

## THE LEGISLATURES, MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA (1999-2007)

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### **Abstract**

*Democracy is all about ensuring popular participation and control of the process of government. The major objective of this paper was to ascertain the role of the Legislatures, the Press and Democracy in Nigeria between the periods of (1999-2007). The work adopted a survey method in assessing the role of the Legislatures, the Press and Democracy in Nigeria). As the instrument of data collection, secondary data was used. Using a dynamic generalized method of Moment's Panel data analysis, the study found that Legislators do not see media practitioners as partners in the promotion of Democracy. Also, Legislators do not respect the media as a legitimate reflection of public opinion, public concerns and social problems and reactions to policies and programs. Based on the followings, the paper recommended that legislators should see media practitioners as partners in the promotion of Democracy by being open to them, interact with them freely and provide them with relevant information that would enable them join hands with the Parliament to promote Democracy in Nigeria. As well, there's need for the parliament to respect the media as a legitimate reflection of public opinion, public concerns and social problems and reactions to policies and programs of the government to bring about the development desired.*

**Keywords:** *Democracy, Legislatures, Media, Government.*

### **Introduction**

Nigeria's Democracy was hard earned; actually with sweat, tears and blood and one can suggest we do a little more to defend it against invaders. Leaving everything in the hands of Honourables /Distinguished alone is costly. That is saying in another way, that if the Legislature is having issues representing Democracy the way it should be represented, there should be a fourth force in the mix that should responsibly step in to ensure it is moved forward and that Force of course is the Media, which has every right under the general rules of Democracy and with the status ascribed to it by the Constitution's recognition of its fundamental position as the fourth estate of the realm, after the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary to offer help at critical junctures.

Where the country is today is critical. If democracy were to be defined against Nigeria's backdrop, something far less than the standard definition of Democracy being the government of the people, by the people and for the people shall emerge. Maybe, something like: 'government of ex-generals by ex-generals for ex-generals' or 'government of kinsmen by kinsmen for kinsmen.' Driving it further down, if standard democracy is underscored by its inclusiveness, the ongoing brand in Nigeria is outstanding

for its exclusiveness. And if it is underscored by free speech and organized confusion, the Nigerian version is notable for graveyard silence and regimentation.

All the attributes of the rugged political system that the ancient Greece bequeathed to mankind are vanishing in the Nigerian experience. One can even add that the French political philosopher, Baron de Montesquieu got it all wrong regarding Nigeria, with his earth shaking theory of separation of power. Nothing seems separated here.

Democracy is all about ensuring popular participation and control of the process of government. Since all the people cannot participate and individually control their government at the same time, they entrust these rights and duties to an elected few among them known as legislators. The legislature is one of the basic structures of any political system. It is known by a variety of names in different countries. Some States identify their legislature as Congress, Parliament, Duma or Knesset. Others designate it as Soviet, Diet, Assembly, etc. (Laxmikanth, 2006). The legislature is ubiquitous in every system of government to perform legislative functions. The law making process is an interesting chain of activities, which involves passing of motions into resolutions and bills into laws which depending on certain circumstances that contribute in one way or the other to national development. In every nation, the legislature as the accredited representatives of the people has the duty of promoting national development through its chain of activities. In Nigeria, legislature has the mandate and is under obligation to initiate debate and show concern on matters affecting the generality of people in the country. Expectedly, such activities should be directed towards reversing declining economy, stabilizing the polity and integrating society with overall aim of enhancing national development. However, the main objective of this paper is to determine the role of the legislatures, the media and democracy in Nigeria (1999-2007).

## Literature Review

### Conceptual Framework

Loewenberg (1995:736) conceptualizes legislatures as "assemblies of elected representatives from geographically defined constituencies, with lawmaking functions in the governmental process". In the same vein, Jewell (1997) identified two features that distinguish legislatures from other branches of government. He opines that legislatures have formal authority to pass laws, which are implemented and interpreted by the executive and judicial branches and their members normally are elected to represent various elements in the population. It is significant to note that legislatures vary in terms of composition, structure and role, from one democracy to the other. Strictly speaking, legislatures are divided into two types. They are the bicameral and the unicameral types.

