

Article No. #

Overview of Current Media Practices and Trends in West Africa

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Abstract

The author examined the current practices and trends in West African media. A case study analysis of the main print and electronic media of Ghana and Nigeria served as a focal point. The analysis was performed within the context of present global telecommunications industries and their corresponding transnational media corporations (TMCs). A general historic overview that highlights main transitions of the development of mass media in West Africa from colonial to post colonial eras was included. The main print and electronic media of Ghana and Nigeria was identified and the political, social and cultural issues embedded in these media's content were examined. Further, the discussions of media forms and contents in West Africa considered how the international press and electronic media interact with the media of Ghana and Nigeria. Evolving media relationships that emerged during the case study suggested a new era of global communication controlled by TMCs affiliated with local government officials and media industries whose primary interests are commercial.

In this paper I will examine current media practices and trends in West Africa via a case study analysis of the media of Ghana and Nigeria. An observation of the current media practices and trends in West Africa should establish any analysis within the larger context of the operations of global telecommunication industries and transnational media corporations (TMCs) as they relate to the structure and content of local media. The case study will briefly review historical media relations in West Africa, refer to current literature on similar studies, plus identify the main print and broadcast media of Ghana and Nigeria. An exploration of the content of these media will reflect on the significant political, social and cultural issues. In addition, the analysis will consider how the international press and electronic media interact with these states' media, and consequently, influence the international image of West Africa. Evolving media relationships clarified during the case study suggest a new era of global communication controlled by TMCs in league with local government affiliates whose primary interests are commercial.

The majority of current West African states were predominantly British and French colonies until the late 1950s to early 1960s. Historically, colonization was the condition of most georegions of Africa. Consequently, various colonial authorities controlled the media development of the entire continent according to their economic and political interests. The earliest newspapers of 19th century West Africa circulating among the indigenous populations began as religious publications published by missionaries (Nyamnjoh, 2005). Religious participation helped to create a politically passive population. In this way,

these publications served a useful function. Nigeria, a British colony, developed the most diverse print media due to an urbanized trading and commercial sector. Still, the majority of Nigeria's early press was targeted to British investors and colonists. France tended to suppress development of an indigenous press in its colonies and emphasized assimilation of the native populations to French culture. A predominantly French press was considered an important part of the assimilation process (Nyamnjoh, 2005). The British were more tolerant of native cultural content in indigenous publications in comparison, but certainly did not encourage a critical local press with its own political agenda (Nyamnjoh, 2005).

Nevertheless, Nigeria would develop such a press and play a significant part in West Africa's struggle for independence in the mid-20th century (Nyamnjoh, 2005). Elite, Western-educated West Africans, including Diaspora returning from North America and the West Indies, began to publish claims for independence in the local media. British and French colonial authorities branded these publications as subversive in the "official" mass media of West Africa (Nyamnjoh, 2005). For example, British governors regarded Nnamdi Azikiwe's Nigerian newspaper as a plague that disrupted peaceful relations. West African nationalists in Nigeria, however, developed an articulate platform for independence and pride for African cultural values in these publications that also served the leadership of neighboring colonies seeking independence (Nyamnjoh, 2005). As indigenous newspaper content grew more political in nature and critical of colonization, nearly all territories ratified strict laws that restricted the right of Africans to publish and distribute newspapers. In addition, economic regulations were imposed that made it very difficult for Africans to import newsprint and other technological and/or structural necessities for building an indigenous mass media that challenged the rule of major colonial powers. West African populations most often depended on media published by colonial powers and intended for the colonists to glean information about international events (Nyamnjoh, 2005).

Historically, there was a difference of perspective among the African elites and their colonizers. The African elites understood they were asserting their independence within their native continent. The colonizers, mostly Western European elites, perceived the assertions of autonomy by indigenous populations as seditious, violent, primitive, and generally in opposition to their economic and political interests within Africa. Their economic interests were in sources of low-wage labor and natural resources that could be extracted inexpensively. Their political interests were in the continued subjugation of the colonial populations. British and French print media of that time projected this particular image of West African native populations to a wider world audience (Nyamnjoh, 2005). Moreover, it is ironic that *after* independence and the international recognition of African states, most of the former colonial powers eventually imposed international trade regulations and other economic measures on independent African states that now make it very difficult *to refrain from* importing Western European content plus structural and technological necessities that tend to dominate current West African media, e.g. WTO "free flow of information" policy. Either way, the US and/or Western Europe's intent to control key aspects of African mass media to more easily meet their economic and political interests in the continent is historically evident.

