

**THE ROLE OF THE PRESS IN EMERGING DEMOCRACIES: AN ANALYSIS OF
NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT
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This study evaluates the performance of the Nigerian press in discharging the duties of a *watchdog* prescribed for it by the Nigerian Constitution – of monitoring the activities of public office holders and holding them accountable to the people. The study uses three different but complementary methods (content analysis, critical discourse analysis and semi-structured interviews). The first two methods are employed in analysing the headline news content and editorial opinions respectively of two Nigerian independent newspapers, using the framework of the Liberal Media Theory (Watchdog Model). The study also used semi-structured interviews to obtain additional information from Nigerian journalists on their professional practices and working conditions. Overall, the study seeks to establish whether the Nigerian independent press is performing the watchdog role of the press as a facilitator of democracy and good governance, by providing critical news and opinions on key issues like political violence and corruption, or whether the press is serving as a *lapdog* of the government in power, the political parties or the ruling economic and political power elite. The main findings of this study indicate that despite numerous challenges which impinge on journalists' professional practices, and the challenges imposed by ownership and control structures, the Nigerian press has played a critical watchdog role in focusing news coverage on the serious political and social problems of violence and corruption in the country's democratisation process, while also challenging the abuse of power by the ruling economic and political elite, although with some regional variations in performing the watchdog role. Overall, the study contends that although the Watchdog Model may appear out-dated in the Western world as a basis for evaluating media performance, this model is still very valid in understanding the normative function of the press within the context of Nigeria as an emerging democracy in Africa.

To my mother, Gladys Onyemaobi, who died that her children may live...

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACN	Action Congress of Nigeria
ANPP	All Nigerian People's Party
APC	All Progressives Congress
AQIM	Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
AU	African Union
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BH	Boko Haram
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CMS	Church Missionary Society
CPC	Congress for Progressive Change
CPI	Corruption Perceptions Index
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EFCC	Economic and Financial Crimes Commission
EMF	Egbesu Mightier Fraternity
EU	European Union
FES	Friedrick Eibert Stiftung
FRCN	Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HWR	Human Rights Watch
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICPC	Independent Corrupt Practices Commission

IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission
ISIS	Islamic State in Syrian and Iraq
IYC	Ijaw Youths Council
JRC	Joint Revolutionary Council
MEND	Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta
MOSOP	Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People
NAWOJ	National Association of Women Journalists
NCDJ	Northern Coalition for Democracy and Justice
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NDIM	Niger Delta Indigenous Movement
NDLF	Niger Delta Liberation Front
NDPVF	Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPAN	Newspaper Proprietors Association of Nigeria
NPP	New Patriotic Party
NTA	Nigerian Television Authority
NYSC	National Youths Service Corps
OPC	Oodua People's Congress
PDP	People's Democratic Party
RQ	Research Questions

SPSS Statistical Package for Social Sciences

UN United Nations

UNDP United Nations Development Programme

US United States



A Map of Nigeria. Credit: World Atlas,
<http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/africa/ng.htm>

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This study examines the performance of the Nigerian press in the coverage of the 2011 general election in the country, within the context of the *watchdog* role of the press. Abercrombie and Longhurst (2007) give this apt summation of the watchdog press:

The media, and the press in particular, are sometimes referred to as watchdogs in that they will warn the public of government or corporate misdemeanours. Though this undoubtedly happens in some cases, there are anxieties that the media watchdogs do not bark very loudly. (Abercrombie and Longhurst, op. cit., p.362).

In examining the performance of the normative, democratic function of the Nigerian press, as the society's watchdog, this study uses the 2011 general election as a focus for empirical analysis of the news content (front page headline news) and editorial opinions of two Nigerian independent newspapers, *The Guardian* and the *Daily Trust*, in order to evaluate how loudly or not the Nigerian press watchdogs bark. The study also examines the professional attitudes as well as the working conditions of Nigerian journalists – and the impact of these on the performance of their professional duties and the discharge of the watchdog role of the press, especially in the context of Nigeria as an emerging democracy in Africa. The study focuses on the analyses of the coverage of some key thematic elements like political violence and corruption which received dominant coverage in the press during the period of the 2011 general election (as discussed in Chapter 5).

Nigeria is a developing country and an emerging democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa. In the over 57 years since she gained independence from Britain in 1960, Nigeria has been unsettled by a culture of political violence and official corruption which has stunted its growth and potential as the giant of Africa. In the post-colonial era, the political violence manifested in military coup d'états and counter coups which truncated the country's democratic governance and crippled the giant of Africa (Osaghae, 1997, pp. 1-15) After several decades of military

dictatorship, Nigeria returned to democratic rule in 1999, with the election of President Olusegun Obasanjo. Since then, the country has enjoyed its first stretch of an unbroken period of more than 18 years of civil democratic governance, after the long years of military dictatorship. However, all has not been well with the country and its democratic governance as the critical social and political problems of corruption and political violence continue to be among the dominant factors in the nation's social, cultural, economic and political life – especially during the country's general elections. The widespread incidence of political violence and corruption on Nigeria's national life, and the overbearing negative impacts of these problems on the country's overall social, cultural, economic and political development have fuelled the desire of analysts and media scholars, including myself, to focus critical inquiry on these political and social problems – and their treatment in the mass media.

Indeed, the Human Rights Watch Report (2011) asserts that in the intervening period of 12 years between May 1999 when Nigeria returned to democracy and the country's third post-military general election in April 2011, more than 15,700 people had been killed in the country's cycle of political violence. The same Human Rights Watch Report also indicated that more than 800 persons lost their lives during the post-election violence which erupted after Nigeria's 2011 presidential election; over 65,000 persons were displaced and more than 500 persons were arrested and charged to court for their suspected involvement in the violence. (Human Rights Watch, 2011, op. cit.) The Lemu Panel of Inquiry set up by the Federal Government to investigate the remote and immediate causes of the post-election violence of 2011 identified official corruption, mass poverty of the populace and a rising population of restive and unemployed youths as the major causes of the electoral violence. The Panel found that official corruption and mismanagement of the economy by politicians were draining the nation's resources and further impoverishing the masses of the people – thereby making them prone to violence. (*The Guardian*, Oct. 25, 2011, p.18) The Panel also observed that Nigerians yearned for a change regarding the failure of the government to deliver the dividends of democracy and good governance, reflected in epileptic supply of electricity, deplorable roads, insecurity of life and property, public frustration and disappointment. (*The Guardian*, Oct. 25, 2011, op. cit.)

Nigeria has not fared much better on the issue of corruption. Over the last 18 years, the country has waged a relentless war against corruption, using the instruments of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices

Commission (ICPC), among others, to investigate, arrest and prosecute offenders, including several state governors, cabinet ministers and top legislators. The government's efforts have yielded some positive results and the country has made some marginal improvements in the war against corruption, according to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI). In the year 2000, Nigeria was ranked the most corrupt country in the world – and improved marginally in 2001 and 2003 when it was rated the second most corrupt nation in the world in the TI's Corruption Perception Index. Since 2012, the country has made steady improvements in the CPI. Indeed, within the last six years, for the first time in decades, Nigeria was not in the list of the 10 most corrupt countries in the world. In the 2014 Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index, Nigeria was ranked 136 out of 175 countries surveyed in the report. This ranking placed Nigeria, alongside five other countries, as the 39th most corrupt country in the world. This is the country's best ranking in the last decade. (See *Daily Sun* newspaper, March 09, 2015, p.20; *This Day* newspaper, February 26, 2015, p. 33; *The Union*, February 27, 2015, p. 12; *Daily Independent*, February 27, 2015, p.44.)

However, in spite of these modest achievements in the war against graft, the dragon of corruption has certainly not been slain in Nigeria. There is still so much to do in Nigeria in the war against corruption. Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari has a famous mantra on which he has anchored the government's war against corruption: "If Nigeria does not kill corruption, corruption will kill Nigeria" (*The Guardian* newspaper, July 16, 2015, p.20). Indeed, the central platform on which General Buhari campaigned for the presidency in 2015 was the war against corruption and this slogan was one of his key campaign messages. On assumption of office, he has since adopted this slogan as a working principle in the war against corruption.

In the light of the foregoing, my study elected to evaluate the performance of the Nigerian press by analysing their treatment of these two specific issues of political violence and official corruption during the pre-election and post-election periods of the 2011 general election. To assess press performance in the specific context of Nigeria, my study analyses the front page headline news coverage and editorial opinions of two major independent Nigerian newspapers, *The Guardian* and the *Daily Trust*, to examine the way the Nigerian press has discharged (or not discharged) the onerous duties of a *watchdog* imposed on it by the Nigerian Constitution – of monitoring the activities of public office holders and holding them

accountable to the people. Indeed, Onishi Norimitsu (2001) describes the Nigerian press as “Watchdogs of a very messy democracy” (Onishi (2001, p.A3). It is pertinent at this point to review briefly the *definitions* of political violence and corruption adopted by this study.

1.1 Political Violence

Political violence is a broad spectrum of violence which is designed to achieve some form of unfair political advantage over another person, group of persons, political party or parties, ethnic or regional blocs, etc. Sisk (2008) observes also that “societies prone to experiencing election-related violence are normally vulnerable to broader kinds of political violence; Kosovo, India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Kenya, or Colombia are examples of instances in which electoral violence is embedded in a broader, often on-going context of deep-rooted social conflict”. (Ibid.) Nigeria fits perfectly into this list of countries. Political violence in Nigeria often manifests mostly in the form of *electoral violence*. Electoral violence is actually a subset of political violence. The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) defines electoral violence as “any harm or threat of harm to any person or property involved in the election process, or to the election process itself, during the election period”. (IFES official website, accessed on May 20, 2015)

Timothy Sisk (2008) defines electoral violence as: “Acts or threats of coercion, intimidation, or physical harm perpetrated to affect an electoral process or that arises in the context of electoral competition.” He noted that when political violence is perpetrated in order to affect an electoral process, the violence may be employed to influence the process of elections, “such as efforts to delay, disrupt, or derail a poll – and to influence the outcomes: the determining of winners in competitive races for political office or to secure approval or disapproval of referendum questions. It is the range of activities aimed at subverting the will of ordinary citizens to freely exercise their choice.” (Sisk, 2008, IFES official website, accessed on May 20, 2015). This definition aptly summarizes the situation of political violence in Nigeria and the various tactics adopted by sundry perpetrators of violence in Nigeria to subvert the will of the people in making free democratic choices, especially during the country’s general elections. In their study, Omotola, J. Shola and Aremu, Fatai Ayinde

(2007), clearly identified violence as a veritable threat to democracy in Nigeria under the country's Fourth Republic.

1.2 Corruption

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) describes corruption as “the misuse of public power, office and authority for private gain through bribe, influence peddling, nepotism, fraud, speed money or embezzlement”. (Quoted in Akinyemi, N., in “Nigeria in 2050: Addressing the Corruption Scourge,” *National Mirror* newspaper, May 12, 2015.) Ha-Joon Chang defines corruption as a violation of the trust vested by its “stakeholders” in the holders of offices in any organization, be it a government, trade union or even an NGO. (*Bad Samaritans: the Guilty Secret of Rich Nations and Threat to Global Prosperity*, quoted in Akinyemi, op. cit.) Development agencies and development scholars thus indicate that corruption is a major impediment to national development. Indeed, Akinyemi observes that corruption has become endemic in Nigeria and has retarded growth and development in virtually all aspects of national life, including education, health, infrastructure, politics, governance, religion, judiciary and so on (Ibid.).

Transparency International, the global anti-corruption agency, defines corruption as “the abuse of power, bribery and secret deals”, and observes that “Corruption has gone from taboo to one of the most talked about problems in the world” (Transparency International website, accessed, August 03, 2015). Thus, from this succinct and apt definition by Transparency International, it could be seen that corruption manifests not only in the taking and giving of bribes, but also in the abuse of office, secret deals and the diversion of public funds for personal gains. Indeed, corruption, as defined above and adopted for this study, pervades various aspects of Nigeria's socio-economic and political life – and is a major fare in the media. “The dominant discussion among Nigerians today is insecurity and corruption. It is the talk among the literates and non-literates, the rich and the poor, the leaders and the governed...” (Muhammad Adanu, “Buhari and The War Against Corruption,” *This Day* newspaper, July 28, 2015, Online. Accessed, 28/07/15).

1.3 Overview of study

The study analyses the front page headline news and editorial opinions of two major independent newspapers in Nigeria, *The Guardian* and the *Daily Trust*, to assess their performance of the watchdog role of the press by analysing the way they presented social and political news and how they constructed their editorial opinions during the 2011 general election in the country. Incidentally, these newspapers are both privately-owned, independent newspapers, like all other major newspapers in Nigeria. During the last era of military dictatorship in Nigeria (1983-1999), the Federal Government owned and controlled two major national newspapers (*Daily Times* and *New Nigerian*), and forcibly closed down several independent newspapers like *The Guardian* and *The Punch* which were very critical of the autocratic regimes. However, in contemporary Nigeria, the pressures of democratisation and commercialization have brought greater freedom from government control for the media in Nigeria, especially the press – resulting to more robust reporting by the press and a greater flow of critical information to the public. The last government-owned national newspaper, *The Daily Times*, which was Nigeria's oldest newspaper, changed hands in 2007 after the government sold it off to private investors three years earlier. With the privatisation of *The Daily Times*, which had been publishing for more than 80 years, the Federal Government disengaged from ownership of newspapers in the country, while retaining substantial interests in broadcasting through the ownership of the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN). There is thus not a single Federal Government-owned national newspaper in Nigeria in the last 11 years – making Nigeria a very fertile ground indeed for the thriving of an autonomous, independent liberal press performing essentially a watchdog role to hold public officers accountable and to facilitate the country's nascent democracy.

However, this is not to suggest that the Nigerian press is totally and completely free. In spite of the Federal Government's disengagement from direct ownership of the newspaper press in Nigeria, one cannot ignore the complex relationship between the press and the socio-political elite in Africa today. For instance, although the Federal Government of Nigeria disengaged from ownership of the press and does not exercise direct control of the press any more, there are still some subtle ways and means by which the government exerts some pressure and influence on the media. Indeed, some African media scholars are very critical of the role of

the governments in undermining the growth and development of a free press which would be strong enough to play an unfettered watchdog role. Ogola (2017) asserts that African governments have a new way of controlling the media by starving them of advertising revenue. For the media organizations, many of which are often in precarious financial situations, being deprived of advertising revenue touches where it hurts most: on their finances and ultimately their survival – given the fact that these African governments are often among the highest sources of advertising revenue in the economy. Ogola’s prognosis is quite scary indeed for the development of a free press in some of these African countries, including Nigeria. Issues arising from the challenges of ownership and control of the press by business entrepreneurs also come up, as well as issues of professionalism and ethics. How the Nigerian press and the journalists strive to cope with these challenges in the performance of their democratic function is discussed further in this thesis. Other specific methods which the state and the political elite employ in controlling journalists or leveraging influence with the press may include inducements (“brown envelopes”) to journalists, arrest and detention of journalists, among others (as discussed in Chapter 5).

Overall, this study evaluates how well the Nigerian independent press performs the watchdog role assigned to it by the Nigerian Constitution – and thus to establish whether or not newspapers in Nigeria provide critical and analytical voices for newspaper readers, in the context of the watchdog role assigned to the press by the Nigerian Constitution (1999 as amended) or whether or not they simply reflect the political positions and affiliations and business interests of their owners. The study uses content analysis and critical discourse analysis as analytic tools based on an understanding of the liberal media theory and the normative political functions of the watchdog press. The research looks at two periods – six months before the 2011 general election and six months afterwards. This gives sufficient time to capture the pre-election period of political campaigns, while also capturing the post-election period when violence broke out in the northern part of the country. By the post-election period, the new government had also settled into office and started implementing its campaign promises and political manifesto. The study seeks to identify if there is any discernible shift in the pattern of press coverage and portrayal of editorial opinions by the two newspapers on the critical issues of corruption and political violence during these two periods. The study also uses semi-structured interviews of journalists and media managers to clarify

some of the issues that arise in the analyses, as well as to identify the major challenges faced by newspaper journalists in Nigeria.

1.4.0 Selection of Media Samples

Although I will return to it much later in the study (Methods), it is pertinent at this state to explain why I selected *The Guardian* and *Daily Trust* to provide the analytical samples for this study. The choice of the newspaper titles to be studied involved the consideration of a combination of factors, which included the geographical reach and location of the newspapers, the readership size, the format and content characteristics (whether “quality” or tabloid press), the political stance of the newspapers (liberal, independent) as well as the ready availability of research materials (the daily copies of the newspapers). Accordingly, in consideration of the factors, the two major independent newspapers selected for this study are *The Guardian* (national newspaper) and *Daily Trust* (regional newspaper). The study examines the press coverage in these two major, independent newspapers. These newspapers represent the key, independent newspapers circulating in the country. Incidentally, these newspapers are all privately-owned, independent newspapers, like all other major newspapers in Nigeria. As pointed out earlier, the last government-owned national newspaper, *The Daily Times*, which was Nigeria’s oldest newspaper, changed hands in 2007 after the government sold it off to private investors – as a part of the government’s policy to deregulate the media industry and enhance pluralism and press freedom.

With the privatisation of *The Daily Times*, which had been publishing for more than 80 years, the Federal Government disengaged completely from ownership of newspapers in the country, while retaining substantial interests in broadcasting through the ownership of the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN). There is thus not a single Federal Government-owned newspaper in Nigeria in the last 10 years, hence the selection of only privately owned, independent newspapers for this study. However, in spite of the similarities in their ownership structure as private independent newspapers, there are various dissimilarities which would provide sufficient grounds for comparisons and contrasts in their treatment of political news and editorial commentaries during the period of the general election. While one of the newspapers, *The Guardian*, is a *quality newspaper*, *The Daily Trust* is cast in the tradition of a *tabloid newspaper*. Secondly,

the two newspapers are located in the two major, often contending, socio-cultural and political power blocs in Nigeria: *the north* and *the south*. While *The Guardian*, which describes itself as “the flagship” of the Nigerian press, is located in the south (Lagos), the *Daily Trust*, which some of its detractors see as “the mouthpiece of the North”, is published in the North (Kaduna). While *Daily Trust* is the only major newspaper located in Northern Nigeria (Kaduna), the political power base of the north, *The Guardian* and several other major newspapers like *This Day* and *The Punch* are located in Lagos, the economic capital of Nigeria. This dichotomy has led to what is colloquially referred to in Nigeria as “the northern press” and “the western press”.

The study seeks to identify any similarities and differences in the presentation of political news and editorial commentaries during the controversial – and ultimately violent – 2011 general election in Nigeria which was essentially an epic political confrontation between the north and the west. These two newspapers are major media conglomerates, with several titles in their stables which are also included in this study. *The Guardian* includes *The Guardian on Sunday* and *The Guardian on Saturday* (the newspaper group’s weekend editions), while *Daily Trust* also includes the *Weekly Trust* and *The Sunday Trust* newspapers – the group’s own weekend editions. Although the daily newspapers are the flagships of each the newspaper groups’ publications, the newspapers in each group share the same editorial policies and management principles – even though the publications have different editors. It is pertinent at this stage to take a brief look at each of these two newspapers in terms of their official editorial policy, missions and visions and how these are aligned to the watchdog role prescribed for the press by the Nigerian Constitution (1999 as amended). These factors will provide some parameters in comparing and contrasting the coverage of corruption and electoral violence by each of the newspapers during the period under review. Indeed, these factors will assist in answering the Research Questions 2, 3 and 4 above. In other words, in evaluating the watchdog role of the press, my study will test whether the unique foci of these selected newspapers, *The Guardian* and *The Daily Trust*: their geographical locations, their readership, their value orientations and their editorial policies will produce different performances of the watchdog role – in their fulfilment of the democratic role of the press.

1.4.1 *The Guardian* newspaper

The Guardian newspaper brands itself, with very good reason, as the flagship of the Nigerian press. *The Guardian* is arguably one of the most credible, most authoritative independent national newspapers in Nigeria. *The Guardian* was established in 1983. It is published in Lagos (South West), Nigeria's economic capital, which is also the media hub in the country. *The Guardian* is owned by the wealthy Ibru family (Niger Delta) who have considerable interests in shipping, fishing, banking, insurance, aviation, hotel and various other businesses. *The Guardian* describes itself as "an independent newspaper, established for the purpose of presenting balanced coverage of events, and of promoting the best interests of Nigeria. It owes allegiance to no political party, ethnic community, religious or other interest group. Its primary commitment is to the integrity and sovereignty of the Federation of Nigeria, and beyond that to the unity and sovereignty of Africa. *The Guardian* is a liberal newspaper, committed to the best traditions and ideals of republican democracy." (The Guardian newspaper's website, www.ngrguardiannews.com/)

Although some members of the Ibru clan also have interests in partisan politics, *The Guardian* newspaper is run purely as a liberal, independent newspaper with no overt political leanings. A member of the family has been a state Governor and a Senator, while the publisher of the newspaper itself, Mr Alex Ibru, was a Cabinet Minister in the military regime of late Gen. Sani Abacha. But when Chief Ibru fell out with the Abacha government, for allegedly failing to make the newspaper toe the government's line, an assassination attempt was made on his life by the self-confessed hit-man of the Abacha government, Sergeant Rogers. Mr Ibru did not make a full recovery from his gunshot wounds (having been shot through the eyes from a moving vehicle while he was in his car on his way home from work. He died in 2012. The motto of *The Guardian* newspaper is: "Conscience, Nurtured by Truth". The publishers, the editors and the journalists strive to maintain this motto even at the risk of their freedom – or their lives.

Readership

Accurate figures about newspaper readership are not easy to come by. Although some newspapers make bogus claims about their circulation figures, for the purpose of enhancing advertisement patronage, the newspaper readership is generally low – given the low level of

literacy and high level of poverty. The estimated circulation figure of *The Guardian* would be in the region of 100,000 copies daily. However, actual readership would be many times higher – given the very high "pass-on rate" whereby one copy of a newspaper could be read by as many as 20 persons. Substantial advertisement revenues help to sustain *The Guardian* newspaper, making it easily one of the largest and most successful newspapers in Nigeria.

1.4.2 Daily Trust newspaper

The Daily Trust newspaper is an independent, radical, left-wing newspaper whose motto is "Trust is a burden". While most of the other major independent newspapers are published in the south of Nigeria, *The Daily Trust* is one of the few surviving newspapers published in the north of Nigeria where the radio, rather than the newspaper, is the major source of media information. *The Daily Trust* newspaper is published by Media Trust Ltd., based in Kaduna (North West). It was started in March 1998, with a weekly edition, before going daily in January 2001. The *Daily Trust* describes itself as a newspaper established to “crystallize the revolutionary vision of an independent Board of Directors”. (Information from the website of the newspaper www.dailytrust.com.ng and its public information products)

The newspaper group is owned and funded by 19 shareholders of Media Trust Nigeria Limited who are mostly young and talented Nigerian professionals in various fields. The managing director / editor-in-chief is Mallam Kabiru Yusuf, a young political economist and journalist who once worked as a Southern African Correspondent of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). The *Daily Trust* newspaper describes itself as a "general interest newspaper" which is "well-focused and market-driven". Like *The Guardian*, the *Daily Trust* is also privately owned and independent of any direct political or religious affiliations. However, the newspaper is designed as a regional tabloid and is very popular in the northern regions of Nigeria, while the much bigger *Guardian* and *This Day* newspapers hold sway in the southern parts and in other cosmopolitan areas of the country. Although the *Daily Trust* newspaper says it is “market-driven” in orientation, it is noteworthy that the newspaper affirms, at the same time, the “revolutionary vision” of its independent Board of Directors”.

Readership

Although there are no clear indications of actual circulation figures or print run, the *Weekly Trust* and *Daily Trust* newspapers describe themselves, with some justification, as "the largest circulating newspapers in Northern Nigeria". The sales copies are distributed in all towns and cities in the North; Lagos, Abeokuta and Ibadan in the South-West; Port Harcourt, Yenagoa, Benin, Calabar in the South-South; Onitsha, Owerri, and Enugu in the South East; and in several outlets in the United Kingdom (UK).

In the remaining parts of this Introductory Chapter, I will give an overview of the press and democracy in Nigeria; an indication of the theoretical framework for the study and the research questions. I will also indicate my methodology as well as the overall organization of the thesis – before delving into the critical section of Literature Review in Chapter Two.

1.5.0 The press and democracy in Nigeria

A large body of literature exists on the role of the press in Nigeria, which is reviewed extensively in the course of the study. With specific reference to the subject area, there is a large body of literature addressing various aspects of media performance in Nigeria, a selection of which is reviewed in this study (Chapter 3). My study adds to the literature on press coverage of elections and political communication in Nigeria. Indeed, my study seeks to expand the scope of the literature by looking at the treatment of two specific issues of official corruption and political violence – in the context of the performance of the watchdog role of the press. This is a clear departure from taking a broad analytical sweep of press coverage of general elections in Nigeria – as some of the earlier studies have done.

A proper analysis and understanding of the press coverage of Nigeria's general elections, as an important area of study, will help us to understand the dynamics of Nigeria's troubled politics, and how different newspapers present political news and editorial commentaries, especially corruption and political violence, to their readers during the general election. My study, therefore, seeks to assess and to understand how well the Nigerian independent press has performed the official watchdog role assigned to it by the Nigerian 1999 Constitution (Amended).

In spite of many legal constraints, operational challenges and official repression, a widely shared view among politicians and actively promoted by the press itself is that the Nigerian press has played a significant role in advancing Nigeria's political transition from military dictatorship to democratic governance. As Pate (2011) points out, in Nigeria, the performance of the mass media in the democratic process at various phases of the country's history has been well documented (Omu, 1978; Ogbondah, 1994; Yusuf, 2001 and Nwosu, 2003, Oso, 2010). Arguably, the mass media (especially the press) have remained in the forefront in the struggle to promote the rights of the people through a credible democratization process. (Pate, 2011, p.2) These scholars contend that the Nigerian press has played a very significant role over the years in the country's overall socio-economic and political development. All through the dark periods of military dictatorship, the Nigerian press, working in cooperation with civil society organizations, political pressure groups and various other stakeholders, with support from the international community, campaigned relentlessly for the military men to leave the political terrain and return to the barracks – where they belong. As Thompson (1997) points out, the Nigeria press challenged the military rulers through various methods, especially through producing and publishing investigative news stories exposing corruption and other brazen acts of recklessness and abuse of power among the ruling military elite (See also Adejare, 2004; Adeniyi, 2010.) As Ibrahim (1995) points out, the Nigerian press has had a strong tradition of freedom of the press – dating back to the colonial days when the press played an important role in the struggle against colonial rule. (See also Rasheed, 1995; Rimi, 1995 and Adejare, 2004)

The main objective of this study, therefore, is to seek a better understanding of the performance of Nigerian newspapers in their classic role as facilitators and watchdogs of democracy, while they are, at the same time, contending with the forces and power relations of the market economy. The study hopes to contribute to a better understanding of how Nigerian newspapers and journalists are balancing this delicate relationship – in spite of the various challenges they face in a developing economy and an emerging democracy like Nigeria. This study is not only very necessary but is also urgent and compelling, because no such study has been done on this aspect of the role of the Nigerian press within the last few years since the country's transition from military dictatorship to civil democratic governance.

Indeed, the 2011 general election was widely acclaimed as the best in Nigeria's recent history. (INEC Results of the Election, op. cit., p.2) However, the electoral commission was

quick to admit that “the 2011 polls, though qualitatively better than many previous elections, was by no means perfect”. (Ibid, vi). Unlike the previous elections which were marred by serious electoral fraud and sundry malpractices (European Union Election Observation Mission Reports, 2004, 2007), the 2011 general election was widely adjudged as free and fair – indeed the freest and fairest general election conducted in Nigeria since the return to civil rule. (EU Election Observation Mission Report 2011.) However, this election also turned out to be “the bloodiest and the most violent” general election in the nation’s history so far (See Lemu Panel of Inquiry Report, 2011). How the Nigerian press mediated this violence and the official corruption that put the nation’s nascent democracy in jeopardy, and the recommendations they made in their editorial opinions for treating these social ills, form the major basis for the inquiry in this study. In order to empower Nigerian journalists to perform the official watchdog role conferred on the media by the provisions of the Constitution, President Goodluck Jonathan signed the long-awaited Freedom of Information Act into law on May 28, 2011. The Freedom of Information Act (2011) repeals some of the provisions of the obnoxious and out-dated Official Secrets Act of 1966, as well as various other draconian media laws and military decrees which had sought to gag the media.

1.5.1 Positioning the study

In examining how the press covered specific issues during the period of the electoral cycle in Nigeria, this study offers some contextual insights into understanding press performance and contributes to the literature on the role of the press in the context of Nigeria as an emerging democracy in Africa. This, in my view, is a particularly important area of research because, although many scholars and writers have addressed various issues relating to the Nigerian media in general and the press in particular (as examined in the select literature review), the role of the Nigerian press in general elections coverage since the post-military era is essentially a new field – as new as the era itself, This is due to the fact that Nigeria had faced several long periods of military dictatorship before the return to democratic governance in May 1999. The study is anchored on the framework of the Liberal Theory (Watchdog Model) which sees the press as the watchdog of society. My study affirms earlier studies which have established that the Nigerian press has played a very important normative role in Nigeria’s democratisation process – from the colonial era to the present day. My study builds on the work of liberal theorists and other media scholars who have established that the press plays a

crucial democratic role as the watchdog of society – especially within the context of emerging democracies like Nigeria.

1.6.0 The research problem

The two issues of political violence and official corruption have already been identified as major problems facing Nigeria as a developing country and an emerging democracy in Africa. The study examines how the Nigerian press covers the twin problems of corruption and political violence which have posed as major threats to the sustenance of Nigeria's nascent democracy – in the context of the constitutional role of the press as the watchdogs of society and facilitator of democracy and good governance. The study examines two aspects of press coverage: first, the study examines the front page headline news of the two selected daily newspapers over a period of 12 months, to determine the major themes and issues which dominated the press news coverage during this period under review. Secondly, the study analyses the editorial opinions of the two selected daily newspapers for the same period of 12 months, to establish the official positions and stance taken by the two newspapers in portraying the same issues of political violence and corruption as manifested during the period of the 2011 general election in the country. The study also examines the recommendations made by the two newspapers for the treatment of these social and political problems of official corruption and political violence as reported in their front page news headlines and also analysed in their editorial opinions during the period under review, in order to examine how well or not the press has performed the watchdog role prescribed for it by the Nigerian constitution. Linked to the performance of the watchdog role of the Nigerian press, the study also examines the challenges which confront Nigerian journalists – and how these challenges affect the performance of their professional duties. My study examines these challenges faced by the press through semi-structured interviews with an indicative sample of news reporters, editors and media managers selected from the four major newspapers in the country.

1.6.1 The research questions

As observed earlier, there is hardly any current research study which has examined the role of the Nigerian press and the extent to which it performs the watchdog role assigned to it by the

country's new Constitution since Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999 after several decades of military dictatorship. Having thus identified the limitations, indeed near absence, of recent research studies on the role of the press in Nigeria's nascent democracy, my study could be seen as a major attempt to fill that gap and provide some new insights into the role of the press in an emerging democracy like Nigeria, which prides itself as "the giant of Africa".

The research will aim essentially to identify and analyse the dominant political and socio-economic issues which the press focused attention on during the period of the 2011 general elections in Nigeria, and to explore if there are any central defining themes and frames that could be taken as a common stance in reinforcing and upholding certain positive societal values or opposing and denouncing various negative practices in relation to the role of the press in promoting democracy and good governance. My research will also aim to identify the problems and challenges faced by Nigerian newspaper journalists in election news reporting and to see whether the ownership structures, size, geographical location or political leanings of the selected newspapers played any significant role in shaping their respective news coverage and editorial opinions during the selected period of the general elections. Accordingly, my study sought to answer five main research questions (RQs) as follows:

RQ1: What major themes were covered in their front page headline news by the two major independent Nigerian newspapers during the period of the 2011 general election in the country and how does this coverage reflect on the performance of their watchdog role?

RQ2: How are events, incidents, actors and policies relating to political violence and official corruption portrayed in these newspapers in their editorial opinions and what does this say about the performance of the democratic function and the ideological role of the Nigerian press?

RQ3: Are there any significant differences in the portrayal of these events, incidents, actors and policies by these two newspapers, given their different locations and ownership?

RQ4: What policy recommendations are advanced by the two newspapers in curbing political violence and official corruption as a means of promoting equity in the country?

RQ5: What challenges are faced by Nigerian journalists in the course of their work and how do these challenges impact on their professionalism and ethics?

1.7 Theoretical Framework

As indicated earlier, my study uses the *Liberal Media Theory* (Watchdog Model) as its main theoretical and analytical framework. Liberal thought conceives of the media as the Fourth Estate of the Realm, a realm in which the press functions essentially as the public watchdog, monitoring the government and its activities. Over time, the watchdog role of the media expanded to cover a monitoring of not only the activities of the government and its agencies, but also a surveillance of other various categories of public officials in order to hold them accountable to the people on whose behalf they hold public office. This study evaluates how the Nigerian press has played this watchdog role – with specific reference to the coverage of the country’s controversial and violent 2011 general elections. In Chapter 3, the study reviews a range of literature on the watchdog function of the press in order to situate the study in the proper context. Although the democratic function of the press as the watchdog of society is well established, political economists and other media scholars are quick to point out some of the weaknesses of the Watchdog Model (Liberal Theory). The arguments and different positions are discussed extensively in the Literature Review section (Chapter 3) of this study.

No doubt, various media theories could be used in assessing and understanding the performance of the Nigerian independent press. The Political Economy Theory is a very attractive option, given the ownership structure of the Nigerian press, the constraints of the market place and the social, economic and political power relations which operate in the context of Nigeria as an emerging democracy and which journalists must negotiate. These factors are more in line with the principles of the Political Economy Theory. However, again given the unique context of Nigeria as an emerging democracy, the Nigerian press has inherited, and vigorously asserts, the age-long democratic function of the media as the watchdog of the society. Indeed, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999 as amended), provides a clear and unambiguous watchdog role for the media: to hold public office holders accountable to the citizens of the country. Section 22 of the Constitution, under the “Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy,” has a provision on the “obligations of the mass media”. This section provides that: “the press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this Chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the Government to the people”. (The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, p.34)

Although the Liberal Theory (Watchdog Model) has its limitations, as discussed later in Chapter 3, it is a fit and proper theoretical framework to be used in the Nigerian context, as I have done here, in analysing and assessing the performance of the Nigerian independent press, given the fact that this model has already been formalized by the Nigerian national Constitution for the operation of the media.

1.8 Methodology

My study uses different but complementary methods (Content Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis) in analysing the headline news content and editorial opinions respectively of two Nigerian independent newspapers, using the framework of the Liberal Media Theory (Watchdog Model). The study also used semi-structured interviews to obtain additional information from journalists in the country on their professional practices and working conditions. A brief explanation is appropriate here on each method and my use of the method in the study. First, a word on content analysis. Content Analysis has become one of the key research methods and approaches in the study of media and mass communication processes. (See Hansen, Cottle, Negrine and Newbold, 1998) As the Dictionary of Media Studies points out, “Journalists operate with a set of assumptions... which provide a way of organizing and filtering the information that they receive and which they subsequently transmit as news.” *The Dictionary of Media Studies* (2007, p.142) For Nigerian journalists, the part is already prescribed for them in the national Constitution. They operate with the assumption – and, indeed, the knowledge, that they are expected to perform the watchdog role already assigned to the media in the constitution. This knowledge provides a way for them to organize and filter the information which they receive and which they subsequently transmit as news, in spite of the challenges they face, and in spite of the pressures of ownership and control sometimes exerted by the owners and the economic and political power elite. Thus, for many Nigerian press journalists, there is simply only one way to go in the performance of their professional duties: the way of the liberal, autonomous independent press operating under the dictates of the watchdog model enshrined for the media in the Nigerian national Constitution. My use of content analysis is because it is one of the methods which provide a coherent, appropriate and principally sociological approach to the production of media and communication research. As Hansen and co. (1998) point out, it is also one of the most frequently used methods in mass communication research, its development as a formal

method of social inquiry having been spurred on by, among others, “the desire to make social inquiry ‘scientific,’ in a manner comparable to the controlled, systematic, objective, and supposedly predictive, methods of the natural sciences” (pp. 92-93). The selection of the quantitative method of content analysis is appropriate to identify the major themes in the front page news headlines of the press and helps to offer evidence to answer RQ1: What major themes were covered in their front page headline news by the two major independent Nigerian newspapers during the period of the 2011 general election in the country and how does this coverage reflect on the performance of their watchdog role?

Beyond the quantitative method of content analysis used in identifying the quantum of news coverage of specific issues, the study also uses critical discourse analysis to examine the language used by the two newspapers in constructing their editorial opinions on the same issues of political violence and official corruption during the period under review. My study adopts the guidelines set out by van Dijk (1988) who recommends that an analysis of media texts should include three parts: “the description of argumentative structures; the explication of presupposed (tacit) assumptions, norms and values; and an analysis of style and rhetorical values” (p.126). My analysis focuses on the language and style used by the newspapers to portray various incidents, events, actors or agents as well as the policy recommendations of the newspapers. With the use of critical discourse analysis, the study attempts to explore how the newspapers use language to convey their ideological positions and to represent the various power relations between actors, incidents and events in the society. Hall (1996, p.26) defines ideology as the mental frameworks, the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation” which different groups use to understand and explain the workings of society, thereby helping to maintain and stabilize various forms of power relations. van Dijk (2007, p.140) observes that studying the editorial opinions of newspapers is of special significance when analysing the ideological role of the news media because editorials are expressions of broader ideological stance of the newspapers’ owners and managers. The selection of critical discourse analysis is appropriate in helping to offer evidence to answer these Research Questions: RQ2: How are events, incidents, actors and policies relating to political violence and official corruption portrayed in these newspapers in their editorial opinions and what does this say about the performance of the political function of the Nigerian press?

RQ3: Are there any significant differences in the portrayal of these events, incidents, actors and policies by these two newspapers? And RQ4: What policy recommendations are advanced by the two newspapers in curbing political violence and official corruption as a means of promoting equity in the country?

In addition, as indicated earlier, the study also used semi-structured interviews to explore the challenges faced by Nigerian journalists, as well as to supplement and clarify some of the information that arose from the analysis of the news content and editorial opinions of the newspapers. The use of Semi-Structured Interviews provides evidence to answer the RQ5: What challenges are faced by Nigerian journalists in the course of their work and how do these challenges impact on their professionalism and ethics?

1.9 The organization of the thesis

This thesis is divided into eight chapters. Chapter 2 presents a historical background of Nigeria – to place the study in the socio-political context as a developing country and emerging democracy in Africa. The Chapter also provides a historical background of the origin of the independent press in Nigeria and its role as the watchdog of the society and the facilitator of democracy and good governance. The chapter also examines the twin problems of political violence and corruption in Nigeria – and the efforts being made by the government authorities to tackle these problems, as portrayed through the press. Finally, the chapter also reviews the recently concluded 2015 general election which marked a new beginning for Nigeria and was remarkably more successful and less violent than the bloody 2011 general election that is the subject of this thesis.

Chapter Three provides the theoretical framework for the study, reviewing the literature and providing the basis for an analysis of the role of the press in Nigeria in the context of the liberal media theory underpinning its constitutional role as the watchdog of society and facilitator of democracy and good governance. The chapter looks at various theories of the media – with an attempt to justify the choice of the Liberal Theory as my theoretical and analytical framework for this study on the coverage of political violence and official corruption by Nigerian newspapers during the country’s particularly bloody 2011 general elections. In this chapter, I also review recent empirical studies in emerging African

democracies which have evaluated press coverage of political issues in the African environment (See Mchakulu, 2011; Amoakohene, 2006, and Waldahl, 2005).

Chapter 4 is anchored on the Methodology adopted for the study. This chapter defines the key concept of Content Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis and explores how their use has become invaluable in the sociological study of media content. The criteria for selecting the newspapers and the media samples used in the Content Analysis and Discourse Analysis were also discussed, as well as the selection of participants who took part in the semi-structured interviews. Chapter Four discusses the methods adopted in this study, the means used in gathering and analysing the data as well as the theoretical considerations which support the methodological framework for the study.

Chapter 5: This chapter analyses the front page headline news coverage of political violence and official corruption in the two selected newspapers, *The Guardian* and *Daily Trust*, during the period of the 2011 general election in Nigeria. The analysis sought to establish whether or not there are parallels in the way the two newspapers presented political news during the 2011 general election in the country, especially with respect to the themes of political violence and official corruption as presented in the front page headline news coverage of the two newspapers. Using quantitative methods, this chapter identifies more than a dozen major themes which dominated the front page headline news of each of the two newspapers in the study during the period under review. The chapter uses the quantity of coverage as an indication of the level of importance attached to such themes by the respective newspapers.

Chapter 6: Using critical discourse analysis, this chapter analyses the editorial opinions of the two newspapers on the same issues of political violence and corruption during the same period of the 2011 general election in Nigeria – in order to establish the ideological positions and attitudes taken by the two newspapers on the twin socio-political problems of political violence and corruption.

Chapter 7 is based on the analysis of a series of semi-structured interviews conducted with newspaper reporters, editors and media managers in Nigeria. The objective of the interviews is driven by the need to answer one of the key research questions of this study: what are the challenges faced by Nigerian journalists – and how do these challenges impact on their professional work? Using the answers provided by the journalists in a series of personal interviews conducted in various cities in Nigeria, the Chapter analyses the challenges which

journalists face in the course of their work in a developing country like Nigeria – and how these challenges impact on their professionalism and ethics.

Chapter 8, the Conclusion, presents a summary of the findings of the study, reviews these main findings and discusses the theoretical implications of the findings. The chapter also presents the modest but significant contributions to knowledge which the study has made at various levels.

CHAPTER TWO

NIGERIA: HISTORICAL, SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a historical, socio-economic and political overview of Nigeria, the context of the research. The chapter looks at the historical and socio-political background of Nigeria, a historical overview of the Nigerian press, the return of democracy in Nigeria after the years of military dictatorship and the cycle of violence and corruption which have dogged the efforts to entrench a viable democratic polity in Africa's political and economic power house. This background is important in the sense that media performance is contextual. Accordingly, since my study sets out to evaluate the performance of the Nigerian press in the context of a post-colonial developing country and an emerging democracy in Africa, understanding Nigeria's historical, socio-cultural, economic and political background may offer some insights into a better understanding of the factors which may have produced the kind of media environment prevalent in the country.

2.1 Nigeria: A Historical and Socio-Political Background

Nigeria is a sub-Saharan African country, classified by the World Bank as a developing, lower middle income level nation, with a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$568.5 billion and a total population of 178.5 million (World Bank, 2014). Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and accounts for 47% of West Africa's population. It is also the biggest oil exporter in Africa, with the largest natural gas reserves in the continent. Indeed, the World Bank submits that "Given these large reserves of human and natural resources, the country (Nigeria) has significant potential to build a prosperous economy characterized by rapid economic growth that can significantly reduce poverty, inequality and improve standards of living of the population through better access to and quality of health care, education and infrastructure services" (World Bank, Nigeria Overview, 2015).

Nigeria's population is made up of over 200 ethnic groups, 500 indigenous languages, and two major religions — Islam and Christianity. The largest ethnic groups are the Hausa-Fulani

in the North, the Igbo in the Southeast and the Yoruba in the Southwest. The fragmentation of Nigeria's geographical, ethnic and cultural identity lines is effectively balanced by the country's federal structure and the strong emphasis of the federal government on representing six geopolitical zones and different ethnic and cultural identities, although the fault lines run deep along these contending ethnic, religious and regional divides. Nigeria's immense diversity and large population appear to be as much a source of strength and potential growth as they are also a source of the violence and instability which has stunted the country's socio-economic and political development.

Indeed, Nigeria prides itself as "the giant of Africa" – and with its abundant human and material resources, this high level of national pride and optimism could be justified. On the international scene, Nigeria continues to be a leading player in the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU), the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). However, since Nigeria gained her independence in 1960 from Britain, her former colonial master, all has not been well politically with "the giant of Africa". Nigeria has gone through long periods of military rule, which have produced some of the most brutal dictators in modern political history. Several political historians, social critics, media analysts and observers have variously noted that Nigeria has, so far, failed to realize her full potentials as a nation richly endowed with abundant human and material resources. (See Achebe, 1983; Osaghae, 1997; Adeniyi, 2010) Indeed, Osaghae (1997) has dubbed Nigeria as the "crippled giant" (p.8)

Osaghae provides a historical and political analysis of major developments in Nigeria since the country's independence in 1960. He stresses the fact that Nigeria was essentially "a British colonial creation". Before the British amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates in 1914 which led to the formation of Nigeria, three notable regional formations existed in the areas which were to become Nigeria. These were the North, the West and the East. The author also observes that despite the amalgamation, the different areas and territories which made up Nigeria had different levels of social, economic and political development and maintained their different cultural and ethnic identities. These differences arising from the country's colonial history have been the major causes of the problems which Nigeria has suffered since independence. Osaghae also identifies "the corruption of the political class" as one of the major causes of Nigeria's problems since independence. In

conclusion, he notes that “Nigeria has since independence moved away from – rather than towards – the actualization of its vast potential” (Osaghae, op. cit., 1-15).

Similarly, Achebe (1983) analyses the various factors which have contributed in setting Nigeria back from realizing its immense potentials as a country – and concludes that “the trouble with Nigeria is firmly and squarely a failure of leadership”. (Achebe, op. cit., 1-15.) In a 2011 report compiled and released by the US-based not-for-profit organization, Fund for Peace, in collaboration with the Foreign Policy magazine, Nigeria was classified as a “failed state” – ranked 14th position among 177 countries evaluated by the organization. (See *The Guardian* newspaper, 2011, Thursday, June 30, p.14.) The newspaper stressed in its editorial commentary that Nigeria’s leadership should address issues of governance, constitutionalism and the rule of law; and infrastructural deficiencies, especially the energy sector. The newspaper also recommended that the government should increase funding of education and initiate policies to create employment. “Above all, we should build institutions that work – that is one critical way to take ourselves out of the bracket of failed states and rub shoulders with healthy nations of the world” (*Ibid.*). A great deal has not changed in the country in those sectors since that report.

2.2 From the Bullet to the Ballot: Return to Democratic Rule in Nigeria

As Tinubu (2011) observes, the past quarter of a century has seen the expansion of forms of democratic governance throughout the world, including Africa (*The Nation* newspaper, July 20, 2011). Nigeria, of course, has not been left out in this positive wind of democratic change blowing throughout the world. Tinubu’s “brief historical sketch,” summarized below, captures succinctly the various major governmental changes which Nigeria has gone through in its short but violent national history. The first major change was the movement from a British colony to an independent nation state in October 1960. The second was the military *coup d’état* in January 1966 and the counter coup in July 1966 – both of which were very bloody indeed and inevitably led to Nigeria’s fratricidal civil war (1967-1970). In 1979, after several aborted attempts at democratisation, the military handed over power to an elected civilian government. However, this government was again overthrown by the military barely four years later, in 1983. A renewed attempt at democratisation culminated in the presidential election of June 12, 1993, which, although generally considered to be free and fair, was

surprisingly “annulled” by the military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida, one in the line of military dictators who had held sway over Nigeria, through the barrel of the gun, since the country’s independence.

“A democratic transition that was in full gear was abruptly terminated. Hell was let loose. Protests were crushed by military tanks. Hundreds of protesters died. Freedom of expression and political rights ... were rudely curtailed. Some media houses were shut down, (newspaper) titles proscribed, journalists detained without charges or on spurious charges” (Tinubu, *op.cit.*).

The acclaimed winner of the annulled June 12 presidential election in Nigeria, the billionaire businessman, Chief Moshood Abiola, was imprisoned for four years for demanding the actualization of his electoral mandate which had been usurped by yet another military dictator, General Sani Abacha. Nigeria was, indeed, in a state of *anomie* – which was only resolved, some say, by the unseen hand of fate. Chief Abiola died mysteriously in custody, on July 7, 1998, while his jailor, General Abacha, had also died equally mysteriously on his bed, on June 8, 1998. The conspiracy theories surrounding the deaths of Chief Abiola and General Abacha, one month apart from each other, are, of course, not matters for this modest research study. Suffice it to say, however, that with the two contending gladiators Chief Abiola and General Abacha out of the way, a new political transition programme, executed by General Abdulsalami Abubakar, culminated in the handing over of power to an elected democratic government on May 29, 1999, headed by Chief Olusegun Obasanjo – a retired army general who was also once Nigeria’s military head of state. Since 1999, Nigeria has, mercifully, had an unbroken period of democratic rule for over 18 years – the longest period of sustained democracy in the country’s 57 years of independence.

With the end of military dictatorship in 1999 and the return to democracy, things were beginning to look up again for Nigeria. After his victory in the first democratic election in 1999 following the end of military dictatorship, President Obasanjo took various steps to calm the frayed nerves of Nigerians and to restore the country to the comity of nations. After his first term in office, Obasanjo was re-elected in 2003 for another term of four years – which ended in 2007. The 2007 general election produced Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar’Adua as president in a keenly contested but highly controversial election which was marred by ballot

rigging and other electoral malpractices. (See European Union Election Observation Mission Report, 2007)

Following a protracted illness attributed to liver ailment, President Yar'Adua died on May 5, 2010, before completing his term of office. His erstwhile deputy, Vice President Goodluck Jonathan, was subsequently appointed as the President by the National Assembly (Parliament) to complete Yar'Adua's term in office – as provided for by Nigeria's Federal Constitution (Amended Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2011). The year 2011 marked the end of the joint Yar'Adua/Jonathan presidency and heralded another general election period in Nigeria: which is the period of study of this research.

The 2011 General Elections were the third to be conducted by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) since the transition to civil rule in 1999. A total number of 63 registered political parties participated in the 2011 polls. As the Chairman of the Electoral Commission points out, the two preceding general elections in 2003 and 2007 were widely criticised as largely flawed, and the Commission was generally held accountable for many of the flaws. Among the major problems identified with those elections for which the Commission was held responsible were a badly compiled roll of voters, shoddy preparations for the elections, poor management of results, aloofness from stakeholders, seeming inability to control the negative actions of political parties and candidates, as well as outright vote rigging in some cases. Consequently, there was a widespread negative perception of the Commission and its capacity to conduct credible elections at the time the present Commission was inaugurated. This created a major burden on the new Commission to deliver noticeably improved elections in 2011. (See INEC Report of the 2011 General Elections, p.2)

The results of the 2011 presidential election, as announced by the Electoral Commission, showed that Dr Goodluck Ebele Jonathan of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) won the election with a total of 22.5 million votes – having also won at least 25% of the total votes cast in 31 out of the 36 states of the country. The runner-up, General Muhammadu Buhari (Congress for Progressive Change, CPC) got 12.2 million votes, collecting at least 25% of the votes cast in 16 states, while the third placed candidate, Mallam Nuhu Ribadu (Action Congress of Nigeria, ACN) scored 2.1 million votes, winning at least 25% of the votes cast in four (4) states. (INEC Results of the 2011 Presidential Election, INEC website, accessed Dec. 09, 2013, 10.30pm) Overall, the conduct of the 2011 general elections was domestically and

internationally acclaimed to be credible and a great leap forward from the previous experiences since the 4th Republic.

Indeed, the 2011 elections were widely acclaimed as the best in Nigeria's recent history. (INEC Results of the Election, op. cit., p.2) However, the electoral commission was quick to admit that "the 2011 polls, though qualitatively better than many previous elections, was by no means perfect" (Ibid, VI). Unlike the previous elections which were marred by serious electoral fraud and sundry malpractices (European Union Election Observation Mission Reports, 2004, 2007), the 2011 general election was widely adjudged as free and fair – indeed the freest and fairest general election conducted in Nigeria since the return to civil rule. (EU Election Observation Mission Report 2011.) But the free and fair elections were marred by an unprecedented outbreak of post-election violence which spread like a wild fire through various parts of the country.

2.3 Media and Political Violence in Africa

Media scholars have done a considerable amount of work on the critical issues of media and elections in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular – especially with regards to the press coverage of electoral violence and conflicts in these elections. To place the 2011 post-election violence in Nigeria in proper context, I will discuss a few of the relevant academic studies, reports and newspaper articles here in order to establish the extent to which political violence and conflicts have permeated democratic elections in Nigeria and Africa. I shall also return subsequently to the issue of media and electoral violence in the Literature Review section of the thesis.

Hitchen (2015) observes that, "In the 2000s, elections and term limits replaced death and coups d'état as the most common ways in which African leaders left office". (Hitchen, *Africa At LSE* blog, 2015) This was because before this period of democratization, Africa had a rash of military dictators and sit-tight elected civilian despots who refused to leave office – until they were killed or overthrown in coups d'état as Hitchen noted. Although democratic elections and term limits are now being upheld in most African countries, political violence and electoral crises have continued to plague the democratic transformation process in many African countries – including Nigeria. (See Cheeseman, 2015; Ekeanyanwu, 2016).

2.4 A Cycle of Electoral Violence in Nigeria

Nigeria has had a long history of electoral violence. Between independence in 1960 and 1999, Nigeria produced only two elected governments – both of which were later overthrown in military coups. Nigeria's military ruled the country for nearly 30 of its first 40 years of independence, until Nigeria made a transition to civilian rule in 1999. The 1999 elections, which brought a retired general, Olusegun Obasanjo, to power, were blighted by such widespread fraud that observers from the Carter Centre concluded that "it is not possible for us to make an accurate judgment about the outcome of the presidential election." (Human Rights Watch Report, 2011, Online, May 17) The Federal and state elections in 2003 were again marred by fraud as well as serious incidents of violence that left at least 100 people dead and many others injured. Serious incidents of fraud and electoral violence occurred again in the 2003 general elections, as in the two previous elections since the transition to civil rule. Indeed, observers from the European Union Election Observation Mission described the 2007 elections, which brought Alhaji Umaru Yar'Adua to power, as among the worst they had witnessed anywhere in the world. Human Rights Watch reports that at least 300 people were killed in violence linked to the 2007 elections. (HRW, op. cit) Human Rights Watch estimates that, altogether; more than 15,700 people have been killed in Nigeria's "cycle of violence" (inter-communal, political, and sectarian violence) since Nigeria returned to civilian rule in 1999. (Ibid)

The cycle of violence repeated itself in the 2011 general elections – before, during and after the elections. By November 2010, 165 people had died in violence linked to the party primaries and campaigns. One of the leading governorship candidates in Borno State was assassinated in January 2011, while bombings in four states in different parts of the country (Bayelsa, Borno, Kaduna, and Niger) left dozens of people dead. Clashes between opposing party supporters or attacks by party thugs during the campaigns killed dozens of others. (Ibid) Worse was to come in the post-election violence.

In its report on the 2011 Nigerian general elections, Human Rights Watch (May 17, 2011) observed that "*The April elections were heralded as among the fairest in Nigeria's history, but they also were among the bloodiest. The presidential election divided the country along ethnic and religious lines*". Human Rights Watch reported that more than 800 persons lost their lives during the post-election violence which erupted after Nigeria's 2011 presidential

election. The victims were killed in three days of rioting in 12 northern states. Over 65,000 persons were displaced. More than 500 persons were arrested and charged to court for their suspected involvement in the violence. (Ibid) Human Rights Watch, which had international observers on ground in Nigeria during the election, provides a graphic account of what happened. The violence began with widespread protests by supporters of the main opposition candidate, Muhammadu Buhari, a northern Muslim from the Congress for Progressive Change, following the re-election of incumbent Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian from the Niger Delta in the south, who was the candidate for the ruling People's Democratic Party. The protests degenerated into violent riots or sectarian killings in 12 northern states.

The Human Rights Watch reported that when the election results started coming in on April 17 and indicated clearly that that General Buhari had lost, his angry supporters went on the rampage in various parts of Northern Nigeria, his home base, in protest against the alleged rigging of the elections to favour Dr Goodluck Jonathan, the incumbent from the South. Eventually, what started as protests turned into riots and degenerated quickly into an orgy of sectarian and ethnic violence across the northern states of Nigeria.

