



MEDIA IN WEST AFRICA:

A THEMATIC REPORT BASED ON DATA 1900-2012

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About V-Dem

Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) is a new approach to conceptualization and measurement of democracy. It is a collaboration between some 50+ scholars across the world hosted by the Department of Political Science at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden; and the Kellogg Institute at the University of Notre Dame, USA.

With four Principal Investigators (PIs), three Project Coordinators (PCs), fifteen Project Managers (PMs) with special responsibility for issue areas, more than thirty Regional Managers (RMs), almost 200 Country Coordinators (CCs), a set of Research Assistants (RAs), and approximately 3,000 Country Experts (CEs), the V-Dem project is one of the largest ever social science research-oriented data collection programs.

V-Dem is collecting data on 329 indicators of various aspects democracy tied to the core of electoral democracy as well as six varying properties: liberal, majoritarian, consensual, participatory, deliberative and egalitarian dimensions of democracy.

A pilot study in 2011 tested the preliminary set of indicators and the data collection interfaces and procedures. Twelve countries from six regions of the world were covered, generating 462,000 data points. In the main phase, all countries of the world will be covered from 1900 to the present, generating some 22 million data across the 329 indicators, as well as several indices of varying forms of democracy.

The resulting database will be the largest of its kind, and make possible both highly detailed, nuanced analysis of virtually all aspects of democracy in a country, and quick, summary comparisons between countries based on aggregated indices for at least seven varieties of democracy.

The data will be downloadable from a public V-Dem website as a public good some time in 2015. Users from anywhere will also be able to use sophisticated but intuitive and accessible online analysis tools. Students and media across the world will benefit from the nuanced comparative and historical data. Governments, development agencies, and NGOs will be able to make much better informed decisions, and even go back in time to re-evaluate aid efforts.

V-Dem is funded by (in order of magnitude): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Sweden, the European Commission/EuroAID, the Swedish Research Council, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Denmark, the Danish Research Council, the Canadian International Development Agency, NORAD/the Norwegian Research Council, Riksbankens Jubileumsfond, and the Quality of Government Institute.

For further details and information, see <http://v-dem.net>.

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Executive Summary

- Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) is particularly useful for helping researchers locate specific times of changes in components of democracy like the media, and track where changes originate in terms of specific, disaggregated indicators of which media freedom is comprised.
- The media sector in West Africa has seen significant region-wide improvements, attributable not just to improvements in isolated cases but to general improvements in all countries.
- Nevertheless, despite general improvement, aspects of the media sector lag behind others, including: 1) government harassment of journalists, 2) weak or lacking media criticism of government, 3) unequal distribution of citizen access to media, and 4) gender imbalance among journalists.
- Countries where the media sector is faring less well than in other nations are Guinea, Nigeria, and Togo.
- Detailed analysis of four critical indicators reveals that:
 - Government censorship persists even in relatively democratic countries like Benin and Senegal, and remains a major problem in Togo and Guinea.
 - Government harassment of journalists is occurring in several countries, particularly Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Benin, and Senegal.
 - Media bias has diminished across the region compared to the past, except in Nigeria.
 - Media corruption is very significant in most West African countries. The problem may now be the region's largest single threat to democratic rights in this sector.

1. Introduction

When the ‘third wave’ of democratization hit the African continent at the end of the Cold War, an outburst of enthusiastic voices expressed hopes for West Africa’s ‘second liberation’, but they were soon replaced with sour commentary about the lack of ‘real’ change. The picture today is mixed, with some countries moving ahead and becoming more free (e.g., Ghana), while others are lagging (e.g., Angola), and, in some cases, regressing (e.g. Zimbabwe). About a quarter of all the world’s states are found on the African continent and vary significantly with respect to political institutions, practices, and outcomes. Out of sub-Saharan Africa’s 48 countries, 15 to 20 can today be considered relatively democratic depending on the minimum criteria used to define and measure democracy, while another 20 or so are more or less electoral autocracies, from Nigeria to Zimbabwe, and a few countries are closed autocracies or in flux, e.g. Ivory Coast, Eritrea, Mali, Somalia, Swaziland (Lindberg 2009a).

Varieties of Democracy contributes to the comprehensive measurement of democracy in four ways. First, this approach understands that democratic tendencies often originate back in time, and this database provides scores extending back over 110 years to 1900. Second, everything in V-Dem will be transparent and open for scrutiny. Data on individual indicators, organized by expert coder scores and their own estimates of confidence, are provided, as well as explicit aggregation rules for the components and aggregate principle-scores. Finally, unlike Freedom House and Polity that provide rather narrow conceptualizations of democracy, V-Dem will provide aggregate scores for seven core principles of different models of democracy emphasizing distinct values. As a result, a diverse array of indicators is measured, organized along over two dozen components, to measure the seven democracy principles.

Media freedom and the rights of journalists to act independently of government repression, as well as a media environment relatively free of corruption, is an essential component of most varieties of democracy. V-Dem collects data on almost 20 separate and unique indicators of various aspects of media freedom.

This report summarizes the results of the data on media for ten core indicators of the media and how democratic the environment for journalists and media operators has been in West Africa from 1900 to the end of 2012. The following presents analysis conducted in order to estimate and track the dynamics of the *media* VDEM component in West Africa during the period. The aggregate *media* component index is based on data (indicators) collected on eight countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Senegal, Nigeria, Togo, Liberia, and Guinea.

At present, the V-Dem aggregation scheme is not finalized so a caveat is that the indices provided below are aggregated in a simplified and intuitive way. When the official V-Dem aggregation scheme is complete (expected in 2015) and the full data been collected, results may come to differ from what is presented below.

2. Origins and Early Developments of Media in West Africa

There were four main sources of the origins of the media in Africa: the colonial state; the European settler colonists; the Christian missionary institutions; and the early African elite or the so-called intelligentsia¹. In Anglophone West Africa the newspaper was introduced in the early 1800's with the establishment of the *Royal Gazette* in Sierra Leone in 1801 and *The Liberia Herald* in 1826. The French territories would not establish newspapers until about 80 years later when Senegal would launch its first newspaper².

The first major spike in the media freedom occurred around World War 1. The second major jump occurred in the 1940's leading up to independence. The media would serve as a medium of resistance, agitation, mobilisation, and organisation thereby contributing significantly to the independence of all countries. However, the development of the newspaper varied from country to country and according to the specific colonial experiences.

Following independence, there was generally a drop in the media freedom in West Africa as across much of the continent. During the immediate post-independence years, nationalist leaders resorted to wholesale monopolization of the media. This press regime usually accompanied the imposition of one-party political regimes based on the assumption that national unity and development required the full and uniform agreement of the population. The logic was to have one voice. To compel compliance, the new governments had ready-made legal resources of colonial legislation to fall back on to. While this rationale applied to all political ideological tendencies, for those states that adopted "socialism" as the political and economic framework for social organisation and economic development, the example of media uniformity prevalent in the Soviet or other socialist systems was a source of inspiration and emulation. Post-independent governments proposed that a pluralistic media, like a pluralistic political situation including opposition and dissenting voices, would impede progress and actually invite rancour and disunity. The one-party form was adopted by both conservative capitalist-oriented regimes like Houphouet Boigny's in Cote d'Ivoire, Kamuzu Banda's in Malawi and Jomo Kenyatta's in Kenya, or by left socialist-oriented ones like Kwame Nkrumah's in Ghana, Julius Nyerere's in Tanzania and Samora Machel's in Mozambique.

All broadcasting became state-owned, having been inherited as such from the colonial administrations that had set them up primarily as extensions of imperial political and ideological control, or as direct propaganda tools in times of the inter-imperialist world wars. The main or dominant newspapers in a country were now ruling party organs and/or the nationalised publications. This reality of the press signified government monopoly of the space for free expression, an indication of a generalized silencing of contrary viewpoints and of dissent. Few governments decreed an absolute banishment of private press. But wherever they prevailed, the private press survived precariously in the face of incessant state interference and outright repression.

¹ Karikari, Kwame 2007. 'Africa Media since Ghana's Independence', in Elizabeth Barratt and Guy Berger (eds.) *50 Years of Journalism: African media since Ghana's independence*. (Johannesburg: The African Editors' Forum, Highway Africa and Media Foundation for West Africa), pp.10-20.

² Karikari 2007

At independence, the structure of ownership and operation of the newspaper was largely the same as it had been under colonialism. In Anglophone West Africa, where Africans had owned the press throughout the colonial period, the first major foreign investment entered the scene in 1950 as the *Mirror Newspaper Group of London* set up papers in Ghana, Sierra Leone and Nigeria. Thus in these places, the press was a mixture of many small politicised publications operated by the nationalist political organizations and members of the elite on one hand, and big circulating newspapers owned by big foreign business on the other.

Under colonialism, radio was specifically a monopoly of the state, and so it remained after independence. In that period, it was not accessible to the people, and opposing or contrary viewpoints were not contested even by the opposition forces. Dissent, therefore, was inconceivable on radio, at least. It proved therefore a useful and an effective instrument in the hands of the post-colonial governments of all forms, and easily lent itself to shutting out viewpoints other than those of officialdom. In many instances, thereby, broadcasting became easily usable as the exclusive organ of the invariably sole ruling party, and ultimately in the service of the leader of the party and nation.

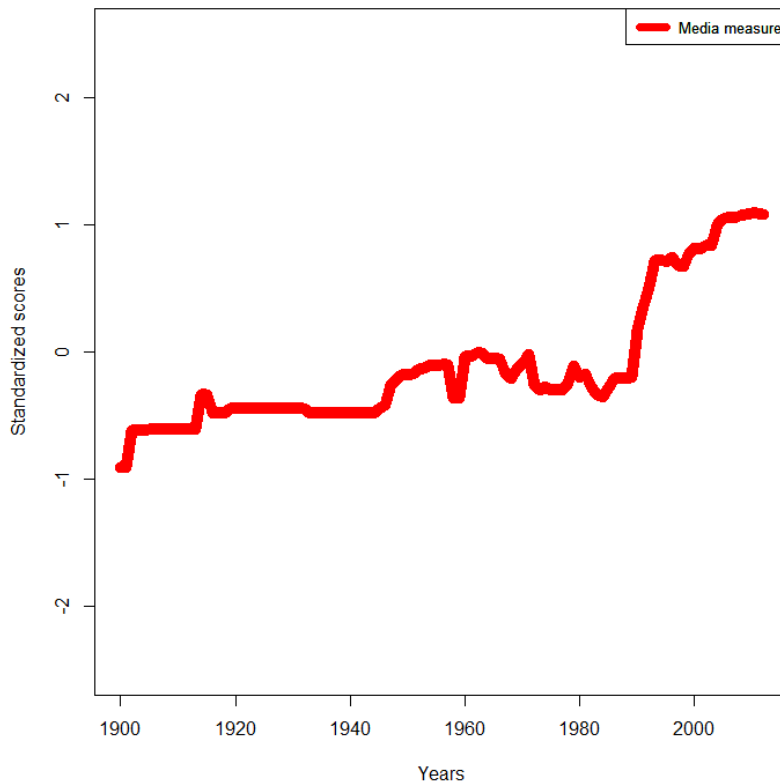
The organisation was usually directly under a Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and therefore headed by the minister thereof. The administrative head was likely to be a director or director general usually appointed by the country's president, the entire staff belonging therefore to the civil service. Broadly, broadcasting policy was based on what the governments considered to be critical national objectives. These included: forging national unity and national identity; development, however it was defined; and, additionally for the more radical pan-African states, supporting the anticolonial struggles elsewhere. Generally it was a policy that placed politics at the head of broadcasting practices.

Everywhere, rapid expansion in broadcasting followed independence. Though broadcasting establishments were concentrated in the capital, nearly every postcolonial government made it a priority plan to expand the reach of broadcasting and access by the populations. Nearly everywhere, educational broadcasting was considered important and radio was used for mass literacy courses, and as supplementary support or distance classes for primary and secondary school programmes. These latter uses, as well as their support for agricultural extension work and rural development generally, borrowed from earlier or even contemporary formats in Europe, Canada and elsewhere. Similarly, the use of the radio to promote public health causes, such as immunisation campaigns, and the fight against endemic health problems like river blindness, was remarkably effective.

