

GLOBAL NEWS AGENCIES: ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS OF THEIR NEGATIVE REPORTAGE OF DEVELOPING NATIONS LIKE NIGERIA

Akagu, Joseph Ifeanyichukwu

ABSTRACT: *Global news agencies have played vital roles in the growth and development of mass communication, they provided on -the spot reports of events from around the globe, in-depth investigations and analysis of events that have shaped the world. But the imbalance of their reportage has not gone down well with developing countries who have alleged that their part of the world is been under reported and unfairly treated in terms of content. According to studies, this negative reportage has led to some implications on the economic, political and socio-cultural aspects of their lives. These allegations were x-rayed to verify its authenticity. Having realized the implications and examined it, some recommendations were made and they include: The stereotypes on Nigeria, Africa and other developing countries caused by the negative reports by the global news agencies especially Western media must be deconstructed using scientific and educational tools. The media’s approach towards Africa must be revised and their informative strategies realigned to consider the trends, contexts and positive events occurring in the continent. Sensitization and educational programmes involving the Western public are required at various levels to promote the desire to have better in-depth and qualified information on the African reality. Gate keeping theory of mass communication served as the theoretical framework for this research while the internet served as source of data collection.*

KEYWORDS: global news agencies, economic, political, socio-cultural implications, negative reportage, developing nations, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Communication is a potent weapon, which puts the society on a firm information ground. Whatever is the societal nature, be it local or international depends largely on communication for its survival. A renowned poet, John Donne (1572 -1631) opines that “no man is an island”, as everyone in a society has the significant need for communication. According to Dominick (1993). “The need for communication, therefore, exists whether or not the society is civilized, and this need had existed long before Gutenberg put together his printing press.”

Be that as it may, there is no gain saying the fact that there is the need for cross fertilization of ideas, which broadcasting across national boundaries can achieve, if the motives of such international broadcasters are genuine. Nevertheless, the scramble for air space and the bombardment of the developing world by the developed world, with all kinds of broadcast messages, have had considerable bearing on the lopsidedness of the world information flow for a long time.

The Big Four

Only a few large newspapers could afford bureaus outside their home city. They relied instead on news agencies, especially Havas in France and the Associated Press in the United States. Former Havas employees founded Reuters in Britain and Wolff in Germany; Havas is now Agence France-Presse (AFP). For international news, the agencies pooled their resources, so that Havas, for example, covered the French Empire, South America and the Balkans and shared the news with the other national agencies. In France the typical contract with Havas provided a provincial newspaper with 1800 lines of telegraphed text daily, for an annual subscription rate of 10,000 francs. Other agencies provided features and fiction for their subscribers. In the 1830s, France had several specialized agencies. Agence Havas was founded in 1835 by a Parisian translator and advertising agent, Charles-Louis Havas, to supply news about France to foreign customers. In the 1840s, Havas gradually incorporated other French agencies into his agency.

Agence Havas evolved into Agence France-Presse (AFP). Two of his employees, Bernhard Wolff and Paul Julius Reuter, later set up rival news agencies, Wolffs Telegraphisches Bureau in 1849 in Berlin and Reuters in 1851 in London. Guglielmo Stefani founded the Agenzia Stefani, which became the most important press agency in Italy from the mid-19th century to World War II, in Turin in 1853. The development of the telegraph in the 1850s led to the creation of strong national agencies in England, Germany, Austria and the United States. But despite the efforts of governments, through telegraph laws of the in 1878 in France, inspired by the British Telegraph Act of 1869 which paved the way for the nationalization of telegraph companies and their operations, the cost of telegraph remained high.