“Muslim rioters targeted and killed Christians and members of ethnic groups from southern Nigeria, who were perceived to have supported the ruling party, burning their churches, shops, and homes. The rioters also attacked police stations and ruling party and electoral commission offices. In predominately Christian communities in Kaduna State, mobs of Christians retaliated by killing Muslims and burning their mosques and properties...” (Human Rights Watch, op.cit.).

The Federal Government had to deploy armed soldiers to halt the violence and mayhem. The violence and civil disturbances which erupted in Nigeria after the 2011 general elections were so intense and extensive that the Federal Government set up a high level Panel to investigate the immediate and remote causes of the crises. President Goodluck Jonathan appointed Dr Sheikh Ahmed Lemu to head the panel of 22 members – which the President inaugurated in Abuja on May 11, 2011. The terms of reference of the panel were as follows: to investigate the immediate and remote causes of the unrest in some states of the federation following the presidential election, as well as the pre-election violence in Akwa Ibom State and make appropriate recommendations on how to prevent future occurrence; to ascertain the number of persons who lost their lives or sustained injuries during the

violence; to identify the spread and extent of loss and damage to means of livelihood and assess the cost of damage to personal and public properties and places of worship and make appropriate recommendations; to investigate the sources of weapons used in the unrest and recommend how to stem the tide of illegal flow of such weapons into the country; and to examine any other matter incidental or relevant to the unrest and advise the government as appropriate. In all, the panel visited 15 states during its investigation and submitted its full report to President Jonathan in October 2011.

In its final report, the Lemu Panel identified *official corruption, mass poverty of the populace and a rising population of restive and unemployed youths* as the major causes of the electoral violence. The Panel found that official corruption and mismanagement of the economy by politicians were draining the nation's resources and further impoverishing the masses of the people – thereby making them prone to violence. (*The Guardian*, Oct. 25, 2011, p.18) The Panel criticised the National Assembly (Parliament) for taking a large chunk of the nation's earning and said the amount being spent on the lawmakers would send Nigeria into bankruptcy. It said: "What these legislators take from the public coffers under the guise of allowances, whether in terms of their oversight function or travelling or any other allowance, cannot be justified by the relevant provisions of the constitution in this regard. They have continued to behave to Nigerians as if they are unwilling to exercise the needed discipline to stop bleeding the country of its scarce resources." (Ibid) The Panel also observed that Nigerians yearned for a change regarding the failure of the government to deliver the dividends of democracy and good governance, reflected in epileptic supply of electricity, deplorable roads, insecurity of life and property, public frustration and disappointment (*The Guardian*, Oct. 25, 2011, op. cit).

The Report said: "There is too much hardship and poverty among the vast majority of Nigerians. The country is not on the right track in many aspects of our lives. Our leaders should not take Nigerians for granted perpetually. The angst of the people is rising and we have reached a point at which we must do the right things... otherwise our democracy shall be put in grave jeopardy; or at best, it will be in a perpetually bizarre state in which election violence is continuously reborn, and peace and progress permanently retarded" (*This Day* newspaper, op.cit). This study examines how the two major Nigerian independent newspapers

covered the issue of electoral violence and corruption during the period of the 2011 general election as indicated.

With on-going efforts to address the root causes of electoral violence in Nigeria (especially corruption, poverty, illiteracy, high unemployment, poor infrastructure and lack of basic social amenities), there is renewed optimism in the air that, with anticipated electoral reforms and enhanced good governance, Nigeria could begin to earn her sobriquet as "the giant of Africa". In this endeavour, Nigeria has an ally in the press. From its early beginnings to the present time, the Nigerian press has played, and continues to play, a significant role in the country in promoting and facilitating democracy and good governance as will be illustrated in the next section. But first, a word about the historical origins of the Nigerian press.

2.5 The Nigerian Press: A Historical Overview

Missionaries were the first to introduce the press into West Africa. The first newspaper in Nigeria was established in December 1859. (See Omu, 1978: 6-7; Ugboajah, 1980:16) Interestingly, the newspaper, in vernacular, was set up by a Church Missionary Society (CMS) evangelist (from Leicester, England): the Reverend Henry Townsend. The newspaper, a forth nightly publication, was in Yoruba, one of the main indigenous languages in Nigeria. It was named *Iwe Irohin (Iwe Irohin fun awon ara Egba ati Yoruba)*¹. Its contents centred on marriage announcements, church news, post office notices, trade reports and attacks on slavery and the Portuguese-led slave trade. (Ugboajah, 1980:16) Townsend outlined his aim in setting up the newspaper thus: "My object is to get the people to read, i.e. to beget the habit of seeking information by reading." (Nwanuforo, 1984:38) This is the hermeneutic motivation in starting a newspaper: it leads, it is believed, to cultured and civilized behaviour. And, of course, the early missionaries, fired by evangelistic zeal, saw themselves as being on a civilising mission to Africa.

From 8 March 1860, *Iwe Irohin* became a bilingual newspaper when an English language supplement was added to it. Translations from Yoruba to English and from English to Yoruba were done by Christian converts who had been instructed in the "Three Rs" – Reading, 'Riting and 'Rithmetic. Omu observes that: "*Iwe Irohin* was unique in several respects.

¹ It is the title of the first newspaper in Nigeria. A newspaper of information for the Egba people.

Selling for a hundred and twenty cowries, the equivalent of one penny, it was the best organized of the mission papers at the time... and more importantly, it were the first to be published in an African language” (Omu, 1978:7).

The newspaper industry in Nigeria grew rapidly afterwards. One of the earliest newspapers after *Iwe Irohin* was the Daily Times, which was incorporated in Nigeria on June 6, 1925. From such humble beginnings of the “penny press” like *Iwe Irohin*, Nigeria presently has more than 30 local, regional and national newspapers published and circulated across the length and breadth of the country. Of these dozens of newspapers, six could be considered among the biggest and the best. These big six newspapers, all privately owned, independent newspapers, are *The Guardian*, *This Day*, *The Punch*, *Daily Trust*, *Vanguard* and *The Sun*. Two of these six major independent newspapers provide the case studies for this research. In spite of many legal constraints, operational challenges and official repression, a widely shared view among politicians and actively promoted by the press itself is that the Nigerian press has played a significant role in advancing Nigeria's political transition from military dictatorship to democratic governance. As Pate (2011) points out, in Nigeria, the performance of the mass media in the democratic process at various phases of the country’s history has been well documented (Omu, 1978; Ogbondah, 1994; Yusuf, 2001 and Nwosu, 2003, Oso, 2010). Arguably, the mass media (especially the press) have remained in the forefront in the struggle to promote the rights of the people through a credible democratization process. (Pate, 2011, p.2)

Indeed, the Nigerian press has played a very significant role over the years in the country’s overall socio-economic and political development. Incidentally, Nigeria’s first President after the country’s independence from Britain in 1960, Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, was a renowned journalist and newspaper publisher before he ventured into politics. Dr Azikiwe, who is regarded as Nigeria’s foremost nationalist, used his newspaper, *The West African Pilot*, as a veritable instrument in the fight against colonialism and imperialism – until the country gained its independence. This was the Golden Period of Nigeria’s First Republic (1960-1966). The young nation was full of optimism to take its place in the comity of nations. Dr Azikiwe was the Governor General until 1963 when he became the President of Nigeria, while Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa became the Prime Minister.

“The republic suffered several severe body blows, including contentious elections, large scale violence and allegations of corruption. In January 1966, a group of young officers staged a military *coup* and murdered several political leaders across the country. The military hierarchy took over government as anarchy beckoned.” (Kolawole, 2010, p.7) The bloody *coup d'état* of 1966 which overthrew the democratically elected government of Dr Azikiwe (President) and Sir Abubakar (Prime Minister) marked the arrival of the military on the Nigerian political scene, barely six years after the country's independence. The *coup* also ushered in a long period of military dictatorship – during which period a succession of military strong men perpetuated themselves in power through the barrel of the gun rather than through the ballot box. This period of impunity eventually produced one of the most brutal and most corrupt military dictators to have ever ruled any country in Africa: the late General Sani Abacha of Nigeria (1993 – 1995). (See Adeniyi, 2010)

All through the dark periods of military dictatorship, the Nigerian press, working in cooperation with civil society organizations, political pressure groups and various other stakeholders, with support from the international community, campaigned relentlessly for the military men to leave the political terrain and return to the barracks – where they belong. As Thompson (1997) points out, the Nigeria press challenged the military rulers through various methods, especially through producing and publishing investigative news stories exposing corruption and other brazen acts of recklessness and abuse of power among the ruling military elite (See also Adejare, 2004; Adeniyi, 2010.). As Ibrahim (1995) points out, the Nigerian press has had a strong tradition of freedom of the press – dating back to colonial days when the press played an important role in the struggle against colonial rule. (See also Rasheed, 1995; Rimi, 1995 and Adejare, 2004)

Indeed, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which was suspended by the military during the years of military dictatorship, provided a clear and unambiguous role for the media – the only professional body so specifically mentioned in the Constitution and conferred with an official function: to hold public office holders accountable to the citizens of the country. Section 22 of the Constitution, under the “Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy,” has a provision on the “obligations of the mass media”. This section provides that: “the press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this Chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the Government to the people”. (The Constitution of

the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, as amended, p.34) For their audacity in challenging the military dictators, many Nigerian journalists paid very dearly: with arbitrary arrests and detentions, imprisonment – and even death – being the order of the day. This cat and mouse game between the military dictators and the press continued until democracy was restored to Nigeria in the year 1999 – after the death of General Abacha (See Amuta, 1992; Thompson, 1978). Even in the post-military era, many Nigerian journalists have been arbitrarily arrested, harassed and imprisoned as a direct consequence of the performance of their legitimate duties – while several have also lost their lives through assassinations and sundry extra-judicial killings – making Nigeria what has been described by media watchers as “a minefield for journalists” (Ndujihe, 2011).

In order to empower Nigerian journalists to perform the official watchdog role conferred on the media by the provisions of the Constitution, President Goodluck Jonathan signed the long-awaited Freedom of Information Act into law on May 28, 2011. The Freedom of Information Act (2011) repeals some of the provisions of the obnoxious and out-dated Official Secrets Act of 1966, as well as various other draconian media laws and military decrees which had sought to gag the media. Incidentally, the major newspapers in Nigeria are all privately-owned, independent newspapers. The last government-owned national newspaper, *The Daily Times*, which was Nigeria’s oldest newspaper, was sold off by the government in 2004 to private investors as part of the government’s deregulation policy of the media, especially the printed press. With the privatisation of *The Daily Times*, which had been publishing for more than 80 years, the Federal Government disengaged completely from ownership of newspapers in the country, while retaining substantial interests in broadcasting through the ownership of the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN). Of the two newspapers selected for the study, *The Guardian*, which started out as a broadsheet, is presented as a *quality newspaper*, while the *Daily Trust* is cast in the tradition of the *tabloids*. Secondly, each of the two newspapers is located in the two major, often contending, socio-cultural and political power blocs in Nigeria: *the north* and *the south*. While the *Daily Trust* is the only major newspaper located in Northern Nigeria (Kaduna), the political power base of the north, *The Guardian*, alongside the other major newspaper like *This Day*, *The Punch*, *Daily Sun*, and *Vanguard* are located in Lagos, the economic capital of Nigeria. This dichotomy has led to what is colloquially referred to in Nigeria as “the northern press” and “the western press”. The study seeks to identify any similarities and differences in

the presentation of political news and editorial commentaries during the controversial and violent 2011 general election in Nigeria which was essentially an epic political confrontation between the north and the south. Given the fact that the Nigerian media environment is a part of the African media landscape, it may be prudent at this stage to give a brief overview of the African media landscape as a way of understanding the Nigerian media and its practices in the large context of Sub-Saharan Africa.

2.6 The Media landscape in Sub-Saharan Africa

The *African Media Development Initiative* (Research Summary Report, BBC World Service Trust, 2006) conducted an extensive independent survey of the state of the media across 17 sub-Saharan African countries: Angola, Botswana, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, South Africa, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The initiative was a part of a project aimed at fostering a stronger media in Africa as an indispensable part of tackling poverty, improving development and enabling Africa to attain its development goals. (African Media Development Initiative, 2006, p.1) The Report observes that: “The media have a critical role to play in aiding good governance, transparency and accountability. A pluralistic and free media sector has always been needed to ensure that all voices in society are heard.” (Ibid., p.8)

In its findings, the African Media Development Initiative made various significant observations about the state of the media in the 17 sub-Saharan African countries it surveyed. It noted, among others, that:

- The media sector is undergoing significant growth and transformation due to democratic reform and globalisation, typically accompanied by economic growth and the availability of new technologies.
- However, despite the wealth of valuable insights available from other published research, systematic and reliable data on the sector is underdeveloped or non-existent.
- There is a lack of robust research, on a continental scale, demonstrating what is and is not working in the attempts by many players to strengthen African media. The lack of reliable information has been a factor constraining private and public (donor) investment.

- The media are growing in diversity and number, serving populations that are equally growing in diversity and number
- Radio dominates the mass media spectrum with state-controlled radio services still commanding the biggest audiences in most countries
- Television is less widely available, especially in rural areas, although it is seen as a growing force.
- Newspapers remain concentrated in urban centres with varying growth patterns across the countries.
- In the new media sector, the adoption of mobile telephony has been the most spectacular, far exceeding uptake of the Internet.
- State-owned media, especially broadcasting services, have the widest reach, and potentially, the greatest influence.
- In addition to broadcasting, most governments in Africa own/control newspapers and news agencies, and most of them operate with a pro-government bias.
- The precarious financial and political positions of many small media outlets mean they lack the long-term financial sustainability needed to improve the quality and diversity of their content and, in turn, to grow their audience. As such, much of the national media output remains urban and elitist, and the content is often closely aligned with the political positions of the government or ruling party.
- Private media, a growing factor, are seen as injecting an independent element, able to act as a watchdog of government and able to help hold government to account. (Ibid., pp.15-18; p.108)

2.7 The twin scourges of corruption and political violence in Nigeria

The Nigerian press, through its reports and editorial opinions, as indicated in the study, has variously identified the twin scourges of corruption and political violence as some of the major threats to Nigeria's nascent democracy – and therefore constitute great impediments to the country's overall socio-political and economic development. The situation has become even more critical in the recent years – especially given Nigeria's long history of corruption and political violence. This study, therefore, analyses the press coverage of the 2011 general election, especially in relation to the culture of corruption and political violence which have

blighted Nigeria's development over the years since the country's independence from Britain in 1960. The study thus evaluates the press coverage of the critical issues of political violence and corruption during the 2011 electoral cycle.

2.8 Sources of Political Violence in Nigeria

Different groups in Nigeria resort to violence – for different reasons. The Nigerian authorities, the media and sundry stakeholders have identified some major sources of political violence in Nigeria. These include, but not limited to, the following:

1. Politicians and their agents
2. The military, the police and other security agencies
3. Tiv/Fulani communal fighters
4. Niger Delta militants
5. Boko Haram insurgents.

(See *Weekly Trust*, June 25, 2011, pp. 1-6; *The Sunday Punch*, January 25, 2015, p.5; *Weekly Trust*, June 18, 2011, pp. 1-16; *Sunday Trust*, March 13, 2011, p.1; *Daily Trust*, March 23, 2011, p.14.)

Indeed, with the proliferation of light arms and heavy weapons in Nigeria which are being mopped up by the ethnic militants, religious insurgents and terrorists, Nigeria has rapidly been turning into what the local media has described as a notorious and deadly “axis of arms” (*Weekly Trust*, November 20, 2010, pp.1-2). The Lemu Panel Report (2011) put much of the blame for the 2011 post-election violence squarely on some leading Nigerian politicians and their supporters. The panel indicted the then leading opposition party candidate, General Muhammadu Buhari, for his utterances following his defeat at the polls which, it observed, led his teeming supporters to take the laws into their hands and unleash mayhem on the land. The Human Rights Watch, in its report, also indicted opposition politicians and their supporters for the violence which spread through Nigeria in the aftermath of the 2011 polls. Says Human Rights Watch:

“The violence began with widespread protests by supporters of the main opposition candidate, Muhammadu Buhari, a northern Muslim from the Congress for Progressive Change, following the re-election of incumbent Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian from the Niger Delta

in the south, who was the candidate for the ruling People's Democratic Party. The protests degenerated into violent riots or sectarian killings in the northern states...Muslim rioters targeted and killed Christians and members of ethnic groups from southern Nigeria, who were perceived to have supported the ruling party, burning their churches, shops, and homes. In predominately Christian communities in Kaduna State, mobs of Christians retaliated by killing Muslims and burning their mosques and properties..." (Human Rights Watch Report on the 2011 Nigerian Elections, Online)

Indeed, a group of northern pro-democracy activists, under the aegis of the Northern Coalition for Democracy and Justice (NCDJ), reportedly urged the government of the United States of America to facilitate the prosecution of the then presidential candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), General Muhammadu Buhari, to for his alleged role in the post-election violence of 2011. The group, in a letter to the United States Secretary of States, Senator John Kerry, which was also copied to the US Ambassador to Nigeria, said that the assistance of the US was imperative in order to help Nigeria stem the tide of election violence in the 2015 election. The group said it had dragged General Buhari to the International Criminal Court but needed the backing of the US to have Buhari repatriated to the court. The group said the conducts and statements of political actors, particularly statements credited to Buhari and others after the 2011 general election and during the build up to the 2015 election were in the context of politically motivated sectarian violence and constituted a threat to the conduct of peaceful, free, fair and transparent elections in Nigeria. NCDJ reportedly instituted a legal action for human rights violation against Buhari before the ICC at the Hague. The group's prosecutor, Goran Sluiter, a human rights lawyer, said in a press conference in Abuja that the group was poised to prosecute Buhari over his alleged role in the 2011 election violence in Nigeria (*This Day* newspaper, January 29, 2015, online.). With the successful conduct of the 2015 general election and the emergence of General Buhari as the new President of Nigeria, the violent past has apparently been swept under the carpet.

Over the years since Nigeria's independence in 1960, the military has constituted a major source of violence and political instability in the country, especially with the bloody coup d'états and counter coups of Nigeria's recent past. Although Nigeria has since returned to democracy since 1999, the military, the police and the various security agencies have continued to contribute more than their fair share to the political violence and insecurity that has bedevilled the country over the years. Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the

European Union, the American Council on Foreign Relations and various other international organizations and agencies have, at various times, indicted the Nigerian military, the police and other security agencies of wanton violence against innocent civilians and suspects alike. The Nigeria Security Tracker (2015) observes that, “Government soldiers kill civilians indiscriminately. Police are notorious for extrajudicial murder” (The *Nigeria Security Tracker*, 2015, Council on Foreign Relations website; accessed, 01/08/15).

North Central Nigeria, otherwise known as the Middle Belt, has been a hotbed of communal clashes and violence between the Tiv local farmers and the Hausa/Fulani herdsmen who settled in their midst from the far north of Nigeria. While the local farmers contend that the Hausa/Fulani pastoralists lead their cattle to damage the food and cash crops of the farmers, the herdsmen insist that the farmers beat up and sometimes kill their cattle for grazing on their farmlands, thereby causing frequent attacks and reprisal attacks between the farmers (who are mostly Christians) and the herdsmen (who are largely Muslims) – and leading to an eternal cycle of violence between the two groups which has claimed the lives of several thousand persons in the last few years. From a communal clash between farmers and herdsmen over grazing rights and local farmlands, the conflict quickly splits along Nigeria’s traditional fault lines of Christians V Muslims and assumes a religious connotation, then just as quickly becomes a violent political conflict as politicians pitch their tents with the different factions according to their ethnic, regional, religious or political configurations.

Over the years, the Niger Delta militants, fighting to control the resources of the oil-rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria, have been a major agent of political violence in Nigeria. The Niger Delta warlords, under the umbrella of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), unleashed a reign of terror, kidnapping of oil workers and bombings of strategic oil installations and sundry government facilities in the oil-producing Niger Delta region of Nigeria, in their bid for resource control and equitable distribution of the oil wealth of the Niger Delta region. Apart from the main umbrella body of the militants, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), other major Niger Delta militant groups included the following: the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC), the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF), the Niger Delta Liberation Front (NDLF), the Joint Revolutionary Council (JRC), the Niger Delta Indigenous Movement (NDIM) and the Egbesu Mightier Fraternity (EMF). Most of these militant groups possessed both light arms and heavy

weapons – making the Niger Delta region of Nigeria one of the most highly militarized and most dangerous zones in the country.

However, the Amnesty Programme initiated by the Federal Government turned out to be the magic wand that restored peace to the Niger Delta region and calmed the nerves of the militants who were fighting for a more equitable distribution of Nigeria's oil resources. Under the Amnesty Programme implemented by late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, and his erstwhile deputy, Dr Jonathan, who later became the President, more than 25,000 erstwhile militants were demobilized and rehabilitated – after laying down their arms alongside their leaders. The Amnesty Programme thus restored peace to the troubled Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

But after the 2015 general election, and the defeat of the erstwhile President Jonathan, the youths of the Niger Delta region are threatening to return to the trenches of violent militancy. Indeed, even before the election, the Niger Delta militants threatened to take up arms again if President Goodluck Jonathan failed to win in the 2015 presidential election. The ex-militants, who met in Bayelsa State, said that any attempt to dethrone President Jonathan would be seen as a direct attack on the Ijaw people (his ethnic group) and threatened to unleash violence on the nation if Mr Jonathan lost his re-election bid (*The Sunday Punch* newspaper, January 25, 2015). When Dr Jonathan lost the presidential election, the militants regrouped and threatened to return to the creeks to unleash a new wave of violence on the nation. This, in turn, prompted the government authorities to place the ex-war lords on a security watch list. (*This Day* newspaper, July 23, 2015, Online; accessed, 23/07/2015)

The threat by the ex-militants was apparently made in the context of the theory of a “balance of terror” to the Boko Haram terrorists in Northern Nigeria. The then Rivers State Governor Rotimi Amaechi and several other prominent members of the All Progressives Congress (APC), the erstwhile main opposition party, had also threatened to “form a parallel government” if their principal (General Buhari) lost the presidential election. These threats of anarchy were borne out by attacks on President Jonathan in some states in the North during his presidential campaign tours. As Mr Boyloaf, a Niger Delta ex-militant warlord reportedly said, “Nobody has a monopoly of violence” (Ibid.). With Dr Jonathan's defeat at the polls and the threat of the militants to return to the trenches, Nigeria is thus still poised between the

devil and the deep blue sea – between the political Boko Haram of the North East and the Niger Delta ethnic militancy of the South-South.

Boko Haram is a radical Islamist movement that has taken roots in Nigeria in the last six years. Boko Haram combines a sectarian, radical Islamic agenda with violence which has since assumed clear political undertones and consequences. The idea of militant Islamism has ideological roots in the Middle East. Ribadu (2015) narrates that Boko Haram (“western education is bad”) started when two Nigerians, Mohammed Ali and Abu Umar, met a Syrian preacher, Abu albasir al Dardusi in Yemen, who indoctrinated them in the line of rejecting western education and all symbols of modern governance. On their return to Nigeria, Ali and Umar started converting people especially young Sunni preachers who already had extreme interpretations of Islam. Mohammed Yusuf, who later started the Boko Haram movement, was among their early converts. Boko Haram subsequently declared a “jihad” (holy war) on Nigeria, following the killing of Yusuf in 2009. (See Ribadu, “Boko Haram and the Global Terror Network”, *This Day* newspaper, June 10, 2015, Online; accessed, June 13, 2015). Since then, Boko Haram has launched a vicious, murderous campaign to Islamize Nigeria and to have its government and institutions run on Islamic principles and precepts. This campaign of violence has left thousands dead and many more maimed or displaced in the last six years.

Indeed, the *Nigeria Security Tracker* (2015), which maps violence in Nigeria, identifies five major “Perpetrators of Violence in Nigeria” and lists the cumulative deaths caused by each group within the last five years (May 29, 2011 – July 2015). The five major perpetrators of violence in Nigeria are:

1. State Actor (5,286 deaths)
2. Boko Haram (13,405 deaths)
3. Boko Haram, State Actor (11,806 deaths)
4. Sectarian actor (5,258 deaths)
5. Other armed actor (1,178 deaths).

Between them, these five main perpetrators of violence in Nigeria have caused a cumulative total of 40,065 between 29 May 2011 and 30 July 2015 (*The Nigeria Security Tracker*, 2015, Council on Foreign Relations website; accessed, 01/08/15). From these figures, it could be seen that Boko Haram is definitely the biggest perpetrator of violence and deaths in Nigeria within the last five years, accounting for 13, 405 (about 35%) of the cumulative total number

of deaths recorded during this period. This is closely followed by a second category of Boko Haram and State actors, which is where deaths result from clashes between Boko Haram and government authorities like the military and security forces. This category accounts for 11,806 deaths. Altogether, deaths resulting from Boko Haram violence and Boko Haram / State Actor violence amount to 25,211 within this period – out of the cumulative total number of deaths of over 40,000. This means that deaths resulting from Boko Haram perpetrated violence and Boko Haram related violence amounts to more than 62% of the cumulative total number of deaths from these main perpetrators of violence in Nigeria in the last five years.

Boko Haram, which declared a jihad (“holy war”) in Nigeria in the year 2009, has now become a part of the global terror network, with connections to al-Shabab, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and ISIS (See Ribadu, 2015, op. cit.). In spite of the emergence of President Buhari, a respected leader who is from the Muslim North, the hotbed of the Boko Haram insurgency and terrorism, the insurgency has not abated. Indeed, within the first two months of President Buhari’s inauguration to office, Boko Haram terrorists killed more than 700 persons and maimed several thousands, while the military authorities (state actors) in turn killed over 600 members of the Boko Haram insurgents. (*This Day*, July 05, Online; accessed, 05/07/15, 22.00pm; *This Day*, July 27, Online; accessed, 28/07/15).

In realisation of the fact that the Boko Haram insurgency is not only a big source of political violence in Nigeria but also a part of the international terrorism network, the international community has readily extended a hand of help to the Nigerian authorities, which have been waging a relentless war against the Boko Haram insurgents and terrorists. Specifically, Nigeria’s neighbouring countries like Chad, Cameroun and Niger Republic have joined up in an international joint military task force to fight Boko Haram. The United States of America, the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU) have also consistently pledged and offered support in terms of logistics, military training, intelligence sharing, humanitarian aid and development cooperation. (See *Premium Times*, July 29, 2015, Online). However, despite the assistance of the international community, the Boko Haram scourge has continued to grow rather than abate – an indication that a lot more still needs to be done to arrest the menace. Indeed, given the fact that terrorism is a global phenomenon, the Nigerian authorities have been canvassing for more international cooperation and support in order to defeat the scourge of Boko Haram terrorism which has blighted the country’s socio-economic and political development.

As Ribadu points out, “The world should, for once, come together and help Nigeria in all aspects necessary to tackle this problem. We still need the weapons and the know-how to route the terrorists from their remaining enclaves and to begin de-radicalisation and reconstruction programmes in earnest. For Nigerians, it is imperative to be united as one nation and fight a common enemy that is Boko Haram” (Ribadu, 2015, op. cit.) The press is a part and parcel of the Nigerian nation and society. Indeed, the Nigerian media have had more than their own fair share of the political violence of the Boko Haram terrorists who have bombed several media houses at various times in the last five years. This study examines in part the role which the Nigerian press, as watchdogs of democracy and facilitators of good governance, has played in the war against Boko Haram and other agents of political violence and corruption which have posed major threats to Nigeria’s nascent democracy.

Causes of Political Violence in Nigeria

Scholars and public affairs analysts have adduced various reasons to explain the causes and the high incidence of political violence in Nigeria, much of which is perpetrated by the youths. Akpoghomeh (2015) attributes the high incidence of political violence in Nigeria largely to poverty and urban frustration. Other factors include poor education, low moral values, inadequate parental care among the youths and the politics of patronage and spoils played by corrupt politicians. Akpoghomeh noted that ahead of elections, the socio-economic and political environment usually became fully charged and political violence became very palpable – while the youth were usually at the heart of most violent conflicts in the country. He recommended that the authorities should use education, vocational skills and regular sensitisation of the youths on the values of democracy and peaceful coexistence as tools to curb political violence in the country. (*This Day* newspaper, online, March 01, 2015).

Similarly, Ribadu submits that illiteracy and poverty are at the root of the rapid spread of religious insurgency and political violence in Nigeria, especially in the Muslim North. Says Ribadu, a former top police officer and ex-chairman of the Nigerian Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC): “The level of illiteracy and endemic poverty among the populace of Northern Nigeria provided a fertile ground for Boko Haram to quickly expand”

(Ribadu, “Boko Haram and the Global Terror Network”, *This Day* newspaper, June 10, 2015, Online; accessed, June 13, 2015).

In its final report, the Lemu Panel set up by the Federal Government of Nigeria to probe the 2011 post-election violence in the country identified *official corruption, mass poverty of the populace and a rising population of restive and unemployed youths* as the major causes of the electoral violence. The Panel found that official corruption and mismanagement of the economy by politicians were draining the nation’s resources and further impoverishing the masses of the people – thereby making them prone to violence. (*This Day* newspaper, Oct. 08, 2013)

The Nigeria Security Tracker (NST), a project of the Council on Foreign Relations' Africa Program, corroborates the findings of this report and observes that the violence in Nigeria is often “motivated by political, economic, or social grievances”. It notes also that the violence in Nigeria is “both causal and symptomatic of Nigeria’s political instability and citizen alienation” (*The Nigeria Security Tracker*, 2015, Council on Foreign Relations website; accessed, 01/08/15).

2.9 Conclusion

In this Chapter, I have given a socio-economic and political overview of Nigeria as an emerging democracy and a developing economy in Africa. The Chapter also provided a historical background of the origin of the independent press in Nigeria and its role as the watchdogs and facilitators of democracy. The chapter also examined the twin scourges of corruption and political violence which have blighted Nigeria’s nascent democracy over the years – and the efforts being made by the government authorities to tackle these problems.

The culture of political violence and corruption indicated above in the Nigerian socio-economic and political context, which marred the 2011 general election, and the press treatment of these critical issues, form the subject of this study of press performance. Given the contextual nature of media performance, an understanding of the historical, socio-cultural, economic and political background of Nigeria, as set out in this Chapter, helps to set the scene for an evaluation of the performance of the press in the context of Nigeria as a post-colonial developing country and an emerging democracy in Africa. Indeed, understanding

Nigeria's historical, socio-cultural, economic and political background may offer some insights into a better understanding of the factors which may have produced the kind of media environment prevalent in the country – and the challenges and working conditions of the professional journalists in the country, as this study seeks to identify. The next chapter will focus on the Literature Review and a discussion of the theoretical framework underpinning the study.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.0 Introduction

As indicated earlier in Chapter 1, this study uses the *Liberal Media Theory* (Watchdog Model) as its main theoretical framework in assessing the performance of the press in the context of Nigeria as an emerging democracy. The analyses are done within the context of the age-old debates about the nature and meaning of liberal theories of the role of journalism. Many studies have reviewed the concept of the media as the Fourth Estate and the model of the press as society's watchdog. Many of these studies have, from different perspectives, discussed the historical origins, democratic functions, principles and practices, as well as the limitations, of the watchdog model at various levels and contexts – global, regional or national. (See Tuchman, 1972; Gans, 1985; Sen and Dreze, 1989; Mancini, 1991; Keane, 1991; Waisbord, 1994; Donsbach, 1995; Lee, 1997; Mancini, 1991; Curran et al, 2003, 2010; Nyamnjoh, 2005; Schudson, 2005; Abercrombie & Longhurst, 2007; Curran, 2011; etc.) I will review briefly some of these studies in this chapter in order to draw some insights from them in my evaluation of the performance of the watchdog role by the Nigerian press.

Indeed, many reformers in the late 18th and 19th centuries saw the press as an important force in society able to act as a counterweight to the powers of the king, the aristocracy and the Church. (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 2007, p.140). The press acted as a source of information for a wider public as well as a forum of debate and disagreement with the activities of the government. Over the years, many media scholars have continued to explore various aspects of the debate on the role of the news media. For instance, while Tuchman (1972) examined the notion of objectivity, one of the key aspects of a free press, as a 'strategic ritual', Altheus (2003) examines new evidence on the concept of press independence. Waisbord (2000) studied the principles and practices of watchdog journalism in the regional context of South America. Mancini (1991) examined the concept of the public sphere and the use of news in a coalition government in a national context. On the limits of liberalism, Gans (1985) examined the view as to whether US journalists are 'dangerously liberal'. Donsbach (1990) discussed the really contentious issue as to whether journalists

indeed play the role of ‘lapdogs, watchdogs or junkyard dogs’. Curran et al (2010, 2003 and other editions) focused on the notion as to whether the press, broadcasting and the new media, in the national context of Britain, were exercising their ‘power without responsibility’. In the regional context of Africa, Nyamnjoh (2005) examined the practice of journalism and concludes that in their aggressive, militant and partisan purveying of the news, African journalists have harmed democracy, rather than enhance it, and have indeed made democracy ‘a victim of the press’. I will discuss the perspectives of Curran et al and Nyamnjoh (op. cit.) in more detail in this chapter. Despite their differences, many of these studies generally agree on the crucial role of the media in disseminating critical information to the citizenry in a democratic society.

Schudson (2005) observes as follows, although with a caveat on the elitism of the media:

Most studies, regardless of the approach they take, begin with a normative assumption that the news media *should* serve society by informing the general population in ways that arm them for vigilant citizenship. I agree that this is one goal the news media in a democracy should try to serve, but it is not a good approximation of what role the news media have historically played – anywhere. The news media have always been a more important forum for communication among elites (and some elites more than others) than with the general population. (Schudson, 2005, op. cit., p.191).

Various other media theories could be conveniently used in assessing and understanding the performance of the Nigerian independent press. Indeed, the Political Economy Theory seemed a very attractive option, given the ownership structure of the Nigerian press, the constraints of the market place and the social, economic and political power relations which operate in the context of Nigeria as an emerging democracy and which journalists must negotiate. These factors are more in line with the principles of the Political Economy Theory. However, again given the unique context of Nigeria as an emerging democracy, the Nigerian national Constitution has formally recognised and endorsed the normative function of the press as the watchdog of the country’s nascent democracy. Nigeria’s 1999 Constitution (as amended)

specifically prescribed a watchdog role for the operations of the Nigerian press. Under its provisions on the “obligations of the mass media,” the Nigerian Constitution (1999, p.34) specifies that: “the press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this Chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the Government to the people”. How well or otherwise the Nigerian press is actually performing this democratic function is the subject of this modest study. So, in accordance with the dictates of Nigeria’s peculiar media environment, although the Liberal Theory (watchdog model) has its limitations, as indicated earlier, it is a fit and proper theoretical framework to be used in the Nigerian context in analysing and assessing the performance of the Nigerian independent press given the fact that this model has already been formalized by the national Constitution for the operation of the media.

While reviewing the literature on the Liberal Theory and the Watchdog Model of the press as the Fourth Estate, this chapter also focuses on examining the literature on the specific subject area of media and politics in Nigeria. Over the years, many media scholars and analysts have explored different aspects of the fractious relationship between the media and politics in Nigeria as a basis for evaluating various forms of media performance. (See Iyekekpolo, 2018; Anyanwu, 2018, 2017; Adibe et al, 2017; Ciboh, 2017; Obijiofor et al, 2017, 2015, and Adebayo, 2017. See also Ekeanyanwu, 2016; Omoera et al, 2016; Okwechime, 2015; Awobamise et al, 2015; Nwammuo et al, 2015; Akinfemisoye (2013);_Oso, 2012; Adesoji, 2010; Aimufua, 2007, among others). Indeed, the relationship between the media and politics becomes even more contentious during elections, when the role of the media becomes even more important to both the politicians and non-politicians, and the general citizenry alike. I shall review a few of these studies briefly here to draw some inferences and insights from their findings.

Overall, this Chapter focuses on a discussion of the Liberal Theory (Watchdog Model) and other relevant theories relating to media and democracy. The Chapter also reviews some academic studies which relate to the performance of the press in emerging democracies. This chapter also reviews the literature on the professional practices and the working conditions of journalists in Nigeria and Africa – and explores how these tie in with the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews with Nigerian journalists on the problems and challenges faced by journalists in Nigeria in the performance of their professional duties.

3.1 The Media and Democratic Society

A considerable body of research work has been done over the years on the very important subject of the media and democracy. These include Hallin and Mancini ((2010, 2004); Curran (2005); Herman (1995); Schudson (2005); Gans (2003) and Lichtenberg, ed. (1991) See also Scammell and Semetko (2000); Keane (1991) and Picard (1985). Many of these studies discuss the key ideas about the role of the mass media in democratic societies. Several of the scholars have also pitched their tenths under various theoretical frameworks to infuse some meaning into the social phenomenon they study. While some of these theories may be complementary to, or a refinement of others, some theories are in direct opposition to others. In communication research studies of media and democracy, two major schools of thought have emerged with two major theoretical models of how to evaluate, interpret and understand the role of the media in democratic societies. These two models and schools of thought coalesce roughly under the *Liberal Theory* and the *Political Economy Theory*. My study adopts the Liberal Theory (Watch Dog Model) as its overarching theoretical framework to situate my research in the proper sociological context within the normative political role of the press in an emerging democracy like Nigeria.

3.2 Liberal Media Theory: The Media as the Fourth Estate

Arguably, one of the most critical roles of the media in a democratic society is the watchdog role. (Sen 1996) argues that the watchdog role gives the media the task of surveillance over the state and its organs, thus enabling the media to expose corruption and abuse of power. The watchdog role of media sees the media as the Fourth Estate. The concept of the press as the Fourth Estate of the Realm, with a function to watch over the government, was believed to have been mooted in the 18th century in England by Edmund Burke, with reference to the immense political power possessed by the press at the time – which he placed at the same level with the other “estates” of power in the British realm: the Lords, the Church and the Commons. (McQuail, 2005, p.169) The watchdog role is thus elevated above all other functions of the media. In its formative stages, the concept of the press as the Fourth Estate was considered as an independent check on the activities of the state, particularly the government. Over the years, however, the watchdog model has evolved beyond keeping a watch on the state and its agencies to take account of many other institutions of social,

cultural and economic power, including powerful individuals, who may have no official relationship with the state authorities or with public office.

The evolution of more forms of media in the modern times has expanded the scope and forms of the media's role in contemporary society – including the normative role of the media as watchdog. Donohue et al (1995, pp. 115-116) affirm the role of the media as a watchdog within the social system, functioning as the traditional fourth estate – and seeking to expose corruptions, conflicts or wrongs in society. The scholars observe that media that perform the watchdog role can have an important influence on conflict resolution, by ‘barking’ at the sign of trouble or some sort of threat to the order, such as a dispute. Donohue et al underscore the normative role of the watchdog media and point out that if a situation occurs where large power destabilisation results and there is confusion over the future of the society, the watchdog's role is to try and resolve issues and restore some form of order (p. 123).

The watchdog role of the media is performed in various ways, including in agenda-setting and agenda-building; informing and educating the citizenry about various major socio-economic and political issues of the day; shaping opinions about issues of public interest and helping the people to make informed political choices, especially during general elections. After elections, the media also help in protecting the democratic rights of the citizens by keeping watch over the elected politicians and other public office holders and calling them to account for their stewardships on behalf of the people. With the role they have played in trying to resolve issues and restore some order to the society, from the colonial to the post-colonial period, through the era of military dictatorship and the transition to democratic dispensation, the Nigerian media, especially the independent press, fit perfectly into the mould of the watchdog media.

The idea of the media as the Fourth Estate of the Realm underscores the concept of a free press – free from state control and interference, acting as a link between public opinion and the government. Oso (2012) points out that as an important element in the legitimising ideology of journalism, the concept of Fourth Estate or freedom of the press looms so large not only in liberal discourse on the role of the press in society, but in the general normative expectations of the citizenry. As Oso observes:

Represented in the concept of the Fourth Estate are certain key ideas which have formed the bases for evaluating the idea of freedom of the press. Apart from independence from the state, these ideas include access, diversity and pluralism in ownership and control, professionalism and media as watchdog of government and its activities. (Oso, 2012, p.49)

Oso further points out that:

While no one will dispute the fact that the idea of Fourth Estate and all it connotes have helped in the development of democracy...the point must be stressed that the mass media have not been able to live up to the ideals that advocates of the concept put forward for its justification. (Oso, op. cit., p.50)

As indicated above, access, diversity and pluralism in media ownership and control, and media as watchdog of government and society are among the key elements of the concept of the press as the Fourth Estate, in spite of any shortcomings of the concept as canvassed by political economists. I shall examine some of these key elements briefly in this section.

Media Access

The notion of media access underscores the belief that the press should serve as a market place of ideas for all contending voices, interests and perspectives to find expression. The media thus act as a veritable platform for representation and expression by the various contending forces in the society. In the performance of their democratic function, the Nigerian press, as demonstrated in my study, provides this access, within some challenges and limitations, for the various contending socio-cultural, economic and political forces in the society to compete in this market-place of ideas. And this is part of what gives the Nigerian independent press the dynamism and vibrancy for which it is known in Africa.

Diversity and Pluralism

Diversity and pluralism in media ownership and control indicate that there should be many different types of mass media – whose ownership should not be concentrated in only a few hands. McQuail (2000) has identified the key elements of media diversity and pluralism as follows:

- Media should reflect in their structure and content the various social, economic and cultural realities of the societies (and communities) in which they operate, in a more or less proportional way.
- Media should offer more or less equal chances of access to the voices of various social and cultural minorities that make up the society.
- Media should serve as a forum for different interests and points of view in a society or community.
- Media should offer relevant choices of content at one point in time and also variety over time of a kind that corresponds to the needs and interests of their audiences. (McQuail, 2000, op. cit., pp. 170-171).

The Nigerian media landscape is a veritable pool of media diversity and pluralism: with more than 200 radio and television broadcast stations, both state and private (Oso, 2012, p.90); and more than 100 newspapers and newsmagazines, owned largely by private media entrepreneurs and some state governments (Nigerian Press Council, 2017). Indeed, the diversity and pluralism of the Nigerian media landscape is in tandem with the pluralism and diverse ethnic configuration of Nigeria: a nation with six different geo-political zones, 36 states, over 250 different ethnic groups and languages, and a population of over 170 million people. It is from this large pool of independent privately-owned newspapers that the two newspapers for this study, *The Guardian* and *The Daily Trust*, were selected for my evaluation of the performance of the watchdog role of the Nigerian press.

Professionalism and Ethics

Some of the inherent advantages of a free press include the concepts of professionalism and ethics among the journalists and media workers themselves. These concepts were developed as further instruments to safeguard the press from external control. My thesis examines also, in the Interviews section (Chapter 7), how Nigerian journalists have fared in upholding

professionalism and ethics in the performance of their duties, in order to enhance the independence of the press as the watchdog of the society.

The Press as Watchdog

The concept of the Watchdog role of the press is well established and has a long history as one of the oldest principles in journalism. This section will give an overview of the history and concept of the Watchdog Press – without having to rehash in detail its long history. Many eminent media scholars, liberal thinkers, political economists and others alike have explored the concept of the Watchdog Press – highlighting its principles, strengths and weaknesses. (See Siebert et al, 1956; Hale, 1977; Lichtenberg, 1990; Francke, 1995; Donohue et al, 1995; and Sen, 1996. See also Curran, 2000; Glowaki, 2003; McQuail, 2005; Nyamnjoh, 2005; Oso, 2012; etc.)

According to liberal thinkers, the mass media should act as the public watchdog monitoring the activities of the government and its institutions. To function effectively in this role, the media must enjoy complete independence from the government and its institutions. The conception of the media, in liberal theory, as the Fourth Estate of the Realm, is in recognition of the fundamental function of the media in disseminating critical information and influencing the expression and consumption of public opinion. The media (print or broadcast) thus provide a public sphere in which citizens may express their views, canvas opinions and debate issues in a democratic forum in which public office holders may be held accountable. In its role as the watchdog of the society, media scholars have, over the years, variously identified the functions of the mass media to include cultural transmission, surveillance, education, entertainment, correlation, mobilisation, social interaction and enlightenment. (Lasswell, 1948; Wright, 1960; McQuail, 2005)

“These functions set the media apart as an important factor in the relationship between the government and the governed,” (Nwammuo et al, op. cit., p.81).

As Hale (1977) observes, it is important for the citizens to have access to information about the government and its actions. Therefore, the press, acting as a watchdog, should monitor the government and its agencies and report on their activities. Francke (1995) asserted that the watchdog role of the press in monitoring the government and its activities is vital in a

democracy. The watchdog model asserts that the press should monitor, criticize and evaluate the government and other institutions in order to check corruption and abuse of power. (Lichtenberg, 1990). Arising from the watchdog concept of the press is the idea that the press should protect the citizens from abuse of power by the government and other powerful individuals or institutions. (Glowaki, 2003). A free press is thus needed as a watchdog to ensure that the government performs its key function of protecting the liberty of the citizens. (Lichtenberg, 1990).

Newspaper organisations themselves are often very quick to announce their *watchdog* editorial stance through the evocative names they often give to themselves. Indeed, the names of the two Nigerian newspapers selected for this study, *The Guardian* and the *Daily Trust*, embody in their names the concept of the press as a reliable, trusted guardian of democracy and the rights and freedoms of the people, poised to monitor the activities of government and other powerful individuals and institutions, to prevent or expose corruption and abuse of power. Other Nigerian newspapers bear equally reflective (watchdog) names like the *Abuja Inquirer*; *The Observer*; *The Democrat*; *The Sentinel*; *The AUTHORITY*; *Vanguard*; *Newswatch*; *TELL*; etc. This practice tallies with the assertion of Donohue et al (1995) that newspaper names like *Sentinel*, *Monitor*, *Observer*, *Inquirer*, *Advocate*, etc., come directly from the notion of the press as the veritable Fourth Estate of the Realm.

The Watchdog concept of the press is rooted in the Libertarian Theory of the free press (Siebert et al, 1956). A free press is needed to give citizens the information they need in order to make informed voting decisions. (Glowaki, 2003) The Libertarian Theory and the Watchdog media concept both hold that the press has the right and duty to act as a check on corruption and abuse of power by public office holders and other powerful individuals or institutions in the society. Over the years, both the Libertarian Theory and the concept of the Watchdog press have undergone various refinements and amendments – although their basic tenets remain the same: a vision of the media performing the democratic function of monitoring the government and the activities of its officials and other powerful individuals and institutions in order to check corruption and abuse of power.

Siebert et al (1956) affirmed that:

The press was to keep officers of the state from abusing or exceeding their authority. It was to be the watchdog

over the workings of democracy, ever vigilant to spot and expose any arbitrary or authoritarian practice. And to fulfil this function adequately, the press had to be completely free from control or domination by those elements which it was to guard against. (Siebert et al, op. cit., p.56)

As noted by Glowaki (2003), the Libertarian Theory came under considerable criticism because it advocated unrestricted freedom of expression while overlooking the fact that freedom of expression would need to be balanced against other rights like individual privacy rights and national security. The Libertarian Theory also received knocks for stressing press rights and freedoms, without the responsibility of the press. The Libertarian Theory was eventually replaced by the Social Responsibility Theory of the Press – a theory which stressed the need for the press to deploy its resources and immense powers in a socially responsible, fair and ethical manner. The Social Responsibility Theory thus affirms that the news media have obligations to society to be truthful, fair, objective and relevant. Among other aspects, the Social Responsibility Theory also holds that the media should be free but self-regulated, and should follow agreed codes of ethics and professional conduct.

Some African media scholars have also made some significant contributions in the exploration of the workings of the watchdog media and the role of the press in politics and democratisation in Africa.

Ibelema (2012) also examines the role of the press as the watchdog of the people. He noted that in journalism discourse the structural perspective is reflected in the considerable literature on the roles of the press as a watchdog of government and business, in the sense of keeping watch on these entities. Not as formally articulated is the role of the press as a watchdog of the people, i.e. as critics of societal values with a bearing on the course of democracy. He noted that the African press's orientation to coverage of civic and political issues emphasises the structural dimensions, especially deficits in leadership and the political process. Yet, in most cases related societal values warrant critical press coverage. He submitted that the African press will further facilitate the consolidation of democracy by elevating its role as a watchdog of the people, and of government and business.

In his study of Africa's media, democracy and politics, Nyamnjoh (2005) explores the role of the mass media in promoting democracy and empowering civil society in Africa. Nyamnjoh contextualizes Africa within the rapidly changing global media and shows how patterns of media ownership and state control have evolved and the immense difficulties under which most African media workers operate. Nyamnjoh also explores the delicate issues of media ethics and professionalism in Africa – based on a case study of the media in Cameroon. He concludes that African governments have done very little to encourage independent media, although he asserts that the media institutions themselves must also share some of the blame. Nyamnjoh, who is very critical of the role of the media in democracy in Africa, asserts that liberal democracy in Africa has become a “victim of a partisan press”. (Nyamnjoh, 2005, pp.231-237). Generalising from the Cameroonian experience, Nyamnjoh says:

One of the main findings of this study is that the media have assumed a partisan, highly political, militant role in Africa. They have done so by dividing the citizens into the righteous and the wicked, depending on their party political leanings, ideologies, and regional, cultural or ethnic belonging. (Nyamnjoh, *op. cit.*, p.231)

However, this situation with the media in Cameroon is certainly not the same with Nigeria. The Nigerian media system, especially the independent press, presents a very different scenario from the gloomy picture painted by Nyamnjoh with the example of the media in Cameroon. Oso (2012) and several other scholars (as indicated earlier) present a very different picture of the Nigerian media and especially the independent press – which have played a very critical democratic role as the watchdog of society – monitoring the activities of the government and other public officials in order to hold them accountable to the people. This is a major plank on which my study rests: the position that the Nigerian independent press has played a very important role in enhancing the country's democratisation process through a vigorous performance of its normative function as the watchdog of society and facilitator of democracy and good governance. This issue is discussed further in the findings chapters (Chapters 5, 6 and 7) of this thesis.

Indeed, the Watchdog role of the press is especially relevant in an emerging democracy like Nigeria, because the press arguably acts as a facilitator and link between the citizens and the governments they elect in period elections. Although recent Nigerian work at a theoretical level is scarce, especially with regards to the watchdog press, a few Nigerian scholars like Oso (2012) have made some notable contributions in this area. The media no doubt play a very important role in national development – especially in the context of emerging democracies and developing economies like Nigeria. According to Agbese (1999), the Nigerian press has a crucial and manifest role to play in sustaining the country's nascent democracy. Agbese observes:

The press is one of the strong pillars of democracy. Some say it is the strongest pillar of democracy. Democracy is built on the foundation of free speech. That right is guaranteed every Nigerian citizen by our constitution. The press remains the only channel through which this very important right is exercised and sustained. Democratic culture cannot be cultivated or sustained without the free flow of information between the rulers and the ruled and among the ruled. (Agbese, 1999, p.7)

As Oso (2012) also observes:

At the national level, particularly in the developing world, there is the academic tradition that holds that the mass media are crucial to national development. This tradition, promoted mainly by American scholars in the 1960s, has seen a resurgence lately in such areas as health campaigns, behaviour and attitude change communication...(Oso, op. cit., p.6)

Investigative journalism

One of the core principles of the watchdog press is the principle of investigative journalism. The independent press in various countries (including the United States of America and Nigeria) has used investigative journalism in exposing abuse of power, official corruption and other forms of improprieties on the part of public office holders, thereby holding them accountable. The Freedom of Information Act (FoIA), recently enacted in Nigeria, has the potential to boost investigative journalism in Nigeria – and enhance the freedom and independence of journalists in carrying out their watchdog roles of monitoring the activities of the government and other public office holders and making them accountable to the people. As Oso (2012) points out,

As a legal instrument, the law has the potential of enhancing the practice of journalism; but like any other tool, that potentiality can only be realized if the law is put to use and the structural constraints which may hinder its effectiveness are removed.
(Oso, *op. cit.*, p.65)

Criticisms of Liberal Media Theory

Political economists are often very critical of Liberal Media Theory in general – and its Watchdog Model in particular. Curran (2005) provides a critical evaluation of traditional liberal thought and assesses its relevance for the modern era. He observes that the principal democratic role of the media, according to liberal theory, is to act as a check on the state. “The media should monitor the full range of state activity, and fearlessly expose abuses of official authority”. (Curran, 2005, p.121) This watchdog role is said to override in importance all other functions of the media – and dictates the form in which the media system should be organized, that is: by anchoring the media to the free market and ensuring its complete independence from government. The watchdog role of the media has its strengths and weaknesses. First, Curran observes that “while the watchdog role of the media is important, it is perhaps quixotic to argue that it should be paramount. This conventional view derives from the eighteenth century when the principal ‘media’ were public affairs-oriented newspapers.

By contrast, media systems in the early twenty-first century are given over largely to entertainment.” (p.122). The watchdog argument also appears time-worn in another way, says Curran. Traditional, liberal theory holds that government is the sole object of press vigilance. This derives from a period when government was commonly thought to be the ‘seat’ of power and main source of oppression. Curran points out, however, that this traditional view takes no account of the exercise of economic authority by shareholders. He proposes that “a revised conception is needed in which the media are conceived as being a check on both public and private power. This modification diminishes the case for ‘market freedom’ since it can no longer be equated with independence from all forms of power” (p.122).

Curran further contends that with the ever-increasing tendency to ‘market corruption’ of the media, “the market can give rise not to independent watchdogs serving the public interest but to corporate mercenaries that adjust their critical scrutiny to suit their private purpose” (p.124). Another strand of the Liberal Theory views the media in a broad perspective: as an agency of information and debate that facilitates the functioning of democracy. The media brief the electorate and assist voters to make an informed choice at election time. The media also provide a channel of communication between and governed, which helps society to clarify its objectives, formulate policy, co-ordinate activity and manage itself (Curran, 2005). As Curran points out, this is a more expansive outlook than the limited, defensive perspective of the watchdog model which is about protecting the public by preventing those with power from overstepping the mark. Overall, the liberal theory has several strengths: it assumes that democracies need informed and participant citizens to manage their common affairs; it also believes that public debate is more likely to produce rational and just outcomes if it takes account of different views and interests.

Indeed, Curran observes that the conglomeration of news media into big business, which mostly took place during the last three decades, gave rise sometimes to no-go areas where journalists were reluctant to tread for fear of stepping on the corporate toes of a parent or sister company. Curran also mentions the plausible claim that the media are in general less vigilant in relation to corporate than public bureaucracy abuse because they are part of the corporate business sector (McChesney, 1997, cited by Curran, op. cit.). See also Herman (1995).

The point about the existence of certain no-go areas in some media outfits is quite valid and does not align with the principles of the Liberal Theory. One cannot ignore the fact that ownership does have some serious implications on the work of journalists. To some extent, the Nigerian press exemplifies some of these arguments on the weaknesses of the free market watchdog model, especially in the instance of “no go areas” when the business interests of the owners are concerned. Indeed, in one recent case of the “watchdog” looking the other way while the public treasury is looted, a major Nigerian independent, ‘liberal’ newspaper, *The Guardian*, tactfully refrained from publishing a major news story of the conviction and imprisonment of the chief executive of a major Nigerian commercial bank, who was indicted on charges of corruptly diverting public funds in the bank into private use, leading to the collapse of the bank. While there was a media feeding frenzy on the story, *The Guardian* simply blacked it out from coverage, apparently due to the fact that the commercial bank was owned by the same family conglomerate which owned *The Guardian*. The chief executive of the bank in question was a direct member of the wealthy family of eminent entrepreneurs who owned the conglomerate. The question was put to some senior journalists and line editors of the newspaper in the course of this research: the impact of the ownership structure and other factors in determining and controlling what is *news*.

