Media-State Relationship in Democratic Societies: An Appraisal of the current Nigerian Democratic Experiment
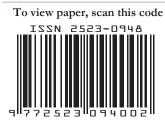
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Abstract

This essay interrogates the nexus between media and democracy. It is a two-pronged approach to the discourse of media-state relationship in democratic settings, with the intention to proffer answer to the questions of what role the media play in democratic consolidation, and what role the state plays to facilitate media operations in the interest of democracy. Divided into four major parts, the first part sets the scene for discussion by giving an overview of the key concepts- media and democracy, upon which the whole gamut of the essay hinges. The second part pegs the study on a theory. Here, Development Media Theory has been employed to explain the dynamics of media-state relationship in budding democracies. Next is a perspective on media-state relationship, where the three state roles of regulation, participation and facilitation of media operations are discussed. The last part of the essay is a functionalist approach to the discourse of media-state relationship in a democratic setting, with accent on the major functions expected of a vibrant media sector such as surveillance, correlation, mobilization, information, enlightenment, education and sensitization, discussed vis-à-vis the Nigerian "politico-media" landscape. The study concludes that media and democracy are interlocked in a symbiotic relationship that is beneficial to each other. The relationship here is best described as two sides of the same coin that can never be separated, hence, each needs and yearns dearly for the other.

Key words: democracy, media, state, Nigeria

Introduction

Informing the citizens about the developments in the society and helping them to make informed choices, media make democracy to function in its true spirit. It also keeps the elected representatives accountable to those who elected them by highlighting whether they have fulfilled their wishes for which they were elected and whether they have stuck to their oaths of office (Dutta 2011:3).

The above citation captures succinctly, the indispensable role of the media in a democratic society. Media and democracy are two concepts that are entangled in an intricate relationship, a symbiotic relationship in which each needs and benefits immensely from the other. This relationship is, however, not difficult to explain. For instance, while democracy needs a vibrant media to provide effective watchdog to the system and hold the key actors accountable, alongside other crucial functions of informing, educating, sensitizing, enlightening and mobilizing the masses to make them live up to their expectations (Ojo 2003); the media on the other hand need democratic government more than any other kind of government, for it is only under democratic regimes that they can function effectively as expected, with a relatively higher degree of freedom. Although the relationship can be more complicated than just this, this simplistic explanation provides the basis for understanding why each of the concepts yearn dearly for the other.

Political scientist and one of the founding fathers of the field of mass communication, Harold Lasswell 1947 provides two premises from which a meaningful discussion of the role of media in a democratic setting can be discussed, namely: surveillance and correlation functions (see Sambe 2008). These functions, among the various functions which the media performs in the society are instrumental to the sustenance of democracy. It is against this backdrop that Ojo (2003: 823) asserts that "a boisterous, courageous and independent media with a broader and more comprehensive worldview in a plural society is a *sine qua non* of a sustainable democracy in Nigeria". Buttressing the point further, he notes that:

It is the role of the mass media in a democratic setting to keep the citizenry well informed. Unless citizens have adequate and accurate information on all the issues and problems confronting them, they will be unable to take enlightened decisions on them. Without such information, they will be unable to comprehend the day-to-day working of the government and to participate in it. Nor will they be able to hold those in authority responsible for their acts of omission and commission. In other words, in the absence of full truthful information, they can perform none of the functions that citizens have to perform in democracy (p.822).

On the part of the state, three major lenses can be used to explain the media-state relationship in a democratic or any given society. These are: the regulatory, participatory and facilitative roles of the state in media operations. These roles are necessary for several reasons, most especially in developing nations that are locked into economic and technological deadlocks, hence, the expectation on the state to step in to provide the enabling environment for media operations in a manner that will enable the media industry live up to its enormous responsibility in the interest of de-

mocracy. In this essay, the interplay between media and state forces is discussed, with accent on the Nigerian political cum media landscapes. The aim is to demonstrate how intricately interwoven the two concepts-media and democracy are, and the forces that nurture and consolidate the relationship.

