



Government and Press Relations in Botswana: Down the Beaten African Track

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Abstract

This paper analyses the manner in which the government treats and regulates the print media in Botswana, especially the public media and argues that this fits within the African context of authoritarian control. It argues that Botswana is not a shining example of democracy in Africa, contrary to popular belief. This is demonstrated through comparative case studies with other African countries. The paper will also address the manner in which the government has treated some of the private publications, notably, *Botswana Guardian*.

Key words: Botswana; Colonial; Authoritarian; African

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INTRODUCTION

To understand Botswana's present media policy, it is best that one approaches it historically. There is abundant evidence that shows that the modern day government of the country shares an umbilical cord with its colonial mother, Britain. It is impossible to have a comprehensive overview of the current policy without delving back into the colonial experience. This scenario fits into the colonial picture of Africa, broadly speaking (Bourgault, 1995; Eribo & Jong-Ebot, 1997; Zaffiro, 1989; Mytton, 1983; Tamado, 2005; Obonyo, 2011).

The themes of colonialism and post-colonialism thus feature prominently in the literature on media policy in Africa and indeed a lot of the developing countries elsewhere. Emphasis is on how colonialism has had a lasting impact on post-independence media regulation in Africa. As Shome and Hegde (2002, p.258) point out, "postcolonial scholarship is concerned with phenomena, and effects and affects, of colonialism that accompanied, or formed the underside of, the logic of the modern, and its varied manifestations in historical and contemporary times".

For McMillin (2007), there is cultural continuity in structures of control between colonial and post-colonial governments. "Specifically, colonialism and post-colonialism cannot be regarded as dichotomous phases where post-colonialism marks a rupture from colonialism or marks the point at which national consciousness emerged..." (McMillin, 2007, p.71).

Even colonial rulers worked on the basis of pre-existing colonial structures, McMillin (2007) argues, in order to create and maintain the basic conditions necessary for their rule. That is why, in Botswana the British used a policy of Indirect Rule, relying on the goodwill of the local chiefs to run the tribal administration.

In a systematic order, the colonialists suppressed the indigenous media and encoded a positive colonial image into early media law and policies in the colonies, according to McMillin (2007). This ensured that the media systems were limited in their development and created a specific ordering regime, a symbolic structure where the coloniser was supreme and the colonised was "a menial slave" (McMillin, 2007, p.76).

The French case is a good example: For North Africa, in 1881, the French (in places like Egypt, Morocco, Benin, and Algeria) passed a law that declared Arabic as a foreign language in North African colonies, with the result that it was a crime to print in or import publications in Arabic (Zaghlami, 2007; Barratt &

Berger, 2007, p.64; Napoli, 1997, Eribo & Jong-Ebot, 1997, p.189).

In the case of the British Colonial government, which is more relevant here, it too had a few strategies it was using to manage the media in the 19th century Africa. One strategy that the British used was giving patronage such as subsidies to friendly publications such and creating their own state owned publications.

1. COLONIAL POLICY AND ITS LEGACY IN BOTSWANA

In the 1890s, the British in Bechuanaland (as Botswana was known then) set up a paper called *Bechuanaland News*, printed in English as an official publication of the colonial government (Parsons, 1968). The paper was used to communicate official notices by the government and the tribal authorities, the local chiefs, who were used by the Colonial government to run the Protectorate¹ cheaply, through a system of Indirect Rule. For instance, Influential chief of the Bangwato tribe, Khama III and Ndebele chief, Lobengula, in Southern Rhodesia (precursor to present day Zimbabwe) used the *Bechuanaland News* to publish official notices. In 1891, the paper announced the appointment of a new Magistrate for Kanye, Ramotswa, Gaborone and Palapye by Queen Victoria.

Previous year's edition reported the replacement of the famous Scottish missionary Robert Moffat by another white man as a government interpreter. It therefore appears that this was an elitist publication, not only because it was printed in a foreign language which only a few, were able to read² but also in its content. It appears primarily to have been intended to be an official mouthpiece of the protectorate government to communicate decisions of the Crown to her subjects. It is not surprising that the chiefs also used it because they were agents of Her Majesty, as Britain ruled Bechuanaland and some of her other colonies through a system of Indirect Rule, where the chiefs were important players. They ran the tribal administration on behalf of the Crown, and collected taxes, tried most court cases, kept the peace, announced new laws and organised labour for public works (Tlou & Campbell, 1997). Not much is known about *Bechuanaland News*, save to say that it existed between 1883 and 1901 (Parsons, 1968, p.4).

