundamental change that would sweep away their opponents from power.

Perhaps the sort of narratives that capture this is best exemplified in *Tribune*. At this point, *Tribune's* founder and former Western Regional Premier was in jail, his party, AG, had been forcibly defeated at the polls and his supporters who were not in jail were being hunted. Even the paper was not spared, as *Tribune* narrates it:

The paper (*Tribune*) was not published for two days because the Nigerian Police in a surprise swoop on the premises of the African Press on Tuesday succeeded in paralyzing the production of the paper. The unprecedented (sic) swoop (...) was the climax of incessant raids on the company which the Nigerian police mounted some three months ago.¹¹

For a newspaper seen as the ideological arm of a political persuasion whose narratives of power run counter to that of the then current power-holders in the West and the centre, such a state of affairs is the ultimate betrayal of the idea of independence. Therefore, nothing but change, of the most fundamental type, is desirable:

...Revolution all over the world bear one general pattern which is against established dissatisfaction among the mass of the people and out of the convincing feeling that

¹¹ "Police Mount Operation Totality on Newspaper: Siege on the Tribune. Corps (sic) Raid Workers", *NT*, front page lead story, Jan. 7 1966.

the leadership has not faithfully and honestly borne the full responsibilities of national freedom and independence...¹² (emphasis added).

Such a fundamental change can only be desirable for those who are not in power and desire to be empowered through the agency of 'revolution'. The attempt to *universalize* the desirability of revolution as if it serves the interest of all people "all over the world" can therefore be seen as negotiating the interests of the *Tribune* and those it represents into universality and centrality.

Tribune argues that the power-that-be must realize that the end was nigh:

We repeat that Nigerian politicians, in whatever position they are today, must have to learn *from the fall of their counterparts, from their misdeeds and iniquities. Those who have eyes should stop to read the bold handwriting on the wall*¹³ (emphasis added).

As the 'S' police "drawn from Northern Nigeria (read, *enemy territory*) for *special operation* in Western Nigeria" (emphasis added) "massacre"¹⁴ and "kill more"¹⁵, in the "holocaust"¹⁶:

(T)he people can never be tired, they can never be silenced, the *Akintola clique* must bear this in mind

¹² "A Big Lesson", front page editorial, *NT*, January 7, 1966. Interesting enough, *Tribune*, created a column called "Popular Forum" for views, opinions, suggestions and advice on the January 15 REVOLUTION" after the army struck.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ "30 Demonstrators Massacred by 'S' Men", front page lead story, *NT*, Jan. 12 1966.

¹⁵ "'S' Police Kill More: As They Uproot UPGA Flags", front page lead, *NT*, Jan. 13 1966.

¹⁶ "Egbas Review West Three Month-Old Holocaust", front page lead, *NT*, Jan. 14 1966.

constantly. And when the clique is *ousted by the people*, those who helped to protract the struggle will gnash and gnash their teeth. *We shall not weep for them*¹⁷ (emphasis added).

Consequently, when soldiers overthrew the government, the *Tribune* and *Pilot* were jubilant, while *Morning Post* (hereafter, *Post*) had no option than to support the new military regime, which pays its bills, as it did the fallen government. *Tribune* asks the new regime to do something about its fallen enemies in the West:

The work of repair now being pursued vigorously by the Military Government in the *dilapidated Western Nigeria* will not be thorough if the leaking and waste pipes of public revenue are not closed up immediately. It is an open secret that before the *disbandment of the corrupt old regime*, the *West gangster politicians* recklessly squandered public funds....¹⁸ (emphasis added).

The 'gangster politicians' the (now late) 'Akintola clique' are the Other to be expurgated in whatever way possible.

The *Post* is transformed by the coup as much as it remained the same. While it no longer supports all that it had supported, it still supports whoever is the present power holder at the centre. In spite of its earlier glorification and defence of the state

¹⁷ "Police Conspiracy", front page editorial, *NT*, Jan. 13 1966.

¹⁸ "Probe Them All", front page editorial, *NT*, Feb. 7 1966.

of affairs under the old order, *Post* now, "join(s) all *lovers of peace* in this country in welcoming the Military Government"¹⁹ (emphasis added).

Post's position is based on a simple fact: "A people deserve the type of government they get".²⁰ The politicians many of whom *Post* had supported, now became people who "behaved all along like spoilt, naughty children (and showed) utter contempt for *public opinion*"²¹ (emphasis added). The *Post* does not mention whether it reflected that 'public opinion' which the politicians had contempt for. The image of the politicians for the paper is now that of a most contemptible bunch:

They seemed to believe that they were a special breed, divinely ordained to lord it over the lesser beings who constitute 99 percent of the people. Hence, in the former regime, corruption, graft, nepotism, tribalism were rife.... Nigerians today are glad and grateful that they see this day; the beginning of an era in which the agents of corruption, greed, nepotism, tribalism shall *be swept away for all time*²² (emphasis added).

The *Post* asks the new regime to be tough and to suspend all political activities:

Nigeria at this time *deserves a tough and strong hand* to steer her barque of state; such the Military Government

¹⁹ "Road to Survival", front page editorial, *MP*, Jan. 19 1966.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

now holds out every promise of supplying...²³ (T)he new Government must suspend all political activities. *Without doing this, it cannot be sure that it will get the atmosphere conducive* to the replanning that lies ahead. The trouble with this country has been over-present surfeit of politics²⁴ (emphasis added).

It took *Post* six years to come to this conclusion about "over-present surfeit of politics", which incidentally was also responsible for the advent of the paper itself. But, in the tradition of going over-board in its support for whoever is paying its bill, the *Post* sanctions anything and everything that the military government does or says, even the statements of the head of the regime, Aguiyi-Ironsi, are "words of gold",²⁵ in the context of the "task of nation-building that lies ahead".²⁶ *Tribune* seems to agree with *Post* on the prospect of the emergence of a Nigerian nation from the rubbles of the First republic:

The *spirit of oneness, the idea of a united, detribalized country, appears to be having honest expressions* in the everyday actions of *our* military rulers²⁷ (emphasis added).

Even here for the *Post* politicians come up as the 'Ultimate fraudsters' whose past actions have to be obliterated so that Nigeria can start on a "clean slate"²⁸:

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ "Best Hope for Democracy" front page comment, *MP*, Jan. 20 1966.

²⁵ "Words of Gold", editorial, *MP*, Jan. 21 1966: 5.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ "Path to True Unity", front page editorial, *NT*, March 9 1966.

It is no secret that *politicians and political parties debased this country* more than anyone else.... *Politicians and political parties defrauded the nation, the people and even life itself*²⁹ (emphasis added).

Perhaps in response to this narratives of "Hossanah today"³⁰, *Pilot*, which though also supports the new regime headed by a man from the area it represents, cautions that:

...The present generation of Nigerians must soar above *the temptation to flatter* when they mean to criticise and correct, they must help *our nation* and age by being their true selves no matter (what)...³¹ (emphasis added).

Lest, institutions like the *Post* and other may make "words lose meaning" and injure "the nation" in its march to greatness, *Pilot* urges the press and others to:

Summon the courage to sing their Hossanahs only when the occasion so demands because only in that way will we be *evolving a great nation where words have not lost their true meanings*³² (emphasis added).

For the *Tribune*, *the past*, which the *Post* narrates is not a *monolithic past*. It contained different elements and different configurations, which must be selectively

²⁸ "Without Bitterness", editorial, *MP*, Feb. 9 1966:5.

²⁹ "Words of Golf", op. cit.

³⁰ "Hossanah Today...", editorial, *WAP*, April 5 1966: 2.

³¹ Ibid. This is however without prejudice to *WAP*'s praises for the regime too, which it describe as having "done a great deal in rectifying the vast mistakes of the past". "Wanted: Independent Information Service", editorial, *WAP*, April 23 1966.

³² Ibid.

dealt with and separated. Unless, this is done, some historical 'devils' may come out in the future as 'saints'. Therefore, *Tribune* argues for the 'correct' narration of the past in which settled interpretation of what happened will not be open to counter or new interpretations as it accused *West Africa* magazine of doing. If this is not done, then:

Today's scoundrels may be immortalised tomorrow. Five years from now, a great scholar with a flair for being different can bring his scholarship to bear on the theory that Akintola died defending the Yoruba's right to a "fair share of the national cake".³³

So that this kind of "revisionism" do not occur in the future, *Tribune* clearly notes that some people are to be permanently considered as "scoundrels", ostensibly including, Akintola. This is an interesting context of the linkages between past, present and future, in the narration of nation and its history. Before this point in which *Tribune* expresses this fear of "revisionism", Akintola had come out as:

that bastardised Yoruba legend of our time (who) has opened up a new phase in his ending, unchequered black career, with a big bang of shameless, loaded lie. A noted neologist and stricter, the NNDP tin-god³⁴ (whose) gang (...) is gleefully swaddled in (...) robbery and fraud³⁵ (emphasis added).

³³"Blue-Print for Action (3)", front page editorial, *NT*, Feb. 19 1966.

³⁴"Shameless Liar", front pages editorial, *NT*, Jan. 4 1966.

³⁵"Now the Hour of Decision", front page comment, *NT*, Jan 3 1966.

This 'tin-god' and 'gang' are then given a seemingly 'worthy' advice:

Akintola has enough time to think; so too (Prime Minister Tafawa) Balewa has still enough time to think for Akintola and bring the man to *simple reason*: that is, that *this veritable mongul (sic) of our time is NO MORE and NEVER wanted by his OWN people*. Not even when he resorts to *bastardising and prostituting sacred Yoruba customs and institutions*...³⁶ This is New Year and Akintola must resolve THIS MINUTE TO QUIT. QUIT HE MUST.... For now, Akintola should be satisfied that he had seen *enough blood flow and destruction of properties*³⁷ (capital emphasis in original, other emphasis added).

Even after Akintola was killed *Tribune* makes clear the way it wishes that Akintola's life and times be represented in history. Almost with relish, the paper writes:

Six days after the *unmourned death* of S.L. Akintola, the body of the 13th *Are Ona Kakanfo of Yorubaland* was still lying yesterday at the public mortuary. Chief Akintola, like the previous holder of the Are title, *died as a villain*³⁸ (emphasis added)

³⁶ This narrative has to be understood in the context of the culture of the Yoruba. The ritual of rejection of an *oba* (king) by the people rings through this narrative as it captures the rhetoric of rejection which is preceded by the sending of calabash to the king who would be expected to commit suicide. The ritual involves such pronouncement as, "the people reject you, the gods reject you". It is to be understood then that *Tribune* links Akintola's rejection with "bastardizing sacred Yoruba customs".

³⁷ "Now the Hour of Decision", front page comment, *NT*, Jan. 3 1966.

³⁸ "The End of An Are", front page, *NT*, Jan. 20 1966.

Tribune emphasised Akintola's title because of the historical significance of this in relation to *Tribune's* reading of Akintola's rôle in the Yoruba nation's history. The previous *Are*, Afonja, colluded with the Fulani to protest against the authority of the Alaafin, the pre-eminent ruler of nineteenth century Yoruba nation (Oyo empire). The Fulani later betrayed him, killed him and advanced on the Yoruba nation, until they were stopped by the Ibadan army. Akintola's 'collusion' with the Hausa-Fulani (North) is, by this emphasis, being linked with that of his predecessor, both of which ended in tragic death.

Therefore, the killing of Akintola and the collapse of the republic in which he and his principals (the NPC and the Hausa-Fulani) held sway, was 'God-sent', given the fact that:

The new military regime came at a time when the ordinary people of Nigeria were wondering whether God really existed.... And so when *God struck* through our *valiant army* (...) the people rejoice(d)³⁹ (emphasis added).

In the event of the reprisal attacks on Akintola supporters and the violence going on in the West – in which, Akintola's hitherto powerful wife, Fadereira, had no

³⁹ "Forward with Our Army", front page editorial, *NT*, Jan. 29 1966.

option but to "look on"⁴⁰ – *Pilot* would seem to agree with *Tribune* in a way, that the West was worst hit in the crisis of the recent past. Yet, *Pilot* in an almost condescending manner, asks the West to 'behave' since it has more than others to be grateful for to the military chiefs who intervened:

...In the new scheme of things the people of Western Nigeria *ought to know* that while all Nigeria have everything to be thankful to the Army, they themselves in particular should lead in *showering gratitude* for the stoppage of mass killings and lootings which stopped immediately the Army came on the scene⁴¹ (emphasis added).

And then the 'condescension':

After all, only God knows what would have been the fate of Westerners by now if the Army did not halt the events following the last Western Nigeria elections! (Exclamation mark in original).

The *un-stated* narrative could be taken to be that the Westerners (Yoruba) had been roundly routed unlike their counterparts in the East who had successfully fought against the North (Hausa-Fulani) onslaught in their own *land*.

In all these, the *New Nigerian* seems not to have reconciled itself – like the Northern elite whose views it represents – to the sudden change in government and

⁴⁰ "Five Motors, 120 Bicycles Recovered. Akintola's House Raided. Fadereira Looks On", front page lead, *NT*, March 9 1966.

⁴¹ "Help Fajuyi", editorial, *WAP*, April 7 1966: 2.

the killing of the North's leaders. The riots in the North in which Igbo's and others were killed for one are not given much attention in the paper's narratives.⁴² In such narratives as that on Ironsi's planned visit to the North the position of the North on emergent formations in the country begins to come to the fore:

We welcome the decision of the Head of the National Military Government (Aguiyi-Ironsi) to tour parts of the republic.... We are particularly glad that the Supreme Commander has found time in his schedule to visit the North. With calls at Kano, Zaria, Jos and Kaduna he will obtain a cross section of opinion in the *whole North*.... He will be able to *re-assure* any doubts they *may have about the effectiveness of recent Government legislation*⁴³ (emphasis added).

New Nigerian, by narrating the position of the power elite as that of the "whole north" *dissimulates* the relations of dominating through the conflating a collective and its part. *Unification* is also at play here as the paper constructs a unity, a collective identification which is affirmed and reaffirmed.

The above however is without prejudice to *New Nigerian's* own narratives of a Nigerian grand nation that will super-cede the 'nation' of "whole North". The paper

⁴² For instance, the headlines of editorials as late as July 1966 give indications of this. They include, "Meeting the People", July 1 1966, "(US) Independence", July 4 1966; "Putting Teeth Into The Rent Legislation", July 4 1966; "Get Expert Advice to Build Exports", July 13, 1966; "Incentive for Self-Help", July 15 1966.

⁴³ "Meeting The People", editorial, *New Nigerian* (hereafter, *NN*), July 16 1966.

asks that every school should be made to perform the "daily ritual" of saluting the national flag as this will help consolidate the idea of Nigerian nation:

The daily ritual and the knowledge that it is being shared with others in every village and town, would *develop a sense of national unity and pride in our nation...* It is not too soon to start *encouraging them to feel that they are Nigerians, bound in ties of nationhood with all their fellow Nigerians*⁴⁴ (emphasis added).

The idea of daily rituals could be linked to Anderson's argument that a nation is a 'daily plebiscite', which notes the centrality of repetitive actions and affirmations across space and time in the construction of nationhood.

The unification degree provides a major prism through which the papers narrate the tensions and contradictions of nationhood. Unification, in itself, as we have explained earlier, is a major mode of ideology. As we stated earlier:

Here power may be established, nourished and sustained by the construction, symbolically, of a kind of unity in which individuals are bound to a collective identity in disregard of fundamental differences and divisions that separate them.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ "A Symbol of National Unity", editorial, *NN*, July 18, 1966: 6.

⁴⁵ See Chapter Two.

Unification involves basically two strategies, *standardization* and *symbolization of unity*.⁴⁶

"Building one Nigeria is not an easy task by any mean",⁴⁷ states the *Post*. "But it is not impossible either".⁴⁸ The announcement by the Ironsi regime that it intended to promulgate the unification decree; for *Post*, constitutes "the first step in a journey that takes Nigeria to greatness",⁴⁹ since "it is clear that tribalism or disunity was Nigeria's greatest bane".⁵⁰

While the *Post's* position is understandable given the fact that it always supported the official line, for the *Pilot* it is a fundamental *credo* given the fact that that was the original position of Zik, the NCNC and the Igbo political elite. Which is why the *Pilot* sees the unification as:

The coming into being by *natural process* of a central Government (which) henceforth makes the *concept of a Federal Government a misnomer*⁵¹ (emphasis).

The *Pilot* therefore hopes:

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ "One Nigeria", editorial, *MP*, Feb 15 1966. Yet *MP* states that the demarcation between Nigerian were "artificial". "This Accra Victory", front editorial, *MP*, Feb. 15 1966.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ "The Budget", editorial, *WAP*, April 2 1966.

that in time, the Military Government of Nigeria would consider the *abolition* of the word "federal" usually attached to Nigeria⁵² (emphasis added).

If this is done, then,

The name of the Military Government will be *written in Gold as the only Go-Getter Government that brought unity to this country*⁵³ (emphasis added).

The paper praises Aguiyi-Ironsi for bringing a "message of hope to millions of *our people* (emphasis added)" when he stated in his budget speech that,

The *new nation* that we are creating will have a place for all people commensurate with *their talent*⁵⁴ (emphasis added).

The North could hardly be part of this "our people" and perhaps the West, given the fact that central to its "doubts"⁵⁵ about the regime was the idea of "talent" which, for the North, was a euphemism for, generally "Southern domination", and particularly, "Igbo domination", especially against the backcloth of Zik's (in)famous statement about the Igbo playing "the role of preserver throughout history" with their

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ironsi quoted in Ibid.

⁵⁵ As expressed in editorial, "Meeting the People", op. cit.

domination of the rest of Nigeria being "only a matter of time". A sign-post of this doubts and "fears" is the piece published in the *New Nigerian*⁵⁶:

Many Northerners still need convincing that the regime is a truly national one – and not one out to *replace Northern domination of the South by Southern domination of the North*. Some are beginning to ask (...) why the coup leaders⁵⁷ have not been brought to trial⁵⁸ (emphasis added).

The narrative then lays the basis for the fear of 'Southern domination':

The North has both a *lower population density* and *lower educational standard* than the South. This leads some of the Northerners to fear that the South will somehow "*colonise*" them by taking over both the jobs in the civil services and their lands. There is fear that all the *current talk about administrative unity*, in practice, open the way to the *demotion of Northerners*⁵⁹ (emphasis added).

It is interesting that an article in *New Nigerian* can claim that the North has a "lower population density". Even where this does not say anything directly on the controversial issue of the North's preponderant population, it nonetheless gives some credence to the argument of Southern politicians that Nigeria is the only place

⁵⁶ The article by one Walter Schwarz was supposedly meant to be published in the London *Sunday Observer*, but was never published in the *Observer*. "Strangers Within Our Gates", front page editorial, *NT*, May 18 1966.

⁵⁷ Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu and the others who planned and executed the January 15 1966 coup in which prominent Northern leaders were killed. They had been arrested and detained by the Ironsi regime after power was handed over to Ironsi.

⁵⁸ "Nigeria Back in Politics?", by Walter Schwarz, *New Nigerian*, May 12 1966.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

in the world where the further you go from the sea to the Sahara, the more people there are; a "fact" that is strongly disclaimed in the South.

That the idea of unification is an *ideal* for the interests that *Pilot* served is explicated in the editorial devoted to defending it against the attacks and ambivalence of the other parts of Nigeria. Contrary to *New Nigerian's* fears on unification, *Pilot* states that that is "what Nigerians want"⁶⁰ and under the system "the question of one section dominating the other does not arise"⁶¹. Those who argue to the contrary must be "tribalists" who,

could not learn by the mistakes of the past, and even though they may like a unitary form of Government, they still want the country to be tied up with the appendages of federalism.⁶²

Pilot then corroborates the opinion of Lt. Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu, the military governor of Eastern Region, who stated that "the present era was one of unity and solidarity for the whole country in which there were no minority areas".⁶³ For the *Pilot*, this is the "ideal" that must be turned into practical reality, particularly, though not stated, the idea of minorities in the East was a repulsive idea to Ojukwu and the interests that *Pilot* represents:

⁶⁰ "What Nigerians Want", editorial, *WAP*, April 19 1966.

⁶¹ "Govt Must Be Firm", editorial, May 31 1966.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ "In the Bid for A United Nigeria...There is No Talk of A Minority – Ojukwu", lead story, *WAP*, April 9 1966.

Indeed minority problems arise with the question of federalism no matter by what description. Before the division of the country into states, there was nothing like minority problem. Nigerians want a constitution in which any section should *feel at home anywhere in the country* and not feel as minorities⁶⁴ (emphasis added).

Pilot adds that nothing short of a constitution that allows "free interchange of abode throughout the country" will "serve the interest of the people⁶⁵ (emphasis added)". *The people* are primarily Igbo, who, due to pressure of land and their dominance in commerce, are a migratory group and have commercial interests in virtually every part of Nigeria, particularly Lagos and the major cities of the North. This plan for unification, for the *Pilot*, therefore, is "far reaching"⁶⁶ and would help Nigerians "evolve a common nationality and end sectionalism".⁶⁷ Consequently, the paper urges the,

Ironsi Regime to carry on since its doings have the *unanimous support of the people*. We are convinced of *our national salvation* under the aegis of the new Military Government⁶⁸ (emphasis added).

⁶⁴ "What Nigerians Want", op. cit.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ "Recrimination?" editorial, *WAP*, April 25 1966.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

Tribune also shares this position on unification decree in the *hope* that it "would pave the way for a great and prosperous nation, which is the hope of everyone".⁶⁹ The 'grand nation' that may emerge from this is what interests *Tribune*:

*If the present army regime within the time-table set for itself is able to build a new Nigerian nation out of the ruins of the past, if it is able to bring together a people torn asunder by tribal trappings and narrow sectionalism which in the day of politicians became worshipped, cherished institutions, then the future of a united and progressive Nigeria is assured*⁷⁰ (emphasis added).

There is no question for the *Pilot* that the unification decree will achieve this. In fact, for the paper the very adoption of this form of government is the birth of "true Nigeria".⁷¹ The fact that *Pilot* had always really desired unitary system is evident in its *jubilation* at the achievement of "one Nigeria, one destiny" and the "wiping out" of federalism:

Today a true Nigeria is born. *Federalism* has been *wiped out*. All the *equivocation* in the past about common nationality is over. Today every Nigerian is a Nigerian *no matter in what part of the country he is....* The policy of divide and rule introduced by the British Colonial administration and perpetuated by self-seeking politicians is over⁷² (emphasis added).

⁶⁹ "A United Nigeria", front page editorial, *NT*, May 26 1966.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ "One Nigeria, One Destiny", editorial

⁷² *Ibid.*

Even the metaphor of "Pakistanization" employed in the pre-independence days by *Pilot* against the AG and NPC is resuscitated:

The world was made to believe that nothing could be better than a *pakistanised Nigeria* because it served the interest of the few on top for the country to be so divided⁷³ (emphasis added).

For the *Post*, the decision takes Nigerian into "a new epoch":

This is a thing that all *true patriots* of this country have eagerly looked forward to....The *Morning Post* commend the National Government for taking the *bold step* to erase all the *divisive* tendencies that had contributed to make Nigerians from one part of Nigeria stranger in another part....⁷⁴ (emphasis added).

Where *Tribune* hopes that the Ironsi regime is able to perform the recommended task "within the time table set for itself"⁷⁵, *Pilot's* wish is, "long live Aguiyi Ironsi's Military Government. Long live the Nigerian Republic".⁷⁶ The *Pilot* could not but wish the government long life given the way it articulates the regime's *raison de'tre* and goals on the regime's behalf:

It is the *declared* policy of the government to build a hate-free, greed-free nation with a contented citizenship

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ "Civis Nigerianus Sum", front page editorial, *MP*< May 26 1966:

⁷⁵ "A United Nigeria", *op. cit.* *Tribune* notes elsewhere, when Ironsi announced that he had prepared a 20-year plan for Nigeria, that "this does not fall within the programme of a corrective government", "Twenty Years", editorial, *NT*, July 22 1966.

⁷⁶ "One Nigeria, One Destiny", *op. cit.*

provided with all the basic human requirements. It behoves any true lover of this country to bring these facts home to *misguided Nigerians*. This is the *supreme task* of one and all, particularly the information media at this *time of national reconstruction*. Anything short of this is gross disservice to *the nation*⁷⁷ (emphasis added).

The fact that these newspapers serve the logic of the relations of domination for the contending groups is further indicated by the way the agenda of members of particular groups which are picked up and amplified by *their* newspapers and how some of the time, the agenda articulated by the newspapers are picked up and amplified by those who the newspapers represent. For example, when Ojukwu ordered that all references to 'tribe or ethnic group' be "completely expunged in future from all Government records", the *Post* praised it as "signpost of the future of Nigeria"⁷⁸. The *Pilot*, about five weeks later asked the central government to do so too:

We also appeal to the Government to *expunge* from all books and documents the vestige of colonial era regarding "tribe" within Nigeria.... *Long live Nigeria as a nation*⁷⁹ (emphasis added).

⁷⁷ "Government Must Be Firm", editorial, *WAP*, May 31 1966.

⁷⁸ "We Must Unite", front page editorial, *MP*, May 10 1966.

⁷⁹ "Long Live United Nigeria", editorial, *WAP*, June 25 1966.

As tension rises in the country, particularly in the disaffected North,⁸⁰ *Pilot* praises the decision to rotate military governors as a "blessing (which will) minimise tribalism"⁸¹ while narrating a regime that is "marching on"⁸²:

We are marching! After six months in office the head of the National Military Government is actually leading his men and people to progress....The march marks the beginning of the Supreme Commander's tour of parts of the Western Group of Provinces.⁸³

Pilot is not done. The "sixth milestone" of the Ironsi regime in its "mission of salvation" is producing a united country, against the odds:

(I)n counting our blessings, we must thank God that in *place of division, we are now forging a homogenous whole*, instead of sectionalism, the dominant theme is now unity...⁸⁴ (emphasis added)

Ironsi never returned alive from what *Pilot* calls the "march to progress", in the "forging of a homogeneous whole" as the tension boiled over into a counter-coup by Northern officers in which he was killed in Ibadan.

⁸⁰ *Tribune* and *Pilot* report "92 killed...506 wounded, 300 arrested", *NT* June 2 1966; *WAP*, June 2 1966.

⁸¹ "Transfer of Army Governors", editorial, *WAP*, July 5 1966.

⁸² "Marching to Progress", front page editorial, *WAP*, July 18 1966.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ "The First 6 Months", editorial, *WAP*, July 18 1966.

Pilot's somewhat arrogant statement that those who lacked "enlarged vista" will be swept away becomes a conundrum of sorts a few days later when the counter-coup happened:

...The days when the pivot of nationalism began and ended with one's small sectional environment [Not tribe or ethnic group] are far gone. Now the format of nationalism is broad and all embracing. *Only those who are capable of showing an equally enlarged vista on public affairs will survive the clean-up campaign now taking place all around*⁸⁵ (emphasis added; the bracketed not in original).

Even on the morning of the counter-coup, *Pilot* unaware of what had happened in the early mornings of the day, described Ironsi's meeting with the Natural Rulers from all over the country as a "huge success (...) in Nigeria's onward march as a nation".⁸⁶ After the counter-coup, and at a period when it was not yet clear what direction Nigeria might take, *Pilot* still narrates the "success" of the Ironsi regime, asking for peace to save the grand nation, like "all Nigerians":

The *West African Pilot* and all Nigerians for that matter feel very much concerned that there should be trouble in the Army at a time *when the national reconstruction programme has advanced to very great height...* No matter what (sic) the source of grouse, no matter how deep and sentimental the cause of difference among the rank and file, we implore them (the soldiers) in *the name*

⁸⁵ "Test For Rulers", editorial, *WAP*, July 28 1966.

⁸⁶ "A Huge Success", editorial, *WAP*, July 30 1966.

*of Nigeria to cease fire.... There is no doubt that up-to-date the National Military Government was riding high in the estimation of the people of Nigeria... In this regard, we call on all men and women of good conscience to throw in their full weight in order to halt the hand of doom before it engulfs our young nation*⁸⁷ (emphasis added).

Given its own opposition and the opposition of the North to the unification process under the fallen regime, the *New Nigerian* is more or less jubilant when it reviews the collapse of the regime and the advent of another:

Nigeria has a new Government. *New men* have accepted the arduous and difficult task of *guiding the nation....* For the sake of the country; for the sake of our people and for the sake of our children; the *new leadership must be given every support....* The unitary system of Government has not stood the test of time. One reason perhaps was that it was imposed hastily and without sufficient thought for the future. *Unity is not something which can be imposed by force....* It must come about slowly and gradually and be built on goodwill⁸⁸ (emphasis added)

In spite of the fact that such unity as conceived by *New Nigerian* was yet to be in place in Nigeria, the paper still sees a "whole nation"⁸⁹ which eagerly awaits the new measures by Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon, the new head of state. Yet, *New Nigerian* counters any suggestion that the North was jubilant over the counter-coup:

⁸⁷ "Plea for Calm", front page editorial, *WAP*, Aug. 1, 1966.

⁸⁸ "Our Hope for the Future", front page editorial, *NN*, Aug. 2 1966.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

Nigeria is facing a grave situation... Anybody who reports or gives the impression that any *section of the community* is jubilant is hindering the efforts to restore calm and order⁹⁰ (emphasis added).

But *Pilot* still romances the grand nation in spite of the uncertainties and discord within the army:

Although the armour of our National Military Government has sustained some visible dents at many points, we of the *WAP* still believe that *we can all rally round and begin all over again to mend it in the greatest interest of our national survival....* It will be a thing of joy to Nigerians if all segments of our populace will continue to feel a *deep sense of national belonging* borne out of *justified national cohesion*⁹¹ (emphasis added).

Post picks up this theme of the *soiling* of the reputation of the army, but also reaffirms faith in the grand nation:

Nigerians have watched with increasing dismay, the blood-bath of the past few months.... This is not the time for self-deceit. *And this is not the time to pretend that the Army is free from the bug of sectionalism* that bites all others outside the barracks. Like every other phase of the Nigerian society, the Army is highly susceptible to tribal sentiments⁹² (emphasis added).

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ "Let's Begin Again" editorial, *WAP*, August 2 1966.

⁹² "Whither, Nigeria?" editorial, *MP*, Aug. 5 1966.

The *Post* then takes the position expressed by Gowon and Ojukwu as representing the depth of the "tribal sentiments in the army":

Lt. Col. Gowon said "...putting all the considerations to test (...) the basis for unity if not there..." The same night, Lt. Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu (...) said just as much, concluding, "there are serious doubts as to whether the people of Nigeria (...) can sincerely live together as members of the *same nation*..."⁹³ (emphasis added)

In spite of all these;

We of the POST believe that Nigerians can swim together without unnecessary bitterness and bloodshed....⁹⁴

The release of Awolowo, Enahoro and others from jail provides another interesting context of the clashing narratives. In its report of the release, *New Nigerian* adds an exclamation mark to the claim – in a news story – by Ojukwu that the defunct Supreme Military Council headed by Ironsi had earlier decided to release Awolowo:

....In the telegram, Lt. Col. Ojukwu said the decision to release Chief Awolowo and other political prisoners was taken by the Supreme Council earlier on!⁹⁵(Exclamation mark in original)

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ "Ojukwu Congratulates Chief Awolowo", front page, Aug 4 1966.

New Nigerian whose founders had been centrally implicated in the imprisonment of Awo and the others, states that the matter had been “a source of contention and dissention throughout Nigeria for the past few years”.⁹⁶ Even though it can be safely assumed that with the killing of Northern leaders – Awo's sworn political adversaries – the refusal to put Nzeogwu and his fellow travellers to trial and the unification decree, Ironsi would have suffered further attacks in the North if he had released Awo, but given how the release now serves the *New Nigerian's* interest, the “merits and demerits” of the case is no longer important, it should just be “welcome and accepted by every Nigerian”⁹⁷, because:

Their *confinement*⁹⁸ provided a cause and reason for discord and differences between Nigerians of varying political beliefs. The future is more important than the past. The *stability* and *prosperity* of our country is more important than old political feuds and fights⁹⁹ (emphasis added).

The *stability* and *prosperity*, which *New Nigerian* emphasizes are those of a Northern-led regime as Gowon's statement later confirms.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ “Releasing Goodwill Through the Prison Gates”, editorial, *NN*, Aug 4 1966.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ This is an example of *euphemization*. The three years these three men have served out of the ten (or less) year term is described as “confinement”, which glosses over the hardship and psychological trauma of imprisonment.

⁹⁹ “Releasing Goodwill Through the Prison Gates”, *op. cit.*

¹⁰⁰ This is later addressed in subsequent pages.

While the *Post* sees the warm welcome that Awo gets as his "hour of glory",¹⁰¹ *Pilot* sees it as "the triumph of truth over falsehood and victory of light over darkness".¹⁰² *Tribune* reports the arrival of the "58 year-old Nigerian nationalist, politician, philosopher and idealist"¹⁰³ from jail,

at this time when *the nation* and its *people* are passing through a period marked by certain vital significant (sic) events sharpening all facets of history of our *great nation* ... Therefore, the release of (Awo) we hope, marks the beginning of *new crusade*, of a *new social and political force* towards *building of a Nigerian nation welded together by genuine unity and strength*¹⁰⁴ (emphasis added).

Even though the *New Nigerian*, in the context of Awo's imprisonment argues that the past should be forgotten as the future is confronted, it returns to that past to rub in the "loss" of "a top leader" who had for long preached unitary form of government. The top leader, who the paper fails to mention, is most likely, Azikiwe:

About nine years ago, one of the *top leaders in* (NOT, OF) Nigeria suddenly discovered that his *time-honoured fight* for unitary form of government for Nigerian was a *lost battle*. For almost 20 years, he had advocated a unitary form of government for Nigeria. He even called for 12

¹⁰¹ "Awo's Hour of Glory...", News, *MP*, Aug.4 1966.

¹⁰² "Awo AT Ibadan", editorial, *WAP*, Aug 9 1966.

¹⁰³ "Release for Awo", lead story, *NT*, Aug. 3 1966.

¹⁰⁴ "Welcome, Awolowo", editorial, *NT*, Aug 4 1966.

states in Nigeria¹⁰⁵ - all of them weak and powerless states, - with a very strong centre. But to everybody's surprise (...) while in London for the 1957 Constitutional Conference, he cried out that "federalism is imperative for Nigeria". This was a very serious departure from an age long belief in a cause that was very unpopular¹⁰⁶ (emphasis added; capitals not in original).

