

# THE MASS MEDIA AND AFRICAN ELECTIONS

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## Abstract

Using Nigeria as a setting, this paper examines how media's reportorial mistakes impact African electoral processes. Eight newspaper textual exemplars were theoretically sampled and presented in a titled Text Box. The texts were subjected to analysis by means of the analytical resources that brim in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Discussion drew on reactions from the reporters who wrote the analysed textual exemplars. Discussion also drew on comments about the 2013 Zimbabwe elections. Results are that questionable communication models tease African media into inaccuracies; and such inaccuracies are found as conniving at electoral abuses in Africa. Conclusion is that until the media snap out of their debilitating ineptitude, electoral outcomes in Africa will continue to be out of synch with the will of the electorates.

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**Keywords:** Mass media, African elections, election rigging

## Introduction

Despite the tension that underpins the global democratic order, one fact had emerged. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, people are hungry for liberal democratic values. All over the world, people yearn for a multi-party democratic system; the type that is founded on electoral succession, independent judiciary, human rights and freedom of speech. African leaders believe that liberal democratic system like the one practiced in advance democracies of Europe and North America has antecedents that could neither be exported nor replicated in the African political setting (Sambo, 1999). There is a suspicion in Africa that uncritical acceptance of the liberal democratic model could foist another form of imperialism on Africa. This suspicion has compelled African political leaders to opt for the so-called "home-grown democracy" (Sambo, 1999, p.145). Home-grown democracy is an ambiguous formulation. To be certain, a formulation is ambiguous when its apprehension demands multiple reading. A formulation that commands multiple reading is an "unpredictable speech act whose meaning resides not

only with the author but extends to the addressee who needs to collaborate with the author to source for a referent for the formulation” (Eco, 1979, p.276).

The choice by African political class to uphold the home-grown variant of democracy is not a neutral choice. Within the choice of a home-grown democracy lies the universal motive that underpins the interest of politicians as a ruling class. Gouldner (1976, p.233) articulates that interest thus:

**The central political problem of the ruling class is not to have the other classes define the social world in ways congenial to its own concern and interest... the main problem of the ruling class is to have other classes obey orders... in ways that support the maintenance and reproduction of itself as the ruling class...**

The effort by the ruling class to get other classes to support its interest is subtle. It only succeeds when other classes are deceived. The mass media is critical to the success or failure of the interest of the ruling class. Whether the captains of media industry know it or not, the fact remains that the mass media have been in a life and death struggle with the ideology of the ruling class. Encapsulated, ideology in this context is that tapestry of maneuvers that tease victims to unconsciously act in a predetermined way. The forces behind ideological predetermination ensures that they benefit when victims of ideology act in the predetermined fashion (O’Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2007, pp.155, 173; Fairclough, 2001, pp. 69; Gripsrud, 2002, pp.35; Silas & Gronbeck, 2001, pp.173, 262-264; Eco, 1979 p.297). In liberal democracies, the media are at advantage in their battle with ideology. The advantage enables the media to “seek the truth and tell it to government” (Herbamas 2001, p.101). But where the media lose ground in the ideological struggle, media practitioners are made to mistake the “instrumentalist role” of the media (Sambo, 1999 p.154) for the “developmental communication” role (Kunczik, 1995, p.211). As cited in Kunczik (1995, p.35), Kurt Lenk has outlined the instrumentalist role of the media. In that role, the media are cajoled into disseminating only the things that serve the state, the fatherland, the repute of a nation. According to Lenk, all other truths are bad or proscribed if they fail to fit in with the will of whoever rules.