The unicameral legislature has only one chamber or house while the bicameral variation has two. All communist regimes, including China, many Latin American countries, Norway, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Israel, Lebanon, and New Zealand had unicameral legislature (Bone, 1972). The bicameral structures are made up of the Upper House and the Lower House. Some countries designate their Upper House as the Senate and the Lower House as the House of Representative. Typical examples of this are the United States of America and Nigeria. In England, the House of Lords and the House of Commons are the designations for the Upper House and Lower House respectively. This structural variation notwithstanding, legislatures tend to exhibit some basic common characteristics. Generally speaking, their members are formally equal to one another in status. For another, the authority of members depends on their claim to representation of the rest of the community. Furthermore, as Loewenberg (1971) opines, quality of status also determines that members of parliament work collectively, either in meetings of the entire membership or of committees of members. These characteristics portray the legislature as what it is by its nature and design, a functional institution. In order for a legislature to remain practically functional and contribute to national development, Ogunna (1983:85) opined that it must, among other things be

*Truly representative in character, knowledgeable and mature in judgment, selfless, responsive, responsible, competent and effective in the discharge of its functions, discreet in the judicious exercise of its powers, and high in its integrity.*

The human society is an organic phenomenon. As such, it is never static. The pressures of its geophysical and the natural interaction of its parts render the human society always dynamic. It is the task of the legislature to make laws and policies to guide the societal dynamism into the smooth channels of growth and development for the good of all. Any policy that is not supported by the legislature is not sustainable. It follows that the state or level of national development of the country is strongly determined by capability of the legislature. In other words, all the power that the legislature possesses is for development. To this end, it can pass necessary relevant laws and employ the force of the community in the execution of such laws in aid of national development.

### **Legislation**

Political science theoretical constructs acknowledgment Parliament as one of the major symbol of democratic representation. Other symbol are: political parties, periodic elections, fundamental human rights and freedom of the citizens to choose their leaders, among others. This is based on the timeless definition of democratic as "government of the people for the people by the people".

Parliament whose central responsibility is lawmaking and oversight function draws its power and existence from the people. Since democracy principally involves periodic elections, people freely exercise their voting to elect those who represent them in the parliament. They also reserve the power to re-elect such people or vote them out during the next election.

Section 4; 80-89 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provides explicit meaning to the concepts of parliament otherwise known as National Assembly Section 4 reads: "The National Assembly shall have power to make law for the peace, order and good government of the Federation." Section 80 - 89 empowers the parliament to have control over public funds and to check the activities of the executive arms especially in the area of public finance.

Section 80(3) (4) provides in a more specific fashion the overwhelming power of the parliament to control public fund and ensure efficient management of public finance. The section contains "no money shall be withdrawn from any public fund of the federation unless the issue of those moneys shall be withdrawn from an Act of the National Assembly. No money shall be withdrawn from the consolidated revenue fund or any other public fund of the Federation, except in the manner prescribed by the National Assembly

Similarly, Section 88 and 89 of the constitution contain the power granted the parliament to embark on oversight functions checking the activities of other branches of government especially the executive arm. Section 88(1) empower each House of the National Assembly to publish in its journal or in the official Gazette of the Government of the Federation "to direct or cause to be directed an investigation into any matter or thing with respect to which it authority, ministry or government department charge or intended to be charged with the duty of or responsibility for executing or administering laws enacted by the National assembly, disbursing or administering moneys appropriate or to be appropriated by the National assembly".

Section 88 (1) however, confers on the parliament the power to make laws with respect of any matter within its legislative competence and correct any defects in existing laws to "expose corruption, inefficiency or waste in the execution or administration of laws within its legislative competence and in the disbursement or administration of funds appropriate by it".

