Postcolonial Trajectories of Foreign News Selection in the Ghanaian Press

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This paper investigated, from multiple levels and perspectives, the influences exerted by global news organisations on the representation of Africa in the Ghanaian press detailing the conditions that have accounted for these influences, which remain celebrated as universal news values. Relying on content analysis, survey and ethnographic interview, the study uncovered a postcolonial ambivalence in which Ghanaian journalists rather largely sought to rationalise these multiple ideological influences on their news-selection with little resistance. The self-reflexive appropriation of an African perspective by these journalists was not reflected in their coverage of the continent. Their heavy reliance on global news organisations, especially the BBC, depicts a lingering postcolonial influence. Although they constructed their increasing use of Xinhua news agency as a form of resistance, the invasion of their subconscious mind by qualities of the BBC is rather submissive.

Introduction

The interest in the study of international communication dates back to history with increased desires of scholars to understand how power, strength and religion were exploited across borders using communication (Thussu 2006). The foremost attempt to explain comprehensively how overseas events become news in other countries has been referenced to the work of Johan Galtung (Galtung and Ruge 1965). Following Galtung's work, UNESCO commissioned few studies (McBride 1980; Sreberny 1985), that established that the dissemination and processing of news in the prevailing information order were marked by inequality and dependency. With increased interaction among people of the world today, some scholars have argued that a better understanding of foreign news messages could lead to an effective communication among nations (Salwen 2003). Mody (2010) viewed foreign news "as a major source of knowledge about the foreign Other" (3). However, developing countries are still struggling to maintain "political, economic and cultural control of their own history, images and national destiny" (McPhail 2006, 20).

The emerging literature on *Afro-pessimism* points to improvements in Africa's media image in the Western press (Bunce, Franks, and Paterson 2017); visual representation in British and French newspapers (Nothias 2014) and mainstream print media portrayal in Canada (Ojo 2014). Scott (2017) questioned the negative portrayal of Africa claim. He argued the claim is a myth that lacks sufficient empirical basis. Nothias (2017) and Obijiofor

and MacKinnon (2016) could not establish empirical support for Africa's negative portrayal in British, French and Australian newspapers respectively. Investigating Africa's coverage in the Ghanaian press has crucial merits that can be traced to that country's historical antecedents and anti-colonial ambivalence. Although the first African-owned newspaper, *The Gold Coast Times*, started to publish in Ghana in the year 1857 (Karikari 1992), Hachten (1971) confirmed that the mass communications in Africa, both past and present, in its "nature and extent" are products of European influences because modern mass communication was not an indigenous African creation and this accounted for why differences in media systems are traceable to colonial experiences (xv). For example, Ghana's early liberal press environment, which allowed the nationalist press to flourish, is usually traced to the liberal British press tradition. The secular press in Ghana at this epoch displayed a radically strong political commitment against the colonial rule (Karikari 1992). The editorial of the maiden edition of *The Gold Coast Times* published on March 29, 1874, summarised the struggle in these words:

> … .In instances where the rights and interests of the people are disregarded, and attempts are made to tamper with them, and to put them down with a high hand, we shall be found at our post, prepared to perform our duty fearlessly and independently, regardless of the frowns of King or Kaiser … . (Jones-Quartey 1974)

No wonder the first attempt to produce a newspaper for the whole of West Africa was started in Ghana in 1931. The *West African Times,* even though founded by J.B. Danquah, was supplied by Reuters as a sign of the country's anti-colonial ambivalence (Barton 2014). Ibelema and Bosch (2009) contended that Ghana—the country which led the way for West African press—did not by accident become the first sub-Saharan African country granted independence and continues to present media that is virtually free on the continent of Africa (302). Hasty (2005) confirmed the continuing importance of the press in Ghana's political discourse, as linguists do in traditional Ghanaian communication.

Skjerdal (2012) later argued that hybrid identities and roles of the African journalists were due to the fact that they saw themselves as members of a global professional community of journalists while at the same time maintaining a local identity. It is from this point that the literature misses how different interdependent ideological factors, including culture, politics, economy and technology, influence the news values of local journalists and yet are easily cited as the spread universal news values. This paper investigated, from multiple levels and perspectives, the influences exerted by global news organisations on the representation of Africa in the Ghanaian press detailing the conditions that have accounted for these influences, which remain celebrated as universal news values. The specific research questions answered were: (1) what is the weight of influence individual global news organisations carry in the Ghanaian press as sources? (2) From the perspective of the journalists, what accounted for these influences on their daily foreign news selection?

