

**DEBUNKING THE MYTHS: PROPAGANDA IN THE PORTRAYAL OF AFRICA IN  
THE INTERNATIONAL MEDIA - A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF NEWSWEEK AND  
TIME MAGAZINES FROM JANUARY 2003 –MAY 2003.**

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI IN PARTIAL  
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF MASTER OF ARTS  
DEGREE IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES**

**SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM**

**NAIROBI, KENYA**



**OCTOBER, 2003**

## Declaration

I declare that this project entitled **Debunking the myths: Propaganda in the portrayal of Africa in the International Media- A Content Analysis of the Newsweek and Time Magazines from January 2003 –May 2003** is the result of my own work and that it has not been submitted either wholly or in part to any other University for the award of Degree or Diploma.

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Signed.....

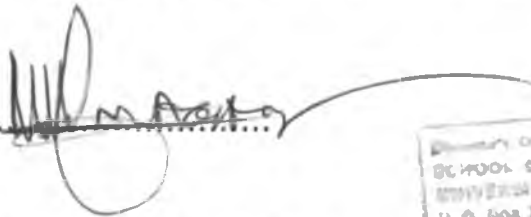
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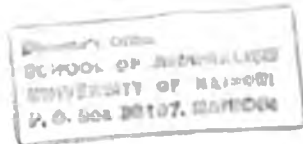
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## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this Project **Debunking the myths: Propaganda in the portrayal of Africa in the International Media-A Content Analysis of the Newsweek and Time Magazines from January 2003 –May 2003**, is a bonafide project work carried out independently by Isaac Mutwiri Mutunga under my guidance and supervision.

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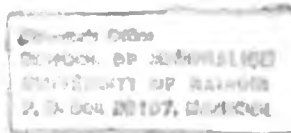
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

No one accomplishes much alone. If you see a tortoise sitting on a fence post, you know he didn't get up there all by himself. I take this opportunity to congratulate those who lifted me up on this academic post. This is a journey which begun many years ago. I thank God who ordained it and has sustained me this far.

I would like to acknowledge and appreciate the efforts and selfless sacrifice of my family who denied themselves to enable me undertake this study. My father, Mr. John M' Mutunga and mother Mrs. Gladys M' Mutunga Mukomeru on whose laps I first learnt the value and power of honesty and hard work, it is because of you that this was possible. I thank my brothers Elijah Gituma Mutunga and Fredrick Kimathi and sisters Ruth K. Mutunga and Nancy M. Makandi who taught me that to fall is not a crime, a crime is to stay down.

I salute the University of Nairobi's school of Journalism staff and students, especially my supervisors Mr. Edwin Nyutho and Mr. Magayu K. Magayu who tirelessly worked on my jumbled ideas to mould them into this magnificent work.

I am indebted to Prof. L.T. Marangu, Mr. G.K. Ikiara and Mr. Gerishon K. Ndubai , who mentored me academically especially for their moral and technical support in research writing.

I appreciate and acknowledge the help and motivation I received from my friends Mr. Joseph Kithinji Ikiara, Mr. Muthuri Ntirintu and Mr. Erastus Gitonga Njue during this study.

Finally I wish to thank my wife Charity who supported me despite lost weekends, and sleepless nights looking for elusive resource materials. You are the best.

## DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

**AIDS**- Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

**BBC**-British Broadcasting Corporation

**CBS**-Columbia Broadcasting Service

**FAO**- Food Agricultural Organization

**Foreign Policy** – A particular course of action taken by a government with regard to a situation prevailing in another country.

**Hegemony**- Refers to the processes whereby a fundamental social group that has achieved direction over the 'decisive economic nucleus,' is able to expand this into a moment of social, political and cultural leadership and authority throughout civil society and the state

**HIV**-Human Immunodeficiency Virus

**Mass Media** – Any organization concerned with dissemination of information and news for profit.

**Myths** - An ancient story that is based on popular beliefs and is used to explain natural or historical events.

**NBC**- National Broadcasting Corporation

**Northern** – Used interchangeably with West to refer to the former colonizing countries and the USA

**Portrayal** –refers to the art of portraiture, drawing a portrait of someone or something. A portrait is a representation. This suggests the existence of a gap between the real thing and the depiction, no matter how true to reality a portrait is drawn.

**Parachute Journalism-** Refers to the reporters who are flown to the epicenters of stories, file their stories and flown back to the headquarters to wait for another event or crisis to happen.

**Propaganda** - Dissemination of ideas and information for the purpose of inducing or intensifying specific attitudes and actions.

**SARS** – Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome.

**TNC** – Transnational Corporations.

**TNMC**- Transnational Media Corporation

**VOA**- Voice of America

**West**- Used interchangeably with the North to refer to the former colonizing countries and the USA.

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## CHAPTER 1 : STUDY FRAMEWORK

### 1.1. INTRODUCTION

Studies of several international newspapers and magazines have shown that many negative qualifiers are often used in news stories about Africa, thus painting a misleading image of the African people and their continent. The most commonly used words by the media to refer to Africa include, "a basket case," "jungle covered," "impoverished," "famine plagued," "full of war," "backward," "primitive," "brutal," "undeveloped," "tribal," "savage," "corrupt," "ravaged by HIV/ AIDS", "war torn", and "third world"

In the international media, much of what is portrayed in newspapers and covered on television about African is the continents' states failing economies and diseased inhabitants. But there's more to Africa than Ebola, AIDS, coups and counter-coups, says Dr. Ali B. Ali-Dinar, outreach coordinator for the University of Pennsylvania's African studies center.

As most international media institutions sing to the dictates of economic pressures by closing their foreign bureaus, the number of inexperienced correspondents and stringers covering international crises and wars has increased. When a crisis occurs in Africa the international reporters are flown to the epicenters, file their stories and flown back to the headquarters to wait for another event or crisis to happen. They are referred to as *parachute journalists*. They fly in to Africa with their own "baggage" of myths, preconceived notions, prejudices and stereotypes but have little or no prior historical, social, cultural or political facts. They are vulnerable to propaganda maneuvers by their seemingly trustworthy sources because of little time spent gathering the facts on the ground and their dearth of Africa political, social and cultural issues.



Andy McElroy from the editorial office of the International Federation of Red Cross Red and Crescent Societies in Geneva gives us his personal commentary on Western media reporting in complex emergencies. He says that, "in a modern journalistic culture of profit-thirsty media corporations, real-time deadlines, pithy soundbites and celebrity reporters who bungee-jump in and out of crises there is little room for coverage that has depth and is constructively critical."

The scholars and journalists who met at Pennsylvania on November 20, 1998 to discuss "African News Coverage in the U.S. Mass Media" emphasized the need for reporters to dispel misconceptions by getting to know the countries and peoples of Africa on a personal level. One of the main complaints voiced at the workshop, organized by Pennsylvania's African Studies Center, is that international media reporters and correspondents often function like soldiers - they parachute into a country with little advance preparation, spend little time with the native population, and fly back out the moment their tour of duty is over. Thus their articles shallowness and lack of background information attest to their dearth of depth knowledge on the people and issues they cover.

The Western media see Africa as one nation. But they should know that Africa is a continent comprising of 53 countries with different cultures, different levels of democracy and levels of development. To counter this, the reporters and correspondents covering Africa should learn the culture, politics, geography and history of Africa well.

Most Westerners have never visited Africa and may never visit the continent. Yet the media has cultivated a particular image of Africa in their mind. Unfortunately, the overall image created by the media about Africa is particularly negative in that they only reflect tribal anarchy, hunger and

famine, civil war, managerial ineptitude, political instability, flagrant corruption and incompetent leadership. These prejudiced mental images of Africa are deep rooted in the Western media that they serve as a benchmark for reporting Africa. They appear to be an extension of the earlier negative images associated with the so-called "dark continent" inhabited by savages.

Africa is used by the developed world as a warning of how worse or better things can get -when you want to scold the dog, beat the chicken. Africa is usually given as a case of United Nations Peace and humanitarian success or failure, but there is always no mention of other examples of European, and Asian countries. It is also given as an example of the philanthropic nature of Bretton Woods institutions, non-governmental organizations and transnational corporations. For instance when the Scottish parliament passed radical land reforms aimed at giving the serfs a chance to own land they worked on, the international media referred to Scotland as Europe's Zimbabwe.

This is a carry-over from the cold war era when propaganda of ideological confrontation dominated the international communication. With the dismantling of the Soviet Union, the West led by the US emerged as the agenda-setter in the decision-making process of world affairs. The retreat of socialism strengthened capitalism which led to the privatization of the former state-run mass media institutions. This market-driven and communication environment has diluted the public service role of the mass media. Though encouraging privatization of the state-run mass media the US and Britain still maintain state-run and funded mass media which are used purely for propaganda purposes.

By privatizing mass media, transnational corporations based in the US and Europe have a major stake in creating and maintaining an international communication system that favours policies advocated by the US and Europe. This has created what Ben Bagdikian, the US journalist and media critic, calls the 'private ministry of information.' This private ministry of information spins the news before it is released to the public. The spin depends on the political, economical or social interests of the corporation or US and Europe.

Distortion of news, in the strict sense of the phrase, occurs when inaccuracies or untruths replace authentic facts or when a slanted interpretation is woven into the news report for example through the use of pejorative adjectives and stereotypes (UNESCO, 1980:157-158).

There are various other ways in which the total picture of events and situations may be distorted.

This occurs when:

1. Events of no real importance are given prominence and when the superficial or the irrelevant are interwoven with facts of real significance.
2. News is cobbled together from random facts and presented as whole, or partial truths are assembled to form the appearance of a complete truth. This is the case of land issue in Zimbabwe where partial truths are used to obfuscate the real issues.
3. Facts are presented in such a way as to cause misinterpretation by implication, where the implicit conclusion drawn by the audience is favourable to particular interests. For instance the Conference in Durban, South Africa, was dubbed a racism conference by Western media after it started tackling issues of slavery, colonialism and the need for Africa to be compensated by the former colonial masters and enslaving nations.

4. Individuals or even whole communities and governments present events in a way that stirs unfounded or exaggerated doubts and fears with the aim of condoning subsequent action.
  
5. Silence is maintained on facts or events presumed to be of no interest to the public. Manipulation often lurks in the things left unmentioned. The most common form of media misrepresentation is suppression by omission. Sometimes the omission includes not just vital details of a story but the entire story itself, even of major importance. This can be best illustrated by the reluctance of the international media to discuss in details the effects of liberalization and abolishing trade barriers to African agriculture sector.

The notion that the media plays a role in shaping audience perception has become hard to challenge. This is especially true in the case of Africa because few people from developed countries ever visit Africa and they rely on the international media for information about the continent. Most Europeans and Americans hold a negative image of Africa because their only knowledge of Africa is based on what is presented by the media which itself is biased against the continent.

The American intervention in Somalia during the early 1990s is often cited as an example of the news media's impact on the making of US foreign policy. Reflecting on the decision to send troops to the Eastern African country on a famine relief mission in December 1992, former Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger said: "I will tell you quite frankly television had a great

deal to do with President Bush's decision to go in the first place...it was very much because of the television pictures of these starving kids [and] substantial pressures from the Congress that came from the same source." (Carroll Raymond, 2001:7-16).

The influence of the media on the public opinion was clearly demonstrated by the subsequent reluctance of the government to commit US troops to Somalia after the 1992 fiasco. Some scholars charge that uncertain leadership in the Western governments often has led to "weathervane" foreign policy, one that shifts in the winds of media-generated public opinion. This portrayal by Western media is a deliberate and systematic process that is created and sustained by the biases in the way the international media through gatekeeping to select foreign news stories based on advertisements as well as political and economical power.

This is consistent with the misconceptions and myths which have been handed down from the era of slavery to the present. During the slavery era, media owners, reporters and scholars portrayed Africans as sub-human to justify slavery. During the scramble and eventual colonization era Africans were portrayed as savages in need of European civilizing. After independence the Africans were presented as incapable of governing themselves to justify exploitation of their natural resources, leading to impoverishing of African states. Have you heard of the expression that Africa had no history but the history of the white man in Africa? If not, I am sure you will recall the kind of history taught in schools during the colonial period whereby children were taught to recite such expressions as "so and so discovered this or that mountain, river, lake and so on." The truth of the matter is that native Africans had discovered

all these mountains, rivers and lakes and lived there for generations, long before the arrival of the explorers.

