

Noble Savages, Communists and Terrorists: Hegemonic Imperatives in Mediated Images of Africa from Mungo Park to Gaddafi.

by **Abubakar Abdullahi***

Abstract

This paper uses the Marxist postulate — that it is those segments of society which monopolize the production of knowledge and information which determine the general ideas and opinions that pervade society — to analyse media coverage of Africa from the early days of explorers to the present time. It links the most salient images evoked by the mass media with the prevailing socioeconomic and political climates that have given impetus to current processes of ideological reproduction. Comparison of early reportage of Africa by European explorers and journalists (e.g. Stanley, Lugard) with contemporary media coverage of the continent reveals a persistent reference to Africans as barbaric, noble savages, communists and terrorists. Such references (images) have powerful ideological implications for the maintenance of the hegemony of a particular socioeconomic system over others. Just as they justified slavery and colonialism in the last century, such images now justify imperialism and military adventurism in Africa.

* Dr. Abubakar Abdullahi teaches in the Department of Mass Communication, Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria.

Nobles Sauvages, Communistes et Terroristes: De Mungo Park à Gaddafi des Impératifs Hégémoniques dans les Images Médiatiques de l'Afrique

Résumé

Cet article se base sur le principe marxiste qui dit que se sont les sections de la société qui detiennent le monopole de la production de la connaissance, et de l'information qui déterminent les idées et opinions générales qui influencent la société pour passer en revue la couverture médiatique de l'Afrique du temps des explorateurs jusqu'à nos jours. L'article établit la relation entre les images les plus saillantes évoquées par les masses médias et les climats socio-economiques et politiques actuels qui ont donné impulsion aux processus actuels de reproduction idéologiques. Une comparaison entre les reportages des explorateurs et journalistes européens (comme Stanley et Lugard) sur l'Afrique et la couverture de cette dernière par les médias contemporains révèle une persistente référence aux Africains comme des barbares, de nobles sauvages, des communistes et terroristes. De telles références (images) portent en elles de puissantes implications idéologiques en vue de la sauvegarde de l'hégémonie d'un système socio-economic sur les autres. Tout comme ils ont justifié l'esclavage et le colonialisme au cours du siècle dernier, de telles images justifient aujourd'hui l'impérialisme et l'aventurisme militaire en Afrique.

Introduction

Classical, neoclassical, contemporary Marxist, critical theoreticians and researchers tend to subscribe to the view that those segments of society with a monopoly of the production of knowledge and information invariably also determine the general ideas and opinions that pervade that society. In communal societies, it is the community as a whole or designated segments of it. In slave societies, it is the slave owners. In feudal social settings, it is the feudal lords, and in capitalist economies, it is the capitalist class, etc. In all these socioeconomic settings, certain institutions play a key role in the reproduction and propagation of the general ideas of that particular epoch. For example, the community was founded on the family in communal societies. Religious and educational institutions were supplemented by the family in slave and feudal settings. In capitalist societies, however, these functions are more entrusted to the educational, religious, and the contemporary institutions of the mass media.

In the contemporary settings, therefore, the general ideas of the time are the ideas favoured by or are favourable to the interests of the class that controls the means and forces of production. This allows this class to exercise control over or enter into partnership with the state – the sole instrument of class rule and expression. This ideological reproduction of ideas that are consonant with vested class interests is seen as a major, although not necessarily an exclusive preserve of the modern mass media. They are an ideological apparatus which function in a way that legitimizes certain viewpoints and opinions necessary for the maintenance of class hegemony and the survival of a system that encourages the existence of classes and the inequalities associated with class divisions in society.

The basic aim of this paper is to apply the above position to the analysis of media coverage of Africa from the early days of the explorers of the so-called 'dark continent' – the traders, pirates and missionaries who 'opened up' the continent to colonial ventures and at a later stage to international monopoly capital – to the present era of neocolonial dependence and underdevelopment. The purpose is to attempt a linkage between the thematic references and imagery used in reference to Africa with the prevailing socioeconomic and political climates and interests that gave impetus to these processes of ideological reproduction.

