

**THE IMPACT OF THE GOVERNMENT CONCEALING INFORMATION ON THE  
PRACTICE OF JOURNALISM: A STUDY OF ANGLOPHONE CAMEROONIAN  
JOURNALISTS**

By

Pechulano Ngwe Ali

A THESIS

Submitted to  
Michigan State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

Journalism—Master of Arts

2017

## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE IMPACT OF THE GOVERNMENT CONCEALING INFORMATION ON THE PRACTICE OF JOURNALISM: A STUDY OF ANGLOPHONE CAMEROONIAN JOURNALISTS**

By

Pechulano Ngwe Ali

This study seeks to understand how a press freedom-related issue such governmental controls of governmental? information affects journalism practice. The study used a survey of 172 practicing Anglophone Cameroonian journalists from private and state media, and in-depth interviews. Interviewees were heads of journalism unions/associations, a media regulatory agency (the National Communication Council), and media owners, publishers, and editors. Results show that the government uses a combination of legislative and administrative practices - mostly through sanctions from the media regulatory body and police harassment—to effectively enforce and monitor control of information. Barriers to accessing government information were found to be: long wait times during appointments with officials, unending referrals to bosses/superiors, delaying press conferences until state media are present, and delaying replies to requests for information, among others. This study argues that coupled with legislative and administrative practices, these barriers lead to imbalanced reporting and ethical compromise. While governmental control of information was sometimes explained by lack of training and unprofessionalism, the practices stifle the development of responsible journalism, shrinking audiences and creating widespread cynicism about local journalistic ethics. The cynicism can also be explained by the fact that some reporters have been known to accept bribes from government officials and agencies, and rich business owners in exchange for not running scandal stories. This practice has been named "gombo journalism" in Cameroon.

Copyright by  
PECHULANO NGWE ALI  
2017

To my beloved friend, brother, colleague, and courageous journalist who has been detained for six months without charges; and to all courageous journalists who speak truth to power in Cameroon.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research took place under the guidance of Prof. Eric Freedman, my academic advisor and the chair of my thesis committee. I cannot say thank you enough for all your support, encouragement, and patience during the entire process. Professionally, I have also grown under your supervision from the time I joined the Knight Center and Capital News Service. To my thesis committee members, Profs. Manuel Chavez and Jennifer Olson, thank you very much for helping me refine the idea, focus and methodological mix of this project. The entire J-School faculty and staff, you have given me a robust experience. My sincere gratitude to the director of Journalism Graduate Studies, Prof. Geri Alumit Zeldes, who believed in my potential—to succeed in graduate school. I went through tough times with her always—being supportive.

I am pleased to have completed this thesis and words cannot describe how appreciative I am of all the Cameroonian journalists who participated in this study. Particularly, my friends, brothers, and colleagues. Although separated by thousands of miles, their support was enormous.

My beloved mama, and my godparents, your prayers from Cameroon kept me going even when I thought I would give up.

Funding:

*The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program*

I acknowledge The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program at Michigan State University for funding my graduate education and taking me through a transformative leadership experience.

*College of Communication Arts and Sciences*

The College of Communication Arts and Sciences also provided funding for this study through a Summer Research Fellowship.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |             |
|--|-------------|
| <b>LIST OF TABLES.....</b>   | <b>viii</b> |
| <b>LIST OF FIGURES.....</b>  | <b>ix</b>   |
| <b>KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS.....</b>   | <b>x</b>    |
| <b>CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND.....</b>                         | <b>1</b>    |
| Statement of the problem.....  | 5           |
| Significance of the study.....   | 5           |
| Media history and journalism practice in Cameroon.....                     | 6           |
| Brief history of Cameroon.....   | 8           |
| <b>CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW.....</b>                                  | <b>10</b>   |
| Introduction.....  | 10          |
| Government and press in the world.....                                     | 11          |
| Media ownership and press freedom: Cases of United States and Britain..... | 11          |
| The case of the United States.....   | 11          |
| The case of Britain.....   | 12          |
| Government and media in Africa.....  | 13          |
| The case of South Africa.....  | 13          |
| Government control of information and journalism practice in Cameroon..... | 17          |
| The press in Cameroon: Legal, economic, and political underpinnings.....   | 18          |
| Cameroon press, legislation, and regulation.....                           | 18          |
| Economics underpinnings.....   | 25          |
| Government—press relationships in two regimes in Cameroon.....             | 27          |
| Government—press relationship: Ahidjo’s regime.....                        | 27          |
| Government—press relationship: Biya’s regime.....                          | 29          |
| <b>CHAPTER III: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....</b>      | <b>33</b>   |
| Theoretical Framework.....   | 33          |
| Research Questions.....  | 35          |
| <b>CHAPTER IV: METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN.....</b>                             | <b>37</b>   |
| Method.....  | 37          |
| Sample and population.....   | 37          |
| Data collection (materials/instruments and period).....                    | 38          |
| Data coding and analysis.....  | 40          |
| <b>CHAPTER V: RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS.....</b>                         | <b>41</b>   |
| Barriers to obtaining government information.....                          | 46          |
| Legal restrictions on dissemination of information.....                    | 47          |
| Direct (extralegal) governmental actions against the press.....            | 50          |

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| How does governmental control of information affect journalism practice?..... | 51        |
| Journalism ethical compromise.....  | 52        |
| Imbalanced reporting.....   | 54        |
| <b>CHAPTER VI: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS.....</b>                | <b>59</b> |
| Discussion.....   | 59        |
| Conclusion.....   | 61        |
| Limitations and suggestions for future study.....                             | 63        |
| <b>APPENDICES.....</b>  | <b>65</b> |
| Appendix 1: Questionnaire for journalists.....                                | 66        |
| Appendix 2: Representative questions for in-depth interviews.....             | 71        |
| <b>BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>  | <b>72</b> |

## LIST OF TABLES

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <i>Table 1: Summary of major press laws that have exist(ed) in Cameroon (as gleaned from prior publications).....</i>                               | <i>24</i> |
| <i>Table 2: Breakdown of survey respondents and interview participants.....</i>   | <i>39</i> |
| <i>Table 3: Impediments to the practice of professional journalism in Cameroon.....</i>   | <i>42</i> |
| <i>Table 4: Counts for journalists' experience with governmental hoarding of information based on affiliation (count and row percentages).....</i>  | <i>45</i> |
| <i>Table 5: Counts for journalists' experience with governmental provision of information based on affiliation (count and row percentages).....</i> | <i>45</i> |



## LIST OF FIGURES

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <i>Figure 1: Breakdown of effects of governmental control of information on journalism practice in Cameroon (Source: by researcher for current study) .....</i> | <i>17</i> |
| <i>Figure 2: Frequency of government's provision versus hording of information when journalists need it.....</i>  | <i>44</i> |
| <i>Figure 3: Barriers to obtaining government information (count of responses).....</i>   | <i>47</i> |

## **KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS**

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| CAMASEJ | Cameroon Association of English Speaking Journalists            |
| CRTV    | Cameroon Radio Television                                       |
| CUJ     | Cameroon Union of Journalists                                   |
| CJA     | Commonwealth Journalists' Association                           |
| CPDM    | Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (Ruling party since 1982) |
| SDF     | The Social Democratic Front                                     |
| NCC     | National Communications Council                                 |
| SOPECAM | Societe de Presse et d'Edition du Cameroun                      |
| KNDP    | Kamerun National Democratic Party                               |
| CPNC    | Cameroon People's National Congress                             |
| STV     | Spectrum Television   |

## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

When Edmund Burke first termed the press as the fourth estate in 1787, the birth of what the press was meant to be in every nation was forthcoming. The following year, Thomas Jefferson, third president of the United States, said, "Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter" (Boyd et al., 1950)<sup>1</sup>. From this statement, the potential importance of the media to every nation is clear, and scholarly research has confirmed the role the media plays in creating and shaping public opinion in every society.

Over two centuries later, the media has grown and developed subject to regulation and deregulation, and dependent on the political/legal/economic/cultural environment where these media operate. Mentioning the "political environment" highlights the fact that the press does not operate in isolation, but within guidelines and laws set by government—thus the existence of a relationship between the government and the press.

Journalists serve society in many ways: provide information, educate the masses, and entertain. Their role in the flow of information and promoting freedom of expression and democracy cannot be overlooked. However, their work, especially in democratically deficient countries, is often impeded by the governments that use regulations, attacks, and arrests and imprisonment to control, censor, and limit the activity of journalists and their news organizations. Control of information and restricted access are very common. All these are part of a bid to avert powerful critiques and prevent journalists from performing their watchdog role. Most governments in Africa, Cameroon included, control the press in some or all of these ways.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Founders' Constitution

Volume 5, Amendment I (Speech and Press), Document 8

[http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/amendI\\_speechs8.html](http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/amendI_speechs8.html). The University of Chicago Press

Cameroon has signed and ratified many international and regional treaties, charters, and other formal frameworks intended to protect freedom of expression. For example, Article 19(2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), a treaty ratified by 165 nations that echoes in key respects the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, —states:

*Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.<sup>2</sup>*

Cameroon ratified this treaty on 27 January 1984 and it went into force on 27 April 1984. But decades later, issues of press freedom and access to information as they apply, especially to the practice of journalism, are still problematic.

The media terrain in Cameroon, like in most African countries, is one of “uncertainty.” Scholars have attributed this to the fragility that characterizes its political, economic, and legal systems. On paper, Cameroon has a free press; a 1990 law on freedom of mass communication diversified the media, including allowing private ownership. The result of this law was the proliferation of newspapers, especially in the early 1990s (Fombad, 2003). Even with this law in place, there are questions of how free and functional the media can be in a country that has no freedom of information law that allows for access to information, a necessity in journalism. Scholars like Holsen (2007) have emphasized the importance of freedom of access to

---

<sup>2</sup> UN General Assembly, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 16 December 1966, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 999, p. 171, available at <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b3aa0.html>. The ICCPR in many respects mirrors the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including in Article 19. See UN General Assembly, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 10 December 1948, 217 A (111), available at <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b3712c.html>.

information as a feature of democracy through a Freedom of Information Act that gives the public the right to ask for and receive information held by public officials and institutions.

In addition, Cameroonian journalism suffers from divisions due to the dual-language and cultural (English and French) system, and due to differences in how journalists from the state and the private media are treated. In Ndangam's 2006 "'Gombo': Bribery and the corruption of journalism ethics in Cameroon," she questions the practice of journalism there, raising issues about ethical and professional standards as journalists struggle to navigate the dual-language, cultural and political system to do their job. Journalists of state-owned media would have easy access to information by the mere fact they work for the government, which is predominantly French, even in the Anglophone (English-speaking) regions because Francophones (French-speaking) head government offices. Ndangam further states that Cameroon's French and British colonial history has aided the development of the press along Anglophone and Francophone cultural and political lines. In this context, issues of access to information, especially from governmental institutions, are even more difficult. This therefore creates an asymmetry of information in the press and in the country. Nyamnjoh (2005) opines that attempts to build a common press system from the two colonial legacies have always faced resistance and outright rejection from both sides of the divide. As Tanjong, Muluh, and Ngwa (1998) describe it, the division within the news industry exists within the context of a rift between journalists working for the state-owned media and those in the private sector.

Different forms of unprofessional journalism have been identified in Cameroon. Nyamnjoh (2005), commenting on the state of newspapers, asserts that nobody who has a sense of determining the nature of what a classic newspaper should look like—in content and form—will consider what is put on newspaper stands as “newspapers.” This is because there is a plethora of ways in which journalism is practiced today:

- “Gombo” Journalism: in which journalists discreetly demand money in return for writing a story (Paquet and Abega, 2000).
- List Journalism: where the news organizations “out,” or list government personalities who owe money to banks, who are corrupt, or who engage in voodoo practices.
- Hate Journalism: journalism that intentionally inserts stories in newspapers, radio, and TV stations that invoke contempt for individuals and communities. One classical example is a screaming headline in the English-language *Messenger* in the 1990s: “I hate this man, kill him,” referring to Governor Oben Peter Ashu.
- Praise-singing Journalism: journalism that praises government officials, leaders, and politicians from whom the journalists anticipate financial gifts or remuneration.

He further blames the unprofessional practice of journalism on lack of training.

Tanjong (2012) claims that unprofessional journalism is caused by three kinds of poverty — psychological, technological, and socio-economic. However, in Cameroon professionalism is often talked about from a perspective of bias against the media, thereby overlooking other factors that could make it even more difficult for journalists to maintain professional standards.

This research project examined such antecedents and precedents in the media landscape and how governmental controls of information impact journalism. It looked at the operational state of the press over time and threats posed by governmental controls of information. This requires an understanding of the institutional structures that govern the practice of journalism—key institutions that monitor, advocate, censor, or promote ethical standards for the practice of journalism. It also looked at the role and importance of a “real” and “independent” media regulatory body and how it actually functions to standardize media practices for both state-owned and private media.

## **Statement of the problem**

Nyamnjoh, (1990) states that although technical, professional, and financial problems are common features of an underdeveloped press, in Cameroon, like in most of Africa and other developing countries such problems either result from and/or are compounded by rigid government control. Examining regulatory statements and official declarations, as well as in interviews with media practitioners, he finds that censorship is the core problem facing the press in Cameroon. While the private press is directly muted by repressive laws and the arrogance of the censor, the official (state-sponsored) press is forced to adopt self-censorship by being part of the civil service. Either way, the consequence is an atmosphere uncondusive to the development and pursuit of professional journalism as an ideal or as practiced in the West. This observation by Nyamnjoh formed the foundation of inquiry for this study.

## **Significance of the study**

This study is significant for several reasons. First, it illuminates issues about the impact of governmental control of information, increasing awareness of the media landscape as well as media practitioners and professional journalism. Also, it sheds light on the impact of media regulation on professional journalism, using official government documents, perceptions, and first-hand experiences from media personnel, to provide a clear understanding of the current situation.

From an academic perspective, this study is groundbreaking, considering that very little has been written about the impact of the concealing of governmental information on journalism practice in Cameroon or elsewhere. Thus this study is a pioneer in extrapolating and unveiling realities of the state of the media vis-a-vis the government and, at the same time, adds to existing literature and provides a stepping-stone for further research.

From a policy standpoint, the results of this study can be used by government and/or journalism unions/associations to shape policies relating to access to information in Cameroon, with the goal improving the way of practicing journalism and enhancing and ensuring a workable environment for professional journalism practice.

### **Media history and journalism practice in Cameroon**

Cameroon has a longstanding problem that affects the media landscape and especially media balance. Its history has created divisions among journalists and journalism associations that function along tribal and regional lines, leading to biased reporting. These lines existed as far back as the 1960s during the country's struggle for independence (Muluh and Ndoh, 2002) and are still experienced even half a century after independence. Tabuwe and Tanjong (2010) maintain that this has led to confusion and too many dichotomies in journalism practice. For example, they say there is a proliferation of journalism associations like the Cameroon Union of Journalists (CUJ) and Cameroon Association of Anglophone Journalists (CAMASEJ), which indicates a divide in the country: public versus private journalists, Anglophone versus Francophone journalists, and Anglo-Bamilike versus Beti (ethnic) journalists.

Anglophone Cameroonians, according to Konings and Nyamnjoh (1997), have often complained about being marginalized by Francophone Cameroonians, whom they claim have suppressed constitutional provisions that are supposed to protect them in this unitary state. With the rebirth of multiparty politics in 1990, and with a certain degree of freedom of mass communication, they say that private newspapers were established that began to express and represent Anglophone interests, reflecting a dichotomy in the media landscape.

Eko (2003) offers additional proof of the dichotomy created by Cameroon's history on media balance). While tracing the role of the Cameroonian English-language press in creating



awareness of the “Anglophone Problem,” Eko found that the English-language newspapers and radio programs used identity and nostalgia to continually present the Anglophone problem as the most important problem, as opposed to the French-language press that has had a hard time acknowledging such a problem existed. Eko’s findings show that the English-language newspapers concluded that Anglophone Cameroonians were a marginalized minority, and kept Anglophone issues alive in politics through its selection and presentation of news stories, features, and commentaries. However, looking at the sources of journalism practiced in Anglophone Cameroon (Anglo-American press tradition) and Francophone Cameroon (French tradition), Eko notes that both traditions are generally different.

