

Relationship between Media Freedom and Development in the Nigerian Society

Bitrus N. Umar
University of Maiduguri, Nigeria

Abstract

This paper examines media freedom and its relationship to development in the society. The media is a general term for the Radio and television, books, magazines, billboards, stop road advertising et cetera, this also encompasses the social media - the internet, cable, and mobile technologies. In other words the media is a vehicle of information that conveys messages and disseminates it to heterogeneous society where information could be used and ideas could be shared among people. Media actually participate fully in development particular the social media which is itself a development. Media is any physical object that communication. Media in development played a greater role that almost every society felt its impact and of course a promoter of development. Section 39(1) of the constitution, Federal Republic of Nigeria guarantees press freedom, the constitution offers that "every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression, including freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference." Section 39(2) of the constitution provides every Nigerians to own, establish and operate any medium for the dissemination of information ideas and opinion. This will help Nigerian society to grow. Development cannot exist in isolation they must be machinery that can foster development, which can be seen in diverse ways, such as infrastructure, roads, banks, organizations, pipe-borne water, electricity, et cetera.

Key words: Media, Freedom, Development, Nigeria and society.

Introduction

Communication scholars and public issues analyst have severally argued that communication has played a fundamental and prominent role in man's efforts to dominate a naturally antagonistic world. All scientific and technological success of development of man wouldn't have been possibly achieved without communication.

The indisputable fact about the media is that it is invaluable and indispensable. It is unanimous on the need for the media in the modern society. Many people in the society today are aware that the media requires freedom in its operation to function well without hitches. Oloyede, (2008:79) noted that though the media is free but there is also no agreement on the degree of its freedom and even if there is how does this freedom be curtailed? The freedom of the media is a type of freedom that has suffered from the gradual process of deregulation of the ideal liberty upto the present day. In most countries of the world where constitution guaranteed the freedom of the media, it is usually operates on the whims and caprices of political and law enforcement machinery for the sensitization the media.

The media are agents and tools of information dissemination in the society. The media acquaint members of the society with happenings around them and the world at large. In fact the media's role is not only to set agenda for the members of the general public but also to play the role of watch dog function for the society.

Asemah, (2011:60) noted that the media constantly go out to monitor trends, political, culture, economic, and others and at the end report back to the society to keep them up to-date with happenings around them. He further posits that media freedom is a freedom that helps the journalists to distribute information as market place commodity.

The Nigerian media is one of the indispensable machineries uphold the rule of law. In a contemporary society, media is the Fourth Estate of the realm of government because it checkmates the activities of the government, the executives, the legislature and the judiciary; this is to say that truth is what every society need which its outcome lead to the real progress or development. The media is responsible for ensuring the accountability of every government to the people, Ewelukwa, (2004:93).

For development to be achieve there must be the presence of the media and such media must be free to practice development news that is the type of developmental information on vital issues such as agriculture, social and political development, economic development etc. such information should be specialized information which the country needs to promote the society, Akinfeleye, (2008:66-7).

To have a clear notion about this discussion, conceptual definitions must be highlighted.

Operational Conceptual Definition of Key terms

Media:

A technical system that helps in the transmission, distribution or reception of messages, Turow, (2003:7).

Freedom

Freedom means liberty, the right to know, own, publish and distribute ones thought view or opinion without any restriction.

Freedom also means liberation from bondage, exemption from arbitrary, despotic or autocratic control, independence, the state of being able to act without hindrance or restraint or liberty of action, Oloyede, (2008:53).

Freedom is defined as a press that is free from government the relationship of such press to the form and stability of government and to economic growth and quality of life, Ndolo (2005).

Development

Development means growth or change from one stage to another or planned growth; it requires social and cultural change as well as economic of the well beings of the society, Uwakwe, (2003).

Development can be seen in various perspective such as historical progress, as the exploitation of natural resources, as the planned promotion of economic, social and political advancement, as modernization et cetera. It is referred to as in the area of economic, social and in political terms etc, Jimada, (2006).

Nigeria

Nigeria is a particular geographical entity, demarcated by boundaries from other geographical location that have a defined territory, occupied by particular set of people which shared same philosophy and having a common goals and aspiration.

Society

A society or human society is a group of people related to each other through persistent relations, or a large social grouping sharing the same geographical or social territory, subject to same, <http://www.wikipedia.com>

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theories are sets of ideas which provide explanations for communication phenomena, Daramola, (2003). The Libertarian media theory is adopted to explain the topic of discussion.

The development of the Libertarian theory occurred through the publication of small textbook by three American authors as noted by Siebert et al, (1956). The theory set out to describe the then current alternative “theories of the press,” concerning the relationship between the press and the society, McQuail, (2005:178).

The theory was propounded by Seibert, T. B., Peterson and Schramm, W. in 1963, advocates that the press should be seen as partner with government in search for truth rather than tools in the hands of government. The theory further explains that the media should be free from government censorship, that being a free press does not mean that the press should engage itself in defamatory or sedition, or should be immune to the rule of law, Anaeto, et al (2008:57). The theory’s principle is outline by Daramola (2003) as follows:

1. Publications should be free from prior censorship.
2. There should be no compulsion to anything.
3. Publication of error is protected equally with that of truth in matters of opinion and belief.
4. No restriction should be placed on the collection of information for publication provided it is done by legal means.
5. There should be no restriction on export or import or sending of messages across national frontiers.
6. Journalists should be allowed to be allowed to claim a reasonable degree of autonomy in their places of work.

