

**Governance and the Media in an Emergent Democracy: A Study of the Role,
Record and Changing Profile of the Nigerian Media 1999 – 2017**

An Inaugural Lecture Delivered at Adeola Odutola Hall, Ijebu Ode

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Protocols

Preamble

In the strict academic tradition, inaugural lectures are delivered by newly appointed professors, who are expected to speak to developments in their discipline, their academic niche, as well as provide a research agenda for their chairs. This lecture borrows some of that conception, but reformulates it in the context of town and gown, as befitting the newly inaugurated Oba Sir (Dr) Sikiru Adetona Professorial Chair of Governance, concerning which by the Grace of God, I am the pioneer Occupant. As many in this audience will know, endowed chairs arrived pretty late in the Nigerian academic culture to the extent that even today, almost seven decades after the first university was established, you can count the number of such facilities in Nigeria. The Oba Sir (Dr) Sikiru Adetona Endowment is arguably one of the most generous in the country so far, and constitutes is an example of the much talked about Awujale Standard. Kudos are appropriate therefore to Kabiyesi, who has chosen to crown his long career bedecked with innovations, by this important one.

Given the calibre and pedigree of the Board of Trustees managing the chair, it is sure to endure as a trend setting educational legacy. Thanks are due, therefore, to the Board of Trustees, chaired by Kabiyesi himself and alternately by Mr. Tunji Ayanlaja, Senior Advocate of Nigeria. Worthy of note too, considering that this is a university chair is the stimulating role of the authorities of the Olabisi Onabanjo University, in particular, the outgoing Vice Chancellor, his deputy, Dean of the Faculty of Social and Management Sciences, as well as the Head of Political Science Department, my Department.

I devote this lecture, as its title suggests, to an exploration of the role, record and changing profile of the media in Nigeria's emergent democracy. As many in this audience know, my career straddles town and gown, having alternated between university departments and editorial board rooms of newspapers+. This informs my choice of specialisation in Political Communication, especially, the linkage between the media and governance. I do hope that the thoughts which are shared here and the

data deployed to substantiate them will be refined in the course of the exchange and feedback that attend the lecture.

Backdrop

It has now become a cliché to say that ours is the age of media in all its varied forms or the age of information. As a colleague joked to me recently, President Donald Trump of the United States governs the country from his twitter handle by waking Americans up with his views, often controversial, and policy statements. It was only a decade or so ago that a former Secretary General of the United Nations referred to the Cable News Network (CNN) as the 16th member of the United Nations Security Council, denoting thereby the awesome power of that global medium. In the same connection, in the scholarly community there is talk about the so-called CNN effect even if the jury is still out on precisely how useful that description is as an explanatory variable. This distinguished audience will be familiar with scholarly descriptions of television as the Fifth Estate of the Realm and social media as the Sixth Estate – all pointing to the importance of media politically and socially.

Indeed, in his well known trilogy, the Italian Sociologist, Manuel Castels, who has been described as the Max Weber of our generation, referred to information or what he calls informationalism, as inaugurating a new mode of production. Permit me to quote him at some length:

The information technology revolution induced the emergence of information, as the material foundation of a new society. Under informationalism, the generation of wealth, the exercise of power and the creation of cultural codes came to depend on the technological capacities of societies and individuals with information technology as the core of this capacity – This prevailing network logic transforms all domains of social and economic life (Castels, 2000:67-8).

In other words, media and information flows in the modern period affect and transform every department of life. One has no apology, therefore, for zeroing in in this lecture on the role, record and changing profile of the Nigerian media with reference to governance in the period between the return of democracy in 1999 and 2017.

Although the lecture considers the media in such genres as print, electronic and digital, it focuses primarily on the print media in the shape of newspapers. True, the

circulation of newspapers and magazines have gone down in the last 16 years, mirroring for different reasons, a global trend, while some titles, such as the *The Nigerian Champion*, *Daily Times*, *National Concord*, *Next*, have either gone off the streets or remain in varying stages of desolation. Nonetheless, newspapers continue to exercise considerable influence on policy making and enjoy a pedigree as arbiters of national conversation, dating back to the anti-colonial and antimilitary struggles.

Hence, despite the fact that broadcasting and social media are increasingly relevant in a population made up preponderantly of youths, the focus on newspapers increasingly accessed online, is justified on account of their continuing influence. Undoubtedly, the Nigerian media, which are the largest and most vibrant in Africa, and regarded as the epicenter of Nigerian civil society, constitute an important plank of our democracy. This is particularly so in the area of accountability of elected officials where they have been in the vanguard of reform causes. Beginning from 1999, when some publications championed the resignation of Hon. Salisu Buhari, Speaker of the House of Representatives through 2014, when Ms. Stella Odua, Minister for Aviation was eased out of office for corruption related charges, to the editorial opinions of some newspapers calling for the resignation of Secretary to Government, Babachir Lawal over “grass cutting misdemeanors” the media, newspapers essentially, remain topical.

Needless to say that the advocacy and reform-oriented role of the quality media have been hard-earned. For example, journalists continue to suffer intimidation from state officials both before and after the signing into law on May 28, 2011 of a Freedom of Information Act after ten years of struggle. There are, the preemptory arrests, prosecution and persecution of critical journalists, as well as the seizure of copies of independent newspapers such as occurred in June 2014 when the Nigerian army carried out searches leading to confiscation of copies of *Leadership*, *The Nation*, *Daily Trust* and *The Punch*. Although justified on security grounds, a typical opinion is that of ‘Reporters without Borders’, which argued that the action obstructs the Nigeria’s public right to information. Such breaches of press freedom were replicated throughout the period under study. This is further illustrated by the forcible closure of *Weekly Insider* in September 2004 and arrest of its key staff, the shutdown of *Freedom Radio* in Kano in 2006, *Channels Television* in September 2008 and detention of its editors for 78 hours. There was also, in November 2013, the inability of *Premium Times*, a prominent online news site to post links to *Facebook* pages from its website. This was believed by its editors, to have been engineered by state security using individuals who complained that the links were ‘abusive’. We can add to these the arrest in January, 2017 of Dapo Olorunyomi,

publisher of *Premium Times* and one of his editors over a critical report on the Chief of Army Staff, General Tukur Buratai.

