

# **The Media, Development Communication, and Governance in Nigeria: The Press for National Integration**

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## **Abstract**

This paper analyzes the role of communication media/news sources towards sustainable governance in an emerging democracy. It specifically examines and discusses the relationship between the press and governance, and the contributions of the press in political development and national integration in Nigeria. The methodology used was a hybrid approach consisting of analytical technique of historical/critical descriptive and content analysis of selected past and current literature on development and political issues. Agenda-setting theory guided the analysis of the relationship of news sources with governments as well as the role of the press in national unity and development. It was determined that the increasing proliferation of news sources in the country does not translate into objective and independent coverage of political issues and events. The study then concludes that development initiatives in a pluralistic and culturally-diverse country should be holistic and situation-realistic. A conceptual-theoretical framework of Press Participation-Based Integrative Model (PPBIM) for sustainable development governance in Nigeria was recommended.

## **Key Words:**

Sustainable development, Agenda-setting, Political development, National integration, Press Participation-Based Integrative Model,

## **Introduction**

Over the past decades, the relationship between the press and governments in Nigeria has been a highly contentious issue, drawing attention from a wide range of communication scholars, political scientists, and independent research institutions. While perspectives and findings differ on the role of the press in the country as well as its relationship with governments, there is a consensus that the concept of sustainable development and governance will be an unrealistic proposition without effective and uncontrolled participation of news sources in disseminating national and political issues. Similarly, democratization in contemporary Nigeria appears unattainable if Nigeria's stakeholders in urban and rural communities are not fully and actively engaged in development needs and planning. The citizens of Nigeria, in particular, must be made to appreciate the importance of participating in

the political process and challenging unpopular government decisions and actions. The national press and other news sources should play the crucial function of advocating for citizens' understanding of government activities, public policies, and development plans.

More than three decades ago, Omu (1978) emphasized that the press in Nigeria should be an effective and vibrant independent entity that could be instrumental to achieving sustainable political development goals. For much of the twenty century, news sources in Nigeria was involved in promoting political awareness, encouraging civic engagement, sensitizing citizens to national issues, and shaping public opinions on a variety of political issues. But it was noted that this role was played under a controlled, confrontational, controversial atmosphere which compromised the effectiveness of news sources and made objectivity of the press exceedingly difficult. The limited functional scope of communication channels in the country's development efforts through many government administrations was attributed to the censorship and intimidation that were used to curb and control political coverage and the independence of news sources.

As discussions on Nigeria's development crisis continue to take an expanded dimension, recent studies clearly reinforce the position of previous researchers that a robust and free press is quite capable of dismantling negative images and stereotypes which the country has faced over a number of years both at home and abroad (Bennett, 2003; Gyimah-Boadi, 2004; Diamond, 2004; McCombs & Reynolds, 2009). In a comprehensive report, The World Bank (2009) explained that early development efforts in Nigeria and other emerging African nations were grossly unsuccessful and unattainable largely because of the inadequate role which the news sources were relegated to play, and which resulted in the widespread criticism of the national media as ineffective to gather and analyze salient issues. Furthermore, Okoro (1993) stressed that the establishment of government newspapers in the country weakened the credibility and competitiveness of communication channels, demoralizing the citizens from depending on national news and information. For one thing, government newspapers were better funded, strategically positioned, and adequately staffed to cover news and events. While in recent years there has been a proliferation of news sources in the country, it remains to be seen whether their journalistic political content, analysis of government programs, and political actions and policies will be objectively and critically explained to the citizens.

