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**The Continued Domination of Western Journalists in Global African News Telling: The Imperatives  
and Implications**

**An Article**

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# **THE CONTINUED DOMINATION OF WESTERN JOURNALISTS IN GLOBAL AFRICAN NEWS TELLING: THE IMPERATIVES AND IMPLICATIONS**

## **ABSTRACT**

Who reports Africa in the British press? This longitudinal study is aimed at addressing this issue. It applied content analysis methodology, the use of four British national newspapers and a sample duration that spanned between 1992 and 2017. It uncovered that Western journalists consistently dominated the reportage of Africa without any exception throughout the sample period. Apart from Western journalists, other journalists or sources involved in the media coverage - African local journalists, Afro-Western journalists, joint journalists, and news agencies' African reports were insignificantly used. Also, this study further revealed that the use of news agencies' African reports had a continuous decline from 1997 to 2017. Therefore, the domination of the British press coverage of Africa over the years by Western journalists results in the portrayal of Africa from an imbalanced single prism of Westernised perspective, thereby resulting in the likelihood of the poor coverage of Africa and the spread of further ignorance of the continent to the global audience, which hampers both tourism and Western business investments to Africa. This study concludes that who reports Africa in the UK press is embedded in neo-colonialism, white hegemony, and inequality.

**KEYWORDS:** Africa, African media, African local journalists, Afro-Western journalists, British media, British media coverage, global media, joint journalists, media representation, neo-colonialism, Western media, and Western journalists.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The extent to which different groups of journalists have reported Africa in the British press have not been comprehensively tested via research, especially on a longitudinal basis. Studies by Bunce (2013 and 2015) indicate that international news images of Africa are no longer constructed entirely or even predominantly by Western-born foreign correspondents. Her position implies that there is quite substantial increase or perhaps a balance in the use of African journalists in the British and other Western media coverage of Africa in comparison with their usage of Western journalists. However, her study did not look at the final news content emanating from the British or other Western mainstream media over a long period of time in order to ascertain the journalists involved in writing or reporting African events, which her use of interview in those studies might not have been best suited to address holistically. Bunce's conclusion contrasts with Mengara (2001:8), who argued that in global media, Africa is seen as European-made, written, reported, and produced by outsiders or Westerners. Mengara's stand concentrated most on the domination of the global media coverage of Africa by both Western journalists and Western media and its major linkage to neo-colonialism.

Carroll (2007) opined that Western media outlets' cuts on foreign news budgets led to drastic reductions in the number of Western correspondents involved in the coverage of Africa, thereby paving the way for their use of more African journalists in writing African news stories in the Western media. In Carroll's opinion, more African journalists' writings were supposedly making it to the final news content of the British and other Western media's African news reports, but it was not longitudinally tested to find out the number of African articles reported prior to and after the budget cut, so as to check who reported them - African journalists, Western journalists or others.

To these effects, it has become very imperative to find out through research, who the journalists that cover Africa in the British press are and the extent of their quantitative reportage inputs in the coverage of the continent over several decades. The image or picture painted of Africa by these journalists largely becomes what the world knows about the continent. Also, if an outsider dominates an insider's story without the latter's full involvement, it has the tendency of skewing up such story – he who wears the shoes knows where it pinches most. Understanding who these journalists are and the extent to which they have been involved in the reportage of Africa appreciably helps to give further insights on why Africa is covered in certain ways in the British media, which is a new addition to the knowledge base of this sub-field.

As stated by Bunce (2015) about Africa been reported somehow in equal proportion by Western journalists in conjunction with African journalists and Carroll (2007) stating that the reduction in foreign news budget paved the way for the British press usage of more African inclined journalists, it is necessary to measure empirically the realistic involvement of Africans, African journalists and others in the reportage of Africa in the British media, so as to ascertain if the claimed improvement in the usage of African journalists is the same case in the UK newspapers.

Therefore, this study would be addressing the following questions:

1. Who are the journalists that cover Africa in the British press?
2. To what extent have they been involved in telling African stories between 1992 and 2017 in the UK newspapers?
3. What has changed over the past three decades in terms of who these journalists are?
4. What explains this disposition?
5. What are their continued implications?

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

In the case of Africa and Britain, the historical colonial linkage is a significant bond between the two. According to Horvath (1972:46), colonialism is commonly identified as a form of domination – the control by individuals or groups over the territory and/or behaviour of other individuals or groups. During the colonial period in Africa, this domination was direct with the colonialists being physically present in their African colonies. This is closely related to the concept of power and Africa was in the total control of Britain and other Europeans, who colonised the continent prior to the independence of most African countries in the 1960s, 1970s, and beyond.

Similarly, Hamelink (2015:11) stated that between 1500 and 1800, a mercantilist, colonial form of globalisation emerged with the adventurous expeditions of the 16th century that explored and exploited distant countries and forced foreign histories and religion upon indigenous people. Even though, it was colonialism, Hamelink believed that it was an aspect of globalisation, which got phased out after most former colonial African countries got independence from Britain, France, Portugal and other European countries, thereby resulting into a shift in the 19th century to a process that appear to be all embracing but had an enormous societal impact (Hamelink 2015).

