

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **5 THE REGIONALISATION OF NEWS AGENCIES AS AN ADAPTIVE STRATEGY IN GLOBAL NEWS FLOWS**

The previous chapter introduced each of the news agencies participating in the study and redefined their relationships based on news exchange agreements. It found that a co-dependency relationship better describes their relationships than the previously stated “dependency relationship” in past literature. Chapter 4 also discussed the adoption of specialised areas of news production, or niche areas, as an adaptive strategy in a globally competitive news environment. This chapter extends the discussion of the adaptation of news agencies in the face of fierce competition.

The chapter describes a further adaptation of the global news agencies in what is termed the “regionalisation of news agencies” and the related ‘effect’ of ‘news fragmentation’. Regionalisation is the expansionism of global news agency operations across different geographical and geo-political territories in a bid to compete among themselves for global news markets and the diffusion of their news product. The regionalisation of news gives rise to and perpetuates the fragmentation of news. News fragmentation describes a condition where the socio-cultural and the historical contexts in which an event occurs are lost because of a reporting style that isolates the event. It makes sense that fragmentation arises from the need to write with brevity and condense news reports in the limited space for news wires. The details about the event are lost.

The chapter integrates earlier discussions in chapter 2 on the contested definition of globalisation. It revisits sceptic and globalist theorists’ explorations of the concept. It critically addresses, for instance, the sceptics’ dismissal of globalisation as merely “regionalisation” and “internationalisation” (Held & McGrew, 2003, pp. 4-5). It proposes that the sceptics’ frame of reference in the arguments they provide on globalisation are limited and unable to break with their reified positions on global capitalism. They tend to reduce globalisation, if it exists for them, to the

homogenisation of the world and everything in it under the system of capitalism. Globalists (i.e., Weberian, post-Marxist, neo-Marxist and post-structuralist theorists) (p. 6), on the other hand, offer a radical departure from defining globalisation simply in concrete and reified terms or seeking to locate it only in structural changes, and see it more as a fluidity of processes and relationships, or “flows” (p. 6).

The chapter addresses the research questions posed in chapter 1. Firstly, it revisits debates on imbalances in the relationships among news agencies presented in previous studies and responds to whether news agencies continue as “agents of globalisation” (Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen, 1998, p. 1) and whether the larger operations at global agencies continue to “monopolise” news flows in the global and local contexts. Secondly, this chapter also examines whether news agencies are facing demise in an increasingly difficult news environment, described by growing competition from other media formats, especially large independent broadcasters and new media technologies (i.e., the Internet) that are changing the profession of journalism and rendering newspapers obsolete. Three media models are identified from the transforming news environment including a ‘market extremism’ model, a ‘statist’ model, and a ‘development’ model. The IPS global agency offers an “alternative,” developmental focus compared to the mainstream market model of the other global agencies and the statist model of government-owned agencies. Lastly, the chapter addresses these agencies in Africa, that is, the extent of their influence on news flows in Africa.

### **5.1 Competition for news markets and “media models” resulting from the activities of news agencies**

Global news agencies are major competitors for news markets around the world. They compete with each other and with other media-formats on the same continents (cf. Boyd-Barrett, 2000; Rantanen, 2004). Conditions that have, to a large extent, contributed to the setting up of global news agencies’ network operations, include, among other things, improvements in and the sophistication of modern technologies.

Computerised technologies linked by satellites, undersea cables and wireless networks, means faster, almost instantaneous communication between their news bureaus worldwide and their headquarters. Hence, flows of information are faster and more direct than previous technologies such as the telephone line or telex machine allowed, and in this quick flow of information, time and space are compressed<sup>1</sup> (i.e., made negligible). Other reasons for the ability to expand globally relate to issues central in their operations and structures in relationship to the commercialisation of the news industry, discussed below.

In one sense, and very importantly, the global news agencies need to diversify their operations with the dynamics of a changing world and how they are placed in it. They have had to redefine their role as competitors in a global news market driven by profits (Boyd-Barrett, 2004; Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen, 2000). The argument is not that there is no longer the monopolisation of news markets by global agencies, but rather, how to define the form(s) that monopolisation takes in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen (1998, p. 5), too, have pointed out this need for revising dated conceptualisations in the literature. If the presence of global agencies in national contexts leads to diversification of information such that local contexts receive news about distant places and vice versa, can one still speak of “monopolisation” or the concentration of information by these global news agencies, for instance?

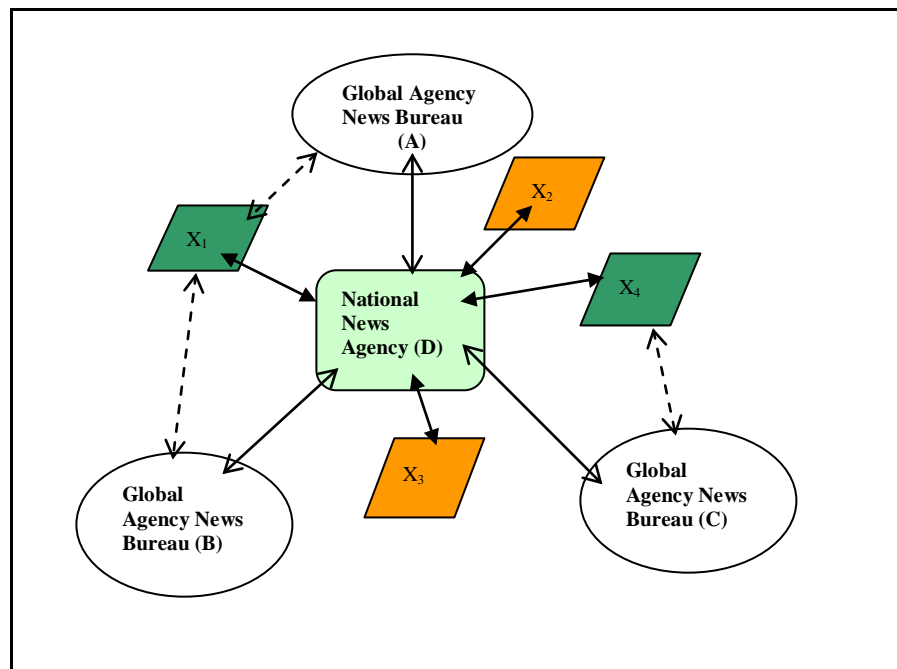
The factors that have enabled the global news agencies’ well-developed competitive drives are also, paradoxically, the same factors causing their regress (cf. Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen, 1998; cf. Chang, 1998; Chang et al., 2000). For example, advances in technologies challenge the future of news agencies that serve mainly print media. These agencies need to adapt and employ strategies that maintain their status of ‘competitor’ over other rival news producers. In this fiercely competitive global news environment, some authors describe the news industry as undergoing a “re-

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<sup>1</sup> See the discussion on globalisation in chapter two, also Held and McGrew (2000, 2003), and Rantanen (2005).

colonisation” due to a few large corporations dominating the industry (Thussu et al., 1998). Independent broadcasting operations and networks, and not news agencies per se, dominate the news industry worldwide. Other authors revamp discussions of “neo-imperialism” in describing the concentrated ownership of information (Bagdikian, 2004; Boyd-Barrett, 1998b; Golding & Harris, 1997).

Two aspects to this intensified competition between global news agencies arise from the data in the study. On the one hand, there is the tendency to compete in different “regional contexts” to attract news markets and to be the main source of news from these contexts. This includes, for instance, setting up extensive networks by strategically placing news bureaus within “peripheral regions” worldwide (e.g., in Africa) and maintaining a constant stream of communication between these bureaus and the main (core) headquarters. The diagram below illustrates the relationship of global agencies in a domestic context and their adaptive “regionalisation”:



**Figure 5-1: Global news agency news bureaus in competition in a domestic context (e.g., in South Africa)** Key: A, B & C = global news agencies (e.g., Reuters, AFP, AP); D = national news agency (e.g., SAPA); X<sub>1</sub>, X<sub>2</sub>, X<sub>3</sub>, & X<sub>4</sub> = retail media (newspapers and broadcaster in SA)

Figure 5-1 demonstrates the presence of competing news bureaus of the global news agencies (A, B, and C) in a particular national context. Each global news bureau competes with the others to provide its news to the national news agency (D) by entering into news exchange agreements with “D.” Global news agencies, in some instances (e.g., in South Africa), even compete with the national news agencies by entering into direct agreements with the retail media (competitors of national agencies) in these contexts. As an example, the Reuters’ news bureau has direct news exchange agreements with retail media in SA such as some newspapers and the national broadcaster. The latter are competitors with the national news agency, SAPA. The broken lines extending between global news agencies (A, B, and C) and retail media (X<sub>1</sub>, X<sub>2</sub>, X<sub>3</sub>, and X<sub>4</sub>) in the above diagram indicate this.

In SA, most retail media (including all newspapers and broadcast media) and non-media (e.g., embassies, government departments, and businesses) subscribe to the national news agency, SAPA. They receive news from SAPA and, according to SAPA Editor (2005), some also use SAPA as a platform to disseminate their own news releases, press statements, and information to be widely circulated. News therefore flows in domestic news contexts and it “feeds” or creates a domestic news market. The ideal “news flow” situation is to facilitate broad participation in and diversity of views, and therefore extend democratic participation.

