

Global Communications

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The Image of Africa in Ghana's Press

The Influence of Global News
Organisations





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5. Portrayal of Africa

Results of Ethnographic Content Analysis

This chapter presents the results of the ethnographic content analysis (ECA), which relates to the four selected newspapers. The weight of influence, dominant themes of portrayal and the subject and tone of the coverage of Africa in Ghanaian newspapers were determined. The quantitative weight of influence individual transnational news agencies carried as a source were analysed, one newspaper after the other, before moving the analysis to the aggregate level where the influence of international news agencies as a whole were discussed. The results of the ECA and ethnographic interview (EI) are reported in this chapter and the next; while the synergies are discussed in the final chapter. The motivation to combine results of both the ECA and EI is to strengthen and offset each approach's weaknesses. After all, the EI was developed with results and insights from the initial ECA to comprehensively uncover the reasoning behind the coverage of Africa from the journalists' perspective and newsroom setup. This allows the findings and conclusions of the study to fit together as a whole.

Quantitative Influence of International News Agencies

The weight of influence (quantitative) international news agencies carry as a source in the selected Ghanaian press individually and collectively were analysed using content analysis. *The Daily Graphic* newspaper dedicated the highest number of pages to foreign news — usually between two to three pages on a daily basis, except when the newspaper was oversubscribed with advertising, and except on Sundays, when no edition is produced. For a period of two years the paper published

4,287 foreign news articles in total. Table 5.1 provides details of the international news agencies these articles were sourced to:

Table 5.1 Sources of foreign news in *The Daily Graphic*

Sources	Articles	Percentage (%)
BBC World Service	2,517	58.70
AP	636	14.85
AFP	339	7.91
Xinhua	231	5.39
Reuters	221	5.16
Others	127	2.96
Own Reporters	107	2.49
Unsourced	106	2.47
CNN	3	0.07
Total	4,287	100

Source: field data (2015).

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC World Service) remains the most cited source over the two-year period. *The Daily Graphic* newspaper which had the highest number of news articles relied on the BBC with over 58% of its foreign news sourced to the British broadcaster. This newspaper’s manner of selection of foreign news, which was positively skewed towards the BBC, also demonstrated a low level of diversity.

The inadequate diversity is visible in the number of articles sourced to the category of Others, which involved many other international news agencies apart from the ones that made it onto the code sheet. The elite ideology of this newspaper is magnified once more by its reliance on just a few well-known international news agencies, such as the BBC, Associated Press (AP), Reuters, Agence France-Press (AFP) and, more recently, Xinhua News Agency. Apart from the BBC and AP, which were more influential than the Xinhua News Agency, the likes of Reuters, Cable News Network (CNN) and Al Jazeera did not compete well with the Chinese news agency. The Chinese Xinhua News Agency joined the race for the quantitative influence just a little over decade ago, and produced a performance below AP and AFP but slightly above Reuters, CNN and Al Jazeera. CNN performed very poorly in this newspaper

as a source. The category of *own reporter/correspondent* includes stories sourced to *The Daily Graphic* reporters or correspondents, both home and abroad, which were indicated in the byline as such. This category was dominated by stories mostly written by Ebo Godwin in Togo about that country's democratic struggles. The second influential set of stories related to the coverage of press conferences on the North China Sea crisis between China and Japan.

Another important category noticed in most previous foreign news studies was Unsourced. This included stories that had no author indications, no source quoted and no attributions cited. Considering the professional pedigree within which *The Daily Graphic* operates, 106 unsourced news stories, especially when compared with the other smaller circulating newspapers, is surprisingly high. It is useful, although, to state that this phenomenon started from mid-2013 onwards. Beginning in this period, the newspaper had a major change in design and outlook that turned *bylines* into names of cities where events took place. The page editor also decided that stories written by her would not bear her name.

The *Ghanaian Times* newspaper dedicated two pages on a daily basis to foreign news coverage, and recorded a total of 3,761 articles over the course of the period.

Table 5.2 provides details on how these articles were sourced:

Table 5.2 Sources of foreign news in the *Ghanaian Times*

Sources	Articles	Percentage (%)
BBC World	2,535	67.40
Xinhua	486	12.92
Reuters	324	8.61
Others	118	3.14
AP	71	1.89
Own Reporter	66	1.76
AFP	63	1.68
CNN	58	1.54
Unsourced	40	1.06
Total	3,761	100

Source: field data (2015).

The BBC remains the most cited source over the period also in the *Ghanaian Times*, providing the sources for 67.4% of all foreign news. The *Ghanaian Times* newspaper had increased diversity in the way it sourced foreign news, considering how individual constituents performed in Table 5.2. The diversity could be described as better, in comparative terms, than what exists in *The Daily Graphic*. The Others category came in fourth position in the ranking with over 3%, which indicates a slight improvement when compared with *The Daily Graphic*, although the performance of the BBC alone skyrocketed, with over 67%. The *Ghanaian Times* uses Xinhua News Agency as a source twice as much as *The Daily Graphic* does, even though both newspapers have a similar agreement with the Chinese news agency. Linked to its historical formation, the *Ghanaian Times* regularly recognises its reliance on the Northern media organisation as a failure inconsistent with its mandate as a Pan-African newspaper. They are always seeking avenues through which to diversify their sources of foreign news. But until the present day, characterising the *Ghanaian Times* as a Pan-African newspaper is inaccurate, considering their current reliance on foreign news agencies. The Chinese Xinhua News Agency is the second most influential source, with a performance above AP, Reuters and AFP. The category of Own Reporter includes stories sourced to reporters and correspondents at the *Ghanaian Times*, both home and abroad. This category of source was, as in *The Daily Graphic*, dominated by press conference coverage of the North China Sea crisis between China and Japan. The newspaper appeared to be the platform where the media battle between China and Japan (regarding the North China sea) was fought in Ghana. The *Ghanaian Times* also recorded the lowest number of Unsourced news stories. Even the few cases counted as unsourced news were marked as such due to issues clearly relating to unavailability of space on the bottom print margin, and these cases were usually indicative of a normal printing error.

