



## **Media Systems, Politics and Press Freedom: Perspectives on Contemporary Russia and Nigeria**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The political system in any society is a major determinant of the nature of its media system. The policies of political leaders are key factors to ensuring the establishment and implementation of laws which promote the freedom of the press. This can be said of the Russian federation and Nigeria two prominent countries in Europe and Africa which have witnessed several political and media transitions over the years. From autocratic and repressive communist and military regimes respectively; Russia and Nigeria currently operate democratic models of governance with constitutions providing for the freedom of expression and of the press. Old habits seem to die hard as censorship and cases of assaults on journalists occur frequently contrary to global expectations of a free Russian and Nigerian press in the twenty-first century. Analysis of statistical data from two internationally respected media bodies; Reporters without Borders and Freedom House reveal that press freedom in Nigeria has improved in recent years amidst current setbacks from current religious and political crisis. Russia's press freedom index is still poor with an uncertain future. Being a measure of national development and international reputation; the Russian and Nigerian governments need to implement laws and policies which promote the freedom of the press.

**Keywords:** Media System, Press Freedom, Russia and Nigeria

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Media systems, politics and human rights are all inextricably linked. Findings from numerous theoretical and empirical researches in political and social science point to this fact. Media and politics depend on each other. Both disciplines often use terms which already imply an interdependent relationship, terms such as: "Media democracy," "media systems" and "political communication" (Engesser and Franzetti, 2011). The interrelationship between politics, human rights and the media has continually been an issue of interest to journalists and scholars as this interrelationship reflects the level of each country's respect for citizens' rights especially the freedom of expression and of the press. The establishment and implementation of laws which grants the press rights is often at the mercy of political leaders who may decide to ignore or bend press these laws in their favor.

As the world moves deeper in to the so-called current age of globalization and liberalization, expectations are high as regards

the quantity and quality of the media in each country. Attention is usually focused on the freedom of the press. The respect for the freedom of the press has become one of the major indicators of the level of a country's development. The ever watchful eyes of global media seem always to be on the lookout for cases of human and media rights violation. Social media and other new media technologies also help facilitate the surveillance role of media as live, factual and unbiased information can now be sourced and transmitted from independent sources. Governments round the world are now more than ever compelled to become more sensitive of the state of their national media systems as this impact positively or negatively on overall national development and international reputation.

The term "media system" is relatively new in communication and media research. Studies show that in a large number of communication books, overviews and even in dictionaries of communication and media, the term is neither defined nor even mentioned (Bastiansen, 2008). According to Bastiansen, the

term “media system” first appeared in Siebert, Theodore and Schramm’s *Four Theories of the Press* published in 1956. In the book, the authors use the term “press” to mean “all media of mass communication” and the term “system” to mean “all mass media in a given society as a whole.” They distinguish between the authoritarian, liberal, socially responsible and soviet media systems (96). The authors counted the socially responsible system and the Soviet media system as variations of the liberal and authoritarian systems thereby creating a sharp dichotomy between these two systems. During the cold war, the authoritarian system characterized by control and repression became a label for the media in the Soviet Union while the term ‘liberal system’ was used to describe the media in the US. Four theories of the press thus helped to spark of interest in the concept of media systems as in the years following, several scholars formulated and till date continue to formulate their own definitions and classification of media systems, these include scholars such as: Raymond Williams, Melvin DeFleur, Joseph Turow, Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini amongst several others.

Siebert, Peterson and Schramm define media system as “all mass media in a given society as a whole.” This definition although helpful, appears to over simplify the concept of media as the media system encompass more than just the totality of the number of mass media in a given society. The media system is composed of the media industry as well as other interrelated sectors of the economy. The media system is linked to a country’s history, culture, economic and political system. Histories, culture, the economy, especially politics, play major roles in shaping the kind of communication sector which is prevalent in any given country. This notion is perhaps what informs Hallin and Mancini’s argument that one cannot fully understand the media system without first understanding the nature of the state, the system of political parties, the pattern of relations between economic and political interests, the development of civil society amongst other elements of social structure (Hallin and Mancini, 2004).