From Mungo Park to Colonel Muammar Gaddafi

At first glance, there is little connection between Mungo Park and Colonel Muammar Gaddafi. There is more than one century separating the two. The

similarity, however, is in the fact that both represent the two polar segments albeit dialectically related processes of Africa's incorporation into the world economy and current efforts to disencumber the continent from the paws of international monopoly capitalism. Specifically, in the early nineteenth century, the activities and pursuits of Mungo Park and his fellow explorers of the African interior like Barth, Livingstone, Clapperton and Wilberforce, the Lander brothers, Stanley, etc., constituted and provided the main framework within which the continent is projected to the Europeans. These, in a sense, formed the basis upon which public opinion is moulded in the Western European mind. The exploits of Stanley in particular, being sponsored by the *New York Herald*, stands out as exceptional in its capability to influence European public opinion, knowledge and the consequent imagery of Africa. On the other end of the continuum, Gaddafi in twentieth century Africa represents and forms the pivot of most coverage and images of the continent, with perhaps the possible exception of famine stricken Ethiopia.

There is no intention in this paper to accuse these early explorers and missionaries of intentional motives of painting such negative pictures of Africa and its people. However, they inadvertently provided their European nations with a potent weapon which was effectively used to justify the political and economic plundering and decapitation of the continent and its people through slave trade and direct colonialism. The picture they painted of Africa as a human zoo full of pagans, animists, cannibals, etc., gave impetus to one of the most puissant moral justifications for colonialism. If anything, the doctrine of the 'civilizing mission' made colonialism an acceptable enterprise in the minds of the Europeans. It was seen as an act of faith, the wish of God and a worthwhile venture worthy of sacrifice by all and sundry in order to take the sacred word of God to these 'noble savages'.

Most of the early European, particularly British, images of Africa were based on the personal accounts of missionaries and adventurers and, at a much later date, officially sponsored ethnographers, geographers, biologists and naturalists, and military and trade expeditionary groups. The reports filed by this amalgam of interests, through various academic and specialized journals, in most cases slithered into the pages of the elite and popular press thus giving them much wider audiences. This made the European travellers' accounts and reports to take into cognizance the various interests of these audiences. As Curtin, (1964:23) pointed out:

The European travellers wrote to please their audience as well as to inform. Religious beliefs were of no interest: they were 'pagan error'. But spectacular festivals, human sacrifices, judicial ordeals, and polygamy were 'curiosities', and were often recounted at length. Thus, the reporting often stressed precisely those aspects of African life that were most repellent to the West and tended to submerge the indications of a common humanity.

To a large extent, the above tendency has its roots in the tradition of pseudo-scientific racism existing at that period in time. The main thrust of this tradition is the application of alleged scientific methods to offer explanations of differences in physical, mental, and even cultural characteristics and behaviour of the different races in the universe. The underlying assumptions upon which the above pseudo-scientific enterprise was based have their roots in two opposing views of the evolution of mankind; monogenesis and polygenesis. Monogenesis posited that all mankind was created as one, originating from Adam and Eve who are said to be of the white race. The appearance of the Negro race was seen and explained as an abnormality which necessitated the 'normal' white race to drive them off to Africa, a less desirable part of the world. According to Curtin, 'the unconscious assumption in these ideas was that God had created man 'in his own image', (in this case, the image of the white biologist). Other varieties must therefore be worst varieties, and thus 'degenerations' from the original stock (Curtin *op cit*: 40-41).