Reuters became the third most cited foreign news source, performing better than AP, AFP and CNN. The *Ghanaian Times* newspaper held Reuters in a similar level of respect comparable to the BBC World Service. That is why it was even surprising to see Xinhua beyond Reuters. CNN, for the second time, performed poorly as a source of foreign news, which makes it clear that the two public newspapers in

Ghana do not rely on the work of the American broadcaster. The CNN effect, which is explained as the American international broadcaster's dominance on foreign policy discourse in the States and in the media in other countries, cannot be upheld here. The category of Own Reporter in the *Ghanaian Times* also constitutes less than 2% of the newspaper's total news articles over two years. This shows high level of dependency on others international media organisations.

The Ghanaian Chronicle dedicated one page, and occasionally two pages, per newspaper for the type of foreign news that fell within the scope of this study. The paper recorded 2,317 articles for the two-year period, making their coverage the fourth highest among the selected newspapers. Table 5.3 provides details on which transnational news agency sources constituted the coverage.

Table 5.3 Sources of foreign news in *The Ghanaian Chronicle*

Sources	Articles	Percentage (%)
BBC World	1,314	56.71
Others	636	27.50
CNN	250	10.79
Unsources	41	1.77
AFP	33	1.41
Own Reporter	26	1.12
AP	10	0.40
Reuters	7	0.30
Xinhua	0	0
Total	2,317	100

Source: field data (2015).

The *Chronicle* is rather unique in their reliance on foreign news organisations as source. Although, like the other newspapers, the Own Reporter category is as strikingly low as less than 2%, they demonstrated a higher level of diversity in their sourcing of foreign news. The source category of Others represents all other foreign news organisations other than the ones listed on the code sheet. In essence, they most frequently used other major news organisations than any other newspaper in the sample for this study. However about 50% of this figure (636) came from

Al Jazeera alone. Just like the *Ghanaian Times*, the Chronicle newspaper cited the source of most of their stories except in cases where there was not enough space at the bottom of the newspaper for citing sources. However, there was no single story sourced to Xinhua News Agency and yet the *other* category was the second highest. This shows that their diversity was widespread. CNN recorded 10.79% as the source of the coverage at a third position. This meant that apart from the BBC, CNN was the next single most cited foreign news agency in this newspaper. This is sharply different from what was recorded in the two public newspapers. Although the BBC was the most cited in this newspaper, just like the two previous ones, the percentage lead dropped a little below the two others for the first time. This further strengthens this diversity in the newspaper's foreign news selection. The BBC was the most cited, though followed by the Others category. CNN came third, while Reuters performed poorly with just seven articles at the seventh position.

The *Daily Guide* newspaper recorded 2,863 foreign news articles published within the two-year period, making this newspaper the third highest in terms of its reliance on foreign news articles as sources. Unfortunately, this newspaper recorded the highest percentage of unsourced news stories — with 13.97% constituting the Unsourced category. Table 5.4 presents further details:

Table 5.4 Sources of foreign news in the *Daily Guide*

Sources	Articles	Percentage (%)
BBC World	1,354	47.29
Others	523	18.27
Unsourced	400	13.97
AP	237	8.28
CNN	220	7.68
Own Reporter	54	1.89
Reuters	39	1.36
AFP	36	1.26
Xinhua	0	0
Total	2,863	100

Source: field data (2015).

The BBC World Service stayed on top with 47.9% of the foreign news carried in the *Daily Guide* — the lowest percentage lead among the four newspapers. Again, the Chinese Xinhua News Agency scored zero in the second private newspaper. The dazzling performance witnessed in the public newspapers so far from the Xinhua News Agency as a source of foreign news in Ghana cannot be extended to the private press. The *Daily Guide* is also the second most diversified newspaper when it comes to sources. The source category of Others recorded 18% of the total news articles for the period under review. AP and CNN recorded modest percentages of 8 and 7 compared to the less than 2% recorded by Reuters, AFP and Own Reporters.

Having outlined the peculiar situations of each newspaper, I proceed now to present the aggregate quantitative view of how the international news agencies competed among themselves as sources for Ghanaian newspapers. The aggregate overview looks a little different from the peculiar trends in the single newspaper analysis. Table 5.5 presents these further details:

Table 5.5 Overview of sources of foreign news in the Ghanaian press

Sources	Articles	Percentage (%)
BBC World	7,720	58.36
Others	1404	10.61
AP	954	7.21
Xinhua	717	5.42
Reuters	591	4.47
Unsourcesd	587	4.44
CNN	531	4.01
AFP	471	3.56
Own Reporter	253	1.91
Total	13,228	100

Source: author (2019).

