

Research Report No. 126

Ayo Olukotun

**Repressive State and Resurgent Media
Under Nigeria's Military Dictatorship, 1988–98**

Nordiska Afrikainstitutet
Uppsala 2004

Indexing terms

Censorship

Democratization

Media

Military government

Political opposition

Press

Nigeria

Language checking: Peter Colenbrander

ISSN 1104-8425

ISBN 91-7106-524-5

© the author and Nordiska Afrikainstitutet 2004

Printed in Sweden by Elanders Infologistics Väst AB, Göteborg 2004

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Dedication | 5 |
| Introduction | 7 |
| CHAPTER 1 | |
| Hegemonic Contest – Repressive State Versus Resurgent Media | 9 |
| I. Introduction | 9 |
| II. The Context – Antecedents | 10 |
| III. Hegemony Theory | 12 |
| IV. Hegemony and the Media – Applying the Theory | 15 |
| CHAPTER 2 | |
| The Economic and Technological Tapestry – The Global Backdrop | 21 |
| I. Nigerian Media – Economics, Technology and Ownership The Context | 23 |
| II. Harsh Economics and Survival Strategies | 27 |
| III. Conclusion – Economics, Technology and Hegemony | 33 |
| CHAPTER 3 | |
| Repression and Resistance 1989–93 | 37 |
| I. Introduction | 37 |
| II. Toughening Cadences and the Context of Repression | 39 |
| III. Calendar of Repressive Activities | 45 |
| IV. Coverage of the Annulment Controversy Crisis | 50 |
| V. Conclusion | 55 |
| CHAPTER 4 | |
| Censorship and Intolerance – The Media in the Abacha Years | 60 |
| I. Introduction | 60 |
| II. Harsh Cadences, Persecution and Resistance | 62 |
| III. A Calendar of Repression | 69 |
| IV. Editorial Postures – The June 1994 Crisis | 72 |
| V. Conclusion | 75 |
| CHAPTER 5 | |
| Driven Underground – The Guerrilla Media Phenomenon | 78 |
| I. Introduction | 78 |
| II. Profile and Perceptions | 79 |
| III. Editorial Postures – The Election Annulment Controversy | 86 |
| IV. The Self-Succession Controversy – Antecedents | 91 |
| V. Linkages to Civil Society and Production Strategy | 95 |
| VI. Conclusion – Retrospect and Prospect | 98 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| CHAPTER 6 | |
| Protest Vernacular – Neo-Traditional Media Versus the Military State | 101 |
| I. Introduction | 101 |
| II. Historical and Sociological Woof | 104 |
| III. Media Versus Military State | 107 |
| IV. Conclusion – Orature and the Discourse Map | 116 |
| CHAPTER 7 | |
| The Global Context – The International Media and the Crisis of Democratisation. | 119 |
| I. Introduction – The Issues. | 119 |
| II. Carrot and Stick Approach to Global Media. | 121 |
| III. Editorial Postures | 124 |
| IV. The Media and Globalisation. | 130 |
| Concluding Remarks – Democratisation and Resurgent Media | 134 |

Dedication

This research report is dedicated to Bagauda Kaltho of the *News*, who did not survive the terror of the Abacha years to tell his story, as well as to all those who refused to “keep silent” in the face of tyranny.

Introduction

This report is the product of a study grant provided by the Ford Foundation and administered by the Media Rights Agenda for the 2001/2002 season.

The report's antecedents go back to 1996, however, when I was invited to read a research paper on media and governance in Africa to an international seminar at Arusha, Tanzania, funded by the Ford Foundation and the Carnegie Endowment.

The stimulating suggestions that I received on the paper from a team of scholars, including Professor Goran Hyden of the University of Florida, Professor S.S. Mushi of the University of Dar-es-Salaam, Professor Okoth-Ogendo of the University of Nairobi, Professor Dele Olowu of the Institute of Social Studies of The Hague, as well as Professors Bayo Williams and Kayode Soremekun, refined and refired my evolving thoughts on the subject.

The paper subsequently appeared in a book published by Africa World Press of New Jersey.

In 1999, I was one of seven Nigerian scholars who became laureates of the University of Sussex/Ford Foundation project on Governance and Civil Society. Administered by the Centre for Research and Documentation, Kano, the grant enabled me to study Nigeria's guerrilla media in the context of state-civil society "encounters."

Two other grants, one from the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and the other from the Ford Foundation (administered by the African Centre for Democratic Governance), enabled me to produce two monographs, one on the media under the Abacha dictatorship, and the other on oral protest media in the Yoruba area under the military. The stage was set, therefore, for a monograph-length study of the entire gamut of state-media relations in Nigeria between 1988 and 1999, which the Ford Foundation grant enabled.

Data collection for this book involved in-depth interviews with media workers across the political divide; state officials, especially those involved in information policy in the years under study; as well as key civil society actors.

Except in a few cases, where they requested anonymity, they have been identified by name in the text. I have drawn on data in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 contained in articles published in the April and July 2002 editions of *African Affairs* (Oxford) with the permission of the journal.

I am indebted to a host of persons whom it would be tedious to list in full. Tunde Babawale, Femi Osofisan, Kehinde Bamigbetan, Femi Adagunodo, and Adewale Maja-Pearce deserve particular mention. I must also thank a diverse group of respondents to my badgering for interviews, a group that included at one level Professor Sam Oyovbare, former minister of information, and at another level, Professor Bolaji Akinyemi, Professor Julius Ihvonbere, and Onome Osifo-Whiskey, the last three being linked in one way or another with the guerrilla media. There are, of course, several others whom I must thank without hassling the reader with their names.

Finally, I thank my wife, Stella, and our boys, Tope and Tade, who bore with equanimity the field trips, library work, and seasons when I was forced to be incommunicado in the crucible of the research enterprise.

I take responsibility, of course, for the weaknesses, as well as strengths of the book.

Ayo Olukotun

CHAPTER 1

Hegemonic Contest – Repressive State Versus Resurgent Media

I. Introduction

In Nigeria, the years between the late 1980s and 1999, when the country returned to civilian democracy of sorts, were marked by overt state repression counter-vailed by the intense activity of an aroused civil society. As the throes and woes of a derailed adjustment policy, a “transition without end,”¹ as well as the country’s pariah status in international relations hit home, sections of civil society rose in protest against the increasingly dysfunctional and venal state.

Nigeria’s vibrant media played an influential role in the struggles over democratisation and a reformed polity in these years. Defying censorship laws, closure of media houses, detention and abduction of journalists, and the mysterious disappearance of key opposition figures, a section of the media, drawing on a protest motif dating back to colonial days, carried the struggle against the monumentally corrupt military class to a new pitch. Paying tribute to the role and posture of the media in these years, Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka, who was a conspicuous member of the opposition in exile, said

The press, and let me seize this very opportunity to stress this, the press has been magnificent, heroic and one of these days, when there is more pleasure, we are going to erect a statue, I am going to see personally to this, that a statue for heroism of the press is erected at a prominent place in this country, we must never ever forget.²

At the heart of the media opposition to successive dictatorial regimes was the invention of a guerrilla strategy in which critical publications and a pirate radio station continued to ventilate societal grievances about the polity and to pinpoint the corruption and perpetuation in power through sleights of hand of the military custodians of the state.³

In studying protest-inspired popular culture in the Yoruba area of Nigeria in these years, I became convinced that a great deal of rebellious orature, with its bold defiance of the state, constituted a counter-hegemonic discourse in neo-Gramscian terms, being designed to subvert state propaganda and the closure of the regular channels of expression.⁴ Hence, we have subordinates not just reproducing “the authoritarian epistemology,”⁵ but also actively subverting it by “celebrating their estrangement from the ruling class.”⁶

Closer reading and reflection convinced me, however, that the rebellious poets and underground journalists were only symbolic of a new form of discourse that allows “civil society to define the image of its own evolution and to

free itself from the shackles of official propaganda.”⁷ In short, we are dealing with alternative media that had risen to the challenge of providing a new critical episteme centred around, on the one hand, anti-authoritarian images and, on the other, a version of democracy that went beyond the trappings and paraphernalia of the electoral democracy favoured by donor institutions and the international media.

Rummaging through the history of the press, I found that there were precedents for the role played by the media in these years, and that in a sense a militant media genre had always posed this counter-hegemonic alternative to the custodians of the repressive state, from Lord Lugard right down to General Abacha.

Leaning on the postulations of hegemony theory influentially adumbrated by Antonio Gramsci and latter-day scholars such as Jürgen Habermas, Louis Althusser, as well as Robert Cox, I contextualise the role of the media in these years. Therefore, while not minimising the role of such factors as ethnic polarisation, the rise of a junk press, or the locational concentration of the media in south-western Nigeria, I argue that the contest between a hegemonised, state-owned media – along with their allies in the privately owned media – and the militant media genre is of cardinal importance. Hence, for example, the managers of state-owned media were involved in policy formulation at the highest levels, as well as in the construction of legitimising motifs through campaigns such as the War Against Indiscipline (WAI) of the Buhari Years 1984–85. Opposed to them and the agenda they set, however, are an increasingly radical press whose opposition to the state drew strength from the protest motif of the anti-colonial press; from international currents and technologies that were anti-authoritarian; and from the more active sectors of Nigerian civil society.

In the next two sections, I elaborate on this motif and explicitly spell out the theoretical elements of hegemony theory. I go on to show in a further section how the theory applies to our study of state-media relations between 1988 and 1998.

II. The Context – Antecedants

It is generally recognised that ours is pre-eminently the age of the media. The growing use of personal computers, cellular phones, the Internet, and other accoutrements of telecomedia signal a new era of media pervasiveness.⁸ In the industrial democracies, for example, it is argued that the media – television especially – increasingly replace traditional political institutions as channels of communication between presidents, prime ministers, and the broad masses.⁹

In spite of the media’s pervasiveness and growing complaints about the so-called “CNN effect,” as well as recognition of the media as the democratic wave’s leading edge, scholarly mapping, analysis, and projection of these trends remain underdeveloped. After several decades of media research, Barbie Zelizer could

lament as late as 1993 that “media power is one of the outstanding conundrums of contemporary era public discourse in that we still cannot account for the media’s persistent presence as arbiters of events in the real world.”¹⁰

The situation is even more dismal with reference to African media research: Les Switzer, in a review of three recent books, complains that “empirical research on the mass media is often lacking in quantity and quality as the contributions of critical scholars are either ignored or misused, while much of the literature is framed in a Euro-American context.”¹¹

One conspicuous blind spot concerns the role of the media in democratic struggles, a role that, as mentioned earlier, is often recognised but little studied. Modernisation theory, in spite of its widely acknowledged failings, did place communication at the heart of its study of political systems. If we go back, for example, to Gabriel Almond’s seven-variable list of the functional categories of a system, political communication is listed as an input function. Indeed, Almond likens political communication to the circulation of blood. According to him:

It is not the blood but what it contains that nourishes the system. The blood is the neutral medium carrying claims, protests, and demands through the veins to the heart; and from the heart through the arteries flow the output of rules, regulations, and adjudications in response to the claims and demands.¹²

Unfortunately, this insight, as well as that of Karl Deutsch, who viewed communication and information flows as the nerves of government,¹³ was not deployed to study political change or flux, but mainly to study system maintenance in contexts where it is taken for granted that change will be incremental. This criticism, of course, applies as well to the entire corpus of modernisation theory and was one of the reasons for its early abandonment by students of the developing world. Matters were not helped by the circularity of the arguments within modernisation theory that stated that the media propel modernisation, while also positing that modernisation along Western lines would aid the rise of plural media.

Similarly, studies which employed a dependency framework to examine the media were limited in that they had less to say on the processes of political change within the dependent countries and also because, as Robert Martin argues, they were employed to apologise for authoritarian forms of media control in these countries.¹⁴

Within the discipline of mass communication, emphasis tended to be laid in the African context on newsgathering, the status and role-conception of media workers, as well as changing communication policies.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, when the third wave of democratisation broke, both the disciplines of political science and mass communication were ill-prepared to theorise, explain, or predict the ways in which the media catalyse or slow democratisation or, indeed, political change and social movements in general.

Hence, the seminal study of transitions in the Latin American context¹⁵ and a spate of books on the subject hardly paid any attention to the media. As a further illustration of this trend, Professor Okwudiba Nnoli's influential edited volume on government and politics in Africa, which ran to thirty-three chapters, did not discuss the media.¹⁶ With few exceptions, therefore, the relationship between state, media, and democratisation has not been studied or theorised.¹⁷ Adigun Agbaje's recent study of the Nigerian press¹⁸ tended to move in this direction but it dealt with the years between 1960 and 1983, and understandably, therefore, did not address the current wave of democratisation in Nigeria or Africa.

III. Hegemony Theory

In spite of the impasse in Marxist theory, accentuated by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the retrenchment of the communist world, hegemony theory has continued to flower in recent years. Its revival in British political science owes much to Stuart Hall's incisive deployment of its key insights to the analysis of Thatcherism to show how, for instance, it employed authoritarian populist themes to rally the nation behind a conservative banner.¹⁹ Of course, the essays of Jürgen Habermas and others have also kept the theoretical debate alive in Europe.

In North America, the pioneering application of hegemony theory to international relations by Robert Cox²⁰ has generated in its wake a growing body of literature that alludes to the creation of a neo-liberal hegemony in the international political economy under American auspices. Indeed, Rita Abrahamsen's 1997 paper²¹ in which a neo-Gramscian perspective is employed to analyse the democratisation wave in Africa, as well as Adigun Agbaje's recent book on Nigeria,²² point to the continuing vitality of the theory. Hegemony theory may in fact come in time to replace the now jaded dependency theory, given the latter's failure to adequately theorise the domestic dimensions of Africa's political economy.

Hegemony theory, which was first explicitly formulated by the Italian radical thinker and Marxist Antonio Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks*,²³ may be said to derive partly from Marx's famous statement in *The German Ideology* that:

The Ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas – The class which is the ruling material force in society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it.²⁴

This is itself unproblematical, even somewhat obvious, as far as it goes. It says very little, however, about the exercise of hegemony by the ruling class and how dissenting intellectuals within the ruling class as well as other classes may subvert

this intellectual domination. It was left to Gramsci to put a theoretical handle on Marx's statement. According to him:

The intellectuals of the historically (and concretely) progressive class in the given conditions exercise such a power of attraction that, in the last analysis, they end up by subjugating the intellectuals of the other social groups; they thereby create a system of solidarity between all the intellectuals with bonds of a psychological nature (vanity, etc.) and often of a cast character (techno-juridical, corporate, etc.).²⁵

If we excuse the dense lexicon, the point is that ruling class ideology becomes in time the sanctified common sense of the entire society through the "power of attraction" or the superior, often tacit advocacy of ruling class intellectuals. Contrary ideological currents may find expression in a plural setting, but they are treated as diversions or eccentricities.

When the hidden persuaders of legitimation fail, there is, of course, a resort to force, but the point is to create a system that makes constant resort to force unnecessary. As Gramsci put it:

The normal exercise of hegemony is characterised by the combination of force and consent, which balance each other reciprocally without force predominating excessively over consent. Indeed, the attempt is always made to ensure that force would appear to be based on the consent of the majority expressed by the so-called organs of public opinion – newspapers and associations – which therefore in certain situations are artificially multiplied.²⁶

This situation can, however, be altered through the development of counter-hegemony led by intellectuals of subordinate classes.

The mass media, along with the educational system, occupy an important place in legitimation struggles, for they are the carriers of ruling class ideology which employ such concepts as "national interest," "our democracy," and emblems of nationhood to maintain a consensus perspective.²⁷ Thus, as Harmes elaborates, "a hegemonic social force must be able both to project its own interests as being for the universal good, and also to provide – or appear to provide – real material benefits to those consenting to its rule."²⁸

As we shall see, the constraining milieu of structural adjustment policies and the popular perception of their deleterious effects substantially eroded the capacity of the Nigerian state to maintain hegemony in the years under study.²⁹

Gramsci's formulation of hegemony theory was extended and carried forward by such scholars as Althusser,³⁰ Jürgen Habermas,³¹ Ralph Milliband,³² and, in the context of international relations, Robert Cox³³ and Stephen Gill.³⁴ In view of this diverse heritage, many latter-day Gramscians have abandoned the Marxist underpinnings and class analysis that informed Gramsci's postulations, thereby provoking charges of eclecticism.³⁵ What is important, however, is for anyone using the theory to show how he has adopted it.

Interesting from the point of view of this study are the insights of Louis Althusser,³⁶ who showed that hegemony involves both the coercive or repressive power of the state, in the shape of the security and military infrastructure, as well as an ideological component maintained by what he called “Ideological State Apparatuses” (ISA).

These Ideological Apparatuses are elaborated as the ways in which hegemony is reproduced through such agencies as culture, communication, education, law, politics, religion, and family. Althusser’s work on this score has been justly criticised as granting very little autonomy to civil society, in that it assumes that its various agencies are thoroughly permeated by the state and, therefore, underestimates the extent to which these “apparatuses” are centres of counter-hegemonic resistance to the state and the dominant ideology.³⁷

Another influential reformulation of hegemony theory is found in the various works of Jürgen Habermas. The most relevant of these for our purposes are his *Legitimation Crisis*,³⁸ his *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*,³⁹ and the recent *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*.⁴⁰

Legitimation Crisis analyses the ways in which the state in advanced capitalist countries is legitimated by the production of conservative political theories, as well as by the depoliticisation of the public realm, which reduces citizens to “political consumers rather than active participants.”⁴¹ These legitimation strategies, however, soon wear thin as citizens begin to see through them and, more importantly, as a motivation crisis produced by the lack of fit between an affluent consumerist society and such pre-bourgeois values as frugality and the Protestant ethic begins to show.⁴² For example, it is hard to reconcile a welfare system of advanced capitalism resting on an equalitarian ethos with a work ethic that stresses achievement through hard work. Habermas’s *Between Facts and Norms* in several respects develops the arguments advanced in his study of the public sphere. The key to legitimating liberal democracies, he argues, is effective communicative power, which in contrast to the “democratic deficits of existing advanced capitalist states”⁴³ with their deformed public spheres, entails a situation “where it becomes possible for citizens to identify, articulate and effectively bring to the attention of their political representatives their values, concerns and interests.”⁴⁴

His conception of the public sphere draws on the vibrant debates that characterised the coffee houses and salons of seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe, which constituted a “communicative space where the private individuals in the society could meet as a public to discuss matters of general or public interest.”⁴⁵

The “democratic deficits” of modern industrial democracies arise because of the decay of these institutions of acute debate of public issues, the rise of organised interest groups, and the competitive market pressures that prevent the media from being genuinely representative institutions. Hence, in contrast to the disem-

powerment of citizens and their marginal influence on decision-making, Habermas posits a deliberative democracy in which civil society, through the auspices of communicative power, can exercise better control of policy-making.

Although Habermas's *Facts and Norms* has been criticised for apologising for, or excusing, many of liberal democracy's failings,⁴⁶ the book and his earlier theorisation of the public sphere have continued to generate debate about the extent to which the media constitute a genuine "public sphere," in Habermas's terms, rather than being the handmaiden of organised business groups or of monopoly capital. Curran has suggested, for instance, that especially with private media, where shareholding is dispersed, journalists are able to "manage a change in the general climate of opinion, a shift in the milieu in which journalists move, and the recomposition of accredited sources."⁴⁷ In this view, the media comes close to providing "the talking cure" in a representative public sphere, which Habermas prescribes for curing the deficiencies of liberal democracy.⁴⁸

Ralph Milliband's influential study of hegemony offers concrete empirical proof of the ways in which the state manages the media, by citing the example of West Germany in the 1970s, where the chancellor had a secret fund of DM13 million for the purpose of supporting government-friendly newspapers.⁴⁹

Similarly in the American context, Noam Chomsky and others argue that mainstream media facilitate hegemony by raising questions about government policy, "almost exclusively within the framework determined by the essentially shared interest of state corporate power. Divisions among elites are reflected in media debate but departure from their narrow consensus is rare."⁵⁰

Recently a number of scholars working within the hegemony theory tradition have combined the key insights of the theory with those of discourse analysis to analyse how oppressed groups and classes construct resistance to domination, sometimes through the use of alternative media forms.⁵¹ Robert Fatton, for example, drawing on the study by James Scott⁵² of "Infrapolitical" resistance, suggests that in state-civil society contests in Africa,

The war of words entails controlling and disciplining the production of consciousness. Knowing full well that their presence in positions of power is contingent on the continued dominance of their "official episteme," predatory rulers are not likely to tolerate the public emergence of an alternative infra political episteme.⁵³

IV. Hegemony and the Media – Applying the Theory

The hegemony framework as reviewed in the preceding sections is undoubtedly very useful in a study of state-media relations both in advanced capitalist countries, where most of the debates have taken place, as well as in Africa.

Following Ericson and others, hegemony is conceptualised in this book as a framework that "addresses how superordinates manufacture and sustain support for their dominance over subordinates through dissemination and reproduction

of knowledge that favours their interests, and how subordinates alternatively accept or contest their knowledge.”⁵⁴

The mass media are conceived to include not just the print and electronic organs of communication but also the ensemble of popular culture as reflected, for instance, in folk media, which harbours a repertoire of counter-hegemonic values and epistemes.

Our conception of democratisation goes beyond its formal trappings of electoralism and multiparty rule to include the struggle for social and economic rights, as well as genuine empowerment in Habermas’s terms.

Pertinent, too, to our study is the creation by civil society of alternative media to contest the domination and repression of civil society by the military state. Here, I draw on the conceptualisation of alternative media by Downes and Miller as including not only “representations which challenge stereotypes”⁵⁵ but also of “media using mainstream forms to challenge mainstream ideology; material not often included in mainstream production; encoding alternative or oppositional messages in texts as well as circulation through different distribution systems and specialist outlets.”⁵⁶

In the period under study, the independent press became sites of hegemonic struggle between the official episteme vended by state-owned media along with the compliant sections of the commercial press on the one hand, and the democratic episteme favoured by articulate civil society on the other. What was happening in the private media was complemented by developments in popular culture, where, as I show in Chapter 6, an alternative, vernacular form was deployed to challenge the military state. I argue in Chapter 2 that these events, connected with the crisis of democratisation, have antecedents not just in precolonial popular culture, but also in the ways in which a militant press genre arose in colonial and early post-colonial history to curb a predatory state.

Of course, the best illustration of an alternative form of media during Nigeria’s democratic struggles was the underground journals of the military years, as well as a pirate radio station, which were employed to delegitimise the military state in the face of repression and terror tactics.⁵⁷

Concerning the state, it bears the legacy of its colonial antecedents, which, in Ake’s words, “made no pretence of being anything more than an organised force used determinedly to effect colonisation and to prevent resistance to it.”⁵⁸ Although Ake underestimates the extent to which the colonists tried to blunt the bite of nationalist resistance by creating a pliant press to oppose the militant anti-colonial press, his characterisation of the state is apt.

In the Nigerian context, and specifically under the military regimes discussed, the state sought to create hegemony by rallying the nation behind military messiahs employing a benign ideology of order and unity and by the cooption of democratic activists into a legitimising framework. This framework, which included

the transformation of a military messiah (Abacha) into a civilian president, could not be sustained, however, because of the relentless opposition of civil society led by a section of the media; because, also, of the opposition of the international community reflected in the international media; and finally because it failed to rise above the constraints of a failed adjustment policy. Unsurprisingly, the death of the dictator in 1998 paved the way for the demilitarisation of the polity and a return to liberal democracy in 1999 under the watchful eyes of the media and the international community.

The international media, though conveying the values of a hegemonic neo-liberal political economy, nonetheless helped to foster anti-authoritarian struggles and to legitimate counter-hegemonic forces within the national community. Their role is discussed in Chapter 7.

Finally, the study is located within the matrix of critical media research, “centrally concerned with the constitution and exercise of power,”⁵⁹ and goes beyond an approach centred on the media to one that “relates media to a series of processes and institutions – such as economic forces, international relations, the state and political movements.”⁶⁰ Hence, as mentioned earlier, we deal with contestation by describing how hegemony is constituted by establishment and mainstream media, and how it is contested by “those forms of mass communication that avowedly reject or challenge establishment and institutionalised politics, in the sense that they all advocate change in society or at least a critical assessment of traditional values.”⁶¹

End Notes

1. Larry Diamond, Anthony Kirk-Greene, and Oyeleye Oyediran (eds), *Transition without End: Nigerian Politics and Civil Society under Babangida* (Ibadan: Vantage, 1997).
2. *Guardian* (17 October 1998) p. 5.
3. See Ayo Olukotun, Authoritarian State, Crisis of Democratisation and the Underground Media in Nigeria, in *African Affairs* (July 2002) pp. 317–42.
4. See Ayo Olukotun, Traditional Protest Media and Democracy in Yorubaland, Research Report presented to the African Centre for Democratic Governance, Nigeria under the Ford Foundation-sponsored, Traditional Political Institutions and the Struggle for Democracy in Nigeria, (2000). See also Ayo Olukotun, Traditional Protest Media and Anti-Military Struggle in Nigeria 1988–99, *African Affairs* (April 2002) pp. 193–211, and Ayo Olukotun, Traditional Protest Media and Democratic Struggles: The Nigerian Experience, in *Africa Yearbook 2002–03* (Oslo, Norwegian Council for Africa, 2002) pp. 85–91. See also Karin Barber, *I Could Speak until Tomorrow: Oriki, Women and the Past in a Yoruba Town* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991).
5. Achle Mbembe, Power and Obscenity in the Postcolonial Period: The Case of Cameroon, in James Manor (ed), *Rethinking Third World Politics* (New York: Longman, 1991) p. 175.
6. Robert Fatton, Jr., Africa in the Age of Democratisation: The Civic Limitations of Civil Society, *African Studies Review*, 38, 2 (1995) p. 68.

7. Celestin Monga, Civil Society and Democratisation in Africa, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 333 (1995) p. 368.
8. See, for example, Richard Huggins and John Turner, The Politics of Influence and Control, in Barrie Axford, Gary K. Browning *et al.* (eds), *Politics: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1997) p. 392.
9. Ibid.
10. Barbie Zelizer, Has Communication Explained Journalism? *Journal of Communication*, 43 (Autumn 1993) p. 80.
11. Les Switzer in a review essay in *African Studies Review*, 38 (September 1995) p. 133.
12. Gabriel A. Almond, A Functional Approach to Comparative Politics, in Gabriel A. Almond and James S. Coleman (eds), *The Politics of the Developing Areas* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960) p. 47 as cited in S.p. Varma, *Modern Political Theory: A Critical Survey* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1975) p. 214.
13. Karl Deutsch, *The Nerves of Government* (New York: Free Press, 1966).
14. Robert Martin, Freedom of Expression in Africa, in Patrick H. O'Neil (ed), *Communicating Democracy: The Media and Political Transitions* (London: Lynn Reiner, 1998) p. 69. See also Olatunji Dape, The Role of the Print Media in Development and Social Change, in Andrew Moemeka (ed), *Development Communication in Action: Building Understanding and Creating Participation* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000) pp. 161–78.
15. Guillermo O'Donnell, Phillippe Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead (eds), *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*, 4 vols (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).
16. Okwudiba Nnoli (ed), *Government and Politics in Africa: A Reader* (Harare: African Association of Political Science (AAPS) Books, 2000).
17. Some of the exceptions include Patrick H O'Neil (ed), *Communicating Democracy: The Media and Political Transitions*, op. cit. See also Ayo Olukotun, Governance and the Media, in Goran Hyden, Hastings W. Okoth-Ogendo, and Dele Olowu (eds), *African Perspectives on Governance* (Trenton, NJ and Asmara: Africa World Press, 2000) pp. 91–121, and Ayo Olukotun and Tale Omole, The Media and Democratisation in Nigeria 1984–96, in Kayode Soremekun, Adebayo Williams, and Dele Olowu (eds), *Governance and Democratisation in West Africa* (Dakar: Codesria Press, 1999) pp. 239–63, and Goran Hyden, Michael Leslie, and Folu Ogundimu (eds), *Media and Democracy in Africa* (Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, 2002).
18. Adigun Agbaje, *The Nigerian Press, Hegemony, and the Social Construction of Legitimacy 1960–83* (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1992).
19. Stuart Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left* (London: Verso, 1988). See also the discussion of Hall's book in Ben Rossamond, Political Culture, in Barrie Axford *et al.* (eds), op. cit., p. 88.
20. See for example, Robert Cox and T. Sinclair, *Approaches to World Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). See also Stephen Gill and James Mittleman (eds), *Innovation and Transformation in International Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
21. Rita Abrahamsen, The Victory of Popular Forces or Passive Revolution? A Neo-Gramscian Perspective on Democratisation, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 35 (1997) pp. 129–52.
22. Adigun Agbaje, op. cit.
23. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, edited and translated by O. Hoare and G.N. Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971).
24. Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*, as cited in Ralph Milliband, *The State in Capitalist Societies: The Analysis of the Western System of Power* (London: Quartet, 1973) pp. 162–3.
25. Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, as cited in David McLellan, *Marxism after Marx: An Introduction* (London: Macmillan, 1979) p. 185.

26. Ibid., p. 186.
27. See for example, Brenda Downes and Steve Miller, *Media Studies* (London: Hodder, 1998) p. 26. The authors write: "It is possible to spot examples of hegemony in operation in the Media by analysing closely the language used to describe current affairs or to represent Political issues. References to 'Our government' or 'Our foreign Policy' can be seen as evidence of the inclusive nature of hegemony, which is intended to naturalise and unite the population. The effect on those who disagree with the actions of 'Our government' is to set them apart as dissenters: they become seen as 'not one of us.'"
28. See Adam Harmes, Mass Investment Culture, *New Left Review* (May–June 2001) p. 103.
29. See for example, Adesina Sambo and Francis Enemu, State-Civil Society Relations and the Legitimacy Crisis of Military Rule in Nigeria, in Adebayo Ninalowo (ed), *Crisis of Legitimation: The State and Vested Interests* (Lagos: Obaroh and Ogbinaka Publishers, 1999) pp. 17–34.
30. See for example, Louis Althusser, Ideology and Ideology State Apparatuses, in Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy*, translated by B. Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971).
31. See Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis* (London: Heinemann, 1976), and Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, translated by T. Burger and F. Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989). See also Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, translated by William Rehg (Cambridge MA: Cambridge, 1996) as cited in Deborah Cook, The Talking Cure in Habermas's Republic, *New Left Review*, 12 (November/December 2001) pp. 135–51.
32. Ralph Milliband, op. cit.
33. Robert Cox, Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory, *Milennium*, 10, 1, (1981) pp. 126–55.
34. Stephen Gill, Transformation and Innovation in the Study of World Order, in Stephen Gill and James Mittleman (eds), op. cit., pp. 5–25.
35. See Enrico Augelli and Craig N. Murphy, Consciousness, Myth and Collective Action: Gramsci, Sorel and the Ethical State, in Stephen Gill and James Mittleman (eds), op. cit., p. 32.
36. Louis Althusser, Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses, op. cit., p. 135. See also McLellan, op. cit., p. 303.
37. Rossamond, op. cit., p. 87.
38. Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, op. cit.
39. Jürgen Habermas, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, op. cit.
40. Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, op. cit.
41. See Patrick Dunleavy and Brendan O'Leary, *Theories of the State: The Politics of Liberal Democracy* (London: Macmillan, 1987) p. 207.
42. Ibid., p. 268.
43. Deborah Cook, op. cit., p. 130.
44. Ibid., p. 137.
45. See Tunde Akanni, The Public Sphere and 1998 Political Transition Programme in Nigeria. Unpublished M.A. dissertation (Mass Communication), University of Leicester, 2000, p. 10.
46. Deborah Cook, op. cit., p. 150.
47. J. Curran, Rethinking the Media as Public Sphere, in Dahlgren and C. Sparks (eds), *Communication and Citizenship. Journalism and the Public Sphere* (London: Routledge, 1991) p. 38, as cited in Tunde Akanni, op. cit., p. 12.
48. Deborah Cook, op. cit., p. 150.
49. Ralph Milliband, op. cit., p. 162.

50. Noam Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions: Thought Control in Democratic Societies* (London: Pluto, 1989) p. 75.
51. See for example, Thilven Reddy, *Hegemony and Resistance: Contesting Identities in South Africa* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2000).
52. James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).
53. Robert Fatton, Jr., Africa in the Age of Democratisation, op. cit., p. 69.
54. R. Ericson, M. Baranck, and J. B. Chan, *Representing Order* (London: Open University Press, 1991) p. 12.
55. Downes and Miller, op. cit., p. 35.
56. Ibid.
57. Ayo Olukotun, Authoritarian State Crisis of Democratisation and the Underground Media in Nigeria, op. cit.
58. Claude Ake, Democratisation of Disempowerment in Africa, Centre for Advanced Social Science, Occasional Monograph, Port Harcourt, 1994, p. 7.
59. Peter Golding and Graham Murdock, Culture, Communications, and Political Economy, in James Curran and Michael Gurevitch (eds), *Mass Media and Society* (London: Edward Arnold, 1991) p. 16.
60. Karol Jacobowicz, Media Within and Without the State: Press Freedom in Eastern Europe, *Journal of Communication*, 45 (1995) p. 129.
61. Tim O'Sullivan, *Key Concepts in Communication and Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 1995), as cited in Abdul Oroh, State, Media and Militarism: *Tell News Magazine* and the Struggle against Abacha's Military Dictatorship in Nigeria. Unpublished MA dissertation, University of Leicester 1999, p. 10.

CHAPTER 2

The Economic and Technological Tapestry – The Global Backdrop

To fully understand media and how they connect with democratic and power struggles, it is important to factor in the economics of production, distribution, and location; ownership issues; changing technologies; as well as the mode of the country's insertion into the information-driven global order. To take one illustration of these intertwined sets of issues, the lack of a functioning and efficient telecommunication sector in Nigeria and much of Africa obviously erodes their connectivity to international information networks, producing what Roger de Weck has called information poverty.¹ Hence, at one level, the gap, even chasm, is widening between an industrialised world where newspapers are distributed simultaneously in Europe and Asia as a result of satellite transmission facilities between Paris and Hong Kong, and much of Africa, where distribution still takes place in many cases by road travel.

As is well known, at the heart of globalisation in the information sector is the convergence between media and telecommunication technologies as well as the expansion through mergers of media conglomerates that combine television, cable, on-line services, computer hardware and software, thriller films, electronic publishing, and manufacturing.²

The power of global media such as the Cable and News Network (CNN), which has been aptly described as the "16th member of the United Nation's Security Council,"³ derives from these cutting edge technologies that have produced a world in which transnationals such as Time Warner, Sony, and Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation increasingly decide what the rest of the world sees and reads.

Central to the information age in which Nigeria and Africa remain peripheral is the dominance of a neo-liberal world-view that celebrates capitalist market forces as well as liberal democracy, defined mainly in procedural terms.⁴

In this respect, there are criticisms within the developing world of the way in which an homogenised Western culture, characterised by Murdoch's Sky TV, Ted Turner's CNN, BBC's satellite TV, and VOA's world net is fast leading to what Uche has termed the "political, economic and cultural recolonisation of the South."⁵ Pinpointing the cartelisation and monopoly trends of the media and entertainment business globally, Frances Cairncross, in an influential book, *The Death of Distance*, says:

TCI America's Second Largest Cable Company which was nearly taken over by Bell Atlantic, a regional telephone company and which owns Liberty Media which claims to be the world's largest Programmer, owns part of Time Warner, America's largest

Cable Company, which in turn owns Turner Broadcasting, America's third largest cable company and which has had an acrimonious joint venture with US west another regional Bell.⁶

Examples of this "incestuous intertwining,"⁷ as Cairncross termed it, are not confined to the United States. In Britain, seven companies dominate the print media. Of these seven, two of them, News International and the Mirror Group, control between them 61 per cent of newspaper circulation in the United Kingdom.⁸ That is not all. News International also owns 40 per cent of BSKB and News Datacom technology subsidiary, while the Mirror Group, publishers of the *Mirror*, *Sunday Mirror* as well as the *Independent*, is the owner of Live Television and Wire TV as well as 40 per cent of TV in Scotland.⁹

News International, it should be noted, also has global tentacles, as it owns shares in the media industry in Asia and Australia.¹⁰ One consequence of this monopoly trend is a media industry wedded less to readers and viewers than to advertisers, corporations, and the interests of capital generally. It also makes efficient the transmission of a uniform neo-liberal viewpoint across the world, in which the American perspective is dominant. Hence a culturalist domination is superimposed on a political-economic and technological superiority. As Franklin and Love express it:

... the West has been able to define and control the world's problems, not only at the level of the material, which political economy is happy to explore, but just as importantly at the level of ideas. In other words, what is considered worth knowing about the world is defined and controlled by the West. And the media in all its globalised forms can be seen as an agent in this enterprise.¹¹

The feeble capacity, decrepit infrastructure, and limited reach of Nigerian and African media translate into dependence on global media as sources of news and even perspective. In terms of content, an overwhelming proportion, in the range of 70 per cent, of what is published or aired in the Nigerian media emanates from the United States and British media. This trend is accentuated by the tendency of Nigerian military and political leaders to make important statements on policy to international media. For example, Nigeria's General Sani Abacha never granted an interview to any Nigerian media from 1993 to 1998, but granted a couple of interviews to the United States media.¹²

Monopoly trends aside, there is the dismal economics of media globally. It should be noted that rapid economic shifts are the order of the day. In the United States, for example, the 1980s witnessed the death of several titles. Particularly hard hit were afternoon newspapers such as the *Minneapolis Star*, *Cleveland Press*, *Washington Star*, and *Oregon Journal*.¹³ In the 1990s, the economic situation for newspapers in the United States grew worse. Take circulation for instance. In spite of the boost to circulation by growth in population, there has been a steady

decline in circulation figures. A 1998 survey by the American Society of Newspaper Editors showed that while 67 per cent of the population of the United States read at least one paper a day in 1977, in 1997 the figure had dropped to 51 per cent.¹⁴

Similarly, the share of advertising to revenue dropped from 22.4 per cent in 1993 to 21.5 per cent in 1998, in spite of a slight mark-up in total advertising revenue. Underlining the declining fortunes of the newspaper industry in the United States,¹⁵ *The Economist* reported three years ago that:

New York City, for instance, used to have four newspapers. In 1995 *Newsday* pulled out of Manhattan to concentrate on the suburbs. Of the remaining three papers, the *New York Times* is profitable; the *New York Daily News* has struggled from crisis to crisis while losing circulation; and the *New York Post* has been winning circulation by keeping prices down, presumably at the cost of its bottom line.¹⁶

Hence, side by side with the increasing globalisation of the American media, indeed partly because of it and the loss of classified advertising to the Internet boom, the economics of the newspaper industry remain fragile. For an established democracy and society, declining economics of media may not substantially affect the geography of power relations. In Nigeria and much of Africa, however, declining media profitability may impact on power relations and have implications for ruling class hegemony. I turn now to consider the economics and technology of the media in Nigeria between 1989 and 1999.

I. Nigerian Media – Economics, Technology and Ownership The Context

Between 1990 and 1999, the media scene was characterised by a tight economic leash for the print and electronic media, reflecting a fragile macro-economy underpinned by the woes of a failed structural adjustment policy.¹⁷ Thus, although paradoxically the late 1980s and early 1990s witnessed a mushrooming of sorts in the newspaper and magazine industry, by the mid-1990s many of the titles had died, while the surviving ones were forced to downsize, close down some of their titles, as well as increase their cover price.

In what has been termed a great crash, over thirty-two publications collapsed between 1994 and 1997, partly due to the harsh economics of production made worse by government's unfriendly economic policies, as well as to political persecution of private media.¹⁸

Thus, although the rapid rise and fall of newspapers is a familiar scenario in Nigerian press history, the period under study witnessed that syndrome to an extreme degree.

The list in Table 1 is far from exhaustive, but is at least indicative of the high mortality of newspapers and magazines in the period under study.

Table 1: Extinct Publications 1994–97

| | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| Evening Times | Republic |
| Nigerian Economist | Citizen |
| Viva | Quality |
| Posie | Eko |
| Times Week | City News |
| Sports International | Voice Razor |
| Money Matters | Master Sports |
| Financial Post | Sports Star |
| Business Champion | City Sports |
| Mail | Nigeria Herald |
| Lagos Weekend | Sunray |
| Abuja Newswatch | A.M. News |
| Corporate | Community Concord |

Source: Newswatch, 6 November 1995, p. 23 and research notes.
The Herald was revived in 1998 by the Kwara State government.

The trend of a dizzying rise and fall of newspapers, and the strains imposed on existing ones, continued right up to 1999, as the fortunes of the *Diet* newspaper suggest. Established in 1997 by Mr. James Ibori, a close ally of the dictator General Sani Abacha, by 1999 most of its staff had walked out as a result of the non-payment of salaries for several months. A few months into the new civilian government, its publisher, the new governor of Delta State, relaunched the paper in attractive technicolour. This, however, did not change the paper's fortunes, and in 2001 a new paper, *Daily Independent*, owned largely by the same publisher, took over from the ashes of the now defunct *Diet*.

