COMMUNICATING AN IMPLOSION: SIGNS AND WANDER, POPULAR CULTURE AND THE CRUMBLING OF EMPIRE

Delivered by

Nosa Owens-Ibie, PhD
Professor of Communication, Media and Development
Caleb University,
Imota, Lagos

Caleb University
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The Vice-Chancellor, 
Acting Registrar, 
Deputy Bursar, 
Deans of Colleges, 
Staff, students and Friends of Caleb University, 
Distinguished Guests, 
Gentlemen of the Press, 
Ladies and Gentlemen

This is the day the Lord has made and my family and I are rejoicing and are glad in it. It is indeed historic that this is the maiden Inaugural Lecture in this university which is now six years old and only last month turned out its second set of graduates.

I feel privileged for this opportunity, especially because the Department of Mass Communication is turning out its first set of graduates in June 2013 and it has pleased God to make me lead the process of producing a set of change agents in mass communication. The mass communication programme has been re-engineered with the four sequences of Broadcasting, Cinematography and Film, Print, and Public Relations and Advertising. The curriculum accommodates elements of new media and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and would keep evolving to make the programme and its products globally competitive. The courses are a distillation of global and local best practices in academic and professional development with a target of producing rounded graduates who are flexible and equipped to compete anywhere in the world. Our slogan “On the Way to the Top” is a message with a mission and a mission with a message. Already and as you may have observed on your way to this venue, construction work has started on the Idowu Sobowale School of Communication which given our current pace of developments in the programme and department is set to be a reference point in communication studies nationally continentally and globally.

Once again, let me thank the Vice-Chancellor for giving me this platform to share a few thoughts.
Unfolding Plot

One of our daughters is a fan of Manchester United and gladly shows off the club’s logo on her laptop while when there is a scream from the living room; chances are that the other who is an unrepentant fan of Chelsea is either applauding a Didier Drogba (and now Frank Lampard or Demba Ba) stunner or wondering at some other point why Robert Di Matteo would be replaced by a Rafael Benitez who did not leave the Premier League and Liverpool in a blaze of glory just some seasons earlier and was on his return initially making the Blues all blue.

At Caleb University, Tottenham Hotspur was a tough nut in the campus league but the last laugh belonged to AC Milan, not Enyimba or Bendel Insurance. The fans of the Big Leagues all appear united in appreciating the talent of a mesmerizing Lionel Messi who is not in a hurry to let go of his World No. 1 rating and true to his name can always be counted on to leave the records of whatever club his FC Barcelona confronts in a messy state while also making a mess of the reputation of coaches. The same Nigerian teams producing the stars that make their leagues tick in Europe are however not quite in contention in the consciousness of this unique generation with unique fascinations.

The football story reflects in its trajectory an unfolding intricate but somewhat testy scenario. Within its rubrics are concepts like globalization, Americanization, popular culture, communication, values and influence all dovetailing in the logic of empire whether physical, mental or spiritual. In its centenary the inevitable question arises on if Nigeria is a developing country, one with arrested development or if there is a resolvable quagmire if it is agreed that this resource-rich country’s potential is too fundamental not to be realised.

A Path Called Globalization

The penetrative force of globalization is the ultimate barrier breaker. Adesoji (2006: 4) sees it symbolized by its capacity to integrate societies from the physical to the realm of ideas. It compresses the world and intensifies consciousness with individual identities assuming more complex dimensions (Robertson, 1998: 8). Globalization empowers universal commonalities and represents a paradoxical force simultaneously restraining, and strengthening social and other identities. Paul Valery sees nothing happening in the world anymore without others being part of moulding it, while Hannah Arendt says that traditions and other past histories are now threatened with irrelevance (see Robertson, 1998: 48). Local cultures are believed to be
undermined by this force. In this process, values are diffused so much that democracy and human rights have become catch phrases in remote hamlets in unlikely continents (Globalization 101: 3).

Nyamnjoh (2004: 41-48) credits globalization with turning individuals into “veritable melting pots of plurality and diversity” creating through a process of cultural alienation an African elite who exemplify the paradox of needing what they do not know and knowing what they don’t need. In addition to this, McQuail (2010: 267) identifies other cultural effects of globalization to include cultural synchronization, hybridization and territorialisation, the increase in multiculturalism and transmission of cultural symbols.

With the internet as the torch bearer of the new de-territorialization order, the state is restructuring (Shah, 2009: 9, 12) in a mainstreaming frenzy with some nation states appearing to be in better control of some elements than others. In Nigeria, the statistics on internet access is instructive. The 45,039,711 internet users constituting 32.2% of the continental total and about a third of the country’s estimated population, 4,369,740 on Facebook by 2011 had risen to 48,366,179 Internet users for June 30, 2012 or 28.4% of the population, 6,630,200 Facebook users by December 31, 2012, and 3.9% penetration rate (Internet Users…, 2013). This makes Nigeria a case study of a core and emerging market (Telecommunications…Usage, 2012).

The mass media in Nigeria on their part represent a theatre for replaying what Owens-Ibie (2000: 62-63) describes as the “unfolding script of globalization”, displaying its contradictions in the process as their embrace of market forces entrench them the more within the global orbit. Statistics on media reach in Nigeria better illuminate this scenario with more than 140 terrestrial television stations (including private networks, 36 state-owned stations, 12 private stations and over three Direct-to-Home platforms), more than 137 radio stations (41 Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria [FRCN] stations, 63 owned by state governments, 41 privately owned, two owned by communities/universities), more than 68 magazine titles and 78 newspapers, and more than 124 outdoor companies managing over 21,000 billboards in the country. Media penetration among the adult population is 79.9% [Television], 82.6% [Radio], 27.4% [Newspaper], 21.0% [Magazine], 66.9% [Out-of-Home] and 22.1% [Internet] (Media Reach Nigeria, 2009). There is a progression especially for broadcast stations compared to the figures provided by Akinfeleye (2003: Annex).
While these figures keep changing, there are criticisms on the content on offer in these media (Ajeluorou, 2010). The media just like globalization are themselves outcomes of the elements that have characterised and keep defining their future. These include colonialism, commerce, technology, telecommunications, advertising, interdependence, imbalances and diplomatic relations (McQuail, 2010: 250).

The Media are Global

The globalisation debate has an ally in discourse on global media which from one perspective are regarded as “messiah” and major purveyors of Western culture promoting values like representative democracy, and women and minority rights. Global media as “menace” are seen as not quite promoting diversity (Demers, 1999: 4-5; Rachty and Sabat, undated: 72-73).

By the way they are configured; global media are instruments of a unidirectional flow of content and perspectives (Owens-Ibie & Ogwezzy, 2009: 134) with Mowlana (1980: 27) documenting Europe and the United States of America as the major focus of such content. Although this trend is corroborated by Garbo (undated: 105) the tendency of national media to filter out development-related information in preference for violence is highlighted. Their role in fostering Western values also comes under scrutiny (Ansah, 1988: 14).

International broadcasting presents a platform for assessing the impact of such global media. Bumpus and Skelt (undated: 97) assert that the BBC and Radio Moscow made major impact in Europe during the World War, while Germany’s broadcasts achieved results with minorities in Hungary, Romania and Poland. The adoption and sustenance of dominant languages as lingua franca in territories is seen as a triumph of cross-cultural broadcasting (Contreras, 1976: 20). The global gains by the English language can also be seen as a triumph for intensive global media activity.

