WHAT HAS BEEN THE POLITICAL EFFECT OF REGIONAL CONCENTRATION OF NEWSPAPER OWNERSHIP AND PRODUCTION IN NIGERIA SINCE 1999? HAS THIS CONCENTRATION AFFECTED THE CONTRIBUTIONS NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS MAKE TO DEMOCRACY?

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A PhD Thesis submitted to the Department of Politics and Public Administration, Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Limerick, Ireland, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

Supervised by Professor Tom Lodge

Submitted to the University of Limerick, November, 2015
ABSTRACT

My research starts from the premise that the contemporary role of Nigeria’s regionally concentrated newspapers hubs in the current political dispensation, particularly after the return to civil rule in 1999, and their forward and backward linkages to content, ownership, public opinion, North/South politics and national integration has not been sufficiently investigated. Mainstream scholarship and a series of commentaries written within a framework of reference drawn from Marxist political economy reduce patterns of ownership to predominant class interests, an unproven assumption, especially for the post 1999 period.

The press in Nigeria influenced decolonization (1940s), national independence (1960) and return of civil rule (1999); however, newspapers are polarised along regional and ethnic lines. This study investigates the political effects, if any, of regional concentration of newspaper ownership and production on democracy in Nigeria since 1999 on one hand while on the other; it evaluates the impact of newspapers’ regional concentration on the democratic process.

Using mixed research methods, the findings indicate that in its current composition and by its institutional structures, the press in Nigeria is embedded in religious, ethnic, regional, geo-political imperatives that characterize the Nigerian State. The cleavage between the press in the North and South has accentuated the differences and divisions that exist in Nigeria. Evidence from focus groups and interviews as well as analysis of editorial content both confirm that concentration of ownership in the two regional hubs as well as the relationship between proprietors and journalists affect the way news is selected and treated. Significantly, the study concludes that as democracy becomes further entrenched in Nigeria, the press is required to take a much more robust and comprehensive worldview than it currently possess for it to be a catalyst in sustaining democratic values in a plural society. It recommends the need to promote online news sources and a restructuring and enforcement of labour laws in Nigeria.

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Date: November, 2015
DECLARATION

I, hereby declare that this dissertation is the product of my own research efforts, undertaken under the supervision of Professor Tom Lodge, and has not been presented elsewhere for an award of a degree or certificate. All sources have been duly distinguished and appropriately acknowledged.

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BABATUNDE VICTOR JATULA

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to Dr. David Oyedepo- author, educationist and minister.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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Victor Jatula
November, 2015
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Front piece I
Abstract II
Declaration III
Dedication IV
Acknowledgement V
Table of Content VI
List of Figures X
List of Tables XI
List of Abbreviations XII

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to the Research Problem 1
1.2 Background to the Study 6
   1.2.1 Newspaper Concentration: The Nigerian Context 11
1.3 Political Commentaries about Regional Newspaper Hubs 12
1.4 Significance of the Study 15
1.5 Theoretical Preoccupations on Press and Politics 19
   1.5.1 The Agenda-setting Tradition 21
   1.5.2 The Political Economy Tradition 24
1.6 Overview of Research Method 27
1.7 Outline of Thesis 28

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction 30
2.2 Newspaper Origins in Nigeria: A Background 30
2.3 Press History in Nigeria 33
   2.3.1 Pre-Colonial Press in Nigeria (1859-1899) 33
   2.3.2 The Press during Colonial Rule (1900-1960) 34
2.3.3 Post-Colonial Newspaper Press in Nigeria (1960-1999)  36
2.4 Current Composition of Nigerian Newspapers  43
   2.4.1 An Overview of National Newspapers  47
2. 5 Newspaper Ownership and its Effect on Politics  49
2.6 Newspapers, Ethnic Relations and Politics in Nigeria  51
   2.6.1 Ethnicity within the Nigerian Press  52
2.7 The Nigerian Press since 1999  57
2.8 Summary  63

CHAPTER THREE: THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction  65
3.2 Research Strategy  65
   3.2.1 Eclectic Research Design  67
3.3 Research Methods  69
   3.3.1 Focus Group Discussions (FGD)  69
   3.3.2 Semi-Structured Interviews (SSI)  74
   3.3.3 Content Analysis (CA)  79
3.4 Data Analysis  86
   3.4.1 Quantitative Data Analysis and Presentation  86
   3.4.2 Qualitative Data Analysis and Presentation  86
3.5 Summary  87

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction  89
4.2 Content Analysis  91
4.3 Do Newspaper Proprietors/Owners Influence Content and Reportage?  100
   4.3.1 How Proprietors Influence Content  103
   4.3.2 Thisday/IPSOS 2011 Presidential Election Opinion Poll  109
4.4 Do Newspapers in Regions form an Agenda-setting Alliance?  113
4.4.1 Newspapers, Ownership and Ethnicised Politics 113
4.4.2 Playing the Blame Game 116
4.4.3 Agenda-setting in the Nigerian Press: Who's Agenda? 119
4.4.4 Diversity or Division in the Nigerian Press 125
4.4.5 Reportage of 2006 National Population Census Figures 126

4.5 Institutional Structure of the Press in Nigeria 129
4.5.1 The Operating Environment 129
4.5.2 Comparison of Management Structures in Lagos and Abuja 132
4.5.3 Challenges to the Profession 135
   4.5.3.1 Economic Challenges 136
   4.5.3.2 Physical Challenges 139
   4.5.3.3 Legal Challenges 141
   4.5.3.4 Professional Challenges 143
4.5.4 Effects of Institutional Structures on the Press 146

4.5 Summary 154

CHAPTER FIVE: THE EFFECTS OF REGIONAL NEWSPAPER CONCENTRATION ON POLITICS AND AN EVALUATION OF PRESS CONTRIBUTIONS TO DEMOCRACY

5.1 Introduction 157

5.2 What are the Political Effects of Regional Newspaper Concentration? 157
   5.2.1 News Bias and Imbalance 157
      5.2.1.1 Is News Biased against the North? 158
      5.2.1.2 Agenda-setting in Nigerian papers 162
   5.2.2 Culture of Political Intolerance 167
   5.2.3 Escalation of Ethnic Rivalry and Conflict 172
      5.2.3.1 Newspaper and Ethno-religious Conflict 176
      5.2.4 Elite Dominance in the Market Place of idea 179

5.3 Political Contributions of Newspapers to Democracy 186
   5.3.1 Newspapers and the Market Place of Ideas 187
### CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Introduction</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 Empirical findings: Enduring Trends and Emerging Patterns</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3 Theoretical Implications</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4 Policy Implications</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5 Study Recommendations</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6 Limitations of Research</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.7 Recommendations for further Research</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### REFERENCE/BIBLIOGRAPHY

APPENDICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX ONE: Question Guide for Newspaper Editors/Journalists</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX TWO: Question Guide for Semi-Structured Interviews</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX THREE: Question Guide for Media Critics</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX FOUR: Question Guide for Focus Group Discussions</td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX FIVE: Question Guide for Newspaper Staff</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX SIX: List of Content Analysed Editorials and Front page news</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Editorial Direction of Nigerian Newspapers 92
Figure 2: Slant variation of editorials 93
Figure 3: Percentage of Negative, Positive and Neutral Editorial 94
Figure 4: Percentage Breakdown of Editorials 95
Figure 5: Percentage of North/South Reportage 97
Figure 6: Percentage Breakdown of Front page 98
Figure 7: Description of Editorial Structure in a Newspaper Organisation 105
Figure 8: Thisday IPSOS Poll Result 109
Figure 9: 2007 Census Figures 127
Figure 10: Organisational Chart of a Newspaper Editorial Department 134
Figure 11: Cross-cutting challenges in the Nigerian media 145
Figure 12: Nigeria Arise. Support Jonathan 147
Figure 13: Nigeria Arise. Support Jonathan 147
Figure 14: Punch Newspaper Senior Editor to Refund 17Million Naira 153
Figure 15: Summary of front page news according to direction 161
Figure 16: Tension in Oyo State 168
Figure 17: The North Boils 173
Figure 18: Goodluck Advertorial 174
Figure 19: How Jonathan Won 175
Figure 20: Governor on Trial for Owning 172 Houses 196
Figure 21: Percentage of Corruption News according to Source 197
Figure 22: Content Analysis of Front Page News according to Category 201
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Summary of Nigerian newspapers 43
Table 2: A Biographic Data Captured for Focus Group Discussion 71
Table 3: Biographic Information of Semi-Structured Interview 74
Table 4: Targeted Data for Content Analysis 81
Table 5: Percentage of Data Captured for 2007 and 2011 85
Table 6: Percentage of Editorial News Category according to Newspaper 94
Table 7: Percentage of Front Page News according to Newspaper 96
Table 8: Newspaper Ownership and Political Affiliation 101
Table 9: Monthly Approximate Remuneration of Newspaper Journalists 137
Table 10: Summary of Front Page News Category according to Region 159
Table 11: Front page Headline of Trust and Tribune Newspapers 160
Table 12: Comparism of Front Page in four National Newspapers 165
Table 13: Percentage of Antagonism and intolerance 170
Table 14: An Outline of Elite Discussion in Vanguard and Thisday 180
**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS FOR NIGERIAN POLITICAL PARTIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>ACPN</td>
<td>Allied Congress Party of Nigeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AD</td>
<td>Alliance for Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AG</td>
<td>Action Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANPP</td>
<td>All Nigeria Peoples Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APGA</td>
<td>All Progressive Grand Alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPN</td>
<td>Communist Party of Nigeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCNC</td>
<td>National Council for Nigeria and Cameroon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NNDP</td>
<td>New Nigeria Democratic Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPC</td>
<td>Northern People’s Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPN</td>
<td>National Party of Nigeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRC</td>
<td>National Republican Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDP</td>
<td>People’s Democratic Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDP</td>
<td>Social Democratic Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nigeria Democratic Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>UPN</td>
<td>Unity Party of Nigeria</td>
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<td>UPP</td>
<td>United People’s Party</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Nigerian society, as is the case in most of Africa, is deeply divided along ethnic, religious and economic lines\(^1\). One possible aspect of this division is that of ownership of newspapers and its concentration in a particular region and/or in the hands of a few individuals which might disproportionately benefit certain political, regional and economic interests. In many cases, such newspapers may have been used to protect concerns which could run contrary to public interest. As Coker\(^2\) has noted, in the Nigerian context, post-independence newspaper ownership has not only been political but has also been a heavily contested arena in which owners engage their newspapers for fierce contestation of political and economic power.

Scholars such as Coker and Omu\(^3\) suggest that Nigerian newspapers have been used to perform predetermined agenda-setting roles by which they give certain issues, public prominence while ignoring others, as part of a process of deliberately projecting specific viewpoints or advancing the interest of certain regions. This agenda-setting role according to Smyth\(^4\) is not a neutral exercise that is free of owners’ bias, institutional ideology, regional affinity or political party affiliation.

This research will examine the political effect of regional concentration of newspaper ownership and production in Nigeria to investigate if regional concentration has weakened, detracted or even strengthened the role Nigerian newspapers play in the democratic process. In its current composition, there are two major regional hubs of newspaper ownership and production in Nigeria- the Lagos/Ibadan hub in the South and the Abuja/Kaduna cluster in the North. As we shall see, the two hubs offer divergent political and ideological characterisations as well as distinct ownership

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histories. This study seeks to explore the effect of the cleavage between both hubs in order to adequately contextualise its consequence within Nigeria’s political space.

Historically, the early concentration of newspapers in Lagos was due to several factors. Omu⁵ suggests that by the mid-nineteen century, Lagos had become a melting pot of trans-Atlantic trade in West Africa. Indeed, as Omu reminds us, Lagos had become so important as a commercial centre that its traders, both Europeans and Africans, were advertising in the *African Times*, published in London. Locally, this availability of advertising revenue provided the necessary fillip for the growth of newspapers in Lagos. Moreover, as Babalola⁶ observes, “the extensive penetration of missionary activities in Lagos coupled with the rapid spread of literacy and basic education created a broad reading public in Lagos”. Literacy expanded to the extent that individual newspaper sales rose remarkably.

Politically, the Clifford Constitution of 1922, Richardson Constitution of 1946 and McPherson Constitution of 1953 each stirred political and nationalist activities, first in the South and later nationwide, allowing newspapers, particularly those located within Lagos to play a central role in the constitutional, political and democratic evolution of Nigeria. At independence in 1960 and with Lagos as the nation’s state and commercial capital, the press in Lagos had not only become a political force but had emerged as the main agenda-setting powerhouse in the nation’s public and political spheres.

Nigeria is however a country sharply divided culturally and politically between the conservative Muslim North and the more culturally heterodox Christian South. Lagos lies in Southern Nigeria and as a consequence, the Lagos press is seen by the nation’s political establishment- mainly from the north- as a negative force, constantly antagonistic to successive governments, especially those from the northern geopolitical zones of Nigeria.

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Adamu maps the less prominent Abuja/Kaduna press hub as located in the North and representative of the powerful, aristocratic northern political class. In this thesis, we will follow his characterisation. *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo* was the first Northern newspaper, a government–owned Hausa weekly, published by well-educated young men who had joined the public service. Such men were often related to the aristocratic families who dominated Northern social and political life, though to a much greater extent than their elders they were influenced by the nationalist thought that was developing in southern Nigeria and within the Nigeria diaspora.

Kukah maintains that the growth of newspaper publishing in Northern Nigeria was to achieve two objectives: the first was to challenge the dominance of the Lagos press, essentially the *West African Pilot* (Lagos) and the *Nigerian Tribune* (Ibadan)- jointly referred to as the “Lagos-Ibadan press axis” and second, to present news from Northern Nigeria by the people of the North. He continues that there was unity of opinion amongst elites from the North, party differences notwithstanding, that the North needed its own national newspaper. This indicated that from the outset *The New Nigerian* newspaper- the first national newspaper from the North- was set up collectively by Northern political elite to challenge the dominance of Southern newspapers on one hand and protect Northern interests on the other.

The divergent political, economic and historical roots of the press in both newspaper publishing hubs in Nigeria, embedded in the nation’s peculiar cultural and political history may have manifested in intense rivalry and power struggle between and among newspapers in the hubs. However, is this still the case, particularly since the reintroduction of multiparty elections in 1999? Are Nigeria’s regionally concentrated newspaper press hubs conflictual or complementary? Do they view their own relationship with each other as ideological or competitive?

In pursuit of the above research problem, this study seeks to investigate five fundamental research questions. Firstly, the study seeks to examine the role of newspaper ownership to investigate its forward and backward linkages with content,

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information management and politics. What powers do newspaper owners wield and how have they influenced newspaper organisation and national politics in Nigeria? Does the influence of ownership help or hinder the press in the discharge of their (newspapers) democratic constitutional responsibilities?

The proliferation of newspapers since the end of military rule in 1999 has raised fundamental questions as to why various political parties and politicians venture into newspaper ownership, why new titles continue to emerge and why newspaper barons desire to retain ownership when it is politically risky or economically volatile to do so. It is fascinating to note that the clamour to establish and sustain a newspaper or chain of publications in Nigeria’s harsh economic environment is persistent. The focus on “who owns the media?” has provoked interest in probing the link between press, politics and society.

Adesoji and Hahn argue that “the motive behind ownership is the use of newspapers as a propaganda tool to secure support either for the cause propagated by the proprietor or their associates. They argue further that “beyond their traditional functions, Nigerian newspapers have served purposes that have diverged from their professed philosophies or ideologies, and despite travails particularly during the long military rule, and the seemingly unprofitability of most ventures, newspapers remain very relevant to politics in Nigeria”¹⁰. Are all newspapers established for political propaganda? Is this dominant narrative supported by evidence? To what extent, if any, do newspaper proprietors influence the content of their titles?

Secondly, the study will investigate northern and southern based newspaper hubs to examine if they perform divergent or convergent editorial and agenda-setting functions and whether they have done this over time. It also seeks to explore, as it were, if they constitute an axis. Do regional concentrations of newspaper ownership and production always embody editorial and agenda-setting coalitions? Do newspapers in Lagos or Abuja respectively represent alliances or could concentration and diversity of editorial opinion within each group co-exist? The subsidiary questions that will be investigated include: do tribal/regional interests affect the way in which democracy is negotiated by the press in Nigeria? Are these regional clusters of

papers internally homogenous with respect to their editorial political alignments— for example are the Lagos-Ibadan papers generally supportive of the South or critical of the federal government? Is the Abuja-Kaduna hub always supportive of their region and its course?

Thirdly, the study seeks to examine the institutional structure of the Nigerian press to study the impact of the media’s operating environment on newspaper professionals and the content they generate. Since the return to civil rule in 1999, the multi-party political system has become more conducive to media professionals and organisations, as compared to the pre-1999 military era chequered with censorship and political control. Additionally, the legal environment has seemingly become more transparent after the passing of the Freedom of Information Act (FOI), granting access to official documents and government information. In its present composition and within the current socio-economic context of Nigeria, is the press free to perform its constitutional duties? Is Nigeria’s regionally concentrated pressable to notably or progressively influence the democratic process?

Fourthly, the study seeks to explore the political effect of regional concentration of newspaper ownership and production on the political process in Nigeria. As Coleman11 noted, newspapers played significant roles in awakening the political and racial consciousness of Nigerians. The study will therefore examine the role of newspapers in Nigeria’s politics, analyse their impact on democratic consolidation and examine their consequence on multi-party election in Nigeria. It is intended that an examination of the press and the role played by both newspapers hubs in major questions of policy and politics, particularly during national election years will help provide insight into the effect of newspapers on politics. Additionally, an investigation into how the ideas and attitudes of both newspaper clusters have developed in relation to changing circumstances and political developments within Nigeria will provide fresh perspective in evaluating the impact of press agitation in both hubs.

Finally, the study will investigate the contributions Nigerian newspapers have made to the democratic process, particularly in the post-military era after the restoration of civil rule. It is noteworthy that newspaper agitation and political development in Nigeria are interlinked. British colonialism created Nigeria, joining diverse people and

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regions in an artificial political entity. The changing political dynamics of the early 1920s not only allowed local representation in the Legislative Council but gave the early newspapers a broader political role, beyond their religious roots. Politics quickly became the main object of interest as circulation expanded in proportion to the interest it generated.

The shift from political participation to decolonisation according to Akinfeleye and Okoye\(^\text{12}\) gathered pace in the 1950s. Omu asserts that “the press took on the role of opposition to the colonial government. It encouraged a sense of political and nationalist awareness and involvement by providing a medium to criticise the authorities, spreading hostility with aspects of official policies and programmes and co-ordinating movements of agitation; confident of its power as the guardian of the rights and liberties of the people\(^\text{13}\)”.

The nationalism that evolved into political parties in Nigeria cemented the use of newspapers as a potent force for political agitation and propaganda. Importantly therefore, the press played pivotal roles in the struggle for and attainment of political independence in 1960. However, Omu\(^\text{14}\) also notes that news sensationalism, political partisanship and commercial pursuits have limited the press since independence. Indeed, Ofeimum makes the very strong claim “that most post-independence newspapers were instrumental to events leading to the outbreak of the Nigerian Civil War 1967-1970 and beyond”.\(^\text{15}\) While the press in Nigeria have been hailed for its vibrancy, resilience and pliability against military rule, especially in the 1990s, in this thesis we shall be exploring whether it has demonstrated the same commitment and virtues in upholding democratic tenets since 1999.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The rationale for this study draws from two related analytical frameworks which shape scholarship on the way newspapers are organised: firstly, concentration of newspaper ownership and its effects on content and democracy and secondly, regional concentration of newspaper production hubs and its impact on politics and


development. In this section, I shall discuss the two themes and how they related to the Nigerian press context.

Globally, concentration of newspaper ownership is increasingly seen as a challenge for contemporary media and society. Some scholars argue that media concentration is necessitated by several commercial, neo-liberal and industry factors; others however contend that when media ownership and production is concentrated in a few hands and/or in particular centres, a number of undesirable consequences may follow. McChesney\textsuperscript{16} notes that concentration could lead to an emergence of market driven media system that is loyal to sponsors, advertisers and government; one that relegates public interest to the periphery. It can also lead to media control in the hands of minority elite who are predisposed to using the media to further their hegemony. McChesney\textsuperscript{17} also suggests that concentrated media monopolies are beneficiaries of the current economic structure and as such seeks its preservation.

Chomsky\textsuperscript{18} argues that corporate-owned news mass communication media are for-profit businesses driven largely for revenue and profit. As a consequence, the way and manner with which news is reported and how it is framed is structured to further their corporate interests. Using the “Propaganda Model”, Chomsky’s analysis of the American media landscape indicates that the United States dominant media exist to serve the interest of the political and corporate elite\textsuperscript{19}.

Similarly, Caplan makes the point that concentrated media ownership may result in the decline of content competition amongst media outlets. As he notes: “The absence of such content competition may culminate in insufficient varieties of news reportage, divergent opinions and alternative perspectives; all of which would limit the capacity of citizens to effectively participate in the democratic process.”\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{17}McChesney, R. W.(1999) The New Global Media; It’s a Small World of Big Conglomerates. The Nation Magazine, November 29,
Scholarly discourse on concentrated ownership suggest that although concentration is problematic in any industry, it presents special problems in the media industry in general and in the newspaper sub-sector in particular because newspapers operate not only in the public domain but also in the marketplace of ideas. When concentration exists in a newspaper market, significant monopoly power arises that may hinder or limit the range, depth and scope of broad and divergent political and social issues that enrich public discourse.

McChesney and Bagdikian estimate that a few massive media corporations dominate and control what the American public see, hear and read. These companies are vertically integrated, and will continually seek to shield, protect and promote the interest of its owners, even if this occurs at public expense. As Melody adds that “the greatest threat to freedom of expression in the United States of America and elsewhere is the possibility that private entrepreneurs will always tend to monopolise the marketplace of ideas in the name of economic efficiency and private profit. As a result of economic conditions or circumstances, access to the marketplace of ideas is restricted to a privileged and powerful few”.

As we shall see, ownership in Nigeria is not yet concentrated in this fashion. All the major titles are individually-owned “monopolies” that link the ownership of several titles in a single company do not exist in Nigeria, and indeed the Nigerian press is less characterised by such ownership than was the case in the 1960s when global press corporations held a substantial stake in the Nigerian industry, as with Thompson’s ownership of the Daily Times. But it is arguable that Nigeria’s newspaper owners share certain common commercial preoccupations that may make them act to restrain the “market-place of ideas” in ways comparable to McChesney and Chomsky’s representation of the editorial effects of concentrated ownership, particularly as this type of ownership has become so prevalent elsewhere.

The other rationale for the study probes the effects of regional or geographic media ownership concentration on politics and development. This has been explored most

frequently at a global level, as in the work of Herman and McChesney\textsuperscript{24} whose studies describe in detail, the origins, recent rapid growth and cross-border activities and linkages of the global news industry largely composed of international conglomerates from the West. They argue that the significance of the ongoing deregulation and convergence of global media and telecommunications systems and the rise of the internet continue to perpetuate Western media imperialism. They conclude that the most important features of this globalisation process are the implantation, consolidation and concentration of advertisement-based commercial media and the dominating control of information flow between the industrialised North and the underdeveloped South.

Chavis observes that about “80 percent of the international news that flow through the newsrooms across the globe comes from the four major news agencies”\textsuperscript{25}. He notes that of this news “about 20 percent is devoted to developing countries, which count for almost three-quarters of world population”. Otgaard argues that major Western media treat the culture of the industrialised nations as superior and place them at the top of an imaginary hierarchy, while the cultures of the developing nations are placed at the bottom. In Western media narratives therefore, Africa is routinely portrayed in negative terms. “These universal but powerfully subliminal message units beamed at global television audiences, connote something not good, perennially problematic unworthiness, deplorable, black... without saying much about Africa’s strategic importance to industrial economies”\textsuperscript{26}.

Gross misrepresentation and imbalance in the international news flow gave birth to one of the greatest debates in the field of international communication in the 1970s and the 1980s- the New World Information and Communication (NWICO) debate; in which developing nations of the South that included all African countries, wanted a radical overhaul of the international communication system. They wanted the world communication system to reflect the diversity and equality of all human races. Carlsson\textsuperscript{27} noted that the NWICO debate paid great attention to objectivity in trans-


\textsuperscript{27} Carlsson, U. “The Rise and Fall of NWICO: From a Vision of International Regulation to a Reality of
national flow of information, inequality in information and fairness in news distribution. However, it did not achieve much in terms of dismantling the architecture of existing international news and information flow between the West and the rest.

In his evaluation of how Africa is portrayed in Western media, Okigbo argues that “Africa is depicted by its extremes- poverty, disease, war, hunger, famine and political instability. It has been suggested that these perceptions cannot be ignored and in fact have persisted over time becoming normalized, reflecting the point of view, mentality, values and interests of developed nations”. Harth posits that the South is not only misrepresented but also under-reported. The single negative narrative of Africa and other parts of the Third World perpetuates white supremacy and Western domination. Coverage of Africa according to Hagos, and indeed of the South, is limited to negative news primarily because negative news fits Western stereotype.

Studies of regional or geographic concentration of ownership within single countries are more rare, though where they exist, they show that there is a similar tendency for the effects to privilege as newsworthy the particular parochial preoccupations of geographic centres of newspaper production while underreporting other concerns as well as helping to perpetuate a hierarchical order of importance and value related to geographical location. For example, Jeffrey Mondak’s investigation of the effects of a local newspaper shutting down in Cleveland in the United States is illustrative of how the absence of locally responsive media can lead to much lower levels of political efficacy amongst citizens.

In line with the above, the regional concentration of newspaper ownership and production in Nigeria poses several problems for democracy, development and politics. The study will therefore investigate the effects of newspaper concentration with its forward linkages to national integration, state competence and the multi-party

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political process. Does the dominance of the Lagos press in national discourse seek only to favour Southern interest and wrestle power from the North? Do newspaper proprietors help or hinder the democratic process with their status and publications?

1.2.1 Newspaper Concentration: The Nigerian Context

In the Nigerian context newspaper concentration, as just noted, does not mirror America’s corporate model in which a few corporations own and control massive infrastructures and media platforms that allow them monopolise and dominate the media-space. Additionally, the economic motive and neo-capitalist underpinnings which Chomsky, Herman and McChesney eloquently describe in their studies as the driving force of the news media in America does not fully fit the Nigerian context in which some newspapers (like the now defunct Concord newspaper) were set up, not for their economic potentials but for pure political purposes. It also does not fit with the regional and religious undertones that characterize the Nigerian media environment. However, their studies demonstrate that media concentration, whether of newspaper ownership in the hands of a few vertically conglomerated news networks or within a particular region (as indicated during the NWICO debate) can be a threat to news objectivity, equal representation and professionalism.

Importantly therefore, concentration in the Nigerian press should be conceptualised within the framework of the population of newspaper titles in a particular region as compared with other regions; measured by observing within the industry, the total number of newspaper titles published in a region, the ratio of total circulation figures, sales and revenue, and ideological and political influence of the top companies to the total sales or assets of the industry as a whole.

Correspondingly, in editorial and agenda-setting terms, concentration manifests as the degree of uniformity of editorial views and front page news by the dominant national dailies in a particular geographical location. Are newspapers in Nigeria located in cities where they are guaranteed quality manpower, expanding circulation figures and increasing advertising revenues or are they entangled in the religious, cultural and ethnic division that characterise Nigerian politics? Are there ideological and fundamental underpinning reasons that determine the location, political affinity and operational logic of newspapers in the two publishing hubs in Nigeria?
The dissemination of information is a critical press function in Nigeria, as it is elsewhere. It assigns newspapers, among other things, a predominantly active role in the political process, providing a forum for a variety of press actors to express their particular views and also allowing newspapers themselves to contribute their own opinion through their choice of front page news and editorial comments. Through their content, Nigerian newspapers are explicitly authorized to publicly express their opinions and by noticeably commenting on public affairs, they make use of their right to report news as autonomous actors. In news publishing in Nigeria as elsewhere, content does not represent the individual views of single journalists, but indicate the editorial stance of a newspaper organisation. It is therefore the case that newspapers regard their content as a means to position and stabilize themselves on the audience market since editorial stance corresponds with certain political segmentations of the public.

Given that content reflects the political views of a title, serves as a forum of presentation for the media’s own view of public affairs and symbolizes the defining character of such titles, Fourie\textsuperscript{32} makes the point that there are different levels of alliances and proximity between the press and other institutions of society and as such, media coverage in general and newspaper reportage in particular is influenced by multiple layers of alliances, proximity and relationships. What therefore are the effects, if any, of regional concentration of newspaper ownership and production in Nigeria?

1.3 POLITICAL COMMENTARIES ABOUT REGIONAL NEWSPAPER HUBS IN NIGERIA

In an age of timelines and information demand, newspapers play a crucial role in informing, educating and influencing the public about politics in all contemporary societies. Additionally, they help crystallize issues and set political agendas by placing the spotlight on what the public should think about\textsuperscript{33}. Modern democratic politics is therefore extensively fought, won or lost in the media battlefield.


\textsuperscript{33} http://voices.yahoo.com/the-influence-media-politics-campaigns-and-651361.html (Accessed June 2012)
Abdullahi argues that the effect of media concentration and editorial alliance is significant in agenda-setting, issue framing and editorial analysis in Nigeria. “The media is the arena of participation in society and any segment of the society that is left behind in that competition will eventually be marginalised”\(^{34}\). His remarks suggest that the Lagos/Ibadan press are part of an elaborate Southern conspiracy to drown the voices of the North; misrepresent the leadership of Northern people and marginalise the economy of Northern Nigeria in the long term. His comment imply that those who control the press control politics and by extension, the nation’s commonwealth.

Agbaje on the other hand contends that contrary to any regional conspiracy theory, “it is the ideology or the politics of the proprietor that decides media-bias, or slant. In Nigeria, this has been the dominant consideration, since the pioneer media proprietors were motivated largely by their political ambition to establish a printing press. The influence of media owners to control the press has remained significant”\(^{35}\). The economic factor, though easily overlooked, is a determining factor in the operational and editorial focus of particular newspapers. Omu\(^{36}\) comments that Nnamdi Azikwe established newspaper outfits during the era of decolonisation to enhance his political prospects and economic prosperity as a potential beneficiary of state power after British disengagement from Nigeria.

Oyovbaire\(^{37}\) posits that the regional dynamics concentrate media power in the southwest. He argues that while owners of the more prominent print media may be of South-West and/or South-East origin, the operational location of their media business is the South-West. Omu\(^{38}\) further agrees that “most of Nigeria’s media outfits have been established in Southern Nigeria by Southern interests”. As a result, their perspective on events follows the structure of Nigerian politics that was discerned five decades ago by Post and Vickers\(^{39}\) and remains in place today. When a national issue enters the public domain for debate, the Nigerian media often,

\(^{34}\) http://www.vanguardngr.com/2012/10/ango-abdullahi-why-the-north-cant-trust-jonathan/
though not all the time, takes a North-versus-South position on it, tending therefore to reinforce or even introduce inter-regional political differences.

Contrary to Mvendaga\textsuperscript{40} claims that the North/South divide that accentuates the cleavages in the Nigerian society determines social/media interactions; some Lagos-based newspapers have, at one time or the other, represented political parties or political views that conflicted with or negated Southern perspectives. A case in point is the \textit{Concord} newspaper, established in 1980 by a prominent Southerner and member of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) -M.K.O Abiola. From its inception, \textit{Concord} newspaper was a pro-Northern propaganda organ based in Lagos and established to support the incumbent government. It stood consistently against Southern-based \textit{Tribune} and \textit{Sketch} newspapers as well as the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) in favour of the northern ruling elite.

Theoretically, Cohen and Young\textsuperscript{41} noted that the mass media are vehicles for offering several important possibilities- attracting and directing attention to people, problems and or solutions in ways which can favour those in power, and correlativelly, diverting attention from rival individuals or groups; conferring status and legitimacy; in practise however, Dahl\textsuperscript{42} has suggested that newspapers are often used to influence the masses in such a way that in one region they may be more predisposed to mobilise propaganda than in another.

Golding\textsuperscript{43} introduces the class trajectory to the role of newspapers in a democracy and claims that in certain cases, the managers are mere front-professionals for the real owners; confirming Oyovbaire’s comment that “Nigerian newspapers not only serve the professional role and mandate assigned to it by the constitution and society but also the political agenda, objectives and motivations of the owners. Such owners see their medium as the political extension of their economic powers, as well as possible ladder for political power or influence”\textsuperscript{44}.


\textsuperscript{41}Cohen, J. and Young, J. (1973) \textit{The Manufacture of News}. London: Constable.


Adorno and Horkheimer\textsuperscript{45} assert that the power of the press lies in its ability to reach mass audience and influence what they think about. This power has been recognised by the political elite and is evidenced in the way governments and corporate elites devise means to control the media: either controlling them completely or providing guidelines within which they will operate freely but with responsibility.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

What is the real harm of party-affiliated newspapers, group ownership and the concentration of financial, political and social power in the hands of only a few individuals located in geographically concentrated clusters? What standard of ownership concentration or regional concentration is economically and politically appropriate and what is socially acceptable?

Globally, the question for media and political scholars is whether a meaningful contribution to a profound public policy debate can be made on the problem of media ownership and concentration. McChesney\textsuperscript{46} and other scholars that follow the political economy school of thought want us to believe that concentrated media ownership has multiple levels of negative effect on news journalism, public opinion representativedemocracy and society at large. Using the media environment in the United States of America as their main context, they point out that the implication of concentrated media ownership threatens civil liberty, freedom of expression, multiparty politics and society\textsuperscript{47}.

McQuail\textsuperscript{48} on the other hand cautions that “despite the amount and ingenuity of research, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that it has failed to establish clear general effects from monopoly and concentration conditions on the balance of cost and benefits, in performance term. Where there is evidence, the effects seem to be quite


small”. According to Picard⁴⁹, the primary reason for the absence of research in this area is the lack of adequate data and funding.

From a political economy viewpoint, the mass media industry is said to play significant roles in legitimating inequalities in wealth, power and privilege. When the control of the flow of information, knowledge, values and images is concentrated in the hands of those who share the power of the dominant class, the ruling class will determine what is circulated through the mass media in order to reproduce the structure of class inequalities from which they benefit. The mass media industry is crucial for the creation of reliable information, knowledge, ideology and propaganda in contemporary capitalist societies.

The most common assumption is that owners of the media influence the content and form of media content through their decisions to employ certain personnel, by funding special projects, and by providing a media platform for ideological interest groups. In the United Kingdom, Curran and Seaton⁵⁰ conclude that the national press generally endorses the basic tenets of the capitalist system- private enterprise, profit, the free market and the rights of property ownership.

In Nigeria, there is unity of consensus amongst political scientists that the effect of media ownership and concentration in general and that of regional newspapers concentration in particular is broad and pervasive. On ownership, Kaplin and Adesoji⁵¹ note that “media ownership is central to the functionality, style, outlook, survival and perception of newspapers. Whether at the individual, group or government level, ownership plays a significant factor in the content of newspapers and the wider role they play in society”. Uka observes that “pre-independence newspapers in Nigeria were mainly owned by individuals and concentrated in regions that saw ownership as a means of voicing the discontent against colonial rule, against political domination and as means of accessing political

offices\textsuperscript{52}. There is therefore an interlocking relationship between ownership and location of production, and more notably, the use of newspapers as political weapons.

At independence in 1960, two trajectories emerged. Firstly, the pre-independence rivalry between newspapers based in the North and South became accentuated. The main political parties- Northern People’s Congress (NPC) in the North and Action Group (AG) in the South used their newspapers as part of their intricate propaganda machinery for political power contestation at the federal level. While political competition existed within each region among the different contesting parties; the real struggle for power occurred at the federal level between parties with consolidated regional power. Secondly, particularly after the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) there was a paradigm shift in patterns of newspaper ownership. The newly formed Federal Government dominated by the NPC, set up the \textit{Post} newspaper, to serve the interest of the national government and challenge the misrepresentation by regional and privately-owned newspapers.

Ugboajah commented that the establishment of “one media; one voice” through overall government ownership of the main newspapers in Nigeria is a killing of variety. “This”, he continues, “is especially problematic in a fragile democracy such as Nigeria’s in which the government does not hide its pure intention of suppressing ‘dissenting’ views”\textsuperscript{53}.

The broad theme in newspaper ownership and regional concentration scholarship in Nigeria leans toward Marxist approaches and subsequent interpretations that see newspaper ownership as a means to reproduce class interests. The use of newspapers as a propaganda tool through subtle manipulation of symbols is broad and pervasive. So, on the one hand, there is a lack of broad and systematic investigation of the effects of regional concentration of newspaper ownership and production within the mainstream political studies scholarship. On the other, a series of commentaries written within a framework of reference drawn from Marxist political economy, suggest that patterns of ownership reinforce predominant class interests.


The point of departure of this study is that it situates the press in its current democratic political system that took off in 1999 after three decades of military authoritarian rule. It is noteworthy that in Nigeria’s 100 years of existence as a geographically specific congregation (since the political and administrative amalgamation of 1914), multi-party elections have never occurred in succession until the commencement of this current political dispensation. Since the 1999 transition, successive elections have been held in 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015, indicating a degree of democratic entrenchment. Previous attempts at regular multi-party elections, at independence in 1960 and in 1979, were not only short-lived but were terminated by authoritarian military interventions.

This study therefore investigates the Nigerian press during its longest spell in a democracy with the intent to provide fresh perspectives on the impact of regional concentration of newspaper ownership and production with particular focus on regional newspaper hubs; examining, not only the enduring patterns but also emerging trends in media and politics scholarship in Nigeria. In so doing, it will provide research-based evidence in understanding the regional/ethnic dimension of Nigeria’s newspaper press and their effects on the political process in Nigeria.

From a policy standpoint, the question of ethnic tension has not only resurfaced in post-1999 Nigeria but has witnessed a steep and spasmodic rise. Ethnic, religious and regional agitation in the polity has resulted in tension, intolerance and wanton destruction of lives and property. How has the media set the agenda, what role do they play in politics and how are they perceived? The study will also challenge the assumption that newspapers are value-free accounts of daily occurrences by professional journalists as they capture reality! Who is the press? What is the extent to which political parties affiliations and tribal allegiances influence Lagos-based newspapers as well as Abuja-based dailies and their outlook?

The study will also challenge the widely held view that newspaper ownership is mainly for economic gains and for political motives. Are all newspaper proprietors in it for economic power? Do all newspaper publishers have political ambitions? Creating new knowledge not only involves understanding well research narratives but also involves in-depth analysis of how political change occurs in society, of how human intention and actions matter, and how ends are influenced by the means of
carrying them out, in what can be called a tangle of process and outcomes. Nothing can be more dangerous and suspicious than a simple monocausal explanation that newspaper ownership in Nigeria has an overtly negative influence on its politics and development.

What are the implications of regional and religious pressures on newspaper publications in both hubs? Do the two newspaper hubs each constitute an axis? If they do, to what extent and at what cost/benefit to national unity, modernisation and democracy? The high level of ethnicity/tribalism, and the dwindling sense of nationalism in Nigeria is a source of serious concern argued Chinua Achebe when he proclaimed that “the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership”\(^54\).

Nigeria’s nascent and fragile democracy requires solid and robust democratic structures in order for multi-party elections as well as democratic tenets to become consolidated. The media, and in particular newspapers, can play important roles in encouraging democratization, strengthening the rule of law and promoting institution-building. Free access to balanced, timely, transparent information is a prerequisite for a transparent and representative political system. The press can, through its watchdog role expose the black-spots in the democratic system, which ultimately helps both the citizens and the government to fill the vacuums of these loopholes and make the system more accountable, responsive and citizen-friendly. This study will generate critical, evidence-based conclusions that will proportionately enrich scholarly understanding of the press in Nigeria.

1.5 THEORETICAL PREOCCUPATIONS ON PRESS AND POLITICS

The aim of this section is to review, in more detail, scholarly discourse on the relationship between press and politics, with particular focus on the defining theories that underpins the relationship on one hand and lays the foundation for the current study on the other hand. Normatively, the responsibilities of the press according to McCombs\(^55\) include “serving as a medium through which government and the governed debate, interact and interrelate”. In essence, the press perform a symbiotic

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role of articulating the direction and decisions of the leaders to society while at the same time providing feedback, opinions and desires from the led to the leaders in the interest of all stakeholders. Koicki adds that the media “should serve as the unbiased arbiter within society, mediating between all parties and providing a platform for the free and fair expression of ideas, opinions and thoughts”56.

The nominal role of the media in a constitutional democracy as observed by Keane57 is to act in the capacity of a watchdog by monitoring and surveilling the activities of elected political representatives, providing a platform for civic engagement and promoting a platform for clarification of issues between the electorate and the elected.

All these extrapolations on the media’s role as the virtual town hall or ‘Public Sphere’ suggest that the press play a catalytic role in society; making reforms possible through the democratic process and in the long-run strengthening democratic institutions and making possible public participation in governance. These arguments however rest upon a range of assumptions about the ways in which media shape society. Research on the effect of press on politics, formation of public opinion and attitudes have been divergent and diametrically opposed. In both old and new democracies, particularly in the latter, there is little consensus about the effect of the press on politics.

Berelson argues that “some kinds of communication on some kind of issues, brought to the attention of some kinds of people under some kind of conditions have some kinds of influence”58. On the other hand, McQuail59 makes the point that mass communication research is premised on media effect, yet it seems to be the issue on which there is least certainty and less agreement. C.R. Wright warns that “it is customary to speak of the influence of the press in global terms, as if it were a single, indivisible pressure at work within society, but closer examination reveals that newspapers are actually multi-functional institutions which make their presence felt

in a variety of ways\textsuperscript{60}. Broadly speaking, theories about the relationship between media and politics have evolved through three successive approaches, media effect, agenda-setting and political economy.

1.5.1 The Agenda-setting Tradition

The mass media as observed by Ward\textsuperscript{61} emerged in the period of rapid urbanisation and social upheaval providing a means of uniting disparate people around common interest. Lippmann\textsuperscript{62} referred to the media as the principal connector of events around us and the images of these events in our minds; in doing this, he supplied early insights into the key analytical mass media concepts of gate-keeping and agenda-setting in which the media are ascribed with the capacity to determine the extent to which the public can access information.

As early as the 1940s, Lasswell\textsuperscript{63} had introduced the term ‘mass communication’ in his work about political power and propaganda. His findings on the impact of propaganda on public opinion and the way such opinion can shape political life indicate that an interlocking relationship between governments and public opinion with the media as the mediator. In this view, elaborated by Klapper\textsuperscript{64} media content was regarded as having direct effects on isolated individuals who need the mass media to interpret the world around them.

However, by the end of the 1990s the accumulation of evidence against the notion of direct media effects had led to a re-evaluation of the ways in which mass media influence society. In the first of these attempts to reconceptualise the media effects tradition, agenda-setting emerged. This research was concerned with the relationship between news and public opinion, not the power of the news to affect attitudes, but its role in influencing how and what people think about issues regularly, and in suggesting and structuring information.

Wood\textsuperscript{65} observes that there is consensus that the media possess the power and prestige to determine for its audience what is important. The media does this in three distinct ways: establishing materialistic goals, status conferral and agenda-setting. Unlike status conferral which means the media’s ability to confer or bestow prestige as well as enhance the authority of an individual, group, organisation and even issues by legitimising their status in the public eye; agenda-setting refers generally to the media capability of raising the importance of an issue in the public mind.

Dearing and Roger\textsuperscript{66} refer to the concept as a continuous rivalry among issue advocates to obtain the notice of the journalists, citizens and politicians. Agenda-setting therefore attributes to the media the capacity to rank the significance of issues, events and people. Agenda-setting is about the ways in which media influence their audiences to accept as important those issues, events and people to think and discuss. McQuail and Windahl\textsuperscript{67} observe that the media by simply paying attention to some issues while neglecting others will have an effect on public opinion; adding that the hypothesis would seem to have escaped the doubts which early empirical findings had on the powerful media effects view.

The idea that people desire media assistance to order their priorities, especially in determining political reality had been in existence for quite a while but without the name agenda-setting. McQuail\textsuperscript{68} confirms that the concept had long been a preoccupation of the scholarship that focussed upon election campaigns.

The work of Lippmann\textsuperscript{69} on the press and public opinion had signalled some of the central questions about news, questions that were now re-emerging. Lippmann’s main argument had been that press interpretations of events could alter people’s interpretation of reality, and thus their views about an appropriate course of action. Lang and Lang\textsuperscript{70} in the 1950s and 1960s were also looking at the role of the media in providing information from which people learn about the world of politics. In their study of television coverage of the McArthur Day parade in Chicago in 1952, the Langs were able to demonstrate an unwitting bias in news, by showing how in news

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{65} Donald, W. (1983) \textit{Mass Media and the individual} California: West Publishing Company
\bibitem{67} McQuail, D. & Windahl, S. (1993) (as in no. 16 above)
\end{thebibliography}
reporting an inferential structure is developed, that is, a simplified set of assumptions about what is important and relevant, which serves to make sense of events for both newsmen and their audiences.

Building on the above, the original agenda-setting study by McCombs and Shaw\(^1\) posits a strong relationship between the topics emphasised in mass media coverage, and the salience of these topics in the minds of the audience as reflected in their responses to survey questions. The agenda-setting impact of the media is not in telling people directly what to think, but rather in identifying the things that people should think about. McCombs and Shaw’s contribution to the formulation of the agenda-setting model owes a great deal to their development of a specific means of testing the theory. Although the methods of content analysis and survey research to establish public opinion were not new, it was the combination of the two methods that established agenda-setting in media research.

Four years after the Chapel Hill Study Shaw and McCombs 1977\(^2\) were able to study a second presidential election campaign. Called the Charlotte Study, it largely confirmed the findings of the first original study, and established agenda-setting within the mainstream of media effect research. What is important about these works and subsequent work is that the simplicity of the formulation and methodology used enabled agenda-setting to be studied over time, and thus as a process rather than simply as an effect.

The field of agenda-setting has expanded significantly since the earliest studies by McCombs and Shaw with the development of corresponding theories of agenda building focussing on relationships between the media and their information sources.\(^3\) A key assumption of agenda-setting theory is that an individual actively seeks cues from the media to help them understand their environment. If needs and interest are so important in the agenda-setting process, then the use and gratifications approach adds an active dimension to agenda-setting. McCombs and Shaw claimed that their agenda-setting studies were moving from a linear effect

\(^3\) Lang & Lang (1981) (as above in 109)
model to a more two-sided model in which audience motives and uses interacted with media content in order to produce differing effects.

1.5.2 The Political Economy Tradition

McQuail\textsuperscript{74} argues that the blind spots\textsuperscript{75} in mainstream media effects studies gave rise to an alternative concept; one that emphasises class conflict and social upheavals within the liberal-capitalist order. As suggested by McQuail\textsuperscript{76}, political economy in media research has a general critical signification and is often associated with questions such as media ownership and control, convergence and consolidation of media industries with other industries.

Political economy focuses on the struggles for power between the proletariat and bourgeoisie. In media studies Boyd-Barrett\textsuperscript{77} argues that it is holistic in its approach to understanding the media and studies the historical, political, economic, organisational, technological, personal and professional factors that impinge on the production process. It studies media, not in isolation, but with and in terms of other institutions, and within the wider social context (nationally and internationally). It deals with communication as a social process, having forward and backward linkages with emphasis placed on ownership, control, structure, and organisation and production relationship.

Mosco\textsuperscript{78} identifies three main features of political economy. First of all, its view of society is dynamic, emphasising historic transformations. Secondly, its concern is with the totality of social relations that constitute the economic, political, social and cultural fields. Thirdly, it is morally committed with its stress on values and principles. In Mosco’s view\textsuperscript{79}, there are three key aspects of the political economy approach to


\textsuperscript{75} The media were not seen in relation to other institutions in society. Questions about power, organisation and control were never asked. Rarely were attempts made to study the social meanings of the media in historical and sociological context. Furthermore, there was a marked emphasis on answers seen to be useful in the short term. The possible influence of the media on institutions, in defining social reality, in setting the political agenda, and on cultural change tended to be ignored.

\textsuperscript{76} McQuail, D. (2005) (as in no. 88 above)


\textsuperscript{78} Mosco, V. (1995) The Political Economy Tradition of Communication Research, Unit 4 of the MA in Mass communication (by Distance Learning), Centre for Mass communication Research, University of Leicester, Pp. 46.

communication: Commodification (the process of taking goods and services which are valued for their use and transforming them into commodities which are valued for what they can earn in the market place), spartialisation (the process of overcoming the constraint of space and time in social life); structuration (which incorporates the ideas of agency, social process and social practice into the analysis of structures).

Halloran\textsuperscript{80} again argues that from the early 1970s, there was a change in mass communication research, reflecting changes in social science generally. One significant development is the re-emergence of a critical research approach that has challenged, not only the supremacy of earlier, mainly positivist research approaches, but also the service and administrative functions of these approaches and the claims and presumptions of the media system that they serve. Barrett asserts that the rediscovery of the critical tradition during the 1960s, (first pioneered by the Frankfurt School and in the media histories of McLuhan\textsuperscript{81}) and the influence of radical economics helped to introduce concepts of political economy to media studies.

Schiller\textsuperscript{82} argues that from 1970 onwards political economy of communication shifted its focus on international communication at a time when much of the work in this particular field was addressed to the modernising potential of the media in Third World countries with little or no reference to questions of media ownership, control, nor even to content, and still less to broader issues of dominance and dependency, tied aid, super power conflict, and media commercialisation. There were questions on the link between the different indices of modernisation, including industrialisation and urbanisation and other broader social questions, but questions about who was setting the research agenda, to whose benefit, informed by which ideologies and discourses were neglected.

For Murdock and Golding, cited by Mosco\textsuperscript{83}, a political economy of the mass media begins with the acknowledgement that the media are "first and foremost industrial and commercial organisations which produce and distribute commodities". The political economy approach also draws attention to the dynamics of change in media.

\textsuperscript{80} Halloran, J. \textit{The Context of Mass Communication Research} (as above)
\textsuperscript{81} McLuhan, M. (1964) \textit{Understanding Media}. London: Routledge
\textsuperscript{83} Mosco, V. (2011) \textit{The Political Economy of Communication}. London: Sage, pp. 63
industries, with particular reference to processes of concentration in the control of media by a few large organisations. Concentration occurs both internally among the media themselves, and externally, between media and non-media companies. Concentration results from processes of integration (horizontal and vertical), diversification of interest, and internationalisation—providing further illustration of process identified by Schiller.

