

Appraisal of the Contributions of the Mass Media to Sustainable Democracy in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper has appraised the contributions of the Mass Media to the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria. The paper observed in retrospect the role of the mass media towards the attainment of independence in 1960, the reportage and editorials against military dictatorship which contributed to the transition to democratic governance in 1999 and the media role in providing education, enlightenment and mobilization of the citizenry towards the consolidation of the nascent democracy in Nigeria. The archival materials and documentaries on the history of Nigeria provided the basis for our appraisal. It is observed that despite the laudable contributions of the Mass media towards the promotion of democracy, they are confronted with challenges such as issues of ethnicity, inadequate modern communication gadgets, poor welfare package, pressure and oppositions from pressure groups and the government, security issues and corruption among others. It is consequently held that these challenges are hydra headed monster that if not dealt away with would continue to impede the over all performance of the mass media in Nigeria. The paper recommends among others that in order for the Nigerian media to serve as effective tools for stabilizing and sustaining democracy, they must be sure to do away with practices that are unlawful and unethical. The media should uphold the ideals of the profession while government and non-governmental organizations should encourage the media industry by creating the environment suitable for smooth practice by professionals while modern equipment should be provided backed up by training of media professionals to enable them compete favourably with their counterparts in other parts of the world.

Key words: Appraisal, Contributions, Mass Media, Sustainable, Democracy and Nigeria

Introduction

It is a truism that the mass media greatly contributed to sending the colonial masters packing, leading to independence, sending the military back to the barracks leading to democracy and have continued to contribute to sustainable democracy in Nigeria. The

establishment of the first newspaper in the country, Iwe-Irohin by the Reverend Henry Townsend in Abeokuta in 1859 was followed by the ones established by Nigeria's founding fathers with very radical positions against the oppression of the Nigerian people by the colonial government, engaging them as tools for political agitations and demanding immediate independence and democracy for the country. Notably, Herbert Macaulay established the *Lagos Daily News*, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe established the *West African Pilot*, Chief Obafemi Awolowo established *The Nigerian Tribune*, among others.

The effort aimed at entrenching democracy in Nigeria has continued to be the lots of the media. This could be seen in the post-independent Nigeria from 1st October, 1960 with the media continuously struggling for the enthronement of democracy in the face of two prolonged stretches of military dictatorships from 15th January, 1966 – 1st October, 1979 and 31st December, 1983 – 29th May, 1999. The ongoing democratic government in the country is therefore largely a product of the struggles of the media. For example, Jibo (2003, p. 3) cited in Iwokwagh and Ijwo (2011) noted that the Nigerian media have been a major political actor long before the country was fashioned as a unified political entity and have continued to play a central role in national politics since then. The mass media are no doubt the driving force that makes for the entrenchment of democracy in any political setting. This is because democracy rests on a knowledgeable citizenry, whose access to a wide range of information puts them in a vantage position to participate fully in public life and the governance of the society (Galadima&Asemah, 2012).

The mass media were so powerful in championing the cause for the independence of Nigeria in 1960, and the same media had prevailed on the military to relinquish power to a democratically elected government in 1999. However, the role of the mass media in the sustenance of democracy was not certain especially that there has been uninterrupted democratic governance since 1999 till date. It is against this backdrop that this paper appraised the contributions of the Nigerian media to sustainable democracy in Nigeria since 1999.

Conceptualization

It is imperative to explain some terms and concepts for clarity and ease of understanding. The first key concept is the mass media which Vaatia (1998, p.28) defines as means of mass communication. These include: television, radio, newspaper, magazines. Nwosu (2003, p.242) said "as a concept, however, the mass media are viewed as all technologically mediated, institutionally organised and spontaneously expressed forms

including such forms as radio, television, newspapers, and magazines.” Odeh (2003, p. 28) corroborated, the mass media are the avenues or channels through which pieces of information are passed to the public, e.g. Radio, television, newspapers, magazines, billboards, handbills, etc. In the context of this paper, the mass media are seen as all the channels through which information, messages, ideas, cultures, knowledge, etc can be passed across to large, scattered, anonymous and heterogeneous audiences.