West African masses adapted to the restricted media conditions imposed by colonial authorities by going underground with the press and augmenting liberation communication with pamphlets, tracts, clandestine radio and oral networks ripe with political rumor, humor, parody, and derision known as *radio trottoir* (Campbell, 1998; Nyamnjoh, 2005). For instance, when reports of national policy appear in the official press, they are immediately parodied on the streets. *Radio trottoir* is a highly effective means of relaying accurate accounts of important events within an atmosphere of selective information (Campbell, 1998). These types of oppositions to the official press that began in West Africa in the 1970s and 80s continue today, albeit in forms and rhetorical content unique to present communication technology and issues as discussed later in this paper.

The above forms of indigenous media supplemented the restricted press of colonial era West Africa allowing local populations to develop an alternative discourse of independence (Nyamnjoh, 2005). However, when independence began to be realized among West African colonies the new governments consisting of the leadership of the independence movement, i.e. the West African elites mentioned previously, followed the lead of colonial authorities and maintained a restricted press (Campbell, 1998; Nyamnjoh, 2005). The governments of the new states understood firsthand the power of the media to propagate a particular political perspective and motivate the masses to act on that perspective (Nyamnjoh, 2005). States used the media as a tool for national development; following that era's U.S. and other Western European nations' leadership in regard to the role of the media in developing countries. The U.S. and former colonial powers still played an important economic role within the newly sovereign West African nations dependent on Western technological and industrial resources. The press, then, became one means of attempting to keep civil society in check, i.e. developing according to Western expectations of a stable geo-region for investment (Nyamnjoh, 2005).

Similarly, broadcasting in West Africa was first controlled by Western colonial powers. Indigenous populations were denied the right to choose the type of broadcast system as well as the right to determine access and use of the system (Nyamnjoh, 2005; Thussu, 2000). While broadcasting a rhetoric of democratic pluralism and freedom of information in West Africa via radio broadcasts by Voice of America or the BBC, especially during the Cold War era, the colonial powers forcefully repressed the nationalist independence movement spreading throughout all African colonies in the mid to late 1950s (Nyamnjoh, 2005; Thussu, 2000). Yet, when independence was granted to West African colonies, the new governments centralized broadcasting in order to maintain rigid state control over this medium as well. Babatunde Jose, a prominent Nigerian publisher, claimed that the post-colonial press in West Africa had relatively less freedom to publish than during the colonial eras (Campbell, 1998). Alternatives to media oppression were now possible, but the governments of postcolonial West Africa preferred to retain an inherited, limiting model of broadcasting until forced to adapt this model to the demands of international broadcast reforms, i.e. deregulation and privatization that began in the 1980s and 90s (Nyamnjoh, 2005). Since then, West Africa's media, and international media in general, have gradually conformed to the demands of the WTO and international telecommunications regulatory organizations

such as the ITU (Nyamnjoh, 2005; Thussu, 2000). The demands of these supra-governmental organizations are designed to allow TMCs to minimize the profit-limiting affects of national borders and the local regulations/customs that characterize these geo-regions, creating unique production and communication conditions that did not exist historically (Thussu, 2000).

The outcomes of the historical processes briefly explained here are evident in the current media of Ghana and Nigeria, which will become apparent in the discussions that follow. According to present scholarly literature, (e.g. Crabtree and Malhotra, 2003; Eko, 2003; Nuviadenu, 2005; Nyamnjoh, 2005; Thussu, 2000) these developmental changes reflect a new era of global communication controlled by TMCs in league with local government affiliates whose primary interests are commercial, i.e. the expansion of consumer, commodity and service markets and, ultimately, profits. From here, the case study identifies the main broadcast and print media of Ghana and Nigeria and examines the content in an attempt to explore the political, social and cultural issues evident within this new era of global communication, including how these issues are framed by local and global media.