Underlining the flourishing and rapid demise of newspapers in the study period are the death of several "soft-sell" magazines specialising in the romantic exploits of the high and mighty. Such once-thriving titles as *Classique*, *Quality*, *Vintage People*, *Crown Prince* and the like are all gone from the market. Similarly, such well-produced magazines as *This Week*, *Nigerian Economist*, and *Quality* did not survive beyond the early 1990s.¹⁹

At the macro-economic level, structural adjustment policies produced a new millionaire class riding on the boom in the financial and banking sector, with its harvest of speculative activities and the so-called wonder banks. Many of the emergent newspapers and magazines in the late 1980s and early 1990s rode the crest of this financial wave, although specifically, too, the ongoing so-called transition to civilian democracy under Babangida was an added incentive. Apart from the short-lived nature of the financial boom, which resulted in the crash of several banks, structural adjustment policies produced rising inflation rates, low capacity utilisation, a heightened crisis of infrastructural decay, and diminishing external reserves. Take the period from 1990 to 1994, for example:

Table 2: Select Macro-Economic Indicators

| | 1990 | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Real GDP (growth rate %) | 8.3 | 4.7 | 3.0 | 2.3 | 1.3 |
| Oil Sector | 5.6 | 9.2 | 2.7 | -2.6 | -6.0 |
| Non-Oil Sectors | 2.7 | 4.0 | 3.0 | 3.1 | 2.4 |
| Utilisation % | 43.2 | 39.4 | 41.8 | 37.2 | 30.4 |
| Inflation Rate (%) | 7.4 | 13.0 | 44.6 | 57.2 | 57.0 |
| Domestic Debt Stock | 32.3 | 35.9 | 31.5 | 31.9 | 38.1 |
| External Debt Stock | 114.3 | 101.2 | 98.9 | 79.0 | 72.3 |
| GDP per capita (₦) | 1,042 | 1,069 | 1,066 | 1,069 | 1,060 |

Source: Central Bank of Nigeria, *Annual Report and Statement of Account*, 1994, p. 2.

As Table 2 shows, the inflation rate rose from 7.4 per cent in 1990 to 44.6 per cent in 1992 and to 57 per cent in 1994. Similarly, capacity utilisation dipped from 43.2 per cent in 1990 to 39.4 per cent in 1991 and again to 30.4 per cent in 1994. These parlous economic indices, as we shall see shortly, translated into the high cost of newsprint and other inputs into newspaper production, as well as declining profitability.

Table 3: Rising Cost of Newspapers. Production Input (1992–98) ₦ Value

| Item | Qty | 1992 | 1994 | 1995 | 1998 |
|--------------------------|----------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 1. Black Ink | 1 Kilo | 50 | 75 | 210 | 80 |
| 2. Printing Film | 1 Packet | 1,500 | 6,000 | 12,250 | 16,500 |
| 3. Newsprint | 1 Ton | 17,000 | 68,000 | 88,000 | 64,000 |
| 4. Block Roller Wash | | 400 | 11,500 | 13,500 | — |
| 5. Plates | 1 Packet | 200 | 365 | 590 | 12,400 |
| 6. Pick up Van (Peugeot) | | 350,000 | 1.2m | 750,000 | 1.5m |

Source: Purchasing Department, Daily Times of Nigeria Plc.

The official exchange rate of the Naira was roughly ₦100 to \$1 between 1992 and 1998.

Table 3 shows the sharp price increase in inputs into printing, especially between 1994 and 1995. A kilo of ink jumped from ₦50 per kilo in 1992 to ₦75 per kilo in 1994, and again to ₦210 per kilo in 1995, but came down to ₦80 in 1998.

Other effects of the economic squeeze on the media were low remuneration for workers, the syndrome of unpaid salaries sometimes running into several months, frequent job changes, as well as the exodus of bright talents from jour-

nalism to other more lucrative professions. Symptomatic of the frequent job changes is the career of Mr. Gbemiga Ogunleye who, in the early 1990s, was a reporter at the *Guardian*. Following the establishment of *A.M. News*, a popular opposition newspaper, Ogunleye moved to the paper as features editor. Following several months of unpaid salaries in 1995, the journalist moved over to *The Punch* shortly before *A.M. News* announced its own obituary in 1996. Ogunleye remained at *The Punch* and rose to become editor of the paper, a position he retained until 2001.

Technology remains rudimentary in the media while computer adaptation is jerky and lacks synergy. Hence, in 1999, in a period when “electronic networks can connect databases and video cameras around the world to unprecedented computer power,”²⁰ a survey on Nigeria notes pertinently that “a visit to the *Guardian* newsroom does little credit to its place and influence in journalism. Besides being a long clutter of tables and chairs, reporters still go through the laborious chore of longhand production. Very little information technology presence is felt here.”²¹

Considering that the *Guardian* is one of Nigeria’s most prestigious newspapers, the state of its technology provides a crucial overview of the status of media technology in Nigeria. Thus, in spite of the arrival on the Internet of titles such as the *Post Express*, *Vanguard*, and the *Guardian*, many journalists were not computer literate in the period under study. In contrast to South Africa, where every journalist could use the computer and with close to half of them having laptops and a majority owning cellphones,²² most Nigerian journalists lacked either laptops or cell phones as at 2000. Between 1996 and 1999, a number of newspaper houses and private television stations undertook computerisation programmes in varying degrees, but these remain superficial as they lack technology support systems, basic infrastructure such as functioning telephones and reliable electricity, and maintenance capacity. These computerisation programmes undertaken with the aid of “consultants” often lack synergy and back up. For example, one of the reasons given for the demise of *A.M. News* in 1996 was the crash of its computers.²³

As Peter Enahoro has usefully mentioned, regarding the state of the media in the mid-1990s:

The Nigerian Journalist goes out to work armed minimally despite today’s electronic age. Side by side with his foreign counterpart he is equipped like a stone age communicator amidst the clusters of sophisticated gadgetry presided over by his Japanese equivalent. Under these conditions, the Nigerian Journalist is an unsung hero – deplorable low wages and delayed salary payment are common.²⁴

As indicated earlier, the distress of the journalists in both the print and electronic media alluded to by Enahoro persisted throughout the entire period, and featured the syndrome of delayed salary payment preceding the collapse of media establishments. Much the same story obtained in other aspects of popular culture, such

as the neo-traditional oral media. One of their better known artists, Opeyemi Fajemilehin, confirmed that the business does not pay its way, hence his need to diversify into cognate businesses in order to survive.²⁵

The decay and distress in the broadcast media were equally gripping, where decrepit infrastructure, unpaid salaries, and survival stratagems ruled the roost. As Louis Bourgault accurately reports:

Economic austerity packages of the 1980's and 1990's have demanded reductions in outlays to the public sector. Thus, both the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) headquarters have drastically reduced federal subventions to their affiliate stations, urging these stations to generate ever higher proportions of their operating budgets from advertising and other quasi commercial activities. Financial disincentives combined with the climate of harassment have had a chilling effect on the electronic media.²⁶

Linked to the media's declining fortunes is the "brown envelope" syndrome whereby journalists either demand or are offered gratification for publishing or killing stories. The distress in the industry made journalists susceptible to this practice, which has come to assume the status of a convention in Nigerian journalism. We have cases, however, of editors and media personnel courageously turning down these seductive gratifications at both corporate and individual levels. Kunle Ajibade, one of the founding editors of *News* magazine, narrated for instance that :

At one point in 1994 General Abacha's son, Ibrahim had offered to invest in *The News* but we turned down the offer, even though we were cash strapped at the time. We turned down a gift of rams on one occasion from Bashorun Abiola, because we felt it would compromise us. A strategy paper generated by one of us (at inception) had advocated the need for decent salaries to avoid bribe-taking, which could ruin our mission.²⁷

It is necessary to cite such instances to offset the tendency to over-generalise the issue of corruption in the media. Also, it should be noted and as I have argued elsewhere,²⁸ corruption is not a peculiar syndrome of the Nigerian media, as the controversy in 2001 over the collection of over ₦100,000 to organise a publicity stunt for a convicted British criminal by the British tabloid, the *Sun*, illustrates.²⁹

However, as I show in a succeeding section, the economic vicissitudes of the Nigerian media from 1990 to 1999 made the media more susceptible to the hegemonising and neo-corporatist strategies of successive military dictators.

II. Harsh Economics and Survival Strategies

In this section, I show how the economic milieu described in the last section constricted the media space and, along with political measures such as the protracted closure of newspapers, resulted in a virtual implosion of the media industry in Nigeria.

There was a veritable mushrooming of newspapers and magazines, paradoxical as it seems, under the structural adjustment policies of the Babangida regime. The phenomenon, observed by Rufai Ibrahim in 1989, whereby “new titles appear almost every month”³⁰ was a result of the emergence of a plutocracy that exploited the opportunities offered to a few to profit from adjustment policies or their manipulation. Most of the newcomers, however, had very short life spans for reasons to be analysed shortly. By 1990, according to one estimate, there were thirty daily newspapers, sixteen Sunday papers, ten weekly magazines, and ten monthlies and bi-monthlies on the media scene.³¹

There were also close to thirty radio and television stations, all owned by the federal and state governments, since the deregulation of the broadcast media did not take place until the mid-1990s, although it had become state policy in 1992. A straitened book-publishing sector as well as neo-traditional popular media forms existed side by side with these forms of media.

The demise of such magazines as *This Week* in 1991 did not prevent the establishment of new titles, such as *Tell* magazine in 1991; *Timesweek* and *Poise* in 1990; *Citizen* magazine in 1990; and the *News* in 1993.

Among the older titles, the most successful remained the *Daily Times*, which enjoyed a circulation of about 100,000 copies in 1991 and boasted fourteen publications under its auspices. The *National Concord* and its associated titles, such as *African Concord*, *Weekend Concord*, and *Community Concord* was another giant. There were also *The Punch*, *Vanguard*, and the *Guardian*, thriving independent newspapers. On the scene too was the *New Nigerian*, wholly owned by the federal government, as well as various state newspapers.

There are other developments worth noting as a prelude to a discussion of the economics of the media, especially with reference to the period between 1993 and 1999. For example, in these years, despite the demise of close to forty titles and the economic recession, new titles continued to spring up.

Among the most prominent of these are the *Post Express*, which hit the newsstands on 2 July 1996 – and boasts the distinction of being the first Nigerian newspaper to have a website; *This Day* began as a weekly in January 1995 and became a daily newspaper in March 1995; the *Diet*, owned by Mr. James Ibori, a prominent pro-Abacha businessman and supporter who became the governor of Delta State; as well as the *Source* magazine, which in March 1997 made its debut and is published by Comfort Obi, former editor of the *Sunday Magazine*, founded by Mrs. Chris Anyanwu, one of four journalists who languished in jail under the Abacha regime. There was also the Abuja-based *Weekly Trust* begun in 1997 – by broadly the same group of intellectuals that started the defunct *Citizen* magazine.

One other feature of these years was the tendency of newspapers to sign syndication agreements with overseas publications, giving them exclusive rights to run their stories. Thus the *Post Express* in October 1996 signed a syndication

agreement with the *New York Times* giving the former the exclusive right to run stories, graphics, and photographs on its pages.³² *This Day* has a similar arrangement covering financial services news and feature from the *Financial Times* of London, while *Vanguard* is in close collaboration with Reuters News Agency.³³

As noted earlier, in terms of modern technology, Nigerian journalism remains at the periphery, as only a handful of newspapers utilise this vast technological potential. One organisation that set the pace in this area is *The Punch*, where the newsroom, as well as twenty senior management staff, are hooked to the Internet. *Punch* modernised its production by giving generous terms to its senior staff to purchase personal computers and to undertake mandatory computer literacy programmes. This, and an aggressive sales strategy have given the paper the edge, pushing it to the fore as perhaps the most widely read paper in the country from about 1997 onwards.

As we saw earlier, adoption or adaptation of new technology is still at an early stage at the *Guardian*, another influential newspaper, with an intellectual appeal and an estimated print run of between 40,000 and 60,000 daily. Of the titles that sprang up between 1993 and 1999, the most successful is easily *This Day*, published by Mr. Nduka Obaigbena, whose affluent, arriviste image featuring "ownership of a speedboat and a jet set business class transcontinental lifestyle" was the subject of an article by Anthony Goldman in the BBC *Focus on Africa* magazine.³⁴

This Day claimed to have doubled its circulation from 30,000 to 60,000 late in 1997 through the introduction of colour printing, a trend that soon became fashionable among the leading newspapers.³⁵ The other daily, the *Post Express*, had not been so successful, in spite of a variety of reader-friendly innovations. In 1997, it was said to be having problems with its circulation, which was down to a little above 6,000 a day.

Circulation figures are highly contentious on the media scene, because the Audit Bureau of Circulation has not issued any figures for over a decade, leaving publications and research agencies to fill the vacuum. Nonetheless, the press remains quite depressed, not having recovered from the crisis of these years. One estimate³⁶ had it that all Nigerian newspapers put together did not sell as much as half a million daily, while Bayo Onanuga, managing director of the *News*, believes that the combined circulation of all newspapers (not magazines) did not exceed 150,000 a day in 1999.³⁷

The best circulation stories are told by a few magazines, especially *Tell* and the *News*, whose anti-establishment image and societal support helped them to sustain a circulation of between 50,000 and 100,000 weekly during the Abacha period. *Newswatch*, which blazed the trail of magazine publishing in 1984, circulated a sober 50,000 for most of this period.

One publication that never quite recovered from the devastating policies of the Abacha years is *Concord*, which between 1997 and 1999 was visibly struggling

to pay its workers – sometimes defaulting on payment for several months. Not only this, but as a result of its anti-government image, many advertisers boycotted it in order not to run foul of government. Abacha, it was said even by some of his close aides, did not read newspapers and was indifferent to their fate. An insider in the government confirmed this widely assumed fact³⁸ by pointing out that the office of the press secretary was rendered ineffectual.

I turn now to repression and harsh economics. Some publications, such as *Hotline* magazine and the *Sentinel*, both published in the north, died mainly from the official harassment of their publishers. In the case of *Hotline* and its sister publication, *Rana* (published in vernacular), they were self-closed because of the repeated detention of their publisher, Alhaji Sani Kontagora, who holds the traditional title of the *Maigajin Rafin Kontagora*.

According to *Hotline*'s editor, Mallam Bello Bashir, the paper's publisher went underground after a three-day detention in 1994 by the Abacha government because, "the magazine was primarily established to defend the interest of Northerners, especially Sardauna's legacy, but since our fellow Northerner is threatening our entire survival, I think there is need for us to go underground for a while."³⁹

The *Sentinel*, owned by the late General Shehu Yar'adua, limped into 1995, increasing its cover price from ₦40 to ₦50 in December 1994. It, however, did not survive that year, due to a mixture of unprofitability and the arrest and consequent detention of the publisher over the alleged 1995 coup d'état. *Citizen*, a well produced magazine with an intellectual bent, did not outlive 1994 because, according to its publisher Mallam Mohammed Haruna, by the third year, "... it was haemorrhaging financially. By the end of the fourth year, it could simply not go on."⁴⁰ The publisher also revealed that *Citizen's* print run never exceeded 20,000 even in its heyday, and throughout its existence from 1990 to 1994.⁴¹

Citizen's demise is typical of a number of magazines and newspapers that slumped in the great media crash of 1994–97. The prevailing economic climate was quite unfavourable to publishing, as indeed it was to industry in general. Price levels went up by almost 80 per cent in 1994, as shown earlier. This apart, government in its 1995 budget increased the duty on imported printing materials by 20 per cent, thus causing it to rise from 15 per cent in 1994 to 35 per cent. Printing materials also attracted other taxes, such as value-added tax, as well as a surcharge of 1.5 per cent.

The case of the media and the publishing industry became more harrowing in the years 1994–97 because of the paralysis of the Newsprint Manufacturing Company (NMC), located at Oku Iboku in Akwa Ibom State. This meant that publishers had to buy imported newsprint and face up to the taxes that Abachanomics imposed on this and other imported items. Despite the warning issued by such bodies as the Newspaper Proprietors' Association of Nigeria concerning

impending media collapse, government policies continued to be hostile to the publishing enterprise, thus driving a number of publications out of the market.

Similarly, as shown earlier, a ton of newsprint went from ₦17,000 in 1992 through 68,000 in 1994 to ₦88,000 in 1995 but stabilised at ₦64,000 in 1998. All other items experienced increases, especially in the period from 1994 to 1997.⁴²

It should be noted, too, in relation to the economics of repression, that after the *Guardian* was reopened in July 1995, it took the publication three months before it could hit the streets, given the damage done to its plant caused by the twelve-month closure and the loss of close to half its staff. It did not revive the *African Guardian*, a respected weekly, nor did it bring back its evening paper, *Guardian Express*, which was once the leading afternoon publication in the country.

African Concord, which was off the streets for twenty-two months, came back in May 1996, but could not stay on the streets for the next fifteen months as a result of persecution. The abduction of its editor, Mr. Soji Omotunde, who was detained for several months, as well as the self-exile of its managing director, Mr. Lewis Obi, partly explains management's decision to rest the spiky journal. Also hit by the recession and relative state indifference were state-owned media such as *New Nigerian*, which closed its southern office for two years and narrowly staved off collapse due to the appointment in February 1995 of a new managing director, Dr. Abdurasheed Abubakar, believed to be quite close to the Abacha administration. *New Nigerian* actually announced suspension of publication before the bail out. The Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) carried out several retrenchment exercises; the *Daily Times* laid off half of its staff in 1997; Voice of Nigeria (VON) was off the air for almost a year; while federal radio went from one level of distress to another. To be noted, too, are such instructions as those given in November 1995 for the review of newspaper headlines to be stopped on state-owned radio and television stations, as well as the limiting of the purchase of newspapers by federal ministries.⁴³

Regarding newspapers and magazines owned by sub-national authorities, the picture in Benue State is typical. As *News* magazine noted:

Appearing and disappearing from the news-stands intermittently has always been a sort of tradition for the *Voice* stable, especially in the last three years. Nonetheless, the Benue State Printing and Publishing Company Limited (BPPCL) surprised even itself this time around. Its two titles *Sunday Voice* and *The Voice* could only grace the news-stands just a few times in over a hundred days. – By mid-August staffers of the Benue State-owned company were yet to receive their March salaries, virtually none of the company's vehicles was functional. Even funds for purchasing items like stationeries were said to be unavailable – desolation also pervades the atmosphere in 2 other government-owned media outfits, NTA Makurdi and Radio Benue. The workers who spoke with *The News* were bitter about the salary arrears being owed them.⁴⁴

On the demand side of the newspaper business, the prolonged economic downturn has led to dwindling purchasing of newspapers and magazines, even among the elite, who have been preoccupied with survival. This has increased the competition among the several publications for a declining market as well as the variety of commercial strategies to stave-off collapse.

When these circumstances are added to such mysterious incidents as the gutting by fire of the corporate office of Independent Communications network, publishers of *News Tempo*, in December 1995; the torching of a section of the *Guardian* newspaper premises by six unidentified armed men, also in December 1995; as well as the alert raised in November 1997 by *Tell* magazine about arsonists trying to burn down its offices, we get a more complete picture of the economics of repression. From the sensational confessions made by some security operatives in the Abacha government to the Justice Oputa Commission on Human Rights, there can be little doubt as to the origins of the arson attacks, which had wide-ranging economic implications.

Equally interesting is the way in which the Abacha government, for example, tried to regulate private broadcasting through the Nigeria Broadcasting Commission. For example, punitive fines ranging from ₦50,000 to ₦100,000 were imposed on satellite television redistribution stations in November 1996 by the Commission because these stations failed to meet its local content requirement.⁴⁵ Similarly, in June 1997, the cost of securing a broadcasting licence went up by about 400 per cent – from ₦400,000 to ₦2.5 million for television licences and from ₦500,000 to ₦3 million for radio licences.⁴⁶

In 1998, African Independent Television (AIT)/RayPower was forced to undertake a downward revision of its staff strength as a survival strategy dictated by the economic environment. It was forced to close down for several months subsequently as a result of financial difficulties.

Finally, repression was hard on individual journalists who had to go without pay for several months (sometimes half-pay) when media houses were closed down. In 1994, government closed down the *Guardian*, *Concord*, and *The Punch*. On these occasions, all the publications of these media houses (spanning twenty titles) were closed, and not just the offending publications. The closure of the *Guardian* for twelve months affected the *Guardian on Sunday*, *African Guardian*, *Guardian Express*, *Financial Guardian Weekly*, and *Lagos Life*.

Similarly, the closure for nearly eighteen months, through armed occupation of its premises, affected *National Concord*, *Sunday Concord*, *Weekend Concord*, *Business Concord*, *Amona*, *Isokan*, *Udoka*, *African Concord*, *African Science Monitor*, and *African Economic Digest*. The closure of *The Punch* affected *The Punch*, *Saturday Punch*, *Sunday Punch*, and *Toplife*. Not just these but all other businesses engaged in publishing or non-publishing activities were similarly closed down, thus increasing the distress of many workers. Taiwo Obe estimated the number of jobs affected by the pro-

longed closure at 3,500.⁴⁷ This figure might even be higher. In the conclusion, I draw the strands together and show how economic vicissitudes impact hegemonic contest and vice versa.

III. Conclusion – Economics, Technology and Hegemony

How do the warp and woof of the techno-economy discussed above affect the ability of the state to build and sustain hegemony and the capacity of economic and political subordinates to challenge that hegemony?

First, the relative underdevelopment of media and technological backwardness make the Nigerian media crucially dependent on overseas media.

Second, although all the media, state-owned and private, were affected by the economic squeeze, opposition media, in particular those challenging the master discourse of the ruling class, suffered the most. The reason for this is not far to seek. Advertisers do not patronise opposition media for fear of being blacklisted by government. Hence, newspapers such as *A.M. News, Concord* and, until very recently, *The Punch* were denied advertising revenue. Indeed, the crash of *A.M. News* and the crisis of viability of the *Concord* for the years 1996–99 are mainly due to this factor. Even if we isolate acts of state terror, such as the torching of newspaper houses, arrest of key journalists, as well as proscription, the odds were stacked against outspoken private media. It should not be forgotten that political persecution was skewed so as to exact the highest penalties. It was not just newspapers that were closed down under the Abacha dictatorship, for example, but associated businesses that shared premises with or were located in the vicinity of the publications.

Third, state-owned media, though forced by the recession to downsize, sometimes received subsidies from government when push came to shove. An example of this is the government-owned *New Nigerian*, which was bailed out by government after some weeks of closure in 1995. Of course, management problems, corruption, and ethnicity also play a considerable role in the running of state media and their lack of profitability. Also, top management staff in state-owned media often had access to funds set aside by the government for publicity. Thus it was possible for some of them to personally benefit from such funds and access to government generally while their institutions failed to break even.

Interestingly, publishers of privately owned media were often targets for seductive gratification by the state, either in the form of appointments, as in the case of Mr. Alex Ibru, publisher of the *Guardian* (who became a minister under Abacha), or in the form of advertising support for their publications. The constant search for hegemony by the state and the need to construct inclusive platforms warrant this kind of intervention, and only when those media organs ignore such “wooing” are they regarded as opposition by government. Also, a latent or manifest division usually emerges between management staff in these

newspapers, who usually toe a soft line for survival reasons, and rank-and-file journalists, who tend to articulate an alternative social and political vision.

Hence, even in the private media we have the situation where editors and managers are courted by state officials, who dangle lucrative carrots before them. In the period under study, therefore, conformist pressures were immense and made more so by economic vicissitudes and the search for survival in a slippery, limping economy. During the controversy between 1996 and 1998 surrounding the self-succession of General Sani Abacha, a number of senior journalists in the independent media even allegedly lent support to the project by agreeing to “tone down” their criticism of it.

Broadly speaking, in spite of these crisis-crossing tendencies and the occasional rallying to the ethnic banner, a discernible split existed on most national issues between a compliant state-owned media (in league with a few private media) and the bulk of the private, outspoken media (including a guerrilla press), which opposed the military state and advocated an alternative, democratic vision at great personal and institutional cost. Concerning the state-owned media and their private media allies, Osundare’s comment that the nation witnessed a “stentorian monologue in which the mass media are reduced to a patriotic reporting of ‘Solidarity rallies’ and a servile dissemination of information on new decrees”⁴⁸ is largely to the point.

End Notes

1. Roger De Weck, The Infotainment Society, in Hans d’Orville (ed), *Beyond Freedom: Letters to Olusegun Obasanjo* (New York: Hans d’ Orville, 1996) pp. 495–7.
2. See Hans d’ Orville, The New Challenges of Global Communication, in Hans d’ Orville (ed), op. cit., p. 193, and Barnet Clive, The Contradictions of Broadcasting Reform in Post-Apartheid South Africa, *Review of African Political Economy*, 78 (1998) p. 551.
3. The statement is credited to Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, former United Nations secretary general, in Flora Lewis, Causes: Lottery or Strategy, in Hans d’ Orville (ed), op. cit., p. 527.
4. See Anita Franklin and Ray Love, Whose News? Control of the Media in Africa, in *Review of African Political Economy*, 78 (1998) pp. 545–50.
5. Luke Uche, The Order of North-South Information Dichotomy in Post Cold War Era, in Luke Uche (ed), *North-South Information Culture: Trends in Global Communications and Research Paradigms* (Lagos: Longman, 1996) p. 11. See also Cees J. Hamelink, Forgetting Africa in the New World Equation, in Luke Uche (ed), *Mass Communication, Democracy and Civil Society in Africa* (Lagos: Nigerian National Commission for UNESCO, 1999) pp. 1–8; Julius Ihvonbere, *Africa and The New World Order* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), and Ayo Olukotun, The Status and Prospects of the Music Industry in Africa, in Zeijka Kozul-Wright (ed), *Edited Proceedings of the LDC III UNCTAD Conference*, held in Brussels on 19 May 2001 (forthcoming).
6. Frances Cairncross, *The Death of Distance: How the Communications Revolution Will Change our Lives* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1997) p. 81.

7. Ibid.
8. Brenda Downes and Steve Miller, *Media Studies* (London: Hodder Headline, 1998) pp. 7–8.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Anita Franklin and Ray Love, op. cit., p. 547. See also Ayo Olukotun, The Vernacular Press and Democratic Mobilisation in Nigeria: A Historical-structural Overview, *African Journal of International Affairs and Development* (May 2002)(forthcoming).
12. See Lanre Idowu, The Media under Abubakar, in Tunji Oseni (ed), *The Media, Transition and Nigeria* (Lagos: Tosen Consult, 1999) p. 267.
13. E. Dennis and John Merrill, *Basic Issues in Mass Communication* (New York: Macmillan, 1984) p. 62.
14. See “Newspapers and the Internet,” in *The Economist* (17–23 July 1999) pp. 15–18.
15. Ibid., p. 16.
16. Ibid., p. 15.
17. See, for example, Adebayo Olukoshi (ed), *The Politics of Structural Adjustment in Africa* (London: James Currey, 1992).
18. See, for example, Ayo Olukotun, State Repression, Crisis of Democratisation and the Underground Media in Nigeria: A Study of Three Encounters, Monographic research conducted under the Ford Foundation/University of Sussex Governance/Civil Society Network, (2000), and Ayo Olukotun, Governance and the Media, in Goran Hyden, Hastings Okoth-Ogendo, and Dele Olowu (eds), *African Perspectives on Governance* (New Jersey/Asmara: Africa World Press, 2000) pp. 91–121.
19. Mohammed Haruna, The Press: The Northern Nigeria Experience, in Olatunji Dape and Adidi Uyo (eds), *Journalism in Nigeria: Issues and Perspectives* (Nigerian Union of Journalists: Lagos State Council, 1996) p. 57.
20. Frances Cairncross, op. cit., p. 57.
21. *Media Review* (March/April 1999) p. 23.
22. John Battersby in *Fourth Estate*, 7 (April/May 2000) p. 16.
23. Author’s interview with Odia Ofeimun.
24. Peter Enahoro, The State of the Media, in *Daily Times* (9 June 1994) p. 20.
25. Author’s interview.
26. Louise Bourgault, Nigeria: The Politics of Confusion, in Patrick H. O’Neil (ed), *Communicating Democracy: The Media and Political Transitions* (London: Lynn Reiner, 1998) p. 93.
27. Author’s interview.
28. Ayo Olukotun, Accountability, Media and Democracy, in Nigeria. Mimeo 2001.
29. *Newsweek*, 21 May 2001, p. 16
30. Rufai Ibrahim, The War Within, in *West Africa* (London) (13 February 1989) p. 216.
31. Osaze Ehonwa, “Thou Shalt not Say”: Sketch of an Anatomy of Censorship in Nigeria 1988–91, in *Liberty* (January–March 1992) p. 13.
32. *Media Review* (January–February 1997) p. 30.
33. Gbenga Adefaye, Prohibition of Importation of Offensive Publications, in Richard Akinola (ed), *Nigeria Media and Legal Constraints*, (Lagos: Centre for Free Speech, 1998) p. 153.
34. *New Nigerian* (11 July 1997) p. 12.
35. Bamikole Ebisemiju, The Colour Race, *Guardian* (29 September 1999) p. 43.
36. Author’s interview with Doyin Abiola.
37. *This Day* (18 July 1999) p. 36.
38. Author’s interview. The respondent had requested not to be identified by name.

39. *Sentinel* (4 April 1994) p. 3.
40. Mohammed Haruna, op. cit., p. 66.
41. Ibid., p. 66.
42. *Newswatch* (6 November 1995) p. 35.
43. *Media Review* (February/March 1995) p. 35.
44. *News* (4 September 1995) p. 33 as cited in Mvendaga Jibo, *The Media and Nigerian Federalism*. Paper read to the International Conference on Federalism organised by the African Centre for Democratic Governance at Abuja, 15–17 March 1999, p. 13.
45. *Annual Report of The Media Rights Agenda*, 1997, p. 5.
46. Ibid.
47. Taiwo Obe in *Media Review* (September/October 1994) p. 10.
48. See Niyi Osundare, *A Press in Chains*, *Newswatch*, Nov., 14, 1995, p. 33.

CHAPTER 3

Repression and Resistance 1989–93

I. Introduction

The period from 1989 to 1993 witnessed an intensification of hegemonic contestation between an increasingly repressive and militarised state and an aroused civil opposition championed by a section of the media. Faced with growing opposition from some of the media and human rights groups, the state intensified incorporationist strategies by purging state-owned media in order to ensure not only that they were compliant, but also that they also aggressively tackled the aroused opposition. The strategies included the buying off of dissenting groups and professional associations, such as the Nigerian Union of Journalists, and continual tinkering with the military institutions in order to identify the main sources of opposition and to accumulate power in the hands of the president. There was also the enlargement of the presidency through the creation of several parastatals around it, a visible and increasingly aggressive national security machine, as well as surveillance of the political class through the deft use of selective sanctions and favours as the occasion dictated. As citizens groaned under the whiplash of a failed structural adjustment policy, and the so-called transition programme came unstuck through constant alterations and shifting of the handover date, the crisis of hegemony became ever more stark. It was in this context that an oppositional media arose to become the arrowhead of counter-hegemonic values by intently querying the political and economic direction of the regime, as well as championing domestic opposition to the annulment of the presidential election of June 1993.

Some of the foregoing trends can be illustrated. When President Babangida turned fifty in August 1991, *Timesweek*, a magazine published by the *Daily Times* in which government has controlling shares, devoted its cover to celebrating the general. Entitled, “Babangida at 50: The Man, The Myth, The Magic,” that edition featured an interview with the president’s wife as well as eulogies to a general whose popularity was at a low ebb.¹

In spite of this posture by *Timesweek* and other *Daily Times* titles at the time, the government went ahead and sacked the managing director of the *Daily Times*, Dr. Yemi Ogunbiyi, in December of the same year in order to pave the way for a reorganisation of the company. The state could no longer tolerate the modest professional independence that the *Daily Times* tried to show. To demonstrate that it meant business, government appointed a “sole administrator,” Chief Tola Adeniyi, for the paper in order to align it more closely with the embattled regime.

Similarly, even though the *New Nigerian* is well known for its pro-establishment views, in 1989 the Babangida government sacked its managing director, Mr. Mohamed Haruna, after detaining him for one week over the tone of the paper and some of its comments.² As Haruna related:

I got the boot from Babangida in 1989 partly because he knew I wrote the editorial that was critical of the appointment of Alhaji Ibrahim Dasuki as the 13th Sultan of Sokoto when it was an open secret that he influenced the appointment as military president with close links to the Dasuki Family.³

Before this event, according to Haruna:

I was detained for a week over an advertisement by the Jamatu Nasril Islam [JNI] in the *New Nigerian*, which the government did not like. The security agents actually detained the managing director, Mr. Innocent Oparadike. But I had to own up for authorising the publication as editor in chief. So we swapped places.⁴

The real reason for Haruna's sacking became evident in the appointment of Mallam Sidi Ali Sirajo as sole administrator of the company. Olu Awogbemila summed up the short-lived tenure of Sirajo at the *New Nigerian* in these terms:

Mallam Sirajo had his audience. Between him and his fans, the symbiosis of sycophancy achieved perfection. He would lead a battery of officers of the newspapers to one government official after the other. He would pledge support for them and in return they sing his praises to high heavens. The newspaper published it all.⁵

In other words, through appointments and firing, government was setting boundaries as well as indicating the kind of discourse it would allow – at least in state-owned media.

The neo-corporatist policies of the state also affected the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), which was divided into pro-regime and oppositional camps. As Kayode Komolafe, secretary of the Lagos State NUJ from 1989 and 1992 expressed it, "At the national level, the whole attempt of the regime to incorporate all forces of the civil society in trying to establish some credibility for its actions did not spare the NUJ. The national NUJ engaged in outright collaboration with the regime."⁶ Hence, there was a dichotomy reflected in the pattern of alliances in the media, between a pliant NUJ at the national level, and an oppositional NUJ in Lagos State, for example, which actually joined the Campaign for Democracy (CD), a well-known human rights group, as the crisis of democratisation got under way between 1992 and 1993. An ethnic reading of this polarisation, though tempting on account of the geography of the alliances, would be superficial because hegemonic and counter-hegemonic alliances criss-crossed ethnicity.

To give just one example of this criss-crossing, the Kano-State based *Triumph* newspaper, reflecting its well-known antecedents, consistently warned against the

possibility of a derailed transition in view of the activities of shadowy organisations such as the Association for Better Nigeria, which called on President Babangida not to relinquish power in 1993.

In its editorial comment of 2 May 1993, entitled “About Association for Better Nigeria,” the *Triumph* argued that:

While we at the *Sunday Triumph* agree that every Nigerian has the right to his opinion, we equally believe that the campaign for the extension of military rule is not only embarrassing but in bad taste considering the huge investment which spanned the period of 8 years. This is in addition to the fact that military rule is no longer in vogue given the global democratisation of different societies.

This position was fully in concord with that taken by the radical press located in the southwest. Hence what we see in the period up till the presidential elections of 1993, at least, was a hegemonic contest fully reflected in the media between a radical opposition and hawkish pro-regime forces.

As Osaghae pertinently notes:

Juxtaposed with the activities of opposition groups were those of the groups which supported the regime. These belonged to two distinct groups. First were the neo-corporatist and co-opted structures, notably the various Armed Forces Wives Associations (Nigerian Army Officers Wives Associations, Police Officers Wives Association etc), the “Better Life” associations, government-sponsored rival students and other associations, traditional rulers, and the federal and state government-owned media, newspapers (notably the *Daily Times* and the *New Nigerian*), and radio and television channels (notably Radio Nigeria and Nigeria Television Authority). The second and more active group comprised associations like the Association for Better Nigeria (ABN), which openly canvassed for the prolongation of Babangida’s regime and the perpetuation of military rule.⁷

With regard to the media, the attempt to construct hegemonic alliances went beyond the state-owned media to include the proprietors and top management of the private media, although it was difficult for these media to openly advocate a pro-government role.⁸

In the next section, I look at the ideological, legal, and political context of state-media relations between 1989 and 1993. A succeeding section takes up the calendar of repressive acts, while two successive sections look at editorial postures and ties the issues together.

II. Toughening Cadences and the Context of Repression

The period between 1989 and August 1993 was a tough one for the media in the context of their relationship with the state. As indicated in Chapter 2, unlike General Mohammed Buhari, who declared flatly that he would tamper with the freedom of the press and went ahead to do so, General Babangida rode to power on

the crest of a popular human rights rhetoric. However, as Tunde Thompson evocatively expressed it, “General Babangida used one hand to caress the press and the other to apply some hard slaps.”⁹

One way of underlining the climate of siege under which the media operated between 1989 and 1993 is to document the increasingly harsh tenor with which government referred to the media, human rights activists, and its critics generally. For example, at the seventh graduation ceremony of the senior executives of the Nigerian Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies, Kuru on 26 October 1985, President Babangida reiterated his inaugural human rights position when he said, “I would like to see us build a society which guarantees the individual freedom of thought, speech and attention and protects society as a whole from threat to the security of persons, family and property.”¹⁰

This motif of liberty was relentlessly harped upon in several speeches in this period. By 1989, however, as a section of the media adopted a querulous bent and opposition began to coalesce over the regime’s political and economic direction, veiled threats, sanctimonious warnings, and demonisation of opponents became the order of the day. On 5 June 1989, faced with growing civilian criticism, President Babangida rallied the military behind him by saying:

Those who are trying to destroy the military and the confidence of the military in its ability, are not only bent on undermining the cohesion of the military and its will to carry on with the tasks ahead undeterred, but are also out to ruin our beloved fatherland. If we allow the military as an institution to be ruined or humiliated then the consequences for Nigeria would indeed be very grave.¹¹

Indeed, a hallmark of the president’s speeches in these years was the portrayal of critics as enemies who are out to destroy. It was a short walk from this perception to the issuing of threats to such perceived enemies, which increasingly included the burgeoning protest and counter-hegemonic press. For example, amid the expansion of state security agencies, a point to which I return, General Babangida warned in 1989 that:

I wish to make it abundantly clear that the administration will not condone any acts which will jeopardize the fulfillment of our economic and political programme and aspirations as a nation. There are spoilers within the system, and as they are identified by security agencies appropriate action will be taken in the interest of the majority of Nigerians, no matter whose interest or personalities are involved.¹²

As the crisis of democratisation intensified and opposition to the regime within and outside the media snowballed, so did the sharpness of the government’s rhetoric and denunciation of its perceived enemies.

As Olatunji Dape perceptively noted of the 1992–93 period:

As the Babangida regime was increasingly thrown on the defensive in its final years, its rhetoric toward the press also grew more combative and intimidating. Vice-President

Alkhomu and Information Ministers, Alex Akinyele and Sam Oyovbaire repeatedly blasted and berated the press for questioning government intentions, and shadowy organisations such as the “Third Eye” surfaced (with apparent government sponsorship and backing) to escalate the war of words and psychological pressure on the independent press.¹³

In mid-November 1992, to elaborate the point, the secretary to the federal government, Alhaji Aliyu Mohammed, summoned publishers and editors of major media institutions and harangued them:

I am sure you know that in the past few months some of your activities have created serious doubts in the minds of the most liberal-minded people including some of your colleagues as to whether or not you know and are sure of what you are doing; or are being used by people who have an axe to grind with government.¹⁴

The verbal harassment and strident charges did not end until Aliyu noted that, “Never in the history of this country have we ever witnessed such unguarded and extremely damaging press attacks on government and its key functionaries as we have seen in the last few months.”¹⁵

Words tallied with action. As the Amnesty International *Report on Nigeria* for 1989 expressed it: “In 1989 federal and state governments continued to arrest, interrogate and detain individuals who made, or were preparing to make public statements the government considered threatening ... Journalists were detained and several newspapers closed throughout 1989.”¹⁶

As repression intensified against human rights activists, labour, and students, the media become further polarised, as shown in the preceding section, between a co-opted hegemonic section and an oppositional media, with a number standing in between.

A striking illustration of this occurred in 1990, when as human rights lawyer, Chief Gani Fawehinmi alleged, a front-page story in the *New Nigerian* was used to prepare the ground for his abduction. The story alleged that some individuals outside the campuses were trying to use the students and the controversy over the World Bank loan to the universities to foment trouble. The story went on to mention a funding campaign launched on behalf of Chief Fawehinmi by Dr. Beko Ransome Kuti, referring to it as a ploy to destabilise the administration.¹⁷ Whether the story itself was the immediate cause of the abduction of the human rights activist or not, it certainly set the tone and prepared the public for it.