The second aspect refers to the evolving patterns of news exchange agreements among global and other non-global news agencies, as these organisations are themselves evolving. The strategy of global news agencies expanding their operations by acquiring and selling news to local retail media, as well as exchanging with local (national) news agencies, is part of a rationalisation process in their survival. This includes splintering their operations globally or diversifying in order to remain globally competitive. They expand horizontally, across diverse geo-territories, to out-compete other global news agency operations as well as other competitive media

formats. For instance, Figure 5-1 above illustrates this strategy in one location; however, an entire network of these splinter operations exists worldwide. What are identifiable in the relations among the various layers of news agency operations are “ideal-types” or “media models” that describe their form.

#### *Market extremism model*

This model probably best describes the global news agencies established in the Western-style of journalism. According to Kumar (2004, p. 56), “Western-style journalism aims at upholding, supporting and justifying confidence in the ‘status quo’” or the “mainstream approach” to news and news values. The expansion, rationalisation, and competitiveness of global agencies, furthermore, resonate with the free market system of capitalism. In this, news exchange serves two purposes: firstly, it is a commodity of exchange and vital to maintaining information flows (a contentious term in itself). Secondly, news exchange and the free flow of information advance capitalist relations because the underlying relation of news production is aimed at out-competing other news producers. Soros (2004), for instance, states that “market values” have penetrated into areas where they do not properly belong, and they instead dictate the role of institutions such that “professions such as medicine, law, and journalism have been turned into businesses” (p. 8). Soros discusses the inadequacies and “instabilities” of financial product markets and the need for “institutional reforms” of the financial trade and other market-driven institutions (ibid.). To borrow Soros’ term, the “institutional reforms” that the organisations of news have made are reflected in their expansion and in their seeking “new markets” and clients.

#### *Statist model*

At the other extreme of “control” in the patterns of media organisations is the statist media model. This model applies to the process of news production and the control over media institutions, not by markets, but by governments. It is applicable especially to news organisations in developing social contexts that emerged from

authoritarian political rule and dictatorships. The authoritarian and despotic form of governance has, since the end of colonialism in Africa, remained almost entrenched in many African states that nonetheless call themselves ‘democracies’ (McNair, 2000; Schulze-Schneider, 1998; Sparks, 2000). PANA, which has undergone several structural and ownership changes, would fall into this category or model. Its members are national news agencies in Africa still under the control of their respective governments (Karikari, 2007). This model includes the news agencies in post-colonial Africa. In contrast to the market extremist model in which too much intervention of the market penetrates areas of news production, the statist model presents too much government interference in news operations, which is as limiting and controlling of the activities of national news agencies, especially. In Africa, there is a long history of pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial media control, which Bourgault (1995) documents. Bourgault states the following:

Vast differences in the press had emerged by the end of the colonial period [in Africa]. Southern Africa, including Zambia, and East Africa had a settler press. This press benefited from a technically strong model fostered through financially well-endowed commercial newspapers, made possible through chain ownership, some the products of powerful mining interests. . . . In francophone Africa, the press was largely nonexistent or undercapitalised, with the exception of the de Breteuil Group. The francophone countries inherited little in the way of an information press. . . . Anglophone West Africa seemed to have the healthiest press in terms of the freedom of its expression. It had the most experienced African journalists, some of whom had absorbed the British free press tradition in an atmosphere unhampered by settler demands. Some of this freedom veered toward exhortation, partisanship, and a generally undisciplined style of writing, editing, and technical production. Here, the West African press suffered from the lack of training and . . . a lack of fact-based stories derived from systematic newsgathering techniques. Despite differences, the press in all Black [sic] African countries had common problems. Internal newsgathering remained a major stumbling block, one that was partially rectified through the establishment of national news agencies. . . . [They] lacked adequately trained journalists; they lacked technical personnel needed to operate printing facilities; they lacked journalists skilled in gathering and reporting the news; they lacked copy editors skilled in proofreading and layout. And they were seriously bereft of qualified managers, persons able to oversee the technically complicated, “people-orientated,” and politically sensitive tasks which are inextricably intertwined in the business of journalism. These various skill, training, and administrative deficits would exacerbate and be exacerbated in and by the awkward economic and political positions in which newly independent African states would find themselves. (pp. 171-172)

What Bourgault (1995) and other authors (Curran & Park, 2000) importantly point to is the historical contextualisation in which African news agencies emerged alongside their presses. Bourgault explains, in part, the difficulties in consolidating a successful

pan-African continental news agency given this history. What we see on the surface, in analysing African media culture is a picture of consistent authoritarian and government control. Banda (2003, p. 64), for example, shows that the media landscape in Zambia reflects its strong historical past of state intervention and a legacy of British colonialism in media development. However, the post-colonial state, according to Banda, continues to play a pivotal role in media policy development in Zambia.

It is true that African governments, to this day, control their national news agencies and even, in the case of many, their broadcasting services as well. The press or print media in Africa, which have a longer and more complex history and development than either the national news agencies or broadcasting media, present a different ownership structure of a combination of private, independent, as well as state-regulated ownership. However, a statist model needs to indicate the precarious history of ownership and control of African media, in general, taking into account African nations' political, economic, historical, and cultural developments. According to Curran and Park (2000), it is easy and misleading to clump all of the countries on the African continent together when analysing their media systems, given their divergent experiences. No in-depth explanations or discussions of these histories can be covered in this study and do justice to it. Instead, that area of investigation is to be the undertaking of future research.

#### *Development model*

Quoting Gunaratne,<sup>2</sup> Kumar (2004) describes development journalism as “an integral part of a new journalism that involves ‘analytical interpretation, subtle investigation, constructive criticism and sincere association with the grassroots (rather than with the elite)’” (p. 56). Kumar states that development journalism rejects “mainstream” journalism’s “subservien[ce] to government and private business interests” (p. 56). It

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<sup>2</sup> Shelton Gunaratne, ‘Media subservience and developmental journalism’, in *Communications and Development Review*, Vol. 2(2):3-7.



is “alternative,” and it focuses on “social issues and developments in their global and national contexts” (p. 57). According to Kumar, “Rather than present news as a series of isolated events with little or no explanation, the development journalist is concerned with explaining ‘why?’ and asking ‘what?’” (p. 57).

The activities of the IPS news agency offer an “alternative” to the former two models because of its “development” focus in news production. For this reason, IPS is described as an “alternative” global news provider (Giffard, 1998). According to Atton and Hamilton (2008), alternative journalism is a particular way of thinking about journalism. It criticises existing dominant practices in journalism because of a “dissatisfaction not only with mainstream coverage of certain issues and topics [that are steeped in entertainment-focussed and influenced by profit-making motives], but also with the epistemology of news [i.e., the ‘nature’ and use of news]” (p. 1). Development journalism is a form of alternative journalism that falls within this range of defining characteristics. Atton and Hamilton (2008) state that the emphasis in alternative journalism is finding alternatives to “*inter alia*, conventions of news sources and representation . . . the hierarchical and capitalised economy of commercial journalism . . . and the subordinate role of audience as receiver” (p. 1). Alternative journalism, in its ideal form, is produced outside of mainstream media institutions and networks (p. 1).

The IPS operations embrace an epistemology of news that is more than simply an activity of journalists collecting and distributing information. IPS adds something additional and different to the news product and processes of the other global news agencies. IPS does not supply daily news coverage about world events in the same way that the mainstream global and national news agencies do. IPS news is alternative in the sense that it goes beyond providing “spot-news” and its focus is

“development” in the broadest sense.<sup>3</sup> Development news focuses on in-depth coverage of issues and looks at various other dimensions in a news story such as the historical, political, cultural, and socio-economic. Development journalism involves “investigative reporting.”<sup>4</sup>

A development model therefore, illustrates “alternative journalism”<sup>5</sup> (cf. Atton & Hamilton, 2008). It is alternative to the mainstream market extremism and the statist journalism models. According to SAPA Editor (2006), “development journalism” is financially non-viable in the operations at a news agency because of the resources and time that it requires to be effective. The DPA Bureau Chief (2007) also stated that “investigative reporting” is no longer a function of the global news agencies because high productivity (output) and speed drive them and that form of investigative journalism is not functional for these “values.” The evolution in mainstream news agencies came about also because of redefining their purposes in a commercially driven news industry. Others state that the national and continental news agencies merely imitate (or try to imitate) the structure, form, and operations of global news agencies (Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen, 1998, p. 16).

According to IPS Regional Director (2006):

We are not really news [meaning IPS does not cover routine, “spot-news”]. If you look at our website, you will see [this] because we also don’t have the kind of resources to react [with immediacy] to [the] things that are happening on a day-to-day basis. If you see our strip-line

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<sup>3</sup> All mainstream or commercial media (especially the older and longer established media) have had over the years to abandon their investigative role in journalism and reporting because of the non-viability of this with the expansion of both the media enterprise and of societies. The newspaper industries worldwide were also faced with steep competition from broadcast and other media and their financial operations were in decline partly because of more competitive media formats (cf. Hardt & Brennan 1995, Read 1992, Bray 1965).

<sup>4</sup> According to Shrivastava (2003:163) investigative reporting, interpretative reporting, depth reporting and human interest reporting are all synonymous with modern journalism. Essentially this means that reporting styles in mainstream journalism have taken on different forms, such as ‘tabloidisation’ and other interests as the world has changed, and as advances in technology have intervened in the focus of news. In the case of tabloid news, it is news driven by profit.

<sup>5</sup> A further trend in news flow is the increasing prevalence of “blogs” referred to as ‘citizen journalism’.