Oliver Boyd-Barrett \(^{84}\) argues that political economy was one response to the prevailing directions of earlier media effects studies. In his view political economy theories have much wider concerns that the individual effects, uses and gratifications the media can supply. Political economists in media studies investigate the relationship of the media to other institutions in society, to economic interests, and to the roles they may play in the development of beliefs systems and dominant ideologies. The importance of the media could not be reduced to simple theories about stimuli and response.

Political economy in the 1990s continues to chart the extent to which cultural production is controlled or influenced by large corporations. Hamelink \(^{85}\) argues that there are four key trends in world communication: digitalisation, consolidation, deregulation, and globalisation. A relatively new feature of political economy of communication is its concern to understand the causes and implications of privatisation, which is to say, the processes by which governments since the early 1980s have sought to reduce support for publicly-owned media and at the same time to dismantle and reformulate the regulatory frameworks governing private control of media, processes which were further accelerated by the collapse of the communist bloc in the later 1980s.

In the 2000’s, Chomsky, McChesney and Herman have focused more on the threat of media ownership and its real and potential dangers to democracy and freedom. McChesney identifies list a set of characteristic trends in the U.S. media, which together signal a crisis \(^{86}\). They include a decline in serious political analysis, the expansion of commentary on leisure-related activity and advertisement represented

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as editorial content, specialised professional staff cuts and the concentration of ownership and management structures, and the increasing uniformity of opinion and the narrowing of parameters permitted for any disagreement.

1.6 OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH METHODS

The purpose of the research in this dissertation is to investigate the political effect of regional concentration of newspaper ownership and production in Nigeria since 1999 and evaluate if concentration has hindered the contributions newspapers make to democracy. The subsidiary research questions are to:

- Examine if, and to what extent, the ownership of newspaper influences content?
- Investigate if newspapers form regional editorial and agenda-setting axis?
- Study the institutional structure (operating environment) of the press in Nigeria?
- Examine the political effect of regional concentration of newspapers? and
- Access the contributions Nigerian newspapers make to democracy?

To collect the evidence needed to address these questions, information was assembled in the following ways. First, Semi-Structured Interviews and Focus Group Discussions were used to gather data.

For the purpose of triangulation, content analysis was used to investigate if newspapers within and between the two publishing hubs form an editorial axis. Data was gathered from the analysed content of seven Nigerian newspapers each covering six months in the two election years, 2007 and 2011.

Qualitative content analysis of editorial comments was used to study the language of reporting in the construction of narratives to determine the position of particular newspapers on reported national issues. Analysis was undertaken by studying the frequency and prominence of political news and front page content categories.

The methodological implications of using these approaches are considered in detail in Chapter Three.
1.7 OUTLINE OF THESIS

The thesis is presented in six chapters.

Chapter One discusses the research topic- an investigation of the effects of regional concentration of newspaper ownership and production on politics in Nigeria and an evaluation of the contributions of the press to the democratic process since 1999. It supplies a brief introduction to the Nigerian setting and reviews the analytical tradition in media research that has informed the work for this dissertation.

Chapter Two reviews existing scholarship on press and politics globally and in Nigeria in particular in an analytical, historical, thematic and theoretical structure. The review connects theory with practice and in so doing, it demonstrates the longstanding relevance of Nigerian newspapers to Nigeria’s political life and society; and also shows the connection between political and media research with their forward and backward linkages to newspaper content and national politics. The relevant literature therefore falls into three broad categories: firstly, the historical context that provided the fillip for the emergence of the Nigeria press; secondly, Nigeria’s media history, particularly the link between press and politics; and finally, existing scholarship on media and democracy. These are based on recent approaches such as longitudinal studies, content analysis, archival research and survey interview methods.

Chapter Three identifies the methodology for the study, the reasons behind the selection of eclectic research methods together with a consideration of its strengths and weaknesses. It explains the choice of the seven national newspapers that provide the focus for the study.

Chapter Four marks the beginning of discussion and analysis. My research situates the Nigerian press in its historical and political context and unpacks the forward and backward linkages that connect press and politics. The chapter addresses three research questions: (1) Ownership- do proprietors influence content? How and why do owners influence content? (2) Regional concentration of newspapers- Do newspapers in particular regions form an agenda-setting and editorial alliance or axis? (3) Institutional structures- What is peculiar about Nigeria’s media
environment? What are the challenges to the profession? What are the effects of Nigeria’s media institutional structure on the profession and on politics?

Chapter Five continues and concludes the discussions and analysis. The chapter focuses on effect, specifically addressing two interlinked research questions: (1) what are the political effects of regional newspaper concentration? And (2) what contributions have the press made to the democratic process in Nigeria since 1999?

Chapter Six, the concluding chapter argues that while the press has contributed notably to the political history and development of Nigeria from its early missionary roots to the dawn of independence and significantly during the military era, they are however polarised between the Muslim North and Christian South which mirror the regional cleavage that characterise the Nigerian state. Nigeria has enjoyed its longest spell (15 years) of democratic rule (1999-2014) since it attained political independence in 1960, yet the political effect of Nigeria’s regionally concentrated press, especially since 1999 not only leaves much to be desired but is yet to radically influence Nigeria’s democratic process. The conclusions also examine the limitations of the investigation, without leaving out the theoretical and policy implications of the study. It concludes with a proposed trajectory for future research.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW: THE PRESS IN NIGERIA

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to review the existing literature on the relationship between the press and politics in Nigeria, to provide insight into the historical background of Nigerian newspapers and to demonstrate how the press, in its over 150 years of existence, has evolved into a noteworthy stakeholder in Nigerian politics and society. As we shall see, existing scholarship is ambiguous on the Nigerian press’s political impact. As historical commentaries have noted, from early on newspaper proprietorship was often in the hands of leading political personalities. As a consequence, newspapers played a conspicuous role in the struggle for independence. Subsequently, though, the close association between particular newspaper titles and particular political parties often helped to reproduce existing tensions and conflicts, with testing consequences for democratic stability. More recently, commentators suggest, their business-like orientation has also helped to curtail their capacity to enhance democratic politics. Generally, in this chapter, I hope to demonstrate that the press/politics nexus is an established feature of Nigerian political life and society; and also show the connection between newspapers and democracy with their forward and backward linkages to news content and national politics in Nigeria.

2.2 NEWSPAPER ORIGINS IN NIGERIA: A BACKGROUND

To provide a context in which the Nigerian press emerged, and to explain how that framework influenced its characterisation and trajectory, this section explores five critical factors that laid the foundation on which the Nigerian press became established. The first decisive factor was the introduction of English language by English traders and missionaries along the coast and hinterland of West Africa and how the spread of English played a significant role in the expanding Western literacy in Southern Nigeria. It is worthy to note that the first missionary enterprise to Africa was pioneered by Europeans from Spain and Portugal who, as early as the
fourteenth century, had established trading posts along the coast of West Africa. It was however not until the late 1700s, noted Ajayi and Afigbo that meaningful and penetrative evangelisation by missionaries really took off. Beginning from 1808, British missionaries, European traders and returned slaves, introduced English language, first along the coast and beyond to promote literacy and legitimate trade in Nigeria.

As observed by Omu, the introduction and use of English language further increased religious relations and legitimate trade between Europeans and West Africans. The founding of Sierra Leone and Liberia in 1787 and 1824 respectively gave the new language a degree of social importance.

The secondly decisive factor relates to the spread of English language beyond the coast; further hinterland due to the penetrative work of British missionary activity and enterprising role of local middlemen. Omu commented that the drive to win souls for Christ necessitate the penetration of much of West Africa’s heartland. In so doing, the missionaries encouraged the spread of the English language, the introduction of literacy and education as well as the spread of Western civilisation. Importantly, the introduction of Western education (schools) and public enlightenment through printing of pamphlets and Christian literatures became enduring. Newspapers were therefore established, mainly in Southern Nigeria as a result of the effective use which the British humanitarian movement made of it in mobilising support for their programmes.

The third decisive factor was the prevailing situation in Britain which evidently made a strong impression on British humanitarians in West Africa and the early adopters of the press. As Omu has described, a central feature of the missionary infrastructure that they established in West Africa was the early introduction of printing presses on which they produced a succession of pamphlets and tracts. From these presses, the first West African newspapers were published, starting with Africa’s Luminary, a Methodist weekly that began appearing in Monrovia in 1836.

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90 Omu, F. (1978) Press and Politics in Nigeria (as referenced above)
The fourth factor is the advent of missionary papers. Ade-Ajayi comments that “it is hard to estimate the impact of early newspapers due to their size and reach, however; their influence was most noticeable in the area of politics.” Missionaries set up newspapers as instruments for proselytization, a function which the later generation of African politician proprietors were quick to embrace. Essentially, it was missionaries rather than officials who brought newspapers to West Africa. This partly helps to explain their early politicisation, in contrast to the “shipping news” function they performed in Spanish America. Prominent nationalist leaders in Nigeria that either owned or edited a newspaper include Nnamdi Azikwe, Ernest Ikoli, Lateef Jakande, Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu, Segun Osoba, and Obafemi Awolowo—all prominent figures in Nigerian politics.

Faringer claims that as a consequence of the above, the foremost newspapers for Nigeria by Nigerians were mainly political in content. Coleman makes the point that local ownership remained an unusual feature of the Nigerian press despite inroads by the Mirror Group and Canada’s Roy Thompson after the Second World War; hence newspapers remained an important vehicle for nationalism.

Finally, the dual character of British relations with Colonial Nigeria further exacerbated the drive and resolve of Nigerians to run local newspapers. On one hand, British Protectorate and later Colonial authorities accommodated political criticism as well as newspaper agitation. Faringer contends that British tradition of press freedom was part of the reason why the press were allowed to operate almost freely across British colonies in West Africa. The introduction of local elections and moderate representation in 1922 and beyond further stimulated the growth of newspapers in Lagos.

On the other hand, oppressive colonial laws and conflicts of interest between British and Nigerian commercial and political concerns, in a setting that favoured the former than the latter, further strengthened the Nigerian resolve to run a Nigerian-owned press, using the press as a means through which political reform and increased

political representation could be attained. Newspapers were therefore seen as the most potent weapon in the fight for expanding local inclusion in politics.

2.3 PRESS HISTORY IN NIGERIA

The main elements of Nigeria’s newspaper history, especially important epochs as well as key political phases are well documented in literature (Coker and Uche). Omu divided his historical account into phases based on social and political developments in the first-half of Colonial Nigeria. Onoja followed a chronological approach in which he focused on media and constitutional changes while Oso’s and Ogunsiji’s narratives tended towards a socio-historical account. For the purpose of this review, press history in Nigeria is grouped under pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial headings. These periods span over 150 years, beginning from 1859 when the first newspaper was published in Abeokuta in present-day South-west Nigeria to 1999 when a democratically elected civilian administration assumed power after three decades of somewhat uninterrupted military rule. While conscious attempt is made to delineate the sequence of events in clear-cut periods; newspaper development not only overlapped between periods but also occurred concurrently with major political developments in Nigeria.

2.3.1 Pre-Colonial Press in Nigeria (1859-1899)

British abolition of the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade precipitated increased legitimate trade and expanded missionary activities along the coast of West Africa. Subsequent missionary penetration of Southern Nigeria aimed at evangelisation, education, expansion and consolidation in the hinterland provided the fillip for the establishment of the first newspaper in Nigeria- *Iwe Irohin fun Awon Ara Egba* (1859-1867) by Reverend Henry Townsend of the Christian Mission Society (CMS). The newspaper was both religious and political in content just as it was bi-lingual (printed in Yoruba
and English languages). Other newspapers of the era, according to Omu included *The Anglo African* (1863-65); *The Lagos Times and the Gold Coast Colony Advertiser* (1880); *The Lagos Observer* (1882-90), *The Eagle* and *Lagos Critic*; *Lagos Weekly Record* (1890-1930); and *Lagos Standard* (1894-1920)\textsuperscript{102}.

The early press was mainly concentrated in Lagos and preoccupied itself with the religious, literary and social development within Abeokuta, Lagos and their immediate environment. The owners of these newspapers were part of the emerging literary elite of the period who indirectly prepared the ground for a more “Nigerian” and politically-radical press with interest in social and political inclusion, using newspapers as a tool of agitation.

### 2.3.2 The Press during Colonial Rule (1900-1960)

The partitioning of Africa among competing European nations at the Berlin Conference (1884-1885) set the pace for Britain’s colonial policy and consequent conquest in West Africa. In Nigeria, the introduction of colonialism in 1900 contributed to and shaped the characterisation of the Nigerian press. Although it was not until 1922 that a more politically press emerged, the momentum was already set in motion by the turn of the century. In spite of pockets of resistance to Britain’s political takeover of local empires and kingdoms; Britain’s interest in political domination and trade monopoly necessitated the amalgamation of the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria and the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria in 1914 to form a single political entity.

The radical political changes almost inevitable meant that the press in Nigeria would become a radical political force. Political reactions to colonialism within the press in Lagos had become evident by 1910 as newspaper content began to reflect prevalent anti-colonial sentiments of a society under colonial rule. The most prominent newspaper of the era was *Lagos Daily* owned and used by Macaulay to win local elections in Lagos for his political party- Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) between 1922 to 1936. Notable also was the *Nigerian Daily Times* established in 1926 (later called *Daily Times of Nigeria*) by a consortium of Nigerians with the


\textsuperscript{102}Omu, F. (1978) *Press and Politics in Nigeria* (as listed above)
collaboration of the Colonial Government. These two prominent dailies indicated an emergent divergence and duality in the press. The former, noted as radical and anti-colonial while the latter, liberal and pro-colonial.

Constitutional developments in Nigeria increased local political participation and boosted newspapers influence on politics. Nwabueze’s 103 detailed account of Constitutional development in Nigeria requires no duplication, but it is important to reiterate that altogether these constitutions expanded the legislative, executive and later judicial authority of an emergent nation. The main newspapers were owned and funded by leading political parties in each region. In the Eastern region, The West African Pilot was dominant; in the West, Nigerian Tribune and Southern Nigerian Defender and in the North, The Gaskiya Tafi Kwabo and the Nigerian Citizen. Others include Northern Advocate (1945); Daily Telegraph (1949) and The Nigerian Sentinel (1950).

In sum, newspaper activities remained heavily concentrated within Lagos and Ibadan. Newspaper ownership shifted from self-publishing editor/owner proprietorship to mainly corporate, party ownership, especially after 1940. Newspapers were a critical part of the movement that transformed pockets of local resistance to colonial rule into Nigerian nationalism. Newspapers such as the West African Pilot were platforms through which nationalist agenda were regularly featured. These papers, with the exception of the Daily Times that was apolitical, were critical of the colonial administration and used their papers to raise political awareness and agitate for political and economic reforms104.

Oso105 highlighted that newspapers of the era were not only political but were instruments of economic empowerment. Citing the Zik’s group of newspapers, Oso argues that Zik had a host of newspapers scattered across the south and middle-belt with which he not only increased his political and editorial reach but also gained financial power. Oso further notes that Awolowo also used Zik’s model to establish the Nigerian Tribune as well as other newspapers to broaden his political and economic reach. Essentially therefore, newspapers became sophisticated tools with

which Nigerian nationalist leader sought social redress, political relevance and economic profit.

On the other hand, newspapers also reinforced partisan hostilities and in some case, accentuated ethnic dissimilarities. Crowder\textsuperscript{106} attributes to the press, rivalry between Nnamdi Azikwe and Ernest Ikoli helped to factionalise the NCNC between the Igbo (Easterners) and Yoruba (Westerners) groupings in the 1940s. As noted by Oso, “the emergence of the party affiliated newspapers was closely linked to the beginning of the formal incorporation of Nigerian politicians into the structure of state power. It also marked the beginning of the ethnisation of the Nigerian press.”\textsuperscript{107} The initial goal of these newspapers was to serve as platforms for political campaigning to win local elections and as stages to sensitize Nigerian to demand for increased political participation. However by the 1950s, political independence from Britain became the predominant theme. Although independence came in 1960, the stage was inevitably set for intense competition among party-controlled newspapers in the politics that unfolded beyond 1960.

2.3.3 Post-Colonial Newspaper Press in Nigeria (1960-1999)

Post-Colonial newspaper history can be broadly classified into two phases. The first can somewhat be described as democratic while the second witnessed lengthy periods of military rule. The importance of this distinction is not merely differentiated by civilian/military administrations but also by dissimilarities in the economic, political and social context within which newspaper operated.

Post-Independence Newspapers during Civil Rule

The regional structure of Nigerian political parties as well as that of the orientation of the newspapers they owned remained largely unchanged after political independence in 1960. No newspaper of note was editorially, financially and politically independent. They were all tied to the apron strings of their owners and remained important party or regional propaganda machineries used to canvass for votes and antagonise opposition parties and candidates. While independence and

\begin{footnotes}
\item[106] Crowder, M. (1972) \textit{The Story of Nigeria}. London: Faber
\end{footnotes}

the attainment of Republic status in 1963 gave full political autonomy to the inheritors of state power in Nigeria; the concept of national unity and political integration remained elusive.

As Osaghae\textsuperscript{108} has noted, this was all the more complicated by regional imbalance within the national political structure. Politics was regionally and ethnically structured leading to structural and institutional imbalances. These were not confronted with leadership, cooperation and unity. Ethnic competition, social diversity, class conflict and a general inability to harness Nigeria’s immense potential after national independence became serious challenges that rocked the foundation of Nigeria\textsuperscript{109}. These divisions were well played out in newspaper content as each private or regional newspaper attempted to outdo one another in representing the interest of their owners. As indicated by Sklar\textsuperscript{110}, the rivalry between The West African Pilot owned by Nnamdi Azikwe, leader of National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) in the Eastern Region and the Nigerian Tribune owned by Obafemi Awolowo, leader of Action Group provides evidence of fierce competition within the media based on divergent political party affiliations.

At the return of multiparty elections in 1979, generally referred to as the Second Republic (1979-1983) both Federal and (most) state governments owned newspapers. By 1980, there was resurgence in private and party-affiliated newspaper ownership as new titles were established. The new titles included: The Punch, 1980; Guardian, 1980; Concord 1982; Vanguard, 1984; The Mail, 1985; and The Reporter, 1987. Others include the Democrat, Advocate, Weekly Eagle, Trumpet, Nigerian Call and the Sun. Oso\textsuperscript{111} observed that a section of the press in Nigeria functioned as propaganda organ for their owners. Citing the example of Concord newspaper, Oso asserts that Concord was principally set up to serve as the mouth piece of its owner (MKO Abiola) and his affiliate political party (NPN). The Second Republic was however abruptly ended through another military coup in December, 1983.

Post-Independence Newspapers during Military Rule

Post-independence politics was fragile and factionalised. The new power elite were encumbered with the complex task of politically harnessing the immense cultural diversity, economic possibilities and regional cleavages that characterized the emergent nation. As it was with most newly independent African states, the new political leaders in Nigeria, limited by long-standing regional suspicion and inexperience at nation building, provided the military in 1966, with the necessary excuse to usurp power under the guise of maintaining law and order.


Decrees and other extra-legal instruments were used by the military to control non-conforming newspapers and journalists. Aside from Constitution Suspension and Modification Decrees 1 of 1967 and 1984 that suspended the 1963 and 1979 Constitutions of Nigeria respectively; others media-targeted draconian decrees included: The Defamatory and Offences Decree 44 of 1966; Newspaper Prohibition Decree 17 of 1967; Armed Forces and Police Special Powers Decree 24 of 1967; Police Act Decree 41 of 1967; Public Officers Protection Act against False Accusation Decree 11 of 1975; Newspaper Prohibition of Circulation Decree 12 of 1978; Detention of Persons by State Security Services Decree 2 of 1984; Public Officers Protection Against False Accusation Decree 4 of 1984; and Decree 35 of 1993 which gave broad powers to the Head of State. Akanbi and Shehu contend that the essence of these decrees was not only an infringement of the rule of law but


also a coarse ploy to silence any opposing voice. In effect, the press was largely curtailed and contained.

At other times, direct control of newspaper ownership through acquisition and part ownership was employed. In 1975, the Federal Government of Nigeria took total ownership of *New Nigerian Newspaper* and 60 per cent shares in *Daily Times*, the largest two newspapers in the State. The takeover, similar to that of the broadcast media suggested that the Federal Military Government intended to monitor, monopolise and control information dissemination through direct ownership. In addition to the above, Akanbi and Shehu noted that military tribunals were set up for the speed dispensation of justice, particularly to lighten the burden of regular courts and fast track the trial of criminal activities. The authors however observed that in reality, military tribunals were engaged for two purposes: first to convict and sentence anyone opposed to military rule; and secondly, to unlawfully detain accused persons with limited possibility of fair trial or appeal.

It was not until the 1990s that the press along with several civil right organisations became more formidable and strategic in their opposition to military autocracy. Ojo and Olukoyun have suggested that the Nigerian press supplied an important challenge to Babangida’s (1985-1993) and Abacha’s military rule (1993-1998). Coincidentally, international events such as the end of apartheid in South Africa, the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War in addition to local events like the annulment of the 1993 presidential election, decades of political repression and relentless containment of the free press in Nigeria provided the fillip needed to demand for reform, change and accountability from successive military administrations, especially the Abacha junta.

**Military Brutalism: A Case Study of Dele Giwa**

To further buttress the harsh terrain in which the press operated during several military juntas, the case of Dele Giwa’s violent death provides evidence of military terror and scare tactics directed towards controlling the press. On the 20th of October

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1986, a parcel was delivered to Dele Giwa’s Lagos residence by an unidentified motor-biker. The parcel was received by Billy Giwa, Dele's 19 year old son. Billy took the parcel to his father who was eating a late breakfast in his study. When Dele attempted to open the parcel, a bomb concealed within ripped open his abdomen and blasted holes in the walls amongst other damages. Giwa died instantly at the tender age of 39 and ended his illustrious and celebrated professional career in journalism.

Dele Giwa was founder and pioneer editor of Lagos-based *Newswatch* magazine along with Ray Ekpu, Dan Agbese and Yakubu Mohammed. Jeter 116 said *Newswatch* “... changed the configuration of print journalism in Nigeria and introduced bold, investigative formats to news reporting”. According to Frisky 117, “investigative work by veteran Human Rights lawyer, Gani Fawehinmi wasted no time in pointing accusing fingers at Ibrahim Babangida (the incumbent military Head of State) as the mandating principal of that killing mission”. Several dots were connected to create the image of a government-sponsored killing.

Frisky believes Giwa was working on a piece that could potentially mar the image of the incumbent military ruler and deeply damage the military establishment in Nigeria. Olojede and Onukaba 118 however argue that although Gani Fawehinmi (also a victim of military incarceration) exploited every legally possible means to prosecute the Head of State, General Babangida, the outcome was unsuccessful. Sticking strictly to facts, they contend that contrary to widespread belief, there is yet no legal proof whatsoever that Babangida had any hand in the killing of Giwa.

In the months that followed Giwa’s untimely murder via a letter bomb, *Newswatch*, was proscribed and thereafter restructured. Commenting on the death of Giwa, Dan Agbese (editor-in-chief and co-founder of *Newswatch*) noted that:

> The pain of losing Dele so early and so cruelly remains fresh for us. It stabs us each time we see his empty space in the office and know that that space will never be occupied again. The pain stabs us each time we see images of his handsome face and remember his mangled body. And when we remember, as we often do, that the man who delighted in satirical

Dele Giwa's assassination during Gen. Babangida's eight year rule (1985-93) was one of the many attempts by successive regimes to silence, intimidate and suppress the Nigerian press. In 1993, the Abacha-led military government succeeded the short-lived Interim National Government (ING) headed by Chief Ernest Shonekan (an unconstitutional administration that succeeded General Babangida). From the onset of the Abacha military government, local and international press organisations questioned the credibility and acceptance of another military regime; however, Abacha was equal to the task of stifling and coercing dissenting voices, particularly those within the Lagos press and civil society. To his advantage, Gen. Abacha had served for nearly a decade as a high-profile superior officer in the Babangida government, and as such, was well vast in strategically silencing the Nigerian news media.

As noted by cpj.org, it was during the Abacha era, precisely in March 1995, that four journalists- Christine Anyanwu, publisher and editor in chief of The Sunday Magazine; Ben Charles Obi, editor of Weekend Classique; Kunle Ajibade, editor in chief of The News; and George Mbah, assistant editor of Tell Magazine- were among 42 people (mostly military personnel) arrested and charged with attempting to stage a military coup against the Abacha government. The four were tried before a secret military tribunal and each sentenced to 25 years in prison. In addition to the 42, several leading human rights activists were also charged for the alleged coup, but for national and international pressure, the military government reduced their jail terms to 15 years.

In November 1995, the military government removed the ban on the Punch Group and the Concord Group of newspapers, two prominent southern based news organizations that were put out of circulation for more than a year. A third, the Guardian Group, had its ban lifted in July 1995 after its owners were forced to offer a personal apology to Abacha- the incumbent military Head of State. These newspapers were targeted by the military government for questioning the legitimacy

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of the Abacha administration and for being critical of the administration’s human rights abuses.

One of the most controversial attacks on civil society by the Abacha military government was the killing of Ken Saro-Wiwa in 1995. In defiance to domestic and international plea, human right activist and environmentalist, Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni leaders belonging to the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MASOP) group were executed in November after a hasty military tribunal had found him and other guilty of inciting hatred and violence that led to the death of other Ogoni chiefs earlier that year.

These unprecedented infringements on the rights of civilians as well as on the freedom of the press, particularly the press in Lagos capture the desperate attempts by successive military juntas to intimidate, suppress and exercise control of the Nigerian polity. What is the implication of Dele Giwa’s gruesome murder on the press in Nigeria? In the broader context, the brutal assassination of Giwa in retrospect brought about two prominent consequences. In the first place, it sent a strong and emphatic message to news journalists’ both in print and broadcast media that the ruling military elite or a section of society with access to extensive economic resources and political connection are capable of protecting their interest at all cost, in spite of the best efforts of the media.

Secondly and consequent upon the first, Giwa’s murder indirectly restricted the media’s capacity to carry out intensive investigative journalism, especially their willingness and ability to publicly scrutinize political office holders. While it is inaccurate to conclude that other news media organisations and journalists have not attempted to probe politicians and public institutions; such attempts have been moderate and mild compared to the scale of operations of Newswatch under the editorial leadership of Dele Giwa.

## 2.4. CURRENT COMPOSITION OF NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS

### Table 1: List of Current Nigerian newspapers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>1st issue</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Ethnicity of owner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blueprint</td>
<td>Abuja</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Northern consortium</td>
<td>Hausa, North</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Abuja</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Sam Nda-Isaiah</td>
<td>Hausa, North</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People’s Daily</td>
<td>Abuja</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Wada Maida</td>
<td>Hausa, North</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Trust</td>
<td>Abuja</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Kabiru Yusuf</td>
<td>Hausa, North</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triumph</td>
<td>Kano</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Triumph Publishing</td>
<td>Hausa, North</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observer</td>
<td>Edo</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Bendel Newspapers Co. Limited</td>
<td>Benin, South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigerian Tribune</td>
<td>Ibadan</td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>Obafemi Awolowo</td>
<td>Yoruba, South West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Mirror</td>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Jimoh Ibrahim</td>
<td>Yoruba, South West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nation</td>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Bola Tinubu</td>
<td>Yoruba, South West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newswatch</td>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Jimoh Ibrahim</td>
<td>Yoruba, South West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Next</td>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Dele Olojede</td>
<td>Yoruba, South West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.M. News</td>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Bayo Onanuga</td>
<td>Yoruba, South West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punch</td>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Ajibola Ogunsola Aboderin</td>
<td>Yoruba, South West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>James Ibori</td>
<td>Ijaw, South South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Hallmark</td>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Prince Emeka Obasi</td>
<td>Ibo, South East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Day</td>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Frank Aigbogun.</td>
<td>Ibo, South East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Champion</td>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu</td>
<td>Ibo, South East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Times of Nigeria</td>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>1925</td>
<td>Fidelis &amp; Noel Anosike</td>
<td>Ibo, South East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sun</td>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Kalu Uzor Orji</td>
<td>Ibo, South East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ThisDay</td>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Nduka Obiagbenwa</td>
<td>Ibo, South East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanguard</td>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Sam Amuka</td>
<td>Ibo, South East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Alex Ibru</td>
<td>Benin, South South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell</td>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Nosa Igiebor</td>
<td>Benin, South South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compass</td>
<td>Ogun</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Gbenga Daniel</td>
<td>Yoruba, South West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osun Defender</td>
<td>Oshogbo</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Kola Olabisi</td>
<td>Yoruba, South West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Harcourt Telegraph</td>
<td>Rivers</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Prince Ogbonna Nwuke</td>
<td>Ibo, South East</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Table 1 above, as at November 2013, there were 26 national newspapers in Nigeria. This data excludes provincial and local newspapers with limited outreach and circulation. 81% (21 newspapers) of the total population of newspapers are located in the South while only 19% (five newspapers) are in the North (Abuja). Out of the 21 newspapers published in the South, only five are published outside Lagos. This represents 20%, one percent more than the total national newspaper population in the North. The Southern (non-Lagos based) papers are: The Compass (Abeokuta: Ogun State), The Observer (Benin City: Edo State), Osun Defender (Osogbo: Osun State) and Telegraph (Port Harcourt, Rivers State). The other 16 newspapers, representing 80% operate from Lagos with bureau offices nationwide.

The above data equally indicate that the 14 (53%) of all national dailies were established post-1999. This does not only confirm the proliferation of newspaper since 1999 as posited by Adesoji and Hahn but also shows Abuja’s emergence and dominance as the main publishing hub in the North. In the North, four newspapers (Leadership, Daily Trust, Blueprint and Peoples’ Daily) are published in Abuja and one (Triumph) in Kano. The demise of the New Nigerian newspaper in 2011 ended the paper’s 49 years run of news reporting in Nigeria, and also ended the dominance of Kaduna as the main hub of newspaper publishing in Northern Nigeria.

The New Nigerian newspaper was collectively established in 1962 and jointly owned by the Northern Regional government to represent the views of the North in national politics. As part of the post-Civil war restructuring by the Gowon administration, the regional government arrangement was dismantled to give way for creation of states in 1976. The ownership of the newspaper was handed to the governors of the Northern states, who continued to fund its operation and appoint its board. The paper, along with The Daily Times of Nigeria, was bought over and run by the Federal Government in 1979. Although ownership was returned to the Governors of the Northern States in 1995, media preference in the North, dearth of revenue and political unwillingness on the part of its owners may have contributed to its demise.

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122 Adesoji and Hahn (as cited above)
Newspaper ownership is categorised along ethnic and regional lines. Accordingly, the five newspapers in the North are all owned by northerners. In the South, six newspapers are owned by Westerners: *Punch* (Lagos), *Compass* (Abeokuta), *Nigerian Tribune* (Ibadan), *Next* (Lagos), *Defender* (Osun) and *PM Newspaper* (Lagos). The seven newspapers owned by Easterners but all based in Lagos include- *Mirror*, *Business Day*, *Champion*, *Guardian*, *Independent*, *Sun* and *ThisDay*. The remaining eight national dailies are owned by people from the Mid-Western region- *Observer* (Benin), *Business Hallmark* (Lagos), *Nation* (Benin), *Newswatch* (Lagos), *Vanguard* (Lagos), *Telegraph* (Port Harcourt), *Daily Times* (Lagos) and *Tell* (Lagos).

Lagos, the main hub of publishing is home to a broad mix of newspaper ownership. Of the 16 newspapers in Lagos, none is owned by a Northerner. Conversely, no Southerner has ever owned a title located in the North. Interestingly, only three newspaper titles are owned by South-Westerners- *Punch*, *Next* and *PM newspapers*— that is, 18% of all newspapers in Lagos. The remaining 82% are owned by Easterners (44%) and Mid-Westerns (38%). This indicates that the bulk of newspapers published in Lagos are owned by non-Westerners.

The dominance of the Southern media, centrally located in Lagos is critical to understanding the role of the press in post-independent Nigeria. The ethnic rivalry and plurality of the Nigerian state as reflected in the ownership structures of Nigerian newspapers makes it difficult to accept the notion that national newspapers in Nigeria are neutral agents of information dissemination. While most newspapers claim to be fair, balanced and objective advocates of democracy; newspaper ownership structures, regional affinity and media agenda-setting priorities suggest a worrying degree of conflict of interest in news organisation’s professional obligations.

As noted by Osagie and Ikime, the roots of Nigeria's post-independence politics and intergroup relations are deeply embedded in its history. Geographically, Nigeria’s population is made up of approximately 200 ethnic groups, 500 indigenous languages, and three major religions- Christianity, Islam and traditional African religion. The three main ethnic groups (Hausa- north, Igbo- east and Yoruba- west)

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had well-organised political and social structures at the dawn of British colonialism of Nigeria in 1900. To the North of Nigeria, two developments had shaped and influenced the region before Britain established its protectorate over the region. First was the long-established Trans-Saharan trade between the Hausa states in Northern Nigeria and North Africa, the Mediterranean and the rest of the Arab world. Second and consequent upon the first was the introduction and spread of Islam, first by contact with North African traders and scholars and secondly and more radically made especially possible by the Fulani Jihad, launched in 1804 by Uthman Dan Fodio. Consequently, Islam had become the main religion within the region and by extension; Islam had influenced the cultural, political, military and administrative organisation of the Sokoto caliphate. The outcome of these events has continued to shape intergroup relations between the Muslim North and the Christian South in post-independence Nigeria.

To the West of Nigeria are well-established kingdoms- Oyo, Ife and Benin with vast administrative and political territories, as far as modern day Togolese Republic. As observed by Johnson\textsuperscript{125}, the decline of the Oyo Empire and the subsequent break away of Yoruba city-states from Oyo’s dominance led to decades in which the whole region was embroiled in a series of internecine war that continued until arrival of the British. Socially, the advent of and long contact with European traders along the coast had significantly influenced economic and political life in Western Nigeria. The early adoption of Christianity as well as Western education had created a society in which European style civilisation had become entrenched. To the East of Nigeria were scores of stateless, segmented, decentralised politically independent communities that co-existed within the same region. One distinguishing factor was the cultural, geographical and lingual variations that separated the Igbo, Efik, Ijaw, Annang, Kalabari and other village states within the eastern region. As is the case in the West, the Eastern region was also heavily influenced by Christianity (Catholicism) and Western education.

In spite of these political, cultural and geographical differences, Nigeria became independent in 1960. The administrative, economic and political merger was a

\textsuperscript{125}Johnson, S. (1976) \textit{The History of the Yoruba’s from Earliest to the Beginning of the British Protectorate.} Lagos: CSS Books
welding of some sort. The extent of the cultural, religious, economic and political differences between the North and South brought to light the marked imbalances between the regions. The gap in political development, press advocacy, educational differences and economic growth between the two regions had grave consequence for political competition, resource control and socio-economic policy issues since 1960. With the above framework, Nigerian newspapers are somehow recruited for and engrafted in the political, regional and ethnic contestation of state power and resources that have characterised the Nigerian state since independence. The North/South divide in the Nigerian press not only suggest cleavages in the regional centres of newspaper concentration and publication but may also indicate deeper ideological, political and religious differences.

2.4.1 An overview of National Newspapers in Nigeria

Grant has asserted that Nigerian newspapers cannot be adequately classified using Western lenses. This is because the latter are either not applicable, or they do not relate to essential differences. For instance, there is no division in Nigeria between the popular and the quality press, in that, all newspapers are popular in style, and all feature national, political and serious content. The key difference is with profitability, location and ownership.

For the purpose of this research, seven national newspapers were selected and content analysed based on their national coverage, popularity, readership rating and ownership. These papers are representative of the main publishing hubs- Lagos and Abuja. The owners also represent the different ethnic regions that make up Nigeria. They newspapers are:

1. The Guardian Newspaper (Lagos)
2. Thisday Newspaper (Lagos)
3. Vanguard Newspaper (Lagos)
4. The Nigerian Tribune (Lagos)
5. Punch Newspaper (Lagos)

6. **Daily Trust Newspaper (Abuja)**

7. **Leadership newspaper (Abuja)**

As indicated on their website\(^{128}\), the *Nigerian Tribune* is the oldest surviving, privately-owned newspaper in Nigeria. It was established in November, 1949 in Ibadan by Chief Obafemi Awolowo (from Western Nigeria) to represent the views of Nigerians in general and the south west in particular. As it was common during Nigerian nationalism, *Tribune* served as the mouthpiece for Awolowo's anti-colonial views and sentiments. In the post-independence era, it played an important role in defending the interests of the Yoruba people and Awolowo's presidential ambitions. Since 1999, *Tribune* has continued to project its founding visions “to create a just and egalitarian Nigerian society, re-generate the spirit of altruism and nationalism in Nigerians by promoting the idea of nationhood\(^{129}\).”

According to its official website\(^{130}\), *Thisday* is a national newspaper founded in 1995 by a former *Times* magazine representative for Africa\(^{131}\)- Nduka Obiagbena (an Easterner). *Thisday* has its main operational headquarters in Lagos but is published concurrently in Abuja to serve its readers in Northern Nigeria. In 2010, the newspaper’s Abuja operation was a victim of a bomb attack by a fundamentalist Islamic group- Boko Haram. *Vanguard* is also a privately-owned moderate newspaper, established in 1984 and published in Lagos by Sam Amuka-Pemu, a veteran journalist from the former Mid-West. As stated on its website, *Vanguard*’s mission is “to serve the people through unflinching commitment to free enterprise, the rule of law and good governance\(^{132}\).”

*Guardian* newspaper is another privately-owned daily newspaper published in Lagos. It has a long history of editorial and political independence. According to its website\(^{133}\), *Guardian* newspaper, since its maiden issue in 1983 claims to be unbiased, liberal and politically neutral. Due to its stand on democracy and human rights, the newspaper has had a topsy-turvy relationship with several military administrations in Nigeria, including proscription, confiscation of newsprint and

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\(^{128}\) www.nigeriantribune.ng (Accessed in December 2012)

\(^{129}\) www.nigeriantribune.ng (as above)

\(^{130}\) http://www.thisdayonline.com/ (accessed in April 2012)


\(^{132}\) http://www.vanguardngr.com/about/ (accessed in April 2012)

\(^{133}\) http://www.guardian.ng.com (accessed in May, 2012)
temporary ban in 1995. *Punch* newspaper is another Lagos-based privately-owned daily newspaper. It claims to be the second largest newspaper as well as the most widely read daily in Nigeria. Since its launch in November 1976 by James Aboderin (a westerner), *Punch* has largely remained a pro-South newspaper.

*Daily Trust* and *Leadership* newspapers are both Abuja-based newspapers and relatively new when compared to other national newspapers in Lagos. *Daily Trust* was launched in 2001 by Media Trust- a privately held Nigerian newspaper publishing company, chaired by Kabiru Abdullahi, from the North. *Leadership* newspaper is owned by Abraham Nda-Isaiah and published by Leadership Newspaper Group Limited. Both newspapers claim to be national in outlook but devote significant coverage to issues that affect the politics of Northern Nigeria.

### 2.5 NEWSPAPERS OWNERSHIP AND ITS EFFECT ON POLITICS

To investigate who owns national newspapers in Nigeria that attempt to shape public opinion and national politics is as paramount as is the question of whose interests they pursue and what effect they have. This section reviews existing literature on the effects of newspaper ownership on politics in Nigeria.

Newspaper ownership in Nigeria is a highly contested arena as news can directly influence public opinion and election outcome. The political influence that newspapers wield was first fully exploited by Herbert Macaulay through his *Lagos Daily News*. Subsequently, owning a newspaper became an essential element in the portfolio of politicians at both regional and national levels in Nigeria. All regional governments had their press appendage with which they propagated their cause. At independence in 1960, the federal government, through acquisition, also owned newspapers. Eribo and Ebot note that newspaper ownership was always political; adding that during military rule; newspaper control through economic, political, legal and policing was evident. Lagos, the main centre of concentrated political activities

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136. [http://leadership.ng/about](http://leadership.ng/about) (Accessed November, 2013)
had vibrant newspaper outfits with which they engaged in the ensuing clamour for increased political participation and the return to civil rule\textsuperscript{139}.

Ogbondah\textsuperscript{140} contends that media ownership in Nigeria is both for hegemony building and expanding political influence. Similarly Oso\textsuperscript{141} notes that “the clamour for political power by the political class is not peculiar to Nigeria; however the plurality or ethnic diversity of the Nigerian society and the impossibility of uniting the several ethnic groups that make up Nigeria has overtime created a situation in which all ethnic groups want access to state power, and as such, recruit the press in the hot contestation for it.” If we accept this view, though, it does imply a rather more subtle understanding of the role that ownership plays in shaping newspapers. When owners are primarily themselves seeking to obtain political influence their concerns may only be indirectly related to the functioning of a capitalist economy.

Globally, Curran\textsuperscript{142} points out that “when ownership of a country’s media is vested in government or in a few hands, the media tend to become mere megaphones of those who own or control them”. In spite claims of editorial independence, Daura\textsuperscript{143} observes that in Nigeria, government-owned newspapers, just as their private counterparts are tied to the apron strings of their owners. Sobowale\textsuperscript{144} makes a similar observation, claiming that the Nigerian press are not mere news gathering and disseminating agencies but help to confer legitimacy. He therefore believes that most news content is suspect, based on editorial judgement and in-house rules. Newspapers therefore protect a privilege elite class despite erroneous notions of plurality and diversity.

Ayu notes that “the press in Nigeria is a millionaire press at the beck and call of the rich and powerful. In spite the growth of the Nigerian media, it is a case of diversity

\textsuperscript{141}Oso, L. http://lasu.edu.ng/news/Press_and_Politics_in_Nigeria.pdf
\textsuperscript{142}Curran, J. (1991) Rethinking the Media as a Public Sphere in Communication and Citizenship: Journalism and the Public Sphere.In Dahlgren P. & Sparks, P. (eds.) The New Media Age. New York: Routledge
without much to choose from. They are all singing millionaire songs.” The commercialisation of news as suggested by Oso infers that those who possess means and privilege tend to enjoy more news coverage than other less endowed classes in society.

In summing up the effect of newspaper ownership on politics in Nigeria, the dominant literature suggest that that media ownership and control in Nigeria is heavily concentrated in the South, in political hands (both with power and access to resources) and have been used significantly to foster the interest of owners and their associates. Closely related to the ownership trajectory is the ethnic/regional dimension, that is, owners not only represent their personal interest but also embody the interest of their region.

2.6 NEWSPAPERS, ETHNIC RELATIONS AND POLITICS IN NIGERIA

This section reviews existing literature on the role of the press in ethnic relations and political cooperation in Nigeria. Is the press a divisive or uniting political and social force? Nigeria is multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-cultural. The inability of successive governments to harness the inherent diversity in Africa’s most populous nation has created a scenario of continued tension with increasing cross-ethnic political suspicion and violence. Region-centred politics has made the agenda of uniting different groups and creating a national identity elusive. Ethnic and political violence between religions and among the groups that constitute Nigeria are eloquent substantiation of these cleavages. The press in a diversified nation as Nigeria is expected to help foster national unity and solidarity, however, evidence from this review proves contrary.

In step with Anderson’s conceptualisation of the role of newspapers in reinforcing the concept of nationhood, especially as a social construct through mass media framing of their audience and addressing citizens as public; Ward corroborates the above when he observed that in Western societies, particularly in the United

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States of America and Britain, newspapers and later radio were the main mediums of mass communication capable of reaching broad audience within and beyond the confines of particular locations in the early nineteen century.

In colonial Nigeria, newspapers were established and run by non-state actors (mainly nationalists) to articulate, promote and agitate for increased political participation of Nigerians in the administration of local communities. As colonialism took roots, particularly with the 1914 Amalgamation and the introduction of the Clifford Constitution; the concept of nationhood became cemented. Post-1922 newspapers’ reconstruction of their audience included the concept of a single nation, populated by over 250 ethnic groups. Nigerian newspapers therefore played significant roles in raising political consciousness toward the concept of nation and nationhood. Marger\textsuperscript{148} however cautions that the media can also be instrumental in deconstructing national identities. In his work on the media’s role in the 1992 civil war in Rwanda, Marger indicates that \textit{Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines} (RTLM), a Rwandan radio station fuelled ethnic and political tensions by broadcasting ethnic propaganda against Tutsis, moderate Hutus, Belgians, and the Nations mission UNAMIR. Similarly, Caplan\textsuperscript{149} claims that RTLM is widely regarded as having played a crucial role in creating an atmosphere of charged ethnic hostility that allowed the genocide to occur. With this dual nature, capable of good and/or evil, how has the press shaped ethnic relations in Nigeria?

\textbf{2.6.1 Ethnicity and the Nigerian Press}

The ethnic structure of the press in Nigeria became contentious at independence and remains a recurrent theme. Mohammed\textsuperscript{150} observes that since 1960, the devolution of political power to the emergent nationalist politicians through the three major political parties (AG, NCNC and NPC), each of which relied on its newspaper(s) to transform itself into a dominant power block in the unfolding political competition preserved the ethnic cleavages inherent in pre-independence newspapers. Adesoji\textsuperscript{151} adds that since independence, the regional divisions that

\textsuperscript{150} Mohammed, (as above)
\textsuperscript{151} Adesoji and Hahn (2001) When not to be a newspaper proprietor \textit{(as above)}
characterise Nigerian newspaper have remained intact and have significantly limited press contributions to democracy.

Ethnicity has thus been at the heart and soul of Nigerian society as the struggle for power and space is reproduced virtually in all aspects of the people’s national life. Abati clarifies that, in many ways “the political press mirrors the ethnic phenomenon and helps bring to light the many dimensions of the ethnic game as it acts as the ears and mouthpiece of the ethnic groups. Ethnicity has thus served as an emotional tool in the hands of journalists as individual preferences gets mixed up with that of a group(s); and this has comfortably reflected in the ownership structure of the Nigerian media.” 152 Again Abati observes that “the ethnic identity of a Nigerian newspaper can be established in two ways- first by looking at the ethnic identity of the publisher and second, by looking at the main market that the paper seeks to cultivate and patronise. In spite of the conflicts of loyalties, ethnic tension and rivalries, deep seated distrust and mutual suspicion all seeking some form of national remedy, the individual publisher’s search for a place, for relevance in all things considered tied to the aspiration of his own ethnic group.”153

Olayiwola154 comments that with the resurgence of private newspapers in the 1980s came ethnicity and tribalism in the media thus limiting the ability of the press to adhere to their professional ethics, especially when reporting cross cultural, cross political and multi-ethnic news. Omenugha155 textual analysis of four Nigerian newspapers on the Hausa/Yoruba ethnic clash in February 2002 indicates that the press was used to escalate ethnic tension during the crisis. The study found that ethnicity serves as a smokescreen that beclouds media reporting. The study suggests that pressure to engage the reading public, especially those concentrated in the South often results in sensationalism and inaccuracies, both capable of inciting public reaction, including but not limited to ethnic violence. Essentially therefore, the

Nigerian press is polarized along regional, political and ethnic lines with every side protecting and supporting their kith and kin.

A similar study by Ekeanyanwu,\textsuperscript{156} a comparative content analysis of Nigerian newspaper coverage and management of political conflict in a pluralistic society between 2003 and 2007 indicates that the Nigerian press has operated more as active players in political crisis and conflict than as an impartial judge of such crisis and conflicts. This he believes has negatively affected the management of such crisis and conflicts both in the short and long run. The larger implication of such reporting is that it creates a volatile environment in which ethnic conflicts thrive.

Ekeanyanwu’s study resonates with Galadima and Enighe\textsuperscript{157} who analyzed the Nigerian press coverage of political issues and came up with the following valid conclusions:

1. The Nigerian press are always used by their owners - private party or government for the propagation of the interests of such owners, especially in the struggle to gain power or monopolize same.  
2. There is recklessness and partisanship on the part of the press during elections and transition to the civil rule programmes instead of restraint and responsible reporting of events.  
3. The principle of objectivity is always abandoned by the championing of the causes of their masters political struggles. 
4. Manipulations of the press to report false election results, which caused violence, mostly in the western region, have been a common trend since independence. 
5. Proscriptions, banning and closures of media houses with the aim of reducing (or avoiding) courses, as a result of the points mentioned earlier is another recurrent trend since the first republic.

Ndaeyo\textsuperscript{158} asserts that the media, due to their sectional and regional ownership patterns as well as their ethnic outlook and reporting, were influential in encouraging military coups during the First Republic (1960-1966), Second Republic (1979-1983) and Third Republic (1993) due to rivalry and bitter politics. In his view, the manner with which regional newspapers reported opposition parties and contextualise the political developments within the country, gave the military a level of justification for


political intervention. Similarly, Okidu\textsuperscript{159} has commented that since 1900, the press has always been tools used to compete for political space and economic superiority amongst fused multi-cultural, multi-social identities.

In a study by Douglas\textsuperscript{160} of Nigerian newspapers between 1906 and 2007, the print media is elitist, largely owned and edited by a small section of society with specific world views. Although, the public believes in the role of the press as society's watchdog; media gatekeepers predominantly represent the views of a small politico-economic group while at the same time excluding others. In Nigeria, the press essentially represent ethnic groups.

To sum up, the effect of newspapers on ethnic relations in Nigeria, reviewed scholarship indicate three fundamental trajectories that have influenced the ethnic colouration of the Nigerian press. Firstly, the entrenched regional and ethnic ownership of the press in pre-colonial times, coupled with the constitutional developments that preserved the regional cleavages that characterise the Nigerian state in the 1950s, set the stage for intense political rivalry at the national level at independence. Regional, economic and political competition, particularly at independence required the recruitment of newspapers as tools in the arsenal of leading political figures in post-independence politics.