“At the heart of this liberal... tradition is thus an admirable stress on active self-determination, reasoned debate and social inclusion. There is, however, one central flaw at its centre: its wide-eyed belief in the free market. Its espousal of neo-liberalism undermines what it sets out to achieve in four different ways” (Curran, op. cit, p. 128). The four weaknesses of the liberal theory identified by Curran are as follows: 1. The free market now restricts the effective freedom to publish, through the very high costs of media publishing; 2. The free market reduces the circulation of public information and renders people less well informed, with the market-driven emphasis on human interest stories to the detriment of public affairs news; 3. The free market restricts participation in public debate, by generating information-rich media for elites and information poor media for the general public (e.g., prestige papers and popular tabloids); and 4. The market undermines intelligent and rational debate, through the tendency of the market-oriented media to generate simplified, personalized information, which comes as a by-product of processing information as a commodity (Ibid.) Curran points out that, ironically, successful public service broadcasting systems come closest to embodying the liberal ideal of informed, rational and inclusive public debate. They give prominence to

public affairs programmes, reasoned discussions and (in some systems) pluralistic representation. This is because they put the needs of democracy before those of profit, and are supported in this by government legislation (Ibid.).

3.3 Comparative media systems

The field of comparative media systems research has a long tradition reaching back to the study *Four Theories of the Press* by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm from 1956. Comparative media system research has been subject to several changes since its establishment. The number of categories to describe media systems grew and approaches got more complex. Another trend is that researchers factor in political systems more intensively to explain and compare media systems. A more fundamental development is the shift from normative to empirically based approaches.

Hallin and Mancini's *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics* (2004) is a seminal study in the field of international comparative media system research. The study compares media systems of 18 Western democracies. The conceptual framework developed by Hallin and Mancini in their comparative study of media systems provides a systematic and applicable approach to analyse differences and similarities of the relationships between media and politics. Hallin and Mancini conceptualized the three models of media and politics which identified specific patterns by geographical regions which were then used for labelling the different models. Hallin and Mancini's framework underscores the role of the state and the power which the political system has in shaping the structure and functioning of a media system. The model also underscores the role of the professionalization of journalism in a given media system. The three models are the Mediterranean or Polarized Pluralist Model, marked by low newspaper circulation; elite politically oriented press; high political parallelism; external pluralism, commentary-oriented journalism; weaker professionalization; instrumentalization, strong state intervention, among other dimensions; the North/Central Europe or Democratic Corporatist Model, which is marked by high newspaper circulation; early development of mass-circulation press; external pluralism especially in national press; historically strong party press; shift toward neutral commercial press; strong professionalization; strong state intervention but with protection for press freedom; press subsidies, particularly strong in Scandinavia; strong public-service broadcasting; institutionalized self-regulation; and the North Atlantic or Liberal Model, marked by medium

newspaper circulation; early development of mass-circulation neutral commercial press; information-oriented journalism; strong professionalization; non-institutionalized self-regulation and market-dominated press. (Hallin and Mancini, op. cit., pp33-67).

Hardy (2008, p.232) describes Hallin and Mancini's approach as currently "the most well-developed analytical framework so far for understanding the relationship between media and political systems." Consequently, many studies apply the framework for their case studies. However, a lot of academic discussions have been going on regarding the limitations of Hallin and Mancini's model of comparative media systems and the applicability of the framework to other non-western countries. (See Blum, 2005; Hardy, 2008; Mihelj et al., 2008; Dobek-Ostrowska et al (2010)). To address the issues raised about the limitations of their model of comparative media systems in western democracies, Hallin and Mancini published the edited volume *Comparing Media Systems Beyond the Western World* (2012), which gives a comprehensive overview with a more global perspective – and contributors covered the media systems of many non-western countries including Israel, China, the Arab states and South Africa – although the wide gap in the coverage of Africa in these frameworks of media systems still remains. Indeed, with specific reference to Africa, some African scholars have questioned the applicability of western media theories to an understanding of the African media systems. (See Mchakulu, 2011; Chuma, 2006; Chimombo and Chimombo, 1996).

All the same, although an African media theory would be quite useful and desirable, the search for such a theory, which would enhance a better understanding of the functions and operations of the media systems of African countries, is still a work in progress – and is beyond the scope of this modest study. I shall return to this point later.

Hallin and Mancini's model of comparative media systems presented a very attractive option as a theoretical framework for my study of the role of the press in Nigeria. Of the three media systems they identified, the Nigerian media system comes closest to the North Atlantic or Liberal Model – as practised in the USA, Canada, Britain and Ireland. However, because of the specific context of Nigeria, and the overarching watchdog role assigned to the media by the Nigerian constitution, I elected to remain with the watchdog model of Liberal Theory which seemed to me to apply more directly in the context of Nigeria as a developing economy and an emerging democracy in Africa. Secondly, this study is more directly interested in

evaluating the actual performance of the Nigerian press of their constitutional watchdog role than in the analysis of the overall media system.

Schudson (2005), another exponent of comparative media systems, examined four approaches to the sociology of news. These are: a. the economic organization of news; b. the political context of news making; c. the social organization of news work; and d. cultural approaches. These approaches, which I will only summarize here, examine the links between the larger structures of the market (economy), state (political), the society (social) and day-to-day practices (cultural) in journalism and the news production process. Overall, Schudson examines the links between the ownership of news organizations and news coverage, as well as the political, social and cultural factors which affect the “construction” of news. For instance, financial considerations are normally decisive in news organizations’ adoption of new technologies. And this technological change, among others, would usually have some considerable influence on the news product. News, therefore, is a complex product which is influenced by various economic, political, social and cultural factors which need to be examined in order to understand the dynamics of the media in any given milieu. Schudson’s four approaches to the sociology of news provides some additional insights in understanding the economic, political, social and cultural factors which influence the production of news and impact significantly on the media systems in Nigeria. The various economic, political, social and cultural factors identified by Schudson align with the same complex economic, social, cultural and political factors which Nigerian journalists sometimes have to negotiate and contend with in the course of their professional work.

In an earlier work, Herman and Chomsky (1988) sketch out a “Propaganda Model” and apply it to the mass media of the United States. The work reflected their belief that the media “serve to mobilize support for the special interests that dominate the state and private activity, and that their choices, emphases, and omissions can often be understood best, and sometimes with striking clarity and insight, by analysing them in such terms” (Herman and Chomsky, 1998, p. xi). Herman and Chomsky contend that “Third World elections provide an excellent testing ground for a propaganda model. Some elections are held in friendly client states to legitimize their rulers and regimes, whereas others are held in disfavoured or enemy countries to legitimize their political systems.” But then this is discussed largely in terms of US foreign policy and relations with Central American countries like El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua. Unlike the Propaganda Model, which is based on a Political Economy of the Mass

Media, my research will adopt a more sociological framework by looking at the role of the press as an agency of *social change*. In the Nigerian context, the press is certainly not “legitimizing meaningless Third World elections” (Herman and Chomsky, 1998, op. cit., p. xi), but playing a significant watchdog role in the search for a new social order, a transformative change for the country, and the sustenance of the country’s nascent democracy.

3.4 An African perspective to a theory of the press

One thing is very clear in all the major media and press theories reviewed above: the theories were essentially developed by American and European scholars to explain media and political phenomena in America and Europe. The African researcher thus often has a problem searching for a theoretical framework which will encompass a certain *African perspective* that would enable the researcher to capture the unique phenomenon of Africa, its society and politics, its media roles, media contents and meanings. This brings us to a discussion of the relationship between western and African media theories – as initiated by some young African researchers. As Mchakulu (2011) points out, "African media scholars (See Uche, 1991; Berger, 2007, p.21-22; Obonyo, 2007) have argued that media theory should depend on well-grounded theoretical and practical knowledge of the African social environment. Eko (2004) argues that ‘oppositional’ elements in African political discourse enable media researchers to apply it on African news content”. (Mchakulu 2011: p.33). As Pate (2011) points out, in Nigeria, the performance of the mass media in the democratic process at various phases of the country’s history has been well documented (Omu, 1978; Ogbondah, 1994; Yusuf, 2001; Nwosu, 2003, Oso, 2010). Arguably, the mass media have remained in the forefront in the struggle to promote the rights of the people through a credible democratization process (Pate, 2011). Given the established contextual nature of press performance, I agree entirely on the need for an African perspective to a theory of the press. This is because the theoretical models which serve very well in evaluating press performance in the developed countries and established democracies of the West, for instance, may not serve as well in assessing press performance in the context of developing nations and emerging democracies in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The Media and Elections

The *ACE Encyclopaedia, Media and Elections* (1998, updated 2012) affirms the point that the media are essential to democracy and a democratic election is impossible without media. This is because a free and fair election is not just about the freedom to vote and the knowledge of how to cast a vote but also about a participatory process where voters engage in public debate and have adequate information about parties, policies, candidates and the election process itself in order to make informed choices. “Furthermore, the media act as a crucial watchdog to democratic elections, safeguarding the transparency of the process.” (ACE, op. cit., p. 1)

Indeed, the relevance of the media in democracy is undisputed. A Friedrich Eibert Stiftung (FES) Media Round Table on the Welfare and Working Situation of Journalists in Nigeria (2010) observed that media freedom is a fundamental political freedom, based on the right to free speech. The media set the stage for public discussion, and undertake to be a watchdog of government action.

Cheeseman (2015) identifies three key barriers to democracy, which existed in varying degrees across Africa at the advent of independence: the prominence of neo-patrimonial structures, the creation of centralised state with a monopoly over economic opportunities and the mixed legacy of the colonial struggle.

These are crucial to understanding the context in which democracy emerged. Cheeseman’s *Democracy in Africa: Successes, Failures, and the Struggle for Political Reform* thus provides a comprehensive overview of the history of democracy in Africa and explains why the continent's democratic experiments have so often failed, as well as how they could succeed. Among other critical issues, the book explores the tragic tendency for African elections to exacerbate corruption and political violence. (Cheeseman, 2015, op. cit., Blurb). The critical questions addressed by Cheeseman, which face Africa and democracy today, are, indeed, the key components of my present study. These challenges are as manifest in Nigeria as they have been in many other post-colonial African countries since their independence – and often play a crucial part in shaping the conduct and outcomes of democratic elections in the continent.

Like Nigeria, Kenya is one of the post-colonial African countries which have had a very turbulent and often crisis-ridden and violent democratic transformation process, especially in their presidential elections. The disputed Kenyan presidential election of December 2007

subsequently triggered a wave of violence in the country. In their paper, *Democratization, Sequencing, and State Failure in Africa: Lessons from Kenya*, Branch and Cheeseman (2009) located the roots of the crisis within three historical trends: elite fragmentation, political liberalization, and state informalization (pp. 1-26). The scholars observe that the origins of each of these historical trends could be traced to the style of rule employed by President Daniel arap Moi and perpetuated by President Mwai Kibaki, who failed to recognize their implications for national unity and the exercise of power in 2007. The authors addressed the sequencing debate within the literature on democratization – and identified various lessons that could be taken from the Kenyan case for other states. Drawing on examples from other African states, the authors argued that the processes of democratization and reform could be undertaken simultaneously, but that this twin-tracked approach requires institutional reforms not yet undertaken by a large number of African polities. (Branch and Cheeseman, op. cit., pp. 1-26). And this brings us to the case of Nigeria, whose democratization and reform processes have similarly been bedevilled by crises, corruption and political violence.

The Press and Politics in Nigeria

As indicated earlier in the Introduction, the Nigerian press has played a very critical role in advancing Nigeria's political transition process from military dictatorship to democratic governance. Indeed, this political role of the press goes back to the colonial period when the press championed the struggle for independence from British colonial rule (Pate,). Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe (aka Zik of Africa), a journalist who was to become Nigeria's first President, established the first newspaper chain in Nigeria known as *The West African Pilot* – which was a major instrument in the fight against colonialism. As Oso (2012) observes, “Apart from being a journalist, Zik and the indigenous elite of the colonial period saw in journalism a weapon to fight the colonial power for Africa's emancipation”. (p.8) The motto of *The West African Pilot* was: “Show the Light, the People Will Find the Way”. A clear indication of the deep passion and commitment with which the Zikist journalists and political elite used the press as an instrument in the struggle against colonialism – the light to lead the people out of the darkness of colonialism. As Oso points out, “the role of the press as light bearers has never diminished in importance, in societies across the world.” (Oso, op. cit.) This political role of the Nigerian press has continued until the present political transition process in Nigeria which culminated in the country's return to liberal democratic governance in 1999. Indeed,

this crucial political role of the press in Nigeria tallies with the notion that the mass media are crucial to national development – especially in developing nations like Nigeria (Oso, 2002). This is the view point adopted largely in this thesis: that over the years, from the colonial period to the period of military dictatorship, down to the present era of democratic political transition, the Nigerian press has played – and continues to play – a very critical and crucial role in the nation’s overall socio-cultural and political development. This assertion is explored further in this section – and throughout the thesis as a whole.

The Contemporary Period

The following section further presents an overview of press and politics in Nigeria in the contemporary section – after the colonial and post-colonial periods. As indicated earlier, the political character of the Nigerian press and its contributions to the struggle for independence and democracy have been well documented. The historical origins of the Nigerian press in the colonial era no doubt contributed a great deal in shaping its dynamic political character Golden and Elliot (1979) observed many years ago that:

Nigerian journalism was created by anti-colonial protest, baptised in the waters of nationalist propaganda, and matured in party politics. The separation of politics and journalism has remained incomplete and the dual allegiances of journalists to professional and political goals have created conflicts whose resolution in daily practice underpins much of contemporary Nigerian journalism. (Golden and Elliot, 1979, p.31).

However, some Nigerian media scholars contend that too much emphasis is laid on the role played by the Nigerian press in politics, from the colonial era to the modern times – without sufficiently situating this role within the context and dynamics of the Nigerian political economy. Oso (op. cit) submits that: “The political/radical orientation of either the early press or the later day successors was largely motivated by the economic and political interests of their owners and the market imperative for survival”. (p.10) My analysis in this thesis also takes on board not only the constraints and challenges of the relationship between the press and the state authorities in the performance of the liberal, normative role of the press, but also

the constraints imposed by ownership and control of the press as dictated by the political and economic interests of the media entrepreneurs. It is my contention, though, that recognition of the impact of the economic and political interests of the media owners, and the market imperative for survival, do not necessarily debar the Nigerian press from the performance of its avowed liberal, normative role as the watchdog of society for the promotion of democracy and good governance in the country. I will return to this view point later in the thesis, as it is indeed one of the central platforms on which the thesis rests.

Overall, the Nigerian independent press enjoys a great deal of freedom from interference from the state and is thus empowered – and able, as shown in my study – to act as a watchdog of the government and its activities, thus holding public officials accountable to the people.

As Oso points out,

...any account of the relationship between the press and politics in Nigeria must be situated within the manner political power is organised in the country, e.g. the largely unstable political terrain and the precarious hegemony of the fractious ruling elite. This has created the large measure of freedom the Nigerian press has enjoyed over the years. The Nigerian press has most often exploited the divisions and disagreements within the ruling elite to enhance its freedom and role in political society. (Oso, *op. cit.*, p.35)

As indicated earlier, many recent empirical studies have also addressed various aspects of the relationship between the media and politics in Nigeria – as a means of assessing media performance. Some of these studies also addressed the issues of political violence and official corruption – and their impacts on the country's current electoral and democratisation process. In his article on the rise of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, Iyekekpolo (2018) investigates the cause of the insurgency and shows how the Nigerian political elite have mobilized and given political relevance to the Boko Haram group. He submits that the Boko Haram insurgency, which has unleashed immense

political violence on Nigeria and Nigerians, is caused by structural vulnerabilities in the Nigerian state – which are exploited by the political elite in their quest for power. The two newspapers analysed in my study were also unequivocal in their indictment of the Nigerian political elite as the creators and manipulators of the violent religious fundamentalist groups and ethnic militias operating in the country.

Ciboh (2017) examines the dynamics of the relationship between journalists and political sources in Nigeria. He avers that the relationship between journalists and political sources in Nigeria has been characterized by a tug of war between reporters and officials where top politicians have the upper hand in the coproduction of news. This is because of the ability of the politicians to provide critical information subsidies that most news media rely on – especially in the context of Nigeria as an unstable democracy where journalists face substantial political pressures. Using a combination of content analysis and in-depth interviews, Ciboh’s study shows how journalists in Nigeria are not only dependent on the information subsidies found in the West but also affected by politicians using positive (monetary awards) and negative (intimidation and violence) tangible incentives that go well beyond information subsidies.

Adebayo (2017) examines the role of peace journalism in the deconstruction of elections and the national question in Nigeria. He argues that traditional media reportage of the “national question” in Nigeria has been more divisive than uniting. The article proposes the adoption of a peace journalism approach to reporting the national question – in order to ensure that members of the various ethnic nationalities consider and value non-violent responses to conflict. In another aspect, Gade et al (2017) are concerned with how to develop sustainable news media in Africa by instituting a culture of professionalism and ethics which would curtail the “brown envelope” syndrome and other corrupting influences in the media. The scholars assert that the development of free, independent and sustainable news media in Africa is bedevilled by the “brown envelope syndrome,” the widespread practice of accepting money for news coverage. This paper reveals the pernicious effects the brown envelope syndrome has on African journalism and its ability to function as a sustainable, democratic tool for nation-building. To curtail the brown envelope, the scholars propose a model to develop an institutional infrastructure for professional journalism.

Omoera et al (2016) explore the challenges faced by journalists in reporting terrorism in Nigeria. The scholars assert that reporting terrorism or extreme violence presents a myriad of challenges and dilemmas to media professionals, information managers, and other state actors who are saddled with the responsibilities of objective, responsible and accurate dissemination of information to the citizenry. The study examines media reportage of terrorism occasioned by the activities of Boko Haram terrorist sect in Nigeria and the challenges which media professionals are confronted with in the line of duty. Using the agenda setting and gate-keeping theories of the media, the study examines the complex relationship between the media and Boko Haram terrorists as well as the dangers posed to Nigerian media professionals and the collective security of the Nigerian state and even the neighbouring countries. The challenges faced by Nigerian journalists in the performance of their professional duties, including violence, intimidation, arrests and detention, form a major aspect of my thesis (Chapter 7).

Akinfemisoye, Motilola Olufenwa (2013) asserts that the Nigerian press has played a significant role as a public watchdog, but the proliferation of new information technologies poses new threats and challenges to journalism in Nigeria. The scholar interrogates the extent to which the collaboration between professional journalists and ‘the-people-formerly-known-as-the-audience’ is influencing institutional journalistic practices in Nigeria – and investigates whether other forms of ‘alternative’ journalisms are creating shifts in the balance of power between professional journalists and the audience. Behrman, Michael ; Canonge, James; Purcell, Matthew ; Schiffrin, Anya (2012) return to the debate as to whether the press are really watchdogs or lap dogs – using as a base a study press coverage of the extractive sector in Nigeria, Ghana and Uganda. The authors note that the media are viewed as playing an important role in promoting economic development by educating the public, framing the agenda for discussion, serving as a watchdog and promoting corporate governance. The article examines some characteristics of the print coverage in Nigeria, Ghana and Uganda of oil, gas and mining, to see whether it lives up to the normative expectations of the role of the press. This line of inquiry is similar to what my study set out to do: examine press coverage of the Nigerian 2011 general election to see if this coverage lives up to the normative expectation of the press to play the role of the watchdog.

Ibeleme (2002) observes that the Nigerian press faced its most turbulent years to date between 1993 and 1998, a span that has been described as the ‘darkest period’ of its 140-year history. This was the period during which the military annulled a national election and sought to perpetuate itself, a development which precipitated a political crisis that brought Nigeria close to another civil war. Ibeleme’s study examined the role of the Nigerian press during the crisis and noted the significant resistance put up by the press during an era in which an illegitimate (and therefore insecure) military government sought to repress a press that was growing in size and independence in a volatile political context and difficult economic circumstances.

Although the 2011 general election in Nigeria, which this study focuses on, was marred by electoral violence, studies show that other Nigerian democratic elections since the country’s return to civil rule in 1999 were also not devoid of political violence and conflicts. Ekeanyanwu (2016) provides an overview of the Nigerian press coverage of electoral violence and conflicts in a pluralistic society. Ekeanyanwu examined the Nigerian press coverage of political crises and conflicts during the second term regime of President Olusegun Obasanjo (2003-2007). He focused on the role of the Nigerian press in covering the struggle for political power in Nigeria and affirms that it is this struggle for political positions that breeds crises and conflicts in the pluralistic society of Nigeria. Ekeanyanwu submits that the Nigerian press has not fared very well in reporting political crises and conflicts because of the advocacy position adopted by most of them. He also observed that editorial influence on the part of publishers may not be unconnected with this trend. “The Nigerian press has operated more as active players in political crises and conflicts than as an impartial judge of such crises and conflicts. This has negatively affected the management of such crises and conflicts.” (Ekeanyanwu, *op. cit.*, p.64) Ekeanyanwu observes that Nigeria’s march to democratization has not been without problems and challenges – and the Nigerian press has had its own fair share of these challenges. Ekeanyanwu has succinctly raised some of the critical issues which my study addresses in the subsequent chapters – especially with regards to the 2011 general election in Nigeria.

3.5.0 Media and Democracy in Africa: Recent Empirical Studies

African media scholars have done a considerable amount of work on the African media environment in the area of media and democracy, using various theoretical models but often along either side of the two main theoretical divides – the political economy or the liberal theory (See Mchakulu, 2011; Chuma, 2007; Alozie, 2007; Amoakohene, 2006; Chimombo and Chimombo, 2009). With specific reference to media and democracy in Africa, several recent research studies have used an analysis of media content to examine press coverage of political and electoral issues in some of the new democracies in Africa. These studies include Mchakulu (2011); Amoakohene (2006); Waldahl (2004). I will examine briefly some of these recent studies in order to draw some insights that could assist me in my own research which is along similar lines of media presentation in an emerging African democracy (Nigeria). In his study, Mchakulu (2011) compares and examines parliamentary rhetoric against newspaper editorials in Malawi to establish whether or not there are parallels in the way political issues are presented in both arenas. The study aimed to establish whether or not newspapers in Malawi provide critical and analytical voices for newspaper readers or whether or not they simply reflect the political positions of their owners' political parties. The study used three case studies – 100 days following the 1994, 1999 and 2004 elections – the traditional 100 days period when newly elected governments tend to use to articulate and lay the foundations of implementing their policies. His findings indicated that in 1994/99, newspaper editorial writers framed political issues by reflecting the positions of their owners.

Amoakohene's research study (2006) compares newspaper coverage of two constitutional governments in Ghana's Fourth Republic, between 1993 and 2002: President Rawlings' National Democratic Congress (NDC) and President Kufuor's New Patriotic Party (NPP). Using the Four Theories of the Press as a model to examine the socio-political environment of news production, Amoakohene's study found, among others, "a systematic bias" in the news coverage of the two newspapers. Whereas the Graphic's bias favoured the ruling administration, the *Chronicle's* bias did not necessarily favour any of the two regimes but was rather against the NDC as a political party and regime. Amoakohene's study concludes that

“political news and the prominence given to it are more the result of relations between political systems (environmental factors) and the media than anything else. Consequently, analyses of newspaper content must be contextualised within local environmental conditions even if conceptualised within global perspectives”. (Amoakohene, 2006, Abstract).

Although Amoakohene’s use of “The Four Theories of the Press” as a theoretical model to study the socio-political environment of news production was already clearly out-dated by 2006, her study nonetheless offers me some valuable insights in the use of content analysis to examine the press coverage of political communication in a new African democracy, Ghana, which is very close to mine (Nigeria). For instance, the issue of *bias* which she identified in the coverage of the newspapers in Ghana could be another aspect to look out for in my content analysis of Nigerian press coverage of the general elections.

In his study of the 2000 Zimbabwe election campaign, Waldahl (2005) points out that the 2000 parliamentary election was the first Zimbabwean election in which the media situation gave the opposition parties against a fair possibility to inform the voters about their politics, rather than the erstwhile total domination of the media by the ruling party of President Robert Mugabe. Waldahl addresses some specific questions like: in which way did the new media situation influence the election campaign agenda? What did the media tell the voters about the two main opponents’ political agendas? How did the media present the violent aspects of the election campaign?

In the questions they asked, the methods they used and the findings they made, Mchakulu (2011); Amoakohene (2006) and Waldahl (2005) provide significant insights which will be very useful to me in the examination of the press coverage of the Nigerian 2011 general elections, a study which is along similar lines, and on an emerging African democracy, as their own studies. But a major point of departure for me from these studies is that the media environment in Nigeria, especially with regards to the *press*, is completely different from the media environment in Malawi, Ghana and Zimbabwe as portrayed in these studies. But I will come back to this point later in the concluding part of this Chapter.

Beyond the more traditional roles of the media, my research adopts a view of the press as *an agency of social and political change* and relates this to what role the press has played in the entire process of Nigeria's political transition from military dictatorship to electoral democracy. The study will also seek to identify to what extent the *ownership* and *control* of

the selected national newspapers affects their news contents and news gathering / news production processes – given the maxim of Altschull (1997) to the effect that “the content of the press inevitably reflects the interests of those who pay the bills”. However, despite these misgivings, and the general constraints imposed by ownership and control structures, Nigerian media scholars generally agree that the Nigerian press in particular has played a very critical role in the country’s democratic process since the country’s independence. Pate (2011) points out, in Nigeria, the performance of the mass media in the democratic process at various phases of the country’s history has been well documented (Omu, 1978; Ogbondah, 1994; Yusuf, 2001 and Nwosu, 2003, Oso, 2010). Arguably, the mass media (especially the press) have remained in the forefront in the struggle to promote the rights of the people through a credible democratization process. (Pate, 2011, p.2) With specific reference to Nigeria and to its press, the press has played a critical role in various aspects of Nigeria’s social, cultural, economic and political development over the years both in the pre-independence period and since the country’s independence from Britain in 1960.

Aimufua (2007) argues that the press has played a very important role in the promotion of Nigeria’s national identity. Aimufua’s study found clear evidence of problems confronting the press in Nigeria, primarily in terms of ownership, control and lack of professionalism among journalists, reinforced by the Lagos-Ibadan axis (which sees a concentration of the press in the South-west) that supports a specific ‘worldview’. However, his study contends that in spite of the problems confronting the press in Nigeria, the Nigerian press promotes nationality and contributes to national integration. The study also found that the success of the Nigerian press in instilling a sense of collective Nigerian national identity in Nigeria’s multi-cultural entities is directly related to how it employs momentous events involving Nigeria to ‘flag’ the state. (Aimufua, 2007, Abstract.) Aimufua’s study (2007) identified four main characteristics common to the Nigerian press as follows:

1. Government-owned newspapers promote the interests of the ruling political party to the detriment of the opposition during elections and electioneering.
2. Many of the newspapers are non-partisan in their editorial policies when there is a military administration in place.
3. Newspapers campaign against any administration that tries to abort the democratic will of the people.

4. Newspapers use international issues/events and other non-contentious issues within the Nigerian state to promote a sense of collective national identity amongst Nigerians (Aimufua, 2007, p.303).

Since Nigeria has returned from military dictatorship to democratic rule in 1999, and the federal Government has divested all its interests in ownership of the press, as a deliberate policy to democratize the media space, many of these findings have been overtaken by events – and by time. However, the Number 3 point is particularly relevant for this present study: “Newspapers campaign against any administration that tries to abort the democratic will of the people.” This is in line with the watchdog role of the press as defined by the Nigerian Constitution – and which forms a major basis for my examination of how well the Nigerian press has performed – or not performed – this Constitutional role as the watchdog of the country’s nascent democracy.

The literature on the Nigerian press also indicates that there some considerable challenges and obstacles in the way of the Nigerian press in performing its constitutional duties as the watchdog of the society and facilitator of democracy and good governance. One of the challenges of the Nigerian press identified by Aimufua (2007, 296-310) and other scholars (see Chick, 1971; Grant, 1971, cited in Aimufua, 2007) is the challenge posed by ownership and control of the press. Nigeria’s media scholars observe that some of these challenges arise from Nigeria’s socio-economic and political environment as a post-colonial state, which lacks clearly defined roles for its institutions. (See Nnaemeka et al, 1989) No doubt, the role of the Nigerian press is, of course, linked with the socio-economic and political environment within which the press operates.

However, this view of Nnaemeka et al of Nigeria as a post-colonial state which lacks clearly defined roles for its institutions is becoming largely overtaken by events in some aspects, especially with regards to the Nigerian press. Indeed, Nigeria’s 1999 Constitution (as amended), which came 10 years after the views expressed by Nnaemeka et al., clearly defined a role (a *watchdog* role) for the press in particular and the media in general. Under its Directive Principles and Fundamental Objectives of State Policy, the Nigerian 1999 Constitution (as amended) provides that: “The press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this Chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the Government to the people.” (The Constitution of the Federal republic of Nigeria, 1999 as amended, p.24)

Furthermore, other literature on the Nigerian press indicates that over the years, ownership influence on press behaviour has diminished in certain aspects, especially with the independent press which were set up in response to new socio-economic realities (See Omu et al, 1996, pp. 9-12). These independent newspapers, like *The Guardian* and the *Daily Trust* selected in my study, attempt to strike a delicate balance between the contending interests of their owners, the survival and viability of the newspaper as a business and their professional interests as media workers playing a normative, political watchdog role. This delicate balancing act may not be very easy – but it is my point of departure in this study: an examination of the news coverage and editorial opinions content of an independent Nigerian press which, although restrained by many challenges, is not fully shackled by the constraints of ownership and control but still manages to focus on the performance of its constitutional role as the watchdog of the society and facilitator of democracy and good governance.

In his research paper, Adesoji (2010) examined the role which the Nigerian press has played since the country's return to constitutional democracy, between the period 1999 and 2009. He appraised the functionality, perception, disposition and role of the Nigerian Press in the new democratic experimentation in Nigeria between 1999 and 2009 to make a case for its being either a partner in constitutional democracy in Nigeria – or an undertaker of constitutional democracy in Nigeria. He found that since the country's return to constitutional democracy in 1999, the Nigerian Press has been a critical and positive partner of constitutional democracy in the country. Adesoji observed that: “As an important stakeholder in the process of nation-building in general and the entrenchment of democratic rule in particular, the Nigerian Press has remained a force to reckon with. Its resilience, obviously a product of its sustained struggle with colonialism and prolonged military rule, not only marked it out as an important pillar of democracy, it also prepared it for the roles it is playing in the era of constitutional democracy.” (Adesoji, 2010, p.23)

However, Adesoji concludes that despite its vibrancy, the differentiations of the Nigerian Press and its inclination towards politics have continued to influence its functionality, perception and disposition. “Thus while the press remains an active partner in the democratic enterprise, it has not completely purged itself of the tendency and the capability to undermine democratic experimentation. The proliferation of newspapers particularly by those using it to cover their back, or defend their interest has not helped matters. By virtue of the issues surrounding its ownership and control or its sympathy, the press in Nigeria has remained

essentially the stale old wine in new bottle despite all attempts at repackaging.” (Adesoji, op. cit., p.31)

I agree with Adesoji that the Nigerian Press has remained an active and critical partner in sustaining Nigeria’s democratic experiment, especially since the return of the country to constitutional rule in 1999. However, rather than the broad sweep which Adesoji took in his paper reviewing the role of the press since the return to democratic rule in 1999, my study focuses on a specific period and a specific event, the 2011 general election in the country, and the coverage of some specific issues (official corruption and political violence) during the period of that electoral cycle. This close study of a specific event and on how the press covered some specific issues during that specific period gives more insights into the activities and the behaviour of the press and their official positions on the specific issues of official corruption and political violence during the period under review. My study also provides an update on literature as well as on the issues covered and the findings made by these earlier studies – most of which were made between five years and 15 years ago.

Besides, Adesoji’s paper reviewed both the private, independent press (*The Guardian, Vanguard, Punch, Tribune, etc.*) and the Federal Government owned press (the *Daily Times* and the *New Nigerian*), which do not exist any longer as government-owned newspapers. The mixture of the independent press and the government press no doubt diluted Adesoji’s perception of the role of the Nigerian press and his description of it as an “old wine in new wine skin”. (Adesoji, op. cit., p.31) However, since the Federal Government divested itself of its holdings in the *New Nigerian* and the *Daily Times*, as a deliberate policy to unshackle the press and enhance media plurality, the vibrant Nigerian Press acknowledged by Adesoji has become even more vibrant and more alert in performing its constitutional role as the watchdog of the society and facilitator of good governance in sustenance of Nigeria’s nascent democracy – as my study found.

3.5.1 Nigerian press coverage of the 2007 general elections

Adesoji devoted a brief section of his paper to an evaluation of the press coverage of Nigeria’s 2007 general elections. He observed that the press coverage of the 2007 general elections was not radically different from what obtained in 1999 and 2003 – except that the problematic nature of the elections generated so much heat which dominated the discourse in

the press. Among the key issues was the decision of the Nigerian Police to import billions of naira worth of arms and ammunition into the country – in order to enhance the capability of the police to deal effectively with cases of insecurity during the electioneering period. More importantly was the violence and widespread malpractices that characterised the conduct of the elections leading to the call for its rejection by the opposition politicians and larger segment of the Nigerian Society ((Adesoji, op. cit., p.27) Indeed, the issue of insecurity and political violence which Adesoji observed in the 2007 general election forms a major plank of my study on the press coverage of the subsequent 2011 general election in Nigeria – which was marred by electoral and political violence on a much wider scale than the 2007 general election.

3.5.2 Nigerian Press Coverage of the 2015 Elections

Nwammuo et al (2015) examined how four Nigerian newspapers with two different ownership structures (businessmen and politicians) covered the 2015 elections in Nigeria. The 2015 general election came after the 2011 general election – which is the subject of my study. It is pertinent to review Nwammuo et al's paper, to draw some insights and parallels from their study on the press coverage of the 2015 general elections. Their findings indicate that newspapers owned by politicians were guided by the political interests of their financiers, while newspapers owned by businessmen were neutral in the coverage of the 2015 elections. "This study confirms Altschull's (1984) theory of media ownership and therefore concludes that media products reflect the preferences of the power structures" (Nwammuo et al, 2015, p.81)

A point of departure for my study is that while Nwammuo et al studied coverage by newspapers owned by politicians as well as those owned by businessmen, my own study focused only on the independent newspapers owned by businessmen who are not known to be partisan, card-carrying members of any of the political parties contesting the elections. It is instructive to note that the findings of Nwammuo et al indicate that while the newspapers owned by politicians reflected the political interests of their owners, the newspapers owned by businessmen were "neutral" in their coverage of the 2015 elections. Simply put, the independent newspapers did not align with any of the political parties in their coverage of the 2015 elections. Although the scholars found that the privately-owned newspapers were

neutral in their presentation of the news of the 2015 elections, they submit that this stance was taken “in order not to favour any political party or candidate so as to continue to attract advertisements from all the parties and candidates” (Nwammuo et al, op. cit., p.87. However, it could also be argued that by being clearly non-partisan in the coverage of the 2015 elections, the independent newspapers were performing their normative function as a neutral arbiter and the watchdog of the society. Indeed, my study of the press coverage of the 2011 general election in Nigeria made a similar finding: that in the presentation of the electoral news and editorial opinions, the independent newspapers were not aligned to any political party or candidate but focused largely on a non-partisan coverage of the election, in the public interest, as part of their normative political function as the watchdog of the nation’s nascent democracy and promoter of good governance, accountability and the rule of law in the country.

3.5.3 Press coverage of corruption and the anti-corruption war

Adesoji (2010) also devoted some space to an analysis of the press coverage of corruption and the anti-corruption war since Nigeria’s return to democracy (1999-2009). He observed that like it was in the press coverage of elections and related issues, the press coverage of corruption among political office holders was remarkable.

“Beginning with the establishment of the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) in 2000 and the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) in 2002 the press appeared to have supported the renewed efforts of the Federal government to tackle corruption in the country. Of particular interest was the press coverage of the travails of two senate presidents and the indictment of several others, either for inflating cost of cars and furniture purchased for them, reaping financial gains from contract awards to ghost firms (mostly owned by themselves or their associates) or from payment of salaries and allowances to non-existent personal aides” (Adesoji, op. cit., pp.27-29). However, despite the initial support of the press for the anti-corruption war of the government, Adesoji noted that some sections of the press were also showing apathy to the war and singing discordant tunes on the necessity or otherwise of the anti-corruption campaign. “Interestingly but worrisome, the press coverage of corruption seemed to have taken the pattern set by the government or through its agencies (EFCC and ICPC). Thus the concentration on or the shift of government

focus from cases also determines the press position or disposition.” (Adesoji, op. cit., pp.27-29)

For instance, Adesoji noted that the EFCC under Mallam Ribadu (its pioneer Chairman) was seen as a weapon in the hands of former president Olusegun Obasanjo to deal with his political opponents. He cites the case of Dr Bukola Saraki, who was re-elected as the Governor of Kwara State despite grave allegations of corruption and the threats of the anti-graft agency, the EFCC, to stop corrupt politicians from contesting elective positions in the 2007 general elections. My study also builds on and extends the findings observed by Adesoji in his paper. My study undertakes an in depth analysis of the press coverage of corruption and the anti-corruption war during the period of the 2011 general election – and evaluates the position and disposition of the press towards the cankerworm of corruption in Nigeria as portrayed in the editorial opinions of the two independent newspapers in the study.

3.6 The welfare situation of journalists and the challenges of the journalism profession in Nigeria

A considerable body of literature exists which identifies the challenges and constraints to good journalism practice and professionalism in Africa in general and in Nigeria in particular (See Mateus, 2005, focusing on the challenges of election coverage; Kasoma, 1996, focusing on ethics in the media, etc.) But I will dwell here on the literature with more specific reference to Nigeria.

The AFRICAN MEDIA BAROMETER NIGERIA (2011) observes that Nigeria’s media environment has always been vibrant, with a steadfast commitment by journalists and other media professionals – and a sustained effort being made towards the preservation of these core values (p.5). The Report notes that the institution of the Ombudsman, which was established in 2009 by the Newspaper Proprietors Association of Nigeria (NPAN), is an initiative that underscores the desire by media professionals and proprietors to bring a greater sense of professionalism. This is because by voluntarily choosing to submit the media to public scrutiny through the complaints received by the institution, says the Report, the media is bringing accountability within its own ranks. “There are equally bright prospects for the media following the steady entrenchment of the newfound democratic culture in Africa’s most populous nation. Government attitude towards the media has changed positively with a

marked departure from the highhandedness of the past, to the use of legal recourse, when and if necessary, to check any excesses of the media.” (African Media Barometer, op. cit, p.5)

The Report also notes that the democratic environment is also promoting the emergence of new legislation that is media friendly. These include the passage of the Freedom of Information Act in 2011 and the Access to Information Act – which are making some positive impacts on the development of the media and the freedom of expression. “However, in spite of these positive changes there are a series of relatively new trends that could seriously undermine the development of the media in Nigeria, which has the reputation of being one of Africa’s most robust media power houses.” (Ibid.) The African Media Barometer identifies the following obstacles, challenges and hazards which confront Nigerian journalists and impact negatively on the performance of their professional duties:

- Working conditions for journalists in both state and privately-owned media organisations are simply deplorable. Not only are salaries very low, but they are also paid intermittently, with a cross section of private media journalists being owed arrears of up to ten months.
- Corruption is eating deep into the fabric of the Nigerian media, and is unfortunately condoned by media proprietors, who sometimes encourage reporters to extort money from news sources in lieu of salaries.
- Nigeria occupies the unenviable dark spot of a country where harassment of journalists is still common and where journalists still have to pay the ultimate price – being assassinated in the exercise of their duties. The fact that the perpetrators of the 2008 murders of Abayomi Ogundeji and Godwin Agbroko of THISDAY newspaper and the 2009 murder of The Guardian’s Bayo Olu have not been tracked down and brought to justice, is extremely worrisome for media professionals.
- With the perpetual fear of losing a job or of being kidnapped or killed, Nigerian journalists seem to have found a comfort zone called self-censorship.

“There is (a) consensus among experts with a keen attention on Nigeria that the country’s media currently stands at a tipping point. How the positive and negative forces identified above eventually play out is left to be seen. Many agree though, that the welfare of journalists is critical to the direction the media will ultimately take, for better or worse”. (African Media Barometer Nigeria, op. cit., p.5)

The journalists interviewed for my study confirm and corroborate these deplorable working conditions and welfare situation of Nigerian journalists. However, they emphasize that despite these problems and challenges, they simply soldier on in the performance of their professional duties, bearing in mind the need to perform the constitutional role of the society's watchdog.

Mättig (2010, Foreword), writing on the Nigerian media environment, observes that media freedom is a fundamental political freedom, based on the right to free speech, and the media set the stage for public discussion and undertakes to be the watchdog of government action. However, he observes that media freedom is a fragile good – and journalists are particularly exposed to threats. “They operate at the frontlines of a battle for political power that is often waged with deadly weapons. Censorship, harassment and imprisonment of journalists and political control of news outlets are some of the most often cited dangers to a free media. Reports about killings of journalists frequently shock the public. Less often cited is the overall working and welfare situation of journalists.” (Mättig, 2010, op. cit., p.7)

He points out, however, that the freedom from fear and want is one of the four cardinal human freedoms that US President Franklin D. Roosevelt emphasized in 1941. Without this freedom being granted, a country could have perfect media laws and establish codes of conducts for journalists and boost media plurality – but “all this is fundamentally endangered if journalists operate under conditions of fear and deprivation”. These conditions of censorship, harassment, imprisonment of journalists, political control of news outlets, killing of journalists, fear and want, poor welfare and working conditions of journalists as identified above by Mättig obtain to varying degrees in the Nigerian media environment and among Nigerian journalists. The semi-structured interviews conducted with an indicative sample of Nigerian journalists and media managers confirm this literature on the hazards of the media profession in Nigeria and the poor working and welfare conditions of Nigerian journalists in the printed press in particular and the media as a whole. The journalists interviewed in my study confirm and corroborate this scenario and this section of the study adds to and helps to update the literature on the working and welfare situation of journalists in Nigeria as well as the hazards of the journalism profession in Nigeria.

Mättig further contends that without an open discourse about the hazards and challenges which journalists face in their daily lives, and without addressing the issues of social protection, collective bargaining and welfare in Nigeria's media world, all deliberations on

media freedom are deficient. “We believe that these issues greatly impact on the independence and the freedom of journalists. No independent reporting is possible without a minimum of material and social protection, since journalists will be vulnerable to intimidation, bribery and control” (Ibid, p.7). The journalists interviewed for my study also recommend various measures for improving the welfare and working situation of journalists in Nigeria, in order to improve their welfare and enhance the effective performance of their professional duties.

The *African Media Development Initiative* (2006, op. cit.) also identified some of the challenges and obstacles faced by journalists in Africa, including low levels of professional, ethical, management and technical standards reported consistently among media practitioners in the countries surveyed. The report observed that these low standards are attributed to four factors:

- insufficient or poor-quality training institutions;
 - rapid expansion of media outlets, that has further strained resources;
 - low salaries and status, with the resulting prevalence of “brown envelope” (bribery based) journalism; and,
 - skills exodus (e.g., poaching of staff to better-paid UN, donor or NGO projects).
- (Ibid., p.16)

The African Media Development Initiative concludes that although many African media outlets operate in a challenging economic, legislative, regulatory, political and technological environment, “the potential of the media to contribute significantly to Africa’s development and governance is enormous” (Ibid, p.108).

Still on the challenges and obstacles to professionalism in the Nigerian media, Akinfeleye (2003) examines the roles and responsibilities expected of a good journalist. He argues that the biggest challenge faced by journalists is that of religious fundamentalism. He believes that journalists must become more rounded, must learn about their history and culture, and must appreciate difference. The author also asserts that the proliferation of journalism training centres has not drastically affected the quality of Nigerian journalism. He stresses the need for a strong symbiotic relationship between the four media stakeholders – the people, the politicians, the publishers and the press – as the basis for effective social responsibility of the press. (Cited in African Media Development Initiative, 2006, p.78)

The journalists who participated in the semi-structured interviews for this study affirmed all the key factors which lead to poor professionalism and low ethics among journalists in Nigeria, as identified in the literature review – but which they strive to overcome in order to ensure an effective performance of the duties.

Overall, although there is some considerable literature on the role which the Nigerian press has played in various aspects of the nation's social, cultural, economic and political development, as reviewed in the fore-going Chapter, none has examined fully how the Nigerian independent press has covered the specific issues of official corruption and political violence as manifested during the period of an election when various other issues contend for attention and space – as well as the actual position of the press on these twin issues of official corruption and political violence as portrayed in their editorial opinions. This where this present study comes in to fill that gap and to contribute to an expansion of the literature on the role of the Nigerian press in the country's overall national development, especially through its behaviour and activities in the news coverage and editorial opinions presented on the specific issues of official corruption and political violence which pose a manifest threat to Nigeria's nascent democracy.

Examining the extent of front page news coverage and the official positions taken by the independent press in their editorial opinions on these two critical issues aims to show the level of importance attached to these issues by the press as two issues which have played a very critical but negative role in blighting the country's nascent democracy. The behaviour of the Nigerian press in their extensive coverage of the twin issues of official corruption and political violence, and the extensive recommendations by the press for the appropriate public policies for curbing the twin evils of official corruption and political violence, indicate clearly that the Nigerian press is effectively performing its Constitutional role as the watchdog of democracy and facilitator of good governance, especially in an emerging democracy like Nigeria. Furthermore, examining the welfare and working situation of journalists in Nigeria, through an open discussion / interview with working journalists helps to understand the challenges faced by journalists in Nigeria and how to improve the conditions – in order to mitigate the negative impacts which these challenges may have on the professionalism of the journalists.

3.7 Comparison of the Coverage of *The Guardian* and *Daily Trust*

As Druckman (2010) points out, “news organizations choose how to package their stories in understandable ways; in doing so, they juggle remaining faithful to the frames used by their sources with simultaneously accounting for news values (e.g., ‘balanced coverage’), while sometimes injecting their own unique perspectives”. The choice of the newspaper titles in this study involved the consideration of a combination of factors, which included the geographical reach and location of the newspapers, the readership size, the format and content characteristics (whether “quality” or tabloid press), the political stance of the newspapers (liberal, independent) as well as the ready availability of research materials (the daily copies of the newspapers). Accordingly, in consideration of the factors, the two major independent national newspapers selected for this study are *The Guardian* (“quality” newspaper); and *Daily Trust* (tabloid newspaper). While *The Guardian*, which describes itself as “the flagship” of the Nigerian press, is located in the south (Lagos), the *Daily Trust*, which some see as “the mouthpiece of the North”) is published in the North (Kaduna). These factors will provide some parameters in comparing and contrasting the coverage of electoral violence by each of the newspapers during the period under review.

3.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have looked at various theories of the media and tried to justify my choice of the Liberal Theory as my theoretical and analytical framework for this study on the coverage of official corruption and political cum electoral violence by Nigerian newspapers during the country’s particularly bloody 2011 general elections. I have also reviewed similar recent empirical studies in emerging African democracies which have evaluated press coverage of political issues in the African environment. Mchakulu (2011) found that in Malawi, in 1994/99, newspaper editorial writers framed political issues by reflecting the positions of their owners. The findings were similar in Ghana (Amoakohene, 2006) and Zimbabwe (Waldahl, 2005).

However, this will be my point of departure from Mchakulu, Amoakohene and Waldahl. Although they did not generalize, their findings seem to indicate that the press in these emerging African democracies tends to reflect the political opinions and leanings of their

owners in the coverage of political news. However, the central thesis of my study is that the Nigerian press, unlike the press in various emerging African democracies like Malawi, Ghana and Zimbabwe, does not follow the trend of reflecting the political leanings of their owners or of the government or party in power. On the contrary, the major Nigerian newspapers are all privately-owned, independent newspapers whose owners are not aligned publicly to any of the political parties. Accordingly, the Nigerian press tends towards the models of the watchdog and social responsibility press.

My study, therefore, presents a different perspective of the press in an emerging African democracy, Nigeria, as a free and independent press performing essentially a *watchdog role* – although a constrained watchdog role – without necessarily going out of the way to portray the political leanings of the owners of the newspapers or aligning their content to the dictates of the government or the political party in power – unlike the situation in some other emerging democracies in African.

My study seeks to unravel how the press covered the major thematic issues of official corruption and political violence during the 2011 general elections, and, by so doing try to identify whether they served as critical sources of information and balanced coverage to their readers, or whether the news reporters and editorial writers covered political issues by reflecting the positions of their owners. My study seeks to add to this body of knowledge on the performance of the normative watchdog role of the press in emerging African democracies. My study also seeks to contribute to a further understanding of the challenges and obstacles which impede the work of journalists in Nigeria and hinder the realisation of full professional and ethical standards in the press in particular and the media in general.

The theoretical perspective of my study is affirmed by many of the studies of the Nigeria press (including Adesoji, 2010; Mättig, 2010) which indicate and acknowledge the Nigerian press' performance of the watchdog role assigned to it by the Constitution. These studies assert that despite various obstacles and challenges, the Nigerian press strives vigorously to perform the watchdog role assigned to it by the Nigerian National Constitution (1999 as amended). Indeed, Mättig (2010, op. cit., p.7) affirms that the Nigerian media set the stage for public discussion and undertake to be the watchdog of government action, with journalists often exposed to threats and dangers in their quest for a free press. He observes of Nigerian

journalists: “They operate at the frontlines of a battle for political power that is often waged with deadly weapons” (Mättig, 2010, op. cit., p.7).

By applying the Liberal Theory (Watchdog Model) as a conceptual frame work to assess the performance of the Nigerian press, my study aims to contribute to a better understanding of the core watchdog function performed by the Nigerian press in holding public officials accountable – thereby promoting democracy and good governance in the country. This study builds on the enduring work of liberal theorists and other media scholars who have persevered, in spite of the very strong pull of the political economy model, in demonstrating that the press plays a very critical normative role as the watchdog of the society – especially within the context of emerging democracies like Nigeria.

Overall, although the concept of the media as the Fourth Estate and other liberal theories about the role of the press have undergone various refinements, in line with the changing political environments and the role of the press in various global, regional or national contexts, their basic tenets remain the same. Abercrombie and Longhurst (2007) sum it up this way:

The debate about the position of the press in society, and its power to influence opinion, has continued to this day and is complicated in society by the proliferation of different media forms. For many, it has lost its capacity to promote rational debate and criticism as it is increasingly commercialized and trivial. For others, it has become over-mighty, capable of influencing governments in potentially undesirable ways or even of bringing down properly elected governments. (Abercrombie and Longhurst, op. cit., pp. 141-142).

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

4.0 Introduction

My study uses two different but complementary methods (content analysis and critical discourse analysis) in analysing the headline news content and editorial opinions respectively of two Nigerian independent newspapers, using the framework of the Liberal Media Theory (Watchdog Model). The study also used semi-structured interviews to obtain additional information from journalists in the country on their professional practices and working conditions. The study tests whether the democratic role of the press is being fulfilled – and the barriers to its fulfilment. A brief explanation is appropriate here on each method and my use of the method in the study. First, a word on content analysis. Content analysis has become one of the key research methods and approaches in the study of media and mass communication processes. (See Hansen, Cottle, Negrine and Newbold, 1998) As the Dictionary of Media Studies points out, “Journalists operate with a set of assumptions... which provide a way of organizing and filtering the information that they receive and which they subsequently transmit as news.” *The Dictionary of Media Studies* (2007, p.142) For Nigerian journalists, the part is already prescribed for them in the national Constitution. They operate with the assumption – and, indeed, the knowledge, that they are expected to perform the watchdog role already assigned to the media in the constitution. This knowledge provides a way for them to organize and filter the information which they receive and which they subsequently transmit as news, in spite of the challenges they face, and in spite of the pressures of ownership and control sometimes exerted by the owners and the economic and political power elite. Thus, for many Nigerian press journalists, there is simply only one way to go in the performance of their professional duties: the way of the liberal, autonomous independent press operating under the dictates of the watchdog model enshrined for the media in the Nigerian national Constitution. My use of content analysis is because it is one of the methods which provide a coherent, appropriate and principally sociological approach to the production of media and communication research. As Hansen and co. (1998) point out, it is also one of the most frequently used methods in mass communication research, its development as a formal method of social inquiry having been spurred on by, among others, “the desire to make social

inquiry ‘scientific,’ in a manner comparable to the controlled, systematic, objective, and supposedly predictive, methods of the natural sciences” (pp. 92-93). The selection of the quantitative method of content analysis is appropriate to identify the major themes in the front page news headlines of the press and helps to offer evidence to answer RQ1: What major themes were covered in their front page headline news by the two major independent Nigerian newspapers during the period of the 2011 general election in the country and how does this coverage reflect on the performance of their watchdog role?

Beyond the quantitative method of content analysis used in identifying the quantum of front page headline news coverage of specific issues, the study also uses critical discourse analysis to examine the language used by the two newspapers in constructing their editorial opinions on the same issues of political violence and official corruption during the period under review. My study adopts the guidelines set out by van Dijk (1988) who recommends that an analysis of media texts should include three parts: “the description of argumentative structures; the explication of presupposed (tacit) assumptions, norms and values; and an analysis of style and rhetorical values” (p.126). My analysis focuses on the language and style used by the newspapers to portray various incidents, events, actors or agents as well as the policy recommendations of the newspapers. With the use of critical discourse analysis, the study attempts to explore how the newspapers use language to convey their ideological positions and to represent the various power relations between actors, incidents and events in the society. Hall (1996, p.26) defines ideology as the mental frameworks, the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation” which different groups use to understand and explain the workings of society, thereby helping to maintain and stabilize various forms of power relations. van Dijk (2007, p.140) observes that studying the editorial opinions of newspapers is of special significance when analysing the ideological role of the news media because editorials are expressions of broader ideological stance of the newspapers’ owners and managers. The selection of critical discourse analysis is appropriate in helping to offer evidence to answer RQ2: How are events, incidents, actors and policies relating to political violence and official corruption portrayed in these newspapers in their editorial opinions and what does this say about the performance of the political function of the Nigerian press?

RQ3: Are there any significant differences in the portrayal of these events, incidents, actors and policies by these two newspapers? And RQ4: What policy recommendations are

advanced by the two newspapers in curbing political violence and official corruption as a means of promoting equity in the country? In addition, as indicated earlier, the study also used *semi-structured interviews* to explore the challenges faced by Nigerian journalists, as well as to supplement and clarify some of the information that arose from the analysis of the news content and editorial opinions of the newspapers. The use of semi-structured interviews provides evidence to answer the RQ5: What challenges are faced by Nigerian journalists in the course of their work and how do these challenges impact on their professionalism and ethics? In the subsequent sections of this Chapter, I shall discuss in a little more detail the methods used and how they were deployed both in obtaining the evidence and in analysing the evidence to answer the research questions for the study.

4.1 Rationale for Methodological Approaches adopted in the study

This section of the Chapter offers a brief explanation and rationale for the methodological approaches adopted in the study. The methodological approaches adopted for the study, the selection of the media samples, the case studies, the titles and location of the newspapers were all geared towards answering the key Research Questions (RQs) indicated earlier and outlined as follows:

RQ1: What major themes were covered in their front page headline news by the two major independent Nigerian newspapers during the period of the 2011 general election in the country and how does this coverage reflect on the performance of their watchdog role?

RQ2: How are events, incidents, actors and policies relating to political violence and official corruption portrayed in these newspapers in their editorial opinions and what does this say about the performance of the democratic function and the ideological role of the Nigerian press?

RQ3: Are there significant differences in the portrayal of these events, incidents, actors and policies by these two newspapers, given their different locations and ownership?

RQ4: What policy recommendations are advanced by the two newspapers in curbing political violence and official corruption which have constrained the country's democratisation process?

RQ5: What challenges are faced by Nigerian journalists in the course of their work and how do these challenges impact on their professionalism and ethics?