Media and democracy: a conceptual overview

The mention of media gives the impression of the means through which one party links with the other, to borrow the words of Sanda (2017:105), the media are: "the whole gamut of information dissemination institutions and agencies in a political system". In the field of communications, media refer to the various means through which messages are communicated to the audience. Narrowing this down to mass communication, we can point at television, radio, newspapers/magazines and to some extent, books and the internet as the media. Typical to all of these is the fact that they contain messages aimed at public consumption (Baran, 2002, Sambe, 2008, Nwabueze, 2014 and Asemah, 2010).

Vakkai and Targema (2017) note that the media are into production of content of all kinds for audiences' consumption, in other words, just the way customers troop into the supermarket to buy products of various kinds, the media also present to the audiences a potpourri of content choices, ranging from music, drama, documentaries, news and current affairs, editorials, advertisements, commentaries, games and puzzles etcetera. This production oriented nature of the media has added to it the adjective-industry. Thus, it is common to hear people talk of the media industry, referring to the means through which we acquire information in the society. In democratic societies, the media industry is conferred with the revered status of the "fourth estate of the realm", due to their herculean task of keeping an eagle eye on the three initial estates-the executive, the legislature and the judiciary (see Ojo 20013).

The media industry in Nigeria, according to Ayedun-Aluma (2017:1) is "diverse to the extent that all categories of media- indigenous, modern and postmodern are represented". He notes that the media industry in the country is an embodiment of media platforms such as newspapers, magazines, radio stations, television stations, recorded music, books, feature films and video games, digital online media and indigenous media (such as festivals and other traditional communication platforms). The ownership structure of the media industry in the country includes federal and state government ownerships, commercial films, private individuals and community organizations, tertiary institutions of learning and foreign-owned media. He, however, decries the existence of contra-diversity traits in the Nigerian media industry such as government's use of the power of advertisement patronage to control editorial content of media, lack of coherence in national ICT and media policies, poor representation of ethnic and religious minorities in the Nigerian media industry and concentration of media outfits in urban centers.

With regards to independence of the media, he observes that the Nigerian media industry is "independent to the extent that the media system covers all issues and does not recognize any 'no-go' areas". Arguing further, he asserts that associations in the media industry in the country make efforts to promote professional codes of conduct and ensure ethical practice, and journalists (especially those in the private media) are reputed not to practice self-censorship in discharging their duties. Forces no doubt exist that reduce this independence of the media in the country, such as the influence of government in the operations of government-owned broadcast media

stations, interests of advertisers, and the lack of constitutional provisions guaranteeing the safety and protection of journalists specifically, despite the enormous constitutional obligation on the media industry.

This assessment of the media industry in the country is fair enough, little wonder, the various media platforms have remained vibrant forces in pushing the frontiers of democracy. Thanks to the proliferation of online media and social media platforms in the country over the last decade, political issues such as electioneering campaigns, public debates, governmental policies and programs are extensively discussed, criticized and deliberated upon in the public sphere. This has, no doubt, given democracy in the country a serious momentum, evident in the fact that during the 2011 and 2015 general elections, these platforms were intensively utilized, the resultant effect of which saw an opposition party unseating the incumbent party in the 2015 presidential elections (Jibril and Targema 2017).

Democracy as a form of government rests is anchored on the principle of popular participation. It is a system of government that carries along the popular will of the masses. In contemporary society, democracy tends to be the most acceptable form of government. Suntai and Targema (2015) summit that democracy entails freedom of each individual to participate in the political community's self-government. At the heart of democratic governance lies political freedom, the rule of law and a credible electoral process that will ensure periodic and regular elections to enable the masses choose their representatives. In this guise, democracy connotes the rule by the people through free and fair elections among other forms of participation, and that is why the Athenians of ancient Greece, progenitors of the concept defined it as *government of the people, by the people and for the people*.

