

## Factors in Mass Media, Third-Term Agenda and Governance in Nigeria

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### Abstract

There are plethora of contending reasons for the failure of the third-term agenda embarked upon by the erstwhile President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo to elongate his term of office from the constitutional two terms to a third term. Although no single account is sufficient to explain the failure and its implications on the festering governance crisis in the country, one key point of convergence is that the media played a pivotal role in ensuring public education on the contentious issue. The study therefore assessed the influence of President Olusegun Obasanjo's policies on the role of mass media against the Third Term Agenda. It also attempts to verify the actual nature of the role of mass media in the Third Term Agenda and investigated the influence of ethnicity and media ownership on the role of the mass media in the Third Term Agenda. It further examined the efforts of the mass media in the emergence of the Fourth Republic in Nigeria. This was with a view to assessing the roles of the mass media in President Olusegun Obasanjo's Third Term Agenda.

The study utilized both primary and secondary data. A total of 170 copies of questionnaire were distributed among members of political parties, academia, journalists, pro-democracy groups and relevant NGOs. The selected respondents were: two members of five major political parties; twenty scholars from recognized academic institutions in Nigeria; three journalists each from three dailies and two weekly newspapers; one member of staff of FRCN in five States as well as National Television Authority staff members; and two members of staff each from state owned radio and television stations in the sampled states; five members of staff each from Private radio stations; five members of staff each from two private television stations; five members of five pro-democracy Non Governmental Organisations across Nigeria; and five members of staff each from National Broadcasting Corporation and Ministry of Information. The secondary sources included books, journal, dailies, among others. The primary data were analysed using the descriptive and inferential statistics while the secondary data were subjected to content analysis.

The results showed that 37.2% of the responded clearly that government's policy did not impact the role of the mass media on the third term agenda. It also, the study showed that the mass media played agenda setting role upon which other actors based their agitations in the third term agenda (54.3 per cent) and that ethnicity did not condition the role of the mass media. Furthermore, the result showed that privately owned media outlets provided a quantum of agitation against the third term agenda. Finally, the mass media were major actors in the race that birthed the fourth republic and in the quest to ensure the preservation of the democracy.

The study concluded that the mass media, maintained an approach and strategy that were largely encapsulated in aggressive attack and criticism rather than an educative effort that is capable of nurturing a democracy.

**KEY WORDS-** Mass Media, Democracy/democratization, Third-Term Agenda, Tenure Elongation.

## 1. Introduction

The Nigerian mass media appeared to have found renewed zest because of its newly found experience of democracy in 1999 (Owen-ibie, 1999). Nevertheless, there is no universal agreement about the direction of the symbiotic relationship between the mass media and democracy. Hence, it has provoked such questions as; does democracy empower the press or the press engenders democracy? Another prominent conundrum revolves around the extent of freedom that the press should enjoy in a polity. Also, within the emergent technologically empowered media, how can the governments ensure adequate control of the flow of information?

There is no doubt that the Nigerian mass media was a major partner in the struggle for the enthronement of democratic rule in 1999 and has been prominent in the quest to deepen democratic values since then. Its mission towards democratization since then has manifested through the creation of platform upon which people could be empowered to take part in civic affairs, in enhancing cultural and national identity, in promoting creative expression and dialogue as well as ensuring individual and party turnover in government.

It was assumed that the assumption of office by President Obasanjo in 1999 was greatly supported by the Mass Media, especially those that advocated for the compensation of the Yorubas over the annulled 1993 Presidential election that was presumed to have been won by another Yoruba politician- Moshood Kashimawo Abiola. The concerted effort of the Mass Media across the country in the third term agenda of President Obasanjo on the other hand, attested to the fact that certain factor(s) propelled the mass media to have acted the way it did. This cross-cultural endeavor of mass media against the third term agenda necessitated this research work and at the same time provokes such question like; was the role of the mass media in the third term agenda affected by the public policies of President Obasanjo? How sufficient was the role of mass media for the emergence of the fourth republic and in democratic consolidation since 1999? To what extent did the issue of media ownership and ethnicity affect the role of mass media in the Third Term Agenda?