The BBC World Service remains the single most cited source for foreign news in Ghana. AP comes second as the single most cited foreign news source, followed by Xinhua News Agency as the third single most cited for foreign news in Ghana; the Chinese news agency which roughly a

decade ago did not have substantial influence emerges here as a strong contender. It is important to note that Xinhua’s aggregate performance is slightly above Reuters, AFP and CNN and this influence is in the two most circulating newspapers in Ghana, which are also public newspapers. The use of own reporters and correspondents in covering foreign news in Ghana is less than 2% of the total foreign news articles over the period under study, which signals a sweeping dependence on foreign news organisations. This Own Reporter category also includes Ghana news agency articles. It is crucial to note that unsourced foreign news in the Ghanaian press is not widespread because it largely related to either issues with design or one single newspaper contributing more than 68% of the total error. Table 5.6 shows the composition of unsourced foreign news among the four newspapers.

Table 5.6 Composition of unsourced foreign news

Newspapers	Unsourced news	Percentage (%)
<i>Daily Guide</i>	400	68.14
<i>The Daily Graphic</i>	106	18.07
<i>Ghanaian Times</i>	40	6.81
<i>The Ghanaian Chronicle</i>	41	6.98
Total	587	100

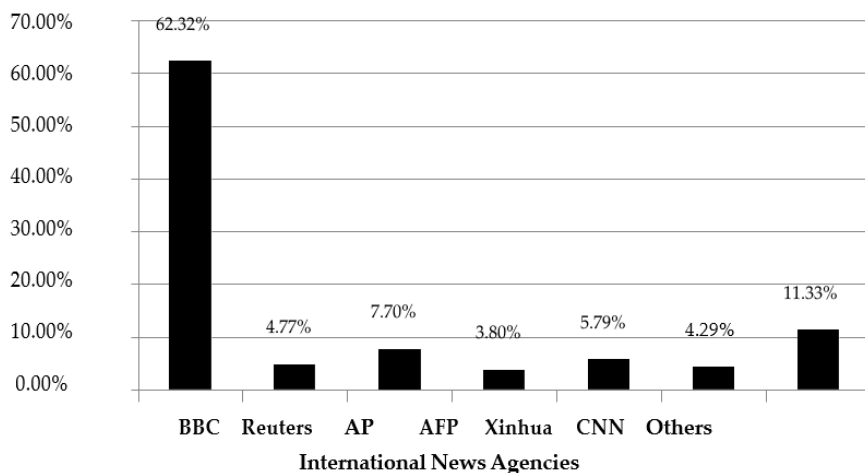
Source: field data (2015).

If it weren’t for the new design of *The Daily Graphic* and the printing errors in the *Ghanaian Times* and *The Ghanaian Chronicle*, unsourced news would have been completely a *Daily Guide* affair and would have not even warranted a mention in this research. But as it is now, unsourced news, which signals poor professionalism, seems to be an issue in the Ghanaian press that warrants a discussion. It is difficult to believe that writing the African story can be such a speculative enterprise with no real sources cited.

To determine the influence each international news agency carried as a source in the Ghanaian newspaper means determining how these foreign news agencies competed among themselves. In this analysis, news cited to the category of Own Reporter and Unsourced foreign news will be taken out of the equation. Figure 5.1 demonstrates the weight

of influence carried by each international news agency as a source as against each other.

Fig. 5.1 Weight of influence of international news agencies (100% = 12,388)



Source: author (2018).

Comparing the performance of international news agencies among themselves meant eliminating the categories of Unsourced and Own Reporter before recalculating the percentages. In such an analysis, the influence of the BBC rises sharply to 62.32%. All the other international news agencies recorded marginal increases in their percentage figure, but the BBC, in particular, recorded a higher increment due to its already high proportional influence among all the four newspapers.

Overview of Africa's Coverage

Having established the international news agencies exerting an influence on how the Ghanaian press reported the continent, this section examines the nature of Africa's portrayal in the Ghanaian press with a focus on the subjects and tone of coverage and the dominant themes of representation. The overarching research question of how Africa was portrayed in the Ghanaian press was answered using sub-questions regarding dominant themes, subjects and tone through which

the African stories were narrated. The second and third parts of this chapter present the analysis relating strictly to the ethnographic content analysis, which relied on news articles that were selected from the four newspapers.

Subjects of Coverage

The first issue concerning the coverage of Africa in the Ghanaian press is the topics/story types/subjects that received the most coverage. It could be argued that the press’s concentration on political reports, as shown in Table 5.7, has rendered a bigger part of the coverage negative since political reports focus on figures of casualties of political conflicts, disagreement of parties, corruption and war. The bias against reporting on history, economy and cultural stories equally indicated the narrow view that was given to many of the things happening on the continent. Mostly, reports were superficial in focus and often written with comparative reference to European democracies. Table 5.7 shows the statistics of the subjects covered:

Table 5.7 Composition of subjects covered on Africa in the Ghanaian Press

Category	Articles	Percentage (%)
Politics	130	72
Social	13	7
Economy	12	7
Personality	9	5
Cultural	8	4
Disaster	6	3
History	2	1
Total	180	100

Source: author (2019).

The two stories relating to history over the two-year period were about Egypt. Personality related stories did not mention a single African celebrity, except political leaders. The eight stories categorised under culture were also not entirely positive. The *Africa rising* discourse,

which has been very much discussed in the current literature, requires contextualisation. First, this discourse became prominent when developed economies were hit by financial crisis. As a result, investors needed new markets for their resources. Second, describing Africa as the next business destination does not necessarily resolve the prevailingly negative media image of Africa imprinted in people’s minds for years. Economic and social issues in Africa simply did not receive sufficient reportage in the Ghanaian press; even the few stories that were reported in the Northern media organisations were not repeated in the Ghanaian press.