3. The Development of Media Freedom in West Africa

Figure 1 presents the dynamics of the *media* component during the period of investigation. Overall, the trend is of increasing values over time. Most notable are the moderate and unstable rise in values of the index during the 1945-1970 period, and the rapid increase starting at the early 1990s.

Fig 1: Media in West Africa (1900-2012)



The aggregated media index rises and falls intermittently from the mid-1960's through the late 1980's and experiences a sharp increase during the early 1990's, coinciding with the Third Wave of Democratization that beset the continent. In response to the economic crisis of the 1980s and early 1990s, African governments were forced to introduce SAPs or the neo-liberal paradigm and governments were required to embark on political institutional reforms and the adoption of liberal democratic forms of governance, a key component was the demand for press freedom.

At the same time, these political demands – for political reforms, human rights and freedom of expression – were already demands on the agenda of a growing social movement of the popular social forces for democratization across the continent³. By the late 1980s, again within a global movement for popular democratic reforms – though not necessarily as a result of the movements that rocked the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe – broad coalitions of forces were demanding democratization across the continent, challenging entrenched military dictatorships and harshly authoritarian or dictatorial one-party dictatorships.

The most visible expression and outcome of the popular demands for democracy from the late 1980s into the 1990s, were the emergence of the private media. This was actually the wrestling away of the state's monopoly of the media and the popular imposition of media pluralism. And

³ Karikari 2007

the most significant political, social and cultural outcome of this development was the emergence of private ownership and operation of broadcasting. All, or nearly all, new constitutions adopted articles and clauses variously guaranteeing press freedom and freedom of expression. The popular assemblies of the Francophone countries most prominently made much of the entrenchment of these freedoms in the constitutions.

4. A More Detailed Look

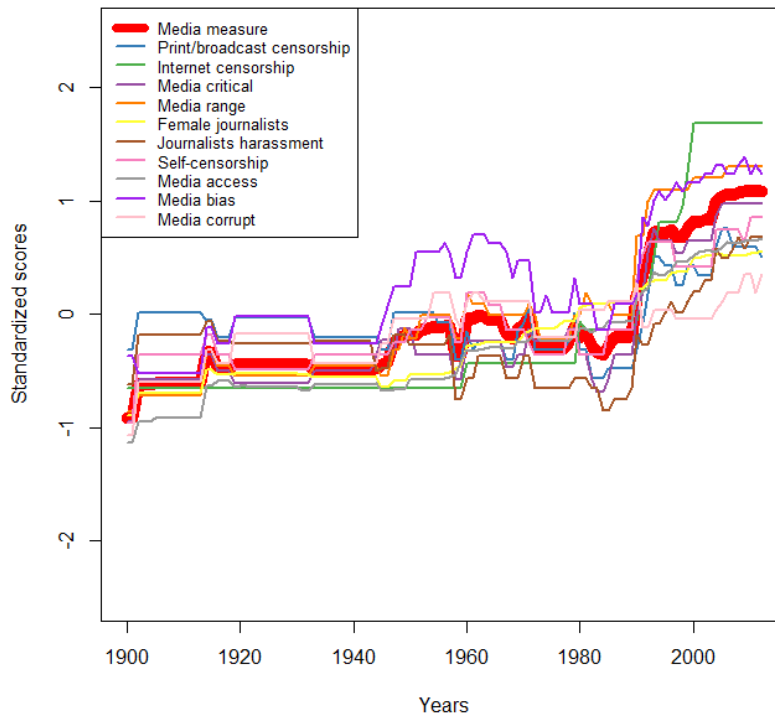
The current media landscape in West Africa exhibits significant progress overall as demonstrated in Figure 1. The following Figure 2 presents the overall *media* index, as well as the composite indicators used to generate it⁴.

The ten indicators used are:

- Whether the government tries to censor the print or broadcast media – blue line
- Whether it tries to censor the internet – green line
- Whether the media is critical of the government – dark purple line
- How wide the range of views presented in the media is – orange line
- What the percentage of female journalists is – yellow line
- Whether journalists are being harassed by powerful political actors – brown line
- Whether journalists employ self-censorship – dark pink line
- The percentage of population that has media access – grey line
- Whether the media is biased against opposition forces – bright purple line
- Whether media agents accept payment for altering news coverage - light pink line

As can be seen in Figure 2, most indicators tend to follow the index pattern. However, all indicators exhibit high degree of variation. All disaggregated media indicators have registered an upward trend since the 1990's, most notably range of views presented by the media, critical and unbiased coverage of incumbents and opposition forces alike, and a dramatic reduction in internet censorship. Freedom of speech, expression, and press are enshrined in the constitutions of all countries in the region. While criminal libel and defamation laws remain on the books in almost all countries, hailing from the colonial era, enforcement of these laws are used sparingly. To be sure, there have been some high profile lawsuits in recent years across the region, yet the extent to which journalists are systematically harassed has declined precipitously. Indeed three West African countries (Ghana, Togo, and Cote d'Ivoire) have fully or partially decriminalized defamation or abolished stringent libel laws within the last 10 years.

⁴ The index is by performing factor analysis, using the indicator variables as input.

Fig 2: Media in West Africa disaggregated (1900-2012)

The independent print, radio, and television sectors have grown exponentially, effectively holding government and opposition leaders to greater account. Two countries in the region, Liberia and Nigeria, are noted for enacting freedom of information laws that promote increased transparency in governance. The internet is also revolutionizing the media landscape, particularly as internet access has increased and government censorship of this arena has decreased dramatically. The media sector is becoming more pluralistic and freer. Note also that figures 1, 2 represent aggregations across countries and years.

The “More Democratic” Areas

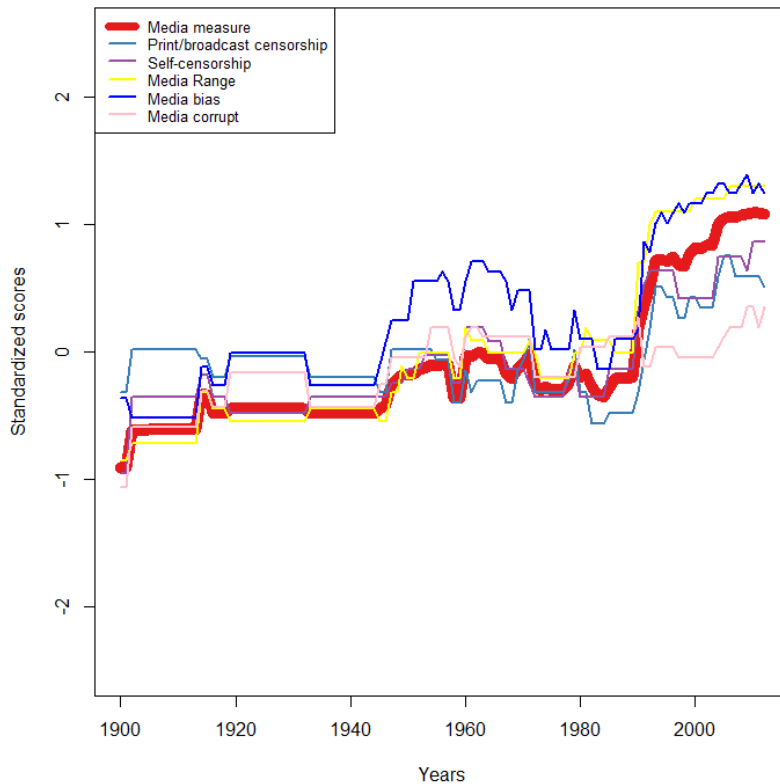
In order to ease interpretation, Figure 3 presents the five “most democratic”⁵ indicators during the 1900-2012 period, on average. Among those are *media bias* (dark blue line) and *corruption* (light pink line), *the range of media* (yellow line), and *media censorship* (light blue line), as well as *self-censorship* (brith purple).

But it is also clear that media censorship and corruption, while on average “more democratic” than the general media index across the full period, this is a result of them being “better than average” primarily in the period leading up to the start of the third wave of democratization. In

⁵ I.e. those with high scores, on average.

the last 20 years, these indicators lag behind instead and are today two of the most problematic areas in the media landscape.

**Fig 3: Media in West Africa disaggregated (1900-2012)
Five "most democratic" indicators**



Many media outlets depend overwhelmingly on the governments for contracts and subsidies which has the propensity to promote bias in reporting, *self-censorship*, and *corruption*. Corruption continues to be pervasive within the media sector. One survey revealed that 63% of Ghanaian journalists admitted to accepting bribes.⁶ This is the country that has emerged as a democratic "showcase" in the region with corresponding levels of media freedom. This has been attributed to low salaries of journalists and lack of top-notch training institutions. The resultant outcome has been sub-optimal standards of professionalism, ethics, and technical capacity in many parts of the region. Increased financial vitality of media operators coupled with adequate professional development and training should alleviate many of these obstacles.

A third indicator that points to an area where "democraticness" of the media in West Africa is falling behind is the share of journalists that are female, indicating a continuing gender gap. *Media bias* seems to be the "most democratic" for almost the entire period.

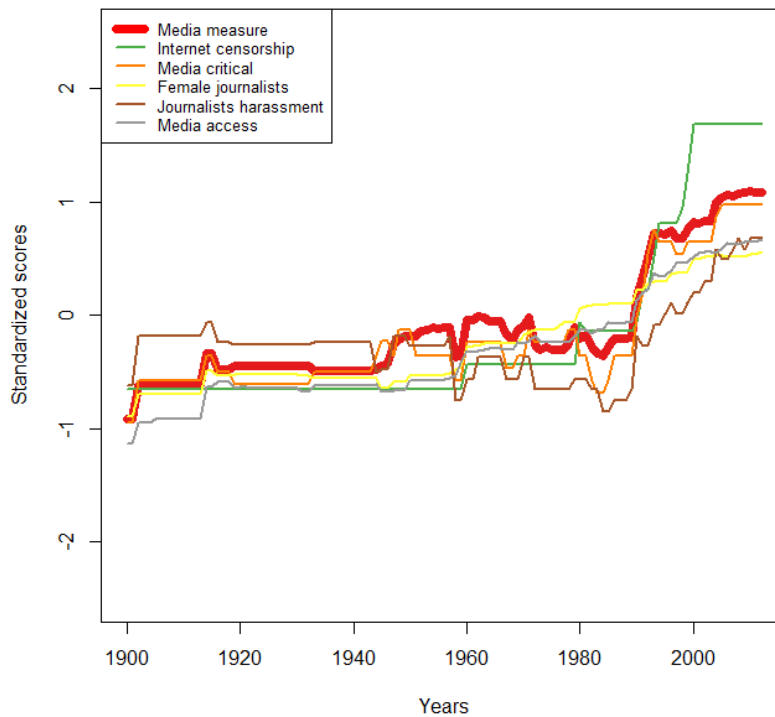
Finally, while there has been expansion in community media in the last 5 to 10 years, an urban bias still exists, compounding informational asymmetry between urban and rural populations.

⁶ <http://democracyin africa.org/the-media-corruption-and-democracy-in-africa/>

The “Less Democratic” Areas

Figure 4 presents the five “least democratic” indicators, on average, during the entire period. Note especially the slow improvement in the “*journalist’s harassment*” indicator relative to others (during the 1960-2012 period). The other indicators include *internet censorship* (green line), *media critical of the government* (orange line), *female journalists* (yellow line) and *media access* (grey line).