These constitutional prescription reinforce the reality that parliament exist fundamentally to make good laws for the good governance of the nation. This explains why 20<sup>th</sup> century has witnessed a rise in parliamentary democracy, an era many nations including Nigeria jettisoned dictatorial regime and embraced representative government.

Jibrin Ibrahim corroborates that the late 1980s witnessed the political transformation in the Eastern Europe resulting in Legislative institution spreading throughout the world with their influence relative

to the power of executive. Ibrahim made specific mention of Africa where the battle to develop the power and responsibilities of the legislature has been intensified in the return time with a note that the executive branch has now turned into the protagonists fighting to retain the vast power they accumulated during decades of military authoritarian rule.

Nigeria, however, remains a good case study here. For parliament to remain relevant in a democracy and be able to carry out its basic duty of lawmaking, it has to first of all, win the battle of legislative independence. More importantly, the parliament has to assert its own autonomy and unique identity without being subservient to the executive. Ibrahim corroborates this submitting that it is the only way the legislative can retain its power and remain the most powerful institution in democratic regimes.

The awesome power of the Parliament can be seen from its ascribed monopoly to make the law through to establish "new commission and agencies; enactment of policy and the control of expenditure through the process of Appropriation Laws".

In democratic theory therefore, the powers of legislature are, at least, as important, if not more important than the power of the executive. This position is, perhaps derivable from the electoral process that give the parliament the power to map and mould views and concerns of citizens and constituents into public policy. Besides, the theory of representative democracy is constructed on the election of legislators by the people to represent them at the level of lawmaking for the society.

Jibrin adds greater impetus to Ibrahim's position. He submit that the legislature is charged with both legislative and oversight functions to regulate and monitor the performance of the executive arm in order to ensure efficiency and accountability in government. According to him, the legislature also moderates the power of the executive so as prevent the emergency of dictatorship in a democracy.

Fundamentally, the derivation of the legislative power from the people makes the parliament a very relevant arm of government. The understanding is that as representatives of the people, the legislators are closer to the people and well position to reflect more accurately peoples aspiration, emotions and concerns. This makes them people's advocates when policies are mounded and directed.

### **Media**

The meaning and concept of media can easily be gleaned from the functions and roles of the media embedded in the theories of mass communication. The theories fundamental provide the scope, philosophy and thrust of media practices. The orthodox view of the media function was captured by Harold Lasswell in his book, *The Structure and Functions of Communication*. He perceives the function of the media from the standpoint of news gathering, dissemination, interpretation and watchdog role. He submits that the press has traditional three-linked responsibilities: to collect and publish the news, to interpret and comment on it, to act as a guard dog of the public interest in area of public concern where executive power may be arbitrarily used.

Lasswell notes that the function of the media flows from a three-fold typology. These are namely: "Surveillance of the world, to report ongoing events, interpretation of the meaning of events and socialization of individuals into their cultural setting" the tread that obviously runs through Lasswell's submission on the function of the media is that the media only inform, educate and enlighten the public but also act as a vehicle for social change, economic reform, the opinion moulding and agents of socialization. In other words, the media have the responsibilities to monitor the activities of government and to promote the duties of the state to protect the socio-economic right of the citizens.

As a vehicle of social, economic and political change, the media are expected to drive and conduct all the segments of society towards a variable destination that will bring about national development. Bola Akinterinwa corroborate that the relevance and the usefulness of media is a function of the extent to which it is able to contribute to the socio-economic development of the society. In other words, the media should operate such that they hold the government accountable to the people, by ensuring that those in government meet the basic needs of the people.

Put differently; the media have the duty to monitor and guide the three arm of government through the provision of information, news items, and commentaries and so on, a function predicated on service to the people and government. The media can also be perceived from the systemic model, which involves the relationship of the print media with other components of the society and the impact of the media on these components.