Secondly, lengthy years of military intervention in national politics in Nigeria, from 1966 to 1999 with brief multi-party elections in 1979, failed to unify neither Nigerians nor dismantle the ethnic elements in the Nigerian politics. Rather than see the military as usurpers of the democratic process, military heads of states, mainly from Northern Nigeria were largely referenced within the Southern press on the basis of their ethnic origins. It is noteworthy that newspapers in the South, particularly Lagos-based newspapers in their political narratives often refer to the North as “producing” military Heads of States as if military autocratic rule is by popular consensus or general elections in the North.


Finally, the regional political party configuration largely between the three regions (North, South and West) have largely preserved the politics of difference and divergence in Nigeria’s political life and by consequence, in Nigerian newspapers. The North versus South political party structure survived the Biafra Civil War (1967-1970), remained intact during the consequent creation of states in each region in post-civil war era, and lingered on in the Second Republic (1979-1983) and the aborted Third Republic (1993).

The review of literature on newspaper ownership and ethnicity provided mixed evidence. On one hand, particularly during 1990s, the press united against military authoritarian rule when they championed the course for return of civil rule. They were inevitably helped by the prevailing negative economic situation in the country, by several civil liberation organisations and by the so-called third wave of democratisation when military regimes and one party government across Africa gave way to civil administrations. The leading role of the press was nonetheless noteworthy by being at the forefront of the movement that led to the restoration of civil rule in 1999. As noted by Ojo, the relationship between the press and military government in the 1990s was very complicated. For their role in exposing government corruption and General Babangida’s agenda of frustrating pro-democracy groups and subverting the process of democratisation; several news outlets (Tell, Tempo, The News, Guardian, Punch, Tribune…) were suspended and/or out-rightly banned by the Babangida administration. In response, a few news media organisations employed guerrilla methods by operating underground, under the radar of government-sponsored State Security Services (SSS).

On the other hand, evidence indicates that pre-1999 newspapers have helped to polarise Nigeria along religious, political and ethnic lines. This polarisation could have contributed to political imbroglio in post-independence First Republic (1960-1966), a gruesome 30 month Biafra Civil War (1967-1970) and several military incursions into national politics since 1975. While it would be parochial and inaccurate to conclude that the press alone determined the course of national politics since independence, there are obvious external, historical and religious dynamics.

involved; the press however played momentous roles in setting regional and political agenda, shaping the perspectives and opinion of its readers and those they seek to influence.

2.7 The Nigerian Press Since 1999

The return to civil rule in 1999 as noted by Ette was a not only a leap towards liberal multi-party elections but also major step towards press freedom. Consequently, scholarly writings on Nigerian newspapers have flourished since the end of military rule. On the whole Nigerian scholarship on the post 1999 press has been generally critical of its political role. This critical predisposition contrasts rather sharply with external perceptions of the political role of the Nigerian press. Freedom House, for example refers to Nigeria’s press as “one of the most vibrant and varied media landscapes in Africa …generally outspoken in its criticism of unpopular government policies”.

On ownership, Adesoji and Alimi studied the effect of ownership on Tribune and their findings indicate that in spite of Tribune’s contribution to the nationalist struggle and the process of nation-building in post-independence Nigeria, the use to which it is put by the successor-owner lends further credence to the ethnic agenda-setting claim. Similarly, Imhoagene notes that the saying that he who pays the piper dictates the tune resonates loudly in the Nigerian press today. Adeyemi described the Nigerian press as the greatest threat to democracy in that those who establish media houses are members of the ruling class who do not have the interest of the people at heart but are interested in the money, the power and the political and economic benefit of setting up a media house.

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Alawode\(^{167}\) commenting on the impact of newspapers agitation on political corruption linked the press with Nigeria’s noticeable improvement in Transparency International’s (TI) Corruption Perception Index (CPI). He asserts that through news reports and analysis, whistle blowing, reinforcement of anti-graft values, corruption deterrent commentaries, political sensitivity and partnership with civil service groups, the media in general and newspapers in particular have helped sustain a more transparent anti-corruption momentum. Mvendaga and Okoosi-Simbine however added that in order to further fulfil its watchdog role; Nigerian newspapers need to show more commitment to the universal ethics of the profession with strong attachment to the sacredness of facts. They believe that “if facts are subjected to disrespect, the way is wide open for all sorts of professional misconduct, ranging from protocol journalism to bribe taking, being perpetrated. In the process, important considerations are compromised, including transparency and accountability in government”\(^{168}\).

The dominant narrative that has emerged since 1999 in Nigerian media scholarship has been the commercialisation of the news and its impact on consolidating democracy. Adesoji\(^{169}\), using historical data suggests that for pre-1999 newspapers, revenue generation was a mirage and not it’s driving force. However, since 1999 profit maximization has become the defining character of the press. Adesoji\(^{170}\) and Ette\(^{171}\) caution that the media in Nigeria has increasingly imbibed professional ethos in their operation, particularly after the restoration of democratic rule; they still remain tools in the hands of politicians in perpetuating hegemonic power structures. Commercialisation, ethnicity and ownership structures have allowed the use of the press to fan the embers of individual agenda and ethnic division because of “cash and carry” nature of the press.


\(^{170}\)Adesoji, A. (as above)

Oso provides compelling evidence that since 1999, “the market has become the decisive moderating force for all press outfit, location, religion, ethnicity or political affinity notwithstanding. The press run as commercial businesses, with production process and cost, with news as the product. The ideal press should be independent of external control to fulfil its constitutional responsibilities but if the press are not free of the need for capital, then their independence will be hindered by those who possess capital”\textsuperscript{172}. His views suggest that in the last few decades, the media in Nigeria have resisted control by colonial masters and the military but their dependence on advertising revenue continues to tie them to those who possess resources.

Oso and Bello\textsuperscript{173} using a longitudinal approach, made a persuasive case for the impact of the revenue on newspapers. They contend that advertising revenue now drives the business of news making as opposed to editorial content. They add that major newspaper outfits in Northern Nigeria- Kaduna/Kano axis have all practically folded up because of fall in circulation figures and more importantly because of a dearth of advertising revenue.

In his study of media accountability and democracy in Nigeria, using case study method, Olukoyun found that the despite the harsh challenges imposed on journalist by Nigeria’s working environment and the fragility of the media business in Nigeria, the press, especially those that are “subversive of dictatorship as well as of Nigeria’s rentier capitalism are at the forefront of antimilitary struggles as well as active in advocating a less corrupt polity in Nigeria’s Fourth Republic.”\textsuperscript{174}

Olukoyun further asserts that Nigeria’s current political dispensation has been enriched by the media’s demand for accountability and the relentless exposure of corruption, be it in the form of falsification of biodata as in the case of Chuba Okadigbo, Ahmed Tinubu and Salisu Buhari; or in the form of misappropriation of funds and outright embezzlement of national economic resources. Interestingly,

\textsuperscript{172} Oso, L. \textit{Press and Politics in Nigeria: on whose side? 2\textsuperscript{nd} Inaugural Lecture from the Adebola Adegunwa School of Communication (AASOC), LASU} \url{http://lasu.edu.ng/news/Press_and_Politics_in_Nigeria.pdf} (Accessed: May, 2012)


Olukoyun concludes that the locational concentration of the press in the South west of Nigeria has been used by establishment politicians and corrupt public office holders to suggest that the press only represents the interest of the Lagos/Ibadan power elite; claiming that the press is sectional, ethnic and bias. However, he argues that such traditional claims are diversionary tactics to discredit press output and divide public opinion.

Similarly, Onoja examined the political economy of news reportage and presentation in Nigeria: a study of television news. His work particularly focussed on how ownership of television stations, the social structure of the Nigerian society and the deregulation of the broadcast industry influenced the reportage and presentation of news on television in Nigeria. Specifically, his study investigated how access in news reportage is given to different social classes in Nigeria and the implication of access to particular classes. Using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to synthetize data gathered through Focus Group Discussion (FGD), Semi Structured Interviews (SSI), Content Analysis (CA), he found that owners of television stations both public and private use their media to advance their economic and political agenda. Importantly, Onoja found that state-owned television stations, unlike their private counterparts function as propaganda outfits to the incumbent government. Specifically, they provide minimum coverage to opposition views but devote maximum attention to either promoting government views of defending mainstream agenda.

As a consequence of the above, Onoja also found a compromise in the media’s professional ethics of neutrality and objectivity as they grant more access to the financially well-off class. This finding is both true of private as well as state-owned stations. While the former grant more access to corporate sponsors and opposition party candidates mainly through sponsorships, commercials and political advertisements; the latter, through ownership and control, feature political office holders and top civil servants. By implication therefore, television stations mainly project the ideas, agenda and activities of the upper social class to the exclusion of the poor and underprivileged. This imbalance has been further accentuated by

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http://irepos.unijos.edu.ng/jspui/handle/123456789/206 (Accessed 05/10/15)
deregulation and commercialisation in the broadcast industry and as such preserves the existing relationship of production in the state.

The key contribution of the study to media scholarship is that the general belief that the media is the neutral eyes and ears of the public is a myth in Nigeria. Television stations, be it public or private, by their operations and news preference further perpetuate and legitimize the existing relations of news production in Nigeria where access to news is dependent of affluence, socio-economic class and political status.

Onoja’s successful study provided methodological guide for this present work. While his sociological research mainly focussed on television station ownership and news broadcast, using data gathered between 1999 and 2003; my studies explored a different media (newspapers) using different data. Specifically, the dual thesis of my dissertation investigated the political effects of regional concentration of newspaper ownership and production in Nigeria since 1999; questioning if concentration has helped or hindered the contributions that newspapers make to democracy.

In particular, my research explored three recurring themes in press and politics nexus in Nigeria. Firstly, it examined if, and to what extent, regional concentration of newspaper ownership influences content and society; secondly, it investigated if newspapers form regional editorial and agenda-setting axis and how this impact of intergroup relations in Nigeria; and thirdly, it examined the institutional structure (operating environment) of the press in Nigeria and its impact on news production. Subsidiary questions explored included an examination of the effect of the regional/ethnic cleavage in Nigerian newspapers as well as study of the contributions of newspapers since the restoration of democratic rule since 1999.

The overall aim of this research is to investigate the role of the media in consolidating democracy in Nigeria. Sixty years after national independence and three unsuccessful attempts at democratic governance in 1960-66, 1979-83 and the aborted attempt in 1993, the question of democratic consolidation in Nigeria has never been more imperative. This is especially so, as lengthy years of military autocratic rule (29 years since independence) and an un-dismantled pre-independence ethnic rivalry between the major ethnic groups (Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba) has resulted in economic and political backwardness.
Within the international community, Nigeria is considered as a fragile state, a cripple giant with immense human and natural resources but without corresponding infrastructural, economic and national development. While democracy has always been regarded globally and particularly in the West as the most durable platform for wide political participation and representation through elections and through public acceptance; the demilitarisation of the polity in 1999 has not resulted in shared prosperity and public progress. It appears that the euphoria associated with the return to civil rule has vanished as some have described the state of Nigeria, and rightly so, as continuity without change.

Given the above context, this study explores the media’s role in entrenching democratic tenets in Nigeria. This is based on the assumption, as noted by Graber\(^\text{176}\) that the mass media exist to: function as the market place of ideas, a platform for broad and diverse opinion in the public domain, serve as a watchdog of society and the surveyor of the political scene. However, Idahosa\(^\text{177}\) cautions that the role of the press can be politically dysfunctional and ethnically disuniting if the press itself is tribalised, ethnicised and compromised.

Methodologically, this research borrows from Onoja who successfully employed FGD, SSI and CA in gathering data for his television studies. The questions used in interviews and reproduced in the appendices to this thesis draw substantially on Onoja’s questionnaires to facilitate comparisons. However, unlike Onoja, the study compares newspaper content between two regionally, ideologically and culturally different regions in Nigeria- North and South to investigate how news content is gathered, what influence content and how, if any, that content influence public opinion. Specifically, my research will content analyse five newspapers in the Lagos hub (Punch, Tribune, ThisDay, Guardian and Vanguard) and two newspapers from the Abuja hub (Trust and Leadership newspapers). Newspaper content in 2007 and 2011 election years will analysed. Additionally, the SSIs and FGDs will be conducted in Lagos and Abuja will a population sample that represents the North/South divide. I propose to hold five FGDs and 20 SSIs in Lagos and Abuja to gather qualitative data.


required to address the research data set out above. (A thorough methodological analysis is provided in the next chapter)

2.8 SUMMARY

The chapter reviewed existing literature on press and politics in Nigeria from three critical perspectives: historical, theoretical and analytical. It maps several factors that influenced the growth and development of the newspaper press in Nigeria. These included extensive groundwork provided by missionary activities through the introduction of Western education, the penetration of English language beyond the coastline into the hinterland of British-controlled Niger area, activities of educated Africans and most importantly, the socio-political as well as constitutional developments in colonial Nigeria.

The review progressed with an in-depth analytical account of how the press emerged and evolved, first as missionary enterprise and then as literary/public enlightenment crusaders and later as nationalist propaganda machinery in West Africa; with particular emphasis on Nigeria. Although politics was a secondary pre-occupation of the early press; it soon became their identifying characteristics. The introduction of constitutional reforms in 1922, 1946 and 1953 allowed the press to exert increasing influence in the political developments within Nigeria. At independence in 1960, newspapers continued to play noteworthy roles in the political process; however, sectional, regional and political leanings influenced the trajectory of the press significantly.

Using the above historical framework to analyse national newspapers in Nigeria, three interrelated scholarship were reviewed in subsequent portions of the chapter. The first section reviewed the influence of newspaper ownership and its effect on national politics. The dominant narrative indicate that newspaper owners- private or state-owned newspapers- wield enormous influence and have significantly used that power to control their editors as well as the content they generate- content that influence the perception of the reading public.

The second section reviewed the role of newspapers on ethnic relations and links increasing escalation of ethnic, religious and politically-motivated violence in Nigeria to newspaper ownership and content. Studies by Ekeanyanwu provide compelling
evidence of how sections of the Nigerian press in their reportage of cross-cultural conflict, through partial, parochial or outright sympathy for certain class or on certain issues has polarized opinions and aided or abetted violence. This media-inflated divergence is most noticeable during multi-party elections, as it was the case in 1979 and 1993 when newspapers affiliated to regional political parties allowed sectional party interest overshadow their professional ethics.

The penultimate section reviewed scholarship on post-1999 newspapers by seeking to understand the current perspectives as well as behavioural dynamics of the press in a democracy. Several studies by Oso, Ette, Adesoji and Oyewole indicate that newspaper ownership by politicians has accentuated unabatedly. Their findings also suggest that economic imperatives have brought news organisations and media practitioners in closer alliance with certain elites- a trend that may have compromised the media's professional integrity. Finally, the review concludes with a synopsis of how this present work seeks to add to existing literature.
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the methods used in gathering data and its subsequent analysis for the study. Guided by Devereux’s work, using content analysis seven Nigerian newspapers were examined to determine if newspapers within and between the two main publishing hubs (Lagos and Abuja) form an editorial axis or exhibit content diversity. Content analysis was also used to examine if these newspapers perform regional agenda-setting functions. The study also used semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions to investigate broader questions about the effect of regional concentration as well as the political contributions Nigerian newspapers make to democracy. The rest of the chapter is divided into three sections. Section 3.2 explores the research strategy and provided justification for the choice of research approach. Section 3.3 describes each research method in detail, outlining the advantages and disadvantages of each approach and how they together provide a robust framework for generating data. Finally, Section 3.4 examines the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in order to address the research questions set out in Chapter One.

3.2 RESEARCH STRATEGY

In brief, my methodological approach has been dictated by the research questions that this study set out to investigate. In exploring the effects of the regional concentration of newspaper ownership and production on content and national politics in Nigeria, I needed two different kinds of data. I needed to explore the extent to which different regional clusters of newspapers exhibit distinctive correlations with different sorts of news treatment and news selection: this required a quantitative assessment of news content. Secondly, to confirm the causality of any such

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correlations, I needed to explore actual social relationships within newspaper organisations, between proprietors, editors and journalists; this kind of information required the elicitation of lived experiences. Then I was interested in the deeper issues of how language and style of reporting can affect the ways in which stories are treated and for this purpose in depth analysis of the way particular stories were written was necessary. Finally to consider the political effects of newspaper content-democratic or otherwise, I needed to find a way of assessing how stories are understood by the people who read newspapers and for this purpose, interviewing targeted sets of different kinds of readers via focus groups seemed a practical expedient. In other words, to address my research questions, I undertook an eclectic range of data collection methods. In embracing this range, I was aware of the theoretical precepts that conventionally inform the combination of qualitative and quantitative research.

Social science consists of disciplined and methodical study of society and its institutions. Science in this context connotes a systematic and disciplined method of acquiring verifiable knowledge. Potter\textsuperscript{179} emphasised the need for rigorous application of careful and systematic observation, an unbiased assembly of data, careful and exhaustive analysis and description of findings as the sine qua non of social scientific research. The two main research traditions are qualitative and quantitative methods. Given\textsuperscript{180}remarked that the objective of quantitative research is to develop and employ mathematical models, theories and/or hypotheses pertaining to natural phenomena. Wimmer and Dominick\textsuperscript{181}added that “quantitative research provides the fundamental connection between empirical observation and mathematical expression of quantitative relationships”.

Denzin and Lincoln\textsuperscript{182}argued that qualitative research on the other hand aims to gather in-depth understanding of human behaviour and the reasons that govern them. Lewis and Ritchie\textsuperscript{183}framed qualitative to include all non-mathematically quantifiable data. The dichotomy between quantitative and qualitative research is

\textsuperscript{180}Given, L. M. (2008) \textit{The Sage Encyclopaedia of Qualitative Research Methods}. Los Angeles, Calif.: Sage
that while the former quantifies and measures; the latter capture human experience in a social context. Hogan, Dolan and Donnelly\textsuperscript{184} therefore suggested that either of these approaches is better suited to answer certain kinds of research questions and “it is critical that the researcher understands which approach is fit for purpose. Thus, choosing the appropriate research method is functionally related to the research question(s). Methodology will not determine the kind of research that is conducted but will guide how the research is conducted and whether the finding will fit with the research objectives”.

3.2.1 Eclectic Research Method

For the purpose of this research, eclectic research method was adopted to investigate the political effects of regional concentration of newspaper ownership and production on one hand and on the other hand to examine the extent of editorial and agenda-setting alliances between the selected national newspapers. The primary objective for using an eclectic approach is to obtain a broad consideration of the research issues. There are some underlying assumptions behind this research approach. First, it is assumed that different types of knowledge can be gained by using different approaches, and therefore it is possible to more fully understand the Nigerian press if it is studied from different viewpoints. Second, there is the assumption that when a research is not bound by specific paradigms, and the researcher is at liberty to choose from a variety of research approaches, it is believed that using more than one method should help to get a clearer picture of the social world and make for more adequate explanations.

A secondary objective with using an eclectic approach is to gain insight into the usefulness of such a broad approach. While a distinction is commonly drawn between qualitative and quantitative research methods; it has been argued that the two are complementary. Kuhn\textsuperscript{185} asserts that large amounts of qualitative work have usually been prerequisite to fruitful quantification in the social sciences. Qualitative research is often used to gain a general sense of phenomena and to form theories that can be tested using further quantitative research or vice versa. Hunter and

Leahey\(^\text{186}\) also adds that in the political sciences, qualitative research methods are often used to gain better understanding of such things as intentionality and meaning.

Drawing from the political economy tradition of communication research, mixed-methods approaches have been used extensively to study how the media operates in a holistic manner. Shleifer and Djankov\(^\text{187}\) in examining global patterns of media ownership used mixed methods to support their argument and draw evidence-based conclusions. Their approach was not only empirical, quantitative and policy-related but also raises broader questions about ownership, control and media effect. More, specifically, with respect to the research for this dissertation, I needed to explore a diversity of considerations in a study of the way that ownership can shape editorial decision making and content. Both in depth anecdotal kinds of information about what might happen in a newsroom as well as systematic tracking of reportage were needed and to obtain these a mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches seemed sensible.

In essence, drawing upon a range of approaches enabled me to achieve the benefits of triangulation. Cohen and Manion\(^\text{188}\) argued that triangulation is a powerful technique that facilitates validation of data through cross verification from more than two sources. In particular, it refers to the application and combination of several research methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon. Methodological triangulation according to Denzin\(^\text{189}\) involves using more than one method to gather data, such as interviews, observations, questionnaires, and documents. By combining multiple observers, theories, methods, and empirical materials, researchers can hope to overcome the weakness or intrinsic biases and the problems that come from single method, single-observer and single-theory studies.

O’Donoghue and Punch\(^\text{190}\) explained that the idea is that one can be more confident with a result if different methods lead to the same result. If an investigator uses only


one method, the temptation is strong to believe in the findings. If an investigator uses two methods, the results may well clash. By using three methods to get at the answer to one question, the hope is that two of the three will produce similar answers, or if three clashing answers are produced, the investigator knows that the question needs to be reframed, methods reconsidered, or both.

The following sections in this chapter examine in detail, the research methods used in generating data required to address the five research questions, including ownership, agenda-setting, operating environment and political effects, identified in the introductory chapter.

3.3 RESEARCH METHODS

3.3.1 Focus Group Discussions

Kitzinger\textsuperscript{191} defines focus groups as an interactive research method that helps to capture the perception and understanding of participants on an issue during a research. In distinguishing focus group discussion from group discussion, she noted that ‘the group is “focused” in the sense that it involves some kind of collective activity and group interaction’. This method allows group members of at least six people and a maximum of 12, to participate in problem analysis and open discussion. Issues raised are mostly broad and pervasive by reason of inputs from people who constitute the group.

Krueger and Casey\textsuperscript{192} posit that the focus group technique has four defining characteristics: they involve people who possess certain characteristics and are recruited to share common quality of interest to the research; they provide qualitative data used to enhance understanding and to reveal a wide range of opinions, some of which the researcher might not expect; and finally, focus groups have focused discussion. Most of the questions to be asked are predetermined, the sequence of questions is established, and the questions are structured to further the goal of the research. However, the moderator is free to depart from the structure if relevant information is presented by the participants.

\textsuperscript{191} Kitzinger, J. (1994) The Methodology of Focus Groups: the importance of interaction between research participants. Glasgow University Media Group. Sociology of Health and Illness Vol. 16 No. 1

The study by Kitzinger 193 conducted with various groups in relation to how newspapers and television news have affected audience knowledge, attitudes and perceptions towards HIV and AIDS illuminates the key elements involved in conducting focus group sessions. Her research approach was designed to extend the understanding of audience beyond the traditional investigation of the active or passive viewer. The Glasgow University Media Group (GUMG)194 observed that instead of working with isolated individuals, or collection of individuals drawn together simply for the purpose of research, participants should be selected from within pre-existing groups: people who already lived or worked or socialized together. This approach enhanced freedom of expression, facilitated by familiarity.

More importantly, Kitzinger employed the news game methodology which draws on theories of encoding and decoding, whereby audiences may take dominant, negotiated or oppositional readings from text. Acknowledging the polysemic nature of text, the news game involves asking members to write their own media content and exploring with them how what they have written relates to their own beliefs. Devereux195 appended that the newsgame can also be stimulated through the provision of excerpts from real media content such as photographs. These processes allows the researcher to access participants awareness of dominant media messages while exploring the bases on which they accept, negotiate or reject messages. As recommended by Kitzinger196, each of the five focus group sessions was perceived as forums within which ideas were clarified by discussions rather than simply outlined. Using the funnel method, the discussions started off with general question and then moved to more specific topics. Lunt and Livingstone197 point out that an important advantage is that focus groups can be conducted very quickly.

196 Kitzinger, J. (1994) The methodology of Focus Groups: the importance of interaction between research participants. Glasgow University Media Group. Sociology of Health and Illness Vol. 16 No. 1
Conducted Focus Group Discussions

Table 2: A biographic breakdown of data captured for Focus Group Discussion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Vocation</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group One</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Journalist (3)Editor (3)</td>
<td>4 M, 2 F</td>
<td>35-45</td>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>Southerners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Two</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Civil Servant (6)</td>
<td>4 M; 2 F</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>Abuja</td>
<td>Northerners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Three</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>University students (6)</td>
<td>3 M; 3 F</td>
<td>20-25</td>
<td>Abuja</td>
<td>Mixed 2x2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Four</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Self-employed (6)</td>
<td>5 M; 1 F</td>
<td>35-45</td>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>Southerners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Five</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Job seekers (6)</td>
<td>2 M, 4 F</td>
<td>23-33</td>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>Mixed 2x2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Focus Group Discussion Participants

Table 2 summarises the membership of the five focus groups which were conducted in July 2013 in Nigeria. Information about a given observation (group) appears as a row running from left to right across the table. The first column of the data-set (running vertically) indicates observation groups. Subsequent columns report the number of participants, their vocation, gender, age, location and ethnic origins respectively. Members of the focus groups were selected in different ways depending on each group. The journalists were identified as contributors to a relevant range of newspapers and invited individually to join a focus group. The civil servants were contacted individually on the telephone at the Ministry of Communication in Abuja, and students, self-employed and job seekers were selected on a snowball sampling basis, the first asked identifying the next person to be approached and so on.

As anticipated, several challenges were encountered in the field. These included erratic electricity supply, transportation issues and most notably, fear and anxiety on the part of participants resulting in their cancelling of pre-arranged group discussions. These challenges however had minimal impact on the study due to adequate preparations and improvisations that included arranging multiple participants for discussions, built-in time and location flexibilities to accommodate expediencies, delays and short-notice rescheduling.

It is also important to add that the news game exercise did not go according to plan. As advised by Kitzinger, focus group participants were meant to write their own media content as the researcher explores with them how what they have written
relates to their own beliefs. However, several attempts by the researcher during fieldwork aimed at getting participants to write their own newspaper content did not yield expected outcomes as most participants declined without providing convincing reasons. Instead, therefore, the researcher had to resort to the less demanding option of asking group members to read existing newspaper cuttings, articles and news headlines—such as the 2007 IPSOS/Thisday presidential opinion poll and to elicit their opinions and commentaries. This arrangement did succeed in generating helping discussion and in stimulating thoughtful responses within the focus groups. The lesson to be drawn from this experience is that research subjects are not easily manipulable and their likely preferences need to be calculated in planning research.

To represent Nigeria’s diverse population, a simple selective sampling technique was adopted. Donnelly observed that selective sampling is a process in which specific member in a population are picked based on certain parameters. For this study, the criteria were based on education, vocation, gender, age and ethnic origins. The selection of six participants per group included at least high school-educated adults with interest in Nigerian newspapers and politics. The age group of participants ranged from 20 to 60. The research participants were also selected to reflect a wide range of political and economic interests. These traits were necessary to ensure that the desired elements within the population were included in the sample.

The groups comprised of participants from a cross section of urban relatively well educated Nigerians. Group one comprised of six Lagos-based journalists, reporters and editors. Group two: six Northerner civil servants (Ministry of Information and Communication) based in Abuja. Group Three: six final year students of the University of Abuja. Group Four: six self-employed, Lagos-based Southerners. Lastly, Group Five: six unemployed in Lagos from mixed ethnic origins.

Three FGD sessions (60%) involving Group One, Four and Five took place in Lagos (South) while two FGD sessions (40%) that is, Group Two and Three were conducted in Abuja (North). For the purpose of diversity, participants in Group Three (Abuja) and Group Five (Lagos) were of mixed ethnic backgrounds. The other

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groups were populated with participants of the same ethnic background- Group One and Four (Lagos) and Group Two (Abuja).

As noted by O’Rourke\textsuperscript{199}, the multiplicity of participants involved in the discussion as well as the way and manner with which they respond should naturally indicate what is going on, on one hand while on the other, it will suggest that the discussion will be holistic. The questions (in line with the research objectives) were clear, short, comprehensible, void of technical jargons and straight to the point (see Appendix 1 and 2 for sample questions). Each session lasted between 45 and 90 minutes and discussions were centred on newspaper content and other related issues. The participants were asked to comment on the degree to which they identify with particular newspapers, how they interpret newspaper content of different papers and their views on how issues are framed. Audio recording and notes was taken with the consent of discussants in order to capture the dialogue.

As explained above, attentive reading of selected reportage was used to examine the relationship between personal knowledge and collective understanding of newspaper content and its influence in a more nuanced and complex manner, specifically in a way which captured what discussants already ‘knew’ about political issues and to show the process by which they had arrived at their own beliefs. Newspaper content, such as the 2011 Census figures as well as rejoinders, articles, editorials were provided to participants and used to elicit commentaries. The relevance of the exercise was significant to the data generated.

The fieldwork indicated that ethnicity and politics remain sensitive topics as participants looped historical antecedents with political complexities that characterize North/South relations in Nigeria. Additionally, there were perceived tensions and palpable cautions when certain ethno-religious issues were discussed. Interviews and discussions in Lagos were more robust and broader in content and context than in Abuja. This suggested differences in levels of open-mindedness to liberal democratic ideas between participants.

The findings also implied that participants in mixed group discussion were “more national and less regional” in their discussion than participants in same ethnic-

\textsuperscript{199} O’Rourke, B. (2009) An Overview of Discourse Analytical Approaches to Research in Hogan, Dolan & Donnelly (eds.) \textit{Approaches to Qualitative Research: Theory and its Practical Application}. Cork: Oak Press
background groups. While the latter disagreed on some issues, they referred to the other ethnic group and the newspapers in the regions as “others”. Participants in mixed groups seemed to agree on most issues, however, it is not impossible that personal opinion were (at times) unexpressed due to the presence of participants from different backgrounds. This was however addressed by the researcher by channelling questions to partakers in rotation.

The study found that participants in each group influenced the direction of dialogue; which reflected their social prominence. Berg\textsuperscript{200} asserted that focus groups allow researchers to examine many variable- demographic and lifestyle information, attitudes, motives, intentions and so on- and to use a variety of statistics to analyse data. Although, flexibility and discretion were employed to prolong certain sessions depending on data generated; saturation occurred when the group no longer provided fresh information.

### 3.3.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are a data collection method where respondents are interviewed individually. Cohen and Crabtree\textsuperscript{201} posits that while a structured interview has formalized, limited set questions, a semi-structured interview is flexible, allowing new questions to be brought up during the interview as a result of what the interviewee says within the context of the general framework of themes to be explored. According to Lindlof and Taylor\textsuperscript{202} “the purpose is to elicit information about a particular research problem in a semi-formal format. This technique is necessary because, it will allow participants to speak broadly on the research problem”.

Mason\textsuperscript{203} added that the structure of a semi-structured interview is usually organised around an aide memoire or interview guide. This contains topics, themes, or areas to be covered during the course of the interview, rather than a sequenced script of standardized questions. The import of a memoire is to provide a structure as well as guarantee flexibility in how and what sequence questions are asked. This format accommodates follow up or probing questions into areas and issues that may not be

\textsuperscript{200} Berg, B. (1997) \textit{Qualitative Research Methods (2nd edition)} Boston: Allyn & Bacon
\textsuperscript{201} Cohen, D. & Crabtree, B. (2006) \textit{Qualitative Research Guidelines Project}. London
included in the original question pool. This is so that the interview can be shaped by the interviewee’s own understandings as well as the researcher’s interest and unexpected responses.

**Conducted Semi-Structured Interviews**

*Table 3: Tabular representation of biographic information of Semi-structured interview*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/No</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>State origin</th>
<th>Vocation</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>S. O.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Ondo (S)</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Lagos (S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>S. A.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Ondo (S)</td>
<td>Journalist - <em>Guardian</em></td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Lagos (S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>N. E.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Enugu (S)</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Lagos (S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>M. M.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Kaduna (N)</td>
<td>Journalist- <em>Daily Trust</em></td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Abuja (N)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>J. J.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Oyo (S)</td>
<td>Journalist- <em>Tribune</em></td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Oyo (S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>A. .U.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Kano (N)</td>
<td>Journalist - <em>Thisday</em></td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Abuja (N)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>A. S.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Ogun (S)</td>
<td>Journalist - <em>Vanguard</em></td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Lagos (S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>J.O.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Oyo (S)</td>
<td>Journalist - <em>Punch</em></td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Abuja (N)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>A. A.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Jos (N)</td>
<td>P.R</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Lagos (S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>F.I.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Katsina (N)</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Lagos (S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>A. A.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Ogun (S)</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>Masters’</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Ondo (S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>N. O.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Imo (S)</td>
<td>Self employed</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Abuja (N)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>D. I.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Delta (S)</td>
<td>Civil Servant</td>
<td>Masters’</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Abuja (N)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>D. I.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Yobe (S)</td>
<td>Self employed</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Lagos (S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>A. S.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Niger (N)</td>
<td>Self employed</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Abuja (N)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>M. I.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Zamfara (N)</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Abuja (N)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>O. B.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Osun (S)</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Abuja (N)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>H. A.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Kaduna (N)</td>
<td>Civil servant</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Abuja (N)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Semi-structure interview respondents*

The fieldwork (semi-structured Interviews) conducted in May 2013, recorded a cumulative response rate of 18 respondents (89%) of the targeted population of 20. A summary breakdown (as shown in Table 5 above) shows that 10 participants (56%) are of Southern origin and reside in the South while eight respondents are from the North (44%). This indicates a fair representation of the North and South.
The key criteria used in selecting participants for the semi-structure interviews were accessibility, educational qualification, age, location, ethnic background and their interest and understanding of the research purpose. Individual interviewees were identified through the same procedures as the focus groups except in the cases of the journalists whom I approached drawing upon contacts who had helped another researcher. Five categories of participants were purposely selected with each category representing a sample of the population. Four respondents for each category were also picked. Category one comprised of editors who perform oversight functions over key departments. Wimmer and Dominick noted that interview with management can potentially enrich the quality of data generated. Additionally, junior reporters were also interacted with as they may have different understanding of editorial autonomy and in-house rules.

Category two included academics, social critics and political activists based on their interest on the research topic. They were encouraged to comment freely on a wide range of project-specific topics guided by the research objectives. Category three comprised of young adults who were either employed or otherwise. Category four consisted of opinion leaders; people, to whom others turn, based on professional competence, expression of thoughts and spread of social network. Katz argues that “opinion leaders have more influence on people’s opinion, actions and behaviours because they are perceived as trustworthy and non-purposive”. This group’s membership overlapped with informants in other categories, most obviously those in Category Two as well as the journalists. Category five comprised of bloggers and citizen journalists. Data generated from them enriched the study by providing insight into how the use of social media news sources is being negotiated.

Seven participants (representing 40%) of the entire interviewed population work and live outside their region of origin while 11 participants (60%) work and live within their region of origin. The significance of this activity was to ensure balance as well as a mixture of opinion, particularly from participants with interethnic exposure. Given that English is the dominant language used by Nigerian newspapers, preference was given to educated participants in order to ensure understanding of the subject of

research and standard grasp of the context and content of newspapers. The academic status of participants included 13 (78%) with university degrees and four participants (22%) holding post-graduate degrees.

In line with University of Limerick (UL) regulations on research ethics, participants were informed of the academic purpose of the interviews and assured of strict confidentiality. Although most participants chose to remain anonymous, with their consent, a digital recorder was used to record the interviews. This was complimented by note taking. The interviews took place mainly in Lagos and Abuja, at a time and place convenient to the participants. Interviews were conducted through face to face interactive sessions that lasted at least 30 minutes each.

To ensure validity, a key criterion was that each participant understood the research questions. The questions (attached in Appendices 3 and 4) were left open-ended and semi-structured. Non-verbal communication as well as body language was fully observed during the interview. In some cases, some questions were reframed to ensure that participants were responding to appropriate questions. The occupational diversity of participants showed that the data captured the perception of a variety of respondents. These included: six journalists (33%), two graduate assistants (11%) with interest in the media; one author (6%), three self-employed (17%), one unemployed (6%), two civil servants (12%), two teachers (12%) and one public relations professional (6%).

Table 6 also summarized the age and gender distribution of participants. A significant number of participants are above 30 years old, although most of them displayed different levels of knowledge of Nigerian politics, the data generated proved useful in the interview discussions. Seven partakers (39%) were within 36-40 age-groups while three participants (19%) were in 26-30 age-groups. Two participants each were in 20-25; 31-35; 41-45; and 46-50 age groups. The data also shows that a third of the participants were females: six women representing (33%) took part compared to 12 male participants (67%).

The interview sessions concluded after all questions were exhausted and no new information was generated. A summary of the key points were provided, as this
provided the respondent with a final chance to expand or clarify any points. Data generated was transcribed, translated when required, and processed.

**LIMITATIONS OF FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION AND SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS**

The two main challenges encountered during the fieldwork were limited time and budget. The other drawback, specific to qualitative approach is the problem associated with the interviewer’s biases which may also prompt respondents to answer questions with restrictions, inhibitions or otherwise. Similarly, data generated from the field depended on the researcher’s competence- when to probe further for information, when to stop respondents from discussing irrelevant topics, and how to frame questions in a manner that elicits useful responses and discussions.

The semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were neither free of complications nor perfect. There were self-appointed group leaders who attempted to dominate and/or monopolise the conversation by imposing their views on others. There were also instances of discussants straying too far from or dwelling too long on certain topics. An additional issue is that the focus group and interview participants, mainly composed of volunteers from Lagos and Abuja may not fully or adequately represent the population from which they were drawn.

Additionally, a peculiar challenge common to focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews methods is the process of selecting materials to be used in writing the research report. Winner and Dominick\(^{206}\) map the complications encountered when analysing qualitative data by noting these four dimensions: firstly, they admit that qualitative data come in different non-mathematic formats; secondly, there is little methodological standardisation; thirdly, interpretation of data is largely subjective; and finally, the writing style may be too narrative, similar to styles employed in novels and short stories. In addressing these issues, Keyton\(^{207}\) described different styles of qualitative reporting but Chenail\(^{208}\) analysis of qualitative data presentation structures provides more insight into qualitative data analysis. (I revisited these themes in the data analysis part in Section 3.3).


\(^{208}\) Chenail, R.J. (1995) *Presenting Qualitative Data*. The Qualitative Report, 2(3), 1-12
3.3.3 Content Analysis (CA)

Walizer and Wienir\(^{209}\) contextualise content analysis as a systematic examination of documented information. Krippendorf\(^{210}\) describe it as “a research technique for making replicable and valid references from data to their content”. Kerlinger\(^{211}\) enumerate the three important elements involved as: systematic analysis, objective examination and quantitative study.

Devereux\(^{212}\) identifies two strands of content analysis: quantitative and qualitative. The former has its roots in the positivist social science tradition while the latter has been influenced by development within both structuralism and post-modernism. The latter is a broad amalgamation of approaches, with different camps stressing the importance of examining semiotics, framing, discursive or narrative dimensions of media texts. The former was primarily developed by Berelson\(^{213}\) and is based on the counting of phenomena. Berger\(^{214}\) defines it as a:

> Research technique based upon measuring (counting) the amount of something (violence, percentages of Blacks, women, professionals types of whatever) in a sampling of some form of communication (such as comics, sitcoms, soaps operas, news shows).

Why content analysis? Lynch and Peer\(^{215}\) suggested that content analysis is useful in quantifying the occurrence of phenomenon in data, identifying patterns; decoding meaning in texts and in comparing editorial and lead stories in two or more newspapers. The use of content analysis is well established in political research in Nigeria. Idowu Sobowale\(^{216}\) used content analysis to study the ‘image of the world through the eyes of five Nigerian newspapers’. Ojebode\(^{217}\) also used content analysis in his study.

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analysis in his investigation of how Europe and the United States of America are portrayed in Nigerian papers. However, these studies were limited to a one year study in each of the two cases. In the present work, content analysis was used to analyse seven different newspapers in 2007 and 2011.

Selection of Content Analysis materials

For the purpose of this study, an integration of qualitative and quantitative content analysis was adopted. As advised by Bryman\(^{218}\), such integration conveys a sense of rigour of and provides guidance to others about the research. Zhang and Barbara\(^{219}\) posited that the purpose of qualitative analysis is to extract patterns, meanings from text and allows for the analyst to understand social reality in a subjective and scientific manner. For the current work, quantitative content analysis was used to investigate the type and percentage of editorial comment and agenda-setting uniformity in both newspaper hubs as well as the degree of slant/direction of front page reportage.

Front page and editorial content were used for qualitative and quantitative content analysis. Thus, a random sampling technique was adopted in the selection of one issue, per week, per each newspaper. A total of 28 issues were selected per month for all seven newspapers. The monthly total was multiplied by 6 months in 2007 and 2011 to arrive at a combined total of 364 issues for all newspaper.

\(^{218}\) Bryman, A. (2005) Integrating quantitative and qualitative research: how is it done? In Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Research; prospects and limits (H333250003)

Conducted Content Analysis

Table 4: Targeted data for content analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspapers</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tribune</td>
<td>Jan 2007: 2, 10, 16, 25</td>
<td>Jan 2011: 6, 12, 18, 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>Feb 2007: 1, 9, 14, 20, 26</td>
<td>Feb 2011: 2, 10, 17, 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thisday</td>
<td>Mar 2007: 8, 14, 20, 26</td>
<td>Mar 2011: 1, 10, 18, 21, 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanguard</td>
<td>Apr 2007: 2, 10, 18, 27</td>
<td>Apr 2011: 1, 8, 15, 19, 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punch</td>
<td>May 2007: 1, 7, 15, 23, 31</td>
<td>May 2011: 2, 10, 19, 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Jun 2007: 4, 12, 20, 29</td>
<td>Jun 2011: 1, 7, 16, 22,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Trust</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7 Newspapers: 364 editions for 2007 and 2011

Source: Anticipated CA materials

Presidential election years: 2007 and 2011\textsuperscript{220} were selected for the purpose of the research. As in the case of McCombs and Shaw\textsuperscript{221}, years in which federal elections are held offer a broad mix of variety in terms of political data in the press- the sort of information that can allow citizens to understand complex social, economic and political issues and participate during elections by making informed political decisions. Election years are therefore useful benchmarks for testing the competence of newspapers to play their constitutional role in the political process.

The selection of 2007 and 2011 as opposed to earlier general elections in 1999 and 2003 was based on three key factors: first, access to archived newspapers for 1999 and 2003 was very limited; secondly, the number of newspapers published in Northern Nigeria, particularly those with broad and national reportage was limited; as such, there was little basis for comparison between newspapers published to both hubs; thirdly, the shift from authoritarian rule to multiparty elections were in their formative years.

More importantly, the two election years (2007 and 2011) represent significant turning points in Nigeria’s political history and democratic consolidation experience.

\textsuperscript{220} Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) \url{www.inec.ng.org} (accessed July 2013)

\textsuperscript{221}McCombs, M. & Shaw, D. (1972) "The agenda-setting function of mass media" Public Opinion Quarterly 36
As indicated by Ette\textsuperscript{222}, the 2007 election was marred by unprecedented rigging, ballot stuffing and result falsification. Indigenous and foreign election monitors were also unanimous in their observation of the implausible election. The European Union Final Report\textsuperscript{223} noted that:

“The 2007 State and Federal elections fell far short of basic international and regional standards for democratic elections. They were marred by very poor organisation, lack of essential transparency, widespread procedural irregularities, substantial evidence of fraud, widespread voter disenfranchisement at different stages of the process, lack of equal conditions for political parties... As a result, the process cannot be considered to have been credible". (The European Union Final Report, 2007)

On its part, the 2011 election was significant for two reasons. First, it was an opportunity for the incumbent political party(PDP) as well as Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to conduct a more credible election that would right the wrongs of 2007. Second and more significantly, it was a test-time for the North/South presidential zoning system within the PDP that unofficially stipulates the sharing of political offices, particularly the Office of the President along ethno-regional lines. Prior to 2011, the South, in President Olusegun Obasanjo had ruled for 8 consecutive years (1999-2007), so in 2007, the North, in President Umar Musa Yar’Adua had 8 years (2007-2015) to rule. However, Yar’Adua’s untimely death in 2010 led the elevation of his vice president, Dr. Jonathan Goodluck, a Southerner, as president. Ette\textsuperscript{224} commented that “Dr. Jonathan’s elevation triggered intra-party conflict by challenging a deeply entrenched policy on the distribution of important political positions and offices”. She continued that “Jonathan was not considered eligible to contest the next election (2011) after completing what remained of Yar’Adua’s four-year term”. The race for the 2011 presidential elections was not only significant at the party level, but also at ethnic, regional, national and international levels.

**Unit of Measurement**

The Units of measurement refers to those benchmarks used in coding and evaluating collected data. For front page news, six coding categories were used to


\textsuperscript{224}Ette, M. (as above in: The Press and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria).
classify data. The categories are: ‘Ethnicity’, ‘Violence’, ‘Party politics’, ‘Presidency’, ‘Election’ and ‘Corruption’. The coding parameters were thereafter used to sort data into appropriate categories. In Appendix Six, a detailed list of editorials, articles and front page news are outlined in a tabular layout.

The justification for the coding categories is line with research objectives outlined in Chapter One, Section 1.6. Specifically, ethnicity code implies content that focus on ethnic relations between the North and South. An example is “Kano- more populated than Lagos- NPC” (Daily Trust: 10/01/2007). The import of this parameter is to quantify the occurrence of news headlines that document political, regional or religious new reports between the North and South. Secondly, Violence code connotes headlines news pieces that cover religious, ethnically or politically motivated clashes across Nigeria with particular focus on the North and South. An example is the communal clash between Christians and Muslims in the middle belt region of Nigeria as reported in Guardian newspaper (Guardian, 12/01/2011). This coding category proved useful in mapping the patterns of violence as well as press narratives in the selected newspapers. Thirdly, party politics code was used to categorise headlines that report the activities of political parties and key political figures. The dominance of elite interest is a common feature in Nigerian newspapers. This category enumerated particular newspapers and the party, political figures and issues that feature regularly on their front page. For example, “Ribadu blasts Adedibu, Akala- says they are unfit to rule” (Punch: 01/02/2007)

Fourthly, the presidency code includes news pieces that report the activities of the executive, legislative or judicial arm of government. The assumption behind this code is that the frequency with which headline news about the presidency occurs is directly proportional to either support or otherwise to the incumbent government. Fifthly, elections code includes headlines that report election-related news and issues. The purpose for this category is to measure the percentage of news coverage as they relate to particular parties on one hand and how each newspaper’s narrative reportage issues. For example, “Ekiti election was not rigged- Atiku” Punch 10/4/2007). Finally, Corruption code includes news articles that report issues on fraud and misappropriation of funds. The aim was to generate data that indicate the quantity of news headlines on corruption according to each newspaper in order to
compare newspapers and their attempt at reporting corruption. For instance, “Governor on trial for owing 172 houses”, (Punch: 09/02/2007)

For editorial comments and Op-eds, the five classification codes include: News, Policy, Tribute, Social, Special and Speculative categories. News editorials are based on a news peg. They focus on issues already raised or on on-going news event or reportage. Policy editorials focus on government activities or policies. Tribute editorials focus on important personalities who died in incidence of significance while Speculative editorial focus on the future, as they relate to certain issues of public interest. Social editorials focus on socio-economic issues that are of concern to most Nigerians. Special editorials do not fall into any of the aforementioned categories and are not of direct relevance to this study.

The slant/direction of both front page news and editorial comments was determined by the stand taken by the newspaper concerning the issue under discussion. To achieve the objective of the study with regards to direction, the following divisions were developed. Positive implies the editorial in question is favourably disposed to the issue discussed. Negative implies that the editorial in question does not support the issue, policy or topic under discussion. Neutral implies the editorial comment is neither positive nor negative in relation to the issue. Neutral editorials merely analyse issues in an informative manner and allow the reader to take a position.

Alternative editorial regional predispositions were considered as either in favour of the North, South or as neutral depending on the issue. Pictures were not coded because of the inherent difficulty in interpreting photographs that do not accompany stories, and the redundancy that can be created in interpreting those which do. The language of reportage was analysed for the purpose of the research. As advised by Akinfeleye225 the mapping of key words and narratives are essential. This also proved valuable during interviews and focus group discussions as questions and follow up queries were framed to elicit personalised and independent reactions as opposed to standardised or negotiated responses from the participants.

### Table 5: Percentage of data captured for 2007 and 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspapers</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Actual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nigerian Tribune</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>47 (90%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>46 (88.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thisday</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>47 (90%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanguard</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>51 (98%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punch</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>51 (98%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Trust</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>45 (86.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>45 (86.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>364</strong></td>
<td><strong>332 (91.2%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Newspaper Content Analysis data

Information about a given observation (object) appears as a row running from left to right across the table. The table shows a summary of data gathered for the study. The first column outlines newspapers, the second and third columns reports target and actual data. A total of 332 editions (91.9%) from a population of 364 editions were obtained for 2007 and 2011. A breakdown of the cumulative percentage of captured data shows that Vanguard and Punch: 51 editions (98%) respectively; Tribune and Thisday: 47 editions (90%) respectively; Guardian: 46 editions (88.5%); and Daily Trust and Leadership: 45 editions (86%) respectively. Bearing in mind a plus/minus error margin of five percent (5%), this is indicative of a successful field outing.

### Limitations of Content Analysis

The main weakness of content analysis is that it is laborious as well as tedious. Riffe, Lacy and Fico\textsuperscript{226} add that the amount of data analysed could make the task time consuming. Moreover, content analysis, on its own, cannot serve as the basis for making statements about the effects of content in general or on an audience in particular. Furthermore, the findings of particular content analysis are limited to the framework of the categories and the definition used in that analysis. Different researchers may use varying definitions and category system to measure a single

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concept. Babbie\textsuperscript{227} assert that the coder’s interpretation and subjectivity of a particular news story provides the ultimate sense that is recorded for analysis.

Weber\textsuperscript{228} asserts that errors arising from inaccurate perception could result in inaccurate interpretations, leading to misrepresentation of newspaper content and consequently of reality. To overcome these problems, the coding was rigorously repeated three times using the same format to ensure that the same results were obtained. In addition to the above, objectivity was maintained through triangulation with other research methods, namely semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

3.4.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

The analysis plan for quantitative data was based on identifying the difference/similarity in data to determine how they address the research questions. The use of descriptive and summary statistics was employed as they condensed data sets to allow for easier interpretation and comprehension. This enabled the significance of the raw data to be displayed and summarised. As a preliminary step towards making these numbers more manageable, the data was arranged in a frequency distribution. Summary statistics made the data more manageable by condensing it. The distribution looked suggestive but it was difficult to draw any conclusions or to generalise from this data until they were sorted.