Democracy is a popular topic of contemporary discourse. Etymologically, the word “democracy” has a remote origin from two Greek words “demos” meaning (the people) and “kratias” meaning (rule of or rule by) when put together the two words become “demokratia” but anglicized as democracy meaning in that original sense as the rule of or by the people. This implies that it is a form of government where the people directly take decisions by themselves as against indirectly through representation. Striking a balance between direct and indirect decision making process in the concept, Adama (2000, pp.65-66) identified two types of democracies, viz: (1) Democracy could be Direct as exercised in the Greek city-State of Athens by gathering all the citizens and having decision-making session directly without electing representatives and (2) Indirect democracy as the one where qualified citizens elect their representatives into parliament to make and take decisions on their behalf, e.g. Nigerian, USA, etc. Democracy is adjudged as the best system of government in the world. It is popularly seen in the light of Abraham Lincoln’s saying that it is the government of the people, by the people and for the people.

Democracy according to Adama (2000, p. 65) is a form of government based on the concept of the will of the people living in that society. Okpeh in Edo (2002, p. 26) said democracy is all about the popular majority participating in the decision making process on who lead and what policies are to be adopted in the governance of the society. Therein all these definitions lie one fact, the supremacy of the people who are by implication, the electorate that decides who goes to govern them in government.

Theoretical framework

This paper is anchored on the development media theory and the agenda setting theory because of their relevance.

Development media theory

Development media theory was propounded by Dennis McQuail in the 1980s to fill the void which became increasingly noticeable as the gap between the developed and

developing countries widened. As the gap widened, it became apparent that none of the classical theories of the press was strictly applicable to developing countries, even though the mass media in these countries were operating according to some of the principles of the classical theories (Ojobor 2002, p. 14). McQuail (1997, p. 131) noted that development media theory was intended to recognize the fact that societies undergoing a transition from under development and colonialism to independence and better material condition often lack the infrastructure, the money, the traditions, the professional skills and even the audience needed to sustain media institutions comparable to those of the first world or second world in which the four theories could take root.

The foregoing suggests that development media theory is supposed to be applicable in countries with lower levels of economic development and with limited resources. The theory proposes that media should be free but should be subordinated to the requirement of economic, social and political development. This means that social, economic and political development should be the focal point of the media. Development media theory according to emphasizes the acceptance of economic development and nation building as over-riding objectives and so expects that certain freedoms of the media would be subordinated to those goals. Emphasis is also on collective ends (interest) rather than individual ends.

Assumptions of the theory

The principles of development media theory according to McQuail in Ojobor (2002, p. 15) are:

- i. The media should accept and carryout positive development tasks in line with nationally established policy.
- ii. Freedom of the media to be open to restriction according to (1) economic priorities and (2) development needs of society.
- iii. The media should give priority in news and information to links with other developing countries, which are close geographically, culturally or politically.
- iv. Journalists and other media workers have responsibilities as well as freedom in their information gathering and dissemination tasks.
- v. In the interest of development ends, the state has a right to intervene in or restrict media operations and devices of censorship, subsidy and direct control can be justified.

Folarin (1998, p. 31) opines that the theory seeks to explain the normative behaviour of the press in countries that are conventionally classified together as developing countries.

Folarin maintained that certain common circumstances or characteristics of developing countries made it difficult to apply the other normative theories to the press. These include: absence or inadequate supply of requisite communication infrastructure, relatively limited supply of requisite professional skills, relatively lack of cultural production resources, relatively limited availability of media literate audience and dependence on the development world for technology, skills and cultural products.

In the same vein, Ojobor (2002, p. 14) quoted McQuail as saying that the conditions that limited the application of other theories or reduce their potential benefits in developing countries include: absence of some of the conditions necessary for developed mass communication system i.e. communication infrastructure; professional skills, production and cultural resources and audience. Another thing is dependence on the developed countries for needs in terms of technology, skill and cultural product.

