Media under Siege: When Civil Society Actors Use Violence to Gag the Media in Ghana's Northern Region

Amin Alhassan[1], Felix Odartey-Wellington[2] & Abdul-Fatawu Shaibu[3]

Abstract

In recent times, Ghana has been lauded as a bastion of press freedom in Africa. However, drawing on the work of Johan Galtung that locates the media in a vortex of the State, Capital and Civil Society, this study problematizes the phenomenon whereby civil society elements in the Northern Region of the West African nation attenuate media freedoms through violence and intimidation of media workers. Adopting the point of departure that freedom of the press is necessary for the proper functioning of Ghana's burgeoning democracy, this study, through interviews with radio station management and staff, confirms that radio stations in the Tamale metropolis of the region adhere to a self-censorship regime as a result of this phenomenon, with inimical consequences for the health and integrity of the public sphere. This study therefore expands the discussion of media censorship beyond the more popular paradigms of State or Capital dominance over the media. While this study confirms the existence of the phenomenon of Civil Society censorship of media, it suggests a failure of the State to guarantee the safety of broadcasters in the Tamale metropolis. It also suggests a weakness of the journalists' association at the national level to advocate on behalf of members who face violence and intimidation in the course of their duties at the regional level in Tamale.

Keywords: Ghana, Media Freedom, Civil Society, State, Violence, Censorship.

1. Introduction

Like previous works (e.g. Tettey, 2001; Diedong, 2016; Nyarko and Akpojivi, 2017), this study adopts the point of departure that freedom of the press is necessary for the proper functioning of Ghana's burgeoning democracy, especially in the functioning of the media as a Habermasian public sphere, its functions in informing citizen participation in the nation's democracy, and its functions as a watchdog on the State and powerful interests. Thus Ghana's 2018 Reporters Without Borders ranking as number one in Africa and number 23 in the world in terms of press freedom is celebrated as a remarkable achievement (Reporters Without Borders, 2018). However, generalised perspectives on the freedoms enjoyed by the media obfuscate lived realities in some parts of the country. It is herein argued, media freedoms are currently attenuated in the Northern Region of the country in a manner that is peculiar and deserves scholarly attention. Precisely, this study speaks to the phenomenon whereby civil society elements forcibly attenuate broadcast media freedoms in the Northern Region and consequently, the effects of same on the ability of broadcast media to function effectively as a Habermasian public sphere. As conceptualised Habermas (1989), the public sphere is a space outside the control of the State and corporate interests wherein citizens can freely engage in discourse about matters of public interest. The voice in the public sphere is therefore a critical rather than deferential voice.

Habermas idealised the space of an active, participative eighteenth century bourgeois public sphere in contrast to the elite-dominated contemporary commodified and corporatized public spheres. This idealised public sphere is therefore the standard against which an active, critical mass media is measured.

[1]University for Development Studies, Tamale, Ghana (hassanamin@uds.edu.gh)
[2]Cape Breton University, Sydney, Nova Scotia, Canada
[3]University for Development Studies, Tamale, Ghana

As Avle notes of the radio medium, "It plays a preeminent role in Ghana's broadcast mediascape, compared to television and the print media" (2011, p.4).

Due to factors such as literacy rates, Internet penetration, portability and unreliable power supply (Walsh, 2017), radio is the most dominant means of media access in Ghana (Mu-azu and Shivram, 2017) with almost 63% of the audience share (MFWA 2017). The Northern Regional capital of Tamale and its environs are awash with several local FM stations, ranging from State-owned public service oriented stations, to commercial, community and campus radio stations (Mu-azu and Shivram, 2017). The city of Tamale is a fast-growing cosmopolitan centre of northern Ghana (Phyfferoen, 2012). It has historically been a political capital, from the pre-independence Northern Territories days to the post-colonial period and the evolution of the current Northern Region. Following the liberalisation of the airwaves in the nineties which made private ownership of broadcasting undertakings possible (Boateng 2009; Walsh 2017), radio has contributed toTamale's cosmopolitanism and of the 48 officially licenced radio stations in the region, 27 operate from Tamale or adjacent districts with the Tamale urban space as the targeted market. The adjacent districts are Savelugu Municipality, Sagnarigu Municipality, Tolon and Kumbungu Districts (NCA, 2018). The State-owned national broadcaster, which owns seven of the 48 licences, uses six as relay stations of the main Tamale-based Radio Savannah. There has never been any sustained publication of print media from Tamale as all the newspapers tend to originate in Southern Ghana with limited circulation in the North. In recent times there have been a few attempts to establish local TV broadcast stations. Two of them, NTV and Sagani TV seem to be holding up to the pressures of a weak advertising market.

