

**ASSESSMENT OF PRIVATE TELEVISION
BROADCASTING OPERATIONS IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF
AIT IN YENAGOA**

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Abstract

This study examines the challenges of private broadcasting in Nigeria with particular reference to African Independent Television (AIT), Yenagoa. The emergence of private broadcasting in Nigeria came with the promulgation of decree 38 of 1992 under the General Ibrahim Babangida Administration. This overtime, led to the decentralization of ownership pattern of the broadcast media. The focus of the study is on the challenges faced by the private broadcast media in terms of operations and sustainability. The pluralist and Marxist theories created a theoretical basis for the study. The survey and questionnaire were adopted as method and instrument respectively. Sixty members of staff of AIT, Yenagoa, participated in the study. Findings show that private broadcasting has contributed to improving the quality of programmes, faster access to new, objective and balanced reporting in Nigeria's media space. However, funding, access to equipment, power supply, government regulations and the need to fully attain digitalization, were some of the challenges confronting the African Independent Television, (AIT), Yenagoa. This has implications for the private broadcast media in Nigeria. The recommendation is that, government, its agencies and other stakeholders should create a soft landing for the private media.

Keywords: Broadcast, Deregulation, Monopoly, Regulation, Programming

INTRODUCTION

Broadcasting is a powerful medium capable of moulding the opinion of the audience. Nwabuzor and Gever (2014) states that the manner broadcasting frame issues influences the way the audience perceives them. Jain (2014) sums the power of the broadcast media thus, “this great and modern invention has been instrumental in social awakening, mass education, entertainment, business and employment. Its reach is the widest... broadcasting has revolutionized our life. It is the quickest, cheapest, and most popular means of communication. It has helped us conquer space and time. The above definitions give an idea of how powerful and relevant the broadcast media have been in the society. Hence, Ariye (2015) asserts that broadcasting is a global phenomenon and an essential aspect of any nation’s social and cultural life.

However, the broadcast media in Nigeria did not start this way. Before the 1990s the broadcast scene was purely dominated by publicly owned medium. It took till 1992 for the deregulation of the broadcast sector in Nigeria to allow for private ownership of the broadcast media. Even during the era of public ownership, the broadcast media was plagued with a plethora of issues. And the inclusion of the private broadcast station did not eliminate these problems rather the private sector became bogged by several challenges as well.

Gever (2015) states: The deregulation of the broadcast media in 1992 by the then military administration of General Ibrahim Babangida was, certainly to widen the scope of broadcasting and subsequently allow private participation. Part of the motivation behind the policy was for

Nigerians to reap the full benefits of broadcasting. As a follow-up of the policy, decree No 38 of 1992 set up a regulatory body known as the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC). The NBC states that broadcasting must serve the interest of the general public.

It writes: Broadcasting organization shall recognize that they exercise freedom of expression as agents of the society, not for any personal or section rights, privileges and proprietors, relatives, friends or supporters.

With the submission above, broadcast stations irrespective of the ownership pattern are duty body to serve the Nigerian public. Adamu (2002) cited in Oketunmbi (2007) observes that deregulation of the industry had thrown up new challenges in a sector that was placid, flat and dull. The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 1999) also allows private ownership of broadcast stations as it writes in section 39(2) “without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1) of this section, every person shall be entitled to own, establish and operate any medium for the dissemination of information, ideas and opinions.”

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Running a private broadcast station involves a lot of human and material resources. A broadcast station relies heavily on machinery and technology to function. It also depends on technicians and experts with the knowledge to make things work.

Broadcasting is capital intensive; as a result broadcast stations particularly television requires huge funding which is often hard to get. In developing economies, public stations get subventions annually from government and as such are usually better funded than their privately owned counterparts. For this reason, the former is better positioned to procure a number of operating facilities for ease of

operations. Even at that, subventions hardly meet all needs in view of the competing demands of government (Iredia, 2015).