## 2-Review of Literature

### *The Mass Media and Democracy/governance: Reciprocity of Effects*

The Nigerian media were major actors in the struggle for the entrenchment of democratic rule and a major vanguard of good governance. Even now that a civilian regime is in place, Nigerians regularly look up to the media especially with the questionable democratic credential of our political parties (and elites), to be the vanguard of democratic consolidation. It is therefore, difficult to talk about democracy and good governance in Nigeria without reserving a place for the media because of their doggedness and above all, their resolve to pursue democratic agenda to usher the country into the center democratic world.

The extent of media importance is further made apparent by having it enshrined in the various constitutions of Nigeria (both past and present). For instance, Section 21 of 1979 and section 22 of the 1989 constitution allow the press to ensure that government is responsible and accountable to the people. No doubt, press freedom is one of the basic features of a democracy. Diril-Teilanyo (1999) emphasizes a reciprocal relationship between the two concepts (mass media and democracy). Democracy results in press freedom (“democratization of the press”) and a free press helps in shaping and sharpening (as well as enthroning) democracy (ibid). The position of Owens-Ibie (1994) as cited by Diril-Teilanyo (1999) aptly captures this relationship by stating that “the presence of democracy in western countries has invariably touched on the democratization of the press. A nation in the process of democratization therefore finds help in the pervasive elements of democratization. Raboy (1999) portrays this relationship differently thus: “democratizing media, as a positive value in and of itself, and fostering a role for media in the democratization of

society”. The later underlines the effort of mass media towards the enthronement of democracy while the former is on the emphasis for the liberalization of media ownership.

From the foregoing, it is axiomatic that democracy empowers the mass media and the mass media helps in the sustenance of democracy. It has been differently stated that democratic system allows the survival of the press, enables public discussion which is presided over by the mass media and encourages some measures of sanity and honesty in government. The huge responsibility of the press in a democracy is a reflection of the critical role that the mass media should play in normal, free-running democratic systems (Owens-Ibie 1994). The *economist* was cited by Owens–Ibie (1994) thus: “the people learn about how they are governed, from what they read in the newspapers and what they see on the television news. Unless voters know something about how they are governed, they cannot have an intelligent opinion about it. And without intelligent opinions about government, you cannot have a healthy democracy”.

Most of the Nationalist movements also possessed media outlets which helped them in the propagation and advancement of their “political” course. On the other hands, the media was also used by the colonialist to integrate African economies and peoples into the international market economy for the benefit of the colonial rules between 1898 and 1960 (Mwangi, 1998). Toward independence, mass media was used to harness the basis of nationalism and nation-building. In the analysis of politics and society in contemporary Africa (in general), Naomi (1999) identified eight situations that characterized the landscape of Africa at the independence and immediately after independence: artificiality of its political boundaries; multiplicity of societies; economic weakness; external dependence’ creation of western-educated elites; fragility of African institutions; absence of shared political culture; and collective memory of humiliation via colonialism. Therefore, the appropriateness in the assertion of Lerner (1959) that “mass media influences development via the dissemination of developmental information”, cannot be downplayed. That is, the identified conditions of African continent stated above, generated reactions via the aid of mass media to arrest the ugliness of the situations.

In addition to this, the media was used to achieve the objective of state consolidation, ethnic harmonization and integration. That is, national unity and development became the first priority of African government. The state endeavored to play altruistic roles by controlling the media in national policies along the aforementioned schemes. On the Long-run the mass media turn-out to be an instrument of propaganda when developmental projects failed (Ronning, 1994). Nevertheless, the initial co-option of the media was to engage them in the process of attempting to harness every available resource for the purpose of development. In most cases, radio was used to take the message of national unity and development to the rural areas where 70 percent of the population lived (Mwangi, 1999). This was clearly painted by Ayittey as quoted by Mwangi [1999] when he averred that “political and development programmes were packaged with the sole purpose of achieving development.

Lippmann (1930) asserts that “the press is like the beam of a searchlight that moves restlessly about bringing one episode and then another out of darkness into vision. This, according to Owen-Ibie is close to surveillance role of the mass media. Moreover, mass media as a means to enhance knowledge is appropriate to my analysis. Democratization in Nigeria fourth republic is deeply rooted in the ability of the mass media to impact the people with adequate knowledge of the beauty of democracy and other democratic values. Power is said to be a product of knowledge. Comstock (1991) clearly refines this sentiment by stating that “the ubiquity of the media... as made selective exposure more difficult and selective perception less easy.