3.4.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

For this study, qualitative data aligned with three critical approaches: comparative, phenomenological and discourse analysis. Firstly, constant comparative analysis approach as originally developed for use in the grounded theory methodology of Glaser and Strauss\textsuperscript{229}, involved taking one piece of data (one interview, one statement, one theme) and comparing it with all others that may be similar or different in order to develop conceptualisations of the possible relations between various pieces of data.


Secondly, a phenomenological approach was used to discover some of the underlying structure or essence of particular experience through intensive study of individual cases. Ray\textsuperscript{230} noted that the central theme of this method is that this approach explicitly avoid cross comparisons and instead orient the researcher toward the depth and detail that can be appreciated only through an exhaustive, systematic, and reflexive study of experiences as they are lived.

Finally, discourse analysis was used, guided by Thorne\textsuperscript{231} and it draws on the extent to which human experience is shaped, transformed, and understood through linguistic representation. Putting experience into words, whether verbally, in writing, or in thought, transforms the actual experience into a communicable representation of it.

Patton\textsuperscript{232} suggests that although no formula exist that transforms qualitative data into findings; the final destination remains unique for each inquirer, known only when, and if, arrived at. Morse\textsuperscript{233} takes it a step further by noting that regardless of the specific approach, all qualitative analysis involves comprehending the phenomenon, synthesising, theorising and re-contextualising the new knowledge. This set of steps helps to depict a series of intellectual processes by which data in their raw form are considered, examined, and reformulated to become a research product.

3.5 SUMMARY

This chapter has described the strategy with which the research questions asked in Chapter One have been systematically and methodologically addressed. Eclectic research methods were used to collect, sort and analyse data rigorously in order to investigate the political effect of regional concentration of newspaper ownership and production in Nigeria. The study was therefore two-pronged: the first aimed to delineate the role and importance of the media in general (and newspapers in particular) to Nigerian society, including its sectionalised audience demographic;


while the second investigated the ethnic, regional and traditional complexities of Nigerian politics.

Five Focus Group Discussions, each comprising of 6 participants were conducted in Lagos (3) and Abuja (2) respectively. Discussants were selected from pre-existing groups, people who already lived, worked or socialized together. This approach allowed for freedom of expression, facilitated by familiarity. The participants however reflected the diversity of the sample population. Group members were invited to read and respond to a common selection of editorial content.

Semi-structured interviews (SSI) were shaped and guided according to research objectives. A total of 18 SSIs were conducted in Lagos and Abuja. In order to mirror the ethnic, gender, age, regional and occupational diversity in Nigeria, five categories of participants were selected, with four respondents representing each category. The participants comprised of editors and journalists, civil servants, students, entrepreneurs and unemployed adults. As with all quantitative research, data generated was recorded in some cases and transcribed.

For the purpose of credibility, rigour and thoroughness of the methods; focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews were triangulation with content analysis. Seven newspapers (Lagos-based (5) and Abuja-based (2)) were content analysed for the purpose of this study. Four issues per newspaper were selected per week which culminated into 28 issues per month, for a period of six months (January to June in 2007 and 2011).

For the unit of analysis, six coding categories were used to classify front page news headlines. The classification included ethnicity, violence, party politics, presidency, election and corruption. Six categories were also used to classify and code editorial comments. These are news, policy, tribute, social, special and speculative. Attention scores for these categories were prominence, duration, space, depth of reportage, language and follow up on news items. Discourse, statistical and comparative analysis were used for interpreting and examining data. The research findings and discussions are presented in subsequent chapters.
CHAPTER FOUR
ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins the analysis and discussion of data generated during fieldwork to explore its significance to the study. As set out in Chapter One, the purpose of the research is to investigate the political effect of regional concentration of newspaper ownership and production since 1999. Has this concentration affected the contributions Nigerian newspapers make to democracy? The five subsidiary research questions are: (1) to examine if, and to what extent, newspaper ownership influences content and news reportage; (2) to investigate if newspapers published in particular regions form an editorial and agenda-setting axis; (3) to explore the institutional structure of the press and assess if newspapers are positioned to influence Nigeria’s democratic process; (4) to examine the political effect of regional concentration of newspaper ownership and production; and (5) to evaluate the contributions of the press to democracy.

Two fundamental goals drove the gathering and subsequent analysis of collected data. The first goal was to develop a comprehensive base knowledge about regional concentration of newspaper ownership and production patterns in Nigeria; explore the institutional structures and operating environment that influence newspaper journalists and the content they generate; and examine the agenda-setting dynamics of Nigerian newspapers to determine convergence and/or divergence of editorial focus. The second goal was to investigate the effect of regional concentration of newspapers and evaluate the holistic contributions Nigerian newspapers have made to democracy since 1999, as it is perceived and utilized by both the public and newspaper establishments; and to determine if current perception and utilisation are consistent with the basic goals of newspapers in a democracy.

The research methods employed offered significant data for discussion and analysis. As discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.3; a total of 332 news content from seven Nigerian newspapers were analysed (See Appendix 6 for a comprehensive list). The
subjects of front page stories were, as expected in an election year, mainly political news that directly and otherwise related to election registration, political parties, party nominees, opinion polls, the electoral commission, the incumbent administration and views of opinion leaders from all sections of society. Unlike editorials, front page news headlines served two broad agenda: firstly, they served agenda-setting ideological functions to the extent that they influence, not only what is considered the salient issues of debate and discourse but also what people think and talk about. Secondly, front page news headlines perform commercial functions by enticing and inviting potential readers and buyers to what is on offer. The editorials on their part, are mostly critical and analytical, expressing the views and agenda of the newspaper organisation.

The data generated through content analysis was used for three things- firstly, to map the key issues as they relate to the study; secondly, to play the “news-game” during group discussions and interviews; and finally for methodological triangulation by systematically quantifying and investigating editorial content divergence and/or agenda-setting convergence. Qualitative data obtained through five focus group discussions and 18 semi-structured interviews not only provided insight into the core political issues and conflicting narratives that preoccupied public perception about press and politics in Nigeria; they also offered a framework for comparing, crosschecking and cross-referencing quantitative data.

The multiplicity of perspectives that the different research methods generated illustrates their correlation on one hand while on the other hand, it increases the likelihood and proximity of data to reality. The critical relationship among the methods used is twofold: first, it ensures construct validity as similar research question have been approached using different research methods. Secondly, it increases reliability and validity by reducing confounding variables, particularly, unforeseen, and unaccounted-for variable that jeopardizes collated data. In presenting the research data and subsequent analysis, attempts have been made to eliminate, or at the least reduce errors, that is, numerical or inappropriate responses and omissions associated with fieldwork by editing minimally and manually; while at the same time ensuring accuracy and non-compromise.
The findings and analysis chapters (four and five) examined the press in five interlinked strands: firstly, through proprietorial influence; secondly, through regional newspaper agenda-setting axis; thirdly, through institutional configurations that examined whether the press conforms to obvious assumptions; fourthly, through an analysis of the political implications of regional concentration of newspaper ownership and production; and finally, through an evaluation of the contributions of the press to democracy.

This chapter presents the data that will help us to address our first three sub-questions that arise when we address the effects of regional concentration of newspaper ownership and production. In the first part, section 4.2 we will present the quantitative content analysis that will supply us with a preliminary indication of the extent to which variations in content and editorial predispositions may or may not correlate with the geographic and regional location of ownership of the newspapers under study. Then in section 4.3 we will present and consider findings that concern Nigerian newspaper ownership and its forward and backward relationship to content production, ethnic affiliation and national politics. In section 4.4 we will look at the evidence that indicates whether regional newspaper ownership embodies editorial and agenda-setting axis, and then, finally in section 4.5 we will explore the institutional structure of the press to probe the industry’s operational environment within Nigeria’s socio-economic context.

4.2 CONTENT ANALYSIS

In this section, content analysis data is employed to address two critical questions: (1) what is the direction/slant of newspaper content in all newspapers examined? And (2) what is the percentage of news content (positive, negative and neutral) between North and South?

Two things are important to note. Firstly, the content analysis is based on an examination of newspaper editorials in the selected papers. As already indicated in the methodology chapter, the classification is akin to a similar study conducted by Ekeanyanwu234 in which he compared newspaper content during inter-communal conflict in Nigeria to determine bias in reportage. For the purpose of this study, 256

editorials were analysed to determine if newspapers are used as tools for regional elite power contest. Secondly, in the course of content codification, it was observed that news about Abuja was not necessarily related to the North. As a consequence, Abuja is included as a stand-alone column in tabular summaries and subsequent analysis.

Content Analysis (Editorial)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direction of newspaper editorials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 1: Chart showing editorial direction of Nigerian newspapers*

In general, Figure 1 reports a summary of 256 newspaper editorials published between January and June 2007 and 2011 used to determine content direction. Three parameters (negative, positive and neutral) were used to codify the content. Positive indicates editorials which present or support the public opinion on the issues raised. Negative on the other hand represents reports that do not support the public opinion on the issues raised in the reports. Neutral is used to indicate such reports that are neither positive nor negative.

As indicated in Fig. 3, 149 editorials (representing 55 percent) were negative and combative. Positive editorials represented 21% while neutral 24%. A closer reading of negative editorial suggest three trajectories: firstly, it indicated criticism of government policies, antagonism between and among opposition parties and discontent by the general public opinion and political actors as pervasive. Secondly, it indicates a culture of antipathy and intolerance between politicians from both North and South, suggesting that newspapers are employed in the class and regional contestation for political power. Finally, newspapers’ may engage the use of negative editorials to increase circulation as such editorials largely mirror public dissatisfaction and sentiments. Importantly therefore, newspaper antipathy and aggressive
editorials have a high tendency of emphasising dichotomies between Northern and Southern political interests.

**Figure 2, showing slant variation between selected newspapers**

Specifically, Figure 2 indicates the percentage of editorial direction according to each newspaper. The evidence suggests no clear distinction between Lagos and Abuja newspapers. Within the Southern press, there are marked variations between _Punch_ and _Guardian_ who devoted more critical editorials to policy and social issues as opposed to _Tribune_ and _Vanguard_ that focussed on news editorials. Abuja newspapers ( _Leadership_ and _Trust_) have similar editorially negative focus.

In summing up, there are therefore two diametrically opposed narrative paradigms (of support and opposition) used in the polarised sections of the press, geared towards either legitimizing or de-legitimizing the struggles of the North and/or South or the sustenance of hegemonic relationships. There is an interesting twist here as newspapers are conceptualised as weapons used to access power in order to control state resources. They are therefore not seen as ends in themselves but means through which political and economic ends are achieved.

Similarly, content analysis was used to determine the percentage of positive, negative or neutral news according to region. The key questions are: Do newspapers set agenda for regional elites? Is there a deliberate attempt to under-report certain regions for ethnic and regional purposes?
Figure 3 indicate a higher percentage of overall reportage of news about the south than the north. Expectedly, reportage on Abuja is higher than that of the North and South principally since analysed data was generated in two presidential election years (2007 and 2011) focussed more on the presidency and the National Assembly. The percentage of news direction according to region neither supports nor denies the assertion by interview and focus group discussants that newspapers are used by regional elites for political power purposes. The extent to which coverage of the north or the south is either negative or positive varies only slightly (in favour of the South).

Table 6: Percentage breakdown of editorials according to each newspaper

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Punch</th>
<th>Guardian</th>
<th>Tribune</th>
<th>Thisday</th>
<th>Daily Trust</th>
<th>Vanguard</th>
<th>Leadership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>News</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tribute</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speculative</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Content analysis of seven Nigerian newspapers

As indicated in the methods chapter, Table 6 shows the percentile distribution of editorial classification by each newspaper. The data gathered indicated that social editorials feature prominently in all newspapers: Thisday (31%), Vanguard and Punch (25%), Daily Trust and Leadership (23%) and Tribune (21%). Similarly, policy
editorials are prominent: *Punch* (37%), *Guardian* (29%) and *Thisday* (25%) respectively. The significance given to socio-economic and policy editorials reflect the perpetuation of a combative and aggressive legacy of the early Nigerian newspapers who were constantly engrossed in battles against government—both colonial and military.

The study found that newspapers editorials are not only critical but are notably negative. Negative editorials (64%), Positive (24%), and Neutral (8%) imply that newspaper antagonism and confrontational editorials have a high tendency of attacking everything government, even if some government policies are laudable. However, significantly, as we have seen, a comparison of editorials between Abuja and Lagos newspapers show significant similarities in the use of negative tone and critical content.

### Content Analysis (Newspaper Front-page)

Now, let us look at the variations in content (front page) between southern and northern newspapers in more detail. As already discussed in the methodology chapter, Table 7 overleaf reports the results of classifications developed to determine and analyse the nature of content in the selected newspapers. Consequently, front page news contents were classified according to the following divisions: ethnicity, presidency, violence, party politics, corruption and election.
Table 7: Percentage breakdown of front page news category according to each newspaper

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Punch (Lagos)</th>
<th>Guardian (Lagos)</th>
<th>Tribune (Lagos)</th>
<th>Thisday (Lagos)</th>
<th>Daily Trust (Abuja)</th>
<th>Vanguard (Lagos)</th>
<th>Leadership (Abuja)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presidency</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party politics</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corruption</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Content analysis of seven Nigerian newspapers

Table 7 indicates a wide variance in front page news reportage among the newspapers. In comparing newspapers within the same hub, there is striking similarity between newspapers in Abuja (Leadership and Trust). The press in Lagos however displayed quantifiable degrees of divergence. In terms of front page news focus, Punch: violence and election; Guardian: party politics and violence; Tribune: party politics and election; Thisday: election and party politics; and Vanguard: violence and presidency.

The three main categories: election, party politics and violence are all interlinked, particularly in election years. Violence related content featured prominently (15% cumulative average) in all newspapers. Politically-motivated violence, especially around elections is predominant in Nigeria, partly because contesting politicians whip up ethnic and religious sentiments against one another and partly due to a culture of political intolerance. In 2011, the escalation of terrorist activities in the North east by an Islamic fundamentalist group- Boko Haram235 increased the occurrence of and frequency with which violence is reported, mainly about the North.

The data also indicate that the North is not sufficiently reported in the news, and when it is, over one-third or 40% of coverage is dominated by violence-related news. News coverage of the South and Abuja are appreciably more than that of the North. A combination of 81% is devoted to Abuja and the South- Abuja (48%) and South

235 Boko-Haram: Also known as Congregation of the People of Tradition for Proselytism and Jihad is an aggressive Islamic fundamentalist group responsible for several bomb attacks in the North including the kidnap of 280 Christian school girls in the North-eastern part of Nigeria in 2014.
(32%) while the North only receives 19% or less than one fifth of total coverage in Nigerian newspapers. The South on the other hand is projected positively in the general national discourse, an indication of gross imbalance in reporting the North and South. Figure 5 below indicate variations in the percentage of coverage between the North and South.

![Percentage of North/South reportage in newspapers](image)

*Figure 5 showing variation in the front-page reportage between North and South*

Ethnicity received high reportage in *Daily Trust* and *Leadership* (19%) respectively suggesting a preference for ethnic-related coverage in Abuja newspapers. *Tribune* is the only Southern newspaper to devote as much as 12% to ethnicity. *Daily Trust, Tribune* and *Leadership* therefore concentrate more on local, ethnic-centred and regional news/market. As expected, the least reportage on the presidency was *Tribune* (4%).

Other Lagos-based newspapers devoted a surprising 10% or less to ethnicity. It is noteworthy that newspapers whose proprietors are from the South East are less preoccupied with North/South rivalry. Importantly, since the end of the Biafra Civil War (1967-1970), contestation of political power at the federal level has been between the North and the South west, to the deliberate exclusion of the South east—a barring consequent upon their unsuccessful attempted to secede thus leading to a 30-month civil war.

*Daily Trust, Leadership* and *Thisday* devoted a disappointing (4%) reportage to corruption. This indicates insufficient resources devoted to an important aspect of press/politics relationship, namely, serving as a public watchdog to investigate, uncover and report political corruption. Conversely, Lagos newspapers: *Punch* (15%), *Tribune* (17%) and *Guardian* (12%) dedicated more coverage to corruption;
indicating consistent criticism of government policies and activities on one hand while on the other, suggesting a concentration of opposition political parties with strong affiliation with a section of the Lagos press.

It is important to note that reportage on corruption ranks bottom place overall. At just 9% of total newspaper coverage and in a country where corruption has been identified (by participants) as the single most destructive political malady in Nigeria; an uncompromised media would have done more to expose corruption.

**Content Comparison between Lagos and Abuja Newspapers**

![Figure 6: Percentage breakdown of front page news category according to each newspaper](image)

Figure 6 indicates that there is significant divergence in the reportage between newspapers in the Lagos and Abuja. On ethnicity and elections, Abuja newspapers devoted almost a fifth and a third of the coverage on ethno-regional and election issues respectively. Lagos newspapers on the other hand are different in focus, direction and content. They devoted more coverage to party politics, violence, presidency and corruption. They also reported, in greater detail on the activities of politician and political parties; thus indicating closer relationship with opposition parties and alternative voices as well as deeper and broader commercial outreach, including but not limited to sponsored articles, advertorials and political publicity campaigns.

**Section summary**

Nigerian newspapers are politico-centric in content and discourse. 20% or one in every five news headline in all newspapers is violence-linked. The prominence given to regional rivalry, particularly North/South relations is considerably lower than
expected. As such; ethnicity only account for 12% overall reportage. Comparatively, Abuja-based newspapers devote extensively more coverage to ethnicity and election than their Lagos counterparts.

Policy, social and news editorials are dominant. They focus on social and economic challenges that confront Nigeria and are used by opposition-affiliated newspapers to frame their narrative. Unlike front page news headlines, editorials are detailed, critical and oppositional. Content analysis data indicate an imbalance in news reportage between the North and South. The North is not sufficiently reported in the news, and when it is, over one-third or 40% of coverage is dominated by violence-related news. The South on the other hand is projected positively mainly in southern papers. The total reportage devoted to corruption in all Nigerian newspaper is cumulatively less than 10%. This suggests a soft stance against corruption on one hand and the existence of legal and institutional barriers to adequately investigative public office holders. Southern newspapers pay significantly more attention to corruption than the northern press.

The striking similarities between Abuja newspapers indicate significant convergence in terms of editorial direction; content focus and front page news slant. Lagos newspapers display broad content divergence, influenced by ownership diversity as well as political party affiliations. Content diversity in Southern papers can also be linked to specific target audience. Guardian newspaper tends towards educated professionals, Tribune towards South westerners, Vanguard towards South easterners; and Punch towards the Southern public. These variations often manifest in differences in reportage and framing of issues.

Up to a point the content based evidence supports the assertion that newspapers in the North constitute an editorial and agenda-setting axis. Lagos-based newspapers also display similar characteristics (in less significant ways) to indicate editorial and agenda-setting alliance. Importantly therefore ownership and regional location assert their influence on content and by extension, ethnic and political relations in Nigeria newspapers. However, is evident from the data on editorial slant, the content analysis did not discern significant variations in the predisposition towards negative or critical editorialising between the southern and northern newspapers.
4.3 DO NEWSPAPER PROPRIETORS/OWNERS INFLUENCE CONTENT AND REPORTAGE?

The press in Nigeria is largely privately owned and concentrated in Lagos and Abuja. Lagos represents mainstream media due to its heavy concentration of newspaper enterprises. Aside from Lagos being the colonial and later national capital until 1991, three key reasons justify this concentration—firstly, there is a large reading public made possible by expansions in Western education since 1900 that were particularly pronounced in its hinterland. In essence, the prospects of increased circulation figures in Lagos and across the South-West are unrivalled in other regions in Nigeria. Secondly, Lagos is the commercial nerve centre of Nigeria which connotes the availability of advertising revenue; thirdly, Lagos as a business location also offers large economics of scale such as an abundance of skilled manpower, access to suppliers, proximity to bank credit and loans, well developed infrastructures and social amenities.

Comparatively, Lagos has benefitted from the combined influence of Christianity, Colonialism, Nationalism and Westernization more than any other part of Nigeria and as a consequence is “home to a more radical, politically-conscious citizenry that employ Western-style liberal architectures as a framework of reference”236.

Since 1999, Abuja (Nigeria’s new national capital from 1991) has emerged as the main publishing hub in the North with three dominant national dailies—Daily Trust, Blueprint and Leadership as well as several other regional and local newspapers. Abuja’s strategic location (the seat of the Federal Government) and her commercial viability have largely provided the fillip for its emergence as a choice destination for newspaper publishing. It has therefore become a melting pot of cultures, possessing an urban population (largely civil servants with interest in business and politics) and an expanding commercial hub thus displacing traditional publishing hubs in the North—Kano (Triumph newspaper) and Kaduna (defunct New Nigerian newspaper).

Table 1, Section 2.4 in Chapter Two provides a comprehensive list of newspapers published in Nigerian between 1999 and 2013. The table below outlines the major newspapers, indicating their owners as well as their papers regional and political

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affiliation. It is noteworthy that in some cases, the political affiliation of a newspaper organisation is publicly known and acknowledged while in many cases, most newspapers claim to be editorial independent without any affiliation to a political party.

Table 8: Newspaper ownership and political affiliation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Place of publication</th>
<th>Owner</th>
<th>Ethnicity of owner</th>
<th>Likely Political affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Abuja</td>
<td>Sam Nda-Isaiah</td>
<td>Hausa, North</td>
<td>PDP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Trust</td>
<td>Abuja</td>
<td>Kabiru Yusuf</td>
<td>Hausa, North</td>
<td>PDP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tribune</td>
<td>Ibadan</td>
<td>The Awolowo family</td>
<td>Yoruba, South West</td>
<td>APC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>The Ibru family</td>
<td>Delta, South-South</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanguard</td>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>Sam Amuka</td>
<td>Benin, South-South</td>
<td>APC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ThisDay</td>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>Nduka Obiagbena</td>
<td>Igbo, South-East</td>
<td>PDP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punch</td>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>The Aboderin</td>
<td>Yoruba, South West</td>
<td>APC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nation</td>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>Bola Tinubu</td>
<td>Yoruba, South West</td>
<td>APC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champion</td>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu</td>
<td>Igbo, South East</td>
<td>PDP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun</td>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>Kalu Uzor Orji</td>
<td>Igbo, South East</td>
<td>APC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Content Analysis Data

In general, Nigerian newspapers are politico-centric; thus displaying and wielding strong electoral, political and policy influence. Historically, the press were a subset of political parties who owned and in most parts substantially funded their operations. While no newspaper is currently owned directly by any political party, there are links that suggest certain degree of connection with political parties; hence the dichotomy and tagging of some newspapers as “opposition press” or “government newspapers” depending on their stand on particular national issues. Newspapers, in light of their influence are regarded as important political tools for power. By providing accounts of the contemporary world as well as images of human interdependence, the press play a pivotal role in shaping social consciousness, and in defining the special relationship between economic and political powers, hence, control through ownership, advertising, legal and extra-legal means exist.

Ownership is predominant among Southern elites and politicians who, through their newspapers influence political developments and public opinion. Since 2001, a
significant number of new titles have not only been set up in the South (Lagos) but mainly by Southern politicians. A journalist from Abuja asserted that:

As it was in the post-independence period when newspapers were established principally for ethno-political issues, today’s newspapers exist along same lines. The owners of newspapers today are mostly southern politicians. Ex. Gov. of Lagos state Bola Tinubu owns the Nation newspaper, Ex. Gov. of Abia state Orji Kalu owns the Sun newspaper, Ex. Gov. of Ogun State Gbenga Daniels owns the Compass, Ex. Gov. of Anambra state Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu owns Champion newspaper and governorship aspirant Jimoh Ibrahim, owner of Newswatch magazine. (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)

In the North (outside Abuja) newspaper ownership and publication has shrunk. The decline and demise in 2010 of the only national newspaper- New Nigerian newspaper published in Kaduna suggested two or more things: it indicated unwillingness on the part of Northern Governors (joint owners) to invest in newspapers, knowing that the dominant media across the region is radio. It could also suggest the inability of newspapers to match professionalism with success in the market place due to declining circulation figures and the scarcity of advertising revenue in Northern Nigeria.

**Why Proprietors Seek Control of their Newspapers**

Three fundamental ownership objectives were identified in the course of the study. Firstly, to make financial gains (as is expected in private enterprise); secondly, to support and propagate a particular ideological or political party line (mostly to support the owners political priorities); and lastly to act in the public interest by means of balanced and investigative reporting. These three distinct objectives provide the framework for understanding and assessing the rational for ownership.

An important mix to the above is the dual character of the press as an ideological/political apparatus on the one hand, and as an industrial/economic organisation on the other. In essence, all existing major newspapers are now part of some business conglomerate. This not only complicates the degree of proprietorial vested interest in their titles but also compounds business decisions due to the criss-cross of investments and concerns.
It is therefore difficult to fully separate these interests in clear terms. Their interconnectedness stems from the polysemic or multi-meaning nature of newspaper content. It is possible that political content is geared towards achieving direct and indirect financial returns to the publisher. On the other hand, a newspaper can prioritize advertising and commercialisation for the purpose of enhancing the political careers of certain politicians or political party. Either way, content is framed to conceal the owner’s intrinsic objectives.

In Nigeria, ownership of newspapers for achieving political ends is a recurring theme. This trend has not only increased but has consolidated, especially with the consistency with which politicians have established newspapers since 1999; indicating the truism that newspapers are political means set up to achieve specific ends. The will to establish and sustain a publication by members of the political elite even when the financial challenges are great becomes understandable; suggesting that the press are major propaganda tools, used by the influential few to sway public opinion and behaviour.

As we will see, Nigerian newspapers are financially often quite precarious for their proprietors. The political dividends that accumulate from their publications are probably more important and rewarding than economic benefits, a feature which suggests obvious complications for the view of newspapers as essentially business concerns.

**4.3.1 How Proprietors Influence Content?**

The concern about the influence of ownership on editorial content is premised on the assumption that too much media power in too few hands is bad for democracy. Concentrated ownership is believed to conflict with content diversity required for participatory democracy. It is less likely that powerful media barons will be held accountable for self-preserving policies and activities that could prevent markets from self-adjusting and reallocating resources to newcomers in the industry.

In essence, monopoly through ownership decreases diversity and plurality but competition on the other hand can potentially increase financial input in newsgathering, increase editorial diversity, increase productivity among journalists and promote media efficiency.
It is difficult to get at the truth of proprietorial involvement in newspaper organisations due to inbuilt deniability in the structure and relationship between owners and editors. Both sides have good reason to conceal the truth. Proprietors, in proclaiming press freedom, do not want the public to think they interfere in what is published. Editors, in asserting their independence, maintain a public face of editorial sovereignty and professional integrity. A Lagos editor remarked that:

More often than not, the reason why some editors leave their plum position is not because of revenue but more because of proprietorial control over every single detail in print. (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)

The dominance of private ownership in the Nigerian press entrenches a culture of ambiguity in ascertaining the influence of ownership. This is complicated by owner/editor newspapers where the distinction between ownership and management is fused. However; patterns of influence can be analyzed through two intricate paths: the necessity to make profit on one hand and organisational decision making structures on the other.

The press mainly comprises of private institutions and as such must be profitable to survive. To survive they must adapt to the constantly changing business environment; proprietors therefore ensure survival and success by defining organisational priorities, overseeing resource allocation and control, influencing policy and strategy, merger and acquisition decisions, profit distributions, shareholder communications, or labour allocations.

These moves are distinct from the day-to-day “operational control” that individual editors and reporters have as they decide what issues to cover, what headlines to write, which sources to interview, or where to place a story. However, beyond big decision-making oversight, ownership can have a more direct and blatant ideological and political influence, with proprietors imposing their values and priorities on their journalistic employees, ensuring that news coverage reflects how they (owners) see the world and how they think it should change.

The research found significant similarities in the management configuration in all seven newspaper organisations which indicate massive concentration of power in the office and person of the Chairman/Owner most of whom double as Editor-in-
Chief. This is the case both in Lagos (*Thisday, Tribune, Punch and Vanguard*) and in Abuja-based newspapers (*Trust and Leadership* newspapers).

The proprietor/editor family ownership feature in the Nigerian press is a legacy that continues to assert itself mainly in the print media. Similar to how Nnamdi Azikwe and Obafemi Awolowo founded, edited and managed the *West African Pilot* (1936) and the *Nigerian Tribune* (1948) respectively, many other newspapers have mirrored that pattern. Foreexample, *Thisday* newspaper was founded in 1995 by Nduka Obiagbena (a Southerner) after working on *Time* and *Newsweek’s* special sections on sub-Saharan Africa. He first established *Thisweek* as a weekly publication in 1987, which grew to become the daily *Thisday* newspaper. Obiagbena continues to edit it as well as exercise proprietorial control. In the same way, Sam Amuka (another Southerner) has remained as Chairman, Editorial Board at *Vanguard* newspapers since 1983 when he established the paper after a successful stint at *Punch* newspaper.

**Editorial/Proprietorial structure in a newspaper**

![Diagram of editorial structure in a newspaper organisation](image)

*Figure 7: Description of editorial structure in a newspaper organisation*

Figure 7 above indicates that proprietors operate at the top of the management pyramid and in so doing, exert influence on all aspects of the organisation—sales, administration, advertising and most importantly, the editorial department. This power structure provides a strong platform for owners/editors to wield control that (in most cases) overshadow professionalism; encourage micro-managing editors and reporters, handpicking news headlines and promoting self-interest and/or the personal agenda of their political party and business associates. A Lagos reporter remarked that:
It is naive to believe owners will not interfere with media content and by extension censor information potentially damaging to companies within their conglomerate, and third parties which do business with them. (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)

**Strands of Proprietorial Influence**

Four noticeable strands of owners’ influence were identified by journalists during the group discussions and interviews. The first is at the point of entry. The ownership from the outset is deliberate in selecting or appointing a compliant editorial team, thus the saying “birds of the same feather flock together” is given expression. Proprietorial control is turned at the moment of appointment, particularly of senior journalists and editors. “At every recruitment phase” observed a Northern discussant in Focus Group 2, “selection and more importantly during interviews; the chain of command as well as the organisational philosophy is subtly communicated”. He further remarked that:

“If you own a business you choose who to hire, and ensure that the new hire understand and fully align with the philosophy of the operation. These philosophies are not included in the contract of employment but they exist” (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

The second strand of proprietorial influence is that newspaper owners determine the roles and business model of their organisations. This connotes that in allocating limited resources, as it relates to assigning journalist to cover certain news stories; and in the process ignoring other; proprietors exercise a high degree of authority and power. Thus, as owners objective vary, the impact of management/journalists pursuing these objectives at the operational level will also vary. A senior reporter from Lagos observed that journalists “are pieces of a puzzle and if you fail to act accordingly, you will be replaced.”

Thirdly, managing editors know what their proprietors think about economics and politics (though they would not publicly admit it), they act accordingly. Even without explicit instructions, it is the case that journalists simply sense, through the tacit social cues and agreed-upon patterns that often structure newsrooms that their time and attention would simply be better spent elsewhere, not on issues that are implicitly understood to be out of alignment with what their organisation’s culture or leadership is thought to value. A reporter based in Lagos commented that:
It is a rule of thumb that reporters intrinsically understand the house rule of the organisation they work in and are able to pick non-verbal communication from the top. As a reporter, I not only understand the house rule, I am also guided by what my editors are interested in. (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)

The true nature of this influence is invisible and it is enacted through organisational structures that let reporters believe they were receiving directives from their supervising editor without them knowing that the editor is acting under strict instructions. An Abuja reporter observed that:

It is a matter of setting the tone, of ensuring that editors and their subordinates know what is required of them. Compliance and job security are connected at many levels. (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)

The last strand is through direct control of editors and reporters on what to publish. Newspaper core content is largely determined by decisions made by owners, such as what to report as news and what to gloss over. This includes prominence of reportage, angle of coverage as well as depth and repetition. An anonymous interview participant based in Lagos commented that the proprietor of the newspaper he worked for was a “control freak” and “very hands-on.” He added that:

He went through a long period of using his papers as personal publicity sheets. He saw every leading article. He intimidated junior staff. He regularly interfered in editorial matters, ordering the paper to run negative articles about so-called “enemies” and exercised control on major issues, such as which party to back in a general election or which policy issues to oppose. (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)

While acknowledging that the newspaper business, unlike other businesses performs constitutionally recognised functions, there is no denying the truism that “he who pays the piper dictates the tune”. An editor from Lagos commented that newspaper owners know what they want and how to get what they want using whatever means possible. According to him:

Newspaper owners know their niche market and understand their readers. This involves saying some things to satisfy some interest, which may dissatisfy others. You can’t blame editors who approve certain articles for publication because if they don’t, they will be sacked and replaced. (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)

The comments assume that newspaper ownership only represents parochial interests. The view conflicts with other views indicating that newspapers were
instrumental in resisting military tyranny in the 1990s and have continued to uphold democratic tenets in the current political dispensation by informing public opinion, exposing corruption and engaging in policy analysis.

Newspaper resistance during the military era can also be evaluated within the framework of ownership. Why do the press resist autocratic governments? In whose interest do the media contest political freedom? Nigerian newspapers have a historical agenda, that is, the ideas and values with which the press is most strongly identified. This agenda is formed through a process of construction which is the product of their own history, and comes to be part of their identity. The main agenda, particularly since 1936 when the *West African Pilot* newspaper was launched is a sensibility that was basically opposed to colonialism, authoritarianism and, tyranny which makes them question everything that either leads to a closed society or threatens basic civil rights.

The majority of participants from Lagos and Abuja agreed that it is in the interest of proprietors to challenge dictatorship because a closed society threatens both the economic and political relevance of the press. Reacting to the above questions, an Abuja-based editor observed that:

> Newspaper agitation during military dictatorship or under any form of government is a two ways street. On one hand is the fight for human and civil rights, for political participation through free and fair elections and for human liberty. On the other hand, the media as a business are fighting for economic survival, relevance, political participation and inclusion. (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

The comment above highlights newspaper agitation within the framework of proprietorial interests even during military totalitarian rule. There is therefore a symbiotic nexus of interest- both public and proprietorial- for newspapers to assert their importance in all political dispensations. To challenge autocratic ideals and authoritarian public space therefore is not only a question of values but also a basic need to safeguard newspaper fortunes.

The inherent vulnerability in the power structures in newspaper organisations suggest how owners can significantly influence and/or exploit their publication(s) to their advantage. It also indicates the susceptibility of media professionals to the
extent that the content they generate can be tailored to suit their proprietor’s political, ideological and economic agenda.

News selection criteria are not universal but vary widely across cultures and organisations. Although editors sift through on the basis of their experience and intuition; decisions and prioritization of news content are heavily influenced by owners. Journalists in Focus Group Discussion One (Lagos) agreed that while there are other internal pressures such as professionalism and resources that influence media gatekeeper’s decisions on which stories to cover, how issues are interpreted and the emphasis given to them; ownership is supreme. A Lagos-based reporter, commenting on a previous employer said: “the final decision on what to publish is made by the Editorial Board, chaired by the publisher. Nothing gets published without the Chairman’s nod”

4.3.2 Thisday/IPSOS 2011 Presidential Election Opinion Poll

The conflation of proprietorial and editorial roles noted above certainly contributes to the perception that newspapers are highly biased politically in their reporting. As explained in the preceding section, members of the Focus Groups were asked to participate in an exercise in which a report on ThisDay/IPSOS presidential poll result was used to elicit their reactions and commentaries.

![Figure 8: Thisday IPSOS poll result](source: Thisday newspaper (16/03/2011))
In 2011, *Thisday* newspaper published an opinion poll in which the paper claimed that more than 60 percent of voters favour Goodluck Jonathan, the presidential candidate of the ruling- People’s Democratic Party (PDP) to win the April 9 presidential poll. ‘Jonathan Leads with 60%, PDP May Lose Four States’ (*Thisday*: 16/03/2011). In some countries, the poll result would be classified as accurate poll forecast but in Nigeria, ethnic suspicion and proprietorial mistrust dominate and divide public discourse.

In the course of the exercise, a *Daily Trust* journalist from the North accused *Thisday’s* owner of taking side with the incumbent president, more so in a situation where both the President and publisher are from the Christian South and of the same Niger-Delta ethnic origin. In his view:

*Thisday* poll, which predicted the result of 2011 presidential election, was dubious. Most people in the North felt that the elites in the South used *Thisday* to set the agenda. I was therefore not surprised when post-election riots broke out in several parts of the North in 2011 because the results felt like they were predetermined. (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

Interestingly, other Lagos-based newspapers criticized the poll result. In a rejoinder to *Thisday’s* poll, “ACN, CPC Repudiate Thisday: Reveals How they Aid PDP to Rig Elections” (*Tribune*: 23/03/2011) accused *Thisday* of using the content of its publication as part of the propaganda service of Nigeria’s government. In the article, two leading South-based opposition parties in Nigeria, Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) and the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) condemned *Thisday* newspaper opinion poll. Joe Igbokwe, publicity Secretary of ACN said:

*Thisday is ‘the number one enemy of Nigeria! This is the fraudulent business that Thisday newspaper has been known for since 2003 and it is all about politics of the stomach. This paper did it for a fee in 2003. This they did again in 2007 and in 2011... This shameless newspaper is preparing the ground for PDP to rig the 2011 elections as it did in 2003 and 2007. (Joe Igbokwe, Tribune, 23/03/2011)

Focus Group Three participants in Abuja all agreed with the *Tribune’s* rejoinder and condemned *Thisday* for a lack of trustworthiness, capable of heating up the polity.
An online newspaper reported that “Nduka, Thisday Work against the Growth of Democracy in Nigeria” (Sahara Reporters237: 24/03/2011).

A Focus Group Five participant from the North commented that:

_Nduka Obiagbena, publisher of Thisday was used by President Obasanjo when he sought a second term in office in 2003. Nduka uses his paper to further the agenda of Nigeria’s ruling class. Aside from the fact that Nduka has made many millions of Naira, he succeeded in repeating the same practice in 2011. This gives you an idea of how entrenched the press are in the dirty politics of this country- they are either canvassing for money bags or clamouring for a particular ethnic group._ (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

The comments above indicate the extent to which members of Focus Group Two from the North as well as other interview participants from the South assert that owners such as Obiagbena have used their titles for inherent personal motives. It cements the claim that the press, due to ownership and management structures in Nigeria is corruptible and vulnerable. A Thisday reporter however objected to the above claims and demanded for proof and substantiation. He said:

_The conspiracy theorists are at work, turning rumour into real news and fictions into fact. Where is proof that Thisday published polls is in the interest of the incumbent? Although the law states that an individual is innocent until proven guilty; in Nigeria, the reverse is the case._ (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)

Although it remains to be seen whether Obiagbena used his newspaper-Thisday to influence public opinion or set the agenda for the 2011 general election, popular commentaries assert that newspaper owners play significant roles in channelling the attention of their titles and by consequence, the public in certain political and ideological directions.

**Concentrated Newspaper Ownership and Ethnicity**

Ownership is also intrinsically linked with ethnic and regional affiliations to the extent that ownership determines news content while location, news context. Nigerian newspapers are therefore categorised along regional descriptions. Although newspaper proprietor’s preferences and interests are not always consistent with that of the region or location of the organisation; yet the line between the two (proprietor’s

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237Sahara Reporters: an online newspaper published in New York by Nigerian-born political activists
interest and regional interest) remain intertwined. As indicated in Chapter 2, Section 2.3, concentration of newspapers in the South, particularly in Lagos suggest that the dominant position of the press in Lagos have been used to the advantage of Southern political elite in their analysis and narrative of Nigerian politics. A significant 81% (representing 21 national newspapers) are located in the South while only 19% (representing five newspapers) are in Abuja.

The blanket description and broad categorisation used to describe the press in Lagos as a unified, one-track press by most Northerners seems inaccurate. This is made evident by the opposition to Thisday/IPSOS presidential opinion poll from other newspapers in Lagos and Abuja; thus challenging the claim that an editorial/agenda-setting axis exists in the Lagos press. In addition to the above, of the 21 newspapers published in the South, five are located outside Lagos. Within Lagos, only three newspapers are owned by South-Westerners (Punch, Next and PM newspapers). The remaining 13 newspapers (representing 82%) are owned by Easterners (44%) and Mid-Westerners (38%). This indicates multiplicity of newspaper ownership as well as a broad range of ethnic interest within the South.

Contrary to the above assertion, Nigeria does appear to have a two-tracked press system largely determined by ownership and regional location (North/South). “It is interesting to note”, observed an editor in Lagos, “that no Northerner has ever owned or managed a newspaper in the South just as no Southerner has ever owned a newspaper in the North”. These cleavages have over time manifested themselves in regional distinction between the press in Lagos and Abuja. In both hubs, the study found that journalists employed by newspapers in each hub felt there was a considerably broad and pervasive portion of proprietorial influence on content. No one whom we interviewed or encountered in focus groups challenged this view.

In Section 4.3, the study explores the claim that regional location of newspapers is tantamount to regional editorial and agenda-setting axis.

Section summary

The print media remains the exclusive domain of private ownership, mainly by Southern politicians with interest in economic and political power. The management structure of Nigerian newspapers concentrates immense control in these proprietors
(most of who double as owner/editors) and as a consequence, they exert enormous influence on their organisations and on the content of their titles. While newspapers played significant public interest roles during the civil resistance to military autocracy that culminated in the termination of tyrannical rule in 1999; it was also in the political and economic interest of proprietors to contest the political system of censorship, proscription and restriction.

The study identified four stands of proprietorial influence on content. The most significant being direct editorial control on content and the news gathering process. The other three being: proprietorial control at the point of appointment of senior journalists and editors; proprietorial control of the roles and business models of their organisations; and lastly, proprietorial control through organisational structures. These forms of control are prevalent in the Nigerian press.

The Thisday/IPSOS newsgame elicited commentaries from discussants about the way and manner with which they believe newspaper owners (Thisday newspaper) have used their titles to further the interest of particular individuals (such as the incumbent president- Goodluck Jonathan). Although this claim was refuted by a reporter with Thisday, the overwhelming consensus amongst participants is that there are significant proofs of proprietorial control over newspaper content with potential political consequences on North/South relations in Nigeria. The impact of this concentration on politics are analysed and discussed in Chapter five.

4.4 DO NEWSPAPERS IN PARTICULAR REGIONS FORM AN EDITORIAL AND AGENDA-SETTING ALLIANCE?

This section explores the question of regional editorial and agenda-setting alliance. Does the press in Lagos or Abuja constitute an axis? If they do, why and if not, why is there a dichotomy between newspapers in both hubs?

4.4.1 Newspapers, Ownership and Ethicized Politics in Nigeria

Given the political, ethnic and religious diversity that exist in Nigeria, the key question is: have the press exploited these cleavages in favour of particular regions or ethnic groups? Are newspapers used for the political contestation of power between the North and South? Do newspapers use the politics of ethnic
difference to assert their relevance to society? The overpowering response from interviewed journalists indicated that newspapers have been used to represent certain regional interests. A Southern editor with Tribune commented that:

*The defunct New Nigerian newspaper was set up in the early 1960’s by the Northern elite to represent their interest. Such a newspaper was perceived as the voice of the North by Southerners. In the same vein, the Nigerian Tribune, (owned by late Chief Awolowo, a Southerner and leader of the most prominent political party) was seen equally in the North.* (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)

The study found a correlation between regional location and news content in both Lagos and Abuja hubs. Who owns a newspaper and where such a title is based are generally used to classify and determine the paper’s locus of allegiance. Location, as much as ownership plays a significant role in the way news is reported, contextualised and framed. The location of an organisation and the influence of reader’s on content are further complicated in Nigeria where meaning is often construed based on ethnicity and religion. An Abuja based journalist remarked that:

*In the North, Southern newspapers are read with suspicion and I think it’s the same in the South. Most newspaper articles are interpreted along regional and political lines.* (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)

This view asserts that newspapers are not neutral agents in the dissemination of information but publish specific opinions, interviews and allow certain perspectives tailored to the audience they seek to address and influence. This includes deliberate omission of certain news items, emphasis on certain perspective given to a story and the choice made about its prominence in a publication. An editor with Vanguard newspaper in Lagos noted that:

*It is impossible to fit every report into the newspaper. As such, there are omissions. At the same time, there are deliberate omissions due to multiple influences- government pressure, market forces, ownership, advertisers and editorial preferences that may work contrary to public expectations.* (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)

There are also significant similarities between regional newspaper hubs and ethnic relationship between the North and South. The rivalry, mutual suspicion and antagonism that manifest in the Nigerian state between the dominant ethnic groups: Hausa-Fulani (North), Yoruba (South-West) and Igbo (South-East) in their contestation of political power and economic resources finds expression in the
regional press through conflicting reports, intentional biases and conspiracies. According to a Northern interview participant in Abuja:

The Lagos press was deliberately silent when Bola Tinubu (a Southerner) was exposed to have used fake University of Chicago certificates in 2001. However, when Buhari Salisu was accused of the same, the Lagos press made a mill of it until he got the boot from the Senate. Though there were grumblings in the North, but never in the region of the magnitude of violent reactions that the Southern press perpetrated when the culprit was not one of theirs. (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)

As such, the press is characterised by politicized ethnicity which accentuates the significant division between the North and South. Newspapers located in either region are therefore publicly perceived and historically depicted as representing their region; hence the labelling of newspapers in ethnic terms- *Ngbati* press (referring to South-West newspapers), *Ndigbo* press (Igbo-owned newspapers), Arewa press (referring to Northern-based newspapers) and now Niger-Delta press (referring to newspapers owned by proprietors from the South-South) is prevalent. Such terminologies were used by informants in this study, as when Abuja-based Focus Group Two discussants referred to the Lagos press and also when interviewed participants in Lagos referred to the newspapers owned by South-easterners.

The ownership and location nexus has resulted in a polarised newspaper press that prioritizes regional differences in its reportage, coverage and analysis. Journalists who participated in the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions in Abuja agreed that the press is engaged in the production of cleavages mainly along ethnic and regional lines. A *Daily Trust* journalist observed that:

*A cultural politics of difference, struggles around differences and the reproduction of historical differences is the core mission of the press. These differences are largely based on artificial parameters; mainly by newspapers based on which part of the country they are located.* (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)

The comment above projects a summary of the contradiction that characterizes the two-tracked press in Nigeria- the protrusion and politics of difference. It is noteworthy that the geographical and cultural division in the Nigerian society, as pointed out in Chapter 2 is mirrored in the press, indicating a similarity and uniformity in content and agenda among newspapers in the same hub.
4.4.2 Playing the Blame Game

As indicated in the methods chapter, critical readings of selected editorial content was used in the focus groups to explore the link between newspaper hubs and North/South dichotomy. Specifically, we asked if newspapers are used by ethnic groups for political power contestation. An editorial piece: “Northern Leaders Crippled Nigeria” (Vanguard editorial: 21/03/2011) in a Southern-based newspaper was at the focus of this exercise. The paper reported that the present crippled state of Nigeria’s economy is not merely a problem of leadership but the outcome of “wasteful and corrupt leaders from the North who ruled the country for 39 years since independence”.

In response to the editorial piece, Focus Group 5 participants made up of discussants from mixed background but all resident in Lagos agreed that people of northern origin may have led Nigeria, and they maintained that the paper is merely playing the blame game and pointing accusing fingers at the North. A journalist from the North observed that the above editorial piece attempts to “demonize and dehumanize the North, its leaders and people as it fits the region within a Southern-conceived framework”. Expectedly, discussants in Focus Group Two in Abuja shared similar views, noting that “when it comes to political power at the national level, the press in Lagos converges in opinion and content against the north!”

However, on the contrary, a Lagos based Focus Group participant argued that Vanguard’s editorial was not only factual but also objective. He noted that:

We can’t deny or pretend that Nigeria has been poorly led by the North. Under such regimes, political appointment to key ministries and departments, resource control were based on ethnicity and not on merit. So the evidence is there for all to see. We can’t continue to elect people into position based on region of origin. (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

It is worth noting that the article was published one month before the April 2011 presidential election and may have been written purposely to sway public opinion in favour of Southerners on one hand while on the other, to frustrate Northerners contesting elections at the federal level. On the reverse side, a rejoinder editorial or article would have been published to counter the Southern claim shortly afterwards.
and whip up anti-Southern sentiments. Either way, the regional press accentuates division between the two regions.

The foregoing commentaries assume that Northern leaders are mirrors and true reflections of the region and its people. This view ignores the class distinctions and characterization between the ruling elite and the masses in Northern societies. Furthermore, the editorial assumes that Northern leaders are characteristically different from their colleagues in the South. The article may therefore be viewed as another clever rhetorical appeal from the Southern press and elite to wrestle power from Northern politicians.

Focus group participants in Group 3 (university students) in Abuja observed that politicians everywhere have an inherently greedy character; mainly interested in self-enrichment, self-agendas and self-perpetuation. Nigerian politicians “are the same; the ruling elite are one, irrespective of party affiliation or ethnic origin.” It is therefore inaccurate and suspicious to differentiate politicians and political behaviour based on region.

Another student in Abuja asserted that Vanguard’s editorial is “typical of the Lagos press who whip sentiments and enjoy pointing accusing fingers at other for hidden political reasons. They like to assert Southern supremacy and increase sales and circulation figures by accusing the North of Nigeria’s problems; inferring that Southerners are better at leadership than Northerners.”

Group Four participants comprised of self-employed Southerners commented that Lagos-based newspapers and the opinions they publish are at times “shallow-minded.” “Some newspapers cannot see the bigger picture of how interconnected and interrelated Nigerians are.” Commenting further on the effect of regionalism in the press, another Southern participant observed that:

> Of course ethnocentrism in Nigeria is what race is to South Africa. The Nigerian press is not immune to this. Issues, debates, editorials, op-eds still run along ethnic lines. However, it would also be an erroneous generalisation to state that this holds true for the universe of Nigerian journalism. (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

There is indication from focus group discussants and interviewed participants to suggest that Nigerian newspapers are mainly regional channels of public information
and power contestation. Additionally, the strong, often conflicting commentaries between participants of northern and southern origin lends support the view that newspapers in each region (North or South) are editorially aligned in furthering their economic viability, the political interests of the elites within their region of location and the ethnic origin of their owners.