Galadima and Goshit (2013) note that democracy entails popular sovereignty, political equality, recognition of the consent of the governed as well as regular and periodic free and fair elections. According to them, democracy flourishes in societies where:

Legitimacy of government rests on its claim to represent the desires of the citizens. Government exists and is, therefore, accountable to do what the people want;

There is regular and competitive electoral process for choosing political leaders and voters can choose from alternative candidates;

Most adults can participate in the electoral process both as voters and as candidates for election;

Citizens vote in secret, free from coercion and;

Citizens and leaders have freedom of speech, assembly, press and organization.

According to Ahmed (2010:24), "democracy is a form of government in which the supreme power of a political community rests on popular sovereignty". It is a system of government which seeks to realize a generally recognized common good through collective initiation, and discussion of policy questions concerning public affairs and which delegates authority to agents to implement the broad decisions made by the people through majority vote (Oyovbaire, cited in Ahmed 2010). In his submission, Okpaga (2010) describes democracy as a system of government that:

meets three essential conditions: an extensive competition among individuals and groups (especially political parties) for all elective positions of govern-

ment power, at regular intervals and excluding the use of force, a highly in-clusive level of political participation in the school of leaders and policies at least through regular and fair elections so that no major (adult) social group is excluded and a level of civil and political liberties, freedom of the press, freedom of expression, freedom to form and join organizations suffi-cient to ensure the integrity of political competition and participation (p.39).

Summarily, democracy as a system of government strives to uphold the virtues of popular participation, supremacy of majority will but with respect for minority rights, constitution of government power by popular choices through periodic elec-tion, competition for public office, freedom of the press and association, incorrupti-ble judiciary, respect for the rule of law, open and accountable government, and ex-istence of competing political parties whose programs and candidates provide alter-natives for voters (Ahmed 2010). After two unsuccessful attempts to practice demo-cratic system of government in Nigeria, the tide swung around again and in 1999, democratic rule was reinstated.

No doubt, the current democratic experiment is the longest ever, spanning over a period of about eighteen years. The journey so far, however, is full of ups and downs, as several forces are at work in the attempt to thwart all efforts to stabilize the system and drive home, the dividends to the masses. Jega (2010:18) enumerates some of the most pressing challenges that constitute cogs in the wheel of democratic consolidation in the country to include a weak electoral system marred by malprac-tices, pervasive existence of prebendalism and patrimonialism, or what is termed as politics of godfatherism, endemic corruption, politics of exclusion that limits popular participation, poor infrastructural development, weak and porous judiciary and heavy concentration of power and state resources at the center among a myriad of many other obstacles that keep the cub democracy in a deadlock, thereby hindering good fruits to come out of it.

Accordingly, he proffered recommendations to help the current democratic experiment to move "from the woods and waters to the fertile plains". The media are crucial in this migration process to the enviable future. Oso (2012:271) establishes the nexus between the media as an institution and democracy. His argument is that: "the mass media are essential in the process of building democratic polity... virtually eve-rybody will agree on the importance of the media of communication in shaping the democratic character of society". Scholars have come to a consensus that the mass media are institutions that a vibrant media sector gives credence to the existence of democracy in any given society. This will be elaborated further in subsequent sec-tions, before then, it is pertinent to examine the government-media relationship in the current Nigerian democratic experiment.

Theoretical framework

This study is hinged on the Development Media Theory. Propounded by McQuail in 1987, the theory suggests that media should help to pursue development goals in the society. This theory charges the media to give priority to the develop-ment needs of the society. Freedom of the press is also advocated for in this theory, as only a free press can facilitate meaningful development. However, given the fragile nature of democracies in developing nations, government is allowed to interfere

with, or meddle into the affairs of the press in the interest of development (Nwabueze 2014). In this guise, censorship and restriction of press operation can be justified. Thus, development priorities are placed first, and all other courses are secondary, hence, the state can "infringe" on the right to freedom of expression and of the press in the interest of development. This theory finds relevance in developing nations of Africa and Asia (Nwabueze, 2014). In Nigeria for instance, the numerous regulations that the press is subjected to, justify the assumptions of this theory. The proposed New Media Bill (which is currently before the national assembly) can also be conveniently situated within the framework of this press theory. The major tenets of the theory according to McQuail, as cited in Asemah (2011) are as follows:

Media should accept and carry out positive development tasks in line with the nationally established policy;

Freedom of the press should be open to restriction according to economic priorities and development needs of the society;

Media should give priority in news and information to links with other developing countries which are close geographically, culturally and politically;

In the interest of development ends, the state has the right to intervene in or restrict media operations and devices of censorship, subsidy and direct control can be justified, and;

Journalists and other media workers have responsibilities as well as freedom in their information gathering and dissemination tasks.

A careful observation of the tenets of this theory as stated above indicates that it is a blend of the libertarian and social responsibility press theories, and perhaps, authoritarianism as well. This combination of traits from the other normative theories, loaded in the development media theory helps it to transcend the weaknesses of the other normative theories, and accommodate the exigencies of developing nations, given their uniqueness and inherent peculiarities (Asemah 2011). No doubt, the theory has been criticized *inter alia,* for harboring counter democratic traits that constitute violations on freedom of expression which is indispensable in democratic settings. This lacuna resulted in the emergence of yet another normative theory for developing nations- the democratic participant theory. Notwithstanding this criticism, the theory provides a good premise to anchor a discussion of the media-state relationship in democratic experiments of developing societies like Nigeria, and the role which the media play in strengthening democratic institutions.

Media-state relationship in contemporary Nigeria: an examination of the regulatory, participatory and facilitative state roles
The relationship between media and the state is best explained by examining the three key roles of regulation, participation and facilitation of media operations. This section gives a perspective on the three state roles.
Regulation: Perhaps, the media industry is one of the industries that attract the attention of state actors most. This is because of the omnipotent role of the industry in the process of governance specifically, and the process of social engineering generally. Often times, government justify regulation of the media in the name of checkmating abuse and misuse of the potentials which they harbor. Nwosu as cited in Ezeigbo (2004) expresses the federal government's skepticism over deregulation of the broad-

cast media industry prior to 1992, noting that:

> Since radio and television are powerful instruments, should they fall into the hands of unscrupulous politicians, they may misuse them for gain and to hold political power unfairly or to propagate parochial ideologies. Also, to some private investors, fairness may be slaughtered on the altar of commercial gain. (p.7)

Such was the conspicuous position of the state, expressing its skepticism over deregulation or liberalization of broadcast airwaves. Buttressing this sentiment further, Ezigbo (2004:2) again cites Head, who avers that "no country can afford to leave so powerful and persuasive an avenue of public communication completely unregulated without shaping it to some degree in accord with public policy and national interest". Shehu (2013) also explains why media control or regulation remains manifest in the Nigerian media landscape. In his words:

> The argument of British Parliamentarians that broadcasting is too important to be left to the professional broadcasters alone seems to be axiomatic among politicians of all times. This may be the basis of the consistent meddlesome attitude of the Nigerian governing class in the management and operation of state-owned broadcast stations (p.85).

Recall that even the print media that have been liberalized since their advent in the country were heavily regulated during the military era with series of draconian and repressive decrees, churned out by the various regimes to confine the press within certain limits of operation. Notable examples include: the Newspaper Prohibition from Circulation Act of 1967, Pubic Officers Protection against False Publication Decree No 11 of 1976; Public Officers Protection against False Publication Decree No. 4 of 1984, Detention of Persons Decree No. 2 of 1984, Newspaper Registration Decree No. 44 of 1993 etc. (Abayomi 2003, Targema and Ayih 2017).

Respite, however, arrived for the broadcast industry in 1992 when the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC) was established through decree number 38 to liberalize the airwaves. Among the numerous responsibilities of the commission include the regulation of the broadcast industry, and setting standards with regard to the content and quality of materials for broadcast in the country (NBC code 2002). Citing Saidu, Ezeigbo (2004:13) notes that the establishment of the commission is a very important innovation which has a very far reaching implication for broadcast industry in Nigeria, as "for the first time in the history of the country, a national body comprising a broad group of various professions, cultural groups, opinion leaders and many others has been created by the government to control and regulate broadcasting".