These divisions in journalism practice show how the history of Cameroon has a negative impact on how journalists report. They fail to provide fair coverage or present both sides of stories. The media cannot be balanced when practitioners are divided. A clear example of partisan journalism is found by Soboth (2009), who shows how the media take sides. According to Soboth, when the French daily newspaper *L’Express* published a cover story with the title “Ill-gotten wealth: The Cameroonian lead” and questioned the wealth and spending of president Paul Biya, and his family, since 1982, the state-owned *Cameroon Tribune*, responded by denouncing the report as biased and advanced the idea that the report was designed to discredit the government. If papers are balanced, they present both sides of the story rather than one reporting about the wealth of the president and the other denouncing the other paper’s coverage.

### **Brief history<sup>3</sup> of Cameroon**

While this study is not about history, it is important to learn a bit the history of Cameroon.

Before July 1884, when the German explorer Gustav Nachtigal “discovered” Cameroon (Kamerun) for Germany, the region already had some European influence from the activities of the Portuguese. They are believed to be to have founded and named Cameroon after the Wouri River (River of Pawns: Rio Dos Camerões) and Mt. Cameroon (the Chariots God).

After German annexation in 1884, the Germans ruled and traded in Cameroon with plantation agriculture as major activity. The system in place was harsh forced labor and many workers died serving German interests. They ruled “Kamerun” until the first World War broke out.

British, French, and Belgian troops defeated and ousted Germany from Cameroon. This was the beginning of the division of the Cameroons with British rule in British or Southern Cameroon, and French rule (French Cameroon) in the remainder of the territory under League of Nations mandates (later United Nations [UN] trusts). The British trust territory consisted of a strip of land bisected by the Benue River along the eastern border of Nigeria. The French territory was administered as part of the other territories of French Equatorial Africa. Cameroon was administered by these two colonial powers until independence in 1960 (French section) and 1961 (British section).

After independence, the country French Cameroun elected its first president, Ahmadou Ahidjo. In British Cameroons the major question was whether to remain with Nigeria or to unite with the newly independent Republic of Cameroon. In a UN-supervised plebiscite (election) in February 1961, the southern section of the former British Cameroons decided to reunite with the

---

<sup>3</sup>DeLancey, M. D., Mbuh, R., & DeLancey, M. W. (2010). *Historical dictionary of the Republic of Cameroon*. Scarecrow Press. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Cameroon/History>

former French Cameroun. The northern section, however, joined the Federation of Nigeria but the final decision was to reunite the French and British Cameroon as the Federal Republic of Cameroon.

Ahidjo ruled Cameroon until 1982 when he resigned and Paul Biya took over. He has been president since then.

## **CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Introduction**

This chapter will discuss the relationship between governments and the media in the world (exemplifying with the U.S. and the U.K.), Africa (exemplifying with South Africa) and then Cameroon. Particular attention will be paid to media ownership and press freedom; concepts closely related to access to information. The legal, economic and political underpinnings of the press in Cameroon will then be discussed.

Over the years, journalism practice has directly or indirectly connected with governments and the political systems in which journalists operate. This “connection” between the media and the government has in one way or the other affected journalism practice negatively or positively. The interest of the government in most cases, as far as this “connection” is concerned, has not always been to control and suppress the media but sometimes to get the media’s support for political, developmental, and socio-economic pursuits. To achieve this goal, governments have tampered with, and/or hindered, professional journalism practice, as Eribo (1997) argues. Studying internal and external factors affecting press freedom in Nigeria, he indicates that the “concept of press freedom abhors government control, censorship, interference, and undemocratic regulations aimed at abridging the freedom of opinion, expression, and transmission of information or ideas through the mass media and other channels of communication” (p. 52). The varying levels of government control, censorship, interference, and undemocratic regulations hinder freedom of opinion, expression, and transmission of information and ideas through the mass media and other channels of communication.

## **Government and press in the world**

Governments throughout the world have taken the responsibility of regulating the media through measures ranging from content restrictions to broadcasting licenses to constitutional freedom of expression provisions. The measures used in regulating and their enforcement vary significantly among countries (Djankov et al 2001). The basic purpose of government regulation across countries is to strike a balance between positive and negative liberties, and state and market. In the former, the government (in developed countries) ensures that negative defined liberties, legislating of media in society and securing freedom of expression are balanced; by legislation that allows the positive freedom of citizens of their access to information. In the latter, where the media is at a position between commerce and democracy, the government ensures that a balance between rights and obligations.

## **Media ownership and press freedom: Cases of United States and Britain**

### **The case of the United States**

McQuail, (2000) posits that “the movement towards codifying journalistic practice had already started in the USA before the 1947 Hutchins Commission<sup>4</sup> report, and one of the first canons of journalism was published by the American Society of Newspaper Editors in 1923.” (p.172). In the United States, freedom of the press is clearly enshrined in the Constitution and laws. A 2008 report of the Common Cause Education Fund says the media is the only industry unambiguously protected in the U.S. Bill of Rights. It is because of the fundamental reasoning

---

<sup>4</sup> The Hutchins Commission (official name was the Commission on Freedom of the Press) was formed during World War II, when Henry Luce (publisher of Time and Life magazines) asked Robert Hutchins to set up a commission to inquire into the proper function of the media in a modern democracy. The commission was established as a response to criticism from the public and government over media ownership.

that in a healthy democracy, information disseminators must not be fettered in their role of holding government accountable.

Baran (2004) reflects on the state of government-media relationships in the U.S. and indicates that “our democracy exists on a foundation of self-governance and free and responsible mass media are essential to both democracy and self-governance. But media because of their power and the often conflicting demands of profit and service under which they operate are open to control” (p. 7). According to Baran, “The difficulty of balancing the public interest and broadcasters’ freedom is at the heart of the debate over deregulation and the relaxation of ownership and other rules for radio and television.” The influence of ownership and control on the media differ from country to country.

In the US, the Freedom of Information Act obliges government officials to provide information to journalists. It was signed into law in 1966.

### **The case of Britain**

Gripsrud (2002) looks at the media in the U.K. from a legal perspective, indicating that “broadcasting has usually required some form of statutory regulation.” According to Branston and Stafford (2006), if the U.K. government decides to regulate, it must take account of European Union policy and the implications of the global media market. They outline six types of regulation that governments around the world can use:

1. Direct control by government
2. Delegation by government to an independent statutory regulator
3. Self-regulation by media producers
4. The general legal framework as a restraint
5. Market forces regulate

## 6. Audience pressure regulates

Branston and Stafford add that delegation by government to an independent statutory regulator (number 2) “is the current system used in the U.K. for commercial radio, television, and telecommunications with Ofcom as the regulator, established by an act of parliament.” They say the independence of the British Broadcasting Corporation from government manipulation is something that developing countries should copy.

### **Government and media in Africa**

In many African countries, the relationship between the government and the media is vertical, with scholars postulating that most governments are high-handed in their handling of ownership and control of the media. From a historical perspective, this relationship has often been patterned on the kind of colonial administration that existed in those countries. For example, given South Africa’s history of colonialism, apartheid, and anti-apartheid resistance, journalists have been studied predominantly in terms of their respective ideological outputs, relative to these systems (Tomaselli, Teer-Tomaselli, and Muller, 1987, 1989). In looking at the situation of government and media in Africa, the experiences of specific countries illustrate the concept.

### **The case of South Africa**

According to Steenveld (2002), the story of the government and the media in South Africa can be seen from two political eras: during apartheid and while in democracy. Three ideological types of journalists were identified from the first period: the conservatives who worked for Afrikaans mainstream media or the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) and supported apartheid; the ideologically ambiguous English liberals; and alternative media journalists who resisted apartheid (Switzer and Adhikari, 2000).

Steenveld (2002) indicates that apartheid's dissolution in the 1990s and the emergence of a new South Africa through democratic elections on April 27, 1994 did not reduce discourse on unconscious racism in local journalism. According to Glenn and Mattes (2011), the post-apartheid era produced new social, economic, cultural, and political realities that directly impacted the entrenched institution of South African journalism. They say the country's constitution adopted in 1996 guarantees citizen's freedom of speech and media. As a result, media organizations/journalists are subject to new but more democratic forms of regulation, implemented by sets of regulatory bodies for each media sector. These bodies have been responsible for the liberalization of local media markets.

Glenn and Mattes (2011) say the liberalization process transformed the SABC from a state to a public service broadcaster, answerable to a multiparty parliament; it licensed a vast number of new community media radio/TV and commercial regional radio stations to compete with the monopolistic SABC; and it established new terrestrial TV and 24-hour satellite TV stations. As a result, international media gained access to local media markets, and in this confrontation of stiff competition, new and old media corporations had to adjust to fit into the realities the new post-apartheid market. They did so through mergers, acquisitions, finding new markets, and cutbacks. According to them, transformations in media markets have increased the number of media outlets and fragmentation/segmentation of the country, which had been conceptualized along racial and ethnic lines. South Africa's media markets, in principle, simply altered existential political ideologies/identities into commercial opportunities. The combination of economic growth, a legitimate government, peace, and racial reconciliation, the extension of leisure/entertainment, and social normalization at various levels led citizens to retreat from the public sphere(s) of critical-rational journalism. As such, mainstream newspapers have been declining in circulation and readership since 1994 (Glenn and Mattes, 2011).



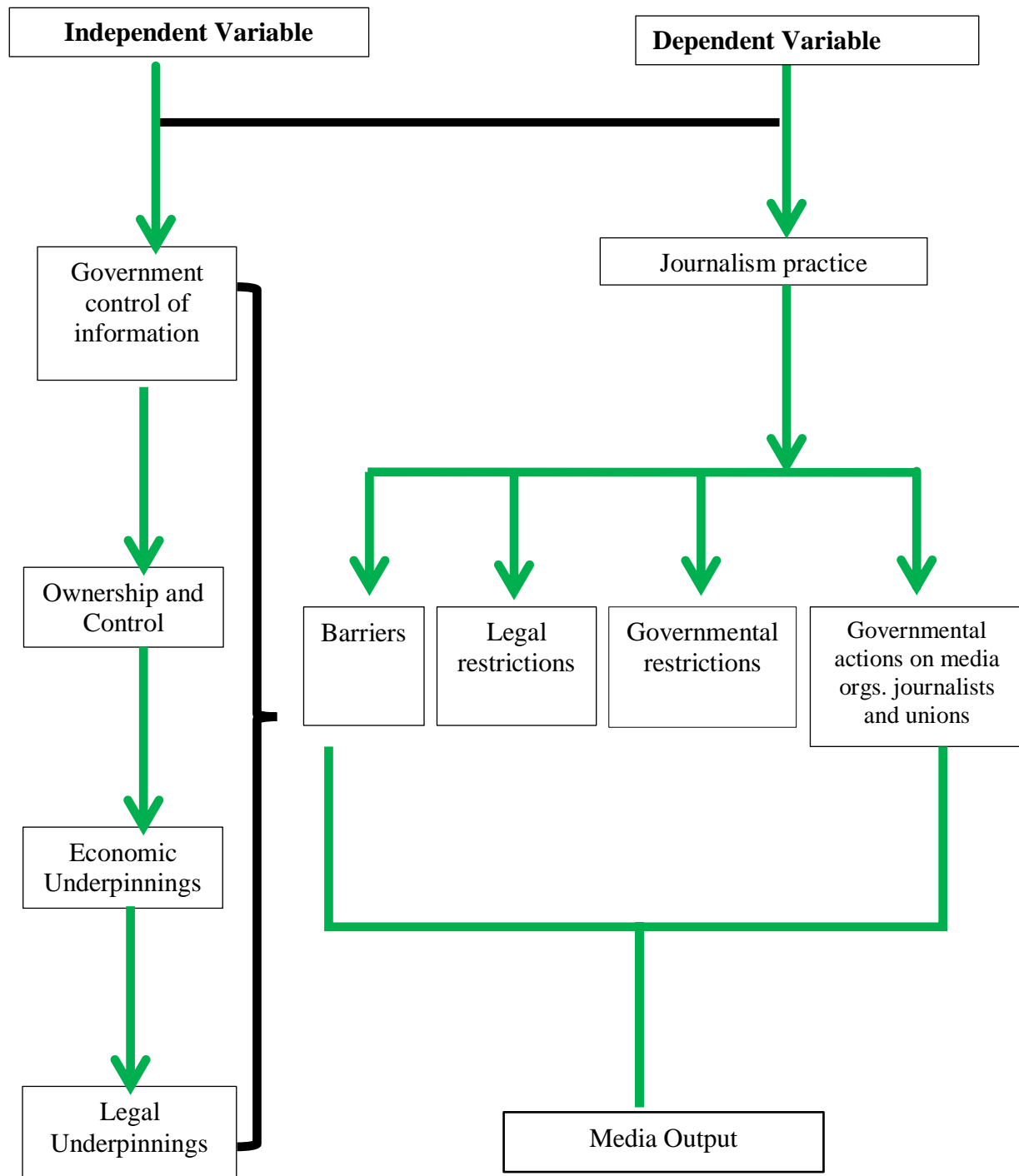
According to Ndlovu (2014), over the past 20 years, local journalism has faced numerous challenges with the background of the post-apartheid or democratic journalism landscape of the country.

1. At the news reception level, it faced declining levels of citizen commitment to being informed. The increase in the number of media outlets also created fragmented postmodern media consumers who are exposed to a wide variety of entertainment messages that compete with mainstream journalism;
2. At the level of “established” norms and standards, local conventional journalism is encountering stiff competition from rising tabloid journalism, with the tabloid *Daily Sun* being the number-one read and circulated paper. The historical dominance of the English and Afrikaans languages is challenged by the continuing growth of African language-based journalism.
3. At the level of the existing media regulatory regime, local journalism has little to worry about. There have, however, been concerted attempts to curtail hard-won post-apartheid freedoms of the media. For example, the African National Congress (ANC) and its alliance partner, the South African Communist Party (SACP), have consistently called for a Media Appeals Tribunal and support the Protection of State Information Bill, both of which are inconsistent with the existing regulatory framework;
4. Local journalism has also faced revenue hurdles resulting from South Africa’s economy being part of global markets. The near-meltdown of the global economy since 2008 hurt the local economy and media institutions. Advertising revenue dwindled. This, in part, caused the cost-cutting termination of senior journalists. Local journalism has also dealt with the impact of new media digital technologies in accessing and publishing news, as

audiences are moving to an online/social media space where news/journalism is to a certain degree “unrestricted”;

5. Local journalism faced issues of social justice. Apartheid prioritized the interests mainly of white men, even in the newsrooms. Consequently, local journalism now finds itself immersed in debates about redressing the racial and gender imbalance with respect to the empowerment of women in general, and black people in particular (Ndlovu, 2014).

## Government control of information and journalism practice in Cameroon



*Figure 1: Breakdown of effects of governmental control of information on journalism practice in Cameroon (Source: by researcher for current study)*

## **The press in Cameroon: Legal, economic, and political underpinnings**

### **Cameroon press, legislation, and regulation**

Dennis and DeFleur (1991) say that every act of communication is shaped by the norms of the society in which it occurs. Looking at how media function, Qasim (2013) says that the structure and function of the media can be described using the four or normative theories of the press to show how the media operates in a given situation. So too have historical situations shaped the structure and functioning of the Cameroon media over time. Many changes have taken place in ownership and control (legislation and regulation) policies.

Muluh and Ndoh (2002) trace the history of the Cameroon media back to the early 1900s during the period of European colonial rule. They note that European missionaries were the first (as early as 1903) to publish newspapers in Cameroon to spread the Gospel. On the other hand, the German colonial administration also published the *Amtsblatt* or the Official Gazette. Tanjong and Diffang (2007) note that this colonial period was marked by a high rate of illiteracy among the general populace, meaning that apart from the evangelical publications, newspapers were published only in the languages of the colonial masters.

At the end of the Second World War, a wind of change blew across Africa, and this affected the ownership and control of the mass media across the continent. In the French-speaking part of Cameroon, a twelve-page weekly publication, *La Presse du Cameroun*, in Douala and *L'Effort Camerounais*, were founded in 1955. The two French-language papers were very influential. In spite of several seizures by the fading colonial government and by the new government right after independence, *L'Effort Camerounais* helped shape the mind frame of Cameroonians. It made the government panic as it pointed out the “ills that bighted society” (Muluh and Ndoh, 2002).