In the United States, the judgment in *Inter Ocean Publishing v. Associated Press* facilitated competition by requiring agencies to accept all newspapers wishing to join. As a result of the increasing newspapers, the Associated Press was now challenged by the creation of United Press Associations in 1907 and International News Service by newspaper publisher William Randolph Hearst in 1909. Driven by the huge U.S. domestic market, boosted by the runaway success of radio, all three major agencies required the dismantling of the "cartel agencies" through the Agreement of 26 August 1927. They were concerned about the success of U.S. agencies from other European countries which sought to create national agencies after the First World War. Reuters had been weakened by war censorship, which promoted the creation of cooperative newspapers in the Commonwealth and national agencies in Asia, two of its strong areas.

After the Second World War, the movement for the creation of national agencies accelerated, when accessing the independence of former colonies, the national agencies were operated by the State. Reuters, became cooperative, managed a breakthrough in finance, and helped to reduce the number of U.S. agencies from three to one, along with the internationalization of the Spanish EFE and the globalization of Agence France-Presse. In 1924, Benito Mussolini placed Agenzia Stefani under the direction of Manlio Morgagni, who expanded the agency's reach significantly both within Italy and abroad. Agenzia Stefani was dissolved in 1945, and its technical structure

and organization were transferred to the new Agenzia Nazionale Stampa Associata (ANSA). Wolffs was taken over by the Nazi regime in 1934, and Reuters continues to operate as a major international news agency today. In 1865, Reuter and Wolff signed agreements with Havas's sons, forming a cartel designating exclusive reporting zones for each of their agencies within Europe.

Since the 1960s, the major agencies were provided with new opportunities in television and magazine, and news agencies delivered specialized production of images and photos, the demand for which is constantly increasing. In France, for example, they account for over two-thirds of national market. The 'big four' - Reuters, United Press International, Associated Press and Agence France Press. Each has carved out its sphere of influence from the old colonial empires. AFP in Paris is strong throughout French speaking Africa. AP and UPI, both US based, have extensive operations in Latin America and are widely used in Japan, South Korea and the Philippines - the areas of US control in the post-war period. And the British have maintained considerable influence in the English-speaking Commonwealth countries through Reuters. Between them, the big four send out 34 million words a day and provide 90 percent of the entire foreign news output of the world's newspapers. The Third World, which represents over two-thirds of the world's population and area, accounts for only 25 per cent of reports from the four agencies.

Since these agencies are based in the West, the major part of their news package is about events in the industrialized countries. Publisher of the Fiji Sun, Philip Harkness, complains about his editors being snowed under with British football results and other unusable material originating from the Western agencies. Running against the fast current of this broad river of news from the West is a trickle of information from the Third World which barely manages to reach the doors of the readers in New York, London or Paris. This counter flow from the developing countries is also controlled by the 'big four'. The exchange of news between the West and Asia is typical of the imbalance.

AP sends out from New York to Asia an average of 90,000 words daily. In return AP takes in 19,000 words either from its correspondents or from the national news agencies of Asia. Reuters and UPI also send out four or five times more than they take from that continent. The news-gathering priorities of the news agencies are reflected in the postings of their own correspondents. Some 34 per cent are confined to the US while a further 28 per cent are based in European capitals. Only 17 per cent are in Asia and Australia, 11 per cent in Latin America, 6 per cent in the Middle East and 4 per cent in Africa.

Global communication is usually conducted through the various mass media platforms of print, broadcast and the new media particularly the Internet. International print media are the truly mass circulated newspapers and magazines in various countries of the world published in several languages and printed simultaneously in several cities of the world. They include; International

Herald Tribune, World Street Journal, Financial Times, Reader's Digest, Time magazine, and The Economist among others. Global broadcasting includes shortwave radio services such as the World Service of the British Broadcasting Service (BBC); Voice of America (VOA); Radio France International (RFI); Deutsche Welle (DW) while international television broadcasting include satellite television stations such as the Cable News Network (CNN), BBC World, Al Jazeera, China Central Television (CCTV) France 24 B sky B (Sky News) among others.

