Reimagining Media in Ghana's Fourth Republic: Infrastructure, Epistemic Violence, and the Daily Political Economy of Peacebuilding.

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ABSTRACT

In Ghana's Fourth Republic, media studies have largely focused on election-related security, often overlooking misinformation and disinformation. This oversight leaves non-electoral, structural conflicts under-examined and underreported, thereby exacerbating tension. This article reconceptualizes the Ghanaian media landscape by examining how its daily political economy, structural framework, and discursive practices affect long-term peacebuilding, in line with this year's United Nations theme for the 2026 World Peace: "Invest in Peace: For Everyone, Everywhere, Every Day." This study uses a triangulated framework that incorporates three theories: the Political Economy of Communication (PEC), Epistemic Violence (EV), and Everyday Peacebuilding Infrastructure. It critically examines the systemic forces shaping newsroom priorities and editors' profit-driven motives, often at the expense of the public interest. Through the PEC perspective, it demonstrates how political parallelism, partisan ownership, and commercialization commodify tension, presenting conflict as a zero-sum political spectacle. Drawing on Gayatri Spivak's and Johan Galtung's concepts of epistemic and cultural violence, the paper shows how media narratives centered in Accra and driven by elites systematically marginalize indigenous knowledge systems, local conflict-resolution mechanisms, and subaltern voices, particularly in complex chieftaincy and land tenure disputes. Conversely, drawing on Roger Mac Ginty's and John Paul Lederach's everyday peace frameworks, the study highlights decentralized community radio and localized digital networks as potential infrastructures for promoting positive peace. Employing a qualitative research approach that includes critical discourse analysis of news coverage and semi-structured interviews with journalists, traditional leaders, and civil society members, the findings suggest that sustainable conflict transformation requires structural media reform. Finally, the paper advocates shifting from reactive, event-focused journalism to deliberate, everyday investment in media infrastructure that prioritizes epistemic justice, social cohesion, and grassroots peacebuilding efforts throughout Ghana.

Keywords: Peace Framework, Epistemic Justice, Social Cohesion, Peacebuilding Effort, Political Parallelism, Commodified Tensions, And Partisan Ownership.

INTRODUCTION

In Ghana's Fourth Republic, the media landscape includes a variety of platforms being it state, private, print, online, social media, and blogs among others, that facilitate political engagement, accountability, conflict resilience and venerability and communication. However, media plurality does not inherently guarantee epistemic diversity or equitable recognition of legitimate knowledge sources. Despite the proliferation of organisations and channels, ownership, political agendas, technological disparities used for disinformation and misinformation, Artificial Intelligent (AI) knowledge content boxes and established routines still shape public knowledge. Dominant actors shape the discourse and determine authoritative voices, often marginalising or misrepresenting rural, minority, marginalized groups. This situation poses challenges for peacebuilding, since it is clearly attached with the issues of justice, human rights and sustainable relations as media portrayals can reinforce stereotypes and perpetuate uneven credibility. This study argues that the media in Ghana cannot be

considered neutral, as it operates within unequal political, economic, and technological frameworks and acts as a perpetrator. The media's role in peacebuilding is shaped more by recognizing certain knowledge and amplifying specific voices than by the number of media outlets or the degree of freedom of expression. Therefore, achieving sustainable peace necessitates not only institutional frameworks for conflict management but also inclusive epistemic infrastructures that enable communities to communicate and negotiate their realities.

It further scrutinizes Ghana's media infrastructure and how it shapes peace architecture and conflict resolution, focusing on its contribution to peacebuilding under the Fourth Republic. The study shows how ownership, political economy, commercial forces, personal interests, and representation concerns have shaped media development, and evaluates their impact on conflict narratives in the Ghanaian public space. This study explores the significance of indigenous knowledge representation, the impact of media narratives on perceptions of conflict and societal cohesion, and ways to improve the media's role in peacebuilding and integrate it into Ghana's national peace framework.