The enlightenment role of the mass media is beautifully packaged by The Economist (1998), “people learn about how they are governed from what they read in the newspapers and what they see on the television news. Unless voters know something about how they are governed, they cannot have an intelligent opinion about it. And without

intelligent opinions about government, you cannot have a healthy democracy. That is, the media should equip the people with the necessary intellectual implements for the adventure of preserving democracy.

Apart from the role of informing, educating and explaining to the people the importance of democracy and exposing its core values for people's mental development, mass media do serve the purpose of keeping officials of government within expected (constitutional) bounds. The media helps to expose corrupt practices within the purview of governance; hence, it promotes transparency and accountability. The opportunity granted by the media for both the majority and minority groups to ventilate their grievances without resulting to violence can ensure political stability. "The press becomes an avenue for letting out emotions that, if bottled, could lead to social tensions and division (Ibid). Then, given the bi-directional flow of information within democracy, the government also makes use of the media to intimate the people about the general atmosphere of the state.

On the other hand, the press played a very important role during the military rule especially, in echoing the clamour for democracy. The media became visible in exposing the systematic abuses of human right, corruption etc during the hay days of military dictatorship in Nigeria. The role of the media was as apparent as the plethora of measures and decrees that were put in place to cripple their effectiveness and efficiency. No wonder that Lateef Jakande who for many years headed the newspaper proprietors association of Nigeria, asserted that the emergency Decree of 1966 was sufficient to turn Nigerian press into a captive press". Though, the level of military suppression appeared minimal due to what Omar F. Ibrahim called "tradition of press Freedom" that emanated from the carriage and professional spirit of Nigerian editors and publishers, and the good sense of some of those in authority (1991). The turn in the political landscape as a result of the demise of the second republic and the coming into power of Buhari with his Decree 4 of 1984 brought about a change in the code of conducts between the media practitioner and public office holders in Nigeria. This and various forms of other clap-down continued through successive military rule.

### **3-Mass Media in the Fourth Republic**

#### *Transition era:*

The 1999 edition of the media world yearbook puts the number of regular newspapers at 78, magazines at 45, television stations at 52 and radio stations at 31 (Oseni, 2000), cited in (Oyero, 2008). The period witnessed the emergence of such Newspapers as the Sun, Daily Independence, Westerner, Compass, The Nation etc and the "re-launching of moribund titles such as the Daily Times.

With the abrupt death of General Sani Abacha in June 1998, and the emergence of his successor Abdusalam Abubakar hand over programme, one would have expected that the mass media would bow to silence. The media according to Oyovbaire (2001), continued with their democratic agitation and operated with extreme suspicion and distrust of the regime and its time table of military exit and hand over to civilian rule." The necessity for renegotiation of the foundations of the nation-state, including if "necessary to break-up the country" was constantly drummed up and mouthed by the media.

The effect of unbridled anti-militarism by the media on the political process was confusion and disarray in the ranks of the Abdusalami Abubakar administration "which in turn gave rise to the hurried regime's agenda for exit and party formation, cum the subsequent registration of three political parties for the hand over election" (Oyovbaire, Ibid). Not only that the media hyper-facilitated the race towards the election, it also "disallowed the registered parties from ensuring the full take-off let alone developing the party system before the elections because of the media tune of haste" (Ibid). The December 1998 local government election was used as template for the registration of political parties in consonance with clearly set out criteria.

The media agitation became partisan and regional at a point in the quest for the transition to the fourth republic. According to Oyovbaire (Ibid), the media advocated for the registration of such political party like Alliance for Democracy (AD) which did not meet up with the requirement for the registration of political parties. The party was “rooted narrowly and sectionally restricted only to the media location of the Yoruba south-west.” There was clear apprehension on the part of the hand-over administration if the AD which was the political “arrow-head” of the Yoruba nationality and the NADECO cum Afenifere, was not registered. There was no doubt – the fact that the Abdulsalami Abubakar transitional government “was (also) very mindful of the media given the full hand and limited time it had.” This was to the extent that he released all the journalists who were either detained or jailed by the Abacha regime (Ewekhare, 2011).

The 1999 constitution that he oversaw enshrines in its section 22 the recognition to be accorded to the mass media thus: The press, radio, television and other agencies of the media shall at all times be free to uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people (1999 constitution) of Nigeria. Under section 39(1) of the same constitution, it is stated that “every person shall be entitle to freedom of expression including freedom to hold opinions and to impart ideas and information without interference”.