### **Electoral Process in Africa**

From the last decade of the twentieth century to date, many Sub-Saharan African countries have been flirting with electoral democracy. The electoral processes have become the way by which these countries recruit their leaders. The quality of life of ordinary citizens in these countries has become a foolproof measure of assessing the leaders that the electoral process recruits. The quality of life of an average citizen in Sub-Saharan

Africa in the last two decades, with a possible exception of two countries, is heading towards the worst. In most Sub-Saharan African countries, the life of an ordinary citizen has become hell because of a near-absolute lack of healthcare, electricity, employment, security, education, transportation and so on. The migrants who perish monthly in their bid to emigrate to the West are somber remainders of the torment that life has become for ordinary citizens in Africa. Many believe (Ubabukoh, 2013; Olumhense, 2013) that the hard life that torments Africans results from inept leadership. Such belief is, by implication, an indictment of the electoral processes that recruit African leaders. A good electoral process cannot continually recruit inept leaders. The mass media, more so in Africa, ought to function to improve the quality of life of ordinary citizens (Rosen, 1999, pp. 1 & 2). The manner in which the mass media cover electoral processes in Africa is of critical relevance in determining the quality of leaders that Africa's electoral processes recruit.

### **The problem**

Using Nigeria as a setting, this paper examines the role of the media in the effort of the ruling class to use the electoral process to maintain and reproduce itself. The objective of this examination is to ascertain whether there are inaccuracies, contradictions and other lapses which the media commit to the advantage of the ruling class.

### **Procedure**

This paper is grounded on the notion that a research process could be adjudged valid not necessarily by how much objective truth it reveals but by how much it contributes to “understanding the world in historical moments and in a manner that is subjective and relative”(Ang, 2001, p. 186; Peredaryenko and Krauss, 2013, pp. 1-17) . More so, this paper is designed to explore how people attach “meaning to actions, beliefs, values and texts within their social world” (Seganti, 2010, P. 970). Studying how people attach meaning to actions and texts requires a research method that prizes words and their meanings over figures. The need to access such words/meanings necessitated the use of a qualitative method in this paper. Let me state that the words and meanings I sought are not the type that make sense in terms of quantity, amount, intensity or frequency” (Okeke & Ume, 2004, p.326).

### **Sampling Technique**

The textual data used are sampled on the basis of their relevance to the explanation presented in the paper (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008, p. 167). The sampling procedure is planned to seek out print media texts, “settings

and individuals where the phenomenon being studied is most likely to occur,” (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008, p.166). In other words, the sampling procedure is purposive. In making this choice, I ensured that the sampled texts are the ones that enhanced the theoretical perspectives I pursued in the paper. A sampling method that targets the generation of data that agree with researcher’s theoretical perspective is known as a “*theoretical sampling method*” (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008, p.167). Citing Mason, (1996, pp.93-94) Silverman & Marvasti state thus regarding theoretical sampling:

**Theoretical sampling means selecting groups or categories to study on the basis of their relevance to your questions, your theoretical position... and most importantly the explanation or account which you are developing ... it builds on certain characteristics or criteria which help to developed and test your theory and explanation (p.167).**

In order to generate a pool of data that could be used on multiple criteria and characteristics, many scholars see *maximum variation sampling* style as conducive to purposive theoretical sampling (Creswell, 2007, p.126; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p.123). Maximum variation style of sampling consists of determining in advance some criteria that differentiate the sites or participants and then selecting the sites and participants that are quite different on criteria in order to maximize the differences (Creswell, 2007, p.126). For Lindlof and Taylor, (2002, p.123) the process of maximizing the difference is at the heart of making sure that a “wide range of qualities, attributes, situations and incidents within the boundaries of the phenomenon under study is tapped.” I also took note of a qualitative research imperative that insists that “sampling should include those persons places, situations that will provide the greatest opportunity to gather the most relevant data about the phenomenon under investigation” Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 181).

It is also considered necessary, in the light of this study, to state as follows regarding what constitutes data in qualitative research. According to Keyton, ( 2001, p.70) “ anything that the researcher could observe or capture, be it a one-word quotation or a lengthy story-like description count as data in qualitative research.” On their part, Lindloff and Taylor (2002, pp. 4 & 18) mention talks, gestures and sentences as among so many things that count as data. Furthermore, King, ( 1996, p. 175) explains that “qualitative methods involve procedures that result in rich, descriptive contextually situated data, based on people’s spoken or written words and observable behavior.” According to these scholars, what matters most when using these things as data is the meaning the researcher can use them to construct in respect of the phenomenon under study.