The aforementioned reasons point to the fact that development media theory expresses dissatisfaction with dependency and foreign domination of “local” media in developing countries. Okunna (1999) in Ojobor (2002, pp. 15-16) posits that the concept of development journalism and development communication are off shoots of this theory, which emphasizes positive influence on development process. Okunna maintained that development journalism is the kind of journalism which pays sustained attention to the coverage of ideas, policies, programmes, activities and events dealing with the improvement of the life of a people. She quoted Quebral as saying development communication is the art and science of human communication applied to the speedy transformation of a country and the mass of its people.

Consenting to the above view, Folarin (1998, p. 33) opines that development media theory has already provided a bearing for the concepts of development communication and development journalism; according to him the concepts appear to be making varying degrees of headway in Operationalisation and implementation in the different zones of developing world.

Agenda setting theory

Agenda-setting theory holds that the media predetermine what issues are regarded as important at a given time in a given society. The mass media institution is seen as a responsible one for raising issues they consider as important, to the plain of public discourse and draw public attention to it in the process. The media do this through the quantity and frequency of reporting; prominence given to reports through headlines

displays, pictures, adverts, layouts in newspapers, magazines, films, graphics or prime timing on radio and television (Folarin, 1998, p. 68, cited in Ojete, 2008). As the “Agenda setting institution”, the media set agenda by monitoring events and reporting same to the members of the society. Therefore, the theory is relevant to the study because it hinges on using the mass media to draw attention of the people to salient issues that happen in the society, so that they will reflect on such issues in the process.

The Nigerian media standing on the stipulations of the agenda-setting theory have been bringing people, issues and events they consider important to the plain of public discourse which the public also reflect on to define their position on a particular public issue; and this is where the relevance of this theory lies. The basic tenets of both the development media theory and the agenda setting theory are relevant to our discourse about the contributions of the mass media to sustainable democracy which invariably is communication for development purposes. Sustainable democracy means development as there would be stability in governance and government would in turn provide the conducive environment for economic and socio-political development. In other words, while the media act as “engine” of development, they also set agenda for the development of the society.

Contributions of the mass media to sustainable democracy in Nigeria since 1999

The history of development of Nigeria cannot be completely told without giving prominent place to the contributions of the mass media. Even more instructive is the fact that the Nigerian mass media have always been in the forefront of the struggle to establish democracy in the country. To this end, Obilade (1999, p. 235), holds that the “press in Africa constitutes an active force in the realization of the goal of the evolution of sustainable democracy in the continent of Africa. He further added that the press in Africa is playing a prominent role in the democratization process in African states which have non-democratic governments”

During the era of colonialism, Nigerian nationalists such as Chief Anthony Enahoro, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, among others engaged the instrumentalities of their newspapers to wage radical anti-colonialism war, leading to independence on October 1st 1960. This made a veteran Journalist, Lateef Jakande to observe that the war for independence was fought on the pages of the newspapers, no shot was fired, no blood was spilled but thunderous editorials abound. With this attainment, the media continued

to oppose the military till the attainment of democracy on 29th May, 1999. The media have continued to play active role as agenda setting institution even at the inception of democracy that started with Chief Olusegun Obasanjo as President on 29th May, 1999 to 2003 and to 29th May, 2007 for his second term. Alhaji Musa Yar'Adua took over the baton from 29th May, 2007 to 5th May, 2010 when he died. Dr. Goodluck Jonathan having acted as President briefly by the powers provided by the legislative instrument of the “doctrine of necessity” of the 6th Nigeria’s Senate due to President Yar’Adua’s ill health assumed constitutional presidency from 5th May, 2010 to 29th May, 2015 and President Muhammadu Buhari holding sway from 29th May, 2015 till date.

Constitutional Role of the Media

On December 10, 1948 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 19 states: *Everyone has the **right** to freedom of opinion and expression; this **right** includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.* The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in Chapter IV, Section 39, Sub-section II provides that “people be free to own, establish and operate any medium for the dissemination of information, ideas and opinions.” It went further in chapter 2 section 22 to provide that “The press, radio and television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people.” By these provisions, the media are expected to monitor the democratic governance in Nigeria as a watchdog and by holding government responsible and accountable to the citizenry. The media have been fulfilling these constitutional roles in diverse ways since 1999 while also mobilizing the citizenry to actively participate in the democratic process during the period under review.