The coming of NBC has been applauded by members of the general public, human right activists and civil society organizations, given its potentials to amplify dissident voices through the permission of private broadcasting in the country. Several privately owned broadcast media stations emerge; both radio and television, African Independent Television (AIT), Channels Television, Sliver Bird TV, Gotel Television are few examples among the numerous private television and radio stations that operate in the country. According to Ihechu and Okugo (2013), NBC performs its regu-

latory role in three major ways. These are: licensing of broadcast media stations (both public and private), monitoring of broadcast content, sanctioning broadcast stations that violate the provisions of the code.

Only applications that have been endorsed by the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria are granted operational license to run broadcast media stations in the country, and any station that transmits without license is considered an illegal station. Monitoring of broadcast content is done based on the set standards of the NBC code, most of which are rooted in the constitution, in the morality and cultural precepts of the land, while sanctions for erring stations range from written warning, charging stations to pay stipulated fines, seizure or forfeiture of equipment, shutting down the station and revocation of license depending on the level of breech. Ihechu and Okugo (2013) however note the commission is sometimes used as a tool by the government to unnecessarily regulate the private media, with a bias to government owned stations. This double standard posture of the commission has been noted also by Ezeigbo (2004). Similarly, Akashoro, Okidu and Ajaga (2013) supply adequate empirical evidence to buttress the "lopsided nature of NBC" operations in monitoring and sanctioning media organizations in the country.

Notwithstanding these allegations, the NBC remains one of the renowned agencies spearheading the state role of media regulation in the country, alongside other sister bodies such as the Nigerian Press Council (NPC), Nigerian Institute of Public Relations practitioners (NIPR) and Advertisers Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) among other agencies. Cardinal to the state's role here is to oversee the industry and checkmate abuses. Recent trends in this area are the heightened debates over state regulation of the online media platforms and by extension, the social media, which by virtue of their operational mode, represent a sort of free-for-all terrain and remain chiefly unregulated. The state is particularly concerned about the gross abuses which these platforms are often times subjected to. Often times, they are being employed to violate the rights of others, and commit acts injurious to public order, state security, public health and morals. Currently, a bill is proposed to the national assembly seeking to regulate the online media platforms.

Participation: media-state relationship here is perceived in the involvement of the state in the process of media proprietorship for the purpose communication. This participation in a developing society like Nigeria is necessary for the simple fact that left in the hands of private individuals; the media industry will not be vibrant enough to satiate the information needs of the society. In Nigeria today, the federal government has effective networks of both radio and television. Radio Nigeria coordinates the radio network in the country with centers in Ibadan, Kaduna and Enugu. Radio Nigeria FM stations are also established in several states across the federation to enhance effective coverage and grassroots participation and representation.

Similarly, the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) coordinates the television network in the country, with network centers in the six geopolitical zones and NTA stations across the various federating states. These two networks serve to cater for the information needs of the masses. Apparently, it would have been difficult, or perhaps, impossible for private individuals to run such network stations given the cost implications of setting up broadcast stations. At the state levels too, the various state governments that make up the federation set up media outfits to serve the information needs of the masses. These stations join forces with the various private media stations in the country to saturate adequate information in the country. Critics, how-

ever, argue that the public media in the country are often times utilized to champion the propaganda of the government of the day, thereby forcing opposition parties to fall back to the private media stations to reach out effectively to the masses. Ezigbo (2004:7) corroborates this position when she notes that: "government media more than private ones, choose to serve the limited interests of government at the expense of the greater and long range interests of the nation as a whole".