[headlines], it means the story underneath. IPS is trying to give a more in-depth analysis of why. . . . For example, if we look at Darfur, while the big media [global news agencies] will give you a blow-by-blow account . . . we don't have the capacity to do that [on a daily basis] because we don't have reporters on the ground. What we do is then maybe try to find out why this [Darfur] is happening and try to explain why there is conflict continuously happening in Africa. We try to explain more about the issues around what is actually unfolding. We used to be a news service before, but then we realised we cannot compete [with the global news agencies]. There are so many people doing news on a daily basis and we don't have the capacity to do that. So instead of trying to compete with that, we found a niche [that] we think is an area where we can add value and that is, knowing [and] doing in-depth analysis around issues.

The IPS focus on development journalism aims, among other things, to encourage the development of professional journalism in Africa and in developing and developed contexts (IPS Regional Director, 2006; see also chapter 4). According to Addison (1993), “development journalism is not a unique form of the craft of journalism. . . . [It] is the fourth estate of developing states” (p. 36). This means that its reporting style is investigative and in-depth, focussing on issues such as corruption and human rights violations that are of interest to the public and that encourage public debates and participation. This form of journalism often means adopting a ‘political motive’ because the fourth estate is synonymous with the “watchdog function” in journalism (see Leys, 1999 and Curran, 2000 for case studies of investigative style journalism). Addison’s usage, however, is limited to liberal democratic nation-states, whereas not all developing nation-states are liberal or democratic.

Development journalism is about encouraging public participation because of its focus on social issues that are of concern to the broader public. It differs from mainstream journalism that has come under pressure to perform for market-driven private and corporate business interests. This model resonates with Leys’ (1999) description of the “public sphere,” as a space “in which the collective thinking of society can be carried on and in which state policy can be critically debated by everyone outside the inner circle of party, corporate and state power; [i]t is here that public opinion is formed” (p. 314). Leys maintains that the media, broadly, must be “reclaimed for democracy” of the type that embraces the notion of public sphere, and that this calls for “a new media order” (p. 328). Addison (1993, p. 36) proposes that

apart from the adversary function, development journalism is promotional and educative, particularly since that journalism depends on the insights of media workers, academics, and even the public for gathering news.

Development journalism seeks to locate the importance of information in the public realm. It is a form of journalism focussing on public matters and locating the public at the centre of receiving information about “the public.” Some authors stated that there is growing dissatisfaction with, and hence, a withdrawal of citizens from using, mainstream sources of information about socio-political issues (Bennett, 2003, pp. 218-226; Rantanen, 2004, pp. 301). Chapter 6 and the analysis given in chapter 7 discuss the emergence of “citizen journalism” as a result of this dissatisfaction with mainstream reporting and sources. Mainstream journalism and sources, by their nature, satisfy the interests mainly of certain sectors of “the public” including advertisers, politicians, and competing retail media. Mainstream media is narrowly focussed on profit margins. An emerging trend and form of alternative journalism is “citizen journalism.” It relates to “development journalism” in that citizen journalism is a form of advocacy and applied journalism. Recently, since the late-1990s, the rise of blogs<sup>6</sup> or blogging sites on the Internet are increasingly providing alternative sources to information and news, according to the AP Bureau Chief (2006) (see chapter 7).

#### *5.1.1 Monopolisation and the competitive drive for global news markets*

Previous studies (Boyd-Barrett & Thussu, 1992; IPI, 1972; MacBride, 1980; Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., 1985; UNESCO, 1953) state that the global news agencies dominated news markets and news flows from around the world and that they set the agendas for what audiences receive and internalise as news. Imbalances in news flows go to the heart of the debate about the need for a “public sphere” to democratise information and encourage broad participation in news and information

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<sup>6</sup> The term blogs describes personalized web pages of individuals or groups that are not traditional media. ‘Blogging’ is a recent occurrence that reflects the nature of change in the use of advanced media technology including computers and the rise of the internet.

flows in civil societies. As Leys (1999, pp. 314-318, pp. 326-331) states, information is central to informing the public, rallying public participation in democracy, and encouraging public opinion. In democracies, information flows contribute to other important aspects of society such as policy-formation (Banda, 2003) and strengthening the public realm of participation in decision-making (Bennett, 2003, p. xiv, pp. 3-37).

The tendency of global agencies to monopolise news flows is “completely untrue,” according to the Reuters’ Bureau Chief (2006):

There’s nothing like a monopoly in this business because we do not stop other agencies from having as many people [covering news] as we do. We do not stop them from investing in technology the way we do. You know, everything is free. There are some areas where others are stronger than us. AP is stronger than us in the USA because that is their home territory. . . . The same thing [applies] with the French news agency, Agence France-Presse. AFP has a reputation, [which] in their case, I think it’s a question of focus. They focus a lot more on general news.

The AFP Bureau Chief (2005) maintains that a competitive relationship exists amongst the global news agencies. According to AFP Bureau Chief, global agencies have good relations most of the time, but they do not have any news exchange agreements among each other. Instead, global agencies seek to have news exchange agreements with local national news agencies and compete for this with the other global agencies. In his opinion, the three leading global agencies, AFP, Reuters, and AP, are in competition with each other in producing news that local agencies will want; therefore, they do not have agreements amongst themselves (AFP Bureau Chief).

The Reuters’ Bureau Chief states the following:

We are competing against other global news agencies like the Associated Press of the United States. We are competing against Bloomberg, which is a relatively new agency, about ten to fifteen years old. But Bloomberg are mostly focused on financial and company reporting. That is where their strength lies. They don’t have the reach and the breadth of Reuters. They cannot

boast about the numbers [of subscribers] that we have. (2006; see also Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen, 1998, pp. 15-34).

The Bloomberg financial news agency, owned by American, Michael Bloomberg, began as an idea to fill a gap that was identified by its owner in the area of financial news reporting (Reuters' Bureau Chief, 2006). According to the Reuters' Bureau Chief, Michael Bloomberg, who was elected mayor of New York City in 2001, was a bond trader who depended on the services of Reuters and others for information serving bond brokers (see also Kay, 2004, p. 11). "There were certain types of information he wanted to have as a trader that he did not get, so he set up his own news agency to plug the loopholes" (Reuters' Bureau Chief). Accordingly, Bloomberg was successful in his venture, as the Bloomberg operation has become one of the keenest competitors in the area of financial and company reporting next to Reuters' news agency and Dow Jones (Boyd-Barrett, 1998, p. 20, pp. 26-27).

According to Reuters' Bureau Chief (2006), despite the success of Bloomberg, Bloomberg's financial service and operations in general has nothing close to the kind of network that Reuters has established over the many years.<sup>7</sup> Boyd-Barrett (1998, p. 27) confirmed that Reuters, among the global news agencies, is the world's leading financial news provider. To illustrate the point, the Reuters' Bureau Chief offered an example that if Reuters reported on a big story out of South Africa, which Bloomberg did not have, they would pick it up from Reuters and credit Reuters' services for it by acknowledging the source of the story as the Reuters' agency. Bloomberg financial reporters regularly pick up Reuters' news so that their own clients will not miss a story (Reuters' Bureau Chief).

The competitive drive between the global news agencies for news markets operates in terms of the speed, accuracy, and level of importance of the information. They also

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<sup>7</sup> According to Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen (1998: 17) 'no single organization within the spectrum of Reuters' competition is thought to offer a range of services as broad as that of Reuters'. Elsewhere Boyd-Barrett (1998: 27) states: 'Reuters is the world's leading provider of financial news and information (...), where it faces a range of specialist competitors'.

rely on accurate and reliable news sources. In other words, these enable them to develop what is called a “news sense.” A well-developed news sense involves being able to harness information that the client markets require and want for their own specific needs. Global news agencies compete for news stories as much as they compete for client markets. Moreover, the news agency that can most often obtain news that another agency cannot, and send this out over the wires the quickest, builds a reputation for reliability and accuracy if these news stories are the more often picked from that agency. It is undeniable that over centuries, the three main global news agencies, Reuters, AP, and AFP, have built reputations of being reliable sources of news (DPA emerged much later with its own successive history after WWII<sup>8</sup>). Information is reliable if it is accurate and comes from sources that are “believable.” This gives news its “value,” according to journalists (cf. Hardt & Brennen, 1995; Schudson, 2000).

Concerning the role of a global news agency, getting news out at the fastest speed (i.e., before its competitors do) is in itself a highly valued activity in determining the success of its business operations. Speed is a news value that is seen to benefit more those news agencies that are focused on distributing financial news, information that stockbrokers, banking houses, financial organisations, and so on require. However, even in reporting general news, news agencies that fulfil this traditional role also compete at the level of speed, but value more the reliability of the information and its accuracy. The issue on developing a “news sense” and news values is taken up in chapter 6, which gives a detailed discussion on news selection and production.

Reuters’ Bureau Chief (2006) explains:

You know, one of the reasons why I told you that clients depend on the news that we put out is to make decisions, and the quicker they’ve got the news, the more money they can make. Say, for instance, when you’re selling currency; a trader who is selling dollars on the currency

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<sup>8</sup> See Wilke 1998 for a full historical account of the DPA news agency established in Germany in 1945 by the allies (UK, USA, France and the East German agency taken over by the then USSR) in the post WWII years.

market, foreign exchange market, you have millions of dollars and a news story that's just happened that will tell you that everyone knows that this news is going to affect the dollar, that the dollar is going to be weaker. So you decide to sell. So there are certain news stories. . . . That, for us, the competition, to get the information out in a matter of seconds before any other agency is primary. . . . We cannot afford to have Bloomberg put up a market-moving story a second earlier than us. We are very competitive on that. Any story that will move the market that will affect the price of gold or platinum, or that will affect the price of oil or the price of corn.