The implication of this is that a broadcast organization which is anxious to meet its needs must make internally generated revenue a prime function. Under the circumstance, the Marketing department is automatically made a frontline department in the system because how much it can generate is a crucial factor in the continued viability of the station and its component parts. Consequently, a production department has to run as an ally of the revenue yielding department. The latter being similarly conscious that it can only sell good quality content also recognises the expedience of departmental interdependence. For this to happen, the management of each department has to fully realize that when people are assembled to perform a task, the division of the task into several parts should not blur the fundamental principle that all those involved have the same goal.

The study therefore source to look at how deregulation of the broadcast sector has sphere since deregulation.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the challenges confronting AIT, Yenagoa as a private broadcast station in Nigeria?
2. How likely is it for private broadcast stations like AIT, Yenagoa to attract investments and funding in Nigeria?
3. What are the likely prospects of digitalization for AIT, Yenagoa as a private television station in Nigeria?
4. How much value does the private broadcast station like AIT, Yenagoa bring to the media scene in Nigeria?

LITERATURE REVIEW

History of African Independent Television

The Africa independent television which is a subsidiary of DAAR communications was borne out of pan cum – humanist vision of the founder, Chief Aleogho A. Dokpesi, who holds a doctorate degree in marine transport engineering, from the University of Gdanski, Poland. The vision of the founder is to rapidly integrate the African continent with the rest of the world, to encourage development in Africa by attracting investors from all over the world through communications. His desire was to bridge the yawning gap in the world’s information order which perpetually places Africa and third world countries at the mercy of the western perspectives opinions and nuances. Through DAAR Communications is a Private Independent Communication outfit based in Lagos Nigeria’s former federal capital and the economic nerve centre of the West Africa sub – region.

DAAR communications was incorporated on August 1998. It boasts of successful background in the closely related fields of printing and publishing. DAAR launched its Broadcast Services in 1994 with the promotion of Nigeria’s first private radio station “RayPower” 100.5fm commenced operation officially in April 1999, before then, DAAR Communications has launched a 24hours global television Services.

African Independent television (AIT) has the philosophy that use geared towards the promotion of Africa values and traditions of the black people across the world

Broadcasting and Technology

Iredia (2015) states that broadcasting is premised on technology and because technology keeps changing by the day, a station, which is not properly managed, is not likely to benefit from the use of the latest facilities. In which case except the management of a station is proactive, obsolete and analogue facilities could mar the efforts of its operatives. The same fate could more easily befall a

broadcast station in the area of regulation. Indeed, the need to apply management principles to broadcasting has become more obvious since 2004 when the deadline on the transition to digital broadcasting was conceived by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). Again, part of the task of managing a station involves monitoring and ensuring compliance with all relevant injunctions and directions.

In Nigeria, the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) which was established in 1992 is empowered to regulate broadcasting in the country. The powers of the Commission are quite enormous to the extent that it can revoke the operating license of a station. The commission has a number of provisions in its broadcasting code that must not be breached. To do otherwise, is to place the fate of a station in jeopardy. Bearing in mind that it is not enough to survive but to be viable and profitable, care must be taken to evolve a management technique or approach that can ensure increased productivity, efficiency and effectiveness of a station.

Problems Associated with Private Broadcasting in Nigeria

The fear that the private owner might abuse the concept of public interest; that he might use his channel as a political tool against his opponents and that fairness might be sacrificed at the altar of commercial minded proprietors (James, 2002). Ikechukwu Amaechi in Ariye (2010) states that the deregulation elicited great enthusiasm from the people and understandably so since the NTA had inextricably become the propaganda instrument of government.

He further emphasized that the enthusiasm and absolute craving for private television by the people was predicated on the belief that like the print media, the independent electronic media was going to provide independent news and entertainment which will inevitably create variety and choice as well as competition which is expected to rub-off positively on the discerning and sophisticated Nigerian public.

Thus, Kolapo (2018) outlines the 10 challenges experienced by private broadcasting in Nigeria and by extension, AIT, Yenagoa to include;

1. Poor Remuneration
2. Digital Broadcasting is Still the Least Developed Broadcasting Channel in Nigeria
3. Broadcasting is Capital Intensive in Nigeria
4. Most Nigerian Broadcasters are not Properly Groome
5. No Freedom of Speech
6. Erratic Power Supply
7. Poor Infrastructural Development
8. Poor Quality of Programmes
9. Non-Payment of Salaries
10. Poor Welfare

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Pluralist and Marxist theory

According to UK Essay (2018) Sociologists are interested in the mass media because of the powerful effect it has in people's lives both politically and socially. Mass media is forms of communication directed to big mass audiences without any personal contact. This can be by radio, television, internet, billboards and so on. This essay is going to explain and critically evaluate the Marxist and pluralist theories of the mass media. An explanation of the media will also be included.