This editorial is very illuminating in the indirect way in which it connects Zik's and Igbo advocacy for unitary form of government with Ironsi's adoption of this form of government, ostensibly, in the context, in the interest of "Igbo domination". Without mentioning any name, *New Nigerian* again places Awo against the 'inconsistent' Zik:

Quite in contrast with this leader, another leader advocated a federal system of government for Nigeria. He did not *mince words over it*. He emphasized that a country so diverse in culture and traditions - a country with many languages, and with development, educationally and otherwise, so uneven - a constitution that allowed for every region to go its own pace, could only be acceptable to the majority of the people¹⁰⁷ (emphasis added).

Then the North enters the story:

The Northern leaders of all shades of opinion (...) *remained unmoved* in their strong belief in a federal form of government The North thus became a late starter in the race for self-rule as it was in the race for education. The federal form of government *became a blessing*.

¹⁰⁵ Interesting enough, Gowon later created 12 states and part of the rationale was to break the 'recalcitrance' of the East.

¹⁰⁶ "Federalism Only Answer", front page editorial, *NN*, Aug. 10 1966.

¹⁰⁷ "Federalism Only Answer", op. cit.

Everybody came to realise that under this system *no inequality and injustice could be done to anyone*. That every region could progress at its own pace¹⁰⁸ (emphasis added).

However, there were some crises that confronted the 'nation':

Then the Army stepped in to save us from total disintegration. We all hailed *our liberators*.... Then very soon, many things, *apparently nauseating*, started to happen. The military power-that-be made the *most disastrous and catastrophic slip*. *Much against the advice of the elders of the country*, the authorities decided to abolish the federation and sought to impose unitarism on the people. The result of some arbitrary decisions were chaos and confusion....¹⁰⁹ (emphasis added)

But then, "the nation" berths again at the *proper abbey*:

Nothing can be more reassuring than (...) that this country is to return to the federal system... The decision is wise and sane...¹¹⁰

Once the interests of the North are well served, the 'grand nation' is alive and well:

The people of this country have much in common and at stake. We can survive the strains and stresses of a lasting existence if only we return to a constitution that allows for each and every component section of the Republic to go at its own pace and to run its affairs in its own *manner and*

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

light. Lt.-Col. Yakubu Gowon is certainly moving in the *right direction*¹¹¹ (emphasis added).

That "right direction" could as well be the "North's direction".

The *Pilot*, which had earlier celebrated the "wiping out" of federalism, describing the introduction of unitary system as the "birth of a true Nigeria",¹¹² changes gear again stating that:

A federal system which should respect the wishes of the majority ethnic and linguistic groupings in the country and at the same time allay the fears of the minorities *should appeal* to the proposed consultative meetings to be drawn from all over Nigeria¹¹³ (emphasis added).

The paper asks however that the new federalism be a *true* one because.

There is a greater benefit to gain if *we still remain one country, instead of tearing asunder by secession*¹¹⁴ (emphasis added).

With this, *Pilot* reintroduces the option of secession into the discourse again, even though it does by disclaiming it. A few days later, Ojukwu picks this up while rejecting the proposed reintroduction of federalism, because, as he argues:

the factors making for a true federation of Nigeria no longer exists.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² "One Nigeria, One Destiny", op. cit.

¹¹³ "True Federalism", editorial, *WAP*, Aug. 10 1966.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ "Factors for True Federation No Longer Exists: Ojukwu", front page lead, *WAP*, Aug. 19 1966.

Hausa or Bini. We do not feel this sense of shame, not because we revel in tribalism or clannishness, but because we *recognise too well that it is only a natural propensity. We believe every Nigerian is a tribalist.* That doesn't matter. What matters is if tribalism succeeds to lie between Nigerians like a curtain of iron¹¹⁹ (emphasis added; capitals in original).

Also, the *Tribune* which had welcomed the "administrative, constitutional and geographical reforms" (unitary system) in the hope that it would make Nigeria a "great and prosperous nation"¹²⁰, now argues that there is "no doubt" that a federal constitution is acceptable to Nigerians given the fact that it is "adequate to the exigencies and function of government and of course the preservation of national unity"¹²¹. *Tribune* must have given a tacit support to the unitary system only as an extension of its support for the Iroko regime – which "uprooted" its political enemies, chief of whom was Akintola. The paper can now be taken to be expressing its *real* position:

A federal system of administration will help keep the *balance of power between the component parts of the federation.* Above all we are hopeful that out of all these efforts will emerge *a new, powerful, progressive and united nation of our dream...*¹²² (emphasis added).

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ "A United Nigeria", op. cit.

¹²¹ "A New Constitution", front page editorial, *NT* Aug. 10 1966.

¹²² Ibid.

The talks which the Gowon regime planned to decide the future of the country provides yet another means for the negotiation of power as much in the open political, institution terrain as at the discursive level where the interest group also clash and contend. The proposed talks presented an opportunity for the narration of power from the past, presaging the negotiation of power in the present and determining future prospects.

The *New Nigerian*, which has stated in relation to Awo's release, that "old political feuds and fights" should be forgotten because they are not very important, returns to the past in locating the proposed talks in the trajectory of Nigeria's history. The talks remind the paper of the 'Igbo domination' of the recent past and not the charges of 'Northern domination' from 1960-1966, which preceded this:

Post-independent Nigeria, unfortunately, was saddle precariously with propensities of some sections of our population to lord it over the rest of the country.¹²³

Given the current balance of power which favoured the North *New Nigerian* argues that such "wise counsel" as existed now should not be lost in a return to 'Igbo domination':

Now that our ship of state has reached another cross-roads at which point *wise counsel must prevail, nothing*

¹²³ "The Forthcoming Big Talks", editorial, *NN*, Aug 23 1966: 6.

*should be done to give room for a recurrence of the events that set our hearts rumbling in January this year*¹²⁴ (emphasis added).

Having *settled* that, the paper establishes a *fact* that reveals a predilection, even if it is not explicit, very akin to that of the *much-maligned* statement by Azikiwe on Igbo's 'destiny' for leadership:

Northern Nigeria has been blessed *with good leadership at all times* and now is the time this leadership must be on show. Our *place in the Republic must be unique*¹²⁵(emphasis added).

Asking for a *unique* place in the federation of supposed *equals*, and not an equal place, for a section that claims to have had the fortune of good leadership all through history, points to the advantage which the paper seeks for that section in the overall context of the Republic. The die of the North's 'unique' place, the paper argues, is cast, and a tenuous unity of the grand nation, cannot be allowed to stand in the place of North's uniqueness; despite the "sporadic and fendentious outbursts from certain quarters of the Republic"¹²⁶ – a reference to the East:

We may end up in a federation or a confederation. But whatever happens *the die is now cast and there should be no illusion of what is good for our people. Our leaders at*

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

this week's meeting must bear in mind that they have the support of some *29 million people*. They must not fail us. They must *not seek concession purely for the sake of unity that cannot stand the test of time*¹²⁷(emphasis added).

This editorial is very significant in the way it collates with portions of Gowon's inaugural speech. It reads like it is lifted off the inaugural in which Gowon stated *inter alia*:

I have come to strongly believe that *we cannot honestly and sincerely continue in this wise, as the basis for trust and confidence in our unitary system of government has not been able to stand the test of time*¹²⁸ (emphasis added).

It would appear that, in the *tale of Northern uniqueness* and the *telling* of it by Gowon and *New Nigerian*, they are both, as Le Gvin stated, "one blood".

Beside the above editorial is an opinion piece entitled, "A Voice from the East Pleads With Yakubu Gowon – Let's Part Our Ways".¹²⁹ This goes on to buttress Gowon's and *New Nigerian's* fears:

It is not possible for us to live together. The seed of bitterness has not only been sown but has long germinated and the resulting plant is producing its own

¹²⁷ Ibid. The paper asked that whatever comes out of the talks must be based "absolutely on what is good for the people of the North and, of course, Nigeria", "The Issue As Stake", editorial, *NN*, Aug. 29, 1966.

¹²⁸ Gowon's inaugural speech.

¹²⁹ By Raymond E. Okorie, *NN*, Aug 23 1966: 6.

ripe seeds which are already dispersing and germinating in their own turn. If you (Gowon) really mean to give us peace, the best and easiest way of doing that is obvious. Let each Region go its own way.¹³⁰

For this *narrator*, the idea of a Nigerian grand nation is vanishing and nothing need be done to save it:

The edifice which was erected by the British colonial administration and which was once asked to take the name of Songhai is now a vanishing fantasy. What now remains only comprises (...) the clashing cymbals of our time.... Therefore there is a great risk in continuing this peculiar political union. The basis for unity as a single nation is wanting (...) tribal passion die hard. Nigeria was a chance result of British imperial administration connoting nothing higher than common allegiance to the British Masters¹³¹ (emphasis added).

Tribune is concerned more about the future and the consolidation of the ideal and idea of the Nigerian nation in its own take on the talks. But the paper is also concerned about the leadership among the Yoruba. *Tribune* advances that the selection of Awolowo to lead the West to the talks is vital because,

Chief Awolowo, as we know him, is a man who has dedicated his energies to the welfare and happiness of the (Yoruba) people and by placing the burden of the leadership of the people on him, he is only being asked to *weld together a people once wrecked by feud*; and to put

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

into service his personal qualities and decisiveness¹³²
(emphasis added).

Then the paper argues that the talks is about "the nation's destiny"¹³³:

This conference is *historic*, it is significant....It is significant because out of these talks will emerge a *charter or a philosophy upon which rests the hopes and aspirations of a people who should live together in a spirit of common belief and understanding; a genuine spirit completely divorced of the past hatred, bias and ill-feelings indeed a spirit cardinally aimed towards one destiny*¹³⁴ (emphasis added).

Tribune sees the "charter" and "philosophy" which will ground the "genuine spirit cardinally" towards common destiny for Nigerians as being far more elevating than *New Nigerian's* focus on the "no compromise" stand which the Northern delegates were urged to take in matters which for the paper, is only of a 'tenuous unity'. For the *Tribune*, the conference is all about the 'future':

All those taking part in this "people's conference" (...) represent the present and *the future of the Nigerian nation*¹³⁵(emphasis added).

Like the *Tribune*, the *Pilot* is also concerned about the grand nation and not sectional advantage, like the one advocated by the *New Nigerian*. If every section

¹³² "A New Chapter", front page editorial, *NT*, Aug. 16 1966.

¹³³ "The Nation's Destiny", front page editorial, *NT*, Sept. 12 1966.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

has a "master plan" – like the North – *Pilot* wonders whose "plan" would be rejected.¹³⁶

First, the paper reviews what is at stake in the *nation*:

The problem facing Nigeria today is not what is best for the country, because *our nation appears to be a place where, although the worst never happens, the best appears impossible of achievement*. No one says that National unity is not a good thing but how it is to be achieved is the moot point¹³⁷ (emphasis added).

The paper tells the *truth* about the Nigerian crisis and 'what is to be done':

The truth about the country is that we are lacking in those fundamental elements that make for unity – that is to say, DEFENSIVE NATIONALISM and IRON HAND LEADERSHIP. A nation requires to face foreign aggression in order to develop *defensive nationalism which is a unifying factor for a common nationality*. Secondly, to attain unity a nation requires *a man on a horse back with a whip to keep the people together*¹³⁸ (emphasis added; capitals in original).

¹³⁶ "The Problem of Unity", op. cit.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

The metaphor of man as head of the household as "the Lord and Master" is then employed to make the point that the component parts of Nigeria should not be allowed to have their way in the overall interest of the 'grand nation' otherwise Nigeria will be a forgotten fact:

Because men want impossibilities without regard to other men's positions, a house-hold which is run on the wishes of the component parts of the family generally ends up as a bare garden. That is why there appears to be some truth in the saying that military dictatorship is best for the masses because the masses do not know what is best for them.¹³⁹

However, *Pilot*, unlike the *New Nigerian*, asks that the Lagos talks to fashion out a constitution "which will satisfy the aspirations of the various ethnic and linguistic groups in Nigeria".¹⁴⁰ To be able to do this, *Pilot* asks that the conferees take the following points into consideration:

- i. A complete break with the past and the introduction of a constitution truly Nigerian reflecting the aspirations of the masses of the people.
- ii. The kind of society which Nigeria is striving to create must be clearly defined.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ "The Task Before Us", front page comment, *WAP*, Sept 12 1966.

- iii. The place of the common man in the society must be supremely reflected such that he should be part and parcel of the ruling machinery.¹⁴¹
- iv. The limit to which foreign element can interfere in our internal affairs to be defined.
- v. Freedom of the press to be restored.¹⁴²

With the contending parties to the soul of the 'nation', particularly the North and the East engaging in clashes which results in the killings in the North, the *Post* argues that these sections and the individuals representing them are not greater than the nation.¹⁴³

Therefore, the paper asks that:

We must, all of us Nigerians, accept the challenge of the times and rise as one man to the task of *binding the nation's wounds in order to save her from bleeding to death....*¹⁴⁴ They must all agree that this country, Nigeria, can continue as one indivisible sovereign state¹⁴⁵ (emphasis added).

If this is done, then the grand nation will emerge as a 'paradise':

¹⁴¹ This would appear to WAP's earlier argument that the "masses do not know what is best for them", "The Problem of Unity", op. cit.

¹⁴² "The Task Before Us", op. cit.

¹⁴³ "The Nation Before Self", editorial, *MP*, Aug. 16 1966.

¹⁴⁴ "Best Yet to Come", editorial, *MP*, Aug. 12 1966.

¹⁴⁵ "The Nation Before Self", op. cit.

With a little more resolve and sacrifice, Nigeria will yet become a paradise on earth, where no one man is oppressed, where justice and love will be the order of the day....And the sorry gory picture of today will be a thing of the past. Let's then march forward, shoulder to shoulder, to the *great tomorrow*¹⁴⁶ (emphasis added).

While the *Pilot* refrains from commenting on the flight of Igbo from the North and is rather concerned with themes of unity, the *New Nigerian* uses every opportunity to protect the North's 'heritage' and attack the East. While the *Pilot* sees the whole crisis in the year (1966) as a "great lesson" that teaches the people "never again (to) postpone till tomorrow what they have to do today"¹⁴⁷, yet advancing that, in spite of the debacle, Nigerians "have every reason to be proud that from the still smoking rubble have emerged a new generation of Nigerians able to face the stark realities of our times",¹⁴⁸ *New Nigerian* sees in the stoppage of the illegal taxes being collected from fleeing Easterners by the Lafia Native Authority an excuse to condemn the "enemies of a united Nigeria (exploiting the matter) in their *campaign of denigration against the North*"¹⁴⁹ (emphasis added).

¹⁴⁶ "Best Yet to Come", op. cit.

¹⁴⁷ "The March of History", editorial, *WAP*, Sept 2 1966.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ "An Example of Reasonableness", editorial, *NN*, Aug. 25 1966.

As far as the *New Nigerian* is concerned, this matter, used to "buttress (the) *stupid demand* for disintegration of the country, is only one in which the sins of one "overzealous official" is visited on a whole government or region." This is described by the paper as "indiscretion and insanity".¹⁵⁰

Consequently, the paper argues that if there will be separation, then the constituent parts of Nigeria should separate in peace:

(I)f the communities in this country decide to part their ways, *as they have the right to do*, they should do so in peace and not in pieces¹⁵¹ (emphasis added).

Post picks this up asking if there is need for the constituent parts of Nigeria to separate and remain enemies, if indeed separation is achieved:

There is already deep-seated bitterness among the peoples of this country. But with a little bit of good sense, time, the healer of all wounds, will ultimately ameliorate whatever bitterness may exist among the people.... And who knows, Nigeria may yet remain. *And if she crumbles, should she do so with former Nigerians becoming inveterate enemies?*¹⁵² (Emphasis added)

While the *Post* asks the government to be "ruthless in maintaining peace" by "crushing the saboteurs"¹⁵³, in the wake of widespread killings in the North, the

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ "Restraint, Please", editorial, *NN*, Aug. 24 1966.

¹⁵² "Freedom of Movement", editorial, *MP*, Aug 26 1966.

¹⁵³ "Crush the Saboteurs", editorial, *MP*, Aug. 31 1966.

Tribune asks for restraint because Nigeria "is seating on a tinder box"¹⁵⁴. The paper echoes the military governor of the Mid-West, Lt. Col. David Ejoor:

Nigeria is now passing through a crucial and momentous stage in her history when different communities have to consider whether they can march forward as *one indivisible whole* in true mutual affection and concord or whether they have indeed reached *the end of a once hopeful experiment in nation-building*¹⁵⁵ (emphasis added).

As the killings in the North mounts, the *Pilot* comes out of its shell of pleading for unity to raise what it considers as critical questions:

The days of wishful thinking is (sic) over.... We have long deceived ourselves and no nation based on self-deception can long endure.... One of the major issues facing the country today is *whether Nigerians can live together as one people, in peace and security.... Can Nigerians live together without fear of one section dominating the other? If they cannot then what is the basis of togetherness* which the weeping Jeremiahs fancy can be achieved in the country?¹⁵⁶

Pilot thinks that the Lagos talks could not do much in the face of the odds:

The facts as they are today, are that *Nigerians are haunted by fear of domination of one section by another, by fear of insecurity of life and property, by fear of molestation*. These are basic human freedoms which,

¹⁵⁴ "Restraint Please", front editorial, *NT*, Aug 30 1966.

¹⁵⁵ "To Be Or Not to Be?", front page editorial, *NT*, Aug 27 1966.

¹⁵⁶ "When Our #-o-v-e Is Tied to The Pound", front page comment, *WAP*, Sept. 19 1966.

*lacking in a country, makes nonsense of united nationhood. Under the atmosphere of apprehension and misgivings, it will be wishful thinking to feel that by a magic wand, the ad-hoc committee on Nigerian constitution meeting in Lagos can manufacture a way in which by tomorrow morning Nigerians will march along in mutual confidence as one people without suspicion of one another. Togetherness cannot be imposed*¹⁵⁷ (emphasis added).

The Mourning Day declared by the Eastern Regional Government by August 29 "in respect of souls lost (in the North) following the events of May 15 and July 29, 1966" which was banned unsuccessfully by the federal military government irked the *New Nigerian* deeply as reflected in its reaction. Even though the paper finds no problem with mourning "the death of anybody", which Ojukwu had described as the "least honour we can do those our sons and daughters now dead"¹⁵⁸, *New Nigerian* avers that:

Every reasonable and right-thinking Nigerian would loathe the unconstitutional action of the Military Governor of Eastern Nigeria, Lt.-Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu in selecting a day of mourning for the people of his region.... There is nothing wrong in mourning the death of anybody. But to do so in circumstances of defiance of lawful authority is to worsen an already bad situation. We dare ask whether

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ "Indiscreet", editorial, *NN*, Aug. 31, 1966.

*those who died during the mad outrages of January this year did not deserve to be mourned*¹⁵⁹ (emphasis added).

The “mad outrages of January” was the Igbo-led coup of January 15, 1966 in which two prominent Northern politicians, Bello and Balewa, were killed. *New Nigerian* is eager to point to the ‘nation’ that the Igbo invited the killings in the North on themselves by killing Northern leaders:

We are surprised and rightly too, to note that the authorities in the East were so indiscreet as to have singled out the tragic events of May and July 29 as if nothing *provoked or preceded* those events, tragic as they were¹⁶⁰ (emphasis added).

Consequently,

The declaration of a day of mourning was a *flagrant incitement* and whipping up of *irrational emotions* at a time when *all reasonable people* are working hard to find a solution to our present problem.... We can now see clearly the designs of the perpetrators of an order whereby *only a section of the Nigerian community must have the right to Lord things over the other sections*...¹⁶¹ (emphasis added).

Even the 16-man delegation of Northerners resident in the Eastern Region who planned to visit the North to plead for the safety and security of Easterners in

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

the North are told by the *New Nigerian* that even though this was a "gesture of goodwill", it is "unnecessary", because:

It is a well-known fact that Easterners, certainly all non-Northerners, *have always been given protection in the North. We sincerely trust that if our Eastern envoys do come, they will have nothing but praise for the orderly and sincere approach of the North towards the unity of the country (...) how hospitable and friendly the people of the North are towards every section of the Nigerian community*¹⁶² (emphasis added).

Yet, it was in the midst of all these "hospitable; friendly, sincere and orderly" people that several hundreds of Easterners, particularly the Igbo, were being massacred. Two days after this narrative of normalcy and order, the paper itself reports that the military governor of the North "gives another STERN WARNING against lawlessness, molestation and acts of subversion"¹⁶³ (emphasis in original). Even these acts are supposedly perpetrated by a "small, misguided minority" of Northerners. Against this backdrop, the *New Nigerian* then faces part of the *reality* of events:

We are back where we were. The uncertainties and fears which were brought about by the *mad propensity of a few*¹⁶⁴ are now being exploited to make the work of

¹⁶² "That Delegation from East", editorial, *NN*, Sept. 10 1966.

¹⁶³ "Lt. Col. Hassan Gives Another STERN WARNING – Against Lawlessness, Molestation and Acts of Subversion", lead story, *NN*, Sept. 12 1966.

¹⁶⁴ Ostensibly, the five Majors led by Nzeogwu who masterminded the January 16 1966 coup.

national reconstruction difficult. Acts of lawlessness, molestation, intimidation and subversion cannot do *this region* any good. *Nations are never built or sustained by indulging in recriminations, bitterness and rancour....* As the Governor of the North (said, we are) most distressed over the action of the *small misguided minority*¹⁶⁵(emphasis added).

This mild *internal* criticism by the *New Nigerian* would certainly not do for the *Tribune* which asks Gowon to take urgent action to stop the "large scale killings"¹⁶⁶ in the North:

This is *savagery and sadism in their worst form*. We condemn, in strong terms, *these killings* and other acts of lawlessness and disorder....¹⁶⁷ (emphasis added).

It is worthy of note that at no time did the *New Nigerian* describe the events as "killings" or "massacre"¹⁶⁸ as the *Tribune* did. They are, at worst, for the former, only "acts of lawlessness, molestation, intimidation and subversion", where they happen at all among the "hospitable, friendly, sincere and orderly" Northerners. For the *Pilot* those that *Tribune* describes as practising "savagery and sadism", are "men

¹⁶⁵ "Let's Watch and Pray", front page comment, *NN*, Sept. 13 1966.

¹⁶⁶ "Action, Gowon", front page editorial, *NT*, Oct. 4 1966.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ "What Next, Gowon?", front page editorial, *NT*, Oct. 5 1966.

on the lunatic fringe"¹⁶⁹ who would have made the country degenerate "(in)to civil war" but for the extra-ordinary restraint of the Easterner¹⁷⁰:

Could we now face the grim realities arising from the disreputable and tragic events of recent weeks. For unless we do this, the hopes expressed both by Lieutenant-Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu and Lt. Col. Gowon over the weekend will dash to pieces and Nigeria with it.... Goodwill messages cannot solve our problems which can be solved by ourselves IF WE APPROACH THESE PROBLEMS WITH TRANSPARENT HONESTY AND OPEN MIND AND STOP PLAYING THE OSTRICH WHILE OUR NATION IS ON THE BRINK OF DISSOLUTION. It is useless to sugar-coat the fact that the *calamities we face are unthinkable menacing*¹⁷¹ (emphasis added; capitals in original).

In the context of the airlifting of Easterners back to their region and Ojukwu's repeated warning that the East might find itself in a situation in which the rest of Nigeria would have pushed her out of Nigeria, *New Nigerian* reminds the fractious 'nation' how the current crisis arose. The paper often does this as to emphasise that the attempt at "Igbo domination" represented by the January 15 1966 coup is the source of all the problems of Nigeria. It is as if Nigeria's history began for the paper on that day.

¹⁶⁹ "A Daniel, A Daniel", editorial, *WAP*, Oct. 5, 1966.

¹⁷⁰ "Hitting the Bull's Eye", front page comment, *WAP*, Oct. 3 1966.

¹⁷¹ "States For Sale", front page comment, Oct. 3 1966.

Perhaps, lest people confuse the basis for the massacre of the Igbo, the *New Nigerian* reconstructs the past through its narration in what it calls the "genesis of the exodus":¹⁷²

The history of the First Republic is *written in blood.... It stands to reason*, therefore, that we should draw some conclusions from and make *sober reappraisals of the events that matured into the crisis which now envelops the nation....*¹⁷³ (emphasis added.)

First, the narrative takes the major Other, Ojukwu, *out of the way*, by more or less *profiling* him, before moving on to the "issue":

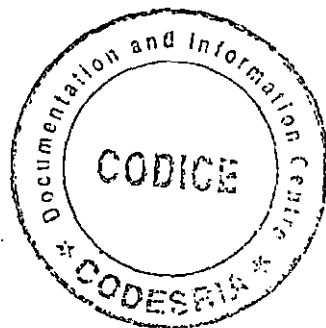
It is therefore, surprising that there are still some *well-placed personalities* who abuse their office by whipping up hysteria and indulging in a *war of psychosis*; by so doing they have unconsciously *fanned the embers of hatred* to the chagrin of the champions of peace and nation-building¹⁷⁴ (emphasis added).

In spite of the fact that the paper itself had earlier reported the 'molestation and harassment' of the Igbo, it now argues that the exodus was "pre-planned" and "obviously" had nothing to do with the North. In any case, argues the paper, the exodus is not only from the North:

¹⁷² "Genesis of the Exodus", front page comment, *NN*, Sept 28 1966.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*



The historic exodus of the Ibos from some parts of the federation has been *misinterpreted* to mean that this *pre-planned* exercise is *confined to Northern Nigeria*. This is *untrue and wicked*. Why should we not summon courage to admit the fact that those *so-called refugees* have decided to *migrate home* out of *their own volition* and that the North as well as the West, the Mid-West and Lagos, have witnessed the *abnormal social phenomenon*....¹⁷⁵
(emphasis added)

This narrative is a good example of how relations of domination are established through *dissimulation* – which is “the concealment, denial, obscuring or deflection of attention away from, or glossing over, existing relations of domination and their process” – as it is expressed particularly in *euphemisation*. The massacre of the Igbo is presented as a ‘misinterpretation’, while the flights to safety are described as “pre-planned”. Those displaced individuals who fled for dear lives are described as “so-called refugees” who decided to “migrate (out) of their own volition”, as if one can *migrate* to one's home. Yet, the paper sees in this mass ‘migration’ an “abnormal social phenomenon” which has no *explanation*.

“History”, *New Nigerian* continues, provides many examples of “would-be mob leaders”¹⁷⁶ – ostensibly, Ojukwu – who were “eaten up” by the “hydra-headed

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

monster" – Igbo passion, as an obvious example – which they created. The Igbo victims of Northern killings are the "mob" for the *New Nigerian* and not the perpetrators of the killings. As far as the paper is concerned, it is this 'mob' who needs to 'repent' and rectify their 'errors':

We pray and hope that after *sober reflection* the *excited and ignited people* will rediscover themselves and retrace their *faltering steps to the path of rectitude and penitence*¹⁷⁷ (emphasis added).

In spite of all these, *New Nigerian* is 'consoled' that a grand nation will emerge in the near future:

It is consoling, however, that out of this tragedy has emerged one great lesson and a guiding principle to generations to come. This is that *to live as a nation*, the maturity of mind, steadfastness and the appreciation of spiritual values are desirable attitude, and that these qualities must form the philosophy on which the *new nation* must subsist...¹⁷⁸ (emphasis added).

That grand nation, that 'national edifice' is narrated to have become acceptable to *all*:

We are happy to note that those who *threatened a total disintegration of our national edifice* have suddenly seen the *wisdom of staying together as one united nation*.... For the *everlasting glory of our nation*, let us march

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

forward as *one united nation* in a federation of *common destiny*¹⁷⁹ (emphasis added).

The credit for building this 'national edifice', *Pilot* reports Ojukwu to have claimed, is more to the credit of the East:

This is a *fact* which we ourselves *know* and which, I am *sure*, *our enemies minimise*, but the last thing that this Region would like to do is to help destroy the *edifice* which they have *made more sacrifice*, put in *greater efforts* and made *far-greater* contributions than *any other section* to build....¹⁸⁰ (emphasis added)

One 'enemy' of the Eastern Region, *Tribune*, 'minimises' this. The paper describes such claim as one "in bad taste and tantamount to propaganda".¹⁸¹

Even though the *Tribune* condemns the killings in the North and considers the reactions from the East, particularly Ojukwu, as "understandably emotional", its overriding task is to protect Western Nigeria from the crisis which the paper reduces to a fight between the Igbo and the Hausa. *Tribune* tells the two 'warring' groups that Yoruba land cannot be their turf:

First, everything must be done (...) to see that no agent-provocateurs, whether Hausa or Ibo, or their agents (...) are allowed to spread foul rumours among the people of Western Nigeria. *Ibos and Hausas must be warned that*

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ "Well Not Destroy The Edifice We Helped TO Build 3, 000 Easterners Dead in May Riots -- Ojukwu", lead story, *WAP*, Oct. 20, 1966.

¹⁸¹ "Enough is Enough", front page editorial, *NT*, Oct. 26 1966.

neither the government nor the generality of the people will allow Yoruba land to be *anybody's battle-ground or arena for small skirmishes*¹⁸² (emphasis added).

Whatever the magnitude of the tragedy that the country is witnessing, *Tribune* is solely concerned ostensibly with the restriction of the "madness" to Igbo and Hausa land, as if the Yoruba are not in any sense implicated in the crisis beyond mediation:

(W)e would again warn *potential trouble-makers*, whether Hausa or Ibo and whatever *their uniform or smuggled arms*, that *all Yorubas will rise like one man to defend their land and heritage*, and that they will not allow *any foolish-outsider* to poison the calm atmosphere of Western Nigeria¹⁸³ (emphasis added).

The reference to 'uniform' and 'smuggled arms' can be read as references to, or as metaphors for, the Northern soldiers stationed in the West and the Igbo respectively. The "smuggled arms" is a reference to the ill-fated aircraft which was allegedly flying smuggled arms to the East.¹⁸⁴

Tribune then picks up the phrase of the *Pilot* on the people "on the lunatic fringe" in asking for mediation:

¹⁸² "Warning and Vigilance", front page editorial, *NT*, Oct. 6 1966.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ "Stop the Gas", *NT*, Oct. 27 1966.

Yorubas, with other ethnic groups, are *destined to restore peace and harmony between Ibos and Hausas*. They must not allow *people on the lunatic fringe* to involve them in the present mass killings and molestation¹⁸⁵ (emphasis added).

But, *New Nigerian* disagrees that the Yoruba have a 'destiny' that imposes on them the task of mediation, because the issue is not a clear-cut one between the Hausa and the Igbo. The paper objects to those who suggest that:

(T)he Yorubas should mediate between the East and the North the implication being that the whole unhappy business is simply a clear-cut issue of North versus East, Hausa versus Ibos.¹⁸⁶

Rather, the paper, without stating so explicitly, would like the matter to be seen as the Igbo against the rest of the country. It continues:

This (the above claim) is not so. Yorubas lost their lives in *January* as well as Northerners. In addition, we should also remember that the *Ibos are leaving Lagos and many towns in Western Region in large numbers* (emphasis added).¹⁸⁷

Whereas *Tribune* and others are concerned about events since July 29 1966, *New Nigerian* emphasises *January (15)* and also the 'flight' of Igbo in 'large numbers' from the West, all in a bid to isolate the Igbo East.

¹⁸⁵ "Warning and Vigilance", *NT*, op. cit.

¹⁸⁶ "Not Such A Clear Cut Issue", editorial, *NN*, Sept. 29 1966.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*.

However, when a broadcast on Radio Cotonou announces that Northerners were killed in the East, *New Nigeria* used the word "killing" even though it states in the reports that "some (were) confirmed, others yet unsubstantiated".¹⁸⁸ Yet, based on this, the paper declares that:

*The nation trembles on the brink of anarchy and despair....A full-scale civil war of the most awful kind is a prospect that must be feared and avoided at all costs*¹⁸⁹(emphasis added).

New Nigerian asks Northerners to heed the appeal of Gowon for an end to the killings, given the fact that they "have *always* prided themselves on their respect for constituted authority and for the maintenance of law and order".¹⁹⁰ In the same edition where the paper echoes Gowon, the latter's speech addressed directly to Northerners is published. Gowon, in it, states that "We (Northerners, including himself) are known as *peace-loving* people and we must do everything in our power not to allow this *good reputation* to be soiled".¹⁹¹ The very instructive appeal reads further:

Fellow Northerners.... You all know that since the end of July, *God, in his power, has entrusted the responsibility of this great country of ours, Nigerian, to the hands of*

¹⁸⁸ "Peace – We Must Find An Answer", front page comment, *NN*, Sept. 30 1966.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ "Above All Keep Calm", editorial, Oct. 3, 1966.

¹⁹¹ "Appeal by Gowon. North's Role in Peace Moves", front page lead, *NN*, Oct3 1966.

another Northerner....¹⁹² Right from the beginning of politics in this country, up to this date, whenever complications arise, the people of the North are known to champion the cause of peace and settlement.¹⁹³ Once the North remains peaceful it is easy to settle disputes arising from any other part of the country.... I receive complaints daily that up to now, Easterners living in the North are being killed and molested, their property looted....¹⁹⁴

These killings, molestation and looting are never reported by the *New Nigerian*, even where it makes allusions to molestation and harassment, it never mentions "killing" as noted earlier. Even in the editorial that backs this call by the head of state, the paper does not admit that Northerners have been killing Easterners.

Pilot is very charitable in its reaction to Gowon's call in spite Gowon's glorification of the Northerner. The paper states that Gowon deserves "the praise of every Nigerian"¹⁹⁵ for calling a halt to the "hell let loose by men on the lunatic fringe".¹⁹⁶ It even describes Gowon as a "Daniel"¹⁹⁷:

¹⁹² Gowon could have added, "after the last Northerner in power, Balewa, was killed by the Igbo".

¹⁹³ He did not cite even one example of when the North had compromised its position in the interest of "peace and settlement".

¹⁹⁴ "Appeal by Gowon..." op. cit.

¹⁹⁵ "A Daniel, A Daniel", editorial, *WAP*, Oct. 5 1966.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

All along, the sincere patriots of this country have been looking for a Daniel to come to the rescue of our *bleeding nation*¹⁹⁸ (emphasis added).

This is an expression of an unusual restraint after an orgy of violence, particularly in Kano, where even *New Nigerian* states that:

The bullet holes in the airport buildings and the dark, ominously significant stains, are a reminder that blind ignorance and prejudice can have no place in *a nation aspiring to greatness*¹⁹⁹ (emphasis added).

