Beyond Afro-pessimism?
British and French Print Media Discourse on Africa

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In memory of my grandfather Roger Nothias

Acknowledgements

Abstract

Western media have come under intense scrutiny over the past 20 years for their propensity to marginalise Africa and to rely on colonial stereotypes, images and narratives. Both within and outside academia, commentators appeal to the concept of 'Afro-pessimism' to qualify and condemn this phenomenon. And yet, the notion is under-theorised and existing empirical studies insufficiently analyse and explain the phenomenon. Drawing on journalism, critical/cultural and postcolonial studies, this thesis seeks to answer the following questions: What is Afro-pessimism? Is it an adequate characterisation of media coverage, and if so, to what extent? Is media coverage moving beyond Afro-pessimism? In order to answer these theoretical and empirical questions, this thesis develops a conceptualisation of Afro-pessimism and provides a Critical Discourse Analysis of British and French print media.

The analysis focuses on British and French broadsheet newspapers and news magazines. I critically analyse the visual and linguistic features of media texts against the background of their context of production and through interviews with foreign correspondents based in South Africa and Kenya. There are two sites of investigation: (1) the press coverage of the 50th anniversaries of independence (2007-2012); (2) the news magazines' front covers dedicated to continental Africa (2011-2015). In site 1, I assess three recurring claims about Western media coverage of Africa, and investigate the discursive nature of the coverage in relation to Afro-pessimism and postcolonial memory. In site 2, I explore the emergence of an Afro-optimist discourse in media coverage of Africa. Finally, I offer a critical appraisal of the accounts of journalists at the heart of the production of Africa's media image.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

INTRODUCTION

It emanates from all these discussions a strong sense of Afro-pessimism, although the word remains to be invented.
(Diop, 2010)

This thesis is about the social construction of a discourse about Africa known as Afro-pessimism within the context of British and French print media. I offer a conceptual framework to critically examine how journalists report on Africa, and then employ this framework to empirically shed light on the changes and continuities of journalistic discourse. What is Afro-pessimism? Is it an adequate characterisation of media coverage, and if so, to what extent? Is media coverage moving beyond Afro-pessimism? These are the main questions that this thesis seeks to answer. The introduction that follows is divided in three parts. First, I introduce the question of Afro-pessimism in Western news media. I then outline my research questions, the four intellectual traditions in which the project is located, and highlight my research contributions at a theoretical, methodological and empirical level. Finally, I present an overview of the thesis' structure and of the core arguments of each chapter.

"A sense of Afro-pessimism"

A shirtless black man wearing short dreadlocks carries on his shoulder a rocket-propelled grenade. His right forearm pointed towards the sky tells us he is joyful, perhaps like a sports-fan celebrating a goal from his team. This enjoyment is further communicated by the large smile on his face, as well as his smiley eyes. Behind him, there is nothing but a plain background. We do not know who he is or where he is from. In a large brown font, the title of the book rules over the image "Négrologie" (Negrology), while the subtitle, in a smaller font, reads "pourquoi l'Afrique meurt" (Why is Africa dying).

Taken together, these elements communicate a vast range of meanings. The weapon connotes a world of violence and civil war. The black man, shirtless and happily violent, conjures racist stereotypes of black Africans as barbaric,

irresponsible and childlike. It uses the codes of the most classic racist representations of black people as close to nature and to their primitive instincts to create the image of an African 'Other', essentially different and inferior. The subtitle makes clear that the book is about "Africa". Yet the choice of a black man and of the word "negro" in the title tells us that it is not about Africa as a continental entity, but rather sub-Saharan, 'black' Africa, understood as a racialised entity. Although the subtitle "Why is Africa dying" could have ended with a question mark, it does not. Instead, it is a statement. It promises an answer, and the cover gives a number of clues as to what the answer may be. The image provides an explanation, even before we open the book, as to why Africa dies: because of its 'barbaric Africans'. The main title brings all these connotations together by combining the racist lexicon of the "negro" with that of death, fatalism and hopelessness ("negrology").

Small details like the choice of a man wearing dreadlocks are not fortuitous. As the symbol of the lion, and consequently strength, pride and wisdom, dreadlocks symbolise anti-colonial struggle and pan-Africanism. They have been associated with the guards of Ethiopian leader Haile Selassie who fought the imperial troops of Mussolini. This conflict was notably driven by Mussolini's desire to avenge the Italian defeat to the hands of Ethiopian fighters during the first Italo-Ethiopian war in the late 19th century. In choosing a picture of a man with dreadlocks, this cover thus provocatively says: "look at what happened to the dreams of African independence".

In sum, the cover implies that the "death of Africa" is essentially of its own making and strongly tied to some essence of "Africa" and "Africans". One simply needs to look at the opening pages of the book to confirm the intention to communicate these meanings: "The African continent, this borderless 'Ubuland', the land of massacres and famines where all hope dies. Why is Africa dying? Mostly, because it commits suicide" (Smith, 2004 p. 13).

This book was not written in the 19th century. It was not written in the 1960s, or the 70s or the 80s. It is not an obscure and little-known book. It is from 2004 and was written by Stephen Smith, a famous foreign correspondent in Africa who worked for Reuters and RFI, and who was the former Africa editor of *Le Monde* and former chief editor of *Libération* – two of the oldest, most respected and widely

read left-wing French broadsheet newspapers. His book, *Négrologie,* received the prestigious France Télévision Prize for the best non-fiction book of the year 2004.[1]

The cover of Stephen Smith's book is as close as one gets to an ideal type of Afro-pessimism. Afro-pessimism is a term that was coined in the early 1990s to capture the construction of an image of Africa as a homogenous place plagued by war, famine, suffering, violence and disasters. Cursed, outside the realm of rationality and modernity, promised to a future as bleak as its past and present, this representation of Africa carried with it a set of racist assumptions and stereotypes reminiscent of older colonial discourses about Africa as a "Dark Continent". News media in particular have been criticised for playing a key role in shaping and reproducing such Afro-pessimism. From the Mau-Mau uprisings and the Biafran war in the 1950s and late 1960s to the 1984 Ethiopian famine and the 1994 Rwandan genocide, images of violent, barbaric, starving, poor and helpless black Africans have dominated international news. This assessment and perception of media coverage led many to postulate that news media were key agents of Afro-pessimist discourse (Hawk, 1992a; Olsson, 1993; Gordon & Wolpe, 1998; Schraeder & Endless, 1998; Ahluwalia, 2001; Franks & Ribet, 2009; Berger, 2010; de Beer, 2010; de B'béri & Louw, 2011; Hammett, 2011; Schorr, 2011).

If news media provide a window to the world, that window seems to be particularly narrow and oddly shaped when it comes to Africa. To respond to this, journalists over the past 20 years have often appealed to an argument grounded in their professional ethos – namely that journalists reflect 'reality'. Robert Guest, former Africa editor for the *Economist* and regular contributor to CNN and the BBC, writes in his memoir: "The reason they [Western journalists] report that Africa is plagued by war, famine and pestilence is that Africa is plagued by war, famine and pestilence. They will stop reporting this when it stops being *true*" [my emphasis] (Guest, 2005 p. 254). Afro-pessimism, in that sense, would be the unavoidable sense that one would get when faced with African news, not a deliberately shaped, and thus avoidable, discourse.

Scholars who have examined the media coverage of Africa generally oppose the view that the media simply reflects 'truth' and 'reality' (Hawk, 1992a; Fair, 1993; Brookes, 1995; Wall, 1997). They embrace a social constructivist approach that

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[1] France Télévision is the French equivalent of the BBC.

views reality as being created through mediatisation and representational processes. The news is manufactured by a few individuals working under organisational constraints, and shaped by different incentives and factors (Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1979; Fishman, 1980; Schlesinger, 1987; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Paterson, 2011). Media outlets construct a particular vision of the world by selecting and frontloading certain issues, phenomenon, events, places and people over others. Far from being a neutral reflection of the world, the news produces reality in a specific way and according to certain conventions, priorities and values that are shaped socially, economically, culturally, technologically and historically.

In consequence, news media convey images and ideas that inform the knowledge of geographically distant places, people, and societies. Particularly in the case of international reporting, this representational repertoire feeds into the imagination that a culture 'back home' has of cultures 'back there'. In other words, it impacts "how we come to see, think and feel about the world, and our place and relations with others in this world" (Orgad, 2012 p. 3). The discussion about international media reporting is thus a fundamental one, whose implications branch far out of the media sphere, in the economic, cultural, financial and political worlds.

It is these concerns about the power of representation that underpinned the critique by Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe (1988) of the image of Africa presented in the work of Joseph Conrad. His controversial essay "An image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness'" sought to deconstruct the racist assumptions of a landmark of contemporary British literature. But for Achebe, the point was not so much to attack Conrad but rather to question "the dominant image of Africa in the Western imagination" within which this novel was located (Achebe, 1988 p. 258). What spurred this essay was indeed that Achebe wearily witnessed the continuation of such an image decades after the formal end of colonisation:

> But as I thought more about the stereotype image, about its grip and pervasiveness, about the wilful tenacity with which the West holds it to its heart; when I thought of the West's television and cinema and newspapers, about books read in its schools and out of school, of churches preaching to empty pews about the need to send help to the heathen in Africa, I realized that no easy optimism was possible.
>
> (Achebe, 1988 p. 261)

More recently, it is a similar lassitude towards images of Africa presented by the media that led Kenyan writer Binyavanga Wainaina to write a satirical essay about how *not* to write about Africa:

> Always use the word 'Africa' or 'Darkness' or 'Safari' in your title. (…) Also useful are words such as 'Guerrillas', 'Timeless', 'Primordial' and 'Tribal'. (…) An AK-47, prominent ribs, naked breasts: use these. If you must include an African, make sure you get one in Masai or Zulu or Dogon dress. In your text, treat Africa as if it were one country.
>
> (Wainaina, 2005 p. 92)

The crux of the issue he addresses is the same as what another Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009) helpfully summarises as "the danger of a single story". Upon arriving in the US at age 19 to study at University, she recalls being pressed by questions from her roommate about where she had learned to speak such good English, and if she could share some of her "tribal music":

> She had felt sorry for me even before she saw me. Her default position towards me, as an African, was a kind of patronizing, well-meaning pity. My roommate had a single story of Africa: a single story of catastrophe. In this single story there was no possibility of Africans being similar to her in any way, no possibility of feelings more complex than pity, no possibility of a connection as human equals.
>
> (Adichie, 2009)

In sum, such a representation of Africa constitutes a violent symbolic process that dehumanises individuals, perpetuates racist thinking and creates a sense of inferiority and insurmountable difference.

If news media are far from being the sole providers of Afro-pessimism, they nonetheless have a particular and crucial place in this story. News is a non-fiction genre that seeks to provide objective accounts of reality and facts. News stories are also encountered routinely, often on a daily basis. Both in its iterative dimension and its claims of truth, the news constitutes a key instrument in the danger of a single story, that is the fact of showing "a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again" (Adichie, 2009). Moreover, news media are also seen as fulfilling a democratic function in society, acting as a Fourth Estate, giving a voice to the people and holding political power to account. Thus, if news media actively sustain a regime of representation that fosters, at best, pity and condescension, and, at worst, contempt and xenophobic sentiments, thus exacerbating inequalities rather than addressing them, they undermine these democratic ideals. For that

reason, they should be held accountable for the representations they construct and convey.

Over the last 10 years, there has been a real uptake for the criticism of Afro-pessimism of Western media. As I will demonstrate, however, the concept is under theorised and lacks a clear definition. In particular, it is often reduced to a set of "negative images of Africa". By this token, *any* discussion of war, poverty, conflict, corruption or violence in Africa would be problematic because of its negative content. However, as Fanon [1961](2004) reminds us, violence *should* be extensively examined and discussed precisely because it is constitutive of the colonial and postcolonial experience. By reducing Afro-pessimism to negative images, there is a risk for studies of Africa's media image to fail to show precisely how contemporary discourses contribute to a particular image of Africa entangled in a colonial representational legacy. In addition, this lack of conceptual clarity contributes to taking for granted Afro-pessimism as a systematic feature of Western media coverage of Africa. Yet, a few recent studies suggest that media coverage might be evolving, and moving beyond Afro-pessimism (Scott, 2009; Haavisto & Maasilta, 2015). This thesis therefore aims to clarify the debate on Afro-pessimism in Western media, first by proposing, at a theoretical level, a fully-fledged definition of Afro-pessimism and second, by assessing, at an empirical level, to what extent and how such discourse is enacted in the media.

Research aims

In light of this background, this thesis investigates British and French print media coverage of Africa in order to answer the following key research questions:

1) What is Afro-pessimism?
2) What is the nature of media discourse on Africa? Is it really Afro-pessimist and if so, in what sense?
3) Are mythical representations enduring, evolving or disappearing, and what are the forces and power relations driving these evolutions and/or continuities?
4) To what extent does the context of news production explain the formation of media discourse? What is the interplay between the processes of

journalistic production and the formation of postcolonial discourse(s) on Africa?

Question 1 is addressed in Chapters 1 and 2. The research questions 2 to 4 are tackled in my empirical analyses. I seek to provide solid evidence – within the bound of my empirical investigation – to assess the nature and formation of media discourse with a view to contribute to a broader understanding of whether and how Western media coverage of Africa is moving beyond Afro-pessimism. I provide a comparative study of British and French print media discourse on Africa through two specific sites of analysis: 1) the coverage of the 50th anniversaries of African independences (2007-2012), and 2) the coverage of continental Africa on news magazine covers (2011-2015). I investigate each site by analysing a combination of textual data, including newspapers articles, news magazine covers, and interviews and questionnaires with foreign correspondents and a range of media professionals.

This research project is located at the crossroad of four academic traditions. It is primarily grounded in the academic tradition of critical/cultural media studies (for an overview see Barker, 2000; Durham & Kellner, 2005). This approach holds that language and media texts enact and dialectically reproduce power relations; that media are pervaded by ideology and contribute to create and reinforce a certain social reality. Just like a palimpsest whose old texts keep re-emerging, postcolonial discourses are made of evolutions and continuities; they carry traces from the past, adapt them to new situations and sometimes challenge them. For this reason, within this broad critical/cultural approach, I also adopt a perspective inspired by postcolonial studies, which analyses the spectres from the colonial era that continue to haunt the imagination of contemporary societies (Ahluwalia, 2001; Mbembe, 2001; Shome & Hegde, 2002; Willems, 2015).

The methodology that I use in this research is Critical Discourse Analysis. It places an emphasis on the relationship between media discourse and power relations (van Dijk, 1993b; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough & Wodak, 2004; Machin & Mayr, 2012; Aiello, 2012b). This approach aims to uncover ideological assumptions contained and conveyed in media texts – both linguistically and visually – and stresses the importance of the historical and cultural contexts in which discourses are produced. But the making of news in particular obeys to a set of structural constraints and hence constitutes a peculiar

context of production (Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1979; Schlesinger, 1987; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Therefore, my research is also grounded in journalism and news production studies. I use this literature to understand how commercial incentives, newsgathering and gatekeeping practices, as well as media routines and journalistic values contribute to the production of media discourse. In other words, I contextualise the critical analysis of media texts and postcolonial discourse within the environment of news production.

At first sight, these literatures may appear disjointed because each field emphasises different aspects of discourse analysis. Critical/cultural media studies place an emphasis on culture as a vehicle of ideology. Postcolonialism is primarily concerned with the structures of power and domination developed through the colonial experience, and their legacy in the current era. Critical Discourse Analysis serves to highlight the ways in which various types of discourses operate, and news production studies are more concerned with the processes involved in the specific context of journalism. Yet, all these traditions have one thing in common that binds them together. They share a social constructivist approach that holds that representations, media texts, discourses and journalistic practices reflect and, dialectically, shape a certain view of the world that is fundamentally imbued with power relations. In that sense, my research is not about Africa, but about the social construction of a representation of Africa in the context of British and French print media

This thesis aims to make three main contributions to the study of Afro-pessimism and media coverage of Africa at the theoretical, methodological and empirical levels.

While the concept of Afro-pessimism has gained strong visibility both in academia and public debates, it remains a floating signifier. As I will show, the concept is underspecified and, as a result, runs the risk of failing to contribute to an understanding of how the colonial representational legacy pervades contemporary journalistic discourse. In a special issue on Afro-pessimism of the journal *Critical Arts: South-North Cultural and Media Studies*, the editors, de B'béri and Louw (2011 p. 335), explain that "although there are bits and pieces and research works on Afropessimism, none has yet brought it all together in a coherent way". This thesis takes on this challenge by putting forward a comprehensive definition of the

Afro-pessimist discourse. This conceptual definition is the result of a critical synthesis of, on the one hand, studies of Afro-pessimism and, on the other hand, studies of Western news media coverage of Africa. In doing so, I hope to clarify the debates beyond a simplistic "negative images" framework.

My methodology combines analyses of media texts – both in their linguistic and visual dimensions – with interviews with media producers. This choice is inscribed in the uptake in the field of Critical Discourse Analysis and social semiotics for greater engagement with production processes shaping texts (Aiello, 2012a; Aiello, 2012b; Machin & Mayr, 2007; Machin & Niblock, 2008). This approach aims to trace key linkages between the linguistic, semiotic and rhetorical features of media texts, their context of production and the political, economic and ideological processes in which they are implicated. By using this methodology, this thesis seeks to link more clearly text and context of production in relation to the postcolonial themes of power and domination. In that sense, it contributes to bringing issues of journalistic production within the field of postcolonial theory that largely developed in abstraction of such empirical considerations (Saha, 2009).

Finally, this thesis seeks to make four empirical contributions to the study of Western media coverage of Africa. While the topic can appear old and sufficiently informed, there are in fact many empirical gaps (Scott, 2015). (1) Existing studies have extensively focused on UK and US media representation of Africa, but in contrast, studies of French media coverage are rare.[2] Do we observe similar phenomena in different Western national contexts? (2) A correlative of this anglophone bias is that very few studies shed light on the way francophone African countries are covered. (3) In addition, the literature tends to focus on the coverage of a narrow range of topics related to war, conflict, disaster and violence (Scott, 2015). The coverage of more banal and mundane news stories has seldom been studied. (4) Finally, despite the key role played by foreign correspondents in producing representations of Africa, these individuals have rarely been consulted in previous studies. According to Scott (2015 p. 9), 80% of the studies on US and UK media representation of Africa focus on media content alone. This thesis is therefore designed to contribute to filling these four empirical gaps.

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[2] I identified only five studies that investigate French coverage of African news.

Structure of the thesis

This thesis is structured in seven chapters: Chapters 1 to 3 set the background, and introduce the theoretical framework and methodological approach of the project; Chapters 4 to 7 provide the empirical analyses.

Chapter 1 presents the theoretical framework of critical/cultural and postcolonial studies in which this thesis is located. I introduce and define the key concepts of representation, discourse and the 'Other' used throughout the research. The chapter also importantly provides the historical background to the concept of Afro-pessimism, proposes a genealogy of the concept and discusses the lack of clarity that surrounds it.

Chapter 2 focuses on the Western media coverage of Africa in the context of journalistic production. I review existing studies of Africa's image in the news to identify the key features of this coverage. I also introduce the literature on journalism and news production that helps us contextualise the formation of journalistic discourse. This chapter concludes by putting forward a conceptual framework of Afro-pessimism that combines the disjointed literature on Afro-pessimism and the broader literature on media coverage of Africa. This conceptualisation is subsequently used in my empirical analyses.

Chapter 3 introduces my methodological approach and its key epistemological features. Critical Discourse Analysis constitutes the integrated methodological framework through which I link the different intellectual traditions introduced previously to analyse my empirical data. In addition, Chapter 3 explains the design of the empirical investigation into media texts – both in their linguistic and visual dimensions – and their context of production, through semi-structured interviews and questionnaires with foreign correspondents and media professionals. Finally, I introduce my two sites of analysis: 1) the coverage of the 50th anniversaries of independence, and 2) the coverage of continental Africa in news magazine covers.

In Chapters 4 and 5, I focus on the first site of investigation. Chapter 4 starts by providing background for the analysis; it offers a brief historical overview of the period of independence of the late 1950s, and frames the 50th anniversaries of independence as sites of collective memory construction. The second section of the

chapter maps out the coverage of these anniversaries by looking at which countries and stories were the most covered. In the last section, I assess in the context of this site three claims about Western media coverage of Africa found in the literature: 1) the use of systematic references to "darkness" and "tribalism"; 2) the presentation of Africa as a homogenous entity; 3) the overreliance on Western/foreign sources.

Chapter 5 provides a more interpretive and critical analysis of the dominant narrative, linguistic and rhetorical strategies found in the coverage. I first focus on the editorials to assess when the anniversaries of independence were deemed newsworthy enough to be given salience, and if Afro-pessimism is at play in these cases. I then offer an interpretation of the discursive common sense of this coverage at large. In order to do so, I propose to step outside the conceptual lens of Afro-pessimism to grasp the ideological function of media discourse in relation to the uneasiness surrounding the colonial past in Britain and France.

Chapter 6 deals with site 2 and presents a multimodal discourse analysis of covers published in British and French news magazines between 2011 and 2015. I use these covers as micro-textual cases that shed light on the more 'macro' dimensions and social implications of a shift in perception and representation from Afro-pessimism to Afro-optimism. The first section consists of a micro-textual analysis of the magazine covers and of the idea of Africa they construct. The second section fleshes out three key drivers of this evolution. Drawing on these two sections, the last section critically analyses the power relations reproduced through this coverage.

Chapter 7 explores the perspective of foreign correspondents on Afro-pessimism and media representation of Africa. As a way to identify drivers of changes and continuities in the reporting of African news, I analyse how foreign correspondents talk about Afro-pessimism, about the constraints of news production and about their audience.

Finally, the conclusion presents a cross-comparative discussion of my findings and their implications for the study of representation of Africa. It also addresses the main limitations of my study and summarises the contributions of the thesis.

CHAPTER 1 - Representation of Africa and Afro-pessimism

In this first chapter, I establish the theoretical framework in which this study is located and I introduce the key concept of Afro-pessimism. The first section introduces the critical/cultural and postcolonial studies traditions and defines the notions of representation, discourse and the 'Other' that constitute the theoretical background to my investigation. In the second section, I draw on this framework and the input of several key postcolonial theorists to examine the historical construction of an "idea of Africa," and to highlight the power relations that underpin it. I pay particular attention to its discursive construction in the colonial context, and highlight the contribution of culture in general, and journalism in particular, to this discursive formation. Finally, I turn to the concept of Afro-pessimism and its etymology. In spite of a significant uptake for the term in the last 20 years, I argue that there is a lack of definition of what Afro-pessimism precisely is and that this creates risks for research into media representation of Africa. The chapter ends on the necessity to establish a clear conceptual definition of Afro-pessimism.

1.1 Theoretical framework of critical/cultural and postcolonial studies

This section provides an introduction and discussion of the key conceptual lexicon used throughout this research, namely, the concepts of representation, discourse and the 'Other'.

1.1.1 Representation

At first, a representation can be defined as the mental depiction of an object. When I think of an apple, my mind forms a mental picture of what an actual apple is. This representation is thus produced through the mental faculty of imagination. The study of imagination has a long philosophical tradition. Bouriau (2003) goes as far back as Aristotle who described imagination as the feeling of an object happening without its actual presence. In a similar vein, Sartre (1940) used the concept of *analogon* to describe this process; the representation we have of an object is a

symbol through which we aim the real object. A representation is therefore the result of the mental faculty of imagination. Kant (1848) went even further in analysing imagination and representation; for him, imagination is not simply reproductive but also productive. It is the faculty that unifies our sensitive experiences; thus, there is no actual perception without the necessary intervention of imagination and thus representation. In sum, representation is a fundamental mental process through which we imagine and experience our world (Bouriau, 2003).

Beyond this first process (ideas and mental pictures we construct in our heads), the notion of representation also refers to the way we communicate these ideas through language (the second process of representation) (Hall, 2003b p. 17). Language is entirely based on a system of representation where words stand for something else, for example an object or an idea. Hall (2003b p. 24) identifies three approaches to understanding how representation through language works: reflective or mimetic, intentional, and constructionist. In the reflective approach, any object or idea in the real world has a meaning, and representation is the process through which this inherent meaning is communicated. On the contrary, the intentional approach argues that the meaning is not contained in the object itself, but that it is the speaker "who imposes his or her unique meaning on the world through language" (Hall, 2003b p. 25). The constructionist approach, finally, emphasises that communication relies on the fact that we share meaning socially. It is not the object or the individual that fix meaning but rather social conventions. In this perspective, representation is the construction and exchange of meaning through language between members of a society. Drawing on Hall (2003b) we can delineate two traditions in this constructionist approach to representation: the first is inherited from linguistics and semiotics, and the second from Michel Foucault's theory of discourse.

The first tradition finds its roots in the work of Swiss linguist Saussure (1960) who developed the concepts of sign, signifier and signified to explain how language functions. In a nutshell, a word stands for an idea, and the association between the word (signifier) and the idea (signified) is the sign. In a sense, a sign brings together two systems of representation (speech and writing / mental concepts; signifier / signified). Language, then, is the organisation and combination of various signs, which allow meaning to be shared. But a sign is not something

"natural"; it is constructed and arbitrary. A "house" could be called a "blurf", it would not change the meaning conveyed by the word. Saussure was not so much interested in the reasons *why* meaning was attached to signs; rather, he focused on the structure of signs and their meanings as being inter-related to other signs within the same system.

Forty years later, Barthes (1957) used this "lexicon of signification" and applied it to various objects of popular culture, hereby taking on the task to extend Saussure's theory to a "science that studies the life of signs within society" (Hall, 2003b p. 36). By looking at travel guides, films and advertisements, he provided one of the key theoretical frameworks to understand representation: every object in society conveys meaning and is thus likely to be analysed as a combination of signs, or a text. By extending the analysis of sign beyond the realm of linguistic, Barthes' semiotics provided a conceptual milestone to understand representation as the construction of meaning across society and not only confined to written and spoken words.

His semiotic perspective also emphasised the cultural and social construction of meaning; signs contain particular values, beliefs and assumptions. To explain this phenomenon, Barthes used the concept of myth. A myth is a "second-order semiological system" in which a sign becomes a signifier for another signified (Barthes, 1972 p. 114). For instance, in a Saussurean perspective the words "red flag" are used to signify the actual object, a red flag. This sign then can also become a signifier for another signified for instance revolutionary politics and socialism in the context of the Paris Commune of 1871 – a myth. In a myth, the arbitrary association of a signifier and signified does not happen in a vacuum; it is constructed by and through culture, history and social conventions. It is in this sense for Barthes that there is an ideological dimension to the myth.

Using the example of a *Paris-Match* cover, Barthes argued that the photograph of a black boy, with his uniform, his salute and his look towards a potential French flag is a myth which, given the cultural codes of the time, signified the concept the French Empire (Barthes, 1972 pp. 125–126). This myth is an assemblage of various signs constituting a "total of linguistics signs" (Howells, 2003 p. 101). More importantly, it is loaded with an ideological meaning, in this case, praising

the values of colonialism, and glorifying and unifying a sense of the French empire:

> But, whether naively or not, I see very well what it signifies to me: that France is a great Empire, that all her sons, without colour discrimination, faithfully serve under the flag and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this negro in serving his so-called oppressors.

(Barthes, 1972 pp. 125–126)

A key feature of myths is their ability to appear as natural and common sense, to make "the contingency appear eternal" (Barthes, 1972 p. 155), thus erasing the historical intentions and inequalities that led to their constitution. As far as the study of representation is concerned, Barthes' ideas were decisive: he extended the analysis of signs to culture more generally and developed the concept of myth, which contributed to a critical understanding of culture's ideological assumptions, and of the way meaning is naturalised.

1.1.2 Discourse

Alongside this semiotic tradition, Foucault (1972) appealed to the concept of discourse, which proved very influential for studying representation. A discourse is the constitution of knowledge about a topic or an object; it is grounded in a historical context, and therefore contains a set of assumptions that are socially and historically produced (Hall, 1992 p. 291). For instance, Foucault would argue that science does not produce objective knowledge, but instead is regulated by discourses. Moreover, Foucault saw discourse as extending beyond the realm of texts or signs. He considered all social practices and institutions – including jails, schools and hospitals – as produced by and regulated through discourse, or in other words discursively formed. Insofar as they structure knowledge, discourses regulate both practices and behaviours by distinguishing, for instance, what is acceptable from what is punishable (Foucault, 1977).

In this discursive perspective, meaning is not natural or fixed but it is power that attempts to fix meaning through discourse. Any discourse claims to hold authority over knowledge, but this authority is shaped unequally. The more dominant the structures are, the stronger their claims to truth are; or in other words, the more authoritative and powerful they are in shaping society by fixing meaning through discourse (Foucault, 1977 p. 27). This resembles Barthes's view of myth as

"naturalising" the historical. But Foucault believed that one ought to look at a much broader historical map of meanings. Moreover, he did not talk of the discourse of an epoch but preferred the idea of discursive formations, which can be defined as a "pattern of discursive events which refer to, or bring into being, a common object across a number of sites" (Barker, 2000 p. 384). When various discourses constitute a discursive formation, they then reach a "regime of truth" (Barker, 2000 p. 20); they hold a dominant position in the constitution of knowledge about an object or a topic.

Although Foucault used his concept of discourse to investigate issues of power and discipline, of identity formations and the regulation of bodies and difference, he showed little interest in racism and colonisation as discursive formations (Young, 1995; Ahluwalia, 2005).[3] This is all the more surprising since the authority of science that Foucault sought to deconstruct with regard to madness and sexuality was also at the heart of the racial epistemology of the 19th century, and of the discursive justification of colonialism: "Foucault had a lot to say about power, but he was curiously circumspect about the ways in which it has operated in the arenas of race and colonialism" (Young, 1995 p. 57). This could be part of what Ahluwalia (2005) called the colonial roots of poststructuralism. He argued that the colonial and postcolonial experience might have played a role in shaping the main issues explored by poststructuralism such as 'Otherness', power, difference, the role of language, the deconstruction of the enlightenment discourse and the domination of subjected bodies (Ahluwalia, 2005). Although Ahluwalia focused mainly on Derrida, he also mentions Foucault, who took a post in the University of Tunis in Morocco in 1966 (Horrocks & Jevtic, 1997 p. 82). Without going as far as reducing the entire poststructuralist project to a colonial unspoken or unconscious, we can certainly highlight that Foucault's silence on colonialism is conspicuous. Yet his concept of discourse "provided the theoretical basis for what has effectively become the founding disciplinary text for contemporary postcolonial theory, Edward Said's *Orientalism*" (Young, 1995 p. 57).

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[3] Foucault (2003) discusses racism in relation to biopolitics in a way that inspired Balibar's (2007) concept of "neo-racism", a racism less based on the concept of 'race' but rather on culture. Foucault's writings on racism were not translated in English until 2003 and it is in fact his concept of discourse that was much more influential for the field of postcolonial studies (Kelly, 2004).

1.1.3   The 'Other'

Focusing on late 18th and 19th century British and French literature, Said [1978](2003 p. 2) referred to Orientalism to describe a discourse through which Europe constructed a representation of the Orient and its people. Said (2003 p. 322) was not trying to assess if this "Orientalist Orient" distorted a "real Orient".[4] Instead, he argued that Western discourses about the Orient were infused and shaped by the imperial domination of the time and, as such, the knowledge of the Orient was inseparable from these relations of power. He relied on the concept of hegemony – borrowed from Gramsci (1971) – to explain the dominance of certain ideas and cultural forms over others at a given time in a society (Said, 2003 p. 7). What colonialism achieved was the domination of the Orient, not only militarily but also culturally and symbolically through the hegemonic control and ordering of knowledge:

> Orientalist discourse and European material interests were mutual allies. As a discourse, Orientalism has always operated as a general configuration of ideas and images which organise and enact a way of representing knowledge of the East, determining not only the means by which but also the position from which the East is represented.
>
> (Pickering, 2001 p. 150)

Said also stressed that there was dialectic dimension to this process: as the West constructed the Orient, it also constructed itself as a binary opposite. Where the Orient is represented as violent, irrational, barbaric and repressive, the West is constructed around categories of freedom, rationality, secularity and progress.[5] In doing so, Orientalism accomplishes two things. Firstly, it creates and sustains an absolute difference between the Orient and the Occident, between 'them' and 'us' – an assessment which echoes strongly Foucault's depiction of madness in Europe:

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[4] In *Covering Islam* (2008), Said revisited these concerns in a contemporary context, and focused specifically on news media. However, Said seemed to adopt an ideological approach, rather than a discursive one. He notably argues that current coverage failed to understand Islam (Said, 2008 p. 176). It therefore implies that there would be something as a *real* Islam, which the media fail to cover and understand. Both ideology and discourse are connected to issues of power and control; but the reason Foucault did not use the concept of ideology is precisely because it postulates something as a *real* object, which is misunderstood and/or distorted. A discursive approach, on the other hand, implies that any understanding of Islam would be a signifying practice and imbued with power relations.

[5] Said was criticised for accomplishing himself a form of essentialism by reducing the West to France and the UK in *Orientalism*, or to the US in *Covering Islam* (2008). For a criticism of Said's concept of the West see for instance Varisco (2007).

> The history of madness would be the history of the Other – of that
> which, for a given culture, is at once interior and foreign, therefore
> to be excluded (so as to exorcise the interior danger) but by being
> shut away (in order to reduce its otherness).
>
> <div align="right">(Foucault, 1970 p. xxiv)</div>

Secondly, this discursive construction also implies a value judgement in which what and who is 'Other' is also inferior. In sum, it creates polarised representations, which reinforce a sense of absolute difference and inferiority. In this perspective, the study of Orientalism tells us more about the West than it does about the East, an idea that we also find in Fanon [1961](2004 p. 58) and his claim that "Europe is literally the creation of the Third World".

Taking a macro-historical approach starting as far back as the Portuguese exploration of the African coast (1430-1498), Hall (1992) extended this opposition between the West and the Orient to the West and the "Rest" more generally. Like Said, he stressed that the West invented itself in opposition to the "Rest" of the world seen as primitive, underdeveloped, backward and closer to nature: "The 'Other' was the 'dark' side – forgotten, repressed, and denied; the reverse image of enlightenment and modernity" (Hall, 1992 p. 221).

The approach developed by Said attracted several criticisms (Varisco, 2007). Two main and interrelated critiques are particularly important here. First, his approach has been criticised for assuming "a single, systematic and homogenous colonial discourse rather than various discourses in circulation that related to colonialism and indigenous peoples" (Pickering, 2001 p. 152). In this regard, the strength of Said's critical framework is also a weakness in that it falls short of paying attention to contradictions, gaps and nuances. For instance, Siran (2011) in his study of late 19th century French dramaturge Jean-René Lenormand demonstrated that cultural forms of anti-colonial rhetoric of the time were also widely pervaded by Orientalist representations, hereby making it difficult to systematically reduce Orientalism to a discourse at the service of colonialism. Second, Said's analysis has been deemed to not pay enough attention to "change in discourse over time, tending to present Western discourse about the Orient as if it was historically unified and seamless in its construction of Europe's 'silent Other'" (Pickering, 2001 p. 154).

The fields of cultural and postcolonial studies that blossomed in the footsteps of the foundational work of Said and Hall have taken on the challenge to overcome these

limitations in several ways. The second critique – a lack of attention to historical evolution of discourse – has become a key concern of postcolonial studies of representation. I will address this concern in the following two sections of this chapter, by looking more precisely at the evolution of representation of Africa in the West. For now, I would like to introduce the notion of stereotype, which constitutes a powerful conceptual tool to pay attention to the contradictions of colonial discourse (first critique).

The concept of stereotype is usually traced back to Lippman (1922) to describe a cognitive process, essential to our perception, where we categorise objects as different or familiar. Lippman was not really interested in racism or racial stereotypes, but his definition set the standard to understand the process through which individuals and societies experience cultural and ethnic difference. Indeed, the concept of stereotype developed by social psychologists incorporates the idea that it mainly has to do with different social groups:

> Stereotypes are generalization about social groups – characteristics that are attributed to all members of a given group, without regard to variations that must exist among members of that group. Stereotypes are not necessarily based on people's first-hand experiences with members of stereotyped groups. They may be learned from others or from the mass media.
>
> (Seiter, 1986 p. 15)

Stereotyping is therefore a core representational practice in the depiction of people and cultures perceived as different, one that "reduces, essentializes, naturalizes and fixes 'difference'" (Hall, 2003a p. 258). But if stereotypes are reductive and crude, they also hold their share of ambivalence, for instance by categorising representation of the 'Other' around extremes and polar oppositions, and often requiring from the 'Other' to be "both things at the same time" (Hall, 2003a p. 229). Thus, stereotypes are crossed by contradictions and split figures or "tropes" (Bhabha, 1983; Gilman, 1985; Hulme, 1992). In that sense, studies of stereotyping pay particular attention to how meaning about difference is closed, but also the various and sometimes contradictory ways in which it is done. Conversely, grounding the process of stereotyping within the conceptual framework of the 'Other' allows us to shed light on the "structures and relations of power which give them their binding force" (Pickering, 2001 p. 60).

In this section, I outlined the key theoretical features of the critical/cultural and postcolonial traditions in which this study is located by introducing several key concepts. The study of representation and discourse holds that culture and media play a pivotal role in shaping and fixing perceptions of people, places and cultures perceived as 'Other', and in establishing and sustaining representations entangled in relations of power. I now use this theoretical framework to deconstruct more precisely the historical and discursive "invention of Africa" in the West (Mudimbe, 1988).

1.2   Genealogy of the discursive construction of Africa

This representation has a complex historical and discursive genealogy. This section identifies the key features of this representation and discusses how it was shaped by a Euro-centric system of knowledge infused by a background of oppression, racism and domination, from the beginning of the modern period to the colonial era. I close this section by discussing more specifically the role of European journalists in the 19th century in "inventing Africa".

1.2.1   Modernity and the idea of Africa

The way Africa came to be dominantly imagined, represented and invented in the Western world can be traced to the discovery of the New World and the birth of the modern world-system (Mignolo, 2011; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013), which is often defined as the birth of modernity (Toulmin, 1992; Mignolo, 1995). Europe, as it sought to put itself at the centre of world history through economic and territorial expansion and domination, simultaneously started to construct 'Others' as essentially different and inferior (Hall, 1992; Toulmin, 1992; Gilroy, 1993). This modern paradigm of alterity together with the growth of the Atlantic slave trade shaped an "idea of Africa" (Mudimbe, 1988; 1994) and a racist view of Africans as inferior, savage and less than human.

For Mudimbe (1994) this idea of Africa as a sort of radical 'Otherness' emerged in the Greco-Roman civilisation. On the contrary, others like Snowden (1970), Fredrickson (2002) and Bassil (2011) argue that prior to the Atlantic slave trade, images of Africans were more fluid albeit highly polarised:

> Before the middle of the fifteenth century, Europeans had little or no direct contact with sub-Saharan Africans. Artistic and literary representations of these distant and exotic peoples ranged from the monstrous and horrifying to the saintly and heroic.
>
> (Fredrickson, 2002 p. 26)

More importantly, during the late Middle Ages, Europe saw the establishment of several positive and glorified images of black Africans. Religion was at the core of this trend as "Europeans began to view Africans as potential military partners against the spread of Islam" (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1997 p. 682). For instance, a cult of Prester John – mythical ruler of a Christian empire often located in Ethiopia – emerged and grew increasingly popular from the 12th century onward. Similarly, it became common to represent Balthazar, one of the nativity magi, as a black African (Fredrickson, 2002 p. 28). In any case, the advent of the slave trade and the development of modern European consciousness led to the establishment of a strongly prejudiced, monolithic, unified and racialised representation of Africa and Africans.

At the core of modernity's conception of 'Otherness' was the dichotomy between noble and wild savages. This dichotomy shaped early representations of native Americans and infused a key philosophical debate of the Enlightenment, the debate on man in the state of nature (Mudimbe, 1988). For Hobbes, man in the state of nature was violent and savage, while for Rousseau this man was fundamentally good, living in simplicity and harmony with nature. While their writings assumed a hypothetical state of nature, both philosophers were impacted by the account of European travellers exploring remote geographical areas. This foundational debate of modernity cemented the dual categories of savageness/barbarity and authenticity/simplicity, which subsequently impacted representation of black Africans (Mudimbe, 1988). As the European commercial slave trade thrived and forced some 12 million black Africans into ships to America to provide cheap labour force, it discursively inscribed difference and inferiority to the black body (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1997; Hall, 2003a).

Parallel to the expansion of the slave trade, the era of Enlightenment – often heralded as the symbol of humanity's walk towards progress, reason and civilisation – was therefore crossed by the paradox that many of its leading thinkers who promoted universal claims of liberty and equality were "anxious to establish that large numbers of the peoples of the world were somehow less than men"

(Bracken, 2001 p. 174). The Enlightenment effectively laid the foundation for the development of the scientific racism of the 18th and 19th century, which underpinned the European colonialism in Africa and contributed to one of its most successful enterprise: "forcing most diverse regions, traditions, and cultures in Africa into one symbolic system" (Mayer, 2002 p. 1).

1.2.2   The colonial myth of the "Dark Continent"

Around the late 18th and early 19th century an image of Africa appeared in a more systematic and coherent way, infused by the racial and colonial episteme of the time (Mudimbe, 1988). The domination of imperial powers was based on civilisational and racial classifications grounded in the newly born anthropology and the development of scientific racism. On the physical, aesthetic, moral and intellectual scales, whites ranked the highest and blacks the lowest (Gould, 1996; Rattansi, 2007). The pseudo-science of craniology notably became one of the main tools used by anthropologists to prove inherent biological inequalities between 'races'. In spite of internal inconsistencies that could have been discarded from within the science of the time (Gould, 1996), racial inequalities were taken at face value, hereby making science a convenient tool for morally justifying the economic and political incentives of colonialism.

This racial episteme pervaded not only the science of the time, but also other social fields of knowledge production, from religion to politics. In the UK, for instance, Bassil (2011 p. 391) argues that Christianity played a pivotal role in shaping a racialised perception of Africa as "savage, backward and indolent, and in need of redemption through British intervention". This view underpinned the debates about the abolition of slavery on both sides, as well as about the civilising mission of colonialism. For Bassil (2011), this view was rendered particularly popular through the medium of the Church and missionary organisations. In France, on the contrary, the view of Africa as inferior and in need of uplifting was heavily supported by a secular tradition of universalism and French republicanism, captured by the famous speech of leader of the Republican party Jules Ferry before the Chambers of deputies in July 1885: "the superior races have a right because they have a duty: it is their duty to civilise the inferior races" (quoted in Bancel et al., 2006 p. 98). Both pro and anti-colonial proponents relied on a similar set of assumptions about the existence of inferior 'races':

> The underlying assumption was that modern society had evolved from its antithesis, that non-white "primitives" in the contemporary world were "childlike, intuitive, and spontaneous", and that because of this they required control and guidance from Europe if they were not to suffer from their inherent physical violence and sexual drives.
>
> (Pickering, 2001 p. 53)

This episteme of racial superiority shaped the way Europe started to "invent" Africa as the "Dark Continent" (Achebe, 1988; Mudimbe, 1988; Bassil, 2011). This metaphor became the common way of describing and talking about Africa in the Victorian period, in particular following the publication of Henry Morton Stanley's account of his expeditions *Through the Dark Continent* [1878](1988). The most influential cultural manifestation of this metaphor is found in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1995). The book is inspired by the many stories of colonisers who were reported to act extremely brutally and madly against black Africans and eventually against their fellow colonisers. While the book was conceived as radical critique of the horrors of imperialism, the extreme cruelty it depicted was blamed on them being in Africa, with Africans, under an African Sun. Thus, it implied a determinism linked to some kind of African essence. In this perspective, the "darkness" of the African land, echoed by the skin colour of its inhabitants, ultimately affects the white colonisers and turns them into brutes and savages, awakening in them their own "darkness" (Achebe, 1988; Spurr, 1993; Lindqvist, 2007). What ultimately became a landmark of British literature, and that remains today an educational rite of passage, was therefore at once a radical critique of colonialism and "the culmination of a nineteenth century literary/political way of seeing the Other" (Fothergill, 1992 p. 45).

Following Barthes's concept of myth, we can say that Africa was shaped or invented as the myth of the "Dark Continent". The word "Africa" does not only signify a large continent located west of Asia and south of Europe. It also became a myth, originating in the Western world, that associated sub-Saharan Africa with violence, brutality, poverty, absence of culture, being outside of history and primitivism (Mudimbe, 1988; Bassil, 2011). This essentialist myth, at once, homogenises Africa as a single entity while reducing it to sub-Saharan, 'black' Africa. It contributes to a "naturalization of racial difference" by representing black Africans as savage, inferior, violent or promiscuous (Hall, 2003a). The black body in particular "became the discursive site through which much of this 'racialized knowledge' was produced and circulated" (Hall, 2003a p. 244). Finally, and just

like the Orient was a mirror through which the West constructed its own identity, Africa constituted "one of the metaphors through which the West represents the origin of its own norms, develops a self-image, and integrates this image into the set of signifiers asserting what it supposes to be its identity" (Mbembe, 2001 p. 2). As Europe invented itself as enlightened, educated, progressive and scientific, it also constructed Africa as an opposite myth characterised by savageness, blackness and inferiority: "Africa became an indispensable term, a negative trope, in the language of modernity" (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1997 p. 689). Despite the fact that on "the very eve of the colonial conquest and occupation, Africa was far from being primitive, static, and asleep or in Hobbesian state of nature" (Boahen, 2011 p. 23), the knowledge and representation of Africa was filtered through these preconceptions.

1.2.3   Colonial culture and journalism

This myth of the "Dark Continent" infused and was reproduced by culture at large, from philosophy and literature to human exhibition and travellers' accounts. German philosopher Hegel (1861), for instance, in his authoritative *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* contributed to popularise the view of Africa as "out of history" and to fixing some of the most pervasive stereotypes about black Africans:

> It [Africa] has no historical interest of its own, for we find its inhabitants living in barbarism and savagery in a land, which has not furnished them with any ingredient of culture. From the earliest historical times, Africa has remained cut off from all contacts with the rest of the world; it is the land of gold, forever pressing in upon itself, and the land of childhood, removed from the light of self-conscious history and wrapped in the dark mantle of night. Its isolation is not just a result of its tropical nature, but an essential consequence of its geographical character.
>
> (Hegel, 1861 p. 103)[6]

In Britain and France, human exhibitions played a key role in reinforcing a certain image of black Africans as exotic savages, since it allowed European population to

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[6] Susan Buck-Morss (2000) provides a fascinating analysis that links Hegel's theory of the master/slave dialectic to the Haitian revolution and the self-liberation of the slaves of Saint-Domingue. For her, that Hegel dealt with the question of lordship and bondage was not ex nihilo but in fact the result of him reading press accounts of the Haitian revolution, and of its centrality to the European political discourse of the time: "Hegel knew about real slaves revolting successfully against real masters, and he elaborated his dialectic of lordship and bondage deliberately within this contemporary context" (Buck-Morss, 2000 p. 844). Surely, many key philosophical debates of the 19th century would benefit from further studies that would contextualise them in a similar historical and critical fashion.

directly encounter 'Otherness' staged and commodified for the purpose of this audience and its assumptions (Blanchard, 2008).[7] Advertisements and theatre also drew significantly on a similar colonial lexicon of representation (Blanchard & Lemaire, 2003; Ramamurthy, 2003; Bancel et al., 2006).

Hammond and Jablow's (1977) and Milbury-Steen's (1981) respective work on British, and British and French literature provide tremendous evidence of the pervasiveness of a dehumanising discourse on Africa and racial stereotypes, in particular in the very popular genre of adventure fiction. In most of the British and French colonial novels of the 19th century, the role reserved to African characters was limited to certain categories such as "loyal servants, cunning villains, Westernized Africans or uncivilized primitives" (Milbury-Steen, 1981 p. 15). Milbury-Steen observes striking correlation between the most commonly used stereotypes in both British and French colonial novels, which notably included physical (ugliness and sensual acuteness), mental (lack of intelligence and culture), moral (primitive, childlike, deceitful) and emotional (impulsive, musically gifted) stereotypes.

As most people in Europe in the 19th and early 20th century only encountered Africa through mediated representations, the authority of those having been there was further increased, despite the fact that their observations essentially reproduced their own preconceptions. In that regard, explorers' and journalists' accounts played a pivotal role in feeding representations of the "Dark Continent". The fabled encounter between Henry Morton Stanley and David Livingstone in East Africa in 1871 is often seen as epitomising the interplay between the imperialist enterprise known as the "Scramble for Africa" and the colonial practices of cultural representation of the continent (Dunn, 2004). Between 1870 and 1914, the world witnessed an increased exploration, invasion, occupation and colonisation of Africa by European powers. Generally hidden behind humanitarian and civilisational concerns, the imperialist enterprise was characterised by the control and exploitation of raw materials and land. It was also a way for European countries to establish their economic and symbolic power nationally and internationally. Seen

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[7] An exhibition at the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris, "Human Zoo, The invention of the savage" (2012), provided extensive visual material to explain the historical evolution of the staging of 'Otherness'. It was particularly interesting to see that many West Africans in the early 20th century were paid to act as Zulu Warriors, from South Africa, for the pleasure of European audiences, thus showing how this form of representation *materially* constructed the (black) 'African Other'.

as a *terra nullius*, Africa was to be explored and exploited. This domination was enacted at a material and symbolic level, and the partition of the continent during the 1884-1885 Berlin Conference is the perfect example of the alignment between the material and symbolic ordering of the world performed by colonialism. The colonial map of Africa, characterised by borders drawn with rulers and setsquares, testified to the conquest and domination of the continent, while rendering its geography "legible to the European gaze" (Popke, 2001 p. 10).

This period was also the early days of international news, as popular press drew on the telegraph technology to report more routinely on the imperial expansion. Press coverage of Africa's exploration grew popular and reached a broader audience; this provided further legitimisation for the imperial project while creating a lucrative market for further expeditions funded by newspapers (Fabian, 2012 p. 95). Stanley, for instance, became a celebrity thanks to his coverage and writings (*In Darkest Africa* sold 150,000 copies in 1890 and was translated in 10 European languages), and his expeditions were funded by newspapers, including the *Daily Telegraph* and the *New York Herald* (Willems, 2015 p. 303).[8] He eventually organised an exhibition in London in 1890 – with the financial support of the Queen Victoria and Leopold II – which praised the British presence in Africa and his "heroic travels in darkest Africa" (Pettitt, 2007). In this way, press accounts of expeditions played a significant role in constructing and cementing representations that suited the needs of imperial expansion and domination (see also Curtin, 1964; Simonsen, 2010; Willems, 2015), while feeding off as well as feeding into the popular literary style of fiction of colonial travel (Fabian, 2012 p. 98).

Pankhurst's (2005) study of the *Times* (London) coverage of the Battle of Adwa provides a compelling example of the press' support to imperialism, even in spite of conflicting interests between British, French and Italian colonial powers. The battle of Adwa of 1 March 1896 was won by the troops of Ethiopian Emperor Menelik against the imperial Italian troops of General Oreste Baratieri. Although France was in competition with Italy, the French public opinion was "unwilling to side with the invaded country because it was situated on the African Continent"

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[8] Murray (2012) reminds us that Stanley's popularity did not decrease despite the documented accusations of him and his officers using brutality, violence and plunder and even slavery, leading to the death of around one thousand individuals, mainly Africans (soldiers, porters and "belligerent natives").

(Pankhurst, 2005 p. 218). Before the Italian troops were defeated, the *Times* correspondent in Paris wrote:

> No one here – with the sole possible exception of one or two dim-witted persons or a few habitually malevolent minds – wishes for the success of the Abyssinians at the price of the discomfiture of a civilized nation, from which it is quite possible to differ in aims and opinions without cherishing any ill-will when that nation is face to face with a brave but barbarous foe.
>
> (Pankhurst, 2005 p. 218)

Following the Italian debacle at Adwa, the *Times* coverage adopted a pro-Italian stance that reflected that of the British establishment; a friendly and sympathetic attitude that was largely explained by the fear that "the defeat of a European power by an African nation would create unrest in British colonies" (Pankhurst, 2005 p. 224).

Because journalists travelling to Africa, especially in the second part of the 19th century, arrived there with an image shaped by previous accounts, they often reproduced a prejudiced image of the continent. They were "on the lookout for scenes that carry an already established *interest* for a Western audience, thus investing perception itself with the mediating power of cultural difference" (Spurr, 1993 p. 21). Such personal and racist prejudice is particularly visible in Stanley's account of Sierra Leone during an assignment for the *New York Herald*:

> If I were asked where I could find the most insolent, lying, thieving negroes, I should undoubtedly say at Sierra Leone. Through some strange caprice the English have permitted a colony of semi-civilized Africans to grow up in order to experiment, perhaps, how wild and rank a colony of negroes can become when left to their own sinful and wicked devices, unchecked and uncurbed by the hand of law. The English will, perhaps, plead as an excuse that the climate is against the exercise of strong will; that no matter how valiant a man be in his intentions when he sets out to govern the blatant woolly-headed rabble of this colony, he will be prostrated before the unconquerable lassitude which the climate quickly engenders in him as soon as he sets foot on its shores.
>
> (Stanley, 1874, pp. 6-7 quoted in Spurr, 1993 p. 80).

Anthropologist Johannes Fabian (2000; 2012) puts forward an additional reason that may have further contributed to the reproduction of such images in travel and journalistic writing: mental and physical exhaustion caused by difficult travel conditions, uncertainty and anxiety. In this perspective, the material conditions of travelling, rendered even more stressful by the daily need to cover a lot of ground,

impacted the state of mind of these writers, eventually contributing to them reproducing images of wilderness and danger (Fabian, 2012 p. 97). However, and importantly, these difficult travel conditions were not inherent to Africa's geography; rather they were the result of self-imposed constraints by explorers and driven by the ethos of colonial expansion.

With the development of the press and of international coverage spurred by the global expansion of colonial empires, the press therefore played a crucial role in informing Western audiences with images of Africa that perpetuated these stereotypes. Even at the dawn of decolonisation, not much seemed to have changed in the way Western journalists wrote about Africa.[9] Allimadi (2002) accessed the archive of the *New York Times*, including correspondence between Africa correspondents and editors from this period. This material perfectly reveals such continuity. Homer Bigart, two times winner of the Pulitzer price and often heralded as one of the most acclaimed American reporter of the 20th century, covered many of the independence movements in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In a communication to his editor in 1960, he writes about the independence movements:

> I'm afraid I cannot work up any enthusiasm for the emerging republics. The politicians are either crooks or mystics. Dr Nkrumah is a Henry Wallace in burnt cork. I vastly prefer the primitive bush people. After all, cannibalism may be the logical antidote to this population explosion everyone talks about.
>
> (Bigart quoted in Allimadi, 2002 p. 6)

This quote reveals his contempt for the independence movements and his racism. The response of his editor – Emanuel Freedman – shows that Bigart's racist views, on the field, were met with similar enthusiasm back at the office:

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[9] In spite of an impressive amount of research conducted into Western media coverage of Africa, in particular on the period from the 1990s onward, there is surprisingly little in-depth, systematic research into media coverage of African news prior to that, and in particular from the late colonial era. The studies quoted here surely provide evidence of the press contribution to the myth of the "Dark Continent", as well as the contribution of travel and missionary writings and travel fictions. And historians of colonial culture provide a lot of evidence of press coverage being in alignment with imperial interests while reproducing well-established stereotypes. Nonetheless, it would be particularly interesting to see media historians deepen our knowledge of media coverage of Africa during this period, using perhaps some of the tools developed by media analysts of contemporary coverage of Africa. This might help us understand better just how far the view of the "Dark Continent" infused press coverage at the time, and, consequently, assess more confidently continuities and changes in current reporting.

> This is just a note to say hello and to tell you how much pleasure your peerless prose from the badlands is continuing to give us and your public. By now you must be American journalism's leading expert on sorcery, witchcraft, cannibalism and all the other exotic phenomena indigenous to darkest Africa. All this and nationalism too! Where else but in the *New York Times* can you get all this for a nickel?
>
> (Freedman quoted in Allimadi, 2002 p. 6)

This rare material provides compelling evidence of the ways in which mythical representations of Africa pervaded the mentalities of journalists up to the end of the colonial era, and ultimately shaped images of Africa produced by the media.[10]

In sum, the West discursively created an idea of Africa infused by a background of domination, slavery, racism, paternalism and imperialism. The representation shaped by colonial discourse cemented a myth of the "Dark Continent" and a view of Africa as 'Other', savage, wild, mysterious and dangerous; ultimately a mirror dialectically shaping the identity of European nation states as developed and modern. The period that saw the establishment of this myth also witnessed the birth and expansion of modern telecommunication systems, with an increasing number of journalists sent in Africa to report on the progress of the imperial project, thus further contributing to reinforce mythical images. It is against this historical and discursive backdrop that a debate on Afro-pessimism emerged in the 1990s, to which I now turn.

1.3 Afro-pessimism: from a postcolonial phenomenon to a postcolonial concept

The concept of Afro-pessimism emerged in the early 1990s. Since then, there has been a real uptake for the concept across the humanities and social sciences, including in literature, sociology, anthropology, geography, and cultural and postcolonial studies. For indication, Google scholar records 89 publications mentioning "Afro-pessimism" or "Afropessimism" between 1990 and 1995; 897 publication between 1995 and 2005, and 1314 between 2005 and 2014. The term

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[10] Allimadi's book has gone relatively unnoticed in the academic literature. One reason might be that Allimadi is a journalist and his book does not follow academic conventions. However, the book provides fascinating first hand material that shed lights on the behind-the-scene processes of production of African news in what is one of the most respected newspapers in the world, the *New York Times*.

has also gained visibility within the media. Again for indication, Nexis records 35 news articles between 1990 and 1995, 222 between 1995 and 2005, and 903 between 2005 and 2014. In order to understand the uptake for the concept and how it links to the issues of colonial discourse and representation, I start by contextualising its emergence in relation to sub-Saharan Africa's economic development and political situation in the 1990s.

1.3.1 Emergence of the concept

The oldest occurrence of the term of Afro-pessimism is found in a 27 March 1988 article from the *Xinhua* General Overseas News service, the Chinese state press agency. The article "France: creditors should do more for Africa's debt problem" relayed the call from Michel Aurillac, French minister of cooperation – a ministry created after decolonisation by General de Gaulles with the aim to contribute to the development of former colonies. Aurillac called creditor countries to do more to alleviate the debts of sub-Saharan African countries and "warned of what he called 'an afro-pessimism' held by some contributors" and their "pessimistic views on Africa's economic situation" (Xinhua News Agency, 1988). The first occurrence of "afro-pessimism" in academic writing is in an article by economist Tony Hawkins in 1990 in *The World Today*, where he noted that "[s]o widespread and deep rooted is Afro-pessimism that it is now impossible to read anything on regional economic prospects without being subjected to a litany of dismal economic statistics" (Hawkins, 1990 p. 205). These two early occurrences allow to historically and discursively locate the uptake for the concept of Afro-pessimism.

The African independences of the 1950s and 60s were backed by a strong sense of optimism and pride (Momoh, 2003 pp. 44–46; Young, 2004 p. 23; Meredith, 2005; Rothermund, 2006); finally free from the burden of colonialism, there were great hopes that most of these countries would finally blossom (Mulwo et al., 2012). The 1980s, instead, gave way to a strong sense of pessimism regarding the ability of African countries to establish on their own "what the West would regard as 'good governance'" (de B'béri & Louw, 2011 p. 339). In the aftermath of the 1970s worldwide energy crisis, many countries on the continent witnessed successive military coups, corruption and the establishment of dictatorships. By the mid 1980s, these countries were unable to repay mounting foreign debts to European and US sources, and were "grappling with the burden of poverty, famine and disease" (Mulwo et al., 2012 p. 3). They turned to the World Bank and the

International Monetary Fund (IMF) to contract further loans to repay these debts (Momoh, 2003 p. 50). Following the emerging economic neoliberalism, these institutions required the borrowing countries to implement structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) (Harrison, 2005 p. 1308). These entailed systematic cuts in public sector budgets to favour a free market economy and stimulate economic growth, most notably through international trade. However, these countries integrated a global market where they were unable to compete with the international private sector. As the SAPs required the scaling back of education, health and labour protection, they "led to greater social and economic deprivation and an increased dependence of African countries on external loans" (Colgan, 2002). These SAPs contributed both to greater poverty and dependency, while preserving Western dominance in the global economy.

Rather than questioning this global framework and its structures of power, the dominant discourse that emerged in the 1990s, especially from the fields of economics and development, focused on painting an "apocalyptic" picture, as evoked earlier by Hawkins (see also Ferguson, 2006 p. 10). At the core of this discourse was the view that not only had Africa failed to "progress" but also that it was mainly to be blamed for this failure (Spurr, 1993 p. 62). Culturalist explanations – that accounted for this failure as a specifically African phenomenon and the result of perceived social and cultural uniqueness – emerged and were reinforced by comparisons with Asian countries, whose economy had taken off in the meantime. This played an effective rhetorical role in sustaining a view of "Africa as being to blame for its own ills" (de B'béri & Louw, 2011 p. 342). As analysed by Escobar (1995), the post World War II development discourse divided the world between "First" and "Third Worlds". This contributed further to pathologising Africa within an ethnocentric framework that sustained the Western global hegemony and its self-representation as modern, progressive and superior. In that regard, the evolution of the World Bank discourse on Africa provides interesting insights into the formation of an Afro-pessimist discourse. Initially seen in the 1970s as a "child" in need of external help to develop (modernisation theory), Africa came to be seen as a "patient" to be cured of its own ills in the 1990s (Wijngaarden, 2006).

From dictatorships, corruption and civil wars to famines, pandemics and even genocide, so big were the challenges facing the continent in the 1990s that a sense

that there was little hope to overcome them progressively took hold. The end of the Cold War – which had provided a framework to locate Africa on the map of global geopolitics – also did much to reinforce this sense of hopelessness as the continent became seen as less relevant, if not irrelevant, to global geopolitics. Discussions of the "African crisis" were thus dominated by a strong sense of pessimism, with prescriptions ranging from recolonisation of the continent to its abandonment (see for instance Rieff, 1998). The profusion of mediatised images of the "African crisis", especially following the iconic coverage of the Ethiopian famine of 1984-1985 and the emergence of 24-hour TV news network, echoed "prevailing representations of both Africa and Africans, as the 'dark continent': primordial, tribal, violent, unable to feed itself and with a begging bowl permanently in its hand" (Ahluwalia, 2001 p. 133). They created "a view that Africa is a basket case, beyond help, a negative outlook known as 'Afro-pessimism'" (Popke, 2001 p. 6). Thus, a representation of the post-independence Africa was shaped, "driven by a need to fit its supposed complexities – its enigmatic psychology, as it were – into an explanatory scheme congruent with our view of Western development" (Chabal & Daloz, 1999 p. 141).