The media in French-speaking Cameroon, as in all other French-speaking African colonies during this period, operated under the French press law of 1881. Eko (2008) says that although the press law granted colonies the right to publish newspapers, this right was highly constrained as all publications had to be under the control of a European French citizen. In addition, all publications were systematically censored; anything appeared in print at the discretion of the colonial authorities. Worse still, Eko says African journalists who did not follow the dictates of the colonial administration were jailed or exiled to other French colonies.

Before 1960, most reading material in the English part of Cameroon came from Europe and neighboring Nigeria. The first two papers to spring up in this part of Cameroon were *Cameroon Times* and *Cameroon's Champion*, both founded on the eve of reunification in 1960. Muluh and Ndoh (2002) say that while the former supported the Kamerun National Democratic Party of Foncha that stood for independence by reunifying with East Cameroon, the latter supported the Cameroon People's National Congress, which stood for independence by integrating with Nigeria.

The first press laws in the reunited Cameroon were enacted in 1966, just six years after independence. They led to the closure of many papers.

Until 1966, journalists in Francophone Cameroon were regulated by the civil law while those in Anglophone Cameroon were regulated by the common law (Ewumbue-Monono, 1992). The 1881 French law on press freedom had been first introduced in French Cameroon as a mandated territory in 1923 and was amended in 1936. However, the French Cameroon Assembly adopted the same as Law No. 55-35 of May 27, 1959.

As for Anglophone Cameroon, Ewumbue-Monono (1992) traces the sources of press law back to the Britain Licensing Act of 1662. However, the law that affected journalism practice in this part of Cameroon was the Nigeria Newspaper Ordinance No. 10 of 1903. The 1903 law was

further amended by the Newspaper Ordinance No. 40 of 1917, the Newspaper Ordinance 26, 1941, and the Eastern Nigerian Law of 1955.

However, Western Cameroon (Anglophone Cameroon) re-unified with Eastern Cameroon in 1961, and the West Cameroon Newspaper Ordinance was passed to govern the establishment of newspapers. The practice of vetting and censorship under the instruction of the Minister of Territorial Administration as provided in the 1959 French Law was extended to Anglophone Cameroon just after unification (Ewumbua-Monono, 1992). Though Anglophone journalists decried the practice, the situation worsened in 1966 when the Federal Assembly adapted Law No. 66/LF/13 on December 21, 1966.

The 1966 press law enacted by the government of President Ahmadou Ahidjo was a slightly modified version of the content-based, highly restrictive colonial press law, modelled on the French law of 1881 on freedom of the press. Eko (2008) and Tanjong and Diffang (2007) describe the 1966 law as powerful censorship machinery that authorized pre- and post-publication censorship. Officials of the Ministry of Territorial Administration (governors, senior district and district officials) in effect became “editors-in-chief” as they were supposed to read the papers two hours before publication, and anything deemed anti-government was blotted out or the paper simply suspended.

Looking at the press between 1966-1990 (twenty-four years of one-party rule), Tanjong et al. (2002) maintains that in this period media owners continued to consider press ownership as a political, rather than an economic venture.

The 1966 press laws were amended five times: Decree No. 69/LF/13 of November 13, 1969; Decree No. 73/6 of December 6, 1973; Decree No. 76/27 of December 14, 1976; Decree No. 80/18 of July 14, 1980; and Decree No. 81/244 of June 22, 1981.

In 1990, another piece of legislation regulating the operation of the media became Law No. 90/52 of December 19, 1990. This occurred within the context of a politically charged environment (Ewumbue-Monono 1992). The 1990 law eliminated the constraints of administrative and financial requirements for setting up press organs and extended the definition of mass communication to cover both print and audio-visual media. Ewumbue-Monono concludes that the main objective of the 1990 press law was to suppress the media whenever the latter was in “conflict” with a principle of public policy.

The 1990 law was motivated by four main considerations: political, professional, economic, and international (Churchill, 1992). In terms of political considerations, Churchill maintains that an outcry for greater democracy and liberalization of the political system inspired the law because pro-democracy demonstrations, the birth of political parties, and human rights campaigns were common. In response, the president created a civil liberties commission to reinforce press freedom. Regarding professional considerations, journalists from the private press, joined by colleagues from government media (often blamed for hiding the truth), pressed the government for greater freedom of expression which the government resisted (Churchill, 1985). Economically, the country was experiencing a deep economic crisis when privatization and the encouragement of professions like journalism seemed to be a solution to unemployment, especially as the number of university graduates grew. Then, as economic assistance had a greater democratization mission to fulfil, pressures from aid bodies like international NGOs, and countries like France and the United States invigorated the drafting of the law.

According to Ndam, (2004), the “new clothes” of administrative control of information-providing organizations since 1990 was more or less a blessing in paving the way for the real break of the press system from the previous legal order. Innovations in the administrative control of information-providing organizations accompanied the “new political dynamism and

legislative architecture of communication.” However, the control of information-providing organizations remained a major preoccupation of the authorities and the regulations underwent additional changes.

Press Law 90-52 was followed by the creation of the National Communication Council (NCC) in 1991 by Presidential Decree No. 91/287 of June 21, 1991 and placed under the authority of the prime minister as head of government, (Tanjong, 2012). It was reorganized in January 2012 before going operational in February 2013. The main mission of the NCC is to assist the state in monitoring and implementing national communication policies. A presidential decree re-organizing the NCC also gave the media regulatory body sanction powers. These sanctions range from warnings to bans on media outlets. The council thus has a disciplinary role over media organizations and professionals with the objective of ensuring a responsible media. But in the case of sanctions, there has been public condemnation and journalists have cried foul, claiming that the members of the NCC are overstepping their bounds.

The NCC derives its budget from public subventions through the prime minister’s office and the president appoints its members. Anye (2012) expressed worries that the organization could be stage-managed to use the new measures and quell the private press, which is the main check on the overarching powers of the Yaounde regime at the moment. Matute (2015) says the NCC’s independence is still questionable because the board is under the authority of the prime minister. He says it is difficult to believe or see that the NCC can work against the government that has to vote on its media policy proposals before they can be implemented.

An example of this is that on August 14, 2014, the NCC published a list of media organs and journalists sanctioned on grounds that they disobeyed the rules requiring them to exercise acceptable journalism. The government claimed that its move against journalists was to protect the public and ensure compliance with professional standards. It provided no further details; the



supposedly violated professional standards were not documented anywhere. Freedom House issued a statement condemning the sanctions, saying it was “simply an attempt by authorities to stifle dissent and consolidate control over independent media.” (Freedom House, 2014)<sup>5</sup>

Muluh (2014) says the implications of such acts implies that an official can use any reason to shut down a radio station that is critical of government.

Even so, these sanctions and other actions of the NCC have provoked many journalists to lambast NCC members in public. Some journalists have accused its members of using their powers to settle personal disputes rather than regulating the media. Although the NCC was created to assist the state implementing communication policies, there are no clear communication policies. Law 90–52 has sections that are tenets of censorship (post publication, banning, seizure, suspension, closure), but it does not call it “censorship.”

In summary, table shows the major press laws that have existed in Cameroon, as explained in the explained above. Note should be taken that this information is only based on what other scholars have written. During the period of this research, several attempts were made to access the Cameroon National Archives where copies of these laws are believed to be found. But all the attempts were futile. As explained above, only the factors that led to the enactment of Law 90-52 (which is still used in Cameroon today) are known (through the work of other scholars). It is difficult to verify the actual process of making the law. But in Cameroon it is believed that laws are made after members of parliament propose and vote on them.

---

<sup>5</sup> Cameroon Limits TV, Radio and Journalists’ Work: <https://freedomhouse.org/article/cameroon-limits-tv-radio-and-journalists-work#.VH4MEGTF8do>

*Table 1: Summary of major press laws that have exist(ed) in Cameroon (as gleaned from prior publications)*

| <b>Period</b>                         | <b>Law</b>                                       | <b>Details about the law</b>  |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| Colonial period<br>(French Cameroon)  | 1881 French Press Law                            | Strict pre-publication censorship by colonial French  |
| Colonial period<br>(English Cameroon) | British Ordinance of 1903                        | Granted Freedom of press with limited censorship  |
| Post-independence (1966)              | Draconian Law: 1966 press law                    | First Cameroon press laws with pre and post-publication censorship<br>Modelled after the 1881 French Press Law.<br>Amended five times: Decree No. 69/LF/13 of November 13, 1969; Decree No. 73/6 of December 6, 1973; Decree No. 76/27 of December 14, 1976; Decree No. 80/18 of July 14, 1980; and Decree No. 81/244 of June 22, 1981. |
| 1990 to present                       | Law 90-52 on the freedoms of mass communications | Replaced 1966 Press Law<br>Supposedly liberalized the press.<br>Removed pre-publication censorship, but post publication censorship allowed. Government can ban and suspend journalists and media houses without needing legal justification.   |

In 2014, the government passed another law on the operation of audio-visual media in Cameroon, but it had nothing to do with censorship or control of information.

## **Economic underpinnings**

The economic situation has directly affected the practice of professional journalism. According to Ndangam (2006), the economics of the press in Cameroon can be defined as a “Band-Aid” economy because, with the exception of *Mutations* and *L’Actu* whose source of capital is known, all other dailies are owned by companies and families, with an opaque, clientelist management model. The “Band-Aid” economy is also recognizable by the lack of training of its agents and by its anarchic competition. Their economic structures force journalists to be resourceful or push them to violate liberties with the professional code of ethics to survive. All private daily newspapers operate on an annual budget whose main expenses consist of printing costs and salaries. None of these dailies owns real estate assets. The rental of head and regional offices is thus also an important part of their budgets.

Advertising constitutes the main source of revenue because print runs and sales figures have steadily declined since 1993. There are many reasons for the decrease in readership, the first being political disenchantment. Since the liberalization of social and political life in 1990, the private press has kept announcing, in column after column, the end of President Biya’s regime. After a contested 1992 election, the incumbent held onto power and has remained master of the political game. Readers understood that change was not on the horizon and progressively turned their backs on the press (Ndangam, 2006).

According to Ndangam (2006), the situation of English-language newspapers is even more worrisome: print runs and advertising revenues are down and the number of unsold copies is high. Of some 20 English-language publications in 1996, the country had only five or six left as of 2006 (Ndangam, 2006), none of them dailies. The most recent data about media in Cameroon (IREX, 2012) counts five newspapers in the country. Most newspapers appear irregularly and often struggle without a head office or a clearly identified editorial board, selling

fewer than 500 copies per issue. Several French-language dailies that tried to publish an English-language version to broaden their readership soon abandoned that idea. Weak purchasing power, the narrowness of the market, and the isolation of certain towns are among the reasons underlying this setback. (Atenga, 2012)

Tanjong (2009) is concerned with the media's fight against corruption, which affects the economic situation of the press. The involvement of the media in that fight highlights the concept of professionalism and development journalism. The author says that when Transparency International crowned Cameroon with the demeaning title of the world's most corrupt country in 1998 and 1999, the country's leadership was shocked. In effect, the media as the watchdog of the society was expected to be more candid in decrying corrupt practices. The report indicates that despite the media's effort in exposing corruption, they experience a number of limitations. Eigen (1997) suggests minimal newsroom budgets as one limitation on reporting about corruption. In most developing countries such as Cameroon, the pay level for journalists is low and in some countries is so low that journalists are open for bribes. The temptation on the part of the journalists to participate in all-expense-paid events by corporate and government sponsors is great as such events can augment their incomes. He stresses that a functioning, self-regulatory media could consist of independent institutions established and funded by the media sector itself, which would encourage compliance with professional codes such as press councils and ethics commissions (Eigen, 1997).

According to Tanjong (2009), the media must strive to sustain their efforts in combating corruption. However, to achieve this vision, the government must ensure the safety of media practitioners in their daily activities through policies that improve freedom of the press, economic viability, and investigative journalism.

## **Government—press relationships in two regimes in Cameroon**

According to Mokake (2004), the relationship between the press and the government in Cameroon? can be viewed from three dimensions. First is the government and state-sponsored press where journalists perform their duties under very restricted conditions. Those who fail to respect the “rules” are punished through suspension, ban, seizure/closure, arrests and detention, and fines. Second is the relationship between government and the pro-government private press, where Le Vine (1964) notes that most private press organs critical of the government in the past had a very short lifespan. Lastly, the government and critical private press where journalists survive always toe the government’s line. The media during the two regimes is discussed below.

Mokake (2004) says the “media space is constantly contested and is subject to organizational and technological restructuring, to economic, cultural and political constraints, to commercial pressures, and to changing professional practices. This can lead to different patterns of domination and agenda-setting and to different degrees of openness and closure in terms of access, patterns of ownership, types of disclosure, and range of opinions represented” (ADF TODAY; October 11, 2004, p. 1). He says that this explanation accurately portrays the importance of the media and reflects an often-strained relationship between the media and government. This is evident from the fact that most regimes try to control the press from within or without through harsh measures because they are aware that the media, like the military and university, are efficient weapons that could be used against them.

## **Government—press relationship: Ahidjo’s regime**

Ahidjo’s era (1960 to 1982) was characterized by the feeling that the press or media was accorded its rightful place in the society. On the other hand, journalists and scholars who worked during that era argue that little press freedom existed as a result of laws that had severe

implications for the press. Bayart (1973) says that in running the state, Ahidjo's control of the press was as tight as was feasible; for more than twenty years, the government either used the media as an extension of the government information service or, because of distrust – especially of the critical outlets – saw them as opposition. Since the radio was exclusively under government control, he introduced or reinforced press laws to constrain the “private press with an iron fist.”

As early as Law No. 59-35 of 27 May 1959, parliament extended government's control of the press (Nyamnjoh, 2005). In less than a decade following enactment of this law, about fourteen newspapers ceased to exist. Ahidjo's government sought to suppress media organizations critical of him. In April 1962, the editor of *L'Effortt Camerounaise*, a Roman Catholic priest, was deported to France for reporting about an incident that happened in a train, resulting to the death of twenty-five prisoners (Bayart, 1973 p. 55; Mokake, 2004; Nyamnjoh, 2005, p. 165).

Mokake, (2004) says the government did not want that incident exposed so it reacted aggressively to outlets that in any way exposed its dealings. This was evident from the fact that journalists either disappeared or were killed because of their interpretative comments that shed unfavorable light on the government. The ruthlessness of this system did not spare even those who merely collaborated with “subversive citizens.” This was the fate of Celestine Lingo, the editor of *L'Essort de Juenes* in Nkongsamba. The French-trained journalist was jailed in the 1970s because he was seen as a collaborator with a Roman Catholic priest who was labelled a potential threat to the regime (Bayart, 1973, p. 55; Mokake, 2004; Nyamnjoh, 2005, p. 165). This summarizes the relationship between the government and the media under Ahidjo's regime. It explains how journalists and media in general could not be watchdogs for society and reported only things deemed necessary and pleasing to the government.

## **Government—press relationship: Biya's regime**

Although much has been written about how the press under Biya's regime (1982 to present) experienced freedom, in reality little changed from the past, as the laws 1959 and 1966 regulating the government-media relationship under Ahidjo continued. Some of those laws were enforced to seize newspapers, arrest and detain journalists, and close media outlets (Bayart, 1973, p. 52; Nyamnjoh, 2005, p. 168). Simply, the government's methodical control of the press went on, despite the regime change and although Biya and his ministers of Information and Culture constantly made pronouncements pertaining to liberalization. This stalemate stood until the 1990s when the media laws were enacted under pressure from home and abroad.

The issue with the government-media relationship under Biya's regime reflects a serious change in the political status quo of the country: the movement from a one-party system inherited from Ahidjo to a multiparty system. According to Gallagher (1991), in the one-party era, the government pulled the media very close to itself. This gave the media the task of explaining and justifying government policies to a citizenry hungry for information. As such, those media organs and practitioners who "failed" to perform this task had themselves to blame.