4.2.0 Definition of Content Analysis

As observed by Hansen et al (1998, p.94), the classic and much quoted definition of content analysis comes from the first major review of the method, Bernard Berelson's Content analysis in communication research, published in 1952. "Content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication." (Quoted in Hansen et al, 1998, p.94) As a method, content analysis has some identified weaknesses. As noted by some scholars (Hansen et al 1998, op. cit., p.94), the notion of "objectivity" in content analysis, as in any other kind of scientific research, has attracted a lot of criticism as being "idealistic", and impossible for any research to be entirely "value-free". Instructively, later definitions of content analysis have omitted references to "objectivity", but stress that content analysis should be "systematic" or "replicable". (Holsti, 1969; Krippendorf, 1980: quoted in Hansen et al, 1998, p. 95) My study does not dwell on the notion of objectivity in the evaluation of the work of the Nigerian press – especially in their reportage of key social problems like corruption and political violence. Content analysis has indeed become one of the key research methods and approaches in the study of media and mass communication processes. (See Hansen et al, 1998, op. cit). My use of content analysis is because it is one of the methods which provide a coherent, appropriate and principally sociological approach to the production of media and communication research. As Hansen et al (1998) point out, it is also one of the most frequently used methods in mass communication research, its development as a formal method of social inquiry having been spurred on by, among others, "the desire to make social inquiry 'scientific,' in a manner comparable to the controlled, systematic, objective, and supposedly predictive, methods of the natural sciences" (pp. 92-93).

4.2.1 News themes and editorial opinions

Hansen et al (1998, op. cit.) have identified various categories which are often deployed in a sociologically-oriented analysis of media content. These include the following:

- Actors/sources/primary definers and their attributes;
- Subjects/themes/issues
- Vocabulary or lexical choice
- Value dimensions and/or ideological/political stance.

(Hansen et al, 1998, op. cit., pp.107-124)

The content analysis section of my study focuses on the category of “subjects /themes/issues” as indicated above by Hansen et al, covered by the newspapers in their front pages, while the critical discourse analysis of the editorial opinions explores the categories of “vocabulary or lexical choice,” as well as “value dimensions and/or ideological/political stance”. (Hansen, et al, op. cit., pp.107-124)

4.2.2 Collection, Coding and Analysis of Quantitative Data

The first part of the study involves an analysis of newspaper headline news coverage and editorial opinions by two Nigerian newspapers during two specific periods in Nigeria’s general election cycle (six months before and six months after the election) and on the specific issues of corruption and electoral violence as defined earlier in the Literature Review in Chapter Two. The newspapers are *The Guardian* and the *Daily Trust*. The pre-selected period of coverage studied is set from October 1, 2010 to September 30, 2011. The quantitative method of content analysis was used for identifying the dominant themes and editorial opinions covered by the two newspapers during the period under review. A copy of every issue of each of the two newspapers for the one year period was collected and collated. These were physical copies of the newspapers which were obtained by the researcher through personal copies of newspapers collected and stored during the selected period, supplemented by back copies obtained through the offices of the respective newspapers, as well as photocopies and archival copies obtained from the National Library in Abuja, Nigeria. In the quantitative aspect, the researcher identifies the major news themes, based on a set of 15 recurrent news themes already pre-selected from the preliminary reading of the collected newspapers. The study then uses manual thematic coding to record and tabulate all the front page news headlines of each of the two newspapers for the 12 months period of the study. (See Tables 1-4).

The figures obtained were then run through the research software, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to calculate the number of occurrences and the percentages of each news item in each of the two newspapers. (See SPSS Tables 1 and 2). A *Chi-Square* test was run on the SPSS, thus using the software to calculate the number of occurrences and the percentages of each news item over both the six months pre-election period (October 2010 – March 2011) and the six months post-election period (April 2011 – September 2011). From the results of the computer analysis of the data, it was easy to identify the dominant news themes covered by the respective newspapers during the period under review. The study repeats the same process for the editorial opinions of the two newspapers, tabulating them over the 12 months period to determine the dominant themes in the editorial opinions of the newspapers over the same period. Indeed, because of the volume of data collected and inputted into the SPSS on the themes in the two Nigerian newspapers during the period under review, the Chi-Square test generated a total number of 24 printed pages of data. However, only some samples of the more general tables are presented here. From the themes that emerged and the percentage of coverage devoted by the two newspapers, it was clear that both newspapers focused attention on the political and social problems of political violence and official corruption in both their headline news and editorial opinions during the period under review – as will be discussed further in the main Chapters on the findings of the study. This clear commitment to a higher level of coverage of the major political and social issues of political violence and corruption indicates a clear commitment to the performance of the normative political functions of the press as the watchdog of the society and the facilitator of democracy and good governance.

4.3 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

As indicated earlier, my study also uses the qualitative technique of critical discourse analysis to examine the language used by the two newspapers in constructing their editorial opinions on the same issues of political violence and official corruption during the period under review. As a branch of socio-linguistics, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) focuses on investigating how societal power relations are established and reinforced through language use. Critical Discourse Analysis, which was first developed by the Lancaster school of linguists of which Norman Fairclough was the most prominent figure, thus focuses on issues of language, ideology and power. As van Dijk (1998) points out, critical discourse analysis primarily

studies the way in which social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. Thus, critical discourse analyses thus deal with the relationship between discourse and power ((pp.352 - 364). Fairclough and Wodak (1997: 271-80) summarize the main tenets of CDA as follows:

1. CDA addresses social problems
2. Power relations are discursive
3. Discourse constitutes society and culture
4. Discourse does ideological work
5. Discourse is historical
6. The link between text and society is mediated
7. Discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory
8. Discourse is a form of social action.

Fairclough's Methodology of CDA

Fairclough (2003, 2001, 1995) developed a three-dimensional framework for studying discourse, where the aim is to map three separate forms of analysis onto one another: analysis of (spoken or written) language texts, analysis of discourse practice (processes of text production, distribution and consumption) and analysis of discursive events as instances of sociocultural practice. Particularly, he combines micro, meso and macro-level interpretation. At the micro-level, the analyst considers various aspects of textual/linguistic analysis, for examples syntactic analysis, use of metaphor and rhetorical devices. The meso-level or level discursive practice involves studying issues of production and consumption, for instance, which institution produced a text, who is the target audience, etc. At the macro-level, the analyst is concerned with intertextual and interdiscursive elements and tries to take into account the broad, societal currents that are affecting the text being studied. (See Fairclough, 2001). There are considerable similarities between Fairclough's methodology of Critical Discourse Analysis and van Dijk's Ideological Square and Theory of Semantic Macro-structures.

Van Dijk's Ideological Square and Theory of Semantic Macro-structures

The analysis of the editorial opinions draws upon two theories of news discourse, namely: Theory of Ideological Square by Van Dijk and the Theory of Semantic Macrostructures also by Van Dijk. To carry out a proper analysis of news text, it is usually better to use a combination of theories or methods that would best answer the underlying questions of the research. These theories are applied to examine the cultural, social, political and ideological factors if any that may have affected the editorial opinions of the newspapers on the issues of official corruption and political violence in Nigeria. The ideological Square theory by Van Dijk is concerned with the question of ideology. Van Dijk notes that opinions may be expressed in many complex ways in texts. He went on to explain that an ideological account would: 1. Emphasise our good properties/actions; 2. Emphasise their bad properties or actions 3. Mitigate our bad properties/actions; 4. Mitigate their good properties/actions. Accordingly, the theory of ideology square identifies certain levels of description of the semantic components in a text, as follows: 1. Explicitness Versus Implicitness; 2. Generality Versus Specificity; 3. Negativity Versus Positivity; 4. Directness Versus Indirectness; 5. Direct questioning Versus Statement. (Van Dijk, 1998, op. cit.)

News or editorial opinion articles linked to an ideology would have some of the following characteristics which fall into Van Dijk's Ideological Square: The news, article or editorial opinion could be in our favour and interest or should impact positively on our image while doing the opposite to our opponents or enemies. In the Theory of Semantic Macroproposition, Van Dijk identifies three major levels of news discourse: Semantic Macropropositions, Global Superstructure (news schema) and Local Meaning (Micro-semantics). This chapter identifies these three levels in the sample editorial opinions and bases the analysis on them. The Semantic Macroproposition or macrostructures is simply the global meaning of the text. In trying to get the semantic Macroproposition, we look at the news report as a whole, by identifying the Macroproposition, we should have a good idea of what the whole text is about i.e. the theme of the article – with regards to a deeper understanding of the latent meanings and ideological positions embedded in the depictions of political violence and corruption in the editorial opinions of the two newspapers.

The analysis is thus situated at the macro-level and focuses not on issues relating to the production, distribution and consumption of the texts of the editorial opinions, but with

elements in the text and their relationship with the broad, socio-cultural and political issues in the context of the country, Nigeria.

After the transition from military dictatorship to democracy in Nigeria in 1999, the coercive power of the military rulers was replaced by the political power, money and influence of politicians – many of them as corrupt and violent in their disposition and attitude to the ordinary Nigerian masses over whom they hold sway. This section of my study examines the language in which the two newspapers, in their editorial opinions, mediate this unequal power relationship between Nigerian politicians and the society at large. Members of the dominated class also use discourse to resist or reinforce the power of the dominant class. In this context of Nigeria, the independent newspapers use the discursive power of their editorial opinions to challenge and resist the power of the members of the political elite – which power often manifests in political violence and official corruption. In performing their constitutional role as the watchdog of the country's nascent democracy, the press uses the considerable media discourse power of their editorial opinions to challenge the political class and attempt to hold them to account over their roles in the political violence and official corruption which have hampered the country's overall socio-economic and political development. From the foregoing, it can be seen that critical discourse analysis is concerned with how power is exercised through language. In line with this concern, this section of my study examines how the Nigerian independent press exercises media power in its editorial opinions through the use of language. Using discursive elements drawn from van Dijk's Ideological Square, as well as narrative and descriptive techniques, this section examines how the newspapers use the language of the texts of their editorial opinions to engage and challenge the Nigerian political elite in the context of their roles in the social and political issues of political and electoral violence and official corruption.

My analysis, therefore, focuses on the language and style used by the newspapers to portray various incidents, events, actors or agents as well as the policy recommendations of the newspapers. With the use of Critical Discourse Analysis, the study attempts to explore how the newspapers use language to convey their ideological positions and to represent the various power relations between actors, incidents and events in the society. Hall (1996, p.26) defines ideology as the mental frameworks, the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation" which different groups use to understand and explain the workings of society, thereby helping to maintain and stabilize various forms of

power relations. van Dijk (2007, p.140) observes that studying the editorial opinions of newspapers is of special significance when analysing the ideological role of the news media because editorials are expressions of broader ideological stance of the newspapers' owners and managers. The selection of critical discourse analysis is appropriate in helping to offer evidence to answer RQ2: How are events, incidents, actors and policies relating to political violence and official corruption portrayed in these newspapers in their editorial opinions and what does this say about the performance of the political function of the Nigerian press?

RQ3: Are there any significant differences in the portrayal of these events, incidents, actors and policies by these two newspapers? And RQ4: What policy recommendations are advanced by the two newspapers in curbing political violence and official corruption as a means of promoting equity in the country?

As was done with the news headlines, I also compiled a list of editorial opinions in the two newspapers, during the period under review, on the specific issues of political violence and corruption. The analysis of the editorial opinions focused on the post-election period (May 01, 2011 – Sept. 30, 2011). The study selected a total of 24 editorials (12 from each newspaper) which dealt with the same issues of political violence, including the bombing of the United Nations (UN) House in Abuja, Nigeria (August 26, 2011) and the bombing of the Nigeria Police Headquarters, also in Abuja (June 2011). The titles and contents of the editorials were read and checked manually (since they were all hard copy newspaper texts) for recurring themes which portray themes reconstructed from van Dijk's Ideological Square. Eight of such themes which convey ideological positions, power relations, class, Us and Them, Religion as threat, political violence as irrationality, government agencies as sources of political violence, as well as the policy action recommended by the newspapers were coded and their percentages of occurrence calculated in each of the two newspapers. See Table 4). These language choices and ideological representations of themes were then used to analyse the content of the editorial in order to explicate the underlying meanings and power relations conveyed by the newspapers about the events, incidents, actors, agents and institutions which they discussed in the editorials. The same method was also used to analyse samples of editorial opinions by the two newspapers on the theme of corruption. The findings of the analysis of the editorial opinions of the two newspapers on political violence and corruption, discussed in Chapter 6, were also used to assess the performance of the democratic role of the Nigerian press.

4.4 The Newspaper samples

For several years since the commencement of the study in 2011, the researcher collected and accumulated the copies of each of the four major independent newspapers in Nigeria, *The Guardian*, *Daily Trust*, *This Day* and *The Punch* covering the period of the 2011 general election. The immense quantities of physical newspapers were later pruned down when the number of newspapers for the study was reduced from four newspapers to two. This was because the other two newspapers dropped were very similar to the two selected, hence offering less difference for comparisons than the two selected, *The Guardian* and *Daily Trust*, which offered more bases for comparisons and contrasts because of their different orientations and locations. This decision also helped in cutting down on the quantity of full newspapers and newspaper cuttings which had completely taken over the researcher's apartment. In addition to the copies of these two specific newspapers, archival materials from the other major newspapers were also collected for possible use in providing historical and factual information that could be useful in understanding the socio-economic and political context of the research. These newspapers have still been preserved for the records.

Data Analysis of Newspaper Samples

The focus of the research is on the press coverage of the last general election in Nigeria, which took place between April-May 2011. Being a specific event like an election, the date was already clearly defined by the event – the year 2011, and the months April and May. However, Hansen and his colleagues (1998) point out that “it is important to bear in mind that while event-specific coverage may be clearly defined by the dates of an event, the key to understanding the role and nature of media coverage would often necessitate analysis of coverage both before and after the dates or periods of a specific event”. (Hansen et. al, 1998, p.102) Accordingly, my analysis of press coverage of the general election spanned a period of one year, from October 1, 2010 to October 1, 2011 – covering the six months period before, and the six months period after, the main presidential election which took place in April 2011. This takes care of the pre-election, election and post-election periods – in order to get a full picture of the nature of the press coverage of the election.

The study does not go the whole hog of what Quandt (2008) describes as the “input, throughput, output analysis”. Rather, the study is essentially a narrative “output analysis” of

the news content and editorial opinions of the two major independent Nigerian newspapers, *The Guardian* and *Daily Trust*. By studying these two major Nigerian independent newspapers, *The Guardian* and *Daily Trust*, the research seeks to reveal important information about the Nigerian press and hopes to offer significant insights into the relationship between the Nigerian press (the media industry) and the Nigerian society. This information will, hopefully, be beneficial in making or refining public policies that will enhance the work of the press and strengthen its official watchdog role in the society.

As a means of studying the frequency of occurrence of the news items in the respective newspapers, the data collected was analysed with the aid of the computer programme *SPSS*, while the qualitative analysis of the editorial opinions was used to identify the official positions and socio-political leanings of the respective newspapers. The analysis is essentially thematic and narrative.

Selection of the printed press for the study

The selection of the printed press for analysis is due largely to the fact that, at least in developing countries like Nigeria, hard copy newspapers are easier to access, store and retrieve, for retrospective analysis, than broadcast media news from radio and television. Secondly, this researcher has also worked in or with the newspaper press in Nigeria for over 20 years, hence would be on more familiar territory than in the broadcast media. As discussed earlier in full in the Literature review, the choice of the newspaper titles to be studied involved the consideration of a combination of factors, which included the geographical reach and location of the newspapers, the readership size (although figures are non-existent or unreliable), the format and content characteristics (whether “quality” or tabloid press), the political stance of the newspapers (liberal, independent) as well as the ready availability of research materials (the daily copies of the newspapers). Accordingly, in consideration of the factors, these two major independent newspapers were selected for this study: *The Guardian* representing the “quality,” national newspaper, with the *Daily Trust* representing the regional, tabloid newspapers.

Sampling of relevant content

The front page headline news items and the editorial opinions of a newspaper are traditionally regarded as among the most important components of any newspaper. My study makes the assumption that the selection of these two samples of content for analysis would be sufficient to give a clear understanding of the type of dominant issues / subjects focused on by the press during the period of the 2011 general elections in Nigeria – and the levels of importance of importance attached by the press to those issues through the amount of coverage and the *positions* taken by the newspapers in their editorial opinions.

Hansen et al (1998) point out that in an analysis of press coverage, the scholar should avoid the temptation to measure and code the exact sizes and the area of each newspaper article analysed. Rather, one should analyse and count “more substantive characteristics of text, and to use simply the number of articles (irrespective of size) as an adequate and sufficient indication of the extent of coverage in different newspapers or over time”. (p. 106) Rather than measure column lengths and widths, this study will use the number of front page headline news and editorial opinions in each of these four newspapers during the period under review to analyse the role and nature of press coverage of the 2011 general election, especially as related to the issues of corruption and electoral violence.

4.5 Pilot study

After designing the research methodology and the collection of data from the newspaper case studies, a pilot study was conducted focusing on three months covering the periods before and after the general election (covering 1/3 or 33.3% of the 12 months period). This study examined the news content of the two newspapers for the period, as well as the editorial opinions of the two newspapers. This provided an indication of the direction of the coverage of the electoral cycle by the two newspapers in the study.

4.6 Peer Review

The data collected from the semi-structured interview of Nigerian journalists on the challenges and obstacles faced by Nigerian journalists, and how these challenges and obstacles impact on their professional work, was presented by the researcher as a seminar

paper in the Department of Media and Communication of the University of Leicester on October 16, 2013. The paper received many corrections and suggestions by supervisors and peers. These corrections and suggestions have been made and have been useful in reworking the presentation as one of the main empirical chapters in the thesis.

4.7 Objectivity, Reliability and Validity

As pointed out before, while some earlier media scholars like Berelson (1952) stresses the issue of objectivity in the definition of content analysis, other scholars have pointed out that the notion of “objectivity” in content analysis, as in any other kind of scientific research, idealistic, since it is impossible for any research to be entirely “value-free”. Accordingly, later definitions of content analysis have omitted references to “objectivity”, but stress that content analysis should be “systematic” or “replicable”. (Holsti, 1969; Krippendorff, 1980: quoted in Hansen et al, 1998, p. 95). All the same, there is the need for the researcher to stand outside his work and adopt a critical stance in evaluating the evidence adduced from his data.

This researcher has striven to do just that. The reliability of this study is assured by the fact that the researcher has followed systematic and transparent methods in gathering the data and adopted replicable methods in their analysis.

Indeed, using archival materials in a study of this nature, the press coverage of a general election in Nigeria, is already, in itself, an inbuilt mechanism for reliability. This view is supported by the affirmation of Silverman (2008, p.285) that as long as textual data are not forged, they are more reliable than any other forms of data such as data gathered through observation. Being archival materials, the newspapers used in the study are freely available in the following places:

- The Nigerian National Library in both Abuja and Lagos
- The offices of the two newspapers, *The Guardian* and *Daily Trust*, in Abuja, Lagos and Kaduna.

Secondly, the semi-structured interviews were recorded and transcribed, and most of the interviewees willingly provided their full names and media affiliations, although a few were cautious about their names being indicated for fear of possible unfavourable consequences. All the same, although most of the interviewees willingly provided their full names and their

titles and affiliations in their respective newspaper organizations, they were nonetheless anonymized, in line with usual practice, by being identified with their initials and serial numbers as indicated earlier. Direct quotations from the newspaper stories or editorials being analysed, or from the journalists interviewed, also help to give the reader a clear insight into the issue being addressed, in the actual words of the newspaper as published or the interviewee as recorded. These act as further tests of reliability recommended by media scholars for qualitative research (See Gall, Borg and Gall, 1996).

4.8 Semi-structured Interviews

In addition to the other methods described earlier, the study also used *semi-structured interviews* to explore the challenges faced by Nigerian journalists, as well as to supplement and clarify some of the information that arose from the analysis of the news content and editorial opinions of the newspapers. The use of Semi-Structured Interviews provides evidence to answer the RQ5: What challenges are faced by Nigerian journalists in the course of their work and how do these challenges impact on their professionalism and ethics? The analysis of the semi-structured interviews is primarily descriptive, focusing on the personal accounts of the journalists of their experiences and attitudes, their work conditions and other factors which impact on their professional work as journalists and how these obstacles and challenges may inhibit the performance of the democratic role of the press.

In the course of the study, the researcher spent some time in Nigeria at different periods between 2013 and 2014 to conduct the semi-structured interviews with 12 selected journalists and editors. The 12 journalists consisted of eight men and four women. The choice was made in order to ensure some form of equity and gender balance in the distribution of the interviewees. Their ages ranged from 28 to 60, while their years of professional experience in journalism ranged from five years to over 33 years (for the oldest interviewed). The interviewees were selected deliberately to cover the key areas usually represented in the structures of a newspaper organization in Nigeria: the management, the editors and the news reporters/news production staff. The selection of 12 persons for the semi-structured interviews serves as an indicative sample of the major groups in the newspaper houses in Nigeria: media owners and managers, editors and news reporters. Interviewing at least one member of each group was meant to provide different perspectives and help to deepen the understanding of the

factors which impact on press coverage in Nigeria. All the journalists selected for the interview were involved in news coverage, news production or news management during the period of the 2011 general election. This consideration served as another basis for the selection of the small number of journalists who participated in the interviews.

The interviews were conducted in different parts of Nigeria (Osun State, Lagos State, Plateau State and Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory). Apart from specifically arranged interviews where the researcher met with the interviewer in an office or a hotel for the face-to-face interviews, the researcher also took advantage of large gatherings of journalists during various media seminars and workshops to meet some of the journalists for the interviews, while it had been very difficult in some cases to track down some of these very busy journalists. The interviews generally lasted an average of 15 minutes and were recorded on tape and transcribed manually afterwards by the researcher himself, in order to ensure fidelity to the text of the journalists' interviews as recorded. The recordings were also supported by extensive note-taking by the researcher – as a fall-back option in case the tape-recorder malfunctioned at any given occasion. However, nothing of the sort happened. Two of the selected journalists who could not be reached in person for face to face interviews were subsequently interviewed online through electronic mail. Some clarifications were further sought from two of the journalists in 2015 regarding issues which emerged in the analysis of the news coverage in their respective newspapers.

The questions were the same for all the interviewees. The questions were:

1. What were your experiences during the coverage of the 2011 general election with regards to political violence and corruption in the media?
2. What challenges do you face in your work and how do these impact on your work as a journalist?

To anonymize the participants, the interviewees are identified by initials and a serial number from 1-12, being the number of candidates interviewed for the study. Although some of the candidates were willing to have their names indicated in the study, if necessary, some others were expressed concerns that they could be sanctioned by their media organizations if their names were disclosed – especially where they may have expressed some critical opinions about the management and organization of their newspaper owners or their managers.

The interviews were analysed according to the recurrent themes addressed by the journalists in their responses as identified in the transcripts. These themes have also been identified and explored by previous reports and studies of the working conditions and challenges faced by Nigerian and African journalists. For instance, African Media Barometer Nigeria (2011) identified the deplorable working conditions for Nigerian journalists, especially in terms of low and irregular salaries; noted that corruption was “eating deep into the fabric of the Nigerian media” and that Nigeria occupies the unenviable dark spot of a country where harassment, arrests, detention and assassination of journalists in the exercise of their duties is still common. This has also led to the issues of censorship. African Media Barometer Nigeria (2011, *op. cit.*, p.5) Aimufua (2007, *op. cit.*) also found clear evidence of problems confronting the press in Nigeria, primarily in terms of ownership, control and lack of professionalism among journalists, while Adesoji (2010, p.23) also identified problems surrounding the issues of ownership and control of the Nigerian press. These key challenges of ownership and control, poor working conditions, corruption, dangers and risks associated with the job and lack of professionalism provide the main themes adopted by the study for the analysis of the semi-structured interviews.

As indicated by Deacon and Pickering (1999), semi-structured interviews enable a researcher to gather specific information on a media research issue. The semi-structured interviews were designed to provide information on some specific issues: the challenges and obstacles faced by journalists in their work, the impacts of these challenges and obstacles on their professional work and their recommendations on how to improve the situation in order to enhance the performance of their official role as the watchdog of the society. The findings of the semi-structured interviews, as will be discussed later in Chapter 7, indicate the determination and courage of the Nigerian journalists to perform their traditional roles as the watchdogs of the country’s nascent democracy, despite all the challenges, risks and deplorable working conditions under which they ply their trade in Nigeria.

4.9 Conclusion

This Chapter explains the different but complementary methods (content analysis, critical discourse analysis and semi-structured interviews) adopted by this study in assessing the performance of the democratic function of the press by Nigerian newspapers and journalists.

These methods help to provide insights into the extent of coverage of the specific issues of political violence and corruption in Nigeria during the 2011 general election – as well as the ideological and or political positions adopted by the newspapers in constructing their editorial opinions on the same issues, as will be demonstrated in the next two chapters. The interviews provide additional information on the working conditions and professional practices of Nigerian journalists. By using both quantitative and qualitative methods, the study seeks to provide evidence to answer the research questions and test whether the democratic role of the press is being fulfilled – and the barriers to its fulfilment. Chapter 5 focuses on an analysis of the front page news headlines of the two newspapers.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS OF NEWS HEADLINES

5.0 Introduction

Hansen et al (1998, op. cit.) have identified “subjects/themes/issues”, as well as “vocabulary or lexical choice, value dimensions and/or ideological/political stance” as among the key categories which are often deployed in a sociologically-oriented analysis of media content (pp.107-124). This Chapter analyses the front page news headlines of the two newspapers to identify the major news subjects, themes or issues which dominated the front page news during the period under review – and how the amount of coverage devoted to these subjects and themes, and the lexical choices, value dimensions and/or ideological/political stance conveyed by the newspapers relate to the performance of the democratic role of the press in the Nigerian context. The analysis also seeks to identify whether the different location, style and orientation of the two newspapers led to a different performance of the democratic role of the media. This analysis helps to answer the RQ1: *What major themes were covered in their front page headline news by the two major independent Nigerian newspapers during the period of the 2011 general election in the country and how does this coverage reflect on the performance of their watchdog role?* Accordingly, this Chapter is structured into five sections: presentation and overview of the news data; discussion of the data; discussion of the lexical choices, value dimensions and ideological or political stance conveyed by the newspapers; similarities and differences in the presentation of news headlines; and the conclusion of the Chapter.

The critical importance of the front pages of national newspapers in disseminating information on issues of grave national importance, especially in the Nigerian context, is underscored by Olumhense (2013). Olumhense, a professional journalist and author, asserts:

The front pages of the press are a wonderful classroom. Pay close attention, and they open your eyes to this moment in time. It is when you turn the pages that you largely encounter the sundry gremlins who seek to interpret the front page. In a chaotic carnival such as Nigeria, it is important to be mindful of those interpreters, for they can poison your soul. They can tell

you what to think, or how to rethink what you thought you had thought through... But you stick with reading the front page news, which is by implication a summary of the most important stories. (Olumhense, op. cit., p.53)

5.1 Presentation and discussion of the news data

As indicated in Chapter 4 (Methodology), to get a full picture of the nature of the media coverage, the news headlines of the two newspapers were collected for the 12 months' period of the Nigerian 2011 general election cycle, covering the pre-election period (October 2010 – March 2011) and the post-election period April 2011 – Sept. 2011). The news headlines were fed into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), using thematic coding. A Chi-Square test was run to identify any significant similarities and differences between the two newspapers regarding the news subjects and themes covered and the percentage of coverage in both the pre-election period and the post-election periods. After the Chi-Square test was run on the SPSS programme, the results showed some interesting details about the level of coverage of specific news subjects, themes or issues by the two newspapers during the period under review. (See Tables 1-4).

Table 1 Sample coded data of news coverage

Daily Trust, JULY 2011

Date	Headline News	Theme
1-Jul-11	Crisis over House principal officers	Corruption
2-Jul-11	Meet husbands of 10 successful Nigerian women	Social issues
3-Jul-11	Why we arrested el-Rufa'i-SSS	Corruption
4-Jul-11	Pepple, Zainab, Duke undergo screening	Presidency
5-Jul-11	SSS nabs 100 Boko Haram suspects	Political violence
6-Jul-11	PDP forces Mulikat on House	National Assembly
7-Jul-11	Maiduguri shuts down as Army launches search	Political violence
8-Jul-11	Maiduguri: Motor bikes now haram	Political violence
9-Jul-11	Uncovering Kano's Blood-Sellers	Economy
10-Jul-11	Baraje takes charge At PDP, until...	Party News
11-Jul-11	Maiduguri: Army shoots 11, destroys houses	Political violence
12-Jul-11	Thousands flee Maiduguri	Political violence
13-Jul-11	Maiduguri: Elders demand end to military action	Political violence
14-Jul-11	Azazi: Troops won't leave Maiduguri	Political violence
15-Jul-11	Now a 9 point agenda cometh	Presidency
16-Jul-11	Borno's unofficial state of emergency	Political violence

17-Jul-11	Finally, Governors agree to pay N18,000 minimum wage	State Government
18-Jul-11	NLC: No Going Back on Strike	Economy
19-Jul-11	20 die in two Abuja crashes	Social issues
20-Jul-11	Labour calls off today's strike	Economy
21-Jul-11	Borno elders to Jonathan	State Government
22-Jul-11	Reps okay Islamic banking	Economy
23-Jul-11	Abuja's deadly car races return	Social issues
24-Jul-11	Waziri is too powerful -AGF Adoke	Corruption
24-Jul-11	Not Available (N/A)	N/A
25-Jul-11	Soldiers kill many in Maiduguri	Political violence
26-Jul-11	Stop random killing in Borno	Political violence
27-Jul-11	Bill seeks longer terms for President, govts, MPs	Presidency
28-Jul-11	Opposition rejects single term	Party News
29-Jul-11	What happened to my estate?	Corruption
30-Jul-11	Not Available (N/A)	N/A
31-Jul-11	Committee didn't agree on single term: Okorie	National Assembly

Table 2

Sample of monthly data of headline news coverage coded thematically (The Guardian)

The Guardian, JULY 2011

Date	Headline News	Theme	
1-Jul-11	Labour gives strike notice over new wage	Social Issues	
2-Jul-11	Time up for Boko Haram, says Jonathan	Political violence	
3-Jul-11	New Ministers: 'All Eyes On You'	Corruption	
4-Jul-11	Nine die in fresh Borno bomb blast, attacks	Political violence	
5-Jul-11	SSS grills 100 Boko Haram commanders over blasts	Political violence	
6-Jul-11	Not Available (N/A)	N/A	
7-Jul-11	How to develop Nigeria, by Okonjo- Iweala, Nnaji, others	Dev. News	
8-Jul-11	Nigeria's foreign policy can't drive growth	International	
9-Jul-11	FG mulls options against Boko Haram	Political violence	
10-Jul-11	Boko Haram Lay down your arms ACF Urges	Political violence	
11-Jul-11	Nightmare as heavy rain sacks Lagos	Environment	
12-Jul-11	Nigeria to take anti-terror crusade to neighbours	Political violence	

13-Jul-11	UN worries as death toll in Boko Haram crisis rises	Political violence	
14-Jul-11	Tension mounts, states evacuate indigenes from Borno	Political violence	
15-Jul-11	We're on probation before Nigerians, says Jonathan	Corruption	
16-Jul-11	Boko Haram Fire Rages in Borno	Political violence	
17-Jul-11	Islamic Banking: Burden on Nationhood	Economy	
18-Jul-11	Labour seeks pact on new wage, insists on strike	Social Issues	
19-Jul-11	Govt Labour talks on new pay deadlocked	Economy	
20-Jul-11	Nigeria, Britain raise bar on trade ties	International	
21-Jul-11	Govt makes investment drive hub of foreign policy	Foreign policy	
22-Jul-11	Reps okay Islamic banking, cash limit	Economy	
23-Jul-11	Discordant tunes over minimum wage	Corruption	
24-Jul-11	Constitutional Amendment Another Round of Hot Air	Corruption	
25-Jul-11	Nigeria, others to earn N150tr from oil export	Economy	
26-Jul-11	Not Available (N/A)	N/A	
27-Jul-11	Jonathan plans bill on one term for President, Govs	Presidency	
28-Jul-11	Again, govt, labour feud over pay	Economy	
29-Jul-11	I won't stay in office beyond 2015, Jonathan insists	Politics	
30-Jul-11	Not Available (N/A)	N/A	
31-Jul-11	The Land of Death-traps	Political violence	

Table 3: News Headlines for the Two Newspapers (Pre-Election Period October 01, 2010 to March 31, 2011)

Themes Pre-election	Newspaper Name				Total	
	Daily Trust		The Guardian			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Political violence	53	29.1%	51	28.0%	104	28.6%
Corruption	26	14.3%	27	14.8%	53	14.6%
Economy	15	8.2%	25	13.7%	40	11.0%
National assembly	13	7.1%	11	6.0%	24	6.6%
Security	11	6.0%	8	4.4%	19	5.2%
Presidency	12	6.6%	9	4.9%	21	5.8%
Social issues	11	6.0%	7	3.8%	18	4.9%
Party news	8	4.4%	6	3.3%	14	3.8%
State governments	7	3.8%	4	2.2%	11	3.0%
International news	4	2.2%	7	3.8%	11	3.0%
Military	4	2.2%	4	2.2%	8	2.2%
Environment	4	2.2%	7	3.8%	11	3.0%
Development news	3	1.6%	6	3.3%	9	2.5%
Religion	3	1.6%	2	1.1%	5	1.4%
Judiciary	3	1.6%	3	1.6%	6	1.6%
Not available	5	2.7%	5	2.7%	10	2.7%

Total	182	100.0%	182	100.0%	364	100.0%
$\chi^2 = 8.455, df=15, P=0.904$						

A Chi-square test was run to identify any significant similarities and differences between the two newspapers regarding the topics covered and the percentage of coverage in the pre-election period.

Table 4: News Headlines for the Two Newspapers (Post-Election Period April 01, 2011 to September 30, 2011)

Themes Post-election	Newspaper Name				Total	
	Daily Trust		The Guardian			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Political violence	63	34.4%	56	30.8%	119	32.6%
Corruption	31	16.9%	26	14.3%	57	15.6%
Economy	18	9.8%	24	13.2%	42	11.5%
National assembly	10	5.5%	10	5.5%	20	5.5%
Security	12	6.6%	12	6.6%	24	6.6%
Presidency	12	6.6%	12	6.6%	24	6.6%
Social issues	3	1.6%	3	1.6%	6	1.6%
Party news	9	4.9%	8	4.4%	17	4.7%
State governments	8	4.4%	7	3.8%	15	4.1%
International news	2	1.1%	6	3.3%	8	2.2%

Military	1	.5%	2	1.1%	4	1.1%
Environment	2	1.1%	4	2.2%	5	1.4%
Development news	2	1.1%	3	1.6%	5	1.4%
Religion	2	1.1%	2	1.1%	4	1.1%
Judiciary	2	1.1%	2	1.1%	4	1.1%
Not available	6	3.3%	5	2.7%	11	3.0%
Total	183	100.0%	182	100.0%	365	100.0%
$X^2 = 5.921, df=15, P=0.981$						

A Chi-square test was run to identify any significant similarities and differences between the two newspapers regarding the topics covered and the percentage of coverage in the post-election period.

The major themes identified from the thematic coding of the recurrent subjects/issues in the front page headlines of the two newspapers during the period under review fell under the broad categories of political violence, corruption, economy, the National Assembly (Parliament), security, the presidency, social issues, party news, state governments, international/foreign news, the military, environmental issues, development news, religion and the judiciary. From the tables of the data analysis of the news coverage, three major themes received the highest percentage of coverage in the two newspapers in both the pre-election and the post-election periods. These three major themes were political violence, corruption and the economy. We shall now review these specific themes and evaluate the extent of coverage as an indication of the level of importance attached to these news themes by the two newspapers.

5.2.0 Political violence

Some of the major incidents of political violence covered by the two newspapers during this period, which attracted front page news headlines, include the following: Pre-election bombing of the Eagle Square in Abuja on the occasion of the Nigeria's Independence Day Anniversary celebration (October 1, 2010); post-election violence in the Northern geopolitical zone triggered by the victory of President Goodluck Jonathan (a Southern Christian) over General Muhammadu Buhari (a Northern Muslim). (April 2011); bombing of schools, markets and churches (several occurrences throughout the period); the bombing of the Nigeria Police Headquarters in Abuja (June 16, 2011); and the terrorist attack on the United Nations (UN) House in Abuja (August 26, 2011).

Overall, political violence received the highest percentage of total front page news coverage in the two newspapers in both the pre-election period (28.6%) and the post-election period (32.6%) as indicated in Tables 2 and 3. Out of 182 days, news of political violence occurred 53 times in the Daily Trust (29.1%) in the pre-election period (October 2010 – March 2011) and 51 times in The Guardian (28.0%) during the same period. In the post-election period (April 2011 – September 2011), out of 183 days, the front page headline news of the Daily Trust recorded 63 instances (34.4%) while The Guardian recorded 56 occurrences (30.8%). Political violence was the most dominant news item in the front page headlines of the two newspapers during both the pre-election and the post-election periods. Indeed, the incidence

of coverage of political violence also rose slightly in both newspapers between the pre-election and the post-election periods, from 28.6% to 32.6% (4.0%). In individual coverage, while the rise in coverage in the Daily Trust was from 29.1% in the pre-election period to 34.4% in the post-election period (5.3%), the rise in The Guardian was from 28.0% to 30.8% (2.8%) within the same period. Altogether there is no significant difference in the amount of coverage which the two newspapers devoted to political violence during the two periods, it is indicative from the total amount of coverage by each newspaper (average of 31.6%) that these newspapers have a similar and clear agenda to focus on political violence as a significant and dominant recurrent news theme during the entire period of the 2011 general election in Nigeria.

5.2.1 Location of incidents of political violence

It is pertinent at this point to discuss briefly the location of the incidents of political violence reported in the newspapers. Table 5 below indicates the location of the major incidents of political violence reported by the two newspapers during the pre-election period.

Table 5: Incidents of Political Killings and Election-Related Violence, December 2010-March 2011

Locations	No. of incidents	%
Northern Nigeria	20	66.67
South West	6	20
South-South (Niger Delta)	4	13.33
South East	0	0.0
Total	30	100.0%

Most of the incidents of political violence, bombing and election-related violence which occurred during the pre-election period happened in Northern Nigeria. Out of 30 major incidents of political killings and election-related violence reported by the newspapers during the pre-election period, 20 incidents (66.67%) happened in Northern Nigeria, the regional base of the Daily Trust newspaper, while six incidents (20%) occurred in the South West (the base of The Guardian newspaper). Four incidents (13.33%) occurred in the South-South (Niger Delta region) while no major incident was recorded in the South East (0%). In these 30 incidents, 88 persons lost their lives while 209 persons were injured (Daily Trust).

This trend was also replicated in the post-election period when violence erupted in several states of the North (as affirmed by the Lemu Panel Report (2011, op. cit.,)). In addition, the bombing of major institutions like the Police Headquarters (June 2011) and the UN House (August 26, 2011) took place in Abuja (North Central), the Federal Capital of Nigeria. The concentration of incidents of political violence in Northern Nigeria could arguably account for the slightly higher coverage of political violence by the Daily Trust newspaper based in the North than The Guardian newspaper based in the South West. However, The Guardian, being a much older (1983) and bigger newspaper with more national spread than the Daily Trust (1998), easily makes up the difference in coverage of political violence despite being located away from the main theatre of the violence. The oil-producing Niger Delta region, where ethnic militias operate, seeking control of the nation's oil wells, also accounts for a significant percentage of the political violence reported in the press during this period (13.33%). The South East did not record any major incident of political violence during this period. This can be explained by the fact that the South East, the region which fought an unsuccessful war to secede from Nigeria (1966 – 1970), was not a major contender in the presidential election of 2011 – which was pitched between the North, the South-South and the South West, as depicted by the newspapers. The South East was largely excluded from the main national political power struggles – but remained fairly peaceful. This account is confirmed by the UN Human Development Report (2016) which asserts that the South East of Nigeria is the safest part of the country.

5.3 Corruption

Some of the major cases of official corruption which occurred during the period, and which attracted front page news headlines in the two newspapers, included the following: Arrest and indictment on corruption charges of the Honourable Speaker of the House of Representatives (Parliament) Mr Dimeji Bankole and his deputy, Mr Usman Nafada (May 05, 2011); cases of corruption against several ministers and members of the Federal Cabinet (several occurrences throughout the period); cases of corruption against some state governors (several occurrences throughout the period) and cases of corruption against some chief executives and directors of commercial banks who misappropriated depositors' funds and led to the collapse of many banks (several occurrences throughout the period). From the data analysis (see Tables 3 and 4) corruption received the second highest percentage of coverage in the two newspapers during the same period: 14.6% in the pre-election period and 15.6% in the post-election period. While the Daily Trust devoted 14.3% of its total headline news to issues of corruption in the pre-election period and 16.9% in the post-election period, The Guardian gave 14.8% in the pre-election period and 14.3% in the post-election period.

Again, as in the coverage of political violence reviewed earlier, altogether there is no significant difference in the amount of coverage which the two newspapers devoted to corruption during the two periods, it is apparent from the total amount of coverage by each newspaper (average of 15.1%) that these newspapers also have a similar and clear agenda to focus on corruption as a significant and dominant recurrent news theme during the period of the 2011 general election.

However, a very significant variation occurred between the news coverage of political violence and corruption. While political violence accounted for 31.6% of front page news headline coverage in the whole period, corruption accounted for 15.1%. This shows that although the two newspapers devoted the largest amounts of coverage to both subjects, issues relating to political violence were more pre-dominant in the front page news coverage than those relating to corruption. This is arguably due to the high incidence of political violence occurring in Nigeria at this period of the general election.

5.4 The economy

The economy also received significant coverage in the front page news headlines of the two newspapers during the period under review. Economic issues received a total of 8.2% coverage in the Daily Trust in the pre-election period and 13.7% in The Guardian, while receiving 9.8% in the Daily Trust in the post-election period and 13.2% in The Guardian. The economy received an average total coverage of 11.25% in the two newspapers during this period. The variation in the quantum of coverage in the two newspapers (4.45%) is even slightly more significant on the economy than on the issues of political violence and corruption. This could be explained by the orientation and location of The Guardian as a quality business newspaper based in Lagos, the economic capital of Nigeria, while the Daily Trust is more a tabloid newspaper located in the North (Kaduna), the political power base of Nigeria.

5.5 Other news themes

Other major news themes which received significant front page news coverage from the two newspapers in both the pre-election period and the post-election period respectively included the National Assembly (6.6% / 5.5%); the Presidency (5.8% / 6.6%); Security (5.2% / 6.6%); party news (3.8% / 4.7 %); state governments (3.0% / 4.1%); international news (3.0% / 2.2%); social issues (4.9% / 1.6%), etc. (See Tables 3 and 4). Although some of the themes were cross-cutting, the final counting of categories was determined by the dominant issue discussed in the news itself. For instance, a headline news report on the national budget was recorded as an economic issue, while a headline news report on how a Cabinet Minister of the Speaker of the House of Representatives (Parliament) misappropriated budget funds was thematically recorded as corruption. It could be argued that the significant decline in the coverage of social issues may have been occasioned by the rise in the coverage of corruption cases when the newspapers clearly indicated that certain news items they were covering were clear cases of corruption – rather than bland social issues. There were also some instances of missing newspapers. In such cases, recorded as Not Available, the newspapers could not be located despite extensive searches at the National Library in Abuja, Nigeria. On some of those occasions, the newspapers did not print due to various logistic problems (newsprint supply, equipment breakdown or workers' strike). These accounted for about 2.8%. This figure is not

deemed significant enough to make any appreciable impact on the results of the findings which indicate clearly that political violence and corruption were the two most dominant front page news themes covered by the two newspapers during the period under review. This quantum of coverage is an indication that the newspapers clearly recognize the themes of political violence and corruption as major social and political issues which deserve critical focus and attention by being placed on the front burner of national discourse. This view is affirmed by Hansen et al (1998, op. cit., p.106) who asserted that in an analysis of press coverage, the number of articles, irrespective of size, can be used validly as an “adequate and sufficient indication of the extent of coverage in different newspapers or over time”. Although it can be argued that bad news is often the main news for the press, it then becomes imperative to do a further analysis of how these newspapers presented this coverage of political violence and official corruption in order to understand their respective perspectives, positions and attitudes to the issues in question – given their Constitutional roles as the watchdogs of society and facilitators of democracy and good governance.

5.6.0 Discussion of the lexical choices, value dimensions and ideological or political stance of the newspapers

This section examines briefly the vocabulary or lexical choices, value dimensions and/or ideological/political stance (Hansen et al, 1998, op. cit.) portrayed by the newspapers in the construction of their front page news headlines, although the next Chapter undertakes a full critical discourse analysis of the editorial opinions of the two newspapers on the themes of political violence and corruption.

But even the language of the news coverage bore clear ideological positions and official stance of the newspapers against political violence and corruption in the country. For instance, in the construction of their front page headline news, the two newspapers make some lexical choices which clearly indicate their ideological positions and official stance to the item of news in question. A few examples will suffice here on the reportage of the news of terrorism by the two newspapers. The newspapers deliberately made use of evocative images of war, violence and death in their reportage of news of the Boko Haram attacks in different parts of the country, especially in the North of Nigeria. Their choice of strong, evocative and negatively loaded value words like “war”, “terror”, “attacks”, “rampage,” and “bloodbath”,

etc., as illustrated below, clearly conveyed their ideological positions that the Boko Haram terrorists and other armed, violent militant groups were simply levying a destructive and ruinous war against the nation and its citizens.

In the pre-election period, one of the most damaging incidents of political violence was the bomb attack at the Eagle Square in Abuja on October 1, 2010: the anniversary of Nigeria's independence. Indeed, hundreds of persons, including foreign heads of state and other dignitaries, as well as President Goodluck Jonathan, were already gathered at the Eagle Square for the public celebration of the country's independence anniversary when twin bomb blasts rocked the precincts of the venue. *The Guardian* newspaper headlines it: "Eight Die, Others Injured In Abuja Blast," with the rider: "We'll Get You, Jonathan Tells Bombers". (*The Guardian*, October 2, 2010). The attack was claimed by the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), a militant group which was fighting to secure the control of the oil wealth in the volatile Niger Delta region of Nigeria. MEND was one of the major sources of terror and political violence in Nigeria which had accounted for numerous deaths, robberies, kidnapping and sabotage of strategic oil installations in the oil-laden Niger Delta region of Nigeria. In this instance, although *The Guardian* announced the tragic killing of eight persons by the suspected militants in the bomb attack, the newspaper quickly countered this headline with a rider: "We'll Get You, Jonathan Tells Bombers". This strategy effectively dilutes the seeming triumph of the militants by conveying to the militants and to all and sundry the angry threat by President Goodluck Jonathan that he will "get the bombers". He did, within a short period of time. The leader of the militant group, Mr Okah, was arrested within one week in South Africa, where he had fled to. (*The Guardian*, October 5, 2010.) He was subsequently prosecuted for his crimes and convicted in South Africa and is still serving his jail sentence in the country.

The Independence Day bomb attack spawned other front page headlines in *The Guardian*, accounting for over 35% of the front page headlines in the month of October 2010. Other headlines for the month arising from the bombing included the following:

- Abuja Bombings: Security Failed, Says Jonathan (October 3, 2010, p.1)
- External terrorist group behind blasts, says Jonathan. Confirms 11 deaths from attack (October 4, 2010, p.1)

- Okah's trial begins, SSS arrests Dokpesi, nine others. Attack sponsored by prominent Nigerians, says agency (October 5, 2010, p.1)
- Presidency, groups query politicisation of bomb blasts (October 7, 2010, p.1).

The coverage by the *Daily Trust* followed a similar pattern as *The Guardian*. The *Daily Trust* also provided some further insights into the incident, including an explanation by former military president, General Ibrahim Babangida, as to why he was not present at the Eagle Square venue of the anniversary when the bombs went off. Speculations were rife that the former military head of state might have suspected that something untoward could happen at the event, given the high level of insecurity and violence in the country. *Daily Trust* headlines the story: "Ibrahim Babangida: Why I was not at the Eagle Square". From their overall manner of construction and representation of the news of the spate of terrorist bomb attacks and wave of political violence, it was clear indeed that both newspapers shared the outrage of the nation at the assault on the country by militants on the anniversary of the country's independence.

Even more graphic in description and definitive in condemnation were the newspapers' headlines of the massive bomb attack on the Police National Headquarters in Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory, on June 16, 2011. The suicide bomb attack was claimed by the terrorist group, *Boko Haram*, which has been waging a religious and political war in Nigeria to Islamize the country and create a Muslim caliphate. *The Guardian* headlines it definitively, authoritatively, as an act of terrorism: "Terror hits Police hqtrs" (*The Guardian*, June 17, 2011, p.1).

The suicide bomb attack on the police headquarters claimed numerous casualties, although figures varied between different media reports and agencies. With its short but powerful headline of "Terror hits police hqtrs," *The Guardian* was unequivocal in identifying the bombing of the Nigerian Police Headquarters as a terrorist attack by the Boko Haram insurgents who also promptly claimed responsibility for the attack. The newspaper reports that the suspected Boko Haram suicide bomber, whose wired vehicle was identified among the wreckage, actually drove into the Police Headquarters with the convoy of the Inspector General of Police before detonating his device. The account of the *Daily Trust* on the bombing of the Police Headquarters was similar to that of *The Guardian*. The headline of the *Daily Trust* was: "Scores killed in Force Hqtrs blasts" (June 17, 2011). However, by using the

passive voice and focusing on the number of persons killed in the attack, the *Daily Trust* skilfully avoided using the word “terror” or “terrorists” in its headline, perhaps in line with the on-going debate to the effect that one man’s terrorist may be another man’s freedom fighter or rights activist. All the same, coming barely two days after the Nigerian Police Chief announced to the media that the days of the Boko Haram terrorists were numbered, both newspapers clearly reported the assault on the Police Headquarters as a deadly strike at the heart of the nation.

The attack also continued to generate several headline stories in *The Guardian* during the month, including the following:

- “Disquiet in the Police as search for bombers continues” (June 22, 2011)
- “North moves against bombing, violence” (June 24, 2011)
- “Boko Haram: No dialogue with govt.” (June 25, 2011).

The coverage of the bombing of the UN House in Abuja on August 26, 2011, reinforced the same theme of Boko Haram’s political violence as terrorism and an assault not just against Nigeria but also against the international community represented by the United Nations. The Guardian’s headline the next morning was “Terror in Abuja: UN Building bombed” (The Guardian, August 27, 2011, p.1). Again, as in the case of the bombing on the Police Headquarters, The Guardian was unequivocal in its headline that the bombing of the UN House in Abuja was a terror attack, for which the Boko Haram group also claimed the responsibility. More than 23 persons, including UN staff and non-UN workers and visitors, died in the attack, with over 100 persons wounded. The assault on the hallowed precincts of the United Nations simply dominated the headline news in the newspapers for the remaining days of the month of August 2011, culminating in “Govt arrests suspects over bomb blast at UN House” (The Guardian, August 30, 2011). The news of the bomb attack on the UN House also continued to dominate the front page headline news in the newspapers in the month of September 2011, contributing 10 headlines out of the 30 days of the month (over 33% of the headline news coverage for the month) as the newspaper followed up on issues relating to the attack, the investigations and the arrest of suspects, as well as public reactions, private security initiatives and government policy changes occasioned by the Boko Haram attack on

the UN House in Nigeria. Headline news in *The Guardian* in the month of September 2011, which summed up the panic and tension in the country, included the following:

- UN House bombing: SSS arrests two, declares blast mastermind wanted (September 01)
- UN House: Blast triggers hi-tech security measures in embassies, others (September 02)
- Council of state okays re-jig of security system (September 07)
- US backs Nigeria's counter-terror plans (September 11)
- Panic in National Assembly over threat of bombing (September 21)
- Jonathan, at UN, urges action against terrorism (September 22), etc.

The response of the *Daily Trust* was quite similar to that of *The Guardian* in terms of the quantum of headline news coverage of the bomb attack at the UN House in Abuja, running from the last week of August into most of September. However, with its headline news on the bombing reading: “UN Headquarters bomb: MORE ATTACKS UNDER WAY – BOKO HARAM,” with the rider: “18 dead, over 50 injured,” The *Daily Trust* again was careful in not using the word terror or terrorism in its headline. This was also the case in the body of the news story, which refrained from identifying the Boko Haram insurgents as terrorists. While *The Guardian* also played down the Boko Haram threat of more attacks by avoiding it in its headline, while reflecting it in the body of the news story of the bombing, the *Daily Trust* newspaper made the ominous threat by the terrorists the main message of its headline: “UN Headquarters bomb: MORE ATTACKS UNDER WAY – BOKO HARAM” (August 27, 2011). The Boko Haram insurgents were thus also the main sources for the headline news of the *Daily Trust* on August 27 – through their veiled messages to journalists, which some media houses like *The Guardian* play down, while some others like the *Daily Trust* tend to play up.

Other headlines in *The Daily Trust* after the UN bomb assault include the following:

- UN BUILDING BOMBING: Jonathan Vows to Track down Bombers (August 28)
- UN Building blast: Death toll now 23 (August 29)
- UN Building bomb: Two BH suspects held (September 01)
- UN Building: BH names bomber, Abul Barra (September 02)

- Boko Haram scare: Security beefed up in Abuja (September 21), etc.

Again, as in the case of *The Guardian*, headline news of the terrorist attack on the UN House in Abuja and its aftermath took up more than 30% of the coverage between the last week of August and the end of September 2011. Indeed, as in the case of *The Guardian*, the quantum of the front page headline news coverage of the attack on the UN House in Abuja and the depth of the follow-up on various socio-political, economic and security issues relating to the terrorist attack was no doubt an indication of the high level of importance attached by the newspapers to the terrorist attack in particular and to political violence in general as a major evil threatening the Nigerian nation. Indeed, the quantum of front page news coverage devoted to the twin issues of corruption and political violence is even more remarkable when placed in the context of the general election. The period of the general election, the electoral cycle, is, indeed, a period when various electoral issues like campaign messages, national development issues, economic reforms, heated ideological debates, party manifestos and sundry political rhetoric would reasonably be expected to dominate the news headlines in the press. On the contrary, issues of corruption and political violence consistently accounted for over 50% of total front page news headlines in both *The Guardian* and the *Daily Trust* during the 12 month electoral cycle of the general election. This trend of news coverage is, no doubt, a clear indication of the high level of importance attached by the newspapers to the twin evils of official corruption and political violence-cum terrorism major threats to Nigeria's nascent democracy which have to be fully exposed by the media in order to be properly tackled by the appropriate government authorities and other institutions. By constantly giving such in depth coverage to the twin evils of corruption and political violence and keeping them on the front burner of public information and opinion, and by the manner in which they constructed the news of corruption and political violence as veritable threats to Nigeria's democracy and the general well-being of the citizenry, the Nigerian press, as represented by *The Guardian* and the *Daily Trust*, eminently performed its Constitutional role as the watchdog of society and fulfilled the normative expectations of the media to facilitate democracy and foster democratisation and good governance.

5.6.1 Physical characteristics of text as markers of very important news

Again, as observed by media scholars, the physical characteristics of texts and visual parallel used in coverage can be taken as further indicators of importance (see Hansen et al, 1998, op. cit). An examination of the front page news coverage of the dominant themes of political violence and corruption in the two newspapers indicates a generous use of physical and visual characteristics to highlight the prominence of the respective news items and to draw more attention to them accordingly. Some of these physical and visual characteristics used in the front page news headlines of the two newspapers include bold headlines in capital letters and deep red or black bold letters to further emphasize the headlines. A few examples will suffice here. During the period under review, both *The Guardian* and the *Daily Trust* newspapers employed a lot of visual effects in the texts of their front page news headlines as a means of emphasizing the importance of the news in question and also attracting the attention of readers to the news in particular and to the particular newspaper in general. These visual effects and physical manipulation of texts include the use of bold capital letters in casting the headlines, the use of bright red colours in the texts to denote importance as well as danger, especially in the cases of violence involving injuries and loss of lives. However, this was more predominant in the *Daily Trust*, the tabloid newspaper. *The Guardian*, a more conservative quality newspaper, was usually more reserved and restrained, although on some days also *The Guardian* used bold, black letters rather than red letters, to indicate and attract attention to issues of very grave importance on its front page headlines. The *Daily Trust* newspaper also occasionally used exclamation marks to stress the importance of the front page news items so highlighted. As indicated earlier, the use of these textual devices like bold, red capital letters and exclamation marks are often the hallmark of tabloid newspapers, and were frequently used by the *Daily Trust*, which is in the mould of a tabloid newspaper, and only occasionally by *The Guardian*, which is more of a quality newspaper and indeed started out as a broadsheet. A few examples will suffice here from the *Daily Trust* to illustrate the use of these visual effects of texts to signpost and underscore the importance of such news items, especially news of political violence and official corruption which are twin dangers to the Nigerian society.