Another government publication, the *Vryburg, Mafikeng and Malmani Protectorate Chronicle* also

existed between 1883 and 1901, with a brief interruption during the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1901). This paper provided valuable information on both Bechuanaland Protectorate and British Bechuanaland. Parsons (1968, p.4) says this weekly was "more liberal in its views than one might expect", but catered for the new white settlers and administrators.

Between 1886 and 1887, the colonial administration patronised a publication called the *Vryburg Advocate and Bechuanaland Gazette*. No further information is available about this publication (Rantao, 1995). The role of South Africa in Botswana affairs needs to be understood in a historical context, as we saw in the previous chapter. Some parts of South Africa, such as Mafikeng, Stellaland and Vryburg had been part of Bechuanaland. In 1884, the British declared a Protectorate south of Molopo River, over the land of Batlhaping and Barolong tribes³. On 30 September 1885, this area was named the Crown Colony of British Bechuanaland, with the capital based on Vryburg. British Bechuanaland was handed to the Cape Colony in November 1895. The area north of Molopo River was named Bechuanaland Protectorate and it is this that became present day Botswana. Interestingly, once more Vryburg became the capital, until 1895 when it was moved to Mafikeng [British Bechuanaland] (Tlou & Campbell, 1997, pp.206-207). The Governor of the Cape Colony, the British High Commissioner, was also the governor of the Bechuanaland Protectorate, as both South Africa and Bechuanaland Protectorate were under British control.

From August 1958, the government gave subsidies to another paper, the *African Echo* (based in Johannesburg, South Africa) and its Setswana⁴ sister publication, *Naledi ya Batswana*. The latter was distributed widely among literate Africans in major towns within the Protectorate from 1947. At some point, the former (*Echo*) was known to be generally sympathetic to the views of the regime in Mafikeng (Zaffiro, 1989, p.52). However, the colonial government's views about these South African papers were later to change radically in the light of growing nationalism in South Africa and the cold war, amongst others.

The colonial government came up with yet another publication called *Bechuanaland Newsletter*, in 1963. It lasted until 1965 when it was succeeded by (or rather continued as) the *Bechuanaland Daily News* and *Botswana Daily News* in 1966 (Zaffiro, 1989).

2. COLONIAL POLICY IN THE REST OF AFRICA

These British practices could be seen in other British colonies in Africa. In Tanzania, then known as Tanganyika,

¹Bechuanaland was known as a Protectorate because it was not forcefully annexed by the British, but rather the local chiefs went to Queen Victoria in England to ask her to protect the territory from other imperial powers, notably the White minority in South Africa.

²One of the major failures of British rule in Bechuanaland was the neglect of education. It was the European missionaries who invested in education, notably the London Mission Society, the Dutch Reformed, the Anglican, the Roman and Lutheran churches as well as the tribal chiefs. See Tlou and Campbell (1997, pp.194-197) and Fawcus, (2000, p.181).

³These tribes both speak variations of Setswana language, the language of Botswana.

⁴ Setswana is the name of the language of the people of Botswana.

the British introduced tough seditious laws and clamping down on indigenous publications. In 1958, the nationalist *Mwafrika* newspaper was charged with sedition for calling the British “suckers of African blood” (Grosswiler, 1997; Eribo & Jong-Ebot, 1997, p.103). The same year, the future president Julius Nyerere was also charged with sedition, convicted and made to pay a fine.

In neighbouring Uganda, (Robins, 1997, Eribo & Jong-Ebot, 1997, p.123) shows that the British suppressed nationalist papers but at the same time supported racist white papers that undermined black people like the *Uganda Argus* and *Uganda Herald*. Editors and publishers were often jailed for sedition or illegal political activity. These papers were subsidised by the government.