Shining as the role and the record of the media have been, the story contains contradictions and rough patches. Hence, as mentioned previously, the effort of the media in extending the frontiers of democracy is *contradicted* by factors such as the incorporation of prominent journalists into an elaborate, spoils sharing arrangement through seductive appointments. One of the most prominent examples is Dr. Reuben Abati, a widely respected columnist of *The Guardian*, who was appointed as President Goodluck Jonathan's Special Adviser on Media and Communication. Before Abati, the Late President Umaru Yar'adua appointed Mr. Olusegun Adeniyi, former editor of *ThisDay* to serve in the same capacity under his government; while President Muhammadu Buhari who took office on May 29, 2015, appointed the respected Femi Adesina, former President of the Nigerian Guild of Editors to a similar position.

This pattern is replicated around the states in the country, and is believed by some to be one of the reasons why the media have lost their bite, and for the most part failed to carry out investigative reporting. More insidiously is corruption of journalists, which is arguably on the increase because of the practice whereby employers owe their workers several months of salaries, expecting them to fend for themselves. To illustrate the point, as at today, media institutions such as *Daily Independent*, *Tell Magazine*, *The News*, *Blueprint*, *Leadership* and *AIT/Ray power* owe their workers arrears of salaries ranging from six to twenty months.

A corollary trend which may have heightened corruption in the media is the collapse of several newspapers, usually preceded by prolonged defaults on workers' salaries. For example, *The Nigerian Compass* which commenced publication in 2008, had by 2011 become distressed. It limped into 2012 and went off the streets. Other examples include *New Age*, *National Interest*, *New Nigerian*, *Champion*, *Weekly Insider Anchor* and, *The Sketch*. Much lamented was the demise in 2011 of *Next newspaper*, which added colour in the space of its three years to the media scene, not least by engaging in investigative journalism, bringing together a pack of fine professionals, and deploying cutting edge information technology. Widely reported lay-offs such as occurred of *The Guardian* in June 2016, involving over 100 staff members and similar exercises at *The Sun*, *Daily Trust* and *New Telegraph*, earlier this year complete the picture of distress.

Hence, the economic frying pan under which the media operated may have accentuated the 'brown envelope' syndrome whereby journalists are bribed to

publish, mainstream, relegate, or kill stories. According to Adaobi Nwaobani who worked for *The Next newspaper* and now reports for The *BBC*, corruption is both systemic and random, and not unrelated to the fragility of the newspaper industry. She reports that some newspaper proprietors often wave off demands for prompt salary payments, by insisting that journalists should use the 'platform', by which it is meant the newspaper or broadcasting space, to fend for themselves. She went on to say in a 2015 report that:

Nigerian journalists are known to prowl to and fro in search of anyone whose pay will inspire their pens. It is common for 'brown envelope' containing cash to be handed out during press briefings- a practice that has been going on for so long that many young journalists with whom I have spoken have no idea that it is unethical. After covering an event, they linger expectantly until the envelopes stuffed with cash arrive. Woe betides you if you fail to meet their expectations (BBC Africa Report, 5 March 2015).

Nonetheless, there is evidence that the media themselves, especially at the level of the Guild of Editors, are taking steps to curb or reduce the abuses that deface their valour and role conception as the voice of the oppressed.

To be noted too is the mushrooming of social media platforms which has enhanced the prospects of participation, engagement and citizenship. This is illustrated by the proliferation of social platforms and growing political conversation on *Facebook*, which in 2016 had almost 16 million users in Nigeria as well as *Tweeter*, *WhatsApp*, *Blackberry messenger*, among several others. The social media, popular among the youths are considered an alternative to the traditional media and offer ways of circumventing official censorship. Related to that, is what Kperogi (2012) has described as 'the citizen online journalism of the Nigerian digital diaspora'. Consequently, many Nigerian journalists draw their news from the popular online medium, *Sahara Reporters* underlining thereby the globalization of the Nigerian public sphere.

The rest of the lecture is divided into four further sections, namely: Changing Profile of the Media, Contradictions of and Drawbacks to Media Reformism, The Crusading Role of the Media and a Concluding Section.

Changing Profile

The period between 1999 and 2017 witnessed phenomenal expansion in the media industry as a result of the liberalized political space, the exigencies of political competition warranting the replication of media outlets; as well as an economic boom riding on unprecedented increase in the price of oil in the world market for many of these years. Nigeria's oil boom produced a new class of billionaires, and economic players, several of whom invested in the media industry. The period consequently, reinforced Nigeria's position as the country with the largest and most vibrant media industry in Africa, followed by South Africa and Kenya. The number of publications is put roughly at 120, several of them founded in the period since 1999. To give an idea of the expansion of the media industry cutting across several types, the former Director General of the Nigerian Broadcast Commission, Emeka Mba, informed two years ago (*Punch*, September 1, 2015) that Nigeria has the biggest broadcast sector in Africa, as it boasted of 133 federal television, 122 state radio, 68 state television, 51 multi-channel, multi-point distribution services, 97 private radio, 43 private television, 63 federal radios, and 27 campus broadcasting stations. Obviously, therefore, the country is well covered in terms of the electronic media with the majority of them owned by the state.

In a trend mirrored across the media, many of these outfits are rudimentary and exist at the margins of survival. The breakdown provided by Mba did not include community radios, 17 of which were approved by the federal government after many years of struggle and agitation by civil society organizations. It should be noted that the broadcasting sector is trapped in relative obsolescence as a result of the failure of the country to undertake the switch over from analog to digital broadcasting. This implies that Nigeria will continue to broadcast analog signals until it is able to migrate, hopefully at the end of 2017.