## **Method of Textual Analysis**

My construction of explanation with the textural data drew on both “researcher construction” and “subjective valuing” (Keyton, 2001, p. 70). These two approaches of deconstructing or interpreting textual data emphasize the use of subjective introspection in writing up what the author or researcher has gleaned from the texts. In using subjective insight, I “attributed a class of phenomenon to segments of the texts (Fielding & Lee, 1998, p. 41). Scholars of the qualitative community (Meyers, 2009, p.166) agree that drawing on various analytic tools like Hermeneutics, Semiotics and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) gives a fruitful foothold on data analysis. This is more so in the light of the fact that there is no off-the-shelf approach to qualitative data analysis. The standard procedure of qualitative data analysis is “custom-built and choreographed according the task in hand. The pass word is learn by doing” – meaning that it is intuitive and iterative (Creswell, 2007, p.150).

## **Validity Concerns**

In order to avoid the mistake of substituting the criteria for assessing validity in qualitative research for the ones used in quantitative approach, it is considered necessary at this point to state scholars’ take on issues bordering on assessment of validity in qualitative research. Scholars, (Keyton, 2001, P. 72; Maxwell, 1996, P. 86; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, P. 209f) are unanimous in stating that the criteria of reliability and validity were initially developed for quantitative research method. They also state that qualitative researchers view these concepts differently. In articulating her view respecting how qualitative researchers account for validity, Keyton (2001, P. 72) states:

**Rather than focusing on what is found, most qualitative researchers focus on the reliability and validity of the techniques or process used in collecting and analyzing data. In qualitative research, validity is achieved when the written account or description represents accurately the features of the communication observed.**

Wainwright (1997) says the same thing but in another style. According to him,

**At the heart of the qualitative approach is the assumption that a piece of qualitative research is influenced by the researcher’s individual attributes and perspective. The goal is not to produce a standardized set of results that any other careful researcher in the same situation or studying the same issues would have produced. Rather it is to produce a coherent and illuminating description of and perspectives on a situation that is based on and consistent with detailed study of the situation**

In disclosing that many qualitative researchers doubt the existence of ‘reality’ Maxwell (1996, P. 86) states that validity is a goal rather than a product. According to him, validity in research is a relative goal. He insists that validity has to be assessed in relation to the purposes of a research rather than being seen as a context-independent property of methods and conclusions. Maxwell argues further that “validity threats are made implausible by evidence not methods” insisting therefore that “methods are only a way of getting evidence (data) that help a researcher rule out validity threat” (Maxwell, pp. 86 – 87). To strengthen this view, Maxwell (1996, pp. 87 – 88) stresses that “we don’t need an observer-independent gold standard to which we can compare our accounts to see if they are valid. All we require is the possibility of testing these accounts against the world – giving the phenomenon that we are trying to understand a chance to prove us wrong.” Polkinghorne (2007, p. 474) also reports that “validity is a function of inter-subjective judgment. According to him, validity “depends on a consensus within a community.”

In order, though, to avoid giving the impression that qualitative researchers do not reckon with validity requirements (Galvan, 2006, P. 57; Lindlot & Taylor, 2002, P. 242; Roulston, 2010, pp. 115-127; Loh, 2013, pp. 1-15) have mentioned the techniques of *members checking*, *members validation*, *members test of validity* or *host verification interviewing the interviewer*, *audience validation* as techniques used in qualitative research to enhance validity. According to these scholars, the process of members check has its origin in the idea that participants in a qualitative research are in fact members of the research team who are checking the results and conclusions of the research for accuracy. Keyton (2001, P.77ff; Roulston, 2010, pp. 83-87) point out that *triangulation* is another process of guaranteeing validity in qualitative research.

