

THE CONVENTIONAL MEDIA IN NIGERIA AND DEMOCRATIC TENETS

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ABSTRACT

This study is a secondary analysis of the role of the conventional media and democratic tenets across the four republics in Nigeria. The attempt tries to evaluate the power structure and balance, as well as shifts between the media and Nigeria governments towards understanding the democratic tenets which dominated each republic. The democratic history of Nigeria is therefore briefly reviewed and analysed in line with an incisive narration of the role of the media in Nigeria. To this end, the Development Media; Social Responsibility; Democratic-Participant; and Agenda Setting theories are found relevant towards understanding the logic of this study thereof. Findings show that the media in Nigeria have been unanimous in the fourth [4th] republic than any other. And have shifted more into issues of good governance than institutions of government. Therefore this study recommends among others that Nigeria's government-media relations, though often amidst competing interest, must be mutual towards the most common good since a strong, responsible but free media is not just seen as a template for democracy, but is also its' strength.

KEYWORDS: Democracy, Democratic Tenets, Conventional Media, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

The role of democracy in modern society is so overwhelming the every modern nation seems to appear to pride itself as a republic. But then, there are key democratic features or indicators that also tends to be the most common indicators of how far and willing a society is sincerely striving towards an inclusive government the key indicators also include the extent to which the media is free, not just in terms of ownership and control, but how it encourages public participation and dialogue in the participatory continuum.

The foregoing may certainly be one of the reasons Altschull (1995), in his book: *Agents of Power: The Media and Public Policy*, makes it a "duty" to first, "pictorially" quote Joseph Pulitzer, saying that "our republic and its press will rise or fall together." The meaning of this position is simple democracy is a participatory form of government, so how can the republic stand if the communication tools and channels for the participation are not significantly rolled into effect.

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Odion (2008, p.79) citing Hornby (2000, p.309) asserts that democracy is a system of government in which the every member of the populace can potentially vote or be voted, or elected into office. But democracy also involves the fair and equal treatment of everyone, their rights to take part in decision making and also fight for justice or resist injustice. The tenets of democracy, in a democratic country are expected to spread beyond the macro level, but well into micro level of a so called republic. The experiences of individuals, irrespective of any political diversity are therefore channelled and shared in an interactive process that is coordinated by the conventional and non-conventional media of communication.

Odion (2008, p.79) citing The International Anti Censorship Organisation Article 19:2000 further sustains that democracy is founded on a number of substantial principles. First of all, at the macro level, elected official and civil servants are supposed to be accountable to the people. This process is enabled by a host of mechanisms which include a striving mass media that can investigate and report compelling details that would ensure that a democratic system is sustained

The relationship between democracy and the media is therefore implicitly symbiotic-meaning a republic cannot stand without an actively standing press. And when the press is falling, the republic should be seen as failing and falling as well. On the bases of such a purported significant relationship between democracy and the media, there is a fresh motivation to summarily but critically make an assessment of the conventional media in Nigerian and the roles thereof.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There are several works on the media in Nigerian and the political struggles of the country. Omu (2008, p.88) looked at the media in Nigeria and the formation of her nation-state. In several

other aspects, Atim (2010) assessed the role of the media in Nigeria as well as the complacencies thereof; Obasanjo (2010), talks of the struggle towards democratic governance in Nigeria through several years of uncertainty; Owolabi (2008) and (Oboh, 2014) articulate about the relationship between the media and democracy in Nigeria. However, as the stages and attempts towards democracy in Nigeria are historically captured and evaluated, the relationship between the conventional media and the various democratic tenets across the strata of “free” existence in Nigeria appears blurred. Such relationship therefore becomes a niche but seemingly important issue that is investigated herein.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study seeks to fulfil the following:

1. To establish correlated positions on the state of the conventional media and Pre-Independence democracy in Nigeria.
2. To understand the main democratic tenets advocated by the conventional media in Nigeria since independence.
3. To ascertain the points of difference in the relationship between Nigeria’s democratic tenets and the conventional media in the country.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study seeks to answer the following:

1. What are the correlated positions on the state of the conventional media and Pre-Independence democracy in Nigeria?
2. What are the main democratic tenets advocated by the conventional media in Nigeria since independence?
3. Are there points of difference in the relationship between Nigeria’s democratic tenets and the conventional media in the country?