As The World Bank report (2012) illustrated, Nigeria has a population of 158 million, which positions the country as the largest and most populous nation in the African continent, representing 47 percent of West Africa's population. The country's diverse and pluralistic structure and composition is fundamentally similar to most African nations, especially in the sub-Saharan region in terms of ethnic groups, linguistic pattern, tradition, values, beliefs, and historical origin. With the exception of a few homogeneous nations, Nigeria is one of the numerous heterogeneous African societies that speak several different languages and dialects, different cultures, and political orientation. English language is the lingua franca (official language), and it is widely spoken in many parts of the country as the language of commerce and social interaction. Although the present day Nigeria is composed of thirty-six (36) states and a federal capital territory Abuja with a total of seven hundred and seventy-four (774) local government areas, the country's origin was traced to the evolution of the three dominant ethnic groups (Igbos, Hausas/Fulanis, and Yorubas) that have influenced and shaped the

country's social, cultural, and political experiences. For decades, the country was a British colony until 1960 when it gain independence and because a federal republic in 1963.

As a nation, Nigeria has encountered numerous tribulations and crises through her turbulent years of post-independent initiatives and self-rule. Some of the recurrent problems and national issues were occasioned by the country's peculiar circumstances, while others emerged as part of the normal evolutionary and developmental processes. Nonetheless, the country has remained one indivisible nation with functional state and federal systems as well as the presence of fairly active news sources. As far as its economic system is concerned, the national economy is described as a mixed one that allows for a free enterprise, the use of market forces, and foreign exchange market.

Researchers, political historians, and scholars have used such terms as the conglomerate society, unity in diversity, the vertical-horizontal mosaic, the multi-national state, and the geographical expression to represent some conceptual attempts to provide an appropriate identification for the country (Graf, 1988; Diamond, 2004; Okoro, 1993). As a country composed of millions of people who speak diverse languages, socialized in unique tribal and cultural backgrounds with distinct religious values and beliefs, the great hope and promise that Nigeria represents to the entire African continent, specifically to the sub-Saharan region, appear unrealistic and unattainable, and it remains a disturbing issue to Nigerian citizens and external stakeholders. Additionally, what remains a source of serious concern for most Nigerians and development researchers is the country's capacity to harness and manage her vast human and natural resources competently and productively in order to achieve sustainable development and modernization in the twenty-first century, which will benefit this generation of Nigerians and their posterity (Gymai-Boadi, 2004; Okoro, 2009). While the country continues to experiment with democratization with varying results, much effort still needs to be devoted to building a strong civil, equal, and economically vibrant nation. Evidently, more citizen participation in the democratic process is urgently needed as well as the creation of an enabling environment for equal representation of ethnic groups and the presence of independent communication channels or press for objective coverage and dissemination of information.

Development studies (Kothari & Cooke, 2001; Casmir, 1991; Diamond, 2004) of recent years indicate that responsible and effective governance is a sine qua non for sustainable democracy and political stability in developing nations of Africa, especially in a country like Nigeria, where the citizens and other significant stakeholders have been clamoring for policy reforms, improved quality of life, and a more robust media presence. Communication scholars and political analysts (Entman, 1989; Bennette, 2003; Gymai-Boadi, 2004) explain that over the past two decades participatory democratic process has taken a dramatic turn in the emerging democracies in the wake of citizens' agitation for good governance, expanded ethnic integration, independent and vibrant press, increased citizen participation, freedom of speech, and informed public debate.

More than ever before, past and present leaders of Nigeria have consistently indicated a commitment to a sustainable national and political development, and have introduced various measures to support their development objectives, social policies, and economic agenda. But as The World Bank (2009) report strongly indicates, the country has not been able to achieve its seemingly ambitious national development programs because of misplaced focus on tribal and

ethnic issues and politics, rather than focusing on an integrated national development that would unify the country towards a common national purpose. For example, development objective in the country shifted in recent times from rural areas where most of the country's approximately 100,000 communities reside to urban communities. Indeed, the uneven distribution of national programs and building of infrastructures in different parts of the country accounts for the growing imbalance in the pace of development in rural and urban communities.