Also, with the end of Britain and other Europeans being physically and directly in full control of Africa both politically and economically, a new form of colonialism is said to have emerged in the form of neo-colonialism, which are visible in the British media, plus other Western institutions that

have continued their dominance of Africa, not by being directly in control of Africa's political power apparatus but by indirectly defining Africa at the global stage (McMillin 2007). In the opinion of Ritzer (2007), neo-colonialism is defined as the continued exercise of political or economic influence over a society in the absence of formal political control. According to Boyd-Barrett (2015), this can take many forms as the media evolve most visibly in technological form, but also in forms of their relationships to different centres of power, ownership, control, geographical and demographic reach, accessibility, genre, purpose, symbolic constituents, and audience.

As stated by Anyangwe (2017), the coverage of Africa in the British and other Western media is deep rooted in neo-colonial narratives. She added that there is lack of African voices in mainstream Western media, which means that African stories are told by someone else – more often than not by Western journalists and international charities and that Western news media coverage of Africa is obsessed with death, destruction and disease, which is in line with most previous studies (Hawk 1992, Golan 2008). This confirmation is a personal product of her experience in working with the global media of the West. Her inclusion of international Western charities as key players in the British and other Western media relationship with Africa, which is in line with Kate Wright's own experience with Western charities as a journalist too (Wright 2018) cannot be over-emphasized on the basis that what gets published about Africa are mainly determined by the editors and/or management of individual Western media companies. What the British media and their journalists chose to put forward to the public domain is what gets consumed by the public. However, exceptions should be permissible particularly during difficult periods such as wars and crisis, when access to such locations for information may be difficult, risky, and hard to get. A situation whereby Western media mostly source for African news information from International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) irrespective of circumstances can become very problematic. Ferrucci (2019) in his book, "Making Nonprofit News" explored how non-profit news is disrupting the industry's very idea of news, news values and news processes. This is a hint at the increasing powerful influence of INGOs in global news. With the place of the internet and social media in today's media practice, this issue can be considerably managed by journalists and media organisations.

Additionally, Badawi (2017) asserted that cultural superiority is still evident in present day Western media. International news coverage of Africa after post-colonial period still has serious deficiencies, according to her. She also said that international news coverage of Africa is still filled with cultural chauvinism and imperial stereotypes. Zeinab advised international news reporting to observe local sensitivities considering the global nature of the world and the impact news have on people, nations, businesses, and general world view.

The post-colonial international media deficiencies are partly due to who reports Africa in the Western media. In support of this, Sundaram (2017) confirmed that the Western media is in crisis – a reporter now handles 20 countries in Africa. He further said that the 24-hour news cycle rarely give us the stories essential for our understanding of major events in our time especially with regards to Africa and believes that immersive reporting – living among the people or location of the events is essential for news to serve its purpose and help us construct any real sense of the world and not by lodging foreign Western correspondents in 5-star and very expensive hotels in Africa, which detaches them from the reality and the people, thereby resulting in the poor reporting of some African stories. In addition to the above stated inadequacies, Amin (2017) opined that one of the key problems of the Western media in their coverage of Africa is having their editorial headquarters outside Africa, where decisions on what should be reported are largely made by people that have little or no knowledge of the continent, hence he advised the Western media to use local crews.

On the above basis, it has become necessary to empirically look at the human elements – the journalists, correspondents or reporters involved in reporting Africa in the Western media, particularly with the use of the British media because of its past colonial connection with Africa to see if they have similar resemblance with that of the physical domination of the colonial masters in their rulership of Africa during the colonial era.

## **FOREIGN JOURNALISTS VERSUS AFRICAN LOCAL JOURNALISTS IN MAKING NEWS ABOUT AFRICA IN THE BRITISH AND OTHER WESTERN MEDIA**

Before the 1990s, the reportage of Africa in the Western media was seen through the eyes of foreign journalists, who knew little or nothing about Africa (Hawk 1992). Beverley Hawk further stated that foreign journalistic works and practices distorted the image of Africa as a whole and what was determined as African news was purely a product of Western journalists and not African at all. In her opinion, the global image of Africa was nothing other than what Western journalists reported about Africa, which over several decades took over the actual and real picture of the continent.

According to Carroll (2007) and Utley (1997), with the reduction of most UK and US elite media's foreign budgets in the late 1990s and most of 2000s, there was significant reduction in foreign correspondents and the use of more locally and cheaper contracted African journalists. These two studies did uncover the substantial recruitment of African local journalists in some of the Western global media outlets and their news agencies in the coverage of African events. However, these studies were unable to longitudinally quantify the news stories about Africa authored by African journalists that got published for public consumption. To employ African local journalists at a cheaper rate than their Western counterparts is one thing and to get their stories published is another issue. It is obviously a good thing to have these African local journalists employed in the Western media, because of the betterment of their economic lives in terms of wages, but that would be counterproductive if their reports fail to make it to the final news content.

Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen (2001), Bunce (2013) and Paterson (2011) in their different studies discovered that major newswires – AFP, AP and Reuters hired more African local journalists especially in East Africa than previously done, who were involved in the news production process, thereby resulting in diversity in the journalists that report African news (Bunce 2015:43). To have African journalists in their hire is one issue and to use the hired journalists' reports in the final news content for public consumption is another matter.

Some other studies tried to find out whose news reports makes it to the public domain – the foreign Western journalists or the African local journalists? Studies by Spencer (2005:85-86), Kliesch (1991), Wu & Hamilton (2004), Williams (2011), Bunce (2011), and Nyamnjoh (2005:87) discovered that majority of the news reported by the foreign Western journalists make it to the public domain, thereby further indicting the West for been responsible for how Africa is reported to the world. Seay (2012) stated that many of the Western media correspondents in Africa were mainly Westerners, who file stories that fall prey to pernicious stereotypes and tropes that dehumanize Africans.