Coverage of electoral matters

The media from 1998 created awareness on the electoral process and participation upon the initiation of the transition to civil rule programme of the Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar led military government leading to the handing over of power to a democratically elected government on 29th May, 1999 with Chief Olusegun Obasanjo as President. Ciboh (2010) pointed out that for citizens to meaningfully participate in the democratic process, they need to depend on the mass media to help them define, sort out complexities and participate

meaningfully in the democratic process as informed participants. He further added that even though other means of citizens' education exist, the mass media are the most common sources of information about elections in democracies and societies in transition around the world. The media gave prominence to issues surrounding elections in their radio and television programmes and feature articles in newspapers and magazines and also covered all the elections held in the country thus, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015 including the bye-elections and staggered elections in some states that have different election years due to legal judgments. This also included the coverage of post-election matters such as upholding and nullification of electoral victories by the judiciary.

Holding government accountable to the people

Many political office holders have been held accountable through investigative journalism by the Nigerian media. This was shown in the uncovering of many scandals that rocked the National Assembly in time past. Prominent among others was the speakergate/buharigate scandal that involved Alhaji Salisu Buhari, the first speaker of House of Representatives upon the return to democracy in 1999 who forged his certificate claiming to have graduated from the University of Toronto, Canada, including age falsification. *The News* magazine professionally pursued the allegations of certificates forgery until Buhari was forced to resign and was subsequently tried and convicted for perjury. (Jibo and Okoosi-Simbine, 2003).

The current flooding in many parts of Nigeria especially Niger State that affected 22 local government areas and killed 40 people were killed. The mass media made the exposure to the government on the impending dangers of these challenges before they happened. As media reported the mayhem of the flood in Niger State, FRCN, on network news of Sunday 16th September, 2018 invited the Director General (DG) of National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Alh. Mustapha Mainama and asked him why the N42b set aside to construct drainages to prevent flood was not utilized. The DG could not answer the question in clear terms.

Intermediating between government and the governed

The mass media are the invisible cords that connect the government and the governed. They operate from the government to the citizenry and vise-a-versa. How could the citizens know the plan of the government towards them and how can a government know the plight of her citizens, if not through the mass media? The mass media function to

inform and educate the masses on government development policies and programmes; they encourage people's participation in such development initiatives and report back to the government the effectiveness or otherwise of such programmes. The mass media also beam their searchlights on issues that border on the masses and project same to the government. The most recent cases are the bridge connecting Katsina-Ala in Benue State with Wukari in Taraba State and the state of Federal road adverts currently projected to the government for urgent attention.

The media operate as the market place of ideas for political thoughts in a democratic setting. They keep the citizenry informed about political process and developments in the society through political reporting while providing opportunity for their participation through relevant media programmes. This is also a feedback mechanism that make the government to hear from the governed thus acting as a check and balance which is needed for good governance and sustainable democracy. In doing this, Nigerian mass media designed several political programmes that kept the citizens abreast of political happening while awakening in them political consciousness. The broadcast media have over the years run programmes such as "Presidential Media Chat", "The President Explains", "Inside the Senate", "Eagle Square", "Democracy Today", "On the Line", "Platform" "Radio Link", "2019 election conference hall on FRCN" among others. Awareness on government policies and programmes has been created through these programmes.

Moulding of public opinion

This is the synergy of individual opinions on an identified national matter of public importance which different people bear their views on. For this scattered, heterogeneous and individualized citizenry to come together on issues that affect them, they need to do so through the media which have become a communal town hall meeting for many people. When people speak in one voice from this town hall meeting, their voice is heard piercingly far away. Through public mobbing, media have succeeded in holding many public servants accountable. The recent example of such issues was when the then minister of Finance Mrs. Femi Adeosun was reported by an online medium (*Premium Times*) to have forged her NYSC exemption certificate. Through public mobbing she was forced out of her ministerial seat on 14th September, 2018.

