

Seeking Balance in Global News Flows: Revisiting the Pan-African News Agency Experience

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Abstract

Africa and Africans have for centuries faced the issue of negative representation in international news media and particularly in the western news media. News reports in these foreign media connote Africa as a backward continent with barbaric people and unchanging culture. These negative representations are “historical baggage” carried from colonial rulers and have lived on to define Africa and its people. The “single story” of Africa being a crisis-stricken continent with a people in need of civilization is one that Africa and Africans have long fought to overturn. The desire to “own the African story” prompted the establishment of the Pan-African News Agency (PANA) by the Organization of African Unity (OAU). With its core mandate of correcting the distorted image of Africa and contributing to global news flow, the Pan-African News Agency was poised to offer a more positive reporting of Africa to counter persistent negative narratives. This study analyzes the successes and failures of PANA in achieving its core mandate, focusing on developments through the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Although PANA exists today, it is now a private enterprise and not very active or effective. Therefore, this study seeks to learn lessons from PANA’s past experiences to inform future measures to revamp the Pan-African News Agency achieve its core mandate of balancing global news flow.

Keywords: Pan-African News Agency; Africa; Global News Flow; News Agencies; Counterflow

Dedication

I dedicate this research to my parents, Mr. & Mrs. Owoahene Acheampong for their prayers and immense support during the entire period of writing this paper.

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Chapter 1.

Background and Justification of Study

For decades, the western news media have spurred indignation and outrage from African people for what Africans consider as the consistently negative representation of the continent and its people in their news reports. The common ways that Africa is written about tend to use the words, “darkness”, “primordial” “tribal”, “a starving people”, “war torn” “guerrillas” among many other negative terms (Wainaina, 2005). These negative and stereotypical ways of presenting the African continent and its people have long existed in western news reports and dangerously grown to be accepted as common sense by the rest of the world. Kasoma (1993:78) notes that, “Western, as well as Eastern media, are almost devoid of any information from Africa, except for the occasional bad news, which is meant to show how inefficient, unfortunate, and in dire need of help Africans are”.

The choice to dwell only on negative events as the news of Africa has been described as a growth industry for the western news media hence the continuous sounding of these negative narratives (Ankomah, 2011, Harth, 2012, Mheta, 2015). Ankomah (2011) in his article *“Reporting Africa”*, notes that a six month study by the TransAfrica Forum in the USA revealed that out of 89 news stories covered on Africa in the New York Times and Washington Post, 75 were negative with 63 out of the total 89 featuring stories of conflict in Africa. Considering the vast and culturally diverse continent of Africa and its people, reports on conflicts cannot be entirely ruled out as untrue. However, as Ankomah (2011) notes, refusing to report the issues underlying the events of conflict create the notion that Africa is only bedeviled with war and destruction.

According to George Alagiah, a BBC newsreader and correspondent to Africa, the persistent negative reporting on Africa is nothing but a “historical baggage”. Alagiah in his 1999 article to The Guardian, describes “historical baggage” as the “20th century view of Africa infected with the prevailing wisdom of the 19th century” (1999, pg. 1). Alagiah’s article was a plea to his fellow journalists from the western media to recognize the “historical baggage” claptrap and report events in full context as they happen. He further notes that, foreign journalists have done a disservice to Africa by often presenting the continent at its worst and not providing a fuller picture of happenings. Africa is often

depicted as a remote place full of hungry people, corrupt governments and plagued in constant chaos and mayhem (Alagiah, 1999).

To Alagiah, a British man who had spent a part of his childhood in Africa, the sentiments raised by Africans on the negative reports received in western news media are valid however, they are sentiments that are not highlighted in western news reports. Interestingly, even though Alagiah's article was a plea to western journalists to drop the "historical baggage", The Guardian in publishing the article, still chose the headline "New Light on the Dark Continent".

To the western news media and their journalists, the association of Africa with darkness seems to be an inseparable affair as still in the 21st century, the western news media carries the "historical baggage" of Africa being a hopeless continent. In March 2012, the American-based news television channel, CNN carried a report on an invasion of a bus terminal in Kenya by some Al-Shabab militants and headlined it "Violence in Kenya" overlying a Kenyan flag. The terrorist incident that left people killed and several others injured was understood by the Kenyan online community as an incident of violence that could just as well happen anywhere in the world hence should not define the whole of Kenya as violent. The Kenyan online community on Twitter therefore acted to reject the image of Kenya as "violent" to be defined somewhere and interpreted as "common sense" hence the online community began promoting #SomeoneTellCNN# in which they called for a retraction of the story and apology from CNN (Ogola, 2014:1). The quest to end such negative representation which to Nigerian novelist and writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche is a result of the "danger of a single story" (2009) of course preceded the advent of social media platforms like Twitter and has found new tactics with these new platforms.

Most African nation states, after independence from colonial rule set up national news agencies to provide an African perspective to news events happening in and outside their individual countries. Even though these national news agencies helped to improve media and communication in Africa, they were insufficient in their activities to cover the whole of Africa and subsequently transmit news abroad. They thus relied heavily on western transnational news agencies who had more developed communication systems hence could cover their own continent and other areas including Africa. The reliance on western news agencies meant that the African media in themselves retransmitted the negative stories of Africa carried in the western news media adding to the woes of the

continent in terms of development and growth. Indeed, writing in 1993, Kasoma reported that “The deluge of Western flow of information through the media to Africa has not abated. African television and cinemas are almost totally dependent on American, British, and French soap operas and films. The news on radio and television as well as in some newspapers is full of stories from the West sent by Reuters (United Kingdom), Agence France Presse (France) United Press International (United States), and Associated Press (United States)” (Kasoma, 1993, p. 78). Bourgault (1995) notes that the domination of global news flow by these four transnational news agencies identified by Kasoma, was detrimental to developing countries who had no means of changing the pattern of global news flow. This was due to the weak economic power and underdeveloped communication systems of developing countries. The ownership and control of much of the world’s media markets by western transnational news agencies meant that these agencies controlled the number as well as the nature of news that flowed in the world. This situation promoted an unhealthy supply of news reports that was injurious to the growth and development of developing countries. News reports carried on developing countries, particularly African countries, by these western transnational news agencies portrayed those countries as “corruption-ridden”, “politically unstable” and “disaster-prone basket cases” (Samarajiwa, 1984, p. 1). To most developing nations, and especially Africans, this was intolerable, thus a change was needed.

To correct these negative connotations attached to the continent and its people and offer a platform for African people to recount their own stories and events from an African perspective, leaders of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963 proposed the establishment of a pan-African press. The establishment of a pan-African press was considered necessary to unite the various national news agencies on the continent and build a formidable force to balance global news flows and correct Africa’s distorted image in the western news media.

Even though the need to rectify the negative reportage on Africa and counter global news flow was of major concern to both leaders and citizens of the continent, the idea for a pan-African press stalled until in 1979 when the OAU at its summit in Monrovia launched what they called the Pan-African News Agency (PANA) (Novicki, 1994). As a pilot project, PANA aimed at “rectifying the distorted images of Africa created in western news agencies and let the voice of Africa be heard on the international scene” (Wauthier, 1987 pg. 66). At the time of PANA’s launch, Babacar Fall, a Senegalese journalist and coordinator-

general at UNESCO reported that, out of ten news items distributed to Africa, nine of them were produced by foreign sources with only one from Africa. Also, many of these news reports contained negative stories of famine, civil war, etc. (Novicki, 1994). This quantitative and qualitative presentation of Africa needed improvements. Hence to African journalists and media experts, PANA was a worthy cause.

Despite the urgency of PANA, it was not until 1983, twenty years after its first proposal in 1963 that the African news agency started operations. The delay in the start of operations was attributed mainly to financial constraints faced by the agency. As per the deliberations brought forth during the OAU summit that saw the launch of PANA, the agency was to be financially supported by African member of states. However, these member states only offered lip services to the agency and did not back their promise of financial support with action (Bourgault 1995, Malam, 1993, Novicki, 1994). The apathy to contribute financially to the agency became a major hindrance to PANA's growth and development. Despite the financial setback that delayed PANA's operation, the Organization of African Unity did not relent in their efforts of seeing the agency become a reality.

The establishment of the New Information and Communication Order (NWICO) in the 1970s compelled African nation states not to give up on the PANA dream. Even though the idea for PANA preceded the 1970s, the heightened calls by developing countries in the mid-1970s for a change in the existing communication and information order fueled PANA into operations. Developing countries argued that the existing information order gave greater attention to developed countries (i.e. Western countries) to the detriment of underdeveloped countries. Information flow ran from the Western countries to the underdeveloped countries with little to no counterflow from the underdeveloped countries, thus a reform of the existing information order was essential. The grievances of developing countries channeled to the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for a change in the existing information and communication order led to the setting up the MacBride Commission by UNESCO to investigate the complaints brought forth. The MacBride Commission's findings established as valid the grievances of developing nations fueling the NWICO to life. The MacBride report's recommendations encouraged African heads of states to push PANA into operations so that Africa could challenge foreign domination through the development of their media systems. (Bourgault, 1995, Cavanagh, 1989, Novicki, 1994). The Pan-African News Agency in short can be

described as a political statement to the world, that Africa was taking control of its media and communication and adding its voice in the global flow of news.

The current study thus analyses the Pan-African News Agency (PANA) as an example of global communications that challenge western domination of news flow. The study looks at the history of PANA and analyses its objectives, policies, organizational structure, finances, editorial control, telecommunication, and other features to ascertain its successes and failures in challenging western domination. Materials including policy documents, reports, minutes of meetings, historical newspapers, journals, dissertations, books and other scholarly materials were analyzed to arrive at findings and conclusions of this paper. PANA even though exists today, its still lags in its ability to achieve the core mandate for which it was set up in 1979, the study thus provides some recommendations for the revamp of the African news agency.

1.1. Problem Statement

The portrayal of Africa as a dark and backward continent filled with hungry, malnourished, and poverty-stricken people has dominated most western news media outlets for decades. The negative reportages on the African continent in the western media have created pictures in the minds of audiences all around the world that Africa as a continent is war-torn, hopeless, disease-stricken, filled with tribal anarchy in need of civilization and its “uncultured” people in need of illumination and redemption. These negative portrayals of Africa have dominated global news flow to date.

Even after African countries won their political independence from colonial masters, there has still been dependence on their cultural products. However, a concerted effort was planned by African states to challenge this domination. This effort came in the form of the Pan-African News Agency which was most active from 1983 to 1990. The history of PANA is not well known, however debates about how African countries and people might act to counter global inequalities in global news flows continue today. These contemporary debates are inadequately informed because of the lacking awareness and analysis of PANA’s history.