The relationship between government and government-sponsored press organs was masked?? and the public generally had the opinion that the state press worked according to the government's orders. According to Fru (2003), CRTV gave a biased interpretation of the "Yondo Black Affair" in March 1990 (the disappearance of nine youths in Bepanda-Douala), and the university students' protest in Buea in April-May 2006. This partly explains the anger students in Buea and Cameroonians in general had against state-owned organs. The students even denied access to and threatened to destroy a CRTV van if it drove into the campus.

From the outset of the student strike, private media like STV, *The Post*, *Eden Newspaper*, *Equinoxe*, and Ocean City Radio had been to the scene to gather first-hand information about

what unfolded. Meanwhile, CRTV practiced "armchair journalism, by interviewing authorities of the university and the province; it took more than a week before a single image of the strike was broadcast over national television. This unprofessional practice on the part of CRTV and other pro-government agents could not be easily swallowed by most citizens. This created a shift of audience to the organs critically reporting what the people wanted to hear as they saw the pro-government agents' inability to provide better coverage of what was happening and on how to manage the strike. Pro-government media cited the press laws as a hindering factor that accounts for the ineptness of their reports" (Fru, 2003). In fact, the Biya regime used the laws effectively to prevent the press from empowering the people and raising political consciousness (Gallagher, 1991; Boh and Ntemfac, 1991a, 1991b; Article 19, 1999; Nyamnjoh, 1999; Eribo and Tanjong, 2002; Mbuagbo and Fru, 2003). Violation of these laws led to arbitrary arrests, detentions, and seizure of critical news organs, or to the transfer or dismissal of journalists in state-sponsored organs (Article 19; Boh and Ntemfac, 1991a, 1991b).

According to Nyamnjoh (2005, pp. 161-183), the situation was the same despite modifications of the laws in 1990 and 1996 that purportedly proved that the government was more open and that freedom in the media space now existed. Importantly, laws No. 90/052 of 19 December 1990 (freedoms of mass communications) and No. 6/04 of 4 January 1996 proved more repressive to media organs (amendment). There were more arrests and detentions under these laws.

One of the government's moves to control its own media, the CRTV, was to transfer or dismiss journalists considered critical of the status quo and to terminate critical programs. This has been the fate of Anglophone journalists who were either transferred or resigned, as well as some of their French counterparts who also did not toe the line or reflect the government's stand on issues. A typical example of this master plan by government occurred in June 1992 when



some employees working on the show “Cameroon Calling” were transferred from the capital to the provinces (Boh and Ntemfac, 1991a; 1991b; Nyamnjoh, 1996b, pp. 350-357; 2005, pp.138-150).

Mokake (2004) writes that the critical press is seen as a potential threat to the government because was instrumental (criticizing the government and demanding more freedom and fighting for more democratic institutions) in the turbulent years of the reintroduction of multiparty politics. Currently, in the crises in the two Anglophone regions that began in November 2016, the private press has been told what topics are taboo, like reporting about Anglophones’ struggle to return to a federal system of government. Journalists resorted to using social media to report on topics that the government calls a taboo. In response, the government shut down the Internet in the Anglophone regions in January, 2017, thus stifling online publishers and greatly affecting the jobs of online journalists (New York Times, 2017). As of the writing of this thesis, the Internet had not yet been restored and journalistic coverage of the “taboo” topics has been muted.

This prevailing relationship has varied little between the two regimes and has not helped the media check social ills like corruption, embezzlement, pollution, exploitation, abuse of human dignity, and immoral actions by public figures. It seldom offers communicators (journalists) the opportunity to hold government to task on key concerns.

On the relationship between the government and the media, for close to six decades, a lot of scholarly interest has focused on examining the role that the media, and specifically journalists, can play in national development in developing countries (Gomba, 2010). Gomba theorizes that the relationship between media and development in contemporary Africa has solidified under the banner of the development media theory. This theory emphasizes the media's role in national development, where the press report stories that are generally educational and emphasize successful local development initiatives to encourage their emulation. After recapping

the central tenets of development journalism, Gomba (2010) compares journalists' conceptions of their role in two different epochs, just as Mokake did on government-media relations in the Ahidjo and Biya regimes. There has been an oscillation in journalists' role conceptions revolving around their "embrace" and subsequent "rejection" of state-defined parameters of development journalism. In Cameroon, the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization adopted a novel approach to address the tension between journalists and the state in a way that incorporates journalists as "development agents." Tanjong, (2009) says there are certain problems in the government that he thinks the media has the responsibility to address, such as corruption and the media's attempt to fight it.

According to Okereke (2013), the level of government interference in the media and the extent of press freedom provide a scope for assessing the practice of journalism in Cameroon. He indicates that since the media do not exist in a vacuum but within a social system, media control cannot be avoided. However, the level of control determines the level of press freedom. This control can extend to preventing the dissemination of information (de facto censorship) or, as this study examines, the government not sharing information that it has generated, such as government records, databases or projects. Generally, governmental information is not shared unless the journalist will use the information to praise the government. Governmental control of information along with many factors thus constrain media owners, reporters, editors, and other journalists from functioning with utmost objectivity and ethical soundness. Moreover, journalists may withhold facts due to an individual's right to privacy, to avoid injury to someone, or to safeguard a national interest.

### **CHAPTER III: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section discusses media theories that fit the context of this study. The second section presents and discusses the research questions.

#### **Theoretical Framework**

To better understand what this study seeks to demonstrate, there is a need to incorporate a theoretical framework to guide and serve as backbone to this research. Three of the four normative press theories and one other theory are used with their constructs amalgamated to provide a succinct understanding of the issue:

1. Authoritarian theory
2. Libertarian theory
3. Social responsibility theory

#### **1. Authoritarian theory: (Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm, 1956)**

According to proponents of this theory, all forms of communications are under the control of the governing elite or authorities or influential bureaucrats. They argue that authoritarians control the media to protect and prevent the public from national threats through any form of communication (information or news). The press is an instrument to enhance the rulers. The authorities have the right to allow any media and control it by licensing and censorship. If any media violates government policies, authorities can cancel and revoke its license. The government can restrict any sensitive issues from the press to maintain peace and security. At the heart of this theory is the concept of censorship to suppress any communication considered harmful to the people, rules, government, and nation.

This theory underlines this study because it illuminates the issue of governmental information control, which is expressed most often as censorship. As Bayart (1973) observes, increased censorship and governmental repression in pre-independent Cameroon made it difficult

for the press to freely perform its duties. By evoking media laws, the government, corporate institutions, and powerful individuals not only strain the relationship between the media and governing authorities but also constrain the media's ability to advance people-oriented governance.

## 2. Libertarian Theory: (Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm, 1956)

According to Odunlami (1996), libertarian theory asserts that an individual should be free to publish what he or she likes and freely express his or her opinion. Libertarian theory advocates that the press must be seen as a partner with government in search of the truth, rather than as a tool in the hands of government. Originating from 16<sup>th</sup> century libertarian thoughts in Europe, it was coined against authoritarian thought. Libertarianism holds that individualism and limited government are not harmful to another. This theory also advances an understanding of the focus of this study because it supports journalists who believe they have the right to perform freely without governmental control. Nyamnjoh, (2005) claims the greatest threat to free communication in Africa has been the reluctance of governments to liberalize press laws. He observes that even when such liberalization exists in principle, governments tend to introduce, by underhand or roundabout ways, measures and practices that effectively curtail press freedom.

## 3. Social Responsibility Theory: (Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm, 1956)

A third theory that forms the foundation of this study is the social responsibility theory with an assertion of the too-liberal nature of the press under a libertarian press system. There was a perceived need to make journalists responsible with little or no external control. The theory allows a free press without censorship, but at the same advocates for professional self-regulation.

The theory lies between authoritarianism and libertarianism because it gives total media freedom on one hand but recognizes a role for external controls on the other hand. Here, press

ownership is private. The social responsibility theory moves beyond the simple “objective” reporting (reporting facts) to “interpretative” reporting (investigative reporting).

This thesis incorporates constructs of this theory because it advocates for responsible journalism practice. Laitila, (1995) says the integrity of the journalist is necessary to ensure accuracy, truth, objectivity, and balance – factors that inform dominant Western notions of ethical standards even though they do not always apply to the realities of non-Western countries. According to such thinking, taking money before publishing, for example, is wrong, unethical, and detrimental to the profession, and it compromises journalists’ ability to practice independent and responsible journalism -- a point the social responsibility theory upholds. This theory helps create professionalism by setting a high standard of accuracy, truth, and information.

In summary, the theories above could exemplify the situation of Cameroon. The authoritarian represents the government restricting access to, and disseminating of information, the libertarian applied from the perspective of press (particularly the private) being critical of the government and struggling to access government information.

## **Research Questions**

After introducing and bring out the basic tenets of the theories that guide this study and how they fit in the context of the study, this study seeks to answer these research questions:

**RQ:** How has governmental control of information affected journalism practice in Cameroon?

That leads to these sub-questions:

**RQ1:** What are the barriers to the press obtaining government information in Cameroon?

**RQ2:** What are the legal restrictions on the press from disseminating information?

**RQ3:** What direct governmental actions (extra-legal) adversely affect media houses, journalists, and journalism unions.

## CHAPTER IV: METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

This chapter discusses the methodological approach used, the sample and population, the data collection process, and the data analysis process. It also describes secondary sources of data used in the study.

### Method

The primary method for this study was a survey (*see questionnaire, Appendix 1*) of journalists in Cameroon. This allowed the researcher to get the perspectives of journalists who engage with different arms of government as they go about their daily routines. It was supplemented with in-depth interviews (*see appendix 2*) with senior officials of media regulatory body. Key decision-makers in media organizations such as publishers and editors also were interviewed, including heads of journalism unions, who in some ways are supposed to be intermediaries between government and the media. Survey and interview participants were assured anonymity. Both the questionnaire and representative interview questions received human subjects review approval from Michigan State University.

In addition, the study analyzes government laws and decrees that affect journalism practice.

### Sample and population

Participants fit into three groups. The first group is made up of English-speaking journalists, male and female, from the public (state-owned/controlled) and private press and from foreign media correspondents (print and broadcast). 200 English Speaking journalists were identified through journalism unions/associations, and hand-served the questionnaire. As a former journalist in Cameroon, the researcher has a connection with journalists there and attended unions/associations meetings to administer the survey. In situations where the

researcher could not attend a meeting of journalists, heads of journalism unions handed questionnaires to respondents. The researcher provided his local phone number so respondents could contact him for clarification as they completed the questionnaire.

The second and third groups are one media regulatory body—the National Communications Council—and journalism unions/associations and publishers respectively. The NCC is the institution that implements government policies relating to <sup>6</sup>journalism practice. Journalism unions/associations (Cameroon Union of Journalists, NUJ; Cameroon Association of English Speaking Journalists, CAMASEJ; and Commonwealth Journalists Association, CJA) and publishers/editors serve as intermediaries between the government (including regulatory bodies) and journalists. The researcher asked representatives of these bodies for face-to-face interviews; eight such interviews took place.

### **Data collection (materials/instruments and period)**

There were two instruments used in the data collection process. First is a questionnaire (all in English since the study population was English-speaking journalists) with 30 closed-ended questions surveyed journalists between the months of June and August, 2016. This questionnaire was designed by the researcher, guided by trends found in the literature and based on his personal experience as a former journalist in Cameroon. The completion time of the questionnaire was an estimated 30–35 minutes. Questionnaires were hand-served to 200 journalists and 172 of the questionnaires were completed and returned. This gave a response rate of 86%.

Each interview with officials of the regulatory bodies and heads of journalism was conducted in person by the author, and lasted 30–45 minutes. They were conducted between the

---

<sup>6</sup> About Freedom of the Press: <https://freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-press>



months of June and August, 2016. Interviews were conducted in English, regardless of whether the interviewee lived in the French part of the country or not. Participants need to be English-speaking. Table 1 shows a breakdown of the number of journalists who completed the survey, the number of interviews done, and respondents' affiliations.

*Table 2: Breakdown of survey respondents and interview participants*

| <b>Survey of Journalists</b> |            | <b>Interviews</b>                         |            |
|------------------------------|------------|---|------------|
| <i>Affiliation</i>           | <i>No.</i> | <i>Participants' Occupation</i>           | <i>No.</i> |
| State press                  | 56         | Regulator (NCC and Press Card Commission) | 2          |
| Private press                | 59         | Journalist Union Representative           | 2          |
| Foreign                      | 4          | Publishers/owners                         | 3          |
| Undisclosed                  | 53         | Editor                                    | 1          |
| <i>Total</i>                 | <i>172</i> | <i>Total</i>                              | <i>8</i>   |

In terms of demographics, 56.4% of journalists who completed the survey were male and 40.7 were female. 2.9% did not disclose the gender. This shows that women are pretty much active in the profession in Cameroon.

Age wise, 51.2% journalists surveyed were between the ages of 18 and 29. 42.4% in the range of 30 to 39. This means that 93.6% were at least 18 years of age and at most 39 years old. 2.9% were in the range of 40 to 49 years, and 1.7% were between 50 and 59. Another 1.7% did not reveal their age.

In terms of professional journalism experience, 41.3% of journalists surveyed had at least two, but not more than four years of professional journalism experience. 29.7% had seven years and above experience, 18.0% had between five to six years of experience and 9.9% had one or less of experience. Meanwhile 1.2% did not reveal their number of years of experience.

## **Data coding and analysis**

The questionnaire data was coded as designed since they were all closed-ended questions with Likert-scale levels of measurements. The researcher entered the coded questionnaire data into a computer with the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS, version 24). The study used SPSS to provide adequate statistical representation of the results and the findings. The researcher ran frequencies to obtain simple descriptive statistics from the data.

For the interviews, the researcher used the qualitative data analysis software NVivo<sup>7</sup> to code answers. Each interview was a unit of analysis. NVivo allows for preliminary exploration of frequently used terms in texts and the pattern of their usage. The second part of data analysis identified recurring themes from the coded interviews. The researcher used the NVivo.

---

<sup>7</sup> What is NVivo: <http://www.qsrinternational.com/what-is-nvivo>

## **CHAPTER V: RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION**

This chapter presents the results and interpretation of the analysis of data from the survey, interviews, and secondary sources. The analysis was used to answer the “specific sub-questions,” which put together, answer the broad research question about how governmental control of information affects

It is worth noting that generally, governmental control of governmental information centers around limiting accessing, processing, and then finally disseminating information. However, these research questions focused mostly on accessing and disseminating the information.

The thesis presents its analysis of the survey data in simple descriptive frequency tables to address the overarching research question.

The surveyed journalists responded to some questions that are necessary to understand and contextualize journalism practice in Cameroon. These are shown below. Journalists were asked to answer “yes” or “no” to each item on a list of potential impediments to professional journalism practice in Cameroon. It was important to ask this question because of the list includes press freedom and access to information, without which we cannot discuss governmental control of information. Table 2 shows the list and the corresponding percentages of journalists who answered “yes” or “no” to each or chose not to respond. 172 journalists responded to the list. For details, see the ranked table below.

*Table 3: Impediments to the practice of professional journalism in Cameroon*

| <i>SN</i> | <i>Issue</i>                                   | <i>Yes</i> |      | <i>No</i> |      |
|-----------|--|------------|------|-----------|------|
|           |  | Freq.      | %    | Freq.     | %    |
| <b>1</b>  | Low pay (salary)                               | 122        | 70.9 | 50        | 29.1 |
| 2         | Lack of access to information                  | 116        | 67.4 | 56        | 32.6 |
| <b>3</b>  | Lack of finances to sustain media institutions | 98         | 57.0 | 71        | 41.3 |
| 4         | Lack press freedom/government censorship       | 91         | 52.9 | 81        | 47.1 |
| 5         | No freedom of information laws                 | 83         | 48.3 | 89        | 51.7 |
| 6         | Inadequate training                            | 67         | 39.0 | 105       | 61.0 |
| <b>7</b>  | Lack of necessary technology                   | 51         | 29.7 | 121       | 70.3 |

This table shows that journalists feel that low salary strongly affects (impedes) the practice of professional journalism. This means economic factors greatly impede the practice of professional journalism. This issue is not just the salary of the journalist, but general lack of finances to sustain media/press institutions (which of course includes paying salaries).