Marxist theorists suggest that the media is dominated by the ruling class who are the major owners of the media corporations, which gives them total control and manipulation of media content and audiences in their own interest. In the view of the Marxist the media is seen as part of an ideal ground in which various class views are battled out. However, pluralists suggest that there is no dominant ruling class. They insist that the role of the media is to promote freedom of speech. In fact they see society as a multipart of rival groups and interests, of

which none take the leading role all of the time. Pluralists believe that the government has a key position in regulating media content and ownership.

METHOD AND DATA ANALYSIS

The study adopts the survey research design. The population covers the media practitioners at African Independent Television, (AIT), Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. However because of the size of the media station there was no sample size.

Distribution of Respondents by Designation at AIT, Yenagoa

Designation	Frequency	Percent
Reporter	11	20
Head, programs	3	6
Newscaster/ AOP	9	16
Technical/ Production crew	15	27
Editor	4	7
ICT & Library	5	9
Producers	8	15
Total	55	100

The table above shows the designation of the respondents of AIT, Yenagoa that provided responses. Fifteen respondents or 27% of the sampled population at AIT, Yenagoa are part of the technical or production crew, 20% or 11 respondents are reporters at AIT, Yenagoa, 9 respondents of 16% of the sampled population are newscasters or On Air Personalities at AIT, Yenagoa, 8 respondents

or 15% of the sampled population from AIT, Yenagoa are programme producers. Those in ICT & Library unit of AIT, Yenagoa accounts for 5 respondents or 9% of the sampled population, 4 respondents of 7% are editors and 3 respondents of 6% of the sampled population occupy the position of Head of program at AIT, Yenagoa.

Table 1: Respondent's awareness on the challenges confronting AIT, Yenagoa in terms of operations

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Yes	36	65.5
No	-	-
Partially	19	34.6
Can't say	-	-
Total	55	100

Table 1, 66% of the sampled population, making 36 respondents indicate that they are aware of the management challenges confronting AIT, Yenagoa while 19 respondents of 35% of the sampled population are partially aware. No respondents indicated not being aware of the operational challenges facing AIT, Yenagoa.

Table 2 Distribution of responses: AIT, Yenagoa has a lot of challenges with regards its operational activities

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	36	66
Agree	15	27
Partially Agree	4	7
Disagree	-	-
Strongly Disagree	-	-
Total	55	100

Table 2 shows how informed about the challenges AIT, Yenagoa in terms of its operational activities. A total of 36 respondents or 66% agrees in strong terms that AIT, Yenagoa has challenges, 15 respondents or 27% of the sampled population agree also that AIT, Yenagoa faces operative challenges while 4 respondents or 7% of the sampled population agree that AIT, Yenagoa has operational challenges. No respondents shares a different view or not knowing that AIT, Yenagoa has operational challenges.

Table 3: Distribution of responses: Operational Issues confronting AIT, Yenagoa

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Full switch from analog to digital broadcasting	3	5.5
Technical knowhow	-	-
Operational cost	9	16.4
Lack of skilled broadcasters	-	-
Lack of standard equipment	7	12.7
Power supply	5	9.1
Government and regulatory agencies interference	8	14.6
All of the above	23	41.8
None of the above	-	-
Total	55	100

For table 3, respondents or staff of AIT, Yenagoa identified some of the challenges confronting the organization. Eight respondents or 15% of the sampled population indicate that government and regulatory agencies interference with AIT, Yenagoa operational activities. The operational cost of running AIT, Yenagoa poses a challenge as identified by 9 respondents or 16% of the sampled population. The lack of standard equipment were indicated as an

operational challenge by 7 respondents or 13% of the population while access to power were viewed as a challenge by 5 respondents or 9% of the sampled population. Three respondents or 6% of the population believe that the full switch from analog to digital broadcasting is a challenge facing AIT, Yenagoa. However, 23 respondents or 42% of the sampled population, accounting for the highest number of respondents, indicated that most of the challenges listed constitute an operational challenge for AIT, Yenagoa.