Henry Morton Stanley, the *New York Times* reporter journey to the 'dark continent' in search of Dr. David Livingstone helped shape the European and American's mass media image of Africa as the "dark continent" torn by senseless violence and ravaged by pestilence and disease. His book *Darkest Africa* inspired Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* which was a must reading for those who wanted posting in Africa. A century later the Western media still paint the over 800 million Africans and the 53 African states in similar hues of disease, disaster, coups, corruption and death.

In his book *Home and Exile* Chinua Achebe argues that narratives are the real source of power. Africa has gone through untold suffering because of the narratives written by outsiders about the continent. He says that those who secure the privilege of writing narratives can arrange stories about others, where, and as, they like. This is because what is projected in the narratives becomes a reality for millions around the world.

International media portray Africans as tormented victims, but they carefully obscure the identities of the tormentors—leaving readers with the sense that Africa's suffering somehow stems from the continent's own inner "darkness" as was explained by the editorial in *Independent on Sunday* entitled, *Weep for the Lost Continent*, claiming that "Africa is so much without hope that it is difficult to believe that it can help itself. If western countries had the will they could re-colonize the continent which they left in such haste." Bruce Anderson, a columnist

of the *Independent* (London) in an article, *Africa Deserves Better: But Not All Of Its Problems Were Created By The West*, said, "It is not clear that (Africa) can generate its own salvation. It may be necessary to devise a form of neo-imperialism, in which Britain, the US and the other beneficent nations would recruit local leaders and give them guidance to move towards free markets, the rule of law and – ultimately – some viable local version of democracy, while removing them from office in the event of backsliding." These views are nothing but a Western racist mentality of denying their responsibility in contributing to the problems in Africa and attributing the anarchy in the continent to Africans' incapability to manage their own affairs.

The negative image painted by the media affects not only the black people in Africa but also the public and the policy makers in America and Europe. Studies show that most "members of Congress and Parliamentarians from developed countries have little knowledge of or direct experience with Africa. This affects the way Africa is perceived from the policy point of view. The general gloomy tone of the international media coverage of Africa reinforces powerful stereotypes about Africa within government and in the broader society and creates a negative context for all consideration of African policy. For instance, the comment from a Canadian Member of Parliament who was afraid to attend a conference in Mombasa because he was afraid he might end in 'savages cauldron.'

The bias in the international news coverage is observable in the choices of story and in the volume and quality of coverage of African issues in relation to other parts of the world. This bias in the international mass media is massive and systemic. Not only are choices for publicity and suppression comprehensible in terms of system advantage, but also the modes of handling

favoured and inconvenient material (placement, tone, context, fullness of treatment) differ in ways that serve political and economical interests.

## 1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study endeavors to catalogue instances of coverage of African issues in the issues of *Time* and *Newsweek* magazines from January 2003 to May 2003 and to debunk the myths which affect this coverage.

The desire to carry out a study on the propaganda in the portrait of Africa and Africans in the international media was spurred mainly by the Special Double Issue of *Newsweek* December 30, 2002 – January 6, 2003. This Special Issue was looking at the people poised to help shape 2003, and gave the best perspectives, and say a final farewell to the legends and newsmakers for whom 2003 was the last.”

This issue was taking counts of all those who contributed to world affairs during the year 2002 and predicted those who would shape the world during the year 2003. Africa’s contribution during the year 2002 as portrayed by this issue was negligible and even its contribution during the year 2003 bleaker. This portrayal was slanted and not representative of the contribution of Africa, a continent endowed with a lot of natural and human resources that contribute immensely to the world economy, science and technology. Has anybody ever given a thought to the Africa-American’s contribution to the building of sky-scrappers and the immense wealth that USA enjoys today as the world’s only super-power? America was built by natural resources plundered from Africa and sweat and blood of the Africans captured and sold as slaves



Africa has 90% of the world's cobalt, 80% of the world's chrome, 50% of gold reserves, half of the world's platinum and nearly all of the world reserves of the industrial diamonds, a third of uranium and is well represented in the Organization of Petroleum Countries (OPEC) by Nigeria, Algeria, Libya, Gabon and many other African countries which are discovering oil reserves. How can a continent which produces a third of all key minerals of the world economy make no contribution in the world affairs?

Was this all Africa did in the year 2002 and hoped to contribute in the year 2003? There are other issues like insecurity caused by proliferation of small arms which are more pressing to Africans but were not covered in the media. Insecurity is never given a lot of thought because it is a big industry for transnational corporations and Western countries that manufacture the arms, which eventually fall into the hands of the rebels and criminals.

The study endeavours to look at misconceptions which have affected the way Africa, and Africans have been and are still being portrayed in the international media. Most of the previous studies done on media portrayal were dealing with specific areas like politics mainly during the cold war era but this study is current with terrorism threats, the just concluded second Gulf War, new information technologies which have transformed mass media and globalization. This study also tries to link the US and European policy on Africa and the misconceptions and distortions created by the media.

The study attempts to establish whether or not the changes in international political, communication, economy and commerce order have debunked the centuries-old myths and misconceptions about Africa and Africans and, hence, the way they are portrayed by the media.

The Special Issue of the Newsweek, through agenda setting, blotted out Africa's crucial issues. Africa got only two articles in the issue, first in the Departmental section, *Disaster, Yet Again* and in the People to Watch, *Changing the Rule of Law*. In the first article it was an ominous way to begin the year with a possibility that some 17 million people could die if they could not receive food from humanitarian groups or donor countries.

The second article was about Souad Salah, an Egyptian scholar, who was challenging the Islamic establishment. The whole article was framed in such a way that the word Africa never featured anywhere. The article separated Egypt from Africa. Unlike in other articles and essays that paint Egypt with the rest of Africa when it comes to the issues of civil strife, security and terrorism, this article talked of challenging Islamic law.

The only time Africa gets generous coverage by international media is after terrorist attacks, famine, natural disasters or coups or to emphasize the role of the West as a "good Samaritan" helping an Africa which is unable to help itself. This is often an opportunity for Aid and relief organizations and TNCs to get publicity. The media coverage is framed in such a way as to blame African governments and laud the donor agencies and Western countries for their humanitarian aid. This is usually propaganda to conceal the exploitation of Africa's natural

resources sometimes creating strife to control natural resources as in the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo since the 1960s.

These myths and misconceptions are created by the international media. Africa is neither on the verge of widespread anarchy nor at the dawn of democratic and economic renewal, courtesy of the Bretton Woods institutions and donor community. A mix of the old myths, new myths, and hasty conclusions made by transnational media and Western countries to justify their crimes against Africa creates these misperceptions and the negative portrayal.

### **1.3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The objectives of the study are:

1. To investigate the effects of misconceptions on the portrait of Africa in the international media.
2. To investigate the effects of propaganda on international media coverage of African issues.
3. To investigate how the international media treat African issues.
4. To investigate if the international media use negative labels and frames when covering Africa.

#### **1.4. HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY**

1. The portrayal of Africa in the international media is affected by myths and misconceptions.
2. The international media coverage of Africa is affected by propaganda.
3. International media are biased against African issues.

#### **1.5. JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY**

Africa always has the wrong end of the stick when it comes to the way it is portrayed in the international media. It is portrayed as a continent beset by underdevelopment, senseless civil strife, ravaged by disease and ruled by inept and corrupt leaders. The coverage of Africa in the international media is often sparse and superficial, emphasizing crises and conflicts. In many ways such coverage serves to reinforce negative stereotypes about Africa. This study attempts to bust the myth that the fifty-three African countries home to over 800 million people has the same problems as portrayed by the media.

The study will show that the scholars, and journalists have used 'labels', myths and misconceptions to frame African issues in a romantic way to attract audience. The colonizers perpetuated these myths and misconceptions to justify their exploitation of the continent's

natural resources, enslave and kill its inhabitants. Africa won her flag independence but the multinational corporations grew stronger and to maintain their commercial grip over the continent's natural resources the multinational corporations perpetuated the myths and misconceptions about Africa. The transnational media corporations which are subsidiaries of the multinational corporations are used to accomplish the task of portraying Africa negatively.

The content analysis of *Time* and *Newsweek* magazines is justifiable because both magazines are subsidiaries of transnational media corporations with a large international readership. Their parent corporations have interests in the mining, manufacturing and service industry influencing the way they portray Africa. The study will try to debunk the myths and misconceptions behind the Western media's continued superficial and negative coverage of African events and suggest remedies to correct the portrait of Africa in the international media.

#### **1.6. SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

This project covers only print media and in particular two international magazines - *Time* and *Newsweek* from January to May 2003. The study endeavors to look at the current research done on the portrait of Africa and Africans in the media. It will also look at the current literature on media portrayal with emphasis on Africa and portrayal of Africans.

#### **1.7. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Due to lack of time the study will only cover two international magazines, *Time* and *Newsweek* magazines covering January to May 2003. The study will not analyze any other international

magazines like Readers Digest or Economist because the *Time* and *Newsweek* magazines are considerable representative of international print media in coverage and circulation.

### 1.8. CONCEPTUAL FRAME WORK

This study is based on the Herman and Chomsky's mass media propaganda model. The propaganda approach to media coverage means that news coverage is systematic and highly censored depending on whether or not the country covered supports the West's and TNCs' political, economic and cultural policies.

In their book, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky exposed the fallacies in the Mass media's portrayal of itself as dogged seekers of truth. Their propaganda model shows the multilevel filtering mechanism that keeps the "free press" in our society decidedly censored. Their theory is that contrary to US advocacy of "free" societies, capitalist bourgeois democracies rely on less overt and obvious (but even more insidious) forms of censor to keep unwanted ideas out of the popular consciousness. The end result of this filtering process is to reduce popular dialogue to a "consensus," representing the attitudes of the power elite who run our society. This method has been in practice for many decades.

Propaganda model of mass media focuses on the inequality of wealth and power and its multilevel effects on mass-media interests and choices. It traces the routes by which money and power are able to filter out the news fit to print, marginalize dissent, and allow the government and dominant private interests to get their messages across to the public. This is especially true in

Africa where governments have no money or power to influence how it is covered by the international media. This affects the way Africa is covered in the international mass media because it lacks enough political or economic clout of its own to get its message across to the international community. Consequently, Africa always gets a raw deal in the international media coverage.

## CHAPTER 2 : LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Introduction

Research on media coverage of Africa and the Africans show that Africa is among the least covered of the world's regions (Wilhoit and Weaver 1983). However, even when Africa is covered, there is a very narrow focus to the coverage. Reportage and analysis of events in Africa are often about "endless" political and military conflicts, ethnic violence, famine, disease and pestilence. Thus, for Africa to be part of "all the news that's fit to print," as the slogan for the *New York Times* reads, the stories must include three elements: events, crisis, and conflict.

Margaret Bald's study of the top 10 stories in 1998 showed that as was the case in 1997, four of the Associated Press's top stories came from abroad, but this did not signal a move towards more expansive and thoughtful coverage of international news in the mainstream US media. The top five stories in 1998 were the US elections, bombings of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, school shootings, John Glenn's space flight, and the settlement between the tobacco companies and the 46 US states. Africa received the second berth in the international coverage only because of the American interests involved.

As CNN correspondent Peter Arnett predicted in *Columbia Journalism Review* in November 1999, "Today a foreign story that doesn't involve bombs, natural disasters, or financial calamity has little chance of entering the American consciousness." (Margaret Bald, 1999: 12)



There is an awful lot of historical baggage to cut through when reporting Africa; the 21<sup>st</sup> Century view of the continent is affected by the misconceptions and myths created in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. Richard Beeston, the Diplomatic editor of *The Times* (of London) blames 'the box' – 'the box contains pre-set ideas'. Thus, the story must fit the box, or made to fit it, or thrown out.' In other words, modern reporters have little or no chance to correct the wild misrepresentations in 'the box'. George Alagiah, a BBC reporter calls it 'template reporting' which implies that there is a formulaic way of reporting. It conveys an impression that there are a set number of ingredients and all a reporter does is ... pick this thing off the shelf and mix the recipe to prepare Africa news (New Africa June, 2003: 22). This shows that the news agenda is dictated by external sources outside the journalist's control. The news agenda is in part set by the traditions, practices and values of journalism as a profession set many years ago (Dickinson et al; 1998:31).