Polygenesis, on the other hand, held that each race was a separate creation, distinct from the white children of Adam and Eve. This position suggested that Adam and Eve had been the last of a series of special creations, and hence some of the living non-Europeans i.e., the Negro, descended from the earlier pre-Adamites. Another version of this theory was that all races were created simultaneously but not endowed with equal ability. This idea was specifically applied to the Africans by a large number of European eighteenth century philosophers. For example, both Voltaire and Rousseau suggested that Negroes were naturally inferior to Europeans in their mental ability. David Hume (1898:252) argued that:

there never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufacturers amongst them, no arts, no sciences... such a uniform and constant difference could not happen, in so many countries and ages, if nature had not made an original distinction betwixt (sic) these breeds of men.

Another glaring example of the application of these theories to the description and tagging of the black race as inferior to their white counterparts was in the works of Edward Long. In his *History of Jamaica* (1774), Long brought forth 'evidence' about the inferiority of the African slaves. In his opinion:

Africans were 'brutish, ignorant, idle, crafty, treacherous, bloody, thievish, mistrustful, and superstitious people.' Their skins were dark, their features different, and they had 'a covering of wool, like the bestial fleece, instead of hair.' They were inferior in 'faculties of mind,' had a 'bestial and fetid smell,' and were even parasitized by black lice instead of the lighter-coloured lice of the Europeans.

It is commonplace, therefore, that in Western thought the contrast between black and white has for centuries stood for the good, true, pure and beautiful as opposed to the evil, ignorant, corrupt and atrocious. When the actions of modern imperialism brought the white world into organized confrontations with the other continents, the existing accretions of dark and black were thickened and extended

to establish an equivalence between 'primitive', 'barbaric' or 'savage' societies and moral perversity, and by inference of black people living amidst jungle, forest and wilderness and a condition of aboriginal depravity. This is even evident in the works of Joseph Conrad, (see *Almayer's Folly*, 1895; *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*, 1897; *Heart of Darkness*, 1899; and *Nostromo*, 1904) in which 'the dark tropics emanate poisonous influences, decay, death; the sombre, primeval forests whisper of inexplicable desires, the gloomy impenetrable jungles of uncivilized life' (Parry, 1983:5). Even though Parry argued that Conrad sees imperialism as 'the last and most degraded stage in the history of a social system', it can be argued that his use of 'blackness' can be culturally conditioned and to a certain extent congenial to audience expectations.

The above positions and their operationalization through dubious pseudo-scientific claims pervaded Western European thoughts and, consequently, images of Africans. Little wonder then that these same racist images permeated the reporting of Africa and its inhabitants by the early European explorers, missionaries and adventurers. The import of these images and accounts, however, is in the capacity not only to cement the generally held opinions and views about the inferiority and barbarity of the African but, most importantly, in the way it was used to justify slavery and the colonization of the African continent under the pretext of 'civilizing' its savage, barbaric and backward people. As the old saying goes, the white man went into Africa with the Bible in one hand and a gun in the other. The Bible he handed over to the noble savages and retained the gun which he used to loot their resources back to his country, leaving them with the Bible to console themselves.

In the era preceding colonial conquest and occupation, therefore, one can argue that the images of Africa relayed to the Western European public had a direct bearing on moulding public opinion towards accepting European political and economic designs and interests in the continent. Most crucial is the fact that most of these images were directed mostly at the educated upper and middle class segments of the European societies. The middle class, in particular, was an important constituency to be won over because of the large number of academicians and liberal thinkers in its membership and their capacity to influence other segments of the society through education, the church and the media. This tendency was admitted by H.M. Stanley, an accomplished and informed foreign correspondent of the *New York Herald*, who was selected because of his versatile knowledge of foreign countries to go after the famous Dr. Livingstone and, if found, to report on his activities. Stanley (1871:1) confessed that:

When I left Bombay for the purpose of leading the 'New York Herald' expedition into the unknown heart of Africa, my abstract conception of the island of Zanzibar was that it was but a little better than a great sandbar, or a patch of Sahara, with a limited oasis or two, surrounded by the sea, rife with cholera, fever, and nameless but dreadful diseases; populated by ignorant blacks, with great thick lips, whose general appearance might be compared to Du Chaillu's gorillas, who were ruled

over by a despotic and surly Arab. . . . How it had become thus distorted in my imagination I cannot conceive. I had read books and articles on Zanzibar, which were by no means unfavourably disposed towards it, yet it floated in my brain as an island whose total submersion in the sea would benefit the world.