1.3.2   A lack of conceptual definition

Afro-pessimism is thus a *discourse*. Those attacking this discourse are concerned with how the continent and its people, its present and its future, are being *represented* as '*Other*' through a Western lens that echoes colonial and racist images of the "Dark Continent". It is no surprise, then, that early mentions of Afro-pessimism almost systematically linked it to the role of the media as seen, for example, in the following quote: "alarming reports on declining African economies and environments are frequent in the mass media. The overall picture is bleak, creating a general Afro-pessimism" (Olsson, 1993 p. 395). South African media studies notably contributed to discussions of Afro-pessimism and the media, notably in relation to the context of post-apartheid South Africa (Wasserman & de Beer, 2009; de Beer, 2010; Berger, 2010; Evans & Glenn, 2010; Evans, 2011; Mulwo et al., 2012). In condemning and deconstructing Afro-pessimism, this literature aimed to confront contemporary discourses and representation with their racist and colonialist roots so as to undermine them, together with the system of knowledge that produces and sustains them.

But up to now, little research has attempted to offer a substantial and authoritative definition of Afro-pessimism. In spite of having a context and some general features, the concept of Afro-pessimism remains a floating signifier. As de B'béri and Louw argue in a special issue of *Critical Arts: South-North Cultural and Media Studies* dedicated to Afro-pessimism: "although there are bits and pieces and research works on Afropessimism, none has yet brought it all together in a coherent way" (de B'béri & Louw, 2011 p. 335). This was the first, and for now only, special issue to be published on the topic of Afro-pessimism per se and provides a very welcome effort that should be praised for attempting to understand what Afro-pessimism is. They identified different views on Afro-pessimism that are reproduced below in Table 1.

Table 1 - B'béri & Louw's table 'Perspectives on Afro-pessimism' (2011 p. 336)

	(1) Africa is misrepresented by racists	(2) Africa is misrepresented by Western media	(3) Africa is in trouble but it can be fixed Version 1	(4) Africa is in trouble but it can be fixed Version 2	(5) Africa is hopeless and cannot be fixed
What is the problem?	Africans are portrayed negatively by Western racists	Africa is portrayed negatively by Western media	African client states are run by poor leaders	Africa is badly run and Africans are incapable of governing themselves	Africans are incapable of running things
Who is to blame?	Racists negatively stereotype Africans (Western racism is the problem, not Africa)	Journalists construct negative representations (Western media are the problem, not Africa)	Bad African governments and neo-colonialism (The West is complicit in the problem)	Africans are to blame (The West is not the problem, it is the solution)	Africans are to blame (The West is not the problem or the solution)
What is the solution?	Attack racist portrayals	Rebrand Africa to create good representations	New African leaders are needed to create better governance	Recolonisation (by the West, the UN or China)	Give up on Africa, excise it from the world community

Does their table help clarify what Afro-pessimism is? By their account, it seems that an Afro-pessimist can be anyone ranging from someone criticising corrupt governments and neocolonialism, to someone believing that "Africans are incapable of running things" and that Africa should be either "recolonised" or "excised" from the world community.

Overall I see three main difficulties with de B'béri and Louw's attempt to conceptualise Afro-pessimism. Firstly, their table confuses two things that, albeit

related, should be separated. The views 1 and 2 are *critiques of Afro-pessimism* (a), whereas the views 3, 4 and 5 are different forms of *Afro-pessimist rhetoric* (b). This confusion between the phenomenon (Afro-pessimist discourse) and its criticism makes it hard to understand the nature of the phenomenon being referred to in the first place, namely, Afro-pessimism.

In addition, despite these different perspectives, de B'béri and Louw assume that Afro-pessimism is a "discourse" and "a practice of representation", one that "produced Africa as a naturalized pessimistic object of knowledge" (2011 p. 345). But their table presents Afro-pessimism as a discourse in the sense of a linguistic unit of text and speech, rather than a system of knowledge. There is a risk, then, to remove from the concept of discourse what gives it its critical edge: revealing the power structures and relations of domination contained, and dialectically reproduced, through discourse.

Finally, de B'béri and Louw argue that mass media are central to this discourse: "[Afro-pessimism] has gained widespread currency in the global mass media (…) journalists now regularly use it as a shorthand commonsensical expression which means that there is no hope for sub-Saharan Africa"(de B'béri & Louw, 2011 p. 338). Yet, none of the articles in the special issue address the question of Afro-pessimism in the context of news media and journalism.

Thus, in their attempt to make sense of Afro-pessimism, de B'béri and Louw simultaneously reinforce its position as a floating signifier and its "taken for grantedness" in news media. These ambiguities permeate more broadly the ways in which Afro-pessimism is used, both in academia and public discourse. The main reason as to why this happens is that the concept is underspecified. In particular, it is too often equated with "bad news" or "negative portrayal" as in the view 1 and 2 of de B'béri and Louw. At this point, the concept of Afro-pessimism drifts away from a refined understanding of a system of knowledge that produces a contemporary, postcolonial image of Africa entangled in older colonial ideas, to a simplistic and reductionist condemnation of "negative" portrayal.

There are several risks in trivialising Afro-pessimism in such a way. For instance, this could prevent studies of Africa's media image to understand precisely the discursive features of the reporting where a colonial representational legacy is at

play. In other words, there is a risk to fail to see what constitutes discursive continuities and what constitutes changes. In addition, the trivialisation of Afro-pessimism as simply a negative portrayal means that the critique of Afro-pessimism can easily be co-opted. For instance, politicians can rely on a trivialised idea of Afro-pessimism as a way to equate "negative coverage" with "racist and imperialist thinking". In this way, they seek to discredit international media, regardless of the quality, accuracy, meaningfulness and public interest of a story. But the question is not only one of negative images of crisis or violence. As Fanon [1961](2004) reminds us, violence should be talked about precisely because it is constitutive of colonial and postcolonial power relations, both in their material and symbolic dimensions. The question then is how this violence is being presented, framed and discussed, and how it is discursively constructed in relation to other representations. Finally, the critique of Afro-pessimism as "negative portrayal" implies, and advocates for, more "positive images" as the desired imaginary horizon. However, in doing so, it dramatically narrows the potential to create different forms of meaning about the continent rather than opening it up in a more complex and multifarious fashion.

Nonetheless, the concept of Afro-pessimism has potential. At its roots, the concept has an important and socially engaged ethos: to assess, and condemn, the reproduction of colonial and racist representations in the postcolonial era. In order to fill the gap of its underspecification while retaining the critical ethos of the concept, a clearer definition is necessary. First, this definition would need to draw both from the literature on Afro-pessimism per se and from the insights of the literature on Western media coverage of Africa – which often refers to Afro-pessimism, although not systematically. This would allow understanding and characterising precisely the discursive nature of Afro-pessimism in news media.

Secondly, this definition needs to be firmly grounded in a postcolonial perspective (Shome, 1998; Ahluwalia, 2001; Mbembe, 2001; Willems, 2015). Postcolonial here should not be understood merely as happening after colonialism, or, worse even, that colonialism, its system of knowledge and representation, and its power structures are things from the past. Instead, the concept of postcolonial "takes into account the historical realities of the European imperial incursions into the continent from the fifteenth century onwards" (Ahluwalia, 2001 p. 14). Thus, it aims to assess the re-actualisation of older colonial myths in a contemporary

context. This postcolonial approach holds that colonialism did not only affect countries under domination, but also the imagination and system of knowledge of the colonising countries (Fanon, 1952) and continues to do so. In that sense, the definition of Afro-pessimism that I will put forward in Chapter 2 anchors the concept in this postcolonial perspective that rejects the contemporary inscription of Africa's difference within a hegemonic framework infused by a background of racism and Western domination. By taking seriously the phenomenon of Afro-pessimism as a discursive formation – one that can be identified and deconstructed – my goal is thus to assess to what extent and how news media contribute to Afro-pessimism.

Conclusions

In this chapter I introduced the theoretical framework of critical/cultural and postcolonial studies in which this thesis operates. I introduced and defined the key concepts of representation, discourse and the 'Other', and explained how these tools can be used to study cultural artefacts and unpack the power relations that they contain. I then drew on this framework to trace the construction of an idea of Africa, a Western construct entangled in relationships of power and shaped by an historical background of institutional racism and domination. The colonial era in particular played a decisive role in shaping an image of Africa as the "Dark Continent", an inverted mirror of Europe's self image. In this colonial context, I also highlighted the key role played by journalists in mediating images of Africa and reproducing and sustaining such discourse. This discursive genealogy served to contextualise the discussion, in the last section, of the concept of Afro-pessimism. In spite of its increasing visibility in the last 20 years, especially to criticise Western media coverage of Africa, I argued that the concept lacks a clear definition. If the concept of Afro-pessimism is to be useful as a critical, postcolonial tool to guide research into media representation of Africa, it needs to be defined more clearly. In order to establish such a definition, I now turn to the discursive nature of Western news media coverage of Africa as established by the literature.

CHAPTER 2 - News coverage of Africa and journalism production

This chapter brings in focus my discussion of representation of Africa and Afro-pessimism by concentrating on Western news media coverage of Africa and news production. I proceed in three steps. Firstly, I provide a review of the literature on Western media coverage of Africa to identify the key features of this coverage. I draw on an extensive body of studies that use a variety of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Secondly, I turn to the specific context of journalism and news production in which this coverage occurs. I provide an overview of the key factors shaping this coverage. In the process, I introduce several analytical tools and approaches emerging from the field of journalism and news production studies, including gatekeeping, news values, commercialism, political economy and media imperialism. This section makes the argument that we ought to situate media texts in their context of production in order to understand how power relations shape media discourse. This process of reviewing the literature on Western media coverage of Africa is necessary in order to establish, in a third and final section, the definition and conceptualisation of Afro-pessimism that is subsequently used to answer my research questions in my empirical analyses.

2.1   Features of news coverage

In this first section, I review the existing literature on Western media coverage of Africa in order to establish what are the dominant features of this coverage. I respectively look at how much coverage Africa receives, what types of stories dominate the coverage and, finally, the language and images used in this coverage.

2.1.1   Africa on the map of international news

Several studies have captured quantitatively the first characteristic of Western coverage of African news. Larson (1984) analysed the news content of more than 1000 US TV newscasts between 1972 and 1981, and he found that Africa accounted for 7% of the international content. A 1995 study mapped the flow of international news, looking at two weeks of international coverage in newspapers

throughout 44 countries (Wu, 2004). Based on statistics of the research, I counted 722 African news stories, which amounts to 1.67% of the total international coverage. Paik (1999) analysed the *Wall Street Journal* international news content between 1990 and 1992. The coverage of Africa represented only 3% of the foreign news coverage, whereas Europe and Asia received 37% and 24% respectively. Wilke et al. (2012) investigated the content of foreign coverage of TV news during four weeks of the year 2008 across 17 countries from five regions. When we focus the results on the six European countries included in the study, the coverage of Africa represent 4% of foreign news coverage, as opposed to 76% of the coverage focusing on other European countries or North America. Overall, their analysis shows that Africa (3%) is the least covered continent along with Australia/Oceania (3%), South America having 9%, the Middle East 18%, Asia 19%, North America 23% and Europe 40% (Wilke et al., 2012 p. 309). The 3% of coverage are in stark contrast with the fact that Africa is home to about 15% of the world's population. This scarcity of the coverage – also referred to as the "neglect of Africa" (Franks, 2010b) – is one of the key and most recurring features identified by the literature on Africa in Western news.

It is not clear if Africa constitutes the most neglected continent in foreign news. A research by the Oxford Internet Institute found that between January 1979 and August 2013, sub-Saharan Africa accounted for 13.4 million of stories as opposed to 60 million for North America and Europe combined, 32.6 million for Asia and 23.5 million for the Middle East and North Africa (Graham & de Sabbata, 2013). Latin America and the Caribbean accounted for only 6.5 million, and Oceania 3.4 million. In fact, if one were to add the countries from North Africa to those of sub-Saharan Africa, the continent would register nearly as many events as the Middle East. The numbers provided by this study should be approached carefully because they do not represent the amount of coverage, but, rather, registered news events.[11] Nonetheless, they point to the fact that Africa may not be the most neglected continent.

A study of 10 years of foreign coverage on three US TV channels shows that both Africa (6.7%) and Latin America (6.2%) receive the least coverage (Weaver et al., 1984). De Beer (2010), for his part, explored UK, US and German TV news

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[11] These results are based on a catalogue of events derived from news stories published in media from nearly all countries in the world (GDELT database).

coverage over the year 2008. He found that while Africa (10.8%) received significantly less coverage than Asia (25.5%), the Middle East (22%) and North America (21.4%), it nonetheless "received substantially more coverage than South America (1.9%)" (de Beer, 2010 p. 603). More recently, Hennig (2011) analysed the entire global news coverage of the *Guardian's* news website for the years 2010, 2011 and 2012. He then created maps to visualise the picture of the world created by the newspaper, where the size of each country is relative to the amount of coverage it receives. The 2010 map (Figure 1), like those of the subsequent years, shows that the media are far from providing a neutral window to the world. While the African continent is significantly shrunk down, this is also very much the case for Latin America. On the one hand, this suggests that the phenomenon of scarce coverage is not unique to Africa and that Africa may not be the continent the "most" marginalised by the media. On the other hand, all studies demonstrate a clear imbalance in that Western countries receive much more coverage than the rest of the world. In sum, the media provide a distorted window to the world where the amount of coverage is far from being relative to the size of the population of the world's geographical area.

Figure 1 - News coverage of the world on *guardian.co.uk* (Hennig, 2011)
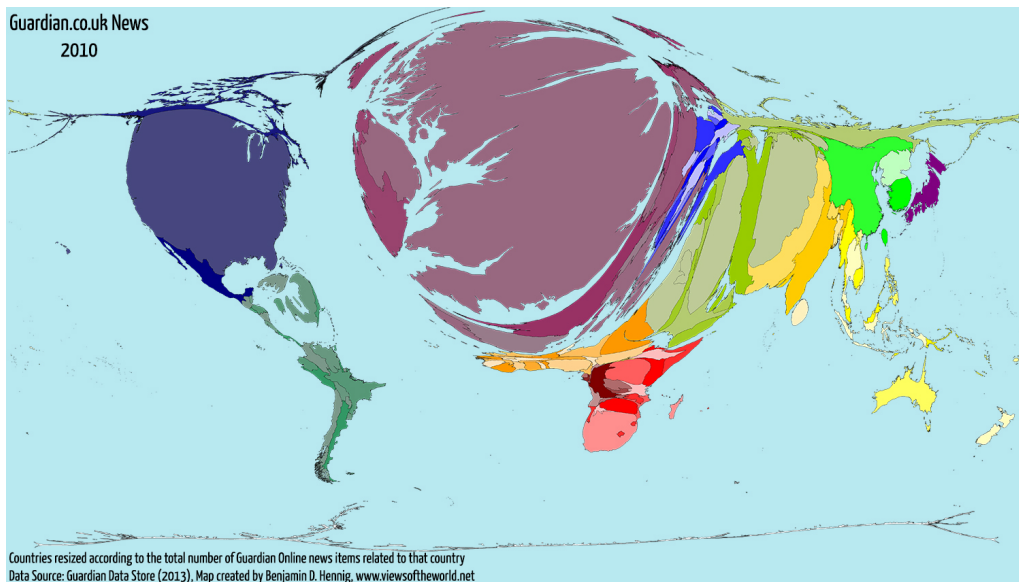
In addition, Hennig's map also shows another feature of Africa's coverage: the concentration on a handful of countries. In their analysis of the *New York Times'* coverage of 18 southern African countries between 1960 and 1975, Charles et al. (1979 p. 151) found that "five nations – Angola, Kenya, South Africa, Rhodesia, and Zaire – account for more than three-fourths of all stories". Bosompra (1989 p.

69) analysed the regional distribution of African news in the *Times*. He found that 74% of the overall coverage was focused on five countries (South Africa, Sudan, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Libya). Domatob (1994) looked at the coverage of Africa in US news magazines between 1989 and 1991. His results show that 75% of the coverage emanated from South Africa alone, and that, except for a few articles on Kenya, the rest of the articles were concerned with "Africa in general" (Domatob, 1994 p. 27). As a result, some 50 countries in the continent were not individually covered. Schraeder and Endless (1998) provide an analysis based on a much greater sample of articles (n=1168) published in the *New York Times* between 1955 and 1995. Southern Africa dominates the coverage with 31% of all articles, and six countries account for 63% of the overall coverage (South Africa, Egypt, Congo-Kinshasa, Algeria, Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, Nigeria) (Schraeder & Endless, 1998 p. 31). In the British context, Brookes (1995) looked at the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Guardian* in 1990 and found that more than half of the coverage concentrated on only two countries, South Africa and Liberia.

This trend continued throughout the 1990s and 2000s. A study on the British TV news coverage of the developing world found that "the African continent received proportionately much less coverage than the other areas" and that "less than half of the 52 African states/territories received any coverage at all" (Glasgow Media Group, 2000 p. 19). Looking at US TV between 2002 and 2004, Golan (2008 pp. 49–50) found that "coverage of 22 nations accounted for more than 90 percent of overall coverage", that five countries (Liberia, Egypt, Libya, South Africa, Kenya) made up more than 50% of the coverage and that 13 countries were not covered at all. Similarly, the results provided by the Oxford Internet Institute show that more than half of the stories about sub-Saharan Africa come from only six countries (Nigeria, South Africa, Sudan, Kenya, Somalia and Uganda) (Graham & de Sabbata, 2013).

Whether Africa is the most neglected geographical area in Western media or not, the existing literature shows that it has consistently been one of the most neglected and that the coverage has systematically reduced the coverage of Africa to a handful of countries.

2.1.2   "Negativity" as the core value of African news

Moreover, the few stories about African countries that appear in the news are selected in a specific way. The consensus in the literature is that the coverage has been found to focus on "negative stories" and to follow a "crisis-driven news agenda" (Lugo-Ocando & Malaolu, 2015 p. 86). Domatob (1994) found that crisis and disaster stories dominated the coverage of US news magazines, and Brookes (1994 p. 465) that "civil war, civil conflict, aid, human rights, politics, crime and disaster account for 92% and 96% of all news about Africa in the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Guardian*, respectively". Schraeder and Endless (1998 p. 32) for their part established that some 73% of the articles published in the *New York Times* between 1955 and 1995 communicated "negative" images of politics and societies, and that there had been an increase in "negative" news, from 67% in 1955 to 85% in 1995. Looking at the *New York Times* and *The Washington Post* coverage of Africa in 2000, Biko et al. (2000) found that 84% of the stories were "negative" and that 70% were about conflict and war. They conclude that: "judging from the disproportionate reporting of 'negative' news over 'positive' news, there is an imbalance in the reporting of news from the African continent" (Biko et al., 2000 p. 4). Golan (2008 p. 53) also found that "the majority of stories about African nations focused on negative and highly deviant issues such as conflict and disasters both natural and human caused". Similarly on British TV, the issues most frequently reported concerning Africa and the developing world appear to be related to conflict, war and terrorism (Glasgow Media Group, 2000).

The Pew Research Center (2011) provides interesting findings to understand how scarcity and "negativity" interact in the coverage of Africa. Based on a comprehensive analysis of TV, newspapers, online news websites, cable news and radio news in the US, the study found that the top African news stories in 2011 were all related to violence or conflict, and that they represented a minuscule fragment of the newshole: 0.17% for the East African famine, 0.07% for the Sudan conflict, 0.06% for the Ivory Coast conflict, 0.02% and 0.01% for violence in Nigeria and Somalia respectively. Taken together the five top African news stories (0.33%) do not even account for 0.4% of the newshole. These various findings concur to support the widespread claims in the literature that "some overselection of negative news from Africa does seem to occur" (Zein & Cooper, 1992 p. 137).

However, there are several pitfalls in reducing the analysis of Africa's coverage to a focus on "negative" news. Firstly, the phenomenon of "bad news" is not specific to Africa. De Beer (2010 p. 604) for instance found that the tone of news reports about Africa in Western media is mostly negative (54.1%) but that it is even more so for Central America (55.4%). Along with the adages "if it bleeds, it leads" or "no news is good news", the idea of news more generally is crossed by a negativity bias. I discuss this aspect in relation to studies of "news values" in more depth in the second part of this chapter.

Secondly, the existing evidence for such a "negative" focus may not be as strong as suggested by the widespread claims in the literature and may be a question of interpretation of the findings. Bosompra (1989) for instance found that 59.30% of the *Times* articles analysed contained a "negative direction", as opposed to 26.75% and 13.95% of positive and neutral direction respectively. He concludes that this supports the critics' contention that the "Western media tend to project a distorted image of Africa" (Bosompra, 1989 p. 68). Yet, one could also give another reading of these results and suggest that given the in-built tendency of news to focus on negative issues, these results may not be as compelling. Similarly, Lugo-Ocando and Malaolu (2015 p. 88) conclude that "Nigeria is predominantly portrayed negatively" on the basis that 58.9% of the articles link the country to crime, corruption and fraud, whereas "only" 41.4% link it to sport, democracy and infrastructure. Here again, a contradictory reading of these findings could be done. Furthermore, Scott (2009 p. 547) – also looking at the British press – reveals that, when we combine the main "negative topics" (civil war, civil conflict, aid and debt relief, terrorism, natural disasters, living conditions, health and disease, and human rights), they amount solely to 23% of the articles. He concludes: "coverage of Africa, in the UK press at least, is not as negative as is often assumed" (Scott, 2009 p. 548).

Thirdly, "negativity" is a fairly subjective criterion. For instance, in October 2014 Burkina-Faso experienced a wave of demonstrations and riots in response to President Blaise Compaoré's attempt to amend the constitution so as to run in yet another election. Most studies quoted previously would characterise this as "negative news" through categories such as "social unrest" or "political instability". This popular uprising eventually led to Compaoré resigning from the presidency after 27 years in power, and to the peaceful establishment of a

transitional government. In another reading of the event, we can thus see it as an empowering and "positive" popular movement that succeeded in its demands for greater political accountability and democratisation.

Finally, an exclusive focus on "negativity" risks sidetracking what constitute the most important and unique aspects of the coverage, namely, the language, images, rhetoric and narratives used.

2.1.3 An "African" bias

These decisive elements have to be assessed against the historical and cultural background detailed in Chapter 1. As Hawk (1992b p. 4) puts it:

> Unusual historical relations have shaped peculiar structures of knowledge regarding Africa. These repertories of knowledge, symbols, and a priori structuring of Africa are a Western creation (…) Cultural receptors among readers are different for African news.

A plethora of studies have shown that Western media rely on a specific set of vocabulary, metaphors and explanatory frameworks when reporting on Africa, and that these contribute to creating a peculiar image grounded in a colonial vulgate (Fair, 1992; Hawk, 1992b; Fair, 1993; Brookes, 1995; Myers et al., 1996; Ogundimu & Fair, 1997; Wall, 1997; Allen & Seaton, 1999; Beattie et al., 1999; Moeller, 1999; Philo et al., 1999; Styan, 1999; Brijnath, 2007; Pontzeele, 2008; Kothari, 2010; Ibelema, 2014). In the reporting of conflicts, this has notably happened through the reliance on "tribalism" as an explanatory framework used specifically for Africans and not for Europeans (Mano, 2015 p. 7). In doing so, media coverage contributed to create a sense that conflicts in Africa are essentially different, that explaining them escapes the bounds of Western rationality:

> "Tribalism" invokes the primordial; it invokes the "uncivilized", locating Africa in a time distant in evolutionary scale from "our" contemporary and modern time. "We" (the "non-tribal") are not like "they" (the "tribal").
>
> (Fair, 1993 p. 15)

The Rwandan genocide of 1994 provides a particularly well-informed example of an event whose coverage relied on a "tribal" framework (Myers et al., 1996; Wall, 1997; Karnik, 1998; Thompson, 2007; Pontzeele, 2008; Chari, 2010). The genocide was portrayed as happening "out-of-nowhere" and being spontaneous,

spurred by "ancestral ethnic and tribal hatred". Presented as incomprehensible, it was "explained through comparison to Biblical myths, supernatural causes, natural disasters or diseases" (Wall, 1997 p. 121). In doing so, it simplified the complex colonial and postcolonial history and political context that led to the planning and unfolding of the crisis. In the process, it disengaged the past responsibilities of former colonial powers that established the racist framework that shaped tribal identities and ultimately gave birth to the conflict (Chrétien, 1997; Chrétien & Prunier, 2003). It also silenced the immediate responsibility of the French government of the time in arming and training many genocide perpetrators, and in eventually providing them an opportunity to flee the country under the guise of a late humanitarian intervention (Chrétien & Prunier, 2003).

This tendency to reduce complex processes and political situations to simple narratives imbued with a colonial mindset has been identified in the context of many other events, from the reporting of the 1984 Ethiopian famine (Sorenson, 1991; Franks, 2013) or violence in South Africa during apartheid (Brock, 1992) to the question of land in Zimbabwe (Willems, 2005; 2015) or the 2007/2008 post-election violence in Kenya (Somerville, 2009). The reliance on colonial narratives extends beyond the reporting of war and conflicts. For instance, Brijnath (2007) analysed how *TIME* magazine represents sub-Saharan African women in its reporting of HIV. She found that their voices were marginalised in favour of "white heroes" and she identified "the recycling of colonial narratives in the AIDS discourse which perpetuates stereotypes of Africa as feminine, dark and diseased" (Brijnath, 2007 p. 384).

In addition, the standards of what can be shown – or said – when it comes to Africa seem different from those applied to other parts of the world. The previous aforementioned studies show that during events such as the Ethiopian famine of 1984, the reporting provided images whose unbearable violence are almost never given to see in other contexts, not because they do not exist but because they are treated with more decency (see also Myers et al., 1996; Chouliaraki, 2006; Sontag, 2003; Campbell, 2012). As Sontag (2003 p. 56) puts it, "the more remote or exotic the place, the more likely we are to have full frontal views of the dead and dying".

In previous research (Nothias, 2014), I found a compelling example that highlights some of these double standards. In May 2010, French Africanist Bernard Lugan

was invited on I-Télé (French 24-hour news channel) to discuss his vision of contemporary South Africa in relation to the hosting of the World Cup. After drawing an apocalyptic picture of the country ("it is a country in distress"), summoning the colonial trope of "darkness" ("South Africa's situation is dark and going to get darker") and eventually affirming that "Mandela did not do anything for South Africa", Lugan went on to argue "I sing the praises of the Bantustan" (Ménard, 2010).[12] Translated into a European context, this rhetoric amounts to saying for instance that Italy was better off under Mussolini than now. Though it might be true that, for instance, there was a lower rate of unemployment at the time, such a statement would be seen as sympathising with fascism. It would be considered a nostalgic account of a fascist regime, and therefore very shocking, eventually leading the TV presenter to intervene. Instead, the journalist sitting with Lugan did not comment on this particular statement and casually carried on with the interview.

Different types of news events throughout Africa appear to be reduced to an Africa-specific system of linguistic, semiotic and symbolic references. For instance, metaphors and expressions such as "Dark continent", "in darkest Africa", "out of Africa" or "heart of Darkness" have been regularly observed in contemporary journalistic writing (Hawk, 1992b; Spurr, 1993; Brookes, 1995). These phrases directly refer to the colonial literature of the 19th century travellers and colonisers, and inscribe journalistic discourse in a clear historical discursive continuum where literary and journalistic styles collide. This process, as Fair (1993 p. 5) perfectly puts it, shows how "'fact' and 'fiction' constantly reinforce each other in the construction of Africa and Africans as the undifferentiated 'Other'".

As a result of the inscription of different news stories in a cohesive symbolic system of references specific to "Africa", journalistic discourse reproduces a view of "Africa as a country", as "a homogenous block with violence, helplessness, human rights abuses and lack of democracy as its main characteristics" (Brookes, 1995 p. 465). There has been a tendency to relate an event located in one country to events happening in other ones, or even to relate it to the continent as a whole. Looking at the Rwandan crisis, Wall (1997 p. 131) found that it was also by virtue of portraying all the neighbouring countries as "just as chaotic and violent" that the coverage inscribed the event in a broader "African" framework. This process of

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[12] Territory set aside for black inhabitants as part of the apartheid policy.

conflating from one country to "Africa" is perfectly played out in a 1977 *TIME* magazine cover presenting Idi Amin as "the wild man of Africa" (Figure 2). One man, in one country, metaphorically embodies the essence of the entire continent; an essence characterised here by a racist view of black Africans as wild, ultimately closer to nature, irrational, in other words essentially different and inferior.

Figure 2 - *TIME* magazine cover (1977)
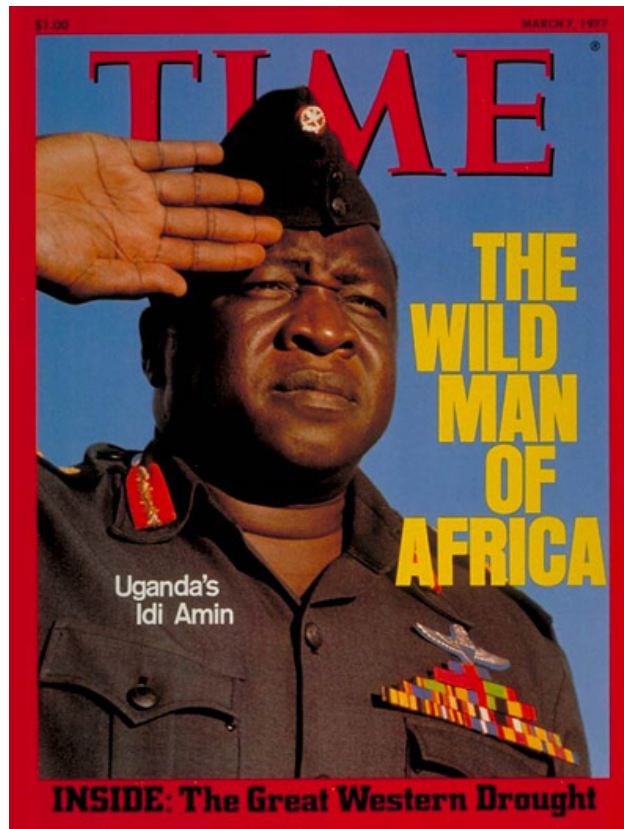
Stereotypes, as defined and analysed in Chapter 1, constitute an integral part of this symbolic system. The literature provides various examples of coverage relying on racial stereotypes by assigning unambiguous and recurring roles to participants in news stories. These polarised representations range from black Africans as closer to nature, barbaric and/or helpless (Wall, 1997 p. 121) to that of benevolent and good willing Westerners. This phenomenon is best summarised in the satirical guide of Kenyan writer Wainaina on "How to write about Africa":

> Your African characters may include naked warriors, loyal servants, diviners and seers, ancient wise men living in hermitic splendour. Or corrupt politicians, inept polygamous, travel-guides, and prostitutes you have slept with.
>
> (Wainaina, 2005 p. 93)

In that context, a key discursive tool to assess how stereotyping occurs is to look at who holds the power to speak in a news story. Studies have regularly criticised the coverage for relying on Western sources and foreign interviewees over local ones (Higiro, 1988; Paterson, 1992; Fair, 1992; Paterson, 1996; Styan, 1999; Malaolu, 2014). In her study of the coverage of US food aid in Africa between 1980 and 1989, Fair (1992 p. 116) found that "of the 134 stories about US food aid sent to Africa, only a handful of stories used as sources the common person, Africans unconnected to governments or relief agencies". Focusing on the reporting of the frontline states on US TV in the 1980s, Paterson (1996 p. 68) observed a similar tendency: "only 46 of 110 interviews appeared to be with black southern Africans. The remainder were with Americans, Europeans, white South Africans, and white Zimbabweans". In the British context, Malaolu (2014 p. 31) found that over 10 years of coverage of Nigeria in five British newspapers, only 28% of the sources were Nigerian while European/foreign sources make up 67%.[13] These studies along with those of Higiro (1988) and Myers et al. (1996) concur in assessing this bias as one that discursively reinforces the view of a world where the authority to speak about and for Africa is located externally; a view that cements the discursive supremacy of a Western world presented as "stable and knowledgeable" as opposed to "a developing world in chaos" (Paterson, 1996 p. 63).

There are two examples in the literature that suggests that local sources may be given more voice in the coverage than the previous studies suggest. In the coverage of the Rwandan genocide, Wall (1997 p. 125) found that there were nearly as many Rwandan sources (44%) as non-Rwandan (mainly Western) sources (48%). Looking at articles on sub-Saharan African in the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Guardian,* Brookes showed that "Western participants are not quoted more than African participants – who are given 30 per cent more word space" (Brookes, 1995 p. 482).

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[13] Based on this finding, Malaoulu concludes: "Thus the preference for non-Nigerian sources ensures that the voices ringing out loud in the construction of Nigeria as news are those of foreigners whose perspectives are not only culturally at variance with Nigerians', but mostly reflect the long-established precolonial and colonial construction of Nigeria" (Malaolu, 2014 p. 31). This statement calls our attention to the risk that exists in such analysis, that of essentialising European/foreign sources as voicing necessarily "long-established precolonial and colonial construction". It should be a cause of concern if the power to talk about Africa lies largely outside the continent, but we should not conclude that Western/European/foreign sources necessarily provide "precolonial and colonial" views. This risk is taken into account in my analysis of sources quoted in Chapter 4.

Both Wall and Brookes go further by looking at how these sources are presented and framed. Rwandans sources are mainly portrayed as passive (70%) and rarely as active in solving problems (7%), whereas non-Rwandans are overwhelmingly presented as solving problems (75%) and much less frequently as passive (19%) (Wall, 1997 p. 125). Similarly, Brookes provides several findings that warrant a more refined understanding of sources quoted. She found that the coverage provided a greater variety of Western participants. These were presented as more authoritative and truthful than African sources that were largely discredited, especially government representatives. This discredit takes different forms, for instance the use of expressive verbs such as "to claim" or "to allege" over more neutral verbs like "to say" often used for Western sources. The discredit can also be communicated by providing information that contradict statements by African leaders (either by offering contradicting facts, or by using past and contradicting quotes from the same source), by relying on Western sources to evaluate these statements or by using quotation marks as a "shock device" around parts of "exaggerated, boastful, illogical, unreasonable or tyrannical statements" (Brookes, 1995 p. 483). In analysing not only who gets to speak but also how these individuals are framed, these studies highlight the subtle ways in which media discourse assigns stereotypical roles to local voices caught between villains – in Brookes – or helpless victims – in Wall.

From the use of the vocabulary of "darkness" and "tribalism" to the presentation of Africa as a homogenous block or the overreliance on Western voices, the discursive nature of journalistic coverage suggests a specific bias in the reporting of Africa. Assuredly, the selectivity and negativity of the coverage contribute to limit the representational repertoire found in coverage. But I have shown that closer and more qualitative investigations of media content allow for a better understanding of how a colonial legacy is enacted in media discourse through metaphors, images, rhetoric and narratives. These features highlighted by the literature feeds into my conceptualisation of Afro-pessimism. However, before turning to this conceptualisation, I first engage with forces and production factors that shape the coverage in such ways.

2.2   Forces shaping news coverage

While the previous section provided a comprehensive account of the features of media content, this section focuses on the context of journalism production and the factors that contribute to shaping such coverage. This section is structured through the model of influences on media content developed by Shoemaker and Reese (1996). Shoemaker and Reese's framework is grounded in a social constructivist approach to the study of news (see also Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1979; Fishman, 1980; Schlesinger, 1987). This theoretical approach is akin to the one of representation and discourse introduced in Chapter 1. It holds that a news item is not a reflection of reality but rather is the product of the interplay of routines, norms, values, organisational constraints and dominant ideologies that exist in a particular historical and social configuration.

Shoemaker and Reese identified five key levels of influence on media content (Figure 3):

> - *The individual level,* which is concerned with the impact of factors such as education, age, gender, ethnicity, personal values and beliefs at the level of the individual media producer;

> - *The media routine level*, which focuses on the "patterned, routinized, repeated practices and forms that media workers use to do their jobs" (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996 p. 100);

> - *The organisational level*, where the emphasis is on the constraints imposed by organisations and on the collective processes involved in news production;

> - *The extramedia level*, where the focus is on sources of influences that are external to the media;

> - *The ideological level*, which is concerned with the influence of the set of values and beliefs that dominate in a society at a given time.

Figure 3 - Shoemaker & Reese's (1996 p. 60) model of hierarchical influences on media content
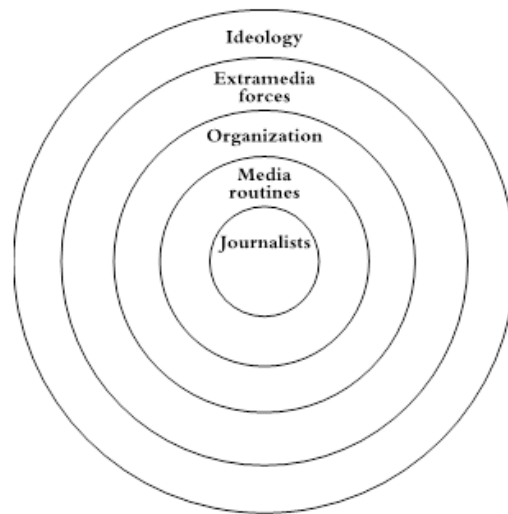
Shoemaker and Reese see these influences as more or less constraining; with the individual level being the least constraining and the ideological level the most. This level approach does not mean that higher levels "eliminate the influence of the level below, but requires that we take it into account, that it sets certain boundaries within which other influences range" (Reese, 2007 p. 37). I now go through each of the first four levels of influences in the context of the reporting of Africa to flesh out key factors explaining the content analysed in the first section of the chapter. The ideological level overlaps with the issues of representation, discourse and power introduced in Chapter 1; it is therefore not discussed independently here. In the process of revealing factors shaping the coverage, I introduce a set of analytical tools and approaches emerging from the field of journalism and news production studies more broadly (gatekeeping, news values, commercialism, political economy, media imperialism). While there are other models of analysis of influences on media content, Shoemaker and Reese's provide a very comprehensive framework that allows bringing together an eclectic body of research and perspectives.

2.2.1   The individual level

In the context of the US civil rights movement in the 1960s, the Kerner Commission (1968) provided a report that identified the mainstream media as a powerful source of racism. The report equated the lack of diversity in the newsroom with biased content: "the press has too long basked in a white world

looking out of it, if at all, with white men's eyes and white perspective" (Kerner Commission, 1968 p. 389). Looking at international news, the *Macbride report* (1980) came to a similar conclusion, i.e. that a Western bias in content could be correlated with the lack of non-Western individuals in news production.

Applied to the context of Africa's coverage, one could argue that the occupational field of foreign correspondence having being dominated by white Westerners is a strong factor. Long time Africa correspondent Bartholomäus Grill puts in clear terms the causality between a journalist's background and her or his reporting: "You can only portray Africa and the Africans from a European perspective. You have no other" (Grill, 2003). It would notably explain why the coverage contains a racial bias such as the focus on the fate of white South Africans and Zimbabweans perceived as "kith and kin" (Gilroy, 2004 p. 114), the framing of stories around white protagonists or the reliance on white, Western sources. In addition, because foreign correspondents are "outsiders", they do not necessarily have a good knowledge of local histories, cultures and languages, and often arrive with few local sources (Wall, 1997 p. 122). This is exacerbated in the case of parachute journalists "who have no particular knowledge or understanding of the continent and who therefore present the most conventional interpretation of events" (Marthoz, 2007 p. 225). In such instance, a journalist is more likely to rely on preconceptions that then lead to simplification and ultimately the reproduction of stereotypes brought from "home" (Hunter-Gault, 2006). Marthoz notes that even for correspondents who have a greater experience of travelling throughout the continent, these issues do not go away:

> Too few Western journalists have bothered to learn any African languages, though some, such as Swahili in East Africa or Pulaar in West Africa, are spoken by tens of millions of people. This lapse means that journalists are cut off from sources of information, opinions, and perspectives other than those given by ministry spokesmen, the UN, or the NGOs.
>
> (Marthoz, 2007 p. 227)

Conversely, then, many studies advocate for the inclusion of more local journalists in the reporting as a way to alter biased coverage. What can be the impact of such changes at an individual level? In this regard, Bunce (2011; 2010) provides two very interesting analyses of the coverage of the conflict in Darfur in 2007 and the post-election violence in Kenya in 2007/2008. She conducted interviews with foreign correspondents based in Darfur working for AFP, AP, Reuters, BBC and

the *New York Times*, as well as an analysis of the content they produced. Out of the 7 foreign correspondents whose content was analysed, 3 are Sudanese nationals, while 2 are British and 2 US American nationals. Bunce asked if there was a difference in the way local-national correspondents reported the story, as opposed to foreign-Western correspondents. She found that Sudanese nationals did not use more local sources in Darfur than Western correspondents. They relied more on the government of Sudan and tended to use fewer sources; the AFP Sudanese correspondent for instance wrote more than 50% of articles with only one source, nearly always the Sudanese government. She concludes that Sudanese correspondents working for international media were less likely to perform a watchdog role compared to Western foreign correspondents (Bunce, 2011 p. 29).

In Kenya, Bunce (2010) conducted an ethnographic observation in the Reuters newsroom during the reporting of the post-election crisis of 2007-2008. She found that there were a lot of debates, and even clashes of values between local/national journalists and Western ones: "the Kenyan reporters felt that international journalists should be more selective and cautious with what they covered, and more reserved in the language they used" (Bunce, 2010 p. 523). This difference of opinions, however, had little impact on the content of the reporting as the editorial control remained in the hands of the Western bureau chief and deputy bureau chief. She concludes "that the dominance of Western views and 'traditional' news values in the newsroom continues without major challenge, not least because of the newswire's pro-business orientation" (2010 p. 527).

Bunce's studies call our attention to three aspects. Firstly, there has been an increased involvement from local-nationals in the international news coverage of Africa at large (Bunce, 2015). The main providers of international news such as Reuters, AFP and the BBC currently operate a network of journalists that is much more diverse than it was just a decade ago. This means that Africa's media image is no longer solely the work of outsiders but also increasingly that of local-national journalists (Bunce, 2015). Secondly, the Darfur study suggests that the individual characteristics of journalists may have an impact but perhaps not in the way that one would expect. In this particular case, the fact of being "local" did not seem to translate into coverage less selective in terms of sourcing. Finally, the Kenya study shows that while individual characteristics can impact how journalists perceive a story should be reported, their ability to do so remains largely constrained by the

professional values and organisational setting in which they operate. I now turn to these aspects.

2.2.2   The media routine level

Out of all events that happen everywhere in the world on a daily basis, only a few become news. Media producers make routine decisions that determine what events are selected. This process of gatekeeping was the focal point of an influential study by White (1950). He conducted research with a newspaper editor, "Mr Gates", and tracked his decision making for a week to understand how the selection process occurred. He concluded that this process was "highly subjective (…) reliant on value-judgements based on the 'gatekeeper's own set of experiences, attitudes and expectations" (White, 1950 p. 65). White thus emphasised the agency of one individual to "make" the news. But as it became clear that news changes very little whomever the individual is, Galtung and Ruge (1965) developed the concept of "news value". They hypothesised that journalists relied on a set of criterion – news values – to determine whether an event is newsworthy or not. The more criterions a story ticks, the more likely it is to become news. In addition, news values not only play a role in the selection process but also in the framing of stories by "suggesting what to emphasize, what to omit, and where to giver priority in the preparation of the items for presentation to the audience" (Golding & Elliott, 1979 p. 144).

Galtung and Ruge focused specifically on international news and identified twelve news values. Out of these, three particularly shed light on the nature of the reporting of Africa as described by the literature: unambiguity, meaningfulness, and reference to something negative. Unambiguity holds that the simpler a story can be presented, the more likely it is to be newsworthy. This would explain the simplification at stake in the coverage and the reliance on simple explanatory frameworks such as "tribalism" in the case of conflicts. This is even more acute in the context of international news where journalists usually have little words or airtime. Meaningfulness can be defined as "cultural proximity" or ethnocentrism: the more an event involves people perceived as more like 'us' (the audience), the more it is likely to be of interest (see also Cottle, 2013). In the British context, this sheds light on the preference given to a country like Zimbabwe that is a former colony and home to a sizeable white population, and on the preference given to anglophone African countries over francophone ones. It would also explain that the coverage has been dominated by Western sources, and framed around Western

protagonists perceived as more familiar to the audience. Finally, I have shown that negativity was one of the key features of the coverage (section 2.1.2). This feature, then, can be understood as part of the broader, taken for granted, perception by media professionals that news is bad news.

These news values are summoned routinely, although not in a way that is clear and obvious to journalists themselves (Hall, 1973 p. 181). Instead, it is through the process of socialisation and professionalisation in the field – daily practices, training, editorial meetings, formal and informal exchanges with colleagues – that journalists develop a naturalised, but largely unspoken, sense of what "news is" and a certain way of seeing the world (Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1979). In the reporting of Africa and foreign news more generally, an important socialisation process is "pack journalism", the phenomenon "whereby individual journalists assigned by different news organizations to cover the news informally rely on each other to validate news judgment, and corroborate story angles and notes" (Fair, 1993 p. 9). This phenomenon leads to group consensus among the "pack" and would explain, for instance, the relative homogeneity found in the coverage by previous studies, largely irrespective of the political alignment or editorial lines of different media outlets.

2.2.3   The organisational level

A news story is the result of a collective process involving translators, stringers, photographers, correspondents, sub-editors, regional editors, picture editors and editors. But not all individuals involved in the production have the same power to shape the end product. Editors in particular have more power to determine what becomes news. They have to ensure that a news item conforms to the values and priorities of the organisation. Several foreign correspondents in Africa have long complained about constraints imposed on them by editors to explain the selection and framing of news events in fairly homogenised and stereotypical ways. One U.S. network correspondent in Africa explains for instance: "In many of my stories, I used interviews with African experts… But [my bosses] would want a young American who was there on his first trip" (Kalter, 1986 in Paterson, 1996 p. 62). The distance between the field and the office exacerbates these situations where the product goes through different, if not contradictory, intellectual processes. Kothari (2010 p. 220) notes in her study of the coverage of Darfur that in the case of stories sent from the field "there is a higher possibility of editorial

amendments and interpretations being made to a story, because the journalist is unable to see the multiple revisions before publication".

In a largely and increasingly profit-driven news environment, commercial viability is a key consideration for news editors. They need to ensure that a story sells and that it outweighs its costs of production. In this light, the aforementioned quote by a US correspondent suggests that the emphasis on Western sources or actors is driven by the need to make it more familiar to the audience so as to ensure its commercial viability. The perception of "what the audience wants" is entirely naturalised in the newsroom and is often assessed through only one, commercial metric: sales, viewership or clicks. This rationale perfectly testifies to a production logic in which what interests the public overrides what is in the public interest; a logic that ultimately leads to reproducing what has worked previously and/or elsewhere, even if this means reproducing stereotypes. Anne-Cecile Robert, assistant editor for the French newspaper *Le Monde Diplomatique*, found this to be particularly acute in the reporting of Africa: "the race for profits leads to simplification" (Robert, 2011 p. 69).

The fact that many outlets have one "Africa correspondent" is also a reflection of a costs maximising thinking. At the same time, the idea of the "Africa correspondent" contributes to a view that "Africa" can be treated as a single, homogenous block. In spite of the continent's political, economic, linguistic, cultural, social, geographical and religious diversity, this idea of "Africa correspondent" assumes and, dialectically contributes to the view that a single individual is enough to make sense of the continent. In that sense, even long-term Africa correspondents are always at risk of being parachutists in their own specialised assignment.

Several logistical factors exacerbate the need to minimise production costs. For a long time, one would have to go through Europe to travel between East and West Africa (Harrison & Palmer, 1986). In spite of significant improvements in airport infrastructures and an increase in air traffic, this still often remains the cheapest way to do so. Governments keen on keeping some of their actions out of the public eye have also caused troubles to journalists by preventing them from getting visas (Hunter-Gault, 2006 p. 13). There are also issues related to insurance and journalists' safety that gradually increased between the 1960s and 1990s. These

include the risks involved in reporting war and conflict, as well as those related to reporting terrorism, such as journalists being taken hostage and becoming targets. Marthoz notes:

> The number of "no-go" zones has multiplied. Though journalists were still able to visit rebel areas during the conflict in Biafra in 1978, and during the wars of independence in Angola or Mozambique, this option is now practically impossible. The level of generalized insecurity, the cost of reporting and insurance, in addition to the desire of the armed groups to keep witnesses at a distance, all prohibit journalists from covering conflict in Africa.
>
> (Marthoz, 2007 p. 233)

These working conditions have made reporting the continent increasingly expensive, while revenues for news media have significantly decreased. Fair (1993 p. 8) estimates that, in the early 1990s, the cost of a foreign correspondent posted abroad had increased to between $250,000 and $500,000. Budget considerations and the application of market logic to news production (McManus, 1994) thus play an important role in shaping news coverage. This is particularly the case in foreign reporting where stories less expensive and perceived as more relevant to a Western audience will be given priority at the expense of a broader range of stories (Paterson, 2011).

In return, this cost and benefit logic has made journalists even more reliant on external sources such as NGOs and the military:

> Confronted with the reticence and refusal of their editors in chief, brandishing the arguments of costs or lack of interest, a number of journalists became increasingly dependent on invitations from humanitarian organizations or national armies for their travels in Africa.
>
> (Marthoz, 2007 p. 231)

Africa correspondent Tristan McConnell, while trying to minimise the phenomenon, recognises this to be a real issue driven by logistical considerations:

> Working this way is rare and while not ideal (for either journalists or readers) it is sometimes necessary, partly as a function of shrinking travel budgets and partly due to our calculation that any access is better than none.
>
> (McConnell, 2012)

This reliance on external sources, then, can lead to framing stories in ways that advance the agenda of these sources. For instance, and based on personal

observations, the French TV coverage of the French intervention in Mali in January 2013 relied almost exclusively on images provided by the French military. As a result, the intervention was largely framed through the viewpoint of the French army. NGOs and aid agencies, for their part, have long capitalised on an image of Africa as violent, poor and in need of saving. Journalists relying on these agencies for access and to balance production costs are therefore at risk to provide coverage more sympathetic to these sources, and to the image they seek to benefit from (Franks, 2013; Wright, 2015).

A perfect example of this process was the story that won the 2014 Amnesty media award for best "photo-journalism" story. Human Rights Watch initially paid for journalist Peter Bouckaert and photo-journalist Marcus Bleasdale to come and report on violence in the Central African Republic. The story then appeared in *Foreign Policy* a few days later, but without any attempt at foregrounding the association with Human Rights Watch. One month later, the story reappeared in the *Telegraph Magazine* without any reference to the Human Rights Watch affiliation. When Marcus Bleasdale won the award in the "photo-journalism" category for the publication in the *Telegraph Magazine*, this affiliation was again invisible. Unsurprisingly, the story was one of violence and horror that frontloaded linguistic and visual tropes of savagery all too familiar to Western audiences ("hellish", machete-yielding mob), and ultimately, but silently, advanced the agenda of the agency (Figure 4).

Finally, traditional media have increasingly relied on another source in the face of increased commercialism: news agencies. The current media landscape is dominated by three agencies with a global role and an incredible ability to set the agenda for international news, with 80% of global news provided by three agencies: AP, Reuters and AFP (Thussu, 2004 p. 51; Paterson, 2011). Because coverage of international news is costly, broadcasters and newspapers rely heavily on news agencies and journalists often churn out wires as articles (Davies, 2009). These agencies have established a monopoly in providing images of Africa (Paterson & Sreberny, 2004 p. 7). Paterson (1994) coined the joint metaphor of "gatekeeping concentration" to describe the increasing importance of a few editors working for Western news agencies to determine which stories from the African continent eventually become foreign news. His research paints "a picture of ever

fewer people, in ever fewer organizations, deciding how Africa is to be seen by the rest of the World" (Paterson, 1994 pp. 16–18).

Figure 4 - Bouckaert & Bleasdale's article on the *Telegraph* website (2014)

The hellish descent of the Central African Republic

An escalating cycle of bloodshed has left tens of thousands dead and entire communities displaced in the Central African Republic. Peacekeeping forces have so far failed to stop the terror

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Christian anti-balaka attack the property of Muslim civilians in an effort to destroy everything in their community   Photo: © Marcus Bleasdale/VII

By Peter Bouckaert
7:00AM GMT 19 Feb 2014   Print this article

Like their main clients, these agencies work on a commercial basis. Thus, news agencies provide stories deemed to be more newsworthy according to the set of news values of their Western clients; stories that are more accessible for a Western audience, visually appealing, negative and easily compressible for the format of TV news reports (Paterson, 1992 pp. 179–181). This market-based structure is confirmed by APTN news executive Nigel Baker who explains that "there is currently no revenue base there for the agencies, but coverage is provided of African stories of major world interest or of interest to the main agency markets" (quoted in Paterson, 2011 p. 39). Paterson's ethnographic research provides a compelling example of how a commercial rationale feeds stereotypical representations. The Reuters Television newsroom in London received a report from an Africa bureau. But the visual of the story did not "fit" with their preconception of what an "African" political story should be. Thus, they replaced

images of a traditional ceremony where a political rally was taking place with older images of Angolan rebel leader Jonas Savimbi (Paterson, 2011 p. 38). With little or no revenue coming from African subscribers, news agency editors thus feel compelled to produce stories that will appeal to their Western clients, giving credence to the importance of Galtung and Ruge's (1965) news values of proximity and meaningfulness.

The commercial orientation of a media outlet, and its positioning on the media market significantly shapes its content and can thus contribute greatly to reproducing stereotypes. These organisational constraints override the values of individual journalists. This notably explains why greater diversity in production processes does not necessarily translate into radically different coverage (see the previously mentioned studies by Bunce, 2010; 2011). Looking at the US press and attempts at addressing racism in the newsroom, Drew found that these attempts did not lead to "long-term, sustained, and institutionalized change" (2010 p. 369). She contends that to undermine the racialisation of news in the US, the professional field would need to revise

> its emphasis placed on objectivity, urgency, and how the industry defines "newsworthy". [Journalists] would need to contend with the market pressures of deadlines and competition, wherein news coverage about systemic social problems does not have the same appeal to consumers that the spectacle of "breaking news" has.

> (Drew, 2010 p. 370)

Saha (2012) makes a similar argument regarding broadcasting programmes in the UK and the greater involvement of British Asians in production. For him, it is the ever more commercial culture of TV production – spurred by deregulation and market competition – that accounts for the reproduction of "problematic, reductive representations of race" (Saha, 2012 p. 424) in spite of greater diversity.

2.2.4   The extramedia level

In the previous section, I have started to discuss extra media level forces that impact media production at the organisational level (NGOs, governments, news agencies, market). In this section, I focus on the broader, more macro-level that surrounds news production, that of political economy.

The political economy approach to the media holds that the media are social institutions entangled, shaped and part of broader political and economic structures (Murdock & Golding, 1973). This approach finds its roots in a Marxist tradition, and its subsequent reading by Gramsci, where the economic base determines the superstructure (Williams, 2005). The greater the control of the means of production is, the greater is the power to shape cultural products and, through them, hegemonic discourse and ideological consensus (Herman & Chomsky, 2010). In the late 1970s, this political economy approach, combined with an anti-imperialist perspective, underpinned one of the most vocal and public criticism of international news: the NWICO debate.

In its early days, foreign news was characterised by a commercial bias inextricably linked to the colonial expansion and the internationalisation of trade (Harris, 1981). Decades into the postcolonial era, international news was still concentrated in the West. This assessment of the structure of international news production led to heated debates about a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) (Masmoudi, 1979). This debate took place over nearly 10 years and notably finds its roots in the establishment of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1955, and the decolonisation movements in Africa and Asia. When Third World leaders and thinkers called for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) in Algiers in 1973, they put at the forefront of the debates the idea of cultural imperialism:

> It is an established fact that the activities of imperialism are not confined solely to the political and economic fields, but also cover the cultural and social fields, thus imposing an alien ideological domination over the peoples of the developing world.

> (Jankowitsch & Sauvant, 1978 p. 226 in Roach, 1999 p. 94)

Three years later in Tunis, the Non-Aligned media seminar called for a new international order in information. In a resolutely anti-imperialist perspective, it condemned firmly the ways in which imperialism infuses media and culture: "The colonialist, imperialist and racist powers have created effective means of information and communication which are conditioning the masses to the interests of these powers" (Information in the Non-Aligned Countries, 1976 p. 41). This culminated in the publication of a UNESCO report in 1980. The *MacBride Report* (1980) challenged the "free flow of information" position defended by Western countries. It forced them to engage politically with an issue that, within UNESCO, had been historically confined to its technical and technological dimension

(Hamelink, 1999 p. 72). The report that summarised the key points of this debate was received with great hostility by the US and the UK; President Ronald Reagan and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher saw it as an attack on freedom of the press, and the two countries withdrew their membership from UNESCO in 1984 and 1985 respectively.

A key focus of the debate was the structure of international news and news flows, starting with the crucial observation that the system was geographically and economically concentrated in Western countries and in particular in Paris, New York and London (Boyd-Barrett, 1980; Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., 1985; van Ginneken, 2005). Tunisian information minister Mustapha Masmoudi – one of the figures that spearheaded the movement, together with the Director-General of UNESCO, Senegalese Amadou Mahtar M'Bow – noted:

> Information in the modern world is characterized by basic imbalances, reflecting the general imbalance that affects the international community... Almost 80 percent of the world news flow emanates from the major transnational agencies; however these devote only 20 to 30 percent of news coverage to the developing countries.
>
> (Masmoudi, 1979 p. 172)

This hegemonic structure of the flow of information, it was argued, contributed to constructing a reductive and stereotypical image of Third World countries in the West.[14] Moreover, this structural inequality also meant that Third World countries also relied heavily on Western agencies for news from abroad as well as from within the Third World. In a way, media could be seen as playing a role in the psychological phenomenon at the heart of Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Mask*, namely the "internalization – or better still, the epidermalization – of inferiority", where the colonised facing the gaze of the coloniser integrates the set of dominant colonial values (Fanon, 1967 p. 11). In this perspective, the structural inequality in international news production leads to a lack of attention to the "concerns and aspirations of the developing countries" and to an emphasis on "events whose significance, in certain cases, is limited or even non-existent" (Masmoudi, 1979 pp. 173–174).

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[14] The Third World terminology is used here since it was the expression used during the NWICO debate. For a critical analysis of the Third World terminology see for instance Escobar (1995).

This political economy/media imperialism approach highlighted that the nature of this coverage could therefore be explained at a macro-level. The deeply unequal structure of news production resulted from political and economic inequalities inherited from the colonial era; as a result, it favoured a very peculiar representation of the world subservient to Western political and economic interests. This way, representations of Africa, the structure of news production and the broader political economy are linked into an historical continuum of economic and cultural domination, from the colonial project (globalisation I) to the expansion of economic neoliberalism (globalisation II) (de B'béri & Louw, 2011 pp. 337–338).

In this second section, I brought together an eclectic body of studies and approaches in journalism production studies. These shed light on various forces shaping Africa's image in the news and provide additional insights into why media discourse is formed in ways that contribute to 'Othering' Africa. That being said, this research is primarily concerned with the discursive nature of the coverage. I therefore put the analytical emphasis on in-depth evaluation of the language and imagery across media texts. In order to assess the discursive nature of journalistic discourse, I rely on a conceptualisation of Afro-pessimism that I now turn to.

2.3   Defining Afro-pessimism

As discussed in Chapter 1, the concept of Afro-pessimism is dominantly used as a way to summarise the criticism made to Western media vis-à-vis their reporting on Africa. However, I also showed that the concept was undertheorised and underspecified. In particular, Afro-pessimism is too often equated with "bad news" from, or "negative images" of, Africa. I argued that a lack of clear definition created several risks including an inability to identify discursive changes and continuities in the reporting, an inability to identify drivers of changes and continuities in journalistic production, and even a risk to see the criticism of Afro-pessimism being co-opted for political gain. In short, an underspecified concept of Afro-pessimism could lead research to fail to show precisely *how*, *where* and *why* a colonial representational legacy impacts journalistic discourse on Africa.

In order to fill the gap of its underspecification while retaining the critical ethos of the concept, I argued that a clearer definition was necessary. I argued that to provide such a postcolonial conceptualisation of Afro-pessimism, this definition

would need to draw both from the literature on Afro-pessimism per se and from the insights of the literature on Western media coverage of Africa. The definition that I now put forward is an attempt at providing a synthesis of these fairly disjointed, yet related, literatures. In linking these literatures, this conceptualisation of Afro-pessimism therefore contributes to emerging postcolonial approaches to media and communication studies (Fürsich & Robins, 2002; Parameswaran, 2002; Shome & Hegde, 2002; Willems, 2015).

Rather than providing a list of types of events or frames (such as "war", "disease", "violence", "famine"…), or a list of stereotypes ("helpless victims", "corrupted leader", "violent rebels"…), I provide a typology of what I take to be the five core discursive features of Afro-pessimism; i.e. the key processes through which an Afro-pessimist discourse is constructed. While these features work in conjunction and often simultaneously, they can be separated for clarification and for analytical purpose.

In addition, this typology allows moving beyond a simplistic negative/positive framework to a more refined and sharper understanding of what Afro-pessimism is. This conceptualisation will be operationalised in my empirical investigation. The clear definition will allow identifying what constitutes an Afro-pessimist discourse in journalistic coverage. To the extent that a media text reproduces these five features, it can be deemed Afro-pessimist. Importantly, a clear definition will also allow identifying coverage that is *not* Afro-pessimist. The task of this research, then, will be to show to what extent and how such an Afro-pessimist discourse is precisely enacted in media coverage through various linguistic, semiotic and rhetorical strategies.