This interpretation of Africa goes back to the days of early European explorers and Christian missionaries who took back to Europe reports about cannibals and savages roaming the jungle as portrayed in such books as Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* published in 1885. The slave trade and, eventually, colonialism followed. The images that were brought to the international media by the settlers and colonizers persist today and many Western journalists unfortunately grew up believing these misconceptions and distorted images of Africa and the Africans.

In the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, Western Europeans journeyed to Black Africa, South of the Sahara, and began to use the old Roman term originally applied to describe a part of North Africa, to the lands south of the Sahara (Mazrui, 1986:25). This began the process of discovery and exploration of Black Africa, as the 'Dark Continent.' But unfortunately when something good

like the pyramids of Egypt and the Carthaginian civilization arose the racist European mind attributed this to mythical Semitic culture and the real Africa was placed further to the South of the Sahara.

It is important at the same time to note that Egypt and Ethiopia have always occupied a peculiar place in the hierarchical structure of racist mythology. In the discursive construction of Ethiopia, there are elements like John Buchan's *Prester John*, the legendary and mysterious Christian King to whom medieval Europe looked for salvation from the encroaching Muslim threat. Other elements include the legend of Amharan elites, who claimed to be direct descendents of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba and Ethiopia as the keeper of the Tabernacle and the Ten Commandments. This puts Ethiopia in the Semitic discursive construction and denies its link to Africa. When Ethiopians defeated the Italians in 1896, they were reclassified as "White" in Europe because of the unacceptability of the defeat by Black Africans. The myths of King Solomon and Queen Sheba were rekindled to explain the defeat.

Despite its peculiar place in this racist hierarchy, Ethiopia is inserted within a general discursive configuration of African famine that is determined by racist concepts. Mazrui explains that Ethiopia was portrayed as a "white nation" in the past to fit the European model of the people that defeated Italy and the mass media have painted them as a "black nation" in recent times because they are suffering and fit the rest of an African state's model. The same case applies to Algeria, Morocco and Libya which are never included in Africa South of the Sahara when discussing development but are grouped together with other African countries when discussing civil strife, terrorism and poor governance. The international mass media has a romantic image

of Africa, a uniform 'dark continent' of wars, famine, coups, cannibalism, diseases and corruption

Even with the discovery of the famous Zimbabwe ruins, a clear evidence of the existence of a well-organized civilization in this part of Africa, the white racist historians tried to attribute such a feat to the presence of some imaginary light-skinned superior race in order to deprive the black skinned Africans their rightful historical heritage and achievements.

This is in line with what US and Europe considers being the Africa's contribution to the world affairs. It is also largely due to the legacy of Gerhard Mercator the great 16<sup>th</sup> century cartographer who distorted the size of Africa in the map in favour of the Northern continents of the world. The modern map based on Mercator projections shows North America as one and half times the size of Africa. It is difficult for the world to believe to the contrary, that in fact Africa is three and half times the size of North America. Africa is also shown to compete with Greenland in size while in reality; Greenland's, 2 million square kilometers, is only a fraction of Africa's 30 million square kilometres.

Regretfully the visual memories of millions of the African children across the generations from their geography lessons have carried distorted ideas about the comparative physical scale of the Northern continents in relation to those in the South (Mazrui, 1986:24 ). The North is not only guilty of manipulating the size of African continent in relation to others but also on the allocation of foreign news.

Starting from the premise that each region has an equal chance of newsworthiness, Larson (Gerbener and Siefert; 1984: 98) found that media covered the developing countries far less than the industrialized countries. According to his research, news events happening in Western Europe, South Asia and the Far East, North America, and the Middle East (including Israel) make up two-thirds of U.S. foreign news. Africa is barely covered and when some coverage is given there is a tendency to dwell more on crisis-oriented news such as unrest and dissent, war, terrorism, crime, coups, assassinations, and natural disasters.

There are several theories that try to explain why media presents some news and not others, give negative framing to some areas and positive framing to others. The reasons range from ownership, journalists' attitudes, news sources, political interference and other external factors. Research on media criteria for news selection indicates that a country's political, social, economic, cultural and geographic characteristics help to determine or predict the amount of coverage that a country or region would receive in the press of another country.

The amount of reportage a country or region gets in the international media is dependent upon its social and cultural, economic, geographic and political proximity and its ties to the United States, Europe and transnational corporations. In this regard, Africa does not contribute much to the realms of technology, science, politics or commerce nor does it have its own homegrown transnational corporations to counteract all this biased and racist propaganda. The activities of TNCs in Africa help to perpetuate the misconceptions which are then spread by the international media which are subsidiaries of the TNCs.

Studies on the dependency theory have shown that TNCs, mostly based in the North exercise control with the support of their respective governments over the developing countries by setting the terms of global trade – dominating markets, resources, production, and labour. Development for these countries was shaped in such a way as to strengthen the dominance of the developing nations and to maintain the “peripheral” nations in a position of dependence in other words to make conditions suitable for ‘dependent development’ (Thussu , 2000: 62).

The developing world leaders argue that the developed countries through their control of major international information channels, give a misconceived and distorted view of their countries and the rest of the world. The Third World countries have called for the overhaul of the existing information order because structurally it has created a model of dependence, with negative effects on the politics, economy and society of developing countries. Tunisian’s former Information Minister Mustapha Masmoud articulated these demands during the formation of New World Information Communication Order (NWICO) (Thussu, 2000:43).

The chief complaints by the developing countries which led to calls for abolition of the old information and communication and the formation of the New World Information Communication Order were as follows:

- Owing to the socio-technological imbalance there was a one-way flow of information from the ‘centre’ to the ‘periphery’ which created a wide gap between the have and have-nots;
- The information rich were in a position to dictate terms to the information poor, thus creating a structure of dependency with widespread economic, political and social ramifications for the poor societies;

- This vertical flow (as opposed to a desirable horizontal flow of global information) was dominated by the Western-based transnational corporations;
- Information was treated by transnational media as a commodity and subject to the rules of the market and
- The entire information and communication order was a part of and in turn propped up international inequality that created and sustained mechanisms of neo-colonialism.

The West led by the US dismissed NWICO as a 'Soviet-inspired' plot to control the Third World countries mass media through state regulation. This led to a relationship in which TNCs control both the terms of exchange and the structure of global market adding to the widening and deepening inequality between the South and the North. This has helped strengthened the North's control of the world's natural and human resources. Current events in the developing countries are reported to the world via the transnational media and at the same time, these countries are kept informed of what is happening abroad through the same channels. By transmitting to developing countries only news processed by them, that is news that has been filtered and cut and distorted, the transnational media have imposed their own way of seeing the world upon Africa and other developing countries.

Cultural aspects of dependency theory by various scholars such as Baran, and Marttelart, among others, try to explain the production, distribution and consumption of media. It explains the link between globalization and the discourse of transnational media and communication corporations and their slanted portrayal of Africa and other developing countries.

Herbert Schiller argues that in pursuit of commercial interests, transnational corporations in league with military and political interests undermine the cultural autonomy of the developing countries creating a dependency on both the hardware and the software of communication media in these countries (Schiller, 1976).

Structurally, due to their education background, even journalists from developing countries help to perpetuate this domination through news selection and framing of events which favour TNCs. Galtung avers that the structural imperialism that exists in the Northern countries is passed on to the elite of the developing countries.

This 'core' thus not only provides a bridgehead by which the center nation can maintain its economic and political domination over the periphery nation, but it also supported by the center in maintaining its dominance over its own periphery (Thussu, 2000: 65).

News flows from the developed to the developing countries via transnational news agencies. Journalists and correspondents gather information in developing countries and send it to the West where it is edited and transmitted back to the developing countries through agencies. This means that the developing countries and Africa in particular know nothing about events of their neighbours except through what has been filtered through the sieves of the developed nations' media gatekeepers who perpetuate misconceptions about Africa.

This is due to the 'agenda setting function of the international media. The news is transferred to Africa in such a way that its primary importance is attached only to those issues the developed nations see as important. There is link between the international media and foreign policy. The

role of the mass media as a powerful instrument of propaganda for corporate and state power cannot therefore be underestimated.

For Herman and Chomsky, a propaganda approach to media coverage means: "A systematic and highly political dichotomization in news coverage based on serviceability to important domestic power interests. This should be observable in dichotomized choices of story and in the volume and quality of coverage... such dichotomization in the mass media is massive and systematic: not only are choices for publicity and suppression comprehensible in terms of system advantage, but the modes of handling favoured and inconvenient material (placement, tone, context, fullness of treatment) differ in ways that serve political interests" (Hanson and Maxcy 1996:180).

The propaganda model is supported by the Gramsci hegemony theory which argues that a dominant social group has the capacity to control and build new social and cultural systems over the weaker social group. This is not necessarily through military power, Gramsci, in *Selections from Prison Notebooks*, argues that the best instrument to wield power is through a consent by ideological control of cultural production and distribution through mass media.

International communication through this hegemony notion is used to conceptualize political functions of the mass media in propagating and maintaining the dominant ideology. The African governments and individuals by extension get fair or unfair coverage depending on whether they do or do not support the West and its political, economic and cultural policies.



Several other studies have examined the media ownership, characteristics of reporters and political influence on reportage. Herman and Chomsky explain why the media select and frame stories the way they do. The news in mainstream international media system passes through several 'filters', including the size, concentrated ownership and profit orientation of media firms; their heavy reliance on advertising and dependence on business and governmental sources of information and the overall dominant ideology within which they operate. Other studies have shown that the following factors affect media coverage and portrayal.

## **2.2. Media Framing**

In telling the story, the news media retell and reinterpret versions of that particular story, as told by other powerful social and political situations. This further reinforces the argument that the media produce certain dominant notions of reality. Like all propagandists, the media seek to predetermine our perception of a subject with a positive or negative label. Some positive ones are "stability" "the president's firm leadership," "a strong defense," and "a healthy economy" mainly used to refer to Western governments and leaders. Negative ones are "impoverished," "famine plagued," "full of war," "backward," "primitive," "brutal," "undeveloped," "tribal," "savage," "corrupt," "warlord," "dictatorial," "strongman," "junta," "regime" and are mainly used to refer to African states and their leaders (Gans Hebert, 1980).

It is important for communicators to know that the way words are used is crucial to understanding the issue at hand. It is through language that people or societies comprehend, experience and act upon social reality. In the instance of the international media coverage of Africa, social reality is constructed through the shared space of language and discourse, which produce a collective perception, use, and understanding of people, events, and issues in Africa.

Humpty Dumpty in *Alice in Wonderland* said that words meant whatever he wanted them to mean. Now their meaning is in the hands of the media and those who speak through the media. The media choose their own 'label' to describe people, countries and events.

The label predefines the subject without having to deal with actual particulars that might lead us to a different conclusion. A frame is the central organizing idea for making sense of relevant events and suggesting what is at issue. News and information have no intrinsic value unless embedded in a meaningful context which organizes and lends it coherence. News stories can be understood as narratives, which include information and factual elements, to be sure, but also carry an implicit message. The informational content of news reports is less important than the interpretive commentary that attends it. It is especially evident in *Time* and *New week* and *Economist* magazines which are stuffed with metaphors, catchphrases, and other symbolic devices that provide a shorthand way of suggesting the underlying storyline. These devices provide the rhetorical bridge by which discreet bits of information are given context and relationship.

The framing, in the case of news coverage, is the ultimate message. Framing information theory states that media do not present an objective view of the world. News frames exist at two levels: as mentally stored principles for information processing and as a characteristic of news text. This shows how the media resulting in a completely different outcome can manipulate similar incidents.

The most effective international mass media propaganda relies upon framing rather than on falsehood. By bending the truth rather than breaking it, using emphasis and other auxiliary embellishments, international media create a desired impression without resorting to explicit

advocacy and without departing too far from the appearance of objectivity. Framing is achieved in the way the news is packaged, the amount of exposure, the placement (front page or buried within, lead story or last), the tone of presentation (sympathetic or slighting), the headlines and photographs.