Field research conducted in the three northern regions (Northern Region, Upper East, and Upper West Regions) showed that radio continues to be the primary source of information for most rural folk.For instance in the Northern Region about 89.56% of males and 87% of females in the rural areas were reported using radio as primary source of information (Alhassan et.al, 2016, p.33). Of these, majority of the radio broadcasts emanate from studios in either Tamale or nearby Savelugu, Sagnarigu, Tolon, and Kumbungu Districts. Drawing on public sphere literature (e.g. Habermas 1989; Boateng, 2009; Nyarko, 2016), it can be said that radiois part of the nation's media ecology and thusconstitutes a critical space for public discourse in Ghana.

2. The problem and research questions

In recent times, there have been a number of reported cases of attack on radio stations in and around Tamale, leading to injuries on media workers, interruption of live broadcasts, destruction of broadcast equipment or vehicles of on-air panel discussants. The origins of the practice of studio attacks may be difficult to establish, but the most dramatic and most visible was the March 11, 2014 incident at Radio Justice in Tamale (Gadugah, 2014), which may become the microcosm of these attacks. Radio Justice was again attacked on December 2, 2017 (MFWA, 2017).Prior to this study, anecdotal evidence gave rise to the hypothesis that the practice hasimpacted the choice of topics for radio programming, the willingness of people to engage in panel discussions on sensitive subjects and the willingness of station managers to enforce a form of self-censorship for their stations. Little is heard following the initial news of these attacks. Significant for the purpose of this research, what is peculiar about these attacks is that they are largely carried out by non-state actors.

There is a perception in and around Tamale that the media is not just a site for contestation of ideas leading to the formation of public opinion in a typical Habermasian sense of the public sphere (Livingstone and Lunt, 1994;Garnham, 2007) but also fertile ground for the seeds of violent conflict. This perception was reinforcedbya National Peace Council Conflict Map synopsis of 2008 which noted that: "In the Tamale metropolis political conflicts occurred in Gumbihini, Choggu and Changli as a result of political rivalries between the two main parties. The conflict was a pre-election violence between supporters of the NDC (National Democratic Congress) and the NPP (New Patriotic Party)[4] in which 26 houses were burnt in the Choggu hill top and Choggu Manayili areas. The conflict emanated from a radio station discussion between the activists of the two main political parties. It resulted into an argument between butchers in the Tamale central market. This led to a conflict among the butchers which resulted in the death of a colleague butcher who was an NDC sympathiser. The NDC organised, attacked and burnt the home of one of the panellists on the radio discussion who was seen as an NPP person" (National Peace Council, 2018).

---

[4]The NDC and NPP are the dominant political parties in Ghana's 4th Republic.

From this National Peace Council synopsis, one gathers that exercising speech rights during a radio panel discussion makes discussants vulnerable to physical attacks. Audience members offended or aggrieved bythe radio discussions therefore prefer violent reactions to the use of media for rejoinders, rebuttals or legal means to seek redress.

Through interviews and newsmedia reviews, this study attempts to investigate the media-violence nexus, the scope of its impact and how it shapes the practice of journalism and media work. It seeks to confirm the anecdotal evidence that the spectre of violence and attack from either known or unknown civil society groups has led to a deliberate act of self-censorship of the media. What is the extent of the impact and how are media gatekeepers responding to this phenomenon? Have certain topics become taboo for news coverage or commentary due to the spectre of violent attacks from elements of civil society?

3. The State, Capital, and Civil Society Vortex and the Media

One remarkable feature of the Ghana's Fourth Republican Constitution is the extensive provisions it makes for the protection of media freedoms. Chapter 12 of the Constitution is entirely devoted to "Freedom and Independence of the Media" and makes six clear provisions guaranteeing the independence of the media, proscribing censorship, and establishing that no law shall be made to require publishers to be licenced. It guarantees the right to rejoinder as a means of compensating for media excesses. The chapter also states that "Editors and publishers of newspapers and other institutions of the mass media shall not be subject to control or interference by Government, nor shall they be penalized or harassed for their editorial opinions and views, or the content of their publications" (Ghana Constitution 1992, Article 4). Article 5 adds that "All agencies of the mass media shall, at all times, be free to uphold the principles, provisions and objectives of this Constitution, and shall uphold the responsibility and accountability of the Government to the people of Ghana" (Ghana Constitution1992, Article 5). The 1992 Constitution was produced against a backdrop of a consistent record of governmental interference, and control of media in Ghana. The country had recently experienced what was described as a "culture of silence" and a decade of military dictatorship (Ankomah 1987; Serlomey 2012:2; Odartey-Wellington et al 2017, 304). Thus, the constitutional provisions referenced above and the general thrust of the Constitution has the effect of protecting the citizen's media rights from State abuse. It will appear therefore that the private sector entrepreneur who invests in media industries, or civil society actors were never envisioned as potential abusers of media freedoms by the Constitution. Thus, the protection of media freedoms, to the extent that the citizen's ability to transmit and receive mass media content is safeguarded, is concerned with threats from the state, with the government, the coercive state apparatus, and the bureaucratic state apparatus as potential threat sources. Hence, it is justifiable to focus on state – media relations as a barometer of the health and maturity of the country's democracy. The Media Foundation for West Africa's (MFWA's) periodic West Africa Free Expression Monitor since 2014 shows this expected trend of the state or agents of the apparatus of state as the major abusers of media freedom (See http://www.mfwa.org/publication-type/reports/). Abusers of media freedom in this context have the intention of attenuating media agency and structuring journalistic practice by forcibly limiting the scope of media discourse or shaping public discourse in the media.