In contrast to the role of the *New Nigerian* was that of the radical *African Concord*, which focused intently on the abduction of human rights activists. For example, in its edition of 23 April 1990, the magazine queried aloud, “Who wants Beko, Falana Dead?”¹⁸

It should also be noted in discussing the context of these years that the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) was proscribed between July 1988 and

August 1990 while the National Association of Nigerian Students carried out its struggle against the regime mainly underground, having itself been proscribed.¹⁹ Concerning the media specifically, the years 1989–93 witnessed continual harassment and intimidation, though the situation was not one of closure of communication channels or absolute repression of expression. Censorship was not total, but random, but was probably more effective for that given that the journalist could never know whether he would be the target of the censor. Armed with an amended version of Decree 2, which had been put to such devastating use under the Buhari regime, as well as a clutch of anti-press laws on the statute books,²⁰ government circumscribed free expression in many subtle and unsubtle ways.

In this connection, one must note the extraordinary accumulation of autocratic powers in the hands of the General Babangida, who was the first military ruler to adopt the title of president and commander in chief. This was not just a titular affair, for under the regime the consensual, even collegial, format of previous military governments, whereby the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC) counterbalanced the powers of the head of state, was jettisoned. As Osaghae, leaning on Nwabueze, reveals, “most decrees enacted by the regime were issued directly by the president and never went through the AFRC (later National Defence and Security Council, NSDC).”²¹

To underline this emergent superior role, the general described as “the repository of the full plenitude of the military government’s absolute power,”²² created an awesome security machine around him, as well as substantially increased the functions, latitude, and visibility of the presidency. At the heart of the security apparatus were three overlapping agencies, namely the State Security Service (SSS), the National Intelligence Agency (NIA), and the Defence Intelligence Agency, with all their chief executives directly responsible to the president.²³ This “substantial security apparatus,”²⁴ as Diamond termed it, which in turn produced “a climate of fear,”²⁵ obviously had implications for press freedom. For most of the persecutions visited on the press in the years 1989–93 were traceable to the advice given by state security that the affected newspapers or broadcasting media constituted a threat to national security.

Giving an insight into the way this worked out under the regime, Professor Sam Oyovbaire, former minister for information and longstanding adviser to the regime, said that the decision to close the *African Concord* in 1992 was taken by the president, on the advice of the security agencies, while he as minister of information was away in Paris to attend a UNESCO conference. In his own words, “The following day, when I later met the president, he said that there were some security reports on what was going on in the *Concord* and that was the reason for its closure.”²⁶ This, according to Oyovbaire, was despite the fact that “I had sent for a copy of the *African Concord* edition and I read through and found nothing so serious as to warrant the closure of a media house there.”²⁷

It was this inscrutable element in the operation of the security apparatus, whose agencies apparently sometimes worked at cross purposes, that thickened the curtain of uncertainty and censorship around the media.

Before zeroing in on the calendar of repression, it must be emphasised that one common way in which censorship worked was through prior restraint, which did not arise solely from self-censorship born of fear of reprisal but also from government agencies seeking an “understanding” by holding regular meetings with publishers and editors.

As Osaze Ehonwa informatively narrates:

If prior restraint is understood to mean any degree of control of the right to free expression, before it is exercised, then the best example of this must be the numerous bonds of silence or restraint which the government or some of its agencies were widely said to have reached with a number of publishers and top editors since 1986. In essence these involved agreement by the media houses – parties to the bond – to avoid specified issues in their editorial or reportorial work, to exercise restraint on these issues, or to handle them in a manner in consonance with the official line of the government.²⁸

Though difficult to prove, the press did carry several stories in the latter Babangida years concerning this type of hegemonic ploy to define the boundaries of discourse.

Adigun Agbaje refers to one such meeting in July 1990 between publishers and state security that was widely reported in the press, in which it was alleged that, “material gains were exchanged for pledges of loyalty and self-censorship. It was also alleged that government agents issued guidelines to the press managers at that meeting.”²⁹ Of course, no one expects that media managers would confirm that they were given material incentives to moderate the editorial postures of their news organs. Nonetheless, any comprehensive insight into state-media relations in these years must take on board the possibility of such things.

Indirect evidence of state-media accords founded on material gains was provided in the abortive April 1990 coup, when Major Gideon Orkar alleged that the press had been bought off by the Babangida regime. Similarly, in an illuminating essay, Tunji Bello, a senior Nigerian journalist, points to the prevalence of such practices in the Babangida years when he writes:

Early in 1986 many Senior Journalists had been known to flaunt their close associations with either the president or his lieutenants. However, of Nigeria’s past heads of state, Babangida remains the most astute in courting the friendship of top journalists and media practitioners. This could be part of his method at seeking legitimacy or popular acclaim like the human rights bogey. Whatever it was, it worked as many of these journalists soon became gatekeepers against attack on government from critics.³⁰

Finally, on this score, this writer can confirm that a senior journalist at the *Daily Times* was approached by top management staff in the early 1990s to advise him

that he had the option of writing pro-government articles in order to attract allowances from the security agencies outside his salary.

I turn now to two issues: one, a calendar of repression in the Babangida years, and two, editorial postures on the controversy and crises that attended the annulment of the presidential elections of June 1993.

III. Calendar of Repressive Activities

As a prelude to a discussion of editorial postures on selected issues, it is interesting to consider the pattern of repression of the media, in terms of the sequence of arrests, seizure of publications, and closure of media houses.

As mentioned before, the years from 1989 to 1991 can be regarded as featuring a milder form of repression, while the period from 1992 to 1993, in view of the heightened opposition to the regime, featured intense repression of the media, underlined by frequent arrests, closure of media houses, promulgation of draconian decrees, such as the so-called death decree, among other repressive measures. Now to the overview of media repression, which as we have seen was the obverse of media cooption.

In 1989, several journalists were detained for varying lengths of time ranging from a few days to several months. Perhaps the most sensational case was that of the editor of the *Republic*, Mr. Paxton Idowu, who, along with six other journalists was arrested in June 1989.³¹ Idowu's arrest appeared to have been triggered by a publication in the *Republic* reporting a legal suit by a businessman, Bashir Mohammed, who made damaging allegations of corrupt business deals against the vice-president, Admiral Augustus Aikhomu.³² Clement Nwankwo and his colleagues provide an insight into the drama and show of force surrounding Idowu's arrest:

When the police, in the process of trying to arrest Paxton Idowu, went to his house and could not find him, they arrested his wife, who was 8 months pregnant, in lieu of her husband. She was thrown into a stinking, narrow and dark police cell, which she shared for the night with a male suspect held for felony, until the next morning when her husband appeared.³³

This was not the only instance in which a family member would be taken as hostage for a journalist wanted by the police in the Babangida years. In 1993, Aramide, Dapo Olorunyomi's baby, and Dapo's mother, Ladi, were arrested when the police could not find her, although they were both released after one day.³⁴

Other repressive acts in 1989 included the arrest of several senior editors of the *Concord* titles. The list included Lewis Obi, editor of *African Concord*, and Dele Alake, editor of *Sunday Concord*, who was detained over a story published in the paper concerning the displacement of thousands of residents at Maroko, a Lagos slum, in order to provide land for some influential citizens at Victoria Island. Also from *African Concord* was Tunde Agbabiaka, the magazine's London editor,

who was promptly whisked off to a police cell on arrival at Murtala Mohammed Airport in October 1989.³⁵

Although the police claimed that the three-day detention of Agbabiaka was a mistake, not many people believed that lame explanation. A more plausible reason for Agbabiaka's detention is suggested by the increasingly radical image of the *African Concord*, which boasted such journalists as Bayo Onanuga, Seye Kehinde, and Kunle Ajibade, who would move out a few years later to found the *News*, a radical journal that survived underground in 1993 and for most of the Abacha years.³⁶

In February 1989, the publisher of the aggressive *Newbreed* magazine, Mr. Chris Okolie, and several of his staff were arrested and detained. The immediate reason for their detention appeared to be a story in the magazine that raised queries over recent promotions within the military establishment.

The year 1990 was even testier for the media. Five media houses were closed down during the year, three of them on account of their coverage of the abortive 22 April coup d'état. Part of the irritation of government with the media was for publishing the coup broadcast statements, despite the frantic pleadings and veiled threats of the head of state's chief press secretary to the media not to publish the broadcast without substantial editing.³⁷ Government closed down *The Punch* for almost a month, *Lagos News* for over one month, and *Newbreed* for over two months for their coverage of the coup.

Several journalists were also detained in this connection.³⁸ Other acts of victimisation of the media in 1990 included the closure of the *Vanguard* newspapers from 11 to 13 June; the closure of the *Champion* from 9 to 13 June over a story disliked by the Lagos State government; the raid by soldiers and seizure of all copies of the week's edition of *TSM* magazine on 7 July; as well as the detention of journalists from various newspapers and magazines.³⁹

Among those arrested over the coup were Chris Mamah, deputy editor of *The Punch*, who was detained for three months, as well as Lawal Ogienagbon, also of *The Punch*, who was kept in custody for twenty-four hours. Mr. Bola Bolawale, features editor of *The Punch* at the time, put the regime's hostility to *The Punch* down to the fact that, "We tried to analyse what the coupists said. We tried to draw attention to the fact that coupists ought to be listened to."⁴⁰ Bolawale recalled, too, that when news of the coup reached *The Punch* newsroom, "there was jubilation in the newsroom although senior journalists were a little more cautious than the reporters."⁴¹ The closure of *The Punch* was attributed by government to what it called "irresponsible analysis" of the coup.⁴²

Other journalists detained included Sam Amuka-Pemu, publisher of the *Vanguard*, and the paper's deputy editor, Mr. Chris Okojie. The list also included Nsirik Essien, editor of *National Concord*, as well as Chris Okolie, publisher of *Newbreed*, who was kept for one-and-a-half months.⁴³

Even after the coup reports subsided, government continued to show irritation. For example, the editor of *Champion*, Mr. Emma Agwu, who was arrested and his publication closed down on 9 June ostensibly for a story dealing with the clash between traders in Alaba and government security, said:

Given the way tempers were flaring at that particular time, and given the kind of interpretations that were being given to various types of activities, I am not exactly in the position to say for sure why *The Champion* was closed – whether it was over its reportage of the Alaba incident or over the Orkar coup. For, certainly, we were upfront in reporting activities during the Orkar coup.⁴⁴

Equally interesting was the way in which radio journalists got caught in the shifting fortunes of military factions during the coup. Radio broadcasts are important to the survival or failure of coups, and unsurprisingly journalists were caught in the fray. Indeed the premises of the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) was a scene of heavy fighting between troops loyal to the government and those loyal to the coup. The arrest of a Radio Nigeria reporter, Tolu Olarewaju, appears to have been due to the fact that the rebels took the radio station briefly. Similarly, some journalists on state radio who hooked up to national radio while the coup broadcast lasted were also briefly detained: hence, for instance, the arrest of the deputy managing director of Amabara Radio, Mr. Emmanuel Osakwe.⁴⁵

The raid on *TSM* magazine is instructive in that it suggests growing official intolerance of criticism as well as the virtually unchecked powers of the state security alluded to earlier. The directorate of military intelligence (DMI) would later claim that it ordered the action because of a report in the paper quoting Mrs. Braithwaite, wife of a well-known political activist and lawyer, as alleging that some security men who carried out a search of her residence made away with some of her jewellery.⁴⁶ What is noticeable here is that as it became obvious that the transition programme was leading nowhere, opposition to government led by the media increased, and the government responded with an escalating crack-down.

The year 1991 was equally difficult for the media. The annual report of the committee for the Defence of Human Rights notes pertinently that:

Throughout the year the military authorities descended heavily on the media through closure of media houses, detention of journalists, blackmail and threats, illegal dissolution of management boards and dismissal of independent-minded staff ... Security agents frequently visited media houses demanding for the transcript of certain stories.⁴⁷

Of the many acts of repression in that year, three stand out. The first was the closure of all the titles in the *Guardian* for ten days on 29 May and the arrest of the editor of the *Guardian Express*, Mr. Bayo Oguntimehin. Second was the expulsion

of Mr. William Keeling, a correspondent of the *Financial Times*, on 29 June for his report on the mismanagement of extra earnings accruing to Nigeria as a result of the Gulf War, while the third was the suspension from the Nigerian Television Authority of two senior editorial staff for failing to air a hastily handwritten story submitted close to network news time on national television.

The immediate cause of the closure of the *Guardian* titles was a story published in the *Guardian Express* on 29 May to the effect that two students of the Yaba College of Technology had been killed in the course of clashes between police and students. In spite of the cautious tenor of the *Express* report, the police and Lagos State governor reacted with fury on the grounds that the story contained an exaggeration that, in the words of the charge read out to the editor and four of the staff, "had an 'intention' to commit felony to wit: Publication of false news with intent to cause fear and alarm to the public."⁴⁸ The police argument was that the *Express* story gave the misleading impression that the police more or less murdered the two students, but this was hair-splitting calculated to punish dissenting media.

Revealingly, the commissioner of police in Lagos State, Alhaji Saminu Daura-Ahmed, said in reference to the event:

We are not going to allow the press to disturb us on what we are doing. We shall not allow any false publication against the police any longer. You [the press] went and reported that Police shot two students at Yaba College of Technology when in actual fact the students died as a result of the riots even before the Police got there. I am happy at what the government did to *The Guardian* and it's a lesson to you all.⁴⁹

What "government did to the *Guardian*"⁵⁰ was to close down Rutam House – all its five publications – as well as corporate subsidiaries such as Express Printing and Packaging Company, Rutam Crellon Computers, and two others.

It was obviously a high-handed measure calculated to exact the highest penalties, and, as the police commissioner said, to serve as a lesson to the section of the independent press that was growing increasingly critical of the government. The *Guardian* returned to the streets undaunted on 12 June, and the very next day lamented in a leader that, "When a government resorts to strong arm tactics instead of employing the due process of law, it inadvertently advertises a lack of faith in its own institutions thus subverting its own legitimacy and authority. It is courting chaos."⁵¹

Evidence that government in 1992 considered the closure of the *Guardian* was provided by Professor Sam Oyovbaire, who said that when *African Concord* was shut down in 1992, the vice-president said to him that security had advised the closure of the *Guardian* as well, but he (the vice-president) had persuaded the head of state not to do it.⁵²

Similarly, the expulsion on 29 June of Mr. William Keeling of the *Financial Times* confirmed the mood of government towards the press. The journalist's

expulsion was over two articles published in the *Financial Times* on 26 June and 27 June. Government took strong exception to the 27 June story entitled, "Concern Over Nigeria's Use of Oil Windfall," which alleged reckless, extra-budgetary spending of close to \$5 billion accruing to government during the Gulf War.

From the point of view of the domestic media, what is interesting is that newspapers like the *Concord* and the *Guardian* criticised the expulsion of Keeling while *Newswatch* and *Timesweek* maintained an ominous silence. The *Daily Times*, in an editorial published on 8 July, took the government side, while the chairman of the editorial board, Dr. Chidi Amuta, berated Keeling's article as an example of "a latter day colonialist mischief and of fiction that threatens national security."⁵³ As mentioned earlier, the domestic media's coverage of the Keeling affair fits into our paradigm of hegemonic or co-opted versus oppositional or protest media.

In discussing repression of the media in 1992 and 1993, it must be understood that during those two years the crackdown not just on the media but on human rights activists reached frightening new levels. The dictatorship postponed the terminus of the transition twice (first to January, then to August 1993), and a section of civil society was up in arms, which in turn provoked intense repression. The detention and charge for treasonable felony of Dr. Beko Ransome Kuti, Chief Gani Fawehinmi, Mr. Femi Falana, Baba Omojola, and Segun Maiyegun in May 1992; the increase in extra-judicial killings and the use of tangible force to quell student and other demonstrations; as well as the siege of the premises of the Civil Liberties Organisation by armed policemen on 20 March 1993 are random examples of this trend. Throughout 1992, moreover, several journalists were detained for brief periods; printing sites, such as Academy Press, were invaded – for example on 5 December 1992 when 100 policemen forcibly stopped the printing of the week's edition of *Quality* magazine – and security men frequently visited newspaper houses allegedly searching for "subversive" documents.

There was also the closure of the *Concord* titles – thirteen in all – on 9 April because of a prickly edition of the *African Concord* entitled "Has IBB Given Up?" Even private but state-friendly media, such as *Citizen* magazine, were not spared the government's dangling axe. For example, as Bilikisu Yusuf, a senior editor with the Kaduna-based *Citizen* magazine, revealed:

There was indirect pressure on *Citizen*. For example, sometime before the Nigerian Custom Service celebrated its centenary we ran a story on the Identity Card Scam. The story entitled The Bottomless Pit was exhaustive. When the customs event came and we were to run an advertisement, earlier promised by the customs, the authorities declined to give [it to] us, saying they did not want to put their money in a bottomless pit.⁵⁴

Bilikisu also suffered detention in 1992 because of a story published in *Citizen* magazine in connection with the president's brother-in-law, Chief Sunny Okogwu. According to her, "After the Story was published, Police Officers came

to arrest me on the orders of the then Commissioner of Police Bappa Jama're. They dumped me in a room and kept me there under the pretext that the Officer in charge of my case was not available."⁵⁵

Her ordeal ended, however, after one day. In the case of media perceived as "enemy," such as *Concord*, government was not so lenient. An apology demanded from Bashorun Mko Abiola assuaged government and kept it from going ahead to legalise the closure of *Concord* with a decree already drafted, entitled Concord Group of Newspapers Publication (Proscription and Prohibition of Circulation) Decree 14 of 1992. As Tunji Bello, one of the editors of *Concord* at the time, noted:

Abiola does not interfere in the editorial process of his publications. He does not tell any editor what not to publish. We enjoyed this at *Concord*. The military, however, never liked *African Concord* and they were surprised that Abiola, as someone close to them should allow that kind of publication.⁵⁶

It is conceivable, however, that Abiola took more interest in the tenor of some of the publications he owned after the reopening of *Concord* in 1992, but this did not significantly affect editorial posture.

Nineteen ninety-three was an even headier year for the media than 1992. The Press Freedom Committee of the Nigeria Union of Journalists summed up the travails of the year thus when it asserted:

Accusing the press of excessive use of language and being too unrestrained in the analysis of public issues, the Federal government set about arresting and detaining journalists and publishers, confiscating publications, proscription of media establishments and general harassment and intimidation of the press and its practitioners were rampant.⁵⁷

To underline the mood of the year, five decrees were promulgated to rein in the media.⁵⁸ These were: Decree 23, which proscribed the *Reporter*; Decree 29, which was the Treason and Treasonable Offence Decree (nicknamed the death decree), which proscribed the death sentence for anyone who either in word or writing disrupted the general fabric of the country or any part of it; Decree 35, which conferred powers on the president to confiscate or ban any publication which contravened national security. Then there was Decree 43, which set out stiff laws and regulations governing the registration of newspapers. Finally, there was Decree 48, Publication Prohibition Decree, which proscribed seventeen publications owned by five newspaper groups. The height of press repression came on 22 July 1993 when government closed down the *Concord* group of newspapers for three months: *The Punch*, *Sketch*, and *Observer*. The Ogun State Broadcasting Corporation (OGBC), which was closed down along with the newspapers, was reopened a few days later. In July and August, persecution fell heavily on various media institutions, including those of the neo-traditional popular variety, which were used

to express dissent against the military authorities. For example, on 6 August a well-known *Ewi* musician, Chief Lanrewaju Adepoju, was arrested by state security. Adepoju's arrest was in all likelihood a consequence of the new album he had cut entitled, *Ipinnu* (A Pledge), which directly castigated the military authorities.⁵⁹ Also visited with stern reprisals were editors and personnel of *Tell* and *News* magazine, as well as the vendors selling them. For example, in two separate incidents on 15 August and 19 August, ten workers belonging to *Tell* magazine were arrested by security men. Many of those arrested were detained in Shangisha, Abuja and were not released until General Babangida was forced to quit office on 26 August 1993.

One other feature of the period between June and August 1993 was persecution of editors in state-owned media who refused to toe the official line. For example, the editor of the Rivers State government-owned *Nigerian Tide* was sent on compulsory leave because of a front page story in the paper entitled, "Presidential Election Controversy: NEC Ordered to Release Election Result."⁶⁰

In the same vein, an editorial comment entitled, "Test of Sincerity," published on 21 June by the *Pioneer*, a publication owned by the Akwa Ibom State government, earned the general manager, Mr. Okon William Akpan, and the editor, Mr. Ebenezer Udojep, compulsory leave. The editorial had canvassed the release of the presidential elections held on 12 June.⁶¹ A final example concerns the editor of the *New Nigerian*, Mr. Yakubu Abdulazeez, who resigned in protest over what he described as undue interference by the federal government in editorial matters.⁶²

IV. Coverage of the Annulment Controversy Crisis

Editorial coverage of the controversy and crisis that followed the annulment of the 12 June presidential election largely followed the pattern outlined in the preceding sections. A hegemonic media was deployed by an embattled federal government in a propaganda war to defuse tension and civil protest against the annulment of the election. The hegemonic media consisted, as mentioned before, of federally owned newspapers, television, and radio, including the *Daily Times*, in which government held majority shares. The counter-hegemonic media, which conveyed civil anger against the annulment as well as set the agenda for the restoration of democracy, included the *Guardian*, *The Punch*, as well as *Concord*. Of course, *Concord*, owned by Bashorun Abiola, had every reason to take an anti-military stand. Indeed, it went beyond the call of professional duty to mobilise opinion against the annulment, thus laying itself open to the charge of becoming a propaganda outfit in the same manner as the federally controlled media.

What is interesting, however, from the point of view of hegemonic contestation, is the way in which a section of the independent media defied censorship and repression and continued to harp on the need for the restoration of civil will.

Indeed, the phenomenon of an underground media (which is considered separately in Chapter 5) owes its origins to the efforts of the media to transcend the limitations imposed by censorship and to create an alternative press in the face of a circumscribed discourse regime.

Take the *Guardian*, for example. The paper had, even before the crisis of democratisation came to a critical juncture, consistently alerted the nation to a military agenda to conduct transitional governance using a constantly manipulated transition programme as a ploy. Olatunji Dape, chairman of the *Guardian* editorial board, had written with typical bite in January 1993 in the newspaper's weekly magazine, that "under him [Babangida] the business of fashioning democratic politics has taken bizarre twists and turns, in theory as well as in practice, to the point where it can be said, following Santayana, that the effort is being daily renewed long after the goal has been forgotten."⁶³ Dape went on to argue that:

The core enterprise itself i.e. the scheme of replacing a military with a democratically government, has been one of the major linguistic casualties. Officially called the "transition," it has been dubbed a "transfiction" on account of the very many qualities it shares with fiction, not least of which is, the delusion that two synthetic political parties created, funded, controlled and administered by the military and their hand-picked surrogates, are the proper vehicles for instituting a durable democratic order, and the belief that you can have democracy without democrats. Those who express this view used to be dismissed as "cynics and sceptics." Now they are called paid agitators.⁶⁴

Dape's article entitled, "Between Kafka and Humpty Dumpty," was promoted on the paper's cover, raising it to the status of a virtual editorial opinion. The *Guardian*, a paper to which in these years, in the words of Mr. Osadolor, former editor of the *Guardian on Sunday*, "security operatives came around to question people, ask journalists to report at their interrogation centre,"⁶⁵ came to the June and July 1993 crisis with a tradition of fierce outspokenness. Reportorially, in the weeks following the election, it mainstreamed the issues surrounding the election with front-page stories. When, after the election, government maintained an ominous silence on the results, the *Guardian* threw in an incisive comment (p. 8) on 23 June under the title "Arresting the Drift." Warned the paper:

The Nigerian people and their leaders, the political parties, the presidential candidates, traditional rulers, religious organizations, human rights and pro-democracy groups, trade unions and mass organizations, professional bodies, women's formations, the government and the president, General Ibrahim Babangida should apprehend the common disaster that may befall us as a nation if the present simulated stalemate is resolved by means other than those clearly dictated by the result of the June 12 presidential election.

On the same day that the editorial was published, the military government announced the cancellation of the presidential elections, which had been judged by international observers as free and fair. A new, testy phase in state-civil society re-

relationships ensued. The *Guardian* used every available occasion to campaign against the military government's decision and to report the spreading protests. For example, while government television blocked out the protests, the *Guardian* had a front page story on 29 June with the title, "Protest Against Poll's Cancellation Spreads: One Person Feared Dead in Ibadan."

Throughout the month of July and into August, as the political crisis intensified, the *Guardian* remained vehement, at great risk to its editors, about the need to uphold the results of the election and for the dictator, General Babangida, to leave office.

Its editorial opinion entitled, "A Matter of Honour," published on 4 July⁶⁶ captures the mood and tenor of the paper, and indeed of the active sector of civil society. Argued the *Guardian*:

If any compelling reason exists for cancelling the presidential election, it has not been furnished. For the Federal Government which cannot claim neutrality in this matter to presume to cancel the election on the basis of evidence known only to itself is a gratuitous assault on the sovereign right of the Nigerians to elect their own leaders. The subterfuge and chicanery of the last two weeks have brought scorn and ridicule on Nigeria, and exposed Nigerians everywhere to contempt.

The editorial, which took up page 8 in its entirety, went on to conclude:

Enough of the dishonourable antics that have diminished us all these past weeks. The nation has suffered enough humiliation. The way forward is for the Federal Government to affirm the verdict that Nigerians delivered so decisively on June 12 or challenge it before the appropriate authority which in this instance, is the Election Tribunal.⁶⁷

A few days later, on 8 July, the *Guardian* published another editorial comment on another aspect of the crisis of democracy, namely the tightening noose on the media. Entitled, "In Bad Faith," it sharply criticised the Offensive Publications (Proscription) Decree 35 of 1993 just issued by government. The *Guardian* argued:

This new decree is in bad faith. The Nigerian press has bent over backwards to accommodate the Babangida Regime. No effort has been spared by the press to keep the transition on course. It is the regime itself that has now almost completely derailed the programme. It is all so very strange. It is one more costly error by the administration.⁶⁸

Looking ahead and indeed capturing the defiant mood of the protest media and civil society, the paper wagered, "The Nigerian press, we would like to point out, has never been awarded freedom. It has won its place in the Nigerian configuration of vital estates of the realm. It has the will, the courage, and the skills to keep that place no matter its circumstances."⁶⁹

What the *Guardian* said editorially was reproduced in equally biting language on its op-ed pages. Thus on Sunday, 11 July, the op-ed page carried three write-ups, namely, "A Season of Betrayal," "Amidst All This," and "Our Prince and

Leviathan." All three were critical of the military dictator and the annulment. The paper was serving as a hot parliamentary session, in which a suppressed democracy was finding its voice.

Similarly on 12 and 13 July, the paper published editorials critical of the regime's conduct. On 12 July, in "Travails of Editors,"⁷⁰ it made common cause with editors in government-owned media who were being victimised for failing to toe the official line. The very next day it berated the military-appointed transitional council for complicity in the annulment of an election they were, at least in principle, supposed to oversee. Entitled "Epitaph to the Transitional Council," the editorial concluded:

They [the council members] will go down as well meaning but naïve men and women drawn into a scheme they did not understand and trapped within it. Their reputation may well survive this misadventure. But if they are henceforth considered lacking in judgement, they can blame nobody but themselves.⁷¹

This, then, was the tenor of the *Guardian* in July and August 1993. Most of its front pages in August were devoted to the political crisis, and it never failed to editorialise, often defiantly, on the turn of events.

To give two final examples, on 18 August the paper had a lead story entitled, "Government Proscribes *Concord, Punch, Sketch, Observer*. Lists Draconian Registration Rules." Two days later, on 20 August, it editorialised in, "The Press Under Siege," that "the Nigerian press which has in recent years been subjected to an ever increasing degree of harassment is now totally besieged. Two recent enactments of the Federal Military Government have brought about this state of affairs that can only be regarded with alarm and apprehension." Pinpointing the hegemonic contestation and its linkage with the struggle to redefine the discourse map, the *Guardian* argued:

The target of these enactments is without question the more robust section of the Nigerian press. Those titles that thrive on fawning adulation of those who make the news or on complaisant endorsement of the latest version of the official truth have nothing to worry about. Their registration is assured. The enactments are harsh indeed, even vengeful.⁷²

As mentioned earlier, the government reorganised the media it controlled to serve the cause of government and to rally against dissent. Take the *New Nigerian*, for example. Even before the democratic crisis of June 1993, the paper virtually became a mouthpiece of government and its security agencies. On 13 November 1992, to give an example, in a front-page story the paper screamed, "Plan to Destabilize Nigeria Uncovered." On reading the story, the claim turns out to be poorly, if at all, substantiated as it merely quoted faceless, "very senior retired and probably serving military officers." The real objective of the story and its probable source becomes clear, however, when in the concluding paragraph the *New*

Nigerian assured its readers that the security forces were already going after those it called, “the organizers and supporters of these subversive activities and would punish them appropriately.”⁷³

The report – if a report it was – would hardly have been different if it had been written by members of the state security service hunting for another pretext to rein in the media and opposition. But such was the posture of the paper. Similarly, in an editorial on 10 June 1993 the *New Nigerian* berated General Obasanjo, other retired generals, and democratic activists who at the end of a meeting in Ota had called on the military to honour the transition programme and conclude it decently. The editorial, entitled “The Unholy Conclave at Ota,” bristled, “The Ota conclave is irrelevant and diversionary. It gives the impression of 31 super patriots in a country of 88 million Nigerians.”⁷⁴

Similarly on 16 June 1993, after the presidential elections and as the nation waited for the results to be announced, the *New Nigerian* ominously called on the military government to void the elections in view of what it called irregularities and lapses in the voting. According to the paper:

All the above point to a situation in which the emergence of a viable democratic process at this time may be questionable. Based on the conditions and circumstances described above, how acceptable could these election results be? Democracy in our content [sic!] must be built on national unity, peace and stability. It must also be intertwined with national sovereignty and sense of belonging. Is this reflected in the pattern of election we have just witnessed? In conclusion, the *New Nigerian* strongly believes that a 3rd party – an alternative to the SDP and NRC has emerged which although not recognized by NEC has the recognition of the judiciary by proxy ...⁷⁵

The third party mentioned here is, of course, the Association for Better Nigeria (ABN), which had been campaigning for President Babangida to hang on to power until 1997. Interestingly, the editor of the *New Nigerian*, Alhaji Yakubu Abdulazeez, resigned his job over the publication of this editorial, alleging that it was faxed from the presidency.

To reinforce its campaign to void the elections in the interest of the “third party,” the *New Nigerian* published, also on 16 June, a paid advertisement on page 3 in which one so-called Association for Nigerian Destiny led by one Alhaji I.I. Dan Musa urged the president to reject the presidential election results. Entitled, “An Open Letter to President Ibrahim Babangida,” it reiterated all the arguments about hitches, low voter turnout, and the like contained in the *New Nigerian* editorial. The real significance of these “texts” would emerge a few days later when the president gave these same reasons for voiding the elections.

On 14 and 27 June respectively, the *New Nigerian* took issue with Western countries (the United States and Britain in particular) for insisting on the fairness of the 12 June elections. The 14 June editorial was entitled, “Intolerable Imprudence,” and it argued, “The United States government has injured our sensitivi-

ties and assaulted our sovereign right to organize our governance without outside interference. The conduct of the election, its cancellation and/or postponement are entirely the internal affairs of Nigerians.”⁷⁶ The 27 June editorial comment of the paper entitled, “Leave Us Alone,” was in the same mould. Curiously a statement made by the senate president, Dr. Iyorchia Ayu, on 29 June was reported differently by the *New Nigerian* and *The Punch*. The *New Nigerian* had, “Ayu Appeals for Calm” while *The Punch* had, “Ayu Condemns Federal Government’s Decision.” Of course, a therapeutic and stabilising tenor was evident in the reports of the *New Nigerian* when it was not attacking the opposition through July and into August. For example, on 9 July, in a story published on page 1 and page 18, the paper screamed, “Row in House as Members Seek to Uphold June 12 Election.” The point of the story was to create the impression that there was no consensus in the house over the 12 June elections.

Similarly, on 14 July, the paper had a report; “FG’s Stand over June 12 Election Commended,” again seeking to create the impression that those insisting on the election results were a minority. As *Media Review* pertinently remarked, “While Nigerians opposed the annulment, *New Nigerian* carried stories clearly supportive of it, and surrendered itself to the government’s propaganda.”⁷⁷

On hand to complement the role of the *New Nigerian* was the Nigerian television, which more or less blacked out statements by Chief Abiola, presumed winner of the elections, while giving generous treatment to the views of government officials. Second, just like the *New Nigerian* and the *Daily Times*, the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) was used to publish stories of doubtful authenticity, in all likelihood emanating from the presidency.

An example was the airing of a message from London, allegedly faxed by Mr. Abimbola Davis of the Association for Better Nigeria (ABN), in which he denied an earlier public confession made in Lagos that the ABN was funded by the presidency.⁷⁸ Hence, the period between June and 26 August, when the dictator “stepped aside,” was one of keen hegemonic contest between an establishment media serving as a propaganda outlet, and a protest, counter-hegemonic media, which, as we shall see subsequently, included an underground guerrilla dimension.

V. Conclusion

In times of hegemonic crisis, the control of, or ready access to, the media is of cardinal importance. As Pierre Sorlin reminds us, “In Societies where power is not stable but is continually renegotiated between competing groups the control of a medium is an invaluable source of influence.”⁷⁹ The Babangida government, as the crisis of democratisation intensified, invested heavily at home and abroad in laundering its image and putting out its story. As has been shown, it tried to circumscribe the discourse regime by persecuting outspoken oppositional media

while co-opting influential journalists and opinion leaders into a neo-corporatist framework under a national unity banner. As we saw too, state-owned media became restive as individual journalists and editors protested the propaganda role assigned to them by government. Government was forced, therefore, to continually tinker with personnel in state-owned media in order to ensure the kind of discourse regime it wanted.

The courageous resignation of editors in state-owned media or their persecution is an important aspect of the crisis of democratisation. In such a radicalising conjuncture, as I show in a subsequent chapter, conservative journalists and culture workers will sometimes join the fray and make cause with the counter-hegemonic opposition.

As I have demonstrated elsewhere,⁸⁰ an ethnic reading of the events of June to August 1993 and beyond would be facile. For one thing, both status quo and oppositional forces cut across ethnic lines. Second, as several others have noted, the government's information minister in 1993, Mr. Uche Chukwumerije, often employed desperate divide and rule tactics by making crude appeals to ethnicity in an attempt to stave off or divide the opposition. Adigun Agbaje captures those moments accurately when he writes that, "an equally damaging aspect of Chukwumerije's game plan relates to the divide-and-rule tactics underpinning his strategy for coping with the more obviously physical manifestations of the crisis. His rhetoric tends to portray the crisis as a sectional one."⁸¹

Hence, the hegemonic contest involved an attempt to deploy ethnic banners and to demonise opposition. The concentration of media institutions in the south-western part of the country made it easy for government spokesmen to categorise militant media opposition to government as sectional, but as was shown in an earlier chapter these are largely status quo ploys. Interestingly, most of the human rights groups and democratic activists that outspokenly opposed the military were based in the south-western part of the country, but the issues they raise concerned the nation and not the Yoruba or the southwest of the country.

As Aaron Gana has pertinently remarked on this score:

One basic weakness of Civil Society Organisations appears to be the unevenness in their spread and strength across the country and the concentration of their activities in the Lagos-Ibadan axis. In one fundamental respect this unevenness often appears to give ethnic/regional character to broad, democratic struggles waged by Civil Society. This for example appears the major weakness of the "June 12 Movement" in the wake of the purported annulment and was to be exploited by the government in ethnicising the struggles.⁸²

This was a dilemma that haunted the protest media and indeed the active sections of civil society in the years of intensified democratic struggle between 1993 and 1998. As explained however, it was the increasingly embattled state that mainly

sought recourse to mobilising ethnic identities, but the nature of the counter-hegemonic challenge went beyond and certainly criss-crossed ethnic identities.

As was shown, too, state persecution of the media and the attempt to buy off opposition was a crucial feature of the Babangida presidency between 1989 and 1993.

End Notes

1. See *Timesweek* (19 August 1991).
2. Author's interview.
3. See *Daily Trust* (11 July 2001).
4. Author's interview.
5. See *Media Review* (June 1991) pp. 12–14.
6. Author's interview.
7. See Eghosa Osaghae, *Nigeria Since Independence: The Crippled Giant* (London: Hurst, 1998) p. 248.
8. Sometimes privately owned newspapers and journals kept suspiciously mute on key national issues.
9. See Tunde Thompson, *Power and the Press*, (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1997, second edition) p. xxxi.
10. See Mike Okoye (ed), *Towards a Better Nigeria: A Selection of Notable Speeches by Nigerian Leaders, 1957–89*, vol.1 (Lagos: Times Books, 1989) p. 336.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 441.
12. Keynote address by General Ibrahim Babangida at the Second National Panel Discussion sponsored by First Bank Plc on 26 August 1989 at the Nigerian Law School, Lagos as reproduced in Ogoga Ifowodo (ed), *Human Rights in Retreat* (Lagos: Civil Liberties Organisation, 1993) pp. 46–7.
13. See Olatunji Dape, The Press, in Larry Diamond, Anthony Kirk-Greene, and Oyeleye Oyediran (eds), *Transition Without End: Nigerian Politics and Civil Society under Babangida* (Ibadan: Vantage, 1997) pp. 541–2.
14. *Citizen* (16 November 1992) p. 8.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Amnesty International Report, 1989* (London: Amnesty International, 1989) p. 274.
17. *African Concord* (23 April 1990).
18. *Ibid.*, cover page.
19. See Adebayo Olukoshi, Associational Life, in Larry Diamond, Anthony Kirk-Greene, and Oyeleye Oyediran (eds), *op. cit.*, p. 463.
20. For a summary of anti-press laws in these years and beyond, see, for example, Tony Momoh, Constitutional Provisions for Press Freedom in Nigeria, in Olatunji Dape and Adidi Uyo (eds), *Journalism in Nigeria: Issues and Perspectives* (Lagos: NUJ, Lagos State, 1996) pp. 118–31.
21. Eghosa Osaghae, *op. cit.*, p. 192.
22. Ben Nwabueze, *Nigeria '93 The Political Crisis and Solutions* (Ibadan: Spectrum, 1994) p. 4 as cited in Osaghae, *op. cit.*, p. 193.
23. See Bayo Adekanye, 'The Military in The Transition' in Larry Diamond, A Kirk-Greene and Oyeleye Oyediran (eds), *op. cit.*, pp. 55–7.

24. Larry Diamond, The Accountability Gap in the Transition to Democracy in Nigeria. Paper presented at the 33rd Annual General Meeting of the African Studies Association, Baltimore, 1–4 November 1990, p. 23.
25. Ibid.
26. Author's interview.
27. Author's interview.
28. Osaze Ehonwa, Thou Shalt Not Say: Sketch of an Anatomy of Censorship in Nigeria 1988–1991, in *Liberty* (January–March 1992) p. 16.
29. Adigun Agbaje, *The Nigerian Press, Hegemony and the Social Construction of Legitimacy, 1960–83* (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1992) p. 65.
30. See Tunji Bello, The Press: Between the Smiling and the Frowning Soldiers, in Said Adejumbi and Abubakar Momoh (eds), *The Political Economy of Nigeria under Military Rule: 1984–93* (Harare: SAPES Books, 1995) p. 303. On corruption in the Nigerian media, see Karl Maier, *This House has Fallen: Midnight in Nigeria* (New York: Public Affairs Press, 2000) pp. 202–3. Maier writes: “And unfortunately, Paying Journalists has become a tradition in Nigeria. It is the brown-envelope syndrome. Journalists covering a politician’s Press Conference, for example often receive a little brown envelope.” See also Michele Maringues, *Nigeria: Guerrilla Journalism* (Paris: Reporters Sans Frontières, 1996), and Ayo Olukotun, The 1999 Nigerian Transition and the Media, *African Journal of Political Science*, 5, 2 (2000) pp. 33–44.
31. See Clement Nwankwo, Frank Aigogun, Elum Emeka Izeze, and Dulue Mbachu, *The Crisis of Press Freedom in Nigeria* (Lagos: Constitutional Rights Project, 1993) p. 39.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. See, Violation of Press Freedom in Nigeria: A Report by the Press Freedom Committee of the Nigerian Union of Journalists (Lagos: NUJ, 1993) p. 20.
35. See Clement Nwankwo *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 40.
36. See Ayo Olukotun, State Repression, Crisis of Democratisation and the Underground Press in Nigeria: A Study of Three Encounters. Monographic research conducted under the University of Sussex/Ford Foundation Governance Network Project, 2000) pp. 34–7, and Ayo Olukotun, Authoritarian State, Crisis of Democratisation and the Underground Media in Nigeria, *African Affairs* (July 2002) pp. 317–42.
37. See Julius Ihonvbere, A Critical Evaluation of the Failed 1990 Coup in Nigeria, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 29, 4, (1991) p. 615.
38. See *Annual Report on Human Rights in Nigeria, 1990* (Lagos: Civil Liberties Organisation, 1991) pp. 42–3.
39. Ibid., pp. 43–6.
40. Author's interview.
41. Author's interview.
42. *African Events* (June 1990) p. 7.
43. See Clement Nwankwo *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
44. Author's interview.
45. For a lively account of the radio coverage of the shifting fortunes of the government and the participants in the coup, see, The War on Radio: A Minute by Minute Account, *Newbreed* (14 May 1990) pp. 22–4.
46. *Annual Report on Human Rights in Nigeria, 1990*, *op. cit.*, pp. 44–5.
47. *1991 Annual Report of the Human Rights Situation in Nigeria Compiled by the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR)* (Lagos: CDHR, 1991) p. 8.