As mentioned, over 120 newspapers, not counting community publications survive in the Nigerian market; although many of these are shoe string enterprises which can capsize and sometimes reappear without notice. For example *National Interest* staged a comeback in 2003, after it was rested for six months only to go off the streets terminally three years later. Circulation figures remain contentious because of the failure of the effort made to revive in 2008, the Audit Bureau of Circulation, which had been comatose for years.

An important development, mentioned earlier, is the growing number of Nigerians who are able to access the internet and social media networks, thus resulting in better engagement and participation of citizens in democratic discourse. Significantly for example, the elections of 2011 and 2015, as well as social outbursts such as the anti-fuel price increase of 2012 and President Muhammadu Buhari's health travails in 2017, were attended by interesting if occasionally frightening conversations on the social media. According to the Nigerian Communication Commission, the number of internet users on the Global System for Mobile (GSM) Communications Network jumped from 76,322,802 in 2014 to 81,892,840 by January 2015. It should be mentioned that the increasing use of social media platforms and internet application is a direct consequence of the continuous rise in the number of people who subscribe to the mobile telecommunications networks. The National Bureau of Statistics put the figure of subscribers at 86 million for 2016; up from 2.3million subscribers in 2002.

Access to the internet, has obviously been of tremendous value to professional journalists as well as citizen journalists, in view of the abundance of information and the opportunities to connect with national and global discourse. The problems associated with patchy networks, breakdown of computers, fitful electricity notwithstanding, journalists are increasingly information technology savvy, a situation that did not obtain at the beginning of civilian rule.

As Kperogi (2012) observes, pertinently, the Post Express blazed the trail of online journalism in Nigeria. According to him:

By the close of the 1990s, a few other newspapers, notably the (Nigerian) Guardian, Punch, Vanguard, and ThisDay, had websites where they episodically republished selected contents from their print editions. By early 2000s, almost all the legacy newspapers in Nigeria had some Web presence aided in part by the aggregation and distribution of their content, along with those of African newspapers, by the AllAfrica.com, the Wahington DC-based multimedia content service provider widely recognized as the world's largest Africa-centered site (Kperogi 2012:447).

To be noted too, is the fact that the majority of Nigerian newspapers can be read online and maintain active websites. Kperogi (2011) insists however, that their online activities and presence are limited to interactivity, and does not, for the most part, include the latter stages of multimediality and hypertextuality. As he put it, "the websites of Nigerian homeland newspapers failed the requirement of Duze's multimediality and hypertextuality and seem to be stuck in Pavlik's first stage in the evolution of online journalism" Kperogi (2011:123)

Kperogi recognized, even as at 2011 that several newspapers such as *Leadership*, *Daily Trust*, *Punch*, and the *Nation* had moved on beyond the first stage of online journalism; although he is correct to say that hypertextuality, whereby newspapers can update content as news breaks, as well as stream video and audio is still a rarity, while hitches with website functionality were frequent. Nonetheless, the situation is rapidly improving, and the vitality of online journalism has been increased by the addition to the media space of such online news publications as *The Cable* commenced in April 2014, *Premium Times*, started in October 2011, and *Eagle online* started in January 2012 and *Bounce* commenced in March, 2017. See Table below.

Table 1:
Online News Publications

Name of publication	Founder	Date
The Gleaner News Online	Tony Iyare	November 2003
The Cable	Simon Kolawole	April 29 th ,2014
Premium Times	Dapo Olorunyomi	October 1 st 2011
The Eagle Online	Dotun Oladipo	January 9, 2012
Sundiata Post	Max Amuche	September 2013
Global Patriots	Simon Ibe	March 2015
The Rainbow	Chijama Ogbu	February 2013
Freedom Online	Gabriel Akinadewo	January 9, 2015
Newsdairyonline	Danlami Nmodu	September,2008
Real news	Maureen Chigbo	November 19, 2012
Prompt News	Akeem Oyetunji	May 18, 2013
Nigeria Politics Online	Semiu Okanlawon	April, 2010
News Express	Isaac Umunna	August 29, 2012
New Mail	Semiu Salami	September, 2010
The Quick News	Monday Ashibogwu	November 10, 2007
Greenbarge	Yusuf Ozi-USman	July 20, 2013
Watchdog	Ben-Bright Mkpuma	August, 2009
Urhobo Today	Laba Oghenekevwe	May, 2012
biztejjers.com	Yemi Adeoye	October, 2011
Metro Watch	Collins Edomarusen	November,2013
New Sentinel	Peter Jones	March 2014
The Citizen	Malachy Agbo	June, 2012
Global village Extra	Taiye Olayemi	2013
persecondnews.com	Femi Soneye	February, 2012
EnviroNews Nigeria	MichealSimire	August, 2012
World Stage	SegunAdeleye	February 7, 2008
Sahara Reporters	Omoyele Sowore	2006
Sahara Reporter TV	Omoyele Sowore	April, 2011
DigitalSENSE	RemmyNweke	August 30, 2009
Frontier News	HoratiusEgua	November, 2011

You News	AfolabiOdeyemi	February, 2012
Gamji.com	Dr.IsmailaIro	1998
The Boss	Dele Momodu	November, 2015
Ynaija	Chude Jideonwo	May, 2010
The Simon Ateba News	Simon Ateba	May, 2015
The News Guru	Mideno Bayegbon	October, 2016
Lindaikejiblog	Linda Ikeji	2007
Daily Post	James Bamisaye	March, 2015
Bella Naija	Uche Eze	July, 2006
Bounce	Media 24	March, 2017

Source: Research Notes

The list above, it should be pointed out, includes several sites that are no longer active, or have become moribund, again reflecting a trend in which other kinds of media, in particular newspapers started with gusto, go off the streets after a few years of publication. Nonetheless, it is conceivable, given Nigeria's youthful population that the number of daily readers of news pages on the web is bigger than the number of those who buy ink stained papers.