On defending the accuracy of the information, reporters have to be sure about what they are reporting on. Accuracy of information is determined, largely, by the level of trust a journalist has in the source of a news item. He or she either is on the scene or relies on informants and key witnesses. For example, Reuters Bureau Chief (2006) explains that when certain people with a reputable standing in society speak (e.g., the Minister of Finance in South Africa or the chairperson of the Reserve Bank in America or in South Africa), "the market listens." News sources therefore have to be reliable, dependable, and accurate insofar as the information that they impart is trustworthy. This information is also valuable to news clients who subscribe to a news agency, such as in the case of the Reuters and other news agencies.

#### *5.1.2 The main client base of global news agencies*

The main clients who subscribe to receive general news from AP, AFP, and DPA tend to be retail media and mainstream commercial media rather than financial companies and brokerage firms as it is in the case of the Reuters and Bloomberg news services. However, Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen (1998) have revealed that the more traditional news agency operations have been in decline over the years, partly as a result of financial pressures and partly as a result of other non-news agency competitors. Retail media outlets, especially global television news networks including the likes of CNN and the BBC, are increasingly competing with agencies as sources of news (Boyd-Barrett, 1998, p. 21).

As a matter of maintaining their status and momentum, global news agencies in the 1990s such as Reuters and AP were said to have joined forces with broadcasting news to produce video and film news footage for broadcast television over and above their



traditional role of providing the print media (newspapers) with news (Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen, 1998). In the case of Reuters, this role was undertaken for Reuters Television, and in the case of AP, Associated Press Television (APTV) (Boyd-Barrett, 1998, p. 19). Palmer, Boyd-Barrett, and Rantanen (1998) stated, “AP is allied with Dow Jones through AP-DJ (AP-Dow Jones) economic news service outside the USA” (p. 64). The idea here is that AP advances in the area of financial news reporting while still maintaining its role in providing general and political news coverage (Paterson, 1998).

The news that all news agencies produce gets distributed mostly via retail media to even wider audiences and the mass public, to non-media organisations, policy-departments of governments, embassies, and non-government organisations. These clients are not necessarily as specialised as the clients of Reuters are, but they are equally as significant and important in the structure of societies. In the bigger picture, Reuters’ clients, mainly financial institutions, are structurally important and relevant to processes of capital and, it may be argued, to maintaining the global financial market.

According to Reuters’ Bureau Chief (2006), the only other global financial news service that Reuters has had an exchange agreement with is the Dow Jones financial news wire (which is American) (Paterson, 1998). Dow Jones is not a traditional news agency, which tend to be wholesalers of general and political news, because it focuses exclusively on financial news indicators and its clients are specialist markets requiring economic news. Reuters has a redistribution clause in its subscription with Dow Jones financial service, which allows Reuters to redistribute information from Dow Jones to Reuters’ clients through their electronic terminals (Reuters’ Bureau Chief). The idea is that Reuters makes it possible for their clients to get as much information as possible and from as many trusted sources that are available. This is part of Reuters’ competitive approach. Reuters’ Bureau Chief maintains, however, that it is only the Reuters’ clients and *not* Reuters’ own staff or journalists who get to

see the information from the Dow Jones service (Reuters' Bureau Chief). Essentially, this means that Reuters' clients indirectly subscribe to the Dow Jones financial service.

According to Reuters' Bureau Chief:

It depends on what service a customer requests. A commodities client will have a screen service that shows mainly commodities stories, but, in all the contracts we give them, the underlying news service [is received], because rest assured, Reuters' reputation is based on news. . . . But your main news service that you subscribe to will be mainly commodities. Somebody else might be an energy client. They will get more energy-related stories and so on with oil stories and trading [stories]. (2006)

Another competitive service that the Reuters' news agency offers that the other global agencies do not is what is called "a dealing service" (Reuters' Bureau Chief, 2006). This literally means that the Reuters' computer terminal (network through which information is relayed) becomes an instrument on which clients can actually trade (Reuters' Bureau Chief). This is achieved using sophisticated technology where clients can do a deal online (Reuters' Bureau Chief). The service allows clients to look at different brokerage firms and banks around the world that are selling or trading in (US) dollars and then make a deal with the bank or brokerage firm that is offering the best exchange rate on the dollar.

According to Reuters' Bureau Chief (2006), if, for instance, a client has South African rands (currency) and wants to purchase US dollars at the best rates, the client subscribing to this service with Reuters goes online, compares exchange rates, and then decides on the institution with which to make a deal. He explains this in the following manner:

You see a bank in Frankfurt [for example] offering a good rate. You can type on your screen and chat with that bank, that broker, and you agree on the deal. It's a secure password protected [screen]. You lock it, and you press "deal," and it's a deal. (Reuters' Bureau Chief)

Clients subscribe to this dealing service with Reuters, and Reuters installs the required “equipment” (technology) for the client (Reuters’ Bureau Chief, 2006).

The global news agencies are competitive in every sense. They compete, in the business sense, in trying to gain an advantage over their peer agencies in terms of acquiring markets, selling to newspapers and retail media around the world, and being the best at what they do—producing and distributing information (AP Bureau Chief, 2006). What also gives a global news agency its edge over its competitors is developing an area, a niche, in which it dominates, as shown in the case of Reuters’ economic and financial services. According to the AP Bureau Chief, developing a business sense is an agency’s primary role as a distributor of news and information.

## **5.2 The regionalisation of bureaus and the fragmentation of news in the operations of news agencies: revisiting debates on monopolisation**

### *5.2.1. The regionalisation of news flows and news bureaus*

The regionalisation of news describes the activities of global news agencies and their tendency to expand their operations worldwide. This dynamic, described as an adaptive tendency, sees global agencies competing in local contexts with domestic news agencies as having the potential for a negative “effect,” and as having the upper hand because of the size of their operations. In the relationships between SAPA and the global news agencies, the issue arises during the investigation (see below).

Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen (1998, pp. 5-12, p. 16) state that national and regional news agencies are locked in a relationship of compliance with the global news agencies, thus inadvertently facilitating the monopolisation tendencies of global agencies and disadvantaging their own growth. This formation of local and global cooperative networking in the relationships between national and global news agencies is described in several other studies simply as “monopolisation” (Boyd-Barrett, 1980; Boyd-Barrett & Thussu, 1992; Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., 1985). Monopolisation is defined here as the concentration of control over news flows. What

enables the dominance of global news agencies over news flows and media markets, however, is what Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen correctly observe in their being “sustained by the accumulated benefits of market advantage rather than by formal agreements” (p. 15). This means that the system of capital, and not necessarily exchanges between news agencies, has differentiated them into hierarchical divisions with unequal levels of participation in global news flows (cf. Kay, 2004; Paterson, 1998 who each define monopolisation as the over-concentration of ownership and control in markets).

Chapter 2 mentions that news and news production activity are not neutral, devoid of human influence and judgements (chapter 6 applies this to the manner in which news is selected at agencies). Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen (1998, pp. 1-6), Bennett (2003, pp. viii-ix, 32-37), and Hachten (1996, pp. xii-xiii) state that news is “political.” The relationships, therefore, among news agencies are definable in political terms.

It can be assumed that journalists on the ground, most of the time, perform their role of news production with integrity. However, they have no final say over the end use of the product of their labour. This decision lies with editors, managers, and ultimately with an organisation’s owners. Essentially, this is why media organisations, in democracies, aim at being independent from politicians, bureaucrats, and governments, so that they can perform according to the precepts and values of their profession. However, the excesses of market intervention present an equally problematic situation.

The study proposes that the social context of, and the politics in, the world, inevitably do intrude in all social relationships including the institutions of news production. There is a dialectical relationship, furthermore, between these institutions and the politics, economics, and cultural exchanges within societies. According to Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen (1998, p. 16), “Local monopolies were achieved through strong local co-operatives.” This dialecticism is visible in the transformations at news

agencies. For example, national news agencies, which Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen (1998, pp. 10-12) previously describe as “dependent,” have evolved in their relationship with global news agencies. Chapter 4 describes their relationships as co-dependent.

This chapter supports and extends certain views of Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen (1998, pp. 1-2). They state, for instance, that global news agencies are “agents” or vehicles of globalisation. Together with global agencies, national and regional (those serving specific regions, not continents) news agencies are described in a hierarchically patterned relationship. By entering into news exchange agreements with global news agencies, the latter two types in fact *also* facilitate globalisation and news flows given their compliance in this hierarchy. However, these contingent relationships cannot be simplified as “monopolisation” by the global news agencies.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was in fact a monopolisation of news markets by a few (three) “international agencies” (Boyd-Barrett, 1980). These did indeed dominate the flow of news (Kayser, 1953) and behaved in “cartel” style with a unidirectional flow of information (Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen, 2000). However, globally, social conditions have changed since the mid- to late-19<sup>th</sup> century, and as the discussion in chapter 4 points out, a “co-dependency relationship,” rather than the earlier theorised “dependency relationships” between national, regional, and global news agencies, exists. This co-dependency relationship, however, reflects a broader systemic problem within the system of capitalism: news agencies, in relationship with each other, inadvertently prop up and enable the free flow of capital. This, on its own, is not a bad thing since it facilitates open information flows. However, once the capitalist system—with its rationalistic tendencies of promoting production above human growth or potential, converting local markets and products (such as news) into profit-making machinery and commodities, and spreading values related to profiteering—is involved, then news agency relationships and functioning become questionable within that system since they aim at independence.

