

PERISCOPING THE NWICO DEBATE USING NIGERIAN PRESS COVERAGE OF DARFUR CONFLICT IN SUDAN AS A CASE STUDY

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INTRODUCTION

Nearly a decade after the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) abandoned discussion on the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO), ending years of contentious debate during which the United States of America and Britain quit the United Nations Agency, about 30 Information ministers from the Non-Aligned developing countries resurrected NWICO in Abuja, Nigeria (Bullen, 1997:1). Rising from their meeting in the Nigerian capital in September 1996, the ministers from Egypt, Bangladesh, Colombia, Malaysia, Zimbabwe, Iraq and about two-dozen other Non-Aligned countries reanimated the NWICO debate in the following declaration:

- Developed countries are employing their media to disseminate false and distorted information of events taking place in developing countries.
- The struggle for the New World Information and Communication Order should be intensified in spite of the end of the cold war.
- The long history of the efforts for a

New World Information and Communication Order notwithstanding, the salient objectives are yet to be realized.

- NWICO should be promoted both within the U.N and UNESCO (Bullen, 1997:1).

The above declaration rekindled the interest of communication scholars and researchers in the once abandoned debate on a New World Information and Communication Order. The NWICO debate emerged as a result of the protest by developing countries over the biased under-reporting of their countries by the technologically advanced dominant media of the developed countries.

Most studies carried out indicated that about 80 percent of the international news that flow through the news rooms across the globe come from the five major news agencies namely Reuters, Agence France Presse (AFP), United Press International (UPI), the Associated Press (AP) and Telegrafoe Agentsvo Sovietkovo Soyuz (TASS) owned by the developed countries of Britain, France, the United States of America and Russia (Ojo, 2002:1).

And of this, less than 30 percent is devoted to developing countries despite the fact that they account for 75 percent of the World Population (Okigbo, 1990: 338). Apart from under-reporting, the developing countries complain that news about them are negatively slanted by the western media and that the flow of information and news is one-sided, from the developed to the developing countries.

To halt this trend and redress the lopsided news-flow, the developing countries under the auspices of the Non-Aligned Movement, demanded for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). The call for a NWICO was first made at the 4th Summit Conference of the Heads of States and Governments of the Non-Aligned countries in Algiers in 1973 (Momoh, 1990:99). The developing countries' proposal towards achieving a favourable information and communication order include, avoiding all initiatives likely to misrepresent or deform or show in an unfavourable light the activities of the developing countries. Regulating the gathering, processing and transmission of news across national boundaries as well as setting up an international body which offending journalists or companies could be called to account.

The Non-Aligned countries believe that the decolonisation of information, which was the main thrust of the Algiers Plan of Action, was essential to promote economic redistribution advocated under a New International Economic Order (Bullen, 1997:2). This campaign for a balance in the international news flow gave birth to one of the greatest debates in the

field of international communication in the 1970s and the 1980s.

Expectedly, the developed countries, spearheaded by the US and Britain, opposed the NWICO campaign describing it as a threat to free flow of information and freedom of the press. Stating the US opposition to NWICO, President Ronald Regan, quoted in the *New York Times* of September 22, 1987, said, "We cannot permit attempts to control the media and promote censorship under the ruse of a so-called New World Information Order", (Ojo, 2002:4).

Scholars from both the developed and developing countries have acknowledged the existence of imbalance in the international information flow. Where the controversy centres according to Nwosu (1990:360), is on the solution. Espousing, (obviously) western solution to the problem, British minister for Overseas Development, Timothy Raison, posits that the information imbalance is a developmental problem which could only be redressed through a "gradual evolutionary process" as against the Non-Aligned proposal of regulating the gathering, processing and transmission of news amongst others (see Nwosu, 1990: 362).

While some communication scholars like Righter (1979:84-106), Attwood (1982:321) and Masha (1982:342), advocate a global cooperation approach towards solving the problem, others like Merril (1978:44-46, 1980:8), Abel (1982:349-380) and Lindsay (1980), recommend a minimal self dependence or inside look by Third World countries.

This implies that the developing countries should concentrate on developing their own communication capabilities; produce more of their own news, programmes, motion pictures, while at the same time cooperating among themselves. Such cooperation entails exchange of news and programmes through their news agencies and more coverage of themselves.

The UNESCO, which has been in the fight for the realization of NWICO, supports the above position. In Article VI of its Media Declaration, it stated that:

...it is necessary to correct the inequalities in the flow of information to and from developing countries and between those countries. To this end, it is essential that their mass media should have conditions and resources enabling them to gain strength and expand and to cooperate both among themselves and with the mass media in developed countries.

(see Momoh: 1990).

In line with the above, African countries took steps to develop their communication muscles and engender flow of news among themselves by setting up the Pan African News Agency (PANA). PANA commenced operation on May 25, 1983. With its five regional offices working with the individual news agencies of member countries, events happening in any part of the continent can be flashed to Dakar, Senegal, the headquarters of PANA and can reach member countries the same day (Momoh, 1990:101). With regard to this development, this study aimed at

examining the coverage of Africa by four Nigerian newspapers, using the Darfur conflict in western Sudan as a case study.

The Darfur conflict began in February 2003, when a rebel army in the Darfur region took up arms against what they saw as years of state neglect and discrimination against Sudanese of African origin. The government responded with a counter insurgency campaign in which the Janjaweed, an Arab militia group, was used by the government to commit wide-scale abuse against the civilian population. By December 2004, over 70,000 people had died and another 1.5 million people displaced by the conflict creating what the UN described as the world's worst humanitarian crisis (*The Guardian*, December 8, 2004:10).

The study analysed the content of the four newspapers to determine the level of coverage given to the conflict, the sources of the news reports on the conflict as well as other African news stories published by the newspapers.

Equally, the volume of news on Africa published by the papers in relation to other regions of the world were ascertained. The newspapers that were analysed include *The Guardian*, *Punch*, *THISDAY* and *New Nigerian*.

Statement of Problem

A research conducted by the UNESCO in the early 1960s as reported by Schramm (1964:94), shows that 70 percent of the World population lack the barest means of being informed of developments at home let alone in other countries. These people, mostly in the developing countries,

rely for much of their domestic news on the five major world news agencies owned by the developed countries that have about 30 percent of the world population. Moreover, news about the developing countries is sourced, processed and disseminated largely through these big five world news agencies. The result is that little is relatively heard about these countries and the little heard are always negative.