Kenyans are familiar with the media descriptions of certain personalities as “powerful minister” so and so, “billionaire” this or that, or “prominent businessman” this or the other.

Frames are developed by providing, repeating and thereby reinforcing words and visual images in reference to some ideas and not others. Frames work to make some ideas more salient, others less salient and others entirely invisible. A frame, therefore, is defined as a central organizing idea for making sense of relevant events and suggesting what is at issue. Media frames, which are largely unspoken and unacknowledged, organize the world both for journalists who report it and, to some important degree, for those who rely on their reports. There can be more than one frame in a single news story. This could be sponsored by the journalist in the lead sentence he or she chooses or the sources quoted. The sources are also potential sponsors of certain frames and their statements depend on which frame they sponsor.

### **2.3. Background of Journalists**

The international media has embedded itself with powerful states and corporations. These media houses are staffed by journalists who owe their position not to any election, popular or otherwise, but to the allegedly rational internal bureaucratic norms of the sector of the employer for which they happen to work (Marris and Thornham. 1996: 84). They follow rules that were established

by their predecessors. It is very hard to bust the myths and misconceptions about Africa because journalists have carried them for centuries from generation to generation.

Golding and Elliott (Marris and Thornham; 1996:411) argue that sometimes news is simply as a result of the bias of individual journalists, committed either because of professional notions of how news should be structured or to social views of the ideas it should convey. This was summed up by David Brinkley, the American newscaster who said, 'News is what I say it is.'

News is not merely a collection of facts put together in narrative form; it plays an important role by providing audiences with ways of handling new and recurring problems like coups and famine in Africa. When it comes to reporting about Africa, it is important to note that culturally, politically, socially and even economically, there are very significant differences. These differences are often not explained; on the contrary, news stories are socially determined where the reporters' social interpretation of events takes precedence. Stories are produced within an environment in which individual journalists and their organizations determine events, occurrences, or activities as newsworthy on the basis of both highly personal rationale and organizational imperative.

Ben Bagdikian, a Pulitzer-prize-winning journalist, complains that a quest for "objectivity" tends to favour official sources of news and "factual" events such as crimes and accidents, omitting the interpretation that readers often need. The focus on events may obscure the general trends that are the key to the understanding and results in a bland diet for the news consumer.

Journalists and other media workers' educational, social and cultural background influence the content of what they produce. In the international communication, most of the news is disseminated by correspondents who are paid on the basis of the articles published. They have to adhere to editorial policy of the magazine in order to get their articles published. Another reason for the sparse and negative coverage of Africa in the international media is the fact that there has been a reduction in the number of African-based correspondents working for transnational media corporations. This reduction in the number of correspondents combined with their location in centres like Nairobi, Cairo, Harare and Johannesburg means that they are denied the opportunity to get to know Africa first-hand by leaving the urban centers to visit rural areas and other countries where many stories breakout. Thus they are unable to portray Africa on anything but a superficial level, because their scope and perception are deliberately limited.

#### **2.4. Reliance on "Legitimate Sources"**

The degree to which newsmakers can be reliable is related to the individual media practitioner, his sources and the issue being covered. The news deviates from reality because it reflects power and its reality more than it serves any representative function. Dominick (2002) found that news is geographically biased, so that it is more likely to originate from some centers than others.

Studies on the news source show that 72 percent of all sources were officials of government or politics or groups and institutions, and another 2.7 percent were former government officials commenting on areas of official status or public relations personnel of multinationals commenting on the corporate issues.

Despite professional myths to the contrary, public relations is necessary for sourcing media news and information. Even the largest and best international media institutions such as *The New York Times*, *CNN*, *Time* and *Newsweek* obtain over half of their material from press releases, press conferences and other routine channels created by the government agencies, corporations and interest groups. Only a small proportion of news results from initiative and innovation of the news organization (Dickinson et al; 1998:32).

Another problem is that while there may be many sources of news, few may be tapped for an article. News organizations rely too heavily on a few oft-quoted sources, according to Jonathan Alter, senior writer at *Newsweek*: "the impression conveyed is of a world that contains only a handful of knowledgeable *people*...." giving forth 'bland news'. The abuse of anonymous sources can best be seen in the growing controversy over the accuracy of US intelligence before the war in Iraq. Journalists, who were quoting anonymous sources to support that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction are now hyperventilating about the failure of the coalition thus far to unearth Saddam Hussein's stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons. They are now pointing to this failure as evidence that the Bush and Blair administration "cooked" intelligence on Iraqi weapons of mass destruction programs to justify attacking Iraq.

In the foreign news coverage the journalists often rely on each other for stories rather than go out and dig for them. This "pack journalism" results in "group think" and a rash of similar stories appearing in the press. Sometimes lack of coordination between correspondents in the field and those at home is responsible for the media missing the "big picture." When there is a conflict in

interpretation, editors often favour their Washington sources over those in the field (Shanto and Kinder, 1987).

In Kenya, for example, foreign correspondents and journalists visit the same social places, sharing sources and stories. They also rely on a very small number of experts to give them analysis about Africa. This presents a narrow and uniform opinion on issues covered by all the international media. This denies the audience the overall objective picture of the world.

## **2.5. News Selection**

How do editors decide what is news? "In a general sense, news is the exceptional, something out of the ordinary which threatens, benefits, outrages, enlightens or titillates," according to Mort Rosenblum of the AP. In the case of foreign coverage, an important criterion is the extent of US involvement.

In a major 1979 study of how American media "gatekeepers" select the news, sociologist Herbert J. Gans found that the main themes of foreign coverage were American activities abroad (especially presidential visits), foreign activities that affect Americans, Communist-bloc countries (focusing on their failures), elections, political protests, disasters and dictators. This led to a skewed impression of the world. As President Calvin Coolidge observed in 1926, "readers of our newspapers might have imagined revolutions and volcanic disturbances were the chief product of Latin America" (Gans, Herbert, 1980: 393).

According to Herman and Chomsky (1994) a propaganda system will consistently portray people abused in enemy states as worthy victims, whereas those treated with greater or equal

severity by its own government or clients will be unworthy. The more worthy the victims, the more coverage they get. This may not directly determine the tone of the story but depending on the event it can be either positive or negative framing.

The US and other transnational mass media provide practical definitions of what is worth and fit to portray the political, military or economic mood of the time. Africa is mostly unworthy because it does not have much influence on political, scientific, economic or cultural events of the world, but it is occasionally worthy when there is disaster because it offers bizarre entertainment or news that is too extreme to ignore. In other cases, Africa may be covered as an indicator of how worse things can get, or as the “best examples of the worst.”

## **2.6. Media Ownership and Profit Orientation**

The media portrayal is done for specific reasons. It reflects economic, political, racial, class, gender and religious bias of the media owners and of the governing class. Herman and Chomsky (1988) contend that the media are drawn into a symbiotic relationship with powerful sources of information by economic necessity and reciprocity of interests. The media need a steady and reliable flow of information to meet the daily news demands and imperative news schedule that they must meet. However, they cannot afford to have reporters and photographers at all places where important stories break. Therefore, they are forced to concentrate their resources where significant news often occurs, “where important rumors and leaks abound, and where regular press conferences are held” (Jarice and Maxcy, 1996 ).



There was a time during Amin Dada's regime when Kampala, capital of Uganda, was dubbed (probably unfairly) as the world's capital for rumours capable of generating at least 20 rumours a day. Perhaps reporters based in Kampala had a field day then, relishing every moment of it.

The four major news agencies of the world (Reuters, Agence France- Presse, United Press International and The Associated Press) belong to only three nations but supply 90% of the international news which passes into the world's newsrooms. "The Third World has accused the West of cultural domination through its control of the major news-collecting resources of the world, through the unstinted flow of its cultural products across the world, and through the financial power of its advertising agencies, its international newspaper chains, its newsprint companies and its hold over the electro-magnetic spectrum on which broadcasting, navigation, meteorology and much else depend' ((MacBride, 1980).

If technology and the astonishing reach, immediacy and public appeal it provides is one reason for the media's growth as a powerful force in foreign policymaking, economic forces are another. The number of independent owners has shrunk. Business mergers involving television, radio and newspaper chains have created larger "cross-media" chains and huge international conglomerates fighting for shares of national or global markets. The General Electric Company (GE), for example, in 1991 numbered among its holdings companies producing everything from dishwashers and air-conditioners to aircraft engines, spacecraft, medical services, data networks and news. GE's news companies included over 200 radio stations and the National Broadcasting

Company (NBC). Westinghouse Electric Corporation, in addition to its many industrial holdings, owns CBS the Columbia Broadcasting Service (Jarice and Maxcy, 1996 ).

As small subsidiaries of the giant corporations, many newspapers, radio stations and television networks must pay even greater than usual attention to circulation figures, ratings and other indicators of profitability. The bottom line counts more than ever. To earn their pay, journalists are pressed to dig out the exciting or exclusive story, sometimes leaked by officials, or policymakers' immediate reactions to often-complex international events (Raymond Carroll, 1997: 6).

Herman and Chomsky (1988) best describe this complex relationship between media owners and the government. They explain filters that affect news choices. The dominant media firms are quite large firms; they are controlled by very wealthy people or by managers who are subject to sharp constraints by owners and other market-profit-oriented forces; they are closely interlocked, and have important common interests, with major corporations, banks and government. This is a powerful filter that affects news choices.

Therefore, if the management of most newspapers has common interests with the corporate world, coverage is in a way expected to follow the corporate investment trail. This affects the operations of the media as a news-reporting agent. The relationship affects how poor African countries are portrayed.

This shows that freedom of the press is guaranteed only to those who own the media. Freedom of the airwaves, the cable systems, and so forth is guaranteed only to those who own the satellites, the cable delivery systems, and the newspapers and magazines. The main issue is about democratic discourse and whether the news coverage is affected by the centralization of the mass media in a few corporate hands. I think we're seeing here, in 2003, after decades of consolidation of media control in fewer and fewer corporate hands Africa has been left dependent on the information and news from the US and Europe. At this point, we have got ten corporations, beginning with Time Warner at the top, that control most of the news and information flow in the world.

## **2.7. Advertising**

In arguing for the benefits of the free market as a means of controlling dissident opinion in the mid-nineteenth century, the Liberal Chancellor of the British Exchequer, Sir George Lewis, noted that the market would promote those papers "enjoying the preference of the advertising public."

The advertisers' choices influence media selection, coverage and framing of the news. The advertiser is the piper who calls the tune in the media industry. The advertisement goes beyond placing an ad in the media; TNCs and powerful government use the banks and suppliers to deny the radical media financial backing. Whoever pays the piper calls the tune.

Africa is disadvantaged because most of the countries are smaller than the TNCs operating from there. Hence, for instance, when it comes to environmental issues and mining the TNCs hire the best experts to allay fears of any environmental degradation, the media also provide press

releases endorsing the works of TNCs in the region. On the other hand poor African countries cannot afford 'think tanks' and experts to argue their case convincingly to the contrary nor can they get free publicity in international media.

Advertising has accomplished what state taxes and harassment failed to do - censoring the news. This has given advertisers a "de facto licensing authority to filter media content and coverage since, without their support, media cannot be economically viable. Since media exports are ultimately dependent on sponsors for advertising, they endeavour not only to advertise Western goods and services, but also promote the Western way of life. The media content, programming, selection, and framing are affected by choice and taste of the advertisers who pay the bills for the media industry.

Africa is not seen as a very important region economically and therefore very few advertisers are interested in the African news. An example of how this could change is South Africa. Because all the major corporations, starting with Information communication and technology and automobile manufacturers, went into South Africa, the number of stories about South Africa has increased significantly. The rest of Africa has continued to lose importance or their newsworthiness except in times of inevitable crises. The same story goes for Botswana and Tunisia where the international media are falling on each other trying to give free publicity to them because of their sudden wealth and development. Botswana has even attracted a state visit by the president of the most powerful country in the world today. Research has found out that media companies are sharply constrained in their coverage during the times that certain companies are sponsors or major advertisers. Africa and most African countries are neither

advertisers nor direct major consumers of American products, so advertisers are less interested in the African news and thus the neglect or ignorance found in the reportage of Africa in the media today.