Even after finding Livingstone and spending some time in Africa, Stanley could not purge himself of the stereotypes attached to its people. This is how he described the start of his second expedition sponsored by both the *New York Herald* and the *Daily Telegraph* of London from Zanzibar to explore the course of the river Nile:

Many wavings of kerchiefs and hats, parting signals from white hands, and last long looks at friendly white faces, . . . The parting is over! We have said our last words for years, perhaps ever, to kindly men! The sun sinks fast to the Western horizon, and gloomy is the twilight that now deepens and darkens. Thick shadows fall upon the distant land and over the silent sea, and oppress our throbbing, regrettable hearts, as we glide away through the dying light towards THE DARK CONTINENT. (Stanley, 1899:54)(emphasis in original)

It is clear that Stanley is evoking for the benefit of his audiences, images of darkness, evil and barbarity. Civilization here ends with the friendly waves of handkerchiefs from *white* hands and smiling *white* faces, according to him, perhaps for ever. The darkness, depression, and gloom set in as even the sun (light) decided to abandon them and sets in the *West*, giving way to lurking barbaric, evil, and sinister shadows characteristic of the dark continent.

These images persisted despite evidence to the contrary, and continued to persevere well into the era of direct colonialism and neocolonialism. Even if these 'Tarzan' imageries of Africa had waned in the twentieth century, they nevertheless formed the background of everything associated with the continent. The shift in emphasis was only superficial. That is, from an image of Africa populated by savages in the pre-colonial and colonial era, to an Africa swarming with tribal Kings, despots, and communist dictators in the independent and post-independence period. This shift also has consequences for European politico-economic hegemonic interests. Emphasis is no more placed on philanthropic excuses of civilizing missions, but on countering the dangerous spread of communist ideas and influence into the lands of these naive, unprotected natives. In this context, socioeconomic and natural disasters, political conflicts and instabilities, were emphasized in the media and explained as resulting from the inability of Africans to manage their environment by themselves and hence the possibility of communist infiltrations. In order to safeguard these natives from these harmful ideas and developments, the presence of the former colonial masters is projected as an absolute necessity, even if it is at a distance, charting out socioeconomic and political strategies and developmental directions.

Media coverage of present day Africa can be classified into two types, albeit both serving the same purpose. The first variety is the coverage of those nations

considered as 'soft spots' or 'democratic.' These are the almost invisible nations that technically are still appendages of the old colonial powers and the new superpowers of world politics and economics. These nations generally give the present transnational power brokers a free hand in pursuing their vested interests in their territory. As a gesture of good will, focus of the international community is surreptitiously diverted from them. Since media attention is to a large extent a function of political activity, particularly international politics, the less visible a country is in the international political cross-currents, the less visible it will be in the international media. These 'stable' nations are still covered and projected by the Western media through the old imagery of the exoticism of the noble savages. They are depicted through documentaries, feature films, holiday brochures and news items, as exotic natural beauty spots unspoiled by civilization, wildlife game reserves, beautiful holiday resorts, etc., where nature and man cohabit without contradiction. More importantly, 'stability' in this context, is equated with 'progress', political maturity, i.e., democracy and development. This stability, of course, is underlined by the commercial and political imperatives these images are supposed to support. That is, economically, the tourist industries mostly owned by transnational corporations with headquarters in the developed nations of the west, and the need to safeguard business and commercial interests of the Western European and North American international conglomerates. In the political sphere, it is the need to prop up these governments that are considered as 'allies' or more appropriately 'puppets' from other possible destabilizing elements from within or without.