The developing countries considered this unfair and in 1973 called for equilibrium in news flow between the developed and developing countries. The UNESCO, in a bid to address the problem, organised numerous conferences to find solution to it. One such conference held in Kuala Lumpur in 1977 recommended that the media should be used as a means of affirming a nation's collective identity, instrument of social interaction with positive effect on society's democratization process through a multi-directional flow of both horizontal and vertical messages from both the media to their public and from this public to the media (Abayomi, 2004:48). Towards achieving these objectives, developing countries were encouraged to establish news agencies and promote multi-lateral communication agreements between and among themselves. They are to gather and exchange news, films and various broadcast materials for their own benefit. This implies that the achievement of a balanced coverage and news flow rests largely in the hands of the developing countries.

In response to this, African nations set up the Pan African News Agency as well as their own individual news agencies. This

study was conducted to find out if the setting up of PANA and individual news agencies by African nations, has improved the coverage of Africa by the African media, using the Nigerian newspapers' coverage of the humanitarian crisis in the Western Darfur region of Sudan as a case study.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What is the extent of coverage given to the Darfur conflict by the selected newspapers in relation to other conflicts that occurred in other parts of the world at the same period?
2. What are the sources of the news on the Darfur crisis and other African news stories published in the newspapers?
3. What is the percentage of African news in comparison with the total foreign news items published by the newspapers?
4. Which region of the world had the highest news coverage during the period under review?

Focus of Study

The Darfur conflict broke out in February 2003. The conflict escalated and gained international attention in April 2004 due to the abuses and atrocities committed by the Janjaweed militia, which created a humanitarian crisis in the region. By December 2004, 70,000 people had died and over one million others forced away from their homes. This study focussed on the period between April 2004 and September 2004, a six-month period when the crisis featured prominently in the global media.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study finds relevance in Agenda-setting and gatekeeping theories. Lippman, cited in Ojobor (2002), stated that the media help to put pictures in our heads. This portrays the media as having the power to set the agenda and raise issues of public importance.

Agenda-setting theory was propounded by Cohen (1963:13). He asserted that the press may not be successful in telling people what to think but it is successful in telling its readers what to think about. McCombs and Shaw (1972:16) cited in Okigbo (1990), who researched into this area concluded that media emphasis on an event influences the audience to see the event as important. Just as the media can set the agenda on domestic issues, they can also influence the audience perception of issues covered in international news since the average person relies on the media for information on what is happening in other parts of the world. The media through deliberate misrepresentation or genuine error of ignorance can create false agenda thereby misleading through information. The consequences of misrepresentation by the western media are responsible for the persistent demand by developing countries for a new world order of information and communication. This call, which is on governments and media proprietors, is equally on journalists who set the agenda and keep the gates (Okigbo, 1990:346).

The media as gatekeepers determine which news event merit coverage or should be published. Media content is created through the gate-keeping functions of the media. Gate-keeping functions are also

important in international communication. According to Okigbo (1990: 346), the controversy over news imbalance arose largely because of the manner in which gatekeepers of the world media have operated.

Thus, the way a country is reported in the media can influence the way she is perceived by the public or audience because the media sometimes set agenda for the audience and these agenda are arrived at following gate-keeping operations of the media.

WORLD MEDIA COVERAGE OF AFRICA

The latent power of the media to influence thought, shape opinion and perception has been a subject of extensive research in the field of communication. While Walter Lippman (1923:23-25), portrays the media as having the power to put pictures in our heads, Lang and Lang (1959:232), submit that the media can force attention to certain issues. Equally, Cohen (1963:13), in his Agenda setting theory asserts that while the media may not be successful in telling people what to think, it is successful in telling its readers what to think about. McCombs and Shaw (1976-16), in their own research on this subject concluded that media emphasis on an event influence the audience to perceive such event as important.

Several researches have been conducted to verify the validity of the agenda-setting theory such as Lang and Lang (1966), Becker and Brynes (1974), Williams and Semlack (1986), Iyenger and Kindar (1987), Roger et al (1983) and

MacQuail (2000), and it has been found that the saliency of the media in telling people what to think about still stands (Tejumaiye, 2005:147). This underscores the importance of the media in the society because what people think about is what they may likely discuss and this discussion can possibly shape their opinion and perception of issues.

Just as the media possess the potency to raise issues of public importance and set the agenda for public discussion on domestic issues, they can equally influence the audience perception of issues covered in international news since most people considerably rely on the media for information on what is happening in other parts of the world.

However, for ideological and other reasons, the media through deliberate misrepresentation and genuine error of ignorance can create false agenda and therefore mislead through information (Okigbo, 1990:346). Analysts of global media system believe that the Western press, which control the international news flow, are guilty of the sins of deliberate misrepresentation and error of ignorance in their treatment of news from the African continent. Mustapha Masmoudi (1984:14-15) attributes this to the reason why international news coverage is unfairly biased against Africa and other less developed nations of the world.

But Rosenblum (1979:247-248), disagrees. He argues that international journalists are constrained by many factors some of which are beyond their control. Peterson (1972) identifies the factors, which influence international news

gatekeepers' decision to use or reject certain news stories to include unexpectedness, frequency, consonance, unambiguity, negativity and cultural background.

Kromah (2002:1), a professor of international communication and Liberia's former information minister however is of the view that cultural factors more than professional inadequacies account "significantly for the stereotyping archetype, which has remained a hall mark of Western collection and dissemination of information about Africa". These socio-cultural factors Ochs (1926:29) insists influence the coverage of Africa in a manner that "reflects the point of view, mentality, values and interests of the developed nations. This point of view according to Ebo (1992:15) is such that lumps the 53 nations of the African continent as one and often portrays it as a crocodile-infested dark continent where jungle life has perpetually eluded civilization. Fitzgerald (1987:24), explains that this accounts for the reason why Western news editors and policy makers consider Africa as less important because the continent is viewed as a vast black hole fringed by Libya and South Africa.

History points to slavery and colonialism as the two events that have had an overwhelming impact on the way the West perceives Africa. Even the embracing of Western education and civilization has not in the eyes of West raised the status of the African from the sub-human level where the West places it. This can be deduced from the viewpoint of former president Abraham Lincoln, quoted in Kromah (2002:4). In his election debate with his opponent in 1858,

Lincoln stated "I am not, nor ever have been in favour of making voters or jurors of Negroes nor of qualifying them to hold office, nor inter-marry with white people". Even with the passage of two centuries after the abolition of slavery, the perception of Africa has hardly changed. The news of Africa is still being infected with the prevailing wisdom of the 19th century (*New African Magazine*, 2000:17). As Uche (1996:17), put it "at the dawn of the 21st century, the North and South are still living in Many Worlds, one Voice". The one voice, he said, is the one the industrially rich North has imposed through its claim to economic and technological superiority and hegemony.