Tone/Quality of Coverage

The coverage of African countries in the selected Ghanaian press was not different from the negative portrayals that existed in literature about the continent from their Western counterparts. Table 5.8 presents the overview of the tonal coverage of Africa, as per the definitions of Chaudhary (2001, pp. 33–34) and the frameworks set out in this study to identify the tone.

Table 5.8 Tone/quality of coverage of Africa in the Ghanaian press

Tone of Stories	Total	Percentage (%)
Positive	27	15
Neutral	9	5
Negative	144	80
Total	180	100

Source: author (2018).

80% of stories relating to Africa were negative in nature or belonged to the *Afro-pessimism* discourse. They reported crisis, war, famine and regional political disputes but ignored improvements in these conditions. When considering angles that were excluded from the reports were also never covered in a positive light within this period — for example, the reconciliation of Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto. The stories that related to them mostly concentrated on their trial at the International Criminal Court (ICC) and its implications for their victory as President

and Vice-president. The positive news articles discussed related to Nelson Mandela in hospital, and Kenya’s unity and independence celebrations. Others included appointments of Africans to some eminent United Nations positions.

Dominant Themes

In this sub-section, I deconstruct the dominant themes used by the Ghanaian press in the coverage of Africa through a close engagement with and interpretation of the news articles. Themes are broader than subjects and contain two to three subjects that communicate some ideas beyond individual subjects (see Stevenson, 1984).

The foreign news articles were extensively coded using both inductive and deductive approaches. The 180 foreign news articles selected from the four newspapers were coded all together 359 times. These codes were linked and grouped to reduce the data to manageable size. In all, ten dominant themes were deconstructed with their corresponding frequency and percentages. The total amount of the coded segment of the articles was as well calculated to provide some descriptive view of the intensity of coding as shown in Table 5.9.

Table 5.9 Frequency of dominant themes, from January 2011 to December 2013

Dominant Themes	Frequency	Percentage (%)
War, Crime and Killing	114	31.75
Crises	95	26.46
Terrorism	45	12.53
Colonial Memory	23	6.41
Democracy and Lack of Press Freedom	18	5.01
Irresponsibility	15	4.18
Development and Progress	14	3.90
Diseases and Disaster	13	3.62
Human Rights, Women and Child Abuse	12	3.34
Unrelated Negative Context	10	2.79
Total	359	100

Source: field data (2015).

These themes were discussed in line with the research objective.

Theme of War, Crime and Killing

This theme included reports of war and fighting, trials and discourses surrounding war crimes, abduction and ransom cases, issues relating to drugs and religious intolerance and its consequent crimes. Where the crimes resulted in killings, the deaths were initially coded as *killing* and later combined with the categories *war* and *crime* due to the blurred nature of these three categories. The theme of *war, crime and killing* represents the most dominant theme through which Africa was portrayed. It is also the most consistent theme, and easy to identify throughout the coding process. That is, much of its attributes were readily manifest. The rampant use of words such as “civil war”, “killed”, “death”, “fierce fighting”, “fleeing from war crimes”, etc., was visible in all the four newspapers. Examples of some coded segments are as follows:

THIRTEEN South African soldiers were killed in the Central African Republic as rebels seized the capital over the weekend, President Jacob Zuma has said (*Daily Guide*).

MORE THAN 100 people are confirmed dead in fierce fighting on Thursday in the capital of the Central African Republic (CAR), Bangui, UN officials say (*The Daily Graphic*).

Population of a town in eastern democratic Republic of Congo hustling between government rebel forces, residents say. BBC’s Ignatius Bahizi, who is on the Ugandan side of the town, says missiles are being fired, killing people. Many people have left their homes since the conflict began in March 2012 (*Ghanaian Times*).

Two schools were attacked at the weekend, with at least 16 students and two teachers killed. Military spokesman Lt Col Sagir Musa said the militants behind those attacks had used satellite phones to militants following recent attacks (*The Ghanaian Chronicle*).

Apart from these examples which covered war, war crimes and killings generally, there were other stories that related to crimes of piracy along the West African coast and issues of hard drugs.

Using the postcolonial theory demands the questioning and reframing of the portrayal by these news articles regarding not only what was written, but also what was ignored/omitted from the reporting. Significant in this category of omission is the fact that in all

these articles which related to the theme of war, crimes and killings, no article assessed the improvements of any of these wars on the continent. The impression was therefore given that no such improvements existed in these situations. The lack of articles discussing improvements on the continent with regards to this theme remains problematic not only because such stories were ignored but also due to the fact that the prominence given to fighting when it erupts is not replicated when progress is made. What was common was that war, fighting and killings became contextual elements for future stories about these countries. This phenomenon will be further discussed under the theme of *negative context*. This contextual background that countries on the continent get tagged with mean that they cannot ever be free from their past. The dominance of the contextual background in many stories gives the impression that the contextual background is pertinent to the present story, framing it as an evolving story, even though the negative context relates to events that happened decades ago.