Literature Review

The general question of what influences journalists in the process of news selection has been severally investigated (Bednarek and Caple 2014; Eilders 2006; Kepplinger and Ehmig 2006; Staab 1990). Some scholars have argued that events have news values, which are global news selection criteria (Schwarz 2006; Palmer 2000). Kepplinger and Ehmig (2006) concluded that the chances of news stories getting published can be

predicted by news factors. Shoemaker and Cohen (2006) rejected these arguments because, to them, news and newsworthiness are theoretically distinct (37). Shoemaker and Reese (2014) later offered a different dimension for understanding news selection with the argument that the influences on journalists in the process of news selection ought to be tackled both at the micro and macro levels of influence. They introduced the *hierarchy of influences*. Zhong and Newhagen (2009) established that cognitive processes of news decision making provided a better insight to understand the journalistic practice of news selection. These arguments in the conceptualisation of news, when applied to the coverage of Africa, should remind most journalists involved that "news values" are not the exclusive determinant of journalists' coverage of the continent.

News Value and Ideology

Westerstahl and Johansson (1994) distinguished between two types of motives that guide media actors in their news selection process, namely: "the assumed taste or interest of the audience and the intention to influence the audience" (71). They associated the former motive with "news value research" and the latter with "ideology". The concept of news facto*r*s traces news selection decisions to specific qualities of events (See Caple and Bednarek 2013). The theoretical model behind this notion assumes that several news factors determine the news value of an event and the eventual decision of journalists whether or not an event is newsworthy. While news value research remains so far the most dominant approach to answer the question of *what is news*, several scholars (Eilders 2006; Lewis 2006; Shoemaker 2006; Staab 1990) continued to argue that news factors offer only a partial explanation of the news-selection process. Elliott and Golding (1979) said news values exist but they are just the resultant explanation for sources selected already. Employing the theoretical approach of "Ding an sich", Schulz posited that news factors aren't objective qualities of events but hypotheses of reality set up by journalists, which could also be regarded as the journalist's own definitions and interpretations of reality (Schulz 1982 as cited in Staab [1990, 4]). According to Staab (1990), the central theoretical challenge of news factors as discussed by Schulz (1982) relates easily to the ontological and epistemological question of the nature of a subject-object relationship, which is the issue of how a recognising subject relates to a recognised object (see Staab,1990).

News selection according to O'Neill and Harcup (2009, 168) is not only based on intrinsic aspects of events but also on external functions including "occupational routines, constraints and ideology". These include media ownership, training, access, relationship and history (Hachten 2004; Golding 1977). For example, professionalism was the catch-phrase that lured independent African states to integrate into a "dominant global culture of media practices and objectives developed in the media of the advanced societies through three mechanisms: institutional transfer, training and education, and the diffusion of occupational ideologies" (Golding 1977, 294). Golding (1977) argued that institutional transfers in the past were more than just organisational replications, such as the case of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) relay service in colonial territories. It was a "wholesale acquisition of modes of practice, standards and assumptions which came to displace discussions of possible alternatives that existed in Africa" (295). He added that the BBC's work in the Third World countries was a function that went far beyond advisory roles and included "executive, exemplary and authoritative roles" (296). Bicket and Wall (2009) have confirmed that the BBC brand in the United States wields significant influence.

However, de Beer (2010) contested these claims of influence with the argument that the nature of modern core–periphery news flows has become *deterritorialised*, in that, certain semi-periphery nations have become even more impactful than some traditional core nations and actors. Public diplomacy, as an element of soft power, relies on media communication to inform and influence the global publics (Guo and Vargo 2017; Golan and Himelboim 2016; Nye 2004). Ting (2010) has demonstrated that foreign news reporting has been influenced by a global consciousness to go abroad which re-established the genre's contemporary appeal.

Postcolonial Theory

The postcolonial theory represents a vast field of inquiry that has been quite contested even on the basis of its nebulous terminologies. Based on a poststructuralist perspective of representation, power, and identity, postcolonial critique provides an avenue to question the spread of media content from advanced liberal democracies as evidence of globalisation and universality of news values (Sayed 2016; Wasserman 2006). The dynamics involved in "Western colonialism and anti-colonialism resistance" in "whatever form, both in the *West and Non-West* lingers" (Prasad 2003, 5) and that is why Shome and Hegde (2002, 251) contended that postcolonial studies should not merely chronicle the facts of colonialism but rather offer "an emancipatory political stance or interventionist theoretical perspective" when examining these issues.

Foreign news selection between and among nations has been studied mostly from the perspective of journalistic routines. Mody (2010) called for the investigations to include geopolitical arrangements and relations of nations. Nothias (2015) argued that there is a shift from Afro-pessimism to Afro-optimism, as Western journalists themselves are engaged in a self-reflexive discussion of their works. Shome and Hegde (2002) have argued for the integration of postcolonial studies and communication with the assertion that the "politics of postcoloniality is centrally imbricated in the politics of communication studies" (249). To understand the ambivalence of our deeply divided global world today requires that one *denaturalises* communication studies so that we do not preserve the innocence of Western-dominated knowledge (Grossberg 1982). Postcolonial connections remain an effective way to look at how social structures embedded in our daily life seem to affect almost everything we do (Obijiofor 2009; Shome and Hegde 2002). For example, how the re-use of certain sources reinforces imperialist values. Shome and Hedge stated that:

> The postcolonial connection is a powerful way of restoring the macro structures and the historical trajectories that frame contemporary social relations within the global/local nexus and it allows us to go beyond the descriptive and account for the ways in which the Western realities have spread across the world as the universal condition. (Shome and Hegde 2002, 261)

To better appreciate foreign news selection in the Ghanaian press, epidermalisation, mimicry, and hybridity are discussed as organising concepts. Frantz Fanon used a pathological metaphor known as *epidermalisation* to describe colonial conditions that cover both perceptual and physical anti-black racism and the primacy of sight. In *Black Skin, White Mask,* Fanon said, "I am overdetermined from without. I am the slave not of the idea that others have of me but of my own appearance" (116). By this, he put up a

notion of internalised oppression known generally as epidermalisation of inferiority (Fanon 2008) and this he argued has caused some people of colour to accept their subjected position as being the *natural order of things*. Fanon never stopped articulating this point. In *Wretched of the Earth,* he made a refreshing appeal:

> Come, then, comrades, the European game is finally ended; we must find something different. We today can do everything, so long as we do not imitate Europe, so long as we are not obsessed by the desire to catch up with Europe. (Fanon 2001), 251)

Fanon had the conviction that colonialism managed to impose on the native new ways of seeing. For Fanon (2008), mimicry results from the exertion of colonial power on the colonised in a manner that they lose the possibility of an autonomous cultural identity and gain legitimacy mostly by taking on Western ideals—or what he has called *white masks*. The fundamental normative quest of Fanon, according to Fuss (1995, 151–153), is "how one can prevent the strategic imitation of whiteness from turning into an unconscious identification with the colonising culture". In applying this concept to Ghana, the question is not only the imitations in the media text but also the way local journalists identified themselves with the qualities of the global actors they imitate and the level of (un) consciousness with which this happens.

Although imitations generally fit quite well into Fanon's fear, other scholars disagree with the binary fixity in Fanon's conceptualisation. In Bhabha's (1994) revision of mimicry, he accepted that changes in the psychic realm that were inflicted on the colonised during the colonial experience are very active even in the postcolonial era. To Bhabha, globalisation, for example, looks very much like being ruled by a superior culture that suppresses one's culture except that the ruling is now predominantly through capital flows rather than force of the military. Bhabha's contribution to mimicry contends that the "doubling of identity comes with the question of what does a man want and this question produces the binary self because identities work in a kind of narcissistic reflection of One in the Other" (Ghasemi, Sasani, and Nemati 2017, 27). He, however, cautioned that the imitation practised by the colonised is not homogenous but metonymic resemblance, repetition and difference simultaneously. Bhabha introduced the *third space,* as a place of hybrid identity that emerges from the fact that the colonised had to live on the edges of two worlds after being psychologically persuaded to imitate their ruler in language, attitude and worldviews. He characterised the imitation at the *third space* as *subversive* in its practice, which means the coloniser's superior role at the centre is disrupted.

The disclosure of ambivalence of colonial discourse disrupts the authority carried by the coloniser. Bhabha argued that the interaction between the colonised and their coloniser at the *third space* gets very active and revalued. The displacement or strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal and repetition of discriminatory identity effects emerge in what he called *hybridity*. Kraidy (2002) cautioned that the "celebration of local reception of global media texts as a site of cultural mixture" misses the fact that these replications largely show how the communicative practice in international news is "constitutive of, and constituted by, socio-political and economic arrangements" (317). To conceptualise the Ghanaian foreign news field to include these active performances of the hybrid-self, would mean, based on the assumption of Bhabha that power is spread evenly between the Ghanaian press and their global news counterparts.

Methodology

Shome and Hegde (2002) have suggested a methodological flexibility for postcolonial studies that allows different philosophical traditions to examine the changing contexts of colonialism. The design employed in this study encouraged a constant feedback from one stage to another reflexively through a conscious search for iteration, observation, questioning, making inferences and repeating the cycle until most questions were answered with the greatest emic validity.

Content Analysis

The quantitative content analysis counted the foreign news sources over two years from January 2011 to December 2012 in the selected newspapers, which represent both private and public ownership structures as well as 92 per cent of daily newspaper circulation in Ghana (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung 2014). A team of four Teaching Assistants at the University of Cape Coast were trained to code frequency of sources. The process had checks and balances to avoid errors. No single coder was allowed to exhaust the process - that is, to code, add the total figures of the count and enter them on the Excel spreadsheet to complete the coding process. This meant that after each working day, code sheets were randomly totalled by any of the coders and entered into the spreadsheet by different coders. This strategy ensured that some errors relating to summation were corrected.