48. *Media Review* (July 1991) p. 10.
49. *Tell* (24 June 1991) as cited in *Media Review* (July 1991) p. 9.
50. *Media Review* (July 1991) p. 9.
51. Editorial opinion, *Guardian* (13 June 1991).
52. Author's interview.
53. *Daily Times* (8 July 1991) p. 19.
54. Author's interview.
55. Author's interview.
56. Author's interview.
57. Violation of Press Freedom in Nigeria, Nigerian Union of Journalists, op. cit., p. 3.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
59. See Ayo Olukotun, Traditional Protest Media and Anti-Military Struggle in Nigeria, 1988–99, *African Affairs*, Vol. 101 2002, p. 193–211.
60. *Guardian* (12 July 1993) 10.
61. *Ibid.*
62. *Ibid.*
63. *African Guardian* (January 1993) p. 23.
64. *Ibid.*
65. Author's interview.
66. *Guardian* (4 July 1993) p. 8.
67. *Ibid.*
68. *Guardian* editorial comment (8 July 1993), p. 8.
69. *Ibid.*
70. *Guardian* (12 July 1993), p. 8.
71. *Guardian* (13 July 1993), p. 8.
72. *Guardian* (20 August 1993), p. 8.
73. *New Nigerian* (13 November 1992) p. 1.
74. *New Nigerian* (10 June 1993) p. 1.
75. *New Nigerian* (16 June 1993) p. 1.
76. *New Nigerian* (14 June 1993), p. 1. The paper's editorials are traditionally published on page 1.
77. *Media Review* (July 1993) p. 18.
78. *Media Review* (July 1993) p. 31.
79. Pierre Sorlin, *Mass Media* (London: Routledge, 1994) p. 150.
80. See Ayo Olukotun, Governance and the Media, in Goran Hyden *et al.* (eds), op. cit., pp. 109–12. See also: Ayo Olukotun, The Media and the Nigerian Civil War, in Eghosa Osaghae, Rotimi Suberu, and Ebere Onwudiwe (eds), *The Nigerian Civil War and Its Aftermath* (Ibadan: John Archer, 2002) pp. 380–91.
81. Adigun Agbaje, A Propagandist, *Media Review* (July 1993) p. 26.
82. See African Centre for Democratic Governance (AFRIGOV), *Newsletter*, 1 (October–December 1998) p. 3.

CHAPTER 4

Censorship and Intolerance – The Media in the Abacha Years

I. Introduction

The period between November 1993 and June 1998, when Nigeria's dictator General Sani Abacha was head of state, was one of pronounced state-media conflict. The years featured a peculiar form of repression, not just of media but also of the active sectors of civil society, as the latter rose in revolt against an increasingly venal and arbitrary rule.

True, as Adekanye argues, "All of Nigeria's Military regimes have at one time or another resorted to proscription or closure of newspaper houses and presses, arrest and imprisonment of journalists, lawyers and other professionals."¹ There is no doubt, however, that Abacha carried these repressive policies to an extreme level and was extraordinarily willing to employ strong-arm tactics against the media and civil society in general.

Article 19: The International Centre against Censorship captures this dimension of those years when it wrote that

Journalists, editors and publishers have been subjected to arbitrary detention; the misuse of criminal charges and unfair trials by special tribunals, torture and ill-treatment and on at least one occasion [a] suspected assassination attempt. The newspapers and magazines for which they work have been the victims of arbitrary banning orders, mass confiscations, concerted attempts to disrupt printing, publication and distribution of "false editions" and the withholding of government advertising for political reasons.²

The suspected assassination attempt mentioned above turned out to be a real one and concerned the murder of Bagauda Kaltho, a journalist with the *News/Tempo* stable who died in detention during the Abacha years, although his fate was not known until 1998. What happened to the media found a parallel in the heavy surveillance of civil society, the arrest of key opposition figures, the frequent stoppage of seminars and book launches by security officials, and more chillingly, the death by assassination of key opposition figures such as Pa Alfred Rewane, Alhaji Kudirat Abiola, and several others, including some who died in unexplained bomb explosions.

The expansion of the state security machine in the later Babangida years became phenomenal under Abacha, who added to it a "death squad" unit whose members have since claimed responsibility for the terror and assassination of those years. As Kunle Amuwo informatively explains:

Abacha sought to exercise absolute control through a reign of terror. He vastly improved, in a wholly negative sense, the well-known security networks which Babangida had spawned in Abuja – obsessed with Security to the point of paranoia – a weak point that was massively exploited by his Chief Security Officer and other cronies – he trusted no one, for he personally commanded his own parallel Security Service.³

Although the degree of culpability of Major El-Mustapha, Abacha's chief security officer referred to above, as well as that of other security chiefs such as Colonel Frank Omenka and Brigadier Sabo, directors of military intelligence, are still matters of judicial investigation, there were startling revelations made at the Human Rights Investigation Commission headed by Justice Oputa.

For example, a former director of the military intelligence, Colonel Steve Idehenre, gave graphic details before the Human Rights Commission concerning the activities of the death squad around General Abacha, which planted bombs, framed prominent citizens – including journalists – in phantom coups, arrested citizens at will, and tortured several Nigerians.⁴

Repression, heavy as it was, was only one face of the regime. The other face related to desperate attempts to win legitimacy and “hegemonise” the dictator's rule. One tactic used by the regime in this latter regard was to instigate the staging of rallies, extensively reported by state media, in which ordinary people “solidarised” with the dictator by carrying pro-government placards. There were several of these rallies, usually staged at critical moments in the government's life. For example, during the pre-trial screening by a military tribunal of those arrested in connection with the alleged coup of 1995, several pro-Abacha rallies were staged across the federation.

As one report informs us:

A common feature characterised the rallies. Invariably some of the demonstrators were clearly illiterates bearing placards with scripted slogans; some held theirs upside down. Then the demonstrators would march to the state house where they would be received by the state's military administrator and his retinue of staff, who it would seem, had been expecting them. A speech condemning the attempted coup and calling for drastic action to serve as a lesson to all those who were intent on coups would be read. The military administrator would thank the demonstrators for their support for the regime and promise to convey their message to the head of state in Abuja.⁵

Contrived or not, the dictator at least took care to couch his actions in legitimist terms and to give the impression that they were genuinely popular. At a more serious level, the dictator hired international public relations experts to brush up his image in the United States. One of them was Paul Manafort, a former Stone business partner and adviser to well-known Republican politician, Bob Dole.⁶ He also made an attempt to buy or invest in two opposition journals, the *News* and *Tell* magazines, having failed to subdue them through repression.⁷

Other legitimising measures sound farcical, including a nationalist economic policy in the first eighteen months of his government as well as an anti-corruption posture that must be set against the monumental diversion of public funds for private ends under his rule. There was also the cooption of influential politicians with good advocacy records, who were associated with democratic struggles in his cabinet. The most notable of these were Mr. Lateef Jakande, Mr. Ebenezer Babatope, and Dr. Iyochia Ayu.

These and other measures notwithstanding, it is the general's depressive mien and crackdown on the media and civil society that comes across most readily. The dictator never obliged any Nigerian media with an interview during his rule, while for three consecutive years, 1996 to 1998, he was named as one of the "top enemies of the press" by a United States-based Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ).⁸

In fact, in a report released a month prior to the dictator's death of cardiac arrest, the CPJ said that the dictator ranked as the number one enemy of the press because he has "escalated his outrageous assault on the country's once thriving independent press, by having twenty-one journalists in detention," among other repressive acts.⁹

As already indicated, it was not only the media but also active civil society that bore the brunt of the general's repression. Amid international protests in November 1995, he hanged minority rights activist and writer, Ken Saro-Wiwa, after a skewed trial by a tribunal. Two months later, the publisher of the *Guardian*, Mr. Alex Ibru, had to flee abroad after he was shot at by the regime's hit squad. Indeed, a conspicuous democratic movement in exile, which internationalised the Nigerian political crisis, as well as the rise of underground media were novel features of these years.

In the next section, I indicate the context of repression, which extended to popular culture, and two succeeding sections respectively take up a calendar of repressive activities as well as the editorial postures, while a concluding section ties the issues together.

II. Harsh Cadences, Persecution and Resistance

In this section, I show more clearly the climate of repression under which the opposition media laboured by alluding to the posture of the dictator, by zeroing in on the spate of repressive laws and activities, and by documenting the travails of the media as revealed in interviews conducted by the author with key media personnel. General Abacha, it was widely speculated and later confirmed by an information official in his cabinet, did not read newspapers and therefore relied almost exclusively on what was fed to him by his aides and press secretaries.¹⁰ As the affairs of the nation were increasingly dominated by national security concerns, his posture towards the media as revealed in his speeches became more belligerent.

He took the occasion of the Guild of Editors' conference in Sokoto in January 1997 to lament the "arrival of a new breed of half-baked and untrained Practitioners."¹¹ He went on to condemn the media as "purveyors of rumours, agents of disintegration, invaders of private closets, unrepentant alarmists."¹²

He took up the media, again, on the fourth anniversary of his government. Lamented Abacha, "The Nigerian media had become unpatriotic institutions which tended to misinterpret the notion of free speech and freedom of the press to mean a license of defiance to defame individuals and governments, indeed to destabilise Society."¹³

The point is that the dictator increasingly viewed the media, and indeed much of civil society, as hostile territory to be subdued or at least neutralised. As we shall see, each time a media house was shut down or proscribed, government deployed maximum force to accomplish the task. For example, when the government was about to close down *The Punch* in June 1994, it descended on the newspaper's premises at 3:00 a.m. ambush style, with "18 armed anti-riot policemen and about 20 agents from the State Security Service."¹⁴ The aim of the early morning strike was to stop the production of the next day's edition of the paper. Not only that, "workers were detained there till 11am when all else were allowed to go home except the editor. He [the editor] was to be detained in his office for the next 72 hours unable to have his bath, unable to change his clothes."¹⁵

Treating journalists like war captives seemed to come naturally to a dictator who was obsessed with security both personal and institutional. Bayo Williams captures this dimension of the dictator when he points out that: "When he took over as Nigeria's head of state, the paranoid and ever superstitious General Sani Abacha, refused to move to the State House until it had been spiritually fumigated and the presidential Guard reconstituted to the single subaltern. This took about three months."¹⁶

The effect of this security obsession was heavy persecution of the media on a scale unknown hitherto in Nigerian history, as a way of cowing the outspoken opposition media.

As Lanre Arogundade, chairman of the Lagos State branch of the Nigerian Union of Journalists during the Abacha years, observed in a comparative context:

When we had the administration of General Buhari and we had Decree 4, we said we could not have it worse. Then we had the regime of General Babangida and newspapers were shut down and we said it would not be worse than this. But certainly, things were worse off under General Abacha. If we have to look at the Military regimes from 1983 up to date that period was the darkest as far as the relationship between the press and the government goes.¹⁷

To put the regime's hostility to the media in further context, it could be argued that it was partly an effort to secure the regime's survival, since a section of the

media, in alliance with civil society groups, agitated for a revalidation of the annulled elections of June 1993 and kept the dictatorship on its toes.

As mentioned earlier, several of the opposition media were closed for periods ranging from twelve to eighteen months and suffered a great deal at both personal and corporate levels.

The experience of Soji Omotunde, editor of the *African Concord*, was typical of the tribe of victimised journalists. Omotunde was abducted on 25 October 1997 by persons who later identified themselves as state security officials. According to him: "I was bundled into their car which blared a siren to clear the road, as it sped off at dizzying speed. I was sandwiched between my two captors at the back of their car, with their sub-machine guns drawn. This was the beginning of my 6-month journey to captivity, incommunicado."¹⁸

Omotunde was interrogated about two editions of *African Concord*, namely those of 2 June 1997, which contained a story entitled, "Abacha's Secret Fears: Why He Won't Go in 1998," and another which had a leader entitled, "Al-Mustapha: The Ruthless Iron Man Behind Abacha." Omotunde, whose eyesight was impaired as a result of his incarceration,¹⁹ continued:

Five days after I was brought to Abuja, I was moved to the State Security Service [SSS] office in Abuja. Here in an unlit, dingy, smelly, mosquito-infested cell, I was dumped, incarcerated for 6 months. For four weeks, I was not allowed a bath neither did I have the benefit of brushing my teeth. At a stage to eat became virtually impossible because of the heaviness of the stench within and around me.²⁰

Omotunde was convinced that his arrest was the sequel to several months of being trailed by state security, during which he changed his car and tried other devices to avoid being arrested.²¹

The travails of the *Concord* and its editors occurred despite the fact that as its managing director, Dr. Doyin Abiola, put it:

We were doing a lot of internal self-censorship. Since you could be killed for raising certain issues, you dance around the issues, so you could live to fight another day. One strategy we adopted was to "leak" material we considered too audacious to publish to the underground journals which promptly published them.²²

Despite these precautions, the *Concord*, in her words, was "traumatised, and bore the brunt of it all."²³ For example, after the *Concord* was closed for nearly eighteen months, the newspaper suffered a sea change. When it finally reopened in 1996, according to its editor, Dele Alake, "We had only one fax machine, located in my house. The far flung *Concord* empire, comprising offices throughout the federation, had been drastically pruned to size due to economic losses. Often, people wondered how we managed to stay in business."²⁴

Of course, as revealed earlier, the newspaper did not stay afloat for long. In a sense, it never really recovered from the persecution during the Abacha years. It

limped into 1999 but went off the streets some time in 2000, after protracted default on workers' salaries. It is probable, as Tunji Bello, the paper's former editor argues, that had the Concord publisher, Bashorun Abiola, survived his incarceration, he could have turned the paper around.²⁵

Interesting, too, was the experience of the *Guardian*, another opposition newspaper, which remained critical of Abacha, despite the appointment of its publisher to the dictator's cabinet as minister of internal affairs. As Kingsley Osadolor, former editor of the *Guardian on Sunday*, told it:

In August 1994, *The Guardian* was not just invaded and closed down, its publications were also proscribed by the government of General Sani Abacha. And that lasted till July 1995. When the paper resumed publishing for two months, there was an arson attack attempt on the premises. In one of the cases now before the Courts, there is a testimony to the fact that it was members of the "hit squad" of the government that tried to burn down the newspaper. A few months after that, the publisher of *The Guardian*, Mr. Alex Ibru, was shot at point-blank range. And for quite a while, he was abroad, trying to recuperate.²⁵

Osadolor mentioned, too, the "severe economic losses and financial haemorrhage"²⁷ sustained by the paper. According to him, "Those behind these acts knew what they were aiming for. They were seeking to break the resolve of *The Guardian* by making it succumb to the whim and caprice of terror. But they failed remarkably as *The Guardian* never lost sight of its philosophy."²⁸ Osadolor is substantially correct here, for the paper remained resilient and maintained its critical tenor for most of the Abacha years, despite the repressive tactics.

Apart from the incidents cited by Osadolor, the dictator put the *Guardian* under surveillance by means of regular visits by security personnel. One such visit occurred on Friday, 29 March 1996 when armed soldiers from the directorate of military intelligence called at the *Guardian* apparently to monitor goings-on or be a constraining presence.

To underline its resentment of the newspaper, The Guardian Newspapers and African Guardian Weekly Magazine Proscription and Prohibition from Circulation Decree 8, 1994, after proscribing the paper, added that: "The premises where the Newspapers and the magazine referred to in section 1 of this Decree are printed and published shall be sealed up by the Inspector-General of Police or any officer of the Nigeria Police Force authorised in that behalf during the duration of this decree."²⁹

After disobeying several court orders in respect of the opening of the *Guardian*, management was finally blackmailed into tendering an apology to the head of state for its oppositional conduct before it could be reopened.

In contradiction of those who categorise media resistance to Abacha as a sectional matter involving the Yoruba press, we have the experience of the travail of the outspokenly critical *Hotline* magazine that was set up in 1987 by Alhaji Sani

Kontagora, a northern businessman. As the editor of the paper, Eddy Ochiugbo, told it:

The Abacha regime put us under surveillance. We began to see strange faces on our premises, particularly in 1994. It was as if they wanted to know what we were going to publish. The same year, our editor-in-chief, Bashir Bello Ako was whisked into detention for a week. So we decided on ways of avoiding security agents.³⁰

Adopting tactics remarkably similar to those of the underground journals, the staff of *Hotline* converged at the home of the editor-in-chief for their meetings. "There, we decide on what to write. Once we finish our copies, we converge at the office. We keep vigil and sleep overnight until production ends. If we get signals that the security agents are around, we hide our scripts."³¹

This hide-and-seek game went on until 1995, when the paper's publisher was arrested under the government's Failed Banks Decree and detained. The government, it should be noted, had been widely criticised for the selective way it went about prosecuting people under this decree. Although Kontagora was eventually released, his incarceration and other problems alluded to in an earlier chapter led to the temporary suspension of the paper.

Refreshing, too, was the role of Desnims Broadcasting, the only independent television in the north under the Abacha dictatorship. Its chairman was and remains Halifa Baba Ahmed, who rose to become executive director at the state-owned Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) before founding Desnims. Although the station did not become oppositional, it kept a professional distance from pro-regime views. As Ahmed stated: "Under the Abacha regime, Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and FRCN were singing Abacha's praises. But many times our station ran news and programmes for a whole month without mentioning Abacha. We ran programmes on corruption and featured opponents of the administration."³²

Ahmed's views on the NTA's and FRCN's postures are right on the mark, for many citizens were put off by their regime salesmanship and found growing recourse to the burgeoning private broadcasting sector featuring African Independent Television (AIT) Channels Television, Galaxy, and Minaj televisions, as well as Raypower Radio, among others.³³ For most of the Abacha years, none of those mentioned above achieved national coverage, a feature that, along with their tight regulation by the National Broadcasting Commission, constrained their effectiveness. Ahmed is pertinent, too, in lamenting that, "the NTA/FRCN role in the Self-Succession bid was very unprofessional. How can Abacha use those public-funded stations to fund his Self-Succession?"³⁴

State media in general, too, got a taste of persecution under the dictator, for the purpose of aligning them with the government's propaganda objectives. For example, government showed irritation towards the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) over some stories it carried, which Reuters as well as the international and

domestic media also instantly carried. Indeed, after one such story concerning the hanging of Saro-Wiwa in 1995, the NAN reporter in Port Harcourt had to go into exile to avoid further repercussions.³⁵

According to Wada Maida, NAN's managing director:

What happened actually, was that we broke the news [of Ken Saro-Wiwa's hanging] and chief Tom Ikimi [the foreign minister] said the entire problem was caused by NAN because he was, he said, in New Zealand doing his best and suddenly NAN broke the story. On that one also, I was summoned. My defence was that Ismaila Gwarzo [national security advisor] and other Security Chiefs, the SSS, the Police and the National Intelligence Agency guy called us to a security briefing. And we were told at the briefing attended by media executives, that as soon as the PRC [Provisional Ruling Council] approved the judgement, Saro-Wiwa and others will be hanged in 24 hours. And nobody at the time told us not to publish the story as soon as he was hanged.³⁶

Despite the sound explanation offered by Maida, he was still reprimanded by Gwarzo for "not using my sense, for after all you are part of government."³⁷ Fortunately, however, Maida did not lose his job. But not every state media official was so lucky. At the *New Nigerian* one editor lost his job as a result of a story carried by the paper relating to a former head of state, even though other papers also carried the story. He was later reinstated, however, by the succeeding managing director, but again ran into trouble when the *Sunday New Nigerian* carried an editorial appealing to the Abacha government to spare General Yar'adua and other coup convicts in 1995. This time, the editor was "promoted" to an innocuous managerial job.³⁸

A senior member of the editorial personnel at the newspaper gave an insight into the paper's posture during the Abacha years: "*New Nigerian* like most newspapers operates by the dictum: he who pays the piper calls the tune. *New Nigerian* is owned by the Federal government and since the crisis was between the Government and the people, Government determined what the *New Nigerian's* posture should be."³⁹

It was revealed, too that there was a lot of internal censorship. According to this informant: "An article I wrote on Abacha's Self-Succession, a Sarcasm entitled 'Metamorphosis of a Prince' was turned down. *New Nigerian* could not opine about the scandalous manipulation of the political process by Abacha between 1996 and 1998."⁴⁰

At the *Daily Times*, Mr. Tunji Oseni, the independent-minded managing director from 1993 to 1995, was fired in August 1995 after he was given four cautions by the information minister. Relations deteriorated between Oseni and the minister, Dr. Walter Ofonagoro, following the latter's refusal to publish an editorial on Carter's visit to Nigeria faxed to him by the minister of information.⁴¹ Government explained that Oseni was removed in order to facilitate the restructuring of the company.

Similarly, when the *Daily Times* company plummeted to an all time low in 1998, government refused to bail it out, probably because of the relatively independent posture of Mr. Peter Enahoro, who was then sole administrator of the company.

Though state-owned media generally served government's hegemonic objectives, editors sometimes ran into trouble with state security. John Araka, editor of the *Daily Times* from 1995 to 1997, who lifted the paper's print run from about 14,000 to 23,000, was detained twice because of stories carried by the paper. According to Araka, even when other papers carry such stories the *Daily Times* was expected to pass over them in silence, if they were clearly embarrassing to government.⁴²

Also to be noted is the experience of journalists in the underground media, which I deal with in Chapter 5. I cite here only the experience of Kunle Ajibade, one of the founding editors of *News* magazine, who was detained in Markudi prison between October 1995 and July 1998 for being an accomplice in the alleged coup of 1995. According to Ajibade:

I was taken captive in May 1995 by State Security Service but was handed over to the Directorate of Military Intelligence, Apapa – a fact which concealed my whereabouts for a while. I was with DMI until I collapsed in the cell and was rushed to the military hospital, Ikoyi. It was while in hospital that forms were brought from the Special Investigating Panel for me to fill. So, technically, my trial for coup plotting began at the hospital.⁴²

In spite of his frail health, Ajibade was sentenced to life imprisonment after a farcical trial. In his words: "Huddled into one of the worst prisons in the country which I shared with armed robbery suspects. Markudi is one of the worst prisons in the country. I was consigned there to die instalmentally but I survived partly because I said to myself that I should not give them the pleasure of having me die ..."⁴³

In concluding this section, I cite, too, the experience of Ben Charles Obi, editor of *Weekend Classique*, a news journal with an estimated circulation in 1995 of 40,000 copies a week. Obi, who spent 1995 to 1998 in jail for aiding coup plotters, said: "It was horrible and dehumanising. We lived like animals; there were no civilised amenities. 100 or so people had to share one bucket. The food was not good enough for dogs, not to talk of human beings. For two years, I was not allowed to have any visitor."⁴⁴

Repression, as mentioned earlier, extended to such popular culture artists and *Ewi* exponents as Opeyemi Fajemilehin, who had to flee abroad in 1996 to escape possible assassination after recording an album entitled *Liberation*, which was strongly critical of the dictatorship (see Chapter 6).

III. A Calendar of Repression

As a prelude to our consideration of editorial postures, I provide a brief calendar of repression and cooption by the Abacha government. Bearing in mind that the preceding section has already highlighted a number of repressive acts towards the media by the regime, focus is given in this section to those not already mentioned.

It will be recalled that following General Babangida's forced departure from office on 26 August 1993, a civilian technocrat, Chief Ernest Shonekan, took over as head of state under a pact between the departing dictator and representatives of the political class. Shonekan's rule and that of the interim national government that he presided over proved to be short-lived, lasting a mere three months. In November 1993 Shonekan was overthrown in a bloodless coup led by General Sani Abacha, who promptly dissolved all existing democratic structures and reverted to thoroughgoing military rule.

An aspect of state-media relations under the Shonekan government worth noting is the fact that he faced vociferous opposition from the militant section of the media and an aroused civil society. There is no greater contradiction of an ethnic perspective of media resurgence in these years than the fact that the allegedly Yoruba-dominated media largely championed the fall from office of Chief Ernest Shonekan, a Yoruba technocrat. Had ethnicity been the issue or the cardinal reason for media agitation, one would have expected the so-called Yoruba media to condone the government of Shonekan. As Olatunji Dape pointed out,⁴⁵ the values which impelled media opposition were those of fairness and respect for the rules of the game. Opposition to Shonekan was expressed on the grounds that he came to power by subterfuge and should give way for the duly elected leader, Chief Moshood Abiola, whose election was annulled by General Ibrahim Babangida. Opposition to General Abacha, as we will see shortly, was also largely on the same grounds. It was the crisis of democratisation that led to media agitation, and for which the media, as I show in Chapter 5, were driven underground and had to publish or struggle against the dictatorship from hide-outs. Shonekan had promised to repeal Decrees 2, 29, and 48 and others promulgated in the dying days of Babangida, but he was overthrown before he could honour the promise.

In his inaugural broadcast to the nation on 18 November 1993, therefore, General Abacha struck a conciliatory tone regarding free expression and went ahead to de-proscribe five media institutions affected by the clampdown of July 1993. He also tried to court civil society, as pointed out earlier, by appointing pro-democracy politicians and media executives to his cabinet. The appointment of Dr. Ihechukwu Madubike, a director in the *Champion* newspapers, as well as Mr. Alex Ibru, the *Guardian* publisher, to the cabinet was seen as an olive branch to a persecuted media. Of course, the appointment of Alhaji Baba Gana Kingibe, who was Chief Abiola's vice-presidential mate, to the cabinet was meant to take the bottom out of lingering "12 June" agitations.

The section of the media that led the revolt against Babangida tended to cold-shoulder Abacha, in spite of his olive branch. For example, the *African Concord* in its editorial comment of 6 December 1993 entitled, "Military Rule? Not Again," said:

The claim of the new regime that it has come to save Nigeria is fraudulent because it is the same military that destroyed the very basis of our national unity exemplified by the votes cast on 12 June 1993. Now the same military which inexplicably placed the country in mortal danger by cancelling votes freely cast is wearing the toga of concerned patriots. The military can never persuade Nigerians that they did not deliberately create the current political turmoil in order to find an excuse to perpetuate military rule.⁴⁶

Advocating a brief military interregnum based on the restoration of the annulled election, the paper went on to suggest that:

The Abacha regime should retrace its steps. It should restore the political structures it illegally dismantled, declare the result of 12 June elections, install the winner and take a bow. Any other course is doomed to fail because 12 June, no matter what any one does, cannot be wished away. And all these can be done in 30 days.⁴⁷

Abacha had other plans, one of which was to lay 12 June and its ghost to rest, as well as institute a fresh transition programme, which was to eventually terminate in his adoption as a so-called "Consensus Presidential Candidate." In the first few weeks following his takeover, however, he enjoyed a honeymoon of sorts with a broad section of the media. He also tried to create support, as we have seen, for his role through various conciliatory gestures. But a counter-hegemonic section of the media, having seen through his game plan, only bided its time. It was only a matter of time before opposition arose from that section of the media, and government replied with a clenched fist.

The year 1994 was to prove eventful in this regard. The first test of wills came on 2 January when a team of state security and police officials seized 50,000 copies of the *Tell* edition for that week. The edition was entitled, "The Return of Tyranny: Abacha Bares His Fangs." The magazine came out, however, in tabloid form to ensure that its readers could catch up on its contents.

Between January and March, several journalists were detained for brief periods in connection with their publications. These included the publisher and editor of *Razor* magazine, Mr. Moshood Fayemiwo and Tony Irolade, over a story predicting a coup d'état; the publisher of *Hotline*, Alhaji Sani Kontagora; as well as Alex Kaba of the *News/Tempo*.⁴⁸

On 25 March, however, state security added a new dimension to the repression of the opposition media when it published fake editions of *Tell* magazine. The management of *Tell* instantly disowned the editions and attributed them to state security. Matters were clearly getting nasty for the opposition media.

In April 1994, government went further down the road of repression when it arrested Dan Agbese, Ray Ekpu, and Yakubu Mohammed, all executive directors of *Newswatch*. This was over an interview carried by the journal in which Brigadier-General David Mark made some critical remarks about the Abacha government. As Yakubu Mohammed recalled it:

The weekend following the publication of the interview, I had gone over to Kogi, my home state, not knowing that State Security was trailing me. I was arrested in Lokoja; Ray Ekpu at the airport (on his way back from Akwa-Ibom) and Dan Agbese also. We were detained at the State Security Service [SSS] headquarters for 12 days. It was our longest detention ever. Interestingly, even after General Abacha ordered our release (as a result of the intervention of the Newspapers Proprietors Association of Nigeria, NPAN) the Attorney-General, Dr. Olu Onagoruwa refused to comply, and was heard threatening that "*Newswatch* must be taught a lesson." We were kept till the following Monday. We took the government to court for illegal detention and won but we were not paid one kobo, nor did government bother to file an appeal.⁴⁹

Newswatch, though not an opposition journal, had experienced sanctions at the hands of a government increasingly irritated with press freedom.

In the same month, government deported Geraldine Brooks, a *Wall Street Journal* reporter, after keeping her incommunicado for several days (see Chapter 7).

In June, government closed down the *Concord* as well as *The Punch*, principally because of their insistence on an early return to democracy through the revalidation the annulled 12 June election. The newspapers' postures tallied with spreading agitation in civil society for such a policy, which government confronted with a heavy crackdown. The *Guardian* was also closed down, as mentioned earlier, in August 1994. The state-media confrontation had reached its high-water mark.

The years 1995 and 1996 were equally tough for the media that was critical of Abacha's rule. In 1995, the most sensational case of media victimisation occurred. It concerned the cases of four journalists who were among forty civilians and armed force officers arrested and consequently convicted of treason and related offences as a result of the alleged coup d'état of 1995. Some of those tried and sentenced to harsh jail terms (commuted from death penalties) included regime opponents such as General Olusegun Obasanjo, General Shehu Yar'adua (who would later die in jail), as well as Dr. Beko Ransome Kuti, a well-known human rights activist.

The four journalists affected were Chris Anyanwu, the female publisher of *TSM* magazine; Ben Charles Obi, editor of *Classique* magazine; Kunle Ajibade, editor and founding member of the *News* magazine; as well as George Mbah, assistant editor of *Tell* magazine. The journalists were tried and convicted in secret on the grounds that their stories suggested that they had foreknowledge of the alleged coup. This was an altogether new dimension in state-media relations in Nigeria.

At least a dozen other journalists, including Nosa Igiebor, editor of *Tell* magazine, were arrested in the course of 1995. To put these events in perspective, it should be noted that throughout that year,

Scores of suspected opponents of the government were detained under the State Security (Detention of Persons) Decree No. 2 of 1984 which provides for the indefinite incommunicado detention without charge or trial ... They included human rights and prodemocracy activists, journalists and members of the Ogoni ethnic group.⁵⁰

In 1996, government kept up the vigil on the media and civil society. Among journalists detained by government was Babafemi Ojudu, who was detained and severely beaten in August 1996, as well as Godwin Agbroko, editor of the *Week*.⁵¹

Although government had de-proscribed the *Guardian* the year before, its publisher, Mr. Alex Ibru, nearly lost his life in a gun attack, as mentioned earlier. Persecution extended to foreign journalists such as Paul Adams, correspondent of the London-based *Financial Times*, who was detained in Ogoniland for a week in January 1996. At the same time, government continued to arrest, detain, and persecute members of the opposition National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), which had been formed in 1994 to advance the cause of democracy.

Similarly, wife of Bashorun Abiola, Alhaji Kudirat Abiola was murdered in June 1996 by members of the government's hit squad. Interestingly, while government prosecuted a so-called transition to civilian rule, it kept on the statute books, and made use of, a battery of anti-media laws such as Treason and other Offences (Special Military Tribunal) Decree 1 of 1986; Offensive Publication (Proscription) Decree 35 of 1993, as well as the Transition to Civil Rule (Political Programme) Decree 1 of 1996. The last one, for example, prescribes punishment of five years for anyone who, "Organises, plans, encourages, aids, cooperates or conspires with any other person to undermine, prevent or in any way do any act to forestall or prejudice the realisation of the political programme."⁵²

To specifically target the media, government prescribed the same punishment for any person who, "does or attempts to do any act to counsel, persuade, encourage, organise, mobilise, pressurise, or threaten another person to join with him or with any other person or persons to misrepresent, accuse, or distort the details, implications or purports of any item of the political programme."⁵³

In January 1997, the information minister, Dr. Walter Ofonagoro, threatened to institute a special press court to try journalists for "false reporting," as well as resurrect the obnoxious Newspapers Decree 43 of 1993, which had been declared "null and void" by a federal high court in 1994.⁵⁴

IV. Editorial Postures – The June 1994 Crisis

In order to track the media's editorial postures, I have focused on one conjuncture when the crisis of democratisation became open and manifest. That was June

1994, when civil society groups resurrected the demand for a revalidation of the 12 June election and the restoration of the mandate given to Bashorun Mko Abiola. Government's response to the crisis was to insist on carrying through a constitutional conference as a prelude to another transition programme, as well as repression of civil society activists such as human rights groups, dissenting media, labour unions, and members of the political class who refused to toe the line.⁵⁵

Several arrests were made across the nation, while pro-democracy groups staged sit-ins, boycotts, and open demonstrations in which lives were lost.⁵⁶ In order to capture the editorial coverage of these developments, which led to an open split between pro-regime and pro-democratic forces, I have chosen the period from 1 to 12 June, when sections of an aroused civil society were in the throes of anti-Abacha agitation, and when the Abacha government deployed a twin strategy of repression and cooption to douse the democratic revolt.

Typical of state media (print and electronic) was the posture of the *New Nigerian*, while the posture of the *Guardian*, which as we have seen was subsequently closed, is representative of the oppositional, counter-hegemonic media in this period.

In the run-up to the first anniversary of the 12 June election (between 1 and 12 June) the *New Nigerian* published eight editorials. Of the eight, five dealt with issues other than the democratic agitation over 12 June. Only three dealt with the "12 June crisis" and all were against a revalidation of the annulled election.

In its editorial of 6 June 1994, *New Nigerian* defined the burgeoning democratic protest as a law and order problem and counselled an approach based on law-enforcement and suppression of protests. Argued the paper, under the suggestive title "Government Must Be Firm:"

The *New Nigerian* feels that regardless of what anybody, group or nation may say about human rights and democracy, generally speaking the Abacha administration being the only one we now have and the only one that currently commands the acceptance and confidence of the preponderant majority of Nigerians, has the paramount responsibility of not only maintaining law and order but preserving the territorial integrity and divisibility of Nigeria as a nation-state.⁵⁷

On 7 June, the paper having argued the previous day, without providing proof, that Abacha "commands the acceptance and confidence of the preponderant majority of Nigerians,"⁵⁸ now went on to argue in the second instalment of the editorial that, "We cannot in the name of democracy directly or indirectly promote chaos and set anarchy loose in the land. We urge the Federal military government to be prompt, decisive and firm in its management of state affairs."⁵⁹

The message was clear: The protests are in defiance of the authority of government and should be put down. This was exactly what happened: a crackdown unfolded, generating even more unrest and further protests.

The final editorial by the paper on the democratic agitation in the period was published on 11 June and entitled, "Let Sanity Prevail." It argued:

First the legitimacy of June 12 was made doubtful by a web of legal intrigues which cannot be resolved without first tampering with our statute books. Second, June 12 was reduced to an ethnic issue thereby alienating and even antagonising other ethnic groups. Third, when Chief Abiola had an opportunity to fight, he played the philosopher.⁶⁰

Significantly, the paper tried to down-play and demonise the protest by referring to it as an ethnic affair. The same ploy had been used in July 1993 by the government's information machinery as a way of diverting attention from the substance of the protests.

In contrast to the *New Nigerian's* pro-Abacha advocacy was the posture of the *Guardian*. The *Guardian*, of eleven editorials published between 1 and 12 June, had nine devoted to issues other than the democratic agitation. It had two editorials on the 12 June democratic struggle, and both were in support of the spreading protests. The first of the editorials, which appeared on 6 June, argued, "If the administration is genuinely desirous of building consensus so that Nigeria might move forward again, the electoral processes organised thus far must be cancelled, unfortunate as this may be. Settled governance in Nigeria will remain a pipe dream until the June 12 question is resolved."⁶¹

The electoral processes concerning which the paper urged cancellation were, it should be noted, those initiated by the Abacha government as a subterfuge to sidestep the protests over the annulled election.

On 11 June, the *Guardian* returned to the issue under the title, "An Unacceptable Response." This time, the paper took issue with the crackdown on civil society by government. Said the *Guardian*:

The majority of those arrested have not been charged at all with any offence. Their detention appears not to be backed by any law known to the public, and they are being held in degrading conditions. And all this for demanding an immediate transition to government based on consent of the people. It is a great insult not only to their exalted persons but to all Nigerians that founding fathers such as Chief Enahoro, Chief A.M. Ajasin, and others of stature are arrested, detained and officially harassed, for what is, at bottom, political activity designed to restore sovereignty to the people.⁶²

The position taken by the *Guardian* was echoed by such opposition papers as *The Punch*, as well as the *News* and *Tell*, which were published principally from hide-outs. As pointed out earlier, an ethnic reading of the opposition to Abacha is misleading. For example, even the northern-based *Sentinel* magazine, whose publisher was General Shehu Yar'adua, was well known for its anti-Abacha views. Indeed, in its 16 May 1994 edition, it anticipated the agitation that was to come in June when in a cover story strikingly entitled, "Abacha: Time Up," it argued, "Critics

have never relented in questioning the moral justification of Abacha, a close ally of Babangida, seizing power and wanting to cling to it.”⁶³

The framing of General Shehu Yar’adua in the alleged coup d’etat of 1995 and his eventual death in detention may not have been unrelated to the anti-Abacha views and the democratic insistence of the *Sentinel*.

I have also alluded to the travails of *Hotline*, another northern-based publication with decided anti-Abacha views. Similarly, in the southwest region, newspapers like the *Monitor*, based in Ibadan, evinced pro-Abacha sympathies on account of which its premises were torched by angry demonstrators during the civil agitation against the self-succession of the general. It is more useful, therefore, to speak of a hegemonic media consisting of state media and its allies in the private sector, and a counter-hegemonic media, which served as the arrowhead of the democratic struggle.

V. Conclusion

In the preceding sections, it was shown how the Abacha government tried to create a discourse favourable to its legitimation through tight control of state media, the funding of some independent newspapers, as well as by repression of opposition media. The government was forced to clamp down on the media and the active section of civil society because they refused to buy into his agenda of setting up another so-called transition programme, when he could easily have concluded that of his predecessor. A section of the media, drawing on a well-developed tradition of activism that we have described as counter-hegemonic, insisted on the revalidation of the annulled elections at great cost. Many opposition journalists were driven into exile, arrested, or forced to publish underground. Nonetheless, government was unable to subdue the democratic media or to successfully market its own version of unity, stability, and order.

Although divisions in the media and civil society sometimes coincided with the nation’s geo-ethnic divisions along north-south lines, for instance, it is suggested that an ethnic reading is superficial as it ignores crucial dimensions of the history of that turbulent era. Forced underground, a section of the media, as we see in the next chapter, became an even more formidable opponent of the military state and an effective articulator of civil society’s resistance to a repressive and unpopular dictator. As Fatton has pertinently observed, “Even in its most totalitarian variant, the state can never fully annihilate civil society. Civil society’s murmurs and ‘hidden transcripts’ are always potentially explosive, they constitute [the] invisible zone of resistance to domination.”⁶⁴

Hence, state repression in the Abacha years typified by a brutal personal dictatorship as well as cooption of dissent, did not succeed in quelling media resistance or in preventing the media from insisting on democracy, human rights, and renewal.