**Fig 4: Media in West Africa disaggregated (1900-2012)
Five “least democratic” indicators**



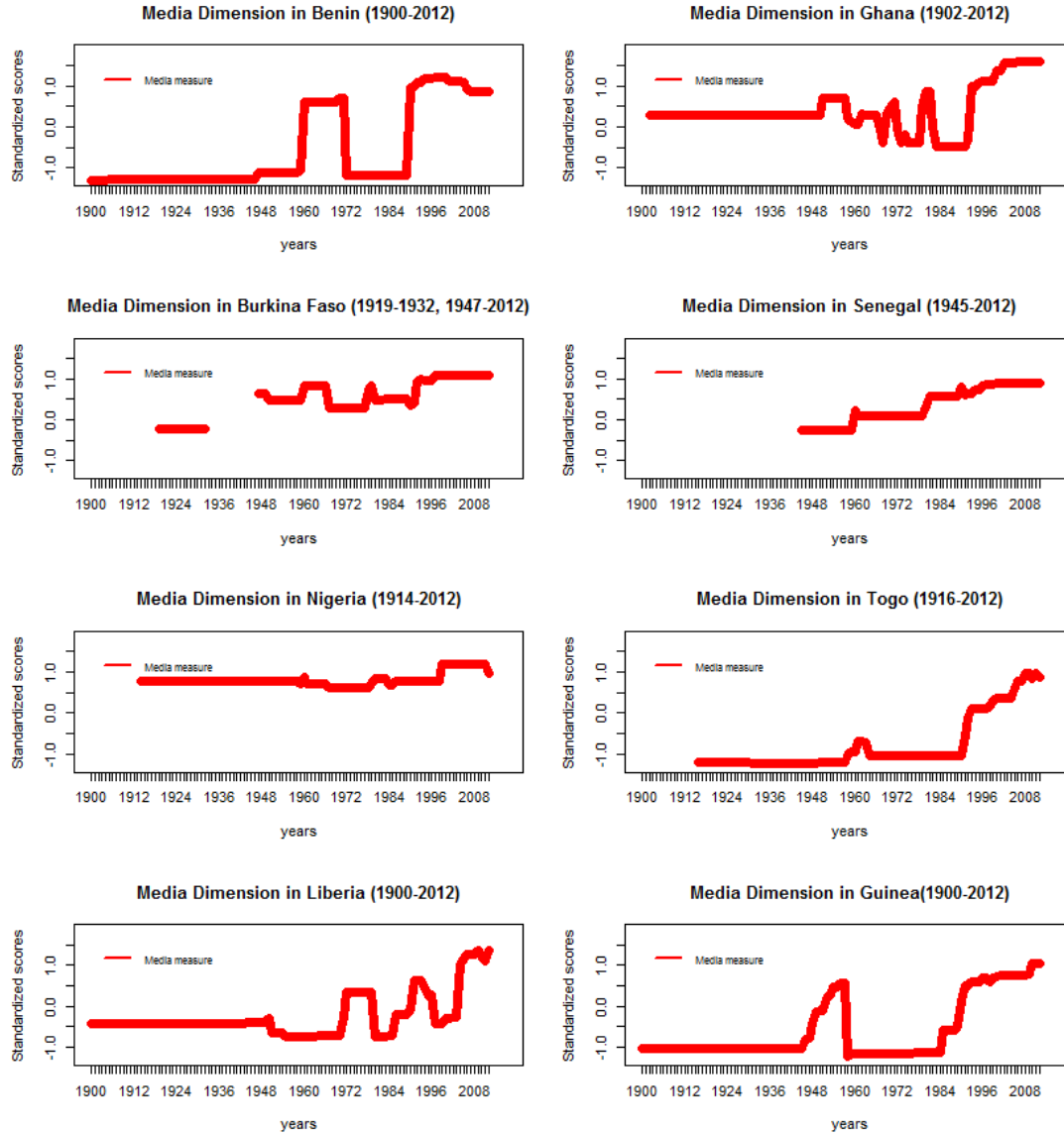
Across the region thus, and across the entire period areas like harassment of journalists, lack of media being critical towards the governments, access to general media across the populations, and gender imbalance among journalists tend to have been, and still are problematic areas from a democratic perspective.

5. Media “Democraticness” For Each Country

Figure 5 presents the *media* index at the country (and not the region) level. While the overall trend for most countries is positive, there have been a slight decline in the overall media index a couple of countries (Benin and Nigeria) while Benin and Togo have experienced increases in print/broadcast censorship in recent years. Nigeria is highly stable in terms of its media index, with very little variation. Most notable is the upward bump in the value of the *media*

component in 1999. Like Ghana, Nigeria also enjoys a rich tradition of media practice in Africa dating back to 1859.

Fig. 5: Cross Country variation in Media 1900-2012



In the post-World War Two period and in particular in the 1950s, the media became a tool for liberation and nationalism that culminated into independence in 1960. Subsequently, the media was subjected to authoritarian control by successive military regimes and dictatorships

till the country's democracy was restored in 1999⁷. Until the 1990s, the broadcast segment of the Nigerian media was fully owned by the government at state and federal levels. The logic of government ownership was that the broadcasting was too sensitive and too strategic to be left in private hands. This has changed with the liberalization of that sector and the issuance of private licenses for broadcasting during the 1990s.

First, we see that Burkina Faso enters the sample at 1919, drops out at 1932, and re-enters at 1947. During those 15 years the colony was divided up between Cote d'Ivoire, Niger, and what is current day Mali. Similarly, Senegal enters the sample at 1945, Nigeria at 1914 and Togo at 1916.

In addition, Benin experiences an abrupt "jump" in the media measure in 1960, a rapid decline in 1971, and an additional rapid increase in 1990. Between 1960 and 1972, Benin underwent significant political competition amongst three regionally and ethnically based political parties headed by Hubert Maga, leader of the northern Bariba ethnic group, Sourou Migan Apithy representing the southeastern Yoruba and Goun tribes, and Justin Ahomadegbe of the southwest and south-central Fon group. The media's significant contribution to this nascent political competition is reflected in Benin's high media index levels during this milieu.

However, vibrant political competition and press freedom correlated with high levels of political instability as regional leaders struggled to capture the state for parochial interests. The military intervened in government 6 times in 12 years during this internecine period. In 1972, General Mathieu Kerekou's launched a military coup, ending the triumvirate Presidential Council that was set up by Maja, Ahomadegbe, and Apithy in 1970. Kerekou's seizure of power put an end to Benin's endemic political instability, however, his imposition of a Marxist-Leninist one-party state brought about significant retrenchments in press freedom. A 1975 coup attempt and 1977 mercenary invasion prompted him to further consolidate his regime and purge opponents. Benin's media index declined significantly during this period and wouldn't rise again until the country's democratic transition during the early 1990's. Subsequent regimes have fostered relatively high levels of press freedom; however since 2010 Benin has registered an overall decline in its media index score under Yayi Boni's regime.

Figure 5 shows that Ghana enters a period characterized by a high degree of changes in the *media* index levels in 1949. This turbulent period ends in 1983, and importantly, 1993 marks an additional rapid increase in the levels of the *media* index. Ghana has a long history of media practice dating back to the early 19th century. By the end of the Second World War, several Ghanaian-owned newspapers had emerged. The press played a significant role in the anti-colonial struggle, mobilizing nationalists' consciousness and exposing the oppression and contradictions under colonial rule. Some of the newspapers were Ashanti Pioneer (1939), Ashanti Times (1947), and Ghana Evening News (1948). In 1949, the Ghana Journalists Association (GJA), which brings together journalists from both the state-owned and private media, was formed to promote professional practice and represent the interests of members. The turbulence in the media from 1949 to 1983 is a reflection of the country's checkered political history.

⁷ Media Foundation for West Africa, 2007. *Media Alert West Africa 2004-2005: Annual State of the Media Report*. Accra: Media Foundation for West Africa.

Between 1966 and 1981, political governance vacillated between civilian and military regimes. Successive post-colonial regimes passed various licensing laws and decrees to control and suppress the development of the media. For example, in 1957, Ghana's first President, Dr. Nkrumah applied the book and newspaper registration laws, denying perceived political opponents license to operate or closing down newspapers belonging to political opponents. He saw the media as an instrument of state authority, and ensured that it provided the impetus for the national development agenda. In the 1990s, the media landscape underwent significantly transformation with the re-introduction of multi-party democracy and a liberal constitution (1992 Constitution). In 2001, President John Kufuor repealed the Criminal Libel and sedition Law, further enhancing media freedom.

At a more detailed level, a dramatic relaxation of government censorship came first in Ghana's most recent period of democratization. It came already in 1989 -1990, along with a more modest improvement in the general public's access to public media. These were the openings that made the rest possible reflected in the overall index score in Figure 5. The election year of 1992 then made other changes possible and more visible. The range of media perspectives, free campaign media, government censorship efforts, paid interest group media, critical media, and paid program media all improved significantly and have stayed constant since then. The last two indicators to reach their most democratic levels were access to media and media bias, both taking place in 1993. Very early and broad-based expansion of democratic media seems to have been a critical aspect of the Ghana success story. While all the details are not show in Figure 5, it may be of interest to note these sequential developments.

During its first period in the sample, the levels of the media index in Burkina Faso exhibits no variation. In the second, an increase in 1960 is visible, followed by a decline in 1966. The year 1960 was the year Burkina Faso obtained its independence from France. Maurice Yameogo became the first president of the Republic. The multiparty form of politics enshrined in Burkina Faso's constitution predicated the rise in the media index immediately following independence. Like many of his contemporaries, Yameogo felt that party politics was not conducive for national cohesion in a young republic. In 1962 he effectively transformed Burkina Faso into an UDV-controlled one party state, declaring the party's "supremacy over all national institutions".⁸ The transformation to a one-party state, however, had limited impact on press freedoms. In 1966, a military coup was launched against his regime by Colonel Sangoule Lamizana. The military's intervention into politics led to another period of political instability and a sharp decline in the media index ensued.

We observe a swift rise and subsequent decline in the index value in 1978-1979 following the introduction of a revised constitution in 1977. Multiparty elections are held in 1978. Lamizana won but was overthrown in a military coup in 1980. In 1983 President Jean-Baptiste Ouedraogo reinstated press and union freedoms. This move empowered the press and workers unions to advocate for increased freedoms. It was during this dispensation that the revolutionary former Prime Minister and Captain Thomas Sankara launched the August 4th coup. The overall media index remained stable during Sankara's rule. Blaise Campaore who oversaw the democratic transition process during the early 1990's overthrows him in 1987. In 1991 he adopted a new constitution that allowed for multiparty democracy. In 1993 the government introduced an

⁸ Victoria Brittain "Introduction to Thomas Sankara and Burkina Faso" pg. 45

information code that guaranteed freedom of press, information, and expression at the same time making insulting the head of state a crime. Outlets also risked being summarily banned if accused of distributing false information or endangering national security.⁹ Although there are libel laws on the books, few journalists have been charged in recent years. The recently institutionalized High Counsel of Communications (HCC) monitors media content, including the Internet, for compliance with the law and ethical standards.

Although Senegal enters the sample in 1945, the Senegalese media is the oldest in Francophone West Africa. Between 1945 and 1960, about 259 newspapers were established in the country¹⁰. This proliferation of print journalism would coincide with the struggle for independence. We see an abrupt rise in Senegal's media index score following its independence from France in 1960. Following independence, like most other West African leaders, President Leopold Senghor decided to monopolize the media sector as part of a broader objective to create a strong national state. Independent mass media was outlawed although he was never fully able to eliminate clandestine critical press.¹¹ Various decrees emerged to regulate the sector. For instance, a February 5th 1960 order was signed to regulate the issuance of professional identity cards to journalists. There was also a Decree n°61/154 of 13 April 1961 which delegated the powers of press control to the Ministry of Information, Radio Broadcasting and the Press.

It wouldn't be until the early 1980's when Senghor's successor Abdou Diouf would lift political restrictions and liberalize the written press. We see a significant rise in the media index in 1981. The transformative change that occurred during this period was intensified in the early 1990's. The Senegalese government began subsidizing the private press in 1990.¹² A liberalized media environment contributed to the unseating of Diouf to opposition leader Abdoulaye Wade in the 2000 presidential elections. Senegal has experienced an upward trend in its overall media index score with stabilization in 1996. Ironically this coincided with the establishment of the Press Aid Fund in 1996. The budget and number of recipients have increased exponentially over the years and some would argue that this has led to increased self-censorship and corruption in the media sector.

Togo exhibits stable and low levels of the indicator. This is punctuated by a slight increase in the early 1960s, and a more significant improvement starting at 1991. The 1973-2003 period is highly unstable. A significant improvement is visible during the 2004-2012 period. Like other countries in West Africa, the media in Togo witnessed major crackdown during the regime of Gnassingbé Eyadéma who presided over a military government from 1967 to 2005. Since the 1990s the media industry in Togo has been experiencing a boom. Togo has over 96 radio stations, seven television channels, and some 40 newspapers.