The aspect of the media industry where this participatory role of the stat is not felt much is the print media industry. This may be attributed in part to the cost effectiveness of running the print media. At the initial take-off of the Nigerian project, the three component regions all operated vibrant print newspapers that lend voices to their respective regions. However, at the moment, most the leading national dailies in the country are privately owned with less involvement of the government. Although state governments own and operate print media outfits, their operations are limited in scope, and they cannot compete favorably with the privately owned newspapers and magazines. In essence, involvement of the state in the ownership of media outfits in the country has filled a big vacuum that would have been created. It has also subsidized information for the masses, who obtain them at less cost.

Facilitation: media-state relationship can also be examined from the standpoint of the facilitative state role. This facilitation, however, is a two-way process. For instance, while the state provides the enabling environment for the media to operate, the media provide avenues for the state to gain acceptance of, and receive inputs of people from the grassroots. In Nigeria, the facilitative state role in this regard is felt in many respects. First is the provision of incentives for the media to operate. Here, the state provides media houses with equipment, funds and facilities to enable them function effectively. The current digitization process presents a good example of this facilitative state role, where governments across levels are channeling resources into the various state-owned broadcast media houses to facilitate the digital migration. Private media houses also benefit from this through government patronage in terms of sponsorships and adverts that help them to augment their income and enhance their sustainability.

The second aspect of this facilitative state role is felt in the aspect of providing a good legal framework for media operations. This is one area in which the current democratic experiment benefits the media industry enormously. Targema and Ayih (2017) note that the return to democratic rule in 1999 brought some respites to the media industry, as most of the repressive and obnoxious decrees that were enacted to muzzle the press have been repealed, thereby, providing a level ground for media operations in the country. Subsequently, the signing into law of the Freedom of Information Act in 2011 adds momentum to the quest to provide a conducive legal environment for media operations. Suntai and Targema (2016) observe that Act empowers journalists to seek and report information to the masses in the interest of democracy.

In the area if ICTs, government's partnership with transnational companies has enhanced their proliferations in the country and their impact in the process of communication can never be contested. With the launching of a satellite- NIGCOM-SAT IR into the space in 2011 (see Nwabueze 2014), a significant milestone has been achieved in the area of communications. Today, courtesy of network service providers in the country such as MTN, GLO, ZAIN, and ETISALAT, every citizen is a reporter in their respective environments, a development that has increased the volume of

information in the public sphere. There is no gainsaying the role which the state plays in facilitating the proliferation of these ICTs, GSM sets and similar gadgets that are instrumental to extending the frontiers of information and communications in the country. All these developments help to strengthen democracy, as they enable the government to carry the masses along, and encourage a wider participation in governance in the interest of democracy.

Interface between media and democracy: a discourse from the functionalist perspective

Oso (2012) demonstrates the nexus between media and democracy. His submission provides a good reference in the conceptualization of the media's power in strengthening democratic principles. According to him:

> In the modern era, their role (the media) in making politics and society visible in providing information, analysis, fora for debate, a shared civic culture - in short, a public sphere- is beyond dispute. They appear ubiquitous and continue to expand. Certainly, the media have been instrumental in globalizing the normative features of democracy (p.272).

Nwokeocha (2012) also corroborates this point. Citing Edeani, he opines that a well-informed people who are effectively oriented to the highest values of their political system are the ones who will be able to use the ballot box wisely and efficiently, keep an effective tab on their representative's performance in the public interest and engage in other kinds of legitimate political activities. To this end, he recommends that the media as the conveyor belt of political information should always saturate the environment with healthy political information that is capable of taking democracy to the next level. They should entrench media debates as a culture. This, he cautions, should be done without favor, and adequate space and time should be dedicated to political education by all media houses, owing to its importance in society. Against this backdrop, it is pertinent to return to specifics at this juncture, and discuss the various ways in which the media and democracy interface as follows:

Information, enlightenment, education and sensitization: these represent a set of interrelated functions which the media perform in the interest of democracy. The media provides the masses with information on the workings of democratic government. In other words, the various platforms such as radio, television, newspaper and magazine; and indeed, the whole gamut of the new media with its numerous platforms serve as linkage between the rulers and the ruled in democratic set ups. Through the media, stakeholders in the democratic process i.e. the representatives and their constituencies share a field of experience. This is particularly important for several reasons, prominent among which is the fact that the media serve as platforms for expressing satisfaction or dissatisfaction as the case may be by the masses to their representatives. Information is a major resource for democratic consolidation, as it keeps all involved in the process on the same page (Nwokeocha 2012).