New Nigerian, now somewhat contrite, after the Kano incident, narrates a rare "moment of truth" in Nigeria's history:

A moment of truth has been reached in Nigerian history. A moment when we have no alternative but *swallow our pride and acknowledge our failings and our guilt*. The *legacies of hate, mistrust, bitterness and prejudices inherited from the past have exploded in our face* and we now see the prospect of *utter and complete chaos* confronting us²⁰⁰ (emphasis added)

Even though the paper has screened off the early killings that preceded this massive killings, which in fact, could be described as 'massacre', it states that the "proud history" of a "great city" (Kano) has been stained. The word, massacre, or 'pogrom' is however not used. Instead, the killings are "black and terrible" and "full

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ "On the Spot Report: Kano – A City of Hurt Yet New Hope", front page, *NN*, Oct 4 1966.

²⁰⁰ "Moment of Truth in Our History", *NN*, Oct. 4 1966.

horror” – which do not immediately suggest that the killings are against a particular group:

Only those who were in Kano over this last *black and terrible* weekend know the full *horror* of what took place. It is a memory that will remain for years to come. A memory besmirch what, in the main, has been a proud history of a great city....²⁰¹ (emphasis added)

In spite of the magnitude of the killings and its own acceptance of complicity in the crisis, *New Nigerian* still offers a defence of the North, even while it avoids mentioning the ethnic group to which the victims belong (Easterners/Igbo), describing them rather as “those who suffered”:

...But with the same sincerity and intensity with which we now express our sorrow and sympathy with *those who suffered* we ask that there should be *no outright condemnation of the North*. It is true that there have been *mistakes*. *All of us – including this newspaper – must share some degree of blame for seeking to exploit prejudices of one kind or another*. But now, albeit tragically belated, a true appreciation of *the road to national suicide on which we have embarked*, has been revealed in a way that we cannot, we dare not, ignore²⁰² (emphasis added).

The paper, in spite of all these, sees the possibilities of national redemption:

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid.

We appeal to everyone with a true understanding of the situation (...) that *if we must survive as a nation* we must learn to live together (...) and work selfishlessly (sic) and honestly towards *rebuilding a better and happier nation*²⁰³ (emphasis added).

Perhaps to ensure that this *rebuilding* is accomplished, *New Nigerian* constantly focuses on what the East is up to:

Why (...) should Lt. – Col. Ojukwu (...) be *at pains to reiterate* that the East is not *hell-bent on secession* when her every move seems in that direction...²⁰⁴(emphasis added)

New Nigerian returns to the issue again stating that nothing has happened in Nigeria to “push” the East out of the country as Ojukwu alleged:

...Which prompts us to repeat the question we asked the other day: What is the East up to? Does she mean what she says or *is she playing for time*? Lt. Colonel Ojukwu tells foreign diplomats that his region has no intention of seceding from the rest of the federation – not unless it is “pushed”. And the East is *behaving as if she is being pushed*. We ourselves have not seen any evidence of this effect²⁰⁵ (emphasis added).

As far as the paper is concerned, the East can only suffer more if it decides on secession:

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ “Why Not?”, editorial, *NN*, Oct 15 1966.

²⁰⁵ Hat is the East Up to? (With NO Apologies for Repeating the Question)”, editorial, *NN*, Oct. 21 1966.

We can't understand why the East is so *apparently intent to inflict more hurt upon (itself)*. It is in the interest of the East for her to declare right now, without further prevarications, exactly what her intentions are²⁰⁶. (emphasis added).

A few days after, the paper – which had two weeks earlier announced that “in spite of the crisis it continues to be widely circulated in the East (with) its delivery vans (going) unmolested”²⁰⁷ – is “warned” not to bring its copies to the East.²⁰⁸

Tribune more or less agrees with the *New Nigerian* on the implications of the statements credited to Ojukwu concerning the Eastern Region's position on the crisis:

After strenuous denials in the past about the intentions of Eastern Nigeria to secede from the federation, the Eastern Governor has now said that the East “might suddenly find” that it has nothing more in common with the other regions. And the question that arises from the statement is: what next?²⁰⁹

This only goes to deepen the crisis and *isolate* the East:

In our view, we cannot solve our problems by ignoring them. The *problem of the East* today is at the *very top* on

²⁰⁶ Ibid. Incidentally, Zik has also warned the North in 1953 that secession would be “calamitous to its corporate existence”. “Dr. Zik Warns the North Secession Prophets and Propagandists: It Would Be Capital Blunder”, front page lead story, *WAP*, May 15 1953.

²⁰⁷ “Footnote”, ‘On the Spot Report’, *NN*, Oct 4 1966: 6.

²⁰⁸ “Motor, Carrying New Nigerian Turned Back at Onitsha”, *NN*, Oct. 28 1966.

²⁰⁹ “What Next?”, front page comment, *NT*, Dec. 14 1966.

the list of our national problems. It must first be *solved* before we can go forward...²¹⁰ (emphasis added).

The paper then suggests what reads like *the solution*, going even further than *New Nigerian* to request a military solution:

The *Nigerian Tribune* argues the Supreme Commander (Gowon) to recognize that the time has come for a *firm solution* of (sic) the *Eastern problem*. If we have *the force* and *the will* to bring the East *into line by armed intervention*, let it be done *with dispatch*²¹¹ (emphasis added).

Tribune further disagrees with the *Pilot* that the meeting of the army chiefs be held in Accra, Ghana, rather than in Lagos, since Ojukwu's only condition for attending the meeting in Lagos accords with the wishes of the Yoruba people": That Northern troops in the West be withdrawn to their region and replaced by Yoruba troops.²¹² Therefore, when the military governor of the Northern Region, Lt. Col. Hassan Usman Katsina, stated that he would not support such withdrawal, *Tribune* comes down heavily on him:

We (...) consider the statement credited to the Military Governor of the North as *extremely provocative*. For *who does this young aristocrat in military uniform think he is to*

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid.

seek to draw *the whole Yoruba race* in battle against him and Hausas?²¹³ (Emphasis added)

The "Hausa troops nonsense", who are described as "foreign troops", who "are not averse to rape, murder and high-handedness", the paper states, is threatening to turn Yoruba land into an "occupied territory". *Tribune* then announces the resolve of the Yoruba:

We know that the Yorubas are *determined* to see that their *fatherland* is not turned into an "occupied territory"²¹⁴ (emphasis added).

That is not all. Katsina would be mistaken, *Tribune* avers, if he thought that Nigeria would still exist if "the East secedes or is forced to secede":²¹⁵

If the Northern Military Governor does not know it, he can carry this fact away: The people of Western Nigeria and Lagos have taken an *irrevocable decision* – *if any part of Nigeria opts out of the federation, Yorubas reserve to themselves the right to determine their own future in any association*²¹⁶ (emphasis added).

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid. *Tribune* which had earlier asked that the East be brought into line by force, changes tone, asking, "Will Nigeria continue as a political unit? If so, in what form? To assume that these questions do not arise since Nigeria MUST remain one is to fly in the face of the facts.... *The truth we fact now is that Eastern Nigeria is gradually breaking its links* with the rest of the country. There are powerful elements in the Region who advocate its complete secession from Nigeria. Equally, there are powerful elements in Northern Nigeria who are anxious to see the Ibos out of Nigeria. How do we reconcile these opposing forces?" The paper then calls for *reconciliation* rather than 'forcing' the East back into the union. "Wanted: A Happy New Year", front page editorial, *NT*, Dec. 31 1966.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

In the middle of all of these, *Pilot* is still not ready to let go of Lagos. While reviewing the state of the union after the collapse of the All-Nigeria Constitutional Conference, the *Pilot*, which again abandons its support for federalism, states that:

*We whole-heartedly endorse a confederal system of government for Nigeria at least so that the inveterate enmity and bitterness existing between the North and East can be healed by time.... In the absence of a federation we support the suggestion of Eastern Nigeria for a Council of State, comprising equal representatives from each state or region to serve as a weak glue to hold the country together*²¹⁷ (emphasis added).

But:

Since *Lagos is jointly developed by all regions* of the federation, we suggest that All-Nigeria Constitutional Conference should meet soon to decide the question of Lagos during the short spell of confederation²¹⁸ (emphasis added).

Pilot, as it did throughout the pre-independence period, stands resolutely for an 'independent' Lagos. Adeyinka Oyekan, the Oba of Lagos's rejection of the merger plan with the West is given prominence in the paper, as he states that, "we shall fight to the last" because "our tradition is different from that of the West".²¹⁹

²¹⁷ "Nigerian Confederation", editorial, *WAP*, Nov. 22 1966.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

²¹⁹ "We Shall Fight Against Merger With West...", front page lead, *WAP*, Nov. 28 1966.

Even though Lateef Jakande, the leader of the Lagos delegation to the talks describes Oyekan's statement as "reckless"²²⁰, the *Pilot* editorializes that:

The people of Lagos have the right to *self-determination*. It is their prerogative to decide whether the federal capital should be merged with the West or whether it should remain free from the region. This is perfectly the people's choice through a referendum....²²¹ (emphasis added)

But even the paper does not leave the matter to a referendum:

We urge that Lagos should be a Federal territory in case the country retains its federal status. And in case of a confederation Lagos should be the country's political capital. In other words, *Lagos should be a separate entity*²²² (emphasis added).

The *territorial narratives* are usually directed against rival regions. While *Pilot* fights for Lagos, the *New Nigerian* also promotes minority agitation in the East where "the people of Calabar and Ogoja Provinces" suggests a strong centre with "states created on the principle of ethnic grouping".²²³ While it promotes such agitation in the East, *New Nigerian* considers the "appeal" led by Josiah Sunday Olawoyin for a merger of Ilorin-Kabba province with the West as "irrational emotions" and a

²²⁰ " 'Oyekan's Attack is Reckless'. Jakande Defends Lagos Delegation...", front page lead, *WAP*, Nov 29 1966.

²²¹ "Lagos State?", editorial, Nov. 30 1966:2-3.

²²² *Ibid*,

²²³ "Calabar, Ogoja Want A Strong Centre. New Memo to Ojukwu", front page lead *NN*, Nov. 24 1966.

"nefarious and treacherous design to sabotage the efforts of the (constitutional conference)" which "right-thinking people" ought not to engage in.²²⁴

New Nigerian notes the central role of the press in the crisis by "observing" the tendency of Ojukwu "to use the press (...) as a vehicle of negotiation".²²⁵ Yet, even the paper itself earlier confessed that it is an instrument of the negotiation of power by the North:

The *New Nigerian* seeks to be read throughout Nigeria but it has never lost sight of the fact that it was brought into being *primarily to serve the North*. It is because it considers it in the *immediate as well as longer term interest of the North* that it feels obliged to comment on those misguided people – we will put it no worse than that – whose actions are destined to bring nothing but *dishonour and disaster to the North*²²⁶ (emphasis added).

In their *absorption* in the crisis as mouth-pieces of the contending interests, the newspapers also wage battles against one another as much as wage battles against the ethnic/regional Other – as in the era covered in the last chapter. In this, *New Nigerian*, with candour, admits that it, like the other newspapers, has failed the grand nation:

²²⁴ "Unwarranted Agitation", front page comment, *NN*, Sept. 16 1966.

²²⁵ "Action Not Words", editorial, *NN*, Nov. 22 1966.

²²⁶ "At Stake – The Future of the North", editorial, *NN*, Sept. 26 1966.

The *New Nigerian* is conscious of its fall from grace but it has always sought to find the truth. It has not always succeeded... (B)ut having said that let us acknowledge that Nigeria's press [NOT NIGERIAN PRESS] ... can do much more to *restore peace* in the country than they are doing²²⁷ (emphasis added; capitals not in original).

Without mentioning names, but obviously in reference to the *Eastern Nigerian Outlook* and *Pilot*, *New Nigerian* points to the "press in certain quarters" which seems;

Hell-ment (sic) on *sensationalising any incident* which it thinks can be regarded as *favourable to their own case and against the North*²²⁸ (emphasis added)

Pilot perhaps typifies that predilection to "sensationalise" a case "against the North" as it suggests a meeting of all the military governors in Accra, Ghana which sole agenda should be "the refugee problem arising from the genocide in the North":²²⁹

The *aggrieved East* in particular, must be appeased if all parts of the country are to sit down and *reason together as members of the nation*²³⁰ (emphasis added).

How should the East be *appeased*?

²²⁷ "Responsibility of the Press", editorial, *NN*, Sept. 27 1966.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ "Meet in Ghana", front page comment, *WAP*, Dec. 16 1966.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

Incidentally, the victims of the Eastern Nigerian origin in the last disturbances in the North have claimed 27 million (pounds) being the total loss they sustained during the riot. We believe a *collective fine imposed on the taxable people of the North* in addition to what the Federal Government can give to the East will calm, the *distressed Easterners*²³¹ (emphasis added).

Is guilt and responsibility collective or personal? *Pilot* seems to locate the answer in the *narrative of precedence*:

A precedent for this collective fine has already been laid in Nigerian history. In 1950, the Kalabari people of Eastern Nigeria paid a collective fine of 20,000 (pounds) to Okrika people for killing Okrika fishermen on a river near Kalabar. In 1951 or thereabouts, a riot broke out between Okrika and Oguloma citizens. The former damaged the property of the later and another collective fine of 20,000 (pounds) was imposed on Okrika people which was paid to the Oguloma people as compensation. In 1958, a riot broke out in Ibadan in Western Nigeria expressing bad blood over the death of Adekoge Adelabu. A collective fine was imposed on the affected area to compensate those whose property was lost on the affray.²³²

These provide a *basis for a strong case* to be made:

Until the East is pacified, the question of considering the *future association of Nigeria is out of the question*²³³ (emphasis added).

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid.

New Nigerian accuses the information media of the East of practising "journalism that can never do anybody any good", because:

They have carried (sic) news which are *absolute false*. They have published news which are *criminally distorted*. They have been saying things which are an open defiance to the National Military Government.... They can be used to render any country asunder, any *united people disintegrating* (sic) and any cause useless.... We strongly maintain that such an information medium should hang its head in shame for helping to tear this country into pieces²³⁴ (emphasis added).

Post writes in the same vein about "certain sections of the press (which) indulge in inciting bitterness"²³⁵. But *Pilot* returns the salvo to *New Nigerian*:

A Daily Paper printed in Northern Nigeria is trying very hard to *introduce polemics into politics in Nigeria again*.... At this stage in our *national metamorphosis*, we regard it as *calculated sabotage or incitement* for anybody to do any act overt or covert to engender *tribal bitterness or sectional ill-feeling*²³⁶ (emphasis added).

While *New Nigerian* welcomes the British envoy, Sir Francis, visiting the North in the hope that he would get the feelings of the North on the political reforms being carried out by the Ironsi regime and pass this on, *Pilot* rejects such suggestion:

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ "To The Future", front page comment, *MP*, Aug 30 1966.

²³⁶ "Keep Polemics Away", editorial, *WAP*, April 21 1966.

Sir Francis is not responsible for reporting the feelings in the North to the Head of the Military Government (Aguiyi-Ironsi) nor is the North the responsibility of the British. Such an editorial is therefore surprising and very revealing indeed. In the light of this and similar articles that have been appearing in the public opinion column of the 'New Nigerian', one wonders whose opinions are being sold to Nigerians.... It finally exposes the New Nigerian not only as to its attitude, but who its *masters* are²³⁷ (emphasis added)

In a manner reminiscent of the activities of a newspaper in the early 20th century described as "lick-spittle", *Pilot*, in a grovelling editorial, is full of praise for the Ironsi regime, for releasing the paper's editor, Stephen N. Iweanya and cartoonist, Akintola Lasekan, who were detained under the State Security Decree, 1966. The paper even describes the publication of the offending cartoon as the "two men's unrighteousness, a mistake of the head and not of the heart".²³⁸

*While the men were satisfied for undergoing punishment for the offence they had committed, they regretted wearing the tag of security risk in a country they had served so meritoriously for years*²³⁹ (emphasis added).

²³⁷ "Revealing Comment", editorial, *WAP*, May 24 1966.

²³⁸ "We Are Grateful", editorial, *WAP*, June 4 1966.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

This is obviously a position taken because the paper supports the regime in power. Earlier, the paper had promised total cooperation with the Ironsi regime beyond the limits of professional ethics:

Speaking for ourselves, we assure the Military Government that it can count upon our *unalloyed cooperation*.... Whenever any news story strikes us as not measuring up to the restraint and discipline of the moment, we promise to kill it in the interest of our new found nation²⁴⁰ (emphasis added).

Yet, *Pilot* celebrates itself as being an institution that is "bound up" with Nigeria's history:

...This has been the role of the "West African Pilot" through the years. *The history of our institution is bound up with the history of this country*. The "Pilot" is not a building. *It is a people – the embodiment of all that is honest and true*²⁴¹ (emphasis added).

The depth of hard feelings that the newspapers have against one another is best exemplified by *Tribune's* two-part editorial after the collapse of the First Republic which insisted that *Sketch*, founded by the Akintola government in the West, particularly to counter *Tribune*, should be scrapped:

Today, we urge on the Military Governor to order that the *SKETCH* should cease publishing.... We take our stand

²⁴⁰ "We Must Conform", editorial, WAP, May 30 1966.

²⁴¹ "Between Ourselves", editorial, WAP, Oct. 6 1966.

for two reasons. First, it is *immoral* for the SKETCH to continue publishing. Secondly (sic) continued publication of *that paper* may mean some 100,000 (pounds) of *good money going down the drain every year* (T)he paper was conceived and born in the circumstances of a *bastard child....* (T)he SKETCH has not really been a *responsible paper....* Later, it became the *worst protagonist of tribalism in Nigeria, unreasonably anti-Ibo, patronising of the Hausa* and creating disaffection between the Oyos (i.e. Ibadan, Oyo, Oshun) on the one hand and the other Yoruba groups on the other.... (I)t represents the decadent past that was swept away on January 15, 1966...²⁴² (emphasis added)

Tribune finds other reasons in the second part of the editorial:

First, the Sketch *has never been a good financial proposition....* Secondly (sic), the SKETCH *cannot even be a financial success.* As a matter of fact, the Sketch will *never even earn sufficiently to pay its editor and the European manager*²⁴³ (emphasis added).

Pilot shares the image of the Sketch including *Post*, which both "played identical role at all material times in the crises that have torn Nigeria apart":²⁴⁴

Realising that the "Morning Post" and the "Daily Sketch" were in the same camp during the period under review, both supporting the Government right or wrong, one would arrive at no other conclusion than that the law of dialectical materialism is in motion and that this *vicious circle of government newspapers contain the germs of*

²⁴² "Scrap the Sketch (1)", front page editorial, *NT*, March 29 1966.

²⁴³ "Scrap the Sketch (2)", front page editorial, *NT*, March 30, 1966.

²⁴⁴ "Pot Calling Kettle Black", front page editorial, *WAP*, Dec. 2 1966.

*their own destruction and may be soon cancelling out themselves*²⁴⁵ (emphasis added).

For *Tribune, Post* contained "hired writers and sycophants" who "will fail" in their "apparent resolve to wreck the present unity of the Yoruba people".²⁴⁶ *New Nigerian* sees the "allegations of refugees" leaving for the East in "our contemporaries (newspapers) in the East" as "wild and stupid allegations".²⁴⁷ Writing in the *Tribune*, Olawoyin accuses the editorial staff of *New Nigerian* of "old prejudices" that die hard, given the fact that the staffers are incapable of divorcing themselves from "their old journalism of hate, character assassination and tendentious propaganda"²⁴⁸. *Pilot* amplifies this view of the *New Nigerian* in its editorial:

The information media in this country established with public funds have a greater responsibility to the public. This is where the role of the "New Nigerian" should be spotlighted. We hope that the paper's activities should not lead the Government to *take any precipitate action against the press*²⁴⁹ (emphasis added).

Pilot, at point, is exasperated with the "new manifestations of nationalism" being peddled by "some Nigerian newspapers", which is essentially a reference to

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ "The 'Post' Will Fail", front page editorial, *NT*, Dec. 8 1966.

²⁴⁷ "The Path of Sanity", editorial, *NN*, Aug. 28 1966.

²⁴⁸ "Open Letter to Editor, 'New Nigerian' ", *NT*, Feb. 11 1966: 2.

²⁴⁹ "Government Must Be Firm", editorial, *WAP*, May 31 1966.

the *New Nigerian* which after Gowon came to power emphasised the unity of Nigeria as it didn't do under Ironsi:

These latter day "nationalist" paper drum unity slogans as if these alone would bring about the desired unity.... Stranger still, these champions of unity have scorned at the plight of (the refugees swarming certain parts of the country) as if they are a worthless lot not worthy of any concern²⁵⁰ (emphasis added).

The paper avers that now that the North is in power, *New Nigerian* no longer finds 'domination' unlike when an Igbo man was heading the government:

At one time, domination stunt used to fill the pages of some of these newspapers.... These days, domination stunt has disappeared from the pages of the newspapers for it appears that domination has dramatically given way for the kind of oneness desired by the papers....²⁵¹ (emphasis added)

3. Conclusion

This chapter analyses the narratives in five newspapers in their negotiation of power in pre-Civil War Nigeria. It underscores the salience of key issues that relates to the construction of grand narrative and the clashing narratives of the contending nations. It shows how in spite of pushing for the interests of the disparate groups,

²⁵⁰ "This Strange Nationalism", editorial, *WAP*, Sept. 24 1966.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

these narratives also capture the grand nation as an *ideal*. Only that the *ideal* often comes up in the service of settled interests of the contending groups.

The chapter also shows the *continuity* in the key elements of the narratives of the pre-independence era and the pre-Civil War era. For instance, the changing rhetoric of domination, from “Southern domination”, to “Northern domination”, and then “Igbo domination” foreshadowed the manner in which these narratives negotiate hegemonic and counter-hegemonic moves.

Even in their attacks on one another – as also in the preceding chapter – these newspapers carried on the discourses of power.

The next chapter analyses the narratives of another specific conjecture in the history of the Nigerian grand narrative, which is the June 12 1993 presidential election debacle.

CHAPTER FIVE

ELECTORAL CRISIS AND THE FALL OF THE THIRD REPUBLIC – 1992-1994

1. *Introduction*

The crisis of the Nigerian *nation* witnessed a new dimension as it manifested in democratic struggle in late 1980s and early- to mid-1990s. The context of the manifestations of the deep-seated dissatisfaction with the prevailing ethos was the transition programme of the General Ibrahim Babangida regime (1985-1993) which was described by Richard Joseph as “one of the most sustained exercises in political chicanery ever visited on a people”.¹

This transition programme, marred as it was, by what opposition elements described as a “hidden agenda”, even though aborted in 1993, continued in a new disguise through the successor governments headed by Ernest Shonekan (Interim National Government, August 26 – November 17, 1993) and General Sani Abacha (November 1993 – June 1998).

Given the nature of the context in which the parties to the *Nigerian Dispute* contested for power in this era, democratic discourse supervened the narratives of

¹ Professor Richard Joseph in a testimony before the Africa Sub-Committee of the US House of Representatives, August 1993, see, Adewale N. Adebaniwi, “Construction and Deconstruction of Political Reality: The Nigerian Press and the June 12 Crisis”, M. Sc. Thesis, Department of Political Science, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, 1995.

power and identity, even where this ultimately devolved on – or were *camouflages* for – group interests.

In the initial coup speech that heralded the General Ibrahim Babangida-led coup, Brigadier Joshua Dongoyaro stated that the concept of "collective leadership" on which military government was usually based had been "substituted by stubborn and ill-advised unilateral actions, thereby destroying the principle upon which government was formed".² He added that Generals Muhammadu Buhari and Tunde Idiagbon-led regime had "distanced itself from the people, and the yearnings of the people as constantly reflected in the media (were) been ignored".³

General Babangida then announced his ascension to power with a promise to revive the Nigerian nation - against the backdrop of the collapse of the past. In his maiden broadcast, he noted that,

We (Nigerians) have witnessed our rise to greatness followed with the decline to the status of a *bewildered nation*. Our human potential has been neglected, with natural resources put to waste, a phenomenon of constant insecurity and overbearing uncertainty has become the characteristic of our national existence. My colleagues and I are determined to change this course of history....

² See *The Guardian* (Lagos), August 28, 1995:1.

³ *Ibid.*

This government is determined to *unite* this country...
⁴(emphasis added)

Consequently, the regime set up the most elaborate transition programme in Nigeria's history, which was to be a "supervised, gradual learning process". The goals of the programmes were stated as follows:

To avoid the mistakes of the past, we must aim at establishing a political system capable of ensuring justice, opportunity for the people to participate in the decision-making process (and) a new social order based on peace, stability and harmony, and an equitable distribution of national resources and opportunities.⁵

In July 1985, General Babangida announced the Transition to Civil Rule Programme of his administration, which was to start with a local government election on non-party basis and end with the swearing-in of an elected president in October 1992. This was based on the minority report, even though the majority report submitted by the Political Bureau had asked for the termination of the transition programme in 1990. Babangida defended the basis for this longish transition:

From our past experience, our political programme must be gradual, purposeful and effective. It must aim at laying the basic foundation of a new socio-political order. We must create a new set of political attitudes of political

⁴ General Ibrahim Babangida, Maiden Broadcast as Head of State, August 28 1985.

⁵ Olagunju, Tunji, Jinadu Adele and Oyovbaire, Sam, *Transition To Democracy in Nigeria (1985-1993)*, Channels Island: Safari Books (Export) Ltd., 1993: 93.

culture aimed at ushering in a new social order. For this administration, this is a duty we owe the future generation unborn. For us, it's a challenge we shall face with the resolve and fortitude characteristic of our military profession. We are committed to laying such foundations for political stability as will render unnecessary military intervention as a vehicle for alternating or changing governments.⁶

After several twists and turns, presidential elections were held on 12 June 1993. In the election in which the National Republican Convention (NRC) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP) fielded Bashir Tofa (North) and Moshood Abiola (South) respectively, the 'political history' of Nigeria was *reversed* as a Southerner (specifically, a Yoruba) was generally believed to have won the election, against the age-long believe that only a Northern candidate could win presidential election in Nigeria. When all the ploys by Babangida and his agents failed in the attempt to scuttle the elections and the results, it resulted in a direct subversion of democracy: annulment. As one of Babangida's close aides, Prof. Omo Omoruyi, avers in his account of the debacle, "those who wanted to create stalemate mounted ambush at the penultimate stage – the official release of the results. The ambush then assumed two dimensions: stalemate which dragged on from June 10 to June 21 and, when

⁶ Quoted in Adeolu Olumide Akande, "Machiavellian Statecraft, State Corporatism and the Social Construction of Neo-Patrimonialism: Nigeria Under General Babangida", PhD thesis, Department of Political Science, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria, 1995: 258.

this failed, the sudden death of annulment".⁷ This then sets off a national crisis that was only second to the Civil War (1967-1970).

In reacting to the annulment, Abiola states that he consulted widely to get assurance that he will not be "chasing shadows" like others before him and "assurances were given in some cases at the highest levels of government including the president himself".⁸ Therefore,

I say categorically, that this decision (annulment) is unfair, unjust and consequently unacceptable.... As I speak today, I am, by the infinite grace of God, and the wishes of the people of this country, the President-elect of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. I am the custodian of a sacred mandate, freely given, which I cannot surrender unless the people so demand, and it is by virtue of this mandate that I say that the decision of the Federal Military Government to cancel the election of June 12, 1993 is invidious, unpatriotic and capable of causing undue and unnecessary confusion in the country....⁹

Babangida reacted to this in a national broadcast stating that:

In the aftermath of the recently annulled presidential election, I feel, as I believe you yourself feel, a profound sense of disappointment at the outcome of our last effort at laying the foundation of a viable democratic system of government in Nigeria....¹⁰

⁷ Omo Omoruyi, *The Tale of June 12: The Betrayal of the Democratic Rights of Nigerians (1993)*, London: Press Alliance Network Limited, 1999: 98.

⁸ See *The Guardian*, June 25 1993: 1.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ See *The Guardian*, June 26 1993: 1.

He added however that given the many problems associated with the election, including, "negative use of money", "moral issues (earlier) overlooked by the (highest ruling body)", "cases of documented and confirmed conflict of interest between government and both aspirants", "election malpractices", "post-election responses" and "the performances of the judiciary", "it is in the supreme interest of law and order, political stability and peace that the presidential election be annulled".¹¹

As noted elsewhere, the crisis "shook the nation to its foundation, felling, on its somewhat roller-coaster journey, three regimes (Babangida, Shonekan and Abacha regimes) and bringing questions of "secession", "disintegration", "self-determination", and such terms of divisive politics to the front-burners of national discourse with unprecedented vigour".¹²

This chapter examines the narratives of this crisis as they relate to the democratisation of the Nigerian *nation* space and the dangers that subversion of same constituted to the nation-idea.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Waie Adebawji, *June 12 Crisis (1993-1998): AN Annotated Bibliography*, forthcoming, Kano: CRD.

We analyse the narratives roughly from late 1992 through 1993 and 1994 in five magazines and newspapers, *TELL*, and *The News* (representing the position of the pro-democracy coalition and essentially, the Yoruba West), *The Guardian* (representing, generally, the South, but specifically, the Southern minorities of the oil-rich Niger Delta), *Daily Champion* (representing the Igbo East) and the *New Nigerian* (representing broadly, the North, but essentially, the Hausa-Fulani, core North).

2. *Narrating A Date With History*

The June 12 crisis that pushed the *grand nation* towards *keeping a date with history*, in spite of the near-epochal changes in the *balance of political sentiments* which it occasioned, was only a major manifestation of the on-going crisis of nation-being. Perhaps the narratives in the *TELL* magazine in the latter part of 1992 foreshadows the pattern of the narratives thrown up by the June 12 crisis:

Politics, according to many a Western political thinker, is "a game of chess", very involved and full of strategic schemes and moves to outwit and subdue the opponent. And oriental philosophers of late Mao (Tse Tung) Zedung's persuasion say it is "war without the guns", requiring, for the attainment of power, the surprise storming of the enemy and his capitulation. Both portraits are true of Nigeria's on-going politics of the presidential race. As the chips are down, what emerges (...) is master

plan by the *core-North to win the presidential election and thus retain power*¹³ (emphasis added).

Tanko Yakassai, a Northern 'irredentist' politician, is made to explain the 'primacy' of the North in the overall setting of the Nigerian state:

"The Northerner is not afraid to *share power*. Nigerians, *other Nigerians*, believe that they do not need to be afraid of the *concentration of power in the hands of the Northerner*. That is the situation many compatriots in the West, Yoruba especially, are not aware of." In the end, he said, all those who are scheming for the Southerner as president would be shocked if the did not take the *Muslim North* into their calculation. His reason? "Nobody can be president of Nigeria without votes of the *Northern Muslims of Nigeria*. Unfortunately, those who hold this view are seen as cowards and *traitors of their fatherland*"¹⁴ (emphasis added).

Ayo Opadokun, who has been in the vanguard of planning to ensure that the South produced the president, responds to Yakassai:

The North (...) has carried on over the years as "if they *owned the country* and the rest of the country were a *conquered people*". In the circumstances, Northern sensitivity to the sensibilities of the South and Middle-Belt "has been largely one of contempt. They reserve for themselves key positions as if others don't matter. We can't just continue like this. That is why we need someone

¹³ "Who Succeeds Babangida", cover story, *TELL*, Sept, 1992: 12.

¹⁴ *Ibid*: 15.

from the South this time around to be president¹⁵
(emphasis added).

For the Middle-Belt, the vehicle for its *resorgimento* is religion:

As Middle-Belters claim, CAN (Christian Association of Nigerian) is the counterpoise to the Islamic Council with which the *Muslim North* "has been domination us".... They seem to have (...) settled for a deal to have a Southerner, preferably a Christian, become president. Jolly Tanko Yusuf, (said) "we have told the East and West to come together to support one candidate. We have said CAN in the North would do whatever it could to support that candidate"¹⁶ (emphasis added).

The Christian challenge is narrated as a fundamental one, as secretary of Kano state chapter of CAN, Joseph Fadipe articulates why the religious body joined the battle for the soul of the *nation*:

... since the time (Sheikh Abubakar) Gumi stated that if a Muslim does not rule, there will be trouble, we have been watching out for any attempt to out-manoeuvre us.¹⁷

Fadipe, then argues that when Christians (Generals Yakubu Gowon and Olusegun Obasanjo) ruled Nigeria, there was 'more judicious use of "our oil wealth"',

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid: 18.

¹⁷ Ibid.

as against, "the corruption, embezzlement, confusion and chaos Plc" of Muslim leader.¹⁸

Yusuf advances that the *nation* is not just in the grip of the Muslim North but a 'tiny fraction' of that:

Even among the Muslims, those *ruling this country belong to one family*. It cannot continue. Nigeria is not a feudal state. It is time for a change to allow another people to produce (the) president (...) "in order to maintain *the nation's integrity*"¹⁹ (emphasis added).

Christian Onoh, former governor of Anambra state throws the Igbo agenda into the emerging equation:

This time around, the Igbo are not prepared to play second fiddle. *The Igbo heartland* is, and will, not be a shopping ground for the number two position²⁰ (emphasis added).

The role of the press in setting the narrative agenda in the emerging consensus of controversy of which section of the country must produce the president is acknowledge by Yakassai. But first, he locates his position in the narratives of southern presidency:

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid: 15.

...My deductions (are) that the movement for a southern president is in effect a movement for Yoruba president... As you know, there are two powers: one is likely to be more important than the other because you can use one to get the other. There is political power and there is economic power. All Nigerians believe that the nation's economic power today is in the hands of the Yorubas, (...) Yorubas dominate the bureaucracy (...) the Yorubas dominate the educational sector.... And the last powerful weapon is also controlled by the Yorubas, and that is the media. *Other Nigerians believe that the Yorubas want political power to dominate the terrain*²¹ (emphasis added).

He then zeroes in on the *Yoruba press*:

Have you seen the report of the *Tribune* of Tuesday, August 11? I have seen it. The editorial comment of the *Catholic Herald* was the subject of their story. The *Catholic Herald* was making conditions for *the continuous existence of Nigeria as an entity*, that there must be southern president. And that *Catholic Herald* actually came close to what I am saying. They adopted two candidates and they were clear in their preferences. Their first choice was Olu Falae, and in order not to appear partisan, they put Iwuanyanwu there.... (A)ll indications are that the *threat is from the West* than from other part of the country. They seem to be the only section of the country that is *bent on getting political power this time around*²² (emphasis added)

²¹ "Nobody Can Be President Without Muslims", interview, *TELL*, Sept. 7 1992: 16.

