The Role of the Press and Communication Technology in Democratization

The Nigerian Story

Aje-Ori Agbese

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This book is dedicated to journalists all over the world who give and gave their lives for human rights, equality, justice and a better world for all

Contents

Preface and Acknowledgments

This book began 3 years ago when I was forced to find a topic for my dissertation. While watching a demonstration in Iraq one day, I noticed that one of the demonstrators, who was actively participating in the protest, was recording the event with a small camcorder. The scene reminded me of my father's arrest in 1994, and the drama that ensued to get him out of prison. Most importantly, I remembered the role his cell phone played in the ordeal. I got really excited and set out to find out if anyone had connected communication technology with political transitions in media research. Alas, very few people had. In fact, no one had examined the possible contributions communication technology would make, and could make, to political transitions particularly in "developing countries." Though the event occurred almost 10 years later, the events of September 11, 2001 brought democratization in the news again. Democracy became newsworthy again and soon, news of countries undergoing political transitions swarmed the media. I found the events very interesting, and was also excited to learn that though the U.S. media especially was covering the events, it was still reporting without a context for people to understand the unique factors hindering democratization in several countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe.

The primary purpose of this book is to introduce students, scholars and lovers of knowledge to the chaotic situation of global political transitions. I have two objectives in mind. The first objective is to make people more aware of the tremendous pain in political transitions, especially since interest in global democratization and democracy increases daily. Despite the many comments, articles, documentaries and speeches on the mistakes the West makes in demanding democracy along western lines, many people are yet to understand that political transitions require more than having elections. My hope is that this book will make its reader see the

sometimes devastating effects such an ideology has. Demands and pressure for quick democracy that fail to recognize the unique factors on the ground in different countries and cultures will only harm the masses in the long run. When people are not encouraged to participate beyond voting, do not know their rights; when candidates receive international backing for some old favor without any objective examination of his or her purpose, and the causes of the problem(s) are not taken into account, the process will fail.

The second objective is to recognize the work journalists do, their contributions, their sufferings. Being a journalist's daughter and a short–time journalist, I understand the importance in appreciating the efforts and sacrifices journalists make to inform, educate and entertain the masses. Though their objectives are not always on the side of right, one must not fail to recognize their contributions. I also hope this book will provide journalists in different countries and cultures with a perspective on journalism in Nigeria. Also, though few participants used communication technology in Nigeria in the 1990s, I hope the book will open the door to awareness about communication technology's pervasiveness in Nigeria today and encourage studies on how the technology can best foster national growth.

The book is presented in six chapters, and written for anyone interested in politics, journalism and international relations. Getting this book done was not easy. However, I benefited from the generosity of scholars across different disciplines who had written or said something on the topic.

I would also like to thank my parents—Rose and Dan Agbese—who taught me to push my boundaries and never forget where I came from. They made sure I had ample contacts, food and quiet to collect data, and continued to support me when time came to make my dissertation a book. My siblings—Okibe, Igna, Oka, Ene, Ogaba and Edeanya—were awesome too.

I benefited immensely from the wisdom and support of Bettina Heinz who encouraged me every step of the way, and even planted the seed that this project could be a book.

I also want to thank the staff of the National Library and *Newswatch* library in Lagos, who allowed me to have a quiet corner to gather data for this project, and pointed me in the right direction when I needed materials. My many thanks also goes to the people who participated in this study and made it a reality. Thank you for sharing your experiences. Big thanks are also in order for Ibim, Isiaka and Kabiru, who took me to my appointments.

Chapter One

Introduction

The end of the Cold War between the United States and the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1989 ended communism and established liberal democracy as a legitimate global political structure (Adebayo, Onigu, Egwu, Amuwo, Eteng, Kawonise, et al., 1997). By 1990, countries in Africa, Eastern Europe, Latin America and Asia politically aspired for democracy and transited from authoritarian to democratic forms of government throughout the decade (Schraeder, 2000). For Nigeria, 1990 to 1999 marked a turning point in various ways. Politically, the wave of democratization led to a movement by Nigerians to free Nigeria from military rule that had existed for 29 of its 41 years as an independent nation (Ojo, 2000).

Nigeria's mass media (print and broadcast) also experienced dramatic changes during this era that contributed towards the movement for political pluralism (Bourgault, 1998). More print journalists stopped defending the compromised press in Nigeria and established their own newspapers and magazines in the 1990s, firmly establishing an era of print media independent of party and government ownership (Ibelema, 2003). The journalism profession also witnessed an influx of "well educated and politically committed" reporters that unlike previous eras had journalism degrees (Olorunyomi, 1998, p. 60). For the broadcast media, the Electronic Privatization Decree of 1992 allowed individuals to open and own radio, television and cable stations and telecommunications, with cyber-cafes and business offices providing Internet, email and fax services (Onwumechili, 1996). Prior to 1992, all broadcast and telecommunication services were government-owned. New communication technologies such as fax machines, cellular phones, satellite dishes and the Internet were also available in Nigeria in the 1990s to help Nigerian journalists and activists mobilize foreign support for a transition to democracy (Olukotun, 2002a). All these challenged

"anew the professionalism, role and corporate security of the military as an institution" (Conteh-Morgan, 2000, p. 341). In return, the military severely repressed the press in the 1990s.

Journalists and publishers were harassed, arrested and detained (Faringer, 1991). Military and security agents firebombed news houses; the government closed news organizations for months, shortened newsprint supply, and banned or seized publications from vendors, distributors and readers (Ogbondah, 1997). Faced with these challenges, journalists devised a new strategy—guerilla journalism—whereby they operated underground to escape capture and seizure of their publications by government officials (Collings, 2001). Also called underground journalism, guerilla journalism is not new. Journalists and political activists in several countries, including China and Poland, have used it to fight authoritarianism (Brodsgaard, 1981; Randall, 1993). For instance, the Chinese Democracy movement in the 1970s began as a *dazibao* (wall poster) movement in Beijing (Brodsgaard, 1981). They published journals underground and sold or posted them on the Democracy Wall on Sunday afternoons to raise people's political consciousness. In Poland, opposition movements and nationalists used the underground press to sustain public discussion and opposition (Johnson, 1998). In Nigeria, underground newspapers, magazines and a radio station arose in response to military repression (Olukotun, 2002a). Journalists who worked for or owned major newspapers and magazines used guerilla tactics to avoid arrest and detention or published tabloid versions to avoid seizure of their publications (Ibelema, 2003; Olukotun, 2002a). But something else made their efforts more effective—new communication technologies (Olukotun, 2002a).

Minabere Ibelema (2003) states that the presence of new communication technology counterbalanced military rule in Nigeria. Communication technology played a big role in making guerilla journalism effective in Nigeria in many ways, perhaps because domestic control of global communications is difficult, if not impossible (O'Neil, 1998). As a result, Nigerian journalists, and pro-democracy activists, wrote and sent stories via email and fax, organized pro-democracy events with non-governmental organizations and moved around without detection. Probably the biggest effect was how communication technology produced demonstration effects—the process by which transition processes in one state influence the calculations of societal and state actors in another (O'Neil, 1998).

Scholars in political science, African history and international relations (e.g., Conteh-Morgan, 2000; Ihonvbere & Shaw, 1998; Ijomah, 2000; Njoku, 2001; Ojo, 2000) have extensively researched Nigeria's transition programs in the 1990s. Others have examined and discussed the mass

media's (print and broadcast) role in political transitions from military, authoritarian or single party rule to multi-party systems in Asia, Latin America, Africa and Eastern Europe (e.g., Bourgault, 1998; Collings, 2001; Ibelema, 2003; Im, 1995; Johnson, 1998; Lewis, 1999; Park, 1998). This area of research is important for though the mass media are "widely recognized as central to democratic construction, our understanding of the role they play in the actual process of transition is poor and largely anecdotal" (O'Neil, 1998, p. 6). However, no one in the literature so far has examined the role communication technology and mass communication played in the process. This is important, for as Volti (2001) points out, communication technologies play a role in societal change. Changes in communication technology have also changed the definition of mass media and pushed the boundaries of communication further, and "such changes have a dramatic impact on the potential for political change in authoritarian systems" (O'Neil, 1998, p.11).

This research fills this gap in the literature by offering a detailed analysis of communication technology and the press' role in transition programs in Nigeria from 1990 to 1999. This study also addressed how changes in communication technology altered the definition of news reporting and writing, and how recent technological changes contribute to societal change. My purpose here was to critically examine the role communication technologies and the press played in Nigeria's transition programs from 1990 to 1999. Specifically, what role did communication technology and the press play in Nigeria's return to democracy? How did journalists use communication technology to advocate for political change and what challenges did they face? Press and print media, used interchangeably in this study, refer to magazine and newspaper organizations and the journalists that work for them. This research was designed to contribute to a growing research area in journalism, political science, and policy literature on the interaction between political transitions and the mass media. Scholars use the term 'media' differently, depending on whether or not the medium, or media, of interest can carry out the process of communication studied (DeFleur & Dennis, 2002). In this study, media refers to the major means of information dissemination—print and broadcast. This study asked four research questions:

> RQ1: What was the Nigerian print media's agenda in the 1990s regarding Nigeria's democratization?
>
> RQ2: What challenges did Nigerian print journalists face during the democratization process in the 1990s?

RQ3: What role did new communication technology play in Nigeria's democratization in the 1990s?

RQ4: What challenges did Nigerian print journalists face in using new communication technology?

To answer these questions, I interviewed ten Nigerian journalists who had worked for daily Nigerian newspapers and weekly newsmagazines for at least 11 years. Interviews were conducted in English, using an interview guide with primarily open-ended questions. Questions sought to generate knowledge about the participants' professional background, beliefs regarding journalism's role in society, experiences under military rule, use of communication technology, access to communication technology, and challenges faced using communication technology. The methodology for this study is discussed in more detail in chapter five.

Data was collected in Lagos, Lagos state, which is located in southwestern Nigeria. Often called Nigeria's most industrialized city, Lagos has the largest number of mass media organizations and cyber-cafes in Nigeria. In the 1990s, most protests against military rule occurred in Lagos (Bourgault, 1998; Olukotun, 2002b). Nigeria was an ideal arena for this study for various reasons. Twenty-nine years of corrective military rule had made Nigeria a rotting corpse shell by 1990. Nigeria was the 13th poorest nation in the world, its educational and social services had crumbled, and corruption had taken a firm hold of the nation (Ojo, 2000). Nigerians believed democracy was the answer and millions participated in the process they hoped would return the country to civilian rule (Bourgault, 1998). Also, the Nigerian press is the largest in Africa, with over 78 newspapers and 45 magazines (Olukotun, 2004).

Nigeria's media environment also presents an interesting mix of how the media works when government and private media ownership exists in a political system, thereby providing "significant insight into the dynamics of government-press relations in a transitional-democratizing press system" (Ibelema, 2003, p. 163). This study focused on the Nigerian press because of its long history of political advocacy since its inception in 1859 (Dare, 1996; Ibelema, 2003). Nigeria's print media has, despite many challenges, remained "one of the most resilient and daring segments of Nigeria's civil society" (Olukotun, 2004, p. 2). This is not to say broadcasting does not exist. As earlier mentioned, the government controlled broadcasting until 1992. Therefore, most broadcasts presented a government perspective. But when private radio and television stations came into being, their programs differed little from those of government stations. The private stations

focused more on entertainment than playing a watchdog role. Moreover, some owners allied themselves to the government and military contacts to get funding. The Nigerian government targeted the print media because it was independent in many ways of government control (Ogbondah, 1998). It is important to add that my interest in this study came from my experiences as a reporter and the daughter of a Nigerian journalist in the 1990s.

My father, Dan Agbese, was arrested and jailed for a story he reported in *Newswatch* magazine in 1994. The story, an interview with a former member of General Abacha's cabinet, informed Nigerians that Abacha had no intention of handing over, though his transition program was in progress. My father and two colleagues were arrested and charged with treason for the story. The penalty was death. While in detention, my father used his cell phone to keep in touch with the family, his lawyer and others who pressured the government for their release. They were released after three weeks, and all the charges were dropped. This experience gave me some insights into the study that helped with data collection and analysis. This book is presented in six chapters.

Chapter two examines available literature on democratization in the late 20th century, political transitions and the role of the media and communication technology in political transitions.

Chapter three is on the case study, Nigeria. The chapter provides a historical background of Nigeria, its journey to democratization in the 1990s and its media environment.

Chapter four presents the methods used for data collection. This research used a qualitative method (in-depth interviews) to collect data.

Chapter five presents the findings of the research, while chapter six presents the researcher's conclusions and suggestions for future study. Following is chapter two, a review of available literature.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

In the latter part of the 20th century, over 30 countries chose to change their political structure from a form of authoritarianism to democracy. Samuel Huntington (1991) calls this period the third wave of global democratization. A wave of democratization is a "group of transitions from non-democratic to democratic regimes that occur within a specified period of time," and "usually involves liberalization or partial democratization in political systems that do not become fully democratic" (Huntington, 1991, p. 15). Specifically, a wave of democratization has occurred if political transitions to democracy outnumber transitions to other political systems. Though Samuel Huntington's work and theory of civilization have generated a lot of controversy and debate, his book, *The Third Wave*, provides a historical perspective on the process of democratization and is largely cited across the literature on political transitions (Gannon, 2001). Therefore, his work on democratization is used to explain waves of democratization here. Three global waves of democratization have occurred since the 1820s.

The first wave of democratization occurred during the American and French revolutions of the 1820s, and industrialization, and lasted for close to a century (Lewis, 2001). Then, political changes were aimed at replacing absolute monarchies and feudal aristocracies with democracies that allowed working and elite classes to mix and have equal rights (Huntington, 1991–1992). European and North American countries during this period adopted an electoral process that allowed 50 percent of eligible adult males to vote, and the creation of a ruling body through elections or majority parliamentary support (Huntington, 1991). These "met minimal conditions of political freedom" (Lewis, 2001, p. 544). However, the first wave reversed in the 1920s. Old or new countries that adopted democracy before or after World War I replaced democracy with "new mass-based, more brutal and pervasive forms of totalitarianism"

(Huntington, 1991, p. 17). Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Latvia, and Germany are good examples of countries where authoritarian governments replaced democratic ones in the 1920s.

The second wave of democratization started during World War II. In the 1940s, Western allies sought to release nations under fascist, military and authoritarian rule, and replace these political systems with democratic ones (Lewis, 2001). The wave spread beyond Europe to Asia and Latin America where several countries either shifted towards or returned to democracy. The wave also affected countries gaining independence from colonial rule in the 1950s and 1960s such as Malaysia, Nigeria and India. But in the early 1960s, the second wave reversed, particularly in Latin America, when military groups started to overthrow democratic leaders. Several military coups occurred in Latin America and Asia, and military rule gradually replaced civilian governments (Huntington, 1991). The wave of military coups soon hit Africa, and by 1970, at least 33 independent African countries had experienced military coups. The authoritarian trend did not last very long.

The third wave of democratization began in Portugal in 1974, when a military coup ousted Marcello Caetano's dictatorship that had started in 1926 (Huntington, 1991). The wave spread gradually to East European, Asian and African countries where single parties, military regimes and personal dictatorships had suppressed political competition and participation (Huntington, 1991–1992). By 1995, at least 74 percent of the countries in these regions were democratic or democratizing (Lewis, 2001). However, this wave differed from previous ones in one important regard. There were external and internal factors that influenced the push for democratization (Huntington, 1991).

Internally, Asian, Latin American and African countries were facing political, social and economic crises with the failure of development programs based on modernization and development theories to build politically and economically stable countries (Melkote, 2002; O'Neil, 1998; Shah, 1996). Modernization theory, based on liberal political thought and neo-classical economics theory, asserted that developing nations would only develop if they adopted Western political, economic and social institutions, and science and technology (Melkote, 2002). Therefore, development theorists in the 1950s and 1960s recommended modernizing traditional societies and using the mass media to create Western replicas across the globe (Lerner, 1958; Mody, 2002; Rogers, 1969; Schramm, 1964). The mass media were seen as the means for taking ideas from the West to developing nations, and "entrusted with the task of preparing individuals in developing nations for a rapid social change by establishing a climate

of modernization" (Melkote, 2002, p. 424). But by the 1970s, programs based on modernization and development theories failed to make many African, Asian and Latin American countries politically and economically strong. The situation worsened in the 1980s when leaders who received loans from financial institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were required to implement programs that still followed a Western route (Callaghy, 1995). These programs failed to yield meaningful or lasting results, and people were left starving, poor, dying and insecure in many of these countries. Latin American and Asian scholars, especially, criticized these programs and theories for ignoring the unique characteristics of the countries they were applied to, and for being racist (Huesca, 2002; Mativo, 1989; Melkote & Steeves, 2001). These problems made several governments illegitimate in the eyes of the people, and mass demonstrations occurred, with people calling for political change (Mwangi, 2002). Indeed, early protests in Francophone Africa were over "austerity measures governments were seeking to implement in order to meet their debt payments and the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) requirements of international creditors and lending institutions" (Penna et al., 1990, p. 85). Poor leadership also contributed to the failure of these programs, and people resented the way their leaders ruled (Hyden & Okigbo, 2002). People called for democratic governance, believing democracy would improve their standards of living, and give them a say in their own country.

The presence of pressure and civil groups in countries under authoritarian or totalitarian rule also contributed to democratization (Gibson, 2001). Following years of political and economic instability, many of these countries were ripe for political transitions, and local pressure and civil groups made life difficult for a number of leaders (Decalo, 1992). These groups openly criticized government programs, structures and systems, and worked with international pressure groups like Amnesty International to make these failures known (Randall, 1993).

Externally, international financial institutions (IFIs) like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and countries like the United States and Britain, made democratization a condition for international aid (Harsch, 1993). Countries that needed economic aid needed to democratize and adopt structural adjustment programs to receive loans (Ayittey, 1998). Structural adjustment programs (SAPs) also provided IFI loans to recipient countries for development projects (Gordon & Gordon, 2001). However, these loans came with conditionalities, including downsizing the public sector, lifting restrictions on foreign imports, currency devaluation, increasing trade liberalizations and cutting back on social services (DeLancey, 2001). Borrowing countries were also required

to hold multi-party elections and uphold liberal democratic principles such as respect for human rights and press freedom (Lewis, 2001). Various developing countries faced major economic crises during this period, particularly in the 1980s, and turned to IFIs for loans, regardless of the stringent conditions that came with adopting the measures (DeLancey, 2001). Unfortunately, SAPs only worsened these countries' economies, causing great hardship to the people and bankruptcies in the private sector (Ayittey, 1998; Chazan, Lewis, Mortimer, Rothchild & Stedman 1999; DeLancey, 2001). This created more political problems, considering that authoritarian leaders who had mismanaged their economies were entrusted with massive foreign aid to improve their economies (Ayittey, 1998). Ernest Harsch (1993) adds that by making democratization "a condition for continued foreign aid and providing assistance for the organization and monitoring of elections," IFIs and western governments demanded minimal change (p. 7). Western governments and IFIs focused on quick multi-party elections, elections by ballot, and not the structures actually being put in place by authoritarian leaders or who was actually campaigning (Harsch, 1993). Some scholars call this type of democracy "low intensity democracy," democracy that received its seal of approval from the international community for any "semblance of free and fair elections" (Adebayo et al., 1997, p. 6). Whether military leaders simply returned to power by retiring themselves and campaigning as civilians, or that authoritarian leaders maintained power by holding elections and declaring themselves winners did not matter (Adebayo et al., 1997; Conteh-Morgan, 2000; Harsch, 1993). This was the case in several African countries such as Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Zimbabwe and Togo.

Another external factor was international mass media coverage of mass demonstrations and protests in some East European, Asian and Latin American countries, from the growth of global mass media in the 1980s (Bourgault, 1995). International coverage of events had a demonstration effect, especially in countries that entered the process in the late 1980s (Randall, 1993). Pictures of Ceausescu's execution in Romania, the fall of the Berlin wall, the removal of Lenin's statues in Bucharest, and news of revolutions in Brazil, the Philippines and Argentina on CNN and other cable services had a spillover effect in countries under similar political systems (Decalo, 1992; Huntington, 1991; Johnson, 1998; Lent, 1998). The events inspired people to rise and push for political change, and even frightened some leaders enough (e.g. Mobutu Seseko of Democratic Republic of Congo) to institute democratization programs for multipartyism. Here was another way that the third wave differed from the previous ones (Hyden & Okigbo, 2002). Transition programs in the late 1980s and 1990s were

a top-down affair, where leaders and the elite spearheaded the transitional process, often in reaction to demands from the people or international bodies. By the mid-1980s, the image of a worldwide democratic revolution undoubtedly became a reality in the minds of political and intellectual leaders in most parts of the world (Huntington, 1991).

Another contributing external factor was the fall of communism in 1989, symbolized by the fall of the Berlin Wall, following revolutions in Eastern Europe and Asia, and the end of the Cold War between the United States and the former Soviet Union (Schraeder, 2000). This meant the end of communism as a political system and since the United States "won" the war, its political structure became the panacea to all political, economic and social ills (Schraeder, 2000). The United States government, and media, actively promoted democracy using governmental, quasi-governmental and non-governmental agencies. A transition model based on the seminal works of Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter was also used to examine and report events in transitional countries (Carothers, 2002). Reports and scholarly documents in the United States labeled countries in transition "transitional" and assumed they would all go through similar stages of democratization (Carothers, 2002). Countries were encouraged to institute policies that created free and open markets, open governance, freedom of expression and the press, and respect for human rights, regardless of their unique cultural, social, political and economic structures. Overall, these major internal and external factors contributed to the third wave of democratization, and by 1990, various countries across the globe began political transitions to democracy (Huntington, 1991).

In a sense, a political transition involves changing or replacing old values and structures with newer ones, and is "a change of leadership or elements of it with or without meaningful socio-political reconstruction" (Ojo, 2000, p. 4). Regardless of the definition, a political transition aims for political stability and can take various forms, not necessarily democracy. One could argue that if authoritarian rule provided political and economic stability, and gave citizens what they needed, a transition to that would suffice. This is especially true considering that no new political system exists without some aspect of the old political order (Randall, 1993). But since authoritarian systems, as defined for this study, generally prevented the bulk of society from participating in the political structure, democracy was the preferred option in the 1990s. Democracy as a political institution in the Western hemisphere dates back to ancient Greece (Nwawua, 2003). In pre-colonial Third World societies, democracy also existed in one form or another (Davidson, 1994; Nwauwa, 2003; Sandbrook, 1988). However, democracy means different things to different peoples and societies. Even

scholars find democracy a vague and difficult concept to define, due to their ideological and professional backgrounds.

According to Kornberg and Clarke (1994), democracy can be defined in political, economic and social terms. Politically, democracy gears towards building structures and processes that will ensure citizen participation. Socially, democracy is concerned with "building a community whose members are equal in social and political terms" (Kornberg & Clarke, 1994, p. 538). Economically, democracy is concerned with ensuring that members of a community have equal access to the resources that exist there. The goal of democracy here is equality for all, which is not always the case in practice (Tilly, 2000). For instance, though ancient Greeks believed all citizens could vote and speak in public gatherings in a democracy, only men and a small elite group had all the rights of democratic rule (Nwauwa, 2003). The Romans defined democracy according to the social and political problems that arose in their society at a given time (Nwauwa, 2003). In modern times, definitions of democracy maintain some aspect of Athenian (Greek) democracy, but have changed to focus on the electoral process, government's purposes and procedures for creating governments (Lewis, 2001).

