

## THE MASS MEDIA AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF THE FOURTH REPUBLIC.

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### Abstract

*There is no doubt the mass media have great role to play in fostering political development in Nigeria. It is based on this that the study examined the mass media and political development in Nigeria with a focus on the fourth republic. The following objectives were to: find out the contributions of the media to the growth and development of Nigeria since the fourth republic; know how the mass media in Nigeria have been able to effectively discharge their responsibilities towards the political integration and development of the country; and find out to what extent the media activities have helped in positively propelling national development. The development media theory was used as the theoretical foundation for the study. The desktop research method was used as secondary data was presented and analysed textually. Findings revealed that the mass media have not done enough to contribute to the growth and development of Nigeria since the fourth republic and that the media are making little efforts towards national integration. It was recommended that there is a need for the mass media to do more to ameliorate these challenges and thereby foster sustainable political development. Also, there should be constant synergy between the media and the National Orientation Agency to foster national integration in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Political Development, Mass Media, Fourth Republic, National Integration.

### Introduction

The importance of the media in the development of politics cannot be emphasized. The media are mass communication channels that are actively involved in obtaining, evaluating, and disseminating information about politics and political issues (Pate, 2011). The media institution is extremely significant and central to people's lives and the democratic process. Not only in Nigeria, but around the world, the media plays an important part in the growth and development of politics, governance, and democracy (Nwagbo, Okafor, & Obiorah, 2016).

The vibrancy of Nigeria's mass media is inextricably linked to the country's democratic experience. While it is stated that a well-informed and educated public is beneficial to democracy and governance, the mass media function as purveyors of popular opinion, allowing the elite to make judgments (Aliede, 2020). The press has always been at the forefront of revolutionizing the political process, starting with the struggle for Nigeria's independence. In this vein, Onwumah (2015) observes that the media played a crucial part in Nigeria's struggle for independence. The mass media supplied the people with the information, awareness, and awakening they needed to understand the risks and horrors of colonial control, as well as the benefits of self-determination. As a result, without properly situating the role of the media in the history of Nigeria's political battles to democracy as it is today in the fourth republic, the history of Nigeria's political struggles to democracy as it is today in the fourth republic would be drastically insufficient. During the colonial period, for example, the media became a tool for challenging colonial rule in the fight for independence. They (the media) played an important role in mobilizing public support for political movements and confronting colonial regimes (Mohammed & James, 2017).

The Nigerian media has come a long way in fostering political growth throughout the country's history. Since the fourth republic, the media has had a significant impact on Nigeria's political development. These days, the media's responsibility is to try to carry everyone along (Santas & Ogoshi, 2016).

It is critical to emphasize that the current political development process is anticipated to be perpetuated until it ensures peace, prosperity, and a sense of justice and equity for all citizens through the media and other stakeholders. To this purpose, each stakeholder has a role to play, both individually and collectively. At this point, it's important to remember that the media is a part of society's political structure and operates within certain economic and political parameters; thus, any discussion of what the media can do to help facilitate and strengthen the process should be viewed in the context of the country's political leadership's commitment to enthroning long-term peace, accountable leadership, and overall development. With this knowledge, it may be feasible to assess the media's behaviour, performance, limitations, and even interest in the process as a whole (Pate, 2011).

Regardless, it is clear that the media has specific roles in consolidating the process that are best handled

by them. Clearly, the media institution expands the public sphere's boundaries for healthy governance and development. It accomplishes this through legitimizing, criticizing, and questioning the validity of the stakeholders' operations. As a result, the media contributes to the shaping of society's political structure (Rutherford, 2000).

### Statement of the Problems

Inasmuch as there is a claim that the mass media have contributed significantly to political development in Nigeria, it must be noted that the political structure or level at which Nigeria is today is not what is desired compared to the developed west. In the present dispensation this is not encouraging. In reality, the mass media must step up its efforts to advance democracy in Nigeria especially in this republic where they have all the available resources to work with and make it possible. In Nigeria today, some claim to be practicing democracy, but in reality, that seems not to be the case as they have been flagrant disobedience of the rule of law and fundamental human rights, which are some of the major factors to consider in a fully developed political system or democratic practice, especially in the fourth republic.