BRIEF BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The media freedom and freedom of expression is not, and was not exclusively an American idea. However, the Americans did not invent the concept, no invented it, but rather it grew from crude beginnings that could be traced back to Socrates and Plato. The concept developed more fully during the past 400 years where the modern history of freedom of the press begin in England during the 16th and 17th centuries as printing developed and grew. When Caxton set up the first British printing pressing in Westminster in 1476, his printing was restricted only by his imagination and ability. There was no law governing what he could or could not print. He was completely free from government censorship for more than 50 years, the British and Americans attempted to regain the freedom that Caxton enjoyed, but shortly after he started his publications, the British Crown then began to control and regulate the printing presses in England. Printing developed during a period of great religious struggle in Europe, and became an important tool in the society. During this period, it was noted that printing presses made communication with hundreds of persons fairly easy and gave considerable power to individual or small groups to who want established/owned could use a printing press.

The British government that time also realized that unrestricted publications and printing could seriously weaken its own power. Information is said to be a powerful tool in any society, and that the individual

or groups of individuals controlling the flow and content of the information received by people exercise considerable control over them. During this period, the printing press broke the Crown's monopoly of the flow of information; as a result, the censorship of printing became very essential.

Research shows that between the year 1476 and 1776, the British devised several other means to limit or restrict the press in England where seditious libel law was used to punish those who criticize the government or the Crown and it did not matter whether the criticism was truthful or not. The press then suffered under licensing or prior restraint laws as well, which required printers to get prior approval from the government or the church before printing their handbills or pamphlets or newspapers or whatever type of printing to be carried out. Printers were also required to deposit certain large sum of amount of money which is called bonds to government as security for the publication. This money will be forfeited if any printing press' materials appeared to have violated the government laws. The British then granted special patents and monopolies to certain printers in an exchange for their cooperation in printing only acceptable works and in helping the Crown ferret out other printers who broke the publication laws.

The British government's control of the press during 30 years was generally successful, but press did not go unchallenged. As concepts of democracy emerge and spread throughout Europe and its environs, it became difficult for the government to limit freedom of expression. The power of the printing press then in disseminating ideas quickly to the masses was greatly helped foster the democratic spirit. However, British law regulated American printers as well during the colonial era, regulations of the press in North America was never as successful as it was in Great Britain, Pember, and Calvert, (2005:35).

The influential international body, the United Nation Educational Scientific and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO) emerged from the Cold War paralysis to develop a new communication agenda which stressed both freedom of expression and media development, was said to have secured broad support from previously opposed international interests which was under the auspices that the wind of change swift into Windhoek Declaration in early May 1991, coincidentally with the imagery of the liberated Namibia, where Alan Modoux of the UNESCO convened a conference on the role of a free independent and pluralistic press in Africa's new democratization. The prestige of the event was said to have accomplished by persuading the Cameroonian government to free a jailed and detained journalist to attend such conference. This period was said to be one of the broadcasters' part of government structure. The attendees of the conference and those focused on this watershed event were also linked to the private press. During this time in history, it was the journalists focused statement that becomes well known around Africa and the world at large. However, the declaration speaks of "press freedom" but the clear intention was not limited to newspaper freedom alone, but also encompasses the "media freedom" which is more widely and covers "journalistic freedom" in general, MIA, 2011:15.

MEDIA FREEDOM

The freedom of the press is enshrined in section 22(1) of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which stated that *"The press, radio, 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."* Also Section 39(1) stated that *"Every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression, including freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference."* While 39(2) stated that *"without any prejudice to the generality of subsection (1) of the section, every person shall be entitled to own, establish and operate any medium for the dissemination of information ideas and opinion."*

Onagoruwa (1985) noted that "press freedom is the right of the press to publish/print without being subjected to any form of intimidation, molestation or blackmailing. Media freedom is seen as the right to help in the enlightenment of every citizens of country by providing the society with open market place of ideas without any overt or covert systematic means of applying censorship, pressures or any form of inhabitation on the part of both federal and state, institutions, organizations and individual, or group of individuals in the country that is within the laws of libel, defamation and obscenity."

"Freedom of the media is said to be the freedom of communication and expression through various channels of medium of communication are disseminated, these encompasses electronic, and print media, while such freedom mostly implies the absence of interference from an overreaching state, its preservation may be sought through constitutions or other legal protections." [www.http://wikipedia.org/.../freedom_of_the_press](http://wikipedia.org/.../freedom_of_the_press). Media freedom to media consumers means freedom to consume whatever information or entertainment from whatever sources choose without restriction. For media creators and distributors it means freedom to structure their business affairs as they wish in seeking to offer the public and expanding array of media option for both news and entertainment. This means that for consumers and creators, media freedom is to be able to convince one's mind without restriction or hitches that may result to the treat of Federal Communication Council (FCC) and the Federal Executive Council bureaucratic bottleneck on what is fair and what is not, [12](http://www.legal-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

dictionary.freeditonary.com.