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW: DEMOCRACY AND THE CONVENTIONAL MEDIA IN NIGERIA

The concept of democracy has been vastly discussed. In this study, what is most important is the convergence of all the views about what democracy really is. Understandably, the creeds (tenets) of democracy are or are hinged on freedom/human rights, self government; and equality (equity/fairness), as well as accountability/Justice of government to the people (Idemudia, 2008, p.139). First, the name "Nigeria," as it is called today was a coinage made known by one Miss Flora Shaw, a then Colonial Editor for the famous newspaper, Times of London (Obasanjo, 2010, p.2).

The Nigerian society, which many, like Omu (2008, p.88) seem to consider as a "forced marriage," is today a so called democratic nation. This is because the constitution is supreme; freedom of choice and human rights are preached and advocated. Odion (2008, p.79) sustains that democracy is founded on a number of principles, including accountability of elected officials and civil servants to the people. This means a host of mechanisms should be in place to uphold any functional democracy.

However, the views about what constitute democracy remain complex because the tenets are vastly challenging to uphold. Real or perceived democratic nations consistently struggle with issues of state and citizen just as much as tyrannies. It is because of such complexity that there is often a seeming approximation of democratic tenets. Indeed, men are not gods, and can only attempt a description of the ideal, let alone uphold it absolutely (Idemudia, 2008, p.139).

The position of Dennis and Merrill (1984) in Egbon (2001, p. 12) is apt to the foregoing, thus:

Democracy is likely to remain not only a contestable concept, it is also a critical concept -

that is, norm or ideal by which reality is tested and found wanting. That is not to say that a perfect democracy is at the end attainable, any more than is perfect freedom or perfect justice. It is rather that the idea and ideal is always likely to function as a corrective to compliment rather than as a prop to it.

As much as this seems too high an ambition of government, governance, and citizenry, many argue that there is no alternative, otherwise power will corrupt the rulers, and arbitrary rule may appear justified.

The role of the mass media in all of this hinges on what many prefer to call the fourth estate beside the executive, Legislature, and judiciary (Umechukwu, 2003, p.73). The three aims of government are typical of so called democracies, towards check and balances -to execute, legislate, and adjudicate. As they check each other, couldn't there be a conspiracy against the due process, and hence the people? Wouldn't the people interact and consider their society, and even the government in place? And in the event of collapse of democracy or republic in the three-arm government system, and the rise of tyranny, what would remain of hope without the media? This questions and possibly many more underscore the value and certainly, as well as the role (at least expectedly) of the mass, conventional media.

Fortunately, the mass media themselves appear to have vastly evolved. And now there is what the likes of Odion (2008, p.81) refer to as e-journalism, amidst digital technologies and media synergies or convergences. In turn, there is supposed to be a commensurate contribution of the media to democracies. In view of the foregoing, the question: what has the conventional media in Nigeria done towards upholding democratic tenets? The position of Ochonogor (2008, p.121) is simple:

The media of mass communication have, and can play great roles in the development of political and democratic ideals of developing countries like Nigeria. The media are multipliers of sources of knowledge, raise levels of resources of knowledge and levels aspirations.

Ochonogor (2008) appears to posit that the conventional media in Nigeria have been doing well towards upholding and sustaining democratic tenets; and that information, as part of knowledge acquisition in a democracy, is the traditional function of the conventional media. It is for this reason that history has shown without exception, that all governments, democratic or not, are interested in control and management of information.

