INTRODUCTION

The coverage of Africa in the media has been analysed using different approaches and from different geographical locations. In the late 1970s and 80s, the literature reported negativity and imbalance on the part of developed nations in both the way they write about Africa and how they have controlled international news flow around the world through the influence of hegemonic private press (Nordenstreng, 2012; Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1997; Hawk, 1992; Sreberny, 1985; Stevensn and Shaw, 1984; Nordenstreng and Schiller, 1979; Galtung, 1971; Galtung and Ruge, 1965). The current literature seems to suggest that the social construction of the discourse about Africa, which has become known as Afro-pessimism, has either improved in the wake of Africa rising discourse (Bunce, Franks and Paterson, 2017, Nothias, 2015; Ojo, 2014) or it is a non-existent myth (Scott, 2015). While recent publications argue that the claim of negative representation has no validity beyond suspected Western countries (Scott, 2017; Obijiofor & MacKinnon, 2016), others continue to adduce empirical evidence to the negative coverage of Africa in the USA elite press and how this has spread around the world (Gruley & Duvall, 2012).

In this book, I trace these debates through the examination of the nature of the continent’s image in Ghanaian press with a focus on the dominant themes of representation, subjects and tone of the coverage. I proceeded to offer reasons that have accounted for the coverage, not only from the perspectives of the journalists and editors but also their newsroom and the world beyond these two contexts. Through a comprehensive design of ethnographic content analysis and ethnographic interview, the study covered the foreign news articles; the journalists and editors; international news agencies and the historical antecedents that have contributed to the coverage.
Africa get in the Ghanaian press. This introduction continues with a general background, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study and overview of chapters.

**Background**

The growing interest in the study of international news flow dates back to history. “The Persian, Greek, Roman and British empires used available communication channels and technologies to accentuate their existence, strength, power, and religion. And through these, they increased their power over time and space” (Thussu, 2000, p.11). However, an early attempt to explain the coverage of one country by another became prominent through the work of Johan Galtung, who introduced the Centre-Periphery Model in which he attempted to explain the inequality within and between nations and why that phenomenon was resistant to change. These inequalities and imbalances in international news flow highlighted by Galtung confirmed the persistent complaints developing nations had been making with regards to their coverage in the Northern press (Galtung, 1971; Galtung & Ruge, 1965).

The attempts to explain how nations cover each other were not adequate to establish the necessary credibility of these imbalances. In fact, not until the publication of UNESCO’s McBride Commission report, the claims of developing nations about imbalances and negative portrayal by the Northern media leading to inaccurate perception and prejudices in the West, remained largely allegations. In addition to the UNESCO publication, several other studies, especially on the portrayal of Africa in other places, have been published (Bunce et al. 2017; Mody, 2010; Chang & Lee, 1992; El Zein & Cooper, 1992). And yet, Scott (2015) contended that although the claim could be accurate, it could not be substantiated with empirical data.
involving non-elite media, diverse events and beyond the US and UK. It is not in doubt, whether or not exaggerated, that the negative media representation from these few countries matters because of its rippling effects on perceptions elsewhere in the world. This is because their coverage is intensified by the fact that the seemingly many media channels and newspapers around the world have failed to promote diversity of views but they rather ensured the reproduction of the same stories under different banners (Williams, 2003).

The Western media have constantly refuted the claim that they represent Africa and other parts of the world with negative frames mainly because what is referred to as Western press is usually US and UK press plus dotted cases in Northern Europe and North America. This debate has been characterised by accusations and counter-accusations, which have not helped the scientific description of the phenomenon. The refutations by the Northern hemisphere, led by the United States of America, according to Graubart (1989) requires a review. Graubart suggested in the California Law Review that when the USA is evaluating proposals for change in the negative coverage of developing countries, it should move away from “the pious sanctity of its private press and pragmatically consider what steps it can take to further the economic and socio-cultural conditions in the Third world by reversing the consequences of centuries of negative coverage” (p. 631).

Two crucial arguments are usually ignored regarding the critique of using USA and UK as the reference point for analysis of Afro-pessimism. First, this is justified, in some cases, due to the hegemonic control these two countries exert on foreign news production and distribution across the world (Paterson, 2017; Cohen, 2013). Another interesting angle missing in this debate is the mirroring of the Northern media coverage around the world particularly in Africa itself. Most often,
the literature simply described these as globalisation. A detailed look at how African journalists portray countries on the continent could provide us with useful insights to assess the gravity of Western domination of the foreign news business and to assist us to understand the ways in which these have promoted dependency and hegemonic influences.