Although the governments of Ghana and Nigeria have ratified new constitutions during a global wave of deregulation and privatization in the 1990s that relaxed many restrictions on the press and broadcasting, (Heath, 2001) there remains a fair amount of rigid media regulation within these states (Nyamnjoh, 2005) plus an indirect influence from international media regulations without due to TMCs and the global telecommunications industries (Heath, 2001; Thussu, 2004). For example, The National Broadcast Commission (NBC) briefly shut down Freedom Radio, a privately owned radio station in Kano, Nigeria on March 28, 2006 for an alleged violation of the Nigerian Broadcast Code. Further, the NBC ordered the station to pay the equivalent of \$1,600 US dollars within 48 hours for failing to comply with the Nigerian Broadcasting Code's political broadcast regulations. Apparently, guests and callers on Freedom Radio's talk show programs were making comments that could possibly disrupt peaceful—or at least uncontested—political relations in the region. The station received written permission from the NBC to resume broadcasting on April 21, 2006, but the station's executive director, Farouk Dalhatu, stated that the NBC did not indicate any conditions for future operations (MRA/IFEX, 2006).

In terms of main print media, the *Nigerian Tribune* is the oldest privately owned newspaper in Nigeria originally published in 1949 by Nigerian nationalist Chief Obafemi Awolowo (Nigerian Tribune, 2006). This seasoned newspaper's motto is "Truth, Courage and Fairness" and it claims to cater to the interests of the common people. The historical blurb about this newspaper highlights its struggle to remain in circulation despite colonial regulations and, later, civil war (Nigerian Tribune, 2006). Like other Nigerian main newspapers the *Nigerian Tribune* has an online version, its website appearing professional, but not flashy, reflecting its history as an established daily publication. In contrast, *ThisDay* online seems to better represent the cutting edge of today's Nigerian press. *ThisDay*'s website has an interactive modern generic, or current Western style news format, that invites readers to join its cyber community where people can read and/or submit news articles, watch headlines and stock market prices scroll by, maintain

an onsite journal and read other journal entries, check out real estate listings, find out the latest entertainment in the region, send and receive email, etc. (ThisDay, 2006). This newspaper's image/format resembles *USA Today*, for example, and claims a readership of 4 billion (ThisDay, 2006). It is the flagship newspaper of Leaders & Company Limited, a publishing business established in 1995. The editor-in-chief of *ThisDay* and chairman of Leaders & Company Limited is Nduka Obaigbena, a Western educated Nigerian, and former employee of *Newsweek* magazine who has served as a keynote speaker at several international and national World Bank and IMF forums. Obaigbena has also served in think tanks sponsored by these two organizations (ThisDay, 2006). It is typical to discover that publishers, directors, journalists, and other key positions within local media and telecommunications industries are trained in the central nations of the current international communication system, which tends to reinforce Western media models as well as Western perspectives of the media's role in a society (Crabtree and Malhotra, 2003; Nyamnjoh, 2005).

Both newspapers' headlines are dominated by the recent debate in the Nigerian government. Nigeria's government is a federal republic modeled after the U.S. government with an Executive Branch, Senate and House of Representatives (World Fact Book, 2006). The essence of the debate concerns the party in power, the People's Democratic Party, (PDP) and one of its leaders, current President Obasanjo, who want to change the Nigerian constitution to allow presidents to serve a third term. President Obasanjo, the first to serve in this office after a Nigerian civil war, was elected in 2003 (World Fact Book, 2006). The next election is to be held in 2007, thus the salience of the PDP's move to change the constitution. Presented as a simple polity, one side argues that the move to change the constitution to include a third presidential term is a dangerous slide toward dictatorship and polarization between the government and underrepresented groups who may continue to be unrecognized or eventually disenfranchised, a projected formula for civil war in the minds of some Nigerians. The other side argues that a third term under Obasanjo and the PDP might prove to be good for Nigeria's economic and political development in terms of stability, citing this administration's record regarding these areas of national development since 2003. There are many positions in between these two simplified perspectives, but the gist of the debate concerns political, and so economic, power and who will wield it in Nigeria after the upcoming Presidential election (Nigerian Tribune, 2006; ThisDay, 2006).

Perhaps these present components of the Nigerian press and this debate that dominates Nigeria's news reports at the moment could be explained as successful outcomes, or processes, of applied modernization, or development, theory as proposed by Lerner and later by Schramm (Thussu, 2000). Meaning, transferring ideologies and practical models of Western society to former colonies such as Nigeria, for example, which were/are regarded as "backward" by Western European standards (Thussu, 2000). Or, perhaps further explained by Schiller's theory of cultural imperialism in which leaders facilitate a former colonial society's entrance into the world economic and political system by reorganizing social institutions, such as the media or government operations, to propagate the values and structures of the

dominant center of the system (Thussu, 2000). However, a closer look at the population of Nigeria and the actual social conditions of this West African state reveals another perspective of these current events.