From 1900 to 1952 Liberia registered a stable relatively low media index level under the virtual on-party state dominated by the True Whig Party. Vibrant political competition between the Republic Party and the True Whig Party ends in 1878. By the time Liberia enters the sample in

⁹ <http://www.worldaudit.org/presstable.html>

¹⁰ Panos, 2004b

¹¹ Wittman, 2008

¹² <http://www.afrol.com/articles/22246>

1900, opposition to the True Whig Party is non-existent, although vibrant intra-party contestation persists due to established presidential term limits. William Tubman is elected president in 1944. He eliminated presidential term limits and remained in office until his death in 1971. During his reign, opposition parties were banned and press freedoms were significantly curtailed. We see a dip in the media index level that remains steady throughout his presidency. Liberia experiences a rapid increase in its overall media index in 1972 under Tubman's successor William Tolbert. Tolbert allowed for press freedom, increased civil liberties, and freedom of speech immediately after taking office. Tolbert re-introduced the two-party system in Liberia after 23 years in 1978. Samuel Doe, a junior officer in the military launched a military coup in 1980, prompting a significant drop in the countries overall media index score. Doe's military regime suspended the constitution, disbanded the legislature, and ruled by decree until 1984. The constitution was re-instituted in 1984 and political parties were allowed to form to contest the presidential elections that he was pressured to hold by the United States in 1985. We see an increase in the overall media index leading up to and following the 1985 elections. Liberia's overall media index score rises until 1990 and then there's a rapid decline as a civil war erupts in Liberia. Charles Taylor wins the presidential elections in 1997 followed by an abrupt increase in the media index, which has persisted in the post-war political dispensation under the Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf regime.

Last, Guinea exhibits low levels of the indicator until a first improvement in 1946-1957, followed by a rapid decline. Levels of the media indicator remain low until a steady improvement begins in 1990. At independence in 1958, the media industry had limited impact mainly because it was urban-based and tightly controlled by the Parti Démocratique de Guinée (PDG) and its charismatic leader, Sékou Touré, who governed the country until he was overthrown by a military coup in 1984¹³ and later Lansana Conté who governed the country for 24 years and died in 2008. The promulgation of the 1991 Constitution gave a measure of freedom to the media, further deepened with new more liberal media laws in 2010. The new media laws give legal recognition to the growing number of online media news websites and radio stations that have become important sources of independent information in recent years.

6. Disaggregating Select Indicators Across Countries

While the view of media in West Africa is interesting from the perspective of the aggregated media index, as well as the scores for various indicators averaged for all countries included in this report, looking at the development of each individual indicator across the eight countries provides another level of richness and detail. We have selected four particularly interesting indicators for this analysis: Censorship by the government of major media, harassment of journalists, media bias favoring the government, and corruption in the media sector.

¹³ Schmidt, Elizabeth, "His Master's Voice: Mass Communication and Single Party Politics in Guinea Under Sékou Touré (review)". *African Studies Review*, Volume 49, Number 3, December 2006, pp.134-135
DOI: 10.1353/arw.2007.0067

Print/Broadcast Censorship

Figures 6A and 6B present cross-country variation in levels of *print/broadcast censorship*. This is, naturally, one of the core indicators of media freedom and thus a critical aspect of democratic dispensation in terms of provision of alternative sources of information and holding the government accountable for its actions. The question the V-Dem Country Experts (multiple per country) were asked to code for each country, was:

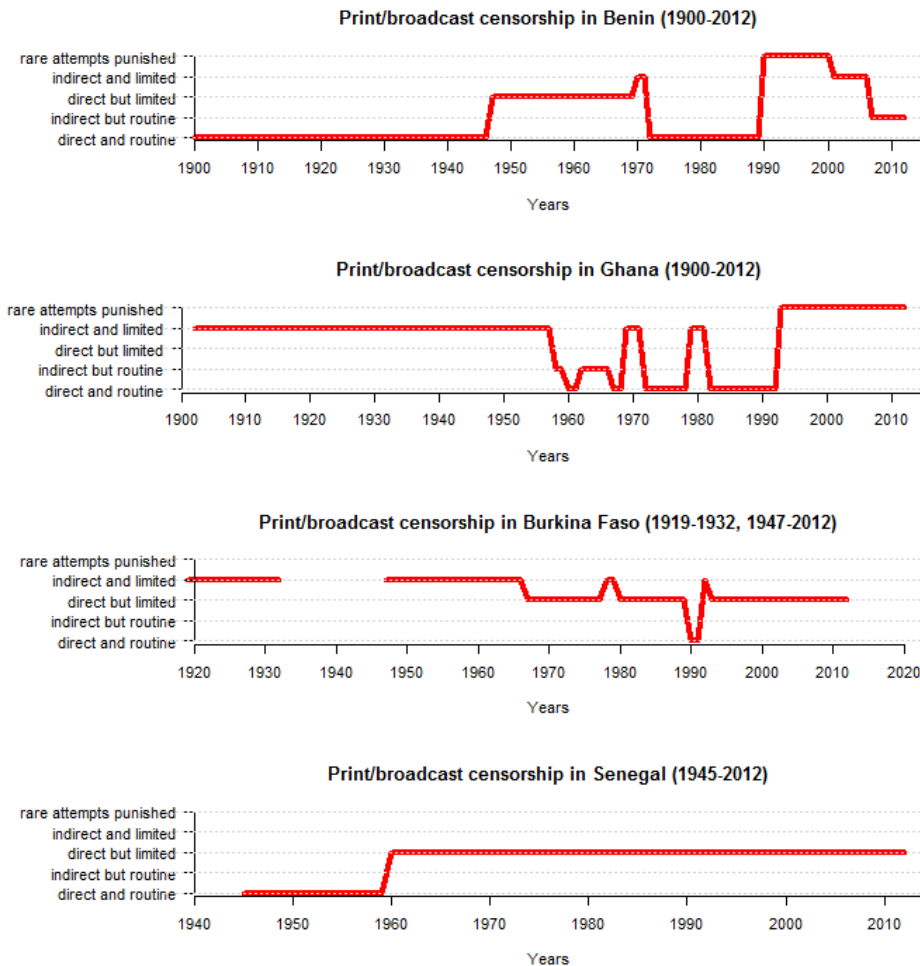
“Does the government directly or indirectly attempt to censor the print or broadcast media?” Experts were also informed that indirect forms of censorship might include politically motivated awarding of broadcast frequencies, withdrawal of financial support, influence over printing facilities and distribution networks, selected distribution of advertising, onerous registration requirements, prohibitive tariffs, and bribery. But it was also clarified that we are not concerned with censorship of non-political topics such as child pornography, statements offensive to a particular religion, or defamatory speech unless this sort of censorship is used as a pretext for censoring political speech. The answer alternatives given to Experts were (and these are the keys to substantive interpretations of changes over time in each country):

- 0: Attempts to censor are direct and routine.
- 1: Attempts to censor are indirect but nevertheless routine.
- 2: Attempts to censor are direct but limited to especially sensitive issues.
- 3: Attempts to censor are indirect and limited to especially sensitive issues.
- 4: The government rarely attempts to censor major media in any way, and when such exceptional attempts are discovered, the responsible officials are usually punished.

As shown in Figure 6A, the differences between countries are significant. In Benin and Ghana the patterns of this indicator across time are highly variable, and follow roughly the overall *media* index seen in Figure 5 (note however, that the initial rise in the values of the indicator in Benin occurs in 1947, preceding a sharp increase in the overall media index score at independence. The subsequent decline began after Kerekou seized power in 1972. A sharp increase occurred during Benin’s democratic transition during the early 1990’s and remained stable until the early 2000’s. Since then, there has been a progressive decline in the indicator value, first during the end of Kerekou’s final administration and increasingly so under Yayi Boni’s administration. In 2006 the High Council for Audiovisual Media and Communications (HAAC) passed a provision limiting press freedom in the months leading up to the 2006 presidential election. This decision restricted the amount of time a media outlet could devote to political parties and presidential candidates. It also forbade the publication of opinion pieces on political candidates that would jeopardize “national unity” while protecting the president’s right to “permanent and limitless access” to organs of the public press. Although these provisions were lifted after the 2006 elections, numerous legal and regulatory mechanisms have been employed to stifle press freedom since Boni’s presidency.¹⁴

¹⁴ <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2013/benin>

Fig. 6a: Cross Country variation in Print/broadcast censorship 1900-2012



A 1997 Press Law that criminalizing libel has been increasingly enforced. The government's Office of Radio and Television (ORTB) allegedly restrict broadcasts that are critical of the government. For instance in 2010 the government blocked the signal of a French radio station that reported on efforts by members of the National Assembly to impeach President Yayi. The HAAC has recently introduced a measure requiring all broadcasters to submit weekly lists of their planned programming, and publishers to submit copies of all their publications. Although it is not systematically adhered too, it has contributed to the lower media/broadcast censorship indicator that has obtained in recent years. Many print and broadcast operators are also increasingly exercising self-censorship in order to avoid defamation lawsuits.

In Ghana, growing censorship, perhaps a reaction to be expected followed the growth and expansion of print and broadcast media in the late 1940s. Figure 6A shows a sharp decline in the level of freedom from censorship after independence. After 1957, Ghana's first President, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, controlled all the press. In 1963, a law gave the Minister of Information wide powers to stop anyone from publishing if the minister felt that publication would not be

in the government's interests. In 1960, the Criminal Code Act 29, 1960 was passed and under Section 183, Subsection 2, the President could pass an executive instrument requesting that newspapers, books or documents be submitted for vetting before publication. "The Newspaper Licensing Act 1963 (Act 189) and the Newspaper Licensing Decree NRCD ten years later required a publisher to apply for a license which was renewable, every year, before publishing a newspaper or magazine."¹⁵

Kwame Nkrumah shut down the opposition Ashanti Pioneer, which had operated since the 1930s, after being subjected to censorship. The National Liberation Council (NLC) imposed stricter controls on domestic private outlets in 1966, which prevented anyone from suing government-owned newspapers. In 1969, Dr. Kofi Abrefa Busia repealed various Acts and dismissed the owner of the state-owned Daily Graphic for opposing him. After the overthrow of Dr. Busia in 1972, Ignatius Kutu Acheampong imposed strict media control and clamped down on opposition outlets by cutting off foreign exchange. Then came a brief period almost free of government censorship coinciding with the democratically elected government of Hilla Limann 1979-1981. Media restrictions were intensified as the PNDC military junta consolidated its rule from 1982.¹⁶ The liberalization of the media and the passage of the 1992 constitution curtailed censorship to a significant degree. The repeal of the Criminal Libel and Seditious Law in 2001 brought the final measure of respite to journalists, particularly those in the private media.

In contrast, the dynamics of the indicator in Burkina Faso and Senegal are very different. In the former, Figure 6A portrays a picture of high levels of press freedom following independence during the country's multiparty dispensation. Although Yameogo transformed the country into a one-party state in 1962 media freedom remained stable throughout his rule. Lt. Col. Lamizana launched a coup in 1966, suspended the constitution and ushered in a period of military rule marked by declines in press freedom including increased print/broadcast censorship. In 1977, Lamizana amended the constitution and paved the way for multiparty elections to take place. Press freedoms were increasingly respected during the period but reverted back to pre-election levels after Lamizana won another term in office. Col Zerbo overthrew him in a bloodless coup in 1980. A series of military coups ensued over the next few years, with the final one occurring in 1987 by the incumbent Blaise Compaore. In 1991 he adopted a new constitution, which allowed for multiparty democracy. There were 62 political parties that formed to contest the 1992 elections. In 1993 the government introduced an information code. While guaranteeing the freedom of press, information, and expression the code made insulting the head of state a crime. Outlets risked being summarily banned if accused of distributing false information or endangering national security.¹⁷ Although there are libel laws on the books, few journalists have been charged in recent years. The recently institutionalized High Council of Communications (HCC) monitors media content, including the Internet, for compliance with the law and ethical standards.

¹⁵ Owusu, William Yaw, 2012. "The Ghanaian Media Landscape: How unethical practices of journalists undermine progress", Reuters Institute Fellowship Paper, University of Oxford.