The Portuguese in Angola were no better: “The press in Angola under Portuguese colonialism was established for the colonial administrative machinery and domination” (Eribo, 1997; Eribo & Jong-Ebot, 1997, p.326). The local people, most of whom were illiterate were left out in press matters. There were no newspapers in the vernacular language. Interestingly, the private newspapers that existed promoted colonial interests and were self-censored. In return, they received government patronage and subsidies, which were withdrawn if they offended government. There was often media black-out from these white owned papers when black people were killed in large numbers in the 1960s. Around that time there were nationalist papers, but they were not tolerated. Publication of people’s opposition to colonial rule was prohibited (Eribo, 1997).

On the basis of the above, commenting about Southern Africa generally and Botswana specifically, Kupe (2007) argues that history of colonialism and post-independence political developments have influenced media systems and structures. “The legacy of media repression is represented by a plethora of laws inherited from the colonial era that curb freedom of expression and freedom of the media” (Kupe, 2007; Barratt & Berger, 2007, p.137). Commenting on Central Africa, specifically Malawi and Zambia, Banda (2007, Barratt & Berger, 2007, p.78) also attributes many laws controlling media to the colonial period: “Secondly, many colonial laws controlling media were retained after independence, and used-ironically-by the erstwhile victims of the same legislation in the interests of the new governments which they constituted”.

3. HUGHES REPORT AND POST-INDEPENDENCE MEDIA MANIPULATION IN BOTSWANA

The genesis of government commitment to manipulation of media and its devotion to serving narrow, partisan interests can be traced to the Hughes Report of 1968. This is the moment that government of independent Botswana officially began to follow in the footsteps of the Colonial masters.

The government engaged a consultant, A.J. Hughes in 1968 to advise on the information functions of government and he made recommendations that would veer government off the track of modern liberal democratic governments. He made a number of disturbing recommendations that have been the foundation of Botswana’s undemocratic government media management system.

He suggested to President Seretse Khama (father to the current President) to write a memorandum to the effect that senior government officers and Permanent Secretaries should be aware that they were Public Relations (PR) practitioners of government. His view was that government policy must be designed with a PR spin⁵ on it and that was the duty of civil servants to further it. Opposition was to be anticipated and factored in. It is apparent from his report that calling the *Daily News* (official national newspaper) editor and telling him what to do was normal practice in government. Government officers were also advised to work closely with the Information Department and officers from there were to meet regularly with Permanent Secretaries and could be summoned anytime as they were always on call.

It is apparent that the British in Bechuanaland adopted the Westminster model of public administration, whereby “public administrators participate in policy deliberations with government as well as being responsible for the administration and delivery of government policy” (Lunt & Livingstone, 2012, p.21). This contrasts with what is known as the Wilson model (US) where there is a clear dividing line between elected politicians who have the role of setting policy goals and civil servants whose role is to administer and deliver government policy.

At the time of independence, the British introduced their administrative system of Permanent Secretaries as executive heads of government ministries and the first such secretaries were all white. Before these permanent secretaries were appointed, between 1964 and 1965, a senior civil servant was appointed to head each ministry. These civil servants were trained in the British ministerial tradition.

These officers were given a course of intensive training in the conduct of public business under a ministerial system. Invaluable guidance material was received from the Colonial Office covering the principles of ministerial and collective responsibility, the co-ordination of policy by the cabinet, cabinet procedure, the relationship between ministers and civil servants, co-ordination between ministries and the non-political character of the civil service. (Fawcus, 2000, p.184).

Some of these officers remained after independence on 30 September 1966, serving in high positions, from Permanent Secretaries to directors of government departments to Attorney General. One, David Morgan, became the first minister of Works and Communications.

