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Africa's Image in the Local Press: An Analysis of African News in Some Nigerian Newspapers

By Nnamdi B. Emenyeonu

Abstract

In the wake of accusations and counter-accusations between the West and developing nations over the imbalanced nature of information flow, communication researchers and policy formulation groups have, over the years, been enticed to make decisions based on empirical findings. In this paper, the author presents findings of a study conducted on four leading Nigerian newspapers over a one-year period. His conclusion is that the media in Africa are equally to blame for perpetrating a negative image of the continent, and that the continent can only benefit from a new and more equitable international communication order by re-examining her values. The paper warns that devoting undue attention to conflict, crime and disasters at the expense of the region's efforts, policies and programmes aimed at advancing the people's welfare, negates the very principle of balanced reporting which Africa so much craves for.

Nnamdi B. Emenyeonu is a lecturer in the Department of Mass Communication at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. He is completing doctoral studies at the Centre for Mass Communication Research, University of Leicester.

L'Image de l'Afrique Dans la Presse Locale: Une Analyse des Renseignements dans Certains Journaux Nigériens

Par Nnamdi B. Emenyeonu

Résumé

Suite aux accusations et contre-accusations nées entre l'occident et les pays en voie de développement concernant le déséquilibre sur le plan du flux de l'information, en science de la communication et de groupes chargés de définir les politiques ont été tentées, durant des années, de baser leurs décisions sur des résultats empiriques. L'auteur du présent article présente les résultats d'une étude menée pendant un an sur quatre journaux les plus importants au Nigéria. Il conclut que les médias africains sont également à blamer car ils véhiculent une image négative du continent et que ce n'est qu'en ré-examinant ses valeurs que celui-ci peut tirer profit d'un nouvel ordre médiatique international plus équitable. L'article souligne qu'il n'est rien de moins que de nier le principe de reportage équilibré dont l'Afrique a tellement besoin que de centrer une attention excessive sur les conflits, les crimes, les désastres au détriment des efforts, de politiques et des programmes menés au niveau de la région, en vue d'améliorer le bien-être de ses populations.

Nnamdi B. Emenyeonu est Assistant au Département de Journalisme à l'Université de Nigéria, Nsukka. Il termine ses études doctorales au Centre de Recherche en Journalisme de l'Université de Leicester.

Introduction

Of all reactions to the call by developing nations for a new order of global news flow and communication, perhaps the most significant was the inauguration of the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems.

Previous efforts such as the establishment of the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) were reported to have achieved little in addressing the news flow controversy. Thus, following repeated demands for the rectification of imbalances in the flow of news and opinions between the industrialised and developing nations, a UNESCO general conference convened in Kenya in 1976, ratified the proposal to establish a commission. Besides investigating the imbalance problem, it was thought this Commission would also be useful for conducting an omnibus study of communication problems in modern society.

That Commission was inaugurated in December 1977, with a special mandate to recommend measures for reducing the communication gap between the developed and developing countries, as well as for achieving a freer and more balanced international flow of information. It has since submitted a report whose highlights have been published in *Many Voices, One World* (MacBride, 1980).

Viewed against the mandate of "reducing the communication gap... and achieving a freer and more balanced flow of information" between the North and the South, the report of the Commission has attracted a lot of criticism from communication researchers, scholars and commentators. Arazu (1987), for example, argues that the report neither articulated the basic features of the desired new order nor showed how efforts to attain it could promote the cause of peace by lessening tension.

It was probably in line with this sentiment that Opubor (1982) likened the Commission to the blindmen's date with the elephant. "We are no nearer an understanding of the totality of communication problems in modern society in spite of the far-

ranging and assiduous deliberations of the Commission," he concluded.

Contentions

Two of the most pronounced complaints of developing nations are that by virtue of the domineering influence of the big Western news agencies, there is a dominance of Western news in international communication. Secondly, it has been pointed out that reports from or about developing nations in the Western media are heavily spiced with accounts of the odd, the bizarre and the gory, all arising from conflicts and catastrophes, tension and turbulence, sickness and squalor.