However, The World Bank (2009) report noted that Nigeria's recent development priorities were guided by a new orientation to economic recovery, self-reliance, and social justice, but the strategic framework established by the political leadership did not fully include all of the national institutions and stakeholders, especially the press (news sources). The report therefore suggests that with a well-balanced blend of transparent leadership and the presence of a robust and effective news sources, Nigeria's future will be as promising and productive as the nation's natural abundance of sunshine and resources. The World Bank's report and other studies (Diamond, 2004; Mbayo, 2000; Graf, 1988) stressed that a recurrent issue of many decades in the country is the establishment of government newspapers that serve as conduits for disseminating political and related issues and promoting the agenda of political leaders. These news media constantly rationalize government's positions and actions and compete successfully with privately-owned news agents.

### **Conceptual Framework: Press Participation-Based Integrative Model**

The concept of press participation-based integrative model is proposed in this study as a balanced approach for achieving sustainable political development and governance in Nigeria. Drawing considerably from political development experiences of Nigeria and research evidence from The World Bank reports (1989 & 2009), as well as from past and recent studies (Entman, 1989; Melkote, 1991; Diamond, 2004; McCombs and Reynolds, 2009), this paper argues that democratic governance and political development objectives of Nigeria have so far been deficient and inadequate. National strategies would have been successful if: (a) the civilian/military leaderships had allowed the news sources adequate latitude to analyze development information, address political improprieties, and expose and hold leaders to public accountability, (b) the press were allowed to make constructive criticisms of government decisions, activities, and programs; and if political parties had not grossly influenced the activities of the press; and (c) government ownership of the press did not translate into control and censorship of national news and information.

The press participation-based integrative model, which derives substantially from general system theory, was developed as a constructive model for political governance shortcomings in the country. Implicit in this model is the idea that communication channels or news sources must be considered an integral part of development objectives in Nigeria for a long-term growth and prosperity. Further, the participation-based integrative concept substantiates the need for collectivity in the design and implementation of strategic development goals in a developing nation. The concept is not only concerned with the integration of the under-utilized Nigerian press in the pursuit of political development agenda, but is also concerned with the integration of all other national institutions and establishments

in the country associated with making change toward sustainability of political governance and national unity.

In the twenty-first century information-rich society, news sources should be more analytical, proactive, and critical of strategic development efforts that impede or forestall constructive attempts at raising citizens' consciousness and patriotism beyond tribal sentiments. Consistently, historical and empirical studies of past decades (Obotette, 1981; Faringer, 1991; M'bayo, 2000, The World Bank, 2000) noted that Nigeria's development problem hinged on the relationship between the nation's news sources and political system and the ability of the press/news sources to contribute significantly to the bid for sustainable national development. In other words, communication channels, especially the press by virtue of its responsibility and obligation, should be able to set the agenda for political and informed debates to guide the actions of the citizenry, electorate, and stakeholders in general. As echoed in The World Bank's reports (2009), sustainable democratic governance is critical for the emerging democracies and developing nations of Africa. For example, to attract foreign investments and global entrepreneurs, encourage strategic global business alliances, and create a competitive business environment, governments of Nigeria and other African nations, must be transparent and consistently trustworthy in their actions, and ethical in their relationships and business decisions. Therefore, the press should be independent and strong enough to expose and analyze government wrongdoings and abuses, and should play a powerful role in the cultural and socio-political advancement of democratic governance.

### **Purpose of the Study**

A combination of factors was instrumental for conducting this research. Principal among them are the role of the press in democratization and inadequate citizens' participation in the political process in Nigeria since the country gained independence in October 1960. Interestingly, despite the proliferation of news sources in the country, recent public opinion studies question the role of the press and its power to contribute to democratic governance in the country. Researchers (Graf, 1988; Entman, 1989; Melkote, 1991; Gyimah-Boadi, 2004) emphasized that an effective press is indispensable in an emerging democracy in which the citizens are expected to be informed and actively engage in political debates and deliberation as well as in electing new leaders. Subject-matter experts Okigbo (1992), Okoro (2003), and Megwa (2009) stressed that in the pursuit of sustainable development in modern Nigeria, the mass media, especially the press, should be considered an integral and functional part of the development agenda because of its unique role in raising public awareness, mobilizing citizens to participate in elections and voting processes, and creating a sense of urgent need for unity and collective effort in national and political development.