In corroboration with Ochonogor (2008, p.121), Idemudia (2008, p.147) quotes the former Minister of Information, Chief John Ode that Nigeria's mass media have grown in capacity and capability. The country now has at least 152 radio stations; 116 television stations, and 40 cable stations. Owolabi (2008, p.153) sustains further that the "media and democracy are soul-mates," and cites Oseni (2005, p.14) who considered the mass media as the engine of democracy. Oseni (2005, p. 23) in Owolabi (2008, p.154) persist that:

The bravery, confidence, selflessness and sacrifice made by the Nigerian press were the single largest contribution towards independence on October 1, 1960 and the installation of democratic government in Nigeria since May 29, 1999.

In as much as many other scholars like Atim (2010) have also pointed out some shortcomings of the conventional media in Nigeria towards tenets democratic tenets, it is beyond doubt, the foregoing corroborations are substantial enough to agree that the conventional media in Nigeria have indeed been very instrumental towards democratic tenets in the country.

Empirical evaluation of more documented position on the foregoing about the conventional media in Nigeria and democratic tenets may still suffice however.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

DEVELOPMENT MEDIA THEORY

The Development Media Theory is postulated by Dennis McQuail. The theory first came to light in 1987, and posits mainly the development priorities of developing countries, and how the media in such countries must factor into such peculiarities. Hence, the theory states that the media in developing nationals must be free but only towards positive development, and responsibly according to the nationally accepted cultural, economic, as well as political policy or task and those of her allies. The implication of the position is that each nation, especially, developing countries may tailor their media experiences and needs peculiarly, while the state may retain the right to intervene for so called "development interest(s)" (Anaeto et al, 2008, p.63).

Anaeto et al, (2008, p.64) are of the view that the Development Media Theory is criticised mostly for appearing to justify media control by government. But also noticeable, the theory is seemingly more relevant to developing nations, as if "developed" nations do not have development needs. However, the development media theory remains relevant to this study because it highlights the need for a very culturally, economically and politically responsible media that would be very sensitive to the peculiarities of the environment where it exists and draws fulfilment.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY THEORY

The first thing that seems most logical to say about the Social Responsibility Theory is that it suits complex and delicate pluralists' democratic situations that make up and have been

experienced in Nigeria. The problems of the first republic media as enunciated earlier are seemingly related to the views of Anaeto et al, (2008, pp.58-59) citing Sandman et al (1972) that the theory was propounded by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm in 1963. The theory owns its origin to the United States based Hutchins Commission on Freedom of the Press, which in turn was set up in 1947 to re-examine the concept of press freedom as enunciated in the Libertarian or Free Press Theory. This is simply because the so called "free market place of ideas" which had long been noticed to encourage commercialization far more than public interests –See Sandman et al (1972) in Anaeto et al, (2008, pp.58-59).

Prominent among the list of positions taken by the social responsibility theory is thus: the media should accept and fulfil its role in society, but in such a way as to improve society and limit fallout amongst competing views and variables. This, according to the theory is only achievable if the media is expertly or professional enough towards truthful, accurate, objective, and balanced information gathering and dissemination, while also granting the possible plurality of views and right to reply. Departing from the libertarian theory which seems to see the media as partners with government, the Social Responsibility Theory is anchored on not just self regulation, but according to a template agreed with the media, but enforced by government. Just as Anaeto et al, (2008, pp.58-59) put it, the Social Responsibility Theory is generally relevant to this writing, but mostly in terms of its' logic of serving "...the political system by making information, discussion and consideration of public affairs generally accessible."

DEMOCRATIC-PARTICIPANT THEORY

The most important application and logic of the Democratic-Participant Theory to this writing is towards understanding the value, significance and enhancement of political participation via media proliferation which has been greatly

witnessed since the 1992 privatisation exercise of the General Babangida military regime. The gains of the media since the deregulation have succeeded in putting forward the argument that media proliferation, enhanced audience access and participation are very fundamental to the establishment and maintenance of democratic tenets.