Two of the presidential contenders in the 1999 election were Yoruba’s from the south west – Chief Olusegun Obasanjo and chief Olu Falae. Their emergence cannot be totally detached from the intention to nationally and stealthily compensate the south-westerns over the death of Moshood Abiola who died in the quest to assume the post of the president in 1993. The media as earlier noted became an instrument in the process of achieving the same.

#### *Mass Media in the National Politics*

The mass media welcomed the Fourth Republic with joy and criticism (Ufuophu-Biri, 2008); joyful for winning the battle for the enthronement of democracy. Equally, they were saddled with the responsibility of protecting the “embryonic democracy jealously from all forms and dangers”. Some of the challenges that the media encountered and had to grapple with between 1999 – 2007 included allegation of election riggings, the allegation of INEC partiality, indiscipline of public office holders, corruption, census, non-performance by the government at all levels, economic predicaments, religious crises and the Third Term Agenda debacle.

The analysis of Hassan (2010) about current issues and the media in Nigeria is pivotal. He stressed the impact of mass media on various issues which ranges from the war against corruption, poverty and Development, electoral matters, the judicial intervention to foreign policy issues. But the by the mass media to perform the social responsibility role was crippled not only by the media structure in Nigeria (Oyero, 2008) but also by the unfriendly relationship of the apex leader with the media. Though, the number media organization assumed some growth with a conservative number of publications (weeklies, dailies and magazines) at 116 (Ogbodo, 1996).

There were constant acrimonies between the media and the Mr. President. According to Ochonogor (2008), the president constantly expresses his disregard for the mass media organization. In a public interview he claimed that “the media have no special role in the polity.” At another time, he was quoted thus: “whoever went to the university to study mass communication had nothing to do”. Ewekhare (2011) calls it “ding-dung manner.” Though, following the re-organization of the federal ministries, the ministry of information and orientation was not only retained but was re-christened ministry of information and communication and minister as well as special advisers on the media were appointed by him.

Interestingly, the media did not only serve as a watchdog but guides the government towards changes as well as tackling the effects of the change. According to Adeyemi (2006), “the media have always occupied the fore-front of socio-political and economic change”. The media did not only agitate or draw attention to the bad policies of

government, but also drum support for the positive initiatives and programmes of government. Some of these national issues that attracted media agitation included fight against corruption, census, religions crises, elections and foreign policies. In the regimes profession to combat corruption which led to the establishment of such bodies as Economic and financial crime commission (EFCC) and Independent corrupt practices and other related offences crime commission (ICPC), the media played a key role. Omoera (2006) appraises this role as “accountability or whistle blowing role”.

On this note the media have unearthed high profile cases of corruption which involved highly ranked public office holders. The closest to the inception of the fourth republic was the falsification of Alhaji Salisu Buhari who became the first speaker of the republic. Omoera (Ibid) quotes Olutokun and Siteolu thus: “as a result of the media’s watchdog role Buhari, on July 22, 1999 dropped his bravado, pleaded guilty to the allegation and resigned his office, thus paving the way for his prosecution”.

Other top corrupt cases attracted aggressive comment from the media. The Chuba Okadigho’s N67 Million car and office furniture allegation, Evan Enwerem (a former senate president), Patricia Olubunmi Etteh (a former speaker, House of Representative), Professor Adenike Grange ( a former Minister of Health), Iyabo Obasanjo (A senator caught up in shady deals in the health and power sectors), House of Representatives ₦23 million car Sandal, the Halliburton corruption scandal, the Vaswasni brother’s scandal and many other improprieties in government circles at different times have been blown open by the media (Omera, Ibid).

The chief Obasanjo regime must also be appraised from the perspective of security or otherwise. The media did not falter in their reports of inter-ethnic crises, religions violence, militancy, armed robbery, abduction, kidnapping and military reprisals/repressions. On certain occasion, the violent Ijaw Youths abducted and murdered twelve policemen who were on duty in Odi town in Bayelsa State. Nineteen other soldiers were killed in peace keeping adventure in the crisis between TIV and JUKUN in Benue and Nassarawa States. Odi town in Bayelsa and Zaki-Biam received a terrible anger of the Nigeria military men that were later deployed by the government of chief Obasanjo. The destruction of the two towns was criticized by the media (Apeloko, 2007). The apex of the internal insecurity became visible with emergence of sectional associations or ethnic militias such as Odua people’s Congress (OPC), Arewa People’s Congress, MOSOP, Movement for the Actualization of sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) etc. All these did not only attract the criticism of the mass media but also were credited in their black-books against the regime.