The argument that African journalists are not doing any better than their Northern media counterparts in portraying the continent with negative frames ignores the complexities behind foreign news selection such as agency of sources and hegemony. Existing research efforts, so far, have described how the media in the dominant Northern hemisphere (Western nations) continues to negatively represent Africa, with some little improvements (Bunce, 2017; Nothias, 2015). These studies on the representation of Africa by the Western media in the 21st century have quantitatively measured the amount of space and the quality of news the African continent gets. Some were limited to visual representations while others concentrated on journalistic decisions, biases and the form of storytelling. Specific recent publications have analysed other developed nations other than the regular suspects (USA and UK) and have found the entire claim to be a non-existent myth (Obijiofor and MacKinnon, 2016; Scott, 2015). These studies, however, did not deal with how Africa is covered within the continent itself and the few that did, ignored (Obijiofor and Hanusch, 2003; Pate, 1992) the agency of sources that were employed in the coverage. But deconstructing the agency of news sources could lead modern journalism scholarship to the discovery of how Western perceptions about Africa have been reinforced by the kind of sources African journalists have depended on for their reportage about the continent.
The literature in this area of research has focused on the African media’s reportage of the continent. Hardly, did they considered the sources employed in these narratives. They usually content analysed newspapers without a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of foreign news selection. The unanswered questions in those analyses included whether the images presented about Africa in the continent’s press are self-formulated or borrowed, and who the original creators of these images were? How have these images been either resisted or reinforced? In moving the foreign news reporting to the African continent, the complexity behind the news selection process is well recognised. In this study, the weaknesses of these previous studies would be improved. For example, Sobowale (1987) who arrived at the conclusion that Nigerian newspapers do not have a better balance of foreign news distribution and prominence compared to their Western counterparts in terms of geographical distribution, ignored the agency of sources used by these Nigerian journalists. This conclusion is problematic because the agency of sources and the complex process of foreign news selection are inextricably connected. Pate (1992) equally examined how many times Africa was reported in Nigerian newspapers and concluded that Africa was the most reported region compared to other regions of the world. Even though this finding was contrary to earlier results by Sobowale’s (1987), it had nothing to say about the quality of the coverage in question and the dominant international news agencies relied on. The elimination of these weaknesses requires an in-depth study with both quantitative and qualitative dimensions in order to discover the full details of how the African media are covering the continent and through what sources, as well as the subsequent implications arising from the use of such sources.
Statement of the Problem

The relationship between the portrayal given a subject in a coverage and ideology has been established (Van Djik, 2009; Snow & Benford, 2000). In a similar line of thinking, Ofori-Birikorang (2009) concluded that journalistic routines and sourcing of news from official domain led to a framing pattern that reinforces an elite ideology in Ghana regarding the national health insurance initiative. The media frames that appear in news have their roots in the several influences that shape their production and reproduction (Gruley & Duvall, 2012; Van Djik, 2009; Beharrell, 1980). However, most scholars have only analysed media content and ignored the deep-rooted questions of sources. Ignoring the usefulness and influences of sources to news selection is just like saying that there is no relationship between media portrayals and their root sources.

In Sparkes’ (1978) classical news flow research, he demonstrated a huge imbalance in the news flow between Canada and USA. While Canada devoted 49.5% of their foreign news to the USA, only 2.3% of USA foreign news focused on Canadian stories. Sparkes, based on these findings, concluded that Canadian newspapers’ reliance on American sources for their foreign news accounted for the huge disparity. It is justified to argue that sources play a significant role in news construction especially because the ideology of news hardly permits the receiving journalists to make significant changes to what their sources have communicated to them.

Journalists, either Western or African, are committed to the questions of concise introduction that must answer the questions of who, what, when, where, why and how. The important question that remains unanswered is whether the African journalists writing for their local newspapers are capable of any resistance towards the
influences of the international press? We can only answer this question when we begin to analyse their works. Investigating African media output with a concentration on sources provided a new angle to the debate of both quantitative and qualitative imbalance of news flow to Africa. In any case, Wrong (2017) underscored the need for African media to show their resistance by taking a more responsible role than their Western counterpart. She argued that African newspapers and broadcasting media have virtually refused to occupy the spaces left in the reportage of the continent by cash-strapped Western news agencies. Other scholars have argued that all conditions necessary for reporting on the continent by its own citizens are in place. Akinfemisoye (2013) argued that significant improvements in mobile telephony and Internet access on the continent present a glorious opportunity for circulation and access to counter-narratives and broader stories on Africa.