On the other end of the continuum, is the type of coverage and imagery projected about and on nations considered by the advanced capitalist countries to be 'unfriendly' or unco-operative in allowing international capital an untrammelled hand to pursue its interests in their economic localities. These nations that tend to assert a level of independence are, in most cases, seen as 'crisis spots' by the western capitalist countries and, to a certain extent, the same interpretation is employed by the international media in their coverage of these nations. In this context, one of the most favourable imagery evoked in the reporting of these nations is that of the communist scare. This kind of imagery is generally used to justify intervention either through direct military action, or through support for 'stable' conservative political groups and factions in an attempt to destabilize the alleged communist-inspired radical governments.

One unfortunate reality is that the above situation is not just limited to the media of Western Europe and North America, but also applies to the African media themselves. This situation can only be explained by reference to the dependent relations that bind the political and economic structures of African nations to the interests of their erstwhile colonial masters and the operations of the international capitalist system, and to a large degree determine the operations and outlook of the media and other infrastructure transplanted and nurtured into fruition in these nations. The similarity in organizational structures, work prac-

tices, professional training, socialization and education, and an imbibed middle class elite attitude all add up to account for these similarities in the West European and African press coverage of African affairs. Despite almost a decade of research and debate under the auspices of UNESCO on the need to evolve a New International Information Order that will rectify these one-sided and negative projections of African affairs by the media, the situation has not substantially changed.

In contemporary Africa, two countries, with the exception of South Africa, stand out as the most visible in the international media. These are Ethiopia and Libya which, ironically, are all tagged as having governments with communist tendencies by the Western capitalist countries and the media. While that may be true of Ethiopia, it is questionable to what extent Libya sympathizes with communism which, in all respects, is incompatible with the Islamic basis of most of Gaddafi's ideas and political action. Whatever the case, both countries are highly associated with communist influence in Africa to the extent that media coverage of these nations mostly concentrate on highlighting the ills of communism as a system and hence its limitations.

In the case of Ethiopia, as is evidenced by its media coverage through Band Aid, etc., it is projected to the outside world as a poverty-stricken nation which has to rely on the benevolence of the rich Western nations to organize charity fanfares to feed its dying populace. The implication is that communism is not working in Ethiopia because it cannot even afford to feed its people and, by implication, even its 'mentor', the Soviet Union is doing nothing to help. The same images are projected about Mozambique and, to a certain extent, Tanzania. The ideological import of these images, particularly in the case of Ethiopia, is underlined by what they deliberately leave out. That is, the fact that the hunger stricken areas of Ethiopia projected in the international media are in fact the regions of Eritrea and Tigre which have refused to recognize the government in Ethiopia with the full backing of the capitalist countries of Europe and North America. Although these regions have been fighting for their independence as separate political entities for a number of decades, the international media deliberately refused to point out these facts to their audience.

From these nascent but nevertheless powerful association of communism with poverty, the media embarked on the current and perhaps most effective of all the 'red scares' in history. That is the association of communism with terrorism. Outside Northern Ireland, Libya is perhaps the next country most closely associated with terrorism by the media. In a comparative analysis of the coverage of Libyan affairs by *The Times* of London, the Nigerian *Daily Times*, the Tanzanian *Daily News* and *The Standard* of Kenya, from 1970-1986, it was found that the third most frequent topical issue addressed by all the newspapers in their coverage of Libyan affairs was its association with international terrorism (Abdullahi, 1990). The other two topics that attracted more media attention than Libya's alleged links with international terrorism were international politics and military

matters, respectively. Similarly, out of a total of 20 categories of negative motifs most frequently used by the newspapers in their reference to Libya from 1970-1985, almost 10 of them, representing about 50 percent of the total, relate to associations and references of Libya with communism/socialism, international terrorism and other related themes. This ranged from references to Libya as encouraging 'East-West'/'North-South divide'; as a 'supporter of international terrorism'/'terrorist and guerrilla sanctuary'; a 'communist'/'socialist' country with a 'regime' or 'junta' type of government; 'non-egalitarian'; 'suppressor of human rights', 'freedom of speech and opinion'; and 'pursuing expansionist policies in Africa' through unsolicited 'interference in the internal affairs of other nations'. A summary of the recurrent topics in Libya's coverage by the above media and the most frequently used negative motifs and references in these topics are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: *Distribution of News Items by Topics.*