Nigeria's population as estimated in July 2005 was 128,771,988. Sixty percent of this population has an income below the poverty line and the average life expectancy of a Nigerian citizen is 46 years (World Fact Book, 2006). The literacy rate, defined as people age 15 and older that can read and write, is only 68%. Besides English as the official language, there are four other languages spoken throughout Nigeria by the four main ethnic groups (World Fact Book, 2006). In 2003, there were 750,000 Internet users; the majority of these users described as young male professionals located in the urban areas of the state (Nyamnjoh, 2005; World Fact Book, 2006). In all of Nigeria, it is estimated there are 6.9 million television sets (World Fact Book, 2006). Clearly, this demographic information about Nigeria does not match the image of the Nigeria presented by this state's main print and electronic media. If development theory has been successful in Nigeria, one outcome since independence has been the development of an urban, professional middle class that is reading about and discussing the power struggles of an elite, or governing class via a public media organized on the Western model; as preferred by this leadership if according to the theory of cultural imperialism. Perhaps this class is taking sides, or perhaps wondering how they will be affected in the future as this struggle plays out, i.e. in this situation the media functions as a mediator for negotiations between classes. The outcome, then, more closely indicates hegemonic relations among social classes based on populations' positions relative to social production, as per Gramsci. This perspective provides a clearer view of Nigeria's media dynamics as well as the political, social and cultural issues these dynamics reflect.

According to World Fact Book (2006) demographics, roughly half of Nigeria's population probably does not have regular, if any, access to the facts and arguments presented on the Internet. Moreover, 68% of the population could not read them if they did have access. Those who cannot read may not have access to a television set or radio, either, where they could, at least, listen to the claims of the current constitutional debate. Moreover, those who do not speak English would not be able to understand the language in these main media examples without translators even if they had access to both the Internet and the TV and could read as well. There is a substantial (as in numbers) social class described here that has an understanding of and opinions about the debates mentioned above. The results as they unfold will also affect their future, probably more sharply than any affects within a middle class. Yet, unless the author and other international readers are in Nigeria, able to read and speak the local languages and are a part of the oral network, we cannot know this class' understanding of or opinions about, for instance, changing the national constitution to permit presidents to serve third terms. As in the colonial eras, the rest of the world sees the image of Nigeria that a relatively small proportion of that state's population, perhaps in affiliation with TMCs or not, prefers the world to see because it is able to direct and/or create and distribute content via the mass media. Furthermore, international readers and/or viewers of Nigeria's media treat these representations as reliable facts they might act upon, even if only to form an opinion.

International and national media often give us a glimpse, if one reads between the lines, of every day conditions and the consequent struggles of this substantial social class in Nigeria. For example, late April 2006 editions of *Reuters* and the *Nigerian Tribune* reported the following composite of multiple stories of kidnappings and car bombings of military barracks in the Niger Delta, and near oil refineries in the region as well. Such a composite is possible because both sources most likely dip into the same international news pools for stories due to the operations of approximately five TMCs that dominate world news industries (Thussu, 2000). MEND, or Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, claimed responsibility for the bombings, which are part of continuing guerilla attacks by this organization representing the Ijaw inhabitants of the Niger Delta. This population, indigenous to the region, remains desperately poor despite the rich oil industry that infiltrates their land. MEND claims that it is trying to force President Obasanjo to recognize their grievances and provide relief from their poverty via guerilla tactics that have, in some weeks, cut oil production as much as 550,000 barrels a day and reduced exports by 20% since January 2006. Obasanjo responded in meetings with other Niger Delta leaders by revealing plans for 20,000 new jobs in the region plus new roads and education and healthcare funds. MEND's leaders boycotted the meeting, claiming the promised jobs were menial.

The reports by both news media represented MEND as a violent, irrational organization. The presence of the military barracks in this region, though, was represented as a protective organization established in the Niger Delta for the benefit of the people and the oil refineries some labor within. However, the Nigerian military has, in turn, attacked MEND militias and taken two of the organization's leaders into state custody, i.e. imprisoned them. Again, there is a difference of perspective depending on the political and socioeconomic interests of those who control global and local mass media. The author does not condone MEND's violence that has killed innocent people who were literally caught in the crossfire. The point is to illustrate that although it is difficult to know the lived experiences of the Ijaw in this example, one may glean an impression of the reality of their daily lives behind the images presented of them. More substantially, the decision to resort to consistent violence in order to gain recognition states their extreme desperation over these conditions. At the end of the day, both global and local media only recognize state violence as legitimate violence. Similarly, a large "voiceless" and "invisible" class exists globally that is more often ignored by mass media or presented in a negative light, as in West Africa.