²² *Ibid.*

This line of narrative finds regular space in *New Nigerian*. For instance, while accusing the 'western' press – the press based in the West of Nigeria – of ignoring the crisis of fuel shortage in the North, while it “make(s) it seem like the *whole nation* is on its knees, on the brink of total collapse (emphasis added)”²³, whenever there is such a crisis in the West, particularly, Lagos. Bala Dan Audu, writing in *New Nigerian* argues that the attitude of this section of the press “worries concerned patriots”:

(T)he West selfishly manipulates the media to present its position as though it represents the feeling of a cross section of the population of Nigeria. If they truly want to present a pan-Nigerian outlook, for God's sake, they should also have the courage to give the same level of publicity to the situation in the north, and other parts of the country, for that matter.²⁴

Audu agrees with Yakassai that the Lagos-Ibadan press represent only Yoruba interests, whether “knowingly or unknowingly”, presenting only “their own narrow, selfish perspective”. He then submits that this cannot help in building a united nation:

If a public officer is Yoruba, then he is excellent. If he is not Yoruba, then he has to kow-tow to their agenda otherwise Yoruba-controlled media mount against his.... They should (...) consider the fact that this country belongs to all.... We cannot build a *strong united nation*

²³ “Western Press and National Issues”, by Bala Dan Audu, *NN on Sunday*, May 2 1993: 5.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

when one area decide(s) to focus on its interests, to the exclusion of others²⁵ (emphasis added).

New Nigerian protests the fuel crisis in the North that provoked this narrative.

In the fourth editorial on the matter within the space of one month, without clearly stating that it is defending what constitutes Northern interests against the *silence* of the dominant section of the press in the West of the country, the paper protests,

(T)he scarcity of fuel that has virtually grounded the economic and social life in most parts of the Northern states of the country to a halt.... The *status quo* is unacceptable.... The social consequences is (sic) like *an undetonated* (sic) *time-bomb*. A solution has to be found. It can be found.²⁶

The narratives above provide a backdrop for the *battle royale* that is soon to be fought in the succeeding months as each of these powerful groups reach for the ultimate democratic prize – the presidency – in attempts to validate group interests and counter advances by the other – either the duplicitous military regime or other power blocs.

Given the state of affairs in the years immediately preceding 1993, the Babangida regime and the pro-democracy movement and human rights groups were

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ "Still on the Fuel Scarcity in the North", front-page editorial, *NN*, May 6 1993.

posed for clashes. The latter constantly points out that "Babangida(s)' most talked about hidden agenda" was unfolding by degrees. Consequently,

They reaffirmed their faith in the termination of military rule by January 2, 1993. And in their belief that Nigeria has so many *unresolved issues threatening the nation's corporate existence*, (they...) renewed their calls for a *national conference*²⁷ (emphasis added).

The frustration with the constant shifting of the transition goal post and its implications for group interests had produced calls for the convocation of a national conference where the vested interests in the 'nation' would dialogue and fashion out a new national ethos. The discourse of national conference, which later was sharpened into Sovereign National Conference, was therefore increasingly dominant. The military however regarded such calls as strong currents geared towards upstaging it:

At best of times, government regards (those making such calls) as irritants, and simply ignores them. But the present climate is fouled. What with the botched presidential primaries and an economy which, after six years of structural adjustment, has not put enough food on the common man's table. So, in its wisdom, the Babangida regime seems to have *resolved that the less dialogue Nigerians do now, the better for the nation*. And it

²⁷ "The Crackdown Begins", cover story, *TELL*, Jan. 4 1993:10.

does not matter what the topic of the dialogue is²⁸
(emphasis added).

This for the *TELL* constitutes the beginning of "the crackdown".²⁹

The newly formed Movement for National Reformation (MNR) led by the man who moved the controversial motion for independence in 1953, Anthony Enahoro, raises immediate possibilities of collision with the government. In its position paper as reported by *TELL*, the MNR,

advocates a redrawing of the political, economic and administrative structure of the *Nigerian nation*. Anchored of the said experience, the movement observed that there is a "need to resolve federalism as envisaged by the country's founding fathers" through "a new Act of Union freely subscribed to by nationalities and federations".³⁰

The Movement proposed eight federations – East-Central: Enugu, Anambra, Abia and Imo States; South-Eastern: Akwa-Ibom, Cross River and Rivers states; South Central: Edo, and Delta states; West-Central: Niger, Kwara and Kogi states; North-Eastern: Taraba, Adamawa, Borno states; North-Central: Kebbi, Sokoto, Katsina, Kano and Jigawa states; Western: Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Ondo and Osun states; Central: Plateau, Bauchi and Kaduna states. All these are to form the Union

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ "Wanted! Another Country", *TELL*, Jan. 4 1993: 17.

of the Federation of Nigeria, UFN or the Union of the Federated States of Nigeria, UFSN.³¹ The proposal, the MNR, advances, will 'restore self-government to the nationalities and peoples that constitute Nigeria "as distinct from independence to Nigeria as a whole".³² This proposal constitutes a fundamental and radical challenge to the status quo, which MNR and others believed was marked by Northern and majority-groups domination.

Babangida reacts to this challenge when commissioning the Nigerian Law School Hostel as *TELL* reports it. He tells students of the Law School:

Your nation or mine cannot do with citizens, young or old, who with *antecedents littered with the debris of unutilised opportunities have recoured (sic) to the desperate measures of wanton criticism*³³ (emphasis added).

The military president is not done. His other attack points more clearly in one direction. He excoriates,

'political fugitives of yesterday (...) who have once again become fugitives from their roots and (who) celebrate their *estrangement at the altar of rabble-rousing*³⁴ (emphasis added).

TELL then aver that:

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ "The Crackdown Begins", *op. cit.*: 12.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

Rarely are names mentioned in the attacks. But, Nigerians who can read between the lines easily recognised those the caps fit. Nigerians who raise eyebrows at such tough posturing are wary because the tough talks follow a pattern. It is like preparing the slaughter slab before sweeping on the enemies.³⁵

This was clearly a reference to Enahoro, who was extradicted to Nigeria in the first republic to face treason charge.

The *New Nigerian* devotes itself to reflecting news and viewed that constantly reaffirmed the military governments 'sincerity' in spite off all the attacks by other medium including *TELL*, *The News* and *The Guardian*. Regularly on its front-page government's spokemen, particularly, the information secretary, Uche Chukwumerije, defends the regime's transition programme:

If after all the various actions General Ibrahim Babangida administration has taken to ensure that only the right leader succeeds him as a democratically elected president, Nigerians decide to mortgage conscience(s) (sic) in exchange for a mess of political pottage (sic) then, they should have themselves to blame³⁶

While the southern papers generally praised the meeting of retired generals and other prominent Nigerians convened by former head of state, General Olusegun

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ *New Nigerian* front page, Feb. 3 1993.

Obasanjo, in Ota to review the state of the nation, as an effort "to save Nigeria", *New Nigerian* writes a front page editorial to condemn the "unholy conclave at Otta"³⁷:

General Obasanjo has allowed his name and prestige to be exploited by *junk publications* to make a goldmine.³⁸ The *cover-page complex* took over from a respected statesman...³⁹ (emphasis added)

The paper then raises questions that tend to suggest that the meeting of these former leaders and other prominent "conspirators" was 'insurrectional':

Could be it that the *real motive* and goal of the Ota conclave go beyond what are contained in the communiqué? Did the participants at Ota farm house conclave want June 12 election to hold? If held, will they allow August 27, 1993 handover to be realistic? We say all these because the Otta Conclave has definitely *heightened the tension in the body politic*.... (They) give the impression of 31 *super patriots* in a country of 88 million Nigeria. It is an *arrogance of privileges and positions that run opposite the ideals of democracy which the 31 conspirators at Otta espoused*⁴⁰ (emphasis added).

The paper attempts to insinuate that the resolution of the "conspirators" at Otta is capable of "derailing" the transition programme – a regular official charge against opposition elements. *Guardian* argues to the contrary. *New Nigerian's*

³⁷ "The Unholy Conclave at Otta", front-page editorial, *New Nigerian* (hereafter NN), June 12 1993.

³⁸ This is a reference to Southern-based papers and magazines which praised the Otta meeting, including *TELL*, *The News* and *The Guardian*. *TELL* puts Obasanjo on its reports of the meeting.

³⁹ "The Unholy Conclave at Otta", op. cit.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

"diversionary conspirators" are *Guardian's* "patriotic" citizens. Yet, the latter quarrels with the fact that former top soldiers dominated the meeting while radical activists were not invited:

The patriotic impulse behind the conference is unexceptionable... (However) the preponderant presence of the military at this conference and the remarkable exclusion of certain ideological tendencies, has undercut its representativeness⁴¹ (emphasis added).

For *TELL*, Obasanjo is a concerned elder statesman "moving" with other "top Nigerian leaders" on a "mission to save motherland". Such a gathering is "historic". The magazine gives prominence to Obasanjo's opening address at the meeting with a bold quote:

Those who could and should keep hope alive either lost or were made to lose their conscience and developed tight lips and withered hands. All that is necessary for the enthronement of evil is for good people to remain silent and inactive.⁴²

Obasanjo's interview in *TELL* is described in *New Nigerian* as "characterised by extremely foul language, various unsubstantiated remarks and half-truths

⁴¹ "The Ota Elders Conference", editorial, *TG*, June 4 1993.

⁴² Cover Story, *TELL*, May 3 1993.

bordering on rumour mongering (...) unbecfitting of an elder statesman" which is capable of "undermining the on-going democratic transition programme".⁴³

In the months that preceded the presidential elections, what dominated the narratives in the press are issues relating to the sincerity of the military regime on the handover of power, the treatment of minority ethnic nationalities and their symbols, and the future of Nigeria. *The News*, for instance, focuses on the Ogoni struggle for self-determination outside of the Nigerian imposition. Relates the magazine:

Ken Saro-Wiwa (...) said the Ogonis were prepared to take back their oil fields, noting with irony: "When the Ogoni are praying to God, the Nigerian government is busy sending security agents to the refineries and oil fields. *Ogoniland does not belong to Nigeria*". Wiwa explained that in a situation where 300,000 Ogonis are denied bare essentials of life and their farmlands destroyed by the activities of oil companies, war was the only choice left to them, *a three pronged war to reclaim their autonomy as a nation*, redress the parlous state of their lives economically and halt the environmental destruction wrought on the land⁴⁴ (emphasis added).

The dissatisfaction in Ogoni land is then connected with the health and peace of the grand nation, Nigeria:

⁴³ "Anti-Democratic 'Democracy': Obasanjo's Recipe for National Confusion", by Dr. Yusuf A. Mohammed, *NN*, May 11 1993: 5.

⁴⁴ "A Call To Arms", *The News*, March 29 1993: 16-17.

A time bomb is ticking in Ogoniland, which, if not defused by concrete and positive action by government had, the *potential of consuming the nation* in one huge avalanche of bloodletting⁴⁵ (emphasis added).

But, Saro-Wiwa explains what constituted for the Ogoni, the alternative to the potential eclipse of the grand nation. The included centrally the convocation of a national talk shop where the "restructuring" of the grand nation would be engineered:

What we need is a completely new structure in the country where *every nation will govern itself*. That's why, to a great extent I share the views of Chief Anthony Enahoro. I think he is on course, but we still have to meet and discuss how many federations in a national conference⁴⁶ (emphasis added).

He continues:

The country is gravitating towards a crisis that'll force a national conference, The Hausa/Fulani will of course want to continue with the *bandit operation* by forming alliance with the Yorubas and the Ibos. There's no doubt that the economic crises that have resulted from the activities of this government have led to a political crisis which would either lead to disintegration of the country or the restructuring of the country⁴⁷ (emphasis added).

Saro-Wiwa argues further that four billion dollars will be needed to "restore (Ogoni) land" which has been poisoned and polluted, since the Ogoni cannot be

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ "Sharpville Will Be Child's Play", interview, *The News*, March 29 1993: 18.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

removed and settled in Kano".⁴⁸ Kano, the most populous, Hausa (Fulani) city in the North, in this context is a symbol of the oppression and domination of the Ogoni. Even as the minorities, as symbolised by the Ogoni, are "tired of the status quo and with the convening of the constitutional conference becoming more doubtful (and) the minorities (...) threatening to go it alone"⁴⁹, Tanko Yakassai, is discursively brought into the narrative to *aggravate* the anger of the minorities where he states that "we" (presumably, Northerners) will take people from the West to deal with any of the minorities that attempt "to take away the oil":⁵⁰

The Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) activist, Owens Wiwa, is then brought into the fray too to respond to Yakassai's 'intemperate' charge. Says Owens Wiwa,

I take my mind back to (Tanko) Yakassai's statement about *Ogoni people being wiped out* and possible use of the Yorubas to do the job. At the time, I thought it was the *ranting of a senile fellow*. But now, I realise it is a *well-planned genocide mission* by the majority. As of now, the officers being used to enact the horrible deed are of Yoruba stock⁵¹ (emphasis added).

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ "Ringling the Divorce Bells", cover story, *TELL*, May 2 1994: 10.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

The major thrust of such narratives as these particularly after the annulment of the June 12 elections, was essentially geared towards amplifying "the issue of revisiting the political structure of the country".⁵² One of the groups proposing this restructuring through the agency of a national conference, the Southern Minorities Forum, decry the,

injustices and inequitable structural imbalances in the present Nigerian federation. Nigeria has not given these states a sense of belonging, no love and no brotherhood. *Since we are not wanted, we now demand our true independence from Nigeria*⁵³ (emphasis added).

The magazine argues that the future of the grand nation would seem to be predicated on the national conference:

Among these groups (minorities), *plenty of hope now seem pinned on the proposed constitutional conference* as an opportunity to articulate their positions. But there has been growing apprehension as to whether the conference will actually hold or not owing largely to the undefined nature and direction of the General Sani Abacha regime⁵⁴ (emphasis added).

Related to the Ogoni case is the Zango-Kataf issue arising from violent clashes between the minority Kataf and their Hausa "guests" which resulted in the

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid: 15.

⁵⁴ Ibid: 15.

setting up of a tribunal to try Kataf leaders accused of murder and other crimes. A General Domkat Bali, former Defence Chief, who left the Babangida regime, a man possessing "moral strength", says on the Kataf trials:

I believe in *justice and without justice in Nigeria* we run the risk of not having *citizens committed to the nation* and not having a *united nation*⁵⁵ (emphasis added).

Bali raises many questions on the fate of the Kataf minorities and here the symbol of *Kano* pops up again:

There have been many religious crises⁵⁶, why is it that Zango-Kataf should get this kind of tribunal? Why was it not done for Bauchi and Kano? Why the emphasis on Zango-Kataf – a *small place* in Kaduna state? All these are valid questions that need answers.... (T)he issue or question that should be raised is that – is it fair? If the answer is that all that has happened so far is not fair then it is wrong? It doesn't serve the country well⁵⁷ (emphasis added).

All of this feed into the need to contest the current arrangement in Nigeria towards creating a *nation*. As Emeka Ojukwu, former secessionist leader articulates it in *TELL*, the convocation of a national talk shop is unavoidable:

⁵⁵ "I Have Serious Doubt That IBB Will Hand Over", Interview, *The News*, March 29 1993: 21.

⁵⁶ It was as much a religious clash as it was an ethnic clash because the Kataf were dominantly Christians while the Hausa were dominantly Muslims. Bali says, "I think it is more of a coincidence that the Hausas are assumed to be all Moslems and the Katafs are mainly Christians one would well say that it's a religious conflict – you can also say it is a tribal conflict. So, it could be both". Ibid. Bali is Christian.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

I believe very strongly that the only legitimate cry in Nigeria today is back to the drawing boards. And that is why I say we must have a national conference. Anybody that says we've come beyond that, I say we are not facing the issue. *We haven't created a nation. We have not created a nation.* Prove that we have... But I would like to show you that *the interest of a group unfortunately still supersedes* that of the *agglomerate* because I don't know what we are really. I *find it difficult to call to a nation today.* I would like us to sit down and let us set the *parameters of our nation*⁵⁸ (emphasis added).

The issue of domination and hegemony and "undue advantage" allegedly taken by the North at the expense of the rest of the nation-of-aspiration is another major theme that the narratives in the press reflect. *TELL* asks Ojukwu to react to the fact that "the North (...) tends to be opposed to the idea of Nigerians or their leaders sitting down to hold (a national conference)".⁵⁹ Ojukwu's response is full of subtle condescension in his attitude to the North:

If you are satisfied with the *status quo*, why would you want to shift it? This is not a church situation, it is life.... I mean, let's face it. When in your life, *your ancestors have never seen wide expanse of water* and today you can become admiral of a fleet, wouldn't you enjoy it? *When you are sitting on desert sands and petrol is piped to you to exploit*, wouldn't you want it? When fertilizer companies are established and you are put on top in the South to run (it) wouldn't you enjoy it? When all the services are

⁵⁸ "Yes, I Will Fight Again. If...", interview, *TELL*, March 1 1993: 22.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

commanded by you, when the powers – the executive, the judiciary, the legislature – are yours to take, at your command, would you really be in that situation, clamouring for change?⁶⁰ (Emphasis added)

This is a good example of *differentiation*, as Ojukwu emphasises those things that differentiate and divide Nigerian power blocs, particularly the “exploitative” North from the rest of Nigeria.

The press reflects the doubts as to the sincerity of the Babangida regime to handover power. As the parties, SDP and NRC, prepared for their presidential primaries, *The News* describes it as an “assumption of vacancy”.⁶¹ When the two candidates, Moshood Abiola (SDP) and Bashir Tofa (NRC) emerged, *TELL* describes it as the “triumph of IBB’s men”⁶², while *The News* asks if Abiola or Tofa can accomplish the “mission to save Nigeria”. Argues the latter:

The two beneficiaries of General Babangida’s “command democracy” are Chief Abiola and Alhaji Tofa who emerged to clinch the presidential ticket of the SDP and NRC. But given the nature of partisan politics in the country and the *growing clamour in certain sectors for a Sovereign National Conference* and the subsequent *re-ordering of the federation*, Babangida’s gift may soon turn into an albatross on the neck of whoever emerges as president in Nigeria....⁶³ (emphasis added)

⁶⁰ Ibid: 23.

⁶¹ “The Last lap”, *The News*, March 22 1993: 19.

⁶² “The Triumph of IBB’s Men”, cover page, *TELL*, April 12 1993.

⁶³ “Mission To Save Nigeria”, cover page, *The News*, April 12 1993.

The magazine avers that given the fact that 'all is not well with the (Nigerian) federation and (the) dangers of its constituent parts coming unhinged"; would a President Tofa or Abiola be up to the task? For the weekly, this constitutes the core question that the embattled nation-of-aspiration confronts. Therefore suppose:

That rot and decay has eaten deep into the *fabric of the nation* and that it is *tottering on the brink of collapse*? That its various sub-groups are dissatisfied with the present structure of the Federation and are clamouring for a new political arrangement? Will either Abiola or Tofa, finding himself in the eye of the storm, turn out to be the man of the moment and exhibiting a presence of mind and steadfastness of purpose, *steer the nation into calmer waters*?⁶⁴ (Emphasis added)

The magazine believes that the global drift towards "ethnic nationalism and dismemberment of nation-states" is more salient in understanding the situation in Nigeria with democratisation as only a manifestation of that, or a sub-text of it.

New Nigerian avers that such narratives as the above are only indicative of a "new fangled malady" of 'bashing' Babangida and 'holding the nation to ransom':⁶⁵

The most guilty (...) are *TELL* and *The News*. In their effort to run down this administration (...) they would stop at nothing even if what they are doing has the potential of *tearing apart the Nigerian nation....* As for *The News* they

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ "TELL, *The News* and *The Transition*", by our correspondent, *NN*, May 20 1993.

seem to have abandoned every sense of decency or ethics (w)ithin (its) short span life span... They (both magazines) threaten fire and brimstone if their own ideas of how the country should go is not followed.... These magazines must be told that they cannot hold *this nation* to ransom. They cannot decide for the rest of us how the country should go⁶⁶ (emphasis added).

The "rag sheets" are then warned that if the "nation breaks apart" ostensibly on account of their narratives, "all of us will be engulfed in it".⁶⁷

Guardian argues against the backdrop of fears over the genuineness of Babangida's resolve to vacate power that unless there are irregularities on a "wide-scale", the results of the election should be respected given the fact that Nigeria's future is predicated on the outcome of the election:

The journey has been *long and tortuous*. It has been marked by false steps, mis-steps real and contrived – anxiety and doubts. Even now, four days to the poll, some doubt lingers. Unless there is *evidence of irregularities on a wide scale* the two political parties, their candidates and their supporters should pledge themselves to abide by the result. *The future of Nigeria* requires nothing less⁶⁸ (emphasis added).

The stage was thus set for clashing narratives once the election crises erupted. First, when further announcement of the results of the elections was

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ "Facing June 12", editorial, *The Guardian*, June 9 1993.

suspended, the 'opposition' *universalised* the desirability of announcing the result insisting that civilised conduct among the comity of nations requires no less.

Guardian asks that the remaining results be officially declared, because,

We ought to *demonstrate to the world* that we are *capable of making* progress and that progress has begun. After *eight long years of transiting*, there is no doubt today that *enough is enough*. Nigeria is ready for democracy. It has never been and (can) never be readier than it now is. This is the reality on the ground⁶⁹ (emphasis added).

New Nigerian thinks otherwise. The paper, which had earlier described the election as a "historic moment in our march towards enduring democratic polity", comes out to question the validity of the election in a front-page editorial instructively entitled, "Our Nation, Our Destiny". *New Nigerian* alludes to,

some happenings that *in their essence* might have *serious consequences* for the democratic process.... Key among them and which are widely reported are the *general apathy, low voter turn-out*, the court verdict and the more *insidious foreign interferences*, apparent election malpractices as well as glaring lapses on the part of the (National Electoral Commission)⁷⁰ (Emphasis added).

New Nigerian's narrative of what transpired during the election is decidedly different from that of *Guardian* and *Daily Champion*. While for *Champion*,

⁶⁹ "The Results, Now", *TG*, June 18 1993.

⁷⁰ "Our Nation, Our Destiny", editorial, *NN*, June 16 1993.

Nigeria's chequered transition process petered out towards a glorious end last Saturday, June 12 1993 with the successful conduct of the last of the elections leading to the withdrawal of the military from civil administration. The election itself was *epochal*...⁷¹ (Emphasis added).

The *New Nigerian* states that,

From general observation and reports, voter turn-out was *very low*. In at least one state, only 12.5 percent of the registered voters actually voted.... The situation was more serious in the Northern states where majority of the voters are peasant farmers who cannot help but attend to their farms....⁷² (Emphasis added).

For all of *New Nigerian's* "general observation and reports", only one concrete example of a state among thirty states could be cited for "low turn-out". Also, the occupational disposition of "northerners" which was not at issue for the many months preceding the election is responsible for the paper's rejection of the validity of the elections. But, *Champion* seems to suggest a reason for *New Nigerian's* about-turn, as it states that, the results of the election unofficially released,

showed *fundamental shifts in the nation's traditional pattern of loyalties and alignments*⁷³ (emphasis added).

⁷¹ "The People's Mandate", editorial, *Daily Champion*, (hereafter, DC), June 18 1993.

⁷² "Our Nation, Our Destiny", op. cit.

⁷³ DC, June 14, 1993.

For *Guardian*, it is a matter of honour that the results be released and validated, because Nigeria has had,

Enough of this *dishonourable antics* that have diminished us.... The way forwards (is) to affirm the verdict that Nigerians delivered on June 12⁷⁴ (emphasis added).

Such views as *Champion's* and *Guardian's* and the interests they represent, for the *New Nigerian* constitute the views of the "minority" which must not be allowed to prevail for the sake of the "destiny of our nation":⁷⁵

We are not apologists for military rule, but as always we want the best for the *destiny of our nation*... To pretend that all is well with the elections is to elevate the views of the minority with a strange and unacceptable interpretation of the concept of democracy⁷⁶ (emphasis added).

Shortly after this editorial, the editor of the paper, Yakubu Abdullazeez, resigned. He stated in his resignation letter that the "sudden change on the editorial policy of the paper is geared towards fanning the embers of ethnic and regional disunity".⁷⁷ This letter receives major attention from the pro-June 12 press.

⁷⁴ "A Matter of Honour", editorial, *TG*, July 5 1993: 8.

⁷⁵ "Our Nation, Our Destiny", op. cit.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Abdullazeez, Yakubu, "Letter of Resignation", June 16 1993. See, Adewale Adebani, "Construction and Deconstruction of Political Reality", op. cit.

While Edwin Madunagwu, the Marxist scholar and member of *Guardian's* editorial board, argues that the unofficial victory of Abiola at the polls is a vote "above every other thing (...) for a revolutionary change"⁷⁸, and that the forces against the election constitute a "neo-fascist movement",⁷⁹ Sina Odugbemi, another member of the paper's editorial board, writes that given the polarity occasioned by the election crisis, "the middle ground has vanished forever"⁸⁰ in Nigeria's politics. It is precisely the absence of the middle-ground that *Champion* deplores, while condemning the "unreasonable intolerance"⁸¹ of such June Twelvers - as represented by Odugbemi:

At the level of ideas, the otherwise vibrant and vocal Nigerian society appeared to be in *grave danger of fossilization between two irreconcilable extremes*: those who consider the nullification of June 12 elections irrevocable and those who consider the demand for upholding the election sacred. The former position is represented by the military government which has demonstrated *increasing strong arm tendencies* against the voice of dissent. The other is represented by a vocal section of the political class which also betrays *unreasonable intolerance* with opinions other than those supporting its position⁸² (emphasis added).

⁷⁸ "A Vote For Revolutionary Changes", opinion, *TG*, June 17 1993: 13

⁷⁹ "Understanding the Present Situation", opinion, *TG*, June 24 1993.

⁸⁰ "The New Governing Class", opinion, *TG*, June 30 1993: 25.

⁸¹ "Nigeria: Way Forward", editorial, *DC*, Aug. 2 1993.

⁸² *Ibid.*

When the regime eventually annulled the election, the narratives return to pointing to the "dangers ahead for the nation". *TELL* narrates the state of affairs thus:

After 10 years of the *most rapacious and destructive military interregnum* in our national politics, the Nigerian people; on June 12, *freely elected their new Leader*, M.K.O. Abiola, in what has been *universally acknowledged as the best election held* in this country since independence⁸³ (emphasis added).

Yet:

...General Babangida, *who anointed himself* the nation's emperor August 27 1985, and *who has never intended to relinquish power*, decided to so brazenly subvert the will of the people. We had severally alerted the nation about the grand fraud that is the transition programme. Many other patriotic Nigerians did the same, crying out without let about the dangers ahead for the *nation*⁸⁴ (emphasis added).

The magazine *universalises* the acknowledgement of the free and fair nature of the election and *expurgates* the Other – Babangida, who is identified as so evil, harmful and threatening (an 'emperor who set up' a "grand fraud (to) subvert the will of the people") as to demand collective resistance and expurgation. This also results inherently in a call for unity against the advances of the 'evil Other'. The magazine then asks a question only to predict the "formal death" of the Nigerian *nation*:

⁸³ "From The Editor", *TELL*, July 5 1993: 9.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

The *pertinent question* now is: How and why did Nigerians allow *the nation* to come to this horrible pass? At this juncture, we can write the *epithet* to mark the *formal death of the nation...*: "Here lies prostrate, Nigeria, a *nation* with huge potentials for greatness, but now bent and broken by the *inordinate ambition of Babangida and his vile obsession with power*"⁸⁵ (emphasis added).

Champion argues otherwise. The paper states that the issue of June 12, which can be resolved "through negotiation by the elite" should not be allowed to 'threaten national survival':

Central as the mandate is to the march towards democracy, it will *serve no useful purpose to allow it to threaten national survival. The nation must survive for democracy to take roots.* We have no doubt that there are no obstacles this nation cannot overcome if the larger national interest forms the paramount basis of political discourse⁸⁶ (emphasis added).

Perhaps as further *prove* of the 'evil' of the regime, *TELL* predicts that this edition may be the last before the regime descends on it – as it did on *The News* – in the regime's "pacification process" which will follow Babangida's "total conquest of the nation".⁸⁷ In dedicating the whole edition to the "stolen presidency", the magazine

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ "Nigeria: Way Forward", *TELL*, July 5, 1993, *op. cit.*

⁸⁷ "From the Editor", *op. cit.*

affirms the eventual and ultimate triumph of that *nation* which has been killed by

Babangida:

We shall never give up *the struggle* because this country is far greater and more important than Babangida and his chorus singers. *The people's will shall certainly triumph*⁸⁸ (emphasis added).

Sani Kotangora counters this view vehemently in his interview with *TELL*. The publisher of the defunct Kaduna-based *Hotline* magazine and strident defender of Northern interests argues that no election took place on June 12 as far as he is concerned and that the North is ready to go to war if Abiola becomes president on the basis of that election.⁸⁹ In the interview, published in *TELL* which is ostensibly to portray the "recalcitrance" of the core North, Kotangora states:

There was no election.... The whole Yoruba race voted for Abiola. Now I am beginning to believe that the problem of this country is ethnicity.... I believe democracy means living without any rancour or disunity and with the majority views carrying the day, but I cannot expect a candidate that is elected by about *30 percent of the people of this country, the Yoruba race*, to say he's going to be my President. No way! No way! We are not afraid of war⁹⁰ (emphasis added).

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ "No Way For Abiola", interview, *TELL*, July 5 1993: 24-25.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

Kotangora attempts here to *differentiate* the Yoruba from the rest of Nigeria, a minority – “about 30 percent” – that seeks to “overtake” the majority – remaining 70 percent. This “30 percent” thus separated from the majority would not be capable of constituting an effective challenge to existing pattern of political power which favours the interests that Kotangora represents. The election, for him, condemns the Yoruba as a totally “undemocratic” race that have to be stopped by the military government unless they want to bring chaos⁹¹; because,

The Yorubas have shown the whole world that even if you have to take *a pig, or a dog and make Yoruba marks* on it, they will choose it because “he is a son of the soil”⁹² (emphasis added).

The metonymy on display in this statement is very instructive when the representation of *pig* for the average (Northern) Muslim is considered. The pig is a filthy, abominable animal for the Muslim while the *dog* would pass for a *bitch*. Kotangora could as well be saying that the Yoruba do not care to present “abominable” candidates, which can be forced on the rest of the *nation*.

When Abiola addressed a press conference where he rejected the annulment and stated categorically that, “I am, by the infinite grace of God, and the wishes of

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

the people of this country, the President-elect of the Federal Republic of Nigerian. I am the custodian of a sacred mandate, freely given, which I cannot surrender", *TELL*, states that the press conference "appeared like an oasis in a desert":⁹³

*It renewed the hope of the 14 million voters who on June 12 smashed the North-versus-South myth into smithereens.... "Nigerians denounced all forms of tribalism, religion and ethnicism which divided us in the past and made military intervention possible"*⁹⁴ (emphasis added).

As Nigeria "journey(s) to the unknown" in the context of its being "on the verge of collapse as single entity"⁹⁵ because of the annulment, *TELL* narrates a military high command that could not stand by while *the nation* drifts towards collapse:

*The nation is at crossroads and the military will be decisive on which road is chosen to the future. General Sani Abacha, defence secretary, who until former president Ibrahim Babangida was stamped out of office, combined the job with that of Chief of Defence Staff, said solemnly that the present calls for sacrifice and patriotism (General Oladipo) Diya (the new Chief of Defence Staff, was also) solemn and spare in his words....*⁹⁶ (emphasis added).

⁹³ "Dictatorship Unbound", cover story, *TELL*, July 5 1993: 28.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ "A Nation in Distress: Threat of Break-Up Real", cover story, *TELL*, Oct 4 1993.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

These "solemn and spare" generals are commended by Abiola himself for their "love of the country, common sense, experience, tact and intellect" with which they "eased out" Babangida. These qualities are also needed, *TELL* reports Abiola as saying, in easing out "Babangida's surrogates" (the Interim National Government). But, despite the fact that "Nigeria (is) already neck-deep in political quagmire and economic depression", *Champion* avers that, "the only way to express collective will is to support the Interim National Government".⁹⁷

While it agrees that the annulment has "thrown the nation into a political tumult unprecedented in post-civil war Nigeria"⁹⁸, *Champion* condemns the violent protests that have followed the annulment. The forces that *TELL* describes as being "decisive" at the nation's crossroads, for *Champion* are "undemocratic forces":

What may not be known to people is that these acts of violence are counter-productive. Rather than galvanise the forces of democracy they disperse and alienate them paving the way to further assault from undemocratic elements.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ "Moving Ahead", front page comment, *DC*, Sept. 10 1993. Significantly, a few weeks after this, the editor of the paper, Emma Agu, was appointed the Chief Press Secretary to the Chairman of the Interim National Government, Ernest Shonekan.

⁹⁸ "Nigeria: Way Forward", front page comment, *DC*, August 2 1993.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

Champion is particularly worried about the plight of the Igbo who have been moving en-mass back to the East from different parts of the country in the heat of the crisis fearing an outbreak of war:

(I)t is these acts of violence that have created the state of wild panic and feeling of insecurity among Nigerian citizens. Never since the era of the civil war have Nigerians witnessed the mass exodus back home of people residing in places other than that of their origin. Given the *high level of post civil war integration of the Nigerian society*, the disruption going on as a result of this panic is of phenomenal proportions¹⁰⁰ (emphasis added).

The "high level of post war integration" is a reference to the return of the Igbo, particularly, the Igbo traders, to different parts of the country after the civil war.

For *Guardian*, this ING is an effort to,

evade the reality of the electoral verdict delivered by the people of Nigeria on June 12 1993. It is only such a government based on that election, and not the ING, that can carry out the task of regeneration and re-building.¹⁰¹

The News would appear opposed to this move towards a coup (which *TELL* seems to predict) to upstage the "two-month old stop-gap arrangement", the ING:

Against the background of a two-month old stop-gap arrangement that has failed to win the sympathy of a populace demanding respect and recognition of the

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ "An Evasion of Reality", *TG*, editorial, Aug. 6 1993: 8.

democratic principle symbolised by 12 June voting (...) the *military arm of the contraption* might be set to foist a new dispensation on the nation thereby *obscuring the electoral mandate*¹⁰² (emphasis added).

The News predicts that the new political arrangement being contemplated would not be acceptable to the "civil society":

The coup being contemplated if executed would sweep off the protem government (...) and abolish 12 June, the 1989 Constitution and all democratic institutions down to the states and local councils.... With the scheme to *weed 12 June aside* becoming this sophisticated in the military, it is not quite clear how acceptable a putsch might be to the civil society¹⁰³ (emphasis added).

It could be seen that the magazine unlike the others, particularly *TELL*, does not support the line that Abacha could save the situation. As opposition to Abiola's mandate festers and as threat mounts, *The News* argues that Abacha may not be the "saviour" because he regards "*northern continued domination* of the nation's military and politics as *holy writ*";¹⁰⁴

All these then, for *TELL*,

seem to suggest that, put bluntly, *Nigeria's days as a single nation are numbered*, especially if the hard issues

¹⁰² "What is the Army Up To?" cover story, *The News*, Nov. 15 1993: 13

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ "Can Abiola Make It?" cover story, *The News*, Oct. 11 1993: 14-20.

of contention are not quickly addressed by way of a *national conference*¹⁰⁵ (emphasis added).