While the Nigerian media may wish to contribute positively to the establishment of democratic principles and the strengthening of the democratic process, we must also recognize some of the main problems that they face individually and collectively. Some of the flaws are caused by internal factors, while others are beyond them because of the political environment.

### Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study include:

1. To find out the contributions of the media in the growth and development of Nigeria since the fourth republic.
2. To know how the Mass Media in Nigeria have been able to effectively discharge their responsibilities towards the political integration and development of the country.
3. To find out to what extent the media activities have helped in positively propelling national development.

### Review of Related Studies

Santas and Ogoshi (2016) carried out a study on **mass media role in consolidating democracy in Nigeria**. The study is of the view that the mass contributed immensely to the return of democracy in Nigeria. This the media did through their critical criticism of the military juntas, mobilization of the citizens to participate in entrenching democratic values, exposing cases of corruption, and making public officers accountable to the people. Despite Nigerian media great performance in promoting democracy. **Olaniru, Olatunji, Ayandele and Popoola (2019) conducted a study on the influence of media on political knowledge amongst undergraduate students in Ibadan**. It was revealed that social media as the most frequently use media, followed by radio, television and newspaper. 31% of the respondents had very high political knowledge while 3% had no political knowledge. Access to radio is the only significant correlate ( $r = 0.42, p < 0.05$ ) and independent predictor ( $\beta = 0.43, t = -3.98, p < 0.05$ ) of political knowledge although access to radio, television, newspaper and social media are significant joint predictors of political knowledge ( $r^2 = .18, f(4, 241) = 4.32$ ). **Nwagbo, et al (2016) carried out a study on politics and democratic challenges and the role of the media in the Nigeria's fourth republic**. It was revealed that the political system has been under serious political equations that have consistently threatened the corporate and peaceful existence of the Nigerian state. As a result of the above, it questions the essence of the media in protecting democracy in Nigeria, what constitute democratic problems and panacea to be adopted towards ameliorating these challenges. In holistic term, it exposes the negative application of politics as a practice and media efforts towards sensitizing the masses on the import of democracy. Kadiri, Muhammed, Raji and Sulaiman (2015) carried out a study on **mass media and the role they play for sustainable democracy and development in Nigeria it was revealed that the role of mass media for sustainable democracy cannot be overemphasized and that the mass media have significant role to play in establishing stability and security as necessary environment for sustainable democracy in Nigeria**. The mass media can be effective in establishing a good atmosphere were growth and development can take place, particularly in the elimination of ignorance which often leads to conflicts, especially in politics. **Aliede (2020) carried out a study on mass media and Nigerian political class**: This study is an attempt to identify the relationship between the Nigerian political class and the nation's mass media. The study revealed that the relationship between the Nigerian political class and the Fourth Estate of the Realm is actually adversary and not cordial, hence affirming the notion of strange-bed fellows in their

relation, rather than partners in progress. It identified that, though diligent in their statutory duties, the press have faced severe adversity under both military and civilian regimes in the country with the attendant consequences. Okoro, Etumnu and Okoro (2019) carried out a study on social media as a modern platform for political discourse and it was revealed that 43% of respondents to a large extent used social media for politically related information. Findings also showed that 46% of respondents said social media have influenced public participation in the democratic process and political discourse among residents in Imo State to a large extent.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study was anchored on development media theory. This theory was proposed in 1987 by Dennis McQuail. This theory which seeks media support for an existing administration and its attempts to bring about socioeconomic growth. It claims that until a country is well established and its economic development is well underway, the media should be supportive of the government rather than critical, and should aid them in carrying out their policies (Okunna, 1999). The goal of development media theory is to emphasize the positive, to promote the autonomy of developing countries, and to place a special emphasis on indigenous cultures. It is both a theory of state support and a theory of resistance to other nations' norms and competing media ideologies. According to McQuail, the press should keep the following tenets in mind while it executes its duties: The media must embrace and carry out constructive development duties that are consistent with the political leadership's plans, and press freedom should not conflict with the government's economic priorities or the citizens' development demands. As a result, the media should prioritize coverage of issues that affect people's daily life. To put it another way, content should be development-driven and focused on people's socioeconomic and political life. In the overall interest of development, the government has the authority to intervene in media operations through the employment of censorship devices, particularly where the press's actions are in conflict with the government's development goals. As part of a comprehensive plan for less developed societies, the mass media should give priority to politically, geographically, and culturally contiguous developing countries in their coverage (Anaeto et al, 2008). This relevance of this theory is hinged on the fact that the media has a great role to play in the development of the third world society be it political, economic etc.