Prior to Adeosun's case, just at the inception of democracy in 1999, *The News* magazine article of July 19th, 1999 titled *The Face of a Liar and the Crook in the House*, exposed

the then Speaker of the House of Representatives, Alh. Salisu Buhari. The paper gave detailed account of how the speaker forged his certificates and falsified his age. The public was mobilized against him through the media and the consequence was his trial and conviction by Abuja High Court. He was consequently ebbed out of the House.

In another development, *This Day* issue of 19th April, 2000 captioned “*Drama in the Senate over Nzeribe*”: “*Obasanjo Faces impeachment threats*”; “*Nzeribe divides Senate*” contained some publications on which public reactions that followed forced Dr. Chuba Okadigbo and Senator Nzeribe out of Senate. The public was made to understand that Nzeribe had been an enemy of democracy, and that he championed the association for better Nigeria, an organization that encouraged Babangida to annul June 12 election. The public rose gruesomely against him which made him to withdraw his impeachment notice and apologized. That issue culminated in the removal of Okadigbo as Senate President (Sambe, 2005).

The Nigerian mass media mould public opinions through setting agenda for public discussion. Umehukwu (2001, p. 35) states that for the mass media to sustain democracy there must be agenda setting for public debate on topical political issues. This would create participatory democracy and thus go a long way to guide citizens to either accept or reject policies initiated by the government. It will be recalled that during the third term debate of the former President Olusegun Obasanjo, the media through feature articles and broadcast media programmes engaged the citizenry by educating them on why they should do away with the ambition of the President to perpetuate himself beyond the constitutional second tenure given to him by Nigerians in the name of third term agenda. The live coverage of the Senate Plenary by AIT where each of the 109 Senators was allowed to speak for or against it with only three Senators going for it did it the greatest blow. Consequent upon this, it was thrown out thus resting the case permanently.

Protection of the fundamental human rights of the people

The investigative journalist has the duty to unearth the truth surrounding any form of human rights abuses done against anyone. The surveillance function of the mass media puts it in the position to monitor and report human rights violation of any kind, especially security agencies brutalities while in the process exposing members of the public to their fundamental human rights and making them seek redress when infringed upon (Asemah, Edegoh and Ogwo, 2012). There was a case in point when the *Nigerian Tribune* of Tuesday, 16 April, 2013 reported with the caption “still on police brutality” in which it

reported the killing of a pregnant woman in Akure, the Ondo State Capital by a police man who had allegedly asked for a bribe from a commercial driver who was carrying the pregnant woman.

In recent times there have been series of reports in the media of the arbitrary use of the Police by the government against those who can be said to have fallen out of favour with the powers that be and can be seen as abuse of human rights. The Tuesday 24th July, 2018 laying of siege around the residences of Senate President Bukola Saraki, Deputy Senate President Ike Ekweremadu, Senator Dino Melaye purportedly to prevent them from going to the National Assembly Complex when 15 APC Senators cross-carpeted to the PDP. Similarly, the Monday 30th July, 2018 laying of siege around the Benue State House of Assembly complex by the Police to prevent the 22 PDP Member faction of the Assembly from gaining entrance into the Assembly while allowing the 8 APC member faction to go in. Reporting human rights abuses such as these by the media makes the public know their rights and privileges as well as drawing public attention to the issue while seeking redress where necessary.

Challenges facing the mass media in contributing to sustainable democracy in Nigeria

The mass media having achieved the great feat of democratization in 1999 has been bedeviled by a plethora of impediments while performing their role of consolidating democracy in Nigeria. These impediments have made their performances to be a mixture of both successes and failures. Some of these glaring challenges include but not limited to the following:

i. Antiquated communication gadgets/equipment and poor infrastructural facilities