According to CSF (2008:124) communication as documented in various statutes, is best and most beneficial to man's ultimate collective survival when freely expressed and disseminated to a heterogeneous society. The Universal Declaration of Human Right stated that, "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression. This right includes to hold opinion without interference and to seek to receive and impart information and ideas through any media, regardless of frontiers." The declaration became mandatory on Nigeria since it became the 99th member of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) now African Union (AU) in 1993. During this period, Nigeria endorsed the African Charter on Human Rights, which comprises almost similar provisions in article 9 of the declaration. However, like any other countries of the world, Nigeria has its own peculiar history imposing on the realization of this noble Universal obligation.

HOW FREE IS THE MEDIA/PRESS

The media as a vehicle of information dissemination does not have absolute freedom in carryout its activities. In most part of the world, the freedom of the media do not exist 100% because they are characterized by internal and external constraints. The government in every country makes use of the media to project their activities to the general public, but despite the government imposition of censorship on the media by bringing out some laws such as the seditious law, law of defamation, copyright laws among others to restraint the press from reporting what they feel unethical and unprofessional to the society. Asemah, notes that, for a press to have absolute freedom there must be the presence of ethics of journalism which still could be looked at as another restriction but in the real sense, there is no organization that can exist without ethics or the rules of law.

The constitution Federal Republic of Nigeria spelt out the type of press freedom. The mass media can only be free if the media can operate within the professional ethical circle of journalism. Ethics here means, knowing the real thing, that difference between what you have a right to do and what you don't have the right to. Baran, (2012) notes that Journalists must adhere to the ethics of their profession which emphasizes truth, honesty, privacy, confidentiality, decency et cetera, so as to protect themselves from offensive content.

The relations between press freedom and the development is the freedom of being at liberty to gather, observe, analyze and the dissemination of such information to heterogeneous audience. This shows that for any country of the world to cherishes development such country must appreciate the media and accept it as tools for development.

The Media freedom generally is the contents which differ from one country to another. What may be media freedom in one country may not be freedom in another. Looking at the Nigerian perspective of media freedom, media freedom differs from one regime to another especially between military and democratic governments.

On 1st October 1960 during independent day, Tunde Agbabiaka, African Concord London Editor was arrested by the security agents and detained for three days on arrival at the Lagos International Airport. When he was released, he was told that he was mistaken for someone else. No compensation or apology was made.

MASS MEDIA RELATIONSHIP WITH GOVERNMENT

First Civilian Regime: Prime Minister - Alh. Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa – (1957 -1966)

Alh. Sir, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa Entered the politics in 1947 and became a member of the Northern Region's House of Assembly in 1951 where he was elected to the Federal House of Representatives. In 1957, Balewa was appointed the Prime Minister of Nigeria, <http://www.nigerianprofessional.com/heads-of-state.html>. During the post-independence government headed by Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa was criticized for enacting obnoxious laws used by the colonialism. The laws include the Seditious meeting Act No. 48 of 1961 and the Defamation Act of No. 66 of 1961, the Official Secret Act No. 26 of 1962, and the defamation Amendment Act No.1 of 1963.

In 1963, there was another Act No.7 of 1963, the Cinematography which empowers the Minister of Internal Affairs and the Federal Film Censorship Board to regulate and control film and filming in Nigeria. All this press law was there to restrict media freedom. The content of media during this period was not free from censorship.

The First Governor General and Civilian Head of State:--Dr. Nnamdi Chukwuemeka Azikiwe (1st Oct. 1960-1966)

Chief (Dr.) Nnamdi C. Azikwe was an instructor at Lincoln University. He later joined the African Morning Post in Accra, Ghana as Editor. He was one of the leading lights of journalism in Nigeria, founding the West African Pilot and the Zik Group of Newspapers which published several newspapers across Nigeria Nation. Following his successful career in publishing, he went into politics alongside Sir Herbert Macaulay. He co-founded the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) which later became the National Council of Nigeria Citizens (NCNC).

When Nigeria gained its independence from British in October 1, 1960 the first Governor General between 1960-1963 was Chief Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe who later became the First Ceremonial President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1963-1966), breaks all ties with the British Crown where Nigeria only retain her status as member of the Commonwealth Nation. Nnamdi Azikwe popularly known as Zik, was then one of the leading figures of Nigeria nationalist. During his period as president in history of the Nigerian Press, the media was not cordial with the government because it was during this period a Journalist was molested at the Airport and no apology was tendered after his release from detention. <http://hotnaijanews.com/nigerian-past-and-present-leaders-from-1960-till-present/>

First Military Regime – Maj. Gen. Ironsi – (16th Jan. 1966 – July 1966)

On the 15th January 1966 was the first military coup in Nigeria which ushered in Major General Johnson Thomas Ummakwe Aguiyi-Ironsi as the first Military Head of State. During this regime, the press was said to have goodwill but his task was not an easy one, his government had to quickly resolve many of political glitches by lifting several banned laws that was enacted by other regime.