In analyzing the role of the media, the systemic demands the examination of the environment conditioning of the media, as well as the effect of the media on the political institution and the socio-political environment. John Whale perceives the media from the agenda setting function. According to him, the media function is profound to the extent it can provide the public with focus and direction, by throwing individual issues that are most relevant and ranked highly on public agenda of concerns. These are indicated through clues such as banner headlines or front-page placement of stories.

There are, however, cautious notes that for media to effectively carry out their role, they have to be free from the clutches of corruption, yellow journalist, sensationalism, ethnic leaning financial inducement and other irresponsible acts. They should operate based on the basic tenets of the profession namely: objective balance, fair reporting and respect for the rule of law.

The situation in media over the coverage of the country's privatization exercise supports this position. For instance, some to officials of agency implementing the privatization exercise perceive most newspaper as being corruptly induced to citizens the exercise and report the activities in the most negative form. This perception is capable of impacting negatively on the watchdog role of the media and raising serious doubts over the credibility of media outputs.

This reality makes it imperative for a journalist to operate responsibly. In so doing a journalist should learn to be above board and leaving no room to make the public believe that he is being manipulated via financial inducement and other means of gratifications to carry out his job.

Besides, a journalist should have the ability to interpret events based on the understanding that he has transformed from simply being a reporter of events and news, to one that articulates, analyses, synthesizes and shape public opinion. Graber<sup>5</sup> observe that this necessary shift role is borne out of real demand from the public for pivotal position, which the media have assumed.

This position was corroborates by Loretta Rosales<sup>6</sup> when she describe the role of the media in two distinct areas, namely; "an instrument of information and an agent of change" through investigation of stories that require substantial exposition and as implicit regulator over government's action in its disposal of authority and functions. She sees the power of the media from its ability to expose government, to enable it reassess its ethical conduct and institution the necessary reforms in aid of common good.

The point being emphasized here is that the media should not only serve as a vibrant counter-balance to the excess of government but an efficient Fourth Estate that can live up to the highest demands of professionalism and relevance. To achieve this, the media should dig beyond the agenda laid out by the government, to serve news items that can raise vital questions and serve the interest people.

Robert Dardenne reinforces this when he submits that media should be seen from its ability to serve the people. His position is that media should serve the people and ensure that it commands the trust and confidence of the people based on the manner they operate. The understanding from this viewpoints is that the media should tell the people what they want and need to know and therefore should give them information they need to be self-governing thereby empowering them to check the excesses of government, improve themselves, their environment and their societies.

What is critical here is that media watchdog function makes people's lives better by partaking actively in improving their materials conditions. It also provides trusted, reliable information that allows them to take actions to improve their government and their societies in this way, the press, stimulates people's

mental growth and help the citizens to diminish that which harms them and nurture that which empowers and serve them best.

### **Challenges of Legislatures, the media in a democratic system**

The restoration of civil rule and democracy to Nigeria in 1999 has brought a new thrust to media coverage of parliament and policies. This new approach has exposed the strength and shortcomings of media practitioner in reporting the new-fangled dispensation. The recognition of the shortcoming has become imperatives as a prelude to suggesting basic framework of solution. This is because unless efforts are made to provide broad-spectrum of options necessary to solving the problems that hamstringing parliamentary and political journalist, they will continue to find it difficult to play the role expected of them in democracy.

The import of this lies in the fact that parliamentary and political reporting is growing steadily in the country with the reinstatement of representative government in 1999, after decades of military dictatorship. In the light of this reality, crucial shock therapy is desirable to ensuring that parliamentary and political reporting is standardized and elevate to the level it should be under democratic climates.

### **Limitation to Effective Parliamentary, Media Practices in a democratic system**

Evidently, key factor that constrain parliamentary journalists from effective performance, among others includes;

#### **Insufficient Grasp of the Beat:**

The extent to which a journalist is able to cover his beat effectively is depended to. A journalist who exhibit low knowledge of the beat will certainly run into the problem of thoroughness in the coverage of the beat. Some journalist who covered the parliament lack the competence and skill to understand parliamentary issues well.