In a study of students in South Africa, Pepler (2003) found that only a few students could name the country’s Minister for Finance, while the same students knew the slogan for Nike. The overpowering image of women in the media has through the same process crystallized over the years with a two-dimensional image based on their sex appeal and domestic roles (Ceulemans and Fauconnier, 1979: 67). Such stereotypical image is discernible in other settings (Griebine,
Undated: 34). Concerns about the distortion of images of local realities ascribed to a Cable News Network (CNN) documentary on Nigeria received some news space (Oguntokun, 2009).

A Cultural Whirlpool

The manifestations of a global culture with its broad theme of liberation across boundaries and identities is premised on basic similarities in encoding reality with intertwined elements of a cluster which include leisure, consumer, youth and popular cultures (Bar-Haim, 1995: 24-25). The rise of global culture derives from the primacy of culture to societies. Mazrui (2009: 98) in affirming the significance of culture lists its functions to include “as lenses of perception”; “standard of judgement”; “means of communication”; “spring or motivation”; “basis of identity”; “ladder of stratification”; and “pattern of consumption and mode of production”. These tie culture to human existence and the capacity of humankind to live in society. It presupposes that culture is the moderator of interactions and a definer of the level of functionality in the social and other realms.

Mass culture presupposes a measure of standardization and what McQuail (1980: 22) refers to as “products manufactured solely for a mass market”. When culture is produced like industrial products and distributed in competition with local cultures, what ensues is what is called the Commodification of Culture (Baran and Davis, 2009: 334). Plato (see DeFleur, 1977: 64) had envisaged a future where children will receive ideas which are the opposite of what they ought to have grown up with and listen to just any type of story. Where individual action converge focusing on a common object outside their personal experience as a response to their needs the outcome is mass behaviour. These individuals transform into a collective which in Blumler’s classification could either be the mass, the crowd or the public, the latter being the only one of the three regarded as a healthy assembly.

The mass media are seen as active instruments in detaching the individual from their sociocultural roots, displacing high and folk culture in the process and drawing him into a vortex which in the estimation of Mills fosters “new forms of dependence” (DeFleur, 1977: 27-30). Although he refrains from attributing to the mass media the capacity to produce direct consequences, McQuail (1980: 11-13) acknowledges the capacity of the media to impact the mobilization of interest and attention. His elaboration on the role of the media includes their tendency to manipulate symbols as evident in public relations and advertising; they bypass
existing power structures and communication channels; and are instruments of influence. A Chinese narrative in fact captures how the level of freedom exercised by the media could determine the degree of democracy promoted in a society (Hong, 2002: 1-4).

But Bar-Haim (1995: 35) questions the ability of the media, especially Western media, to serve as instruments of reform either at societal or global levels. McQuail (1980: 15) alludes to this too in his contributions to isolation and rootlessness in urban settings, not allowing real participation and presenting the picture of involvement even when that may be more like an illusion. The MacBride Commission had acknowledged the need for mediated communication but also alerted on the threat it posed to the “quality and values of culture” (MacBride et al, 1980: 159). This view is echoed by Omu (1997: 192) and a key transmission belt for this is the flow of films which Contreras et al (1976: 16) believe is based on commercial considerations and not on cultural policy.

In his analysis of how broadcasting impacts social values, Silvey (1974: 312) concludes that those most susceptible to change in this equation are the bewildered and the insecure. Blake (1993: 16) in fact posits that the “rhetorical structures, traditional values and knowledge systems” of white Europe and America are in the process of this transmission propagated as the standard for human and societal existence. Mazrui (2009: 93) identifies three methods used by the West to transmit messages and images to the developing world. These are Western-style education, news and mass media and the internet. Such awareness led in the early days of television broadcasting in Nigeria through the Western Nigeria Television (WNTV) to calls for the production of authentic local programmes by the Chairman of the corporation Chief T.T. Solaru in 1961 and Engineer Teju Oyeleye, its General Manager over a decade later (Ikime, 1979: 32), given the rash of films that became the inevitable content of the station.

Americanization’s Broadway

Efforts to classify America as imperialist has been resisted by scholars like Bertrand (1987: 1) who regard the American empire as not an intentional creation but the dominant force of the twentieth century and a product of the fascination of nations who copy it due to its attractions and economic advantages.
However, there are those who see America’s rise as a carefully cultivated and nurtured process which has involved the film industry and the government. Wagnleitner (1994: 50, 55) notes that in 1938, the government in Washington D.C assumed central control of the country’s cultural exports and established within the Department of State a Division of Cultural Affairs just before the Second World War. Swann (1994: 179) notes that after 1945 this relationship remained strong. Despite the mixed results from such collaboration that the media, film and television now come in what Tunstall (1977: 273) called “American packages” is a reflection of the reach of those efforts. Hollywood became a critical part of the political transformations taking place in America (May, 1989: 125, 127). In this same process Marlboro branded with an advertising-propelled imagery that captured global imaginations transforming the cigarette of the cowboys by 1972 into the best selling in the world. A French source quoted by Bertrand (1987: 3) described this cultural warfare as targeting the head by paralyzing “without killing, conquering by slow rot” and one which obtained wealth “through the disintegration of cultures and peoples”. France Culture Minister Jack Lang in 1982 fired an indirect but obvious broadside at America for seeking to “impose a uniform culture on the whole world” (Taking Cultural…1992). Schiller (1973: 1) declared that media managers in America are involved with the creation, processing, refining and circulating information and images which determine beliefs, attitudes and behaviour and that such production of messages which do not reflect social reality is actually mind management.

In assessing Canadian television through this prism, Taras (1991: 191) discovered that it has become as much a vehicle for promoting American culture as it has been of Canadian culture, with Canadians playing a minor role in the process. In his chronicle of American cultural diplomacy, Wagnleiter (1994: 208) affirmed how national cinemas got their cues from Hollywood which defined the dominant themes. That probably explains the launch of Telesur as the Latin American cultural response to Cable News Network (CNN) and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), with Venezuela as the driving force.

The effectiveness of such initiatives at national and regional levels is better determined through research, but comments like those of a popular act like Jay Leno in 1993 concerning the global impact of American cultural programmes rankles. According to him, “We’re going to ruin your culture, just like we ruined our own.” (see Dwyer, 1994: 31). However, a June 1992 study of 16-year old school boys and girls in Poland by Wawrzychek and Mazur (1994: 21-22) while acknowledging American influence asserts that young people’s wide exposure to American
products do not necessarily eradicate their native cultural patterns. Although such patterns are being transformed, the responsibility for that transformation could be traceable to other sources in addition to America.

**Popular Trends**

Within the cluster of cultures, popular culture remains a core focus in any examination of cultural empiricism. Americanisation has a real alliance with the ramifications of culture’s popular variant.

Although as Maltby (1989: 10-19) has noted, America did not colonize the rest of the world in the 20th century, it certainly “coca-colonized” it. He was alluding to the blanketing of the world by the Coca-Cola brand. American popular culture has come to define images of what constitutes civilization. This culture he asserts has caused “intense social disruption in the Third World, inculcating new patterns of behaviour, new desires and new dissatisfactions”.

Attempts at defining culture position it as a reflection of everyday life in any society. A succinct and encompassing insight is provided by Browne (1994: 11) who describes popular culture as “of the people, by the people, for the people.” He elaborates by incorporating into its sphere “the mass media, entertainments, diversions, heroes, icons, rituals, psychology, religion.” In his defence of popular culture, Rolin (1994: 17) justifies its centrality by stating that all culture is after all consumer culture, performing the task of liberation at individual and social levels, and in relation to time and space. Culture, he notes, is social just as it is historical. He derided the doctrine of good taste, stating that “taste is dead.”