Furthermore, Nothias (2017) said that foreign Western correspondents write primarily for an audience back home, who are predominantly white. Because, most of the Western correspondents live in Africa and do not in daily lives encounter their audience back home, results in the assumption of what their audience likes for news, which in turn influences story selections and writing and in a way feeds into stereotypes.

To compound the issue, only few Western journalists are involved in the coverage of Africa than most other parts of the world (Sundaram 2017), hence he stated that only one reporter covers about 20 countries in Africa, which has the tendency of Africa been poorly covered in the Western media or perhaps culminating into the Western media's continued stereotypical and negative coverage of Africa (Hawk 1992, Golan 2008). This means that the possibility of accurately and properly covering the continent may be difficult for one journalist to undertake promptly – 20 African countries may far exceed the whole of Europe in terms of size. Sundaram (2019) further stated that the Western correspondents covering Africa have continued to appropriate the labour of local African journalists. He posits that the Western journalists in most cases do not report the works of African local journalists and when they do, they distort the news stories to some extent and in some cases credit the stories to themselves. Wahutu (2019) in a study in which he interviewed some African journalists in Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa highlighted the disparities between who they thought was reporting Africa for Africa and Africans and what the reality was. From the interviews, he noted that it was not Africans but foreigners who told the story of Africa to Africans. The foreigners are mainly Western journalists, whose editors are often based in London, Paris, New York, and other Western cities. While most of their Africa correspondents file in African news from Africa and the editors select the news stories, which they find useful and interesting. This sort of gatekeeping role by the editors amounts to a typical case of an outsider overseeing the story of an insider and largely from a distance, in line with Hawk (1992), who stated that the Western journalists reporting Africa know little or nothing about the continent. This sort of situation is prone to conflict, misunderstanding, negativity, and lack of accuracy in the reportage and understanding of Africa and African events.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The use of quantitative content analysis featured in this study. It involved the use of four British national newspapers namely: Daily Mail, The Guardian, Financial Times, and The Times. The coverage period was from 01 January 1992 to 31 December 2017. The reason behind the above three key decisions were based on suitability, variety, and synthesis, respectively. The method is able to unravel media research issues as the ones posed in this study, which is also longitudinal in nature with a large data size. The newspapers are very national and cut across different political orientations, class divides and readership, while the coverage period was when the highest level of research inquiries on British and Western media coverage of Africa took place (Scott 2017).

Using Lexis Nexis Databases with the search words "Africa or African", about 31,000 news articles were generated. Due to the large population size and in order to have a balanced and representative sample, a systematic random sampling was applied using every 5<sup>th</sup> news article starting from the 5<sup>th</sup> article in the individual newspapers, thus resulting into a total of 6,110 total samples of African news articles, which became the centre of this research and were directly used in this study. Also, the 6,110 African articles were all manually coded by the researcher. There were two independent intercoder reliability tests or pilot studies, which applied 20% of the samples that yielded 0.91 (Cohen's Kappa) accuracy score before the application of the codebook to the main manual coding of this study by the researcher. The author, by-line, or writer of each of the news article was categorized and counted to generate the frequency, percentage, and general distribution of the categories of the journalists in this study. The Lexis Nexis Database already has the names of authors of the news articles, which was categorized based on where the names are from or their citizenship as well as a google search of the names. African names are peculiar, so are Western names but with an additional google search of the names, more accuracy of grouping them appropriately in the coding process was made easier.

## RESEARCH RESULTS AND FINDINGS

### The groups of journalists that covered Africa in the British press

This study discovered five groups of journalists, who were involved in the coverage of African stories in the studied British media from 1992 to 2017. They include:

- 1. African local journalists** – this group comprised of journalists from Africa, who lived and worked in Africa and whose written works had featured in some of the four UK newspapers used in this study.
- 2. Western journalists** – this group involved journalists from the West, who may be based in Africa or outside of Africa. Some of them moved to Africa as correspondents, some occasionally travelled to Africa as the work demanded, while some were based in the UK or other Western countries.
- 3. Afro-Western journalists** – this group included journalists of African descent, who worked and lived in Europe and other Western locations and whose works about Africa have been reported in any of the studied newspapers.
- 4. Joint journalists** – this included Africa news articles that have been produced together by more than one journalist - one must have been an African journalist and one must have been a Western journalist or more.
- 5. News agencies** – this included any news item that was attributed to a news agency such as Reuters, AFP, AP etc.

### Cumulative results from all the four British newspapers

Table 1 below sums up the overall distribution of the journalists that covered Africa in the four studied British newspapers, which was based on the above explored groups.

**Table 1: Distribution of Journalists from all the four newspapers**

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
African local journalists	197	3.2
Western journalists	4534	74.2
Afro-Western journalists	208	3.4
Joint journalists	30	0.5
News agencies	48	0.8
Unknown journalists	1093	17.9
Total	6110	100.0

From Table 1 above, it can be noted that Western journalists had the highest number of African news articles to their credit. Out of 6110 African news articles, Western journalists authored 4534 of them – a whopping 74.2% of the total samples and were the most used journalists in the studied



British newspapers. Afro-Western journalists were 2<sup>nd</sup> placed, but very far behind the Western journalists' usage with only 3.4% share – a total of 208 news articles were written by them. The 3<sup>rd</sup> most used journalists were African local journalists with 3.2% involvement in the sampled articles amounting to a total of 197 news articles to their credit. The 4<sup>th</sup> most used were the news agencies with a total of 48 cases (0.8%), while joint journalists were the least applied with only 30 articles (0.5%) from them. 1093 of the African news articles (17.9%) had no traceable author in Lexis Nexis and they were mostly feature news. This picture suggests that Western journalists were predominantly used in the coverage of Africa in the four British newspapers, which portends that their definition of Africa in global African news reportage largely shapes the image of the continent at the international level. All other journalists' usage in the British press as exemplified in this study appear very inconsequential.