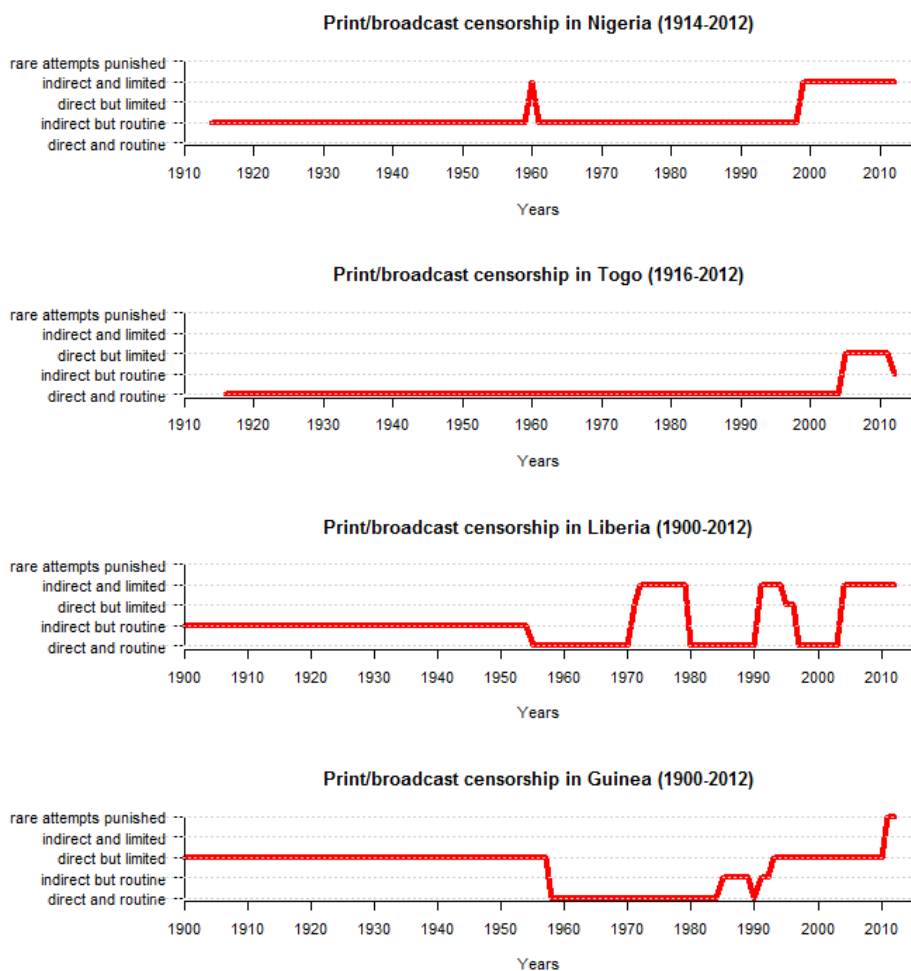
https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/fileadmin/documents/Publications/fellows_papers/2011-2012/The_Ghanaian_Media_Landscape.pdf

¹⁶ Owusu, 2012

¹⁷ <http://www.worldaudit.org/presstable.html>

There is very little variation in the levels of the indicator in Senegal and this is reflected in Figure 6A. We observe one “step”, occurring at independence in 1960, followed by a stable period of relatively average scores on the indicator. Although successive governments have not practiced overt censorship, intimidation and self-censorship is pervasive due to stringent defamation laws. Article 72, 80, and 255 of the penal code is particularly harsh on journalists and impose severe criminal penalties for libel and the publication of materials that compromise national security by “disturbing the public order,” “inciting popular insurrection,” or “spreading false news.” Members of the independent press, however, are still frequently highly critical of the government.

Fig. 6b: Cross Country variation in Print/broadcast censorship 1900-2012



Nigeria's *print/broadcast censorship* indicator values are relatively stable in Figure 6B. This tendency is punctuated for a brief period in 1960, and then we see a real improvement starting in 1999. In Nigeria, government censorship of broadcasting programmes is prevalent in state-owned media, though authoritarian governments manage to extend censorship to privately owned media houses. Censorship of broadcast programmes in Nigeria takes diverse forms such

as restriction of access for opponents of government, imposition of states of siege, sanction of broadcast stations and even (alleged) state-sponsored terrorism. For example, General Ibrahim Babangida prevented the broadcast of the presidential elections in 1993 and imposed a restriction of access for opponents of government. There was imprisonment and exiling of journalists during the regimes of Generals Babangida and Abacha (i.e. state of siege); closure of African Independent Television (AIT) and Ray Power FM, in 2005, for alleged violations of the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) codes (i.e. sanction of broadcast station); and the alleged murder of Dele Giwa in 1986 by General Ibrahim Babangida (i.e. state-sponsored terrorism)¹⁸. As a result of threats and pressures from media owners, politicians, advertisers, and even armed groups, Nigerian journalists and editors have found safety in self-censorship. Newsrooms sometimes “kill” stories because they are sensitive to certain interests that are closely linked to the publication, such as advertisers and political ‘godfathers’ (a code word for political patrons). Self censorship is prevalent in both State owned and privately owned media principally because journalists fear such consequences such as loss of job, lack of promotion, official reprisals, physical attacks and libel cases.

On seizing power in 1985 in a palace coup, General Ibrahim Babangida repealed the notorious 1984 Decree number 4 that was previously used by Generals Mohamed Buhari’s regime against journalists, but began a crackdown on the media by 1990 after twice extending the country’s transition into civilian rule. Babangida’s regime in 1992 seized 80 000 copies of the *African Concord* weekly magazine for the revealing the rots in the political and economic policies of his regime.¹⁹ General Sani Abacha also instituted similar crackdown on the media after pronouncing himself head of state in 1993, and later by 1995 decided to eliminate or permanently neutralize “enemy journalists” such as Kunle Ajibade, George Mbah, Ben Charles Obi and Christine Anyawu who were variously charged with acts of subversion and treason²⁰. The 1999 constitution that is the one currently in force in broad terms guarantees media freedom and freedom of expression in Chapter IV, Section 39.

For Togo Figure 6B displays a high degree of government censorship throughout the pre-independence and independence eras until improvements are registered relatively late, in 2005. A brief period of less strict censorship by the government restricted to only sensitive issues (a value of 2) is followed by an increase in the level of censorship in 2009. Most journalists and editors practice self-censorship for fear of being chastised, dismissed, or even assaulted. Togolese journalists do not cover all events and key issues, least of all those related to security and national defence. They avoid issues such as corruption by public officials and abuses by members of the president’s family.

In Liberia Figure 6B demonstrates an early increase in print/broadcast censorship following the highly contested 1955 presidential elections in which William Tubman won a third term after

¹⁸ “Government’s Censorship Of Broadcast Programmes And The Citizens’ Right To Know’, Nsukka *Journal Of The Humanities*, No. 18, 2009/2010.

www.unnfacultyofarts.com/download.php?download_file=UNN...pdf

¹⁹ Sankore, Rotimi 2007. ‘Media Resistance in Nigeria: The News and Tempo’, in Elizabeth Barratt and Guy Berger (eds.) *50 Years of Journalism: African media since Ghana’s independence*. (Johannesburg: The African Editors’ Forum, Highway Africa and Media Foundation for West Africa), pp.26-30.

²⁰ Sankore, 2007.

eliminating presidential term limits. This would be the last time that any contender would challenge Tubman for the presidency. Leading up to the elections, Tubman suspended the writ of habeas corpus and survived an assassination attempt. His regime immediately cracked down on opposition and the critical journalists were imprisoned. Print/broadcast censorship would not abate until the Tolbert regime in the early 1970's. Following a sharp decline after the Doe led military coup in 1980, the overall media index begins to rise in 1984. However the print/broadcast censorship indicator remained low throughout the Doe regime until the 1990 civil war. Characteristic of most military regimes, the Doe regime did not tolerate criticism. Decree 88A introduced on July 21, 1984 effectively banned criticism of the government by making it a criminal offense to "create disharmony, spread rumors, lies and disinformation"²¹. We don't observe a rise in the print/broadcast censorship indicator until 1991, at the height of the Liberian Civil War. The Charles Taylor regime ushered in another period of print/broadcast censorship. It is not until the 2004 interim government that significant improvements occur pertaining to print/broadcast censorship.

Finally, in Guinea there is a clear decline in the levels of the indicator in 1958, followed by an improvement period starting in 1985 as displayed in Figure 6B. After independence in 1958, the state-owned media, particularly *Guinea Broadcasting Corporation*, *Radio Kaloum Stéréo* and *Radio Guinée Internationale*, served as propaganda tools for the Sékou Touré's regime that governed the country until he was overthrown by a military coup in 1984²², followed by a increased degree of freedom to the media in terms of less government censorship. The new media laws in the 1990s have removed prison sentences for defamation cases. They have also adopted a narrower legal definition of defamation and have made the offence much harder to prove in court. The Government of Guinea has toned down its brutal repression of the media in order to attract the sympathy of donors and international public opinion and by that benefit from financial assistance.

Harassment of Journalists

Another absolutely critical indicator of a democratic environment in the media sector, is the degree to which journalists are free to write what they find, and provide the public with the information they have. Harassment of journalists is a technique typically used by less-than-democratic leaders to curb the independence and freedom of speech for individual journalists. The question the V-Dem Country Experts (multiple per country) were asked to code for each country, was:

"Are individual journalists harassed - i.e., threatened with libel, arrested, imprisoned, beaten, or killed -- by governmental or powerful nongovernmental actors while engaged in legitimate journalistic activities?"

The answer alternatives given to Experts were (and these are the keys to substantive interpretations of changes over time in each country):

²¹ Liberia: A Promise Betrayed Lawyers Committee for Human Rights

²² Media Foundation for West Africa 2007, p.32

- 0: No journalists dare to engage in journalistic activities that would offend powerful actors because harassment or worse would be certain to occur.
- 1: Some journalists occasionally offend powerful actors but they are almost always harassed or worse and eventually are forced to stop.
- 2: Some journalists who offend powerful actors are forced to stop but others manage to continue practicing journalism freely for long periods of time.
- 3: It is rare for any journalist to be harassed for offending powerful actors, and if this were to happen, those responsible for the harassment would be identified and punished.
- 4: Journalists are never harassed by governmental or powerful nongovernmental actors while engaged in legitimate journalistic activities.

Figures 7A and 7B present the dynamics of this indicator: *harassment of journalists*. Here, again, a high degree of fluctuation is visible for Benin and Ghana, compared with relative stability in Burkina Faso and Senegal (apart from a massive decline in Burkina Faso in 1949, and two “bumps” in Senegal, 1990, and 1996).

The patterns for Benin and Ghana are very similar indeed to those observed in Figure 6A. In Benin the low and stable value of the indicator increased significantly at independence until the 1972 coup led by Kerekou. The indicator experienced a decline during Kerekou’s military regime until the 1990 democratic transition. A slight decline occurred in 2006 when a provision was passed limiting press freedom in the period prior to the March 2006 presidential election. This decision restricted the amount of time a media outlet could devote to political parties, presidential candidates, or even governmental institutions in the months leading up to the election. At the same time, it protected the president's right to "permanent and limitless access" to organs of the public press and forbids opinion pieces concerning political candidates that might jeopardize "national unity."

These final days of Kerekou’s second stint as president saw cases of journalist harassment and attempts to limit critical content in the media. In February of that year, *Panorama’s* managing editor was temporarily detained and charged with high treason after publishing an article describing an alleged coup attempt intended to keep Kerekou in power.²³ The following month, Kerekou's Communications Minister “fired two top officials at the state-run broadcast office after they refused to broadcast a government videotape allegedly proving the presence of electoral fraud due to doubts about the tape's authenticity”.²⁴ Boni assumed power later that year. A few months later, his regime arrested and temporarily detained three journalists representing two independent newspapers for publishing articles critical of the police and the first family. In 2009 three journalists reported incidences of physical attacks. The media has encountered continued difficulties. The authorities disrupted Radio France Internationale’s transmission in 2011 as it commenced airing a prominent call-in show on the disputed election. In 2012, the High Authority of Broadcasting (HAAC) suspended the private television station

²³ <http://www.worldaudit.org/presstable.html>

²⁴ <http://www.worldaudit.org/presstable.html>

Canal 3, for “undermining national unity”. Harassments of individual journalists have also continued albeit at a modest level.