Thus, slavery and colonization did not only crudely interrupt African progress but it left a legacy that propels media coverage of Africa in a skewed fashion. The equation is such that provides that news is only news when it satisfies the expectation of the consumer whose mind set about Africa is little more than the pictures of Tarzan and Gorillas (Kromah, 2002:4). At the heart of these images is African portrayal as a culturally, intellectually and politically inferior continent (Heyden, 1999:2)

This is why *The Economist*, an influential UK based magazine in its May 13th-19th 2000 edition, described Africa as a "hopeless continent". The notion and perception of African as a hopeless continent where nothing good comes from forms the basis and foundation for the tendency of the Western media to report Africa negatively. Conflicts and crisis seems to be a better attraction. Several

research findings lend empirical credence to this. For instance, a research on African related stories that appeared in both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* from the end of March to mid-August 2000, showed that of the 89 stories on Africa, seventy five of them were negative in content (Ojo, 2002:4). The news stories, Ojo noted, were "presented as tribal conflicts with strong metaphors and imagery of savages and beasts in which people with the hearts of darkness are killing themselves for no reason or dying of AIDS".

Similarly, Uwakwe (2005: 243) who carried out a content analytical study of BBC Focus on *Africa Magazine* from April 2003 to September 2004 reported that out of the six issues of the magazine studied, three featured headlines depicting negative issues in Africa.

These findings, are not different from the previous study carried out by M. EL Zein and Anne Cooper over a decade ago. El Zein and Cooper looked at the *New York Times* Coverage of Africa from 1976-1990 and reported that apart from being infrequently reported, news about Africa are laden with conflict and crisis when reported (El Zein & Cooper, 1992:136). Fernby (1986:13), Momoh (1990) and Biney (1999), equally affirm that African news stories appear in the Western media only when they border on crisis, sensational issues and portray Africa as incapable, corrupt and unworthy of help.

Having chosen crisis and conflict as a better way of presenting Africa, the Western press by "genuine error of ignorance" or "deliberate

misrepresentation” or both ignore development efforts in Africa. According to Momoh (1990:98), serious efforts are being made by governments in Africa to pull the continent from the rungs of poverty, but these efforts are rarely or half-heartedly reported. A case in point is the survey on American media coverage of African Democracies: 1994-2004. The study reflected inequitable coverage of positive developments in Africa. The smallest category was education with only twenty articles, even though within this period APARC's (African Presidential Archives and Research Centre) state of Africa report 2003 on educational advances on the continent recorded a 90 percent literacy rate in Botswana, 1.7 million additional primary school enrolment in Kenya, a rise in the enrolment in teachers Training Colleges in Ghana from 6,000 to 8,500 in year 2000 and the construction of more than 600 new class rooms in Malawi. Neither these gains nor similar gains from 1994 to 2004 were reported in the more than 2,700 items surveyed from *The Times*, *The Post*, *The Journal*, *USA Today* or *US News*.

Equal, instructive is the content audit carried out on the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* from March to August 2000, by the Trans Africa Forum (2000:5). The report indicates that there was no report on regional economic or political cooperation in Africa, no indepth look at any of the African political economies, the private sector was totally ignored while all articles related to development were centred on the public sector. Piqued by the unfair reporting of Kenya in the *Washington Post*, a Kenyan in an editorial letter to the paper

wrote.

The post has not told its readers of the many positive developments in Kenya especially in economic reforms... it has also ignored Kenyan efforts in mediation in regional conflict, especially on Somalia and the Sudan (Washington Post March 31, 1994).

Confessing to the sin of deliberate neglect of positive developments in Africa in his coverage, George Alagiah, an Asian born BBC African correspondent wrote in the *Guardian*:

My job is to give a fuller picture

But I have a gnawing regret that, as a foreign correspondent, I have done Africa a disservice, too often showing the continent at its worst and too rarely showing it in full flower (New African Magazine 2000:17)”.

Apart from their penchant to ignore positive developments in their coverage of Africa, the negative stories reported by the Western media about Africa are often without historical context. The lack of historical context can be seen in a *USA Today* (May 4, 1994) article, which noted that the height of American Investment in South Africa was before 1981, before the end of apartheid (during the period of violent repression of black democratic aspirations). One could logically conclude from such coverage that violence in the name of apartheid seemed to have less of an

impact on investment than violence under a black majority democratic government (APARC, 2005:6).

Equally, the *New York Times* picture of South Africa is a portrait of disfunctionality, assertions such as "South Africa has had one of the highest rates of rape including child rape in the world", "South Africa has one of the highest per capital highway fatality rates worldwide" as reported by *Times* are often without historical or contemporary context. The inference is that there is a correlation between such data and black majority rule. A more balanced assessment of such data would at least offer comparisons to the apartheid period or disaggregate such numbers and make comparisons to other countries on other continents at the same stage of development. But, this is not so because as Ebo (1992:18) reasoned the stories are not giving historical context to avoid linking the West to the problem even though "much of the political strife and problems in Africa results from the collision of distinct cultural groups arbitrarily thrown into political entities by Western colonialists in their scramble for Africa".

These bias and gross misrepresentation of Africa in the global media controlled by the West gave rise to the desire by African countries and other developing countries who are being treated in the same manner to call for a new world information and communication order.

TOWARDS IMPROVED COVERAGE OF AFRICA: THE NWICO OPTION

The demand for a New-World Information and Communication Order

(NWICO) is rooted on the premise that the content of information (news) is largely produced by the main developed and industrialized countries in which the image of the developing countries are frequently portrayed falsely (Aliede, 2005:220). The reason behind the demand is summed up in a report submitted to the club of Rome by RIO (Reshaping the International Order 1977:37), which declared that:

industrialized countries will not have real access to full information on the Third World, its demands, aspirations and needs, until such time as information and communication patterns are liberated from market oriented sensationalism and news presentation which characterise them at present and until they are consciously stripped of ethnocentric prejudices.

The Macbride Commission (1980:44) implied this further when it stated "the Western press gives inadequate and superficial attention to the realities of developing countries, often infusing coverage with cultural bias". Apart from biased coverage the developing countries complain that the flow of information is one-way and equally monopolistic in pattern from the developed to the developing countries. Macbride (1980) and Agba (2002:257), anchored the protest of the developing countries on what they described as quantitative and qualitative

imbalance in news flow. Quantitative imbalance concerns the amount of news flow in both directions - developing and developed countries. Masmoudi (1979:173) paints the picture thus:

This imbalance is created by the disparity between the volume of news and information emanating from the developed world and intended for developing countries and the volume of the flow in the opposite direction. Almost 80 percent of the world news flow emanates from the major trans-national news agencies. However, these devote only 20 to 30 percent of news coverage to the developing countries despite the fact that the latter account for almost three quarters of mankind.