This study seeks to rectify this deficit by providing an historically informed analysis of PANA's development, successes and future approaches to Africans' aims to achieve more balance in how reportage about and in Africa proceeds.

1.2. Research Goal and Question

This study analyzes the Pan-African News Agency as an example of global communications that challenges western domination of news flow. The goal of this research is to learn from PANA's successes and failures, and the factors that contributed to these.

The research question for this study is: What are the factors that accounts for PANA's impact in achieving counterflow against western domination in the news media?

1.3. Theoretical Framework: Agenda-setting, Dependency, and Pan-Africanism

There is the need to understand the issues and debates integral to the period during which there was the rise of NWICO and the establishment of PANA. To do this, the study draws from the perspective of the agenda-setting theory (McCombs & Guo, 2014), the dependency theory (Thussu, 2019), and Pan-Africanism theory (Kasanda, 2016). Ideas concerning agenda-setting, world systems of dependency and Pan-Africanism intersected in the establishment of PANA.

The background to the establishment of NWICO and the establishment of PANA stems from the theoretical argument that the mass media through its news selection and framing of news is significant in shaping public opinions and thinking hence the control of global news by western transnational news agencies means the spread of western ideologies that constitute a serious threat to the preservation of other cultures and in this case, African cultures. The agenda setting theory explicitly spells out the mandate the traditional media performs in the transmission of issues of relevance in the media's perspectives to that of public's perspectives. In simple terms, the "media's agenda define the public's agenda" and forms public opinions" (McCombs & Guo, 2014 pg. 251). The news media operates in such a way that it conveys only a partial version of the world's happenings to the public thus creating mental images that shapes public opinions and

behaviours. (McCombs & Guo, 2014). The attitude of western news media to provide only a partial view of events in their news reports on Africa have contributed to the negative images formed in the minds of its audience and the world at large of Africa being a continent bedeviled with crisis. The history to establishing PANA was thus to provide the platform of correcting this agenda set by western news media on Africa being poor which has shaped the thinking and perceptions people hold of Africa. Even though some 21st century scholars have denied the relevance of the agenda-setting theory because of the influx of social media networks, (Coleman & McCombs, 2007; Iyengar & Hahn, 2009; Denham, 2010; Takeshita, 2005 in Johnson, 2013), other scholars through empirical evidences have proven that the agenda-setting theory of the traditional media still persists and that social media platforms only carry what these traditional news media transmits (Martin, 2013, Lang Lang, 2014).

The dependency theory which clearly captures the history of PANA is hinged on the fact that political, economic, and military power of developed nations have put them in a position to dominate and exploit developing countries of their resources leaving developing countries in utmost dependence on developed countries. (Ferraro, 2008, Chase Dunn, 2015, Thussu, 2019). The theory which is often used as a framework in understanding economic inequality has been applied to media studies, particularly global media studies. (Thussu 2006). It posits that, due to technological advancements and industrialization of developed countries particularly the west, large imports of media products (news, television programs, etc.) are sent from these western countries to developing nations. This situation causes a high dependence on foreign products by developing nations as their weak technological advancements does not allow an equal dissemination of media products. This leads to what Schiller describes as media imperialism where the “so-called electronic invasion threatens the cultures of countries in the periphery and promotes a consumer lifestyle to the expense of community values” (Thussu, 2019 pg. 47). The proliferation of foreign media content and the inequalities that characterize it can be associated with issues such as dependency, hegemony and exploitation especially by international media from the west (ibid). The dominance enjoyed by western transnational companies shrouded the voice of Africa and took advantage of their power to act as self-appointed mouthpieces of the continent, reporting events how they deem fit. It is in a quest to break this dominance and counter unequal news flow that PANA was established. PANA is most importantly a pan-Africanist movement to see a

united Africa challenge western hegemony. To understand the role of PANA, it is fit to understand firstly its roots in Pan-Africanist ideologies.

PANA as a continental news agency was born out of the fury of Pan-Africanists who felt the systematic negative report of Africa by western transnational news agencies should come to an end. Pan-Africanism is the idea that people from the black race all around the globe form a nation with a common sense of purpose, an agenda of togetherness to fight against bias towards the black race and the mistreatment they suffer from the westerners (Outlaw 1996, pg. 88 in Kasanda, 2016). It is an acknowledgement of the disjointed nature of African people's existence, their demotion and disaffection both on their own continent and in the world. (Aniche 2018). The Pan-Africanist idea has controlled the discussion on the purpose of the African for almost ten decades. (Kasanda, 2016). The Pan-Africanist ideology that characterized Africa's fight against colonialism also influenced the founding of PANA. As Murithi (2007) noted, a central belief of Pan-Africanism is that ideas not designed by Africans themselves, will barely be in the interests of Africans hence the establishment of PANA, a news agency that would operate on the terms and conditions of African nationalists. Pan-Africanism as a major framework for PANA simply put forth the idea that Africans needed to report on news and events about Africa from the African perspective. PANA aimed to offer a platform for Africans to tell their news and end the dependency on western news media. In a wider perspective, the idea centered on using the mass media for political, economic, social and cultural liberation, and development. The idea is that the mass media ought to be used for nation building, with government's support and direction.

1.4. Significance of Study

The establishment of a New Information and Communication Order (NWICO) was an event that happened in a period under specific circumstances and another establishment of such an order may not be found necessary to repeat itself. It is therefore imperative, African nations took charge of their communication and information systems to tell their own stories the way they deem it fit and project a positive image of the continent and its people on the international front. The media has proven to be a powerful tool in shaping public opinions and thinking. This is evident in the way the media frames its news.

The study chose the Pan-African News Agency due to its position as an agency that sorts to unite the whole of Africa, strengthen their media systems and together act as a formidable force to challenge western domination of global news flow. The dream of Africa to counter the global flow of news was to be realized through PANA's establishment. It is thus imperative to study the news agency in these present times to access its mandate as a force against global communication and inform what better can be done if Africa want to curtail the negative reports still evident in western news reports.

The study is again significant to expand literature on the Pan-African news agency which was a phenomenal achievement by African nation states and contribute to expanding literature on international communication. The establishment of PANA was phenomenal, however a simple google search on PANA generates very few materials. This is not good news for a continent that seeks to correct negative historical notions held of them and its people by the outside world through proper dissemination of information and communication. For a continent that have accused western writers of telling their stories, it is interesting that literature on important milestones like PANA is written extensively by westerners while the African literature is scanty on the subject. This displays the difficulty underlying Africa news and information gaining prominence on the international scene thus contributing to global news flow. The study realizing this, hope to contribute to African literature on media.

1.5. Limitations of Study

This study on the Pan-African News Agency faced some limitations although efforts were made to ensure these did not hinder the analysis and findings of the study. Specifically, many archival materials about PANA are only available in print form in African countries and these were thus not available to me while based in Canada during COVID-19 travel restrictions. The insufficient electronic availability of scholarly materials on the history and activities of the news agency made it necessary to dig into the bellies of the internet for articles, blogs, newspapers that could add on any form of information necessary to progress this study. These extra efforts were found to be very useful in achieving the objective of the study. Also, the study is limited by the fact that it dwelled on documentary research. Perhaps, the study would have been improved if I had on-site experiences related to the activities of PANA. Nonetheless, a review of primary

(eyewitness accounts) and secondary documents helped progress the research to achieve its objective.

1.6. Outline of Chapters

The remainder of this paper has four chapters. The next chapter, Chapter 2, addresses issues concerning global news flow and the establishment of the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) which was vital to PANA's founding. It also discusses the development and importance of news agencies to global media landscape.

Chapter 3 describes the establishment of the Pan-African News Agency. It lays out PANA's objectives and roles as a continental news agency. It also assesses PANA's structure, editorial and financial strength as well as its telecommunication abilities to inform on the efficacy of the agency

Chapter 4 provides analysis of PANA's successes and failures against PANA's own objectives. It again discusses the restructuring and privatization of the Pan-African News Agency.

The final chapter, Chapter 5, summarizes discussions and conclusions of the study and offers some recommendations for PANA to achieve its mandate.

Chapter 2.

Background to the establishment of PANA

This chapter reviews literature on issues underlying global news flow and the importance of news agencies in global media affairs. The purpose of the section is to highlight and understand issues surrounding the global flow of news in the mid-1970s that subsequently made the founding of the Pan-African News Agency necessary.

2.1. Global News Flow

News flow deals with news and information sources, content of news, its distribution and consumption (Mowlana, 1985). Global news flow, conversely, involves the reportage of news and happenings about foreign states. It defines and interprets the movement of news from one country to another (Segev, 2016). The underlying issues surrounding the establishment of the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) was that western transnational news agencies dominated the global flow of news to the detriment of developing countries whose economic and telecommunication power did not provide the chance for a counterflow of news. The implication of this is the biased reportages given to events happening in developing countries in the western news media. The concerns of unbalanced global news flow characterized the NWICO debates in the 1970s and was very significant to the founding of the Pan-African News Agency.

Much of the confusion surrounding news flow is the definition of what exactly is news. (De Beer, 2009 cited in Bormann & Gysbert, 2017). Ngwu (2018), asserts that words like, "information", "news" and "media" have repeatedly been confused due to its looser application thus the explanation of such terms is necessary (pg. 184). The notion that news is the "coverage of events by journalists" is no longer the only idea that characterize news. (Moisy, 2012, cited in Ngwu, 2018 pg. 184). This is evident in the form of development journalism adopted by developing nations as a mechanism to develop their media and communication systems. To many leaders in developing nations, the mass media and news should seek national development thus news reports should be of importance to the progress a nation. As explained by former Nigerian minister of information, Tony Momoh (1987) in his article, *"The Press and Nation Building"*, " the

interest of the nation overrides any other interest, the press has a duty to win, maintain and perpetuate support for the nation” (pg. 54). This notion of the character of news and the media questions the role of PANA in the contemporary global flow of news.

2.1.1. Factors affecting Global News Flow

A very important factor influencing the direction of global news flow is the structural situation of a country, that is, in the world system theory, “core” countries are more pronounced in news coverage and contribute majorly to news flow than periphery countries (Chang 1998). For countries in the periphery to make the news, events happening in the periphery country must be based on conflicts and disaster among themselves or conflicts with core countries. Thus, periphery countries making it in the world news is not based on the importance of the event but the value of the conflict that characterizes the event. This explains the reports of conflicts and crisis on developing nations in international news media.