Using the MFWA published data on violations of media freedom in West Africa for the years 2014, 2015 and 2016, (MFWA 2014a-c;MFWA 2015a-c;MFWA 2016a-c) the following chart is constructed to graphically present threats from different groups of democratic society, namely the State, Capital and Civil Society. The MFWA data useseight categories for tabulating abusers of media freedoms. These are 1. Police/Security forces, 2. State officials, 3. Regulatory bodies, 4. Political party affiliates, 5. Media owners, 6. Organized groups, 7, Courts and 8. Other individuals. We found out that these categories can be re-grouped into the three blocs of State, Capital and Civil Society.

Thus in our re-configuration, we grouped Police/Security forces, State officials, Courts and Regulatory bodies, into State and State apparatus agents. The category of Media owners was retained as a category for Capital. Political party affiliates, Organized groups and Other individuals constituted the category of Civil Society.[5]

Thus in this reconfigured typology, the following is the outcome of the re-tabulation of the MFWA data into Sate, Capital (Media Owners), and Civil Society.

**Composite Chart of Violations of Media in W. Africa 2014 - 2016**
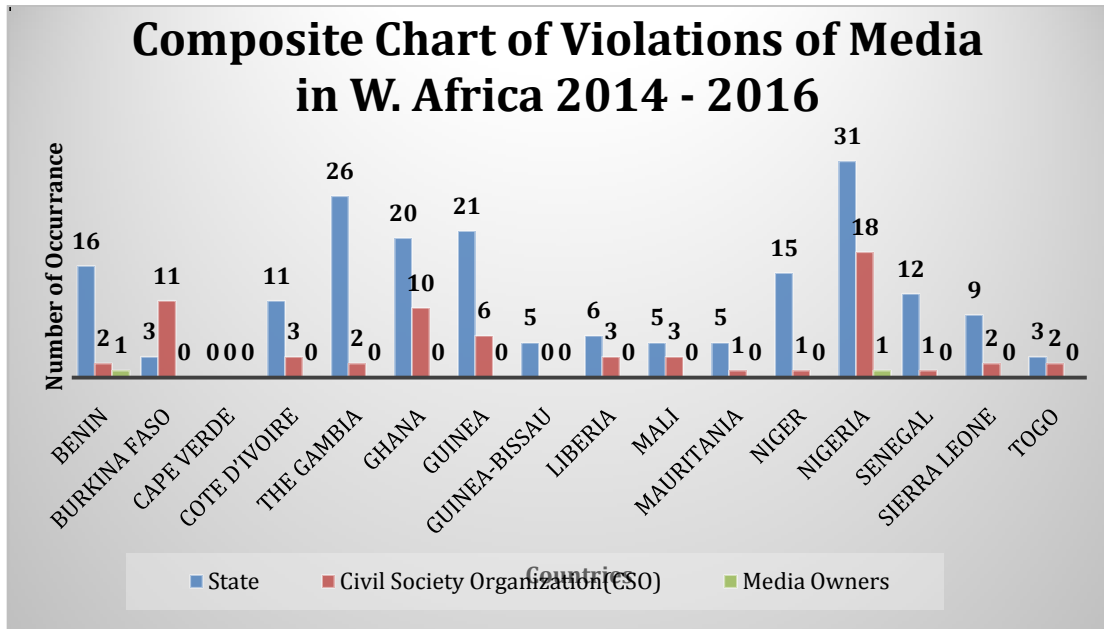
As can be seen in the chart, with the exception of Burkina Faso, the State remains the dominant abuser of media freedom in West Africa. The situation in Ghana is consistent with this West African pattern. However, the record of actors in civil society is quite revealing of the emerging threat to media freedoms. It is important to compare this record of actually existing developing democracies and the thrust of Ghana's Constitution where the State isexclusively anticipated as the potential source of threats. Neither the elements of civil society(who are lead abusers in Burkina Faso), nor actors in the media market economy are assumed to be threats to media freedoms. The experience of the Northern Region, being used as a case study in this paper thus affords us the opportunity to highlight civil society as an unexpected emerging threat to media freedoms.

Johan Galtung's (1999) model of media and society offers a normative framework whereby the media is located in a hegemonic triangular vortex constituted by State, capital and civil society. We draw on this framework to make sense of the condition of the media in the Ghanaian democracy. In Galtung's formulation, the three units of society compete to exert influence on the media, as it is the channel of public communication (1999, p.9). Where a strong State exists, the media is likely to gravitate toward State interests. This can be in the form of exclusive State ownership of the media or fear of the coercive power of the State, both of which were observable in Ghana prior to media liberalisation (Hasty 2005). Drawing on Habermas (1989), it can be said that under those circumstances, for example, "the State-owned media played a 'representational' rather than a critical function vis-à-vis State power" (Odartey-Wellington et al, 2017, p.304). In an environment of a strong Market/Capital dominance over State and Civil Society, the media would be seen as being subservient to the wishes of capital through the power of advertising funds or through the ownership structures (McChesney, 2015). In Galtung's taxonomy, civil society appears to be the weakest of these three institutional elements (1999, p.12).