Second Military Regime – Gen Yakubu “Jack” Dan-Yumma Gowon – (1st Sept. 1966 – 29th July 1975)

In July 29th 1966, Nigeria had its second military coup which brought General Yakubu Gowon who was a (Lt. Colonel then). During this regime, the press as noted by Abayomi in Akinfeleye and Okoye (2003) did not receive fare operations, because the Newspaper and magazine medium suffered a lot. It was during this period, specifically 1967 that the Newspaper prohibition of Circulation was enacted under Act No. 17 which was said to have misused by some overzealous state governors. General Adeyinka Adebayo of the western region, who was then a colonel, prohibited the circulation of the “Morning Post and Imole Owuro newspapers” in the state. Also government owned and the then privately Daily Times was also banned, Asemah, 2011:82).

Dada (2000:35) note that apart from the military officers, administrator and journalists there were also some foreign that wrote book on how this regime was characterized by the activities of the Civil War which lasted for three (3) years. He further stated that journalist like Nelson Ottah narrated the arrest and trial of Brigadier Victor Banjo, Lt. Col. Emmanuel Ifeajuna, Major Phillip alale, and Sam Agbam for attempting to overthrow the Biafra Head of State, Lt.Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu. The mass media find this regime as un-conducive to display their profession well.

The Third Military Regime - General Murtala Ramat Mohammed (July 29, 1975 – Feb. 13, 1976.)

On the 29th July 1975, Gowon’s government was toppled by another military coup d’état where General Murtala Ramat Mohammed became the third military coup leader. His regime was not different from other military regime because the attacks on media began with the government taking over the Daily Times of Nigeria. On 1st September 1975 government acquired 60 percent equity share of newspapers through the National Insurance Corporation of Nigeria (NICON). This was said to be the largest surviving newspaper in African and the first to be quoted in the stock exchange, Decree No. 101 was also enacted to legitimize the action of the government. This regime lasted for six month after which General Murtala was assassinated on Friday 13, 1976. The coup was led by Colonel Bukar Sukar Dimca, immediately after the announcement of Murtala’s death the Military Supreme Council unanimously decided to appoint General Olusegun Obasanjo who was then a Lt. General and Chief of Staff Supreme Headquarters who was second in command to Murtala Mohammed.

The Fourth Military Regime – Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo – (14th Feb. 1976 – 1st Oct. 1979)

In 1976 after taking over power, president Obasanjo promised to implement the entire programme initiated by his late boss, Gen. Murtala Ramat Mohammed. In regard to press relationship, President Obasanjo in assuming office pardoned the Editor-in-Chief of African Spark Magazine, Late Dr. Abarogie Ohunbamu who published an editorial seriously castigating the Head of State, Murtala Mohammed. It was during this regime that the Nigerian Press Council (NPC) was also established to serve as mechanism for ensuring ethical standard in journalism professions. The regime from its inception became cordial but later the Head of State promulgated a Decree No.11, entitled “Public Officer’s Protection Against False Accusation” which was meant to act as limitation to press freedom. He then resurrected the Newspaper Prohibition Circulation Act of 1967, which forced the Newsbreed Magazine Published by Chief Earnest Okoli led to rest. Most journalists ended in prison for lack of resistance to such repressive press laws.

Second Civilian Regime – Alhaji Shehu Shagari – (1st Oct. 1979 – 31st Dec. 1983)

The 1979 ushered in a democratic elected President, Alhaji Shehu shagari. This regime removed all the military enactment Decrees and maintain the existing media restrictive laws such as sedition, defamation, contempt of court and Official Secret Act. Sambe (2008) notes that law books were frequently used at federal and state level that affect the media’s relationship with government which as serve as censorship to media freedom.

Fifth Military Regime – General Buhari (31st Dec. 1983 – Aug. 1985)

In 1983 when Buhari overthrown the democratic elected president, the press also witnessed a lot of hitches during his regime where two Decrees was promulgated to curtail what the government saw as “excesses”

of media practitioner. This was some of the measures imposed by the government to check the excesses of the press Decree No.1 Constitution (suspension and Modification) of Decree of 1984, second Decree No. 2 was specifically empowered the Chief of staff to detain any one, including journalists and political commentators for act construed to be detrimental to the state security. During this regime several journalists were arrested, detain and imprisoned among whom were, Tunde Thomson and Nduka Irabo, both of The Guardian Newspaper, there were tried and was convicted under the Decree. Duro Onabule, editor National Concord was also arrested and detained thrice, once for two weeks, Haroun Adamu, editorial adviser of The Punch and Rufai Ibahim ex-editor of Amana, Hausa Language newspaper of the Concord group was detained and was freed after the government was toppled. Leke Salawu of the Triumph, Bukar Zarma, editor of the New Nigeria, Aliyu Babatunde Ahmed, editor of Sunday New Nigeria were also detain only one month, Pate, (2011:96-97).