Although the observation that each newspaper represents specific ethnic group(s) assumes that newspapers don’t have agendas of their own which may vary from that of their region of operation. It also ignores the concept of “mercenary journalism”- the practice whereby some journalist attempt to strong-arm the elite for material (and not political) gain; however, it does indicate conflict between the hubs- a battle of supremacy in protecting regional political interests.

An Abuja-based journalist with Leadership disagreed with the notion of conflict but commented that “competition” between the Northern and Southern press is a more precise description of the Nigerian newspaper scene. He added that in the market place of ideas:

> Competition through alternative perspectives is essential for progressive elections and democracy. The relevance of the press in the North is to challenge the one-way traffic of the Lagos press. (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

Is the press in Lagos one-way traffic? Several interviewed journalists from Lagos objected to the assertion, claiming “there is no such thing.” A Punch newspaper editor commented that:

> The press in Lagos is vibrant, authoritative and well-rounded in their analysis; compared to the press in the North, that are several decades behind in commercial success, editorial content and agenda-setting. (Focus Group Discussion comment)

In addition to the above, another Lagos-based semi-structured interview participant remarked that the status of Lagos is larger than a mere ethnic enclave.

> Lagos state is part of the South West but it has never been, and will never be a tribal-closed society. Lagos is a mega-city; populated by people from everywhere; not by Yoruba’s only. It is therefore inaccurate to conclude that once a newspaper is established in Lagos, they are inherently in support of everything south! (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)
To sum up the findings in this section, there is strong evidence, particularly from focus group discussions and interview commentaries to suggest that newspapers may have been used as tools through which historical and ideological rivalry between the conservative North and liberal South are contested. An interviewed participant from Abuja noted that “though there are rare cases where the interest of a newspaper and that of its region conflict as in the case of Concord newspaper in Lagos and the Southern quest to produce a president in the 1980s; it is difficult, if not impossible to separate the interest of most newspapers from that of their region of operation.” Nigerian newspapers therefore largely represent the interest of their region of operation!

4.3.3 Agenda-setting in Nigerian Newspapers: Whose Agenda?

In the process of disseminating information, newspapers do much more than merely informing its audiences. By selecting which public affairs news will be published and by giving special prominence to some reports, the news media suggest which people, issues, and events are especially deserving of public attention. A senior editor with Thisday observed that:

*Few readers miss the point that long front-page articles with banner headlines are more important than short inside stories. Newspapers set the agenda for the public’s attention to that small group of issues around which public opinion form.* (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)

The Three Broad Narratives on Agenda-setting in the Nigerian Press

Given the importance of this agenda-setting function, the question is: whose agenda do Nigerian newspapers set? Three broad narratives emerged in the course of the study on the question of whose agenda regionally-concentrated newspapers pursue. The first and overwhelming narrative, expressed by the majority of discussants in Abuja indicated that an alliance exist within the newspapers in Lagos that represents the leading thoughts of Southern elites. A significant majority of the participants in the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions in Lagos also agreed that a Lagos-Ibadan press axis exist and have remain the “main agenda-setting”, “most articulate”, “highly opinionated” and “most vocal” newspaper hub in Nigeria.

Focus Group One participants asserted that despite a decline in the national economy since the late 1980s, which has reduced earnings and brought economic
hardship, the number of newspapers and magazines in Lagos has continued to grow steadily. A discussant noted that:

*The Lagos press asserts itself as the mediator between the nation and the individual. As such, it has embraced political news as a commodity for engaging the public and as a means of remaining commercially viable. This is in continuation of the dominant historical role it plays as the main conduit of public information in Nigeria.* (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

Interviewed Journalists in Lagos further commented that newspapers elsewhere (referring to the Kaduna/Abuja newspaper hub) are “reactive” and “less influential”. The comment of a journalist from Daily Trust in Abuja captured the narrative succinctly:

*The Lagos/Ibadan axis of the Nigerian press is a powerful weapon in the arsenal of the pro-Awoist, anti-North political and elite class in the South. I contend that since the amalgamation of the North and South by the British in 1914, an influential minority of the South’s population have continued to use the press through ownership, location, Western education and civilisation to dominate the debate and set the agenda in Nigeria.* (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

A similar observation was made by another Northern participant who believed that:

*The Nigerian press in reality is the Lagos/Ibadan press. Their perception of Nigeria is what the world has consistently seen. It may not be the whole picture, but it’s the only picture that counts. It may not be fair but it is the reality as it is today. The different newspaper titles scattered across Lagos and Ibadan notwithstanding, they all have the same perspective.* (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)

These three comments suggest that the ideological perspective of the Southern elite has become the main framework for moral reference for news in Nigeria and that this perspective has deep historical roots. However alternative viewpoints which take a more generous view of the Northern vision of Nigeria were also shown in the research. For example, a participant remarked that “the New Nigerian newspaper (now defunct) in its days was a newspaper that set national news agenda, not just for the North but for all. It provided balanced reporting and editorial independence. Although it was published in the North, it competed favourable with newspapers in the South.”
Does the press in Lagos and Ibadan pursue the interest of Southern elites? Most participants from the South asserted that it is inaccurate to claim that newspapers in Lagos belong to the same ideological camp or are mostly politically aligned. They argued that the press in the South are mainly owned by individuals who are from different parts of the South and belong to different political groupings. A Lagos-based interviewed participant remarked that:

*Southern Nigeria is populated by people of different tribal groups, with different languages, different cultures, different historical experiences and different political orientation. However, it cannot be ruled out that there is a bias in the North that all newspapers published in the South are prejudiced because they are located in Lagos and Ibadan.* (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group comment)

The above comment indicates that the ownership pattern of the press in Lagos is a reflection of the diversity that exists in the South. It also indicates that general perception in the North of the South is a sort of blanket view of everything South. This view is reinforced by comments from Group Two participants in Abuja who asserted the overwhelming power of the Lagos press. A Northern participant believes that:

*The Lagos/Ibadan press has a long history of radicalism due to comparative high level of education and early adoption of Western civilisation. However they are beset with the usual 'single story' - full of prejudices. I suppose that has been the need behind the founding of New Nigeria newspaper (now defunct), Daily Trust and Leadership newspapers.* (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)

It could be argued that the prevailing narrative seeds resistance through its marginalising of the Northern aspects of the country. Further, there is an interesting side which this participant makes about the “single story” which he suggests is ‘full of prejudices’. We shall need in this analysis to consider whether the North is silenced – or, more disturbing, misrepresented in the central narrative.

The second narrative explores the crisscross of interest between the political economy of newspapers and the opportunity that Lagos provides. These interwoven dynamics both provide explanation for establishing newspapers in Lagos. Given that Lagos is the economic nerve centre of Nigeria; most news organisations strategically establish in mega-cities (such as Lagos) where they can potentially reach broader
audience and maximize profit. A Guardian newspaper editor based in Lagos observed that:

Profit maximisation is one of the principal forces under-girding the establishment of many newspapers along Lagos-Ibadan axis. Most nationally-read daily newspapers and weeklies are concentrated around Lagos-Ibadan axis because of economic reasons. (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group comment)

The view reads Lagos and the South as ‘micro-Nigeria’ in that it is a centre of national significance in economic and political terms. Money and power, it is suggested, operate from this locus so it would be no more than sensible business practice to set up a national newspaper in this region. The North on the other hand, has a higher percentage of concentrated poverty than the South, particularly the South-west with a comparatively low poverty rate.

An interviewed public relations participant from the South situated post-1999 newspapers within the global capitalist economic structure of modern Nigeria and argues that newspapers, first and foremost are private business concerns who primarily want to make profit. The study found that since 1999, Lagos newspapers have shifted more in the direction of news commercialisation and market-led management models. A Lagos editor with Vanguard noted that the difference between the military regime era and the current civilian dispensation is that newspapers have become more commercially oriented. He said that:

Survival was the order of the day during the military era but success is the focus now. To achieve this goal commercialisation, yellow journalism; sensationalism, soft new are given priority than critical issues. (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)

The economic dynamics as outlined above draw attention to the importance of commerce. Nigeria’s harsh socio-economic environment and its impact on newspapers may be influencing “aggressive behaviours that define the Southern press”. An Abuja reporter admitted that in today’s newspapers, “there is little analysis and investigating involved, much of what we read in the papers are interviews, opinions and events of the rich and famous.”

The place of the market and how that underpins reportage was elaborated by an Abuja-based Southern participant who admitted that in reporting issues about the
North, newspapers in the South are not comprehensive in their coverage. He remarked that “due to religious, cultural and language differences; most news reports of the North in the Lagos press are biased.” He concluded that “inaccurate reportage adds to tensions between the North and South.”

In a bid to cut cost, Lagos newspapers do not have as many reporters in many of the northern states, particularly outside Kano and Kaduna. They may have one reporter, mainly based in the capital city, covering a whole state. It is therefore not impossible that some news articles about the North are the opinion/take of a reporter. (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

The view expressed above indicates the dangers of biased or imbalanced coverage which could potentially escalate suspicion between the North and South. As reported in the Guardian newspaper (Guardian: April 26, 2012) Thisday newspaper as well as other Lagos newspapers in the North were bombed by Boko Haram due to “insensitivity to Islam and the interest of Northerners”. While Boko Haram does not represent the North; the incident sparked public outrage in the South as much as it complicated North/South relationships.

An emphasis on profit maximization on the other hand has increasingly blurred ethnic and regional rivalries. The drive for profit has accentuated the similarities in operations among newspapers to the extent that commodification of news, sensational journalism and over-pollicisation of issues has become prevalent.

The third narrative shaping the views of a large minority of Northern participants asserts that newspapers in the South have an inherently radical character that conflicts with the North’s conservative political structure. The Lagos/Ibadan press is an offshoot of the Yoruba conventional culture of criticism, a pronounced history of political struggle and a traditionally radical political system of opposition to oppressive rulers. According to a Tribune (Ibadan) editor in the South, “Southwestern Nigeria is an area that has witnessed the most intense Christian missionary activities, and a majority of the population is Christian. Christians have dominated the press as proprietors, editors and reporters. This has blended well with radical Yoruba political beliefs”
An editor with *Leadership* in Abuja observed that:

...no newspaper is ideologically neutral, transparent or innocent, the editor and his reporters on the one hand and their audience on the other hand constitute an ideological empire. The newspaper subjects all newsworthy events that constantly come up in social life to rigorous linguistic manipulation to make them suit the commercial imperative of the enterprise and the ideological expectation of the audience. (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)

This critical root was further influenced by the (Christian) Enlightenment that may have intensified newspaper agitation and extremism. This Lagos press is therefore routinely dismissed by the Muslim North as “Western-Christian-Yoruba conspiracy, committed to a secular and liberal-radical order which opposes the conservative-religious political elite from the North. A Focus Group Two discussant from the North remarked that:

*The core difference between the North and South is not mainly politics but religion. The two religions- Christianity and Islam have contradictory political views. Christianity has been more subtle and more aggressive without due recourse to Islam.* (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

The study found that the radical ideology inherent in the South and its politics sets huge expectations on Lagos-based newspapers who in turn tailor their content to satisfy news consumption appetites of their targeted readers. For Lagos-based papers to make profit and remain relevant; they must fit into the accepted framework of the Southern readers which mainly consist of South-westerners.

“It is however noteworthy” according to a Northern journalist “that:

*The political ideologies and philosophies of Yoruba ethnic nationality, are sometimes anti-North. If the press in Lagos genuinely want to contribute to cultivating and sustaining a culture of democracy in Nigeria, it must learn to heal itself of its ethnic, sectional and religious prejudices.* (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

In support of his views, another Northerner remarked that although the Lagos-Ibadan press is not dominantly owned by Yoruba’s; yet most of its employees are South-westerners. Why is the tune of the Lagos-Ibadan press consistently in favour the Yoruba’s but inconsistent with the interest of non-Yoruba’s who constitute a significant portion of the South’s population?
There is a subtle shift in this third narrative, that is, the issues of Yoruba philosophy and political influence are here bolstered by a story about the radical and dominant qualities of the South west. A remarkable twist of irony suggests that the traditional political legacy of pre-colonial Yoruba societies provides the ‘educated’ South with a richer range of resources than the ethnically-conservative North. The comments therefore indicate a conflict of interest between the West-oriented radical South and a traditionalist North with interlocking religious and political interest in Nigeria. A Lagos editor asserted that:

Since the end of the Regional governments at Independence in 1960, the economy of the South has risen substantially about that of the North. The same can be said of education, industry and infrastructure. All of these can be attributed to the radical politics of the South. Unfortunately, not much has changed in the North. (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)

The three narratives converge to reinforce a clear dichotomy in the Nigeria press, a cleavage between the press in the North and the South that has religious and ethnic roots and manifests in cementing political division between and among the confederating units that make up the Nigerian state. These views emphasize the existence of regional axis in the press- the Lagos/Ibadan press axis (South) and Kaduna/Abuja axis (North). More importantly, the agenda-setting force of the Southern press has been seriously used by Southern elites to contest power with and dominate national political discourse. It is therefore safe to conclude that the press have been used to represent either region in competing for State power.

4.4.4 Diversity or Division in the Nigerian Press

An editor with Leadership newspaper in Abuja observed that though the press in Nigeria is divided between the two regions; the division allows for diversity of opinion in the market place of ideas which is essential for public enlightenment. He noted further the:

The split in the press in Nigeria has an unintended advantage in that it gives the readers a variety of opinion from different sources and different perspectives. Newspapers in some nations, particularly where they are owned by conglomerates are all centrally and editorially controlled by their corporate owners. (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)
The above view suggests that regional dichotomy is equal to media diversity. However, what are the consequences of a bifurcated press, based on cultural differences? Lagos-based Focus Group Four participants all agreed that ethnically-based divisions create serious integrity questions for the press. They contended that the power of the press lies in its trustworthiness but if articles are twisted for narrow ethnic and political reasons or journalists/editors are bought in order to ensure specific kinds of reportage, a newspaper is, in effect, a “doctored” document. Questions that border on reliability emerge. The reader is left to wonder whether a particular news piece was paid for with pre-determined personal or corporate objective(s). A Southern media critic commented that:

*If a news article or editorial critic an organisation or government policy; how does the reader know if the opinion is genuine, and not because the asking price of the editorial writer or publisher was not met? When is a story a hoax, a reward, a love story or a campaign jingle? When is the absence of a story the story? When is a headline a “unheard line”?* (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

An Abuja-based editor observed that diversity of content connotes that a newspaper should fully represent the interest of all. “Content diversity therefore includes the views of the excluded- minorities, opposition, unemployed, women, youth, and, most importantly, the less privileged so that the stories of all can be told, as much as the voices of all can be heard.”

Is there a lack of content diversity today? A Northern participant noted that:

*Absolutely! From the inaccurate, narrow representation of the North and Islamic culture in newspapers to the homogenous voices on mainstream radio, our nation’s media system is growing less and less diverse day by day. The Nigerian press seems a shell of its once vibrant self. Most of the newspapers in circulation today do not hide their allegiance to the party and or government in power (at any given time). It is increasingly becoming difficult to distinguish one newspaper from another as most of these papers are speaking for their political associates- often in limited, confined and inadequate terms.* (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)

**4.4.5 Reportage of the 2006 National Population Census Figures**

The effect regional location has on the way news is presented was strikingly clear in press reportage of the 2006 census. Population census figures are contested, contentious and controversial in Nigeria because of its economic implications and
political undertones. They are used in determining revenue allocation, state and local government funding as well as political representation at the federal legislature (Senate and House of Representatives). In the past and perhaps to date, census figures are largely disputed due to its inherent importance.

The first attempt at a nationwide census was in 1952-3. The figure of 31.6 million was considered an undercount due to public apprehension that the exercise was connected to tax collection. The 1963 census figure of 55.6 million was officially accepted, it was however encumbered with charges of inaccuracy and manipulation for regional and political purposes. The figures were claimed to be inconsistent with projection of the 1953 figures and tensions created after the release of the census figures contributed to the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970). A third census was conducted in 1973 but the results were cancelled in the face of repeated controversy. Attempts were made in the 1980s to conduct credible census but no subsequent nationwide census was held until 1991. On foot of the above historical antecedent, the reportage of the 2006 National Population Census by all selected national newspapers showed a tendency towards regionally predisposed partisanship.

Figure 9: 2007 Census Figures
Source: Vanguard news headline (18/01/11)
The Lagos press reported the census figures in questionable terms, subtly probing the credibility of the figures as well as the authenticity of the exercise. “Census: Kano beats Lagos” (Vanguard: 10/01/2007). “Census result: Lagos is behind Kano in population figures” (Nigerian Tribune: 10/01/2007). “Kano more populated than Lagos- Census” (Thisday: 10/01/2007). “Kano, Lagos tops census results- NPC” (Punch: 10/01/2007), “Population census- Lagos behind Kano” (Guardian: 10/01/2007). “Still on the 2006 Census figures” (Guardian editorial: 20/03/2007) reported that the figures seems inflated in favour of a section of Nigeria and concludes that social, infrastructural, developmental and planning needs of the exercise remains unmet.

The news headlines indirectly queried why and how Kano’s figures exceeded Lagos. Their headlines also suggested that the press in Lagos hold long-held beliefs that contradicted the figures. On their part, the Abuja press “Kano tops population census figures again” (Daily Trust: 10/01/2007) insisted on the accuracy of the census figures.

Among our own informants, differences in perception about the validity of the census tended to follow regional affiliations. As a Lagos based participant remarked, there is a history of conspiracy, starting from the 1950s census calculated to give the North an edge. He said further that:

*The figures are forged. The 2006 census is politically manipulated. How can Kano be more populated than Lagos? We are not surprised with that figure because how can the federal government justify 44 Local Government Area in Kano and 19 in Lagos? Imagine the budgetary allocation that goes to Kano yet, the revenue generated in Lagos surpasses that of all states in the North. There is no way Kano can have a population higher than Lagos. (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)*

Another Lagos-based Journalist commented that most federal establishments, including NPC are staffed and controlled by Northerners; so it is possible for the figures to have been inflated. A journalist with Guardian newspaper believes the census 2006 is a “fraud”. On the other hand, members of Focus Group Two, all discussants from Abuja agreed with the figure and openly accused the Lagos press of strategically pushing a divisive agenda. A discussant within the group commented that the Lagos press were unimpressed with the figures because “they (Southerners)
believe there are more people in the South; although they don’t have a scientific way of refuting the census figures. Remember that the North has always recorded higher figures than the South.

The commentaries above show that newspapers have aided both directly and indirectly ethnic tension, regional division, political polarisations and mutual suspicions. This is equally evident during election coverage and reportage, when newspapers, in support of their owner’s political affiliation, openly oppose and criticize other politicians or political parties.

4.5 INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE PRESS IN NIGERIA

The aim of this section is threefold: first, to examine the political and economic environment that condition the framework within which the press operates; second, to compare and contrast the organisational structures in Lagos and Abuja-based newspapers; and finally, to discuss specifically how the operating environment underpins newspaper operations and content as well as how these impact the press in Nigeria generally.

4.5.1 The Operating Environment

Newspapers are not produced in a vacuum. Journalists work in a field of conflicting loyalties, all of which have the possibility of influencing their work. Newspaper professionals have the potential for divided allegiance towards their audience, editors, advertisers, proprietors, State regulations and/or the profession. Journalists therefore work within a range of constraints and contradictions; structural factors that affect their output. These dynamics could range from legal, legislative, organisational, regulatory, cultural, professional and proprietorial constraints in the workforce. A Guardian editor based in Lagos commented that:

Newspapers are made by a group of imperfect professionals, working out of cramped offices while trying to find out about what happened in the world from people who are sometimes reluctant to tell us and, at other times, are positively obstructive. (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

The Nigeria press functions within three operational frameworks- firstly, within the context set out by the State through media regulations and laws; secondly, within the
framework of private ownership in terms of management style, publishing philosophy and capital investment; and finally, through the "invisible hand" of the market which includes competition within the industry, socio-cultural undercurrents and audience preferences. Newspapers operating space in Nigeria is highly contested with several layers of interest and influences. The ethnic, religious and regional diversity that characterize the Nigerian state has helped to accentuate political and economic rivalries between regional groups at different phases of national life. Within this framework, newspapers are viewed more as social and political tools rather than engines of economic growth and political development.

Nigeria is an emerging economy with a relatively competitive press. Since 1999, the press have functioned within the scope of an elected democratic government, one that is characterised by open elections, free markets, and private ownership of print and broadcast resources with limited State intervention. Although government’s stake in the national economy includes regulatory and budgetary control as well as spending on public infrastructure, education and defence; the economy is still viewed as capitalist because in the area of private enterprise, news firms are free to decide on basic economic questions of what to produce, when to produce and for whom to produce?

State regulation of newspaper ownership and operations in Nigeria is built on two propositions: the first is that news content has a powerful impact on politics, with ideological diverse content producing socially desirable outcomes. The second proposition is that unregulated markets may tend to produce too little ideological variety or too much commercialized content.

Politically therefore, regulation is essential because newspapers disseminate information about politics, which may in turn increase political participation; persuade voters to support particular parties or policies, or indirectly shift party support by influencing which issues are salient. Newspapers also affect the power of incumbents by informing voters about corruption or other dimensions of performance, and by giving a platform to alternative voices that might be shut out of mainstream or public means of open communication.
In this broad perspective, the Nigerian government has two roles; namely, to administer existing institutional frameworks, through regulation and legislation, including provision of infrastructure and the administration of law and order within the industry; and secondly to mobilize political will that constantly ensures the efficiency of the system according to changing societal priorities.

As pervasive as the State role seems, the system relies on private ownership of the means of production to adequately function. The liberal element in Nigeria’s dynamic regulatory structure is in its ability to grant power to private entrepreneurs to enter, compete in, and exit from media markets. While the State performs oversight roles in ensuring social order and equal opportunities without coercion; private ownership of the means of production ensures freedom and functionality within the system.

Private ownership of means of media production and distribution oversees the economic, managerial and cultural framework within which news media organisations operate. The field in which media managers function is distinctive in a number of ways: first, media organisations produce information products rather than tangible products, and the underlying economic characteristics of information products differ from those of other types of tangible goods in critical ways. These fundamental economic characteristics are related to crucial differences in demand, production, market, and distribution conditions, creating a very different management environment compared to other industries.

Secondly and more importantly, media products have extremely high social externality value because of the central role information and media content plays in economic, social and political processes. In this regard and due to the critical role newspapers play in society, media management practices have implications far beyond the purely economic concerns of corporate investors. This implication transcends beyond the immediate industry imperative to include the effect of organisational management on media content and society.

In essence, regulations regarding the content and reach of newspapers combinations, protection of national security; protection of the rights of individuals, and cultural safeguards, religious and ethnic sensitivities strongly influence what may or may not be published. Absolute control of newspapers through private ownership
may not be in public interest or in the interest of the profession. On the other hand, absolute control of the media by the State (a prevalent practice during military dictatorship) stifles the democratic process and hinders diversity in public political participation.

In Nigeria, the relationship between the press and the State has relatively improved since 1999, however, newspaper houses and media products are still subject to arbitrary State interventions including but not limited to arrests of journalists, closures of newspaper organisations and the use of extra-legal measure to control the press. A Lagos-based reporter observed that:

\[
\text{The Nigerian press is said to be free but when reporting on corruption, human right abuses, executive rascalty and electoral malpractices; journalists are arrested, denied access to information, detained or targeted by the State and its security apparatus. (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)}
\]

In spite of the structure that has been set in place for press freedom, political interference (pressure not to publish) mainly by the State, political elites and newspaper proprietors remains prevalent. Censorship is a recurring problem in the State regardless of the supposed freedoms expressed in the 1999 Federal Constitution of Nigeria. Government philosophy and documents may state press freedoms exist, but in the day to day affairs of life such freedoms fluctuate widely.

While the Constitution makes provision for the press to perform watchdog and surveillance functions; it has had difficulty fulfilling that role due to the demands of the various competing special interest groups. The large number of different voices has created something of a marketplace of ideas; however, a considerable portion of the ideas are framed in narrow ethnic and regional lines; some of which have escalated into violence.

4.5.2 Management Structure: Comparison between Lagos and Abuja Newspapers

The business of news management can be volatile due to the time-bound and perishable nature of information that newspapers publish. Additionally, news production is not only expensive but also akin to a manufacturing process. An Abuja-based editor commented that:
Nigerian newspapers have transformed from a literary to a politico-commercial entity, catering for its readers, shareholders, owners, advertisers and the nation at large. (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)

Newspaper making has become an industry requiring a high degree of editorial and technical skill as well as business acumen both commanding large outlay of capital. The raw material consists of mainly two things: news, including editorial opinion and features; and advertising. News, intended to build and hold circulation is gathered and processed by the editorial department while advertising, both displayed and classified, is collected and serviced by the marketing department.

The study found significant correlations in the management style of all selected news organisations in Lagos and Abuja. While it was possible in the 1980s to argue that public and private newspaper organisations operated under two different forms of market principles, separated by different funding and market doctrines; it certainly is not the case now as all privately owned national newspapers operate within the neo-liberal economic philosophy, intended to maximize profit and prioritize advertisement as the major source of income.

Journalists in both Lagos and Abuja agreed that the organisational structures of Nigerian newspapers are designed to prioritize news production and routine operations, particularly as they relate to news gathering, processing and dissemination. While there are variations in priorities depending on the size and reach of the newspaper, policy objectives and capital investment; economic and political priorities are supreme, particularly those that ensure the survival and profitability of the organisation and probably, those that protect the interest of owners.

Figure 10 below represents an organisational structure that is common to all newspaper organisations in Nigeria. While there may be technical differences and nomenclatures unique to particular organisations; the functionality of the structure is similar across board.
In comparing the management configuration within and between the press in Lagos and Abuja, a considerable majority of interviewed journalists consented that no significant differences exist in the organisational structure among Lagos and Abuja newspapers. Additionally, other similarities include the publisher of *Leadership*, Abraham Nda-Isaiah, though a Northerner is Christian, educated in the South-West (University of Ife) and has several business concerns in Lagos. Furthermore in 2011, Azubuike Ishiekwene (former publishing editor at *Punch*) became the first Southerner to be appointed managing director in the North (*Leadership*). In general, what we therefore have is immense similarities in the organisation, managerial and reporting structures in the Nigerian press.

A *Vanguard* editor in Lagos commented that:

*There is no difference in the structure. We all have owner-editors and a wide network of reporters and correspondents. We all represent interest. This is coupled with industrialisation in production which entails multiple printing plants, spread out circulation networks and up-to-date communications technology.* (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)
The above comment indicates that despite regional, religious and political affiliations, most newspapers are now run as commercial concerns. This dual role that integrates commerce with content has always been a feature of the print media. However, since the deliberate State privatisation and liberalisation in the broadcast sector from the mid-1990s; commercialisation of news across the print media has become widespread. According to a Lagos journalist:

*The dominant publishing philosophy tends towards profit making than otherwise. In the pursuit of this philosophy, political, ethnic and social reportage tends towards sellable news, concentrating on soft news, entertainment, sports and celebrity gossip.* (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

The above comment suggest that newspapers that thrive under the current economic terrain are those that balance editorial vibrancy and commercial success by keeping their business options open and are not overtly and permanently dependent on any political party. What this therefore indicates is that most newspapers now assert a degree of independence on one hand; but on the other hand, a level of dependence on advertising revenue to fund their operations.

It could also indicate that the industry is radically restructuring its operations to mirror the socio-economic changes brought about by dwindling advertising revenue, increasing online news sources and decreasing circulation figures. Either way, more newspapers are shifting priorities from the traditional region-focussed models of reporting and affiliations to more liberal, commercial and market-led models.

Most journalists observed that news commercialisation may have stabilised the industry by providing useful revenue that sustains news publishing; it is however not without its challenges- problems that potentially affect journalists, news organisations and democracy.

**4.5.3 Challenges to the Profession**

The study found that Nigeria’s changing and challenging environment has had a topsy-turvy impact on the press and may have compromised it. The challenge of financial sustainability has posed a real threat to editorial independence, political neutrality and investigative journalism.
A *Leadership* editor in Abuja commented that:

*Besides the challenge of limited access to capital and low circulation; credit scarcity makes newspapers vulnerable to political and economic pressures as they struggle for survival because they do not generate sufficient revenue to expand and develop.*” (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

Journalists in our Focus Group discussion in Lagos identified several significant challenges confronting reporters in the pursuit and discharge of their responsibilities. They agreed that the Fourth Estate in Nigeria have made giant strides but are still confronted with constraints such as “proprietor’s influence, dearth of resources, poor conditions of service, political and corporate interference, politically-motivated kidnappings, job hazards as well as the lure of monetary gratification” which tend to subvert editorial independence. These limitations are hereunder discussed under economic, professional, legal and physical challenges.

**4.5.3.1 Economic Challenges**

The relevance of the media in democracy is undisputed and freedom is a fundamental requirement needed by media practitioners everywhere to expressly discharge their duties. In Nigeria however, press freedom is not only threatened but is radically endangered. A *Vanguard* reporter stated that:

*Media freedom is a fragile commodity and we journalists are particularly exposed to threats. We operate at the frontlines of a battle for political power that is often waged with deadly weapons. Censorship, harassment, imprisonment of journalists and political control of news outlets are some of the most often cited dangers to a free media.* (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

An Abuja reporter said that Nigeria’s ruthless business climate characterised by poor circulation figures, poor wage structures, and sub-standard working conditions influences unprofessional practices across the board. He stated that many proprietors are unable, unwilling or deliberately delay salaries and wages. “*There are cases where, newspaper organisations owe their workers between five and 12 months arrears of salaries and wages.*”

Admittedly, it would be extremely difficult for the media organisations and journalists working in them to act independently under such financial circumstances. The press
have become easy preys to interest groups seeking to advance their selfish agendas, using newspapers as platforms of propaganda. A Lagos-based journalist noted that:

*Newspaper organisations and their journalists are pressured by needs and want to engage in immoral conduct such as accepting gifts and bribe to ensure survival. Journalists probably would be less inclined to corruption we have more.* (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)

The comments above indicate vulnerability to corrupt practices within newspaper outfits, a situation compounded by poor salaries and poor working conditions. The concept of minimum wage generally prevents the income threshold from falling below certain earnings, however, in the newspaper industry, mainly dominated by the private ownership; salary earnings are largely unstructured, untimely and inadequate. The bargaining power of each individual is fundamental to wage negotiations and salary agreements. While this system may give a few experienced journalist fair advantage; majority others are left at a disadvantage. Significantly therefore, the system exploits Nigeria’s mass unemployment and gives proprietors undue advantage during recruitment and salary negotiation.

Table 9: Monthly approximate remuneration of newspaper journalists in Nigerian

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Monthly salary (Naira)</th>
<th>Euro equivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reporter</td>
<td>N25,000 - 34,000</td>
<td>€125 – 170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Correspondent</td>
<td>N35,000 - 50,000</td>
<td>€175 – 250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Editor</td>
<td>N50,000 - 75,000</td>
<td>€250 – 375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editor</td>
<td>N75,000 – 100,000</td>
<td>€375 – 500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Editor</td>
<td>N100,000 -125,000</td>
<td>€500 – 625</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Data gathered at focus group discussions and interviews with 11 journalists*

*Note: Exchange rate at €1 equivalent N200 as at October 2013*

Interview data provided by journalists indicate that a large number of employed workers earn between 25,000 and 34,000 naira (approximately 125 – 175 Euros) per month. A significant minority earn in the region of 35,000 to 75,000 naira (approximately 175-375 Euros) per month; while the remaining few earn over 100,000 (approximately 500 Euros) monthly.
An Abuja journalist said that:

> When you compare what the entry pay is for the banking and telecommunications industry (N100,000 and 125,000) respectively, you will understand that we are grossly underpaid. Even if some journalists refuse bribes, their employers will take it. This among other reasons emboldened some to start taking it too. (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)

In addition to the above, an analysis of the cost of living in Nigeria indicates that the take home pay of journalists is not only comparatively small but an inducement to corruption. A *Leadership* journalist noted that “Nigerian journalists are an endangered species; over-used and under-paid. What Nigerian journalists take home is very ridiculous when compared to the job we do.”

A former Lagos journalist, now public relations professional commented that while still in the employment of *Tell* magazine, her first-hand experience of financial difficulties was from the point of her first assignment. She said that:

> I know that some media houses still pay ridiculous as take home pay while their directors live in million-naira houses... While my colleagues, mainly graduates were earning N30,000, I was earning 10,000 as monthly salary with a paltry N4,000 as transport allowance to source for stories within Lagos in a month. Sadly, these journalists risk their lives to get exclusive stories but get little in return. All these are openings for these poor journalists to be bought over by corrupt officials. It takes the glory and grace of God for a journalist on N20,000 monthly to close his eyes to N250,000 bribe to cover a corruption story... (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

**Cases of Unpaid Salaries in the Nigerian Press**

“NUJ pickets *Champion* Newspaper Over its Member’s Unpaid Salaries” (*Daily Trust*: 09/06/2013). The paper reported that the headquarters of *Champion* in Lagos was shut down from May 27 to 29, 2013 by members of Nigerian Union of Journalist (NUJ) over the non-payment of salaries and allowances arrears of its staff running to about 18 months. The article attributed industry-wide fall in revenue and management issues within *Champion* as principal reasons for salary delays but observed that it is totally unacceptable for any newspaper to owe its workers; particularly junior staffs up to 12 months’ salary arrears.
Similarly, “New Nigerian (NN) Staff Give Ultimatum over Unpaid Salaries” (Blueprint: 16/01/2013) reported that workers of NN are owed 10 months’ salary arrears – a deliberate failure of management (jointly owned by the 19 Northern states) to fulfil its financial obligation. Furthermore, “NUJ Threatens Media Organisation over Unpaid Salaries” (Punch: 02/04/2013) reported that NUJ president, Mohammed Garba, decried media owners owing journalists several months of unpaid salaries. According to Mohammed:

> We are worried that major newspapers owners making several millions of naira as profit owe their employees several months of unpaid salaries. How do we talk of sanitising the industry and the profession when some media organisations are aiding corruption by that act?” Thisday newspaper, Champion newspaper and Daar communications are warned. (Mohammed: Punch: 02/04/2013)

4.5.3.2 Physical Challenges

The comments from media participants indicated that the degree, consistency and brutality with which newspaper journalists were attacked during the military era is incomparable to the present, less-hostile democratic dispensation; however, Nigeria remains a dangerous place to be an active journalist.

Punch newspaper reported “2012 As Deadliest Year for Journalists” (Punch: 30/12/2012) by asserting that Nigeria has a long history of violence against journalists, particularly during the military era when the founding Editor-in-Chief of Newswatch magazine, Dele Giwa, was killed via a letter bomb in October 1986; and concludes that media practitioners are still under attack.

In the current dispensation, state security agencies remain a threat to press freedom. “Nigerian Police as the ‘leading Source of Abuses against the Press” (Guardian editorial: 4/5/2010). The editorial claimed that the police are frequent tools in the hands of executive power holders who use them to intimidate or suppress the press. A Tribune correspondent stated that:

> The job of a journalist is highly dangerous. While the spate of attacks has reduced; when compared to other emerging democratic states, Nigeria still has a high mortality rate in terms of media professionals. (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)
The research findings indicate that a major threat to press freedom and general security since 2011 has been the violent campaign by the militant Islamist sect Boko Haram, whose wave of bombings, assassinations, and intimidation across the Northern part of Nigeria has left a trail of death and destruction.

“Nigeria: Media under Siege as Boko Haram Bombs Thisday, Sun and Moment” (Leadership: 27/04/2012). The paper reported that the Boko Haram sect yesterday (26/04/12) turned its attention to the media as it “unleashed a string of coordinated attacks on three media houses in Abuja and Kano killing no fewer than nine journalists in the process.” Guardian reported the same attack: “Boko Haram suspected as bombs kill at least seven at Nigerian newspapers” (Guardian: 27/04/2012).

During the news-game using the above newspaper cutting, a reporter with Trust noted that the attack on Thisday in Abuja:

...was not only targeted at Southern newspapers. A reporter of the Nigerian Television Station was killed in Maiduguri. So that attack on Thisday in Abuja is not an isolated incident. The attack is intended to send out a strong signal to the media in general. (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

When asked if the attack on Thisday and other Southern-based newspapers is a signal that the North will no longer tolerate the Lagos press, several participants from Abuja and Lagos agreed that Boko Haram did not act for or on behalf of the North so it is inaccurate to infer that the North will no longer accommodate Southern newspapers. A Leadership reporter noted that:

Boko Haram, the sect responsible for the attacks claim that the reason for the bombings was because Thisday was not reporting in their favour. They also threaten to attack seven other newspapers both in the North and South. (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

In ascertaining press freedom, an article titled: “How free is the Nigerian Press?” (Thisday: 19/05/2013) argued that journalists are still being murdered in the course of their duties. These include: Godwin Agbroko of Thisday (December 22, 2006), Paul Abayomi Ogundjeji, Thisday (August 16, 2008), Bayo Ohu, Guardian (September 20, 2009), Edo Sule Ugbagwu, The Nation (April 24, 2010), Zakariya Isa

A United Kingdom-based organisation *Committee to Protect Journalists* (CPJ) ranked Nigeria high among nations where killing of journalists is seen to be rampant. An article titled: “World Press Freedom Day: Nigeria 11th Worst Nation for Journalists” (*Leadership*: 03/05/2013) lamented that while deadly violence continues to plague the press globally; there has been a noticeable increase in Nigeria.

cpj.org\(^{238}\) also listed several recently killed journalists and they include: Sunday Gyang Bwede and Nathan Dabak of *The Light Bearer* both murdered in April 24, 2010 in Jos, Pleateau State; Ikechukwu Udendu of *Anambra News*, murdered in January 2013 in Anambra state and Nansok Sallah of *Highland FM*, murdered in January 2012.

It is important to note that while killing of journalists may have reduced since 1999; violence against media practitioners (particularly by State security agents and political thugs) did not end with military rule. Nigerian journalists still face real and potential threats in the discharge of duties. These threats may have potentially impeded investigative journalism as a whole or limited newspaper’s ability to push boundaries, probe politicians or challenge certain economic or policy excesses.

### 4.5.3.3 Legal Challenges

Access to information is a challenge as certain individuals, organisations and government departments deny or restrict journalists’ right of access. A significant number of journalists agreed that access to government documents is limited because official papers are either classified as confidential information or under national security, a practice that became the rule, rather than an exception during the military era. Until the passage of the Freedom of Information (FoI) Act in 2011, access to official information remained restricted by provisions in the 1962 Official Secrets Act, Decree 4 of 1984 and the Criminal Code, which created various press and speech offenses, including sedition, criminal defamation, and publication of false news.

\(^{238}\) [http://www.cpj.org/killed/africa/nigeria/]
The 2011 FOI Act was seen by several newspaper journalists as a milestone that would gradually remove several legal restrictions that hinder access to official information; thus guaranteeing citizens' right to public information and improving the working environment in which newspapers operate.

*Daily Trust* and *Punch* newspapers articles: “Jonathan Sets the Agenda for Office and Signs the Fol Bill into Law” (*Daily Trust*: 01/06/2011) and “President Signs Historic Fol Bill” (*Punch*: 01/06/2011) both reported that the new legislation is the result of a decade-long advocacy campaign led by civil society groups and media practitioners. *Guardian* newspaper editorial (04/06/2013) observed that the signing of FOI Act is a “key step to ending impunity. The bill is fundamental to rule of law, human rights and the key role of the media in sustaining democracy”.

Since its passage in 2011, has access to government documents enhanced press performance? Are journalists as well as the general public able to access government information? Is "right-to-access" being implemented and enforced? Commenting on the Foi Bill since its passage, a reporter with *Tribune* contended that nothing has changed in terms of barriers journalists face in accessing information. He said that:

> Since the Foi was passed into law, little has changed. Access to information still remains a privilege; not a right, in fact, certain journalists are allowed access to certain government event because they work in certain organisations or belong to certain opinion group or have certain political affiliations. As you should expect, if you are part of opposition or are critical, you are likely to be barred. (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

Another Southern journalist said that:

> Laws don't implement themselves; they are implemented by people. In the Nigerian context where there are no clear guidelines for implementation, compliance and enforcement... It is observed that the Act contains more exemption sections and clauses than sections that grant access to information, alerting that some mischievous public officers can use these sections for unjust purposes. (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

“The Reality of Freedom of Information Bill” (*Daily Trust*: 17/9/2012) noted that the excitement that came with the signing of the 2011 Fol Act, as elicited among members of civil society, the media and human rights groups, is being replaced with
frustration and disappointment. The Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE), in responding to the impact of the FoI Act remarked that “the president has more than anyone else empowered the citizens to participate in the governance of their own affairs; however, its implementation so far has been far more in breach of the provisions than compliance by government agencies.”

The FoI was summed up by an Abuja editor as “toothless bulldog, a deliberate watered down version of reality reconfigured by Nigeria’s elites to further conceal corruption at all levels.” So, frustration with the limitations of the legislature is not confined to southern editorial rooms. These comments indicate that denial of access to information in Nigeria remains a real threat to democracy. A virile press is the voice and conscience of the people. It plays an optimised role in an atmosphere of freedom, in which access to information is guaranteed and where ideas, information and opinion are expressed freely. In the absence of press freedom and unlimited access to information; official secrecy and concealment will continue to hinder media professionals across the board.

4.5.3.4 Professional Challenges

This study has identified three critical professional challenges that confront the press. Firstly, newspaper proprietors, through recruitment policies, management structures and editorial priorities; pose a threat to professionalism due to the premium they place on their relationship with business and political elites. Secondly, most newspaper organisations discourage in-depth, substantive journalism because of the expenses and time commitment involved, this is underpinned by market-driven business model that focus more on popular culture than hard news content. The final challenge is a dearth of skilled manpower and competent staff.

A Guardian editor in Lagos noted that:

The media space is saturated with politicians who own newspapers. The reason why they invest so much in such ventures is for publicity and to push their political agenda. Are these papers economically sustainable? Not really. I'm afraid not. Gbenga Daniel as Gov. of Ogun State started Comet and Westerner newspapers but the papers died immediately he left office. That shows the power owners wield. (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)
According to Focus Group 2 discussants in Abuja, “it is a tall order to expect editors of privately owned newspapers to turn against or criticise their owners, advertisers and shareholders. “They also agreed that the power of ownership is overwhelming, especially in the Nigerian context where high unemployment, unenforced labour laws and a spongy court system prevails. An Abuja-based civil servant that partook in Focus Group 2 noted that:

> By and large, Nigerian newspapers operate in a difficult environment—dearth of infrastructure, no constant electric power, no paper mill, dearth of properly trained manpower; yet, they have to critic those who wield power and wealth. This is not a rather comfortable task. (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

The study also indicated that entry into and practice of journalism has become an all-comers affair, especially for those without adequate and necessary education and training. A senior editor with Thisday observed that the academic qualification of entrants into the profession is comparatively higher than previous decades but decried the quality of recent university graduates, most of whom lack investigative reporting skills.

Critical skills that integrate multimedia knowledge and Information Technology skills also remain a challenge. With more people consuming news digitally; the imperative for re-skilling, up-skilling and re-training appears to be more cogent than ever. As society changes, so must the press transform its ability to function as democracy's watchdog. A Southern newspaper editor commented that:

> The quality of newspaper content is directly related to the competence of journalist. What we have are mostly unequipped and ill-trained graduates who find themselves in the press but lack critical investigative and basic reporting skills with which to report corruption, election crisis, ethnic tension and other socio-political issues in a balanced manner. (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

A noteworthy number of Lagos reporters said that training drastically improved their writing. Solving the skills deficit in their reporting made it easier for them to address the other challenges to their work. However, training does not always lead to better journalism, principally because it only addresses one challenge (a lack of skills) of the many facing journalists.
The regulatory body for journalists, the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), according to participants has had minimal influence on its members and on the profession. An Abuja editor highlighted that “in terms of basic professional academic-entry criteria, as is the case with the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) or Nigerian Medical Association (NMA); the NUJ is unable to properly-monitor the standards of members, particularly those with aggressive and predatory tendencies.”

The above comment equates media professionals with those in legal and medical practice; however, unlike those professions, there is a basic distinction about the press, namely, it is impossible for the NUJ to restrict entry into the profession only to media, communication or journalism graduates. The bulk of what journalists do is communication (at a professional level) but then, the ability to communicate is not the exclusive preserve of qualified media professionals.

The final obstacle under professional challenges is the overwhelming lack of infrastructure- computers, dicta-phones, digital recorders and camera, mobile internet, limited access to online resources and the inadequacy of in-house training and development. A reporter from Abuja noted that:

*We lack to tools with which to do the job effectively. In most newsrooms, there are not enough computers in some offices for everyone to have access at the same time. Personal laptops are rare and digital recorders are a big deal. It should not be so.* (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

Figure 11 below indicates major criss-crossing challenges that confronts journalists in Nigeria, specifically, obstacles to professionalism and performance.

![Figure 10: Cross-cutting challenges in the Nigerian media](source)

*Source: Data gathered at interviews and group discussions*
The study found poor pay and limited access to information as the biggest obstacles to professionalism. These challenges significantly impede performance and objectivity in the press. The findings also suggest that news coverage of politics is not adequately keeping the public informed, nor is the press playing its watchdog role effectively. The press tend to report more on principal political actors and the activities of political parties from the perspective defined by the elite.

When the press report on government budgets; it does not monitor budgetary priorities or budgetary implementation; when the media evaluates an administration; they focus on what government is doing; not how the public benefits from government activities. Often, stories on political and economic development in the mainstream media are inadequate, incomplete and inconsistent with reality. Reportage of politics in particular is generally predictable and pedestrian. Given the centrality of politics to Nigeria’s economy, coverage of main political issues are peripheral while partisanship and bias are central.

4.5.4 Effects of Institutional Structures on the Press

The study effects of the current institutional structure of the press on newspaper content are twofold: corruption and the increasing influence of advertising revenue. These two combined have eroded editorial independence in most Nigerian newspapers, thus limiting the ability of the press to positively influence public policy.

Increasing Influence of Advertising over Reportage

Historically, advertising and circulation covered a substantial part of newspaper production cost, leaving the reading public to buy at reduced prices. A steady decline of the latter has meant a progressive dependence on corporate advertisement. However, advertising revenue is also declining. According to an article titled: “Nigerian Advertisers Spend N103Billion Naira in 2011” (Sunday Trust: 18/11/2012), advertising revenue for newspapers continues to dwindle notably. The newspaper reported that television advertising revenue increased in 2011 by N46.076 billion as against the N39.656 billion recorded in 2010. Radio recorded N13.142 billion as against N12.807 billion spent in 2010. Outdoor expenditure was N28.142 billion compared to N28.562 spent in 2011 while the print recorded N15.395 billion below N16.524 spent in 2010.
An editor with Tribune remarked that “corporate and political advertisements are the two main sources of revenue in the industry but the latter far outweighs the former”. The illustrations below in (Thisday and Tribune newspapers) provide ample evidence of how some newspapers now use their front-page for political advertisement.

Figure 12: Nigeria Arise. Support Jonathan
Source: Thisday (12/01/2011)

Figure 13: Nigeria Arise. Support Jonathan
Source: Nigerian Tribune (12/01/2011)
The primacy of political advertisement indicates a shift towards increased commercial spaces in order to accommodate more advertisements and generate more revenue. Note that the placement of the advertisement in the front page would have been taken up by headlines or a news-photo for the lead story. This has several implications for newspapers, particularly their ability to inform the public and encourage political participation. On one hand, it supports the revenue base of the press and increases financial stability. On the other hand however, the prominence given to advertisement may have compromise editorial independence. It may have resulted in reduction of space devoted to investigative coverage and analysis both of which are crucial to the political role newspapers play in a democracy.

Commenting on the influence of advertising revenue, an Abuja editor stated that:

*The influence of advertising on newspapers is such that news editors now select articles not only on the basis of interest to readers but for their influence on advertisement. It is the case that news is now tailored to support adverts and not the reverse. Unlike elsewhere, Nigerian newspapers have a close relationship with politicians and the political class are the heaviest advertisers both directly and otherwise.* (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)

The commercial dynamics that surrounds advertising in the press has resulted in indirect control of newspapers by wealthy politicians and corporate organisations, who through advertising Naira; influence the slant of reportage and define the boundaries of coverage. The nexus between the elite and the press is such that the former seeks to recruit the latter in the pursuit and contestation of state power; while the latter seeks to publicly and positively project the latter for political gains. It therefore suggests how interest in the press is manifested and employed for mass propaganda.

These developments are indicative of the extent that advertising revenue can tame investigative reporting and how government and corporate sponsors have used advertising contracts to ‘fix’ critical papers and even critical reporters. Several reporters were able to relate with the unpleasant experience of being blacklisted by government departments or private companies when they critic particular state policy or specific companies. Commenting on the power of advertising, a Public Relations professional in Lagos believes that:
Most newspapers today are looking for easy money, particularly from politicians without figuring out how to be financially independent. The economics of most newspapers is dependent on political adverts. It is therefore not surprising that only a few newspapers can declare their circulation figures with accuracy. (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)

The above commentaries imply a deepening of affiliation between newspapers and the political elite in which the elite provide revenue through sponsorship, advertisement, access and privileges for the press and in return, the press operates as propaganda machinery for the reassertion, re-election and hegemonic dominance of the ruling class. An alliance based on mutual economic benefit. So long as advertisements are steady, the press will stay in their favour.

Is political advertising the only means through which newspapers can survive? Is it possible to marry editorial objectivity with increased advertisement? In response to the above questions, an interviewed journalist noted that:

*I think increased advertising revenue side by side with independence is one thing that can make the industry survive as a whole. Newspapers should start looking at commercial and professional way of generating revenue, and stop banking on easy advertising. That's why you see some papers die a natural death because most of them exist for particular political parties; so when the parties that favour them are no more in power, they fade out.* (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)

The symbiotic relationship that characterise media/politics nexus in Nigeria is at variance with widely-accepted democratic principles. The relationship potentially signifies a decline in the media’s ability to perform its watchdog role. While admitting that the press are confronted with serious legal, professional, economic and physical challenges, it is a disservice to public interest and a threat to democracy when professionalism and objectivity are sacrificed on the altar of advertising revenue. The study found that while a few newspapers are able to balance editorial independence with commercial success; others have not. While some focus group discussants question the over-dependence on political advertisement in the press; others concedes that it is impossible to marry the two.