Continental news agencies were the outcome of the politicised debates on communication at UNESCO (see chapter 2). They also emerged in the post-colonial period in which the global South was taking shape. The news agencies resulting from these historical processes include CANA, OANA, and PANA (Boyd-Barrett & Thussu, 1992). Since the fall of socialism and the receding of the NAM (and NANAP), these have played a marginal role in global news flows, but are significant in their location within the global system of capitalism and information exchange. They, in fact, hold a strategic position, although politicised, to ‘fracture’ or ‘diffuse’ the excessive capitalistic tendencies in open information flows including monopolisation (discussed below).

#### *5.2.2 Regionalisation and the sceptics’ and globalists’ positions in relation to globalisation*

The “regionalisation of news bureaus” is relevant and applicable to making sense of various positions on the concept of globalisation. According to Held and McGrew (2003, pp. 4-6), sceptics use the term “regionalisation” to dismiss that there is globalisation. For sceptics, globalisation is not distinguishable from regionalisation. According to them, globalisation lacks “identifiable geographical referents” and “specificity” (Held & McGrew, p. 4). In other words, how is it possible to distinguish globalisation from the “international,” “transnational,” or “regionalisation”? They define internationalisation as the “growing links between essentially discrete national economies or societies” in what they refer to as justifying the “neo-liberal” and imperialist “project” of “the global free market and the consolidation of an Anglo-American capitalism” (Held & McGrew, p. 5). In these economic referents, globalisation, for them, is an “ideological construction” (ibid.). They associate the fragmentation in economic processes with capitalist production in the cross-border internationalisation and flow of goods, services, and social relationships, but they underplay the “cultural effects” and qualities of these cross-border exchanges and the “cultural” relevance of globalisation.

Globalists, on the other hand, emphasize the “temporal or historical” and “spatial attributes” of the concept of globalisation (Held & McGrew, 2003, p. 6; see also the full description in chapter 2). These attributes are relevant in the “activities and relations [that] crystallize on an interregional or intercontinental scale” (ibid.). The “regionalisation of news,” introduced as a concept in this study, supports and lends evidence to the globalist position, while at the same time adopting a “neo-Marxist” position in relating globalisation (as the sceptics do) to its economic ties in the global capitalist system.

Global news agencies expand their activities to other domestic contexts, which in turn influences their activities and operations there. At the same time, this influences the local context, for example, through exchanging news with domestic agencies and employing local journalists from these contexts, all of which facilitate their global operations. Likewise, the local agencies and journalists are introduced to and interact with the global news agencies’ activities in their exchange relationships with them. This has added the ‘unintended’ dimension of facilitating “consciousness” in the activities of news agencies, in what they do and what they are about. Such an argument introduces the cultural perspective on news agency relationships because it looks at the meanings in these interactions.

The expansionist tendencies of global news agencies also has the unintended consequence of supporting the ‘rationalistic’ system of capital accumulation and capital flows, which, in the last two years since 2007, has proved not to be a self-regulating system as classical economists have indicated. Locating foreign global news agencies in local national contexts facilitates the interaction between the foreign cultures of the news agencies with the local media culture. This study uses this argument to support the phenomenon of a global consciousness that expands from the so-called “global public sphere” (Leys, 1999; Sparks, 2000).

The regionalisation of news, in which global agencies expand their operations, can be observed because there is direct interaction between the local and the global agencies. Earlier studies defined and described the activities of “international” news agencies as monopolistic because they usurped global media across contexts. These were the content-based studies observing the discrepancies in news flows in cross-cultural studies. Today, or since the late 1990s and into the new millennium, Reuters, AP, AFP, and to a growing extent, DPA are “global” in their reach and interactions with local media. No longer are they simply identifiable by their countries of origin (Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen, 1998; Read, 1999). Because of the location of their bureaus worldwide, and their assimilation into distinct cultural settings through employing local journalists within their organisations, for example, they qualify as “global.”

As they experience pressures from an increasingly competitive news environment, the need for agencies to expand becomes stronger. The question remains, does “regionalisation” thereby also extend and contribute to the monopolistic control by global news agencies as previously stated in the literature? To recap, according to Boyd-Barrett (1980; 2000), the early “international news agencies,” Havas, Reuters,<sup>9</sup> and Wolff, were indeed monopolistic organisations. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they divided among themselves the world of news production in a “cartel style.” However, changes in the world order at the end of the Second World War (Read, 1999) led to a hierarchical ordering of international, national, and continental news agencies. This was particularly the description against the background of Cold War politics and the setting up the Non-Aligned Movement. The few members of the cartel abandoned their informal agreements among each other over territories. However, Cold War politics resumed an ‘ideological’ form of monopolisation between East and West. In the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the relationships between the global and the emerging national and continental news agencies were seen to offset the balance of flows between nations (Sreberny & Stevenson, 1997) such that we no longer can

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<sup>9</sup> See Donald Read (1999) for a detailed biography on the history of Reuters and the international news agencies and the rise of competition amongst them.



speak of monopolisation by a cartel. Instead, new forms of cooperation and co-dependency are relevant.

### *5.2.3 Fragmentation of news: a concomitant effect of the expansion of global news agencies*

Fragmentation of news occurs in presenting an event as a unique and an unusual or novel occurrence (Bennett, 2003, p. 48). This inevitably happens in fulfilling the functions of news values that make an event “newsworthy” (chapter 6 discusses news values in the selection practices). The fragmentation of news results further in ‘de-historicised’ news— that is, the removal of the event from its historical and the social, political, and economic conditions that give rise to it. To illustrate, in reporting “spot-news,” which are the daily occurrences of events across the world, history and the cultural conditions and socio-political processes (that precede events) are lost in the need to condense or shorten the report to fit within the limits of space for a news wire’s requirements (cf. Bennett, 2003, p. 48). Spot-news needs to be reported with brevity, and this ‘type’ of news (as opposed to features, development news, and press releases) must be put out on news wires with speed and with accuracy, to compete with other agencies. Speed and accuracy are news values prized more highly at news agencies, which are competing for news coverage rather than depth of content (As stated in chapter 4, news agencies have lost investigative reporting style).

The fragmentation of news occurs in two ways in relation to regionalisation: firstly, because global news agencies compete with each other to report on as many events as possible in a day and to be the quickest releasing these news stories, the event is presented as an isolated news item, removed from the broader historical, social, and global context. Secondly, the further splintering of labour in news production due to global agencies’ networks of bureaus operating separately from their main headquarters inevitably results in even further fragmentation when that news is re-edited at the headquarters. The fragmentation of news is important in considerations

of *what* news *does* and what it is supposed to do (cf. Bennett, 2003, pp. 9-10; see also chapter 6).

Ultimately, the regionalisation of news bureaus and the fragmentation of news also assist in explaining the apparent “commoditisation” of news. Commoditisation refers to news becoming commercialised. It is a product that must sell and (in the case of retail media, especially) it must entertain in order to ‘buy’ clients (Leys, 1999, pp. 318-319). Thussu (2003) describes this form of ‘news-commercialisation’ and commoditisation as “infotainment” because the need for a 24/7 news feed can, according to him, “lead to sensationalization and trivialization of often complex stories and a temptation to highlight the entertainment value of news” (p. 117).

### **5.3 News exchange agreements in the developing South African context**

While the expression “exchange of news” is commonly used to describe the news flow agreements among the various news agencies, this can be misleading concerning, for instance, the payment or non-payment of news. A news exchange agreement is a contractual arrangement and a negotiation between news organisations and reflects both the quantity and the content of news being exchanged for a fee, usually a subscription that is renewed on an annual basis. In the news exchange agreements between SAPA and the global news agencies, there is a financial component involved. SAPA is a domestic news agency serving predominantly the South African media, but they also have a mandate on behalf of their newspaper members (also the owners of SAPA) “to be bulk purchasers of international news” (SAPA Editor, 2005). SAPA therefore buy news on a contractual exchange basis with the global news agencies.

SAPA Editor maintains the following:

[SAPA] will buy in contract with Associated Press, AFP, DPA, not Reuters right now. We will buy on an annual basis, for so many millions or hundreds of thousands of rands, their full wire service that comes in to SAPA. We fulfil a function of filtering all of that news. If we get

eight hundred stories a day from AP, we can't send those all to the Star [newspaper] because their copy-taster on the foreign pages is looking for two stories. We will throw out what we call copy-taste, about sixty-percent of that literally, in the bin and we will pass on, according to what we think, [what] our customer [the newspapers] want[s] [as] a selection of international news and financial news. So on any daily SAPA cast, you will find a cross-section of news, entertainment, financial news, sport, [political news], East Asia, what's happening in the [United] States, etcetera. Now we pay a fixed fee for that, but at the same time, all those agencies buy SAPA for a fixed fee. So, they will subscribe to SAPA. So we buy AFP [news] and AFP buys from us. We will pay more because they [global agencies] give us more news from the world. We give them news from South Africa. And that is a matter of negotiation. (2005)

The sub-sections below offer further description and analysis of the relationships between the global news agencies in the domestic context with SAPA.

#### *5.3.1 News exchange agreements between the global news agencies and the local South African Press Association*

The relationships between SAPA and the global news agencies are described as very amicable, according to SAPA Editor (2005). All of the participating global agencies conceded that they have positive working relationships with SAPA. These relationships between the national and global news agencies presented in the sub-sections below reflect the broader contextual changes that are influencing news agencies. A discussion of the relationships between the global news agencies, the continental news agency, PANA, and SAPA follows this discussion.