Economic factors also affect the global flow of news. Economic power influences the quantity, quality, accessibility and broadcasting of news (Wanta & Golan 2010). Economic power determines the accessibility of technological infrastructure needed to gather and disseminate news. For developing countries, the limited telecommunication infrastructure makes it difficult to gather and disseminate news to the international front making it difficult to reach international recognition. A country’s economy also determines whether it has the capability of preserving standard news media that is competitive with the elite in the world’s media landscape with regards to excellence in work ethics, remuneration of its workers and advertising. Maintaining a standard media that can contest globally is furthermore dependent on telecommunications infrastructure and tariffs and the ability of the populace to patronise the service (i.e. news products). The influence of economic factors is also evident in the fact that countries at the centre of news flow are rich ones with a large gross domestic product and large populations.

Political factors also affect both the content and flow of news. The level of press freedom in a country also has a direct influence on constraint; restriction on the movement of foreign reporters; and restriction on the marketing of the news products (i.e. both import and export). A higher value is ascribed to news originating from countries that enjoy media freedom. Thus, the people or parties managing a country’s political and economic life have

a major influence on the news flow in it. With the growth of the internet, many forecasted that the time of strict censorship is over. Unfortunately, countries like the Republic of China and Saudi Arabia have developed measures to severely restrict the international flow of news. China has developed what has become known as the “Great Firewall of China” that filters content and makes it very difficult for its citizens to access news from outside its borders (Ramsy 2010). In a move to minimise the chances of similar calls for reforms in China, the government of China blocked access to information on the uprising in Egypt, trying to stem the flow of international news to China and its citizens (China blocks unrest, 2011). In Saudi Arabia, access to the internet is also restricted by the government that filters out any “dangerous” content (Abdallah 2010).

We may assume that cultural, religious and other differences seriously impede the flow of news. Language, problems of translation and ethnic attitudes and prejudices are the main complicating factors. It is rational that countries that speak the same language will be more probable in patronising news products among themselves than countries that speak different languages. Thus, countries in Africa where English is the lingua franca are more likely to exchange news amongst themselves than they would with the Francophone African countries. Other important social and cultural factors are the extent of migration between two countries, the amount of travel between two countries, historical relations between countries and religious diversity (Wanta & Golan 2010).

2.1.2. Problems in Global News Flow

The global flow of news has been associated with the problem of imbalances (unidirectional) with developing countries accusing developed nations particularly the West of being bias in its reports of the world, particularly Africa. These highly developed nations control the flow of news globally as they define which incidents are relevant and needs to make the news. News events happening in third world countries, particularly Africa are deemed not to be newsworthy, thus excluded from coverage unless under derogatory circumstances. Schulz (2001), observes that, news from Africa centres on extreme poverty, high levels of corruption, violence, and natural disasters. The fact that developed nations, particularly the West features negative news about Africa led to the “cry” for a New Information and Communication Order (NWICO) in the late 1970s. The NWICO though faced disapprovals from developed nations was implemented to give a

more even-handed flow of news and overturn the narrative of developing nations being poorly represented in the international news media. (Bourgault, 1995).

The problems related to the global flow of news stem from the nature of information flow which connects to the basic ideas of freedom of speech and the freedom to hold opinions. Ekeanyanwu (2015) underlines four problems linked with global news flow to include: free flow, unidirectional flow, vertical flow and market-oriented flow. Developed countries are rooting for an unrestricted news flow from a country to another. Even though the cause for an unrestricted flow of news may sound positive as it opens the right to seek and have information, in the field of international communication this may be considered negative. This is because insisting on the right to freely disseminate and receive information and neglecting other aspects of the process, is another international communication flaw, - which is the unidirectional flow of news (Ekeanyanwu, 2015).

The unidirectional flow of news presents a distasteful imbalance of global communication flows where news flows from developed countries to developing countries without counterflow from the developing countries. The vertical flow of news means that, what makes the news is decided by developed countries to the detriment of third world countries who perpetually remain consumers. They are excluded from the production and dissemination of news.

The market -oriented flow of news is another major problem facing global news flows. In here media products are considered mere commodities intended for profit maximization. This puts to the background the mandate of the media to develop society through its activities and highlights commercialization to gain profit as the media's mandate (Ekeanyanwu, 2015).

The founding of the Pan-African News Agency was in line with the highlighted problems facing global news flow. It intended to counter the flow of global news dominated by western transnational news agencies and re-define the function of the news media to promote the development of the African continent.

2.2. New Information and Communication Order (NWICO)

The major issues underlying the meetings of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in the mid-1970s and early 1980s was the

call by developing countries for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). The demand for modifications in the standing pattern of information flow and global news was necessitated by what developing nations perceived as an imbalance in flow of news and information from the north to the south. Countries from the south argued that due to obvious “economic, technological imbalances, political and social statuses, there was ‘a one way flow’ of information from the ‘centre’ to the ‘periphery’, which created a wide gap between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots’” (Masmoudi 1979 pg. 172).

The argument led by representatives of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was that much of the world communication networks was owned and controlled by the highly industrialized countries. A number of western transnational news agencies like the Associated Press (AP), Reuters, Agence France- Presse (AFP) and United Press International (UPI) dominated the global news market and information technologies leaving the less industrialized countries dependent on them for world news and even more detrimental, news happening in the very own regions of developing countries. These western news agencies controlled up to 95% of world information flows (De Beer, 2010). The major grievances of developing nations were that the developed nations consciously capitalized on their economic and industrial superiority to dominate global news flows thus passing down their cultural products in the form of news, music, movies, to developing countries. This constitutes to neo-colonialism and cultural imperialism, a situation developing nations saw as a threat to their growth and development (Carlson, 2005). Ekeanyanwu (2005) notes that the domination of news flow by the west created quantitative and qualitative imbalances. He further asserts that, in a content analysis of television news channels BBC or CNN, there is a higher chance that out of a hundred news reportages only ten would be from developing countries and more sadly nine out of the ten stories will be full of negatives (ibid).

The concern to counter global news flows and end the negative representations of developing nations led to the setup of the MacBride commission in 1977 by UNESCO. The MacBride commission chaired by Sean MacBride was to study the grievances brought forth by developing nations and provide necessary recommendations to solve this. The commission after its investigations put out a report “*Many Voices, One World*” which established as true, complaints of developing nations and called for the strengthening of their national media to avoid dependence on foreign sources (MacBride, 1980).

Many scholars welcomed the MacBride report and saw it as achieving a milestone in ending global communication inequalities. Nordenstreng (2005:59) reasoned that the MacBride report was quite “lightweight”, but “carried a lot of political weight”. The report signified the universal movement to democracy and the fairness of information flow (ibid). The report stood as the first United Nations document that extensively deliberated on the structural imbalances in world communication and news flow and provided practical ways to solve them (Mattelart, 2005 pg. 53). Recommendations from the commission’s report influenced the establishment of the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). NWICO hoped to overturn or at least balance the vertical flow of information that existed and change the nature of the news media that mostly ignored the less developed world apart from its disasters, famines and wars (Carlsson, 2003).

The existence of NWICO though hailed by developing nations faced rejection from some countries in the West. Thussu (2005) notes that western countries led by the United States saw the order as a ploy for dictators from the developing countries to suffocate press freedom, impose restriction on the free flow of information and keep away foreign journalists. Third world countries however accused the West that, their quest for free information flow is an enticement to gain political, economic, and cultural dominance over developing countries through the help of western news agencies.

The establishment of NWICO brought with it a new air and rekindled Africa’s hope of reversing western domination of global news flow by countering news reports and flows from the outside world. To put the recommendation of the McBride commission into action, African leaders championed the establishment of a Pan-African News Agency which the leaders believed was capable of truly presenting Africa in the way it should be represented.

2.3. News Agencies

The mass media performs an important role in disseminating news and information to the public. The media is known to be powerful in shaping opinions of its audiences. Even though journalists have taken the responsibility of spreading knowledge through communication exchanges, their inability to cover events happening all around their respective countries and those happening outside, have led to their dependence on other news sources like news agencies.

News agencies have been defined in many ways. APA news (2019:1) in their publication *“Importance of News Agency and its Role in Modern Journalism”*, defined a news agency as a “an association that assembles imperative data and appropriates it as news from around the country, or the world, to an enormous gathering of a group of onlookers”. A news agency may be a “press agency, press association, wire service, or news service organization that gathers, writes, and distributes news from around a nation or the world to newspapers, periodicals, radio and television broadcasters, government agencies, and other users” (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2006:2).

In responding to a question in their 2002 publication *“Global and National News Agencies: Opportunities and Threats in the Age of the Internet”*, Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen (2002:57) pose the question “what are news agencies and why are they important?” and in turn respond that “news agencies were classically defined as ‘wholesale’ media, gathering news for the purpose of distributing it to other -- ‘retail’ -- media, mainly newspapers and broadcasters, who packaged news agency news for their own distinctive readers and audiences. Until recently, news agencies did not have a direct access to an audience consisting of individuals; their services were mediated through their subscribers.”

The establishment of news agencies could be traced as far back to 1832 when Charles Havas conceived the thought of commercializing news and information. He set up the bureau Havas whose initial responsibility was to translate news articles in foreign newspapers to the French media. The “translation agency” soon became a full-blown news agency, -the Agence Havas, and began collecting its own news alongside its previous role of merely translating news articles in foreign media. Agence Havas evolved to what we have now as Agence France-Presse (Broderick & Darren, 2008). Following the steps of Havas, Paul Julius Reuter and Bernhard Wolff established their own news agencies performing the role of collecting and disseminating news. In 1849, Wolff set up the Wolffs Telegraphisches Bureau in Berlin and Reuter in 1851 established the Reuters London. The American agency, Associated Press was also founded in 1848 (Menke, 2013).

Expansion of the telegraph networks in developed countries led to the development and expansion of the news agencies, which focused on delivering quick and precise telegraphic information to the media, commercial consumers and to governments.

The telegraph invented in 1833, was state controlled in many European nations except for Britain. However, in France though telegraphic networks was controlled by the government, the government made it accessible to some news agencies. One of such agencies worth noting is Agence Havas. The expansion of telegraph networks in Europe and other western countries aided the growth of the products of news agencies to the rest of the globe. Headrick (1981) notes that by 1871, the British had launched themselves as “information hegemony”. They owned 72 percent of the world’s submarine cables hence earned the spot as the global news centre. This supremacy is resounded today as Britain headquarters two of the largest global news agencies, Reuters and Associated Press (Hugill, 1999). The dominance thus enjoyed today by these western news agencies stems from an age-long advantage of not only being formidable in gathering and disseminating news, but an advantage enjoyed due to its ownership of powerful communication systems that aid in news dissemination. Therefore, for PANA to strive as a formidable news agency, it needs to put in extra efforts in developing its communication system as technology has proven to be an important tool in the flourishing of any news agency.