From Hallin and Mancini’s argument it can be deduced that political system more than any other factor influences the media sphere of any given country. In many instances the definition of the term media system implies its dependence on the specific political system in a society (Engesser and Franzetti, 2011). This argument is in the line of thought of the classic four theories of the press which describe the state of the media under various kinds of political systems. Representative political systems such as found in countries like Finland and Norway have liberalized and deregulated media systems and rank very high on the global press freedom index. The media under autocratic and repressive regimes are often heavily censored and denied of rights. The media in Russia during the Soviet era as well as the media during the military eras in Nigeria are classic examples which testify to this fact. The Soviet Union collapsed in 1991 after 69 years and the military era in Nigeria in 1999 giving way to a contemporary era in the Russian federation and in Nigeria which has been marked by political changes and economic development. The changes brought by the new era have resulted to changes in the form of governance and politics. The new political systems in Russia and Nigeria as expected, have resulted in new media or communication

systems. These political systems have also created new approaches to the issues of human rights especially regarding the freedom of the press.

The Russian Federation and Nigeria share some interesting characteristics. Both countries are highly influential entities in their regions. Russia is the world’s largest country with a total land area of 17,075,400 km<sup>2</sup> spanning across Europe and Asia. Nigeria is the most densely populated Black Country in the world and is extremely influential in Africa. Nigeria is popularly called the Giant of Africa. Russia and Nigeria are richly blessed in human and mineral resources. In both countries live people of different ethnicities, languages and religion. Russia and Nigeria rank amongst the world’s top ten producers and exporters of crude oil. Both countries also have close ties, as bi-lateral relations have existed between Russia and Nigeria since the 1960s from the soviet and military eras. Russia for instance was a strong ally which supported the Nigerian military government during the 3 years civil war against the separatist Republic of Biafra. Till date educational, economic and technological ties are strong between both countries.

According to constitution, Russia is governed by a semi-presidential system of government with the president as head of state and the prime minister as head of government. Nigeria is governed by a presidential system of government. Russian and Nigeria are fundamentally structured as representative democracies with the federal government composed of three branches; the legislature, executive and judiciary. Both countries have constitutions which provide for the freedom of expression and of the press as well as other basic fundamental human rights.

Contrary to global expectations, the freedom of expression and of the press have been serious issues of concern as the Russian and Nigerian governments are frequently accused of violating press rights. Cases of killings, kidnap and assault to journalists are frequently reported from both countries. Reports and rankings from various media organizations which study and assess countries on the basis of the freedom of the press reveal that the media in Russia and Nigeria are not free. Two most globally renowned media organizations Freedom House (FH) and Reporters Sans Frontieres (Reporters without Borders) (RSF) describe Russia as “the most dangerous country in Europe for journalists.”

Interestingly, government officials in Russia and Nigeria argue that global media’s view is overly exaggerated and borne out of malice and jealousy from western countries because of their rapid economic growth. These officials hold that the freedom of the press is strongly upheld in their countries. However, human rights organizations hold that government agents as well as some religious and political groups in Russia and Nigeria have used and continue to use forceful and many times, subtle tactics to frustrate the work of journalists especially journalists of dissent.

This research examines the political and media spheres in the Russian federation and Nigeria with a view to revealing how current political systems influence the media especially in regards to press freedom.

## 2. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND THE MEDIA

For many years philosophers and scholars have attempted to describe the relationship between government and the media especially in regards to freedom and control. Changing political, economic, and social conditions strengthened the need to describe and explain this complex relationship (Dominick, 2013).