These claims have attracted counter claims and both have in turn constituted the focus of many an empirical investigation among communication researchers and communication policy formulation groups. In one of the earliest investigations into the dominance of Western news in international news flow, the International Press Institute (IPI) reported the existence of an imbalance in global news exchange in favour of the industrialised nations.

In another pioneer study, Schramm (1964) drew attention to the disparity in news flow between industrialised and developing nations. In collaboration with other researchers Schramm carried out another news flow study in which he critically analysed the contents of 16 Asian dailies. He found that those papers received from Western wire services, a view of the world quantitatively dominated by Western news. (Schramm et al., 1978)

In another study that spanned a wider scope, Gerbner and Mavanyi (1977) probed the cognitive level of readers about world affairs in Western Europe, Eastern Europe, the defunct USSR, USA and Africa. They reported that in almost all these regions, readers seemed to know more about Western Europe. In the defunct USSR for example, readers got more news about the USA and Western Europe than readers of the two regions got about the USSR. According to the same report, Third World nations,

especially those in Africa, were most invisible in the international press of the 1970s.

There are researchers whose studies dwelt on wire service despatches. One of them, Hester (1978) analysed the international news despatched by the Associated Press (AP) and found that approximately 70 per cent of AP's stories were on developed nations while the remaining 30 per cent were on developing nations.

Using a method similar to Hester's, Rimmer (1981) analysed the foreign news content of the United Press International (UPI) "A" wire service in the USA. The analysis showed that UPI's foreign news dwelt most conspicuously on America and Europe. It furthermore indicated that although the Middle East and North America finished third, they were featured on account of their conflict-generating propensity. Further demonstrations of "westernness" in international news flow are numerous and are adequately illustrated in the works of Masmoudi (1978); Schiller (1978); Leung (1979); and Nwosu (1979).

As regards the type of Third World news covered, Nwosu's (1979) study indicates that crisis and politics got most prominence in news items and articles on Black Africa in four British and American newspapers. Rimmer also reports in his 1981 study that "coverage of Third World events (by the Western media) focused largely on violence and disasters rather than positive developments".

In another study whose results were supportive of Rimmer's finding, Riffe and Shaw (1982) identified a disparity in the tone of news of the Third and First Worlds in two American newspapers. News stories about the Third World in the two papers were more likely to deal with conflicts or upheavals than stories from the First World.

The foregoing studies which supported Third World complaints have not been left unchallenged. There exists a substantial stock of studies whose results indict or at least puncture Third World complaints about the dominance of Western-oriented news and unfavourable Third World news in global news flows.

In one such study, Stevenson (1984) reports that one-third of foreign news in media systems of industrialised nations originated from the Third World just as two-thirds of all foreign news in Third World media originated from Third World countries. He also found that 60 per cent of foreign news carried in regional wire services in the USA was devoted to the Third World. Another study which came out with a similar finding after a content analysis of four major international news agencies (AP, AFP, UPI and Reuters) in comparison with the use of their despatches in 16 Asian newspapers, was done by Schramm. Of the 2,039 items on developing countries despatched by the news agencies, only 15 per cent was used in the Asian papers, the analysis indicated, compelling Schramm to conclude that "the four international news agencies presented more news on Third World countries than their newspapers could use". (Schramm et al., 1978)

In terms of quality of coverage, Schramm further reported that only 16 per cent of the entire despatches on the Third World in the four agencies were on wars, disasters and crime while more than 36 per cent were on economic issues. Other studies whose results were supportive of minimal attention on negative news in developing countries have been done by Bishop (1975), Pinch, (1977) and Stevenson (1984).