News agencies act as the first gatekeepers through which news events are filtered before the retail media receive them. The news from news agencies is what media markets around the world receive. News that comes in to SAPA from each of the global news agencies—AP, AFP, and DPA—does not get redistributed from the SAPA wire to the other global news agency because, as mentioned previously, global agencies are in competition for news and news sources with each other. Therefore, while the news that SAPA receives from AFP goes out to all SAPA subscribers, it does not go to the AP news wire because the two global agencies are competitors. The same applies with the news that SAPA receives from AP that is not redistributed to the AFP or DPA news agencies (SAPA Editor, 2005).

*Reuters and SAPA: the global within the local*

The relationship between SAPA and the Reuters news agency is steeped in a history that stems from British colonial imperialism in South Africa. SAPA Editor (2005) describes the relationship between SAPA and Reuters in the early years of SAPA's operations as amicable, but in later years, from the early 1990s, that relationship became strained as Reuters attempted to compete with SAPA by acquiring domestic exchange agreements with the local SA retail media (cf. Boyd-Barrett, 2000, p. 10; Forbes, 1998, p. 153). In the words of SAPA Editor, then, the relationship turned hostile. The Reuters' bureau attempt to become the main supplier of local news to the South African news market was met with discord, resulting in SAPA withdrawing their subscription with Reuters.

The kind of structure that Reuters has, which is based in Britain, had been associated with the colonial period for a long time. According to the Reuters' Bureau Chief, it was therefore "natural" that the Reuters structure would be more entrenched in countries that were colonies of the British Empire and a part of the Commonwealth of Nations. He pointed out that the original owners of Reuters were mainly the newspaper associations in the Commonwealth including the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and the New Zealand Press Association. The news agencies that developed in the post-colonial contexts, such as in South Africa (and even PTI in India), were fashioned on the operations and structure of the Reuters' news agency (Reuters' Bureau Chief).

The news associations that were given birth, as it were, in the British Commonwealth are all said to imitate the operations of Reuters (Reuters' Bureau Chief, 2006). In one sense, this has not necessarily had entirely negative outcomes because the reputation worldwide that Reuters has established as being a news agency that is accurate, reliable, and quick with delivering news globally has had a positive impact on the national news agencies that grew from and imitated Reuters' news operations.

Despite their being modelled on the Reuters news agency, none of the domestic news agencies can claim to be on an equal par with it. They continue, however, to operate on this model, employing the same news values as Reuters.

The preceding point is worth further consideration when one takes into account the differences in approach between so-called Western journalism, which operates in the “liberal tradition,” and “alternative forms” of journalism, of which the IPS is an example (see also Curran, 2000). Boyd-Barrett and Thussu (1992, pp. 19-25) state that national news agencies imitating the global news agencies’ Western style of journalism has led to a “dependency relationship.” According to the Reuters’ Bureau Chief (2006), SAPA, for instance, shaped its news operations and developed a professionalism based on its imitation of the Reuters’ news agency and its association with Reuters. In argument, having evolved and adapted from the British global news agency has not allowed the domestic, post-colonial news agency to explore either an alternative or a uniquely national brand of news journalism.<sup>10</sup> The argument points to an emerging debate in newsrooms and in academia for the development of a ‘public sphere’ model of news in which a diversity of information sources are explored (not just the excesses of mainstream traditional journalism) (Bennett, 2003; cf. Curran, 2000; Leys, 1999). See also the discussion on the ‘development media model’ in section 5.1., and the discussion in chapter 2 on news imbalances and the public sphere.

According to the Reuters’ Bureau Chief (2006), “in every country where Reuters operates, apart from [having their] own staff and [their] own sources of news, [Reuters] depends on the local news services, not to give [them] the news, but as

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<sup>10</sup> The recent incident of the BJF (Black Journalists’ Forum) in SA having excluded their white colleagues from a meeting was deplored in racial terms. If one takes into account the fact that journalism worldwide has always been defined in the liberal Western tradition or Anglo-American tradition and adapted in different social contexts, one observes no universal ‘alternative’, or ‘non-western style’ of journalism, up until the 1990s in which a trend in citizen and public journalism has emerged. The latter are, however, almost insignificant to the deep-rooted influence of Anglo-American journalism.

further sources of news.” If Reuters takes a news item from SAPA, they do not just put it on their wire. The news item must first be checked (for accuracy and credibility). Then, Reuters checks if they have their own sources on that particular news item. In this way, the local news agency is said to be a “tip-off” to the global news agency. If a story from the local news agency is credible and “strong,” Reuters will put it on their wire immediately, but they will “credit” the local agency for that story (Reuters’ Bureau Chief). This “method” applies to other stories that Reuters uses, even from the local broadcast media in SA, because all local media, according to the Reuters’ Bureau Chief, are used to “tip-off” global agencies on local occurrences that are reported in the local media.

It was in the early 1990s that Reuters’ news agency made the decision in all its overseas operations to stop giving exclusive redistribution rights of its news to the locally subscribing news agencies; this included SAPA (SAPA Editor, 2005). What this meant was that domestic news agencies would no longer have the right to distribute or to be the sole distributor of foreign news from Reuters. To analyse the impact of this, it would mean for one thing that Reuters would become a direct distributor of their news at domestic levels to domestic news markets. This would allow Reuters to expand its client base in national contexts. For instance, if South African newspapers could not obtain news (especially financial and economic news) from SAPA, they would go directly to Reuters’ news agency and form individual contracts (news agreements) with that global agency because it produced news that they wanted.

According to the SAPA Editor (2005), Reuters wanted to “sell [their news] directly” in competition with SAPA on the basis that the “sum of the parts [would] make up more than the whole.” In other words, Reuters wanted to sell directly to the Star newspaper and directly to the Sunday Times newspaper, with the aim that the returns would be greater than if they merely exchanged with SAPA (SAPA Editor). This led SAPA to reduce the cost of the “exclusivity contract” (redistribution rights) with

Reuters and how much they would pay Reuters annually, but in later years, Reuters withdrew this contract altogether so that SAPA could no longer redistribute Reuters' news locally (SAPA Editor). According to the SAPA Editor, in the 1990s, Reuters set up their own local news bureau in competition with the South African Press Association:

[T]here was quite a bitter battle. . . . They [Reuters] had cut ties with SAPA completely. They no longer bought from us and we no longer bought from them. We [SAPA] survived. They decided not to do it anymore [run a domestic Reuters bureau in South Africa in competition with SAPA] because it was costing them a lot of money. . . . Then they wanted to make peace with us, so they came and they made peace. It was about 1996 or 1997, maybe even as late as 1999. (SAPA Editor)

This issue was raised with the Reuters' Bureau Chief (2006), and he maintained that Reuters "does not have that relationship where SAPA puts up a story and says it is [a] SAPA-Reuters [story]." This means that SAPA does not use Reuters' news stories on its own wire. Instead, one sees in some of the local SA newspapers that individual newspapers subscribe directly to Reuters for news and its picture service because the Reuters news agency will be credited in the dateline when its news stories are used. One sees this trend emerging with the other global agencies as well in SA, AFP, AP, and DPA (e.g., the Business Day, City Press, and Sowetan newspapers).

Reuters' Bureau Chief (2006) maintains that the relationship with the local SAPA news agency is simply that they supply Reuters with news and that SAPA might have "other news agreements with Reuters" competitors, AP and AFP. Since 1999, SAPA has sold their news to Reuters, but they do not receive Reuters' news any longer (SAPA Editor, 2005). The relationship between the two news agencies is described as cordial, but Reuters is said to compete with SAPA "on our home ground" by selling to individual newspapers (SAPA Editor).

#### *AP and SAPA*

AP subscribe to SAPA and SAPA to them, according to the contract that AP have with SAPA. AP can pick up news from SAPA, but while they receive the full SAPA

wire, they choose only a few stories from SAPA (AP Bureau Chief, 2006). According to the AP Bureau Chief, “Obviously, when you’re working for an agency, you don’t cover a country [in] the same way [that] a newspaper does.” In other words, not every local South African story would make international news, so AP does not use every story received from SAPA even though AP subscribes to the full SAPA wire. The role of AP in South Africa is not to provide the South African audience with news. Instead, AP is interested in providing the rest of the world with news from South Africa (AP Bureau Chief).

The issue of news agencies “filtering news” refers to the selection of news items that the editors or chief-editors (at news agencies and at newspapers) decide are newsworthy for their audiences or their brand. Therefore, editors filter news by choosing what is wanted and what is not. Furthermore, certain stories are edited based on the decision of the editor. This is the “gatekeeping” function of an editor (Bennett, 2003, pp. 2-4; see also Schudson, 2000), and chapter 6 further elaborates and explains the issue.

The types of news stories that the AP chooses from SAPA are influenced by what the AP subscribers want and the mandate given to AP editorial team (AP Bureau Chief, 2006). The main subscribers of AP news are its member newspapers in America. According to the AP Bureau Chief, while there is no specific focus of what news stories AP want from South Africa, they tend to look at business stories when that might interest business clients outside of SA. They also look at “focal stories” such as news about development and HIV/AIDS (AP Bureau Chief). AP also chooses stories that “may say something about the country or the region so [that] other people can understand it better” (AP Bureau Chief). In this sense, audiences and media client markets who buy the final product have an indirect influence on the news selection at agencies and, therefore, indirectly influence their operations. This ‘effect’ also reflects the networking operations of news agencies tied to the broader dynamics of a global market based on supply and demand.