Ethnographic Interview

I relied primarily on the findings from the ethnographic interview conducted at the top four daily newspapers in Ghana: *Daily Graphic*, *Ghanaian Times*, *Daily Guide* and the *Ghanaian Chronicle*. The ethnographic interview consisted of two weeks of non-participant observation combined with different genres of the interview. For the first two days, there was a total lack of structure and control and I simply recorded some conversations I could remember after the day's work. At this stage, I had eight hours of observation per day. The ethnographic encounter eventually evolved to include informal interviews with no conscious structure beginning from the fourth day. At this stage, I reduced the observation to four hours each day to allow me an hour-long conversation at the close of the working day. The interviews and field notes were thoroughly perused overnight before the next working day. This continued with sit-down semi-structured interviews and later structured interviews in the second week. The journalists are confronted with the results of the content analysis. The focus of both the interview and observation gained shape and structure as I moved through the interview genres from "lack of structure" (Day 1) to "structure" by the end of the fieldwork.

The process was repeated among the four selected newspapers. To synthesise the various experiences expressed by the journalists in the individual interviews and observations, I administered a structured survey for the editorial staff of the four newspapers.

I developed the field notes into thick descriptions and transcribed interviews. After a close reading of the interview transcripts, I developed a list of concepts that were revealed by the data in addition to initial codes. I read the transcripts for the second time and noted possible modifications to initial concept ideas. Using key-words-in-context and constant comparison strategies of analysis separately, I coded the entire data making the necessary

comments and memos for the reasoning behind each code. After the initial coding process, I printed out the code systems from the MAXDQA software for manual consistency check with a colleague in the office. Based on the code system, memos and comments, I began the second level coding with the purpose of seeking patterns and connecting code into a conceptual hierarchy.

Survey

For purposes of data triangulation and to resolve the major weakness of content analysis, a survey that explored the perceptions of the journalists about various aspects of foreign news was administered. It was pilot tested at *Mirror* and *Spectator* newspapers in Ghana. The respondents in the main survey included editors, sub-editors, photojournalists, reporters and interns working in editorial roles. These editorial staff were 100 in all and 100 questionnaires were distributed to them with a response rate of 61 per cent. They ranked the nine international news agencies from 1st to 9th where 1st is the most favourite they would turn to for news on Africa and 9th the least favourite. In this analysis, the ranking was coded as such: 1st = 10points; 2nd = 9 points; 3rd = 8 points; 4th = 7points; 5th as 6points; 6th = 5points; 7th = 4points; 8th = 3points; 9th = 2points (the 9th rank was provided for respondents who felt their favourite was not on the list).

Findings and Discussions

These findings are presented in line with the two research questions:

RQ 1: What is the weight of influence individual global news organisations carry in the Ghanaian press as sources?

This question focused on the count of bylines or stated sources of the foreign news article including the articles that belonged to reporters of these newspapers themselves as well as the news articles that were not sourced at all. Figure 1 shows the details:

Figure 1 indicates a vivid general reliance of the Ghanaian press on global news organisations for the coverage of foreign news. This phenomenon is the result of complex interrelated and interdependent factors that cannot be easily delineated. However, this paper attempted to explain it from two stages. First, the major conditions responsible for the general reliance include globalisation of Western professional ideologies; economic rationale; the Internet and its associated technology. At this stage, no strong postcolonial influences are imputed because many of the global news organisations had no colonial and postcolonial relations that are strong enough to warrant such influences. Beyond this level though comes the latter stage influence shown by the unequal contest among the global news organisations that pointed to postcolonial legacies. Although not mutually exclusive, these two stages have been demarcated for the purpose of analysis.

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) is the most used source of foreign news with about 58 per cent of the total articles published in the newspapers during the period of study. The "Others" category is made up of all other foreign news agencies used, in addition to those that appeared on the code sheet. It represented the second largest source (10.61 per cent) because it covered several popular news agencies that were not used consistently as a source across the four newspapers to warrant a position on the
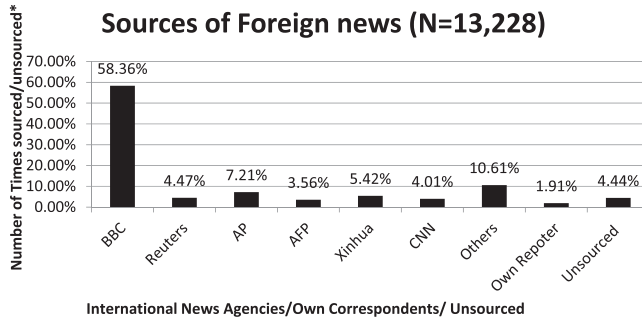
Sources of Foreign news (N=13,228)

FIGURE 1

Sources of foreign news in the Ghanaian press (*Daily Graphic, Ghanaian Times, Daily Guide* and *Chronicle*) including own reporters and Unsourced news items for the period of 1st January 2011 to 31st December 2012

code sheet. The Chinese Xinhua news agency was the third single most used agency in the Ghanaian press with 5.4 per cent of the total amount of sources (13,228) counted over two years. Xinhua's entry performance is slightly above Reuters, AFP, CNN and just a little below AP. The Chinese government's engagements and programmes in Ghana provided further details on this performance. The interviews confirmed the existence of a standing agreement between Chinese Xinhua news agency and two newspapers in Ghana (*Daily Graphic and Ghanaian Times*). Figure 2 displays how the international news agencies competed among themselves, as sources for foreign news coverage in the Ghanaian press, assuming there were no *own reporters* and *unsourced news* components.