Proponents Bar-Haim (1990: 281) adds that this cultural form is fuelled by “disillusionment, frustrations, anxieties and changes effected by ideology, religion, or other belief systems.” It targets a change to the configuration or disposition of cultural power through connecting with cultures of popular culture however assert that symbols are instruments of popular culture transmission (Browne et al, 1990: 1). Such symbols are products of the context which produce them. What a nation feeds itself with therefore determine their destiny, according to Fishwick (1995: 13), quoting an 1826 statement of Jean Brillat-Savarin. Today, junk or fast food is an important part of that nourishment just like hip hop is winning over converts in unlikely

The consequence of the rise of popular culture with a heavy American slant was the approximation of American popular culture to what Todd Gatlin referred to a “global lingua franca” (see Culture…1993: 52). The media and all the artefacts of consumer culture remain effective tools in consolidating the gains of this culture, although critics of the globalization powered by popular culture speak of the ensuing product as “cultural genocide” (Globalization 101: 14) with decapitated cultures as casualties.

But while elite culture co-exist with popular culture in America with the media as allies in their promotion, the increasing access to multi-media has opened up the space for influence especially for the young (Gigli, 2004). The development of video films in Nigeria fit this mould. As Owens-Ibie (1998: 41-42) noted, while local cultures are “refined by influences which dictate the mainstreaming of values to fit global prescriptions”, the themes and plots are primed by local producers for the market and the pre-occupation, among others, with sex, intrigues, conflict, violence and fraud is overpowering. In fact, Owens-Ibie (1989: 11), concerned about the drift towards the hedonism promoted by the growing fixation with dramatic entertainment once analyzed the contest as drama versus development. A study by a parents’ group elsewhere on music television channel MTV, found that in 171 hours of programming that aired during the week of March 2004 there were “13 sexual scenes per hour” in its reality series… 32 cases of the use of foul language per hour in its music videos (see MTV, 2005).

Arulogun (1979: 29) recounts his experience in a cinema house in the Ekotedo area pre-independence where young men in jeans, cowboy hats and scarves seen in American films like Wild Wild West gathered. The area, by his account, sooner became a den of miscreants. As Owens-Ibie and Ogwezzy (2011: 214-215) found, the fascination of the young for the trappings of popular culture continues. Talk shows which allow a level of mainstreaming represent one such avenue and is growing in popularity. The battle for the audience and advertising revenue offers another platform for the promotion of popular cultural elements (Owens-Ibie, 1992: 49). In Edo land with traditional historical roots the language; dress, music and dance are being redefined by attempts at mainstreaming although aspects of the culture have survived (Owens-Ibie, 1997: 34).
Value Orientations

The culture of packaging, virtually patented by the Americans, is evident in the field of communication and journalism and has spawned derivatives rooted in global brands. One of them is what George Ritzer calls McDonaldization which is about how the principles governing the operations of the fast food chain has permeated other spheres of life. The journalistic variant of this neologism is McJournalism which is driven by market principles and in which circulation is key. The local press offers a standardized fare with similarities in formats and contents (increasingly summarized news), and technological convergence eliminates some production functions and the combination of roles and functions, and makes “multi-skilling” inevitable (Allan, 2005; Franklin, 2005: 137-147).

The adapted versions of this genre is evident across respective channels of mass communication and even more so in the new media. Nigerian television as a terrain of McDonaldization and McJournalism has increasingly built its appeal on a diet of programmes showing significant gains for American popular culture (Owens-Ibie, 2000: 138-140) and even the regulatory National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) despite efforts to moderate the deluge through its enabling law and various enforcement decisions is constrained by the logics in the environment. Owens-Ibie (1990: A6) after surveying the horizon declared that any non-acknowledgement of the solid gains of Americanization would amount to taking a flight from reality. An example was the introduction by the African Beamlink Network (ABN) of live broadcasts of CNN on the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) during its then dark hours of 5am – 2pm (this extended till about 2.55pm on occasions). The transmission which commenced on February 11, 1993 had within a month gained in popularity attracting more advertising till public criticism led to a review. While the defunct Daily Times championed its stoppage because of its symbolism, legislators in the Lagos State House of Assembly canvassed for its retention claiming that since the broadcasts was just “news” they had no prospect of harming the culture. The broadcast was stopped exactly a month after it started (Owens-Ibie, A6).

The golden rule now appears to be the consolidation of a framework which uses popularity as a basis for determining media content (Oso, 2012: 53). This trend is consistent with historical narratives on media effects (Bryant and Thompson, 2002: 23-33) which content has therefore to resonate with its audience. The product of this coalescence remains a subject for interrogation.
One of the areas of interest has been media portrayal of violence which affects audiences at the psychological levels of behaviour, emotion (affective) and cognition.

Owens-Ibie (1991: A6) in what he labelled “Exciting Incitement” recounted the fatalities which resulted from the airing of a local television drama series which blended the qualities of a “Rambo” or typical gun-wielding American hero who was capable of eliminating an army of natives whether in the jungles of Africa or somewhere in Asia. *Arelu* was a hit in the south west of Nigeria and showed a man with mystical powers and a dane gun who vanquished all foes till a final encounter with a force of light. While it lasted, *Arelu* won converts some of whom attempted to recreate his fire power. The defunct *Daily Sketch* of January 5, 1987 reported the killing of a playmate by a 17-year old boy as they rehearsed *Arelu*. The victim’s father recounted how the culprit had invited his son thrice before the incidence of the misfired dane gun. The rehearsal of *Arelu* by a child and his colleague in Iwaraja, in the old Oyo State in 1986 also led to one of them being shot in the hope that a mystical bullet-proof similar to that in *Arelu* will vindicate the bold. The boy died (Owens-Ibie, 1991: A6).

No matter the weight of this type of evidence in efforts to correlate media portrayal of violence with real violence, the concerns are real. Such concerns date back to the colony when film was introduced into the continent and country. Mgbejume’s account (1989: 3) highlights how from the outset films tended to portray myths rather than reality. The stories of Big Brother Africa and Big Brother Nigeria (Olaïya, 2009; A’daudu, 2006) also capture how reality TV has taken “reality” and its portrayal a notch higher with the no-holds-barred projection of humankind in their natural state operating from a location over a period. That the extremities of inmates have been somewhat moderated may be the product of the protest of strident “local voices”.

Other areas and issues have come under focus in national life. The report of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) that Igbo - one of the major languages in Nigeria faces extinction in 50 years is one of such. Findings from a 2007 study in Lagos and Imo States, show that “7% of children between 6-11 years in Imo State and 9% of them aged 5 years and below were unable to speak Igbo.” Another study show that 80% of parents in Lagos State and 50% in Imo State either speak a mixture of Igbo and English to their children or mainly English to their children. Although Igbos register a strong presence in Nigeria’s Nollywood (film industry), DSTV could not launch an exclusive channel for that language group because there were not Igbo movies to sustain such a station. The result is that there are now exclusive stations on DSTV only for Yoruba and Hausa movies (Fadare, 2011: 54).
While more effects and impact studies would illuminate the obvious assumptions deducible from these developments, it is apparent that the mass media are major instruments of socialization. Their significance is accentuated by the level of consumption of media messages by Nigerians which Nwuneli et al (1993: 35, 48) state is higher than those of all developing Black African countries. This would appear logical based on the population of the country, but such media messages have the capacity to blur the perceptions of the people more likely along the lines they are exposed to. When the capacity of the media is juxtaposed with the incapacities of its gatekeepers and those who moderate content, there arises a dilemma which subordinates such media to extraneous influences and contending forces in the macro environment. A study by Owens-Ibie (2009: 338), notes, for instance, that poverty is one factor which has conditioned the response of journalists in Nigeria to the demands of their professional mandate and capacity to promote the principles of democracy (Owens-Ibie, 2009)

Theories as Context

There is a rich theoretical text illuminating the ramifications of the communication traditions being interrogated in this discourse starting with the mass society theory dating back to the 18th century which anticipated a scary future substituting man with machines (Baran, 2009: 27). Moemeka (1988: 5-9) examined the work of the critical theorists whose focus is on the culture industry as producers of mass culture with the mass media increasingly providing the basis for the construction of images about others through all kinds of representation.