"National conference" is thus held out as the only means of saving a collapsing grand nation. Given this, it is not surprising that the military and the core Northern elite what are regarded as perhaps the biggest obstacles to the construction and/or survival of this grand nation, by the opposition press are constantly attacked.

Champion views the prediction to narrate – on the possible extinction of the Nigerian 'nation' as "warmongering":

The nation has been trapped in a lock-jam; a prisoner to a foreboding elite power game. As the nation becomes increasingly asphyxiated, the *warmongers* have rolled out the drums, beating the tunes of war with a draw out captive public *gyrating dangerously towards fratricide*. This should stop¹⁰⁶ (emphasis added).

In the aftermath of the annulment of the June 12 election, *The News* focuses on the 'Kaduna Mafia', the "dormant power vortex" of the Northern laager, which has 'set to sail again'.¹⁰⁷ As might be expected in a narrative that zeros in on a power group that was thrown up by historical processes, the magazine goes back to the

¹⁰⁵ *TELL*, Oct. 11 1993.

¹⁰⁶ "Nigeria: Way Forward", op. cit.

¹⁰⁷ "The Mafia Moves", cover story, *The News*, Nov. 22 1993: 18-25.

days of late Ahmadu Bello, Sarduna of Sokoto, who was the "very personification of the collective dream of the Northern political and economic elite to rule over the fledging Nigerian federation":¹⁰⁸

He (Bello) went further and put in place a near-perfect political and economic machinery that welded together a vast region comprised of diverse ethnic and religious groups into a single political entity so formidable in its single-mindedness of purpose that it easily trounced all other comers in the political terrain.¹⁰⁹

That *nation* of the North that was so formidable, that "dream empire (now) utterly violated", *The News* states, has brought together its storm-troopers in the bid to "bring back to life Alhaji Ahmadu Bello's 'single and indivisible' North as a counter-force to the South's attempt to wrest political power at the centre". Argues the magazine:

(I)t was the first step in a new offensive by the Northern power elite to return to the political centre stage following the *rude shock* it received on 12 June when the *overwhelming majority of Nigerians* voted for Chief M.K.O. Abiola as their next president. The core group (...) read in Abiola's victory a shift of political power to the south and they did not like it. 12 June also brought forcefully home to them, the harsh reality of a 'United North' that has fallen apart at the seams with the ethnic minorities of the Middle-Belt up in arms and insisting on self-determination

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

and a political destiny distinct from Ahmadu Bello ('s) "one North, one people, one destiny"¹¹⁰ (emphasis added).

For the magazine, Babangida's annulment of the presidential election was a "much needed breather" for this power elite, who then went into soul-searching and re-positioned "with power back in its *enclave*...in the safe keeping of the *northern-dominated and controlled* armed forces and General Sani Abacha, a Kano man of Kanuri extraction at its helm".¹¹¹

The task that consequently faced "amorphous and secretive group consisting of key members of the northern power oligarchy dating back to the days of Ahmadu Bello", was to:

determine the exact point it took the wrong turn politically and re-fashion its strategy to not only block a return to 12 June but also return power to its political arm when the whistle sounds for another contest...¹¹²

In this same edition, the magazine published excerpts from a translated version of Maitama Sule's address at the launching of a book, *Power of Knowledge* in Kaduna where he made a statement, which was to become highly controversial

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

particularly coming against the backdrop of the annulment. The magazine boldly quotes Sule's thesis of "divine division of labour" in Nigeria:

The northerners are endowed by God with leadership qualities. The Yoruba man knows how to earn a living and has diplomatic qualities. The Igbo is gifted in commerce, trade and technological innovation. God so created us individually for a purpose and with different gifts.... If there are no followers, a king will not exist...¹¹³ (emphasis added).

Sule also said that it was the Sardauna who had the "wisdom" and "foresight" of recruiting Northern youths into the army:

Today, we are reaping the fruits of that foresight. Anything, anybody would want to say about military involvement in government; if you don't have your man at the helm of affairs, you would have been dealt with or you would have been killed.¹¹⁴

The News argues that the power and billions of petro-dollars that this power-elite hijacked could have been "carefully husbanded and utilised" to transform the Northern Region and Nigeria as a whole into "a flourishing and affluent federation".¹¹⁵ But this was not the case as:

(G)reed, corruption and political opportunism interviewed, turning members of the conservative Northern power elite

¹¹³ "Why The North Leads", Discourse, *The News*, Nov. 22 1993: 16-17.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ "The Mafia Moves", *op.cit.*

and their compatriots in the South into billionaires overnight at the expense of the entire region. The consequence: the vicious cycle of poverty, illiteracy and disease in which Ahmadu Bello's 'One North' is trapped. Indeed, this *lethal cancer* has seeped into other parts of the country....¹¹⁶ (Emphasis added)

The North is therefore the "contaminator-in-chief" among the constituent parts of the grand nation with what Jolly Tanko Yusuf, a northerner minority Christian activist, call, " a stupid vision of corruption, (and) vision of disgracing the country".¹¹⁷

Adebayo Williams, in his essay in this same edition, *witnesses* that the disarray from which the Kaduna Mafia was recovering is a pointer to "how greed, compounded by capital political folly, can undo even the most powerful of cabals". He submits that it would have been in the interest of this cabal to accept and support June 12 because this is the "least politically costly option for the oligarchy" after the "orphan from Minna" (Babangida) had visited devastation on the power clique.¹¹⁸

TELL agrees with *The News* about the opposition of "the Caliphate" – which the latter calls "the Kaduna Mafia" – to the re-validation of Abiola's *mandate*. This group, is informed in its activities, *TELL* discloses, by "the need to preserve the

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ "The Last Oligarchs", essay, *The News*, Nov. 15 1993: 33-35.

monolithic North reminiscent of the 1960s when the late Sardauna of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello, held sway".¹¹⁹

Pre-occupation with the recent past is also a major feature of the narratives around the June 12 issue, as the newspapers and magazines regularly remind Nigerians of the regime that brought the *nation* into its present crisis. *The News's* narratives of the Babangida regime after the general left office are full of attempts to finger the man as a *nation-destroyer* per excellence:

General Ibrahim Babangida's eight-years *iron rule* was like the extended black night of an eerie history. At the dusk of his reign, he hurriedly commissioned series of books to secure for him a warm placement in "correct history", but many of his country folks are convinced that the books represent a reversal of civilised culture¹²⁰ (emphasis added).

What could be the legacy of the man, Babangida who the magazine described as "a plague in the land"?

So, what precisely is Babangida's legacy after eight years in power? What solid achievements will independent and unbiased researchers and historians stumble on, say in twenty years time, as they sift through the *layers of untruth*, weaved around the Babangida presidency by official singers?¹²¹ (Emphasis added)

¹¹⁹ "June 12: North's Grand Design Against Abiola", cover story, *TELL*, July 18, 1994: 8-14.

¹²⁰ "A Plague in the Land", *The News*, October 18 1993.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

Lest, as the *Tribune* noted on Akintola¹²², that history be "re-written" in the future, *The News* describes as the "years of the locust",¹²³ the years that Babangida spent in power:

(F)or eight years, Ibrahim Babangida was atop the throne – the Nigerian military presidency. These were years of decay, waste and ravages.... But, when history come to judge Babangida, he will be recorded as one leader who had all the resources and goodwill at his disposal but chose to fritter it away and went further to *debase his country*. Everywhere General Ibrahim Babangida went, he sowed chaos, grief and moral drought. Whatever he touched, he stained with his evil (aura). This, simply is the military dictator's legacy ¹²⁴ (emphasis added).

Again:

(T)he *disgraced* regime of Ibrahim Babangida, the military dictator (...) caused much havoc, of the *Hiroshima proportions*, to our country¹²⁵ (emphasis added)

TELL agrees with this reading of Babangida's place in Nigeria's history because:

The annulment of the June 12 presidential election by (...) Ibrahim Babangida, has not only visited on Nigerians an unprecedented trauma, it has depressed them psychologically and dampened the spirit of a people *noted*

¹²² *Tribune*, op. cit.

¹²³ "The Years of The Locust", cover story, *The News*, Oct. 18 1993.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *The News*, Feb. 21 1994.

globally for robustness and a certain gongo-go spirit¹²⁶
(emphasis added).

Champion does not see the Babangida as roundly condemnable. For the paper, Babangida's wife, Maryam, made "remarkable efforts to put women on the national agenda" when she was in office as First Lady. Her name, therefore, will be written in gold in the annals of women empowerment:

When the history of women movers in Nigeria is written, Mrs. Babangida will certainly get good mention for her *vigorous attempts to liberate* and bring to the fore-front Nigeria's down-trodden women¹²⁷ (emphasis added).

With the Abacha regime securely sequestered in power, the narratives of the pro-June 12 newspapers and magazine reflect the new realities. First, a major theme is disappointment with how the political class, particularly the June 12 movement, caved in. It is narrated as the "killing of hope", the hope of the people:

The ultimate casualty of the new romance between the cream of the nation's political class and their military overlords is (...) the Nigerian people. For them *12 June was a beacon of hope, an intimation of greater things until the politicians conspired with military adventurers to snuff out (life from the mandate). M.K.O. Abiola drove the last nail home when he gave tacit support to Abacha's coup. But in doing so, he may also have signed the death*

¹²⁶ "The New Political Gamble", cover story, *TELL*, May 9 1994.

¹²⁷ "Honouring Mrs. Babangida", editorial, *DC*, Sept. 20 1993.

warrant of the political class in Nigeria¹²⁸ (emphasis added).

Professor Claude Ake, the director of the Centre for Advanced Social Science (CASS) picks this theme up in an interview with *The News* pointing out that what is left is the convocation of a Sovereign National Conference, to save the *nation*:

I think that there is only *one struggle now* – the struggle for a Sovereign National Conference. That struggle must now be understood in terms of *the reality of the disconnection of the political class from the base* and an understanding of this *historic betrayal*. It is going to be a popular struggle¹²⁹ (emphasis added).

The News confronts the question of this “historic betrayal”, asking ‘what really went wrong’ and why Abiola “readily surrendered (his) historic mandate” in endorsing Abacha’s palace coup which “effectively consigned 12 June to history”.¹³⁰ The magazine’s lengthy narrative picks up the myriad of reasons that were responsible for the annulment and the sustenance of the annulment including Abiola’s ‘personal limitations’, the collusion of the party executives with the military, the General Shehu Yar’ Adua’s factor and Abiola’s own capitulation to the same forces that were against his ascendancy:

¹²⁸ “A Game for Chameleons” *The News*, Dec. 6 1993: 22.

¹²⁹ “A New Reality IS Emerging”, interview, *The News*, Nov. 13 1993: 28.

¹³⁰ “June 12: What Really Went Wrong? Inside Account”, cover story, *THE News*, Dec. 13 1993.

Not a few Nigerians were disappointed that the man they overwhelmingly elected to chart a new course for their embattled country could visit the military dictator who had unilaterally cancelled the results of the election.¹³¹

Ojo Madueke, a politician and *The News's* columnist, gives a conceptual cover to the shift by the erstwhile supporters of the mandate, which include(d) him. Though Madueke considers June 12 as an "unforgettable milestone in our search for real nationhood",¹³² he argues against Sina Odugbemi's earlier submission in *Guardian* that the "middle ground has vanished forever"¹³³. Advances Madueke, after reviewing the state of affairs, which necessitated "tactical compromises and somersaults while preserving the Strategic Objective of 12 June":¹³⁴

What therefore exists in the present constellation of political interests of civil society following 12 June is the ING/ABN on the extreme right; the civil liberties groups on the extreme left; and the *12 June accomodationists* with Abacha regime in the middle. That middle is the *path of principled pragmatism and peaceful transition to democracy anchored on the inviolable spirit of 12 June*. It is in that *middle that we as a nation can recover our democratic will and purpose again*¹³⁵ (emphasis added).

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² "Is There Life After 12 June?" My View, *The News*, Nov. 13 1993: 10.

¹³³ "The New Governing Class", opinion, *TG*, June 30, 1993.

¹³⁴ "Is There Life After 12 June?" op. cit.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

Ojo's narrative *rationalises* the 'collaboration' of ex-June Twelvers with the military through the construction of a "chain of reasoning" which defends and justifies the action and *euphemises* it by describing what others regard as "capitulation" as "accommodation". Also, he *universalises* the action, which serves the interests of those who were eager to savour the goodies of participation in governments as if all shares those interests and that anyone who has inclination could actually enjoy the benefits that this presents to the "nation to recover".

Ojo continues his *rationalization*:

From that middle we can focus on a National/Constitutional conference without debilitating anxieties concerning *probable declarations of secession*.... Those who wish to take the 12 June members of the Abacha administration to task for their decision to participate should come forward with a *principled but feasible alternative* that were open to the *serious* politician after the ING collapse. IT is *plainly nihilistic, if not irresponsible*, to stand by and watch the *nation literally fall apart*¹³⁶ (emphasis added).

For this narrator there was no "principled" as well as "feasible" alternative to joining the Abacha train, because the other option available is for the "nation (to) literally fall apart".¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

As the Year 1993, which was described as Nigeria's *annus incredibilis* ended and 1994 begins, the narratives on the fate of the grand nation grow desperate. As *TELL* interviews a Justice Akinola Aguda who predicts "a war" and says, "the future of (Nigeria) is very bleak",¹³⁸ Abiola tell *The News* that Nigeria is "near disaster".¹³⁹

Aguda argues that the issue is not North versus South but a 'clique' in the North which "because they are used to oppressing their immediate surroundings thinks the same oppression should go round the whole country".¹⁴⁰ Adebayo Williams looks at the personal limitations of the "custodian" of the June 12 *mandate*, and argues that the *mandate* has yet produced 'significant' results. Abiola was bound to "misbehave" as he had done, *The News* essayist reasons, because,

On 12 June, the Nigerian populace delivered a resounding vote of no confidence in two principal factions of the Nigerian ruling class: *the military* and the *backward-looking oligarchy that has held the nation to ransom* since independence. Bashorun Abiola, *the people's arm-bearer* had flirted with both....¹⁴¹ (emphasis added)

Yet:

What is important is that the correct lessons must be grasped. To the extent that 12 June has dealt a *staggering blow to the pretensions* of the Nigerian ruling

¹³⁸ "We May Have A War" – Aguda', cover interview, *TELL*, Jan. 17 1994.

¹³⁹ "We Are Near Disaster" – Abiola', interview, Jan 10 1994: 29-39.

¹⁴⁰ "We May Have A War", op. cit.

¹⁴¹ "A Cause In Search of Hero", cover essay, *The News*, Jan. 10 1994: 21-23.

class, to the extent that it has exposed the *hollowness of its claims*, to that extent it remains a *potent symbol of national rejuvenation*, a living cause in search of a hero¹⁴² (emphasis added).

The News even selects "June 12" as "Man of the Year", because it "represents a watershed in the history of the Nigerian nation-state".¹⁴³ The magazine links this with a trajectory, which may be called "The Triad of Nigeria's Fate": The Anti-Colonial Struggle, the Civil War and then June 12.

As the latest manifestation of the fateful triad, June 12 is constructed as,

One day in the calendar of a drab year (that) promises *the arrival of a new dawn* and the *eclipse of an ancien regime* – but it also holds the *destiny of a nation dangling*¹⁴⁴ (emphasis added).

The military, for *TELL*, is responsible for the *dangling destiny of the nation*:

The military came as saviour only to emerge as the scourge of the people... Now, the concept of Nigerianism is seriously under contention, *the nature of the state is in dispute and the national psyche is battered and beaten*¹⁴⁵ (emphasis added).

The annulment of this "arrival of dawn", for *TELL*, has wrecked havoc on Nigeria and the nation idea:

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ "Backstage", *The News*, Jan. 10 1994.

¹⁴⁴ "Man of the Year: June 12", cover story, *The News*, Jan 10 1994.

¹⁴⁵ "Still in Babylon", cover story, *TELL*, Jan. 24 1994.

Since its grotesque annulment (...) by Babangida, the *June 12 phenomenon* has not only become a leitmotif and a recurring theme, it has dominated the upper rungs of *national discussions*. Also it has provoked indignation and outrage never seen in the land such that the *most reticent*, the *most dignified* and the *most patrician across political divides* became its most clear advocates.... (N)ever in (Nigeria's) brief history has one event *wielded the nation solidly*¹⁴⁶ (emphasis added).

Abiola, in a marathon interview with *The News* attacks the Abacha regime over its agenda and warns that *the nation* cannot move forward unless it goes back to June 12:

If only we know how near we are to disaster in this country today. They would soon know. The moment we open the *Pandora box of our national relationship as a country*.... (T)hey will know that many Nigerians following the June 12 experience believe that there is no Nigeria worth living in because there can be *no justice for some people*¹⁴⁷ (emphasis added).

"Some people" is Abiola's metaphor for Southerners who are *suffering* from the monopoly of power by the North, which Sobo Sowemimo, a lawyer, accuses in *The News* as holding "the people of this country to ransom".¹⁴⁸ Given this, Sowemimo says, "secession is legitimate".¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ "The New Gamble", op. cit.

¹⁴⁷ "We Are Near Disaster", op. cit.

¹⁴⁸ "Secession is Legitimate", interview, *The News*, Jan 17, 1994: 53.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

Malam Lawan Dambazau would seem to be exasperated by all these as he tells *TELL* that "each section (should) go its own way". Although, Dambazau agrees that the political future of Nigeria is "doomed forever"¹⁵⁰ if the June 12 debacle is not "properly addressed", yet, he states that:

(T)o avoid any *bloodshed* or *civil disorder*, I will suggest that we sit down peacefully round a table and ask each section of the country if *they still want to belong to Nigeria*. Those who want to go should be allowed to do so in piece instead of deceiving each other over a non-existent concept of one Nigeria. Honestly (sic) let us divide the country peacefully and each section goes its own way¹⁵¹ (emphasis added).

While Nigerians give up the hope of redemption for their "deeply troubled nation",¹⁵² in the hands of "an embodiment of woes" (General Abacha), Dambazau argues that many more people in the North want Nigeria to be one because they are "more nationalistic".¹⁵³ Williams could as well be responding to these images of *oneness* when he argues that,

The vociferous war-cries stem from (the) feeling of great betrayal, this feeling that behind the empty slogan of "One Nigeria", there is nothing but *bare-faced hypocrisy and a*

¹⁵⁰ "Let Each Section Go Its Own Way", interview, *TELL*, Feb. 14 1994: 18-19.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² "The Great Betrayal: Abacha's 100 Days of Drift", cover story, *TELL*, March 7 1994: 10.

¹⁵³ "Let each section..."

grand design to sentence a part of the country to *perpetual slavery*¹⁵⁴ (emphasis added).

Williams argue that "only a spirited effort can save the nation from suicide" even though the constitutional conference "will serve as a sympathetic undertaker for the nation's journey to the great beyond",¹⁵⁵ *The News* wonders what will happen if the conferees voted for a separation:

If at the end of the proposed constitutional conference, delegates voted that *the nation pull apart for now*, what would be the consequences of such a decision? Is a *Czech-Slovak velvet divorce* possible in Nigeria?¹⁵⁶ (emphasis added).

The magazine often uses the word *nation* as synonym for Nigeria, even though it is obvious in context that this *nation* does not capture the emotional solidarity, which ought to be folded into it. It is at best a nation-of-aspiration, a *grand nation-of-intent* that is yet a *grand solidarity*:

A million naira question hangs on the neck of the Nigerian federation: *will it survive the impetuous temper of the moment or disintegrate into an unmanageable mosaic* – the type of madness the world now witnesses in Bosnia? Eighty years after the amalgamation, the Nigerian federation is today beset with the most challenging test of its survival¹⁵⁷ (emphasis added).

¹⁵⁴ "An Arewa Liaison", essay, *The News*, Feb 21 1994.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ "If Nigeria Breaks...", cover story, *TN*, Feb. 2 1994: 19.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

The magazine then captures the dynamics of these disintegrating forces in all sections of the country, which obstructs a "collective journey of destiny":

What are the consequences of the new convulsive spirit tearing down the *nation*? All over the country, nations and ethno-nations are putting heads together on how to redefine their place in the Nigerian federation...¹⁵⁸ (emphasis added).

The News ostensibly believes that nations and ethno-nations, within the context of Nigeria, capture different types of groups. Unfortunately, there is no elaboration of which groups fit either of the tags.

On its part, *TELL* reports doubts that the confab would hold, since if it is aborted, the conservative Northern political elite and Abacha would be happy because the confab is likely to 'disturb' the balance of forces¹⁵⁹ in the country.

Consequently,

(T)he scope of the on-coming talks is being teleguided and restricted to tally with the purpose of Babangida's annulment of the June 12 election to carry on with the thesis that *only a northerner should, in the final analysis, rule the country*¹⁶⁰ (emphasis added).

The magazine continues:

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ "Abacha and the Kaduna Mafia: Their Plot to Derail Constitutional Conference", cover story, *TELL*, March 14 1994: 10-11.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

At (a) meeting, the decision of the 'Kaduna Mafia' was allegedly ratified and that Abacha was directed to seize power from Shonekan. Meaning that Abacha's November 17 coup was *mandated* by the northern ruling class to restore the *north's political supremacy* ¹⁶¹(emphasis added).

This narrative of a 'mandate' from the North given to Abacha conflicts with *TELL* earlier narratives of the "patriotic" zeal and "wisdom" of Abacha, which Abiola attested to, and the "solemnity" of the general as he dialogued with Abiola to "save Nigeria". The equation changes and Abacha is invested with new clothes and the events leading to his hijack of power gets new narrations to suit emergent power configurations.

The new configuration also transforms Abiola from the one who "betrayed" the people – as he is 'wont to do given his personal limitations and ideological background' – to one who has been "betrayed by friends" and "abandoned by political associates", yet, "doggedly (keeping) alive hope for the realisation of the mandate":¹⁶²

Two incidents last month succinctly drive home the fact that Abiola is *investing his prodigious energy in keeping*

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² "The Travails of Abiola", cover story, *TELL*, April 11 1994: 8-13.

hope alive for June 12 and ultimately realising the mandate Nigerians gave him¹⁶³ (emphasis added).

Mandate, used as if it were an ordinary word that describes Abiola's 'legitimacy', it must be noted, is itself a discourse. It comes complete with the baggage of settled conviction about Abiola's victory, though unannounced officially, in the June 12 1993 polls. It also assumes that any one using the word as if it were unproblematic, also accepts that whatever electoral victory Abiola won in 1993 was still tenable at the point of the usage of the word and could therefore still be validated.

The News which had earlier narrated exhaustively why Abiola couldn't claim his 'mandate' the year before now states that the man "seems set" for the final push to "regain his pilfered mandate".¹⁶⁴ As the "forces that will chase out Abacha"¹⁶⁵ gets ready without an answer to the question, "who will save Sani Abacha?"¹⁶⁶ the Abiola push looks set to claim victory:

The very first *serious* evidence of a preparedness to claim the mandate was the 3 August 1993, fiery speech he (Abiola) made on the "inviolability of June 12" where he

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ "Abiola Tackles Abacha. Forms Govt . Cabinet List Out Soon. Asks Abacha to pack Out", cover story, *TN*, May 16 1994: 17.

¹⁶⁵ "Forces that Will Chase Out Abacha", cover, *TN*, March 28 1994.

¹⁶⁶ "Who Will Save Sani Abacha? Op. cit.

promised to keep a date with history on the *historic mandate*¹⁶⁷ (emphasis added).

But the magazine forgot this when Abiola "disappointed" the people in the months after the annulment. *TELL* emphasises the likelihood of victory over the forces against *the nation*:

Nine months after (the) power-drunken recklessness, the ensuing political crisis draws *the nation* to the edge of *the precipice* by the day. But the *symbol of June 12*, Abiola, thinks the *cup will pass the nation*. Rather, he told a friend last week that he would realise his *mandate yet*¹⁶⁸ (emphasis added).

Yet, the *nation* still faces a myriad of problems subsumed under the rubric of political and economic crises. These crises are narrated as resulting from the policies and attitude of the Abacha regime while "the nation (threatens to) grind to a halt".¹⁶⁹ As *The News* narrates it:

Abacha's political and economic agenda release a Frankenstein monster. The architect himself stands helpless as two frightening dangers confront Nigeria; *the fear of disintegration and the fear of a natural economic wheel that may soon grind to a halt*. Nigerians should brace up for the worst...¹⁷⁰ (emphasis added).

¹⁶⁷ "Abiola Tackles Abacha", op. cit.

¹⁶⁸ "A Letter Cannot Annul The Mandate", *TELL*, April 11 1994.

¹⁶⁹ "Get Set for the Worst", cover, *The News*, Feb 14 1994.

¹⁷⁰ "Prepare for the Worst", cover story, *TN*, Feb 14 1994.

TELL on its part restates this line, a few weeks after *The News*, narrating

"why Nigeria may collapse"¹⁷¹:

Abacha's economic programme, wrecked by poor funding, internal differences, lack of credibility and IMF, World Bank opposition, is speedily *grinding* Nigeria's economy to a halt inflicting on the people a *regime of unprecedented suffering*¹⁷² (emphasis added).

For the magazine, these are not purely economic matters because, "the problem is a leadership one which requires the nation having democratically elected rulers".¹⁷³ What then is the linkage?

The merits of this (...) are the opening up of the economy to fresh foreign investment, the pacification of the country whose diverse tempers have been over-heated, and the enthronement of peace much needed for growth. If the economic problem also boils down to having democracy, then perhaps issues like the *sacredness of Abiola's June 12 mandate and the national Question suddenly becomes top-burner agenda* (emphasis added).

Both magazines link the logic of economic crisis – and the reverse, economic prosperity – to the June 12 crisis, the crisis of nationhood and the manner of their resolution. In a word, the state of the economy is proportional to the state of health of the *grand solidarity*. As a respondent tells *The News*, the issue is not just "access to

¹⁷¹ "Why Nigeria May Collapse", cover, *TELL*, April 18 1994.

¹⁷² "Staring Collapse in the Face", cover story, *TELL*, April 18 1994.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

the distribution of resources, but access to distribution of power at the centre".¹⁷⁴

Which explains the North's 'opposition' to even the planned 'token' convocation of a constitutional confab:

If for General Abacha the decision to convene the Constitutional Conference was a token concession to the political south to enable him *grab power*, for the far northern politicians and technocrats, it was a *major political earthquake in the mould of June 12* for the simple reason that it has the *capacity of threatening the power equation* in the country which is presently in their favour¹⁷⁵ (emphasis added).

But *Guardian* argues otherwise after the election and selection to the proposed confab had been completed. The paper avers that with this it might appear that the country is set to move forward again, but that the reality is the contrary:

It is abundantly clear right now that Nigeria is not set to move forward at all.... The nation is, once again, all aquiver. Tension is high.¹⁷⁶

Champion argues to the contrary. As far as the paper is concerned:

With the recent *successful conclusion* of the delegates election, all is now set for the constitutional conference.... (I)n spite of this obvious hazy start, the election *went on smoothly and ended hitch-free*¹⁷⁷ (emphasis added).

¹⁷⁴ "Prepare for the Worst", op. cit.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid*: 27.

¹⁷⁶ "If Peace Must Return", editorial, *TG*, June 6 1994: 12.

¹⁷⁷ "Onward, Democracy", editorial, *DC*, June 6, 1994: 4.

Guardian disagrees. Stating the background to the present state of affairs necessitating the national confab, the paper argues that:

The idea of a re-gathering of the true representatives of the several peoples of the multi-national state of Nigeria in order to fashion an operative consensus had been propagated by this newspaper along with several other patriotic persons and institutions. The felt need for a Sovereign National Conference to tackle the complex bundle of issues popularly referred to today as the National Question. It was this idea that the present administration seized upon, and proceeded to adapt in a manner entirely of its own choosing.¹⁷⁸

For *Champion* these purposes can still be achieved at the confab, which the military regime has set up:

To us this is the moment of truth. This is the moment when we must look ourselves in the eye, without blinking, and tell ourselves the bitter truth. This is the time to *clinically treat those intractable issues* that have become a cankerworm in our body-politic. Such issues as *injustice, equity, marginalization, the plight of the minorities, ethnic imbalances in the military, monopoly of power by a section of the country* and a host of others, should be tabled and resolved once and for all¹⁷⁹ (emphasis added).

¹⁷⁸ "If Peace Must Return", *TG*, op. cit.

¹⁷⁹ "Onward, Democracy", *DC*, op. cit.

But the version of this confab that the régime is holding, argues *Guardian*, is "fundamentally flawed" and it has failed politically *ab initio*, because "it is without legitimacy".¹⁸⁰ This is because:

There are whole sections of the country whose true leaders are not coming to the conference. The Constitutional Conference Election, it must be remembered, is not an election designed to produce a government. It is designed to fashion consensus. Thus, even if one tiny community only were to boycott, it would still have failed. And continuing with it will only further divide the nation.¹⁸¹

Not so, *Champion* avers. The paper narrates a different reality regarding the composition of the confab:

*Very credible Nigerians have thus emerged as delegates to the conference. They include.... With these calibre of personages going to the conference, we feel confident that the conference is indeed the right place to thrash out the myriad of problems currently tormenting this nation...*¹⁸² (emphasis added)

Guardian submits that only two options exist for the country. The convocation of a 'genuine' national conference whose recommendations will form the basis of a government of national unity based on the June 12 election, or allowing the political

¹⁸⁰ "If Peace Must Return", op. cit.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Onward, Democracy", op. cit.

class to negotiate a government of national unity based on the June 12 election, which will then organise a 'genuine' national conference:

The second option in our view, is the simpler of the two, to return Nigeria to peace, sanity and settled democratic governance. The fresh awakening of the demand for immediate democratisation in Nigeria shows, as nothing else can, that settled governance in Nigeria will remain a pipe-dream until the June 12 question is genuinely resolved.¹⁸³

Any contrary order, for *The News*, will result in "the portents of *chaos and disintegration* (which) are more real than ever before" (emphasis added) while *TELL* avers that "how Abacha handles them (the emergent problems) will considerably determine whether Nigeria *remains one* politically or (not)"¹⁸⁴ (emphasis added). But, *Champion* insists that, "the annulment, as unjust and unfair, as it is, ought *not hold the entire nation to ransom* (emphasis added)".¹⁸⁵

With Abiola reaffirming the "inviolability" of June 12 as "the only way for the country to move forward", the two magazines narrate a grand nation that is united against the Abacha regime because "since the mandate's annulment *nothing* has

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ "Staring Collapse in the Face", op. cit.: 16.

¹⁸⁵ "In Whose Interest?", editorial, *DC*, June 10 1993.

gone well with the *nation*¹⁸⁶ (emphasis added). *Champion* agrees that things have not gone well with the nation since the annulment:

That the situation is gradually getting out of hand is no longer in doubt. We are passing through very grim moments in the life of our nation. For the first time since the end of the civil war, *disintegration is nakedly staring us in the face.... Never before have we been subjected to such a protracted and precarious political stalemate as the June 12 debacle.* Never before have our people been subjected to the *magnitude of despondency as they are presently subjected.* Never in the last 24 years, *has this nation's future been so bleak and so uncertain as it is presently.* The sum total is that our nation is in pillory¹⁸⁷ (emphasis added).

In the context of all these, marginal identities also contest the space with the *monolith* that manifest either as the North or its dominated extension, the Nigerian State. As southern minorities threaten to secede because they are "tired of the status quo and with the convening of the constitutional conference becoming more doubtful"¹⁸⁸ the Middle-Belt also "revolts", setting up a "platform to challenge the hegemony of old masters (the Hausa-Fulani)"¹⁸⁹ and "shake off the Hausa-Fulani yoke".¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁶ "Abacha in Trouble. His Problems Mount Despite Eagles' Victory", cover story, *TELL*, April 25 1994.

¹⁸⁷ "In Whose Interest?", front-page comment, *DC*, June 10 1994.

¹⁸⁸ "Ringling the Divorce Bells", cover story, *TELL*, May 2 1994.

¹⁸⁹ "Middle Belt Revolts", cover story, *TN*, May 23 1994: 15.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

In what represents a fine example of the *expurgation of the other*, *The News* states that this "affirmation of defiance" by the minorities involves:

An unequivocal statement that the Middle-Belt elites had severed their *binding ties with the Caliphate*; now they were engaged in trying to *crystallize the identity* of their geopolitical zone as an *independent player* in the drama of Nigerian politics¹⁹¹ (emphasis added).

On its part, *TELL* links the revolt of the minorities to the annulment of the election "that was won by Moshood Abiola who hails from the Western part of the country"¹⁹²:

The event (...) has since *intensified the fears of minorities* who now see their chances to aspire to the presidency as non-existent, if the laager created has also caused the Yoruba and Ibos to call for *separation at various fora*¹⁹³ (emphasis added)

What followed the resolve of Abiola to reclaim his *mandate* and the formation of the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO) as the vanguard for the re-validation of the mandate as they are narrated in the press, particularly the "advocacy press", reflect the full "complicity" of the press with the institutions and individuals in the political society in setting the parameters of the struggle.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² "The Big Revolt...", op. cit.: 15.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

NADECO had given the Abacha regime May 30 to fold up and allow Abiola to take over as the democratically elected president and then set-up a government of national unity. The editor-in-chief of *The News* in his editorial note tells the story of how attention turned to the battle to re-validate the June 12 mandate:

From the grapevine, from our usually reliable sources came the information that Basorun M.K.O. Abiola, *the acknowledged winner* of Nigeria's 12 June Presidential election is primed up to have his *long promised rendezvous with history*, that is, fulfil his electoral mandate, now twice denied by the *illegitimate government* of Ernest Shonekan and Sani Abacha¹⁹⁴ (emphasis added).

This planned 'rendezvous with history', for *Champion*, is very 'disturbing',

(O)n the whole, the manner, content and character of the present pro-democracy agitation is disturbing. Indeed, it is difficult to clearly ascertain whose interests these agitations are meant to serve: that of *the nation* or the *selfish interests of the agitators*¹⁹⁵ (emphasis added).

In this "ultimate encounter"¹⁹⁶, *The News* states that Abiola is set to announce a government of national unity and a 'programme of action' for which he "receives enthusiastic national support"¹⁹⁷ against which the Abacha regime could not 'survive'.

¹⁹⁴ "Backstage", *TN*, May 16 1994: 4.

¹⁹⁵ "In Whose Interest?", *DC*, op. cit.

¹⁹⁶ "The Ultimate Encounter", cover story, *TN*, May 16 1994: 17.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid*.