As Nigeria prepares for national elections in 2015, it is important to analyze the role of the press towards electing credible leaders as well as engendering citizens' interest in political activities. Studies of past decades (Taylor, Nwosu, & Mutua-Kombo, 2004; Ansu-Kyeremeh, 2004; Chikelu, 2004) have consistently highlighted the critical role of communication in different phases of development, especially during elections by providing useful information to arouse citizens' interest and mobilize their participation in electing political candidates for leadership positions. The analyses in the preceding studies and in other political research

(Diamond 2004) clearly support the reevaluation of the role of the press in Nigeria's bid for democratization.

As a recent study of The World Bank (2009) emphasized, an essential focus of development communication in the African nations is the strategic use of news sources to disseminate critical information for the benefit of internal and external stakeholders. Over two decades ago, leading political scientists Burns, Peltason, and Cronin (1985), and Entman (1989) described the mass media as powerful institutions and agents in contemporary societies, which should be involved more and more in creating, processing, managing, and diffusing knowledge and information in a country in search of establishing democratic values. Additionally, Diamond (2004) acknowledges that in the quest for sustainable political or economic development, the press has been credited with playing a central analytical role in serving as surrogate companions that explains events and issues for intellectual stimulation, public debate, and collective action.

As a result of information availability and sophisticated analytical frameworks, citizens in a developing nation become less resistant to or more acceptable of development news, policy reforms, and government actions and implementations (Nwanko, 1992; Diamond, 2004; Okoro, 2009). In a comprehensive report, The World Bank (2009) justifies the role and contributions of indigenous press in nation-building, ethnic integration, and national unity, stressing the utility of news sources in political socialization in emerging economies. Importantly, the press provides the level of political analysis which informs and empowers citizens in independent and collective decision-making and in feeling that they have a stake in national development agenda. Therefore, Nigeria's quest for sustainable development governance is achievable to the extent that the national press can provide constructive coverage of the overall scheme of democratic governance.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The fundamental focus of this study is on the role of the press in Nigeria's political development as well as its relationship with governments of the country. Over an extended period of time, this issue has been a recurrent debate and a focus of scholarly analyses among researchers across political science and communication disciplines. While discussions and findings regarding media role have been mixed and inconclusive, recent studies (Mbayo, 2000; The World Bank, 2009; Okoro, 2010; Graber, 2010) characterized the press in developing nations as ineffective in news dissemination and analysis, and described its relationship with governments as controversial and antagonistic. The nature of the relationship that has been largely instrumental to the heightened misunderstanding and disunity among the diverse ethnic groups in the country, which continues to perpetuate tribal consciousness, engenders political instability, negates and compromises national unity and collectivity.

### **Review of the Literature**

Over many centuries, the human race has witnessed significant political changes and upheavals in countries around the globe, especially in developing nation like Nigeria, where political governance is undergoing difficult experimental stages and where the role of the press in the political process has faced tremendous challenges and obstacles. Consequently, the



ordinary citizens and other stakeholders are updated regularly through media-based knowledge for comparative assessment of politics, policies, and the economy. Political scientists (Graber, 2010; Diamond, 2004) and communication scholars (Nwanko, 1992; McCombs & Reynolds, 2009) are consistent in their arguments that to achieve sustainable democratic governance in developing nations and for the concept of democracy to thrive, the citizens of the country must possess the knowledge, skills, and awareness to understand basic principles of the democratic process, including unyielding participation in electing political candidates to various offices. Increasingly enough, it is the role of the press in developed nations to introduce citizens to the basic rules, principles, and practices of democratic values by constantly evaluating government actions and policies. Additionally, news sources have an additional responsibility of conveying the values of political tolerance, trust in democratic governance, respect for the rule of law, and active engagement in electioneering campaigns. Fundamental to sustainable political governance in Nigeria is ethnic integration, because as long as different tribes/ethnic groups continue to resist equal and fair distribution of economic resources in the country, the goal of sustainability remains difficult or an unrealistic proposition. In light of the preceding views, Egbon (1988) noted that since one of the nagging problems confronting Nigeria is that of national unity and tribal coherence, the federal government should ensure that its development agenda and policies adequately allow for mobilization of information resources for equal access and distribution.