Conflict theory explores the power structure and how those in the commanding heights of the levers of power maintain dominance with the media as instruments for the promotion of uniformity and conformity. Neo-Marxism explored this theme further as a social theory, a position shared by Abdullahi (1991: 3). The Functionalists examine communication effect from the three models of Action/Motivation where the audience play dominant roles in the course of receiving and assigning meaning to the messages, the Structural/Cultural which emphasizes the context of a communication as a limiting factor despite the dominant role of the source, and the Functional which sees communication as “systematic interaction”. While the Functionalists see the mass media as instruments of enlightenment and education, the Conflict and Critical theorists see the mass media as instruments of domination and manipulation. Media Hegemony is about how the ideas that dominate in society are those of the ruling class. The Limited Effects
Model while acknowledging the capacity of mass communication and media to achieve some effects is inclined to locating them within a nexus of factors and thus a contributory agent in any analysis of causes of audience effects (Severin and Tankard, 1992: 248-254). Baran (2009: 29-30) corroborates this view citing findings from studies by Paul Lazarsfeld, pointing out that people have different approaches to resisting influences from the media. He however notes that the Limited Effects Model is criticised for being reductionist and generalizing from a limited number of studies.

The Cultivation Theory developed by George Gerbner and his colleagues offers additional helpful insights. The theory posits that heavy television viewing leads to cultivation and the development of common perspectives and values. McLuhan’s Media Determinism is based on the premise that the media shape perceptions and thinking. British Cultural Studies started with deterministic assumptions on direct effects of mass media and how they promote hegemony. Cultural studies investigate how the struggle between ideologies produces culture. It is identified with postmodernism which deals with how language and other symbolic forms produce, reproduce or change social reality. Articulation is the reinforcement of such social reality from many sources. The Frankfurt School – the best of the Marxist tradition whose light bearer is Jurgen Habermas also highlights the universal principles in language use in what he calls universal pragmatics. Communication, he notes, is key to emancipation with language which requires competence on the proper use of speech to achieve results - as the tool for such communication. He posits that society is defined by a mix of the elements of interaction, work and power (Littlejohn and Foss, 2007: 333-337) The Effects of Synthetic Experience, whose proponents were Funkhouser and Shaw, deals with how perceptual reality is manipulated and rearranged by exposure to computers, films and television through the content and processes of communication. The Spiral of Silence seeks to prove that the mass media impact public opinion through what Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann its source called the three characteristics consonance, cumulation and ubiquity. Since the mass media often are a source of information on the distribution of public opinion on any issue, there is the tendency for minority voices to become silent voices. Noelle-Neumann also presented the Powerful-Effects Model under which the Spiral of Silence theory can be subsumed. It attributes powerful effects to the mass media as corroborated by three studies. One of them was The Great American Values Test of Ball-Rokeach, Rokeach and Grube who found that the attitude of viewers, their ranking of basic values and willingness to put up a particular political behaviour could be changed. This finding was the result of watching a very well promoted 30-minute television programme of the same title on all
three American TV networks at the same time, one evening in a real world setting. (Severin and Tankard, 1992: 249-253; 258-260).

Lazarsfeld and Merton (1977: 565, 575) focus on two concepts, namely Narcotizing Dysfunction which despite evidence of increased attention to mass media products, posits that the connection of such products with reality is weak and this superficiality of content tends to mask mass apathy. Monopolization focuses on the unchallenged diffusion of images and values within the media. Murphy (1977: 350-353) classifies social regularity, status conferral, agenda-setting (according to Walter Lipmann, the media only offer people what to think about, rather than tell people what to think [Baran and Davis, 2009: 279]), narcotizing dysfunction and surveillance as five theories of the social effects engendered by the media which are less obvious. As Baran and Davis (2009: 280-281) further note, what the media does by drawing attention to some issues rather than others is Priming, while the reciprocal influence in the arena of public policy by government, media and citizens is Agenda-Building. The media may trigger organized social action to enforce social norms through focusing on action which are inconsistent with public morality. However and as McLuhan (1977: 105) quoting David Hume noted that causality is not easy to determine. One of such is the attempts to link media portrayal of violence to real life violence. Gerbner (1988: 27) believes the link is difficult to establish. In his testimony before the Senator Pastore’s Committee, former Surgeon-General Steinfeld was however categorical about the causative relationship between both types of violence (see Murphy, 1977: 365).

Differences exist in what audience know and how they respond to cues in the communication environment. There is always Knowledge Gap between segments of the population. What Joseph Klapper (see Owens-Ibie, 2011: 40) explains in his Selective Processes show that individuals encode and decode communication based on certain parameters with consequences for media effect. In this regard, Klapper identifies the four processes of Selective Exposure, Selective Attention, Selective Perception and Selective Retention to messages. Symbolic Interactionism explains how meaning is assigned to symbols by people and how such interpretations now control them. There is often a social environment for learning which is referred to as social behaviourism. In semiotics, meaning is seen as socially produced with the media structuring reality (Branston and Stafford, 2007: 11). The participation process in the transformation of communication to action is the focus of Pragmatist Theory. The theory was developed by Karl Jensen who through his Social Semiotic Theory sought a middle ground.
between the arguments in Cultural Studies and research on media effects (Baran and Davis, 2009: 301, 331-333).

These theories, models and concepts show the rich field from which the communication of trends and the implications of such communication can best be assessed. The perspectives offered by a communication process increasingly fit into moulds with individuals, institutions and power structures not just involved but functioning as interested parties. Sociologist Erving Goffman developed the Frame Analysis Theory which explains how individuals make meaning of their social environment. The frames used in the public sphere, paraphrasing William Gamson, emerge from the deliberate activities of individuals and interests keen on promoting particular world views. Through Framing Theory, the tenet of objectivity in journalism is challenged and journalism as rather seen as a platform through which ideas is debated after being presented. This platform could be said to be under the control of those who structure the news in particular directions and promote frames which suit their agendas. What W. Lance Bennett calls News Reality Frames involves those in the elite class and how they use journalism and journalists to construct news. Public relations is an institutionalization of the control over frames, news frames (Baran and Davis, 2009: 319-321).

In their summary of the evolution of mass communication theory, Steven Chaffee and Miriam Metzger surveyed the emerging landscape with new media fundamentally re-ordering the course of the way media are conceptualized, structured and used in this millennium. Their conclusion is that what is mass communication theory is being brought to an end and that it is better understood now as media theory (also see Baran and Davies, 2009: 347).