Lipset (1960) defines democracy as a system that "supplies regular constitutional opportunities for changing the governing officials, and a social mechanism which permits the largest possible part of the population to influence major decisions by choosing among contenders for political office" (p. 45). Robert Dahl (1990) defines democracy as "a set of political institutions and practices, a particular body of rights, a social and economic order, a system that ensures desirable results, or a unique process of making collective and binding decisions" (p. 5). He adds that democracy differs along two basic dimensions—public competition amongst contestants and the right to participate in elections. Ideally, a democratic government aims to bring these two dimensions together with elections, a multi-party system and respect for fundamental human rights as essential elements (Makinda, 1996). Vanhanen (1997) takes a procedural approach to democracy. He defines it as a political institution where people rule through public policies created either by direct electoral vote or indirectly elected officials, and as "a process in which each voter who chooses to vote counts equally and in which a plurality is determinative" (p. 28). A democracy is basically "a political system in which different groups are legally entitled to compete for power and in which institutional power holders are elected by the people and are responsible to the people" (Vanhanen, 1997, p. 31). In this vein, any government that totally excludes the people from the decision-making process is undemocratic (Beetham, 1992). For David Held (1995), there are three types of

democracy—direct or participatory democracy, liberal or representative democracy, and single-party democracy.

Participatory democracy involves all citizens in the decision-making process, but elected officials make the decisions in a representative democracy. A single-party democracy disallows multiple parties and the government is seen more or less as a representative one. Huntington (1991) adds that democracy implies that "those civil and political freedoms to speak, publish, assemble and organize that are necessary to political debate and the conduct of electoral campaigns" are present (p. 7). Though scholars cannot agree on what makes a system democratic, a political system is "democratic" when people select their leaders through fair, straightforward, episodic competitive elections (Schumpeter, 1950). Nevertheless, Kornberg & Clarke (1994) point out that though scholarly definitions of democracy are commonly used, scholars and ordinary citizens differ on what democracy should be about:

> A number of goals and conditions that collectively constitute the normative ends of democratic theory are in tension and conflict. Fundamental questions such as how should a democratic political system balance liberty with equality and the rights of the individual (and more recently, the group) with those of the community are long-standing and unresolved. Democratic theory does not provide clear guidance about how to answer such questions either in the abstract or perhaps more importantly, in real-world democracies whose political systems must continuously address an array of highly diverse and complex social and economic issues. (p. 543)

In their study on Africans' view of democracy, Bratton & Mattes (2001) found that though scholars defined democratization as "a quest for equal social and economic outcomes," almost seven out of 10 non-elite Africans surveyed saw it as "political procedures" that protected human rights, voting and participation in decision-making (p. 109). Whatever the definition used, Decalo (1992) argues that African countries were ripe for democratization, or at least political transition, during the period of the third wave of democratization. The wave signified a fundamental need to free Africa a second time and led to Africa's second independence (Schrader, 2000).

When Africans fought for their first independence mainly after World War II, their aim was to end European colonization and domination (Davidson, 1994). But following independence, many countries maintained colonial structures, political and otherwise, which were mainly authoritarian in nature. While some countries did this along multi-party lines (e.g., Nigeria,

Togo, Benin, Uganda and Ghana), some used one-party structures arguing, like the colonialists had, that competitive politics were "an imported luxury neither needed nor affordable in developing countries" (Decalo, 1992, p. 9). Houphouet-Boigny of Cote d'Ivoire argued that single party states were more reflective of pre-colonial Africa, and better at maintaining national unity in multi-ethnic countries (Zolberg, 1964). Some leaders also adopted Marxism in protest of colonial rule (e.g. Julius Nyerere of Tanzania). By the late 1960s, leaders in several African countries including Cote d'Ivoire, Zambia, Central African Republic, Liberia and Ethiopia had turned their countries into personal kingdoms, creating a "form of oligarchic patrimonialism that was even unknown in pre-colonial Africa" (Uwazurike, 1990, p. 67). Houphouet-Boigny, for instance, created a paternal system of government where Ivoriens saw him as a father figure. He created a system of "patron-client relationships," in which he used charm and "the provision of economic and political patronage" to gain and keep people's loyalty (Schraeder, 2000, p. 226). Like many African leaders who took over after colonialism, he concentrated the country's power in himself to "destroy the ability of other state actors to challenge the decision-making supremacy of the presidential mansion" (Schraeder, 2000, p. 221–222). He replaced democratic principles with paternalistic autocracy and regarded the country as his personal property, one that would "benefit himself, his cronies, and tribes [ethnic] men" (Ayittey, 1999, p. 71). He once remarked, "There is no number two, three or four. In Cote d'Ivoire there is only a number one: that's me and I don't share my decisions" (*West Africa*, 1988, p. 1428). But single-party rule and Marxism failed to build viable economies and countries by the end of the 1970s (Ramsay, 2001). Even countries that adopted multipartyism failed to bring the needed political and economic development, as they were plagued with political problems, including military coups (Legum, 1999).

A military coup d'etat is the illegal take over of a government by a branch of the armed forces like the army, navy or air force (Decalo, 1976). Between 1951 and 1985, coups "became the institutionalized method for changing governments in postcolonial Africa" (Jenkins & Kposowa, 1992, p. 271). Most coups occurred in the 1960s as about 20 African countries experienced a successful or abortive coup in that period (Decalo, 1976). By 1990, 267 coups, successful, abortive and plotted, had occurred in the continent (Wang, 1998). Citing corruption, authoritarianism, inter-party tensions and squabbles, ethnic tensions, and civilians' inability to build politically and economically stable countries, amongst other reasons, soldiers intervened in the political setup of countries across the continent (Decalo, 1976; McGowan & Johnson, 1984). But other factors were also responsible for

military intervention. One of these was political ambition amongst military officers especially in the army, the most equipped and trained branch of the armed forces in Africa. This trend occurred especially in countries that experienced at least three coups (McGowan & Johnson, 1984). In countries where soldiers played a central role in government, some saw themselves attaining power and becoming head of state, especially when enmity existed between a powerful officer and the civilian leader (Decalo, 1976). Jenkins & Kposowa (1992) explain that because many officers trained in the West, they judged their countries and themselves by western standards and viewed "their own societies as backward, corrupt and inefficient," and intervened in government as a result (p. 274). Other times, seeing senior officers in power living lavishly fuelled the personal ambition of junior officers (Anene, 2000).

Another factor was what Schraeder (2000) calls a contagion effect, whereby there is a high probability that another coup will follow a previous one, or a coup in one country will cause a coup in a neighboring country. The contagion effect was very strong in West Africa, the region with the most coups in Africa (McGowan & Johnson, 1984). Coups were also the result of African armies having nothing to do at this point. After the colonial powers left, colonial armies were scrapped. There were no wars to fight, and some civilian leaders only used soldiers to suppress opposition. Wang (1998) also adds that international arms transfers to African countries were a contributing factor as politicians provided armies with weapons to secure their loyalty and reduce the potential for coups. But with nothing to do and becoming politicized in this way, they turned to coups when their demands were not met (Schraeder, 2000). However, like single parties and Marxism, military rule did not improve the lot of many African nations (O'Kane, 1993). With time military rule became "highly institutionalized, personalized, patrimonialized" as soldiers themselves became as corrupt and dictatorial as the civilians they replaced (Decalo, 1992). So, with 41 military and other single-party governments in Africa by the late 1980s causing political and economic instability, Africa was ripe for democratization in the 1990s (Hyden & Okibgo, 2002; Legum, 1999).

The 1990s arrived with a great need to demilitarize and democratize as the new order of globalization challenged the professionalism, role and corporate security of the military and single-partyism as suitable political institutions in the continent (Conteh-Morgan, 2000). As was the case in other continents affected by the global wave of democratization, Africa was pushed to democratization by several internal and external factors (Ogbondah, 1997). For instance, Africa was the only continent that experienced large population growth and decreases in food production in the 1980s

(DeLancey, 2001). The adoption of structural adjustment programs added to the continent's economic problems, as the programs used the guiding principles of modernization and western development (Gordon & Gordon, 2001). But two major events pushed the democratization need further in Africa.

One was the call for a National Conference in Benin in 1990 that led to the end of General Mathieu Kerekou's 18-year Marxist-Leninist authoritarian government (Monga, 1997; Ogbondah, 1997). The second event was Nelson Mandela's release in 1990 and the lifting of the ban on black political activities in South Africa (Monga, 1997). These events raised hope about the possibility of Africans seeing great change and actually participating in the process. Reports from international media on massive demands for democracy in other countries also affected Africans (Randall, 1993; Tettey, 2001b).

The "visual effect of Eastern Europeans removing statues of Lenin from city squares had enormous symbolic impact" on Africans, and they learned how to organize, demand political change, and the dangers to avoid in the process (Bourgault, 1995, p. 207). The presence of new communication technologies such as "fax machines and computer-based networks in the hands of private individuals, of companies and of nongovernmental organizations with facilitated linkages with the outside world while eroding monolithic information control within," also helped Africans in the democratization of the continent (Bourgault, 1995, p. 207). As the role of the media and communication technology in democratization is the focus of this study, they are discussed further next.

THE ROLE OF THE MASS MEDIA IN DEMOCRATIZATION

Samuel Huntington's (1991) study on the third wave of democratization suggests the wave was powerful because it had a demonstration effect, helped largely by the existence of global mass communication systems. In countries where only government-controlled media existed, people received information on events in their countries from the international media (Randall, 1993). A number of scholars (Bennett, 1998; Chang & Riffe, 1998; Im, 1996; O'Neil, 1998; Raichev, 2002) have found that a relationship exists between the mass media and political transitions. Scholars see the mass media as an important instrument in national development, as its role is to ensure a balance between the economic, social, political and ecological spheres (Mwangi, 2002). Authoritarian and totalitarian regimes also work through the mass media to create fear and sustain power, and in times of political turmoil, the mass media plays a witness role, keeping everyone

aware of the subtle or overt political transformations occurring (Bennet, 1998). Moreover, mediated political communication is more effective in causing regime change than in later building stable institutions (Bennett, 1998). Therefore, the media are critical in political transitions because they reflect "relations between state and society, the elite and the masses" (O'Neil, 1998, p. 7). But what exactly is the media's role during a political transition, in this case, democratization?

Peter O'Neil (1998) says the mass media's role in democratization is keeping the people informed so they make good political choices and participate in the process. Vicky Randall (1993) adds that the media's role is creating a safe sphere for public discourse, where people are free to discuss without fear of repercussions from the government or anyone. The media's role in democratization could also be that of a watchdog that provides critical information, updates the public on political candidates, and reports any attempts to derail the democratization process (Johnson, 1998). Randall (1993) explains that the media play a watchdog role and become more outspoken during the democratization process because restrictions are removed and opposition groups need to create a following with the media's help. The number of newspapers, magazines and other media also tend to increase when media laws are loosened during political transitions (Hyden & Okibgo, 2002). Media scholars and journalists often contend that the media should "initiate constructive debate on government policies, actions and attitudes in such a manner that issues or policies will be discussed objectively" (Yusuf, 1999, p. 236). In doing so, the media sets the public agenda for political transitions, telling people what issues to think, discuss and worry about (Wimmer & Dominick, 1987). Park (1998) adds that the media's role in democratization is also one of unification and reconciliation, particularly in countries where authoritarian rule caused massive human rights abuses (e.g. unlawful detention, kidnapping and murder). He believes the media should be free to discuss past errors and ways of righting wrongs that occurred otherwise, the post-transitional society is on shaky ground. Olukotun (2002a) further suggests that the media can facilitate democratization by "highlighting issues of accountability, by nudging governments towards respect for human rights including those of minorities and marginalized groups, by exposing corruption and rent-seeking behavior, as well as by setting the agenda for public discourse" (p. 340). Regardless of the definition or explanation given on the media's role in political transitions, one must remember that various factors affect the media's effectiveness in any society (Raichev, 2002). This is important as the media takes on the "forms and coloration of the social or political structures within which it operates" (Siebert, Peterson & Schramm, 1956, p. 1). Therefore, scholars cannot use

the same criteria to examine every media's role in political transitions, even if their (media) characteristics are similar. Several scholars have suggested various models for examining and understanding the factors that affect the media's role during democratization in any country.

Many communication scholars in the 1960s, 1970s, and part of the 1980s believed any country's mass media had to move the country towards open markets and democracy (Carothers, 2002; Hyden & Leslie, 2002; Raichev, 2002). They suggested the mass media in any country should follow the libertarian model of the press and become more of a watchdog. Under the libertarian model, the mass media, particularly the press, acts as the fourth branch of government (Siebert, Peterson & Schramm, 1956). The press' role is to educate the public so they can participate in a democracy and hold government accountable. Most of these studies projected that the press would become westernized and democratic at the end of the transition (Raichev, 2002). In their writings, John Merrill (1974) and Karl Jakubowizc (1995) emphasized the media's adversarial role as its key function in the democratization process, believing the media's ultimate goal should be fighting for freedom of expression and press, and moving national development along western lines. Both Merrill (1974) and Jakubowizc (1995) privilege democracy more than any other political structure, believing at the end of the transition, the country and the mass media will become more affluent, competitive and pluralistic. Countries at the transitional stage tend to move, in Merrill's opinion, toward democracy as the ultimate political structure. Therefore, as countries move away from the traditional stage, they will become prosperous, competitive and pluralistic. Most studies on Third World media systems have followed this path, arguing that the ultimate goal of every transitional media system is to become westernized. But Raichev (2002) warns that these models should be used carefully as they are ethnocentric in nature and contribute little to the understanding of media change in non-democratic or former authoritarian countries. For O'Neil (1998), these models are largely concerned with the causal relationship between the media, government and society and provide little insight on the media's actual role in political transitions. Johnson (1998) also argues that it is ethnocentric and biased to examine media systems using the American or British media as role models as there is no empirical proof that following the libertarian philosophy will create a free and expressive society. An American journalist cannot suggest strictly following the libertarian philosophy, when he or she does not know or understand the compromises journalists have to make under authoritarian rule to protect themselves and their families. For instance, Argentinean journalists during military rule from 1976 to 1983 did not actively confront

or expose the havoc the military caused because they could have been killed (Park, 1998). At least 520 journalists were killed in Latin America during military rule in the 1980s (Park, 1998). It will also be difficult for an East European journalist to simply adopt the American system when he or she may not understand how the American system of commercialism and open markets will work in his or her country. Moreover, free markets do not equal an open and democratic society (Raichev, 2002). Therefore, some scholars argue that to understand the media's role in democratization, one must first look at each country individually, and determine what factors—social, political, cultural, historical and economic—affect the media's democratization role (Hachten, 1999).

O'Neil's (1998) approach to this entails several factors. One is knowing the types of mass communication systems that exist in the country and how they operate, before and during democratization. In other words, how is information disseminated in the country? What issues challenge the dissemination of information in the country? Researchers need to know if the country has only broadcast (electronic), print media, a combination or if one form dominates. Does the country have access to international media such as the Cable News Network (CNN), Voice of America (VOA), the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), satellite and cable television and videotapes? O'Neil (1998) argues that knowing the kind of media available makes it easier to determine how people get information and whether or not an audience exists. For instance, since print media requires a large literate and mostly urban audience, a country with mainly print media will attract more people from urban areas (Campbell, 1996). However, more people might be reached if a country has more broadcast media (Hachten, 1999). For instance, during Benin's transition to democracy, many Beninoises tuned in to radio to participate in the National Conference. The conference aired live each day in French, the principal language of the country (Ogbondah, 1997). Information can also be sent accidentally, when "protests, speeches and other mobilizing actions" are sent "by chance over television and radio, before they can be censored. Information can also be disseminated as a product of regime crisis" when state-run media believe they can ignore the rules (O'Neil, 1998, p. 8). Accidents can occur because a medium can have effects "independent of the specific purpose of their owners and operators" (Randall, 1993, p. 626). For Olukotun (2002b), considering the types of alternative media available in the country is important. These could take the form of underground publications, poetry, music and theatre. Alternative media are important during democratization because they could provide information when other major outlets are repressed, as was the case in Hungary and Poland (Hall & O'Neil, 1998;

Shelley, 2001). Alternative media provide access and enhance press freedom in light of government repression (Gunaratne, 2001). Other times, journalists used new tactics to report events. For instance, during military rule in Argentina, the public discussed events by buying advertisement space in newspapers (Park, 1998). Newspapers such as *La Prensa* published the names of missing people in the form of advertisements to escape persecution from the government.

A second factor is the degree and type of government control that exists over the mass media (O'Neil, 1998). William Hachten (1999) explains, "In the relationship between government and mass communication, the basic question is not whether government controls the press, but the nature and extent of these controls" (p. 16). All media systems, even the "freest," must deal with government regulation to some degree because "freedom of communication is an ideal" (Merrill, 1991, p. 3). Though governmental control is mostly over broadcast media, the press is also controlled. In some countries, the government directly controls the press through ownership or legal measures (Chang & Riffe, 1998; Fox, 1998; Randall, 1993). In other countries, the government indirectly controls the press through newsprint and equipment subsidies, harassment, cooptation of journalists and more (Martin, 1998; Park, 1998). To understand the media's role in democratization, therefore, it is important to know how much control the government has over the media before and during the transition. This is because government control, whether direct or indirect, can determine the quantity and kind of information and public discourse that occurs during the transition. When South Korea was under military rule, for example, the military controlled the broadcast media and prevented it from broadcasting critical or opposing information (Kyu, 1998). The government ordered broadcast journalists to participate in development communication and provide only information that supported the government. However, when the democratization process began in 1987, government control was relaxed and the broadcast media, though government controlled, also presented information that challenged authoritarianism (Kyu, 1998). Government control can also determine whether the media will even participate in the democratization process. In Romania, the broadcast media "accidentally" participated in the democratization process when Nicolae Ceausescu ordered them to broadcast his reactions to the people's revolution and his pro-Ceausescu rally. The coverage of anti-Ceausescu protests was accidental, as he had not expected the opposition rally to hold where he was holding his pro-rally. This contributed to Romania's democratization (Hall & O'Neil, 1998).

A third factor is the country's economy, as well as other forms of media ownership that exist. If a country's economy cannot sustain private

ownership, or at least independent media, then the media's role during the transitional process is affected (Alabi, 2001). In most developing countries, the government is the central institution for generating capital (Callaghy, 1995). Therefore, the mass media must rely on government for foreign exchange to get the necessary printing machinery and equipment, and sometimes, advertising revenue (Faringer, 1991). This presents a problem during political transitions. A country's economy should also be able to sustain a reading public that can buy advertised products (Campbell, 1996). The economy should also be strong enough to ensure that journalists do not turn to other forms of supplemental pay such as bribes or engage in envelope journalism (Kyu, 1998). The economic situation in Argentina ensured that government officials and politicians controlled the media through pay-offs, which further limited the access and dissemination of information during the democratization process (Park, 1998). When favorable economic conditions do not exist, the media will have to rely on the government to survive and that determines if the media will play a catalytic role or support the government during democratization. In South Korea, for example, due to economic hardships, 93% of 700 journalists surveyed admitted to receiving bribes from their news sources, thereby corrupting the news process during political transitions (Kyu, 1998). If a country's economy is diverse enough to allow other forms of finance, the media has a greater chance of carrying the people along during democratization (Ibelema, 2003). One also needs to know where authority is located in private ownership as it could inhibit the media's role (Fox, 1998).

In Brazil for instance, the private television station, *TVGlobo*, was a government ally during the military era (Fox, 1998). Once the democratization process began, the station changed its tune and supported calls for democracy by broadcasting demonstrations and calling on Brazilians to join the fight. Obviously, the station did not intend to go down with the government (Fox, 1998).

Finally, O'Neil (1998) suggests examining the presence of media globalization in the country. Advances in communication technology since the 1970s have led to the creation and adoption of new communication technologies like fax machines, the Internet, email, cellular phones, cable and satellite television and more in various parts of the world (Hachten, 1999; Rogers, 1986). These technologies have made the world smaller and more connected, and therefore created a global media environment where information is shared. Therefore, it is important to know if the country examined has access to these technologies, which sometimes provided the catalytic event that led to democratization in countries like Romania and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). In fact, Hachten (1999) argues

that facsimile transmissions played an important role in the toppling and challenging of authoritarian governments in Iran, Panama, the Soviet Union and China. Media technologies and international media contributed to the demonstration effect that taught people under authoritarian rule to organize and fight for democratization (Huntington, 1991; Randall, 1993).

In her approach to examining the role of African media in democratization, Louise Bourgault (1998) considers a political economy, the level of ethnic integration, development of mass media systems, and the presence of civil society important factors. Bourgault's points on political economy are similar to O'Neil's in the sense that a country's political and economic setup must be understood. The ethnic integration factor is an important one, especially when considering countries with various ethnic groups. Ethnic tensions tend to run high in multi-ethnic countries, where various ethnic groups fear domination from another (Schraeder, 2000). As a result, people tend to support ethnic loyalties when political tension exists (Crook, 1990). Journalists are not immune to ethnic politics because they belong to ethnic groups too (Uche, 1989). If ethnic groups do not cooperate, the news media might not carry out its functions effectively, particularly when news is scrutinized from an ethnic perspective (Bourgault, 1998). Moreover, a disunited country will be incapable of uniting to remove an authoritarian government, because the government will instead use that disunity to prolong its stay in power.

The presence of civil society is another important factor to consider as political scientists argue that a strong civil society ensures the legitimization of democratization (Johnson, 1998). According to Edozie (2002), "Civil society is the prime engine of democratization, and the mere existence of civil society necessarily results in democratization" in any society (p. 11). There are various definitions of civil society, depending on the context applied. According to Gibson (2001), one can define civil society at political and individual levels. At the political level, civil society refers to independent organizations such as churches, student bodies and labor unions that can check the power of the state. At the individual level, civil society "requires a specific set of attitudes and behavioral orientations toward politics, including a certain style of interpersonal interaction and collaboration" (Gibson, 2001, p. 52). Im (1996) adds that most definitions of civil society depend on the context such as civil society as the economy or market, civil society as the non-state arena, or civil society as the public sphere. The public sphere is a place where neither institutionalized political action nor private interest seeking prevails as they do in the state or market. Bourgault (1998) defines civil society in an African context as social groups united through similar interests to fight a particular cause. These could

be students, women, professional, religious organizations, trade or labor unions. Bourgault (1998) considers the existence of a civil society important because in certain instances civil societies call for democratization. Gibson (2001) concurs, saying civil societies seem to be "an essential condition for successful democratization" (p. 52). In certain instances, civil societies have fought governments and draconian media laws, as they did in South Korea between 1985 and 1993 (Im, 1996). In covering the activities of society, the media present voices of dissent. A strong civil society will create events the media can cover, and even provide information the government will not provide to the media (Edozie, 2002). During the democratization of some East European countries, civil groups started their own newspapers or alternative media to fight authoritarianism (Campbell, 1996; Johnson, 1998). For example, in Poland, the Catholic Church published about 50 newspapers and periodicals underground and distributed them in schools and factories during communist rule in the late 1980s (Campbell, 1996). In China, student unions and other groups published *dazibaos* (wall posters) that informed people of their rights and voiced dissent (Brodsgaard, 1981). Therefore, if civil society does not exist, the media might be informing a docile audience that could do nothing during democratization. However, Gibson (2001) warns that civil societies are not perfect as their activities can be undermined by "radical individualism, social anomie and distrust, and just simple greed," making them vulnerable to manipulation by an authoritarian government (p. 53).