The News even publishes what Abiola, who the magazine now calls "president-elect" will tell "fellow country men and women", his 'presidential' address to Nigerians. Part of the longish Abiola speech includes the following lines:

After exhaustive consultations with fellow countrymen and women from all over Nigeria, at home and abroad, it has become clear to me that the only way forward, if we are to arrest the continuing dangerous drift towards total economic collapse, the complete breakdown of law and order, and most importantly, the threat of *political disintegration* of our country, is to put in motion at once the machinery for actualising the mandate given to me on 12 June 1993, for a return to democratic government....¹⁹⁸ (emphasis added).

Consequently,

I call upon General Sani Abacha and his unelected and discredited team to respect the sovereign will and democratic rights of the people of Nigeria, to remove themselves forthwith from all government offices and premises over which they have exercised illegal occupancy.... I appeal to all Nigerians to stand firm in peaceful defence of democracy and civil rights of all citizens.¹⁹⁹

As the D-Day for Abiola's "date with history" draws near, *New Nigerian* accuses the government of being "benevolent to a fault", asking that the government

¹⁹⁸ "Reading Abiola's Lips", cover, *TN*, May 16 1994.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

be firm in dealing with the forces of the revalidation of the June 12 election.²⁰⁰ The paper argues further that, "June 12 can only be relevant if it is not seen in "isolation".²⁰¹ For *TELL*, "Abacha's days are numbered"²⁰², while *The News* declares that, "all (is) now set for Abacha's overthrow"²⁰³:

The Abacha junta seems cornered as the ghost of June 12 roars again in the shape of an ultimatum from pro-democracy forces.²⁰⁴ Like the proverbial Jaguar in the tale, the fiery 12 June has crashed out of General Abacha's cage and is now set to devour him. The opposition has roared back to life, spiked its guns and jumped into trenches.... Will it bury Sani Abacha's regime?²⁰⁵ (Emphasis added)

While *Champion* charges the Abacha regime for "giving more recognition to a very vocal minority", a "disagreeable group of people who have caused considerable tribulation for all"²⁰⁶ – that is the pro-June 12 agitators - *Guardian* frowns at the arrest of leading politicians who "have raised poignant questions"²⁰⁷ on the eve of the threatened declaration by Abiola. The paper is particularly peeved at the arrest and 'harassment' of elder statesmen, Anthony Enahoro and Adegunle Ajasin:

²⁰⁰ "Government Must Be Firm (1)", front-page editorial, *NN*, June 6 1994: 1.

²⁰¹ "Let Sanity Prevail", front page editorial, *NN*, June 11 1994.

²⁰² "Abacha's Days Are Numbered", cover, *TELL*, May 30 1994.

²⁰³ "All Set for Abacha's Overthrow", cover, *The News*, May 30 1994.

²⁰⁴ "Red Card for the General...", cover story, *TELL*, May 30, 1994.

²⁰⁵ "Abacha's Game is Up", cover story, *TN*, May 30 1994.

²⁰⁶ "That Abacha Speech", editorial, *DC*, June 18 1994: 4.

²⁰⁷ "AN Unacceptable Response", editorial, *TG*, June 11 1994.

Every nation has its symbols and icons.... For the national fabric to cohere, these symbols must be treated with reverence and even under the most unsettling circumstances. It is a *great insult*, not only to their exalted persons but to *all Nigerians* that founding fathers such as Chief Enahoro, Chief Ajasin and others of stature are arrested, detained and officially harassed for what is, at bottom, political activity designed to *restore sovereignty where it belongs, i.e. to the people*²⁰⁸ (emphasis added).

The action, the paper avers, can only further "undermine the corporate existence (of Nigeria) whose basis is already fragile".²⁰⁹

As *TELL* and *The News* narrate the "spirit of June 12" which has returned like the unconquerable phoenix²¹⁰ those opposed to the spirit, like General Olusegun Obasanjo, are pictured as been outside of a "holy alliance". Obasanjo, for one, moves to "force his way to political relevance", as he faces "deep credibility crisis at home".²¹¹ The state of affairs that the Obasanjos have supported is in recession as even "the most casual observer" could see that "Abacha was fighting desperately for dear life":²¹²

The opposition, hitherto in a slumber had in *one bound*, roared back to life, spiked its guns and jumped into the trenches, daring Abacha to pick up the gauntlet. As things

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ "On the March Again", sub-cover story, *TN*, June 6 1994: 12.

²¹¹ "Obasanjo's Game", *TN*, May 30, 1994.

²¹² "Abacha's Game is Up", op. cit.: 18.

stand, NADECO and the broad pro-democracy movement in the country is *headed for certain victory* in their campaign to take the wind out of Abacha's confab²¹³ (emphasis added).

For *Champion*, Obasanjo is not a man "forcing his way to political relevance", but a "voice of reason" who in his "tireless efforts as (a statesman has) taken it upon (himself) to mediate in the crisis," risking "temporary estrangement by seeking to protect Nigeria's unity and larger national interests"²¹⁴

NADECO proposes that Abiola's government's 'primary mandate' will be to convene a Sovereign National Conference, which will restructure Nigeria and deal with the National Question. For *The News* this represents the emergence of a *grand solidarity*, which can give birth to a *new nation*:

(T)he NADECO initiative has suddenly altered the political equation raising expectations for a *truly pan-Nigerian political organisation* capable of not only driving the military back to the barracks permanently, but also putting in a place, a credible platform on which the task of *rebuilding the country can truly begin*²¹⁵ (emphasis added).

TELL adds that:

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ "Nigeria: Way Forward", DC, op. cit.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

NADECO is the group of the moment and is not about to bend from its set objectives which is to be achieved in phases²¹⁶

Guardian argues that the division that the situation has produced is sharper and more dangerous:

It was to prevent this kind of situation that this newspaper has consistently argued that the government cannot afford to ignore the *passionate wishes of vast segments of the polity* in a multi-national society and it must be seen to play the only role for which governments are instituted – as arbiters and mediators²¹⁷ (emphasis added).

The News then asks Abacha to either flee or lose his life in resistance:

General Sani Abacha may not realize it yet, but he is a *mere spectator* in the unfolding drama as the tide of events has swept him aside and assumed a life of its own. Will he, as General Babangida did in August 1993 *smartly step aside and save his head* or will he insist on riding the crest of the tide *to self-destruction?*²¹⁸ (Emphasis added)

The “mere spectator” in the unfolding drama of nation-assertion was eventually to call a halt to the battles against him as he arrests Abiola and others and returned the attacks on civil groups and the populace. But before then, the

²¹⁶ “Tightening The Noose”, cover story, *TELL*, June 6 1994: 11.

²¹⁷ “The Conference”, editorial, *TG*, June 27 1994: 12.

²¹⁸ “Abacha’s Game is Up”, op. cit.

opposition succeeds in “discrediting the elections (to the regime's planned Constitutional Confab) and rendering the (...) conference – if it holds – a nullity”.²¹⁹

TELL glorifies and celebrates the ultimatum that NADECO handed down on the Abacha regime:

The term ultimatum is a *high-calibre word* in military circles. It represents the *last line of warning* and usually in military psyche, it does not shift easily. Next to summary decisions, it is etched indelibly in the army's lexicon, held in high-stead, a word to watch.... Which is why, when (...) NADECO sprang one on the government of General Sani Abachä (...) it put the junta and the *riation* on tenterhooks with certain ring of alarm....²²⁰ (Emphasis added)

The News on its part engages with “what is to be done” to validate June 12.

Its editor-in-chief, writes that:

(A)lthough *no shot have been fired yet, no petro-bombing, no sabotage of strategic installations*, it is clear that the *battle of wits and strength* has begun²²¹ (emphasis added).

The magazine could as well be pointing out the means of fighting the battle, which are yet to be adopted.

²¹⁹ “Tightening the Noose”, op. cit.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ “June 12: What Is To Be Done, cover story, *TN*, Jan. 13 1994.

Shuman²²² argues that there are three components to *storytelling right: Entitlement, Tellability and Storyability*. Storyability combines the (who of the) entitlement to claim an issue as legitimate discourse with the significance in tellability, by addressing what kinds of narratives are appropriate in any given (situated) encounter. For *TELL* and *The News* narratives appropriate in this context are the one that confers victory on the opposition even though at the level of *real politics*, the struggle is yet to make clear gains.

As "tension (mounts) in the land"²²³, with "Aso Rock in Disarray"²²⁴ and Bashir Tofa, Abiola's opponent in the election getting ready to "concede victory"²²⁵, the "final showdown"²²⁶ is set with "no respite for Abacha".²²⁷ Abiola declares Abacha "a goner" on *TELL*'s cover with "the nation on edge as (he) prepares to assume power"²²⁸:

Nigeria may be on the threshold of a protracted struggle for the rebirth of democracy whose far-reaching consequences would be difficult to predict.²²⁹

²²² Shuman, op. cit.

²²³ "Abacha is a Goner" --'Abiola', cover, *TELL*, June 13 1994.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ *TN*, June 27 1994.

²²⁸ "The Final Showdown", cover story, *TELL*, June 13 1994: 10.

²²⁹ Ibid.

New Nigeria in the context of the threats by NUPENG to go on strike in support of the June 12 mandate, call on the

(V)oces of Reason within the union (...) to oppose opportunism and despotism before the two evils destroy the union and threaten the stability of the *nation*.²³⁰

With Abiola in hiding after declaring himself president – which *TELL* describes as “11 day tactical withdrawal”²³¹ – the two magazines reports that Abiola and Abacha “battle for control” even as pressure mounts on Abacha to quit. States *TELL*:

Abacha is in a fix as *pressure mounts* both at home and abroad for the military to hand over to Abiola, *winner* of the June 12 election and give Nigeria a *new lease of life*²³² (emphasis added).

For *The News*:

The *cornered* Abacha junta is bent on clinging to power. Can the *usurpers* survive as the democratic forces queue behind the *dejure President Abiola*?²³³ (Emphasis added)

The two magazines call Abiola either “the president elect” or the “dejure president” after he declared himself president. For *New Nigeria's Candido*, the ‘Lagos-Ibadan Press’ axis has a “strange pre-occupation with the shenanigans of

²³⁰ “Kokori's Threat”, editorial, *NN*, July 4 1994.

²³¹ “Abiola's Triumph”, cover story, *TELL*, July 4: 10.

²³² “Walking A Tight Rope”, *TELL*, June 27 1994.

²³³ “No Respite For Abacha”, op. cit.

June 12", in spite of the fact that "Nigeria can move forward without June 12".²³⁴

Champion agrees largely with Candido:

The on-going political crisis seems, more than any other incident in recent years, to have brought to bold relief (the) unfortunate tendency of the Press in the country. Manifesting the *most petulant of disposition, some sections of the Press became so rabid and too frenzied to make any sober, coherent and constructive contributions* in the quest for ways of extricating the nation from the embarrassing incapacitating quagmire into which it had been mindlessly pushed²³⁵ (emphasis added).

That the Abacha regime was not offering an olive branch to Abiola after his declaration worries *TELL* which expresses its fears for the regime which it calls "usurper":

To say the country is in a mess would be a gross understatement. Yet in his broadcast on Sunday, June 12, General Sani Abacha, the leader of the *new gang of military usurpers*, rather than attempt to provide a *soothing balm for the frazzled nerves of Nigerians*, threatened fire and brimstone.... That was the *clearest indication* yet that he is very determined to follow the *disastrous footsteps of his disgraced predecessor*, General Babangida²³⁶ (emphasis added).

²³⁴ "The June 12 Papers", Candido, *NW*, July 6 1994.

²³⁵ "The Nigerian Press", *DC*, Aug 29 1994.

²³⁶ "From the Editor", *TELL*, June 27 1994.

Yet, given the forces that the magazine discursively range against Abacha, the man "incommunicado in Aso Rock (suffers) from depression"²³⁷ so much so that his doctor advised him to rest while "mallams from Kano gave him *spiritual solace*"²³⁸ (emphasis added). In spite of this "solace", "the nation is being unconscionably driven to catastrophe by the Abacha junta and its collaborators".²³⁹

When Abiola reappeared from hiding and was arrested, the magazine still "kept hope alive", as Abiola urges:

M.K.O. Abiola appeared in public Wednesday last week in Lagos to address a rally, he seemed to have a *premonition* of his subsequent arrest. So, he made the best use of that opportunity to restate his belief in democracy. Now in Maiduguri jail, the man who *emerged victorious* in last years presidential election, tells *Nigerians not to give in to coercion, a jackpot mentality*²⁴⁰ (emphasis added).

For *TELL*, despite Abiola's arrest, his "dramatic public appearance" as the 'elected president' "further strengthened the pro-democracy movement and put the Abacha junta on a *final* notice that time is up".²⁴¹

²³⁷ *TELL*, June 27 1994.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ *TELL*, June 13 1994.

²⁴⁰ "Don't Lose Hope. Detained Abiola Tells Nigerians", cover story, *TN*, July 4 1994.

²⁴¹ "Abiola's Triumph", *op. cit.*

With Abiola behind bars, the narratives focus as much on the need for "hope" as on his 'travails':

Since his arrest, *President-elect Abiola* has been tossed round the country and treated like a criminal. But the junta is still jittery and getting desperate as it doesn't know what to do with *the man whose mandate it has usurped*²⁴² (emphasis added).

For *The News*,

(T)he *most ridiculous, the most obnoxious* happened in Nigeria when about 500 armed policemen stormed the Ikeja residence of Moshood Abiola, *the man who was duly elected President*²⁴³ (emphasis added).

This "president elect", for Balarabe Abubakar, writing in *New Nigeria* is a "tragic hero". With his self-declaration, Abiola has made himself:

an object of *political mockery and ridicule* (...) tearing through Nigerian's (sic) historical pages, *bearing ridiculous credentials and without a sense of shame*²⁴⁴ (emphasis added)

Abiola, is presented by *The News* as a victim of an 'oligarchy which feared Southern presidency':

Abiola won resoundingly the presidential election.... Then the *criminally cruel* happened. The military junta in power

²⁴² "The Ordeal of MKO", cover story.

²⁴³ "Abiola's Travails", *Backstage*, TN, July 4 1994.

²⁴⁴ "Abiola: A Tragic Hero?", opinion, NN, July 22 1994: 7.

annulled the election on *flimsy* charges, but more because an *entrenched Hausa-Fulani oligarchy* dreaded the emergence of a Southerner as president of Nigeria. What kind of country is this?²⁴⁵ (Emphasis added)

From this point on, the narratives begin to differentiate between those who stood for June 12, the military governments that annulled and sustained the annulment of the election and the northern 'oligarchy'. The fragmentation in the nation-of-aspiration begins to manifest more clearly:

It is in this open arid land a *veritable wilderness* that Nigeria's democratic prospects symbolised in MKO Abiola is being *caged* and *defiled*. Would he wallow long in this 'Siberia' of the Abacha junta?²⁴⁶ (Emphasis added).

The images of 'arid land' and 'wilderness' where Abiola is being 'defiled' can be seen as a portrayal of that 'Caliphal North' which is opposed to Abiola's mandate and consequently *defiles* him and his mandate – and by a discursive extension, the *nation*.

A "strange beauty"²⁴⁷ glows from the "rather weird incarceration"²⁴⁸ of Abiola as the Abacha junta is confronted with its "tenuous" hold on power while Abiola "still

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ "In Abacha's Gulag", cover story, *TN*, July 11 1994.

²⁴⁷ "The Ordeal of MKO". Op. cit.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

has the heart of the generality of the Nigerian people"²⁴⁹. *New Nigerian* sees no "strange beauty" in the agitation on "the expired mandate"²⁵⁰ by "CIA-backed"²⁵¹ "barbaric (...) new champions of democracy".²⁵² *TELL* on its part narrates how "the caliphate"²⁵³ – *The News's 'oligarchy'* – moves to "erect more obstacles" against Moshood Abiola:

(T)he stress on the preservation of a *cohesive and united North* was informed by the desire of the *hegemonists (...)* to keep power perpetually in the North.... (T)he urgency and desperation for power by the hegemonists of the North has found expression in the Abacha regime and two other formidable groups within the core North.... (A)ll owe allegiance to the *preservation of the caliphal North* and the *status quo*; all dread the prospect of a change in power base on account of the sundry privileges they are likely to lose....²⁵⁴ (Emphasis added):

Despite this image of a monolithic North, however, *TELL* fragments *this monolith*:

Far from being a monolith, the North is *sundered* – the abjectly poor against the extremely rich and the Middle Belt against the far North. Secondly, The *clamour for the restoration of Abiola's mandate* refuses to abate in spite of

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ "CIA and Confab", editorial, *NN*, Sept. 23 1994: 1&2.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² "The Triumph of Madness", front-page editorial, July 26 1994.

²⁵³ "Plots to Kill June 12", cover story, *TELL*, July 18 1994: 10.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

designs to foist on Nigerians a *collective amnesia*²⁵⁵
(emphasis added).

In spite of the "antics" of this oligarchy "the nation" is still narrated as facing
"grave crisis"²⁵⁶ which may degenerate in to a war. Argues *TELL*:

For a long time, Nigerians thought the *dragon of national disintegration* had been slain for good. The civil war of 1967-70 was supposed to have taught all the bitter lessons there were to learn – and more. But the on-going crisis bears disturbing evidence that those lessons were either never really learnt, or have been forgotten²⁵⁷
(emphasis added).

For *Guardian*, the past is important in understanding the present situation of things in the polity:

Particularly worrying is the fact that it appears that the hard-liners in the ruling elite appear to have the upper hand right now. The hard-liners are not prepared to talk to the opposition. They want the opposition to surrender, meek as lambs. That, it will be recalled, was the attitude that led to the crisis in the Western Region in 1962. It was also the attitude that culminated in the civil war in 1967. Once again such tendency is on the prowl...²⁵⁸

What is equally significant in the narratives from this time on is the emphasis on the 'historic' injustice of the annulment, incarceration of Abiola and his trial. This

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ "On the Brink", cover story, *TELL*, July 25 1994.

²⁵⁷ Ibid: 9.

²⁵⁸ "Time for Genuine Dialogue", editorial, *TG*, July 18 1994: 10.

collocates with and somewhat enables the "grave crisis" which may lead to "national disintegration". Abiola's condition is narrated as the *most perverse* of injustice by a group of soldiers who ought themselves to be tried for "subversion":

(C)learly, the *illegal regime* is stretching its luck too distantly. Every minute that it subjects Abiola to trial, it only indulges in *self-ridicule* for the junta and its civilian collaborators are actually the persons that should be tried for *subverting Nigeria's democratic will*²⁵⁹ (emphasis added).

The "unjust treatment" of Abiola is set against the backdrop of the attempt at "national re-awakening symbolised by the June 12 election." Taken together with the revolt to validate the election in the following June, the month takes on a significance for the 'nation':

June 12 is now more than a median month in the calendar of a bleak year. As the recent history of our country has since proven, it is the short-hand *between anomie and restoration – the metaphor of becoming*²⁶⁰ (emphasis added).

As *anomie* recovers itself and subdues *restoration* while the *metaphor of becoming* evaporates from the nation space, the opposition press narrates the "end of Nigeria's history". "Goodbye Nigeria!" hollers TELL, as "the world turns its back on

²⁵⁹ "Backstage", TN, July 18 1994: 4.

²⁶⁰ "Backstage", TN, July 11 1994.

the giant".²⁶¹ This *world* that has turned its back on Nigeria, *New Nigeria* argues only "refused to respect the ability and capacity of Nigerians to choose for themselves".²⁶² But Soyinka says in another cover story in *The News* that, "Nigeria is doomed"²⁶³, because,

Abachà where he is sitting down and his cohorts may think that there is peace in this country.... It is an illusion – a complete illusion of calm.... Very soon, the population will be proscribed and only the government would be legal in this country.²⁶⁴

The narrative in the *Guardian* of the state of affairs is even grimmer:

For over a year now, it must be remembered, Nigeria has been succumbing to gravity as a result of this crisis. Severe social dislocations continue and the poor vanish into hopeless misery and the middle classes yield to dizzying poverty. The economy becomes more disarticulated by the day, and it continues to contract as investors shy away from the country and capital flight continues. *Above all, the bonds of community* which in spite of the strains and stresses have held the country together for decades now stands dangerously close to snapping altogether²⁶⁵ (emphasis added).

The paper then calls for the triumph of 'wisdom' over 'idiocy', which is typified by a situation in which "a conservative coalition with a regional core (takes) charge of

²⁶¹ "Goodbye Nigeria! The World Turns Its Back on The Giant", cover, *TELL*, October 31 1994.

²⁶² "Unacceptable", front page editorial, *NN*, August 30 1994.

²⁶³ "Nigeria Is Doomed", cover interview, *TN*, November 28 1994.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁵ "Time for Genuine Dialogue", *op. cit.*

the state apparatus and is using it to repress the opposition".²⁶⁶ Such positions as this, for *Champion*, signify that the press has abandoned "sobriety and decency, adorning insensitivity, intolerance, divisiveness, recklessness and cold-calculating selfishness as a garb".²⁶⁷

New Nigerian argues in similar lines. The foreign press, which canvasses for the restoration of democracy, are described as "unfair":

(BBC, CNN and the foreign press) have been less than fair in their reports about the protracted struggle between the so-called *June 12 forces* which are in a *minority* and the *patriotic majority*²⁶⁸ (emphasis added).

As General Oladipo Diya, Abacha's deputy confesses to *TELL* that he is "ashamed of military rule",²⁶⁹ the magazine announces shortly afterwards, "Now, Nigeria is Finished."²⁷⁰

3. Conclusion

The narratives about the June 12 crisis are significantly different from the earlier narratives we have analysed as much as they are significantly similar to them. In terms of similarities, the June 12 narratives reflect the essential core of issues

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ "The Nigerian Press" *DC*, op. cit.

²⁶⁸ "Foreign Media Nonsense", front-page editorial, *NN*, Aug. 24 1994.

²⁶⁹ "I am Ashamed of Military Rule", cover interview, *TELL*, August 8 1994.

²⁷⁰ "Now, Nigeria is Finished", *TELL*.

pertaining to the construction of a grand nation; issues that have to do with justice, equity and fairness. These issues resonate through the three *stretches* of narratives we have analysed. Yet, the June 12 narratives are different in that after the annulment, the 'grand nation' was narrated as "finished" and "ended" despite the attempt by the 'other' side to project the continuation of the 'nation'. Why is this so? Given the fact that the narration of the re-invention of Nigeria is predicated upon the construction of a 'grand nation' that abandons the past in search of a future, the annulment and the sustenance of same consequently demobilised the construction of this new (grand) nation and returns the contending nations to their tents. The attempts to "keep a date with history" consequently ended in the "end of history".

In the next chapter, we consider the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century contours of the narratives of nation as they signpost the negotiation of power in a democratic Nigeria.

CHAPTER SIX

EARLY YEARS OF THE FOURTH REPUBLIC: THE WRATH OF AGES – MAY 1999 – MAY 2000

1. *Introduction*

Chapter five focuses on the crisis that gripped the Nigerian state principally as a result of the elaborate and laborious transition programme of the General Ibrahim Babangida regime and specifically the annulment of the June 12 1993 Presidential Election. Even though the chapter analyses narratives of this crisis as reflected in the media in the first two years of the crisis (1993 and 1994), the crisis manifested in different ways until the death of two principal actors in the unfolding drama, Basorun Moshood Abiola and General Sani Abacha in July and June of 1998 respectively.

Not a few Nigerians believed that it was the crisis, which had consumed two governments – Babangida's and the Interim National Government headed by Ernest Shonekan – that also consumed the Abacha regime, its head, General Sani Abacha and the 'symbol of June 12', Moshood Abiola.

While Abacha's death was a welcome relief to many, given the unprecedented scale of arrest, detention, execution and assassination of dissenting

figures during his rule, Abiola's death was seen by a significant section of the country as putting "Nigeria on the cross" with the attendant implications for the collapse of the Union.

However, the death - by natural causes or by 'conspiracy' - of the two could be seen as the termination of a national debacle with potential opportunities for a new, though not necessarily fresh, beginning for a much troubled polity.

A high level negotiation that included the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, Commonwealth Secretary General, Emeka Anyaoku and United States envoys had attempted to persuade Abiola to renounce his "mandate" which he declined before he gave up the ghost after drinking tea allegedly prepared by a member of the US delegation. An international body of medical experts later certified that Abiola died of 'natural causes' – a heart attack.

The level of Abiola's resolve and the surprising clarity of his mind after four years of solitary confinement were betrayed by his letters to prominent Nigerians from jail.

The new helmsman, General Abdulsalami Abubakar, Abacha's Chief of Defence Staff, announced the resolve of his regime to move Nigeria beyond the logjam occasioned by the annulment. He released those jailed by the Abacha regime

for plotting against the regime in what was dubbed the "Gwadabe coup plot" particularly former head of state, General Olusegun Obasanjo. He also released several activists and journalists jailed by the late dictator and beckoned the press to a new lease of life in freedom.

The regime then instituted a new transition programme, a very short one, which was to culminate in the swearing into office of democratically elected officers by May 29, 1999.

Three political parties were eventually registered by the regime. These were the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the All People's Party (APP) and the Alliance for Democracy (AD).

Given the criteria laid down for the registration of parties, not a few political analysts believed that the AD did not meet the criteria. Why then was the party registered?

The registration of the Alliance for Democracy was an indication of the dynamics of 1999 Nigeria and the balance of political forces in the country. Since the March to nationhood in the 1960s, the Yoruba, given their position in the power configuration in Nigeria, have sought the highest office in the land. They have, in fact,

acted as if they have been more deserving of it based on the "administrative genius" of their leader, Obafemi Awolowo.

This struggle captured by the travails of Awolowo in politics re-enacted itself in the Second Republic when Awo again vied for the highest office in the land in 1979 and lost to a northern candidate, Shehu Shagari, who was seen by the Yoruba particularly as far less capable and demonstrably incompetent.

Awo's loss was believed to be due to many factors, chief of which was his inability, and the inability of the Yoruba nation, to forge a meaningful alliance with North as the Samuel Ladoke Akintola attempted to do in the First Republic. Perhaps owing to this, in his second attempt in the Second Republic, Awo forged an alliance with a section of the "Kaduna Mafia," the group of core Northern conservative elite. The leader of this faction, was Obasanjo's former martial deputy, retired Major General Shehu Musa Yar'Adua, who as events later showed, was constructing a strategic alliance with the West in his own future bid for the same office. The group produced a running mate for Awo in Alhaji Kure.

Yet Awo suffered a worse electoral defeat in the second attempt as even his "sure" states including Oyo and Bendel states were captured by the Northern-

dominated National Party of Nigeria (NPN) even though his party, the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) also won Kwara State from the NPN.¹

The 1983 elections were marred by large scale and widespread rigging and unbridled partisanship by the Federal Electoral Commission, FEDECO, the judiciary and the police headed by Sunday Adewusi. For many, the democratic experiment had come to an end and as the ruling party, NPN, waxed stronger in its bid for a one-party state, the opposition and many Nigerian waited for "divine intervention."

This intervention came barely three months after Shagari's second term when the soldiers took over power. The new government headed by General Muhammadu Buhari, a Fulani also had a second in command, General Tunde Idiagbon, who, in spite of the wrong impression created by his name, was also Fulani. These two, described as "Fulani irredentists" and "partners-in-terror", by Wole Soyinka,² instituted a highly autocratic government organized around a messianic "War Against Indiscipline" through which the press was gagged while several politicians languished in jail. This was against the backdrop of the escape into exile of the

¹ UPN victory in Kwara state in the gubernatorial election was a way for the most powerful political figure in the state, Olusola Saraki to settle a score with his estranged political ward, Atah, who was his party's candidate. Saraki ordered his supporters to vote for the UPN candidate in the gubernatorial election.

² Wole Soyinka, *The Open Sore of A Nation: A Personal Narrative of the Nigerian Crisis*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

prominent members of the ruling party and the house arrest in which Shagari and his deputy, Alex Ekwueme were kept.

Long jail terms were imposed on opposition politicians, even as security agents ransacked Awolowo's house.³ Those were seen as evidence of "partisan justice". The situation was worsened by the fact that the regime banned any discussion of the political future of Nigeria.

General Babangida, and the others with whom he instituted a long and nightmarish transition programme, eventually upstaged the regime.

In the context of all these, voices were raised in the South of Nigeria, particularly in the West, for the convocation of a National Conference to discuss the basis of Nigeria's unity and fashion a new form of association that could endure.

The victory of two Northerners, Adamu Ciroma and Shehu Yar'Adua, in the primaries of the government-created parties, the National Republican Convention (NRC) and Social Democratic Party (SDP) raised a new form of fears in the South that the political party would "for ever" remain in the North. Consequently, even those

³ Buhari later claimed in an interview that this was the handwork of "fifth columnists" in his government, ostensibly, General Babangida. "Why I Was Toppled- The Buhari Interview", *The News*, July 5 1993.

who were opposed to the chicanery of the Babangida regime, including civil liberty groups, supported the cancellation of the primaries.⁴

The ban subsequently placed on some aspirants cleared the coast for the emergence of Moshood Abiola, a billionaire publisher and major Islamic figure, who had been a much-hated personality in his home-stead (West) given his conservative politics and his closeness to prominent Northern figures and military top brass.

Abiola's emergence and acceptance in the Yoruba West was a strategic move by the mainstream political elite to use a Muslim Yoruba who was acceptable to the North to engineer a strategic shift in power as a prelude to redressing several years of domination, hegemony and the rot in the Nigerian state. It was reasoned that if the North could not accept a radical (Christian) Awo in the First Republic and a progressive (Christian) Awo in the Second Republic, it could only betray its 'duplicity' if it failed to accept a conservative (Muslim) Abiola in the Third Republic even though he was running on the platform of a supposedly progressive party.

The fact that the North could not produce a politician of stature to run against Abiola made things easier for the coalition that backed Abiola in a desperate move to simultaneously snatch power from the military and the conservative North. In this

⁴ See, "Presidency: The North's Secret Plan for Power", cover, *TELL*, September 7 1992.

desperate move even the fact that Abiola picked a Muslim as running mate made no difference as prominent Christian leaders and groups – who were more eager for power shift – supported Abiola's bid.

The annulment of this "historic election" in which a Southerner won "fair and square" as Adamu Ciroma put it, was therefore a watershed in the political history of a fractious polity. For many in the South, particularly the West, this was a conclusive prove that the North wanted to hold on perpetually to power. Calls for the convocation of Sovereign National Conference therefore gained a new impetus as many asked for the peaceful separation of the constituent groups in Nigeria to avoid another civil war.

The incarceration and eventual death of Abiola and the many casualties that the Yoruba suffered in terms of imprisonment, assassination, and exile, under General Sani Abacha's run-away autocracy, only served to present the other sections of the country with what could pass for a political *fait accompli* in the attempt at reconstituting democratic rule in 1999. The argument was stark, even if many were persuaded: the Yoruba needed to be appeased. In what Sani Kotangora described as "blackmail", Northern politicians were persuaded not to run for the

presidency so as not to “prove” the accusations of an attempt at perpetual headship of the Nigerian state.

Apart from Alex Ekwueme, an Igbo, who made a serious run for the highest office, nobody from other ethnic nationalities seriously contested for the office. The PDP presented former head of state, General Olusegun Obasanjo, while the APP-AD alliance presented Olu Falae, another Yoruba.

Obasanjo was the choice of core conservative elements in the North who had done business with him before when he was in power and were particularly happy with the fact that he allowed his Fulani deputy, Yar'Adua, to run the government while he also opposed the larger interests of his Yoruba compatriots, particularly Awolowo and later Abiola. As would be expected, Obasanjo did not get any significant support from the Yoruba West apart from the Yoruba politicians who were eager for national “spoils” and were convinced that, as the “anointed” of North and the generals in power, he would win the elections.

In spite of this opposition to Obasanjo, the West still welcomed the transfer of power and expected a new lease of life for Nigeria, while still demanding a national talk-shop. Rumours of Obasanjo's death before he was sworn-in however raised his rating among his people who suspected another “grand plan” by the North to subvert

the transfer of power. Obasanjo's actions in the first few months in power endeared him to the Yoruba who saw in him the potential for redressing the "vice hold" of the North on power. For the North, such also constituted evidence of "bad faith" and a stab in the back.

The narratives that follow react to and contest this state of affairs as they serve the interests of the different nations within the Nigerian union. The past recreates itself in new ways in the attempt by the newspapers and magazines to address emergent configurations and struggle for the soul of the Nigerian nation. Three newspapers and one magazine are analysed in this last empirical chapter as indicators of the narratives of power. These are *The Guardian* (as voice of southern minorities), *Post Express* (East), *TELL* (West) and *Weekly Trust* (North). The first one year of the new democratic government is covered in this analysis.

2. *Narrating the Wrath of Ages*

The fact that the narratives in/of this era are as concerned with new situations and events as much as they are a continuation of the on-going narratives of nation is key to understanding the enactment of power in these narratives. The narratives

here can be fitted or inserted into a continuum that can at best be only new manifestations of old wrath.

Explaining such synthetic character of narratives, as Louis O. Mink⁵ advances, require "colligation" with the explanation of an event by tracing its intrinsic relations to other events and locating it in its historical context."⁶

These narratives are constructions and elaborations of collective burdens, struggles and destinies⁷, conditioned, as Bennett and Edelman⁸ argue, by the incentive of the privileged to justify their advantage and augment them and the need of the deprived to rationalize their disadvantage or struggle against them.

In the few weeks preceding the hand-over of power by the "Northern oligarchy" to the South in May 1999, attempts are made to provide a background to the "national arrival." The important backdrop for Col. Tony Iyam, one of the brains behind the April 22, 1990 Orkar coup, writing in *TELL*, was the coup which

(T)hrew a monkey's wrench into the wheel of the ruling cabal's evil work of perpetuating themselves in power forever. It sounded alarm bells on the contingency of impoverishment, brutalisation, murder and other atrocities that have been visited on Nigeria by the

⁵ Mink, "The Anatomy of Historical Understanding", in Ricoeur, op. cit.: 156.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Farrel, Thomas B., op. cit.

⁸ Bennett and Edelman, op. cit.: 165-166.

ascendancy of men like Badamasi Babangida, Sani Abacha and Ishaya Bamaïyi.⁹

On this "historic day," Radio Nigeria, according to Iyiam which "until then (was) permanently used by the cabal for propaganda purposes" was used by "forces of liberation,"

(T)o expose the intensified marginalisation of the Igbo, the Yoruba, and the Southern and Northern minorities. This aroused Nigerians from their political stupor and underlined the *urgent necessity to address the "National Question"* or more appropriately, to address the "union of the countries nationalities question"¹⁰ (emphasis added).