The bottom line is that the power of advertisers over the media content stems from the fact that they buy and pay for the content- they provide the media subsidy. Thus, the media compete for advertisers patronage developing the content to serve their needs and not the needs of the readers.

## **2.8.Sourcing the news**

The media is drawn into a complex relationship with the sources of information due to economic and strategic interests. For the media to survive it needs a steady, reliable and economical supply of news. Due to time and economic reasons the media cannot have reporters and photographers at all places where stories are breaking out.

The media concentrates its resources where 'significant' news may breakout, where regular international conferences are held. Governments and corporate sources also have a greater merit of being recognized and credible. The bigger they are, the more credible they are. Unfortunately African governments and corporations are relatively small compared to others from America and Europe. Hence the international media does not post many permanent reporters or photographers in Africa unless there is conflict like the one in Democratic Republic of Congo, Ivory Coast or Liberia.

By 1990, there were some 420 US foreign correspondents sourcing news for different international newspapers and magazines. Eight out of ten are based in a dozen countries that their editors consider particularly newsworthy or that have good communications facilities or close cultural ties to the U.S.: These are Argentina, Britain, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, South Africa and the Soviet Union (Carrol Raymond, 1997:87-94).

The study shows only Egypt and South Africa have international journalists or correspondents posted there. The rest of Africa is not considered newsworthy to warrant posting a permanent reporter or journalist.

## **2.9. Transnational Corporations and State Hegemony**

Hegemony refers to all those processes whereby a fundamental social group that has achieved direction over the 'decisive economic nucleus,' is able to expand this into a moment of social, political and cultural leadership and authority throughout civil society and the state...(Hall, 1980).

Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman, in *Manufacturing Consent*, present the New York Times as media-typical in its conflation of "All the news that's fit to print" with "all the news that is corporately feasible to print." In so doing, they argue, the mainstream, corporate media act as propagandists for American corporate ideology because news that challenges this ideological power base is either mis-represented or ignored. Another way to formulate this is to say that corporate media present hegemonic control over American popular discourse -- they can choose to frame this discourse as contested and oppositional or not (Richard, 2003).

Lee Martin and Norman Solomon contend that corporate-state power represents its own interest not by informing the public as to the operations of its political-economic power but by disseminating myths that operate to conceal the real function of this power, and thus gain public consent to the existing situation. These myths are used to explain and justify the prevailing conditions of existence in the world (Maxcy and Hanson, 1996: 193).

Michael Parenti, a political scientist supports the state and transnational hegemony theory. He says, "with unflinching consistency, US intervention has been on the side of the rich and powerful of various nations at the expense of the poor and needy. Rather than strengthening democracies, US leaders have overthrown numerous democratically elected governments or other populist regimes in dozens of countries ... whenever these nations give evidence of putting the interests of their people ahead of the interests of multinational corporate interests. "

The powerful governments and TNCs can be said to influence the mass media in six ways: the patron, censor, the actor, the masseur, the ideologue and the conspirator (Marris and Thornham, 1996:85).

The role of the government as media patron means that it controls the media through direct funding like in the case of BBC and VOA in Britain and the US, respectively. The state provides the media with negative economic patronage by exempting it from taxes and positive patronage through the placing of government and its agencies advertisements. This is used selectively to reward or punish media houses which do not tow government line. Therefore the international media and Western governments stand on Africa is always similar.

The role of the state as censor is well known. The powerful government like that of the US can control what appears in the media by invoking laws like state security. This was attested to during the second Gulf war when reporters 'embedded' with the soldiers reported what the Pentagon wanted them to report. The state sometimes lean on the media to prevent the publication or transmission of a particular item which may put the government in negative light.

The state as an actor in the media is crucial in providing media with news. At other times the state stage-manages events for the benefit of the media. The advantages of swaying the public opinion through stage-managed media blitz sometimes makes states implement policies in a rush. Those advantages often tempt policymakers into trying their hand at stage-managing events. An egregious example was the Pentagon-planned presence of hordes of camera-flashing journalists on the beach when the marines landed in Somalia to begin the US humanitarian mission.

"What too often counts," says David R. Gergen, a White House adviser in the Nixon, Ford, Reagan and Clinton Administrations, "is how well the policy will play, how the pictures will look, whether it sends the right signals, and whether the public will be impressed by the swiftness of the government's response--not whether the policy promotes America's long-term interests." Sometimes policymakers respond to events too quickly in order to accommodate the deadlines of the demanding media. Decisions are sometimes made, statements given on a perceived need to make the evening news (Raymond Carrol, 1997).



## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS

### 3.1 Data Collection

The data will be collected by exhaustively doing a content analysis of *Time* and *Newsweek* magazines from January 2003 – May 2003.

The two magazines - *Time* and *Newsweek*, structurally are divided into four major parts: Cover Story, World Affairs, Business, Science and Technology and Society and Arts.

This study endeavors to find out how many times Africa was featured in these sections either as the main story or as an example in the stories. It will also try to establish whether the coverage was negative or positive. An article or story will be rated as negative, based on a lack of clearly drawn out sources, inadequate background information and use of negative labels and frames.

An article will be rated positive when the sources are clearly drawn, adequate background and it is objectively written.

### 3.2 Data Analysis

The data will be analyzed by using a coding sheet to record the coverage of approximately 22 issues of *Newsweek* magazine and 21 issues of *Time* magazines. Using a coding sheet to list down the instances of coverage in the two magazines and show if they were biased, negative or positive. This study will not use centimeters or inches to measure the length of the articles but will give a value of 1 or 2 depending on how many articles are covered about Africa in an issue.

Any article however small about Africa will be listed as a coverage. This is because for the purpose of this study a one negative framed paragraph article may have greater political, economical, or social implications than two pages of positive slanted story. The space given to

Africa issues will be divided to the total number of pages in the particular issue to determine the percentage given to Africa in every issue under study.

The coverage will be divided into negative or positive. Negative coverage refers to stories which by way of labeling, or framing portray Africa in a prejudiced way while positive ones are those which try to be as objective as possible telling the story the way it occurred and providing background information.

## I. Newsweek- January 2003

Date of the Issue	Featured in the Departments Section		Featured in the cover story		Featured in the World Affairs section		Featured in the Business section		Featured in the Science and Technology section		Featured in Society and Arts section		% of the total coverage
	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	
Dec 30, 2002-Jan. 6, 2003	-	1**	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.4%
Jan. 13, 2003	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1.7%
Jan. 20, 2003	-	1	-	-	4**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8%
Jan 27, 2003	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1***	-	0.8%

\* The title of the story was *Disaster, Yet Again*, about inevitable famine in Africa. But the writer says 'Today the circumstances are dire in part because of the diversity of factors contributing to the famine. The factors are listed of HIV/AIDS which has killed rural labour force and cutthroat government policies. There is no mention of natural causes and structural adjustment programmes which prohibit the government subsidy in health and education hence most of the farmers cannot store foodstuffs beyond one season.

\*\* This interview with Muammar Kaddafi Titled 'The Former Face of Evil' was written under Middle East section. The second article *Scolding the Dog, Beating the Chicken*.

\*\*\* The story was about the fear of Genetically- modified organisms and mentioned Zambia in passing regarding its refusal to accept genetically modified corn from the U.S.

## II. Newsweek - February 2003

Date of the Issue	Featured in the Departments Section		Featured in the cover story		Featured in the World Affairs section		Featured in the Business section		Featured in the Science and Technology section		Featured in Society and Arts section		% of the total coverage
	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	
Feb 3, 2003	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.66%
Feb 10, 2003	-	1*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.5%
Feb 17, 2003	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.03%
Feb 24, 2003	1***	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.1%

1

\* The article titled *A reason for Hope* was about President George Bush unveiling a \$ 15 billion AIDS relief package. Africa was mentioned as one of the recipients of this largesse from the US.

\*\* The article was titled 'Kenya's question mark'. It was lauding the peaceful transition but using the tribal angle it played Odinga as the second most powerful man in the government.

\*\*\* This was a quote from two Zimbabwean Cricketers, Andrew Flower and Henry Olonga, "we cannot in good conscience take to the field and ignore the fact that millions of our compatriots are starving, unemployed and oppressed."

### III. Newsweek- March 2003

Date of the Issue	Featured in the Departments Section		Featured in the cover story		Featured in the World Affairs section		Featured in the Business section		Featured in the Science and Technology section		Featured in Society and Arts section		% of the total coverage
	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	
March 3, 2003	1*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.1%
March 10, 2003	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2*	-	-	-	3%
March 17, 2003	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1*	-	-	-	3%
March 24, 2003	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.1
March 31, 2003	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

\* These were two quotes, the first from Dieudonne Hossie, a Congolese official, admonishing people of Kelle thinking that Ebola is caused by black magic and the second from Gibson Kente, a famed South African playwright announcing that he was HIV- positive, in an effort to combat the social stigma surrounding AIDS.

\*\* Living off of Trash, a story about people who earn their living by selling paper, plastics and other garbage to recycling plants in Egypt.

\*\*\* This article titled the *Sun Rises Late* was included in the Science and Technology section though it was about the Ogiek, a Kenyan hunting and gathering tribe which was in conflict with the government over its habitation in Mau forest. The writer failed to give the pro and cons of the story and concentrated on how the Mau forest is fast being cut down. For instance the reporter never analysed for explained the reason why one section of the Ogiek lives in the forest while another is settled as peasants.

#### IV. Newsweek –April 2003

Date of the Issue	Featured in the Departments Section		Featured in the cover story		Featured in the World Affairs section		Featured in the Business section		Featured in the Science and Technology section		Featured in Society and Arts section		% of the total coverage
	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	
April 7, 2003	-	-	1*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.6%
April 14, 2003	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
April 21, 2003	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1.7%
April 28, 2003	-	-	-	-	-	1***	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.7%

\* A quote from President of Zimbabwe Robert Mugabe responding to his critics who compared him to German dictator Adolf Hitler; “If I am Hitler, then this Hitler has only sought justice for his people, the sovereignty of his people, recognition for his people and their right over their resources .”

\*\*\* A Hollow Triumph? “A story about Nigeria’s return to civilian rule.

### V. Newsweek Magazine May 2003

Date of the Issue	Featured in the Departments Section		Featured in the cover story		Featured in the World Affairs section		Featured in the Business section		Featured in the Science and Technology section		Featured in Society and Arts section		% of the total coverage
	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	
May 5, 2003	1*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.09%
May 12, 2003	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.4%
May 19, 2003	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
May 26, 2003	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

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\* A quote from Olusegun Obasanjo, The Europeans should not think that we are Europeans. Our culture and environment are different from theirs.

## VI. Time Magazine- January 2003

Date of the Issue	Featured in Notebook/Milestones		Featured in the cover story		Featured in the World Affairs section		Featured in the Business section		Featured in the Science and Health section		Featured in Society and Arts section		% of the total coverage
	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	
Dec. 30 2002- Jan. 6, 2003	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.61%
Jan 13, 2003	-	-	-	-	-	2*	-	-	-	-	-	-	4%
Jan 20, 2003	-	3**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1***	-	2.4%
Jan 27, 2003	-	1	-	-	-	1 <sup>♦</sup>	-	-	-	-	-	-	5.8%

\* The first article was '*Second Chance for Kenya*. The reporter applauded President Kibaki's victory but wondered if he had what it takes to clean the government of corruption. There was impression that this was like second nature to African.

The second article, *On a Sticky Wicket*, supported calls for Britain boycott of matches in Zimbabwe.

\*\* In the World Watch/Notebook section there were stories on fighting in Ivory Coast, Rwanda, Algeria and on the sentencing to death of assailants of former president Laurent Kabila.

\*\*\* The article titled, *Wines and Food*, was a story of South African writer, farmer and winemaker.

♦ U.K. Terror: The Algerian Connection. Though the alleged terror suspects were from Algeria the reporter kept referring to them as North Africans.