**Communication as the Known Stranger**

Communication has become the familiar stranger to a world often unable to fully come to terms with its dynamics. Giffin and Patton (1976: 3-6) define communication as generation and attribution of meaning. Through it meaning is exchanged. Lasswell (1977: 84) summarizes communication as “Who says what, In which channel, To whom and With wh at effect?” It is capable of defining, informing, disinforming and persuading (Watson, 2003: 13). The communication process actually allows man to function as a normal part of society (Oloyede, 2008: 39) and language is a basic means of forming, expressing and reinforcing values, norms and what is acceptable in a society (Watson. 2003: 12).
The various types of communication require interaction at different levels and by different participants but the more the people involved, the more complicated. But man is not a passive receptor, notes Barnlund (1976: 9). As a definer of new trends the internet, for instance, represents speed, scale and diversity in communication through verbal, pictorial, sound, codified and numerical communication (Mazrui, 2009: 99). Communication technology is defining new vistas strengthening on the one hand those who have access and control and making those on the receiving side open to influence (Varis, 1985: 54). The way these products of modern science are used, says David Sarnoff (McLuhan, 1977: 104) therefore determine their value. But as Uche (1988: 98-101) alerts, the way these technologies are being deployed may have further devalued the culture and other values of the less privileged countries.

The MacBride Commission (1980: 253) pointed to the power of communication as simultaneously capable of liberation and oppression. The history of communication, states Fisher (1982: 9) is also the history of society – from speech to writing, printing, telegraph, radio and television and the current but still unfolding communication revolution. The control of the means of communication often determines who controls the society. Mortensen (1972: 357-358) declared that every act of communication implies some form of influence. Moemeka (1988: 11) quoting Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch, restate that while the social environment impact media images, audience response is determined by “psychological dispositions, sociological factors and environmental conditions”

The findings of Edeani (1988: 82-83) proves that mass media are important channels of message transmission in Nigeria. Mass communication on its part, according to Silvey (1974: 312) is more effective in reinforcing attitudes, ideas and values. One way to understand mass communication is to analyse it from a perspective of what Murdock and Janus (1984: 7, 57) refer to as the “flow of money” between the advertising industry and the mass media. Advertising and the influence of advertisers are known to impact information flow and images in the media. As Okwuke (2004: 25) has noted, “adverts sell more than products. They sell images, values, goals, and concepts of who we are and who we should be. They shape our lives”. The other types of what the media project through what they disseminate appear as potent as regular advertising with corporate interests at work. Bosompra (1993: 58-59) found that the likelihood of risk behaviour has a positive correlation with increased viewing of television. Okoye (1993: 71) asserts that heavy viewers of home video are more likely to become victims of mainstreaming. A study of the
research community in Nigeria by Owens-Ibie (2011: 164) found that researchers accept the appropriateness of mass media for influencing policy. This finding is corroborated by another in India which found that official press coverage is known to have precipitated official action. The *Indian Express* published a “Kamla story” by Ashwini Sarin on forced prostitution which got so much publicity that it eventually led to the enactment of an anti-devadasis law to address the problem (Grjebine, undated: 17, 23).

Within a context which talks about the individual’s right to communicate as a fundamental need and process (Fisher, 1982: 38) with implications for communities and nations, it is clear that individuals, societies and nations are supposed not only to receive or gain access at a superficial level, but to be able to receive, seek and impart information (MacBride, 1980: 253, 259). Where this is not happening, it only signals a generation living in denial of the very fundamentals that should define its co-existence. It means that messages (Schramm, 1977: 15, 20) are supposed to evoke meaning within cultural contexts while response to messages is supposed to have the imprint of distinct cultural experiences. But as McLuhan (1977: 100) noted the medium becomes the message from an operational point of view. It therefore is an issue when such medium rely on factors and forces in the macro-environment which all have a stake in manipulating the public sphere and converting same to orbits of influence. That is why Guback and Varis (1982: 49-50) assert that communication “should be particularly protected against foreign penetration because it is essential to national and cultural identity and to the improvement of the quality of life”. This may not quite suggest exclusivity since that may amount to unfeasible cultural purity in an interdependent world. It probably is a way of cultural preservation within the context which threatens the major Nigerian Igbo language with extinction within the next half century.

**News Determinants**

The content of mass media such as news is determined by realities rooted in structures and processes in society. M’Bayo (2009, 76-77) asserts that media content is a product of society in which the media is a sub-system. Media are themselves open to the influence they wield in society with the sources of such influence coming from the “socialization and attitudes” of those who work in the media, organizational routines, concentration of ownership which breeds hegemonic tendencies, forces such as audiences, advertising and culture and social institution. Da Costa et al (1980: 6) maintain that media are a reflection of civilization though they do this through a distorted prism. In media studies it is acknowledged that news is biased and not
transparent and is a complex process of framing and evaluation serving the interests of dominant forces in society (Branston and Stafford, 2007: 196). These forces could be said to include what Ndlela 2009: 58) identified as the pervasive inclination by African media, especially newspapers and television, to be purveyors of Western culture. Owens-Ibie (2003: 374) draws attention to various extra-professional criteria which shape editorial decisions with the commercialization of the media being one key determinant (Owens-Ibie, 1993: 61, 66-67; also see Oso, 1991: 50-51). Culture influences the encoding and decoding of media messages. Herbert Gans identified eight “enduring values” or ideologies common in the news. These include “ethnocentrism, altruistic democracy, responsible capitalism, small-town pastoralism, individualism, moderatism, order and leadership” (Hallahan, 2011: 69, 60-61). Dominick (1986: 356-357) identifies tradition, organizational policy, technology and economics as responsible for the formation of news values. The common elements which determine newsworthiness are timeliness, prominence, proximity, consequence and human interest. Bittner (1989: 252-255) identifies personal and professional ethics, deadlines, economics, legal restrictions, competition, news value and news hole as determinants of news selection.

But some assumptions exist. Schiller (1973: 8) identifies five such assumptions in the structuring of content and consciousness which he regards as myths. These are – neutrality, unchanging human nature, absence of social conflict, media pluralism (since real choice cannot exist without diversity) and the myth of individualism and personal choice.

Various perspectives to what constitutes news make the journalistic output open to diverse interpretations. Owens-Ibie (1988: 62-63) highlights some. While John Lopiccolo notes that whatever is reported is news, Paul Dallas believes whatever happens is news. Ace Young says it is life and what is happening around us. Sam Zelman distinguishes news as what is important and what people have to know and want to know. Robert Hudson states that whatever the boss says news is qualifies as news. News is also seen as the projection of the negative or extraordinary (Owens-Ibie, 2002: 32-33). This fluidity in the interpretation of a product which is fundamental to the daily chronicle of the development process may have informed some assessment of journalists. Stephen Crane in 1895 described a newspaper as a “collection of half injustices…a court where everyone is kindly and unfairly tried…a market where wisdom sells its freedom” (see DeFleur, 1977: 66-67).
The battle for audience ratings translated to a share of the market accentuates the dilemma (Owens-Ibie, 1999: 94), culminating in, for instance, the era of the wrap-around as the symbol of the decline in news value (Dare, 2012). Beam (2003: 368-380) backgrounds this trend with a focus on market-oriented journalism which has been on the rise since the year 2000. This journalistic form implies an aggressive recourse by a medium to offering to their audience whatever they want or need. This is a logic which understands only the language of the bottom-line and the factors and forces which align with this imperative.

**Signs and Wander**

While the trajectory plotted in this discussion appears to present Nigeria as conquered territory daily further sucked into the whirlpool of globalization, Americanization and related forces, they also point to an entirely different direction on what should be a growing consciousness. It is about empires and the shape of a future out of control of the dynamics of science and technology. It is about the evolution of a trend spiralling out of control of those in the vanguard of the levers of global power. It is about communication as history with an apocalyptic tinge. The signs are convoluted but they are not quite accompanied by wonders. Rather these signs appear to reveal a wander, a drift.