One of the reasons why Galtung considers the category of Civil Society weak is that both the Sate and Market equally have representation in civil society in the form of civil society organisations (CSOs) and adjuncts. We diagrammatically represent Galtung's model as follows in order to demonstrate the triangular vortex:

---

[5]While not conflating political parties with civil society organizations like NGOs, political party affiliates in this context refers to partisan elements such as activists, sympathisers and adjuncts outside of the state apparatus. The focus of this paper is on actors in the space between the state and capital.
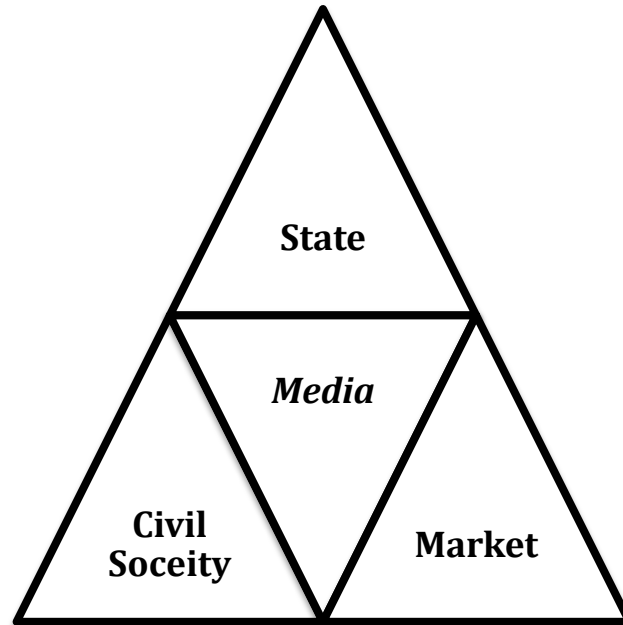
Academic and popular publications abound showing how the State and capital leverage power to dominate or influence the media (Herman and Chomsky, 1988; McChesney, 2015; Mentan, 2015; Ogola, 2017; Mwakideu, 2017; Kruger, 2017). It is often the case that there is little focus on how civil society elements shape media content or practice. This study adopts the position that the impact of civil society actors on media freedoms also deserves attention. This is pertinent to recent dynamics observable in the Northern Region of Ghana. As indicated above, for about a decade now, while State actors in the region have largely respected media freedoms, civil society actors have emerged as a new source of systemic and structural media repression. Today, almost all radio stations located in the vicinity of the regional capital Tamale have adopted self-censorship strategies to avoid provoking diverse vigilante groups including political militias, activists, sports or religious fanatics, and partisans in chieftaincy conflicts. This study, therefore, focuses on activities of civil society elements that have manifested a tendency to use violence as an instrument of media control in the Northern Region.

4. Methodological Note

In investigating this phenomenon, interviews were conducted with the management of nine local radio stations in the Tamale vicinity between January and March 2018. In addition, 15 local journalists were purposively sampled and interviewed. The study also included interviews with law enforcement officers on factors that militate against the successful investigation of violent crimes against the media.

The nine radio stations are:

	Name of station	Category and ownership
1.	*Zaa Radio*	Private/ commercial
2.	*Radio Savannah*	State/Public service
3.	*Radio Justice*	Private/Commercial
4.	*Diamond FM*	Private /Commercial
5.	*Might FM*	Private /Commercial
6.	*North Star*	Private/Commercial
7.	*Fila FM*	Private/Commercial
8.	*Bishara Radio*	Private/Commercial
9.	*Tawasul Radio*	Community

The focus of the study crystalized out of an attempt to understand why local FM stations increasingly avoided comprehensive coverage of certain issues. In these matters, there is often a total media blackout or when the issues receive media treatment, this is limited to extracting news releases. In 2017, the frequency of abuse of media escalated. The following is a list of some of the discursive moments which were used as reference points for the interviews:

- April 4, 2017, a radio DJ was lured to a location and assaulted for making what was considered derogatory comments about local video/film actors.
- August 24, 2017, *Tawasul Community FM*was attacked, staff assaulted and equipment vandalized leading to the termination of a live sports programme.
- September 4, 2017, an NDC communicator was assaulted at *Bishara Radio* for comments he made during a live programme.
- December 2, 2017, *Radio Justice*was attacked, equipment vandalized and a panellist was assaulted during live discussion on Dagbon chieftaincy issues. Broadcast was terminated. For *Radio Justice*, this was a repeat of the March 11, 2014 attack during which vehicles and property were torched in apparent protest against a live panel discussion broadcast.