2.3.1   Homogenisation

For Ahluwalia (2001 p. 133), Afro-pessimism has a "tendency to homogenize the 'African tragedy', concluding that Africa has neither the political will nor the capacity to deal with its problems". This reveals a key feature usually associated with Afro-pessimism, namely, that it is a discourse about Africa as a whole (de B'béri & Louw, 2011; Bassil, 2011). As such it implies a generalisation about the continent, which, more often than not, contributes to erasing the diversity of its 54 countries and to flattening African identities (Adichie, 2009).

That Afro-pessimism is a discourse about the continent as a whole does not mean that it cannot emerge in the coverage of a single African country. A compelling example of how this happens can be seen in the international media coverage leading to the 2010 World Cup in South Africa (Nothias, 2014). Following a terrorist attack on the Togo team in Angola in January 2010, by a separatist group of the Cabinda exclave, international media turned to South Africa with worries that it possibly foreshadowed violence to come during the tournament. Interviewed by journalists, chief World Cup organiser Danny Jordaan responded: "If there is a war in Kosovo and a World Cup in Germany, no one asks if the World Cup can go on in Germany. Everyone understands the war in Kosovo is a war in Kosovo" (Myers & Smith, 2010). For Gumede (2010), this coverage revealed that "Western media too often see the whole continent of Africa as one country". This example – in which a local event is related to Africa as a whole – highlights homogenisation as a core feature of Afro-pessimism (Berger, 2010; Hammett, 2011).

2.3.2   Racialisation

"African" as it is used in Western media, Hawk argues (1992b p. 7), does not really refer to people living on the continent as a geographical entity "but rather people who are black and live on the African continent. It is a colonial label. North Africans and descendants of European settlers are not included in the term". This division of the continent along the skin colour of its inhabitants has been essential to the invention of the idea of Africa (Mudimbe, 1988; 1994) and to Afro-pessimism (Bassil, 2011). As Mano (2015 p. 11) explains, "the categorisation of Africans according to skin colour was part of racial ideologies developed by white colonial settlers to give greater legitimacy to economic exploitation of different groups". It is perhaps most visible in the light of the recent uprisings in Tunisia or Libya. They might take place on the African continent, yet the media refer to them as part of the "Arab spring" (despite Libya, in particular, being historically at the forefront of the African Union and continental pan-Africanism). The "fact of blackness" discussed by Fanon (1952) is therefore "tied to representations of 'Africa' as the 'Other'" (Fair, 1993 p. 6). This has led some to talk of Afro-pessimism as a racialised phenomenon (Evans, 2011 p. 399). The racialisation at stake in Afro-pessimism means that there are particular racial meanings attached to

Africa to construct and fix its difference (Fair, 1993 p. 11), as articulated through expressions such as "black-on-black" or "tribal" violence.

2.3.3 Selectivity

Another feature of the Afro-pessimist discourse is that it is highly selective and partial. This selectivity takes many forms. For instance, the selectivity can be seen in the types of topics and issues that constitute what de Beer calls the Afro-pessimist "codebook" that includes "famine, civil conflict and disputed elections"(de Beer, 2010 p. 598). In other words, it is selective because it focuses only and iteratively on certain aspects of lived experiences in Africa (Momoh, 2003 p. 34). It is also selective in the way it makes sense of these experiences, for instance by relying on "tribal" or exclusively ethnic explanations of complex political situations, and by using simple, unambiguous, ethnocentric explanatory frameworks, or what Dunn calls "the 'emplotment' of Africa and Africans within specific Western-scripted narratives" (Dunn, 2004 p. 485). The selective dimension of Afro-pessimism is similarly at stake in the way the discourse controls who holds the authority to talk, and how it tends to silence certain voices and/or assign them disempowering and stereotypical roles (Brookes, 1995; Wall, 1997). This feature is particularly entrenched with the nature of the news production process that always involves elements of selection. As such, this selection process is not unique to Afro-pessimism but it operates alongside and together with other discursive features to ideologically construct Afro-pessimism. In that sense, the ways the Afro-pessimist discourse homogenises (feature 1) and assigns racial meanings (feature 2) also testify to the highly selective nature of this discourse (feature 3), just like the reliance on a ranking framework (feature 4) and the projection of Africa into the future (feature 5) that I now turn to.

2.3.4 Ranking framework

Garret and Schmitt (2011) conceptualise Afro-pessimism in a broader context of neoliberal politics and a narrative of progress emerging from the development literature. In this global narrative, the African continent is presented as unable to put itself on the track of progress and to live up to its postcolonial expectations (Schmidt & Garrett, 2011 p. 425). This echoes the 19th century racist theories of civilisations and history (Hegel 1861; Renan 1882), as well as their contemporary reactualisation for instance in the work of Huntington (1997) or in Fukuyama's

argument (1992) that Western liberal democracies constitute the final stage in the narrative of progress (Momoh, 2003 p. 51). Put into this broader framework of progress, Afro-pessimism appears as deriving from a discourse of measurement standard, which assesses the failures of the continent against standards established in and by the West; it fixes "Africa and Africans in a specific reading of space and time within an evolutionary narrative dictated by Western/modernist values of the individual and the market" (Dunn, 2004 p. 489). Afro-pessimism thus constitutes a ranking framework concerned with Africa's progress in terms of Westernised development or rather, "the disappointment of that promise" (Spurr, 1993 p. 19).

2.3.5 Prediction

The last feature of Afro-pessimism is its ability to make predictions and project Africa into the future (Ahluwalia, 2001 p. 133; Momoh, 2003 p. 34). It is what "pessimism" stands for in Afro-pessimism. Evans, in her study of Afro-pessimism online among white South Africans expatriates, identified projections in the future as key to their Afro-pessimism:

> Online expatriate responses to events in South Africa perpetuate this [Afro-pessimist] thinking to varying degrees, with openly racist declarations and fantasies of recolonisation sitting at the extreme of the continuum, and predictions about the country's decline and apologetic speculations about the benefits of apartheid situated further along the scale.
>
> (Evans, 2011 p. 400)

From the belief in recolonisation to feelings of bitterness and renunciation, Evans research points to active predictions of a dark future as a key component of Afro-pessimism – a features that, again, echoes strongly colonial myth of Africa as the "Dark Continent" (Mudimbe, 1988; Bassil, 2011). By predicting a bleak future, this discourse not only works upstream – in its interpretation of the past and the present – but also works downstream by actively promising that things cannot get better or will get worse, in a determinist fashion (Ahluwalia, 2001 p. 133). In that sense, it continues the legacy of imperial discourse that "carries with it a prescription for change that must be conveyed with self-confidence and certainty" (Price, 2008 p. 57).

In summary, Afro-pessimism as a discourse is a system of knowledge and representation of Africa that regulates its geography, history, identity, societies, its past, present and future through five key features that work in conjunction:

1) It is a discourse that homogenises Africa;

2) It is a racialised discourse which assigns particular racial meanings;

3) It is highly selective and partial;

4) It relies on a ranking framework through which the continent's progress is assessed against criteria set by the West;

5) It involves an element of prediction and projection into the future.

While the definition that I put forward provides a comprehensive way to apprehend the phenomenon, it is the task of empirical investigation to unravel the different ways in which these features are activated in media discourse, through language, images, metaphors, narratives and rhetoric.

Conclusions

This chapter achieved three tasks. I reviewed the literature on Western media coverage of Africa. It established that the coverage was scarce and generally focused on a few countries and on "negative" stories. More importantly, it demonstrated that the coverage contains a set of linguistic, semiotic and rhetorical components that construct a specific image of Africa grounded in a colonial representational legacy. I then turned to the context of news and journalism production in which these representational processes occur. I drew on Shoemaker and Reese's model of influence on media content to introduce an eclectic body of research that contributes to refining our understanding of the forces shaping such an image. Finally, I drew on the input from the existing studies of Western media coverage of Africa, and combined it with existing studies on Afro-pessimism per se to establish a clear conceptualisation of Afro-pessimism as a discourse. I identified five key discursive features and I argued that this conceptual clarification allows establishing whether journalistic coverage can be deemed Afro-pessimist. Whether and how these features manifest themselves precisely in journalistic discourse will be assessed through my empirical investigation of media content in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. Before entering this investigation, I turn to the methodological approach and tools used to investigate Afro-pessimism in British and French print media and to answer my research questions.

CHAPTER 3 - Methodology

This chapter introduces the methodological approach used in this research, Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA). I first provide a discussion of CDA and of its key epistemological features, namely the emphasis on text, discourse, context and power. I stress the importance of accounting for the production context of media texts as a way to gain a deeper understanding of the formation of media discourses and of the power relations shaping them. I also introduce the multimodal dimension of the project, i.e. the attention to not only the linguistic but also visual components of media discourse. Finally, I argue that CDA constitutes both a theoretical and methodological framework ideally suited to answer my research questions at the crossroads of the different approaches introduced in Chapters 1 and 2, namely critical/cultural media studies, postcolonial studies and journalism production studies.

I then turn to the practical aspects involved in designing the research. I introduce the rationale for the research focus and for the selection of the two sites of analysis. I explain the process of data gathering and I map out the various empirical tools used to answer my research questions in the context of each site. I use a mix of tools including quantitative content analysis, qualitative discourse analysis, multimodal discourse analysis, semi-structured interviews with foreign correspondents and questionnaires with media professionals. The last section discusses additional methodological thoughts regarding translation and the use of Twitter as a research tool.

3.1   Critical Discourse Analysis

3.1.1   Text and power

I use a methodological approach rooted in CDA, which combines micro-analyses of textual data with a broader understanding of their context of production and of the power relations shaping media discourse. CDA has become particularly well established as a critical/cultural approach to the study of communication (van Dijk, 1993b; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough & Wodak, 2004; Machin & Mayr, 2012). Broadly, it is interested in the way language dialectically enacts and

reproduces power relations (Fairclough & Wodak, 2004 p. 357; Tonkiss, 2004 p. 373). By qualitatively looking at media texts, CDA aims to deconstruct the latent meanings and underlying assumptions contained in texts. It puts the emphasis on paying close attention to *how* things are said, and *why* (what kind of ideological purpose a discourse serves) rather than to only *what* is said (as can be the case in descriptive content analysis) (Machin & Mayr, 2012 p. 5). In particular, CDA has been concerned with the role of discourse in reproducing dominant ideologies, with dominance here being understood as "the exercise of social power by elites, institutions or groups, that results in social inequality, including political, cultural, class, ethnic, racial and gender inequality" (van Dijk, 1993b p. 249). This hegemonic view of society does not assume a direct top-down model, but it "recognizes that the distribution of power in society is paralleled by the distribution of meanings in texts, and that struggle for social power are paralleled by semiotic struggle for meanings" (Fiske, 1989 p. 98). It does not imply that the reception of these texts is fixed; but it tries to show how dominant discourses precisely try to fix a certain meaning and worldview in texts.

Over the years, CDA scholars have developed tools to systematically analyse the linguistic components of media texts, for instance, by looking at who gets to speak about certain topics (and who does not), at the lexical fields used to discuss certain issues, at the ways in which certain concepts are taken for granted (presuppositions), at the use of figure of speeches (metaphor, hyperbole, metonymy, synecdoche) and at silences in texts (what is not being said and why) (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Most early versions of CDA – which emerged in the field of critical linguistics – sidetracked other components involved in the construction of meaning in texts, in particular visual ones. This shortcoming has been addressed by integrating a multimodal dimension developed in the field of social semiotics, which stresses how visual components communicate along, and together with, linguistic components (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; 2001; 2006; Kress, 2010). In this context, a multimodal CDA of visual texts can investigate:

- The setting and objects depicted and the connotations behind them;
- The most salient components of an image;
- The gaze of a person represented and the way the viewer's gaze is positioned in relation to the image;
- Whether individuals are portrayed as part of a group or not (and whether some are excluded);

- The choice of a particular angle, and visual metaphors;

- The composition of an image (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

In other words, a multimodal approach calls for integrating how different modes of communication work together to construct meaning and discourse in texts. My research therefore integrates a multimodal component as way to account for the textual richness of journalistic discourse on Africa.

In sum, CDA is primarily a form of qualitative textual analysis that seeks to deconstruct media texts so as to explain how power relations are enacted in media discourse (Machin & Mayr, 2012 p. 5). Fürsich summarises several reasons that warrant a specific analytical focus on text as "a distinctive discursive moment between encoding and decoding that justifies special scholarly engagement" (Fürsich, 2009 p. 238). Textual analysis makes several central contributions to the understanding of communication, including: unpacking the range of meaning possibilities contained in a text and its ideological potential; understanding the historical evolution of discourse; interpreting the mediated reality constructed in media texts and "[what] versions of reality are available in a given media text" (Fürsich, 2009 p. 245); and explaining "which cultural sensibilities prevail that allow for such a text at this specific point in time" (Fürsich, 2009 p. 247).

3.1.2   Text and context of production

Although CDA principally offers an in-depth analysis of media texts, it holds that discourses are constructed in specific social and historical contexts that the analysis needs to integrate. News in particular is constructed in a very peculiar context and has its own goals, ethics and professional practices and cannot therefore be analysed like any other texts (Richardson, 2008). However, CDA-inspired research can fail to integrate contextual components and this has led to sharp criticisms (Widdowson, 2004; Philo, 2007). It has been particularly criticised for not discussing enough with producers and thus reading too much out of the text. In discussing the work of van Dijk and Fairclough, Widdowson argues that:

> over and over again (...) there is the insistence that you cannot read significance straight off from the text, but that it is a matter of relating texts to their conditions of production and consumption. But what they say is not what they do.
>
> (Widdowson, 2004 p. 367)

In practice, he argues, these contextual elements of production or consumption are largely missing from most CDA studies. A notable risk of this structuralist tendency is to attribute an intention to the producers of texts, without consulting them or investigating the ways media texts come about. Although this criticism was made more than 10 years ago, it is still a challenge for the current generation of CDA analysts. This is visible for instance in the recent multimodal CDA framework developed by Machin and Mayr (2012). Their approach is based on the idea of "semiotic choices":

> The communicator always has a range of semiotic choices available to them when they wish to represent a person. The choices they make will never be neutral but will be based on the way they wish to signpost what kind of person they are representing, or how they wish to represent them as social actors engaged in action.
>
> (Machin & Mayr, 2012 p. 103)

On the one hand, this idea of semiotic choice stresses the importance of the use of specific words, narratives, images and rhetorical devices that make up a text. On the other hand, it also attributes to the producers of these texts an intention. This approach takes for granted that the choice of a word or image reflects the ideological intention of its producer. There is a risk, then, to wrongfully assign intentionality, to miss on the collective processes involved in constructing media texts and to fail to capture the range of contextual factors – sometimes contradictory ones – leading to these semiotic choices. Ultimately, this can contribute to missing out on key forces that shape media discourse.

In order to overcome this difficulty, some have argued for more systematic investigations of media producers and of their working condition. Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999 pp. 61–62) go as far as to argue for the "the systematic presence of the researcher in the context of practice under study" as a way to dig deeper into "the beliefs, values and desires of [the] participants". For Machin and Mayr (2012 p. 217), it is crucial to do so when analysing newspaper discourses, for instance by conducting interviews with media professionals. There is now an uptake for grounding CDA of media texts in their context of production through interviews as found in the work of Machin and Mayr (2007), Machin and Niblock (2008) and Aiello (2012a; 2012b).

I adopt a similar approach. I do not aim to research journalistic production per se, but I integrate contextual information to ground my textual analysis in a broader understanding of news production. I do so by engaging with media producers through interviews and questionnaires, as well as by grounding the analysis in existing studies of foreign news production (Chapter 2). By focusing on texts and linking them with broader professional practices, values and ideology of production, I will therefore examine how discourses construct and convey meanings that enact power relations, while suggesting contextual explanations as to why they appear. Although this methodology does not exhaust the complex ways in which discourses circulate from production to reception, it will provide solid evidence of *how* discourses are enacted in media texts and some explanations as to *why*. In doing so, I make a contribution to the literature on media representation of Africa that has dominantly fallen short of combining textual analysis and original analysis of production. According to Scott (2015 p. 11), 80% of all studies on representation of Africa in the US and the UK focus on media content alone. Only a few combine text and context of production by producing original empirical data at both levels, in particular through interviews with correspondents; and many of these do so by relying on a very small amount of production-oriented data. The methodology that I adopt therefore contributes to filling this gap.

3.1.3 A theoretical and methodological framework

Because of its emphasis on text, power relations and context of production, this CDA approach provides the perfect methodological framework to answer the three research questions addressed in my empirical analyses:

- *Text*: What is the nature of media discourse on Africa? Is it really Afro-pessimist and if so, in what sense? (Research question 2)

- *Power*: Are mythical representations enduring, evolving or disappearing, and what are the forces and power relations driving these evolutions and/or continuities? (Research question 3)

- *Context*: To what extent does the context of news production explain the formation of media discourse? What is the interplay between the processes of journalistic production and the formation of postcolonial discourse(s) on Africa? (Research question 4)

In the remainder of this chapter, I will turn to the design of the empirical analysis and the analytical tools used to answer these questions. The subsequent sections therefore constitute a sort of audit trail of the research design and process. However, it is important to note here that CDA constitutes as much a methodological framework as a theoretical one. As Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999 p. 16) highlight, CDA implies working across disciplines and putting them in dialogue. In the context of this research, the key epistemological features of CDA outlined above relate to different aspects of the intersecting literatures introduced in previous chapters. As I use it here, CDA is also the integrated theoretical framework through which my analysis brings the different intellectual traditions introduced in Chapters 1 and 2 – namely critical/cultural studies, postcolonial studies and journalism studies – to reflect on the data and the phenomenon of Afro-pessimism. The concept of Afro-pessimism as defined in Chapter 2 is therefore the analytical interface between, on the one hand, critical/cultural and postcolonial approaches, and, on the other hand, the more empirical approaches of news production research. This conceptualisation of Afro-pessimism creates a connection in the direction of these different literatures and allows "connecting the level of text or discourse analysis with sociological positions on institutions, actions and social structures" (Weiss & Wodak, 2003 p. 8).

3.2   Research design

This section provides the rationale for choosing a comparative approach between France and the UK and for studying broadsheet newspapers and magazines. I then turn to the sites of analysis and why they were selected.

3.2.1   Rationale

Why France and the UK?

This research is grounded in a postcolonial perspective that explores the remnants of colonial past, the spectres that keep haunting contemporary memory and imagination (Mbembe, 2001). I thus look at the way former colonial empires cope with the task of reporting on former colonies, and the extent to which they escape

past representations. When it comes to colonial history, France and Britain are two major former colonial empires, especially in Africa. The two former empires have kept strong links with their former colonies after independence, be it through immigration, language, politics or ongoing economic interests. For this reason, France and Britain are – among the former European colonial empires – two of the most interesting cases. In addition, adopting a comparative approach is a fruitful way to assess both similarities and differences across local contexts; it can help identify more clearly what is taken for granted in a given culture. Finally, while there are many studies of UK coverage, there are only a few studies of French media coverage. A correlative of this anglophone bias is that the coverage of francophone countries is rarely studied (Scott, 2015 p. 11). My comparative approach thus contributes to filling these two gaps.

Why study news media?

Richardson (2008) notes that news texts cannot be analysed like any other texts in particular because of their function in society. As Nimmo and Combs (1992 p. xv) explain: "historically, the mass media were heralded as the ultimate instruments of democracy (…) [They] were destined to unite, educate and as a result to improve the actions and decisions of polity". News media are traditionally seen as an essential tool in a healthy liberal democracy, fulfilling roles of information providers, watchdogs and Fourth Estate (Curran, 2000; McNair, 2009; Hearns-Branaman, 2011). Yet, the literature (see Chapter 2) suggests that Western news media have overall failed to the task of reporting the African continent in a way that contributes to the reduction of racist perceptions.

Assuredly, news media cannot be blamed for being solely responsible, since myths and stereotypes are deeply embedded in culture. Here one can notably think of the contribution of humanitarian agencies (Chouliaraki, 2006; Campbell, 2012), advertising (Ramamurthy, 2003), film (Evans & Glenn, 2010) and literature (Fabian, 2012). However, precisely because news media are supposed to fulfil a democratic function in society, they should be held accountable for the discourses they construct and convey. In addition, and as opposed to fictional genres, the news media make stronger claims of representing 'truth' and 'reality'. In fact, and in the same way that philosopher John Rawls (1971) argued that you can assess the fairness of a society by how it treats its least well-off members, I would argue that

we can gauge the quality of our news media by assessing the way they report on disadvantaged groups, be it ethnic and religious minorities, working class, or habitants from distant and poorer countries. We should care about the way news media report on Africa since this tells us something about their quality and the extent to which they live up to the expectations of media fulfilling a democratic role in liberal societies (McNair, 2009).

Why study broadsheet print media?

As Scott notes, newspapers have "several distinctive features which make them particularly influential sources of information" (2009 p. 535). These include a greater contribution to political knowledge of audiences and the capacity to communicate more context and complexity due to the ability to fit more words in an article than in a TV item. According to a research by Harvey (2008) quoted in Scott (2009 p. 535), 41% of people in the UK state that they get their knowledge of "poor countries" from newspapers. Even in the digital context, traditional news – including newspapers and news magazines – still dominate the online news market in France and the UK. In the UK and France respectively, 87% and 74% of the people use traditional news brands online, as opposed to 32% and 38% for aggregators, and to 31% and 30% for social media and blogs (Newman & Levy, 2013). This report also shows a particular resilience of French newspapers and magazines in the digital context: 6 out of the 12 top French online news brands are newspapers or magazines, with three newspapers leading this ranking.

There are three further reasons that underpin my focus on broadsheet print media. Firstly, this choice is grounded both in a CDA tradition concerned with elite discourse and racism (van Dijk, 1991; van Dijk, 1993a) and in theories of agenda setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). These approaches hold that the view of elites and socially advantaged groups – including for instance politicians, investors and businessmen, journalists, academics and intellectuals – play a stronger role in framing public consensus on political, social and economic issues as well as decision making. The CDA tradition in elite discourse and racism, for instance, sought to understand how the issue of immigration is framed in the European broadsheet press, and how this links to the reinforcement of racism and to the promotion of reactionary immigration policies (van Dijk, 1993a). Because CDA sets out to uncover relations of power and domination, it is a socially situated

approach to knowledge formation (Fairclough & Wodak, 2004 p. 365). This explains why CDA scholars have put an emphasis on studying social inequalities, elite ideologies and issues related to identity formation such as nationalism, racism and classism. In that sense, CDA shares an affiliation with the politically committed and interventionist form of research found in cultural and postcolonial studies. By drawing on these literatures, I inscribe my research in a similar politically committed, anti-essentialist and anti-racist approach. This socially situated approach drives the focus on broadsheet print media as a way to "look up" to the discourse of socially advantaged groups.

Secondly, the broadsheet press remains a point of reference and authority within the journalistic industry. A position as a foreign correspondent in a newspaper like *Le Monde* or the *Times* carries a prestige that many journalists see as epitomising the "best of" journalism. It is not uncommon for journalists working for broadsheet print media to be invited on TV and radio shows to provide expert opinions. Similarly, it is frequent for other media to rely on what was written in broadsheet papers, for instance through press reviews. In other words, this section of the media has a discursive impact in the journalistic field that extends beyond the immediate context of their home media.

Finally, a recurring argument in the debate on Afro-pessimism is that the portrayal of Africa in the news has a detrimental impact on the continent's economic development. According to Schorr (2011), Afro-pessimism contributes to perceptions of political risk and provides an explanation as to why, for instance, FDI in some African countries do not reflect the countries' economic competitiveness. She argues that the news media are a key factor in this perception gap: "the news and media sources, to which investors look to be informed, are biased and woefully inaccurate in their portrayals of Africa" (Schorr, 2011 p. 56). While I do not focus on the niche of business/financial media, many of the broadsheet newspapers and news magazines included in this research constitute part of the news diet of the business audience. They therefore contribute to perceptions of Africa among these circles. For all these reasons, the broadsheet print media are perfectly suited to an investigation into the state and discursive nature of Afro-pessimism.

3.2.2   Selection of sites

Site 1: The 50ᵗʰ anniversaries of independence

Between 1957 and 1962, 24 African countries gained their independence from colonial powers; 15 were French colonies and 7 British colonies (see Appendix I for a full list). Between 2007 and 2012, these countries celebrated their 50 years of independence. The debates surrounding these anniversaries offer a particularly interesting vantage point to explore the issue of Afro-pessimism; it is a moment where the postcolonial past and present are assessed, and the future possibly predicted. Afro-pessimism can partly be seen as the expression of a disappointment that followed, and contrasted with, the optimism of the independence period (see section 1.3.1); and these anniversaries constitute an invitation to look back on, and take stock of, this period and what has been achieved. Given that a key feature of the Afro-pessimist discourse is the emphasis on assessing Africa's "progress" (feature 4, ranking framework), the coverage of these anniversaries could provide a fertile ground for an Afro-pessimist discourse to flourish.

Site 2: News magazine covers on Africa

A cover is the most salient feature of a news magazine. It is the first piece of information that a reader encounters. It is as much a sales argument as it is an editorial statement frontloading the main news of the week or the month. Magazine covers also constitute rich, multimodal texts. When the *Economist* published in 2011 a cover on Africa with the title "A hopeful continent", many saw this as a sign that a new narrative about Africa was emerging. Taking this cover as a starting point and ending in January 2015, I focus on news magazine covers that were dedicated to continental Africa. In doing so, I will empirically assess, using my typology of five discursive features, to what extent Afro-pessimism constitutes the dominant discourse about Africa as a whole in British and French news magazines covers between 2011 and 2015.

Rationale for the selection of sites

The selection of these two sites was driven, on the one hand, by the definition of Afro-pessimism as a discourse about "Africa" and, on the other hand, by an

assessment of the limitations of the current literature. The majority of existing studies tend to focus on the coverage of one African country and from this they conclude that it is representative of how "Africa" is covered. This is not necessarily problematic if putting together all these studies could give us insights into how most African countries are covered. However, the countries analysed are often the same. Scott found that six countries – South Africa, Rwanda, Sudan, Kenya, Sierra Leone and Somalia – make up 55% of all studies (Scott, 2015 p. 13). He also notes "the relative absence of studies of coverage of francophone African countries" and that "28 countries were not the subject of any analysis at all" (Scott, 2015 pp. 13–14).[15] As such, the literature is far from providing strong insights into how Africa is covered, but rather how the coverage of a few countries relate to the social construction of a broader idea of Africa. Because a key feature of the Afro-pessimist discourse is to claim an authority over the knowledge of Africa as a whole, I have therefore chosen two sites of analysis with a continental dimension. Site 2 focuses on media coverage of continental Africa. Site 1 includes 24 countries, which will allow me to draw broader conclusions more confidently. In addition, site 1 includes 15 francophone countries and thus contributes to the knowledge of the coverage of francophone Africa.

Scott also remarks a narrow focus on specific events and most notably the 1984 Ethiopian famine, the 1994 Rwandan genocide and the Darfur crisis between 2003 and 2009. There seems to have been a tendency to focus on events that fit with the preconception of what researchers want to find. Scott (2015 p. 3) gives the example of Moeller (1999) who focused on four case studies precisely "because they correspond with 'the crises represented by the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse – pestilence, famine, death/assassination and war/genocide'" (Moeller, 1999 p. 4). On the contrary, site 1 falls outside an expected focus on war and crisis, and defies an easy preliminary categorisation into negative or positive news. It will therefore provide insights into the more routine and banal aspects of media coverage, those that are taken for granted in the literature. As for site 2, the focus is not on a theme or an event but on the entirety of the media discourse about Africa.

Finally, site 1 focuses on the linguistic aspects of journalistic discourse, while site 2 puts the emphasis on the visual dimension. Taken together, these two sites

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[15] This is also the case for lusophone African countries and more research is similarly needed to shed light on the coverage of these countries.

provide complementary insights into the multimodal nature of British and French print media discourse on Africa.

3.3   Data gathering and analysis

I gathered the data so as to cover, in one case, a significant section of the media industry (site 1), and in the other case, its entirety (site 2). The data in site 1 constitutes *all* the articles about the 50th anniversaries of independence published in *most* broadsheet newspapers between 2007 and 2012. The data in site 2 constitutes *all* magazine covers focused on Africa published in *all* the main broadsheet news magazines between 2011 and 2015. In that sense, the data gathered in both sites is to be understood more as an entire corpus of texts than as a sample. The methodological tools used in each site derive from the nature and amount of data gathered. I used a mix of methods to provide analyses tailored to each site but in a way that reflects the research commitment to contextual and critical analysis of media discourse.

The data analysis follows the three-stage process outlined by Thurlow and Aiello (2007 p. 313). The aspects tackled at each step are interwoven, but for analytical purposes these distinctions are useful to understand the different stages I went through during the collection and analysis of the data:

- *Descriptive analysis:* I identify the main discursive patterns and features contained in the textual data.

- *Interpretive analysis:* I analyse how these discursive patterns and features communicate a certain meaning and I draw on contextual elements to explain how media texts are produced.

- *Critical analysis:* I relate these discursive patterns and features to power relations characteristic of the postcolonial era.

The goal of this approach is to link the micro-analyses of texts (identification and analysis of textual strategies) with an understanding of their contexts of production and, at the macro level, with the power relations that frame them (Aiello, 2012a; Aiello, 2012b). While I go through these analytical steps in both sites of analysis, I

do so in different ways due to the nature and amount of data in the respective sites. In the two sections that follow, I explain how I gathered the data and how this three-stage analytical approach was operationalised in each site.

3.3.1   Site 1: The 50th anniversaries of independence

Data gathering process

Based on the rationale outlined previously for studying broadsheet print media, I included four broadsheet newspapers in each country and using the following criteria: broadsheet orientation, agenda setting role, significant national circulation, reputation within the industry and good amount of international news. Not all newspapers tick these criteria in the same way, and it is the balance of these criteria that determined the selection of each newspaper. In addition, I also selected the newspapers to keep a balance between the two countries in terms of political and editorial orientation by including in both countries a newspaper with a financial orientation and three newspapers with a centre-left, centre-right and right political affiliation. With this selection of eight newspapers (Table 2), I am covering the great majority of this section of the industry in both countries.

Table 2 - Newspapers under study (and political/editorial orientation)

France	UK
Le Monde (centre-left)	*Guardian* (centre-left)
La Croix (centre-right)	*Times* (centre-right)
Le Figaro (right)	*Telegraph* (right)
Les Échos (business orientation)	*Financial Times* (business orientation)

The articles were collected through Nexis, and I followed a similar procedure to search articles in both British and French newspapers.[16] I used the following time frame: January 1st 2007 to January 1st 2013. This time frame covered the anniversaries of 50 years of independence for 24 African countries. With the year 2010 dominating most of these anniversaries under the umbrella expression of "African independence", I conducted an initial search for articles that contained

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[16] I also included the weekend editions of the newspapers. These have different names in the UK because they are published by sister papers and I took this into account during the search: the *Telegraph* (the *Sunday Telegraph*), the *Guardian* (the *Observer*), the *Times* (the *Sunday Times)* and the *Financial Times* (*Financial Times Weekend*).

three sets of key words (Table 3). I then replaced "Africa" with the name of each individual country that celebrated 50 years of independence (Appendix I).

Table 3 - Combination of words used to identify news articles

Word 1	Word 2	Word 3
Africa / Afrique +	Independence / indépendance +	Celebration / fête
Africa / Afrique +	Independence / indépendance +	Anniversary / anniversaire
Africa / Afrique +	Independence / indépendance +	Jubilee / cinquantenaire
Africa / Afrique +	Independence / indépendance +	50 / fifty / cinquante

I searched the entire newspapers, and not only the news sections, so as to cover the entirety of the media discourse about the 50th anniversaries available to readers in these newspapers. All articles were skimmed to assess if they were relevant for my analysis. Broadly, there were two types of relevant articles: articles that focused specifically on a celebration marking 50 years of independence, and articles that mentioned the celebration within the coverage of a different story. All articles that fell in one of these two categories were downloaded from Nexis and stored chronologically and per newspaper.

This process allowed me to systematically gather all the articles that discussed – in one way or another – the celebrations (framed in the media in a continental or national perspective, and either as an event in itself or an event worth mentioning in the context of another story). As the search took place, I found that the anniversaries of Swaziland's 40 years of independence and Zimbabwe's 30 years of independence received significant media coverage in this time frame. These were also included in the data collection because, as I will show, these two anniversaries were covered at the expense of the 50th anniversaries of other countries.

Amidst optimistic discussions of the power of the internet to challenge traditional gatekeeping processes and provide more depth and content, one of my goals was to assess if newspapers produced exclusive online stories: that is, stories found on the newspapers' websites but not in the paper editions. I therefore carried a search procedure similar to the one described above, using only newspaper websites as sources on Nexis. When a relevant online article was identified, I compared it to my database of newspapers articles to see if the article had been published in the paper. In some cases, the title of an article changed as it moved from the paper

version to the online version. Therefore, when an online article was published on a date similar to a print article, I compared them to see if it was the same article with a different title. If that was the case, the online article was discarded, as it did not consists of exclusive online content. While it might be interesting to learn more about the translation of print articles into online articles (and possible changes made in the process), this was not the focus of this research. Instead, my engagement with online content in this site is limited to assess whether the online environment provides a platform for exclusive and different content.

Data analysis: content and discourse analysis

Site 1 consists of 282 news articles. Because this is a fairly large corpus, I used a mix of quantitative and qualitative tools, and I focused on the linguistic and rhetorical aspects of journalistic discourse. I designed a coding sheet so as to map the nature of the media coverage of the 50th anniversaries of independence (Appendix II). Among other types of information (author, date, title, section where the article appears, length), the coding included details about the geographical focus of the articles, the individuals quoted and the way they are quoted (quoting verbs), and the use of specific lexical fields. Each article was coded manually and the results were then recorded in an excel document. The coding sheet in Appendix II gives detailed explanations of the categories used; I also provide explanations in the analysis chapters when introducing the results of the content analysis.

The coding process had two functions. Firstly, it served as the basis for a quantitative content analysis that mapped out the overall features of the coverage. This is presented in Chapter 4 where I provide a systematic analysis of these features. The analysis details *when* the anniversaries became "news" and *why*, i.e. what requirements and aspects of news production drive the coverage. In the process, I also assess three of the most common kinds of criticism raised against Western media coverage of Africa (see section 2.1.3): a) the constant references to "darkness" and "tribalism"; b) the portrayal of Africa as a country; c) the overreliance on Western voices and sources. The textual analysis is complemented by material retrieved from the interviews conducted with foreign correspondents. In doing so, the analysis of the coverage of the anniversaries of independence in Chapter 4 is done with an eye to shedding light on the broader question of how British and French journalists write about Africa.

Secondly, the coding process allowed me to build a gradual understanding of the data that I subsequently analyse in Chapter 5. Here the analysis takes a resolutely qualitative turn. I deconstruct what constitutes the "natural" or the "common sense" of the coverage; what Hall would call the taken for granted of communication where power relations are buried. I unpack the rhetoric, narratives, patterns and silences that make up the coverage and focus on understanding the ideological function(s) of this journalistic discourse. Based on in-depth knowledge of the data gained through the initial content analysis, the discourse analytical approach used in Chapter 5 therefore aims to dig deeper into the social reality constructed by media discourse, and the postcolonial power relations shaping this discourse.

The analysis of this site is therefore spread across two chapters. Chapter 4 focuses on the more *descriptive* and *interpretive* aspects of the analysis. Chapter 5 also includes elements of *descriptive* and *interpretive* analysis, but it primarily concentrates on the more *critical* aspect of the analysis. At the end of Chapter 5, I bring together the *descriptive*, *interpretive* and *critical* dimensions to provide an overall conclusion to my analysis of this site.

3.3.2 Site 2: News magazine covers on Africa

Data gathering

The data for the site 2 was gathered from December 2011 to January 2015. I first established a list of the main prominent news magazines as well as Sunday supplements that stand at the UK national equivalent (Appendix III). Being based in the UK most of the time, I checked these publications on a weekly and monthly basis in a newsstand, and bought any news magazine with a cover focusing on continental Africa. Whenever I was away for more than a month, I monitored these publications online. In the French context, the covers of the main news magazines are visible on their online archive; every month, I monitored these archives to identify any relevant cover. Overall, I identified twelve covers that focused on continental Africa over eight news magazines. In addition to the magazine covers, I also gathered throughout the research process some 60 news articles and blog posts relevant to the phenomenon of magazine covers about Africa. These include for instance commentaries on the magazine covers under study, or pieces that include

interviews with media producers involved in their production. These articles were downloaded and thematically organised in an excel document where I included quotes relevant for the analysis.

Data analysis: multimodal discourse analysis

In site 2, the method consists of a detailed multimodal discourse analysis that links text and context of production in order to critically examine the construction of a certain idea of Africa (Mudimbe 1994). Against the saying "do not judge a book by its cover" I approach magazine covers as rich multimodal texts. They connote a number of values and communicate specific worldviews through a series of interconnected semiotic choices. They are meant to draw the attention of the readers without alienating them. They should appeal to their values, curiosity and assumptions, sometimes by disrupting them. In other words, they can be seen as a nexus of semiotic choices, media market imperatives and ideological worldviews. Because of the relative small size of the corpus under study (12 covers), I decided to provide a very detailed multimodal discourse analysis of each cover. I draw on the tools developed in the field of multimodal critical discourse analysis and social semiotics by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) in their study of the grammar of visual design, and those summarised by Machin and Mayr (2012) so as to dig deeply into the semiotic richness of media texts. This includes looking at the range of visual, linguistic and compositional choices (words, images, colours, pose and gaze of individuals in photographs, font sizes, salience, compositional structure, lighting and design). I also conducted interviews and questionnaires with media professionals directly involved in their production to shed some light on the various production factors behind textual choices. In doing so, I trace key linkages between the covers' semiotic features and issues of postcolonial representation, and the broader political and economic processes in which they are implicated.

Because the amount of textual data in this site is much smaller than in site 1, I present the analysis in a single chapter. The structure of the chapter, however, reflects a similar three-stage analytical process. The first section of the chapter provides mainly the *descriptive* analysis as well as some *interpretive* analysis. The second section focuses on deepening the *interpretive* analysis. The third section, finally, draws on the *descriptive* and *interpretive* analyses to offer the *critical* analysis of the magazine covers.

3.4   Engaging with media producers

3.4.1   Semi-structured interviews and questionnaires

I complement the analysis of media content with semi-structured interviews with foreign correspondents. I focus on foreign correspondents because they are at the heart of the production of the coverage. While they often find themselves on the receiving end of the criticism of Afro-pessimism, there are very few studies in the literature on Africa's media image that complement qualitative analysis of media content with interviews with foreign correspondents. Including correspondents in my research is both a way to research and analyse their perspective, as well as gain a deeper understanding of the manufacturing of Africa's media image.

Interviews can be described as a form of "conversation with a purpose" (Bingham & Moore, 1959 quoted in Lindlof, 1988 p. 164) and constitute "a practical qualitative method for discovering how people think and feel about their communication practices" (Keyton, 2006 p. 295). I settled on a semi-structured approach to the interviews. All participants were asked a set of core questions dealing with production practices (writing, story selection, relationships with editors, perceptions of the audience) and issues of media representation (understanding of Afro-pessimism; perception of the criticism of Afro-pessimism in Western media; stereotypes; intercultural communication). The interview questions are attached in Appendix IV and provide details of the different aspects that I was probing.

The core questions were not always asked in the same order so as to allow a fluid discussion. This way, participants could expand on certain aspects and I was able to follow up on others, therefore providing the freedom to "depart briefly to go down an unexpected conversational path" (Keyton, 2006 p. 295). I also established a set of optional questions to be used depending on the context and flow of the conversation, and if the time allowed. As part of these optional questions, I included a reconstructive approach (Reich, 2006): I presented journalists with an article they wrote and asked them about the production of this text. This stimulus was used to gain further insights into the immediate production of a story, as well

as ground the broader discussion of media representation and production into specific examples.

Finally, because site 2 focuses on magazine covers, I decided to use questionnaires to reach out to other important actors involved in their production including a graphic designer, an illustrator, a photographer, and an art director. The questionnaire was focused on specific media texts and was kept short (six questions maximum) to help receive a positive response rate. Each questionnaire was tailored to the magazine cover and to the role of the individual in its production (see Appendix V for an example of questionnaire).

3.4.2   Identifying and accessing participants

Participants were identified following a concentric approach – from those directly involved in the content analysed to those working for the media outlets studied, to foreign correspondents working for British and French media outlets in Africa and those working for Western media. After having gathered my textual data for the two sites, I first identified those who were the main contributors of articles (site 1). For site 2, I did online research to identify graphic artists, illustrators, art editors, photographers and editors involved in the production of the magazine covers analysed. I then identified the current Africa-based correspondents (staff) working for the newspapers and magazines which content was analysed. I subsequently identified freelance journalists who have a working relationship with one, or more, of the outlets analysed. Given that Johannesburg and Nairobi are the two cities with the greatest concentration of foreign correspondents in Africa, and the greatest concentration of interviewees I had identified, I undertook trips there to conduct the interviews face-to-face (Johannesburg, 14 days in October 2013; Nairobi, 24 days in October and November 2013). Once I started the interviews in the field, I gained better access to a greater number of journalists working for international media. Although not necessarily involved in the textual data analysed, these were also interviewed to provide greater insights into the practices, values and ideologies of foreign correspondents in Africa, and to contextualise my analysis of media representation and discourse.

For the most part, I initially contacted interviewees by email (see Appendix VI). It was generally difficult to find the contact details of journalists (email and/or phone) through the online platform of the media outlet they work for. I used the

directory of members of the Foreign Correspondents' Association of East Africa (FCAEA) and Southern Africa (FCASA) that provided phone and email contacts for most correspondents. Unfortunately for future studies, these associations appear to no longer make these lists publically available online. As per ethical requirements, after a first contact was established, interviewees were provided with an information sheet and a consent form before the interview took place so that they would know more about the project, what their participation entails and how the data would be protected (see Appendix VII). Two copies of the consent form (Appendix VIII) were signed upon starting the interview, with one copy remaining with participant and one with the researcher. In the case of the phone interview and online questionnaires, consent was reached by having participants fill in and sign the consent form electronically.

The process of getting access to foreign correspondents was quite smooth. I never received an email from a participant refusing to take part in the project on the basis that they felt the research was biased or of no interest to them. Only one participant initially expressed doubts about participating and asked more questions about the project before taking part. Some of my requests remain unanswered, while others were declined either because the participants' calendar did not match mine, or because they had move to a new position in another part of the world. I believe there were four main factors that contributed to this smooth process of getting access.

Firstly, being a Leeds University student turned out to be an advantage in two cases where the journalists were Leeds University alumni; in their initial email responses, the two journalists highlighted that they studied in Leeds and this seemed to create on their side a positive perception of the project and some form of bonding point. This was confirmed in the face-to-face meetings that both started with some informal discussions about the experience of studying in Leeds.

Secondly, being introduced by someone else contributed to participants taking my request seriously. This was particularly true when someone I had just interviewed introduced me to someone else. Thus, once I had a foot in, I was in a good position to contact new participants by telling them that one of their trusted colleagues advised me to get in touch with them. In Nairobi, I was directly introduced to

several foreign correspondents during interviews conducted in a café heavily frequented by international journalists.

Thirdly, and related to this, going to South Africa and Kenya to conduct the interviews was very important. "Being there" made a huge difference to secure access. In several instances, correspondents told me that a key reason they accepted to be interviewed was that I came "all the way down here".

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I believe the approach of the project – grounding the analysis of media representation and discourse in their context of production – was one to which correspondents related. Based on our discussions, several correspondents seem to receive quite regularly requests for interviews for academic projects. Interestingly, one journalist explained that requests for academic interviews had grown exponentially in the last five years and in direct correlation with a decline in requests from young journalists asking for advice to become correspondents in Africa. In another case, a correspondent explained that she received a lot of requests but that she usually does not answer to them mainly because she does not like the "tone" of these studies: "but in your case, there was something different. And you came all the way here".

Although journalists often perceive journalism research with suspicion, I found that foreign correspondents have strong interests in issues of representation and stereotypes – something that I explore in depth in Chapter 7. Their suspicion, then, stems from them feeling that academic research on Africa's media image fails to integrate the material conditions in which journalists work, is generally focused on the criticism of "negative news" about Africa, and approaches the topic with an agenda, namely that researchers will find what they have established a priori that they wanted to find. Correspondents did not make it systematically explicit that they "liked" the tone of the study. In fact, several participants displayed irritation and weariness at some questions – something analysed in Chapter 7. But they made their interest in the topic and their appreciation of the approach explicit enough for me to believe that the overall framing and presentation of the PhD strongly contributed to them accepting to take part.

Twenty-three media professionals participated in the study. Four responded to the questionnaire (Table 5) and I conducted nineteen interviews (Table 4). The

interviews ranged in length from 66 minutes to 136 minutes, and the average
length was 88 minutes. In Table 5, whenever a participant requested anonymity
and to ensure anonymity, I removed the name of the media outlet(s) they work for,
as well as the specifics of their job description. Except for one, all the interviewees
who requested anonymity work for media outlets under study in my analysis of
media content.

Table 4 - List of interviewees

Name or anonymised description	Job title	Media outlet	Interview location
Africa correspondent 1	Anonymised	Anonymised	Nairobi
Africa correspondent 2	Anonymised	Anonymised	Nairobi
Beauduffe, Christophe	Southern Africa bureau chief	*AFP*	Johannesburg
East Africa correspondent 1	Anonymised	Anonymised	Nairobi
East Africa correspondent 2	Anonymised	Anonymised	Nairobi
East Africa correspondent 3	Anonymised	Anonymised	Nairobi
Grill, Bartholomäus	Africa bureau chief	*Der Spiegel*	Cape Town
Kelto, Anders	Africa correspondent	*PRI*	Cape Town
Laing, Aislinn	Southern Africa correspondent	*Telegraph*	Johannesburg
Macheroux-Denault, Nicole	Africa correspondent	*RTL Television*	Nairobi
Moore, Phil	Photo-journalist	*Times, Sunday Telegraph, Guardian, Le Monde, Le Figaro*	Nairobi
Nahr, Dominic	Photo-journalist	*TIME*	Nairobi
Njanji, Susan	Southern Africa correspondent	*AFP*	Johannesburg
Perry, Alex	Former Africa bureau chief	*TIME*	Cape Town
Ribstein, Sophie	Southern Africa correspondent	*BBC*	Johannesburg
Smith, David	Africa correspondent	*Guardian*	Johannesburg
Southern Africa correspondent 1	Anonymised	Anonymised	Johannesburg
Southern Africa correspondent 2	Anonymised	Anonymised	Phone
Wrong, Michela	Correspondent (Cote d'Ivoire, Zaire, Kenya)	*Reuters, BBC, FT*	London

Table 5 - List of respondents to questionnaire

Name	Job title	Magazine cover
Bacon, Derek	Illustrator	*The Economist – "Africa Rising"*
Delhomme, Anne-Sophie	Art director	*Courrier International – "Africa 3.0"*
Perrier, Aude	Graphic artist	*Le Monde Magazine – "Africa, the take-off"*
Siegle, Lucy	Contributing journalist to the special issue	*The Observer / The New Review – "Welcome to the new Africa"*

3.4.3   Analysis

I approach the interview material in a dual perspective. On the one hand, it provides insights to ground media texts in their immediate context of production. On the other hand, the respondents' answers and the language they use to talk about specific issues constitute actions that can be observed, and thus analysed. This language performs a social function in the sense that foreign correspondents talk from a particular social position, that of the journalistic field. As Lindlof notes "interview talk is the rhetoric of socially situated speakers, *not* an objective report of thoughts, feelings, or things out in the world" (Lindlof, 1988 p. 165). In this perspective, I am interested in *how* they talk about certain issues, and what their ways of talking about these issues tell us about the broader nature, values and structure of the journalistic field. In sum, the interview material is used to critically contextualise the analysis of content and is also approached as textual data that can be discursively analysed to engage with the perspective of correspondents.

This dual approach drives the analysis of the interview material. In a first step, I retrieved all the quotes concerned with articles, events and textual features analysed in my two sites such as story selection and news values, generalisation/conflation or sources quoted. The most relevant material was then incorporated into Chapters 4, 5 and 6 to ground the analysis of media discourse in both the immediate and broader context of production.

Chapter 7 provides further analysis of this interview material and feeds into my overall appraisal of Afro-pessimism and of the production of Africa's media image. This chapter is the outcome of a second step of analysis of the interview

material. In this second step, I immersed myself deeply in the data and gained gradual understanding of the transcripts by reading them several times, first in the chronological order in which they were conducted; then by grouping them according to the geographical location of the participants (Kenya/South Africa); and finally by linguistic group (British/French). As I got more familiar with the data and saw emerging common themes and differences, I decided to focus on three key themes linked to the broader lines of questioning of the thesis: how foreign correspondents talk about Afro-pessimism, about the links between production processes and issues of representation, and about their audience. I then extracted quotes dealing with each of these themes in a fourth reading of the transcripts. I also did a keyword search in the transcripts to make sure that I did not miss quotes relevant to these three themes (such as "audience", "afro-pessimism", "editor", "stereotype", "representation", "criticism/critic", "production"). The use of these themes is more structuring than it is limiting; the categories used in the analysis of each theme were not pre-established but stem from the range of answers given by the respondents themselves. In doing so, I aimed to provide an account (Chapter 7) that gives justice to the range of perspectives, and sometimes the contradictions, that I encountered in my research.

A last step in the analysis of the transcripts was a form of reverse reconstruction. Journalists often spontaneously talked about the production of stories not directly related to my sites but pertinent to understand the discursive production of African news. I therefore extracted all quotes about these stories, and subsequently identified the news articles discussed in order to make further links between news producers' decisions and media texts. I then integrated some of these reverse reconstructions into the Chapter 7. This, however, was done very carefully because in that case, journalists have the upper hand: they are the ones setting the agenda for the reconstruction, and their insights into these stories could impact my interpretation of these articles. In other words, it created a risk for me to be too close to their interpretation and thus to possibly lose the critical edge necessary to deconstruct media texts. These reconstructed stories were therefore used insofar as they were either illustrative of experiences reported by many correspondents, or on the contrary apparently unique and contrasting with broader routines – I highlight this throughout the analysis in Chapter 7.

3.4.4　Ethics and handling of the data

Ethical approval was granted on 20 August 2013 from the Arts and PVAC (PVAR) Faculty Research Ethics Committee. Anonymity was the default position for the research, and non-anonymity was included as an option. The information sheet and consent form used in the recruitment process are attached in the appendices. Where the participant took part on an anonymous basis, I made sure that they would not be identifiable in the quotes used in the PhD by removing not only their names, but also the specifics of their job description, any reference to the media outlet they work for, as well as information about whether they work for British or French media; in addition, when reconstructions were conducted with journalists choosing anonymity, I made sure the articles discussed in the analysis are not identifiable by removing the headline, date, the name of the media outlet and by not including exact quotes from the articles.

All steps were taken to ensure the privacy and protection of the data. The interview recordings were first uploaded on my laptop, which is password-protected and whose hard disk is encrypted, and then deleted from audio-recording device. They were then transferred from fieldwork locations to the university ftps server with a secure connection. Once uploaded onto the university of Leeds server, all audio files were deleted from my laptop. The raw data, including recordings and transcripts were not made available to any other persons.

The audio-recordings amount to 1681 minutes (28 hours and 1 minute). Interviews with foreign correspondents working for the outlets under study were integrally transcribed, while the others were partially transcribed. Any grammatical mistakes were transcribed; any actions such as sighs were also transcribed in the following form: [sighs]. In some cases, the interviewee had physical gestures; not all of those were transcribed, especially as the transcription process started one month after the end of fieldwork and it was thus not possible to remember all of these. However, in cases where these physical actions were important to make sense of a section of the interview, I noted it during the interview and then included it during the transcriptions in square brackets. Here is an example of what it looks like on a transcript: "I have got a notebook and I am just literally like [mimicking writing frantically on a notebook]". Pauses were noted with an ellipse "…". Whenever an emphasis was put on a word, or part of a sentence, I transcribed this through italics;

and whenever the respondents included a real or fictional dialogue in their answers, this was noted by quotation marks. The punctuation I used in the transcription includes periods, commas, exclamation and question marks. Other punctuation marks such as colon, semi-colon, hyphen, or bracket are included only when those were used in the answers given in writing. I did the transcription using an open-access software called "transcriptions" that allows including timestamps so as to synchronise sections of a transcript with the audio recording. All together, the transcripts are 93 466 words long.

3.5 Additional thoughts

3.5.1 Translation

The study is comparative and it was thus partly conducted in two languages, English and French. Some of the data – news articles and interviews/questionnaires – are therefore in French. Being a native French speaker with professional experience translating a book from French to English, I did all the translations. I paid particular attention when translating interview quotes and articles extracts to be as close as possible to the original text. I favoured almost literal translation as much as possible, only paraphrasing when the literal translation rendered the meaning obscure. In some instances, the specificities of the French language were such that some translation explanations were necessary to fully grasp the linguistic dynamic of a text. This is for instance the case in the use of feminine/masculine articles. In French, any word is either masculine or feminine. While this gender attribution is often arbitrary, it still has discursive consequences. Africa, for instance, is feminine; so when a magazine cover on Africa depicts an image of a woman accompanied by a text "Africa, *she* is beating growth records" the feminine article has a discursive function that cannot be translated simply by "it". Similarly, some metaphors in French do not necessarily have an English equivalent, or have an equivalent that is quite different in tone and images; in these cases, the French metaphor was translated literally, and an explanation provided to clarify the meaning. Overall, this was done to keep the reader as close as possible to the feel of the original text.

The use of the French language also had implications for the interview dynamics. Where English uses "you", French uses either "tu" or "vous". "Tu" is the singular

version of "you", while "vous" is the plural version. This difference has implications in interpersonal communication. "Tu" would be used as a mark of familiarity and proximity, while "vous" marks politeness and distance. There is then a power dynamic at stake in how people address each other. For instance, a discussion may start with using "vous" and then one participant starts addressing the other using "tu". This can create an imbalance in the exchange where one participant establishes a form of superiority and authority over the other. In simple terms, the exchange becomes asymmetric and is no longer taking place on an equal footing. In the context of the interviews, I always started with "vous" and moved on using "tu" only if the participant offered to do so. No participant started addressing me as "tu" without offering me the opportunity to also address them as "tu". Thus, all the interviews in French were always conducted on an equal footing, although some felt more intimate and others more formal.

3.5.2   Twitter as a research tool: two uses

Twitter was an interesting and very useful too during this research. There are two ways in which I used Twitter for academic purposes. Firstly, I developed my Twitter profile by following as many Western foreign correspondents working throughout Africa. Because correspondents use Twitter both personally and professionally, following them and seeing their tweets and online interactions was also a way to cultivate further my knowledge of the professional field. In a way, it constituted a form of small-scale digital ethnography that also feeds into the contextualisation of my textual analysis.

Secondly, I used Twitter as a way to cultivate an intellectual engagement with bloggers based in Africa and/or interested in African affairs (in particular with regard to media coverage of Africa). The list provided by Rachel Strohm of African Twitter commentators was a very useful starting point. [17] The issues discussed in this PhD extend beyond the realm of academic debates; the digital sphere provides some very interesting discussions on the topic of Africa's media image and includes a range of voices (from within Africa, from the diaspora, from within academia, from the journalistic field). Whenever I would see a blog post or article pertinent to my project, I would re-tweet it. This way, my Twitter timeline

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[17] The list started with 50 Twitter accounts, but now counts more than 100: http://rachelstrohm.com/2014/01/27/top-50-africans-i-follow-on-twitter/

also constitutes a digital archive of some of the discussion happening online – an archive that proved very useful in the writing stage of the PhD when I needed to go back to some of these pieces.

Conclusions

This chapter mapped out in detail the layered methodological approach that was used to answer the project's research questions. I introduced CDA as the framework that integrates the theoretical approaches laid out in Chapters 1 and 2, and that drives the methodological approach of the research. I argued that grounding the analysis of textual material in the context of news production provides deeper insights into the nature of media discourse about Africa and into Afro-pessimism. Because there are no blue prints as to how to conduct a CDA, the chapter then detailed how CDA was implemented in the research. I introduced the two sites of analysis, the process of gathering a range of data (news articles, magazine covers, interviews, questionnaires) and the tools used to analyse them (quantitative content analysis, qualitative discourse analysis, multimodal discourse analysis). I now present the analysis of these data in the four chapters that follow. Chapters 4 and 5 focus on site 1; Chapter 6 focuses on site 2; Chapter 7 provides an in-depth analysis of the interviews with foreign correspondents.

CHAPTER 4 - How do French and British journalists *actually* write about Africa? The case of the 50th anniversaries of independence

I feel like I'm on trial and you are confronting me with the evidence of my past sins!
(David Smith, 2013)

This chapter is the first of two chapters focusing on my first site, the coverage of the 50th anniversaries of independence. It has three functions that are respectively addressed in three sections. The first section provides a brief historical background to the period of independence of the late 1950s. It then frames the anniversaries as sites of collective memory construction and their coverage as a form of commemorative journalism. This section constitutes the background for both the analysis provided in the remainder of the chapter, as well as for the continuing analysis in Chapter 5. The second and third sections present findings from my content analysis. In the second section, I ask, "When did the anniversaries become news"? I answer this question by looking at the amount of coverage the anniversaries received, which countries were covered and what were the most covered stories. In the process, I flesh out contextual elements pertaining to news production that shed light on these features of the coverage. In the third section, I empirically assess, within the context of this site, three claims about the Western media coverage of Africa found in the literature and discussed in section 2.1.3, namely: 1) the systematic references to "darkness" and "tribalism"; 2) the presentation of "Africa as a country", or a homogenous entity; 3) the overreliance on Western sources preventing Africans from telling their own (hi)stories.

4.1 The 50th anniversaries of independence

4.1.1 Historical background to the independence

On 27 January 1960, Congolese musician Joseph Kabaselleh, who was close to revolutionary leader Patrice Lumumba, performed with his band African Jazz the song *Indépendance Cha-Cha* in Brussels. At the time, the roundtable talks leading to Congo's independence were taking place. When independence was officially declared on June 30 1960 in Léopoldville, the song could be heard once more. In

fact, it had grown increasingly popular not only in Congo but in several parts of francophone Africa. With its upbeat Congolese rumba rhythm, the song seemed to capture perfectly the sense of hope and pride that accompanied the independence movements:

> Indépendance cha-cha tozuwi ye! (We have won independence)
> Oh Kimpwanza cha-cha tubakidi. (We are free at last)
> Oh table ronde cha-cha ba gagner o! (We won it at the roundtable talks)
> Oh Lipanda cha-cha tozuwi ye! (Long live the independence that we've won)

Indeed, between 1957 and 1962, 24 countries in sub-Saharan African (re)gained, won or were granted – depending on the context and the perspective taken – independence from colonial powers. They included 15 French and 7 British colonies. Starting with Ghana in 1957, a "wind of change" blew throughout the continent, as British Prime Minister Harold MacMillan famously stated.[18] The year 1960 in particular saw as many as 17 colonies becoming independent states. While each independence movement had its own dynamic, context and mode, a sense of optimism and euphoria generally backed up this historical moment (Rothermund, 2006). Underpinning this optimism was the idea that, finally free from the burden and constraints of colonialism, these countries would blossom, and that the newly independent states would bring about better and fairer conditions of living for their inhabitants (de B'béri & Louw, 2011 p. 339; Ahluwalia, 2001).

This historical moment was the culmination of several decades of anti-colonial struggles and fights for national sovereignty (Boahen, 2011). As such, it formally put an end to the judicial basis of colonialism, and it represented a significant historical step towards liberation and independence. Yet, it would be an historical shortcut to equate this decolonisation with complete freedom, and the words used by Mandela to describe the meaning of the end of apartheid are also relevant to describe these early days of independence:

> The truth is that we are not yet free; we have merely achieved the freedom to be free, the right not to be oppressed. We have not taken the final step of our journey, but the first step on a longer and even more difficult road.
>
> (Mandela, 1995 p. 617)

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[18] He first used this expression in an address in Accra on 10 January 1960. The formula only became popular after he repeated it in a speech in Cape Town to the South African Parliament one month later.

From the analysis of the nature of postcolonial African states (Ahluwalia, 2001) and neocolonialism (Nkrumah, 1965; Chomsky & Herman, 1979; Sartre, 2001) to investigations into the shady links also known as "Françafrique" between French politicians and corporations, and several post-independence African leaders (Verschave, 2000), a wide body of research explains why the independence did not signal the end of Africa's exploitation and why oppressive politics survived colonialism. Mbembe (2010), for instance, reminds us that the agreements signed between France and its former colonies in the 1960s were not meant "to put an end to the colonial system, but in fact allowed to contractualise and outsource it". Already at the time of independence, revolutionary leaders such as Amílcar Cabral, Kwame Nkrumah or Frantz Fanon raised similar concerns and noted the difference between, on the one hand, political independence, and, on the other hand, national liberation, actual decolonisation and structural changes (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2012 p. 76). In the words of Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2012 p. 77), "a postcolonial world was never born; rather what decolonisation facilitated is better described as a 'postcolonial neocolonized world'".

Yet, a powerful myth of decolonisation, as turning the page of colonial history and starting from anew, fared well and proved convenient in hiding what Grosfoguel (2007) terms the "coloniality of power". The idea of coloniality of power points to the economic and military domination of the world by the West but also to the hierarchisation of social relations – including racial but also sexual, political, spiritual and linguistic ones – that underpinned this domination since the beginning of modernity:

> [This power] put in place over a period of 450 years did not evaporate with the juridical-political decolonization of the periphery over the past 50 years. We continue to live under the same "colonial power matrix".
>
> (Grosfoguel, 2007 p. 219)

Yet, a myth about the postcolonial persisted; one in which the state of things in former colonies had little if nothing to do with the past or present actions of Western powers. This view contributed to hide the coloniality of power found in the social, political and economic structures inherited from colonialism. This coloniality of power was also at work in the emerging modernisation and developmentalist paradigm (Escobar, 1995), and in the implementation of structural adjustments programs in the 1980s and early 1990s. In any case, the

hopes raised by the myth of decolonisation as complete liberation were short-lived. Within 30 years post-independence, the continent faced a set of tremendous and pressing political, economic and social challenges. As highlighted in Chapter 1, this provided the context for Afro-pessimism to flourish in the fields of economy and development, and subsequently in the global media imagination.