Transformation and development of Ghana's media infrastructure during the Fourth Republic, focusing on factors that shape media production, distribution, and the recognition of knowledge. It analyses how media framing shapes public perceptions of conflict and societal cohesion, represents diverse perspectives, and portrays epistemic violence. Additionally, it assesses the media's role in peacebuilding and seeks to establish a framework for integrating media into national peacebuilding efforts.

The study employs a qualitative-dominant mixed-methods design to investigate media ownership, representation, and conflict framing. The study used a semi-structured, face-to-face interview guide and selected participants—journalists, media managers, editors, and community leaders—through purposive and snowball sampling. Discourse analyses defined clarity of language use, representation, narrative, framing, and power relations on issues, which were used to construct social and political reality in Ghanaian media. This was clearly identified in the study's conceptual and theoretical underpinning. The study also used interpretivist analysis to understand how individual platforms and media groups construct, experience, and interpret political events, conflict, ethnic belonging, and peacebuilding in a given space, using empirical data from the field. Interpretivist thematic analysis also observed media gatekeeping, dispute framing, and social cohesion, using three to four case studies to highlight diverse media-peacebuilding relationships and influence in the Ghanaian space at all times.

The political framework essential to understanding Ghana's media system is the Fourth Republic, which began with the reinstatement of civilian constitutional governance in 1992. In contrast to previous periods, this transition enhanced media independence and diversity, facilitated platforms for discourse, and reinforced the media's role in democratic decision-making,[1] contributing to an understanding of Ghana's media system in the Fourth Republic.[2] Democratization has repositioned the media as an instrument of political accountability and engagement, with reforms aimed at ensuring democratic governance. This transformation extended beyond mere formality.

Ghana instituted regular multiparty elections and peaceful transitions of power, notably the 2000 transition between the NDC and the NPP, which is frequently regarded as a consolidation of democracy. The 1992 constitutional framework supported elections, political liberalization, rights and liberties, an engaged civil society, and a more autonomous media capable of holding the government accountable.[3]Ghana's media liberalization has expanded citizens' opportunities to express themselves, challenge authority, and seek recognition.[4] While this environment can foster peace and accountability, it may also amplify certain voices

[1]Darkwa, Ernest, Hrishikesh Inguva, Constance Osafo-Adjei, and Bridget Acquah. "The public sphere on a digital plane: The influence of the new digital media on Ghana's democracy and the public sphere." *Inverge Journal of Social Sciences* 3, no. 2 (2024): 46-62.
[2]Tawiah, Alexander. "Social Media Campaign Strategies: A Case Study of Political Issue Framing by 2024 Presidential Candidates in Ghana." *Journalism and Media* (2025).
[3]Dartey-Baah K, 'Political Leadership in Ghana: 1957 to 2010' (2015) 9 *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* 49–61.
[4]Darkwa, Ernest, Hrishikesh Inguva, Constance Osafo-Adjei, and Bridget Acquah (2024). pp. 4

while overlooking, misinterpreting, or undervaluing others.[5] The Fourth Republic shaped conflicts over information, truth, representation, and social harmony.

It argues for integrating media infrastructure and epistemic power into conflict and peace studies, recognizing media as an informal yet essential element of Ghana's peace architecture. It argues that peacebuilding happens through everyday communication beyond formal institutions and redefines media studies by emphasizing media's role in producing power and knowledge. This perspective addresses epistemic justice for marginalized groups in two ways. The policy recommendations include enhancing media regulation, journalism education, and national peacebuilding strategies, as well as promoting conflict-sensitive reporting and community storytelling to support peaceful coexistence.

Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Consideration

This study uses a triangulated theoretical framework, drawing on three theories that bridge the media's structural conditions: the political economy of communication, epistemic violence, and peacebuilding infrastructure theory.