This reality impinges on their effectiveness to produce insightful report from the beat. Such journalist would be unable to break new grounds to exhume exclusive news items which potentially place a journalist over and above his colleague. Besides, such journalist find it difficult to analytical put the news items they able to generate from the beat into proper context and perspective.

To efficiently cover the parliament, a journalist should begin by coming to terms with the intricacies of parliament. A journalist should put extra efforts to understanding the basic elements of democracy and parliament, their workings, structure and applications. There is need for them to establish relevant links in key departments of the parliament and create necessary report that will enable them guarantee pertinent window for veritable and constant news generation.

#### **Poor Professional Training and Skill:**

To be able to cover the parliament effectively and adequately, a journalist must basic professional training and skill. This is because parliamentary reporting is a highly specialize area that requires some degree of specialization of professional obligation, a journalist should not only obtain educational qualification in journalist to cover the parliamentary but more importantly embark on training on parliamentary reporting to enable him acquire greater skills for better result.

#### **Inadequate Provision for Professionals Toolsand Facilities**

Some journalist who cover the parliament lack the basic tools and facilities necessary for adequate coverage of the beat. This realization has had adverse impact on the ability of skill and most parliamentary journalist to do a good job. Some of the basic tools includes; tape recorder, digital camera, laptop with internet connectivity, functional telephone, fund to pursue news breaks, vehicle and so on.

A good numbers of the parliamentary journalist can hardly boast the beat. In these modern times, a media organization that intends to stand out in the highly competitive and essentially dynamic aforementioned professional tools and facilities.

### **Low Aptitude for Investigation**

The knack to investigate a story to its logical conclusion is one key area some parliamentary reporters fall far short of. Some of them still rely on press releases, press conference, interviews and coverage of plenary sessions and committee activities as major sources of news generation. Only a few regrettably exhibit investigative skill and as such little attention is accorded to this important sources of news generations.

For a journalist to be able to dig up the News behind the news, lurk in corners to expose the ills perpetrated by the parliamentarians and other policy makers they must investigate, verify and clearly news worthy stories, scoops and leads. Essentially, journalist's propensity to hold the policy makers accountable to the people is largely dependent on their ability to investigate their actions and inaction, how they carry out the mandate reposed on them.

Low capacity for investigation is a huge to the effective coverage of the parliament in line with the social responsibilities press paradigm. To sharpen the inclination for investigation, a journalist should learn to persevere, recognize a developing story, and follow it up by asking the right question and talking strategic steps to providing answers to the questions.

### **Draconian Media Laws:**

Most of the laws put in place over the years to provide cover for media practices are innately moribund. A classical example is the Official Secret Act enacted in 1961 by Tafawa Balewa regime which the Freedom of information Act has now punctured.

Worst still are the Decrees enacted by the various military regimes to cage, repress, and oppress media organization and their personnel. Instances abound in Buhari's Decree 4 of 1984 enacted to censor what was published in the press. Also, Babangida's Offensive Publications (proscription) Decree 29 of 1993.

Babangida additionally enacted Newspaper Registration Decree 43 of 1993 to gag the media. These laws and several other similar enactments are still present in the statutory books and thus obstruct effectual media practice in the current democratic dispensation.

### **Ethnic Leaning**

Nigeria is a heterogeneous society. Therefore reporters, editors and media owners come from the various 250 ethnic groups or more which make up the nation. There is usually a strong tendency for media personnel to play up favorably issues that border on their ethnic groups to the detriment of those that concern other ethnic nationalities. For instance, some Northern reporters usually observe when they are treating issues that border on Islam and Arewa Consultative forum. The same applies to some of their Eastern counterparts' when they handily issues on Ohaneze Ndigbo and the defunct Biafra. Some of the south western reporters follow the same patterns on issues bordering on Afenifere Odua People's Congress.