The influence that the BBC World Service commands increased to over 62 per cent, establishing the British foreign broadcaster as the single most used foreign news organisation. There is also the preponderance of other Western news agencies such as AP, CNN, Reuters and AFP.

The findings of the content analysis revealed a lot but with little explanation. To avoid over speculation of the data, the findings of the perception survey became quite useful. Table 1 provides the details of the analysis:
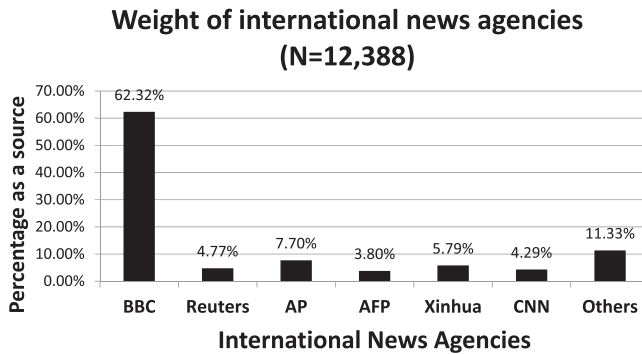
Weight of international news agencies (N=12,388)

FIGURE 2

Weight of influence among International news agencies as sources in the Ghanaian press from 1st January 2011 to 31st December 2012

The BBC is not just the most used foreign media in Ghana as shown by this perception table, but it also comes with a very high ranking. Considering that 1st rank was awarded 10points, a 9.51 shows the BBC was, on the average, ranked 1st by 95 per cent of the respondents. CNN was the second most influential, while the fourth and fifth went to Reuters and AP respectively. This shows more dominance by the Western press.

Al-Jazeera ranked third as the single disruption of the Western domination. However, Al-Jazeera was not consistently sourced in these newspapers to even warrant a space on the coding sheet during the content analysis. The *Pan African Press* (PanaPress) and *Xinhua* ranked seventh and eighth respectively. Comparing these to the content analysis data, it is clear that Xinhua is poorly rated among the journalists of these four Ghanaian newspapers, however, through public diplomacy agreement signed with two of these four newspapers, the Chinese news agency has become the third single most used news agency as a source for foreign news. The regional news initiative of *PanaPress* was not consistently and significantly used as a source, to justify their inclusion on the content analysis codebook, however, the initiative even ranked better than Xinhua. This gap in the perceptions survey and content analysis results are revealing when it comes to what journalists say individually and what their editorial output as an organisation looks like. Comparing the most used sources and the organisation wide ranking by the journalists, it obvious that the BBC World Service commands an enormous influence but this could be better explained by the constructions, journalists and editors, give to it.

RQ 2: From the perspective of the journalists, what accounted for these influences on their daily news foreign selection?

All the four newspapers had reporter/editor roles which meant that the foreign pages were part of the special desks headed by page editors who took full responsibility for whatever appeared on their pages. This also meant that the journalists served as reporters as well as editors for their own pages. They usually made the daily news-selection decisions. They would receive recommendations from their colleague editors in the editorial conference but generally, the news-selection decision of the day is exclusively theirs. The following themes were unpacked through the analysis of the entire data:

Conceptual substitution theme, as used in this paper, represents a cognitive processing feature displayed by the journalists for constantly making reference to the BBC whenever they needed to refer to an international news agency in answering questions that even had nothing to do with the BBC. For example: "If you take the BBC, for instance, they make

TABLE 1

Analysis of international news agency preference of Ghanaian journalists

International news agencies	Total rank points (TRP)	TRP/61 (average TRP)	Position
Xinhua	265	4.34	8th
AFP	336	5.51	6th
BBC	580	9.51	1st
AP	353	5.79	5th
Al-Jezeera	436	7.15	3rd
CNN	496	8.13	2nd
Reuters	419	6.87	4th
PanaPress	268	4.39	7th

sure they are covering almost everywhere" (Tms p1).[1] Another said: "When BBC or other international news agencies are reporting these stuff, I can't complain" (Gde p2). The cognitive fixation of citing the BBC as the usual example also became metonymic. That is, in referring to all the international news agencies, the journalists used the BBC, which is only one of them, to represent the whole. Explaining his daily routines as the page editor, the journalist said: "With technology, most nights I go on my phone to BBC and the next morning because I have read them, I just go ahead and follow how things are breaking on from each of these networks" (Crs p3). The use of the plural "these networks" later in the sentence displays this metonymy which is revealed across different interviews. This conceptual substitution was not limited only to examples; there were occasions where the journalists, in the course of describing their preferences, had to measure other international news agencies by the perceived qualities of the BBC. By so doing, they argued, for example, that to better appreciate the availability of resources to an international media organisations, one needed to see how it is in the case of the BBC:

> There is football in Italy and the BBC's team is there even during the campaign and everything because it's money. And someone needs to mobilise these resources and this is something common to the Western press that we do not have. (Gph p5)

Measuring other international news media by the qualities of the BBC was common and coded across all the six interviews. One journalist said: "I diversify my news sources a lot. I go to the likes of CNN, Al Jazeera based on where the news is happening but all in all, I go to the BBC first and see how others fall in line" (Crs p3). These cognitive conceptual substitutions, apart from being *unconscious,* revealed that these patterns of thinking are not different from the content analysis and survey data analysed. The presence of the BBC's qualities to the subconscious minds of these journalists is significant and confirms the British broadcaster's qualitative influence in addition to the enormous quantitative weights already established in this paper with regards to the research question one (RQ1). It equally signals the presence of the major normative concern of Frantz Fanon that the strategic imitation of whiteness could turn into an unconscious identification with the colonising culture and its institutions.

The theme of *cultural defeat and domination* was widely revealed by the data. This was the most coded theme under different sub-themes during the preliminary coding. Even though there were several admissions of bias by the Ghanaian journalists relating to slant and negativity on the part of the international news media against the continent, they ended up suggesting that they still had no alternatives or they measured their alternatives with their perceived qualities of the BBC World Service. For a start, there is a firm confirmation of negative portrayal and bias towards Africa in the international media among these Ghanaian journalists. For instance, in answering the question of whether there was any evidence of bias in the reportage of Africa that were recognisable to them, two journalists answered respectively:

> Oh I know because, maybe, I am a senior journalist. I know that slanting, they have to continue keeping Africa's negative perception. It was a worrying thing that is why we had to try and do some editing, edit out those that connote extreme negativity. (Gph p5)

> There is an old myth that nothing good comes from Africa and so they have to reinforce that. I know this because when they come to Ghana and visit the posh areas of East Legon,

they won't take a picture of that, they will take negative ones like the slum of Agblog-bloshie. (Gph p4)

Another one even asked me to join him watch a YouTube video, when he said:

I watched an interesting introduction of the BBC's Andrew Neil on his show called 'This Week' a day after the Paris attack. He recited the might of France as a world power. Compare that to the news a day after there is bombing by 'Boko Haram' in Nigeria and you will notice the slant of how two different terrorist acts are described by the same media organisation. (Crs p3)

After these splendid admissions of bias by most of the journalists, they then highlighted their inability to change the narrative about Africa:

Because we are picking stories from what the BBCs of this world have published, this is mainly what you will get. Sometimes we are not happy to be using all these negatives but that's what they have and the thing that you aren't there where they covered the event. We do not have the opportunity or the resources to go and cover. Sometimes I wonder if that is all they can cover. (Gph p4)

One of them argued that the Ghanaian journalist's incapacity to have alternatives, dates back to history. He said, "even before the advent of the Internet, we did not have any other choice, it was difficult to get foreign news except to listen to the BBC radio or VOA. We couldn't afford to send people around Africa" (Crs p3).

Other journalists described the BBC as the most prominent and credible media they knew growing up and as a result, they have kept learning from the BBC until now. In describing his preferences for any international news agencies, the interviewee said:

I think besides knowing that other media houses exist, I have been used to the BBC from my infancy. My father, in those days, had this shortwave radio at one point in time and I switched between the BBC Hausa and English services all day. One is always learning and improving their English language by listening to them. (Gde p2)

This description, apart from being a genuine preference for the BBC, also represents a cultural domination emanating from the fact that the BBC was the only alternative available at the time he was growing up. In fact, this domination surfaced visibly in his next assertion. While discussing how he felt about the negative images reported about Africa that have been replicated in his newspaper, he defended the images and added that he did not even believe in the self-rule of the African:

I don't think I have any cause to dispute any of the reports I hear on BBC because I still have this idea that we are not doing well as Africans and due to this sometimes Yaw and I, joke over this Kwame Nkrumah's position that the black man is capable of managing his own affairs. I think I don't share in those positions because by and large, they have messed up governance, the typical African leader tries to go beyond the constitution so that he will stay beyond what the standard tenure he is entitled to and it is like that in most countries in Africa. (Gde p2)

However, comparing this assertion about self-rule to the answer he provided on lack of diversity in his use of foreign news agencies, one could argue that he is no longer capable of being critical of his childhood preference - the BBC:

> I don't think it is good this way. The graph is quite lopsided. One has to spread one's net to other places maybe because we have put the BBC in that category, it has even become very difficult to critique their presentations which isn't good enough. (Gde p2)

These two assertions are typical of a stage in the Fanonian concept of internalised oppression where the colonised is fully aware of oppressions exerted by the coloniser but accepts it as a *natural order of things*. Fanon described this as an internalised oppression or epidermalisation of inferiority, which is unlikely to end as long as the colonised continues to imitate or catch up with the coloniser's ideas. The idea that Africans have themselves to blame for remaining poor and consequently incapable of telling any good story or getting reported in any good image runs across the interviews but only one journalist linked this to its root cause: the uneven encounters Africa lived and continues to live in. As long as colonial institutions, such as the BBC, remain the standard by which African journalists compare themselves, the imitation will not end soon. Therefore, depicting these imitations as universal news values is not wholly accurate.