Finally, Bourgault (1998) suggests understanding how press systems developed in the country studied. This entails taking a historical perspective to understand if the media have any history of government opposition (Bourgault, 1998). This also involves knowing what kinds of media exist in the country, how they operate, and who owns and controls them. Martin (1998) further suggests examining the impact of colonialism in certain countries for colonialism, particularly British colonialism, allowed little freedom of expression and the press. Freedom of expression is an "essential precondition to democratic politics, which in turn depends on the existence of an informed, aware and active citizenry" (Martin, 1998, p. 63). But the nature of colonialism prohibited any freedom of expression, "and actively suppressed it legally and forcefully" (Martin, 1998, p. 63). Colonial governments required the licensing and registration of indigenous newspapers, and sedition laws led to the arrest, detention and torture of journalists at whim (Ogbondah & Onyedike, 1991). When broadcasting came to these countries, the colonial powers controlled television and radio services (Alabi, 2001; Uche, 1989). Some former colonies retained this tradition of government-controlled electronic media after the colonialists left (Lent, 1998; Randall, 1993). In several Asian

and African countries, the sedition laws created by colonial leaders are still in existence, and in some cases have been expanded (Ogbondah & Onyedike, 1991). These colonial traditions created an environment that allowed the harassment, detention, fining, and even killing of journalists when they voiced dissent or published critical or opposing views before and during political transitions in post-colonial countries. In Argentina, for instance, over 91 journalists simply 'disappeared' during military rule (Park, 1998).

Campbell's (1996) approach to understanding the media's role in democratization involves, in addition to economic and political factors, a country's level of urbanization, literacy, press traditions and the level of Marxist rule (probably any rule prior to democratization). He focuses his approach on the role of the press in post-Marxist countries in Europe and Africa. Since the major audience of the print media in transitional countries is in urban areas, Campbell (1996) argues that the level of urbanization (the size of the urban population) determines whether a strong audience exists to read newspapers and participate in political discourse. The press' role of informing the populace depends largely on the existence of an audience in the urban areas of society. Urban residents are seen as those who can afford to buy newspapers and affect the political situation. Connected to this is the level of literacy that exists in the country. If a country has a large number of people who can read and write in the common or official language, the press will succeed in informing and moving the people. If literacy rates are low, a large segment of the population will not get the information and participate in the process. Regarding press traditions, Campbell (1996) suggests examining the history of the country's press to see if there is a tradition of opposition and fighting for press freedom, as well as the press' professional orientation. When a country's press does not have such traditions, like most Eastern European countries, it might be docile during democratization as it never voiced opposition and does not know where to begin (Raichev, 2002). Or it could voice opposition during democratization and later revert to its old ways (Bennett, 1998). However, if the press had a tradition of opposition prior to authoritarian rule, chances are the press will actively produce critical information during the transition, and probably even during authoritarian rule, as the press did in Hungary, Poland and Benin (Campbell, 1996).

It is also important to consider the depth of authoritarian rule. In countries where authoritarian rule has not deepened, it is possible for the media to play an adversarial role during the democratization process (Campbell, 1996). In countries where authoritarian rule is deeply embedded, the media use more systems of self-censorship and support the government out of fear or habit, as was the case in Brazil and Romania (Johnson, 1998; Waisbord, 1998). A historical perspective also clarifies the depth of democracy that may

have existed in the country prior to re-democratization. For instance, Poland's stable democracy is credited to the fact that the country shared similar political characteristics with the West before communist rule began (Campbell, 1996). A political history that included the rule of law, a free press, and other factors made it possible for Poland to have a successful democratization.

Overall, these factors are quite important and point to the fact that each country faces unique challenges during the democratization process. As all media systems "reflect the political and economic systems of the nations within which they operate," it is therefore important to examine the unique factors that influence the media's activities during political transitions (Hachten, 1999, p. 17). A few scholars have used these factors to examine the media's role in democratization in Eastern Europe, Asia, Latin America and Africa, and found that historical, political, economic, socio-cultural and professional factors do interact with the media's role (Bourgault, 1998; Campbell, 1996; Chang & Riffe, 1998; Hall & O'Neil, 1998; Ibelema, 2003; Olukotun, 2002a; Raichev, 2002). Despite these factors, the literature lacks information on the media's actual role in the democratization process. Existing studies focus on the media's role in the post-democratization phase and examine the media's actions and situations along Western lines. That is problematic, considering the media's role in democratization is not fully understood (Randall, 1993). O'Neil (1998) points out that it is very important to fully understand the media's role in the transitional phase, as this will explain the post-transitional phase better. Furthermore, studies have focused mostly on broadcast media, television and radio, because of its assumed powerful influence (Randall, 1993). As Raichev (2002) points out, deeper discussions on "how social, historical and cultural factors influence post-Cold War changes in the press" are "chronically lacking" (p. 9). For Vicky Randall (1993), studies say "almost nothing" about the press' contribution to democratization (p. 625). To help fill this void in the literature, this study focused on the print media. O'Neil (1998) argues such a focus is needed because though print media might not be able to create television and radio's sudden impact, its ability to "undermine authoritarian power is also great. The ability of authoritarian regimes to fully control the printed word is still more difficult than that of the electronic media, even though the reach of the print medium may be much limited" (p. 8).

THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY IN DEMOCRATIZATION

New communication technologies played a powerful role during the third wave of global democratization (Huntington, 1991). By the 1970s,

communication technologies such as computers and satellites were available in some parts of the world, particularly since development communication had technology as one of its tools (Singh, 2002). By the 1980s, developments in communication technology had enhanced its ability to gather and disseminate information across national and international borders (Hachten, 1999). Everett Rogers (1986) defines communication technology as the "hardware equipment, organizational structures and social values by which individuals collect, process and exchange information with other individuals" (p. 2). For Stover (1984), communication or information technology, is a "means of communication and information management which provides more effective and more efficient interaction" (p. 2). Since the 1980s, changes in communication technology have led to a change of its definition to reflect its influence on human communication. New communication technologies now have a level of interactivity, a talk back mechanism that allows people to communicate one-on-one, one-to-many, or many-to-many (Rogers, 1986). Interactions are therefore more interpersonal, with some mass communication qualities, as they can be used to communicate with one or more people. As a result, these technologies are not "politically neutral and they tend to have differentiating effects" (Leslie, 2002, p. 109). Ball-Rokeach and Hoyt (2001) define new communication technologies, therefore, as "part of a total communication environment whereby people choose from a range of available media to fulfill communicative goals" (p. 355). New communication technologies include computers, satellites, teleconferencing networks, electronic messaging systems, videocassette recorders (VCRs), the Internet, and cellular phones. These technologies have social, political and economic uses and provide "opportunities for individuals to step out of the mass homogenized audiences of newspapers, radio and television and take a more active role in the process by which knowledge and entertainment are transmitted through society" (Smith, 1980, p. 22). Communication technology also extends "our perceptions and knowledge, and enlarges our consciousness" (Rogers, 1986, p. 233). As Stover (1984) puts it, "Information technology (IT) and communication are related" (p. 3). Socially, communication technology, indeed technology in any form, is an important cause of social change as it can improve methods of doing things (Volti, 2001). The invention of the telegraph in 1841, for example, made it possible for American newspapers to report international and national news through the Associated Press, and changed newspapers from personal and party journals to news disseminators (Sloan & Startt, 1999). With the telegraph, an "objective" style of journalism, the inverted pyramid news writing style, was also created (Rogers, 1986). One could say that

> Communication technologies have directly affected our ability to listen and speak widely and instantaneously and, comparatively speaking, inexpensively. Indirectly, these technologies have undermined our political organizations based place and left us wondering how well our place organizations—national armies and governments, for example—are equipped for service in the new century, where communities are organized in space as importantly as in place. (Shaw & Hamm, 1997, p. 226)

The pressures placed on newspapers, television and radio by new communication technologies like cable television and the Internet are also accelerating and changing what people think is important and where they get information to make daily decisions (Dizard, 1994). Communication technologies are also beneficial to education and social and health services (Pratt & Ha, 1995). Economically, communication technologies are helping businesses, production and management services run smoother (Pratt & Ha, 1995). A better economy presumably means better living conditions. Development scholars also point to the importance of communication technology in national development, particularly in developing countries, through the mass media (Hachten, 1999; Mody, 2002; Rogers, 1986; Singh, 2002; Stover, 1984). Scholars looked at the relationship between information technology and national development and realized communication and information technology "may be a useful tool in changing Third World countries and alleviating some of their poverty" (Stover, 1984, p. 3). Using the modernization theory, scholars assumed developing nations would be more like industrialized ones if they had the communication technologies that existed at the time (Jimada, 1992). Therefore, development was often measured by the amount of communication technology that existed in a country, and how available the technology was to people (Pratt & Ha, 1995). In the 1960s, scholars saw transistor radios as important tools in solving problems of poverty, illiteracy and more, and encouraged their use in creating and broadcasting programs on health, rural and family development (Rogers, 1986). By the 1980s, scholars like Everett Rogers (1986) believed satellites; microcomputers and videocassette recorders were the "most important new media for Third World development," particularly as these provided their owners with more control than government controlled media (p. 242). Communication technologies like telephones could build strong economies in developing countries (Pratt & Ha, 1995). But Stover (1984) warns that though technology is necessary for national development, it is not enough. A country needs other elements, such as natural resources, trained labor, political will, and a desire for self-reliance to begin

and sustain development. Politically, scholars argue that communication technologies have a liberating effect, as they empower citizens to influence political institutions (Tettey, 2001a). Communication technologies also allow citizens to gather information about politics and governments easily, join political discussion groups and even work with others for a political cause (Hacker & van Dijk, 2000). By the mid-1980s, scholars noticed that these features might have contributed to another political effect of communication technologies in the 1990s.

Apart from providing information and improving communication, communication technologies could threaten authoritarian leaders, who could not "ensure themselves a safe environment" because channels like the World Wide Web were "beyond their control and manipulation" (Perrit, 1998, p. 431). New communication technologies essentially threatened authoritarian governments in the late 1980s and 1990s because their citizens now had other ways to send out information and engage in political discourse. The technologies also provided a way to organize and fight authoritarian or unsatisfactory governments, and fuelled a global spread of democratic optimism (Tettey, 2001a). One could conclude that "political and technological changes" in the 1990s were related "revolutionary catalysts" that strengthened "the third wave of democracy and helped extend democratic dispensation around the globe" (Tettey, 2001a, p. 133). This was possible because new communication technologies have certain qualities that made them effective in the democratization process. These include a "reciprocal interactivity among many people; a global network that is not constrained by territorial boundaries; uncensored speech; the ability to challenge and cross-check official views and the development of transnational civil society" (Tettey, 2001a, p. 136).

According to David Held (1996), communication technology also provides a free environment where citizens have some level of autonomy to participate in all issues affecting them. Others like Kedzie (1997) see communication technology as a tool for participatory democracy because it fosters equality among citizens. Communication technology has also made it easier for human rights groups to keep authoritarian governments under international scrutiny, and sometimes prevent human rights abuses (Jones, 1994). But Hamelink (1997) warns that such a utopian view of communication technology negates the fact that only a minority have access to communication technology, and therefore its resulting influence. Tettey (2000) also warns that "subjective interests, intra-organizational power-behavioral schemes and other socio-political factors that shape the environment in which the technology is deployed" are often neglected in the discussion of technology's benefits. Factors like economic status, geographical location,

education, gender and understanding the language used for the appropriate technology often ensure that not everyone can participate in the democratization process through communication technologies (Tettey, 2001a). Rogers (1986) argues that communication technology, indeed any technology, often ends up enhancing the participation of an elite few, and distancing the majority, particularly rural dwellers, from the political core. Owning a computer also does not mean having access to the Internet. Therefore, despite the advantages that communication technologies provide, it is not a given that everyone can participate in the democratic process as everyone does not have access to these technologies (Alabi, 2001). Nevertheless, several examples abound across the globe, some dating to the 1960s, of communication technology's role in political transitions.

During the Tiananemen rebellion, Chinese students in China and overseas used personal computers, telephones and fax machines to communicate with protestors in China (Hachten, 1999). A Chinese student at Harvard University started a 24-hour Beijing-to-Boston hotline that carried news from Tiananemen Square to his apartment, where he used faxes, telephones and computers to send the news to Chinese students across the United States. The 1991 coup in Moscow failed partly because the coup plotters did not shut down international phone lines or shortwave radio and satellite stations. Russians also used photocopying machines, fax machines and cellular phones to encourage others to resist the coup. Soviet journalists also helped by making photocopies of their publications, as their offices were sealed, and distributing them on the streets. During the Shah's reign in Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini and other exiled religious leaders maintained contact almost daily with opposition groups using telephones and audiotape recordings from 1963 to 1979 (Rogers, 1986). The audiotapes contained political and religious messages copied in bazaars and mosques, transcribed, and then distributed within Iran. The government was unable to prevent the spread of such messages. When opposition groups rose against the government in 1978, newsletters, religious and political announcements were photocopied and distributed. During South Korea's democratization in the 1980s, Korean journalists started a grassroots press that provided Koreans with information the establishment press would not provide, using fax and printing machines (Kyu, 1998). In Taiwan, legalized and underground cable television stations gave political opponents a chance to reach people when the ruling party disallowed them from using the three television stations in the country (Lent, 1998). Finally, Seychelles' deposed Prime Minister, James Mancham, also used communication technology to return to office. During his exile in the United Kingdom, he used a fax machine to send political information to all 600 fax machines in Seychelles to rouse support for his

return in 1992 (Jones, 1992). These examples show that communication technologies have played some role in political transitions. But the literature does not discuss how this occurred or the factors that encouraged or discouraged their use in various countries. This study aimed to fill this gap in the literature by examining communication technology's role in Nigeria's democratization in the 1990s. To do this, the factors that contributed to Nigeria's democratization in the 1990s need to be understood. In the next chapter, follow Nigeria through its journey to democracy in the 1990s.

Chapter Three

Case Study—Nigeria

HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL BACKGROUND

Located in West Africa, Nigeria is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean in the south, Benin and Togo in the west, Cameroon in the east, and Niger and Chad in the north. The country covers 336,669 square miles, "twice the size of California and three times the size of the United Kingdom" (Falola 1999, p. 1). Nigeria is not mountainous or flat, and Africa's third largest river, River Niger, flows throughout it. Once described as "a collection of independent Native states, separated from one another . . . by great distances, by differences of history and traditions and by ethnological, racial, tribal, political, social and religious barriers," Nigeria is home to over 100 million people from over 250 ethnic groups (Obasanjo, 1980, p. 1). It is Africa's most populous nation (Oyewole & Lucas, 2000). The major ethnic groups and languages in Nigeria are Igbo, Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba. English is the official language as Nigeria was a British colony from 1861 to 1960. Nigeria is a federation made up of 36 states and a federal capital territory, Abuja. Economically, while agrarian, 80 percent of Nigeria's revenue comes from crude oil (Okonta & Douglas, 2001). Nigeria is the world's ninth largest oil producer, with the fourth largest reserve of natural gas (Bourgault, 1998). The country also exports various minerals including tin, columbite, uranium, limestone and coal (Oyewole & Lucas, 2000). Nigeria is a member of several international organizations, including the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the United Nations, African Union, and the Commonwealth of Nations.

Nigeria as a modern political entity existed as three colonies, the Lagos Colony, the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria and the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria, during British colonial rule. The Lagos Colony was

later merged with the Southern Protectorate and in 1914, Lord Frederick Lugard, Nigeria's first governor-general, amalgamated both protectorates. But this amalgamation was more on paper than in reality as the British used different methods to govern each protectorate, a system that laid the foundation for future political problems (Gambari, 1985). The northern part was governed through indirect rule, a system that allowed the British to govern through local emirs. British officers played an advisory role in the north because they believed it was easier than administering the vast territory with few British officials and meager funds. Indirect rule worked in the north because the people had a centralized political system similar to the British monarchy, a common language (Hausa) and religion (Islam) (Omoni, 1982). Northern rulers were also allowed to maintain their cultural practices (Pearce, 2001). But the south presented a different picture as a variety of political and cultural structures existed in this region. The territory was also comparatively smaller than the north, making direct British rule easier. To govern the area, the British changed the political structure to suit their political ideal of centralized authority (Gambari, 1985). For example, since one person did not hold power in pre-colonial Igboland, the British created and installed warrant chiefs who reported directly to them (Davidson, 1994). In other areas, leaders were dethroned and deported for opposing the British, and supporters installed. These governmental differences provided great contrasts when the protectorates were amalgamated in 1914. While the south was open to the modernizing influences of "expanding overseas trade, religion and education, all on western lines," the north still had a system that "had prevailed for a century before the coming of the colonialists" (Gambari, 1985, p. 161). Moreover, both sides never met or sat down to work together, even though there was a legislative council that required representatives from both sides to meet (Oyewole & Lucas, 2000). In fact, northerners and southerners were isolated until 1947 when northern representatives sat beside southern representatives for the first time in a legislative council (Oyewole & Lucas, 2000). Lugard believed he was supposed to "unify administrations, not peoples" and governed the country as separate regions (Cronje, 1972, p. 5). In 1939, the south was divided into two, creating three regions, north, east and west. This further complicated the country's cultural and political setup. When Nigeria gained its independence in 1960, the stage was already set for a politically troubled nation (Ihonvbere & Shaw, 1998).

The newly independent nation was a federation of three regions—northern Nigeria consisting primarily of Hausa-Fulani, the west of Yorubas, and the east of Igbos. All three regions, especially west and east, had numerous minority ethnic groups within them. Differences in culture,

language, political and social structures caused several tense episodes following Nigeria's independence (Ihonvbere & Shaw, 1998). Political problems for the young nation started in 1962 with disagreements between members of political parties, based on issues of tribalism, the jailing of prominent political figures, an unfair election in 1964, regional fear of ethnic domination and questionable census results (Wright, 1998). The product of all these was a military coup on January 15, 1966. According to the coup organizers, the military had come to fight Nigeria's "enemies"—corruption, tribalism nepotism—and "those who make the country look big for nothing before international circles and put the Nigerian political calendar back by their words and deeds" (Nzeogwu Kaduna's coup broadcast to the nation on January 15, 1966). A number of prominent leaders, including the prime minister, were killed. Taking up the leadership of the country was Major General Agunyi-Ironsi, an Igbo. In May 1966, Agunyi-Ironsi abolished the regional system of government under Unification Decree No. 34 and introduced a unitary system that put the regions under a central military government (Azikiwe, 1975).

The coup caused some concern in the international community, which viewed Nigeria as "politically the most sophisticated state in West Africa, embodying the best of the Westminster model, and hence a pacesetter for the continent" (Decalo, 1976, p. 7). However, many Nigerians welcomed the coup with "the greatest outbursts of national enthusiasm ever seen in the country" (Nnoli, 2000, p. 121). Inter-party tensions and politicians' inability to effectively govern and unite the country made Nigerians unsatisfied with civilian government (Diamond, 1988). But the coup carried ethnic undertones as all the politicians and senior army officers killed came from the north and west (Obasanjo, 1980). Only one was an easterner. Furthermore, Agunyi-Ironsi's new government was not the cure Nigerians hoped for as it "smacked of tribalism and favoritism" (Azikiwe, 1975, p. 3—4). Inter-ethnic distrust increased with time as non-Ibos interpreted Agunyi-Ironsi's actions as being favorable to Igbos alone. Propaganda through the British Broadcasting Corporation and British High Commission that Igbos were going to dominate Hausas, the largest ethnic group and the major power brokers before the coup, did not help matters (Nnoli, 2000). The combination of Ironsi's unification decree, his refusal to try the coup plotters and ethnic propaganda, heightened tensions between Hausas and Igbos. The result was a counter coup on July 29, 1966. Over 50,000 Igbos and other easterners, including Agunyi-Ironsi, were killed. Over two million people were dislocated (Ibelema, 1992). The Northerners had sought to end "a grand Igbo plan for domination, but the July coup rocked the foundations of Nigerian unity" (Dare, 1985, p. 196). After three days of

secret talks and confusion amongst military officers, Lieutenant-Colonel Yakubu Gowon took over as head of state.

In his first national broadcast on August 1, 1966, Gowon described 1966 as a "fateful year" (Agbese, 2000, p. 29). Planning to preserve unity and maintain peace, he set up ad hoc conferences with regional delegates to review Nigeria's constitutional future. But ethnic tension and rumors about plans to exclude the Igbos caused problems. Eastern leaders felt their political future was threatened and they wanted the country broken up (Dare, 1985). They had been planning regional independence since the January 1966 coup. Therefore, "With Easterners at home and abroad returning home with news of Nigerians' brutality against them, and with the oil flowing in the Eastern Region," the way was now open for a possible Eastern secession (Obasanjo, 1980, p. 9). Gowon and several prominent people attempted to bring peace and quell secessionist ideas, but the military governor of the Eastern Region, Lieutenant-Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu, refused to cooperate. Further distrust between both parties increased in August and September 1966 when stories spread that hundreds of Northerners had been killed in the east and their corpses were floating in the Imo and Niger rivers (Dent, 1991). Radio Cotonou in Cameroun broadcast this macabre news, which Enugu Radio in eastern Nigeria suppressed (Azikiwe, 1975). Then Radio Kaduna, a northern radio station, broadcast the story, causing the massacres of more easterners in the north from September to October 1966. The story was never proven or denied.

Two ad hoc conferences in Benin and Ghana and other peace attempts occurred. Nothing worked. On May 26, 1967, the Joint Meeting of Chiefs and Elders and the Consultative Assembly of the Eastern Region mandated Ojukwu to declare a free sovereign state named Biafra (Ojukwu, 1969). In response on May 27, Gowon subdivided the nation into twelve states, believing this would remove the charge of Northern domination (Dare, 1985). He subdivided each region into three states. But Igbos interpreted the act as a way to further reduce their political strength (Dare, 1985). That day, Ojukwu declared Eastern Nigeria the independent Republic of Biafra, with himself as head of state and commander-in-chief, and totally dissolved all political ties with the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Ojukwu, 1969). He encouraged Easterners to reject "the authority of any person or persons other than the Military Government of Eastern Nigeria to make imposition of whatever kind or nature upon you" (Ojukwu, 1969, p. 194). Biafra officially seceded on May 30, 1967. Further tensions resulted in a civil war that started on July 6, 1967 and ended on January 12, 1970. However, the end of the war did not mean the beginning of better things for Nigeria (Falola, 1999).

Nigeria's political environment after the civil war was laden with military coups and rule (Oyewole & Lucas, 2000). Between 1966 and 1993, Nigeria experienced 11 military coups, abortive, plotted and successful. Military intervention became so ingrained in Nigeria that it became "common practice, an integral role of the military in society" (Conteh-Morgan, 2000, p. 343). Reasons for the military coups were similar to those given for military coups in Africa. As in the first coup, consequent coup plotters cited the failures of previous governments to improve Nigeria socially, economically or politically (Anene, 2000; Schraeder, 2000). But no government did better than the other economically, politically or socially (Njoku, 2000). Rosemary O'Kane (1998) offers an explanation. Since foreign demand and world markets determined the prices of goods from producing nations like Nigeria, the military had little or no control over the price of their products. Their inability to build a strong economy inevitably made it impossible to build a politically stable country or achieve anything of substance. But Ayittey (1999) argues that since soldiers are rarely trained to run countries and subject to similar challenges as politicians, it is impossible to believe they would have fared better than civilians. Moreover, military leaders rarely tried to return power to civilians when they realized they were not doing any better. The longer soldiers stayed in power, the worse Nigeria's economy became (Conteh-Morgan, 2000). But some regimes recognized that a return to civilian rule was necessary at some point because of the "democratic drive embedded in Nigerian civil society" since pre-colonial times (Ibrahim, 1998, p. 22). To this aim, Nigeria underwent transition programs under six of its eight military leaders (Falola, 1999).