⁵But the term spin was not in existence by then

Alan Tilbury became founding Attorney General (Fawcus, 2000)

Hughes noted the sensitive nature of Information and Broadcasting departments and suggested that either they were to be put in a single specialist ministry or under the president or vice president. He suggested that government could gradually work on that. However, it was not until 2002 that the Ministry of Communications, Science and Technology was established to house both. He also questioned the separation of *Radio Botswana* (national radio) from Information Services Branch and deemed it premature. He said it gave radio journalists the misconception that they were independent of and not part of what he called “government’s publicity machinery” (Hughes, 1968, p.17). He advised close government monitoring and exploitation: “Indeed the sensitive political nature of information means that these services consistently need ministerial involvement if they are to serve **government** (my emphasis) with maximum effect” (Hughes, 1968, p.14). What can be deduced from this quotation is that the media was to serve the narrow interests of government, which meant the civil service and politicians of the ruling party, and mainly the latter. This is consistent with an earlier policy of the colonial government to use the media to support moderate political figures, who were sympathetic to the Colonial authorities. This was consistent with British Colonial practice across Africa (Mytton, 1983; Bourgault, 1995).

Whilst government was considering how best to run these departments (Department of Information services and radio Botswana), Hughes suggested the appointment of a Deputy Minister of Home Affairs who would from day to day “control” (Hughes, 1968, p.14) the departments. At the time (1960s), the official media was under the Ministry of Home Affairs. Initially the government implemented this by appointing an Assistant Minister in the Office of the President (OP) to deal specifically with the media. The first one was MP Kebablamang Morake.

Hughes recommended to the government of Botswana to continue publishing the *Daily News* to support government activities and that “publicity for the activities of opposition groups should be avoided wherever possible” (Hughes, 1968, p.19). He advised that the government should not be quoted by government media in response to opposition accusations but should rather be given a platform of “a self-contained statement rather than as a reaction to opposition activity” (Hughes, 1968, p.19). Hughes (1968) was emphatic on government control though: “Whichever course is followed, some means should be introduced to ensure that the newspaper in general supports the government, although this should not rule out occasional criticism such as readers’ letters, etc.” (Hughes, 1968, p. 47).

The opposition was never regarded as a legitimate part of democracy that must be respected and given access

to the *Daily News* or *Kutlwano* (another government publication, a magazine). Rather, the opposition was treated as anathema. This is a problem that endures to this day. There is always a torrent of complaints from opposition political parties in Botswana about how the government manipulates the *Daily News* and excludes the opposition from coverage by this widest circulating publication.

Linear development objectives were set in post-colonial Botswana with the support of the former colonial masters. This was what was called developmental journalism, with emphasis on farming, health, nutrition, sanitation, entrepreneurial skills, women’s literacy and others (McMillin, 2007). This helped consolidate the power of ruling parties, such as the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) and give them positive media coverage. For scholars such as Beltran, 1967, there could not be development without communication. He argued that if successful countries in the world were compared with those that were not developed, it would be noticed that communication was the major contributing factor. Governments had to ensure that information from central authorities in urban areas of government programmes filtered down to the ordinary people in the villages (Beltran, 1967, in Gumucio-Dragon and Tufte, 2006, p.266). North African countries such as Morocco, Libya and Algeria also followed this path of developmental journalism, with the press assigned the roles of mobilisation, sensitisation, awareness raising and security and defence of independence. As McMillin (2007) has already argued, the press became integrated in the post-colonial power structures to serve the new governments: “The euphoria and enthusiasm of the independence of the region enabled the press to be an intrinsic part of the political power, if not power by itself” (Zaghlami, 2007; Barratt & Berger, 2007, pp.64-65).

As a result, the concept of development journalism became contested in Africa, as it meant different things to governments and to the media. To the government, the media must prioritise national cohesion and unity, and stories and images that demonstrate this unity and cohesion ‘are to be prioritised over images and discourses that reflect discord, conflict and differences’ (Kupe, 2007; Baratt & Berger, 2007, p.140). To the media, such stories are interesting as they reflect what is happening in society and what needs to be done to achieve unity and cohesion.

4. MINISTERIAL INTERFERENCE IN THE PRINT MEDIA

In Botswana, one of the highlights of government control and manipulation of the media along these lines was in the 1990s. This occurred with the *Daily News*. A senior cabinet minister, Ponatshego Kedikilwe, personally

edited a story in the *Daily News* concerning him. As Presidential and Public Administration Minister (the ministry then responsible for the media), between 1986 and 1997, Kedikilwe was annoyed by the story that accused him of influencing construction of a road from Martin's Drift to Sefophe village so that it could lead directly to his farm. He edited the paper to correct facts (Kedikilwe, 2005; Tamado, 2005, p.117) as he knew them and the edited version was leaked to the private press and published, embarrassing him and the government in the process.

