Actions and Reactions to the Evacuation of Guantanamo Bay Detainees to Ghana: A Content Analysis of Daily Graphic Online Reporting

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Actions and Reactions to the Evacuation of Guantanamo Bay Detainees to Ghana: A Content Analysis of *Daily Graphic* Online Reporting

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Abstract: The Guantanamo Detention Camp was a facility created by the US government to house enemy-combatant captured from war fronts in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Amid controversies surrounding the legality of their detention, the Obama administration pledged to shut down the facility. Since terrorism has become a global menace, efforts to combat it have been approached from a multilateral perspective than unilateral; the US transferred some of the detainees abroad recently to close it. Ghana is one of the countries that accepted two inmates. Through content analysis, this study examines media coverage of their evacuation to Ghana as expressed by sections of the Ghanaian public. Overall, society resented their arrival on fear and panic, insecurity and illegality grounds.

Key words: Terrorism, media, public, Guantanamo Bay, security, discourse, society

Introduction

Ghana was thrown into a state of shock when the media reported that the Islamic State (ISIS) has recruited an alumnus of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science & Technology (KNUST) in Ghana and this, among other recruitments are achieved through online and offline publicity (Bilgen, 2012). This concern appeared to intensify when the media again published that two Yemenis detained in Guantanamo Bay have been evacuated to Ghana on 7 January 2016. Guantanamo Bay is a US naval base where a detention facility was built after 9/11 to detain "enemy combatants" captured in Afghanistan and Pakistan during the counterterrorism mission (Dahlstrom, 2003; Yin, 2005). In the words of the US Defense Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, the detainees are ''among the most dangerous, best-trained, vicious killers on the face of the earth and were all involved in an effort to kill thousands of Americans'' (Rose 2004 cited in Howell, 2007). According to him, the facility was built to "detain extraordinarily dangerous people, to interrogate detainees in an optimal setting, and to prosecute detainees for war crimes" (Saani, 2016). By these, the Secretary announced that the detainees would not be assigned Prisoners of War (POW) status (Dahlstrom 2003, Greenhouse 2009,

Chlopak, 2002); but face trial before military commissions established by Executive Military Order of 13 November 2001(Greenhouse, 2009). This, coupled with the release of photos of the inmate's accommodation conditions (Dahlstrom, 2003) triggered global criticism hence the gradual withdraw of the physical and emotional backing given to US at the beginning of the War on Terror in which alliance of countries joined them on the Kabul raid on 7 October 2001 (Jamison, 2005). To them, the questioning strategies adopted, and keeping detainees' identities and their location of detention secret is unacceptable (Jamison, 2005; Paust, 2004). In one account, Aradau (2007) referred to Butler's argument that in Guantanamo, national and international laws were suspended leading to NGOs and European leaders joining the critical voices of analysts to condemn it. He recounted descriptions of Tony Blair of the Bay as an 'anomaly' which should be shut down and the director of AI who Frames it as 'the Gulag of our times'. Assessing the situation, the UN defines the legal regime in Guantanamo as an affront to the rule of law and several human rights declarations (Aradau, 2007) such as the Geneva Convention (Dahlstrom, 2003). For instance, army investigators employed harsh counter-resistance means in a systematic order to coerce detainees to cooperate (Bloche & Marks,

2005; Steyn, 2003; Marks, 2007; Lewis, 2004; Malinowski, 2008; Rubenstein & Annas, 2009; Chlopak, 2002 & Woodward, 2009) and might explain Marks (2007) position that three of the Guantanamo inmates took their own lives and some twenty-five of them were unsuccessful at multiple suicide attempts. To him, each passing day worsens their mental state of well-being and others being depressed clinically (see also: Howell, 2007 & Kennedy et al., 2009). These, inform Barack Obama's criticism of the Bush-led administration during the 2008 US elections on the handling of the terrorism war with special emphasis on the Guantanamo prison and questioned the mode of interrogations applied there (Yin, 2010) hence his determination to shut the facility on assumption of office. Malinowski (2008) reiterated: the incoming president should issue an executive order that prohibits torture and secret detention leading to the closure of Guantanamo. On May 2009, President Obama outlined a new approach to deal with detainees and its allies to encompass protecting American values (Padmanabhan, 2014) and pledged to close the center by 23 January 2010 (Rubenstein & Annas, 2009). Ghana got enlisted among the countries that accepted US proposal to house the detainees. However, news of this evacuation was received with mixed-reactions and generated widespread discourse among politicians, policy analysts, academia and civil society in Ghana questioning the legality of the evacuation, terms of agreement, the motive behind keeping Ghanaians in the dark and why Ghana, and not the US or their homeland Yemen. This seems to contradict the words of the Deputy Commander of Guantanamo who in October 2004 said: "the majority of them [the detainees] will either be released or transferred to their own countries" (Yin, 2005; Malinowski, 2008).