In the month of September 2011, the *Daily Trust* newspaper used red, bold headlines in capital letters in all its weekend editions and on major news stories of political violence,

accounting for over 30% of the front page headline news for the month. This trend is replicated every month in the newspaper during the period under review.

- “BLOOD BATH IN BIU: Soldiers, youths clash in Borno. Many killed” (*Daily Trust*, September 04, 2011)
- NIGERIA’S WAR ON TERROR HEATS UP. Police move all Boko Haram suspects to Abuja (September 10, 2011)
- “UNABATED VIOLENCE IN JOS: 91 Killed In 10 Days” (September 11, 2011)
- “PEACE MOVE TURNS SOUR: Gunman kills OBJ’s Boko Haram host” (*Daily Trust*, September 18, 2011)
- “HOW WE RELEASED BOKO HARAM LEADER – POLICE” (*Daily Trust*, September 24, 2011), etc.

By employing these visual effects and physical characteristics to enhance the texts in their front page headline news, the newspapers are not only seeking to attract the attention of potential buyers and readers of the newspapers but are also making a bold statement that these issues of official corruption and political violence headlined in the news are very critical issues indeed which deserve to be imprinted on the front burner of national consciousness. RC, a line editor of one of the newspapers who participated in the semi-structured interviews, confirms this point during the interviews.

Of course we want to sell our papers. But we want also to stress the point that these issues in question are very important issues which should be brought to the attention of all and sundry, but the leaders and the general public. Corruption and political violence are serious threats to the Nigerian society.

- RC, Abuja, 05/12/15

As shown in the next section, in the construction of their front page news headlines during the period under review, the two newspapers showed clearly that they took the political stance and the ideological position that political violence and corruption constituted a clear and present danger to Nigeria’s nascent democracy and the security and development of the nation.

5.7 Saying no to terrorism and political violence

As indicated earlier, the front page news headlines of the newspapers, in their coverage of some major, specific incidents of political violence during the period, showed clearly the stance of these newspapers against the scourge of terrorism and political violence that was afflicting the nation – as depicted in their style of language and the choice of words employed in the headlines. The newspapers clearly said no to terrorism and political violence, as they did to corruption. The newspapers were unequivocal in their condemnation of the terror and violence unleashed on the nation by the Boko Haram terrorists and other militant groups – which they asserted were created and were being manipulated by the Nigerian political elite in their quest for power. This position of the newspapers is consistent with the findings of Iyekekpolo (2018, op. cit.), whose study shows how the Nigerian political elite have mobilized and given political relevance to the Boko Haram group – and exploited and manipulated the terrorist group in their quest for power.

A principled stand against corruption

In their representation of news of specific cases of official corruption during the period under review, the two newspapers, *The Guardian* and *the Daily Trust*, went beyond the mere reportage of major news events to take a principled stand against corruption. This is shown by the careful choice of words with which they constructed the headlines news, before following these up even more forcefully in their editorial opinions. A couple of examples will suffice here to give an indication of the general trend by which the Nigerian independent press participated actively in the war against corruption and political violence, in fulfilment of the democratic function (watchdog role) of the media.

One of the major cases of official corruption reported during the period was the case involving the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Mr Dimeji Bankole, who was indicted for corrupt enrichment and embezzlement of public funds. On May 13, 2011, *The Guardian*'s headline news announced: "Outrage as Bankole admits Reps owe banks N10b". The *outrage* in the land was because most of this huge sum of N10 billion (over 400 million pounds sterling then) was reportedly misappropriated by the Speaker, his deputy and their other cronies in the House of Representatives. Mr Bankole and Mr Nafada were subsequently

arrested and prosecuted by the Federal Government's anti-graft agency, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). When the young, high profile Speaker was picked up by the police on charges of corruption on May 5, 2011, it naturally made the front page headline news the next day for most of the major newspapers, including *The Guardian* and *Daily Trust*. "EFCC arrests Bankole" was the headline news of *The Guardian* on June 6, 2011.

It is significant to note the choice of words by *The Guardian* in the construction of the news headline: "Outrage as Bankole admits Reps owe banks N10 billion". By using the word "outrage", *The Guardian* is clearly taking a position of criticism and indictment of the action of the members of Nigeria's House of Representatives (Parliament), under the leadership of Mr Bankole, in borrowing the huge sum of N10 billion from commercial banks, in spite of the huge annual allocation given to the Parliament by the Federal Government. The story went on to indicate that this amount of money was not even deployed to any useful purposes, in the overall national interest, but was used to settle the personal allowances and emoluments of the Parliamentarians – an action which was clearly illegal and fraudulent, hence the arrest of the Speaker of the House by the government's anti-graft agency, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). By the appropriate and elegant choice of one word, "outrage," *The Guardian* was clearly able, as it intended, to construct or represent a story of the anger, frustration and deep-seated animosity in the country where the political and economic elite were brazenly misappropriating the resources of the country while the vast majority of the people remained poor and embittered. The Lemu Panel Report (2011, op. cit.) established quite clearly that it is these kinds of brazen looting of the nation's resources that cause so much anger, frustration and bitterness among the masses of poor Nigerians – and frequently this rage boils over into political violence. In effect, therefore, *The Guardian's* headline news story of May 31, 2011 (as in many other instances) did not just convey a neutral news report but constructed a principled position for the newspaper and a moral indictment of the corrupt practices engaged in by the members of the House of Representatives and their leadership under Mr Bankole.

The travails of the Speaker of the House of Representatives and his deputy continued to attract the headlines on a regular basis, making the headline news at least eight times in that month of June 2011 alone (over 25% of the headline news for the month). Some of the other

subsequent headlines in *The Guardian* in June alone on Mr Bankole's corruption case included the following:

- “Court rejects bail bid, puts Bankole in Custody” (June 9, 2011)
- “New finds in the House, EFCC guards Bankole's deputy in hospital” (June 13, 2011)
- “Bankole gets bail, re-arrested” (June 14, 2011), etc.

The *Daily Trust* newspaper also focused attention on the corruption case of the Speaker of the House of Representatives. On June 6, 2011, *Daily Trust* also used the same news of the arrest of the Speaker, Mr Bankole, as its headline news. The newspaper's lead story was headlined: “Desperate last moves: to stop Tambuwal, Bankole arrested”. The news of the Speaker's corruption case also made the headline several times in the month of June 2011. For instance, on June 14, 2011, the headline read: “Bankole, Nafada charged with N38 billion fraud”. It is significant to note that Mr Bankole's political career did not survive the barrage of media attacks and negative publicity which fell on him as a result of the reported incident of corruption in the House of Representatives. In addition to being prosecuted by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, he subsequently lost his seat in the House of Representatives. His political career virtually came to an end, arguably aided by the quantum of critical reporting focused on the case an alert Nigerian independent press playing its watchdog role as enshrined in the Constitution (1999, Amended).

5.8.0 National versus regional differences in the performance of the watchdog role

However, in spite of the similarities in the quantum of news coverage between *The Guardian* and the *Daily Trust* on political violence and corruption, and their clear critical stance against these political and social problems in the country, there are a few noticeable differences in the news selection, choice of language, and the ideological/political stance portrayed by these newspapers which suggest a different performance of the watchdog role depending on the location and the ownership and control structures of the respective newspapers. In order to avoid bogging down the text of the thesis with a plethora of instances, just a few examples will suffice here to illustrate this point. When General David Mark, a Christian from the Middle Belt of Nigeria and a member of the ruling People's Democratic Party got re-elected as the Senate President in May 2011, the two newspapers took very different stances in their news headline reports of the event. *The Guardian*, based in Lagos (South West) and owned by

a Christian (Mr Alex Ibru), took a positive, factual stance to the news, reporting that “77 Senators Okay Mark for President,” which was more than the constitutional requirement of two-thirds of a total number of 109 Senators. On the other hand, the *Daily Trust*, located in Kaduna (North West) and published by a Muslim (Mallam Kabir Mohammed) cast a headline which read: “Senate Presidency: Mark rigs the rules”. By the use of the phrase, “Mark rigs the rules,” and the choice of just one word, “rigs,” the *Daily Trust* headline inputted political corruption on the part of the Senate President – that he “rigged” the rules by illegally amending the Standing Orders of the Senate to favour his re-election. This allegation was never sustained or proved and the election of General Mark as the Senate President stood until he completed his term in 2015. An editor of the *Daily Trust* newspaper who participated in the semi-structured interviews for this study (AA) reaffirmed the editorial policy of the newspaper as an independent, liberal newspaper without any political, tribal or religious leanings. The editor stressed that their reporting of social and political news, including the news of the elections, was objective and unbiased. But, despite the assurances of the editor, a few instances like the one cited above tend to support the notion that the *Daily Trust* occasionally leant towards the core Northern geo-political zone of Nigeria where it is based: a zone which is predominantly Muslim and was in massive opposition to the government of President Goodluck Jonathan – a Christian from the South. Indeed, the 2011 general election was largely a political confrontation between the Muslim North (represented by General Muhammadu Buhari, the then opposition leader) and the Christian South (represented by Dr Goodluck Jonathan, the then incumbent President of Nigeria). The fierce contest between the two politicians was the main cause of the political violence which marred the 2011 general election in Nigeria – as affirmed by the Lemu Panel of Inquiry (2011, op. cit.)

One other example will further help to illustrate the point of departure in the coverage of news of corruption between *The Guardian* and the *Daily Trust*. Although both newspapers made headline news of the corruption case of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Mr Bankole, their headlines appeared to be diametrically opposed on the same issue. On June 6, 2011, the front page headline news of *The Guardian* read simply: “EFCC arrests Bankole”. On the other hand, the *Daily Trust* gave it a dramatic but politically loaded twist:

“Desperate last moves: to stop Tambuwal, Bankole arrested (*Daily Trust*, June 6, 2011). While *The Guardian* reported the facts of the case: the arrest of the Honourable Speaker of the House of Representatives, Mr Dimeji Bankole, by the country’s anti-graft agency on

charges of corruption and embezzlement of public funds amounting to N38 billion (over 200 million pounds sterling then), the *Daily Trust* postulated that the arrest of the Speaker by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission was a “desperate move” by the ruling party to stop the emergence of a Northern opposition candidate, Mr Aminu Tambuwal, from emerging as the new Speaker of the House. Tambuwal comes from the same Northern geo-political zone and Muslim religious background as the Publisher of the *Daily Trust*, although the Publisher is not a known card-carrying member of the main opposition party that championed Mr Tambuwal’s political interests and ambitions. These examples cited above, and several other small but similar instances, seem to reinforce the reputation of *The Guardian* as the *flagship* of the Nigerian press, and the perception of the *Daily Trust* as the *mouthpiece* of the North. Indeed, as observed earlier, the fervent opposition of the Muslim North to the ruling party led by President Jonathan from the Christian South was the main trigger of the post-election violence which spread mayhem and anarchy in the country after the 2011 general elections won by President Jonathan.

5.8.1 Different performance of normative function

On its own part, *The Guardian* also showed a different performance of the watchdog role in its news selection and editorial judgement when it blacked out the major news of the indictment and imprisonment for corruption of a member of the family of its Publisher. Although it protests fiercely its liberality, objectivity and political neutrality, there was one notable departure, during the period under review, from the regular posture of *The Guardian* in how it reacted to the unravelling of the news of the corruption scandal involving one of the family members of the owners of the newspaper. On October 8, 2011, Mrs Cecilia Ibru, the Chief Executive Officer of a major commercial bank, and one of the most powerful women in Nigeria, was convicted on charges of corruption and embezzlement of public and stakeholders’ funds in the custody of the bank. This made headline news in most major Nigerian newspapers, including the *Daily Trust* – as did the prosecution and conviction of many other bank chief executives who led to the collapse of nearly a dozen major banks through the looting of depositors’ funds and the stripping of the assets of the banks. On the day Mrs Ibru was convicted and jailed, *The Guardian* deliberately elected to ignore the news completely. Reason: Mrs Ibru is a matriarch of the Ibru family, the wealthy Niger Delta

family in South-South Nigeria which owns a business empire spanning aviation, banking, shipping, automobile, hotels, media, etc. A line editor of *The Guardian* who participated in the semi-structured interviews (RC) witnessed the drama in *The Guardian's* head office in Lagos on the day in question. He confirmed that the management of *The Guardian* and the board of editors were in a deep quandary over how to handle the story of the imprisonment of Mrs Ibru for corruption.

I was there that day. It was not an easy decision. After a very long meeting, a decision was made to run the story, in line with *The Guardian's* avowed liberalism and objectivity as the flagship of the Nigerian press. But the instruction was to play down the story and tuck it somewhere in the inner pages of the newspaper. This seemed a convenient editorial compromise in a very delicate situation. However, later in the night, in the course of the production process of the newspaper for the next day, another instruction came to the editors to drop the story of Mrs Ibru's conviction and imprisonment completely from the newspaper – and this was done. (RC, 05/12/15)

However, despite these few incidents which suggest a different performance of the watchdog role of the press, *The Guardian*, which describes itself as the flagship of the Nigerian press and the Daily Trust, whose motto is Trust is a Burden, have generally maintained a strong agenda of critical reporting against the various socio-economic and political problems of Nigeria, especially the issues of political violence and corruption, as analysed in this Chapter, in line with their commitment to the performance of the watchdog role of the press and the fulfilment of the democratic function of the media.

5.9 Conclusion

This Chapter analysed the coverage of the themes of political violence and corruption which emerged as the dominant themes/subjects in the press during the 2011 general election in Nigeria – accounting for 30.6% and 15.1% respectively of total front page news headlines in

the two newspapers. (See Tables 3 and 4). The quantum of coverage of these two political and social problems is a clear indication of the high level of importance attached to these issues as critical problems which pose a clear and present threat to Nigeria's nascent democracy. Indeed, the quantum of coverage in the front page headline news devoted to the twin issues of official corruption and political violence is even more remarkable when viewed in the context of a general election period when various electoral issues like campaign messages, national development issues, economic reforms, heated ideological debates, party manifestos and sundry political rhetoric would reasonably be expected to dominate the news headlines in the press. This section of the thesis also analysed the choice of language used by the newspapers in the construction of their front page news headlines during the period under review, as well as the political stance and ideological positions they may have portrayed in the way and manner they constructed their news headlines on the subjects of political violence and corruption, focusing on specific examples of major incidents of political violence and corruption reported by the two newspapers during the period under review. The study identified a lot of similarities and a few differences in the construction and presentation of the news of corruption and political violence by the two newspapers. In a few cases, these differences tended to confirm the more liberal and objective quality of *The Guardian*, which describes itself as "the flagship of the Nigerian press," while some of these differences in news representation also tended to reinforce the public perception of the regional tabloid, the *Daily Trust*, as "the mouthpiece of the North". From the foregoing, it could be argued that both *The Guardian* and the *Daily Trust* are sympathetic to the causes of the South and the North respectively – and these causes are fundamentally political. However, in my opinion, this does not seem to undermine their ability to perform their normative functions – as will be further demonstrated later in the Critical Discourse Analysis of the editorial opinions of the two newspapers in the next Chapter. While news coverage is generally reportorial and factual, the editorial opinions, on the other hand, convey the actual official position and stance of the newspapers on the issues which they have addressed in the said editorials. It is, therefore, more appropriate to evaluate the official position and general stance of a newspaper from a qualitative analysis of its editorial opinions than from an assessment of its headline news coverage – although the former could also offer some tentative insights into positions and attitudes as illustrated above.

Overall, in spite of the few differences in their news coverage, it could be seen that during the period under review, the two newspapers, *The Guardian* and the *Daily Trust*, played a very critical role in providing a large amount of news coverage to the twin political and social evils of political violence and corruption, thereby keeping them on the front burner of national discourse and drawing public attention to these issues. The two newspapers showed clearly that they took the political stance and the ideological position that political violence and corruption constituted a clear and present danger to Nigeria's nascent democracy and the security and development of the nation. By so doing, despite the observed limitations, these two independent newspapers are clearly performing creditably the constitutional role of the Nigerian press as the watchdogs of the society and the facilitators of democracy and good governance – especially in the context of Nigeria as an emerging democracy in Africa.

As noted earlier in the Literature Review (Chapter 3), media scholars have done some considerable work on establishing the role of the press in sustaining Nigeria's nascent democracy. Adesoji (2010) conducted an analysis of the press coverage of corruption and the anti-corruption war since Nigeria's return to democracy (1999-2009). He observed that like it was in the press coverage of elections and related issues, the press coverage of corruption among political office holders was remarkable. He observed that the press supported the efforts of the government to tackle corruption in the country, especially with the establishment of the two key anti-graft agencies, the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), although some sections of the press were also showing apathy to the war against corruption (Adesoji, *op. cit.*, pp.27-29). My findings corroborate Adesoji's findings on the support of the press in waging the war against corruption in Nigeria since the country's return to democracy, especially the independent press. However, given the fact that Adesoji's study was conducted more than six years ago, covering the period between 1999 and 2009, and included both the private media and the public media organizations, my current study updates and adds more detail and fresh insights to the role of the press in waging the war against corruption and political violence in Nigeria, with specific reference to the independent press which is the focus of my study. In his evaluation of the press coverage of Nigeria's 2007 general elections, Adesoji also observed that the problematic nature of the elections generated so much heat which dominated the discourse in the press. Indeed, the issue of insecurity and political violence which Adesoji observed in the 2007 general election formed a major plank

of my study on the press coverage of the subsequent 2011 general election in Nigeria – which was marred by electoral and political violence on a much wider scale than the 2007 general election studied by Adesoji.

Overall, the existing literature on the role of the press in Nigeria indicates that the Nigerian press has remained a critical and positive partner in sustaining Nigeria's democracy since the country's transition from military dictatorship to civil rule in 1999. Adesoji (2010, *op. cit*) observed that the Nigerian press has remained “an important stakeholder in the process of nation-building in general and the entrenchment of democratic rule in particular”. He notes that the resilience of the Nigerian press has “marked it out as an important pillar of democracy, (and) also prepared it for the roles it is playing in the era of constitutional democracy.” (Adesoji, 2010, p.23) The findings of this Chapter affirm Adesoji's thesis that the Nigerian Press has remained an active and critical partner in sustaining Nigeria's democratic experiment, especially since the return of the country to constitutional rule in 1999. However, there is also a marked point of departure between Adesoji's methods and conclusions and my findings. Rather than the broad sweep which Adesoji took in his paper reviewing the role of the press since the return to democratic rule in 1999, my study focuses on a specific period and a specific event, the 2011 general election in the country, and the coverage of some specific issues (official corruption and political violence) during the period of that electoral cycle. This close study of a specific event and on how the press constructed the news of some specific issues during that specific period gives more insights into the activities and the behaviour of the press and their representation of the specific issues of official corruption and political violence during the period under review. My study also provides an update on literature as well as on the issues covered and the findings made by some of these earlier studies – most of which were made between five years and 15 years ago. As will be explored more fully in the next chapter (Chapter 7), my findings also indicate that the vibrant, liberal and fiercely autonomous Nigerian independent press, which, in the performance of its watchdog role fears neither individuals nor governments – military or democratic – is a different animal altogether from the subservient, government press observed by some African scholars like Mchakulu and Amoakohene (*op. cit.*) in some other countries and emerging democracies in Africa.

As indicated earlier, the next Chapter (6) provides a more qualitative examination (Critical Discourse Analysis) of the editorial opinions of the newspapers on the twin social evils of

political violence and official corruption, the nexus between them and the options for public policy to tackle these problems which undermine Nigeria's democratisation process.

CHAPTER 6

ANALYSIS OF EDITORIAL OPINIONS

6.0 Introduction

This Chapter uses the qualitative method of Critical Discourse Analysis to evaluate the editorial opinions on political violence and official corruption in Nigeria in the two selected newspapers, *The Guardian* and *Daily Trust*, during the period of the 2011 general election in the country. The analysis in Chapter 5 has already identified political violence and corruption as the two dominant themes in the press coverage of front page news headlines during the period of the 2011 general election in Nigeria. This trend is replicated in the editorial opinions as the newspapers analyse, comment and offer their opinions on the major issues they have already reported in the news headlines. Taken together with the earlier Chapter 5, this analysis seeks to test whether the Nigerian press is fulfilling the democratic role of the media as enshrined in the Nigerian Constitution (1999, Amended). Accordingly, the chapter examines how these newspapers construct and represent news of corruption and political violence in their editorial opinions and the official positions they take on those issues in line with the modified Liberal Media Theory (Watchdog Model) which is the main theoretical framework adopted for this study.

6.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

As indicated earlier in the Methodology Chapter, this section of the study analyses the language and themes of the editorial opinions of the two newspapers. The analysis aims to reveal the socio-cultural, political and ideological characteristics and positions of the two newspapers – and to provide some insights into the social context of Nigeria in which the discourse is embedded. The analysis explores the use of language by the newspapers to convey ideological and socio-political power relations and positions, especially positions which denote class, religion, power and powerlessness, us and them, among others, on one hand, and also how the press uses language to challenge or resist the political elite's abuse of power as manifested in their involvement in official corruption and political violence.

The analysis is situated at the macro-level and deals not with issues relating to the production and consumption of the editorial opinions, but with elements in the text and their relationship with the broad, socio-cultural and political issues in the context of the country, Nigeria. This analysis of the language of the written text of the editorials enables one not only to appreciate deeply the manifest meanings of the language used in the text but also to unravel the immanent meaning of the language deployed in the texts of the editorials. The analysis aims to produce insights into the manner in which the Nigerian independent newspapers use their editorial opinions to challenge and resist (or to support and promote) social and political inequality, power abuse or domination, as manifested in electoral crises, political violence and official corruption among others. In analysing the editorial opinions of the newspapers, this chapter focuses on the themes of the editorial opinions and the lexical choices made in the language used in constructing the editorials to make positive or negative commentaries on the subjects of the said editorials. Accordingly, the discussion in this section focuses on an analysis of the linguistic descriptions, style, rhetoric and meaning of the key expressions employed in the editorials, as well as an examination of the relations between the text (discourse) of the editorial opinions and the context of Nigeria's socio-cultural, economic and political environment as depicted in this study. This analysis helps to tie the nexus between the texts of the editorials and the context of Nigeria's challenges with electoral crises, political violence and official corruption.

Overall, as indicated in the preceding chapter, political violence and official corruption were the most dominant issues which featured in the headline news coverage of the two newspapers in during the period of the 2011 general election. Given this dominant coverage accorded to political violence and corruption in the news, as reflected in the lives of the people, it is safe to assume that certain stereotypes and opinions might have been developed about the socio-cultural attitudes and behaviours of Nigerians in general, and of Nigerian politics and politicians in particular. These stereotypes may have developed into ideologies which not only influence the reporting of news and events but also the construction of editorial opinions of the independent newspapers in Nigeria. The analysis of the editorial opinions of the two newspapers aims to identify some similarities and differences in the depiction of these social issues of corruption and political violence in the editorial opinions of

the two newspapers, especially with regard to the role of Nigerian politicians and the ruling elite in these two critical issues which threaten the country's democratic development.

The analysis is based on Van Dijk's Ideological Square and the theory of semantic macrostructures. A comparative analysis of the editorial opinions of the two newspapers on corruption and political violence would offer some insights into the ideological leanings and positions of the newspapers, as well as an understanding of the ideological make-up of the editorial opinions. The analysis also seeks to shed some light on how the media and the public view Nigeria's fight against corruption and political violence – given the role of the media in the representation of societal values and perceptions. Accordingly, in analysing the editorial opinions of the two newspapers, the thesis examines the following: a. The differences and the similarities in the Macro-propositions and Global Structures; and b. The differences and similarities in local meanings, lexical style and rhetoric in the sample editorials. The limited scope of this chapter allows only the use of discourse analysis to analyse the texts of the editorial opinions and does not include detailed quantitative or qualitative analyses.

The selection of Critical Discourse Analysis is appropriate in helping to offer evidence to answer RQ2: How are events, incidents, actors and policies relating to political violence and official corruption portrayed in these newspapers in their editorial opinions and what does this say about the performance of the political function of the Nigerian press?

RQ3: Are there any significant differences in the portrayal of these events, incidents, actors and policies by these two newspapers? And RQ4: What policy recommendations are advanced by the two newspapers on the key themes of political violence and official corruption which impact negatively on the country's democratisation process?

6.2 Presentation of data

Using 10 themes reconstructed from van Dijk's Ideological Square, which convey ideological positions, power relations, class, Us and Them, threat, violence and irrationality, among others, an analysis of 24 pre-selected editorials of the two newspapers showed some significant results on how the two newspapers used language to convey some social norms, power relations and political or ideological positions not just in the editorial opinions of the particular newspapers but within the wider context of Nigeria (See Table 8). Two editorial

opinions (one from each newspaper) are also analysed in depth to show specific instances of the use of Semantic Macrostructures to convey latent meanings and ideological positions in the editorial opinions of the newspapers on the theme of political violence.

Table 8 The Newspapers' Editorials

Themes	Newspaper Name				Total	
	Daily Trust		The Guardian			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Targeted class action	1	8.33	-	-	1	4.17
Policy action & recommendation	3	25	3	25	6	25
Political violence as threat to security	1	8.33	-	-	1	4.17
Political violence as terrorism	1	8.33	4	33.33	5	20.83
Ethnic clashes fuel political violence	3	25	-	-	3	12.5
Political violence as crime	1	8.33	-	-	1	4.17
Security agencies cause political violence	1	8.33	2	16.67	3	12.5
Political violence as irrational	1	8.33	-	-	1	4.17
Religion (Islam) as threat to security	-	-	2	16.67	2	8.33
Labour unions fuel political violence	-	-	1	8.33	1	4.17
Total	12	100.0	12	100.0	24	100.0
		%		%		%

From the data, political violence as a targeted class action occurred once (1) in the *Daily Trust* but did not occur in *The Guardian*. Policy action and recommendation occurred three

times (3) in both the *Daily Trust* and *The Guardian*, accounting for a total of 25% of total occurrences; political violence as threat to security occurred once (1) in the *Daily Trust* (8.33%) while *The Guardian*, which was more unequivocal, preferred to refer to political violence as terrorism, four times (33.33%); the *Daily Trust* also portrayed political violence as a crime (8.33%); both newspapers also assert that security agencies cause political violence (*Daily Trust*, 8.33%; *The Guardian*, 16.67%); the *Daily Trust* described political violence as irrational (8.33%) while *The Guardian* suggested that fundamentalist Islam was a threat to national security (8.33%). *The Guardian* also claimed that labour unions fuel political violence, under the manipulation of politicians (8.33%).

6.3.0 Application of Semantic Macrostructures to decode latent meanings

One of the key thematic areas in which the two newspapers showed a great deal of similarity as well as differences in their editorial positions was on the delicate issue of the role of the national security agencies in the perpetration of political violence in Nigeria. In this subsection, I will apply Van Dijk's theory of Semantic Macrostructures to decode some latent meanings in the texts of two editorial opinions done by the two newspapers on the sustained attacks by the security agencies on the Boko Haram insurgents who have been identified in earlier chapters as one of the major sources of political violence in Nigeria within the last 10 years.

Analysis 1: *Daily Trust* newspaper

Editorial Caption: Hunt for Boko Haram is no licence to kill

Date of Publication: 14 July, 2011, p.31

Semantic Macroproposition

The highly evocative heading of the *Daily Trust* editorial, *Hunt for Boko Haram is no licence to kill*, summarises the newspaper's opinion and gives the reader a clear idea of what the opinion article is all about. The newspaper implies that the government's on-going war on terrorism is being wrongly and wantonly prosecuted by hunting down the Boko Haram insurgents – like wild animals being pursued for the kill by vicious predators.

The lead paragraph of the editorial opinion, which provides more information on the theme of the opinion piece, says as follows: “There is no question that the deteriorating security situation in Maiduguri, the Borno state capital, calls for urgent and decisive action on the part of the Federal government. But from reports that soldiers deployed there for internal security operation have been breaking into homes and shooting adult males at random, this is not the kind of action that would bring the situation under control. There are also credible reports of soldiers setting fire to buildings and vehicles in the name of the hunt for suspected Boko Haram members blamed for the spate of deadly explosions in the city. The objective of the operation is not helped when the same reports suggest that the Joint Task Force (JTF) members went on what looked like a retaliatory mission to avenge the killing of a soldier and wounding of others when a device exploded near an army roadblock a few days earlier. The Spokesman of the JTF, Colonel Victor Ebhaleme, denied that the army engaged in any untoward activity, asserting instead that explosive devices placed by the Boko Haram members had caused the fires in the buildings”.

The title of the *Daily Trust* editorial opinion and the lead paragraph have provided the answers to the important questions in news and editorial opinion writing: the *what*, *who*, *where* and *why*. The *what* is the main theme of the article, which is the government’s on-going war against Boko Haram insurgency. The *who* are the main actors in the event referred to by the article: the members of the Federal Government’s security agency, the Joint Military Task Force (JTF), as well as the Boko Haram insurgents. The *where* is Maiduguri, the Borno State capital (North East Nigeria), which is the hotbed of the Boko Haram insurgency. The *why*, which is the *reason* for the current “urgent and decisive action”, is identified as “the deteriorating security situation in Maiduguri, the Borno state capital”.

The title of the editorial opinion is clearly implying that the Federal Government and its security agencies are high-handed in the prosecution of the war against terror in the North east of Nigeria. By the use of the emotive word “hunt”, the *Daily Trust* is implicitly saying that the Federal Government and its security agencies regard the Boko Haram insurgents as wild animals to be hunted down and exterminated, rather than mere “suspects” who should normally be presumed innocent until proven otherwise in a competent court of law.

The caption of the editorial opinion, “Hunt for Boko Haram is no licence to kill,” is not merely a title but is in itself an editorial commentary or evaluation. Through the careful

structuring of the title of the editorial opinion, combined with the semantic choices in the lead paragraph, the *Daily Trust* newspaper clearly lets the readers know that it does not support the modus operandi of the prosecution of the Federal Government's war against terror in the North East.

The *Daily Trust* newspaper clearly considers that the manner in which the federal Government is prosecuting the war against terror in the North East is reckless and unreasonable and based on excessive use of force.

Local Meaning

As Van Dijk (1988) points out, the Local Meaning of a text constitutes its microstructure, consisting of the meanings, word groups, clauses, sentences and sentence connections. The local meaning collectively forms the macroproposition and should give a clearer understanding of the heading or main topic of the text. To analyse this editorial further and understand it better, it is pertinent to look at the structure, the writing style and the linguistic and rhetorical elements of the text in order to get a broader understanding of the latent meanings of the editorial. The main participants depicted in this editorial opinion are the soldiers attached to the Federal Government's military Joint Task Force (JTF) and the members of the Boko Haram insurgents waging a terror war in Nigeria. These clearly identified participant-actors in the saga in the North East of Nigeria help lend credence and authenticity to the views canvassed by *Daily Trust* in the editorial opinion.

To reflect editorial balance to the reports which suggested that soldiers were raiding homes and shooting adult males at random, and setting their houses and vehicles on fire, the *Daily Trust* quoted a statement by the JTF Spokesman, Col. Victor Ebhaleme, who denied the reports and asserted that the army did not engage in any untoward activity. This gives the reader the impression that the editorial opinion is balanced, fair and objective – and is authoritative – given the fact that it reflects the opinion of the relevant authorities. However, the newspaper did not adduce any further information, facts or opinions to counter the assertion of the JTF Spokesman but continued in the same manner it started out by indicting the JTF and the government authorities through its choice of words and images.

The editorial uses very strong words and imagery to depict the soldiers and federal security agents of the JTF, while using euphemisms to describe the Boko Haram activities of

bombings and mass murders, which the Federal Government authorities, the international community and other independent newspapers like *The Guardian* have described unequivocally as *terrorism*. For instance, while implying very clearly that the soldiers were acting with great impunity and recklessness, as if they have a “licence to kill”; and were “stabbing in the dark and drawing the blood of law abiding citizens,” among others, the newspaper selects milder words and expressions to portray the Boko Haram insurgents.

The *Daily Trust* does not use the word terror, terrorists or terrorism even once in the entire editorial opinion. On the contrary, the newspaper uses expressions like Boko Haram “sect members”; Boko Haram “problem,” Boko Haram “threats”, Boko Haram “hysteria”, etc. to describe the clear and present danger posed by Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria and neighbouring countries like Cameroun and Chad in the last few years. This soft approach in depicting the Boko Haram terrorists, and the use of very harsh images of hunters, predators, betrayers and back-stabbers to portray the government’s security agents fighting the terrorists shows that the newspaper is clearly biased against the government and the security agencies – and tends to favour the Boko Haram terrorists in its ideological positioning. This ideological leaning by *Daily Trust* towards the Boko Haram religious fundamentalists and insurgents may not be unconnected with the fact that the newspaper is owned and published by proprietors in Northern Nigeria – the same geo-political and cultural location as the Boko Haram insurgents.

From the editorial opinion article we can begin to identify at least three groups: the in-group (the good guys) represented by the ordinary people of Borno State, Nigeria, who are the victims of both insurgency and military brutality; the bad guys, represented by the Boko Haram “suspects”; and the really bad guys (represented by the soldiers and members of the military Joint Task Force who are said to be hunting down and killing the Boko Haram suspects. The *Daily Trust* newspaper is implicitly portraying the soldiers as unreasonable and brutal. The newspaper is also clearly indicting the Nigerian Federal Government for derailing in its fight against terrorism by unleashing terror on hapless citizens through the wanton killing of adult males in Maiduguri and the burning of their vehicles and houses.

All these point to the newspaper’s belief that the war against terror was a political gimmick by the government of President Goodluck Jonathan, a Southern Christian, to humiliate and subdue the Northern Muslim geo-political zone of the country in order to consolidate his hold on power.

Global Superstructure

The Global Superstructure refers to the overall architecture of the text in question, which is the *Daily Trust* editorial opinion. As indicated earlier, the title of the editorial opinion, in combination with the lead paragraph, provided the answers to the key elements in the construction of the editorial opinion. These include the following elements:

What – The government’s on-going war against Boko Haram insurgency

Who – The main actors in the event, the members of the Federal Government’s Joint Military Task Force (JTF): soldiers breaking into homes and shooting adult males at random, soldiers setting fire to buildings and vehicles in the hunt for Boko Haram insurgents

Where – Maiduguri, the Borno State capital (North East Nigeria)

Why – The *reason* for the current action is identified as “the deteriorating security situation in Maiduguri, the Borno state capital”.

When – The editorial opinion did not state when these events it alluded to occurred – and did not cite the sources of the “reports” it referred to. These omissions leave some gaps – and question marks – in the construction of the superstructure of the editorial article.

Overall, the Macro-proposition of this editorial opinion, the notion of federal security agencies as perpetrators of political violence, underscores the unequal and troubled power relations between the Nigerian civilian populace on one hand, and the armed forces, the police, the secret services and the other security agencies on the other hand – and the Boko Haram insurgents in between them. In this editorial titled: “*Hunt for Boko Haram is no licence to kill*”, the *Daily Trust* newspaper clearly indicted the nation’s armed forces and security agencies on reported cases of extra-judicial killing of innocent, unarmed persons in Northern Nigeria under the guise of the “hunt for Boko Haram” insurgents. The use of the metaphor of a “hunt” depicts the insurgents as wild animals who are being hunted down for the kill by blood-thirsty security agencies, rather than criminal suspects who should be arrested and prosecuted according to the laws of the land. This view is consistent with the law and order approach apparently adopted by the newspaper with respect to terrorism and political violence. The phrase, “licence to kill,” is apparently borrowed from popular culture, arguably made more famous over the years by the thriller novels of Mr Ian Fleming, the

British author and journalist (1908-1964), whose fictional character, James Bond (007), a secret service agent, is alleged by the narrative of the novels to have a “licence to kill”. Even before one reads the editorial itself, with the choice of the powerful, evocative phrase of the title, “Hunt for Boko Haram is no licence to kill,” the *Daily Trust* clearly depicts an imagery of the impunity and lawlessness of some of Nigeria’s soldiers and security operatives who may be contributing in fuelling political violence in the country through extra-judicial killings. This view of Nigeria’s soldiers and security agencies as major sources of violence and extra-judicial killing is shared by *The Guardian* as shall be seen in the analysis of the next editorial opinion.

Analysis 2: *The Guardian* newspaper

Editorial Caption: Terrorism and national security

Date of Publication: 16 September, 2011, p.14

Semantic Macroproposition

The heading of *The Guardian* editorial, *Terrorism and national security*, summarises the newspaper’s opinion and also gives the reader a clear idea of what the opinion article is all about. The newspaper clearly identifies the problem by its name, terrorism, without beating about the bush, and implies immediately, right from the title, that terrorism is a serious national security issue in Nigeria.

The lead paragraph of the editorial opinion provides more information on the theme of the opinion piece. It says as follows: “Recent pieces of official information on the wave of bomb attacks on public buildings and persons in the country are highly illuminating of the nation’s lack of preparedness to counter terrorism. Indeed, the spate of bombings took the nation unawares; and it is bad enough that security agencies could not properly utilise the hints they had of one of the attacks before it took place. It is worse when they embark on panic measures that may complicate security issues in the future”.

The title of *The Guardian* newspaper editorial opinion and the lead paragraph answer the important questions in news and editorial opinion writing: the *what, who, where* and *why*. The *what* is the main theme of the article, which is the issue of terrorism and national security in Nigeria – and the government’s lack of preparedness in fighting terrorism.

The *who* are the main actors in the event referred to by the editorial opinion article: the members of the Federal Government's security agencies and the Boko Haram insurgents. The *where* is the country as a whole, with the insurgents targeting public buildings and persons in various parts of the country. The *why*, which is the *reason* for the newspaper's call for action, is the recent "wave of bomb attacks on public buildings and persons in the country".

Although the title of the editorial opinion is just a plain statement, "Terrorism and national security," which does not attach any clear ideological interpretation or position to the heading, the lead paragraph fills in the gap with more information and moral evaluation. The lead paragraph indicates very clearly that the government's "lack of preparedness to counter terrorism" is so bad that the security agencies could not even properly utilise hints they had about one of the bomb attacks before it took place. The newspaper is clearly implying that the Federal Government and its security agencies are grossly incompetent in their handling of the critical issue of terrorism which was grievously undermining the country's national security.

Local Meaning

To analyse this editorial further and understand it better, it is pertinent to look at the structure, the writing style and the linguistic and rhetorical elements of the text in order to get a broader understanding of its latent meanings. The main actors depicted in this editorial opinion are the Federal Government authorities and security agencies as well as the members of the Boko Haram insurgents. These clearly identified participant-actors in the terrorism war going on in Nigeria help to lend credence and authenticity to the views canvassed by *The Guardian* in the editorial opinion. Unlike the *Daily Trust* editorial analysed earlier, *The Guardian* editorial clearly identified and named the problem as terrorism – and also clearly identified the Boko Haram sect as responsible for the recent wave of bomb attacks on public buildings and persons in the country – which has created great concern among Nigerians. The newspaper observes as follows: "That the country is fairly under the siege of bombers is already an accepted fact. Unabashedly, the Boko Haram sect has claimed responsibility for most of the attacks".

To give authenticity and authority to its views on the lack of preparedness in the prosecution of the war against terrorism in Nigeria, the newspaper quotes the then National Security Adviser, General Andrew Azazi, as saying that the country was "not prepared for the current level of terrorism," and that "it would take a while for the nation's security formations to be

on top of the situation”. *The Guardian* asserts that the late Al Qaeda leader, Osama Bin Laden, reportedly said some years ago that Nigeria was ripe for an Islamic revolution. The newspaper asserts, therefore, that given these ominous warnings from the Al Qaeda and its affiliates about an impending Islamic revolution in Nigeria, which was now manifesting in a wave of terrorist bombings by Boko Haram, the editorial indicts the government authorities for their lack of preparedness and due diligence in the prosecution of the war against terror in Nigeria. “The claim of unpreparedness is characteristic of negligence, even irresponsibility, of successive governments in the country”.

Through its choice of words and images, *The Guardian* also clearly indicts the Boko Haram sect for the recent wave of bombings in the country, most of which it has “unabashedly” claimed responsibility for.

Global Superstructure

The construction of *The Guardian* editorial follows a similar structure as that of the *Daily Trust* in its Global Superstructure. As indicated earlier, the title of the editorial opinion, in combination with the lead paragraph, provided the answers to the key elements in the construction of the editorial opinion. These include the following elements:

What – The government’s lack of preparedness in fighting terrorism – a major issue of national security

Who – The main actors identified in the editorial opinion: the Federal Government and its security agencies; the National Security Adviser, General Andrew Azazi; the late Al Qaeda leader, Osama Bin Laden; and members of the Boko Haram sect.

Why – The *reason* for the current action is identified as the recent “wave of bomb attacks on public buildings and persons in the country”.

Where – In different parts of the country.

When – The editorial opinion did not state specifically when these waves of bomb attacks occurred but hinted at the time-frame by qualifying the occurrences as “recent”. The missing information about the actual dates of some of these waves of bomb attacks could have further amplified the editorial opinion and put it in more proper historical context.

Overall, *The Guardian's* editorial opinion presents a much more balanced commentary which, by its choice of words, imagery and rhetoric, indicts both the Boko Haram sect for the recent wave of terrorism in the country, and the Federal Government for its lack of preparedness and political will to fight the scourge of terrorism in the country. The editorial opinion is not skewed heavily in favour of either the Federal Government and its security agencies – or the Boko Haram sect and its adherents.

In conclusion, *The Guardian* noted that the issue of militancy by non-state actors had long gained currency in security sector discourses, even before the September 11, 2001 bombing of the Twin Towers in New York, USA. “Therefore, it became clear to many analysts and stakeholders that issues of security in the new century would be largely determined by non-state actors. The simple truth is that governments in these parts are rarely proactive, and also have been blinded by political definition of who the enemy is. This is a problem we need to overcome if the country is ever to unravel its security challenges”.

6.3.1 Discussion of other key themes / macropropositions in the editorial opinions on political violence

In lieu of doing more detailed analysis of over a dozen other pre-selected editorial opinion articles from the two newspapers, which would extend beyond the limited scope of this chapter, I will examine only the headings / titles of the remaining editorial opinions and identify the main themes / macro-propositions underlying the meanings and ideological leanings of the newspapers' opinions.

6.3.2 Political violence as terrorism and threat to national security

Through the representation of their editorial opinions on the bombing of the Nigeria Police Headquarters in Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory (June 16, 2011) and the United Nations House, also in Abuja (August 26, 2011), the two newspapers further demonstrated their aversion to terrorism and political violence and their support to the efforts of the government in waging the war against terror. *The Guardian's* editorial opinion on the terror attack, which claimed numerous casualties (actual figures unknown), was sombrely titled: “The explosion at

Abuja police headquarters” (*The Guardian*, June 27, 2011, p.16). In its editorial opinion on the terrorism attack on the UN House, *The Guardian* observed that because of the failure of leaders in the Northern states of Nigeria (the origin of the Boko Haram terrorists and religious fundamentalists) to provide western education to their populace, many of the youths become “willing tools for political manipulators and religious fundamentalists” (*The Guardian*, June 27, 2011, op. cit., p.16.) In very strong language, the newspaper asserts that the youths in the Northern states of Nigeria, the base of the Boko Haram insurgents, readily become “willing tools for political manipulators and religious fundamentalists”. This phrase clearly portrays the unequal power relations between the jobless, uneducated youths in Northern Nigeria who are at the mercy of the ruthless “political manipulators and religious fundamentalists” who use them to carry out suicide bombing and mass murders. The phrase, “political manipulators and religious fundamentalists” also conveys the belief of the newspaper – and the wider view of the Government of Nigeria that the violent insurgency going on in Nigeria is not just a manifestation of religious fundamentalism but was also being orchestrated by “political manipulators”. This view is confirmed by the Lemu Panel of Inquiry Report (2011, op. cit.).

Indeed, the bombing of the Nigeria Police Headquarters in June 2011 and the UN House in Abuja in August 2011, within two months of each other, no doubt represented two of the most significant and most tragic manifestations of political violence-cum terrorism during the period under review, which further allowed the independent press to construct a strong standpoint on the issue of terrorism and political violence in the country. The massive suicide bomb attack on the Nigeria Police Headquarters in Abuja on June 16, 2011, was claimed by the terrorist group, *Boko Haram*, which has been waging a religious and political war in Nigeria to Islamize the country and create a Muslim caliphate. The attack came just two days after the Inspector General of Police, Mr Hafiz Ringim, reportedly declared that the days of *Boko Haram* sect were numbered. Indeed, on Wednesday, June 15, 2011, the press was awash with news headlines announcing the declaration of the Inspector General of Police (IG) the previous day (Tuesday) to the effect that the Boko Haram insurgency was virtually over in Nigeria. The bold, front page headline of the *Daily Trust* newspaper was “IG: Boko Haram’s days are numbered”. (*Daily Trust*, June 15, 2011, p.1) The Boko Haram terrorists struck his office, the Nigeria Police Headquarters, two days after his statement, on Thursday, June 17, 2011. The police boss barely escaped death in the spiteful attack on his office building. In the editorial, the newspaper observes that: “The bombing of the Nigeria Police Headquarters in

Abuja signifies more than the terror and destruction of human lives and property that accompanied it. It underscores an alarming depth of the state's failure, which can only be reversed through a complete re-orientation to governance". (*The Guardian*, op. cit, p.16.) In the construction of its editorial position on the terror attack at the headquarters of the Nigeria Police Force, *The Guardian* portrayed the incident as indicative of "an alarming depth of the state's failure". The newspaper thus indicted the Nigerian nation state as having "failed" in its bounden duty to protect the lives and property of the citizens against such brazen "terror and destruction of human lives and property". (Ibid) Beyond the law and order approach, *The Guardian* saw the rising wave of terror in Nigeria as a failure of governance in the country over the years. The newspaper argued that granted that terrorism was a global phenomenon; Nigeria's situation was more a manifestation of the protracted absence of governance in the past years, which would explain why terrorism was rising in Nigeria while it was declining in the better organized countries. *The Guardian* observed that because of the failure of leaders in the Northern states of Nigeria to provide western education to their populace, many of the youths become "willing tools for political manipulators and religious fundamentalists" (*The Guardian*, op. cit., p.16.)

The newspaper noted that situation in the South of the country was similar, with many educated youths graduating into the unemployment market – and also becoming easy recruits into robbery, kidnapping, cybercrime and sundry nefarious activities. (Ibid)

Religious fundamentalism as threat to national security

Unlike the *Daily Trust*, *The Guardian* specifically identified Islamic fundamentalism as the major source of the religious insurgency in Nigeria which had spiralled into terrorism. In its editorial titled "Softly, Softly, Kwankwaso on Shari'a" (July 7, 2011, p.14) the newspaper urged the then Governor of Kano State (North West), Dr Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso, to tread "softly" on his views about the implementation Shari'a (Islamic) laws in some parts of the country – in order to avoid fuelling political violence.

Political violence as class action, irrational

Daily Trust also used the theme of political violence as a class action. In the editorial titled: "Targeted attacks on youth corps members" (May 04, 2011), the newspaper condemned a

Boko Haram attack on members of the National Youths Service Corps (NYSC), a youths mobilization service scheme for fresh university graduates. With the phrase, “targeted attacks on youth corps members,” the newspaper conveyed the fearful message that the religious insurgents were deliberately targeting and killing the youths – thus seeking to decimate the future leaders of the country. Similarly, in the editorial, “A senseless and cowardly attack,” The *Daily Trust* portrayed political violence as irrational (“senseless”) and cowardly. Indeed, anyone of group of persons who would attack and kill innocent school children, unarmed men and women and bomb marketplaces, schools, churches, bus stations, police stations and offices of international development and humanitarian organizations would be anything but rational. However, it could be argued that while the Daily Trust took refuge in deploying various sub-themes and expressions to classify the various incidents of terrorism and political violence perpetrated by the Boko Haram sect and their sponsors, without calling them terrorists (8.33%), The Guardian was unequivocal in identifying the group as terrorists – and their violent attacks as terrorism (33.3%). In mediating political violence, the two newspapers also went beyond criticisms to focus also on the themes of policy and action in punishing the irrational purveyors of political violence and tackling the problem of violence in Nigeria. From the analysis shown in the tables of editorial opinions, the theme of policy action and recommendation was the only theme on which the two newspapers achieved parity in number of times it occurred (three times each) during the period, accounting for a total of 25% of the total coverage. In its editorial on the bombing of the UN House, the *Daily Trust* (August 29, 2011) endorsed the following thematic policy action:

The government should define and fashion out a clear response to the horrible attack. The government should establish a positive identity of all persons behind the attack and other recent such attacks, and establish their motives – political or otherwise. Whatever group, whether Boko Haram or some other persons, are found to be behind the bombing of the UN House should be exposed and the authorities should not hesitate to take all necessary measures to restore order, stability and security of lives and property throughout the country. (p.31)

Through the appropriate choice of words, the newspaper urged the government to “expose” whatever group or groups were found to be behind the bombing in the country. By the use of

the phrase, “whatever group or persons” found to be behind the bombing, and the word, should be “exposed”, the newspaper casts doubt on the widely held notion that the Islamist insurgency group, Boko Haram, was behind the high profile bombing of the UN House and the Nigeria Police Headquarters. The newspaper conveys the meaning that the persons, group or groups behind the bombing in the country were clandestine, faceless groups whose identities had not yet been fully established.

All the same, the newspaper emphasized the need for the government and its authorities to “take all necessary measures to restore order, stability and security of lives and property throughout the country. (Daily Trust, August 29, 2011, p.31) Overall, the Daily Trust emphasized the law and order approach to curbing political violence in the country and suggested that the law enforcement agencies and the judiciary should wake up to their responsibilities. The newspaper observed the failure by the government and its agencies to punish offenders of previous cases of political violence in Nigeria was responsible for some of the recurring cases of political violence in the country. The newspaper concludes that: “It behoves the law enforcement agencies and the judiciary to do what the public expects of them, namely to ensure that perpetrators of violence and their sponsors are prosecuted and punished according to the law...” (*Daily Trust*, op. cit.). In effect, therefore, the newspaper is again criticising the government authorities, the law enforcement agencies and the judiciary for lack of seriousness in prosecuting the war against terror and suggesting that much of the political violence in the country was actually instigated and funded by unnamed “sponsors” – apparently referring to politicians and other members of the social, economic and political power elite who are believed to sponsor violence in the country in order to achieve their selfish purposes (Ibid.). The significance of the law and order approach here is that the newspaper is constructing a position that if the government and the security agencies “wake up to the responsibilities” of maintaining law and order and ensuring good governance, terrorism and political violence would abate in the country.

The Guardian, through its choice of words, implied that the government had failed woefully in discharging its duties and responsibilities to protect the lives and property of the citizenry. Accordingly, the newspaper also made various policy recommendations, among others, on how to curb terrorism and political violence in the country, which it described as manifestations of “the failure of government” – a government which has “lost its soul”. (*The*

Guardian, June 27, 2011, p.16.) This conveys a clear indictment of the government and its agencies for their failure to provide good governance and to secure the nation.

More than anything else, the nation needs to reverse the failure of governance, in order to regenerate its lost soul. The President, as the nation's Chief Security Officer, must seriously engage with the security and intelligence chiefs in order to review their lapses. Violence and terrorism cannot be tackled piecemeal. There is a need for a holistic approach that will aim to educate the people, provide them with housing and healthcare, empower them with jobs and assure protection of their lives and property.

(*The Guardian*, June 27, 2011, op. cit., p.16.)

The Guardian stressed that the police should live up to its responsibility of maintaining law and order in the land, by discharging their duty seriously and proactively. Wherever crime is committed in the land, the perpetrators, by whatever name called, should be identified and sanctioned according to the law. Beyond the use of force, there is a need to engage aggrieved Nigerians constructively.

A major trigger of terrorism and political violence identified by the press is the issue of the proliferation of arms and light weapons in Nigeria. In their editorial opinions, the newspapers take a clear stand against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the country as a source of danger for the country's nascent democracy. The *Daily Trust* newspaper indicates that in March 2011, just about a month before the general elections, some unidentified persons who may have been planning to perpetrate political violence had already started to stockpile various arms and ammunition in different parts of the country – some of which were eventually discovered by the state security agents. (See *Daily Trust*, April 11, 2011, p.32). In some illegal arms factories discovered by the State Security Service (SSS), the secret agents reportedly discovered and seized over 100 weapons of different designs – as well as some equipment for making bombs. (See *Daily Trust*, April 11, 2011, p.32). In its editorial of April 11, 2011, titled "Illegal arms depots," the newspaper noted that it has been "expressing its concern for several months, especially after the outbreaks of violence in Jos and a number of other places in the country". The newspaper saw "a nexus between the disturbing

proliferation of weapons and the desperation of politicians and their agents in pursuit of the infamous ‘do-or-die’ politics, and the creeping violence that threatens to engulf the country as the elections approached”. (*Daily Trust*, *ibid.*) The newspaper condemned the complacency of the government and its agencies in dealing with politicians who procure arms and use violent means to force their will on the electorate. To curb the proliferation of arms and weapons in the country, which could “spell danger for the country,” *Daily Trust* made the following comprehensive recommendations for public policy, in order to enhance peace and ensure law and order in the country:

The licensing regime for persons and firms in the arms and explosives trade should be overhauled; to do that, current licensees should update their records. The Government should suspend further issuance of new licences and order the inspection of existing factories and their products and clients. The State Security Services (SSS) should step up its inquiry into the sources of weapons it has intercepted in various parts of the country, the persons involved and their financiers, and hand over the culprits to the appropriate agency for prosecution. (*Daily Trust*, April 11, 2011, p.32)

The post-election violence which erupted after the 2011 poll confirmed the fears predicted and analysed by the newspapers in their editorial opinions. The post-election violence in the Northern geo-political zone was triggered by the victory of President Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian from the South, over General Muhammadu Buhari – a Muslim from the North and a former military head of state of Nigeria. Following General Buhari’s reported statement that the election was rigged to deny him victory by the ruling party of President Jonathan, his passionate supporters erupted into violence, arson, murder and general mayhem in the North East of Nigeria between Muslims and Christians, Northerners and Southerners. By the time the mayhem was over, more than 100 persons had lost their lives while thousands of residential houses, business premises, churches and mosques, motor vehicles and sundry property had been destroyed in arson and vandalism. (See *Human Rights Watch Report*, 2011, *op. cit.*, which gives a graphic account of the violence and destruction which followed the 2011 general election in Nigeria.) In a national broadcast on the post-election violence, President Jonathan noted that: “these acts of mayhem are sad reminders of the events which

plunged our country into 30 months of an unfortunate civil war, or the long-drawn political crisis engendered by the annulment of the June 12, 1993 election”. (*Daily Trust*, April 22, 2011, p. 33)

The *Daily Trust* and *The Guardian* took clear positions in condemnation of the post-election violence in Nigeria and proffered suggestions on how to tackle the recurring menace of post-election violence. In its bold, FRONT PAGE COMMENT / editorial opinion simply titled “Post-election violence,” *Daily Trust* lamented that, unfortunately, Nigeria had, again, “lived up to its reputation as a theatre for post-election violence”. (*Daily Trust*, April 22, 2011, p. 1) The paper noted that there were claims of electoral malpractices and outright rigging, blamed principally on the ruling People’s Democratic Party (PDP) for allegedly manipulating the election to ensure that its candidate, President Goodluck Jonathan, remained in power. The *Daily Trust* observed that it would not be enough to condemn the post-election violence without asking what may have triggered such “mindless bloodletting”. The newspaper recommended that a government inquiry should thoroughly examine the underlying causes of post-election violence and identify what the government should do to address them. “The authorities should get to the root of the huge disenchantment that made it possible for such frontal attacks on even symbols of traditional authority”. The newspaper emphasized that with his renewed mandate at the election, President Jonathan should show true statesmanship and national leadership and “figure out what measures to take to unite the nation fractured by recent events and heal the wounds they have caused. Anything less will only promote the feeling of disenchantment that has swept through a large swathe of Nigeria”. (*Daily Trust*, op. cit., p.33).