Kedikilwe got steeped in more controversy and media manipulation in the interest of the ruling BDP. He simply transferred government journalists who were perceived to be allied to the opposition, irrespective of their seniority and without any investigation or evidence of unprofessional conduct. Sometimes these journalists were redeployed to do completely different jobs in other ministries, a practice similar to the one in Ghana where they were retired early, given indefinite leave or simply fired (Anokwa, 1997; Eribo & Jong-Ebot, 1997, pp.20-21).

In an interview (Tamado, 2005), Kedikilwe confirmed that in 1996, he transferred Bapasi Mphusu, the then Chief Press Officer, to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, to work as Acting Registrar of Companies and later Public Relations Officer in the Department of Tourism. He was however brought back in 2003 and eventually became Director of Broadcasting Services in 2005. All the same, he was finally pushed out altogether and transferred to the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) as an Administrative Director in 2008. There were many other government journalists transferred in this manner. The BDP government denied journalists professional judgement and discretion in both the *Daily News* and *Kutlwano*.

The government's manipulation of the *Daily News* and *Kutlwano* has become worse with the ascendance to power of a former army general, Lt General Seretse Khama Ian Khama as head of state in 2008. Although democratically elected, Khama has shown an attitude more authoritarian than that of his predecessors, Festus Mogae and Quett Masire. He has pushed the official media back to the Office of the President and appointed trusted aides to key positions over the media. One is Mogomotsi Kaboeamodimo, appointed to be Deputy Permanent Secretary in the Office of the President. A former Director of the Department of Information and Broadcasting, his office is located at the Mass Media Complex, the government's centre where all the official broadcast and print media are housed. He has direct access to the content of government publications and his computer is linked to that of government reporters. He is able to weed out unwanted content before it goes on air or to print⁶.

⁶Confidential interview with *Botswana Daily News* reporters, Gaborone, 17 August 2013.

5. LEGISLATION AND GOVERNMENTAL INFLUENCE: THE MEDIA PRACTITIONERS ACT 2008

On 11th December 2008, despite protests from the media, media proprietors and civil society, government went ahead and passed the Media Practitioners Act (MPA) 2008. The Act established a statutory Press Council called the Media Council and the long title introduces it as "an Act to establish a Media Council of Botswana for the purpose of preserving the maintenance of high professional standards within the media and to provide for matters related thereto" (MPA, 2008, p.1). The following are some of its objectives:

- a) Preserve media freedom.
- b) Uphold standards of professional conduct and promote good ethical standards and discipline among media practitioners.
- c) To promote the observance of media ethics in accordance with the Code of Ethics by the Council under section 9(1).
- d) To promote public awareness of the rights and responsibilities of media practitioners through such outreach programmes as may be established.

The Act was enacted to govern the conduct of all media practitioners, though, broadcast journalists are already regulated through the Broadcasting Act (1998).

The governing body of the Council is the Executive Committee consisting of a Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, a Treasurer and six additional members. The Executive Committee is elected at an ordinary general meeting or special meeting of the Council. It registers and accredits resident media practitioners. The administrative head of the Council is the Chief Executive appointed by the Council and answerable to it. The Executive Committee has the duty to implement the objectives of the Council as discussed above.

The Executive Committee is answerable to the Minister in the sense that at the end of each financial year it is required to submit an annual report indicating activities and operations of the council in the financial year past. In the event that this is not done, the Minister has power to dissolve the Executive Committee (Sec 34 (2) and appoint an interim one. Similarly, although the Council through its Executive Committee has power to make regulations through a special resolution, the Minister is empowered to make regulations, by statutory instrument, 'directing that the Executive Committee be dissolved and that the Council elects a new Executive Committee, relating to any other matter intended to safeguard the interests of the public and promote professional standards in the media, giving effect to the Code of Ethics issued by the Council, relating to the registration and accreditation of non-resident media practitioners and prescribing **anything** (my emphasis) to be prescribed by the Minister under this Act (Section 38).