The Political Economy of Communication (PEC) examines the material power dynamics that shape the production, distribution, and consumption of communication resources within social environments.[6] Mosco underscores the need to analyze media ownership, financing, and control, as well as the interests that shape media content, to show that media operates within political and economic frameworks.[7] The media landscape in Ghana serves as a case study for this perspective, where ownership, political affiliations, and financial pressures profoundly affect journalistic practices and editorial autonomy.[8] In Ghana's Fourth Republic, the media is closely linked to economic, political, and communication institutions, shaping public discourse and perceptions and carrying implications for both conflict and peace.[9] The interplay between media ownership and political interests shapes the editorial environment and how political figures are portrayed in the public domain. Critiques of political economy theory underscore its limitations, particularly its economic reductionism, which emphasizes ownership and capital at the expense of cultural and ideological influences on media narratives.[10] The theory's focus on ownership is insufficient to account for the diverse interpretations of content by various social groups.[11] Furthermore, it encounters difficulties in defining communication and addressing marginalized knowledge forms and epistemic violence.[12]

Epistemic violence theory, as articulated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, examines how knowledge systems are constructed and how they represent marginalized subjects.[13] In her seminal essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?”Spivak highlights forms of harm that extend beyond physical violence, encompassing misrepresentation, silencing, and institutional authority, particularly within media contexts.[14] For example, in Ghana, media platforms may provide visibility but often prioritize officials and elite experts over local knowledge holders, prompting critical inquiries into whose perspectives are deemed legitimate.[15]This situation underscores the

[5]Ibid, n3

[6]Mosco, Vincent. *The Political Economy of Communication*. 2nd ed. London: SAGE, 2009.

[7]Ibid, n2
[8]McChesney, Robert W. *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999.
[9]Ibid, n2
[10]Herman, Edward S., and Noam Chomsky. *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1988.
[11]Ibid, n2
[12]Ibid, n3
[13]Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. “Can the Subaltern Speak?” In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, 271–313. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988.
[14]Ibid, n2
[15]Asante, Nana Ama Agyemang. "How free is Ghana’s media." *Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. https://reutersinstitute. politics. ox. ac. uk/how-free-ghanas-media* (2020).

epistemic power inherent in media practices. However, critics contend that Spivak's concept of epistemic violence may be overly broad, and that marginalized communities are not entirely voiceless; they frequently establish their own communication channels and practices.[16] Therefore, scholars suggest shifting the focus from merely identifying who is silenced to examining who holds the authority to legitimize knowledge in the media.[17]

The Peacebuilding Infrastructure Theory posits that sustainable peace emerges not from a single agreement or event but from a continuous network of institutions and relationships that actively prevent, manage, and transform conflict.[18] This theory contends that the media should be seen as an integral part of this network, not merely an observer, and that peacebuilding efforts are compromised when they overlook how media narratives shape public perceptions of peace and violence.[19] The infrastructure for peace theory argues for justice, institutions, the rule of law, human rights, and inclusivity, which can provide other members of society with opportunities for harmony and can also become a platform for resistance and conflict. However, in the eyes of the rules, this enforced power was short-lived compared to reverential power, according Durkheim. By centralizing the media's role in peacebuilding, the theory highlights the material, institutional, economic, and epistemic structures that determine which peace narratives become visible and credible.[20] It offers a comprehensive analytical framework that connects political economy, epistemic authority, and peacebuilding outcomes, showing how media ownership patterns and control structures significantly shape social relations and conflict dynamics.[21] At the same time, the theory acknowledges media's dual nature: it can foster peace or exacerbate tensions, depending on context.[22] Ghana's media landscape exemplifies this duality, revealing a disparity between the diversity of media outlets and genuine inclusivity in recognizing knowledge. [23]Thus, the framework effectively analyzes how everyday communication practices and complex media systems can facilitate or hinder peacebuilding in specific settings, since they have been muted for long. Democracy in this reality has become a talk show, from which the media in Ghana sometimes go off-board.