All these cases were reported to law enforcement agencies but investigations have stalled and no prosecutions have resulted. There are several other threats of violence that have led to the termination of broadcasts but have not been reported to law enforcement agencies. In all these cases, so far, we have gathered that neither state nor agents of capital have been involved. In all cases, however, civil society agents have been identified as perpetrators.

5. Findings and discussions

A common thread in the responses analysed suggest that the phenomenon of organized violence against the media from civil society groups was agreed to be real. Staff and management of the nine radio stations acknowledged that the phenomenon is threatening the independence of the media in and around Tamale. A journalist at Radio Justice simply stated: "When you come across a story on certain topics in the region, you have to ask yourself if your editor or manager will allow you to work on it." In response to a follow-up question asking why, he said: "it is for the security of the station and myself." The spectre of insecurity here is in reference not to the State or Capital, but Civil Society actors.

Radio Justice has been attacked three times since 2004. On all three occasions the management of the station claims that the attackers were unknown. As was articulated during an interview, "No. As for that one we don't know them, we address them as unknown persons that came. In all the three, the first one it was a media war, the second one they were many so we couldn't identify them like a community coming to attack" (*Radio Justice* Interview). The failure or inability to identify perpetrators does not appear to be an accurate answer as earlier, the interviewee admitted that Tamale is a place where "everybody knows everyone." In an environment of impunity and intricate social relations, identifying the perpetrators in itself is a security hazard(Odartey-Wellington et al 2017). Thus the inability of a media executive to publicly identify perpetrators of media violence is itself a function of dominance of civil society elements in muzzling the media which is not guaranteed protection by law enforcement. The responses of some of the journalists interviewed corroborate the perception that the perpetrators are known. It is the fear of being identified as a whistle-blower or "snitch" that keeps them from going on record with the identities of perpetrators. And in some instances, the perpetrators keep their records of notoriety as a badge of honour and will remind peers or opponents of said record. Indeed, in the arson attacks on *Radio Justice* depicted in the following images, the identities of the arsonists are common knowledge, but neither the Police nor the victims are willing to pursue the matter through a judicial process.

Photo Credit: Management of Radio Justice

All the 15 journalists interviewed concurred about the existence of an unofficial list of taboo topics. The commonly identified topic was Dagbon chieftaincy issues. Specifically, debates about chieftaincy issues, particularly ones that bordered on *Abudu* and *Andani⁶* were seen as clear taboos. The subject of traditional politics is also articulated to national partisan politics and often lines are blurred when attacks occur. However, what is clear is that these attacks do occur and are driven by audience grievances over content. The Manager of *North Star FM* in the interview reported that the station has experienced two attacks in recent years even though checks with the Police disclosed three attacks on the record. According to the manager:

---

⁶This refers to the two royal clans or "gates" with the prerogative to produce the "Ya Na" or king of the Dagomba ethnic group in Ghana. Decades-long conflict between the two clans has often resulted in violent clashes, the most recent resulting in the killing of Ya Na YakubuAndani II and scores of his subjects from both sides of the divide in March 2002 (Albert, 2008; Amankwaah, 2013). The level of violence involved in that particular conflict informed a characterisation of the incident as a "war" by a judge who tried some of the alleged perpetrators (Vinokor, 2015). The conflict is regarded as having the potential to "pull the country apart" (Hirsch, 2012). As Amankwaah (2013, p. 12) notes, this explains why matters relating to the conflict between the two clans are considered to be "an extremely sensitive topic."

"I am a management member and only came to manage this place from June this year but the previous managers or directors were attacked. The station started at the road leading to School of Hygiene thus the Zogyiri area. People besieged the place throwing stones. I can't remember when though that was the first time. The second attack was about two years ago. I've always been a director of the company but because of certain crisis here I was brought in to streamline things. One attack was in the day time but we fought them back. One of them (the attackers) was late to spark his motorcycle so our staff set it ablaze and they took to their heels. There were certain discussions going on here concerning chieftaincy and other things and I think they didn't like it."

Alhaji Aliu Mahama, a former Vice President of Ghana, established *North Star FM* as a private venture while he was in office. It was during his tenure thatYa Na Yakubu Andani IIthe traditional king of Dagbonand several people were killed in what was seen as a chieftaincy clash (see footnote 3). It was seen by many as an *Abudu* attack on the *Andani* faction of Dagbon traditional governance. To the extent that the Abudus are regarded as being pro-NPP and the Andanis, pro-NDC, the popular perception was that the NPP, and by extension, Mahama, was sympathetic to the Abuducause(Albert, 2008, p.52). The *North Star FM* station is therefore seen as an Abuduplat form. As the Manager of North Star put it: "You see, this station is branded as Abudu and an NPP sympathiser so there were supporters of NDC who actually did that [the attack on the station] ... Because if people are discussing things and they are not insulting anybody,just a general discussion like the Radio Justice one, and you don't like what is being discussed do you have to attack? You don't do that."