This study seeks to analysis the content of *Daily Graphic* reported online as expressed by sections of the public (lawmakers, politicians, security analysts and civil society) to depict the Ghanaian experience of how society reacted to the evacuation of the Guantanamo detainees to Ghana amid rumors of terrorists' attack in the country.

Literature review

The Guantanamo Bay was leased to the US by the Cuban government in 1903 and it is the oldest US foreign base in a communist nation (Dahlstrom, 2003). Aradau (2007) recorded that in the early 1990s; refugees from Haiti who applied for asylum were evacuated to Guantanamo for processing and subsequently denied. "Many were held up to three years in makeshift barbed wire camps, exposed to heat and rain in spaces infested with rats and scorpions, with inadequate water supplies and sanitary facilities" (see also: Johns, 2005). Soon after the 9/11, and subsequently the evacuation of the POW to the Bay, the popularity of Guantanamo heightened in the global media space hence becoming the focus of discourse to the extent that Marks (2007) observes:

The focus on Guantánamo Bay conveniently distracts attention from other detention centers, such as Bagram in Afghanistan and numerous unidentified "black sites" operated by the CIA across the globe where interrogation practices and the role of health professionals have come under far less public scrutiny. There is a danger that Guantánamo Bay has or will become a staged detention center, while more egregious treatment of detainees is conducted elsewhere (p. 713).

This height of concentration is as a result of the horrific nature of Al-Qaeda using aircraft to collapse the twin-towers and the US determination to retaliate to prevent future strikes by invoking the Patriot Act 18 that gave the executive ample powers that even supersede civil liberties (Jamison, 2005 & Steyn, 2003). The Bay received its first batch of detainees from Afghanistan numbering twenty on Friday, January 11, 2002 (Jamison, 2005) and another thirty followed. Within a space of 10 days, the detainees, kept at 'Camp X-Ray' had risen to 158 and tallied till it hits over 600 inmates (Dahlstrom, 2003). Upon criticism, the US Military improved the conditions at Guantanamo by erecting permanent building to house the detainees [Camp Delta] (Jamison, 2005). By this quarantine, the Bush administration intended to hold the detainees indefinitely (Malinowski, 2008) and this was echoed in a 2002 speech by the government's Deputy Assistant Attorney General John Yoo that: "Does it make sense to ever release them [the Guantanamo Detainees] if you think they are going to continue to be dangerous, even though you can't convict them [detainees] of a crime" (Yin, 2005, p.151). However, to the Red Cross, "the system of keeping detainees indefinitely without allowing them to know their fates was unacceptable and would lead to mental health problems". This, Judith Butler describes as the creation of 'black hole' in the world leading to the 'Guantanamo Limbo' (Aradau, 2007) where prisoners were held "to put them beyond the rule of law, beyond the protection of any court, and at the mercy of the victors" (Steyn, 2003, p.14). Responding to concerns over suicide at the Bay, Howell (2009) relied on Foucault's 1973 'madness and civilization' theory to study along two narratives ('terrorist madness' - Bush administration) and ('psychologically impaired'-NGOs) and concludes that an understanding of those who are 'mentally ill' and 'madmen' (dangerous or pathological) should determine those to be incarcerated and others placed on coercive prescriptions to preserve security, order and liberty. However, to Jamison (2005), amid the detainees are juveniles aged (10-13) captured as enemy-combatants whose psyche may be different from the adults. On a decision continuum to 'release' or 'detain' inmates of the Guantanamo detention, Yin (2005) identified two perplexing challenges. Firstly, "continuing to detain persons who are no longer threats to the United States is undesirable and is unlikely to persuade the rest of the world of our good intentions". Secondly, "releasing persons who in fact intend to commit mass violence against the US or to rejoin the ranks of those

fighting our military is also undesirable" (p. 150). In this instance, the US appears to be safeguarding its *international reputation* as a defender of democratic ideals as Malinowski (2008) affirms that tracing the war on terror from Guantanamo to Abu Ghraib is "filled with episodes that have diminished its [the US] reputation and influence in the world" (p. 148) on one hand, and mindful of its *own security* on the other. In as much as this 'release-detain' stalemate makes Howell's study a step in the right direction, it raises similar concerns in Ghana whose president has hosted two of the inmates. The question of "why Ghana and not keep the detainees in the US or send them to Yemen" appears to be rooted on two notions. Firstly, the US somewhat received global backing to fight terrorism in the context 'we are fighting on behalf of the world'. Secondly, due to the global outcry to shut Guantanamo, it has became imperative that countries voluntarily accept the detainees to empty the facility and shut it.