Cable News Network (CNN)

CNN was established on June 1, 1980, by American businessman, Mr. Ted Turner. Its corporate headquarters is the CNN Center located in Atlanta, Georgia, USA. At inception, Turner called the CNN project "round the clock news operation". This has remained the main focus of this veritable medium of global communication. Using sophisticated communication satellites, CNN broadcasts to millions of viewers all over the world. It is the first cable television to reach viewers directly without going through local affiliate stations. CNN's journey to prominence was initially stalled by a series of related problems. Among these were: Lack of patronage by the American audience.

CNN was initially patronized by about 20% of US television households. This margin was far below what could generate profit. Also CNN could not penetrate the target TV market as projected. Advertisement receipts too were very low. In the first five years of operation, Turner spent about \$70 million to keep CNN afloat. There were predictions then of failure for the CNN project among media analysts who wondered if Mr. Turner had enough money to lose for years. Apart from low profit, lack of patronage and mounting debts were other initial problems that confronted the CNN on its journey to prominence. One other major problem CNN had to contend with was competition by old generation TV networks such as ABC, CBS, NBC, ESPN, Nickelodeon, etc.

These problems did not deter Mr. Turner; instead they brought about a sense of re-awakening by making the station more attractive to viewers. This re-awakening changed the fortunes of CNN and by 1985 it had started generating some profits. However in 1996, Time Warner acquired the assets of Turner Broadcasting System, the parent company of CNN.

Another acquisition of Ted Turner's CNN came on January 11, 2000 when American Online acquired CNN/Time Warner for \$164 billion. AOL/TW as the company was then known became the world's largest media company. The merger created a digital media power with the potential to reach the global audience in one form or another. In 2003, the board of directors of AOL/TW voted to drop 'AOL' from its brand, thereby reverting to its 1990 brand of Time Warner. CNN's uniqueness lies in its innovative use of communication technologies via satellite to reach its audience. CNN has been outstanding in several aspects. It is the first international TV station in the world to broadcast a 24-hour news service. It is reputed for extensive live coverage of global events.

Over half of a billion viewers around the world watched its live coverage of the Persian Gulf War in 1991. It has also covered live, successive American presidential conventions, funerals of late King Hussein of Jordan, Yitzak Rabin of Israel and Laurent Kabila of Democratic Republic of Congo. Moreover, CNN has a sister network, Headline News, which produces 48 half-hour TV news daily.

There is, in addition, a 24-hour Radio Syndicated Service – CNN Radio. Other CNN sister networks include CNN-Money, CNN/SI plus, TBS, TNT, HBO, Turner Classic Movies, WB and Cartoon Network. CNN's programmes are received in about 200 countries around the world. CNN depends on private funding and private revenue from advertising, and parades an array of broadcast stars. The CNN edge as it is often called is its ability to get a news situation first before other TV networks. In other words, CNN offers its international audience timely news stories than other networks.

It has been able to achieve this by developing and maintaining a formidable working relationship with other TV networks, news agencies and broadcasting unions worldwide. This is under the direct supervision of CNN's Senior Vice-President who oversees the network's international news team of 250 full-time staff outside the United States and 25 assignment editors on CNN international assignment desk. The slogan of CNN is "Be the first to know" .

BBC World

This station is the British Broadcasting Corporation's 24-hour international current affairs TV channel with BBC News, documentaries, lifestyle programmes and interviews. It was launched in January 1996. Internationally, it competes with the CNN and Sky News in Europe. BBC World was formerly known as BBC World Service Television. Unlike the BBC World Service Radio, it is commercially funded as the British government refused to extend the foreign office grant-in-aid to it.

It was originally carried on Star TV, the pan-Asian Satellite Television Service based in Hong Kong, which was later acquired by media giant, Rupert Murdoch. Owing to the Chinese government's dislike of the BBC's news coverage, Star TV dropped the carriage of the channel in the region. BBC World is carried on Satellite and Cable and its bulletins are also re-broadcast on local terrestrial channels. It is not officially available in the UK, on the grounds that it carries advertising. However, it can be received from satellite in the UK.