Transitions to democracy started with General Yakubu Gowon who promised to hand over to a civilian government in 1974 when he came to office in 1970. He did not. General Murtala Muhammed overthrew him in a coup in 1975. Murtala Muhammed is noted by many as a "revolutionary reformer" that promised to return the country to civilian rule by 1979 (Ijomah, 2000, p. 301). His assassination in an abortive coup in 1976 prevented him from seeing his promise through. His successor, General Olusegun Obasanjo, kept that promise and put Nigeria in the hands of Alhaji Shehu Shagari in 1979 (Falola & Ihonvbere, 1985). Shagari lasted until another coup put General Muhammadu Buhari in power in 1983. Buhari never announced any plans to hand over to a civilian government during his regime and focused on fighting corruption, producing disciplined citizens and fighting the drug war instead (Agbese, 2000). However, his draconian laws created a frightened nation, as drug traffickers were executed, hundreds of people were detained without trial or even knowing their offences, and the infamous Public Officers Protection Against

False Accusation Decree 4 alienated the press. In 1985, General Ibrahim Babangida overthrew Buhari and promised to reinstate democracy in five years (Lewis, Robinson & Rubin, 1998). But Babangida headed the "most prolonged, expensive, highly convoluted, and indeed dubious" political transition in Nigerian history (Ojo, 2000, p.8). He failed to carry out his promise and instituted an interim government instead when he stepped down in 1993. Three months later, General Sani Abacha, who used similar tactics as Babangida, silently toppled the interim government. But Abacha's ambition to transform himself into a civilian president while in office was more apparent (Njoku, 2001). Babangida and Abacha led Nigeria through its longest and most painful transition programs in the 1990s. Major movements by the masses to make democracy a reality in Nigeria also occurred during this decade. Therefore, it is important to examine the transition programs of Babangida and Abacha to some extent, as they brought Nigeria into Africa's second wave of independence and the third global wave of democratization.

JOURNEY TO DEMOCRACY IN THE 1990S

Stressing a human rights orientation, Babangida began his regime with a disengagement program that would return power to civilians in 1990 (Ojo, 1998). He created a Political Bureau and Constitution Review Committee to review the 1979 constitution, and create a new constitution and timetable for a third republic. All Nigerian military leaders believed a new constitution was imperative (Anene, 2000). By the end of 1985, his transition program involved a National Population Commission, National Electoral Commission (NEC), a Code of Conduct Bureau, a Code of Conduct Tribunal, Directorate for Social Mobilization (MAMSER), Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFFRI) and a Constituent Assembly. These agencies aimed at party formation, investigating the problems of Nigerian politics and society, and revenue allocation. Babangida's transition program was straightforward, and in many ways, filled with good intentions. He created programs that would rebuild Nigeria socially, politically and economically. MAMSER, for instance, was supposed to mobilize and orient Nigerians toward a culture of mass participation in the political process (Ijomah, 2000). The Political Bureau promoted one of the most "detailed and interesting discussions of Nigerian politics ever condoned by the military" and received about 27,000 submissions from the public (Wright, 1998, p. 82). Millions of naira went into elections and building party offices and headquarters all over the country. The government removed the ban placed on political parties during Buhari's reign and 88

political associations arose. Thirteen associations submitted applications to become registered political parties. But Babangida's transition program was also riddled with inconsistencies in implementation from the beginning.

Following the recommendations of the Political Bureau, the government adopted a two-party system and created two parties, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC). This was perhaps a mistake because Nigerians do not see politics along progressive (liberals) and conservative (republicans) lines alone, but also along ethnic and regional lines. This has been the undoing of political parties in Nigeria since they are defined along regional and ethnic lines, and thus produce narrow-minded political groups. The best strategy would have been to encourage a party system that suited the cultural and social conditions of the people (Ojo, 2000). But the two-party system probably made it easier for Babangida to manipulate the parties the way he did throughout his transition program.

On June 27, 1990, Babangida banned all former and serving public officials, military and civilian, from participating in or running for office for 10 years (Ojo, 2000). He later included anyone convicted or punished for corruption or misconduct in office in the past in the ban, to deter anyone tempted to repeat the same actions. By the end of the year, he allowed the banned politicians to return to the political arena. Their entrance brought back old political practices, such as money politics, rigging and antiquated ideas. Then Babangida changed the hand-over date from October 1990 to October 1992 to allow more time to prepare Nigerians for the task ahead (Oyewole & Lucas, 2000). In August 1991, Babangida unexpectedly created nine new states and over 50 local government areas, bringing the number of states to 30, and local governments to 500 (Ihonvbere & Shaw, 1998). This confused the transition program. Babangida then announced that the military would now hand over in January 1993 and rescheduled presidential primaries for August and September 1992. In 1992, internal strife and legal battles over the results of the presidential primaries that made Shehu Yar'Adua (SDP) and Adamu Ciroma (NRC) flag bearers for each party caused the banning of 23 presidential aspirants, 11 from SDP and 12 from NRC, for the rest of the transition (Ihonvbere & Shaw, 1998). The parties had to pick new candidates. Stephen Wright (1998) contends that Babangida was upset that both men were northerners. In the end, SDP chose Moshood Kashimawo Abiola, a southerner, and the NRC chose Bashir Othman Tofa, a northerner, to run in the presidential elections slated for June 12, 1993, in time for a military handover on August 27, 1993. Elections took place and Abiola won. Babangida was going to enter the history books as the second Nigerian military leader to hand over to a

civilian government (Agbese, 2000). Markedly, he was going to hand over to a southerner. It was not to be. On June 23, 1993, Babangida annulled the presidential election, citing legal and administrative problems. This claim was devious as "the regime ruled by decree," sponsored and organized the elections (Lewis, 1999, p. 145).

Economically, the latter part of 1990 brought a petroleum windfall to Nigeria as the Gulf war raised oil prices (Lewis, Robinson & Rubin, 1998). The sudden profit meant new resources that would stabilize the country and hopefully move the transition along quicker. Instead, "reckless government spending, spiraling corruption and delinquent debt service hindered growth while damaging the country's international standing" (Lewis, Robinson & Rubin, 1998, p. 44). To salvage the economy, Babangida took loans from the IMF and World Bank and instituted a Structural Adjustment Program that failed due to inefficient implementation and lack of accountability (Oyewole & Lucas, 2000). By adopting a Structural Adjustment Program, Babangida allowed foreign market forces to determine the value of the naira. "The IMF/World Bank gurus believed that the currency was over-valued. They wanted it devalued" (Agbese, 2000, p. 101). When Babangida left office in 1993, the currency's official rate was 20 naira to $1.00. The black market rate was 85 naira to $1.00. With growing social and economic problems, Babangida's rule became "more dictatorial and self-interested" (Lewis, 1999, p. 143).

Socially, the transition did not fare any better. The national census conducted under the National Population Commission was controversial and problematic. "After spending hundreds of millions of naira, declaring three work-free days and mobilizing several hundreds of thousands of teachers and military personnel," the population commission announced a figure of 88.5 million Nigerians, a figure lower than projections by Nigerian governments and international organizations (Ihonvbere & Shaw, 1998, p. 125). DFRRI was one program that looked good on paper but in reality never made it. The program's objective was to "open up rural feeder roads, provide rural water supply and assist in other areas to make life more meaningful in the rural areas and help stem rural-urban drift" (Agbese, 2000, p. 101). Instead, millions of naira went down the drain in futility (Ojo, 2000). His government also repressed the press.

In 1986, a prominent investigative journalist, Dele Giwa, was killed by a letter bomb. The government banned his magazine, *Newswatch*, for six months in 1987 for publishing a confidential government report from the Political Bureau on the systems considered for the country's return to democracy (Faringer, 1991). The regime closed several print media several times. Nigerians watched all these and suspecting that Babangida was not

going to step down, formed pro-democracy and civil rights groups to challenge him (Edozie, 2002).

The annulment especially sparked strikes and violent reactions all over the country from teachers, students, human rights groups, trade unions, segments of the media and a few politicians (Edozie, 2002). "For much of the Nigerian public, this action represented the designs of an entrenched military leadership unwilling to cede power or access to the nation's oil wealth" (Lewis, 1999, p. 145). Over 100 people died in riots in Lagos and other southwestern cities. However, Babangida was not solely responsible for his actions.

Politicians did not present a united front (Oyewole & Lucas, 2000). While some fought to remove the military, others fought to keep them in office. People like Arthur Nzeribe, an industrialist and politician, launched a series of legal actions under the auspices of The Association for a Better Nigeria to stop the June 12 election. He even won an injunction against the election from an Abuja High Court two days before the elections. Nzeribe also campaigned for Babangida to remain in office rather than handover to an elected candidate (Lewis, Robinson & Rubin, 1998; Oyewole & Lucas, 2000). As the tussle continued, Babangida "stepped aside" and handed over to an Interim National Government (ING), headed by Ernest Shonekan, to complete the democratization process. The ING had seven months to make this happen. Overall, Babangida's transition program was manipulated to "favor his continuing in office and to prevent any real democratization" (Ijomah, 2000, p. 304).

In November 1993, General Sani Abacha toppled Shonekan's interim government and became Nigeria's seventh military ruler. In his national broadcast Abacha said it was time for the problems of the nation to be addressed "firmly, objectively, decisively and with all sincerity of purpose" (Abacha, national coup broadcast, November 18, 1993). He described his government as "a child of necessity with a strong determination to restore peace and stability" and promised to "enthrone a lasting and true democracy" (Abacha, national coup broadcast, November 18, 1993). He reopened media houses closed by Babangida and promised to query the judiciary, military, national institutions, the banking industry and more, and reorganize and reform them. Only the banking industry was reformed. Nigerians hoped Abacha would return power to Abiola soon. He engaged in discussions with Abiola's camp and named a mainly civilian cabinet with old politicians and pro-democracy leaders on board, including Abiola's running mate, Babagana Kingibe (Lewis, 1999). He also appointed Alex Ibru, publisher of *The Guardian* and one of his strongest critics, interior minister. Abacha did all this not to only gain "legitimation through

inclusiveness," but also outsmart members of Abiola's camp and Nigerians as a whole (Ibelema, 2003, p. 182). Abacha's mission was "not to hand over to Abiola but to rule" (Agbese, 2000, p. 128). His intentions became clear when he scrapped the constitution and dissolved the Interim National Government, the two parties, local, national and state assemblies, state executive councils and NEC.

Nigeria was facing serous political problems at this point. It seemed likely that the nation was heading towards another civil war along the lines of anti- and pro- June 12. Would that have happened? Possibly, but further examination reveals that chances for that were remote since "the ingredient for such a drastic development was missing" (Agbese, 2000, p. 128). Ethnicity or regionalism was not the basis for the June 12 annulment. Abiola received most of his votes from the north and, ironically, did not do well in his own region (Ibelema, 2003). Any charge that the north usurped the election was countered by the fact that the north voted overwhelmingly for Abiola. Furthermore, religion was not an issue in this election (Agbese, 2000). Perhaps if Abiola had been Christian and Tofa Moslem, it would have been a different story. It is important to note too that political leaders, as earlier mentioned, were not united but extremely suspicious of each other and divided on the issue (Hyden & Leslie, 2002). Most of them "buddied up" to the military. It is therefore "difficult to avoid the conclusion that these decisions were based on opportunism, symptomatic of the morally challenged political elite," even though each claimed he or she was serving the nation (Wright, 1998, p. 88). All Abacha had to do was what past military leaders did—exploit the disunity and internal suspicion to his advantage (Njoku, 2001). But realizing democracy was inevitable, particularly with mounting pressure in Nigeria and constant global demands for democratization, Abacha created a Constitutional Conference "to debate the framework for a new political transition" in 1994 (Lewis, 1999, p. 146).

On January 16, 1995, Abacha released his transition program using recommendations from the conference. He created the National Electoral Commission (NECON) and the Transition Implementation Committee to begin work on a transition to democracy. Unfortunately, these institutions were firmly under presidential control (Ijomah, 2000). The constitutional conference attracted a large number of politicians who received stipends from and warmed up to the government, but did not have the power to discuss the fundamental problems facing the nation. Nevertheless, the conference's Committee on Political Transition fixed a January 1, 1996 exit date for the military. The government was displeased with the terminal date and took steps to ensure delegates knew that. When the conference

reconvened after a long break, members decided the January date was no longer feasible. Members pushed for an extension of military rule instead. It is safe to surmise that the conference bought Abacha time to strengthen his power and raise false hope in Nigerians (Ijomah, 2000).

As in Babangida's transition program, political associations applied for registration. But this time the government paid certain people to "float pro-government political associations that would eventually be registered" (Ijomah, 2000, p. 306). In the end, five registered parties were in full support of and supported by the government—the United Nigeria Congress Party, the Democratic Party of Nigeria, Grassroots Democratic Movement, and the National Center Party. Local government elections took place and the government disqualified any candidate it did not sponsor. Furthermore, anyone in the approved parties that announced intentions to run for president was threatened. For example, the leader of the National Center Party, Don Etiebet, was beaten and detained when he expressed his intentions to run for president.

Abacha's regime faced a lot of public and international criticism, probably more than any other military regime (Njoku, 2001). However, the dissolution of the SDP and NRC took away the base that would have mobilized and made oppositional voices strong and legal. Abiola's tendency to negotiate directly with the military and not with the diverse voices at his disposal did not help matters (Lewis, Robinson & Rubin, 1998). But opposition to Abacha's government was rife, particularly from the press, pro-democracy and human rights groups, labor unions and university students (Edozie, 2002). Dozens of pro-democracy and voluntary associations arose and pressed for a return to democratic rule. These groups fell into six categories—civil rights, pro-democracy, special interest, unions and churches, external and umbrella groups (Wright, 1998). Groups like the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO) proved to be a serious threat. The coalition gave Abacha until May 1995 to hand over to Abiola (Agbese, 2000). The Petroleum and Natural Gas Staff Union (PENGASU) and the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG) embarked on strikes that caused acute petrol shortages across the country (Njoku, 2001). Pro-democracy agitation grew louder and louder. Abacha responded with force.

His government established decrees that repressed all forms of opposition and acted harshly against the media. Leaders and activists were arrested, detained and jailed without trial. Some, like Ken Saro Wiwa, Alfred Rewane and Kudirat Abiola, were assassinated (Njoku, 2001). Even more people, particularly former politicians and cabinet members, were jailed under the guise that they knew of two coup plots against Abacha in

1994 and 1997 (Oyewole & Lucas, 2000). Those who feared persecution fled the country and continued to oppose the government from abroad. Subsequently, the Commonwealth of Nations suspended Nigeria from its organization and the United States, Canada, Britain, South Africa and other countries placed sanctions on Nigeria. Regardless, by June 1994, it was obvious Abacha did not intend to step down. This was confirmed when Abiola was arrested and jailed on June 23, 1994 for declaring himself president. The charge was treason.

In April 1997, a group of Nigerians decided that Abacha had to succeed himself as president and campaigned as such (Edozie, 2002; Njoku, 2001). Members of the Youths Earnestly Ask for Abacha (YEAA) even organized a two million-man march in Abuja. It was obvious to all that the military government sponsored these groups. Abacha never publicly announced he would run, but it was obvious that was his intention. He used his transition program to cement his intention. In October 1997, Abacha's transition program ended with the five political parties voting for Abacha as sole presidential candidate on each party's ticket (Ijomah, 2000). Then on June 8, 1998, Death voted and Abacha died of a heart attack. But despite his tactics, Abacha's government did something unique in Nigeria.

His authoritarian rule "provided the much needed opportunity to accelerate democratic transition. Abacha's self-interest in retaining power brought a great awakening among Nigerians of divergent groups" (Njoku, 2001, p. 83). It could be said that politicians, pro-democracy groups, journalists, human rights activists, local and foreign non-governmental agencies, individuals on self-exile, had all finally identified a common enemy and united to take him out. Before, differing policies and ideologies had made it difficult for these groups to unite in the fight for democracy. However, Abacha did not act alone for leadership sometimes reflects the society it represents. "Nigerians carried out his executions, identified the imagined or real enemies, and settled personal vendettas under the cover of state security" (Njoku, 2001, p. 85). Taking Abacha's place in June 1998 was General Abdulsalami Abubakar.

Abubakar noted in his second national address on July 20, 1998, that Nigeria's last attempt "at democratization was marred by maneuvering and manipulation of political institutions, structures and actors. In the end, we have only succeeded in creating a defective foundation on which a solid democratic structure can neither be constructed nor sustained." African and international leaders courted and warmly welcomed the general. Some relaxed sanctions they placed on Nigeria during Abacha's reign. Abubakar scrapped most of Abacha's transition program and changed NEC to the Independent National Electoral Commission. Abubakar was open and

humble, and took steps to restore credibility to the government, albeit cautiously. He planned to release Abiola, but Abiola died on July 8, exactly one month after Abacha. Abubakar handed over to the democratically elected government of Olusegun Obasanjo on May 29, 1999. It was so easy and so quick that one wonders why it took Babangida and Abacha so long to do the same.

Ijomah (2000) notes that Nigeria's transitions to democracy "encountered difficulties because of the principal mid-wife of the transition, the military ruler himself. There seems to be an intriguing allure in the presidency that impels leaders, once in office, to wish to eternize their power" (p. 293). This is one reason why Nigerian military leaders pretended to democratize the country. But they did so with the blessing of the international community, which in the 1990s equated democracy with the ballot box and multiple parties. Dictators could claim to be democratic by going through the motions of holding "rigged multi-party elections" (Adebayo, et al., 1997, p. 6). Nothing in the history of military rulers qualifies them as gurus of democracy, but the world trusted them to know what paths would lead to democracy in Nigeria for some reason (Harsch, 1993).

Clearly, the 1990s were full of challenges for Nigerians. Twenty-nine years of "corrective" military rule had made Nigeria the 13th poorest nation in the world by 1997; its educational and social services had crumbled, and corruption was taking a firm hold on the nation. Nigerians believed democracy was the answer and fought for it in massive ways. Many lost their lives in the process. However, Ibelema (2003) notes that one cannot ignore the efforts of the Nigerian press in the democratization process in the 1990s. Also, by the latter part of the 20th century, new communication technologies like satellite television, microcomputers, fax machines and cellular phones were available in Nigeria, and made it possible to communicate and send information faster, cheaper and across international borders (Rogers, 1986). These technologies also provided Nigerians with alternatives to government-controlled mass media. Following is an examination of the Nigerian press and its place in Nigeria's political history.

THE NIGERIAN PRESS

The Nigerian press is one of the largest in Africa, with over 78 daily and weekly newspapers and 45 news and social magazines (Olukotun, 2004). Most literature on the African media describe the Nigerian press as a champion of democracy because it "stands out for its structure of ownership and editorial policies" (Ette, 2000, p. 67). Nigeria's press is reputed to be the freest in Africa, even during military rule. This is largely due to the

press' history of political advocacy since its inception in 1859 (Dare, 1996). Of course, the assessment of Nigeria's degree of press freedom depends on various factors, such as the type of media ownership that exists, type of political system, the judiciary, co-opting tactics, media expertise, literacy levels and the economy (Uche, 1989). Nigeria's media environment presents an interesting mix of government and private media ownership, which affects the level of press freedom that exists at a given time. The government owned all broadcast media until 1992 when the Electronic Privatization Decree allowed private individuals to own and operate broadcast media and telecommunications (Onwumechili, 1996). Though state and federal governments own newspapers, private individuals own most of the press in Nigeria. The twist in the Nigerian press is that government newspapers are not always pro-government, and dominant ownership by a single or group of individuals leaves the independent press open to personal monopoly for the owner's benefit (Eribo, 1997). The type of political system prevailing in Nigeria at a given time can also determine the level of press freedom that exists.

As in any country, the media and political systems are linked (Dalton, Beck & Huckfeldt, 1998). In most instances, the press is free only when it does not criticize the government. Studies indicate that the Nigerian press had greater freedom under civilian governments than they did under military governments (Ogbondah, 1997). Throughout the military's 29-year reign in Nigeria, they instituted several decrees and extralegal measures to control the press. More journalists were also arrested, detained, fired and imprisoned without trial under military rule than they were under civilian rule (Ogbondah, 1991). Therefore, it is difficult to assert that the Nigerian press is free at all times, especially since studies suggest that press freedom thrives better in a pluralistic political system. Uche (1989) also considers the attitude of Nigerians to the press an important determinant of press freedom. According to Tom Hopkinson (1966), the African press has a credibility problem with its audience because they view it suspiciously. This is probably because the "whole concept of mass media and the philosophy of their freedom are Western in origin and context" (Uche, 1989, p. 145; Mativo, 1995). Moreover, the concept of press freedom needs a literate audience, large enough to appreciate the cause of press freedom (Campbell, 1996). As of 1999, Nigeria's literacy rate was over 51% (Oyewole & Lucas, 2000). This figure might be higher if indigenous languages and Arabic counted towards the international measurement of literacy. The country has a long way to go in educating all its citizens to read and write in English (Falola, 1999). To understand the Nigerian press and its role in society therefore, Ibelema (2003) suggests using a historical perspective

that examines the Nigerian press in four periods. These are the nationalist, regionalist, state-oriented and independent press periods. He explains that each period contributed to the press' role in Nigeria in the 1990s. These periods also overlapped, as events in one era often spurred the adaptation of the press in another era. Nigeria's political, social, economic and cultural situation also affected the press' role in each period.

The press' role in the nationalist era (1860s—early 1950s) reflected the political, social and economic situation of the era. Nigeria was under British rule at this time, and the British controlled the country's politics and economy (Falola, 1999). The goal of colonial rule was to make Nigeria more like Britain, and the British created social programs along those lines (Boahen, 1987). It is important to note that European educational policy aimed at producing Africans who would be content performing menial tasks. Only a few would acquire higher education to become like their European colonizers (Marah, 1987). The Nigerian press started along these lines in 1859, when Reverend Henry Townsend started a Yoruba newspaper, *Iwe Irohin fun awon Ara Egba ati Yoruba* (*Iwe Irohin* for short), to get Nigerians in Abeokuta (in southern Nigeria) to read and seek information by reading (Omu, 1978). This was the first vernacular newspaper, and by 1860 first bilingual, in Africa (Nwankwo & Kurian, 1982). The newspaper's focus was education and entertainment, but it paved the way for modern mass communication systems that replaced talking drums and interpersonal village communication systems in Nigeria (Eribo, 1997; Uche, 1989). The few newspapers that followed *Iwe Irohin* continued providing education and entertainment, but acquired a political edge by 1863 (Ibelema, 2003). In 1880, a group of Nigerians started *The Lagos Times and Gold Coast Colony Advertiser*, with depots in several countries, including Britain and Sierra Leone, to encourage West Africans to fight for their independence from colonial rule. In an editorial, the publishers said

> We are not clamoring for immediate independence . . . but it should always be borne in mind that the present order of things will not last forever. A time will come when the colonies on the West Coast will be left to regulate their own internal and external affairs. (Uche, 1989, p. 94)

In the early 1900s, most newspapers carried a nationalist slant, pushing for some form of self-determination or political rights for Africans. This awakening of nationalism across the continent was due to a number of events. Firstly, European need for trained African personnel and clergy created a group of western educated Africans that understood

the languages and customs of the colonizers (Gambari, 1985). But this breed of Africans by the 1920s, particularly in British Africa, wanted to participate in public affairs and gain social recognition for their efforts. The British were "uneasy before the educated African and sometimes expressed contempt for the few educated elements in the colonies" (Omoni, 1982, p. 82). As a result educated Africans were treated disdainfully—"denied the right to vote, to hold a job according to ability, and to earn according to qualifications, experience, and merit" (Sithole, 1965, p. 69). In Nigeria, the story was no different. Educated Nigerians wanted to participate in the public affairs of Nigeria. In fact, some Nigerian lawyers, doctors and merchants participated in the National Congress of British West Africa in 1920, not to "organize an anti-government movement, but to help the work of the government in a loyal and constitutional manner" (Arikpo, 1967, p. 56). But racism and the damage done to traditional institutions and customs proved Nigerians would not be allowed to participate fully and equally in the development of the colony (Falola, 1999). Realizing this, Nigerians united and saw nationalism as the key to getting their country back.

