

Three Decades of the Fourth Estate in Ghana: Issues, Challenges and the Way Forward

Authors : Samuel Pimpong

Abstract : In most liberal and constitutional democracies, the media serves as a dominant power in the construction of the fundamental building blocks for the consolidation of democratic governance. However, the extent to which the media can enhance democratic consolidation in a country depends to a large extent on the independence of the media, the robustness of legislative frameworks and the safety of journalists in discharging their duties without fear or favor. This study sought to examine pertinent issues, practices and challenges facing the media in Ghana's Fourth Republic and attempts to make recommendations regarding the way forward. The work adopted a qualitative study approach. A total of sixteen (16) participants were purposively selected for face-to-face interviews. The study hinges on the democratic participant media theory and the development media theory. Primary data was analyzed via thematic analysis procedure. The study revealed that although Ghana has repealed its criminal libel laws, nonetheless other statutory Acts, such as the Electronic Communications Act 2008 (ACT 775) and the Criminal and other offences Act 1960 (Act 29), among others continue to stifle freedom of expression. On the other hand, press freedom is being abused by the use of fake content publication. Further, the study revealed that the absence of a comprehensive regulatory structure impedes the activities carried out by the media. Consequently, the study recommends a regulatory structure to oversee media activities and content, as the National Media Commission (NMC) lacks the authority to do so. In this direction, the study recommends a limitation on the role of the National Communications Authority (NCA) to administer broadcasting signals and transfer its licensing and sanctioning powers to the NMC in order to create one sole and completely independent media regulatory authority that deals with all media related issues.

Keywords : media, constitutional democracy, democratic consolidation, fourth republic

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