2.3.1. Importance of News Agencies

News agencies act as link conveying tools of news from the custodians to their consumers. They keep people updated about issues related to their countries, workplaces, and places they cannot assess. Smith (1980) in a publication “*The Geopolitics of Information*”, stated that aside the rotary press, the setup of news agencies in the 1800s was the most significant development in the print media. The core mandate of news agencies is to gather information about a set subject, write it, and then distribute it to its audience via newspaper, radio broadcast, periodicals, television broadcast, and other channels. News agencies are basic to the journalism industry. The mass media in most countries made up of newspapers, radio and television stations have common interests with news agencies and report varied subjects and issues which include the government, politicians, police, among others. Many media websites also rely on news agencies to bring coverage of events happening in their own countries and outside the world to their audiences.

The 2001 UNESCO report titled “*News agencies in the era of the Internet*” summarized the important purposes of news agencies as:

- They provide affordable services of domestic and international news to national and local media.
- They are important and privileged sources of news for political, economic and financial institutions.
- They serve as a conduit for services of international news agencies to local, domestic media, and feedback local and national news to the international news agencies and thus can influence the international representation of their nations.
- They are typically more driven by goals of public service than of profit maximization.
- They are often regarded by governments as tools of national development and as vehicles for positive or balanced images of their countries for international consumption.
- They serve as a partial correction to the more negative news agendas of international news media (predominantly owned by US, British and French media interests).

Schramm (1965), pronounces that “national development processes categorically demonstrates how “free” information has social effects for redeeming a society “from ignorance and unilateral manipulation” (pg.6). According to him, the quantity of information accessible and how wide it is distributed is an important part in the speed and smoothness of development. Implying that development of a state occurs in the most peaceful and less chaotic manner than just the fastest way (ibid).

2.3.2. Development of News Agencies in Africa

Africa as a continent has been the last born in most innovations that have affected the world. It is noted to lag in some facets of livelihood, - ranging from infrastructure to good health care, portable drinking water to good educational system and last but not least good technology and communication systems. In the 19th century when the western world was developing their communication and their technology systems, Africa was still battling

with colonization by some major European countries such as England, France, Belgium, and Portugal.

The first news agency to hit an African soil was the Ethiopia News Agency established in 1942. The agency was established be the official mouthpiece of the Ethiopian government. Ethiopia was the only free country on the African continent at the time (i.e. the only country in Africa that was not colonized). Thus, it was free to run its own affairs as a country. Although the Ethiopia News Agency was established early (i.e. comparing to other African countries), it had to halt operations for 16 years (1947 to 1963) because of financial difficulties, thus did not achieve any prominent feat in terms of improving Africa's media and communication system.

Countries such as Egypt, Ghana, Nigeria, Algeria, and Angola had news agencies established immediately they gained independence. Ghana for instance founded the Ghana News Agency (GNA) in 1957, that is the same year the country gained independence. It was established by their first president, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah as part of a "network of coercive and partisan institutions". It was established to be the mouthpiece of the government in power to propagate a more favorable news of the country to the world and to control the news flow internally (Hasty, 2005). Egypt also established the Middle East News agency (MENA) in 1955. MENA like many news agencies in Africa was owned by government hence did the biddings of the government in power.

The spring up of these national news agencies though was in a good light, did little in strengthening the media in Africa to counter global news flow. It was thus necessary to African heads of states to establish PANA which as a consolidation of the various national news agencies will serve as the mouthpiece of the continent and its people and act as a formidable force in global news affairs.

News agencies undoubtedly play a major role in the global dissemination of news. The ability to bring events happening in distant areas to their audiences on a daily basis details the power news agencies have in making the world a global village. Most nations in the west have dominated global affairs due to the strength they wield in news dissemination which is made easy by their well-established news agencies. A positive way through which Africa can gain prominence on the international scene is by developing its

media and communication and setting up news agencies can help this process. Thus, the founding of PANA was in its right direction.

Chapter 3.

The Establishment of PANA

This chapter examines the major subject of the study, the Pan-African News Agency. It looks at its objectives, organizational structure, editorial activities, as well as its financial strength as a news agency with the mandate of countering global news flows. The examination of these factors is necessary to lead the study into the analysis of the capability of such an agency to succeed in its objective of contributing to global news flows.

3.1. History of PANA

The Pan-African News Agency (PANA) was launched in 1979 as a “specialized institution” of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The launch of the agency was part of a pan-Africanist agenda to liberate the African media from what media practitioners in Africa saw as a domination by western news agencies, particularly the “big four”- Reuters, AFP, UPI and AP at the time (Malam, 1993, Novicki, 1994, Bourgault, 1995). African people have for long criticized western news agencies for creating a distorted image of the continent through their news reports. In a Kampala conference held by information ministers and officers of the OAU in 1978, the assistant general secretary of the OAU, Peter Onu posited that, “For too long, the western news media have been presenting Africa as they see it not as we see it....they speak for themselves and speak for us as well...we want to correct the balance”. (Onu, 1978 in “statement on Pan-African News Agency” pg. 74).

The idea of establishing a pan-African press, dates to the 1960s. In May 1963, the OAU made its first resolution to establish a news agency that was central to the needs and development of the African people. It was however not until an OAU summit held in Monrovia in July 1979, - that heads of states from 42 African countries decided to launch the Pan-African News Agency (PANA). It was to be headquartered at Dakar, Senegal. Even though the continental news agency was launched in 1979, it was not up until May 1983, that the agency saw its first broadcast (Malam 1993, Novicki, 1994).

The Pan-African News Agency was regarded as an “ambitious plan” by some, like the New York Times reporter Alan Riding (cited in Hunt, 1992:1). PANA was to perform the double role of re-transmitting news stories from the state-owned national news agencies of its member states as well as report happenings on the continent through its own correspondents (Cavanagh, 1989, Ogola, 2014).

Membership of PANA according to the agency’s charter were to be all national news agencies of African states who were a part of the OAU. However, at the start of operations of PANA in 1983, only 5 national news agencies were members. This was because most African nation states did not believe in the ability of PANA to overturn the dominance enjoyed by western transnational news agencies in Africa. They were doubtful of PANA’s strength to compete with western transnational news agencies in global flow of news (Novicki, 1994). Malam (1993) points out there were some countries that were pro-western and did not share in the vision of the OAU. Notable amongst them was the francophone country, Cote d’Ivoire. Cote d’Ivoire’s apathy towards PANA was due in part to the country joining the OAU in 1985, two years after PANA had started operations and also, its strong allegiance to western countries like the US and UK. PANA however saw increase in its membership due to its output of covering major events happening on the continent like meetings of the OAU council of ministers and several OAU Summits held in Addis Ababa. Hence by 1983, PANA had thirty national news agencies and by 1987, the number had reached forty-seven (UNESCO, 1990). Member states of PANA were together to provide the agency with news reports of 20,000 words a day in English, French, Portuguese and Arabic which were to come later did not materialize due to financial constraints.

To support the operations of PANA, an annual budget of 3.8 million was set aside for the daily running of the agency. Quotas to be met by each member state was determined by a country’s economic power, hence countries with stronger economies like Nigeria, Libya were charged to pay higher amounts to the agency. However, African heads of states did not live up to their pledges of financial support, a situation that became detrimental to PANA’s growth.

PANA since its establishment faced a lot of difficulties in achieving its objectives. These difficulties led to its near collapse but for intervention of UNESCO. UNESCO’S intervention led to the privatization of PANA in 1993. PANA besides its challenges was

noted to have progressed information flow among nations on the continent (Bourgault, 1995, Malam, 1993, UNESCO, 1990,).

3.2. Objectives of PANA,

At its establishment, the objectives of PANA as outlined in the 1979 convention of the OAU held in Monrovia, far outstretched the formal objectives to be expected from a traditional news agency. However, PANA's role was different hence objectives that would drive home its goals were necessary. Following the recommendation from the MacBride commission, PANA sort to strengthen the media in Africa by uniting the various national news agencies. News about fellow African nations was made known to individual African countries through western news agencies, a situation PANA hoped to revert, and through a consolidation of these state-owned national news agencies project African news to the international front.

PANA from the outset was hinged on the Pan-Africanism ideology of unity to fight a common goal. The founding body of PANA, the OAU, has the ideology of pan-Africanism at heart and holds a strong belief that for Africa to redeem its image on international platforms, there was the need to unite and fight its detractors. Pan-Africanism has been political idea that believes in the sovereignty of the state to bring development to Africa. To Pan-Africanists like Kwame Nkrumah, Africans must "seek ye first the political kingdom and all other things shall be added unto you". Drawing from this, one can assert that to African nation states, all other developments involving the unity of Africa comes second to state development. It was therefore expected that some journalists and media experts flagged PANA as a political tool to sell African governments through the powerful channels of the media. PANA as a political agenda is reflected in its objectives as it sort to promote the aims of the OAU.

The newly established news agency again, unlike most transnational news agencies did not seek to make profits but focused on development journalism which is mostly interpreted as government-inspired journalism (UNESCO, 1990). PANA'S charter thus outlines the objectives of the agency as: -

- to promote the aims and objectives of the OAU for the consolidation of the independence, unity and solidarity of Africa.

- to give more information about and assist in the liberation struggle of peoples against colonialism, neo-colonialism, imperialism, apartheid, racism, Zionism, and all other forms of exploitation and oppression.
- to promote an effective exchange of political, economic, social and cultural information among member states.
- to work for the sub-regional and regional integration of African countries and strengthen among them bi-lateral and multi-lateral cooperation by ensuring a rapid and constant dissemination of reliable and objective information.
- to correct the distorted picture of Africa, its countries and peoples resulting from partial and negative information published by foreign press agencies and portray its cultural values.
- to establish a data bank on Africa with a view to promoting the facilities of collection, processing and dissemination of adequate documentation.
- to cooperate with African news agencies to have greater impact on the press, radio, television and cinema (UNESCO, 1981).

3.3. Organizational Structure

PANA was primarily under the control of information ministers from member states of PANA. These ministers comprised the main decision-making body. They met every two years as a “PANA” body and decided on the agency’s policies, programs and budget. There was also a 14-member intergovernmental council elected by the conference of information ministers. Members on this council were elected based on the geographical location. The OAU divided the continent into five regions, each with a stated number of legislatures on the council: North Africa (2), Central Africa (3), East Africa (3), West Africa (4) and Southern Africa (2). These five regions corresponded with the five “pools” of the news agency. Their headquarters were in Tripoli, Kinshasa, Khartoum, Lagos and Lusaka, respectively (Unesco, 1981, Wauthier,1987). These pools transmitted news stories gathered from its member states to the general headquarters of PANA in Dakar. Malam

(1993:143) argues that, PANA's location in a francophone country, Senegal accounts for the reason none of the pool centres was in another francophone country.