Worse still, some reporters tenaciously slant facts for the purpose of defending their Kinsmen on matters that border on fraud and scandal. More regrettable is that the editorial philosophy of some media organization is simply built around the part of the country the owner comes from.

This is instructive of the large scale editorial focus Daily Trust and Leadership accord Hausa/Fulani issues, the ethnic group the large shunk of the owners of the papers comes from. The same applies to Champion, The sun that treats Ibo issues far more extensively because publisher comes from the region.

Evidently, no ethnic group enjoys the kind of mention in Nigeria similar reason bordering on ownership structure. The same however applies to Vanguard the reflects this reality in its editorial contents with regard to Niger Delta issues.

This reality is clearly a recognized failing in media practices in the coverage of parliament and democracy and therefore potentially mitigates against media operations under democratic milieu in the country.

### **Financial Inducement:**

Akin to several other professional groups in the country, the media industry is also people with some bad eggs. To this end, some media personnel concede to all manner of gratifications particularly financial inducement, which in media parlance is branded "brown envelop designed to influence them. This reality basically drives the contaminated media personnel to be bias in the manner they report, comment and analyze the issue under focus.

Under this situation, the reporters is neither guided by the weight of the professional ethic nor media philosophy under democracy but the weight of brown given to him. This corrupts tendency of some journalist is a huge hurdle to vibrate, effective, objective, balance and fair media practice decision under a democratic climates

### **Low level of information flows from Principal Offices, Committee Heads, Information Officers and other Bureaucrats to Media Personnel:**

From the professional, the basic new material for media organization are news items which come in the form of quantitative and qualitative information or data. The sources of a news media depends largely on the extents of news worthy materials at its disposal.

This follows that the performance of a journalist covering beat particularly an extensive and significant beat like the National Assembly is entirely a function of the volume of news items he is able to generate and supply to his media organizations. One of the key readiness of the information custodians to freely allow journalist access to news worthy items.

Agreed that journalist can rely on other sources of news generation including investigation coverage plenary section and committee activities, free flow of information from the appropriate quarters to the media personnel is mostly on National Assembly for the increase of volume of media reports in National Assembly.

Besides, it provides the media personnel a veritable window to cross-check their facts, balance their story thereby enabling them to scale down the rates of speculation and half truth. It also facilities a healthy relationship between the media and the parliamentary necessary to check healthy reports and to promotes democracy and strengthen parliament.

### **A Checklist towards Enhancing Media Practices in National Assembly**

To be able to check the recognizes flaws towards ensuring marked improvement of media practice in democracy, the following submission are germane. First, the media should concede more attention to investigates as a key source of news generation than other source if they must be well equipped to hold the parliament accountable to the public as contained in the watchdog media model and section 22 of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria that mandates the media to make decision makers answerable. This would potentially enhance the media impact level on the parliament and other branches of government.<sup>1</sup>

More importantly, the compelling need for a journalist to be knowledgeable about his beat cannot be over-emphasized. This according to Ikechukwu Nwosu<sup>2</sup> would enable him to understand the complex and intricate nature of the beat such that he would report and analyze intelligently and comprehensively. In this way, he would be able to provide the lawmaker the analytical mind to understand situation and the environment in which they find themselves.

A journalist covering the parliament should master his beat so well including its dynamic, scope, structure and working such that he would have in impeded access to facilitates and personnel that are in the position to provide him news worthy items.

### **Theoretical Framework**

**Social responsibility theory:** Social responsibility theory allows free press without any censorship but at the same time the content of the press should be discussed in public panel and media should accept any obligation from public interference or professional self regulations or both. The theory lies between



both authoritarian theory and libertarian theory because it gives total media freedom in one hand but the external controls in other hand. Here, the press ownership is private. The social responsibility theory moves beyond the simple "Objective" reporting (facts reporting) to "Interpretative" reporting (investigative reporting). The total news is complete facts and truthful but the commission of the freedom press stated that "No longer giving facts truthfully rather than give a necessary analyzed or interpretative report on facts with clear explanations". The theory helped in creating professionalism in media by setting up a high level of accuracy, truth, and information.