During the brief hours in which the coup plotters held sway, Nigerians were told that the "sadistic, drug-baronish (sic) and homosexual inclined" government of Ibrahim Babangida had been terminated while the "dominating states" of Sokoto, Kano, Katsina, Bauchi and Borno were excised from Nigeria by the coup plotters on behalf of the "oppressed and dominated" people of the South and Middle-Belt. Prior to this coup, this narrative argues, "the concept of "nation" was confused with that of

⁹ "No Easy Walk to Freedom", Forum, (Col.) Tony Iyiam, *TELL*, May 3 1999.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

“country”.¹¹ The critical issues that faced Nigeria since independence are therefore “still requiring solutions:”

What are the choices before us on this (National Question) topic? In trying to posit options, it is imperative to *bear a fundamental fact in mind. As of today, Nigeria is not a nation. It is a country of various nations...* The problem with our own entity is that we have so signally failed to imbibe a cardinal principle of fruitful co-existence, which is equity¹² (emphasis added).

This reflects the earlier argument that at the core of these narratives is what can be discarded as “past continuous”. As the debate on the Sharia question in the new constitution shows, the future is moulded with the clay of the past:

Christian Northern members of the (Provisional Ruling) Council, including those from the Middle Belt, were especially *embittered by what they perceived as an attempt to remake the whole of the old North in the image of the Caliphate*. They argued that the so-called North was no longer a geographic and political monolith, and that it was high time the cultural and particularly the religious diversity of the region was recognised and accepted as a reality. The fierceness of the opposition to the whole *Sharia gambit* has forced the opponents to retreat for now¹³ (emphasis added).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid: 47.

¹³ “War Over Sharia: PRC Divided”, cover story, *TELL*, May 10 1999: 20-25.

On the eve of the return of democratic rule, the *Post Express* is more concerned with the replacement of Northern hegemony by Yoruba hegemony as the "allocation of ministerial and parastatal posts in the Fourth Republic (stirs) up a whirlwind of protests among certain political blocs in the country".¹⁴

According to the *Express*:

Going by the recommendations of the General Olusegun Obasanjo Transition Committee, *the South-West will enjoy monopoly of the nation's communication sector....* Already, the proposal has drawn *the wrath* of some technocrats from both the *Northern and South Eastern parts* of the country who alleged a *grand design* to entrust a sector as sensitive as communications to a particular zone¹⁵ (emphasis added).

All these form the immediate background to the restoration of democratic rule with the landmark of the installation of the first democratically elected president from the South. The logic of this "power shift" folded into the possibilities of national renewal dominated discourses in the press. Yet these are fed, by the southern newspapers, into the need for restructuring as the basis of national renewal.

After reviewing the political history of Nigeria, particularly the immediate past, *TELL* states that:

¹⁴ "North, South-East Protest Ministerial Allocations..." lead story, *Post Express* (hereafter, *Express*), may 11 1999.

¹⁵ Ibid.

An arguably wiser nation, obviously deferring to the political imperatives of June 12, zoned the presidency to Abiola's South-West¹⁶ (emphasis added).

What then constitute the greatest challenge of the new democratic arrangement would remain the consolidation of this "wisdom" displayed by the nation:

Given political courage and a good dose of statesmanship, the agenda should be simple. It lies *in restructuring the Nigerian state* and giving effect to a constitution that expressly makes a provision for this. This is one thing we *as a nation*, should not fear to do¹⁷ (emphasis added).

The *Express* advances that what is most crucial at the moment is nothing but the celebration of Nigeria's survival as a nation in spite of the storm that had raged against the corporate existence of the nation:

The achievement of national survival ought indeed to be priced over other gains. This is a moment in world history when the future of large nation-states, especially federation, is being actively re-examined and even challenged in brutal conflicts.... In most of these cases, the continuation of nation-states that the world had come to take for granted can no longer be guaranteed.¹⁸

¹⁶ "Nigeria's Last Chance" editorial, *TELL*, May 31 1999: 16.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ "Celebrating Survival, Re-inventing Hope" editorial, *PE*, May 29 1999: 6.

It matters less to the *Express* in what concrete ways hope could be reinvented as national survival is celebrated. But *TELL* disagrees vehemently with this line of thinking because, since this constituted Nigeria's "last chance" to survive as a nation, there is the need for concrete reinvention of Nigeria beyond hope. The magazine explains the rationale thus:

Why restructure the country? At the centre of the "Nigerian problem" may well be the manner of the coming together of the Nigeria(n) nation, a problem which late Ahmadu Bello, the first and only premier of Northern Nigeria, called "the mistake of 1914". Hugh Clifford (...) would, in 1922, sum up this negative aspect of the young Nigerian nation. It is "a collection of independent native states, separated from one another (...) by great distance, by differences of history and traditions and by ethnological, racial, tribal, political, social and religious barriers."¹⁹

How has this reality played out? *TELL* advances that:

Since independence, two negative, even centrifugal forces have assailed the young republic with the devastating effect of a typhoon. One is the quest for regional, if not *ethnic, hegemony over the rest of the country. The Hausa-Fulani's assertion of a divide and rule has proved unfortunate, throwing the nation into crisis.* This was to lead to the emergence of the second force, namely the entry of the military in politics... It did not help matters at all, again over time, *that the military*

¹⁹ "Nigeria's Last Chance", *TELL*, op. cit.

*became absolutely controlled by the North*²⁰ (emphasis added).

The "twin-evil" of Hausa-Fulani domination and military rule – acting in concert and sourced from the same location for the magazine - made the emergence of a Nigerian nation impossible:

Nothing could have been so damaging of national unity and a thriving federation. Under it (the "twin-evil") the south groaned and the minorities became the glorified slaves of the house that Lugard built.²¹

The strategy of *expurgation of the other* is used to full effect by the magazine here as it identifies and constructs an "enemy within": the Hausa-Fulani political soldiers who are portrayed as harmful, even evil and as threats to national unity, deserving of resistance and expurgation. Conversely, this is also more of unification as the other ethnic nationalities are invariably summoned to a united front against the twin-evils.

Even where these twin-evils constitute part of the "ignominious history" of Nigeria, the *Express* insists that surviving against all the crises compels Nigerians to celebration:

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

It is a tribute to (...) Nigerians in their own country that Nigeria weathered the storm of its recent ignominious history to endure in unity... Very few nations have a second chance of re-inventing themselves. *Nigeria is one*. In this regard, this can indeed be said to be *Nigeria's finest hour*²² (emphasis added).

Between Nigeria's "finest hour" and her "last chance", the newspapers disagree on how the present is to be apprehended in the context of the past and how the future should be faced: With hope or with fear? For *TELL* the future is folded closely to hope:

"The Mistake of 1914", can surely be corrected by restructuring. Nations that choose the path of foolhardiness in resolving the ... issues of their co-existence present the world frightening spectacles of self-implosion.²³

Where power-shift is a significant step, *TELL* argues, avoidance of subsequent and crucial steps toward restructuring can only be followed by the end of the history of the Nigerian nation:

No section of the country need fear restructuring because it is not an order that be foisted on anyone. Rather, it should be the sensible outcome of a sovereign national conference of all Nigerian people at which, in freedom, a mutual consensus on a workable basis of a united Nigeria can be reached.... (Obasanjo) satisfies,

²² "Celebrating Survival, Re-inventing Hope", *PE*, op. cit.

²³ "Nigeria's Last Chance", op. cit.

though arguably, the requirement of power shifting to the South... (but) to obey this imperative in the breach could throw the Nigerian ship of state against the loadstone rock. That may well prove Nigeria's last chance²⁴ (emphasis added).

Obasanjo's ascendancy does not constitute an unqualified "power-shift" given the fact that he is the choice of that same power bastion accused by *TELL* of throwing the nation into crisis. But as events unfold, this same Obasanjo becomes the unqualified symbol of power shift and national re-awakening for *TELL*. The magazine narrates the new state of affairs thus:

In a departure from what had become the norm, he (Obasanjo) boldly made key appointments into the government that not only stress *competence* and seniority but *reflect the true principle of federal character...* For the first time since the Second Republic, Nigeria's minority ethnic groups are being made to feel they are really part of the country and not just adjuncts of the major three. But *in spite of this altruism of all he has done as president, Obasanjo is perceived by some leaders of a section of the country, to be deliberately stepping in their toes²⁵ (emphasis added).*

These *isolatable* and *isolated* "leaders" of a section of a diverse country are invariably in the context, accused of "incompetence" since the emphasis of the

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ "From the Editor", *TELL*, July 5 1999: 17.

system against which they are complaining is "competence and seniority". This is a fine example of metonymy. The magazine then zeros in on this "section":

In short, the North is *grumbling*, and this is threatening to become a dangerous rumble. *And the only way those who believe they have first claim on political power in Nigeria settle their grievances is through a coup d'etat*²⁶ (emphasis added).

From *grumbling* which conveys a negative image of an undue complaint, to a "dangerous rumble" of a coup, *TELL* attempts to anticipate "the North". "The North", through the strategy of synecdoche, is conflated with its part, the Hausa-Fulani (core) North, which *TELL* had earlier isolated from the rest of the North – and the rest of the *nation*. By predicting that this "North" would resort to coup d'etat as it had always done since it assumes primacy in political relations, the magazine subverts the interests of the North and nourishes that of the "South", which had been "groaning" under the yoke of the "conspiratorial combine" of Hausa-Fulani oligarchy and military rule.

Even the *Express* which had earlier ignored the realities and frailties of the Nigerian union in ushering in a new dawn shortly afterwards notes – in the context of the Kafanchan communal clashes – that "Nigerians have not yet learnt the art of

²⁶ *Ibid.*

living together in peace."²⁷ In what would appear like a return to *TELL*'s earlier position, the *Express* links the "unpopular overlordship of Islamically imposed emirs"²⁸ on non-Muslim communities in the North to the questioning of the "continued imposition of such rulers"²⁹ in other parts of the country and therefore called for the convocation of national conference in the future through which a "peaceful dismantling"³⁰ of "alien rulership structure"³¹ could take place:

Ignoring these potential fires will be tantamount to stroking the embers of a *future conflagration that threatens (Nigeria's) corporate integration*³² (emphasis added).

Guardian agrees that such issue as the ones that provoked the Kafanchan communal clash has to do with "the fundamentals of identity and equity in a plural ethnic setting."³³ The paper argues against this background of "the dimension of a nationality struggle for identity and self-determination," that,

Every group deserves to have due recognition and political space in society. The traditional institutions of one group should not be imposed on others. Doing so will violate the principle of unity in diversity.³⁴

²⁷ "The Kafanchan Communal Unrest," editorial, *PE*, June 4 1999: 8.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ "The Kafanchan Communal Unrest," editorial, *TG*, June 4 1999: 16.

³⁴ *ibid.*

For *TELL* all these feed into the power matrix in the country, particularly because, "for the first time in Nigeria's history as an independent nation, the (Northern) oligarchy saw that power has effectively eluded them:"³⁵

They have now been relegated to the background...
They regretted (their) decision (...) to concede power to the South...³⁶

In resolving to "reclaim power at all cost,"³⁷ this "core North", according to the magazine, decided to "sack" the Obasanjo government, which constitute for this North a "miscalculation." But the magazine argues that even in this "miscalculation" the "oligarchy" didn't have a choice. Why?

Following the death of (Basorun Moshood Abiola)... the far North had *grudgingly* conceded that power would, *out of sheer necessity and self-preservation* of the northern establishment itself, have to shift to the South. But power shift, as conceived and understood by the North, was electing a *Southern president they can do business with*. Which is to say a person they could use to maintain the status quo and their *stranglehold on power*. That is, arrange a situation where they would still control all the critical and strategic levels of power without necessarily and outwardly being in charge³⁸ (emphasis added).

³⁵ "The North Fights Back", cover story, *TELL*, July 5 1999: 22.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ "The North Fights Back", *TELL*, op. cit.: 21.

TELL interprets "signals" from the core-north through the strategy of elaboration. With "which is" and "that is," the magazine elaborates the strategies, for the acquisition of power by the North, subverting it through disclosure and simultaneously enacting the discourse of power that serves its own location in the spectrum of the relations of domination within the grand narrative.

As stated earlier, *expurgation of the other* as a strategy of the mobilisation of meaning in the service of power has its opposite/corollary in unification. *Trust* returns the salvo to *TELL*, principally, and the interests that the latter serves, by inverting the logic. *Trust*, in turn, isolates and expurgates the Yoruba other, unifying the other ethnic nationalities against the Yoruba and also defending "Northern unity" against southern attempts to divide Northern groups.

First, it unifies all others against the Yoruba, as *TELL* does against the Hausa-Fulani. *Trust* presents the case of the rest against a section:

We know that the *average Yoruba man* and the leaders of the *tribe* mostly support or sympathise with OPC (Oodu'a People's Congress) and may even be secretly delighted at their heroics. The main OPC demand is Yoruba autonomy via a Sovereign National Conference. Killing people from *other ethnic groups* may be their method of precipitating a crisis that may lead this autonomy. Despite having *one of their own* in Aso

Rock, *most Yoruba* seem to share this desire for autonomy³⁹ (emphasis added).

From the “average Yoruba” to “most Yoruba,” *Trust* collects the whole “tribe” (a pejorative word in contemporary discourse) in an “inordinate” pack – people who are yet to be satisfied despite the fact that they have the presidency. Others are consequently invited to stop the Yoruba and rescue themselves:

Other *regions* and *ethnic groups* must sooner, rather than later *confront* this Yoruba demand and *articulate their own negotiating position*. As the government recognises, the constitution of Nigeria must be *negotiated* and *each group* must form and forcefully state *its own position*⁴⁰ (emphasis added).

At any rate, as Aliyu Tilde, a *Trust* columnist argues, “Yoruba nation” never existed and it is only a “utopia” and the “anti-thesis of Yoruba history” to talk about one:⁴¹

Nothing like that ever existed in their history. While other ethnic groups could boast of having a legacy of nationhood and contribution to the advancement of nationhood this particular one (Yoruba) left only that of destruction⁴² (emphasis added).

³⁹ “The Killings in Ketu”, front page comment, *Weekend Trust* (hereafter, *WT*), Dec. 3-9, 1999.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ “The Only Solution to OPC”, Friday Discourse by Aliyu Tilde, *WT*, Jan 7 13 2000: 14.

⁴² *Ibid.* Tilde describes the Yoruba as ‘ethnic group’, yet argues that they never constituted a ‘nation’ in their history.

It can be argued that the reference to regions in this narrative essentially point to "one North" while the others are "ethnic groups" who must confront the Yoruba. It will also ordinarily be expected that Trust's call for a "renegotiation" of "the constitution" by each group "forcefully", should collocate with similar demands by *TELL*, *Guardian* and *Express*, but the reference to "the constitution" as opposed to "the (Nigerian) nation," or "the (Nigerian) state" union marks out the difference in perspectives.

That the newspapers, and magazines representing the broad North and South differ in their position on unity and *fractionalization* in the North is evidenced by this contradictory narratives by *TELL* and *Trust*. *Trust* rationalizes the relations among Northern ethnic groups and constructs a "chain of reasons which seeks to defend or justify the social and political relations making them worthy of being defended". It also *rationalizes* the relations as if it exists in "timeless and cherished" tradition, giving "Northerners" a "sense of belonging to a comity and to a history which transcends the experience of conflict, difference and division," while also glossing over the existing relations of domination in the North. On the other hand, *TELL* fragments this North and also, through the strategy of *differentiation*,

emphasizes "the distinctions, differences and divisions" between the groups in the North, which "disunites" them. Argues *TELL*:

Blinded by the inordinate ambition to continue to monopolise power, the (Hausa-Fulani) hegemonists are said to be alarmed that the Middle-Belt is being gradually snatched away from them... Messages were sent to emirs that they should advocate their subjects on the dangers facing the Northern oligarchy" that is "Southern domination"... In particular, people of the Middle-Belt cannot see the sense in this ... of marginalization....⁴³ (In spite of the fact that three of the four service chiefs are from the North. The mafia claimed that they are not from the core North (...) that three of them are Christians (...) members of the mafia suddenly realized that Kano State is now the Middle-Belt. This is against their claim in the past that there is a *monolithic North*⁴⁴ (emphasis added).

Trust sees this kind of narrative, as an attempt to fragment the north and so renders a counter-narrative:

As at independence (...) there were 12 (...) provinces in *the North*. These provinces later became the 19 Northern states and Abuja Federal Capital Territory which are now referred to as "*Northern part of the country by the Southern and (curiously by some Northern media) to deny them their cherished Northern identity and so divide them against each other to rule and dominate them*"⁴⁵ (emphasis added).

⁴³ "The North Fights Back", op. cit.

⁴⁴ "The Mafia Bares Its Fang", cover story, *TELL*, Sept. 20 1999: 15.

⁴⁵ "Constitution Reviews – Wither Northern Nigeria", *Inside Politics, WT*, Nov. 3-9 1999: 31.

With their emphasis on the Middle Belt and the Christian North, *Trust* submits:

Our detractors seemed to have succeeded in fragmenting the North into leadership groups. The stage is set for the domination of the North ...⁴⁶ (emphasis added).

The weekly however reminds Northerners about how the core Northern political elite including Tafawa Balewa, Nigeria's late prime minister, Ahmadu Bello, the North's late premier and Muhammadu Ribadu, late federal defence minister, "battled their southern counterparts and invariably won".⁴⁵

When crucial issues such as date for Nigerian independence, structure of the country, etc. came up for discussion at the central legislative council or constitutional conference, *the so-called illiterate backward Northerners outwitted the so-called university educated Southerners*. For example, the North refused to be intimidated into accepting 1956 as the date for Nigerian independence but opted for a date "as soon as practicable" and this saved the North from Southern domination which independence in 1956 would have entailed⁴⁷ (emphasis added).

The past, for the weekly, forms a canvass on which the needs and opportunities of "northern solidarity" is written and negotiated.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

But a Northern "radical" and aide of President Obasanjo tells *TELL* that this type of thinking, epitomized and glorified by the *Trust*, will sink Nigeria:

Unless there is a fundamental shift in political thinking and a serious about turn by the North, the future of Nigeria cannot be guaranteed. *Right now, it is the North that is posing a threat to the continued existence of Nigeria*⁴⁸ (emphasis added).

Consequently, barely six months into the life of the new democracy, discourses of break-up again returned to the front pages as Soyinka warns in *TELL* that, "if within a year, there is no rethinking in the whole process of governance, this country stands the risk of break-up."⁴⁹ Col. Abubakar Umar, another radical retired soldier discloses to *TELL* that, "if for any reason Obasanjo loses his life today in any military coup, I think that will be the end of Nigeria."⁵⁰ And Abubakar asks doubting Thomases, "if other countries have broken up, why do you think Nigeria will not break up."⁵¹ Such voices as these from the North who get represented in Southern narratives of power, *TELL*

⁴⁸ "The Trouble With the North..." Ahmadu Abubakar, Presidential Aide', cover story, *TELL*, Sept. 6 1999: 17.

⁴⁹ "What the President Must Do, interview, *TELL*, July 5 1999: 30.

⁵⁰ "Nigeria May Break-Up...", cover interview, *TELL*, July 12, 1999: 13.

⁵¹ "The Trouble With the North", op. cit.

reports, are targets of attacks from fellow Northerner who perceive them as "enemies of the (Northern) cause."⁵²

While Abubakar in *TELL* accuses the North that "went berserk in terms of appropriation of government machinery for itself" of being responsible for the possible break-up of Nigeria, Adamu A. Mohammed in *Trust* affirms that it is actually the North that has sacrificed too much "for the corporate existence of Nigeria":⁵³

While other regions in the nation are busy adjusting their minds to the inevitable (i.e. of the balkanization of the country) trying to position their people so that they won't be caught unaware (sic), where in the north all you hear or see the treachery of our elders. The North has sacrificed too much for the corporate existence of this country. We fought a 30-months (sic) civil war just to keep the nation (sic)... it is now evidently clear that the war fought in the first instance (a war fought out of patriotism) was a mistake. We should have asked the Biafran Republic to go, and even any other entity to have backed-out by that time⁵⁴ (emphasis added).

Like the "mistake of 1914," this "mistake of 1957", the writer argues has again attracted insults to the North:

⁵² "The Mafia Bares Its Fang", *TELL*, op. cit.

⁵³ "The North: Where Do We Stand?" *Inside Politics* by Adamu A. Mohammed, *WT*, Jan. 18-24, 2000: 37.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Now, look at how the other regions have constantly been abusing our efforts. They say it in point blank (sic) that the north is the only region preventing the much talked about conference of the millennium (Sovereign National Conference). They are of the belief that we are afraid of the SNC because we *have been enjoying almost all wealth at the expense of the other regions*⁵⁵ (emphasis added).

The first 100 days of the Obasanjo government provides another context for evaluating the narratives of power by the different groups. When Obasanjo declares that he had been fair to all, *Express* takes him up and challenges his "concept of fairness". Even though his 100 days has convinced Nigerians of his goodwill as well as his courage, argues the paper, "they have not been backed up" with the kind "technical competence and such (policies) that produces quality public policies."⁵⁶ More importantly, his "idealism is still stained with ethnicity"⁵⁷ which the paper fails to explain here but elaborates elsewhere:

The background to this is the charge of marginalization, which various segments of the nation's population have levelled against the president. Ethnic groups, geopolitical zones, and even regional blocks (sic) have accused the president of being unfair to them in his appointment. What concept of fairness led the president to concentrate his security appointments (...) on the

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ "100 Days of Obasanjo", editorial, *PE*, Sept. 6 1999: 8.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

South-West zone? What fairness dictated that the military top brass come mainly from the North Central?⁵⁸

The *Express* ignores the question over the religious factor in the appointment of service chiefs. Three of the four are Christians. As a paper biased in favour of Christianity, this factor is not considered expedient to raise.

Guardian agrees largely with the *Express* in this matter of marginalisation:

On the political front, the President will need to show *much more greater* sensitivity to concerns about marginalisation expressed by large sections of the country by adopting, and being seen to *adopt a more equitable basis of power distribution* among the constituent zones and states of the country⁵⁹ (emphasis added).

The paper continues:

The criticism from some quarters that the President's public appointments have so far not properly reflected *genuine national spread and equity* in the allocation of prince portfolios should not be *treated with levity*. The president must take steps to redress this anomaly⁶⁰ (emphasis added).

In the articulation of what the *Express* calls, "the Igbos travails in Nigeria" which results in their being "hated, battered and marginalised (while seeking for) an

⁵⁸ "Obasanjo's Theory of Fairness", editorial, *PE*, Aug. 18 1999: 8.

⁵⁹ "Obasanjo's First 100 Days", editorial, *TG*, Aug. 30 1999: 20.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

equitable share of the national cake;⁶¹ *TELL* states that the Igbo leaders presents "feeble voice".⁶² Consequently, for *TELL*, Obasanjo's 100 days have been full of "achievement", save for the cry of marginalisation by Northern conservatives:

To many Nigerians, those days (100 days of Obasanjo) have been full of *landmark achievement*. However, some of the steps had ruffled feathers especially among the group of Northern conservatives usually referred to as the mafia⁶³ (emphasis added).

But, why is the Mafia "crying" marginalisation? *TELL* answers:

First, the Northern conservatives were the ones who wooed Obasanjo into joining the presidential train. He was their *anointed candidate*. Thus, when he became president, they expected him to pay back his IOUs...⁶⁴ (Emphasis mine)

The "feeble voice" of the third leg of the Nigerian tripod – the Igbo – whose military officers are treated "at best as outsiders",⁶⁵ attracts contempt from *Trust*, which accuses the Igbo of joining the "bandwagon" of the "patriots," a group of eminent Nigerians canvassing for "true federalism", which *Trust* argues is largely a Yoruba affair:

⁶¹ "Nigeria: Hope for the Southeast? (11)", *Politics, PE*, Dec. 24 1999: 24.

⁶² "Wounds That Won't Heal", *TELL*, Sept 20 1999: 24.

⁶³ "The Mafia Bares Its Fang", *op. cit.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ "Wounds That Won't Heal", *op. cit.*

The four or so Igbo members jumped into the bandwagon of the "Patriots" in order not to be left out of the corridor of power that now rules Nigeria. It was the same scenario in 1959, 1964, 1983 *when Igbos played second fiddle roles to Northerners in order to secure crumbs from the master's table! Such shameful roles place the Igbos where they are today – marginalised group*⁶⁶ (emphasis added).

The Patriots proposal to reorganize Nigeria's federalism towards rectifying the imbalances, which favour the north, *Trust* argues, is a "prelude to the annulment of 1914 amalgamation."⁶⁷

The Igbo do not take such accusations of subservience lying low. As a letter to the editor published in the *Guardian* by an Igbo exemplifies, this accusation only feeds into the overall maltreatment of the Igbo in Nigeria:

Even though the Igbo have suffered all manner of bastardisation, deprivation, mistrust and insult because they had the *courage to defend their land and say "No" to slavery, injustice and mass slaughter*; the Igbo will rise again as a people. Someday, *Ndi Igbo* will be accepted, trusted and allowed to participate fully in the leadership of our country⁶⁸ (emphasis added).

The introduction of the Sharia legal code for the administration of criminal justice in the North, first in Zamfara State, also provoked discourses of

⁶⁶ "Patriots" Proposal: A Prelude to the Annulment of 1914 Amalgamation", *Inside Politics, WT*, Jan 18-24, 2000: 37.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ "Ndi Igbo and the Nigerian Union", *Letters, TG*, June 17 1999.

fragmentation. The Sharia debate however preceded this era. It had been at issue since the era of independence struggle. It arose again fiercely in the debates leading to the restoration of democratic rule in the Second and Third Republic. It was easier to resolve in these two periods because the soldiers were in power and so could force a settlement on the political class. It was resolved that for those who so choose, the Sharia legal system could be used for the administration of civil law in the northern states.

Therefore the introduction of the Sharia legal code for both criminal and civil justice was a major departure from the earlier trend that was sure to provoke serious crisis particularly from Christians who had always feared "planned Islamisation" of Nigeria and the use of religion by the core North for the retention of power.

Before the military handed over power to civilians, there was a storm in the Provisional Ruling Council (PRC) over the Sharia issue. As *TELL* reports it:

The pro-Sharia group wanted a provisional amendment that would fundamentally alter the status quo. The 1979 constitution only provides for states that so desire to set up a Sharia court of appeal... The proposed amendment would make it mandatory for all states to set up Sharia courts.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ "War Over Sharia: PRC Divided", cover story, *TELL*, May 10 1999.

But, the PRC eventually decided that the status quo should remain. But when the Zamfara state government moved towards changing the status quo, debates on the implications for national unity were raised. What the Zamfara state did, according to *TELL* is planting "a political bomb which may soon set the nation on fire unless care is taken."⁷⁰ Continues the magazines:

Tick-tack! A time bomb, code named "Sharia", is ticking away in Zamfara State. The rest of the country is holding its breath because its eventual explosion may shatter *the dreams and aspirations of the neo-nationalists who fought with sweat and blood to have a refurbished Nigeria after the wear and tear of successive military dictatorships*⁷¹ (emphasis added).

The *Guardian* agrees largely with this reading, emphasising that the Sharia matter constitutes a threat to democracy:

(I)n a rather unfortunate twist of familiar reality, it appears the Sharia system is being turned into a factor with a potential to unleash centrifugal religious tension in our *new born and still fragile democratic polity*⁷² (emphasis added).

⁷⁰ "Sharia Akbar! Sharia Ak-bomb!" cover story, *TELL*, Nov. 15 1999.

⁷¹ From the Editor", *TELL*, Nov. 15 1999: 11.

⁷² "The Sharia Controversy", editorial, *TG*, Nov. 4 1999: 16.

The *Express* describes the Sharia law as a "treasonable legislation" and the governor and the State Assembly members as "law breakers" who should be arrested and charged for "treason":⁷³

Of greater concern is that these *obviously retrogressive steps* are being taken in Nigeria on the eve of the 21st century...⁷⁴ (Emphasis added).

The papers and magazine then examine the implications of this for the country. *TELL* submits that:

In fact, the implications of (Governor Ahmed) Yerima's actions are *too glaring* to be ignored by very critical observers. The first implication is that, henceforth, no Christian or any other non-Muslim can ever become the executive Governor of Zamfara State for as long as the supreme law there is that of Sharia... (T)his is unconstitutional. The second (...) is that Zamfara has *indirectly excised itself* out of the federal laws of the country standing close as "sovereign state" within a republic. The third, and perhaps, the most eye-opening is the fact that Zamfara has successfully "*restructured*" itself within the Nigerian federation and that *Northern* state wants "*self-autonomy*" or "*self determination*" is free to adopt its own strategy to achieve same...⁷⁵ (Emphasis added).

For the *Express*,

⁷³ "Democracy and Order", editorial, *PE*, Oct. 21 1999.

⁷⁴ "Sharia, Civil Rights and National Question", editorial, *PE*, Nov. 11 1999.

⁷⁵ "From the Editor", *TELL*, op. cit.

(B)y far the most fundamental problem which the current experimentation with the Sharia option poses is that it has the potential of bringing matters of restricted religious application into direct conflict with matters of a larger socio-political and therefore secular nature. As matters stand today, there is no way of winning the Sharia challenge without altering either the present constitution or the *configuration of the territorial expression* to which it refers⁷⁶ (emphasis added).

The *Guardian* elaborates these changes in the "configuration of the territorial expression" in pointing out the implications of the Sharia issue:

There seems (...) to be an attempt to turn the Sharia into a total way of life, a kind of theocracy that supplants the law of the land. In other words, its promoters have politicised it.... What they are saying, in essence, is that *this country cannot be one*. It is a threat to national unity; It is a dangerous proposition that is abroad⁷⁷ (emphasis added).

TELL links Yerima's "political crusade" with that of the late Sardauna of Sokoto, Ahmadu Bello in the "desire" to "dip the Koran into the Atlantic Ocean and across Nigeria" and, related to this, dominate the country eternally:

What continued to baffle most political observers is the timing of the Sharia declaration.... (S)ources told *TELL* that a *Northern cabal, which has held the country to ransom for several decades* but currently outside the power (...) of Aso Rock, is involved in this new plot to

⁷⁶ "Sharia, Civil Rights and National Question", op. cit.

⁷⁷ "Sharia and the Kaduna Riots", editorial, *TG*, Feb 28 2000: 20.

rattle and if possible, topple the Obasanjo administration⁷⁸ (emphasis added).

These "Northern leaders"⁷⁹ who have fed on government "all their lives"⁸⁰ as *TELL* described core Northern elite, are challenged by *Guardian* to stop the moves that threaten national unity:

The country did not have to wait for the bloodshed in Kaduna before protesting the *folly* of those who want to use the Sharia as an instrument of political challenge... And where are the leaders of the North: They should be courageous enough to declare it (Sharia) a *monstrosity*. They must say where they stand on this issue if *they still* harbour *any hope of a united nation....*⁸¹ (Emphasis added).

Trust ignores all these "salient implications" concentrating on Muslims and Christian who "forged unity in adversity to ward off their attackers" whom they simply regarded as "misguided hoodlums".⁸² The responsibility for the riots, which in "several parts of Kaduna" according to the weekly "defied religious colouration" is however subtly laid at the doorstep of "anti-Sharia demonstrators" who neither sought nor obtained police permit, who became "aggressive", "molested" motorists

⁷⁸ "Sharia Akbar! Sharia Ak-bomb!!", op. cit.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ "Sharia and the Kaduna Riots", op. cit.

⁸² "Kaduna Carnage. Eye Witnesses Accounts", cover story, *WT*, Feb 25 2000.

and forced many *Muslims* to say "anti-Sharia slogans".⁸³ However, "some" Christian demonstrators told the weekly that their "aggression" was provoked after they were stoned by Muslim youths.⁸⁴

Unlike the *Trust's* OPC youths in Lagos who exhibit "stone-age barbarism,"⁸⁵ having been "consumed by evil and employing methods some category of animals would find detestable,"⁸⁶ the Kaduna youths "crafted their own agenda" only because of the "absence of leaders to guide them."⁸⁷

For the *Guardian*, the OPC militia should not be dismissed because "they have an idea of what they want out of the Nigerian union. Some of their demands are fundamental to the pursuit of justice and good governance."⁸⁸

Even the police is accused by the *Trust* of "going beyond their mandate by siding with one group,"⁸⁹ in the Kaduna riots, ostensibly Christians. The concerns of the southern press about the political implications are however not important to *Trust*, as it argues that:

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ "The Killings in Ketu" front-page comment, *WT*, Dec. 3-9, 1999.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ "Shariah: The Way Out", front page comment. *WT*, March 3-9 2000.

⁸⁸ "The Problem of Ethnic Militias", editorial, *TG*, Sept. 23, 1999: 16.

⁸⁹ "Shariah: The Way Out"; *op. cit.*

Terrible as the killings were, the issue goes beyond them and even the *so-called* political class that are always accused of manipulating people and making issues out of primordial sentiments⁹⁰ (emphasis added).

This stands in direct opposite to what *Trust* saw as salient in the riots in Lagos in which Yoruba youths in OPC were implicated. In that instance, the weekly wanted a probe into the activities of those "manipulating primordial sentiments":

(W)e hope the government will go further to find out (a) how the OPC is funded, (b) where and how it gets its supply of arms with which they overwhelm the police's feeble response. We believe that if government pursue such and other relevant questions *with determination* and *genuine desire* to redress wrong and prevent future recurrence, the identity of those behind the OPC politically, ideologically and financially would be revealed. For, whatever its demand, *the OPC must be made to atone for its crime*⁹¹ (emphasis added).

The "atonement" is however not required by *Trust* in the Kaduna case which is reportedly worse in terms of casualties than that of Ketu, in Lagos. *Trust*, which describes Obasanjo's shoot-at-sight order in the Lagos case as "indulgent (...) like a grand father talking to wayward children rather than a commander-in-chief warning pre-meditated murderers,"⁹² (an act which, even as mild as *Trust* says it is, for *TELL*

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ "The Killings in Ketu", op. cit.

⁹² Ibid.

constitutes a "dangerous gamble"⁹³) fails to call some youth (who) under the guise of religion, killed hundreds of people and destroyed property worth billions of naira⁹⁴ in Kaduna any names. Yet, the weekly describes the retaliatory attacks in the East against Hausa-Fulani as "massacre".⁹⁵ What happened in Kaduna, for the magazine, is "carnage", but the one in the East, is "massacre". While carnage does not immediately convey *agency*, massacre clearly does. *Trust* even accused Chief Emeka Ojukwu as being partly responsible for the Kaduna plots.⁹⁶

Like every major crisis, the introduction of the Sharia legal code and the subsequent riots again raise questions about national survival and the means of ensuring this or surrendering to disintegration. *Express* expresses this discourse in the course of the Sharia controversy:

A dangerous trend has crept into our polity. Gradually, our national discourse has been invaded by expressions of separatism and talks of ethnic self-determination... Even the *Sharia escapade* in Zamfara is an extension of this trend... In all the threats that we have seen and heard of late, there is almost always a proviso. People are saying that *they would opt for self-determination if the inequities in our present system are allowed to endure*⁹⁷ (emphasis added).