### Results from the individual newspapers

Having seen the overall results based cumulatively on all the four newspapers, it would further help to look at the results based on the individual newspapers. Table 2 and Figure 1 below sums it up.

**Table 2: Journalists used by the individual newspapers to cover Africa – Their Frequencies and Percentages**

	Daily Mail		The Guardian		Financial Times		The Times	
Journalist	Frequency	(%)	Frequency	(%)	Frequency	(%)	Frequency	(%)
African local journalist	4	1	106	4.3	64	3.3	23	1.8
Western journalist	324	84.8	1836	73.8	1383	70.5	991	77.4
Afro-Western journalist	0	0	194	7.8	5	0.2	9	0.7
Joint journalist	0	0	19	0.8	9	0.5	2	0.1
News agencies	0	0	18	0.7	26	1.3	4	0.3
Unknown	54	14.1	313	12.6	474	24.2	252	19.7
Total	382	100	2486	100	1961	100	1281	100

**DAILY MAIL:** From Table 2 and Figure 1 above, Western journalists were the most used in the reportage of Africa in Daily Mail with 324 news articles (84.8%) written by them out of 382. The 2<sup>nd</sup> most used were African local journalists with only 4 publications (1%) to their credit. The joint least in the group were Afro-Western journalists, joint journalists, and news agencies, who had no single publication to their credit. 54 African articles (14.1%) had no authors attributed to them in Lexis Nexis databases and they were mostly feature news.

**THE GUARDIAN:** From The Guardian as shown in Figure 1 and Table 2 above, Western journalists were the most used in the coverage of Africa with 1836 sampled news articles out of a total of 2486 written by them. That represented 73.8% of the total samples. Afro-Western journalists were the 2<sup>nd</sup> most used journalists with 194 news articles (7.8%) authored by them, while African local journalists were the 3<sup>rd</sup> placed with 106 news articles (4.3%) produced to their credit. Joint journalists were next in line with only 19 news reports (0.8%) to their credit, while the news agencies' reports were the least used with a total of 18 cases (0.7%). 313 African articles (12.6%), mostly feature news had no traceable author in Lexis Nexis.

**FINANCIAL TIMES:** From Financial Times as displayed in Figure 1 and Table 2 above, the dominance of Western journalists continued with 1383 news articles (70.5%) out of 1961 written by them. The 2<sup>nd</sup> most used were African local journalists with just 64 African news articles (3.3%) published to their credit, followed by news agencies with 26 news articles (1.3%) attributed to them. Joint journalists were the 4<sup>th</sup> placed with only 9 cases (0.5%), while the least used in the coverage were Afro-Western journalists with only 5 sampled news articles (0.2%) to their credit. 474 of the sampled African news items (24.2%) in Financial Times had no known author and were mainly about feature African stories.

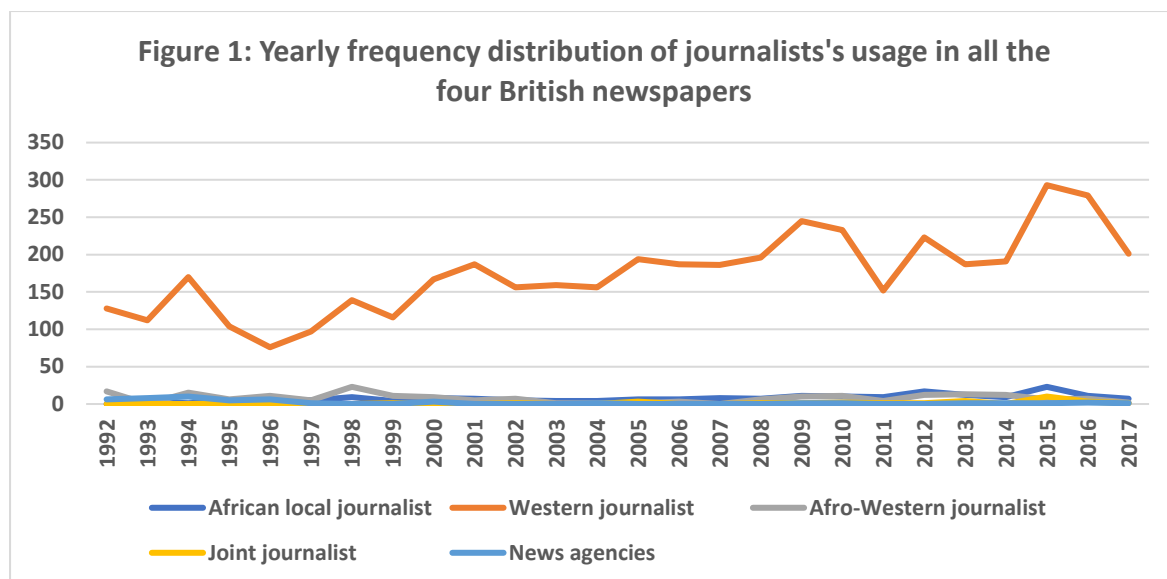
**THE TIMES:** The results from The Times also paints a similar picture like the above stated newspapers as can be seen in Figure 1 and Table 2. Western journalists were the most prominently used with a total of 991 African news articles (77.4%) authored by them out of 1281 samples. They were followed by African local journalists with only 23 cases (1.8%), while Afro-Western journalists were in the 3<sup>rd</sup> position with only 9 articles published to their credit (0.7%) in this newspaper. News agencies' reports were the 4<sup>th</sup> placed with only 4 cases (0.3%) to their credit, while joint journalists were the least used group of journalists with only 2 news articles (0.1%) written by them. 252 African sampled news articles (19.7%) from The Times had no authors attributable to them in Lexis Nexis databases and they were largely feature news items as well.