The Problem

The claims and counter claims regarding anomalies in global news flow have been fuelled to a large extent by conflicting results arising from investigations such as the ones cited above. The ensuing debate has been aptly described as the dialogue of the deaf or a series of disconnected monologues. In reaction to the confusion, Ekwelie (1985) advised every country to endeavour to solve its own internal information sharing problems instead of turning world forums into wailing walls, a counsel which seems to draw its validity from the observation that even among the agitating developing nations, there are glaring imbalances in communication facilities and in news flow between the cities and

the countryside. As Ekwelie put it, "the urban population seems to be engaged in a collective monologue, ignoring the villages and farmers."

As an introspective audit, this article fixes its gaze on the conduct of the print media in Africa with special regard to the phenomenon of quantitative imbalance and qualitative coverage in the presentation of African affairs using selected Nigerian dailies as a sample. It seeks to answer the question: what kind of coverage does Africa give itself? The paper specifically addresses the following questions:

- What aspects of news about Africa do the selected papers stress?
- How much salience is given to development news and articles?
- What discernible news values predominate in the reports carried in the papers?
- What image of Africa is portrayed in the reports?

Method of Study

To answer these questions, four leading Nigerian newspapers which enjoy substantial readership in and beyond Nigeria were content analysed, three for quantitative coverage and four for qualitative interpretations. For quantitative analysis, *The Daily Times*, *The Guardian* and *The Vanguard* were purposively selected to represent government ownership, the elite press and private ownership-cum-general interest readership respectively. The three papers also devote considerable space to foreign news, especially news from other African countries.

The study covered the period between April 1, 1991 to April 1, 1992. Within this period, there were 1,095 issues of all three dailies. Adapting Stempel's constructed and composite weeks, a sample of 105 issues was drawn. Each of them was thoroughly coded for the following content categories:

Story type: Classified every coverage as straight news, feature article, supplement, photonews, cartoon etc.

Publication: Referred to the paper carrying the story under analysis.

Source: Defined the news organisation which originated any of the stories, e.g. PANA, NAN, foreign news agencies (here defined as those operating outside Africa), staff of the papers, foreign press, radio, television and satellite or cable television.

Country: Identified the African nation(s) covered in a particular story.

News locale: Denoted which area of the country was covered - urban centre, federal/state capital, rural area etc.

News subject: Categorised individuals, groups, institutions or organisations referred to in any story.

Topic: Sorted out the subject matter of the story such as government activities, economy, sports, military, arts, culture and entertainment, and education. Others included international ties, food and agriculture, science and technology, law, religion, crime, health, disasters, unrest, human interests and so on.

Story Direction: Coded as favourable, unfavourable or neutral. Favourable stories were defined as those which contained good news or positive and admirable developments e.g. free and fair election, successful development activities, political stability, rural development and so on. Unfavourable stories were seen as those that portrayed a country in a bad light such as coups, riots, bloodshed, crimes etc.

For the qualitative analysis, issues of *The Daily Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Vanguard* and *The National Concord* published within the period May 1, 1991 through May 1, 1992 were used for the study.

Results

The 105 issues of the three papers selected for the analysis generated 352 stories on various issues about African countries. Of this lot, straight news was placed first with 291 items (82.6 per cent) while features followed with 70 items (11.4 per cent). There were 14 photonews items, representing 4 per cent and five editorials on matters concerning different African countries. There were only two articles while genres such as supplements, cartoons and letters-to-the-editor were absent.

Examining the quantity of reports about Africa published by each paper within the period of analysis, *The Guardian* was found to have carried the highest coverage of African affairs, having generated 120 reports or 34 per cent of the entire coverage. *The Daily Times* followed closely with 117 reports or 33.2 per cent, while *The Vanguard* had 115 reports or 32.8 percent.

The analysis further showed that the sources of a great majority of the reports were not indicated. A whopping 268 reports (76 per cent) fell under the source-not-indicated category. Sixty-seven reports, (29 per cent) were credited to staff reporters and non-staff writers, while foreign (non African) news agencies were the sources of nine (2.6 per cent) of the reports. The PANA and NAN provided three reports each, while other African papers (excluding Nigerian) were the sources of two reports.