Okpeh (2005, p. 635) painfully notes that “in a globalizing world characterized by competition to hook on to the stupendous breakthroughs in information technology and application, it is common sight in Nigeria to see journalists hopelessly relying on equipment acquired several decades ago”. Most Nigerian media houses have poor infrastructural facilities and are not well equipped with modern communication equipment for effective and efficient information management and dissemination. This development is largely attributed to corruption that is prevalent among government officials and the lack of political will of government to turn around the fortunes of the media industry. As

such Nigerian journalists cannot compete favourably with their counterparts in other developed parts of the world.

ii. Ethnicity

Ethnic consideration has permeated the nation's body polity. Historically, the development of the media industry from the previous republics showed this. Okpeh (2005, p. 165) describes this term as "Axis question" and the "North/South dichotomy which fuels ethnic consideration over and above national interest. Jibo (2003, p. 52) cited in Iwokwagh and Ijwo (2011) observes that "when a national issue enters the public domain for debate, the Nigerian media often take North verses South position on it" He laments further that the situation where ethnicity has been used, especially in recent times to excuse excessiveness of government. In the views of Galadima and Enighe (2001, p. 67), the mass media in the first republic were not harmonized. The media were tribally and regionally or sectionally bias in their coverage of national events. And the aftermath of this posture led to divisions of the press into various geopolitical areas. To this end also, Okpeh (2005, p. 167) states, "Ethnicity has challenged and is still challenging the profession of journalism in Nigeria. The tenacity of this phenomenon has however, compounded the dilemma of journalists, since it puts disrepute to their professional ethics and sense of moral and social responsibility".

iii. Corruption

Corruption which has over the years eaten deep into the fabrics of the Nigerian society and threatening democratic sustainability has permeated the activities of the mass media too. Corruption leads to compromises which make effective and efficient discharge of duties impossible and one can imagine the media practice in the midst of this. Alemoh (2011) reported that Nigeria media practitioners have been accused on several occasions in regards to issues of bribery, corruption, and a host of other unethical behavior in the discharge of their day to day duties of reporting news events. Some journalists have thrown away the ethics of the profession by receiving bribe to either kill a news story or write fictitious story in a bid to promoting a political figure. Also, some after going out for news coverage make demand for "brown envelopes" from the people concerned. All these corrupt practices compromise the work of the journalists.

iv. Ownership influence/external pressures

The media is most often than not pressured by its owners, the public, political parties, interest groups, and the government regulatory agencies leading to side-taking in reportage of national events just to promote the interest of the pressuring quarters. According to Ogbu (2013, p. 265) these problems render the mass media environment unconducive for professional and effective media practice. In his view Ende (2013) quoting Adesoji (2010, p. 43) lamented that despite the vibrancy of the Nigerian media, the differentiation of press and its inclinations towards politics have continued to influence its functionality, perception and disposition by the virtue of the issues surrounding its ownership and control or its sympathy. Hence, external influence from the media owners especially government owned media organizations leadverts to stories going to the public as they wished, agreeing with the saying that he who pays the piper dictates the tune.

v. Lack of critical and objective analysis of issues that concern the government of the day

There is a near absence of critical and objective analysis of issues that relate to the government of the day. To this end, Ojo (2015) states that in assessing the media coverage of the 2011 elections, the UNDP- sponsored study found that the coverage of the election was not to be issue based; the media were not adequately critical in analyzing the various political parties' or their candidates' campaign promises made. He went on to assert that the media showed weakness in engaging their investigative journalism prowess; most often than not the media did not differentiate between the official and political campaigns activities of sitting public office holders like governors; government owned media on a general note in many ways went contrary to the provisions of the electoral act, professional code of ethics and the Nigerian political broadcasting codes. For instance, some opposition parties' candidates complained that television and radio stations of states government found it hard to air the jingles and political adverts of the opposition parties. Complaints about this situation went to the relevant regulatory body but nothing has been done to address it. This undermines the principles of democratic values and cultures.