National politics and traditional politics are however not the only precursors of radio station attacks in Tamale. On August 24, 2017, an official of the local football club, Real Tamale United (RTU), attacked the host of a live programme at *Tawasul Community FM* for discussing match fixing allegations against the club. The official was invited to phone-in or come to the studio to respond to the match-fixing allegations. Hehowever attended at the station with two well-built minders (hired thugs colloquially referred to in Ghana as "macho men")to visit violence on the host for daring to mention his name on air. This was reported to the Police while the programme host was sentto the hospital. The next day, the official brought in some community leaders to apologize for his action and agreed topay compensation for the trauma suffered by the host and equipment damage. According to the management, the arbitration process was facilitated by the Police, a claim that the Police did not corroborate when contacted for this study. The Police however confirmed that parties in these cases are often loath to opt for criminal prosecution, rather favouring amicable settlements which are not precluded under Ghanaian criminal law if the offences fall in the realm of misdemeanours.[7] In more serious cases, the Police admit being unable to apprehend culprits due to a lack of community cooperation, leading to cold cases. Interestingly the promise of compensation in the *Tawasul* casedid not materialises and the Police have discontinued with the case. To the extent that debt-collection is not a remit of law enforcement, the police argued that their options are limited when parties default on amicable settlements in this context.

6. Self-Censorship Practices

Most of the management staff interviewed acknowledged that they take precautionary measures to ensure that they do not offend certain identified community elements for fear of incurring their anger. Of the 15 journalists, only two claimed that their work is unaffected by the fear of these community elements. The two stated that when their copy is not included in bulletins by their local stations as a result of covering a potential civil society "taboo" topic, they send these stories for use by media organizations outside the region. In acknowledging this, they impliedly conceded the existence within their local stations of regulatory practices that can be categorized as self-censorship as a result of the de facto regulatory regime imposed by civil society elements. One manager of an FM station, after requesting anonymity before the interview, said "We do not do local programming. We give the news and do sports and then national politics and music. No local issues." Asked why, he said: "The local people are not predictable. If you imagine what has happened to other stations in the past for very simple issues, you wonder what *koraa* (at all) is wrong with them."

From the responses of both journalists and the management, the list of subjects that are taboo include chieftaincy issues, controversies over sports, and issues that engage linkages between traditional and national political cleavages.

---

[7]The hands-off approach adopted by the Police in relation to attacks on Tamale stations mirrors the approach to similar cases in other parts of Ghana. See for example, "OwusuBempah apologises to Hot FM, Ghanaians for Misconduct" (Ghanaweb, 2018).

Interestingly, while the NPP is branded *Abudu* and the NDC is seen as being *Andani*-biased, these perceived alliances are social constructions and do not mean that all members of each of the parties actually identifies with the corresponding chieftaincy faction. Consequently, partisan political discussions *simpliciter* are not considered sensitive enough to merit self-censorship by news workers. They become toxic only when they are articulated to local chieftaincy politics. Yet, while these matters appear to be provocative, they are also very salient on the public agenda. A failure to discuss them openly does not wish them away. On the contrary, these issues have often materialized as social implosions that have negatively impacted socio-economic development (IRIN 2003).

7. Conclusion

This study has engaged with the phenomenon whereby civil society elements forcibly limit broadcast media freedoms in the Northern Region and consequently, curtail the ability of broadcast media to function effectively as a Habermasian public sphere. We argue that broadcasters in Tamale are compelled to engage in self-censorship to reduce or avoid the potential of attracting violent attacks by civil society elements. This study therefore expands the discussion of media censorship beyond the paradigm of State or Capital dominance over the media. This study confirms Nyarko and Akpojivi's (2017) that "provocation" often lies at the root of the media intimidation and attacks in Ghana to the extent that, in the context of this study, some audiences object to reportage or discussions on radio in Tamale. What is intriguing is that this study is against the backdrop of Ghana's celebration as an African success story when it comes to media freedom. While we did not set out to examine the methodology of Reporters Without Borders' ranking, a cursory view of its 87 questions instrument of evaluation is heavily skewed at identifying abuses perpetrated by the State. And as noted in the earlier review of Ghana's Constitution, the focus on the State as a likely abuser of press freedoms can actually obfuscate non-state actors who are emerging sources of media freedom abuses.

While this study confirms the existence of the phenomenon Civil Society censorship of media, it also suggests a failure of the State to guarantee the safety of broadcasters in the Tamale metropolis,[8] as several respondents suggested the existence of a state of impunity. As the manager of Radio Justice noted, "if you don't arrest, how then do you start a judicial process?" Further, it suggested a reticence by Capital to expose media holdings to economic loss resulting either from loss of advertising revenue when broadcasts are suspended, or when equipment is damaged, or when budget lines have to be created for target hardening as a security measure. As one manager starkly noted, "we can't afford security for 24 hours' service."