Regarding the frequency of coverage of individual African countries, South Africa was found to have attracted the highest coverage with 106 reports or 30.1 per cent. With 65 reports (18.5 per cent) of the entire coverage, Liberia attracted the second highest coverage while Cameroon and the Republic of Benin came third and fourth with 24 (6.8 per cent) and 16 (4.5 per cent) reports respectively. The frequencies for other countries are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Frequency of Coverage of African Countries

Country	Frequency	%age	Country	Frequency	%age
Algeria	9	2.6	Kenya	9	2.6
Angola	9	2.6	Liberia	65	18.5
Benin	16	4.8	Libya	10	2.8
Burkina Faso	2	0.6	Mali	1	0.3
Cameroon	24	6.8	Morocco	3	0.9
Cote d'Ivoire	5	1.4	Mozambique	2	0.6
Chad	3	0.9	Namibia	8	2.3
Egypt	13	3.7	Niger	2	0.6
Ethiopia	9	2.6	Senegal	3	0.9
Gabon	2	0.6	Somalia	6	1.7
The Gambia	2	0.6	Sierra Leone	2	0.6
Ghana	12	3.4	Sudan	4	0.4
Guinea	1	0.3	S.Africa	106	30.1
Tanzania	3	0.9	Togo	3	0.9
Zaire	3	0.9	Zambia	10	2.8
Zimbabwe	5	1.4			

n=352, total=100%

Countries such as Botswana, Burundi, The Central African Republic, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mauritania, Malawi, Malagasy, Rwanda and Uganda attracted not even a single item.

The audit on the locale of coverage showed that events concerning the entire country were most covered. Such events accounted for 115 reports or 37 per cent. The locale of 110 reports (31.2 per cent) was not indicated. Fifty-eight reports or 16.5 per cent were on places outside Africa; 52 other reports (14.8 per cent) had African country capitals as their locale; 11 reports were on urban centres while from rural areas originated only two (0.6 per cent) of the stories.

On news subjects, opposition and rebel leaders attracted most of the coverage. They were the subject of 103 (27.2 per cent)

reports. The citizens were the subject of 93 (26.4 per cent) reports, while government and presidents made the subject of 65 reports (18.5 per cent). Other news subjects and their frequencies are illustrated in Table 2;

Table 2: Frequency of News Subjects

Subject	Frequency	%age
The Government	65	18.5
The President	65	18.5
Other prominent govt officials	14	4
Citizens	93	26.4
Govt officials of non African States	3	0.9
Opposition/Rebel Leaders	103	29.9
Others	9	2.8
Total	352	100.0

Relative to topic or subject matter, the highest coverage of 67 reports or 19 per cent was on rebel group activities. Following closely on the heels of rebel activities was 'civil war' which was the subject matter of 57 reports (16.2 per cent). Sports was placed third with 50 reports (14.2 per cent), while political events and government activities were the topics of 40 (11.4 per cent) and 34 (9.7 per cent) reports respectively. Subject matters such as food and agriculture, science and technology received no attention.

In terms of tone, 160 reports or 45.5 per cent were unfavourable to Africa while 143(40.5 per cent) were favourable. Forty-nine reports (14 per cent) could not be placed in either category.

Qualitative Analysis

This section of the analysis presents relevant contents with a view to reinforcing the quantitative results on the dominant images of Africa as portrayed by the newspapers analysed. Ten

Table 3: Subject Matters

Topic	freq.	%age	Topic	Freq.	%age
Govt activities	34	9.7	Ext politics	33	9.4
Economy	14	3.7	Religion	2	0.6
Sports	50	14.2	Science/Tech.	0	0
Military	6	1.7	Aid schemes	2	0.6
Food/Agric.	0	0	Politics	40	11.4
Arts/Culture/Ent.	4	1.2	Civil wars	57	16.2
Law	4	1.2	Disasters	2	0.6
Health	2	0.6	Civil unrest	28	8.0
Crime	5	1.4	Rebel groups	67	19.0
Education	3	0.9	Human int.	0	0

n= 325, total=100%

dominant images of Africa were discerned as follows:

1. A Continent Engrossed in Domestic Violence

On page 2 of *The Vanguard* of May 1, 1991, a report captioned "29 Killed in Soweto" narrated how 29 people died in a political violence as members of the Inkatha Freedom Party went on a rampage following the murder of Mayor Moses Khumalo. This image was reinforced with a photograph of a man said to have been killed by the Inkatha. The picture was published on page 20 of *The Vanguard* of May 8, 1991.

Furthermore, *The Daily Times* of February 1, 1992 published on page 5 a story headlined "Security Cordon at Algiers Mosque." The story stated that a feeling of insecurity suffused the city as the radical Islamic Salvation Front overtook an uncompleted mosque, and that riot policemen armed with automatic rifles and tear gas were drafted to forestall conflicts.

In yet another portrayal of violence, *The Daily Times* of February 6, 1992 carried the headline, "15 Killed in Algerian Protest." According to the report, Algerian troops shot and killed 15 people in a confrontation between the fundamentalist Islamic Salvation Front and law enforcement agencies.

2. A Continent Immersed in Civil Unrest

One of the several stories which portrayed this image appeared on page 2 of *The Vanguard* of May 23, 1991. Headlined "Protest in Ghana", the report indicated that Ghanaian students under the auspices of the National Union of Ghana Students held a demonstration to protest against the composition of their nation's Consultative Assembly. Another story in the same paper of May 27, 1991 further reinforced the image of unrest. It was a report on calls and efforts by the Islamic Salvation Front toward unlimited general strikes in demand for early presidential elections.

In the same issue, a story under the headline, "Farmers Protest in Pretoria" reported protests by white South African farmers in Northern Transvaal and Orange Free State provinces over government policy on land reform. In yet another article with a similar portrayal, *The Daily Times* of February 4, 1992 reported, "Abidjan University Shut", highlighting a two-day violence on the campus and the university's subsequent closure. As a background, the report reminisced that some soldiers had earlier raided the university in a move termed "crack down on vandalism," during which several people were killed.

The Guardian of November 8, 1991 added pep to the portrayal with a report on the collapse of banking services in Kenya following a nation-wide strike by bank workers. *The National Concord* on its part heightened this image on page 10 of its February 25, 1992 edition with a story titled: "Ivorian Troops Fire Women Marchers." The report said that about 100 bare-breasted women supporters of the Ivorien Popular Front were attacked with tear gas and stunt grenades, and recalled Prime Minister

Alsana Quatara's ban on marches and political gatherings after a riot in which cars and buildings were burnt.

3. *A Continent Where Mutual Co-operation and Good Neighbourliness Exist Among Countries*

In an editorial on page 6, of *The Vanguard* of May 6, 1991 titled "Lifting Sanctions in South Africa," the paper lauded President Babangida's speech which urged the lifting of sanctions on South Africa if there was a commitment by the racist regime to repeal all pro-apartheid laws. The paper once more portrayed this image in its May 14, 1991 issue, when it reported that the front-line states had unanimously condemned the haste with which countries were re-opening diplomatic missions in South Africa, arguing that restraint should be exercised until all discriminatory policies against the black population are completely eliminated.

In its own contribution, *The Daily Times* issue of February 1, 1992 published the story of Namibia's plan to conclude extradition treaties with numerous countries in Africa.

4. *A Continent Filled with Tribal Clashes*

"Inkatha Warns ANC" was the headline of a story on page 2 of *The Vanguard* of May 7, 1991. According to the report, the Zulu-based Inkatha group had threatened to mount one hundred thousand armed men in Soweto unless ANC heeded its call to stop alleged killing of Inkatha supporters.