In a similar vein, only on Saturday 14th July, 2018 at the end of the vote casts in the Ekiti State Gubernatorial Elections, the State Governor took control of the state television station, The *Ekiti State Broadcasting Corporation* to announce the results in favour of his candidate and party, Professor Olusola Eleka of the PDP. He did this because he who pays the piper dictates the tunes even if the journalists and managers of that outfit were opposed to that move on the ground of ethical and legal regulatory consideration. However, the

organization received the sledge hammer of the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC) when it banned it and its operation with immediate effect.

vi. The current security challenges facing the country

The current security challenges in the country heightened by activities of insurgents on innocent Nigerians and killer herdsmen attacks on farmers and rural communities in recent times posed great threat to the practice of journalism and sustainable democracy in Nigeria. The *boko haram* sect had at various times issued warnings to media institutions and journalists across the country. For instance, on April 26, 2012, a suicide bomber hit *This Day* Newspaper office in Abuja killing two people and leaving thirteen others injured; among them was a twelve-year-old kid. As if that was not enough, shortly after the Abuja incident, another bomb blast was reported in Kaduna, affecting a plaza housing the offices of *This Day*, *The Moment*, and *The Sun* Newspaper respectively (*Daily Trust*, April 27, P.5). Also, On June 20th, 2012, a Channels Television Reporter, Enenche Akogwu was shot dead by unknown gunmen suspected to be members of the *boko haram* sect while he was in the line of duty covering the multiple attacks unleashed on the ancient city of Kano that day. On his killing, Channels TV issued this Release: “*My love for Nigeria has been a compelling impetus charting the course of my life. Courageous in the face of adversities, hopeful when confronted with despair and delightful when the society makes appreciable progress.*” – Enenche Akogwu (as retrieved from saharareporters.com/2012/06/20/channelstv-reporter-shot-dead-in-kano). These attacks threaten the responsibility the media have to gather and report news for public consumption which can affect and hinder free flow of information in the society if not quickly addressed by the government.

Conclusion

Between 1999 and 2018, Nigeria has successfully transited from civilian to civilian administration four consecutive times. This has given us the courage to safely say that democracy has gradually and sustainably taken root in the country. The contribution of the Nigerian mass media from the appraisal of its performance in this direction can never be over-emphasized even in the face of some daunting challenges. What is required now is for all democracy sustaining stakeholders and institutions like the mass media to continue to consolidate on the gains of these successes for its growth and development. The build up to the forthcoming 2019 general elections and the consequent civilian

transition on May 29th is very instructive in this direction. The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria supported by the Social Responsibility theory and the Agenda-setting theory confer great responsibility on the media in a democracy especially a growing one like in Nigeria.

Recommendations

For the mass media to further consolidate the successes they have recorded in sustaining democracy in Nigeria therefore, some deliberate measures should be taken by government and non – governmental organizations as well. These may include:

- i. Provision of good welfare package for media professionals. It has been observed that Nigerian practicing media professionals are among the least paid in the world which is ill-motivating for them to put in their best in sustaining democracy and so government must look into it especially concerning the ones in government owned media establishments.
- ii. Provision of modern communication equipment. The world today is technology-driven and the Nigerian mass media must follow the trend “bumper to bumper”. Consequently, allocations to media stations should be increased for the purpose of changing obsolete communication gadgets to modern ones especially in the face of the ongoing global transmission from analogue to digital broadcast stations. These increased allocations must also be followed with strict monitoring to ensure that the disbursed funds are utilized appropriately. Training and retraining should be part of the new technology and knowledge acquisition.
- iii. Self-repositioning through self-cleansing and self-sanctioning within ethical and legal considerations by practicing media professionals. The incessant corrupt and unethical practices among journalists should be addressed by journalism regulating bodies like the Nigeria Press Council (NPC), Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), Nigeria Guild of Editors (NGE), and National Broadcasting Commission (NBC). Enforcement of strict adherence to professional codes of practice among members should be the in-thing. Erring members found wanting by the law must be prosecuted without inhibiting professional frictions. The ability of these regulatory bodies to sanction erring members, especially when done fairly, can moderate the unethical professional practices in the industry. When they are guided by ethical and legal considerations in the discharge of their professional responsibility to Nigeria and Nigerians, they will be seen to be consolidating the democracy they

fought so hard to achieve and will be held in higher esteem by other professions and the society at large.

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