The four theories of the press is significant in this research on Russia and Nigeria as its description of media systems in autocratic and liberal political systems is especially applicable in the study of the media in every country. Later media theories tend to focus on media systems in Europe and the Americas. A popular example is Hallin and Mancini's "Southern-European," "Northern and Central-European" and "North-Atlantic media systems." Countries in Africa and Asia are often left out of the discuss as if they have no media systems.

### 2.1. Media Systems in Contemporary Russia

Russia has a rich history dating back almost a thousand years. The Cambridge History of Russia reveal that from the early period of the "Kievan Rus" in the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD, through the Mongolian invasions, through the imperial years of the Tsars and the Great Russian revolution in 1917; Russia has witnessed several periods of historical and political change. These periods brought with them great political, economic and technological experiences which currently have enabled Russia to rise to a strong economic and technological super power. One of the most significant periods in Russia's history and indeed the history of the modern world, was the Soviet-communist era (1922-1991).

Known as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) the Soviet Union comprised of 15 member countries with Russia as the dominant State. The Soviet Union was controlled by the leaders of the Soviet Communist party. Joseph Stalin (1898-1953) was perhaps its most notable leader. Although notorious for his autocratic leadership style and firmness marked by numerous executions and imprisonments; Stalin's regime encouraged public education, scientific and technological development. By his death in 1953, Russia had developed in to an industrial, military and nuclear superpower only rivaled by the United States (Sunny, 2006). The driving spirit of technological and industrial development led Russia to pioneering space travel. In 1957 Russia launched the first space satellite and in 1961 sent the first man in to space.

In the Soviet era the media developed. The number of newspapers and magazines in circulation increased. Television and radio was introduced to and the number of broadcasting houses increased through the years. Although the media grew in numerical strength and reach, censorship and propaganda prevailed. The media was under strict state control. The communist party viewed the media as a "transmission belt" whose job was to educate the ignorant and naïve masses and lead them in to a shining communist future rather than to inform them on what was really going on (Gerasimov, 1998). The authorities tried to justify their restrictions through propagandist publications and broadcasts while their opponents from within and outside the USSR argued for the establishment

of press freedom in the publics' interest. The communist party stamped down on any publication which attempted to reveal the secret activities of the regime and news stories which they felt, portrayed the Soviet Union as lagging behind the rest of the world (Zassrousky, 2004).

From the 1970's the Soviet Union began to weaken due to bad leadership from its incompetent and increasingly corrupt leaders, strives within the communist party and the restiveness of the people who began to yearn for a democracy society. Mikhail Gorbachev the last leader of the communist party recognizing this downward spiral, introduced the policies of Glasnost meaning "openness" or "freedom of expression" and Perestroika meaning 'a restructuring of the system' The policies of glasnost and perestroika allowed for a freer but still censored press. The enactment of the 1990 media law which officially banned censorship of the media and allowed for more freedom of expression was the boldest step taken by the government to establish the freedom of the press and pave the way for a future democratic system.

To the disadvantage of Gorbachev's regime the enactment of the new freedom of expression strengthened his critics. Critics of Gorbachev's policies became bolder and more influential and as a result the media became divided between those who supported the changes introduced by Gorbachev and those who advocated for a return to communists' principles (Simons, 2013). A coup to overthrow Gorbachev was attempted in August 1991 but it failed thanks to the efforts of Boris Yeltsin a statesman of high repute being the Chairman of the Russian Supreme Soviet State. Yeltsin mobilized the people against the politicians who did not like Gorbachev's increasingly democratic policies.

Yeltsin had lost faith in one United Soviet Union. He believed that each member of the union would perform better as an independent country and so liaised with other leaders who shared this idea to plan the dissolution of the Soviet Union. At the time, Gorbachev who had already lost so much public support due to the dwindling economy of the Soviet Union, high inflation and food shortages, resigned from office. The Soviet Union collapsed on 25<sup>th</sup> December, 1991 after 69 years. The union broke up in to 15 independent countries. This breakup marked the emergence of the Russian federation. Yeltsin who had then become so popular in Russia was elected the first "President of the Russian Federation" officially beginning the Russia's contemporary era.