Theme of Crises

This is the second most widely used theme in telling the African story. Subcategories coded under this theme included: economic crisis, political crisis, regional crisis, refugee crisis, migration crises, controversies, corruption and power-drunk leadership. Significant within this theme is political crisis on the continent, especially in Egypt, Zimbabwe and a few dotted cases in Central Africa. This is because much of the fighting going on in Central Africa was constructed as regional crisis and coded as such in this study. Other important regional crises in this category included Kenya–Somalia conflicts and Sudan–South Sudan conflicts. The flow of refugees within Central and Eastern Africa were covered, especially that of Kenya and Ethiopia hosting Somali refugees. Corruption was described as an unending crisis in some of the articles.

It is factual that the crises in Central Africa have gone on for decades with substantial casualty figures. The news reports highlighted much of the escalation and possible talks to ending the crises. However, the prominence received by the escalations was not equal to attempts at reporting possible negotiations. Also, due to the frequent failure of negotiations and deals, new attempts at peace negotiations were

trivialised by the journalists. This act of trivialising attempts at peace making paints a picture of unending crisis. These are examples of coded segments regarding this theme:

THE signing of an agreement to end the crisis in Mali is likely to delay due to the absence of the rival parties to talks in Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso, according to officials close to the negotiations (*The Daily Graphic*).

THE Rwandan President Paul Kagame say the UN peacekeeping force in the Democratic Republic of Congo has “in some cases” made the crises worse (*Daily Guide*).

SEVENTY generals in the Egyptian armed forces are to be retired, the government has announced. The move comes weeks after President Mohammed Mursi replaced the defence minister and the chief of staff (*Ghanaian Times*).

Journalistic news has such a rudimentary structure that must be followed in a manner that journalists can hardly dissent from. Crisis reporting lends itself more to this rudimentary structure and even though journalists could dig deeper to the root causes of crises, they rarely do it. This leaves most reports on crises hanging on the day or week the event occurred. Apart from the fixed mechanical structure of these news articles, they occupy the journalists only when there is fierce violence or discord. As such, improvements get removed from the agenda not by volition of the journalist but due to their adherence to the profession's ideology.

Theme of Development and Progress

This theme was consciously created to make room for positive reporting because it is natural to assume that there would be a good amount of developmental and progressive stories, especially in the era of *Africa rising discourse*. Subcategories earmarked for coding under this theme included discoveries, positive African heroes, growth and development, and balanced stories with developmental agenda. There was one discovery story and one *balanced* story. The majority of the stories here related to Nelson Mandela of South Africa. There were also three development and growth-oriented stories. Significant among

these was the \$64.3 million loan facility from Botswana to Zimbabwe that was reported on the website of NewZimbabwe.com. The other positive story was reported by Xinhua News Agency and it was related to the Chinese President's commitment to support Tanzania in her development agenda due to that country's recent progress. Reuters reported the last progress-oriented story which announced the increase in oil production by Libya as a result of stability in the country. However, that story ended with the negative context of the Benghazi attack on the US Embassy that killed four people. The following include examples of coded segments:

ZIMBABWE'S Finance Minister Tendai Biti, on Monday, said more than \$20 billion was needed for infrastructural projects such as road and rail networks and to fully kick-start the re-emerging mining industry. "The thirst for capital in our country is huge and high," Biti said at a ceremony to unveil a 500-million pula (64.3 million US dollars) credit facility from Botswana (*The Ghanaian Chronicle*).

NIGERIAN AGRICULTURE Minister Akinwumi Adesina has been named Forbes African of the Year for his reforms to the country's farming sector. "He is a man on a mission to help Africa feed itself," said Forbes Africa editor Chris Bishop (*Daily Guide*).

The subcategories captured under this theme did not necessarily paint a very positive picture but carried some optimism that crises and challenges would end. Generally, these stories were non-existent or were too limited to paint a holistically positive picture of the continent:

Government efforts and preparedness will be further enhanced to ensure the security of lives and property of all Nigerians, irrespective of their locations within the country. On the issue of intelligence gathering, the presidential aide said: "The government has acquired and deployed highly sophisticated security equipment," adding that members of the security agencies have received and continued to receive adequate training "such that our intelligence gathering capacity have witnessed a monumental increase in capacity to gather information" (*The Daily Graphic*).

Throughout the entire period of the study, this was the only message of reassurance and hope carried in the Ghanaian press regarding the efforts of Goodluck Jonathan's government to fight back the Boko Haram insurgency. All the efforts at fighting the insurgency were not

reported as such. They were mostly questioned and trivialised, making it look as if Nigeria was incapable of handling the Islamist insurgency.

Theme of Human Rights, Women and Child Abuse

The subcategories of this theme include human rights abuse, in general, and abuse of women and children in particular. These were some of the deductive subcategories that I started coding with. However, not many of the news articles on Africa were narrated using these themes. The stories coded here involved executions, court judgement that promoted abuse of people's rights in authoritarian states and abuse of women and children particularly. Abuses that resulted in "killings" were coded twice. These are some of the illustrations of coded segments:

GAMBIA has defended the execution of nine death-row prisoners amid a chorus of condemnation led by the United Nations (*Daily Guide*).

CAMPAIGNERS in Egypt say the problem of sexual harassment is reaching epidemic proportions, with a rise in such incidents over the past three months. For many Egyptian women, sexual harassment — which sometimes turns into violent mob-style attacks — is a daily fact of life. Last winter, an Egyptian woman was assaulted by a crowd of men in the city of Alexandria (*Ghanaian Times*).

The news articles of the entire period failed to report on any positive developments either effected by women and children, or done to/for them. It does not give the sense of any normal child development on the continent, nor of women doing anything noteworthy. All the news articles framed women and children as victims.