Closely related to the above were the series of religious crises which were sometimes rooted in naivety of the media practitioners. Oboh, (2008) is of the opinion that political war of vendetta amongst the various political “gladiators” that we have in Nigeria. This is because “Nigerian democracy is still dominated by the elites” (Oboh, Ibid). Unlike General Ibrahim Babangida who in the quest to enroll Nigeria as a member of organization of Islamic countries stated that “religion will no longer be ignored as a potent weapon of social mobilization.” Obasanjo’s position was neutral (Oboh, Ibid pg 13). The above assertion of IBB was magnified by the media to the extent that it bred inter-religious conflict. The 2002 Kaduna religious crisis which claimed the lives of over 200 Nigerians was triggered by a publication of This Day Newspaper “which the Northern Moslems interpreted to be blasphemous on the person of prophet Muhammad” (Oboh, Ibid pg 14).

Uncensored media report brought another religious crisis in 2008 based on “ridiculous” foreign publication of the image of Muhammad which was later magnified by the Nigerian media. The publication triggered unrest in Kano, Maiduguri, Benue, Kaduna etc. The Tell Magazine of March 6, 2006 was extensively quoted by Oboh (Ibid, pg 15) to justify the political under-tone of all these series of religious “volcanoes” thus: “for some Nigerians ...

the crisis coincided with the time the constitution review committee was to hold a public hearing for the amendment of 1999 constitution, which some believed would have given Obasanjo opportunity to contest for a third term in office. ...” it was claimed that northern elites simply employed violence to dislodge the amendment move. It is on this note that the media should be alerted on the common boundary between and among different religious bodies in Nigeria.

Apart from the foregoing analysis the mass media played an unarguably bravura role in mobilizing Nigerians for the 2006 census. The census took place between 21st and 27th of March, 2006. The media’s role was apparent before, during and after the head count. The National Population Census (NPC) collaborated with the mass media to “ensure a full-scale participation in the census exercise” (Ojete, 2008). Parallel to the above, the Guardian, in its April 4th, 2006 edition noted that: “there was scanty evidence of public enlightenment about the ...Population Census.” In a rejoinder, the NPC via the Tell Magazine of April 24, 2006 stated that intensive, extensive and purposive campaign began several months ago before 21st of March, 2006...” Notwithstanding, the media provided meaningful information and education on the census via editorials, news, headlines and other journalistic genres (Ojete, Ibid).

It is of great value to briefly discuss the Nigerian mass media in electoral process within the time under consideration. From the local government election of 1998 to the 2007 elections, the media “lived up to its expectation of keeping the public abreast of happening in the political space of Nigeria” (Omoera, 2010). The media played educative, informative and agitative roles in the conduct of elections. The media was at the forefront of the agitation for electoral reforms, reporting irregularities and malpractices that characterized the 2003 and 2007 elections and called for immediate actions after the elections (Omoera, Ibid). The extent of the electoral evil propelled an elected president (Umaru Yar’Adua) in his inaugural speech (voice of America, May 29, 2007) to admit that the election that produces him was without flaws.

The relentless drum-bit by the media produced the “electoral reforms committee (ERC) to examine the entire electoral process with a view to effecting reforms to raise the standard of elections (Omoera, ibid). Some electronic media such as NTA, AIT and Channel TV organized debates for various contestants (Ufuophu-biri, 2008) to test their competence and to allow them to intimate the populace their manifestoes.

Another foreign policy issue which appears not to excite the media was on the deportation of Nigerians by some African States (Hassan, 2010). Nigerians were expelled from Libya, Gabon, South African etc for not possessing valid traveling documents. The third issue was on the federal government consideration to observe the verdict of the international court of justice on the Bakassi peninsula. The people and the civil societies employed the mass media to ventilate their sentiments against the decision of federal government to cede the peninsular to Cameroon. The initial rejection of the verdict by the government was not unconnected with the roles played by the mass media. Meanwhile, on assuming power, the president was compelled to withdraw the Nigerian soldiers from Sierra Leone. He was also criticized by the media for his foreign trips and was asked to defend himself. Another issue through which the media showcased their efficiency was in speaking against the third term agenda of president Obasanjo.