4.1.2 Sites of collective memory

Between 2007 and 2012, 24 countries marked their 50th anniversaries of independence. 50 years mark a symbolic threshold that invites us to remember and cement – or redefine, challenge and disrupt – national and continental histories, and also to take stock of the future (Lentz, 2013 p. 218). It is a moment where the colonial and postcolonial past, and the immediate present are assessed, and where the future is often predicted. This pivotal moment can be understood as a site of collective memory construction that "informs our understanding of past events and present relationships, and contributes to our expectations about the future" (Edy, 1999 p. 71). Independence days are a particularly good example of such "sites of memory" (Nora, 1989). Throughout the world, they are generally seen as the most symbolically important national day for a nation (Zerubavel, 2003). On a first level, then, the question of memory and remembrance concerns the immediate community involved. In this regard, Lentz (2013) provides comparative insights into the celebrations of 50 years of independence in 10 African countries. She shows how these celebrations significantly differed from one country to another. More importantly, she argues that they were contested sites of collective memory, where the norms and limits of the national community and identity were heavily debated, "whether the jubilee served as a forum for political campaigning or celebrated national unity irrespective of party differences" (Lentz, 2013 p. 233).

In the context of these anniversaries, there were significant debates about who are the heroes to be celebrated, or on what date should the anniversary be celebrated. Burkina Faso, for instance, became independent on 5 August 1960. The jubilee, however, was celebrated on 11 December 2010, echoing the date when the country officially became a republic (11 December 1960). But there were concerns among the population that the choice of the December date was also a way to silence Thomas Sankara's revolution of 4 August 1983, which closely coincided with the date of the independence (Lentz, 2013). Sankara, who was murdered during a coup that led then President Compaoré to power, remains a national hero to many

Burkinabe, as well as an iconic figure for pan-Africanism and anti-imperialism. The choice of the December date, then, conveniently allowed removing Sankara from the official agenda of these ceremonies, and from the collective memory that the government sought to emphasise. But given the popularity of Sankara, he remained part of the broader collective memory surrounding these celebrations, if only because the contentious choice of the date was locally debated (Lentz, 2013 p. 224). Thus, these anniversaries were contested sites of collective memory construction where various and competing interpretations of the past, of the nation and of national identities were played out.

As Lentz (2013 p. 209) notes "such national days are usually staged by the state; at the same time they stage the state itself, making it palpable to the citizenry and potentially to a wider international audience". In focusing my analysis on British and French coverage, I am therefore also interested in the meaning of these anniversaries in relation to the identity and imagination of these two former metropoles. I aim to understand how the past, present and future of the former colonies are being portrayed and to assess if Afro-pessimism dominates the coverage. In the process – and following the lead of Said who described Orientalism as a discourse that tells us more about the West than the East – I will shed light on the discursive construction of France and Britain as colonial and postcolonial communities, and on their place and responsibility in this history.

4.1.3 Commemorative journalism

The reporting of such commemorative events, where the past becomes news, constitutes a challenge for journalists: "Long touted as the first draft of history, journalism has typically exhibited a reticence to move beyond the topical, novel, instantaneous and timely" (Zelizer & Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2014 p. 2). If reflexive and detailed analysis of the past seems to contradict the routine requirements of news production, journalism makes much, if not constant, use of the past (Edy, 1999, Zelizer 2013). Neiger et al. (2014) also note that journalism makes various uses of the past and they put forward a typology of its uses. These range

> from the clear presence of the past in commemorative journalism, to the less salient appearance of the past in items that use it as an analogy, and finally to the clandestine yet ubiquitous presence of the past in everyday items focusing on current events.
>
> (Neiger et al., 2014 p. 117)

Commemorative journalism, where the use of the past is perhaps the most visible, puts journalists in a complex position where they need to balance and negotiate different requirements. Because commemorative events are planned and organised, they are convenient for journalists and editors who can work upstream and in a timely manner. Commemorations are often state driven which means that journalists need to decide whether and how they should alter the frame initially provided and, in the process, contribute to the formation of a broader, more contested and complex collective memory. Yet the space available for journalists to discuss the past remains limited. There will always be a limit to how much detail and nuance can be included in any given story, and to an extent there will always be room for historians to point to a lack of nuance, detail or complexity.

The seasoned Africa correspondent Bartholomäus Grill – whom I met a few days after the al-Shabaab terrorist attack on the Westgate Mall in Nairobi in September 2013 – sees time and format as the main factors that constraint journalistic contextualisation of international news:

> News reports are often really poor in terms of background, whether historical or sociological and that is due to a lack of time. Yesterday I had only one page to explain the threat of al-Shabaab in Eastern Africa. I don't feel good when I have to do these sorts of snapshots. In a book, of course, you would have an opportunity to go in-depth. (…) I started to read the report of the security council of the United Nations on al-Shabaab, which is 500 pages long. I wish I had the time to read it all. But what did I read? The summary. Because –tic, toc, tic, toc- you have the deadline approaching. (…) It's a much more complicated story than what you are actually able to convey in the space that you have.

Deciding just how much historical information should be included in a news report is therefore a real challenge, if not something of a slippery slope. Journalists have to identify and hierarchise items of information into different categories such as assumed, necessary, new or optional knowledge. This hierarchisation of information needs to be assessed against the newsworthiness of a story and its relevance to a given audience. In that context, commemorative journalism calls for balancing

> several simultaneous and complementary rituals, such as national commemorative rituals, the media rituals that revolve around such "national occasions" and, at the same time, the everyday, secular ritual of news production and dissemination.
>
> (Neiger et al., 2014 p. 115)

In reporting the 50th anniversaries of independence, journalists therefore had to balance different, and sometimes antagonist, ritualistic requirements: newsworthiness, on the one hand, which is more present-oriented; and, on the other hand, commemoration, which is more past-oriented. In this case, journalists are not only writers of narratives about the present and of the first draft history but also, in a way, of the second draft of history (Edy, 1999). Furthermore, these anniversaries and commemorations cannot a priori be categorised as negative or positive news events. Independence day in Togo, for instance, coincided for a long time with both President Eyadema's rise to power, and the death of anticolonial leader Sylvanus Olympio during a coup, in which President Eyadema was involved. In that case, the anniversary of 50 years of independence was likely to bring back painful memories of the coup. My analysis therefore does not assume that these anniversaries are positive or negative events, or that they should be celebrated. Rather, I approach these 50th anniversaries as a pivotal moment suitable to draw an overall picture of many postcolonial African states – as well as an opportunity for introspection into the colonial and postcolonial history of Western powers – and therefore relevant to assess the extent of Afro-pessimism in media coverage.

4.2   When the anniversaries become news

4.2.1   Amount of coverage

Table 6 presents an overview of the articles that focused on, or mentioned, the 50th anniversaries of independence, per year and per media outlet. The online articles included here are those that can be found online only, and not in print version. Overall, this corpus comprises a total of 282 articles, with 154 articles found in the French press and 128 in the UK press. In each country respectively, *Le Monde* (n=47) and the *Guardian* (n=60) had the most substantial coverage overall. A reason behind this greater coverage in both papers is their use of the online platform. The *Guardian*'s online content puts it ahead of the *Financial Times*, which had more print articles (n=33). *Le Monde* similarly published more online content than the other French papers. Significantly, nearly 50% (n=30) of the online articles appeared in *Lemonde.fr* and *guardian.co.uk*. These two newspapers made noteworthy use of the online platform to produce additional content, but overall the newspapers made marginal use of the online platform to produce additional content in relation to the 50th anniversaries.

Overall, some 14.5% of the articles acknowledge the use of news agency material, but this proportion changes significantly when broken down into online and print articles (Table 7). Only 6.3% of the print articles openly make use of news agency content. At first sight, this finding echoes the claim by most correspondents I interviewed that they did not really use news agency material to write their stories, although this result is limited to assessing the visibility of that content.

Table 6 - Number of online and print articles per year and per newspaper

Newspaper	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Total
PRINT (France)							
La Croix	1	4	1	29	1	1	37
Les Échos	0	0	0	15	0	0	15
Le Figaro	1	0	0	23	0	0	24
Le Monde	2	2	3	36	2	0	45
PRINT (UK)							
Financial Times	3	1	3	24	2	0	33
Guardian	4	0	1	25	2	0	32
Telegraph	0	1	0	6	2	1	10
Times	5	3	2	10	3	1	24
TOTAL Print	16	11	10	168	12	3	**220**
ONLINE (France)							
Lacroix.fr	0	0	0	8	0	0	8
Lesechos.fr	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Lefigaro.fr	0	1	0	7	1	0	9
Lemonde.fr	0	0	0	14	1	0	15
ONLINE (UK)							
ft.co.uk	0	0	0	3	0	0	3
guardian.co.uk	1	1	0	9	2	2	15
telegraph.co.uk	1	2	0	5	1	1	10
times.co.uk	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
TOTAL online	2	4	0	44	6	3	**62**
	2007	**2008**	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**	**Total**
Combined France	4	7	4	133	5	1	154
Combined UK	14	8	6	82	13	5	128
TOTAL combined	18	15	10	215	18	6	**282**

Table 7 - Number of articles that acknowledge use of news agency material

	France	UK	Total	% in relation to all articles
Print	5	9	14	6.3%
Online	20	7	27	43.5%
Total	25	16	41	14.5%

In contrast, nearly half of the exclusive online content correspond to either verbatim or re-writes of agency wires. Based only on the assessment of visible news agency material, the image of a journalistic industry churning out agency wires (Davies, 2009) appears particularly acute in the production of online content. Rather than providing a space for more depth and context, or what Chouliaraki (2013) would define as a cosmopolitan form of journalism, the online platform here appears as a way to publish or re-write stories, generally short, brought from wholesale media retailers like AFP and Reuters (Paterson, 2007). But Paterson (2007) also found that a significant amount of news agency material is used without attribution, which suggests that news agency wires may have a greater – albeit difficult to assess – impact on the overall coverage.

4.2.2 Countries covered

The vast majority of the articles (n=215) were published in the year 2010, when 17 African countries celebrated their 50th anniversaries. In addition to national anniversaries, several stories were also framed around the idea of a continental anniversary; this was notably the case in France where the government invited armies from its former colonies to parade on the Champs-Elysées for Bastille Day on 14 July 2010. As a result of such continental framing, 34% of the articles referred to the 50th anniversary of independence of "Africa" as a whole, and thus contained an element of generalisation in their framing (Table 8). Nigeria comes second in the result (n=45) and is followed by the Democratic Republic of Congo (n=31).

Out of the 24 countries that celebrated their 50th anniversary, French newspapers reported on 19 of these countries and British newspapers reported on 11 countries.[19] There are significant differences between French and UK coverage.

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[19] As explained in Chapter 3, Zimbabwe's 30th and Swaziland's 40th anniversary of independence were also covered in my time frame and included in the analysis. If we add

While the 5 most covered countries in France are DRC, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Ivory Coast, the ones in the UK are Nigeria, DRC, Ghana, Zimbabwe and Swaziland. Meaningfulness – a news values identified by Galtung and Ruge (1965) that encompasses historical, cultural and linguistic proximity – seems here to be an important factor at stake in shaping the news agenda of both countries. While 4 of the 5 most covered countries in France are francophone countries and include 3 former French colonies, the UK coverage includes 4 former British colonies.

Table 8 - Geographical focus of the anniversaries covered in all articles

Country / Location	Total	French Press	UK Press
Africa	93	71	22
Nigeria	45	9	36
DRC	31	15	16
Ghana	19	5	14
Senegal	12	8	4
Zimbabwe	11	1	10
Swaziland	10	1	9
Mali	9	9	
Ivory Coast	7	6	1
Guinea	5	5	
Mauritania	5	5	
Sierra Leone	5		5
Chad	4	4	
United Republic of Tanzania	4		4
Cameroon	3	1	2
Central African Republic	3	3	
Somalia	3	2	1
Uganda	3		3
Gabon	2	1	1
Madagascar	2	2	
Niger	2	2	
Benin	1	1	
Burkina Faso	1	1	
Burundi	1	1	
Congo	1	1	

these two countries to the overall list of countries, the French press reported on 21 countries and the British press on 13 countries.

For David Smith, the *Guardian*'s Africa correspondent, these historical links are an important aspect shaping media coverage of Africa:

> The British media still write about former colonies and where the British empire was, and French journalists still mainly write about the former French colonies. Part of that is the historical interest, and part of that is also the sheer practicality of language. A British journalist can probably operate quicker and easier in Zambia where people are speaking English and get a better story out of it, whereas if you go to a French-speaking country and you don't speak French, it's going to be more of an effort to get it. You may not have the money to hire an interpreter. So in that way, these things still have an impact.

Similarly, Aislinn Lang – Southern Africa correspondent for the *Telegraph* – remarks that "the key interest for the British media is in the former colonies", while the head of AFP in southern Africa explains that the AFP has "more offices and staff in francophone Africa – Dakar, Abidjan, Libreville, Kinshasa, for historical reasons obviously". He further elaborates:

> There is no demand for Zimbabwean news among our francophone clients. It doesn't work. Madagascar works in France and West Africa. But some of these wires are not even translated in English. That's the rule of the game. (…) So here it's not the proximity of the skin colour, it's the linguistic and historical proximity.

As a result and as shown in Figure 5, the map of Africa constructed through such coverage significantly mirrors the partition of the continent into French and English colonial empires, and testifies to the ongoing importance of colonial ties in determining the relevance and newsworthiness of African news to a given audience (see also Skurnik, 1981; Atwood, 1985; Meyer, 1989).

There are also other factors at stake. Nigeria, which comes second across all coverage, is the most populated country on the continent, and also the richest country in terms of oil resources. Within the African context, Nigeria features as a leading economic nation relevant to global market trends. Its dominant position in the news agenda, then, links to a commercial bias that has characterised international news since its inception in the mid 19th century (Harris, 1981) and that Bunce (2013) recently found to be increasingly relevant to understanding international news coverage of Africa.

Figure 5 - Maps of coverage

French Coverage

1-4 articles
5-9 articles
10-14 articles
14+ articles

UK Coverage

In both France and the UK, DRC ranks quite highly (respectively 10 and 13% of the coverage), which demonstrates a shared sense of the country's newsworthiness. The DRC used to be a former Belgian colony known as the Belgian Congo. Perhaps more than any other part of the continent, Congo was key to the mythical construction of Africa as the "Dark Continent". The country explored by Stanley and Livingstone served as the backdrop for Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness* (1899), and subsequently became associated with such expressions as "Into the heart of Darkness", "Into Africa", "Into deepest/darkest Africa", "In the heart of Africa". This association of Congo to "darkness" was sustained by the violent rule of Belgium King Leopold II, and was carried on during the autocratic dictatorship of Mobutu in the post-independence era and the subsequent conflicts following his overthrow. In many ways, such continuity provides a pre-written, highly symbolic and unambiguous media script (Galtung & M. Ruge, 1965; Harcup & O'Neill, 2001) and a journalistic metaphor familiar to Western audiences (Hawk, 1992b) that would partly explain the salience of DRC in the news agenda of both countries.

4.2.3 Most covered stories and news values

To better understand the focus on these countries, it is important to look at the specific stories that were covered. Table 9 provides a list of the six most covered stories in the French and UK press respectively.

These events reveal a combination of factors. In the cases of Nigeria and DRC, the national commemorations could be framed around something that went wrong. On 1 October 2010, the Nigerian government organised a parade and festivities in Abuja. The celebrations were marked by a car-bomb attack claimed by the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (Mend), which killed at least 10 people and injured 36 (Figure 6). DRC for its part celebrated its 50th anniversary on 30 June 2010. A few days later, a truck incident in the Eastern part of the country killed at least 230 people. Four days before the celebration, there was the funeral of Floribert Jubeya, an important personality of the Congolese civil society and vocal opponent of the Kabila regime. Jubeya was murdered and the governmental authorities were suspected to be involved in his murder. In both Nigeria and DRC, then, it is insofar as these celebrations could be described as "tarnished", "spoiled", or "ruined" that they made it onto the news agenda. This process was similarly at stake in the more discreet coverage of other national

celebrations such as Guinea, Ivory Coast and Madagascar. Madagascar, for instance, faced a political crisis, which resulted in describing the anniversary as "morose" (*La Croix* #17) and as a "party spoiled by a political dead end" (*La Croix* #27).

Table 9 - Six most covered stories in the French and UK press

Date	Story	N° of articles
French Press		
13 - 15 July 2010	Bastille Day parade in Paris	21
28 June - 10 July 2010	DRC's official celebration of 50 years of independence	12
29 - 31 May 2010	France-Africa Summit	12
21 - 24 Sept. 2010	French Interior Minister Brice Hortefeux in visit in Mali for the 50th anniversary of independence	9
2 - 5 April 2010	Senegal unveils the monument of the African Renaissance	6
3 - 5 October 2010	Attacks during Nigeria's jubilee	6
UK Press		
3 - 5 October 2010	Attacks during Nigeria's jubilee	24
28 June - 10 July 2010	DRC's official celebration of 50 years of independence	11
15 - 19 April 2010	Zimbabwe's official celebration of 30 years of independence	9
6 - 8 March 2007	Ghana's official celebration of 50 years of independence	6
3 - 5 September 2008	Swaziland's official celebration of 40 years of independence and King Mswati III's 40th birthday	5
13 - 15 July 2010	Bastille Day parade in Paris	4

Figure 6 - Attack during Nigeria's celebration (*Guardian*, 2010)

Nigerian capital rocked by three bombs on 50th independence anniversary

At least eight people killed by militants from Niger delta over what they call '50 years of failure'

Jenny Percival and agencies in Abuja
The Guardian, Friday 1 October 2010 17.37 BST

At least eight people were killed in two car bombs outside the justice ministry in Abuja.
Photograph: Pius Utomi Ekpei/Getty Images

References to elite nations or people were also important values that made the anniversaries newsworthy. This was the case with the France-Africa summit held in Nice between 29 May and 1 June 2010. The yearly summit was held under the theme of the 50th anniversary of African independence and of the renewing of Franco-African economic relationships. Similarly, the celebration in Mali attracted media attention because the French Interior Minister, Brice Hortefeux, attended the celebration on 22 September 2010. The visit was primarily an opportunity for the minister to meet with President Amadou Toumani Touré to discuss the kidnapping of seven French workers from the French companies Areva and Satom-Vinci in neighbouring Niger and claimed by AQMI. As a result, the articles dealing with this anniversary had more to do with the diplomatic visit and threats of Islamic terrorism in the region, and their impact on French economic interests, than with the anniversary.

The fact that Western officials attended the celebrations in DRC and Nigeria assuredly also fuelled the newsworthiness of these events. In DRC, the Belgian king Albert II and the queen Paola attended the celebrations. The queen was even offered diamonds by the wife of Congolese president Kabila. This spurred a small

controversy in the following days because the costly gift was perceived to be at odds with the country being one of the poorest in the world. This controversy further raised the media profile of the anniversary. As for Nigeria, the then British prime Minister Gordon Brown and the Duke of Gloucester were supposed to attend the parade, but pulled out of it after receiving a warning from British intelligence services.

On 14 July 2010, France celebrated Bastille Day by inviting armies from its former African colonies to parade on the Champs-Elysées (Figure 7). This was the main initiative taken by President Sarkozy to mark an anniversary thought as a "way to celebrate a shared history" and a "chance to clearly confirm the changing relationship between France and Africa; a relationship that ought to remain privileged while being balanced, transparent and uninhibited" (Sarkozy, 2009). This celebration heavily backfired, with several newspapers noting the "paradox of the coloniser celebrating the emancipation of its former subject" (*Le Monde* #30). Organisations from the civil society such as the FIDH (Fédération Internationale des ligues des Droits de l'Homme) also complained about the "paradox of celebrating the values of the Republic while honouring torturers, dictators and other human rights predators" since France invited several armies

> involved in bloody repressions against civil populations: 353 dead in Congo in 1999 during the massacre of the Beach in Brazzaville, 500 dead during the presidential elections in Togo in 2005, 100 dead in Cameroon during the food riots of 2008.
>
> (*Le Monde* #30)

Three other anniversary stories were framed around the perceived exuberance of African leadership, and around the indecency of celebrations described as lavish in the face of extreme poverty. On 3 April 2010, Senegal marked 50 years of independence by unveiling the African Renaissance monument, a 49 meters high bronze statue that depicts a man, woman and child emerging from a volcano (Figure 8). The media significantly relayed criticisms that the statue was a "presidential vanity project and waste of money" (*Guardian* #9) contrasting with the living conditions of Dakar's inhabitants:

> Wade, 83, who is expected to seek another term in office at elections in 2012, has been criticised for spending so much money on the £17m structure, when Dakar residents, living in its shadow, endure regular power blackouts and flooding.
>
> (*Guardian* #9)

Figure 7 - Bastille Day military parade (*Telegraph*, 2010)

Bastille Day military parade in Paris, France, in pictures

A Benin female army regiment marches on the Champs Elysees
Picture: REUTERS

Figure 8 - Senegal's statue of the African renaissance (*Le Figaro*, 2010)

Le Sénégal grave son indépendance dans le bronze

🏠 › ACTUALITE › INTERNATIONAL Par 🅕 Tanguy Berthemet | Mis à jour le 02/04/2010 à 20:15

Des enfants regardent la statue de la Renaissance africaine, jeudi dernier à Dakar . *Crédits photo : AFP*

Le monument de la Renaissance africaine, inauguré dimanche à Dakar, fait polémique.

The style of the statue described as "Soviet realist" (*Guardian* #9) or "Africano-Stalinist" (*Le Figaro* #4) also attracted critical media attention. In most cases, the coverage noted that such initiative would not benefit the population and that most people were, in fact, not even able to attend the ceremony. A perfect example of this framing is the following concluding section of an article:

> Seated next to her mother, the 10-year-old Mariatou wonders about
> this renaissance that she hopes to see one day. But the bus ride to

cover the 10km between their village and the statue is too much of
a luxury.

<div align="right">(Le Figaro, #3)</div>

Similarly, the celebration of Swaziland's 40 years of independence was marked by controversy because the anniversary of independence coincided with the 40th anniversary of King Mswati III (Figure 9). Again, journalists contrasted the sumptuous £ 7 million party with poverty in the country:

> About 70 per cent of the country's population of 1.1 million live off on less than 23p a day, making Swaziland one of Africa's poorest and least-developed nations (…) there is little to celebrate for the 41 per cent of Swazis who are HIV positive (the highest rate in the world), or the 40 per cent who are unemployed, or the 70 per cent who live on less than 23 pence a day.
>
> <div align="right">(Times #11)</div>

Figure 9 - Swaziland's 40th anniversary of independence (*Telegraph*, 2008)

The polygamy of King Mswati III was also a significant aspect of the coverage, which described a traditional dance of "tens of thousands of bare-breasted virgins" (*Times* #11) during which the King could pick his 14th bride to

> live in one of the many palaces that the king (listed by Forbes magazine as the world's 15th-richest monarch) has built for them. She will use his helicopters and his cars. She will join his other wives on shopping trips, like their recent £ 2.2 million spree to Dubai.
>
> <div align="right">(Times #11)</div>

In addition to the perceived exuberance of the event, and the contrast between lavishness and extreme poverty, this story therefore included reference to sex and

nudity. Harcup and O'Neill (2001 p. 274) identified reference to sex and nudity as a significant contemporary news value that also provides picture opportunities, something that several correspondents also noted: "certainly, when you are going off on a story now you are obliged to think about pictures" (Aislinn Laing, Southern Africa correspondent, *Telegraph*).

Finally, Zimbabwe's 30th anniversary of independence attracted British media attention, in part because of the historical links with the country, but also because this event provided the opportunity to tell an unambiguously negative story through one symbolic character, Robert Mugabe. The 30 years threshold was an occasion to remind British readers of the familiar script of the "liberator" becoming a "tyrant" (*Guardian* #59) who turned "so much hope into so much misery" (*Telegraph* #26). Again, the coverage stressed the contrast between lavish celebrations and the state of poverty in the country, with some calling the party "insensitive to the suffering of the country's people" (*Guardian #63)*. Finally, the attendance of child cadets during the celebrations provided noticeable visual material (Figure 10), symbolically echoing the image of the child soldier, which is a trope that Evans and Glenn (2010 p. 15) found to be "the perfect embodiment of a doomed future" and of Afro-pessimism.

Figure 10 - Zimbabwe's 30th anniversary of independence (*Guardian*, 2010)

Robert Mugabe rejects violence as Zimbabwe turns 30

President urges an end to inter-party attacks but the MDC casts doubt on latest call for reconciliation

Cadets parade at Harare stadium during celebrations marking Zimbabwe's 30 years of independence from Britain. Photograph: Alexander Joe/AFP/Getty Images

David Smith

Of all the most covered stories then, only Ghana's celebration escaped a narrow news selection framework, which made these anniversaries newsworthy and relevant insofar as something went wrong or when the anniversaries could be related to something controversial and exuberant, or when they directly involved Western nations and/or individuals.

As noted previously, this selection process has partly to do with the tendency of news to focus on geographical areas of interests based on existing historical links. Similarly, for my interviewees this selection process has also to do with features of news production that go beyond the specific case of Africa. In this sense, Africa correspondent Bartholomäus Grill remarks:

> It's a general approach of news: news is only bad news. That's a sort of unwritten law of news making. It has nothing to do with the perception of Africa. This is the way a newspaper or a news agency works in general.

Nonetheless, he recognises that the outcome of this selection process is not unproblematic and is not independent from existing perceptions of Africa's 'Otherness':

> We always carry the burden of a long history of perception of the 'Other'; an 'Other' continent, an 'Other' culture, 'Other' people and so on. The problem is that the reporting of Africa is usually very superficial: it is focused on catastrophe, wars, famines and so on.

When it came to choosing which anniversaries to cover, David Smith (*Guardian* Africa correspondent) provides particularly revealing insights into the various factors at stake in the selection process and what he terms the "inbuilt inconsistencies":

> Another illustration of the inbuilt inconsistencies is that this sort of 50th anniversary of Cameroon and many other countries just came and went. We don't do much on them. But then the 30th anniversary of Zimbabwe independence happened; even though 30 years is a less significant figure, we did a whole big spread on them because it was Zimbabwe. (…) I do remember having a conversation or just thinking to myself: "ok so it's Mugabe's 30 years in power or it's a sort of cluster of African countries turning 50. We'll do Mugabe's 30 years in power". Partly because we write about it a lot; partly because of the British colonial links; partly because it was easy to get to from here; partly because Mugabe is such a news personality. It feels a little bit more live to have the same man who is still there, rather than old historical

stories about guys who are now long dead. And there is also a sense of "if we are going to go really big on Zimbabwe 30, it's sort of pushing anniversary journalism too far to write about lots of countries turning 50".

In sum, while at first sight my data may give the impression of a multifarious coverage that included various events and different types of stories, there was in fact a clear logic that brought these anniversaries onto the news agenda. This rationale combined several requirements of news production, from the focus on negative events, the unambiguity of a story and its potential to provide compelling visual material, to a cluster of ethnocentric news values that included the focus on events that involved Western nations or people, or on stories and countries more familiar to a given national audience. In this regard, Smith's testimony perfectly gives to see how these naturalised news values interact with practical considerations to shape the coverage.

4.3   Dark and tribal? Homogenised? Voiceless?

I now turn to findings of the content analysis that address more directly three claims found in the literature on the coverage of Africa. These are that the coverage systematically refers to "darkness" and "tribalism", present "Africa as a country" or a homogenous entity, and tend to rely on Western/foreign sources (see section 2.1.3). These three claims point to linguistic components through which several features of Afro-pessimism as defined in Chapter 2 can be deployed, namely, *racialisation*, *homogenisation* and *selectivity*. In that sense, assessing these three claims gives indications of the extent to which media coverage contains features through which Afro-pessimism can be activated.

4.3.1   Lexical fields

I assessed the first claim – the systematic references to "darkness" and "tribalism" – through an analysis of the lexical fields found in the coverage. Drawing on Fowler (1991), Machin and Mayr (2012 p. 31) compare a lexical field to a map of meanings that symbolically delineates areas of salience and that foregrounds certain features, ideas and values. I tracked a range of lexical fields throughout the articles to get an overall sense of the map of meanings surrounding these anniversaries, the results of which are found in Figure 11. The figure presents the lexical fields and the percentage of articles in which they were found. The

categories were developed using some of the most common themes referred to in existing studies of media coverage of Africa. I also created other categories that allow capturing other lexical fields such as "economic growth", "progress and achievements", "good governance" and "culture". Looking at lexical fields alone is limited in terms of revealing the rhetorical and discursive nature of the coverage; but it provides a first entry point that gives a sense of the vocabulary most commonly used in the context of these stories.

Figure 11 - Percentage of articles in which selected lexical fields appeared
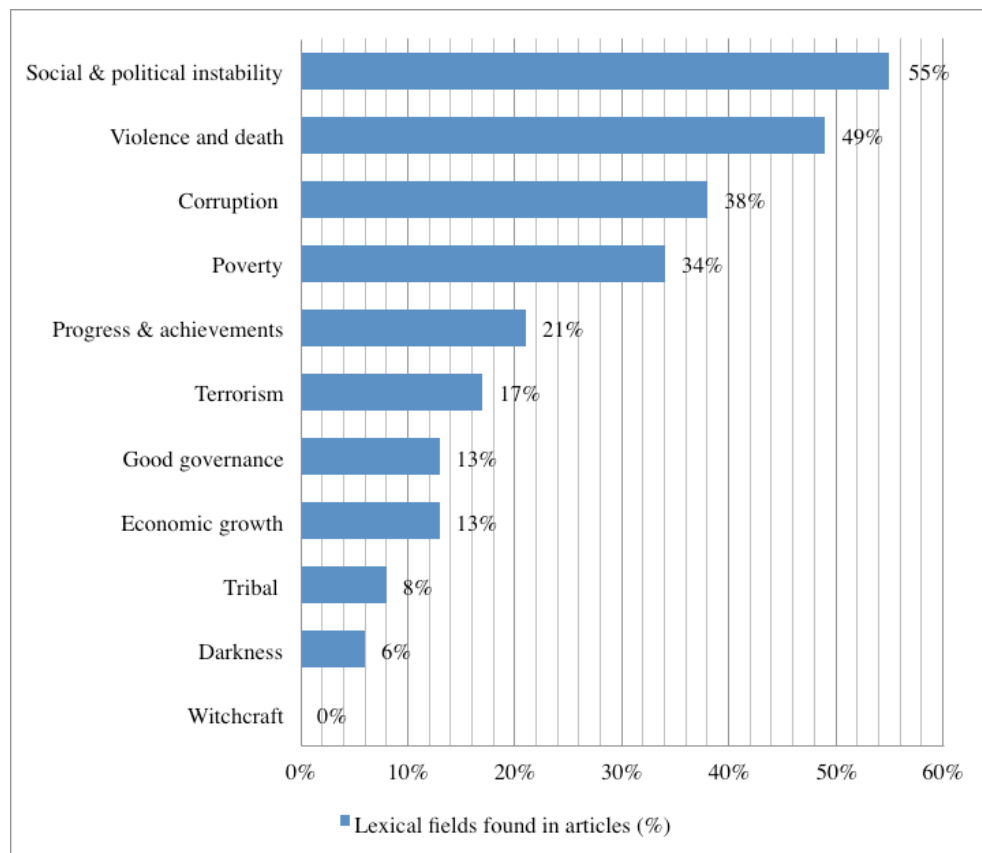
The four most prevalent lexical fields were those of social and political instability (55%), violence and death (49%), corruption (38%) and poverty (34%). The coverage routinely commented on these anniversaries in relation to "poor" or "impoverished" people "in risk of dying" and "victims of violence", to states being described as "collapsing", "anarchic", "oppressive" and to leaders as "corrupt", "despotic" or "autocratic". However, the lexical field of "progress and achievements" comes 5th in these results (21%), and 13% of articles contained the lexical fields of "good governance" and "economic progress" which suggests that the coverage also contains contrasting aspects that are not entirely marginal.

Moreover, and quite significantly, the lexical fields of "tribalism" (8%) and "darkness" (6%) – that is, the use of words such as "tribe", "tribalism", "tribal", "ethnic" "or "dark", "darkness", "darkly", "gloom", "gloomily", "bleak" – were far from being systematic features of the coverage.

4.3.2   Conflation

In a debate organised by the *Guardian* development network to debunk the "Myths about Africa", panellist Onyekachi Wambu started the debate by saying that "the biggest and most pernicious myth about Africa is that you can talk about a continent that can contain China, the United States, most of Western Europe, India and make these kinds of generalisation" (Chambers, 2014).

In order to assess the extent to which media coverage contributes to a view of Africa as homogenous, I used several tools. Throughout my corpus, I tracked all generic references to Africa, that is, instances where articles refer to "Africa", "African" or the "continent". This is done through the use of various nouns and adjectives that can appear negligible: "governance on the continent", "in sub-Saharan Africa", "in Africa", "sub-Saharan Africa continues to", "to feed the whole of Africa", "Africa's biggest oil industry", "most African countries", "the continent's most effective fighters". One generic reference to Africa in an article does not necessarily make for a clear case of conflation. But it can act as a subtle linguistic marker that activates in the reader's mind an "Africa frame".

In order to identify more precisely how journalistic writing contributes to a conflated view of the continent, I also looked at three further linguistic strategies: active generalisation, comparison and overlexicalisation.

Active generalisation: This is when one country is taken to evoke a larger African phenomenon, when a text relates a specific case to Africa as a whole. An example of such active generalisation can be seen in the following article:

> *Ghana,* which on independence had an economy larger than South Korea or Malaysia, is in many ways the *tale of modern Africa*. [my emphasis]
>
> (*Times* #6)

Here, the reading and understanding of the story is actively framed within a broader "Africa" framework that conflates Ghana's situation with that of "modern Africa".

Comparison: Another strategy that I identified is comparison. For instance, Philippe Bernard in *Le Monde* (#11) paints a broad-brush comparison between six different countries so as to ultimately evoke, explicitly, a generalised view of Africa:

> From *Liberia to Sierra Leone,* war lords driven by a murderous madness and sustained by the wealth of raw materials turned children into killing machines (1989-2003). *From Sudan to Angola* and from *Somalia to Congo, Africa* was a patchwork of civil wars for the control of natural resources and power. [my emphasis]
>
> (*Le Monde* #11)

There were other ways for comparisons to be used to contribute to a generalised view. In an interview with Guinean militant Alioune Tine, journalist Philippe Bernard (*Le Monde* #6) asks him a question about Guinean president Lansana Conté: "so, in a way, he behaved like Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe?" The respondent then leans into this leading question: "Yes. Conté truly is the *Mugabe of francophone Africa* given his sort of mad way of running power, and his belief that the country belongs to him" [my emphasis]. This quote is then used as the title of the article "The Mugabe of francophone Africa". Up to this point, the interview did not contain any generic reference. By using such a leading question, the journalist effectively puts the reference to Mugabe in the mouth of the respondent. This comparison then contributes to reframing the interview within an existing and easily understandable framework of the "bad African leader" driven by "power" and "madness"; an "essentialist and racist assumption (…) [that] suggests that African somehow have a higher propensity to being 'corrupt dictators'" (Willems, 2015 p. 306).

Two final examples of how comparisons are used to evoke a larger African framework can be found in *La Croix:*

> Although not a "Narco-state" *like Guinea-Bissau or Conakry, Ghana* is showered with money and drugs, among the political class as well.
>
> (*La Croix* #5)

> *Senegal* is often presented as model of democracy *compared to other countries on the continent*. But this assessment should not blind us from the fact that several acts of violence have hindered the democratic process in the country.
>
> (*La Croix* #11)

These comparisons start by differentiating the situation of one country (Ghana and Senegal) to its immediate neighbours (Guinea-Bissau and Guinea Conakry) or "other countries on the continent". At first, the comparison seems to introduce a positive statement ("Unlike elsewhere, …"). However, this is instantly undermined as the articles note dysfunctional aspects ("showered with money and drugs"; "several acts of violence"). In doing so, these comparisons not only turn a similarly positive statement into a negative one, but they also implicitly but actively create a broader "African" reference framework which is simultaneously mobilised to frame these statements.

Overlexicalisation: Machin and Mayr (2012 p. 37) define overlexicalisation as the "abundance of particular words and their synonyms" that create a form of over-persuasion. In my case, I looked at the overlexicalisation of generic references to "Africa", "African" or "the continent".

The article below was published in the *Financial Times* and provides a compelling example of how the overlexicalisation of generic references to Africa works. These lexical reminders are disseminated throughout the article and within each paragraph. In doing so, overlexicalisation serves to foreground the particular case of Ghana within a continental framework. In this particular article, the sense of over-persuasion is reinforced by the simultaneous reliance on comparisons and generalisation.

> **"Ghana-ing votes; Thriving democracy is a rare model for <u>Africa</u>"** (*Financial Times*, 8 January 2009).
>
> Elections of one sort or another have taken place in ***<u>all 48 sub-Saharan African countries</u>*** in the past decade. ***<u>On a continent</u>*** that has also experienced some 83 successful coups in half a century, this is often cited as a mark of progress.
>
> Many elections, however, have not in themselves translated into greater stability or social justice. ***<u>In most countries</u>***, voting has merely added trappings to a new form of one-party rule, where incumbent regimes control electoral machinery and use patronage and oppression to maintain power. A slew of election setbacks have, meanwhile, revived doubts as to whether ***<u>a continent</u>*** riven

by ethnic discord and beset by development challenges is yet suited to western democracy.

Nigeria's 2007 polls were marred by fraud of every kind. In ***Zimbabwe,*** Robert Mugabe is still in power nine months after he and his party were beaten at the ballot box. ***Kenya*** is struggling to overcome the traumatic aftermath of its own hotly disputed elections. Overall, the evidence suggests *Africans* still tend to vote along ethnic lines – rather than for what they believe in – and that their leaders rarely miss an opportunity to cling to power. The combination can be deadly.

In this context, ***Ghana***'s elections, culminating in victory at the weekend for John Atta Mills, the opposition candidate, are cause for celebration. Yesterday, Ghanaians witnessed the second constitutional transfer of power in a decade. Only ***Benin, on the mainland continent***, has experienced alternating political power of this kind.

The peaceful outcome was the more remarkable for following such a tight contest with so much at stake. Only 40,000 out of 9m votes separated the ruling party candidate and his victorious opponent, to whose government the first drops of Ghanaian oil will accrue. ***Ghana*** was the first *African country* to win independence and among the first to be ravaged by coups and counter coups. Two years ago, the country celebrated its 50th anniversary of independence. It is now blazing a trail towards more democratic rule.

Yet Ghanaians, like ***many other Africans,*** are divided along ethnic lines in who they vote for. They face the same daunting development challenges as their peers.

What has made the difference is that successive leaders have allowed an independent media to flourish and an autonomous electoral commission to gain strength as an institution, and with it public trust. In the process, Ghanaians are becoming increasingly demanding of performance from their politicians. Their example is particularly welcome at a time when real democracy *in Africa* is otherwise under threat.

This article also shows how a comparison can take the form of a positive statement – "Ghana is a rare model for Africa"; "Only Benin, on the mainland continent, has experienced alternating political power of this kind"– which ultimately recreates broader "African standards", as the positive example of Ghana is presented as an exception, in opposition to "Africa" where "real democracy (…) is otherwise under threat".

The foreign correspondents I interviewed claimed to be careful about generic references and conflation. One of them recognised that "you can see generalisation

creeping in, but I hope not ever in my writing" (East Africa Correspondent 1). Similarly, Aislinn Laing, the *Telegraph's* Southern Africa correspondent, said that she was careful when referring to "Africa" in an article:

> I try not to use Africa because I obviously don't think that you can put an entire continent into a word. I don't feel I need to and I don't feel any frustration with the fact that I can't use the word Africa. If you are writing about one particular issue that is that country's issue, then you don't need to broaden it to say Africa. (…) I think I resist any attempt to refer to Africa as a whole, ever.

Laing then tried to identify more precisely if and when she does use the word Africa and suggests that generalisation can occur as a result of fairly practical reasons:

> I'm trying to think when do I use the word Africa. I mean, I very rarely just write Africa. I'm writing about African elephants and how many there are at the moment. But as a reference to an issue I would never use the word African. I could be proved wrong, I'm sure, if you go through my articles and find some references to it. (…) Sometimes people use broad-brush because they know that they can't be accurate in the time that they have. To find the statistics for one specific country can be difficult. For example, I've been trying to find the statistics for how many elephants are killed in Southern Africa each year and I can't. So I'm having to use the African statistics. So you sometimes have to be broad-brush because you don't have the time or the ability to be able to find the very specific stats. So when they talk about other African countries it's because actually they don't have the time to probably go and find out which ones it is. In a way that's better to be broad-brush rather than trying to be more specific and getting it wrong. But yes there is that danger.

Figure 12 shows that 72% of all articles made use of generic references. This result shows a discrepancy between generic references to Africa in 73% of the articles and the 33% of articles that had an initial continental framing. It is also noticeable that there is a much greater discrepancy in the context of British reporting (74% of generic references for 17% of articles with a continental framing) than in the French context (72% for 46% of articles with a continental framing). Overall, conflation was certainly constitutive of the coverage as a whole. 47% of the articles contained cases of conflation, through active generalisation, comparisons and/or overlexicalisation. While foreign correspondents claim to avoid generalisation as much as possible, this finding suggests that this may occur more often that they are keen to admit.

Figure 12 - Generic references to Africa and conflation (in %)
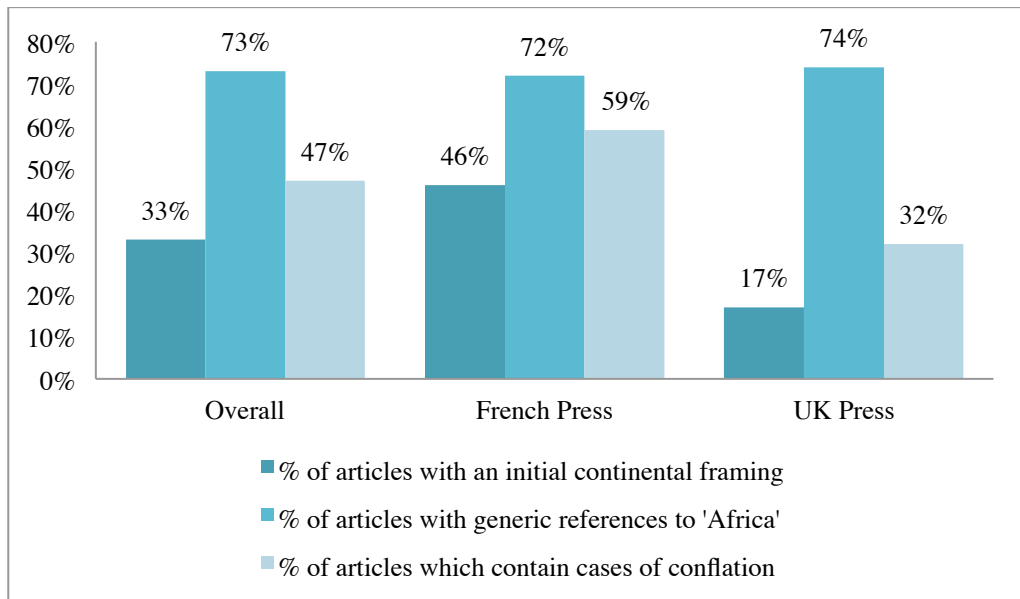
These conclusions echo the results of an application created by data-driven journalist Nicolas Kayser-Bril (2013). Using the APIs of the *Guardian* and the *New York Times,* the application measures how many articles mention "Africa" without referring to a specific country. This result is then compared to articles that refer to "Asia" without mentioning a specific country. The results demonstrate that there are many more articles referring to "Africa" in generic terms than to "Asia", with respectively 8601 and 2783 articles in the *Guardian* since 1 January 2012. In addition, it shows that articles mentioning Africa in generic terms are much more likely to occur than articles that mention 1 of the 3 biggest African economies with South Africa, Egypt and Nigeria respectively appearing in 6871, 4394, 2343 articles. Again, these results are at odds with those for Asia where China was referred to in 15126 articles, India in 8309 and Japan in 7913. That such a differential treatment between Africa and Asia persists in two of the most internationally respected broadsheet newspapers is an indication that the encouraging signs noted by Scott (2009) with regard to the UK press coverage of Africa should not blind us to ongoing features of this coverage that indeed seems to be specific to Africa.

While my findings support the view that the coverage of Africa is pervaded by conflation that contributes to a generalised view of Africa, two observations nuance these results. Firstly, my corpus contains several articles that are not written by foreign correspondents because it includes articles that appeared outside the

news pages (e.g. culture, editorials, domestic news, comment/opinion pieces). In addition, my interviews confirmed that most correspondents do not write their own headlines – something that I discuss in more depth in Chapter 7. I found several cases of active generalisation in the headlines, where the article focuses on one country but its title refers to Africa more generally:

- "Wearing a red nose for Africa's corrupt clowns is a bad joke" for an article on Ghana (*Telegraph #13*);
- "Africa's other Zimbabwe" for an article on Swaziland (*Guardian.co.uk #40*);
- "The Mugabe of francophone Africa" for an article on Guinea (*Le Monde #6*);
- "Ghana-ing votes; Thriving democracy is a rare model for Africa" for an article on Ghana (*Financial Times #9*);
- "France, the main target of Islamic terrorism in Africa" for an article on Mali (*Le Monde #33*);
- "Africa at 50" for an article on Nigeria (*Times #20*);
- "Nouakchott, the first capital born African" for an article on Mauritania (*Le Monde #45*).

There is therefore the possibility that conflation maybe more likely to occur in articles not written by foreign correspondents, and/or maybe the result of the editing process back home. Secondly, 33% of the articles contained an initial continental framing which already constitutes a process of conflation. While there is a discrepancy between these 33% of articles with an initial "Africa" framing and the 47% of articles containing cases of conflation, this discrepancy remains relatively low (14%). If we remove the 33% of articles with an initial continental framing, then the proportion of articles containing cases of conflation is 20%. In that sense, conflation through generalisation, comparison and/or overlexicalisation was a feature observed in the coverage but it was not systematic.

4.3.3   Voices and quoting verbs

As discussed in section 2.1.3, several scholars have emphasised the overreliance on Western sources. Yet, the extent of such bias in media coverage has not really been followed up on in more recent studies of Africa's media image, with the notable

exceptions of Bunce (2011) and Malaolu (2014). When it comes to newspapers analysis, this perhaps has to do with the difficulty in assigning a category to an individual based on textual material only. If one is interested at looking at a potential skin-colour bias, this is easier done with TV coverage, although it still raises issues about the epistemological violence that exists in subsuming and classifying an individual under one category (Levinas, 1974). In my case, then, I made the choice to categorise speakers according to (a) their professional occupation and (b) nationality or the national affiliation of the institution they represent, insofar as the text makes this evident. As such, this categorisation does not seek to make a statement about the individuals' identity – something fundamentally multifarious, mixed, unstable and complex. Rather it is interested in understanding how the media comes to frame individuals as representative of certain nations and parts of the world, and especially if this is done at the expense of others. In spite of the limitations of such categorisation, this remains nonetheless a useful tool to understand partly who is given a voice in media discourse.[20] Categories were developed by using those found in previous studies and by expanding them to get a more detailed and accurate understanding of the voices quoted (see appendix II for details on the categories used).

As can be seen in Table 10 and 11 below, politicians are the most visible, with n=80 and n=116 in the UK and French press respectively. Bearing in mind the specificity of my site of analysis, these results align with the long-standing and broader tendency of news to give prominence to official voices, and in particular government representatives. In the French press, politicians are followed by journalists (n=29), academics (n=22) and members of the civil society (n=18); and in the UK press, by members of the civil society (n=26), NGO representatives (n=22) and vox pop (n=21).

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[20] If an individual is identified by her/his nationality, this takes precedence over their institutional affiliation. However, when this was not the case, the institutional affiliation was used instead (when applicable). For instance a researcher at the Paris School of Economics might be American and identified as such in an article. However, if he/she is presented simply as a "researcher" at the Paris's School of Economy, then it is the national affiliation that stands out to the reader.

Table 10 - Individuals quoted in the French press

	French	British	Other Euro	US	African	Unable to identify	Sub-Total
Politician	56	0	2	2	56	0	*116*
Journalist	10	0	3	0	15	1	*29*
Academic	13	0	1	0	8	0	*22*
Civil society	2	0	0	0	15	1	*18*
Expert	12	0	0	0	1	1	*14*
Other	2	0	0	0	8	3	*13*
NGO	5	0	0	0	1	3	*9*
Vox Pop	0	0	0	0	7	1	*8*
Business	3	0	0	0	0	0	*3*
Sub-Total	103	0	6	2	111	10	*232*

Table 11 - Individuals quoted in the British press

	French	British	Other Euro	US	African	Unable to identify	Sub-Total
Politician	6	12	5	5	52	0	*80*
Civil society	0	0	1	0	25	0	*26*
NGO	1	10	1	0	4	6	*22*
Vox Pop	0	0	0	0	20	1	*21*
Academic	1	5	0	0	8	1	*16*
Business	0	9	1	0	4	1	*15*
Other	0	0	2	0	8	4	*14*
Journalist	0	2	1	0	8	0	*11*
Expert	0	5	0	0	0	0	*5*
Sub-Total	8	43	11	6	129	13	*210*

When it comes to the use of Western sources (French, British, other European and US American), both the French and UK press favour national sources with respectively 103 French voices and 43 British voices. But, overall, do journalists significantly quote more Western sources than African ones? Figure 13 provides the aggregated numbers of Western sources (as defined above) in comparison to

overall African sources. The results highlight that the media use either as much African as Western voices in the French press (48% for both), or, in fact, more in the UK press (32% of Western voices as opposed to 61% of African voices).

Figure 13 - Proportion of Western vs. African interviewees
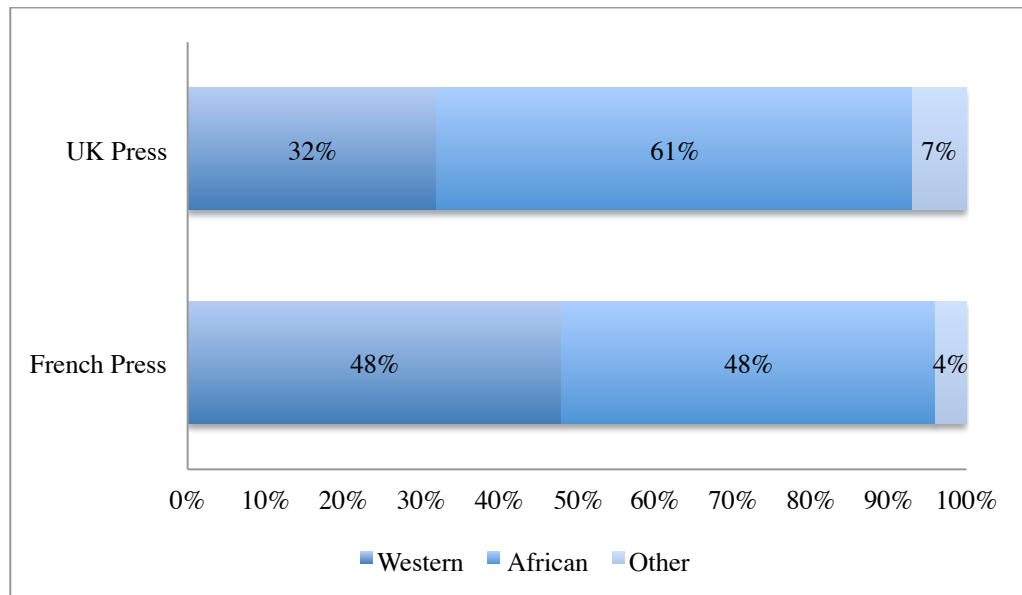
On the one hand, these results seem to undermine the idea that there is a strong bias in favour of Western sources. In fact, there seems to be a strong awareness among correspondents about balancing sources. For instance, East Africa correspondent 1 expressed concerns about a subtle bias in the use of sources:

> Take the example of South Sudan when it was becoming independent in 2011 where a lot of foreign journalists flew in, including a lot of young freelance journalists. During that time, what you would see is that the voice of reasonable authority would be a white man. And then, the kind of local colour would be a dude seating under a tree. And you would always see that the only black South Sudanese boy would be a poor dude on the street, and the only brainy boys would always be the white dudes. That kind of thing really worries me so I would always make sure that I always quoted a South Sudanese brain. Because, of course, it is really easy to ring WHO (World Health Organization) – they have a good press department – so that you can get the authority voice, and then do a vox pop in the street. And I think it shifted insidiously the voice of reason to the white man. (…) If you look at who gets quoted, that is part of – I don't know if it's Afro-pessimism – but of the failure of journalism to capture the complexity of such situations. (…) It's very easy to be lazy and not to see the impact. Nothing is wrong in the sense that it's accurately sourced; but it's skewed.

On the other hand, one could make the case that a significant part of African news stories remains told through the voice of Western individuals. Moreover, and as the previous quote suggests, it is important to ask what kinds of African voices are given space to speak in the news.

Once again, elite voices are given the most weight (Table 10 and 11), with nearly half being politicians (45%); they are followed by members of the civil society (17%), journalists (10%), vox pop (9%) and academics (6%). This salience of African politicians and government officials should be understood in the context of a broader framing of African leadership. Table 12 below provides a list of the five heads of state the most referred to in all articles.

Table 12 - Top five African heads of state most referred to in the coverage

Name	N° of Articles
French Press	
Joseph Kabila (DRC)	13
Laurent Gbagbo (Ivory Coast)	13
Amadou Toumani Touré (Mali)	10
Abdoulaye Wade (Senegal)	9
Goodluck Jonathan (Nigeria)	6
UK Press	
Goodluck Jonathan (Nigeria)	24
Robert Mugabe (Zimbabwe)	23
Joseph Kabila (DRC)	13
King Mswati III (Swaziland)	9
John Kufuor (Ghana)	9

Joseph Kabila (DRC), Goodluck Jonathan (Nigeria), John Kufuor (Ghana), Robert Mugabe (Zimbabwe), King Mswati III (Swaziland), Amadou Toumani Touré (Mali) and Abdoulaye Wade (Senegal) figure high in these results given that their countries were among those that received most coverage. But if we remove all the stories on Zimbabwe from this count, it appears that Mugabe still appears very often, in particular throughout the UK coverage, with 14 articles not about Zimbabwe mentioning him. Similarly in France, Gbagbo was the second most

referred to African head of states (n=13) whereas only six articles were initially about Ivory Coast. In an article on Ghana's jubilee, Chris McGreal writes:

> *African leaders,* including South Africa's *Thabo Mbeki* and *Robert Mugabe* of Zimbabwe, joined the celebrations along with celebrities such as Pelé. [my emphasis]
>
> (*Guardian* #6)

Similarly, David Smith writes about the ceremonies organised in DRC for the 50th anniversary of independence:

> A total of *18 African presidents, including Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe,* watched a parade of 15,000 soldiers and 400 tanks and heard Congo's leader, Joseph Kabila, call for a "moral revolution". [my emphasis]
>
> (*Guardian* #33)

While it is understandable that a news article cannot list all the names of 18 heads of state, the singling-out of Mugabe is a telling example of a peculiar discursive construction of African leadership in the press. In the interview, Smith explained:

> Part of the British media's obsession with Zimbabwe is the historical link. But also it has its own characteristics about this dramatic fall from grace. And Robert Mugabe has become almost this symbolic African dictator figure. He's a news celebrity so we are much more likely to write about him than Paul Biya who most people in Britain have never heard of, whereas they probably have heard of Mugabe. This again is sort of indicative of how all news, not just African, really feeds off personalities. You have to give something a human face. You have to tell the story through a person. And Mugabe is this sort of larger than life figure so that's often the touchdown.

When presented with the example above taken from his article, he said:

> I feel like I'm on trial and you are confronting me with the evidence of my past sins! [Laughing] "18 African presidents, including Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe", yes that's right. But a lot of this, one has to bear in mind, is something that's not unique to Africa but is actually representative of the way the media works worldwide.

Again, the specificity of news – beyond the particular case of Africa – is pointed out to account for this linguistic choice. The first example written by Chris McGreal does demonstrate that news more routinely feeds off personality, as it mentions Mugabe alongside Mbeki and Pelé. While this provides some answers as to *why* this occurs – a *why* located in the specificity of news production – this choice has a clear representational impact that links to a broader and very peculiar

narrative about "bad African governance" (Willems, 2015 p. 305). By associating systematically Mugabe with other African leaders, then, such instances simultaneously frame, conflate and frontload a very specific idea of African leadership as systematically and essentially dysfunctional, something made very explicit in the headline of an opinion piece published on Ghana's jubilee: "Wearing a red nose for Africa's corrupt clowns is a bad joke" (*Telegraph* #13). In sum, although there were as many African voices as Western ones in all articles (and even more in the case of UK newspapers), the coverage did not necessarily constitute a media space that empowers Africans to tell their own stories and address their own concerns, given that this space was heavily dominated by politicians which, additionally, are framed in such terms.

Another way to understand how voices are framed in media discourse is to look at the quoting verbs used to introduce them. For instance, is the person "saying", "explaining", "ordering", "complaining" or "adding"? The way a speaker is introduced impacts the way the reader is invited to engage with that person. These subtle linguistic choices implicitly convey judgments and connote or undermine agency. They position the individuals quoted in specific ways and can even make evaluation as to whether the person should be trusted or their comments dismissed. Drawing on Caldas-Coulthard's typology (1994) of quoting verbs and their connotation, I coded the quoting verbs used to introduce speakers. This classification includes seven categories:

* (1) *Neutral verbs* such as "say" or "tell" that do not introduce any particular judgment or evaluation about the speaker.

* *Metapropositional verbs* that convey the author's interpretation of the person quoted and which can be broken down into three types: (2) *assertive verbs* such as "explain" or "announce" where the speaker is positioned as a reliable, balanced and rational voice; (3) *directive verbs* where the speaker "orders" or "instructs" and which can connote authority and control; (4) *expressive verbs* such as "complains" or "claims" that frame the speaker in more emotional terms, as more defensive and possibly less in control.

* (5) *Metalinguistic verbs* characterise the language used by the person to talk such as "narrate" or "recount".

* (6) *Descriptive verbs* such as "laugh" or "gasp" which relate what is being said to the attitude of, and interaction with, the speaker.

* (7) *Transcriptive verbs*, finally, signify that what is being said relates to things previously discussed or marks the continuation of someone's speech, for instance "add" or "go on". These verbs can signify that these speakers are given more space to expand on their ideas, or it may link different pieces of speech together.

Table 13 provides an overview of the quoting verbs used to introduce interviewees identified as African or Western (as defined previously).

Table 13 - Quoting verbs used to introduce African and Western voices

	French Press			UK Press		
	African source	Western Source	Total	African source	Western source	Total
Neutral	21	25	46	104	63	167
Assertive	34	86	120	8	24	32
Directive	9	2	11	5	1	6
Expressive	61	16	77	19	8	27
Metalinguistic	5	1	6	1	1	2
Descriptive	6	1	7	2	2	4
Transcriptive	18	18	36	5	6	11
Total	154	149	303	144	105	249

To begin with, there is a strong imbalance in the use of neutral verbs between the French and the UK press. With 46 neutral quoting verbs used for a total of 303 verbs in the French press, and 167 neutral verbs used for 249 quoting verbs overall in the UK press, there seems to be a clear journalistic difference between the two countries. In their attempt to define different types of journalistic cultures, Hallin and Mancini (2004) identified France as part of a polarised pluralist model characterised by more opinion based journalism and literary writing. British journalism, for its part, is part of an Anglo-American tradition that favours objectivity and neutrality. In a way, then, the imbalance in the use of neutral

quoting verbs partly testifies to these historical, and ongoing, journalistic differences (Esser & Umbricht, 2014).

Beyond these national differences, we can see similar discrepancies, notably in the ways in which both French and British journalists make use of assertive and expressive verbs that mark the author's interpretation of the speaker (Table 14).

Table 14 - Chances of speakers to be quoted neutrally, assertively & expressively (%)

	French Press		UK Press	
	African source	Western source	African source	Western source
Chances to be quoted neutrally	14%	17%	72%	60%
Chances to be quoted assertively	22%	58%	5%	23%
Chances to be quoted expressively	40%	11%	13%	7%

In both cases, the chances of an African source to be quoted assertively were much lower than for a Western source (22% vs. 58% in France; 5% vs. 23% in the UK). Similarly, the chances of an African source to be quoted expressively were higher than for a Western source (40% vs. 11% in France; 13% vs. 7% in the UK). There was little use of directive verbs but once again, the chances of African interviewees to be framed in a directive way were much higher. It should be noted here that expressive or directive quoting verbs do not have a single connotative value. For instance, depicting a speaker as directive can connote authority, but it does not necessarily imply a value judgment as to the validity or legitimacy of this authority. Similarly, introducing a speaker as expressive is not necessarily disempowering, and can, in fact, bring the speaker emotionally closer to the reader. These results should therefore be read against the specificity of this site of analysis, and in particular the fact that politicians dominated African voices. But politicians also dominated Western voices. Such consistent discrepancies – in particular, that African voices were systematically framed as less assertive – therefore suggest a subtle bias in the way in which journalists frame African voices as opposed to Western ones.

Conclusions

This chapter provided the first part of my investigation into the British and French press coverage of the 50th anniversaries of independence. I analysed the context and ways in which these anniversaries became news and several linguistic components of this coverage in relation to features of news production. The 50th anniversaries of independence were moulded so as to fit several requirements of news production. Newspapers tended to focus on stories that concerned the former colonies of their respective national market. The anniversaries mainly became news insofar as they could be related to something negative, controversial, exuberant or when it directly involved Western nations or people. I then looked at three core claims of the literature and assessed the extent to which they characterise the way British and French journalists write about Africa in the context of this site. These three claims point to linguistic components through which several features of Afro-pessimism as defined in Chapter 2 are deployed, namely, *homogenisation*, *racialisation* and *selectivity*. Therefore, assessing these claims provides some indication of the extent to which media coverage contains features through which Afro-pessimism can be activated.

The coverage dominantly drew on lexical fields that do paint a bleak picture ("social and political instability", "violence and death", "corruption" and "poverty"). However, references to "darkness" and "tribalism" were far from being systematic, a finding that contrasts with previous studies (Hawk, 1992b; Spurr, 1993; Brookes, 1995). Whereas 1/3rd of the articles initially had a continental framing, more than 2/3rd contained generic references to Africa, and nearly 50% contained cases of conflation through active generalisation, comparisons and/or overlexicalisation. This finding however is nuanced by the fact that of all the articles not initially framed in a continental perspective, 20% contained cases of conflation. Finally, I showed that in the French coverage there were as many African as Western voices, and that in the UK coverage there were more African voices than Western ones. However (1), these were dominated by politicians that were more broadly framed in a way that undermined a sense of African agency or empowerment; and (2) there was a subtle linguistic bias in that journalists systematically frame African voices as less assertive.