From this editorial, it could be seen that *The Daily Trust* newspaper went beyond a condemnation of the high incidence of political violence to ask several critical questions which touch on the foundations of Nigeria’s nascent democracy. The newspaper stresses the need for the government authorities to unearth the “root causes” of post-election violence and seek ways to address them. Significantly, the newspaper went ahead to identify a “huge disenchantment” in the Nigerian populace as one of the major causes of the “mindless bloodletting” in the land. (*Daily Trust*, April 22, 2011, p. 1) Subsequent events bore out the recommendations of the newspaper as the Federal Government set up a panel of inquiry to investigate the remote and immediate causes of the post-election violence and to recommend ways and means of addressing them in order to avoid a future re-occurrence.

Indeed, this widespread disenchantment with the ruling political elite as portrayed by *The Daily Trust* in the said editorial was identified later by the Lemu Panel Report (2011) as among the major causes of the post-election violence and general political crises in Nigeria.

The Guardian newspaper also welcomed the need for the government to get to the roots of the sources of political violence in the country and seek appropriate solutions to them. But the newspaper, highly critical of the government, the ruling party and the political elite, did not support the manner in which the government chose to go about the task of the investigation of the post-election violence and the way to prevent a future re-occurrence of such violence in future elections in Nigeria. The Guardian condemned as “inappropriate” the setting up of an unwieldy panel of 22 members to investigate the post-election violence. The newspaper dismissed in its editorial opinion the government’s move on the setting up of a panel of inquiry:

It is not the way to inspire public confidence that justice is about to be done. This is particularly so going by the history of similar committees, which in the country, most often goes to no issue. (*The Guardian*, “The probe panel on election violence,” May 18, 2011, p.14)

The significance of this is that the newspaper does not trust the motives of the government and believes that it is a way of sweeping the matter under the carpet by making sure, as in the past, that the report would “go to no issue”. Accordingly, the newspaper states clearly its position and belief that the government has embarked on a wrong course of action which “does not inspire public confidence that justice is about to be done”. (*The Guardian*, “The probe panel on election violence,” May 18, 2011, p.14) The newspaper’s main concern is that the committee would become another bureaucratic organization, bogged down by red tape, whose recommendations were not likely to be implemented, that is, “would go to no issue” – as had happened often in the past with such investigative committees and panels of inquiry. (*The Guardian*, “The probe panel on election violence,” May 18, 2011, p.14)

(*The Guardian*, “Lemu report on election violence,” October 25, 2011, p.18).

Among its main findings, the committee observed that Nigerians yearned for a change regarding the failure of successive governments, since the country’s independence in 1960, to

deliver the dividends of democracy and good governance to the Nigerian people, who are still plagued by epileptic supply of electricity, deplorable roads, corruption, poverty, insecurity of life and property, public frustration and disappointment. The committee warned that “the true state of affairs could escalate to social revolution if preventive measures are not taken on time” (*The Guardian*, “Lemu report on election violence,” October 25, 2011, p.18). The *Guardian*’s editorial position here is, again, quite significant in its highly critical posture to the government authorities. *The Guardian*, as a socially responsible media organization performing its watchdog role, clearly constructs a position which aligns with the findings of the panel of inquiry which “told the government the hard truth: that it has continually failed to deliver good governance to the Nigerian people”. (*The Guardian*, October 25, 2011, p.18).

As *The Guardian* feared in its editorial opinion, that the report of the Lemu Panel of Inquiry on Political Violence would “go to no issue”, just like other similar reports in the country’s history, very little has changed since then. All the same, by constantly mediating these national issues and problems and keeping them on the front burner of national discourse, holding public office holders to account, followed by appropriate and positive recommendations for public policy on how to remedy the bad situation in the country, the Nigerian independent press, as exemplified by *The Guardian* and the *Daily Trust*, have consistently performed their constitutional duties as the watchdogs of the society and facilitators of good governance.

Overall, the main themes / macropropositions identified in the editorial opinions, through a semantic analysis of the headings, focused on the following concepts: Political violence as terrorism and threat to national security; security agencies as perpetrators of political violence; religious extremism and Islamic fundamentalism as a threat to national security; political violence as class action; and political violence as irrational.

6.4 A vote against political violence

This chapter also analyses some editorial opinions by *The Guardian* and the *Daily Trust* on some specific cases or incidents of political violence mediated by the two newspapers. In constructing their editorial opinions on the incidents of terrorism and political violence which occurred in the country during the period under review, the Nigerian independent press, as represented by *The Guardian* and the *Daily Trust*, came out clearly in supporting the

government's war against violence and took a definite stand in saying No to the growing culture of political violence in the country, as shall be shown in this chapter. *The Guardian*, a quality, national newspaper, came out clearly and openly in condemning the evils of terrorism and political violence in the country. Similarly, the *Daily Trust*, a vibrant independent tabloid whose motto is "Trust is a Burden," came out unequivocally to condemn the creeping culture of political violence in Nigeria, in keeping with the constitutional role of the Nigerian press as the watchdog of society and the facilitator of the country's nascent democracy. Indeed, the above subheading, "A vote against political violence", is paraphrased from the caption of an editorial by the *Daily Trust* newspaper, "A vote against electoral violence," (*Daily Trust*, January 18, 2011, p.30). By constructing and standing on the positions they took in their editorial opinions during the period under review, as shall be demonstrated in this section, the Nigerian independent press, as exemplified by *The Guardian* and the *Daily Trust*, consistently performed their constitutional duties as the watchdogs of the society and facilitators of good governance.

The press coverage indicated a significant and progressive rise in incidents of political violence mediated by the press in their news and editorial opinions as the general election drew nearer – before overflowing into post-election violence. As indicated in the Analysis of News Coverage in Chapter 6, the amount of news coverage in the two newspapers showed a considerable increase in cases of political violence just before the general election – rising from six to seven cases a month (about 21%) of total front page headline news coverage and peaking around 9 to 10 cases (30%) on the eve of the general election. Indeed, in the last three months before the general election, front page headline news and editorial opinions each accounted for at least 10 of the 31 days in the month. The level of political violence finally overflowed into chaos and anarchy, culminating in the post-election riots in Northern Nigeria and the suicide bombing of key national institutions and targets by the *Boko Haram* religious / political insurgents. Indeed, even before the first ballot was cast in the 2011 general election, the spectre of violence was already hanging over the polls. (See Lemu Panel Report, 2011, op. cit).

The incidence of political violence in the country, manifested in violent attacks on politicians, electoral candidates and supporters from various political parties, began to rise dramatically. Several prominent politicians were assassinated in different parts of the country, while many others survived with severe injuries after being shot on the highways, on campaign trails or

simply attacked at home by unknown gunmen and armed marauders – as captured clearly by the *Daily Trust* newspaper in its editorial titled “Spike in political violence”. (See *Daily Trust*, editorial, March 21, 2011, p.31). By the use of the word, “spike”, the newspaper clearly indicated the rising level of political violence in the country during the election period. On the eve of the National Assembly election, an office of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the country’s electoral umpire, was bombed in Suleja, Niger State (North Central), killing several persons, including electoral officials and politicians. Days before the tragic incident, there were also reports of seizures of caches of arms and ammunition linked to politicians (See *Daily Trust*, editorial, April 11, 2011, p.32). The violence, bombings, attacks and targeted killings in Nigeria, before and after the general elections, led to what the *Daily Trust* described in an editorial as a “climate of insecurity” in the land. (*Daily Trust*, June 16, 2011, p.31).

Politicians and top members of the main political parties, the ruling People’s Democratic Party (PDP) and the opposition All Nigerian People’s Party (ANPP), as well as the many minor political parties came under severe criticisms from the press for the rising incidence of political violence in the country ahead of the general election. For instance, in an editorial “Politicians and threats to democracy,” *The Guardian* newspaper criticised Nigerian politicians for “demonstrating a lack of capacity” in their political campaign rhetoric, but instead “showing a preference for divisive comments that threaten the democratic process and the sovereignty of the nation”. Accordingly, *The Guardian* admonished all politicians to consider the general interests of the people first, and to “rise above pettiness and riotous claims in their campaigns”. (*The Guardian*, Dec. 28, 2010, p.14) Similarly, *The Daily Trust* criticised Nigerian politicians across board for reported manipulation of results and sundry electoral fraud in their party primary elections, thus leading to violence in the prelude to the general election. In “*A vote against political violence*,” observed that, as the general election drew nearer, “disturbing reports of political violence have surfaced in some states following alleged manipulation of results of the recently held party congresses”. The newspaper stressed that “this trend must be quashed because of its capacity to dampen the growing enthusiasm of the electorates and sow seeds of doubt in the ability of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to deliver credible elections”.

(*Daily Trust*, January 18, 2011, p.30) The two newspapers under review, *The Guardian* and *Daily Trust*, were thus quick to notice this trend and to take a definite stand against political

and electoral violence in their editorial opinions. They also recommended policy measures to nip the problem in the bud.

In the *Daily Trust* editorial titled “Spike in political violence” (March 21, 2011, p.31), the newspaper observed that “the increasing number of violent attacks on candidates and supporters of opposition parties has raised concerns about the conduct of the general election next month (April 2011)”. The newspaper listed several instances of recent attacks and killings of politicians across the country (for instance the attack by gunmen on General Lawrence Onoja, Senatorial candidate of the Action Congress of Nigeria political party, ACN, in which General Onoja was wounded and one of his aides was killed; the attempted abduction of Prince Ikonne, the governorship candidate of the ACN in Abia State; the assassination of the candidate of the All Progressives Part of Nigeria, ANPP, Alhaji Mohammed, in Borno State, which the party described as a clearly politically motivated murder; etc.) Consequently, the newspaper condemned the rising incidence of political violence in the country, especially ahead of the general election and called on the government authorities to go beyond political rhetoric and curb the ugly trend of political violence spreading across the land. The newspaper observed that, “With the spate of attacks, some fatal, it is evident that tension is building up in different parts of the country, especially between the ruling party and the opposition”. The newspaper said it had “no reservations whatsoever” in “condemning this alarming trend of violence” in Nigeria’s politics. The newspaper made its editorial stand in very clear terms, adding:

Violence is not a useful means to achieving any political goals. Politicians should imbibe a culture of tolerance of opposing views – and accept to play politics without violence.

(*Daily Trust*, March 21, 2011, p.31)

It could thus be seen very clearly that, as indicated earlier, the *Daily Trust*, a vibrant independent tabloid, came out unequivocally to condemn the creeping culture of political violence in Nigeria, in keeping with the constitutional role of the Nigerian press as the watchdog of society and the facilitator of the country’s nascent democracy.

The Guardian newspaper, liberal, authoritative and fiercely independent, tells it the way it is to the politicians and the powers that be, no matter whose ox is gored – unlike in some

African countries where the press is controlled by the state and muzzled by the political and economic power elite. Accordingly, like the *Daily Trust*, *The Guardian* also played a critical role in mediating and condemning the violence and general state of insecurity in the land during the cycle of the 2011 general election under review, conveying a very strong message against political violence and warning the politicians of the consequences of statements and actions that could instigate political violence in the country. For instance, in its editorial of December 28, 2010, *The Guardian* identified Nigerian politicians as among the major “threats to democracy” in the country. The newspaper condemns the tendency of some Nigerian politicians to make reckless and “divisive comments that threaten the democratic process and the sovereignty of the nation” (*The Guardian*, Dec. 28, 2010, p.14.) In a homily on the need for prudence in political communication, *The Guardian* criticised the former Vice President Atiku Abubakar of the ruling People’s Democratic Party (PDP), who was campaigning for the office of president and threatened, in the words of Fanon, that “those who make peaceful change impossible make violent change inevitable”. Condemning the veiled threat of violence and similar other reckless statements by politicians, *The Guardian* wrote:

Politicians generally need to be reminded that no negative statement or action that is likely to inflict violence on the people or torpedo the political process is welcome. Inflammatory comments, probably arising from selfish interests, undoubtedly pose a great threat to peace and national stability. Any call to arms, in which ever way it is communicated, or the intent, is damaging and should be strongly condemned. Violence at any point will...be an ill-wind that blows no good. It will always beget further mayhem to the detriment of the current democratic dispensation (*The Guardian*, “Politicians and threats to democracy,” Dec. 28, 2011, p.14).

By its choice of words, it is very clear in this editorial that *The Guardian* is constructing a strong position against political violence and against the politicians who contribute in one way or the other to instigate political violence in the country, especially through their “negative statements or actions”. The newspaper “strongly condemned” the “inflammatory comments” and “selfish” actions of the politicians which create tension in the country. Indeed, this editorial by *The Guardian* was a very clear warning to Nigerian politicians in several respects:

(a) that no negative statement or action that is likely to inflict violence on the people or torpedo the political process is welcome; (b) that inflammatory comments... undoubtedly pose a great threat to peace and national stability; (c) that any call to arms...or the intent, is damaging and should be strongly condemned; (d) that violence at any point will...be an ill-wind that blows no good; (e) violence “will always beget further mayhem to the detriment of the current democratic dispensation” (*The Guardian*, op. cit., Dec. 28, 2011, p.14). The newspaper was right. Its dire warnings went unheeded by the politicians. Its predictions came to pass – as the nation went through political mayhem and chaos in the course of the 2011 general election in the country.

Scholars, social and political analysts, government officials and even reformed militants and insurgents are generally agreed that the rising wave of terrorism and violence in Nigeria are all largely political in nature – fuelled by the greed and ambition of politicians. And this violence, no doubt, is a veritable threat to Nigeria’s nascent democracy (See Soyinka, “Under-reading violence,” *The Guardian*, Feb. 15, 2015, p.9; Akinola, A, “Political violence as threat to democracy,” *Daily Sun*, April 17, 2015, p.50; Amaraegbu, P, “The psychology of terrorism,” *The Guardian*, Feb. 15, 2015, p.9.) Soyinka (“Under-reading violence”, op. cit.) observes that Nigeria was underestimating the growing culture of impunity, terrorism and political violence in the country which pose a big threat to the country’s democratic experiment (*The Guardian*, Feb. 15, 2015, p.50.) Akinola (2015, op. cit.) states clearly that the government authorities, the security agencies and indeed all Nigerians must join hands together to fight and defeat the growing culture of political violence in the country, given the established fact that “political violence is a threat to democracy” (*Daily Sun*, April 17, 2015, p.50) Indeed, “General Boyloaf” Victor Ben Ebikabowei, an erstwhile Niger Delta warlord who once bore arms against the nation before he embraced the Federal Government’s Amnesty Programme and laid down his arms, summed it up thus: “The resurgence of violence in Nigeria is motivated by greed and by politicians”. (*The Guardian*, Nov. 28, 2011, p.9)

The Nigeria Security Tracker (NST, 2015) confirms these views and affirms that the violence in Nigeria is often “motivated by political, economic, or social grievances”. It notes also that the violence in Nigeria is “both causal and symptomatic of Nigeria’s political instability and citizen alienation” (The *Nigeria Security Tracker*, 2015, Council on Foreign Relations website; accessed, 01/08/15, 18.17 pm).

6.5 The national and the regional variations in editorial stance between *The Guardian* and the *Daily Trust*

As indicated in chapters 3 and 4, of the two selected independent newspapers, *The Guardian* and the *Daily Trust*, have certain differences in their location, style, political orientation. One of the objectives of this study is to identify whether these differences will produce a different performance of the watchdog role of the press. The analysis of the editorial opinions in this chapter, as shall be illustrated in the foregoing discussion in this chapter, indicates that although the publishers of these two newspapers under review are not politicians or known members of any registered political party in Nigeria, and so do not necessarily allow their political biases to influence the content of the two newspapers, their socio-cultural backgrounds, religious affiliations and the locations of the newspapers sometimes do have a discernible impact not only on the news content but also in shaping the editorial opinions of the two newspapers. While *The Guardian*, a quality, national newspaper which shows a more liberal and open attitude in condemning the evils of terrorism and religious fundamentalism is based in the largely Christian South West (Lagos) and is owned by a Christian family, the *Daily Trust*, a regional tabloid, which sometimes hedges and prevaricates in its editorial opinions on the issue of Boko Haram Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism, is based in the largely Muslim North West (Kaduna) and is owned and operated by a Muslim faithful.

The *Daily Trust* came out strongly also to condemn the bomb attack on the Nigeria Police Headquarters. The *Daily Trust* editorial was simply titled: “The police HQ explosion” (June 22, 2011, p. 34). Unlike *The Guardian*, which was categorical in identifying the bombing as a terrorist attack orchestrated by the Boko Haram insurgents as claimed by their spokespersons, *Daily Trust* asserted: “Like everything else regarding issues around the spate of blasts in parts of the country since the October 1, 2010 episode at the Eagle Square in Abuja, firm evidence of who are behind them (the bomb attacks) is hard to come by; either the security agencies are themselves as purblind as the rest of the society, or are not levelling with the public”. (*Daily Trust*, June 22, 2011, p.34)

The newspaper observed that if indeed the attack was carried out by a suicide bomber, as widely reported in the news media, it would be “an entirely new and dangerous dimension in the history of civil strife in Nigeria”. *Daily Trust* also recalled the historical origins of the

Boko Haram outfit, which emerged as a “ragtag group” a couple of years earlier. The newspaper observed that:

...if there is evidence that the ragtag group that engaged a few policemen in Maiduguri in 2009 is the same group that has metamorphosed into this killing machine that came close to assassinating the national police chief, this should be presented and its members relentlessly pursued and brought to justice (Ibid.).

By dismissing the Boko Haram terrorists group as a former “ragtag group” that “engaged a few policemen in 2009,” the newspaper is clearly mocking the government and the security agencies for not doing enough in containing a small group of bandits who had become a terror in the land. Even more significantly, the *Daily Trust* newspaper is indeed questioning the very existence of the Boko Haram terrorist group by asking the government to present the “evidence” of the transformation of this “ragtag” group into a sophisticated “killing machine”. The questioning by the Daily Trust of the very existence of the Boko Haram group reflected an unsubstantiated notion in the Northern, Muslim dominated parts of Nigeria (where the Daily Trust newspaper is located) that the Boko Haram terrorist group was probably a phantom used by the government of President Jonathan (a Southern Christian) to cause havoc in the country in order to perpetuate himself in power. The newspaper conceded though that “if” it was indeed this same “ragtag group” of aggrieved northerners that had now “metamorphosed into a killing machine” (Boko Haram), the government should seek to identify the members, arrest them and prosecute them (law and order approach), rather than waging war against them as the government was doing after identifying them as terrorists.

Overall, the newspaper indicted the nation’s security agencies for being lax in the performance of their duties to maintain law and order in the land. A strong and fervent campaigner for the law and order approach, *Daily Trust* concluded that, in order to curb the menace of terrorism in Nigeria, “the security agencies and the government need to do far more than what we have seen so far”. By adopting this position that the security agencies and the government need to do more than we have seen so far, the newspaper is clearly saying that the government and the security agencies have not done enough in the fight against terrorism

and political violence and needs to do a lot more in order to curb the menace of terrorism and political violence in the country.

A major difference in the stance and official positions of the two newspapers as portrayed in their editorial opinions is that while *The Guardian* is unequivocal identifying the Boko Haram sect as the terrorist, Islamic fundamentalist group they truly are, the *Daily Trust* prevaricates, asks for “evidence” and often refrains from using the word “terrorism” or describing the group as “terrorists,” despite all evidence and indications of the fact that these people who bomb churches, mosques, markets, motor parks, amusement centres, national institutions and international organizations, like the UN, cannot be anything other than terrorists. A tentative conclusion can be drawn that this divergence in stance and official position is influenced by both the geographical location of the two newspapers and the socio-cultural, economic and indeed political affinities of the owners of the two media organizations. While *The Guardian*, a quality, national newspaper which shows a more liberal and open attitude in condemning the evils of terrorism and religious fundamentalism is based in the largely Christian South West (Lagos) and is owned by a Christian family, the *Daily Trust*, a regional tabloid, which sometimes hedges and prevaricates in its editorial opinions on the issue of Boko Haram Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism, is based in the largely Muslim North West (Kaduna) and is owned and operated by a Muslim faithful.

In effect, therefore, as indicated earlier in this section, although the publishers of these two newspapers under review are not politicians or known members of any registered political party in Nigeria, their socio-cultural backgrounds, religious affiliations, political orientations and the locations of the newspapers sometimes do have a discernible impact not only on the news content but also in shaping the editorial opinions of the two newspapers. In effect, as I pointed out earlier in Chapter 5, both *The Guardian* and the *Daily Trust* are sympathetic to the causes of the South and the North respectively – and these causes are fundamentally political. However, as I indicated earlier also, this tendency does not seem to undermine the ability of these newspapers to perform their normative functions.

Several other instances of the construction of their editorial opinions with regards to major incidences of terrorism or political violence also help to demonstrate the positions of these newspapers with regards to the war against political violence – as well as the differences in their official positions to the issue. *The Guardian's* editorial opinion, “The bombing of the

UN Building” (September 1, 2011, p. 14), dwelt on the massive bomb attack on the UN House in Abuja on August 26, 2011, which was another major incident of political violence and terrorism during the period under review.

On the other hand, the *Daily Trust*, in typical tabloid fashion of bold headlines and screaming captions was even more direct and angry in its editorial opinion captioned: “A senseless and cowardly attack”. (*Daily Trust*, August 29, 2011, p.31) Again, as in the case of the bombing on the Police Headquarters, *The Guardian and Daily Trust* were unequivocal in their editorial opinions that the bombing of the UN House in Abuja, which killed more than 23 persons and wounded over 100 others, was a terror attack. (See *The Guardian*, August 27, 2011, p.1; *Daily Trust*, August 27, 2011, p.1.) Indeed, the Boko Haram group also claimed responsibility for the suicide bomb attack on the hallowed precincts of the UN House. Under their constitutional roles as watchdogs and socially responsible media organizations, *The Guardian and Daily Trust* condemned the outrage occasioned by the bombing of the UN House in Abuja (August 26, 2011). *The Guardian* said of the brazen suicide bomb attack, which threw the nation into mourning:

The explosion dealt a major blow to the country’s image, political entity and economic prospects. More than any previous incident, the bombing (of the UN House) brings Nigeria into the fore of countries that are firmly threatened by terrorism.

(*The Guardian*, September 1, 2011, p. 14)

In this editorial, and with the choice of words and overall use of language, *The Guardian* is clearly constructing a view of terrorism as a major “threat” to Nigeria’s image, political entity and economic prospects – and should be tackled effectively. *The Guardian* noted that the targeting of the UN building, which housed 26 humanitarian and development agencies of the United Nations, brought a new dimension to terrorism and socio-political violence in Nigeria. *The Guardian*, connecting with elite opinion and the worldwide condemnation which trailed the bombing of the UN House in Abuja, also quoted in this editorial the statement of the UN Secretary General to the effect that the bombing of the UN House was “an assault on those who devote their lives to helping others” (*The Guardian*, September 1, 2011, *op. cit.*).

As a liberal newspaper, The Guardian also sought to balance its constructed viewpoint by reflecting the voice of the Boko Haram group which issued a statement claiming responsibility for the attack at the UN House and attempting to justify it. The Guardian observed that a spokesman of the Boko Haram group, in attempting to justify the attack on the UN House, affirmed the political orientation of the extremist, Jihadist group and alluded to a nexus between corruption and political violence. The newspaper quotes Sheikh Azzawahiri justifying the action “because the Nigerian government is corrupt, insensitive and deceitful. The organization warned that it would soon start a full scale offensive against the Nigerian State (*The Guardian, September 1, 2011, op. cit., p.14.*).

As socially responsible media organizations performing a constitutional watchdog role, the Nigerian independent newspapers also show that they go beyond criticising the government and its agencies to making recommendations for policy and positive action in addressing the challenges identified in their editorial opinions. In the said editorial opinion on the bombing of the UN House, *The Guardian* makes the following recommendations to mitigate the scourge of violence in Nigeria:

The government must go beyond rhetoric and properly shake up the security apparatus to train, equip and coordinate them towards protecting lives and property. The President should spearhead an exploration of a UN Resolution enjoining multiple efforts to curb terrorism. These will include peaceful resolution of internal conflicts, protection of human rights and granting of audience to aggrieved members or groups within the population. (*The Guardian, Sept. 1, 2011, p.14*)

In its own editorial response to the bombing of the UN House in Abuja, the *Daily Trust* condemned the attack, as did *The Guardian*, and also reaffirmed its positions against political violence in the country. In “A senseless and cowardly attack” (*Daily Trust, August 29, 2011*), the newspaper declared:

World leaders have joined Nigeria’s President Goodluck Jonathan to express outrage and condemn the barbaric and cowardly attack on the symbol of humanitarian work

worldwide. There can be no justification for this dastardly act, which the government must swiftly respond to. (p.31)

By using the words “outrage,” “cowardly and barbaric” and “dastardly act” to describe the suicide bomb attack on the UN House in Abuja, the newspaper is clearly constructing a position of anger, revulsion and condemnation of the attack and its perpetrators – describing them as cowards who would attack a humanitarian UN agency housing unarmed aid workers (Ibid.). The newspaper noted that the attack on the UN compound has raised the stakes for Nigeria, which is already facing challenges on the international front as a hotbed for corruption and listed as a ‘country of interest’ by the United States in its list of nations with potential terrorist threats. The newspaper pointed out clearly its belief that only a “deranged mind” (a mad person or a group of mad persons) would be propelled to target a community of humanitarian workers like the UN. The newspaper urged the security agencies to wake up to their responsibilities of safeguarding lives and property in Nigeria. The *Daily Trust* also noted the prevarication in the statements reportedly made by a spokesman of the terrorist group, Boko Haram, who claimed that the attack on the UN House was in retaliation to the security clampdown in the group’s traditional base in Borno State (North East). (*Daily Trust*, August 29, 2011, p.31)

6.6.0 Discussion of key themes in the editorial opinions on corruption

The major themes and macro-propositions which emerged from the analysis of the editorial opinions on corruption during the period were the view of the Nigerian politicians as corrupt and dishonest; the government lacks the political will to fight corruption, and policy recommendations by the newspapers. The newspapers generally conveyed their full support to the fight against corruption being waged by the government, but believe that the government lacks the political will to fight corruption with full commitment. These themes, and how the newspapers constructed their editorial opinions around them, are explored in this section.

6.6.1 Politicians as corrupt and dishonest

As indicated earlier in Chapter 5, one of the major cases of official corruption reported in the Nigerian press during the period under review was the case involving the Speaker of the House of Representatives (Parliament), Mr Dimeji Bankole, who was indicted for corrupt

enrichment and embezzlement of public funds. Under Mr Bankole's watch, the House of Representatives borrowed N10 billion from commercial banks, in addition to its huge annual budget, and spent all the money – causing a huge outrage in the land and generating a very big scandal for the law makers when the scheme was burst open by the media. After evading arrest several times, Mr Bankole and his deputy, Mr Usman Nafada, were subsequently arrested on May 5, 2011, and prosecuted on corruption charges by the government's anti-graft agency, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). Bankole and Nafada were charged with corruption and fraud amounting to Naira 38 billion (over 200 million pounds Sterling). (The Guardian, May 6, 2011, p.1) *The Guardian* and *Daily Trust* published running news stories on the Bankole case as well as editorial opinions. The newspapers used their editorial opinions on the case to reinforce the general image of the Nigerian politician as corrupt, greedy and dishonest.

In its editorial, titled “Between EFCC and Bankole,” *The Guardian* (June 16, 2011), observed that beyond the criminal aspects of the corruption charge, the case raises an ethical issue regarding the institution of the Speakership of the House of Representatives, which, in theory and in practice, is the engine room of democracy – being the “temporal site of sovereignty” housing the representatives of the people. *The Guardian* noted that the matter raises once more the issue of corruption in the national parliament and other institutions of government. The newspaper observed: “Since the fourth republic, both (the) lower and upper legislative chambers have been involved in corruption scandals, the gravity of which had led to purges in the leadership of both houses. Beyond that, the country has not fared better on the corruption index rating; we have shared, not once, the ill-fortune of being the most corrupt country in the world”. (*The Guardian*, June 16, 2011, p.14) In this editorial, *The Guardian* clearly constructs a scenario of a corruption-infested National Assembly (Parliament) which, since the country's return to democracy (the 4th Republic) “has been involved in corruption scandals, the gravity of which had led to purges in the leadership of both houses” (Ibid). By the choice of the words “scandals” and “purges”, the newspaper indicated clearly that this was not just a simple case of corruption but a political scandal of immense proportions which should, as in the past, lead to “purges” or massive removals of the top leaders of the National Assembly (Parliament).

The Guardian is clearly unhappy that Nigeria has continued to share “the ill-fortune of being the most corrupt country in the world”. (Ibid, p.14) In this editorial, as in several others, *The*

Guardian clearly takes a stand against the “grave corruption scandals” of the National Assembly, which raise not only the “criminal aspects” of such corrupt practices but also “ethical issues” about the conduct of the elected representatives of the Nigerian people in the upper and the lower houses of the National Assembly. By constructing a standpoint which takes a view of corruption as not only a matter of criminal indictment but also moral misconduct unfit for high public office holders like members of the National Assembly, *The Guardian* is clearly pitching its tent in support of the war against corruption.

The newspaper observed that there was a general consensus that corruption is counter-productive to the goal of social development, because, very often, the resources meant for development projects were either misapplied or stolen outright by corrupt public officials, while the country and its people continued to suffer the ravaging effects of poverty and underdevelopment. Overall, *The Guardian* stressed the point that corruption is antithetical to social development and good governance and should be fought with all the energy and political will that the country could muster. In all these, the newspaper is standing up creditably to the constitutional role of the Nigerian press as the watchdogs of democracy and facilitators of good governance, thus underscoring the critical role of the press in the regional context of Nigeria as an emerging democracy in Africa.

The Guardian's clear revulsion with the unfortunate corruption scandals of the National Assembly and the newspaper's clear position on the war against corruption are in line with the newspaper's orientation as a liberal, independent newspaper fulfilling the democratic role of the press as a watchdog of the society and facilitator of democracy and good governance. This stance also affirms the submission of Adesoji (2010) that the Nigerian press plays a critical role in supporting the government's war against corruption being prosecuted by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Related Offence Commission (ICPC) (Adesoji, 2010, op. cit., pp. 27-29).

In line with the democratic function of the press as the watchdog of society and facilitator of democracy and good governance, *The Guardian*, beyond condemning the incidents of corruption in the country, also recommends some measures to halt the trend. In the editorial, “Between EFCC and Bankole,” *The Guardian* (June 16, 2011), *The Guardian* advises the new leadership of the House of Representatives and other political leaders to be “above board” and reinforce the integrity of their high office – in order to help consolidate the country's

democracy. The paper advises the government authorities to do a thorough investigation and proper prosecution of the corruption case against the Speaker of the House, Mr Bankole, in order to ensure that all corrupt persons are effectively prosecuted the case does not go the way of other high profile cases which end up without any tangible results. Says the newspaper:

“We sincerely hope that the current case will not be another episode of grandstanding. What the country needs now is deterrence to would-be culprits in the abuse of public offices. Certainly, there lies some potential for ridding our country of the endemic scourge of corruption,” the paper concluded. (*The Guardian*, June 16, 2011, p.14.) In another editorial, *The Guardian* also recommended the setting up of Special Courts to try corruption cases. The newspaper noted that the increasing demand for the establishment of Special Courts to prosecute corruption cases was a clear indication that the anti-corruption campaign in the country had performed below par. (*The Guardian*, September 21, 2011, p.14).

Like *The Guardian*, the *Daily Trust* newspaper also demonstrated its support to the government’s fight against corruption by the manner in which it constructed the news of the corruption cases it represented in its editorial opinions during the period under review. The paper devoted critical attention to various general issues of corruption and amplified the theme of far-reaching policy recommendations on how to tackle the scourge of corruption in the country. The newspaper also criticised the government’s anti-corruption agencies and indicated that it was not convinced that the government was very serious in the manner it was waging the war against corruption in the country. For instance, in its editorial of December 16, 2011, *Daily Trust* says pointedly in its caption: “This is no way to fight corruption” (*Daily Trust*, December 16, 2011). In the said editorial, the *Daily Trust* reviewed several recent cases in which the government did not follow through with diligent prosecution on some serious cases of corruption reviewed by the newspaper. Such cases analysed by the newspaper included the case against the multinational telecommunications company, Siemens AG, which was indicted for complicity in the bribing of several senior Nigerian erstwhile government officials and politicians in return for huge contracts in the telecommunications industry in Nigeria (See *Daily Trust*, December 16, 2011). The newspaper observed that Siemens paid a fine of N7 billion in restitution and apologised to the Nigerian authorities for its misconduct – and the case was dropped. Another case reviewed by the newspaper was the case involving another large, international company, Julius Berger PLC. In October of the same year, *Daily Trust* observes that the government also reached a similar deal with the

multinational construction company, Julius Berger, which paid N4 billion in fines for its involvement in another bribery scandal which involved the United States company, Kellogg, Brown and Root (KBR), a former subsidiary of the multinational oil services firm Halliburton. The firm was accused of paying \$180 million in bribes to some Nigerian officials.

The *Daily Trust*, after reviewing these cases and many other similar cases of brazen graft in the country, domestic and foreign, which were not properly handled by the government authorities, bungled by the government authorities, concluded that: “This is not the way to wage the war against corruption. Unless the government sharpens its focus on the fight against graft, the deterrence effect would be lost and the fight would be severely weakened, if not heavily compromised.” (*Daily Trust*, Dec. 16, 2010, p.33). In another editorial, titled “The EFCC ‘advisory’ to politicians”, the *Daily Trust* endorses a recommendation that corrupt politicians and all other persons with cases of corruption pending against them in the law courts should be banned from holding or contesting for public office. The newspaper concludes that until this is done, “the government is merely paying lip service to the fight against corruption” (*Daily Trust*, November 4, 2010, p. 25).

Apart from their support of the government war against corruption as indicated above, the newspapers also clearly focused on the theme of punitive measures for individuals or groups of persons convicted of corruption. As indicated earlier, the *Daily Trust* endorsed a recommendation that corrupt politicians and all other persons with cases of corruption pending against them in the law courts should be banned from holding or contesting for public office. (*Daily Trust*, November 4, 2010, p. 25). *The Guardian* equally endorsed a recommendation that “the public at large, including many civil society and women organizations, should mobilize to prevent charlatans from becoming legislators and governors”. (*The Guardian*, “Embargo on corrupt politicians,” November 3, 2010, p.14) Indeed, the similarities in the editorial stance and official positions of the two newspapers on issues of corruption in Nigeria clearly indicate the commitment of the two newspapers to the fight against corruption in Nigeria – in the performance of their constitutional roles as the watchdogs of society and the facilitators of democracy and good governance.

6.7 The nexus between corruption and political violence

The critical editorial commentaries and views by the two newspapers on the issue of corruption are consistent with the wider discourse and perception of Nigeria as one of the most corrupt nations in the world where many public office holders use their positions to misappropriate public funds. (See Transparency Int., op.cit). The British Prime Minister, David Cameron, was widely reported in the media in May 2016 as describing Nigeria as a “fantastically corrupt” nation. (<http://www.tori.ng/news/30239/you-have-a-fantastically-corrupt-minister-in-your.html>) (Accessed, 22/05/16).

The Sunday Punch newspaper (May 29, 2016, p.1) describes this class of public office holders who misappropriate public funds and enrich themselves corruptly as “democracy rogues”. The newspaper asserts that findings by Nigeria’s anti-corruption agencies and investigative panel reports indicate that since the country’s return to democracy in 1999, Nigeria has lost more than N38 trillion through corruption, money laundering and sundry misappropriation of public funds. In the specific instance of arms procurement for waging the war against the Boko Haram insurgents, the newspaper asserts that the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission discovered that various government officials and agencies embezzled a total of over USD 15 billion. (*The Sunday Punch*, op. cit., p.1) On April 26, 2016, Nigeria’s Information Minister, Lai Mohammed, reportedly asserted that investigations between that corruption investigations being carried out by the present government of Nigeria showed that between 2006 and 2013 alone, 33 Nigerian officials stole more than N1.34 trillion, an amount which, he claimed, was more than one quarter of the 2015 national budget – and represents the total earnings of four African nations.

The Minister also affirmed the nexus between corruption and political violence in Nigeria:

It was corruption that prolonged the war against Boko Haram and sent many soldiers and civilians to their early graves. The funds meant to buy arms and ammunition for our soldiers to fight Boko Haram were shared out by a few people for political purposes. Unless we fight corruption to a standstill, nothing else we do will yield positive results.

http://pulse.ng/local/lai-mohammed-55-people-stole-n1-34tr-minister-says-id4960529.html?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=daily-2016-04-26&utm_source=newsletter#) Accessed, 29/04/16.

6.8 A different performance of the watchdog role on corruption

In spite of the similarities in the support of the newspapers to the fight against corruption, and the endorsement of strong punitive measures against convicted offenders, there are also some noticeable differences in their response to or their representation of news of corruption. This suggests a possibility that, as discussed earlier in the Literature Review (Chapter 3), the different location, orientation, style and ideological stance of the two newspapers may produce a different performance of the watchdog function. One significant incident may serve to illustrate this point. When Mrs Cecilia Ibru, a bank chief executive, was jailed for corruption and fraud, alongside many other executives of commercial banks, *The Guardian* chose deliberately to refrain from reporting the news or writing an editorial opinion on it. (This is confirmed by RC, an editorial staff of the newspaper who participated in the semi-structured interviews, 2015.) The reason for this apparent double standard was not far-fetched: Mrs Cecilia Ibru was a matriarch of the Ibru family – the wealthy Nigerian family which owned *The Guardian* and many other mega corporate organizations spanning banking, shipping, airlines, hotels, automobiles, foods and agro-business, among others. On the other hand, the *Daily Trust*, an independent tabloid which has the motto: “Trust is a burden,” and takes its watchdog role very seriously, celebrated the conviction of Mrs Ibru and her cohorts as a very “important victory in the anti-graft fight”. (*Daily Trust*, Oct. 21, 2010, p.32).

Overall, in their strident and principled stance against corruption in Nigeria and their consistent advocacy for an effective and committed prosecution of the war against corruption, which has stunted Nigeria’s overall socio-economic and political development, the Nigerian independent press fulfils the normative expectations of the social responsibility theory of the press as a positive instrument for social, cultural, economic and political change.

6.9 Conclusion

This Chapter analysed the editorial opinions of the two newspapers on the twin issues of political violence and corruption which emerged as the two most dominant themes in the front page headline news coverage and editorial opinions of the two newspapers during the period under review. The amount of coverage and critical attention devoted to these two themes in the editorial opinions of the two newspapers is a clear indication of the high level of importance attached to these issues as critical social problems which pose a clear and present threat to Nigeria's nascent democracy. The analysis identified some similarities and differences in the positions taken by the two newspapers and the recommendations that they made for official policy in tackling the twin evils of official corruption and political violence. In a few cases, these differences in the positions taken and the recommendations made by the two newspapers tended to confirm the more liberal and objective quality of *The Guardian*, which describes itself as "the flagship of the Nigerian press," while some of these differences in the positions taken and recommendations made also tended to reinforce the public perception of the regional tabloid, the *Daily Trust*, as "the mouthpiece of the North". Altogether, although there are considerable similarities in the positions taken and the recommendations made in the editorial opinions by *The Guardian* and the *Daily Trust* on corruption and political violence, there are also a few noticeable differences in the positions taken by the newspapers and the recommendations that they make for public policy on how to tackle the twin evils of corruption and political violence as indicated in this chapter. These examples cited above, and several other small but similar instances, seem to reinforce the reputation of *The Guardian* as the *flagship* of the Nigerian press, and the perception of the *Daily Trust* as the *mouthpiece* of the North. Indeed, the fervent opposition of the Muslim North to the ruling party led by President Jonathan from the Christian South was the main trigger of the post-election violence which spread mayhem and anarchy in the country after the 2011 general elections won by President Jonathan.

From the foregoing analysis of the language and themes of the editorial opinions of the two newspapers, there is a clear indication that the location, ownership structure and the socio-economic and political orientations of the newspapers can produce a different performance of the watchdog function in the different newspapers. The differences in the news coverage between the national newspaper (*The Guardian*) and the regional newspaper (*The Daily*

Trust) are more pronounced in the construction of the editorial opinions – which indicate the ideological stance and positions of the two newspapers. While *The Guardian* is located in Lagos (in the Christian-dominated South West of Nigeria) and is owned by a Christian, the *Daily Trust* is located in the Muslim-dominated North West of Nigeria) and is published by a Muslim. In the context of the Nigerian media, *The Guardian* is generally regarded as the country's number one newspaper, “the flagship” of the Nigerian press, while the *Daily Trust* is regarded as the “mouthpiece of the North”. With specific reference to the construction of their editorial opinions, the differences which emerged, as illustrated above, suggest that the different locations, style, orientation, ownership and editorial positioning of the two newspapers produced a slightly different performance of the watchdog role of the press. The implication of this for theory is that the Liberal Media Theory is not a monolithic theory, cast in stone, but has different variations in its application. Indeed, even while discharging the democratic role of the media, the location, ownership, style and orientation of the newspapers can produce a different performance of the watchdog role of the press.

Overall, with the construction of their editorial opinions on the twin issues of corruption and political violence, the critical viewpoints they represented and the policy recommendations made by the press, the Nigerian independent newspapers are clearly performing their constitutional roles as the watchdogs of the nation's democracy and facilitators of good governance. From the foregoing critical discourse analysis, it could be seen that the Nigerian newspapers clearly used their editorial opinions as a form of social action – which they deployed to address social problems, challenge inequitable power relations and convey their ideological positions. This analysis of the editorial opinions on corruption by the two newspapers, and the definitive stands they took against corruption and the perpetrators of corrupt practices in Nigeria is affirmed by the findings of Adesoji (2010) that the Nigerian press plays a critical role in supporting the government's war against corruption being prosecuted by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Related Offence Commission (ICPC) (Adesoji, 2010, op. cit., pp. 27-29). Similarly, the construction of the editorial positions of the two newspapers and the critical stance they took against terrorism and political violence, and the perpetrators of terrorism and political violence in the country, the press also played a very active role in support of democracy and good governance. This also tallies with the findings of Adesoji (2010), who submitted that:

As an important stakeholder in the process of nation-building in general and the entrenchment of democratic rule in particular, the Nigerian Press has remained a force to reckon with. Its resilience, obviously a product of its sustained struggle with colonialism and prolonged military rule, not only marked it out as an important pillar of democracy, it also prepared it for the roles it is playing in the era of constitutional democracy. *(Adesoji, 2010, p.23)*

CHAPTER 7

NIGERIAN JOURNALISTS: WORKING CONDITIONS AND PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES

7.0 Introduction

This Chapter discusses the semi-structured interviews with newspaper journalists. This Chapter focuses on mapping the challenges which Nigerian journalists face at work in pursuing the democratic role assigned to them by the National Constitution (1999, Amended). As indicated in Chapter 4, the data in this chapter emerges from exploratory interviews conducted with an indicative group of 12 journalists. The analysis follows up on the discussion of the themes of political violence and corruption in the Nigerian context already discussed in the analysis of the headline news (Chapter 5) and the editorial opinions (Chapter 6) of the newspapers during the period of the 2011 general election. The analysis also explores a select number of other themes already identified by earlier studies and reports on the working conditions and professional practices of journalists in Nigeria. These key themes, along which the analysis is structured, include the following: deplorable working conditions, corruption in the media, lack of professionalism, security hazards and dangers to journalists and censorship (See the African Media Barometer Nigeria, 2011, op. cit. p. 5; Adesoji, 2010, op. cit., p.23 and Aimufua, 2007, op. cit.) The journalists interviewed for this study identified similar challenges and obstacles which they face and which have serious impacts on their professional work – especially in election coverage in general, and in the coverage of the 2011 general election in particular.

The findings of the semi-structured interviews of Nigerian journalists ranged around the critical issues of ownership and control of the media – as well as the issues of professionalism and ethics in the media. As already established in media scholarship, the issues of ownership and control, professionalism and ethics have a significant impact on how journalists perform their jobs, as well as on the content of their media products. The interviews give some insights into how Nigerian journalists struggle to cope with the challenges posed by ownership and control of the press – as well as the issues of professionalism and ethics and how these issues impact on the performance of their professional duties.

7.1.0 Ownership and control in the Nigerian press

As indicated earlier, most of the major national and regional newspapers in contemporary Nigeria are owned by private media entrepreneurs and businessmen who are not known to be directly aligned or affiliated to any of the registered political parties in the country. Although these media proprietors may not be partisan politicians, as during the colonial era when the key press owners, journalists and editors were mostly card-carrying political party members, one can certainly not discountenance the strong influence of ownership and control structures on the practice of journalism in Nigeria.

Among the key issues raised by the journalists interviewed in the study was the issue of ownership and control of the press – and how this affects the performance of their professional duties. The question of ownership and control is no doubt crucial to an understanding of media performance. Altschull (1984) identified the clear impact of ownership on media content and performance. McQuail (2005) points out that the central issue which arises in the concept of media ownership and control is the extent to which media organizations can claim to exercise autonomy and independence in relation to their owners and financiers. Shoemaker and Reese (1991) found that while news organizations funded by special interest sources were more likely to pander to those interests of their owners, thus more likely to be less objective, news organizations funded by commercial sources were far more likely to use objectivity and newsworthiness as their principal standards in making news judgements. The Nigerian press and the professional journalists who work therein, no doubt, have to grapple constantly with the challenges of ownership and control, as the journalists interviewed for this study affirmed. Their views and comments, as portrayed below in the thesis, show how they have struggled to contend with the issue of ownership and control, and the impact this has had on the performance of their duties – especially during the coverage of the 2011 general elections in Nigeria.

7.1.1 Censorship arising from ownership and control structures

As indicated earlier, previous studies and reports also identified problems surrounding the issues of ownership and control of the Nigerian press. The journalists interviewed in this study affirm this point and identified the issue of interference from some of the media owners and other vested interests. They indicate that some of the media owners are very high-handed

in asserting their control of the media houses and some outline no-go areas for the journalists, while in some media houses, the no-go areas may be unstated but were there nonetheless, thus creating room for some form of censorship – and self-censorship.

The publisher is almost a god. Some of his actions are often arbitrary and whimsical. Journalists are heavily surcharged for missing news stories – or for ‘mismanaging stories’. These surcharges can be up to 30% or 50% of the reporter’s monthly salary, depending on the adjudged severity of the case.

- BL (21/08/13)

This assertion shows that the attitude of some of the media owners to journalists is sometimes condescending and unprofessional.

KA (The Guardian) confirms that there is usually some restriction and censorship imposed by the owners of the newspapers and the government authorities. KA is both a field reporter and a line editor of one of the most influential newspapers in Nigeria.

The no-go areas may not be specified in black and white, but they are always there. There is usually some restriction. It is usual, but it is also usually from the outside (external)”. For instance, in the year 2009, he was covering a contract to secure some new broadcast equipment for the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA). There was a crisis over broadcast rights between public and private broadcast stations. At a stage, there was an instruction from the government that he should not report the story. You have to respect your sources. There is thus a measure of self-censorship. You cannot reveal or report everything you hear or know.

- KA, Abuja, 02/10/13

AO corroborates the issue of censorship, overt or covert, from the media owners and managers. He asserts that in his media organization and several other media houses he has worked, there is a subtle form of censorship by the editors and line editors who sometimes “kill stories” you have laboured long and hard to produce – and no explanations are given.

Sometimes you are put under so much pressure to produce a story but when you submit it, it is not even published.

AO, Abuja. 02/10/13

AA (a line editor), corroborates this issue of censorship and “killing of stories” in the newsroom. He confirms that the censorship is subtle and the “no-go areas” observed by respective media houses may not be indicated anywhere in black and white. He claims that as a reporter, you simply got socialized into the system of the particular media house in which you worked.

As a reporter, by the time you write a number of stories on a particular issue and none of them gets published by the editors, you get the message.

- AA (Abuja, 02/10/13)

UO, who covered some key reportorial beats for another of the major national newspapers, The Guardian, over the years, also corroborates the issue of censorship, especially by the government authorities. For instance, he recalls that during a certain renovation of the State House (the Presidential Mansion), under a past military regime, during which new security cameras were installed and reinforcements were made to the walls, the reporters were told not to file any reports on the renovation, for security reasons. He claimed that a reporter who innocuously referred to the renovations in a weekly column was summoned and cautioned by a top official in the Presidency.

The reporters covering the Presidency were regularly informed not to report certain issues or occurrences – for security or other reasons, or for no reasons at all.

- UO (Abuja 05/12/15)

RA (Daily Trust) also confirms that she has experienced censorship in her news organization. The report you produce is sometimes dropped or cut by the media managers, depending on who is in charge.

“Journalists do not have a free hand to operate.”

RA (*Daily Trust*, 21/08/13)

Incidentally, the interviewees indicate that the control of journalists and their reporting by the publishers and owners of newspapers is more in relation to the business and economic interests of the media owners and not necessarily in accordance with political fragmentation. For instance, the publishers of the major independent newspapers (*The Guardian*, *Daily Trust*, *This Day* and *The Punch*) are all business entrepreneurs with interests in key aspects of the economy (publishing, banking and finance, insurance, telecommunications, entertainment, shipping, aviation, etc.) and are touchy about how issues in these areas are reported by their newspapers. KA and AO identify this trend in *The Guardian* newspapers, corroborated by RA and AA for the *Daily Trust* newspaper, etc.

For instance, when Mrs Cecilia Ibru, a bank chief executive and the wife of one of the owners of *The Guardian* newspaper, was jailed in 2012 for fraud, *The Guardian* newspaper completely blanked out any reference to the news – although this made the headlines in most of the other major newspapers. However, on the political side, given the fact that none of the publishers of these main independent newspapers is a known card carrying member of any political party, the reporters tend to enjoy more free hands to do their jobs in their classic roles as facilitators and watchdogs of democracy – hence there is more convergence in the coverage of socio-political news than in the coverage of economic and business news. The government authorities, another source of interference, are often concerned more with issues of national security (KA, AO).

Although these trends of censorship reported here by the journalists strongly suggest an inclination of the Nigerian press towards the system of the Political Economy, given the dilution of their watchdog functions through the structures of ownership and control, the point

to be made here is the fact that the Nigerian journalists consistently resist, confront and repudiate these constraints in order to perform their Constitutional political functions of the watchdog of the country's nascent democracy. Indeed, it is the struggle of the journalists and the independent press to free themselves from the restrictions of the socio-economic and political power elites, in order to perform their normative political functions, that largely accounts for the high incidence of violence, harassments, intimidation, arrests, detentions and assassinations visited on Nigerian journalists – as already identified by Ndujihe (2010, op. cit.; The Africa Media Barometer Nigeria (2011, op. cit.; and Adesoji, 2010, op. cit.)) among others.

7.2.0 Professionalism and ethics in the Nigerian press

Other key issues raised by the journalists interviewed for this study converge loosely around the key issues of professionalism and ethics in journalism practice in Nigerian. All the journalists have varied and interesting accounts of their experiences in journalism practice in Nigeria – especially with regards to the coverage of elections in general, and the coverage of the 2011 elections in particular. As indicated earlier, the semi-structured interviews with Nigerian practising journalists were conducted in the context of the 2011 general election. All the interviewed journalists participated in the coverage of the election. While some of the journalists were fully out in the field, on the campaign trail of some of the key political actors, like the National Assembly (parliamentary), governorship and presidential candidates, some others processed and produced the incoming news of the elections at the news desks. The journalists, who were all asked specific questions about their experiences in the coverage of the 2011 general election, identified other problems and challenges they faced in the coverage of the election in particular, and in their professional journalism work in general. These problems and challenges included violence and threats of violence experienced by some of the journalists during the coverage of the 2011 general election; exposure to inducements and bribes by political actors; and the general poor working conditions and welfare situation of the journalists – as they narrated fully in this chapter. The problem of exposure to political violence and corruption encountered by the professional journalists in the context of the coverage of the 2011 general election mirrors the same thematic elements of political violence and corruption identified earlier in this thesis in the analysis of front page news headlines (Chapter 5) as well as in the analysis of the editorial opinions (Chapter 6) as the dominant themes in the sampled newspapers during the period of the 2011 general election in Nigeria.

These issues identified by the participants also affirm the themes identified earlier in studies and reports, and include the following: security hazards and risks of violence, low wages and poor remunerations, irregular payment of salaries and allowances, sexual harassment, censorship, lack of work tools and modern technological equipment, lack of training and professional development. Indeed, the journalists affirm that most of these obstacles and challenges were amplified during the critical period of the general election when official corruption was rife and political violence was spreading like a wild fire across Nigeria. (See Chapter 2, Context; Chapter 5 and Chapter 6) The discussion of the semi-structured interview with the journalists in this Chapter is divided into six sections dealing with these various but related themes of deplorable working conditions, corruption in the media, technology, training and professional practice, censorship arising from ownership and control structures, sexual harassment, and security hazards and violence to journalists.

7.2.1 Deplorable working conditions

One of the broad themes on which all the journalists (100%) who participated in the semi-structured interviews agreed was the issue of the deplorable working conditions for Nigerian journalists. The journalists affirm that these deplorable working conditions manifest most especially in terms of low and irregular salaries, non-payment of allowances, non-observation of leaves and off-days. One of the interviewees, BM, a senior correspondent (*This Day*) affirms this.

Poor remuneration is one of the major problems with the Nigerian press. The salary is nothing to write home about. After 16 years in journalism, I still earn a paltry salary of a little over N100, 000 a month (about £400). There is no proper pension scheme: As I speak with you now, I am not sure of any pension or gratuity, after 16 years in journalism. This is accounts partly also for my frequent movements from one media house to another, because of the problems in the media houses.

- BM (Interviewed in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria, 21/08/2013)

BM claims that his peers in other professions like banking, ICT, oil and gas and the international organizations earn four or five times more than he does. AO, a senior correspondent in *The Guardian newspaper*, corroborates the issue of low wages and poor remuneration for journalists. He affirms that the salaries and wages are not just very low: they are also very irregular and are often paid in arrears.

The salaries of journalists in most media houses are very poor. And even this is often paid in arrears. Some of the newspaper houses owe journalists arrears of salaries of eight months, 15 months and even up to two years.

- AO (Jos, 21/08/2013).

BM has even a more compelling narrative on the issue of irregular payment of salaries in his own media organization.

My organization usually owes staff up to six months' salary arrears at any point in time. This is a regular practice: after six months of accumulated unpaid salaries, the company pays three months and waits three more months before the next pay cheque – which brings the arrears back to six months. The newspaper has been picketed twice by the workers union for non-payment of salaries. I received my bank's alert today informing me of the payment of my salaries for May and June – when I should have been expecting the salary for August. You can be transferred from one station to another, at little or

no notice, and without the payment of any allowances to aid your relocation. BM (21/08/2013)

Some of the journalists claim that with the low salaries and irregular payment of these salaries by the media houses, they often have to use their own personal resources to supplement what they need to perform their official functions. This further impoverishes the journalists whose resources are already very low.

The work of journalists involves a lot nocturnal activities which further drain the personal resources of the journalists. Many engagements that will lead to news last into the night. Many meetings with news sources also take place at late hours in the night. The reporter has to do a lot of running around, often with their own resources. Even if you have a personal car for your own mobility, sometimes you may not even have money for fuel – and no transport allowance is given to you.

AO, Jos, 21/08/13.