The qualitative imbalance dwells on what is published about the developing countries. The latter complain that the Western Media treasure oddity as a news value in their report about them. As a result only the bizarre are reported. Most of these reports are about wars, pestilence, strife, disease, disaster, famine, coups, political crisis, economic downturn and every other thing that wears a black outfit (Agba 2002:258). Kombol (2005:103) gave an instance:

In Zambia's case... there has been no time in the history of the country

especially after the colonial era, that she has been in the Lime light of Western media coverage other than when a looming famine was predicted in 2002. Back then the nation received wide spread publicity with the graphic portrayal of Zambia as a dooms day territory.

The habitual biased under coverage of developing countries by the media of the West which emphasis mostly the unfavourable aspects often lead to audience perception that Africa and other developing nations is turbulent, crisis-oriented, violent and chaotic. Also the under reporting of development affairs mean that the developing countries are perceived as deficient in development (Okigbo 1990:351). The imbalance in news flow between the West and the developing countries could be attributed to the dominance of the Western media in global communication technology.

Writing on this Feuby (1986:3), noted that though it is true that "the world has never been more abundantly informed about itself", it is also true that the technological progress that made this possible has eluded most parts of the developing regions. This explains why 80 percent of the international news that flow through the news rooms across the globe come from the five major news agencies - Agence France Presse (AFP), United Press International (UPI), the Associated Press (AP), the Reuters and *Telegrafoe Agensvo*

Sovetskovo Soyuz (TASS) (Ojo, 2002:1). These world news agencies, which are owned by the developed countries of France, USA, Britain and the former Soviet Union, render services to almost all the media houses in the less developed countries (Amakiri 2005:39), who depend considerably on them for their daily news reports.

The near total dependence of the developing world on the Western media is given vent by Grachev and Yermoshkin (1984:15), who observed that:

When a Latin American opens his morning newspapers eight out of ten stories he reads have nothing to do with the problems of his continent, six out of the ten reports have been supplied by AP, UPI, Reuters or Agence France Presse. In the evening, Latin Americans watch

Television which presents news items in the same proportion, and also from foreign source. The situation is similar in the newly independent countries of Africa too.

The Macbride report (1980:156-159) corroborated this. The commission discovered in its investigation that most African news agencies do rely exclusively on the services of foreign news agencies even while dealing with issues that occurred in their immediate environment. Thus, from the developing world's perspective the

developed countries take advantage of their superior communication apparatuses and inflict ideological and cultural domination on the under-developed countries, under-report and portray them (less developed countries) in bad light. They also feel that the imported model of a free-press only sows dissent and conflict in their countries instead of promoting the unity vital to economic development and to the building of an independent modern state (Aliede, 2005:221).

It is in the light of the above that the developing countries initiated the demand for a new world information and communication order (NWICO) to redress these disadvantages. Mustapha Masmoudi, then Tunisia's information minister articulated the African position in a paper he submitted in 1978 to the Macbride Commission, a 16-member body created by UNESCO to study communication issues in the wake of the NWICO demand by the developing countries. Some of the proposals include:

- That Western media coverage of Africa should avoid all initiatives likely to misrepresent, deform or show in unfavourable light the activities of developing countries.
- That the gathering, processing and transmission of news across national borders should be controlled.
- An international body before which offending journalists or companies could be called to account should be set up, (See Bullen, 1992:2).

The UNESCO, which was sympathetic to the desire of the developing

countries, passed a resolution adopted by consensus at the 19th General Conference of the body in Nairobi in 1976 and at the 31st United Nations General Assembly. The resolution according to Kleinwachter (1993:15) was aimed amongst others to promote the development of national communication systems in the developing countries and to develop a concept for a democratic restructuring of the international information system.

Primarily, the nations of the South, which include all countries of Africa, wanted a radical overhaul of the present international communication system. They wanted the world communication system to reflect the diversity and equality of all human races. As Masmoudi put it, "the primary purpose of NWICO is to initiate further reforms and to establish a new communication order more just and more beneficial to the whole community of mankind".

This attempt by Africa and the rest of the developing countries to restructure global communication through the institution of a NWICO was however, opposed stoutly by the West. The efforts of the two opposing parties to push their cases generated one of the greatest debates in the field of international communication in the 1970s and the 1980s.

WESTERN PERSPECTIVE ON NWICO

The West led by the US and Britain strongly opposed, resisted and rejected the attempt by the developing world to correct the imbalance in the flow of information

though the institution of a NWICO. They saw the demand for a NWICO as a frontal attack on capitalism. Writing on this, Roach (1990:283), cited in Ojo (2002:2) observed that the "critique of US domination of information flow and Madison Avenue brought home to the West that in many ways the NWICO movement was an attack on capitalism: it was not only the news and entertainment values which were felt to be 'alien' to many non-Western societies but also the trans-nationalised economy represented by American industries".

To Attwood and Murphy (1982:13-23), there is more to the question of information flow, it is not the content of the world's new channels that gives rise to the controversy, "more important than news, be it development news or coups and earthquakes, is the economic data transmitted daily across the borders..."

X-raying further the Western position, Amakiri (2005:52), stated that to the West, the whole idea of NWICO amounts to a negation of capitalism's ideology of open competition in the market place of ideas as the demand connotes official control of news. Instead of a balanced flow of information, the West insists on free flow, which it argues, sustains objective journalism, free press and democracy.

NWICO was therefore perceived by the West as an attack on capitalism, democracy and freedom of the press. The West particularly anchors their opposition on the latter. Supporting the Western news agencies, Righter (1984:48) posits that their report on the developing world is informed

by their libertarian nature of a “free market place of ideas” which is rooted in their belief in the freedom of the press.

Echoing Righter, Rosenblum (1977), points out that Western journalists feel that if the order works, it would lead to an end to the freedom of the press as they view it as an invitation to government control of the mass media.

Former US president, Ronald Regan, shares this perception of NWICO as an invitation to government control of the media. Expressing his, and indeed, the US vehement opposition to NWICO, Regan declared “we cannot permit attempt to control the media and promote censorship under the ruse of a so-called New World Information Order” (*New York Times* September 22, 1987).

Odious to the West also is the developing world's proposal that being one of the vital tools of national development, the media should be properly controlled by the state. According to Aliede (2005:226), the West argue that this can cause distortion and amount to interference with free flow of accurate news and freedom of the press.