In the context of this site, the claims that the coverage of African news *systematically* refers to "darkness" and "tribalism", treats Africa as a country and relies pre-dominantly on Western voices do not appear to be supported by the analysis. However, this does not mean that Afro-pessimism was absent from the coverage or that the coverage did not testify to the endurance of mythical representations. In fact, my analysis revealed that processes of conflation, while not systematic, are nonetheless constitutive of the coverage, and that the framing of African voices is impacted by a subtle bias linked to peculiar perceptions of African political leadership. In order to shed further light on the discursive nature of this coverage, in the next chapter, I provide a more qualitative and critical analysis of journalistic discourse.

CHAPTER 5 - After 50 years, what is there to celebrate? Afro-pessimism and postcolonial memory in journalistic discourse

> *There is nothing happy about independence 50. What are we celebrating? Our independence every year should be a time of reflection when everybody locks themselves up in a dark room and cries.*
>
> (Seun Keuti, 2011)

In this chapter, I carry on my investigation into the coverage of the anniversaries of independence by providing a qualitative and critical analysis of media discourse. The chapter is structured in three key moments. I start by analysing editorials to assess when the anniversaries were deemed newsworthy enough to be given salience, and what discourse is constructed in these editorials. I then take a qualitative and interpretive approach to analyse the construction of a discursive common sense in the coverage at large. While the primary aim of my analysis is to identify dominant narratives and linguistic and rhetorical trends across all articles, I also make use of a core analytical tool of discourse analysis, namely the appraisal of silences, i.e. I ask what is not being said and why? In the last section, I bring back this media discourse to what it tells us about the societies that produced it. I propose to step outside the conceptual lens of Afro-pessimism and to interpret the ideological function of the press coverage in relation to the uneasiness of contemporary France and Britain to engage with their colonial past.

5.1   The anniversaries in the editorials

I start my analysis by looking at editorials. Editorials have a very salient place in newspapers; they appear in the first pages and tackle what a newspaper sees as the main news of the day. Moreover, editorials are not merely personal opinions but argumentative reports advising social and political elites on specific issues, in particular in the case of broadsheet papers (van Dijk, 1991 p. 126). In that sense they are "manifestations of more complex, socially shared, and dominant ideological frameworks that embody institutional relationships and power" (van Dijk, 1991 p. 126). There were two editorials in my corpus, both published in *Le*

Monde. These constitute only two articles out of a corpus of 282 articles and, as such, I am not claiming that they are representative of the entire coverage. But given their salient and authoritative position, I now provide a close analysis of their linguistic and rhetorical features so as to understand under which discursive circumstances the anniversaries were deemed newsworthy enough to be given prominence.

5.1.1 Lexical fields and conflation

The first editorial published in December 2008 concerns Guinea (*Le Monde* #2). It does not focus on the anniversary of independence per se, an event celebrated in October 2008. It uses the anniversary as a backdrop to frame the present situation of the country as it faces political instability in the aftermath of the death of its president Lansana Conté. The second editorial uses the celebration of the anniversary of independence in DRC as a news peg for political instability and human rights violation in the country (*Le Monde* #27). Both editorials attempt at interpreting the present situation of the countries in the context of the 50 years post-independence.

They both make extensive use of the lexical fields of death and violence, poverty, political instability and corruption: for Guinea, "death", "confusion", "distress", "putsch attempt", "poor Guinea", "Stalinist dictatorship", "military rule", "abusive power", "catastrophic", "one of the most corrupted in the world"; for DRC, "human rights violations", "strangled", "war", "dictatorship", "state weakness", "militias that terrorise and rape", "persecutions", "murders", "appalling business environment", "attacks", "poverty", "torture", "decline". Both editorials appeal to a broader "African" framework via the use of generic references ("one of the richest countries in Africa"; "at the heart of the African continent") and active generalisation. For instance, the description of Guinea's president Sékou Touré rule as an "African style of Stalinist dictatorship" purposely evokes an image of "bad African governance" (Willems, 2015). DRC, for its part, is taken as an example symbolising most of postcolonial Africa: "the former Belgian Congo dramatically symbolises the regressive spiral that took hold of a great many African states during this postcolonial half-century".

This conflation is reinforced by the use of the language of darkness and hopelessness. Guinea is hyperbolically described as "plunged into confusion and

distress more than ever". Its population is "exasperated" and "worn out" and its "only hope is that they [the people] have nothing to lose". The use of the adverb "gloomily" to describe the anniversary reinforces this sense of despair and hopelessness. Similarly, DRC's anniversary is described as "tragically grotesque" and is associated, very saliently, in the title with the heart of darkness: "In Congo, an anniversary into the heart of darkness". The opening sentence geographically plays out this metaphor by dramatically evoking a "red light flickering in the heart of the African continent". Such metaphor not only geographically locates Congo "in the heart of the continent", but it also actively frames Congo *as* "the heart of the continent" – metaphorically capturing some form of 'African' essence.

5.1.2   Interpretation and prediction

Both editorials reveal a need to inscribe the two national histories within a linear historical narrative reminiscent of the colonial perception of Africa as lacking history or out of history. The most famous formulation of this argument in the 19th century was Hegel's exclusion of Africa from universal history (Hegel, 1861; Camara, 2005); a discourse that "denies history as well as place, constituting the past as absence, but also designating that absence as a negative presence" (Spurr, 1993 p. 98). Perhaps less known are the words of Victor Hugo, French literary hero of the 19th century and often heralded as the defender of the oppressed given his engagement against the death penalty and social inequalities:

> *Africa has no history; some sort of large and dark legend surrounds her* (…) Africa is the tropical blazing. It seems that to see Africa is to be blinded. An excess of sun is an excess of night. (…) There are only two sides to this savage Africa: populated, it is then barbarous; deserted, it is wild. (…) In the 19th century, the white man transformed the black into a man; in the 20th century, Europe will turn Africa into a new world. The problem is to create a new Africa, to make the old Africa suitable to civilization. Europe will solve it. Hail, people! Seize this land. Take it. From whom? From no one. Take this land from God. God gives the land to men. God gives Africa to Europe. Take it. [my emphasis]
>
> (Hugo, 1879 in M'Bokolo, 2008 p. 3)

Such perspective on Africa as a *terra nullius*, out of history, stuck in a repetitive and circular temporality conditioned by "darkness" and "primitivism", was not the prerogative of a few thinkers. Rather, it was part of the broader paradigm that underpinned the European debates on the civilising mission of colonialism. Whatever the political leaning, this paradigm posited the continent as out of

modern civilisation and out of the historical progress towards human flourishing and the expansion of rationality, until or unless Western countries were to be involved (M'Bokolo, 2008; Spurr, 1993).

This colonial fascination with a perceived lack of history is echoed in the description of Guinea as a country that "entered history with great fanfare" at the time of independence. This "entry into history" is immediately contrasted with the present situation as the country "starts the 21st century in tatters". This statement not only implies that the country's history started after independence, as if it had not pre-colonial or colonial history; it also implies that the country ultimately failed to "enter history" as demonstrated by its current catastrophic situation. In the case of DRC, the salient use of the "heart of darkness" in the title carries a similar colonial tone, implying that nothing has changed and that the country is stuck in a circular temporality of "darkness". Another testament to the reliance on the framework of a linear historical narrative is the description of the independence as something "reached" rather than "won" or "fought for" – an expected step in the trajectory of progress that ultimately proved to be too big of a challenge for the two countries.

This postcolonial failure is further assessed via the use of a ranking framework that relies on standards established by international institutions:

> [Guinea] is ranked 160 out of 177 in terms of standards of living by the UN; it is considered one of the most corrupted in the world and half of its population lives with less than 1 dollar per day.

DRC, for its part, is "ranked second to last in the World Bank's ranking for its appalling 'business environment'". The main reason behind their failure then comes down to one thing: irrationality. The results for Guinea in the post-independence years are "as catastrophic as they are absurd"; while in the DRC they come from the "regressive spiral" seen in "great many African states". As a way to further stress the irrationality behind the two countries' situation, the editorials contrast the potential for success (assessed via the countries' material richness) with actual results:

> While Guinea is one of the richest countries in Africa, its population is one of the poorest in the world.

> While a geological miracle, the Congo, one of the poorest countries on the continent, is also ranked second to last in the World Bank's ranking for its appalling "business environment".

These statements reinforce the sense that the terrible results are somehow inexplicable; that the countries were seemingly in the best position to flourish after becoming independent. This decontextualised presentation of the postcolonial failure as the result of some irrationality carries racist undertones that promote a racialised view of black individuals as less rational and more instinctive. This decontextualisation also links to the myth of decolonisation as turning the page of colonial history that I discussed in the previous chapter; appealing to irrationality prevents from engaging with the actual rationality of the coloniality of power that shaped post-independence states (Grosfoguel, 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2012). Nothing is said for instance about the fact that these countries became so poor, for a large part, because they were so rich in natural resources (Davidson, 1992; Auty, 1993). Similarly, nothing is said about the impact of colonial structures, both material and psychological, on the functioning of postcolonial states (Ahluwalia, 2001), on the political instrumentalisation of tribal identities (Chrétien & Prunier, 2003), or on the promotion of extractive economies and their terrible social consequences.

In fairness, the editorial on Guinea does refer to the "one-sided contracts" signed after the independence, hence pointing to Western involvement and responsibility. These, however, are mentioned to stress the failure of Guinean leaders to renegotiate them:

> Neither of them [Sékou Touré and its successor] managed to reconstruct the development of their country by renegotiating the one-sided contracts that link the country to the main international producers of aluminium.

In doing so, the editorial emphasises the failures of Guinean leadership – and responsibility – rather than a more global system, which also benefited from such leadership. Guinea's failure is reduced to the irrationality of its leaders: "All it took, so to speak, was the rule and the lost illusions of two men". The broader structures and system that contributed to creating, sometimes promoted, and often benefited from such leadership is never questioned; they remain in the background, invisible. In fact, colonialism is never mentioned in these two editorials. In the case of DRC, in particular, nothing is said about the Belgian colonisation that spanned over nearly a century – first under the ferocious rule of Belgian King Leopold II

and then under the authority of the Belgian parliament – and that laid the cultural, political and economic foundations of Mobutu's violent rule, a dictator who came to power by overthrowing anti-colonial leader Patrice Lumumba with the backing of US military forces. By focusing, instead, on a perceived irrational history presented essentially as of African responsibility, these articles contribute not only to erasing colonialism but also to silencing the rationality behind the coloniality of power that played a vital role in shaping the postcolonial era.

Finally, the editorials conclude with a prediction or a prescription and therefore actively propel these two countries into the future. Having such a concluding paragraph is a traditional feature of editorials as news schemata that "do not merely formulate opinions to be conveyed to the public, but also attack, defend, or give advice to the authorities" (van Dijk, 1991 p. 126). Here, the editorials mention the French government and other authoritative institutional figures including the European Union, the African Union, Western countries and the United States. In the case of Guinea, the prediction is one of clear hopelessness:

> Guineans know that they don't have much to expect from the African Union or from the European Union, and even less from France that have all witnessed this disaster almost without saying a word. Their only hope is that they have nothing to lose, which unfortunately does not guarantee the serenity of their future.

It is not a prescription but a pessimistic prediction: nothing has been done, nothing can be done, and nothing will change. For DRC, the editorial evokes the risks of further disruption for the whole region of central Africa:

> Western countries, which have supported the election of Joseph Kabila, must denounce the drift of its protégé and the decline of a strategic country which risks spreading in the Central African region that is barely recovering. In response to the deafening silence of the Belgian king, the European Union and the United States must show vigilance, given that these countries are essential financial backers and the first beneficiaries of the richness of the Congolese sub-soil.

In mentioning the mineral richness of DRC from which Western countries benefited as well as the support to Kabila's regime, the editorial certainly recognises a form of Western responsibility. But this responsibility, its history and impact are not called into question. It is mentioned in passing and used to present Western countries as the exclusive solution to the improvement of the country's future.

5.1.3   Key features of Afro-pessimism in the editorials

These editorials are structured in three key moments. They start with (1) a seemingly neutral observation of an event. This observation is grounded in (2) an interpretation that draws on lexical fields, metaphors and images that are aggregated into a broader "African" framework; an interpretation that recreates the bleak postcolonial history as exclusively the responsibility of a few irrational leaders and one which entirely silences the impact of colonialism. Finally (3), the editorials conclude by predicting that things will get worse or cannot get better. At best, the solutions come from the West and, at worst, there are none. For all these reasons, these editorials can be seen as cases in point of Afro-pessimism. In the table below, I provide a summary of their linguistic, narrative and rhetorical components through which the five features of Afro-pessimism put forward in Chapter 2 are actively deployed.

Table 15 - The discursive construction of Afro-pessimism in editorials

Features of Afro-pessimism	Linguistic, narrative & rhetorical components
Homogenisation	- Generic references to Africa - Active generalisation - Colonial metaphor and language (heart of darkness and out of history)
Racialisation	- Irrationality of African leadership and of the postcolonial failure - Colonial metaphor and language (heart of darkness and out of history)
Selectivity	- Silencing colonialism - Frontloading the present failure - Irrationality of African leadership and of the postcolonial failure - Lexical fields of death & violence, poverty, political instability & corruption
Ranking framework	- Highlighting the lack of progress - Highlighting the failure to enter history - Contrasting potential with (lack of) achievements - Reliance on statistics from international/Western institutions (World Bank, UN).
Prediction	- Western countries as the only solution - No hope - No African agency (local or regional)

Key to the discursive construction of Afro-pessimism is a set of production requirements. The inclusion of the anniversaries in editorials is constrained by dominant news values (focus on francophone countries, negativity). The format of editorials provides little room for historical contextualisation, which leads to silencing the colonial legacy. Similarly, the schema of editorials accounts for the

concluding paragraph that ends on a prediction or a recommendation; and the fact that these predictions systematically involved Western powers is linked to editorials in the broadsheet press being aimed directly at a Western audience of decision-makers. This micro-textual analysis therefore demonstrates how Afro-pessimism as a discourse is being enacted in journalistic writing, as well as how requirements of news production and conventions of journalistic writing dialectically drive the reproduction of this discourse.

The point of this analysis is not to say that newspapers should have covered these two anniversaries in a more positive light, or that political leaders in DRC and Guinea have no responsibility in the current state of both countries. They ought to be held accountable, and if anything the media have not talked enough about the two successive wars in Congo which have killed more than 5 million people since 1996, making it the deadliest conflict since World War II (Sundaram, 2014). What I have shown, however, is that the anniversaries of independence appeared in editorials insofar as they could be narrated through a clearly Afro-pessimist lens. The editorials paint a bleak and conflated picture of postcolonial Africa that removes traces from colonisation and Western responsibility; one that actively conveys hopelessness and promises violence, and that portrays the future as relying entirely on Western agency. As the 'Other' is portrayed as essentially different, inferior and without agency, a sense of the national 'Self' is dialectically reinforced; a 'We' that is given agency and the higher moral ground, while its colonial legacy is negated.

5.2   Reconstructing the discursive common sense of the coverage

These editorials, of course, are only two examples of a much larger corpus. In this section, then, I answer the question: what was the dominant discourse that surrounded the coverage of these anniversaries more broadly? The analysis provided is qualitative and interpretive in nature. It makes connections across the different media texts so as to understand the discursive common sense that emerges from the coverage.

5.2.1 Framing the anniversaries: failed, insensitive and discreet

During my content analysis, I noted all the adjectives used to describe these anniversaries. This allowed me to identify three dominant frames used in the coverage of the anniversaries at large: to present the anniversaries as *failed*, *insensitive* or *discreet*.

The failed anniversaries

The best and most visible example of the *failed anniversary* frame was the coverage of Nigeria's jubilee as the "celebrations to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Nigeria's independence were rocked by a series of attacks" (*Times* #25). Three car bombs exploded in Abuja during the festivities, two outside the justice ministry and another one at Eagle Square where Nigerian President Jonathan was welcoming foreign dignitaries. With 12 people dead, the celebrations were "wrecked" (*Guardian* #21) and "plunged into mourning" (*La Croix* #31). *Times* (#22) concludes with a pessimistic outlook that "as well as overshadowing the 50th anniversary of the independence of Africa's most populous nation, the bombs could derail a shaky peace deal brokered last year with the rebels". In addition to describing the commemoration via means of this tragic event, the press also heavily stressed the failure of Nigerian authorities in preventing it. British intelligence received warning of an upcoming security threat, which led British dignitaries to pull out of the parade. The warning was shared with Nigerian authorities but these carried on with the festivities nonetheless. As a result, Nigerian authorities were not only represented as incompetent, as opposed to the British, but also ultimately responsible for the failure of this anniversary.

The insensitive anniversaries

The second frame consisted in describing the anniversaries as insensitive, polemical or shocking. Key to this framing was to stress the lavishness of the celebrations. In Senegal, the inauguration of the monument of the African Renaissance – "a soviet-style statue which spurred much controversy" (*La Croix* #11) given its costs and the fact that it was build by North-Korean workers – took place "with great pomp" (*Le Figaro* #8). In Cameroon, the ceremony was described as follows in *Les Échos* (#8):

A huge portrait of Cameroon's president Paul Biya stands in the background. There are smokes and traditional dances everywhere. On this 18th of May, Yaoundé celebrates the 50th anniversary of independence from the former colony. The event takes place in a brand new sport venue, which looks like a flying saucer. Highly symbolically, it was just built by the Chinese.

The anniversaries in Burkina Faso, Mali, Ghana, Zimbabwe and Swaziland were also described as celebrated with "much pomp". In all cases, this pomposity – materially embedded in the urban landscape, infrastructures and in commodities – was contrasted with aspects perceived to be at odd with the very idea of a celebration. This contrast notably provided compelling visual material for journalists. East Africa correspondent 1, who covered the celebrations in DRC as both journalist and photographer, recalls taking a lot of pictures of this contrast: "the pomp and the expenses contrasted with horror in the East and oppressed opposition, completely corrupt deals at every turn and so on".

In Mali, the party was contrasted with the abduction of seven workers of the French multinational energy company Areva:

The large roads of Bamako are dressed with flags. The pavements have been carefully repainted; the asphalt of the roads has been, once again, fixed. Mali was yesterday fully dedicated to celebrate the 50th anniversary of independence. In the newspapers, everyone only talked about this. But there were barely any mention of the seven Areva workers who were abducted a few days ago.

(*Le Figaro* #23)

In Ghana, the celebrations are described as "ostentatious" (*La Croix* #5) as the country "splashes out for jubilee":

A fleet of 50 Mercedes, 50 BMWs and 30 jaguars, costing about £3 million, ferry the continent's elite to a huge party to celebrate Ghana's 50th anniversary of independence (…) Events include a miss Ghana competition, an African fashion show, the longest table of traditional food dishes, a golf competition, lectures, boxing and a beach party.

(*Times* #6)

Here, the "lavishness" of the yearlong party is vigorously questioned by contrasting it with poverty in the country:

The total budget for these festivities, which commenced with an all-night party in Accra, is said to be £10.4 million. You might reasonably ask if this is a sensible way of spending $20 million at a

time when the average citizen of Ghana as a daily income of around 67p (1.33$).

(*Telegraph* #13)

Similarly in Swaziland, the celebration is described as "extravagant" (*Telegraph* #3, #15), "posh" (*Telegraph* #20) and a "huge 40th birthday bash" (*Times* #10). The costs of the "lavish silver jubilee" (*Telegraph* #21) notably became the focal point of the media narrative:

> There will be parades, traditional dances, fireworks and feasting to honour King Mswati III, the Sherbone-educated ruler who has 13 wives and is at the apex of a still highly traditional society. (…) The dignitaries will be ferried to a stadium close to the royal family's kraal in a fleet of 20 newly-bought BMW 750s (…) The cakes for the occasion cost £7,000, and nine of the king's 13 wives chartered a jet for a week-long preparatory shopping trip to Dubai.

(*Telegraph* #15)

> In addition to fleets of expensive cars, including a Chrysler Maybach 62 costing £250.000 and private helicopters, the king has built a string of sumptuous palaces to house 13 wives.

(*Times* #12)

The perceived exuberance and eccentricity of the event was further highlighted "as scores of bare-breasted virgins dance in front of the portly King Mswati III of Swaziland to celebrate his 40th birthday" (*Times* #12). Eventually, the description of this exuberant lavishness is contrasted with poverty and social deprivation. King Mswati III "feasts off a country which is bleeding" (*Times* #12) and "spent the equivalent of half the national health budget to dispatch his 13 wives on a collective shopping trip to Dubai and Europe last month" (*Guardian* #40). As summarised in *Le Figaro* (#29): "The lavish celebration shockingly contrasts with the abject poverty in which two third of the population live in". In all these cases, the coverage of the anniversaries was polarised around extremes: on the one hand, lavishness and, on the other hand, poverty, social deprivation and/or economic and political instability. Ultimately, these descriptions all point to the idea that celebrating anything in these contexts was insensitive.

The discreet anniversaries

Finally, the other anniversaries mentioned in newspapers were described as happening discreetly. Niger "celebrated in simplicity" (*La Croix* #27) as "the event

was marked by a simple military parade and the traditional 'tree planting ceremony' during which thousand of trees are planted to stop the desert" (*La Croix* #24). Mauritania "celebrated discreetly its 50th anniversary of independence" as financial constraints and security issues forced the government "to revise its ambitions: no pomp, no foreign envoys and no military parade (…) The celebration of the small Islamic Republic therefore took place in the 'Mauritanian' style, with simplicity" (*Le Monde* #45). Other countries like Chad and the Central African Republic even had to postpone their celebrations due to economic and political problems (*La Croix* #27). Finally, Togo's anniversary was described as "confidential, and taking place amidst political cacophony" (*Le Monde* #15). In the year 2010 – where some 17 sub-Saharan African countries commemorated their independence – "the celebrations on the continent remained generally very discreet" (*Le Figaro* #8).

Overall, this discreetness was either welcomed as more in tone with what should be expected in this situation, or criticised for being a way for governments to avoid unwanted media attention:

> Such a jubilee could be a pretext to analyse the past and question the future. (…) This 50th anniversary is embarrassing for leaders who don't want to face their disastrous results. Only a few countries, then, have prepared spectacular ceremonies (…) In most countries, some statements, an historical conference and a military parade will do. The people, too busy to survive, have many other concerns.
>
> (*Le Monde* #15)

> "Should we organise pompous and expensive celebrations in a context of misery and austerity?" asks *Le Potential* [a Congolese newspaper]. "Spectacular celebrations would be an insult to the majority who rot in darkest misery. In fact, a poor and highly indebted country can't afford these fancy expenses".
>
> (*Le Monde* #61)

5.2.2   Reversed memory and the narrative of failure

These dominant frames all have one thing in common: they resulted in a coverage being much more about the *present* than about the *past*, and especially the past events being commemorated, namely the anti-colonial struggles for independence. This process is similar to what Neiger, Zandberg and Meyers (2014) describe in their study of the coverage of the Holocaust Remembrance Day in Israel. They found that in the coverage of this event, the present becomes "the heart of the story

and the main interest of the narrative, while the details of those past occurrences themselves are pushed aside, or, rather, into the background"(Neiger et al., 2014 p. 114).

To describe this phenomenon, they coined the concept of "reversed memory" that is "the cultural mechanism and journalistic practice of focusing on the present while commemorating a shared past" (Neiger et al., 2014 p. 114). This mechanism is the result of several competing rituals, mainly the ritual of news production (present-oriented) and the one of collective memory construction (past-oriented). Reversed memory, then, is the collusion of these different rituals into a narrative device where the "past is commemorated by means of the narration of the present" (Neiger et al., 2014 p. 114).

This focus on the present over the past appears clearly when looking back at the stories that attracted most media attention (see Table 9 in Chapter 4). The main news items focused either on a *present event* happening coincidentally to a commemoration, or on a commemorative event that would be contextualised into the *present social, political and economic state* of the country discussed. In the first group, we notably find the attacks during Nigeria's celebration and the visit of French Foreign Minister Brice Hortefeux in Mali to discuss the abductions of French worker by Islamic terrorists. These events frontloaded the present newsworthiness of an event and relegated the commemorative event in the background. In the second group, the commemorative event was frontloaded as "news" but was mainly a way to discuss a present situation. All the stories on Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Senegal and DRC focused extensively on the dysfunctional present including corruption, poverty and anti-democratic leadership while, once again, sidetracking the history of the independence commemorated. In any case, these two strategies contributed to reversed memory and resulted in a similar outcome: an absence of discussion, analysis and actual commemoration of the independence movements.

A telling example of this absence of the past being commemorated is that the actors of the independence movements were largely absent from newspaper coverage. With the exception of Kwame Nkrumah and Patrice Lumumba (both mentioned in 12 articles) and of leaders who stayed in power after independence only to turn into dictatorial figures, the leaders of the anti-colonial struggles were

virtually erased from the collective memory constructed at this occasion. Thomas Sankara was mentioned in only one article while revolutionary leaders such as Sylvanus Olympio, Barthelemy Boganda, or Amílcar Cabral were not mentioned at all, hereby confined to the recess of history. Similarly, while it is common in commemorative journalism to interview survivors or individuals involved in the past events commemorated, only seven articles interviewed people that were actively involved in – or simply witness to – the anti-colonial struggles.

Newspapers therefore emphasised the dysfunctional present over a complex and contested past. The anniversaries, whether failed, insensitive, or discreet, all testified to this dysfunctional present. But, as Neiger, Zandberg and Meyers (2014) argue, the focus on the present also impacts the framing and understanding of the past, in particular when done in a commemorative context. In other words, the framing of the present anniversaries also constituted a specific entry point into the past. It epitomised and frontloaded a discursive common sense about the 50 years post-independence that can be summarised under the following motto: there's nothing to celebrate.

This discursive common sense was made very explicit in several instances:

> The 18 states that celebrate 50 years of independence are unable to say exactly what success they are celebrating.
>
> (*La Croix* #18)

> [Nigeria] There's nothing good to celebrate after 50 years of failures.
>
> (*Le Monde* #69)

> [Nigeria] There is nothing happy about independence 50.
>
> (*FT #35*)

> It may be 50 years since the country [DRC] won independence, but there is little to celebrate.
>
> (*FT #12*)

> It's 50 years since many countries across Africa gained independence but there is little to celebrate for the people whom Robin Denselow meets in Nigeria.
>
> (*Times* #20)

> Many Ghanaians have little to celebrate today.
>
> (*Times* #6)

It's the 50th anniversary of the beginning of independence for colonial Africa. I hope we get shown something less embarrassing in the coming years.

(*Time* #23)

This idea that there is nothing to celebrate was further supported by the condemnation of local elites and politicians, and a denunciation of social inequalities:

[Swaziland] "I have nothing to celebrate because the only people that can celebrate are the few, the minority within the royal family," said Mario Masuku, president of the People's United Democratic Movement. "The king has a right to celebrate his individual birthday like anybody, but as a country to say we have something to celebrate is a misnomer. While the invited guests are eating sumptuous meals they must know they are eating and drinking the blood of the poor Swazis". While impressive highways link the capital Mbabane to the South African border and the other main centre, Manzini, Swaziland has the highest HIV prevalence rate and the lowest life expectancy in the entire world. Most of its people live in dire poverty, relying on subsistence agriculture to survive.

(*Telegraph* #15)

[Swaziland] There is little to celebrate for the 41 per cent of Swazis who are HIV positive (the highest rate in the world), or the 40 per cent who are unemployed, or the 70 per cent who live on less than 23 pence a day.

(*Times* #11)

[DRC] For those outside the city centre, there is very little to celebrate.

(*FT* #12)

[Nigeria] For the common man, things have never been so bad; for the politician, things have never been so good.

(*FT* #21)

Key to this rhetoric of failure were references to the disappointment in the face of unfulfilled hopes – "the failure of many parts of Africa to live up to the promise of decolonization" (*Guardian* #6) – and of the gap between potential and actual results:

"There is frustration about the *gap between where we could be and where we are*," says Femi Lijadu, 51, a lawyer and a former executive director at United Bank for Africa.

(*FT* #19)

At the time, everyone wanted to see in this young nation [Ghana] and its leader the future of all Africans. *These great hopes are now gone*.

(*Le Figaro* #3)

This year, 23 [*sic*] African countries are celebrating their 50th anniversary of independence. *Most hopes* that emerged at the end of colonisation *did not become real*.
<div align="right">(*Le Monde* #17)</div>

How did Mugabe turn so much *hope into so much misery?*
<div align="right">(*Telegraph* #26)</div>

On October 1 1960, Nigeria was *Africa's great hope*. The same *promise lives on* 50 years later, having survived civil war, military dictatorship, economic mismanagement and social turmoil.
<div align="right">(*FT* #18)</div>

[Africa] It is a somewhat *depressing story of hopes raised and dreams* dashed.
<div align="right">(*Times* #4)</div>

The new state [DRC] spiralled into the chaos which has *scotched so many of the hopes vested in independence* (…) the swift defeat of democracy in Congo prefigured many of the subsequent *disappointments and betrayals in post-independence Africa*.
<div align="right">(*Guardian* #42)</div>

It is this "*gap between potential and fulfilment*" that has enraged Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka, who spoke in Port Harcourt on Monday demanding the Nigerian leadership give its citizens better reasons to celebrate.
<div align="right">(*Guardian* #45)</div>

[Africa] There is a *huge disappointment* towards most of the hopes from the decolonisation.
<div align="right">(*La Croix* #49)</div>

[my emphasis, throughout]

In several instances, the main success that deserved to be celebrated was that things could have been much worse:

The country's [Nigeria] success in remaining "one nation" over the past 50 years – enduring decades of disunity, civil war, and over 30 years of military rule – is an achievement in itself.
<div align="right">(*Guardian* #45)</div>

Nigeria is being praised for being "back from the precipice" (*Guardian* #20), and Burkina Faso because "compared to most African countries, it looks like a haven of peace" (*La Croix* #12).

Amidst these tales of failures, Ghana partly stood out in the coverage. Ghana's anniversary in 2007 was the only anniversary that gained significant attention for another reason than the immediate failure of its ceremony, or because it could be

related to something negative or that directly involved Western nations or people. Nonetheless, the coverage was done against the backdrop of a broader framework of continental failure as can be seen through the use of various comparisons:

> *Compared to its neighbours*, Ghana looks like a haven of peace, democracy and relative prosperity.
>
> (*La Croix* #8)

> The former British colony remained a stable democracy *contrary to its neighbours* and in particular Ivory Coast and Togo. Ghana, the first country in black Africa to gain independence, has been celebrating this anniversary since March 6.
>
> (*Le Monde* #7)

> Though the great majority of Ghanaians remain very poor, Ghana is *relatively* prosperous and politically stable and is now re-emerging as one of the success stories of the region.
>
> (*Guardian* 5)

> Ghana's elections, culminating in victory at the weekend for John Atta Mills, the opposition candidate, are cause for celebration. Yesterday, Ghanaians witnessed the second constitutional transfer of power in a decade. *Only Benin*, *on the mainland continent*, has experienced alternating political power of this kind (…) *[This] example is particularly welcome at a time when real democracy in Africa is otherwise under threat*.
>
> (*FT* #7)
>
> [my emphasis, throughout]

These comparisons systematically assess Ghana against a broader regional or continental framework. Ghana's case is presented as an exception that contrasts with a broader 'African failure'; a good example insofar as other countries did much worse; ultimately, an exception that is used to prove a more general rule. Ghana's anniversary was chronologically the first to be covered by the media – an event whose newsworthiness could not, at first sight, be found in the limited set of news values that shaped the coverage of other anniversaries in the following years. Yet, throughout these comparative examples, we see that the master narrative of failure that subsequently blossomed was already here. And even if Ghana appeared as an exception, it was still framed through the rhetorical features of the master narrative of failure found in the broader coverage of the other anniversaries. These included:

- Questioning the costs of the celebrations:

    The $20 million spent on these celebrations – in a country that exports raw materials (gold, cocoa, bauxite) but where the GDP

per habitant is of 450$ – are at sharp contrast with the urging social needs of the population.

(*Le Monde* #7)

▪ Highlighting the gap between potential and results:

A colony that went from riches to rags.

(*Times* #6)

"I don't think we have lived up to the promise of independence".

(*Guardian* #39)

It was also a time for reflection on what had gone wrong in a country [Ghana] that won independence with an economy larger than South Africa's. Even today, much of the population lives on less than a dollar a day.

(*Guardian* #6)

▪ Celebrating the fact that things could have been worse:

Ghana can look back with pride because it has not gone down the doldrums like other African countries.

(*Times* #6)

"But having survived the last 50 years intact, when you look at our neighbours, is something" [Kyeretwie Opoku members of the Ghanaian advocacy group the Committee for Joint Action].

(*Guardian* #39)

In other words, Ghana was framed either as an exception that proved a more general rule or through a frame similar to the one used to describe other countries. In any case, this framing of Ghana fed and reinforced the broader narrative of failure about the postcolonial past that dominated press coverage.

5.2.3   Traces of colonial myths

As part of this discourse of failure, the press appealed to several long-standing colonial myths, namely the pathologisation and infantilisation of Africa, and the view of the continent as out of history.

In *Le Figaro* (#9) Guinea is described as a "tropical gulag" that "progressively sunk into a bloody *paranoia*" [my emphasis]. In an article titled "African schizophrenia" *Le Monde's* Africa correspondent Philippe Bernard very positively reviews a book by Malian writer Moussa Konaté *Is black Africa cursed?* Bernard summarises the book's key argument, in his own words, as follows:

Why does Africa remain at the bottom of the world order? (…) Africa is *sick* of a culture that perverted the idea of solidarity and

> turned it into a subjugating tool and a strong factor of inertia (…)
> Behind the apparent conviviality, the submission to the group favours parasitism, corruption and tyranny at the cost of labour. [my emphasis]
>
> (*Le Monde* #44)

Bernard then highlights the paradox of "a fallback on idealised traditional cultures" on the one hand, and the admiration towards "the knowledge of the whites" on the other. It is this paradox that he describes, again in his own words, as the "African schizophrenia". In the face of a "probable disaster", this schizophrenia should be urgently overcome through "the recognition by Africans of their mistakes, starting with the role of their chiefs in the slave trade".

These references to "schizophrenia" and "paranoia" as a way to understand the postcolonial African experience are telling examples of a process of pathologisation. Fanon (1952) showed that the pathologisation of colonial societies and identities was integral to the discursive reproduction of colonial and racialised power relations. In the 1980s and 1990s, the language of the modernisation and developmental paradigm also carried this discursive pathologisation in talking about "Third World countries" (Escobar, 1995) and the "disappointment of [the] promise [for Westernised development]" (Spurr, 1993 p. 19). Processes of pathologisation have also been constitutive of the "new racism" that emphasises cultural differences as opposed to racial or biological ones in the context of the European immigration debates of the 80s and 90s (Barker, 1981; Balibar, 2007). For Clarke, key to this new racism was "the development of a politics of fear which uses emotional and affective processes to pathologise others in a language of cultural difference" (Clarke, 2008 p. 518). The pathologisation of culture and identities perceived as different is therefore a discursive tool in a continuing process of 'Othering' – taking the form, in this case, of an essentially different and unique "African" culture that is "sick" and, ultimately, is the best explanation as to why the continent remains "at the bottom of the world order".

Fanon also reminds us that another important discursive feature of the racialisation of colonial identities was the view of blacks as childlike (1952 p. 6). In my case, there were several instances of this childlike analogy used in the description of states and leaders. In *La Croix* (#13), the era of the 1970s and 80s was described as the "teenage crisis" of anglophone African countries, one that ultimately "led to greater autonomy today" in opposition to francophone countries. In *Les Échos (#8),*

CNRS researcher Roland Marchal described the expectation on the side of French elites that "Africans retain their childlike behaviour by favouring French businesses". Analogies of states being childlike were also communicated via African voices. In *Les Échos* (#8), Cameroon's former Prime Minister Henri Hogbe Nlend is quoted saying "If we don't let a child fall, he will never be able to walk". In the *Telegraph* (#8), Donsky Traoré, a member of the Malian hip-hop band SMOD, says, "many countries in Africa are celebrating 50 years of independence. But would a 50-year-old person make so many wrong choices? You'd expect some maturity". This statement ultimately implies that these states remained in a childhood state. For Saminaden, Loughnan, and Haslam (2010 p. 91) this colonial metaphor of the 'Other' as childlike, carefree and undisciplined constitute a counterpart to the stereotype of the 'Other' as savage or governed by instinct rather than reason. In this sense, the imagery of the childlike African states – incompetent and irresponsible and, ultimately, in need of control, parenting and even discipline – reproduces a racialised and colonial gaze.

Finally, the press appealed in several ways to the myth of Africa's lack of history. As discussed in my analysis of the editorials, the view of the continent as out of history was key to the discursive construction of the colonial idea of Africa. This myth was entrenched in the broader paradigm of modernity in which Western countries and cultures were seen as leading the trajectory of human progress towards the flourishing of rationality and universal freedom. This myth has proved to be enduring. A testament to the contemporary persistence of this myth was the speech given by former French president Nicolas Sarkozy in Dakar in 26 July 2007:

> The tragedy of Africa is that the African has not fully entered history. The African peasant, who for thousands of years has lived according to the seasons, whose life ideal was to be in harmony with nature, only knew the eternal renewal of time, set by the tempo of the endless repetition of the same gestures and the same words. In this imaginary world where everything starts over and over again, there is no place for human adventure or for the idea of progress. In this universe where nature commands all, man escapes from the anguish of history that torments modern man, but he rests immobile in the centre of a static order where everything seems to have been written beforehand. This man never launched himself towards the future. The idea never came to him to get out of this repetition and to invent his own destiny. The problem of Africa, and allow a friend of Africa to say it, is to be found here. Africa's challenge is to enter to a greater extent into history.

(Sarkozy, 2007 in Konaré, 2008 pp. 24–25)

This was Sarkozy's first official visit in sub-Saharan Africa as French president. Several commentators have highlighted the discrepancy between Sarkozy's claim to "conduct policies of reality and not policies of myths anymore" and his obvious appeal to a set of colonial myths (Stoler, 2008). His words also carried a particular echo in a French context where a public debate over national identity, immigration and colonial memory was gaining momentum. A milestone of this debate was the 2005 French law on colonialism, which required high-school teachers to lecture their students on the "positive values" of colonialism and on the "positive role of the French presence abroad, especially in North Africa" (Stoler, 2008 p. 126). The law was eventually repealed a year later but it did spur a heated public debate, with, on the one hand, those attacking the law as disastrous, negating colonial history and revelatory of a postcolonial inhibition, and, on the other hand, those complaining about the "political correctness", culpability and self-hatred that underpinned the criticism (Ledoux, 2013).

In the French coverage, references to a perceived lack of history were mainly done to refer to the controversial speech itself:

> The main thing for a large part of the French public opinion is to know whether Africa "barely" entered history, or "not enough" or "enough".
>
> (*Le Monde #7*)

While these references were probably done with an eye to avoid re-entering the controversial debate, they nonetheless constituted the residual traces of this broader backdrop. In the UK press, some journalists directly appealed to this myth such as William Wallis, the *Financial Times* Africa correspondent:

> The Grand Hotel in Kinshasa, where dignitaries from across Africa and beyond arrived yesterday to take part in a celebration of the Democratic Republic of Congo's 50th anniversary of independence from Belgium, *is frozen in time*. It is the reflection of a stagnant economy that has failed to earn promotion from near the bottom of world development rankings despite prodigious mineral wealth and recent commodity booms. [my emphasis]
>
> (*FT #12*)

In equating the hotel "frozen in time" with the lack of progress of the nation, he metaphorically calls upon a broader view of Africa's timelessness. But the clearest example of the deployment of this myth can be found in a *Times* (#4) article titled

"What have politicians done for them? Zilch". The author, British journalist Matthew Parris, grew up in South Africa, Rhodesia and Swaziland, and writes:

> In the 50 years since I was in Malawi as a young boy, *life in most African villages has not changed in the slightest*. (…)
>
> Now I am back here in the sub-Sahara: a subcontinent I know well. This time I'm travelling under my own steam, with friends, in true rural Africa**,** a land I love. Malawi is a friendly, safe and gentle country, welcoming to strangers, and not by African standards notably inefficient or corrupt. But what strikes me most – more than any of the changes I see in the cities – is *how little has changed in the lives of the vast majority of the people of Africa***,** who live on the land.
>
> During the half-century in which Harold Macmillan's winds of change have blown themselves – in political terms – into a gale, (…) during the half-century between what I saw when I was 10 and what I see now at 60, *life in the average African rural village is unaltered*.
>
> This week I returned to a small village near Lake Malawi, where I went last November to write (for the *Times* Christmas Appeal) about the work of a small British charity. I am not exaggerating when I say, without qualification, *that nothing – nothing – has changed for better or worse or at all, in village life. You could rewind the video 50 years and you would not spot a single feature that placed us in 2009 rather than 1959* – none, that is, except the lines of my face. Oh, there is, perhaps, one: *the new pumps we were installing are of a more primitive design than the 19th-century style lever-pumps that used to be installed in colonial days*, as these often proved too complicated to maintain in remote areas in Africa. [my emphasis, throughout]

Taking an example of one small village in Malawi, Parris creates a generalised view of Africa as static: "life in most African villages has not changed in the slightest"; "little has changed in the lives of the vast majority of the people of Africa"; "nothing – nothing – has changed for better or worse or at all, in village life. You could rewind the video 50 years and you would not spot a single feature that placed us in 2009 rather than 1959". Things have not changed, except, maybe, for the worst as the winds of change turned into "a gale" and "as the new pumps we were installing are of a more primitive design than the 19th-century style lever-pumps that used to be installed in colonial days". Parris even makes his bias clear in the text as he dismisses "any of the changes [he] see[s] in the cities", refusing to engage with them and what they might mean. His narrative style is reminiscent of a travelogue, a literary style that Fabian (2012 p. 96) found – at the turn of the millennium and in the US context – to reproduce many of the tropes of the late

Victorian era travel narratives, including "images of Africa as snapshots in time, contributing to the view of Africa as stagnant".

Drawing on these observations, Parris carries on:

> I do not, from this, conclude that colonialism was good, or that African independence has been bad. No, they have both proved largely irrelevant, hardly scratching the surface.
>
> When we British marvel at how so small a nation managed to govern so much of so large a continent, with so few colonial officers on the ground, we overlook the fact that we weren't really governing at all. We were just there. We were marching around, building and mending a few (rather bad) roads, policing (after a fashion) with the help of tribal chiefs and elders, and generally flying the flag. And on the whole, and for some time, the locals couldn't be bothered to remove us.

That he needs to state what he "does not conclude" shows that there would, in fact, be a logical conclusion for the reader to draw based on his observations: "colonialism was good", "African independence has been bad". While he appears to undermine any grandeur of the British Empire, he in fact emphasises that colonialism had barely any impact, was irrelevant and superficial, and, in any case, was done with the support of locals. More striking, perhaps, is the statement that "locals couldn't be bothered to remove us", hereby dismissing entirely the history of anti-colonial struggles – which, one should bear in mind, were what the anniversaries supposedly commemorated.

These residual traces of colonial myths, although not systematic, contributed nonetheless to the discursive common sense of failure that culminated in the widespread assessment that most countries, or even the continent as a whole, are worse off than 50 years ago:

> Most Africans are poorer today than they were 50 years ago.
>
> (*Times* #16)

> Africa is the only continent in the world to have become poorer in the past 50 years.
>
> (*Times* #6)

> The DRC will celebrate the anniversary of its independence from Belgium today, poorer and more violent that it was 50 years ago.
>
> (*Times* #18)

> Ghana is now one of the poorest countries in the world. The average income is $550 per habitant, far from South Korea and its $16 000. And yet, in the 1950s the Gold Coast was richer and in a better position that what became the "Asian tigers".
>
> <div align="right">(Le Figaro #3)</div>

The idea of an absence of progress, or even regression, is perfectly captured in a metaphor found in *La Croix* (#26): "During this half of the century, sub-Saharan Africa moved forward and stagnated, just like a runner on a treadmill losing breath while not getting anywhere".

At first sight, this assessment may not seem contentious to the reader, especially since plenty of 'hard' facts are provided to support it but also because it appears to be concerned with social inequalities and poverty. In addition, by taking the form of a simple before/after analysis, this master narrative of failure appears obvious and common sense. But far from being only a simple observation, the view that Africa is worse off today than 50 years ago has a clear rhetorical correlative: the continent was better off 50 years ago, under colonial domination. Seen this way, this seemingly neutral assessment takes on a different form and its ideological dimension becomes clearer. It simultaneously fosters a sense that the independence did more harm than good, that colonisation was not so bad after all and that ultimately the postcolonial failure proved right many who, before, during and immediately after independence, doubted the very ability of colonised people to self-rule. This rhetoric was part of the discursive resistance to the demands of the anti-colonial movements, and often constituted the core argument of those opposing independence. In the early 1960s, the French press quoted abundantly the words, possibly fictional, of an old Malian farmer: "son, when will they be done with their independence?" (Diop, 2010). The use of this quote in the French press at the time served a clear rhetorical purpose; it highlighted in a cynical way and with a veneer of colonial nostalgia that the newly independent countries seemed to have fared better under colonial rule than after independence. Eventually, this rhetoric comes full circle as these words found a contemporary echo in the *Guardian* (#42) but this time in DRC: "One of many mordant jokes doing the rounds in Kinshasa is: 'Independence, will it be over soon'?"

5.3   The dynamics and ambiguities of postcolonial memory

In this section, I unpack further the ideological work at play in the coverage and bring back the discursive common sense to what it tells us about the societies that produce it. I propose to step outside the conceptual lens of Afro-pessimism and, instead, use Gilroy's concept of postimperial melancholia (Gilroy, 2001; 2004) and Stoler's concept of colonial aphasia (Stoler, 2008; 2011) as a way to explore more fully the dynamics and ambiguities of this media discourse.

5.3.1   The "post-postcolonial" moment

I previously appealed to the idea of reversed memory to capture the dominant narrative used to cover the anniversaries. The coverage focused primarily on the present failures of African states as a way to commemorate the past. Dialectically, this depiction of the present conditioned the understanding of the past 50 years via a master narrative of failure, which stressed the gap between potential and results, and the fact that the continent seems to be worse off today than 50 years ago. Therefore, reversed memory is not only a narrative device (commemorating the past via narration of the present) but also a tool in the advancement of dominant ideologies.

In their study of reversed memory in the coverage of Israel's Holocaust Remembrance day, Neiger, Zandberg and Meyers (2014 p. 124) found that the commemoration of the Holocaust was reduced, or rather instrumentalised, to celebrate "the mere existence of the State of Israel". Hence it contributed to the advancement of a specific political project and provided "a narrative sweetener that eases the collective taking of the bitter, traumatic pill of the past" (Neiger et al., 2014 p. 124).

In my case, reversed memory constituted a "narrative sweetener" that prevented France and the UK to face their colonial history, easing the collective taking of the colonial pill. Whereas Western colonial powers were, historically, the antagonists of a legitimate fight for freedom and self-determination, blame is here exclusively focused on and shifted to those at the heart of the news items, namely present African leaders. As a result, the present-oriented narratives take over a contested and complex past and reduce postcolonial history to an overarching narrative of

failure in which Africans appear solely responsible for both the bleak present and past.

Reversed memory and the narrative of failure contributed to the discursive formation of what I call a *post-postcolonial moment*. Rather than providing an opportunity to engage into a memorial work on the colonial past, the 50 years threshold served to focus on the dysfunctional present and African responsibility, a responsibility then extended to make sense of a broader postcolonial failure. The commemorative dimension of these anniversaries was sidetracked as the newsworthiness value (present-oriented) took over the commemorative value (past-oriented). Rather than an opportunity to look back, 50 years became a threshold to turn the page of colonial history and to advance the idea that colonialism is no longer relevant to the understanding of contemporary societies, be they former colonies or colonial powers. This function of the 50 years threshold is made explicit in an article by David Smith titled "50 years on, can colonialism still be blamed for the country's [DRC] woes?" (*Guardian* #33). After briefly reviewing the history of the country since the rule of Leopold II, Smith eventually quotes Congo's current foreign minister Alexis Thambwe Mwamba as being

> ready to end the blame game. "Fifty years later, we cannot say that if things are not going well in Congo, it's the fault of Belgium or of Leopold II".

In order to elucidate more precisely how reversed memory and the features of the narrative of failure come together to discursively construct this post-postcolonial moment, I turn to an opinion-piece by Niall Ferguson published in the *Telegraph* (#13). Ferguson is a Scottish historian and professor at Harvard University. He has been a regular contributor to *Bloomberg*, *Newsweek*, the *Financial Times* and the *Telegraph*, and is the writer of several books adapted into TV series by Channel 4 including *Empire: How Britain made the modern world* (2002) and *Civilization: the West and the Rest* (2011). His article was published at the occasion of both Red Nose day and Ghana's inauguration of its 12-months celebration of independence. Ferguson starts by observing that Comic Relief provides some £1.7 million to NGO projects in Ghana while the Ghanaian government is reportedly spending some £10.4 million to fund the festivities. He then vigorously questions the idea that there is anything to celebrate by contrasting the costs of this anniversary with poverty in the country:

> You might reasonably ask if this is a sensible way of spending $20 million dollars at a time when the average citizen of Ghana has a daily income of around 67p ($1.33). You might also ask what exactly Ghana has got to celebrate after 50 years of "freedom".

He then stresses that Ghana is today worse-off than it was 50 years ago:

> The average Briton was 39 times richer than the colony's average inhabitant. (…) Between 1960 and today, the gap between Britain and Ghana has more than doubled, so that the average Briton is now 92 times richer than the average Ghanaian.

To understand "what went wrong", Ferguson appeals to a phenomenon that extends beyond the case of Ghana:

> The answer is more or less the same answer you would give for *any sub-Saharan African country* since 1957. Kwame Nkrumah, who led Ghana to independence, was in many ways typical of the first generation of post-colonial African leaders. (…) Nkrumah was wholly incapable of distinguishing the *virtues from the vices of British rule*. [my emphasis]

At this point, he sets out to demonstrate that Ghana was in fact better off under colonial rule, first by stressing the positive impact of British colonialism and then by arguing that the fears expressed by colonial powers vis-à-vis the ability of colonised people to self-rule were entirely justified:

> Three years before independence, *thanks in large measure to the efforts of missionary schools*, Africans already occupied a third of senior civil service posts. (…) Though it was tight-fisted when it came to education and healthcare, *the Colonial Office at least provided the foundations for economic and political stability: trade, balanced budgets, sound money, the rule of law and non-corrupt administration*. (…)
> If you look at the photographs of the handover of power in 1957, the Duchess of Kent looks pained; the Governor, Sir Charles Arden-Clarke, looks sceptical. Those facial expressions proved e*minently justified*. (…) Five years before [independence], one British official had warned: "It seems fairly clear that the danger now is not that of an outburst of anti-European feeling but rather that of an abuse by a certain section of Africans of the power which we are transferring to them. This danger arises partly out of *the tendency of the African to exploit the African if placed in a position to do so*, and partly out of the lessons in the organisation of party dictatorship which some of the leaders learnt from their early flirtation with Communism". *Too true*. (…) By the early 1960s Ghanaian women were staging protests with placards reading "BRING BACK THE BRITISH".

Ferguson's argument eventually culminates in attacking what was his main target all along, what he has referred to elsewhere as the "imperial guilt" leading to a "culture of self-flagellation" (Skidelsky, 2011):

> Today, there are still people who fondly believe that *all Africa's problems are a legacy of colonialism* – the fault of the wicked British. Those same people also cling to the notion that this legacy can be expunged only by the payment of reparations in the name of "aid". *Fifty years on we can surely think more clearly*. In virtually every case (Botswana is the sole exception), former British colonies in sub-Saharan Africa have fared worse under independence than they did under British rule. [my emphasis]
>
> <div align="right">(Telegraph #13)</div>

50 years therefore becomes the threshold where "we can surely think more clearly" and where "all of Africa's problems" are not "the fault of the wicked British". The problem with this rhetoric is that it reduces the question of the legacy of colonialism to a zero-sum game. Surely, the channelling of aid money by corrupt governments is a pressing issue that calls for a condemnation of those who benefit from it at the expenses of those who actually need it. However, this does not mean that there is no room for discussing the impact of colonialism in constructing the conditions and structures of this system; a system to which Western countries have contributed, even after the formal end of colonialism. In Ferguson's perspective, there seems to be no room for shared responsibility; instead, it is an "either/or" choice. 50 years on, the responsibility of the postcolonial failure is *exclusively* the one of "Africa's corrupt clowns".

It is in this sense that I talk of a *post-postcolonial moment*. It is a moment where the culture of "self-flagellation" should give way to "clearer thinking"; a moment where the "collective taking of the bitter, traumatic pill of the past" (Neiger et al., 2014 p. 124) is eased by focusing on a dysfunctional present seen as exclusively of African responsibility. In this perspective, it becomes safe to say that colonialism should no longer be blamed since African countries were better off under colonial rule. In other words, it signalled the end of the postcolonial era and inaugurated the moment where 'We' should get over colonial history by reclaiming its positive aspects and by dismissing colonialism as irrelevant to contemporary societies.

This piece was not the work of a journalist, let alone a foreign correspondent. Perhaps it is worrying to see it expressed through the voice of an academic, although Ferguson is a notoriously controversial figure. On many occasions, he has praised the historical dominance of the West as essentially good for humanity at

large, and defended British imperialism on the basis that it was not as bad as other imperialisms. But Ferguson's view strongly echoes the discursive common sense of failure analysed previously throughout the coverage. This common sense, I would argue, is symptomatic of the uneasiness that has taken hold of contemporary discussions about colonial history in the UK and France.

5.3.2 Postimperial melancholia and colonial aphasia

This discourse ultimately tells us more about the societies that produced it, than about the countries being covered in this coverage. It is linked to the unsettled colonial history in contemporary British and French societies.

In *After Empire,* Gilroy (2004 p. 2) investigates the meaning of colonial and imperial history for, and its impact on, the formation of political conflicts and identities in contemporary multicultural British society. For him, British society since the 1950s is beset by its inability to come to terms with its colonial past and its loss of imperial prestige (Gilroy, 2004 p. 98). This loss has lead to an "anxious, melancholic mood [that] has become part of the cultural infrastructure of the place, an immovable ontological counterpart to the nation-defining ramparts of the white cliffs of Dover" (Gilroy, 2004 p. 15). It is this mood that Gilroy terms "postimperial melancholia". It manifests itself clearly when Britain is invited to engage with its brutal history that challenges the nation's moral legitimacy, self-esteem and sense of greatness (Gilroy, 2004 p. 100). Such instances

> often [trigger] a chain of defensive argumentation that seeks first to minimize the extent of the Empire, then to deny or justify its brutal character, and finally, to present the British themselves as the ultimate tragic victims of their extraordinary imperial successes.

> (Gilroy, 2004 p. 103)

As I have shown, such defensive and even revisionist stance was clear in Ferguson's piece on Ghana or Parris' article on Malawi. Similarly, Gilroy notes that such melancholia is particularly visible in the British press obsession with Zimbabwe, and its support to white farmers – "Britain's abandoned colonial kith and kin":

> The repetition of tragic southern African themes (…) are a notable feature of this moment not only because they convey the catastrophic consequences of intermixture and the severe problems that arise once colonial order has been withdrawn or sacrificed but

because, like Linday Colley's recent work and Enoch Powell's "rivers of blood" speech, they are deployed to contest and then seize the position of victim.

(Gilroy, 2004 pp. 114–115)

Such postimperial melancholia therefore manifests itself in British representation of its former colonies. It also underpins the framing of several political debates "at home", such as the ones on black criminality and immigration. In the latter in particular, the immigrant – as a political body – becomes the ambivalent discursive site where the construction of the 'Other' is intrinsically linked to the collective identity of the national 'We':

[It] comes to represent all the discomforting ambiguities of the Empire's painful and shameful but apparently nonetheless exhilarating history (…) the incomers may be unwanted and feared precisely because they are the unwitting bearers of the imperial and colonial past.

(Gilroy, 2004 p. 110)

Because it "feeds the illusion that Britain has been or can be disconnected from its imperial past" (Gilroy, 2004 p. 2), postimperial melancholia has damaging moral and psychological consequences for the construction of a multicultural society. Most notably, it frames the phenomenon of immigration as an invasion and fosters aggressive sentiment towards migrants seen as "unwanted alien intruders without any substantive historical, political, or cultural connections to the collective life of their fellow subjects" (Gilroy, 2004 p. 98). For Gilroy (2004 pp. 102–103), then, the future of multicultural Britain depends on the nation's ability to engage with "the hidden, shameful store of imperial horrors" and to transform "a revised account of the nature of imperial statecraft" into "critical reflections on national life". Only then will appear the prospect for the formation of a reconciled national identity.

Stoler (2008; 2011) follows a similar line of enquiry over a blocked colonial memory in the French context. Her work is partly inscribed in the trend among historians to revisit the French republic as a racialised and colonial entity from its start – a phenomenon captured by the oxymoron of *république coloniale* (Bancel et al., 2006). In contemporary popular discourses, the place of colonialism in the country's history, its meaning and legacy, how it should be remembered, denounced or celebrated remains unsettled. France's colonial history is "alternatively irretrievable and accessible, at once selectively available and out of

reach" (Stoler, 2011 p. 122). It is this process that Stoler conceptualises as *colonial aphasia*. She favours the term aphasia over amnesia so as

> to emphasize both loss of access and active dissociation. In aphasia, an occlusion of knowledge is the issue. It is not a matter of ignorance or absence. Aphasia is a dismembering, a difficulty speaking, a difficulty generating a vocabulary that associates appropriate words and concepts with appropriate things.
>
> (Stoler, 2011 p. 125)

In other words, the concept of aphasia stresses that the issue is not only that colonial history is absent and not discussed (amnesia), but rather that there seems to be an inability to make sense of this colonial history precisely when it appears in the contemporary context and discussed in the public sphere. Sarkozy's speech in Dakar was a perfect example of such colonial aphasia. For Stoler (2011 p. 139), the speech was not epiphenomenal but relied on a pernicious common sense shared by the French audience. It was indeed this audience that Sarkozy addressed, rather than the Senegalese and African youth that Sarkozy claimed to talk to:

> Addressing himself with "frankness and sincerity" to Africa's youth, he urged them "not to dwell on the past," not to blame today's European generations for the deeds of earlier ones, not to expect today's generations "to expiate the crimes" of those who came to conquer "a long time ago". He asked Senegal's youth to remember that the coloniser indeed took and pilfered, "but also gave". That they "were wrong but sincere, truly committed to 'a civilizing mission'".
>
> (Stoler, 2008 p. 209)

While Sarkozy presented his speech as a "sincere" recognition of the exploitative nature of colonial history, what he did in fact was to present colonialism as "a finished violence and closed history" (Stoler, 2008 p. 210):

> [H]e marked "the folds of history" as a danger zone, prompting an exhortation to his listeners not to expect "repentance" on the part of today's French society for the crimes of its (often well-meaning) forefathers. The warning was clear: neither Africa nor France would do well to ferret in those folds.
>
> (Stoler, 2011 p. 139)

It is therefore both the appearance of colonial history, and the inability to speak of it and to understand it not merely as an accident but constitutive of France as a racialised republic that constitute colonial aphasia. As a result, colonial categories are entirely disjointed from contemporary governing logics (Stoler, 2011 p. 155). This does not mean that everything in French contemporary society can and should

be explained by a colonial genealogy; rather, Stoler (2008 p. 196) calls for careful investigation to assess precisely how and where colonial racial epistemologies are deployed in the politics of the present.

In many ways, the coverage of the anniversaries of independence dialectically reflected and reinforced this discomfort towards colonial history in France and the UK. From the frontloading of Afro-pessimism in editorials to the focus on the dysfunctional present, from the silencing of anti-colonial histories to the interpretation of the past via a narrative of failure that summoned colonial history only to dismiss it as no longer relevant, the dominant discursive features of the press coverage of the anniversaries constitute mechanisms that feed off and ultimately contribute to postimperial melancholia and colonial aphasia.

5.3.3 Ambiguities

Yet, as both Gilroy and Stoler note, engagement with colonial history is not devoid of ambivalence and ambiguities. In fact, ambiguities can constitute prime tools that blur the understanding of, and engagement with, the colonial past. Readers will have noted that several of the article extracts used so far included quotes from African voices including among others, representatives of the civil society, politicians, artists and intellectuals. These voices often constituted the most acute and radical critique of African leadership, but also conveyed the narrative of failure and disappointment towards the post-independence era. This is where the main ambiguity of the coverage of these anniversaries lies.

In the previous chapter, I showed that African voices constituted the majority of individuals quoted. Assuredly, the critique of poor political leadership was a dominant feature of the media discourse, and at times contributed to reproduce easy stereotypes about "bad African governance" (Willems, 2015). But it was also the expression of real frustration and disappointment from within the continent towards an elite that failed to live up to popular expectations. As such, this critique was ultimately concerned with poverty, inequalities and human rights violations; one that can only be dismissed as simply and only stereotypical or Afro-pessimist at the risk of refusing to give room to legitimate and pressing calls for social equality, government accountability and political freedom. In order to shed more light on this discursive tension between stereotypical representation and social critique of African leadership, I will look at one of the most covered news event:

the celebration organised by the French government on Bastille day on 14 July 2010.

Under the impulse of President Sarkozy, the French government invited 14 countries from sub-Saharan Africa – all former French colonies – to attend and take part in the traditional military parade held to celebrate the birth and unity of the French republic. The coverage of this event falls under the category of the *insensitive* anniversaries as the ceremony, conceived as a tribute to a shared past, heavily backfired. It perfectly captured the paradox of the *République coloniale*: the former colonial power celebrates the end of its own oppression by inviting its former colonies to celebrate and commemorate their independence, while celebrating the republic itself. Perhaps, one can imagine India commemorating its 50 years of independence on British soil and on the Queen's Official Birthday to understand the symbolic ambiguity of this event. In representational terms, the spectacle of black African military troops parading in the streets of Paris was reminiscent of the *Paris-Match* cover analysed by Barthes (see Chapter 1).