Secondly, Africans had fought in and contributed to the two world wars. These wars contributed greatly to the fight for African independence (Khapoya, 1998). A million Africans fought in World War I, a war fought partly on African soil and for African territories, and at least 300, 000 lost their lives (Davidson, 1994). World War I made Africans realize how much Europeans depended on them for troops and material gain. Moreover, it helped them realize that Europeans were not invincible for they were hurt and killed like Africans during the war (Khapoya, 1998). The League of Nations' mandate regarding the redistribution of former German territories further laid a seed for the end of colonial rule, as it implied that wards would one day rule themselves (Oliver, 2000). But while the first war stirred the pot of African liberation, World War II opened the Pandora box.

World War II (1939 to 1945) contributed greatly to the movement for African independence. The war had two main effects: It created a "new radical leadership" and a "large group of supporters for the new African leadership" (Omoni, 1982, p. 87). Allied propaganda during the war bore the sentiment that World War II was for freedom and "the right of mankind to have a government of their choice" (Omoni, 1982, p. 87). But Africans learned at the end of the war that this claim did not apply to them; they were just instruments for the freedom of Europeans (Sithole, 1965). This aroused their political and nationalist sentiments deeply, and they strongly agitated for the end of European colonization

and domination. The story was no different in Nigeria, and the press of the era reflected these feelings.

The Nigerian press devoted itself to "raising consciousness to a high level in editorials and special columns devoted to anti-colonial issues" (Falola, 1999, p. 83). Newspapers like the *Lagos Weekly Record*, *The Lagos Daily News* and the *West African Pilot* used a combative and provocative tone to assert the rights of Nigerians to self-governance (Bedu-Addo, 1997). Journalists' nationalist anti-colonial orientation showed in the stories they covered and the editorials they wrote. In response, colonial rulers released press laws that made it a crime to publish information that ridiculed the government or its officials (Ogbondah & Onyedike, 1991). Lord Lugard even issued a law that empowered him to appoint a press censor, seize printing presses, confiscate newspapers and impose a bond of £250 on "undesirable" publishers (Nwankwo & Kurian, 1982). The government also arrested, convicted, and tortured journalists. Some Nigerian journalists and publishers used guerilla tactics to voice their opposition (Nwankwo & Kurian, 1982). For instance, Nnamdi Azikiwe, through his *West African Pilot*, was outspoken on the issue of Nigerian independence (Idemili, 1978). His paper was intended to revolutionize Nigerian journalism and "demonstrate that journalism could be a successful business enterprise," based on his training in the United States (Idemili, 1978, p. 86). Azikiwe started West Africa's first newspaper chain, with newspapers in different regions (Nwankwo & Kurian, 1982). His papers carried a clear anti-government tone, and in response, the government banned his major papers, the *West African Pilot* and *The Comet*, for six weeks (Nwankwo & Kurian, 1982). However, whenever they banned a newspaper, he brought another paper from another region to take its place. After the ban, the government denied his paper official advertising, the major source of revenue at the time. During World War II, he went into hiding, claiming the government was trying to kill him (Omu, 1978).

In the 1920s, the press became more political, especially after the 1922 Clifford constitution allowed four Africans to be nominated and elected to the Legislative Council for Africans and form political parties (Oyewole & Lucas, 2000). Nigerians used the opportunity to press for change. Though the Nigerian press maintained a nationalist agenda, they soon became mouthpieces for their publishers' parties (Uche, 1989). Several prominent Nigerian politicians from 1922 until Nigeria gained her independence in 1960 were journalists and publishers. Prominent amongst these were Nnamdi Azikiwe, who became Nigeria's first president, and Herbert Macaulay. Overall, the press' actions during this era placed it "at the heart of political discourse, making it a central focus and tool for

political influence" in Nigeria (Bedu-Addo, 1997, p. 2). This reflected in the eras that followed, especially as governments and politicians realized how important the press was to politics and government.

During the regionalist era, from the late 1950s to the early 1970s, federal and regional governments started and owned newspapers (Uche, 1989). Regional governments started newspapers mainly to articulate the issues of the people in the regions to the federal government. These papers also maintained the "advocatorial press tradition" of the nationalist years (Ibelema, 2003, p. 173). They often took on an anti-government stance, and the regions competed vibrantly amongst themselves for control of the federal government and the nation's resources by ethnicity (Ibelema, 2003; Uche, 1989). Political pluralism often breeds a controversial press, as was the case during the regionalist era. But the regionalist era was not without press laws as newspapers were required to register and submit signed copies of every issue to the government (Nwankwo & Kurian, 1982). Under Agunyi-Ironsi several decrees were established, such as the Defamatory and Offensive Publications Decree, which authorized the government to arrest anyone for publishing anything deemed threatening to national security (Eribo, 1997). Gowon put more decrees in place during his regime, such as Decree 17, the Newspapers (Prohibition of Circulation) decree, which authorized the government to ban and prohibit the circulation of newspapers.

When political turmoil began in the late 1960s, the press, even those privately owned, took regional and ethnic sides. The failure to support one's region or ethnic group meant being "labeled a saboteur and an unpatriotic element" (Uche, 1989, p. 99). This attitude featured prominently during the Nigerian civil war and influenced the next era. Before the war began, Gowon divided the regions into 12 states and laid the foundation for the state-oriented press era.

The state-press era started during the Nigerian civil war and continued after the war (Ibelema, 2003). During this era (1967—1979), state governments strove to establish newspapers that would keep people in their states informed, and of course keep the interests of the ethnic groups in the states in national view. Examples of these papers include *The Observer*, the *Chronicle*, *Daily Sketch*, *Nigerian Herald* and the *Nigerian Standard*. A striking occurrence of this era is that while the number of private newspapers declined, the number of government owned newspapers increased (Bedu-Addo, 1997). The federal government bought most or all shares in the dominant national newspapers—*New Nigerian* and *The Daily Times*—in 1976 (Uche, 1989). The number of state newspapers later declined as a bad economy led to the closure of several of them. The press

faced other challenges. In 1973, Minere Amakiri, a journalist, was arrested. His head and beard were shaved with a pocketknife, and he was stripped, whipped and jailed for 27 hours for writing a story that teachers in Rivers state had not been paid in months (Ogbondah, 1991). The military governor of the state was angered that the story appeared on his birthday. Murtala Muhammed's government also passed decrees to keep the press in check, despite the low number of newspapers (Eribo, 1997). But there was a vacuum and need for national non-government newspapers. This need gave rise to the fourth era of the Nigerian press—the independent press era.

The independent press era began in the 1980s, when wealthy business people and journalists started newspapers and news magazines. Note that during this era, the military was in power and though Nigeria's economy was worsening, the entrance of new technologies helped newspaper and magazine production (Ibelema, 2003). Moshood Abiola, a businessman, started the Concord Group, with a daily newspaper, *The National Concord*, and a weekly, *The African Concord*, to cover national, regional and other events in 1980. *The National Concord* was politically influential during Nigeria's Second Republic, from 1979 to 1983, as Abiola used the paper to protect the economic, religious, and political interests of the National Party of Nigeria, and to disseminate the party's ideals (Uche, 1989). In 1983, Alex Ibru, another businessman, and Stanley Macebuh, a journalist, started *The Guardian* to provide an independent opinion and balanced coverage of views (Bedu-Addo, 1997). Then in 1985, four journalists, Yakubu Mohammed, Dele Giwa, Dan Agbese and Ray Ekpu started an investigative news magazine, *Newswatch*, the first of its kind in Nigeria (Bedu-Addo, 1997). According to Ray Ekpu, the magazine was the creation of a "gang of disgruntled journalists who were far from satisfied with the existing state of things in the Nigerian press and who hoped through their new, independent magazine, they could contribute to the practice and growth of journalism in Nigeria" (quoted in Bedu-Addo, 1997, p. 3). The four owned 65 percent of the magazine, and four businessmen owned the remaining 35 percent. The *Newswatch* founders also pledged to refrain from participating in, accepting or running for political office. According to Bedu-Addo (1997), this was important as many Nigerian journalists and publishers have political ambitions, as the history of the Nigerian press has shown. This era witnessed a rise in newsmagazines like *Tell*, *TheNews*, and *The Week*, and *Tempo*.

Targeted at the middle and upper class, news magazines aimed at providing news in "a seductive and elegant style" at a cheaper rate so that people bought fewer daily newspapers (Olorunyomi, 1998, p. 60). The independent era of the Nigerian press also witnessed the entrance of well-educated and politically conscious reporters who were ready to take a more

activist role in journalism (Olorunyomi, 1998). They especially believed in creating debate, fighting corruption at all levels, and returning the country to non-military rule. These journalists often left news houses they worked for and started their own if the outlet was not critical enough of the government. For instance, *Tell* magazine was founded in 1991 by some journalists from *Newswatch* that felt the magazine was becoming too conservative and demure (Ibelema, 2003). Citing "an activist journalistic philosophy," the journalists decided to tell the news since others only watched it (Ibelema, 2003, p. 175). Nevertheless, the independent-era press faced some challenges.

In 1984, Buhari's government imprisoned Tunde Thompson and Nduka Irabor, two editors of *The Guardian*, for publishing falsehoods about an administrative reshuffle in the External Affairs ministry (Ogbondah, 1991). In 1986, *Newswatch*'s editor-in-chief, Dele Giwa, was killed by a letter bomb he received at home on October 19. In 1987, the magazine was banned for six months and his partners were arrested and jailed for "publishing reports of a government commission before it was made public" (Ogbondah, 1991, p. 111). In one week in April 1990, at least 25 journalists were arrested for reporting on an abortive coup. For the *National Concord*, the story was no different. Under the leadership of Doyin Abiola, its managing director and editor-in-chief, the paper was closed in 1992 for publishing a story Babangida found embarrassing (Ohadoma, 2004). Following the annulment of the June 12 elections, which its founder won, the paper was constantly targeted by the government. In fact, the paper was closed for two years between 1993 and 1996. Despite these, the activist philosophy was alive in various magazines and newspapers in Nigeria, and was useful in the fight against efforts by the military government to silence the press and the struggle for democracy in the 1990s (Collings, 2001). Indeed, the independent press era featured the "first self-actualizing, consistent and articulate surrogate parliament in the history of the subdued civil order in Nigeria" (Olorunyomi, 1998, p. 59). But the 1990s were difficult times for the Nigerian press (Collings, 2001).

The independent press, keeping with Nigeria's tradition of independent and persistent reporting, refused to provide the unquestioning support the military government expected of the mass media (Olorunyomi, 1998). Since a country's political and economic structures affect the media, like most Nigerians, the press was dissatisfied with military rule, increasing corruption and the burden of SAP conditionalities that failed to produce the expected change (Bourgault, 1998). Ibelema (2003) explains that any political situation will create a corresponding role for the press and a matching audience with certain expectations. Sometimes, journalistic orientations

determine whether the press will use conflictual or peaceful strategies to bring about change. By the 1990s, Nigerians were generally resentful of military rule, and the annulment of the June 12 elections only intensified this resentment (Collings, 2001).

> The annulment rubbed hard on three sensitivities: the political, the ethnic and the economic. Politically, there was a strong yearning for electoral democracy, resulting from a near-consensus that the military had overstayed and had, in any case, failed to fulfill its rationalization for seizing power. Nigeria's worsening economy, perhaps more than anything else, intensified disillusionment with military government. And then the ethnic factor, the increasingly vociferous complaint of Southerners that Northerners had presided over the federal government since independence. (Ibelema, 2003, p. 177)

These issues led to violent reactions and strikes across the country. Therefore, a press that wanted to carry the people along during the transition process had to reflect the political situation in the country. The press took on an adversarial tone helped by the fact that most print media was located in the region with the most anti-government actions—the south-west (Olukotun, 2002a). The press took on this role for several reasons. For one, the Nigerian press has a long history of advocacy and believes it is "a watchdog whose fundamental responsibilities include safeguarding public rights against governmental encroachment," exposing corruption, misadministration and other vices (Ogbondah, 1991, p. 121).

Secondly, though the government owned most of the broadcast media, it did not own the print media, and targeted the print media as a result (Ogbondah, 1997). The fact that the government controlled much of the broadcast media also made the press more trustworthy to Nigerians, who usually see the Nigerian press as "the people's parliament" in the absence of an elected one, and "the most effective channel to express their wishes and grievances" (Ogbondah, 1991, p. 121). As Dana Ott (n.d.) and Vicky Randall (1993) explain, information is crucial during the democratization process because people rely on the media to show them how to participate in the process. Most people will not meet and question politicians or examine the policies and participate in the debates that occur. Therefore, a trustworthy or reliable medium must become the people's eyes and ears, scrutinize government performances and report their findings (Graber, 2002). The Nigerian independent press did just that, and was vocal with its criticisms of the military governments of Babangida and Abacha. Ibelema's (2003) analysis of newspapers and magazines published in the 1990s shows that

the press was very "skeptical of the government's pronouncements regarding transition to democracy" (p. 183). Most stories constantly questioned the military's sincerity to hand over, constantly warned Nigerians of Babangida and Abacha's ploys to retain power and defied governmental orders to tow the line (Olukotun, 2002a). The generals responded with force.

Journalists and publishers were harassed, arrested, intimidated, and detained (Eribo, 2002; Faringer, 1991). News houses were firebombed, newsprint supply was shortened, and newspapers were banned and seized from vendors, distributors and readers (Ogbondah, 1997). From 1990 to 1997, the government closed 44 newspapers and magazines; 17 journalists were jailed and at least 20 others lived in exile (Collings, 2001). Some, like Tunde Oladepo, an editor of *The Guardian*, were killed. But journalists were not the only ones attacked. In 1993, security forces arrested four men for reading a photocopy of *TheNews*. In 1995, they arrested a newsvendor at a Lagos airport for transporting five thousand copies of *Tell*, *Tempo* and *TheNews* magazines. At the court hearing for the case, when the judge asked if the publications were banned or prohibited, the prosecutor said they were "simply not patriotic" (Collings, 2001, p. 48). Other times, security forces harassed, arrested and beat anyone found at a medium's premises, or anyone related to wanted journalists. When security forces could not find Dapo Olorunyomi, an editor of *TheNews*, they arrested his wife. Babangida and Abacha also instituted decrees to legalize their actions against the press (Ibelema, 2003). The Treasonable Offenses Decree of May 1993 imposed the death penalty on anyone whose speech or writing was disruptive to the rubric of the country. The Newspapers Decree No. 43 of 1993 also made it compulsory for newspapers to register with the government at the cost of $1,000 (about 100,000 naira then). Under Abacha, decrees 6, 7, and 8 of 1994 invalidated a court order to reopen proscribed newspapers and magazines, and for the government to pay damages to them. His government also placed a value-added tax on newspaper production, which caused increases in cover price and advertising rates. This laid the foundation for newspapers and magazines becoming an exclusive item for the rich. Faced with these challenges, journalists came up with a new strategy—guerilla journalism—to cover the transition process.

Guerilla journalism occurs when journalists operate underground to escape capture by government officials (Collings, 2001, Ibelema, 2003; Olukotun, 2002a). Also called underground journalism, guerilla journalism is not new as journalists and political activists in several countries including China, Poland, and the Philippines have used it to fight authoritarianism (Brodsgaard, 1981; Randall, 1993). The Chinese Democracy movement in the 1970s began as a *dazibao* (wall poster) movement in Beijing

(Brodsgaard, 1981). Members published journals underground and sold or posted them at the Democracy Wall on Sunday afternoons to raise people's political consciousness. In Poland, the opposition and nationalists worked through the underground press to sustain public discussion and opposition (Johnson, 1998). In Nigeria, various print journalists adopted this strategy to keep Nigerians informed on the actions of repressive governments dating from the colonial era (Idemili, 1978). When the military banned *Newswatch* in 1987, the owners simply started a soft-sell magazine, *Quality*, in its place that often brokered discussions on political and social issues (Ekpu, personal communication, October 30, 2003). The Nigerian press also used guerilla tactics to report the actions of the military government during the transition process in the 1990s. Some journalists started underground newspapers, magazines, and a radio station (Radio Kudirat) to oppose the government (Olukotun, 2002a). To keep Nigeria's democratization and Abiola's struggle alive, Doyin Abiola started a monthly newsletter that was sent to key members of several groups, including the Commonwealth, African Union, the United Nations, the Clinton administration and non-governmental agencies (Dare, 2006). According to Olatunji Dare (2006), Doyin Abiola believed Nigeria's struggle had to be kept alive, "not merely on the streets, but in the hearts and minds of influential actors spanning the entire political spectrum in Nigeria, as well as in the international community" (p. 2). Those who worked for or owned major newspapers and magazines also used guerilla tactics to avoid arrest and detention or printed tabloid versions to avoid seizure of their magazines and newspapers (Ibelema, 2003; Olukotun, 2002a).

The editorial staff of news magazines like *Tell*, *Tempo*, *Newswatch* and *TheNews* was constantly on the move to avoid arrest. Editorial staff often held editorial meetings at soccer matches, stadiums, theaters and other public but inconspicuous places (Collings, 2001; Ibelema, 2003; Olukotun, 2002a). Recounting his experiences, Babafemi Ojudu, publisher of *TheNew*s and *Tempo* magazines, always carried a packed bag, rarely lived at home, stayed with different friends and occasionally wore a disguise (Collings, 2001). But guerilla journalism was "carried further by new communication technologies" (Olukotun, 2002a, p. 318).

Minabere Ibelema (2003) says the presence of new communication technology (NCTs) counterbalanced military rule in Nigeria. Communication technology played a big role in making guerilla journalism effective in Nigeria in many ways, perhaps because domestic control of global communications is difficult, if not impossible (Bourgault, 1998; Olukotun, 2002a; O'Neil, 1998). By 1990, communication technologies like the Internet, cellular phones, personal computers, satellite and cable

television were present in Nigeria. Though not widely available (in fact, only the rich could afford cell phones and computers, and Internet services were only available in private cafes), these technologies brought Nigeria and Nigerian journalists into the information technology age. When problems began with the military in the 1990s, some Nigerian journalists used these technologies to write and send stories via email and fax, and even organize pro-democracy events with non-governmental organizations. Others moved around without detection, thereby avoiding arrest. These new communication technologies also helped Nigerian journalists and activists mobilize foreign support for a transition to democracy (O'Neil, 1998).

Ojudu boasted at a conference in Kenya that his cell phone and laptop computer helped him elude the police and keep his publications going (Collings, 2001). Probably the biggest effect was how communication technology produced demonstration effects—the process by which transition processes in one state influence the calculations of societal and state actors in another (O'Neil, 1998). The Internet "virtually erased the communication gap between Nigerians at home and those in the Diaspora," especially as many newspapers, magazines and journalists seized the opportunity to create web pages providing Nigerian news (Eribo & Albada, 2002, p. 124). Nigerians abroad were also able to garner international attention through the Internet. Through cyber space, they actively protested events in Nigeria (Tettey, 2001a). For "privileged journalists," Internet access empowered them to advance a free press system in Nigeria during military rule (Eribo & Albada, 2002, p. 126). Nigerians also got information through another communication technology—the videocassette recorder (VCR).

The advent of Nigerian video films in 1991 made it possible to distribute politically forbidden information under the guise of entertainment (Hayes, 2000). Unlike film, video is much more difficult for the government to control since government officials cannot go to every home and seize them (Williams, 1987). According to Boyd, Straubhaar and Lent (1989), VCRs and tapes can reach areas that the press and other media cannot reach. Widespread use of the VCR "can challenge the usual government control of television in most of the non-Western world by providing diversity and variety in entertainment" (Boyd, Straubhaar & Lent, 1989, p. 87). People are free to watch whatever they want with VCRs. These movies particularly focused on the great lengths people were going to make money, the lavish lifestyles of corrupt individuals, and the deplorable state of the nation. Nigerians were therefore reading, listening, and watching as the mass media provided them with stories that called for democratization. In this way, the Nigerian mass media helped initiate debate on government

policies, actions, and attitudes in a way that allowed issues to be discussed (Yusuf, 1999). By taking on an activist role, the Nigerian press not only set the public agenda but also pushed for social change (Shah, 1996). After all, "by discrediting the military, the press facilitated the rapid transition to civilian rule in 1999" in Nigeria (Ibelema, 2003, p. 197). Mass communication scholars have developed models and theories to explain the media's effects on the public (Larsosa, 1997). These include the agenda setting theory, media framing, play theory, uses and gratifications theory, and media system dependency theory (Baran & Davis, 1995). This study used Maxwell McComb and Donald Shaw's (1972) agenda setting theory.

Agenda setting theory posits that by constantly covering an issue, the mass media tell people what to think about (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Dearing and Rogers (1996) define agenda setting as "an ongoing competition among issue proponents to gain the attention of media professionals, the public and policy elites" (p. 2). For Weaver, Graber, McCombs and Eyal (1981), agenda setting is the media's ability to "influence the perceived salience of key political elements" (p. 5). Paletz (2002) defines agenda setting as the theory that journalists, by selecting and highlighting a few stories each day, determine which issues are treated as important in the news. Cook et al. (1983) define agenda setting as "the process by which problems become salient as political issues meriting the attention of the polity" (p. 17). Overall, most definitions of agenda setting deal with how issues become important in the news and for the public, and how and why people think about and categorize social issues (Roberts, Wanta & Dzwo, 2002). The basic hypothesis of agenda setting is that the way the news media covers issues cues the public regarding what issues are important, and which are not, which in turn influences governmental policies (Wanta, 1997). As Siegel (1983) puts it, this is an important issue to understand in a study like this because "The media are by far the most important information source about politics for the general population" (p. 15).