Terrorism and media

Progressively, terrorism has become a global threat (Liebes & Kampf, 2007; Elu & Price, 2015) and elevated the significance of media coverage on the subject (Liebes & Kampf, 2007). Thus, global terrorism has occupied a salient position on the public agenda of many nations over the past three decades (Keinan, Sadeh & Rosen, 2003) and Ghana is no exception. Keinan et al. (2003) further hinted, "the world has come to witness a new type of terrorism characterized by a blatant orientation towards the media and designed to attract its attention. The ultimate target of this terrorism is the media consumer rather than the victim" (p. 150). In agreement with this assertion, Wilkinson (1997) described terrorist act as one "directed at a wider target than the immediate victims" (p. 51) and further espoused that whenever terrorist violence occurs, the media will always scramble to gather news to satisfy audience especially in the current study where there is high public curiosity to be informed about the victimizers and their victims (See also Liebes & Frosh, 2006; Yarchi, et al., 2013). By this, terrorists seem to capitalize on media's insatiable thirst for the news and indirectly engaged them as their propaganda machinery to feed the public with their information. It is in line with this that progressively, terror perpetrators themselves have legitimately become information source for the media (Liebes & Kampf, 2007) creating a win-win situation for the entities involved in this relationship. Whereas terrorists want exposure on media's primetime to publicize and legitimize their beliefs in the lens of their affiliates, mass media coverage of terrorism provides a persistent avenue to publish compelling stories to attract and maintain high audience/listenership (Wilkinson, 1997). Though the media extensively have been blamed for terrorism propagation anxieties, Nellis and Savage (2012) maintain that "even if information coming through the media causes fear, first amendment protections of press freedom should be respected and many follow the credo that the public has a right to know regardless of the outcome" (p. 764). Thus, the media functions on the policy of laissez faire and should not be constrained in its coverage of terrorism irrespective of the implications of conveying violence in the news to the public (Wilkinson, 1997). These are reminiscent of the position of Cooper (1976) when he argued that "the power of the fourth estate for good or evil is unquestionable" (p. 226). This critical role of the media informs Marks' (2007) position that without secrets documents that leaked to the media, conditions at Guantanamo and the fight shut it would hardly be uncovered and achieved; and this interface the exact situation in the Ghanaian experience of the evacuation of the two.

Putting Africa into perspective, the continent experienced significant degrees of terror attacks in 2014 (US Department of State, 2014). Between 1974 and 2008, Africa saw 4,993 incidence of terrorist activities of which 261 groups claimed responsibility (Elu & Price, 2012). In West Africa (WA) alone, terrorist groups include the al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the Movement for Unity and Jihad in WA (MUJAO), Boko Haram, Seleka-anti-Balaka and Janjaweed; and their activities have drawn international concerns (Nkwi, 2015). Tracking the history of terrorism, Nkwi (2015) argued that WA is a bastion of terror activities and that the increase of terrorism after the 9/11 should not be misconstrued as the starting point of the menace as some literature appear to portray. He underscored that terrorism in the region has affected its development negatively. One of its major targets is business related so that the economic cost to governments and society become severe (Elu & Price, 2015). Clarke (2015) contends that terrorism in Africa is a bigger threat compared to Europe but receives much less coverage. He compared 17 people killed in France and the massive global condemnation it received to figures ranging from 150 to over 2000 people killed in Baga, Nigeria. This appears to defeat the multilateral approach to dealing with terrorist attacks.

Theoretical underpinnings

This study relied on the theory of moral panic (Cohen, 1972) to understand how society reacted to the evacuation of the Guantanamo detainees to Ghana based on media stories. Cohen (1972) theorized that whenever values and interests are threatened, media depict the issues, public interest awakens, officials and opinion makers respond and panic precedes social changes. Among its plethora applications, moral panic is now "used by journalists to describe a process in which politicians, commercial promoters and media habitually attempt to incite and have become the way in which daily events are brought to the attention of the public" (McRobbie & Thornton, 1995, p. 559-60). The analysis of media reports in the current study is ideal considering Cohen's (2002) postulation that the media surfaces in all the three roles of moral panic: [i] agenda-setting [ii] transmitting the images and [iii] breaking the silence, making the claim.

Method

Design

Due to the global nature of this subject, the study focused online news of print media outlets because generally, newspapers remain the base of agenda-setting within Ghana's public sphere (Nyarko, 2016). Specifically, the *Daily Graphic* was sampled purposively for this study based on the following criteria: it is more refined and professional (Hasty, 2006), active online publication, high readership and regular review of its content by broadcast stations in Ghana. According to GeoPoll, out of the 15 top newspapers in Ghana, *Daily Graphic* has the highest readership [1.5 million], *Daily Guide* [726,000], *Ghanaian Times* [532,000]. Moreover, other titles run by *Daily Graphic* were rated: *The Mirror* [fourth-416,000], *Junior Graphic* [fifth-248,000], *Graphic Sports* [seventh-169,000] and *Graphic Showbiz* [ninth-146,000] (Zurek, 2018). Beyond these, record shows that the Ghanaian print (newspapers, magazines and journals) operating offline is estimated to be about 466 (IREX, 2012). Ghana's media ecology is dominated by state and private ownership.