End Notes

1. Bayo Adeganye, The Military in the Transition, in Larry Diamond, Anthony Kirk-Greene, and Oyeleye Oyediran (eds), *Transition Without End: Nigerian Politics and Civil Society Under Babangida* (Ibadan: Vantage, 1997) p. 51.
2. See *Nigeria: Abacha's Media Crackdown. A Report By Article 19: International Centre Against Censorship* (London: Article 19, April 1997).
3. Kunle Amuwo, Transition as Democratic Regression, in Kunle Amuwo, Daniel Bach, and Yann Lebeau (eds), *Nigeria During the Abacha Years, 1993–98: The Domestic and International Politics of Democratisation* (Ibadan: IFRA, 2001) p. 14.
4. *Guardian* (11 September 2001) p. 1.
5. See *Annual Report, 1995, A CLO Report on the State of Human Rights in Nigeria* (Lagos: Civil Liberties Organisation, 1996) p. 126.
6. *Newsweek* (23 September 1996) p. 3.
7. Author's interviews.
8. Lanre Idowu, The Media Under Abubakar, in Tunji Oseni (ed), *The Media, Transition and Nigeria* (Lagos: Tosen Consult, 1999) p. 267.
9. *Media Rights Monitor* (May 1998) p. 1.
10. Author's interview.
11. *Guardian* (22 January 1996) p. 27.
12. Ibid.
13. *Guardian* (17 November 1997).
14. *Media Review* (June 1994) p. 11.
15. Ibid., p. 15.
16. Bayo Williams, Towards a Typology of Contemporary Armed Conflicts in Africa: Elite Reorientation in the Era of Globalisation. Paper presented to the Conflict, Control and Conciliation Group Meeting, African Studies Centre, Leiden, Netherlands (12 May 1999) p. 18.
17. *National Concord* (10 July 1998) p. 7.
18. Author's interview.
19. Ibid.
20. Author's interview.
21. Author's interview.
22. Author's interview.
23. Author's interview.
24. Author's interview.
25. Author's interview.
26. Author's interview.
27. Author's interview.
28. Author's interview.
29. See *Supplement to Official Gazette Extraordinary*, 8, 81 (24 August 1994) (Lagos: Federal Government Printers, 1994) p. A153
30. Author's interview.
31. Author's interview.
32. Author's interview.
33. On the emergent private broadcasting media, see Michele Maringues, The Nigerian Press: Current State, Travails and Prospects, in Kunle Amuwo, Daniel Bach and Yann Lebeau, op. cit., pp. 211–13. See Also Ayo Olukotun, Governance and the Media: Nigerian and East African Per-

- spectives. Paper read to the governance seminar held at Mt. Meru Hotel (Novotel), Arusha, 12–16 May 1996.
34. Author's interview.
 35. Author's interview.
 36. Author's interview.
 37. Author's interview.
 38. Author's interview.
 39. Author's interview.
 40. Author's interview.
 41. Author's interview.
 42. Author's interview.
 43. Author's interview.
 44. Author's interview.
 45. Author's interview.
 46. *African Concord* (6 December 1993) p. 11.
 47. *Ibid.*
 48. See *Violations of Press Freedom in Nigeria in 1994: A Report by the Press Freedom Committee of the Nigerian Union of Journalists* (Lagos: NUJ, 1994).
 49. Author's interview.
 50. *Report of Amnesty International, 1995* (London: Amnesty International, 1995) p. 239.
 51. *Nigeria: Abacha's Media Crackdown. A Report by Article 19*, op. cit., p. 5.
 52. *Ibid.*, p. 10
 53. *Ibid.*
 54. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
 55. See *Sentenced to Silence: 1997 Annual Report of the Media Rights Agenda* (Lagos: MRA Publications, 1998) p. 1.
 56. *Country Report on Human Rights Practices by the State Department of the United States, 1997*, p. 266.
 57. *New Nigerian*, editorial opinion (6 June 1994) p. 1.
 58. *Ibid.*
 59. *New Nigerian*, editorial opinion (7 June 1994) p. 1.
 60. *New Nigerian*, editorial opinion (11 June 1994) p. 1.
 61. *Guardian*, editorial opinion (6 June 1994) p. 12.
 62. *Guardian*, editorial opinion (11 June 1994) p. 16.
 63. *Sentinel* (16 May 1994).
 64. Robert Fatton, Jr., African in the Age of Democratisation: The Civic Limitations of Civil Society, *African Studies Review*, 38, 2 (1995) p. 68.

CHAPTER 5

Driven Underground – The Guerrilla Media Phenomenon

I. Introduction

As discussed in the last chapter, the sustained security siege of the opposition media and the outright closure and proscription of newspapers forced a section of the media to develop an underground strategy to stay in business and to struggle against the dictatorship. This was a notable departure in state-media relations and involved a hit-and-run operative style, in which journalists, operating from hide-outs continued to publish critical journals in defiance of the state.

The principal media institutions involved on a sustained basis in this strategy are *Tell* magazine, *News* magazine (which also published *Tempo* magazine, a tabloid), as well as a pirate radio at first called the Freedom Frequency Radio, later renamed Radio Kudirat. The underground phase of the media began in the final year of President Babangida's term, and became pronounced during the Abacha years, when it became impossible for opposition media to operate in the conventional way.

In these years, when several independent media houses were shut down by government and when state propaganda was ubiquitous, the guerrilla media filled a crucial gap in keeping people informed of goings-on in government, especially those aspects that government liked to conceal. Along with rebellious orature discussed in the next chapter, the guerrilla media constitute an alternative media and a counter-hegemonic forum that allowed civil society a space in which to express itself in the face of authoritarian closure. The popularity of the illicit publications and radio and the active support given by civil society to journalists on the run, in the shape of shelter as well as direct funding, suggest that the underground media were one way in which civil society countervailed and curbed a repressive, authoritarian state.

Guerrilla journalism was no dinner party, to paraphrase a famous dictum. In the words of one of its exponents, "journalists came to the office when it was dangerous to do so. When there were no offices to come to, due to the siege, we all knew where to meet. Many of us didn't care if we lived poor."¹

At least one guerrilla journalist did not survive the Abacha years. He died in detention, while several others either fled into exile to escape assassination, or spent varying periods in detention under harsh and harrowing conditions. Interestingly, the two underground journals, despite the repression and frequent man-hunts, never missed a single edition, so resilient was the framework developed in the years of struggle. The rest of the chapter is divided into five sections. The

next section takes up profile and perceptions; two succeeding sections highlight editorial postures on issues related to democratisation; another section discusses the linkages between media and civil society; while a final section draws the issues together.

II. Profile and Perceptions

Tell Magazine

Tell magazine, which published its first edition on 15 April 1991, did not start out as an adversary, much less guerrilla publication. Although its mission statement was audacious in terms of the marketing goals it set for itself, there was little, at the time, to foreshadow what it would later become, the arrowhead of opposition journalism. As one of the five founding editors, Dele Omotunde, expressed it: "We left *Newswatch* because we felt we were not having professional fulfilment and hence the best thing was to branch out to form our own magazine."² This sounds pretty much like young men itching to try their hands at something different, rather than a group of agitators.

Incidentally, all five founding editors of *Tell* had worked for *Newswatch* – an intellectual and competently produced journal started by Dele Giwa, Ray Ekpu, and Yakubu Mohammed. *Newswatch*'s forte is its investigative, in-depth feature stories – a trait inherited by *Tell* magazine, which then added to it a social conscience and crusading imagination. Three of *Tell*'s founding editors – Nosa Igiebor, Dele Omotunde, and Dare Babarinsa – were pioneer members of *Newswatch* and served on its editorial board, while the two others, Onome Osifo-Whiskey and Kola Ilori, rose to become associate editor and senior staff writer respectively.

Much initial recrimination and professional rivalry attended their pulling out of *Newswatch*, underlined by grievances about low remuneration and the allegation that top hats were not as worker-friendly as was once thought. Concerning this phase, Ilori said, "Actually we don't want to go to that era of 'bad blood' but suffice it to say that we weren't getting professional fulfillment and we felt we had to leave."³ The initial promotional campaign to launch the magazine had all the overtones of professional rivalry with *Newswatch*. The adverts blared, "Others Watch the News. We Tell It," a jibe at their former employer's name. Many years later, one can still feel a sense of lingering "bad blood," as Ilori called it, in the vehemence with which one senior manager at *Newswatch* derided *Tell*'s style of journalism as subjective and unprofessional.⁴

That, notwithstanding, there is no doubt the *Tell* magazine began seriously as a news journal with the considerable experience of five members of *Newswatch* editorial board, who had all benefited from Dele Giwa's exposés of murky aspects of national life. Interestingly, Dele Giwa paid the supreme price for his

courage and frank reportorial style, a fact not lost on the editors of *Tell*, who came close to martyrdom several times between 1993 and 1998.

Apart from the five founding editors, there are other hands such as Ayo Akinkuotu, who joined the magazine from the features department of the *Daily Times*; Ademolaa Oyinlola, who came to *Tell* with over a decade of experience in broadcast journalism at the Nigerian Television Authority. George Mbah, who was jailed by General Abacha for coup plotting, and Ben Charles Obi also served in senior capacities at *Tell*. The last two editors moved on earlier in 2001 to found a spiky new journal called *Weekly Insider*.

Tell openly says it is one of the few magazines that does not reveal the identities of its board of directors because that might expose the board to the kind of hazards that the journalists have had to face under successive dictatorships. Although they say that the magazine was started with the help of investors and businessmen who believed in them, the journalists are reticent about who these people are and what the status of their relationship with them is. It is probable that some of these investors are activists who merely donated to the journal without necessarily expecting cash returns, although it is likely that they expect good mention or support. Osifo-Whiskey, managing editor of *Tell*, recalls that it was Bashorun Mko Abiola who launched their magazine in 1991, but quickly added, "He gave us no money; he did not invest. He was selected to do the job because he was president of the Newspaper Proprietors' Association and a great news-maker."⁵

At the time *Tell* made its debut in 1991, the magazine market was already well served by such thriving titles as *Newswatch*, *African Concord*, *African Guardian*, *This Week*, and *Timesweek*. *Tell*, therefore, had to make a big impact to position itself in such a market. Its strategy, as stated in a position paper, was to:

... establish a credible presence by appearing simultaneously on the news stands in all the major areas of the market on Mondays. This means that most of the copies of every edition of the magazine will be collected from the printers on Saturdays and dispatched immediately so that they reach the most significant sale points latest by Sunday evening.⁶

This aggressive market strategy served *Tell* well in penetrating a fairly saturated market. On occasion, it also made the magazine vulnerable in the days of struggle to security men when they decided to seize copies of "offending" editions. Not having its own press, *Tell* decided early on to print at Academy Press, one of the leading printing presses in the country.

At the time *Tell* was launched, the early promise of the Babangida years had worn thin: the economic reforms he launched a few years before had been pretty much derailed; the transition programme was going through the convulsions of an over-directed script with frequent changes being made by fiat; the middle class, battered by the woes of adjustment, was restless; students were restive; and gen-

eral discontent was in evidence. There was a place, therefore, for a serious news journal that set store by editorial independence.

The strategy paper also argued that the Nigerian media scene was a setting where, “most of Nigerian media houses are government owned and the rest the imperial publicity outposts of money bags with political ambitions.”⁷ *Tell* set out, therefore, to establish a medium independent of governmental and political influence. It can be said that the journal has succeeded within limits in doing this, as we shall see, although complete editorial independence is obviously hard to achieve.

The guerrilla phase of *Tell*'s existence began in 1993, a politically eventful year in the country and one in which media crackdown was pervasive. As Nosa Igiebor, editor in chief, recalled:

It started in 1993; we were two years old then and had just moved up printing 70,000 copies and basking in the excitement of our achievement. The second week we printed 70,000 copies, we ran into trouble as our May 2, 1993 edition entitled “Transition: 21 Traps against handover,” in which we predicted that the transition to civilian rule was leading nowhere, were all seized at the printing spot. We responded by coming out with a tabloid edition of the same report printing fewer copies.⁸

This set the stage for defiance of the authorities that was to become a marked feature of the years 1993 to 1998. With respect to circulation figures, Igiebor said that about 30 per cent of copies printed were usually returned unsold. *Tell*'s reputation soared with each security infringement, as it was increasingly perceived as a courageous journal that unpopular dictators were out to destroy. The 2 May 1993 incident did not end until the premises of *Tell* had been sealed off by the police.

Between May and August 1993, when General Babangida was forced out of office, there were three major seizures involving, according to one estimate, 200,000 copies of the magazine.⁹ Indeed, at the time the dictator stepped aside on 26 August 1993, four senior editors of *Tell*, Nosa Igiebor, editor-in-chief, Ayodele Akinkuotu, senior associate editor, Kolawole Ilori, executive editor, and Onome Osifo-Whiskey, managing editor, were in detention, leaving the succeeding, short-lived government of Chief Ernest Shonekan to release them.

Life became nastier for *Tell* under Abacha, under whom it became impossible for the journal to operate in the conventional way due to protracted security surveillance, yet the paper somehow managed to appear on the streets every week. How was this possible? Igiebor explained;

... we sat down and assessed. Their [government's] business was to ensure that we don't publish. Ours was to ensure that we come out without fail. This meant reorganizing our approach to producing. Rather than stay on one spot and become sitting ducks for state security, we had to be several steps ahead of them. By spreading out and operating in several centres or cells. If we use your house this week, we vary the next week and use another house. We, of course, had to preserve the anonymity of the owners and venues of our cells.¹⁰

Igiebor made the same point pungently elsewhere:

If there is one thing that lack of sophisticated weaponry has taught several African countries at war, it is the efficacy of guerrilla warfare. For any guerrilla army, the strategy for winning is not so much in the number of weaponry but in the ability to be smart and think ahead of your opponent. At *Tell*, we learnt the lesson to be one step ahead. There were times when we could not maintain the lead over our opponent but we always quickly appraised our position and changed tactics.¹¹

Guerrilla warfare was not without its price. Igiebor spent six months in detention between late 1995 and 1996, and consequently had to flee abroad to escape possible assassination. His colleague, Onome Osifo-Whiskey, who also spent six months in detention, said:

We and our families were constantly under threat. A few of us were marked out for assassination. For over one year, I did not live in my house (before my arrest). I lost a friend with whom I was hibernating when two weeks after I left his house, he was assassinated by unknown persons. I moved from place to place estranged from my family.¹²

The essence of guerrilla journalism, as Ayo Akinkuotu explained, is the, “duplication of officers, that is ‘The Bush’. At critical times in Abacha’s 5-year tenure, the magazine was forced to operate from over seven ‘bush’ offices. Some were procured in extreme emergencies while others were vacated without notice.”¹³

It is interesting, too, that all of *Tell*’s editors pay tribute to the overwhelming support of various sections of civil society that concealed their operations, lent them offices, bought many copies of *Tell* as “solidarity support,” among other services.

News Magazine

News magazine hit the streets on 8 February 1993 at a time when the country was in ferment. The backgrounds of its founding editors were decidedly more radical than those of *Tell*, coming as they did from the combative *African Concord*, from where they all resigned in protest against its publisher’s apology to General Babangida following its shut-down in 1992.

As Kunle Ajibade, one of the founding editors who was jailed from 1995 to 1998 in a coup frame-up by General Abacha’s government, put it:

We [the founding editors] were all in *Concord Press*, Bayo Onanuga, Dapo Olorunyomi, Femi Ojodu, Seye Kehinde and I. The *African Concord* we edited had a radical image. It stood out and became the highest circulating magazine in the country. It was that image, I believe, which inspired *Tell* to launch out in 1991. Even within the *Concord* titles, we were exceptional in terms of editorial daring.¹⁴

Ajibade, a scholarly journalist, is substantially correct about the radical image of *African Concord* that soon set it on a collision course with the government. Another interesting aspect of the backgrounds of the founding editors was that with the exception of Bayo Onanuga (currently managing director), they are all graduates of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ife, and specifically were products of the radical critical ferment at the English department, which featured neo-Marxists scholars like Biodun Jeyifo and G.G. Darah, as well as the maverick Adebayo Williams – all teachers at Ife in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In the same period, Wole Soyinka held forth as a professor in the dramatic arts department.

Trouble broke out after *African Concord* published a particularly spiky edition entitled, “Has Babangida Given Up?” This led to the closure of the publication by government in April 1992 and the specific demand for an apology before it could be reopened. When Bashorun Abiola, the publisher, felt obliged to apologise, Bayo Onanuga and four others felt they had a duty to resign in protest. In his resignation letter, Onanuga said that, “Journalism is not meant to make the environment cosy for leaders of nations, it is meant to prod them to act in the interest of the larger society. It is meant to cause them sleepless nights.”¹⁵

A philosophy of journalism that was to result in the guerrilla exertions of the *News* was coming into being. Ajibade said, “Our model was the *Independent* of London, run by professionals and ensuring that no one of them could hold controlling shares.”¹⁶

A strategy paper by Bayo Onanuga entitled, “Inventing an Editorial Compass for *The News*,” critiqued existing news journals by saying: “They are not probing enough. They sound too boring, too uncritical of government. No magazine in the world can be very successful if it does not at times wear the armour of the opposition or the critic.”¹⁷ This was to prove important in defining the editorial slant of the journal. Another founding personnel member (not editorial staff) is Sani Kabir, a product of the radical social science faculty at Ahmadu Bello University. Kabir’s office, money (he is a businessman), and skills proved important in tiding the organisation over difficult times.¹⁸

Four months after the *News* hit the streets, it was proscribed and all its editors declared wanted on national television. It was in these circumstances that the company floated *Tempo* magazine, which continued to be published clandestinely. A report by the press freedom committee of the Nigerian Union of Journalists for the year 1993 said, “*Tempo* coming from the same stable, inherited the popularity of *The News*.”¹⁹ The police now moved in to start prosecuting vendors found selling the magazine. Two vendors, Onomakpor Onabare and Owete Bernard, were arraigned in Warri on two counts of selling *Tempo*, which allegedly contained “seditious materials,” and with the intent of “causing disaffection among members of the public and make them rebel against the authority of the Federal government.”²⁰

For much of the Abacha period, November 1993 to June 1998, the *News* was an “outlaw” journal and many vendors were arrested for selling it in Abuja, Kaduna, and elsewhere.

The *News* seeks to maintain professional integrity and to rise above the brown envelope syndrome (bribe-taking to publish or kill stories), its editors maintain. Ajibade argues, for example, that they operated with, “a sense of mission that put them above the temptation to take brown envelopes.”²¹

In an imperfect ethical milieu, the *News* can claim to operate with more integrity than most publications around. The *News*’s style of guerrilla journalism closely resembles that of *Tell* magazine. It consists of, “beating security forces by using different centres – not cosy offices, sometimes shacks for editorial meetings. We used to take a few staff into confidence and go to hide-out production sites in the night. We courted personnel within the security and governmental system who lent us timely security assistance.”²²

The *News*, like *Tell*, got plenty of support from civil society. This came in the shape of, “houses given to us by people who were totally in support – without asking for rent. We had plenty of ‘patriotic’ buying of our magazines. Our sales soared in the difficult years which was why we could stay afloat on just circulation, since we had no advert support.”²³

I probed deeper into the usually concealed area of those who gave financial support. One key editorial staff member explained:

People gave a lot of support, although quite a number made promises they didn’t keep. Rewane [assassinated Chief Alfred Rewane] was very helpful. He gave advert back-up for press releases he sent. When any of us was arrested, he made sure he visited our relations and put them on a stipend for succour. Just as he bankrolled NADECO [National Democratic Coalition] he supported us – which was why they killed him after trying in vain to strangulate his business.²⁴

Odia Ofeimun, editorial board chair and poet-laureate, explained: “Urban guerrilla work is easier in Lagos because of the sprawling terrain. It is less possible elsewhere. Economically, we did good business because of the popularity of our illicit publication.”²⁵

The *News* had a year or so of respite under General Abacha, during which it launched *A.M. News*, a daily. It crashed, its editors say, because of the difficulty of running a daily under the conditions in which they operated.

Radio Kudirat

This pirate radio, which raised the stakes in the struggle between the opposition and the government in the Abacha ears began its career as Freedom Frequency Radio broadcasting, first on 93.4 and later 99.9FM. After awhile, it claimed to be sending its signals from the Atlantic Ocean between 7:00 a.m. and 7:30 a.m. In

June 1996, the radio assumed the name Radio Democrat International and now changed to short wave.

At this point, it could be received at 7:00 a.m. to 7:30 a.m. on 7195KHZ on the 49 metre band and from 4:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. on 6.205KHZ on the 49 metre band. Subsequently, in 1997, it could be received for an hour between 8:00 p.m. and 9 p.m. every day.²⁶ It changed its name to Radio Kudirat following the assassination of Mrs. Kudirat Abiola, wife of Bashorun Mko Abiola, presumably for her outspokenness and anti-regime activities.

It created some excitement in the country and feedback was received from Nigeria in the NADECO office in London about the impact of the broadcasts. One of its operatives, George Noah, said that he and Dayo Benson, who have backgrounds in telecommunication and live in Britain, wrote the initial business plans which were then sent to the Norwegian and Swedish embassies for funding.²⁷

Professor Wole Soyinka and General Alani Akinrinade were mentioned as crucial to the funding and operation of the radio. NADECO chieftains such as Professor Bolaji Akinyemi, who made broadcasts, as well as Senator Bola Tinubu, were critical to its success. It became the official voice of the opposition and reverted to the use of Nigeria's independence national anthem, rather than the current one.

The fund-raising side was handled by senior figures in the opposition, while people like Kayode Fayemi, chair of the London-based Centre for Democracy and Development, Professor Adeyeye (who broadcast under his own name), and others were members of the editorial team. Kayode Fayemi revealed that funding was by Western governments and commercial interests, operating through foundations and a blind trust set up by the radio.²⁸

The radio gave nightmares to Nigerian security, which spent no small effort in trying to track its operation. Using modern technology and liaising with other dissident radios such as Radio Burma, Radio Kudirat became the arrowhead of opposition abroad. Its operatives claim to have had listening posts within the country and received strange calls from dissenting Nigerian state officials, who alerted them to events such as the attempted assassination of opposition chieftain Senator Abraham Adesanya, and the General Diya coup frame-up.

Funds were a constraint on its operations as was the fact that it had to operate clandestinely. According to George Noah,²⁹ the one-hour daily broadcast took about twelve hours to put together. Information was gathered in Nigeria by people claiming to be working for local radio. Feedback was received from four or five continents on the radio programme, especially from Nigeria, where responses came from places like Funtua, where some blind persons had written to request radio sets. Opposition prisoners such as Chief Gani Fawehinmi and Chief C.O. Adebayo claim to have been buoyed by the broadcasts while in jail.³⁰

For example, in his recently published autobiographical narration of his days in exile, Chief C.O. Adebayo (as opposition chieftain) said of Radio Kudirat:

Of course, I never missed news time, especially on Radio Kudirat, The Voice of Democracy, no matter how poor radio reception was. Reception depended on the location of my temporary habitation and I was frequently on the move. During my first 12 months in Abidjan, I changed accommodation more than 15 times for personal security reasons or other necessities including funding difficulties. During news time, I sometimes had to step out of my room and identify locations within the confines of my residential premises, where reception was best, holding the portable Grundig Radio to my ear, if necessary.³¹

Adebayo, former governor of Kwara State, underlines here the inefficiency and transmission difficulties of the radio outfit. This, notwithstanding:

Radio Kudirat was a veritable instrument of encouragement as a dependable source of cheering news. It also served as an early warning system for predicting the direction of the Nigerian dictator's villainous exploits. Through Radio Kudirat, I knew when Abacha's agents were combing Benin Republic ... for the likes of me.³²

I turn now to two case studies of the underground media in the throes of democratic struggle against a despotic military state.

III. Editorial Postures – The Election Annulment Controversy

In this section, I take a look at an encounter between the repressed underground media and the military state of General Ibrahim Babangida. The encounter took place mainly in July and August 1993, when the underground media went to great lengths, and at great risk to the editors, to challenge the decision of the dictator to annul the 12 June 1993 election. The outcome was that the dictator was forced to leave office on 26 August 1993, though not before he had installed an unelected civilian, Chief Ernest Shonekan, in office as head of an interim government. The victory won by the media on this occasion was, therefore, only partial, for they failed to achieve the substantive demand of restoring the annulled election.

The Antecedents

To place in context the opposition mounted by the underground media to the annulment of the 12 June election in July and August 1993 we must go back to the few months before the election, especially the way in which General Babangida had manipulated the transition through frequent policy changes. Even before the elections, *Tell* and the *News* were at the forefront in alerting the nation that the transition would in all likelihood become bogged down in the interminable scheming of President Babangida as well as the banning and unbanning of the political class.

A few examples will make the point. On 15 March 1993, *Tell* did a cover story entitled, "IBB Stays On: August 27, A Ruse." The story raised critical doubts about the so-called transition and sought to alert Nigerians that the whole matter was becoming a charade.

One of the omens focused on by *Tell* was the activity of the increasingly vocal anti-democratic groups, such as the Association for Better Nigeria (ABN), apparently sponsored by the presidency, which demanded that the president should not hand over but should enjoy four more years in office. Unconvinced that the subject had been laid to rest, *Tell* returned to it in its edition of 2 May 1993, which devoted its cover story to "Transition: 21 Traps Against Handover" in which it again alerted the public that there were enough booby traps in the programme to explode it. In communication theory, front page or lead stories are used by editors to set the agenda or the mainstream issues they consider of top-most importance. In consistently devoting its lead stories to the possibility of a derailed transition through programmed confusion, *Tell* was preparing itself and the public for the showdown that ensued in July and August 1993.

As mentioned in the last section, *Tell's* 2 May edition was seized by security personnel, between 50,000 and 70,000 copies being affected according to two different versions of the event. The government in a show of force sent seventy-five security personnel to arrest three editorial staff, namely Ayodele Akinkuotu, who was senior associate editor, Dayo Omotosho, assistant editor, and Jude Igbanoi, the sales supervisor.³³ It is probable that more arrests would have been made if some of the other key editorial staff had been around the office at the time. To show that they meant business, the police came back the next day, 3 May, to seal off the premises of *Tell* magazine. A new testy phase was clearly in the offing.

News magazine was in the fray, too. Its 2 March edition, entitled "Revealed: Babangida's Methods and Tactics," ran into trouble. Like *Tell*, it had exposed several dirty tricks, subterfuges, and outright bribes being used by the regime to abort the transition to democracy. Over thirty security agents stormed the office of the *News* and seized 30,000 copies of the magazine. In a pattern that was to last for another four years, some senior journalists made good their escape before they could be arrested.

As Bayo Onanuga, managing director, put it: "We had information that government did not expect us to be around to report the June 1993 elections ... So we knew we were in for a raw deal."³⁴ To show its disapproval of the *News*, government agents again combed the premises of the magazine and carted away 40,000 copies. It also arrested David Spencer, the circulation manager, before proscribing *News* magazine on 22 June 1993 through a decree entitled, The News (Proscription and Prohibition from Circulation) and declaring all its editors wanted. Government also deployed policemen to the premises of the *News* for several weeks, and continually harassed or arrested vendors selling the magazine.³⁵

Olugboji captures the atmosphere of those months:

In several incidents in the second half of 1993, armed security personnel riding on police vans or unmarked cars descended on vendors in several cities across the country, firing guns into the air, confiscating "Offending" publications and arresting vendors hawking such publications. More than any other publication, *Tell* and the *News* suffered the most harassment in the hands of General Babangida's Security agents.³⁶

Also to be noted is the promulgation of the Treason and Treasonable Offence Decree in May 1993 (nicknamed death decree), which made treasonable and punishable by death the publication of anything that in the view of the authorities could disrupt the fabric of the country.³⁷

The July and August Encounters

It was clear to all in July that government was in a foul mood and was prepared to go to any length in quelling dissent and caging free expression. In the protests that greeted the annulment of the 12 June election, soldiers actually fired at crowds in Lagos, resulting in several deaths. The stakes had been raised by both the military state and the aroused opposition. The journalists, especially those of *Tell* and the *News*, were clearly in peril and it was no longer safe for them to be identified openly as working for those publications. Although the *News* magazine had been proscribed at the end of June by a decree backdated to May, the magazine continued to appear up till 5 July 1993. As Kunle Ajibade commented: "We flouted that proscription order, however, for we kept on publishing the *News*. In one of the editions, the cover actually announced that the reader was reading a proscribed publication."³⁸

The *News*, of course, changed its publishers and production sites to avoid being tracked by security, who would have been quite gratified to put away all the editors, who were now declared wanted. The *News*, now illicit, devoted its 5 July edition to an interview with General Buhari, the head of state toppled by the then current president. It was a calculated act of defiance meant to send a message to the dictator, Ibrahim Babangida.

Again, the story was given utmost prominence, being the cover and lead story. Buhari maximised the opportunity provided by the interview to criticise the regime. Said he, "The transition is not meant to work. I mean it," (p. 28) and finally, "This military institution we know best had been desecrated, infiltrated and perverted" (p. 17). From the point of view of discourse theory, "which analyses the way systems of meaning or 'discourses' shape the way people understand their role in society and influence their political activities,"³⁹ the Buhari interview was preaching the overthrow of the Babangida government. It was a message to the effect that, eight years after he seized power, Babangida had lost all justification to hang on to office. And who better to make the point than the man Babangida ousted from office?

Other angry voices were featured in the same edition of the *News*, the last before it floated *Tempo*, because the technical and logistical problems of constantly shifting publishers and production sites overwhelmed its editors. On p. 19, the *News* quoted Dr. Olu Onagoruwa, human rights activist and constitutional lawyer, as saying, “An election includes its result – what is going on is a disgrace and a national shame – there is a conspiracy against society.” Also, on p. 23, Seye Kehinde, one of the paper’s founding editors, reminds his readers that, “the transition programme has been amended 38 times.” *Tempo* magazine, a tabloid now, took over from where the *News* (proscribed) had stopped. This was a courageous act, although technically *Tempo*, which had been registered along with the *News*, was not proscribed.

Government continued to insist that *Tempo* was illegal and at one point said it was being published at the American Embassy – an allegation dismissed by its publishers as calculated to rationalise government’s failure to locate and destroy their operations. The editors say that some security personnel sympathetic to them looked the other way when they were going around with covers of *Tempo*.

Government did not officially let up on the crackdown, however. The first edition of *Tempo* – 50,000 copies – was impounded and seized in a raid, which involved up to 100 security officials. The edition was entitled, “The Great Betrayal: Abiola Ditched?” It berated the negotiations then going on to horse-trade over the 12 June election and form an interim government. On p. 15, it quoted Abiola as saying, “Both of us [Babangida and Abiola] are over 50. We shouldn’t be afraid to die. Why are you afraid?” It also quoted the Sultan of Sokoto as saying (p. 17), “There is no other route away from catastrophe than the swearing in of Abiola.” This was clearly the language of confrontation, even anomie, which was to become a hallmark of *Tempo* in this period.

Tempo’s critics accuse it of using intemperate language and raising hackles for commercial reasons. Its editors say they are only being brutally frank. Meanwhile, the administration, increasingly stung by the relentless criticism of the media, closed down several publications and one broadcasting station on 22 July – about seventeen in all.

Following the *Tempo* precedent, some of the affected publications floated other journals to prosecute the struggle for democracy. For example, *African Concord* (closed down) floated *African Concord International*.

Each week of August, *Tempo* came out with lead stories on the democratic struggle, alerting the nation to ongoing moves to abort it through political wheeling and dealing. On 2 August, *Tempo* had a leader, “Fresh Moves to Ease Babangida Out”; on 9 August, “On the Brink of Catastrophe”; 16 August, “August Masterplan, How Abiola will Remove IBB”; 23 August, “Dirty Moves – SDP’s Secret Deals with Babangida.” This was a fully underground phase, for all editions of the *News/Tempo* had to be printed from hide-outs.

On one occasion, security men arrested Ladi Olorunyomi (wife of Dapo Olorunyomi, founder/editor) and their baby, Aramide, apparently as hostages for the editor at large. They were, however, released later on the day of the arrest. Government also continued to warn of stern reprisals and to manhunt “offending” editors and seize publications. *Tell* magazine was equally on the offensive, in spite of the persecution visited on the opposition media. Virtually every issue in July and August devoted its lead story to the democratisation struggle.

On 9 August, it had a leader, “More Plots against Handover”; 16 August, “Betrayal of a Nation: Babangida Entrenches his Dictatorship”; and 23 August, “Enough is Enough”. At the *Tell* library, these editions are in tabloid, a format adopted in order to pre-empt or counteract the constant seizure of the magazine by security. On 9 August, Onome Osifo-Whiskey, managing editor, wrote in biting prose, “All over the land the nation is mourning. The people are mourning their freedom, which is now viciously trampled upon. They mourn the perfidy and betrayal at the 11th hour of their self-crowned military president.”⁴⁰

The same week the article quoted above appeared, government arrested four senior editors of *Tell* over two of the journal’s publications in July entitled, “Stolen Presidency – IBB Wages War on the Nation” (5 July) and, “Nigeria: Waiting for the Worst” (26 July). Although these editions were confiscated by security, they were reprinted in tabloid and circulated by the organisation. This was not business as usual, but defiant publishing. As it turned out, the four senior editors arrested were not released until General Ibrahim Babangida was forced out of office on 26 August. Their arrests did not deter their colleagues from coming out, as earlier indicated, with equally trenchant editions. For example, the 23 August edition did not have a news heading in the journalistic sense. It was defiant commentary entitled, “Enough is Enough,” with, “Opposition against the Babangida Regime Mounts,” as a rider.

The arrest of the *Tell* editors on 15 August was accompanied by a show of force, with eighteen armed security personnel breaking into *Tell* offices to cart away documents and to wave their guns menacingly at any possible intruders or recalcitrant journalists. In a statement issued by *Tell* management after the raid (obviously from a hide-out), they promised not to be intimidated by the development, “but to remain committed to its duty of keeping Nigerians regularly and truthfully informed about what is going on – at this period in the nation’s history.”⁴¹

Tell kept its word and piled even more pressure (along with other civil society groups) on the regime, which also at this time faced growing international criticism and sanctions. On 26 August, Babangida announced to the nation that he was “stepping aside” in favour of an unelected civilian president, Chief Ernest Shonekan. The underground media had at least achieved the fall of a dictator,

even though it had failed to achieve the swearing in of Bashorun Mko Abiola, a demand it continued to make in the ensuing four years.

IV. The Self-Succession Controversy – Antecedents

Self-succession refers to the attempt of General Sani Abacha to continue in office after October 1998 through a sham election in which he would have been either the only candidate or would have been pitted against a straw candidate. Before self-succession became a live issue on the nation's agenda, the then head of state manipulated the transition programme so much that it looked increasingly predictable that he would be "elected" or "adopted" as a consensus candidate by the five political parties and the nation.

Two distinguishing features of General Abacha's transition programme are worth noting. The first is the way, alluded to above, in which he used the state auspices to scare intending presidential contestants from the terrain. As Ebenezer Obadare expressed it, "When former Oil Minister, Donald Etiebet, a front liner of the disbanded National Central Party of Nigeria (NCPN), appeared too eager to launch his presidential campaign, he was promptly invited for a 'chat' by officials of the State Security Services. Thus for several other presidential hopefuls, the fear of 'Etiebetisation' was the beginning of political wisdom."⁴² The other factor, related to the above, was the use of the state machinery to kill opponents, frame them in coup d'états, start fires around newspaper houses, abduct recalcitrant individuals, and generally terrorise society.

The existence of a killer squad under the regime (now a subject of judicial investigation) made it extremely hazardous to speak one's mind. With respect to the media, Ayo Obe, president of the Civil Liberties Organisation, wrote in June 1997:

There had been a sustained assault upon the freedom of expression, in particular on the media and its practitioners by means of closures, raids by the so-called security forces, secret trials, detentions without trials, with journalists held incommunicado or being kidnapped without information, so that friend and family are left guessing about the whereabouts, health or even continued existence of loved ones.⁴³

Persecution fell heavily on *Tell* magazine and the *News*, which had been driven underground. One journalist, Bagauda Kaltho of the *News*, abducted in 1996 had died in jail, although this was not to be known until two years later, after the death of General Sani Abacha. Dapo Olorunyomi, founding editor of the *News*, had fled abroad in 1996 to escape assassination, his wife joining him a year later; Nosa Igiebor, editor in chief of *Tell*, had fled abroad after a six-month stint in detention, and so on.

This then was the prelude to the campaign against self-succession by the underground media. In order to bring out their contribution against self-succes-

sion (which had timely support from Radio Kudirat), I have chosen the month of February and March 1998 for two reasons. First, the campaign for self-succession by state-sponsored groups such as the Youth Earnestly Ask for Abacha (YEAA) reached a crescendo in the so-called two-million-man march held in Abuja, counteracted by the opposing march held by human rights activists in Lagos in the same month. Second, the events of March 1998 were only weeks away from the massive raid on the *News* in April 1998 in which thirteen of its staff were arrested – no doubt a sequel to the role it played in actively opposing self-succession.

On 16 February 1998, the *News* had a lead story that contained an interview with pro-democratic chieftain, General Alani Akinrinade, who had been driven into exile in London. The interview was conducted by Bayo Onanuga, managing director of the *News*, operating also from his exile base in London. The bold headline was, “We Now Have Weapons to Fight Abacha,” and on the top right corner of the cover page was another header: “Presidency: I will stop Abacha – M.D. Yusuf.” The *News* was clearly making the statement that self-succession was in deep trouble at home and abroad. The choice of Akinrinade for a cover story was calculated to offend the regime, which was uneasy about the role of exiles in NADECO. Akinrinade, also active on the Radio Kudirat project, said in the interview, “It is Abacha who has a problem. It is Abacha who has time ticking away for him,” a prediction the regime’s days were numbered.

On the 3 March, the *News* returned to the alleged coup led by General Diya, for which he was being detained, and described the whole affair, quoting Colonel Umar, as, “Elimination by Treachery.” Its edition of 9 March was even bolder, almost incautious. It said, “Confusion Hits the Military,” on its cover. On p. 13, the *News* reported that, “conflicting signals emanating from the military high command and Aso Rock paint a picture of a house divided against itself.” It then asked: “Can General Sani Abacha Keep His Constituency Together?” On 16 March, it devoted its cover to the march for Abacha’s presidency and had a cover story, “Presidency ‘98. The People vs. Abacha,” with the rider, “Why the Abuja March Failed,” and a second rider, “How the People Won in Lagos.” The edition sought to rally opinion against Abacha and his self-succession plan when it revealed (p. 15) that the Abuja march cost taxpayers ₦3 billion, the size of the budget of Adamawa State in northern Nigeria.

Also on 23 March, the *News* devoted its cover to an interview with social crusader, Chief Gani Fawehinmi. It was strikingly titled, “Fire is Coming.” Chief Fawehinmi, not so long returned from extended incarceration by the regime, said (p. 16), “It is not that those who are pro-Abacha love him but they love his pocket more than his person. The anti-Abacha people in deep contrast love the masses and they want to extricate them from exploitation.”

On 30 March 1998, the *News* predicted on its cover: “Abacha to go like Koromah – The World Warns.” The point to be made here is that the journalists oper-

ating mostly from hide-outs gave direction to the pro-democracy struggle, and carried it to a new pitch.

As Odi Ofeimun, chairman of the editorial board of the *News* and *Tempo*, said, "If a soldier can risk coup d'état, why couldn't journalists risk all through their pens. We fought as if it was a personal war – we had to work out a lean measure of ourselves to cope with the state terror machine."⁴⁴

Timely support was lent to the campaign against self-succession by the broadcasts of the pirate radio, which according to Tunde Fagbenle, one of its operatives, "at least piled psychological pressure on Abacha." Fagbenle, who used another name for his broadcasts, believed that the vernacular programmes of the radio had more impact than the others in that they reached the masses. One other apparently popular presenter was Julius Ihonbere, a professor of political science whose fluency in Pidgin English was put to devastating use in mobilising against self-succession. There was good networking between the underground print media and Radio Kudirat, as the former sometimes took stories from the later. Also, through the network stories were faxed from London to the radical journals. For example, as Fayemi explained,⁴⁵ such stories as the outburst by a woman close to General Diya came through the active network between the radio and the underground print media.

Ihvonbere, who was involved in daily broadcasts and recruiting presenters in the United States for the radio, said the challenges posed to self-succession by the broadcasts were illustrated by the correspondence from Nigeria they received on the impact of Radio Kudirat. According to him, "It troubled Abacha deeply, who tried to discredit it and find its central players."⁴⁶ Ihvonbere revealed, too, that some of General Abacha's ambassadors and state officials were subverting the government from inside. They did this by sending evidence to the radio network about what government was planning; how much it was spending on propaganda, for example. All the monies collected by Alhaji Ismaila Gwarzo to launder the regime's image were already known to the radio network, which put such information to devastating use in eroding the regime's credibility, both through the radio and in *Tell* and the *News*. What is at issue here is the political use of the underground press in the struggle against an oppressive and autocratic government.