A Lagos based journalists concedes that:

*In my 23 years of media engagement, survival in the newspaper industry boils down to advertisement. NEXT newspapers (now defunct) that tried to breathe in a bit of fresh air by its robust investigative journalism had to*
close down due to lack of funds. Attack corruption and corruption fights you back. *NEXT* was forced into an early embalment due to suffocating lack of advertisement funds. (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)

It is noteworthy that attempts at publishing left or labour-oriented newspapers has not succeeded mainly due to a dearth of advertising revenue- the defunct *Next* newspaper was commercially limited due to poor advertising income.

**Corruption in the Nigerian Press**

There is diversity and plurality in Nigeria’s print media, providing a wide range of news and information. The study however indicates that news organisations in general and newspaper journalists in particular are deeply entrenched in allegations of controversies, corruption, and “cheque-book journalism\(^{239}\) which in no small way affect objectivity, professionalism and balanced reporting. Nigerians are exposed to extensive corruption and political influences that permeates society. Within the media, journalists are also exposed to bribes and gratifications (any form of offer to influence new reportage). Bribery unfortunately encourages bias as the receiver is generally disposed to act in favour of the giver, even if it means omitting, manipulating or ignoring the facts.

Although the Code of Conduct, Nigerian Guild of Editor\(^{240}\) prohibits bribery; several journalists’ anecdotes reinforced the impression of widespread extent and rampant of corruption in the press. They unanimously agreed that “it is no longer news that journalists entrusted with the responsibility of monitoring the activities of public office holders as enshrined in Chapter 1, Section 22 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution\(^{241}\) are grossly engaged in corrupt practices and have allowed politicians and corporate organisations to compromise journalistic standards”. A Southern based participant in Abuja noted that:

> During the military era, many Nigerians were fooled and deceived that the hero of that time was the media. Realizing that the people believe, trust and rely on them, they betrayed this trust and sold Nigerians to the ruling class for their own material gains. Since 1999, we have seen a new Nigeria

\(^{239}\) Cheque-book journalism- the practice of paying money for positive publicity in a newspaper.

\(^{240}\)Section 7, Code of Conduct: Nigerian Guild of Editors: “A journalist should neither solicit nor accept bribe, gratification or patronage to suppress or publish opinion. To demand payment for the publication of news is inimical to the notion of news as fair, accurate, unbiased and factual report of an event.”

\(^{241}\) Chapter 1, Section 22 of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria
The above reading suggests a political highjacking of the press by politicians who conceive newspapers as credible platforms for public manipulation. It also shows a shift in public perception towards the press—one that is now sees newspapers as organs of “mass propaganda and political manipulation”. Journalists are now viewed as “shameless mouthpieces of politicians.” It can therefore be argued, and rightly so, that the press operate in their self-interest and in that of the minority few elite. Arguing from an economic viewpoint, a Group Five from the South noted that:

Newspapers sell news for money. Where else do you think they get money from? How many people buy newspaper or even read newspaper in Nigeria. Don't you know it's more lucrative selling mobile phone recharge cards than newspaper by those street hawkers? So they (newspapers) have to look for alternatives... (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

The group discussion reinforced the view that newspapers have two audiences: on one hand is the reading public while on the other are the ruling elite. These two audiences have conflicting interest in that, while the former (public) require transparency in and scrutiny of public and political office holders; the latter prefer a system of uninterrupted and unchecked political secrecy that makes misappropriation and embezzlement of funds possible. It is the case that due to diminishing purchasing power of the reading public, most newspapers are “cosying up” with the latter audience for advertising revenue and other fringe benefits.

A Lagos editor observed that:

Corruption is so prevalent in the media and the temptation is so high. Journalists interact with the high and might, especially politicians and big business people who not only have political and economic agenda but would enlist support for the media, at any price. It therefore takes a lot from journalist to resist an inducement of a bribe, more so, as they are poorly remunerated. The fourth Estate has undoubtedly been eroded by institutional corruption. (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

The commentaries indicated that journalism in Nigeria has shifted and bargained its position as watchdog of society to become collaborators in the gradual devaluing of
its values through mis-information and cover-up for dishonest public office holders. It also found that just as reporters lobby for press secretary position, their employers take on political appointments. A Lagos-based participant remarked that:

In 2011, Idowu Obasa of the News magazine became local government chairman under ACN, Dapo Olorunyomi became a consultant to Nuhu Ribadu who eventual became the Presidential Flag bearer of ACN. Babafemi Ojudu of the News magazine is now a Senator representing ACN at the National Assembly. Recently, Mr. Bayo Onanuga, Managing Director and Editor-in-Chief of the News magazine, referred to Mr. Bola Tinubu as his godfather! How can he (Bayo) be critical of his so-called godfather? (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

He continued further that:

Nigerian journalists have perfected the act and art of bribe taking. It is difficult if not impossible for journalists to bite the fingers that feed them. For example, since Ruben Abati (former Managing Editor) became the Chief Press Secretary for President Goodluck Jonathan, he (Ruben) has transformed into a government apologist. His critical writings in the Guardian newspaper for many years are over. (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

The commentaries indicate a link between journalists and political parties to an extent that some journalists deliberately mis-represent and mis-inform public opinion in favour of their affiliated party in return for political appointments. While it is not wrong for journalists to take up political appointments; it is interesting to note that such appointments pose a threat to common good when the office holder engages his network of media contacts to manipulate public opinion. As in the case of Ruben Abati (a former journalist now Presidential Press Secretary) it is not impossible for people in his position to influence their former colleagues, employers and newspaper to promote certain political agenda.

**Corruption in the Nigerian Media: the case of Azubuike Ishiekwene**

An article: “Newspaper’s Senior Editor to Refund 17 Million Naira Proceeds.” (OsunDefender[^243]: 22/03/2010) reported that “in a bold move to redeem its battered image, the Board of Directors of Punch newspaper today fired the company’s


[^243]: Osun Defender, a privately owned regional newspaper, published and circulated within Osun state and the South-West region of Nigeria
executive director in charge of publications, Mr Azubuike Ishiekwene following his indictment by a probe panel set up to investigate the various allegations of multi-million naira corruption charges against him. The board found him guilty as charged and immediately terminated his appointment.”

“The indictment against Azubuike was instigated by Mr Steve Ayorinde, a former senior correspondent of Punch who petitioned the board in February and accused Azubuike of using Punch newspaper as a platform of extorting millions of naira from corrupt politicians and top business executive. The weight of allegations and public outcry that followed the indictment forced Punch to set up a probe panel that found Mr Ishiekwene guilty of financial misgivings.”

I wonder if Steve would have blown the whistle in such a spectacular way if he hadn't been forced out of Punch. I suspect not, which leads me to believe that there are 100s more like him who staff media organisations right across Nigeria. (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

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Figure 14: Punch newspaper senior editor to refund 17 million
Source: Osun Defender

In our focus group reading exercise, participants in Group One in Lagos responded unanimously to the article above noting that it is a classic example of abuse of power, professional misconduct and greed of unimaginable proportion.

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244 http://saharareporters.com/column/nigeria-mass-media-trial?page=1
Another journalist with *Thisday* newspaper spoke of how Azubuike’s scandal shook the media in general and questioned the credibility of every journalist. “The Azugate put us all in bad light and everywhere you went afterwards, you were looked at like a professional extortionist.” He concluded that:

*It is a known fact that no reporter will report an event or cover a story unless he/she is “settled”, and that no media house will publish the event unless their editors and reporters are adequately “settled”. (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)*

Similarly, another Lagos-based editor with *Vanguard* added that the widespread nature of corruption within the media is alarming, particularly among pressmen attached to the State house. He noted that:

*Journalists and political correspondents attached to the State house or assigned to cover political events are the most vulnerable because politicians will do anything for positive press coverage. (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)*

The findings conclude that corruption permeates the Nigerian press. Media organisations as well as the journalists that work in them are indifferent to corruption. Acceptance of gratification has become the norm rather than an exception; even though bribe of any kind has a tendency to accentuate editorial and reporting bias.

**4.5 SUMMARY**

The chapter is divided into three interconnected sections. The first explores current trends and emerging patterns in newspaper ownership configuration in Nigeria. It also explains why and how newspaper owners influence the content of their titles through direct, subtle, structural and inferred strategies and what that influence is used for—political, economic and ideological purposes, namely; contestation of power, consensus building, agenda-setting, hegemony and propaganda.

Section two examines regional newspaper hubs to determine if they constitute an axis; why they are regarded as axis, whose interest (regional, political party and/or ethnic elite) they pursue and whether regional newspaper hubs represent diversity or division. The study finds strong correlation between newspapers in both hubs similar to the relationship between the North and South. The mutual suspicion, antagonism
and opposition inherent in Nigeria is played out in the press suggesting that the Nigeria press is embedded in ethnic, religious and regional sentiments that characterise the Nigerian state.

The content analysis data helped set the context for the findings from focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews. Focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews tended to offer a more polarised view of the editorial differences between the northern and southern papers. Even so, the content data indicates that newspapers in Abuja devote a high percentage of their content on regional-related news than their Lagos counterparts. The percentage of content devoted to news about corruption (4%) is disappointing. This indicates either pro-government sentiments or a tamed press. However, content analysis did not show that northern papers were any less predisposed to negative editorialising than their southern counterparts.

Lagos newspapers remain the dominant agenda-setting press with strong links to political parties and politicians thus suggesting alliance (through ownership and location of operation) towards the Southern power elites. Their significantly high reportage of corruption and political criticism indicate anti-government sentiments as well as political antagonism.

The study found content divergence within the Lagos press, thus questioning the blanket-description attributed to it by our informants interviewed in the north. However, in spite of thematic differences and similarities; regional inequality and ethnic dissimilarities of newspaper proprietors divide the Nigerian press distinctly. The Northern axis of newspapers, just as their dominant counterparts in the South, represents the interest of their region of location and more importantly, the political, economic and ideological interest of their owners.

The third and last section of this chapter investigates the institutional structures of the press in both newspaper hubs. It discerns striking similarities in the management and hierarchical structures in Abuja and Lagos. More importantly, four cross-cutting challenges are identified in the study. These are legal, physical, economic and professional hindrances that not only confront but also hinder journalists in the pursuit of their duties.
The effects of intrusive ownership, regional newspaper cleavages and institutionalized challenges have had multiple implications on press performance since 1999. A significant majority of these implications have raised concerns as well as questions about the impact of regional concentration of newspaper ownership and production as well as the contribution of the press to the political process in Nigeria.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE POLITICAL EFFECTS OF REGIONAL NEWSPAPER CONCENTRATION
AND AN EVALUATION OF PRESS CONTRIBUTIONS TO DEMOCRACY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter continues with the analysis and discussion of findings as they relate to research questions set out at the beginning of the thesis. It is divided into two sections: the first section presents an analysis of the political effects of regional concentration of newspaper ownership and production and discusses the extent to which these impact on Nigeria’s politics in general. The second section evaluates the contributions of newspapers to politics since 1999 to determine more specifically if regional concentration of the press has aided or hindered democratic developments in Nigeria.

5.2 WHAT ARE THE POLITICAL EFFECTS OF REGIONAL NEWSPAPERS CONCENTRATION?

The purpose of this section is to discuss the findings as they relate to the political effects of concentrated newspaper ownership and production in Nigeria. Four overlapping effects were identified in the course of the study: (a) news bias and imbalance (b) culture of political intolerance; (c) escalation of ethno-regional rivalry/conflict; (d) elite dominance in the market place of ideas. A broad array of issues is subsumed in these four effects. These include questions on the type of news bias prevalent in Nigerian newspapers? How does news bias affect public perception? What are the effects of political intolerance? And how do the elite dominate the press?

5.2.1 News Bias and Imbalance

News remains the central ingredient of the press. It emphasises the social relevance of newspapers as constitutionally recognised agent of public enlightenment, political education and public opinion formation. Inherent in the concept of news are ideals such as detachment, objectivity, neutrality, accuracy, completeness and non-
partisanship all of which increase newspapers credibility to the extent that they justify relevance to reach broad audiences.\textsuperscript{245}

Chomsky\textsuperscript{246} however has noted that news is a reconstruction of salient events based on two strands of influence: internal and external factors. The former includes news gathering, selection and production issues such as the reporter’s bias, editorial preferences, owner’s inclination and the commercial interest of the newspaper concern. The latter are outside influences which include corporate advertisers, government legislation and regulation, religious sensitivities, ethnic pressure, political party affiliation and concerns over national security.

The gathering, selection and reportage of news, as noted above, indicate an inherent selectivity in the process. The commission of one (news items) invariably implies the omission of another either deliberately or otherwise. Given that not all news is news worthy due to the constraint of space and time, the key questions therefore are: does the regional composition in the Nigerian press influence prejudiced reporting? Are Nigerian newspapers balanced, that is; do they report the opinion of dissenting voice and cover all sides of the divide? Or are they biased, that is; do they select, shape, construct and determine political discussion in order to serve narrow interests?

5.2.1.1. Is News Biased against the North?

In this section, data from the content analysis was used to investigate if there is news bias against the North and the extent of news bias against the North in the Nigerian press. As indicated in the methodology chapter, Table 11 presents the percentile summary of front-page news according to category and region (North and South). It is important to note that Abuja (Nigeria’s capital and seat of Government) is geographically part of the north but separately categorised and deliberately included in the table below due to its strategic importance to national politics. As observed while codifying data during the content analysis, news reportage on Abuja does not directly include or necessarily relate to the North. The distinction between Abuja and other parts of Northern Nigeria is that while the former covers the activities of the Presidency, the Upper and Lower Houses of Assembly, ministries


and sundry State departments, the latter reports news about local politics, policies and happenings peculiar to the northern states.

Table 10: Summary of front page news category according to region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Election</th>
<th>Presidency</th>
<th>Violence</th>
<th>Corruption</th>
<th>Party politics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuja</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Content analysis of seven selected newspapers

As noted in Table 10 above, news coverage of the South and Abuja are substantially more than that of the North. A combination of 81% is devoted to Abuja and the South- Abuja (48%) and South (32%) while the North only receives 19% or less than one fifth (1/5) of total coverage in the selected Nigerian newspapers.

Comparatively, the data indicates that the North is not sufficiently reported in the news, and when it is, over one-third of the coverage is dominated by negative news of violence, disaster and poverty. Almost half (40%) of overall coverage for the North is related to violence, especially those narrating electoral conflicts, ethnic differences and religious unrest. The most dominant of the above are associated with both terror activities by Boko Haram Islamist jihadists and ethno-religious clashes between Christians and Muslim in parts of Jos.

Comparatively, violence-related reportage accounts for less than 25% of total coverage in the South. The South is therefore projected as stable and progressive while the North by implication is framed as a volatile and unsteady region and by consequence, incompatible with business, investment and democracy. The South (Positive 8% and Neutral 14%) is projected in more positive light that the North (Positive 5% and Neutral 9%). The South also has a higher percentage of overall coverage- 30% compared to the North- 20%.

Table 11 below indicate how Southern newspapers engage in negative press in their reportage of the North and its politicians. It is noteworthy that while Trust newspaper in Abuja reported two opposing views- one asserting that Mohammed Buhari (a presidential aspirant from the North) is unfit to rule as remarked by Professor Wole
Soyinka; it also included the comment from elements of the PDP affirming that ‘Soyinka was entitled to his opinion.’

Table 11: Front page headline of Trust and Tribune

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trust newspaper (Abuja) 16/01/2007</th>
<th>Tribune newspaper (Ibadan) 16/01/2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Front page headline: “No way for Buhari-says Soyinka.” “He is entitled to his opinion replies PDP.”</td>
<td>Front page headline: “Buhari not fit to be president of Nigeria” says Soyinka.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Content analysis

Newspapers in the South (see Tribune above) only reported and commented on Soyinka’s remarks. In Lagos, Vanguard news headline was titled: “Obasanjo, Soyinka slams Buhari as unfit to rule.” Similarly, Thisday led with “Soyinka: why we must shun Buhari/Yar Adua because they Lack Credibility and are Corrupt.” The “one-sided” headlines suggested that Buhari and Yar Adua (both presidential candidates from the North are incompetent to lead Nigeria).

It is difficult to quantify both the direct and less obvious linkages between Southern newspaper reportage of Northern Nigeria and the concentration of poverty in that region; however media stereotype in the description and analysis of the North, especially in the Southern press may have contributed to the dearth of investment and development in the region. The data also indicate a high volume of coverage on Abuja. This signified the import of federal elections, especially to the House of Assembly and Office of the President as highly contested and controversial. It is expected in a general election year for reportage on elections to be substantially high (34%) overall. Although this suggests robust coverage of election-related activities; however, extensive analysis on the election has focussed more on regional differences and less on ideological discourse and debate.
Coverage Comparison between the North and South

Figure 15: summary of front page news according to direction
Source: content analysis data

Figure 15 above shows the imbalance in coverage between the North and South and how the press in the latter dominates the national discourse. The North/South disparity in news flow bears semblance with rural/urban information inequality- a complex and varied phenomenon with implications for political participation. Information concentration in urban centres, especially about the South suggests that the press does not adequately focus on the lives and activities in the rural North despite the fact that they constitute a vast proportion of the population.

When the North is reported, they are mainly negative and positioned conspicuously in the newspaper. For example, *Vanguard* editorial (14/03/2007) captioned: A Nation of Unwilling Leaders: A Political History of Failed Leadership and the Fear of its Continuity” blamed Nigeria’s past Presidents and Heads of States (mostly from the North) for Nigeria’s socio-economic challenges and alerts Nigerians not to perpetuate the dominance of incompetence. Similarly, Tribune front page (25/01/2007) titled: “Buhari and Yar Adua are Not Fit to Rule Nigeria.” Both Buhari and Yar Adua are leading Northern politicians with keen interest in becoming President. The headline however suggest that they are both “unfit to rule”

The (often negative) blanket coverage of the North is complicated by three factors: poor circulation volume, illiteracy and inadequate rural infrastructures all of which impede sustainable newspaper production, distribution and coverage. Ekeng\(^{247}\) in his study on newspaper circulation figures in Nigeria (as cited by Mahmud

Abdulrahem et al) noted that “a 2010 ADVAN Newspaper Circulation Report ranked *Punch* newspaper as the number one selling national daily only circulates 34,264 copies, The Sun was ranked second with 25,632 unit sales. Vanguard got 25,241, while Guardian and Thisday came 4th and 5th respectively, with 25,222 and 21,703 daily sales. Daily Trust, the most popular newspaper up North has 11,672 daily unit sales. Tribune, the oldest surviving newspaper in Nigeria, managing only 8,314 daily sales while Leadership circulates 1,600 copies daily”. Although controversy trailed the findings of the report, particularly on the accuracy of the figures; there is no evidence of disagreement with the rankings.

Let us briefly recapitulate the main findings that arise for the quantitative data reviewed above. In general, reportage of the North, especially in Lagos newspapers tends to project the region in negative light when compared to Southern Nigeria. This tendency is especially pronounced among Southern papers who present the Southern region as stable, developing and progressive. Electoral analysis and commentary emphasise regional differences rather than exploring policy and ideological concerns. Arguably, this editorial predisposition is partly the product of the regional location and geographic concentration of newspaper ownership.

### 5.2.1.2 Agenda-setting in Nigerian Newspaper

The findings (in the previous section) are reinforced by insights available from the focus groups and interviews. In the course of our focus group exercises, using the Lagos-based *Punch* newspaper report titled: “North/South Rivalry Stops Progress of Petroleum Bill" (*Punch*: 18/03/2011), the question of balance or bias was posed to Group One discussants in Lagos constituted by six journalists. They not only admitted that the quality and quantity of published news is a function of the gathering and selection process, but also noted that what separates one newspaper from another is agenda-setting content. They strongly agreed that there are sufficient reasons to conclude that news is manipulated or framed to suit specific agendas. A *Punch* editor within the group remarked that:

*News is a strategic determiner of information for political and economic decision making. It is used as data necessary for policy formation,*

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commercial necessities, trade and development, exploration of natural resources, military purpose and environmental impact. There is therefore a lot at stake. (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

When asked about the criteria for news selection and issue framing, their answers converged on news relevance, fairness, objectivity and freshness. A reporter with Tribune in Focus Group One however observed that “beyond textbook answers the owner’s considerations, available resources, commercial concerns and regional factors hold more importance in the day-to-day newsroom decision making than anything else.”

The divergent view, particularly on critical decision making priorities as well as the degree and extent to which each newspaper adheres to what criteria, provides insight into what shapes content, and its subsequent impact. While most participants agreed that the first and main responsibility of the press is to the public, a Lagos-based news editor observed that:

“The business model as defined by the owner cannot be overemphasised. The Editorial Board (chaired by the Chairman) normally decides based on the philosophy that is in the interest of the business. In Nigeria, most decisions are based around political power contestations, revenue generation- adverts and circulation in that order.” (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

The above commentary not only reasserts the manifest influence of owners but also raises several questions: does focus on profits and markets compromise editorial independence? Is it possible to marry government criticism with commercial success? In an attempt to please advertisers, are ethical and media’s social responsibilities compromised? These questions generated mixed reactions from journalists during the news-game, the majority of who stressed that “people before profit” should be standard practice; but “in reality, it is the reverse!” A significant minority, particularly reporters observed that “politically correct responses are not always consistent with reality”.

Group Five discussants in Lagos constituted by six unemployed participants from mixed ethnic backgrounds observed that it is impossible for news not be biased and imbalanced if newsmen accept material and financial gratification to either disguise paid propaganda as news stories or avoid reporting damning news. The “brown envelop syndrome” as described by Group Two participants made up of six civil
servants in Abuja “is not only prevalent; it erodes editorial independence. An Abuja editor asserted that:

The most inherent bias is in story selection; a pattern highlighting news stories that coincide with the agenda of a particular political party or region; while ignoring stories that coincide with opposing views. If you take the Nation and Compass newspapers in the South, they will report the same issue differently because their owners belong to different political and ideological camps (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

Ownership, regional and political affiliations and bribery are reinforced in shaping newspaper bias. Each of these places inherent pressure on newspaper editors and complicates the selection and framing process. Expectedly, all interviewed journalists claimed that the newspapers they work in report news in a balanced and objective way, but how credible is this claim? When asked if newspapers frame issues for regional purposes, participants of Northern origin observed that objectivity is a scarce commodity in Southern papers. Referring to Lagos newspapers, a Northern interview participant commented that “what we see in the papers are conflicting, at times fabricated news pieces. Spin and propaganda have become front page materials.” A significant majority, particularly in Lagos asserted that “Northern papers profit through biased regionalised and ethnicised reporting.” A Southern reporter noted that:

Just as State-owned newspapers are viewed as private properties, mouth-pieces, and publicity and propaganda machineries of the incumbent government in power; in the same manner, privately-owned newspapers function in a similar fashion- the operation and content reflect the personal agenda of their proprietors. (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

An analysis of newspaper content on “Amnesty for Niger-Delta Militants” declared by the Nigerian Federal Government in 2009 indicate a divergence of opinion between newspapers in Abuja (North) and Lagos (South). Although newspaper commentaries on the Niger-Delta crisis converged in condemning the insurgency and their violent campaign on oil and gas workers and destruction of oil installations and infrastructures (Guardian: 10/04/2007; Thisday: 25/01/2007 and 12/06/2007); the North/South dichotomy in the Nigerian press divided consensus on whether amnesty should be granted to the militants.
“Amnesty for Niger-Delta Insurgents” (Leadership (front page) 16/06/2011) reported that while peace is essential in the Niger-Delta; the amnesty approach may be hindered by political and logistical challenges. A Lagos-based newspaper (Thisday(editorial) 23/06/2011) on its part hailed the decision of the Federal Government to grant amnesty to militants in the Niger-Delta.

The Amnesty analysis cited above indicates that bias and imbalance exist in Nigerian newspapers. It is the case that every report, and by extension, every newspaper brings to a report some degree of objectivity as well as subjectivity. Each reporter has to make choices in writing a story: what to include, what to leave out, and what sources to use. A few well-placed adjectives, a few use of "alleged" or "so-called" can cast a definite ideological twist.

The study found that the most common way through which bias manifests itself in news is via word choice, which includes selection or omission of sources, omissions and commission, suggestions and implications all of which limit or expand a narrative or define how an issue is framed. Diction and syntax allow an idea to be established in any number of ways: some are basic, others are luxuriously flamboyant, some reveal secondary thoughts, others betray hidden emotions. An Abuja editor noted that:

_Bias, in many forms, is not necessarily explicit in the words that have been used but can be recognized when seen in the fuller context that the words represent. Journalists do this by manipulating single words in such a way that whole sentences' meanings are subtly changed and sometimes not so subtly._ (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

In Table 12 below, the front page lead stories of four national dailies as published on April 19, 2011 are reproduced to demonstrate the slant of reportage of the same issue (outcome of 2011 presidential election) in these newspapers.

Table 12: Comparism of front page headlines in four national newspapers

|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Source: Content analysis of selected newspapers
In all four newspapers, the lead stories are iterating the same piece of information—the election of Jonathan Goodluck as the President of Nigeria. However, it is important to note that the decision concerning syntax and diction, and what further information is added (as in the above example in Vanguard and Tribune, the two southern papers) can lead to sentences being so altered from the basic idea that the same exact event can be depicted in two fundamentally different ways. In Table 9 above, the use of “post-election violence” and “opposition party reject results” would have impacted the way readers interpreted the articles.

It is however highly possible that the negative tone and content with which the North is described fits the maxim: No news sells like bad news! It may also fit and reflect Southern perception and preferences of the North—an image of illiteracy, unemployment, underdevelopment and religious fanaticism. A Focus Group Two participant in the North (Abuja) commented that:

What we (North) experience is a black out of positive news due to a conflict of interest in the Southern press. Whether it is the media, the Southern elites or Southerners in general; it appears that that part of Nigeria prefer to report and read negatives about the North. Most of the news in the Southern media is misrepresenting and deforming Northern culture. (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

The study found that news in the press is not fully representative of diverse and divergent views. Newspaper content represented the perception of a minority class and satisfies the concerns of the political few. Through selection of issues, distribution of concern, emphasis on salient events, framing of views and filtering of information; most newspapers consciously omit alternative voices, do not adequately educate citizens to engage in active political participation but protects the interest of elites.

In the final analysis, a Focus Group 2 participant from the North remarked that “there is palpable fear of domination in the North where it is believed that a deliberate attempt exist in the South, especially in the Southwest to exploit the advantages of industrial and economic superiority and establish perpetual political dominion.” Southern stereotypes of the North may have overtime also limited the social and economic opportunities in the North. Newspapers are the platforms of these
exchanges between two unequal regions with the Southern press dictating and monopolizing the flow of information.

So the bias that is evident for the content analysis; is conspicuously evident to newspaper readers and journalists. An especially key statement in this section is the admission from an editor that regional affiliations are a key consideration in affecting news selection and story treatment, though southern journalists also drew attention to the diversity of political allegiances within the Southern press. That the perception of the Southern press is perceived as being regionally biased by Northern journalists as well as northern newspaper readers is an especially alarming effect of the way that location of ownership and publication helps to affect political perception of the press’s role.

5.2.2 Culture of Political Intolerance

Political culture is a set of attitudes, beliefs, and sentiments that give order and meaning to a political process and which provide the underlying assumptions and rules that govern behaviour in the political system. These widely held set of beliefs include concepts of equality of opportunity, liberty, democracy and individualism that underpin the functioning of a political system. The press through its mediated and agenda-setting roles are major players in framing issues, constructing and deconstructing national dialogues.

In the interviews, when asked what kind of political culture the polarised press has helped to shape in Nigeria, a journalist with Trust in Abuja noted that

...historically, the press in Nigeria is intolerant- of other religions, colonialism, military dictatorship and of non-Christian ethnic groups! The press in the South particularly, through their reporting have overtime "demonised the North politically and culturally. (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)

Another Northern participant asserted that “although there is diversity of ownership within Lagos, their concentration in the South has “created a situation in which the opinions of Northerners are drowned in the ocean of Southern perspectives.

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An Abuja reporter believed that the agenda of “the Lagos press is to undermine the unity of the North by portraying our region and religion as illiterate, underdeveloped and violent. They speak about the North as if we are all members of Boko Haram sect” (a radical Islamic fundamentalist group that have claimed responsibility for several bomb attacks in different parts of Northern Nigeria.) While no evidence of the above claim exists in any Southern newspaper, particularly within the sample population analysed for this study; the remark could indicate Northern stereotype of the South.

The popular account seeds resistance through its marginalising of the Northern aspects of the country. We shall need in this analysis to consider whether the North is silenced, or more disturbing, misrepresented in the central narrative. A discernible concern suggests that the South displays superiority tendencies towards the North and its press, expressly manifesting in dominating the media discourse and suppressing the other.

A Lagos-based journalist said that:

> Who are the Northern press? Are they not a few sprinkling in the over-saturated South-controlled press? No matter how Daily Trust and Leadership try, they will never get or rather it might take them a century to get to the level of credibility and respect that Guardian or Punch enjoy for instance. It’s a personal opinion but I think that it holds- without empirical evidence- since I lack any now- but going by the common sense theory of the press, my views might still hold some water. (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

Other Lagos-based journalist however disagreed with the above comment. While they admit that the North is comparatively underdeveloped, they argued that:

> Newspaper criticism should not necessarily be equated with hatred. In the North however, any news report that challenges the status-quo or questions authority is deemed as anti-Islam. What follow afterwards is violent demonstrations and conflicts. (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

Again, three polarised views emerged- the first asserts that the press in the South is intolerant of the North; the second admits that the North is underdeveloped; while the last narrative claims that media criticism ought not be equated with intolerance and detestation.
Figure 16 above from Ibadan-based *Tribune* suggests how the press create political tension with ethnic implications. The headline indicated the imminent dissolution of the Oyo State House of Assembly (South) by the Federal House of Assembly, predominantly populated by Northerners. A careful reading of the content however signify that the National Assembly is “considering” the use of its constitutional powers under Section 4(11) of the Constitution to dissolve the State Assembly as one of the remote alternative to restoring peace in Oyo state. According to the report:

> A 9-man Committee had recommended the suspension of the Oyo State House of Assembly in its report on the strength of the alleged unpreparedness of the factions in the crisis to close ranks (Source: *Nigerian Tribune* (20/02/2007, pp. 4)

Given that the average reader mainly skims through the news caption in the front page, the news headline would have raised suspicion in Oyo state and the South around the possibility and constitutionality of an imminent dissolution of a State Assembly on one hand while on the other hand, may have further widened cleavages between the North and South.

The underlying historical complexities and rivalries renewed through press bias and tendentious reporting continue to strain political and economic development
opportunities. The study found that newspapers have deliberately escalated tension through their reportage and framing of issues; as such a culture of intolerance and politicised ethnicity endure.

**Antagonism and Intolerance in Newspaper Editorials**

*Table 13: Summary showing types of editorials in Nigerian newspapers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>News</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tribute</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speculative</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Content analysis of seven Nigerian newspapers

Table 13 above reports the percentile summary of editorial types in Nigerian newspapers. As discussed in the methods chapter, the less prominent editorial types Special (5%) and Tribute editorials (8%) cover broad themes not linked to this study. Special editorials cover international politics not directly related to Nigerian affairs and therefore not analyzed. Tribute editorials are devoted to acknowledging and honouring historical figures and national heroes.

The two predominant editorial types are Social (28%) and Policy editorials (26%). Together, they constitute (54%); more than half of all editorials. The main thrusts of these editorials (Policy and Social) are economic and development challenges such as insecurity, inflation, unemployment, corruption, infrastructural inadequacies and ineffective policies that confront the Nigerian state. News and Speculative editorials (32%) combined, represent a third of all editorials.

A further analysis of policy editorials across all seven newspapers indicated an overwhelming anti-government slant in reportage. Although the degree of criticism varied between newspapers in both hubs (Southern newspapers were more assertive and critical), there was no significant difference in the penchant for anti-government sentiments between Abuja and Lagos newspaper editorials.
There are strong correlations among Nigerian newspapers and between newspapers in both hubs in their critical editorials—social and policy. This finding resonates with interview and focus group commentaries in which participants agreed that shortages and inadequacies in State performance “compels” newspapers to criticize government at all levels.

Why are social and policy editorials prevalent in the press? There are two logical explanations. Firstly, the tradition of political agitation in the press has long historical antecedents. Political, regional and religious antagonism was synonymous with and interpreted as press vibrancy during the colonial and military eras. This trend has not only endured but has consolidated. Secondly, due to the intricate relationship between newspapers and political parties; editorial criticisms are used to challenge the incumbent administration on one hand with the intention of spreading disaffection on the other.

Editorial are not only ideological but also critical. They seek to suggest alternative causes of action that may generate better outcomes on one hand while on the other; they seek to sway public opinion and trust in particular directions. They also oppose government’s policies, actions and inactions in line with adversarial press traditions not peculiar to Nigeria.

To summarise this section with particular reference to how newspaper content perpetuate a culture of political intolerance; content analysed data indicate that newspaper editorial are not only inherently critical but also sectional. Although such criticism are two thronged (government criticism and regional/political antagonism), the latter, more than the former is prevalent. As noted in this section, a culture of ethno-regional motivated criticism, especially between newspapers with regional affiliations and by politicians with accesses to particular newspapers has perpetuated political intolerance between the two regions as well as within the regions. This is made more obvious by focus group commentaries and interview remarks by participants who assert that over time, the Nigerian political landscape is charged with deep-seated prejudice of the other region.
5.2.3 Escalation of Ethnic Rivalry and Conflict

Nigeria is a pluralistic and multi-faceted society in which diversity manifest in ethnic, religious and cultural differences. However, Nigeria has been characterised by perpetuating socio-political instability right from political independence in 1960. This is consequent upon Nigeria’s ethnic multiplicity and its associated political peculiarities. Incidences of communal clashes between and within ethnic groups have been on the increase since 1999.

The Nigerian State has had to confront issues of integration and national unity. What is described as harmonious co-existence between ethnic groups is often very fragile and this snap in the face of slight provocation. Do newspapers inflate or deflate ethnic tension? What role do newspapers play to inflate or deflate ethno-religious conflicts?

The study found that Nigeria’s pervading multi-ethnic tensions which manifest in allegiance to ethnic group, inter-ethnic antagonism, hostility are also influenced by the press. The overpowering response from focus group and interview participants in general is that newspapers have been used frequently and considerably to represent the interest of their owners and of regions in which they operate at the expense of national integration. It is therefore no coincidence that in spite of the decline in advertising revenue and readership figures, new titles continued to proliferate.

The press, in using ethnic and regional differences whip up political sentiments and further polarise Nigeria by giving prominence to politicians with sectional and religious interests, who use ethnicity as the major driver of political choice during elections. The study found that newspapers have contributed to the widening cleavage between the predominant Christian South and Muslim North.

Exploring the Language of Reportage in Post-Election News Coverage

The study indicated that Nigerian newspapers prioritize ethnic tendencies, owner’s preferences and regional cleavages at the expense of national unity. Three newspapers—Nigerian Tribune, Thisday and Punch newspapers all reported on the 2011 post-election outcome between Goodluck Jonathan from the Christian South and Mohammed Buhari of the Muslim North.
A Southern newspaper front-page read: “Presidential election fallout: North Boils.” (Tribune: 19/04/11) reported that the outcome of the 2011 presidential election which favoured Jonathan Goodluck had “sparked heavy protests in most Northern part of the nation and has escalated into carnage, loss of lives and destruction of properties”. It further indicated that irate youths have “gone berserk over results” and that a “24 hour curfew has been imposed in Kano and Kaduna states”.

While protests and violence, as reported in other newspapers (see Punch: 19/04/2011) was widespread and nationwide, Tribune’s report suggested that the scale and scope of the violence was only limited to the North and made no mention of similar incidences in the South. The tendency to paint a part of the country in negative light by some Southern newspapers is conceived in the North and among Northern elites as “typical” of the Lagos press.

Tribune also suggested that the cause of violence was principally due to the president elect, Goodluck Jonathan being a Southerner. The coverage failed to take into cognizance the strength of Jonathan’s political party- People’s Democratic Party (PDP) in the North as well as the South. It also suggested that “the eruption of violence in the North was not only against Southern interest but an outcome of long-
standing anti-Southern sentiments that pre-dates Nigeria’s independence. (Tribune: 19/04/2011)

Thisday newspaper on its part led with: “Nigerians have spoken with one voice: one Nigeria and one president we can trust.” (Thisday: 19/04/2011). The newspaper’s front page was a sponsored advertorial that totally ignored the riots in different parts of the country but painted a picture of peace and tranquillity within the nation to its readers both in and outside Nigeria.

Thisday, in its January 12 edition titled: “Nigeria Arise: Support Jonathan. Time for Transformation is now”, also used its front page as advertisement for President Goodluck Jonathan political campaign. The newspaper was also involved in the accurate but controversial prediction of the outcome of 2011 election, when its IPSOS poll, published on the 21st of March, predicted Jonathan will win the election by 60%.

Group Two participants comprised of six civil servants in Abuja accused Thisday and its publisher, Nduka Obiagbena of representing the interest of the elite as the unofficial public relations platform of the Jonathan administration and the PDP. Majority of the participants also in Group Two from the North believed there is an
“unholy alliance” between the publisher of Thisday newspaper and the incumbent administration.

Figure 19: How Jonathan won
Source: Punch 19/04/2011

“Post-election violence rocks Sokoto, Kano, eight others” (Punch: 19/04/2011) comprehensively captured post-election crisis and maps the radius of violence that engulfed the nation. However, similar to Tribune, Punch also paid particular attention to the North.

Abuja-based Trust newspaper front-page titled: “Jonathan emerges as President” (Trust: 19/04/2011) surprisingly played down the controversies surrounding the election results and several allegations of rigging and corruption, especially in the North. The paper did not kow-tow the traditional, anti-Southern line that pre-1999 Northern newspapers would have deferred to; neither did it justify the violence in some sections of the North. It is noteworthy that Trust has sympathy for the incumbent PDP political party which was the platform through which Jonathan Goodluck actualised his presidential aspirations. It is therefore not impossible that the newspaper’s stand on election 2011 and more importantly on North/South rivalry was compromised.
5.2.3.1 Newspapers and Ethno-Religious Conflicts

Newspapers are social institutions involved in reporting conflicts. Since 1999, three main stands of conflicts have become dominant: political, religious and regional. While these three have interlocking relationships and often overlap; they are also interlinked by economics, especially the struggle for and control of economic resource. The study found that the press, due to its inherent regional outlook and consequent narrow analysis have deliberately escalated differences, heated up the polity, isolate particular events and accentuate division.

In the build up to hosting Miss World Beauty Pageant in 2002, Thisday newspaper published an article: “The World at their Feet” (Thisday: 16/11/2002) which suggested that Mohammed “would probably have chosen a wife among the beauty pageants.” The news piece was said to be cynical of Prophet Mohammed and did not go down well with Muslims. Focus Group 2 participants in Abuja agreed that the article was “offensive, blasphemous and denigrating to the Holy Prophet.”

On Wednesday, November 20, anti-Southern riots broke out in Kaduna and other cities in the North. The offices of Thisday and other Lagos-based newspapers were set ablaze by irate youth. Tribune newspaper (21/11/2002) reported attacks, killing and maiming of Southerners in general and Christians in particular. The pageant was finally cancelled due to the eruption of violence in the North. Northern newspapers were very critical of Thisday and blamed the violent outburst in the North on the insensitivity of a Southern newspaper. A leading newspaper in the North wrote:

It is very clear that some newspapers and writers (especially from the South) find it difficult to accept and respect the values of other people... Most commentaries on Sharia especially have been not only negative but utterly antagonistic ...and others are written with unlimited mischief. (New Nigerian: Dec. 9, 2002).

The commentaries during the news game proved insightful on the role newspapers play in amplifying regional and ethnic differences. Group Two participants in Abuja individually recalled the incident and together agreed that Thisday newspaper deliberately ran the article as a show of disrespect and disregard towards Muslims. A discussant in the group remarked that:

The newspaper was aware of what it was doing and the import of their content. I don’t know if they were representing the South or acting alone
but we all know that such an article will not promote peaceful co-existence. *Thisday* can’t pretend not to assume that the story would not generate anger among Northerners and Muslims. They therefore went ahead to publish the story. (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

The reactions in the North, particularly, attacks on Southerners signify an assumption; that *Thisday* acted on behalf of or represented the South. While the article may have touch on deep-seated Southern sentiments about the North, it seems premature and inaccurate to conclude that the South through a newspaper was casting aspersion on the North.

Two polarities emerged during the news game discussions: at one end were mainly Southerners who did not support the news article but condemned the violence and politicization of the issue; while at the other end are (mostly Northerners) who not only justified the reckless reactions but also interpreted the articles as a Southern attack on Islam and the North.

Several Group 3 participants in Abuja however argued that in a matured democracy, newspapers “ought to set standards and not get entangled in mud-slinging.” A student from the North remarked that:

*How can a newspaper justify such a violent reaction to a newspaper article? I am not justifying the content of that article neither can I blame anyone for the public reaction in Kaduna and Kano but how right is it for the New Nigerian to say that violence is a justified reaction?* (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

The article (*Thisday* newspaper published article: “The World at their Feet” *Thisday*: 16/11/ 2002) and its devastating consequence on relations between the North and South as well as the ensuing political tensions that followed highlighted how the press can stir misunderstanding and conflict. A Focus group observer from the North believes that “the unhealthy competition and division in the press have tended to hinder political and economic co-operation and development between the major ethnic groups within Nigeria.”

The study found an alarming absence of consensus among Nigerian newspapers. Politicisation of issues and prioritisation of regional sentiments over public interest has become a worrying trend. The North versus South attitude in the Nigerian press
continue to divided views, not only on ideological and policy grounds but on religious and ethnic basis. An Abuja participant remarked that:

*Leadership and Trust operate with caution while Lagos papers are more radical in their views. Without taking sides, regular contradictions and attacks between the two press axes remain a threat to peaceful coexistence, religious freedom, national development and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).* (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

The question of whether the press will outgrow petty tribal and ethnic skirmishes conceals a more critical one: who profits from public crisis? Do circulation figures and advertising revenue increases during crisis? Is the press compelled to create tension, escalate existing strains or do both for economic reasons?

These questions would have been investigated quantitatively by comparing sales figures, between crisis and relatively stable periods however, request for access to sales, circulation and financial data in all selected newspaper organisations visited was denied. Overwhelmingly however, a significant number of journalists agreed that there is considerable correlation between “*big stories and increased circulation and revenue.*” An editor with *Thisday* newspaper in Lagos admitted that:

*Big stories and front page pieces command big revenue both directly and indirectly- directly through an increase in advertising and circulation revenue and indirectly through publicity and professional prestige.* (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)

He further remarked that:

*When Thisday (Lagos) broke the story of the Presidential Poll outcome in 2011, claiming the incumbent president, Goodluck Jonathan will win by a 60 per cent margin; our newspaper increased production and circulation that month due to increased demand.* (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)

The Nigerian press have always played a controversial role in fanning and sustaining the embers of bigotry in reporting crisis. This finding correlates with Ekeanyanwu’s study of the Nigerian press coverage of political conflicts (between 2003 and 2007) in a pluralistic society. His research suggested that the Nigeria press has not fared well in reporting political conflicts and crisis because of the advocacy position

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250file:///C:/Documents%20and%20Settings/JATULA/My%20Documents/Downloads/PRESS%20COVERAGE%20IN%20GLOBAL%20MEDIA%20JOURNAL%20AFRICAN%20EDITION.pdf
adopted by most of them. The press is therefore blamed for instigating, complicating or amplifying ethno-religious crisis by providing a platform for promoting religious disharmony, manipulation of reports to fit religious and regional interest. The lack of even-handedness in criticizing and condemning political violence that camouflages as religious violence by the press is an obstacle to democracy.

A press that is prejudiced is incapable of telling the truth to government as well as telling the truth against his group is therefore a danger to society. The press in Nigerian is confronted with a crisis of rediscovery and reinventions, otherwise, they will be categorised as part of the problem rather than being part of the solution. Newspapers that promote intolerance and bias are a liability to society as well as an obstacle to peaceful co-existence.

To sum up this section, evidence from content analysis which detail the role played by national newspapers in escalating ethno-religious conflict through biased and inaccurate reporting not only show how newspapers report news of violence but more importantly, it indicate how the press fuel such conflict through sensationalism, bias and imbalance. Specifically, the exploration of the language of reporting suggests that a section of the Southern press project the North negatively. As noted in the case of Miss World Beauty Pageant in 2002, a Southern newspaper article sparked mass riots in the North due to the offensive religious content in the article. In a country that is prone to sporadic ethnic and religious riots, insensitive newspaper content has proved costly, leading to widespread violence.

5.2.4 Elite Dominance in the Market Place of Ideas

Do newspapers represent the views of the political class? Do publishers represent the interest of certain ethnic groups? Do newspapers portray the opinion of the poor and less privileged? These questions were addressed during our focus group sessions. Using the above questions as groundwork for discussions on the role of classism in the Nigerian press, a significant majority of respondents in Lagos and Abuja agreed that there is a strong relationship between media proprietors and the political class- a bond of symbiotic mutual benefit that enhances the interest of both parties.
Group Two discussants in Abuja observed that beyond ethnic and political divides, a web of association exists between newspaper owners, politicians, top civil servants and corporate elites for the sole purpose of sustaining and advancing their privileges. As we have seen in Chapter 2 (Table 1 on page 60) a significant number of newspaper owners are also politicians with direct interest in public office. In Lagos, the main publishing hub, a broad mix of newspaper ownership exists, 18% of which are owned by South-westerners while the remaining 82% are owned by Easterners (44%) and Mid-Westerns (38%).

This network and the influence they wield stretch farther than the media into politics, industry, public policy and governance. The media, notably newspapers and television are therefore used to set the agenda of what is to come and determine the boundaries of public discourse. According to an Abuja reporter:

*The overwhelming influence of newspaper owners, particularly through their managing editors has made access to newspapers and the press the exclusive preserve of the proprietors’ friends, associates and political/business partners. If you are out of that circle, you are out of circulation.* (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)

Discussants in Focus Group Three also in Abuja remarked that the real beneficiaries of the Nigerian press are the elite who use newspapers for reasserting hegemonic relationships. The ruling class weaves ethnicity and religion with political issues in a bid to gain legitimacy. A Lagos-based journalist commented that:

*Newspapers are the mouthpieces of the elite. If you look at the front page, editorial comments and op-eds of most newspapers, it is easy to discern whose interest a particular newspaper is out to protect. Not many newspapers make an effort to conceal their obvious support for a politician or political party.* (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

The study found that beneath the multiple layers of relationship among the elites is a shared desire to protect their economic concessions. Through ownership and management structures, corporate sponsorship and political advertisement, newspaper content significantly reflect the bias of their proprietors and their associates. The table below outlines front page news headline of two national dailies- Vanguard and Thisday over a seven-week period (16/01/07 to 26/02/07) to show the extent to which elite news dominate newspaper content.
Table 14: An outline of elite discussion in Vanguard and Thisday

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Vanguard newspaper</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16/01/07- Obasanjo, Soyinka slams Buhari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25/01/07- Atiku hits Obasanjo afresh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/02/07- Speed up hearing on Atiku’s case- FG tells court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/02/07- National Assembly faults Federal Govt on Atiku’s deflection to Action Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14/02/07- FG bars Atiku not to partake of April’s polls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20/02/07- Police recover late Funsho Williams phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26/02/07- My life in danger- Atiku: hold Federal Government responsible</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Thisday newspaper</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16/01/2007- Soyinka: why we must shun Buhari, Yar Adua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25/01/2007- Ali seeks Atiku’s impeachment. Obasanjo wants to oust Atiku</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/02/2007- Atiku plans to cause unrest in Nigeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/02/2007- INEC okays Buhari and others for election</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14/02/2007- Oyo Lawmakers are misfits- Masari (Speaker of Federal House of Rep.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20/02/2007- Funsho Williams phone recovered in the North</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26/02/2007- Election screening exercise- Atiku still in the race</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Content analysis data

Table 14 above shows the dominance of elite opinion, news and interest in the front pages of two newspapers (Thisday and Vanguard). The individuals mentioned in the above table are mainly political party leaders, politicians, public office holders and lawmakers with influence in national politics. Alternative voices, if reported, are concealed in the inside pages in most newspapers. There has been a subtle shift in emphasis from general reportage about the welfare of the poor and vulnerable, state of the economy, to political dialogue between and among politicians and political parties who mainly seek alliance for mutual economic benefits and financial gains. Remarking on the above, one Group Five discussants in Lagos observed that:

*The main change since 1999 is money politics and its link with the press. It was possible in previous dispensations to get an article published. The public had access to get things done through newspaper but now that journalists are not promptly paid or not paid at all, news content and*
The practice of “check-book journalism” (situations in which news journalists or media organisations seek financial gains from politicians in return for positive reportage (as cited in Chapter 4, Section 3 under the sub-heading- Corruption in the Nigerian Media: the case of Azubuoike Ishiekwene) has become the rule rather than the exception. This trend continues to challenge the credibility of the press as much as it does journalism, its role in politics and its influence on society.

Cases of Elite Discussion in Nigerian Newspapers
This section explores prominent elite discourse. It also compares narratives, counter-narratives and maps patterns of dialogue and general direction of news reports.

*Soyinka’s Comments and its Reportage in Newspapers*- “Soyinka: why we must shun Buhari, Yar Adua” (*Thisday*: 16/01/2007) The paper reports that Nobel Laureate, Professor Wole Soyinka, disparaged the candidature of the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) presidential candidate, General Muhammadu Buhari and his Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) counterpart, the Katsina State governor, Alhaji Umar Musa Yar’Adua, saying neither of them is fit to be president. He described Buhari as "one ex-ruler that the nation cannot call to order" adding that crimes committed against the polity "must be answered in the public space, not in caucuses of bargaining." Similar headlines featured in *Guardian, Tribune* and *Punch* newspapers in the South.