Fig. 7a: Cross Country variation in Harassment of Journalists 1900-2012

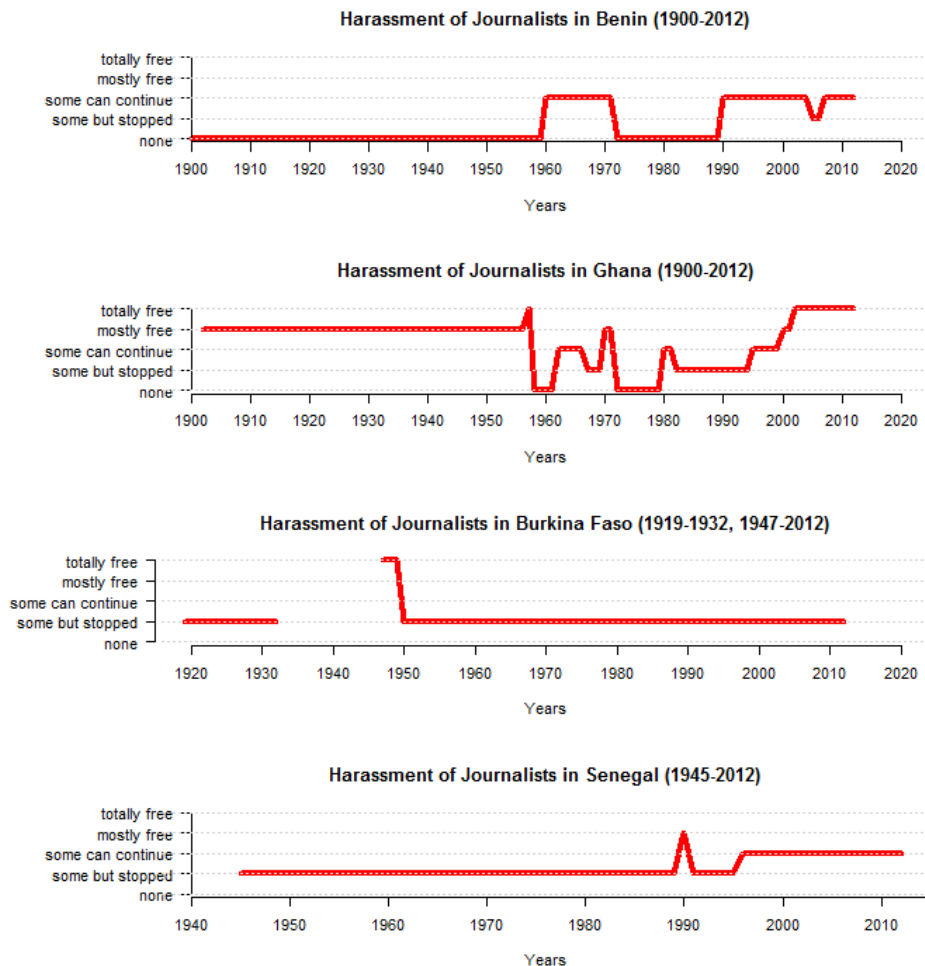


Figure 7A shows that Ghana’s situation is quite unique compared to the other countries. The level of harassment of journalists was quite low and stable for a long time from 1900 to 1950s, presumably largely because of the lack of journalism. Improved in the late 1950s but remained volatile up to the late 1970s, stabilizing in the mid 1980s and registering significant improvements since the 1990s. This trend is a reflection of Ghana’s political turbulence, characterized by growing censorship and passage of various laws by successive regimes to curtail press speech. Harassment of journalist includes dismissal of journalist and long jail terms. The liberalization of the media in the 1990s and subsequent repeal of the criminal liberal law in 2001 has reduced harassment. As well, the GJA, MNC, civil society organizations including sections of the public have spoken out against various forms of harassment of journalists when they occurred.

Figure 7A displays a different development over time in Senegal. In 1980 Senghor resigned from office and turned over power to his Prime Minister Abdou Diouf. Diouf continued the process of political liberalization inaugurated by his predecessor. He wins the 1983 elections and subsequent 1988 elections; however the latter are marred with allegations of electoral fraud due to Diouf's banning of international election observers and implementation of an "optional" secret ballot. Riots ensue, Abodulaye Wade the opposition leader is imprisoned and a three-month curfew is imposed.

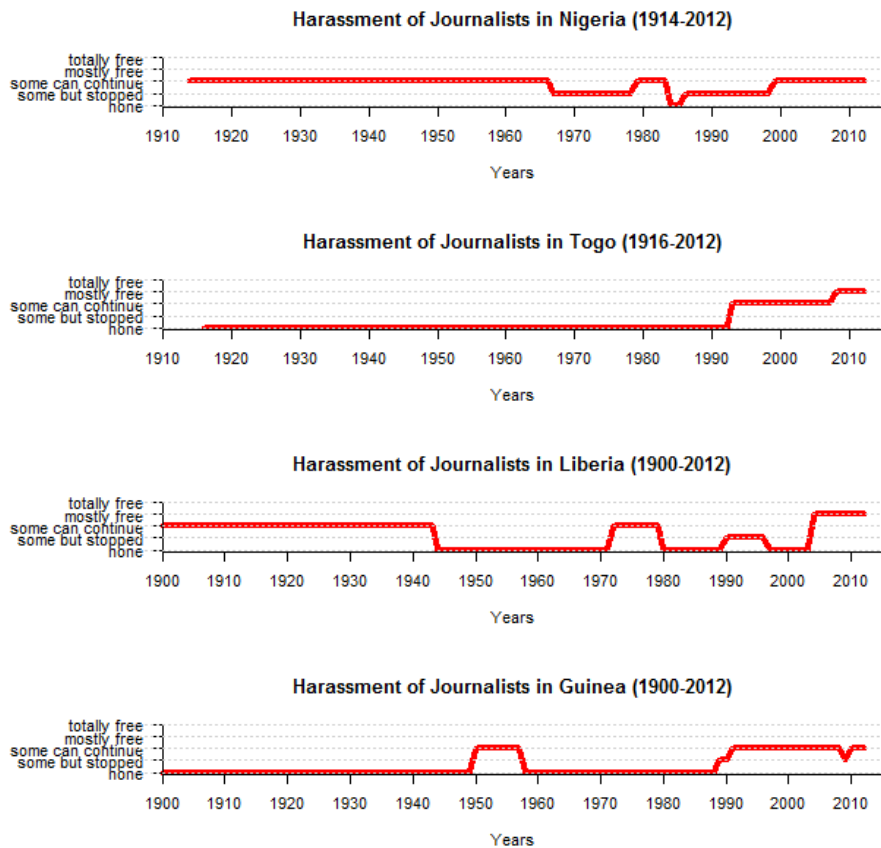
Fig. 7a: Cross Country variation in Harassment of Journalists 1900-2012



The opposition boycotts the 1990 local elections and President Diouf decides to establish a Government of National Unity with opposition members amidst international criticism and civil unrest. This is the time period in which we witness a sharp decrease in journalist harassment followed by a rapid depreciation in the indicator in 1992 when Wade's political party *Parti Democratique Senegalaise (PDS)* exited from the government and re-engaged in active opposition. Diouf agreed to electoral reform leading up to the 1993 presidential elections, one of the stipulations being guaranteed access to the state media for all parties. A decrease in

journalist harassment coincided with the 1996 local elections and stabilized thereafter. However, leading up to the 2012 presidential election, numerous incidences of journalist harassment were documented. After the Constitutional Council approved Wade's decision to run for re-election, three journalists covering the event were beaten by police, including Malick Rokhy Bâ, a correspondent from Agence France-Presse as well as two female reporters from *Le Populaire*, a Senegalese daily. A French freelance photographer, Romain Laurondeau, was also injured during anti-Wade demonstrations."²⁵

Fig. 7b: Cross Country variation in Harassment of Journalists 1900-2012



Nigeria is portrayed in Figure 7B. Here we see a period of stability until 1967, when the series declines significantly. It then declines again in 1984, followed by a rise in 1999. The media was subjected to various forms of harassment especially during the period of the military rule²⁶. The military targeted the independent media in an attempt to eliminate dissent, criticism or opposition. For example, on seizing power in 1985 in a palace coup, General Ibrahim Babangida repealed the notorious 1984 Decree number 4 that was previously used by Generals Mohamed Buhari's regime against journalists, but began a crackdown on the media by 1990 after twice

²⁵ <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2013/senegal>

²⁶ Media Foundation for West Africa 2007, p.69

extending the country's transition into civilian rule. Babangida's regime in 1992 seized 80 000 copies of the *African Concord* weekly magazine for the revealing the rots in the political and economic policies of his regime. General Sani Abacha also instituted similar crackdown on the media after pronouncing himself head of state in 1993, and later by 1995 decided to eliminate or permanently neutralize "enemy journalists" such as Kunle Ajibade, George Mbah, Ben Charles Obi and Christine Anyawu who were variously charged with acts of subversion and treason²⁷. In 1997 to 1998, when Abacha tried to transform himself into a civilian ruler, 94 journalists and media workers were individually attacked at various times, at the height of the crackdown, 14 out of the 26 journalists and media workers in prison were from *The News*, *Tempo* and *PM News* publications, while others went underground or in exile, several editions of publications were seized while four journalists were killed, Of the 23 decrees aimed at curtailing press freedom and freedom of expression.

For Togo Figure 7B shows the first improvement in 1993, and an additional one in 2008 resulting a much better situation for journalists in the country than ever before. Yet, harassment continues. To give but one example: Following the publication, on September 30, 2005, by his newspaper, *Forum De la Semaine*, of a press release by the Coordinator General of the October 5 Patriotic Movement, in exile in Belgium, who accused President Eyadéma, his children and his clan of "maintaining a strong hold over the resources of the country and the destiny to the nation", Jean-Baptiste Dzikodo said he received telephone calls, death threats from the presidents' children, his close relations and other anonymous persons. This threat was put to effect when according to the journalists, security forces arrested him in an Internet café in Lomé. They seized his cell phone and computer where they found photos of people who had been injured during the elections. They also accused him of having sent the photos abroad to deliberately tarnish Togo's image. Dzikodo was then held in detention for 11 days followed by an additional 30 days in prison. Afterwards, he was charged with attempting to disseminate false news and fined 500-thousand CFA (910 US dollars). That Dzikodo is still alive may well be attributed to the public outcry against his detention."²⁸

For Liberia Figure 7B demonstrates a decline in the indicator during the Tubman regime followed by a significant improvement during the Tolbert regime. In 1955 the prominent Independent was fined and banned after publishing articles critical toward the government. Following this incident, Tubman tolerated only limited criticism of his government and journalists challenging his government were harassed routinely. Tubman dies in office in 1971 and his vice president William Tolbert ascends to power. Tolbert liberalizes the press in 1972, tolerating criticism and guaranteeing press freedom. In 1978 he reintroduces the two-party system in Liberia that had been effectively banned since the 1955 elections. The following year, the newly formed opposition group Progressive Alliance of Liberia (PAL) planned a large-scale demonstration against a proposed increase in the price of rice, "in defiance of a government ban on public demonstrations."²⁹ The 'rice riots' would degenerate into wide-scale looting, destruction, and violence. Tolbert imprisoned some members of the opposition. Political tensions continued between the government and oppositional forces throughout 1979 and

²⁷ Sankore 2007, p.28

²⁸ Media Foundation for West Africa 2007, pp.88-89

²⁹ D. Elwood Dunn (2009) *Limits of Reciprocity: Liberia and the United States During the Cold War* (Palgrave MacMillan: New York)Pg. 97

early 1980. Sergeant Samuel Doe launches a military coup in 1980. Several prominent journalists were detained under Doe's military regime including the managing director (Kenneth Best) and reporter (Willis Knuckles) of the *Daily Observer*; Momolu Sirleaf, publisher of *Footprints Today*; and Rufus Darpoh, editor of the *Sun Times*.³⁰ There is a slight increase of the indicator during the Civil War followed by a sharp decline during the Taylor regime. Significant improvements occurred in 2004 during the interim presidency of Gyude Bryant and have remained at relatively high levels under Johnson-Sirleaf.