Broadcast media in West Africa is also a complex warren of interconnecting global and local media relations that affect content that, in turn, affects political, social and cultural issues. The role of Ghana Television (GTV) has evolved from one of development, in the sense of modernization, to mirroring global and local phenomena (Nuviadenu, 2005). Television service in Ghana began in 1965 with the establishment of state-owned GTV operated by the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC). GTV broadcast to all of Ghana; education and the development of Ghana's national and social ideals were this station's primary goals (Nuviadenu, 2005). However, over the years, GTV and several other privately owned smaller television stations, TV3, Metro TV and Crystal TV, tended to become an elite, urban medium, not the medium of the people as imagined in 1965 (Nuviadenu, 2005). Nuviadenu's (2005) study

of international program flow on Ghana television from 1969-2003 reflects this transition. For instance, 100% of the programs broadcast on GTV in 1969 were educational, i.e. a form of distance education, and in English, according to the government's agenda for this medium. Yet, jumping ahead to 1984, Nuviadenu (2005) found that 93% of programs on GTV were local and 7% were foreign. The content had changed as well, more local talk shows were aired and imported programming consisted mostly of sporting events, e.g. soccer games, and movies. The amount of broadcast hours increased over time as well due to technological advances and economic progression within Ghana (Nuviadenu, 2005). Jumping to the present era, Nuviadenu (2005) found that in 2003, 120 programs (58%) were locally produced and about 86 programs (46%) were primarily from the U.S. and Europe, although a few were imported from other African nations. Many of the same or similar programs from a GTV guide for 2001 were possibly listed in US television guides during the same year, e.g. *Everybody Loves Raymond*, *Animal Kingdom*, *Cartoons*, soap operas and various US-based news programs (Nuviadenu, 2005). The local shows on GTV, such as *African Journal*, tended to reflect Western formula models, and so Western cultural values and perceptions, with nuances of African cultural values and perceptions, a sort of hybrid product representing a blend of global consumer culture and local culture (Eko, 2003; Nuviadenu, 2005; Thussu, 2000).

Hybridity in the context of television programming is an especially critical cultural issue because this medium has such a significant influence on humans' perception of reality (Nuviadenu, 2005). Eko (2003) predicted the hybridity that results, in Africa for example, from the domination of TMCs within international communication flows threatens to obliterate traditional African cultures. Crabtree and Malhotra (2003) discuss this same threat in an Indian context. As these authors note, the reinforcement of U.S. and European hegemonic ideology within entertainment media erodes local cultural values and perspectives of social relations (Crabtree and Malhotra, 2003; Eko, 2003). Not only culture is affected by the interaction of global and local media, but also economic and political distinctions between social classes are sharpened, especially since the 1990s and subsequent global deregulations and privatizations (Crabtree and Malhotra, 2003).

Heath (2001) also studied the GBC, but focused on the changes in regional radio since constitutional governance was reestablished in 1992 and private broadcasting became legal for the first time. Heath's study is significant in that radio is the most accessible, and therefore, the most utilized medium of West Africans seeking news, educational broadcasts and entertainment (Eko, 2003). The rapid development of telecommunication technologies coupled with neo-liberal trade policies enforced by the WTO and ITU eventually changed the radio programs that were broadcast under the control of the GBC as it changed the source of funding for this corporation (Heath, 2001). The new Ghanaian constitution mandated that the GBC would receive a significant cut in state funding. Instead of relying on state revenues, the GBC was expected to restructure its operations to attract more advertising revenues from private enterprises (Heath, 2001). As a result, the GBC's orientation toward public broadcast ideals of accessibility and

participation of all changed to being dependent on the vested interests of local and global commercial media corporations and grants solicited from NGOs (Heath, 2001).