January to June 2016 was the time frame for data gathering because it was the period that the detainees arrived in Ghana and the interest of both media and the public were high on the subject. Keywords as such: "Terrorism, Guantanamo Bay Detainees in Ghana" or related subjects were keyed into the search functionality on the website of *Daily Graphic* to retrieve the stories. Using inclusive criteria, all articles with a minimum content of two hundred words were selected. Consent to conduct this study was issued by the Graphic Communications Group Limited. The major limitation of this study is the use of only *Daily Graphic* for analysis. However, at the time of data gathering, a search on the websites of the other newspapers returned few or no Guantanamo story though they covered extensively offline.

Analysis of content

This study draws on the eight-step qualitative content analysis process: "prepare data, define unit of analysis, develop categories and coding scheme, test coding scheme on a sample of text, code all text, assess coding consistency, draw conclusions from the coded data, report methods and findings" by Zhang & Wildemuth (2009, p. 3-5). Content Analysis (CA) involves the process of applying an objective coding scheme to a raw data such that the information is condensed and systematically presented for analysis (Berg, 2007). Furthermore, CA is the "breaking down or fragmenting text into pertinent units of information for their subsequent coding and categorization" (Ruiz, 2009, p. 7). This approach enables text to be captured so as to deduce the subjective and inherent meaning they construct and attach to their actions (Neuman, 2006) in a scientific manner (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). Firstly, the articles *(N=50)* were downloaded, formatted, printed and labeled individually from 1 through to 50. The unit of analysis, categories and coding schemes were defined and

developed. Furthermore, some stories were sampled, coded to ensure consistency and shortfalls identified in the scheme were refined. Finally, all the articles were thoroughly read and relevant portions that speak to the evacuation process were coded under four units for analysis: (i) fear and panic, (ii) political dimension and (iii) legality, agreements and security issues.

Results

The president of Ghana on 7 January 2016 made a decision to accept two Guantanamo inmates voluntarily to contribute to global tranquility. The two, Mahmud Umar Bin Atef and Muhammed Salih Al-Dhuby were Yemenis captured from Afghanistan in 2001 as purported Taliban and Al-Qaeda enemy-combatant and detained at Guantanamo for 14 years according to US-Based *Fox News* (Obour, 2016). However, their evacuation to Ghana generated intense public discourse and outrage because society's values and interests appear threatened in line with Cohen's moral panic. For instance, Franklin Cudjoe, the president of IMANI Ghana assessed this development and described it as "unwise decision". Similarly, Keith Bluwey, an International Relations Analyst bemoaned: "the decision was "reckless" and "dangerous", [because] the Mahama administration was only interested in the financial benefits that it may derive from it" (*Daily Graphic Online*, January 7, 2016). These positions resonates a source from parliament that argued:

Although there is war in Yemen, some Yemeni citizens freed from Guantanamo were returned to their country. So on what bases were they brought to Ghana? [While] the issue was being openly discussed in the US, the [Ghanaian] Minister [of Foreign Affairs] had decided to discuss the matter with MPs behind closed doors (*Daily Graphic Online*, February 22, 2016).

This informed the position of the then minority leader in Parliament urging the president to "'come clean' on the issue and tell Ghanaians the truth" because to him "the entire process [of evacuation] was shrouded in secrecy [and] that was unacceptable in a democracy, except where Ghana's interest would be jeopardized in a more transparent and open process" (*Daily Graphic Online*, February 16, 2016). However, to Powell, governing authorities hold private information regarding the susceptibility of targets that terrorists intend to attack. He concludes that where the marginal security return to resources allotted to protecting more susceptible targets is smaller than the marginal return to resources allotted to protecting less susceptible targets, then secrecy dominates security (Powell, 2007) and this appears to be the situation Ghana finds itself. The evacuation of the Guantanamo detainees to Ghana discourse impacted society on three major fronts.

The fear and panic front

Fear gripped many Ghanaians when the Guantanamo inmates were evacuated to the country. On social media, responses of people were a mixture of anger, disbelief and fear. This reiterates that the Internet has broadened the spectrum of terrorist propaganda and revolutionized their operations with minimal risk

and cost (Bilgen, 2012). The image Guantanamo has calved for itself 'to house hardened terrorists' as defined by Donald Rumsfeld is a negative one and it is a ground for many anxious Ghanaians who interpret the evacuation as a transfer of US problem to Ghana despite studies that all countries are susceptible to terror attacks (Jones & Fong, 1994; Owusu-Sekyere, 2016). This becomes evident in the challenge the US itself is facing in the closure of the Guantanamo especially 'how' and 'where' to release inmates without compromising its security (Yin, 2005). Society's position is rooted in the notion that terrorism is in response to external stimuli, predominantly government actions (Crenshaw, 2008) hence the agitation by society against President Mahama's decision. Moreover, Rosendorff and Sandler (2004) found that proactive counterterrorism by a country [in this case the US] tends to breed negative externalities on other states by diverting attacks to foreign targets. The media depicts Bay in the following narratives:

Some weeks ago, there was a *bombshell!* Two suspected persons, who had hitherto been detained at the *infamous* US Guantanamo Bay Detention Center in Cuba, had been granted asylum in Ghana! (*Daily Graphic Online*, March 4, 2016).