#### *Appraisal of the “Third Term”: the New Breed of Culture of Tenure Elongation in Nigeria*

The assumption of office by General Obasanjo in 1999 as the first fourth republican president was surrounded by declaration of optimism that Nigerian leaders have learnt their lessons and would hence respect the desire of the people for the enthronement of rule of law, democracy and federalism as well as the sanctity of the Nigerian constitution. Past political experiences kept Nigerians alive to the usual cunning schemes of leaders to perpetuate

themselves into power with the excuse of an endeavour to perfect one project/programme or the other. “This misguided determination on the side of the leaders first became apparent from 1974 when General Yakubu Gowon announced his commitment to return the country to democratic rule in 1976” (Jibrin, 2006). This promise encountered another attempt to be postponed. Gowon thought that he was the only individual who could hold the society together. He was wrong and was shown the way out while he was attending OAU summit in Kampala (Uganda).

The “sit tight” syndrome became worst during the Babangida’s regime through his “transition without end”. The hope of returning Nigeria to a democratic government appeared to be realizable when he set up the political Bureau in 1986 and the constitutional drafting process that he initiated to create a blue print on how to return to democratic rule” (Jibrin, 2006). The transition “enterprise” constantly witnessed postponement. It was interestingly noted by Dare (1999) that Babangida used the media to “prepare the ground for such changes and to justify them after they were announced”. Eventually, the relatively free and fair presidential election of June 12, 1993 was annulled by IBB for a reason (still) not known.

A National Interim Government was set-up thereafter when he “stepped aside”. The ING headed by Ernest Shonekan was sacked few months after and Abacha re-established a full fledge military regime over the country. Then Abacha came and promised to be different from Babangida. He committed himself to organizing a quick transition to democratic rule and reneged. Abacha thought he could manipulate the process and use the security agencies to intimidate his opponents into silence while prolonging his autocracy. All the registered political parties adopted him as their presidential candidate in his bid to become a “civilian” government. His effort was contested and his plans resisted by a wide spectrum of Nigerian (the mass media inclusive). General Olusegun Obasanjo risked his life to confront the self-secession plan of General Abacha (Jubrin, 2006).

The death of Abacha in 1998 brought a sign of relief as General Abubakar became Nigerian democratic hero for ushering in the fourth republic in a non-manipulative transition process (Jubrin, Ibid). From May 29, 1999 to 2007, the Nigerian polity was piloted at the highest level by President Olusegun Obasanjo. He eventually failed to resist the temptation of being in power after he had ruled for eight years. His own self perpetration bid which was wrapped in the nomenclature of “Third Term Agenda” became a household terminology. The 1999 constitution states thus about the tenure of office of the Mr. President:

a)when his successor in office takes the oath that office; b) he dies whilst holding that office; or c) the date when his resignation from office takes effect: or d) he otherwise ceases to hold office in accordance with the provisions of the constitution, (FRN constitution, Sect. 135 (1), 1999).

Sub. Section 2 states further that the president shall vacates his office at the expiration of a period of four years commencing from the date, when –

a)in the case of a person first elected as president under the constitution, he took oath of allegiance and the oath of office; and b) in any other case, the person last elected to that office under the constitution took the oath of allegiance and oath of office or would, but for his death, have taken such oaths.

The third term Agenda was initially unclear, given the fact that the president Obasanjo and other concern players did not clearly communicate the agenda to the people of Nigeria. In fact, President Obasanjo recently said that



he never “toyed with the idea of a third term and that it was some members of the National Assembly that initiated the move to amend the constitution”, (The Nation, 2012). However, Senator Ibrahim Mantu, former Deputy Senate President and the Chairman of the National Assembly Constitutional Review Committee (CRC) in 2006 openly averred that president Obasanjo was the only qualified father and leader of modern Nigeria that deserved another term.

Mantu also alleged that there was never a time that former President Obasanjo lobbied him to use his position as chairman of the CRC to bend the rules and ensure the passage of the tenure elongation clause, (ibid). Also, The Guardians (2005) reported that the Peoples Democratic Party rose from a special session and announced that neither the party nor the President has any intentions whatsoever to violate the Nigerian constitution and impose a third term agenda on Nigerians. But what was apparent as far as the widespread denial of the intention to impose a third term agenda is concern is that, the president is not known to parade such an attitude of coldness in the midst of allegation of such magnitude.