Table 4: Distribution of responses: Running a private broadcast station successfully takes a lot of funds

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	36	65.5
Agree	14	25.5
Partially Agree	5	9.1
Disagree	-	-
Strongly Disagree	-	-
Total	55	100

For table 4, 66% of the sampled population of 36 respondents agree that funding is a major need of AIT, Yenagoa, like every other private station. Twenty-six percent of the sampled population, representing 14 respondents agree that funding is an issue for AIT, Yenagoa while 5 respondent or 9% of the population see funding as partially the issue confronting AIT, Yenagoa.

Table 5: Distribution of responses: broadcast equipment as well as operations keep evolving and AIT, Yenagoa tries hard to evolve

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	15	27
Agree	11	20
Partially Agree	13	24

Disagree	16	29
Strongly Disagree	-	-
Total	55	100

In table 5, 16 respondents or 29% of the sampled population which is the highest population think that AIT, Yenagoa is not doing enough to evolve with the rest of the world in terms of its operational activities. On the contrary, 15 respondents, making 27% of AIT, Yenagoa staff, see the station as working hard to move with the trend, 11, respondents or 20% think AIT, Yenagoa as doing enough to evolve while 13 respondents or 24% of the sampled population partially agree that AIT, Yenagoa evolves.

Table 6: Distribution of responses: Private broadcast stations attract enough investments and funding from the private and public sector

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	3	5.5
Agree	8	14.6
Partially Agree	6	10.9
Disagree	21	38.2
Strongly Disagree	17	30.9
Total	55	100

In table 6, AIT, Yenagoa staff responded as to if the station attracts enough investment or funding. Thirty-one percent or 17 respondents disagree entirely that AIT, Yenagoa attracts enough funds, 21 respondents or 38% of the sampled population do not agree that AIT, Yenagoa attracts enough funds. However, on the flip side, 8 respondents or 15% of the sampled population think AIT, Yenagoa attracts good enough funds or investment while 3 respondents or 6%

of the sampled population a strongly of the opinion that AIT, Yenagoa attracts good investment or funding.

Table 7: Distribution of responses: challenges with securing funds or investment opportunities for AIT, Yenagoa and private broadcast stations

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Commercial bank policies and regulations	5	9
High lending rates	18	33
Issues with terms of repayments	9	16
Lopsided investment requirements	2	4
All of the above	21	38
None of the above	-	-
Total	55	100

For table 7, respondents identified the likely challenges confronting AIT, Yenagoa with securing funds for operation and 18 respondents, representing 33% of the sampled population indicated that the high lending rates posed a challenge for accessing funds for AIT, Yenagoa. Nine respondents identified the terms of repayment as what constitutes a challenge when considering funding for the station. Commercial bank regulations or policies is creating a challenge for AIT, Yenagoa as seen by 5 respondents or 9% of the sampled population while 2 respondent or 4% say the lopsided investment requirements which is not so favorable to the organization stands in the way of securing much funds. However, 21 respondents, which is 38% of the sampled AIT, Yenagoa population indicates that all the points mentioned above are challenges confronting AIT, Yenagoa.

Table 8: Responses on if AIT, Yenagoa has attained full digitalization of broadcast operations

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Yes	3	5.5
No	18	32.7
Partially	32	58.2
Can't say	2	3.6
Total	55	100

Table 8, 32 respondents, representing 58% of the sampled population from AIT, Yenagoa indicated that the station has partially achieved the digitalization of its broadcast operations. However, 18 respondents, representing 33% stated, 'No', meaning the station is yet to attain full digitalization of its broadcast operations. Three respondents or 6% said Yes, AIT, Yenagoa has attained full digitalization while 2 respondents or 4% of the sampled population do not have anything to say.