The decision to host the detainees in Ghana has provoked a *firestorm of controversy* and *outrage* among Ghanaians, with many expressing fear that the move would undermine Ghana's internal security and expose the country to attacks from religious extremists (*Daily Graphic Online*, January 7, 2016).

By these, the detainees arrival triggered society to wrath, fear and confusion because firstly, they see the Bay to have a questionable reputation to associate with; secondly, the security of the state is being compromised and finally, the entire evacuation process is unreasonable. Sections of the Ghanaian public could not comprehend why the president would accept them into the country. For a moment, Ghanaians saw their country as an autocratic state where the president takes fundamental decisions without consulting its subjects. Subsequently, a civil society group requested that the matter be referred to the apex court for clarification in the statements:

In their [society's] bewilderment, people asked important questions: "Is Ghana, not a democracy?" "Could the government take such key decisions, without consulting the people? ...Should the decision not be challenged in court?" (*Daily Graphic Online*, March 4, 2016).

There was fear and trembling! People could not fathom why the government would allow such persons [deemed as terrorists] into Ghana! (*Daily Graphic Online*, March 4, 2016).

As safety debates heightened, it affected the way society functions. The phenomenon of 'be your brother's keeper' and 'community goodwill and coexistence' in Ghana began to wane dramatically. For instance, the Guantanamo discourse nearly deteriorated the strong relationship between Ghanaian Christians and Muslims, which has becomes a global model into unrest because discussion was done through religious lens. This led to a new phase of relationship among Ghanaians and foreigners marked by extreme suspicion especially at public places such as airports, bus stations, hotels, workplaces, cinemas, funeral grounds, malls and even churches and mosques recruited security officers to man their services. By this, terrorism generally steals society's freedom, desire to live normal lives and also breeds distrust that was hitherto unified thereby instilling fear. This reflects studies that terrorists aim at targets to cause fear and panic rather than the harm caused to the immediate victims (Krueger & Malečková, 2003; Bilgen, 2012). Thus, terrorists achieve their aim when they succeed to plant fear in society without necessarily causing grievous physical harm. The state of fear and panic further heightened with breaking news that:

Four [new] Yemeni nationals have been hauled before an Accra circuit court for allegedly entering Ghana with fake French passports and visas, thereby concealing their real identities (*Daily Graphic Online*, February 4, 2016).

In an atmosphere of fear about the spate of attacks in nearby nations like Nigeria, Ivory Coast, and Burkina Faso among others, it gave a reason for Ghanaians to be more anxious with the acceptance of the inmates. This concern suggests that a country's level of anxiety of terrorism occurrence is determined by its proximity to a victimized state. For instance, Jetter (2014) noted that media coverage of terrorist attacks is high for countries that trade with the US and are geographically closer to it. Putting the spate of terrorist attacks in West Africa under perspective, Kwesi Aning of the Kofi Annan International Peace Keeping Training Centre in Accra wrote cautioned:

We [Ghanaians] are a potential target. The president must whip his security chiefs into line. The quality of analysis they give the president must improve dramatically. Burkina Faso has been a confluence for the activities of terrorists for a very long time. We have also seen the worsening of the power struggle between the Islamic States and Al-Qaeda for the last two and half years with West Africa becoming the front line for that power struggle. Every single country in West Africa is a potential territory for the expression of this contestation of power and influence (Aning [yen.com], 2016).

By this, member states should develop consistent strategies. It is highly inadequate to organize security summits once in a blue moon. Daily and weekly intelligence gathering and strategies must be employed, monthly reviews adopted and yearly reforms injected in our way of life (Owusu-Sekyere, 2016) because terrorists have not rested and have been consistent in planning their attacks. Bueno de Mesquita (2008) had cautioned: "the dilemma is that counterterrorism tactics that increase short-run security may diminish long-run security by fanning the flames of conflict" (p. 7). Thus, inconsistent government policy rather breeds increased violence. Beyond these states of affairs that triggered anxiety among Ghanaians, fear and panic could have been better managed if major communication lapses were addressed. Firstly, the Ghanaian government machinery through its media should have

broken the evacuation news to citizens instead of by US-based *Fox News* and secondly, it lacked internal stakeholder briefing which supports the position that the entire evacuation process was handled in secret. Despite the above sentiments by the public, a section of the Ghanaian society did not share the 'fear syndrome' view. Adib Saani, a Ghanaian political and foreign policy analyst noted:

My 70 year old mother called me in a state of panic from Tamale [Northern Regional Capital]. Terrified, I enquired what the matter was. "I understand terrorists have invaded Ghana" she exclaimed. I instantly burst into laughter. As happening, I allayed her fears and tried desperately to make her understand we are safe (*Daily Graphic Online*, January 21, 2016).

Saani clarified that ex-convicts are those proven guilty by a competent court of jurisdiction, but the two Yemenis brought to Ghana after 14 years of incarceration at the detention camp cannot be described as such. The Yemenis were two of the over 500 inmates released without any crime. He reiterated:

Ghana is neither the first nor the last country to extend this humanitarian gesture. About 55 countries including European countries such as Sweden, Germany, France, Belgium, Spain, United Kingdom, have taken in these detainees. All former Gitmo detainees in Europe are living peaceful lives, without engaging in militant or other violent acts (*Daily Graphic*, January 21, 2016).