In a special editorial package by Reuben Abati titled “The third term agenda and the National Assembly”, Abati exposed the hidden connotations of the denial of both PDP and president Obasanjo. The resolution of Obasanjo could be interpreted to mean that he believed in the fact that it was the National Assembly that reserves the prerogative to amend the constitution to accommodate tenure elongation bid,

What the party has managed to do, if you read between the lines, is to tell Nigerians that only the National Assembly has the powers to amend the Constitution, and it has before it about 100 amendments including a review of the tenure of Governors and Presidents, and that the PDP believes in legislative independence and would not in any way stand in the way of the legislature although it is committed to the stability of the Nigerian state, (Guardian, Dec. 5, 2005).

The experience of money politics quickly engendered reactions from different quarters with the inclusion of coalition of political parties in the country. Mr. Osita Okechukwu, national publicity secretary of CNPP concisely advanced agitation towards this direction thus:

We want to know who authorised the opening of the Central Bank of Nigeria’s vault where over N30 billion was withdrawn, the foot soldiers who distributed monies to lobby National Assembly members, chiefs, emirs, obas and sundry characters who collected,(Guardian, ibid).

It is clear at this juncture that the loyalist of the agenda originally intended to manipulate the National Assembly for smooth sailing. This was supported by Omoera (2010) when he stated that “the agenda was aimed at motivating the law making organ of the government to circumvent the constitution to allow the president to stay in power for long” (Omoera, 2010). At a point, the relationship between the president and law makers grew abnormally awry given the incessant feeling of suspicion. The Peru and Lebanon experiences became a point of reference for the N/A not to expressly agree on the approval of the funding of the confab, (Tell, Feb. 21, 2005). They expressed the fear that the President could turn-around to dissolve the N/A.

There was widespread opposition to the Third Term Agenda from the mainstream political elite of all the zones in the country and virtually all the political classes as well as the international community. The mass media role in the agenda which is the focus of this paper was on the basis of constant drum of publicity to the ignoble act of self perpetuation.

The fear that the lawmakers could easily bend their principles to financial gain provoked the aggressiveness of the media rage against the third term agenda. It was believed that the law makers could be rented to make any laws that would suit the man of power. On other occasions, each time any lawmaker tried to stand up and confront the tyranny of the Presidency (Okadigbo, Anyim Anyim, Ghali Na'Abba, Aminu Masari), such a lawmaker was pushed down and pushed out by the oppressive machinery of the PDP, the Presidency and the renegades in the Assembly, (Guardian, *ibid*). In the states, the lawmakers, as a rule, work for the Governor. They refer to him as their leader. And the leader is expected to look after his boys by making them comfortable.

The third term bid failed after the National Assembly annulled the entire process of amending the Constitution following sustained public outrage and the media aggression.

On the other hand, Obasanjo reserved the opportunity to employ the labour of both EFCC and ICPC also as means to achieve his aim. Also, the agenda would have triggered massive rigging of the 2007 election beyond the level at which it was formerly witnessed. On a general appraisal, the bid negates the mission of democratic consolidation as far as it categorically contradicts some basic nexus of democracy.

Coppedge (2011) in his *Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy: A new Approach*, enumerates thirty three components and indicators of democracy. Some of the variables he stated include free election, elective government, regular election, turnout, female suffrage, party ideology, party system size, ethnic equality, gender equality, competitiveness, turnover, etc. Coppedge (*ibid*) appraise the later thus: the change in (a) party control and (b) individual control over (c) the executive and- if different (d) the most powerful office in the land. Hence, it is crystal that the third term bid contradicted the former; regime turn-over which is a major ingredient of a consolidated democracy.

### *Conclusion*

The study finds out that the Nigerian mass media as an industry was unified and provided an aggressive opposition against military government which consequently led to the emergence of a democratic government in 1999. Also, the mass media, especially the privately owned ones suffered attacks during the Obasanjo regime due largely to their vehement opposition to undemocratic events and anti-people policies. One of these events was the Third Term Agenda which is the focus of this paper. The reality of the agenda became apparent during the 2005 constitutional reform conference.

In actual fact, the work has made it clear that the agenda did not generate the rift between the president and the private media houses especially rather, their relational record has mostly appear on the deficit side of history. The study also reveals that the policies of president Obasanjo did not account for the anti-posture stand of the mass media, hence, the desire to preserve democratic government in Nigeria. The intention to preserve the principle of rotational presidency as well as the clear ambition of some political players, partly contributed to the private media aggressive rage against the third term agenda. I also became clear that the struggle of the mass media transcended ethnic division or loyalty.