All the individual newspaper's results prove that Western journalists were largely responsible for the studied British press coverage of Africa. They had far higher comparative advantage over all other journalists involved in the representation of Africa as can be noted from all the above results. This is in line with Hawk (1992), who argued that the global media image of Africa is seen through the eyes of Western foreign journalists.

However, The Guardian are more likely to use African local journalists, Afro-Western journalists, and joint journalists in its coverage of Africa than any of the other newspapers, while Financial Times are more likely to use news agencies' African reports than the rest. Also, the broadsheets (The Guardian, Financial Times and The Times) are more likely to use all the groups of journalists as applied to this study no matter the smallness of their quantity of usage than the tabloid (Daily Mail) – the broadsheets used all the five groups of journalists or sources in their reportage of Africa, while the tabloid did not feature Afro-Western journalists, joint journalists and news agencies' African reports.

### **The cumulative yearly results**

The yearly distribution of the journalists that covered Africa in the studied UK newspapers between 1992 and 2017 is very important to know in order to help us find out if there were any trends, patterns and changes in their usage in African news reportages as displayed in Figure 1 below.



From Table 3 and Figure 2 above, Western journalists remain by far the most dominant type of journalists that reported about Africa in the studied British press for the whole 26-year period of this study. From 1992 to 2017, they consistently and continually led the reportage of Africa in the British press with no yearly exception.

Between 1992 and 1996, the use of news agencies' African news stories made some inroads but from 1997 to 2017, there was a decline in the use of news agencies' reports in the four newspapers' coverage of Africa, which can be attributed to journalistic practices and the emergence of the internet and social media resulting in more direct sourcing for news from individuals and organisations. Afro-Western journalists were slightly used all through the years except for 1993 and 2007. The use of African local journalists made some minor positives in the 2000s and 2010s, which could have been because of cuts in most Western media's foreign budgets (Carroll 2007) that possibly paved the way for them. They (African local journalists) got minutely used in reporting African stories in every year of the sampled timeframe, but their usage did not maintain a steady yearly upward increase and as such cannot be likened to a permanent change. This partially contradicts the claim by Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen (2001), Bunce (2013) and Paterson (2011) that concluded in the direction of quite a significant number of African local journalists being used in some Western media coverage of Africa, which may be the case in some Western news wires, particularly in their East African outlets but certainly not the case in the UK newspapers as typified in this study.

The use of joint journalists was the worst hit group of journalists used by the four British newspapers with only 1 joint by-line report each in 1995, 1999, 2002, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012 and 2017; 2 in 2010, 3 each in 2005 and 2016; 4 in 2013 and 10 in 2015 totalling 30 out of 6110 (0.5%). The use of joint journalists – an African local journalist jointly reporting an African story with a Western journalist is lacking as can be seen from Table 2 above.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In analysing the results of this study, it would be best to compartmentalize it into the different areas that have direct connections to the study for its easy understanding, thus the following analytical sub-sections: analysis based on the statistical results and previous studies, the place of colonialism

and neo-colonialism, the economic and commercial nature of Western media companies, the external factors and organisational structures impacting on global media practices and the resultant implications of Western journalists' domination of global African news telling.

### **Analysis based on this study's statistical results and previous studies**

With some developments in foreign news coverage in the 2000s and 2010s, which some scholars (Bunce 2013, 2015; Williams 2011; Carroll 2007) adduced to have ushered in some significant changes in the direction of who reports Africa in the Western media, it has become imperative to comprehensively and longitudinally measure the developments especially in the British media coverage of Africa. Research looking at the extent and degree of involvement of Western journalists in the British media representations of Africa on a longitudinal basis is lacking. Same as studies on the journalists that cover Africa generally in the British press. From the results above, it has been empirically made clear, the alpha position of Western journalists in the coverage of Africa at least within the British press. It has also been discovered that apart from Western and African local journalists, other forms of journalists and sources exist in the British media coverage of Africa.

The global news reportage of Africa in the British press and other Western media have mostly been dominated by Western journalists (Hawk 1992), even though there exist other groups of journalists and sources - African local journalists, Afro-Western journalists, joint journalists and news agencies' reports involved in the coverages. Evidentially, the Western journalists were topmost in usage in all the studied British newspapers' coverage of Africa. With a total of 84.8% in Daily Mail, 73.8% in The Guardian, 70.5% in Financial Times and 77.4% in The Times and a cumulative average of 74.2% of Western journalists' usage, this result indicates the supremacy of Western journalists' application by the four UK newspapers in their reporting of Africa. All the newspapers followed the same pattern of huge Western journalists' domination, which according to Ebo (1992) is both deliberate and systematic. To further attest to the above is the yearly distribution of Western journalists in the coverage of Africa as against the use of all other journalists and sources. From 1992 to 2017 as demonstrated in this study in Table 3 and Figure 2, Western journalists took the topmost position of telling the world about Africa without any yearly exception. This is much so because of the lack of an African global media front to cater for the image needs of the continent.