The journalists also demonstrated a sublime resistance with the claim that they possess an exclusive native African perspective. They usually edited some negative content and descriptions. But these remain only ideas because performative options for resistance available have not been institutionalised. To edit out some negative ideas was not a requirement of any in-house style guide. Rather, the Ghanaian journalists' level of wholesale adoption of "Britishness" because of colonial history, could not represent a negotiation of their position in a lopsided power relation like the one they operate in.

In explaining how much responsibility they could assume for the negative images about Africa they reproduced in the Ghana press from the international media, one of the journalists accepted having weakness that had been magnified by the possession of British surname and the boss who knew this usually jokingly said: *you're* British*:* "I am maybe biased because I am 'Q …..Q', so I'm 'British'. We do sometimes deal with this when the deputy editor calls me 'British' for using more BBC and UK stories than others. Maybe, I am really *British*" (withheld).

Another journalist, while responding to a lack of diversity in his foreign news selection, explained that he shared the views the BBC carried on most issues because Ghanaians are British-inclined:

> It looks like a country like Ghana is British. Don't you think so; you know we worked with the British for many years as a colony. Because of that, we are British-inclined, we prefer the write-ups and views of the BBC to the rest. (Tms p1)

These journalists, having established throughout the interactions, that the BBC is full of good qualities, would like to gain credibility by associating themselves with the British broadcaster not only by saying that they are "British", but also speaking of the central role the BBC occupies in their daily news selections as one journalist said: "I use BBC a lot. Occasionally I use AP" (Gde p2). Another one said, "I give priority to all international news agencies closest to the place of an event but all in all, I go for BBC first" (Crs p3). Another journalist also said, "When I am beaten by time and I am quickly looking for news, I first go to the BBC because it's timely and reliable" (Gph p4). Furthermore, one of them said, "I like the BBC because they are current and reliable. We look forward to their qualities becoming our values too" (Tms p1). These were not all, another journalist had a stronger opinion as this:

> You will go there because you don't have a choice, they are timely and when you pick a story from BBC and compare it with other at least the facts won't change. You look generally, globally at what is happening because we share a worldview with them. (Gph p5)

In a discussion on the way forward, some of the journalists mentioned the need for disruption of postcolonial barriers and to engage the use of modern technologies to create a sharing hub among African journalists because they felt Western journalists covering the continent were interested in something else:

> I am an African and if I am writing something about Mali or Somalia, I will not look for dirty children, excuse me to say, in "tattered clothes". I am used to seeing barefoot kids. When they come here they get blinded by stuff they have never seen before. (Gph p4)

The journalists equally argued, across the interviews, that an African perspective exists, which is different and represents different things compared to what other cultures might make of it. To promote the "African perspective", they require some organisation amongst themselves and resources to drive that in an era of cost-cutting. This is what one said:

> I think the speed of technology and social media provides us with a unique opportunity to share among ourselves. It just needs somebody to make the first move, to maybe form a sub-regional body taking the initiative and then eventually spreading it to the entire continent. (Gde p2)

The appropriation of an African perspective and the heavy reliance on global media in this study points to an observation of Skjerdal (2012) that African journalists appropriate local identity while at the same time accepting inclusion into a global professional journalism culture. This provides us with the basis to argue that some kind of hybrid self of the Ghanaian journalist theoretically exists. The interviewees argued that organisational level failure to support journalist to report about the continent has actually exacerbated the situation of reliance on foreign news organisations. Management has relied on the argument of cost-cutting to neglect their commitment towards journalists' comfort to report from abroad. Talking about their experiences in reporting on elections in neighbouring Togo, Cote d'Ivoire and Nigeria, the journalists recounted these:

> I covered elections in Nigeria and Cote d'Ivoire. The resources that the big international news agencies released and what our own have is very intimidating. Ours was limited. To go and speak to someone with language limitation and lack of resources on your side was like hell. I cannot afford dinner or go to the Internet Café with my sources. I even had to return quickly because my money was finished. (Gph p5)

> I think it is a problem, it's difficult the resources are not available, even if they are available they are not released because those who are supposed to release them don't find it necessary going to another African country. But they are happy when we break some crucial original stories from Nigeria through my contacts because I used to work there. (Gde p2)

These assertions suggest lack of institutional support, which eventually renders the hybrid self in this scenario timid and dominated by the preponderance of lopsided power dynamics between the actors in the foreign news field.