On the proven bias in their media coverage of events in the developing countries, the West contend that there is universal bias in journalism. According to Merrill (1983:15), if the Western world is guilty of bias so is journalism all over the world. Stephenson (1984:134), who shares a similar view, argues that it is not true that the developing world is singled out for under-reporting or false reporting for that matter. He contends that the attention given to disruptive news in less developed countries is characteristic of all media

systems. Haskin (1983), Galtung and Ruge (1973), Peterson (1979) and Bohle (1986) also agree. They believe that bad news about developing countries in the Western media are not selected solely on account of their “badness”. They argued that though “bad news” is a news selection criterion, it is used in consideration with other news selection criteria.

Hodgson (1993:24), on his own part, accused leaders of Africa, who are mainly the sources of the criticism against the West, of lacking the knowledge and understanding of criteria of news judgement, stressing that unusualness/oddity, interest, amongst others are benchmarks for defining and determining news values. Hodgson may have been echoing Merrill (1985), cited in Aliede (2005:223), when he mentioned that interest plays a major role in the Western media selection of news about the developing world. Addressing Nigerian journalists in 1985, Merrill, professor of journalism from the US described NWICO as mere wishful thinking. He therefore advised developing countries to accept the realities because the interest of the Western societies is not to read about bridges, roads, dam constructions and other development news from the third world or anywhere else.

One can deduce from the above arguments that the West believe that “news is judged by the reality of the environment of the news source and finally by that of the consumers”.

Also in their defence, the West further accused the developing countries of being equally guilty of biased negative under coverage of the Western countries.

Sharpe (1987) and Atwood (1982), accused the media of less develop countries of giving the United States a bad press. Sharpe enunciates for instance that a study of international news in four Nigerian newspapers indicates that negative coverage of the United States exists and in fact predominates in the Nigerian press.

With these arguments the developed countries therefore stoutly rejected NWICO and all it stood for. What the rigid opposing positions of the West and the developing countries portend is that the objective of achieving a better coverage of Africa in the world through the platform of NWICO appears unrealisable. However, many Scholars have come up with some proposals on the alternative way developing countries could achieve their objectives.

ALTERNATIVE PROPOSALS FOR ACHIEVING A BETTER MEDIA IMAGE AND BALANCED COVERAGE OF AFRICA

In the wake of the heated debate generated by the disagreement between the West and the developing countries on the way by which the information imbalance could be redressed, communication scholars and media analysts from both sides of the divide have articulated proposals they believe could lead to achieving equilibrium in information flow and subsequently better coverage of the African continent.

Some of these proposals advocate a "global integrationist approach". Proponents of this approach such as Righter (1979:84-106), Attwood (1982:321) and Masha (1982:342), see the problem as one that needs the cooperation of the global

community to solve. This approach provides that the developing world should be given help by the advanced countries to develop their communication technology and potentials to bring them at par with the developed worlds. According to Attwood (1984), this global cooperation will help journalists in developing countries to obtain expertise and technology, which they can apply professionally. Masha (1982:342), in his own proposal, is of the belief that in an inter-dependent world it would not be practicable nor desirable for the developing world to isolate themselves by rejecting everything alien.

The above line of thinking is shared by Falk (1975) in his world federalist perspective and is equally similar to Rosens and Jones (1975:426-433) global functionalist perspective which prescribes the use of global cooperation in identifying and solving specific global problem like the information flow problem.

Other scholars are however of the belief that the destiny of Africans lies in their own hands and not in the hands of the Western countries who have their own interest to pursue.

Kintu Musoke (1998), Prime Minister of Uganda and a former journalist, belongs to this school of thought. He asserts that, "much as we could beseech the international media to give balanced reporting on Africa, we are all convinced the lasting solution will come from within Africans and African governments themselves". Those queuing behind this idea reason that Africans should be more self-reliant and more aggressive in solving their own problems by looking inwards.

Nwosu (1990:331) who belongs to this group proposes a model, which emphasizes “positive minimal inside-looking approach or a minimal cut-off from dependence on the international communication flow pattern as now constituted”. Developing countries are challenged by this model to shut their doors to some foreign media programmes which they complain of (Merrill, 1980:8), and to produce more of their own news, TV programmes and motion pictures (Abel, 1982:349).

Kombol (2005:97) agrees. According to him “as long as there is local consumption in less developed countries of international media content from major Western sources, media domination will persist”. This he said is because Africans have given up coverage of their affairs to CNN and BBC as well as other international media.

Nwosu's minimal dependence and self-reliance model equally emphasizes the development of the communication structures of the developing countries. According to Lindsay (1980), who also subscribes to this model, what the developing countries need to concern themselves with is communication development and not development communication. The developing countries, Lindsay expatiates, needs a temporary shutting off or radical inside look in order to develop their communication capabilities and bounce back to the system more prepared to compete in the global information flow.

The UNESCO, which has been in the forefront of the fight to achieve

equilibrium in the global media information flow, supports this idea. In its media declaration in 1978, it stated that it is essential for the mass media of the less developed countries “to have conditions and resources enabling them to gain strength and expand and to cooperate both among themselves and with the mass media of the developed countries”.

The self-relevance approach also encourages regional communication cooperations amongst the developing countries. It calls for the establishment of effective regional communication projects, the establishment of news agencies and the promotion of multi-lateral communication agreement between and among developing nations.

Macbride (1980:260) threw his weight behind this but recommended that the promotion of news agencies should be integrated within the tradition, culture, development objective and the social political system of each country.

It was apparently in response to the above that the Union of African News Agencies was established in 1963 in Tunis, the Caribbean News Agency in 1976, and the Pan African News Agency in 1983. The major idea behind the establishment of these news agencies according to Oboh (2005:209) was to use them to counter the unfriendly foreign media reports on the third world and to increase the coverage on the events of developing countries being reported by the international media. Agba (2002:258), explains further that this was necessary because the news flow imbalance is traceable to the monopolistic grip which the five trans-national news agencies

namely Reuter, UPI, AP, AFP and the former Soviet Union's TASS have on mass communication sourcing globally.

Prime Minister Musoke (1998) agrees on the necessity for African countries to establish new agencies in order for them to have the power to decisively influence the way their image is constructed. To create this positive image, Ghana's minister of information quoted in Heyden (1999:5) recommends that African leaders, governments and citizen must work harder to produce positive news in Africa through "affirmative reporting", for Africa. This according to Heyden (1999) is because:

*as long as bad news sells,
(and it most certainly will
for a long time to come) we
shouldn't hold our breath
waiting for the Western
media to realize that their
images are not an accurate
portrayal of Africa's reality.
As Africans, we need to stop
seeing ourselves through the
eyes of the Western media
and find a way to make them
see us as we see ourselves.*

In conclusion, therefore, the responsibility of presenting a true picture of herself, an accurate account of affairs in the continent and the projecting a better image of the people of the continent to the outside world, rests with African people, African governments, African media and African journalists.