### *AFP in relation to SAPA*

When SAPA abandoned their subscription with the Reuters news agency in the 1990s, they entered into a contract and subscription with the French AFP (SAPA Editor, 2005). SAPA purchases news from AFP and sells their news to AFP. Together with the AP and the German DPA, SAPA receive their international (foreign) news from these three global agencies. According to SAPA Editor, taking on the AFP news wire worked out cheaper than when they subscribed to the Reuters news wire. SAPA pay AFP more, however, for foreign news than AFP pays for SAPA news “because they [AFP] give us more news from the world [than] we give them news from South Africa, and that is a matter of negotiation” (SAPA Editor).

According to SAPA Editor (2005), the French news agency expanded its operations throughout Africa as their interest in the continent began to grow. Three ex-SAPA reporters work for AFP, which AFP “recruited from us,” according to the SAPA Editor. More news that SAPA receives about Africa comes from the AFP agency than from any of the other global news agencies because AFP is strong on general and political news in Africa (SAPA Editor). In terms of African television news reports, the bulk of news that Channel Africa sends out to the rest of Africa on its twenty-four hour satellite channels derives from the likes of Reuters, BBC, and APTV, according to SAPA Editor.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Boyd-Barrett (1998:19) explains that the global news agencies predominantly provide their news service to retail media (newspapers and broadcast media), but two of the leading global agencies, Reuters and AP, expanded their operations in the 1990s in a context in which the global news agencies faced increasing competition from other emerging retail broadcasting news networks. Boyd-Barrett (1998:19-21) states that by the mid-1990s Reuters had taken over the wholesale television news service, Visnews, to form Reuters Television. Reuters had also bought a minority share in the British television news station ITN. The AP news agency has an associated television news service, APTV. Reuters Television and APTV are the two leading global broadcasting news networks together with the WTN service (World Television News) which is the successor of United Press International Television Network (UPITN, American). Reuters also has shares in WTN through its association with ITN. ITN has a minority share in WTN (Boyd-Barrett 1998: 20).

According to the AFP Bureau Chief (2005), SAPA are their biggest clients in South Africa. There are no direct news exchange agreements between AFP and most of the South African newspapers since these get AFP news through SAPA (AFP Bureau Chief). This “exclusivity agreement” has been the arrangement for over decades between AFP and the “national news agencies,” including SAPA (AFP Bureau Chief). The exclusivity agreement between global agencies and national agencies means that all locally based retail media must obtain international news from their domestic national news agencies in order to receive the global news agencies’ wires.

The AFP Bureau Chief (2005) stated that there has been a desire from AFP to change this arrangement and sell their services directly to the SA newspapers, as Reuters attempted to do in the 1990s, but this would result in AFP competing with SAPA. Therefore, according to the AFP Bureau Chief, the conventional agreement remains in place between AFP and the SAPA news agency, but it is not yet clear whether this will change in the future (AFP Bureau Chief).

The implication of such a “change” would mean either that SAPA becomes fully privatised, where the SA newspapers no longer exclusively own them, or that the SA newspapers decide on a direct contract between themselves and the global news agencies. There is also the potential that other news agencies can emerge in SA to compete with SAPA in selling foreign news to local retail media. Currently, the SABC (which used to be the largest subscriber of SAPA news, but no longer subscribes to SAPA, according to SAPA Editor, 2005) exchanges news directly with the global news agencies and competes with SAPA.

AFP provides SAPA with their complete English news wire, which includes the international wire, meaning that SAPA gets everything that AFP puts out in English (AFP Bureau Chief, 2005). SAPA uses AFP stories a great deal, such that one will often see a “SAPA-AFP credit line” in most of the South African newspapers that subscribe to SAPA. However, AFP Bureau Chief states that some of the South

African newspapers do have direct agreements with AFP where they buy news content and pictures from AFP. These include *The Citizen*, *The Sowetan* (for text only, not for photographs), *This Day* newspaper (which folded in 2005), and *Business Day*. The other SA newspapers that receive AFP news obtain it by subscribing to SAPA. On the African continent, other African newspapers are also said to get most of their news about South Africa from their national news agencies that subscribe to AFP (AFP Bureau Chief).

#### *DPA's relationship with SAPA*

According to the DPA Bureau Chief (2007), DPA has an exchange agreement with SAPA, but SAPA is used as a “tip-off” or “alarm” in Southern Africa to alert DPA about news in the region. This is similar to Reuters’ monitoring of SAPA’s domestic news content. For DPA, this means that SAPA is a news source for the global news agency, which is reporting for its overseas market predominantly in Europe. If SAPA carries a story on its news wire that is of interest to the DPA news agency, they will pick this up, but they will also look at other news sources carrying the same story, such as the SABC and other radio stations (DPA Bureau Chief). According to DPA Bureau Chief, DPA does not translate news stories from SAPA because these are written mainly for their South African audiences. If DPA uses the story, it has to “put it into context” for its overseas media clients, and so they obtain more sources on the news story from other local media, according to DPA Bureau Chief.

The DPA Bureau Chief (2007) offered an example: in early 2007, SA was a member on the United Nations’ Security Council. Had a local story emerged concerning South Africa’s input at the UN Security Council that would have had international interest, DPA would have picked up the local story and sent this to the DPA head office to be integrated into a broader context story “where South Africa is part of a bigger picture.” The DPA Bureau Chief maintains that a variety of news sources in a local context is important for the global news agency, which does not only rely on the domestic national news agency as a source of local news. Furthermore, monitoring

different news sources on a daily basis can be time consuming, but it is imperative for a global news agency to monitor as many local sources as possible in order “to get an idea of the mainstream discourse [and] what the debate in the country is [about]” (DPA Bureau Chief).

The above example brings into focus the importance of news agencies, in general, as reliable sources of news in part because of the professionalism involved in how they acquire information and how they report on it. This is compared, in the analysis of chapter 7, with the emerging phenomenon of “blogs,” which are information sites on the Internet that are not “professional” journalistic sources of information.

#### *IPS and SAPA*

IPS does not exchange news with any of the other global news agencies. According to the Regional Director at IPS (2006), there is no need to because IPS does their own original stories with a different focus even if similar issues are covered. IPS does however supply news stories to national news agencies such as SAPA and to websites such as the All-Africa.com website (IPS Regional Director). IPS provides content that is a different product from what the mainstream global news agencies supply. IPS does not cover spot-news. Their focus or niche, as discussed in the previous chapter, is on development-related issues. Their journalistic style is also in-depth and investigative reporting. In that sense, IPS is an alternative news agency with operations on every continent.

According to IPS Regional Director (2006), SAPA subscribes to receive news stories from IPS, but IPS does not subscribe to receive SAPA news. IPS has a direct news agreement with the South African newspaper, the *Mail & Guardian*, which is a privately owned, weekly publication. The *Mail & Guardian* mainly focuses on issues requiring in-depth, investigative journalism. It is also a “fourth estate” type of

publication because of its journalistic style.<sup>12</sup> It is an “alternative” publication. All of the other SA newspapers that receive IPS features and news stories obtain these through SAPA, who make a selection of the IPS news wire (IPS Regional Director).

#### **5.4 The activities of the global news agencies, SAPA, and PANA in Africa**

The history of the formation of news agencies on the African continent, according to many critics, is a history that is marred by the interference of the respective African governments in terms of the ownership and control of these national news agencies (Karikari, 2007; Rønning & Kupe, 2000). In Africa, SAPA is often cited as the only example of a non-government-owned and independent (i.e., privately owned) news organisation (Forbes, 1998; Kupe, 2007). The governments of all the other African nations play a dominant role in the financing and therefore in the control of their news agencies in terms of what they may produce and in terms of what news they may distribute, particularly when this is about an African nation-state or Africa (Barratt & Berger, 2007). This interference by governments in the control of African media (and in Latin America and Asia) is problematic to Western media organisations that place a high value—indeed, a non-negotiable one—on the freedom of the media from political and government interference.

On the African continent, the flow of news in terms of the global news agencies’ presence and activities (of production, selection, and distribution) is characterised as fragmenting the news from region to region. This means that in the activities of global news agency bureaus, the African continent is divided into four main regions from which each of the global agencies produces and distributes news. The news from Africa produced by global news agencies predominantly serves their overseas markets, not the African media markets. This situation may be open to change as the African news agencies are coming under increased pressures by their controlling

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<sup>12</sup> The *Mail & Guardian* Online is the first internet-based news publication in Africa. It works in close association with the *Mail & Guardian* newspaper but has its own support and Editorial staff. M&G online can be accessed at <http://www.mg.co.za>. It produces daily news to complement the in-depth reporting of the newspaper.

governments and, hence, open and free information is lacking on the continent. Global news agencies may then step in to provide information/news to this local developing context.

There is a two-fold problem with this. The first is that the global news agencies then dictate the terms of news content for the continent (De Beer & Steyn, 1996; cf. Escobar, 1995). The second is that under these restrictive conditions, while global agencies may be providing a platform for the development of news flows, they also become the main sources of news to the continent. The situation, as described by Boyd-Barrett (1998), remains one of dependency of African news agencies, in general, on global agencies for news about the continent and from neighbouring African nations. The IPS Regional Director reiterated this view and the problem with foreign press reporting Africa for the Africans (see below).

#### *5.4.1 Are continental news agencies worldwide in decline?*

In previous studies, Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen (1998) also explained that with the end of the Cold War and the gradual regress of the NWICO debates, the role of continental news agencies has declined for at least two reasons. The first is the withdrawal of funding and financial aid in the developing world and its redirection to an emerging capitalist Eastern Europe. The second reason is the lack of commitment from member agencies in their cooperative contributions of news (and resources) to maintaining continental news agencies because the drive to produce a (politically motivated) continental co-operative agency no longer exists in the face of the changes in global politics.