In an editorial rejoinder: No way for Buhari- Soyinka, Yar Adua: “He is entitled to his opinion” (*Daily Trust*: 16/01/2007) report that Soyinka’s disapproval of Buhari is an academic exercise as the final decision lies with Nigerian who will decide Nigeria’s future at the polls.” *Punch* editorial rejoinder (*Punch*: 18/01/2007) quotes Prince Tony Momoh (the then information minister during Buhari’s rule) asserts that “Soyinka has right to freedom of expression. Who does he want? There is due process of electing a leader in Nigeria and Buhari has undergone this process by emerging the candidate of the ANPP.”

*Oyo Lawmakers are Misfits*- in the South; most newspapers reported the “name-tagging” of Oyo lawmakers by the Speaker of the Federal House of Representative. Oyo is a key State in the Western region, a centre of Yoruba culture. “Oyolawmakers
are soldiers of violence- Masari” (*Punch*: 14/02/2007). The same is reported in *Thisday*: “Oyo lawmakers are misfits- Masari” (*Thisday*: 14/02/2007). The front-page news in both papers quotes Alhaji Masari (Northerner and Speaker, Federal House of Representatives) as he labels State legislators from Oyo state as misfits after a confrontational matter degenerated into aggressive physical scuffles among the law makers in the chambers of Oyo State House of Assembly.

In Abuja, *Daily Trust* coverage (14/02/2007) of the issue condemned Oyo State legislators and accused them of non-compliance with the rule of law. The report however glossed over the name-tagging by Masari. In response, several Southern newspaper rejoinders, particularly *Tribune* and *Thisday* (19/02/2007), acknowledged the fracas in the Oyo State House of Representatives but took up issues with Masari’s comment, accusing him of insulting the sensibilities and independence of the South. A column titled: “Masari’s thunderous denunciation” in *The Nation* newspaper (Lagos) captured the mood of most Southern newspapers:

I don’t know how much more abuse Ibadan can take before it throws off the yoke ... First were pressmen, columnists and civil society groups who railed against the legislative and democratic perversion going on in the capital city of Oyo State. Then were leading politicians who dragged ... lawmakers’ reputations in the mud. Soon after, EFCC’s Nuhu Ribadu weighed in with his emotional blather that brought the house down at a University of Ibadan colloquium. Now, finally, the rather sedate Speaker of the House of Representatives, Alhaji Aminu Bello Masari, has fiercely denounced the lawmakers of the Oyo State House of Assembly as soldiers of violence and rascality. Does Ibadan still have room to take more insults? (*The Nation* newspaper, 18/02/2007). Pp. 14. Emphasis mine)

**Southwest Rascals**- “South west rascals’ Jonathan under fire (Thisday: 10/02/2011); “Nigeria needs more radicals in government- ACN replies Jonathan” (*Nigerian Tribune*: 10/02/2011); “PDP vows to drive rascal Govs from Lagos” (*Vanguard*: 10/02/2011); and ‘South west rascals’ Jonathan under fire from Yoruba leaders” (*Punch*: 10/02/2011).

‘Southwest Rascals’- Southwest hits back at Jonathan” (*Daily Trust*: 10/02/2011) condemned the president’s use of the word “rascal” to describe members of the opposition parties in the Southwest. The paper again in its editorial: *Unedifying Remark- the President Calling Oppositions in the Southwest Rascals* (*Daily Trust*: ...
17/02/2011) frowns at the use of demeaning words to describe opposition party member in a particular part of Nigeria.

**Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) quiz Tinubu**—Ex-Governor of Lagos State and leader, Action Congress (AC) political party, Bola Tinubu was invited by EFCC for questioning over allegations of financial misappropriation and corruption during his administration in Lagos. The news was reported in all Southern newspapers. “Tinubu appears before EFCC” (*Punch*: 12/06/2007); “EFCC quizzes Tinubu over fraud, and Nnamani” (*Tribune* 12/06/2007); and “EFCC quizzes Tinubu, Akume” (*Vanguard* 12/06/2006).

Reports from the Lagos press however suggested that the move was a calculated attempt by the Peoples’ Democratic Party (PDP) led Yar Adua administration to attack Action Congress political party and disrepute the person of Bola Ahmed Tinubu. Although the EFCC neither singled out Tinubu nor attacked his political party; a “conspiracy theory” was hatched in several follow-up reports in the Lagos press. A Lagos-based editor with *Tribune* noted that:

> *It is no surprise that the Action Congress party alarm over an alleged plot by the incumbent administration to order the arrest of former Lagos governor and ACN leader, Bola Ahmed Tinubu by the EFCC is a calculated attempt by the PDP to boost their hold in the South west.* (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)

“The EFCC and ex-Governors” (*Guardian*: 20/06/11) provided comprehensive and objective analysis of the matter when the paper reported that “at least 10 former governors are indicted by EFCC, a move to sanitize the polity and rid the system off corruption.” *Guardian* editorial comments argued that EFCC’s action in initiating investigations on former governors sends a strong signal to incumbent administrators that corruption has no place in politics.

The general theme in the above cases indicates the prevalence of political editorial and rejoinders in all newspapers, particularly *Daily Trust* and *Leadership*. Three strands of dialogue were identified in the course of the study: firstly, attacks on region or on particular politician caused a thread of regionally defensive outbursts and reactions, whether from the North or South. Secondly, election and re-election of potential candidates or particular parties featured significantly in editorials. Finally,
criticism of government performance is viewed by opposing politicians as scoring political points.

To conclude this section on elite dominance in the market place of ideas and its consequence on newspaper reportage, the social responsibility theory of the press which asserts the media’s role as society’s watchdog is threatened by compromised autonomy and editorial dependence on proprietors’ political affiliations and advertising revenue. The direction of reportage and the interpretation of events mainly along political lines raise a concern. It specifically challenges the fundamental assumption that underpins the concept of mass media. The media, described as the fourth estate of the realm are not expected to be subservient to politicians, the state or its political institutions. It is expected the competing power centres, groups and individuals will have free and equal access to newspapers to articulate their views, thus enriching the political process. Evidence in this section indicates significant elite dominance in the market place of ideas has stifled multiplicity of voices and the clash of contending ideas and opinion.

**General summary**

This section has investigated the political effects of regional concentration of newspaper ownership and production in Nigeria. Using content analysis, focus group discussion and interview data, the study found four significant political effects of newspaper concentration in Nigeria. Firstly, regional concentration has led to bias and imbalance in news content and reporting and as a consequence eroding news credibility. Secondly, it has created and perpetuated a culture of political intolerance between the competing factions, regions and groups within Nigeria. Thirdly, newspaper concentration has further escalated ethnic and regional rivalry among the component groups that make-up Nigeria. Finally, concentration of newspapers in the North and South of Nigeria has allowed elite dominance in the market place of ideas, thus allowing the agenda of a privileged few to saturate newspaper content, often to the exclusion of competing and alternative ideas.

The study found that Nigerian newspapers have at sundry times and different manners, particularly through their content, served as political tools in the hands of owners, editors and the elite class in contesting political power. However our content
analysis does indicate that newspapers both in the North and the South can be very critical of government—often—and that they present a diversity of political affiliations. These are the more politically positive outcomes of an ownership structure which is still heavily individualised and in which proprietors often have political affiliations which are sometimes regionally determined.

Despite this qualification, in general it is fair to conclude that since 1999, the press is yet to fully engage with the Nigerian public in so far as providing relevant and adequate news with the sole purpose of empowering the public to participate in the political process. The effect of regional concentration of newspaper ownership and production has systematically hindered the pursuit of Nigerian newspaper in protecting the interest of the people.

5.3 POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS

In this final portion of analysis and discussion, this section attempts an evaluation of Nigeria’s regionally concentrated press to appraise their contributions to the democratic process since 1999. It is important to note that a society’s media and political systems are interdependent to the extent that politics depends on the media to inculcate and reinforce political values and norms such as freedom, voting and obedience to the law. The media is also used to maintain social order and national integration; organize and mobilize citizens to carry out essential civic duties and responsibilities; and mediate in conflicts that develop within the political domains. These broad functions are based on democratic ideals that assert the social responsibility of the press.

Using the above framework, what has been the contribution of Nigeria’s regionally-concentrated newspaper hubs to democracy since 1999? For the purposes of this analysis, the index used to assess Nigerian newspapers was based on a comparison between what is constitutionally expected of the press and what the press actually produces. Specifically, does the Nigerian press measure up to their responsibilities as enshrined in the constitution?
For clarity of purpose, Section 39(1) and (2) of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria provides that:

_Every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression, including freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference._ "Every person shall be entitled to own, establish and operate any medium for the dissemination of information, ideas and opinion._

In the same vein, Section 22 of the same constitution gives the press, right to hold government accountable to the citizens. It states:

_The press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this Chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the Government to the people._

Furthermore, Section 16 gives the press:

_The right and freedom to hold the governors accountable for good governance, and to control the national economy in such a manner as to secure the maximum welfare, freedom and happiness of every citizen on the basis of social justice and equality of status and opportunity._

These Constitutional provisions suggests that the press should do four things: (a) provide a forum for discussion of diverse, often conflicting ideas; (b) give voice to public opinion; (c) serve as the surveyor of the political scene as well as the performance of politicians; and lastly (d) act as a public watchdog that barks loudly when it encounters corruption, abuse of power and mis-behaviour in the corridors of power. Graber used these same indexes in her analysis and scrutiny of the media in the United States of America.

**Evaluating Newspapers Contribution to the Political Process in Nigeria**

**5. 3.1 Newspapers and the Market Place of Ideas**

In liberal democracies, newspapers are expected to provide a forum for wide, conflicting debates, discussions and ideas in the belief that broad and robust reportage will bring out the truth in political dialogue, capable of guiding public policy.

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251 The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Section 16)
252 The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Section 22)
253 The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Section 39)
The notion of providing a platform for public debate is strengthened by concepts such as neutrality, objectivity and impartiality. These ethical considerations in the discharge of the media are meant to stock the market place of ideas with diversity of perspectives and ideas essential for a robust democracy.\textsuperscript{255}

The marketplace of ideas theory stands on the notion that, with minimal corporate or government intervention—an open approach to the regulation of speech and expression, that is, ideas, theories, propositions, and movements will succeed or fail on their own merits. Left to their own rational devices, free individuals have the discerning capacity to sift through competing proposals in an open environment of deliberation and exchange, allowing truth, or the best possible results, to be realized in the end.

The freedom of expression and representation is regarded as a fundamental political right (under Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) which states that “everyone shall have the rights to hold opinions without interference” and “everyone shall have the freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of choice.”\textsuperscript{256}

**Do Nigerian newspapers serve as a market place of ideas?** The study indicates that although newspapers have proliferated since 1999 with multiple daily newspapers concentrated in Lagos; however, the plethora of newspapers is neither tantamount to diversity of opinions nor representative of the multiple facets of the Nigerian society. Though the number of newspapers competing for readership has increased; the limited variety of ideas in print and the narrow discussion and analysis of issues offers the citizens inadequate and restricted proposal from which politically informed decisions can be made.

The Lagos press which represents mainstream are mainly owned and controlled by Southern political elites who use their mediums as propaganda machinery and agenda-setting vehicles. An Abuja journalist noted that “Nigerian newspapers do not offer the electorate multiple and insightful coverage and discussion of the several

\textsuperscript{255}http://scholarship.law.duke.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2867&context=dlj (Accessed 22/04.15)

\textsuperscript{256}Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
political challenges that confront the public. When they do, he continues, the options are streamlined.” He also observed that right wing; labour and non-liberal oriented ideas that offer alternative perspectives are either blacked out of the press or not given adequate attention in the media. Ideas that do not conform to those of the Southern elite class, particularly notions that are critical are consciously omitted in the press for fear of backlash by politicians and corporate sponsors with vested interests.

In the same vein, Northern newspapers (Trust and Leadership) are not only critical of Southern political views but are also socially conservative on issues that concern the North. On the question of state efficiency, it is observed that although the Federal Government of Nigeria allocates almost equal resources to each state from the Federation Account, the performance of state governments in the North is rarely reported in Northern newspapers, and if they are, they are relegated to the periphery. The prevalence of abject poverty, the lack of social infrastructures and an inadequacy of quality education, social welfare, medical care and social housing in Northern Nigeria as opposed to the South are not featured critically and incisively, in spite of their gravity.

The notion of newspapers as market place of ideas is also hindered by monopoly control of the media, access limitations suffered by disfavoured or impoverished groups, and the arguable nonexistence of objective truth. While all newspapers in Nigeria claim to uphold the tenets of the profession; there is a lack of consensus on fundamental matters relating to Sharia Law, Boko Haram, and revenue allocation. Most newspapers generally reflect the dominant thoughts of their region or the political or economic interest of their owners.

As noted by a Northern editor in Abuja, the poverty of ideas in Nigerian newspapers is accentuated by business and political elites interact for mutual advantage, deal making and power-assertion, where necessary, power sharing, and power-conflict. This minority class use newspapers to legitimize their hegemony and/or monopolize public debates that favour their class. He stressed that:

The Nigerian press was the example of a vibrant, uncompromised and pro-democratic media, but shortly after the demise of the military in 1999, a new press emerged, one that is pro-money media. We now see media
The above narrative indicated that the “cosy” relationship between the press, political class and the State may have facilitated a conflict of concern and breach of responsibility by the media. The central argument being that such relationship will negatively impair the media’s ability to investigate and critic the State and/or its various arms. The potential of a clash of interest, especially on the media’s part has stood against the press in adequately providing a platform for robust and comprehensive discussion.

A 10-country opinion-poll study that compared the level of trust between national governments and the media conducted by GlobeScan in 2006 for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), concluded that “trust in media was; highest in Nigeria (88% media v 34% government).” But a further analysis of the report indicated the percentage of trust in each media in Nigeria and newspapers appear to fare comparatively badly.

In urban areas of Nigeria, citizens’ most important news sources in a typical week are television (mentioned first by 63%), radio (22%), and newspapers (13%). Just 1 percent mentioned the Internet and 1 percent friends and family. Nigerians are highly trusting of national television, with 90 percent saying they have a lot or some trust in it. (Trust in the media, pp. 14)

The limited range of reportage, analysis and discussion in the press, especially the near exclusion of serious investigative articles and corporate criticism have resulted in an overwhelming distrust of newspapers (13%) by the public. While it is not suggested that the press should continue the adversarial and topsy-turvy State/media relations prevalent during military authoritarianism; it should at least seek to better report critical/alternative voices and produce undercover reporting.

257 GlobeScan 2006 Opinion Poll Trust in the Media study that compared the levels of trust between governments and the media in 10 nations.
file:///C:/Documents%20and%20Settings/JATULA/My%20Documents/Downloads/02_05_06mediatrust%20(1).pdf
To sum up this section, the suspicious intimacy between newspapers and the political class is a concern. Aside from creating a disconnected public from political participation, it has allowed the political elite to control newspaper content and manipulate information. A significant number of interviewed participants from Lagos and Abuja agreed that to get a rounded view on any issue, a newspaper consumer will necessarily need to read more than a few newspapers (due to political affiliations and ideological polarization) to get a well-rounded world view.

5.3.2 Newspapers and Public Opinion

Newspapers are constitutionally empowered to perform mediatory roles in society, by this; they (newspapers) moderate and reconcile the dialogue between the public and the political class to allow meaningful political participation. This allows government to know the opinion of the public as well as those in the minority on one hand while on the other hand; it allows the electorate to understand the policies and direction of government. The dual role of the press has helped cement its relevance as a quintessential social institution, required for modern democracy to function.

The concept of public opinion is premised on the notion of majority rule that characterize modern constitutional democracy. Conceptualised as the complex collection of opinions of many different people and the sum of all their views; public opinion however falls within the framework of the agenda-setting function of the media. The press, due to their mediatory role, is to crystallize and articulate the collective and prevalent thoughts and opinion in society.

The value of public opinion is its relationship to public policy. The link between citizen preferences and electoral predilections and by consequence government and governance informs why the press take serious interest in defining, shaping and framing political communication in such a manner that policy issues as well as electoral processes, State institutions and whole societies are shaped and dependant on the media.

To what extent do newspapers in Nigeria represent public opinion? To ascertain if newspapers represent public opinion, a content analysis of Guardian (Lagos) and Trust (Abuja) newspapers was conducted, covering May and June, 2011. The analysis focused on the “Letters to the Editor” section in which public
opinion and commentaries are published. Two criteria were used to determine if newspapers published public opinion—firstly, we sought to determine if the published opinions were specific to local politics, national politics or non-political issues. Secondly, we sought to determine the slant of the letters using positive, negative or neutral parameters.

A total of 64 letters were content analyzed: Guardian: 43 and Trust: 21. For Guardian, 70 per cent of content focused on politics (Local politics: 28% and National politics: 42%) while non-politics was 30 per cent. In Trust, 67 per cent was devoted to politics: Local politics (24%) and National politics (43%) respectively; while non-politics was 33 per cent. In both newspapers: Guardian (Lagos) and Trust (Abuja) we found similarities in the priority given to national political issues—almost 50 per cent of content was political (national) while the remaining one-third was focused on non-political matters. Does this however suggest that national politics is a concern?

In determining the slant of the letters, we content analyzed them using three headings (positive, negative and neutral). For Guardian newspaper in Lagos, 88 per cent of National political content was negative, particularly critical of government agencies and State corporations delivering essential services such as Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA), National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) and Federal Road Maintenance Agency (FRMA) to mention a few. A similar percentage of negative content was found for local politics (80%). Published letters to the editor that were either Positive or Neutral were significantly low.

In contrast to Guardian (Lagos), Trust newspaper in Abuja published a higher percentage of positive letters (65%) for national politics than negative (35%). For local politics, both negative and positive were equal (50%) respectively. The percentage of published letters that were neutral was insignificant.

The above analysis indicated that Guardian newspaper in Lagos published more negative letters to the editors than Trust in the North. Whether this may be representative of Southern perspective of the Federal Government or a reflection of what Guardian newspaper wants its readers to see premised on editorial commission or omission and based on the newspaper stand towards the
Administration; remains to be seen. However, the overall percentage of negative letters, especially on politics is a clear indication that Nigerian newspapers do represent, to a reasonable percentage, the opinion of Nigerians.

To add to the above, the long-standing economic crisis in Nigeria couple with intense contestation for state power among the competing political and ethnic entities has meant that newspaper reports are influenced by politicised ethnicity. This is further complicated by the lack of consensus within the public sphere due to a lack of unanimous public opinion. On important public policy issues, the opinion of elites with access to State resources are featured prominently while the views of the majority and poor are largely drowned, just as the voices of ideological dissenters are mainly featured in the margins. Overall the opinion of the masses is treated as largely inconsequential, except during electoral surveys and opinion polls.

Nigerian newspapers have been fair in granting access to many viewpoints. The press therefore enhances participatory democracy by providing the public multiple perspectives on several national issues. (See content analyzed data in Chapter 4, Section 4.3.2. on “Playing the Blame Game.”) It is often the case that post-election reportage in Nigerian newspapers has indicated the orientation of the press to the extent that diversity and variety have created robust reporting and public trust in news reportage. It is noteworthy that the views expressed in Northern and Southern newspapers generally enhance the variety of information in the public domain.

On the other hand, the view of the social political world is deficient when aspects and critical segments of public debate are filtered out or included only vaguely. Public feelings of trust are more often than not based on personal conclusions than by excellent reportage in the press. A newspaper reporter from the South observed that during the 2007 presidential election:

Significant private ownership of the print media negatively impacted on and influenced the reportage in favour of incumbents’ parties and personalities. There were also numerous complaints from candidates who claimed to have been denied adequate coverage because of political bias and internal censorship. Opposition parties also alleged that they did not receive fair treatment from the media. Small parties and female candidates in particular said they struggled to compete for media attention. (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)
Similarly, a reporter with Tribune newspaper in Ibadan (South) noted that:

*Most journalists exercise a limited degree of professionalism; and because their wages are so poor, many take bribes from politicians they write about in order to make ends meet. Often, their extra source of income is ‘thank yous’ for the stories they write. But journalism's role in democracy is diminished when those ‘gratifications’ come from politicians with intent.*

(Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)

Public opinion draws from newspaper content. If the press fails to alert people to information that they need to judge major aspects of the political scene, citizens’ capacity to influence public opinion is limited. The media’s ability to set the political agenda may not inform the public of what to do; it however present issues to think about. In the Nigerian press, newspapers have neither provided adequate and necessary information on one hand, neither have they represented the collected opinion of Nigerians accurately and representatively.

In the final analysis, newspapers content between the two hubs and more importantly among newspapers in Lagos indicate diversity, competition and a variety of sorts. While they may not be doing enough to discuss the likely consequences of various types of political decision; they still remain a formidable force against the excesses of political office holders. They serve as a forum for expanding discussion of conflicting elite views about numerous political issues. As democracy consolidates in Nigeria, more and more newspapers now ascribe to non-partisanship and editorial independence. According to Focus Group 1 and 2 discussants mainly comprised of Journalists and civil servants in Lagos and Abuja respectively, Guardian in Lagos stands tall among newspaper that cover news in a balanced round-table manner, thus representing conflicting elite views about policy and politics.

**5.3.3 The Surveillance Function**

Effectiveness and efficiency in public office is critically related to transparency. The media are expected to serve as eyes and ears for citizens, and monitor the soundness of policies as well as oversee the performance of politicians. The evaluator role of newspapers lays in their ability to insightfully and constructively critic government actions and policies. In most societies, particularly authoritarian governments, criticism is equated with opposition and disaffections. This therefore
explains why newspapers are deliberately targeted in such regimes. In democratic societies also, media criticism also attracts disfavour and unpopularity.

Investigative journalism is a routine, primary source of information conducted by newspapers or freelance journalists that deeply probe matters of public interest which usually involves crime, political corruption or corporate wrongdoing. This is done through analysis of documents, scrutiny of government activities, research into social and legal issues, numerous interviews with on and off-the-record sources with the aim of uncovering fraud, corruption or error.

Although the press lacks the enormous resources and legislative power (such as possessed by the police and other state security agencies) to effectively survey politicians and the political scene, they rely heavily on leaks and tips voluntarily supplied by insiders and social critics. This is why journalists wait for such information before venturing into questionable political activities.

**How effective is the Nigerian press in performing its surveillance functions?**

An interviewed participant in Lagos remarked that:

> In spite of several attempts to suppress and control the media in Nigeria, Freedom of the press has been a long battle, fought and won by tears, sweat and blood, especially during the military era." The relatively free media environment was created not by politics but by the press. (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)

The comment above indicates that the current political environment and the consequent press freedom has remarkably helped the press to engage more meaningfully with politics, with the goal of cementing enduring democratic principles. In more ways than one, the press have uncovered plots to alter the Nigerian Constitution, illegally by President Olusegun Obasanjo and his associates to extend his term in office (see Washington Post, 17/5/2006)\(^{258}\). As indicated in Figure 20, they have exposed state governors who convert state resources for private gains. But have they done enough and can they do more?

\(^{258}\)http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/05/16/AR2006051600705.html (Accessed 23/04/2015)
The press have been accused of major shortcoming in political surveillance, complicated by shallow analysis of issues, dearth of investigative journalism and a failure to uncover gross misappropriation of funds and excessive executive rascality. The press do not assess the soundness of policies and the performance of politicians adequately to make inclusive participatory politics possible.

**Newspapers and the fight against corruption in Nigeria**

Nigeria’s soaring popularity in the global corruption index and its eroded image in the comity of nations are endemic and worrisome. “Fighting Corruption in Nigeria” (The Nation: 25/07/2012) reported that The Gallup Corporation, (a United States-based research body) ranked Nigeria as the second most corrupt country in the world and the most corrupt in Africa. Similarly the Economics Intelligence Unit, ranked Nigeria low in life-expectancy terms. “Fighting Corruption the Nigerian Way” (Thisday: 05/01/2013) examined the extent of political corruption and tags it as “one of the most-oft talked” about issues in Nigeria.

In evaluating the extent to which the press fights corruption in Nigeria, the editorial content of Tribune and Vanguard newspapers between January and February 2007
were analysed to determine the quantity of corruption-related news on one hand and on the other hand quantify those that derived from either investigative journalism or other sources. Corruption here applies to all public officials and politicians who engage in active and passive bribery, as well as attempted corruption, abuse of office, fraud, extortion and money laundering. A total of 52 editorials were analysed, eight of which were related to corruption (as defined above) - four for each newspaper, representing 16 per cent cumulative.

It is noteworthy that while both newspapers gave adequate publicity to the issues, only a single corruption news-story (representing 7%) was a product of investigative newspaper journalism. The significant others were derived from others sources, including but not limited to court proceedings, anti-corruption agencies, whistle-blowers and opposition parties criticisms. Importantly, the study found that a notable quantity of corruption-related news in the press emanated from anti-corruption agencies such as Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Public Compliant Commission (PCC).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Percentage of corruption news according to source</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Investigative journalism</td>
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<tr>
<td>other sources</td>
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*Figure 21: percentage of corruption news according to source
Source: content analysis of Tribune and Vanguard*

During the focus group sessions we explored the reportage of corruption in Nigerian newspapers. A significant majority of participant from Lagos agreed that corruption is the leading cause of underdevelopment in Nigeria and concurred that the average politician seeks power, not because of a willingness to serve the State and its people sacrificially but because of the juicy pecuniary gains attached to public office.

An interviewed student at the University of Abuja observed that corruption is so prevalent that it permeates every facet of the State. He noted further that:
Abuja is the seat of the Federal Government and also the melting pot of influential people seeking government contracts. The population of career contractors in Abuja cannot be rivalled elsewhere in Africa. The most expensive residential structure in my entire Local Government Area was built by a Senator in one year. He was not worth much before entering politics but his house is worth millions. (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)

The general consensus among participants is that newspapers’ attempt at exposing corruption is not only feeble but also grossly inadequate. Firstly, the press cannot do it alone, without institutional and public support. They do not have the capacity and resources to effective monitor the activities of public office holders at the local, state and federal levels. Secondly, a significant section of the press is also entrenched in corruption, made possible by poor conditions of service, unethical professional conducts and more prominently, external pressure from politicians and corporate organisations.

In comparing state and private newspapers, a Northern interview participant noted that:

*The state-owned newspapers lack credibility as they are practically propaganda machines of their government. Besides, there are very few still standing. The privately-owned ones are not doing much better. Their credibility is compromised because of their reliance on political advertisement and corporate sponsorship.* (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)

The final point was made by an Abuja-based editor who highlighted that the economic pressure on the industry has severely hindered the ability of the press to fight corruption. She noted that investigative journalism is not only time consuming but also risky. “We are all too familiar with several reported cases of killed, maimed or injured journalists, especially by the police and State Security Services (SSS). The use of force and legal tools to clamp down on media coverage deemed critical of the government, particularly newspapers that publish articles on high level public corruption, the poor state of the economy and the state of insecurity has increased.

To assert the veracity of the above, Campaign to Protect Journalist, an independent, non-profit organisation that promotes press freedom worldwide commented that a steady rise in unsolved murders in recent years landed Nigeria on CPJ’s Impunity Index for the second year in a row. Since 2009, five Nigerian journalists have been
targeted and killed while no perpetrators have been brought to book. Nigeria is second only to Somalia in terms of Africa's worst record on unpunished journalist murders. CPJ also reported that newspapers in Nigeria- Leadership, Punch, Trust and Vanguard are victims of government censorship and harassment\(^{259}\).

There were generous concessions that gave “some” credit to the press in their reportage of corruption. A Southern journalist based in Abuja said “there are still a few dedicated journalists out there who put their lives on the line in their attempt at exposing corruption. By putting the facts in public domain and providing alternative policy directions, they are helping the system.” Most participants agreed that effective media surveillance of the political space is burdensome on one hand while on the other; fighting executive corruption is not an overnight task, as it involves uncovering abuse of power, financial misappropriation and outright stealing of public funds, all of which are complex and complicated.

A Lagos editor noted that:

> Fighting corruption in Nigeria is an uphill task. It is not easy to look into the face of those who wield power and who may and can use it to achieve personal objectives. Much has been done, and much more needs to be done. (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)

### 5.3.4 The Watchdog Function

Watchdog journalism is predicated on the media’s ability to supply the citizens with information they must have to prevent or stop the abuse of power; to warn citizens about those doing harm; and to keep the public informed to the extent that they (public) can meaningfully engage in politics. To function in this role, the press needs to maintain close contact with elected public officials to understand their policies and at the same time maintain reasonable distance from the powers in order to criticize it.

In order to expose wrongdoing, the watchdog aims at finding hidden evidence that may help the public know the truth. Watchdog journalism has led to shameful resignation of power. A known example is the reportage of News magazine that uncovered age falsification and the use of forged University of Toronto certificates by the then newly elected Speaker of the Federal House of Representative, Alhaji

Salisu Buhari. In July 1999, Buhari admitted to forgery and perjury; and stepped down as Speaker\textsuperscript{260}.

A sizeable minority of focus group discussants agreed that Nigerian newspapers are making the most of the circumstances in which they are situated. In addition, most participants agreed that the press have been in the forefront in protecting our democratic experience. However, Group One participants in Lagos asserted that much of the significant work done is in the press is done by an influential few, mainly based in the South (Lagos). A Lagos-based journalist added that:

\textit{Recently the Punch did a punchy editorial that showed the excess wastage of the PDP controlled federal government. Business Day’s editorial was what pushed out the former minister of power - Barth Nnaji. They showed how he had manipulated the sale of PHCN to his advantage. Yes, the Nigerian press has, is and will continue to be the 4th Estate of the Realm. (Anonymous (2013) Focus Group Discussion comment)}

\textbf{Do the press hold public office holders accountable to the Nigerian public?} An Abuja-based reporter noted that while it is obvious that the political scene has changed, the role of the press is not less important, in fact, it is more complicated because there is no longer a common enemy as in the era of military dictators. The press since 1999 have had to adjust to the democratic reality while at the same time ensuring that public interest remains priority.

Most participants agreed that the force, resilience and aggression with which the press withstood military dictatorship and agitated for the return to civil rule have not been the same since 1999. The intensity of coverage and robust reportage required to keep public servants on their toes has been generally inadequate.

An Abuja reporter observed that:

\textit{An evaluation of the press today leaves much to be desired. We are now firmly and securely in the pocket of money bags. There used to be newspapers that constantly put government on their toes; not anymore. More often than not, what we have now are public relations platforms for the high and mighty. (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)}

A Southern discussant in Group Five noted that “newspapers are like diaries of political actors. If you don’t know what the politicians are up to or what the next big thing is, just pick up a few copies of daily newspapers, you will get a complete itinerary and list of their activities”. This view was corroborated by another discussant within the group: “we thought the media will retain its role against the military and put the present civilian government on edge, but what we have is conspiracy and promotion of profligacy, stealing, and publicity for looters as champions. The press in Nigerian is now part of the Establishment, equally participating in the sharing of the national cake.”

The commentaries above indicate that the change from military to civil rule was precipitated by the press but assert that many journalists and media outlets tend towards reflecting the status quo, rather than radically challenging it. As currently structured, newspapers are for-profit enterprises that are concerned about their financial bottom lines. As a consequence, watchdog journalism has decreased significantly not because there are not enough socio-political issues to report but because the media now compete in conforming to mainstream ideas than otherwise. As indicated in Chapter 4, section 4.4, only 10 per cent of total coverage is devoted to news about corruption.

Journalists know that the average citizen is only mildly interested in the political life that surrounds them. Consequently news selection criteria relate more to readership appeal than to the political significance of stories or their relevance to public good.

**Reportage of Corruption in Nigerian Newspapers**

![Coverage of corruption in the press](image-url)

*Figure 22: Summary of content analysis of front page news according to category*

*Source: Content analysis data*
Figure 22 above reports the cumulative percentile summary of front page headline news of seven national newspapers in 2007 and 2011. It is significant that only 10% of total news reportage is devoted to corruption in spite of its prevalence in Nigeria, particularly political corruption which entails official misuse of public resources for personal enrichment. In 2012, Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index ranks Nigeria as the 139th most corruption nation out of the 176 countries in the world; however, coverage of corruption is surprisingly subsidiary to reportage on violence (19%) and ethnicity (12%). Corruption, in spite of its destructive effects on economic development and nation building, is the least prominent in Nigerian newspapers.

**Why 10 per cent?**

The legal environment still perpetuates the culture of secrecy and lack of access to official documents. Although the FoI Act was enacted in 2011, its lack of implementation has resulted in a system in which the press is routinely denied access to State information. At present, there are unclear provisions for the independence of the press regulatory body-Nigerian Press Council (NPC)261 charged with wide-ranging powers to enforce compliance is funded by government and sit under the Federal Ministry of Information; reporting directly to the Minister of Information and indirectly to the President. It is therefore not impossible that such concentration of power may have been abused in the interest of the government, especially against contradicting and opposing news journalists.

Insecurity of informants both within and outside the press is another deterrent to “leaking” government information that may expose the excesses of public office holders. The protection and guarantee that whistle-blowers deserve is largely insufficient.

Furthermore, the proprietor’s interest and that of their political and economic associates also hinders journalists from performing surveillance and investigative journalism. This is further complicated by some media gatekeepers (editors) who filter news to select what is fit for publication in sync with the publisher’s priorities. Finally is the fear of backlash which may include but is not limited to loss of

261Section 7of Nigerian Press Council Amendment Decree 60 of 1999
advertising revenue, poor corporate sponsorship and denial of access to government information. An editor with Leadership in Abuja noted that:

*Government as well as corporate bodies are the biggest advertiser in the press. In some instances, it makes financial sense to tread cautiously when reporting sensitive political issues.* (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)

The present level and depth of political reportage suggests that the press is not sufficiently engaging in surveillance nor adequately performing its constitutional role as society’s watchdog. Media advocacy for transparency, integrity and accountability in public office through investigative journalism and evidence-based reporting is not robust and adequate. A reporter from Lagos added that:

*Some journalists abuse the Nigerian constitutional provision that gives the media the duty to monitor government, using the provision to ‘witch-hunt’ public officials and to enrich themselves through the seeking of payments for journalistic favours.* (Anonymous (2013) Interview comment)

The press still engage in watchdog and surveillance roles. The Nigerian political system in which the ruling and opposition parties vie for public recognition and acknowledgment of their performance has meant that the press in general and newspapers in particular remains the medium through which the public is reached. As a consequence, the press receives a reasonable degree of privilege information both from within and outside the political class, with which newspapers uncover corruption, critique policy and inform the public. However, since 1999, the propensity to undertake this function has become weaker.

**5.4 SUMMARY**

In the final analysis, this chapter explored two critical aspects of this study. The first investigated the political effects of regional concentration newspaper ownership and production. The study found four striking effects: 1, news bias and imbalance; 2, a culture of political intolerance; 3, escalation of regional tension and rivalry; and 4, the dominance of elite discussion in the market place of ideas. It presented evidence to show that each of these effects were at least partly shaped by the geographic location of ownership, and, sometimes, the propensities of owners to view their newspapers as vehicles for defending regional or even more parochial concerns.
Nigerian newspapers have always been tools of public information and enlightenment; however, in its current configuration, the Nigerian press has become a melting pot for the political elite and top public office holders to share ideas; express their convictions and set political agenda. News is for the poor but not about the poor; it is for the masses, made by leaders, framed by the press for mass public-thought control.

A culture of political intolerance and violence, particularly during election seasons permeates society. While these conflicts are adequately reported in the press through attention-grabbing news headlines that frame, prioritize and sustains the political tensions and conflict between and among ethnic groups, political parties, political actors, opinion leaders and government; newspapers have influenced and sustained electoral tensions and the politics of suspicion that characterise the Nigerian state.

The second section examined the contributions made by the press in Nigeria since 1999. Four questions were used to evaluate the contributions of the press since 1999: Do Nigerian Newspapers represent a market place of ideas? To what extent do newspapers in Nigeria represent public opinion? How effective is the Nigerian press in performing its surveillance functions? Do the press hold public office holders accountable to the Nigerian public?

Here we have a mixed picture. Regionally located newspaper proprietors take a close in editorial content and alternative and opposing views of critics and political opponents are systematically filtered out. This means that Nigerian papers are especially unlikely to represent the views and beliefs of a wide cross section of society. Radical views by reporters that may displease newspaper proprietors and their associates are edited to conform to owner’s expectations. The views of the privileged are not only prominent but also dominant. The poor have little or no access to the press, except when they are used to justify the views of politicians’ electoral priorities. Rather than balance the mediatory role by providing balanced reportage between the democratically elected representatives and the electorate; the press mainly portrays the views and opinions of the elite. The opinion of the public is both brushed over and oversimplified in the press. On the other hand, though, because proprietors still embody a long standing relationship Nigerian tradition of
themselves being politically affiliated or connected, in its totality the Nigerian press embodies a range of political opinion, united doubtless by adherence to shared elite norms, but differing in partisan concerns and loyalties.

Partisan political diversity is an especial characteristic of the southern press and here too there seems to be more editorial effort than in the north to solicit public opinion through the letters to the editor page and reproduce views that challenge authority. And with caveats about commitment and depth we have reviewed evidence that indicates that Nigerian newspapers still undertake surveillance and watchdog functions.

In brief, there are two major political effects of the regional concentration of press ownership. The first is negative in that it has helped to reinforce political tension between the north and the south and to perpetuate the stereotypical representation of the other that helped to accentuate these tensions. Secondly, and conversely and more positively, geographic concentration of ownership as well as a maintained tradition of politically affiliated ownership has helped to ensure that Nigerian newspapers still perform certain key democratic functions, albeit with uneven degrees of commitment and effectiveness. Most importantly, taken together, they represent diversity of political views, though hardly a marketplace of ideas. And they remain willing to carry criticism of the shortcomings of government, albeit in a regionally biased fashion.

Globally, the print media is in transition mainly due to the democratisation of information via social media platforms capable of revolutionising information gathering, dissemination and consumption. In Nigeria, online news has opened up the political space, allowing traditional journalists, newspaper organisations as well as “citizen journalists” to participate in political discourse. However, the broadened sphere is yet to translate into closer surveillance and detailed scrutiny of the policies and activities of public servants.
CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Two broad and divergent perspectives have emerged and dominated the discourse on and the nexus between press and politics in Nigeria. The first narrative posits that newspapers are quintessentially socio-political institutions that have and continue to significantly promote democratic ideals. Kalejaiye\(^\text{262}\) asserted that “the press in Nigeria played fundamental roles in resisting politically undemocratic practices and the flagrant abuse to rule of law not only during the clamour for independence but also during military rule.” In essence, Nigerian newspapers evolved with an overwhelming political character which formed during Nigerian nationalism in the 1930s, matured at national independence in the 1960s and established itself as a profoundly important democratic force in the 1990s when it, along with other civil right groups resisted military authoritarian dictatorship.

The other narrative contends that the Nigerian press since independence have tended to corrupt the democracy they laboured so hard to build, particularly during the nationalist era of Nigeria’s political history. Sobowale\(^\text{263}\) posits that rather than promote integration, independence and national development; the press became biased, sectional and agents of disunity, occasioned by regional and ethnic differences. Unah\(^\text{264}\) adds that press activities since independence were characterised by ethnic stereotypes and primordialism; part of which Uko\(^\text{265}\) claimed encouraged several military interventions during the first thirty-nine years of political independence (1960-1999).

General literature on the connection between regional press hubs and national politics is inconclusive. This study set out to investigate two principal questions: firstly, to explore the effects of regional concentration of newspaper ownership and production on Nigerian politics; and secondly, to evaluate the contributions of the press since 1999 to determine if they have aided or hindered Nigeria’s democratic process. The study therefore situated the press within Nigeria’s socio-historical, political economy to examine press/politics relations in a nascent parliamentary State.

As outlined in Chapter One, the study sought to explore five subsidiary research questions: (1) If, and to what extent do newspaper owners influence content and news reportage? (2) Do newspapers published in certain regions constitute an axis? (3) Do the institutional structure of press position newspapers to influence the democratic process in Nigeria? (4) What are the political effects of regional concentration of newspaper ownership and production? (5) What contributions have the press made to Nigeria’s political process since 1999?

The remainder of this concluding chapter is divided into seven sections: Section (6.2) contains a synthesis of empirical findings and summarises the study’s outcome as they relate to specific research questions. Section (6.3) explores the theoretical implications of this study and how they may impinge on existing theories. Sections (6.4) and (6.5) examine the policy implications and recommendations respectively. Section (6.6) discusses research limitations while the final section (6.7) indicates suggestions for further research.

6.2 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS: ENDURING TRENDS AND EMERGING PATTERNS

The Nigerian press has thrived since the return to democratic rule in 1999. With a broad range of privately-owned newspaper titles; the press continues to assert itself as an effective ideological and political institution in disseminating information, setting agenda, shaping popular consciousness, constructing and/or deconstructing political discourse and influencing national politics. However, Nigerian newspapers are still regionally divided between the Lagos and Abuja publishing hubs. The former, mainly concentrated in Lagos, possesses a combative political character with strong historical antecedents. The latter functions as an alternative to the Lagos press. These publishing hubs have distinct historical roots and divided political allegiances,
a phenomenon that have resulted in conflict of interests between the hubs and among the newspapers published within them. We now provide a summary of empirical findings.

If, and to what extent do regionally concentrated newspaper ownership influence newspaper content?

The study found that ownership of newspapers for achieving strategic political and economic ends is a recurring theme in Nigeria. As discussed in Chapter 4, Section 4.3, since 1999, the main newspapers are those established by individuals with considerable economic and political clout. This trend, also noted by Oyeleye, Ogbondah and Edeani (see Chapter 2), has not only increased in contemporary times but has consolidated. Three ownership objectives were identified, namely: to make profit; to influence political decisions; and finally to act in public interest. While these objectives are difficult to segregate; the consistency with which the political class have established newspapers since 1999 suggests that newspapers are tools for achieving largely political purposes. This finding resonates with Adesoji and Alimi266 who noted that the clamour to establish and sustain a newspaper or media conglomerate is in itself political.

To shape content and by extension, influence public opinion, government policy and political behaviour; newspaper proprietors engage four strategic forms of control over their organisation and the content they generate. Firstly, they exert control over journalists at the point of recruitment. Secondly, they oversee the strategic management and resource control of their organisations by prioritising areas of news focus and editorial analysis. Thirdly, owners employ subtle control by setting the tone for their organisations with editors and journalists complying accordingly. Finally, most owner/editors out-rightly control their content and micromanage their resources.

As noted in Chapter 4, proprietorial control is made possible by heavy concentration of editorial and administrative responsibilities in the office and person of publisher/editor. While it is necessary for owners to oversee the productivity of their enterprise; proprietorial control over content tends to prioritize the desires of owners.

above professionalism and public interest. As observed by Adeyanju and Okwori, the inherent vulnerability within the production process indicates how proprietors have used their titles for personal gains.

Newspaper ownership and content partly accounts for the combative political characterization of the press in Nigeria. Elite struggle for control of State resources asserts itself in newspaper content to the extent that significant percentages of newspaper articles, op-eds, editorials and front page news are framed to mask regionalelite power struggle. This resonates with Sobowale’s\textsuperscript{267} work on media ownership in Nigeria. Importantly therefore, the political class through its use of political, religious and regional divisive and primeval tendencies employ the press to mobilize readers and followers in their class warfare for political power. This finding corroborate the analysis of Chomsky and Herman\textsuperscript{268} who argue that the private media are effective powerful ideological institution that carry out systematic Establishment functions by reliance on adverts, propaganda and overt coercion.

**Do newspapers published in either hub constitute an editorial and agenda-setting axis?**

Regional newspaper axes exist in Nigeria and largely project the narrative and agenda of their geographical location. The Northern axis of newspapers in Abuja, similar to their dominant counterpart in the South (Lagos-Ibadan axis), mainly represent the interest of their owners as well as the political, economic and ideological interest of the political class in their regions. This is particularly evident in Abuja where significant similarities exist in editorial alliance and agenda-setting convergence. The Lagos axis exhibit broad content diversity as well as divergent allegiances based on ethnicity, ownership and political affiliation.

As we have seen in Chapter 4, a strong correlation exists between the location of a newspaper and its content. The location of a newspaper influences the content and defines the context with which issues are framed, debated and prioritized; hence the


categorisation, according to Oso\textsuperscript{269}, of certain newspapers as “Ngbati press” (South western) and “Arewa press” (Northern press). The above description fits with broad narratives on regional differences and divergence between the north and south of Nigeria.

In investigating whose agenda Nigeria’s regionally concentrated newspapers set, three broad narratives emerged to cement the point that the Nigerian press is essentially the Lagos press. The first narrative suggests that Lagos papers, influenced by nationalist agitation and post-independence confrontations with military autocracy, represent the thoughts and views of Southern politicians to the extent that they set national political agenda and monopolise policy discourse. The second narrative explored the crisscross of interest between the political economy of newspaper and their drive for commercial success. It situates Lagos as the prime location for establishing a publication due to its intellectual, historical and commercial viability. The final view asserts that Southern papers have an inherent radical character, influenced by Yoruba traditional political thoughts and crystallised by Western liberal philosophy. More than any other class in the Nigerian society therefore, South-western elites and politicians have benefitted immensely than any aspect of society in their use and control of newspapers and the content they generate for political and economic purposes. This explains why Abuja press are so defensively intransigent and conservative.

The ownership/location nexus have combined to produce a polarised press, divided mainly along proprietorial and regional lines. The study found that Nigeria’s pervading multi-ethnic tensions which manifest in allegiance to ethnic group; inter-ethnic antagonism and hostility have influenced and are also influenced by the press. The press, in using regional differences, aggravate political sentiments have further polarise Nigeria by giving prominence to politicians with sectional and religious interests, who, according to Abati\textsuperscript{270}, use ethnicity as the major driver of political choice during elections. As noted in Sections 4.4.2 and 4.4.5 (Reportage of the newspapers have contributed to the widening cleavages by an emphasis on political

\textsuperscript{269}Oso, L. (2012) Press and Politics in Nigeria: on whose side? Paper delivered at the Lagos State University’s 47\textsuperscript{th} Inagural Lecture.
\textsuperscript{270}Abati, R. (2000) The Press, Politics and Society in Nigeria. In Oseni, Tunji and Sobowale (eds.) Hosting the 140\textsuperscript{th} Anniversary of the Nigerian Press. Lagos: Solarsprint
differences between the predominant Christian South and conservative Muslim North.

Evidence provided through content analysis in Chapter Four resonates with Ekeanyanwu’s findings on media coverage and political crisis in Nigeria and indicates that the mixture and plurality of newspaper titles in Nigeria conceals the narrow and limited scope of social and political analysis, particularly informative content required for participatory and inclusive democracy. The range of issues reported are elite dominated, party-centred and urban focussed. As the press continue to openly align with, sympathize and/or support regional political parties to the exclusion of others, they directly heighten tension within the polity. It is impossible to know whether a more inclusive, freer and broader minded press could have helped avert the more unfortunate aspects of Nigeria’s political history, but it seems likely that an undivided press would have done better.

**Does the institutional structure of the press in Nigeria position newspapers to influence the democratic process?**

There are significant institutional challenges that hinder editorial independence and professionalism in the Nigerian press. These challenges have overtime limited and in some cases tamed the press. It is noteworthy that since the return to democratic rule in 1999, the media operating environment has become tolerant and less hazardous when compared to decades of military rule; however, as noted in Chapter 4, Section 5, a close examination of the current context provided insight into the challenging realities that limit the potentials of the Nigerian press, even in a democratic system. Using Focus Group discussions and Interview commentaries, the study identified four major cross-cutting challenges that confront news journalists, editors and newspaper organisations.

Firstly, economic challenges including but not limited to dwindling advertising revenue, fluctuating circulation figures and poor salaries; all of which have overtime made journalists and news organisations susceptible to accepting bribes and gratifications from politicians and corporate sponsors. This directly threatens

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newspaper's ability to perform its constitutional role on one hand while on the other hand, limits their ability to influence the democratic process. Secondly, physical challenges including kidnapping, maiming, beating, unlawful detentions and arrest, death threats and killing of journalists creates an atmosphere of insecurity and fear (see cpj.org website). The minimal success by the Nigerian Police to arrest and prosecute those who perpetrate these crimes against the press is a concern.

Thirdly, legal obstacles including: decrees (Decree 4, 1984- the Public Officers Protection Against False Accusation) and laws (The Defamation Act No.66 of 1961, the Official Secrets Act of 1962) have restricted the press in their quest for access to information. In spite of the passage of the Freedom of Information Act (FoI), not much have changed in terms of an enabling environment for the press to function effectively. Finally, professional challenges such as poor employee reward and recognition, rudimentary infrastructures, unimplemented employee development programme and poor conditions of work makes it difficult for professionals to function effectively.

As observed in Section 4.5, these institutional barriers have not only inhibited the press from functioning professionally but have resulted in two significant threats. Firstly, the increased priority given to political advertisement due to economic challenges; has allowed the political and corporate elite to directly and remotely manipulate editorial direction and news content. Secondly, financial pressures have increased the prevalence of corruption within the press, particularly, acceptance of bribe, gratifications and unethical practices. The dismissal of a senior editor with Punch newspaper due to bribery is a case in point.

**What are the political effects of regional concentration of newspaper ownership and production?**

The study identified four political effects of regional concentration of newspaper ownership and production. Firstly, in (Section 5.1.2), news bias and imbalance have featured as a defining characteristic of Nigeria’s polarised press. Nigerian newspapers are not neutral; they represent mainly proprietorial and regional views and perspectives. Using content analysis data, the findings indicate news bias against the North, particularly in Southern newspapers. The North is projected
instereotypes of poverty and religious fanaticism. On the other hand, Abuja papers report the South with political suspicion.