As noted earlier, several of the studies relating to foreign news selection and imbalances have concentrated on Western media output neglecting how this phenomenon, over the years, has evolved and affected journalists around the world and those in developing countries as well. The few studies that investigated the coverage of the African continent by her own media institutions have equally focused on framing, spaces allocated to specific regions of the world, inability to give third world countries prominence and quality of coverage (positive, negative and neutral). These aspects of the problem were studied mainly using content analysis. The exclusive use of content analysis, in this case, cannot account for the perspective of the African journalists and editors, their source preferences, constraints in the newsroom routine and the factors beyond the journalists and their newsroom that have either prevented or hindered their resistance of the negative images circulating in the Northern media organisations.
The circumstances that precipitated the news values of a particular international news agency to become the guiding principle of an African newspaper could be the result of several factors such as media ownership, training, access, relationship and history (Hachten, 2004; Golding, 1977). Unfortunately, these explanatory elements have not occupied the agenda of researchers enough. My quest to investigate the coverage of Africa within the continent itself does not, like Nyamnjoh’s (2017) argued, mean that African journalists will do better or much worse than what their Northern media counterparts have so far done. Rather, I consider this a commitment to plurality, in a way, that gauges how the issues have evolved over the years and crossed borders.

To this point, it could be argued that the comprehensive understanding of Africa’s media image within the continent itself has not received enough attention. This study filled the vacuum by providing a current description of the continent’s portrayal in the Ghanaian press. The description focused on dominant themes employed, the sources utilised, subjects discussed and the reasoning behind the portrayal. The approach in this study satisfied the demand for a comprehensively designed research that takes into account journalists’ perspectives, newsroom culture and ideological level concerns like colonial relationships and emerging economic influences on journalistic news production and distribution. With these covered, the study tackled news selection decision making beyond the events and the journalists to their social milieus, the newsroom and the Ghanaian society in general.

**Purpose of the Study**

The overarching purpose of this study has been the description of how Ghanaian newspapers portrayed the African continent in their foreign news pages and the
subsequent issues such portrayals have revealed. I deconstructed the themes embedded in the foreign news stories that related to Africa. These themes were compared with what has been established already in the literature relating to Northern media coverage of Africa (Bunce et al, 2017; Hawk, 1992). Closely related to this objective is the weight of influence each international news agency carry as a source in the Ghanaian press and the aggregate influence exerted by all the international media on Ghanaian media’s coverage of the continent. The subsequent reasoning behind the kind of representation Africa gets from the Ghanaian press in terms of actors, conditions and practices were evaluated. These specific objectives of the study offered guidance to its focus:

1) To deconstruct the dominant themes, tone and subjects employed in the representation of Africa in the Ghanaian press and to discuss the deconstructed themes in relation to those employed by the media in the Northern hemisphere regarding the portrayal of Africa (Bunce et al, 2017; Hawk, 1992).

2) To determine the weight of influence that international news agencies carried as a source in the Ghanaian press (Obijiofor and Hanusch, 2003).

3) To evaluate the conditions, actors and practices that shape the foreign news selection beyond news values, by uncovering both conscious and unconscious elements, from the perspective of the journalists, their work environment and the immediate world beyond the newsroom.

4) To investigate the nature of inter-media agenda-setting the relationship between Ghanaian newspapers and transnational news agencies (Segev, 2016; Golan, 2008; Groshek & Clough Groshek, 2013; Roberts & Bantimaroudis, 1997).
**Research Questions**

The review of past scholarship influenced the comprehensive nature of how this study is designed in terms of data collection and analysis, which both determine how the research questions are posed. The following research questions guided the study:

RQ1: How was Africa portrayed in the Ghanaian press?
   a) What were the dominant themes through which the African story was narrated?
   b) What were the subjects mostly covered on the continent?
   c) How was the quality/tone of coverage (negative or positive or neutral)?
   d) How comparable are RQ1 (a,b,c) between the Ghanaian press and their Western counterparts (Hawk, 1992; Bunce et al., 2017).

RQ 2: What is the weight, quantitative and qualitative, of influence that international news agencies carry as sources in the Ghanaian press?

RQ3: What, from the perspective of the journalists, accounts for the kind of representation Africa gets in the Ghanaian press in terms of actors, condition, and practices?

RQ 4: How have inter-media agenda-setting preferences between the Ghanaian press and their foreign counterparts evolved?