Enlightenment as a function of the mass media in democracy connotes creation of awareness on the political process. It could be on the system of government in place and how it operates, the agenda of the government (like the seven point agenda/vision 2020, transformation agenda, etc.), policies and their implications (such as fuel subsidy removal in 2012 and 2016), among a myriad of other issues.

Enlightenment relates to the information function, although it aims at achieving a goal specifically, what could be termed "special information" that would enable the masses understand the direction of the government and its implication(s) on their lives (ibid).

Closely related to this are sensitization and education which refer to providing purposive information that will enhance a deeper understanding of the democratic process. This function is felt most in terms of new innovations in the democratic process. A good example here is the nature of the voting process. The media can take it upon themselves to educate and sensitize the masses on the voting process, such as the registration process, what is expected of them at the polling units during the accreditation and voting processes etc. The introduction of e-voters register and a card reader for biometric verification of voters in the 2015 general elections created a serious need more massive sensitization and education of voters prior to the election to achieve a hitch free election. Worthy to note is the fact that the whole gamut of the media is deployed for the achievement of these purposes. Each medium have its unique strengths in this regard, hence a combination of all the platforms help to minimize the inherent limitations of the individual platforms, and achieve the overall goal of optimally informing, enlightening, sensitizing and educating the masses in the interest of democracy.

Mobilization: mobilization is simple terms is 'getting people to act as expected' (see Nwabueze 2014). It is a political strategy used to spur the masses to action. In this function, the media serve as instruments in the hands of politicians to galvanize support of the masses for certain candidates, policies or public debates (Nwokeocha 2012). Asemah (2011) corroborates thus:

> When the mass media are properly positioned, they can be an effective way for mobilizing the populace towards political, educational, cultural and economic aspirations of the people. They can galvanize people to support government policies and act as watchdog on the political system (p.46).

This explains why politicians court the various media platforms (both traditional and new media), and utilize them intensively during electioneering campaigns. The media can also be deployed to mobilize the masses against a candidate or policy. This also explains why the media are patronized by both contesting groups in terms of public debates. The 2012 anti-subsidy removal protest witnessed a scenario similar to this, where both the government and the organized labor- the two parties in the struggle deployed the media to win the support of the masses. Often times, the media prove effective in mobilizing the masses, which justifies why they are indispensable in the democratic process.

Surveillance: this is, perhaps, one of the most renowned functions of the media in the democratic process. It confers on the media, the status of the fourth estate of the realm, meaning the media are the most important institutions in the democratic process after the first three arms- the executive; the legislature and the judiciary (see Sambe, 2008). The role of this fourth estate is to provide a check on the entire system by keeping an eagle eye on its operations and raising alarm where necessary. This in media parlance is known as the watchdog role. Through the watchdog function, the media keep the rulers accountable to the masses, and complement the war against graft and other official misconducts. Since the return of the country to

democratic rule in 1999, the media have been at the forefront of spearheading the watchdog role, with celebrated cases such as exposure of the Speaker, House of Representatives Salisu Buhari in 1999 who forged a bachelor's degree of the University of Toronto (Sambe 2008) among others. Ojo (2003) emphasizes the surveillance function of the media in democratic settings when he notes that:

> ... the mass media educate the public on state affairs, disseminate information on the activities of the government – which are most often secretive in Third World countries – expose wrongdoing, including corrupt practices which impact negatively on economic development, and keep the government on its toes, all in order to ensure 'accountability, transparency, probity and integrity' (p. 822).