Table 9: Distribution of responses: challenges with full digitalization of the AIT, Yenagoa

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Funding	11	20
Importation of broadcast equipment	8	14.6
Issues with government regulatory framework for digitalization	2	3.6
Internal issues and resolution	2	3.6
All of the above	32	58.2
None of the above	-	-
Total	55	100

Table 9 addresses what the staffs of AIT, Yenagoa thinks is responsible for the non-attainment of full digitalization. Eleven

respondents, which is 20% of the sampled population see funding as the major obstacle stopping AIT, Yenagoa from attaining full digitalization while 8 respondents or 15% of the sampled population thinks the importation of broadcast equipment is a hurdle for AIT, Yenagoa digitalization operations. Internal issues and resolution is seen by 2 respondents or 4% of the sampled population as a reason the digitalization attempt of AIT, Yenagoa has not taken effect. Finally, 32 respondents, which is 58% or above one-half of the sampled population indicated that all the challenges mentioned have been a stumbling block towards attaining a full digitalization of AIT, Yenagoa.

Table 10: Distribution of responses: Private broadcast stations like AIT, Yenagoa have helped to improve broadcasting in Nigeria

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	27	49.1
Agree	21	38.2
Partially Agree	7	12.7
Disagree	-	-
Strongly Disagree	-	-
Total	55	100

In table 10, AIT, Yenagoa staffs, indicated whether or not the private broadcast stations in Nigeria have been helpful towards helping the broadcast scene in Nigeria. A total of 27 respondents or 49% of the sampled population, which accounts for almost a half of the population strongly agree the private broadcast station in Nigeria has contributed immensely to the growth of broadcasting in Nigeria. Another 21 respondents of 38% agree that private broadcasting has helped improve the broadcast sector while 7 respondents or 13% of the population are in partial agreement on the contributions of the private broadcasting in Nigeria's media. However, no respondent

disagreed that private broadcasting has helped improved the broadcast sector in Nigeria.

Table 11: Distribution of responses on the values AIT, Yenagoa have added to broadcasting in Yenagoa State

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Faster news delivery	11	20
Better programme quality	9	16
Objective reporting	8	15
Feedback and audience participation	-	-
Creative and improved programme content	6	11
All of the above	21	38.2
None of the above	-	-
Total	55	100

Table 11 shows the contributions or benefits of AIT, Yenagoa and by implication the private broadcast station to broadcasting in Yenagoa State. Eleven respondents, representing 20% of the sampled population says AIT, Yenagoa has helped in ensuring faster news delivery, 9 respondents, which is, 16% of the sampled population state that better programme quality is the added value of AIT, Yenagoa to the state. Eight respondents, which is 15% of the sampled population say that AIT, Yenagoa has brought about objective reporting in Yenagoa and Bayelsa State. Six respondents, which 11% of the sampled population say AIT, Yenagoa has brought about creative and improved programme content in broadcasting in Bayelsa State. Finally, 21 respondents, which is, 38% of the sampled population says all the above benefits have been part of the contributions of AIT, Yenagoa to the broadcast sector.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Research question 1: What are the challenges confronting AIT, Yenagoa as a private broadcast station in Nigeria?

No doubt the challenge before the broadcast sector is enormous. Furthermore, the private broadcast sector faces a stiffer challenge considering that they do not have access to government subventions and more.

The issue of financial challenges confronting the private broadcast station is not exaggerated. Majority of the respondents identified lopsided investment policies, commercial bank and CBN regulation, irregular repayment terms and high interest rates as some of the financial woes AIT, Yenagoa has to contend with. Rodney (2004) states that the industry requires heavy capital outlay in state of the art technology to operate efficiently: transmitters, computerized control rooms with tele-promoters, comp-graphic switches, studio cameras, recorders, cassettes and tapes, players and mixers, editing suite, OB vans, digital studios, websites, generating plants etc. High cost of importation of these equipment and lack of regular power supply became problem early in the life of stations. Many stations were unable to secure enough foreign exchange from Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), to procure equipment, and most challenged the imposition of import duties on broadcast equipment.