Whenever Barthes' analysis is summoned, the caption of the picture is almost always disregarded.[21] Yet, it provides significant contextual information to understand in what sense this image signified a certain myth of the French Empire. The caption reads:

> The nights of the army: Little Diouf came from Ouagadougou with his comrades, children of the troops of the French West Africa federation [A.O.F] to open the fantastic spectacle presented by the French army this week at the sports palace.

The nights of the army were a 1955 televised military pageant. From the Black Guard of Dakar to the Republican Guard and the Foreign Legion, 4000 individuals paraded to celebrate France's colonial empire, just a few years before the French colonial empire would start to collapse. The representational continuity between this event and the 2010 jubilee is clear. The continuity from the colonial to the postcolonial context did not go unnoticed in newspapers, with most of them

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[21] In a 2009 film, *Vita Nova*, Vincent Meesen embarked on a quest to find Diouf Birane, the cadet pictured on the *Paris Match* cover. His fascinating film takes us through this journey and several reflections on the mediatisation of colonial history and memories. He did not find Birane but encountered a schoolmate who also appeared in photographs inside the *Paris-Match* issue. This film constitutes a fascinating way to revisit Barthes's writing through a postcolonial lens as it provides greater historical context to make sense of Barthes's image then and now, but also as it gives an individuality, history and a voice back to the individuals depicted in this iconic *Paris-Match* issue.

discreetly relaying concerns that the ceremony carried colonial undertones. However, none of the newspapers noted the even clearer continuity between the parade and the ceremony organised by de Gaulle almost exactly 50 years ago (Figure 14). On 14 July 1959, France celebrated the newly established 5th republic as well as the new political organisation of the French colonial empire into the *Communauté* (replacing the *Union Française)*. On the Place de la Concorde, de Gaulle handed over flags to the heads of states of the 12 countries of the *Communauté* as a sign of union and solidarity.

Figure 14 - De Gaulle on 14 July 1959; Sarkozy on 14 July 2010
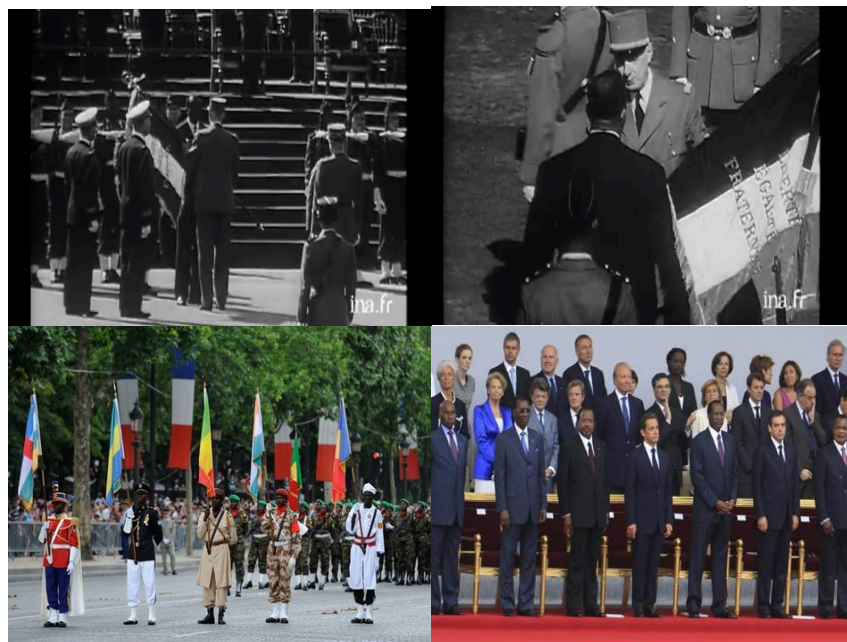
If the 2010 parade was portrayed as controversial and insensitive, it was mainly because the media relayed statements from several NGOs, including the International Federation for Human rights (FIDH), that many leaders attending the ceremony were dictatorial figures and that several of the armies parading had been involved in bloody repressions and human rights violations:

> "It's hard to imagine a stronger paradox than this: as the values of the Republic are being celebrated, they are flouted by the presence of torturers, dictators and other human rights predators who, instead of being condemned, are being honoured by France" writes FIDH president Souhayr Belhassen.
>
> (*Le Monde* #30)

In relaying information from the civil society about established human rights violations, the press took a critical stance towards this ceremony and aimed to fulfil

its watchdog role. From a normative standpoint that sees the denunciation of dictatorial powers as being key to the democratic role of the media, it is hard to complain that newspapers acted as watchdogs and contributed to shed light, and ultimately put pressure on, dictatorial governments. In representational terms, however, the prominence of these criticisms had several consequences and constituted an ideological diversion. Firstly, they lent vigour to old stereotypes of "Africa's big man" and "African savagery", both embodied in the racialised-as-black body of the military troops and politicians. Secondly, they called upon and cemented idealised values of French republicanism as essentially antithetical to phenomena of postcolonial violence. They disjointed colonial racial epistemologies from the politics of the present and fed the illusion that France is or can be disconnected from its colonial past. Finally, they diverted public attention from engaging into a commemorative work about the colonial past by focusing on a dysfunctional and decontextualised present with seemingly no connections with, precisely, this past. For instance, France has yet to do a public inventory of the Françafrique and this anniversary could have been a tremendous opportunity to do so; instead, Françafrique was simply mentioned, in passing, in 10 articles out of 154; as a result, its meaning, spectrum and relevance to put in perspective the spectacle organised by the French government remained very marginal.

The discomfort and ambiguities that surrounded the event captured perfectly Stoler's phenomenon of colonial aphasia. Colonial history, at once here and not here, available and unreachable, remains unsettled. As the dysfunctional present takes centre stage, it remains unclear what should be done with this past, and how it should be talked about. Unsurprisingly then, according to a survey conducted by iSAMA on behalf of the French government, nearly 70% of the people surveyed felt "not concerned by this commemoration", although more than 80% believed that France should "reinforce its links with its former colonies in black Africa" including aid (86%), cultural links (86%), commercial links (85%) and diplomatic links (82%) (Sainte-Marie & Fert, 2010). These results are a telling demonstration of colonial aphasia: the national community simultaneously expects to reinforce its involvement with the former colonies, while it hopes to disengage itself from a colonial history that seemingly does not concern it.

Reducing the media discourse on the anniversaries of independence to a simple and straightforward Afro-pessimism would not only be highly reductive; it would also

miss the strength of the ideological process at work. Just because media coverage focused extensively on the failures of African leadership does not make it Afro-pessimist. By holding to accounts the governments of countries facing extreme poverty and social inequalities, and by trying to convey some of the concerns of populations that are not necessarily in a position to attract public attention, the press aimed to fulfil an important social function. I would argue, however, that this legitimate, even necessary, critique of African leadership was in tension with the equally necessary work of colonial memory, and that this discursive ambiguity, this tension between commemorative values and news values was key to feeding postimperial melancholia and colonial aphasia. As the coverage appropriated a critique of African elites and leadership, and of social inequalities, often by means of African voices, it also reinforced the idea that discussions of the colonial past are irrelevant, ultimately diverting readers from engaging both with the colonial past supposed to be commemorated, and with the present ruins of this past. In a way, this coverage was made even less objectionable and more ideologically powerful precisely because the non-engagement with colonial history was hidden behind a veneer of present social concerns.

Conclusions

This chapter provided a qualitative critical analysis of the discourse surrounding British and French broadsheet press coverage of the anniversaries of African independence. I showed that the press frontloaded these anniversaries in editorials insofar as they could be narrated through a clearly Afro-pessimist lens. In the process, I demonstrated precisely how Afro-pessimism was enacted in media discourse, and also that the format and schema of editorials played an important role in shaping this Afro-pessimism.

Looking at the coverage more broadly, I showed that the past was commemorated via the narration of a dysfunctional present, with the celebrations of the anniversaries being presented as failed, insensitive or discreet. Interpretations of the past 50 years drew partly on colonial myths (pathologisation, infantilisation, negation of history), and overall were reduced to a master narrative of failure. On the one hand, this master narrative of failure consisted of a social critique of political elites and socio-economic inequalities. On the other hand, it also sidetracked the commemorative value of these events and generally silenced

colonial and anti-colonial histories. This narrative of failure opened the way for a "post-postcolonial moment" where it becomes safe to remove Western responsibility from the postcolonial failure, and where colonial history is seen as irrelevant to the present. My analysis thus highlighted several discursive mechanisms that testify to the inability of the former colonial communities to engage with their colonial history.

In order to understand the dynamics and ambiguities of this discourse, I stepped outside the conceptual lens of Afro-pessimism to interpret the press coverage in relation to what Gilroy, in the British context, has called "postimperial melancholia", and to what Stoler, in the French context, has called "colonial aphasia". In this way, what was a rare occasion for British and French media to invite their respective national communities to engage with their colonial past was reduced to an invitation to turn the page of colonial history; a complex page that, as a result, still remains misread and has yet to find its place in the popular book of the two countries' histories.

My analysis across Chapters 4 and 5 does not paint the picture of a media coverage systematically pervaded by generalisation about Africa as a country and by constant references to "darkness" and "tribalism", or dominated by Western voices. Instead, it paints a more complex picture of postcolonial discourses in the journalistic field, and of the ways in which they relate to broader features of news production and journalistic conventions.

The anniversaries became newsworthy insofar as they complied with a combination of long standing news values, that is, when they could be related to something negative, controversial, exuberant or when they directly involved Western individuals or nations. When they appeared in editorials, these anniversaries were discussed through a clearly Afro-pessimist discourse. In turn, the formation of Afro-pessimism in editorials was linked to the traditional schema of editorials as short, spurred by the urgency of the present and aimed at a given national audience of decision makers.

Additionally, the propensity of news to be present-oriented led the broader coverage of these anniversaries to sidetrack their commemorative dimensions and to focus instead on a dysfunctional present. The watchdog role of journalism and

the default position of being critical of governments gave way to vocal critiques of social inequalities and of African leadership in the coverage. At the same time, this social critique reproduced peculiar narratives about African leadership that are entangled in older colonial discourses.

Material conditions of journalistic production, such as a lack of resources, also exacerbate the construction of a media discourse linked to a colonial legacy: since newspapers have few staff on the continent, they did not give equal weight to the different anniversaries. Instead, they focused on what was perceived as more relevant to a given audience, thus partly explaining why the British press covered Zimbabwe's 30th anniversary and Swaziland's 40th anniversary at the expense of many francophone countries turning 50. The following comment by David Smith perfectly testifies to the naturalisation of several of these production requirements within the journalistic field, while revealing a journalistic awareness of the in-built inconsistencies and double standards that make up media discourse:

> For us as a British paper, numerous African countries turning 50 is a bit too vague and abstract. (…) It's better to have a sharp, simple [story] rather than a cluster (…) you would tend to go more for the anniversary of a particular person who has been in power for a particularly long time. (…) There is an inconsistency around anniversaries and clearly for Britain and France next year the centenary of the WWI we have to be massive (…) In hindsight, maybe we should have done more of it. I mean…I think in an ideal world we could have done more. We could have done a whole series. Particularly if we had the staff and the resources; if we had a correspondent in each of those [countries] it could have been really interesting.

Taking into account this context of journalistic production therefore enhances our understanding of the formation of postcolonial discourse. The mechanisms behind the production of this discourse do not appear to be unique to the coverage of African news. But, importantly, the end result of this mechanism is the formation of a specific media discourse about Africa that carries the traces of a colonial representational legacy. In this site, I tried to demonstrate this by showing that requirements of journalistic production worked hand in glove with the discursive formation, in some cases, of Afro-pessimism and, more generally, of a discomfort surrounding colonial history, characteristic of a broader postcolonial unconscious in Britain and France.

CHAPTER 6 - "Rising", "Hopeful", "New": the emergence of media Afro-optimism

A reconstructed image of Africa is a historical process of correcting the existing overrepresentation of its negatives and underrepresentation of its positives.

(Mohammed, 2013 p. 53)

This glowing portrait of Africa's position in the global economic system is a very significant historical event. For the first time in five centuries, a different image of Africa seems to be emerging: one of modernity, economic dynamism and progress.

(Sylla, 2014 p. s8)

In 2000, the *Economist* published an issue titled "The hopeless continent". On a plain black background, it showed the picture of a young black man carrying a shoulder-fired missile embedded in the shape of the African continent (Figure 15). This explicitly connoted violence, war, darkness and pessimism. This cover is a case in point of visual representation of Afro-pessimism. While often used to exemplify Afro-pessimism in Western media, this cover is merely one of many other instances of Afro-pessimism making the cover of Western news magazines throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. In 1990, the French news magazine *L'Express* run a front cover story on "Africa, the tragedy"; in 1992, the German broadsheet magazine *Der Spiegel* used the title "Africa, the continent of misery. Should the whites save it?" (Figure 16); in 1992, US magazine *TIME* talked about "the Agony of Africa" (Figure 17); in 1999, French monthly magazine *Courrier International* talked about "Africa, the failure of democracy".

In 2011, the *Economist* published a special issue on "Africa rising". This positive outlook was at sharp contrast with the Afro-pessimism that historically dominated international coverage. In a few years, this cover reached an iconic status. It was seen as indicating a change in perceptions of Africa and heralding an era of better, more positive representations of the continent. As David Smith, the Africa correspondent for the *Guardian,* comments, he can now rarely go to a conference on economy in Africa without someone putting back-to-back the hopeless/hopeful continent covers: "It has become the sort of template, the emblem".

Taking this 2011 *Economist* cover as a starting point, this chapter investigates this shift of narrative(s) about Africa on the covers of British and French news magazines. Does a similarly positive discourse dominate media representation of continental Africa in news magazines covers? If so, what are the key semiotic and linguistic features of this positive outlook? What idea of Africa is being constructed in the process? What are the drivers of this representational evolution and, ultimately, what are its ideological implications?

Figure 15 - The *Economist* cover (2000)

Figure 16 - *Der Spiegel* cover (1992)
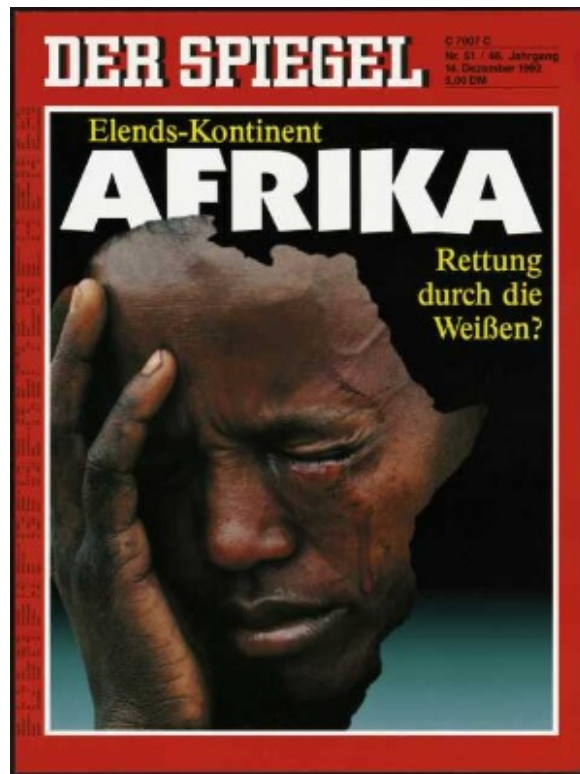
Figure 17 - *TIME* cover (1992)

From December 2011 to January 2015, I identified 10 covers that focused on continental Africa over eight news magazines (and Sunday supplements in the UK which stand as the national equivalent):

- The *Economist's* issue of 9 December 2011.
- The *Sunday Times Magazine's* issue of 26 February 2012.
- The *Observer Magazine's* issue of 24 June 2012.
- *Le Point's* issue of 9 August 2012.
- The *New Review's* issue (supplement of *The Observer)* of 26 August 2012.
- The *Economist's* special report of 2 March 2013, which included two different covers depending on the regional edition.
- *Courrier International's* special issue of March-April-May 2013.
- *Le Point's* issue of 26 March 2014.
- *Le Monde Magazine's* special issue of January 2015.

To this corpus of British and French magazine covers, I am also adding a cover from the US American news magazine *TIME* of 3 December 2012 because, in the course of my research I interviewed two people involved in its making. These individuals provided insights into the production mechanisms of this cover that, as I will show, shed light on the broader manufacturing of an image of Africa also found in the other covers. Illustrations for all the covers are provided throughout the chapter.

As explained in Chapter 3, my methodology consists of a detailed linguistic and semiotic analysis that links text and context of production (Aiello, 2012b) in order to critically examine the construction of a certain idea of Africa (Mudimbe, 1994). Against the saying "do not judge a book by its cover", I look at magazine covers as rich multimodal texts. I approach them as a nexus of interconnected visual, linguistic and compositional features (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996), production routines and ideological worldviews. These texts reflect and dialectally contribute to a discursive construction of Africa entangled in broader social structures of power. In addition to a detailed analysis of textual data, I draw on interviews and questionnaires with several media professionals involved in their production, including foreign correspondents as well as a freelance illustrator, a graphic artist, a photographer, an art director and a contributing journalist. I also draw on

interviews given by three editors and published elsewhere (Chanda, 2013; Pitroipa, 2013). In doing so, I trace key linkages between the covers' semiotic features and issues of postcolonial representation, and the broader political and economic processes in which they are implicated. In sum, I use these as micro-textual cases that shed light on the more 'macro' dimensions and social implications of a shift in perceptions and representation of Africa.

These 10 covers constitute all the covers dedicated to continental Africa among this section of the media in my time frame. As such, they do not constitute a sample but rather an entire corpus of texts. In addition, a magazine cover is particularly salient. It is the first piece of information that readers encounter and it can make or break the sales of an issue. A cover story is what a magazine sees as the main story of the week or the month. A magazine cover is made for public consumption, since one does not need to buy or read a magazine to see it. It reaches far beyond the immediate readership of a magazine, and, when it reaches an iconic status, a cover can take a life of its own and circulate very widely, especially in a digital context that makes covers widely available online. These covers therefore constitute a particularly salient site where an authority over the knowledge of the continent as a whole is claimed, and it thus makes them highly relevant to the study of Afro-pessimism.

The chapter is structured in three parts. The first one provides an analysis of the covers' features and of the idea of Africa they construct. The second part fleshes out the key drivers of this representational evolution. The last section brings in dialogue the features analysed and the drivers behind this coverage to critically analyse the power relations contained and reproduced through this coverage.

6.1 The features of news magazine covers on Africa

This first section maps out the set of linguistic, semiotic and compositional features of the magazine covers under study. I pay attention to similarities as well as differences across the different covers to exhaust their representational repertoire and to critically analyse what idea of Africa they construct. In the process, I shed light on several production mechanisms that explain and shape this representational repertoire.

6.1.1   Economic growth, modernity and 'Africanness'

My investigation of this emerging media narrative starts with the 2011 *Economist* cover because of the iconic status it has gained. The "Africa rising" cover (Figure 18) depicts a black child running in the savannah. He is pulling a rainbow-coloured kite in the shape of Africa, which rises high in a clear blue sky. An acacia tree is in the distance together with sunrays emerging from a mountain chain that draws the horizon line in the image's bottom part. This is a wholly positive picture connoting hope for the future. The rays of the rainbow emerge from South Africa, a country self-defined as the rainbow nation and, at the time, the leading African economy. Its former president Thabo Mbeki was at the forefront of the "African Renaissance" – a concept assuredly familiar to the *Economist's* readers. The African Renaissance revisited the pan-African dream through, primarily, economic growth. In a way, the rainbow emerging from South Africa and opening up to the rest of the continent suggests that South Africa is leading the way of this continental renaissance. After all, South Africa had just hosted the World Cup a year before; the same year it joined the BRIC grouping.

Figure 18 - The *Economist* cover (2011)

The image links clues of "Africanness" with a positive and optimistic message of progress and economic growth, a process also at stake in the *Sunday Times Magazine* cover (Figure 19) and a second *Economist* cover (Figure 20). The *Sunday Times* and the *Economist 2* communicate a sense of African wilderness, the former with its title "the Lion's roar" and the latter with the depiction of a giraffe – hereby referring to the two savannah animals par excellence that are iconic of safari tourism and wildlife documentaries. Together, the savannah landscape, the lion and the giraffe evoke the wild environment suitable for big-game hunting. This portrayal is reinforced by the emphasis put on sunlight in the two *Economist* covers. These semiotic features resonate strongly with the ironic advice given by Wainaina (2005 p. 94) that "readers will be put off if you don't mention the light in Africa".

Similar components can be found in a special issue of *TIME* magazine (Figure 21) that also uses the "Africa rising" title – itself a linguistic reference to sunlight. It shows a pictogram-like graphic composition framed by *TIME's* traditional red border. The cover has what Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) call a centre-margin compositional structure. In the salient centre, a large yellow sun is applied to a plain light green background. The shape of a brown acacia tree is inserted onto the sun. The savannah tree, also found in the two *Economist* covers, echoes a sense of nature, wilderness and earthiness. These semiotic references – sun, savannah and wilderness – are an integral part of a colonial portrayal of Africa as the "white man's paradise" (Hammond & Jablow, 1977 p. 48). Africa is portrayed as an open landscape frozen in time; a land of possible and new departures, suitable for exploration and ultimately exploitation (Dunn, 2004 p. 492).

Figure 19 - The *Sunday Times Magazine* cover (2012)
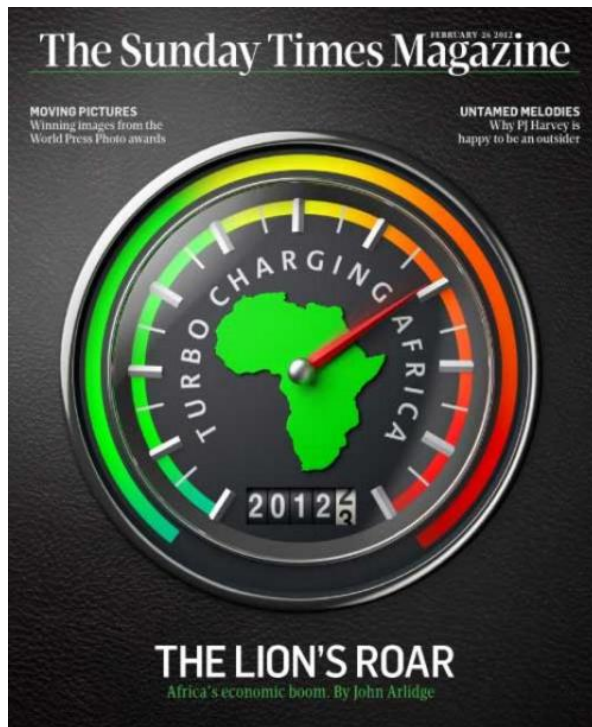
Figure 20 - The *Economist* cover (2013)

Figure 21 - *TIME* cover (2012)

The reliance on such a representation of Africa extends beyond the realm of news media. In fact, this phenomenon was recently the subject of critical discussions online on what has come to be known as the "Africa/acacia tree meme". Simon Stevens, a student from Columbia University first identified the phenomenon (Figure 22). His collage of book covers of novels about Africa shows that "whether it's Nigeria, South Africa, Mozambique, Botswana or Zambia, it's that same kind of distended belly of the setting sun" (Campbell, 2014). Peter Mendelsund, an art director for publisher Knopf and a cover designer, provided some insights into the rationale behind this production choice:

> If someone goes out on a limb and tries something different, and the book doesn't sell, you know who to blame: the guy who didn't put the acacia tree on the cover (…) We're comfortable with this visual image of Africa because it's safe. It presents 'otherness' in a way that's easy to understand (…) right now, we're in the age of the tree. For that vast continent, in all its diversity, you get that one fucking tree.
>
> (Silverberg, 2014)

Figure 22 - The Africa/acacia tree meme (Stevens, 2014)
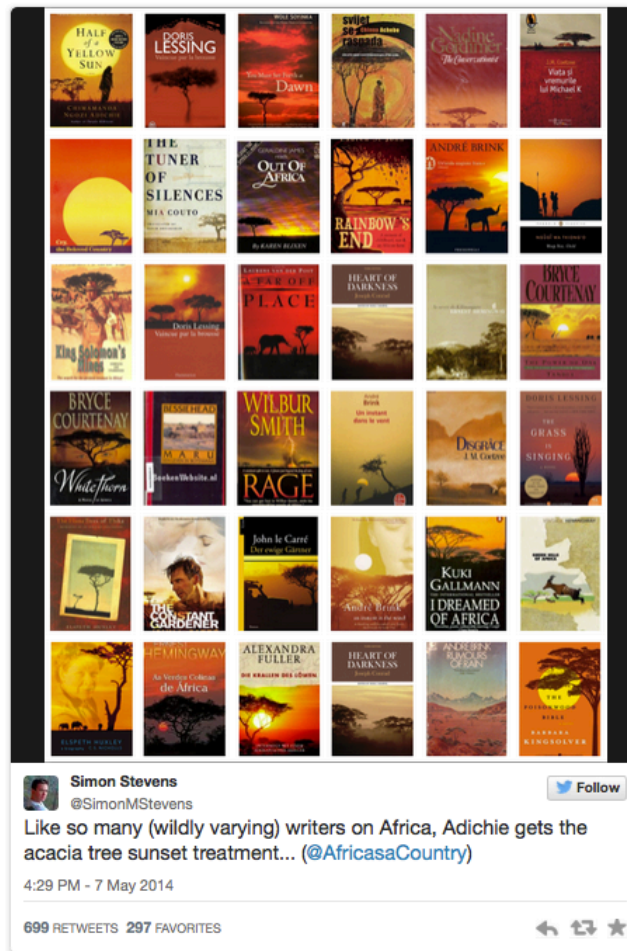
In this context, the use of Africa's geographical shape in the *Economist 1* and the *Sunday Times* carries connotations dating back to the 19ᵗʰ century "Scramble for Africa". Harpold (1999) reminds that the map of Africa and the seductions of its "unsolved mystery" were central to the authorial project of Joseph Conrad in *Heart of Darkness*. The map binds "the physical and imaginary geographies of his fictions to one of the defining visual tropes of high colonialism" (Harpold, 1999). In these two covers, the maps do not include national borders, which contributes to a generalised view of the continent, while concealing geographical divisions that give to see Africa's colonial partition for economic purposes in the late 19ᵗʰ century. Although the maps include the northern part of the continent, the 'Africa' discussed in these special issues is in fact sub-Saharan Africa. Additionally, Madagascar is systematically removed. Such projection is therefore not so much geographically informative as it is a coercive instrument "for naturalizing, reifying, and depoliticizing cultural-historical formations" (Harpold, 1999).

These clues of 'Africanness' are combined with various connotations of modernity and economic progress. At a linguistic level, "rising" echoes the assessment of economic growth as made clear in the references to "Africa's economic boom" (*Sunday Times*), to the "world's next economic powerhouse" (*TIME*) and to the "world's fastest growing continent" and the giraffe's neck abnormally extending so as to mirror a growth curve (*Economist 2)*. The "lion's roar", then, also implicitly refers to the "Asian tigers", a metaphor coined to label Asian countries often hailed as the success story of economic neoliberalism in the developing world (Parameswaran, 2015). The *Sunday Times* further connotes economic performance by visually associating Africa to a turbo car. The cover has a centre-margin composition. On a black mat background denoting the dashboard of a luxurious car, it gives salience to a large speedometer. This speedometer displays two gauges which both range from green to yellow to red. In its centre is a green Africa, circled by the words "Turbo charging Africa". The use of the pan-African colours found on many African flags (red, black, green and yellow) reinforces a visual sense of 'Africanness'.

Similarly, *TIME* uses the pan-African colours through the interplay between the frame and the title (red), and the graphic art (yellow of the sun and green of the background). The cover also represents buildings through various rectangular shapes that are reminiscent of chart bars or columns found in visual representations of economic statistics. The buildings are in marginal position (bottom part and along the frame) and relatively small, but their brown colour contrasts with the light green of the background, which gives them salience. As the buildings blend with the basis of the tree and draw the horizon line, the image metaphorically envisions Africa's future through urbanisation, a clear marker of modernity.

6.1.2   Generic images and symbolic representation

Strikingly, the four aforementioned covers are symbolically loaded rather than informative. They favour graphic design over photographic evidence. Dominic Nahr, the former Africa photographer for *TIME,* and member of the Magnum Photos agency, was initially approached to produce the cover. Based in Kenya, he was asked to provide city shots of downtown Nairobi – with the hope of visually capturing African urbanisation:

> They needed an image in the rush because that's what happens all the time (…) I heard there was a fashion show downtown and so I went downtown to get a picture. But it's a bad day with an ugly weather. Downtown looks like crap. So I send them pictures and they say: "no we need more downtown, we need the cover. It's for the cover, you know, and we need city shots". So I am trying to get views of the only section of downtown Nairobi that could provide nice city shots. But they always look like crap because the city does not look like a very inspirational city. It looks like it is stopped in time like 30, 40 years ago.

The publication of the issue was delayed by a week and a London based graphic artist, Noma Bar, was called to design the cover instead. Nahr knew his images would not be used. He admitted being initially surprised by the visual choice of the "tree and the sunset", but then remembered the *Economist* cover, and some other magazines, had the "same feel". He also recalled something similar happening during the World Cup (Figure 23): "in a way the World Cup is also Africa rising. I was sure I had the right cover; it was a face, it would have been perfect for Africa rising. But they went for the same kind of style again". Again, graphic composition was preferred, although the graphic designer was not in the UK but in Victoria, Texas. In that sense, these covers seem to be shaped, less by the diversity of things available in the field, and more by expectations and preconceptions from the newsroom. The choice of using graphic compositions instead of photographic evidences highlights a production mind frame in which if editors (in the US) are not able to find what they want (to represent Africa) in Kenya, they will literally make it up by asking someone (in London or in Texas) to visually give life to their preconceptions.

These covers reproduce various features of what Machin (2004) terms the generic image characteristic of the visual language of stock photography. A generic image is more about signifying a concept and a mood than about providing informative evidence. The *Economist* 1 shows a wide blue sky – a feature associated with the category of freedom and which is a hallmark of the generic image (Machin, 2004 p. 331). Derek Bacon, the illustrator who produced the image, further explains: "The boy used was from a photo library but altered to look black. He was white to start with, but was in just the right position for a kid running with a kite". Once again, it does not matter whether the image informs real life events, places or people. Instead, graphic efficiency and symbolic representation is key. As the skin colour is literally made up like in a Minstrel show, it demonstrates the use of generic models where physical attributes "overwhelm or suppress people's unique,

individual features" (Machin, 2004 p. 323). Additionally, portraying Africa as a child carries colonial undertones of Africans as childlike and irresponsible and ultimately in need of guidance. This iconography remains central to humanitarian communication (Chouliaraki, 2006), and it comes as little surprise that a secretary to one of the heads of Comic Relief asked Bacon for prints for their walls: "That issue came out in December so made quite a good present, for the right people. Other requests were from people involved in some kind of charity work in Africa".

Figure 23 - *TIME* cover (2010)

Another feature of the generic image as defined by Machin (2004) is at stake in the third *Economist* cover titled "A hopeful continent" (Figure 24): the importance of attributes. The cover shows a medium range photograph of a black woman with a prominent smile. Her arms are opened and her pose relaxed. She looks out of frame and it is therefore an "offer image" where she is offered as an item of information and an object of dispassionate scrutiny (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006 p. 119). We look slightly up to her, which connotes empowerment and agency. She holds a pineapple in each hand, and wears a Manchester United shirt and a skirt made of a colourful African cloth. Just like props in a stock photography, the attributes are "used to connote not only the setting but also the identities of the actors and the nature of activities, but in terms of 'types' rather than individual identities"

(Machin, 2004 p. 322). The symbolic feminisation of the "hopeful continent" as a colourful and warm black woman can be seen as part of a "mother Africa lens" that goes hand in glove with "a paradise imagery of sunsets and wildlife" (Jones, 2012 pp. 40–41). It summons one side of the binary stereotype of the "noble savage", where Africa is inextricably linked to blackness, warmth and exoticism (Berger, 2010). The woman's attributes therefore blend signifiers of globalisation (football shirt), 'Africanness' (dress, blackness, 'mother Africa') and positivity (open arms, smile).

Figure 24 - The *Economist* cover (2013)

The out-of-focus background suggests that she is in an indoor market. This setting connotes the informal sector; one that offers "opportunities to the most vulnerable populations such as the poorest, women and youth" (Kayizzi-Mugerwa, 2013). The modernisation theories of the 1950s and 1960s perceived an informal economy as a sign of late industrialisation and lack of progress. In the late 1980s, however, economist Hernando de Soto argued that this sector provided an interesting response to weak states (Mintz-Habib, 2013). This idea attracted the attention of the World Bank and the IMF. His thesis promoted "entrepreneurship" and "dynamism" but also offered further justification for economic deregulation. The benefits of the informal economy remain contested and the African Development

Bank (2013) recognises that "most informal workers are without secure income, employments benefits and social protection". It is not, however, this picture of the informal economy that the cover depicts. Instead, it associates the informal economy – at the heart of the neoliberal project in Africa – with positive values of hope and women's empowerment. By taking the form of an "offer of information", this image simultaneously provides an "offer of goods-and-services" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006 pp. 122–123), in that case offering Africa's market opportunities.

6.1.3 Gendered Africa

Le Point's first cover (Figure 25) provides a different take on symbolic feminisation with a close shot of a black woman with a large Afro haircut. She looks straight at the viewer. Such "demand image" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006 p. 118) invites the viewer to enter some kind of imaginary engagement with the woman. She is wearing eyelash extensions and a glossy red lipstick on her full lips. Her features resemble beauty criteria associated with international modelling. On her hair, the title states: "Africa is not the one you think *she* is". Before the title, a small font text reads: "in spite of wars and tragedies, *she* is beating growth records". In the bottom left, the bullet points read "her successes, her elites, her promises". The use of the feminine pronoun "elle/celle" (translated here by "she") plays a significant role in framing Africa as feminine. She is attractive and surprising, not the one "you think *she* is". As the woman looks straight at the camera, her gaze calls for a response and entices the viewers to dive into the magazine, almost in a flirtatious manner. The cover frontloads her appearance and relegates her name, Inna Modja, to a very marginal position (lower right; smallest font; little colour contrast). In fact, she is not even talked about within the magazine. She has no voice or agency, no background and barely a name. Like a cover girl, she offers herself as an object of visual consumption and simultaneously embodies the attractiveness of the continent's "growth records".

Such gendered and sexualised vision has antecedents in metaphors that sustained the colonial conquest of Africa seen as female and passive, "spatially spread for male penetration and exploration" (Brijnath, 2007 p. 375). But this image is also a case in point of typing (Aiello, 2012b p. 60). Unlike in stereotyping, there is no exaggeration or simplification of her features. However, other aspects of this image are simplified, particularly the background and the setting. The image then foregrounds the woman's physical attributes (black skin, Afro hair, attractive

features and sensual lips). At once, this cover inscribes her (attractive) difference – rooted in a sexist and colonial fascination – within the visual codes of decontextualised and generic photography so as to ultimately sell Africa's economic performance.

Figure 25 - *Le Point* cover (2012)

Mireille Duteil, the editor of this special issue, was particularly delighted by the sales of this issue that stood at more than 90 000 copies sold, "a number slightly above the average but particularly good for the August month which is usually very bad for sales" (Pitroipa, 2013). She further shared that they "received a lot of feedback for this special issue and that the readers asked us to renew the experience. They regularly ask us when we will put Africa on the cover again" (Pitroipa, 2013). Building on this relative commercial success for a topic long viewed as hard to sell among news producers, *Le Point* published a new special issue on Africa on March 2014, less than two years after (Figure 26). This is even more remarkable given that *Le Point*'s covers in their large majority deal with national politics; in the same time frame no other continent (not even Europe) made the cover of the magazine, and out of 77 covers published between the two

dedicated to Africa, only five concerned international news (one on Angela Merkel, one on Mandela, two on the Pope, and one on the war in Mali).

Figure 26 - *Le Point* cover (2014)

This new cover bears striking resemblance to the previous one. Again, Africa is written in bright yellow, this time with a subtitle "The great awakening", and two bullet points "Some incredible destinies" and "An historic shift". Once more, Africa is discursively embodied through the face of a black woman, albeit this time the readers probably know her. Indeed, Lupita Nyong'o had recently risen to international fame following her winning the Oscar for the best supporting actress for her role in *Twelve Years a Slave* (2013). Her picture on the cover is in fact taken from this ceremony as she is wearing the same dress, make up, accessories and haircut. It is again a demand image, as she looks straight at the reader. She similarly embodies beauty criteria associated with international modelling with notably the make up on her eyes and lips. Her association with the world of modelling and fashion is reinforced by the fact that she appeared on the cover of numerous fashion magazines in previous months, including notably *Dujour* (Winter 2013), *W magazine* (January 2014), *Dazed* (February 2014), and *New York*

Magazine's Spring Fashion Issue (February 2014). The background, like in the previous *Le Point* cover, is decontextualised and foregrounds her physical appearance. A significant difference with the previous one, then, is that Lupita Nyong'o is a celebrity. As such, the relegation of her name to the lower left corner does not, in itself, contribute to erasing her voice and individuality. In fact, one would expect that with her being on the cover and the bullet point "some incredible destinies", she would be the topic of an article inside the magazine. Her personal story, after all, is a tremendous tale of globalising, multifarious identities that challenges one-dimensional perceptions of African identities (she was born in Mexico, grew up in Kenya and then studied in the US). Yet, like Inna Modja, she is not the topic of any article and is not even mentioned in the 54 pages dedicated to Africa in the magazine. Her function on the cover is again a commercial one, that of being an object of visual consumption so as to sell a magazine while promoting a commercially successful Africa.

6.1.4 Style and identities

Another cover that uses a photograph is *Courrier International's* one (Figure 27). Art director Anne-Sophie Delhomme expressed the clear desire from the editorial team to demarcate their cover choice from a "simplistic and stereotypical Western gaze":

> It was a collegial choice. First, we had a brainstorming session with the two editors of the special issue, the editor in chief and the photo editor to determine several main themes and the angle of the cover. We decided that we wanted to show the energy and promises of modernity of the African continent. We also thought it would have to be embodied; so we wanted a face, an attitude, in any case a cover with a human dimension.

The choice was made, then, to use an image by an African photographer. For Isabelle Lauze, the special issue editor, "for a long time, foreign experts and analysts have held a monopoly in terms of who can talk about Africa. They knew better than the Africans what was happening to them! Today, Africans are speaking up" (Chanda, 2013). In fact, the special issue as a whole is exclusively made of articles and images produced by Africans (defined in the editorial as citizen born in Africa or part of the diaspora; who are black, white or mixed-race and from various countries), hence the cover's subtitle "Africans tell the new dynamic of the continent". From a visual point of view, Anne-Sophie Delhomme further

explained: "it was paramount to bear witness to the visual creativity of the continent. We therefore made the choice to rely on African photographers".

The photograph is part of a portrait series by Senegalese photographer Omar Victor Diop conceived as a tribute to the new generation of creative and forward-looking Africans. The young man looks straight at the viewer. It is a "demand image" that brings him closer to us (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006 p. 124). The picture draws on the visual codes of iconic African photographers Malick Sidibé and Seydou Keïta famous for their staged, playful portraits and their emphasis on clothing, pose and colourful backdrops. As a fashion photographer, Diop's image also emphasises high key lighting, style and the art exhibition format. It is therefore also marked by a corporate style of visual communication; one that Aiello found to be "increasingly prized and profitable in the global marketplace of symbolic exchange" (Aiello, 2012b p. 51).

Figure 27 - *Courrier International* cover (2013)
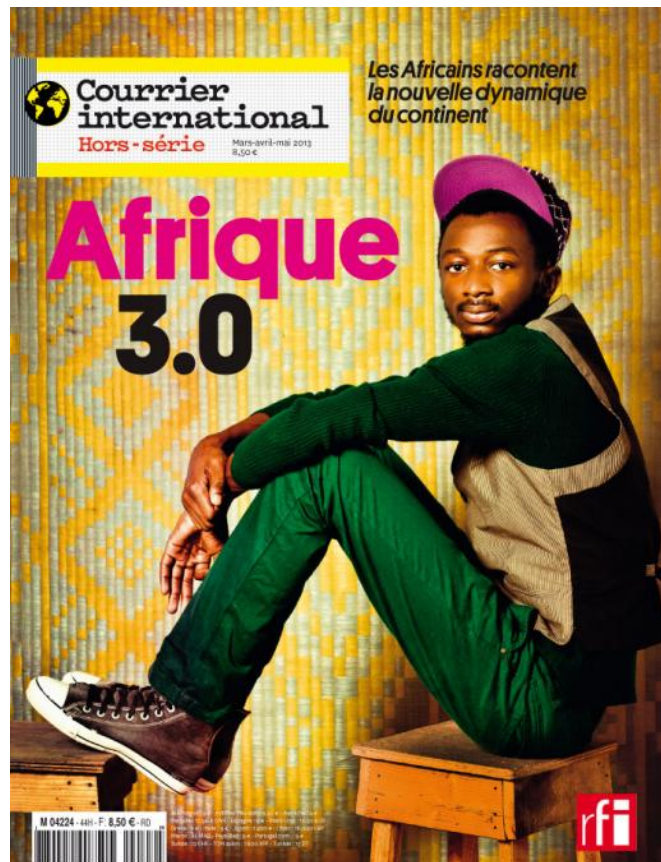
This image reached a consensus among the editorial team

because of the quality of the picture, the bright colours but also the charm of the character. The composition of the picture allowed for

an efficient arrangement of the titles and a good readability. We had a lot of good pictures but none met all these criteria.

(Delhomme, art director)

The title "Africa 3.0" – borrowed from the book of two South African journalists, Richard Poplak and Kevin Bloom – connotes digital advances and social media empowerment. Isabelle Lauze confirms that

> it is a wink to the vocabulary of internet. It is also an editorial statement. Africa 1.0 was colonial Africa. Africa 2.0 was the Africa of the independence movements, but this Africa was still under the tutelage of the former colonial powers. Africa 3.0 refers to the Africa whose time has finally come, with the end of the dependency towards the West.
>
> (Chanda, 2013)

For all its intent to demarcate itself from Western discursive constructs of the continent, this editorial statement nonetheless testifies to a need to inscribe Africa within a narrative of temporal progress that necessarily starts with European colonialism – ultimately suggesting that Africa had no history before. As Gregory Mann (2013) notes ironically in his review of the special issue for the blog *Africa is a country*, "fancy meeting you here, Herr Hegel", in reference to Hegel's view of Africa as outside of history. This discursive feature is also visible in the statement by Delhomme that they wanted to show the "promises of modernity of the African continent". Finally, Mann (2013) also notes that while the two editors Isabelle Lauze and Ousmane Ndiaye embraced a diverse definition of who is an African author (born in Africa or the diaspora, whether white, black or mixed-race), the special issue focused only on sub-Saharan Africa.

Overall the cover certainly avoids colonial or racial stereotypes, and portrays a young, urban and empowered Africa – a portrayal reminiscent of the idea of Afropolitanism. The term was initially used to capture a sense of African identities as fluid, mixed, and global, and "refusing on principle any form of victim identity" (Mbembe, 2007 p. 28). For Mbembe (2007, p. 28), it constitutes an "aesthetic and a particular poetic of the world" that incorporates consumerism, fashion and style. Afropolitanism thus defies categorisation of Africans as exotic 'Others' "untouched by the West's culture of individualistic atomization and materialism" (Berger, 2010 pp. 182–183). Dabiri (2014), in contrast, notes that much of this "hipster Africa experience" is entrenched "with the rapacious consumerism of African elites" which cannot be read independently from the deeply unequal social

structures inherited from colonialism and sustained by economic neoliberalism. She thus criticises the emancipatory potential of what she deems to be "the attempt to begin with style, and then infuse it with substantive political consciousness" where "African progress is measured by the extent to which it can reproduce a Western lifestyle" (Dabiri, 2014). Wainaina (2012b) shares similar concerns for the potential "commercialization of the African identity to serve capitalist consumerist ends" and of Afropolitanism becoming "the marker of crude cultural commodification".

These aspects of Afropolitanism are particularly visible in the cover that the *Observer* dedicated to Nigerian pop star D'Banj, labelled the "Star of Africa" (Figure 28). This is yet again another "demand image". It also uses a plain background so as to frontload D'Banj. His attributes – tailored tuxedo, bow tie, transparent specs, shinning watch and bracelet – connote style and fashion. Assuredly, this image disrupts stereotypes about African identities. In fact, it echoes what photographer Nahr would have wanted to see on the *TIME* cover: "something with style, where you would think it's New York but it's not. (…) Changes are happening in construction and roads, but visual changes are happening in personalities and characters, thing like that, and style and music".

Figure 28 - The *Observer Magazine* cover (2012)

When discussing a section of the current generation of African youth – through a portrait of his 16 years old daughter Sue who he describes, among other things, as an avid consumer of smartphones and tablets, entertainment TV, fashion and celebrities – Nyamnjoh (2013 pp. 129–130) challenges the idea that we should

> rush to the conclusion that Sue and young African girls and boys like her are victims of Western imperialism and consumerism, and that they are guilty of mimicry and of modelling themselves after Western stars and desires (…) Sue and her generation simply refuse to adhere to the logic of purity and dichotomies, which invites everyone to know and stick to their preconfigured place in the 'natural' or 'normal' order of things.

I would side partly here with Nyamnjoh. This, however, does not suppress the ambiguities that exist in celebrating as emancipatory a globalising African identity defined primarily by consumerism and style. The *Courrier International* and the *Observer* covers both provide an empowering image that challenges stereotypical representations of Africa and African identities. Both images also focus primarily on style, with the *Observer* borrowing from the visual codes of stock and fashion photography and with *Courrier International* combining a corporate style of visual communication with traditions of African photographers. These covers therefore navigate the ambiguous water of Afropolitanism where commodification, individual empowerment, and cultural and technological mobility define African identities.

6.1.5   Mise-en-abîme

The *New Review* also links to Afropolitanism by providing various stories on young creative entrepreneurs. Its cover, however, takes a very different approach that favours symbolic representation (Figure 29). The black colour connotes the blackness and "darkness" of the continent while giving salience to the white word cloud. The most salient linguistic elements communicate stereotyped images of Africa: "poverty, HIV, drought, disease and corruption". The dominant red background with yellow linguistic elements evokes the communist flag and an era where Africa's media relevance was largely determined by cold war proxy struggles and conflicts. It is also perhaps a subtle reference to China's growing presence throughout the continent; a presence that Mawdsley found to be framed in British newspapers in ways that reproduce

a rather simplistic binary between the sometimes mistaken or frustrated but essentially well intentioned West (Dr Livingstone), and the amoral, greedy and coldly indifferent Chinese (Fu Manchu) battling over a corrupt and/or helpless Africa (the Dark Continent).

(Mawdsley, 2008 p. 523)

Figure 29 - The *New Review* cover (2012)

In any case, the cover's semiotic features strongly resonate with those of a perfect example of Afro-pessimist cover published in *TIME* magazine in 1984 (Figure 30). The *New Review* cover therefore up-plays Afro-pessimist tropes and a quick look at the image would communicate: "postcolonial Africa is a Dark Continent". The key rhetorical moment – the conjunction "but" – is introduced with the smallest font. The readers may have to re-read the text, or at least to overcome their first impressions to realise that the cover is in fact a reflexive montage.

Figure 30 - *TIME* cover (1984)

The *New Review*'s cover plays out *en abîme* the debate on Africa's image, with reflexivity being the decisive visual aspect of the cover. The cover does not aim to portray the "new Africa" talked about in the magazine; instead, it seeks to engage the readers by inviting them to question commonly held assumptions about Africa. A similar strategy was found on *Le Point's 1* cover and its statement "in spite of wars and tragedies, she is beating growth record. Africa is not the one you think she is". But whereas *Le Point* tries to visually illustrate the "new Africa", *The New Review* relies on a playful discrepancy between the linguistic and the visual, where the linguistic promise of "a script that is starting to change" contrasts with the visual that frontloads an Afro-pessimist representation. In that sense, the cover operates at a meta-discursive level (Wasserman & de Beer, 2009) by directly referring, in the content itself, to a broader debate about Africa's image and the role of the media ("for years we have been telling the same old stories").

With this *mise-en-abîme* of Africa's media image, the *New Review* draws on, and frontloads, Afro-pessimism as a referential framework, even if only ironically. There is then an ambiguity in giving prominence to self-reflexivity in the content, which resonates with the key paradox of the postcolony identified by Mbembe:

> (It is) as if the most radical critique of the most obtuse and cynical prejudices about Africa were being made against the backdrop of an impossibility, the impossibility of getting over and done "with something without running the risk of repeating it and perpetuating it under some other guise".
>
> (Mbembe, 2001 p. 1)

Finally, *Le Monde's* cover (Figure 31) combines several features found on *The New Review* one and in previous ones. This is a demand image where the character – neither obviously masculine or feminine – looks straight at the viewer with a sense of pride; her or his gaze is at the middle of the composition and engages the reader in a relationship of equal, thus connoting agency and empowerment. The cover blends photographic evidence with graphic composition. The black face emerges from a plain black background where the only and barely discernable element is the hair of the character, which appears to be dreadlocks on the right part of the image.

Figure 31 - *Le Monde Magazine* Hors-série cover (2015)

The photo editor proposed the picture to Aude Perrier, the graphic artist that produced the cover. It was taken from a series of pictures from an African photographer because the editorial team "wanted to put forward an African artist (…) We found the gaze to be strong, an artistic contrast, a beautiful look and we

didn't try to find out more about the identity of the person" (Aude Perrier). Applied in transparency to this face is a map of the continent (which does not include Madagascar) designed through multi-coloured dots that connote a digital aesthetic, like the word cloud of the *New Review* and the reference to "Africa 3.0" in *Courrier International*. Aude Perrier explains: "the dots are here to evoke the dynamic dimension of Africa, led lamps, emerging cities, scientific, economic and graphic tables". The title "Africa, the take off" is in line with previous titles of Africa "rising", "aspiring" or the "great awakening". Perrier notes that "it corresponds to the editorial line of this issue. It was meant to evoke the dynamic and contemporary side of Africa". She found the approach to have been successful since "this visual pleased a lot of people. And it worked because it was not pessimistic, but attractive, modern".

Like for the *New Review,* this linguistic element stands partly in contrast with the visual dominance of the dramatic black background often associated with Afro-pessimist representations. In that sense, the cover also incorporates reflexivity and *mise-en-abîme*, with the black background symbolising a canvas of assumptions, the shadows out of which the new, empowered and digital face of Africa emerges.

6.2 The drivers of media Afro-optimism

These covers testify to a real uptake for positive images of Africa, an Afro-optimism. In the following section, I step outside these media texts to discuss three key factors driving the emergence of this discourse. I present and discuss these drivers following a concentric approach similar to the one put forward by Shoemaker and Reese (1996) and introduced in Chapter 2; I tackle individual, organisational and extramedia levels. In doing so, I relocate these media texts and their linguistic, semiotic and compositional features in a broader production and discursive context so as to flesh out, in the third section, the power relations buried in them.

6.2.1 Driver 1: Awareness vis-à-vis Afro-pessimism

A first driver of this positive discourse on Africa is the awareness within the journalistic field about issues of stereotypical representation of the continent and its inhabitants – a criticism that, as I highlighted in Chapter 1 has become increasingly

visible in public debates. In that sense, this greater awareness seems to have contributed to a willingness to tell different, more positive stories about Africa. David Smith, who has been working as the Africa correspondent for the *Guardian* for more than five years, bears witness to this evolution:

> A lot has changed in the last 10 years. There probably, really was a time when there was a very one sided, stereotyped view of Africa. And it was portrayed only as a place of evil dictators, cannibals and classic images of famine in Ethiopia and all of that. I think there was a pushback against that, quite rightly. (…) A lot of media have taken that criticism of Afro-pessimism on board and consciously set out to give a different perspective, and show an optimistic side of Africa. In my five years, this demand has increased even more, because editors now ask you to look for a story about a fashion show in Lagos, or downtown development in Johannesburg, to write about artists and musicians. So in response to the criticism of Afro-pessimism, a lot of editors have taken that on board.

For Lucy Siegle, who was a contributing journalist to the *New Review* special issue, this greater awareness is linked to the fact that many newsroom staff

> have spent time in Africa – including myself, my immediate editor and many members of staff – and have a good working knowledge, either culturally or politically or both. Perhaps more importantly, we have a strong interest in stories from different parts of Africa.

In its editorial to the 2011 "Africa rising" issue, the *Economist* expressed some remorse about its 2000 cover saying that it "regrettably labelled Africa 'the hopeless continent'", while its 2013 report promised to "paint a picture at odds with Western images of Africa"; these two examples suggest a willingness to take on board criticisms about a one-sided image of Africa in Western media. Similarly, Perry explained "foreign correspondents are aware of the issues of colonial stereotypes, and discuss these among themselves" and that his "Africa rising" piece which made the cover of *TIME* was "just the latest in a long line of similar pieces", although he was not involved in the cover design, or the headline which he found to be too one-sided. The previously quoted statements from Isabelle Lauze and Anne-Sophie Delhomme about the editorial choice to rely exclusively on African journalists and photographers also demonstrate similar willingness to tell different stories and in different ways. A recent study with 124 international news reporters in sub-Saharan Africa similarly found that the majority of them are aware of the "representational deficits regarding Africa's media image" (Vicente, 2013 p. 24). This greater awareness of issues of stereotypical representations – a phenomenon

that I explore in more depth in Chapter 7 – appears to have contributed to driving a more positive media outlook about Africa.

6.2.2   Driver 2: Commercial incentives

This individual reflexivity, however, should be contextualised in a range of commercial incentives for media organisation that significantly drive the emergence of this positive coverage. As explained earlier by the editor of *Le Point's* special issue, Mireille Duteil, their first issue sold quite well – with numbers slightly above the average but during a time of the year were sales are usually low (August). These results gave them an incentive to publish another special issue, whereas foreign news very rarely appears on *Le Point's* cover. A recent analysis of five French news magazines found that international news (including Europe) constituted only 11% of the covers (Piquard et al., 2015). Similarly, Ousmane Ndiaye, one of the editors of the *Courrier International* issue explained that they came out of this editorial experience with the conviction that Africa is "not an unsalable journalistic material" (Pitroipa, 2013). Foreign news has always been a difficult topic to sell for news magazines, especially on their covers. According to a former editor of *Newsweek* "a foreign subject on the newsmagazine's cover results in a 25 per cent drop in newsstand sales" (Moeller, 1999 p. 312). So what is, then, the commercial potential of such positive coverage?

In revisiting Galtung and Ruge's typology of news values, Harcup and O'Neil noted that, although news still remains generally "bad news", there is an increasing and "surprising amount of good news" (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001 p. 272). They go on establishing a new set of 10 decisive news values and, like Galtung and Ruge, argue that the more of these news values can be found in a story, the greater the chances of it being covered are. This positive trend about Africa then ticks three of these news values: good news ("stories with particularly positive overtones"); surprise ("stories that have an element of surprise and/or contrast") given that all these magazine covers are made to surprise readers about their preconceptions of Africa; and magnitude ("stories that are perceived as sufficiently significant either in the number of people involved or in potential impact") given that these covers talk about an entire continent (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001 p. 279). This way, Afro-optimism becomes a selling point for media outlets and for audiences all too familiar, if not fatigued, with Afro-pessimism.

However, the greatest commercial incentive driving this positive discourse is the strategy adopted by some media outlets to open themselves to new media markets. *Le Point 2* special issue coincided with the launch of a new website "Le Point-Afrique". This project was two years in the making, and the commercial rationale behind it was made clear in the editorial of the special issue:

> We are hoping to make ourselves heard much farther by engaging with the entire francophone world (…) Thanks to Africa and its demography, the number of people speaking French will boom in the next decades. This is an opportunity that we intend to benefit from.

Similarly, *Le Monde's* special issue coincided with the launch of their website "Le Monde Afrique", described in the magazine as:

> [a] true pan-African and francophone media, that will accompany and follow Africa's economic take off by engaging with the players involved in African news, the African diaspora throughout the world, expats in Africa and all those in love with this continent.

This way, Serge Michel *Le Monde's* editor in Chief, explains in the magazine that the new platform "will be targeting a younger audience in Africa and to do this, we might adjust the tone or way certain articles are entitled".

These strategies are part of a broader trend to extend readership overseas, and develop a more global outlook in the face of increased commercialisation and global exposure (Sambrook, 2010 p. 57). For instance, the *Economist*, the *Guardian* or the *Financial Times* increasingly brand themselves as global, through different regional editions and the reliance on a more diverse network of journalists. In the context of the African market specifically, *Le Point* and *Le Monde* follow suit from Al-Jazeera English's branding as providing a different perspective on Africa, symbolised by the fact that the Channel's first global promotional campaign was launched from South Africa (Al Jazeera, 2014). In a similar vein, but with a stronger intertwinement of economic and political interests, the Chinese media CCTV Africa has sought to develop a "greater engagement with African audiences" by notably "advancing new ways of looking at Africa" and positive journalism as a way to ultimately "favour [China's] image or interests abroad" (Gagliardone, 2013 p. 25). While *Le Monde's* launched its new Africa platform, BBC News launched a digital Africa edition spurred by the increase in mobile phone users on the continent (Habari Media, 2014). This move was symbolically kick-started by the organisation of a hackathon in Nairobi "to

generate and develop ideas that will help BBC World Service connect with digital audiences across Africa" (BBC, 2015). Therefore, the appetite for positive coverage of Africa is also driven by a commercial incentive to get a piece of Africa's growing media cake. In this way, it aligns clearly with a narrative about Africa's economic growth and its place in the global political economy that originates from the corporate discourse of the international financial institutions.

6.2.3   Driver 3: The corporate discourse of financial elites

The uptake for a positive discourse about Africa grounded in economic statistics can be traced back to a dramatic change of perception of the continent among investment and financial circles. According to Bach (2013 p. 11), this shift originates with the discovery of significant oil reserves in West Africa in the late 1990s. Technological progress allowed the development of offshore oil fields, and the business environment was perceived as highly favourable, i.e. extremely advantageous terms offered by states to foreign investors. These aspects contributed to a view of West Africa as "the last large unexplored energy frontier'" (Bach, 2013 p. 11). This view subsequently extended to the entire continent, especially after the increased involvement of China and BRIC countries from the mid-2000s onwards. In 2008, the OECD Chief economist promised that Africa is "in the process of becoming the new emerging markets investment frontier" (Bach, 2013 p. 13).

The tipping point for the establishment of this discourse was the year 2010, in which the publication of several reports from investment firms called for foreign investors to change their perception of Africa so as to benefit from its market potential. McKinsey published a subsequently much cited report on the "Lions on the move" (Roxburgh et al., 2010), while Ernst and Young launched a flagship Africa attractiveness programme. The same year, South Africa successfully held the first World Cup in Africa. This was the perfect PR vehicle to build up the profile of an Africa rising, a project of rebranding in which firms such as Ernst and Young have openly claimed to use their brand leverage "global reach to promote the African investment agenda" (Ernst & Young, 2014 p. 24). In fact, the title of the World Cup's song "this time for Africa" was directly echoed in the 2011 Ernst and Young Africa's attractiveness report ("it's time for Africa"), as well as in a book written by the former vice-president of the World Bank and former director of the French Development Agency (Severino & Ray, 2012). In 2011, the African

Development Bank published a report on the rise of the African middle class, which was subsequently very influential (Sylla, 2014 p. s8). After the year 2010, there was therefore an increase in conferences and consultancy reports on the theme of Africa rising, as well as a significant increase in official visits and diplomatic exchanges with the continent (Bach, 2013 p. 1). This discursive consensus emerging from the world of corporate finance also led to "unprecedented coverage of Africa in financial media" (Bach, 2013 p. 1).

Against the euphoria of financial circles, some economists such as Sylla (2014) have started to question both the accuracy of this view, as well as the interests it serves. Sylla explains that this optimistic vision relies on three types of argument, namely the potential of the continent (in terms of natural resources, demography and urbanisation), an increase in purchasing power, and economic growth. While statistics are clear about the continent's tremendous rate of growth in GDP, Sylla (2014 p. s11) notes that this growth "is largely oriented towards reconstruction and stabilisation"; in other words, during the 2000-2010 decade, the continent was "making up for lost time rather than heading towards 'emergence'". Moreover, this growth has come at tremendous costs with little job creation and with the transformation of African countries as essentially "profitable for a type of foreign investment oriented towards the extractive industries and motivated by short-term profit" (Sylla, 2014 p. s16). In that sense, this optimistic view emerging from financial circles is in continuity with the broader political economy that imposed structural adjustments plans throughout the continent in the 1980s and 1990s, except that debt repayments has been replaced by foreign direct investments as the main transfer tool. This optimistic discourse brushes over the tremendous social and environmental costs of the development of extractive economies and of an economic growth that only benefits local elites and foreign countries no longer confined to Western powers. A recent study found that "lived poverty at the grassroots remains little changed" in Africa, pointing to the fact that the effects of growth "are not trickling down to the poorest" (Dulani et al., 2013). This positive narrative ultimately suggests that the SAPs finally paid off, and equates success and progress only with economic growth.

6.3 Africa's evolving media image in the context of global neoliberalism

While there is certainly a noticeable uptake for this positive discourse, it is therefore hard to posit that it constitutes a significant historical break in terms of what drives the image of Africa. As a result, this Afro-optimism is far from being a discursive rupture in the construction of Africa's image.

6.3.1   Discursive features of Afro-optimism

My analysis revealed the emergence of a positive trend in the discursive construction of continental Africa. All the covers dedicated to continental Africa in British and French news magazines between 2011 and 2015 frontloaded a positive discourse about Africa. At first sight, this suggests a significant evolution of Africa's media image. Many critics of Afro-pessimism, such as Mohammed (2013) quoted at the beginning of the chapter, would welcome it as a way to correct the historical overrepresentation of negatives.

However, my analysis showed that these covers dominantly draw on pre-existing, often colonial, notions of 'Africanness'. These are combined with various signifiers of modernity, economic attractiveness and progress. Through this combination, these covers work to 'Other' its subjects while simultaneously reinforcing a neoliberal status quo in which only economic performance and attractiveness matter. Even the more disruptive covers of *Courrier International*, the *Observer* or *Le Monde* which do not visually rely on colonial notions of 'Africanness' are still part of, and contribute to, the uptake for an Afro-optimist discourse.