Triangulation is a process of sourcing data from different sources in one project. For qualitative researchers, diverse data sources are always viewed as a strong validity marker in a research. Data sources in this paper include the texts/documents displayed in the Text Box and the response from the reporters whose texts are displayed as data in the Text Box. The multiple data source exemplifies, in this paper, methodological triangulation (Jankowski and Wester, 1991, p.62, Roulston, p. 84). On whether the outcome of qualitative research could be generalized, researchers in the qualitative community believe that “qualitative research is conducted on specific interaction with specific interactants in a specific context (Keyton, 2001, P. 69). Thus, the results from such studies, like the present one, might be less generalizable to other interactants at different time and space and/or context. Keyton discloses that qualitative researchers, as is the case in this

paper, remind their readers of this reality by identifying context elements in the research objective(s)/problem.

**Text Box 1: Media and the Coverage of Electoral Process**

S/NO	Newspaper & Date	Textual Exemplars
1	<i>Guardian</i> , 18 <sup>th</sup> July 2010, p. 72	Let me take you down to what happens so you change it, if you don't ... we are ultimately designing a system that would destroy us in the end.
2	<i>Guardian</i> , 18 <sup>th</sup> July 2010, p. 72	The Resident Electoral Commissioner says "Your Excellency, since I came ... there's no accommodation and my vehicle is broken down." The governor replies, "Chief of Staff, please ensure that the REC is put in a presidential lodge, allot him two cars."
3.	<i>Guardian</i> , p.5, 22 August 2013	We came to the conclusion that substantial majority of workers in the commission are actually honest people, doing honest job.
4.	<i>Guardian</i> , p.12, October 6 <sup>th</sup> 2013	The ongoing complaints about the powers of the INEC chairman, Atahiru Jega, and the alleged lopsided structure in the commission are issues that should not be ignored. Confidence building is critical to the success of INEC's job...
5.	<i>Guardian</i> , p. 5, August 22 2013	I am happy to say that in the last three years, we are building trust and gaining confidence in one another.
6.	<i>Guardian</i> , p. 5, August 22 2013	I did my best to do things very openly and transparently.
7.	<i>Guardian</i> , p. 5, August 22 2013	Where we have to take disciplinary measures, we did it quietly without making it a public issue.
8.	<i>Punch</i> , p. 18, 2 May, 2011	NDI said any actions taken on offenders should be widely publicized.

### Analytic Interpretation

Exemplars 1 and 2 of Text Box 1 were uttered by a former Peoples Democratic Party's state governor in Nigeria. Politicians of Peoples Democratic Party have been winning elections and ruling Nigeria since the military relinquished political power in 1999. The former governor made the cited utterance as part of his later-day realization that the media could lead a crusade against election rigging in Nigeria. In this light, the 'you' in the governor's "let me take you down to what happens so you change it" exemplar 1 of Box 1, refers to the media. In a similar vein, the 'what happens' phrase in that exemplar refers to the governor's experience about how Nigeria's electoral officials collude with the ruling party in Nigeria to rig elections. The governor was reminding the media that if they (the media) fail to initiate moves to curb election rigging in Nigeria that the rulers who rig elections, the Nigerian press which ignores election rigging and every other Nigerian would be seen as designing a system that would destroy Nigeria.

In exemplar 2, the former governor gives revealing insight on how they, the rulers, and the election officials conspire to rig elections. According to the governor, election fraud starts with illegal gratification. Illegal gratification commences when the Resident Electoral Commissioners of each of the 36 states arrive their respective states for election assignment. Upon arrival, the electoral officials go to the governor of the state where the commissioner is posted to solicit favors. The governor overzealously complies. The compliance seals the illicit alliance. After the alliance, every other thing about the election – like the selection of polling-booth attendants are compromised to favor the ruling party.