### 2.2. Privatization-Commercialization-Democratization of the Russian Media

Boris Yeltsin introduced the policies of privatization, market and trade liberalization with a view to opening up Russia to the global market and improving the economy. State funding of the media was greatly minimized and in some cases stopped. The lack of sponsorship and the realities of the new market economy began to bite hard on the media as several media houses had to close down or be bought by business tycoons (Simons, 2013). 1993 was a golden year for the media in Russia due to the adoption of the Constitution of the Russian Federation. Articles 29 and 30 of the constitution provided for the freedom of expression forbidding all forms of censorship and guaranteeing the respect for the

freedom of the press. 1993 also witnessed the establishment of the first private TV network; owned by a business man Vladimir Gusinsky. From 1994 major media houses especially newspapers, were bought by wealthy politicians and top business tycoons -the so-called oligarchs who saw the media as profit making enterprises and avenues for political propaganda. Yeltsin's administration thus caused a shift in the Russian media system from the Soviet-communist system to a commercially driven system; what Sheftelevich (2009) describes as "a transition from an administrative bureaucratic model to a market and democratic 'model' (1). The media under Yeltsin grew becoming pluralistic and more independent, what many scholars refer to as 'the golden era for mass media in Russia'" (Hopstad, 2011).

Yeltsin's government was not without problems. As the oligarchs became more involved in the economy, corruption and inflation increased almost causing the total collapse of the economy. Yeltsin tried to run for a third term in office but parliament rejected this idea and instead called for his resignation. Yeltsin called for the dissolution of the parliament but this did not work out. Yeltsin resorted to using military force to drive the members of parliament out. The building of the house of parliament was severely damaged, 187 people including many journalists were killed and thousands wounded. Yeltsin's unpopularity continued to increase through the years; on 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1999 he resigned from office.

### 2.3. Contemporary Nigeria and Media

Contemporary Nigeria is the product of an ancient history of different groups of people living in the region of what is present day Nigeria located on the West African coast. Archeological findings reveal records of complex human activities dating back to 9000BC in eastern and south western Nigeria among the Nri people and Iwo Eleru (Falola and Heaton, 2008). Before the advent of British colonial rule, Nigeria comprised of different kingdoms ruled by powerful kings controlling large territories, of note: The Benin, Oyo, Sokoto, Opobo, Efik to mention a few. Other smaller ethnic groups also existed, independent of these large kingdoms. Unlike the early Russians who were united by common language and culture, early Nigerian kingdoms were decentralized; each kingdom having a separate language, religion and traditional practices. However commercial and in some cases, intercultural relations existed between some of these kingdoms; between others existed wars and border conflict.

Nigerian groups began contact with Europeans in the fifteenth century. Early contacts were for the purpose of trade in palm and peanut oil and precious stones. The development in agriculture especially in plantation farming in the United Kingdom and the United States created a dire need for massive human labour; the westerners now demanded a new commodity - human slaves. Many Nigerians were captured or sold as slaves to the west during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The UK amongst other countries grew in prominence as a trade partner on the Niger coast. The increasing influence of the British prepared ground for the arrival of Christian missionaries in 1841. The missionaries established church missions, hospitals and introduced western education especially in South-western and South-eastern Nigeria. The emergence of Nigerian journalists led to the publication of the first newspaper

Iwe Irohin in 1859. Iwe Irohin written in English and Yoruba was of a religious and political nature. Western education did not spread much in the north as the people were predominantly Muslim. The northerners had adopted Islam as a state religion from Arab traders. In 1808 it was enforced throughout Northern Nigeria by the Sokoto Empire.

With superior military might the British government launched its plan by capturing the city of Lagos in 1861 and declaring in part of Britain. In 1886 the British established a company called the Royal Niger Company (RNC). The RNC took over all trading activities along the Niger coast; any opposition to the company's activities was severely dealt with.