On a going forward basis, it has been suggested that local media mobilise a Civil Society body to advocate on their behalf and to safeguard their interests. As the manager of Tawasul Radio mused during an interview:

"I think off late Northern Region, Tamale *per se*, we the media houses we are in trouble. I think though I'm yet to meet other media personnel to set up a union should something like this happen they can fight for the affected people. The absence of the union is making people attack media houses because no one is there to fight for us, Tamale is becoming unbecoming that people take things into their hands and do whatever they want. And the media plays a greater responsibility in this particular region but I don't know why they don't regard us so either the problem is coming from us or just within the region itself, the higher authority has emboldened them. For instance, just three days ago, the same thing happened to *Justice FM* and when the issue came up it is like one particular gate … came and did that which is alarming and something must be done. There should be a collective responsibility like a union. There should be rule to protect the interest of media houses."

While this approach could be helpful, it is curious that broadcast media workers seemed oblivious to the function of the Ghana Journalists Association (GJA) in protecting members in all regions. In other words, they see the need to create a parallel Civil Society structure rather than rely on the national journalists' association for support. The GJA appeared to be a distant factor in the equation, signalling a need for the body to refocus its efforts to ensure the protection of broadcast media workers in the Northern Region.

---

[8] For example, the State has prosecuted persons who have attached broadcasters in the national capital, Accra (see Djabanor, 2015).

The current practice of self-censorship is inconsistent with media norms as a Fourth Estate and public sphere. Indeed, it is inconsistent with the Habermasian conceptualisation of the public sphere as an unfettered space for public discourse anchored in Civil Society. To that end, it is important that law enforcement be seen to act in cases of attacks on media in the Northern Region. This is an area in which the GJA can play a stronger role in ensuring law enforcement accountability. As captured in the interviews, the sense of impunity is the strongest factor creating the state of insecurity that Tamale broadcasters are experiencing. That, therefore, should be the focus of intervention if local broadcasters are to function effectively.

8. References

Albert, I. O. (2008). From 'Owo Crisis' to 'Dagbon Dispute': Lessons in the Politicization of Chieftaincy Disputes in Modern Nigeria and Ghana. *The Round Table*, *97*(394), 47–60. https://doi.org/10.1080/00358530701625976

Alhassan, A., Ayelazuno, J., Mohammed, S., &Santua, N. (2016). *Evaluation of MADE radio programs in Northern, Upper East and Upper West Regions of Ghana.* Tamale: Market Development for Northern Ghana/Nathan Associates.

Amankwaah, C. (2013). *Election-Related Violence: The Case of Ghana.* Uppsala: NordiskaAfrikainstitutet.

Aning, E. K. (2005). The anatomy of Ghana's secret arms industry. In N. Florquin& E. G. Berman (Eds.), *Armed and aimless: Armed groups, guns, and human security in the ECOWAS region* (pp. 29–102). Geneva, Switzerland: Small Arms Survey.

Ankomah, B. (1987). Ghana's culture of silence. *Index on Censorship*, *16*(10), 17–19.

Avle, S. (2011). Global flows, media and developing democracies: The Ghanaian case. *Journal of African Media Studies*, *3*(1), 7–23. https://doi.org/10.1386/jams.3.1.7_1

Boateng, K. (2009). Radio in Accra: Communicating among Linguistically and Ethnically Diverse Audiences. *Intercultural Communication Studies*, *XVIII* (1), 161–175.

IRIN (2003, March 11) "Counting the cost of the Dagbon crisis". http://www.irinnews.org/news/2003/03/11/counting-cost-dagbon-crisis. Accessed 23 April 2018

Diedong, A. L. (2016). Donkor: A Case Study of the Safety of Journalists in Ghana. Global Media Journal: African Edition. *Global Media Journal - African Edition*, *10*(2), 92–120. https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.5789/10-2-268

Djabanor, F. (2015, October 29). Obinim acquitted and discharged [Photos]. *Citifmonline.Com*. Retrieved from http://citifmonline.com/2015/10/29/obinim-acquitted-and-discharged-photos/

Gadugah, N. (2014, March 11). Three arrested in Radio Justice Attack in Tamale - MyJoyOnline.com. *MyJoyOnline*. Retrieved from https://www.myjoyonline.com/news/2014/March-11th/three-arrested-in-radio-justice-attack-in-tamale.php

Galtung, J. (1999). The State, Capital and Civil Society: A Problem of Communication. In K. Nordenstreng, M. Traber, & R. Vincent (Eds.), *Towards Equity in Global Communication: MacBride Update*. Creskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

Garnham, N. (2007). Habermas and the public sphere. *Global Media and Communication*, *3*(2), 201–214. https://doi.org/10.1177/1742766507078417

Ghana Constitution (1992). *The Constitution of the Republic of Ghana.* Accra Ghana

Ghanaweb (2018) "OwusuBempah apologises to Hot FM, Ghanaians for Misconduct" https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Owusu-Bempah-apologizes-to-Hot-FM-Ghanaians-for-misconduct-709652

Habermas, J. (1989). *The structural transformation of the public sphere: an inquiry into a category of bourgeois society*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Hasty, J. (2005). *The press and political culture in Ghana.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Herman, E. S. (1988). *Manufacturing consent: the political economy of the mass media* (1st ed.). New York: Pantheon Books.