The Democratic-Participant Theory which was propounded by Dennis McQuail in 1987 scales down to every aspect of the relationship between media and democracy as well as all the inherent tenets. It also includes the need for inclusion of all parties, interests as opposed to the hitherto or often perceived/real situation of elitist inclinations (Anaeto et al, 2008, pp.61-62). The assumption of the theory implies that the conventional media can be owned by various democratic interests groups and individuals, provided the tenets of democracy are generally accepted and respected in the course of information gathering and dissemination.

AGENDA SETTING THEORY

The Agenda Setting Theory, according to Oboh (2014, p.42), was postulated by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972. The theory is said to have been significantly upheld in much of political communications and experiences. McCombs and Shaw (1972) postulate that the society do mirror issues, phenomena or events as important, but only according to how such had been hitherto or contemporarily stressed by the organized conventional mass media. The meaning here is that by gate keeping, editing, and finally highlighting certain issues, events, or phenomena as important via coverage or reportage, an agenda is often set among the populace (audiences).

The Agenda Setting Theory is also relevant and apt to this study. This is because of its synergising understanding towards the democratic participation of audiences in media selections

and dissemination of news worthy [positive or negative] issues, events/ phenomena that enhance developmental attitude and orientation via responsible journalism. It must be noted that it is only the Agenda Setting Theory that has the postulate potential to harmonise all the normative theories of the media, some of which have been relevantly applied in this study.

METHODOLOGY

The Secondary Analysis design was used towards data collection. It is the use of primary or secondary information towards new niche findings. Several scholars such as Hyman, 1972; Hakim, 1982; Dale, *et al* 1988, as noted by Dale

(2004) have upheld the secondary analysis as a time and resource saving research design towards vast, varied and quality data. Indeed, Irwin and Winterton (2011, pp. 2-3) reiterate that the secondary analysis design is an established practice towards the re-use of data. Secondary analysis thus enables greater use to be made of data beyond the research which originally produced them. Several historical data, reports, scholarly publications, and books were consulted and evaluated. As such, the data was “re-cycled” [extracted towards addressing the questions herein]. There was care not to replicate any previous findings, but rather depend on the vast, varied but relevant information base towards attaining the main stay of this study.

DATA AND FINDINGS

Table 1. Correlated positions on the state of the media and Pre-Independence democracy

• General media advocacy for independence
• Discord amongst media about independence time and timing activities
• Discord amongst media about pre-independence media policies
• Issues of media training and professionalism

Source: Secondary Analysis, 2018

Table 1 show that the pre-independence media in Nigeria mostly and generally agreed and advocated for Nigeria’s independence. There were disagreements however.

Table 2. Main Democratic Tenets advocated by the media in Nigeria

Democratic Tenet	Approximated Remark
Self-governance/Civil-Rule/Governing institutions	Significantly Advocated
Equality/Fairness	Significantly Advocated
Freedom/Human rights	Not Significantly Advocated
Accountability/Justice	Not Significantly Advocated

Source: Secondary Analysis, 2018

In table 2, it is shown that the main democratic tenets advocated by the media in Nigeria are Self-governance/civil-rule/governing institutions, equality/fairness, freedom/human rights, as well as accountability/justice. However, only self-governance and equality/fairness are significantly advocated.

Table 3. The Conventional media in Nigeria and Democratic Tenets in Nigeria

Democratic era	Media influence	Media slack	Outcome
Pre-independence/Shortly after	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Freedom/human rights ● Self-governance [Significantly] ● Accountability/justice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Equality & fairness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Nigeria's Independence
First republic & interruptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Civil Rule ● Equality/fairness [Significantly] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Freedom/human rights ● Accountability/Justice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Second republic
Second republic & interruptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Freedom/human rights ● Equality & fairness ● Civil Rule [Significantly] ● Accountability/justice 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Third republic ● Interim government
Third republic & interruptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Civil Rule [Significantly] ● Accountability/justice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Freedom/human rights ● Equality/fairness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fourth republic
Fourth republic & interruptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Freedom/human rights ● Equality/fairness ● Civil Rule ● Accountability/justice ● Governing institutions [Significantly] 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sustained national transition: 1999-2003(PDP) 2003-2007(PDP) 2007- 2011(PDP) 2011- 2015 (PDP) 2015 – Date (APC)