Further detainees journalists include; Etim Etim, a financial correspondent of The Guardian newspaper in Lagos was arrested and detained for three months without trial under the state Security (Detentions of Person) under Decree 2 of 1984 for allegedly obtaining classified information on the Central Bank of Nigeria contravention of the Officials Secrets Act.

On September 7, 1984 Chris Okolie, Publisher of the Newbreed magazine, wrote a letter to Security official complaining of how he was treated to his life by persons he suspected to be security agents. This lead to his arrest by the SSS and that he published a story about corrupt practices in the setting up of Policy stations and suggesting that the then Inspector-General of Police Muhammadu Gambo, may be force to retire because of the alleged scandal.

Sixth Military Regime – Gen. Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida – (27th Aug.1985 – 26th Aug. 1993)

In assumption of office, President and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces Federal Republic of Nigeria, General Babangida, the first thing he did was to establish the National Broadcast Commission (NBC) under Decree 38, this is to allow the ownership of the Radio and Television stations to operation under this Commission. He regime was characterized with so many problems because he was not straight forward about when he will return the country to civil rule. He extended twice his own time table of returning to Civil rule that is by handing over power to a democratic elected president which he failed. This made the regime to become the number one enemy of the press, Asemah, (2011).

During this regime of General Babangida, Newswatch magazine was ban which attracts a lot of reaction from the general public within and outside the nation. On April 13, 1987 Harold Anderson, publisher of the Omala World Herald and also Chairman of the world press freedom committee wrote to the president urging Mr. president in a strongest term caption *“immediate lifting of your government’s Decree banning publication of Newswatch magazine and harassment of its editors.”* This was widely carried out at the time when the case of unresolved murder of the Newswatch editor’s Chief Dele Giwa who was murder by Babangida’s regime through a letter bomb. This type of action was deeply concerned over the future of the press freedom. Dele Omotunde Deputy Editor-in-Chief of Tell Magazine, explains the situation of press freedom in the country as not free as the outside world but rather authoritarian in nature. The press/media freedom suffered series of government harassment and censorship during this unhealthy military regime.

On February 6, 1989, Femi Aborishade, Editor of a Trade Union inclined publication of the Labour Militant, was arrested and detained for seven month without trial. He was accused of publishing treasonous material in connection with his campaign for the release of 11 trade unionists in the country’s Electricity Utility Company sentenced to life imprisonment for a strike, which caused a nationwide power blackout in 1989.

On June 16, 1989, Paxton Idowu, then Editor of The Republic Newspaper were arrested and detained by the police. Their offence was to have published a report on a legal action instituted by a detained business man, Bashir Muhammadu alleging corrupt practices and fraudulent business deals with Admiral Augustus Ikhomu, the then Vice President, who had ordered the detention of Muhammadu.

Sam Amuka-Pemu The Vanguard newspaper editor and Deputy Editor Chris Okojie were arrested on April 24, 1990 where Amuka-Pemu was released a few day later, Chris Okojie remained in detention without charge.

On May 29, 1991, the entire publications in The Guardian newspapers’ Group namely the Guardian Daily and Weekly, Guardian Financial Weekly, Guardian Express, Lagos life and African Guardian Express, Lagos Life and African Guardian magazine were forced off the streets when their premises were shut down on the order of the Raji Rasaki the then Lagos State Military Administrator that the offence was that two students of Yaba College of Technology Lagos was shot dead by state security agents during demonstrations.

Interim National Government – Chief Ernest Shonekan (26th Aug. 1993 – 17 Nov. 1993)

On August 26, 1993 when Babangida was forced out of government by mass protest from within and outside Nigeria, an unelected government was constitute which was headed by Chief Ernest Shonekan who serve just as a figure head of the Interim government. During his regime he did not command the respect of Nigerian press. The government was considered as a brainchild of the military which annulled the presidential election of

June 12 elections.

Seventh Military Regime – Gen. Sani Abatcha (17th Nov. 1993 – 8th Jun. 1998)

General Sani Abatcha who Shonekan's Minister of Defence was proclaimed to have moved himself to power as Head of State. In assumption of office the first thing he did was to unbanned the banned newspaper and lift up the suspensions on publications and radio stations, until mid 1994 when he trampled on newspaper houses at will, proscribed publications, seized magazine copies and jailed many journalists (newsmen) on allegations of taking part in coup plotting, Momoh (1998). During this period, Tell Magazine, The News and The Tempo had a rough time particularly with Abatcha's security agents. Many pressmen were said to have been jailed, while others were killed. Also George Mbah of Tell Magazine was arrested in May 1995 over a controversy of Army Officer's death, this did not end, Niran Malaolu of The Diet was charged with treason in 1997 phantom coup he was court-martialled and sentenced to life in jail by the then highest military ruling body in Nigeria and many others were also jailed, Akinfeleye, and Okoye, (2003:116). Also on the 10th of November 1995, Ken Saro Wiwa was hanged by Abatcha's regime, which resulted to the immediate suspension of Nigeria from the Commonwealth of Nations.