Al Jazeera

This is an international television station that has grown in popularity in recent years. Often referred to as, the Arabic CNN or BBC. It is further referred to as the capital of Doha. Doha is the capital of Qatar where it is located. Al Jazeera is the controversial news source for the Middle East. According to About.com (2011), "Al Jazeera offers 24-hour news coverage with an Arabic focus to more than 35 million viewers worldwide." In a region where most news is strictly

controlled by the government, Al Jazeera which in Arabic means island or peninsular has become an outlet for non-censored viewpoints and its provocative broadcasts have earned it criticisms from both the Arab and Western worlds. It operates web sites in Arabic and English. Al Jazeera was founded in 1996 by the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khafila al-Thani who overthrew his father's regime in a bloodless coup in 1995.

According to an American journalist, Daniel Schechter, this satellite TV-station has become the electronic capital of the Arab world-and among the fifty best known brands in the world. He further states that this emerging global broadcasting station functions more like an oasis in the desert country where it is based as well as in the international television news industry in which its dedication to hard-charging news makes it an anomaly. Al Jazeera emerged after the BBC trained journalists for an Arabic language news service, only to stop the project after an attempt was made to censor its programming. Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, then pictured as a tool of US interests, decided to fund the project.

CCTV News

CCTV News formerly known as CCTV-9 is a 24-hour English news channel, of China Central Television (CCTV), based in Beijing. The channel grew out of CCTV International, which was launched on 15 September 2000. CCTV began considering English-language international news programming on January 1, 1979, at the start of China's "reform and opening up." English news bulletins began on CCTV-2 in 1984 and later became available to overseas viewers.

Up till April 2010, CCTV 9 was a mixed general interest channel featuring news, travel programming and language training. In April 2010, CCTV-9 was relaunched as a 24-hour English language channel, and its name was changed to 'CCTV News'. CCTV News coverage includes newscasts, in-depth reports, and commentary programmes, as well as feature presentations. Its free-to-air satellite signal can be received by more than 85 million viewers in over 100 countries and regions. It is also carried by Cable, DTH, IPTV, and Terrestrial television platforms or systems in many nations. It caters to a global English-speaking audience, including overseas Chinese and English speakers in China.

Patterns of Coverage of Africa by Global Media Agencies

Scholars, politicians and other relevant stakeholders from Africa and other developing countries have complained about the biased and negative coverage of their regions by the mass media of developed countries including some of the global broadcast stations already mentioned. According to Uche (1996), "the complaint of the developing countries is that the media of the advanced countries particularly Western nations continue to portray their regions in the negative as areas of earthquakes, military coup d'état, economic chaos, conflicts, hunger, famine, humanitarian crises, political instability, HIV/AIDS, inefficiency, and corruption among others" Makunike (2011), corroborates the above point when he states that in the United States of America for instance, for listeners or viewers to be interested in news out of Africa it must be negative; conform to the traditional stereotype in its spotlight on grotesque and sensational

events; it must show misery and woe, corruption, mismanagement, starvation, primitive surroundings and in the case of Nigeria, chaos and outright anarchy.

He further elaborates on the coverage pattern of Africa in the American media: We hear of famines and coups but not the rejuvenation of the cities and the cultural vitality of its village life; about oppression and massacres but not education, self-help and political development; about poaching and habitat destruction, but not ongoing action or efforts at conservation, reforestation and environmental awareness. (Makunike 2011). In a recent study, Kalyango (2011), compared the news gathering goals of gatekeepers (editors) with public attitudes regarding the coverage of Africa by CNN. Results showed not only dissonance but also a disconnect between CNN news producers and Uganda's viewers' perception of their two major local stations. Although CNN was the main source of international news in 2004 in Uganda, its appeal had diminished with viewers by 2008 as they considered its coverage largely biased and ill-motivated towards Africa. It was these previewed negative and biased reports about Africa and other developing countries by the mass media of the developed countries of the West that led to the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) debate.