Media commentators adjudge the media industry in Nigeria in the discharge of their surveillance function as vibrant to the extent that they cover all issues and do not recognize any "no-go" areas (Ayedun-Aluma 2017). Several forces exist, however, that limit the surveillance function of the media such as the institutionalization of corruption as a 'national culture' in the country by the political stakeholders in the country (see Egwemi 2012). Government interference in media operations also limit this all-important function, as observed by Ayedun-Aluma (2017), that:

> The Nigerian media environment harbors the forces that promote a dependent media system to the extent that: the operations of media organs owned by the state governments are generally subject to state intervention; media (especially broadcast media) regulatory institutions are subject to governmental influence through their legal status as well as methods of appointment of their membership (p.2).

Arguing further, he notes that some media professionals (especially journalists) are reputed to be corrupt and to engage in unprofessional conduct for financial gain. The recent indictment of several media houses across the country in the Dasukigate scandal proves the veracity of this claim. Msughter (2017) subscribes to this point. His essay titled: "corruption and the media: who will investigate the investigator" opens the pandora box, and exposes some of the shoddy deals journalists in the country engage in that weaken the effectiveness of their watchdog role on the political system. Notwithstanding these systemic and professional problems, the diversity and pluralism of the Nigerian media industry as noted earlier in the essay- encapsulating all media forms- private and online media inclusive that are independent, are big plus to the industry in terms of helping it live up to expectations of its surveillance role in the democratic process.

Correlation: in the democratic process, this function of the media is best described as the interpretative process. It is an in-depth journalistic endeavor where journalists, through editorial, commentary and column sections throw light on key governmental policies and interpret them to the audience in the light of contemporary realities (Sambe 2008). Asemah (2012) gives a vivid description of the correlation function of the media. Citing Orewere, he posits that:

> Correlation refers to the process of going beyond mere gathering and distribu-

tion of information to include reasoned interpretation of what is given out as news about the environment, including at times of, the prescription for conduct in reactions to the events reported. This is what is often referred to as editorial or an attempt to present "news behind the news" such as going beyond facts to situate the events. This is also called news analysis which of course, could accommodate some form of propaganda (p. 47).

Correlation is an advanced form of the information function of the media which helps media outfits to put news event into perspective. In the democratic process, the media's perspective on issues is very important, as it can form the basis of the media agenda, and by extension, public agenda for the purpose of stimulating a healthy and more enlightened debate on the issue. Through the correlation function, the media bridge the gap between policy formulators in the democratic process and the masses for whom the policies are intended, and link the two parties together to chart the way forward in for purpose of driving home, the dividends of democracy. It is only with a vibrant media sector in the democratic process that governmental policies (both productive and counter-productive), with their accompanying implications can be adequately interpreted to the masses to enable them make meaningful inputs into the process of governance.

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion demonstrates the interplay between media and state in democratic settings. It presents a symbiotic relationship beneficial in several ways to both parties. For democratic sustenance, therefore, a vibrant media sector that will watch over the system is pertinent. This call becomes pressing given the other supplementary functions such as information, enlightenment, education and sensitization which the media perform in the interest of democracy. To achieve this, however, an enabling environment- legal, economic and otherwise must be provided to strengthen the media sector and give it the required impetus to discharge the herculean task of extending the frontiers of democracy in other to drive home, more dividends to the masses. The peak of this argument is that a vibrant media industry is the onus of democratic claim of any given society. Be this as it may, the tenets of developing media theory that relate to state interference with the operations of the media and restriction to freedom of expression must be applied with utmost caution, and only where it becomes necessary in the interest of democracy.

To this end, government and state actors at all levels must blend the regulatory role with facilitation to pave the way for a vibrant media sector that will help to uphold the cannons of democracy. Although regulation is necessary to give the media direction and focus, no effort should be spared to provide a level ground for media operations, kudos to the Nigerian constitution that provides for the fundamental obligation of the media, the right to freedom of expression and recently, the Freedom of Information Act. It behooves on journalists and other media workers to exploit these avenues to the fullest for the purpose of consolidating democratic principles in the country. Media and democracy are, and will remain two sides of the same coin.

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