In an article signposting the scenario of the crumbling of the American empire, Osagie (2009), reported his discussion with the late Secretary to the Federal Government of Nigeria, Mr S. O. Wey who noted that Afghanistan has been linked to the crumbling of empires, stated that with the demise of the Soviet Union, America would not be able to dominate the world. He foresaw a United States which would lose its hegemonic superiority due to incapacitating internal factors and policies. Holland (2012) has drawn a parallel between what is happening in the West and developments which resulted in the loss of empire by the Romans and Britain. Goldsmith (1975) chronicled the reasons why the Roman Empire (described as a “true empire” (blindkingofbohemia, 2012) fell noting that the Barbarian invasion was not the major reason. He drew attention to the three factors which Ennius said were responsible for the greatness of the empire, namely, divine favour, steadfastness and discipline and moral character of the Romans. The ruination of the Roman Empire was due to the powerful foreign influences which led in the quoted words of Lecky to the corrosion of Roman virtues and the embrace of various customs, language and nationality.
With the British Empire now not as powerful as it was in the colony and with its most formidable representations in this century being probably the English Premiership, British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), the Monarchy and the English Language, it is fairly apparent as Winston Churchill once noted that the “empires of the future are the empires of the mind” (Media Facts…, 2009). The battle for the mind waged through globalizations’ overarching impact, unrelenting gains for Americanization, including in the domain of popular culture, shows that physical empires still retain a dynamic which daily make countries of the world even weaker or to further mainstream as survival strategy in a world of All-Share Index, Growth Rate, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) whiz kids.

The spread of the English Language may suggest the consolidation of empire having emerged as the principal language in the world. But other languages such as Latin, Greek, Arabic, French, Chinese are known to have held such position. The concern of Noss is that English Language is also likely to be supplanted over time (see Contreras et al, 1976: 20). The description of America as the “Romans of the modern world” (Matthiessen, 1998: 14) could be one way of raising issues on the shape of an unfolding future which point in a direction with a remarkably Roman coloration. Owens (2013) after tracing the progression of what used to be a powerful British Empire, is worried about patterns in America noting that like Rome the empire rather than fall would just collapse. He also alludes to a situation where like Britain, America may continue to pretend that there is an empire despite knowing that the emperor’s clothes are no more on.

**Imploding in Bits**

Commentators like D'Souza (2006) have highlighted the qualities that make America great. These include its good life for the ordinary person, equality, opportunities for the pursuit of happiness, its ethics of work which shift attention from “heavenly aspirations to earthly progress”, religious liberty, ideals and interests, and its promotion of freedom. These qualities have also been the source of concern even by some Americans and other commentators.

The rise of secularism and strident efforts to promote human rights and civil liberty has meant official de-emphasis for what is now generally termed the far-right or conservative principles rooted in Judeo-Christianity. Niose (2012) for instance argues against the retention of America’s motto “In God we Trust”, stating that it was adopted in 1956 in the heat of the Cold War after “under God” was added to the Pledge of Allegiance in 1954. According to him, the motto
affirms the endorsement of religion and should be expunged and replaced with the former motto *E Pluribus Unum* which translated from Latin means “Out of Many, One” which speaks of the country as a federation - Out of many states, one nation.

In an August 20, 1983 crusade in Atlanta, Georgia, Evangelist Jimmy Swaggart dwelt extensively on the ascendance of what he called “secular humanism” noting that it was threatening the fabric of American life. Faith in man and the control of man over his affairs, he noted has replaced faith in God as the omnipotent creator and determinant of the affairs of men.

The debate has continued and for some, the September 11, 2001 attacks on the Twin Towers and other key monuments in America may have been less a failure of intelligence and more of a wake-up call that the best in technology and expertise may not address some vulnerabilities. The rise in church attendance immediately after the devastation tended to point to the natural recourse to the Almighty God when human calculations fail or don’t work the way they are programmed.

Before and since then, that country has witnessed attacks which defy explanations. A chronicle of the worst school shootings (Evon, 2012) has often portrayed a nation shocked beyond description after each episode. There was the The Bath School bombing which claimed 45 victims on May 18, 1927; University of Texas killings with 16 Victims on August 1, 1966; shooting at California State University At Fullerton on July 12, 1976 with seven deaths; the April 20, 1999 Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado incidence with 15 victims; March 21, 2005 Red Lake Senior High Massacre where eighth died; October 2, 2006 Amish School shooting with six victims including five girls aged between seven and 13 at West Nickel Mines School; Virginia Tech April 16, 2007 disaster which claimed 33 victims; Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, Illinois where a Sociology student wearing a shirt labelled “terrorist” killed five students, injured 21 others before killing himself in 2008; April 2, 2012 Oikos University, Oakland, California shooting with seven fatalities; and Sandy Hook Elementary School, Newtown, Connecticut where a gunman killed 28 people including 20 children under the age of seven on December 14, 2012. Sandy Hook has triggered a fresh round of debate on gun control.

Other unflattering statistics suggest an estimated 800,000 attempted suicides annually in America with demographic contributors to suicide risk identified by Reiss and Dombeck (accessed 2013) as including increased firearms availability, substance and alcohol use. Suicide is identified as the third leading cause of death among those aged between 15 and 24 years. Research suggests that
“marriage rates are at their lowest ever” while “committed couples” are not getting married because of the fear of divorce. Only about half of American adults are currently married (Welsh, 2011). Pat Robertson, founder of the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) and co-anchor of The 700 Club during the programme on March 12, 2013 affirmed that a marriage ends in divorce in America every 13 seconds.

Owens (2013) believes that there is a need to get rid of the Empire to save the Republic and is convinced that there is a need for restoration at the family level to the era of the work ethic and moral sanity. It is either, he states that Americans “individually spark a revival of what made us great or we sink into the hole dug by moral rot and the decay of ambition”.

The logic of globalization and orientations, the communication process and media has meant a localization of these American realities in Nigeria with the simultaneity in content dissemination and reception. The pursuit of freedom and official positions on rights issues has meant a fairly open contest in the public domain of social processes which has not yet achieved a national consensus even in America.

Even as the media was reporting Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe confronting the British Prime-Minister David Cameron over calls to respect gay rights (To Hell…2012), Nigeria through Information Minister, Labaran Maku, challenged the US President, Barack Obama over his advocacy for gay rights. The minister re-echoed the plans of the Senate to outlaw same-sex marriage affirming the right of the country to cultural preservation which should not be sacrificed on the altar of human rights (Ogbru, 2011).

Despite such reactions Ezeobi (2013) has reported the existence of a gay club in Lagos. Cynthia Osokogu, a student of Nasarawa State University was lured to her death by male friends she made through Facebook (Abdulsalami, 2012; Alao, 2012). Fagorusi (2013: 13) analyzed the impact of the social media platform 2go with 12.5 million subscribers in Nigeria compared to Facebook (6.63 million) and Blackberry (about 2.5 million). The network was founded by two computer science students of the University of Witwatersrand, South Africa, has more male than female users mainly in the 15-24 years bracket, is quite popular with pupils of secondary schools and many young people who are out of school, can run on different types of phones, allows anonymity and its “flirt and relationship rooms” are heavily patronised. He told the story of his friend’s 23-year old sister, who was then four months pregnant through a relationship contracted
through 2go though both of them were living in Kaduna and Oyo – a distance of 655 kilometres. They found a way of overcoming the physical distance after three months of communicating via 2go. Nigeria subscribers on the 2go platform represent 61% of its users.

Despite exciting developments and the recourse to the trappings of popular culture to fill an obvious void, a study has found that people have become unhappier since 2009. A University of Vermont team monitored over a three –year period 63 million Twitter users and found that “except for a rise between January and April 2009, happiness is in sharp decline online” (McMillan, 2011). As it is in the United States, so it is emerging in Nigeria.