In the eighties and nineties, studies on the interrelation between media and development have engaged the interest of eminent scholars and researchers. Both Mcquail (1988) and Melkote (1991) concurred with the earliest theoretical models on media effects, which conceptualized the impact of the press as direct and powerful on individual values and attitudes as well as on the interdependent nature of a society. Together with political development is the concept of citizens' motivation, which forms the basis for national integration and ethnic unification in a developing nation. Indeed, utilizing news sources to motivate citizens is a strategic and necessary approach in a modern society because motivation is considered a prerequisite for citizens' political interest and engagement, and it demonstrates support for a meaningful political direction.

Sustainability of establishments and their objectives has become increasingly significant because of the growing impact of globalization and interdependence of businesses and markets. Communication networks have expanded tremendously and have enhanced the quality of life and the rapidity of business operations across nations. For example, early diffusion studies (Schramm, 1964; Rogers, 1973; UNESCO, 1970) synthesized a strong justification for the critical role of the press in a responsible democratic governance both in developed and in developing nations. The preceding studies substantiated the contributions of news sources in national development, and stressed why the mass media cannot be divorced from the implementation of development objectives and initiatives. Further, with the advent of new media technology in the twenty-first century, there has been a strong speculation that this advancement in communication network, especially the Internet, will be used to sustain public interest in politics and current affairs, and to increase participation of stakeholders in political strategies as well as foster their commitments to democratic values. The new media technology will have a tremendous impact on democratic communication in increasing the diffusion of knowledge as well as fostering political consciousness and interest among the

citizens. Okoro (2010) noted that the traditional media (newspapers, radio, and television) distort, trivialize, and embellish information that diminish democratic communication, the new media technology (Internet, multimedia, and computer-mediated communication) can be utilized to encourage active political citizenship and promote effective debate and critical analysis of politics and governance. Therefore, it can be argued that the press is not only indispensable in a political process, but it has also become inseparable from development strategies especially in the present information driven societies.

Ever since it became a major political issue in the wake of a national struggle for democratization among Nigerians at home and abroad, the concept of development has been operationalized to reflect growth, political stability, and ethnic/tribal integration. The World Bank report (2009) entitled "The media and development," expanded the conceptualization of development to include a drive toward the utilization of news sources as independent agents of human and societal enlightenment capable of educating the masses and sustaining their interest in democratic values. Indeed, looking back over the past decades of communication research on political and national development in Nigeria, it can be contended that the potential role of the press in the process of sustainable democratization is greater in the twenty-first century than ever before, especially given the proliferation of independent news sources and new social media channels.

## **The Nigerian Media Landscape**

### **Post-Independence Press in Nigeria**

With the achievement of political independence, the number of indigenous newspapers increased for various reasons associated with national development and intellectual sophistication, and the press has taken on an expanded role in the country's quest for advancement and democratization. Unlike in the years of colonial era, political agitation and respect for the dignity of the citizens are no longer the primary foci of the news sources. As the Nigerian Yearbook (1979) declared, the primary problems facing the country since the dawn of independence are two-fold: "First, how to forge a virile and united country out of conglomeration of ethnic groups in Nigeria; the second problem is how to develop the country's economy rapidly in order to give the masses a decent standard of living and thus satisfy their legitimate expectations in the independent Nigeria" (p.341). In addition, the Nigerian Yearbook criticized governments' ownership of newspapers as a counter-productive initiative and development since the departure of colonialism from the country. These government newspapers compete for readership with news sources established and published by private individuals and organizations, and a number of regulations and laws are usually in place to control their content and distribution.