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**4. Presentation and Analysis of Primary Data**

**Respondents’ view on the cohesion of mass media in the struggle for democracy and emergence of 4<sup>th</sup> republic**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
They were unified	67	71.3	71.3	71.3
Not unified	13	13.8	13.8	85.1
I don't know	14	14.9	14.9	100.0
Total	94	100.0	100.0	

**Table 4.1**

The question of whether the mass media were unified against the military government in the quest for a democratic government generated the following responses; 67 (71.3%) persons for Yes, 13 (13.8%) persons for No and 14 persons (14.9%) for I don’t know.

**Respondents’ view on the cordiality of relationship between Obasanjo and the mass Media before third term bid**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
The rel. was cordial	40	42.6	43.0	43.0
Not cordial	39	41.5	41.9	84.9
I don't know	14	14.9	15.1	100.0
I	93	98.9	100.0	
	1	1.1		
Total	94	100.0		

**Table 4.2**

About the cordiality of relationship between the mass media and president Obasanjo before the Third Term Agenda also paraded almost a similar pattern of responses as the above question; 40 (43.0%) person for yes, 39 (41.5%) persons for no and 14 (15.1%) persons went for I don't know option.

**Views of respondents on the Impact of media ownership on the role of the mass media  
 In the third term agenda**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Ownership impact roles	55	58.5	58.5	58.5
Did not	20	21.3	21.3	79.8
I don't know	19	20.2	20.2	100.0
Total	94	100.0	100.0	

**Table 4.3**

Fifty five persons of about 58.5% are of the opinion that mass media ownership influenced the role of the mass media in the third term agenda. 20 (21.3%) persons opine that there is no relationship between ownership and the role of mass media in the third term agenda.

**Views of respondents on the role of government owned media in the Third Term Agenda**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
They acted against	25	26.6	27.2	27.2
The acted for	51	54.3	55.4	82.6
I don't know	16	17.0	17.4	100.0
	92	97.9	100.0	
	2	2.1		
Total	94	100.0		

**Table 4.4**

Fifty one (55.4%) respondents stated that the government owned mass media did not act against the third term agenda, while 25 (27.2%) opted for yes in support of the fact that government owned media act against the third term agenda. 16 (17.0) persons did not know.

**Views of respondents about the direction of the private media's role in the Third Term bid**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
They acted against	59	62.8	64.8	64.8
They acted for	18	19.1	19.8	84.6
I don't know	14	14.9	15.4	100.0
	91	96.8	100.0	
	3	3.2		
Total	94	100.0		

**Table 4.5**

The justification of the role of the private media as anti- third term is supported by 59 persons who constitute 64.8% of the total respondents. 18 (19.8%) and 14 (15.4%) persons selected No and I don't know respectively.

**Views of respondent on the influence of policies of government on the role  
 Of the mass media in the third term agenda**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Policies infl. The role	35	37.2	38.0	38.0
Did not	37	39.4	40.2	78.3
I don't know	20	21.3	21.7	100.0
	92	97.9	100.0	
	2	2.1		
Total	94	100.0		

**Table 4.6**

Thirty seven persons against 35 respondents say No and Yes respectively to the idea that president Obasanjo's policies impacted the role of the mass media in the third term agenda. They constitute 40.2% and 38.0% respectively.

**Views on the ethnic harmony among the Nigerian mass media against the third  
 term agenda**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
There was harmony	56	59.6	59.6	59.6
No harmony	17	18.1	18.1	77.7
I don't know	21	22.3	22.3	100.0
Total	94	100.0	100.0	

**Table 4.7**

Fifty six persons agreed that there was ethnic harmony among the Nigerian mass media in the third term agenda. They constitute 59.6% of the respondents. 17 and 21 selected No and I don't know respectively. They amount to 18.1% and 22.3% respectively.

**Views of respondents on the quest of the media to preserve rotational presidenc**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Quest was valid	11	11.7	68.8	68.8
Not valid	3	3.2	18.8	87.5
I don't know	2	2.1	12.5	100.0
	16	17.0	100.0	
	78	83.0		
Total	94	100.0		

**Table 4.8**

The overwhelming "Yes" to the above question generates a low response to the current one. Only 16 respondent selected options; 11 (68.8%) persons are for yes, 3 (18.8%) for no and 2 (12.5%) for I don't know.

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