By selecting and emphasizing certain issues and events in the news, and downplaying or dropping others, the mass media exert some influence (Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1964). The agenda setting process sometimes begins at the media level, where an issue or event becomes salient (Dearing & Rogers, 1996). Media agenda setting studies mainly examine the prominent issues and events on the media agenda, and how news organizations and personnel select and present certain issues over others (Weaver, Graber, McCombs, & Eyal, 1981). Here, the media is the main dependent variable of a study (Rogers, Dearing & Bregman, 1993). Dominic Larsorsa (1997) defines the media agenda as the "sociological" product of the "psychological processes of individual media practitioners" (p. 155). Studying the media

agenda is important because in providing the context that makes problems "politically relevant," the media "gives people reasons for taking sides and converts the problem into a serious political issue" (Purvis, 2001, p. 81). If an event receives a lot of media attention, the public believes it is important, and public opinion, sometimes policy, is affected. Studies have found a connection between the media agenda and what people think about. For example, Hetherington's (1996) study on the media's influence showed that constant negative images of the economy during George Bush Sr.'s reign affected voters' perception of him as a political candidate. The media were influential in "establishing public priorities" (Purvis, 2001, p. 77).

However, until the 1980s, agenda setting research had "consistently accepted the media agenda as a given, without considering the process by which the agenda" was built (Carragee, Rosenblatt & Michaud, 1987, p. 43; Rogers, Dearing & Bregman, 1993). Scholars rarely questioned how or who built the media agenda. Researchers believe this is an important area to examine in the agenda setting process, as the media are the major source of information, particularly in democratic societies (Lasorsa, 1997). McLeod, Becker and Byrnes (1974) point out that the media agenda's effect on the public agenda is dependent on certain issues. For instance, if the media's credibility is low or untrustworthy in a person's opinion, the media agenda will not affect the public agenda.

Larsorsa (1997) argues that to understand how media agenda setting works, and its political importance to society, it is important to understand how the psychological activities of reporters and editors create the media agenda. In other words, how the media agenda is built. People are unaware that news "is constructed through a constantly changing set of mores and adjustments as journalists, politicians and people seek their own ends through an often imperfect exchange of information" (Bennett, 2003, p. 10). People are susceptible to the subjective goals and interpretations of people, including journalists, who have their own agenda. News routines, values and procedures like deadlines and finding competent sources also limit the number of issues and events on the media agenda, as well as the depth of discourse that could occur (Bennett, 2003; Kosicki, 1993). Purvis (2001) argues that agenda setting research should examine how news organizations and journalists select news stories because those within the media exercise considerable power. Since the relative importance the media give an issue determines how important the audience will think the issue is, it is important to know who sets the media agenda and how. This is known as agenda building.

Agenda building "refers to the sources' interactions with gatekeepers, a give-and-take process in which sources seek to get their information

published and the press seeks to get that information from independent sources" (Ohl, Pincus, Rimmer & Harrison, 1995, p. 91). For Jablonski and Daniele (1998), agenda building examines the relationship between the media and political leaders. Rogers and Dearing (1988) also point out that various factors affect the process by which political leaders' policy agendas are created or maintained. Available research indicates that the media agenda building process sometimes involves an interdependent relationship between policy makers and the media because they rely on each other for information. However, policy makers are not the only influences on agenda building. Studies in the United States indicate that other media, government officials and social and interest groups can determine what issues appear and rise on the media agenda. Other times, a trigger event will place an issue on the media agenda (Cobb & Elder, 1972). For example, the death of basketballer Len Bias from cocaine overdose in 1986 heightened media coverage of drug abuse in the United States. Prior to this, the issue was not prominent on the media agenda. Other influences include powerful community groups that subtly influence the media agenda, the relationship between news professionals and their major sources of information, advertisers, entertainers, public relations staff, the president (in the United States) and other media (inter-media) (Ball-Rokeach, 1985; Danielian & Reese, 1988; Dearing & Rogers, 1996; Ghorpade, 1986; Larsorsa & Wanta, 1990; Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1964; Rogers, Dearing & Chang, 1991). The relationship between media practitioners and these actors is influenced in various ways.

Thomas Qualter (1989) notes that sometimes, sources try to distract the public by giving journalists information on other issues. Lasorsa and Wanta's (1990) study on inter-media influence found that regardless of differences in size, audiences or influence, news organizations agree on the issues and events that appear on the media agenda, but present them differently to get different reactions from their audiences. More importantly, those who decide what issues get on the media agenda are in powerful positions as gatekeepers (Purvis, 2001). Gatekeepers could be individuals or groups in the mass communication chain that are involved in making or influencing the decisions about what gets covered, how it is covered and what is eventually publicized.

To understand how the media agenda is built, researchers suggest examining the political, socio-cultural, and economic contexts of a given society, of which the press is a part (Campbell, 1996; Ibelema, 2003; Raichev, 2002). Rogers and Dearing (1988) also recommend conducting studies on who sets the media agenda in developing countries, as the media often becomes a part of the events that are covered, especially during

political and economic crises. When such crises occur, the media not only cover themselves, but also "become actors in the drama and worthy of coverage themselves" (Zoch, 2001, p. 197). With this in mind, this study postulated that Nigerian journalists were not unaffected by the Nigerian environment in the 1990s. I wanted to see how they created news agendas in the 1990s, and what affected their choices.

Using the media agenda building part of the agenda setting theory also provided a methodology for conducting this study. To measure the media agenda, scholars often use content analysis to determine how much coverage an issue or event received, or how salient an issue was in a given period (Dearing & Rogers, 1996). Media content is operationalized as "the number of some countable unit like the number of story column inches in a set of newspapers, number of front-page stories an issue receives, or the number of news stories about an issue during a year of TV newscasts" (Dearing & Rogers, 1996, p. 35). Several studies have used content analysis to determine how often the event or issue of interest was presented. However, the contents of newspapers and magazines cannot tell a researcher how issues and events are selected for coverage. Therefore, I interviewed Nigerian journalists to get their perspectives on the process by which issues and events of political change were selected and reported instead. This would further explain the media agenda building process.

The findings of this study contributes to the agenda-setting theory by enhancing scholars' understanding of how issues get on the press agenda in Nigeria, and the socio-cultural, political and economic structures that affect how the news agenda is set in Nigeria. Journalistic choices related to news coverage reflect socio-cultural values, the type of training and education they received, media ownership, the economic and political structure (authoritarian, capitalist, communist, etc), and the particular values fostered by the news organization (Ibelema, 2003). This is because a medium's character in practice is deeply embedded in its host society (Randall, 1993). Therefore, by examining how the press constructed its agenda in Nigeria, using interviews, one can understand the features unique to the Nigerian press. One can also understand how these features supported or constrained their roles during the democratization process in the 1990s. Knowing a news organization's ideology could further contribute and extend the agenda-setting theory's applicability. The next chapter discusses the methods used for data collection.

Overall, the literature indicates that after 29 years of military rule, demilitarization was necessary and transitions to democracy, or democratization, were the catch phrase in the 1990s. Nigeria needed democracy since military rule failed to make the country politically, socially

and economically viable by the end of the 1980s. Understanding this need, Generals Babangida and Abacha created transition programs that would democratize the nation. Unfortunately, they created programs that would keep them in power. Realizing this, Nigerians organized and formed pro-democracy groups and pushed for swift political change and the end of military rule. A key player was the Nigerian press, which took on a watchdog, adversarial role to inform Nigerians of the transition programs in the 1990s. However, the generals were displeased with the defiant stance of the press, and used various tactics to repress them. The press adapted to the situation by using guerilla tactics to find and publish information on the democratization process.

Chapter Four

Research Methodology

The study used a qualitative method, interviews, to gather data and answer the research questions. Qualitative methods allow a researcher to study issues in depth and detail to gain understanding (Keyton, 2001).

This study examined the role the Nigerian press and communication technology played in Nigeria's democratization in the 1990s. To add to the literature of a rarely studied area in mass communication, the study examined how Nigerian journalists provided information on the transition programs of Generals Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha, and how they used communication technology to keep Nigerians abreast of events in the 1990s. Nigerian journalists who worked for newspapers and magazines from 1990 to 1999 participated in the study. The study asked the following questions:

> RQ1: What was the Nigerian press' agenda in the 1990s regarding Nigeria's democratization?
>
> RQ2: What challenges did Nigerian print journalists face during the democratization process in the 1990s?
>
> RQ3: What role did new communication technology play in Nigeria's democratization in the 1990s?
>
> RQ4: What challenges did Nigerian journalists face in using new communication technology?

RATIONALE FOR RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research produces findings "not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 11). According to Patton (1990), qualitative methods are "ways of finding out what people do, know, think, and feel by observing, interviewing and analyzing documents" (p. 94). Qualitative methods are also used to explore areas about which little is known. Data can be collected using qualitative methods in three ways—in-depth, open-ended interviews, direct observations and written documents. In-depth, open-ended interviews were used to gather information here as the event of interest, Nigeria's democratization, occurred over a decade ago.

Also called long or face-to-face interviewing, in-depth interviews are a major tool in research (Frey, Botan, Friedman & Kreps, 1991). The aim is to learn more about people, their experiences and perspectives on events, in their own words. Interviews allow a researcher to understand people's perspectives, "to retrieve experiences from the past, to gain expert insight or information, to obtain descriptions of events or scenes that are normally unavailable . . . or to understand a sensitive or intimate relationship, or to analyze certain kinds of discourse" (Lindlof, 1995, p. 5).

The purpose of in-depth, open-ended interview methods is to allow the researcher know and understand other people's perceptions (Patton, 1990). Other purposes include testing hypotheses, learning how people communicate in their own environments, and testing what other scholars have found (Lindlof, 1995). Interviews generate direct quotations, which "are a basic source of raw data in qualitative inquiry, revealing respondents' depth of emotion, the ways they have organized their world, their thoughts about what is happening, their experiences, and their basic perceptions" (Patton, 1990, p. 24). Interviews allow a researcher to question participants personally. Since interviews are interactive, the interviewer and the interviewee establish a relationship, which encourages the respondents to hopefully provide full and accurate information (Lindlof, 1995). However, it is necessary to remember that interviewees present selective perceptions. There are also limits to the amount of information interviews provide.

Regardless, interviews provide rich data and are the "principal alternative to observation" since they allow the researcher to learn about events he or she could not observe directly (Lindlof, 1995, p. 163). However, a researcher should keep his or her eyes open during the interview to be able to describe the setting, the participants and their perspectives to readers (Patton, 1990). In-depth interviews were appropriate for this study as they allowed the researcher to gather information on events she did not witness.

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

Sample Selection

The sample for the interviews consisted of journalists (editors and reporters) who worked in Lagos state from 1990—1999. Unfortunately, I could not use a sampling frame, a "list of the available population from which participants are selected," to find participants in Lagos (Keyton, 2006, p. G-10). The Nigerian Union of Journalists had a list I could use, but I could not identify who worked for member newspapers and magazines during the period of interest. Also, I could not determine whether the people listed worked in Lagos or some where else as newshouses send their reporters to other states but list them as part of the staff at headquarters. Some magazines publish a list of reporters and editors in each edition, but these are not updated regularly. For newspapers, most only publish the names of the publisher, editors and stockholders. So I devised two sampling methods to find participants.

The first sampling method involved working with the managing editors of the selected newspapers and magazines to get an inclusive/exclusive sample. This sample involved selecting five journalists who worked or had worked for at least 10 years with national newspapers and magazines. The second method involved using a network sample, whereby the researcher used reports in published literature to select five journalists who were actually on the run, threatened and/or arrested and jailed during the democratization process. Literature on guerilla journalism in the 1990s indicates such people used communication technology more since they practiced journalism on the run. This mixed sample was important as some journalists have insights from being on the run and others have insights to offer from going to work as usual. In all, the sample size for the interviews was 10 journalists. This was a small sample, but

> The depth and detail of qualitative methods typically derive from a small number of case studies, too small for confident generalizations. Case studies become particularly useful where one needs to understand some special people, particular problem or unique situation in great depth, and where one can identify cases rich in information—rich in the sense that a great deal can be learned from a few exemplars of the phenomenon in question. (Patton, 1990, p. 53–54)

Data Collection

Since it was very expensive to interview journalists via telephone from the United States, I traveled to Lagos and collected data from August to

December, 2003. Selected participants were contacted three weeks after I arrived in Lagos. An interview date was set with each person. I used a moderately structured interview guide to create questions. The guide consisted primarily of open-ended questions for each participant to ensure the study's reliability, and was flexible enough for follow-up questions (Dominick & Wimmer, 1983; Lindlof, 1995; Patton, 1990). An interview guide is the most flexible means of getting information as it lends itself easily to questioning in greater depth and detail. Interviews were conducted in English and questions sought to generate knowledge about the journalist's professional background, beliefs regarding journalism's role in Nigeria, experiences under military rule, use of communication technology, access to communication technology and challenges faced using communication technology. I began the interview by discussing the purpose of the study and allowing the participants to ask any questions they had. The interview began with background questions, to break the ice and ease participants into the discussion (Stacks & Hocking, 1992). The interviews took about one to two hours, depending on how much information a participant was willing to share. Three participants spent over three hours sharing their experiences though. I taped the interviews with a tape recorder to ensure I got direct quotations and reduced the chance of error.

I then transcribed and analyzed the data I gathered using the themes that arose from the data. I did not find previous research with themes I could use. It is not always possible, particularly in exploratory studies, to find previous research that generates themes suitable to the study (Couch, 1987). I also used inductive analysis. In inductive analysis, "the patterns, themes and categories of analysis come from the data; they emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis" (Patton, 1990, p. 390). I also looked for opposing and thematic hierarchies in the transcripts to find out how the experiences of the participants differed and how they were similar. Once I was done, I brought the data together to answer the research questions.

In describing their experiences, the participants repeated certain words and phrases. Such phrases and words became themes because almost every participant used them. Categorizing and analyzing the data using such themes made analysis simpler.

In the next chapter, the findings are discussed in detail.

Chapter Five
Findings and Discussion

The economic, socio-cultural and political factors of any society influence the press. The ideology of any news organization also influences the journalists that work for it. These factors in turn are reflected in news writing and production. Therefore, it was important to determine the factors that affect Nigerian journalists, and how they contributed to agenda building in the 1990s. As a participant, Kunle Ajibade, put it, "we've got to look at all these really to appreciate, to appreciate where the journalist is coming from, where he's functioning and where he is likely heading to." To learn the unique factors influencing the Nigerian press, I talked to 10 journalists. Their responses showed the above factors do influence news coverage and production in Nigeria.

THE PARTICIPANTS

The sample consisted of nine men and one woman. All had at least 12 years' experience in the Nigerian media. They all had university degrees. Seven of them had journalism degrees. The others had degrees in English and literature. Two participants also had law degrees, and one had a doctorate in theatre arts. Some participants had worked or schooled in other countries, including the United States and the United Kingdom, but all had traveled extensively. At the time of the interviews, eight participants held senior positions in their news organizations, owned or co-owned the news organization. The participants consented to having their names used in the study.

Reuben Abati is the chairman of *The Guardian*'s editorial board. He holds degrees, including a doctorate, in journalism, law and theatre arts. Abati joined *The Guardian* late 1991. He has worked with various news organizations, including the *Los Angeles Times*. His journey into journalism

began as a distraction. "Journalism was something I considered cheap and easy. I thought my main orientation was to be a scholar. I was brought up to look down on journalism because it's like journalism is a low voltage engagement and scholarship was it" (personal communication, October 31, 2003). So he taught full-time. But he soon became "disillusioned. The students were not interested, the system itself was becoming too political and the pay was dangerously poor." He resigned and joined the editorial board of *The Guardian*. He has no regrets and describes journalism as a "big classroom that provides me an opportunity to reach a larger audience and I think I like the glamour of being a journalist."

Kunle Ajibade is an editor and co-founder of *TheNews* magazine. He has degrees, including a masters, in English and literature. He was a copywriter for an advertising agency before entering journalism in 1986. "Even though I was enjoying myself in advertising, I then had a number of friends in journalism who had the freedom to wear what I am wearing now (casual shirt and trousers)" (personal communication, November 11, 2003). He thought there "was something else I wanted to do and that was journalism." He started by writing literary reviews for newspapers before joining the *African Concord*. After he and some colleagues refused to apologize to Babangida for a story in 1992, he resigned and co-founded *TheNews* with other journalists. In 1995, Ajibade was arrested and charged for plotting a coup. He was jailed for life, and released when Abacha died in 1998.

Soji Akinrinade is the deputy editor-in-chief and a director at *Newswatch*. He has degrees, including a masters, in journalism from the United States and United Kingdom. According to him, his foray into journalism "just happened, maybe accidentally. It's not something I planned because I always wanted to be a lawyer" (personal communication, November 4, 2003). But he developed an interest in journalism and writing in secondary school. He has worked with various newspapers and magazines in Nigeria, and presently runs *Newswatch*'s London bureau and online version.

Ray Ekpu is the chief executive officer of *Newswatch*. He has degrees, including a masters, in journalism. He decided at an early age that he wanted to be a journalist "even though I didn't know fully what it was to be a journalist. I think I was just excited by the grandiloquence of the language that people like Nnamdi Azikiwe were using in those times" (personal communication, October 30, 2003). He developed his interest in secondary school where he wrote news stories on school events as "Penman Remy." Professionally, he has worked in various Nigerian newspapers since 1974. He and three colleagues founded *Newswatch* in 1984.

Nosa Igiebor is the editor-in-chief and co-founder of *Tell* magazine. He has a degree in journalism. He wanted to be an economist but could

not get admission to study economics at the university. Math was required. "I've never seen a subject I hated as much. I hated math and because I hated it that meant I couldn't pass the O level math" (personal communication, November 13, 2003). He chose journalism instead since he had written articles for various publications and "loved reading newspapers and magazines." His journalism career started in television. But since he "wanted a serious career in journalism," he switched to print media in 1980. He worked with a few newspapers and magazines before he and a few colleagues started *Tell* magazine in 1990.

Odia Ofeimun is a poet, author and sometimes, a journalist. He has degrees in English and literature, and entered journalism "out of necessity" (personal communication, November 12, 2003). When his parents could not pay for his education, he dropped out. After "bumming around as an unemployed for a while, I got a job at a local newspaper as a reporter." This was in 1968. Since then, he has worked on and off in a few publications. He was an active member of *The Guardian*'s editorial board until he moved to Britain. He returned to Nigeria when Babangida annulled the June 12 elections in 1993. "My reason for remaining in Britain simply became hollow. Honestly, I simply felt my being in Europe was untenable at a time when so much was going to be happening at home." He returned to Nigeria and joined *TheNews* because it was "run by fairly bold and intrepid young men who generally wanted anybody who could hit Abacha in the face." He joined the magazine as chairman of its editorial board.

Comfort Obi is the editor-in-chief and publisher of *The Source*, a newsmagazine in Lagos state. She holds a degree in English and like Ofeimun, her foray into journalism was out of "hardship initially. I was in school; my parents were teachers, having a hard time and nothing much as pocket money" (personal communication, November 17, 2003). Her opportunity to make money came when she discovered her roommate was paid when her stories were published in a newspaper. "I read her own and I felt mine was better so I sent my own and they published it and they started paying me. So, I kept writing every week and that's how I got into journalism." Obi worked for a few newspapers before joining the editorial team of *The Sunday Magazine* (TSM), whose publisher Christine Anyanwu, was arrested and jailed in 1995 for conspiring to plot a coup.

Olu Ojewale is an associate editor at *Newswatch* (he moved to *Tell* after this study was conducted). His degree is in mass communication from a journalism college in London. He got into journalism because he likes to "communicate" (personal communication, October 30, 2003). And, "I like human rights. I always see the agony in people's faces and it dawned earlier that the only way I can contribute in alleviating those problems is

through communication, and the only means available is journalism." He worked primarily with government publications before joining *Newswatch* in 1990.

Bayo Onanuga is the managing director, editor-in-chief and co-founder of *TheNews* magazine. His degree is in mass communication, and he has worked in public relations, electronic and print media. Initially, he did not want to practice journalism, even though he had a degree in it. He wanted to work in foreign affairs. "But well, maybe fate had its own role to play. I was not given a place in the foreign affairs ministry, and I said, ah, ah, I was trained as a journalist, so let me practice my profession" (personal communication, October 29, 2003). In 1992, he was asked to apologize to General Babangida for a story published in the *African Concord* magazine. He refused and resigned instead. He and other colleagues that resigned their positions started *TheNews* in 1993. Bayo Onanuga has been a journalist since 1982.

Kingsley Osadulor is the deputy managing director and deputy editor-in-chief of *The Guardian*. He has degrees in mass communication and law. He is also a practicing lawyer. He got into journalism as a child participating in children's shows on radio. "Subsequently the interest blossomed to public affairs and it was inevitable that one then would pursue a course in journalism" (personal communication, November 12, 2003). He joined *The Guardian* as a reporter/researcher in 1985 and has been with the paper ever since.

All the participants said they enjoyed their work and have had good, sometimes bad, experiences in their careers.

BUILDING A PRESS AGENDA IN THE 1990S

To answer the first research question—What was the Nigerian press' agenda in the 1990s regarding Nigeria's democratization?—and to understand how that agenda was built, I asked the participants to discuss what they thought the Nigerian press' agenda was in the 1990s. The participants said the agenda was the end of military rule. The press believed "military rule should end and then let us have civil politics," said Osadulor. For Ray Ekpu, "It was to get the military out of office and to ensure that we had . . . I wouldn't say democracy, I would say an elected civilian government." The participants said they created the agenda based on several factors. One was the knowledge that military rule was no longer fashionable on the global scene. Many countries were democratizing and democracy was tied to international relations. Secondly, the military had failed to correct a number of problems in Nigeria.

> Ray Ekpu:
> Perhaps if they had been successful in delivering the goods, in improving the public welfare, maybe Nigerians would have thought differently about asking the politicians to come . . . And they [military] had stayed for too long, and Nigerians are freedom-loving people and they were saying well, we haven't gotten the goodies that we expected we would get and we haven't gotten the freedom.

The military had proven to be as corrupt and problematic as the politicians they removed from office. As a result, Nigerians wanted an end to military rule. The participants said the press had to reflect this feeling in its coverage and agenda. As Kingsley Osadulor put it, "that wasn't the time for any news medium to try to impose some other agenda on the readers." Stories that contributed to this agenda appeared frequently as a result. The publications presented the agenda by covering events and issues that allowed Nigerians to discuss and debate an end to military rule, and democracy as a viable option. They also covered democratization processes in other countries, particularly African ones. Abati added that the press provided leadership and reflected the wishes of the Nigerian people.

He explained that the press pushed for democracy because it was "interested in the rule of the people, the people being empowered." Some participants said creating such an agenda was also the press' responsibility. As Odia Ofeimun explained,

> You don't have political movements in Nigeria that are consistent or actually allowed to remain consistent. If people, if organized groups existed or are actually allowed to exist in a country and the sharing and disseminating of opinions; if the way they articulate their positions is a free flowing affair, the press would have less need to set agendas. The Nigerian media has had to play the role of political party, trade union, ombudsman and name it. Whatever is supposed to cleanse society and make it better, the press has taken on.

I then asked the participants to explain their news organization's ideology and the story selection process to understand how their news ideologies contributed to the agenda building process. In other words, how did the agenda end up in the publications?

The participants said they judged all events and issues using the basic news values of journalism—timeliness, impact, prominence, proximity, singularity, conflict and oddity. Stories also had to be factual, topical, and

relevant to the publication and its audience, objective, well written and balanced to appear in the publications. News organizations examined events using these values and selected stories if they contributed to the agenda. Stories selected at *The Guardian* had to meet the organization's mission statement. Reuben Abati, described the mission statement as the newspaper's conscience. "The motto is conscience nurtured by truth," and it ensures stories uphold the "values of equity, of justice, of truth." *The Guardian* also contextualized its stories so readers got a deeper understanding of the event and issues presented. Other criteria included:

> Bayo Onanuga:
> Whether it's factual, whether it has also been corroborated; are we sure this story is correct? . . . Perhaps most important is that we have to look at the market. How will the market accept this story? How will it react to the story? Will this one appeal to our readers? Because if you don't look at that, and you're just publishing stories as a social service, before you know it you'll have to close shop and go home.