This reemphasizes that with the exponentially growth of terrorism (Jetter, 2014; Bilgen, 2012), the need to fight it from a multilateral approach rather than a unilateral one cannot be over-emphasized (Owusu-Sekyere, 2016). For instance, Albania accepted 5 of the 22 Chinese wrongly captured in Afghanistan and Pakistan by 'bounty hunters' after the US invasion and released in 2004. The rest remain stranded in Guantanamo for fear of possible torture if they return home (Saani, 2016). By this, Robert Jackson, the US Ambassador to Ghana stressed: terrorism is an international problem and that no country is immune to it. In a comment to allay society's fear and panic, a member of the clergy called for calm and cautioned that Ghanaians should react with circumspection towards the two Yemenis because any unfavorable reaction could rather draw extremist invasion:

Any negative reactions from Ghanaians can antagonize extremists who could eventually respond in negative ways we can hardly imagine, we [Ghanaians] should see the two individuals as private men and people who want to chart a course of life for themselves in our country [Ghana] and leave out any association with extremist groups (*Daily Graphic Online*, January 26, 2016).

This reinforces the study of Jones and Fong (1994) that a country with resilient media is prone to terror attack because its vociferous nature makes it ready to convey critical voices of society which may rather inflame tensions instead of calming it. However, a source disagrees saying: "it [the detainees transfer] is not in our interest, these people are not ordinary refugees who are being found

places of rest, […] and they should have no place in Ghana" (*Daily Graphic Online*, January 7, 2016). These resistances demonstrate the extent to which society abhors terrorism.

The Political front

The evacuation of the detainees to Ghana metamorphosed into a partisan political encounter. Ghana witnessed a 'for' and 'against' discourse within its public sphere where objectivity lost its virtue, especially at a time their arrival coincided with the country's 2016 general elections. For instance, Wereko-Brobbey bemoaned: "in our country, the highly partisan political atmosphere we have established does not allow any room for cross party consultation on matters of presumed national interest" (*Daily Graphic Online*, January 26, 2016). This has been branded the 'winner [of elections] takes it all phenomenon' in governance and though it has received public condemnation, it lingers on. Eugene Kwadwo Mensah, a Ghanaian Law Professor at the Chonnam National University in South Korea noted:

The political class reacted in predictable ways. For supporters of the government, the detainees were not really terrorists because they had not been convicted of any offence and the government's actions could be justified on humanitarian grounds. The government's critics condemned the decision and wondered why the authorities would put the country on the frontline of the war against terrorism (*Daily Graphic Online*, March 4, 2016).

Beyond the blame game that engulfed the public sphere to win political points, the study showed that a significant number of Ghanaians generally resented the acceptance of the two Yemenis into the country as exemplified by an appeal by a member of the clergy that Ghanaians should be patient and not over-react towards the detainees. However, to many Ghanaians, the acceptance of the detainees is tantamount to exposing the country to external aggression. A Ghanaian minority MP commented: "The people in my constituency are worried. This weekend I will meet a section of them and I will tell them that this is a government they should distrust" (*Daily Graphic Online*, February 22, 2016). This rhetoric seems to capitalize on the evacuation of the detainees to convey political messages aimed at making the sitting administration unpopular. Reflecting on Ghana-US relations, Nana Akuffo Addo, the leader of the then largest opposition party explains:

Even though we have strived and will continue to strive for strong ties of co-operation between our two countries [Ghana and US], we recognize that at the end of the day, decisions that are taken must serve the mutual interest of the two partners. Ghanaians are yet to be persuaded that this decision was in our national interest (*Daily Graphic Online*, February 25, 2016).

Abraham Amaliba, a legal practitioner and a member of the communication team of Mahama administration debunked the association of the two Yemenis to terrorism because for no offence, the US held them captives for years. Amaliba sees the president's accommodation of the detainees as a contribution to global peace and security and to help clean the mess the US has created. This is

evident in the statement below:

The government's reasons for accepting the former inmates of Guantanamo Bay was to correct the wrongs perpetuated by the United States of America. "They [the detainees] are not terrorists. They were only rounded up and made to go to a detention camp for 14 years but the US could not find any act of terrorism against them (*Daily Graphic Online*, January 26, 2016).

This resonates the position of Malinowski (2008) that the "challenge for President Bush's successor will involve not looking forward but looking backward at the abuses committed by the previous administration" (p. 157) and correcting them. However, the United States Ambassador to Ghana, Robert Jackson, finds the politicization of the transfer of the detainees to Ghana as undesirable. "I think it has become a political issue here. I regret that" (*Daily Graphic Online*, April 16, 2016). He [explained] that foreign policies should basically be non-political and that the US-African foreign policy had generally been bi-partisan. In as much as this public sphere discourse is good for a thriving democracy, over-politicization of issues has a high tendency to obscure the path to real democracy and development. To some analysts, President Mahama lost the 2016 Presidential Elections to the opposition party partly due to the acceptance of the detainees to Ghana which voters resented.