### **Research Methodology**

This study employed the desktop research method where secondary data was relied on for the study. Since the focus of this work is on the historical perspective of the Nigeria political and National integration, the sources of literature are secondary sources from different types of publications by previous scholars in this field of communication. Such as books, magazines, previous seminars and scholarly works, Newspapers, pamphlets, booklets, speeches by elder statesmen and nationalists. The data were presented in textual form. Thus, descriptive and deductive logic were used as method of data analysis.  
*To find out the contributions of the media in the growth and development of Nigeria since the fourth republic*

### **The Media and its Capacity to Mobilize Nigerians towards Electoral Participation**

By 2023, Nigerians will be ready to file out for another round of elections. The Nigeria political history had witnessed different truncations and distortion at various times by the military class.

However, there is still a worrisome aspect of political development in Nigeria which unless properly looked into, the country may continue wobble and be unable to achieve political stability. This problem is what Ofoeze, cited in Konkwo (2011), describes as “crises of political participation” Ofoeze observes that this problem of crises of political participation has three different dimensions;

- 1) The unwillingness of the political elite of the north to share power with the political elite of other ethnic groups in the country. According to Palombara (1974), once the Northern elite come to power, they will want to go to any length to use the paraphernalia of the federal government and the power of incumbency to perpetuate themselves in power. In this manner, they employ National power to appropriate to themselves, National resources in favour of their region to the disadvantage of other regions they also use what is described as federal might to put in place, policies aimed at destroying and destabilizing the elites of other ethnic groups such as was very evident in the imprisonment of Awolowo and his close associates and in most recent times, the imprisonment of Dr. Orji Uzor Kalu in order to truncate His 2023 Presidential ambition. According to Konkwo A look at the recent political history of Nigeria shows that the northern elite of the military establishment has constantly and consistently monopolized power by assuming the headship and any other office considered

important or relevant to the existence of the country not just during the many military incursions in the Nigerian polity but also presently in the Civilian administration of Major General Muhammad Buhari taking place between 2015 and 2023.

- 2) The dimension of crises in political participation in Nigeria has been identified in the deliberate exclusion of the Nigerian masses from sharing the power of governance Ofoeze, Notes that, this second dimension has been highly overshadowed through the tactical/deceptive and use of sentiment of region, stateism and ethnicity by the governing class.
- 3) The third dimension of crises in political participation is the issue of the decorate confusion, inserted in the polity by the elite. They make it difficult to differentiate between mobilization in political participation and creation of political institution structures for citizens participation in political process.

The late Nigerian head of states, General Murtala Mohammed had in 1976, shortly before he was assassinated ordered that all the broadcast media in Nigeria, especially radio and television be nationalized under the umbrella of the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) (Konkwo, 2011, p.246). the major reason for this measure was the divisive uses to which the politicians of the first republic had put the media to, they deployed the electronic media massively in fanning the embers of disunity and ethnicity and that eventually led to the political violence in the West in 1964 and 1965 and ultimately to Biafra/Nigeria Civil War of 1967 – 1970. Nwosu, cited in Konkwo observes that, “though the mass media were acknowledged as indispensable tools for the execution of elections.