In the decades of 1960s through the 1980s, it was remarkable that serious newspaper activities and publications emerged. Important news sources appeared almost on a yearly basis because of the enthusiasm of politicians and governments to manipulate information and control the thinking and actions of citizens. Citing a veteran Nigerian journalist, Thompson (1988) categorized newspapers in post-independence Africa in three distinct groups: (a) privately-owned press by indigenous Nigerians (b) press owned by political parties and groups, and (c) press established and sponsored by federal and state governments.



### **News Sources in Nigeria and Tribal Priorities:**

In the midst of the furor and clashing arguments about the role of the Nigerian press toward political development, past studies (Opubor, 1974; Omu, 1978; Okigbo, 1992; Okoro, 1993) determined that the press in the country was disseminating information and news that oftentimes triggered or perpetuated tribal instead of national consciousness, and was providing ethnic news that engendered distrust and divided loyalty among the citizens. Since Nigeria's independence and subsequent civil war, the negative impact of ethnicity and tribalism seems to be eroding the nation's solidarity and the coverage of national news sources have been blamed for much of this disunity. More than three decades ago, Obotette (1984) noted that "the gigantic economic and political programs already designed to cement Nigerian national unity are debatable as to their scope and direction. What seems indisputable is the renewed call on the nation's newspapers to help mobilize the nation's human resources and transform the old structures of Nigerian society into a viable, strong nation" (p. 5). Furthermore, in a critical analysis of communication and Nigeria identity, Opubor (1974) emphasized that the integration problem in the country would remain a serious issue as long as the press and other communication channels continue to place more emphasis on ethnic interests rather than on national development agenda. The study then maintained that to achieve ethnic integration and sustainable political governance, Nigerian news sources must henceforth focus on collaborative, integrative, and strategic communication designed to provide constructive news and information that can shape citizens' attitudes and behaviors, cultivating a culture of oneness in an environment where all citizens are able to contribute their initiative, creativity, and intellectual know-how equally.

Nigeria's political independence was halted by a series of military interventions that spanned over two decades, the country has had to deal with two frequently alternating forms of governance and leadership—military and civilian – in which news sources were either marginalized or disallowed from effective participation in national debates. The role of the press under these forms of governance was different and challenging, especially regarding objective news reporting and information dissemination affecting states and tribes in the country. Because the military regimes controlled political activities and other institutions associated with development in the country, an analysis of the activities of news sources under military leadership is critical as it provides a useful context. For example, in 1966 when the military overthrew the civilian government administration, it redefined specific statutory provision in order to control and limit the scope and functions of the press in the country. Nigeria's Federal Government Official Gazette (1964,1966) noted the following restrictive provisions which were enforced against the news sources in the country: Defamation Act of 1961 which forbade the publication of defamatory matter; the Official Secrets Act of 1962 which made it illegal to the publish classified national information; Newspaper Amendment Act of 1964, which criminalizes the dissemination of false editorial content; and the Law of Sedition, which prevented expressions or statements capable of promoting hostility or disintegration among Nigerian citizens. Additionally, the military regime promulgated decrees that restrained the role of news sources, making it exceedingly difficult for them to contribute constructively to political and development issues in the country.

### **The Press in Nigeria and Agenda-Setting Role**

The ability of news sources to objectively analyze and interpret significant issues in Nigeria's political context has been a subject of tremendous concern since the establishment of newspapers in the country over the past fifty years. The agenda-setting power of the press, which (McCombs, 1981) described as a "by-product of a social interactive process," is crucial for the development of a society and for the stimulation of intellectual consciousness, particularly in Nigeria that desperately needs the unification of various ethnic communities to work together as citizens of one nation in order to support the struggle for democratic reforms and governance. For example, studies conducted at different times (Graf, 1988; Diamond, 2004) pointed out that in some developing nations of the world (Asia, Africa, and Latin America), where the level of illiteracy is relatively high, agenda-setting role is urgently needed because citizens depend on the established values of news sources and the sophisticated analysis of issues to guide their prioritization and decision-making. Immensely influenced by the sizeable body of literature on the theoretical and empirical significance of agenda-setting, it was considered an appropriate paradigm for evaluating and analyzing the press, its role and contributions, and its relationships with various political entities in an emerging democracy such as Nigeria.