Legality, agreements and security front

At the height of the discourse surrounding the acceptance of the inmates was concerns about legality of the evacuation, agreement terms reached and how 'security-ready' is Ghana? The then minority in parliament assessed the acceptance of the detainees vis á vis the constitution and argued that: **"**The conduct of President Mahama in bringing the two former Guantanamo Bay detainees into the country without parliamentary approval constitutes a breach of the 1992 constitution which he [the president] has sworn to uphold" (*Daily Graphic Online*, February 16, 2016). Referring to Article 75 (1) and (2) of the Ghanaian constitution which states: "A treaty, agreement or convention executed by the president should come to the House under an Act for ratification or by a resolution" (*Daily Graphic Online*, January 30, 2016), Opoku Prempeh, then Minority Member of Parliament (MP) explained: I am not saying that "the President could not do what he had done, but the constitution which he has sworn to uphold says if he does that, he must refer it to this House" (*Daily Graphic Online*, January 30, 2016). To establish the constitutionality of the evacuation, two Ghanaians Margaret Banful and Henry Nana Boakye sued the government at the Supreme Court (SC) seeking for:

[i] a declaration that the continued stay of Mahmud Umar Bin Atef and Muhammed Salih Al-Dhuby in Ghana is unlawful, [ii] an order directed at the Interior Minister to immediately return the two detainees to the US government and [iii] an order that the government produce the diplomatic agreement between it and the United States government that gave the green light for the transfer of [the detainees] to Ghana (*Daily Graphic Online*, June 22, 2016).

Subsequently, Helen Ziwu who represented the Attorney General (AG) told the court there was no 'formal written agreement' leading the SC to order the state to: "Produce in camera the notes verbal, the subject matter of this application for a determination thereon pursuant to Article 135 clauses 1 and 3 of the constitution" (*Daily Graphic Online*, June 23, 2016). Making reference to the US legal system called "executive privilege" where the executive machinery need not consult parliament due to the nature of subject(s) like foreign policy and national security, Charles Wereko-Brobbey, the Chief Policy Analyst of the Ghana Institute for Public Policy Options (GIPPO) maintained:

The Guantanamo Two came to Ghana as a result of an agreement between the US and Ghana. So, this is a *foreign policy matter*. Since there is a disputed claim that they were engaged in terrorism, this is also a *national security matter*. Obviously, it would have been difficult and inappropriate for the government to consult us [Ghanaians] on this issue. If had done so, it would in all likelihood have jeopardized our relationship with the US – [but] who knows what we got in exchange for our decision? (*Daily Graphic Online*, March 4, 2016)

To Wereko-Brobbey, in as much as secrecy is paramount in issues of this nature, there seem to be a long-standing ties between the two countries which Ghana particularly would not like to lose it and may inform the acceptance of the detainees. Moreover, there are concerns that the government might have received some form of reward in this regard. As society became more concerned about this subject, the US Ambassador to Ghana, Robert Jackson explained to Nana Akufo Addo, the flagbearer of the biggest opposition party, New Patriotic Party (NPP), that the evacuation of the detainees was done on the understanding that the US pays the entire cost of their stay in Ghana for two years and noted that similar arrangements have taking place in other 55 countries. He further explained:

Beyond that, there has been absolutely no money, no payment, no bribe, [and] no agreement. We did not tie the Millennium Challenge Compact, which had already been signed, to the detainees. We have not increased or decreased US assistance to Ghana. I want to be very clear that there was no exchange of money as far as I am concerned (*Daily Graphic Online*, April 16, 2016).

Despite this understanding, the concerns of the public hovers around the tag "terrorists" and "terrorism" associated with the detainees and the fact that legal procedures were breached in the evacuation process.   Finally, the SC of Ghana ruled as unconstitutional the president decision because it lacked parliamentary approval and requested that government release the agreement to parliament for ratification. Though the detainees' stay officially expired on 6 January 2018, two reasons explain their continued residence. Firstly, the evacuation agreement has no exit plan after two years of stay. Secondly, the Mahama administration granted the detainees refugee status six months after their arrival in

Ghana on 21 July 2016. Though this is in line with international protocol, it affirms that the evacuation process was hidden. Three similarities emerged in how the US and Ghanaian administrations handled the inmates. In both countries: [i] activities were shrouded in secrecy, [ii] civil society went to court to challenge it, [iii] SC ruled as unconstitutional the handling of detainees and/or their evacuation. However, this resolution process through the court demonstrates deepening democracy.