Source: Secondary Analysis, 2018

Table 3 shows a summary of how the media in Nigeria have influenced democratic tenets in Nigeria. Details of Nigeria's democratic history so far show that the more the media agitated and adhered to all the democratic tenets, something unique happened. In 1993, though the presidential election was annulled, the military leadership could not stay, and instead appointed an interim government; this has not happen in the history of the country. Even as the situation, according to Obasanjo (2010), was alien to Nigeria, it showed there was significant pressure towards self-governance. Also, it can be observed that during the return to a so much talked about democratic rule since 1999, all democratic tenets have been advocated by the media (Oboh, 2014). Particularly, governing institutions, such democratic tenets, as influenced by the

conventional media, have arguably sustained democracy in Nigeria.

Nevertheless, besides self-governance, there have been calls by the media for more freedom and human rights, equality and fairness, as well as accountability to the people. The media in turn have benefited. It is within the fourth republic that the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) was signed into law. Irrespective, many media organizations have suffered destruction and various forms of intimidation in the pursuance of enshrined democratic tenets.

In the light of such positions about the role and influence of the conventional media in Nigeria towards Nigeria's democracy, it appears reasonable to attempt some summary examples of thereof.

PRE-INDEPENDENCE

Though the press during this era existed to serve the cultural, economic and political interests of British colonial masters, Nigeria's independence would have delayed had it not been for the role of "editor-nationalists," who "...grew to occupy a parallel position..." becoming a formidable opposition to the colonial government towards Nigeria's freedom (Egbon, 2001, p.53). The electronic media like radio and television were tightly controlled by the colonial masters, but it was quite difficult to also control the newspapers and to some extent magazines.

There are hardly documented roles played by magazines towards nationalism, but the opposite is the case newspapers. Many of the nationalist efforts towards Nigeria's independence were carried out on newspapers pages, while some of the forefront nationalist also owned newspapers. For instance Nnamdi Azikiwe was the publisher of West African Pilot and went on to become the Governor General; Herbert Macualey, another forefront nationalist bought over Lagos Daily News -the first daily newspaper in Nigeria, from Victor Bababunmi in 1927; Obafemi Awolowo was the publisher of the Nigerian Tribune, went on to become Governor of the Western Region, among others (Ciboh, 2007); (Duyile, 2009); and (Daramola, 2015).

The democratic tenets adhered via the media at this stage were freedom and human rights, accountability, and self-governance. Through the newspapers that were published, the nationalist expressed grievances with the colonial authorities in terms of governance, human rights, and the perceived willingness of Nigerians to self-governance. The activities of the colonial masters were also questioned towards understanding their effectiveness and efficiency to the masses. All of this aggregated into a stronger call for self-government and the hope that eventually, Nigeria, and the federal republic to be, will be built on strong democratic tenets.

FIRST REPUBLIC AND INTERRUPTIONS

The first republic was cut short by the military. The reasons projected were ethnicity, regionalism, corruption and the need for state cohesion (Oboh, 2010; Atim, 2010, p.164). According to Egbon (2001, p.54):

There was rapid growth of newspapers industries in post-independence Nigeria as each of the regional governments in the early 1960's had at least one newspaper organisation of its own which was loyal to the ruling party.

Omu (1979, p.248) cited in DuobleGist (2013) argues that the press, during the first republic was very partisan. There was some significant influence on the Action Congress crisis of 1962; the national census of 1962-63; 1963-64; and the national election that followed. The democratic tenets agitated via the media at this stage of Nigeria's democracy were civil-rule and equality (equity, fairness, and justice).