More akin to an African proverbial saying that "he who beats the drum dictates the sound and direction of the music" is alive in this regard. Because these British newspapers are in Britain and owned by the British or other Westerners demands to some extent that they choose who they deem best to work with. As another saying goes, "charity begins at home", their concentration of employees would largely tow home lines by recruiting from within UK or Europe. These two proverbial sayings seem to be one of the simplistic explanations to the dominance of Western journalists in global African news telling by the British press.

A look at previous studies posits that there exist some noticeable contrasts between some of them and this study. According to Bunce (2013 and 2015), the increased presence of African local journalists in Western media has started to change how Africa is depicted in international news coverage. Her findings concluded that the coverage of Africa by the Western media is no longer as it was before the 2010s – there are some improvements in who reports Africa in the Western media and what they report, with African local journalists playing huge visible roles more than they did decades ago. She approached the research using 51 semi-structured interviews of journalists (African and Western) based in Africa and her results were centred on the interpretations of the interviews conducted. This conclusion of hers could still be accurate, particularly in terms of the more presence of Africans in the Western news agencies' coverage of Africa than what it was the

previous decades. However, recruiting African local journalists is a positive thing, but that does not necessarily imply that the employed African journalists' news reports would definitely make it into the public domain of the mainstream British and other Western media. Certainly, their employment stands to help them economically and financially, inclusive of their immediate and extended families. As can be seen from this study, African local journalists' African news reports hardly make it into the final news content of the studied British press but in Bunce's work, they do particularly in the news wires (news agencies). One equally has to consider the place of visibility and consumption of African news in the news agencies' reports and the mainstream newspapers. As argued by Lader (2007), the UK newspapers play a vital role in informing UK citizens about Africa with about 47% of UK citizens using newspapers as a source of information about the lives of "poor people" in Africa. This implies that a good number of British citizens and other global audience of most of the UK newspapers have the likelihood of sourcing for news or information about Africa from the newspapers than the Western news agencies. Journalists, media practitioners and media houses are the ones more prone to using news agencies' African news reports than the masses. Also, the Western news agencies' African reports written by African journalists stand the risk of conflicting with the news ideals of most Western media – in line with Bunce (2013), who opined that African local journalists frequently disagreed with Western correspondents in relation to which African news stories should be produced.

Additionally, Nothias (2017:75) stated that foreign Western correspondents write primarily for an audience back home, which equally implies that reports from African local journalists would find it somewhat difficult to comply with this criteria and that could largely result to the non-use of works by African local journalists in the British media, even though their African news reports may be in significant quantity in news agencies' reports. Also of note and in line with the researcher's experience in this study, most of the sampled African news articles in this study that emanated from the news agencies (AP, AFP and Reuters) did not reflect the persons who wrote them, but were mostly credited to the news agencies from which they were sourced from by the newspapers – this further reduces the visibility and potency of the acclaimed improvements in the use of African local journalists' works in the Western dominated global news wires.

Therefore, the production of more of African local journalists' African news reports for the news agencies without such news items getting to be read and consumed by most of the British and other Western public in the mainstream British media seems to be counter-productive. This issue can be clearly seen in this study's British press usage of news agencies' reports in the studied British media coverage of Africa, which experienced a continued downward spiral in its usage in the four newspapers starting from 1997 to 2017 as evidenced in Table 3 and Figure 2 above. This indicates that UK newspapers use less wire agencies' African reports than their applications by African newspapers (Wahutu 2018). This change in the UK newspapers' use of news agencies' reports could be attributed to journalistic practices and the emergence of the internet, and social media, whereby journalists can more easily reach out to people and organisations for a particular news and its detailed confirmation. Between 1992 and 1996 as displayed in Table 3, the British press did use higher amount of news agencies' African reports far more than the later years – in five years (1992 – 1996), 0.6% of African news were sourced or credited to news agencies while in 21 years' coverage of Africa in the studied UK newspapers (1997 – 2017), it stood at 0.2% - an indication that the increased reportage of African local journalists' writings about Africa in the news agencies does not necessarily imply their usage in the mainstream British media for public consumption. In this guise, the improved use of African local journalists in the news wires of the West is a good and welcome development, especially in the context of African news stories, the continent's global media image and with the hope that over time that such media narratives by Africans would be widely used and

consumed by the Western media and their audience. However, the complete acknowledgement of news agencies' African reports in the studied UK newspapers to the news agencies and not to the writer substantially renders the efforts of the involved African local journalists and writers both valueless and voiceless, hence the use of newspapers nicely suits this sort of study.

A further look at previous studies that concluded in terms of improved or better use of African local journalists in the coverage of Africa by the British and other Western media such as Bunce (2013, and 2015), Williams (2011), Carroll (2007) etc. failed to observe and unravel the trend or pattern of the improvements. Some improvements are temporary, while some others are consistent or permanent. The former fades away easily, while the latter stays significantly longer or permanent. This lack of differentiation in improvement leaves a huge gap in our understanding of the place and position of African local journalists in the production and reportage of Africa in the British and other Western media, which this study seeks to address. From this study, it can be distinguished that the improvements witnessed between 1992 and 2017 in the four British newspapers' use of African local journalists were more of smokescreens, which were very momentary and as such may not stand as representative of a permanent shift in who reports Africa in the British press. From Table 3, it can also be observed that there was lack of consistent improved use of African local journalists. The slightly noticeable increase in the newspapers' use of African local journalists were in the following years: 2009, 2012 and 2015, which was far lower in quantity than their Western counterparts' African news reports. That does not imply a better presence of Africans in the reporting of their own stories in the global media of Britain.