Topic	N	%
International Politics	117	9.7
Domestic Politics	25	8.5
Terrorism	28	9.5
Economic Matters	23	8.0
Military	80	27.2
Social Provisions	1	0.3
Crime	7	2.4
Culture, Religion and History	3	1.0
Sports	2	0.7
Human Interest	2	0.7
Academic/Student Matters	4	1.3
International Aid	2	0.7
Total	294	100.0

The image of Libya presented by *The Times* of London, *The Daily Times*, *The Daily News*, and *The Standard*, is that of a communist inspired nation whose only vocation is to destabilize other nations by sponsoring terrorists to go out and kill and maim innocent women and children. This image of Libya and Gaddafi is much more expounded in the feature articles some of the newspapers carried which, in most cases, were written by the newspaper's staff or regular columnists. The identification of Libya with Soviet communism was the major theme of two separate articles published by the Nigerian *Daily Times* and *The Times* of London in 1982 and 1986 respectively. The *Daily Times'* article titled 'OAU Summit: Gaddafi's 2-Faced Approach', was written by Obika Kienyi while *The Times'* article titled 'Timetable of Terror', was written by Prof. Paul Wilkinson, a terrorist expert relied upon heavily by the British media on issues related to terrorism.

Table 2: *Frequency Distribution of Negative Motifs.*

No. Motifs: Libya as/or Having:	Freq.
1. Economically backward	1
2. Encouraging Arab Disunity	4
3. Pro-PLO/Strongly against Israel/Partisan	34
4. Encouraging East-West Division	4
5. Encouraging North-South Division	32
6. A supporter of international terrorism	56
7. Pursuing expansionist policies in Africa	65
8. Interfering in the internal affairs of other nations	84
9. Having authoritarian/eccentric leadership	11
10. Predominance of Religious fundamentalism	13
11. A violator of human rights	4
12. A suppressor of freedom of speech/opinion	3
13. Plagued with political instability and violence	9
14. Non-egalitarian	8
15. Communist/Socialist	29
16. A terrorist/guerrilla factory and sanctuary	33
17. Gaddafi as a 'Mad Dog'	3
18. Gaddafi as erratic/unpredictable	12
19. Gaddafi as 'the world's most dangerous man'	2
20. Having a government described as a regime/junta	33
Total	440

As the following excerpts clearly show, the same myths and images were projected about Libya and its leadership across all the articles despite the fact that they were written and published almost four years apart and by two different authors from two separate media establishments. In their effort to link and solidify the mythology of communist influence in the day-to-day activities of Libya, both Kienyi and Wilkinson juxtaposed that:

One might also question why a man of peace would want to buy \$8 billion worth of sophisticated military equipment from the USSR. The Libyan Air Force now has 20 Soviet MiG-21 fighters, 100 MiG-23s, 35 MiG-25s and 5 MiG-25Rs, the most advanced of all Soviet military aircraft now in operation, plus 17 TU-22 bombers. Col. Gaddafi's Army has 2,400 Soviet tanks, including fairly sophisticated T-72 models not commonly sold to Third World buyers. The small Libyan Navy even has three Soviet-made submarines. All of this massive, sophisticated fire-power far exceeds what Libya's 2.9 million population would ever need for purely defensive purposes (Kienyi, 1982).

Gaddafi's ideological differences with Soviet Communism have not proved any bar to close relations with Moscow, which found it convenient to have a fanatically anti-American ally with friendly bases in the Mediterranean. Libya has been allowed

to buy millions of pounds worth of military equipment since the early 1970s, including Soviet submarines, MiG fighter aircraft and hundreds of T-72 tanks. Libya also has treaties of friendship and co-operation with other communist countries [Wilkinson, 1986].