The Political Economy–Epistemic Violence–Peacebuilding Infrastructure (PEEPI) Framework synthesizes three theoretical perspectives: the Political Economy of Communication, Epistemic Violence, and Peacebuilding Infrastructure Theory. The argument asserts that media in Ghana play a crucial role in peacebuilding, serving as a fundamental infrastructure component rather than merely a communicative entity. The political economy of media shapes power distribution and the legitimacy of knowledge, which in turn influences conflict, inclusion, trust, and social cohesion. Consequently, the success of Ghana's peacebuilding initiatives is intricately connected to the political-economic and epistemic configuration of its media system. This framework suggests that peacebuilding encompasses not only formal institutions, such as the National Peace Council, but also media organizations, which are integral to the infrastructure that influences peace and conflict dynamics. In the context of Ghana's Fourth Republic, the media landscape is characterized by diversity, with factors such as ownership and technological disparities impacting the prominence of issues in the public sphere. UNESCO has identified challenges such as media concentration and journalist insecurity as significant concerns in evaluating Ghana's media environment.

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[16]Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977* (Pantheon 1980).
[17] Fricker, Miranda. *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
[18]Lederach, John Paul. *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997
[19]Bush, Kenneth. *A Measure of Peace: Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA) of Development Projects in Conflict Zones*. Ottawa: Canadian Peacebuilding Coordinating Office, 1998.
[20]Wallensteen, Peter. *Understanding Conflict Resolution*. London: SAGE.
[21] Galtung, Johan, and Mari Holmboe Ruge. "The Structure of Foreign News: The Presentation of the Congo, Cuba and Cyprus Crises in Four Norwegian Newspapers." *Journal of Peace Research* 2, no. 1 (1965): 64–90.
[22]Lynch, Jake, and Annabel McGoldrick. *Peace Journalism*. Stroud: Hawthorn Press, 2005.
[23]Asante, Nana Ama Agyemang (2020)

trust, and social cohesion. Consequently, the success of Ghana's peacebuilding initiatives is intricately connected to the political-economic and epistemic configuration of its media system. This framework suggests that peacebuilding encompasses not only formal institutions, such as the National Peace Council, but also media organizations, which are integral to the infrastructure that influences peace and conflict dynamics. In Ghana's Fourth Republic, the media landscape is diverse, with ownership and technological disparities shaping which issues gain prominence in the public sphere. UNESCO has identified media concentration and journalist insecurity as significant concerns when evaluating Ghana's media environment.

DISCUSSIONS

From Repression to Pluralism: Ghana's Media Transition and Peacebuilding

To fully understand the contemporary Ghanaian media landscape, one must situate it within the country's transition from authoritarian rule to constitutional democracy.[24] The media platform was grounded in colonialism, which promoted imperial rule and created a climate of fear among ordinary Ghanaians. This reality did not change much under all the military rule. The imposed abuse of rights, among others, was for colonialists' and the military leaders' interests. It was a form of control and reporting of events, and the emerging private media stations were tagged as anti-colonial and anti-dictatorship; their stations were closed down, and journalists were sometimes arrested without going through legitimate legal systems.[25] The relationship between the state and the media underwent a profound transformation between the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) and the establishment of the Fourth Republic in 1993. Under the PNDC, which came to power after the 31 December 1981 military coup led by Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings, journalists and media organizations that adopted critical positions toward the regime operated in a highly restrictive political environment. Preventive detention legislation and other coercive mechanisms created considerable risks for journalists who challenged the political establishment during the first Presidency of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. Historical accounts indicate that journalists associated with the Free Press, including Tommy Thompson and Mike Adjei, were arrested and detained in 1983 after publishing material critical of the PNDC government. The newspaper was subsequently forced to suspend operations in 1986 after authorities deemed some of its editorials "unpatriotic" (Amnesty International, 1984, 1985, 1988, as cited in Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 1989). Journalists' experiences during the PNDC period illustrate how political power can shape the conditions under which journalism is produced. The problem was not simply the absence of formal constitutional guarantees but the broader political economy of information, in which the state possessed substantial coercive and institutional capacity to constrain critical voices. This reality contended against the theory. As a result, the media operated in an environment where editorial independence could carry significant personal and professional consequences. The experiences of journalists such as Tommy Thompson, Mike Adjei, and other members of the Free Press became part of Ghanaian journalism's historical memory and reflected the broader struggle over citizens' and media practitioners' right to scrutinize political authority.[26] Indeed, subsequent reports indicate that Thompson and other editors continued to face state pressure even after the transition to constitutional rule, showing that democratic institutions did not immediately eliminate tensions between political authority and critical journalism. In 1996, for example, Tommy Thompson and other newspaper editors were arrested and charged with publishing false news intended to injure the state's reputation.[27]