The changes led to more broadcasts in English and less in indigenous languages of Ghana, i.e. at least four different languages and their sub-dialects. Translation summaries of news broadcasts could no longer keep up with the demand imposed by the new flow of English only programming flooding the airwaves. Some regions were down to only two hours of indigenous language broadcasting a day. When radio is the main source of news in a geo-region, this is a significant change for many rural populations (Heath, 2001). Ghana, like Nigeria, has large income gaps among its workforce, 31% of this smaller nation's population of 21,029,853 lives below the poverty line (World Fact Book, 2006) and depends on radios for news and entertainment. In sum, Heath (2001) noted that the least advantaged populations of Ghana, e.g. elderly, physically disabled, poor women, ignored by advertisers seeking consumer markets are neglected in terms of radio programming attuned to their needs and interests. Regional FM radio in Ghana has now become attuned to urban, middle class professionals, much as GTV now channels the Western images to this same social class. Readers may sample the programming offered by JoyFM (<http://www.myjoyonline.com>) as an example of one of Ghana's three main radio stations. The experience is much the same as listening to a major station in Chicago or other U.S. metropolitan regions. Both mediums have become tools for the development of consumer markets rather than tools that serve the communities within Ghana (Heath, 2001). Still, these same tools are utilized to criticize such consumer-oriented development wherever it becomes possible to establish more independent media, such as Freedom Radio or the Nigerian *Guardian*.

The *Guardian* is one example of an independent newspaper that elaborates on the West African tradition of *radio trottoir* by featuring political cartoons as one aspect of the daily's critical coverage of Nigeria's government (Nyamnjoh, 2005). Political cartoons have become very popular in West African press since the deregulation of state-owned media in the 1990s brought more opportunities to evolve this region's long-standing tradition of *radio trottoir* in a more modern form (Nyamnjoh, 2005). The content of these cartoons echo the editorial position of this independent news source in relation to the debates over a third term presidency. The illustration, titled "Undiplomatic Soldjering", depicts a moving car occupied by two men having a conversation on the way from here to there, a very typical daily act in many modern societies. The driver says he's heard that President Obasanjo is writing a book titled *The Animal Called Man*, a reference here to the practice of political rumor as well as a commentary on current social conditions/relations in Nigeria and, perhaps, on Obasanjo personally. The passenger responds that he's heard the president is writing a different book. The driver asks, "What book? *My Will Part II?*" This comment refers, possibly, to a "political death" of sorts for the President and his party, the PDP, which could lose power due to unpopularity if the third term movement backfires. Or, it could refer to an overbearing will on the part of Obasanjo, again a more personal interpretation. The passenger again responds negatively, "No, *My Command Part II.*" This "punch line" suggests that the push for a third term smacks of military rule and dictatorship (Guardian, May 11, 2006). This independent newspaper serves

as one example of the familiar negotiation of political power and leadership within public discourse, even though it may appear there is little space for critical discourse and different perspectives of social phenomena, let alone negotiation of power relations within this new era of global communications in which TMCs have gained so much control over global and local media.

Overall, the forms and content of West African media in Ghana and Nigeria arise from material and practical social relations over time, and so, give evidence of these concrete relationships as they have evolved from the colonial era to the present. Although there are positions that argue the media shapes social relations, there seems to be a preponderance of evidence in this very general overview able to tip the argument in favor of the opposite view, social relations shape the mass media, especially social relations to production. More accurately, it is the dialectical interaction of the media and social relations that produces histories and current trends like those examined in this paper. The colonial era, in part, came about because industrial development in central nations of that epoch's world system needed new and abundant sources of low wage labor and natural resources that could be processed inexpensively. Although the development of international communication was driven, in part, by the necessity of commerce to communicate over distances with these colonies, the ever expanding and more efficient means of communication afforded a mass media that could serve political, social and culture interests as well. It is not feasible for any state to maintain economic and political dominance over large populations through military force alone. Thus, a hegemonic mass media functions as this term suggests, a mass mediator for the negotiation of power in a global social system.

As the historical context suggests in the case of West Africa, the colonial powers used mass media, in part, to negotiate the consent of the colonized for their economic and political agendas and, in part, to control dissent of the colonized against these same economic and political agendas. Correspondingly, in the post-colonial era the media was used in much the same way by the governing class of the newly independent West African states to gain legitimacy among the governed class. In the current era of global and local communications, the West African elites function as affiliates, albeit dependent affiliates, among the dominant global class. As affiliates, they negotiate nationalism among the local class that is often experiencing the extreme poverty created by globalization of social production. While at the same time, national borders are transcended by the dominant global class during commercial ventures. All of these negotiations require a tool able to mediate such complex relations. Today's global media continues to be one such tool. How global communications will evolve from here remains to be seen. Thus, this paper concludes with a call for more research that focuses on global media as an integral part of hegemonic negotiations between social classes. Such a focus may lead to new theoretical understanding of the relationships between society and its mass media.

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