The regional governments at the time were apprehensive of the role of the central government, and the accountability thereof. There was also the question of equality in the scheme of federal character, and this was largely articulated via the regional media. This was largely the reason all the regional government anchored their agenda via the media. Soon after the Action Congress crises, the already powerful regional media were largely blamed for flammable propaganda that many consider as predisposing factors towards the chaos.

SECOND REPUBLIC AND INTERRUPTIONS

The second republic started in 1979. This was after some military "interruptions." Part of the reasons adduced by the military was the violence and regionalisation which was perceived as been capable of dividing the country (Ufuophu-biri, 2008, p.48). The second republic which was led by Shehu Shagari, did not enjoy the cooperation of most media. Majority of the press at the time

did not consider the victory of Shagari as genuine. But Obasanjo (2010, p.14) insists that “no coup is a substitute for democracy.”

According to DoubleGist (2013, .p.1) and Daramola (2015, p.151), most of the other contesting political parties like Great Nigeria People’s Party; Unity Party of Nigeria; People’s Redemption Party; and the Nigerian People’s Party (NPP) had media organs through which politicians who lost the election articulated their protest against the ruling party and made serious allegations of electoral fraud. It was such significant role of the opposition via the elite opposition media that led to the passage of the National Assembly Electoral Act of 1982, few months to the general elections (DoubleGist, 2013, p.1).

Yet the conventional media in Nigeria [beside the state owned media], were still very agitating towards anti-corruption and due process crusade. Obasanjo (2010) asserts that one senior government minister hinted that he would only consider that the economic situation was bad when he was able to see Nigerians fetching for food from the dump hill. The perceived, attendant corruption, lack of accountability in governance during the second republic served as an excuse for the General Muhammadu Buhari led military coup, which took place on the 1st of January, 1984. The Buhari coup terminated the second republic, and some politicians were even jailed in relation to the acclaimed corruption. Yet the media is said to have strongly condemned the coup, and instead propose a quick return to democratic rule.

The demands by the media during Buhari’s regime in turn provided another excuse for General Babangida, who led a subsequent coup that overthrew Buhari. General Babangida promised to return power to an elected government. This would become his main tactical edge. Since, the media and almost every Nigerian expected the process to be a coordinated smooth

approach to the third republic. However, General Babangida stayed on for eight years under the guise of planning a transition to self-rule. This indeed became the major point of confrontation between the Nigerian media and all military regimes. It can be seen from the preceding paragraph that the democratic tenets adhered by the media during this so called democratic era (the second republic) included freedom, human rights, self government; and equality (equity, fairness, and justice), as well and accountability of government to the people.

THIRD REPUBLIC AND INTERRUPTION

The history of Nigeria’s third republic is submerged in General Ibrahim Babangida’s tactical process (manoeuvre) towards a so called democratic rule. This made the media, to once again, become front runner agitators for democratic rule. This point is important because, in Nigeria’s history, the third republic arguably remained an “uncompleted” exercise towards democratic rule in Nigeria.

After the media suffered serious casualties in the fight towards the restoration of power to civilian, self-rule, there was a general election that was contested by two parties –the National Republican Convention (NRC) and Social Democratic Party (SDP). These parties were in the first place formed and sponsored by the military government, with its agenda and constitution all written by the Babangida regime (Obasanjo, 2010). While it is quite beyond the intentions of this writing to discuss how the elections went, it is yet relevant to recall that the media was again used for and against certain political interest, during the process and outcome of the elections.

Jibo (1996, p.13) acknowledges the role of NTA (Nigeria Television Authority) during the Abiola-Torfa debate in the Presidential debate, held on 6th June, 1993; and the Vice presidential debate, hailing the debate as “...a great improvement over Verdict’ 83” because it went to great trouble

to eliminate media bias. The NTA did this by leaving it to the two political parties to choose the panel which fielded questions.” General Babangida, however, annulled the election amidst pressure by the vast majority of the conventional media in Nigeria.