Before getting to the question of outcome, let us take the contribution of *Tell*, which devoted its pages in February, March, and beyond to struggling against self-succession. Dare Babarinsa, one of its founding editors, described the carnival mounted in Abuja to rally for self-succession in these terms:

Last week, the ragamuffins gathered in Abuja for a 2-day rally. They spent more than ₦900 Million "donated" by willing local states and the federal government. The money spent is enough to buy 450 Peugeot cars or build 90 secondary schools or provide 45 army barracks. The dictator is desperate – I understand that in the proposed

constitution, edited by the dictator, there is a clause providing for a sole presidential candidate in case other persons interested in the contest disappear or die.⁴⁷

In the same edition, *Tell* carried an incisive interview with Ayodeji Olatoregun (apparently one of General Diya's wives), who miraculously escaped to London following the incarceration of General Diya. The interview was conducted by Nosa Igiebor, *Tell's* editor in chief (in exile in London) and it depicted the atrocities, use of torture, and subterfuge, that were pervasively associated with General Sani Abacha. All of these issues, it should be noted, carried photographs of Mr. Onome Osifo-Whiskey, *Tell's* managing editor, reminding the public that he was abducted by security agents on 9 November 1997.

Tell's 23 March 1998 edition, obviously printed from a hide-out, devoted its cover to self-succession by screaming, "Opposition Unites Against Abacha." On the right hand top corner it had a picture of Mr. Basil Ukegbu, with the caption, "The General Must Go!!"

On p. 13 of the same edition, Ayodele Akinkuotu, senior editorial personnel, notes that, "Pro-democracy campaigners, human rights activists and credible politicians are poised to put an end to Abacha's military dictatorship and plans to succeed himself as civilian president." The story itself chronicled the efforts of the pro-democracy movement to counteract the state propaganda mounted by the general and to unseat him. All *Tell* editions for April up till the general's sudden death in June 1998, as well as those of the *News*, were oriented in the way I have been describing. The journals chose the most graphic terms to highlight their opposition to self-succession.

Government, of course, replied with more persecution and efforts to track down the personnel of the journals who had not yet fled the country and who held on courageously. One such effort was the crackdown on the *News* on 20 April 1998, in which forty armed security agents raided the administrative offices of the *News* and *Tempo*, apparently searching for editorial personnel, who wisely did not come to the office at the time. There were several other raids on both the *News* and *Tell* at the time, in the hopes of putting more people behind bars.

On 28 April there were three separate raids on the *News*. In one of them, four administrative staff were arrested, twelve computers were taken away, as well as two Laser Jet Printers and a ₦1 million scanner. The *News* staff, believing that there was a let-up in the crackdown after the arrest of Babafemi Ojudu, managing editor, Rafiu Saliu, administrative manager, and Tokunbo Fakeye, defence correspondent, fell into the trap set by the security forces. This and other crackdowns did not prevent the journal from appearing, after being published in one of several bush offices.

Bayo Onanuga explains that,

We were always ahead, thanks to computer and desktop technology. We were always prepared, armed with diskettes in which we copied stories in advance – Ready to oper-

ate in small cells. Through E-mails and modern technology, I was able to send stories from London to my colleagues in the underground press ...⁴⁸

The struggle against self-succession by *Tell*, the *News*, and Radio Kudirat succeeded in mobilising the citizenry against the agenda, in giving unity and voice to pro-democracy agitation, and in offering an alternative media in the face of governmental suppression of the media. The self-succession agenda was not withdrawn by government or its many agencies, in spite of the heavy opposition to it. The death of the dictator as a result of cardiac arrest in June 1998 put a natural end to the self-succession programme. It needed an unforeseen death to alter a state policy that the underground press, leading the pro-democracy forces, could not alter. However, it is clear that the underground media played an important role in the struggle against the dictatorship.

V. Linkages to Civil Society and Production Strategy

This section takes up two issues, namely linkages between civil society groups and the underground media, as well as the strategies deployed by journalists to beat state security and get their publications produced and circulated.

It should be noted at the outset that both journalists and civil society groups are reticent about these linkages as a number of those involved refused to even discuss the issue. This limitation, notwithstanding, it is clear that substantial linkages existed between various civil society groups, including the political class and the underground media. In the case of the pirate radio that emerged as the voice of the opposition movement in exile, this was conspicuously so. As mentioned earlier Professor Wole Soyinka, General Alani Akinrinade, and Senator Bola Tinubu, key figures in NADECO and the opposition in exile, were critical to the funding and sustenance of the radio project. They, as well as Professor Bolaji Akinyemi and Chief Anthony Enahoro, made regular broadcasts on the radio. As Professor Akinyemi revealed:

I was involved in the setting up of Radio Kudirat. There were several people who were involved, obviously Professor Wole Soyinka was the leading light. But I was involved in the preliminary work that was done. I was also involved in Radio Freedom (the precursor to Radio Kudirat) which were a series of medium-wave transmitters that were brought into the country even before Radio Kudirat was set up. I was involved in that. And I made regular contributions to all these radios.⁴⁹

Akinyemi went on to explain, too, that he featured regularly on the Cable News Network (CNN) and the British Broadcasting Corporation with the objective, in his own words, of “letting the world know what was happening in Nigeria; and letting Nigerians know through those media that the world had not forgotten Nigeria.”⁵⁰

Giving further insight into the civil society network that was linked to the underground radio network, Kayode Fayemi said that the network was fed by dissenting state officials. In his words:

Sometimes we had advance information, for instance on the attempted assassination of Chief Abraham Adesanya. We received strange calls from fifth columnists within the Administration even on attempts to kill General Diya and so on. Many of our most authentic stories came from inside the administration, some of which were fed to us by foreign journalists to whom these officials spoke or confided.⁵¹

Chief Adesanya, NADECO leader, in striking confirmation of Fayemi's explanation, has said several times that he first learnt of the plan to assassinate him from Radio Kudirat.

Similarly, it is remarkable that through the radio network and the exiled democratic movement it was possible for linkages to be built between the exiled editors of *Tell* and the *News* in London and their colleagues in Lagos. Both Nosa Igiebor and Bayo Onanuga revealed that they used the radio's London office to get stories across to their colleagues. Similarly, *Tell* and the *News* regularly monitored and often reported information from Radio Kudirat, just as they linked up with Nigerians in exile and featured them in the journals.

Beyond the radio network, however, human rights activists such as Femi Falana regularly bought copies of the underground journals in order to distribute them to Nigerians as a form of solidarity.⁵² Some other human rights activists, such as Ogoga Ifowodo of the Civil Liberties Organisation, provided shelter for journalists on the run. As Odia Ofeimun narrated: "I was squatting with Ogoga Ifowodo in Professor Itse Sagay's boys' quarters where I lived constantly under the fear of arrest. I shuttled between this hide-out and the flat of one of my lecturer friends at the University of Ibadan."⁵³

That is not all. Dr. Doyin Abiola, publisher of the *Concord* press and wife of Bashorun Abiola, revealed that when she received any story or information that could not be published by the *Concord*, she passed it on to the underground journals, which promptly published them.⁵⁴ In this way, the journals received a lot of information they could not otherwise have obtained. Recently, too, Chief Segun Osoba, currently governor of Ogun State, mentioned in a public lecture in Lagos that when he went underground during the Abacha years, it was the editors of the underground journals who fed him with information on areas where he could safely hide without being tracked by security.⁵⁵

Regarding financial support for the journals, I have already alluded to the role of Chief Alfred Rewane. Also, Chief Ayo Adebajo, a NADECO chieftain, revealed that Chief Anthony Enahoro's Movement for National Reconciliation (MNR) launched a sort of insurance scheme under which the movement, to which Adebajo belonged, could succour the families of journalists who had been arrested or whose newspapers were closed down.⁵⁶ It is conceivable that

some of these funds went to the editors of the underground journals. It is probable, too, that human rights activists and opposition politicians gave various forms of support to the embattled journalists. Hence, the evidence available on this score suggests that various civil society groups and individuals gave material and moral support to the underground journals. Indeed, it is probable that these journals suffered more persecution because state officials realised that this media genre had substantial support from various segments of civil society, as well as the international community.

Equally interesting are the strategies employed by the guerrilla media to beat state security and to get their material out. This has been alluded to in the preceding sections, but it is pertinent to mention that at the heart of their strategies was a highly fluid and mobile structure that could relocate at short notice. The strategy also involved deserting the offices when the tide of repression was high and sneaking back in when there was an ebb in the crackdown. As Akinkuotu explained:

When editors came calling mostly on foot, and they saw strange faces lurking around the premises or filling visitors forms, they themselves behaved like visitors. It was when they got the sign that the coast was clear that they stayed to hold five-minute conferences in corridors. Fresh assignments were sent in through couriers and completed assignments dropped in designated places termed "Bush Office" or simply "The Bush."⁵⁷

Sometimes, however, this ploy did not work and security men made arrests either in the newspaper premises or on the way to the bush offices.

The bush offices themselves, Kola Ilori, one of the editors of *Tell*, narrated were:

... safe houses in different parts of Lagos. These houses had no telephones so nobody could trace them. The safe houses act as offices for editorial meetings, production and editing. Printing was done in different cities. The organisation's bankers supported with credits when returns from sales offices were slow in coming while suppliers of printing materials were directed to supply to an agreed location that would not arouse suspicion of state security.⁵⁸

In view of the frequent seizure of these journals, the editors devised a system whereby, "ambulances, water board trucks and vans hired from private companies"⁵⁹ were employed to distribute the magazines around the country.

Similarly, the editors revealed that due to constant harassment, sometimes "places like stadiums and theatres became the 'newsrooms' where a highly decentralised structure allowed each department of the magazine to meet in groups of 6 under a disguised framework."⁶⁰ It was through such tactics that the journals survived the dictatorship.

In concluding this section, it should be noted that the journals were not the only publications that were persecuted by the state. Independent newspapers like

The Punch, *Concord*, and the *Guardian* were closed down for periods ranging from nine to fifteen months and their journalists often detained. The publisher of the *Guardian*, Mr. Alex Ibru, narrowly survived assassination in 1996. The phenomenon of the underground media was, therefore, only one extreme dimension of state-media conflict under the Abacha dictatorship.

VI. Conclusion – Retrospect and Prospect

The two episodes discussed in this chapter, as well as the profile and perceptions of the Nigerian underground media, underline the presence in Nigeria of a vibrant media steeped in an advocacy role on behalf of openness, human rights, and democratic governance. In the first episode, a militant section of the media invented an underground strategy to fight a dictator who annulled free and fair elections. They, of course, paid a great price for this. Indeed, by the time the dictator was forced to resign in August 1993, the principal editors of *Tell* magazine had been hounded into detention while the *News* magazine, officially proscribed, was forced to appear through a surrogate publication, *Tempo*, which was published from a hide-out.

In the second encounter discussed, we saw an underground press whose leading lights were either in exile or in detention or, in the case of one senior journalist, assassinated. Their other colleagues, however, continued to carry on the struggle from several hide-outs.

As discussed, this was civil society's device of curbing a cruel dictatorship. The inefficiency of the dictatorships, the presence of an underground economy, new technologies, the fractionalisation of the ruling class, as well as the sprawling urban terrain of Lagos all conduced to the emergence of an underground media much in the same way as an underground press had flourished in the nooks and crannies of apartheid South Africa. This was a clear case of an alternative media created to free the discourse space from being monopolised by establishment perspectives, and to throw up subversive motifs capable of slowing down, if not derailing, an authoritarian project. The successful use of underground media in the military years makes it more likely for the strategy to be repeated if Nigeria again relapses into the sort of authoritarian rule witnessed under Babangida and Abacha.

End Notes

1. Author's interview with Odia Ofeimun.
2. Interview with Dele Omotunde, as reproduced in *This Day* (17 April 1999) p. 9.
3. Ibid.
4. Interview with a *Newswatch* senior executive.

5. Author's interview.
6. Strategy Paper, *Tell* (undated) p. 3.
7. Ibid.
8. Author's interview.
9. B. Olugboji *et al.*, *The Press and Dictatorship in Nigeria* (Lagos: Constitutional Rights Project, 1994) p. 11.
10. Author's interview.
11. Dorothy Okpa, The Struggle for a Free Press: A Case Study of *Tell* Magazine. B.Sc. (Hons) research project, Department of Mass Communication, University of Lagos, June 1999, p. 48.
12. Author's interview.
13. *Tell* (31 August 1998) p. 33.
14. Author's interview.
15. *Guardian* (4 May 1992) p. 27.
16. Author's interview.
17. Bayo Onanuga, Inventing an Editorial Compass for *The News*, A Strategy Paper, 1993, p. 3.
18. Author's interview.
19. *A Report by the Press Freedom Committee of the Nigerian Union of Journalists* (Lagos: NUJ, 1993) p. 8.
20. Ibid.
21. Author's interview.
22. Author's interview.
23. Author's interview.
24. Author's interview.
25. Author's interview.
26. Author's interview and *Tell* (9 September 1996) p. 30.
27. Author's interview.
28. Author's interview.
29. Author's interview.
30. Author's interview.
31. C.O. Adebayo, *Running for Dear Life: My Work in Exile* (Washington: Moremi Foundation, 2000) p. 30.
32. Ibid.
33. B. Olugboji *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
34. Author's interview.
35. *Report by the Press Freedom Committee of the Nigerian Union of Journalists*, *op. cit.*, pp. 19–20.
36. B. Olugboji *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
37. See for example, Adeyinka Adeyemi, The Nigerian Press under the Military: Persecution Resilience and Political Crisis. Discussion paper presented at the Joan Shorestein Centre, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, May 1995.
38. Author's interview.
39. David Howarth, Discourse Theory, in David Marsh and Gerry Stoker (eds), *Theory and Methods in Political Science* (New York: St Martin's, 1995) p. 115.
40. *Tell* (9 August 1993) p. 3.
41. *Tell* library file and *Tell* (23 August 1993) p. 29.
42. Ebenezer Obadare, The West and Democratisation Process in Nigeria: Perspectives on the Abacha Transition Programme 1995–98. Paper presented at the Faculty of Social Sciences Conference, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, 16–17 September 1998, p. 7.

43. *This Day*, (Lagos) (1 June 1997) p. 30.
44. Author's interview.
45. Author's interview.
46. Author's interview.
47. *Tell* (16 March 1998).
48. Author's interview.
49. Author's interview.
50. Author's interview.
51. Author's interview.
52. Author's interview with Kunle Ajibade.
53. Author's interview.
54. Author's interview.
55. At a public forum in Lagos on 24 November 2001 for the launch of a book on the Abacha Years.
56. Author's interview.
57. Ayo Akinkuotu, *Tell* and the Abacha Transition, in Tunji Oseni (ed), *The Media, Transition and Nigeria* (Lagos: Tosen Consult, 1999) p. 132.
58. Cited in Abdul Oroh, *State, Media and Militarism: Tell News Magazine and the Struggle against General Abacha's Military Dictatorship*. Unpublished M.A. Dissertation, University of Leicester, 1999, p. 44.
59. Ibid.
60. Dapo Olorunyomi, *Defiant Publishing*, in Tunji Oseni, op. cit., p. 238.

CHAPTER 6

Protest Vernacular – Neo-Traditional Media Versus the Military State

I. Introduction

In this chapter, I examine the contestation between the military state and an aroused civil society at the level of popular culture. Given the limited reach of the print and electronic media in Nigeria and much of Africa, the terrain of music, theatre, and orature is especially important in the conflict between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic values.

On the one hand, the state employs this arena to build its legitimacy by hooking up to popular traditional motifs and by getting pro-government musicians to cut celebratory records. The clearest example of this trend, discussed in a succeeding section of this chapter, is the so-called two-million-man march mounted by General Sani Abacha and his supporters in March 1998. The heart of the two-day carnival was an extraordinary concert in which musicians, comedians, and entertainers from across the country entertained a huge audience as part of the campaign for the self-succession of General Sani Abacha.

On the other hand, however, we find counter-hegemonic values and ideas that are “gloriously scornful of official myths”¹ expressed through these same media forms. In this respect, the distinction drawn by David Kerr between mass popular culture, which he defines as “popular culture generated by hegemonic forces,”² and “the popular culture created by the people themselves”³ is pertinent. We see this syndrome unfolding in Zimbabwe, for example, where the defiant protest songs of Thomas Mapfumo have created popular excitement and anti-authoritarian waves in connection with the unpopular rule of Robert Mugabe.⁴

In the Nigerian context, Timothy Shaw and Julius Ihvonbere have usefully distinguished between a group of establishment musicians who engage in “praise singing glorifying the rich and turning a blind eye to the increasing-poverty, unemployment,”⁵ and another group, whose “messages have been those of change, revolution, mobilisation, empowerment, liberation.”⁶ In the first group are Ebenezer Obey, Sunny Ade, Kolington Ayinla, Chief Osadebay, and Dan Maraya Jos, while the second group features artists like Sunny Okosun, Majek Fashek, Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, and Christana Essien Igbokwe.

While such a typology is undoubtedly pertinent, it fails to connect with the idea of radicalising conjunctures, in which establishment artistes may make common cause with the people. In neo-Gramscian terminology, such radicalising conjunctures constitute moments of negation that “provide a breeding ground

for the reproduction of legitimation crisis for a given system under concrete empirical circumstances.”⁷ I provide evidence in the empirical section of this chapter that establishment artists such as Ebenezer Obey and Sikiru Ayinde Barrister, who have cut several albums to legitimate new government policies such as Operation Feed the Nation, became critical as the political and economic crisis of the late 1980s and 1990s became pronounced.

Indeed, in the aftermath of the annulment of the June 1993 election by General Babangida, neo-traditional media became a veritable vehicle of subversive messages directed at the military authorities, especially in the Yoruba-speaking area. Bayo Williams provides insight into this phenomenon when he writes of Yoruba protest media that:

They fuelled the climate of popular outrage which led to the precipitate and unceremonious departure of General Babangida following the infamous annulment of the presidential election. Two of these artistes, Lanrewaju Adepoju and Gbenga Adewuyi, much lionised as Yoruba *Ewi* poets, were so daring in their personal attacks, so liberal with savage excoriations that between them they probably cost the Babangida government its remaining authority and legitimacy in Yorubaland.⁸

Alongside this querulous popular media was the resurgence of a vernacular press, published in Yoruba, of which *Alaroye* is the most distinct. These emergent vernacular media tried to fill a gap in discourse by translating popular political debates into vernacular and by giving the grassroots a voice in those debates – a development accentuated by the emergence of private radio stations in the mid-1990s.

The concerns about vernacular media that have had a fitful career in Nigeria’s history were given salience recently with the declining circulation and increasing cost of urban-based newspapers; the irregular production of electricity for much of the 1990s, as well as the diminishing purchasing power of rural dwellers and the growing urban sub-class.⁹ The popularity of *Wakabout*, a Pidgin English column in the defunct but quite successful *Daily Times* title, *Lagos Weekend* has also raised concerns about the possibility of a newspaper published in Pidgin English. In considering the prospects of vernacular journalism generally, it is pertinent to bear in mind that the bulk of it has merely sought to be no more than indigenous versions of establishment English language newspapers and television, being more oriented towards entertainment and official discourse.

Alaroye, founded in 1992 and rapidly achieving success in circulation terms, has shown the possibility of a more politically flavoured and critical journalism in vernacular, since the paper contributed its quota to the anti-military ferment in the 1990s. In general, however, most vernacular newspapers do not survive their third anniversary, largely as a result of the host of problems discussed in a previous chapter. One area where vernacular media (print and electronic) continue to hold fascination is the northern part of the country. Jibril Aminu has noted in this

respect that, “the vernacular press, at least in the local languages in which I am proficient, in this case, Hausa is excellent. *Gaskiya Tafi Kwabo*, Radio Kaduna and others stand alone, particularly during political activities when the polemics prove particularly enriching to the language.”¹⁰

Interestingly, from the perspective of this book, *Gaskiya*, although normally moderate in tenor, lent itself to anti-authoritarian protests under the military, although it was not allowed to perpetuate that position. As one senior journalist from the north expressed it, “*Gaskiya Tafi Kwabo* had a lot of problems with the government over what they published particularly under the regime of General Ibrahim Babangida.”¹¹

There is also the case of *Rana*, the Hausa-language version of *Hotline*, which suffered persecution under Abacha for its outspoken anti-government views.

Of interest, too, in considering popular oppositional discourse is the phenomenon of pavement radio, as influentially analysed by Stephen Ellis.¹² It constitutes a medium whereby suppressed grievances and information are freely discussed in thriving rumour mills. According to Ellis, pavement radio:

... thrives on scandal in the sense of malicious news, and rarely has anything good to say about any prominent person or politician. Transmitters of pavement radio, that is to say ordinary people in Africa, meeting in the course of their daily round, delight in casting doubt on the good name of a politician, ascribing improper or dishonest actions. One government Minister will be said to have completed a corrupt transaction. Names will be named and sums of money quoted. Explanations will be advanced towards the behaviour of the political elite.

Rumour mills, therefore, update the free speech festivals of traditional Africa in which authorities are caricatured, scorned, or chastised. Rumour holds a peculiar place in Nigeria’s political history: while some rumours have turned out to be no more than creative banter at the expense of the politico-military elite, others have proved to be stunningly exact in directly foretelling political events. Newspapers and magazines have sometimes taken risks in publishing some rumours in order to elicit official denial or confirmation, one of the most conspicuous examples being the persistent rumour about the state of General Abacha’s health, which was published by the *News* magazine in 1997, only to be unconvincingly denied and the journal further persecuted. In contexts of authoritarian closure or suppression, pavement radio constitutes a veritable public space, in Habermas’s terms, to be utilised by the lower classes and counter-elites to refashion the discourse arena.

For the purposes of detailed empirical study of the posture and impact of popular media in the late 1980s and 1990s, I have chosen to highlight the opposition mounted by neo-traditional media in the Yoruba-speaking area in these years, as well as state responses to this opposition. As I argued in Chapter 1, this is one area where the contest between hegemonic political values and counter-

hegemonic ones is most pronounced. In the next section, I provide an historical and sociological backdrop to the phenomenon of traditional protest media discussed in Section III. Section IV attempts a synthesis and looks ahead.

II. Historical and Sociological Woof

The protest motif, or the right to censure unpopular leaders, is a well-established credo of Yoruba indigenous media and art and goes way back to precolonial times.

Even court poets, singers, and entertainers whose job was to stir the king in the morning to the sound of *Oriki* accompanied by drumming and music, sometimes exercised poetic licence to gently reprimand erring royalty. Such a rebuke or light reprimand was aired under the credo:

| | |
|----------------|--------------------------------|
| Ngó wi | I will have my say |
| Oba Ki Pòkorin | The king does not slay singers |

The poets could use allegory, veiled hints, talking-drum languages, or the occasion of free speech festivals to pass the message.

Opeyemi Fajemilehin¹³ suggests that the court poets usually told a story that carried indirect messages for the chieftaincy. They could also employ satire by quipping:

| | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| Bo tise na ni o mà se | As you have been doing |
| Mómò yí wà padà | Go on doing |
| Àwon Bàba re tó se béè | Your forefathers who |
| Nwon ti ku lalilai | Behaved similarly |
| | They live on forever. |

Sometimes, too, *Oriki* establishment poets inject critical references into their songs of praise. This may be an unflattering physical feature of the person being praised or a reference to some ignoble act by the person. For example, as Olatunji has shown, the *Ikee mi dike amuseye* (My hunchback has become a hunchback to be proud of) is a reference to a particular Yoruba lineage mentioned in praise poetry.¹⁴ In this way, an uncomplimentary defect is alluded to in a subtle indirect manner.

What was true of court poets/entertainers was even truer of masquerades and the poets based in the families of the well to do, as well as the itinerant singers. In traditional Ibadan society, for example, some *Egunguns* (Masquerades) such as Aiyelabola, composed songs based on “popular opinion,” that is to say the raw materials of their songs and displays were based on current happenings, especially abuses about which there were strong feelings.

Protests, it should be noted, could arise from the *Oba's* negligence or tardiness in addressing social abuses; from misrule; from oppression of the poor; or from shielding the rich from retribution for wrongs committed. Although traditional

religious worship contained instruments for sanctions or “vengeance,” the airing of petitions as well as the poets’ censure of political misconduct, especially at annual festivals, occupies a cardinal place.

Ibadan and parts of Lagos certainly were steeped in this tradition, which was prevalent in precolonial Yorubaland as constituted by the Oyo empire. Samuel Johnson, in his influential *History of the Yorubas*, records the case of Alaaḡin Jayin, a powerful ruler of the Oyo empire, who put to death his heir-apparent, Prince Olusi, because he envied the latter’s growing popularity with the people of the state. The reaction of his subjects was to raise an *Egungun* around the palace with the purpose of staging an open ridicule of the king’s conduct. Perceiving that such vehement criticism of the king would have seriously lowered the dignity of the Alaaḡin’s office, Jayin committed suicide before his aggrieved citizens could carry out their open scoffing at his conduct and violation of his authority. This event, according to Johnson,¹⁵ is celebrated in Yoruba folklore by the well-known saying:

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Ókú dedè ká gbèwì d’ Akèsán | Just before the protest got to the palace |
| L’Oba Jáyin téri gbaso | Alaaḡin Jayin committed suicide |

It should be noted, too, that there was an element of abomination in confronting royalty in this way, since the authority of royalty was bound up with priestly and intercessory functions. However, in this instance, protest media inverted tradition in order to censure an unpopular leader.

Chief Adebayo Faleti posited that whenever an *Oba* went off course in the Oyo empire and Yorubaland, the *Egunguns* would enact some sketches to pillory or reprimand the *Oba*.¹⁶ One way in which this was done was by mimicking the *Oba*’s physical features. Another was by composing songs that focused on a physical defect to pinpoint the erring king. The *Oje Ile Agborako*, a species of theatrical and entertainment *Egungun*, was particularly noted for this sort of mimicry.

Another instance of the deployment of protest media to checkmate oppressive royalty was pointed out by Professor Olatunji. According to him the Alaaḡin’s slaves, called *Kudefu*, had become reprobate and unpopular with the citizenry of the old Oyo empire. One of the *Egungun* staged a performance in which he impersonated or played the part of *Kudefu*. The king’s slaves then started beating everyone on stage, including the *Egungun*, who, acting the part of the king, exclaimed, “*Há! Há! Kúdèfù, erú Ò moba*” (“The king’s slaves no longer respect the king”). Although the actor was later detained and freed, the point of the satire was that the king’s slaves had become uncontrollable and would soon turn on the king himself unless they were checked.¹⁷

One indirect, but interesting piece evidence of the pervasiveness of protest media in precolonial and colonial Yorubaland is their survival in the annual ritual and festivals that are still held in virtually all Yoruba towns. While some of these

are deployed to check social abuses such as theft, adultery, and thuggery among the citizenry, some are consciously political in that they take on erring royalty. They include free speech festivals that subject the conduct of royalty to searching criticism.

Lagos *Ewi* poet Opeyemi Fajemilehin attested to this by narrating how this tradition was employed in his adolescent years in the early 1960s in the Ekiti countryside of Yorubaland. According to him,¹⁸ at the annual *Uromo* festival devoted to the worship of Ogun (the god of iron), poetic licence was exercised to satirise an *Olugede*, the Chief of Igede, who sold his car. The singers sang:

| | |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| È gán kórópe (2x) | He now hitch-hikes around (2x) |
| Onigèdè ta mótó re | The Igede chief sold his car |
| È gán kórópe | He now hitch-hikes around |

To ridicule another *Oba* who smoked often, the traditional composers sang:

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Obá Ipe fi (2x) | A king should not smoke |
| Abalawo ei mu cigar | The king of a neighbouring town does not touch cigarettes |
| Obá Ipe fi | A king should not smoke |

Most Yoruba towns, including Lagos and Ibadan, have such annual festivals where no one is above the censorious lyrics of the singers. In Ibadan, the annual Okebadan festival includes a feature in terms of which singers are given poetic leeway to sing satirical songs as a form of intra-community cleansing. These songs and the accompanying lyrics may take the form of critical political commentary. In spite of the decline of this festival and the upsurge in the number of salacious and sexually inclined songs that feature in it, the concept of purification rites and free speech opportunities are far from lost.

The predominantly oral genres through which the Yoruba express protest include *Ewi* (poetry); *Ekun Iyawo* (bridal chanting); *Esa* (masquerade chanting); *Ijala* (hunter's songs); *Rara* (a form of incantatory singing); and *Odu of Ifa* ritual songs that accompany *Ifa* worship. There is also *Aroko* (sign communication) or semiotics, which employ codes to communicate messages. And, finally, there is the famous talking drum with its well-known capacity for mischief, ambiguity, and censure.

It should be noted, too, that colonial economics and politics introduced basic changes that affected indigenous media forms. It opened up the Yoruba cities of Ibadan and Lagos, for example, to sources of wealth and prestige not based on military valour or the subsistence economy, but on mobility within the colonial bureaucracy and the emergent commercial network. Alongside this, Christianity and periodic Islamic revivals took their toll on the indigenous world-view, which constituted the substructure of the media forms. The chief no longer owned the land, and merchants, emergent nationalist politicians, civil servants, and clerks became the new players.

Oriki as a genre reflected these changes because its discourse system and codes derived meaning largely from the receding subsistence economy. It and other indigenous media were deployed, however, in attenuated forms in the political struggles of the colonial period. For example, the itinerant *Egungun* tradition, which staged mimics of errant *Obas*, metamorphosed into modern Yoruba theatre, pioneered by Hubert Ogunde, Duro Ladipo, Kola Ogunmola, and the comedian, Moses Adejumo (aka Baba Sala). Within this tradition, it was Hubert Ogunde, who in 1946 founded the Ogunde theatre company, who best exemplifies the protest element.

Ogunde had scuffles with the colonial authorities, who promptly censored his play *Strike and Hunger* in 1946 as well as *Bread and Bullet* in 1950. The two plays were criticisms of the official reaction to the general strike of 1945 and the Enugu coal miners' strike of 1949. A decade and a half after these struggles, Ogunde's play *Yoruba Ronu*, a biting satire of Akintola's misrule in the western region, would be banned in the west by the regional government. In the 1980s and 1990s the theatre tradition fell on hard times and has mainly specialised in producing comedies and thrillers for home videos although, as we shall see, it harbours a minority of combative artists.

Orature and music has fared better, however. The advent of radio and television in the Western region (Western Nigerian Broadcasting Service) as well as electronic recording provided veritable outlets for the flowering of *Ewi*, *Ijala*, as well as *juju* and *fuji* music.

Ewi exponents such as Lanrewaju Adepoju, Adebayo Faleti, and Tubosun Oladapo all had long years of service on Western Nigeria Radio and later Radio Oyo – Oyo State Radio.

Similarly, Radio Lagos provided an outlet and breeding ground for another group of Yoruba poets, artists, and musicians such as Opeyemi Fajemilehin, Telemi Oshikoya, Ebenezer Obey, Sikiru Ayinde Barrister, and a host of others. Indeed, these artists have professional outfits, cut records, produce cassettes, and, in one or two cases, compact discs. The dominant discursive genre among these artists is *Oriki*, whereby they sing in honour of the rich and powerful. What is interesting about the conjuncture, however, is the way in which even some pro-establishment musicians exercised artistic leeway to censure the military or communicate public disaffection.

III. Media Versus Military State

Sikiru Ayinde Barrister, the *fuji* maestro, and Chief Ebenezer Obey, *juju* musician recently turned gospel singer, hardly qualify as radical musicians. Indeed, insofar as their music evinces a political direction, it is a conservative one. Yet under the military tyranny of General Ibrahim Babangida and his successor, General Sani Abacha, both musicians rose to the occasion to tackle the military. Ayinde was

sufficiently irked by the angst, anomie, and military-induced suffering of the Abacha years that he cut an anti-military album entitled *The Truth* in 1994.

Entering the fray, and anticipating official reaction to his biting lyrics, Ayinde wagered:

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Èru kan kò bà mi rárá | I do not fear anything, not even death |
| Tori Iku na ni yìò gbèhìn èda | All of us will die some day |
| Ki a ma ba ayé àwon omo wa jé | But we must take care lest we destroy our children's future |
| Ki wón má sèpé fodun wa ni kótó | Or do things that will make them curse us even in our graves |

Ayinde went on:

| | |
|---|--|
| Ónje wá won gògò | Food is scarily expensive |
| elubo silè mèji òtilé lögörin nàirà lójú wa | Yam Flour has moved from ₦2 to ₦80 |
| Ilú-elépo ni Nigeria | Before our very eyes |
| Ti a kò san kòbò, Tòlörün fi kè wa | We are a land blessed with oil given by God |
| Tiò bà ma rèpo rà à di sè | But for you to find fuel to buy |
| Wà surun ojò mèta nibè | It is a great ordeal |
| Ki o tò rèpo rà | You need to sleep for three days at the fuel station |

Touching on the issue of corruption, Ayinde said:

| | |
|---|---|
| Tàwon Ològun bà fipà gbà'joba | Whenever soldiers seize the government |
| Ti wón bádépò olóri | Even if the officers are squatting before seizing power |
| Kóda ti eni ta ñgwi bá yalè gbè | By the time they rule for three days |
| Tó bá Sèjoba Nigeria fójó mèta | They become millionaires and multimillionaires. |
| Láisi tàbí sùgbón àti di milionia | Soon they build houses in Abuja, Ikoyi, |
| Tabi multi miliona Kià, àti kòlè | Lekki Peninsula, |
| Kan S'Abùjá, Ìkan ni' Ìkòyi Peninsula | And they buy houses in America, Germany |
| Áati ra Kan S' America, Germany Pèlu France | They stash money away in Switzerland |
| Áati kówo rè Switzerland | |

Resonant and prophetic as well as grippingly critical, Ayinde's record magnified popular anger against a decadent military regime. In the same vein, Chief Ebenezer Obey, who had sung many praise songs in honour of the Yoruba business elite as well as cutting pro-government albums such as *Operation Feed the Nation* and *Right Hand Drive*, designed to mobilise people in support of new policies, turned critical in the early 1990s as the economic recession bit deeper and the citizens groaned under the whiplash of structural adjustment.

| | |
|--|--|
| Sang Obey in " <i>Formula 1-0-1</i> ": | To get a job is hard |
| Àti r isé Òrán | To get to your place of work is even harder |
| Àti dé bi sé wàhàlà | Even returning from work is a tug of war |
| Àti dé bisé kò dàbí àti wàlé | All the bus stops are filled with stranded commuters |
| Gbogbo bus stop Èro dúrò de mótó | There are fewer vehicles than passengers |
| Èrò, Èrò, Pò Ju mòtò lo | |

Although Obey's lyrics were characteristically couched in prayer mode, his message was not lost on the rulers and the citizens. Equally interesting is the way in which Yoruba gospel artists took on the military authorities, using their increas-

ingly popular lyrical mode. One of them, Adebayo Adegboyega, sang in veiled reference to General Abacha:

| | |
|--|---|
| Eja nlá tó nda Ibú rú Kólórun Kó bá wa Yò Jàde | That big fish that troubles the deep. Let God help us pluck it out |
|--|---|

Another song in the same vein by the same artist is *Ilu le koko* (Times are So Hard) More directly, in an album made early in 1998 at the height of General Abacha's oppression, gospel artist Telemi Oshikoya sang:

| | |
|---|---|
| Áh! Your Excellency Sé bó sèsè hàn pé ara nkanni Ara nkan omo énià Nise niwon Ò lè so Ibèrú látoowó ijo ba Éyi lómú ki kèkè pa kèkè Kálukú foóo lèràn wón nwóye | Ah! Your Excellency Things are really bad Nigerians are groaning But they dare not speak There is fear of government Everyone is dumb silent They have chosen to wait and see |
|---|---|

As for protest *Ewi*, the modern poet sees himself as a philosopher-king dealing with profound truths; the fearless tribune of the masses; and a prophet foretelling disaster if wise counsel is not heeded. Sometimes, poets take on consciously protest names, as in Opeyemi Fajemilehin's *Omo Akoro Wósi* (One Who Rejects Oppression).

Given that radio is the pre-eminent medium in Nigeria as in other parts of Africa, traditional poets employ it to reach a wider audience. For this reason, radio professionals majoring in *Ewi* occupy a strategic position in legitimation contests. Mr. Deroju Adepoju, a senior manager with Eko FM (Radio Lagos) has produced *Ewi* for that medium since 1978. Indeed, he is one of those who have made *Ewi* acceptable to a wider Lagos audience. Although he works for a state-owned radio, he has been involved in skirmishes with his bosses and with security agencies over the airing of critical *Ewi* verses that raised issues of social and political significance.

During the latter phase of the Babangida regime, he composed a biting critical poem that was aired on Eko FM. Entitled, *Awon Opuro* (Those Who Do Not Tell the Truth), the poem criticised the political direction of the Babangida regime, especially its constant manipulation of the so-called transition programme. The *Ewi* also delved into the escalating social inequality in the nation, referring to a well-fed politico-military class that disported itself in flashy cars on Allen Avenue in Lagos, in contrast to the growing immiseration of the majority.¹⁹

The *Ewi* attracted the instant attention of the authorities in the form of an instruction from the presidency to investigate the circumstances surrounding the critical production. After a few weeks of official threats, however, the artist was let off the hook with a warning to be more circumspect. It was suggested that the lenient view of the event taken by the authorities may be connected to the inter-

vention of the then minister for information, Mr. Tony Momoh, himself a former journalist.

Undaunted, Adepoju returned to the struggle in 1994 during the attempt by Nigerian civil society to revalidate the annulled presidential elections of 1993. An *Ewi* entitled, *Awon Odale* (Those Who Betrayed Abiola), and read by Adepoju, earned him persecution from the authorities. State security paid a visit to his office, obviously with the aim of detaining him. Adepoju, acting on an early warning, travelled out of Lagos into temporary hiding. After some hide-and-seek games with the authorities, he was again let off with a warning. Needless to say, the poet/journalist felt sufficiently intimidated to maintain a lower profile, but he had widened the scope of subversive discourse on the perfidy of successive military regimes, namely those of Babangida and Abacha.

Equally interesting is the posture of Chief Olanrewaju Adepoju, a leading Ibadan-based poet. Adepoju's impact derives from his being more established in the business and his having survived many political struggles, including anti-military ones. In the period under consideration, Adepoju suffered in his own words, "diverse official reactions ranging from veiled threats to outright arrest, detention and prosecution. Most of these conflicts were at the national level."²⁰

A perusal of his poems reveals why he got into trouble with the military. His album entitled, *Eto Monia* (Human Rights), is typical of a critical genre. Made in the Babangida years, its chosen title itself revealed a political message to a ruler who rode the crest of human rights to early popularity of sorts, but had begun to deny those rights as his rule became more oppressive. Although *Eto Monia* was an outcry against particular abuses by soldiers and task forces in Lagos and Ibadan in 1986, it also took broad swipes at military rule in general.

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Ìlú tólólórí, tó lóba, tó nijóye | A city that has a head, wise men and traditional rulers |
| Tó ládájó gidi | That has judges |
| Tó Lámófin tótó | And learned gentlemen |
| Tó Sepè Soldier ló | How come it is soldiers that rule over them? |
| Tún joba lori wa | |

In these verses Adepoju touches on the aberration of military rule, with all its brutality, in a country like Nigeria, with its infrastructure of high-calibre manpower, especially judges and lawyers.

Underlining the social and political oppression of those years, Adepoju sang:

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| ibá Se ilè ájeji niyá | Were one to encounter |
| Gbè Jeni bí èyi | Such sadism and suffering in a foreign land |
| Sèbí bí ose à bà sà wàlè | One could at least exercise the choice of fleeing back home |
| Bó bá banibe lórilè èdè eni | But when such oppression visits you in your own country |
| Bo la fè sá lo? | Where do you run to? |

Babangida's Nigeria was fast becoming what Adepoju is saying here, a land of sorrow from which one should, ideally, take refuge. But where does one run to?

he asks poignantly. There is also the political thrust of his commentary on human rights abuses.

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Nibádán át' Èkó | In Ibadan and Lagos |
| Nibi oye Kójú o gbé lá | Where civilised norms should prevail |
| Mímú ni nwón nmú | Human beings are being hurled into detention camps |
| Omo ènià | As if they were animals |
| Bigbá abá' nmé ranko | |

There is, too, the social bite of his lyrics in depicting the plight of the poor.

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| E jé Ká má bèrè lówó ara wa | Let us ask one another |
| Njé réti mbe fún Mèkúnnú? | Is there hope for the common man? |

Interestingly, to the same collection of poems about human rights Adepoju adds a dirge in honour of Dele Giwa, the journalist who died in a bomb explosion. He regards Giwa's death as indicating an ominous trend and asks his listeners to ponder what future Nigeria is devising for itself, when journalists are murdered with parcel bombs.

Although not all of his albums are as direct as this, there is no doubt that they helped to create a climate of scepticism about military rule and to underline the need for a democratic government based on the rule of law. Indeed, some of Adepoju's critical lyrics are couched in prayer mode, in keeping perhaps with a new fundamentalist religious outlook, but they are no less effective for that.