In this regard, it is expected that important news developments such as the

Darfur crisis in Sudan should be given prominence and adequate coverage by the media of African countries. The continent's media have to be sufficiently on ground to monitor events as they unfold in order to present an accurate report to Africans and the world at large.

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study was conducted using the content analytical method. The nature and objective of this study necessitates the adoption of the content analysis method.

This research technique finds relevance when handling research topics dealing with press coverage of various issues. The manifest content of the selected newspapers-news stories articles, editorials, cartoons, illustrations etc- were carefully examined, coded and analysed with a view to making justifiable inferences on the manner of coverage given to the conflict in Sudan and other foreign news items.

POPULATION OF STUDY

The population of this study covers all the issues of newspapers published in Nigeria from April 2004 to September 2004. This gives us a period of 183 days. Four newspapers have however, been purposively selected for this study. The total number of issues for these four newspapers is 732 at 183 issues per newspaper.

The choice of the selected newspapers was based on their accessibility, circulation and availability. It is believed that data generated from them will give a

fair and accurate answer to the research questions posed in this work. The four newspapers include: -

THE GUARDIAN

This is a privately owned newspaper established by Chief Alex Ibru in July 1983. The African Media Directory (1996) ranks the paper among the top quality newspapers in Africa. It is published in Lagos and has a circulation figure of 18,500 per day (Orhewere, 2002:82).

THE PUNCH

The Punch is an independent newspaper established by Chief Olu Aboderin. It is published in Lagos and has a circulation figure of over 18,000 copies a day (Orhewere, 2002:82). **Punch** newspaper is among the leading newspapers in Nigeria in terms of circulation, readership and popularity.

THIS DAY

This newspaper is owned by Nduka Obaigbena and was established in 1995. It is one of the leading newspapers in the country published in Lagos and circulates nationwide

NEW NIGERIAN

This paper was established in 1966 by the then government of Northern Region. It was taken-over by the Federal Government in 1975 and was transferred back to the 19 Northern States in June 2004. It is published in both Lagos and Kaduna and has a circulation figure of 13,000 copies per day (see Ohewere, 2002:82).

SAMPLE SIZE

Simple random sampling was used to select the sample for this study. The study period is six months; seven issues per paper per month were drawn by balloting. This gives 42 issues each for the four newspapers, which were studied. Thus a total of 168 issues were examined and analysed.

The choice of selecting 168 issues for this study is informed by the desire for convenience and the fact that increasing the sample size beyond 42 issues of each newspaper may not produce significantly more accurate results. According to Ohaja (2003:86), small sample size in content analysis has been found to be just as effective as those involving higher figures.

SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

While purposive sampling was adopted in selecting the four newspapers used for this study, simple random sampling by balloting was used to select the issues studied.

There are 26 weeks in the six-month period under review. Six weeks, out of the 26 weeks were randomly drawn for this study, one week per month. Of the six weeks selected, the first three drawn from the months of April, May and June were continuous weeks.

The remaining three weeks drawn from the months of July, August and September were constructed weeks. There are 42 days in the six weeks, which translate to 42 issues per newspaper. Thus a total of 168 issues were analysed.

INSTRUMENT FOR DATA COLLECTION

The instrument used in collecting the data is code sheet. The code sheet is used in systematic data collection for content analytical research. The code sheet, which consists of columns and rows, is designed to facilitate the coding of contents of newspapers studied and their frequency.

UNIT OF ANALYSIS

For the purpose of quantifying and analysing the content of the sampled newspapers according to the research questions, the variables are operationalised as follows:

- (a) **Frequency:** This refers to the number of times stories relating to the Darfur conflict and other African stories appeared in the selected newspapers in terms of item count.
- (b) **Type:** The nature of the story about the Darfur conflict such as straight-news, features, editorials, letters to the editor, pictures, cartoons and illustrations.
- (c) **Source:** The sources of the African news stories used by newspapers (Local sources or foreign correspondents, News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), Pan African News Agency (PANA), the big five (Reuters, TASS, UPI, AP, AFP), other African News Agencies, no attribution.
- (d) **Region:** This refers to the continent, which a particular news story dwells on (Africa, Europe, Asia, North America and South America).

Coding Categories

A. NEWSPAPERS				
Guardian	-		01	
Punch	-		02	
THIS DAY	-		03	
New Nigerian	-		04	
B. STORY TYPE				
News	-		01	
Editorials	-		02	
Features	-		03	
Opinion articles	-		04	
Letters to the Editor	-		05	
Cartoons, Pictures & illustrations	-		06	
C. SOURCES				
Local Reporters/Sources	-		01	
NAN	-		02	
Other African News Agencies	-		03	
The Big Five (Reuters, TASS, AP, AFP, UPI)	-		04	
Foreign correspondents	-		05	
No attribution	-		06	
D. FREQUENCY				
1	-	20	-	01
20	-	40	-	02
40	-	60	-	03
60	-	80	-	04
80	-	100	-	04
Above 100	-		-	06
E. REGION				
Africa	-			01
Europe	-			02
Asia	-			03
North America	-			04
South America	-			05
Oceania	-			06

METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

To analyse the data the coded data were presented in raw figures, frequency tables and simple percentages. These were then subjected to qualitative and quantitative analysis. The analysis and interpretation were related to the research questions from which deductions were made and conclusions reached.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

A total of 2,757 foreign news stories were generated from the 168 issues of the four newspapers studied. Among these are news on the Darfur crisis and other major crisis in the world. The major world crises considered include the Iraqi crisis, the Middle East crisis and the Afghan crisis. The data were analysed in relation to the research questions posed in chapter one of this study.

NEWS PAPERS	STRAIGHT NEWS	FEATURES	EDITORIAL	LETTERS TO THE EDITOR	PHOTO GRAPHS	CARTOONS	TOTAL
GUARDIAN	31(29.8%)	02(16.6%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	06(50%)	0(0%)	39(29.7%)
PUNCH	15(14.4%)	05(41.6%)	01(50%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	21(16.0%)
THIS DAY	19(18.2%)	02(16.6%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	05(41.6%)	0(0%)	26(19.8%)
NEW NIGERIAN	39(37.5%)	03(25%)	01(50%)	01(100)	01(8.3%)	0(0%)	39(34.3%)
TOTAL	104(79.3%)	12(9.16%)	02(1.52%)	01(0.76%)	12(9.16%)	0(0%)	131(100%)

TABLE 1: Nature of news coverage of the Darfur crisis by the four newspapers

Table 1 shows the nature of coverage given to the Darfur crisis. The four newspapers for the 42 days period of study generated 131 news items on the crisis. Out of this figure, 104 or 79.3 percent were straight news, features recorded 12 (9.16%), same as news photographs 12 (9.16%), editorial 2(1.52%) while cartoon had and nil return.