Hirsch, A. (2012, July 5). Ghana's rival Dagbon royals risk pulling the country apart. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jul/05/ghana-royal-rivalry-threatens-violence

Kruger, F. (2017). Why media freedom remains fragile in South Africa. Retrieved April 23, 2018, from http://theconversation.com/why-media-freedom-remains-fragile-in-south-africa-85868

Livingstone, S., and Lunt, P. (1994) The mass media, democracy and the public sphere. In *Talk on Television: Audience participation and public debate*(9-35). London: Routledge.

McChesney, R. W. (2015). *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics In Dubious Times*. New York: The New Press.

Mentan, T. (2015). *In Defence of Press Freedom in Africa: An Essay*. Mankon, Cameroon: Langaa RPCIG

MFWA (2014a). State of free expression violations in West Africa January – April 2014. Accra

MFWA (2014b). West Africa free expression monitor: The state of freedom of expression in West Africa May – August 2014. Accra

MFWA (2014c). West Africa free expression monitor: The state of freedom of expression in West Africa September – December 2014. Accra

MFWA (2015a). West Africa free expression monitor January –March 2015. Quarterly Issue No. 4. Accra

MFWA (2015b).West Africa free expression monitor April – June 2015. Quarterly Issue No. 5. Accra

MFWA (2015c). West Africa free expression monitor July – December 2015. Issue No. 6. Accra

MFWA (2016a).West Africa free expression monitor January – June 2016. Accra

MFWA (2016b). West Africa free expression monitor July – September 2016 Accra

MFWA (2016c). West Africa free expression monitor October – December 2016 Accra

MFWA (2017, December 4). Thugs Attack Radio Presenter, Disrupt Live Broadcast - Media Foundation for West Africa. Retrieved April 23, 2018, from http://www.mfwa.org/country-highlights/thugs-attack-radio-presenter-disrupt-live-broadcast/

Mu-azu, I. A., &Shivram, G. P. (2017). Proliferation and impact of FM radio in northern Ghana. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Research*, *3*(3), 1–4.

Mwakideu, C. (2017). Media freedom in Africa "not great." *DW.COM*. Retrieved from http://www.dw.com/en/media-freedom-in-africa-not-great/a-38626417

National Peace Council (2008) "National Peace Council Ghana Conflict Map" http://conflictmap.mint.gov.gh/Home/Northern/Tamale-Changli-Choggu-Gumbihini

NCA (2018) "List of authorised VHF and FM stations" National Communication Authority NCA https://nca.org.gh/assets/Uploads/LIST-OF-AUTHORISED-VHF-FM-THIRD-QUARTER-2018.pdf

Nyarko, J. (2016). Newspaper Review Show in the Broadcast Media Space in Ghana: An Exploratory Qualitative Study. *SAGE Open*, *6*(2), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244016654952

Nyarko, J., &Akpojivi, U. (2017). Intimidation, Assault, and Violence against Media Practitioners in Ghana. *SAGE Open*, *7*(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244017697165

Odartey-Wellington, F., Anas, A. A., & Boamah, P. (2017). "Ghana in the Eyes of God": Media ecology and the Anas journalistic investigation of Ghana's judiciary. *Journal of Applied Journalism & Media Studies*, *6*(2), 293–313. https://doi.org/10.1386/ajms.6.2.293_1

Ogola, G. (2017). *Popular Media in Kenyan History: Fiction and Newspapers as Political Actors* (1st ed. 2017 edition). Cham (Switzerland): Palgrave Macmillan.

Phyfferoen, D. (2012). Hiplife: The location, organization and structure of the local urban pop industry in Tamale. In L. R. Koos (Ed.), *Hidden Cities: Understanding Urban Popcultures* (pp. 237–246). Oxford: Interdisciplinary Press.

Reporters Without Borders (2018) World Press Freedom Index https://rsf.org/en/ranking_table

Serlomey, E. E. (2012). Rethinking citizen voice: The case of radio call-ins in Accra, Ghana. *APPP Working Paper*, *26*, 1–32.

Tettey, W. J. (2001). The media and democratization in Africa: contributions, constraints and concerns of the private press. *Media, Culture & Society*, *23*(1), 5–31. https://doi.org/10.1177/016344301023001001

Vinokor, M. A. (2015, June 3). Ya Na murder trial closed case unless new evidence emerges — Justice Apau. *Graphic Online*. Retrieved from https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/ya-na-murder-trial-closed-case-unless-new-evidence-emerges-justice-apau.html

Walsh, C. (2017). *Social Impacts of New Radio Markets in Ghana: A Dynamic Structural Analysis* (Job Market Paper). Retrieved from http://econ.sciences-po.fr/sites/default/files/ghana_radio%282%29%281%29.pdf