These representative samples of the interviews of the journalists indicate serious concerns with the issue of very low salaries as well as irregular payment of the salaries, despite the fact that they are already very low. As observed in a seminar by Garba Bello, an official of the Nigerian Union of Journalists (Abuja, 2013), “Whenever you discuss the issue of salaries and working conditions of journalists, the media owners are usually very jittery, because they are all guilty. The issue of poor salaries no doubt affects the performance of journalists”. These views expressed by the Nigerian journalists confirm the findings in earlier reports and studies which made findings of poor working conditions and very low salaries in the journalism profession in Nigeria. (See the Media Barometer Nigeria 2011, op. cit., Adesoji, 2010, op. cit., Aimufua, 2007, op. cit.) The fact that Nigerian journalists receive low wage has also been affirmed by the findings of studies of Muhammad (2009) who has shown that among the challenges hindering investigative journalism in Nigeria and the failure of Nigerian journalists

in uncovering corruption are poor remuneration, bad working conditions, internal and external corruption both within the media and the relationship between publishers and politicians (p.155).

7.2.2 Corruption in the media

The notion of brown envelope journalism (corruption in the media) has been a subject of debates and studies by African scholars (Skjerdal, 2010; Kasoma, 2010). As indicated earlier in Chapter 3, several previous studies and reports observed that corruption was eating deep into the fabric of the Nigerian media. The journalists confirm these findings. Some of the journalists claim that the corruption in the media is fuelled by the low salaries and wages already discussed above; the non-payment of allowances and the attitude of the media owners and their managers.

The attitude of the employers and publishers is very worrisome. There is no motivation for journalists. The attitude of the publishers is they have given you a job and they don't really care how you do it. Often, there are no allowances for official trips. I have had on several occasions to use my own money and personal resources to travel to places where I was researching or obtaining news stories. During the coverage of the 2011 general elections, I was sent from my duty station (Abuja) to another state (Kwara State) to cover the state elections – without any allowances. I managed to survive because I am from that state and I have some family relations in the state. How can you send a reporter to cover an election in another state, without any allowances – yet the reporter is not expected to accept any gifts or money from politicians and other news sources?

RA (Jos, 21/08/13)

BL corroborates that the attitude of some publishers, including his own, seems to encourage journalists to be corrupt.

The publisher is known to tell journalists that by giving them an employment letter and his newspaper's identification card, he had already given them a 'meal ticket' and so they did not really need salaries and allowances from him. To survive within this situation of irregular salaries, many journalists (although I don't do it) take to soliciting contracts from politicians and public office holders; extortion and collection of 'brown envelopes' (bribes) from news sources and news makers.

- BL (Jos, 21/08/13).

This indeed sounds like a licence for corruption. Giving professional journalists very low salaries – and paying them very irregularly, and sending journalists out to cover a general election, in a very corrupt and violent country like Nigeria (as indicated in Chapter 2), sounds like a recipe for compromise and moral disasters. Overall, many of the journalists indicate that a clear impact of the low wages and poor working conditions of journalists is *corruption* in the Nigerian media. They claim that the situation is made much worse during the general election when corrupt politicians pump a lot of money into the system in an attempt to corrupt the political process by trying to induce the voters, the media and other critical segments of society to support their quest for power.

For journalists with very low wages and irregular payment, the temptation could be very strong indeed. RA (2013, op. cit.) asks a rhetorical question which seems to sum up the nexus between low wages / poor conditions of service and corruption in the Nigerian media: "How can you send a reporter to cover an election in another state, without any allowances – yet the reporter is not expected to accept any gifts or money from politicians and other news sources?" However, none of the journalists interviewed admitted to being involved in the corruption in the Nigerian media. None admitted accepting brown envelopes (bribes) or any form of inducements to do their work.

I know that some journalists do it (take bribes) but I don't. When you start collecting money from these people (politicians and other news sources) you put

yourself in danger. I have a job to do and I try and live within my income. *BM (21/08/13)*

RD, a news editor, asserts:

Although I don't have money, it is in my own interest not to collect money from these people. It makes me free to do my work. Nobody can call me and say to me, 'please drop that story', or 'please don't use so and so story'. The moment you start collecting money from them, you become their stooge – and their slave.

- RD, Abuja, 05/12/15.

KA (*The Guardian*) affirms:

A journalist is supposed to expose corruption, fraud, etc. and keep public officers accountable. But the journalist has to be empowered to do his job. There is a saying that if you fight corruption, corruption fights back. But as journalists, we still have to do our work, even with all the problems and the challenges. My belief in the Supreme Being (God) has been the major factor that has sustained me in the (journalism) profession.

KA (Abuja, Oct. 02, 2013)

Although journalists are aware of that corruption in the media is unethical, as confirmed by BM, RA, AO and AA and several others, yet the unethical practices are rationalized on the basis of survival.

For such journalists, it is a battle for survival. And the publishers and media owners do not make matters any better. *BM, 21/08/13*

This view is similarly affirmed by RA:

They (media owners) give you a job to do but do not give you the means with which to do the job.

RA, 21/08/13

Indeed, as the interviewees pointed out, the *Code of Ethics for Nigerian Journalists* (1998), which is freely available to members of the Nigerian Union of Journalists and the Nigerian Guild of Editors and other professional journalism bodies or associations in the country, clearly provides the ethical guidelines by which journalists can judge and be judged. The Code emphasizes the need for journalism practitioners to maintain “critical reporting, accuracy, fairness and objectivity”. (The Code of Ethics for Nigerian Journalists, 1998, p.4) The Code states clearly that “a journalist should neither solicit nor accept bribe, gratification or patronage to suppress or publish information; to demand payment for the publication of news is inimical to the notion of news as a fair, accurate, unbiased and factual report of an event”. (Ibid.) Indeed, the provisions of the Code of Ethics for Nigerian Journalists capture the spirit of the Liberal Media Theory (watchdog model), as examined in the Literature Review, which places a heavy burden on the media practitioner as a fair, objective and unbiased umpire – indeed, the watchdog of the society. But can a hungry watchdog effectively perform its task of policing the society, holding public office holders accountable and facilitating democracy and good governance? The low pay and poor working condition of Nigerian journalists, which expose journalists to the temptations of inducement by newsmakers and news sources through bribes (brown envelopes) and sundry gratifications, constitute some of the major challenges and obstacles on the way of Nigerian journalists in the effective performance of the watchdog role assigned to the press by the Nigerian Constitution (1999, Amended).

However, the journalists interviewed for this study were quick to point out that despite these challenges and obstacles, they never forget for one moment that, as journalists and media professionals, they are called upon by the National Constitution to play a crucial role as watchdogs of society and facilitators of good governance in the context of the country’s emerging democracy. They point out that the watchdog role imposed on the press by the Constitution overrides all other considerations and helps to motivate them and sustain their zeal in the performance of their professional duties as journalists.

It is our country; as journalists, we have a stake in helping to make it better.

- RA, 21/08/13.

Another of the interviewees concurs on the unflinching commitment of Nigerian journalists to the performance of their professional duties of the society's watchdog imposed on them by the Constitution:

The military messed up the country. Now that we have democracy back, it is our duty as journalists to make democracy survive and to function – in the interest of all Nigerians, especially the coming generation, our children and our children's children. – *UO (Osun, 06/04/04)*

All the journalists assert that they are fully conscious of the Constitutional role of the Nigerian press as the *watchdog* of the society, hence their courage and commitment to doing their work in reporting the news objectively, exposing corruption and various socio-economic and political malfeasances – in spite of the poor working and welfare conditions of Nigerian journalists and the challenges and obstacles they face on the job. Although these obstacles and challenges dampen their morale, they do not significantly detract the journalists from focusing on the performance of their professional duties and the fulfilment of the watchdog role assigned to the media by the Nigerian Constitution (1999 as amended). Indeed, it is significant that in spite of these challenges, obstacles and poor working conditions, which could have made the Nigerian press to capitulate and to become a *lap dog* of the government in power, the political parties and the social and economic power elite, the Nigerian independent press has remained a vibrant, fiercely independent and very critical watchdog of the society, performing the democratic role of the media as indicated in the news stories and editorial opinions analysed in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 of this thesis.

7.3 Technology, training, and professional practice

Nigerians journalists do not only contend with the economic, social and political issues of low wages, corruption and violence, they also have to negotiate the need for the provision of critical work tools and other necessary technological equipment which are taken for granted in the more developed world. These challenges lead to a lack of professionalism was one of the key issues identified by the journalists in the context of the Nigerian media. They claim that they lack the basic work tools, the training and the updating of skills which would enhance their professionalism as media practitioners.

Many Nigerian press reporters lack modern electronic gadgets for processing and sending their news stories – in spite of the intense pressures and tight deadlines associated with the job. Things like laptops, internet facilities or smart phones are often lacking – unless you can afford to buy them for yourself. Journalism in Nigeria is a very stressful job. There are so many assignments to cover for the news reporter. The editors are always in a hurry for you to get the story. So, there is no room for in depth research and proper story writing. And there is no rest for the journalist. Journalism has no respect for your time. You have no weekends. Even on Sundays, you work almost all day. There is so much wahala² in journalism.

- TJ (Jos, 21/08/13)

AW (*This Day*) corroborates this and adds that reporters even go the extra mile to use their own resources to buy their basic work tools and to train themselves in various new media skills in order to enhance their professionalism – without having to wait for the management of their media organizations to assist them in this regard.

Reporters lack basic work tools like tape recorders, laptops and even operational vehicles. With their meagre and

² Yoruba word for trouble

irregular wages, journalists still have to buy these basic work tools like tape recorders and laptops by themselves.

- AW (Jos, 21/08/13)

These assertions by the journalists are confirmed by Larkin (2004) who observed that the Nigerian media, especially the cinema, which was the focus of his empirical inquiry in Nigeria, operate on the margin of technological advancement irrespective of the apparent connection of Nigeria to a globalized media system.

Another issue identified by the journalists which inhibits their professionalism is the lack of training and regular updating of skills. The journalists contend that the media owners could do a lot to enhance professionalism by encouraging and supporting the journalists to undertake professional trainings, educational and other capacity building programmes – in order to update their skills and enhance their professional practices and competences. However, the media owners and their managers do not do this.

There is little educational progression or academic advancement for journalists – unless you get off the job. I entered journalism with a first degree. Sixteen (16) years later, I have not had a chance to do a second degree. You only get to attend workshops and seminars.

- IB (Jos, 21/08/2013)

AA, a senior line editor, corroborates this:

Many practising journalists in the field are not exposed to regular trainings, workshops and professional conferences. There is a need for improvement in the coverage of the electoral process. Nigerian journalists need to look inwards and see how to update themselves in terms of their skills and their job performance. There has been a little bit of improvement, but there is still more to be done. We need to improve on electoral coverage in order to build a solid

foundation for future elections. There is a need for journalists to purge themselves of sentiments and biases, in order to enhance our credibility and respect in the eyes of the public.

AA (Abuja: 02/10/13)

RA (*Daily Trust*) also identifies the issue of quacks and fake journalists in the media in Nigeria as another factor that undermines professionalism.

There are many quacks and fake journalists in the journalism profession in Nigeria. This undermines professionalism and makes people look at journalists with suspicion and mistrust. This encourages the poor attitude of Nigerians to journalists; Nigerians tend to look down on journalists and this attitude reflects in the way they treat journalists or relate with journalists. Some of us have managed to continue in the profession just because of the passion we have for journalism.

- RA, 21/08/13.

7.4 Sexual harassment

Another theme that came up during the interview, but which was discussed by only one participant, was the issue of sexual harassment, especially of female journalists. This raises the issue of gender and professionalism. The Nigerian society has always leaned towards the patriarchal system. Caught between the traditional and the modern, the structure is still based on what Makama (2013) defines as “a set of social relations with material base which enables men to dominate women” (p.115). There is a blurred line between the modern, whereby female journalists are not immune to harassment from security agents, just as the men (as discussed in the next section) and the traditional, where women are seen as inferior to men (Makama, 2013; Agbalajobi, 2010). This attitude is expressed in sexual harassment which female journalists experience from both within and outside the media houses they work for, as narrated by RA (*Daily Trust*).

As a female journalist, one of the major problems I have faced is sexual harassment. It is always there. Most of the men you come in contact with as news sources want to go out with you. To survive, I developed a reputation as a ‘no nonsense lady’. Indeed, after I got married, some of my contacts said to me: ‘Miss journalist, so you do talk to men?’

RA, 21/08/2013.

The fact that only one journalist out of 12 (including four female journalists) spoke about it suggests either that it may be of very little occurrence – or that it is grossly under-reported or under-represented. RA, who has experienced sexual harassment and spoke openly about it, thinks it is under-reported and under-represented, because people may not often want to discuss such things. Although the other female journalists did not talk of any incidents of sexual harassment, RA says that the incidence of sexual harassment in the Nigerian media, especially of female journalists, is very widespread:

It is always there, but many do not want to talk about it.

RA, 21/08/2013.

The point that some other female journalists may not discuss this issue, even when RA claims it is very widespread, may arguably be due to the tabooed nature of such a subject and the fact that within the Nigerian society, discrimination and gender inequality between men and women have not been empirically given much consideration (Makama, 2013; Agbalajobi, 2010).

7.5 Security hazards and violence to journalists

As indicated earlier in this Chapter, as well as in Chapter 3 (Literature Review), journalism in Nigeria is a very risky and very dangerous profession, with journalists frequently arrested, detained or murdered in the course of their professional work (Ndujihe, 2010, op. cit). Nigeria is thus a country where harassment, arrests, detention and assassination of journalists in the exercise of their duties are still common. This clearly suggests a reflection of the political violence in the society already indicated in the news and editorial opinions of the independent

newspapers (Chapters 5 and 6), as well as previous studies and reports on Nigeria (Chapters 2 and 3). The Nigerian press is thus not immune to the pervasive violence already identified in the Nigerian society. All the journalists interviewed for this study have faced or encountered one form of violence, harassment or intimidation in the course of their professional work as journalists. This was even more so during the 2011 general election when political crises during the election and post-election violence led to the deaths of scores of Nigerians and the destruction of so much property in various parts of the country (See Lemu Report, op. cit., 2011). Some of the journalists interviewed faced harassment and violence or the threat of violence directly from security agents and other partisan political in the coverage of the 2011 general election in Nigeria, while the other journalists encountered harassment and violence on the beat as meted out to other journalists and even ordinary citizens. KA, a line editor and field reporter (*The Guardian* newspaper), recalls an incident of electoral violence in Ekiti State (south west Nigeria) during the 2011 general elections.

Politicians from different camps and opposing parties, with their supporters and political thugs, clashed. It was a free-for-all fight. Guns and other dangerous weapons were freely used. We had to escape. Although I did not suffer any personal injuries or harm, it was a traumatic experience. I believe that the very high level of violence in Nigerian politics is because of the desire of many Nigerian politicians to win at all costs and by all means.

- KA (*The Guardian*, Abuja, 02/10/13)

BM also encountered violence and harassment during the coverage of the general election. He recalls an incident in Rivers State (South-South Nigeria) when a group of armed policemen prevented journalists from entering the office of the electoral commission for the announcement of an election result.

The policemen attempted to manhandle the journalists and threatened to deal with us – and we took to our heels. – BM, 21/08/13.

AO (*The Guardian*) did not experience any violence personally but knows many other journalists who did. He is deeply concerned about the dangers and risks of violence faced by journalists, especially during the periods of general election coverage.

There are a lot of risks to reporters in Nigeria, especially during the coverage of elections. Although I did not experience any violence personally during the election, I know some colleagues in the broadcast media who were molested by security men while they were covering the elections. Their cameras and other equipment were seized and damaged by security operatives.

AO, Abuja, 05/12/14

AA, a line editor (*Daily Trust newspaper*), asserts that given the immense risks involved in reporting Nigerian politics, a Nigerian journalist in the field on an election coverage is “an endangered species”. He recalls an incident when a group of journalists he was with was confronted by armed militants with sophisticated weapons in Ogoniland (Niger Delta) during the election coverage. All the journalists naturally fled. The threat posed by ethnic militants who harassed journalists in Ogoniland (Niger Delta) as recounted above by AA, a political editor, also confirms the indications given in the analysis of news and editorial opinions that in addition to terrorists and religious insurgents, ethnic militants and government’s security agents were also major sources of political violence in Nigeria.

RA, also of the *Daily Trust newspaper*, gives perhaps the most touching account of her experience of the hazards of the profession during her coverage of the 2011 general election. She came close to being shot by an armed security operative while she was on election duty. She asserts:

Journalism in Nigeria is a very risky profession. During the coverage of the 2011 general election, I was close to being shot by armed security men. “I took photographs with my camera and a group of armed security men in the area thought I was focusing on them. They ordered me to surrender my camera and one of them threatened to shoot me and actually

aimed his gun at me. I looked him in the face and told him to go ahead and shoot me if that was what he wanted to do.

RA, 21/08/13.

Luckily, she lived to tell the story.

PS and AK, (Osun State, who are also both members of the National Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ) also testified to the violence and hazards faced by journalists in Nigeria. PS reaffirms her regular line that Nigerian journalists are, indeed, “on the firing line”. She was pushed and shoved by a policeman on one occasion during her coverage of the elections and she was forced to retreat from the scene to avoid further consequences. AB, another female journalist, confirms that two of her colleagues had faced harassment and intimidation from some political office seekers following some news reports they filed for their media organizations which the persons in question found unfavourable to their political ambitions. These reported incidents of violence, threats of violence, harassment and intimidation of journalists involving security operatives (police, army, state security agents etc.) also confirm the indications obtained from the analysis of the editorial opinions that in addition to terrorists, religious insurgents, ethnic militants and political thugs and hirelings who fuel violence in Nigeria, the government’s security agents are also among the major sources of political violence in the country.

These incidents of violence recounted by the journalists, which they experienced or witnessed, occurred in different parts of the country, especially the North, the West and the South-South (Niger Delta) regions of the country – an indication of the wide spread of political violence in the various geo-political zones of the country, especially during the period of the general election. Muhammad (2009) has confirmed that Nigerian journalists are physically assaulted in the process of being investigative in their reportage.

7. 6 Impacts of these challenges and obstacles on journalism practice in Nigeria and the coverage of the 2011 general election

All the journalists interviewed agreed that the issue of low wages and generally poor remuneration of journalists in Nigeria is at the root of the corruption and ethical misconduct which have permeated the practice of journalism in Nigeria. They noted that since some media houses have become notorious for not paying their reporters regularly, with some of them owing arrears of workers' salaries for as long eight months, journalists were exposed to the temptations of collecting bribes – which invariably hindered the objectivity of their reportage in the long run. To make ends meet, some journalists were also *moonlighting* – doing several jobs at the same time. The journalists interviewed noted that given the constitutional role of the Nigerian media as the Fourth Estate of the Realm and the society's *watchdog*, a compromised and corrupt press would be unable to foster the media pluralism and open communication which would enhance a healthy political process in the country. Although it is not easy to demonstrate empirically how these challenges and obstacles have actually affected the work of Nigerian press reporters on the field, one can safely assume that a poorly motivated, poorly paid, corrupt and distracted journalist may not be in the best frame of mind to serve as an effective watchdog of the society. But the journalists interviewed denied ever taking bribes to do their work.

As indicated earlier, the journalists interviewed were all involved in the coverage of the 2011 general election mostly in the field as reporters or as line editors producing reports of the election – as in several previous general elections in Nigeria. Generally, as could be seen from their responses, they underscored the various institutional and professional weaknesses which undermine electoral coverage in Nigeria – and which also undermined the coverage of the 2011 general election. With specific reference to the 2011 general election, the journalists interviewed indicated, albeit without mentioning specific instances, that these weaknesses, problems and challenges undermined their effective coverage of the election. One of the journalists interviewed, RA, narrated how she was posted from Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, where she lived and worked, to another state to cover the 2011 general election – without being given any relocation or transport allowances or any spending money whatsoever. The publishers just assumed that she would get by and do the job – by whatever means possible. As she observed in the interview, “How can you send a reporter to cover an election in another state, without any allowances – yet the reporter is not expected to accept any gifts or money from politicians and other news sources?” Although the journalist did not give any further details of how she coped in the coverage of the 2011 general election, the

implication of the situation for professionalism, ethics and effective electoral coverage could be deduced. And she was not alone in being placed in such compromising situations which undermine electoral coverage in Nigeria. As also shown in the accounts of the interviewed journalists, several of them faced violence or violent situations, including a threat of being shot by armed security operatives (RA) in the course of the coverage of the 2011 general election in Nigeria. No doubt, these institutional and professional challenges and weaknesses undermine the coverage of elections in Nigeria. Another of the journalists interviewed in Abuja (AA, 2013), summed it up thus: “We need to improve on electoral coverage in order to build a solid foundation for future elections. There is a need for journalists to purge themselves of sentiments and biases, in order to enhance our credibility...”

From all the foregoing, it could be seen that while vigorously affirming their professionalism and high moral standards, the journalists interviewed for this study conceded that there is a high degree of bribery, inducements, brown envelop journalism and various other forms of unethical and unprofessional practices in the Nigerian media. This affirms the assertions of media scholars like Oso (1991; 2012) who have been very critical of the Nigerian press. Oso (2012) points out that journalists and other commentators have often attributed the high degree of unethical practices in Nigerian journalism to the parlous economic situation of many media organizations, many of which cannot adequately take care of the welfare of their workers in terms of payment of salary, training, etc. (Oso, 2012, op. cit., p.33).

7.7 Measures recommended by the journalists to tackle the obstacles and challenges

Overall, the journalists recommended various solutions to the challenges and obstacles they identified as constituting impediments to the professional discharge of their duties. These can be summarized under the following sub-headings:

- Better pay for journalists
- New welfare and insurance scheme for journalists
- Provision of work tools
- Training and capacity building for journalists
- More dedication on the part of journalists

Better pay for journalists

All the journalists interviewed (100%) agreed that the most significant challenge they faced as journalists was the issue of low salaries and poor conditions of service. They posited that to reduce corruption and improve professionalism in the journalism profession, media owners and publishers would need to improve the salaries and general conditions of service of journalists in the country. The interviewees also stressed the issue of prompt payment of salaries. They appealed to the media owners to ensure the prompt and regular payment of the salaries and allowances of the journalists who work in their establishments. The interviewees submitted that media owners should employ only the number of journalists they can afford to pay, rather than gather hundreds of men and women to work for them but cannot pay them.

New welfare and compulsory insurance scheme for journalists

The President of the Nigerian Union of Journalists, Mr Mohammed Garba, confirmed in September 2013 that subscribing to the union's insurance scheme was now compulsory for all journalists in the country. He said the scheme became compulsory because of the compelling need to enhance the welfare of Nigerian journalists. Before then, many Nigerian journalists did not have any form of insurance cover. Indeed, of three journalists who died in a tragic road accident in September 2013, on their way from an official assignment in Abuja, only one had an insurance cover – which caused nationwide indignation and led to the union's decision to make subscription to the insurance scheme compulsory for all Nigerian journalists. Garba said the Union has also initiated an endowment fund to cater for the special needs of its members.

Provision of work tools

The journalists also agreed that the newspaper houses should facilitate the work of journalists by providing them with modern equipment like laptops and internet facilities. Or give them cash advances or loans to buy such devices for themselves. This would make their jobs easier. The newspaper houses should also provide vehicles for late assignments in order to enhance the mobility of journalists.

Training and capacity building for journalists

The journalists interviewed noted that in addition to investing in the business of publishing, newspaper publishers and proprietors should also invest in the people who do the work – the journalists. “This is the best way to make the business work for them – and then they can make their money. They should take care of the little things that can make the profession better in Nigeria,” Say MB of This Day newspaper. Specifically, the journalists emphasized the need for regular training and capacity building programmes for journalists to update their skills and enhance their professionalism.

More dedication on the part of journalists

The journalists interviewed agreed that the professional bodies (the Nigerian Union of Journalists, the Nigerian Guild of Editors, the Newspapers Proprietors’ Association of Nigeria, etc.) and the regulatory agencies (the Nigerian Press Council, the National Broadcasting Commission, etc.) should do more to enhance professionalism in journalism by checking the activities of quacks, and monitoring and sanctioning unethical conduct among professional journalists. More dedication is also required on the part of journalists. Some journalists simply do not have the dedication and passion to the job – which is what keeps the committed ones going. The journalists also posited that news editors should allow more time for stories to be fully researched and developed before rushing it in for publication. This will reduce the pressure and tension on journalists.

7.8 Internal measures by newspapers to check corruption

The major independent newspapers have put measures in place to check corruption and enhance professional ethics among their press reporters and media workers. Media Trust Limited, the publishers of *Daily Trust*, *Weekly Trust*, *Sunday Trust* and *Aminiya* newspapers) regularly publishes a full page Public Notice titled: “**NO, THANK YOU!**” The notice, signed by the Management and directed at the newspapers’ numerous readers, news-makers, advertisers and other well-wishers, says in part:

The practice of journalism in Nigeria today has acquired some odium due to the ‘brown envelope syndrome’. For those who may want it spelled out, ‘brown envelope’ is the practice whereby journalists, or those who pass off themselves as such, insist on being paid to cover events, write news reports or feature articles (that are clearly not to be paid for). This practice is not limited to the lowly reporter; it obtains also at the high echelons in media organizations. Similarly, many reporters and editors are offered gifts and gratification, sometimes with the overt aim of influencing their work.

(Daily Trust, Sept. 20, 2010, p.54).

The organization observes that some of these gifts could be described as ‘token’, and may be offered in ways it may be rude or self-righteous for the journalist to reject there and then. Where this is the case, the journalist is expected to declare the gift. The company emphasizes that:

It is the policy of Media Trust that its editors and reporters should not solicit for gift or gratification either through begging, flattering, cajoling or blackmailing those they encounter in the course of their work. Where a gift can be graciously declined, we expect our staff to do so. However, where it is pressed on them, they will declare it so that the company can write a letter thanking the giver and donating the gift to charity.

(Daily Trust, Sept. 20, 2010, p.54)

In these regular publications, the newspaper requests its readers, advertisers and newsmakers, not to seek to influence its reporters and editors with bribe, gratification and gifts – and to report anyone claiming to be its member of staff who engages in such unethical conduct. The newspaper goes ahead to provide telephone numbers and e-mail addresses to contact for whistle-blowing information regarding any unethical conduct by any of its journalists and

media workers. *The Punch* newspaper has a back page advertorial piece which it runs regularly, encouraging readers to report any cases of impropriety which they may notice on the part of the newspaper's staff. The piece, titled *Ethical Complaints?* declares:

We, The Punch Nigeria Ltd., do not demand or accept gifts or gratification to publish articles or photographs, neither do our journalists. Therefore, we employ you not to offer any to our journalists. In the event that a Punch journalist demands such, please send your complaints to Ethics@punch.com

(*The Punch*, Friday, Sept. 06, 2013, p.64)

The Guardian and *This Day* newspapers also have similar measures and publish similar messages to check corruption and sundry unethical practices among their journalists and other media workers.

7.9 Conclusion

In the foregoing Chapter, an indicative representative number of Nigerian journalists interviewed for this study identified some of the major challenges and issues in the working conditions of journalists in Nigeria. Although this is a small indicative sample, the accounts and experiences of these journalists are supported by earlier studies and reports on the practices and working conditions of journalists in Nigeria as indicated in the Chapter 1 and Chapter 3 (Literature Review). Indeed, the discussion in this Chapter followed up on the discussion of the themes of political violence and corruption in the Nigerian context already discussed in the analysis of the headline news (Chapter 5) and the editorial opinions (Chapter 6) of the newspapers during the period of the 2011 general election. The analysis also explored a select number of other themes already identified by earlier studies and reports on the working conditions and professional practices of journalists in Nigeria. These key themes included the deplorable working conditions of Nigerian journalists, corruption in the media,

lack of professionalism, security hazards and dangers to journalists and censorship (See the African Media Barometer Nigeria, 2011, op. cit. p. 5; Adesoji, 2010, op. cit., p.23 and Aimufua, 2007, op. cit.) The journalists interviewed for this study identified similar challenges and obstacles which they face and which have serious impacts on their professional work. The journalists also identified some measures which they want the media owners and publishers to adopt in order to enhance the performance of their professional duties of the society's *watchdog* ascribed to the media by the Nigerian Constitution.

In spite of the many challenges and hazards faced by Nigerian journalists, especially press reporters, they have nonetheless been able to rise above these and perform creditably in providing political news and information to Nigerians during the general elections. Indeed, despite the difficulties they faced and the obstacles they encountered, some of the interviewed journalists who covered the 2011 general election stressed that they took it as a personal challenge to go out there and report the news of the election to their readers – even at great personal costs to themselves. As noted by the African Media Barometer Nigeria (2011):

There is (a) consensus among experts with a keen attention on Nigeria that the country's media currently stands at a tipping point. How the positive and negative forces identified above eventually play out is left to be seen. Many agree though, that the welfare of journalists is critical to the direction the media will ultimately take, for better or worse.

(African Media Barometer Nigeria, op. cit., p.5).

Overall, what stands out from the interviews is that despite the many challenges and obstacles which Nigerian press reporters face in the course of their duties, they are still able to rise above these challenges in the performance of their classic role as facilitators and watchdogs of democracy – while seeking ways to enhance ethics and professionalism. Although all the journalists interviewed denied ever taking bribes to do their work, they confirmed that corruption was rife in the Nigerian media and they were aware of incidents of corruption among some of their colleagues. The journalists interviewed asserted that the issue of low wages and generally poor working condition of journalists in Nigeria was at the root of the corruption and unethical practices which have permeated the journalism profession in Nigeria.

They noted that since some media houses have become notorious for not paying their reporters regularly, with some of them owing arrears of workers' salaries for as long eight months, journalists were exposed to the temptations of collecting bribes – which invariably hindered the objectivity of their reportage in the long run. To make ends meet, some journalists were also *moonlighting* – doing several jobs at the same time. The journalists interviewed noted that given the constitutional role of the Nigerian media as the Fourth Estate of the Realm and the society's *watchdog*, a compromised and corrupt press would be unable to foster the media pluralism and open communication which would enhance a healthy political process in the country.

The trends of violence, corruption, intimidation, sexual harassment, low wages and censorship reported here by the journalists strongly suggest an inclination of the Nigerian media system towards the model of the Political Economy, given the dilution of the watchdog functions of the press through the structures of ownership and control and other social and political power relations. However, the point to be made here is the fact that despite the observed incidents of unprofessional and unethical conducts, the Nigerian journalists and the independent press consistently resist, confront and repudiate these constraints in order to perform their Constitutional political functions of the watchdog of the country's nascent democracy. Indeed, it is the struggle of the journalists and the independent press to free themselves from the restrictions of the socio-economic and political power elites, in order to perform their normative political functions, that largely accounts for the high incidence of violence, harassments, intimidation, arrests, detentions and assassinations visited on Nigerian journalists – as already identified by Ndujihe (2010, op. cit.; The Africa Media Barometer Nigeria (2011, op. cit.; p.5 and Adesoji, 2010, op. cit., p.23) among others.

Overall, Nigerian journalists in the independent press have performed creditably well in discharging their watchdog duties, in spite of a lot of severe constraints and challenges. However, a lot still needs to be done to lift their game to the next level. As one of the interviewed journalists (AA) opined to his fellow Nigerian journalists, “*We need to improve on electoral coverage in order to build a solid foundation for future elections*”.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

8.0 Introduction

This study set out to test the performance of the political role of the press in the context of Nigeria as an emerging democracy in Africa. To achieve this purpose, the study adopted three main methods: content analysis, critical discourse analysis and semi-structured interviews. The content analysis focused on the front page headline news of two major newspapers in Nigeria, *The Guardian* and the *Daily Trust*, in order to determine the dominant themes they covered in the news during the period under review, as an indication of the level of importance they attached to those themes by pushing them to the front page of national discourse. In the second stage, through the use of the qualitative technique of critical discourse analysis, the study sought to identify the ideological and political positions and stance of the newspapers in their editorial opinions on these major issues they covered in their main news reports – especially the critical twin issues of political violence and corruption which have posed as veritable threats to Nigeria’s nascent democracy. Thirdly, through exploratory semi-structured interviews of an indicative, select number of news reporters, line editors and managers, the study sought to identify some of the major challenges faced by Nigerian journalists in their working conditions and professional practices – and how these challenges impact on the performance of their official duties and the discharge of the constitutional obligation of the press as the watchdog of the society and facilitator of democracy and good governance. This Chapter is divided into five main sections which will review the main findings of the study in the news analysis, the analysis of the editorial opinions, the semi-structured interviews, and the theoretical and methodological implications of the findings on the role of the press in an emerging African democracy like Nigeria.

8.1.0 Review of the main findings

This section reviews the main findings of the study in the three empirical chapters which undertook an analysis of the news coverage, an analysis of the editorial opinions and the exploratory interviews with journalists.

8.1.1 Analysis of news coverage

The analysis of the front page headline news of the newspapers revealed that political violence and corruption were the two most dominant themes covered in their front page headline news by the newspapers during the period under review. The trend is replicated in every month both during the pre-election and the post-election periods, rising slightly after the election when post-election violence broke out and spread rapidly through various states in the North of Nigeria. This is closely followed by coverage of *official corruption* in the second position (see figures). This finding answers the Research Question No.1:

What are the dominant issues/subjects covered by the two major independent newspapers during the one year period under review – the year of the 2011 general election – as indicated in their front page headline news reports and editorial commentaries?

This high extent of coverage as discovered in the analysis underscored the level of importance which the newspapers accorded to the issues of political violence and official corruption as major threats to Nigeria's nascent democracy.

Apart from positioning in the front page headline, which already denotes the highest level of importance of a news story, the study also found that the Nigerian press, especially the tabloid *Daily Trust*, employed a certain number of physical characteristics of texts to further highlight the importance of their front page lead news stories and to draw more attention to the newspaper's copies at the news-stands – and to such important stories as they may have published for the day. Again, as observed by media scholars, the physical characteristics of texts and visual parallels used in coverage can be taken as further indicators of importance (see Hansen et al, 1998). Indeed, an examination of the front page news coverage of the dominant themes of corruption and political violence in the two newspapers indicated a generous use of physical and visual characteristics to highlight the prominence of the respective news items and to draw more attention to them accordingly.

The study found that during the period under review, both *The Guardian* and the *Daily Trust* newspapers employed a lot of these visual effects and physical manipulation of texts in their front page news headlines as a means of emphasizing the importance of the news in question and also attracting the attention of readers to the news in particular and to the particular newspaper in general. However, the use of these visual effects and physical characteristics of text, including the use of bright red colours to cast the headlines, to denote importance as well as danger, especially in the cases of violence involving injuries and loss of lives, was more predominant in the *Daily Trust*, the tabloid newspaper. *The Guardian*, a more conservative quality newspaper, was usually more reserved and restrained, although on some days also *The Guardian* used bold, black letters rather than red letters, to indicate and attract attention to issues of very grave importance on its front page headlines. The *Daily Trust* newspaper also occasionally used exclamation marks to stress the importance of the front page news items so highlighted. As indicated earlier, the use of these textual devices like bold, red capital letters and exclamation marks are often the hallmark of tabloid newspapers, and were frequently used by the *Daily Trust*, which is in the mould of a tabloid newspaper, and only occasionally by *The Guardian*, a quality newspaper which started out as a broadsheet.

8.1.2 Politicians and ruling elite top cases of corruption reported in the news

The study found that most of the major cases of corruption reported in the front page news headlines during the period under review involved top public office holders and government officials as well as other prominent members of the social, economic and political elite. The major culprits indicted in cases of corruption during the period under review included the following: the Honourable Speaker of the House of Representatives (Parliament) Mr Dimeji Bankole and his deputy, Mr Usman Nafada, who were indicted in 2011 for corrupt enrichment and embezzlement of public funds; several ministers and members of the Federal Cabinet; some Federal court judges and other national judicial officers; some chief executives and directors of commercial banks who looted depositors' funds – which led to the collapse of many banks and financial institutions and nearly crippled the national economy.

Similarly, politicians and other prominent members of the ruling elite were also cited in the major cases of political violence and post-election violence covered by the two newspapers

during this period. For instance, the post-election violence which swept through the country after the 2011 general election was attributed largely to the inciting utterances and of the then opposition leader, General Muhammadu Buhari, who refused to accept his defeat at the elections by the then President Goodluck Jonathan. The two other major sources of terrorism and political violence in Nigeria were also reported in the press as being the political creations of the ruling elite meant to achieve their selfish political interests and quest for political power. For instance, when the Afenifere and the Oodua People's Congress (OPC), from the South West, were the main militant groups in Nigeria, a son of the region and former military Head of State, General Olusegun Obasanjo, was elected the President of the country (1999-2007); the same situation occurred when the Niger Delta militants (South-South) held sway in Nigeria: a son of the Niger Delta, Dr Goodluck Jonathan, emerged the President (2009-2015). When the Islamist fundamentalist group Boko Haram (North East) became the major source of terrorism and political violence in Nigeria, General Muhammadu Buhari, another former military Head of State, was finally elected the President of Nigeria – after three failed attempts.

Beyond the reporting of the news of the involvement of these politicians and various public office holders in corruption and political violence, the two newspapers took clear positions in indicting these persons for their roles in perpetuating corruption and political violence in the country. The highly critical positions of the newspapers against the activities of these politicians and other public office holders in corruption and political violence are even more manifest in the construction of the editorial opinions of the newspapers as established in this study. This was a clear indication that the newspapers were not aligned with any of the political parties in their coverage of the 2011 elections and their aftermath.

8.1.3 National and regional variations in news coverage

However, in spite of the similarities in the quantum of news coverage between *The Guardian* and the *Daily Trust* on corruption and political violence, the study established a few noticeable differences in the presentation of news between the two newspapers in the coverage of the same news event – as well as in the editorial decisions to publish or not to publish the news of an event of public interest. Even when they published news stories on the

same event or incident, the two newspapers sometimes took very different stances in their news headline reports of the same event, arguably due to the differences in their regional locations as well as the ownership and control structures of the respective newspapers. This suggests a different performance of the watchdog function by the two newspapers. The regional variation is more pronounced in the analysis of the news and editorial opinions of the *Daily Trust* newspaper, which is a regional tabloid located in the North of Nigeria as opposed to *The Guardian* which is a national newspaper.

An editor of the *Daily Trust* newspaper who participated in the semi-structured interviews for this study (AA) reaffirmed the editorial policy of the newspaper as an independent, liberal newspaper without any political, tribal or religious leanings. The editor stressed that their reporting of political news, including the news of the elections, was objective and unbiased. But, despite the assurances of the editor, a few instances like the one cited above tend to support the notion that the *Daily Trust* occasionally leant towards the core Northern geo-political zone of Nigeria where it is based, while *The Guardian* also learnt slightly towards the South, where it is based. However, these variations did not seem to affect the performance of the functions of providing the coverage of important political news and information to their readers.

8.2.0 Analysis of editorial opinions in *The Guardian* and *Daily Trust*

The analysis sought to establish whether or not these newspapers in Nigeria provide critical and analytical voices for newspaper readers or whether or not they simply reflect the political positions and affiliations and business interests of their owners. After an analysis of the editorial opinions of the two newspapers, the study found that the newspapers generally came out with strong condemnations of the politicians and other public office holders who were indicted for corruption and other instances of abuse of power.

8.2.1 Spike in political violence before the general election

As pointed out earlier in the Analysis of News Coverage, the study observed a significant issue in the pattern of violence as mediated by the press during the period under review: a

progressive rise in incidents of political violence covered in the press in their news and editorial opinions as the general election drew nearer – before overflowing into post-election violence. As indicated in the Analysis of News Coverage in Chapter 6, the quantum of news coverage in the two newspapers showed a considerable increase in cases of political violence just before the general election – rising from about 21% of total front page headline news coverage and peaking around 30% on the eve of the general election, as some crooked Nigerian politicians sought to impose their wills on the electorate by any means fair or foul. In the last three months before the general election, front page headline news and editorial opinions each accounted for at least 10 of the 31 days in the month. The level of political violence finally overflowed into chaos and anarchy, culminating in the post-election riots in Northern Nigeria and the suicide bombing of key national institutions and targets by the *Boko Haram* religious / political insurgents.

8.2.2 Politicians are responsible for the wave of political violence in the country

The main political parties, the ruling People’s Democratic Party (PDP) and the opposition All Nigerian People’s Party (ANPP), as well as the many minor political parties traded blames amongst one another for the rising incidence of political violence in the country ahead of the general election. And the two newspapers under review, *The Guardian* and *Daily Trust*, were quick to notice this trend and to take a definite stand against political and electoral violence in their editorial opinions. Both newspapers also rose strongly in challenge of and resistance to the rising incidence of political violence and insecurity in the country, especially ahead of the general election and called on the government authorities to go beyond political rhetoric and curb the ugly trend of political violence spreading across the land. This performance was in line with the political role of the Nigerian press as the watchdog of society and the facilitator of the country’s nascent democracy.

8.2.3 Politicians incited post-election violence

The study also observed that the post-election violence which spread mayhem and anarchy in Nigeria after the 2011 general elections, which was one of the major incidents of political

violence covered by the press during the period under review, was reported by the press as being largely instigated by the reckless and inflammatory utterances of politicians who lost the elections but were not gallant enough to accept defeat. The post-election violence in the Northern geo-political zone was triggered by the victory of President Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian from the South, over General Muhammadu Buhari – a Muslim from the North and a former military Head of State of Nigeria. Following General Buhari’s reported statement that his ‘victory’ was stolen at the polls by the ruling party of President Jonathan, his passionate supporters erupted into an orgy of violence, arson, murder and general mayhem in the North East of Nigeria between Muslims and Christians, Northerners and Southerners. By the time the mayhem was over, hundreds of persons had lost their lives while thousands of residential houses, business premises, churches and mosques, motor vehicles and sundry property had been destroyed in towering infernos of hate. Again, the *Daily Trust* and *The Guardian* rose stoutly in condemnation of the post-election violence in Nigeria and focused on the themes of how to tackle the recurring menace of post-election violence.

The paper noted that there were claims of electoral malpractices and outright rigging, blamed principally on the ruling People’s Democratic Party (PDP) for allegedly manipulating the election to ensure that its candidate, President Goodluck Jonathan, remained in power. *The Daily Trust* observed that it would not be enough to condemn the post-election violence without asking what may have triggered such “mindless bloodletting”. The newspaper recommended that a government inquiry should thoroughly examine the underlying causes of post-election violence and identify what the government should do to address them. “The authorities should get to the root of the huge disenchantment that made it possible for such frontal attacks on even symbols of traditional authority”. The newspaper emphasized that with his renewed mandate at the election, President Jonathan should show true statesmanship and national leadership and “figure out what measures to take to unite the nation fractured by recent events and heal the wounds they have caused. Anything less will only promote the feeling of disenchantment that has swept through a large swathe of Nigeria”. (*Daily Trust*, op. cit., p.33)

Subsequent events bore out the recommendations of the newspaper as the Federal Government set up a panel of inquiry to investigate the remote and immediate causes of the post-election violence and to recommend ways and means of addressing them in order to avoid a future re-occurrence. This affirms the findings of Iyekekpolo (2018) that much of the

political violence in the country is caused by the Nigerian political elite in their quest for power. This is also in line with the findings of the Lemu Panel on post-election violence which cited the actions, utterances and reckless statements of politicians as the major triggers of the post-election violence that flared up from amongst their large population of poor, illiterate and ignorant supporters. Among its main findings, the committee observed that Nigerians yearned for a change regarding the failure of successive governments, since the country's independence in 1960, to deliver the dividends of democracy and good governance to the Nigerian people, who are still plagued by epileptic supply of electricity, deplorable roads, corruption, poverty, insecurity of life and property, public frustration and disappointment. The committee warned that "the true state of affairs could escalate to social revolution if preventive measures are not taken on time" (*The Guardian*, "Lemu report on election violence," October 25, 2011, p.18).

By constantly mediating these national issues and problems and keeping them on the front burner of national discourse, holding public office holders to account, followed by appropriate and positive recommendations for public policy on how to remedy the bad situation in the country, the Nigerian independent press, as exemplified by *The Guardian* and the *Daily Trust*, have consistently performed their constitutional duties as the watchdogs of the society and facilitators of good governance.

In the performance of their democratic role, the press went beyond criticism to offering recommendations for positive change. The study established that beyond the criticisms, lamentations and condemnations of the evils of official corruption and political violence, both newspapers made comprehensive recommendations and suggestions for the treatment of the twin scourges of official corruption and political violence which they have variously identified as veritable threats to the sustenance of democracy and good governance in Nigeria. This is in line with their duty as the watchdogs of society and facilitators of democracy and good governance. As has been shown so far, *The Guardian* has very critical and very strong views on corruption and its debilitating effects on Nigeria. The paper observes that although Nigeria has always witnessed high profile cases of corrupt public officials, there are hardly any real convictions – hence the need for the security agencies to do diligent investigations and proper prosecution of these high profile cases to serve as deterrence to others. The newspaper also condemned what it called "the bogey of plea bargaining" that has been added to the corruption complex. "We sincerely hope that the current case will not be another

episode of grandstanding. What the country needs now is deterrence to would-be culprits in the abuse of public offices. Certainly, there lies some potential for ridding our country of the endemic scourge of corruption,” the paper concluded. (*The Guardian*, June 16, 2011, p.14.) In another editorial, *The Guardian* also recommended the setting up of Special Courts to try corruption cases. The newspaper noted that the increasing demand for the establishment of Special Courts to prosecute corruption cases was a clear indication that the anti-corruption campaign in the country had performed below par. (*The Guardian*, September 21, 2011, p.14).

The *Daily Trust* newspaper also devoted critical attention to various general issues of corruption and made many far-reaching recommendations on how to tackle the scourge of corruption in the country. The *Daily Trust* also came hard frequently on the government’s anti-graft agencies for their inept prosecution of the war against corruption in the country. In its editorial commentary titled: “This is no way to fight corruption” (*Daily Trust*, December 16, 2011), the newspaper explored the international dimensions of corruption and castigated the Federal Government for dropping criminal charges against the multinational telecommunications giant, Siemens AG, for complicity in the bribing of several senior Nigerian erstwhile government officials and politicians in return for huge contracts. An indication of the kid gloves with which the Nigerian government treats corruption cases is shown in the justification which the Nigerian Minister of Justice Mr Mohammed Bello Adoke gave for the government’s withdrawal of the case against Siemens. Adoke said Nigeria’s existing penal laws were too weak; that Siemens paid a fine of N7 billion in restitution and that the company had ‘apologised’ to Nigerians for its conduct. (*Daily Trust*, Dec. 16, 2010, p.33). In October of the same year, the government also reached a similar deal with the multinational construction company, Julius Berger, which paid N4 billion in fines for its involvement in another bribery scandal which involved the United States company, Kellogg, Brown and Root (KBR), a former subsidiary of the multinational oil services firm Halliburton, once headed by ex US Vice President Dick Cheney. The firm was accused of paying \$180 million in bribes to some Nigerian officials.

The *Daily Trust*, reviewing these cases and many other similar cases of brazen graft in the country, domestic and foreign, which were bungled by the government and its agencies, concluded that: “This is not the way to wage the war against corruption. Unless the government sharpens its focus on the fight against graft, the deterrence effect would be lost

and the fight would be severely weakened, if not heavily compromised.” (*Daily Trust*, Dec. 16, 2010, p.33). In another editorial, titled “The EFCC ‘advisory’ to politicians”, the *Daily Trust* endorses a recommendation that corrupt politicians and all other persons with cases of corruption pending against them in the law courts should be banned from holding or contesting for public office. The newspaper concludes that until this is done, “the government is merely paying lip service to the fight against corruption” (*Daily Trust*, November 4, 2010, p. 25).

The Guardian made the following recommendations, among others, on how to curb terrorism and political violence in the country.

The police should live up to its responsibility of maintaining law and order in the land, by discharging their duty seriously and proactively. Wherever crime is committed in the land, the perpetrators, by whatever name called, should be identified and sanctioned according to the law. Beyond the use of force, there is a need to engage aggrieved Nigerians constructively. More than anything else, the nation needs to reverse the failure of governance, in order to regenerate its lost soul. The President, as the nation’s Chief Security Officer, must seriously engage with the security and intelligence chiefs in order to review their lapses. Violence and terrorism cannot be tackled piecemeal. There is a need for a holistic approach that will aim to educate the people, provide them with housing and healthcare, empower them with jobs and assure protection of their lives and property.

(*The Guardian*, June 27, 2011, op. cit., p.16.).

Daily Trust emphasized the law and order approach to curbing political violence in the country and suggested that the law enforcement agencies and the judiciary should wake up to their responsibilities. The newspaper observed that “it is the failure to punish offenders of previous cases of political violence that is responsible for some of the recurring cases of political violence in the country. The newspaper concludes that: “It behoves the law enforcement agencies and the judiciary to do what the public expects of them, namely to ensure that perpetrators of violence and their sponsors are prosecuted and punished according to the law...” (*Daily Trust*, op. cit.).

Indeed, months before the general election, persons bent on perpetrating political violence had already started to stockpile various arms and ammunition in different parts of the country –

some of which were eventually discovered by the state security agents. (See *Daily Trust*, April 11, 2011, p.32).

In some illegal arms factories discovered by the State Security Service (SSS), the secret agents reportedly discovered and seized over 100 weapons of different designs – as well as some equipment for making bombs. (*Daily Trust*, April 11, 2011, p.32). In its editorial of April 11, 2011, titled “Illegal arms depots,” the newspaper noted that it has been “expressing its concern for several months, especially after the outbreaks of violence in Jos and a number of other places in the country”. The newspaper saw “a nexus between the disturbing proliferation of weapons and the desperation of politicians and their agents in pursuit of the infamous ‘do-or-die’ politics, and the creeping violence that threatens to engulf the country as the elections approached”. (*Daily Trust*, *ibid.*) The newspaper condemned the complacency of the government and its agencies in dealing with politicians who procure arms and use violent means to force their will on the electorate. To curb the proliferation of arms and weapons in the country, which could “spell danger for the country,” *Daily Trust* made the following comprehensive recommendations for public policy, in order to enhance peace and ensure law and order in the country.

The licensing regime for persons and firms in the arms and explosives trade should be overhauled; to do that, current licensees should update their records. The Government should suspend further issuance of new licences and order the inspection of existing factories and their products and clients; the State Security Services (SSS) should step up its inquiry into the sources of weapons it has intercepted in various parts of the country, the persons involved and their financiers, and hand over the culprits to the appropriate agency for prosecution. (*Daily Trust*, *op. cit.*, p.32).

8.2.4 Mediating the war against corruption

As indicated earlier in Chapter 6, one of the major cases of official corruption reported in the Nigerian press during the period under review was the case involving the Speaker of the House of Representatives (Parliament), Mr Dimeji Bankole, who was indicted for corrupt enrichment and embezzlement of public funds. Under Mr Bankole’s watch, the House of Representatives borrowed N10 billion from commercial banks, in addition to its huge annual budget, and spent all the money – causing a huge outrage in the land and generating a very big

scandal for the law makers when the scheme was burst open by the prying media. After evading arrest several times, Mr Bankole and his deputy, Mr Nafada, were subsequently arrested on May 5, 2011, and prosecuted on corruption charges by the government's anti-graft agency, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). Bankole and Nafada were charged with corruption and fraud amounting to Naira 38 billion (over 200 million pounds Sterling). Although *The Guardian* and *Daily Trust* published running news stories on the Bankole case, there was a paucity of editorial opinions by the two newspapers on the subject. This was quite understandable, given the fact that the matter was in the law courts. While the media can publish or broadcast the news of the facts about the actual proceedings of a case in court, it is usually regarded as *subjudice* (contempt of court) to proffer public opinion about an on-going case in court, in order to avoid prejudicing the matter (Uniform High Court Civil Procedure Rules of Nigeria, 1988, Order 42).

In spite of the legal limitations, *The Guardian* published a number of editorials on the subject of the Bankole corruption case as a clear indication of how public office holders corruptly enriched themselves with public resources, while the masses of the people remained in abject poverty. In its editorial of June 16, 2011, titled "Between EFCC and Bankole," *The Guardian* observed that beyond the criminal aspects of the corruption charge, the case raises an ethical issue regarding the institution of the Speakership of the House of Representatives, which, in theory and in practice, is the engine room of democracy – being the "temporal site of sovereignty" housing the representatives of the people. The Guardian noted that the matter brings once more to the front burner the issue of corruption in the national parliament and other institutions of government. The newspaper observed: "Since the fourth republic, both (the) lower and upper legislative chambers have been involved in corruption scandals, the gravity of which had led to purges in the leadership of both houses. Beyond that, the country has not fared better on the corruption index rating; we have shared, not once, the ill-fortune of being the most corrupt country in the world". (*The Guardian*, June 16, 2011, p.14)

The Guardian used the opportunity of the editorial to engage robustly on the issue of corruption and its effects on Nigeria's overall socio-economic and political development. The newspaper observed that there was a general consensus that corruption is counter-productive to the goal of social development, because, very often, the resources meant for development projects were either misapplied or stolen outright by corrupt public officials, while the country and its people continued to suffer the ravaging effects of poverty and

underdevelopment. Overall, *The Guardian* stressed the point that corruption is antithetical to social development and good governance and should be fought with all the energy and political will that the country could muster. In all these, the newspaper is standing up creditably to the constitutional role of the Nigerian press as the watchdogs of democracy and facilitators of good governance, thus underscoring the critical role of the press in the regional context of Nigeria as an emerging democracy in Africa.

The Guardian had also similarly endorsed the proposed embargo on corrupt politicians and recommended that “the public at large, including many civil society and women organizations, should mobilize to prevent charlatans from becoming legislators and governors”. (*The Guardian*, “Embargo on corrupt politicians,” November 3, 2010, p.14) Indeed, the similarities in the editorial stance and official positions of the two newspapers on issues of corruption in Nigeria clearly indicate the commitment of the two newspapers to the fight against corruption in Nigeria – in the performance of their constitutional roles as the watchdogs of society and the facilitators of democracy and good governance.

8.2.5 Lack of political will to prosecute the war against corruption and political violence

Both *The Guardian* and the *Daily Trust* agreed that the government lacked the political will to prosecute the war against corruption and political violence, the twin evils which have posed a clear and present danger to Nigeria’s nascent democracy. In various editorials, the two newspapers pointed out that over the years, the government authorities have conveniently ignored various recommendations and suggestions not just by the media but also by well-meaning Nigerians, as well as the recommendations by various official investigative panels and judicial commissions of inquiry set up by the government itself. In one of its many editorials on the subject, *The Guardian* pointed out that the main reason why the government authorities are unable or unwilling to prosecute the war against corruption and political violence is because the same politicians and the ruling elite are the very same persons who are largely involved in the brazen looting of the nation’s resources as well as the instigation of political violence to serve their own selfish interests – thereby constituting, in effect, the major threats to the nation’s nascent democracy (*The Guardian*, “Politicians and threats to democracy,” Dec. 28, 2011, p.14).

Daily Trust equally weighs in on this. In one of many editorials highly critical of the government's anti-graft campaign, the newspaper concluded that "the government is merely paying lip service to the fight against corruption" (*Daily Trust*, November 4, 2010, p. 25).

Indeed, the Lemu Panel of Inquiry which investigated the post-election violence that erupted in Nigeria after the 2011 general election observed that one of the major causes of the violence was the disenchantment of the masses with the government over its inability or unwillingness to address the issues of corruption and general mismanagement of the nation's abundant resources by the political and ruling elite. (See Lemu Report on Election Violence, *The Guardian*, October 25, 2011, p.18).

8.2.6 National and regional variations in editorial positions

Again, as in the case of front page news coverage, the study found that there were some variations in the themes and the language of construction of the editorial opinions of the two newspapers. Although both the *Daily Trust* and *The Guardian* newspapers devoted so much critical attention on the coverage of official corruption and political violence in Nigeria during the period under review, and made many far-reaching recommendations on how to tackle the scourge of corruption and political violence in the country, there were some variations in their positions and approaches, as well as in their decisions to publish or not to publish certain matters. For instance, when Mrs Cecilia Ibru, a bank chief executive, was jailed for corruption and fraud, alongside many other executives of commercial banks who looted depositors' funds in their trust and brought a severe distress to the Nigerian economy, *The Guardian* deliberately refrained from reporting the news or writing an editorial opinion on it. The reason for this apparent double standard was not far-fetched: Mrs Cecilia Ibru was a matriarch of the Ibru family – the wealthy Nigerian family which owned *The Guardian* and many other mega corporate organizations spanning banking, shipping, airlines, hotels, automobiles, foods and agro-business, among others. A senior editor and top management staff of the newspaper then as well as a sub-editor, two of the journalists interviewed for this study, confirmed that it was a deliberate decision by the newspaper to avoid coverage of the case of Mrs Ibru. On the other hand, the *Daily Trust*, an independent tabloid which has the motto: "Trust is a burden," and takes its watchdog role very seriously, celebrated the conviction of Mrs Ibru and her cohorts as a very "important victory in the anti-graft fight". (*Daily Trust*, Oct. 21, 2010, p.32).