The effectiveness of agenda-setting has been manifested in the ability of the press to interpret complex political and social issues, some of which are outside citizens' immediate intellectual environment or knowledge base (Lippmann, 1922; McCombs, 1981; McCombs & Shaw, 1984). Evidently, the development situation in Nigeria has been relatively slow and retarded, and the political environment is certainly overdue for process reengineering. The system requires a much more robust involvement of news sources to provide the level of analysis and interpretation that will increase citizens' interest in electioneering campaigns, voting activities, and elections. Discussions with opinion leaders indicated that the degree of political apathy in the country during the last elections could be traced to citizens' lack of awareness, motivation, inadequate or unavailability of information for critical decision-making, and total indifference to development goals. For example, during electioneering campaigns and elections, news sources should provide voters with unbiased information about candidates and their academic and professional qualifications, campaign manifestoes, specific standing or positions on current issues, and their voting records (if available). As practiced in advanced nations such as the United States and Great Britain, the critical analyses provided by the press during elections and voting periods become the basis for citizens to evaluate and elect candidates to offices.

The World Bank reports (1989 & 2009) pointed out that a majority of the citizens in sub-Saharan Africa lack adequate knowledge to make informed decisions about political issues. Therefore, the press agenda-setting role would enhance people's knowledge and raise their level of awareness of issues associated with national and political development. Furthermore, the report stressed that the contents of news sources in most African countries are based upon the ideological interest and orientation of the existing political system or the ruling elites. As a result, press agenda-setting in these developing countries is determined or set by the influential ruling class for the general public. Although the central theme of The World Bank reports was focused on national development and political stability for sub-Saharan Africa, repeated emphasis was placed on the need for a free and vigilant press as a significant and realistic

approach to achieving broad-based development objectives. It is against this background that the relevance of the agenda-setting role of the press in Nigeria is critically important and can be

clearly measured for effectiveness. Entman (1989) and McCombs and Reynolds (2009) concurred in their analyses that the agenda-setting framework underscores the significance of news sources to influence issues which audiences in media-saturated nations know about, talk about, and act upon.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

There is no doubt that sustainable political governance in Nigeria can be achieved, but the strategies for executing it should include the contributions of independent, robust, and free news sources capable of informing the citizens and challenging their political thoughts to participate in democratizing their political system. Nigeria is a dynamic and heterogeneous nation; therefore, it requires a vibrant and vigorous press that can effectively address and evaluate the nation's complex political, tribal, and leadership issues. As the country prepares to elect new political leaders in 2015, a fundamental focus in the nation's development scheme should be to improve and empower communication channels and to establish a credible and responsible relationship between news sources and political leaders.

Evidently, Nigeria's most critical need, as a pluralistic nation, is the promotion of political sophistication and socio-political integration that will unite all ethnic/tribal groups. Unfortunately, recent political and tribal issues in some parts of the country over several months indicate that the country still faces disturbing situations reminiscent of the past three decades. Prominent among these problems are institutionalized ethnicity, internecine class/elite interest, tribal disunity and warfare, unequal treatment of citizens in political appointments, and the devastating absence of dedicated political leadership. More than anything else, political governance urgently needs the cultivation of a national awareness that transcends parochialism and selfish ethnic considerations. To establish a responsible governance structure, elected leaders cannot divorce the press from its constructive role in the quest for a long-term development agenda. Therefore, the press participation-based integrative model is a significant value proposition because it provides a balanced approach needed for national and political development to exist.

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