Table 2: Top leading sites

Medium	Volume of traffic per month
Punch	Over 15million
Naij.com	14.5million
Pulse	14 million
Vanguard	14million
Sahara Reporters	13.5million
Premium Times	12million
Thisday	10million
The Guardian	10million
The Nation	Over 9million
Daily Post	9smillion

Source: Calculated from Alexa, June, 2015.

As the table above shows, an increasing number of Nigerians, mainly the elite, are able to get their news, from either the online versions of major newspapers, or online news sites such as the influential *Premium Times* or diasporic *Sahara Reporters*. Considering that newspapers increasingly source their reports from online publications, a synergy has been created between both forms of media, especially on anticorruption and human rights issues. Social media, in spite of their abuses such as the impersonation of prominent Nigerians like Professor Wole Soyinka and Chief

Olusegun Obasanjo, as well as recycling rumours and fake news, constitute exciting spaces for civic participation and democratic discourse.

Nigerian journalist, Tolu Ogunlesi alluded to this dimension when he wrote (*The Punch* September 28, 2015) that:

You also have to remember that this is a country for which most of our history, what one might call truly mass media was in the hand of the government (television and radio until the liberalization that began mid-1990s), and what was passed for private or independent wasn't really 'mass' in its distribution (the newspapers, newsmagazines). It is into that context that social media have landed, offering us something truly liberating: mass media in which we are not only consumers but also producers and distributors as well.

The other side of the explosion in newspapers is the high mortality of titles as a result of a mismanaged economy with severe infrastructural deficits. Hence, the birth of several new titles as well as the high death rate of titles can be seen as two sides of the same coin. Some of the prominent new titles which have survived include *The Nation* 2006, *The Sun* 2003, *Daily Independent* 2002, *Leadership* 2004, *Daily Trust* 2001, *New Telegraph* 2013, and *Business Day* 2001. Among those that did not survive are; *Nigerian Compass*, *National Interest*, *The Comet*, *Next*, *New Age*, *The Anchor*, *News Watch*, *National Examiner*, *Tempo*, *PM News* and others.

The economic climate also affected older titles such as; *The Post Express*, founded in July 1996 by businessman Sony Odogwu, but rested in July 2003, *The New Nigerian*, which for many years was the regional voice of the northern part of the country was finally rested in 2012, *The Champion* owned by an Igbo businessman, Emmanuel Nwayanwu has remained comatose for a decade. The distress was particularly hard on the magazine sector where *Tell*, and *The News*, had to downsize considerably and as at October 2015 are owing their staff several months of salaries. *News Watch*, respected for its sober and dignified analysis, was acquired after several years of distress by businessman, Jimoh Ibrahim, who turned it into a daily newspaper, entitled *NewsWatch Daily*. Ibrahim also owns *National Mirror*, founded in 2006 but which had become comatose.

Table 3: Some Newspapers Rested Between 1999 and 2017

Title	Year rested
Sketch	2000
Concord	2000
The Post Express	2003

Tempo	2003
National Interest	2006
The Comet	2007
New Age	2008
Spectator Weekly	2008
Westerner	2011
NewsWatch	2011
Next	2011
New Nigerian	2012
Nigerian Compass	2012
PM News	2015
NewsWatch Daily	2016

Source: Research Notes

As mentioned earlier, the protracted defaults on salaries is a pronounced feature of these years, with some titles and electronic media, owing as many as 20 months of salaries. News broke 2 years ago concerning the sealing of the premises of *Daily Independent*, by the National Union of Journalists, which accused the management of owing 23 months of salaries (*The Nation*, October 8, 2015). There was also the celebrated case of *This Day newspaper*, against which a former editor, Paul Ibe, won a landmark case in court compelling the company to pay his outstanding salaries and allowances. The paper reportedly owed between 6-8 months of salary arrears, a story that is replicated across a wide stratum of the media.

In this respect, the demise of *Next* newspaper which excitingly deepened accountability through investigative journalism is typical of the difficulties faced by independent newspapers seeking to make a mark. Adaobi Nwaobani captures this dimension of the problem when she wrote that:

But revenue soon began to dry up. In Nigeria, established newspapers are paid to keep big stories off the front page. Adverts are supposed to buy silence. Often, Next would run a story in its popular weekend edition, only for editors to arrive at the office on Monday to meet an aggregated marketing team- certain big advertisers had terminated their business that morning. After one revelation about corruption in the oil trade, scores of advertisers instantly pulled out (BBC Africa Report, March 5, 2015).

The point being made here is that advertisers exercise indirect veto on editorial content by sanctioning independent private media, which set out to be fearless and daring. Considering that the state is the biggest advertiser, it has often used this

power to skew the media playing field, in favour of state-owned electronic media as well as compliant and complacent, private media. Important as that issue is, it is not the only reason for the rapid collapse of newspapers.

Regarding the escalating cost of input into newspaper production, in most of the years under study, the table below is instructive.

Table 4: Rising Cost of Newspaper Production Input (2004-2015) N Value

Item	Qty	2004	2008	2012	2015
Black Ink	1 Kilo	380	500	1300	2421
Printing Film	1 packet	21990	33,000	34,000	N.A
News Print	1 Ton	109,000	N.A	145,000	185,000
Plates	1 packet	N.A	18,000	21,500	94,500

N.A- NOT Available

Source: Research Notes

As table four shows, the increasing cost of newspaper production inputs such as *News Print, Plates, and Black Ink* put pressure on publishers, many of whose enterprises were undercapitalized to begin with. Another dimension of the problem is the fact that the lack of adequate infrastructure, power and security, brought additional pressure on businesses, including newspapers and the electronic media. Drawing attention to this problem, Mr. Steve Ojo, President of Galaxy television, a fiercely independent medium argued that:

Government has not supported the industry; the infrastructural facilities that would ensure that the industry thrives are not there. For example- we supply our own power, water and every other infrastructure we need. Under any circumstance, anywhere (else) in the world, the government provides all these facilities. In Nigeria the reverse is the case. (The Punch, April 30, 2005 pg a24)

Noticeable too, is what may be called the return of the north to Nigeria’s discourse map because of the rebirth of the Northern media in the years understudy. In an ethnically divided country, and given Adebaniwi’s jibe that Nigeria lacks a national media, but instead has an *Arewa media, Ngbati media and Nkenga media* (Adebaniwi, 2002), this rebirth is crucial. As backdrop to this development, it should be noted that the former governor of Nasarawa state, Dr. Abdulihi Adamu, lamented the virtual absence of a northern media from the nation. Entitled “Where is the Northern Press?” Adamu, in a lecture to the Arewa Media Group elaborated:

Is there something, I wonder that makes it impossible for newspapers to survive in this part of the country? Perhaps, the answer lies in the stubborn refusal to appreciate the role the news media play in the development of societies and in the contest for power, particularly in a democracy. The balance of power or the balance of terror is a stabilizing factor in every society. I do not argue for a press war. I argue for freedom from other people's mass media in order that we may be heard (Media Review, July 2005, p26).

At the same time as Adamu made these remarks, *the New Nigerian* had become comatose; it however, did not suspend publication until February 2012. What is of interest is the recent establishment and relative profitability of a clutch of newspapers based in Abuja such as *Leadership*, *Daily Trust*, *People's Daily*, and *Abuja Inquirer*, among others. In this list, easily the most successful are *Leadership*, founded in 2004 by Sam Nda Isaiah, most recently, a Presidential candidate on the platform of the All Progressive Congress in the 2015 election; as well as the Trust group of publications which includes, *Weekly Trust*, *Daily Trust*, *Sunday Trust* and the Hausa language *Aminiyah*. These independent newspapers appear to have broken the jinx of frequent collapse of newspapers in that part of the country. When you add to these, private television stations such as, *Desnims*, founded by Halifa Baba Ahmed, *Gotell TV* based in Yola, as well as the Kano based *Radio Freedom* owned by Bashir Dalbatu among others, one gets a sense of the bounce back of a northern regional media. The consequence of this is that of an increasingly level playing field, with regards to the access of diverse ethnic groups to the media. In this same connection, the vacuum created by the eclipse of *Champion newspapers*, has been filled to a large extent by the newspaper chain of former governor of Abia state, Dr Orji UzoKalu. The chain include: *the Sun*, *New Telegraph*, and *The Spectator*. Although these are based in Lagos, they draw a substantial part of sales and advertising revenue from the South-East and the South-South.

Table 5: Ownership and Location of Major Media Institutions

Name Of Medium	Location	Proprietor & State Of Origin
The Guardian	Lagos	Alex Ibru (Delta)*
ThisDay	Lagos	Nduka Obaigbena (Delta)
The Vanguard	Lagos	Sam Amuka-Pemu (Delta)
The Punch	Lagos	Ogunsola/Aboderin (Oyo)

Daily Trust	Abuja	Kabiru Yusuf (Kano)
The Nation	Lagos	Bola Tinubu (Lagos)
National Mirror	Lagos	Jimoh Ibrahim (Ondo)
African Independent Television	Lagos	Raymond Dokpesi (Edo)
Channels Television	Lagos	John Momoh (Edo)
The Sun	Lagos	Orji Kalu (Abia)
Leadership	Abuja	Sam Nda Isiah (Niger)

Source: Research Notes

As table five demonstrates, although nine out of eleven major media institutions are located in Lagos, only three of these, *The Punch*, *The Nation* and *National Mirror* have Yoruba proprietors. Indeed, the emerging trend as shown in the table is a preponderance (four out of eleven) of media owners from the Niger Delta area, a fact that may not be unrelated to the Petroleum-driven political economy of Nigeria and the incorporation of the elite from the Delta area into national framework of accumulation and distribution of spoils.

As may be expected, a good number of newspapers and electronic media are owned by politicians across the political spectrum. *Media Review*, in an article, entitled *A Peep into Tinubu's Media Empire*, mentions that the former governor of Lagos state, Bola Tinubu is a major shareholder in the *News Magazine*, as well as a proprietor of *The Nation* newspaper, *the Broadcast Giant*, *Radio and Television Continental*, concluding that he is truly one of Nigeria's few media moguls (Media Review, April 2012). Tinubu is not the only politician to establish media institutions. The case of Dr. Orji Kalu has already been mentioned; there also is *the Nigerian Compass* and *The Westerner*, established by former Ogun state governor, Gbenga Daniel both of which are defunct. Then there is *The Union*, reportedly owned by Diezani Alison Madueke, former minister for petroleum, and the emerging media empire of Mr. Jimoh Ibrahim, a member of the People's Democratic Party. Ibrahim owns *National Mirror*, founded in 2006, as well as *News watch Daily* which he bought over from the former owners of *News Watch Magazine*. *Gotel Television* based in Yola is owned by Abubakar Atiku, Nigeria's former Vice President. Although to some extent, ownership of media by politicians tends to widen the discourse space, it carries nonetheless, the price tags of partisanship and censorship of journalists who work in these newspapers.

It is worth mentioning too that Nigerian Journalists work under far from ideal conditions of employment. As the preceding narration has demonstrated, defaults on workers' salaries are a rampant syndrome, often presaging the collapse of

newspapers. Hence, although most newsrooms, following a trend blazed by *ThisDay* have been updated with computers and other information technology gadgets, that has not prevented widespread abuse in terms of the irregular payments of the salaries of workers. As African Media Barometer (2011:52) expressed it:

Across the industry, working conditions for Nigerian Journalists and other media professionals are poor. Salaries are low, irregular and in some cases, inexistent. This is not only true of private media organizations. Even journalists of state-owned media are underpaid and complain of lack of career prospects. Many workers in the state-media are also recruited as casual staff and work under even more pathetic conditions.