Finally, in Guinea there is a slight improvement during the pre-independence 1950-1957 period, followed by a decline after independence when journalists were again routinely harassed in severe ways in case they dared to criticize the incumbent government. This is captured in Figure 7B. Journalists were often subjected to restrictive media laws, government interference, intimidation, and physical violence. This level of repression of journalists remained stable until a significant improvement comes with the third wave of democratization in 1991. For a time Guinea is a place where journalists are relatively free to criticize the government. But violence against journalists became commonplace in 2009 and 2010 during the difficult two-year transition to democracy. Army Captain Moussa Dadis Camara led the military junta that took power after Conte's death and pledged not to stand as a presidential candidate in the 2010 elections. Camara however changed his mind, provoked protest demonstrations in the capital Conakry in September 2009, which were brutally repressed by the army. Human rights groups said at least 157 people were killed in a sports stadium when soldiers opened fire on demonstrators and sexually assaulted women. Following the bloody repression of the September 2009 demonstrations in Conakry against the military government led by Captain Moussa Dadis Camara, several journalists fled the country. Some private media also suspended operations temporarily for fear of recriminations.³¹

Media Bias

A third critical indicator of the extent to which the media environment is democratic, is the level of bias in the reporting by the media. The question that Country Experts were asked to code was:

"Is there media bias against opposition parties or candidates?"

Experts were also instructed to take particular care in rating the year-to-year variation on this question if media bias tends to increase or decrease in election years; and that coverage can be considered "more or less impartial" when the media as a whole present a mix of positive and negative coverage of each party or candidate. The response categories they were provided with were:

³⁰ Liberia: A Promise Betrayed – Lawyers Committee for Human Rights report pg. 89

³¹ Infoasaid, 2011. *Guinea Media and telecommunications landscape guide*.

http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/guinea_media_landscape_guide_updated_300811.pdf

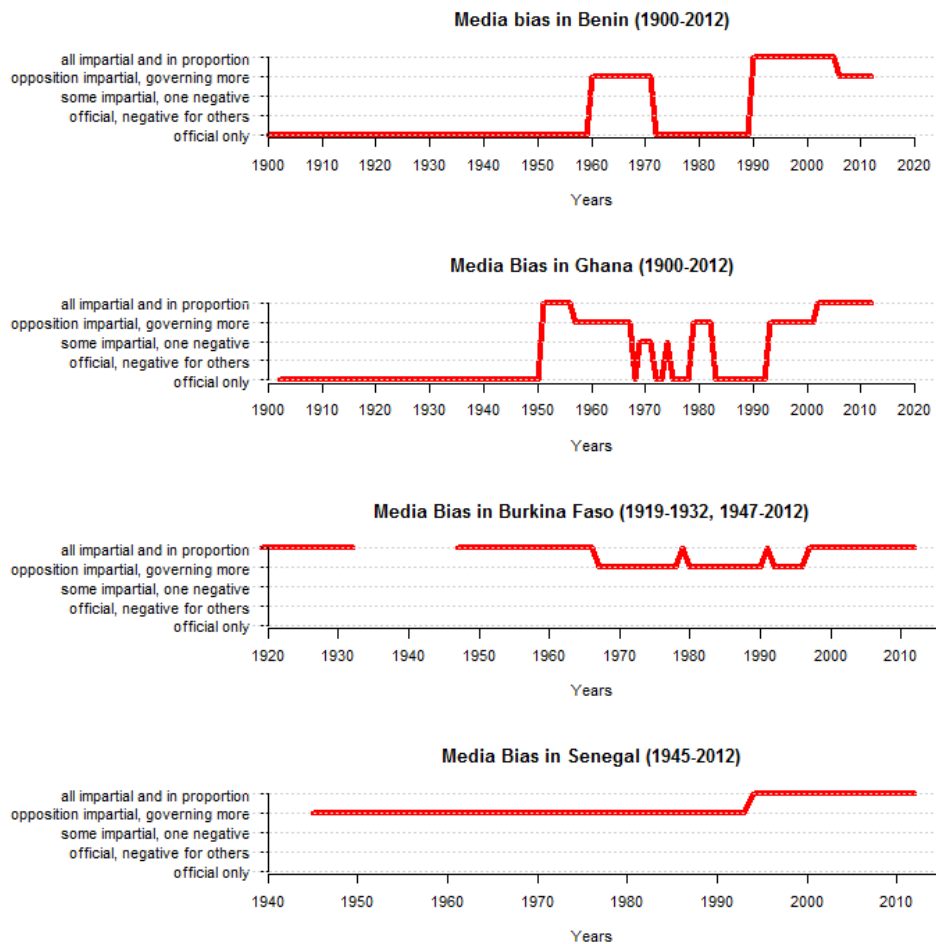
- 0: The print and broadcast media cover only the official party or candidates, or have no political coverage, or there are no opposition parties or candidates to cover.
- 1: The print and broadcast media cover more than just the official party or candidates but all the opposition parties or candidates receive only negative coverage.
- 2: The print and broadcast media cover some opposition parties or candidates more or less impartially, but they give only negative or no coverage to at least one newsworthy party or candidate.
- 3: The print and broadcast media cover opposition parties or candidates more or less impartially, but they give an exaggerated *amount* of coverage to the governing party or candidates.
- 4: The print and broadcast media cover all newsworthy parties and candidates more or less impartially and in proportion to their newsworthiness.

Figure 8A and 8B present the dynamics in the values of the indicator: *media bias* for each of the eight countries from 1900 to the present (2012).

Figure 8A shows that for Benin the immediate post-independence ushered in a period of media pluralism and criticism of the government and opposition alike. The military coup of in 1972 effectively curtailed press freedom, as was characteristic of one-party rule in the region and particularly the military regime variant. Media bias remained stable until democratic transition in 1990 that generated media coverage that was more critical and unbiased. Those positive gains have only recently seen a downward trend in the later years of Boni's administration.

In Ghana, Figure 8A again displays a turbulent period beginning with an increase in the indicator's value in 1951 with media being rather impartial up through independence and in the first few years until Nkrumah's regime stifled the media. The overthrow of the Nkrumah regime in 1966 heightened media bias against Nkrumah and his party. A few years of varying levels of bias were followed by a steep increase in impartiality in 1968 with the elected Busia government in place. In 1979 we observe another increase in impartiality, followed by a decline in 1982-83 after the military government of J. J. Rawlings had taken over. While media bias further intensified in the early 1980s following the growing number of private newspaper that were very critical of the PNDC regime, notwithstanding the passage of laws to repress the media. At the same time, the state owned newspapers and broadcasting stations were pro-Rawlings regime. In the coming years of military-cum-civilian non-democracy, the media is highly controlled and favors the incumbent government in its reporting. Finally, we observe a rise in the values of the indicator in 1993 after the elections in 1992 and the general increase in democratic rights in Ghana.

Fig. 8a: Cross Country variation in Media Bias
1900-2012



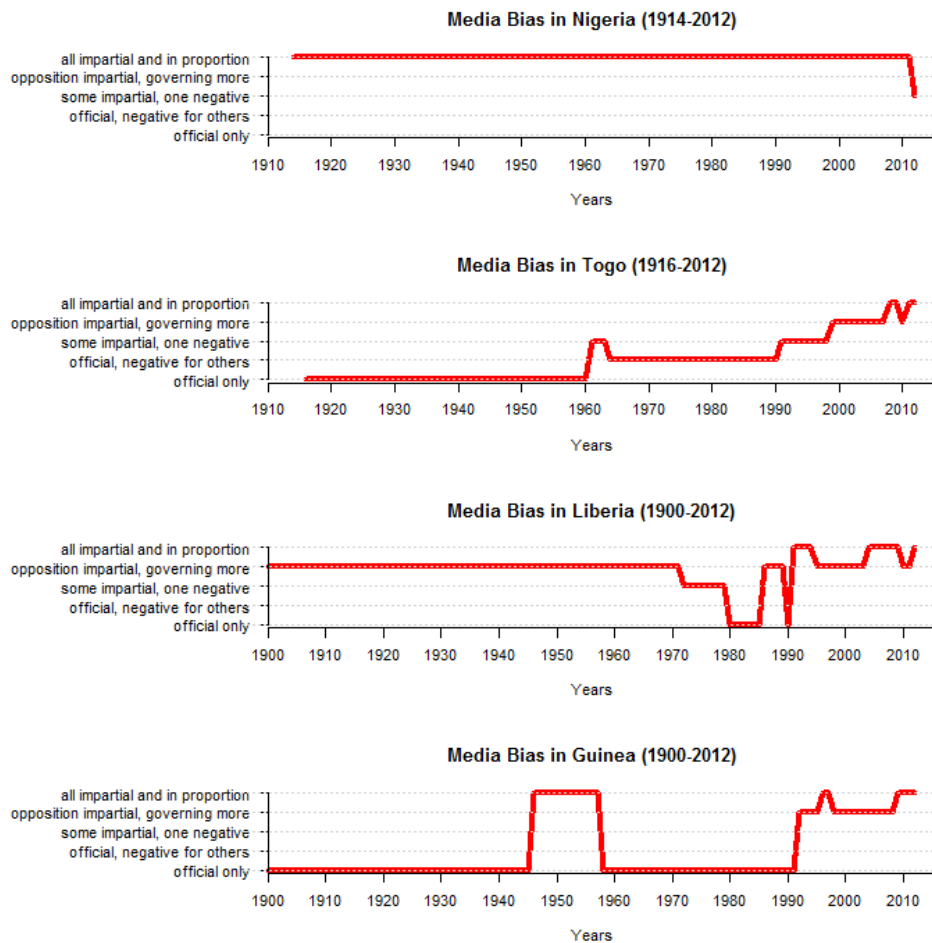
In Burkina Faso the picture is of relative stability as displayed in Figure 8A, punctuated by a drop in 1967 following the republic's first military coup. We witness a final increase in 1991, corresponding with the Third Wave of Democratization. The values in Senegal exhibit low levels of variation, with the only change in the values of the indicator being a positive jump in 1994.

Figure 8B displays how is extremely stable Nigeria is in terms of media bias. Generally, the media landscape shows obvious biases and slants in terms of what issues they cover, which angles they take their coverage from and what space they devote to these issues.³² The media, especially the privately- owned outlets, remained skeptical about the sincerity and ability of the Nigerian government to deliver the dividends of democracy to the Nigerian people. The result was that at every point when the government and Nigerian people had conflicting viewpoints

³² UNDP, n.d. *Guide to the Nigerian Media*. UNDP Nigeria.
web.undp.org/comtoolkit/reaching.../AGuidetotheNigerianMedia.pdf

on policy issues and programs, public media lined up government officials to project their views, while independent media lined up opposition figures to offer theirs. And generally, while private media sometimes also reach out to some government officials to balance their reports, the publicly funded media often did not care about opposition views.

Fig. 8b: Cross Country variation in Media bias 1900-2012



For Togo Figure 8B shows that media's impartiality increased in 1961 but only modestly so, then declined again and stayed stable until the 1990s. A steady improvement started in 1991 and while the country is clearly not a democracy, the media has been allowed to become more and more impartial perhaps opening up space for more democratic-like accountability in this country, albeit gradually and without other media rights following the same development.

In Liberia, Figure 8B shows how although the overall media index improves significantly from 1972 to 1980, we observe an increase in the media bias during this period (the line drops down south). This may be attributed to the True Whig Party dominance, the fact that it was the only political party, and the inclination of the press to report favorably on a reformist regime. Media bias abated during the mid-1980's leading up to the nation's first multiparty elections in

roughly a century. The onset of the 1990 Civil War brought about increased media bias; however, as the war escalated the media became less biased in its coverage. The media exhibited increased bias throughout the Charles Taylor regime until the Gyude Bryant interim government from 2004 to 2006. The media became very active during the lead up to the 2006 elections. There was a slight drop during the early years of the Johnson-Sirleaf regime however the indicator is currently on an upward trend. The media is increasingly critical of the government and opposition parties alike.