The constitutional transition fundamentally altered the legal foundation of media-state relations. The 1992 Constitution of Ghana, which ushered in the Fourth Republic in January 1993, dedicated an entire chapter to the

[24]Ibid, n2

[25] An interview was conducted on April 18, 2026, at the Manhyia Palace with a media personality, Kofi Badu, who has been practicing for 60 years and is now the 92-year-old Chief of Staff at the Manhyia Palace.

[26] Interview conducted in Kumasi, Okay FM Manager on 17/04/2026

[27] Ibid,n2

freedom and independence of the media.[28] Chapter 12, particularly Article 162, guarantees media freedom and independence, prohibits censorship, protects the establishment of private media, and provides that editors and publishers should not be subjected to governmental control, interference, punishment, or harassment because of their editorial opinions or the content of their publications.[29] Article 163 further requires state-owned media to provide fair opportunities for divergent views and dissenting opinions, while Articles166 and 167 establish and define the functions of the National Media Commission (NMC), including promoting media freedom and independence and maintaining professional journalistic standards. These constitutional provisions represented a significant institutional departure from the political environment that had characterised the PNDC era. Media freedom was no longer merely a normative aspiration but became constitutionally protected within Ghana's democratic order. More importantly, the Constitution positioned the media not simply as commercial organisations or channels of information but as institutions with a democratic responsibility to promote governmental accountability. Article 162(5), for example, explicitly links media freedom to the responsibility of holding the government accountable to the people. This constitutional formulation is particularly significant for understanding the Ghanaian media as an institution within the country's democratic and peacebuilding architecture. The constitutional protection of media freedom was accompanied by a broader liberalisation of the communications environment. The emergence of private broadcasting significantly altered the structure of the Ghanaian media system. Whereas the broadcasting environment at the beginning of the Fourth Republic was dominated by state-controlled radio and television, the liberalisation of the airwaves opened opportunities for private actors to establish broadcasting organisations.

Media Liberalisation, Regulatory Institutions and the Political Economy of Media Pluralism in Ghana's Fourth Republic

The development of regulatory institutions, including the National Communications Authority (NCA), provided an institutional framework for licensing and regulating electronic communications. The NCA, established in 1996 under Act 524 and subsequently operating under the National Communications Authority Act, 2008 (Act 769), became the statutory institution responsible for regulating electronic communications and broadcasting authorizations.[30] Broadcasting liberalization subsequently produced a much more diverse and competitive media environment. Private radio, television, and later digital platforms expanded the number of voices participating in Ghana's public sphere. Research on Ghana's broadcasting environment notes that liberalizing the airwaves in the 1990s encouraged greater public participation, including phone-in programs that let citizens contribute directly to discussions of political and social issues. [31]The transformation has continued with technological change and digitalization. The Ghanaian media environment has evolved from a predominantly state-oriented system into a complex ecosystem encompassing private radio and television, newspapers, online news platforms, social media, citizen journalism, and increasingly data-driven forms of reporting.[32]

"In this state, sensational reporting has increased, allowing the public, who have access to phones-ins, to judge without a fair hearing for all parties involved. The defense of these parties is often compromised, as they are unable to respond to violence, often incited by members of their groups, whether political, religious, or ethnic, which affects Ghana's peaceful coexistence and denies opportunities. Media personnel in Ghana are underpaid