A Media Narrative
The Dictator: A world of terror

DIRECTED by Larry

There's also some business with

Rage as firm dupes visa applicants of millions

They were from different backgrounds and places. They were, however, bound by a common factor: their desire to seek greener pastures outside the shores of Nigeria. It was not to be eventually. They were swindled. Why did this happen and how?
THE ALARMING WAVE OF KIDNAPPING

A new wave of kidnapping is outweighing other worries of Nigerians

The wave of kidnapping in the country is now extremely alarming. From politicians, to judges, medical doctors, journalists, lecturers, businessmen, Nollywood actors, senior government officials and their close relatives—almost everyone is now at risk. A day hardly passes without reports of the kidnapping of some prominent personalities or their relatives.

And these are even the ones that make the headlines. There are so many others who are less prominent or not considered important enough to attract media attention. The fact of the matter is that in our country today, kidnapping has become a thriving criminal enterprise.

In the last two weeks alone, at least four high profile kidnapping cases were recorded. Prof. Kamene Okonjo, the 83-year-old mother of the Coordinating Minister for the Economy and Finance, is one. Another was a seasoned journalist who was kidnapped by armed individuals near the Nigerian National Theatre. The kidnappers demanded a ransom of N5 million. A 35-year-old man was also kidnapped and later released.

We must highlight the fact that many others are not reported. The statistics are inexact, but the trend is clear. The abduction of a local politician in a northern state was another case. The local government had to intervene to secure the release of the politician after negotiations.

Yet there is no indication that the relevant authorities are tackling this challenge with the seriousness it deserves. The paucity of information of arrests, prosecutions and conviction of perpetrators of this criminal act clearly demonstrates the lack of resolve and seriousness of the authorities.

This is not just about the money that is paid in ransom. It is also about the lives that are lost and the fear that permeates the society. The police and the security agencies need to be proactive and show that they can protect the people.

The government and the people must work together to stem the tide of kidnapping. The government must invest in the security agencies, provide them with the necessary resources, and ensure that they have the authority to act decisively.

It is also important for the media to report on these incidents accurately and responsibly. The public needs to be informed, but they also need to be reassured that the authorities are taking steps to address the problem.
‘Drugs, not religion, is Nigeria’s problem’

Professor Ishaq Oloyede is the Coordinator and Executive Secretary of Nigerian Inter-Religious Council (NIREC). In this interview with Kazeem Ibrahimi, the former Vice Chancellor of the University of Ilorin insists that Nigeria’s problem is not Christianity or Islam. For him, what is necessary for the adherent of the religions is to tolerate each other and fight drug addiction, violence, bombings and killings.

WHAT is NIREC set up to achieve?

The Nigerian Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) established by the Nigerian Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs (NSSCA) and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) to promote the harmonious coexistence of Muslims and Christians. The meeting of the Council from 1999 when it was established to 2006 when it was reconstituted had taken place. The present leadership has continued to enjoy the support of the two religious communities. The current leadership has been at the forefront of the fight against drug addiction, violence, bombings and killings.

Roadblocks

How Policemen Extort ‘Mosquito Allowance’ On Abakaliki-Enugu Expressway

We Are Complying With IG’s Orders – Ebonyi CP

From Leo Soluchi, Abakaliki

WHAT remained was for the junior officers charged with the responsibility of checking vehicles and interviewing bus drivers to start issuing receipts for monies received. This is because as the day wore on, animosity and endless argument with policemen on whether they have paid their toll or not.

Ends of the road, that was actually what the many police roadblocks at the Abakaliki-Enugu pressway were turning to before the directive of the acting Inspector of Police, Mohammed Abubakar, which recalled policemen from checkpoint duties.

The Enugu-Abakaliki expressway is notorious for the grilled security arrangements to check the activities of criminals along the nation’s highways. Four years ago, Ezillo and Itsa-Ezillo communities, challenged the fragile peace existing between them by engaging in a protracted criminality. The wanton destruction of properties and massacre of innocent citizens compelled the
Artisan docked for defrauding 
woman of N105,000

MATTHEW ASABOR- LAGOS

fully obtained the sum of 
N105,000 from Ibrahim 
on the pretence to offer 
him one-room apartment.

Code Law of L

When the cha 
read to the def

Internet fraudsters use 
my Facebook account to 
defraud — Okotie

counts with Reverend Oko-
tie’s name.

“In one of the accounts, 
they are sending mails to 
Reverend Okotie’s sup-

The statement added 
that “Reverend Okotie 
hereby warns the general 
public that he has no kid-

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Indications emerged, Tuesday, that the only daughter of General Frank Osokogu (rtd), the late Cynthia Osokogu, whose body was discovered in a Lagos morgue a month after she was declared missing, could have been murdered by her Facebook acquaintances.
Already, six persons, among them two university students, a pharmacist and an employee of the hotel where the 24-year-old post-graduate student was murdered have been arrested.

Investigation into the murder, as reliably gathered, revealed that Cynthia was strangled to death in the hotel by her assailants, who thereafter left with an undisclosed amount, her student identity card and phones. Report said the beautiful and vivacious Cynthia had chatted with the two undergraduates on Facebook for months.

In the process, they reportedly got to know that she owned a boutique in Nasarawa State, following which they reportedly had a business proposal with her, promising to host her whenever she visited Lagos…
Nigeria can’t continue like this — Obasanjo
A Centenary Circle

Brown (2012: 4-6), while announcing the supervised interment of the print edition of Newsweek magazine and the introduction of its digital replacement, wrote definitively about an inevitability. She said that the decision of the 80-year old international newsweekly to go digital is one fact their competitors “will one day need to embrace with the same fervor”.

The development process in Nigeria echoes such inevitabilities with variants of a subsisting dependency philosophy playing out. Berrigan (1979: 11) had noted that development is “for Man, by Man, and of Man”, but the operationalisation of its processes has increasingly tended to equate development with a modernization philosophy with indices rooted in global specifications and other externalities which in a context is accommodating and in another somewhat dismissive of the logics which define/d traditional societies. Tehranian (see Watson, 2003: 28) in fact avers that modernization as a process involves the “universal leveling of societies into relatively homogenous entities”. Since societies “enculturise” individuals, cultivating them through socialization into “expected patterns of behaviours” (Watson, 2003: 12), the State of the Act points in the direction of an orientation for Nigerian development rooted in ironic disorientations. And that fits a pattern starting with the colony. Abdullahi’s (1991: 17-18) quote of the Dual Mandate of Lord Frederick Lugard published in 1922 illuminates this perspective again drawing attention to the Romans

As Roman imperialism laid the foundations for modern civilization, and led the wild barbarians of those islands along the paths of progress, so in

Africa today… we are repaying the debt, and bringing to the dark places of the earth, the abode of barbarianism and cruelty, the torch of culture and progress, while ministering to the material needs of our own civilization…Let it be admitted at the outset that…Europe is in Africa for the mutual benefit of her two industrial classes, and of the native races in their progress to a higher plane; that the benefit can be made reciprocal, and it is the aim and desire of civilized administration to fulfil this dual mandate.