Most journalists have ideas about what an event should look like to be considered news. One such quality is that the news item must be current and updated. When an international event happens, journalists consider how much-updated details the various international news reports could provide in the shortest possible time and made available online. These are some of the quotations:

> In my experience, we had to because the BBC is current and writing better. I like the

> BBC, they are current. (Gph p5)

> Most of the time, it is BBC that is current. (Tms p1)

> I prefer BBC because it's very current and cuts across the world and the continent either good or bad. (Tms p1)

In addition to these, some journalists also mentioned the international outlook of the news items and varieties provided for them to select from in order to depict the world in general. Others felt the stories needed to be in-depth or comprehensive because they first needed to understand the context in detail. These are some of the examples of their responses:

> The news must have a worldwide dimension. (Gph 6)

> I like the BBC because they give an in-depth analysis and they also dwell more on African issues. (Crs p3)

These quotations could be interpreted as criteria journalists must work with, but it is not clear whether their decision of selecting 58 per cent of BBC stories was based on these facts or these are justifications for decisions they have already taken.

Conclusion

Foreign news in Ghana is predominantly taken from the BBC and other prominent global news agencies from Europe, North America and recently Xinhua news agency from China. The journalists mentioned that strong economic rationale, the Internet and its associated technologies and professional co-optation have driven the reliance currently being witnessed. Although these conditions inure to the benefit of the BBC as well, their unmatched qualitative and quantitative influences recounted by the journalists have promoted the British broadcaster as the ultimate reference for most professional journalists in Ghana. Notwithstanding the fact that the BBC is generally an influential international media organisation, with very rich professional values, the unequal influence they carry among their global news counterparts remains quite telling.

Relying on the earlier argument of de Beer (2010) that influences on the international narrative of periphery countries have become *deterritorialised* in the current news flow era, one would argue that BBC's influence on the Ghanaian press goes beyond cultural globalisation. Three main justifications from the analysis can be recalled. First, conceptual substitution, which represents an unconscious identification of the Ghanaian journalists with the BBC's values was pervasive. Second, even though most of the journalists agreed that foreign news reporting about the continent was negative, they still argued that it was *a natural order of things* to depend on the BBC, in particular, because self-rule is worthless.

Others attributed the BBC's impact over their childhood media experience as contributing to a shared-world view they now hold. These unconscious identifications with a superior culture remain at the core of Fanon's internalised oppression concept.

Fanon's argument that epidermalisation urges an oppressed person to a permanent dream to become like the dominator is nuancedly useful due to the consistent gaze and "looking over the shoulder" that rather solidifies the superior roles the BBC, as a British colonial broadcaster, has always held. The possibility of Bhabha's hybridity exists perhaps in the journalists' acceptance that their news-selection preferences represent to some extent, a subjugation they wished did not exist. However, their resistance continues to be submissive. This led largely to their easy adoption of the Chinese news agency, Xinhua. The use of Xinhua News Agency, although constructed as South-South cooperation, equally points to an instrument of domination because of the uneven power dynamics experienced so far.

I argue that through their reliance on foreign news agencies, Ghanaian journalists have reinforced negative images about the continent, which were carried in the Western media. In some instances, they accepted these images because they had no options to deconstruct them. Under certain circumstances, the journalists accepted outright cultural defeat and ignored their responsibility to deconstruct these images. The Ghanaian journalists envisaged resistance by claiming that an "African perspective" exists which they possess in comparison to other international journalists but the performance of this has not been realised. The journalists have, rather ambivalently, sought in a significant manner to associate themselves with the qualities of a colonising institution as an element of credibility and legitimacy of their choices. Bhabha (1994) pointed out that these associations always have some hidden elements of resistance that contribute to unsettling the position of the coloniser at the centre. This *hybrid self*, even though exists theoretically in the Ghanaian case, it is not strong and notable enough to unsettle the coloniser's influence. With these prevailing ideological influences, it is not surprising that the concept of how the Africa news must look like is quite rooted in the conventional ideas of universal news values, prevailing geopolitical arrangements and stereotypes invented by Western news organisations.

It is imperative though to state that the uneven colonial encounter and the domineering role played by the BBC, from the colonial era until today, is not the only factor that has sustained the level of submission depicted by the Ghanaian journalists so far, but also basic factors such as education and journalism training, in particular, have enhanced this reliance.

This paper contributes to the ongoing attempt to "De-Westernise" the field of journalism studies by questioning the way in which normative frameworks like "news values" have failed to offer the necessary scrutiny of *Afro-pessimism* although they are celebrated as the scientific reasoning behind news selection. Another crucial benefit of this study to journalists and journalism research is how wide the concept of news values, with all its weaknesses, has travelled and defined Africa's coverage in international media.

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1. Due to anonymity agreements accepted during the field research, interviewees were identified by six alphanumeric codes in this analysis: Tms p1, Gde p2, Crs p3, Gph p4, Gph p5, and Tms p6.

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Michael Yao Wodui Serwornoo, School of International and Intercultural Communication (SIIC), Ruhr University Bochum, Bochum, Germany. E-mail: michael.serwornoo@ruhr-uni-bochum.de; michael.serwornoo@ucc.edu.gh. http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8975-4607