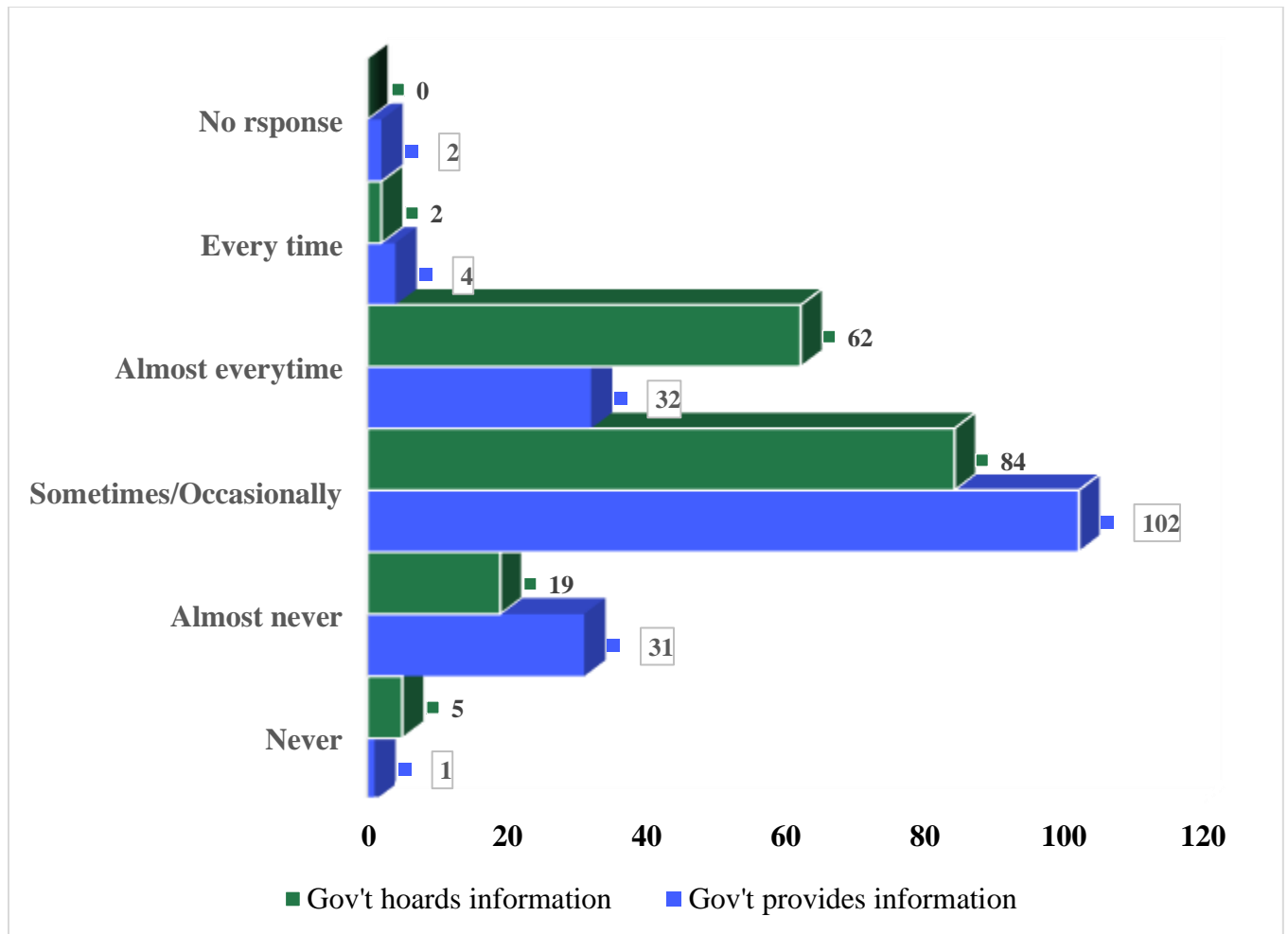
Also frequently cited as impediments to the practice of professional journalism are issues related directly to governmental control of information—lack of access to government information, lack of press freedom/government censorship, and the absence of freedom of information laws. These are top issues that these respondents said impede journalism practice.

After establishing issues that impede the practice of journalism in, it is important to know how often the government provides or conceals information from journalists. In the survey, a five-point Likert scale to measure the frequency at which government officials/agencies/organizations provide information to, or conceals information from journalists. The levels of the scale were: never, almost never, sometimes/occasionally, almost every time, and every time. The survey asked these questions: How often do government

officials/agencies/organizations provide information when you need it? And how often do government officials/agencies/organizations hoard information when you need it?

As Figure 2 shows, two of the 172 respondents said the government always hoards information from them when they want it. By contrast, four journalists said the government provides information to them when they need it; while these outliers may suggest that journalists' access to government information is not restricted or only slightly restricted, these numbers are too small to make that conclusion. Close to every time means "almost every time," and more journalists (62) said the government hoards information almost every time. Thirty-two said the government provides information to them almost every time. This clearly indicates that press access to government information is restricted. Moreover, 148 journalists (86.05%) said the government hoards information when they need it "every time, almost every time or sometimes/occasionally." By comparison, 138 (80.23%) said the government provides information "every time, almost every time or sometimes/occasionally."

This bar chart illustrates this explanation.



*Figure 2: Frequency of government's provision versus hoarding of information when journalists need it.*

A cross tabulation comparing the experience of journalists working in state-owned houses to those of the private press vis-à-vis accessing governmental information is shown in the tables 4 and 5 below. 4 examines journalists' affiliation by how often government officials/agencies/organizations hoard (hide) information, and 3b shows affiliation by how often government officials/agencies/organizations provide information. The differences between state and private journalists are clear.

*Table 4: Counts for journalists' experience with governmental hoarding of information based on affiliation (count and row percentages)*

|             |             | Never  | Almost never | Sometimes | Almost every time | No response | Total      |
|-------------|-------------|--------|--------------|-----------|-------------------|-------------|------------|
| Affiliation | State-owned | 3 (5%) | 7 (13%)      | 33 (59%)  | 11 (20%)          | 2 (4%)      | 56 (100%)  |
|             | Private     | 1 (2%) | 6 (10%)      | 23 (39%)  | 29 (42%)          | 0 (0%)      | 59 (100%)  |
|             | Foreign     | 0 (0%) | 1 (25%)      | 2 (50%)   | 1 (25%)           | 0 (0%)      | 4 (100%)   |
|             | No response | 1 (2%) | 5 (9%)       | 26 (49%)  | 21 (40%)          | 0 (0%)      | 53 (100%)  |
| Total       |             | 5 (3%) | 19 (11%)     | 84 (49%)  | 62 (36%)          | 2 (1%)      | 172 (100%) |

*Table 5: Counts for journalists' experience with governmental provision of information based on affiliation (count and row percentages).*

|             |             | Never  | Almost never | Sometimes | Almost every time | Every time | No response | Total      |
|-------------|-------------|--------|--------------|-----------|-------------------|------------|-------------|------------|
| Affiliation | State-owned | 0 (0%) | 6 (11%)      | 33 (59%)  | 13 (23%)          | 2 (4%)     | 2 (4%)      | 56 (100%)  |
|             | Private     | 1 (2%) | 17 (29%)     | 27 (46%)  | 14 (24%)          | 0 (0%)     | 0 (0%)      | 59 (100%)  |
|             | Foreign     | 0 (0%) | 3 (75%)      | 0 (0%)    | 1 (25%)           | 0 (0%)     | 0 (0%)      | 4 (100%)   |
|             | No response | 0 (0%) | 5 (9%)       | 42 (79%)  | 4 (8%)            | 2 (4%)     | 0 (0%)      | 53 (100%)  |
| Total       |             | 1 (1%) | 31 (18%)     | 102 (59%) | 32 (19%)          | 4 (2%)     | 2 (1%)      | 172 (100%) |

After establishing how problematic access to government information is for journalists, it is important to understand the ways in which the government prevents access to information by journalists. Here is where the research questions being to be answered, actually, questions that are found directly from the questionnaire. We note these barriers were designed the literature and the researcher's broad experience a journalist in Cameroon. While the list of barriers is not exhaustive, these give us an idea the various strategies that the government use to conceal information from journalists.

## **Barriers to obtaining government information**

RQ1: What are the barriers to the press obtaining government information?

There are multiple barriers to obtaining government information. The survey asked journalists to choose from a list of possible barriers to obtaining government information. The list included (abbreviations in brackets are used to accommodate space restrictions on the graph):

- No return/response to calls in request for information (NRRCRI)
- Long wait times during appointments (LWTDA)
- Won't start a press conference in the absence of state media (WSPCASM)
- Delayed replies to request for information (DRR1)
- Refused access without press cards (RAWRC)
- Unending referrals to superior /boss (URSB)
- Intimidation (ITMDT)

Figure 3 illustrates the number of journalists who answered “yes” or “no” about specific barriers to accessing government information. Comparing those who said yes and no allows for easy understanding of the top barriers to accessing governmental information, to the press. The analysis indicates that long wait times during appointments, unending referrals to superior/boss, won't start press conference in the absence of state media, and delayed replies to requests for information are the top barriers to journalists' access to government information in Cameroon. At least 100 of the 172 respondents said these four top factors are barriers to accessing government information. Respectively, the two least-common barriers were intimidation (with 76 journalists saying government intimidates them to prevent access to information vital for their work) and refused access without press cards, with 64 respondents who said they do not have access to government without press cards.



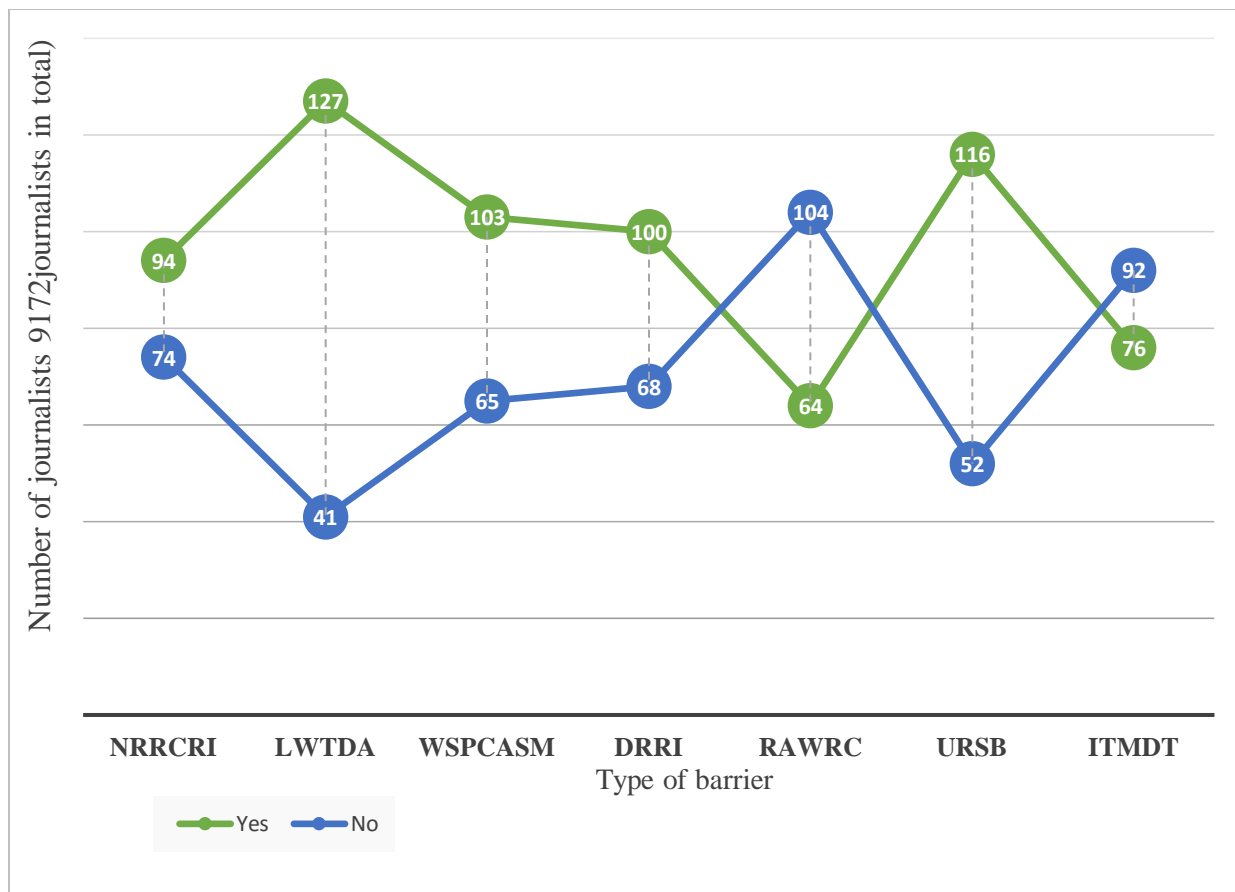


Figure 3: Barriers to obtaining government information (count of responses).

Knowing these barriers, it is logical to examine what laws (if any) say about disseminating information. This brings us to the second sub-research question which deals with legal restrictions on information dissemination.

### Legal restrictions on dissemination of information

RQ2: What are the legal restrictions to disseminate information to the press?

The major press law officially in force is the 1990 law on freedom of mass communication. Law No. 90/52 of 19 December 1990 relating to freedom of mass communication is assumed to have liberalized the press, but Ewumbue-Monono (1992) notes that this law was enacted within the context of a politically charged environment and an

obscured objective of suppressing the media whenever it was in “conflict” with the principle of public policy or the government. In this regard, sections limit the dissemination of information to the press either through direct administrative controls or by virtue of ambiguity in the statutory language.

Sections 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17 of chapter II of the 1990 law have information dissemination restrictions classified under “compulsory submission of copies” of publications and “seizure and ban” of publications. First, the language of these and many other sections of the law is ambiguous. It uses “press organ” and “publication” without distinguishing the type of press organ (broadcast or print)). The general provisions of the law include audiovisual communication in its definition of mass communication. Therefore, broadcast journalists are seemingly excluded from the law. In practice, however, it applies to all types of press institutions.

Compulsory submission of copies prior to distribution, and seizure and banning:

Looking at the cited sections, section 13 obliges press organs to submit copies of their publications to legal authorities at least two hours prior to distribution

*In this regard, the publisher shall be bound to submit to the State Counsel not less than two hours prior to distribution, two signed copies of each issue. (Chapter II, section 13, law no. 90-52 of 19 December 1990 relating to freedoms of mass communication)*

Sections 14 and 16 require press organs to submit copies or print samples to administrative authorities (Senior Divisional Officers), four hours before distribution. For daily publications, the four-hour deadline is reduced to two hours. The president, who holds all administrative power, appoints these administrative authorities. For press organs in the political capital where most administrative head offices are located, the obligation is tougher. Press organs have to submit copies to the senior divisional officer, the governor of that region, and the

Ministry in Charge of Territorial Administration and Decentralization. The effect and level of control is tripled because different administrative officials may see different things to rationalize blocking circulation of an issue.

Additionally, section 16 requires the press to submit copies to the central and external services of what was the Ministry in Charge of Information and is now the Ministry of Communication. The law does not specify these external and central services, but one is the national archives, to which section 15 obliges publishers to submit copies prior to distribution. The case of section 15 is exceptionally encouraging for the sake of archives (preserving history), but based on the researcher's personal experience, issues critical of the government don't reach the national archives if administrative authorities find something potentially damaging to the image of the government in them.

Why does the government require advance submission of copies? The obvious reason is censorship, and a paragraph of section of Law 90-52 clearly states that:

*The newspaper issues thus submitted may be censored in whole or in part where there is a conflict with the principles of public policy. The censorship decision may be appealed against before a competent magistrate who cannot make a ruling within one month following the date he is seized of the matter. (Law 90-52, 12/1990, section 14)*

If the press organ does not respect the conditions stated in the law, section 21 of Law 90-52, classified under 'special obligations' shall be enforced. The section states:

*The distribution of a press organ shall be suspended as soon as the administrative authority establishes that the said organ does not fulfill all the prescribed conditions. The suspension shall be lifted as soon as the conditions of publication are once more fulfilled. (Law 90-52, 12/1990, section 21).*

Finally, banning and/or seizing press organs is allowed by section 17. If a press organ's

publication conflicts with the “principles of public policy,” administrative authorities with territorial jurisdiction can order its seizure. Only the Ministry of Territorial Administration can ban the press organ. This is paradoxical because administrative officials with territorial jurisdiction are “decentralized” organs of the ministry. They do not need permission from the headquarters before executing a ban. However, according to the law, the banning or seizure order can be appealed. This does not happen in practice.