Below the intergovernmental council were committees responsible for running specific departments. There were the finance, editorial, technical, and recruitment committees. The finance committee examined the budgets and audited accounts of the agency. The editorial committee supervised news stories written by journalists in the PANA newsroom. They recommended staff trainings among other initiatives to enhance the editorial work of PANA. The editor-in-chief coordinated with the various national news agencies to check in on their editorial activities. The technical committee was rather a small committee made up of a technical director, two engineers and a few technicians. Their main job was to develop and maintain smooth transmission and reception of news to and from Dakar, the five pool offices and the national news agencies. They were thus in charge of all transmission facilities. The recruitment committee hired journalists from among the various national news agencies of member countries. While some of the journalists hired were considered permanent, that is, those under a contract agreement of five years, others were considered temporary staff with a contract agreement of two years. There was a third group of employees called the staff on rotation. These journalists were brought in from their national news agencies to PANA's newsroom for a few months, mostly between a month to four months.

PANA exemplified what is a characteristic of most organizations by holding different departments to oversee different activities of the news agency, however a conference of governmental representatives being the major decision-making body of the agency blurred its objective of being a voice for the continent. (Malam, 1993). This was a major concern raised by Senegalese journalist and director-general of PANA, Auguste Mpassi-Muba. Mpassi-Muba underscored that the controlled state-owned national news agencies of which PANA took its stories from prevented journalists from exhibiting professionalism like they should. This contributed to the credibility problems faced by PANA. Mpassi-Muba in an outburst posited,

“Bureaucracy prevails in these news agencies to such a point that professionals have lost the most elementary reflexes of journalism...Under these conditions it is difficult to be the first to transmit or “break” African news. Very often, it is the delay or silence on our parts that our detractors or competitors easily interpret as absence of a free press or

incompetence of the African journalist. The situation seriously affects the credibility of PANA, which is requesting the revision of some articles of the convention to enable it to directly overcome some of the handicaps of the national news agencies” (cited in Cavanagh, 1989, pg. 360).

Following this outburst, Mpassi-Muba in an interview in June 1998 advocated for the removal of article 8 of PANA’s convention which was restrictive and compelled the agency to re-broadcast all news stories sent forth by national news agencies without modification or adjustment.

3.4. Editorial Activities

The PANA stylebook, authored by editors-in-chief of the various news agencies, laid out some editorial principles intended to provide a “high degree of professionalism, consistency and uniformity” in its news production (PANA style book pg. 13 cited in Malam, 1993). In the style book, PANA defined what it called “standard news” as the “factual report of an event which is timely or new and which is interesting, unusual and/or significant to the public” (ibid). News reports according to PANA should be credible, concise and disseminated with speed (Malam, 1993). This definition of news, according to Malam is identical to what is seen in “standard western journalism textbooks” (1993, pg.144) Thus, by adopting such a definition, PANA was poised to operate along western lines of news production thereby indicating a degree of failure of PANA’s purpose of offering “alternative” news (Malam, 1993, 144). To Malam, such a definition eliminates “process-orientated” news stories that are not necessarily “directly observable” (Malam 1993 pg. 144).

In critiquing this “western” definition adopted by PANA, Malam posits it only goes to accentuate the “big four market approach” where news is seen merely as a “commodity” that is susceptible to rot if not immediately used by the news agency (Malam, 1993, pg. 145). By assuming this definition as universal and copying it into its style book, PANA rudely ignored the cultural and economic considerations that led to the conceptualization of these “western news values”. (ibid). The false impression of what constitutes to “news” seemed to have put PANA on a wrong premise in achieving its goals” (Malam, 1993, pg. 145). The shortfall with considering only eventful activities as news stories, maintains a situation where only major political actors and elite members of the society dominate the

news. The editor's view and description of what is "news" is only what will make it into the public thereby reflecting a subjective viewpoint of the cultural reality. (Malam, 1993). The embracing of western journalism values as an exemplar to Kasoma (1996) is a "tragedy facing African journalism" (pg.95).

The adoption of these "western" values that news should be, - concise, credible and speedily disseminated accentuates the fact that PANA did not seek to detach itself from western models of news coverage (Malam 1993, Novicki, 1994). Replacing "concise" with "brevity" in its stylebook, PANA underscored that "economy in the use of words is a cardinal rule of news agency journalism", it was therefore necessary for journalists to use "precision and brevity in their writing" (Pana style book, pg. 13 Malam, 1993).

The quest to disseminate news with speed is also a characteristic of western news models which are very much capitalist in nature. PANA's adoption of this concept was rather inept as it did not consider the peculiarities between the economic and cultural attributes of African and Western communities. Its concentration was to be the "first in putting out African news" (Malam, 1993).

PANA's editorial output was pecked at 20,000 words per day in English and French (Unesco, 1990). PANA urged its members from the various national news agencies to send in news stories and features and virtually everything received and publishable was re-transmitted (ibid). PANA however noted that, the writing of feature stories was very low among member agencies. This was due to the lack of training journalists from these national news agencies had in creative writing. Also, the underpayment of journalists did not encourage them to put in the strenuous effort of writing features. To curb this, PANA in August 1984, organized a feature writing workshop for senior journalists from 12 of its member agencies in Dakar (UNESCO, 1990). The agency also provided a \$50 incentive to journalists who submitted feature articles to PANA. The Pan-African News Agency claims, - this saw some improvement in the number of feature articles submitted by journalists from the national news agencies (Fall, 1994, Malam, 1993, UNESCO, 1990). These feature articles were sent through the postal service because of the lack of wire networks to link Dakar to the southern part of the continent. Also, due to the seemingly ageless nature of the articles and cost-effective means of transmission, feature articles was sent via postal service (UNESCO, 1990). According to PANA's 1990 progress report,

the volume of news produced by the agency had increased by 50% in the period between, January 1986 and December 1989 (Malam, 1993).

3.5. Finances

Since its first broadcast in 1983, PANA has been bedeviled with huge financial crisis. According to the OAU, the agency was to be mainly funded by African governments. The annual budget of PANA pecked at 3.8 million was to be a contribution from individual heads of states of PANA's member states. The amount to be contributed by each country as outlined by the OAU was based on a country's economic power, thus oil rich countries like Nigeria were to make higher payments. However, contributions were not forthcoming from these governments, a situation that was detrimental to the growth and expansion of the news agency (Cavanagh, 1989, Malam, 1993, Novicki, 1994, Unesco 1981, Wauthier, 1987). So severe was the financial crisis that in 1988, Tanzania on behalf of the then 45 member states of PANA, sought a \$25 million grant from the European community-France, Italy and various United Nations agencies (Brooke, 1988). The \$25 million was a five-year grant to help PANA improve on its transmission equipment. This was not the first time the agency, dedicated to ending western domination had relied on western sources like France, Italy and various United Nations agencies for monetary support. In fact, a UN panel in 1982 provided the African news agency, PANA, with 1.5 million to help it carry out its operations (New York times, 1982 Jan. 21).

However, it seemed African nations themselves did not want to see the activities of the news agency come to fruition. Malam's visit to the PANA's headquarters in Dakar, in December 1990, revealed that eleven years after the birth of the Pan-African News Agency, countries like Gambia had never contributed a "single" dollar to the agency. In the same year, oil rich countries like Algeria, Libya and Gabon had faulted in paying their contributions. Malam notes that it was quite surprising for an oil rich country like Libya to be in arrears for three years costing the agency to lose \$1 million in revenue. Nigeria which had been noted to contribute the highest (\$600, 000 yearly) and had exhibited great interest in seeing the agency survive most often than not delayed its payments to the agency (Malam, 1993).

In a broadcast on Radio Tanzania in December 1991, the director of information reported that, only five member countries out of the large number of 52 had sent in their

full contributions to the agency that year (ibid). The apathy towards the payment of fees always left the news agency incapable of meeting its annual budget of \$3.5 million set by OAU. In 1990, for example, revenue generated from member states amounted to only \$1.5 million. For a budding news agency that had increased its expenditure by almost 200% between 1986-1989, this situation was detrimental to its survival. The Pan-African News Agency in a quest to improve its editorial activities and expand its reach, spent about \$5.59 million between 1979-1985 and \$10.8 million from 1986-1989, totaling \$16.47 million in a span ten years since its early stages of development (Malam, 1993). This hike in expenditure between 1986-1989 revealed the high cost involved in operating an “international” news agency as PANA (ibid).

Even though it was bound to be difficult for an organization like PANA with members from over 50 different countries to diligently pay their dues, the general apathy shown by members suggested a non-interest in the vision of the news agency or more sadly a non-interest in news and events happening on the continent (Malam, 1993). The apathy towards payment was attributed to the economic crisis that had hit Africa in the 1980s. Most African states in the 1980s faced economic hardships and depended on structural programs for survival. Also, newly independent African states were more into developing their individual national news agencies that the activities of PANA came second. Malam will however refute the argument that some countries faulted in paying their dues because of economic weakness. He cites Senegal, Rwanda and Congo as countries who did not necessarily have strong economies but were up to date with their payments. (ibid).

Babacar Fall, a Senegalese journalist and coordinator-general of PANA in an interview, revealed that one of the reasons for the inadequate funding of the agency was the initial proposal by OAU for the agency’s funds to come from the coffers of African governments. PANA by this initiative became a suspect of promoting governments’ propaganda messages. Thus, for eight years (1983-1991), private news media houses in and outside Africa boycotted the use of products from the agency and around the period from 1989 to 1990, contributions from governments started decreasing (Novicki, 1994). Fall, after his appointment by Unesco in 1991 to investigate the reason for PANA’s decline identified that, to both African and foreign media professionals, PANA lacked credibility, - “what we heard was what African professionals had been telling governments 10 years

ago that if you want PANA to be credible, it must be editorially independent” (Novicki, 1994 pg.2).

3.6. Telecommunications

Some of the major issues faced by the Pan-African News Agency, were the poor telecommunication networks between the various African nations, high rates of tariffs on communication satellites as well as poor and obsolete transmission equipment (Malam 1993, Novicki, 1994, UNESCO, 1990). Even though, several decades had passed since most African nations gained independence, they still depended on former colonial states for the transmission of information to neighbouring African states (ibid). For example, to send a message from Senegal to Zaire, lines had to be linked through Belgium (Malam, 1993). This routing of many circuits via Europe showed that the legacy of colonialism still lingered (UNESCO, 1990). Indeed, the poor infrastructure of telecommunications on the continent was detrimental to the activities of PANA.