The British established indirect rule using the Kings and local chiefs as agents to collect tax from the people. Smaller percentage of this tax was used to develop some towns and cities. Towns like Lagos, Calabar and Benin which had strong British presence, received more attention with the establishment of schools, hospitals and churches. The greater percentage of the tax was spent on British interests.

In 1960 colonial rule ended with the British government's declaration of Nigeria's Independence. At independence Nigerian adopted a parliamentary system of government. Sir Abubakar Tafwa Balewa of the Nigerian People's Congress (NPC) was elected Nigeria's first prime minister. The northern Hausa-Fulani Muslim dominated NPC which held 134 of the 312 parliamentary seats, began secret schemes to ensure that power was only centered amongst the northerners. However this ethnicity based scheme did not go well with the Southern Nigeria Yoruba dominated party - Action Group (AG). The NPC soon began a new alignment with the Igbo Christian dominated part National Convention of Nigerian Citizens. The AG did not take kindly to these schemes in parliament. Ethnic based quarrels and even physical fights were common in parliament during this period of Nigeria's first republic.

The disunity in parliament coupled with electoral fraud in the 1966 elections inspired some young military officers from the south-east to overthrow the government, assassinate the prime minister and the King of Sokoto - A man revered by the northerners. All these were done to end the plans to "Northernize Nigeria;" it also marked the entry of the military in to Nigerian politics. The first military regime headed by General Auiyi- Ironsi was only the first amongst others which were to follow. In 1999 when the military decided to finally leave power; Nigeria had experienced 29 years of military dictatorship.

The discovery of crude oil in 1973 raised Nigeria to the status of an oil giant. Nigeria became rich and economic and infrastructural development grew. Several public and private media houses were established. However the immense wealth of the country was not managed properly as corruption and ethnicity grew stronger amongst the military rulers. General Sani Abacha (1943-1998) who took over power in 1993 was notably corrupt, embezzling millions of dollars and transferring them to foreign bank accounts. At Abacha's death and the end of the transitional government, Olusegun Obasanjo a retired military general from the south

(who had been in prison on suspicion for treason) was released and elected as civilian president of Nigeria in the 1999 elections.

During Obasanjo's administration the media industry received and elected a boost with the adoption of the 1999 constitution which upholds the freedom of expression and the press. Obasanjo expanded media privatization policies which resulted in an increase in the number of private media houses; the internet and mobile telephony were introduced.

The greatest nightmare of the current Jonathan led administration has been attacks by Boko Haram an extremist Islamic group, Boko Haram advocates for the end of western practices and the total "Islamization" of Nigeria. Bombings, kidnaps and killings of hundreds of Christians, journalists and government officials have become an almost weekly occurrence in Nigeria. Cities like Kano and Jos have become very dangerous places to live in. Some Nigerians hold that these attacks are politically motivated to obstruct the governance of President Jonathan who is a Christian from the minority south-south region of Nigeria.

The struggle between the media and the government continued in to civilian rule under Olusegun Obasanjo (from 1999 to 2007). Journalists investigating electoral fraud or cases of human rights abuses were frequently detained; many media houses were closed down. Newspapers such as Daily Independent, The News and The Observer were frequently raided by police during Obasanjo's first term on office. The police actions were said to be the result of critical publications about the government (Akinwale, 2010). Obasanjo's government was also notorious for delaying the Freedom of Information Bill. The freedom bill is targeted at granting the press more access to documents and records of government officials and institutions in a bid facilitating the work of investigate reporters. The bill is also targeted at protecting journalists from unnecessary legal prosecution. Obasanjo delayed this bill till the end of his tenure and eventual hand over to Umaru Yar'Adua in 2007.