Eighth Military Regime – Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar (8th June 1998 – 29th May 1999)

General Abubakar came into power at a period when Nigeria had its worst image in its history, where things were characterized by so many hitches. The first thing he did was to restore public confidence in governance and reassured the International Community of his commitment to return the country to democratic rule. He then freed all the journalists and activists who were jailed unjustly by Abatcha's regime and succeeded in conducting peaceful free and fair elections which produced civilian government that ushered in Chief Olusegun into power.

Third Civilian Regime – Chief Olusegun Obasanjo (29th May 1999 – 29th May 2007)

This regime which is the third civilian regime is characterized with a lot of problem between the state and the press. The press during this period criticized the policies and some of the mischievous actions of the state officials, as noted by one writer of the "newspaper and magazine cartoonists which carried the caricature image of Chief Obasanjo which was said to be beyond the point of provocation." In the same vein, Ik Muo observed in the Guardian of February 23, 2000 noted the criticism of the president which he said has taking a hitherto, an inconceivable dimension.

Another criticism from the press was the attack on the president for forcing Audu Ogbeh the Chairman of the ruling Party of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) to resign from his post. The Guardian newspaper of 19, 2005 in its editorial, thus; "it smacks of abuse of office and privilege that president acted the way he did in circumstances of Ogbeh's forced resignation."

On March 26, 2004, in Vanguard Newspaper, Abubakar Umar criticized the president for his failure to account for the nation's crude oil windfall. The writer said, "The president is yet to account for the ₦300 billion short falls in the payment for its crude allocation for domestic consumption."

The government reactions of the media criticism lead to the arrest and detention of some journalists. Also on 2nd May 2005, Orobosa Omo-Ojo, the publisher of the Midwest Herald was arrested and detained on the orders of Stella Obasanjo, the president's wife for publishing an article titled "Greedy Stella", in another reaction, the government on 19th January 2005, the armed police officers invaded the premises of a Port Harcourt Weekly, National Network, and arrest its publisher, Needam, and Ogbondah, (2011:34, 38). This regime was characterized with so many problems with the press. The regime's relationship with the press is not cordial; the media in trying to pinpoint some of the government loopholes end in arrest and detention by the government, this also shows that the media is not free neither do the media have freedom.

Fourth Civilian Regime – Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua – 29th May 2007 - 5th May 2010

In April 21st 2007 Alhaji Yar'Adua came into power as the fourth democratic elected president. The election was strongly criticized by observers, as well as the those two opposition party All Nigeria Peoples' Party (ANPP)'s candidates, Gen. Mohammed Buhari and Alhaji Atiku Abubakar of the Action Congress (AC). During this regime Alh. Yar'Adua proposed a government of National Unity, which he called on those opposition parties to join hands with him to move the country forward. During this period also the mass media was battling with the true picture of Mr. President ill-health before it became opened to the general public, <http://hotnajanew.com/nigerian-past-and-present-leaders-from-1960-till-present/>

The press during this regime was not also free because of government censorship in some certain issues, because some of the laws still curtail journalists from the total freedom.

Fifth Civilian Regime – Dr. Goodluck Jonathan (May 29, 2011- Date).

During this period the media relation with Dr. Jonathan is cordial only that the regime is characterized by some many problems from the opposition parties, also while battling with the problem of insurgence in the North and a lot of problems in the East and West among which are pipeline verndalization and kidnapping and lots of others, research also shows that during this period two reporters have been detained after publishing an

critical article on President Jonathan. The Reporters popularly known reporter without borders says that the journalists were arrested for refusing to name their sources and calls their detention "unacceptable," and that "if the president feels offended by an article, he has a number of ways to respond other than launching a harassment campaign," Reporters Without Borders announced in a statement.

Tony Amokeodo and Chibuzor Ukaibe of Leadership, a daily newspaper, published an article last week titled: "Outrage trails presidential directive on Tinubu, APC." Also from the Global Post: also during this regime, three journalists said to have been arrested for wrong report on polio vaccines. **The article was** alleged that Mr. President has been going to great extent trying to putting a halt to the growing popularity said the opposition party, including ordering surveillance.

The report triggered denials from the president's top aides, who ordered police to find the writers and get their sources. The article also reads, "We are concerned that journalists can be still taken away on some presidential orders and be detained," "the managing director of Leadership told The Associated Press," <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/africa/nigeria/130409/nigeria-journalists-detained-after-story-president-goodl>

MEDIA FREEDOM AND DEVELOPMENT RELATIONSHIP

Media freedom can be seen as an oil machinery of development. Schramm (1964) notes that the mass media contribute substantially to the amounts and kinds of information available for dissemination to the people of a developing country where the media focuses attention on problems and goals of development. Habte (1983:100) posit that "news and information media are viewed as essential intermediaries between policy decision makers and public mobilizers to accept new ideas and modern techniques without creating cultural and ethical tension and psychological frustrations and anxieties."

Development is defined as the gradual manifestation of positive changes in the economic, industrial political, social, cultural and administrative life of a country. Development here is seen as a way of dealing with human endowments, natural or physical, psychological and other factors. It is an idea of deliberate planning in order to direct, influence, facilitate and accelerate the economic growth of a society and a country at large. Development is a step that actually varies from one stage to another. Development can be seen in areas like, agricultural development, industrial development economic development, educational development etc.