The governor made the statements cited as exemplars 1 and 2 of Box 1 in 18<sup>th</sup> July 2010 – the same month the current Nigeria’s electoral commission chairman, Atahiru Jega was appointed. He made the statements in hope that the revelations would galvanize the media into initiating a nationwide outcry against election rigging (Molomo, 2013). The best opportunity the media had to get the electoral commission chairman to comment on the allegation that the electoral body colludes with the ruling party to rig elections was on 22 August, 2013. On that date, Atahiru Jega granted a comprehensive interview to the *Guardian* newspaper – the same newspaper that published the former governor’s revelation about how the electoral umpire colludes with the ruling party to rig elections. Many paragraphs like the one cited as exemplar 8 ought to have been exploited by *Guardian* reporters, during the interview, to make the chairman comment on the former governor’s revelation. But surprisingly, during the whole interview stretching more than 60 column inches set on 3 ¾ inch column size, the four *Guardian* reporters who anchored the interview never deemed it necessary to buttonhole the electoral chairman on the revelation that indicted the electoral body of collusion in election rigging. When I contacted the reporters on 20 October 2013 and asked why they did not raise the issue of collusion as raised by the ex-governor, their reply was:

**On the statement credited to former governor of Cross Rivers State on the INEC colluding with governors to rig elections, which you said was carried on one of the 2010 editions of *The Guardian*, we did not ask a question to that regard because we did not remember it at all. But on personal observation, having covered INEC for a long period of time, it does not mean that INEC does not have bad eggs. It is obvious that there will be no rigging of elections without members of INEC staff being involved.**

In a similar vein, when I drew the reporters’ attention on 20 October 2013 to the contradictions in some of Jega’s comments during their interview, especially, the contradictions in the texts cited as exemplars 6 and 7 of Box 1; the reporters replied thus:

**Yes there is a sort of contradiction in the INEC claim of transparency and secret disciplining of its indicted staff. But the chairman was trying to state that he was trying to avoid the public condemnation of the entire staff of the commission for being corrupt. I remember he noted that the decision to sack corrupt members of INEC without making it public was to secretly sanitize the commission. According to him, he met a commission with a battered image which he wanted to sanitize without bringing them to the public ridicule.**

## **Discussion**

A common concern exercises the ingenuity of critical scholars. That concern is to fathom why ordinary citizens lack the access to express themselves as opposed to endless access enjoyed by corporations, governments and her institutions (Mcgregor, 2007, p.11; Fiske, 2004, p.219; Kunczik, 1995, p.167). An uglier angle to the lopsided access-situation is the leverage enjoyed by those at the advantageous side of the access-equation. Contributing to this advantage is the flaw of *structural amnesia* (Kunczik, 1995, p.161). Structural amnesia instantiates when the audience are deprived of angles to issues/events because of journalists' failure to ask necessary questions of newsmakers. According to Mayhew (1997, p.6), journalists' failure to ask necessary questions is accounted for by an inclination on the part of the powerful to avoid encounters that induce a two-sided dialogue in an open forum. Mayhew (p.14) explains this avoidance as premising the so-called *information economics*. Information economics prizes abbreviated arguments (tokens) above extended explanations. Mayhew, however, asserts (p. 37) that all the talk about 'tokens' is motivated by a concealed determination to manipulate through a process known as "spinning."

Similarly, Kunczik (1995, p.33) locates the main reason for not asking necessary questions by journalists in their pursuit of "topicality." According to Kunczik, enslavement to topicality or the pursuit of the latest breaking news jeopardises such journalistic norms as careful research and avoidance of pseudo-events. Referring to topicality as atomization of reports or snippet journalism, Kunczik (p.149) points out that day-topical style of reporting informs the audience superficially about outstanding events, persons and issues dominating current affairs. Such reporting, he informs, is not suitable for building up a cumulative knowledge and a lasting comprehension of political contexts. Rather than that, snippet journalism actually retards public knowledge and rationality. The concession by the journalists who interviewed Atahiru Jega, Nigeria's election commission boss, that they forgot the former governor's revelation about how the election-commission's senior officials collude in election rigging vindicates the notion that media's ineptitude retards public knowledge.