Incidentally, religious songs, gospel music especially, became increasingly popular in the late 1980s and 1990s as vehicles for conveying anti-military protest and condemning oppressive rulers.

Thus, in *Olorun Gba wa* (God Please Save Us!) Adepoju sang:

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Oba mi òkè ti nyoni ninu àdánwò | Oh! God that delivers from tribulation |
| Ìwo nikan lagbójulé | You are our only hope |
| Olòrun Gbà wà O | Lord, please save us |
| Wà dāwan' dè | Come and liberate us |
| Olùgbàlá, Olùránlówó | Our saviour and helper |
| Ìwo la tèóo sí | We look expectantly up to you |

Made in the dark days of the Abacha terror machine in Nigeria, it takes little discernment to see that the poem was a bill of petitions conveyed in prayer mode about the socio-polity.

Similarly, drawing political and humanistic lessons from General Abacha's death, Adepoju sang in *Iku Abacha* (1998) (Abacha's Death):

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Èniyàn ta dájò kú fún | Those condemned to death are still alive |
| Òti kú ràrà | It is the person who condemned them |
| E ni tó dájó ikú | to death, that has died instead! |
| Òún gbàná òrun lo | |

This was an allusion to the many Nigerians on death row in Abacha's detention camps who could now breathe a sigh of relief at the death of the dictator. Interestingly, among those left to rot in jail and possibly die was General Olusegun Obasanjo, who would later become Nigeria's president.

A more specific tackling of the military authorities is encountered in the album entitled, *Ipo Asaju* (Burdens of a Leader). Adepoju pungently asked:

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Làgbàjà | Look, you leader |
| Ti nwón bá fi ó joba lóri wa | When you became leader over us all |
| Sè nwón ni ko réwa je ní? | Were you assigned to cheat and trample over us? |

If this is still a little proverbial, Adepoju settles down to depict the national condition in 1998 and the need for the new military ruler, General Abubakar, to start solving the problems before they got out of hand.

| | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Eso fólóri ori lè èdè tuntun | Tell the new head of state |
| Asikò tò, kòtún gbogbo | It is time to redress all the burning |
| Oun tò fè bàjé tò pátápátá | Grievances in the nation |

Providing a reformist agenda for the new helmsman, Adepoju lists these grievances as endemic fuel scarcity; the need to free political detainees clapped in jail by the former head of state; the soaring unemployment and worsening inflationary trends; as well as the need to uplift the decaying educational and health infrastructure.

To be topical, Adepoju argues that the traditional poet must remain polite, even when bitingly critical, and, indeed, claims to have been "saddened by the vulgarity which some budding poets displayed during the June 12 struggle and the Abacha versus Abiola episode."²¹ What is important in considering the work of Adepoju is that he contributed to the democratic ferment at a critical juncture in the nation's history. And this remains so, despite his oft-lamented inconsistencies, for what is at issue is not so much his personal character or stability, but the impact of his albums at given historical moments.

Equally interesting is the contribution of Mr. Opeyemi Fajemilehin, a younger and hard-hitting critic of the military. Adopting the consciously protest sobriquet of *Omo Akoro Wósi* (One Who Rejects Oppression), Fajemilehin, representing a tribe of vigorous Yoruba poets, deployed his artistry to telling effect, and, of course, was persecuted for his outspokenness. One of his early socio-political commentaries under the Babangida regime depicted the government as a ruthless landlord who was bleeding the people, symbolised as its tenants, to death.

Another of his well-known criticisms of the military is *Oku roro* (Death is Bitter). The refrain goes thus:

| | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Má roró O | Don't get churlish or sour |
| Má rorò | Don't get churlish or sour |
| Òkú roró kí kèni yàn jo | Those who never attract followers |
| Mà rorò | Don't get churlish or sour |

From this parable of the military's tight-fisted rule, Fajemilehin veers towards allegory in telling a story of a very selfish and wicked man who comes to an inglorious end. It was a thinly veiled message and Fajemilehin himself admits that "he hit the government hard."²²

In a brilliant satire, Fajemilehin ridicules the military and the person of General Ibrahim Babangida, whose sly and cunning tactics of out-dribbling civil society he parodies. Entitled *Èkùn Ise* (Well Done), it takes little for a discerning listener to understand that this is no praise song, which it pretends to be by its title, but is a frankly critical song deploring the governance record of the Babangida regime.

| | |
|--|---|
| Ekú Isé Jàre, Ij'oba | Well done, you government |
| Ígbà ti e fẹ̀ Wolé nǝ́ si | When you started ruling us some years back |
| E sé léri wipé ǝ́nje yi ǝ́ dǝ́pó | You promised to bring down the cost of food |
| E ni ebi ǝ́ ni pará ilú mó | You said you would put an end to hunger and suffering |
| Sèbi náirá méjǝ́ ni garawa gári n'gbà na | At that point, a tin of <i>gari</i> [cassava food] was only eight Naira |
| À mó lǝ́jǝ́ ǝ́ni tǝ́mó | But today a tin of the same item |
| Garawa gári ti gba promotion | Has climbed to forty-six Naira |
| ǝ́ di náirá mérin din ladota | |

He sang of military rule with thinly concealed irony:

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| E ni tǝ́ báti nibon lǝ́wó | Whoever has a gun |
| Tǝ́ woso ogun | And wears a military uniform |
| ǝ́un lǝ́ni lǝ́kǝ́iyé jù lǝ́iyé nbi | Automatically becomes the most knowledgeable in the community |
| E má pa wǝ́je bí obi | Go on cracking us like kola nuts |
| E ma wá wá n'sǝ́ | Drive us ahead with a whiplash |
| A kú kú ti ya sǝ́gǝ́mú | The rest of us are all idiots |

Taking on the general (Babangida) personally and his administration, he sang:

| | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Àwon èniyàn kún tún bèrè | Some of your critics are asking |
| Ogun ki le jà | What wars did you fight? |
| Té fi ngbokún | To earn you such rapid promotion |
| Ti efi ngbàràwò sásá | Ignorant fools they are |
| Kò yè won ni | You could have explained that |
| È bá tún la yé won wipé | You fought the Mamser war |
| È jagun Mamser | You fought the SAP war |
| È jagun SFEM | You fought the SFEM war |
| E jagun SAP | |

Considering that the socio-economic policies referred to here by Fajemilehin were all very unpopular – the structural adjustment policy for example – the mockery in the poem becomes more biting.

A visit to his office by security agencies and rumours of his impending arrest compelled the poet to go underground. No doubt his satire contributed its quota to the de-legitimisation of the Babangida regime on the eve of the 1993 elections.

Again, during the struggle of civil society to revalidate the annulled 12 June election, Fajemilehin wrote a critical song entitled *Oiito* (The Truth). In the song,

he called on Chief Ernest Shonekan, head of the interim government imposed by the departing dictator, to take the path of honour by calling on the winner of the presidential elections, Bashorun Mko Abiola, to assume office. He warned darkly that nothing built on falsehood could stand the test of time. Again, state security trailed him for a while and he had to go into hiding.

The poet's greatest ordeal came, however, in 1996 after he recorded an album entitled *Liberation*. This was at the height of the Abacha terror and security came after him just after the album was recorded. There were hints that, this time, he would be eliminated. According to him, "I scuttled out of the country and sojourned in Benin Republic, Togo and Ghana, consecutively. A truce brokered by the United Nations office in Togo, enabled me to return to the country, after agreeing and pledging not to release the album and to stay off the political fray."²³

Kunle Ologundudu, another fiery *Ewi* poet shot into the limelight in 1993, after he made an album denouncing the annulment of the 12 June elections of that year. The tenor of the album and its sometimes abusive lyrics promptly drew the attention of the security agencies. He moved from pillar to post, in the manner of an "underground" journalist, to evade arrest and possible assassination. He would later sing about his ordeal in *Iku Abiola* (Abiola's Death):

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| Nitori June 12 | Because of the June 12 struggle |
| Ologundudu orilégbe | Ologundudu became a vagabond |
| | Wandering from place to place |

There were, of course, other poets and musicians who entered the fray, but not all of them are considered here. Playwright and TV producer Laolu Ogunniyi was one of those whose anger at the annulment of the 12 June 1993 elections moved him to cut a denunciatory album entitled *Mokago June 12* (I Raise the Alarm on 12 June). According to Ogunniyi, "I was shocked at the annulment and called for the de-annulment of the elections. *Mokago June 12* was an outlet for me to express my rage, shock and disappointment at the military's brazen rape of democracy. Through the album, I was able to tell the military that they committed a blunder."²⁴

Of interest, too, is the play *Obaluaye* written by Chief Yemi Elebuibon, Yoruba playwright, poet, and musician. Named after one of the Yoruba gods called Obaluaye, the play exposed the machinations and selfish plots of General Babangida and his cohorts to hold on to office through the annulment of the June 1993 elections. The play also had one of its characters say that only by de-annulling and re-legitimising the elections could lasting peace return to Nigeria.²⁵

What we see in this section, therefore, is the willingness of poets, musicians, and theatre practitioners to take on the military during the inept and tyrannical rule of successive military rulers, especially Babangida and Abacha. It was observed, too, that the protest songs, poems, as well as theatre reached a cre-

scendo during the struggle between civil society and the military over the cancelled presidential elections of 12 June 1993. The artistes were very much part of that struggle, indeed its mouthpieces in the Yoruba-speaking areas. This may partly explain why the struggle reached the ferocious extent it did in that part of the country.

It should be noted that in keeping with the predictions of hegemony theory, the state deploys the cultural resources of the informal media to construct a discourse favourable to its legitimation. Realising the crucial nature of this terrain of contestation, the state seeks to dominate it. An excellent illustration of this tendency under the military was the gigantic effort by General Sani Abacha and his cronies to summon the vast artistic resources of Nigeria to market his self-succession campaign in the guise of the so-called two-million-man march. Although the event was organised under the leadership of the Youths Earnestly Ask for Abacha (YEAA) movement and the National Council of Youth Association of Nigeria (NCYA) led by Alhaji Iliya Ibrahim, it was clear that the event, which paralysed work and economic life in Abuja for two days, had state backing.

The state's use of traditional media on this occasion cut across Nigeria's geo-ethnic groups, in order to create a "national" platform. Reporting the 3 March 1998 rally, the *Guardian* in its edition of 4 March wrote that:

Banners and balloons laced the Abuja sky as the rally to canvass the presidential candidate of Gen. Sani Abacha started as a carnival. The first day of the 2-day event appeared more of entertainment than political mobilisation with musicians, dancers and professional entertainers taking the centre-stage.²⁶

Among Yoruba entertainers mobilised to sing the glories of Abacha were Sir Shina Peters, Wasiu Alabi, and Salawu Abeni. Similarly Bisi Olatilo, a professional master of ceremonies, as well as the comedians Baba Aluwe and Jide Kosoko signed on to the dubious agenda.

Outside the Yoruba-speaking area, an impressive array of musicians and comedians were on hand to construct legitimising lyrics. The list included Christy Essien Igbokwe, Onyeka Owenu, Dan Maraya Jos; comedians such as Mohammed Danjuma and Usman Baba Pategi (Samanja); and the Atilogu, Swange, and Koroso dancers. Professional masters of ceremonies outside the Yoruba area included Sunny Irabor (producer of a weekly television programme), Ralph Obiora, and Ernest Ifejiku, as well as renowned broadcaster Ikenna Ndaguba. To underline the carnival atmosphere, "large balloons with pro-Abacha inscriptions were suspended on the parade ground as part of the campaign paraphernalia."²⁷ Similarly, the nation's football team, the Green Eagles was on hand to raise the tempo of the event.

Of course, a representative sample of the political class also turned up to sing the glories of Abacha. What is of interest, however, from the point of view of this

report is the deployment of artistic resources by the state in the search for hegemony. Some musicians from the Yoruba-speaking area, fearing a backlash or unwilling to be exploited by the political machine, backed out of the event. One of them was Chief Sunny Ade, current president of the Association of Musicians (Lagos State chapter). Sunny Ade hastily arranged an overseas trip, ostensibly on medical grounds, in order to provide himself a decent escape. Those musicians present at the rally composed songs in honour of General Abacha and sought to convince Nigerians, through the auspices of the so-called two-million-man march that there was no alternative to Abacha's "civilianising" and ruling Nigeria for at least another four years.

Nor was this the only instance in which legitimising songs were created by pro-government musicians. Shortly after the creation of Ekiti State in 1996 by the government of General Sani Abacha, folk musician Chief Elemure Ogunyemi produced a record to celebrate the general and his government. Ostensibly produced to "thank" the head of state for his kindness, the record castigated critics of General Abacha's government, asking them in effect to shut up.

Sang Elemure:

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Èkitì tí loì terè, atí yó | Ekitis have overcome at last |
| Èkitì tí jàjàyè, a yege | Ekitis have fought and won |
| Olórí Ogun Nìgería, a dùpè | Head of Nigerian Armed Forces, we thank you |
| General Abacha, e seun | General Abacha, thank you indeed |
| Kete Omo Ogun lápapò, e seun | All members of the Armed Forces, we thank you |
| A mò tí jàjàyè e seun | Ekitis have triumphed thank you |
| Kete Omo Ogun lápapò e seun | General Sani Abacha, we express thanks |
| A mò tí jàjàyè, e seun | |

The exuberant and repetitive expression of appreciation, as well as the direct, repeated mention of the general's name constitute literary devices to celebrate a government whose popularity at home and abroad was at a very low ebb.

Leaving no one in doubt as to where he stood in the political divide, Elemure went on to sing:

| | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Gbogbo ra k'èí kòwé ibàjé | All you petition writers |
| À á lé kete ranan jáde | We will send you all packing |
| Gbogbo ra k'èí kòwé ibàjé | All you protesters and agitators |
| ó ye kálé ranan jáde | We ought to send you all packing |

Obviously, this was an attempt to strengthen the general's hand in his illiberal policy of silencing opposition through the demonisation of the regime's critics.

IV. Conclusion – Orature and the Discourse Map

In a context where predatory rulers are forever structuring discourses to legitimate their often oppressive rules, the need to rearrange the discourse space through motifs subversive of personal and class-based rule remains urgent.

Whether in celebration of “bottom power” as demonstrated in the First Lady Syndrome, or in the creation of elaborate rites of leadership adulation, Nigeria and much of Africa remains steeped in servile pathologies. The manipulation of national symbols and history reflected in the sometimes “almost pathological need for the leader to give his name to practically every major institution established in his time,”²⁸ are complemented by obsequious lyrics created by pro-state musicians.

In this context, and as has been shown in this chapter, counter-hegemonic themes thrown up by subaltern classes in the form of songs, poems, protest marches, and denunciatory theatre are especially valuable in freeing discourse from the suffocating clutches of state propaganda.

As shown in this chapter, state repression of formal media made the sprouting of alternative media by civil society virtually mandatory. Hence, the seminal role of the rebellious Yoruba poets in contesting the master narratives of successive dictatorial regimes and their official bards helped to reorder state-society relations in favour of the latter. Beyond the military era, the resources of protest vernacular media are already being deployed to checkmate predatory rule under the new civilian regime, spread democratic values, and drum up the lessons of contemporary history. Thus, in a recent album cut to celebrate Nigeria’s return to democracy, Sikiru Ayinde Barrister went down memory lane to remind Nigerians of the horrors of the Babangida era.

Sang Sikiru in biting lyrics:

| | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Ìjoba wón wa nibe fódun méjo | Babangida ruled us for eight years |
| _joba chop make I chop | It was a government of |
| Ateni tó je nibè àtè_i kówóje | “Chop make I chop” |
| Lójó ojókan Ìdajó olórun áde | All those who partook |
| | Of the utter corruption of the era |
| | Will one day face God’s judgment |

This is also an indirect warning to the new civilian regime, asking it not to emulate the reprobate ways of the military era. The popularity of *fuji* music ensures a ready market for and the wide reach of such messages, though, of course, their appeal, as in the case of vernacular newspapers, is limited to the speakers of the language of protest. There is evidence that many other Nigerian languages boast similar political resources, but their deployment as symbolic capital to reshape discourse is in varying stages of development.

End Notes

1. Robert Fatton, Jr., Africa in the Age of Democratisation: The Civic Limitations of Civil Society, *African Studies Review*, 38, 2 (September 1995) p. 68.
2. David Kerr, *Dance, Media Entertainment and Popular Theatre in South East Africa* (Bayreuth: African Studies Series, 1998) p. 81.

3. Ibid.
4. *Time* (2 May 2000) p. 36.
5. Julius Ihonvbere and Timothy Shaw, *Illusions of Power* (New Jersey/Asmara: Africa World Press, 1998) p. 136.
6. Ibid.
7. Adebayo Ninalowo, Intellectuals within the Context of Legitimation Crisis, in Adebayo Ninalowo (ed), *Crisis of Legitimation: The State and Vested Interests* (Lagos: Obaroh and Ogbinaka Publishers, 1999) p. 68.
8. Bayo Williams, Literature in the Time of Tyranny in Dele Olowu, Adebayo Williams, and Kayode Soremekun (eds), *Governance and Democratisation in West Africa* (Dakar: Codesria Press, 1999) p. 76.
9. See Ayo Olukotun, The Vernacular Press and Democratic Mobilisation in Nigeria: A Historical-Structural Overview, *African Journal of International Affairs and Development*, 7, 1 (2002) pp. 112–30.
10. Jibril Aminu, The Place of Media in the New Global Order: The Fourth Estate and the Challenge of Qualitative Maturation. First Media and Society Lecture, 9 July 1996, as published in *Media World Souvenir Publication* (1996) p. 35.
11. Author's interview with Mohamed Haruna.
12. Stephen Ellis, Tuning In to Pavement Radio, *African Affairs*, 88 (July 1989) p. 322.
13. Author's interview.
14. Olatunde Olatunji, *Adebayo Faleti: A Study of His Poems 1954–64* (Ibadan: Heinemann, 1982) p. 23.
15. Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas*, (Lagos: CMS Bookshops, 1960) pp. 170–2.
16. Author's interview.
17. Olatunde Olatunji, op. cit., p. 2.
18. Author's interview.
19. Author's interview.
20. Author's interview.
21. Author's interview.
22. Author's interview.
23. Author's interview.
24. Author's interview.
25. Author's interview.
26. *Guardian* (3 March 1998) p. 1.
27. Ibid.
28. See A.H.M. Kirk-Greene, His Eternity, His Eccentricity, His Exemplarity? A Further Contribution to the Study of H.E. the African Head of State, *African Affairs*, 90 (1991) p. 169.

CHAPTER 7

The Global Context – The International Media and the Crisis of Democratisation

I. Introduction – The Issues

In this chapter, I examine the coverage of the crisis of democratisation in the international media, as well as the attitude of the Nigerian dictatorships to “world opinion,” as reflected in elite American and British media.

The international media in the age of globalisation have become so dominant that no study of state-media relations would be complete without reference to them. Pinpointing the salience of global media in the current wave of democratisation, Larry Diamond has posited that:

An interesting doctoral thesis is waiting to be written on the impact of satellite television networks and perhaps specifically of the Cable News Network (CNN) in disseminating rapidly news of the democratic revolution around the world in powerful visual images of its struggle, and subtle and not so subtle normative messages as well. It is precisely the revolution of global communications with its powerful cultural impacts, that has permitted the unprecedented globalisation of democracy.¹

What is true of the electronic media discussed by Diamond applies equally to the growing use of the World Wide Web and the Internet as weapons of democratic struggle in the years since the mid-1990s and, of course, applies to a lesser extent to the international print media, whose output is instantly recycled in the domestic media in Nigeria and other parts of the developing world. In his account of the contribution of the Internet to the democratic struggle in Indonesia, Tedjabosu Basuki shows how low-priced Internet “shops” in university towns became sites of subversive political protest against the Suharto government.² According to him:

It is from these sites that many activities and students are able to receive news about events that are not fully reported in the mainstream media. Because every cafe also provides a printer for hire, users are able to obtain hard copies of the material. With a speed that is hard to estimate, print-outs of alternative news are then distributed down to the grassroots.³

Something of this nature also occurred in Nigeria during the Abacha dictatorship, although on a lesser scale. For example, as mentioned in Chapter 5, exiled journalists in the guerrilla press such as Bayo Onanuga, managing editor of the *News*, maintained contacts with their colleagues in Lagos through the Internet and the

use of fax machines. They were thus able to keep up the struggle, as it were, from London and other European capitals. Apart from this, editors of opposition newspapers such as *The Punch* maintained regular contact with democratic exiles abroad, and even featured their views in newspapers in Nigeria. Of course, as discussed earlier, the illicit radio network, using the latest technology, also provided a forum in which rebellious discourse could be aired and recycled within Nigeria.

As Remi Ibitola, editor of *The Sunday Punch* from 1994 to 1999 commented, one way in which opposition media such as *The Punch* promoted democratisation was by “linking up with those in exile and featuring them in regular interviews, in order to provide an alternative to government propaganda.”⁴

To be noted in this connection is the impact of cultural activities of embassies of countries such as the United States and Britain in Nigeria. The United States Information Service in Nigeria publishes a monthly journal called *Crossroads*, which is circulated to print and electronic media in Nigeria, and enabled Nigerians to keep abreast of the international ramifications of the democratisation struggle in the Babangida and Abacha years. Through the WorldNet television programme of USIS, Nigerian journalists were able to monitor events that connected Nigeria to the outside world. In one such programme, attended by this researcher on 27 June 1995, Nigerian journalists were able to converse electronically with Randall Robinson, executive director of Trans-Africa, an organisation with decided anti-Abacha views and profile in the United States. The conversation took place on the day General Abacha was receiving the report of the 1995 draft constitution, which was subsequently published by USIS.⁵

Also, the “globalisation of news”⁶ and news sources must take account of the dominance of news agencies such as Reuters, AP, and AFP, as well as global television news pioneered by CNN and BBC World Television, which employ cable, satellite, and the Internet to distribute news around the world.⁷ The importance of the international media to the Nigerian crisis is underlined by the popularity of CNN, BBC, and VOA in Nigeria, including the vernacular programmes of the BBC and VOA. In times of political crisis, when mainstream media are on a leash, news consumers naturally turn to the international and alternative media for accurate reporting.

The international print media are also well represented in Nigeria, where such journals as *Time* and *Newsweek* are on sale, as well as others such as *The Times* of London, the *New York Times*, and the *Washington Post*, which have a restricted circulation. Much of the global media, including news agencies, has correspondents in Lagos, while others cover Nigeria from Nairobi. In the years under study, some of the correspondents like Paul Adams became famous because of their persecution by the Abacha government, while Karl Maier, who reported on Nigeria for the *Independent*, has published a compelling book on Nigeria during the Babangida, Abacha and early Obasanjo years.⁸

Although international media coverage of Nigeria and Africa has been much lamented for its shortcomings – with its focus on crisis, superficiality, and fixation on the national interest of their host countries,⁹ in the years under study the international media played a fascinating role. The repression of the domestic media, especially in the Abacha years, lent to the foreign press the status of alternative media purveying counter-hegemonic values about the domestic state. Hence, the stoppage in the Abacha years of an edition of *Newswatch* containing a vitriolic article entitled, “Tropical Despot,” the expulsion of the CNN crew from Nigeria in 1994, the detention of foreign correspondents, all of which dovetailed with the activities of the Nigerian opposition at home and abroad and increased the popularity of the critical, foreign media. Thus, just as anti-regime articles published in the underground press were photocopied and recycled, censorious articles in the foreign media were published by the opposition press in Nigeria and were sometimes recycled as photocopies among the populace.

As argued in Chapter 1, the impact of the global media was to reinforce counter-hegemonic values, in spite of the fact that those media themselves are the bearers of a neo-liberal hegemony within the international political economy. A conference of information ministers of non-aligned countries held in Abuja in 1996 revived some of the old complaints about the dominance of the global media and the need for development journalism, but these complaints sounded hollow in the face of General Abacha’s track record of repression, ineptitude, and monumentally corrupt governance.

The attitude of the Babangida and Abacha governments to the foreign media was to court them in search of a good image abroad, and, failing that, to persecute them. The rest of the chapter is divided into three sections namely: a carrot and stick approach; editorial coverage; and a conclusion.

II. Carrot and Stick Approach to Global Media

Faced with mounting legitimacy problems arising from the crisis of democratisation, both Babangida and Abacha adopted a carrot and stick approach to the international media. On the one hand, both men invested hugely in laundering their image abroad by hiring overseas public relations firms; on the other, they showed irritation by expelling, detaining, or persecuting foreign journalists.

As we have seen, they both postured as nationalist messiahs by criticising “Western propaganda” and identifying the need to counter it through nationalist and regionalist information outlets. This latter posturing was carried to bizarre extremes in General Sani Abacha’s marketing of his so-called transition to democracy as a “home-grown” product.

Although hard data on the scale and extent of image-laundering projects in the foreign media are scarce, bits and pieces of data suggest that billions of dollars were frittered away on such endeavours. An indication of the extent of this

spending in the later Babangida years was given in a Dallas publication entitled *Good Home News*.¹⁰ According to its June 1990 edition, an American firm hired by the Babangida government was being paid an annual fee of ₦1 million to polish its image and this fee did not include, “extraordinary but necessary expenses such as travel, overseas telephone calls and extensive photocopying.”¹¹

Olatunji Dape provides further insight into this phenomenon, which reached a crescendo during the crisis of 1993:

As at May 1993, the Federal government had 51 publicists in Europe on its retainer-ship. Their brief was simply to polish Nigeria’s image. Each publicist owed his retainership to some influential person in government, who was more interested in earning a commission on the retainership (in hard currency) than in polishing Nigeria’s image.¹²

Hence, the image-refurbishing enterprise provided another outlet for a rentier class to stash money abroad in hard currency through the award of lucrative contracts to overseas publicists.

There is of course nothing to suggest in this period or in the Abacha years that these projects, or the contributions to presidential campaign funds or the cultivation of the Black American connection in the United States, had any significant positive impact on Nigeria’s image abroad.

Under Abacha, who never granted any interviews to Nigerian journalists, image-laundering became obsessive. One such promotional effort featured a video and a book. According to Chris McGreat, the *Guardian* (London) correspondent in Nigeria,¹³ the promotional facelift was, “dedicated to persuading the world that Nigeria’s military dictator General Sani Abacha took on the job only with great reluctance, that Nigeria is governed by laws; and that the international fraud and drug trafficking attributed to its nationals are the fault of people pretending to be Nigerians.”¹⁴

To achieve these aims, the government enlisted seven public relations firms in the United States and advertised in South African and Zimbabwean newspapers pleading for sympathy and understanding. After every crisis such as the judicial murder of Ken Saro-Wiwa, frantic image-refurbishing projects were launched by public relations firms to put out Nigeria’s story, predictably to little avail. That Abacha set such store by the foreign media can be gauged from the fact that while speculations were rife at home about his self-succession plan, the general granted an interview to one United States newspaper in February 1997, during which he said that his constituency, the army, would decide the issue of his self-succession. Nigerians were forced to learn, therefore, how their president’s mind worked from a United States newspaper.¹⁵

As mentioned before, one of the public relations firms that worked to launder Abacha’s image in the United States is that of Paul Manafort, adviser to Republican politician Bob Dole.¹⁶ Manafort’s company had been hired to polish the

image of several countries with poor human rights records, and came in handy for Abacha.¹⁷

To be noted too in this connection was the consternation caused by the pro-Abacha role of such United States politicians as Senator Carol Moseley of Illinois.¹⁸

It is conceivable, too, that United States oil companies, given their conservative role during the Nigerian political crisis in the Abacha years, conducted publicity campaigns on behalf of the government.

Overall, however, there appears to have been no significant progress, in terms of image face-lift, from the extensive activities of the public relations firms hired by Abacha. It is pertinent to mention, however, that considerable funds were gobbled up by national security officials on the pretext, or through the actual practice, of image-laundering. Carrots in the shape of “wooing” the international media having failed or yielded poor results, the two dictators harassed foreign journalists.

One of the most notable cases of harassment under General Babangida concerned William Keeling, correspondent of the *Financial Times*, discussed in Chapter 3. Government’s attitude to Keeling, which was defended in the state media, was meant to serve as a warning that there were limits to the kind of discourse government would allow. Significantly, most of what was contained in Keeling’s report regarding General Babangida’s prodigal spending of extra earnings accruing to the country during the Gulf War was confirmed by a panel headed by renowned economist, Dr. Pius Okigbo, a few years later.

Under General Abacha, persecution of foreign journalists became almost routine. In 1994 alone there were at least three cases reported by the Press Freedom Monitoring Unit of the Nigerian Union of Journalists.¹⁹

On 7 April 1994, there was the deportation of the *Wall Street Journal* correspondent, Geraldine Brooks, which was referred to in Chapter 3. Brooks, who was trying to get a perspective on the conflict between the Ogoni people and the oil companies in Rivers State, was “held incommunicado for several days and her notes were confiscated, before she was deported to the United States.”²⁰ A brutal dictatorship was not going to allow the international media to upset the discourse regime prescribed by it.

In June of the same year, British journalist Nick Aston June was detained by Major Paul Okutimo, the dreaded chairman of the Internal Security Task Force charged with “restoring peace” in Ogoniland. Nick’s detention was during the course of a survey of Ogoniland intended to produce a report on the victimisation of the Ogoni people.²¹

On 26 August 1994, two reporters from CNN were apprehended in the lobby of their hotel, “bundled into an unmarked vehicle and driven to a waiting chartered aircraft at the Murtala Mohammed International Airport,”²² and deported. Another version of the same event had it that the CNN reporters were appre-

hended by officials of the state security and police and were forced into a waiting car without being allowed to take their belongings.²³

What is interesting, however, is that the Abacha government was showing considerable irritation at foreign journalists within the country, apparently not minding the fall-out of such actions.

In January 1996, Paul Adams, correspondent of the *Financial Times* was detained for one week in the course of monitoring a demonstration by Ogoni activists in Rivers State. Adams, who was charged with the possession of "seditious documents," was only released after the British government interceded with the dictatorship on his behalf.²⁴

This episode was quickly followed by the detention in February of another British journalist, Hillary Anderson, who had only just arrived in the country. There were other cases of harassment of foreign journalists by the dictatorship, but the ones discussed were the more notable incidents. What is important is that, just as the dictator put the domestic media on a tight leash, he extended the same treatment, by and large to the international media.

I now consider editorial coverage of the crisis of democratisation in the period under study.

III. Editorial Postures

The internationalisation of the Nigerian political crisis as evidenced in the formation of the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), which had a Nigerian and international segment; the diplomatic sanctions against Nigeria such as expulsion from the Commonwealth; as well as the various congressional debates in the United States all put Nigeria on the spot, albeit in a negative light.

To be noted in this respect are the campaigns mounted by prominent Nigerian exiles such as Professor Bolaji Akinyemi, who, as mentioned earlier, appeared on CNN and spoke on the BBC; as well as Nobel laureate, Professor Wole Soyinka, who wrote several articles in the United States media campaigning for sanctions against the Abacha dictatorship. In a sense, however, the dictatorship was its own worst enemy in that one of the highlights of global media coverage of Nigeria concerned the execution of notable writer and environmentalist Ken Saro-Wiwa in November 1995. This, more than any other event brought an unprecedented surge of negative coverage in the international media on Nigeria. As Grossman has noted concerning this event, "after the Nigerian military carried out the lynching, the American press exploded with coverage. Suddenly Ken Saro-Wiwa was front page news everywhere."²⁵

This was, then, a defining moment during which the world took a closer look at the Abacha dictatorship and campaigns to further ostracise the regime intensified. The impact of the Saro-Wiwa murder is further illustrated by the fact that,

according to one estimate, there were 3,574 stories on Nigeria in the American newspapers in 1995, an increase of 48 per cent over the figures for 1994.²⁶

With respect to the American media, it should be noted that they generally did not say much about Africa, which is covered in the international section in such journals as *Time* and *Newsweek*. This is less the case with the British media, although even here *The Economist* and mainstream newspapers did not usually pay much attention to Nigeria or any other African country. Interestingly, as I demonstrate subsequently, the crisis of democratisation in Nigeria generated coverage in both the elite American and British media, in spite of their usual lethargy on African issues.

In order to illustrate the posture of the media, I have chosen to look at three periods of crisis, namely the annulment controversy of 1993, the resurgent democratic campaign of 1994, and the immediate aftermath of the judicial murder of Ken Saro-Wiwa.

To take the election annulment controversy first, the British public was fairly well served with up-to-date accounts of the goings-on before, during, and after the voiding of the presidential elections. Karl Maier of the *Independent*, who, as mentioned earlier, has subsequently published a splendid book on Nigeria, did a good job of reporting the elections from Lagos. On 13 June 1993, the day after the voting, a report in the *Independent on Sunday*²⁷ captured the mood in Lagos when it noted that, "Nigerians have been unable to choose their leaders for a decade, thanks to two successive military regimes, so when they were given a chance to vote for their President yesterday, they did so with gusto." There was also a follow-up report on 15 June 1993 in the *Independent*, entitled "Populist Yoruba Chief Looks Set to Lead Nigeria."

The shock of the annulment and its fall-out were further captured by *The Times* on 24 June in a report entitled "Babangida Annuls Nigeria's Cleanest and Freest Election,"²⁸ as well as on 25 June with another entitled, "Pressure Mounts on Lagos to Honour Election Results in Nigeria."²⁹ There were similar reports in the *Guardian* and the *Observer*. Editorial opinions condemning the annulment were also published in the British media and, significantly, reproduced in opposition media in Nigeria. An example of this is a comment in *The Economist*, reproduced in the *Guardian* (Lagos), entitled "Nonsense in Nigeria."³⁰ The comment argued that, "the rest of the world regards Zaire as a bad joke because the man at the top there had made it one. Do Nigerians want to go the same way?"

A comment in *The Times* also noted that, "The annulment is the fourth time in three years that General Babangida has thrown out a timetable for moving the nation to democracy."³¹ The BBC also keenly followed developments and talked to several Nigerians across the political divide, most of whom came down hard on the annulment.

A similar trend was noticeable in the United States media where major American newspapers wrote editorial opinions criticising the annulment. Thus, critical editorials appeared in such elite newspapers as the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Christian Science Monitor*, and *Boston Globe*, among several others, condemning the annulment and urging diplomatic and other sanctions on the part of the United States government against Nigeria. Again, most of these reactions were recycled in Nigeria's opposition media and cited as evidence that civil society had the blessing of the international community in protesting the annulment. The condemnatory tenor of reports in the American media is illustrated by Kenneth Noble's account of the new transition schedule announced by Babangida late in June 1993 under the title, "Nigerian Who Voided Vote Offers Democracy."³²

Similarly, a representative editorial comment in the *San Francisco Chronicle*³³ called on major Western countries to cut diplomatic ties with the military dictatorship. Considering the pace and depth of reportage and commentary on Africa in the United States media, the concerted focus on the annulment must be judged as impressive. The editorial postures also helped to frame American official reaction to the crisis. As Adeyemi accurately informs us, "the policy adopted by the United States State Department reflected most of the opinions of the major media."³⁴

Considering that it was the combined pressure mounted by Nigeria's civil society led by the opposition media, the international community, and dissenting military chiefs in Nigeria that forced Babangida out of office, the contribution of American and British media must be judged as influential on this occasion.

This brings me to the crisis of democratisation between June and August 1994. All the facets of the crisis – from the resurgent democratic protests through the arrest of Chief Abiola right down to the closure of opposition newspapers in August – were covered by both British and the American elite media. A typical report in *The Times* of 26 June 1994 informed readers that Abiola was arrested while talking to BBC radio on his mobile phone.³⁵ There were follow-up reports and commentaries on the unfolding situation in *The Times* throughout July and August, with most of them filed by Michael Binyon, the diplomatic editor. Most were sympathetic to the democratic protests and often quoted human rights activists or members of the opposition. For example, on 27 July 1994 a report entitled, "Lagos Police Open Fire on Pro-democracy Marchers," was published. It said that:

The government's use of curfews and other strong-arm methods have failed to quell the mood of rebellion. On Sunday, Wole Soyinka, the Nobel Prize winner publicly stamped on a medal he received from General Ibrahim Babangida, the former Nigerian dictator, saying – "This is a fascist country, I have no need for this honour, it has been stained."³⁶

To put *The Times's* sympathetic editorial posture of reports and commentaries on Nigeria in context, we must go back to 15 June 1994, when in a leader entitled "Uniform Presidents,"³⁷ the paper stated bluntly that "it is time for Nigeria to return to civilian government." The editorial went on to call on Britain to

... lend weight to Chief Abiola's cause. After token sanctions, the withdrawal of military advisers and the suspension of training courses for Nigerian soldiers, a recall of European union ambassadors from Abuja is the logical next step. Chief Abiola has assured the general of a "retirement with dignity"; the advantages of such a retirement, both to the brass hats and to their long-suffering countrymen, must be made plain to General Abacha. It is time for him to go.

The *Guardian* though less emphatic than *The Times*, nonetheless called for early elections and an end to military rule, for example in its leader of 4 August 1994.³⁸

An article written by a member of parliament and published in the *Guardian* in July, pleading for understanding for Abacha, generated strong criticism from one Mr. Tom Robbins, who wrote in the *Guardian* of 14 July 1994.³⁹ Robbins lamented that the MP, whom he believed was "enlisted" by Abacha's government, "enthuses about the brutal military junta that is holding the Nigerian people to ransom and seems to be happy to embrace injustice in the name of commerce."

The overall impact of editorial coverage in the British media was to strengthen the hand of the Nigerian opposition, although to little avail between June and August 1994, principally because government heavily repressed the democratic protests and, as seen earlier, proscribed opposition media and detained several civil society actors.

There was an equally sympathetic editorial tenor in the majority of the elite American media, including CNN, whose coverage of the political crisis led to its expulsion from Nigeria in August 1994. A report in the *Washington Post* on 24 June 1994 by Cindy Shiner documents the crisis of democratisation as well as the diplomatic fall-out. It quoted a State Department spokesman, Mike McCurry, as saying that "Abiola's detention raised serious questions about the military government's commitment to restore democracy,"⁴⁰ and gave insight into several tactics by Abacha to buy support by attempting to "appease poorly paid lower ranking soldiers who have grown tired of corrupt military rule." There were similar sympathetic reports in the *Washington Post* and other elite papers in July, August, and up till early September.

Equally interesting is the article by Kevin Fedarko in the European edition of *Time* magazine of 15 August 1994.⁴¹ The article began by quoting Archbishop Adetiloye's pungent letter to Abacha, which reads, "God had decreed your exit from power and nothing can change it. Good luck if you choose to ignore his order." The article, broadly sympathetic to the democratic protests, nonetheless defers to the fear expressed in State Department circles about the possibility of the crisis descending into a civil war. It quoted Fayemi, a Nigerian activist, how-

ever, as saying, "Until you resolve the basic injustice that led to the oil crisis in the first place, it's going to be difficult to return to business as usual."

As in the case of the British media, the overall tenor of American elite media was one of sympathy for the democratic cause, qualified by the prospect of anarchy or war should the country fracture along geo-ethnic lines. The fact that opposition media were proscribed in Nigeria gave added importance to the editorial coverage of the international media, as well as of the guerrilla press.

As argued earlier, however, the crisis of June to August 1994 did not succeed in forcing Abacha out of office.

This brings us to an examination of the coverage of the Ogoni crisis in the aftermath of the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and others late in 1995 and early in 1996. As Joe Grossman's painstakingly researched coverage of the Saro-Wiwa affair makes clear, and as mentioned before, pretty little was said of Saro-Wiwa in the United States media before his hanging on 11 November 1995. Steve Kretzman of Greenpeace, the well-known environmental organisation, puts this down to "the general lack of interest in anything [that has to do] with Africa ... What happens with African issues is that until someone dies or until you get just an unbelievably shocking event, no one wants to talk about the situation ..."⁴²

The hanging of Saro-Wiwa and other Ogoni activists provided just the shocking event that roused the conscience of the world and caused the United States, the European Union, and others to apply further diplomatic sanctions against Abacha. From the point of view of the democratic struggle within and outside Nigeria, the Saro-Wiwa affair is important to the extent that it mobilised world opinion against Abacha and brought an unprecedented flurry of editorial coverage of Nigeria in the American and British media.

In the American media, editorial opinions appeared in elite publications such as the *New York Times*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *Washington Post*, and others denouncing the executions, with calls for an oil embargo on Nigeria. Op-ed articles by Wole Soyinka, Nobel laureate in exile, and several others were published between November 1995 and March 1996. In typical editorial comments, the *Los Angeles Times* on 28 November 1995 and the *New York Times* on 3 December 1995 called for sterner sanctions against the Abacha government.⁴³

That the issue continued to reverberate in public debate in the United States is further illustrated by editorial comment of the *New York Times* on 10 February 1996 entitled, "Unforgotten Crimes in Nigeria," as well as another on 6 May 1996 calling for stiffer sanctions against Abacha.