Another example of this portrayal was found in *The Daily Times* of February 1, 1992. Under the headline, "35 Killed in Cameroon's Ethnic Clashes", the report stated that a squabble between the Choa Arabs and the Kotokos left 35 people dead and 97 others seriously injured. A similar headline, "100 Killed in Niger's Ethnic Clash" appeared in *The Guardian* of November 1, 1991, reporting that about 100 people from the Peul tribe were killed in a dispute over land with the Hausa tribe. The Hausas were

said to have set fire to huts in the village of Todda, a Peul community.

The Guardian reported yet another ethnic upheaval in Kenya. On page 7 of its November 8, 1991 edition, the paper's report titled "Kenyan Security Forces Deployed to Quell Ethnic Clashes" said that para-military personnel had been drafted to squelch a clash between the Kalenjin and Nandi tribes over ownership of land, a clash which claimed the lives of three persons and forced 4,000 people to flee from their homes.

Still on tribal fracas, *The Guardian* of November 8, 1991 carried an article under the headline, "Togolese Ruling Party Linked With Tribal Killing." In the story, the ruling party of President Eyadema was accused of fuelling a tribal war in which 31 people died and 114 others were injured.

5. A Continent Torn by Rebel Conflicts

"Clashes in Angola" was the headline of a story in *The Vanguard* edition of May 14, 1991. More intense violence, the report said, had erupted in Angola following the collapse of a cease-fire accord between the Angolan Government and UNITA rebels. The paper also carried the headline, "Ethiopian Rebels" in its May 14, 1991 issue. The story reported that a rebel group in Ethiopia appeared to be gaining more grounds in its bid to take over the Red Sea port of Beyelhaul.

Rebel activity was yet the subject matter of a story published in *The Guardian* of January 28, 1992, under the headline, "Rebels Kill 6 Soldiers in Eastern Sierra-Leone." The rebels reportedly ambushed government troops, killing six of them. On the same issue, *The National Concord* of January 2, 1991 reported that Sierra Leonian rebels had refuted government claims that it had captured Southern Sierra-Leone from them (rebels). The rebels insisted that they were firmly in control of the area. "Chadian Army Kills 400 Rebels" in *The Concord* of January 5, 1992, "Niger Confirms Rebellion from Tuaregs" in *The National Concord* of January 2, 1992 are additional headlines which proclaimed rebellion in African countries.

6. A Continent Undergoing Democratic Reforms

The Guardian of August 6, 1991 announced: "Togo's Conference to Decide on Radical Approach." This was the headline of a story which had details of consultations among Togolese politicians on the best option of instituting multiparty democracy in the country. In that same edition, the paper also had another story on democratic reform in the Cameroon. Under the headline, "Cameroon: Long Road to Democracy," the report featured "non-violent campaigns" by opposition leaders for multiparty elections in the country.

In its own report, *The Daily Times* of February 4, 1992 carried the headline, "Sudanese exiles call for democracy", a headline which summarised the conference of Sudanese opposition groups during which the constitution for a new democratic Sudan would be adopted. *The National Concord* of February 28, 1992 reported that an unfolding new experiment in multiparty systems in Benin Republic gives a boost to the quest for political pluralism not only in the country, but on the entire continent. Other reports which portrayed that image included *The Guardian's* report headlined "South Africa Government, ANC Meet on Political Issues" and an article headlined, "Chadian National Conference to Hold in May" carried in *The Vanguard* of March 31, 1992.

7. A Continent High in Human Rights Violation Record

Several reports in the papers analysed depicted African countries as centres of oppression. For example, *The Vanguard* of May 23, 1991 had a story titled, "Guinea Bans Demonstrations". The country's minister of the interior, the report said, had clamped a ban on all meetings and demonstrations except those authorised by the government.

Another evidence of this image can be found in *The Daily Times* of February 1, 1992. Titled "Tanzanian Troops Oust Striking Doctors", the story stated that about a hundred armed soldiers

forcefully ejected striking doctors from their government-supplied houses. This was against a court injunction which forbade government from evicting the doctors.