Then there is a Complaints Committee comprising a Chairperson (who shall be a member of the public) and 8 representatives of the public. These eight are precluded from employment or financial interest in the media but should have “serious interest in the furtherance of the communicative value of the media” (Section 11 (1) (b)).

The Minister is also empowered by Section 15 to appoint an Appeals Committee consisting of a Legal Practitioner practising in Botswana and recommended by the Law Society and the person shall chair the Committee. Other members shall come from the public and the media, with the Council recommending the latter. The Appeals committee has powers to enhance, vary, reduce or dismiss decisions of the Complaints Committee. However, a dissatisfied complainant has a chance to go to the High Court if they are not happy with the decision of the Appeals committee. They may approach the High Court which in terms of the Act may confirm, vary or set aside the decision of the Appeals Committee. The Court can also send the decision back to the Committee for reconsideration. The minister is empowered to remove a member of both the Complaints and Appeals Committees if they are unable to perform their functions (Section 17 (3)).

6. GOVERNMENT HARRASSMENT OF THE PRIVATE PRESS

The government has used a range of measures to harass the press, including deportation of foreign journalists, some of who had fled from liberation wars in South Africa. Another measure was denial of advertising revenue. In a small economy like Botswana’s, government revenue is very important for the survival of newspapers. These issues are discussed in detail below.

6.1 Deportation as a Strategy to Deal with Negative Publicity

The *Guardian* exposed a number of scandals which irked the government. Between 1985 and 1995, Masire’s administration, like that of Nyerere in Tanzania (Grosswiler, 1997, p.105) declared seven foreign journalists prohibited immigrant (PI), including two *Guardian* editors, South African Charles Mogale and John Mukela, a Zambian national who was only a couple of months into his job in 1987. Mxolisi Mxgashe, a South African refugee had reported the sluggish response of the Botswana Defence Force (BDF) to the raid by the much stronger South African Defence Force (SANDF) which killed a few people in Gaborone and the 1984 General Elections (Mokone, 2010). The General Elections were historic in that they exposed the rigging of the ruling party and brought to parliament the leader of the main opposition Dr. Kenneth Koma through a bye-election after a ballot box was found hidden and unaccounted for.

6.2 Withdrawal of Government Advertising Patronage as Punishment for Unfavourable Publicity

The government was not done with the *Guardian* and in 2001 apparently ordered a ban on government and parastatal⁷ advertising in the paper and the *Midweek Sun*. This was declared unlawful by the High Court in Lobatse (Tutwane, 2003). However, it appears by this time. The old man was already tired of the confrontations and eventually sold his titles to the Mmegi group, which became the largest and most powerful group in the country. He left the country but was to return a few years later to start the *Echo*, a less successful tabloid.

This case has precedence elsewhere. In the UK case, *R. v. Derbyshire Council, exp Times Supplements Ltd*, the *Times Education Supplement* dragged the Council to Court after it withdrew adverts following the *Sunday Times*’s series of articles attacking the Labour led Council and its leader, David Bookbinder (Robertson & Nicol, 2002). The Council had been out of vengeance for the *Times* criticism switched the 60 000 pounds annual worth of educational teaching posts to the *Guardian*. The Divisional Court quashed the Council decision on the strength of evidence that it was based on vendetta against the newspaper.

7. GOVERNMENT MANIPULATION OF THE PRESS AS AN AFRICAN PARADIGM

When we look at the manner in which the government handles the press in Botswana, we will see that it treats it more as a propaganda tool than as a professional department. It is manipulated to give positive coverage to the ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) government and its officials. This is easy to do in the face of a weak civil society and weak and fragmented opposition. The other explanation for this is that the same party has ruled the country from independence in 1966, winning every successive general election and thus becoming complacent.

However, the argument being made here is not that government intervention in the media is unprecedented anywhere in the world but rather that in the modern liberal democratic political set up, which Botswana often asserts itself to be the epitome of (and indeed with the affirmation of foreign commentators), governments do not regulate the media closely as does the government of Botswana.

It is acknowledged that all over the world, governments have historically intervened to manage and regulate the media. Humphreys (1996) demonstrates comprehensively how various Western European governments have intervened in the media, from as far back as the seventeenth century. Hillyard and Percy-Smith (1988),

⁷A parastatal is like a semi-independent government institution, often a commercial one.