Theme of Democracy

This theme contained both positive and negative coverage of the continent. It dealt with issues such as peaceful and non-peaceful elections on the continent, and assessments of the reasons why most sitting African presidents die. Other issues included lack of general freedom, lack of press freedom, military take-overs, leadership challenges and sanctions against countries like Zimbabwe. One particular story read under this theme discussed four countries (Zambia, Malawi, Ghana and Nigeria); this story presented an example of negative reporting on

the theme of democracy in Africa, since in attempting to discuss these four countries together, it perpetuated the error of generalisation and homogenisation. In Ghana, the death of President John Evans Atta Mills and the constitutional succession did not involve any violence or dispute. This was also the case in Nigeria for Umaru Musa Yar'Adua. However, the analysis in question ignored these two successes and put them together with Zambia and Malawi simply because all four countries lost a ruling president:

In Zambia, in Malawi and Ghana and in Nigeria, the death of the presidents was followed by a constitutional succession with a minimum of violence and dispute, and I think this is a very encouraging sign for Africa's development (*Ghanaian Times*).

While this is intended as a positive assessment, it nonetheless is not entirely positive since there is a significant difference between minimum violence and complete absence of violence, as was the case in both Ghana and Nigeria. Several other issues discussed here pointed to press freedom as a sign of good democracy. The following is illustrative of some of the coded segments:

KENYA'S MEDIA has expressed outrage after-parliament approved a bill imposing regulation on, Journalists. In a late-night sitting on Thursday, MPs voted to set lip a communications tribunal with the power to impose fines for breaching a code of conduct (*The Daily Graphic*).

In this quote, the capacity of Members of Parliament to discuss a law that limits press freedom in a late-night sitting is doubted. However, there are usually several reasons why parliamentary debates run into the night. These include overloaded agenda, late commencement of sessions and many others. But the two feature stories on Kenya and Uganda made no room for such possibilities or mentioned them even in passing.

None of the articles provided explanation for why press freedom is quite problematic in some African states, most of whom are either in transition, transformation or crises. That background information would have been useful because most of the stabilised countries on the continent have decent press freedom records. The idea which required explication was whether press freedom was an ideal element to measure

countries in crises. Answers to such questions were rarely given in the stories.

Theme of Colonial Memory

Stories coded under this theme invoked colonial memories in a largely negative way. The issues covered in such stories included harmful histories of the continent, and stereotypical depictions of the continent as the haven of wild animals and a deposit of natural resources. Some other articles portrayed the continent as donor-dependent, usually waiting on saviours from the Northern Hemisphere. A replay of colonial history, and its accompanying discourses and sentiments, has not invoked the necessary guilt in the colonisers; rather it has accorded them a space of superiority. The peculiar case of Mau Mau fighters in Kenya was reported with the announcement of reparations by the British foreign secretary at the time.

Colonial demarcations of natural resources and boundaries have remained a real worry for most Africa nations. The specific cases reported were in Ethiopia, Egypt, Sudan and the Nile:

In June, UK Foreign Secretary William Hague said Kenya's Mau Mau fighters would receive payouts totalling \$32m (£20m) as compensation for being tortured during colonial rule. Mr. Kenyatta said it was important for foreign powers to realise that Africa had come of age and needed respect and fairness in trade not reparation (*Ghanaian Times*).

FIRST reinforcements to French force in the Central Africa Republic (CAR) are in a bid to restore peace after a rebel takeover. Mainly 200 troops have deployed, with another 500 imminently following former rebel forces who have reportedly been leaving the capital, Bangui, as the troops arrived (*The Daily Graphic*).

The fact that Western countries threaten to freeze aid to countries that have anti-homosexual laws is indicative of the fact that those countries are practically unable to run without aid and would be forced to repel those laws.

Theme of Terrorism

This theme is an extension of the theme of *war, crime and killings*. It is defined as the total deaths resulting from terrorism and terrorist activities in general. It is the third most dominant theme because of the activities of Boko Haram in Nigeria and Al-Shabaab in Somalia and Kenya. Killings resulting from these extremist Islamist groups were coded forty-five times under this theme. Terrorism activities in Southern Libya and Mali were also reported. The most outrageous notion depicted under this theme was that the involvement of Boko Haram in Cameroon and Chad meant that the continent was seriously threatened by activities of Islamists. There are fifty-four countries on the African continent, spread across a vast space of land, and it is difficult to agree with the notion that an activity in Nigeria which has been successful confronted in two neighbouring countries, Chad and Cameroon, threatens the entire continent. These are some extracts of the coded segments:

RADICAL Islamists in control of northern Mali are becoming "increasingly repressive," Amputating limbs, whipping people in the streets and stoning to death a couple accused of adultery, a human rights group says (*Daily Guide*).

Mali has been in disarray for much of the year. Islamist and Tuareg separatists seized control of the north of the country and discontented soldiers staged a coup after the civilian administration was unable to regain control of all of the country (*Ghanaian Times*).

Boko Haram militia has been blamed for a series of deadly attacks in recent years. THE US has designated Nigeria's Boko Haram and Ansaru militant groups as foreign terrorist organisations. The state department described the move as "an important" step to help Nigeria "root out violent extremism". It means US regulatory agencies are instructed to block business and financial transactions with the groups (*The Ghanaian Chronicle*).