## VII. Time Magazine- February 2003

Date of the Issue	Featured in Notebook/Milestones		Featured in the cover story		Featured in the World Affairs section		Featured in the Business section		Featured in the Science and Technology section		Featured in Society and Arts section		% of the total coverage
	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	
Feb 3, 2003	-	2*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.1%
Feb 10, 2003	-	-	-	-	-	1**	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.76
Feb 17, 2003	-	3***	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.8%
Feb 24, 2003	-	2****	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.3%

\* There was a two paragraph article about the plane crash in Busia, Kenya where a minister died and a score of others were injured. There was a story about fighting in Ivory Coast.

\*\* Coverage of Zimbabwe showing how bad things are for Zimbabweans

\*\*\* There were stories on fighting in Central Africa Republic, massive blast in a Nigerian apartment, and last chance treaty in Ivory Coast.

\*\*\*\* The articles were on civil strife in Liberia and Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

### VIII. Time Magazine- March 2003

Date of the Issue	Featured in Notebook/Milestones		Featured in the cover story		Featured in the World Affairs section		Featured in the Business section		Featured in the Science and Technology section		Featured in Society and Arts section		% of the total coverage
	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	
March 3, 2003	1*	1**	-	-	-	1***	-	-	-	-	1****	-	14.8%
March 10, 2003	-	2*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.02%
March 17, 2003	-	-	-	-	-	1+	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.5%
March 24, 2003	-	1*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.2%
MARCH 31, 2003	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.3%

\* Malawi government to sell 20% of its grain reserves

\*\* AIDS dirty truth, an article contradicting the final assertion that 90% of HIV/AIDS infection is acquired through heterosexual sex.

\*\*\* Killers Come Home, a story on the release of the people accused of genocide in Rwanda. Received two pages in the magazine.

\*\*\*\* Africa received the cover story and the largest coverage given to any African issue but unfortunately Eight pages were devoted to covering protest music from two unknown Zimbabwean musicians.

\* There were two articles in the *For the Record*, featuring a story on protest against US war plans in Iraq and another about shortages of oil in the oil –rich Nigeria.

+ A story about Winnie-Mandela – Nelson Mandela’s ex-wife court battles

♦ A Shaky place, a story about the failure of France brokered peace in Ivory Coast.

In this Special Issue Africa received negative slanted articles; first about the October 20, 1952 massacre and repression of Kenyans by THE colonial government which the reporter calls the *Bloody Mau Mau revolt* and a story about the release of Mandela from prison in Feb. 11, 1990. The reporter sarcastically wrote that after 27 years in prison Mandela mistook a microphone for a boom gun.

### IX. Time Magazine- April 2003

Date of the Issue	Featured in Notebook/Milestones		Featured in the cover story		Featured in the World Affairs section		Featured in the Business section		Featured in the Science and Technology section		Featured in Society and Arts section		% of the total coverage
	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	
April 7, 2003	-	1*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.1%
April 14, 2003	-	2**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.2%
April 21, 2003	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.03%
April 28, 2003	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

\* This article catalogued the “repression measures” Zimbabwe had taken against the opposition members.

\*\* Articles about peace accord in Democratic Republic of Congo and travails in Zimbabwe  
A story about the search for 28 missing tourists in Algeria

### X. Time Magazine- May 2003

Date of the Issue	Featured in Notebook/Milestones		Featured in the cover story		Featured in the World Affairs section		Featured in the Business section		Featured in the Science and Technology section		Featured in Society and Arts section		% of the total coverage
	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	Positive framing	Negative framing	
May 5, 2003	-	1*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.08%
May 12, 2003	-	3**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.45%
May 19, 2003	-	2 <sup>•</sup>	-	-	-	1	--	-	-	-	-	-	2.7%
May 26, 2003	-	3****	-	-	-	1 <sup>•</sup>	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.6%

\* Strike two, the article was about street protests by Zimbabweans against increases in the prices of foodstuffs and fuel.

\*\* There was a story about the end of the standoff between Nigerians and oil corporations. There was also an article about South Africa president, Thabo Mbeki's and Olesogun Obasanjo's and Bakili Muluzi visit to Zimbabwe.

<sup>•</sup> A story about fighting in the DRC after the withdraw of Uganda troops in the region and an obituary of the death of Walter Sisulu, an anti-apartheid crusader, obituary for Sam Bockarie, a West Africa labeled warlord by international media.

Losing the Grip, a story about the power struggle in Zimbabwe.

\*\*\*\* Among the articles the longest was about the release of 17 European tourists who had been held hostage by militants.

<sup>•</sup> There was a story of a terrorist attack in Morocco subtitled, Morocco wanted to think terror attacks happen elsewhere. It emphasized the role of Moroccan fundamentalists in the suicide attack.

## Analysis of issues covered per country

Country	Civil Strife/Terrorism	Insecurity	HIV/AIDS, Ebola	Famine/Hunger	Corruption	Arts and Society	Business and Industry
Algeria	***	***					
DRC	***	***	***		**		
Egypt						*	***
Ivory Coast	***	***		**	***		
Kenya		***	***		***		
Liberia	***	***		***	***		
Malawi		*	***	***	**		
Nigeria	**	**			***		
South Africa			***			***	***
Tunisia							***
Zambia		**	***	***	**		
Zimbabwe	***	***	***	**	***		

**Key:**

**\* Rarely covered**

**\*\* Often covered**

**\*\*\* Frequently covered**

## CHAPTER 4 : RESULTS

According to the study findings there were 25 articles in the *Newsweek* magazine and 40 articles in the *Time* magazine dealing with African issues during the period under study (January 2003-May 2003). The number of the articles sampled included all the cover stories, news reports, feature articles, quotations, commentaries, opinions, editorials, sports and photographs.

Over 90 percent of the articles covering Africa issues were rated negative, based on a lack of clearly drawn out sources, inadequate background information and use of negative labels and frames. The study noted lack of diversity of topics covered, and articles were published mainly in the **Periscope** section of the *Newsweek* magazine and the **Notebook** section of the *Time* magazine. The topics covered were mainly civil strife/terrorism, insecurity, HIVAIDS, Ebola, famine/ hunger, corruption, land conflicts, tribalism and relationship with the West or TNCs. They used a series of sweeping unsupported statements, which condemns the continent on a region by a region basis. For instance, "Central Africa has been a catastrophe for up to a decade," and "West Africa seems caught in an expanding series of civil wars"; the Horn of Africa regimes are starving their peoples"; and North Africa link to terrorism."

The use of inappropriate and inaccurate framing and labels were also a recurring problem, the study found words like; "AIDS scourge" "a basket case," "impoverished," "famine plagued," "full of war," "backward," "primitive," "brutal," "undeveloped." These labels were inserted in articles even when they did not help in the analysis and elaboration of the topic under discussion.

The study also recorded several cases of sensational reporting, citing headlines such as ‘*Living off Trash*’, ‘*U.K. Terror: The Algerian Connection*,’ and ‘*Kenya’s question mark*’ There was also deliberate lack of follow-up to stories that should have been exhaustively investigated, such as the article about a scientific research that conflicted with the earlier assertions that 70% of the HIV infection in Africa was caused by heterosexual relationships.

In terms of originality and sources of the stories, the study found out that most of the stories were culled from news agency sources or local correspondents and spiced with anecdotes and labels to make them interesting and bizarre. There were no articles by African scholars, leaders or politicians in the two magazines but to the contrary scholars, experts and politicians from West had their articles published.

More than 80% of the *Newsweek* coverage of Africa dealt with civil strife and corruption in Zimbabwe, Ivory Coast, Liberia, and Democratic Republic of Congo. *Time* magazine gave the same issue 85% of the African coverage. This shows that there is consensus in the issues to cover in Africa in the two international magazines. Zimbabwe, Democratic Republic of Congo and Liberia received the most coverage in both magazines.

The only time African countries received positive coverage, the efforts were attributed to its association with donor community or Western countries. In both magazines positive coverage went to Egypt, South Africa, and Tunisia. Tunisia’s portrayal as the fastest developing third world country was attributed to its association with the European Union and divorce from traditional practices. On May 26, 2003 issue of the *Newsweek*, Rana Foroohar’s article, *the*

*Country that Works*, asserts. "Proximity to Europe (80 miles only), and policies by founder President Habib Bourgaiba to get rid of traditional system such as polygamy and embracing capitalism economy as opposed to socialism as the recipe for Tunisia's success." Rana alludes that Tunisia is cohesive because of closer association with former colonial master France but fails to account for civil strife in Algeria and motley of other former France colonies engaged in civil wars. On the other hand Egypt, was portrayed as a remedy to the Muslim fundamentalism with its new brand of liberal Muslim. South Africa was portrayed as the continent's economic, social and political powerhouse. But unfortunately former President Nelson Mandela and President Thabo Mbeki were ignored by the two magazines may be because of their critical stand on the American and British foreign policies.

The December 30, 2002 – January 6, 2003, *Time* issue was a special edition featuring *People who mattered in 2002* among other issues. The issue featured the people thought to have had great impact in the world affairs either positively or negatively in the year 2002. Only President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe was included in the list of the people who mattered in the year 2002. According to the issue he was included because "he stole the election and ruined Zimbabwe's economy by seizing the country's white-owned farms giving them to his soldiers, cronies and family members." This was a great disservice to the continent because there were so many Africans who contributed positively during the year 2002.

The *Newsweek* magazine started the year 2003 with an ominous prediction that around 17 million Africans faced hunger. The story portrayed the African continent as a one ravaged by



famine caused by lack of food-producing resources countries like Ethiopia and Eritrea committed more to border skirmishes than to food production.

The story was framed in such a way as to show that Africa cannot feed itself and therefore humanitarian agencies had to intervene or some people would just have to go hungry. In the story titled "Disaster, Yet Again" the writer says ' Today the circumstances are dire in part because of the diversity of factors contributing to the famine. The factors are listed as HIV/AIDS which has killed rural labour force and cut-throat government policies.'" There is no mention of natural causes and structural adjustment programmes which prohibit the government subsidy in health and education hence most of the farmers cannot store foodstuffs beyond one season. In the *Science and Technology* section, an article was vilifying Zambia and Malawi for declining genetically modified corn from America. Biotechnology is given as the only alternative to food problems in Africa. With the support of corporations, the media encourages Africa to boost agricultural production through biotechnology.

In their book, *Food First: Beyond the Myth of Scarcity*, Frances Moore Lappe and Joseph Collins busted the myth by convincingly arguing that scarcity of food was not the cause of hunger. They demonstrated that there was still ample food being produced for everyone in the world. They identified the true causes of hunger as inequality and lack of effective democracy.

Why is the international media concerned with lack of food in Africa, instead of concentrating on the equitable distribution of food to the world population? Food is used by the North to reward or punish the African countries. The international media does not cover African countries like Zambia which are forced to sell food reserves to service their external debts but instead dwell on the famine without explaining the cause.

Researches by OXFAM and other aid agencies have shown that even "hungry countries" have enough food at one time or another. The international media sometimes invariably underestimate agricultural production in Africa to pave way for biotechnology. *Time* and *Newsweek* did not report that most African countries couldn't realize their full food production potential because of the gross inefficiencies caused by inequitable ownership of land resources. Africa has enormous still unexploited potential to grow food, with theoretical grain yields 25% to 35% higher than maximum potential yields in Europe or North America. Beyond the yield potential, ample arable land awaits future use. In Chad, for example, only 10% of the farmland rated as having no serious production constraints is actually farmed. In countries notorious for famines like Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia and Mali, the area of unused good quality farm land is many times greater than the area actually farmed, casting doubt on the notion that there are simply too many people for scarce resources.

When vilifying President Mugabe for grabbing land from the minority white settlers in Zimbabwe, the two magazines did not truthfully report the fact that the Ian Smith's government pushed the African peasants to the marginal semi-arid areas leaving the most productive land to only few white farmers. The same story is repeated in many of the African countries in which hunger is rampant, more than half of the productive land is not under food crops but as forest reserves, game reserves or cash crop plantations.

The two magazines also tried to explain why there is hunger in Africa. The consensus was that hunger in Africa is caused by the lack of government planning and nature. But they failed to

note that though there are droughts and other natural disasters in many parts of Africa, poverty is the real cause of famine. Only the chronically impoverished die from the effects of drought, and Africa's impoverishment has been several hundred years in the making. Who has impoverished Africa? Is it not the colonial powers both during pre- and post- independence eras?