**Significance of the Study**

Media representation and news selection about the foreign others have been debated well enough with a lot of accusations and counter-accusations. Perhaps, Indira Gandhi knew that real change was nowhere in sight when she stressed the importance of self-reliance in these words:

> We want to hear African on events in Africa. You should similarly be able to get an Indian explanation of events in India. It is astonishing that we know so little about leading poets, novelists, historians and editors of various Asian, African and Latin American countries while we are familiar with minor authors and columnists of Europe and America (Gandhi, 1984, p.16)
The reactions of some editors in Europe about the portrayal of Third World countries have been rather defensive (Nordenstreng, 2010). A detailed look at the phenomenon in this study offers a hopeful and comprehensive academic perspective lacking in some of the previous literature.

The approach in this study contributes to the literature on media representation in five unique ways. Firstly, this study contests media representation through the approach of postcolonial theory, which is a more democratic re-reading of media text, questioning, reframing and rethinking representations about the West and Others (Shome & Hegde, 2002). It is essential to note that the use of postcolonial theory in analysing foreign news selection is not to emphasise the West and East divide but to understand and explain how identity is represented in the politics of power. This will help explain how the *West and Others* are constitutive of one another in ways that are both “complicitous and resistant at the same time” (Shome and Hedge, 2002, p.264).

Secondly, the trends in society are dynamic, therefore, the over-concentration on Western media output, in itself, is just a confrontational approach. Gongo (2007) argued that differences exist between Western journalists and their African counterparts in framing the same news item about the continent. Based on this, one can be sure that an investigation of the African press and the way they cover the continent will provide a better understanding of how the continent’s media image is constituted. This study provides a new angle to the literature by pointing to differences and similarities that exist between the coverage of Africa by Ghanaian journalists and their counterparts from the Northern hemisphere. It explained the pre-existing conditions that have shaped these differences. Where similarities are discovered, they were further discussed to determine if they represented a blend of
identities or subtle domination. I provide a description of how far European influences on the states in Africa today may not be representing cultural globalisation. As Mengara (2001) puts it, “The Africa we know today is European made Africa. It’s a world almost totally manufactured in the image, modelled in postcolonial chaos: dependent, unworkable, and inherently chaotic and despotic” (p.8). A comprehensive analysis of Ghanaian newspapers and the themes they carry demonstrated the magnitude of hegemony that lingers around the foreign news selection and helps us understand in what ways this is inextricably linked to colonial tendencies, which have sought to justify Western colonial interventions by relying hugely on de-humanising the colonised (Mengara, 2001).

Thirdly, international news flow is considered usually as a product of gatekeeping factors (Chang and Lee, 1992) or event-oriented determinants (Eilders, 2006, 2006; Maier and Ruhrmann, 2007). Only a few studies have investigated inter-media agenda setting as a possible factor (Groshek and Clough Groshek, 2013; Golan, 2008). Even the few inter-media agenda-setting studies that have been conducted only investigated Western media houses. The findings of this study contribute to this new area of literature through the provision of an explanatory level analysis of how Western new agency materials (articles) subsequently appear in Ghanaian newspapers as foreign news. I argue that these subsequent appearances of these news items in Ghanaian newspapers represent a new form of domination that is occasioned by previous colonial relationships and severe economic conditions, rather than an element of cultural globalisation. With this thinking, I trace the workings of the framework within which Western news agencies extend their newsrooms around the world through inter-institutional repetitions of their news items and formats. Other
scholars have called this phenomenon *news borrowing or journalistic co-orientation or inter-nation intermedia agenda setting*.

Furthermore, most studies on news selection have been limited to content and frame analysis at the expense of a broader, explicit and multidisciplinary framework (Van Dijk, 2009). The Glasgow Group authors, who published a seminal research on international news imbalances, explored these difficulties with the reasoning that news making is based on cultural routines and professional practices that are usually taken for granted by researchers when they investigate news selection. With these backgrounds, and as per the recommendations of Van Dijk (2009), this study developed a detailed and explicit analysis of foreign news production routines and structure of the foreign news report. All these provided insights into the deeper understanding of ideological reproductions taking place in the Ghanaian press.

In an attempt to capture the inherently ideological structures embedded in the news selection process, this book contributes to the literature on journalism research with a unique blend of ethnographic content analysis (ECA) and ethnographic interview. Although ECA is aimed at seeking a deeper insight into the media text, it still cannot provide the perspective of the journalists and editors. This weakness was addressed with a design of a detailed ethnographic interview. The application of these detailed methodical techniques largely enriched the findings in this book.

**Overview of Chapters**

The details here show how the various chapters of the research have been presented:

The introduction consists of the general background, statement of the problem and the purpose of the research project, and the research questions. It also includes the significance of the study, which espoused the uniqueness and contributions of the
study. The descriptions in this book were approached in a manner that revealed the image of Africa in the Ghanaian press with a specific focus on how the literature described the dominant themes employed by media in its coverage, the sources, actors, conditions, and practices at the heart of the foreign news selection.