[28]Republic of Ghana. (1992). Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, 1992, Chapter 12: Freedom and Independence of the Media. (Constitute Project)

[29]Ibid, n2

[30] United Nations. (2026). International Day of Peace 2026:

[31]Heath, C. W. (1999). Negotiating broadcasting policy: Civil society and civic discourse in Ghana. Gazette, 61(6). (Sage Journals

[32]Danso, S., & Mohammed, A. (2025). Data journalism uptake in the Ghanaian media: Opportunities, professional adaptation and challenges. SAGE Open. (Sage Journals)

and often manipulated, leading to instability and the spread of misinformation and disinformation through fraudulent means without consideration for sustainable peace. Specialisation and research, which could mitigate sensationalism and prevent violence, are often overlooked."[33]

Media plurality has consequently become an important component of Ghana democratic consolidation. The proliferation of media organisations has created more opportunities for political actors, civil society organisations, citizens and marginalised groups to enter public debate. Plurality, however, should not automatically be equated with independence, diversity, or democratic quality. A media system may have numerous outlets while still showing concentrated ownership, political influence, unequal access to resources, and ideological competition. Therefore, the expansion of Ghanaian media needs to be examined through the lens of political economy: who owns media organizations, who controls resources, whose interests shape editorial agendas, which voices gain visibility, and what economic pressures influence journalistic decisions.

This distinction matters because the political economy of the media affects not only news production but also the quality of democratic discourse. The expansion of private broadcasting has strengthened competition for audiences, advertising revenue, political influence, and public attention. Commercial pressures can push media organizations to prioritize content that generates audience engagement, while political relationships and ownership structures may shape editorial priorities. Recent scholarship on African broadcast media similarly demonstrates that ownership, political influence, censorship, resource limitations and professional expertise can affect the capacity of media organisations to contribute to conflict management and peacebuilding.[34]

Media Pluralism, Conflict-Sensitive Journalism and the Everyday Infrastructure of Peacebuilding in Ghana's Fourth Republic

The Ghanaian media landscape must therefore be understood as both an achievement of democratic liberalisation and a site of continuing contestation for conflict positionality. On the one hand, the constitutional protection of media freedom and the proliferation of private media have considerably widened the communicative space available to citizens. On the other hand, the freedom to publish does not necessarily guarantee equality in the production or circulation of information. Economic inequalities, ownership concentration, political affiliations, professional capacity, technological disparities and audience competition can shape which issues become prominent and which perspectives remain marginal. Consequently, media plurality can create a more inclusive public sphere, but its democratic value depends significantly on the institutional, professional, and economic conditions in which it operates. The relationship between media plurality and peacebuilding is particularly important in a politically competitive society such as Ghana. Democratic competition inevitably generates disagreement, contestation and conflict over political power and public resources. The media are one of the principal arenas where these disagreements are interpreted, amplified, and negotiated. Through news reports, interviews, political discussions, phone-in programmes, documentaries, investigative journalism and digital interactions, media organisations can provide spaces in which competing interests encounter one another without necessarily resorting to violence. In this sense, media institutions can contribute to peacebuilding by facilitating dialogue, exposing grievances, providing citizens with reliable information and creating opportunities for public accountability.

However, the media's contribution to peacebuilding is neither automatic nor uniformly positive. Media platforms can reduce tensions when they provide accurate information, contextualise disputes, facilitate dialogue and give voice to affected communities. Conversely, sensationalism, misinformation, inflammatory rhetoric, stereotyping and unverified allegations can intensify social and political divisions. Research on African broadcasting demonstrates that news and current-affairs programmes can contribute to conflict resolution and peacebuilding,

[33] An Interview with a manager of a public Television Station in Accra on 09/07/2026 in his office in Accra.