Humphreys (1996), Franklin (1994), and Williams (1998) argue that the UK has a long history of government censorship and especially in the broadcast media, with the country considered to be the most censorial in Western Europe. An example of such practice by the UK government is the D-notice system dating back to 1912. This is a system whereby press stories are vetted and the press was prevented from publishing military information and it became voluntary in 1945 (Franklin, 1994, p.79).

Another governmental news management system is the lobby system. Although it is now considered a characteristically British system, it has been used elsewhere, notably in France, which had a ministry created specifically for news management (Humphreys, 1996, p.50). Dating back to 1884, this is a system whereby a select group of journalists are given privileged access to government information and normally briefed at the highest level, i.e. Prime Minister's office and the information is non-attributable (Humphreys, 1996). These journalists have tended to be appropriated by government, and have tended to metamorphose from active and critical observers to 'passive purveyors of government messages' (Franklin, 1994, p.86).

Similarly, governments use the Official Secrets Act to censor news. This legislation specifies certain categories of information which may not be published, ranging from foreign affairs, and intelligence information, to activities of the security services. The 1989 amendment of the law in Britain was viewed as more restrictive than its predecessor (Franklin, 1994). However, these tools were used mostly during war time or times of conflict. Chapter 8 will explore these issues further by delineating with examples.

As already stated, these tools of censorship and news management were used mostly during the rule of Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister (1979-1990). This was typical, as with the Second World War looming, the Home Secretary invoked Regulation 2D which gave him personal power to ban any publication which published any material calculated to incite opposition to successful prosecution of war (Curran & Seaton, 1997). The government also clamped down on the Communist *Daily Worker and the Week* had them closed in January 1941. Although the government claimed to ban these small circulation, insignificant papers, in the public interest as they had criticised government's participation in the war, in fact the decision was based on a wider government plan to fight Communism (Curran & Seaton, 1997, p.61).

But when one looks at present day Britain, to a large extent the society would disapprove most of the practices in media management or media regulation associated with the Thatcher era and those preceding it. For instance, scholars have observed that under the Blair government in the UK, there was a shift from government to governance (Lunt & Livingstone, 2012). Under the Conservative government of David Cameron, from 2010 there has also

been talk of a big society. The shift is a movement from big government to small government where stakeholders take over some of the responsibilities which were before discharged by government.

The relations between power and the ordering of social behaviour at all levels of society, from the nation state, to the transnational organisation of the sub-national organisation, to the community and even to the individual have changed. As a result, the power of governments diminishes and is dispersed upwards and downwards in what Jessop (2007, p.75; Lunt & Livingstone, 2012, p.5) terms "de-nationalisation".

Further, there is "de-nationalisation of the state" as well as "de-statisation of the political system", "with a shift from government to governance" (Jessop, 2000, p.75; Lunt & Livingstone, 2012, p.5). Governance in this respect describes a dynamic structure of rules in which varied stakeholders interact and permanently negotiate with one another without a nerve centre of command and control. It is for this reason that a regulator like Ofcom is given policy making powers.

Botswana's media management and regulation fits within the pattern in Africa, where most governments use the media for narrow personal interests and stifle press freedom. Such governments often score lowly in Western press freedom ratings. For instance, in the 2014 Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index, covering 180 countries. Eritrea occupies the last spot whilst European countries occupy the first ten positions, with Finland at number 1. Botswana is at number 41, and apart from Namibia at 22, Cape Verde at 24 and Ghana at 27, most African countries occupy positions beyond that (Reporters Without Borders, 2014). The scores measured the variables of pluralism, media independence, environment and self-censorship, legislative framework, transparency and infrastructure.

Newly elected post-colonial governments in Africa have often imitated the colonisers, constructing the nation as a monolithic entity and placing women, lower castes and ethnic minorities at the bottom of the pack. Political policies which were often as elitist and hegemonic as those of the colonial masters were retained, McMillin (2007) observes, citing India as an example.