Terrorism has a global character, with examples of its activities all over the world. The global nature of the phenomenon was not discussed. The articles rather related terrorism on the continent to poverty, failed governments and corruption. It took the United States of America, for instance, a lot of time to consider Boko Haram as a terrorist group. Until

this happened, some of the articles constructed the insurgency as a fight for better living.

Theme of Poverty, Disease and Disaster

This is one of the deductive themes with which I started coding. Items coded here included natural disasters, poverty and diseases such as HIV/AIDs and the six killer diseases in Africa. The data revealed that these were not popular themes of representation under which the African story was narrated. It is however imperative to state that diseases and disasters are opportunistic issues — they are reported as and when they happen. Assuming that a major disaster or disease outbreak had happened during the period under review, the study would have recorded significant amount of these stories. In the case of poverty, newspaper articles do not report on this theme as much as TV and online reportage does. Poverty in Africa was not significantly reported in these newspapers. The omission of articles dealing with either millennium development goals (which later became sustainable development goals) in Africa was not surprising either because these type of news stories do not feature even in the international news agencies themselves. And when the items are not in the international press, then it is likely they will not be in the Ghanaian press, because the latter depends largely on the Northern media organisations for the coverage of the continent. The following are some of the coded segments:

SOMALIA'S GOVERNMENT has declared the north-eastern region of Puntland hit by a tropical cyclone at the weekend a disaster area (*Ghanaian Times*).

Rescue operations became more difficult after night fell, South Africa mall roof collapse traps dozens. TWO PEOPLE have died and about 40 are feared trapped after a roof collapsed at the construction site of a South African shopping mall, paramedics (*Daily Guide*).

SENEGAL'S President Macky Sail's called for the country's Senate to be abolished, with the money saved going for flood relief. Although the low-lying suburbs of the capital, Dakar, flood during most rainy seasons, this year has seen exceptionally high rainfall across West Africa. It is estimated that thousands of people have been left homeless (*The Daily Graphic*).

Accidents that were a result of unforeseen natural disaster were coded under this theme. Findings from government investigations regarding disaster were not cited throughout the coding. Whenever the findings were referred to, they were mainly cited as not credible. Evolving stories attracted attention only when bloodshed or casualties continued.

Themes of Irresponsibility and Negative Context

These two themes revealed by the data were inductively coded and represent instances when actions and decisions of African authorities were described as examples of irresponsible governance, indiscipline, lavish spending, destruction and misuse of state properties without any context. Some protests were constructed as the failure of African governments to improve the living standards of their people. Other stories also imputed a lack of responsible behaviour in ensuring the security of citizens of African nations. Kenyan authorities were accused of ignoring security information offered them before the Westgate mall attack by Al-Shabaab. Therefore, in the heat of the attack, where news reports needed to show solidarity to the people of Kenya and victims' families, they were heavily engrossed in a blame game. The second part of this theme concentrated on the use of past negative events as context to almost every new news article. In providing a context for a story, past negatives were recounted, thereby detracting from the positive elements of the story. This runs through other positive stories within other themes.

Comparing the Coverage of the Ghanaian Press to their Western Counterparts

Afro-pessimism in the Western media has been researched in various studies. Two such studies that have attracted my attention include the work of Beverly Hawk in 1992 titled *Africa's Media Image* and a near replication of Hawk's work recently published by Mel Bunce et al. (2017) under the title, *Africa's Media Image in the 21st Century*. These two publications had two compelling strengths. First, they provided a longitudinal view of Africa's coverage in the Western media which

span from 1992 to 2017. Second, the collaboration between journalism scholars and practitioners gave a good balance of theory and practice within this area of research. In this section, I offer a comparison of the coverage of Africa in the Western press, as per longitudinal comparison outlined in Bunce et al. (2017), to what exists in the Ghanaian press. My study is not a replication of either Hawk (1992) or Bunce et al. (2017) and therefore I proceed with the comparison based on caution and with a clear statement of what is comparable and what is not. By these rationalisations, I established the basis for my comparison.

A clear limitation to statistical comparison exists because of differences in study design, structure and periods. Sample sizes and conceptualisation of international news agencies are equally different. In my study, international news agencies referred to all traditional international news agencies (AP, Reuters and AFP etc.) plus international broadcasting media organisations (BBC, CNN, etc.) and their online platforms, and any non-Ghanaian media organisation that was provided as the source for foreign news in the selected Ghanaian newspaper. This conceptualisation was very much guided by what existed in coverage. Apart from statistical comparison, there are other forms of qualitative comparisons that could be made from the conclusion of those two studies in relation to the research topic under investigation. Bunce et al. (2017) selected Ghana as one of its country samples. The international news agencies used in Bunce et al. are covered in my research as well. Both publications used content analysis to determine the subject and tone of the coverage.

The overreaching objective of their research and mine relates to the evolution of *Afro-pessimism* in the Western press either over time or geographical spread. This comparison is useful for two reasons. First, it shows how the Western press coverage of Africa has evolved, as reported by Bunce et al. (2017). It provides a crucial extension to the debate of *Afro-pessimism* and the recent claims of improvements. Second, it opens up the area for further specific research aimed at replicating these studies using African media as cases.

Comparison of Subjects Covered

Much of the previous research, including Bunce et al. (2017) and Hawk (1992), mentions humanitarian/disaster stories as the most prominent subject of *Afro-pessimism*. While Bunce et al. (2017) report a general reduction in this subject in comparison to Hawk (1992) and other studies that followed, my study reveals that *Disaster* coverage in the Ghanaian press was the least covered subject (see Table 5.7). The fact that the coverage of Africa in the Ghanaian press significantly mirrors what exists in the Western press was not surprising because of the high dependency already established. No subject will be prominently covered in the Ghanaian press if it does not abound in the Northern media organisation, the pool from which the journalists in Ghana select their sources.