Last, in Guinea we see an improvement on this indicator, as displayed in Figure 8B, during the 1946-1957 period, followed by a decline. The indicator's low levels remain stable until an improvement in 1991. Television remains a state monopoly, but it only reaches Conakry and a handful of other large towns.³³ Again, one can hope that this aspect of media freedom is precipitating other more positive developments but given the country's instability, it is unclear if the media organizations can operate to any great extent at all. In short, the media may not be biased but it just does not reach very many individuals in the country.

Corruption in the Media Sector

The final indicator we are taking a closer look at is corruption in the media. It is a critical indicator since even if the media sector is free of harassment, intimidation, direct control and "guidance" from the government, corruption may still be used as a means to control what is being written and reported. The question that Country Experts were asked to code was:

"Do journalists, publishers, or broadcasters accept payments in exchange for altering news coverage?"

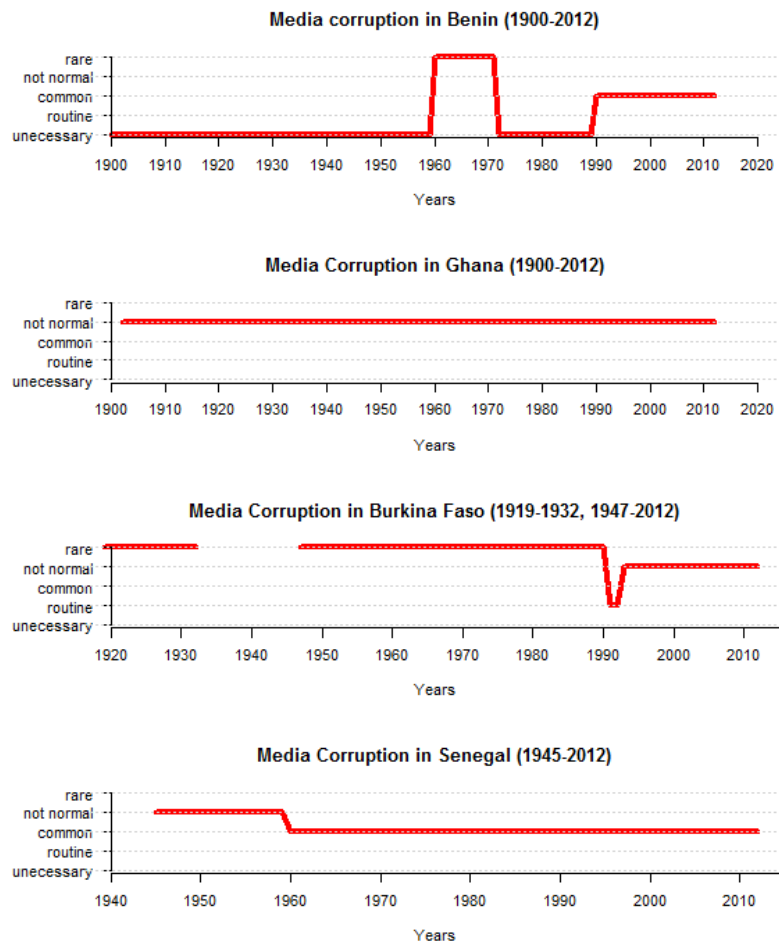
The response categories they were provided with were:

- 0: The media are so closely directed by the government that any such payments would be either unnecessary to ensure pro-government coverage or ineffective in producing anti-government coverage.
- 1: Journalists, publishers, and broadcasters routinely alter news coverage in exchange for payments.
- 2: It is common, but not routine, for journalists, publishers, and broadcasters to alter news coverage in exchange for payments.
- 3: It is not normal for journalists, publishers, and broadcasters to alter news coverage in exchange for payments, but it happens occasionally, without anyone being punished.
- 4: Journalists, publishers, and broadcasters rarely alter news coverage in exchange for payments, and if it becomes known, someone is punished for it.

³³ Infoasaid, 2011. *Guinea Media and telecommunications landscape guide*.
http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/guinea_media_landscape_guide_updated_300811.pdf

Figures 9A and 9B present the dynamics of *media corruption* in the region. This indicator shows the least amount of within-case variation. Looking across both figures, only Benin in Figure 9A shows a decrease in media corruption immediately following independence. This indicator follows the same trend as Benin's aggregated media index.

Fig. 9a: Cross Country variation in Media Corruption
1900-2012

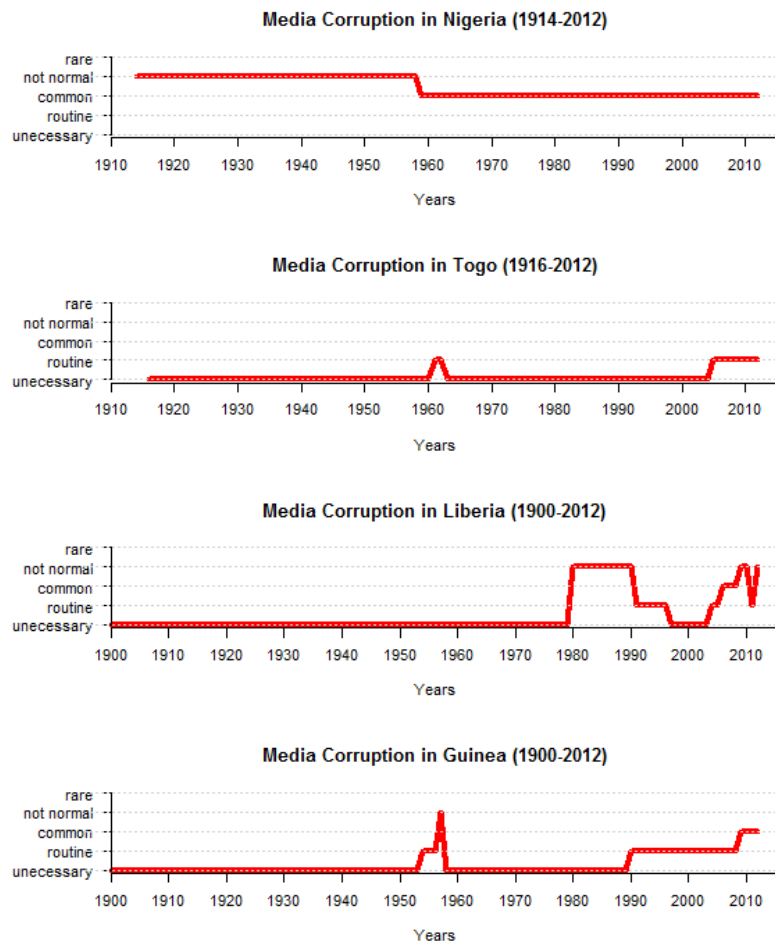


Ghana's indicator level for instance has remained stable since the start of the sample. Ghana exhibits no variation in *media corruption*. It is not clear how widespread corruption is amongst journalists in Ghana. There is the general belief that looking at society in Ghana as a whole, journalists are not too bad. Transportation allowances for media practitioners to travel to press conferences, for example, are considered legitimate, although some media houses now have a policy that does not allow their journalists to accept such support. On the occasion of Christmas or bereavement in the family it is a tradition for donations to be given which are culturally problematic to reject. Where such a gift is excessive ("a heavy envelope") this certainly does constitute corruption. Media corruption may take several forms: receiving money to write stories in a certain way, accepting other favors, or being blackmailed to refrain

from publishing certain stories.³⁴ These practices are not as prevalent as they once were, although there are still journalists around who are “forced to mortgage their integrity by poverty”.

Figure 9A also shows that for Burkina Faso, the only real change in the media corruption coincides with the introduction of multiparty politics. In this instance we see an abrupt increase in media corruption levels followed by leveling off at slightly higher levels a year or so later. Corruption in the industry primarily takes the form of bribes to publish or refrain from publishing certain stories. The low salaries of most journalists make them susceptible to these practices. Many West African governments have also established media support funds, which has the potential to induce corrupt practices or at the least contribute to self-censorship.

**Fig. 9b: Cross Country variation in Media corruption
1900-2012**



³⁴ Africa Media Barometer, 2011. *The first home grown analysis of the media landscape in Africa – Ghana*. Windhoek, Namibia: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES)

Senegal and Nigeria exhibits slight decreases in the index right after independence followed by stabilization until 2012. In Nigeria Figure 9B displays a similar drop in 1959 leading up to independence.

In Togo, Figure 9 demonstrates two slight changes in the values of the series. The first one is an abrupt improvement in 1961-1962 coinciding with the independence era. These improvements, like the presidency of independence leader Sylvanus Olympio, were short-lived. Olympio was assassinated in a bloody military coup in 1963. Eyadema's ascension to power marks a significant decline in press freedom. Low levels of press freedom and high levels of corruption in the media remain relatively throughout his 38 year rule. Only after his death in 2005 does corruption in the media subside coupled with other positive developments in the sector. However, corruption remains more prevalent in the media sector than in other countries in the region.

For Liberia Figure 9B shows significant fluctuations. Incidentally, it registered its lowest levels of corruption in the media sector during the military regime of Doe. During the first four years the constitution was suspended, the legislature disbanded and the military junta ruled by decree. It is possible that the high levels of journalist harassment, media bias, and overall repression precluded the regime from having to bribe journalists. In 1984 although a new constitution was approved accompanied by the lifting of a ban on political parties, corruption levels remained virtually stable until Doe was ousted from power in the 1989 Taylor led rebel insurgency. Media corruption levels increased during the Civil War furthered by yet more corruption during the Taylor administration. A less corrupt media sector emerged during the Byrant interim government and continued to improve throughout Johnson-Sirleaf's administration. Leading up to the 2011 presidential elections there is a precipitous drop in the media corruption index, only to rebound to previous levels following the elections.

Last, in Guinea Figure 9B portrays a short-lived improvement during the 1954-1957 period, followed by modest improvements in 1985 and 2009. Corruption in the media sector has been systemic, rivaled only by Togo in the region. The media landscape was extremely vibrant leading up to independence in 1958, with low levels of corruption, media bias, and censorship. The media encountered significant setback as Sékou Touré transformed the country into a one-party state. It is only after Touré is overthrow in 1984 that wide-scale corruption in the sector subsides. New media laws established in 2010 has decreased the overall incidence of corruption in the sector.

7. Conclusions & Reflections

Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) is particularly useful for helping researches locate specific times of changes in components of democracy like the media, and track where changes originate in terms of specific indicators.

Looking at it from a long-term perspective, the media sector in West Africa has seen significant improvements across the region, and generally speaking for all countries in the region. The

levels of democratic freedoms in the media have gone up both looking at aggregated indices, and when looking at all specific indicators.

Yet, it is also possible to identify areas in the media sector that are now lagging behind others, and could be said in need of more detailed attention and discussion. This regards in particular four specific indicators: 1) harassment of journalists, 2) lack of media being critical towards the governments, 3) access to general media across the populations, and 4) gender imbalance among journalists.

It is also possible to point towards countries where the media sector is faring less well than in other nations: Guinée, Nigeria, and Togo. While the overall index for media freedom has improved significantly in the last 10-20 years in these countries, they are still lagging behind the rest of the region.

Finally, the analysis of four critical component-indicators of how free and democratic the environment is for the media provides a level of detail and nuance that is instructive. Government censorship, informal as well as formal, remains an issue even in relatively democratic countries like Benin and Senegal. It constitutes a major issue in the less democratic states like Togo and Guinea.

Harassment of journalists is an area in need of attention particularly in countries like Burkina Faso despite the many gains in terms of other democratic rights there in the last 10 years; in Nigeria where violence is a general issue; in Togo as well as in more democratic countries like Benin and Senegal.

Media bias towards favoring the incumbent government is much less of an issue on most countries across the region today compared to earlier periods. The most deviant case from this positive trend is Nigeria where the media seems to become much less impartial in the last few years.

Corruption in the media sector is a very significant issue in most countries. This may be the single largest threat to democratic rights in the media sector in West Africa. It is difficult to know to what extent corruption is distorting media towards or against incumbent governments, or versus other actors but it seems very clear that distortion is there and a significant problem across almost all countries.

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