Contradictions of and Drawbacks to Media Reformism

Delivering a keynote address to the National Summit of Nigerian Journalists in August, 2016, Nigeria's former President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo went on record as saying, "Nigeria is increasingly polarised and divided along ethnic lines with the press fanning the embers of division and separation". Although Obasanjo's tackling of the media on this occasion is debatable, it nonetheless underscores a recurrent issue in Nigerian media studies, namely: Its division along the nation's ethnic fault lines.

Scholarly opinion was expressed on this matter by Adigun Agbaje in one of the best books on Political Communication in Nigeria, Agbaje argued that

The press has found it difficult to rise above the personal, political and cleavage acrimonies of the colonial and postcolonial state and society. Second, the press itself has bifurcated along the lines of the fissures delineated in these inter-personal, inter-party, intra-party, cross-cleavage and intra-cleavage schisms (Agbaje, 1992, p. 29).

Study after study have confirmed the basic division of media in Nigeria into ethnic, regional and religious lines, although it will be simplifying a complex problem to try to read opinions of newspapers or television stations from the identities of the writers or publishers. For, obviously, there are cross-cutting lines and cleavages, such as politics, which, for example, mandates presidential candidates to have support across the nation's geo-polity. There is also the fact, as table 5 shows that, ownership of media does not correspond with geographical location, considering that even though, major media institutions are based in the Yoruba speaking areas, especially Lagos and Ibadan, they are not owned by Yorubas.

That said, there is no running away from the fact that despite the efforts of our media to build trans-ethnic identities and in some cases increase their market share across our federal geography, ethnicity, region and religion remain potent divisive issues.

Previously mentioned, as a contradiction to media reformism, is the issue of corruption which although, is a global problem, tends to be uniquely expressed in Nigeria, the media inclusive. As a reporter in Washington Post once put it, "Police

call it a Kolanut, journalists call it the Brown Envelope and Politicians call it a Welfare Package. Whatever the name, the almighty bribe has long lubricated Nigerian society, as it has, few others on earth” (cited in the Comet, May 3, 2005).

There are numerous examples of media corruption. One of the most recent is the summoning by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission in 2016 of Mr. Nduka Obaigbena, President of the Newspapers Proprietors Association and the Publishers of *ThisDay*, with respect to slush funds from which some Nigerian newspapers benefited through the office of the former National Security Adviser, Col. Sambo Dasuki. Although, the charges were apparently dropped, the incident constituted a very tense and anguishing moral occasion for an institution, which had been in the forefront of advocacy for good governance.

Other forms of questionable transactions prevalent in the media include the existence of beat associations, which are constituted by reporters covering specialised news desks. Arogundade (2015, p15), a senior journalist, provides insight into this practice:

In 2012, the National Association of Energy Correspondents (NAEC) named Chevron Nigeria Limited as the best Community Development Company of the year. Same year, League of Airport and Aviation Correspondents (LAAC) conferred an award of excellence on then Aviation Minister, Princess Stella Adaeze Oduah, (later sacked from the cabinet over allegations of irregular purchase of bullet proof cars) and decorated Dana Air, later involved in a crash, the most Customer-Friendly Airline in Nigeria.

Obviously, these awards, so-called, have frankly pecuniary motives and continue to thrive, in spite of criticisms of the practice.

As a counter-narrative, there are several cases where journalists refused to take bribes, which were offered to stop investigative stories they were doing. One example is that of the award-winning journalist and Enterprise Editor of the defunct *Next* newspaper, who has now moved on to be the Managing Editor of the online *Premium Times*, Mojeed, who broke several investigative stories of monumental corruption in the oil sector under the Jonathan administration narrated his experience, as follows:

We were offered bribes. Some characters who portrayed themselves as agents of the minister and other persons named in the story wanted us to name our price for dropping the story. I was later told that my publisher was offered a huge sum in foreign currency bribe, which he rejected. Pressures were put on us through close friends, publicists and professional colleagues. Some officials of the NNPC frequently threatened me. When those didn't work, the police and other security agents began to harass us (Daily Trust, August 3, 2015).

To be noted among the hopeful tendencies also is the in house cleaning by the Punch news paper which publishes on its back page daily, an ethical refrain which says that:

We, Punch Nigeria Limited, do not demand or accept gifts or gratification to publish articles or photographs, neither do our journalists. Therefore, we implore you not to offer any to our journalists. In the event that a PUNCH journalist demands such, please send your complaint(s) to ethics@punchng.com or 08168214977. The Daily Trust also publishes a similar ethical rallying statement.

All told and in spite of sanitising measures, corruption of media remains an extant problem and moral blur.

A final problem to be considered in this section relates to the ideological narrowness of the media and the absence of fundamental debate on social and economic direction. As Sam Oyovbaire expressed it:

The radicalism of the media as an anti-colonial and pro independent vehicle, as anti bad governance vehicle; as antimilitary rule and pro democracy institution is really no more than being radicalism of the right or centre ideology. For obvious reasons, the same goes for the broadcast media. In a real sense, Nigeria has only establishment or status quo media. (Oyovbiare, 2001: 16).

In other words, the Nigerian media mirror the ideological barrenness of the political class without transcending it. It would have been interesting if the media, as you have it in Western Europe, for example, contain a few left leaning publications that focus more on what Oyovbaire described as:

The critical problems of social classes as class formation, increasing poverty and pauperization of the Nigerian social formation, the surge of mass unemployment of even graduates from tertiary institutions.

To be sure, it is not that our media do not sometimes raise these issues; it is simply that they do not make them their foci. Related to this lacuna is the urban centeredness of the media and the failure to incorporate the majority of the populace who live in the rural areas. Overwhelmingly, we encounter the media - newspapers, television stations, blogs, as urban phenomenon, considering that most of them do not have reporters in the rural areas. One looks forward to the day when community newspapers, rural radios and blogs operating from the hinterland will widen the discursive umbrella beyond its currently narrow celebration of eminent persons, rich people, powerful people, all of whom are located in our cities.