According to Uche (1996), "NWICO was a clamour or intellectual discourse of the 1970s and 1980s by the countries of the South or less developed countries at the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Non-Aligned Movement which centered on the nature, content, direction, quantity, fairness, balance and objectivity in transnational news flow that was dominated by the media and news agencies of the industrialized West." African delegates at that conference supported by the defunct Soviet Union argued that the bulk of the news or reports generated and disseminated by the major Western mass media were negative or unfavourable to developing countries in quantitative and qualitative terms. There have been implications of the biased coverage of Africa and other developing countries by the dominant Western mass media. We shall look at them in four phases which include; Economic, political and social-economic implications.

In the first place, the biased pattern of coverage has created a very negative and pessimistic perception of developing countries by citizens of the industrialized societies particularly those that have never been to the African continent. According to Garrick (2012), "for the average person in the Western world who has never ventured to Africa, his information about the continent is largely sourced from the powerful mass media of the West. Such people tend to view the African continent as one that lacks borders, countries and identities. Thus, issues in Africa are usually referred to as issues in Africa while being country specific is optional."

Economic Implications

The first consequence of this pessimistic view of Africa is the negative effect on foreign direct investment (FDI). The emphasis on FDI is crucial as it has been asserted that it is investment and not Western aid that will help turn the African continent around. The biased or redundant

coverage of Africa reinforces the negative images of the continent and this affects the flow of FDI into it. To illustrate this point, Garrick (2012), cites the Africa Attractiveness Survey recently conducted by Ernest & Young. In this study, over 500 business leaders from the Western world were divided into two groups, consisting of those doing business and those not doing business in Africa. When they were interviewed, findings highlighted a significant perception gap between the two groups. Those not doing business on the continent had a largely pessimistic view of the continent and their prospect of doing business there was very low while those already doing business there were confident in the region's growth.

Renowned Nigerian entrepreneur, Tony Elumelu re-echoed the same point in a recent CNN interview when he stated that negative portrayal of Africa in Western media has scared away several foreign investors from Africa in some critical sectors except areas such as telecommunications and extractive industries. This is a problem that was deliberately created to keep Africa in check and continually hinder her growth and development.

Furthermore, through the constant promotion of standard stereotypes in which the continent is portrayed as a place of major natural disasters such as (volcanic eruptions, droughts, floods etc) and violent social conflicts like militancy, as well as a breathtakingly beautiful wide habitat. It becomes very difficult for the westerner who depends on these media for information to venture into any kind of investment in a place described like this. In his eyes, Africa is filled with danger. This negative reportage makes governments and enterprises very reluctant to invest in the continent because they have been very negatively influenced by the report of a corrupt Africa overtaken by conflict and diseases. This is not to disregard the image created by our African brothers who find it great to talk down on the continent at will.

Political Implications

Politicians of developing countries allege that there is a Western bias to the news that is printed about their countries. People from the Third World seem to make news in Europe and the USA only when they die of starvation or kill each other. Riots, gory deaths, the marriage scandals of an Idi Amin or a Soekarno hit the headlines of the Western press, while positive news about development projects or industrial growth are ignored. Even the language used in reports is heavily loaded in favour of the Western establishment. Guerillas fighting racist regimes in Africa or military dictatorships in Latin America are described as 'terrorists'. Not till the last years of the war in Vietnam did the Western news agencies explain that the National Liberation Front enjoyed widespread popularity, and was fighting what the Vietnamese people considered an occupying army. Likewise the names of many independent minded nationalist leaders of the Third World - like Mossadeq or Allende - are invariably prefixed by terms like 'Leftist' or 'Marxist', but a Reagan or a Pinochet is hardly described as a 'Rightist' or 'capitalist'.

The effects of the constant use of terminology should not be underrated. It tends to reinforce stereotypes that have been built up over generations - the Far East as an area constantly ablaze

with revolts and carnage, the Middle East seething with Sheikhs and their harems and Africa steaming with strange animals prowling through the bungle. Such a bias moulds public opinion to the point where Western military intervention in Vietnam or El Salvador is made quite acceptable. Tailoring news to meet Western self-interest often means cultivating the idea of a threat from without.