To enable the exchange of news among its member states, PANA planned three network links from, - Dakar to each of the five pool centres. However, the implementation of these planned networks was crippled by, - high costs of postal, telegraph and telephone services (PTTs), disrupted links in the regional communication infrastructure and the financial instability of PANA (Unesco, 1990). The UNESCO report on evaluating Pana’s activities, revealed that interconnectivity problems in the central and western African regions made it possible to only create a link between Kinshasa-Brazzaville and Dakar-Lagos, respectively. In the North and South Africa subregion, a number of links were established between the pool centre at Tripoli and member states, however like the situation in central Africa, there were no circuits to connect these pools to the headquarters in Dakar. This inhibited the receiving and dissemination of news to and from PANA headquarters to member states. The news agency thus relied on teleprinters to receive and transmit news stories, which were very slow by all standards. (ibid).

The exorbitant tariffs charged on PTTs led PANA to use radio communications as a temporary measure, - to facilitate the operations of the agency. The document submitted by UNESCO quotes the price range of \$10,000 to \$20, 000 as the tariff charge for connecting neighbouring countries and \$60,000 to \$75,000 for connecting to countries outside Africa per year. The failure by member states to contribute money to the agency,

left the agency incapacitated to bear these costs (Unesco, 1990). The Pan-African News Agency thus rented a 35kw transmitter from the Senegalese telecommunication authority, SONATEL. The transmitter covered the east, central, south and parts of west Africa. However, countries in the north of Africa and those within a radius of 1,500 km from Dakar were completely left out because they were outside the coverage area (Malam, 1993, Unesco, 1990,). Even though, the radio transmissions had offered some useful service to the agency, it faced its own problem of not being able to cover the whole continent and there were complaints of poor reception by those who received it (ibid).

Indeed, covering a continent as vast as Africa with one transmitter was bound to come with hindrances such as these. In 1994, coordinator general of Unesco, Babacar Fall in an interview with African report magazine posited that the mode of transmission (radio transmissions and point to point lines) had become obsolete and the agency needed much financial support to materialize its vision of having a VSAT system using satellite distribution that would cover all of Africa and part of the world. (Novicki, 1994).

PANA's establishment provided the platform for the voice of Africa to be heard on global communication scenes and to finally challenge the negative narratives that have characterized the continent for centuries. Even though, it faced some challenges like financial constraints, technological underdevelopment, control by governments, among others, its achievement of consolidating the individual national news agencies on the continent cannot be downplayed. PANA's establishment progressed information flow among nations on the continent (UNESCO, 1990). Before PANA, most national news agencies depended on western transnational news agencies for news in and outside Africa. Although, this dependence on transnational news agencies persists and PANA would not be said to have ended it, PANA's objective to be a pool of African national news made the individual national news agencies popular among themselves. It provided the chance for an African perspective of news and events to be captured in African news reports and this, was a goal PANA had intended to achieve.

This said, PANA has a long way to go to achieve its objective of countering global news flow. The news agency as a result of its challenges raised above, did not gain prominence on the international scene. This was evident in a study conducted by Nigerian professor Frank Ugboajah on the content of daily newspapers in Nigeria. Ugboajah's study revealed that news stories carried by PANA made only 9% appearance in Nigerian

newspapers while 38% of news stories carried in the newspapers were from the “big four” western transnational news agencies and 24% from the News Agency of Nigeria (cited in Cavanagh, 1989, pg. 356).

This notwithstanding, PANA’s founders were resilient in seeing the agency attain its set out goals and so in the periods of the 1990s, PANA having examined its challenges and setbacks entered a recovery phase.

The next chapter will highlight the failures and successes of PANA according to its outlined objectives in charter 2 of its stylebook. It reviews PANA’s activities and the decision that led to the call for UNESCO to intervene in the operations of PANA.

Chapter 4.

Analysis on the Pan-African News Agency

4.1. Successes and Failures of PANA

The establishment of Pan-African News Agency (PANA) was undoubtedly a good initiative by Organization of African Unity (OAU). The need to overturn the negative narratives of Africa and its people in the western news media and contribute to global news flow was urgent to Africa's cultural, economic, social and political development. The mass media has for centuries gained repute for influencing the opinions of its audience and playing a major role in advancing the growth and development of a country. In fact, most developed countries like the United States and United Kingdom have maintained dominance over world economic affairs due to their strong media and communication systems that allows them to transmit ideas and innovation across borders. It is therefore imperative Africa strengthens its media and communication systems to help in achieving prominence on the international scene.

The section thus analyses PANA's successes and failures in respect to its own objectives, the factors that contributed to these and what can be learnt from PANA's experience moving forward.

4.1.1. Successes of PANA

PANA as a news agency achieved some successes in countering global news flow. The factors that contributed to PANA's successes was its extensive reports on policies and initiatives put in place by the OAU for the development of the continent, its concentration on domestic news, that is happenings in the various African countries and also the adoption of development journalism which meant PANA provided more positive news about Africa.

Report on OAU Initiatives

PANA achieved its objective of promoting OAU initiatives and activities. For instance, PANA reported extensively on OAU Summits held in Addis Ababa and other

meetings of the OAU council of ministers. A prominent one of PANA's reports was the "Twenty-first Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of States and Governments" held in Addis Ababa in July 1985. This session of the OAU held discussions and laid down measures to improve Africa's food situation and agricultural development. They also mapped out ways to alleviate Africa's external debt burden. Reports as this projected the policies of African governments towards not only the economic development of the continent but also their quest to free Africa from various forms foreign control caused by the continent's dependence on foreign aids. PANA's engagement in reporting these OAU meetings and summits increased its popularity on the continent and fed the outside world with positive initiatives happening in Africa. PANA as a result of these reportages increased its transmission from six thousand words per day in 1983 to fifteen thousand words per day by 1985.

Cooperation with African news agencies

PANA made success in advancing information flow among nations on the continent. By being a consolidation African national news agency, PANA made popular the various national news agencies to their counterparts in other African countries. (UNESCO, 1990). Prior to the establishment of PANA, most national news agencies not only depended on western news agencies for news happening in the western world but also news happening on the African continent itself. Citing the example of the Ghana News Agency (GNA), the New York Times in 1964 reported that about eighty percent of news sources found in the GNA newsroom came from the Reuters (Goldstein, 2001). This heavy dependence on western news agencies is what PANA sort to balance out by re-transmitting news from the national news agencies. This was vital to advancing intra-flow of information in the continent and decrease reliance on western news agencies.

Positive Reporting

PANA also achieved counter flow by providing more positive reports about Africa. PANA concentrated on reporting developmental initiatives and projects happening in various parts of the continent. For instance, PANA's operations started in a period (1983) where Africa was bedeviled with many coup d'états. Whiles their fellow western news agencies reported extensively on these coup d'états, PANA, in its news reports, gave highlights to countries that had embraced democracy and were doing well as democratic

governments. Mauritius, Zimbabwe, Senegal and Botswana are examples of countries that had embraced democracy at the time.

Another instance of positive reporting initiated by PANA was the period during the Liberian war. The Liberian civil war in 1989 made huge waves in the western news media due to the severity of the war that killed about 250,000 people. However, while the western news media made this occurrence a major theme in its news reports, PANA concentrated on other happenings in the country and the continent which were more positive. Reports on hunger alleviation programs and developments in agriculture to solve Africa's hunger issues characterized PANA's news reports at the time.

A content analysis of PANA's reports revealed that, non-crisis events carried by PANA totaled 75.2% as against 23.85% of crisis news (Akuta, 2001). This showed PANA's resilience to offer a counter narrative to the negative reports of Africa seen in the western news media. PANA's activities advanced the agency's quest to contribute to global news flow.

4.1.2. Failures of PANA

In spite of PANA's successes the agency was limited in its ability to achieve counterflow. The western news agencies still maintained dominance on the African continent and over global news flow. They were thus a force PANA could not challenge. Major contributing factors to PANA's failures was its editorial control, financial constraints, lack of investment in technology, under sourcing of staff, reliance on national news agencies, political differences among member states and restricted media markets.

Reliance on National News Agencies

A major failure of PANA was its reliance on state-owned national news agencies. This was due to PANA's small staff size. PANA by 1988, five years after it started operations had only seventeen news reporters and editors, a number lesser in comparison to even a provincial news outlet in Europe or America (Cavanagh, 1989). The small staff size of PANA made it difficult to extensively cover the whole of Africa and engage in the "breaking news" strategy employed by the western transnational news agencies. Transnational news agencies have gained prominence and attracted a lot of audience and clients to their products due to their ability to report on events as quickly as they happen.

This contributes many profits to the agency for its operations. As noted by Read (1999:5), “the ability to report news speedily as they happen is the very essence of news agency reporting”. A quick search through Reuters Handbook of Journalism which serves as guide for the organization and its workers reveals the agency’s goal to build a reputation of “reliability, accuracy, speed and exclusivity” (Reuters Handbook). PANA would have gained much audience should it have employed the strategy of reporting news spot on, instead of relying on news stories that became dead by the time it got to PANA’s headquarters from the various news agencies. Director general of PANA Mpassi-Muba, gives a picture of PANA’s lateness in reporting issues happening on the continent. He notes that, newspapers all around the world carried the story of the riots that led to the butchery of Hutu tribesmen by Tutsi tribesmen in Burundi. These newspapers got the stories from the reports made by Reuters and Associated Press. However, PANA’s member agency in Burundi did not put out a single report of the happenings so did PANA (cited in Cavanagh, 1989). Not being able to report news as it happened meant PANA failed to engage and influence a broader audience.

Another factor for PANA’s heavy reliance on national news agencies was due to inadequate financing to fund the agency’s activities. African governments did not hold up to their promises of funding the organization. This was due in part to the severe economic crisis that had bedeviled the continent at the time PANA started operations in the 1980s. An Overseas Development Institute (ODI) report revealed that, in the period between 1980-1984, Gross Domestic Products in Sub-Saharan Africa increased by only 1.2% each year with per capita incomes declining by 2% each year over the same period with high rate in population growth (ODI, 1987). This led to many African countries falling on structural programs like the IMF, to adjust their economies. The 1980s also saw major coup d’états on the continent crippling the economies of some nation states. Africa was still recovering from the woes of colonialization and adjusting to democratic governance did not come easy to some countries. A study by McGowan (2003), showed that out of the forty-five African countries studied, thirty-eight of them had experienced coup d’états. Nigeria alone had over this period experienced six coup d’états. This political instability meant that these nation states did not have the peace to pay attention to PANA. The destruction of resources that came with the coup d’états crippled the economies of nation states creating the difficulty of fulfilling their promise of supporting PANA financially.