As the foregoing is being sustained by Atim (2010) and Daramola (2015), it is crucial to recall that General Ibrahim Babangida yielded to the public pressure and activism vowed via the media [which the media also stood for], and handed over mantle to an Interim National Government (ING) headed by Chief Ernest Shonekan (Obasanjo, 2010, p.18). However, the national government that was formed hardly understood the base of its leadership, and seemed even more elusive.

The interim government was easily toppled by the General Abacha led coup. Due to the continued struggle by the media towards restoration of civil-rule, freedom, equality and human rights, the Abacha regime also became very aggressive towards most private media, while the public media virtually became the loudest and unabated puppet for the ‘Abacha Must Stay’ saga. Obasanjo (2010, p.18) strongly describes late General Abacha, thus:

He was the greatest affliction on Nigeria since independence. He maneuvered himself to be the only one candidate of five political parties for presidential election in 1998. With such ridiculous maneuver, he would have won with only his children voting for him. Providentially, Nigeria was spared.

The media along with pressure from other activists [many of whom had already left the country] suffered great repressive decrees that have since been termed the worse in the political history of Nigeria (Ufuophu-biri, 2008; Daramola, 2015). Once again, the democratic tenets advocated for were civil-rule and accountability and justice. General Sani Abacha suddenly died

under uncertain, but potential controversial circumstances, and was immediately “overrun” by General Abdusallami Abubakar.

FOURTH REPUBLIC AND INTERRUPTIONS

Already, the fourth republic is the most successful in the political history of Nigeria, and appears to have come to stay. Nevertheless, the “hero” of this era is Retired General Abdusallami Abubakar, who in 1999 perfected a transition/electoral process, and handed over power to another Retired General Olusegun Obasanjo, who “won” the election under the platform of the new People’s Democratic Party (PDP) –See Oboh (2014).

Obasanjo (2010, p.19) would later say this about his “victory”: “somehow and in a typical Nigerian manner and fashion, we managed to snatch victory from the jaws of political defeat and embarked on a redemptive journey towards political re-invention and economic recovery.” This means that the victory was ill obtained in a non-democratic manner that was at least, at the time, “...typical Nigerian manner and fashion.”

Since 1999, the relationship amongst the conventional media in Nigeria, and between the conventional media and Nigerians, as well as between the Nigerian government and corporate entities has remained strong towards sustaining the republic. At various times, media reports have perpetuated pressure towards maintaining not just law and order, but political participation that has in turn influenced how the government and politicians employ their schemes. One example is the role of African Independent Television (AIT) during the President Obasanjo’s third term bid in 2006, which had the tendency to derail the so called democratic progress made during the fourth republic.

According to Daramola (2015), AIT had a permanent stand at the national assembly during the third term saga, and almost paid dearly for it when one of the stations broadcast outfit was

attacked in the course of such transmissions. The third term bid collapsed under the very weight and influence of public attention and palpable media propaganda. Several other media reported and provided analysis on the issues and its implications of the third term bid to Nigeria's democracy. However, former President Olusegun Obasanjo himself would not mention the third term agenda saga, as it is not contained in the 2nd Redeemer's University Convocation Lecture which he presented at the Redeemer's University, Ikeja, Lagos state (Obasanjo, 2010).

The Nigerian media, during the fourth republic also reported on corruption scandals. There have also been several other frightening attempts by the media to draw attention to abuse of office by elected and public officials. Another issue worthy of mention in the understanding of the conventional media in Nigerian and democratic tenets is reportage of electoral fraud/malpractices. Many private radio and television stations have reported several incidents of electoral irregularities. At the same time, some media have been accused of causing the situation or aggravating it (Atim, 2010; Oboh, 2014). The role of privatised media in Nigeria is however highlighted herein as also important See -Guobadia (2008, pp.271-275).

According to Oboh (2014), the Nigerian elections for example have always been mediated, but most prevalently, since the return to democratic governance since 1999. The conventional media in Nigeria has contributed and influenced democratic tenets more than any section of the society. And indeed, no section of the society advocates for any positive changes without using the media. The expansion, privatisation, and digitisation of the Nigeria media have all being motivating factors towards enhanced influence of the conventional media towards sustaining democratic tenets. Combined with the force of the social media, the conventional media in Nigeria has largely remained politically influential.