New Nigerian published the most news on the crisis with a total of 45 news items or 34.3 percent, followed by *The Guardian* with 39 or 29.7 percent. *ThisDay* recorded 26 news items or 19.8 percent of the total while *Punch* gave the crisis the least coverage with 21 news items or 16.0 percent of the total.

It is instructive that though *The*

Guardian and *ThisDay* considered other foreign events topical enough to publish editorials on, the Darfur crisis, a major international crisis in Africa raging at that time, did not attract an editorial from the two papers.

Also none of the four newspapers published a cartoon on the crisis.

TABLE 2: Coverage of the Darfur crisis in relation to other major crisis in the world

CRISIS	GUARDIAN	PUNCH	THIS DAY	NEW NIGERIAN	TOTAL
DARFUR	39(34.2%)	21(41.1%)	26(26.8%)	45(34.8%)	131(33.5%)
OTHER CRISES	75(65.7%)	30(58.8%)	71(73.1%)	84(65.1%)	260(66.4%)
TOTAL	114(29.1%)	51(13.0%)	97(24.8%)	129(32.9%)	391(100)

Analysis of the data in table 2 indicates that the four newspapers produced a total of 391 news items on major crises in the world within the 42 days period studied. The Darfur crisis had 131 or 33.5 percent of the total news items while the remaining 260 or 66.4 percent were on crises that occurred in other parts of the world at the same period with the Darfur crisis. These include the insurgency in Iraq following the ouster of Saddam Hussein, the Middle East crisis between Israel and the Palestinians and the Taliban/Al Qaeda crisis in Afghanistan.

The data equally reveal that *New Nigerian* had more conflict news recording 129 or 32 percent of the total while *The Guardian* followed with 114 (29.1%). *ThisDay* and *Punch*, published 97 (24.8%) and 51 (13.0%) news items respectively. It is noteworthy that while *ThisDay* gave the Darfur crises 26 percent of its total on conflicts, it gave 73.1 percent to other

conflicts. The same trend of giving more prominence to crisis that happened in other regions of the world is maintained by the other three newspapers in varying proportions.

TABLE 3: Sources of the News published on the Darfur Crisis

NEWS PAPERS	LOCAL SOURCE	NAN	FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS	AFRICAN NEWS AGENCIES & MEDIA	BIG FIVE	FOREIGN MEDIA	NO ATTRIBUTION	TOTAL
GUARDIAN	09.50%	01(100)	0(0%)	0(0%)	19(51.3%)	0(0.66%)	08(19.5%)	39(29.7%)
PUNCH	05.27.7%	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	04(10.8%)	08(26.6%)	04(9.7%)	21(16.0%)
THIS DAY	01(5.55%)	0(0%)	01(100)	0(0%)	07(18.9%)	12(30%)	05(12.1%)	26(19.8%)
NEW NIGERIAN	05(16.6%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	03(100)	07(18.9%)	08(26.6%)	24(58.3%)	45(34.3%)
TOTAL	18(13.7%)	01(0.7%)	01(0.7%)	03(2.29%)	37(28.2%)	30(22.9%)	41(31.2%)	131(100%)

The data in table 3 show that of the 131 stories published by the four newspapers, 41 or 31.2 percent were not attributed. The five major world news agencies, UPI, AP, Reuters, AFP and TASS supplied 37 (28.2%) other foreign media such as BBC, VOA, CNN, etc supplied 30 or 22.9 percent, while local correspondents and other sources in Nigeria accounts for 18 or 13.7 percent. African News Agencies and Media provided 3 (2.29%) news items and the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) as well as the foreign correspondents of the newspapers provided 1 (0.7%) news item each.

The picture presented by the data on table 3 is against the expectation that being a crisis in Africa the bulk of the stories should have emanated from African sources. On the contrary 82.3 percent of the stories were supplied outside Africa by the five major news agencies, other foreign media and the non-attributed stories, which are monitored stories from the foreign media. This is a far cry from the African sources, which accounted for just 17.3

percent when news items from local sources, NAN, foreign correspondents of the papers and African News agencies and media are summed up.

The above explains why the crisis was not given adequate coverage because the newspapers depended mostly on the foreign media and news agencies for the stories they published on the crisis. This equally means that the stories published on the Darfur crisis by the papers were written from the Western perspective and news value, which are often without context and negatively slanted.

TABLE 4: Sources of African News Stories Published by the Newspapers

NEWS PAPERS	LOCAL SOURCE	NAN	FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS	AFRICAN NEWS AGENCIES & MEDIA	BIG FIVE	FOREIGN MEDIA	NO ATTRIBUTION	TOTAL
G	19(27.7%)	0(0%)	05(33.3%)	12(27.2%)	56(37.3%)	69(51.4%)	129(28.3%)	288(133.6%)
PUNCH	26(48.1%)	01(100%)	0(0%)	01(2.27%)	39(23.3%)	21(15.6%)	27(5.93%)	111(12.9%)
THISDAY	12(22.2%)	0(0%)	10(66.6%)	04(9.09%)	36(24%)	24(17.9%)	130(28.5%)	216(25.2%)
NEW NIGERIAN	01(1.85%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	27(61.3%)	23(15.3%)	20(14.9%)	169(37.1%)	240(28.0%)
TOTAL	54(6.13%)	01(0.11%)	15(1.75%)	44(5.14%)	150(17.5%)	134(15.6%)	455(53.2%)	855(100%)

The data on table 4 revealed that 455 or 5.32 percent of the 855 news items published by the four newspapers on African countries were not attributed. The major international News Agencies, AP, Reuters, UPI, AFP and TASS were responsible for 150 or 17.5 percent, while 134 (15.6%) were provided by BBC, VOA, CNN and other foreign news media. Local correspondents and contributors supplied 54 (6.31%), 44 (5.14%) came from African news agencies and media, while 15(1.75%) and 1(0.11%) news items were contributed by foreign correspondents of the newspapers and News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) respectively.