Reporting on a meeting of Third World bauxite producers, a UPI dispatch added that some experts feel this could be the first step in the establishment of a series of international cartels for controlling raw materials essential to the industrialized nations, which could set United States' economy back more than 40 years. Such alarmist reports create the feeling that the industrialized countries must defend themselves by obstructing such organizations of producers from the Third World. With agencies like UPI getting 80 percent of the revenue from Western newspapers it is not surprising that they look at the globe in terms of the West's needs. Vietnam continued to be front page news as long as American soldiers were killed but receded after a US withdrawal until events like last year's famine barely got a mention.

This bad light sets up the developing countries for disregard and disrespect from the powerful west. Negative reportage, incorrect information and blind assimilation of it have contributed to the woes of developing countries like Nigeria.

Recently David Cameron, the British prime minister in a private chat with the Queen and the Arch Bishop of Canterbury called Nigeria and Afghanistan fantastically correct. He has never been to Nigeria, what he knew was what he was told, no thanks to the powerful media who feeds him with those things he knew. He could be wrong, but he believed the source from which he got the information and that is the problem. And that has the capacity to destroy diplomatic relations among countries. The tacit conclusion is that nothing can work in Africa and no form of government is possible, let alone a democratic one.

The implication is an image of a continent that is perpetually in crisis, without any hope of advancing without palliative and charitable aid, or at the best, without assistance provided and managed by good willed (non-African) actors.

Socio-cultural Implications

The first report given by the nineteenth century explorers described a continent where the people were different to us, their pigmentation was different, their anatomy were different, their traditions were different. According to Corby (1995), they depicted the inhabitants as "simple, hospitable, authentic and kind in line with the myth of the "good savage." It is also a land where time is believed to flow differently, if at all." This recurrent stereotype of African people strengthened by the media is a weapon the West has used over the years in severing the socio cultural relations between the West and other developing countries. Some of those antics include

the representation of the African continent as the “dark continent” which extends to take in the supposed darkness, dullness, impenetrability and the occult side of the world.

Furthermore, the Western perception of African people is that of primitive, irrational, superstitious, lazy as well as incapable to plan or care for themselves. When these characteristics are transferred to “know how” and professionalism, the result is a picture of individuals and groups possessing poor cognitive and operative capacity, ill-suited for managerial positions and depending on outside aid for any emergency.

Turning the other side of the coin, the mindset down here in the developing world especially Nigeria where people especially young people want to be like the people of the West because they are superior. A good example played out in South Africa during the burial of the late South African leader Nelson Mandela, preference was accorded all the Western/foreign media such as CNN, BBC, Al Jazeera and the likes, over the local news media coming from other parts of Africa, one of which is TVC News, a PAN African station based in Lagos Nigeria. Most of these foreign media correspondents were allowed entry into the main venues of all the centres used for the burial of the late icon, while most, if not all other news agencies having African origin were shot out, and allowed to make do with scanty reports they could possibly grab or gather from around the South Africa venues. In a similar situation, the stadium venue that hosted all of the world leaders in attendance, including the U.S. President Barack Obama, none of the four TVC News’ correspondents was allowed access into it.

That, from experience, was because anything and everything coming from the Western world is considered superior to those with African origin. This is because of the global media’s impact. They have greater capacity to send information down here as much as they desire as against the media in developing countries that have no capacity to send their own message across. Because of this, the richer media have the liberty to send and receive whichever content they desire and by so doing, they acculturate people in this part of the world, change their perception and implant in them the ideas they want without a uniform reciprocation from the developing world media agencies.

This imbalance is what creates the problem and when the system is like this, it hinders international cooperation and interventions as well as creates a barrier between the citizens of developed and developing countries of the world with the former feeling superior and the later feeling inferior because of disparity in exposure.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The term ‘Gate- keeping’ has been widely used as a metaphor to describe the process by which selections are made in media work, especially decisions regarding whether or not to allow a particular news to pass through the ‘gate’ of a news channel.