In the same fashion, Libya was securely tied to international terrorism by both Kienyi and Wilkinson who linked it to such groups as the Red Army, radical PLO factions and even to the legendary 'fictional' character of 'Carlos the Jackal.' Fictional in the sense that so much imagery had been weaved around him to the extent that even his existence borders on an aberration of reality. Nobody ever claims to have seen him; he is never photographed, cannot be identified, and nobody is sure if he is dead or still alive. Yet, he is resurfacing in Libya. In actual fact, the articles suggest that Libya associates, finances and trains almost all concealable terrorist groups in the world. As both authors pointed out:

If peace is his (Gaddafi's) goal, why has he set up 20 terrorist and guerrilla training camps in his country? Graduates of these camps, the Japanese Red Army, and various radical Palestinian groups, have killed scores of innocent civilians throughout the globe. Graduates of Libyan training camps were among the terrorists who set off bombs in airports in Rome and Athens in 1973. Gaddafi certainly was not furthering the cause of peace when he rewarded with a gift of two million dollars the infamous international terrorist, Carlos the 'Jackal', for directing the bloody Kidnapping of OPEC ministers in 1975 (Kienyi, 1982).

If there were a Nobel prize for terrorism, Gaddafi would surely be the obvious candidate. He has provided Libya's oil wealth, weapons, diplomatic facilities, terrorist training camps and sanctuary for client terrorist groups of every type, including Black September, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Moro Group in the Philippines, the IRA, Italian Fascists, the Red Brigades, and even the Black Muslims in the United States (Wilkinson, 1986).

What we have tried to put forward in the foregoing is that it is not a mere coincidence that information about and on Africa right from the days of the early explorers and missionaries to date almost always centres on the bizarre, the unusual and, sometimes, the unacceptable. The early missionaries and explorers, both sponsored and those who allegedly went on their own vocation, did play a crucial role in the opening of Africa to international monopoly capital through colonialism. The information about the African continent and its peoples they were providing in conjunction with the implicit and explicit images this information contained did inadvertently, either by design or default, provide their nations with one of the most powerful moral excuses for the colonization of Africa and its people for economic, political and social gains. In a similar fashion, reporting of African affairs during the periods of direct colonialism and its immediate aftermath also drew heavily on these mythologies of the backwardness of the African and his 'inability' to advance on his own accord, to justify resistance to independence movements and the continuing presence of the colonialist in the region. Images of political instability, tribal warfare, religious bigotry, public

corruption, poverty and economic deprivation constitute the main substance and diet of the international media, African, West European and North American, in their coverage of Africa in the post-nominal independence era.

These images, we admit, are to a certain extent valid. But, to attribute them to the human or psychological nature of the African is fallacious because almost all of the above problems are mere symptoms of the effects colonialism had in the continent. If anything, it was the colonialists who created tribes and political regions for the sake of administrative expedience through the famous 'divide and rule tactic' which inevitably led to most of the inter-tribal and inter-regional conflicts in today's Africa. Similarly, poverty and economic deprivation and political instabilities in the continent are all handmaidens of colonialism and neocolonialism. These images, however, act as powerful levers in the process of public opinion formation to the extent that even if the United States or one of its cronies in Western Europe decided to invade an African or Latin American country on the flimsy excuse of bringing about stability or countering the spread of dangerous communist ideas and influences, people tend to see it as something worthwhile, normal, or even outright desirable and justified. The Libyan case is a pointer in that even the African media tend to believe and impart the same to their audience that Gaddafi is a dangerous terrorist.