The crusading role of the Nigerian media

The crusading role of the Nigerian media on the behalf of good governance, human rights and democratic values represent one of their finer and heroic sides. Even the titles of our newspapers, such as *Vanguard*, *Guardian*, *Punch*, *Tribune* and others suggest such a role definition. That role is given formal constitutional recognition in Section 22 of the Nigerian Constitution, which mandates the media to monitor governance and ensure the accountability of elected officials to the people.

The magnificent opposition to military dictatorship in the 1990s, which featured publications that went underground to survive, and a pirate radio station are cases in point (Olukotun, 2000; 2002; 2003; 2004; 2010; 2013; 2016). Recall, for example, that Nobel Laureate, Professor Wole Soyinka, in a tribute to the media regarding their antimilitary role in the Abacha years:

The press, and let me seize this very opportunity to stress this, the press has been magnificent, heroic and one of these days, when there is more pleasure, we are going to erect a statute, I am going to see personally to this, that a statue for heroism of the press is erected at a prominent place in this country, we must never forget (The Guardian, October 17, 1998, P.5).

As far as I know, Soyinka has not yet erected this statute. Should we assume, as may well be the case, that after almost eighteen years of democratic practice, we do not have enough pleasure, as he and the rest of us had hoped?

The comment and pledge, however, underscore the advocacy role which the media have continued to play, often at great cost. Indeed, one might as well say that, in terms of state-media relations, there are very few differences between the overbearing dictators of the military years and the civilian autocrats who succeeded them.

Table 6: Nigeria's Ranking on World Press Freedom Index 2003-2016

Year	Nigeria's ranking	No of countries ranked
2003	103	158
2004	117	158
2005	123	161
2006	120	161
2007	131	164
2008	131	168

2009	135	170
2010	145	173
2011	N A	N A
2012	115	178
2013	115	178
2014	112	180
2015	111	180
2016	116	180

N.A: Not Available

Source: Culled from Reporters without Borders: VARIOUS ISSUES

A cursory look at the table suggests the context, often harrowing, in which the media exercise their role of oversight in our emergent democracy.

One of the important battles fought by the media in the first decade of civilian democracy concerned vehement opposition to the attempt made by former President Olusegun Obasanjo to extend his tenure by another term. Despite intimidating tactics and direct assault in the media which included the shut down of the Kano-based *Freedom Radio*, the media continued to campaign against the self-succession project. Following the shut down of the radio because of its fiercely independent view, the Punch published a biting editorial entitled "Shutdown of Freedom Radio". The paper argued that:

The official clampdown on the vocal media can be misconstrued by the public as part of a wider plot to silence the opposition. Indeed, it has been alleged that there are plans to contain the media, as part of the thickening plot to elongate the tenure of some elected officials (The Punch, April 12, 2016).

In the same vein, *This Day* newspaper in an editorial entitled "*The politics of intimidation*", and published on April 16, 2006, denounced the partisan use by the People's Democratic party of instruments of state coercion, warning that "such arrogance of power may lead to self-immolating hubris". Similarly, editorial and opinion articles hostile to tenure elongation appeared in various newspapers. For example, *The Guardian* in its editorial of March 12, 2006 argued that:

History beckons on the National Assembly to mobilize its members and rise up to put a stop to the third term charade. If members fail in this duty, it will be on record that they jointly and severally, presided over the failure of democracy in the country. The

challenge is for them to eschew selfishness, and opt for selfless duty. The only way our democracy can grow is to continue to nurture and protect it. And we call on all Nigerians at this time to be vigilant.

Media opposition to the agenda, however, did not prevent some newspapers from accepting unsigned wrap around adverts campaigning for tenure elongation. The newspapers claimed however that publishing the advert had nothing to do with their editorial opinion that self-succession for Obasanjo was wrong and unethical. Hence, the media and civil society continued to relish their successful deployment of media power to checkmate unconstitutional self-succession.

In a continuation of the same trend, the quality media were in the forefront of exposing corruption and calling for reforms, to little avail, under the Jonathan administration. *The Punch* Editorial of December 3, 2012 is characteristic of the posture of the paper towards the rot in that government. Entitled "Jonathan spendthrift: Enough is enough", the paper argued that:

Nothing typifies the frivolous, insensitive and completely inept leadership troubling Nigeria currently than the recent approval of a N2.2bn banquet hall for Aso Villa by the Federal Executive Council. Coming at a time when the country is buffeted by serious security and other challenges, it demonstrates that this government is not a thinking one. Just one of the dozens of eye-opening government expenses, President Goodluck Jonathan is proposing to build a party hall in the palatial Aso Villa while millions of Nigerians are hungry and jobless. Like the fifth Roman Emperor, Nero, Jonathan is fiddling around while the nation is burning. This disgustingly lavish lifestyle must be curbed.

Still on profligacy in government, it is of interest that a biting editorial in the *Guardian* of January 12, 2012 criticised the 2012 budget in the following terms:

Emerging indication that ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) of the Federal Government will spend a whopping N11.25 billion on foreign trips alone in the 2012 budget is deplorable, scandalous, and shamefully insensitive to the state of the nation. It amounts to no more than unbridled expenditure and wastage of taxpayers' money in frivolous entertainment of a few privileged public officials under the guise of official foreign trips.

Given the current ugly state of affairs in the country, especially, with regard to fuel subsidy removal, which has occasioned spiralling inflation, the logical step would have been for government to shelve most foreign trips this year to reduce cost of governance, and show seriousness of its empathy, if any, with the people.