For meaningful development to be achieved at both local and national level, the press system in Nigeria must be free to certain extent where the populace must have an unrestricted access to information and communication to facilitate development in Nigeria, Uwakwe, (2003:24,8).

Development in Nigeria is one of the fundamental areas of concerned. In spite of the growing stature and visibility in the global setting, Nigeria is very much a developing country which is characterized by so many indices of underdevelopment in the face of global setting. Okunna, (2003) note that the crucial role the media could play in the development of any nation has become generally accepted and could only be achieved when the mass media granted a freedom to gather inform, entertained and disseminate such information which could easily be accomplished through a discipline press that can make meaningful contribution to national development. Discipline means adherence to ethics of professionalism.

Development can only take place when there is the presence of media freedom. The media normally laid emphasis on positive values that unite the various cultures, social and geographical entities in making up a society of nation. In this regard the media are seen as promoter of national consensus and help in nurtured and preserver cultural values. It also serve as guide in measuring what is and what it not and showing the light toward planning and achievement for national goals and objectives as set by those in government as development, Oso, (2002:116). He further said that "...in the new nations and traditional societies of Africa, journalist has additional responsibilities to help in building a nation out of the multi-lingual, multi-cultured societies in countries where economic sources are inadequate to meet the challenges of the people... and that the journalists are part of the society, and if the society decays, the journalist cannot claim to be healthier than the body, and if law and order break down and there is chaos, there would be no newspaper, no broadcast no journalists and of course no, readers," Jose, (1975). This shows that in the absent of media freedom, there is no development.

In Nigeria the state attaches great importance to the mass media as tools for promoting national development and unity in diversity. Musa, (2011:) notes that the other forms of media like the home videos, and internet was said to be the latest manifestation of media development in Nigeria which is growing at a faster stage and unprecedented rate and was achieved as a result of development.

Media freedom exposes the ills of the society, providing solutions and leads to the creation and increase in empathy in persons which is an essential state ingredient in the modernization process. It can also create climate of modernization such vital ingredients as innovativeness, achievement motivation, educational and occupational aspiration.

On 2nd December 2003, when Takiram Peter the Executive Director of Africa Division of Human Rights Watch argued the Commonwealth leaders meeting in Abuja should not give Nigeria a free pass of human right because Nigerians cannot express themselves freely without the fear of grave consequences, (IJC, 2008:133).

On September 23, 2003 as recorded by Okoro (2004:200) Cyril Mbah of the Monitor, was barred from entering the State House, President Olusegun Obasanjo's government by close down the Insider Magazines' office by men of the SSS on September 4, 2004, confiscated valuable documents and about 15,000 copies of the September edition of the magazine because of the lead story titled "Aso Rock Ohanaze Face-Off: Condemn Biafra Now! No Ohanaze.

Chairman media and Public Affairs of the House of Representatives, Hon. Abike Dabiri condemned the clampdown describing it as a bad precedent aimed at staining government and press relationship in the country. She also said that the closure was an attempt to prevent the press from carrying out its constitutional role as a Watchdog of society. (Internl. Journal of Comm. (2008:134-1360).

SUMMARY/CONCLUSION

Research shows that right from the pre-colonial system of government in Nigeria, the mass media have never granted a freedom to express itself but rather the press is curtail by government censorship. Udoakah (1996:12) posits that the issue of media freedom is very complex, and that media freedom should not be seen as a different matter from the question – how should a society be ruled? Further stated that, the right to determine what course a nation should follow is that of the nation itself because the media in every society operate in favour and interest to whom they belong, media differs from one regime to another. This shows that the media freedom is limited to the state.

Okunnah noted that for the mass media to be free they must apply the ethics of their professions such as: *accuracy* – that the personnel of the press and that of other media information should do their best to ensure that the message the society receives is factually accurate, no any portion should be distorted and no essential fact should be deliberately suppressed. *Integrity* – the reporter should make sure that the reputation of individual or group of individuals be respected and information and comment on their private lives should not be published falsely, among others.

Looking at the above statement by Okunnah, media organization should be able to minimize the risk involved in their professions and that can guarantee the media freedom to operation.

In a final note, I can state categorically that even Nigeria as a nation cannot operate without the rule of law to check for some excesses, in which the media also is not an exception to this, but this does not mean that the government should curtail the media from being objective in their dealings.