The inadequate funding meant PANA had to cut down on its budgets at the time when it need money to employ more workers and professional journalists and improve its telecommunication networks to facilitate the operations of the agency.

Inability to cover Africa effectively

Another major failure of PANA was its inability to effectively and competitively cover the whole of Africa. Aside PANA's problem of not having adequate staff to cover the continent, its lack of investment in technology contributed immensely to PANA not being able to report the whole of Africa. It is no doubt that advancement in communication technology aided the expansion and domination of western transnational news agencies to the rest of the world. PANA needed to use modern technologies like computers, submarine cables, satellites, circuits, among others to in effectively cover the vast continent of Africa. Its use of point to point lines, postal, telegraph and telephone services (PTTs) and unreliable radio wave transmission was obsolete (Novicki, 1994). According to UNESCO (1981), only one-third of the 48-member news agencies of PANA received coverage or were able to send their news to PANA. Prominent amongst them was Nigeria and most of the countries in the western part of Africa. This was due to their strong telecommunication link with PANA's headquarters in Dakar. Whiles Africa wallowed in technological poverty, developed countries continually developed their telecommunication systems thus gaining dominance over the world communication systems. PANA thus needed funds to invest in its telecommunications for improved services however the inadequacy of financial support meant PANA could not expand its operation and therefore fulfil its goals.

Small Market Size

PANA failed to widen its media markets. Aside the few reports PANA's few journalists fed the agency, PANA relied on national news agencies of its member states for news stories. PANA's inability to maintain partnership with other transnational news agencies inhibited it from gaining revenue and popularity in the outside world. For example, PANA's counterparts in the Caribbean, the Caribbean News Agency (CANA), partnered with Reuters for international news and in turn supplied Caribbean news to the western news agency (Thomas, Nain & Costanza-Chock, 2002). This helped in creating a wider market for collecting revenue for the operations of CANA. And so, whiles CANA faced the similar issue of its member states not paying their financial contributions, its

decision not to be just a pool of national news agencies of its member states allowed foreign associations with news organizations like BBC and CNN thus providing a wider media market to sell its products (Akuta, 2001). To Akuta (2001), PANA needed to widen its media market to include external partners instead of majorly partnering with just national news agencies of its member states. PANA's ability to contribute to counterflow is hinged on its capacity to gain presence on the international scene, however its restricted market meant to was far back in achieving such aim

Loss of Subscribers

Lastly, a major failure of PANA was its loss of subscribers overtime. PANA was noted to have had subscriptions from the BBC, Voice of Germany, radio France, and also subscriptions from the national news agencies of Italy and India. There were significant evidence that proved PANA's products were carried in newspapers in the United States, Caribbean, UK, Canada and Switzerland (Boyd- Barret &Thussu 1992). However, overtime these news agencies cancelled their subscriptions from PANA. The issue was that PANA faced a complication. The main decision-making body of PANA was information ministers of the various African states thus even though they had the mandate to strengthen Africa's media system and contribute to global news flow, they also had their national interests at heart. This led to the situation of transmitting news reports that seemed like propaganda messages thus to the subscribers, PANA lacked the credibility to operate as a viable news agency. For example, Director general of PANA, Mpassi-Muba notes that, the Algeria Press Service, national news agency of Algeria failed to report on the riots that had thrown Algeria into a mayhem in 1988. It waited several days before any report was done on the news and when it finally submitted to PANA, editors of PANA were shocked it was nothing but a government press release. (cited in Cavanagh, 1989). In a content analysis of which actors made it in PANA's reports, Akuta (2000) revealed that 45.4% of actors in PANA's reports were state officials while regular citizens accounted for only 8% in PANA's report. These instances made it difficult for subscribers to use PANA's products.

Again, PANA's reliance on state-owned national news agencies made the agency unattractive to subscribers due to the believe that national news agencies are mouthpieces of governments. Article 8 of PANA's charter that prohibited the editing of news reporting also presented PANA was merely fulfilling governments' agenda. Mpassi-

Muba kicking against these restrictions is mentioned in a New York Times interview, "We can't sell silence...the one-party states always want to control information...For African countries, news is not a great priority". He is quoted again to have charged communication officials who gathered for a meeting in Dakar in 1989, to join hands in fighting against restrictive laws. Mpassi-Muba encouraged, "We must give up with the hesitating behaviours toward information, believe in our achievements and the confident with our cadres and professionals of the media" (in Cavanagh, 1989 pg. 361).

Another challenge faced by PANA Akuta (2001) identified is the cultural and language differences that existed among PANA's workers. PANA was understaffed and had only one representative of each of the language used by PANA for news dissemination, that is English and French. The linguistic and national differences according to Akuta affected the translation of news stories and general operation of the agency. Even though I believe this is a weak assertion, however considering the fact that PANA had representatives from each region of the continent, the one person from a specific region in the newsroom was not enough to translate all stories from the region. An assertion like this goes to reinforce the misplaced thoughts of Africa's unity being unachievable because of cultural differences.

The historical goals associated with PANA's establishment were a determination for Africans to have the power and platform to report African events and concerns due to the perceived negative coverage of happenings in Africa by western news agencies. Although the setting up of PANA was commendable, its decision to be headed by heads of state and members in government was a restrictive measure that was detrimental to the operations of the agency. Also, its editorial control, limited media market, financial constraints and poor telecommunication networks were great hindrances that were ignored or taken for granted in the start of its operations. These challenges acted as stabling blocks for PANA to compete with powerful western transnational news agencies. This notwithstanding the OAU with the passion to see PANA live on turned to UNESCO in the 1993 for help in revamping the news agency that had lost all popularity and was on the verge of collapse. PANA needed to be revamped and save itself from total collapse thus it entered a new phase of restructuring which is, - the privatization of PANA.

4.2. Privatization of the Pan-African News Agency

The Pan-African News Agency underwent restructuring in 1993 and became a private entity in 1995. The aim for restructuring was to make the agency achieve much professionalism and credibility as a news agency. It also aimed at providing the platform for PANA to support itself. The OAU seeing the decline in PANA's activities and the loss of its subscribers called on UNESCO to help save the agency from total collapse. UNESCO is noted to have played important roles in strengthening the media of developing countries hence the call on them by the OAU.

As part of its plans to help PANA, UNESCO appointed the Senegalese journalist, Babacar Fall as coordinator-general of PANA. Fall, together with some seasoned journalists on the continent investigated the reasons for PANA's decline. In an interview with the Africa Report journalist, Margaret Novicki, Fall revealed that a major reason for the decline in subscription and activities was due to PANA's control by African heads of states. According to Fall, media professionals in and outside Africa did not recognize PANA as a credible news source but rather a propagandist tool used by African governments to sell governments' ideologies (Novicki, 1994). Thus, for PANA to gain credibility, it needed to shed off the heavy government control. Hence, the restructuring was needed.

Since PANA was to shed off government control, it needed to map out ways of generating funding to operate. According to Fall, PANA intended to look at the commercialization of its products. PANA's first target audience was the United States. To Fall, establishing a strong relationship between Africa and America would be a great breakthrough for the newly reformed agency. (Novicki, 1994). This was not surprising considering the power the United States wields on the global communication scenes and the large number of black communities in America.

Fall envisaged that by the end of 1995, PANA would have a list of potential investors who would help in the growth of the news agency. To generate income to support the agency, it planned to open thirteen offices to support the activities of its correspondents. The locations of these offices were selected based on the anticipated revenue that could be generated from the country. Notable places of target were Johannesburg, Cairo, Tripoli, Addis Ababa, among others. These places had large

national markets hence could generate income to support activities in the office (Novicki, 1994).

PANA's restructuring lessened control of its editorial activities. New specialized bulletins like women health programs, science and sports and environment and health programs were introduced thus providing a variety to PANA's reports which had previously mostly focused on political actors and governments (Malam, 1993). PANA's editors were at liberty to edit news stories from national news agencies and its journalists were encouraged to do live reports on events happening in Africa, rather than depend solely on national news agencies.

PANA exists with governments retaining twenty-five percent of PANA's shares; however, it operates today more as a private enterprise. The agency which should serve as a mouthpiece for Africa and its people exists as a ghost of itself in need of a revamp.

Africans cannot continually stand being misrepresented in western news media. PANA was and it still is a strong medium Africans can use to make their voice heard on the international scene and counter negative narratives.

The study, by learning from the past experiences of PANA outlines some recommendations in the next chapter to guide PANA's revamp

Chapter 5.

Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusions

From the analysis and discussions of PANA above, the study agrees the establishment of the African news agency was a good idea and it had great potential for being the mouthpiece of the continent. Its efforts to restructure and strengthen its operations to meet its goals is also to be applauded. However, in these present times of the early, 21st century, the negative representations of Africa in western news media persist and Africa still makes little contribution to global news flows.

Even though the negative stereotypes of Africa have received much academic and media attention, they are still a problem Africa and Africans battle with. An example of these persisting negative narratives was seen in a New York Times job posting for a bureau chief in its Nairobi office in Kenya. The job posting described that, the qualifying applicant would have “tremendous opportunity to dive into news and enterprise across a wide range of countries, from the deserts of Sudan and the pirate seas of the Horn of Africa, down through the forests of Congo and the shores of Tanzania” (Gathara, 2019:1, Kiruga, 2019:1). The advertisement further depicted the east African area as an “enormous patch of vibrant, intense and strategically important territory with many vital storylines, including terrorism, the scramble for resources, and constantly struggles between democracy and dictatorship” (ibid). To the end, the advertisement suggested that the perfect applicant, “should enjoy jumping on news, be willing to cover conflict, and also be drawn to investigative stories and be able to delight our readers with unexpected stories of hope and the changing rhythms of life in a rapidly evolving region” (Gathara, 2019:1, Kiruga, 2019:1). This description given to the job posting threw the Kenyan online community into outrage as they took to Twitter with the #someonetellNYT# to backlash the New York Times on what they described as the continuous delight of the western media to seek only negative news from the East African region and the African continent as a whole. Why the New York Times did not include in the posting that it was in search for a candidate that would crack out innovative and developmental projects happening in the region is what baffled the Kenyan online community. It was as if the author of the

advertisement had learnt “*How to write about Africa*” from Kenyan author Binyavanga Wainaina without learning it was a satiric piece (Gathara, 2019).