This theory keeps certain areas free for the Press but at the same time puts lot of responsibility on media. As discussed in the beginning that the media is not just seen as an enterprise like others in the business sector of any society, but due to its unique nature, society expects a particular role which media must play in getting rid of social evils, educating people, criticizing government policies and exposing other wrong doings in a society. The sense of responsibility has been emphasized more in this theory as compared to any other.

- Media has certain obligations to society
- It must show truth, accuracy, objectivity, and balance
- The media should be free but self-regulated (codes of conduct, and ethics)
- The media is pluralistic: diversity of society, various points of view, forum for ideas
- The media ownership is a public trust. The journalist is accountable to his audience / readers

In line with the social responsibility, press paradigm, the cornerstone of media philosophy in democracy, the media are expected to shape democratic environment by playing surveillance, watchdog role and embarking on constructive criticism of government activities. The media can essentially achieve this in greater scale through investigation and verification of perceived anomalies in government that hamstring national development and growth. More importantly, the media are duty-bound to disseminate the outcome of the investigation and the verification of the perceive misconducts in the polity in a balance and objective approach for enhanced result.

Basically, in democracy, the media serves as a builder between those in government and the governed. They constitute a veritable vehicle for democratic change by swaying the leaders and the led towards a new political culture, value and orientations.

### **Conclusion**

Democracy is the best guarantee for positive and practical development in a free society; it is a system of government that recognizes the principle of equality, justice and accountability as regards the rights and obligations of both the leaders and the led. Nigeria's democracy is one of the greatest assets of the nation today. It places the destiny of the people in their own hands, thrusting the task of leadership and the management of the nation's resources upon their shoulders. The power to elect their leaders and also hold them accountable can only be guaranteed in a democracy as it is at present.

For those of us in the pen fraternity, a heavy responsibility has been placed on us, to ensure the success of Nigeria's democracy and the extension of its roots deep within the crust of the people's rights and interests. Along the path of fulfilling this responsibility, one has come to realize and appreciate that the symbol of this hard earned democracy is the legislature.

Once the legislature is not there, democracy completely ceases to exist. Because of its centrality in the democracy system, it has been the major victim of successive military regimes in the world over. Left the legislature stunted, robbed of institutional memory and capacity, unlike the other even in military regimes.

Therefore, in as much as the press must do its duties conscientiously and uprightly, the National Assembly must be spared the excessive bashing it has gotten from the press since the inception of this democracy dispensation. However, the role of the mass media in a democracy is second to none. It is a pillar upon which every genuine democracy is built. That is why the developed nations of the western world do not joke with the independents operations of the media. Many of them have laws that guarantee the existence and free operations of the section of the polity, as it is the surest guarantee against a dictatorship, be it the military or civilian type.

The role of the media in a young democracy like Nigeria's include reporting and analysing government policies, programs and activities. As a watchdog, it should objectively draw attention to lapses observed in the conduct of public affairs, especially when our national interest is assaulted. The press, through its reporting and analysis, should promote the ideals as patriotism, nationalism and loyalty.

### Recommendations

The following are the recommendations derived from this research;

- a. The legislators should see the media practitioners as partners in the promotion of democracy by being open to them, interact with them freely and provide them with relevant information that would enable them join hands with the parliament to promote democracy in this country.
- b. There is need for the parliament to respect the media as a legitimate reflection of public opinion, public concerns and social problems and reactions to policies and programs.
- c. Legislators must use a more advanced public relations strategy to write press releases and stay in contact with constituents.
- d. Legislators in leadership positions can hold weekly press conferences to discuss legislative issues and priorities.
- e. Legislators can send a weekly press release to their local people about their stand on issues and their activities that week.
- f. The legislature can hold an orientation session for reporters at the beginning of each legislative session to discuss the context behind the issues that could come up in that session.

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