Secondly (as observed in Section 5.1.3), Nigerian newspapers have helped to create and sustain a culture of political intolerance with each newspaper, based on their affinity to a political party bitterly contesting the loss of one party while rigorously defending the victory of another. Reportage of the 2007 presidential election and its aftermath clearly suggests the propensity by newspapers to deliberately report news in a manner that questions the credibility of the electoral process, incites the public to protests or violence and reports news in a non-objective and imbalanced manner - a case of professionalism being sacrificed on the altar of political sympathy. This resonates with findings by Galadima and Enighe.272

Thirdly (as seen in Section 5.1.4), reportage of ethnic rivalry and conflict, particularly about the core North and Middle-Belt has escalated tension among the confederating parts of Nigeria. A Thisday article linking Miss World Beauty pageant and Prophet Mohammed sparked rage and religious violence in Northern Nigeria. The commission, omission, exaggeration and oversight in coverage by each newspaper for regional, religious and political interests have become the norm. This finding correlates with that of Ekeanyanwu.273

Lastly (as noted in Section 5.1.5), through ownership patterns and the influence of advertising revenue, the dominance of elite interest in the market place of ideas is now very prevalent. As corroborated by Ibrahim,274 a mutual bond of symbiotic reciprocal benefit exists between the press and elite. The former provide the platform for power brokers who set political agenda and influence public discourse for hegemonic purposes while the latter reward newspapers with advertising revenue and compliant journalists with political appointments as press secretaries. The danger inherent in this structure is that alternative and opposing views are largely excluded as news is mainly framed by the press in the interest of proprietors and

advertisers. Similarly, the views of people from disadvantaged sections of society are marginalized.

**What contributions have newspapers made to the political process since 1999?**

An evaluation of the contribution of the press to democracy since 1999 produced mixed evidence. On one hand and in spite of broad power to scrutinize political office holders and state institutions conferred on the press by the 1999 Constitution; Nigerian newspapers are yet to fully engage in effectively policing the executive branch of government; neither have they radically contributed to broader political participation by using their titles as platforms for public discourse and political enlightenment. On the other hand, the institutional challenges (professional, legal, economic and physical) discussed in Chapter 4 as well as findings from content analysed data that indicate diversity and state criticism in editorial commentaries demonstrates the resilience and courage of the press in confronting well-connected elites with access to extensive personal and state resources.

Four parameters were used to evaluate the contributions of the press since 1999: Do Nigerian newspapers represent a market place of ideas? To what extent do newspapers in Nigeria represent public opinion? How effective is the Nigerian press in performing its surveillance functions? Do the press hold public office holders accountable to the Nigerian public? The study found that the press, due to ownership and commercialisation/corporatisation of news have prioritised elite interest over and above that of the larger society. As a consequence, non-conforming views are marginalised. However, content analysis data, particularly in the Lagos-Ibadan newspaper axis suggest that the press represent the critical views and public opinions of large sections of society. The history of agitation, synonymous with the Nigerian press, continues, even in this current dispensation, to prove the political relevance of the press in Nigeria’s democratic consolidation.

Taken together, these findings suggest that in its current composition, Nigerian newspapers have the potential to radically influence the democratic process. Although newspaper reportage of the political process seems inadequate in fully informing the public, especially on the critical issue of state efficient and political
performance; yet, evidence indicate that the press, with the limited resources at their disposal and their broad responsibilities, have not renege on their surveillance and watchdog functions. They have continued to challenge institutionalised corruption, question social inequality and demand equitable re-distribution of state resources.

Oso\textsuperscript{275} remarked that whatever the ideological and ethnic inclinations of any of the existing newspaper; the market has become an important decisive moderating force. While some argue that political advertising has weakened the ability of the press to balance editorial independence with commercial viability, making most newspapers vulnerable and compromised. They also remark that political elite, conscious of the enormity of their resources and the vulnerability of the press have perfected the act of exploitation, principally through ownership and advertising contracts. As a consequence, some newspapers are sympathetic to specific advertisers. Others believe, and rightly so, that, economic independence is a critical criterion for sustenance of editorial independence. The priority given to increasing circulation figures, profit-driven management structures and advertising revenue have contributed to stability and growth within the newspaper industry.

6.3 THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The press in Nigeria is central to the proper functioning of democracy because they gather and disseminate information necessary for political participation, economic decision and policy formulation. Three significant events have shaped Nigerian newspapers since 1914. Firstly, the end of Federal Government-owned national newspapers (\textit{The Daily Times} and \textit{New Nigerian} newspapers) has led to a total dominance of private ownership since the 1990s. While there are pockets of state-owned newspapers; their circulation is not only limited; their content have minimal influence on national politics.

The second significant event is the political transformation that occurred in 1999 and the subsequent social changes that now define the economic and democratic context within which newspaper operations. Prior to 1999, the press in Nigeria has had to contend with 46 years of Colonial rule (1914-1960) and 30 years of military

\textsuperscript{275}Oso, L. (2012) \textit{Press and Politics in Nigeria: on whose side?} Paper delivered at the Lagos State University’s 47th Inaugural Lecture

215
rule (1965-1979/1983-1999). As a consequence of the long period of undemocratic rule, Nigerian newspapers have only functioned within a democracy for 23 years since the 1914 Amalgamation, a significant 14 of which is in the current political dispensation. The third change is the corporatisation of the newspaper press. This is especially true where industrialisation and commercialisation has been accompanied by formation of larger, more commercialized newspaper organisations, leading to the growth of multi-level media firms serving domestic and sub-regional markets.

These three forces: the dominance of private newspapers since the 1980s, changes in the democratic political context since 1999 and the rise of large newspaper firms since 2001 have combined to largely define the market-led newspaper industry in Nigeria. The private ownership status of the Nigerian press, similar to that of the United States of America and the United Kingdom is consistent with the believe that in a democracy; the press must be free from governmental pressure and control.

As pointed out by Graber, checks and balances within the political systems would be strengthened by independent external safeguards provided by private news media eager to preserve the people’s control over their government. The argument in favour of private media ownership is premised on the belief that corporate media and the expression of divergent views are considered essential for democracy. It is thought that variety affords the public the opportunity to choose the most logical political option(s) available.

As noted by Hallin and Mancini, the public choice theory of the press asserts that because private and independent newspapers supply alternative news to the public, they enable individuals to choose among political candidates, goods and securities— with far less fear of abuse by unscrupulous politicians, producers and promoters. Moreover, competition among media firms ensures that voters, consumers and investors obtain, on average, unbiased and accurate information. Djankov added that State-owned media would manipulate and distort information in favour of the

ruling party and entrench its rule while preventing the public from making informed
decisions, thus undermining democratic institutions.

The private versus public debate over media systems and ownership have overtime
shifted towards the former than the latter though Lenin\textsuperscript{279} argued that government
ownership of the media, especially in a welfare state is desirable because
information is a public good that should be made available to all, even to those
unable to afford it. If the public is ignorant, especially if private media outlets serve
the interest of the governing class, state ownership of the press can expose the
public to less biases, more complete, and more accurate information..

What this study has demonstrated in the Nigerian media/politics context and
arguably abroad (liberal democratic states globally) is that the private press is not
free of bias and imbalance, can escalate regional/ethno-religious conflicts, give
prominence to the ideas and opinions of the elite class, limit and narrow the debate
in the public domain and can be corrupted due to several inherent institutional,
political and commercial challenges. Although there are multiple newspaper outlets
in Nigeria, it should be noted that multiple newspaper titles does not ensure content
pluralism and diversity due in part to standard industry norms and business
practices, commercial concerns and dependence on same sources.

As observed by McManus\textsuperscript{280} in his study of market-led journalism in the United
States, private control of the media does not always represent public interest.
Graber\textsuperscript{281} adds that private control of the newspaper press means control by self-
selected enterprises that are not accountable to the general public. The extent to
which each newspaper serves public interest varies significantly when explored
regionally and commercially. As it is the case with most private news media, the
primary concern is to generate revenue to its owners; a concern which may vary or
conflict with public interest.

\textsuperscript{279}Lenin, V. (1925) On freedom of the press, 7 Lab. Mon. 35
Publication.

Science. 2003. 6: Pp. 139-160
Herman and Chomsky\textsuperscript{282} noted that the eagerness to retain the largest possible readership and please advertisers and sponsors, private newspaper may avoid controversies that might offend sizeable audience segments. Furthermore, in the pursuit of profit, most newspapers feature sensationalized news of crime, sex, political endorsement, campaign advertisement and oversimplification of serious news. The shift towards soft news instead of serious news has been described as a disservice to democracy.

In the final analysis, the private press though described as the fourth estate in the realm and the defender of public interest cannot, on its own, guarantee political accountability and stability. Democracy requires more than active citizens and a private news media that supply information with which effective political participation is organized.

6.4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Nigeria remains a largely divided society along every conceivable line- land, language, culture and religion. The adoption of a regional and now federal system of government is yet to be fully explored and truly domesticated because of the absence of a unifying consensus in form of concerted agreement among the federating units that make up Nigeria. The emergent political class that is a sole beneficiary of the regional and economic imbalances in the country has made it a point of duty to perfect inequality as a political culture. The outmoded deception on the part of Nigeria’s elite class has left the nation with a delicate political structure and a fragile economic base. The ruling political class in Nigeria is power obsessed and engages with the media as tools of attaining and sustaining political and economic control.

The transition from military rule to democracy since 1999 is yet to result in tangible social and economic progress for Nigerians and for Nigeria. As noted by Osaghae\textsuperscript{283}, Nigeria remains a “crippled giant” in spite of immense economic, human and resource potentials. According to a former president of Nigeria, the social, economic and political challenges that confront Nigeria are neither regional nor

cultural. He believes that “the problem with Nigeria is not in our tribes or religions, but what we are witnessing is the handiwork of some wicked politicians, religious leaders and elites who are using the media as a tool to destroy the society. 284.”

Newspapers and the Nigerian Elites

Politically, newspapers play critical roles in the electoral process, including but not exclusive to mediatisation, public enlightenment and political engagement. Increasingly, politics have become progressively dependent on the media to reach electorates; a process which places immense power in media organisations as they become increasingly influential.

In Nigeria, there is a symbiotic relationship between newspaper proprietors and the dominant political elites to the extent that access to news is unequal. This inequality is perpetuated by ownership patterns and the commercial imperatives of the news business. Although inequality mirrors the in-egalitarian social order in modern societies, in that, those with material means are the ones whose opinions are published; the gap has widened remarkably in recent times. Political discourse is therefore dominated by the elites who wield economic and political power to the exclusion of the masses.

Marx and Engels285 remarked that the ruling class controls the subordinate classes through domination of the ideas available in the culture.

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. (The Communist Manifesto (1865))

In its present frame, the mainstream press is controlled by a few elite who manage what is read, discussed and heard. Who, by their control of advertising and sponsorship spending, are selective, un-objective and biased in the quantity and quality of information they make available in the newspapers they own and control. This structure poses the following threats:

285 Marx, K. & Engels, F (1865) The Communist Manifesto
Threat to Democracy

Democracy is enriched by an objective and inclusive media that performs three critical roles; namely: public information, citizen’s participation in the electoral process and public vigilance which includes watchdog and surveillance roles. Historically, the press in Nigeria has contributed significantly to the democratisation of Nigerian politics prior to and since national independence in 1960.

In the present media/politics dispensation, newspapers’ mediatory role between politics and society has not been adequate in ensuring an inclusive political system critical to a flourishing democracy. The commercial or regionally-bias press does not necessarily translate to pluralism or diversity in the market place of ideas in terms of discursive variety in the political process. There is strong evidence to suggest a dearth of serious and investigative journalism. Editorial independence is sacrificed on the altar of sensationalism, advertisement and commerce. The press fails to consider the voice and opinion of those without access to power and those from particular parts of Nigeria.

Public information is superficial, with minimal ideological groundings and limited to cleavages between the North and South, thus masking the real issues that confront Nigeria’s inability to drive the nation towards tangible economic prosperity and national development. Public participation is limited to general elections, once every four years. Newspapers have not been able to give full, adequate and comprehensive expression to the diverse voices of the Nigerian society- a large section of society is largely invisible in the press. The press is not positioned to radically and fundamentally influence democratic political behaviour in Nigeria. Public vigilance is limited due to institutional structures that underpin press performance. Newspaper report of political corruption is hindered by ownership structures, lack of resources and the inherent difficulties in uncovering corruption.

Using the Propaganda Model to explain the dangers of the current structure of the market-driven United States media, (similar to the Nigerian model), Chomsky and Herman\textsuperscript{286} argue that structures of ownership and control, dependence on other major funding sources (notably advertisers) and mutual interest and relationship

\textsuperscript{286}Herman, E. S., & Chomsky, N. (2002) \textit{Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media} New York: Pantheon,
between the media and those who make the news and have the power to define it, absolutely threatens freedom of speech, diversity of opinion in the public space and the limiting alternatives in the political process.

In the Nigerian context, the research has shown that a weak press is a fertile ground for minority rule to thrive. In the absence of a vibrant and independent press, those who rule are left to perpetuate their interest. The regional concentration of newspaper ownership and production has significantly threatened the entrenchment of democracy through news bias, imbalance, sensationalism, party affiliation, owner’s ideology and control.

**Threat to Ethnic Relations and Peaceful Co-existence**

Nigeria is a mishmash of more than 250 ethnic groups, each of which is jostling for recognition and relevance in the political arena; each has terrible angst of being dominated by others; and each is crying of political marginalization. The mutual suspicion and unhealthy competition appear to be getting louder as the years roll by and even seem to threaten the corporate existence of the nation.

Nigeria has been characterized by perpetuating socio-political instability right from independence. This is consequent upon Nigeria’s ethnic multiplicity and its associated political peculiarities. Incidences of communal clashes between ethnic groups have been on the increase even in recent years. In real terms, Nigeria has struggled to forge and bond as a united, indivisible and integrated nation. For most parts, what is described as harmonious co-existence between groups is often very fragile and this snaps at the slightest provocation. What follows afterwards are violent clashes in which lives are lost, economic activities paralyzed and valuable properties are destroyed.

This study found that Nigeria's pervading multi-ethnic tensions are also influenced by newspapers through news bias and imbalance, ethnic coloration and information manipulation. Nigeria’s regional newspaper axis has contributed to the widening of cleavages between the predominantly Christian South and the Muslim North. The regional split among Nigerian newspapers informed by ownership, location, ethnicity, institutional structures and economics have principally eroded press credibility and
objectivity. Conflicting reports in the papers continues to fuel mutual suspicion, fear and distrust.

6.5 STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the origin, ownership patterns and regional concentration of newspaper production, the press has become steeped in preserving the interest of its owners and their regions. It lacks the capacity, as presently constituted, to serve as veritable vehicles of revolutionary social transformation in public interest. These findings recommend three main courses of action for strengthening the press in Nigeria.

6.5.1 Online news platforms and news blogs

The impetus for participatory model of public information and communication is a global phenomenon. The emergence of citizen journalism and the use of social media for information sharing are borne out of necessity than otherwise. The rising cost of newsprint, slum in advertising sales and revenue, and drop in circulation figures have necessitated national interest in and expansion of online news activities.

More importantly, the increasing difficulty of opposing and/or alternative voices and ideas accessing the public through traditional media in general and newspapers in particular has provided sustained fillip to social media information sharing. While most traditional newspapers now have online editions; there are alternative online news sources that by-pass news gatekeepers and report on issues excluded in print newspapers.

The attraction to internet news is not only because they are instant and unfiltered but more decisively because they are free. Hal Varian287 asserts that a significant portion of the cost of a newspaper is in printing and circulation. These costs are essentially eliminated by moving to online distribution. Additionally, online news is much fresher and more easily accessed. Online news reading can also be a much richer experience due to the use of hyperlinks, info-graphics, interactivity, user involvement and video content. Essentially, online news can provide the emotional intimacy of television along with enhanced interactivity, personalised content and the analytical depth of the printed word.

A significant proportion of online news sources are beset with questions of credibility, authenticity and source verification; however, readers migration online indicate that online news is the future as more and more traditional newspapers are transiting online. The bigger challenge however is that of sustainability and quality-consistency. To provide high value news and broad coverage, online news cannot remain free; neither can advertising sustain the cost of production. Robert Picard\textsuperscript{288} observed that free is clearly not the right price for news, but the movement to a paid model will not be as simple as transferring from the traditional news platform to online news.

These challenges notwithstanding, online news sources have opened up new avenues with which democracy is being negotiated. Firstly, online and social media news sources have redefined the way information is being gathered, processed and disseminated. Secondly, the concept of citizen journalists has also broadened the scope and capacity of the press to function as active watchdogs of the political process. Thirdly, social media has enhanced inclusive public discussion and opinion sharing without the moderation or manipulation of media gatekeepers.

It is therefore recommended that State intervention should cover three critical areas. Firstly, by investing in mass literacy, computer training and re-skilling of adults with minimal use and understanding of information technologies; online access will increase, thereby allowing many more to participate in news gathering and information sharing. Investment in further training and education can be done with the assistance of existing academic bodies and institutions. Secondly, the State should invest in providing the infrastructure required for expanding the reach of telecommunications and broadband coverage beyond urban centres. This can be explored from a policy standpoint by providing import subsidy, encouraging public-private partnership and/or through tax breaks for companies willing to invest in rural network expansion. Finally, through industry regulation and promotion of healthy competition among network providers; the State can potentially drive down connection charges, thereby increasing online access.

\textsuperscript{288}Picard, R. \textit{The Challenges of Online News Micropayments and Subscription}. (Accessed 13/10/2013)
Enforcement of labour laws

There is an abundance of state and federal legislation that covers a whole gamut of labour related laws in Nigeria; however, implementing contracts of employment to the letter through the court system; and Labour/Industrial Relations tribunals remains a challenge. The economic crisis in Nigeria, compounded by millions of unemployed/underemployed adults has fuelled the near total disregard for employment laws.

Employers are almost left to either pick or choose favourable sections of certain portions of contractual agreement with employees or left to implement contracts of employment purely on the basis of good will. Just as contracts are meant to be honoured; so are laws meant to be enforced. Cases of non-payment of salaries, violation of workers right, deplorable working conditions, unfair dismissal and unlawful termination of contract are widespread in general and prominent in the media.

Access to and the cost of justice is also beyond the reach of the average Nigerian. More often than not, the financial might and the abundant wealth of resources available to corporations and big businesses cannot be challenged by stand-alone media workers in the absence of a fully functional legal system. In a few cases, a small amount of unfairly dismissed individuals have successfully challenged newspaper organisations but this should be the standard pattern of behaviour that is considered normal in society; not a rarity.

Adewunmi and Adenugba\textsuperscript{289} studied the state of workers right in Nigeria and found that there is an appreciable level of rights awareness on the part of workers in general but the level of compliance on the part of employers is low. Official enforcement is low and this is encouraged by weak institutional capacity. Their study also found a strong belief on the part of workers that the trade union organisation, and not the State, is in a good position to ensure the protection and enforcement of workers’ rights. They concluded that the provisions of labour laws by themselves are not enough grantees for the protection of workers right and as such there is need to

look beyond these instruments in protecting the right of workers and enforcing the laws contained in contract of employment.

It is baseless to enact laws in Nigeria without proper monitoring to ensure that the laws are adhered to and complied with by all stakeholders, particularly companies. There is therefore, a fundamental need for a review of implementation of labour and employment laws in Nigeria. Onuegbu\textsuperscript{290} observed that the Nigerian common law principle of Master/Servant relationship which is applied by the law courts at Federal and state levels, including the Nigerian Industrial Court (NIC) in cases of termination/dismissal from employment without statutory flavour (employments in the private sector and a few public sector employment) is harsh, unfair and inequitable as it does not take due cognisance of the circumstance of the Nigerian worker and the Nigerian working environment.

The challenge of enforcing labour laws in Nigeria is not only widespread but also prevalent. The State and its institutions/agencies are capable of protecting workers rights through several instruments of existing laws. Adewunmi\textsuperscript{291} argues that the Nigerian labour scene has witnessed many workers strikes resulting from an overdue or unpaid wages, workplace gender discrimination, harassment and negligence and believes the government’s recently adopted Trade Union Amendment Act does not adequately address the issue enforcement of workers’ rights.

**Implementation of Freedom of Information Bill**

Freedom of expression and of the press as enshrined in the 1979 Nigerian Constitution, particularly under Chapter IV guarantees the right of the media and the people access to information for transparency, accountability and efficiency. However, in spite of the aforestated constitutional provision and similar enactments, access to information, particularly public records and official documents has remained a mirage, the passing of the FOI bill notwithstanding.

\textsuperscript{290}Onuegbu, C. Review of Obsolete Labour Laws. *Thisday* newspaper, April, 9, 2013

There are several factors which limit the application and effectiveness of the FOI Act. The two main obstacles are illiteracy and poverty. A vast majority of the populace for whose benefits the Act was enacted are either uneducated or ignorant of its existence. Similarly, the need to make ends meet by most Nigerians has relegated their interest in governance to the background. They consider the resort to the FOI Act for accountability from public institution as time-wasting and futile.

The National Orientation Agency (NOA)\textsuperscript{292} gave five major objectives in publicizing the Act, namely: (a) To improve citizens’ awareness and understanding of the provisions of the Act; (b) To seek information from public institutions at the Local Government level; (c) To stimulate proactive disclosure by public institutions as required by the Act; (d) To ensure that public institutions provide access to information applied for under the Act and; (e) To ensure that the NOA spearheads the public sensitization of the Act.

However, what appears to be the major set-back and casts-shadow on the FOI Act is the jurisdictional challenges obstructing its wheel of progress. The Act remains unenforceable in most of the federating states on the ground that it is yet to be enacted as state laws. It is equally important to reiterate the unwholesome attitude of public officials who notwithstanding the passing into law the FOI Act are still reluctant to supply the requested information.

The delayed implementation of the FOI Act has hindered access to official documents and limited the quest for accountability in public office. In theory, it is said that the business of government is open to public scrutiny, open to fair and just laid down procedures in the conduct of public affairs and open to accountability; however in practice, official secrecy, corruption and unconstitutional discretionary powers are institutionalised. It is recommended that the State in Nigeria should review the implementation of the FOI Act.

\textbf{6.6 LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH}

In the course of the study, a number of vital limitations not only became apparent but also required attention. Firstly, the fieldwork for the study was mainly done in Nigeria (Lagos and Abuja). It involved setting up appointments well in advance of

\textsuperscript{292} National Orientation Agency (NOA) website: \url{www.noa.gov.ng} (Accessed April 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 2014)
discussions and interviews, nevertheless, the short notice with which several pre-
arranged interviews were cancelled and the failure of many potential interview
candidates to show up was challenging.

Additionally, a few interview participants declined to have their interviews audio
recorded. Having observed this problem and given the limited time frame to spend in
Nigeria, the number of potential participants was increased by involving more
prospective targets, specifically for focus group discussion. The outcome was a
gradual but immediate reduction in loss of precious time and scarce resources.

A second challenge of note is the perceived sensitivity with which participants
approached the research questions. Politics and ethnicity are volatile interrelated
issues in Nigeria, particularly in the wake of reprisal attacks by the fundamentalist
Islamic terrorist group, Boko Haram. Participants in focus groups might not have
responded unreservedly, despite reassurances of confidentiality and commitment
that gathered data is strictly for academic research. This problem however had
minimal implication on gathered data during focus groups and semi-structured
interviews. Limited forms of non-engagement were observed as participants became
more comfortable and outspoken as the sessions progressed.

The most significant limitation was limited access; in some cases denied access to
people, organisational data and documents. Participatory observation within
newspaper organisation, especially in observing editorial board meetings where
crucial production decisions are made would have provided valuable insights into
how newsroom decisions were made. Although some organisations were un-
cooperative due to distrust, fear and suspicions, individual reporters and journalists
were helpful during in the interviews. Access to documents and archived
newspapers was granted at the University of Lagos Library, Akoka; Lagos State
University Library, Ojo and National Libraries in Abuja and Ibadan.

The study was not specifically designed to evaluate the role of the media in general-
radio, television, newspaper and new media on democracy. Given that other societal
institutions (national security agencies, the electoral system, judicial structures,
political parties and the electorate) other than the press influence national politics,
the current study was unable to analyse other variables that strengthen public policy
or weaken democracy. The findings of this research should therefore be put in its proper context.

Chapter 3 described the participants used in the current research and indicates that these were selected individuals, available for the study at that moment in time. In the light of this, they may not be totally representative of the entire population. The sample represented a rough cross section of well-educated Lagos and Abuja residents but was hardly a sample of newspapers’ mass readership let alone the population at large. Readers therefore should approach the current findings and conclusion with caution. In addition, the cross-section nature of the current data suggests that the interpretation of results should be limited to the groups examined at the time of the research. Even so, the evidence that well informed and critical readers of newspapers are predisposed to view the press as constituted by agenda-setting axes is especially powerful.

The current study has only examined content analysis of selected national newspapers- Punch, Guardian, Thisday, Daily Trust, Tribune, Leadership and Vanguard. The data generated from front page news and editorial comments was for the first six months in 2007 and 2011 respectively (two significant national election years). By reason of the sample size, caution must be applied, as the findings might not be transferable to state or local government settings. The gathered data also excluded non-election years.

6.7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Further research aimed at understanding the role of the press in promoting inclusive politics during election and non-election years and as an integral part of an overall endeavour to improve the democratic process in Nigeria is recommended in the following areas:

Online news and political participation in Nigeria

Globally, the predominance and effervescence of online news sources is impacting traditional newspapers in different but fundamental ways. In Europe and North America, newspapers continue to face harsh economic challenges, accentuated by the 2008 financial meltdown. Advertising revenue has plummeted due in part to
severe economic challenges, while readership habits have changed as consumers turn to the internet for free information and news. Outside the West, particularly in India, Pakistan, Brazil and parts of Africa; readership and circulation of traditional newspapers are on the increase; cost, content and online news availability notwithstanding.

In Nigeria, the introduction of mobile internet and broadband connectivity in 2004 has deeply increased access to and diffusion of information on World Wide Web. Online news and blogospheres has proliferated the media-space with the potential of altering information dissemination and news consumption patterns. It is within this framework that my study on regional newspaper ownership and concentration and its impact on politics can be extended with further studies on the impact of online and social media news platforms on political participation in Nigeria? Is online news a panacea for the many challenges that beset and limit the ability of traditional newspapers to fully engage citizens in participatory democracy?

My research has thrown up many questions in need of further investigation. There is renewed emphasis on modern communication technology for better content and information dissemination. How these issues threaten national economies and political sovereignties need to be studied. The impact of such technologies on news production also need further research, in areas such as web casting, new digital technology and the effect of unmanned stations on national development. It also bring to the fore the need to determine the relationship between the wider mass media and politics.
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- 25/01/2007- Ali seeks Atiku’s impeachment. Obasanjo wants to oust Atiku
- 01/02/2007- Atiku plans to cause unrest in Nigeria
- 09/02/2007- INEC okays Buhari and others for election
- 14/02/2007- Oyo Lawmakers are misfits- Masari (Speaker of Federal House of Rep.)
- 20/02/2007- Funsho Williams phone recovered in the North
- 26/02/2007- Election screening exercise- Atiku still in the race

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- 25/01/07- Atiku hits Obasanjo afresh
- 01/02/07- Speed up hearing on Atiku’s case- FG tells court
- 09/02/07- National Assembly faults FG on Atiku’s deflection to Action Congress
- 14/02/07- FG bars Atiku not to partake of April’s polls
- 20/02/07- Police recover late Funsho William’s phone
- 26/02/07- My life in danger- Atiku: hold Federal Government responsible
APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE
SSI Question Guide for Newspaper Editors or Journalists

1. What is the editorial policy of your organisation?
2. Do Nigerian newspapers have a role in politics?
3. In what sense do newspapers contribute to political debates and decisions?
4. How are the overall decision for news coverage and report taken?
5. Is political coverage an inter-departmental issue? Which departments contribute to the coverage?
6. What are the criteria for choosing an item for reportage?
7. In your opinion, what level of coverage should newspapers aim for – informed debate? Full coverage? Brief outline of relevant issues?
8. How would you describe the political news your newspaper reports?
9. In your view, what is the image that your paper aims for? How would you like people to perceive your coverage of the issues?
10. Within the newspaper industry in Lagos, what is the role of the New Agency of Nigeria?
11. How would you describe the current level of State censorship and regulation within the industry?
12. How do you prioritise news items?
13. How regularly do you hold discussions with others in relation to news items?
14. Is there a chain of command in relation to what gets published or not?
15. As a policy, would your newspaper accept fee for a story that may not have been covered? (I don’t understand this)
16. How is news reports offset against advertisements?
17. Are advertisements related to news items?

18. What influence do adverts have on news reporting?

19. What relationship does your paper have with politicians?

20. What kind of workshops do you cover? How regular does your newspaper cover workshops and seminars attended by top government functionaries?

21. And how often do you ignore those not attended by top government functionaries, particularly where there is a Governor and a farmer's cooperative meeting? (too argumentative a question)

22. Who are your regular advert patrons?

23. What is the stand of your organisation over payment for news covered?

24. List the category of reports that are likely to be paid for?

25. If there is a regular patronage from a particular organisation how would you balance such interest?

26. Have you ever received a complaint from the Governor or top placed people or organisations on not representing their interest or publishing their adverts or that your news put them in bad light?

27. Explain if there has been any particular complaint from any of your advertisers about your report?

28. What informs your coverage of news?

29. What are the political effects of your news reporting?

30. What would you say in comparison of news reports between private and government owned television stations if you were likely to carry more reports on any of the above issues?

31. Has been a time that the owner of your station drew your attention to a news report on your newspaper?

32. What was his reaction to this story and on what story? Have you ever reprimanded any of your reporters or editors for any particular story?

33. Explain if you think ownership of a newspaper medium has anything to do with the type of news on your station?

34. Do you think that owners of newspapers directly interfere with the paper's news?

35. What would you say was your relationship with: 1. the opposition 2. incumbent Government. 3. Politicians in general?
36. Does politics play an inordinate role in newspaper content? Why?
37. What would you regard as good management of news?
38. How does your newspaper report issues that affect North-South relationship?
39. What are the effects of regional concentration of newspaper?

APPENDIX TWO

**Question Guide for Semi-Structured Interviews**

1. How do you like to stay current on news?
2. What is your main source of political news?
3. How important are Nigerian newspapers to democracy?
4. Why do you prefer particular newspaper(s)?
5. Do you think certain newspapers represent certain ethnic groups?
6. What are the issues that generate national tension in Nigeria?
7. Are newspapers used to advance certain interest? Why
8. Evaluate the adequacy or inadequacy of the report of national issue?
9. Explain whether there is any difference in the reportage major national dailies?
10. Do Lagos-based newspapers form an editorial axis in major national issues?
11. If so, give examples? If not, why?
12. Newspapers are primarily out to make profit; in the process do they sensationalise reporting, especially political news, to increase readership?
13. How do the Lagos press promote democracy?
14. Since 1999, there have been a proliferation of newspapers in Nigeria; does this necessarily mean a more diverse market place of ideas?
15. What is the difference between private and state-owned media outfits?

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16. Do newspapers in the south add to the general unrest in the north? How and why?

17. Let us compare the private and government owned newspapers in the reportage of issues affecting them; whether they report more or less: A. The poor; B. Owners of newspapers stations; C. Politicians D. Head of State. E. Other people in the society

18. What is the affiliation between newspaper proprietors and political parties?

19. Explain if you think that any of the stories would have been in any way better?

20. In what ways has the return to democratic rule affected the news industry?

APPENDIX THREE

Question Guide for media critics and researchers

1. What role do Lagos newspapers play in the Nigerian polity?

2. From 1999 to 2012, how has newspapers in Nigeria fared?

3. What is the difference between the different types of newspaper ownership structure and their editorial content?

4. Newspapers owned by politicians and those owned by professionals- what’s the difference?

5. Newspapers before, during and after the civil war: an evaluation?

6. What is the difference between private and state-owned newspapers?

7. Is there a Lagos-Ibadan newspaper axis?

8. From Amalgamation to Boko Haram, what is the role of newspapers in North/South dichotomy?

9. How is the North perceived in Lagos papers?

10. Is there a conspiracy against the northern elite in Lagos papers?

11. How important is newspaper ownership to its content?

12. Is newspaper publishing in Northern Nigeria unsustainable? Why?
13. How do newspapers contribute to the volatile state of the Nigerian nation?
14. Can you comment on the media war against corruption?
15. How can the Lagos media win the war against ethnic politics in Nigeria?
16. What is the difference between newspapers owned by politicians and non-politicians?
17. Why is newspaper ownership important; even when breaking even is not viable?

APPENDIX FOUR

Question Guide for Focus Group Discussions

1. How do you like to stay current on news about Nigeria?
2. Where did you hear of it? Where was your source of information on this?
3. Evaluate the effect of newspaper ownership on news content?
4. Explain whether there was any difference in the reportage by Nigerian newspapers?
5. Enumerate what areas you think any of these newspapers omitted out of their news reports?
6. Do you think that if some news items had involved other set of people, it could have been different?
7. Let us compare the private and government owned newspapers in the reportage of issues affecting them; whether they report more or less: A. The poor; B. Owners of television stations; C. Politicians D. Head of State. E. Other groups of people in the society.
8. Explain if you think that any of these reports would have been in any way better?

APPENDIX FIVE

Question Guide for Newspaper Staff

1. What kind of news should newspapers report and what news should be downplayed?

2. Who are these superior officers (positions)?

3. What determines front page news?

4. Who writes the editorial column/comments for your newspaper?

5. What kind of news report do you cover? Where there is a Governor or highly placed persons or where there is none?

6. How regular does your station cover workshops and seminars attended by top government functionaries? And how often do they ignore those not attended by top government functionaries?

7. As a policy, does the newspaper house accept fee for the coverage that may not have been covered?

8. How does this affect the news judgment?

9. List the category of reports that are likely to be paid for? If there is a regular patronage from a particular government or organisation, are you likely to carry out news that may affect his interest?

10. Explain whether there has been any particular complaint from any of your advertisers about your report?

11. What happened afterwards?

12. How regular do you have to discuss your news items with superior officers?

13. Who are these superior officers (positions)?

14. Comparing news reports on newspapers, between the rich and the poor, how would you rank their coverage? Would you say it focuses more on the rich than the poor?

15. If you heard a news report on riot today, which paper are you likely to read it from before you believe it
## APPENDIX SIX


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Headline</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/1/2007</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>The odd favours Jonathan over Ribadu- an article that highlights Jonathan's political advantages over Ribadu's</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/14/2007</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Origin, trends and articulation of African Philosophy 2- an academic exploration of African philosophy through the years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/20/2007</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Warri North constituency and monopoly of riverine politicians- recycling leadership- monopoly of political power by the riverine areas at the expense of Koko people similar to the North</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/14/2007</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Jonathan: what Nigerians need for change- opportunities, infrastructure, transparency, accountability, probity and progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/20/2007</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Memo to emerging leaders to put the people first and strive to make a difference in the lives of people- lessons in leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/26/2007</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Battle royale in Anambra central senatorial district- Dora Akunyili ex NDLEA boss and Ngige ex-governor will be an interesting contest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/2/2007</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>CPC: meteoric rise of a phenomenon- the rise of a new political party with little money, no big name but doing big things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/10/2007</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Sustaining the new lease of life in Abia state- a call to all leading politicians in Abia to maintain calm and retain peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/18/2007</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Imperatives of Jonathan's presidency- zoning the presidency is undemocratic but the Jonathan candidacy is payback for the North who have always had it their way for so long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/27/2007</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>That shooting at Eke Awka campaign rally- growing violence in the Nigerian polity especially during elections is a fearful trend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/12/2011</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Bomb blast and conflicting figures- figures are based on political consideration, actual reality, eye witness estimates or newspaper sales- the media have a social responsibility of verifying figures before publication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/18/2011</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Now that Buhari’s emerged in CPC- Buhari's emergence is an interesting development in the race for presidency in Nigeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/27/2011</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Obasanjo’s intervention in Cote D’Ivoire- Obasanjo’s mediation in ivory coast at the instance of Jonathan did not yield much fruit. OBJ recommends military intervention as last resort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/2/2011</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>The place of Offa in modern politics- kwara politics is again open, after years in PDP claws, anything short of a sterling performance from the new man is a complete let down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/10/2011</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>The resumption of S-East universities- while ASUU may have achieved a good deal of its objectives, its conduct of the industrial action portrayed the association as inflexible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/21/2011</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>The trouble with this house- the leadership of Northern Nigeria has outperformed its North African kin only in the depth of its avarice, ineptness, chocking corruption and monumental legacy of colossal waste</td>
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<td>3/1/2011</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Sanitizing the stock market- tribute of Okereke’s tenure in the stock exchange by virtue of her leadership and expertise</td>
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<td>3/18/2011</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Eliminating poverty in Africa- a look at ending poverty through the Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/21/2011</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Legal challenges of 2011 election- it does appear that lawyers encourage their clients to challenge every election failure</td>
</tr>
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<td>3/28/2011</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Re: Benin-Ore road construction- a rejoinder to a damning report on the federal road, outlining what govt. is doing to fix the problem, written by a special adviser to the minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2/2007</td>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>PHCN's bizarre prepaid billing- the disturbing and shocking customer service rendered by PHCN new meters.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/10/2007</td>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>Nnewi: abandoned and neglected- the lack of basic social amenities in an industrial and commercial town</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/16/2007</td>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>Non-payment of deceased Lagos civil servants gratuity-corruption and fund embezzlement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/25/2007</td>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>Bring Nwosu's killers to justice- call on the police to investigate and arrest Nwosu- assassinated Human Rights campaigner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/1/2007</td>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>Cote d’ivoire crisis and Nigerian economy- Lagos chamber of commerce and industry advised against any military action in Ivory Coast without a full study of the cost-benefit analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/9/2007</td>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>stop vilifying school teachers- lack of confidence in the system is caused by politics, failure of policy and infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/14/2007</td>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>Rot in judiciary- ominous for 2011- the judiciary remains the last hope of the common man and they will play a pivotal role as Nigeria’s democracy transits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/20/2007</td>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>Lifting the ban on toothpick and others, unwise for manufacturing in Nigeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/8/2007</td>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>A new dawn for environmental health officers- a revival in and academification of environmental health is a step in the right direction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/14/2007</td>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>Letter to my countrymen- a call to Nigerians to vote wisely in the coming election to secure a good future for Nigerians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/10/2011</td>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>Yoweri Museveni and the RAP initiative- a president in Uganda doing rap music. Nigerian leaders ought to find ways to sooth nerves in the north</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/21/2011</td>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>SSS and celebration of womanhood- the abuse on a bank staff by officers on the SSS on International women’s day is a startling reminder of the tense security environment in Nigeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/28/2011</td>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>All for love- the use of native medicine for stronger lover from her husband almost led to her death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/1/2011</td>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>Jumbo beating for jumbo pay- the violence that erupted at ACN secretariat at Kaduna is not a positive development for democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/26/2011</td>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>The logic of the terrorist- sequel to the killing of Bin laden, 66 Pakistanis were killed by Al Qaeda for what?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/1/2011</td>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>Women on women- a conference on women in politics and complaints from women who believe that their main obstacle is their fellow women</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/7/2011</td>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>The snare of beauty and death- the story of a skimpily dressed girl and her untimely death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2/2007</td>
<td>Punch</td>
<td>Nigeria’s abortion law and today’s realities- the debate on abortion is sad in that we are in the process of choosing who should live and who should not. Abortion on demand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/10/2007</td>
<td>Punch</td>
<td>Smoke free public places- taking a cue from Spain- a call on Nigerian authorities to consider banning smoking in public places</td>
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<td>1/16/2007</td>
<td>Punch</td>
<td>NCC and SIM card registration- the confusion surrounding registration and the demand for 6 billion naira for the exercise is wasteful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/25/2007</td>
<td>Punch</td>
<td>Concerning voters registration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/1/2007</td>
<td>Punch</td>
<td>AIDS stabilizes regardless of promiscuity- the disease is being tamed thanks to education, medication, awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/9/2007</td>
<td>Punch</td>
<td>Throwing money at problems- all talk and no action by govt. on job creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/14/2007</td>
<td>Punch</td>
<td>Commercial courts- a necessity- a move that can reduce the stress on regular courts and bring to book bank frauds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/26/2007</td>
<td>Punch</td>
<td>Bode George's reception- after being incarcerated for over 2 year for fraud and corruption at the NPC, Bode return home to a grand reception, only fitting for a king</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/8/2007</td>
<td>Punch</td>
<td>Bakare- cleric, calls for violent change- a presidential candidate and VP are calling inciting the public and calling on others to take to violence sounds like treason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/14/2007</td>
<td>Punch</td>
<td>Bode George: Jonathan's albatross- the carnival like post-prison celebration for Bode by PDP is a shame on Jonathan and PDP generally</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Selected Front Page news in 2007 and 2011**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Article</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Trust</td>
<td>Yar Adua- I will be servant leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/8/2007</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>I'm alive- Yar Adua recovering from Germany + INEC: Unceasing concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/14/2007</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Only court can save Atiku, says INEC + House summons INEC and other for a violence-fee election</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/20/2007</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Mofa's account N700m: I was asked to implicate Atiku- Fasawe + The road to anarchy- Soyinka's take on Nigeria's future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/26/2007</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Atiku's group divided over presidential race + FG drags Shell MD, 19 others to court (for dumping toxic waste in Nigeria)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/2/2007</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Gana blames PDP for Nigeria's woes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/10/2007</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Obasanjo debunks rigging of election</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/18/2007</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Police ban rallies ahead of presidential election, US, EU condemns violence + Atiku, Buhari, other opposition candidates meet + Go to tribunal, INEC tells losing Ngige, Audu, Okocha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/27/2007</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Election: ANPP heads for tribunal + Olurin remains in Ekiti as state administrator- FG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/1/2007</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Govt. beefs up security ahead protest as opposition insist on mass action + Yar Adua seeks peace with opposition party and civil society + EFCC arrest maritime agency boss, others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/7/2007</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>PDP disappoints N-Central, S-West (failure to win elections) + Controversial polls in tribunal yards + 5 killed as soldiers, residents clash in Ileshe</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/20/2007</td>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>Presidency paid N700 into my account- Fasawe- they will not ruined my political career + Go to tribunal, INEC tells Atiku and others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/26/2007</td>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>Don’t dare me, deputy warns Dariye, Gov. Jos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/2/2007</td>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>Stakeholders okay education bill, 'sector of emergence' + Court decides Atiku’s fate over polls tomorrow + Power supply, Job creation top Nigerian's demands for next president</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/10/2007</td>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>Indicted candidates remain barred, says Obasanjo + Atiku ends campaign, insists on contesting poll + Govt. moves to meet U.S aviation rating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/18/2007</td>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>Atiku, Buhari others yet to agree on polls boycott + 30 die in Kano as police, fanatics clash + Global right body faults Nigeria's election results + US expresses concern over flaws in Nigerian polls + Local monitors wants polls in 10 states cancelled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/27/2007</td>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>ANPP to contest Yar Adua's victory at tribunal + President-elect to unfold plan for N-Delta within 3 months + Why Olurin is still in office by Obasanjo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/1/2007</td>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>Govt. beefs up security ahead protest as opposition insist on mass action + Yar Adua seeks peace with opposition party and civil society + EFCC arrest maritime agency boss, others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/7/2007</td>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>Nigerian to manage own internet country code + 5 feared dead in fresh Osun violence + Another plane crashes in Egypt, search for Kenyan aircraft continues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/15/2007</td>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>Atiku, Buhari get tribunal's nod to inspect INEC papers + New Niger Delta emerging, say Obasanjo + Achebe, Nigerian abroad, kick against polls result + Nigerians won't regret my choice as president- Yar Adua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/2/2007</td>
<td>ThisDay</td>
<td>Gana: Nigeria heading for confusion- his take on PDP performance in the last 8 years and why the party needs reform + INEC: Akala's indictment, meaningless afterthought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/10/2007</td>
<td>ThisDay</td>
<td>INEC: UK firm to handle poll results- foreign observers besiege commission + Obasanjo debunks rigging allegations- Ekiti election was not rigged + Atiku weighs Buhari's option- says it's a self-serving gang up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/18/2007</td>
<td>ThisDay</td>
<td>Again, Nigeria stands at the crossroads- presidential election is here + Presidential polls: Buhari, Atiku and others call for postponement + Taliban kills 13 policemen in Kano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/27/2007</td>
<td>ThisDay</td>
<td>Olurin stays, says FG (due to the electoral quagmire) + Yar Adua: Niger Delta is my priority + Let's repeat the polls, says Buhari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/1/2007</td>
<td>ThisDay</td>
<td>Ehindero (IG, Police) threatens force on opposition parties proposed strike actions + Buhari seeks to halt inauguration + Yar Adua appeals for understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/7/2007</td>
<td>ThisDay</td>
<td>Senate presidency: David Mark emerges front-runner + Yar Adua begins first foreign mission + In France, its Nicolas Sarkozy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/15/2007</td>
<td>ThisDay</td>
<td>Tribunal grants Atiku, Buhari access to INEC documents (post election issues) + Yar Adua- I will not revisit Bakassi peninsular issue with Cameroon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/23/2007</td>
<td>ThisDay</td>
<td>Ehindero- We have nabbed Ige's killers + INEC contract- Senate clears Nnamani + Appeal court strikes out Peter Obi's suit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/31/2007</td>
<td>ThisDay</td>
<td>Yar Adua makes first appointments: Kingibe becomes SGF + Zoellick to replace Wolfowitz as World Bank President + Chimaroke shun Senate seat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/4/2007</td>
<td>ThisDay</td>
<td>Obasanjo may quit ex-presidents forum + Senate presidency: anti-Mark meeting deadlocked + fuel crisis looms in Lagos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/12/2011</td>
<td>Punch</td>
<td>PDP primaries- panel clears Jonathan, Atiku...+ Jos rocked by killings again</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/18/2011</td>
<td>Punch</td>
<td>PDP summons emergency meeting with Nwobodo + Police recover bombs in Enugu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/27/2011</td>
<td>Punch</td>
<td>Voter registration: we'll need N6.6b for 7 days extension-INEC + Bankole in impeachment trouble</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/2/2011</td>
<td>Punch</td>
<td>INEC, PDP bow to Obasanjo + 43 parties beat INEC deadline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/10/2011</td>
<td>Punch</td>
<td>South west rascals' Jonathan under fire + INEC to display voters register March 2nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/17/2011</td>
<td>Punch</td>
<td>CCB verifies 22 ministers’ assets, threatens prosecution + Senate rejects N1.2b budget for upkeep of ex-head of states</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/21/2011</td>
<td>Punch</td>
<td>IMF can’t dictate to Nigeria- Reps + Legislators should not earn more than teachers, police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/10/2011</td>
<td>Punch</td>
<td>PDP knocked over refusal to sign code of conduct + INEC files appeal against 5 governors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/18/2011</td>
<td>Punch</td>
<td>North-South rivalry stops progress of petroleum bill + Police arrest man over Port Harcourt bomb scare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/6/2011</td>
<td>ThisDay</td>
<td>Delta rerun: odds favour Uduaghan (governorship election rerun) + At last Tinubu endorses Fashola for 2nd term + Ogoni's want UN to probe murder of ken Saro Wiwa, others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/12/2011</td>
<td>ThisDay</td>
<td>Nigerian Arise, support Jonathan. Time for Jonathan is now + PDP primaries: massive security cordon in Abuja full front page advertisement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/18/2011</td>
<td>ThisDay</td>
<td>PDP NEC meet, may replace Nwodo + Voters registration- 3 killed in Jos + CBN streamlines Sharia banking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/27/2011</td>
<td>ThisDay</td>
<td>Alliance talks collapse- Tinubu, others want Buhari to step down for Ribadu + Jega INEC boss meets senators, seeks extra 6.6 billion Naira</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/2/2011</td>
<td>ThisDay</td>
<td>Concern mounts as Court cases threatens April polls + Under pressure, Mubarak promises to quit in September + Kaduna, PH refiners resume operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/10/2011</td>
<td>ThisDay</td>
<td>Bankole is our official candidate- PDP + ACN hits back at Jonathan over 'rascal' jibe + NJC stops Salami's promotion to S-Court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/17/2011</td>
<td>ThisDay</td>
<td>PDP fears losing in 6 north-west states + Buhari, Ribadu kick off campaigns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/21/2011</td>
<td>ThisDay</td>
<td>Jonathan meets Ciroma, woos IBB, Gusau, Atiku + House probes High court judges over frivolous injunctions</td>
</tr>
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<td>3/10/2011</td>
<td>ThisDay</td>
<td>Katsina-Alu, Salami suspended by the National Judiciary Council + INEC seeks stay of execution of its judgment that extends the tenure of 5 governors to 2012</td>
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<td>3/18/2011</td>
<td>ThisDay</td>
<td>Jonathan meets Buhari, TV debate to hold March 29 + INEC staff demand life insurance for polls</td>
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<td>Tribune</td>
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<td>Tribune</td>
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<td>Obasanjo- eight years after- failure to deliver</td>
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<td>Vanguard</td>
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<td>Tribune</td>
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<td>ThisDay</td>
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<td>Upgrading herbal medicine</td>
</tr>
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<td>Trust</td>
<td>Jonathan's challenge- economic recovery and national unity and true federation</td>
</tr>
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<td>Trust</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Trust</td>
<td>The Dominique Strauss Kahn affair</td>
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<td>Trust</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Trust</td>
<td>Climate of insecurity- politically motivated ethnic violence across the country MEND and Boko Haram</td>
</tr>
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<td>Trust</td>
<td>The police HQ explosion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/17/2011</td>
<td>Vanguard</td>
<td>Freedom of information for none- while some think the FoI is for journalist, it is for all and an essential part of our democracy. Those who oppose it should not expect it to come to their rescue when they need it</td>
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<td>Vanguard</td>
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<td>Vanguard</td>
<td>15 Days to possibilities- a call on electorates to vote wisely, shun violence and remain determined to move the polity as well as the economy forward</td>
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<td>Vanguard</td>
<td>Surplus of freedom- the belief of Legislators as the pass the freedom of information bill- freedom of information is the right of every citizen in a democratic society</td>
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<td>3/28/2011</td>
<td>Vanguard</td>
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<td>Vanguard</td>
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<td>Vanguard</td>
<td>As we vote again- a call for INEC to deliver, for people to vote credibly and for security operatives to enforce the law</td>
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<td>Vanguard</td>
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<td>Vanguard</td>
<td>Avoidable accident- a mob's rage: a road blockage at the Abuja-Kaduna express because of an accident at sabon wase. A shocking reminder that people can get fed up with government's inactivity and then react</td>
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<td>Vanguard</td>
<td>Sack of a minister- Interior minister Capt Emmanuel Iheanacho by the president leaves much to be desired. No reason was given for his sack but speculations are rife that it is not unconnected with violent clashes across the country</td>
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