Many charges of poor performance were leveled against them, he notes further that during the 1979 and 1983 elections, the major charges against the media included partisanship, ethnic and religious bias, distortion of facts figures and reality on ground, corruption and polarization of the north-south dichotomy or what is described as “Dichosyndrome”.

Idiong (1973-39) while identifying how journalists have contributed towards the political crises in the country, notes that, Newspaper editors are often tribalistic and narrow minded while the press were not innocent of the evils, corruption, nepotism and tribalism. In 1986 Nwosu, notes the predictability of the electronic media during the second republic political activities, according to him the federal radio and television houses tended towards (NPN), The party in power at the federal level, while most of the state owned radio and television stations tended to support any party in power in their various states.

### Leaders of the Fourth Republic

12	General Olusegun Obasanajo	1999-2007
13	Alhaji Umaru	2007-2010
14	Dr. Goodluck Jonathan Ebele	2010-2015
15	General Mohamed Buhari	2015 till Date His tenure shall expire on May 29, 2023.

*To know how the Mass Media in Nigeria have been able to effectively discharge their responsibilities towards the political integration and development of the country*

### The Media and National Integration in Nigeria

In discussing the role of the media in overall national integration and development, Herman and Chomsky (1988) cited in Konkwo (2011) emphasis the capability of the mass media to inculcate individuals with “values, beliefs and code of conduct that will integrate them into the state or national structures of the larger society”. They further observe that societies where there are major social conflicts (such as in Nigeria in form of sporadic religious upheavals, strikes, banditry, kidnapping, herders vs farmers, conflicts and massive genocidal activities of one particular ethnic group against others in the country, the mass media can perform this role of mobilizing the citizenry for national integration and development through systematic propagation. The integration of various ethnic groups in Nigeria remains a primary objective of the mass media, to this effect and according to Konkwo, the following ideas are put forward as suggested strategies for mass media mobilization and integration of Nigeria into a strong indivisible nation.

### Suggestions towards National Integration

- 1) The media should in collaboration with Government embark upon massive enlightenment campaigns aimed at bringing together the diverse ethnic groups that make up the country, to identify

- with one another and begin to build bridges of peace and as existence between them in achieving this, such items as films, and all other instruments of the Mass Media should be put in place for this Mass action, the message to be propagated, should be packaged in different languages and dialects spoken by the concerned ethics groups for ease of understanding.
- 2) The National Orientation Agency (NOA) should be well funded and sanitized to appreciate the need to intensity the use of the media in discriminating information.
  - 3) Media Planners and Managers should at the appropriate times, make sure government, state or federal are reminded of the need to adopt policies that make the purchase of the various mass media gargets such radio sets, television sets, Newspapers, magazines etc less expensive.
  - 4) The agencies or bodies established by the federal government to regulate broadcasting in Nigeria, such as the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) should apart from ensuring that enough local content is maintained among the media channels, they should also ensure that all local media houses include programmes that contain messages or information that conform to the national integration ideals.
  - 5) The efficacy of the film medium as a tool for cultural propagation and national integration in Nigeria should be highly emphasized.
  - 6) The current stringent condition to be meet by prospective applicants for broadcast license should be relaxed so that more persons can own manage and participate in the media industry in Nigeria.
  - 7) There should be the Nigeria dream to which all citizens should aspire as propagated by the National Orientation Agency in partnership with Mass Media.
  - 8) On the political front, the media should see it as a responsibility to ensure that those who are thrown up to lead the nation such as presidents and other such highly placed positions are well educated, exposed and experienced.
  - 9) The media should also ensure that all citizenry to be thrown up for leadership must be detribalized.
  - 10) The media should set up campaign to fight against all forms of discrimination and marginalization on grounds of tribe and ethnic background
  - 11) Merit, excellence, creativity and special achievements should be encouraged and given the pride of place if national integration and development must be achieved.
  - 12) All citizens must enjoy equal rights and privileges while equality before the law must be played up.
  - 13) There is need for a National sovereignty truth and reconciliation conference where all national deference's should be discussed and resolved in the interest of peace and national reconciliation.