Chapter one presents the historical and contextual background of the study. Beginning with a discussion of the UNESCO commissioned McBride and Sreberny-Mohammadi reports, the chapter opens up the debate of that era. The findings of Hawk’s edited book on the *Image of Africa* are outlined. This is followed by the recent replication of Hawk’s (1992) work by Bunce et al. (2017). Ghana’s evolving positionality as a strong Pan-African state is discussed from the pre-independence through the post-independence era to the current Internet and digital age. The chapter further zeroed in on the overview of the Ghanaian media as well as a detailed description for each of the selected newspapers.

Chapter two situates this study in the current literature as a way of benefiting from previous research. It discusses the meaning and usefulness of foreign news in general. This was followed by a conceptualization of terms and a discussion of opportunities that digital and Internet era brought to foreign news decision-making. It continued to evaluate the various determinants of international news coverage. The chapter continued to describe how Africa has been portrayed in the Western media alongside a discussion of the determinants of international news flow. This chapter zeroed in on the framework within which the African press operates and the influences of international news agencies, and Western education and training on this whole process. This is followed by a review of how new media technologies have influenced foreign news reporting in Africa. It further reviewed previous empirical research on how the continent has been covered and the specific framework under
which the African press works.

Chapter three is devoted to the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of the study. The theories of newsworthiness, inter-media agenda setting and postcolonial critique are discussed. The inter-relationships among the three theories are outlined to bring out useful hints to address the objectives of the study. The theoretical framework is then married to the hierarchical influence model of Shoemaker and Reese (2014), which accounts for the rigorous conceptualization of the varied influences on the selection process. The chapter closes with a summary of its core elements.

Chapter four discusses the methodology with a detailed outline of the various methods and procedures that were used to obtain and analyse data for the study. It explains the major methodology and research design utilized. Ethnographic Content Analysis (ECA), a method that integrates qualitative and quantitative approaches to content analysis was explained. The rationale for the use of multiple methods (triangulation) for data collection as it pertains to this study was discussed. The chapter explains, the sampling methods and procedures employed, the units of analysis that were subjected to examination, the period of study, as well as all the steps and procedures that went into the actual data collection in the field. The methods of data analysis were also discussed. The chapter ended with an explanation for validity, reliability, ethical issues as well as coding instruments and the protocol adopted for the study.

Chapter five presents the findings of the ethnographic content analysis that emerged from the examination of news articles on the foreign news pages in the newspapers studied. It discussed how the findings of the ethnographic content analysis (ECA) fit into the purposes outlined for the research. The chapter ends with a
comparison of Africa’s image as portrayed in the Ghanaian press vis-à-vis the current literature. This comparison was not meant to apportion blame but rather to reveal the gravity of the consequences of Western media domination of foreign news around the globe. The quantitative influence exerted by individual international news agencies are examined in addition to the overview of Africa’s portrayal in the Ghanaian newspapers with regards to subject and tone of the coverage. The dominant themes of the portrayal were then discussed.

Chapter six focuses on the description of the findings relating to the ethnographic interview aspect of the data as a follow-up to chapter five. The ethnographic interview revealed the reasoning behind the foreign news selection process in Ghana from the perspective of the journalists and editors regarding the discursive themes that were found earlier in the content analysis. The chapter outlined the qualitative weight of influence and the conditions shaping the foreign news selection and Ghanaian media. The workings of inter-media agenda-setting relationships discovered in the content analysis were traced through the ethnographic interviews. All the findings were reduced to thick descriptions involving little or no discussions at that stage of the analysis.

Chapter seven discusses the findings, outlined in chapters five and six, in line with the objectives of the entire study especially through an evaluation of each of the research question posed in the introduction. The chapter argues that the coverage of foreign news in the Ghanaian press reinforces existing postcolonial trajectories and relationships that have played into the existing imbalance in international news flow around the world. The chapter further found that soft-power success of China’s Xinhua news agency could not only represent south-south cooperation, as it was described but presents a new form of domination due to the fact that the relationship
and engagement between the Chinese and their Ghanaian counterpart is marked with
an imbalance of power relation and interaction. Juxtaposing the dependency of the
Ghanaian press on international news agencies against their claim of an *African
perspective*, one could describe the processes as resistant and subaltern-ambivalence
in nature. However, to reach such a conclusion requires an answer to the question of
when resistance is considered effective. Is it when it is conceived or when it is
practised? This is because having conceived that change is immediately required, the
Ghanaian journalists have done less in practice to establish any potent resistance to
their negative proxy coverage of the continent.