Of interest and underlining the media advocacy role on behalf of good governance, was a police college documentary aired by *Channels TV* on January 22, 2013. The photo report showed the deplorable plight of the surroundings and living condition of the college, leading to an avalanche of scandalised commentaries and criticisms of the Jonathan administration. At the same time that Channels focused on the rot, the social media were agog with pictures, opinion articles and vitriolic comments. In response to the documentary entitled “Nigerian Police College on the Brink of Collapse”, former President Jonathan visited the college and made the statement: *This is a calculated attempt to damage our image. The Police College Ikeja is not the only training institution in Nigeria.*

The anger that trailed the Channel’s TV report found an echo in the print media, which promptly took up the gauntlet. For example, an editorial in the *National Mirror*, entitled President Jonathan’s Shock Find at Police College, (January 31, 2013) called for sanctions for those responsible for the rot in the college. It went on to say that *we implore the President to use his high offices to restore the Police College, Ikeja and other institutions that might be affected. This is not the right time to bemoan the television documentary, righting the wrongs is more important.*

The Punch editorial entitled “Police College and the Shame of a Nation”, published on January 23, 2013, was more categorical in blaming the Jonathan administration. Argued the Punch,

It is shocking that the Jonathan Administration is so insecure that it is afraid to let the media freely report their findings at the Police College, Lagos. The expose by Lagos-based Channels Television of the horrendous state of facilities at the top police training institution raises apprehension as to the capacity of the state to safeguard the populace. The immediate response of President Goodluck Jonathan too has deepened worries, rather than reassured Nigerians, that security of the citizens is in competent hands. It is another confirmation of the depth of decay and depravity into which governance has sunk in Nigeria.

Interestingly, as a result of media advocacy and public outcry, Jonathan decided to give a facelift to the college in order to ameliorate some of its blatant woes. Overall, the episode must go on record as constituting a splendid example of improving governance through the oversight role of vigilant media.

The last example to be considered is the more recent focus on corruption charges levelled against the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Babachir Lawal.

President Muhammadu Buhari's claim to have cleared Lawal merely deepened apprehension and increased the calls for Babachir's resignation. Derisively referred as the "grass-cutter", several editorials have zeroed in on the issue, which relate to the spending of huge sums of money to cut overgrown grass at the Internally Displaced Camps. Typical of these editorials is that of the *Vanguard*. Entitled "SGF Lawal must step aside now", it argued that, *How the Presidency treats the corruption scandals involving the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF) David Babachir Lawal, is perhaps, the greatest test of the integrity of President Muhammadu Buhari as a leader and the anti-corruption stance he has projected since he came to power in May 2015 (Vanguard, January 5, 2017).*

The opinion by the *Vanguard* was corroborated by the *Guardian* newspaper in an editorial, entitled "Babachir Lawal: A Matter of Honour". The *Guardian* argued that, *The findings, backed by documentary evidence, and recommendations of the Senate against Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), Babachir David Lawal, are sufficiently damning to warrant that he resigns from the high office he holds (The Guardian, January 4, 2017).*

These examples clearly make the point that the quality media remain in the struggle for good governance.

Concluding Note

The preceding sections of this lecture examined the strength and weaknesses of the media in the context of Nigeria's emergent democracy. Such issues as the changing and diversifying profile of the media, changing technologies, the explosion in newspapers and online media, the bounce-back of Northern newspapers, as well as the continuing vibrancy of the media were iterated and discussed. These hopeful tendencies were counterbalanced but not cancelled out by such contradictions as corruption and unethical lapses, regional, religious and ethnic divisions, the ideological narrowness and urban centredness of the media, as well as the poor working conditions of journalists made worse by the protracted default of salaries on the part of employers.

In terms of the playing field, the return to civilian rule, the signing of the Freedom of Information Act, after a ten year struggle, have liberalised the discursive space; as was shown however, intimidation of journalists, suspension of television stations, as well as harassment of media across genres dominated the entire period. Hence, while most international rankings gave the Ghanaian media a verdict of free for the years under study, the Nigerian media were rated as partly free. That notwithstanding, our media, drawing on a protest tradition, dating back to the colonial and anti-military struggles and the enabling instruments of the 1999 Constitution kept elected leaders on their toes, and in alliance with diasporic media, such as Sahara reporters, widened the democratic space and civic participation. Interestingly too, in spite of the preponderance of media owned by political actors, journalists, by and large, continue to maintain, with varying success, the autonomy of their craft and what one may call constructive partisanship, which takes a position but does not suppress opposition views.

It is noticeable that the digital public sphere is alive and well in Nigeria with the country connecting to global currents via the social media powered by mobile phones, as well as, citizen journalism. So far, however, outside of Nollywood, Nigeria is poorly represented in global media structures, considering that it lacks contra-flow power, which can project Nigerian narratives on the scale of *Al-jazeera*.

Looking ahead, the media will have to maintain, even enlarge the crusading and reformist outlooks with which they have been historically associated. To do this,

they must increase efforts to rid their ranks of corruption, as well as ensure that employers of media pay their workers, as and at when due. Journalists should not be content with merely reflecting society, must rise above the corrupt polity by demonstrating that they take the values they canvass seriously. The media will be stronger still and become better instruments of national integration if the organisations that cater to a national audience make conscious efforts to carry along perspectives that are based in regions other than the ones in which they are located. Of course, there is nothing wrong with regional newspapers or even community ones, but those must be so defined and should avoid being so provincial that they are of little national value.

The model of journalists becoming owners of media contains the potential, if sustained, to redefine journalism practice. The success of *Channels Television*, and a clutch of online media, such as *Premium Times* and *The Cable* are promising tendencies in this direction. With reference to media founded by politicians, it has been suggested that a trusteeship model distancing media from political control would prove to be desirable and rewarding in terms of increasing the independence of journalism practice.

Overall, the Nigerian media, their limitations notwithstanding, have creditably discharged themselves, but obviously will need to do even more in the years ahead, and to go back to Soyinka's formulation, considering that there is not enough pleasure in the land.

I thank you for listening.

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