Again, *The National Concord* of March 5, 1992 published another rights violation story. The headline read, "Amnesty Accuses Tunisia" and the story revealed that at least 800 people believed to be members of the Islamic Fundamentalist Movement had been in detention for 18 months without trial. The same report indicted the Tunisian authorities for using torture and illegal detention on other opposition groups.

8. A Continent Plagued by Coups and Political Instability

On May 25, 1991, *The Vanguard* had a headline, "Mengistu's Whereabouts Unknown." According to the report, confusion and uncertainty had overtaken the Ethiopian country following a coup while the fate of the former president was not known.

"Renewed Fighting in Chad" was yet another headline whose report dwelt on political instability. The story which appeared in *The Daily Times* of February 3, 1992 told readers that Chadian troops had clashed with rebels loyal to Hissien Habre. The rebels, the report added, had attempted to capture the capital after failing to overthrow the government.

Another reinforcement of this image was found in the August 5, 1991 edition of *The Guardian* under the caption, "Coups Foiled in Comoros". The subject of the story was an abortive attempt to unseat President Mohammed Kijhar of Comoros Island. "Plot Against Nujoma Uncovered" was the headline of *The National Concord* report on plans by a group to subvert the government of Sam Nujoma.

9. A Continent that Places Premium on Sports

This image resounded in several stories. The following headlines are examples: "African Football comes of age" - *Daily Times* February 1, 1992. The story focused on the 18th African Cup of

Nations Championship, describing it as a triumph for African football and predicting that the world cup would soon come to Africa.

"Watch Out for Algeria's Boulmerka in 1500m Men," published in the *Guardian* of August 15, 1991 which lauded Africa's giant stride in international athletics held in Rome that year and expressed the hope that more laurels were on their way to Africa.

"Morocco: Surviving a World Cup Match" in *The National Concord*, January 7, 1992 featured Morocco's brilliant efforts in world soccer. It was full of praise for soccer stars such as Timouni Zaki.

10. A Continent Endangered with High Crime Rate and Violence

One of the reports that conveyed this image was published in the February 5, 1992 edition of *The Daily Times*. Captioned "Beninois Gangster Kills a Nigerian", the story narrated how the gangster who specialised in extorting money from Nigerian traders killed a Nigerian in Cotonou. The story of violence reappeared in *The Daily Times* of February 6, 1992. Headlined "2 Killed in Liberia Grenade Attack", the story gave details of a grenade explosion in a bar in Monrovia which killed two persons.

As if these were not enough, *The National Concord's* headline of March 4, 1992 proclaimed, "Three Algerian Fanatics to Die". According to the story, a fundamentalist group known as Hizbollah allegedly attacked a mine, killing one person in July 1990 as well as engaging in a shooting incidence in April 1991. Three members of the group linked with these acts were therefore condemned to death.

Discussion

The data arising from the analysis are descriptive enough to answer the questions which form the essence of this study. On the question of what aspects of news about Africa are stressed,

it can be concluded with a considerable measure of confidence that the African press pays a great deal of attention to negative events or developments which are not favourable to the continent's image.

The analysis of story direction showed that 160 (45.5%) of the stories were unfavourable, an average of 1.5 unfavourable stories everyday. Furthermore, under news subjects, opposition leaders, especially rebels attracted the highest coverage (103 or 27.2%), a lead they maintained under subject matter. Of about 16 categories coded under subject matter, activities of rebel groups were most reported (67 or 19%) followed closely by civil war which was the subject of 57 or 16.2% stories.

Civil unrest attracted 28 (8.0%) items. These three categories alone accounted for 148 or 43.2% of all stories about Africa in the three papers. Apart from sports which attracted 50 reports (14.2%), the rest of the subject matters such as 'crime', 'disasters', and 'military' also had some flavour of negativism.