[34]Danso, S., Adjin-Tettey, T. D., Serwornoo, M. Y. W., & Azanu, B. (2024). African broadcast media participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding: An examination of practices across nine countries. African Security, 17(3–4), 177–204. https://doi.org/10.1080/19392206.2024.2420544 (University of Ghana)

but that political influence, ownership and control, inadequate resources and limited professional expertise can constrain this contribution.[35]

This tension makes journalistic practice central to the Ghanaian media's peacebuilding function. Professional journalism requires more than providing competing political voices; it also requires verification, accuracy, fairness, contextualisation and attention to the potential consequences of published information. In conflict-sensitive environments, journalists must distinguish between reporting conflict and reproducing conflict. A report that merely amplifies accusations between political actors may increase public hostility, whereas journalism that investigates the underlying causes of disagreement, provides evidence and creates space for competing perspectives can contribute to understanding and peaceful resolution. Recent Ghanaian discussions of conflict-sensitive journalism have similarly emphasised accuracy, balance, context, verification and the inclusion of diverse stakeholders as essential components of reporting that does not inflame tensions.[36]The significance of this role extends beyond conventional armed conflict. Peacebuilding in Ghana should also be understood in relation to electoral competition, chieftaincy disputes, communal tensions, resource conflicts, political polarisation, misinformation and other forms of social division. Ghana relative democratic stability does not mean that the country is insulated from conflict risks. Rather, the country democratic institutions, including the media, play a preventive role by providing mechanisms through which grievances can be publicly articulated and contested without necessarily escalating into violence. The media can therefore function as part of what may be described as the country everyday peace infrastructure. This study posits that every news bulletin, headline, interview, editorial, social-media post and current-affairs programme can either contribute to social understanding or deepen division. Investing in peace, therefore, also requires investing in the quality, independence, professionalism and social responsibility of media institutions. The Ghanaian case provides a particularly useful setting for examining this relationship because the country has experienced both authoritarian media repression and extensive media liberalisation. The historical movement from a political environment in which journalists could be detained for criticising the government to a constitutional order that expressly protects media freedom demonstrates the institutional significance of democratic transition. At the same time, the contemporary media environment reveals that legal freedom alone cannot guarantee responsible or peace-oriented journalism. Recent scholarship has raised concerns about threats, assaults, intimidation and other pressures against journalists in Ghana, suggesting that media freedom remains vulnerable even under constitutional democracy.[37]

The challenge, therefore, is to move beyond a narrow understanding of media freedom as the absence of censorship towards a broader conception of media freedom as an enabling condition for democratic participation, accountability, social cohesion and sustainable peace. Such an approach recognises the media as institutions embedded within political and economic structures rather than as neutral observers operating outside society. The media can challenge political power, but they can also reproduce existing inequalities and power relations through ownership structures, sourcing practices, agenda setting and representational choices. Consequently, the democratic contribution of media plurality depends not simply on the number of media outlets but on the diversity of ownership, accessibility of platforms, professional independence, quality of journalism and capacity of citizens to participate meaningfully in public communication. It is against this background that this article reconceptualises the Ghanaian media landscape through the interconnected dimensions of political economy, structural organisation and discursive practice, and examines their implications for long-term peacebuilding. The political economy dimension draws attention to ownership, financing, advertising, political relationships and competition for audiences. The structural dimension considers the institutional and regulatory arrangements that shape media operations, including constitutional guarantees, regulatory bodies, technological infrastructure and

[35]Ibid, n2
[36]Ghana News Agency (2025)

[37]Kwode, P. A. K., Asekere, G., & Ayelazuno, J. A. (2024). The erosion of media freedom in Ghana: A signal democratic backsliding? Media, Culture & Society, 46(1), 112–129.https://doi.org/10.1177/01634437231185933 (Sage Journals)

patterns of media concentration. The discursive dimension focuses on how journalists and media organisations construct political and social realities through framing, language, sourcing, agenda setting and representation.