Colonizers disrupted farming and herding systems that for centuries Africans had adapted to changing environmental conditions. Ecologically balanced food systems were undermined, the best agricultural lands were taken over by the colonial powers and their supporters for growing coffee, sugar cane, cocoa, and other export crops that were viewed as the means to economic development which would provide the North with raw materials. Private and government funds were invested to develop these cash crops, while traditional food production for the majority poor Africans was neglected. The North controls the price of the cash crops and has ensured that the cost is all time low. This is the case with the coffee crop which supports majority of the farmers in the East and Horn of Africa. The coffee farmers are among the most impoverished, over-worked and exploited group, the net earning from coffee cannot buy food and send their children to school.

Small scale and subsistence farmers have been deliberately pushed further and further into marginal lands with scarce rainfall thus decreasing their ability to produce food. It is unfortunate, yet avoidable, situation that has contributed to the frequency of the drought-induced famine.

Using the best land for export agriculture degraded the environment and impoverished the rural agricultural population, forcing many of them to work on plantations or immigrate into the already crowded cities in search of employment. Plantation owners and other commercial

interests developed a large labour force that could be paid low wages, thus ensuring high profits. These are the people who the two magazines should focus on as the main cause of food shortage in Africa.

Finally, financial aid and government loans do not go to the African peasants and pastoralists but to the expensive, large-scale cash crop projects. Historically, Africa generally receives less aid for agriculture than any other continent, and only a fraction of the meagre aid ever reaches small-scale farmers who produce the bulk of the continent's grain. Most of the agricultural aid goes to the irrigated, export-oriented, elite-controlled production which has exacerbated food shortages in rural areas.

On the February 3, 2003, *Time* magazine issue there was a two-paragraph article about the plane crash in Busia, Kenya where a Cabinet Minister died and scores of others were injured. This was a great a story by all standards but it was tucked away in a corner together with stories about civil strife in the Ivory Coast. This shows that if the news in Africa were not negative they received only a mention and no elaboration. The international media categorizes all deaths in Africa the same to show that ones security is not ensured when in the continent.

Civil strife in Sierra Leone and Liberia received the large coverage in the two magazines. Sierra Leone was portrayed in grotesque human rights violator where over 50,000 people have been killed and a million displaced since 1991 when the civil war erupted. This is another of the international media euphemism when referring to conflicts instigated by the West. The problems in Sierra Leone and Liberia can be attributed to the diamond and the transnational corporations

interests in the region. Due to their natural resources, Liberia and Sierra Leone have become an attractive and profitable dumping ground for nations and arm manufacturers eager to get rid of weapon stocks made superfluous by the end of the Cold War or by technological developments.

The two magazines conveniently did not tackle the arms angle while reporting on the disintegration and civil strife in Africa. Information on Africa conflict was presented without a historical or analytical context to explain the roots of conflict. On account of this lack of historical and analytical examination, most Western reports resorted to attributing all conflicts in Africa to primordial irrationality and "tribalism". The French, British, American governments and multinational corporations have propped up puppet governments which sometimes use civil war as a way of keeping the citizenry under subjugation.

The magazines merely gave a catalogue of events without giving adequate background on the history and cause of the civil strife in the region. What creates civil strife in Africa is not the artificiality of its borders but the artificiality of its states. For instance, Professor Mazrui argues that the Somali are a people looking for a state. Most of the African states attained independence on a diplomatic platform, with the former colonial powers, dictating the structure of the government and not through the emergence of strong leaders and governments that could establish effective control over the territory and extract the resources necessary to sustain an independent state. It is important to note that though Somalia has no central government and there is a lot of clan fighting the two magazines never gave the country any coverage. This is mainly because there are no significant TNCs, US, or European interests in the region.

It is interesting, and perhaps instructive, to note that much of the conflict in Africa is concentrated within countries where natural resources remain relatively abundant and local governments are too weak to protect its natural resources. The rebels use the funds obtained from the sale of the natural resources to buy weapons to continue waging war with governments. Washington's Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), for example, made its largest investment ever in Africa when it agreed to support the construction and operation of a major methane plant in Equatorial Guinea, a focal point of the West African oil boom. This makes it imperative for the international media to keep close surveillance on the region to safeguard their interests.

The January 20, 2003 *Newsweek* issue had given Africa a larger coverage but unfortunately it was negative portrayal putting Mummar Kaddafi of Libya in negative light. It argued that colonel Kaddafi mellowed after being bombed by Americans in 1986 when his adopted daughter was killed. In fact the article titled "Scolding the Dog, Beating a Chicken: Yes, Kaddafi has mellowed. But why?" The lessons to be learned from an earlier war on terror" summed the negative framing by insisting that for Saddam Hussein of Iraq to mellow down, he must be bombed the way Kaddafi was bombed. The author praises the French for taking the responsibility for bombing the Italian environmental nongovernmental organization's Greenpeace ship (Rainbow warrior). The author does not call this a terrorist act. The interview with Kaddafi was an eye opener to the issue of terrorism and liberation movements. The interview brought forth the old controversy of definition of who is a terrorist. President Kaddafi was accused of supporting African liberation movements like the Africa National Congress. Former South African president Nelson was portrayed as a terrorist a decade ago. This shows

that anybody who challenges the exploitation of Africa by Western countries is branded a terrorist.

After the end of the war in Iraq subsequent issues of the two magazines gave extensive accounts of various African states involvement with terrorism. True to the adage, *a lie will go round the world while the truth is pulling on its boots*, the two magazines gave a skewed account, depicting terrorism not as a worldwide scourge independent of the sophistication and development of a country but as a third world and in particular an African affliction. In their coverage of travel advisories and ban of flight to Kenya by US and British governments, *Newsweek* wrote, "Kenya was selected by terrorists because social and security conditions here and elsewhere in East Africa have sometimes made it possible for terrorists to operate with a relatively free hand" The article went on to talk of presence of a Haroun, a terrorist involved in 1998 US Embassy in Nairobi and Dar es salam bombing. The story was framed in a way to blame the government for not apprehending a terrorist on the loose armed with shoulder-launched missile.

On the January 27, 2003 *Time* magazine issue there was an article *The Algerian Factor*, which alleged that since September 11, 2001, British authorities had detained dozens of North Africans, mostly under suspicion of terrorism. Although those arrested were from Algeria, the reporter kept alluding to them as North Africans.

On the May 5, 2003 *Time* issue, there was an article titled *Friendly Advice* which reported that President Thabo Mbeki, Olusegun Obasanjo, and Bakili Muluzi had gone to Zimbabwe to force 'regime change' in the country. Bheki Khumalo, Thabo Mbeki's presidential spokesman who was at the meeting, interviewed by the *Newafrican* said that the regime change was not

discussed in the meeting and that the issue of regime change was a figment of imagination among a part of the press. This was an endeavour by the magazine to set an agenda and influence the public opinion.

There was an article in the same issue titled *Waiting for Disaster* which argued that (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome ) SARS was giving rich countries plenty of trouble but it would cause real devastation in Africa. The reporter did not analyze Africa's dismal health sector in terms of brain drain and structural adjustment programmes. Majority of doctors working in the developed countries are from Africa countries.

Africa's health sector is in tatters partly because the World Bank and IMF's Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPS) reduced the African government spending on public health and introduced cost sharing. Therefore Africa's health sector is not ready for SARS or any other epidemic breakout. This is partly because World Bank SAPs have impoverished the health sector while the transnational pharmaceutical industries have denied Africa affordable generic drugs. The article was also slanted to show that the African governments have no capacity to run projects and hence they need 'experts'.

The two magazines gave extensive coverage of HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa. It is evident that the coverage of HIV/ AIDS ravages in Africa by *Newsweek* and *Time* magazines were misleading. But in what ways has this happened? They over-exaggerated infection rates, and trumpeted dubious theories of the evolution of the disease. Coverage of HIV/AIDS in Africa by two magazines focused on the grimmest of scientific findings and soaring infection rates in southern African countries. But however laudable their motives, they ignored or deliberately



downplayed some encouraging developments of genuine importance like declining infection rates on the continent.

Promising medical advances in search for HIV/AIDS vaccine and reduced drug prices by pharmaceutical corporations in the fight against AIDS in Africa received extensive media coverage. Less attention was given to other significant findings that point to the curtailment of the epidemic. HIV/AIDS is not claiming nearly as many African victims as media projected a decade ago. The epidemic now appears to be receding in the continent, because fewer people are now being infected with HIV than are dying of AIDS; and the widely feared "breakout" of AIDS into Africa's sexually active population is now almost certain not to occur. For instance in Kenya the infection rate has gone down to 12% from 15% two years ago, Uganda infection rate has gone from over 20% a decade ago to around 8% currently.

This has been the bone of contention between the media and African countries regarding the HIV/AIDS statistics. Many African countries argue that the media cannot give the source of their information on the number of those infected. There has been a deliberate effort by the media to exaggerate the number of those infected and to make governments like Botswana to look as if they have been defeated by the scourge.

Why is the spread and impact of the epidemic so hard to measure? Even the best estimates of the number of HIV infections, AIDS cases, and AIDS deaths are highly conjectural, not only in Africa but also in Europe and the US. This uncertainty is not surprising because HIV/AIDS has been stigmatized. Because of the stigma (and because AIDS still appears to be a universally fatal disease), people often don't want others to know that they are HIV positive or have been

diagnosed with AIDS. Similarly, survivors often don't want others to know that their loved ones died of AIDS. As a result, even the most careful researchers are unable to produce definitive numbers that would enable us to pinpoint its spread with confidence ( Schwartz and Murray, 1996).

But unfortunately the two magazines have peddled Africa HIV/AIDS statistics without any empirical evidence.

The two magazines covered on corruption and disintegration of states and governments in Africa extensively. However their stories failed to give a historical and analytical background of the problem. During the Cold War, the two rival power blocs imposed an artificial, tenuous stability on the continent by propping up the corrupt leaders of client states. After the end of the Cold War the puppet Presidents could not sustain their governments without the support of their backers. Most of the countries had a government and rebel movements running side by side being supported by either of the power blocs. This was the case in West and Central African countries. The end of Cold War means that the power blocs left the governments to defend themselves against well-armed rebel groups, sometimes supported by multinational corporations.

In recent years, economic decline and the decay of administrative structures brought by the structural adjustment programmes imposed by the Bretton Woods institutions as a condition for lending to African countries have further weakened the capacity of most African states to govern effectively. The armies of unemployed youths and impoverished peasants are an easy and ready pool for rebel groups.

The two magazines castigated and gave extensive coverage to the authoritarian government in Africa. But there was no historical background information on the genesis of authoritarian rule in the continent. The authoritarianism of many African governments supported by Western countries to enable them exploit natural resources like in Democratic Republic of Congo, coupled by their incapacity to project power throughout their countries, has provided a fertile breeding ground for armed opposition movements. This situation has given way to a paradox wherein governments can easily arrest rebel leaders in their capital cities but have little capacity to curb even minor armed insurgencies in rural areas. In most of the rural areas where there are abundant natural resources, transnational corporations have established parallel governments to help them keep security while exploiting the natural resources. The rebel groups use the money from the natural resources under their control to buy weapons to fight governments like in Sierra Leone, Liberia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Amidst all this glaring evidence to the contrary, still the two magazines have the audacity to argue that corruption and disintegration of African governments is caused by factors inherent in the continent itself. Amid all this evidence the two magazines still argue that corruption and disintegration in African governments is caused by factors inherent in the continent.

The two international magazines failed to take into account the deep-rooted causes of the corruption and disintegration of the African states, which were undoubtedly exacerbated by the coming to power of an African elite which colluded with the French, British, American governments and multinational companies to bleed African economies through Western-designed and imposed neo-liberal economic reforms. Certainly, Africa had ruthless and corrupt Moi, Amin, Mobutu, Bokassa, and so many others but these leaders were propped up (and in

Mobutu's case, installed) by Western governments for the express purpose of serving the Western's selfish interests, to the disadvantage of the African people.