A few participants added that getting their publication sold was an important factor to consider in selecting stories as they were running businesses. Since Nigerians wanted an end to military rule, Osadulor said any news organization that presented a contrary agenda would definitely "have lost out of the marketplace." One had to consider the marketplace because as Nosa Igiebor put it:

> You cannot ignore the readers who are the consumers of your product, in this case our magazine. I mean, yes, our perception of what they will consider as a lead story or a good story, or what they want to read of course helps us to decide what story we do.

The press needed Nigerians to end military rule, and had to consider their interests in their coverage. However, allowing the audience to define the news sometimes caused ethical concerns because Nigerians "seem to like a lot of scandal," said Ray Ekpu. He said however that the Nigerian audience was no different from other audiences in the world as "all human beings love scandal; they like to hear what has happened to the other person, whether it's something good or something bad." Others added:

> Bayo Onanuga:
> What I find in Nigeria is that a story must sufficiently shock Nigerians for them to say they want to buy it. It must be maybe very hot

> stories, something strange to them that can this happen in Nigeria or something like that. You publish a story—oh, somebody has stolen five million naira—in Nigeria they say the editor is crazy. Five million naira, when people are stealing billions of naira?
>
> Comfort Obi:
> Nigerians want to read tragedies, bad stories, disasters, stories of somebody being pulled down; stories of armed robbers, stories of corruption, scandals basically. You go out of your way to look at what people are suffering, sufferings in the land, maybe bad roads and all that, and they look at it and say it will not sell. Even vendors will tell you, "madam, this your story . . . It's a good story, but nobody will buy it."

Nigerians, in their view, often want only negative information on anyone they do not support. This corresponds with Anokwa and Salwen's (1988) finding that the public could set the media agenda. One might argue here that publications that constantly portrayed the military negatively got higher readership than those that presented a balanced or pro-government view in the 1990s. Not all participants believed they had to lower standards to help Nigerians imbibe the agenda in the 1990s though. To ensure Nigerians received balanced and accurate information therefore, some news organizations used their mission statement, in-house rules and target audience to guide how they selected and published news stories. As Abati explained,

> This is a newspaper that does not scream. This is not a paper for vulcanizers, for mechanics, for artisans, you know, for ordinary people. This is a newspaper of record. This is a newspaper for policy makers, either local or international. And that is our aspiration, to produce a newspaper that will be read by the policy makers and the intelligentsia. In other words, our primary target is the upper class and the middle class. So in treating issues, we think of what it is that that particular class that we have defined, the target audience, will be able to live with. So the paper does not scream because we believe there's no issue that is so earth shaking that a newspaper should carry a banner about.
>
> Ray Ekpu:
> *Newswatch* is an up market publication that appeals to the intellect. It doesn't pander to low taste. We expect that people who are the

> core readership are those who are educated, possibly people who have a college degree, university degree or who have worked for some years; people who have some understanding of public affairs, who are interested in what is happening to their country, who worry about the economy, politics and the environment and science. We don't want to make money at all costs.

It is also important to add that the process of selecting the stories that went into the publications differed somewhat in the newspapers and newsmagazines. The newsmagazines used a similar system of story selection. The process involved an editorial meeting where the editorial staff met and debated the merits and demerits of ideas presented. Selected ideas were then assigned to reporters and research teams. Cover stories were selected and assigned at another editorial meeting. According to Ray Ekpu, this was a "good way of managing the news because it brings the wisdom of so many people into the decision making process, rather than for one who has risen to become editor-in-chief saying ah, this must go." At *The Guardian*, the process was more individualized, but based on in-house rules. The process changed somewhat when some organizations adopted guerilla journalism. From their responses, their news organization's ideology influenced their news ideology to an extent and sometimes helped them draw the line between objectivity and subjectivity in Nigerian journalism. If a news organization wanted factual, balanced, well-researched stories, the participant said they defined news events along those lines in the 1990s. A balanced story is one that presents both sides of an issue, especially controversial ones. Apparently, the medium's character affected the journalists as they relied on their news organization's ideology to determine what to publish and how to publish.

Next, I asked the participants to discuss what they believed their role was in Nigeria, and how that belief affected the agenda building process in the 1990s. Their educational backgrounds seemed to affect their definition of a journalist's role in Nigeria.

Those with journalism or mass communication degrees said the press' chief role was to inform, entertain and educate, while those with non-journalism degrees said the press' main role was a watchdog one. For Comfort Obi "the main role of the journalist is to keep the government on its toes, point out the ills of society, condemn the government where it has done wrong, commend where they find the government has done well." A Nigerian journalist's role goes beyond this too. According to Kunle Ajibade,

> The role of the journalist in Nigeria is the role allotted to it in the constitution. There is a section of the constitution that spells out the obligations and duties of journalists. What is that role? You see, when the constitution makes you what it calls the fourth estate of the realm—the first estate is the executive, the second is the legislature, the third is the judiciary and the fourth, it says the fourth is the press because it is the press that will call these three other branches to proper accounting.

The journalist was the "voice of the voiceless" and had to "protect the people against the excesses of the forces in power and authority," according to Abati. All the participants agreed that the Nigerian press had a watchdog role to perform mainly because the press had played that role for centuries. As Abati explained,

> The mission of the Nigerian journalist has not changed in terms of defending the people, in terms of speaking for the people. In terms of acting as the mirror for the society; in terms of holding down the rulers to face principles, in terms of reminding both civil society and government of the importance of fundamental human rights, the rule of law and the values of justice and equity. And this is why if you look at the tenure of Nigerian journalism, it's been largely committed to advocacy. It's also been largely an adversarial press.

Nosa Igiebor added that Nigerian journalists represent "fortunately or unfortunately, the only effective opposition to the government in power, either under a military regime or under a civilian government like we have now." The responses show that a Nigerian journalist's role is a broad one that goes beyond informing, entertaining and educating the audience on issues. The Nigerian press serves as government's opposition where none exists, sets the agenda and speaks for the people. For Igiebor, being the opposition is

> Worrying because sometimes you have to define, you need to establish where journalism ends and politics begins. Because if journalists and the media are serving as the bulwark against the ruling government, the ruling party, playing the role of political opposition, are we not vying into the realm of politics, pure politics as it were? Where does journalism end and politics begin?

Some participants said certain factors and situations sometimes defined the roles they played in the 1990s. These factors and situations often challenged their roles.

CHALLENGES OF NIGERIAN JOURNALISM

Type of Government

The commonest challenge discussed was the Nigerian military government. As Peter O'Neil (1998) noted, the type of government in place during democratization affects the role the press will play. The participants said military rule in Nigeria was a major challenge because it greatly affected their role. According to Comfort Obi, journalists were the "first targets of every military regime in Nigeria. They clamp down on us. Then the second is the national assembly and then the constitution." The military killed, arrested and jailed journalists, and even closed news organizations for long periods. This created an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty in Nigerian journalism. The military also controlled the press indirectly through newsprint and equipment subsidies and cooptation. The participants did not like military rule and called it "an aberration."

> Bayo Onanuga:
> Military rule, as people say, is an aberration. I don't think any good society deserves military rule anymore. It's not good because under the military, the first thing that suffers is the rule of law. In fact, they will tell you they are suspending the constitution. So that means they can do anything, they can undo anything. So, for us journalists, we can better operate if we are working under a government that believes in the rule of law. Military rule is not in our best interest.

> Reuben Abati:
> Under the military, this was a very difficult country. The first thing that was suspended was Chapter 4, dealing with human rights. The soldiers appropriated the right to determine the rights of other Nigerians. Of course, there was corruption; questions could not be asked because they were not accountable to anyone. And of course, the Nigerian press, reflecting the wishes of the Nigerian people, was opposed to this orientation. This is well illustrated by the kind of leadership the press provided between 1993 and 1999 when the general orientation was to say look, these soldiers, they've been here for too long.

> Olu Ojewale:
> Military rule was generally autocratic, dictatorial and an aberration. It has no true reflection on the people because they do their own things their own way, not minding whether the generality of the public suffer a lot. So, we can't take our fate in our hands with the military.

> Ray Ekpu:
> Military rule, I've always felt that it's emm . . . no matter how benevolent it is, it's unacceptable because of the nature of the work I do. You are bound to be inquisitive, you're bound to query, you're bound to ask questions, you're bound to query what you don't like. Military rule objects to that. It does not accept any of that. So it is difficult for a journalist to fit into a system that says oh, you can't say anything, oh you can't do anything, oh you can't say this is wrong. That is antithetical to journalism practice itself.

The actions of the military against the press meant some news organizations had to redefine their role somewhat. According to Ekpu, performing his role as a journalist during military rule was like "walking a tight rope. You weigh your options. You try to tread the middle path without giving up the fundamental principles." Others like Igiebor became "more emboldened. It served as a motivation for us to say no, this attempt to intimidate the media will not be acceptable to us. We'll do our jobs as journalists." For Abati, the press' role in the 1990s "began from the point of view of opposing the military—Babangida, Abacha, Abubakar. Faced with the wrath, the failures of the military over a period of over 20 years, democracy became like an alternative that the people wanted by all means."

ENVIRONMENTAL PRESSURES

Some participants said the Nigerian environment was a challenge. The environment included political and socio-cultural factors such as lack of social infrastructure (good roads, electricity and communication facilities), ethnocentrism, poor education and training facilities and access to information. The participants constantly decried the quality of journalists working in newsrooms today, but said that reflected the quality of Nigeria's educational system itself.

> Kingsley Osadulor:
> The infrastructural inadequacies in the environment ensure that you have to provide your infrastructure, most of your infrastructure,

yourself. So we provide our own power and rely on public supply when it is available. There's also the problem of general insecurity in the land. Your reporters are on the road, your editors, your principal officers; everybody is exposed to the hazards of living in a particularly difficult environment such as Nigeria in terms of security.

Reuben Abati:
I find that ethnicity is a major determining factor in Nigerian politics whereby newspaper houses have ethnic orientations. Journalists also have ethnic orientations and that limits their capacity to look at issues objectively.

Odia Ofeimun:
Most of the people who go into "newspapering" as journalists or editors or even newspaper owners are not properly educated for their roles and the system of reeducation for journalists is virtually non-existent in Nigeria. A journalist leaves the university and enters the profession. For the next 15 years, he attends no course, no fellowship, nothing. But he's still working. Therefore, even the need and the wish to attempt to rise to that level is completely removed by the environment in which they operate. Oh, the ignorance you will find in many newsrooms is gulling.

Nosa Igiebor:
The greatest problem we have in this profession, I believe, is the lack of access to information. That's a big hindrance for the profession, for journalists, in trying to perform, to do their jobs. Journalists are accused on the one hand of being sloppy in reporting stories, not getting the facts right and all that. But how will they get the facts right when they don't have access to this information, to these facts? Till today, even rudimentary decisions of the government are filed away, are put away in secret files and somebody tells you, oh no, no, no, we can't tell you.

Comfort Obi:
The secrecy in government. I cannot pick up the phone for example that I want to confirm something and I get through and talk. There's so much bureaucracy. They'll never talk to you, they'll never really answer your questions. A Nigerian minister or a Nigerian top politician, somebody high up like that in government will prefer talking to a foreign journalist than a Nigerian journalist. There's no . . . , we don't have enough access to information.

The environment created by the military also made journalism unattractive to possible journalists in the 1990s.

THE NIGERIAN PUBLIC

Interestingly, some participants thought the Nigerian public was a challenge and sometimes, a blessing. The Nigerian public, in the participants' view, did not understand their role in connection with the press. If the news did not mesh with the public's perception of an event, they criticized the press. The Nigerian public also tended to spend more on soft sell publications. Onanuga said it was probably because "they just don't want to be informed. They're looking for gossip, they're looking for stories that will not help them in any way to achieve anything." Other problems with the public were:

> Bayo Onanuga:
> The members of the public still don't see that they have a role to collaborate with the media. You're doing a story, you need certain collaboration, you need to go talk to Mr. X, Mr. Y. The press knocks on his door, calls saying, "I want your input on this story," and he says "No, I don't want to talk to the press." Such attitude will not help in the business of informing the public because the people need to have the whole information or they will have one side and go about with this kind of narrow perspective on an issue.

> Olu Ojewale:
> I would say the Nigerian public is the most difficult public I have ever seen. Well, just take a typical football match. When Nigeria is playing against another country, if Nigeria should lose that match, you'll see the kind of reaction you will get. Nigeria, I mean the whole nation, will become a coach. We are very critical. Very, very critical. Once something does not please a typical Nigerian, he does not want to hear about any good side that's coming out of it. As long as he's not pleased with it, nothing else matters.

Nevertheless,

> Ray Ekpu:
> I think the Nigerian public has been very very supportive of journalism, particularly if they're fighting good causes. You notice that very easily

when journalists are arrested and detained or imprisoned, or when, as has happened a few times before, newspaper houses are shut or torched as it happened a few years ago. In fact, when *Newswatch* was proscribed and we were just sitting there . . . we didn't have money and they had frozen the company's account, our own personal accounts. Some people who read the story actually phoned us and said that we're going to give you 200,000, 300,000 naira to support yourself. So the public is actually very supportive, provided the paper is doing what is right, what is seen to be in the public interest.

THE NIGERIAN ECONOMY

Another challenge discussed was the Nigerian economy. The Nigerian economy has worsened since the 1980s. Since the press is part of society, changes in the economy affected the press in terms of sales, equipment and paying salaries.

Reuben Abati:
We operate in an economic environment whereby the cost of production is very high. To get newsprint you have to import. All the things, all the inputs used in the production of newspapers, they have to be imported. They have to buy ink, they have to import machines, sometimes you have to import expertise to maintain the machines. So, you are in an environment whereby, at the end of the day, cost is so high. The cost of adverts have to go up, the cost of the newspaper has to go up. Now, the effect of this of course is that many newspapers cannot make ends meet.

Kunle Ajibade:
The reader that used to buy maybe four, five papers can now just afford to buy maybe one, maybe two. The reader that used to buy five magazines can now just afford, barely, to buy maybe just one. We cannot talk about this without talking about the deranged economy that we are running in this country. Our people are being pauperized. They don't have the money to feed themselves, to feed their families, and the first thing that goes when you are confronted with that kind of very harsh reality is maybe newspapers. Anything that will not put food on the table of an average Nigerian now is dispensed with immediately. So that is the reality we are coping with, and is the reality that we will continue to cope with until we have an enabling environment.

Noting these challenges, I asked if anything made their jobs easy. Only Kunle Ajibade found something that made his work easy—technology. The other participants found nothing that made their jobs as journalists easy in Nigeria. Instead, they disclosed more challenges. Overall, these like journalists in any country, socio-cultural, political and economic factors influence how Nigerian journalists perform their roles. These factors presented challenges that the journalists had to deal with to perform their roles in Nigeria. Next, the participants discussed how they practiced journalism in Nigeria in the 1990s.

NIGERIAN JOURNALISM IN THE 1990S

To understand how they practiced journalism in the 1990s, I asked participants to share their perspectives and experiences on military rule, news production processes and survival tactics in the 1990s. According to Olu Ojewale, practicing journalism in the 1990s was "a bit scary in that you could never tell who could be picked up next and you could never be sure." The participants described military rule under Abacha and Babangida particularly as an "aberration," "unwarranted," "terrible" and "unnecessary." Kunle Ajibade said their governments "took Nigeria back to the stone age." The military's anti-press attitude meant a rocky relationship with the press. However, most participants preferred working during Babangida's regime to Abacha's.

> Comfort Obi:
> Babangida was not as hard, as terrible as Abacha. I think Babangida, at times he's like a mosquito. At times you could see him smile, joke, call you by your first name. If he knows your birthday he could pick up his phone and call you. He had some charisma. You could be angry with him, very, very angry with him, but when you see him and he talks to you, whether he means it or not, you're kind of disarmed.

Some participants had bad experiences under Babangida though. *Newswatch* was proscribed for six months and one of its founders assassinated during his regime. Bayo Onanuga also had to resign from the *African Concord* after its publisher, Moshood Abiola, asked him to apologize to Babangida for a story in the magazine. He resigned instead. Despite these incidents, the press had a good relationship with Babangida. That relationship changed when he did not want to leave voluntarily after he had spent so much money on transitions. Onanuga said the press

realized they were "going to have to push him out." Abacha had a good relationship with the press when he took over, but this only lasted a few months.

Obi said in the beginning, they believed Abacha would stay for a few months and hand over to Abiola. When he did not, they decided he should leave too. Abacha responded with force and "turned this country into an arena of savagery," said Ajibade. The press experienced this in various forms.

> Reuben Abati:
> Under Abacha, it was in 1994, the paper published a story in the *Sunday Guardian* about hawks and doves in Aso Rock and all that, and the paper was shut down the following day. We remained shut for about a whole year. We didn't return till October 1995.

> Nosa Igiebor:
> They were always seizing editions of the paper on a regular basis. They'll just go to the press, Academy Press where we print, and take the entire edition away that week. They were doing that regularly. They'll come here and occupy our offices, but we printed. We still came out and found other ways to publish the magazine. But it was extremely difficult operating under those conditions. You are producing a magazine, you're not sure if you'll be able to get it to the readers. If you're lucky you may have succeeded in getting them out of the press. Of course, you still have to take them to various locations for distribution. They simply waylaid the vehicles on the way and seized those copies. Well, because we knew that their ultimate goal was to discourage us from publishing the magazine, in the short run us out of business, we had to devise other means of printing the magazine without drawing the attention of the security agents.

ENTER GUERILLA JOURNALISM

So, to get the publications to the readers, journalists used guerilla journalism. However, only participants at *TheNews*, *The Sunday Magazine*, *Newswatch* and *Tell* said they performed some form of guerilla journalism to survive and keep Nigerians informed in the 1990s. Those from *The Guardian* said they did not practice guerilla journalism in any form in the 1990s. Odia Ofeimun said that this was probably because *The Guardian* was too well established to fight a dictatorship. He added, "You can clamp down and lock them up and they won't be able to do anything.

It's too top heavy and too ground heavy to move." Guerilla journalism involved using some form of guerilla tactics.

Bayo Onanuga:
Even though we had one organization, we had a lot of offices. I will say we had about four, five offices. Some of them did not even have signboards. You'll just see they're normal houses, but journalists were working there. We had to operate in a decoy way without exposing . . . Like this place where we are now [office where interview took place], it was housing our printing press and we gave it a different name—24 Hours Press Ltd. Several times SSS (Secret Security Services) people came here and they met us here. They were looking for stories we were going to publish and they talked to the printers. I just said look, these people are just our customers. And they said, "Well, don't print for them again." I said yes, we won't print for them again. Then the following week we will not come here again. We'll go to another place to print. At times we went from one printer to another, and again, doing a lot of things in a guerilla way, most of them secretly. We could not sit down in the office to meet, to hold discussions like this. Sometimes we chose a hotel to discuss what kind of stories we were going to publish. Sometimes we'll leave Lagos, we'll go to Ibadan or go to Ijebu-Ode and hold our meetings. I must say it was a very terrible time.

Comfort Obi:
For about six months, I was producing the magazine disguising myself and running from place to place. We had to move our offices from here to there. At times we were operating in business centers in Surulere where nobody could think any journalist would be.

Nosa Igiebor:
[Where did you hold editorial meetings?] Oh, we were using so many places, sometimes hospital clinics. We had some doctor friends, we were using their clinics at night. We have friends . . . we used their offices, friends and well-wishers; we'll just use their residences. We met in churches. We were all just going one by one like we were going for service and people normally will come for service and when they finished service and left, we stayed back and held meetings. When it's dark we'll leave.

> Soji Akinrinade:
> [How did you keep the magazine going after your colleagues were arrested?] Well, we just liaised with the guys. We either talked to them on phone using my 090 at the time. I think that's what we had. And oh, just appear in an unmarked car, not my own car. I used several cars because I had friends, family friends, who gave me their car to use. I would come in, look at what they're doing. That's the way we did it. Just pop into the office late at night or sometimes they brought stories to me at a friend's house and I would edit and give instructions on what to do. But I can tell you that I didn't show up at the house because they (SSS) had a truck parked there, in front of my house throughout until the guys were released.

According to Kunle Ajibade, guerilla journalism was necessary for survival.

> We had no other job, and there were staff whose salaries had to be paid. So we kept going on account of that and through just the sheer will of wanting to challenge these Goliaths who will like to see us perish, you know. The will, the determination to keep going so that we can help steer the course of democracy, we can also help to keep our people afloat. When I talk about people I'm talking of the staff and ourselves, because we didn't have any other means of livelihood. That was part of what led to guerilla journalism. And let me also be very honest with you that chance, luck and God Almighty played very significant roles in this.

According to these journalists, luck, chance and God featured prominently in avoiding arrest because they understood getting arrested meant torture, jail and possibly death. Some like Odia Ofeimun had their passports seized. They devised various means to avoid arrest, considering security agents watched their homes and trailed them. They used similar tactics, including disguises, different cars and fake identity cards. Sometimes, security agents and government officials warned participants of impending raids.

> Comfort Obi:
> I'm not somebody that could tie wrappers. I never tie wrappers. I'm a trouser suit person basically for the office. But at that time I found myself tying big head ties, tying wrappers to disguise myself. I was on the wanted list. I didn't know that. It was the SSS director who gave the order that told me. He said, "we kept looking for you and

somebody came to tell us that you wear nothing but trousers to work and that you're very fair [complexioned] and you walk very fast and low protocol." And they gave an order saying arrest every young lady wearing trousers and who is fair, and they actually arrested some and interviewed them. I laughed. I said the time you were looking for me at Illupeju, I was tying wrappers at Surulere, producing the magazine. There were actually two times when CID people came from Alagbon and I was there. But they didn't see me. I was tying wrappers and tying head tie and they actually spoke to me. I said I was just a cleaner. "I came to clean the place and we have not seen Comfort for two months now." I would wear bathroom slippers, I would tie the cheapest of wrappers, dirty ones, and I would be speaking pidgin, broken English, with them and I would completely change my voice. I wore no makeup. At times, I would tuck something here [points at stomach] and look pregnant.

Bayo Onanuga:
There was this day they came to arrest . . . I think they came for me. Then one of our senior editors was coming in and he didn't know. Someone just told him [nonverbally indicates "they are there"]. He had already entered the office. He was in shorts. So when he saw that, when he had already been given a sign that the people were around, he started talking. He said, "Where is Mr. Onanuga? I've finished his car oh. Tell him his car is ready. He should come and pick his car from my workshop, blah, blah, blah." Because he was wearing shorts, he was now sounding like a mechanic so the security people who were around, they didn't . . . they just thought he was a mechanic. He walked out again and he ran away. He actually brought his own car and said Mr. Onanuga's car. He dropped the key and walked out of the office. That's how he escaped. Then, at the gate there's an alarm there. So if the security man sits down and notices one or two persons coming, saying they are looking for either the press manager or something, and he feels they are security men from SSS or DMI [Department of Military Intelligence] or something, just under his table he touches a button. The alarm will not sound outside there. It will sound inside so everybody will start running, *gburu*, *gburu*, jump through the fence, they're gone!