While this Law 90-52 exists, there are no laws that oblige the government to provide information to the press, and none that is specifically allow government officials to conceal information or certain types of information (secrecy laws).

### **Direct (extralegal) governmental actions against the press**

RQ3: What direct governmental (extralegal) actions adversely affect media houses, journalists, and journalism unions?

Apart from implementing laws that impede journalistic information access and processing, other extralegal governmental actions that are not explicitly written in law but carried out by the government, affect the press. A major body that carries out direct governmental actions concerning the press is the National Communications Council, created in 1991 by Presidential Decree No. 91/287 of 21 June 1991. It operates under the authority of the prime minister as the head of government. According to Tanjong (2012), its mission is to assist the state in monitoring and implementing national communication policies. It has operated for two decades after the presidential decree reorganized it. The reorganization seemed to give the regulatory body sanction powers ranging from warnings and suspension of journalists to bans of media outlets. The council claims it plays a disciplinary role to ensure a responsible media.

For example, in 2014, the NCC published a list of sanctioned media organs (newspapers, and radio and TV stations), on grounds that they disobeyed the rules of acceptable journalism or were involved in unethical practices. Some of them were shut down, and some programs and journalists were suspended for up to nine months or completely banned. However, the so-called rules are non-existent. This researcher asked the regulatory body for a document that defines the rules but was not provided any such document. Muluh (2014) says the implications of such actions imply that an official can use whatever reason to shut down a radio station critical of government. Sanctions are attempts to undermine critical journalism.

Another example is the recent shut down of the internet<sup>8</sup> in the two English speaking regions the Cameroon. For four months, (January to April, 2017), the internet was completely shut down in the Northwest and Southwest regions after an Anglophone revolt against marginalization. During this period, journalists were arrested, and their phones and mobile devices checked for potentially harmful information to government.

### **How does governmental control of information affect journalism practice?**

This is the overarching research question. With the sub-questions answered, this section examines how these factors affect the practice of journalism. The interviews of the media regulatory body, publishers/owners, heads of journalism unions and editors were a great resource in answering the question in more depth. A thematic analysis of the text of their interviews identified two major issues related to the impact of governmental concealing information: journalism ethical compromise and imbalanced reporting. These are discussed in detail, and illustrated with quotes from the participants.

---

<sup>8</sup> Cameroon ends internet shutdown on orders of President Paul Biya: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-39665244>

## Journalism ethical compromise

Compromised journalism ethics emerged as a strong theme from the analysis, and participants blamed it for the poor state of journalism in Cameroon. Compromised ethical standards may be damaging and stifling responsible journalism, but journalists' lack of following ethical standards may not be intentional. The environment in which they practice has subjected them to a tendency to bend professional rules and/or standards from time to time. The first issue that leads to ethical compromise is information-related laws. As a respondent said,

*The laws are bad. Libel is still criminal which means you can't be daring enough. The journalist has the responsibility to still provide evidence for accuracy... If you understand how journalism practice work, if you, if I, get an interview from you, you are a human source. How do I produce a material source in court? What if you are unwilling to testify in court?... The fact is that you have the responsibility to provide evidence on the accuracy and truthfulness. There is also the fact that there [are] a lot of secrecy laws... (Interviewee 1: media owner and publisher)*

The issue of secrecy or distrust between the news sources -- in most cases the government and the journalist -- has led to serious professional ethical compromise. He adds:

*You have a practice where journalists are very willing to take bribes and can even ask for bribes. Even when you find what seems to be a well-investigated story, sometimes it's based on information that has been planted as we call it into the newspaper by some external forces. That information might be true, it could be accurate, but it's not a product of serious journalistic work (Interviewee 1: owner and publisher)*

Compromised ethical standards are often instigated by incentives or gifts from the government to the press. Every year, the government has a package (usually financial) that is shared among press institutions around the country. Owners/designated heads of the press

institutions compile a file and submit to the Ministry Communication. The criteria for awarding such incentives are not clear and journalists/press organs often complain of partiality, in favor press institutions that have “connections” with government officials. Although not all press organs accept such incentives, those that do tend to be “loyal” to the government and use it as leverage to access government sources. This may seem a good survival practice, but it has implications for the quality, accuracy, and objectivity of what the beneficiaries report or publish. Although benefitting from a government gift necessarily results in ethical compromise, one participant explained how government incentives would affect how he practices. The comment below came from an owner/publisher/editor, and his editorial policy reflects his response to receiving a gift:

*To be honest in saying that when you step out as a publisher or as a reporter, to receive aid from government, even if there are no hard-binding rules on how to carry on with your profession, there is something somehow hanging somewhere there. There is some sort of feeling that I have to somehow not be too hard if government is doing something or not ... because I might risk losing some patronage or someone. So in your psyche it plays, but even if it plays, what I want to say is that it's on a very limited extent.*

*(Interviewee 2: media owner and publisher)*

In a country without a clear definition of who a journalist, imposters flood the profession. As they lack basic journalism training, ethical standards are further compromised. Although the lack of free access to government information may result in ethical compromise, that does not mean that access guarantees professional practice. Other factors such as low salaries (Table 1) damage the practice of journalism.

## **Imbalanced reporting**

One characteristic of good journalism is balance: presenting multiple sides of the story accurately. For this to happen, the journalist needs to hear from more than one side of a conflict story. It may also mean obtaining solid information and presenting it accurately so that the report is not based on opinion. This is not always the case in Cameroon, especially with government sources. Journalists' limited and sometimes lack of access to government information has nursed and grown imbalanced reporting as a phenomenon, with journalists cutting corners or publishing or broadcasting stories that can be regarded simply as opinions.

A government media regulator acknowledged in an interview that the private media often lack access to state agencies and government institutions.

*The complaint is access especially to state institutions so they find it quite difficult to report on state matters. (Interviewee 6: regulator)*

This creates an imbalance in the flow of information. Essentially, the private press is unable to report state matters. Because of the asymmetry of information sharing in favor of the state media, the private press ends up reporting rumors or stories based on anonymous sources. In such cases, the government can use that as an excuse to ban, seize equipment or suspend them on grounds of unprofessionalism.

Four other participants, two from owners/publishers and two from journalism unions agreed, stating that journalists rely on public events without comments from newsmakers. The problem is the lack of sources. A publisher stated:

*It's quite challenging, first of all because the news gathering process is very tedious, the availability of sources, sometimes you have to do official public events which are really sometimes not very newsworthy. But if you really wanted to have a very newsworthy story, which will require you talking to multiple sources often you find out that these are*



*people who are unwilling to talk. Generally, people don't understand the role of the media, especially public officials, and so it becomes very difficult for them to cooperate with the media. (Interviewee 1: owner and publisher).*

Even at public events, accessing government sources is also problematic. Government newsmakers and agencies are always guarded by forces of law and order who prevent journalists from interviewing them. In the case of a breaking news event that requires the presence of forces of law and order, journalists have additional barriers to overcome. This confirms that the execution of proper journalism practice is hampered by serious government checkpoints in the form of forces of law and order. A publisher illustrated this with an example of a fire outbreak:

*In many places where there is a barrier to the public that excludes the media, there is usually a second barrier for the media. But in fact when there is a barrier here, the police put a barrier for the media right up here -- so if there is a fire, some incident happens here, they will let people stand around and watch but they wouldn't tolerate a camera or a microphone, and the barriers for journalist are raised far away from what is going on. And many journalist fear to work under those climates because you can be harassed. These guys have a way of harassing you without repercussion and, yes, some young reporters will be afraid... (Interviewee 1: owner and publisher)*

Another publisher explained that the private press does not always get an invitation to cover government public events. They attend without being invited and what they see or hear at the event is all that they report, provided they are allowed to attend.

Although governmental control of information is a barrier mostly to the private press, journalists for state-owned/controlled press outlets also say that governmental control of information is rife. First, officials are skeptical of these journalists and don't always divulge information. And when they do, they tailor the information to fulfil government objectives and

give no room for further questioning or clarification. An interviewee who heads a journalism union and works for state press said that state media are not allowed to criticize the government. Control may not come directly from government officials but from their superiors in the newsroom:

*At times we also have information about some of the things they do which we think are destructive to development...The major interference is that they always like to tell you or remind you, "Don't forget that you are working in a state media" I have directors, I have bosses here. I'm not talking about ministers. I'm not talking about the government; I am talking about our bosses here. And so whenever you have some sensitive information, you have to refer to your hierarchy first and they tell you what to do with that information. You don't just go broadcasting [just] because you have that information. (interviewee 4: union, state media)*

Interviewees also explained that it even more difficult to get sensitive information, such as that available by getting into a ministry to access public records. They assert that issues of lack of training and unprofessionalism make the government skeptical and thus committed to controlling information.

*But on the other hand, we can also understand some of those officials in Cameroon reason being that many journalists in Cameroon are untrained and unprofessional. Some journalists in Cameroon are capable of deforming information you gave. They change it completely, so people have become so skeptical about giving out information... The official press like the CRTV, Cameroon Tribune, they are lighter on them because they know these two media organs are less sensational than the others. (interviewee 4: union, state media)*

This raises questions about journalists incorrectly framing information before dissemination. Although that question may be legitimate at times, it was only state media journalists who mentioned this argument during the interviews.

A union leader who works for a private outlet emphasized the difficulty of being a journalist without a freedom of information law and said that authorities see the media as both an enemy and as a partner in “development and democracy.” This breeds an atmosphere of hostility. However, in cases in which the journalist wants to write a story that the government thinks will not harm its reputation, officials can easily provide necessary information -- provided the journalist goes through usual the administrative bottle bottlenecks and gets to the official:

*That's a primary difficulty that we have, getting information, especially public documents, public statistics, public officials. To see a public official and get them to speak is not always easy. Except you want to praise them. And if they think that you don't want to praise them, they will not answer your question. Even when you get to them for interviews, they give you half-truths. Sometimes they are evasive. And at other points, they may even disclaim what they tell you shortly before you go to press with it.*  
*(interviewee 5: union, private media)*

Officials, sometime including those from local government, need clearance from their superiors before they can talk. An exception is when they want a report to help settle scores with their opponents. Essentially, they readily provide information to journalists if they want to get back at their opponents. In such a case, the journalist must carefully verify that information before publishing or broadcasting. This example exemplifies such situations:

*Like we were following up the issues of land grabbing in Fako subdivision. And we needed documents: how much land was surrendered to the villages, how much land went to which administrator and under which circumstances 'did] they got such land. How*

*was the land distributed to the population whose right it is to have the land? And you discovered getting those documents was very difficult, particularly because the senior divisional officers think that it can be incriminating for them. The chiefs think that they need to get clearance from the senior divisional officers before they can speak. It's only in cases where either of the parties may be the chiefs, the senior divisional officer, or the land officials are disgruntled that they can then release such documents to you. But even when they do, it's important to crosscheck because somebody may fake a document and give it to you. So when you get a document from one party, it is important to check with the other party if the document is authentic and it's always very difficult to get such authentication. (interviewee 5: union, private media)*

From the analysis sub-questions, and therefore the overarching research question was answered. In summary, the government uses strategies such as long wait times during appointments with journalists, no replies to requests for information, and unending referrals to superiors and bosses to restrict journalists (especially the private press) from accessing government information. Also, sections 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 21 of Law 90-52 on the freedoms of mass communications restricts the dissemination of information through post-publication censorship, seizure/closure of press publications, banning and suspension of journalists and press institutions. Finally, extralegal actions carried out most by the NCC, have adverse effects on the practice of professional journalism. The in-depth interviews revealed two common effects of government concealing governmental information: ethical compromise and imbalanced reporting.

## CHAPTER VI: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

### Discussion

One way to gauge journalism practice in Cameroon is through understanding that press freedom cannot be discussed without probing its key subset: access to, and dissemination of information. Because the press exists in a social system and is affected by interactions in the system, it is impossible to avoid all press controls. But the level of control and how that control manifests itself can shape journalism practice. After analyzing the ways in which the government controls information and how such control affects journalism, issues of access seem clarified.

A major setback in the in the media sector in Cameroon is that law 90-52 defines freedom of mass communication without including the right to access. First, an interviewed regulator broadly defended the supposed press freedom with the fact -- more like an assumption --that there many press organs in the country:

*First of all, the element of freedom. There is freedom. Here is a country as small as it is which has almost six hundred newspapers. What are you doing with six hundred newspapers, has more than a hundred or a hundred and something radio stations and so are television stations, you know as many. (interviewee 6: regulator)*

However, the NCC cannot provide a comprehensive database and exact number of press organs. The irony is that many of those press organs don't have a license, and the regulator claimed that the government has created something called “administrative tolerance” by allowing media houses to operate without licenses. This is an additional way to clamp down on the press because the government controls the information. A press organ operating without a license risks being closed for not having a license if it is critical of the government. So journalists have to “stay out of trouble” to remain in business.

The NCC as a government institution enforces the 1990 law and can sanction press organs and journalists, but when it comes to access to information, it is an advisory body that cannot force the government to do anything, as a regulator explained:

*We tell government what is supposed to be done, we tell journalists what [they are] supposed to do. The rest is that relationship, and you must guide or guard a good relationship ... to have access to information. It's a phenomenon that is not yet very much in people's minds ... on what kind of information to give out to the professional media people. So that's something that has to be worked on constantly. (Interviewee 6: regulator)*

Journalists/editors, publishers, and regulators described a situation in which the press must have “*cultivated some special relationship*” with government officials/agencies that must be “*guided and guarded*” to get access to information. But after journalists obtain the information, the law obliges them to submit copies for official review before distribution. The government uses a combination of legislative measures and administrative practices to maintain control, limiting the circulation of public facts that are critical for the functioning of a fragile democracy.

The idea of pre- publication review not only retards the free flow of information but also has an economic impact if officials do not permit distribution. The financial and personnel resources spent to produce the issue are lost, and this is detrimental to a country whose press lacks substantial economic sustainability.

Issues of training and following professional standards contribute to the degraded state of journalism in Cameroon. This is evident from interviewees who argue that governmental control of information can be justified because some journalists use information in unprofessional ways.

However, it is unclear what “unprofessional” means in Cameroon’s press system because there is no clear code of ethics or well-documented professional standard practices.

The findings also show that no particular mass communication theory can be used to explain the press system and practices in Cameroon. The theoretical framework of the study was built around three of the Siebert et al’s four theories of the press: authoritarian, libertarian, and social responsibility. It can be said that Cameroon’s press system and practices reflect a mix of these theories. While there is a great deal of governmental control of information (authoritarian) as exercised through different tactics, there is also some freedom, especially in the multiplicity of press organs. Journalists are caught between stiff governmental control and a duty to speak truth to power and to be socially responsible in how they practice their profession. Although it is unclear which theory is dominant in the system, the findings show how governmental control of information has long-lasting adverse effects on the growth and practice of independent and watchdog journalism.

## **Conclusion**

This study has explored and explained access to information, press freedom and journalism practice in Cameroon. It identified multiple barriers to access to government. Based on the survey, these include long wait times during appointments, frequent referrals to superiors/bosses, failure to start press conference unless state media is present, and delayed replies to request for information.

From a policy perspective, it is widely known how the government restricts access to information, controls the press, and stifles its development. However, supporting evidence has been out-of-date or inadequately documented until this study. It can therefore serve as a reference point to policymakers in drawing up policies relating to the functioning of the press

and its relationship with the government in Cameroon and other African countries with similar government systems. Journalism unions or media regulatory bodies can also use the findings of this study as guide to develop and implement enforceable professional standards in the practice of journalism in Cameroon.