Jonathan's administration as elected president which began in 2011, has given a huge boost to press work in Nigeria. The signing in to law of the Freedom of Information Act on May 28, 2011 has so far been his greatest effort to promoting press freedom. In recent years journalists and media houses have attacked.

### 3. HYPOTHESIS AND RESEARCH METHOD

#### 3.1. Hypothesis

H0: Political systems in Russia and Nigeria influence the current state of the media directly and indirectly.

H1: The press in contemporary Russia and Nigeria are in a difficult situation as government agents other religious and political groups apply legislative tactics and sometimes brutal force to repress and control them.

H2: Many Russian and Nigerian journalists have been forced in to self-censorship for fear of their lives.

#### 3.2. Research Method

Press freedom helps to strengthen democracy and is a strong indicator of national development. Measuring press freedom involves the collection and evaluation of data to ascertain the degree of freedom the press, media organizations and online communities enjoy in each country. The measurement will also involve the evaluation of efforts made by government officials to respect and ensure the respect for the freedom of the press. Measuring press freedom in countries is a huge and complicated task as it involves sourcing for the opinions of peoples of different location, language and profession. Some media scholars even argue that results from different studies conducted are uncertain because press freedom is in itself an uncertain concept; press freedom is understood differently by people even in democratic societies round the world (Holtz-Bacha, 2004). The measurement of press freedom in countries has so far been by indexing. Media organizations source for data, evaluate and form an index for assessing the level of each country's press freedom. Two media organizations which are internationally respected for their standards and assessment of the media are Reporters without Borders (RSF) and FH. Press freedom indexes by these two organizations are globally respected based on the methodology and resources put in to gather and evaluate data.

RSF relies on surveys by preparing a lengthy questionnaire comprising of 74 questions and six other sub-questions. These questions are centered on core areas of: Pluralism, media independence, environment and self-censorship, legislative framework, transparency and infrastructure. These questionnaires are then sent to 18 partner non-governmental organizations located in five continents, its 150 correspondents round the world as well as to journalists, jurists, researchers and human rights activists. A logarithmic formula is then used to weigh and score each country. The score range is from 0 to 100 with 0 as the best possible score and from 100 and below the worst. Apart from the questionnaire RSF goes further to assess the level of violence against journalists. The outcome is given a weight of 20%, factored in to the six criteria and affects the final score. RSF's current rankings cover 179 countries.

FH does not utilize questionnaires rather it relies on data sourced by its staff which travel round the world, professional contacts and findings from human rights and press organizations. To assess the level of press freedom, FH uses 23 methodology questions and 109 indicators in three categories assessing the legal, political and economic environment. A score of 0-30 places a country in the "free press group," 31-60 in the "partly free press group" and 61 to 100 and below in the "not free press group."

An attempt to carry out independent unfunded measurement of press freedom in a huge country like the Russian federation and a populous multi-ethnic and multilingual country like Nigeria will is not only difficult but also financially overwhelming and even daunting hence this research relies on summarizing and analyzing secondary data gathered from annual press indexes by RSF and FH. Rankings and scores by were extracted from annual indexes spanning a period of 10-year and summarized in to two tables. Data 1 for summarizes findings from RSF and Data 2 findings

from FH.

Datas 1 showing a summary of global ranking and scores of Nigeria and Russia from annual Press Freedom Indexes by Reporters without Borders for a 10-year period 2003 to 2013.

Datas 1 reveal a significant drop in Nigeria's press freedom from 49<sup>th</sup> position in 2003 to 103<sup>rd</sup> in 2004. Nigeria's press freedom index continued to drop steadily reaching its lowest position in 2011. Between 2012 and 2013 Nigeria has showed some improvement moving up to 115 in 2013. This is attributed to Nigeria's current policies to promote the freedom of the press especially the President Jonathan's signing of the Freedom of Information Act which grants investigative reporters more access to documents from government and institutions.

Russia's press index remains at low positions dropping year after year with 2010 recorded as the worst period in the past decade. An improvement came in 2011 then another decline in 2012 leaving Russia currently in position 148 in 2013.