Such Afro-optimism can be seen as a binary opposite of Afro-pessimism, and, as such, is part of a similar discursive continuum. Africa was hopeless, in despair, starving, lagging behind; it is now hopeful and rising, it welcomes you with pineapples and is the turbo car of the global economy. This discourse reproduces the main discursive features of Afro-pessimism identified in Chapter 2: (1) it *homogenises* Africa and (2) provides a *racialised* view of the continent reduced to sub-Saharan Africa and where the "fact of blackness" is essential; (3) it is highly *selective*, here by focusing on positive aspects only; (4) it is part of a *ranking*

framework which assesses the continent's progress against criteria of economic performance; (5) it *predicts* Africa's future, but in positive terms this time (see Table 16). This Afro-optimism therefore reproduces a reductive vision – infused by both a colonial imagination and a neoliberal ideology – of Africa's present and future.

Table 16 - How Afro-optimism reproduces the five features of Afro-pessimism in magazine covers

Features of Afro-pessimism	Main linguistic and semiotic components of the magazine covers
Homogenisation	- The use of generic references to "Africa". - The use of colonial images of a landscape frozen in time and wild (savannah, acacia tree, lion, giraffe). - The reliance on the map of (mainland) Africa without borders.
Racialisation	- The focus on sub-Saharan Africa as opposed to Africa as a geographical entity. - The use of colonial images of a landscape frozen in time and wild (savannah, acacia tree, lion, giraffe). - The "fact of blackness" as key to represent African identities. - The making up of blackness (i.e. the child running in the savannah painted black). - The reliance on gendered and racialised representations (foregrounding physical appearance / "mother Africa").
Selectivity	- The frontloading of an unambiguously positive portrayal through linguistic references ("hopeful", "rising") and semiotic choices used to represent individuals (welcoming pose, smiling faces, attractive appearance). - The assessment of "progress" and "achievements" solely in terms of economic growth and of conformism with a Western lifestyle of consumption. - The silencing of growing social inequalities and of the damaging social impact of neoliberal policies.
Ranking framework	- The reliance on, and the frontloading of, signifiers of economic progress ("rising", "economic boom", "economic powerhouse") - The use of signifiers of modernity ("turbo car", high rises, football shirts, fashion, consumption, digital aesthetic) - The embodiment of economic progress through animalistic metaphors ("lion's roar", giraffe) - The importance of a linear reading of history ("historical shift", "great awakening", "Africa 3.0")
Prediction	- The use of signifiers of hope that actively project in the future (rainbow colours, "rising", "aspiring", "hopeful", "promises", "growing", "next economic powerhouse", "the new Africa")

Thus, we should be careful about claiming and celebrating the novelty of this discourse, or its unprecedented dimension. Sylla (2014 p. s8), as mentioned previously, talked about a "very significant historical event" because "for the first

time in five centuries, a different image of Africa seems to be emerging: one of modernity, economic dynamism and progress". My analysis, instead, reveals a clear continuity in the discursive construction of the image of Africa. This discourse "constitutes an invitation to call back the ghosts of the explorers, soldiers, traders and settlers who each in their own way once 'discovered' Africa" (Bach, 2013 p. 11), and evokes the "Scramble for Africa" and the race by imperial powers for raw materials in the 19th century. It is in that sense that Browning and Ferraz de Oliveira (2015) talk of the contemporary branding of a continental African identity as contrasting with the supranational discourse of pan-Africanism of the independence era:

> Whereas the pan-Africanism of the 'leaders of liberation' called for an internally focused dialogue and a refusal to place the concerns and perceptions of outsiders at the heart of debates about reclaiming subjectivity, branding implies a more direct engagement with the orientalist gaze and calls upon Africans to respond by reshaping themselves and their societies in accordance with the anticipated desires of outsiders.
>
> (Browning & Ferraz de Oliveira, 2015 p. 11)

Gabay (2015) adds weight to this argument. He notes that there are several historical antecedents of similarly positive discourse in Western portrayal of Africa:

> Africa's supposedly unspoilt, and indeed unused (environmental and demographic) nature, has often been expressed as fundamental to Africa's character at various historical points of the Western encounter with the continent from the 18th century (Curtin, 1964: 60-61, 68-69) until now (Buscher, 2012). (…) Very little about today's Africa Rising narratives is new.
>
> (Gabay, 2015 p. 29)

More precisely, he argues that these positive narratives have appeared at moments of Western insecurity. Thus, the current trend of Afro-optimism could also be understood in relation to the post-2008 economic crisis context where "the West is beset by economic problems, disillusionment with formal democracy, and in Europe in particular, an aging population" (Gabay, 2015 p. 24). In an echo of a decisive component of postcolonial scholarship, the Africa rising discourse can be seen as an inverted mirror and a product of Western narcissism.

6.3.2   A discursive trickling down

My findings suggest that the emergence of Afro-optimism on news magazines covers appears to result from a discursive trickling down, where the Afro-optimism originating from the view of international financial elites, and subservient to the interest of an unequal global political economy, filters through the news agenda. This is particularly visible in that the first magazine to frontload the Africa rising narrative was the *Economist*, a news magazine with a broad readership but primarily aimed at the world of business. Similarly, *MoneyWeek,* a properly business-oriented magazine also ran a cover on "booming Africa" in 2011. Unsurprisingly, its cover relied again on the savannah and acacia tree tropes, with high-rise and modern buildings in the horizon line. This filtering through the media then serves as a self-fulfilling prophecy with business firms relying on this media coverage to further reinforce this discourse, such as Ernst and Young 2013's report which used the *Economist's* cover evolution to confirm that "an exciting shift" was happening in Africa's market potential.

There are signs that this demand for positive news is not limited to one-off covers but is starting to seep through the broader coverage and to impact media outlets at an organisational level. The AFP Southern Africa bureau chief, Christophe Beauduffe, confirmed that there was a broader uptake for more positive stories driven by demands from the market, a trend also confirmed by several of my interviewees:

> There is a pressure from our editors, well not really a pressure, but let's say that there are expectations from our clients to cover Africa positively. Let's get over the whole Africa is corrupt, full of poor people starving and conflict, which remains largely the case because if you look at our production throughout Africa, we cover this because this is what happens. But they [the clients] are very happy when we have articles on economic development, agricultural development and lifestyle. They want more articles about the smartphone boom, new technologies and so on. Yesterday, we had a large videoconference with all the bureau chiefs in Africa and the main editorial bureau in Paris and there is, apparently, a demand from our clients to show Africa as a continent moving forward.

From the extra-media level of political economy, to the level of media organisations and individual journalistic awareness and all the way down to media content, the uptake for Afro-optimism appears to result from a discursive trickling

down through which power relations of domination and inequality endure. Seen uncritically, this positive narrative risks preventing critical engagement with the global neoliberal framework and pressing issues of economic and social inequalities. It could favour the development of extractive economies, which ultimately only benefit a small local elite and foreign countries no longer confined to Western powers. In a way, the concerns raised at the time of the NWICO debate are still very relevant but ought to be re-contextualised within this evolving global political economy.

6.3.3 The stylisation and commodification of difference

Furthermore, there is something compelling about the style and visual language of these covers. Machin (2004) argues that changes in the global political economy of visual communication lead to a homogenised global visual language where photography is no longer about being witness to the real but is rather part of a symbolic system. While Machin focused on stock photography, corporate communication and advertisement, these covers testify to a similar evolution in the field of news media. At least, four covers use stock photographs; seven emphasise graphic composition over photographic evidence; the photographs used all reproduce various features of the generic image (decontextualisation; generic settings and people; role of attributes). All the covers draw heavily on the language of "positive thinking which is itself a crucial moral value in the corporate/consumerist world" (Machin, 2004 p. 331). Within this homogenisation of style, however, Africa's difference is actively summoned. Africa's specificity is visually frontloaded but also stylised to look professional, sleek and competitive within a framework of generic global design. This process of honouring difference through the inscription of specific representation within generic design should be understood in the context of "contemporary processes of aestheticization – which are at the heart of the neoliberal restructuring of identities and social relations in the service of global capital" (Aiello, 2012b p. 72). In this process, African identities and the continent's future are visualised in the increasingly homogenised and generic visual language of global neoliberalism.

Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o (1986) once famously pointed to the linguistic challenge in apprehending African realities beyond a Western gaze. During the 2012 African Studies Association UK biennial conference, he used the example of the word 'tribe' (Wa Thiong'o, 2012). In his native Gĩkũyũ, he explained, the word

does not convey the colonial connotations that it holds in English or French. He made this point to call African writers to write in their own language. But his argument has far reaching consequences for Western media. It implies that these languages are colonised, that colonialism is linguistically rooted. As a result, and perhaps too deterministically, Wa Thiong'o suggests that there would be an epistemological and linguistic impossibility to apprehend African realities in their own terms through these languages. However, my analysis has shown that it is not only at a linguistic but also at a visual level that such debates need to take place. For it is heavily through a visual style and aesthetic characteristic of global neoliberalism that these covers shape African identities, realities and the continent's future in a way that continues the discursive legacy underpinning Afro-pessimism.

Conclusions

All the covers analysed in this site signal an evolution of Africa's media image, a gradual shift from Afro-pessimism to Afro-optimism with regard to continental narratives. On the one hand, these depictions rely heavily on a set of signifiers of modernity, positivity and 'Africanness'. On the other hand, these covers are a prime example of a visual style that favours symbolic representation and generic imagery. My analysis further revealed a significant amount of media self-reflexivity and awareness regarding media Afro-pessimism, both at the production and content levels of these covers. But this positive and reflexive trend should not be embraced as radically undermining Afro-pessimism. Instead, I have argued that this trend was the result of a discursive trickling down initiated in the field of international financial institutions and which is subservient to a global neoliberal political economy. In other words, I have suggested that the foundations of Afro-optimism lie in the same political economy that shaped Afro-pessimism.

This, in turn, explains why this Afro-optimism mirrors precisely the five discursive features of Afro-pessimism identified in Chapter 2: it *homogenises*, *racialises* and *depicts very selectively* Africa*;* it assesses its progress in a *ranking framework* and *predicts* its future, albeit in positive terms. Rather than challenging the system of representation that shaped Afro-pessimism, this media Afro-optimism constitutes an attempt at altering Africa's image within this system of representations and reshapes and brands Africa's image in relation to foreign desires and narcissism.

Finally, and in the context of these specific media texts, I demonstrated that the distinctive visual style and design of these covers was the process through which Africa's difference was (re)inscribed within a dominant discourse of globalised neoliberalism, in a clear discursive continuum with Afro-pessimism. From the visual style of these covers to the values embodied in them and the commercial incentives driving this discourse at the extra-media and organisational level, the image of Africa becomes a commodity through and through (Horkheimer & Adorno, [1944] 2002).

CHAPTER 7 - "I am not trying to seek the true Africa": Foreign correspondents in a postcolonial drift

It all comes down to, in my mind, someone who reads my paper, who has never been to Africa and they are coming for business for the first time, or more likely for a holiday for the first time. (…) They have read the paper, and my stories about Africa. They come here, and they step off the plane and spend a week and a half here. When they get back on the plane, how wrong was their impression according to what they had read?

(Africa Correspondent 1, 2013)

Although many studies have looked at the textual and discursive features of media coverage of Africa, only a handful of studies analyse, or include, the experiences and views of individuals involved in the production of African news (Willems, 2005; Kothari, 2010; Bunce, 2013; Vicente, 2013; Malaolu, 2014). This is all the more surprising given that foreign correspondents are routinely mentioned in content-oriented studies of Western media coverage of Africa. This chapter contributes to filling this gap by providing a critical appraisal of the accounts of foreign correspondents based in the two hubs of international news on the continent: South Africa and Kenya. Foreign correspondents are at the heart of the journalistic production of Africa's image, and are generally on the receiving end of the criticism of Afro-pessimism. They are located at a key nexus of the production process, acting as mediating agents between the ground to be reported and the demands of editors back home; a nexus where the politics of representation and the constraints of media production meet. This chapter therefore sets out to explore the discourse of foreign correspondents to see what it tells us about Afro-pessimism, about the production of media discourse, and about the values, priorities and challenges that shape their reporting of Africa.

I conducted 19 in-depth semi-structured interviews with a range of journalists working for international media organisations in Cape Town, Johannesburg and Nairobi. The majority of my interviewees (13) are foreign correspondents working for the British and French print media analysed in the previous chapters. They are either permanent staff or freelance journalists that have a regular working

relationship with one, or more, of the newspapers or magazines which content was analysed previously. Here, I draw the majority of my observations from this poll of core interviewees.

The chapter is structured in three sections. The first section focuses on how foreign correspondents understand and react upon being asked to discuss Afro-pessimism in Western media. In the second section, I analyse how correspondents talk about production processes and their impact on media representation of Africa. The last section analyses how foreign correspondents talk about their audience as a way to shed light on the continuities and changes in the reporting of Africa. The choice of these three sections is linked to the broader lines of questioning of the thesis but each section is organised along themes that emerged from the interviews. Before entering the analysis, I first provide below the background to the professional context of foreign correspondents in Africa.

The notion that foreign correspondents are a dying breed has become common currency. The last twenty years have seen a significant decrease in the amount of Western foreign correspondents and bureaux posted abroad (Utley, 1997; Moore, 2010; Sambrook, 2010). This decline results from a combination of economic pressure and technological evolution, with print media particularly suffering from the loss of advertising revenues and print sales, and from the transition to the online environment and cross media competition. In a recent report, Richard Sambrook (2010 p. 8) also observes an evolution at large of the nature of news that has impacted the provision of international news: "news now appears to be ubiquitous and ambient, with the premium on speed and comment – neither of which necessarily require expensive bureau".

The decline of foreign correspondents has been particularly salient in sub-Saharan Africa, especially in the 1990s after the continent lost its strategic relevance for cold war proxy struggles (Franks, 2010b p. 72). This has come at costs that both academics and journalists have complained about. A dramatic illustration of the impact of the lack of foreign correspondents posted in Africa was the 1994 Rwanda genocide. The international media failed to grasp the scale of the events unfolding. Most journalists arrived there too late, only to focus on the crisis of Hutu refugees fleeing to Goma and on the French military intervention "Turquoise", resulting in a media framing with damaging impact on public understanding of both the crisis

and the genocide (Philo et al., 1999). For Anne Chaon who worked on AFP's Africa desk in the first weeks of the genocide, this failure was more that of the media industry than of the few journalists present at the time. The international media attention was focused on other events in the world (the OJ Simpson scandal; the death of formula 1 driver Ayrton Sena; the bombing of Gorazde in Serbia) as well as elsewhere on the continent as South Africa held its first multiracial elections (Chaon, 2007 p. 162). Bartholomäus Grill, then the Africa correspondent for German broadsheet newspaper *Die Zeit*, was in South Africa covering the elections. He painfully recalled finding himself in the situation of having to be simultaneously at two places some 3500 km away, just like many other Africa correspondents at the time: "like others, I too wrote unforgivable stories from afar for which I am ashamed today, 20 years later" (Grill, 2014). Concerns about the lack of means to cover such a large geographical area are therefore not new. But the ongoing decline of traditional foreign correspondents and bureaux keeps on raising questions about the ability of the international media to cover it adequately.

Rather than lamenting the decline of foreign correspondents, some like Bunce (2010; 2015), Archetti (2012), Murrell (2014) and Skrubbeltrang (2015) focus on informing the evolutions in the structure of international news production and how these redefine what foreign correspondence is, and who is a foreign correspondent. The decline in permanent foreign correspondents posted abroad has resulted in a greater reliance on news agencies (Bunce, 2015). In the African context in particular, Thomson-Reuters and to a lesser extent AFP have become the prime providers of news for most TV channels across the globe (Paterson, 2011). As Bunce (2015) notes, these agencies have a more global agenda as they cater to clients no longer only confined to Western countries. Moreover, they increasingly rely on a large network of local journalists. She concludes "that international news – an important source of images and texts in the semiotic construction of 'Africa' – is to a large extent, discovered and written by journalists from the region" (Bunce, 2015 p. 2). Looking at Iraq and Indonesia, Murrell (2014 p. 2) demonstrates the role played by fixers in international reporting:

> Fixers bring to the [foreign] team local knowledge, translation capabilities, contacts and access to people and places that will affect the kinds of stories that are told and *how* they are told. They offer a window into how locals perceive the issues that are being reported, and therefore allow reporters to transcend the limitation of being outsiders in foreign lands.

This growing body of literature paints a more complex picture of international news production that increasingly involves local actors and is integrated into a globalising market.

While perhaps smaller and part of a more globalised environment, there remains a network of Western foreign correspondents based in sub-Saharan Africa working primarily for national media 'back home'. Some are permanent staff, others freelancers working for several outlets; some are Africa correspondents, others East or Southern Africa correspondents. This elite group still enjoys a strong reputation, with a bureau posting traditionally seen "as a reward for years of distinguished service in domestic reporting" (Murrell, 2014 p. 1). The media they work for remain very influential within the industry at large and are often heralded as the benchmark of quality journalism. This group of correspondents shares the broad demographic features of their predecessors, and of foreign correspondents posted elsewhere. Vicente (2013) provides the most recent information about the demographics and occupational characterisation of international news reporters working across sub-Saharan Africa. Drawing on the answers of 124 participants based in 41 countries, he found that their socio-demographic characterisation "is consistent with previous research implemented in other geographies of foreign correspondence (Hess, 1996, 2005; Nosaka, 1992), confirming a male-oriented occupational field composed by an educational elite" (Vicente, 2013 p. 22). Most of them are still based in Nairobi and Johannesburg, the two hubs for the production of international news emerging from sub-Saharan Africa, and where most of my interviews took place.

These journalists are key producers of textual material found in the outlets under investigation in the previous chapters. Given their position, these journalists find themselves, more than any other group, on the receiving end of the criticism of Afro-pessimism. As individual professionals, they come to embody and represent a set of values associated with the industry at large. Yet, they also hold key insights into the mechanisms, motivations, and constraints that go into the making of this image. In addition, because it is part of the daily routine of a correspondent to read the competition, foreign correspondents probably constitute the group the most familiar with Western media coverage of Africa. Engaging with their accounts, experiences and discourse therefore constitutes a unique opportunity to understand and deconstruct the manufacturing of Africa's media image from within.

7.1   Foreign correspondents and Afro-pessimism

This section focuses on foreign correspondents and Afro-pessimism. What do they understand by Afro-pessimism? How do they react to the criticism that Western media are Afro-pessimist? Are there significant differences in their reactions and if so, how can these be explained?

7.1.1   "Is that a type of hairstyle?"

When looking at all answers, Afro-pessimism, as perceived by foreign correspondents, is made of several features (Table 17). These include: negativity / selectivity (in the choice and presentation of stories); the reliance on stereotypes related to famine, corruption, violence and poverty; a colonial ancestry. In one case only, a correspondent identified two more components, namely generalisation and hopelessness:

> Where you verge from just straight news reporting, and reporting on bad things, and turn it into a kind of Afro-pessimism [is] when your report is basically saying "there is no hope, this is how it is". And you generalise from this very specific [to Africa].

> (East Africa correspondent 2)

Taken together, these answers echo several of the features of Afro-pessimism identified in Chapter 2, most notably selectivity, racialisation ("stereotypes" and "colonial ancestry"), homogenisation ("generalisation"), and prediction ("hopelessness"). However, there was no strong and systematic consensus about what Afro-pessimism exactly is, beyond a negative image of Africa. This lack of clear, unambiguous understanding was also visible in the way Afro-pessimism was described as a "presentation", a "perception", a "belief", an "idea" or an "accusation" (underscored in Table 17). Each of these terms confers to Afro-pessimism a different nature. "Presentation" emphasises the role of the media (the act of presenting / representing). In contrast, "perception", "belief" and "idea" underscore Afro-pessimism as existing beyond media portrayal (e.g. audience, society generally). Finally, "accusation" stresses the rhetorical use of them.

Overall, the term was perceived as pejorative, as a label akin to being called 'racist'. As a result, journalists had three main types of reactions used to distance

themselves from Afro-pessimism, or to mitigate the relevance of the criticism of Afro-pessimism in Western media.

Table 17 – How correspondents understand Afro-pessimism

Negativity / Selectivity
It would be if you have a media that talks about Africa only when there is a famine or a war. Only when something negative or shocking happens. (Southern Africa Correspondent 1) It would be, I imagine, the unfair <u>presentation</u> of news events and trends in Africa. It is unfair because either within a story it focuses on the bad side, simply. Or within the choice of which stories to write, it shows that. (Africa Correspondent 1) I think the <u>accusation</u> of Afro-pessimism is usually made with reference to hearing a bunch of these newspapers cuttings. And, "look, all these stories about Africa are bad and negative", and "why do we only write about famine in Ethiopia, rape and conflict in Congo". And particularly in South Africa, "why do we write about a potential race war and don't look at positive achievements"? (David Smith, Africa correspondent, *Guardian*)
Stereotypes
The misery and suffering, and preferably misery and suffering that fit into nicely delineated boxes, so famine, disease etc. Basically the four horsemen of the apocalypse. (East Africa correspondent 2) I suspect it might mean the kind of <u>perception</u>, prejudiced, that things are terrible and bad and that governments are corrupt, and people poor and starving. (Africa correspondent 2)
Colonial Ancestry
It's the <u>idea</u> that Africa is the Dark Continent, the hopeless continent, that famous *Economist's* front page; [the idea] that it's full of libidinous and corrupt African leaders; that the interest is from stories of tourists being eaten by safari animals; the <u>belief</u> that African leaders can't really run things for themselves and if they do they'll steal the money, mess things up (…) There is a colonial aspect to it. (Aislinn Laing, Southern Africa correspondent, *Telegraph*) I suppose it's associated with the old [sigh], I hate to say this because I've just had it so many times, this is not the way I think, but it's associated with "savage Africa", "colonial Africa", old of these kinds of stereotypes and tropes which are very old hat. (East Africa correspondent 1)

Firstly, foreign correspondents would describe Afro-pessimism as "unfair", "biased" or "prejudiced". In doing so, they clearly positioned themselves in opposition to Afro-pessimism. In fact, most journalists vocally rejected Afro-pessimism, describing this as being completely at odd with their approach and intentions; one even hesitated to discuss Afro-pessimism "because it has nothing to do with the reasons why I became a journalist in various bits of Africa" (East Africa correspondent 1). By condemning Afro-pessimism, foreign correspondents

distanced themselves from the phenomenon, thus making Afro-pessimism irrelevant to their individual journalistic production.

The second reaction consisted in arguing that media coverage perceived as Afro-pessimist was simply a reflection of the truth; that the issue was not the 'representation' but the 'reality'. Michela Wrong, a former correspondent in Cote d'Ivoire, Zaire and Kenya for Reuters, BBC and the *Financial Times*, made this clear:

> It seems to me that way too much attention is paid to how Africa is viewed in the Western media, when the issue should be how to address the problems that lie at the root of that perception. When the *reality* changes, the perception will also automatically. (…) It's more a case of symptom and cause being mixed up. Africa is not in trouble because it is being misrepresented in the Western media. It is still, sadly, in trouble, ergo the media conveys that message to the outside world. [my emphasis]

In a similar vein, the AFP Southern Africa bureau chief, Christophe Beauduffe, appealed to the 'reality' to explain the pessimistic perception of the continent:

> This continent is not faring well, and there are no objective reasons to believe it will be better in five year given its leaders. I don't care that people call me pessimist or not, that's the *reality*. [my emphasis]

These reactions mirror two classical strategies identified by van Dijk (1992) in the rhetoric of racism denial by the press: intention denial and justification. Regarding the former, van Dijk (1992 p. 92) gives the example of a newspaper that defends its focus on minority crimes by "claiming to publish 'the truth', and thus deny prejudiced opinions about minority crime and hence deny spreading such prejudices with the intention of discrediting minorities". Justification, then, is a correlative of intention denial, since media coverage is justified on the basis that it reflects 'reality'. For van Dijk (1992 p. 104), these constitute the most consequent forms of racism denial which "often lead to the strategic move of reversal: *we* are not the racists, *they* are the 'true racists'". While not widespread, such reversal of the charges was visible in Wrong's assessment of the criticism of Afro-pessimism in Western media:

> At times I lose patience with the criticism's covertly racist tone. (…) Perhaps [Africa is] not always [reported on] accurately, and with varying degree of stupidity and racism, sure but ignorance

and knee-jerk racism operate in the opposite direction, too, in the way Africans write about and think about the West.

Finally, the last reaction was to trivialise the criticism of Afro-pessimism by equating Afro-pessimism with "bad news about Africa", or by arguing that critics confuse these two things:

> I think some of those people mistake Afro-pessimism for what journalists do everywhere including their own countries. (…) It's not Afro-pessimism. It's a sort of world pessimism because the default position of journalism is to be sceptical and what some might see as negative.
>
> (David Smith)

> In my experience, I don't think any of that applies to Africa uniquely as opposed to anywhere else in the world.
>
> (Africa correspondent 2)

> You can draw a distinction between reporting bad news in Africa and being an Afro-pessimist. And I think a lot of the critics – and you won't be surprised if I defend the way foreign correspondents cover Africa on the whole – see us reporting bad news and immediately assume that this comes from this sort of Afro-pessimist or, worst still, racist or possibly stupid origin.
>
> (East Africa correspondent 2)

By equating Afro-pessimism with bad news about Africa, journalists argue that the phenomenon is not specific to Africa but simply reflects what news is. This strategy provides both intention denial and justification: there is no particular intention targeting Africa, and there is a clear reason why news focuses on negative stories – and by extension why Afro-pessimism occurs, if by Afro-pessimism one means "bad news about Africa".

In sum, when faced with the criticism of Afro-pessimism, correspondents displayed three defence strategies to distance themselves from Afro-pessimism or mitigate the relevance of the criticism. These can be summed-up in the following terms:

1) "I agree with you, Afro-pessimism is condemnable. But Afro-pessimism has nothing to do with my work".

2) "What people may perceive as Afro-pessimism is simply a reflection of the reality. We are victims of a classical case of 'shooting the messenger'".

3) "This is not specific to Africa; this is the way news works everywhere".

Finally, there were significant differences in how journalists based in South Africa and those based in Kenya reacted. Nairobi-based correspondents displayed more exasperation than their South African counterparts. Only then would critics of Western coverage of Africa be referred to as "stupid", or even "racist". Similarly, only in Nairobi did a correspondent initially refuse to talk about Afro-pessimism: "I don't even want to answer. It means nothing. It's such ah [long sighs]. I have no interest in it. I think these things are reductive, and simplistic and unhelpful" (East Africa correspondent 1). In contrast, South Africa based respondents were generally less defensive and usually relied on the first distance strategy. They were more familiar with the term Afro-pessimism itself as opposed to Kenya where a few journalists had not heard the term before. This suggests that the local context in which journalists are based shapes their reaction to the criticism of Afro-pessimism. In order to explain these different reactions depending on the local context, I now turn to the ways in which the debate about Africa's media image played out in both countries in recent years.

7.1.2 The Kenyan context

In the 2007 Kenyan presidential elections, Mwai Kibaki was elected in contentious conditions against the opposition leader Raila Odinga. Odinga and his supporters challenged the results and accused Kibaki of electoral fraud. The political feud stirred up identity-based hatred, and escalated in a countrywide post-election crisis where more than 1200 people died, and some 350 000 were displaced. For almost two months, the event attracted the unusually sustained attention of international media (Bunce, 2015 p. 14). In the aftermath of the post-election violence, the role of both local and international media came under scrutiny (Somerville, 2009; 2011). International media were deemed to have overplayed the scale of the violence, and to have drawn on a "tribal language that was incorrect, condescending and potentially inflammatory" (Bunce, 2015 p. 15).

Similar criticisms emerged in March 2012 when the Kenyan 'twittersphere' reacted to a CNN story on an attempted terrorist attack on a Nairobi bus. The title "Violence in Kenya" was perceived as sensationalist, exaggerated and decontextualised. In reaction, the hash tag #SomeonetellCNN grew increasingly popular, eventually becoming "the second most trending term on Twitter that week" (Bunce, 2015 p. 23). CNN apologised and the report was eventually removed from their website.

One month later, *Foreign Policy* published a tribune by academic Laura Seay criticising "many Africa correspondents [who] file stories that fall prey to pernicious stereotypes and tropes that dehumanize Africans" (Seay, 2012). Her article notably targeted Nairobi and Johannesburg based Western foreign correspondents and "the lack of journalistic ethics employed by some reporters working within the continent" (Seay, 2012). One month later, Tristan McConnell (a Nairobi based correspondent working for several US and British media) responded in *Global Post*. He argued that Seay failed to see the existing good reporting and that her "lumping together all foreign correspondents as dumb racists" was a "cheap rhetorical trick" (McConnell, 2012). In addition, he appealed to his "on-the-ground" journalistic authority to undermine Seay whose views, like those of "self-appointed Africa watchers", "(…) emanate from an ivory tower long divorced from the reality on the ground" (McConnell, 2012). This exchange spurred a lively discussion on Twitter, with several journalists joining in to debate the merit of both pieces. But both on Twitter and in the two aforementioned pieces, the focus of the debate progressively moved from questions of intercultural representation and news production to comments, at times inflammatory, about the performance of individual journalists.[22]

A month later, Kenyan writer Wainaina published a cynical satire of Nairobi-based foreign correspondents:

> Nairobi is a good place to be an international correspondent. There are regular flights to the nearest genocide, and there are green lawns, tennis courts, good fawning service (…) If your spouse has arrived in Kenya and does not have a job, soon he or she will be fully networked and earning lots of pounds/euros/dollars, making sure the babies of Africa are safe (…) Because you are a good person, who believes in multiculturalism, and that politicians are evil.
>
> (Wainaina, 2012a)

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[22] In her piece, Seay (2012) mentions Nicholas Kristof from the *New York Times* who identified "a 9-year-old Congolese girl who had been gang-raped. The *New York Times* printed the girl's real name along with a facial photograph and even a video of her online". McConnell (2012), then, recognised that Kristof's identification of the young girl was "abhorrent" but also used this example to both distance himself from Kristof (a New York based columnist) while further attacking Seay's supposedly lack of "on-the-ground" knowledge: "his place, rather, is alongside Seay and the other self-appointed Africa-watchers who dip a toe in the continent and then pontificate from afar".

This further contributed to orient, in the Kenyan context, the debate on Western media towards personal attacks on foreign correspondents. This "personal turn" reached its climax during the 2013 presidential elections. There were concerns, if not expectations, among international media that the elections may spur violence, following the pattern witnessed in 2007. In parallel, the work of foreign correspondents became increasingly scrutinised, notably through social media and Twitter. Many journalists expressed their surprise at this scrutiny, one calling it a "huge industry" where there are "as many people analysing our reporting as there are people doing the reporting itself" (Africa correspondent 2) – something that he had never experienced in his previous post in another part of the world.

There was a humoristic element to these comments and discussions about foreign correspondents. Michael Holman – a former editor for the *Financial Times* – wrote in the *Daily Nation:* "foreign reporters [are] armed and ready to attack Kenya (…) Kenya was braced at the crossroads on Saturday amidst growing concern that the demand for clichés is outstripping supply" (Namlo, 2013). The column was published under a pseudonym (Elkim Namlo), something that prevented most people to see the irony that this acerb criticism was written by a former Africa correspondent (Ochiel, 2013). In the *Guardian*, Mukoma Wa Ngugi (2013) described a CNN story as "slap your knee funny", and wrote that he "and many other Kenyans saw the Western media coverage of the Kenya elections as a joke". On Twitter, the hashtag #tweetlikeaforeignjournalist trended, and included jokes such as "Foreign journalists stranded in their hotels as peace makes it hard for them to do their job" (Brown, 2013).

But the active monitoring of foreign correspondents, notably on Twitter, was far from being only humoristic. The #SomeonetellCNN re-emerged, and was used to "name and shame" journalists (Bunce, 2015 p. 23), often attacking them as "racist" and "colonialist", and in some cases threatening them. One foreign correspondent remembers receiving personal attacks and deportation threats, and being vilified in a way "that never happened to me before" (East Africa correspondent 1). Overall, whatever the content of your reporting, it was not a good time to be a Western foreign correspondent in Kenya. One journalist recalled:

> Western journalists had a very hard time because we were mentioning in our coverage that, last time, around 1100 died and half a million people were displaced. (…) [The Kenyan middle-class twitterati] were self-righteous, claiming that it was an unfair

> parallel to draw, and actually it was a perfectly reasonable parallel
> to draw because we were potentially staring down the barrel of a
> repeat performance.
>
> <div align="right">(Africa correspondent 2)</div>

For another correspondent, these "Twitter punches" and the labelling of foreign correspondents as "colonial aggressors" were parts of a broader political strategy, which played out on social media:

> There were people paid to hunt people in packs through social
> media so I was not at all the most affected. There were many,
> many other journalists and also Kenyan campaigners who were
> very much affected by that kind of thing.
>
> <div align="right">(East Africa correspondent 1)</div>

The criticism of Western journalists relied on an anti-colonial rhetoric interwoven with the political strategy adopted by the Uhuru Kenyatta / William Ruto coalition. Following their indictment by the ICC, the two former political rivals joined forces in the elections and rallied support notably by relying on anti-colonial sentiments (Cheeseman et al., 2014). In the context of the Kenyan elections, then, the criticism of Western media was part of a broader political rhetoric used by politicians to rally popular support, avoid accountability and ultimately win the elections despite strong suspicions of rigging (Brown, 2013; Cheeseman et al., 2014).

7.1.3   The South African context

In South Africa, the key event that shaped the debate over Western media coverage of Africa in previous years was the 2010 World Cup. As soon as it won the bid in 2004, South Africa was put under the media spotlight over concerns about the delivery of infrastructures, and security for visitors. From the start, the event was branded by FIFA and the South African government with a symbolic "African" dimension, this being the first World Cup "on African soil".[23] In the lead up, the questions raised by the media had as much to do with the media scrutinising, as they usually do, the host country than with a stereotypical and reductive view of South Africa at risk of 'race'-driven conflicts; and with a prejudiced view that an African country would be unable to manage these expectations.

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[23] The other final contenders for hosting the tournament were Egypt and Morocco. If one of these countries had won the bid, concerns about organisation would have also very likely be part of the international media coverage. Yet the symbolic load of the event would have been quite different since the other contenders were based in North Africa. It would have been particularly interesting to see how the notion of a first tournament played "on African soil" would have been negotiated and framed by the media in that context.

A key moment in this debate was, interestingly enough, an event that did not happen in South Africa. Six months before the cup, there was a terrorist attack by a separatist group of the Cabinda exclave on the Togo team in Angola during the African Cup of Nations. Because the event involved football and happened in an African country, several international media turned to the South African authorities with worries over security during the tournament. The chief World Cup organiser Danny Jordaan swiftly pointed at the Afro-pessimism of Western media and the double standards behind these questions, and called for "the world [to] be balanced and not apply different standards when it comes to the African continent (Myers & Smith, 2010).

Following the use of the word Afro-pessimism by South African officials, the term started to circulate in the media and became visible in public debates as a shortcut for biased and prejudiced coverage. In a previous research, I found that British and French newspapers routinely used the term, and often discussed, at a meta-discursive level, the role of the media in relation to Afro-pessimism (Nothias, 2014). Symbolically, the World Cup became as much a way to talk about South Africa's ability to host a major sport tournament than a way to "mute the sceptics", and "trump Afro-pessimism" and broader discourses about Africa (Moody, 2010; Murphy, 2010).

Most of the criticisms of Western media were aimed at extremely sens(n)ationalist stories published mainly in British tabloids. The *Daily Star* notably published an article "World Cup Machete threat" on the murder of Eugene Terre'Blanche, the head of the white supremacist movement Afrikaner-Weerstands-Beweging (Afrikaner Resistance Movement) two months before the competition:

> England fans could be caught up in a machete race war at the World Cup in South Africa. The killing of white supremacist leader Eugene Terre Blanche caused far-right campaigners to warn teams to avoid the "land of murder" this summer.
>
> (Hugues, 2010)

Mentioning possibilities of "civil war", "total nightmare" and "explosion of violence", Hugues also lists threats of "machete gangs (…) roaming the streets". While the article primarily quotes fair-right campaigners, it nonetheless creates a strong sense of insecurity and violence, notably using the image of the machete and thus evoking scenes of "African" violence such as the Rwandan genocide.

Moreover, it foresees the worst-case scenario: "if civil war erupts [it] means the tournament cannot be played in the country this summer". Because it summons images of a savage Africa rooted in the colonial imagery of the "Dark Continent", because it fosters an atmosphere of racial violence and because it promises the South African World Cup to be a failure, this article could be seen as a case in point of Afro-pessimism.

The author of this article is a London-based sport journalist working for a tabloid newspaper. In fact, the most criticised articles were not the work of South Africa based foreign correspondents but rather, that of parachute journalists or of journalists writing from their office back home. As opposed to the Kenyan situation, the World Cup also attracted more different types of journalists (most notably sport journalists). Moreover, while the criticism had a generalising dimension like in Kenya, it did not include the "naming and shaming" of journalists on social media, nor threat to foreign correspondents.

Finally, the criticism of Western media was much less entangled with the political exploitation of an anti-colonial rhetoric. The hosting of the Cup did raise significant issues about local politics including economic development, and social and economic inequalities in post-apartheid South Africa (Chari & Mhiripiri, 2014). The push for a positive media coverage certainly benefited FIFA and its president Sepp Blatter. The South African government, for its part, used the event as an opportunity to showcase a cohesive national identity – a transient cohesion in "a country in which a segregated racial past keeps lurking beneath the surface of a fractured post-apartheid transition" (Chuma, 2012 p. 315). As a result, the criticism of Western media and Afro-pessimism certainly benefited a range of economic and political interests; but it was neither a tool to intimidate journalists nor part of an anti-colonial rhetoric used by local politicians to reach the presidential office in a questionable context.

The way the debate on Western media coverage of Africa played out in these two contexts seems to explain the different reactions of the correspondents to my questions about Afro-pessimism. All my Nairobi based interviewees were present at the time of the 2013 elections, while all my South Africa based interviewees were there during the World Cup. All systematically referred to these two events. The term of Afro-pessimism was much more publicly visible in South Africa than

in Kenya, which explains why correspondents in South Africa were more familiar with the term. The criticism of Western media in South Africa was particularly aimed at tabloid newspapers and articles written by sport and parachute journalists. In contrast, foreign correspondents in Kenya experienced virulent and personal criticisms, and even threats. It was thus easier for South Africa based correspondents to feel less personally targeted and to distance themselves from these criticisms (relying on the first defense strategy identified in section 7.1.1). Finally, the criticism of Western journalists in South Africa was not part of a broader anti-colonial rhetoric used by local politicians. This, then, explains why Kenya based correspondent displayed more irritation and weariness; one even explained having to "try not to get too worked up" when talking about these questions (East Africa correspondent 2). All of them raised concerns about the criticism becoming a tool for political manipulation in the Kenyan context, while South Africa based respondent more plainly denounced Afro-pessimism.

To conclude this first section, I now return to a response given by Africa correspondent 2 when asked what Afro-pessimism was: "Is that a type of hairstyle?" In a way, this witty remark exemplifies the state of Afro-pessimism as a floating signifier. Stuart Hall used the expression of floating signifier to talk about 'race' as a signifier whose meaning, "because it is relational and not essential can never be finally fixed, but is subject to the constant process of redefinition and appropriation" (Jhaly, 1997). Similarly, when analysing what foreign correspondents understand by Afro-pessimism, I have shown that there was no clear, authoritative definition about what Afro-pessimism precisely was. I also showed that correspondents reacted in different ways but mostly with a view to distance themselves from Afro-pessimism, often using strategies classically found in racism denial by the press. Finally, I showed that their reactions to the criticism of Afro-pessimism depended on the local context. Because the debate on Western media coverage of Africa has been defined and appropriated differently in the two countries, the reactions between South Africa and Kenya based correspondents differed. While this section paints a generally defensive picture of foreign correspondents vis-à-vis the criticism of media Afro-pessimism, the next section will show that an engagement with production processes reveal a more complex picture of how correspondents relate to questions of representation of Africa.

7.2 Foreign correspondents and the news production of Africa's image

In this section, I engage with news production processes and how foreign correspondents talk about these. What can we learn from, and about, foreign correspondents when engaging with production processes, and their impact on the construction of Africa's media image?

7.2.1 When things go wrong

I start by analysing examples shared by correspondents that, in short, give to see when, how and why things go wrong. This subsection is thus not meant to systematically explain how correspondents work or how African news is made. Rather, it provides an informed account of different aspects of the news production process that contribute to simplification, generalisation, and stereotypes in the coverage of Africa.

From the headline and lead-in text to the choice of illustrations or the copy editing process, the production of any single news item involves several individuals with distinctive specialisation, knowledge and sensibility. Any article is co-authored, although this is rarely visible to the readers. The accounts of foreign correspondents that follow suggest that this process of co-authoring plays a significant role when things go wrong.

In their large majority, correspondents do not write their headlines. Most suggest a title to their editors. But very few have full control over the one ultimately used or get a read back. At the same time, headlines are very salient. They have to catch the attention of the reader and often emphasise one aspect of the article over others. By essence, they reduce an already short piece of writing to one clear and unambiguous nugget of information. Paradoxically therefore, this first point of entry into the work of correspondents – that significantly frames the reading and interpretation of an article – is generally not decided by them.

One risk is that the intellectual process that drives the writing of the article differs from the one driving the choice of headline:

> Headlines are just the worst thing because obviously it's a muppet sitting in front of a computer [back home], who doesn't understand the context and has read the top five paragraphs – well, maybe more to be fair. But it's the thing that will automatically get you in trouble.
>
> (Africa correspondent 1)

The headline choice can notably contribute to gross generalisations that significantly alter the argument of an article or even contradict it. East Africa correspondent 2 expressed this frustration saying that "often, I find that I'll be trying not to generalise and then I'll look at my story and the headline is 'Africa something'".

This discrepancy can also lead to misinterpretation with damaging impacts for a journalist's relation with her or his sources. Aislinn Laing, for instance, tells the story behind an article published in 30 April 2013 in the *Telegraph*. Nelson Mandela was recovering in his Johannesburg home from a 10-day stay in the hospital. President Zuma came to visit, and images of this visit were released to the public by SABC, showing a very frail Mandela. The airing of the video was heavily criticised, notably on social media, as people denounced the images as degrading and insensitive. Aislinn Laing contacted Mandela's oldest daughter Maki Mandela for an interview to ask her is she was happy about that image:

> She said: "No, I am not happy about that. Would anyone want his or her grandfather to be shown in that light? It's not great". But she added: "However, I do want to stress that they have done a really good job looking after him, that I don't criticise the ANC generally, that I think his doctors are fantastic and obviously we rely on the government to provide that help. So I am not angry. I just think that it was unfortunate and that somebody made a bad judgment call". So I knew that it was nuanced (…). But then the editor in London probably didn't think about it and wrote "Nelson Mandela's family furious over TV pictures of frail South African icon".

Whether the editor "didn't think about it" or in fact consciously made this choice, the end result was the sensationalising of the story, first by misinterpreting Maki Mandela's reaction and then, by generalising to "Mandela's family". As a result, Laing explained that Maki Mandela refused to grant her any more interviews after that because "[she] told me [they] were not furious about that and we put that as a headline".

Southern Africa correspondent 1 further shared two examples that demonstrate how headlines written back home can simultaneously jeopardise a journalist's relation with her sources and introduce a racial bias. She wrote an article about a family of white South Africans who decided to live one month in a township next to their housekeeper on the average salary of a South African family living in townships:

> They changed my title to something along the lines of "Whites who live like blacks". Ouch! When you see this in the paper in the morning, you don't feel so good. Because, what does it mean exactly "to live like blacks?" (…) Something similar happened for an article about the new South African middle class, and especially about young and successful women entrepreneurs. The title was something like "Black bling bling". And here again, you send the article to the people you interviewed – some of which you know personally as friends – and you have to explain yourself.

Like titles, the choice of photographs generally does not involve the input of correspondents but are particularly salient to the reader. Several correspondents saw this as one element where generalisation and stereotypes would often creep in. East Africa 1 correspondent faced this situation several times ("three times in nearly three years"), and shared a particularly compelling example. He wrote a story on the rise of processed-food consumption and diabetes in Kenya ("instead of HIV, tuberculosis, it's a more Western disease as it was"), and interviewed middle-class Nairobians who eat a lot of meat:

> They put a picture of ethnic Somalis refugees in Dadaab refugee camp, of kids being tested or something, which was just completely not what the story was about. Ok, so they have just done another reductive "Africans are all poor and ill" photo to match a story they obviously haven't read. They have just seen Africa, diabetes and they got the first picture out. And it's so undermining to what the story is about.

In addition, the title referenced Africa, whereas the article was solely about Kenya. A similar text-image discrepancy occurred in a story on entrepreneurship and thriving businesses in Dadaab refugee camp ("so, debunking what people might immediately assume") where the picture chosen was that of an "emaciated kid or something like that". As the picture choice was not coordinated through the same intellectual decisions than the correspondent's, this article seeking to disrupt some assumptions ended up visually reinforcing them.

Finally, several journalists talked about copy-editing as another key process where stereotypes and generalisation would make their way into the coverage. Talking about the 2007/2008 post-election violence in Kenya, Africa correspondent 1 notably explained: "this happened within copy-editing, for instance introducing words like 'tribal' during the post-election violence. There was a real pressure to get into copy, high up, 'tribal violence' or 'tribal bloodshed'".

In sum, the geographic distance involved in the co-authoring of a news article opens up the space for ignorance to impact media content. Indeed, my interviewees often summoned ignorance back home as a primary reason for the production of stereotypical news coverage:

> It's linked to ignorance: the ability to detect and avoid stereotypes does not work as well when the person only knows Africa through TV or film.
>
> <div align="right">(Southern Africa correspondent 2)</div>

This is exacerbated in the context of increased commercialisation. Several correspondents highlighted that journalists, in particular freelance, have to make concessions to demands that are driven by ignorance and prejudices. Africa correspondent 2 gave the example of an article published in *TIME* on "Africa's drinking problem". Most of the article dealt with drinking in Kenya, and particularly Nairobi where the author, a freelance journalist, is based. It briefly addressed South Africa, but did not contain any reference to another African country:

> It was a great story about alcohol consumption in Kenya. It was a shitty one about Alcohol consumption in Africa. I can just imagine the conversation the author had with the editors that results in "this has got to be about Africa, right?!" What do you do? You are not gonna do the story? Not take the 600$? You have got to live. So you do some kind of distasteful things. We would like not to generalise too much, but it's still difficult when you are being mediated by the editors and the newspapers, and they still have a strong tendency to say "well this thing happened in Nairobi, which is Kenya, which is Africa".
>
> <div align="right">(Africa correspondent 2)</div>

These examples partly constitute classical defence strategies by correspondents as they point fingers at others, particularly editors. While not all correspondents complained about their editors, there was nonetheless enough evidence to suggest that the level of knowledge and interest from editors makes a significant difference to the work of correspondents. It is telling, for instance, that Alex Perry quit his job

at *TIME* after falling out with one of his editors. The latter was reluctant to send him to Mali to cover the progress of Islamist militants. Once there, the editor insisted on over-ruling on story direction and forced him to abandon 10 days of reporting. When Perry said he wanted to go to Timbuktu, the editor asked him: "Timbuktu? Is that a real place?" For Perry, this was the straw that broke the camel's back.

These varied accounts provide compelling examples of how sensationalism, simplification, generalisation, racial bias and stereotypes make their way into media coverage. They demonstrate how different production layers and incentives, how ignorance and the geographic distance involved in the production process contribute to the representational 'Othering' of Africa.

7.2.2   Journalistic reflexivity

Through this engagement with production processes, we also see emerging a picture of foreign correspondents as a highly reflexive group. While many did not welcome Seay's aforementioned criticism of Western media, most in fact agreed with a key point of her analysis: "no way one reporter can cover 12-15 countries well" (Schiff, 2012). One correspondent – supposed to cover 38 countries "from Senegal to Somalia down to the top of Southern Africa" – described this assignment as "ridiculous". Southern Africa correspondent 2 described the Africa correspondent title as "in substance, totally stupid since there are 54 countries". For David Smith who holds this title, being responsible to cover some 48 countries (in his case) makes them "always vulnerable to the criticism because we can't possible do it properly and 100% comprehensively"; he even confessed to "sometimes writing about countries having never been there in my life and a lot of other countries I might have been to once". For him, and many others, the sweeping dimension of the title was completely at odd with their awareness that the geographic area they cover is incredibly diverse:

> I am always pushed back into this pigeonhole because of my title. So somebody, somewhere has built a conceptual framework and put a rubber stamp on this. But still, obviously, the more time you spend here, the more you become conscious of the subtleties that even one country alone, like South Africa, has eleven languages, nine different social ethnic groups, nine provinces.
>
> (David Smith)

These statements do not only constitute a critical take on their job title; they demonstrate a strong questioning of the "conceptual framework" that determine their professional practice, and of the "idea of Africa" that underpins this framework:

> This word is again a problematic concept because, as we know, it's incredibly diverse: a billion people, 55 countries. (…) Every country has peculiarities, unique characteristics. So what do we really mean by this woolly concept of Africa?
>
> (David Smith)

In fact, correspondents clearly perceived "Africa" as much as a term defining a geographical area than an idea. As a result, they displayed suspicion about the relevance of using "Africa" in their reporting:

> I go through all the British newspapers to see what is being written and everyday there will be some romantic reference to Africa like it's just one place where everything happens. (…) If you are writing about one particular issue that is that country's issue, you don't need to broaden it to say Africa.
>
> (Aislinn Laing, Southern Africa correspondent, *Telegraph*)

In a similar vein, there was strong willingness from correspondents to distance themselves from the idea that they "write about Africa":

> If you are on some quest to find the true Africa then perhaps you are already on a fraud quest. That's not what I am trying to do. (…) The only sense in which I write about Africa as a whole is that my stories are drawn from this geographical patch. (…) I am not trying to seek the true Africa. I don't find myself writing about Africa. I write about Kenya, and Rwanda and Sudan and individual incidents within those places.
>
> (Africa correspondent 2)

For others, the naming of the continent and some degree of generalisation should not be dismissed as straightforwardly problematic but is something that calls for scrutiny and tact:

> You have got to be very self-critical when you start saying, "this is" about Africa; because generally it's not. It's usually about a country, or a town, or a house or a person.
>
> (East Africa correspondent 2)

> I think we can and should compare and draw wider conclusions from individual events, but you have got to do that critically. And

not just go "well it happened somewhere on the African continent therefore it tells me something about Africa as this thing".

(Africa correspondent 2)

As much in the way they talk about the "Africa correspondent" title than in their critical take on what "Africa" stands for, their views in fact echo the social constructivist approach found in much of the literature on media representation of Africa.

Foreign correspondents also displayed strong awareness of, and frustration at, one of the key in-built features of international news production: ethnocentrism. I previously discussed the tendency of news to prioritise issues, events and people perceived as closer (geographically, linguistically, culturally, ethnically) to a given audience. Cottle (2013) coined the term of "calculus of death" to describe the naturalised and institutionalised ethnocentrism that notably shapes disaster reporting. The result of this "calculus of death" is a media landscape that, far from promoting cosmopolitan ideals, reinforces the idea that some lives, always the same, are worth more than others. But against the view of correspondents as unaware, powerless cogs in a cynical machine, Cottle also found a strong reflexivity among TV correspondents, and analysed some of the ways they try to infuse their reporting with cosmopolitan ideals ("the injunction to care").

My interviewees displayed similar reflexive attitudes. Most journalists working for British media complained about the never-ending demand for "Brits in shit"[24] stories – the perfect example of news relevance being determined both by the nationality and the skin-colour of the protagonists. Southern Africa correspondent 1 similarly complained about the preference for stories involving white people:

> There's a phenomenon of identification. I asked myself the question on the Westgate attack: would there have been so much interest if it weren't for all the Western victims? Maybe yes. But it's clear that the images of the little white girl running alone in the mall had an impact.

The racial identification phenomenon was particularly salient in the South African context. Following Mandela's death, a French correspondent witnessed a very large number of parachute journalists going straight to Orania, an Afrikaner whites

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[24] The expression is used to refer to stories about British nationals ("Brits) involved in bizarre, violent or sensational situations ("shit").

only town. For him, this reflex testified to the ongoing impact of ethnocentric values – here racial identification/white solidarity – deeply embedded in news production.

In sum, the correspondents I interviewed have an acute understanding of how the logics of news production contribute to the reproduction of an ethnocentric, often stereotypical, view of Africa. Importantly, however, they have all been in post on the continent for several years. As the following quote suggests, this means that they have assuredly had to take part in this system to come to these conclusions:

> Many stories commissioned are done so through a prism that comes from Europe. (…) So it's a mixture. You have stereotypes and a Western gaze on countries like South Africa. And then you have the constraints of media production, which makes it easy to talk about crime in South Africa, in particular on TV. I have had arguments with TV journalists who wanted to come and do stories on crime here. When I first arrived, I used to say yes. But then I realised I really didn't want to do that. Because what will come out of the various production constraints of a two minutes story is "people are shooting at each other; people are scared".
>
> (Southern Africa correspondent 2)

Even more compelling is this reflexive assessment from Africa correspondent 1 who argues that if one could vacuum his writing alone, the picture of Africa that his audience would get would be far from a "true representation":

> How wrong is the paper getting it? I would say pretty [emphasised] wrong. I would say they [readers who have never been to Africa] would be surprised at how many brand new cars there are here; that you can get fantastic coffee and milkshakes and, whatever, sky vodka. I am just looking literally wherever I can see. (…) I think they'd be surprised of that because the idea they are going to get from it is that everyone is running around with a machine gun and a keffieh wanting to blow white people up in Kenya; in Uganda, that it's all about either gorillas or guerrillas; or a crazy president who thinks that you shouldn't wear condoms because that's the best way to stop HIV. That's a mental exercise that I use quite regularly in what I try to push the paper to take.

More than ever before, journalists have been faced with sustained public scrutiny of the content and impact of their work, with social media playing a particularly important role in that process. All correspondents are familiar with Laura Seay, Wainaina's essay on "How to write about Africa" and the *Africa is a country* blog. This context arguably contributed to create a generation of correspondents highly aware of these questions:

> I think we are much more aware of the criticism of Western media coverage of Africa than journalists 30 years ago. I am not saying things are perfect and that we are done with these [stereotypes] because clearly there is still this "little music" [25] being played over and over again; and because discussing with our chiefs and reading our colleagues' work impact us. The hardest part is to decontaminate all this. That's clear and that's a long work of deconstruction. (…) You no longer really have obvious racist clichés, but this "little music", yes; we still need to work on this. (…) On my Facebook page or on Twitter, I share a lot of articles that ask if Western journalists give a reliable, honest and responsible image of Africa. And I think that this is an essential question for us. We need to ask ourselves this question everyday.

(Southern Africa correspondent 2)

This high level of critical reflexivity echoes the findings of a study looking at how US journalists grapple with the racialisation of their news (Drew, 2010). Drew interviewed journalists involved in the production of special series dedicated to racism in the post-Civil Rights era. She found that:

> [I]nvestigation of racism in their cities prompted them to turn their lens inward, engaging in a critical self-reflection about the complex relationship between racism and their news content, production practices and newsroom hierarchies.

(Drew, 2010 p. 353)

This study raises fundamental questions about the potential for professional reflexivity to "become a significant tool for fostering consciousness and action" and "to challenge the methods of knowledge production and the values undergirding this process" (Drew, 2010 p. 368). While the context of foreign news production differs in many ways from national/local coverage, it is still possible to ask similar questions about the ability of individual journalists to challenge the dominant features of news production – a classic case of structure vs. agency. In the final subsection, I therefore ask: does reflexivity among foreign correspondents in Africa translate into different production practices? How do journalists negotiate and act upon this reflexivity?

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[25] This interviewee used the metaphor of the "little music in our head" to refer to the institutionalised and naturalised drive for negative and unambiguous stories which, in their iterative dimension, contribute to a reductive representation of Africa.

7.2.3   Acting upon reflexivity

In previous chapters, I identified features of media coverage that can be interpreted in light of this reflexivity. In Chapter 4, I showed that there was a greater reliance on African interviewees than Western ones – a finding at odds with previous studies. I also showed that conflation did occur but perhaps not to the extent that critics make it sound; and that reference to "darkness" and "tribalism" were far from being systematic features of journalistic writing. In Chapter 6, I showed that the dominant narrative about Africa in news magazines was that of Afro-optimism. These various findings can partly be understood as the result of a greater awareness on the side of journalists of the criticism of Afro-pessimism.

Earlier, I demonstrated how the writing of headlines back home could contribute to generalisation, misinterpretation and stereotyping. Because of these experiences, some correspondents now request a read-back on their headlines; others have now full control of their headlines. This is one example of how individual reflexivity can foster new practices, i.e. a greater involvement in, or coordination of, a key production stage.

For a few journalists, adopting a human interest angle to frontload and promote a sense of common humanity was a productive tool to act upon this reflexivity:

> Ok, maybe [Mogadishu] is so crazy and bonkers that some guy in London does not get it. There's no way he's going to get it. But if you find that individual who opened a shop and is struggling to pay school fees. And then when the Islamist guys came and took too many taxes, he couldn't send his kids to school. Well then that makes sense because it's just a guy trying to make a living. Even though Moga might not mean anything, you can make the world make sense in this way.
>
> (East Africa correspondent 2)

Although done with an eye to humanise a news item – to reduce the distance between 'us' [the audience] and 'them' [distant 'Others'] – the human interest strategy is double-edged. How one defines the relevance point for the audience is a Pandora box. This was made clear in an interview with Nicole Macheroux-Denault, Africa correspondent for RTL Television, who also defended the "human interest" approach. She advocated for this to be used in conjunction with something that amounts to "situational" or "strategic" stereotyping (Barker, 2000 p. 191). Stereotypes, she argues, can be used to initially appeal to the audience interests. By

humanising the story, you then "flip the initial stereotypes upside down". This process amounts to what I analysed in the previous chapter when the *New Review* frontloaded an Afro-pessimist representation on its cover, only to undermine this discourse in the magazine by providing a range of disruptive stories on art, technology and entrepreneurship.

In contrary, photo-journalist Phil Moore (*Times, Sunday Telegraph, Guardian, Le Monde, Le Figaro)* argues that such "strategic" stereotyping mainly contributes to reproducing clichés. He mentioned a recent AFP article about free Wi-Fi in Kigali that included in its first lines "in a region long associated with war and genocide". It contrasted the country's history of violence with technological progress generally associated with Western countries as a way to spur the curiosity of the readers: "a perfect example of the 'Africa rising' narrative put on the backdrop of 'the horrors of the continent'". Without dismissing the hugely important part of the genocide in Rwanda's recent history, Moore argued that not everything should be set against this backdrop:

> It's lazy and it reinforces stereotypes. What would be good is if these stories could just be written against the backdrop of the quality of the investment, of the technology, of the creativity – whatever the story at hand is. If London was to implement free Wi-Fi across the city that would be news in its own sense. That would be massive news in the British press, and they wouldn't set this against the backdrop of the 7/7 bombing, or on the backdrop of massive social inequalities within the city, which exist. It would simply be a technology story about Wi-Fi in London. People's perceptions of Africa are that it is underdeveloped, that it's poor, conflict-ridden, etc. There is space for that in *some* stories, but it shouldn't *constantly* be in the top-line.

Interestingly here, a better strategy to act upon reflexivity consists in falling back onto the ideal of factual news. In other words, to prevent African news from reproducing stereotypes about Africa they should be treated as "news", rather than "African". This is echoed by David Smith for who "there is more criticising views of corrupted leaders because they are corrupt rather than because they are Africans or fitting a stereotype". In fact, many correspondents were of the view that being too reflexive could hinder the core democratic functions of journalism:

> Sometimes, we are browbeaten and so worried about perpetuating these clichés that we almost might be inclined not to cover the important and tragic catastrophes which are unfolding, or not necessarily unfolding but which are self-perpetuating and self-sustaining.
>
> (Africa correspondent 2)

> As a journalist I think you just have to write it straight. You can't second-guess it, or sort of think "maybe I'll play this down because I don't want to reinforce stereotypes". If there is evidence of corruption you've got to write about it. You've got to make sure that you give a voice to those Africans living in a society we are criticising, to make it clear that you are not trying to point to the whole society about this.
>
> (David Smith)

In these perspectives, journalists do not really act upon their reflexivity but instead rely on core features of the traditional idea of news.

Finally, another strategy through which correspondents negotiate their reflexivity consists in actively seeking other avenues to produce more creative, in-depth or disruptive writing. Southern Africa correspondent 2 notably adopted a very clear strategy. The outlets he likes to work for do not offer enough money to make a decent living. At the same time, a two-minute appearance on TV brings him as much money as an article that would take four days of work. The occasional TV work thus provides an income that allows him to work on more interesting and more in-depth projects:

> To explain on TV that Oscar Pistorius vomited in court, that's of no interest to me in journalistic terms. But one minute on TV is 150€, i.e. one article for the newspaper. Paradoxically, you may have to finance the most interesting things with what is less interesting. (…) I don't have any culpability over this, because to me all of this is the "froth of things"; it's the "froth of information", the "froth of journalism" and it's not going to make a big difference. However, what this froth is going to finance is very interesting, and I may not have been able to do it without this. And then I'll be able to write three pages, or an exclusive investigation, and I will bring a real added value in terms of information, so I have no remorse. (…) It's all very paradoxical, because I am the first one to think that the Pistorius story is completely uninteresting, but then I go on TV to tell this saga. But I accept this completely; I tell myself that there are things much, much more important than this, and that I need to find a way to finance them.
>
> (Southern Africa correspondent 2)

Such strategy of spreading knowledge production across media outlets and medium is also at stake when journalists write stories outside the news pages (features, culture, tourism pages), or turn to book writing as a way to escape the constraint of general news writing. Another correspondent talked about his involvement in a cooperative blog, in ad-hoc writing of long pieces for a magazine, and in an artistic

project in collaboration with a photographer. Without these side activities, he confessed he would feel like "some terrible person who is failing in that responsibility to tell things as they are".