This can be seen in the manner and extent of coverage of the 2015 general elections.

The call for equality, fairness, and justice, as well as freedom and accountability seem to have given way to the transitions that have been witnessed in Nigeria's fourth republic since 1999. Accountability seems to be at the fore front. Via media accountability calls on the elected, the Nigerian electorates appear to have become more conscious of the power of their votes, and the rights associated with democracy. The outcome, of the 2015 general elections may also have not being without the huge role of the media. Though there could be arguments for media use by all political parties, the Nigerian media largely remained open and level to political debates and interaction.

The influence of the ruling political party on state radio and television seems to be dwindling. While opposition parties are, at least, "pretentiously" accorded "airtime," [either free or not] towards popularising their political manifesto/candidates, there are more private newspapers, magazines, radio or television organisations that are available and significant in reaching the more politically smart Nigerian electorates.

Given that in the political history of Nigeria, there has never been an election victory for the opposition at the federal level, it is extreme difficult to think that the conventional media in Nigeria, through all the intervening variables, did not play any role. Besides, Lolade (2015) insists that the 2015 general elections were the most expensive. A situation where every political party, haven know the influence of the media tried to make the most out of media use towards winning elections. The conventional media in Nigeria remaining free, and expanding into private hands, will become more relevant to Nigeria's democracy, and the tenets thereof. How instructive and constructive, the democratic participation in Nigeria would be remains to be seen. Irrespective, the role of the conventional

media, since fighting repressive military regimes and remaining resilient needs sound acknowledgement.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Data show that the pre-independence media in Nigeria, mostly and generally agreed/advocated for Nigeria's independence. There were disagreements however. The foregoing positions were sound enough at the time. Nevertheless, the media also had peculiarities. The common decimal is that every media serves as the mirror of the society in which it is found. However, government-media relations, though often amidst competing interest, must by mutual towards the most common good. Media regulation must not be self defeating. Besides this paper has shown that the stronger the media, the better the democracy thereof.

The main democratic tenets advocated by the media in Nigeria are civil-rule, equality/fairness, freedom/human rights, as well as accountability/justice. However, only civil-rule and equality/fairness are significantly advocated. Advocates of media freedom are right. The media can best serve societal needs if there is freedom of the press. The conventional media in Nigeria has shown that the more the media is free, the more significant the role it can play. This is in tandem with democracy. There cannot be full democratic tenets without the media, and vice-versa. However, media experts and professional have to be aware: to whom much is given, much is often expected. A more free media would also mean or imply a greater need for the training and the professionalism of media personal. Such ought to be taken very seriously. This is because the understanding and application of logical theoretical bases in media activities/appraisal have often been elucidating.

The conventional media in Nigeria have been more unanimous in the fourth [4th] republic than any other. And have shifted more into issues of

good governance than institutions of government. The role of the conventional media in Nigerian, so far towards democratic tenets has been largely significant. Nevertheless there are fluctuations in terms of the dynamics of media ownership and varying political interest. Media ownership and control actually deserves to be regulated if the Nigerian state must democratically survive. However, Nigeria's media "playing ground," though ripe with various interests and strife must be level. Media regulators and experts should consistent mind the precarious situations and or tendencies.

The largely regional media that existed in the first republic, which had low level of influence towards national cohesion, should often be an example to avoid if the nation-state of Nigeria is to remain in foreseeable future towards. Nevertheless, as call stronger institutions of government continue to rise, and especially, the clamour for the restructuring of Nigeria, state and or regional conventional media would professionally become pivotal. Government-media relations in Nigeria, though often amidst competing interest, must be mutual but decisive towards the common good. This is because a strong, responsible but free media is not just seen as a template for democracy, but is also its' strength.

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