Media Pluralism, Discursive Power and the Political Economy of Everyday Peacebuilding in Ghana's Fourth Republic

This approach is necessary because you cannot assess the contribution of media plurality to democracy and peace simply by counting the number of radio stations, television channels, newspapers, or digital platforms. What matters is what these institutions do with the communicative space available to them. A plural media environment can broaden participation, expose abuses, strengthen accountability and facilitate dialogue; equally, it can intensify polarisation when economic and political incentives reward sensationalism, partisan framing and antagonistic discourse. The analytical task is therefore to identify the conditions under which media plurality becomes a resource for peace rather than merely an expansion of the marketplace of political communication. Ghana experience since the beginning of the Fourth Republic suggests that media liberalisation has contributed significantly to democratic deepening by expanding access to political information and providing citizens with multiple channels through which public issues can be debated. Yet the sustainability of these gains depends on the ability of media institutions to balance commercial imperatives with public-interest responsibilities. The constitutional framework provides an essential foundation, but professional ethics, institutional independence, economic sustainability, media literacy, regulatory accountability and conflict-sensitive journalism are equally important. The challenge for the Ghanaian media is therefore not simply to preserve the freedom to speak but to use that freedom in ways that strengthen democratic institutions, human dignity, social cohesion and peaceful coexistence.

In this regard, the media should be understood as an important part of Ghana peacebuilding infrastructure.[38] Their contribution begins long before violence occurs: through accurate information, responsible political reporting, early identification of grievances, amplification of marginalised voices, exposure of misinformation and creation of spaces for dialogue. The media also remain relevant after tensions emerge, when framing events can influence whether societies move toward reconciliation or further polarisation. Peacebuilding, therefore, requires a media system that combines editorial independence with professional responsibility.

Conclusion and Recommendation for the Study

The central argument advanced here is that Ghana transition from media repression to constitutional media freedom created the institutional conditions for a plural and vibrant media environment, but plurality by itself does not guarantee democratic resilience or sustainable peace. The political economy of media ownership and resources, the structural organisation of the media system and the discursive practices through which journalists construct public realities jointly determine whether media freedom produces accountability, inclusion and social cohesion or reproduces polarisation and inequality. In the spirit of the United Nations 2026 call to "Invest in Peace," Ghana investment in peace must therefore include investment in an independent, pluralistic, professionally responsible and conflict-sensitive media system. Such an investment is not peripheral to democratic consolidation; it is part of the institutional infrastructure through which democracy, social cohesion and lasting peace are reproduced every day.

The study recommends that the media be a core part of Ghana's peace infrastructure and calls on the National Peace Council and National Media Commission to formally incorporate peacebuilding into routine media practices beyond crisis reporting, into a peacebuilding framework for the media. Capacity building should focus on conflict reporting to prevent escalation into violence. This emphasizes the need for stronger conflict-sensitive journalism through ethical standards and regular training on peaceful coexistence.

[38]Nyarko, J. (2016). Newspaper review show in the broadcast media space in Ghana. SAGE Open. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244016654952 (Sage Journals)

Furthermore, this study advocates inclusive representation, community engagement, transparency in ownership, and editorial independence to mitigate epistemic violence and conflicts of interest at every reporting level. Lastly, media responsibilities should emphasize community partnerships and digital media literacy campaigns to address misinformation and promote responsible online communication. The report recommends integrating peacebuilding into journalism education, supported by monitoring frameworks that evaluate the media's role in fostering social cohesion.

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The authors breached no ethical requirements. The study was conducted under the guidance of the University of Ghana, Legon Committee. The study was also conducted in accordance with the ethical standards laid down in the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki and its later amendments, or comparable ethical standards.

Disclosure statement

This is a reference to the University of Ghana, Legon. There is nothing else to declare.

Consent, data,

Consent was sought from participant for the study follow other materials, and/or code availability: Data will be made available upon request. Nothing else needs to be declared.

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