Foreign correspondents therefore act upon their reflexivity in several ways: at an intra-media level (sourcing, writing and editing stages), an inter-media level (working across different news media) and at an extra-media level (finding other avenues such as books or artistic/cultural projects). These, however, primarily constitute individual coping strategies rather than demonstrating a strong ability to challenge the broader system of foreign news productions, and in particular the commercial orientation of this structure (see section 2.2.3). Indeed, as Africa correspondent 1 states, the bottom line for newspapers remains a commercial one:

> Newspapers are essentially businesses run by a series of directors whose job is to sell as much of that product to the detriment of their competitors, and therefore what you put into the product is to make it more attractive than your competitors. And, sadly, selling prejudice does sell. And challenging prejudice, which does not happen on the news page, and it does not happen enough on the comment pages, well if you do it too often, you can lose customers, essentially.

In his study of the demographics of foreign correspondents in sub-Saharan Africa, Vicente found that freelancers working for three or more news organisations dominated the profession (50.81%), and that the field was evolving towards freelancing (Vicente, 2013 p. 31). Freelancers often pride themselves for being independent journalists who can say no and who have greater control over which stories they want to pursue. For instance, Southern Africa correspondent 1 expected that following Mandela's death there would be a high demand for stories about the risk of racial tensions in post-Mandela South Africa: "It's our job to say no. You can say no. If that's what they want, I am not going to do it".

At the same time, Vicente (2013) also found that the field was evolving towards increased precarious conditions. In this context, how much power do freelancers have to "say no"? In an article published in the *Columbia Journalism Review*, freelance war reporter Francesca Borri detailed the many constraints freelancers face today as a result of increasing precariousness and competition:

> People have this romantic image of the freelancer as a journalist
> who's exchanged the certainty of a regular salary for the freedom

> to cover the stories she is most fascinated by. But we aren't free at
> all; it's just the opposite.
>
> <div align="right">(Borri, 2013)</div>

Seen in this light, the choice made by the journalist to cover the Pistorius saga on TV in order to publish more meaningful stories elsewhere, exemplifies a hegemonic production system that co-opts journalistic reflexivity. Just like the consumers described by Horkheimer and Adorno in the *Culture Industry* [1944](2002 p. 136) who "feel compelled to buy and use its products even though they see through them", foreign correspondents appear to take part in a system through which they clearly see.

7.3 Foreign correspondents and their audience

I now bring in focus my analysis of foreign correspondents and representation of Africa by looking at how correspondents imagine and talk about their audience. The idea of the audience is a sort of blind spot in the production of foreign news. On the one hand, "what the audience wants" is naturalised within the newsroom (Paterson, 1996 p. 375); as such, the audience is a representation in itself. On the other hand, because perceptions of the audience by journalists significantly influence news choices, they ultimately impact media representations. Thus, I approach the audience as a discursive construct that dialectically links issues of news production and of media representation.

7.3.1 The grandma, the tourist, the businessman, the political elite …

When asked who they think their audience is, or when talking spontaneously about their audience, correspondents most commonly referred to four categories: a) the family member / the common person, b) the tourist, c) the businessman, d) the political elite / the decision maker. Not all foreign correspondents mentioned all these profiles, and depending on the editorial line of the paper, the emphasis would be put on different types of audiences, for instance a newspaper like the *Times* emphasises its political readership, while *Les Échos* emphasises its business readership. In one instance, a correspondent was very explicit about not writing or working with a Western audience in mind. But looking across all interviews, these four categories constitute the main and recurring profiles used by foreign

correspondents to talk about their audience. What does this typology of audiences tell us about the production of African news?

The first observation is that foreign correspondents write primarily for an audience 'back home'. This is hardly surprising since this is the primary reason behind the idea of foreign correspondence. Not unlike anthropologists, foreign correspondents are translators between cultures (Hannerz, 1996 p. 118). Their job is to report on a part of the world and a culture, and to make sense of it to another. They share with anthropologists "the condition of being in a transnational contact zone, engaged in reporting, representing, interpreting – generally, managing meaning across distances, although in part at least with different interests, under other constraints" (Hannerz, 2002 p. 58). Bunce (2015 p. 12) found that the ability to relate to a home audience was no longer as important for journalists working in international news agencies. However, my interviews with journalists working for nation-based outlets reveal that the ethos of writing for an audience 'back home' remains paramount for this sub-group of correspondents.

The main common denominator of these four types of audiences is that they all belong to a national culture. As a result, the involvement of fellow national citizens in an event becomes a key indicator that a story will be relevant to the audience. This explains, for instance, the ongoing production of the previously mentioned "Brits in shit" stories, or the framing of major disasters or conflict situations around the fate of fellow national citizens. Embedded within the national belonging is also the racial identification of the audience as white. This was perfectly exemplified during the Westgate attack in Nairobi that claimed some 67 lives, including 4 British citizens and where over 175 people were wounded. On 22 September 2013, as the siege was still taking place, the *Telegraph* was running on its website the headline "Britons caught in Nairobi shopping mall attacks" (Figure 32).

Figure 32 - *Telegraph.co.uk* article on the Westgate attack (2013)

At the time, no British victim had been reported yet and the title relied on a statement from William Hague, the Foreign Secretary, claiming British nationals were "undoubtedly caught up in the attack". Without confirmation of British citizens killed in the attack, the article frontloaded the fate of victims from other Western countries: "Among those confirmed to have been killed in the attack were two French and two Canadian nationals (…) The United States said it believed Americans were among those injured". For many correspondents, this phenomenon is neither new nor is it specific to the coverage of Africa. As Africa correspondent 1 put it: "it is the famous joke about the Aberdeen newspaper headline: 'Titanic sinks; Aberdeen man drowns'". Yet, through this naturalised process driven by perception of the audience, the media actively contribute to the sense that certain lives, Western and white, are worth more than others.

The correspondents sometimes defined relevance as "what will interest a given national readership", without necessarily involving fellow citizens in the story. Southern Africa correspondent 2 gave the example of a story on shale gas in South Africa that would speak to the interest of the French readership, as a national debate about shale gas was raging at the time in France. He recognised, however, that finding the relevant angle was "not always obvious" and sometimes "problematic":

> Take the rhino poaching: I am the first one to denounce it. We have done a lot of stories on this. But clearly this is part of the post-materialist values of the Western reader who will be interested in what happens to Rhinos but much less about what happens in a township. It's a bit caricatured but I think the media coverage is a bit excessive on that story. And at the same time, we are all part of this system, and we feed this trend because there is a demand.
>
> (Southern Africa correspondent 2)

Another significant consequence of the way the audience is imagined is simplification. The audience is assumed to have little to no prior knowledge or interest, especially when it comes to the first two categories (the common person / the tourist). This significantly impacts what background and contextual information journalists deem important in any given story. Talking about Zimbabwe, David Smith explains that he rarely talks about how the Movement for Democratic Change [the main opposition party to Mugabe between 1999 and 2005] had broken down into different factions:

> If you are in Zimbabwe or you are a Zimbabwe aficionado, you want to know that stuff, you are already into it; you want to know that Welshman Ncube has broken away from Morgan Tsvangirai and why it's important. Frankly, I think the average British reader is still about Mugabe vs. MDC. You don't want to muddy the water too much.

The way correspondents imagine their audience drives what they see as "relevant" news which confines media coverage of Africa to specific boxes:

> Brits in shit. Shark attacks. Or "Pilot kidnapped by CAR rebels". Or "foreign oil worker found with his pants down in a Lagos hotel". Those are all things that I know will pique [the audience] interest. The collapse of Africa's longest running and most successful peace deal in Mozambique this week – which is significant because it's a collapse of a peace deal that ended a nasty civil war some years back? No way, that would not have even been a tiny bit. Congo mineral stuff? No. Nigeria kidnapping? Yeah. Boko Haram? Yep. AQMI? Yep.
>
> (Africa correspondent 1)

These statements echo the claims by East Africa correspondent 3 that most of the British press tends "to presume that our readers are only interested in major calamities, countries with which we have a historical colonial relationship, Brits in troubles, wildlife and white mischief".

In sum, the four types of audiences embody a cluster of news values that mirror those that I showed to be driving media coverage of Africa in Chapter 4: negativity; the involvement of Western nations or people; the focus on countries or people more familiar to a given audience; economic relevance; unambiguity of the story. The way correspondents talk about their audience suggests that their work is "less shaped by an appreciation of the diversity of things actually there on the beat, and more by the attitudes and ideas brought from home" (Hannerz, 2007 p. 307). Dialectically, therefore, this imagined audience contributes to the covert process through which African news become simplified and stereotyped.

Furthermore, the audience also plays a strong role in the defensive rhetoric used by correspondents when faced with criticisms of Afro-pessimism. The audience becomes a way to divert the responsibility away from journalists: "the audience plays a huge role in agenda setting and I don't want to let them get away without having at least 50% of the responsibility" (Nicole Macheroux-Denault, Africa correspondent). The use of the audience as part of a defensive strategy relied on two cornerstones. On the one hand, correspondents would argue that the media deliver what the audience wants, and that unfortunately stereotypes sell. Given the commercial dimension of news production, then, the reproduction of stereotypes can be explained by the demand from the audience. On the other hand, correspondents would argue that they are not responsible for how people interpret media content – another classic strategy used in racism denial by the press (van Dijk, 1992 p. 92).

At best, correspondents would recognise that they rely on assumptions about the audience. David Smith claimed that journalists have been playing a "guessing game for centuries", and Africa correspondent 2 argued: "there are a lot of unpleasant, unspoken truths within knowing what the readers are interested in". Very rarely would correspondents recognise the media's responsibility in shaping the audience preferences that then feed back journalists' perceptions of the audience. Perhaps it takes stepping back from one's socialisation in the journalistic field to question this? Commenting on his public letter criticising the quality of CNN's reporting on Africa in its flagship program *60 minutes*, former foreign correspondent turned writer and academic, Howard French, wrote:

> The media pretends that it's only serving up what people are
> interested in (…) What the media is doing, in fact, is training the

> public's sensibilities by its own approaches to a variety of topics. Africa has traditionally been accorded very little space in the media (…) [except for] immense tragedy, interest in a white person playing a starring role, or wildlife. Over time, these become accepted as the only reasons most people would want to pay any attention to Africa.
>
> (Adegoke, 2015)

Foreign correspondents report for a distant audience. On the one hand, there is a distance between what they perceive interest their audience, and what interests them personally and professionally as correspondents. On the other hand, the distance is the geographical one between the field and "home". Except one, all my interviewees have been living in South Africa or Kenya for at least four years. In their daily lives, they do not encounter their 'back home' audience. The geographic distance translates into assumptions about what the audience is interested in; these assumptions, in turn, influence story selection and writing. In this way, the journalistic eye is on "the lookout for scenes that carry an already established interest for a Western audience, thus investing perception itself with the mediating power of cultural difference" (Spurr, 1993 p. 21). How foreign correspondents imagine their audience is therefore key to the mediation of the distant 'Other', and partly explains why this reporting makes "a kind of return trip, catering to ideas, even stereotypes, which are in fact already well-established at home" (Hannerz, 2007 p. 307). Representations of the distant audience (upstream) and of the distant 'Other' (downstream) are in a dialectic relation, whereby assumptions about the former feed stereotypes about the latter.

7.3.2   ... and the digitally connected 'Other'

However, the story of how foreign correspondents perceive their audience would not be complete without looking at the role played by local audiences. As discussed in the first part of the chapter, South African and Kenyan audiences increasingly use social media to discuss, comment and question the Western media coverage of Africa. In fact, these constitute the audience that foreign correspondents engage with the most, both through social media and in their daily lives. Seven correspondents shared Twitter followers statistics. In the majority (five out of seven cases), most of their followers were from the African country where they are based, before followers in their home country. On average, this amounts to 32.5% of local followers against 19.5% of home followers. Local

populations who have long held the status of distant 'Others' – to be represented only – are increasingly becoming audience members.

Through this local involvement, African voices are increasingly heard and take part in shaping the narratives about Africa, and this appears to impact how foreign correspondents write and work. For Africa correspondent 1, the involvement of local audiences through social media can in fact contribute to raising journalistic standards: "Nowadays, especially in Kenya, you get picked up on very quickly by the twitterati if there is anything that looks like it could be slightly dodgy; which is good!" He recalled being in assignment a few years before with a venerable old correspondent who was surprised to see him take so many notes when interviewing a woman:

> He said: "if you have a "the" instead of an "a", or a "with" instead of a "from", what is she gonna care about?" That's changed now. You can be anywhere and some guy is like, "hey" – on his phone – "I saw what you wrote about me in a refugee camp or whatever!" Which is good!

As this story suggests, the role of local audiences in the digital age is primarily a reactive one. A perfect example of this reactive role was the international reporting of KONY2012 (Nothias, 2013). KONY2012 was a 30-minute video created by Christian American NGO Invisible Children. It aimed to raise awareness about the crimes committed by the Lord's Resistance Army and its leader Joseph Kony. In April 2012, the video went viral, eventually reaching 110 million hits in a few days (Chalk, 2012 p. 3). This success was as surprising as the online reactions it spurred were numerous. Observers in Uganda and elsewhere raised questions about its accuracy (Kony was portrayed as still in Uganda, whereas he had left the country six years ago), the policy it advocated (US military intervention), and its reliance on dehumanising stereotypes and colonial tropes that disempower Africans and present them as voiceless distant 'Others' (Nothias, 2013). The backlash grew in parallel to the video spreading on the web, and a blog compiling the different criticisms, Visible Children, also went viral and attracted at least 2.3 million views in a few days (Tutton, 2012).

While the international media initially focused on the "buzz" created by the video – hereby giving it further promotion – it then incorporated this backlash in its coverage. Two Ugandan journalists who had been at the forefront of the online backlash, Rosebell Kagumire and Angelo Izama, were interviewed on most

international news organisations, including CNN, CNTV, BBC, France 24, the *New York Times*, the *Guardian* and Al-Jazeera English (Chalk, 2012 p. 8). Social media thus enabled these voices to be granted a space in mainstream media platforms that have, historically, marginalised such voices. This local engagement through social media became part of the international coverage, and played a role in shaping the mainstream news narrative. Looking at the 2013 Kenyan elections, and the use of #SomeonetellCNN on Twitter, Bunce (2015 p. 24) observed a similar phenomenon where Kenyan tweets managed to make CNN amend its coverage and "were not restricted to the 'twittersphere' – they entered into, and became stories in mainstream international news coverage".

The engagement with local audiences via social media is not a panacea. On the one hand, internet penetrations in and across African countries vary greatly (Ogunyemi, 2011 p. 468 quoted in Bunce, 2015 p. 24), which means that there are strong communicative inequalities among local audiences. On the other hand, there is a risk to fetishise authentic "African" voices as able to "provide some kind of unchallengeable African truth" (Jacobs, 2013). Talking about Kony2012, Jacobs (2013) reminds us that Invisible Children "has 'African voices' on its staff" and that "this was part of the filmmakers' defence when they responded to criticisms". However, I would argue that there is one area where this engagement from local audiences certainly heralds a strongly disruptive potential. It is the fact that foreign correspondents increasingly envision local population as either actual or possible audience members.

I will illustrate this point with a story shared by "PRI's The World" Africa correspondent, Anders Kelto. Kelto was embarking on a yearlong radio project that followed the lives of kids in a school in one of the poorest townships of the Cape Town region. After having spent a couple of months in the school in preparation for the program, he prepared a video that would accompany the launch of the program online. He chose the title "Learning in poverty" and shared his choice with his editor. Upon hearing the title, the editor told him that he could not use this title. Perplexed, he asked "why?" The editor then told him that, before putting the video online and choosing a title for the program, he should go to the classroom and show the video to the school kids. As he looked at them watching the video, the journalist recalled thinking, "thank god I didn't use this title!" When I asked him to unpack what was wrong with this title, he explained that it reduced these

kids' lives and learning experience, their present and their future, to the experience of "poverty"; that it equated them exclusively with "poverty" and that it completely failed to communicate the complexity, nuances and basic sense of common humanity that they were in fact trying to show in the program. Ultimately, they settled on the title "School Year" with the subtitle "Learning, Poverty, and Success in a South African Township".

This story illustrates what can happen when foreign correspondents envision local population as potential audience members. It was not until he envisioned the subjects of his reporting as potential viewers that he realised that his title could be considered dehumanising and reductive. For now, local populations have mainly played a reactive role in the news production process (à la #SomeonetellCNN or KONY2012). But that all correspondents talked about the local engagement via social media heralds some potential for a stronger impact on the production process. More than ever before, foreign correspondents cannot afford not to envision local population as potential readers (Franks, 2010a). Whether or not they welcome the local backlash, whether or not their media decide to become "more nationalistic in the face of global exposure" (Sambrook, 2010 p. 57), foreign correspondents are all impacted by the fact that there is a local audience that may read their content.[26] In that sense, the primarily reactive role of local audiences via social media contributes to cultivate journalistic sensitivities over time that will impact the news production process upstream, not only downstream. My argument is not that foreign correspondent should write primarily with a local audience in mind. But it is likely that, faced with growing local feedback, correspondents will come to integrate more systematically the "local citizen" as a category alongside "the tourist", "the grand ma", "the businessman" and "the politician"; something that could only lead to greater accountability and more sensitive forms of reporting.[27]

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[26] For now, this is particularly true for British journalists. The two hubs of news production in Africa, South Africa and Kenya, are anglophone countries. These are the two countries where the backlash most often comes from, which also means that French journalists are not the subjects of as much scrutiny. But given the number of francophone countries in Africa, this is likely to become increasingly the case as internet penetration grows in these countries. DRC for instance, is the most populous francophone country in the world, ahead of France. Twenty-one countries in Africa have French as an official language and an additional five have it as a second language.

[27] My findings here are linked to my focus on a sub-group of foreign correspondents working for nation-based outlets and who are not parachute journalists. But the majority of international correspondents in Africa work for media outlets such as Reuters, AFP, Al Jazeera and the BBC that have a more global agenda; and many of these journalists are

Conclusion

This chapter provided a critical appraisal of the accounts of foreign correspondents on three issues: Afro-pessimism, the news production of Africa's image, and the audience. In the first section, I showed that Afro-pessimism is a floating signifier and that the debate about Western media coverage of Africa is played out in local contexts and shapes how correspondents react to the criticism of Afro-pessimism. Paradoxically, while correspondents seek to distance themselves from Afro-pessimism, the second section of this chapter demonstrated that when engaging with production processes, correspondents were much more open to criticisms. In fact, they display a strong awareness of how the logics of news production lead to simplifications and stereotypes. This individual reflexivity testifies to a new journalistic sensitivity, and even leads journalists to develop strategies to act upon it. Yet, these strategies remain at an individual level and are constrained by broader features of production.

Finally, I analysed how the way correspondents think about their audience is a driver of both continuities and changes in the reporting of Africa. The existence of naturalised perceptions of who the audience is and what interests them contributes to simplification and to the reproduction of stereotypes about distant 'Others'. However, correspondents also increasingly envision these distant 'Others' as potential audiences. In the age of digital and social media, local population are impacting the reporting of Africa downstream – by being reactive and keeping in check Western media coverage. But they also have an impact on reporting upstream; as correspondents integrate local population as potential audiences, this contributes to increasing the accuracy and accountability of the reporting. This emergent trend heralds some potential to deliver higher levels of accountability in the reporting of Africa in international news.

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local or regional journalists (Bunce, 2015). By virtues of a globalising media market, it is possible that the majority of foreign correspondents in Africa have already started to operate a significant evolution in the perceptions of the audience. Future research into the perceptions of the audience by these local/global correspondents, as well as by parachute journalists, could help illuminate the extent and significance of that trend.

The representation of foreign correspondents in popular culture and public debates often oscillates between heroes and villains or puppets (Hannerz, 2002 p. 60; Ehrlich & Saltzman, 2015); between the intrepid cosmopolitan human rights defenders portrayed by Jennifer Connelly in the Hollywood blockbuster *Blood Diamond* (2006), and the self-righteous neocolonial subject depicted by Wainaina, a mere exchangeable agent of media imperialism and of the "calculus of death" (Cottle, 2013). In contrast, my analysis draws a more nuanced and complex portrait located in the gap between these two representations (Hannerz, 2002 p. 60). It paints an informed account of the primary producers of media texts about Africa as individuals caught between the broad demand of their industry and their awareness of issues of representation and stereotypes.

I would therefore describe the foreign correspondents as being in a *postcolonial drift*. On the one hand, correspondents "catch the drift" of the postcolonial criticism of Western media. They are not only familiar with it and understand its general meaning; they also ask themselves these questions and, on several points, side with the criticism. It is telling that the most recent, and largest public campaign to call for an improvement of the reporting of Africa was led by Howard French, a former correspondent in Africa. On the other hand, the *postcolonial drift* stands for the broader evolution of the international media landscape in the postcolonial era; an evolution marked by much continuity but also by changes brought about by a globalising and digital age.

The perfect example of correspondents navigating this *postcolonial drift* materialised during my interview with Bartholomäus Grill, the Africa bureau chief for German broadsheet magazine *Der Spiegel*. Towards the end of the interview, Grill was browsing through huge piles of papers and articles spread throughout his office. He was searching for a special issue dedicated to Africa of a German magazine to complain about the Afro-pessimist choices made by the editorial team. Underneath massive piles of papers and news articles, I caught sight of three books: Said's *Orientalism*, Mbembe's *On the Postcolony* and the *Granta* journal containing Wainaina's "How to write about Africa". In a way, the piles of news articles perfectly symbolised the weight of a media industry that, more often than not, suffocates the foreign correspondents' awareness of issues of postcolonial representation of Africa.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has investigated British and French print media so as to evaluate the state of Afro-pessimism in journalistic discourse and to assess the nature and production of postcolonial discourses on Africa. This conclusion offers a thematically structured cross-comparative discussion of my core empirical findings. I first answer my four research questions respectively. Next, I underline the implications of my findings for the study of representation of Africa and the debate about Afro-pessimism in the media. I then discuss the limitations of this study and identify future avenues for research. Finally, I emphasise the core contributions this thesis makes at the empirical, methodological and theoretical levels.

Beyond Afro-pessimism in the *postcolonial mediatropole*?

Answering the research questions

Research question 1: What is Afro-pessimism?

The term Afro-pessimism emerged in the early 1990s to describe and condemn a discourse on postcolonial Africa that originated in the West and reproduced images, narratives, stereotypes and a rhetoric reminiscent of older colonial and racist representations of sub-Saharan Africa and Africans. The 1990s also witnessed a tremendous increase in international news provision brought about notably by the emergence of 24-hour rolling news culture and international news channels. This contributed to a global mediatisation of African news, but essentially through a narrow lens of war, conflict, famine, poverty, violence and political instability. Western media thus became a central focus point of the debate about Afro-pessimism. From then on, critiques saw Western media as key contributors to the construction, reproduction and circulation of Afro-pessimism.

And yet, as I argued in Chapter 1, the concept of Afro-pessimism lacks a clear definition. I illustrated and discussed the absence of clarity around the notion of Afro-pessimism in the literature, and I suggested that this lack of conceptual clarity

could be detrimental to an adequate analysis of the coverage of African news. Chapter 7 provided further examples of the state of Afro-pessimism as a floating signifier since foreign correspondents did not have a clear, single, authoritative understanding of the notion at hand, beyond the shared view that Afro-pessimism has to do with a set of "negative representations". These findings suggest that the lack of clarity surrounding the concept is at stake both within as well outside academia. In addition, I also demonstrated that, although the Afro-pessimism of Western media seems to have become taken for granted, there are several empirical gaps in the literature including (1) a lack of research into French media coverage, (2) into media coverage of francophone countries, (3) into the coverage of more banal news events, and (4) into the perspective of foreign correspondents. This thesis sought to contribute to filling these gaps by providing, at a theoretical level, a fully-fledged definition of Afro-pessimism and, at an empirical level, by providing an analysis of British and French print media discourse about Africa.

Drawing on the disjointed literature on Afro-pessimism and the literature on Africa's image in the news, I put forward a definition of Afro-pessimism as a discourse. I identified the key discursive features that make Afro-pessimism in journalistic discourse peculiar. The Afro-pessimist discourse, I showed, operates through the combination of five discursive features: (1) it homogenises Africa; (2) assigns it racial meanings; (3) relies on a highly selective representational repertoire; (4) assess Africa's progress against criteria set by the West; and (5) predicts a bleak future to the continent.

Research question 2: What is the nature of media discourse on Africa? Is it really Afro-pessimist and if so, in what sense?

In order to assess the state of Afro-pessimism in media discourse, I conducted an empirical analysis of British and French print media, or the *postcolonial mediatropole*. With this notion, I mean to refer to the media systems and cultures of two metropoles that were the main centres of the colonial power in Africa. My choice to focus on these two countries was motivated by the key claim of postcolonial theory that colonialism affected the imagination and system of knowledge of colonising countries up to the current era. I focused on two sites of investigation with a continental dimension, and I attended to both the linguistic and visual components of journalistic discourses as well as their contexts of production.

My findings challenge the view of a monolithic Afro-pessimist discourse in the coverage of Africa in British and French print media. Instead, my analysis paints a more nuanced picture of a discursive construction of Africa that is ambivalent, multifaceted and more complex than first meets the eye. Looking at the coverage of the 50th anniversaries of independence, I showed that the claims that the media coverage *systematically* refers to "tribalism" and "darkness", treats Africa as a country and fails to give a voice to Africans – three components through which the Afro-pessimist discourse can be actively deployed – are not supported by the analysis.

Afro-pessimism was not absent from the media coverage either. It was particularly salient in editorials that used linguistic, narrative and rhetorical components through which the five features of Afro-pessimism were enacted. But overall, the main discursive dynamic at stake in the coverage was a master narrative of failure caught between a discomfort surrounding colonial history in Britain and France, and a social critique of corrupted elites, inequalities and poverty.

In addition, I showed that not one news magazine cover embodied Afro-pessimism. Instead, there was a significant uptake for a resolutely positive discourse about Africa. This Afro-optimism was not confined to a few publications but indeed was found on all covers published between 2011 and 2015, and throughout a range of magazines with different editorial lines across the two countries. Beyond a homogenous and systematic Afro-pessimism, these findings testify to the co-existence of different narratives about Africa in British and French print media.

Research question 3: Are mythical representations enduring, evolving or disappearing and what are the forces and power relations driving these evolutions and/or continuities?

While the narratives that characterise the media landscape are not all Afro-pessimist, they nonetheless indicate an ongoing impact of colonial power relations and colonial representations.

In site 1, I demonstrated that British and French media report primarily on their former colonies, which revealed the importance of colonial ties in shaping news

from Africa. Yet, the reporting often drifted from the focus on one country to Africa more generally. There was a tendency to ground the reporting in relation to Africa as a whole through generic references and, to a lesser extent, through active generalisation, comparison and overlexicalisation. My analysis of quoting verbs also established that there was a subtle linguistic bias that contributed to present Western voices as more authoritative, knowledgeable and reasonable than their African counterparts. This bias resonates with the discursive polarisation of social actors around binaries characteristic of colonial discourse. I also showed the endurance of several colonial myths to interpret the post-independence years, namely the pathologisation and infantilisation of Africa and Africans, as well as the strategic negation of some parts of Africa's history. Finally, I proposed that the main discursive dynamic at stake – an ambiguous master narrative of failure – should be understood in the context of the unsettled colonial memories in the UK and France.

In site 2, I showed that the magazine covers drew on pre-existing, often colonial, notions of 'Africanness' and combined them with signifiers of modernity, economic attractiveness and progress. Far from disrupting Afro-pessimism, the Afro-optimism of these covers took part in a similar discursive apparatus by reproducing the five discursive features of Afro-pessimism. Afro-optimism, I argued, should be interpreted in relation to the evolution of colonial power relations into a neoliberal ordering of the world that favours short-term profit, extractive economies, and foreign capital at the expense of social and economic equality. These covers therefore reproduced a reductive vision of Africa caught between a colonial imagination and a neoliberal ideology.

In sum, colonial representations and power relations significantly shape the discursive construction of these various postcolonial "ideas of Africa", and not only in the form of an Afro-pessimist discourse. In that sense, I would argue that mythical representations are simultaneously enduring and evolving, more than they are disappearing. My findings call our attention to the non-systematic dimension of Afro-pessimism and to several discursive ambiguities and disruptions in the coverage; but they also indicate several ways in which colonial ideas and images find their way back into contemporary journalistic discourse.

Research question 4: To what extent does the context of news production explain the formation of media discourse? What is the interplay between the processes of journalistic production and the formation of postcolonial discourse(s) on Africa?

In order to better understand how and why these postcolonial discourses come about the way they do, I grounded my textual analysis into the context of news production and of the values, practices and structures characteristic of the journalistic field.

The "idea of news" and several long-standing news values are key factors shaping media coverage. In site 1, I showed that the anniversaries became news insofar as they could be related to something negative, controversial, exuberant or when it directly involved Western nations or people. Another key value that dominated the news was ethnocentrism. This consists in prioritising events that include individuals perceived as closer to a home audience based on linguistic, national or racial criteria. But it is also visible when coverage relies on pre-existing and simplified explanatory frameworks, and on a representational repertoire that the home audience, supposedly, more easily relates to. This was found in site 1 and also in Chapters 6 and 7, from the reliance on the savannah tree trope (Chapter 6) to the preference for "Brits in shit" stories (Chapter 7).

There are others features built-into the fabric of journalism that significantly shape postcolonial discourses. For instance, the conventional schema of editorials lends itself to the deployment of Afro-pessimism (Chapter 5). The division of labour and the different production layers (headline selection, choice of visual, copy editing) can significantly contribute to sensationalism, simplification, generalisation, stereotypes or a racial bias (Chapters 6 and 7). In Chapter 5, it was even the watchdog function of journalism that, when combined with the tendency of news to be present-oriented, contributed to sidetracking the commemorative dimension of the 50th anniversaries. As a result, the watchdog function of journalism shaped media discourse into a narrative sweetener for Britain and France to distance themselves from their colonial history and postcolonial responsibilities.

The interview material used throughout Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 shows that these features of news productions and journalistic values are naturalised in the professional field. A particularly revealing example was the analysis of how

foreign correspondents talk about their audience – a naturalised representation of the audience 'back home' that dialectically feeds stereotypes about distant 'Others'. Postcolonial journalistic discourses about Africa are therefore constructed by and through these production processes and values that journalists perceive as common sense, tied to their professional role and even, at times, morally *right* (watchdog function).

These professional values and features of journalistic production, however, did not appear ex nihilo. They emerged in the 19th century with the establishment of the idea of news media as watchdogs (Hearns-Branaman, 2011) and of a network of international news subservient to Western interests (Harris, 1981). Therefore, they developed alongside, and are entrenched with, the historical expansion of colonialism. Put into this broader context, it would appear that contemporary journalistic discourses carry and reproduce colonial representations by virtue of foreign reporting having similarly inherited a colonial legacy in its structure, values and production practices.

The naturalisation of these values and practices among journalists is the process through which postcolonial meanings occur. But it is also the process through which individual journalists manage their reflexivity. My interviews revealed a strong reflexivity among foreign correspondents about issues of colonial representations and stereotyping. While these individuals developed several strategies to act upon their reflexivity (at an intra-media, inter-media and extra media level), their reflexivity also gives to see, in counterpoint, the broader system of foreign news production within which they operate. By their own account, many dominant features of the international media industry contribute to the representational 'Othering' of Africa. Beyond individual strategies, then, the way correspondents seemed to cope with being part of this broader structure was by retreating to the common sense of "what makes events newsworthy", "what news is for", "what journalism is" and "what the readers want".

The reflexivity was also visible in media content, in particular in the magazine covers that promised to show the other side of Africa, the new Africa, the Africa the media never show you. Yet, this reflexivity appeared to be the result of a discursive trickling down that originated from the circle of international financial elites. In other words, the media reflexivity about Afro-pessimism was driven by a

set of commercial incentives, more than by a cosmopolitan, disinterested desire to break free from the legacy of colonial representations. In the context of an evolving global political economy, these media generally bought into an exploitative narrative about the continent as the new frontier-market, a narrative reminiscent of the 19th century "Scramble for Africa". The promises by media outlets that they will provide a new, different image of Africa is linked to a set of commercial incentive for the media industry itself. Indeed, several British and French media outlets hope to benefit from the conjunction of a relative lack of pan-African media originating from the continent, of a boom in online consumption and of the fact that French and English are widely spoken throughout the continent to establish their brand in this media market.

In terms of representation, this trend brings about some disruptions. For instance, it prompts a greater consideration for digitally connected local audiences no longer only perceived as subjects of reporting (Chapter 7). This trend also leads to the appearance of an ambiguous Afropolitanism that refuses to assign a victim identity to Africans but that is also entrenched in a capitalist culture of consumerism, lifestyle and commodification (Chapter 6). However, in the context of my analysis of magazine covers, the trend for new representations of Africa mainly translate into the discursive reproduction of the five features of Afro-pessimism under a new guise. In particular, I demonstrated that this process occurs through the adoption of a corporate visual aesthetic characteristic of stock photography, a process of aestheticisation (Aiello, 2012b) that shapes Africa's difference vis-à-vis the expected, narcissistic desires of a foreign gaze.

In sum, the empirical engagement with the context of news production not only explained the multi-layered formation of media discourse. It also allowed digging deeper into the power relations within which postcolonial discourses, including but not limited to Afro-pessimism, are implicated. My findings thus paint a picture of the *postcolonial mediatropole* as an institutionalised fabric of knowledge impacted by colonial power relations and their postcolonial evolution into a globalised neoliberal ordering of the world; a social institution *in* and *through* which mythical representations endure and evolve in new, complex and ambivalent ways, more than they disappear.

Challenging the co-option of the criticism of Afro-pessimism

This research comes to a close at a particularly exciting moment in the public debate about Africa's media image. The criticism of Western media coverage of Africa and of Afro-pessimism has gained significant currency beyond academia and notably within the media. The *Guardian*, for instance, published Wainaina's criticism of Western correspondents in Nairobi in 2012. In 2014, it published an article about the application "Africa isn't a country" which used the *Guardian's* very own API to reveal that its journalists are almost four times more likely to mention "Africa" in their articles without referring to a specific country than they would for "Asia" (Kayser-Bril, 2014). The same year, the newspaper organised a public debate in its London coffee shop (#guardiancoffee) on "Debunking myths about Africa", just like the BBC World Service in 2012 with its "Africa's media image: justified or prejudiced?" debate. In June 2015, the BBC reported early on, and thus contributed to promote, a viral Twitter campaign using the hashtag #TheAfricaTheMediaNeverShowsYou inviting to promote a more diverse and positive image of Africa to the world.

Similar calls for changing the image of Africa are not limited to the field of news media. In humanitarian communication, the online campaign "Africa for Norway" went viral in 2012 through a song that ironically asked Africans to donate radiators to freezing Norwegians as a way to disrupt stereotypes (Paterson, 2013 p. 5). In 2013, Oxfam launched a new campaign "See Africa differently" that called to "make Africa famous for its epic landscapes, not hunger", "for its food markets, not its food shortages" (Tanner, 2013). These are only but a few of many examples that point to the liveliness, reflexivity and awareness that surround a broad debate on Africa's media image within the media.

But in the blunt words of Lydia Polgreen, the *New York Times* Johannesburg Bureau Chief, "what is more insulting than the idea of 'positive news' from Africa? As if the continent was a dull witted child in need of encouragement" (Ross, 2012). Indeed, while these various initiatives aim to, and are presented as, correcting Afro-pessimism, they largely end up reproducing the discursive legacy of Afro-pessimism. I notably demonstrated this in the case of the Afro-optimism of magazine covers (Chapter 6).

This rebranding of Africa – and, its correlative, the criticism of Western media coverage of Africa – is implicated in a set of economic and political interests, both foreign and local. For instance, NGOs facing compassion fatigue and increased competition find in this positive discourse a way to appeal to their donors in new, feel-good and narcissistic ways (Chouliaraki, 2010). Governments keen on keeping media scrutiny at bay can also rely on the criticism of Western media, as was the case in the 2013 Kenyan elections or the 2010 World Cup in South Africa (Chapter 7). Similarly, international financial circles have spearheaded the "Africa Rising" narrative, but mainly in support of extractive economies that economically favour foreign countries and local elites, and have damaging social impacts (Sylla, 2014).

In his comprehensive and systematic review of empirical research into US and UK media representations of Africa published between 1990 and 2014, Scott (2015 p. 4) argues that existing research is insufficient to reach "any firm, generalizable conclusions about the nature of media coverage of Africa". In consequence, he argues that the widespread belief that Afro-pessimism dominates media coverage is a "myth", in Barthes' sense, and an "imaginative object" (Scott, 2015 p. 16). He concludes by reminding that Said (1978), whose work is often summoned in studies of media representation of Africa, identified academic scholarship as a key contributor to Orientalism. Scott therefore suggests that studies that make unsubstantiated, generalisable claims about media representation of Africa risk contributing to a discursive common sense that ultimately provides support to this rhetoric of the rebranding of Africa and to a set of corporate and political agendas. In other words, there is a risk for academic scholarship on media Afro-pessimism to become instrumental in supporting the very system of hegemonic power it seeks to challenge in the first place. Power could be *redone* precisely where it is sought to be *undone* (Ahmed, 2012 p. 13).

At the roots of this risk is the underspecification of the concept of Afro-pessimism and its equation with "negative" images of Africa. The result of this underspecification is the trivialisation of postcolonial representations that appear obvious, common sense, unchanging, hereby mythologising them further instead of unpacking their complexities, contradictions and evolutions. It also implies that it is impossible to talk about violence, political instability, social inequalities and poverty without reproducing colonial discourse. In sum, an underspecified concept of Afro-pessimism could be devoid of the critical ethos – characteristic of

critical/cultural media studies and postcolonial theory – that seeks to confront dominant discourses with their racist and colonial roots so as to challenge the hegemonic power structures that produce them.

While there is a risk of co-option of the criticism of Afro-pessimism, I made the choice in this thesis to not back down from this risk. Firstly, I put forward a conceptualisation grounded in a postcolonial perspective of Afro-pessimism beyond "negative images" as a way to remedy to the underspecification of the concept. Secondly, I provided an empirical analysis that engaged with the complexity and ambivalence of postcolonial discourses and their production. This analysis sought to be critical and to show precisely what postcolonial discourses are made of, how they come about and how power relations inherited from the colonial era shape them. But it also attempted to be transparent and go against the grain, for instance by facing the fact that Afro-pessimism was not a systematically dominant discourse. In this dual effort at a theoretical and empirical level, this research sought to advance our knowledge about the state of Afro-pessimism in British and French print media, while refusing to let the study of Afro-pessimism and the analysis of postcolonial representations be used against themselves.

Limitations and avenues for future research

There are several limitations to this research linked to its scope and methodological approach. Here I outline the main limitations in three areas – audience reception, production, and context of investigation – and suggest future areas of research related to these limitations and to my findings.

This thesis focused on media content and production and therefore did not engage with the question of reception. My findings do not make claims about the reception of media texts. I do not embrace a reductive top-down model, which would argue that the ideological load of media texts is transferred straightforwardly to readers. While I do not argue that reception of these texts is fixed, I have tried to show how media discourses both reflect and, precisely, try to fix certain meanings and hegemonic worldviews through specific semiotic, linguistic and rhetorical choices. Nonetheless, it would be interesting to see future studies include an element of empirical investigation into audience reception so as to gain a deeper understanding of the circulation of Afro-pessimism. Is Afro-pessimism in media

content accepted or resisted by audiences? Or, in the case of content that cannot be deemed Afro-pessimist, do audiences re-activate Afro-pessimism in their reading?

Another limitation of this study is the depth of the investigation into key processes of production. While I was able to interview media producers directly involved in the production of the texts analysed, the fabric of news production is complex and multi-layered insofar as it involves a host of other individuals such as editors, fixers and translators. In this regard, the ethnographic work of Bunce (2010; 2011; 2013; 2015) was particularly useful throughout this research to complement my analysis of the broader context of journalistic production. I hope this thesis demonstrated that an engagement with production contexts provides deeper insights into the circulation and operation of power shaping media discourse. Inspired by this approach, future studies could analyse further how the structure and evolution of the environment of news production impact postcolonial media discourse. I notably see two aspects, briefly discussed in my empirical analysis, that warrant further research: digitisation and commercialism. How does the digital environment impact the reporting of Africa, both in terms of content and practices? In Chapter 4, I found that most of the exclusive content published online was in fact news agency material. This limited finding suggests that the online platform may reinforce the power of established international news providers rather than challenging it. In Chapter 7, I suggested that increased freelancing and economic precariousness in the field of foreign reporting, resulting from commercialisation, could lead reflexive journalists to do distasteful things. Future studies could shed even more light on the interplay between commercialism and postcolonial representations.

Finally, this study is limited to the context of the UK and France. I therefore cannot generalise my findings to "Western media". What I have done is analysed British and French print media against the backdrop of a broader debate about "Western media coverage of Africa", and to provide findings that nuance and challenge this broader criticism of "Western media". While I focus on a Western context, I attempted to de-Westernise my approach at a theoretical level by drawing on the literature of postcolonial theory. This is in opposition to the dominant form of de-Westernisation in journalism studies where theoretical frameworks from the "North" are used to analyse empirical examples in the "South" that bring "local colour" and "serve as evidence for the theoretical argument made by the North"

(Wasserman, 2011 p. 103; see also Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012 for a broader critique of Eurocentric theory). Still, future studies could contribute further to the effort of de-Westernising the debate by looking at similar issues of representation in the context of African media as well as in, and across, countries with growing economic interests in the continent such as India, Brazil and China (see for instance Wasserman, 2011 for a proposal for more comparative projects that attend to the context of the global South; see Gagliardone, 2013 for an investigation of Chinese media in Africa). Finally, another area that future studies should attend to is to compare the coverage of Africa with other geographical areas, both to evaluate the extent of a differential media treatment of the continent and to understand how a colonial legacy also shapes representations of the rest of the world.

Key contributions

In spite of these limitations, this research has made several substantial contributions at an empirical, methodological and theoretical level.

Empirical contributions

Firstly, this research has contributed to filling four important empirical gaps in the literature. I provided an analysis of (1) French media and (2) francophone African countries. Overall, my findings did not reveal strong differences in the way British and French journalists cover Africa, and in the way francophone and anglophone countries are covered. The most noticeable difference was that French newspapers prioritise francophone countries and British newspapers prioritise anglophone countries (site 1). But this difference in media content is the result of a similar mechanism in the two countries, namely the role of colonial ties in determining newsworthiness. In spite of this different geographical focus, I found that the main discursive features of media coverage, both in site 1 and 2, were largely shared across the two countries. Another gap in the literature that this thesis contributed to fill is (3) the study of the more banal and mundane forms of coverage, those that do not fall in the categories of wars and disasters. By changing the focus, the empirical investigation revealed that there are a variety of discourses at stake in the coverage of Africa: Afro-pessimism and commonly held assumptions about Western media reporting of Africa exist but they are not as systematic as often claimed; there is a clear uptake for an Afro-optimist discourse and; there are more

ambiguous narratives such as in the case of the reporting of the 50th anniversaries of independence. Finally, (4) I analysed the views of an elite group of journalists that have rarely been consulted in previous studies, despite their key role in shaping media discourse.

Methodological contribution

At a methodological level, my approach grounded the analysis of media content into contexts of production, hereby producing interrelated empirical data at both levels. This choice was inspired by, and contributes to, the uptake in the field of social semiotics and CDA to engage with media producers and with the multimodal nature of contemporary communication. In terms of content, my analysis attended to the linguistic as well as the visual dimensions of media content. The engagement with media producers, for its part, offered insights into the values, incentives and constraints shaping media discourse. By linking contextual aspects to features of media content, the analysis provided a deeper understanding of the power relations within which postcolonial discourses are implicated. Thus, this methodological approach also contributed to a greater dialogue between postcolonial theory and journalism studies by inviting to take into account the material conditions under which racialised forms of knowledge in the journalistic field are produced.

Theoretical contribution

Finally, at a theoretical level, I put forward a conceptualisation of Afro-pessimism to remedy to the underspecification of the concept. This was a way to prevent the concept from becoming instrumental in an ideological project that critical/cultural and postcolonial studies seek to challenge. By using a clear definition, I was able to delineate what constitutes precisely Afro-pessimism in the coverage as well as what does not. Furthermore, this definition also allowed understanding that Afro-optimism, which at first sight may seem to be a new and different discourse, was in fact a clear discursive continuity. This definition will hopefully provide a solid benchmark for future studies interested in assessing the state of Afro-pessimism and Africa's media image.

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Appendices

Appendix I

List of countries used to retrieve data in Site 1

Between 1957 and 1962, the following 24 countries (in alphabetical order) in sub-Saharan Africa gained their independence from colonial powers. These countries therefore marked their 50th anniversaries of independence between 2007 and 2012.

* Benin (France – 1960)

* Burkina Faso (France – 1960)

* Burundi (Belgium – 1962)

* Cameroon (Germany / France / Britain – 1960)

* Central African Republic (France – 1960)

* Chad (France – 1960)

* Democratic Republic of Congo (Belgium – 1960)

* Gabon (France – 1960)

* Ghana (Britain – 1957)

* Guinea (France – 1958)

* Ivory Coast (France – 1960)

* Madagascar (France – 1960)

* Mali (France – 1960)

* Mauritania (France – 1960)

* Niger (France – 1960)

* Nigeria (Britain – 1960)

* Republic of the Congo (France – 1960)

* Rwanda (Belgium – 1962)

* Senegal (France – 1960)

* Sierra Leone (Britain – 1961)

* Somalia (Britain / Italy – 1960)

* Tanzania (Britain – 1961)

* Togo (Germany / France – 1960)

* Uganda (Britain – 1962)

Appendix II

Coding sheet for Site 1

1. <u>Newspaper</u>

2. <u>Date of publication</u>

3. <u>Title</u>

4. <u>Author</u>

5. <u>Section</u>

   1. International News   2. Domestic News   3.   Opinion
   pieces/columns
   4. Editorials   5. Culture   6. Business
   7. Other

6. <u>Length (in words)</u>

7. <u>Page</u>

8. <u>Focus: continental or national (specify country)?</u>

9. <u>Peg (see note 1)</u>

   1. Celebration / 2. Other: detail

10. <u>Acknowledgement of news agency material (see Note 2)</u>:
    1. Author / Co-author
    2. If the article quotes a news agency, how much of the article the news
       agency material constitutes (approximately):
       0-10%   10-50%   50-90%
       90-100%

----VOICES----

11. <u>Individuals quoted </u>(see note 3): as identified in the text, either by reference
    to their nationality or by the reference to the institution they represent. In
    that sense, it is individual in so far as they come to represent a national
    institution or a community in the text. It does not make claim to make a
    statement about the identity of the individuals. "African", as used here, is
    not limited to sub-Saharan Africa. If the name of the individual is written,
    write the name. If anonymous, write "anonymous".

    a. Government / political party:
       i. France
       ii. UK
       iii. Other European
       iv. US.
       v. African
       vi. Other / Unable to determine
    b. NGO / INGO:
       i. France

      ii. UK
      iii. Other European
      iv. US.
      v. African
      vi. Other / Unable to determine

c. Business / Company / Firm representative:
      i. France
      ii. UK
      iii. Other European
      iv. US.
      v. African
      vi. Other / Unable to determine

d. Journalist:
      i. France
      ii. UK
      iii. Other European
      iv. US.
      v. African
      vi. Other / Unable to determine

e. Other member of the civil society (non-NGO):
      i. France
      ii. UK
      iii. Other European
      iv. US.
      v. African
      vi. Other / Unable to determine

f. Academic:
      i. France
      ii. UK
      iii. Other European
      iv. US.
      v. African
      vi. Other / Unable to determine

g. Expert:
      i. France
      ii. UK
      iii. Other European
      iv. US.
      v. African
      vi. Other / Unable to determine.

h. Vox pop:
      i. France
      ii. UK
      iii. Other European
      iv. US.
      v. African
      vi. Other / Unable to determine

i. Other:
      i. France
      ii. UK
      iii. Other European
      iv. US.
      v. African
      vi. Other / Unable to determine

12. Quoting verbs: for each individual quoted give details (on a corresponding line) of the quoting verb(s) used. In brackets, characterise the verb(s) based on Caldas-Coulthard's typology of the meaning potentials of quoting verbs (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 59): Neutral structuring verb / Metapropositional verb (give detail: assertive – directive – expressive) / Metalinguistic verb / Descriptive verb / Transcriptive verb.

----LEXICAL FIELDS----

Give examples of words, group of words and/or expression for each category when applicable (5 examples max) (see Note 4).

13. Corruption and bad governance
    e.g. corruption, corrupt, undemocratic, dictator, dictatorial, kleptocratic.
14. Darkness.
    -e.g. dark, darkness, darken, darkly, heart of darkness, bleak, gloom, gloomy.
15. Economic Growth
    -e.g. growing investments, growing economy, booming economy, rising economy, positive growth rates, upbeat economic picture, new business.
16. Good governance
    -e.g. free elections, democracy, political stability, peaceful transition, stable regime, good leadership.
17. Poverty
    -e.g. poor, poverty, disadvantaged, impoverished, penury, beggar.
18. Progress and achievements
    -e.g. success, progress, achievement, prosperous, bright, improvement, positive change/outlook, flourish
19. Social / political instability
    -e.g. conflict, coup, turmoil, instability, unstable collapse, crisis, dispute, insecurity, recession.
20. Terrorism
    -e.g. Al Qaeda, AQMI, terrorist, terrorism, extremist.
21. Tribal
    -e.g. tribe, tribal, tribalism, ethnic.
22. Violence and death
    -e.g. death, dead, dying, deadly, murder, killings, killed, violence, war, casualties, assassination
23. Witchcraft
    -e.g. witch, witchcraft, witch doctor, exorcism, healer, magic, superstition, spell, juju

----THE FACE OF AFRICAN LEADERSHIP AT 50 / THE MEMORY OF THE INDEPENDENCE----

24. Does the article mention current African heads of State? If yes, specify which one(s).
25. Does the article mention past African heads of State? If yes, specify which one(s).
26. * (see note 5) Are the anniversaries characterized by an adjective? If yes, which one(s).
27. *Is there a reference to "colonialism", "post-colonialism", "pan-Africanism" or "FrançAfrique"? If yes, write the sentence where they/it appear(s)

----POLARISED GEOGRAPHY AND CONFLATION----

28. Does the article mention the "West", "Western", "North", "Northern", "Europe" "North"? If yes, write the sentence(s) where it appears.
29. Is there a generic reference to "Africa" e.g. "in Africa", "African", "the continent", "Africa"? If yes, give details.
30. Does the article contain cases of conflation through active generalisation, comparison and/or overlexicalisation? If yes, give quote(s).

----REFLEXIVITY (AFRICA'S IMAGE)----

31. *Does the article mention Africa's image or the debate about media representation of Africa? If yes, give quote(s).

----ADDITIONAL INFO FOR DISCOURSE ANALYSIS----

32. *Is there any particularly striking figure of speech (hyperbole, metonymy, synecdoche)? Give details and provide a brief interpretation.

33. *Is this article interesting for further micro-analysis (e.g. representative of overall coverage, or on the contrary, particularly different): explain briefly in my own words why.

Note 1: The difference here is between articles that focus primarily on the anniversaries as opposed to articles that simply mention the celebrations. The goal is to assess how the anniversaries themselves are framed, but also when they were discussed in the context of other stories.

Note 2: This category, albeit limited, allows assessing the visibility of news agency material.

Note 3: The goal here is to assess who holds the authority to speak about African issues and which kind of voices is made available. I am not counting the number of quotes but the visibility of speakers; as a result if an individual is quoted several times in the same article, he/she will appear only once in the coding. However, all quoting verbs used for this speaker are recorded. This is how it would appear in the excel coding database:

11. Individuals quoted	12. Quoting verbs
a.ii: Tony Blair	> "said" (neutral) x2
a.v: Joseph Kabila	> "said" (neutral) > "claimed" (metaprop – assertive)
h.v: elderly guard	>"mumbles" (descriptive)

Note 4: These thematic lexical fields derive from the recurring claims in the literature on Africa's media image about the topics, issues, and types of words used in the coverage of Africa. See notably Brookes (1995) for "darkness", "tribalism", "witchcraft", "corruption", "social and political instability". Other categories were added to offer the possibility to account for other aspects of the coverage such as "economic growth", "progress and achievements" and "good governance". I coded single words as well as group of words. When there was an ambiguity about the connotation accompanying a word or group of words, the word / group of words were coded based on the context in which they appear. For instance, "Ghana succeeded in reducing poverty", the group of words "succeeded in reducing poverty" would qualify as "progress and achievements" rather than "poverty". Another example: "new businesses" without context cannot automatically qualify

for "economic growth". But if the sentence reads, "news businesses have been steadily developing", then it qualifies as "economic growth", whereas if the sentence states, "the political situation has a damaging impact on the development of new businesses" this would qualify as "political and social instability". This coding process is therefore limited in that it does not tell us much about the rhetoric or argument of the articles. That being said, it is a particularly useful tool to assess the use of lexical fields that have strong connotations built-into them such as "darkness" and "tribalism".

Note 5: The asterisk means that this category/question will not be used to draw quantitative conclusions. Rather, the questions with * allow to build up a knowledge of the data that will feed into my interpretation of the coverage in the more qualitative, critical analysis of media discourse.

Appendix III
List of magazines monitored (Site 2)

FRANCE	UK
Courrier International	*Monocle*
L'Express	*Prospect*
Le Figaro Magazine	*New Statesman*
Le Nouvel Observateur	*The Economist*
Le Point	*The Spectator*
M, le magazine du Monde	*The Week*
Marianne	Sunday supplements from:
Paris Match	The *Financial Times Week End*, The *Independent on Sunday*, The *Observer*, The *Sunday Telegraph* (and *Telegraph Magazine* on Saturday) The *Sunday Times*

Appendix IV

Interview Questions

An asterisk (*) means that the question is a core one, and should be ask (or covered) in every interview.

Introductory question
How did you come to your current position and how long have you been working in this position?

Selection process / News Values
*Can you describe the ways your newspaper/media outlet decides to cover a story? That is, how do you assess how much to put into a particular coverage and who makes the key decisions?

Perceptions of the audience
*In your opinion, what news about Africa does your audience expect?

Is it important for you to get feedback from your audience and if so, how do you do so?

Impact local context / news diet
*How would you describe your relationship and interaction with local helpers and with other international journalists? *Follow up if they do skip either part + be prepared to elaborate (stringers, translators, drivers, fixers, other assistants).*

In terms of daily routine, could you describe to me the local media outlets you read/consult and whether you use them for ideas or as source?

Practical challenges and constraints
*What would you say are the biggest practical challenges that you face on a regular basis? What are the major constraints you have to work with?

News agency material
*Could you describe the way you use news agency material to research and write your stories? (Which ones do you use, why and how much?)

Do news agencies have different priorities when it comes to African news?

Criticism of Western media / Afro-pessimism
*Have you heard of the term Afro-pessimism and what does it mean for you? (Always try to ask this question fairly early one in the interview).

*Journalists working for international, mainly European and North American media, have come under intense criticisms for their reporting of African news generally. Among these are the ideas that coverage is scarce, focuses excessively on "negative" stories, tend to simplify complex issues and convey stereotypes (for instance by relying on simple prisms of ethnicity or tribalism). In an opinion piece published in *Foreign policy*, academic Laura Seay writes:

> *"Many Africa correspondents file stories that fall prey to pernicious stereotypes and tropes that dehumanize Africans (…) Western reporting on Africa is often fraught with factual errors, incomplete analysis, and stereotyping that would not pass editorial muster in coverage of China, Pakistan, France, or Mexico."*

Do you agree with that statement?

Commercialism and representation
*French journalist Anne-Cecile Robert argues that the "marginalisation of Africa in the Western media" is caused by financial constraints that lead to over-simplification of sensitive and complex issues. To what extent do you feel economic pressures impact your work?

Intercultural communication
Africa editor of Der Spiegel Bartholaumaus Gryll wrote a book where he reflects on his 25 years of experience as a foreign correspondent in Africa. He notably writes:

> "*Whenever I look at [Africa] I say to myself: Try to discard the distorted images and projections. But don't think that you will then find the true, genuine Africa. You can only portray Africa and the Africans from a European perspective. You have no other.*"

Do you also think that you can only portray Africa from a European perspective?

Homogenisation
*It seems very difficult to talk of Africa, as a whole, without falling into a form of essentialisation. Do you think about this when mentioning "Africa" in a piece? Is a certain degree of generalisation inevitable or even desirable?

Afro-optimism
Recently, there have been attempt at telling more "positive" stories about Africa (show coves by The *Economist* and *TIME* Africa Rising). What do you think about this kind of coverage?

Reconstruction questions (if possible)
*I have here an article that you wrote. Can you tell me what you remember about researching and writing this story? (Follow-up on decision process, cost/benefit analysis, interaction with editor or other correspondents, interaction with sources, use of stringers).

-Depending on the article, ask specific questions to the interviewee about strategies identified in the article through the coding. These can include for instance, the use of certain sources, the framing of these sources or the use of quoting verbs, the use of overlexicalisation, comparison or active generalisation. Point some of these features to the interviewee and ask if they consider these things?

Appendix V
Example of questionnaire (Site 2)

1. In what capacity were you involved in the production of this cover?

2. Can you tell me what you remember from the process of working on this cover: how many people worked on this cover? Did you receive guidelines to create the cover and if so, which ones? Was the process in any way different from the production of other covers?

3. Did you use any images/material from a stock photography agency?

3. Why did you make the choice to use X semiotic choice (e.g. colour, shape, design, individual depicted)?

5. What sort of image of Africa do you think this cover is trying to project, and why?

Appendix VI

Solicitation E-mail

Dear [name],
My name is Toussaint Nothias, I am a PhD student from the Institute of
Communications Studies at the University of Leeds. I am conducting
research into the coverage of African stories in French and British press. I
am looking to conduct an interview with you (general time frame 60 min) to
discuss your experience in producing African news stories and your
attitudes towards the notion of Afro-pessimism in Western media. I feel my
research would benefit from your help due to your experience and position
in the field, and also because [name of organization] is one of the key
institutions I am looking at. In the end, I hope my research will contribute to
a better understanding of journalists' practices in producing African stories.

For more information about my research, please find attached an
information sheet. You can also have a look at my personal webpages and
some of my publications (see links at the end of this email). The information
sheet provides details about the use of data and confidentiality. I should also
let you know that you can withdraw from the research at any time before,
during the interview or after the interview (up to the writing up of the thesis
i.e. January 2014). Furthermore, if it is not convenient to meet in person, the
interview could be conducted over the phone or skype but a face-to-face
interview is preferable.

[More specific information about my schedule], so if you are interested then
please let me know your availability. If you feel you are too busy, which I
fully understand, then I hope you could refer me to someone else in your
organisation that would be able to assist me. Should you have any further
questions about the research project, my schedule or anything else, please
do not hesitate in contacting me, either by email or by phone:
+447853945131.

Thank you in advance for any help you can give.

Toussaint Nothias
Institute of Communications Studies, University of Leeds

http://ics.leeds.ac.uk/people/toussaint-nothias/
http://leeds.academia.edu/ToussaintNothias

Appendix VII

Information Sheet

Beyond Afro-pessimism? British and French print media discourse on Africa.

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take some time to read the following information sheet carefully.

Purpose of the project

The aim of this PhD project is to understand what kinds of news about Africa are produced in French and British media, how and why. Against the backdrop of criticism of Western media coverage of Africa being too "negative", this study postulates that there is a pressing need for thorough and up-to-date empirical research. In particular, it aims at understanding the working, sometimes difficult, context in which journalists produce news and how decisions about which stories to cover are made. I hope my research will contribute to a better understanding of journalists' practices in producing African stories and to explore efforts made by journalists to provide a balanced reporting of the continent.

Participation in the project: what is involved?

You are being invited to take part in this project given your experience and position in the field of international news. This would involve taking part in a one-off semi-structured interview (60 min is a general time frame). At any point during the interview, if you do not wish to answer certain questions or wish to put an end to the interview, you can do so without giving a reason. I am flexible regarding interview location and will endeavour to accommodate your favourite option. If we are unable to meet face-to-face, a phone, skype or written interview can take place, at a time convenient for you.

Type of information and importance of your contribution

My research would highly benefit from your help due to your experience and position in the field. As this research aims at understanding the working context of news production, your contribution constitutes a paramount aspect of the project. I am also hoping that my research will provide a platform for the voice of journalists to be heard on the often heated – sometimes partial and limited in understanding - debate on Africa's media image.

The kinds of information that I would be interested in gaining include –but is not limited to – the following: use of news agency material, interaction between journalist-editor, interaction with other foreign correspondents as well as local journalists, sourcing and routine practices.

By taking part in this project, you accept for the data collected to be used in relevant future research, including journal articles, book chapters and conference presentations.

Confidentiality and withdrawal

Upon starting the interview, you will be given this information sheet and a consent form. Anonymity is the default option for this research. All steps will be taken to protect the data and to retain your anonymity in publication of quotes, especially if you would be in a unique position e.g. where the description of your employer would disclose your identity. Should you wish to take part on a non-anonymous basis, you may do so.

Interviews will be audio-recorded, unless you prefer not to. The raw data including transcripts and recording will not be made available for any other persons or purposes.

You will be able to withdraw from the research at any time, before, during or after the interview (up to the writing up of the thesis i.e. January 2014) without having to give any reason for this.

Contact point for further information

Thank you for taking the time to read through the information. I truly hope you'll be able to assist me in this research, as your participation will assuredly provide fascinating insight into the important debate about Africa's media image. Should you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me directly, either by email or phone.

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Appendix VIII

Consent form

Title of the Research Project:
Beyond Afro-pessimism? British and French print media on Africa

Name of the researcher: Toussaint Nothias

	Add your initials next to the statements you agree with
I confirm that I have read and understood the letter explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.	
I agree for the interview to be audio-recorded and stored electronically	
I agree for the data collected from me to be used in relevant future research, including journal articles, book chapters and conference presentations.	
I agree to take part in the above research project	
*I give permission for my **name** to be used in this research (Optional)*	

Name of participant	
Signature	
Date	
Name of researcher	
Signature	
Date*	

*To be signed and dated in the presence of the participant.

Once all parties have signed this, the participant will receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the letter and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy of the signed and dated consent form will be kept with the project's main documents in a secure location at the University of Leeds.

Contact details of lead researcher:
M. Toussaint Nothias, 07853945131
cstn@leeds.ac.uk