Film played an instrumental role in the actualization of the Mandate. Mgbejume (1989: 2-3) provides insights into this phase in the evolution of film in Nigeria. The Colonial Film Unit was interested in films which “…always draw a large number of unsophisticated African folks who will laugh at the most inconsequential things (but generally two or three shots late); quantity
rather than quality is the significant thing”. Many of these films tended to give a skewed picture of the Western reality “making it luxurious, non-moral if not immoral and almost certainly materialistic”. The use of guns to earn a living got its early expression in some of those films. While a Black writer, Richard Wright in 1948 worried about the impact of ideas conveyed through these films on African natives concerned about their potential to destroy their “communal, fragile, traditional, tribal and almost sacred institutions”, Colin Beale, Secretary, Edinburgh House for Visual Aids, made the following remarks during the 1948 Conference on Film in Colonial Government:

I am convinced that for the African, with his primitive mind, his pitifully meagre mental outlook, his lack of general cultural background, his semi and often total illiteracy, his sense of wonder and his love of fun, the cinema could have an almost immeasurably great future. We believe that educational films, together with morally uplifting “entertainment” pictures both serious and comic (the African has a delightfully unspoiled sense of nonsense and a hearty laugh is a well-known relief to emotional strain), would do much to relieve the soul-destroying boredom which is doing so much to make the African of today an easy prey of materialistic agitators of every kind.

The outcome of motives and actions in the colony and post-colony explains the current scenario where globalization is on the march and there is an incremental but unfolding whittling of the boundaries of tradition despite levels of cultural resistance. Enforcement and other regulatory mechanisms appear constrained by demand and supply side economics and the result is evident in variations of the rules of engagement with constituencies, including the media. In 2004 for instance, the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) stopped the live feed of some BBC programmes on Ray Power 100.5 FM, but by October 2011, the programmes returned. Today, Brila 88.9 FM, Cool 96.9 FM and Beat 99.9 FM, among others air programmes deriving from partnerships with international broadcasters. The love of the English Premier League has become the beginning of entertainment for electronic and print media in Nigeria and the Spanish and Italian leagues are gaining in popularity. American basketball, tennis, golf are regular offers. Channels Television’s programme - The American Example is only one in a string of programmes and features by electronic and print media spotlighting the attractions of that country.
These however may just be the icing on a cake filled with negatives patterned along conventional definition of news as exaltation of the shocking, negative and whatever represents a deviation from order. In the process, the vulnerabilities of the more developed world, especially America gets daily amplified and relayed. This is not just about a fiscal cliff but about an empire on the cliff. Many who are enamoured by the attractions of America therefore worry because the trends are replaying gradually and systematically in a satellite like Nigeria.

The Bible in Galatians 5: 9 (King James Version) states that “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump”. On the one hand therefore is a country that rose from the contradictions of colonialism, slavery, racial discrimination, and economic vicissitudes, translating its disadvantages to become the pre-eminent global force shaping the destinies of nations; a nation where the dream of a Martin Luther King Jnr has translated to an African-American occupying the White House in one sign that left many gasping in disbelief and wonder and who has now despite the challenges won a second term in office. Here is a country that is inventing, refining and deploying the products of science and technology to consolidate its dominance of a global space (and outer space) in the midst of a spirited positioning by a country like China which is clear enough about its willingness to supplant the American Dream. Here is a country that has worked systematically and assiduously to stamp its imprint economically, politically and technologically in all corners of the world in a carefully cultivated script and through national and global institutions and organizations which have become a part of the reality from the North Pole to the South Pole. Here is a country that has evolved a cultural package and unrelentingly marketed it so well that like Owens-Ibie (1990) concludes, America is now “our America.” Here is a country that has defined benchmarks in the professions providing reference points for global and national standards. Here is the country of the Pulitzers in journalism, the Grammys in music, the Oscars in the motion picture industries yearly packaged to hold the rest of the world captive, yearning for the next outing. Here is the country that has sold itself as a destination of hope no matter where you come from, showcasing sports stars, scientists, journalists, academics and professionals, entrepreneurs who left their countries and achieved their dreams in the land of opportunity.

But here too is an America which appears in what amounts to an ironic wander from history and eternal realities not to be learning the lessons from the Romans who lost a dream after 1200 years on the global stage. As Owens (2013) and other watchers of the current phase of the American Dream are noting, the unmaking of America is evident from the “little leaven” even
while the big picture is one huge roller coaster rolling effortlessly like the World War 11 German Panzer over tricky terrains. That little leaven targets the underbelly of that country steadily weakening the very foundations of its rise despite its preference for the enlargement of the coast of freedom, liberty and the liberation of the human spirit from the constrictions that limit its manifestation.

That little leaven while acknowledging the iconic moments of an Abraham Lincoln presidency and some other exceptional leadership in its history appear to discountenance what Lincoln symbolised as a man who stood for freedom and authored easily the most famous quote on democracy as “government of the people, by the people, for the people” but knew like Hebrews 11: 3 states that “things which are seen were not made of things which do appear”. Lincoln used “Under God” in three major addresses (White, 2008: 58) acknowledging in the process that there is a God which created and controls the affairs of men. Such a stand is now grand foolishness to many in that country and elsewhere. As 1 Corinthians 2: 14 states it is a case of the natural man not ever imagining or being in a position to understand the workings of such spiritual principles.

In an age of drones, missiles, smart bombs, phones and electronic devices, the internet and connectivity, there has to be some other explanations for the how in other happenings which defy the logic of an all-powerful country. But as Psalms 11: 3 states, “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” The issue is more about the values and logics which made America great and if what is happening now is not a replication of a trend which is decidedly Roman.

On the other hand is resource-rich Nigeria which captures in its trajectory hopes of the African possibility and is realistically or sarcastically labelled the “Giant of Africa”. Developments in Nigeria affirm the country’s status as a fundamentally mainstreaming transitional society. In its centenary, the country has defied rational explanations and continues to amaze even its citizens with its staying power despite ramifying contradictions. Through its strengths and challenges Nigeria has become the battleground for a multiplicity of forces targeting its soul and from which has emerged discernible patterns. One major beneficiary of the struggle has been America which presence is obvious in key areas of national and local life. The communication process and media transmit one gain after the other for American popular culture, among other downloads of the American Dream. They are active midwives to an evolutionary phase that is seeing Nigeria gradually coalesce as Naija (no small thanks, among others, to the contributions of Etisalat’s rave
commercial “Naija for Life” and now an institutionalization of a dilution of name through Naija 102.7 FM in the commercial hub of Lagos, in the more obvious scenario.

The simultaneous relay of models of academic and other achievements and the privations and deprivations of life in America reflect a conflictive essence. The “death of good taste” is yielding folk heroes and trends disruptive of local values. Media are also serving as tools for the transmission of elements of the still unfolding heritage.

Nigeria is therefore caught in a web and in the game of the little leaven with a somewhat complicated future outlook which combine poorly with the subsisting challenges of leadership, corruption, ethnicity, management of religious differences and image issues borne of individual and group desperations. Nations ignore their strengths to their peril but the management of internal contradictions with an eye on the small picture through a rediscovery of purposeful and focused leadership assures a place for a redeemable future and the undoubted possibility of a Nigeria that still has real prospects of overcoming its dilemmas.

Food for the Road

Globalization has provided a vital springboard for Americanization. Americanization has consolidated the penetration of American popular culture with different national variants. Popular culture has spawned hybridization across barriers, including in traditional societies. Communication has been the faithful servant mutually relaying patterns, currents and undercurrents of influence. In the process, communication has become the transmission belt of an unfolding scenario where drivers appear to be losing control of the internal mechanics which defined the rise of empire while satellite stations are rebroadcasting in exciting and pliant befuddlement.

If the freefall that reduced the Roman Empire from a behemoth wiping out the gains of 1200 years is replaying with the official relegation of God in the clan of the more developed world or unofficial disinclination to further official declarations on the fear of God or being “Under God” in Nigeria in particular, then this is a wakeup call to an avoidable inevitable: LET US PRAY!
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