*Guardian's* interview with Jega threw up another flaw that plagues media practice in Africa. The textual exemplars presented as exemplars 6 and 7 in the above Text Box projects a disturbing instance of contradiction. Surprisingly, the interviewers, despite being aware of the contradiction, chose to ignore it. The ignored contradiction affords grave implication when considered under proper perspective. Contradiction in texts offers instructive insight when considered within the context of the tenets of articulation theory. Articulation theory promotes a reportorial style that creates connections by coordinating one reality to another. Articulation links certain practices to some effects; this text to that meaning; this meaning to that reality, and this experience to those politics (Anderson & Ross, 2002, p.222; Slack, 2004, pp.114 & 115). The beauty of plying communication within this theoretical scope is to avert the much criticised flaw of glossing over the contradictions that underlie the practices and discourses of the powerful (Fiske, 2004, p.214ff; Gripsrud, 2002, p.35; Beharrell & Philo, 1978, p. x). When contradictions in the discourses of the powerful are glossed over, it frustrates the audience with what Kunczik (1995, p.202) refers to as “learned helplessness.” When the mass media connive at contradictions, they sacrifice meaning production and proper perspective on issues on the altar of merely exhausting themselves in the process of staging meaning (Fiske, 2004, p.219; Taylor, 2000, p.140). By wittingly or unwittingly ignoring the contradictions entailed in exemplars 6 and 7 above, the *Guardian* reporters allowed the electoral commission boss to “spin” ( Mayhew, 1997, p. 37) away from National Democratic Institute’s directive which stipulates public trial, naming and shaming of electoral offenders ( exemplar, 8 Box 1). The entailments of exemplar 3 of the Text Box expose the election boss’ flirtation with contradictions as a deliberate ploy to launder the image of the commission. That ploy flies in face of the entailments of exemplar 4 of Box 1. The entailments of that exemplar hint that questionable things still go on at the electoral body. Given the gravity of the issue entailed in exemplar 4, the *Guardian* ought to use a genre of media practice with a potential to compel the electoral commission boss to make categorical clarification on the issues raised in exemplar 4. The choice, by *Guardian*, of raising such grave issue in an editorial page could be nothing than to “help the powerful avoid encounters that induce a two-sided dialogue in an open forum” (Mayhew, 1997, p.14).

The inaccuracies under discussion point to the challenges that retard progress. These challenges are more devastating in countries where lack of will results in doing things the wrong way. One thing that is done improperly today – especially in less-developed parts of the world is communication. In many parts of the developing world, only the distorted model of communication is practiced. Promoters of distorted model of

communication assume that journalism practice is merely the art of sending and receiving message or transferring/transmitting information from one person to the other. Scholars denounce this flawed model as conveyor-belt, conduit metaphor, transportation or the transmission model of communication (Chandler, 2010, Anderson & Ross, 2002, pp. 62-66).

Transmission reportorial style fails to reckon with the fact that whatever a news source says has not exhausted all shades of intuition and experience that prompted what is said. A communication model that thrives only on what is 'said' lacks the idea that "language does more than say or pass information but is biased in a thousand ways" (Birch, 1989, pp. 42 & 169). Gouldner (1976, p. 112) outlines another insight which is ignored by promoters of the transmission model of journalism/communication. According to Gouldner, news generates tension as a result of the dissonance between the facts of news and the affect structure of the news audience. The need to reduce such news-generated tension, according to Gouldner, requires news report to go beyond the mere facts and take up the additional responsibility of helping the news audience to grasp what the facts of the news are/means. Gouldner's view resonates when (Zelizer, 1997, P. 414; Watson, 2003) noted that "the meaning of an event is as important as its facts." Unfortunately, African journalists and majority of their mentors still define and practice communication as the "dissemination of news and opinion" or as a process of "providing information," (Kasoma, 1999, pp.446 & 450).

If communication is to fulfill the role of helping humanity to confront social vices (Rosen, 1999) including the menace of election rigging, it must embrace the tenets of public journalism (Rosen, 1999, Anderson & Ross, 2002; Friend, Challenger & McAdams, 2000). Public journalism promotes a reportorial style that seeks out trends and patterns rather than reacting to events. Public journalism sees its mission not as a mere source of information but a facilitator of public debate and, sometimes, an active leader in the debate (Rosen, 1999; Friend, Challenger & McAdam, 2000, P. 228 – 231; Anderson & Ross, 2002, P. 291). Public journalism empowers journalists and makes them see themselves as "arena and actors" who should not take aloof stance on public discourse (Gripsrud, 2002, P. 232). When journalists realize that they are actors in the arena of public discourse, the realization emboldens; making them to realize that they are not just mere reporters but "craft people who build up the world the same time they are describing it" (Rosen, 1999, PP. 2 & 4). Public journalism could galvanize African journalists into embracing the obligation of using social mobilization to develop Africa. Social mobilization could impel journalists to go beyond helping the government to sensitize the electorates on the need to get voters card during election season. Going beyond such mobilization should