We are not in any sense implying that there is a tight-knit conspiracy between the early missionaries, explorers and the present day modern media with the captains of industry and the political elite to deliberately emphasize the negative and unusual images of Africa in order to convince their populace of the need to colonize and civilize them. This kind of conspiracy thesis, as attractive as it may sound, is inadequate for proper analysis, even though it should not be discounted in some instances. The fact that the African newspapers analyzed in the Libyan coverage above, conform to the same attitude of the Western press add a further dimension to the inadequacy of direct one-to-one conspiracies. We have to take into account such factors as the ethnocentric bias of the early explorers and missionaries, their socialization and education, plus their perceptions of the type of news or information which would make it into the popular press and specialized magazines and journals, in determining the content, angles and colouring of their reports about Africa.

Within the same framework, the similarity in the African media coverage of Libya with that of a European newspaper, particularly in their association of Libya with terrorism and Soviet communism, can be explained with reference to the possible pervasiveness and attraction these images have for the media in their attempt to satisfy their audiences. The very fact that the African media still rely, to a large extent, on the international news agencies for most of their foreign and even regional news influences an uncritical adoption and dissemination of these images to their audiences (Abdullahi, 1990). All these factors can be adduced from the dependency relations characterizing contemporary African countries. In this context, we are referring to the similarities in professional viewpoints,

ideologies, work ethics and organizational structures of the African media and their journalists to their European counterparts. A similarity achieved through education and training, and the transfer of media structures and technology.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we feel it is worthwhile to go beyond the falsity or otherwise of the reporting of Africa, or any part of the Third world for that matter, if we are to grasp the full consequences such images and myths hold for the peoples of these regions economically, culturally, politically and socially. References to Africans as barbaric, noble savages, communists, and terrorists by the international media have very strong ideological implications for the maintenance of the hegemony of a particular socioeconomic system over others.

This position is underscored by no less a person than Lord Lugard, one of the most celebrated colonial administrators the British Empire has ever produced in his *Dual Mandate*, first published in 1922 as a response to the British Labour Party's criticism of British imperial escapades. In it Lugard succinctly juxtaposed the relationship between the 'morals' and economic reasons for the colonization of Africa and other regions of the world. He pointed out that:

As Roman imperialism laid the foundations of modern civilization, and led the wild barbarians of these islands along the path of progress, so in Africa today (sic) we are repaying the debt, and bringing to the dark places of the earth, the abode of barbarism and cruelty, the torch of culture and progress, while ministering to the material needs of our own civilization . . . Let it be admitted at the outset that European brains, capital, and energy have not been, and never will be, expended in developing the resources of Africa from motives of pure philanthropy; that Europe is in Africa for the mutual benefit of her own industrial classes, and of the native races in their progress to a higher plane; that the benefit can be made reciprocal, and that it is the aim and desire of civilized administration to fulfil this dual mandate (pp. 17-18).

References

- Abdullahi, A. (1990). *One World One Voice? : Libyan Affairs Coverage by one European and Three African Newspapers: 1970-1986*. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis submitted to Leicester University.
- Berghan, Marion (1977). *Images of Africa in Black American Literature*. London: Macmillan.
- Cook, M. (1936). 'Jean Jacques Rousseau and the Negro,' *Journal of Negro History*, XXI, pp. 294-303, July.
- Curtin, P. D. (1964). *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780-1850*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Hume, David (1898). 'On National Character', *The Philosophical Works of David Hume*, (4 vols.), London.

- Kienyi, O. (1982). 'OAU Summit: Gaddafi's 2-Faced Approach,' *The Daily Times*, Lagos, Nigeria, April 7.
- Lugard, F. D. (1929). *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*. Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons.
- Parry, Benita (1983). *Conrad and Imperialism: Ideological Boundaries and Visionary Frontiers*. London: Macmillan.
- Stanley, H. M. (1872). *How I Found Livingstone: Travels, Adventures, and Discoveries in Central Africa* (second edition). London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low and Searle.
- Stanley, H. M. (1899). *Through the Dark Continent*, Vol. 1. London: George Newness.
- Wilkinson, P. (1986). 'Timetable of Terror', *The Times*, London, January 28.