This is corroborated by Mwesige and Kalinaki (in Barratt and Berger, 2007, p.98) who also paint a picture of post-colonial governments in East Africa (Kenya and Uganda) intent on controlling the media to protect their interests and preservation of their power: "Successive governments continued to use draconian colonial laws on the press, exercising complete control over radio and television and in some cases banning private newspapers. Public media was used to legitimise what were often ruthless dictatorships.

This is best illustrated by taking a brief look at an array of African countries to see how they treat their press. Though these countries are a mix of democratic countries

and non-democratic, they all have the common denominator of repression of the press, especially the public one.

Benin in West Africa has a long history of press manipulation by the state. President Kerekou in independent Benin of 1972 was clear that the press had to follow his orders. He nationalised private newspapers, a move similar to that of President Arap Moi in Kenya and Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana. Having adopted Marxist doctrine as official policy, the public media was to serve government interests only (Robins, 1997).

Upon independence, Nyerere of Tanzania emulated his predecessors. His government-run *Daily News* had editors appointed by him and when he one such editor criticised the Sudanese government for the manner in which he executed rebels he was fired for criticising another African leader. In 1963 a Reuter's reporter was expelled from the country, a British journalist in 1964 and a BBC journalist followed in 1974. Two Kenyan papers were banned in 1964 and outgoing press dispatches were censored (Grosswiler, 1997; Eribo & Jong-Ebot, 1997, p.103).

In Uganda, Idi Amin Dada who came to power in 1978 continued the British type of rule, perhaps with more brutality. Journalists were often tortured and killed, including Nicholas Stroh of the Washington Star. Amin Dada shut all but one newspaper that supported him (Robins, 1997; Eribo & Jong-Ebot, 1997, p.123).

The present government of President Yoweri Museveni has not done any better. Two newspapers and a radio station were raided in 2013 in the wake of a story that the government deemed to be fallacious and disrespectful (Greenslade, 2014). The Ugandan police, acting on the basis of a court order raided the offices of the *Daily Monitor*, and *Red Pepper*. The *Monitor* had written a story that President Yoweri Museveni's son Brigadier Muhoozi Kainerugaba was not only positioned to succeed his father as president but that there was also a conspiracy to frame or eliminate senior officials in government opposed to the plan. The paper based its story on a leaked letter said to be written by the head of the country's Internal Security organ. The writers of the story, together with the Managing Editor refused to disclose their source upon police questioning. It was then that the police obtained a court order to demand disclosure and with the paper remaining adamant. At least 50 police officers raided the Monitor premises in the capital Kampala and other outlets owned by the Nation Media Group, including two radio stations. The police disabled the printing press, computer servers and radio equipment (Greenslade, 2014).

In Angola, just like in Benin, Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda, the post-colonial government of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), adopted Marxism as official policy. The colonial Ministry of Information was replaced by new Marxist-Leninist machinery that saw the press as "an agitator, propagandist

and organiser" (Eribo, 1997, p.332). Government propaganda was complete as there were no private papers during the leadership of President Agostinho Neto. Opposition to government was not countenanced and the death penalty was meted out against people who "committed crimes against the state" or the revolution, including journalists. The latter had a specific crime of "spreading false information that would endanger the good name of the state" (Eribo, 1997, p.333).

In Egypt, upon independence the indigenous regime set up the Office of Censorship under the Ministry of Culture, in violation of the 1971 Constitution which had guaranteed press freedom (Napoli, in Eribo and Jong-Ebot, 1997, p.189). All news articles had to get prior approval before publication. The pattern is the same across the length and breadth of Africa, irrespective of the colonial master.

SUMMARY

When one looks at colonial media policy in both Bechuanaland and post-colonial Bechuanaland (Botswana), it is clear that the rulers approached it from a behavioural, direct effects perspective, sometimes called the hypodermic syringe/needle model (Laughey, 2007). Their assumption was that the media was too powerful and was directly affecting the public. In other words, the assumption was that a stimuli from the media followed by a straightforward audience/reader/viewer response. This is still the government attitude in modern day Botswana although media research has not validated this position with other scholars arguing and demonstrating through their own research that audiences are not a passive mass, but active participants. Audience members have the capacity to decode ideologies carried in media messages, (Hall, 1982; Laughey, 2007, p.60) and may even resist these (Hebdige, 1979).

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