McQuail (2005), opines that the Gate-keeping theory deals with the processes and factors that influence the decisions of a media organization to select or reject potential newsworthy items for public dissemination. The theory postulates that media organizations and the key media professionals act as gates to the flood of information coming in from the larger society. These gates are opened to let some kind of information through for processing and publication; or they are shut to deny other kinds of information the opportunity for processing and publication.

Tejumaiye (2000), enumerates the determining factors in which these gates are open or closed. Such factors include; structure of information industry, qualitative differences in the roles of key communication personnel, characteristics of the audience, nature of the media and characteristics of the information sources. He went further to expatiate that the Gate-keeping interactions of these factors may be represented thus: sources select information items that they present to communication professionals who themselves carry out their own selection, guided by criteria derived from the rules of their organization, the demands of the industry, the nature of their professional duties, the information value or content of the items and the limitations of the media.

The selections of the communication professionals are presented to the audience, who in turn select the items they will attend to and those they will pass on to other people. In the light of this study, the media organizations constitute a determining factor in the kind of information or media culture received and disseminated. Therefore, the power to receive or reject information that will develop or harm the societal culture, the media responsibilities and activity of the society or country is in the ambit of the media organization. The theory rightly apply to this study.

Recommendations

- The stereotypes on Nigeria, Africa and other developing countries caused by the negative reports by the global news agencies especially Western media must be deconstructed using scientific and educational tools. Furthermore, the media's approach towards Africa must be revised and their informative strategies realigned to consider the trends, contexts and positive events occurring in the continent.
- Sensitization and education programs involving the Western public are required at various levels to promote the desire to have better in-depth and qualified information on the African reality.
- Programs addressed to human resources in the media are crucial. It is advisable to select correspondents who have lived and worked in Africa, or those who intend staying there for some time, and to train Western journalists (via training courses on history, African culture courses, methods for selecting and handing news) and African reporters (not only professional updating courses but also special courses to revive cultural identity and social responsibility).

- Networking has been suggested. Involvement of “friends of Africa” no matter where they are and what field they operate in, as long as they commit themselves to spread a more exact image of the continent, even via horizontal exchange between civil society actors. Obviously a special role can be played by members of the African Diaspora, contribution can be invaluable in the gap between cultures and societies.
- The setting up of a real and proper international ombudsman able to represent a benchmark for analysis and accurate intervention on the image of Africa and other developing countries.

CONCLUSION

Having taken a look at global news agencies and the economic, political and socio-cultural implications of their negative reportage of developing countries like Nigeria, it became obvious what the western media can do and has done to Africa and other developing nations with their media which they have succeeded in using as a neo-colonial tool to shape opinions in Africa and control affairs from far away as a result of the imbalance in finance and technological power. Furthermore, Superior technology and professional expertise have enabled Western news agencies and journalists to provide information efficiently. When combined with the best in a humanitarian liberal tradition, these have produced some remarkable journalism.

Exposures of US army brutalities in Vietnam or the suppression of human rights in Uganda have had a powerful influence on public opinion. But such examples are a few silver linings in an otherwise dark and menacing cloud. It is the overwhelming trend of sensationalizing poverty and civil wars, damning and distorting the aspirations of ordinary people and ignoring the historical and social context of third world problems that has marked western reporting about developing countries.

Finally, having identified communication imbalance which have led to the situations we discussed above, it becomes obvious that there is a need to make things right, to create a level playing ground and ensure that by making one part of a country aware of other parts, their people, arts, customs, and politics; by permitting the national leaders to talk to the people, and people to the leaders and to each other; by making possible a worldwide dialogue, by keeping goals and accomplishments balanced before the public, thus modern communication, widely used, can help weld together isolated communities, disparate subcultures, self centered individuals and groups, and separate developments into a truly international development.

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