The data indicate in clear terms that

the NAN and other African news agencies had no significant contribution to the international news published by the Nigerian newspapers on Africa producing only 0.11 percent and 5.14 percent respectively of the total. This means that the papers depended mainly on foreign sources outside Africa for the news they published about Africa. The foreign sources (i.e. the five major news agencies, foreign media and non attributed sources) together account for 86.3 percent of the entire news items published about Africa. This confirms the assertion by Schramm (1964), MacBride (1980), Grachev & Yernoshkin (1984) and Amakiri (2005), that Africa and other developing countries depend considerably on the five major news agencies and the media of developed countries for their daily news report even for events happening in their own environment.

Similarly, it lends credence to Kombol (2005)'s position that Africa and other developing countries have given up coverage of their affairs to CNN, BBC and other International media. The data equally supports Ojo (2002), in his claim that 80 percent of the International news that flow through the newsrooms across the globe come from the big five major world news agencies, the CNN and the BBC.

The data further revealed that only *The Guardian* and *ThisDay* have foreign correspondents that are stationed in Washington and London respectively. *The Guardian* however, is the only newspaper with a correspondent in Africa stationed at Johannesburg, South Africa.

NEWS PAPER	AFRICA	ASIA	EUROPE	NORTH AMERICA	SOUTH AMERICA	AUSTRALIA & OCEANIA	TOTAL
GUARDIAN	286(33.6%)	106(29.4%)	231(30.8%)	95(30.2%)	29(32.9%)	86(36.3%)	751(31.7%)
PUNCH	111(12.9%)	51(15.0%)	135(18.0%)	51(16.2%)	12(13.6%)	629(89.5%)	362(15.3%)
THISDAY	216(25.2%)	84(24.7%)	162(21.8%)	81(25.7%)	19(21.5%)	87(31.8%)	569(24.0%)
NEW NIGERIAN	246(28.8%)	184(50.6%)	220(29.2%)	87(27.1%)	28(31.8%)	85(22.7%)	641(28.9%)
TOTAL	855(36.1%)	339(14.3%)	748(31.6%)	314(13.2%)	88(3.71%)	220(9.92%)	2366(100)

TABLE 5: Coverage of the World by Regions

Table 5 shows the coverage of the world region-by-region and also provides the total percentage of African news in comparison with the global news published during the period under review. The data show that of the total of 2,366 news items, the African region recorded 855 or 36.1percent, Europe 748 or 31.6 percent, Asia 339 (14.3%) and North America 314(13.2%). South America has 88 or 3.71 percent and Australia/Oceania region got 22 or 0.92 percent of the total foreign news published by the newspapers.

Though, the data show that Africa has a greater percentage of the foreign news published by the newspapers, it may not really be so when one considers that most of the conflict stories which were not considered here were mostly about the countries of Europe and North America because of the roles they are playing in these conflicts. Even if the news items on the Darfur crisis are added to the African stories, Europe and North America which provided most of these news stories (as table four indicates) would still have a greater percentage of the news.

Equally, the data revealed that Asia, which has twice the population of Europe, has only 14.3 percent of the entire news stories. South America did not fair better either, while the Australia/Oceania region is the least covered continent with just 0.92

percent of the total. This confirms the imbalance in news coverage between the developed and developing countries considering that most of the news was supplied by the media and news adjuncts of developing countries, vindicating earlier studies carried out by Schramm (1964:94), MacBride (1980:156-159) and Abayomi (2004:51).

CONCLUSION

This study examined the coverage of Africa by four Nigerian newspapers using as a case study the Darfur conflict in Sudan, which was described by the United Nations and the government of the United States of America as the world's worst humanitarian crisis and genocide respectively. The nature of the coverage and the sources of the news stories used by the newspapers on the crisis were studied. Equally, the coverage of the African continent in relation to other regions of the world as well as the sources of the stories published on Africa was also scrutinized.

Based on the data generated from the 168 editions of the newspapers, presented and analysed, the following conclusions were reached:

1. In covering the Darfur crisis the newspapers relied mainly on stories supplied by the major international wire services (AP, UPI, AFP, Reuters and TASS) and BBC, CNN, VOA, etc. And as a result of their reliance on these western media the coverage was sparse and the stories published were written from the perspective and news values of the western media who sourced and provided the stories for the newspapers.

2. The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), other African News Agencies and their media had no significant contribution to the news stories published about African countries as the western media and their wire services supplied most of the stories. This signifies that African News Agencies are not effective and that there is little or no exchange of communication materials among the media of the continent.

3. Over 80 percent of the foreign news stories published by the newspapers were sourced from the western media. This indicates that the international news flow is still one-sided, from the developed to the developing countries.

4. Because most of the news stories were supplied by the west, the developed countries of Europe and America received more coverage in the four newspapers than African countries and other developing countries. This confirms the imbalance in news coverage between the developed and developing countries.

5. Only one newspaper, *The Guardian*, out of the four studied has a correspondence in one African country, South Africa. Since the papers rely mostly on the western media and their wire services for the news they publish about Africa, it means that Africa is still being reported from the perceptions and perspectives of the Western press.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From this study it is clear that the newspapers depended considerably on the western media to report Africa and that Africa was under-reported by the Nigerian news media examined. Equally, the pattern

of dominance of conflict news and non-contextual reporting was prevalent in the news stories published by the newspapers on the African countries. This underscores the assertion that the responsibility of reporting Africa in its true colours and image rests on Africa and her media. In order to achieve this, the nations of the continent should individually and collectively ensure that:

1. The national and regional news Agencies are revived and adequately funded to assume their primary roles of gathering, processing and disseminating news among African countries.
2. Establish or revive existing bilateral and multi-lateral agreement in the areas of information.
3. Establish or rekindle existing links and cooperation with other developing countries of the world to achieve improved and adequate coverage of Africa and the developing countries.
4. In order to catch up in the information flow race and possibly achieve balance in today's unidirectional flow of information, there is need for greater commitment on the part of governments in Africa to improve the communication infrastructure in their countries.
5. African media should take advantage of the information communication technology (ICT), which is easing the flow of information to exchange news reports amongst themselves through the World Wide Web and Internet Radio.
6. Since negative coverage leads to negative perceptions, the media in Africa must take control of the coverage of Africa from the western media in order to unearth and highlight the buried, untold and unpublished stories of growth, reform and sustainability in Africa. To do this, African news should be taken from African mass media and the media in Africa should do this by patronizing their national and regional news Agencies such as PANA instead of Reuters, AFP, AP, etc. This will improve the image of the Agencies and even attract international media to also make use of their services.
7. African media journalists must apply their skills in news coverage and processing to ensure that their reports are in-depth, incisive and qualitative enough to attract subscription from both African and international media.
8. In order to compete favourably with western advances in the communication field, African countries should re-structure, adopt and implement clearly defined communication policies to meet the prevailing standard in the communication industry.

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