Evidence of a desperate public relations campaign by the Nigerian government to turn the tide is provided in an article published in the *New York Times* on 7 December 1995, which mentioned a two-page advertisement costing \$103,175 by groups defending the Nigerian government. The article mentions that the advertisement, which appeared in the *New York Times*, was paid for by the Nige-

rian government.⁴⁴ The mood of the American media is further illustrated in two articles published by *Time* magazine on 13 and 20 November 1995 respectively.⁴⁵ The second of them, “Defiant Hangings,” by Elizabeth Gleick, states that, “Shocking as the executions were, what is more remarkable is General Abacha’s audacity; the men were hanged even as Premiers from the nations of the Commonwealth, which includes Nigeria, were gathered in Auckland.”⁴⁶

Up till 1997, the Saro-Wiwa affair continued to provide a benchmark for advocates in the United States media for measuring the despotism and cruelty of the Abacha government. For example, an influential article by Nobel laureate Nadine Gordimer in the *New York Times* on 25 May 1997 carried the striking title, “In Nigeria, the Price for Oil is Blood.”⁴⁷ The article sums up the sense of frustration of those who campaigned for stiffer sanctions against Abacha over the Saro-Wiwa affair. It laments: “So far this year, the total official response from the Clinton Administration amounts to support for a UN fact finding mission on Nigeria. There is no more than talk in Congress about introducing a bill to codify executive sanctions against Nigeria already in place.”

In the British media, there was equally intense focus on the Saro-Wiwa affair. The confirmation of the death sentence passed on Saro-Wiwa raised consternation in leading elite newspapers such as the *Guardian*, which explains the hue and cry and sense of outrage conveyed by the media after the execution. For example, two days before Saro-Wiwa’s judicial murder, the *Guardian* in a vigorous editorial entitled “Nigeria and a Bunch of Thugs,”⁴⁸ had written:

Death was the outrageous verdict on Ken Saro-Wiwa and his eight fellow-accused in Nigeria: now the generals have compounded the outrage by confirming the death sentence. They have done so with typical arrogance on the eve of the Commonwealth Conference. This timing may be of small consequence compared to the enormity of the decision, but it shows the extent to which this bunch of thugs believes it can get away, literally with murder.

In spite of this and other remonstrances, Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni activists were put to death by hanging on 11 November. The report instantly made front-page news in the British media, with supporting condemnatory editorial comments and calls for vigorous sanctions against Nigeria.

A front page report in the *Guardian* of 11 November 1995, entitled “Nigeria Defies World with Writer’s ‘judicial murder,’”⁴⁹ quotes John Major, the British prime minister as saying, “I thought this was a fraudulent trial, a bad verdict. It has been followed by judicial murder. I do not see how Nigeria can stay in the Commonwealth until they return to democratic government. This will be an acid test.” The report mentions the recall of the British high commissioner in Nigeria for “urgent consultations” and delivers a volley of condemnations by prominent writers around the world.

The *Independent* had a similar report on 11 November entitled, "Nigeria Defies the World: Commonwealth is Thrown into Turmoil."⁵⁰ It had another story, written by Karl Maier, entitled "Execution Fuel Fears of 'Cauldron of Anarchy,'" and finally, on the same page, an editorial comment with the title, "It Is Time To Get Tough." The editorial argued: "The only weapon the corrupt regime in Lagos will respect is an embargo on Nigeria's Oil. Commonwealth leaders and The European Union should impose sanctions forthwith. And they should maintain them until Nigeria's soldiers leaders organise free elections."

On 13 November, a leading columnist in *The Times* expressed doubts about the sanctions option in view of its cost to Britain. Nonetheless, he recognised that, "Nigeria stands condemned. The call for sanctions overwhelms us – with the good and pensive features of Ken Saro-Wiwa spread across the pages of every weekend paper and the outrage of world opinion stamped into every headline, scarcely a voice is raised in doubt."⁵¹

Although not much diplomatic mileage resulted from the hue and cry in the British media, the event provided a moment for the world to take another look at the dictatorship and at the moral and diplomatic support to be given to pro-democracy forces within and outside Nigeria.

In an insightful analysis, Paul Adams, who would later be brutalised by Abacha, wrote:

Abacha and his colleagues are a far cry from their predecessors. He got to the top as the head of military intelligence. A secretive and humourless man, he lurks in the presidential palace, is never seen in public, never addresses a crowd and hardly ever travels. He has surrounded himself with like minded thugs.⁵²

Adams went on to say:

For many of them their only knowledge of the outside world are the numbers of their bank accounts in Europe where they sent away the millions of dollars they steal from Nigeria's treasury. It is possible that they did not even think of the Commonwealth meeting in Auckland when they decided to carry out the executions on Friday.⁵³

In the next section, I draw the strands together to conclude this chapter.

IV. The Media and Globalisation

The role played by the international media as discussed in this chapter confirms the insight of one scholar of the developing world that:

Increasingly, discussion in newspapers, on the Internet, on smuggled cassettes and television cross-cut and overlap, contributing to a common public space. New and accessible modes of communication have made these contests increasingly global, so that even local issues take on transnational dimensions.⁵⁴

Although Sickleman was writing of the Middle East, the point holds for Nigeria and Africa as well. Hence, we see that at a time when the domestic media were heavily repressed and foreign journalists persecuted, the dictatorship could not prevent Nigeria from being discussed globally. The fact that views in the foreign media were reproduced by opposition newspapers, when they could publish, suggests that the international media had an important effect on the democratic struggle in Nigeria. It has been shown, too, that frantic image-refurbishing activities abroad made very little impact, mainly because they were contradicted by the dictatorship's own repressive and insensitive postures.

As we have seen, too, Nigeria was widely discussed, more than ever before, in the international media, albeit in a negative light in the period under study. The American media shook off their traditional lethargy about Africa, for example, to mainstream, relatively speaking, the Saro-Wiwa affair and to urge sanctions.

No matter the weaknesses of the international media, they provided alternative media for civil society, so to speak, in the face of governmental repression. Important, too, is the influence of CNN, VOA, and BBC, especially the vernacular programmes of the latter two, which ensured that information was made available about world reaction and opinions on Nigeria.

Finally, except in the period between June and August 1993, the role of the international media in the three cases examined did not result in significant political changes in Nigeria, although in all cases they strengthened the hand of the opposition, as argued before.

End Notes

1. Larry Diamond, *Globalisation of Democracy, Trends, Causes and Prospects* (Lagos: Centre for Democratic Studies, 1992) p. 2.
2. Basuki Tedjabosu, Indonesia: The Web as A Weapon, *Development Dialogue* 2 (Uppsala) (1998).
3. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
4. Interview.
5. Transcript, USIS WorldNet Television Broadcast with TransAfrica Executive Director, Randall Robinson, 27 June 1995, 2:30p. m.–3:30p. m.
6. Oliver Boyd-Barret and Terhi Rantanen (eds), *The Globalisation of News* (London: Sage, 1998).
7. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
8. Karl Maier, *This House has Fallen: Midnight in Nigeria* (New York: Public Affairs, 2000).
9. Pita Agbese and Chris Ogbondah, The U.S. Press and Political Change in the Third World: The Coverage of Military Coups, *Political Communication and Persuasion* 5, 1, (1988) pp. 33–46.
10. Nigeria Hires a Public Relations Firm in US, in *Good Home News* (Dallas) 1, 6 (June 1990) p. 6, as cited in Julius Ihonvbere, A Critical Evaluation of the 1990 Coup in Nigeria, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 29, 4 (1991) p. 626.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

12. Olatunji Dape, Nigeria's Image and its Impact on Development. Paper Presented to the UNDP Workshop on the Role of The Media in Development at ASCON, Badagry, 1 April 1995, p. 4.
13. *Guardian* (Lagos) (30 November 1995) p. 22.
14. Ibid.
15. See Ochereome Nnanna, The Columnist as a Transition Chronicler, in Tunji Oseni (ed), *The Media, Transition and Nigeria* (Lagos: Tosen Consult, 1999) p. 257.
16. *Newsweek* (23 September 1996) p. 3.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. *Violations of Press Freedom in Nigeria January–September 1994*. Press Freedom Monitoring Unit of the Nigerian Union of Journalists (Lagos: NUJ, 1994).
20. Ibid., p. 6.
21. Ibid., p. 12.
22. Ibid., p. 17.
23. *Media Review* (December 1994) p. 21.
24. Michele Maringues, *Guerrilla Journalism* (Paris: Reporters Sans Frontieres ,1996) pp. 126–7.
25. Joe Grossman, *Hanged: Ken Saro-Wiwa in the American Print Media* (Santa Cruz, California: Inner Image Ink, 1996) p. 49.
26. *Champion* (Lagos) (4 January 1996) p. 3.
27. *Independent on Sunday* (13 June 1993) p. 17.
28. *The Times* (London) 24 June 1993, p. 12.
29. *The Times* (London) (25 June 1993) p. 13.
30. *The Economist* as cited in the *Guardian* (Lagos) (19 July 1993) p. 6.
31. *The Times*, (London) (25 June 1993) p. 13.
32. *New York Times* (26 June 1993) p. 3.
33. *San Francisco Chronicle* (24 June 1993) p. A22 as cited in Adeyinka Adeyemi, The Nigerian Press Under the Military: Persecution, Resilience and Political Crisis. Discussion Paper presented at the Joan Shorestein Centre, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, May 1995) p. 25.
34. Ibid., p. 15.
35. *The Times* (London) (26 June 1994) pp. 9 & 26.
36. Ibid. (27 July 1994) p. 11.
37. Ibid. (15 June 1994) p. 15.
38. *Guardian* (4 August 1994) p. 23.
39. Tom Robbins, *Guardian* (14 July 1994) p. 27.
40. *Washington Post* (24 June 1994) p. A31.
41. *Time Europe* (15 August 1994) pp. 1 & 3.
42. Radio interview cited in Joe Grossman , op. cit., p. 58.
43. Ibid., p. 84.
44. Ibid., p. 75.
45. *Time* (13 November 1995) p. 19 and (20 November 1995) p. 26.
46. Ibid. (20 November 1995) p. 26.
47. *New York Times*, op-ed (25 May 1997) pp. 1 & 5.
48. *Guardian* (9 November 1995) p. 16.
49. Ibid. (11 November 1995) p. 1.
50. *Independent* (11 November 1995) p. 3.

51. *The Times* (London) (13 November 1995) p. 20.
52. *Sunday Times* (London) (12 November 1995) pp. 1 & 5.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
54. Dale Sickleman, The Coming Transformation in the Muslim World, *Current History*, 99, 633 (January 2000) p. 20.

Concluding Remarks – Democratisation and Resurgent Media

Ours is undoubtedly an age of media pervasiveness. The spreading use of personal computers, cellular phones, and the Internet and the global reach of Cable News Network (CNN) have announced the arrival of an information age.

Manuel Castells in a seminal trilogy published between 1996 and 1998 described Information Capitalism¹ as the driving force of globalisation and much of contemporary politics. Castells argues that:

Politics becomes increasingly played out in the space of the media. Leadership is personalized and image making is power making – whoever the political actors and whatever their orientations, they exist in the power game through and by the media in the whole variety of an increasingly diverse media system that includes computer mediated communication networks.²

The struggle for democratisation in the face of a repressive dictatorship in Nigeria between 1988 and 1998 dramatically underlined the power of the media to shape events. As was shown in the preceding chapters, opposition to military rule by-passed or defied the suppression of the formal media, spawning in the process new rebellious vehicles to carry forward the democratic struggle. It is this radical alternative media, as John Downing and others³ characterised them in a recent influential study of rebellious communication and social movements, that we have described as counter-hegemonic.

The rebellious strain that was radical civil society's method of curbing a cruel dictatorship, drew sustenance, images, and symbols from a robust tradition of media combativeness that has roots its in precolonial and anticolonial patterns of checking arbitrary power. Hence it is argued that a common thread links the struggles of the militant media from its protest forays against imperial hegemony right down to its "guerrilla" and neo-traditional exertions in the late 1980s and 1990s. These vibrant media resonated as a critical public sphere in Habermasian terms in which the democratic spirit could be kept alive and flower. As argued too, the contributions of other segments of civil society as well as the international community in sustaining rebellious anti-military discourse is an important component of the Nigerian political drama in these years.

In contrast to orthodox formulations of the role of the media that stress ethnicity, locational concentration, or posit an indiscriminating liberalising role, we privilege the contradiction between an establishment media, which legitimate the power structure on the one hand, and an alternative, rebellious media, which subvert the existing repressive order on the other.

Hence, just as editors and culture workers were co-opted into the changing permutations of ruling class hegemony, a section of the media invented novel outlets to expose the convenient fictions by which military power was legitimated and propped up. There is nothing mechanical or over-deterministic about this. As was shown in Chapter 3, establishment journalists sometimes made common cause with radical civil society, as in the case of an editor of the government owned *New Nigerian* who chose to resign rather than defend the annulment of the 1993 elections. This phenomenon finds wider application within the polity, in that dissatisfied insiders within the political and military establishment actively but secretly supported guerrilla journalism.

Nigeria's recent political history is complex and rich in contradictions, and no theoretical perspective can be deployed in a formulaic fashion if we are to capture its cunning tapestry. Nonetheless, it is maintained that a neo-Gramscian framework yields insights that earlier studies have tended to ignore in their search for viable explanations. The role played by the media in Nigeria's recent political history leads us to expect that they will continue to be important in shaping post-military Nigeria, even as they are in turn affected by new developments.

Noteworthy is the role of the media in struggling for accountability within the rentier political economy that undergirds Nigeria's virtual democracy.⁴ The resignation of high public office-holders as a result of media-led crusades and the tendency of the media to keep elected leaders on their toes in the Fourth Republic constitute a veritable updating of the traditions of struggle and contestation over public space that were the major preoccupations and legacy of the period between 1988 and 1998.⁵

Interestingly, even as the media insist on accountability within the larger polity, they are themselves increasingly fingered for corruption and unethical behaviour. A report in the influential *Tell* magazine entitled, "The Rot in the Media," informs us that "the publisher of a national newspaper had used his publication to blackmail a top ranking member of the Obasanjo administration to release nearly ₦54 million (about \$600,000) to kill stories that would rake up scandals involving the official."⁶

Despite this strain, however, the quality press maintains a semblance of decency and even sometimes exposes corruption in the media themselves, as the *Tell* magazine report illustrates.

The fact remains, therefore, that a section of the media and radical civil society came out of the years of military dictatorship with enhanced prestige and pedigree in view of the seminal anti-authoritarian struggles. Were Nigeria to succumb to military rule in the future, this anti-authoritarian legacy will prove important in shaping the course of events.

End Notes

1. Manuel Castells, *The Information Age, Economy Society and Culture, Volume III, End of Millennium* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), p. 82. See also Manuel Castells, *The Information Age, Economy, Society and Culture, Volume I, The Rise of the Network Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996) and Volume II, *The Power of Identity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997).
2. Cited in David Held and Anthony McGrew, *The Global Transformations Reader: An Introduction to the Globalisation Debate* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002) p. 80.
3. See John D.H. Downing with Tamara Ford *et al.*, *Radical Media: Rebellious Communication and Social Movements* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2001). On alternative rebellious media in the context of democratisation in Africa, see Debra Spitulnik, Alternative Small Media and Communicative Spaces, in Goran Hyden, Michael Leslie, and Folu Ogundimu (eds), *Media and Democracy in Africa* (Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, 2002) pp. 177–205.
4. Richard Joseph, Africa 1990–97, From Abertura to Closure, *Journal of Democracy*, 2 (1998) pp. 7–17.
5. For my thoughts on the role of Nigeria's media in the Fourth Republic, see for example, Ayo Olukotun, Promoting the Ideals of Federalism in Nigeria: The Role of the Press, in Tunde Babawale *et al.* (eds), *Devolution of Powers in a Federal State* (Lagos: Friedrich Ebert Foundation, 2000) pp. 131–43; Ayo Olukotun, The 1999 Nigerian Transition and the Media, *African Journal of Political Science*, 15, 2 (1999) pp. 33–44; Ayo Olukotun, From Military to Civilian Rule: Thoughts on a Media in Transition, in Lanre Arogundade and Bose Eitopah (eds), *Media in a Democratic Government* (Lagos: International Press Centre and Friedrich Ebert Foundation, 2000) pp. 94–102; and Ayo Olukotun, Media Reporting and the Tinubu Administration: An Appraisal, in Bola Akinterinwa (ed), *Bola Tinubu and the Struggle for True Federalism in Nigeria, Perspectives, Problems and Prospects* (Ibadan: Vantage, 2000) pp. 154–65. On the historical origins of the rebellious motif in Nigerian media, see Ayo Olukotun, At the Barricades, Resurgent Media in Colonial Nigeria, 1900–60, in O. Oyebade (ed), *Foundations of Modern Nigeria, Volume II* (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 2003) pp. 229–46.
6. Tell (Lagos) (6 May, 2002) p. 34. On corruption in the media of the Fourth Republic, see Ayo Olukotun, *The Media, Accountability and Democracy in Nigeria (1999–2003)*. Mimeo, Dept. of Political Science, University of Lagos.

RESEARCH REPORTS PUBLISHED BY THE INSTITUTE

Recent issues in the series are available electronically for download free of charge
www.nai.uu.se

1. Meyer-Heiselberg, Richard, *Notes from Liberated African Department in the Archives at Fourah Bay College, Freetown, Sierra Leone*. 61 pp. 1967 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
2. Not published.
3. Carlsson, Gunnar, *Benthonic Fauna in African Watercourses with Special Reference to Black Fly Populations*. 13 pp. 1968 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
4. Eldblom, Lars, *Land Tenure—Social Organization and Structure*. 18 pp. 1969 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
5. Bjerén, Gunilla, *Makelle Elementary School Drop-Out. 1967*. 80 pp. 1969 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
6. Moberg, Jens Peter, *Report Concerning the Soil Profile Investigation and Collection of Soil Samples in the West Lake Region of Tanzania*. 44 pp. 1970 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
7. Selinus, Ruth, *The Traditional Foods of the Central Ethiopian Highlands*. 34 pp. 1971 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
8. Hägg, Ingemund, *Some State-Controlled Industrial Companies in Tanzania. A Case Study*. 18 pp. 1971 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
9. Bjerén, Gunilla, *Some Theoretical and Methodological Aspects of the Study of African Urbanization*. 38 pp. 1971 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
10. Linné, Olga, *An Evaluation of Kenya Science Teacher's College*. 67 pp. 1971. SEK 45,-
11. Nellis, John R., *Who Pays Tax in Kenya?* 22 pp. 1972. SEK 45,-
12. Bondestam, Lars, *Population Growth Control in Kenya*. 59 pp. 1972 (OUT OF PRINT)
13. Hall, Budd L., *Wakati Wa Furaha. An Evaluation of a Radio Study Group Campaign*. 47 pp. 1973. SEK 45,- (OUT-OF-PRINT)
14. Ståhl, Michael, *Contradictions in Agricultural Development. A Study of Three Minimum Package Projects in Southern Ethiopia*. 65 pp. 1973 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
15. Linné, Olga, *An Evaluation of Kenya Science Teachers College, Phase II 1970–71*. 91 pp. 1973 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
16. Lodhi, Abdulaziz Y., *The Institution of Slavery in Zanzibar and Pemba*. 40 pp. 1973. ISBN 91-7106-066-9 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
17. Lundqvist, Jan, *The Economic Structure of Morogoro Town. Some Sectoral and Regional Characteristics of a Medium-Sized African Town*. 70 pp. 1973. ISBN 91-7106-068-5 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
18. Bondestam, Lars, *Some Notes on African Statistics. Collection, Reliability and Interpretation*. 59 pp. 1973. ISBN 91-7106-069-4 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
19. Jensen, Peter Føge, *Soviet Research on Africa. With Special Reference to International Relations*. 68 pp. 1973. ISBN 91-7106-070-7 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
20. Sjöström, Rolf & Margareta, *YDLC—A Literacy Campaign in Ethiopia. An Introductory Study and a Plan for Further Research*. 72 pp. 1973. ISBN 91-7106-071-5 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
21. Ndongko, Wilfred A., *Regional Economic Planning in Cameroon*. 21 pp. 1974. SEK 45,-. ISBN 91-7106-073-1 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
22. Pipping-van Hulsten, Ida, *An Episode of Colonial History: The German Press in Tanzania 1901–1914*. 47 pp. 1974. SEK 45,-. ISBN 91-7106-077-4 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
23. Magnusson, Åke, *Swedish Investments in South Africa*. 57 pp. 1974. SEK 45,-. ISBN 91-7106-078-2 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
24. Nellis, John R., *The Ethnic Composition of Leading Kenyan Government Positions*. 26 pp. 1974. SEK 45,-. ISBN 91-7106-079-0 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
25. Francke, Anita, *Kibaba Farmers' Training Centre. Impact Study 1965–1968*. 106 pp. 1974. SEK 45,-. ISBN 91-7106-081-2 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
26. Aasland, Tertit, *On the Move-to-the-Left in Uganda 1969–1971*. 71 pp. 1974. SEK 45,-. ISBN 91-7106-083-9 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
27. Kirk-Greene, Anthony H.M., *The Genesis of the Nigerian Civil War and the Theory of Fear*. 32 pp. 1975. SEK 45,-. ISBN 91-7106-085-5 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
28. Okereke, Okoro, *Agrarian Development Programmes of African Countries. A Reappraisal of Problems of Policy*. 20 pp. 1975. SEK 45,-. ISBN 91-7106-086-3 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
29. Kjekshus, Helge, *The Elected Elite. A Socio-Economic Profile of Candidates in Tanzania's Parliamentary Election, 1970*. 40 pp. 1975. SEK 45,-. ISBN 91-7106-087-1 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
30. Frantz, Charles, *Pastoral Societies, Stratification and National Integration in Africa*. 34 pp. 1975. ISBN 91-7106-088-X (OUT OF PRINT)
31. Esh, Tina & Illith Rosenblum, *Tourism in Developing Countries—Trick or Treat? A Report from the Gambia*. 80 pp. 1975. ISBN 91-7106-094-4 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
32. Clayton, Anthony, *The 1948 Zanzibar General Strike*. 66 pp. 1976. ISBN 91-7106-094-4 (OUT OF PRINT)
33. Pipping, Knut, *Land Holding in the Usangu Plain. A Survey of Two Villages in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania*. 122 pp. 1976. ISBN 91-7106-097-9 (OUT OF PRINT)
34. Lundström, Karl Johan, *North-Eastern Ethiopia: Society in Famine. A Study of Three Social Institutions in a Period of Severe Strain*. 80 pp. 1976. ISBN 91-7106-098-7 (OUT-OF-PRINT)

35. Magnusson, Åke, *The Voice of South Africa*. 55 pp. 1976. ISBN 91-7106-106-1 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
36. Ghai, Yash P., *Reflection on Law and Economic Integration in East Africa*. 41 pp. 1976. ISBN 91-7106-105-3 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
37. Carlsson, Jerker, *Transnational Companies in Liberia. The Role of Transnational Companies in the Economic Development of Liberia*. 51 pp. 1977. SEK 45,-. ISBN 91-7106-107-X (OUT-OF-PRINT)
38. Green, Reginald H., *Toward Socialism and Self-Reliance. Tanzania's Striving for Sustained Transition Projected*. 57 pp. 1977. ISBN 91-7106-108-8 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
39. Sjöström, Rolf & Margareta, *Literacy Schools in a Rural Society. A Study of Yemisrach Dimis Literacy Campaign in Ethiopia*. 130 pp. 1977. ISBN 91-7106-109-6 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
40. Ståhl, Michael, *New Seeds in Old Soil. A Study of the Land Reform Process in Western Wollega, Ethiopia 1975-76*. 90 pp. 1977. SEK 45,-. ISBN 91-7106-112-6 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
41. Holmberg, Johan, *Grain Marketing and Land Reform in Ethiopia. An Analysis of the Marketing and Pricing of Food Grains in 1976 after the Land Reform*. 34 pp. 1977. ISBN 91-7106-113-4 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
42. Egerö, Bertil, *Mozambique and Angola: Reconstruction in the Social Sciences*. 78 pp. 1977. ISBN 91-7106-118-5 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
43. Hansen, H. B., *Ethnicity and Military Rule in Uganda*. 136 pp. 1977. ISBN 91-7106-118-5 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
44. Bhagavan, M.R., *Zambia: Impact of Industrial Strategy on Regional Imbalance and Social Inequality*. 76 pp. 1978. ISBN 91-7106-119-3 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
45. Aaby, Peter, *The State of Guinea-Bissau. African Socialism or Socialism in Africa?* 35 pp. 1978. ISBN 91-7106-133-9 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
46. Abdel-Rahim, Muddathir, *Changing Patterns of Civilian-Military Relations in the Sudan*. 32 pp. 1978. ISBN 91-7106-137-1 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
47. Jönsson, Lars, *La Révolution Agraire en Algérie. Historique, contenu et problèmes*. 84 pp. 1978. ISBN 91-7106-145-2 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
48. Bhagavan, M.R., *A Critique of "Appropriate" Technology for Underdeveloped Countries*. 56 pp. 1979. SEK 45,-. ISBN 91-7106-150-9 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
49. Bhagavan, M.R., *Inter-Relations Between Technological Choices and Industrial Strategies in Third World Countries*. 79 pp. 1979. SEK 45,-. ISBN 91-7106-151-7 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
50. Torp, Jens Erik, *Industrial Planning and Development in Mozambique. Some Preliminary Considerations*. 59 pp. 1979. ISBN 91-7106-153-3 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
51. Brandström, Per, Jan Hultin & Jan Lindström, *Aspects of Agro-Pastoralism in East Africa*. 60 pp. 1979. ISBN 91-7106-155-X (OUT-OF-PRINT)
52. Egerö, Bertil, *Colonization and Migration. A Summary of Border-Crossing Movements in Tanzania before 1967*. 45 pp. 1979. SEK 45,-. ISBN 91-7106-159-2 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
53. Simson, Howard, *Zimbabwe—A Country Study*. 138 pp. 1979. ISBN 91-7106-160-6 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
54. Beshir, Mohamed Omer, *Diversity Regionalism and National Unity*. 50 pp. 1979. ISBN 91-7106-166-5 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
55. Eriksen, Tore Linné, *Modern African History: Some Historiographical Observations*. 27 pp. 1979. ISBN 91-7106-167-3 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
56. Melander, Göran, *Refugees in Somalia*. 48 pp. 1980. SEK 45,-. ISBN 91-7106-169-X (OUT-OF-PRINT)
57. Bhagavan, M.R., *Angola: Prospects for Socialist Industrialisation*. 48 pp. 1980. ISBN 91-7106-175-4 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
58. Green, Reginald H., *From Südwestafrika to Namibia. The Political Economy of Transition*. 45 pp. 1981. SEK 45,-. ISBN 91-7106-188-6 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
59. Isaksen, Jan, *Macro-Economic Management and Bureaucracy: The Case of Botswana*. 53 pp. 1981. SEK 45,-. ISBN 91-7106-192-4 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
60. Odén, Bertil, *The Macroeconomic Position of Botswana*. 84 pp. 1981. SEK 45,-. ISBN 91-7106-193-2 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
61. Westerlund, David, *From Socialism to Islam? Notes on Islam as a Political Factor in Contemporary Africa*. 62 pp. 1982. SEK 45,-. ISBN 91-7106-203-3 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
62. Tostensen, Arne, *Dependence and Collective Self-Reliance in Southern Africa. The Case of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC)*. 170 pp. 1982. ISBN 91-7106-207-6 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
63. Rudebeck, Lars, *Problèmes de pouvoir pop ulaire et de développement. Transition difficile en Guinée-Bissau*. 73 pp. 1982. ISBN 91-7106-208-4 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
64. Nobel, Peter, *Refugee Law in the Sudan. With The Refugee Conventions and The Regulation of Asylum Act of 1974*. 56 pp. 1982. SEK 45,-. ISBN 91-7106-209-2 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
65. Sano, H-O, *The Political Economy of Food in Nigeria 1960-1982. A Discussion on Peasants, State, and World Economy*. 108 pp. 1983. ISBN 91-7106-210-6 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
66. Kjørby, Finn, *Problems and Contradictions in the Development of Ox-Cultivation in Tanzania*. 164 pp. 1983. SEK 60,-. ISBN 91-7106-211-4 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
67. Kibreab, Gaim, *Reflections on the African Refugee Problem: A Critical Analysis of Some Basic Assumptions*. 154 pp. 1983. ISBN 91-7106-212-2 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
68. Haarløv, Jens, *Labour Regulation and Black Workers' Struggles in South Africa*. 80 pp. 1983. SEK 20,-. ISBN 91-7106-213-0 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
69. Matshazi, Meshack Jongilanga & Christina Tillfors, *A Survey of Workers' Education Activities in Zimbabwe, 1980-1981*. 85 pp. 1983. SEK 45,-. ISBN 91-7106-217-3 (OUT-OF-PRINT)

70. Hedlund, Hans & Mats Lundahl, *Migration and Social Change in Rural Zambia*. 107 pp. 1983. SEK 50,-. ISBN 91-7106-220-3 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
71. Gasarasi, Charles P., *The Tripartite Approach to the Resettlement and Integration of Rural Refugees in Tanzania*. 76 pp. 1984. SEK 45,-. ISBN 91-7106-222-X (OUT-OF-PRINT)
72. Kameir, El-Wathig & I. Kursany, *Corruption as a "Fifth" Factor of Production in the Sudan*. 33 pp. 1985. SEK 45,-. ISBN 91-7106-223-8 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
73. Davies, Robert, *South African Strategy Towards Mozambique in the Post-Nkomati Period. A Critical Analysis of Effects and Implications*. 71 pp. 1985. SEK 45,-. ISBN 91-7106-238-6 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
74. Bhagavan, M.R., *The Energy Sector in SADC Countries. Policies, Priorities and Options in the Context of the African Crisis*. 41 pp. 1985. SEK 45,-. ISBN 91-7106-240-8 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
75. Bhagavan, M.R., *Angola's Political Economy 1975-1985*. 89 pp. 1986. SEK 45,-. ISBN 91-7106-248-3 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
76. Östberg, Wilhelm, *The Kondoa Transformation. Coming to Grips with Soil Erosion in Central Tanzania*. 99 pp. 1986. ISBN 91-7106-251-3 (OUT OF PRINT)
77. Fadahunsi, Akin, *The Development Process and Technology. A Case for a Resources Based Development Strategy in Nigeria*. 41 pp. 1986. SEK 45,-. ISBN 91-7106-265-3 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
78. Suliman, Hassan Sayed, *The Nationalist Movements in the Maghrib. A Comparative Approach*. 87 pp. 1987. SEK 45,-. ISBN 91-7106-266-1 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
79. Saasa, Oliver S., *Zambia's Policies towards Foreign Investment. The Case of the Mining and Non-Mining Sectors*. 65 pp. 1987. SEK 45,-. ISBN 91-7106-271-8 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
80. Andræ, Gunilla & Björn Beckman, *Industry Goes Farming. The Nigerian Raw Material Crisis and the Case of Textiles and Cotton*. 68 pp. 1987. SEK 50,-. ISBN 91-7106-273-4 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
81. Lopes, Carlos & Lars Rudebeck, *The Socialist Ideal in Africa. A Debate*. 27 pp. 1988. SEK 45,-. ISBN 91-7106-280-7
82. Hermele, Kenneth, *Land Struggles and Social Differentiation in Southern Mozambique. A Case Study of Chokwe, Limpopo 1950-1987*. 64 pp. 1988. SEK 50,-. ISBN 91-7106-282-3
83. Smith, Charles David, *Did Colonialism Capture the Peasantry? A Case Study of the Kagera District, Tanzania*. 34 pp. 1989. SEK 45,-. ISBN 91-7106-289-0
84. Hedlund, S. & M. Lundahl, *Ideology as a Determinant of Economic Systems: Nyerere and Ujamaa in Tanzania*. 54 pp. 1989. SEK 50,-. ISBN 91-7106-291-2 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
85. Lindskog, Per & Jan Lundqvist, *Why Poor Children Stay Sick. The Human Ecology of Child Health and Welfare in Rural Malawi*. 111 pp. 1989. SEK 60,-. ISBN 91-7106-284-X
86. Holmén, Hans, *State, Cooperatives and Development in Africa*. 87 pp. 1990. SEK 60,-. ISBN 91-7106-300-5
87. Zetterqvist, Jenny, *Refugees in Botswana in the Light of International Law*. 83 pp. 1990. SEK 60,-. ISBN 91-7106-304-8
88. Rwelamira, Medard, *Refugees in a Chess Game: Reflections on Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland Refugee Policies*. 63 pp. 1990. SEK 60,-. ISBN 91-7106-306-4
89. Gefu, Jerome O., *Pastoralist Perspectives in Nigeria. The Fulbe of Udubo Grazing Reserve*. 106 pp. 1992. SEK 60,-. ISBN 91-7106-324-2
90. Heino, Timo-Erki, *Politics on Paper. Finland's South Africa Policy 1945-1991*. 121 pp. 1992. SEK 60,-. ISBN 91-7106-326-9
91. Eriksson, Gun, *Peasant Response to Price Incentives in Tanzania. A Theoretical and Empirical Investigation*. 84 pp. 1993. SEK 60,-. ISBN 91-7106-334-X
92. Chachage, C.S.L., Magnus Ericsson & Peter Gibbon, *Mining and Structural Adjustment. Studies on Zimbabwe and Tanzania*. 107 pp. 1993. SEK 60,-. ISBN 91-7106-340-4
93. Neocosmos, Michael, *The Agrarian Question in Southern Africa and "Accumulation from Below". Economics and Politics in the Struggle for Democracy*. 79 pp. 1993. SEK 60,-. ISBN 91-7106-342-0
94. Vaa, Mariken, *Towards More Appropriate Technologies? Experiences from the Water and Sanitation Sector*. 91 pp. 1993. SEK 60,-. ISBN 91-7106-343-9 (OUT-OF-PRINT)
95. Kanyinga, Karuti, A. Kiondo & P. Tidemand, *The New Local Level Politics in East Africa. Studies on Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya*. 119 pp. 1994. SEK 60,-. ISBN 91-7106-348-X (OUT-OF-PRINT)
96. Odén, Bertil, H. Melber, T. Sellström & C. Tapscott, *Namibia and External Resources. The Case of Swedish Development Assistance*. 122 pp. 1994. SEK 60,-. ISBN 91-7106-351-X
97. Moritz, Lena, *Trade and Industrial Policies in the New South Africa*. 61 pp. 1994. SEK 60,-. ISBN 91-7106-355-2
98. Osaghae, Eghosa E., *Structural Adjustment and Ethnicity in Nigeria*. 66 pp. 1995. SEK 60,-. ISBN 91-7106-373-0
99. Soiri, Iina, *The Radical Motherhood. Namibian Women's Independence Struggle*. 115 pp. 1996. SEK 60,-. ISBN 91-7106-380-3.
100. Rwebangira, Magdalena K., *The Legal Status of Women and Poverty in Tanzania*. 58 pp. 1996. SEK 60,-. ISBN 91-7106-391-9
101. Bijlmakers, Leon A., Mary T. Bassett & David M. Sanders, *Health and Structural Adjustment in Rural and Urban Zimbabwe*. 78 pp. 1996. SEK 60,-. ISBN 91-7106-393-5
102. Gibbon, Peter & Adebayo O. Olukoshi, *Structural Adjustment and Socio-Economic Change in Sub-Saharan Africa. Some Conceptual, Methodological and Research Issues*. 101 pp. 1996. SEK 80,-. ISBN 91-7106-397-8

103. Egwu, Samuel G., *Structural Adjustment, Agrarian Change and Rural Ethnicity in Nigeria*. 124 pp. 1998. SEK 80,-. ISBN 91-7106-426-5
104. Olukoshi, Adebayo O., *The Elusive Prince of Denmark. Structural Adjustment and the Crisis of Governance in Africa*. 59 pp. 1998. SEK 80,-. ISBN 91-7106-428-1
105. Bijlmakers, Leon A., Mary T. Bassett & David M. Sanders, *Socioeconomic Stress, Health and Child Nutritional Status in Zimbabwe at a Time of Economic Structural Adjustment. A Three Year Longitudinal Study*. 127 pp. 1998. SEK 80,-. ISBN 91-7106-434-6
106. Mupedziswa, Rodrick and Perpetua Gumbo, *Structural Adjustment and Women Informal Sector Traders in Harare, Zimbabwe*. 123 pp. 1998. SEK 80,-. ISBN 917106-435-4
107. Chiwele, D.K., P. Muyatwa-Sipula and H. Kalinda, *Private Sector Response to Agricultural Marketing Liberalisation in Zambia. A Case Study of Eastern Province Maize Markets*. 90 pp. SEK 80,-. ISBN 91-7106-436-2
108. Amanor, K.S., *Global Restructuring and Land Rights in Ghana. Forest Food Chains, Timber and Rural Livelihoods*. 154 pp. 1999. SEK 80,-. ISBN 91-7106-437-0
109. Ongile, G.A., *Gender and Agricultural Supply Responses to Structural Adjustment Programmes. A Case Study of Smallholder Tea Producers in Kericho, Kenya*. 91 pp. 1999. SEK 80,- ISBN 91-7106-440-0
110. Sachikonye, Lloyd M., *Restructuring or De-Industrializing? Zimbabwe's Textile and Metal Industries under Structural Adjustment*. 107 pp. 1999. SEK 100,-. ISBN 91-7106-444-3
111. Gaidzanwa, Rudo, *Voting with their Feet. Migrant Zimbabwean Nurses and Doctors in the Era of Structural Adjustment*. 84 pp. 1999. SEK 100,-. ISBN 91-7106-445-1
112. Andersson, Per-Åke, Arne Bigsten and Håkan Persson, *Foreign Aid, Debt and Growth in Zambia*. 133 pp. 2000. SEK 100,-. ISBN 91-7106-462-1
113. Hashim, Yahaya and Kate Meagher, *Cross-Border Trade and the Parallel Currency Market — Trade and Finance in the Context of Structural Adjustment. A Case Study from Kano, Nigeria*. 118 pp. 1999. SEK 100,-. ISBN 91-7106-449-4
114. Schlyter, Ann, *Recycled Inequalities. Youth and gender in George compound, Zambia*, 135 pp. 1999. SEK 100,-. ISBN 91-7106-455-9
115. Kanyinga, Karuti, *Re-Distribution from Above. The Politics of Land Rights and Squatting in Coastal Kenya*. 126 pp. 2000. SEK 100,-. ISBN 91-7106-464-8
116. Amanor, Kojo Sebastian, *Land, Labour and the Family in Southern Ghana. A Critique of Land Policy under Neo-Liberalisation*. 127 pp. 2001. SEK 100,-. ISBN 91-7106-468-0
117. Mupedziswa, Rodreck and Perpetua Gumbo, *Women Informal Traders in Harare and the Struggle for Survival in an Environment of Economic Reforms*. 118 pp. 2001. SEK 100,-. ISBN 91-7106-469-9
118. Bigsten, Arne and Steve Kayizzi-Mugerwa, *Is Uganda an Emerging Economy? A report for the OECD project "Emerging Africa"*. 105 pp. 2001. SEK 100,-. ISBN 91-7106-470-2
119. Obi, Cyril I., *The Changing Forms of Identity Politics in Nigeria under Economic Adjustment. The Case of the Oil Minorities Movement of the Niger Delta*. 125 pp. 2001. SEK 100,-. ISBN 91-7106-471-0
120. Bigsten, Arne and Anders Danielson, *Tanzania: Is the Ugly Duckling Finally Growing Up?* 113 pp. 2001. SEK 100,-. ISBN 91-7106-474-5
121. Chitando, Ezra, *Singing Culture. A Study of Gospel Music in Zimbabwe*. 105 pp. 2002. SEK 100,-. ISBN 91-7106-494-X
122. Kamete, Amin Y., *Governing the Poor in Harare, Zimbabwe. Shifting Perceptions and Changing Responses*. 67 pp. 2002. SEK 100,-. ISBN 91-7106-503-2.
123. Schlyter, Ann, *Multi-Habitation. Urban Housing and Everyday Life in Chitungwiza, Zimbabwe*. 77 pp. 2003. SEK 100,-. ISBN 91-7106-511-3.
124. Mans, Minette, *Music as Instrument of Diversity and Unity. Notes on a Namibian Landscape*. 55 pp. 2003. SEK 100,-. ISBN 91-7106-510-5.
125. Leith, J. Clark and Ludvig Söderling, *Ghana—Long Term Growth, Atrophy and Stunted Recovery*. 110 pp. 2003. SEK 100,-. ISBN 91-7106-514-8
126. Olukotun, Ayo, *Repressive State and Resurgent Media under Nigeria's Military Dictatorship, 1988–98*. 136 pp. 2004. SEK 100,-. ISBN 91-7106-524-5