Since it has become clearer that having a freedom of information law (that will oblige officials to provide information to journalists, it is critical that such a law be introduced in Cameroon. The result may not only lead to better practice of journalism, but may also help in building trust between the government, Cameroonians, and the government. With access to, and free dissemination of information, social ills like corruption, lack of transparency and accountability, and the mediocrity that has been plaguing and draining the country of its potentials can be combatted. The skepticism that exists between the government and its people can be reduced. But this may be not likely to happen in the near future, perhaps not until the powers change hands (from a one-man decision making to a more democratic and transparent process), journalism associations unite and become stronger.

The more sources of information we have, the greater our knowledge. The greater our knowledge, the more intelligently we can select our representatives in government at all levels, and the better we can guide their decisions. A strong democracy depends on information and knowledge. A variety of sources of information independent of each other is important.

This study concludes that while governmental control of information is sometimes rationalized by a lack of training and unprofessionalism, this control stifles the development of responsible journalism practice, shrinking audiences, and creating popular cynicism about journalistic ethics. The cynicism can also be justified by “gombo” journalism, the fact that some reporters and media owners squeeze cash and other benefits from government officials, agencies, and rich business owners in exchange for not running fabricated or real scandal stories.



African journalism across the continent is plagued by most, if not all of the issues uncovered in this study. The main reason could be the system of government, the laws and government extra-legal actions as in the case Cameroon. But to better comprehend how governmental control of information and the government–media relationship in general affects journalism practice, the methodology and design of this study can be replicated or adapted to fit the context of the country under study.

### **Limitations and suggestions for future study**

This study has limitations in its methodological mix. While the methods used are appropriate, they were not necessarily combinable. One method could be used to explore and examine groups of participants separately in detail. This way, a more general conclusion could be made about a particular group of participants. Participants in in-depth interviews can be expanded to include the reporters and qualitative data used to support the results of a survey like the one used in this project. This could help ensure qualitative understanding of the experiences of journalists with trying to secure government information and the adverse effects of government control on journalism practice.

Conducting this study in Cameroon was challenging because access to legal documents and to potential participants -- particularly government officials -- is never guaranteed. It was difficult for officials to obtain clearances from their bosses before agreeing or declining to participate in the study. Some did not even respond to interview requests. Nevertheless, this project expands on concepts of governmental control of information, press freedom, access to information, and journalism practice in a developing country.

Also, in the future, it would be interesting to study French-speaking journalists to see how different their experiences may be, and how governmental control of information may affect

the practice of professional journalism. This French-speaking part of Cameroon (which make up 80% of the country) is not only linguistically different, but also culturally because the impact of France. Historically, the French-speaking part of Cameroon has had relatively less press freedom and access to information, based on the French laws that existed in that part of the country from the time of colonization to independence. After independence, the law that governed the press in the French Cameroon was modelled after the French Press Law which enforced strict censorship. Although after independence and subsequently reunification the two parts of the country formed the Federal Republic, then United Republic and today The Republic of Cameroon, life in the two parts is still pretty much lived according to the cultures of the former colonialists (British for English-speaking Cameroon and French for French-speaking Cameroon). Moreover, the supposed marginalization of Anglophones that has recently led to a revolt, loss of lives and shutdown of the internet, is seeming not experienced in the French part of the country. The reason also seems obvious; more than 90% of those in government are French-speaking.

## **APPENDICES**

## Appendix 1: Questionnaire for journalists



**Pechulano Ngwe Ali (Researcher)**

**Eric Freedman (Supervisor)**

**Application ID#: i051412**

**Topic: The Impact of governmental controls of information on Journalism Practice in Cameroon**

**Instrument for Data Collection**

**Site: Cameroon, Africa**

This survey about the government–media relationship in Cameroon is part of a study for my M.A. degree thesis in Journalism at Michigan State University, U.S.A. Thanks for agreeing to take part in it. The survey will provide a better understanding of how journalists perceive professionalism and manage how they relate with the government as they go about their daily routines in journalism practice. It should take 30–35 minutes. All responses and personal information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. The survey results will be organized and analyzed as a group, and will be used strictly for academic purposes. Participation is voluntary and you can refuse to answer certain questions. You must be 18, or older to participate.

### *Section One: Professionalism in Journalism in Cameroon*

1. As a journalist, what does it mean to be professional? (You can tick more than one)

- 1. Balanced reporting
- 2. Diversity in use of sources
- 3. Objective in reporting
- 4. Fact-based reporting
- 5. Avoiding insults
- 6. Concise
- 7. Being constructive
- 8. Being fair in reporting
- 9. Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

2. As a journalist, what does it mean to be unprofessional? (You can tick more than one)

- 1. Collecting bribe (“Gombo”)
- 2. No use of sources
- 3. Biased (taking sides) reporting
- 4. Hate journalism
- 5. Reporting rumours
- 6. Collecting gifts (freebies) from sources
- 7. Checkbook journalism (paying money for access to material or interviews)
- 8. Publishing stories based on assumptions
- 9. Defaming and libeling

- 10. Sensational reporting
- 11. Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. On a scale of 1–5, where 1=extremely unprofessional and 5=extremely professional, rate the level of professionalism in the media/press in Cameroon
  - 1. Extremely unprofessional
  - 2. Unprofessional
  - 3. Neutral
  - 4. Professional
  - 5. Extremely professional
- 4. On a scale of 1–5, where 1=poor, and 5=excellent, rate the quality of journalism in Cameroon
  - 1. Poor
  - 2. Fair
  - 3. Good
  - 4. Very good
  - 5. Excellent
- 5. What accounts for the/your level of unprofessionalism in journalism practice?
  - 1. Lack of press freedom/government censorship
  - 2. Lack of access to information
  - 3. Low pay (salary)
  - 4. Inadequate training
  - 6. Lack of necessary technology
  - 7. No Freedom of Information Laws
  - 8. Lack of finances to sustain media institutions
- 6. How concerned are you about professional journalism practice in Cameroon?
  - 1. Not at all concerned
  - 2. Slightly concerned
  - 3. Somewhat concerned
  - 4. Concerned
  - 5. Extremely concerned

*Section Two: Government–Media Relationship (Legal/press freedom, political, economic, news source, info. hoarding)*

- 7. As a journalist, which arm of government do you engage with most?
  - 1. Executive
  - 2. Judiciary
  - 3. Legislature
- 8. How do you engage with the government? (Feel free to tick as many as they apply)
  - 1. Using officials as sources
  - 2. Asking for funding
  - 3. Publishing government adverts
  - 4. Partnering with government for professional advancement
  - 5. Acquisition of press cards from government
  - 6. Acquisition of subvention
  - 7. Others
- 9. How do (es) you(r) (media institution) get funding to operate? (You can tick more than one option)
  - 1. Government subventions

- 2. Personal funding
  - 3. Adverts
  - 4. Publications
  - 5. Secret sponsors
  - 6. Sponsors from NGOs
  - 7. Others
10. How dependent are you or your media organ on government subvention? Rate from 1–5
- 5. Always dependent
  - 4. Dependent
  - 3. Occasionally/sometime dependent
  - 2. Rarely dependent
  - 1. Never dependent
11. How often do government officials/agencies/organizations provide information when you need it?
- 1. Never
  - 2. Almost never
  - 3. Sometimes/occasionally
  - 4. Almost every time
  - 5. Every time
12. How often do government officials/agencies/organizations hoard (hide) from you when you ask?
- 1. Never
  - 2. Almost never
  - 3. Sometimes/occasionally
  - 4. Almost every time
  - 5. Every time
13. How do government officials/agencies/organizations hoard (hide) information from you? You can tick more than one.
- 1. No response/return of calls
  - 2. Long wait times during appointments
  - 3. Won't start a press conference until state media is present
  - 4. Delayed replies to request for information
  - 5. Refused access without press card
  - 6. Unending referrals to superior/boss
  - 7. Intimidation
  - 8. Others (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

*Section Three: Impact on Professionalism*

14a. Do these institutions regulate the media in Cameroon? Circle the ones that apply (Y=Yes, N=No)

|                                       |   |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| National Communications Council (NCC) | Y | N |
| Journalism Associations/Unions        | Y | N |
| Ministry of Communication             | Y | N |
| National Press Card Commission        | Y | N |

14b. Which of them has the most impact/influence on how you do your job? \_\_\_\_\_

15. How likely are you to continue to report a story when you do not have access to the information needed to write that story?
- 1. Extremely unlikely
  - 2. Unlikely
  - 3. Neutral
  - 4. Likely
  - 5. Extremely likely
16. How reliant are you on the government/government official as a news source?
- 1. Never reliant
  - 2. Rarely reliant
  - 3. Occasionally/sometimes reliant
  - 4. Almost every time reliant
  - 5. Always reliant
17. From the list below, rate from 1–7, the truth of the following statement as it applies to you. “I will go ahead and publish a story without government sources if they refuse to talk to me.”
- 1. Very untrue of me
  - 2. Untrue of me
  - 3. Somewhat untrue of me
  - 4. Neutral
  - 5. Somewhat true for me
  - 6. True
  - 7. Very true of me
18. What effect do you think the government–media relationship in Cameroon has on professional journalism practice?
- 1. Positive (support professionalism)
  - 2. Negative (does not support professionalism)
  - 3. No effect
19. Apart from your relationship with government, what other factors impede your practice of professional journalism? You can tick more than one.
- 1. Unavailability of credible news sources
  - 2. Employer’s policies
  - 3. Lack of funds
  - 4. Lack of training
  - 5. Personal beliefs
  - 6. Weak journalism unions
  - 7. Other\_\_\_\_\_
20. From the list above which ones interfere most with your practice of professional journalism?
- 1. Unavailability of credible news sources
  - 2. Employer’s policies
  - 3. Lack of funds
  - 4. Lack of training
  - 5. Personal beliefs
  - 6. Weak journalism unions
  - 7. Other\_\_\_\_\_

*Section Four: Demographics*

21. What is your primary beat of reporting?
- 1. General assignment reporter

- 2. Politics
  - 3. Education
  - 4. International affairs
  - 5. Sports
  - 6. Security
  - 7. Business
  - 8. Environment
  - 9. Culture
  - 10. Crime
  - 11. Other (specify)—————
22. Educational level: 1. Diploma. ——— 2. B.Sc. / B.A.——— 3. Master's ———4. PGD——  
 —— 5. Ph.D.———
23. Gender: 1. Male ——— 2. Female———
24. Age: 1. (18–29) ——— 2. (30–39) ——— 3. (40–49) ———4. (50–59) ——— 5. (60  
 and above) ———
25. Professional journalism practice experience: 1. (1 yr. or less) ——— 2. (2–4 yrs.) ———  
 3. (5–6 yrs.) ——— 4. (7 yrs. and above) ——— 5. Retired——



## **Appendix 2: Representative questions for in-depth interviews**

1. Who is a journalist? (NCC and others)
2. Who owns and controls the media in Cameroon?
3. Is professional journalism practiced in Cameroon?
4. What hinders professional journalism practice in Cameroon?
5. What factors explain the relatively slow development in the media landscape of Cameroon?
6. Which media law(s) does Cameroon use? (NCC)
7. How do government policies affect media output in Cameroon? (NCC)
8. To what extent do Cameroon government sources hoard (hide) information?
9. What measures does the government put in place to implement/ensure professional Journalism practice in Cameroon? (NCC)
10. What do journalism unions/associations do to ensure professional journalism practice?
11. How concerned are you about press freedom and the relationship between government and the media/press in Cameroon?
12. What do you see as a remedy to the major problems of unprofessionalism in Cameroon's media landscape?

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allen, D. S. (2005), *Democracy, Inc.: The Press and Law in the Corporate Rationalization of the Public Sphere*, Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Ahidjo, A., (1964), *Contribution to national construction*. Pans: Presence Africaine.1980, Anthologie des Discours 1957-197. Nouvelles Editions Africaines.
- Amner, R. (2008), Educating journalists for democracy and development: Foregrounding “Reformist”, “alternative” and “oppositional” Journalisms. Paper presented at a research colloquium for academic staff and postgraduate students, School of Journalism and Media Studies, Rhodes University in South Africa.
- Amougou, A.D., (1994). *La Censure Administrative de la Presse Ecrite au Cameroun selon la Loi de 1990*. DSSTIC dissertation, ASMAC/ESSTIC Yaounde (mimeo).
- Anaeto SG, Slo-Anaeto M (2010). *Development Communication Principles and Practice*. Lagos: Stirling Horden publishers Ltd.
- Article 19, (1999), *Hollow Promises: Freedom of Expression in Cameroon since 1995*. London: The International Centre Against Censorship.
- Baglo, G. (2008). The journalists’ working conditions in Africa. *Paper presented at UNESCO World Press Freedom Day*, Maputo, Mozambique, 2–3 May 2008. Retrieved 20 November 2012
- Banda, F. (2006). Alternative media: a viable option for Southern Africa. *Openspace*, 1(5), 80–83.
- Banda, F. (2007). Radio listening clubs in Malawi and Zambia: Towards a participatory model of broadcasting. *Communicare: Journal for Communication Sciences in Southern Africa*, 26(1), 130–148.
- Baran, S. J. (2014). *Introduction to Mass Communication, Media Literacy and Culture*. (8<sup>th</sup> ed.) McGraw Hill, New York.
- Barlow, J. P. (1999). Africa Rising (1). Tout ce que vous savez sur l’Afrique est faux. *JEUNE AFRIQUE*, 32–36.
- Bayart, J. F. (1973). Presse écrite et développement politique au Cameroun. *Revue française d’études politiques africaines*, (88), 48–63.

- Beckett, C. and Kyrke-Smith, L. (2007), *Development, Governance and the Media: The role of the media in building African society*, London: POLIS.
- Berger, G. (2005). Powering African newsrooms: Theorizing how Southern African journalists make use of ICTs for newsgathering. *Doing Digital Journalism: How Southern African Newsgatherers are using ICTs, Grahamstown, High Way Africa*, 1–14.
- Berger, G. (2008). What is There in Media for Poor Women and Men? The Case of South Africa. *Whose Voices*, 87–98.
- Besley, T., & Prat, A. (2006). Handcuffs for the grabbing hand? Media capture and government accountability. *The American Economic Review*, 96(3), 720-736.
- Bishop, C. A. (2009). Freedom of Expression and the Right to Know: A New Conceptualization in International Human Rights Law Quinnipiac University Hamden, CT 06518. Paper presented to the Communication Law and Policy Division, International Communication Association, Chicago.
- Boh, H. (1997). The State of the Media in Cameroon. *Yaounde: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung*.
- Borden, S.B. and Pritchard, M.S. (2001). Conflict of interest in journalism. In M. Davis and A. Stark (Eds.), *Practical and professional ethics: Conflict of interest in the professions* (pp. 73–91). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Buckley, S., Mendel, T., Duer, K., & Siochrú, S. Ó. (2008). *Broadcasting, voice, and accountability: A public interest approach to policy, law, and regulation*. University of Michigan Press.
- Capitant, S. (2008). *Médias et pratiques démocratiques en Afrique de l'Ouest: usages des radios au Burkina Faso* (Doctoral dissertation, Paris 1).
- Carey, J. W. (1997). Community, public, and journalism. *Mixed news: The public /civic/ communitarian journalism debate*, 1-15.
- Chapman, J. (2005). *Comparative media history*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Chari, T. (2009). Ethical challenges facing Zimbabwean media in the context of the internet. *Global Media Journal: African Edition*, 3(1), 1 – 3 4.
- Chavula, H. K. (2013). Telecommunications development and economic growth in Africa. *Information Technology for Development*, 19(1), 5-23.
- Christians, C. G. (2008). The ethics of universal being. *Media ethics beyond borders: A global perspective*, 6-23.