Nosa Igiebor:
I use glasses but in that period when I'm going out, I don't wear my glasses because people know me with my glasses. But if I remove my glasses, they will still know me but you have to know me very well to

> recognize me without my glasses. And of course, I grew a beard, wore a face cap, tried all kinds of means to make myself as anonymous as possible. So I got to a checkpoint one day and the police officer said, "you look familiar." I said, "Me?" He said "yes." I said, "Familiar how?" He said, "Are you not a journalist?" I said I was not a journalist. "I'll show you my ID card." He said, "What do you do?" I said, "I sell paint." "So you sell paint?" I said, "Yes." He said, "But you look like this man who works," didn't remember my name, "that man who works in *Tell*." I said, "Oh, that is true. A lot of people have been saying so. But you know the other man wears glasses." He said, "Ha, that is true. It's true." If I had worn my glasses, there's no way I would have denied I was that person.

When these tactics failed, participants like Bayo Onanuga and Soji Akinrinade were smuggled from Nigeria to the United States and Britain respectively. Nevertheless, five participants, Akinrinade, Ekpu, Ajibade, Onanuga and Igiebor, spent at least a few days in jail in the 1990s. Kunle Ajibade spent three years in jail. According to the participants who practiced guerilla journalism, several factors contributed to its success. These included Nigerians, foreign governments and national and international human rights organizations like the Freedom Forum, Amnesty International, Campaign for Democracy and communication technology. Guerilla journalism was also an expensive venture.

Igiebor, Onanuga and Obi found they were duplicating costs by changing venues. This was noticeable in the quality of *Tell* and *Newswatch*. I noticed some copies of these magazines were printed on poor quality paper during that period. These copies made the magazines look unprofessional. The seizure of publications and the attacks on vendors selling their publications affected their income, and they sometimes needed places to print at a moment's notice. Some Nigerians came to their rescue. Nigerians like Lateef Jakande and Jim Nwobodo, who were also in government, allowed members of *TheNews* to print secretly at their printing presses. Onanuga said since no one suspected this, the government concluded the American embassy printed the magazine. However, some Nigerians suspected of helping the cause were killed. One was Alfred Rewane.

> Odia Ofeimun:
> Alfred Rewane will send you a news release, which you will publish, and after he will send the same release to you and publish it as an advert, which meant that he wanted to keep you alive. Whenever anybody was locked up, arrested or detained, Rewane would visit his family, buy

> toys for the children, give them a stipend, and he did that religiously for almost everybody who was arrested. He would sponsor conferences, ensure that people who had no monies to attend meetings would be there and in general, he was a participant in almost everywhere he thought opposition forces needed to be supported.

Obi said some Nigerians provided advertising support to *TSM*, even loaned it money. Since she was working secretly, she could not openly solicit for adverts. So she created a system that involved copying the adverts of friends in other publications and placing them in *TSM*. She then took the issue and a bill to the person saying, "Why didn't you give me this advert? Why should you give this media house and not me and you're saying that I'm your friend? *Oya*, pay us. Because they were my friends, they couldn't say no." They told her they gave the adverts to others because she was in hiding. Nevertheless, if she saw their adverts in any publication, she should copy it, run it and send them a bill. For Obi, "That's how we managed." Communication technology also helped, especially in the realm of production and information sharing.

COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY'S ROLE IN NIGERIA'S DEMOCRATIZATION

The commonest forms of communication technology in Nigeria in the 1990s were fax machines, pagers, personal computers and telephones. These technologies helped with communication and production. However, these technologies were not readily available to everyone in Nigerian media houses. Most times only top staff and owners had easy access to or owned some form of communication technology. In the early to mid-1990s, computers were not available to all members of staff. Most media organizations had just one computer, which only a typist or typesetter had access to, to prepare stories for publication. Reporters wrote their stories in longhand and gave them to the typist or typesetter, who prepared them for printing on the computer. It is important to note that though these technologies were not largely available, the fact that they existed in Nigerian media organizations in the 1990s is impressive, considering such technologies were not readily available to U.S. media organizations until the mid-1990s either (Pavlik, 2001). It would be erroneous to believe therefore that Nigeria, as a developing country, was far behind Western nations in adopting communication and information technology.

The participants who used these technologies during military rule said communication technologies were very helpful in returning Nigeria to civilian rule. Computers were particularly helpful in ensuring the publications

reached the public. Igiebor said they made journalism a "mobile office. We could work anywhere."

> Bayo Onanuga:
> The computer was very useful. We always made sure that we copied the templates of all our publications in some diskettes so that anywhere we go . . . in fact, once we have these diskettes with us, it means we can replicate our templates anywhere. We don't need to hold computers. We can always use the diskettes anywhere. I remember we used that in 1993, for instance, when they first shut down our office and we had to relocate. We just moved to Lagos Island and we replicated what we were doing. It was just as if nothing happened. We had to copy all the templates of our papers on diskettes and we didn't keep them at the office. I had a copy, the head of our computer had a copy so that in case they came here and took over our computers, we can go to any business center and just say, lock up your shop. We downloaded the template and started all over again. It was so easy.

This was a common technique also at *Tell* and *TSM*. Fax machines also helped in sending information to publications, and especially to foreign governments and international organizations.

> Kunle Ajibade:
> Dr. Beko Ransome-Kuti, a human rights activist, a medical doctor, was campaigning for our release. Obasanjo, the current president, had been arrested and he now got this message. It was the defense of one of the soldiers, Bello Fadile. Bello Fadile is a Ph.D. holder in law. He said he will defend himself at the tribunal, so he wrote his defense. It was that defense where he talked about the crookedness of what was happening to them, to himself and the other officers, that they were arrested for nothing and all that. That was the kind of evidence Nigerians needed to punch holes in the claims of the Abacha government that there was indeed a coup plot. So it was very very vital information, a necessary document that the entire world and Nigerians needed to know about. As soon as he (Ransome-Kuti) got that, we also got a copy here. Dr. Beko Ransome-Kuti faxed the message, in fact the entire defense. People like Lord Avebury in the House of Commons in London, because he was chairman of the committee on human rights in the House of Commons, got this message because Beko Ransome-Kuti faxed the message to him. It became a tool in the hands of the members of the

> House of Commons who were fighting for democratization and justice in Nigeria. The message was also sent through fax to the UN.

Fax machines were also used to send stories for publication. However, since security agents could track the phone lines, journalists had to devise systems for sending information. These included using different fax machines at different business centers and using pseudonyms. Obi said her code name was "Katanga," or "Margaret Thatcher." Code names also ensured they could use office or home phones as phone lines were tapped and in some cases, blocked.

Newswatch directors and top editorial staff had cellular phones, popularly called 090 phones, at this time. So did those at *TheNews*. Soji Akinrinade said though its use was not widespread, the phone came in handy when his colleagues were arrested in 1994. They used the phone to keep in touch with him from prison and to relay their experiences. Bayo Onanuga said an email account was created for *TheNews* using a non-governmental organization as a cover up. Anytime they were attacked, information was sent to organizations like International Freedom of Expression eXchange (IFEX) in Canada and the Committee for the Protection of Journalists in New York via email. These organizations re-sent the information to other groups. This system generated a lot of confusion for the government who did not know how international agencies learned of the arrests of journalists and the closure of media houses. Onanuga also used email to send stories to the magazine while in exile in the United States. But despite its helpfulness, some communication technologies challenged some of those that used them.

The challenges involved knowing how to use the computer and the Internet when they had access. Onanuga had to learn how to use the computer while in the United States because in Nigeria, he employed people to use the computers. He had to learn how to use a computer when a colleague gave him a laptop in the United States. Onanuga's challenge is understandable, considering when computers first arrived in Nigerian news organizations, they were few and only typesetters had access to them. Reporters simply wrote their stories and handed them over to typists who typed them on the computer and returned them for editing. It was a "laborious process," said Abati. This system created challenges for journalists when computers entered newsrooms. At *The Guardian* however, there was a lot of debate as people resisted the idea of computers in newsrooms. Where this was a problem, *Tell*, *TheNews*, *The Guardian* and *Newswatch* organized training sessions for their journalists.

Using email was another challenge. Onanuga said he "didn't even know how to connect" to the Internet. When he faced this problem, he "called Dapo [Olorunyomi]. I said, Dapo, I'm at the computer now. I'm at a loss. Can you explain this thing further?" Using new technology was the basic problem participants faced. They tackled the challenge with training. It is important to add that communication technology in Nigeria boomed around 1998. The coming of the Global Systems for Mobile Communication (GSM) in 2001 made the use of cellular phones widespread and more people now have access to the Internet and email. These advances, according to Igiebor, have "tremendously" helped journalism. Communication between journalists and their sources and colleagues has improved. In fact, in 2003, GSM helped *Tell* change its cover at the last minute when a political story broke. The magazine was the only one that carried the story that week, and that was good for business. The GSM is not without problems though as the participants say it is expensive, not available in all parts of the country and the services are often bad.

These findings answer the last two research questions. Communication technology helped Nigerian journalists in performing their roles in the 1990s. Telephones, fax machines, email and computers helped journalists with news reporting and production. However, they experienced some challenges in using these technologies, particularly the computer. Challenges were faced by learning how to use the technologies and adapting to them.

JOURNALISTS' EVALUATION OF GUERILLA JOURNALISM

Guerilla journalism helped end military rule. The participants agreed that Nigeria's democratization would have been impossible without the press. Evaluating themselves, participants scored the Nigerian press highly. However, they also criticized how guerilla journalism was practiced. Ekpu called guerilla journalism "counterfeit journalism' because "you stay where you are, concoct stories and publish. It is a vile form of propaganda. It is not journalism. To call it journalism is a misnomer." He believed publications did not need to change journalistic practices to perform their roles. "Journalism rules do not change with circumstances. Whether you are at peace or in war, the rules are the same," said Ekpu. He said news stories should be balanced, corroborated and true. Indeed, Obi said stories were fabricated, like saying her publisher, Chris Anyanwu, was going blind in jail. Those that practiced guerilla journalism agreed that guerilla journalism was not ethical or wholly professional, but rules had to be sacrificed to keep the heat on the military and push the press' agenda. The end justified the means. Moreover,

Bayo Onanuga:
It was not because we wanted to go out of our way to start abusing people or to start writing stories without checking them or something, but because the circumstance at that time allowed for that. At that time, who is that journalist that will say Mr. President or Mr. Abacha, can you respond to this? In fact, you dare not. You dare not.

Nosa Igiebor:
There were stories we did that were below par in terms of standards because we were not allowed the opportunity to hear the other side of the story. If you showed up anywhere to talk to any minister, you got arrested. So to that extent, it got to a stage where we never cared any more. That well, since the government doesn't want to see our faces, they don't want to talk to us . . . But we still tried to reach them through back doors. Many, some of them still spoke to us off record, and we tried to reflect it in the story. But by and large, I think that we were too harsh on the government in the sense that yes, it was a repressible regime. But to take the position that everything the government did was wrong was in itself wrong.

Odia Ofeimun:
They were not very ethical risks but they were risks you simply had to take if you wanted people to know what was going on. You actually had to find a way to get information, whatever possible, just get it. It's not the usual way journalists are supposed to work. You are supposed to access the information through all the well-known channels. But since you could not go through those channels, you got the information some way and then of course you relied a great deal on virtual face columnists in government. People in government who themselves were dissatisfied with what was going on actually offered a lot of the information.

Such people gave information anonymously, fearing persecution. Ofeimun added that the guerilla press' trust in such people made them vulnerable to manipulation.

It was also the means for controlling the guerilla press because the government devised a means of ensuring that you got information that would mislead the public. In the case of *TheNews*, there was a period

> when the second-in-command to Abacha, Diya, virtually sold dummies to *TheNews* through editors who were so trusting due to some foolish ethnic assumptions that the man meant well; that he was just a Yoruba man in a bad fix who had to play along in order to be able to get certain things done. It just wasn't true.

Guerilla journalism was also criticized for not providing balanced coverage on the activities of pro-democracy groups. Some publications did not report the bad things pro-democracy groups did. According to Odia Ofeimun, "*Tell* magazine hardly criticized anybody once that anybody showed he or she was a pro-democracy advocate. As much as possible, they refrained from any criticism of the opposition." But those who offered a balanced perspective like *Newswatch* were labeled pro-government by the public.

> Ray Ekpu:
> Some people who accused us of being conservative wanted us to lie, upset and turn the rules upside down. I'll give you an example. During the Babangida government, we sent some people out to cover the riots and they brought back reports about the demonstrations and what not, and how hoodlums took over the demonstration. They were robbing people of their jewelry, they were raping girls, they were doing all sorts of things. And we had the evidence. We had the pictures and we put the story together. We supported the demonstrations all right, but of course there were things that happened that shouldn't have happened, which we reported. And then the paper came out and some of these people were writing us, some confronted us. "Why did you report that people were raping girls, that they were stealing properties from people? This is a pro-democracy demonstration." I said, "What?! I think my primary responsibility is to report the truth, to report what happened, irrespective of who is affected. We support pro-democracy demonstrations, but I don't think it's fair for them to go out of their way and harm people and deprive people of their property and say this is pro-democracy demonstration."

Ekpu added that such a stand probably cost them their audience when military rule ended, as people believed they had sold out. "Some people said oh, these people are conservative, these people have been bought over, but none of that happened. It's just that our view of journalism is that it doesn't change with circumstances." The public's response to *Newswatch* is understandable, considering the magazine blazed the trail of investigative journalism in Nigeria. Many Nigerians I met and talked with in conducting this

research felt the magazine had softened since Dele Giwa's murder in 1986. Ekpu and Akinrinade agreed that Giwa's murder affected them somewhat, but had not prevented them from doing their jobs the way they wanted or believed it should be done. It is also important to add that the Nigerian definition of a liberal or conservative publication is based on the publication's portrayal of government. A publication that frequently portrays an unfavorable government negatively is liberal. A publication that either presents both sides or constantly portrays an unfavorable government positively, at any time and for any reason, is conservative by Nigerian standards, or to put it in Nigerian terms, a sell out. Such definitions often affect how stories are written and the image a publication strives for in Nigeria.

A few participants indicated that giving Nigerians what they wanted was part of the problem. As Ojewale said earlier, the Nigerian public tends to support those that say what they believe. Anything contrary is unacceptable. Therefore, publications that constantly presented an image of military leaders that the public wanted received more public support than those who did not. This feeling carried over following the reinstitution of democratic rule in 1999. As of 2004, *Tell*, *TheNews* and *Newswatch* magazines had circulations of 100,000, 80,000 and 50, 000 respectively (Olukotun, 2004). Prior to 1995, *Newswatch* had a circulation of 120,000.

Overall, most participants felt the overall success of guerilla journalism made these lapses forgivable. They also said their organizations are now trying to remove those practices and have mostly returned to practicing responsible journalism. I wanted to know if given the opportunity the participants would relive the experience again. Four of them, Abati, Ajibade, Obi and Onanuga, said no.

> Kunle Ajibade:
> I think it is an irresponsible man that would say jail is good. I want to go back to jail? No. It is not good to go to jail because Nigerian prisons are bad. But that is just one way of looking at it. Of course, I will say no to injustice. But maybe in the process of saying no to injustice I will now find a way of checkmating, of preventing people who want to put me in jail.

> Comfort Obi:
> I don't want to go through this again. I mean, leave my family? I would not see my brothers and sisters for months, I wouldn't know if I'll just be walking and somebody picks me up, and it happened like that to my colleagues. I remember the case of Onome Osifo-Whiskey that was driving his kids. They were going to church and they trailed him,

> overtook them and double crossed [blocked] them and took him from there and left the kids in the car. Nobody wants to go through that experience again. That is not to say that if the chips are down, if the military ever dares again, that I would not want to go through that to get democracy back. I think we want a future for our children.
>
> Reuben Abati:
> Never again. You see, there are so many imperfections under democracy. The present civilian government at all levels has had one brush or the other with the media—journalists being brutalized by security aides of an important public official or state governments insisting that a particular reporter is unfriendly and they want to push him out of their state, they don't want to see him; or allegations that journalists are biased against particular politicians or persons taking media houses to court on grounds of defamation or misrepresentations. But all that is nothing compared to what we suffered under military rule.

The other participants said they would gladly relive the experience. As Igiebor put it,

> I would [do it again] without hesitation because that is journalism, that is the job I do. That is the job I love to do in spite of the hazards, the risks, in spite of the fact that it's a thankless job. Everybody, any government has a problem it blames the press. People see the press as an enemy. But I'm not discouraged about that. I love this job. I don't see myself doing anything other than journalism because nothing will fulfill me as much as the job I'm doing now as a journalist. I believe this is where God designated me to be and I would have been out of place in any other profession.

Overall, the findings showed the press' agenda in the 1990s was to end military rule. To create this agenda, journalists and their news organizations carried stories that encouraged a push for democratization. In presenting information that tallied with the press' agenda, journalists and news organizations faced a variety of challenges. Describing these challenges, the findings showed that the environment, the Nigerian public, economy and military government contributed to keeping Nigerians informed on Nigeria's democratization difficult. However, the journalists met these challenges since they believed in what they were doing. Journalists also mentioned the challenge of being unable to maintain ethical standards in carrying out their agenda. For those who worked in conservative outfits, maintaining

journalism ethics was the solution. For others, guerilla journalism was the option. However, in adopting guerilla journalism, participants noted that several unethical practices occurred. These included publishing false information, sensationalism, unidentified sources and towing an ethnic view. From some participants' perspective, the environment created by military leaders, especially General Sani Abacha, warranted these practices. It was interesting to observe the disagreement that ensued between participants on this issue.

The participants also said Nigerians, international and national civil organizations and communication technologies, helped their efforts to achieve their agenda. Some Nigerians provided financial and infrastructural support to news organizations. This ensured they kept publishing. National and international civil organizations also helped. They provided journalists with information and spread the word whenever the government attacked journalists and their organizations. Such activities internationalized the press' activities and pushed the call for democratization further. The commonest forms of communication technology available to the press in the 1990s were computers, fax machines and cellular phones. A few had access to email and the Internet. These technologies helped journalists in performing their roles in the 1990s. Though using these technologies presented some challenges initially, journalists overcame them by learning how to use them.

Chapter Six

Conclusions, Limitations, and Suggestions for Future Research

CONCLUSIONS

This study examined literature on political transitions in the latter part of the 20th century and the mass media's role in political transitions, using Nigeria in the 1990s as a case study. To test the press' role in pushing Nigerians to fight for political change, the study used the media agenda building part of the agenda setting theory. Agenda setting theory postulates that the media are very influential in telling the public what to think about concerning political issues. This study focused on how democratization and transition issues got on the press' agenda, and sought to find out who set the press' agenda on these issues in Nigeria in the 1990s. Using content analysis and interviews, the study sought to answer four research questions.

Question one of this study (What was the Nigerian press' agenda in the 1990s regarding Nigeria's democratization in the 1990s?) was answered. The Nigerian press' agenda in the 1990s was to end military rule. The participants said building such an agenda was important because military rule was no longer fashionable and Nigerians were tired of military rule. The press had to reflect these feelings in its coverage.

For question two (What challenges did Nigerian print journalists face during the democratization process in the 1990s?), the study found Nigerian journalists faced several challenges, including the Nigerian government, the Nigerian public and the Nigerian economy. Their challenges in the 1990s reflected the socio-cultural, political and economic challenges in Nigeria at the time.

To answer the third research question, the participants were asked what forms of communication technology they used in the 1990s. The commonest forms were telephones, fax machines and computers. A few participants also used email and the Internet. The participants experienced

some challenges using these technologies, particularly computers. They had to learn how to use the computer to overcome the challenge. This answered question four.

LIMITATIONS

Finding participants that matched the criteria for the interviewing sample was a problem. Fortunately, my father, Dan Agbese, had contacts in various news organizations. He met with those in charge who created opportunities for me to meet with managing editors or the chairman of the editorial board. It is important to note that whenever I used his contacts, the interviews went on schedule. When he did not provide a contact, things were more difficult. For instance, when I contacted a participant on my own, the participant agreed to participate, made an appointment, but did not show up, twice. When my father called the participant, and the participant learned I was really Dan Agbese's daughter, we made another appointment and it was kept. Anyone who wants to conduct a similar study should have contacts in the industry, as people are more willing to disclose things to and work with you for that reason. In fact, some participants let me know they were helping me because of my contacts.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The continuing increase of countries undergoing political transitions from authoritarian rule to democracy makes the continued study of the media's role in political transitions important. At least 50 countries that underwent political transitions in the 1990s have backtracked to a form of authoritarianism or are vulnerable to backtracking in the near future (Council on Foreign Relations, 2001). It is important to note that democratization in the 21st century is being obtained more by violent than by electoral means. Countries like Liberia, Georgia and Haiti are good examples. Even Nigeria is not far from backtracking, as democracy has, in the view of many Nigerians, so far been unfavorable. It brings to mind the issue of how quickly people in such countries expect to see the dividends of political transitions. Nevertheless, the increase in political transitions and the new tactics being used calls for people and political organizations to know how best to meet the challenges that occur with political transitions. This is important considering countries undergoing political transitions from authoritarianism face similar challenges. Advancements in technology and transportation have also made it possible for a country's political problems to be known on a global scale. The advantage is more people are involved in the process

and can help countries achieve their political goals. The disadvantage is a hasty transition to fit global standards could mean shaky foundations for democracy. Democratization is also still tied to economic relations.

This study focused on the Nigerian press and aimed at finding ways in which the press can keep people informed during democratization. For the future, work on this area must continue to help countries and news media transitioning from authoritarianism to democracy. More countries have similar situations that need to be addressed. Even more important is the fact that over 50 countries reinstituted authoritarianism as democracy in the 1990s, and are still facing the problems democracy should have solved. Another wave of democratization is not far from happening again. Therefore, it is important to make the tactics used in other countries in the democratization process available. Journalists in Zimbabwe practicing guerilla journalism have credited Nigerian journalists for showing them how to perform their roles under authoritarianism. A study on the broadcast media's contributions to the process in Nigeria is needed as that has not happened so far.

I would also suggest another study on communication technology's contributions to developing nations. Nigeria has experienced a boom in communication technology that has given more people access to the mass media. A large number of Nigerians have cellular phones now, and Internet and email services are widely available. In relation to the mass media, there are more call-in programs on radio and television stations allowing Nigerians to provide feedback on political, economic and social issues. This means Nigerians can weigh in on political events and push for social change. While in Nigeria in 2003, I listened to radio shows that asked people in Lagos to call in on social problems in Lagos like roads and bridges needing repair, no electricity, corrupt police and more. People always called in, and the radio station investigated such reports. Listeners later learned when government agencies fixed a road or electricity returned to an area from the presenter. Such activities say a lot about Nigeria's democratization process. This also says a lot of communication technology's contribution to the agenda setting process. In fact, in 2003, the governor of Anambra state used his cell phone to alert the media and the government of his abduction by police officers. Communication technology actually makes it easier to gauge the public and media agendas, as recorded shows can be used to see if the agenda set by a program is the one the public adopts.

Overall, the findings answered the four research questions in the study. In this chapter, I concluded that the Nigerian press played an active role in creating an agenda to end military rule. Available communication technology helped their efforts and ensured the press disseminated

information on Nigeria's democratization nationally and internationally. Suggestions for future research in this area are made, and the study's limitations were discussed.

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