A further reinforcement to this position can be found in the frequency of coverage of individual African countries. The dens of chaos and bloodshed such as South Africa and Liberia* got the highest and second highest coverage respectively, while relatively calm countries such as The Gambia, Guinea Bissau and Botswana got scanty or no coverage.

Regarding the degree of salience given to development news and articles, the results showed that the coverage of such news was dismal. Development news items were coded as those that dwelt on the welfare of the people namely, all ramifications of development programmes, policies and projects - be they for the provision of social amenities, health, food, shelter, employment, economic well being and education, or rural face-lifts.

As shown in Table 3, subject matters such as 'health', 'aid packages' and 'education' were featured in not more than three reports, while 'food and agriculture', 'science and technology' and 'human interest' had no mention at all.

By inclining their reports towards countries where there were

* At the time of this study.

crises of all sorts and news subjects whose actions were controversial and contributory to conflicts, the local press betrayed a preference for oddity and conflicts as the overriding values in news judgement.

Finally, on the question of the kind of image of Africa portrayed in the sampled papers, the results of the quantitative analysis with regard to news subjects, subject matter and story direction give an impression of Africa as a continent weighed down by persisting problems. But by far, the image of Africa as portrayed by its media is most lucidly displayed in the qualitative analysis. Of ten enduring images discernible in the analysis, seven were negative or unfavourable. They portrayed Africa as a continent characterised by political violence, civil unrest, tribal conflicts, rebel insurrection, human rights violation, coups and fluctuations of political systems and rising crime rate.

Conclusion

By inundating Africa's publicity with reports of the negative, the local press runs foul of the same charges levelled against the Western press. Odhiambo (1991) reports that the rest of the world equates Sudan with hunger and war; Liberia with mass murder and breakdown of civil society; Kenya with corruption and tribalism; Tanzania with benign neglect of the economy; Nigeria with military dictatorship; and Zaire with corruption and political thuggery. He argues that these images may have been distorted, for it is extremely difficult to reconcile Africa's clamour for fair reporting in the international media, with the mass of negative publicity it receives from its own media as shown in the results of this analysis.

If we must benefit from the realistic approach of predicating the quest for a new and more equitable order of international communication on self examination, the question of news values has to be addressed. Whereas conflict, coups, violence, political instability, crime, disasters and other adversities are undoubtedly parts of Africa's reality, lavishing attention on the sensa-

tional, the gory, the bizarre or the feudal to almost the exclusion of other interesting developmental issues, not only negates the principle of balanced reporting, but also inflicts much harm on Africa's image.

Considering Africa's status as a developing continent, emphasis should be placed on the region's efforts, policies and programmes to uplift its people, and to enhance the utilisation of the rich human and natural resources of the area for development. If anything, media highlights should dwell on how Africa is solving her economic, social and political problems, and not on the problems themselves.

Perhaps, there is need to reorient reporters' news values through regular workshops and novel approaches in the teaching of news writing and reporting in communication schools. The obsession with journalism of the exception should give way to values such as:

- promotion of human dignity
- global peace
- environmental preservation
- economic recovery and political harmony
- civic education and moral exhortations, etc.

On another realistic note, Africa and indeed the entire developing world need to revitalise their communication network. For as long as the continent depends on the Western media and the news agencies in particular for much of its knowledge of not only foreign affairs but also African news, the crusade to combat all the practices which it finds objectionable in the current order of international communication remains mere history.

The continent's major news agency, PANA, cannot even cover Africa effectively. Not with its only five regional offices. African countries should overcome petty political disagreements and live up to their responsibilities in the area of strengthening PANA by way of funding, modern communication technology, human resources and the freedom to operate free from paralysing government supervision.

Perhaps with a formidable news agency and a sustainable programme of intra-regional collaboration for news, programme and skill exchange, a more result-oriented strategy would have been put in place to combat quantitative and qualitative biases against Africa in global communication.

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