### **Colonialism and neo-colonialism as central to the relationship between Africa and Britain**

The dominant use of Western journalists in the British media coverage of Africa can further be explained along the lines of colonialism and neo-colonialism in which there are contestations between superiority versus inferiority, civilised versus uncivilised, logical versus prelogical, scientific versus mythical.

In the opinion of Mengara (2001:2), the domination of African news at the global level by European media and European journalists should be seen as the systematic manufacturing of a continent based on binary oppositions that juxtapose a civilised democratised West with a savage Africa. Mengara sees Africa as a "European Made Africa", seen, written, and produced by outsiders – the Westerners. Similarly, Spencer (2005:85-86) who wrote in relation to Western foreign correspondents in Rwanda, stated that there is a positional superiority adopted in global news coverage and this reaffirms the images of dependency, which have become symbolic of the African experience. This can be traced back to the colonial period when Africa was colonised, ruled, and dominated by the British and other Europeans. De Beer et al (1995) stated that Africa was portrayed negatively during the colonial era and were presented as primitive, barbaric, uncivilized, culturally, and mentally inferior. Asante (2013) further stated that nothing could be written or accepted in the West about Africa in any other light than the age long colonial mentality about the continent.

According to Legum (1971:27-38), it has been noted that the mass media in Africa before the independence of African states were in the control of the colonial governments, who maintained severe forms of media censorship either directly as was the case in Francophone African countries or indirectly through sedition and other laws in Anglophone African colonies. Stokke (1971) agreed that during the colonial era in the French speaking African countries, all the national press was owned and managed by the French directly from Paris, which differed slightly in the British colonies, where some colonial media outlets were run from and within their African colonies. The Western controlled colonial governments maintained complete dominance of the mass media in their African

colonies, which can be seen in today's Western media prominence as key global media players in international communication. Majority of the media products consumed especially in Africa and the world inclusive of the internet and new media emanates from the West and their media.

Therefore, the domination of Western journalists in the studied British media coverage of Africa is in line with the British and European colonial tenets and therefore can be likened to its new metamorphosis. Paterson (2017:214) states that imperial grip has altered shape but not disappeared on Western media's representation of Africa. The present-day Western media relationship with Africa is significantly a direct product of colonialism and the overwhelming use of Western journalists far more than any other group of journalists in the British press coverage of Africa attest to this.

However, it is necessary to know the past so as to help humanity live in the present and predict the future, but an over-indulgence and relentless emphasis on the past posits to a large extent the lack of interest to move on and be better. In African issues, particularly in relationships with Britain, Europe, and the West, this seems to be the case. Regrettably, the age long clamour for fairness in the Western media representation of Africa has yielded very little positives with Bunce (2017: 26) stating that it is wrong to conclude that we have moved beyond Afro-pessimism to an era in which Afro-optimism and Africa Rising dominate the news agenda. This deserves to be changed to get Africa on the realistic path of speedy and steady growth and development. Contextually, the British media would only employ the people they want as their journalists and from the trend in Figure 2, there is a very slim tendency in the foreseeable future for any massive change in this direction. For African countries to have a grip on this would require each of the 54 independent nations of Africa to set up their own prominent global media outlets as has been done by Qatar with the establishment of the Doha-based Al Jazeera and the Chinese establishment of a global news agency, Xinhua and a global media channel, CCTV China. Alternatively, and more economically too, different African countries perhaps can consider having joint global media outlets to help in this direction.

### **Global Western media as profit focussed businesses**

Most British and other Western media companies are businesses that strive for profit maximisation. As such, it would be out of place not to look at the political economy of the media in analysing the results of this study. The four British newspapers used in this research are formal business organisations trying their hardest to break even and stay afloat in business. They all have the focus of making profits every financial year. In an effort to achieve this, these media organisations devise strategies that would help them easily market their products to their audience, hence according to Ebo (1992:15), the bad news coverage of Africa by the Western media is seen as deliberate, systematic and for profit purposes. In print newspapers and other media outlets, the news stories reported, where they are reported, who reported them and when they are reported are very important and key to drawing attention and sustaining the audience interest in buying and sticking to such media companies. Printing of newspapers is not cheap – it is capital intensive and involves the use of printing machines, printing papers, ink, journalists that write the stories, editors and sub-editors that edit the news articles, the use of electricity, an office space, distribution networks and so on, which all require some sort of financial funding.

In Ebo's opinion, negative stories about Africa make more commercial sense to Western media than meaningful stories (Ebo 1992:10-11). This statement by Ebo suggests that commercial factors remain a huge determiner in the relationship between Africa and the Western media. This entails that profit maximization influences the determination of events as newsworthy especially as it relates to Africa and this has equally been supported by works such as Sarpong (2007)). This obsession of selling

news determines the dark side of the economic logic behind the mass media. Negative and bad stories are deemed more captivating to the global or Western audience and the journalists who report them are very important as well in sustaining and maintaining the standard. Any major overhaul or change in who reports Africa in the British media has the likelihood of negatively impacting on their profit and sales margins, inclusive of losing out on a chunk of loyal audience, who may have been very much attached to the Western journalists' ways of writing and presentations. To this effect, it becomes a relatively difficult issue for most of the British media to radically change from their dominant use of Western journalists to African local journalists or any other group of journalists. And this appreciably accounts for the continued and sustained huge use of Western journalists in the British media coverage of Africa.