dovetail into questions about voting right and the implication of giving such right to everybody of voting age at an early stage of experimenting with electoral democracy.

When the media make voting right a subject of public debate, the advantages that Europe and the United States reaped by denying women and the hoi polloi such right for centuries could be discussed and harnessed. A mass media-initiated debate on voting right could explore and harness the lessons in notions like “the men who possess a deeper insight into political life and its needs are never numerous in any age” and “a single remarkable individual may see things correctly, while all the world about him has wrong views” (Habermas, 2001, p. 276). The belief that political liberty, during the fledgling stage of a democratic experiment, should not be for everybody compelled Europe and the United States to deny voting right to “ manual Laborers” (Habermas, 2001, p. 276). That belief also denied women the voting right till 1920 in the United States (Horton, & Leslie, 1974, P. 224). It is only cynics that fail to see the link between Western world’s electoral discipline and the restrictions they placed on the electoral rights of rabbles.

When a civic debate on African electoral process draws on Habermas as cited, innovative arguments against the insistence that illiterate persons in remote outposts be allowed to vote could be articulated. Such articulation could prompt the enactment of a law that denies, for a specific period, the extension of electoral privileges to remote inaccessible places where majority of the population are persons who do not understand the importance of voting right. The fact that African elections are more rigged in remote outposts is instructive (Omolomo, 2013).

When African journalists make civic debate part of media content, such a platform would provide arena for Africans to start questioning the role, on African elections, of the so-called ‘International Community’ as led by the European Union and the United States. Such arena would also urge adherence to the instructive points in The Accra Colloquium on African Elections (2009). Many African media, by the standards of the Accra Communiqué on African Elections, embrace only the wrong things. In a similar vein, European election commentators are hardly impressive in their comments about African elections. For instance, Tensi & Gil (2013) only amplified what they felt were the weaknesses that would tilt the election against the MDC in their 28 May 2013 comments about this year’s Zimbabwe election. Surprisingly, these commentators chose to say nothing about the abuses which the MDC cried out against. Tensi and Gil, in that comment, pretended they did not know that the abuses that the MDC decried can never be tolerated in European elections. These inaccuracies undermine African elections and often lead to the recruitment of the inept into leadership. Recruitment of the inept into African leadership positions

accounts for the desperation which commentators like Schmidt (2013) correctly see as the root of the exodus, even at the risk of drowning on the high sea, of Sub-Saharan Africans to Europe. Where I disagree with Schmidt and other Europeans is their belief that stopping the exodus will result from closing their borders. If anything, what might promise the cessation of the exodus would be to ensure that African elections reflect the will of the electorates. African electorates can choose leaders who can make Africa be like or even better than Europe. It is only when fair elections recruit such leaders that Africa will start to develop. Until such happens, any effort to stop the exodus of Africans to Europe will be futile.

### **Conclusion**

African media, more so, Nigeria's are focalized and found in this paper as indulging in inaccuracies and contradictions that help African political class to unjustifiably perpetuate itself. African media are discussed as preferring the transmission model to the public journalism model of journalism practice. This preference is discussed as the reason African media connive, wittingly/unwittingly, with election agencies to recruit inept leaders. The ineptitude of African leaders is discussed as the reason Africans of sub-Saharan extraction risk life and limb in their desperation to emigrate to the West. The paper prognosticates that the West needs to take more than cursory interest in African electoral system if they want good leaders to occupy African political leadership. The paper sees such move as the only veritable measure that would stem the exodus of Africans, with its deadly concomitance, to the West.

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