*To find out to what extent the media activities have helped in positively propelling national development*

### **Mass Media and National Development**

A national development is defined as a rise in its economic, human, political, and socio-cultural security. Development, according to Asemah and Asogwa (2014), is "a process of change in mindset, social structure, and overall acceleration of economic growth, through the decrease of poverty and inequality." National development can be defined as a gradual improvement in citizens' economic, educational, and health condition, embracing all aspects of their well-being and providing them with political freedom. "National development," according to Adekoya and Ajilore (2012), "is a word that refers to a nation's sustainable growth and development toward a more desirable state." National development is centered on people, and its success is measured in terms of how well it has improved the life of the people. "National development refers, among other things, to the expansion of the nation in terms of unity, education, economic well-being, and popular engagement in government," Elugbe (2010) as cited in Adekoya and Ajilore (2012). (p. 66).

The media is viewed as a catalyst for change and growth, thus when it is used for societal and human enlightenment, such as sourcing and disseminating knowledge and educating the populace, the development of a nation is secured. Nigeria's constitution grants the media the freedom to publish news and, as a result, support national development by providing information to the general public and fostering an atmosphere conducive to human development (Nwaolikpe, 2018). Dominick (2002) noted that in developing countries with strong centralized control over the media, the mass media should aid in the development of the nation, as well as the promotion of other national goals.

### **Nigeria in the Fourth Republic**

The situation in Nigeria today is unexplainable, everything ranging from the economy to insecurity, human rights abuse and infrastructural decay, add unemployment. Brain drain, capital, human and industrial flight. Banditry, kidnapping ethnic cleansing and citizen brutality by the security forces, also talks about poverty, moral decadence and all sought of criminal activities. The situation in Nigeria today is likened to what took place in Liberia in the 1980s. According to Ogazi and Wagbara in their book, Africa, "A continent in Crises" p.81. On April 12 1980, Sergeant Samuel Doe took over power in Liberia. Doe's 10 years in power was characterized with abuses which included extra-judicial killings of both civilians, solders and other members of society. Arbitrary arrests, detention without trial conviction on trumped up and false charges, constraints on freedom of speech and association, subordination of the judiciary to the executive arm of government and suppression of press freedom. Observers believed that Doe's dictatorship was characterized by ruthless crushing of any form of protest, objections to criticism, and attempt at journalistic or any other form of fact finding was treated with disregard and disdain. By 1989, the domestic situation in Liberia had become truly pathetic and a full scale war broke out. Our prayer is that Nigeria does not go down that path to war, as the effect of the 1967-1970 civil war that was fought in Nigeria are still very fresh in the citizens memories.

### **Conclusion**

The Media are indispensable in the life and historical development of all countries of the world. Nigeria inclusive. No doubt the media played and are still playing major roles in the integration and developmental stages of the Nigeria Nation life. However when traced from its inceptive years in 1932 and up to date, and when juxtaposed in the face of its contemporaries such as India, Pakistan and China, in Asia and at home in Africa with such countries as Ghana and Ruwanda, one does not need to go far to discover that Nigeria has not done well. Nigeria still remains a baby at 60, still not finding a strong foot to stand on and if the yards stack to measure the level of peace, integration, socio political and economic development and general growth of a Nation is the media, then, one will be left with no choice but to say that the mass media in Nigeria have left a lot of her responsibilities yet undone.

Though it may be unfair to totally condemn the mass media in Nigeria since there have been some areas where some media organizations are said to have done well.

### **Recommendations**

1. The mass media have made a contribution towards the growth and development of the Nigerian fourth republic. However, their efforts are not enough as there are a lot of political issues hindering development. Hence, there is a need for the media to do more in ameliorating these challenges and thereby foster sustainable political development.
2. The mass media are making good efforts in national integration. There should be constant synergy between the media and the National Orientation Agency to foster national integration in Nigeria.
3. The mass media is a great platform to influence national development. As such, it should be well utilised to propagate national development and growth so as to place Nigeria in a better position just like the developed West.

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