The subject of *Economy* in my study included stories dealing with economic issues, business and financial activities involving the continent. This subject recorded only 12 stories within the period of 24 months as compared to 130 stories recorded under *Politics*. This represents a contrast to Bunce et al. (2017), where a significant portion of the claims of improvement in *Afro-pessimism* was attributed to the increase in the subject *Business*, which was considered generally positive. Bunce et al. cautioned that the overall increase in *Business* reporting was not uniform across the newswires but was proportionally led by the output of Reuters.

The subject of *Politics*, in this study, included political violence, casualties of politically motivated fighting, political turmoil and disagreements, corruption involving political leaders and war. Out of a total of 180 news articles coded, 130 of them, representing 72%, belonged to this subject. The African continent's newness to Western democratic practice presented an amorphous challenge for the improvement of the continent's media image. Comparing this to Bunce et al. (2017), which coded this subject as *Crime and Conflict*, it could be realised that there was no difference since *Crime and Conflict* recorded an increase in their research as well.

Social stories in this study were concerned with extensions to news stories that provided analysis of social implications, social impact, participation and general sociological foundations of policies and

programmes. Usually, sports is included in this category but it was delimited in my study because the coverage needed to be hard news. Many of the stories analysed did not include hard news on sports. Even though the subject of *Social* issues was coded the second highest (13 times), it was still insignificant compared to *Politics*. One of the reasons for this was the fact that social implications of policies are usually analysed in peculiar journalistic genres other than hard/straight news reports. In Bunce et al. (2017), the subject of *Sport* saw an increase in its coverage for the continent in the Western press.

The subject of *Personality* was coded nine times and involved stories about celebrities and popular people who were not acting in the role of politics. The lack of concentration of this subject on African celebrities clearly showed the low level of visibility the African celebrities receive in the press both from Africa and the Northern Hemisphere. Within 24 months, African celebrities or heroes were mentioned nine times, and most often the stories related to Nelson Mandela of South Africa. It is also interesting to note that not all of these nine mentions were positive. There were stories concentrating on the feud within Mandela's family regarding his estate. This subject could not be easily compared with Bunce et al. (2017) because there was no such unique conceptualisation of the subject in that study.

The subject *Culture* was coded only eight times. This was quite astonishing because there are several stories coded in other subjects that have cultural implications. The cultural context of most subjects already discussed were ignored. The reason why this is predominant is because there is very little coverage of this theme in the Western media, from which the Ghanaian press picks its stories. This plays into the globalisation discourse which preaches cultural universality. In fact, no such subjects were specifically investigated in Bunce et al. (2017) and as such no comparison can be made. Africa, as a continent of unique individual countries, has rich historical contexts that must be included in its coverage. It is rather surprising that the subject of *History* was coded only twice in the entire study of 180 articles. Indeed, those two instances related to analysis of Egyptian archival materials. The lack of historical antecedents of most of the subjects that discussed the continent made the coverage look unfair, as if Africa's harsh colonial encounters and contributions to world history were non-existent.

Comparison of Tone/Quality of Coverage

This section presents a comparison of the tone of the coverage which was categorised into positive, negative and neutral/mixed. Following from the themes and subjects already discussed, it is reasonable to state that *Afro-pessimism* dominated the coverage. About 80% of articles were negative, which is contrary to the significant decrease recorded in Bunce et al. (2017). The idea that coverage of Africa has improved in the Western press, as reported in Bunce et al., has not reached the continent yet. The evidence in the case of Ghana proved this because *Afro-pessimism* still dominates the coverage of the continent.

Positive tone represented 15% of the coverage, and this is just 27 articles out of 180. Articles that had an equal or substantial amount of both positive and negative coverage were coded as neutral. These included only 9 articles, representing 5% of the total coverage. The imbalance in the coverage cannot represent a reflection of daily activities of the continent because more of the positive events happening have been ignored. For example, the *Africa rising* discourse did not only represent growing economies and foreign investments but also meant a scramble for Africa's resources. However, it is usually the Chinese investments in Africa that were constructed as a scramble for Africa's resources. In this study, the coverage of Africa is not positive and representative of the daily tragedies and triumphs of its citizens.

Summary

In this chapter, I established the enormous quantitative weight of influence international news agencies carried as a source for the Ghanaian press, from individual points of view to an aggregate picture. The issue of unsourced news was briefly discussed because of its implications for journalistic editorial decision-making and professionalism. I proceeded to deconstruct themes with which Africa was portrayed. The subject and tone of the coverage were outlined. The coverage centred on political subjects, with 72% of the total selected articles. The neglect of African celebrities and personalities was resounding. History, cultural and disaster were among the least-covered subjects. These were followed by social and economic subjects. The outlook of the subjects covered

was linked to the tone/quality of the entire coverage. It was established that the excessive slant towards politics meant the coverage had the likelihood of being negative, because most African countries are new to the Western democracy they have come to be measured alongside. In this final part, the findings of RQ1 (a., b. and c.) were compared with Bunce et al. (2017). While Bunce et al. argued for an improvement in Africa's image mostly in the Northern press in recent times, this study reveals that such positive evolutions have not yet reached the mainstream press in Ghana.