The action taken by the Kenyan online community on Twitter add on to the numerous efforts Africans are continuously making to see an end to these negative qualifiers. The advent of social media has indeed proven to be a powerful tool in calling out and shaming such unqualified descriptions of Africa and its people. However, Africa needs more than social media activism to erase these narratives about the continent and its people. As noted by Meraz (2009), social media platforms help in redistributing the influence of the traditional media proving that indeed the traditional media still wields the power in setting public agenda. It is thus necessary for the Pan-African News Agency to map out effective ways to achieve its set out mandate.

In terms of achieving counter flow, PANA has made little efforts as western news media still dominate the African continent and the wider global space. The western news media through donor funding of media initiatives have maintained dominance on the Africa continent. A study by Wasserman, Gadzekpo, Peterson (2019), “*Donor-funded journalism is on the rise in Africa: why its needs closer scrutiny*” reveals that, a huge share of foreign aid sent to Africa yearly is to support Africa in developing its media. A 2018 report by the United States based Centre for International Media Assistance (CIMA) concluded that in a year, about US\$600 million from both state and private funders is spent developing media in Africa (Benequista, 2019). Foreign aid is used to fund a range of activities including training and travel expenses of journalists, investigative journalism, health reporting across the continent, among other projects (Wasserman, Gadzekpo & Peterson, 2019). Wasserman, Gadzekpo & Peterson (2019) note that, however well-meaning foreign aids are, they influence the kind of journalism that gets done since foreign funders hold the purse. Journalists who receive sponsorships or funding from western news media tend to do the bidding of their sponsors and thus may lead to incomplete and or distorted coverage of events (ibid). For example, the BBC’s Africa Eye investigative journalism agency in Africa and the Ghanaian-owned Tiger Eye PI investigative journalism agency funded largely by the BBC, collaborated on an exposé on student-lecturer relationships in some universities in Ghana and Nigeria throwing the West African region into outrage. The exposé carried out in 2019 was titled “*Sex for grades: Undercover in West African Universities*”. The investigative piece alleged that some senior lecturers from specific universities in Ghana and Nigeria asked for sexual favors from some female students in

return for excellent grades. Even though the investigative agencies may have had good intentions for revealing this rot, citizens in these two countries backlashed the agencies for generalizing this to be a norm happening in Ghanaian and Nigerian universities instead of dealing directly with the academics who may have committed the act. Generalizing such events to mean the norm happening in these west African universities is characteristic of western news reports and has the effect of degrading the image of institutions of higher learning in these countries. To the citizens, if such representations are not curbed, they will have an age-long effect on university education in the region and to a more general extent, Africa. Similar exposés done by the BBC in other parts of the world like the UK have been appropriately addressed as sexual harassment cases happening in the specific universities without any attachment to influencing grades of students. Thus, BBC giving such a meaning to these sexual harassment cases without evidence, to the two countries, showed the kind of the news western media wants to hear from or about Africa. The involvement of local investigative agencies in the exposé shows the influence donor funding has on the activities of journalists.

Donor funding without doubt have helped in the development of Africa's media, however due to the fact that on the one hand, donor funding can coerce journalists to do the bidding of their funders and unduly change their practices, media producers in Africa need to be watchful about donor backing. They should do a thorough evaluation before accepting funding so as not to compromise their professionalism (Wasserman, Gadzekpo, Peterson, 2019). Looking at the push for domination through donor funding, there is the need for PANA to stand strong to re-build its capacity for the growth and development of the Africa's media.

Recently, new challenges are coming in from other parts of the world needs to brace itself in dealing with the old challenges as well as the emerging ones. For instance, a report by The Guardian newspaper revealed that China is targeting non-English speaking journalists to expand its influence on global news flow. The report, following a survey of journalist unions across 58 countries revealed that China, through study expeditions, media control and the supply of "pro-Beijing content" is undertaking a wide-spread outreach as part of its efforts to "reshape the global news landscape with a China-friendly global narrative" (Doherty, 2020). The two-month study exposed Beijing's extensive use of non-Chinese speaking journalists, particularly from developing countries to augment its own news stories (ibid).

Again, the declaration by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) for African countries to shift from using analogue to digital terrestrial television by June 2015, gave the opportunity for countries like China to introduce its digital satellite television, StarTimes to the continent. Through strategies such as the reduction of decoder prices, employment and training of many staff from the African region, StarTimes gained dominance over other digital terrestrial television including the South Africa digital terrestrial television (Madrid-Morales, 2018). In Zambia, StarTimes reduced prices of its decoder to allow Zambians benefit from the digital migration. According to the firm's sales director, Ciff Sichone, the decoders which cost 199 Zambian Kwacha (USD 10.64) was reduced to 99 Zambian Kwacha (USD 5.29) to allow citizens in rural areas the chance to purchase (ibid)

Also, StarTimes in Nigeria introduced a new policy that sponsored seventy percent cost for all staff that sought professional development both locally and internationally (ibid). The digital satellite company boasts of directly employing over 1,300 staff in Nigeria and providing income to about 3,000 citizens of Nigeria through the sale of StarTimes decoders. Currently, StarTimes operates in sixteen African countries, offering coverage to about eighty percent of the population in Sub-Saharan Africa. The launch of Chinese media channels like the China Global Television Network (CGTN), Xinhua news channel and China radio international in Africa form part of China's plans to gain prominence in the outside world and to establish deep footprints in Africa (Madrid-Morales, 2018).

To provide the correct context to African stories in the western news media, some scholars and media experts have suggested that newsrooms of these western news agencies should hire African writers and reporters who may have in-depth knowledge and insights on events happening thus report them as they should. In as much as this may be a helpful venture, Freudenthal (2020) in a study notes the various forms of discrimination and stifling of growth that journalists of colour face in these western newsrooms. The study, "*How white are the newsrooms working on Africa? We ask them*", revealed that journalists of colour found it difficult to be hired in western news agencies and the few that made it to working in these newsrooms were often at the bottom of affairs. Editorial positions were mostly held by their white counterparts, making it difficult to influence news stories thus in the case of Africa, what editors-in-chief will accept to be news will be the news to be reported. Looking at the less power, African journalists will have in influencing news reports, it is imperative, Africans own their media and have their news agencies to

be able to provide the right context to news happenings. Hence the importance of revamping PANA.

5.2. Recommendations

Moving forward, PANA, whether it operates as a private enterprise or as an African Union (AU) initiative can employ these recommendations to achieve its set out mandate.

Firstly, for PANA to be popular and maintain dominance on the African continent, it should employ the strength in the diversity of Africa's official languages. Africa can be divided along four major official languages lines. That is Anglophone, Francophone, Arabophone and Lusophone Africa. Dividing up PANA into branches to report specific happenings in that region will help in raising PANA's popularity on the continent and overturn western dominance. Having for instance a PANA Francophone will ensure that news and events happening in the Francophone region is covered in-depth. National news agencies and private media houses will freely collect news from PANA Francophone or Lusophone fully convinced the "mouthpiece" of the region has complete and up to date information on things happening in the region. This hypothesis is centered on the mass communication theory which contends that the "further people are from the place of events, the less interesting the news becomes" (Churchill, 1991). It is therefore plausible that people within a sub-region would be more attracted to news and information from their sub-region than that from other regions (ibid).

It would seem likely that if PANA can produce news in different languages it will expand its reach to the global scenes. Western transnational news agencies like Reuters and AFP broadcast in seventeen foreign different languages and six languages, respectively. This has contributed to their growing dominance in global news affairs. Like their counterparts, PANA should inculcate transmitting in foreign languages like, Spanish, German, Arabic, to attract audiences from that part of the world.

The Pan-African News Agency should also limit its reliance on national news agencies. Since national news agencies are considered official mouthpieces of government, PANA should cut down on its reliance on news reports from national news agencies since a faction of its patronizers feel they only serve the needs of the government of the day. For example, the Ghana News Agency founded in 1957, which until the spring

up of the Pan-African News Agency was considered the most efficient news agency in Africa was established as a segment of a “network of coercive and partisan institutions” (Hasty, 2005: 34). It had the mandate to transmit more favorable news about Ghana and control information flow in the country for national interest. Acting as a gatekeeper, the GNA transmitted foreign news to the media in Ghana and immediately removed any news article or report that did not favour the government (ibid). This function of the GNA is identifiable with most national news agencies in Africa thus sending the notion that national news agencies are not critical in its news reports and mostly pro-government. For PANA to stand as a credible and reliable source, it should as much as possibly shed off these associations to increase its patronage by media houses on the continent and on the international scene. PANA should rather serve as a major source of news reports for the national news agencies on the continent.

With the advancement in world technologies, PANA should look at using modern technological means for faster transmission of its news. This is because readers are influenced by the speed news and events happening in faraway or remote areas reach them and thus are influenced to request for more on daily. The need for quick and reliable information from Africa to reach the rest of the world is not only necessary for the world to get current news about Africa but also to promote the economic, cultural and political development of the continent.

PANA should also employ investigative journalism and photojournalism. PANA should inculcate the culture of investigative journalism and provide the right context to happenings on the continent. Leaving critical issues like crime, corruption, among others unsaid leaves them to interpretations that may denote negativity and not good for building the image of Africa. Critical analysis given to issues or happenings by Africans themselves provides the right interpretations for audience in and outside Africa to understand better.

Also, photojournalism has been instrumental in the growth of news agencies like Reuters who currently employ over 600 photojournalists. Their ability to supply news in both texts and images to newspapers and other agencies have been a major tool in the development of the dominant western news agencies. PANA can thus employ photojournalism to strengthen its activities and reach a wider audience. Employing these methods means expansion in PANA’s recruitment and this is vital for an agency that aims

to cover news and events happening on a vast continent as Africa and serve news to the outside world.

The Pan-African News Agency as part of its activities should also include documentaries. Documentaries will provide the chance to delve into the rich culture of Africa, showing its beautiful and precise meaning to the world. This will offer the opportunity to eradicate the notion that African culture is backward and barbaric.

Lastly, there is the need for PANA to recruit many correspondents and have many bureaus on the continent to provide spot news and fast-breaking news. This will draw a wider audience to its reports. Churchill (1991), explains that AFP, Reuters and APA have grown to become world agencies with such strategies as employing correspondents across several countries and continents and providing spot on news to its audiences. This explains why in modern times more than 80 percent of news sources about Africa and the world found in most African newsrooms is from these news agencies (Hasty, 2005).

Who tells the African story?

The world needs an African perspective to news and events happening on the African continent. Even though the of telling African stories can not be restricted to African journalists, it is important Africans takes charge of their own stories and provide the correct interpretations for them. The cry by Africans of the misrepresentation of the continent and its people in western news media should be a thing of the past. A revamp of the Pan-African News Agency is necessary to provide the right content and context to African stories.

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