⁹³ "OPC: Obasanjo's Dangerous Gamble", cover story, *TELL*, Jan 31 2000.

⁹⁴ "Shariah: The Way Out", *op. cit*

⁹⁵ "Massacre in the South-East – As Returnees Told Tales of Happenings in Kaduna", *WT*, March 3-9 2000: 6.

⁹⁶ "Kaduna Riots: The Ojukwu Connection", *WT*, Mar. 3-9 2000.

⁹⁷ "Threats of Secession" editorial, *PE*, Nov. 22 1999.

TELL put is down to the need for the convocation of a SNC, as it has always insisted:

There is no *doubt* that the *Zamfara debacle* has reawakened the people's consciousness to the need to have a sovereign national conference to resolve the primordial riddles that have negated every progressive move to make Nigeria regain its bearing in the march towards civilisation⁹⁸ (emphasis added).

After reviewing the demands of several groups, the magazine affirms that:

virtually every group is talking secession if their (sic) grievances are not resolved to their satisfaction fast. And many of them are adamant that the first condition that must be fulfilled to continue to keep the country united is the convening of sovereign national conference.⁹⁹

But *Express* disagrees that the expressions of dissatisfaction captured by *TELL* constitute threats of secession. Rather,

(W)e are witnessing a quickening of our *patriotic instincts* rather than serious and deliberate threats of secession¹⁰⁰ (emphasis added).

Therefore,

⁹⁸ "From the Editor", *TELL*, Nov. 5 1999, op. cit.

⁹⁹ "Tension Escalates.... Over Secession Threat", cover story, *TELL*, Nov. 22 1999.

¹⁰⁰ "Threats of Secession", *PE*, op. cit.

Clearly (...) there is a case for a restructuring of the federation. The suggestion of a sovereign national conference on the matter is ventilated by the existence of a popularly-elected National Assembly with full powers to defend and protect the sovereignty of the Nigerian people.¹⁰¹

The reason for the absence of a threat of disintegration, according to the *Express*, is later explained - with the "bad faith" of the Yoruba-West at the outbreak of the civil war becoming central:

On whether Nigeria is headed towards disintegration, quite a good number of political experts say that it is not likely. According to them it would have been easy for Nigeria to break-up but for the British and American interests, the fact that the South-East may not readily come out to agitate for it *because of betrayal during Biafra by the very sections now campaigning the cause* and the fact that the Middle-Belt which also feels, oppressed by the Hausa-Fulani oligarchy may not just support it¹⁰² (emphasis added).

The *Guardian* advances that national conference is very crucial to Nigeria's survival. While praising the "landmark"¹⁰³ meeting in Asaba by the six governors of the South-South states of Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross-Rivers, Delta, Edo and Rivers

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² "21st Century Nigeria: A Threatened Federation", Sunday Special, *PE on Sunday*, Dec. 12 1999: 10-11.

¹⁰³ "Landmark Meeting at Asaba", editorial, *TG*, April 7 2000: 16.

– “the economic power house of the country,”¹⁰⁴ the paper, finds it “disturbing” that the gathering said nothing about the agitation for a national conference:

It is disturbing that the South-South leaders did not make a categorical statement on the current clamour for a national conference to address the distortions and deformities that impede the functioning of a federal system.... Just where does the region stand on the issue? A national conference is needed to provide a platform for a peaceful resolution of the mounting crisis. Instead of avoiding the issue, the governors and legislators of the South-South zone ought to face the challenge of preparing their various states and communities for any such conference.¹⁰⁵

In what constitutes a rare admission of fundamental crisis by a medium that represents the North, *Trust* submits that a structural problem that results in widespread dissatisfaction afflicts Nigeria:

The current cries for restructuring or sovereign national conference by sections of the Nigerian federation is apparently a derivative of the *patriotic desires* of the people to realise self-determination and freedom to develop after having lived together since 1914. These years of the *Nigerian alliance* did not seem to augur well for either of *the conglomeration*....¹⁰⁶ (Emphasis added).

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ “Towards a Northern Nigeria Federation”, lead comment, *WT*, March 24-30, 2000: 15.

In the editorial which echoes Bello's statement regarding "the mistakes of 1914", the *Trust* goes further than Bello – who had said, when he made the statement, that he wished to go no further than that. Contrary to the narratives of the north as a "leech" feeding off the rest of the country, as *TELL* alleges, *Trust* argues that it is the north that has made the most of the sacrifices for the rest of the country.

From the 1950s to date, the North has always played the role of the absorber of the shocks of the Nigerian federation. The Northern leadership¹⁰⁷ at great expenses and risks has contained agitations especially from the South-West....¹⁰⁸ (Emphasis added)

The weekly elaborates on this:

One pertinent question is who really is benefiting more from the logjam called Nigeria? Politically the South has persecuted Northerners in government since independence. They have been responsible for the collapse of all regimes from Balewa to Abacha. They define moments and situations. They have since become umpires of doom and never say or see anything good in and from the North be it a *Christian or a Muslim*¹⁰⁹ (emphasis added).

¹⁰⁷ Which *TELL* says has "held the country to ransom for several decades", "Sharia Akbar..." op. cit.

¹⁰⁸ "Towards a Northern Nigerian Federation", op. cit.

¹⁰⁹ This is an attempt to *unify* all Northerners irrespective of religion, against the South. Ibid.

Where *TELL* describes "power shift" as "grudging concession" by the North out of sheer necessity and *self*-presentation of the northern establishment,¹¹⁰ *Trust* argues that it was an "undemocratic act."

They (Southerners) forced the Northern political class to *undemocratically* relinquish power through their propaganda machines that were ironically aided at formation or even bankrolled by the same Northern elite and establishment...¹¹¹ (Emphasis added)

However, obviously irked by the loss of power to the South, *Trust* states that Nigeria should either revert to *status quo ante* or disintegrate. The weekly completely opposes "restructuring" which will perhaps permanently disable the northern establishment, which it represents. The magazine argues that the proposed SNC can only hold if it will lead to the disintegration of the "unholy alliance" that is Nigeria:

*The Nigerian national question is unending and the contradictions among the peoples are increasingly assuming primacy. The leadership is doing a lot of disservice to the people by continuously shying away from addressing the very roots of the national calamities... (A) national sovereign conference will only be relevant if it will have as its focus, the dismemberment of this unholy alliance of incompatibles. The question of restructuring does not arise*¹¹² (emphasis added).

¹¹⁰ "The North Fights Back", op. cit.

¹¹¹ "Towards a Northern Nigerian Federation", op. cit.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

The *Express* disagrees with *Trust* on which section bore the greatest burden for Nigeria's oneness. Against the backdrop of the efforts since the 1914 amalgamation to make Nigeria one, *Express* submits:

In the South-East, especially among the Igbos,¹¹³ the *acute domination, suppression and marginalisation* Nigeria is known to be visiting on some segments of her citizenry have been *unspeakably pronounced*. The Igbos bore the greater part of the brunt in keeping Nigeria one since the end of the war, the Igbos have been the butt of much of the ethnic and religious violence in Nigeria¹¹⁴ (emphasis added).

The paper argues that it is against the backdrop of the recent attacks on the Igbo in Kaduna that the five governors of the South-East states of Abia, Anambra, Enugu, Imo and Ebonyi states demanded for "confederation as the only political arrangement that can ensure Nigeria's continuing survival as a united and indivisible country", while calling on their people to retaliate attacks on them. The demands, *Express* advances, has also been made in the South-West, and the South-South:

Nobody needs to be told that Nigerian federalism has been tragically defective... if we still sincerely believe in *the possibilities of a united and indivisible Nigeria*, there cannot be an attractive alternative to a confederal

¹¹³ The *PE* prefers a "South-East" that subsumes the South-South, otherwise there would have been no need to mention the Igbo once reference has been made to its synonym, the South-East.

¹¹⁴ "For a Confederal Nigeria" editorial, *PE*, March 15 2000: 8.

Nigeria which can come into being through a national conference, sovereign or otherwise¹¹⁵ (emphasis added).

While this betrays the uncertainty of the *Express* on how to proceed, in that it had earlier sanctioned national conference, then opposed it because it is "vitiating by the existence of a popularly elected National Assembly" only to reaffirm its importance here, the editorial and the one that follows it¹¹⁶ exemplify the defence of Igbo position by the paper. But *Trust* will have none of such arrangement as confederation:

The question of restructuring does not arise. The clamour for a confederation is simply an advancement of those Nigerians who want to eat their cake and have it. *The basis of the alliance has been shaken to its roots....* Since it is the *genuine desire* of the people to go their ways, so let it be¹¹⁷ (emphasis added).

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ "Obasanjo and Confederation", editorial, *PE*, March 20 2000: 9.

¹¹⁷ "Towards a Northern Nigerian Federation", *op. cit.*

The reference to the "basis of the alliance" gives echoes of Gowon's inaugural statement where he said in 1966 that "the basis of unity is no longer there."

The *Express* disagrees with *Trust's* interpretation of the confederal call. The paper argues that,

The call for confederalism is only a symptom of a more fundamental systematic failure. To quarrel with the former rather than the latter which caused it is to chase shadows in name of statecraft.¹¹⁸

But Mohammed Sani Dutinma, writing in the important column, *Inside Politics*, in *Trust* agrees with the confederation call. For him it is good for the North:

There is nothing wrong with confederation. Was it not at a confederal level that the North produced the first political class and leadership that could not be equalled today... Why then should we continue to cling to a union where we are only tolerated and regarded as parasites...?¹¹⁹

As to President Obasanjo who described the call for confederation as both "unpatriotic and mischievous," *Express* states:

(The President) would (...) be guilty of naivety if he remains insensitive to the historical circumstances that induce sections of this country to define their posture towards the Nigerian Federal Republic. *The Igbos have had the strongest faith in Nigerian unity.* They easily act

¹¹⁸ "Obasanjo and Confederation", op. cit

¹¹⁹ "North: The Party if Over", *Inside Politics, WT*, Mar. 31-Apr. 6 2000: 37.

out this faith by quickly making any part of this country they go to, their home. And yet periodically, in the history of this country, the Igbos have had to pay dearly for their faith in one Nigeria¹²⁰ (emphasis added).

Inside Politics avers that the call by Igbo governors and their kinsmen to retaliate when attacked by other Nigerians is not surprising given the antecedents of "Igbo tribal leadership beginning with the January 15th 1966 bloody military coup," which 'game plan' was elimination of Northern and Yoruba leaders to pave way for imposition of Igbo hegemony over Nigeria:¹²¹

When that scheme failed (...) the Igbos rebelled and seceded to form the so-called Republic of Biafra. This was *crushed* after a bloody civil war. It appears that history is repeating itself. This time five governors are playing the *ignoble* roles of the five majors in the 1966 *infamy*. This time around the "no victor, no vanquished" slogan will not apply. The vanquished will be crushed to rise no more to afflict Nigeria's body-politic....¹²²

The *Guardian* argues that it is only if all interest groups and centres of influence come together that the problems of Nigeria can be solved. The crises in the country, the paper adds only prove that "all is not well with the realm."¹²³

A lasting, long term solution can only be found through the concerted effort of a variety of interest and centres of

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ "From the Five Majors to the Five Governors?" *Inside Politics*, *WT*, Mar. 31-Apr. 6, 2000: 37.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ 'Communal Clashes: Beyond Crisis Management', editorial, *TG*, Aug. 1999: 20.

influence within the Nigerian polity. The difficulty in mobilising such adverse interests and power centres for a concerted response is, itself, a problem which *underlines more deep-rooted dysfunctions in our nation-building efforts*¹²⁴ (emphasis added).

Like *TELL* and *Express* and unlike, *Trust*, *Guardian* avers that, "restructuring is the only way to save the Nigerian nation":

The opportunity for *national restructuring must be seized in good spirit* and with sincerity by all stakeholders, rather than continue in the pretence that we are already experiencing genuine democracy, and given efficient governance, we should simply allow sleeping dogs to lie¹²⁵ (emphasis added).

Express strengthens the argument:

To postpone this badly needed restructuring is to condemn the Nigerian political experiment to continuous instability. *The choice before the nation is clear*. It is either true federalism or confederation¹²⁶ (emphasis added).

The one and only way to "let sleeping dogs lie" and the only "clear choice" for the *Trust* is to go back to pre-1914 structure of a united North and its other, the South. *Trust* reaffirms the unity of "one North", in spite of efforts to fractionalise it by the "Lagos Ibadan" press:

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ "The Truth About Nigeria", editorial, *PE*, Mar. 27 2000: 8.

It is not true that relations between different groups in the North is antagonistic. Even the Sharia issue that is *being used by the Lagos-Ibadan press axis as a tool for creating disaffection so that they (the South) may have their way in the diabolic scheme of perpetuating hegemony and holding onto both the political and economic power* is not as unresolvable (sic) as it is portrayed¹²⁷.

The weekly would seem to suggest here that the Sharia matter could be sacrificed at the alter of Northern unity against "Southern diabolical scheme." *TELL* restates this narrative that *Trust* alleges of creating disaffection among northern groups:

The political clique which wants to say goodbye to Nigeria may not have it that easy. Increasingly, the Middle-Belt a largely Christian area, may not be willing to be a part of one monolithic North.¹²⁸

The *Express* believes that it is precisely the unity of the Southern main groups, the Yoruba and Igbo that scares the North:

This unity has ordinarily put the North off and exposed its position. This is because in the event that the restructuring really takes places (sic), the centre, which had since 1966 enjoyed the centrally collected revenue will be weakened. Indeed, the North is more exposed in this than any other region.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ "Towards a Northern Nigerian Federation", op. cit.

¹²⁸ "A Dangerously Agenda", cover, *TELL*, Mar. 20 2000.

¹²⁹ "Confederacy – East/West Reviews the Aburi Accord", magazine, *PE*, March 25 2000: 11.

Trust advances that after reverting to the pre-1914 structure each of the two regions should then hold sovereign national conference to "determine what they want to do with themselves"¹³⁰ and perhaps rectify the mistake of 1914. This not only "makes more sense"¹³¹ but it is in the best interest of the North:

The North can only realise its potentials and develop when it ceases to be a part of the present arrangement. A Northern Nigerian federation will be *viable* and within the first 10 years of existence be able to attain more than 90% literacy level... *Never mind the sea*. It is only a lazy person that relies on sea-ports¹³² (emphasis added).

The reference to the *viability* of the North, its capacity to produce 90% literacy rate and to survive without access to the sea all answer to contrary position stated throughout the history of the *Nigerian narrative* by southern press.

For all the longish narrative by the *Trust* and the events that provoked it, *TELL* asks if "break up is imminent" as "Northern leaders threaten Nigeria."¹³³ The magazine takes some symbol of this North and savages their positions:

Crises always separate *real statesmen* from the pretenders to that august status.... Shehu Shagari was the first elected executive president of the country... But

¹³⁰ "Towards a Northern Nigerian Federation", op. cit.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ "Break-Up Imminent? Northern Leaders Threaten Nigeria", cover story, Mar. 20 2000.

since (...) *Northern army officers* (...) sacked his government in a coup (...) Shagari's metamorphosis from a *national leader to a section and ethnic leader* has been swift and steady. He rarely expresses his views on national issues in public, and when he does, it is mainly to defend the so-called Northern interests.... (General Muhammed) Buhari's disposition and position (...) are no different from those of Shagari¹³⁴ (emphasis added).

Trust seems to return the salvo as Bola Ige, the Minister of Power and Steel is described as self-professed bastion of Yoruba interests and "apostle of ethnic hatred."¹³⁵

TELL goes on to attempt to *prove* the "bad faith" of the Northern leaders:

Between October 1 1979 and May 29 1999, all the heads of state were Northerners and Muslims¹³⁶ beginning from Shagari himself. None of them thought then that the priority of their people was a pure, unadulterated Sharia. Which of course, clearly shows that the on-going Sharia crisis is all about politics and the control of power. The "wrong person" is occupying Aso Rock. And the *control of the seat of federal power is the exclusive preserve of Northern Muslims*, as Maitama Sule (...) once implied in his *weird treatise* on the relative strength of the three major ethnic nationalities¹³⁷ (emphasis added).

¹³⁴ "From the Editor", *TELL*, Mar 20 2000.

¹³⁵ "G.G. Darah's Diatribe and Ethno-Religious Hatred, lead comment, *WT*, Mar. 3, Mar. 31-Apr. 6 2000: 1

¹³⁶ *TELL* has never accepted that Ernest Shonekan was a head of state and always discountenances the 84 days he sent in office as Head of Interim National Government (ING). Shonekan is Yoruba and a Christian.

¹³⁷ "From the Editor", *TELL*, Mar. 20 2000.

The "Arewa Republic" which *TELL* says Northern political "clique" is planning to set up is one peopled by "a decrepit army of hungry street urchin" the *almajiris*.¹³⁸ The "clique" has decided on this path which *Trust* advocates, *TELL* argues, because Obasanjo has blocked "their continued sucking of filthy lucre and the spoils of office":¹³⁹

Because the political clique is at the moment, in the wilderness, where it is unable to harvest the trapping and panoply of power, any longer, it is unable to come to terms with the Obasanjo presidency.¹⁴⁰

Contrary to the "paradise for the masses" that *Trust* says the "Arewa Republic" or "Northern Nigerian Federation" would be with 90 percent literacy within 10 years, *TELL* states that 19 out of the 20 *almajiris* in the north – who are used to foment trouble -- "would go through a Hobbesian life that is short, nasty and brutish."¹⁴¹ Apart from that:

By the latest figures from the Federal Office of Statistics, FOS, the core Northern states have the highest under-five mortality rates, shortest life expectancy rates and highest population per medical doctor ... They have the lowest literacy levels, lack access to portable water supply, good toilet systems, electricity, and proper refuse disposal, and, have the *weakest capability to*

¹³⁸ "The Other Side of Sharia", *TELL*, Mar. 20 2000: 17.

¹³⁹ "A Dangerous Agenda", cover story, *TELL*, op. cit.: 14.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ "The Other Side of Sharia", op. cit.

*generate any sort of revenue internally*¹⁴² (emphasis added).

This is precisely the situation that *Trust* promises will be reversed in the "Northern Nigerian Federation" while it argues that "it is not true that relations between different groups in the North is antagonistic," *TELL* insists that the Hausa-Fulani North has lost the Middle-Belt and other non-Hausa Fulani because of the former's "ethnic plot... to continue their domination of the region".¹⁴³ Comments the magazine:

The history of events since the amalgamation of Nigeria (...) appears to lay credence to this claim. The "core" North has always sought to be the dominant factor in the country's politics... This historical antecedent is one of the reasons people say the Hausa-Fulani have continued to *believe* that they are in the *majority*. But *all that fallacy is about to stop*....¹⁴⁴ All the groups are calling for an end to *internal colonisation* by the "core North", which they accuse of perpetually making their people "hewers of wood and drawers of water."¹⁴⁵

In a move to counter virtually every strand of the narrative of power in rival narratives, how meanings are marshalled in the service of the relations of domination

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ "The Middle Belt Revolt", cover, *TELL*, Mar. 27 2000: 20.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ "Defusing the Sharia Bomb", cover story, *TELL*, Apr. 17 2000: 12.

comes out in bold relief. As to the claim in the *Trust* that "we (Northerners) fought a 30-months (sic) civil war just to keep the nation"¹⁴⁶ together, *TELL* reports that:

To show their *deep-seated grievances* nurtured by several years of marginalisation, (Middle-Belt) groups recalled that the bulk of their sons in the military fought the Nigerian civil war. At the end of that war, their sons were not given the desired ranks while *Northern officers* became *generals without firing a single bullet or commanding any troops*¹⁴⁷ (emphasis added).

Trust considers this "onslaught" crucial enough for a cover story:

Of late, the media have been awash with reports of various groups of political elite *in the North* who are championing the cause of a new identity for their people known as the Middle-Belt. The pith of this identity is the repudiation of the Far North and a desire to weld the distinct religious and ethnic minority groups in the *Near North* and encourage them to *fancy themselves as one people*¹⁴⁸ (emphasis added).

Where the mouthpiece of the Far North, *Trust* could not wish away the existence of this "Near North," it dissembles it. It notes that those making such claims to speak for the people in Benue, Plateau, Adamawa, Taraba, Kogi, Kwara, Niger, Nasarrawa and southern parts of Kebbi, Borno and Yobe states need to be questioned:

¹⁴⁶ "The North: Where DO We Stand?" *WT*, op. cit.

¹⁴⁷ "Defusing the Sharia Bomb", op. cit.

¹⁴⁸ "Middle Belt: One 'Region', Many Voices", cover story, *WT*, June 23-29 2000. See also, "Middle-Belt is Meaningless", lead comment, *WT*, Apr. 28-May 4 2000: 13-14.

(D)oes everybody in these areas share the sentiments of a Middle Belt cause? What exactly is the Middle-Belt? What is the motivation behind its resurgence? Are the pronouncements of the standard bearers of the Middle Belt truly representative of the opinions and feelings of the *disparate ethnic and religious groups* that populate the area¹⁴⁹ (emphasis added).

Trust declares that it has found, in confronting these questions, that "the people of the place that is usually referred to as the Middle-Belt are not united in their desire for a separate, independent identity"¹⁵⁰ and that in any case the "media hype",¹⁵¹ such as that of *TELL*, ostensibly, that accompanied the resurgence of the Middle-Belt agitation has led to the loss of the "real meaning and origins of the concept."¹⁵²

Regarding what *Express* gleefully announced as the revisit of Aburi accord by the West and the East over a newfound alliance on "confederation," *Trust's* "Inside Politics" columnist wishes them well, uniting the "true northerners" in the Middle Belt with the core North against this West-East understanding:

Good luck to the Yorubas, and their *newly-found confederate allies* east of the River Niger. The *rest of us*, so-called "*Middle Belters*" *inclusive* will remain Nigerians to realise the dream of a *great country* on the continent

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

of Africa... The *quislings* and *Yoruba lackeys* who do not want to be *addressed as Northerners* should pack their bag and baggage and go to the lands of their new found "friends" or *masters* in *Oduduwa land* or the *truncated New Biafra*¹⁵³ (emphasis added).

Elder statesman and leader of NADECO, Anthony Enahoro's move to re-organise the vanguard of pro-SNC elements attracts the attention of opposing narrative. While *Express* describes him as "a hero of Nigerian nationalism",¹⁵⁴ *Trust* says he is a "77-year-old former exile"¹⁵⁵ and "the big masquerade of ethnic federalism." And those who are joining the Enahoro "bandwagon" from the North, *Trust* avers "do not understand the complexities of life in the Savannah" It submits therefore that:

No one is begging anyone to be a Northerner. The choice for any *sensible politician* is dictated by hard realities. *The North is big enough to survive such defections*¹⁵⁶ (emphasis added).

For the avoidance of doubt, the weekly then states that once the cohesion of the North breaks, that will be the end of Nigeria:

But let nobody deceive himself about the *survival of this country* once the North as we know it breaks up into wrangling units. It was a *united and resolute nation* by

¹⁵³ "Ooni's Outburst", *Inside Politics*, *WT*, May 12-18 2000: 27.

¹⁵⁴ "For a Confederal Nigeria", *PE*, *op. cit.*

¹⁵⁵ "One North or Anarchy", front-page comment, *WT*, April 21-27 2000.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

the North that defeated Biafra and kept *Nigeria one*... If the North holds together, the clamour for ethnic autonomy will *begin and die* on the pages of *Lagos newspapers*. And poor, old Enahoro may perhaps permit himself to quietly retire to Uromi for *ultimate appointment with his maker*¹⁵⁷ (emphasis added).

With this what is in the interest of a group or at best a section of the country is posited as being in the interest of all.

Given the un-abating narratives of Hausa-Fulani "threat" to the rest of Nigerian which *TELL* captures as "Hausa-Fulani assertion of a divine right to rule," and the consequent attacks on the group, Muhammad Sammani, writing in *Trust*, describes the Hausa-Fulani as an "endangered" group, because:

Virtually every ethnic group directly or indirectly attribute(s) misfortunes and disadvantages to one ethnic group – Hausa-Fulani.¹⁵⁸ No ethnic group receives the seemingly endless bastion (sic), intimidation, harassment, insults and abuses like the Hausa-Fulani.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Even the idea of Hausa-Fulani as a single ethnic group is problematic. It is largely a political construct as Peter Ekeh argues. The Hausa and Fulani are two separate groups that have fused in the power configuration. Ekeh, Peter P., "Political Minorities and Historically-Dominant Minorities in Nigerian History and Politics", Oyeleye, Oyediran, ed. *Governance and Development in Nigeria*, Ibadan: Oyediran Consult, 1996: 33-63. Is'haq Moddibo Kawo perhaps points in his own piece on the matter where he refers to "Fulani people" and not "Hausa-Fulani", "G.G. Darah's Diatribe", op. cit.

¹⁵⁹ "Endangered Hausa-Fulani", *Inside Politics*, *WT*, April 7-13 2000: 34.

In spite of the fact that they "are the targets of attack at the slightest provocation,"¹⁶⁰ the Hausa-Fulani are constructed as "the most liberal ethnic group in (Nigeria) who most often (...) only hold the "cow" while the others milk it."¹⁶¹ Every group in its narratives is convinced that it is at the receiving end of an unfair deal and that others are the beneficiaries of its sacrifice, as the narratives of the other groups have also shown.

Perhaps what best reflects the glorification of a collective past in an attempt to narrate the present and confront the future is the narrative of the Nigeria's wasted years" by *Guardian*. All the clashing narratives of deep-seated divisions – as we have shown in the pre-independence days – are *erased* in the narration of a glorious past:

The founding nationalists had helped to inspire (...) optimism by speaking *collectively* of the *possibility of a great nation* where ethnic pluralism would constitute a source of strength, and a federalist arrangement to liberate the potentials of the constituent units of the multi-ethnic, multi-national country. The euphoria seemed justifiable because indeed Nigeria is a *blessed nation*, endowed as it is with human and natural resources of the highest quality.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² "Nigeria: The Wasted Years", editorial, *TG*, October 1 1999.

But this "glorious" past has been marred by contemporary happenings:

Today, sectarian identity is as sharp as a newly acquired machete, as each group resides (sic) out of the centre to the ethnic periphery. Various social groups are questioning the basis of the *Nigerian union*¹⁶³ (emphasis added).

3. Conclusion

As the foregoing narratives show, the narratives of this era are only a *rehash* of narratives of the past, reinvented and rearticulated in the service of resurgent realities and new power configurations. As manifestations of the relations of domination themselves, these narratives follow, react to, reconstruct and deconstruct the contours of these relations which they service.

This chapter concludes the empirical contexts through which this work attempts to explicate the construction of meaning in the service or disservice of power. What remains is to draw conclusive lessons from the study.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION: THE SPACE AND LIMITS OF GRAND NARRATIVE

A narrative that ends, is without a future
- Joshua Foa Dienstag, (*Dancing in Chains*, 1997)

1. Introduction

This last Chapter of the thesis connects the findings of the research to its theoretical, methodological and practical implications and the basis for further research. It also underscores the dynamics of the relations of domination as they are expressive in a major institution in the Nigerian case, the press, and how this has impacted on the *idea* and *ideal* of the *Nigerian nation*:

2. Conclusion

In contemporary times, the analysis of ideology and the problems associated with this analysis in modern society have become central to social and political theory.¹ This work, based on a particular ontological and epistemological background, analyses the narratives in the press on the idea of a Nigerian meta-nation within the context of the reformulation of ideology defined sharply as *meaning in the service or disservice* of power. The research studies symbolic forms in the

¹ Thompson, John B. *Ideology and Modern Culture*, op. cit.: 74.

press through the context of the structured political relations, which the employment and deployment of symbolic forms, in specific circumstances, create, nourish, support and reproduce² or counteract, deconstruct, deform and subvert. Essentially, the work is about the intersection of meaning and power viewed through the centrality of the press in the political process of nation building or *nation-destroying*.³

The study examines the ways in which these symbolic forms/modes legitimise, dissimulate, unify, fragment, and/or reify the relations of domination, even though these are not the only ways in which symbolic forms intersect with power. There is therefore, the need for further research into the other ways in which symbolic forms can and do connect with power.

The analysis of the modes touches the 'nerve of power', given the fact that these narratives highlight those who (or are believed to) benefit most and those who (or are believed to) benefit least from the construction of a (Nigerian) grand nation throughout its history and how the disparate groups and nations negotiate, in their narratives, their opportunities and the injustices inflicted on them.

² Ibid: 7.

³ It can be argued that where a grand nation is to be successfully created, there is the need for the 'destruction' of the existing nations along ethnic lines.

The study started out by posing this question: Is there a Nigerian nation in the narratives of the Nigerian press? This question does not admit of a clear-cut 'yes' or 'no' answer.

First, this work contests the assumption, in much of the literature, that ideology functions as a kind of 'social cement', a glue that binds people in a collectively shared values and norms. The study shows that specific social-historical circumstances determine the meaning, parameters and salience of nation (as ethnic group) and grand nation (the Nigerian nation) in the narratives of the Nigerian press.

In their interpretation and articulation of the notion of nation, the Nigerian newspapers and news magazines cross and transverse the register from the notion of nation as country, state or ethnic group (Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa, Efik, Fulani, Tiv, etc.) or ethnic-amalgam (Hausa-Fulani) to political region (North, West, East) and the Nigerian Union (or *nation-of-aspiration*).

The study finds that, in their narratives of power the Nigerian press (newspapers and newsmagazines) use the nation as it is expedient in the context, whether as a (Nigerian) grand nation that already exists, or as a (ethnic or sub-) nation – such as Igbo nation, Yoruba nation, etc. Even these *ethnic* nations are contested as some limit its frontiers and others even contest its existence in history.

It is the dynamics of the relations of domination at each point, as the study reveals, that condition which of the contesting nations are glorified and sanctified.

Yet, in all of the narratives, clearly the Nigerian grand nation, even where it is discursively combated, subverted and rubbished, is still taken as an *ideal*, but a *conditional* ideal. The press exhibited – in the instances studied from the 1950s to the first year of the 21st century – a tendency towards affirming the primacy of the Nigerian nation *if and where* it serves *common* interests defined primarily by the contending narratives in the light of the interests they serve. Thus, a Nigerian grand narrative exists to the extent to which it serves the interests of the power-groups.

Theoretically, the study points to an important addition to the reformulation of ideology as *meaning in the serve of power*. It argues that since it is admitted that contradiction is intrinsic to ideology, it then must be redefined as *meaning in the service or disservice of power*. In the relations of domination, which are "systematically asymmetrical", meaning serves to establish, nourish and sustain relations of domination in particular instances for the dominant, as much as it is used to counteract, subvert or deform the relations of domination by the subordinate.

The work also contributes to the theory of narrative by affirming the centrality of narrative in the construction of nation. It is argued that in the attempt to construct

supra, meta or grand nations in the African post colony, the press constitute the major terrain for the *performance*, and the discourses that are geared towards this as much as the grand-nation itself constitutes a narrative that mobilizes or demobilizes meaning in the interest of power. Further research will however be needed to explicate this theoretical position in other contexts in the continent.

This study confirms the position in extant analysis of the nation that emphasises the *transition* that the nation witnesses which connects its past and present to the future; and the emotive and emotional attachment that is central to nation-definition. *A nation*, this study shows, *is a filiation that is expressive in narratives*. Narratives affiliate nation to particular interests. Consequently, a narrative constitutes either a confirmation or a negation of affiliation to particular (grand) nation.

However, there is need for further research that transposes and tests this thesis in other terrains of ideological expressions like the arts, literature, music, folklore and others.

At the level of practice, this study puts in bold relief, the role of the press in igniting, exacerbating and perpetuating difference, crisis and hatred. By emphasising divisive factors and tendencies where the interests they represent are compromised

and promoting particular versions of 'unity' only where their interests are served, the press help to subvert the possibilities of national unity.

The study points strongly to the absence of what is described as "overriding national interest" in the pursuit and protection of set agenda through press narratives. Even where it is excusable that the press pursue such agenda – largely sectional, where not personal and selfish – for which the newspapers and news magazines are set up, the discourses of passionate hatred that override the clashing narratives of power, occlude national conciliation and reconciliation. It is expected that this study will afford media practitioners the opportunity to view broadly the contours of media narrations spanning the history of the Nigerian Union and how these narratives have helped in setting the parameters (and worsening them) for the divisive politics that is triumphant in the Nigerian state. In their accusations against one another, the newspapers and news magazines point to the need for a rethink in the narration of the possibilities of a nation-of-aspiration (the Nigerian nation).

It is apparent here that unless the press in the narrative of national crisis desist from using the lexicon that expresses ethnic hatred and ethnic slurs, the nation-of-aspiration to which the press sometimes point would be a pipe dream.

What is left to be said is that, in this analysis of the narratives in the press, the subject matter does not admit of "incontestable demonstration". As Thompson succinctly puts it, "we are in the realm of shifting sense and relative inequalities, of ambiguity and word-play, of different degrees of opportunities and accessibility, of deception and self-deception, of the concealment of social relations and of the concealment of the very process of concealment".⁴ Therefore, it is impossible to provide an analysis that cannot be contested. The interpretation of symbolic forms in the press that is carried out in this work is not above all suspicion. The theoretical perspective that informs this work is not 'external to social facts' in the same way that a 'hypothesis is external to observable events'. As Habermas articulates it, "if theory formation must be linked to the categorical formation of the object domain, theoretical perspectives are no longer external to social facts in the same way that hypotheses are external to the observable events through which they can be falsified".⁵ It is however, unclear whether under this kind of circumstance, theory does not also become an explication of contexts of meaning.⁶

⁴ Ibid: 71.

⁵ Habermas, *On the Logic of the Social Sciences*, op. cit: 94.

⁶ Ibid.

Against this backcloth, the preceding analysis of the creative construction of *possible meanings* admits of further re-interpretation. There are no final interpretations, particularly in the *pre-interpreted* domain of symbolic forms, which constantly requires re-interpretation. As Mannheim argues, "history as history is unintelligible unless certain of its aspects are emphasised in contrast to others. The selection and accentuation of certain aspects of historical totality may be regarded as the first step in the direction, which ultimately leads to an evaluative procedure and to ontological judgement".⁷ Clashing interpretations are as inevitable as clashing narratives.

⁷ Mannheim, Karl, *Ideology and Utopia*, Louis Wirth and Edward Shils (trans.) New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1936: 93-94.

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