Some differences were also noticed in the portrayal of editorial opinions between the two newspapers in the study on the aspect of political violence. Although both the *Daily Trust* and *The Guardian* usually came out unequivocally also to condemn the wave of political violence which was engulfing the nation, *Daily Trust*, the regional tabloid published in the North of Nigeria, the base of the Boko Haram Islamist extremists, often wavered in identifying the suspected or known perpetrators of the violence by name. For instance, following the bomb attack on the Nigeria Police Headquarters, the *Daily Trust* wrote an editorial which was simply titled: “The police HQ explosion” (June 22, 2011, p. 34). Unlike *The Guardian*, which was categorical in identifying the bombing as a terrorist attack orchestrated by the Boko Haram insurgents as claimed by their spokespersons, *Daily Trust* asserted: “Like everything else regarding issues around the spate of blasts in parts of the country since the October 1, 2010 episode at the Eagle Square in Abuja, firm evidence of who are behind them (the bomb attacks) is hard to come by; either the security agencies are themselves as purblind as the rest of the society, or are not levelling with the public”. (*Daily Trust*, June 22, 2011, p.34)

The newspaper observed that if indeed the attack was carried out by a suicide bomber, as widely reported in the news media, it would be “an entirely new and dangerous dimension in the history of civil strife in Nigeria”. *Daily Trust* also went down the memory lane to the historical origins of the Boko Haram outfit, which emerged as a “ragtag group” a couple of years earlier. The newspaper observed that “if there is evidence that the ragtag group that engaged a few policemen in Maiduguri in 2009 is the same group that has metamorphosed into this killing machine that came close to assassinating the national police chief, this should be presented and its members relentlessly pursued and brought to justice.” (Ibid.) Overall, the newspaper indicted the nation’s security agencies for being lax in the performance of their duties to maintain law and order in the land. A strong and fervent campaigner for the law and order approach, *Daily Trust* concluded that, in order to curb the menace of terrorism in Nigeria, “the security agencies and the government need to do far more than what we have seen so far”.

Thus, the major difference in the positions of the two newspapers as portrayed in their editorial opinions on political violence is that while *The Guardian* is unequivocal in calling a spade a spade and identifying the Boko Haram sect as the terrorist, Islamic fundamentalist group they truly are, the *Daily Trust* prevaricates, asks for “evidence” and often refrains from using the word “terrorism” or describing the group as “terrorists,” despite all evidence and

indications of the fact that these people who bomb churches, mosques, markets, motor parks, amusement centres, national institutions and international organizations, like the UN, cannot be anything other than terrorists. A tentative conclusion can be drawn that this divergence in stance and official position is influenced by both the geographical location of the two newspapers and the religious and socio-cultural affinity of the owners of the two media organizations. While *The Guardian*, a quality, national newspaper which shows a more liberal and open attitude in condemning the evils of terrorism and religious fundamentalism is based in the largely Christian South West (Lagos) and is owned by a Christian family, the *Daily Trust*, a regional tabloid, which sometimes hedges and prevaricates in its editorial opinions on the issue of Boko Haram Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism, is based in the largely Muslim North West (Kaduna) and is owned and operated by a Muslim faithful.

In effect, therefore, although the publishers of these two newspapers under review are not politicians or known card-carrying members of any registered political party in Nigeria, and so do not necessarily allow their political biases to influence the content of the two newspapers, their socio-cultural backgrounds, religious affiliations and the locations of the newspapers sometimes do have a discernible impact not only on the news content but also in shaping the editorial opinions of the two newspapers – as well as the decision to publish or not to publish a particular item of news or an editorial commentary. In spite of these differences, in their strident and principled stance against corruption and political violence in Nigeria and their consistent advocacy for an effective and committed prosecution of the war against corruption and political violence, the veritable monsters which have stunted Nigeria's overall socio-economic and political development, both independent newspapers commendably fulfilled the normative expectations of the social responsibility theory of the press as a positive instrument for social, cultural, economic and political change.

The study found that in some cases of news coverage and the construction of editorial opinions, while *The Guardian* leaned towards the South, where it is located, the *Daily Trust* also leaned towards the North – where it is located. In various instances, exemplified in the thesis, both *The Guardian* and the *Daily Trust* were sympathetic to the causes of the South and the North respectively in the coverage of the news and the language used in the construction of their editorial opinions – and these causes are fundamentally political. However, this tendency did not seem to undermine the ability of these newspapers to perform their normative functions.

Overall, my study found that although Nigerian journalists grappled with the challenges imposed by media ownership and control structures in the country, and had issues with professionalism and ethics, the independent press did not align itself with any of the political parties in the coverage of the 2011 general elections. The newspapers studied were generally non-partisan in their news coverage and editorial opinions and were indeed very critical of the politicians and various public office holders for their roles in undermining the nation's democracy and democratisation process through their deep involvement in official corruption and political violence. The study also found some regional variations between the newspapers in the coverage of news and construction of editorial opinions on some issues. But despite these issues which seemed to weaken their claims to independence and autonomy, the Nigerian press and the journalists persevered in asserting and playing the watchdog role of the press in the country's political context as an emerging democracy in Africa.

8.3.0 Semi-structured interviews

As indicated earlier, the findings of the semi-structured interviews of Nigerian journalists ranged around the critical issues of ownership and control of the media – as well as the issues of professionalism and ethics in the media. As already established in media scholarship, the issues of ownership and control, professionalism and ethics have a significant impact on how journalists perform their jobs, as well as on the content of their media products. The interviews gave some insights into how Nigerian journalists struggle to cope with the challenges posed by ownership and control of the press – as well as the issues of professionalism and ethics and how these issues impact on the performance of their professional duties.

The study confirmed, from the interviews with the journalists, that the journalism profession in Nigeria has many challenges and hazards and that Nigeria is, indeed, not just a veritable “landmine for journalists”, as observed in an earlier study by a media analyst, but also “one of the most dangerous places in the world for journalists to work” (Ndujihe, 2010).

While most of the journalists have at one time or the other faced harassment, threats and intimidation in the course of their professional work, and one had actually been detained, unfairly tried and imprisoned, all of them knew other journalists who had suffered some of the

misdeeds identified earlier by Article 19 and Media Rights Agenda (1997), like arbitrary arrests and detention, misuse of criminal charges and unfair trials, banning of their publications, assassination attempts and actual assassinations, disappearances, seizures of independent newspapers and magazines, disruption of printing and distribution, withholding of official patronage and advertising from independent publications and official interference in editorial decision-making.

One of the most intractable challenges of journalism in Nigeria identified by the journalists interviewed in the study is the issue of political violence on journalists – the political violence which also spills over into the general society as indicated in this study. Two of the journalists interviewed in this study were threatened with being shot or dealt with by men in uniform; one actually had a gun pointed at her while she was covering the elections but found the courage to dare her assailant, a military police officer, to go ahead and shoot her if part of his official function was to shoot journalists. Indeed, over the years, many Nigerian journalists have been killed in the course of the performance of their official duties. During the course of this study, many cases of assassination of journalists occurred in Nigeria. For instance, 13 Nigerian journalists were killed in active service in 2012 alone, making it the highest in the history of the country since independence in 1960. These killings are often politically motivated (Madukwe, 2013). The Nigerian press thus experiences more than its own fair share of the *political violence* which manifests in the society – which also forms a major part of their reportage, especially during the general elections.

Low wages and non-payment of regular salaries are among the major challenges identified by the journalists interviewed in this study. All the journalists interviewed agreed that their wages, salaries and allowances were nothing to write home about and were indeed among the very lowest of any professional cadre in the working in the country. To add salt to injury, these abysmally low salaries and wages are also hardly paid on time – oftentimes they are not paid at all. As I write this in January 2016, more than 90% of all the major independent newspapers in Nigeria still owed their staff some arrears of salaries and wages or the other. Indeed, one of the biggest independent newspapers, *This Day*, is reported to owe its staff 18 months' salary arrears. In other words, this newspaper has not paid salaries to its journalists and sundry media workers in 18 months (TD 1, January 05, 2016.).

The challenge of low wages and non-payment of regular salaries leads to another major problem of the media in Nigeria: corruption, which is also another major problem in the Nigerian society as a whole – as identified in the press coverage analysed in the study.

Most of the journalists interviewed in the study agree that they have been offered monetary inducements or “brown envelopes” (bribes) at one time or the other, in the course of their professional duties, although some denied accepting such offers even when they were hard pressed to do so. Momodu (2011) echoed the same sentiments about corruption, ethical issues and the poor welfare of journalists in the Nigerian media. "The business of journalism is almost a thankless one in Nigeria. More often than not, the journalist is viewed as an omnipotent Dracula who should fight the battles of society while others sit in the comfort of their homes. But despite his gallant efforts, the journalist is probably the poorest professional in our country... These days, many of our friends (journalists) are forced to become emergency public relations consultants to politicians, businessmen and show biz personalities. In desperation, some may turn to blackmailing important members of society” (Momodu, "Why journalists are poor," *This Day* newspaper, October 8, 2011, p. 64).

The Nigerian press is thus not immune from the cancer of corruption which has eaten deep into the general society – and which the press also rails against in its reportage. The Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), the professional umbrella body of Nigerian journalists, tries to enforce a Code of Ethics which it has established for media practitioners in the country. The NUJ regularly handles reported cases of corruption and professional misconduct against journalists and metes out various degrees of sanctions against proven cases of infractions. Some of the penalties include fines, suspensions, apologies and retractions of offending materials (Garba, 2013).

Overall, the journalists interviewed in this study identified various challenges and obstacles they face in course of the performance of their official duties as journalists. These include security hazards and risks of violence, low wages and poor remunerations, irregular payment of salaries and allowances, sexual harassment, lack of work tools and modern technological equipment, lack of training and capacity building, censorship, among others. The major impact of these challenges and obstacles is that professional standards are compromised – and the pervasive corruption in the society has also eaten deep into the media, thus also

compromising the effective performance of the *watchdog* role assigned to the media by the Nigerian Constitution.

However, in spite of the challenges, which include the twin scourges of corruption and violence that have impeded socio-economic and political development in the country, many of the Nigerian journalists interviewed affirm their total commitment to the performance of their duties in the overall public interest and in the truest tradition of the society's *watchdog* – a role ascribed to the media officially by the Nigerian Constitution (1999).

8.3.1 Reflections on theoretical implication

This study assessed how the Nigerian independent press covered the critical issues of official corruption and political violence during the cycle of Nigeria's 2011 general election. During the period under review, the Constitutional role of the press as the watchdog of democracy and facilitator of good governance dictated how the two newspapers under review covered these critical issues of official corruption and political violence. An interesting phenomenon was unravelled in the course of the study. During the period under review, the Nigerian press operated essentially as an autonomous, independent, liberal press, aligned to neither the government in power nor the opposition parties out of power, but performing its democratic role as the watchdog of the society and the facilitator of democracy and good governance. The Nigerian press is thus a worthy example of the Liberal Media Theory (watchdog model), as enshrined in the Nigerian National Constitution (1999, Amended).

However, the role of the Nigerian press should not be over-hyped. Adesoji (2010) observes that despite its vibrancy, the differentiations of the Nigerian Press and its inclination towards politics have continued to influence its functionality, perception and disposition. "Thus while the press remains an active partner in the democratic enterprise, it has not completely purged itself of the tendency and the capability to undermine democratic experimentation. The proliferation of newspapers particularly by those using it to cover their back, or defend their interest has not helped matters. By virtue of the issues surrounding its ownership and control or its sympathy, the press in Nigeria has remained essentially the stale old wine in new bottle despite all attempts at repackaging." (Adesoji, op. cit., p.31) I agree with Adesoji that the Nigerian Press has remained an active and critical partner in sustaining Nigeria's democratic experiment, especially since the return of the country to constitutional rule in 1999. However,

rather than the broad sweep which Adesoji took in his paper reviewing the role of the press since the return to democratic rule in 1999, my study focuses on a specific period and a specific event, the 2011 general election in the country, and the coverage of some specific issues (official corruption and political violence) during the period of that electoral cycle. This close study of a specific event and on how the press covered some specific issues during that specific period gives more insights into the activities and the behaviour of the press and their official positions on the specific issues of official corruption and political violence during the period under review. My study also provides an update on literature as well as on the issues covered and the findings made by these earlier studies – most of which were made between five years and 15 years ago.

8.4 Summary of findings and reflections on the implications of the findings

As indicated earlier, the study found, among others, the following:

- The Nigerian independent press, in spite of the pressures of ownership and control, which sometimes challenge their professionalism, has performed efficiently and effectively its constitutional duty as the watchdog of the society and facilitator of democracy and good governance – especially through its coverage and position against the evils of corruption and political violence which have blighted Nigeria as a country.
- The Nigerian press is largely autonomous, operating in a plural, liberal media environment and are not owned or controlled by the government, the ruling party or the opposition parties, thus giving them a strong, critical voice against the government and against social and political evils like corruption and political violence in the country.
- Nigerian politicians and the ruling elite are largely responsible for the high level of official corruption and political violence in the country.
- The Nigerian governments and their agencies usually lack the political will to wage a committed and sustainable war against corruption and political violence – for the simple reason that the top government officials and other members of the ruling elite are the very same persons engaged in, and benefitting from, the corruption and political violence bedevilling the country.

- By mediating the issues of corruption and political violence, and taking strong, critical positions against these social evils, while recommending various measures to tackle them, the Nigerian independent press indeed plays a very active role in the war against corruption and political violence – in the context of its constitutional duty as the watchdog of the society and facilitator of democracy and good governance.
- Nigerian journalists, in spite of many hurdles and challenges hampering their professional work, performed their jobs creditably as media workers in holding public office holders accountable and thus discharging the normative expectations of the media as a positive instrument of social change

These findings have very strong implications for social, cultural and political policy in Nigeria. The implication of all these for policy is that the Nigerian government and its agencies should engage more with the press in particular and the media in general as strong partners in the war against corruption and political violence, given the crucial role which the press is playing already in that regard. The government should ensure a proper implementation of the Freedom of Information Act – to enable journalists and media workers and other interested persons to gain easy access to public information which could assist them in exposing cases of corruption, malfeasance and other cases of impropriety against public office holders in line with the duty of the press as the watchdog of the society. Finally, the government should further help to strengthen the role of the media by removing various anti-media laws and regulations which hinder the performance of the media, to enhance the active role which the press is playing already in highlighting and condemning issues of corruption and political violence, thereby helping to keep public office holders accountable to the people on whose behalf they hold public office.

8.5 Contributions to knowledge

My study has made some modest but significant contributions to knowledge in media scholarship, specifically in the aspect of understanding the performance of the watchdog role of the press in a national context. The study adopted a Liberal Theory approach (Watchdog Model) in evaluating the performance of the Nigerian press in the coverage of the key thematic issues of official corruption and political violence during the period of the 2011 general election in Nigeria. Although the watchdog model may seem out-dated as a model for

assessing media performance in the advanced Western democracies, my study has demonstrated that this is not necessarily the case in the Nigerian context – where the democratic function of the press is deeply enshrined in the national constitution and actively practised by the professional journalists. Indeed, as shown clearly in the foregoing chapters, my thesis offers some distinctive empirical evidence for the significance of the watchdog concept and its associated practices in the context of Nigeria as an emerging democracy in Africa.

My study established that during the period under review, the press played a critical role in mediating the key thematic issues of corruption and political violence which have hindered the full realization of Nigeria’s democratisation process, and taking strong, critical positions against these social evils in their editorial opinions, thereby resisting and challenging the power and control exercised by the dominant political elite in the country – the abuse of which powers often manifest in official corruption and political violence. The interview with journalists also provided clear empirical evidence to demonstrate the significance attached to the democratic role of the press by Nigerian journalists who strived to perform their professional duties with a high degree of commitment and diligence – in spite of numerous challenges and obstacles which they face in their working environments: like low and irregular wages; threats and intimidation; arrests and detention; imprisonments and assassinations. My study demonstrates, and affirms, that contrary to what may obtain in some other African countries, the watchdog journalism role is still alive and well in Nigeria – in both concept and practice.

Overall, as demonstrated in my study, the Nigerian independent press, in its practices and orientation, typifies the watchdog model of the Liberal Media Theory: a plural, watchdog press performing its democratic functions, in spite of many challenges and obstacles, including the contending interests of the media owners, which limit the effective performance of these democratic functions. This liberal, watchdog model of journalism as practised by the Nigerian press rises above the narrow confines of the political economy models of “government journalism” or “opposition journalism” (as identified by Chimombo and Chimombo, 2007; Mchakulu, 2011, etc.) which kowtows completely to the interests of the government in power and the ruling party or the opposition political parties – as obtained in several African emerging democracies. My study therefore contributes to the conceptual

debate about watchdog journalism practice and updates the literature on the subject – especially in the context of Nigeria as an emerging democracy in Africa.

8.6 Limitations of the study and areas for further research

This study examined the press coverage of the twin themes of official corruption and political violence during the 2011 general election cycle in Nigeria, in order to assess how far the newspapers performed their constitutional duties as the watchdog of the society, and the facilitator of democracy and good governance. It also attempted to establish whether the newspapers served as critical voices for the dissemination of public information and opinion on major social and political issues to the readers or if they simply served as the voices of their owners and or the government in power of the opposition parties. Overall, as indicated earlier, the study found that the Nigerian press functions largely as an autonomous, independent press, operating in a plural, liberal media environment and are not owned or controlled by the government, the ruling party or the opposition parties, thus giving the newspapers a strong, critical voice against the government and against social and political evils like corruption and political violence in the country.

The choice of only two newspapers for the research, out of a number of over 12 major newspapers and many smaller ones, could be cited as a limitation for the study. However, this choice was deliberate and was informed by the theory and methodology chosen for the study. While most of the major national newspapers are based in Lagos (South West), the economic capital of Nigeria, only one major newspaper, *the Daily Trust*, is published in Kaduna (North West). Instead of studying more of the same models, the newspapers based in Lagos, it was important for the study to select one major national newspaper, *The Guardian* (based in the South West) and one regional newspaper, the *Daily Trust* (based in the North West) – in order to explore the similarities and possibilities of regional differences in the way they presented their front page headline news as well as the manner in which they constructed their editorial opinions to reflect the realities of Nigeria’s major socio-economic and political problems.

The small number of participants selected for the semi-structured interviews (12) to explore the challenges faced by professional journalists in Nigeria can be pointed out easily as one of the limitations of the study. However, this number was deliberately selected as a small, exploratory, representative sample of the journalists and media managers in a regular newspaper office in Nigeria. The major categories are the editors / managing editors (top

management staff); the line editors and sub-editors (editorial supervisors and news production staff); the staff correspondents and news reporters (news gathering staff). Representatives were chosen from each category to participate in the semi-structured interviews. A deliberate effort was also made to achieve some gender balance by selecting at least one female journalist from each category (4). Due to this small number of journalists selected to participate in the semi-structured interviews, one would be cautious in generalising the findings. However, the newspapers they represent are among the largest and most influential newspapers in the country – whose journalists face similar problems and challenges as the many other journalists and media workers in the country. New research in this area may need to widen the scope of the choice of the number of newspapers as well as the number of journalists to be engaged in any structured or semi-structured interviews – in order to achieve a much wider scope that would enable the generalisation of findings.

In the process of the study, other areas for further research were also identified – in order to shed more light on the role of the Nigerian press in the country's nascent democracy. Since this study focused on an analysis of two of the major themes which dominated press coverage during the period under review, the themes of corruption and political violence, an area for further research would be to widen the focus and analyse all the dominant themes identified in the front page news coverage and editorial opinions of the newspapers within the critical period of the cycle of the general election. This would afford the researcher a wider scope of analysis of the interplay of various major themes during the period – and how these newspapers covered these themes in their news stories, as well as to compare and contrast the positions adopted by the newspapers on these themes in their editorial opinions – in the context of the watchdog role of the Nigerian press. Another area of further research is to explore the deeper variations between the national newspapers and the regional newspapers, especially the differences in the presentation of political and economic news as well as the differences in the official positions taken by the various newspapers on such issues. Finally, given the overarching influence of globalisation, especially in the area of information technology, another key area for further research would be to explore the impact which the information and communication technology and new media have had on the processes of news gathering and news production by the Nigerian press within the last 20 years.

8.7 A new beginning: The 2015 general election

A lot has happened on the political scene in Nigeria since after the 2011 general election which is the subject of this study. Since the commencement of the study, the 2015 general election, which was arguably much less violent fractious, has come and gone – and ushered in new hopes of a more enduring democratic transformation in Nigeria. Indeed, Nigeria has institutionalized the 29th day of May as the country's *Democracy Day* – in recognition of the day when the country returned to civil rule in 1999 after many years of military dictatorship. Since that historic return of Nigeria to democratic governance, the country's newly elected presidents have customarily taken their oaths of office on that day after every general election. Accordingly, on May 29, 2015, General Muhammadu Buhari, a retired army officer and a former military head of state of Nigeria, climbed the inauguration podium in the *Eagle Square* in Abuja, Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory, and took the oath of office as Nigeria's new president and commander-in-chief of the country's armed forces. The oath of office was administered to President Buhari by the Chief Justice of Nigeria, Justice Mahmoud Mohammed. General Buhari, then 72, had just defeated erstwhile President Goodluck Jonathan, then 58, in the country's fiercely contested 2015 general.

In the result of the presidential election of March 28, 2015, General Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressives Congress (APC) polled a total of 15.4 million votes to defeat the incumbent president Dr Goodluck Jonathan of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) who got a total of 12.8 million votes, with other contenders trailing far behind the two top shots. The 2015 general election was Buhari's fourth attempt at the presidency, having contested and lost in each of the previous three presidential elections in 2003, 2007 and 2011. (See *This Day* newspaper, April 01, 2015, p.1) General Buhari, the retired former military head of state of Nigeria, had successfully turned the tables against Dr Jonathan who had roundly beaten him four years earlier in the previous general election of April 2011.

The Guardian newspaper (May 30, 2015, p.1) reports that more than 50 leaders from all over the world witnessed the inauguration of General Muhammadu Buhari as the 14th President of Nigeria. The United States government's delegation was led by the Secretary of State Mr John Kerry. Indeed, the inauguration was historical: this was the first time a Nigerian president was handing over to an opposition politician after a free and fair democratic election. Indeed, after the presidential election in March 2015, even before the final votes had been counted,

President Goodluck Jonathan called General Muhammadu Buhari to concede defeat and to congratulate him on winning the ballot. This was a rare display of sportsmanship and graciousness uncommon in Nigerian politicians. At the Presidential inaugural dinner in Abuja on May 28, Dr Jonathan also urged Nigerians to cooperate, support and show understanding in all situations to the incoming administration of Gen. Buhari, in order to ensure the continued progress of the country and to sustain the gains made by the country's nascent democracy. African leaders who were in attendance at the dinner also hailed the remarkable achievements made by Nigeria in its political transition process, especially in the peaceful conduct of the 2015 general election.

In his goodwill message, the President of the ECOWAS commission, Mr Kadré Désiré Ouédraogo, thanked the people and government of Nigeria for ensuring a peaceful conduct of the 2015 general elections. He described the exercise as Nigeria's greatest contribution to ECOWAS. In her remarks at the occasion, the chairperson of the African Union Commission, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, assured President Buhari of the Union's support. Zuma said: "Nigerians, you did us proud because if things go well in Nigeria they will go well in our continent". (*The Guardian* newspaper, May 29, 2015, online.) Indeed, the then president-elect, Gen. Buhari observed that the telephone call put across to him by President Jonathan congratulating him even before the final result of the presidential election was announced, "changed the course of the nation's political history" because it brought the country back from the edge of the precipice. Buhari alluded to the endemic violence in Nigeria's political history when he stressed that if President Jonathan "had attempted to make things difficult" by not conceding defeat, such a gambit "would have been at the expense of the lives of poor Nigerians" (*This Day*, May 28, 2015, online.)

The 2015 general election in Nigeria was the fourth general election in the post military era. Typical of Nigerian violence-prone general elections and vitriolic campaign rhetoric, the presidential campaign itself was like a war – "a war of words" (*Daily Trust* newspaper, January 11, 2015, p.9). However, in spite of a few skirmishes and some pockets of violence in some states during the governorship polls, the 2015 general election was generally peaceful and did not witness the orgy of violence and bloodletting that was unleashed on Nigeria in the aftermath of the 2011 presidential election which is the subject of this thesis. As *This Day*

newspaper pointed out, the successful and peaceful conduct of the 2015 general election was Nigeria's "finest hour" – and it "rekindled the hope and pride of Nigerians in the future of their country as a respectable democracy". (*This Day*, April 05, 2015, p.7)

Although the general election of April 2011 is, indeed, the main focus of this research study, it was necessary to review the contemporary socio-political context in order to draw some parallels between the two elections and understand the press coverage of the earlier election and its bloody aftermath. Unlike the violent and bloody 2011 general election, the 2015 general election marked a turning point for Nigeria. As indicated earlier, even before the tallying of the votes had been concluded, President Jonathan graciously conceded defeat and called General Buhari to congratulate him – thus pre-empting any possibility of another outbreak of a post-election orgy of violence. The spokesman of the victorious All Progressives Congress (APC), Mr Lai Mohammed, commended President Jonathan for exhibiting "an uncommon courage and exemplary character by accepting defeat in such a swift manner," thus dousing the tension in the land which had reached a boiling point. (*This Day* newspaper, online, March 31, 2015.) General Theophilus Danjuma, a former chief of the Nigerian Army, opined that the singular act of the erstwhile President Jonathan in conceding defeat promptly saved Nigeria from another civil war. Ironically, General Buhari's refusal to concede defeat in the 2011 general election was identified as one of the major triggers of the post-election violence which blighted the 2011 electoral cycle and led to the loss of lives and property of many Nigerians. (Lemu Panel Report, 2011, op. cit.)

It is pertinent to point out here that the research work and the preparation of this thesis on the press coverage of the 2011 general election in Nigeria was still on-going when the 2015 general election took place. The overview on the 2015 general election thus provides an update on the socio-political situation and also presents a marked contrast on the 2011 general election generally portrayed by the media as the most violent and the bloodiest general election in Nigeria's recent political history – as shall be seen in the subsequent chapters.

8.8 Outlook for the future

Overall, since the return to democracy in 1999, Nigeria has embarked on an ambitious agenda of social, economic and political reforms – which have started yielding positive returns as seen in the successful political transition programmes recorded since then, despite some

serious economic and developmental challenges. On the flip side, the World Bank (Nigeria Overview, 2015, op. cit.) indicates that the sharp decline in oil prices since the third quarter of 2014 has posed major challenges to the country's external balance and public finances. This is due to the fact that oil accounts for close to 90% of exports and roughly 75% of the country's consolidated budgetary revenues. As a result of the economic shock caused by the steep decline in oil revenues, Nigeria's currency, the Naira, has depreciated by over 30% within eight months, while the nation's foreign reserves declined from \$39 billion in July 2014 to \$30 billion in March 2015. This has led to a spending cut of over 60% by the federal Government, while many states in the country have not been able to pay the salaries and wages of state civil servants. However, on a positive note, the World Bank indicates that in comparison to 2010, poverty has declined in Nigeria over the last five years by about 2.3%. The share of people living below \$1.25 per day poverty line declined by an average 0.5% per year from 32.7% in 2010 to 30.4 in 2015. This poverty reduction has been fuelled by the country's significant economic growth within the last five years.

On the political scene, although there were some pockets of violence during the governorship elections in some states, the 2015 general election was largely successful and peaceful. Indeed, the election was more peaceful compared to the fourth election held in 2011. The 2015 general election marked a substantial progress in electoral and democratic development and were characterized by observers as freest and fairest in the country's election history. As an emerging democracy in Africa, Nigeria is today confronted by the urgent need to maintain its fragile peace and national unity, while sustaining the momentum of its political and economic development – in the face of dwindling oil revenues.

The World Bank (2015) observes that Nigeria has received positive momentum from the elections, but still faces strong regional challenges, particularly in the Niger Delta and the North. "Niger Delta militants have threatened a possible resumption of their disruptive activities under a Buhari presidency, and this will need to be defused. In the North East, Boko Haram remains a threat, and millions of displaced persons require assistance. There has been major destruction of infrastructure along with the loss of lives and impoverishment in this region" (World Bank, Nigeria Profile, April 28, 2015, Online). These are some of the underlying tensions which erupt into the kinds of political violence and other challenges in Nigeria portrayed by the independent press as shall be seen in the subsequent chapters.

8.9 Final Reflections

Overall, this study assessed how the Nigerian independent press covered the critical issues of official corruption and political violence during the cycle of Nigeria's 2011 general election. During the period under review, the Constitutional role of the press as the watchdog of democracy and facilitator of good governance dictated how the two newspapers under review covered these critical issues of official corruption and political violence. Three phases in the electoral cycle were used as case studies: the pre-election period, the election period and the post-election period. In each of these periods, it was observed that the newspapers did not align themselves to any political party or to the government in power in both their news coverage and in their editorial opinions on the twin scourges of official corruption and political violence which have manifested as veritable threats to Nigeria's nascent democracy. On the contrary, the two newspapers were often highly critical of the government of the day and the political parties who were clearly identified as fuelling both official corruption and political violence in order to foster their selfish interests. Indeed, the independent newspapers were often in clear opposition to the government and the political parties and were generally regarded as the defenders of the masses and the last hope of the ordinary citizens who had become long frustrated and disenchanted with the government of the day and the ruling political elite of the country – irrespective of whichever political party they belonged to. This situation in Nigeria is clearly unlike the scenario discovered by Mchakulu (2011) in Malawi in his 1994 case study where he observed that “the press was highly polarised with newspapers being allied either with the new ruling party or with the opposition” (Mchakulu, 2011, p.).

In effect, therefore, the press in Nigeria does not fall into the model of the “opposition press” which supported the opposition party as observed by some scholars of the African press (see Chuma, 2006) or the “government” model of journalism exhibited by the newspapers which supported the government in power and toed the ruling party lines, as observed by Malawian media scholars (Chimombo & Chimombo, 1996). On the contrary, the landscape of a robust, non-aligned independent press in Nigeria encouraged the flowering of a vibrant, combative and aggressive press which fears neither government nor political party but rather often functioned as if it were the direct antithesis to the ruling political elite by whatever political party card they may be carrying. This led to the emergence in Nigeria of a strong, independent

press functioning along the Liberal Media Theory (watchdog model) as prescribed by the Nigerian Constitution (1999 as amended). The result is an independent Nigerian press which took its Constitutional role as the watchdog of the society very seriously – so seriously that many Nigerian journalists frequently lost their freedoms or even their lives as a direct result of the performance of their official duties as journalists. Unencumbered by party leanings and affiliations, the Nigerian independent press and their journalists were thus able to offer balanced, objective news reports and critical, analytic voices in their editorial opinions, proffering remedies for the treatment of the various ills of the society. In this regard, in spite of various obstacles and challenges, the Nigerian independent press is far more advanced and more sophisticated in its practice of journalism than the press in several African countries already identified by African media scholars in the studies mentioned above. However, to enhance professionalism and ethics, there is an urgent and compelling need to identify and address the various challenges and obstacles placed in the way of journalists by both the government and the media owners, like legal constraints and obnoxious censorship laws; harassment and intimidation of journalists; arrests, detention and imprisonment of journalists; assassination, murders and disappearances of journalists; as well poor training, irregular or non-payment of salaries and the abysmally low wages of journalists and sundry media workers as orchestrated by the publishers and media owners.

Adesoji (2010) rightly observed that: “As an important stakeholder in the process of nation-building in general and the entrenchment of democratic rule in particular, the Nigerian Press has remained a force to reckon with. Its resilience, obviously a product of its sustained struggle with colonialism and prolonged military rule, not only marked it out as an important pillar of democracy, it also prepared it for the roles it is playing in the era of constitutional democracy.” (Adesoji, 2010, p.23) In spite of the limiting working conditions and professional practices of journalists, the Nigerian press has played a very critical role as one of the most important pillars of democracy in the country, performing its watch dog function in a plural, liberal media environment. This is a clear indication that the Nigerian independent press can only get better in the performance of its democratic functions.

Overall, the theoretical perspective of my study is affirmed by many of the studies of the Nigeria press (including Adesoji, 2010; Mättig, 2010) which indicate and acknowledge the Nigerian press’ performance of the watchdog role assigned to it by the Constitution. These studies assert that despite various obstacles and challenges, the Nigerian press strives

vigorously to perform the watchdog role assigned to it by the Nigerian National Constitution (1999 as amended). Indeed, Mättig (2010, op. cit., p.7) affirms that the Nigerian media set the stage for public discussion and undertake to be the watchdog of government action, with journalists often exposed to threats and dangers in their quest for a free press. He observes of Nigerian journalists: “They operate at the frontlines of a battle for political power that is often waged with deadly weapons” (Mättig, 2010, op. cit., p.7). As Harsch (2011) observes, “For decades, most African countries were ruled by military or one-party regimes. In response to popular agitation, much of the continent shifted to multi-party systems in the 1990s and coups became less common”. (Ernest Harsch, “Africa defends democratic rule,” *The Sunday Punch*, May 1, 2011, p.15). These new democratic values are being strongly defended, encouraged, nurtured and supported by the independent press in some emerging African democracies like Nigeria. It is these new democratic values that will shape Africa’s progress in the coming decades.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1a: Sample of Guardian editorial on political violence

38 |

The Guardian
Conscience is an open wound; only truth can heal it. *Thomas Merton 1954-66*

Editorial

Security agencies and extra-judicial killings

THE other Sunday, an Army Staff Sergeant with the 242 Reconnaissance Battalion at Ibekeko, Badagry, Lagos was allegedly killed by policemen attached to the Lagos State Security outfit, the Rapid Response Squad (RRS). There are conflicting reports as to what caused the killing. A version had it that the soldier was escorting goods from Seme border, Nigeria's frontier with Republic of Benin, when the men of the RRS halted the vehicle for a search. The soldier, however, threatened the policemen, demanding a free passage, and the policemen responded with a volley of bullets killing the soldier on the spot.

Another version states that the army non-commissioned officer was on a motorbike when he was accosted by the policemen and he identified himself but the policemen were not convinced. As a result, there was a quarrel and the soldier made to go but was shot by the policemen. However, he managed to phone his colleagues in the Operation MESA, an anti-robbery army patrol squad, who came to the scene of the incident by which time the soldier had died. The policemen responsible were promptly arrested and handed over to the military.

Subsequently, a meeting on how to prevent the situation from further deteriorating was held by the Divisional Police Officer of Ibekeko Police Station, the Head of the State Security Service and the Commanding Officer of Ibekeko Barracks. That was not the end of the matter as reprisal was coming. By Tuesday May 24, the soldiers carried out revenge attacks on the police. The DPO, Saliu Samuel and the Divisional Crime Officer (DCO), Mr. Samson Okedusiayo among others, who were on a peace mission to the barracks were allegedly killed by soldiers in a most brutal manner.

The Army Public Relations Department's response to the public outcry that this generated was outright denial that any of their men was involved without even the measured response of conducting an investigation into the matter. The Police did not mince words that their men were killed by soldiers. We condemn this incident in the strongest possible terms. It is not only embarrassing; it is an assault on civil order and public psyche. How can the public come to terms with the fact that two sister services charged with the enforcement of law and order and protection of life and property as well as the defence of the country's sovereignty have become lawless and of nuisance value to the civil order that they are being paid with taxpayers' money to guarantee. It is disturbing, because this is not the first time that this type of incident is happening, especially in Lagos State.

We recall most vividly, the October 4, 2005 incident at the Area C Headquarters of the Lagos police Command, Ojuelegba, when soldiers from Abaiti Barracks attacked the Police Area Command and killed no fewer than five policemen, razed down the command and several vehicles and freed detainees at the command. These various incidents are symptomatic of the death of *esprit de corps* among the sister services in the country and the gross indiscipline within the formations. There is no reason why there should not be a cordial relationship between the army and the police. As it is, this is an obvious deficit in the training of these two security agencies. A force without proper education and socialisation to civil ethics is a force for banditry.

Too often, security agencies, especially the police, commit extra-judicial killings and many do not get arrested and therefore are not sanctioned by law, the consequence has been the entrenchment of a culture of impunity in the security agencies. It is only when it happens among security agencies that it becomes top news in the media, however. While this current incident may not be the end of extra-judicial killings by security agencies, we are nonetheless comforted by the recent sentencing of Police Sergeant Kalejaiye Oja to death by hanging by a Benin High Court in respect of a premeditated extra-judicial killing of Paul Erimafa in 2003. That should serve as deterrence to trigger-happy security operatives who treat the civil populace as 'bloody civilians' that can be gunned down at will.

Although the Minister of Police Affairs had assured that the matter was being given adequate attention by the Federal Government, we warn that it should not end up as a case of the 'Unknown Soldier'. The matter must be thoroughly investigated and the culprits brought to book. It is against the tenets of civil-military relations to kill policemen with the white flag in search of peace. Civil-Military relations is also about good governance and the army and other security agencies have a constitutional role in ensuring the maintenance of law and order and the entrenchment of the rule of law, not rule of the jungle, as they have demonstrated in this instance.

APPENDIX 2: The Guardian editorial on the bombing of UN House, Abuja.

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THE GUARDIAN, Thursday, September 1,

The Guardian

Conscience is an open wound; only truth can heal it.

Editorial

The bombing of Abuja UN building

ONCE again, the nation is in mourning, following the bomb explosion of Friday, August 26, 2011 at the United Nations building in Abuja, where no fewer than 23 people were killed, and many more badly injured.

The explosion dealt a major blow to the country's image, political entity and economic prospects. More than any previous incident, the bombing brings Nigeria into the fore of countries that are firmly threatened by terrorism. This is most disheartening.

There has been widespread condemnation of the brazen attack, thought to have been executed by a suicide bomber who allegedly drove into the UN building in a car laden with explosives.

The targeting of the United Nations building, provides a new dimension to such bombings. The Abuja building houses 26 humanitarian and development agencies of the United Nations. As the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon observed pensively while condemning the act, "this was an assault on those who devote their lives to helping others."

Nigerians and their government must necessarily be worried that the country has now come under the repeated assault of terrorists. The international portent of that impression, as an unstable and violent country, is as devastating as its potential to curtail the nation's economic advancement.

Virtually the whole world has appropriately reproved the unprovoked attack, with the UN immediately despatching its Deputy General Secretary Ms. Asha-Rose Migiro, along with other top aides, to Nigeria. The United States President Barack Obama described it as "a murderous act," Russia "vigorously" denounced it as a "senseless, barbaric crime." The European Union has also decried it as "a senseless act of violence towards the UN and its personnel."

Expectedly, the incident threw the UN building and personnel inside into a state of pandemonium, as the bomb's impact tore through the four floors of the building, wrecking parts of it and tearing many occupants into shreds.

So far, the *Boko Haram*, a controver-

sial and violence prone sect, has reportedly claimed responsibility for the bombing, with its spokesperson, one Sheikh Azzawahiri justifying the action "because the Nigerian government is corrupt, insensitive and deceitful." The organisation also allegedly warned that it would soon start full scale offensive against the Nigerian State.

By targeting the UN, it is clear that whoever is behind the bombing has grouses beyond the national borders. Whether it is masterminded by the *Boko Haram* or otherwise, the bombing has all the trappings of terrorism, a scourge of international dimension. The government and people of Nigeria must be concerned that its territory is being used as a launch for these attacks, while its people constitute majority of the victims.

This is not acceptable and should be resisted accordingly. The incident, and similar others ranging from the bombing of Police Headquarters on June 16, 2011 and the October 1, 2010 independence anniversary explosion near the Eagle Square, both in Abuja, pose a major security problem to the country.

The challenge goes beyond the Nigeria Police, which obviously is not sufficiently trained or equipped for terrorism scourge of this dimension. Nevertheless, the police and other security outfits such as the State Security Service (SSS), the National Intelligence Agency (NIA), office of the National Security Adviser (NSA) and the intelligence units of the armed forces, have a key role to perform.

Each of them ought to be charged with specific responsibility to be coordinated and harmonised as a whole, towards ridding the country of criminal acts, however they may be called. At the moment, there is a foreboding evidence of ineptitude by the agencies with some of them already trading blames. They have repeatedly given the impression that they only react to, rather than pre-empt terror strikes. This lapse must be addressed and reversed if the country seriously desires to stop these gruesome acts.

The successive incidents portray a failure of intelligence. It is scandalous that even when the security agencies were

given prior intelligence hints of the incident, they appeared unresponsive or powerless to stop them. Government must go beyond rhetoric to properly shake up the security apparatus to train, equip and coordinate them towards protecting lives and property.

President Goodluck Jonathan should be in the fore front of this effort. His reaction to the UN building bombing, as in those before it, is disappointingly spontaneous in visiting the scene and addressing the country and the world, rather than merely issuing statements through his aides. Surely, the bombing is serious enough to warrant a more physical response from the President.

Beyond this, government must come to terms with the likelihood of foreign complicity in the bombing incidents, given their sophistication and the latest target. It must respond appropriately to such a threat.

As things are, the Abuja bombing is an attack on the international community based in Nigeria, signifying insecurity of foreign nationals, and constituting a major assault on foreign investment initiatives. It is instructive that both the UN and the Nigerian government are already exploring the possibility of wider connection and the necessity for international assistance in addressing the incident. Steps in this regard should be taken fully in order not to end up chasing shadows.

In addition, President Jonathan should spearhead an exploration of a UN resolution enjoining multiple efforts to curb

terrorism. These will include peace resolution of internal conflicts, protection of human rights and grant rights of audience to aggrieved members or groups within the population.

Much as the country cannot compromise its authority above all persons would appear that the governa has not given sufficient priority assuage grievances across the 36 This informs intermittent calls national dialogue by whatever name is called. The president needs to reasonable allowance for this opt while seeking the cooperation of international community in fighting terrorism. He cannot however, under the international character terrorism to abdicate his duty of protecting lives and property of all zens.

Lastly, the latest Abuja bombing again revealed the comatose state the country's health care service perhaps the number one hospital the country, the National Hospital Abuja succumbed pitifully to the enigma of the blast. The signal of overwhelmed health institution layed by the hospital, and the consequent decision by the UN to move this of the bombing to South Africa for medical attention, speaks volume of the sorry state of the health care in this country.

This again should be a wake-up call the federal and state government address fundamental issues in safeguarding the health of Nigerians.

sept 1, 2011

APPENDIX 3: Sample of Daily Trust editorial on political violence

DAILY TRUST Thursday, July 14, 2011

DAILY TRUST



No. 20 F.O.W. Mafemi Crescent, Off Solomon Lar Way,
Utako District, Abuja
09-6726241, 6715364

Hunt for Boko Haram is no licence to kill

There is no question the deteriorating security situation in Maiduguri, the Borno state, capital calls for urgent and decisive action on the part of the Federal government. But from reports that soldiers deployed there for internal security operation have been breaking into homes and shooting adult males at random, this is not the kind of action that would bring the situation under control. There are also credible reports of soldiers setting fire to buildings and vehicles in the name of the hunt for suspected Boko Haram members blamed for the spate of deadly explosions in the city. The objective of the operation is not helped when the same reports suggest that the Joint Task Force (JTF) members went on what looked like a retaliatory mission to avenge the killing of a soldier and wounding of others when a device exploded near an army roadblock a few days earlier. The spokesman of the JTF, Colonel Victor Ekeaheme denied that the army engaged in any unwarred activity, asserting instead that explosive devices placed by the Boko Haram doleifers had caused the fires in the buildings.

The authorities must be sensitive to the delicate handling that the situation requires. Soldiers, in spite of their earnestness and zeal in putting down internal threats to security, should be cautioned not to tar every resident, no matter how suspicious they believe the people might look, with the same brush. The harassment that residents feel with the incessant security checks that have caused hardship to the civilian population is tilting towards some resentment as well. That is why it is very vital that the populace be educated about the temporary inconvenience they may be going through and why it is important for the long-term security for their lives and property. People who definitely are not the sect members being hunted must be told why they have to endure roadblocks, and walking with raised arms whenever they approached a checkpoint, in addition to evening curfew and the ban on commercial motorcycles. To reassure residents and the nation in general, the JTF operations should be subject to oversight and review every case of abuse should be investigated.

It is obvious that these restrictive physical measures are not what the situation demands. The Federal government must task the intelligence community to come up effective strategies that could lead to a breakthrough in the current challenges. There has been no coherent explanation why the police, the army and Nigeria's entire intelligence apparatus have not been able to pinpoint where the threats are coming from, and positively identify those behind it, be they Boko Haram, or others. It is high time that emphasis is laid more on gathering information about the sect than on stabbing in the dark, and drawing the blood of law-abiding residents. The massive exodus of residents reported after the recent security crackdown only underscore deteriorating situation, a far cry from the stabilisation that the operation was meant to bring about. It shows a lack of confidence in the modus operandi of the soldiers and police task forces. Brute force and indiscriminate use of military power on civilians should be replaced with intelligence gathering, which would now form the foundation for a clear strategy in dealing with the threats.

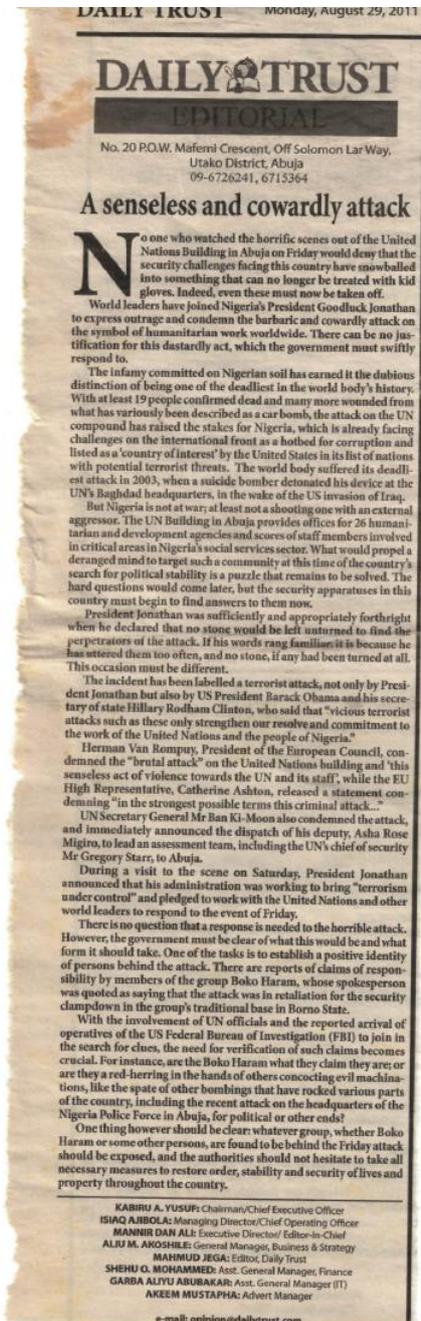
There should also be concerted effort to stop the Boko Haram hysteria from taking hold in other parts of the country. The unprecedented traffic bottlenecks in Abuja recently that caused considerable hardships to commuters were as a result of stringent checks by soldiers with briefs to look out for Boko Haram members. These were uncalled for. While reasonable measures are needed to curb this kind of security threat, these should be results of painstaking deliberations so that they do not end up causing more harm than good.

If the authorities have been able to determine that it is indeed the Boko Haram are behind these security scares, then the task is made much easier if measures to tackle the challenge flow from a clear understanding of the problem. But it bears stressing that the current haphazard and heavy-handed approach of the army in 'looking' for Boko Haram will only lead to more problems than it would solve. At the moment the measure risk losing the hearts and minds of the very people whose co-operation is key to resolving the problem.

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APPENDIX 4: Daily Trust editorial on bombing of UN House



APPENDIX 5: a sample of The Guardian editorial on corruption

The Guardian 03/11/10
The Guardian is an open world, only truth can hold it. www.guardian.co.uk

Editorial

Embargo on corrupt politicians

As the country prepares for the 2011 general elections, the issue of creditable leaders assumes bigger proportions. It is an incontestable fact that our democratic system has thrown up many unfit leaders who impose themselves on the people. As a result, the country never seems - to use a hackneyed phrase - to move forward. Instead our type of presidential system with its unaccountable political office holders has reduced accountability and multiplied mediocrity and corruption. Under the warped system we are operating, everything is seen in the light of power and who exercises it and little consideration is given to the needs of the people whose very docility ensures that politicians run no risk for ignoring the very people who presumably elected them into office.

It is in this spirit that we sympathise with the untidy effort of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in publishing and displaying doing so, a so-called advisory list which had been in its archives and website since 2008. The list focuses on politicians and other persons with damning or questionable reputation. The EFCC has stated bluntly that its intention in making this list public originally is to prevent persons of questionable character from contesting elections in Nigeria. There is no right-thinking person who will quarrel with this intent. Indeed the public at large, including many civil society and women organisations, should mobilise to prevent charlatans from becoming legislators and governors.

If the EFCC list is any good, it serves as a reminder to the people of Nigeria to make a critical assessment of the type of people who are vying for office, not just the few that have been highlighted by the anti-corruption body. The time to enthroned democracy is before an election and not after it. In the United Kingdom and the United States, the character of contestants is viewed with a microscope. Any whiff of impropriety leads to the withdrawal of the candidate. In those climes, political office seekers do not wait for the court to pronounce on their guilt before quitting office. In Nigeria we are yet to ascend to that level of accountability. On the contrary our politicians are a hardened lot. Some of them who ought to be in prison for their crimes against the people of this country are nevertheless still calling for our votes. Even those pronounced guilty in a proper court of law return to announce that God had told them to forgive their enemies. To date, no Nigerian politician accepts responsibility for his actions.

All of this invokes sympathy for the EFCC's position. But must they wait until elections are around the corner to show Nigerians their report card? Would it not have been nicer if the EFCC developed the habit of issuing say, quarterly reports on their activities and achievements? This will help a great deal to reassure the growing band of skeptics who feel that as in the days of Nuh Ribadu, prosecutions have become selective. We note that immediately prior to the 2007 election, the EFCC published a controversial list of those it considered unsuitable to hold political office.

We warned then as we warn now that an accusation does not amount to conviction. The rule of law stipulates that all must be adjudged innocent until proven guilty. Although our court process is so painfully slow, nothing should be done to short-circuit the rule of law. The judicial system must be empowered to quickly try the cases of indicted persons and to find some way of eliminating the dilatory tactics of lawyers often called ex parte motions. Even in football there is a penalty for wasting time.

Since the publication of the EFCC list, opinions have been divided as to the propriety of the action. The Minister of Justice and Attorney General of the Federation, Mohammed Bello Adoke, concerned by this development has written a strongly worded letter to the EFCC deprecating the publication of the list and saying that it was capable of overheating the polity. He also pointed out the risk of being perceived as a witch-hunter and concluded that the law courts could pronounce on who may or may not contest elections.

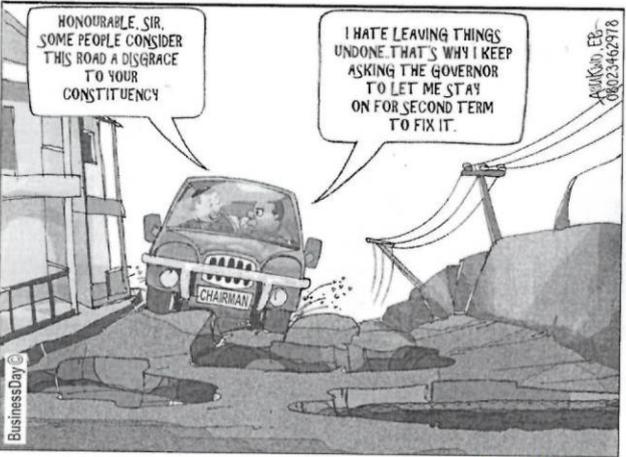
In our view, the real danger in the publication of the EFCC list is not as that list is nowhere a comprehensive list of corrupt politicians, nor yet mentioned into the fray. In responding to criticisms, Mrs. Fatima Waziri has explained that the EFCC is fully aware of its powers and has no intention to dictate to either the political parties or government agencies. Such information as it has provided is however useful. The people deserve information on issues of personal integrity.

We feel that the Attorney General and the EFCC should be on the same side of the fence and should not be seen to be exchanging words in public. For instance, the EFCC should have been calmly advised to turn over their controversial document to the SSS who might find it useful in the screening of candidates.

APPENDIX 6: Satirical editorial cartoons on 2011 election

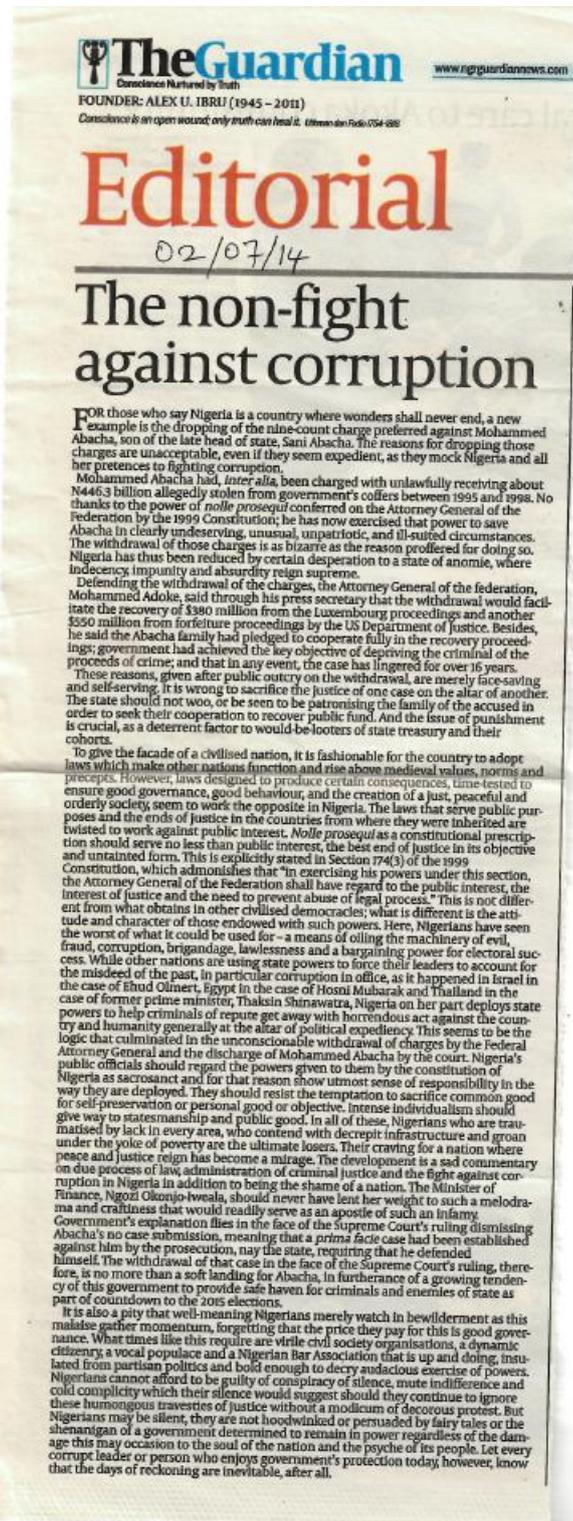


APPENDIX 7: Satirical editorial cartoons on 2011 election



Business Day 02/09/10

APPENDIX 8: The discourse continues – the government lacks the political will to fight corruption, say the newspapers.



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