Security is critical to every nation; however, in the Ghana experience, the detainees' evacuation coincided with its 2016 elections which by itself, needs intense security. According to the Minority Leader in Ghana's parliament, some security procedures were overlooked in the evacuation process. He noted:

Article 84 (a) of the 1992 Constitution mandated the National Security Council (NSC) to safeguard the internal and external security of Ghana, while Article 83 (1) made the Foreign Affairs and the Interior ministers members of the NSC, yet clearly national security meetings were not convened on the matter (*Daily Graphic Online*, February 16, 2016).

The Minority leader appears to argue that even if the evacuation process was not made public due to its nature, at least security institutions created by the constitution should have been consulted. Hitherto, reports by the US based *Fox News* show that the US government had published earlier that Bin Atef was a high risk to the US interests while Al-Dhuby is rated medium risk. However, to Ambassador Robert Jackson, the detainees were not imposed on Ghana but her representative thoroughly interrogated them in a statement that:

Ghana did not just accept the ex-detainees when the US Government approached it, [because] the country was [even] to host three of the ex-detainees but the Ghana Ambassador to the United States, Lt. Gen Joseph Henry Smith, interviewed them and finally accepted two instead of the three (*Daily Graphic Online*, April 16, 2016).

By this, the US appears to distance itself from the detainees' status and identities making Ghana bear full responsibility because the country interrogated them prior to acceptance. On Ghana's readiness to handle terrorism situations, the US will launch the "Epic Guardian" organised in Africa to increase the effectiveness of US and African security forces to respond to international threats: trafficking and terrorism. However, Azam and Delacroix (2006) show that the level of foreign aid a country receives positively correlates to the number of terror attacks it experiences because donor assigns counterterrorism responsibility wholly to terror-targeted administrations. It appears that terrorists subsequently strike to test the efficacy of the donation be it intelligence training, physical security equipment or financial. For secrecy reasons, 'prestige foreign aid' (Morgenthau, 1962) which donors capitalize on to create positive global image for themselves should have no place in terrorism-related matters due to security tendencies.

The study showed that rumors of terrorism alone amid the transfer of the detainees impacted Ghana negatively to the extent the Police Commander of the Eastern region of Ghana cautioned:

Hotel operators [should] reject clients who refuse security checks on their premises. This has become necessary to avert robberies and terrorist attacks following the rising trends of such attacks in some parts of the West African sub-region (*Daily Graphic Online*, January 26, 2016).

Don't be afraid of losing the little monies from clients who refuse security screening. They are dangers to your lifetime investments and you must do all you can to protect your investments from such persons (*Daily Graphic Online*, January 26, 2016).

By this, the famous marketing postulation: 'customer is king' began to fade unimaginably. This crystalized into society coining a slogan hash-tagged: "Rastafoɔ wɔ krom" meaning "mad people are in town". This rhetoric created fun to cushion people's fears; but also cautioned them to be careful and watchful. Terrorism has permeated society and the fear of it, particularly, is usurping people's freedoms, stifling businesses and would-be investments. For instance, the higher a country is prone to terror attack, the lower it chances of attracting foreign direct investment (Abadie & Gardeazabal, 2005). Beyond the disturbing human consequences (Jetter, 2014), terrorism can hinder growth and influence investment decisions (Jetter, 2014; Eckstein & Tsiddon, 2004) but the effects of such attacks are temporary (Eckstein & Tsiddon, 2004) if handled well. The interplay between issues of legality, politics and security in relation to the detainees' evacuation to Ghana bred fear, panic and resistance because society perceives terror-related matters to threaten their values and interests.

Conclusion

The study has analyzed online content of *Daily Graphic* and shows that overall, the public resented the decision by the president to accept the detainees to Ghana. The public panicked to the extent that they demanded their repatriation. The degree of fear is dependent on: [i] the level of media coverage of terrorism rumors prior to incidence of terror and/or arrival of the detainees and [ii] the proximity of a country to a victimized state. In Ghana, the proximity of victimized states such as Burkina Faso, Cote D'Ivoire, Nigeria among others heightened fears with the arrival of the detainees. Ghana's readiness to handle complex security situations as a major reaction presupposes that the trust of society in its own security services and intelligence determines the level of fear. Whereas the Mahama administration buttresses their actions on the multilateral approach rhetoric to combat terrorism, the public argues that significant legal structures were overlooked during the evacuation. To the public, though decisions on foreign policy and security were handled secretly, constitutionally created security entities should be consulted. The public perceives the detainees evacuation as the importation of 'trouble' from the US to

Actions and Reactions to the Evacuation of Guantanamo Bay Detainees to Ghana: A Content Analysis of Daily Graphic Online

Volume 5 Reporting 9

a purportedly 'terror-free' and 'peaceful' country. From the Ghanaian experience, terrorism affects all facets of life and it is evident that news of it rumours and the acceptance of purported terrorists into society alone causes as much panic in societies that have not experienced terrorism as it pertains in victimized states. This study recommends that media moderators, panelists and audience who phone-in to programmes should be mindful of their utterances during public sphere discourse in terrorism matters because it has a high tendency to inflame extremism. Generally, the dilemma is that whereas media coverage of terrorism provides the news to inform society; it also inflicts fear and insecurity.

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