Edward Herman, economist and media analyst, argues that "... the establishment can't admit [that] it is human rights violations that make ... countries attractive to business -- so history has to be fudged, including denial of our support of regimes of terror and the practices that provide favorable climates of investment, and our destabilization of democracies that [don't] meet [the] standard of service to the transnational corporation..." He further argues that, there is ...a huge tacit conspiracy between the U.S. government, its agencies and its multinational corporations, on the one hand, and local business and military cliques in the Third World, on the other, to assume complete control of these countries and "develop" them on a joint venture basis. The military leaders of the Third World were carefully nurtured by the U.S. security establishment to serve as the "enforcers" of this joint venture partnership, and they have been duly supplied with machine guns and the latest data on methods of interrogation of subversives."

There was no background information when reporting of corruption and mis-governance in Africa. Information on Africa corruption and mis-governance was presented without a historical and analytical context or perspective to explain the roots of a conflict. On account of this lack of historical and analytical examination, the two magazines resorted to attributing all conflicts in Africa to irrationality and weaknesses inherent in the continent and its people. Secondly, "information" of reporting on Africa sometimes underlies or informs Western governments' foreign policies. Thirdly, "information" also plays a big role in the formation of Western public opinion, both sympathetic and negative, towards Africa and her people. There is still a popular

misconception that anything written or seen on television is true. Unfortunately, Western media takes full advantage of this misconception to further their own interests.

This myth needs to be debunked. Since the Cold War era the trend has been that in order to receive international media coverage as a developing country, the news must be negative or too bizarre to ignore. For instance the, “apartheid” South Africa used to receive more international media coverage than the rest of Africa. Paradoxically, the same South Africa whose government is currently in the hands of the blacks who are the majority and despite being the economic, political and technological powerhouse, does not receive a quarter of coverage it used to receive under the inhuman and oppressive “apartheid” rule. Uganda has gone out of the international media except for a few instances of attacks attributed to the Lord’s Resistance Army or military scandals in DRC. This trend runs contrary to the 1970s and in 80s when Uganda used to receive wider coverage in the international media. Many Europeans and Americans know the Uganda of the 1970s with civil strife and HIV/AIDS as opposed to modern Uganda with one of the fastest growing economies in the region.

The frames used by *Time* and *Newsweek* magazine were consciously chosen to present the story in a direct and meaningful way to promote and serve the selfish interests of the West. They were drawn from and are reflective of biased shared cultural narratives and myths which resonate with the larger social, cultural, political and economic themes.

Africa was portrayed as a continent where the world is always sending humanitarian aid to avert one catastrophe or other. In the February 3, 2003 issue of *Newsweek* magazine, an article titled *A reason for Hope* depicted President George Bush’s \$15 billion AIDS relief package to Africa as a

lifeline to the HIV/AIDS ravaged continent. This amount of money was magnified to enormous proportions. But this was a drop in the ocean compared to the billions of dollars given to the state of Israel for military aid.

Although Africa is disproportionately aid-dependent (due to factors beyond her control) she does not receive a disproportionate amount of aid compared to other parts of the world. This misrepresentation confuses the actual amount of money African countries receive, which is relatively small, with the importance of that assistance relative to the continent's individual gross national product (GNPs).

Collectively, sub-Saharan Africa receives a little more than one-fourth of all official multilateral and bilateral assistance in the world. It receives approximately 7% of US foreign aid. About one-tenth of official development assistance to sub-Saharan Africa consists of emergency funds to victims of natural and man-made catastrophes. On a per capita basis, the region receives slightly more on average than other low-income countries but only about one-fifteenth as much as the state Israel. This information was not included as a background by the two magazines when discussing aid to Africa.

African countries, however, continue to depend heavily on international aid because their economies are so small and so depressed that even modest amounts of funding represent a huge percentage of their GNPs and national government budgets. The two international magazines through their coverage, shout, "African countries are among the most aid-dependent in the

World..." But in reality only one African country (Egypt) is among the largest recipients of foreign aid.

They also advocated free market and globalization as a way out for Africa. But they failed to inform the audience that the world market is Africa's worst enemy. Almost all African countries are dependent on exporting minerals and cash crops. While real prices in the world market for these commodities have declined during the post-World War II period, the prices of manufactured imports from industrialized countries have steadily increased. Liberalization and globalization has created uneven playing field for African farmers. The heavy subsidy by the European and American governments to the respective agricultural sector has reduced the power of African agricultural products to compete in the world market. For instance, every American cow is subsidized at two dollars. This is a bigger profit margin than any African beef or dairy farmer would ever expect to receive.

Poverty as a topic was not addressed in the issues under study. There was no adequate coverage of poverty in Africa caused by low commodity prices and over pricing of finished products from the West. Throughout sub-Saharan Africa, low commodity prices have affected markets and local communities that depend on a very narrow range of exports. Most Africans find themselves in what Oxfam calls a "trade trap" where they are forced to produce cash crops for income that is so low; they continue to live their lives in abject poverty. In Cote d'Ivoire exports of coffee rose by 26 percent in volume but fell by 21 percent in value between 1988 and 1990. Similarly, in Rwanda, export earnings declined by 50 percent between 1987 and 1991. In Kenya the prices of

coffee and tea have been on the downward spiral since early 90s. Most of the coffee farmers have exchanged coffee trees for horticulture which is fetching more money in the world market.

African countries did not get any coverage on the business section of either *Time* or *Newsweek* magazines. Coverage went to multinational companies which exploit Africa's natural resources but the continent is never mentioned. The world terms of trade are structured in such a way that most African governments have been forced to spend more on the world market than they earn. They have filled this gap by borrowing. By 1992, external debt for sub-Saharan Africa was over \$200 billion --a debilitating number that represents 109 percent of its GNP, an 80 percent increase since 1980. The World Bank has concluded, " that the bite that debt-service payments take out of a country's capacity to import each year is clearly unsustainable in an environment of low investment and stagnant GDP." The two magazines did not cover this issue which is central to the Africa economy.

The world financial system is a greater cause of hunger in Africa than is bad weather. Forced to produce foreign-exchange earning crops to pay off unpayable debts, African nations find themselves importing more and more food. Food imports, currently estimated at 10 percent of total imports, place considerable strain on Africa's balance of payments.

There was a wider coverage on the humanitarian activities of the donor agencies and Western nations. The Bretton Woods institutions were portrayed as the patrons of the African continent. There has also been a myth to the effect that the institutions are the only way for African countries to gain economic independence. The IMF, the U.S. Agency for International



Development (USAID), and other Western donors have also been involved in creating and perpetuating this myth.

The World Bank leads the way. In March, 2000 the institution released a series of public relations initiatives in a document entitled, *Adjustment In Africa: Reforms, Results, And The Road Ahead*. The bank claimed that adjustment was working in Africa and that countries that have most closely followed its advice have grown the fastest, directly contradicting even its own internal 1992 draft study entitled, *Why Structural Adjustment Has Not Succeeded in Sub-Saharan Africa*. The same red herring by the Bank was picked by the international media and presented as facts.

Of the six countries that the World Bank presented as adjustment "successes"--Ghana, Tanzania, the Gambia, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe--four had deteriorating rates of investment and two had negative GDP growth rates during their respective adjustment periods. *Adjustment In Africa* also conveniently ignores the social disaster in countries like Tanzania and the full effect of large donor aid infusions in Ghana.

In addition, it took credit for gains in Zimbabwe and Burkina Faso, despite the fact that they undertook their own adjustment processes that in key areas contradicted the Bank's advice.

Zimbabwe, which was previously touted by the West as a case study for Structural Adjustments Programmes in Africa, is sinking fast because of its policy of equitable distribution of land which is viewed by the West as favouring the Africans to the disadvantage of the white farmers and multinational corporations. As a consequence, President Mugabe is being demonized by the Western media, which is agitating for his removal from power.

## 4.1 CONCLUSION

In *The Emergence of American Political Issues* (1977) McCombs and Shaw state that the most important effect of the mass media is its ability to mentally order and organize our world for us. In short, the mass media may not be successful in telling us what to think, but they are stunningly successful in telling us what to think about.

Africa has been portrayed as the dark continent in need of civilizing, and its heathen peoples in need of enlightenment through enslavement and colonization. For a long time Africa has been presented as a continent in the difficult throes of trying to become more like the societies of the Western Hemisphere. From the era of Africa's enslavement and colonial rule, traders, missionaries, adventurers and explorers have all played a role in perpetuating and disseminating certain (mostly negative) images of Africa.

*Time* and *Newsweek* coverage of Africa influences the foreign policy, commerce and politics of the continent. Perhaps this is the reason why Africa received a superficial coverage, because it is not seen as a major player in global politics. The biased media perspective and coverage of Africa is predictable. Africa, vast as it is, 30 million square kilometres of it no longer seems of great importance to the world. The Western media know that Africa is not an arena for any great political, economic or even technological games.

Press releases by the US or British governments regarding security in African nations was used in the two magazines and framed in such a way as to show that the African governments have lax security or are not doing enough to fight terrorism. Mark you "terrorism" as defined by these two biased though powerful governments and conveyed to the rest of the world by their

equally biased and powerful media. Recently, the US and British governments issued security advisories to their citizens not to visit Kenya and also banned flights to and from Kenya. While the flights and tourists to Israel, one of the bloodiest hotspot in the world today has not been affected. The irony of all ironies is the fact that even after the suicide bombings of the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, right in the heart of America, stories manufactured and marketed by the Western media continue to show that the U.S.A government was, and still is, both competent and in control.

Often the US and European policymakers promote the country's interests by using the media to send diplomatic signals to other countries or even to speak directly to other peoples. Instead of sending messages through ambassadors, the President or other top officials may find that speaking their own words in a press conference or interview has more impact on certain foreign leaders. The Western governments through press releases and sometimes by commissioning of the so called experts to carry out half-baked research on various aspects of life in Africa pretend to be experts in the continent. As every levelheaded and keen observer of the happenings on the continent very well knows, nothing could be further from the truth. Asia Russel, spokesperson for Health Global Access Project, on the intellectual property guidance for anti-AIDS drugs in Africa hit the nail on the head when she quipped, '*Technical assistance.... From the U.S. will always be a case of the fox guarding the henhouse.*'

Finally, I will quote President Bakili Muluzi of Malawi during an interview with Baffour Ankomah and Khalid Bazid of *NewAfrican* Magazine, (July 2003), "...I was the Chairman of the SADC until August last year. In that capacity, I attended so many meetings on the conflicts

*in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi and Angola. And I told the journalists covering these meetings: "You are painting a very bad picture of Africa, because you are only picking these countries in conflict, but Africa is not only Angola or Burundi or Rwanda or Congo. There is Malawi. There is Botswana, for instance- a very good example of democracy. Go to South Africa. Nobody wants to talk about great strides achieved in South Africa."*

"It is up to us," avers former Daily Dispatch editor, Donald Woods, "Africans must learn to do things for themselves."

## **CHAPTER 5 : IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY**

It is my sincere hope that this study will help scholars and students of international communication to understand the notion behind the selection, framing and coverage of news in the media about Africa in particular and the developing countries in general. It will help in the interpretation of placement, size and framing of the news from various countries in the international media.

These findings could also be useful to policy makers while drafting communication policy guidelines which will strike a balance between the commercial and public service sectors of the media. This can be done mainly by encouraging community media and discouraging monopoly of the corporate ownership of the media.

The study will also help African leaders to shoulder the burden of implementing African solutions to the continents' problems without relying on the donors and Western countries which have their agenda and interests to promote. African leaders and policy makers should understand very clearly that the Western countries in particular are not willing to accept Africa's home-grown solutions to her own problems which are not necessarily in the favour of the interests of the West. This is because the rest of the world is not willing to live with African solutions that they do not necessarily favor.

When it comes to issues such as conflict resolution and economic development, genuine African solutions vary considerably. The international community has approved some of these

initiatives, Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and other organizations, have strictly speaking been formed at the instigation of West.

IGAD changed its focus from the threat of drought and locust infestation to that of conflict--to negotiate an agreement for the resolution of the problems in this part of Africa due to the instigation from West.

African solutions to her problems have been condemned outright by the international community not because they are unattainable but because tragically the persistence of the conflict serves the interests of the international community.

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