### **External issues, structural and organizational dimensions to media practices**

Furthermore, there exist other variables and issues that interplay in the production and consumption of global news, which predisposes certain aspects of the Western media to tow some particular lines of action such as the dominant use of Western journalists in the British media coverage of Africa events. These issues can best be summed up as structural, organizational, and external factors. Most journalists all over the world, whether Western, African or any other class of journalists somehow operate within the constraints of wider political, economic, social, religious, and organizational pressures.

Shoemaker and Reese (1996) suggested three hierarchy of influences – the contribution of individual journalists was at the bottom of this list, while organizational demands and values were the next key influence. The topmost were factors external to the media such as politics, ideology, and others. To a great extent, organizational and external factors constrain both the employment of journalists, the autonomy of the journalists and their ability to shape news content. At the organizational level, there are criteria of who these Western media organisations would like to have as journalists and one of which would be a person who is very well able to have written for Western audience or readers. With this in mind, African local journalists who mostly write for their African audience in Africa would find it a little difficult to scale through this selection criteria, thereby leaving the domain of Africa global media telling prominently for Western journalists. Another issue that may be responsible for the almost exclusive domination of Western journalists in the British media coverage of Africa is on the basis of its treatment as a club – the newspapers know the journalists and perhaps have more confidence in them, the journalists know the newspaper companies, their histories, writing styles, their audience and an assumption of what they like for news from Africa. This therefore to a certain degree makes it difficult for African local journalists to be noticeably used in the British media coverage of Africa, thereby making the coverage of Africa in the British media more of an exclusive place for “white British boys”, as stated by Bunce (2010) about the journalists that were employed at Reuters' office in Nairobi.

Again, the political situations in Africa have a considerable place in who reports Africa in the global Western media. According to Bunce (2011), African local journalists are more vulnerable to prosecution by oppressive governments in Africa than Western journalists. In order to protect them, it becomes logical and reasonable to have Western journalists report those news items that are more vulnerable to the persecution of the African local journalists and this to some extent justifies the dominant use of Western journalists in African news coverage in the British press. But the only problem with this is that over a long period of time, it can lead to the takeover of the entirety of who reports Africa in global Western media, which this study affirmed to by its discovery of the dominant use of Western journalists and therefore, calls for balance.



## **The implications of Western journalists' dominance of global African news coverage**

The dominance of the British media coverage of Africa by Western journalists have some implications in international communication, the global perception of Africa and the business or economic life of the continent. Firstly, the domination by Western journalists predisposes the coverage of Africa in the British press to be more Westernised than Africanised both in content and delivery, which to some extent fits into Mengara's "a European Made Africa". This equally has the potency of suppressing everything African in African news stories particularly in the voices or actors used in the production of such African news stories. Once this takes hold, African news articles tend to become skewed, one sided and imbalanced because the voices used may not holistically reflect the truest realities of such African stories. For a core African news story to be balanced and nuanced would require voices from diverse backgrounds particularly African voices, which the Westernised news reporting disposition negates, hence Africa is seen through the lens of Western NGO's doing some charitable works in Africa as supported in the works of Momoh (2003), Franks (2010), Bussman (2010), De B'Berl & Louw (2011), and Hawk (1992).

Secondly, when African stories are more Western inclined, there is the tendency of such African news stories to be inaccurate, especially in their cultural contexts, which invariably gives the wrong impression of Africa and indeed a poor global understanding of the continent and people of Africa.

Finally, the Westernised outlook of African news in the British media made possible by the dominant presence of Western journalists, with its potentially poor treatment of African stories leaves the British, other Westerners and Western businesses with little or no information to make informed decisions about tourism and economic investments in Africa, thereby hampering Western foreign business investments and vacations to Africa. Clough (1992:25) states that the way Africa is portrayed by the British and other Western media has discouraged Western businesses to invest in Africa. This implies that foreign companies are put off investing in Africa due mainly to the picture of instability of the continent portrayed by the British and other Western media. To add to this is the report by Commission for Africa (2005:223) which states that the Western media coverage of Africa has erected a wall of pessimism for Western investment in the continent of Africa.

## **CONCLUSION**

The global media coverage of Africa as can be inferred from this study was performed by five classes of journalists namely - African local journalists, Western journalists, Afro-Western journalists, joint journalists, and news agencies' reports. Africa as a people and continent were predominantly reported to the global audience by Western journalists. The use of African local journalists in global African news was hugely very insignificant and did not show any considerable improvement in about three decades of this study. The British media usage of news agencies' African news reports was gradually or almost been phased out in the studied British media reportage of Africa between 1997 and 2017. The use of Afro-Western journalists and joint journalists were very minute. The domination of Western journalists in global Africa news telling could be attributed to colonialism, white supremacy, commercial or economic philosophies, political factors, and organisational issues. Their dominant usage has the potency of resulting into an imbalanced Westernised production of African news with poor quality dispositions, thereby fuelling more global ignorance about Africa and the hampering of Western foreign business investments and tourism to Africa.

Conclusively, this study contributes empirical evidence of how African journalists are not only vastly under-represented in British news coverage, but also that this has persisted for years. It makes an

important contribution to scholarly understanding of journalism in postcolonial perspectives, particularly on who reports Africa in the global media of Britain and the West.

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