- Christians, C. G. (2004). Ubuntu and communitarianism in media ethics. *Ecquid Novi*, 25(2), 235-256.
- Chronis, M. (2012). South Africa's media currencies: Shaping the understanding of the local media environment. In *Media landscape 2012*, 89–106. South Africa: GCIS.
- Churchill, E. M. (1985). Law and the media in Cameroon: the effects of media laws on the practice of journalism in Anglophone Cameroon, 1917-1985. Unpublished Document, pp. 4
- Churchill, E. M. (1992). The right to inform and the 1990 press law in Cameroon. *Africa Media Review*, 6(3), 19-29.
- Coleman, R. (2000). The ethical context for public journalism: As an ethical foundation for public journalism, communitarian philosophy provides principles for practitioners to apply to real-world problems. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 24(1), 41-66.
- Commonwealth Secretariat. (2004). Cameroon Presidential Election 11 October 2004: Report of the Commonwealth Observer Group. London: Commonwealth.
- CPDM, (1985). Bamenda: Fresh Impetus. Yaounde: SOPECAM
- Daniels, D. (2013). The state of the newsroom in South Africa, 2013: Disruptions and transitions. Johannesburg: University of Witwatersrand.
- De Beer, A. and Merrill, J. C. (eds) (2004). *Global Journalism: Topical Issues and Media Systems*, Boston: Pearson Education. Public journalism in Africa.
- De Beer, A. S. & Froneman, J. D. (1994). The quest for media ethics: An introduction. *Ecquid Novi*, 15(1), 3-25.
- De Beer, A. S. and K. G. Tomaselli. (2000). South African journalism and mass communication scholarship: Negotiating ideological schisms. *Journalism Studies* 1 (1): 9–33. *Ecquid Novi: African Journalism Studies*. 2002. Special issue: Journalism Skills. 23(1).
- Ebo, B. L. (1994). Ethical dilemma of African journalists: A Nigerian perspective. *Journal of Media Ethics*, 9(2), 84-93.
- Eko, L. (2001). Many spiders, one World Wide Web: Towards a typology of Internet regulation. *Communication Law and Policy*, 6, 448–460.
- Eribo, F. & E. Tanjong, (2002). *Journalism and Mass Communication in Africa: Cameroon*, Lexington Books, New York.

- Eribo, F., & Tanjong, E. (1998). Reporting under civilian and military rulers: Journalists' perceptions of press freedom and media exposure in Cameroon and Nigeria. *Ecquid Novi*, 19(2), 39-55.
- Erik C. Nisbet and Elizabeth Stoycheff, (2011). A Multilevel Model of Supply and Demand for Press Freedom. The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, DOI: 10.1177/0093650211429117
- Essoka, P., (1999). "Democracy, Good Governance and Communication." Available at [www.cthnonet-africa.org/pub/p.95essoka](http://www.cthnonet-africa.org/pub/p.95essoka)
- Fombad, C. (2003). The Mass Media and Democratization in Africa: Lessons from Cameroon. *The Transition to Democratic Governance: The Continuing Struggle*, JM Mbaku and JO Ihonvbere, Ed. London: Praeger, 221-248.
- Forje, J. W. (2001). Africa's bumpy road to democracy: reconstituting the nation state. *Africa at Crossroads: Complex Political Emergencies in the 21st Century UNESCO/ENA*, 1-20.
- Frère, M. S. (2012). Perspectives on the media in 'another Africa'. *Ecquid Novi: African Journalism Studies*, 33(3), 1-12.
- Gallagher, D. (1991). Public and Private Press in Cameroon. Changing Roles in the New Pluralism. Available at [http://www. Lightfield. com/Cameroon/ispl/html](http://www.Lightfield.com/Cameroon/ispl/html).
- Gilpin, R. (2008). Depoliticizing Zimbabwe's economy: Solutions for two million percent. Report, United States Institute of Peace. Retrieved from [http://www.usip.org/files/resources/USIP\\_0808.PDF](http://www.usip.org/files/resources/USIP_0808.PDF).
- Glasser, T. L. (1991). Communication and the Cultivation of Citizenship', *Communication*, 12(4), pp. 235-48.
- Glenn, I. and R. Mattes. (2011). Political communication in post-apartheid South Africa. Working paper no. 299. Cape Town: CSSR. <http://cssr.uct.ac.za/node/851> (accessed August 1, 2016).
- Graber, D. A., McQuail, D., & Norris, P. (Eds.). (1998). *The politics of news: The news of politics* (p. 8). Washington, DC: CQ Press.
- Gripsrud, J. (2002). *Understanding Media Culture*. SAGE publications, London.
- Haas, T. (2007). *The pursuit of public journalism: Theory, practice, and criticism*. Routledge. London

- Haas, T. (2008). Civic mapping as a public journalism tool. *Revista Estudos em Comunicação-Communication Studies*.
- Hafez, K. (2002). Journalism ethics revisited: A comparison of ethics codes in Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, and Muslim Asia. *Political Communication*, 19(2), 225-250.
- Hartley, J. (2012). *Communication, cultural and media studies: The key concepts*. Routledge. London
- Herman, E. S. & McChesney, R. W. (2004). *The global media: The new missionaries of corporate capitalism* (3rd ed.). London: Continuum. London
- Hoggart, R. (2005). *Mass Media in a Mass Society*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Holsen, S. (2007). Freedom of Information in the UK, US, and Canada. *Information Management*, 41(3), 50.
- Jallov, B. (2008). Setting the Agenda of Public Concern: Power and Challenges of Community Radio, in R. Lars and M. Mia (eds), *Whose Voices? Media and Pluralism in the Context of Democratization*, Proceedings of a conference and workshop held at the Collegium for Development Studies, Uppsala University, Sweden, 20–21 September 2007, pp. 67–74.
- Jinadu, Adele. (Ed), (2000). *the political economy of peace and security in African: ethno-cultural and economic perspective*. Harare, Zimbabwe: AAPS.
- Jowett G. & O'Donnell, V. (2011). *Propaganda and Persuasion*. (5<sup>th</sup> ed.) Sage: Beverly Hills, California.
- Jua, B. N. (2001). Civil Society's Contribution to Democratic Consolidation in Africa. *African Anthropologist*, 8(1), 4-19.
- Kanyane, M. H. (2007). *Conflict of interest in South Africa: a comparative case study* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria).
- Karikari, K. (Ed.). (1996). *Ethics in journalism: Case studies of practice in West Africa*. Institut Panos, Paris.
- Kasoma, F. P. (1996). The foundations of African ethics (Afriethics) and the professional practice of journalism: The case for society-centred media morality. *Africa Media Review*, 10, 93-116.
- Keane, J. (2004). Structural Transformations of the Public Sphere, in F. Webster (ed.), *The Information Society Reader*, London: Sage, pp. 366–78.

- Kivikuru, U. (2006). Top-down or bottom-up? Radio in the service of democracy: Experiences from South Africa and Namibia. *International Communication Gazette*, 68(1), 5-31.
- Krüger, F. (2004). *Black, white and grey: ethics in South African journalism*. Juta and Company Ltd. South Africa
- Laitila, T. (1995). Journalistic codes of ethics in Europe. *European Journal of Communication*, 10(4), 527-544.
- Lenoble-Bart, A., & Tudesq, A. J. (Eds.). (2008). *Connaître les médias d'Afrique subsaharienne: problématiques, sources et ressources*. KARTHALA Editions.
- Levine, VT., (1964). *The Cameroons from mandate to independence*. Berkeley: University of California Press
- Lingo, C. (2003). Editors' Forums: Cameroon country report. Commonwealth Press Union). Retrieved September 30, 2016.
- Lodamo, B., & Skjerdal, T. S. (2009). Freebies and brown envelopes in Ethiopian journalism. *Ecquid Novi*, 30(2), 134-154.
- Morna, C. L. (2007). Glass Ceiling Two: An Audit of Women and Men in South African Newsrooms. *Parklands: SANEF [cit. 9. 6. 2016]. Dostupné z: [http://us-cdn.creamermedia.co.za/assets/articles/attachments/04784\\_glassceiling.pdf](http://us-cdn.creamermedia.co.za/assets/articles/attachments/04784_glassceiling.pdf)*.
- Mabweazara, H. (2010). *New technologies and print journalism practice in Zimbabwe: An ethnographic study* (Doctoral dissertation, Edinburgh Napier University).
- Mawindi Mabweazara, H. (2011). Newsmaking practices and professionalism in the Zimbabwean press. *Journalism Practice*, 5(1), 100-117.
- Mano, W. (2005). Press freedom, professionalism and proprietorship: Behind the Zimbabwean media divide. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, 2.
- Maxwell, J. (1992). Understanding and validity in qualitative research. *Harvard Educational review*, 62(3), 279-301.
- McChesney, R. W. (1997). *Corporate media and the threat to democracy* (Vol. 1). Seven Stories Press.
- McQuail, D. (2010). *McQuail's mass communication theory*. Sage Publications.



- Mishra, N. K. (2008). Governmental threats for media freedom: Comparative study of Asian countries. *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 149-156.
- Moyo, D. (2007). Alternative media, diasporas and the mediation of the Zimbabwe crisis. *Ecquid Novi*, 28(1\_2), 81-105.
- Mukela (ed.), *Essays and Conversations on Media and Democracy*, Maputo: NSJ Trust, pp. 190–212.
- Muluh, H., & Ndoh, B. (2002). Evolution of the Media in Cameroon. *Journalism and Mass Communication in Africa: Cameroon*. Lexington Books, Maryland, 3-16.
- Munzu, S. (1993, September). Le droit penal et la communication de masse dans un etat de droit: perspectives et orientations'. UNESCO seminar on 'Le Cadre d'Exercice de la Liberte de Presse dans un Etat de Droit.
- Murdock, G. (1992). Citizens, consumers and public culture. *Media cultures: Reappraising Transnational Media*, 17, 41.
- Ndangam, L. N. (2006). “Gombo”: Bribery and the corruption of journalism ethics in Cameroon. *Ecquid Novi*, 27(2), 179-199.
- Ndembiyembe, P.C., (1997). 'Media, Tribalism and Democracy' in: Eboussi Boulaga, F. (ed.) *Democracy in the Throes of Tribalism*. Friedrich-Ebert Foundation & Gerddes Cameroun: Yaounde (pp.37-43).
- Ndlovu, M. (2014). South African young adults’ viewership of television news and implications for democracy. *Ecquid Novi: African Journalism Studies* 35(2): 92–108.
- Nga Ndongo V. (1987). *Information et Democratie en Afrique : L'Experience Camerounaise*. SOPECAM : Yaounde.
- Nga Ndongo V. (1993). *Les Médias au Cameroun : Mythes et délires d'une société en crise*. Paris : Harmattan.
- Nightingale, V. and Ross, K. (eds) (2003). *Critical Readings: Media and Audiences*, Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Nisbet, E. C. (2008). Media use, democratic citizenship, and communication gaps in a developing democracy. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 20(4), 454-482.

- N'thepe, G.N., (1993), *Aspects Pratiques de la Loi relative à la Liberté de Communication Sociale*. Paper presented at the UNESCO seminar on 'Le Cadre d'Exercice de la Liberté de Presse dans un Etat de Droit', September 6 10, 1993, Yaounde.
- Nyamnjoh F. B. (1990). *How to 'Kill' an underdeveloped Press: Lessons from Cameroon*. Center for Mass Communication Research; 104 Regent Road, Leicester LE1 7LT, UK. Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Nyamnjoh F. B. (2002). *Media Ownership and Control in Cameroon: Constraints to Media Freedom*. Unpublished Note.
- Nyamnjoh, F. B. (2005). *Africa's media: Democracy and the politics of belonging*. Zed Books. London
- Nyamnjoh, F. (1997). Media, tribalism and democracy in Cameroon. *Democracy in the Throes of Tribalism*, pp. 45-64.
- Nyamnjoh, F. B. (1996). *Mass media and democratization in Cameroon*. Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation.
- Nyamnjoh, F. B. (2013). Protest Journalism as a Literary Genre: The Case of Anglophone Cameroon Journalism Today. *Critical Perspectives on Cameroon Writing*, 485.
- Nyamnjoh, F. B., Wete, F., & Fonchingong, T. (1996). Media and civil society in Cameroon. *Africa Media Review*, 10, 37-66.
- Ocitti, J. (1999). Media and democracy in Africa, mutual political bedfellows or impeccable arch-foes. Fellows Program, Weather Head Center for International Affairs Harvard University.
- Ocwich, D. (2006), FM Radios and Rural Development, Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Orebro: Orebro University, available from <http://www.magj.se/pdf/Denis%20Ocwich.pdf>. Last accessed 13 September 2016.
- Odunlami, I. S. (1999). *Media in Nigeria's security and developmental vision*. Spectrum Books Ltd.
- Okigbo, C. C. and Eribo, F. (eds) (2004). *Development and Communication in Africa*, Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.

- Omu, Fred. (1978). The New Era and the Abortive Press Law of 1857. In McGarry, Georgia, (Ed.). *Reaction and Protest in the West African Press*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Ottaway, M. (2008). Is there a role for development aid in the area of media promotion? *Whose Voices*, 21-7.
- Panos (2007). *At the Heart of Change: The Role of Communication in Sustainable Development*, London: Panos.
- Perry, D. (2003). *The Roots of Civic Journalism: Darwin, Dewey, and Mead*, Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Ponus (1992). *Challenge Hebdo* Issue No. 070 of 19 May.
- Rønning, H. & Kasoma, F. P. (2002). *Media ethics: An introduction and overview*. Maputo: Nordic SAC Journalism Centre.
- Rosen, J. (2000). 'Questions and Answers about Public Journalism', *Journalism Studies*, 1: 4, pp. 679–83.
- Scannell, P. and Cardiff, D. (1982). 'Serving the Nation: Public Service Broadcasting Before the War', in T. Bennett, G. Martin and B. Waites (eds), *Popular Culture: Past and Present*, London: Croom Helm, pp. 161–88.
- Schaffer, J. (2002). "The Role of the Media in Building Community." In *Global Issues and Ethics* Available online on <http://usinfo.State.gov/journals/itgic/0401/ijge/gj02.htm>.
- Simeon, D., Caralee M., Tatiana N., and Andrei S., (2001) *Who Owns the Media?* World Bank, and Harvard University, June.
- Skjerdal, T. (2010). Justifying self-censorship: A perspective from Ethiopia. *Communication and Culture*, University of Westminster, 7(2): 98-121. ISSN 1744-6708 (Print); 1744-6716.
- Socolow, M. (2005). "At war: government and the media." *The Boston Globe*. 13 December. Web. 24 June 2012.
- Sparks, C. (2007). *Globalization, Development and the Mass Media*, London: Sage.
- Sjøvaag, H. (2014). The principles of regulation and the assumption of media effects. *Journal of Media Business Studies*, 11(1), 5-20.

- Steenveld, L. (2002). Key issues need renewed discussion about the media's role in our new democracy. *Ecquid Novi: African Journalism Studies* 23(1): 119–130.
- Tanjong E. (2012). *Media Balance in Sub-Saharan Africa's Fragile Democracy: Analysis of Journalism Practice in Cameroon*. Design House, Limbe, Cameroon.
- Tanjong, E. & Ngwa, G. (2002). Public perceptions of Cameroonian journalists. In F. Eribo & E. *Journalism and Mass Communication in Africa*. Lexington Books., Maryland.
- Tanjong, E., Muluh, H. and Ngwa, G. (1998). Journalism education in Cameroon: Historical and empirical approaches. Unpublished manuscript, University of Buea.
- Tehrani, M. (2002). Peace journalism: Negotiating global media ethics. *Press/Politics*, 7(2), 58-83.
- Tomaselli, K. G., Teer-Tomaselli R., and J. Muller. (1989). *The press in South Africa*. Cape Town: Richard Lyon and Company.
- Ukpabi, C. (Ed.). (2001). *Handbook on journalism ethics: African case studies*. Windhoek: Media Institute of Southern Africa.
- VonDoepp, P., & Young, D. J. (2012). Assaults on the fourth estate: Explaining media harassment in Africa. *The Journal of Politics*, 75(1), 36-51.
- Wasserman, E. (2010). *Threats to ethical journalism in the new media age*. Media Ethics Online, 21(2). Retrieved 8 April 2016, from <http://media.www.mediaethicsmagazine.com/media/storage/paper655/news/2010/07/01/AnalysesCommentary/>
- Wasserman, H. and G. J. Botma. (2008). Having it both ways: Balancing market orientation and political claims at a South African daily newspaper. *Critical Arts* 22(1): 1–20.
- White, R.A. (2010). The moral foundations of media ethics in Africa. *Ecquid Novi: African Journalism Studies*, 31(1), 42–67.