Majority of the respondents identified that AIT, Yenagoa are yet to fully attain the digitalization of its broadcast operations. Armstrong (2018) states that tremendous benefit can be achieved through digital switchover. These benefits include an increase in efficiency in the use of spectrum and the launch of new services for viewers, which in turn, helps to secure the future of the terrestrial television as a viable economic platform. As countries increasingly adopt digital TV technology, analogue TV will become obsolete, making its maintenance difficult and costly. Further challenges are identified in table 9 and has to do with the problems with importation of broadcast equipment and government regulatory agencies.

Research question 2: How likely is it for private broadcast stations like AIT, Yenagoa to attract investments and funding in Nigeria?

Though, it is possible for AIT, Yenagoa to access funding as well as investment opportunities but the respondents identified that there have been so many pitfalls towards receiving funding from both private and public sources.

Therefore, the data addressed the possibilities and challenges with securing funds for AIT, Yenagoa. First, majority of the respondents admitted that securing funds for operations does not come easy from private or public sector. Government framework and agencies were identified as barriers to funding. High lending rate, CBN and commercial bank regulations also frustrate AIT, Yenagoa's attempt to secure funds for its operations.

Research question 3: What are the likely prospects of digitalization for AIT, Yenagoa as a private television station in Nigeria?

Responses shows that majority of the respondents see AIT, Yenagoa as not fully attained digitalization of its broadcast operations and that has been a major challenge to its operations. Though, there are high prospects for the full cross over from analog to digital broadcasting, as identified in the study however, government policy framework as well as the importation of the required equipment have been a major constraint to achieving this task.

Research question 4: How much value does the private broadcast station like AIT, Yenagoa bring to the media scene in Nigeria?

It is evident that private broadcasting which came to be after decree 38 of 1992 was passed under the General Ibrahim Babangida's administration have done more good than harm to the Nigeria broadcast scene. Private broadcast stations as the findings showed, have indeed contributed immensely to the growth of broadcasting in Nigeria. The specific areas itemized include faster new delivery, better

quality programmes and content, objective reporting, creative and improved programme content are some of the few contributions.

CONCLUSION

The study was able to reach the following conclusions that there is a clear fact that the private broadcast media in Nigeria is in dire need of help as it is undergoing several challenges and deregulation of the broadcast sector gave rise to private broadcast. The advent of private broadcasting in Nigeria has resulted in the improvement of the broadcast sector in Nigeria. It has resulted in better program content and quality. Also, faster news delivery has become possible with the introduction of the private sector.

Also The private broadcast media have faced a major problem with funding issues. Part of these financial issues has to do with CBN and commercial bank policies which has made it difficult to access funds. Where private broadcast stations can access funds, the repayment terms are either not favourable or the lending rates are too high. Government policies and framework has not helped the private sector to function without much issues. Private broadcast stations do not enjoy subventions like government owned stations and government policy framework has been a limiting factor for private broadcasting stations.

There are also issues of molestation and harassment of media practitioners, particularly from the private broadcast stations and by the law enforcement agents over issues relating to the carrying out of their activities as journalists as well as the problem of erratic power supply has resulted in more cost in terms of operations for private broadcasting stations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

No doubt, deregulation has made appreciable impact on the socio-cultural, economic and political life of the country. However, it is seen that if the broadcast sector must continue to enjoy the gains of

broadcasting then the private media owners and the government must create the enabling environment for the sector to thrive.

There is an urgent need for taxes on importation of broadcast equip to be cut drastically if not removed completely to aid the importation of broadcast equipment. All stakeholders in the financial sector, including commercial banks, industrial banks and the likes need to create relevant and specific packages targeted at the broadcast media to aid their operations and access to better funds to keep the broadcast station viable and meet their production standard.

Media operators also need to be very conscious about staff salary and remunerations. The welfare of the broadcast media personnel is paramount to ensuring that the staffs give their best to their duties.

The media must remain true to their stand on objectivity, fairness and objective reporting. The media must strive to keep society informed and enlightened about the happenings in society.

The NBC has its statutory responsibility to monitor the activities of the private broadcast media to ensure they stick to the tenets of broadcasting, informing the public, enlightening and educating the public while remaining objective. Lastly, the issue of government interference in media activities, police harassment of media practitioners has to stop for the media to carry out its functions without fear and rancour.

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