REFERENCE

- Abayomi (2003) in Akinfeleye, R. (2003) Fourth Estate of the Realm or Fourth Estate of the Wreck: Imperatives of Social Responsibility of the Press. In Asemah, E (2011). Lagos: Malthouse Press - Nigeria.
- Akinfeleye, R. (2008) *Contemporary Issues in Mass Media for Development and National Security*. Lagos. Malthouse Press Limited. Nigeria.
- Akinfeleye, R. A. and Okoye, I.E. (2003) *Issues in Nigerian Media History: 1900-2000AD*. Lagos, Malthouse Press Limited. – Nigeria.
- Baran, S.J. (2012:408) *Introduction to Mass Communication: Media Literacy and Culture*. Seventh ed. New York. McGraw-Hill Companies Inc. USA.
- Dada, P.J. (2000) *The Federal Armed Forces in the Nigeria Civil War, 1967-70*. Jos. Midland Press, Nigeria.
- Daramola (2003) in Anaeto, S.G. (2008) *Models and Theories of Communication*. Maryland. Africana Renaissance Book Incorporation, USA.
- Ewelukwa, B.N. (2004) *Introduction to Nigerian Press Law*. Anambra. Varsity Publisher Co. Ltd. Nigeria.
- Habte A. M. (1983) Mass Media Role in the Third World. In Martin, J. and Chaudhar A. Grover (ed.) World Mass Media System. NY: Longmans. In Uwakwe, O. (2003) *Communication and National Development*. Owerri, Afrika-Link Books – Nigeria.
- International Journal of Communication: An interdisciplinary Journal of Communication Studies*. Communication Studies Forum (CSF), (2008)). Nsukka, Enugu – Nigeria.
- International Journal of Communication: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Communication Studies*, Anambra – Nigeria.
- Jimada, U. (2006) *Essentials of Development News Reporting*. Evans Brothers (Nigeria Publishers) Ltd.
- Jose, B. (1975) The Press Freedom in Africa: African Affairs, Vol.75. pp.255-262. In Oso, L. (2002:116) *Communication and Development*. Abeokuta. Jediah Publisher, Nigeria.
- Media in African (2011) *Journal of Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA)*.

- Momoh, (1998) in Akinfeleye, R.A. and Okoye, I. E. (2003) *Issues in Nigerian Media History: 1900-2000AD*. Lagos, Malthouse Press Limited. – Nigeria.
- Musa, M.D. (2011) *Mass Media Intellectuals and the Cultural Imperialism Discourse in Nigeria*. In Oso, L. and Pate, U. (2011) *Mass Media and Society in Nigeria*. 2nd edition. Lagos, Malthouse Press Ltd – Nigeria.
- Ndolo, I. (2005) *Mass Media System and the Society*. Enugu. Rhyce Kerex. Publishers.
- Ogbondah, C.W. (2011) *A Critical Analysis of State-Press Relations in Nigeria, 1999-2005* in Oso, L. and Pate, U. (2011) *Mass and Media and Society in Nigeria*, (2nd ed.) Lagos, Mouthouse Press Ltd. – Nigeria.
- Okunna, C. S, (2003) *Media Ethics: Making Media Professionals Partners in National Development*, Uwakwe, O. (2003) (ed.) *Communication and National Development*. Owerri, Afrika-Link Books. Nigeria.
- Oloyede, B. (2008) *Free Press and Society: Dismantling the Culture of Silence*. Ibadan, Stirling-Horden Publishers Ltd, Nigeria.
- Onagoruwa, T. (1985) *New Directions for Journalism in Nigeeria*. Ibadan, NUJ NTA.
- Pate, A.U. (2011) *The Press and the Buhari Regime in Nigeria: in Oso, L and Pate, A. U (2011) (ed.) Mass Media and society in Nigeria*. 2nd edition. Lagos Mouthouse Press Limited. Nigeria.
- Pember, D. R. and Calvert, C. (2005) *Mass Media Law*. McGraw-Hill Companies Inc. New York, USA.
- Sambe, S. (2008) *Rural Press and ICT: Farce of Fallacy*. In Nwosu, I. and soola, O. (ed.) *Communication in Global ICTS and Eco-System Perspectives – Insight from Nieria*. Enugu Precision Publishers, in Asemah, E (2011) *Selected Mass Media Themes*. Jos, Matkol Press - Nigeria.
- Schramm, W. (1964) *Mass Media and National Development*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and Fundamental Rights (Enforcement Procedure) Rules.)
- Turow, J. (2003): *Media Today: An Introduction to Mass Communication*. Boston, New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, USA.
- Udoakah (1996) in *International Journal of Communication: An interdisciplinary Journal of Communication Studies*. Communication Studies Forum (CSF), (2008)). Nsukka, Enugu – Nigeria.
- <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/africa/nigeria/130409/nigeria-journalists-detained-after-story-president-good>
- <http://hotnaijanews.com/nigerian-past-and-present-leaders-from-1960-till-present/>
- <http://www.nigerianprofessional.com/heads-of-state.html>
- <http://hotnaijanew.com/nigerian-past-and-present-leaders-from-1960-till-present/>

This academic article was published by The International Institute for Science, Technology and Education (IISTE). The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open Access Publishing service based in the U.S. and Europe. The aim of the institute is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the publisher can be found in the IISTE's homepage:

<http://www.iiste.org>

CALL FOR JOURNAL PAPERS

The IISTE is currently hosting more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals and collaborating with academic institutions around the world. There's no deadline for submission. **Prospective authors of IISTE journals can find the submission instruction on the following page:** <http://www.iiste.org/journals/> The IISTE editorial team promises to review and publish all the qualified submissions in a **fast** manner. All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Printed version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

MORE RESOURCES

Book publication information: <http://www.iiste.org/book/>

Recent conferences: <http://www.iiste.org/conference/>

IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digital Library, NewJour, Google Scholar