Datas 2 showing a summary of annual global ranking and scores of Nigeria and Russia from annual Press Freedom Indexes by FH from 2003-2012.

Datas 2 reveal a steady decline in Nigeria's press freedom ranking from the 103<sup>rd</sup> position in 2003 to the 145<sup>th</sup> position in 2010. The years 2011 and 2012 witnessed an improvement which place Nigeria at the 126<sup>th</sup> position as of 2012. From the scores Nigeria has remained in the 'partly free press' group throughout the past decade. Russia's ranking has remains at low ebbs improving in 2005 then dropping to the lowest position in 2009. From the scores Russia has declined from being partly free in to the "Not Free Press" group. FH is yet to release its 2013 rankings.

#### 4. EVALUATION OF THE STUDY

Socio political situations both past and current are the main factors that the shape media systems in Russia and Nigeria. The transitions in the media sphere have been primarily the result of political change from communist and military rule to democratic governance. Each regime and government in the past 100 years has contributed its quota to developing the media. Media houses and outlets in Russia and Nigeria have greatly increased in numerical strength. However accessibility remains an issue due to the increasingly commercialized nature of the Russian and Nigerian media. As prices of newspapers, magazines, air time and internet rates rise, the citizens are continually "priced out" of the media.

As shown the summary of press freedom indexes, the press in Russia and Nigeria are in a difficult situation and thus not free, Russia's falling press index stems from continuous incidents of killings and the assault of journalists and politicians of dissent. The perpetrators of these assaults are scarcely ever found despite the Russian government's claims to putting serious efforts and resources in the investigation; a trend which continually puts the Russian government in suspicion of involvement in these crimes. 2010 and 2013 have been Russia's lowest years based on reports of

violence to journalists and political critics. Recently has been the case of Boris Berezovsky a strong critic of President Putin's who escaped to England on self-exile. Berezovsky was found dead on March 23, 2013 outside his home. Till date, the cause of his death is unknown; many suspect it is the work of Russian secret service. The continuous monitoring of the internet activities by security agents, police intimidation of online journalists and violent crackdown on peaceful demonstrations by opposition groups all contribute to Russia's current very poor press freedom record.

Nigeria has had a terrible past of gross violation of human rights and press freedom under the military and early civilian administrations. Although some efforts are being made by President Jonathan to promote press freedom, the past cannot be erased as bad records affect Nigeria's current press rankings. The signing in to law of the Freedom of Information Act is a welcome development in Nigeria but the worrisome issue is whether this new press law will ever be respected or implemented? The issue of implementation of press freedom laws is serious issue for concern in Nigeria and Russia. Laws which protect the press only remain on the pages of the constitution, never to be implemented. In recent years attacks on the press in Nigeria have mostly been by Boko Haram who have bombed media houses and killed many journalists for investigating and reporting their activities. The bombing of two offices of This Day newspapers in Abuja and Kaduna in May, 2012 was one of Boko Haram's tactics to frustrate the work of the press in Nigeria.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

The press is regarded as the 4<sup>th</sup> estate of government and performs a surveillance role in society. Critical independence, democratic constructiveness and commercial viability of are features which make the press unique. The press helps to draw government's attention to issues affecting the people; thereby helping the leaders to tailor their policies and programmes to meet the public's needs. Contrary to expectation, the press is often regarded as an enemy rather than a partner in good governance. Political leaders seem to be in perpetual fear of the press. The ability of the press to mobilize the people to action against government's injustices informs the censorship and repression the press suffers in many countries.

Political leaders need to recognize that it is the role of the press to set the stage for public discourse on popular issues. An administration which does not welcome public opinion is not serving the public's interest. As Russia and Nigeria look forward to a bright future of greater socio-economic growth and better international recognition, more efforts need to be put to implement laws which promote the freedom of the press.

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