Partly because of the regionalisation and introduction of global news agency bureaus worldwide, so-called continental news agencies, the ‘middle-men,’ are in decline. Continental agencies cannot expand operations, particularly in their own regions, as a result of lacking competitiveness with the global news agencies who already have exchange agreements in regional areas with local national news agencies that want

their news. Their operations (i.e., the continental news agencies) stagnate and sometimes, as has happened in the case of PANA, go through several reorganisational shifts and definitions (Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen, 1998; Boyd-Barrett & Thussu, 1992).

According to several of the global news agencies' participants, PANA may have the potential to become a pan-African news agency playing an influential role as news provider in Africa. The PANA Deputy-editor (2006) reiterated this fact in the example given of numerous times that change was made at PANA to turn it into a globally recognised news agency and to compete with the global news agencies (see chapter 4). In the previous chapter, PANA is said to be modelled on the Reuters and AFP news agencies (PANA Deputy-editor). However, because PANA is still owned (and perceived by other agencies to be owned) by the African member states, and despite the PANA participants' claims of independence in the operations of the news agency, their news is largely the product of nationally run and government-controlled member agencies. The interference by governments in news production damages PANA's efforts to transform itself into a global news agency from Africa.

The relationships amongst news agencies are seen as fundamental to understanding two things. Firstly, these relationships present how news agencies are defined at the various levels at which they operate (i.e., global, national, and continental) (cf. Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen, 1998, pp. 4-5). Secondly, the relationships among them describe what they do and how they operate. In the last century, news production and distribution have shaped, influenced, and defined them, and in turn, has influenced their relationships of news exchange. This is most evident in the relationships between global and national news agencies. It also exists, however, between the continental news agency and the national news agency and, rarely, between continental and global news agencies.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Continental news agencies such as the Pan African News Agency in Africa, the Non-Aligned News Agency Pool and the Organisation of Asia-Pacific News Agency have not been as successful as either

While the global news agencies—Reuters, AFP, AP, DPA, and the “alternative” IPS—each have their headquarters based overseas (mainly in their countries of origin), they also have strategically located news bureaus worldwide including on the African continent. All of the global news agencies reporting on Africa have their bureaus based in different “zonal areas” on the continent. News is reported from these zones by these agencies, exclusively for international audiences outside of Africa. Each of the participating global news agencies in the study have a Southern African news bureau based in Johannesburg, South Africa, but report news inclusive of that region. Likewise, they have regional bureaus in the other parts of Africa, covering news about these specific zones or regions. In a sense, they compete with PANA, which is meant to be reporting about the African continent, not just for Africans, but for global audiences as well.

#### *5.4.2 The role of SAPA in Africa in relation to the African news agencies*

SAPA does not have news exchange agreements with other national news agencies from other developing contexts in Africa, Asia, or South America. A “sprinkling of news bureaus from overseas,” other than the global news agencies, are said to be interested in news from South Africa, and these send foreign reporters out to SA (SAPA Editor, 2005). These smaller international news agencies include correspondents from the Japanese Kyodo news agency, from Moscow’s ITAR-TASS news agency [i.e., Information Telegraph Agency of Russia—Telegraph Agency of the Soviet State], and a “growing contingent” from China’s Xinhua news agency (SAPA Editor). According to the PANA respondent (2006), PANA has a correspondent based in Cape Town (but the respondent declined to offer further information or the contact details in this regard). No other news agencies from the other African, Asian, or South American continents are present in South Africa, with regard to regional bureaus. An explanation is mainly that national (domestic) news

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national or global news agencies have in their outreach and collaboration. Reason for this is discussed in the chapter.



agencies cannot afford to set up news bureaus with their own staff reporters outside of their national contexts. Furthermore, there appears to be logistical difficulties in national agencies covering other developing national contexts such as the need for translation services, for example. Furthermore, national news agencies rely, to a significant extent, on the global news agencies for news from other national contexts.

SAPA does not exchange news directly with the Indian nationally based news agency, PTI, which is the dominant news agency in India.<sup>14</sup> Two examples of separate news events, important to both national contexts, in India and South Africa were presented to the SAPA Editor. In 2004, India held its national elections that coincided with the national elections being held in SA the same year. However, neither country reported the event occurring in the other nation as significant to their domestic media. This is despite the historical overlaps between the two nations. For instance, both were imperialist British colonies, and both have a long political relationship stemming from India's support of the liberation movements during the apartheid regime in SA (and even before then). The coverage of each country's national election in their domestic contexts was in fact reported via the global news agencies.

SAPA Editor (2005) explained why there are no news exchange agreements between the two developing countries by drawing on an example of the Xinhua (Chinese) news agency in SA:

The level of interest amongst our end subscribers is a fraction of what Xinhua believes we should have. So for the Indian elections, my understanding of what's happening there would be pretty vague because it wasn't in my sphere of direct interest. We got copies [news coverage] from the [global] agencies, we saw pictures on television, etcetera, of how the elections worked out, the changes, this that and the other. But ask yourself, the average South African, were their lives materially affected by the outcome of the Indian elections? Maybe in the long term because of x, y, and z factors, but actually, no. So it makes sense. Why get

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<sup>14</sup> In 2004, the researcher was in India to conduct a pilot study for a comparison of news flows in the developing contexts of SA and in India. However, this had to be abandoned for this study because it proved too expansive and non-viable both in time and resources.

terribly excited about that when you can engage an agent to report? Well, it's not the best prize, but it's the most cost-effective prize. (SAPA Editor)

The local South African news market is not interested in what is happening in India, for instance, because it may appear that that has no bearing on the average South African's life (SAPA Editor, 2005). To illustrate, SAPA Editor believes that the possible attitude of the average SA newsreader is such that mass poverty, illiteracy, or abuse of women in another national context has little bearing on South Africans because they are focused on their own issues despite any overlaps. This is contrary however to modern-day new social movements such as the Green Peace movement, Amnesty International, or even the women's liberation movements (which began in Europe and spread to the USA). New social movements are global in character and have been able to secure widespread support across national boundaries and gender and class divides (cf. Shah, 1999). Information is vital to their membership and to their ideals, and the modern media has been instrumental in their spread (cf. van Zoonen, 1992).

SAPA did have news agreements with the Arab press news agencies, but that did not last, according to SAPA Editor (2005). They tried to exchange news with the Middle East News Agency (MENA) based in Cairo, with the Algerian Press Service (APS), and with the Moroccan news agency, the Maghreb Arab Press (MAP). The arrangements did not work well because, according to SAPA Editor, the agencies did not meet the story quota or the number of stories that were meant to be exchanged with SAPA. SAPA also ran the Zimbabwean News Agency ZIANA [Zimbabwe Inter-Africa News Agency] (in the 1980s) and helped to set up the Namibian agency, NAMPA.<sup>15</sup> They tried exchanges with the Angolan agency, ANGOP [Angola Press], and some of the West African countries as well. None of these exchanges were

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<sup>15</sup> A recent online article in the German press conveyed through the DPA news agency, the Namibian news agency is facing possible liquidation given that it is in arrears on national taxes of up to 1.3 billion Namibian dollars.

successful because SAPA felt that they were putting in more news and finance than they were getting back (SAPA Editor).

It can be argued that the domestic SAPA news agency already gets news about other developing contexts by subscribing to the global news agencies whose extensive networks reach across continents. In this argument, the monopolisation of information flows becomes a reality because there are only a few globally strong news agencies that provide more or less the same news coverage because they compete for the same markets. What is at stake here is the need for a diversity of sources. This situation might help explain the incidence of “blogging” sites on the Internet, given that alternative sources for news and information other than the “official” news sources from the mainstream private (and government-owned) media are being sought. This may be an issue for further investigation in related studies.

The relationship between SAPA and PANA has been limited to unsuccessful attempts to regenerate PANA for the African continent.. In the early 1990s, a few people like journalist Moeletsi Mbeki, the brother of SA President Thabo Mbeki, and SAPA put in a bid to revamp PANA and turn it around from its declining role in Africa (SAPA Editor, 2005). According to SAPA Editor, they were willing to take up their share to rejuvenate PANA together with the support from the United Nations (UN), which is actively involved in developing media capacity in Africa, and various other donors from the international community. The intention was to recreate PANA “as a real African News Agency” (SAPA Editor). As discussed in section 4.2.1 of chapter 4, this attempt did not materialise.

SAPA has itself not been recognised as an independent news agency by other African media and news agencies. According to SAPA Editor (2005), there is much suspicion by other African agencies about SAPA being a government agency. In the post-1990s, SAPA Editor explains that when he first tried making contact with other African news agencies after SAPA’s isolation during the apartheid years, he found it

difficult to convince others that SAPA was never a government news agency and that the government did not own them.

SAPA Editor (2005) expressed the view that Africa should report itself, but in all instances of attempted news exchange with other African news agencies, the quality, content, and quantity of news exchange has been questionable and not up to standard. Because of this, the supposed “western colonial kind of news” that the global news agencies provide about the continent is still better than what African national news agencies are providing (SAPA Editor). According to SAPA Editor, there is a fundamental clash in the conceptualisation and definition of news in many of the African countries, which has resulted in a clash between them and SAPA entering into successful news exchange agreements with each other.

SAPA Editor (2005) believes there is a “huge divide” on the issue of news exchange amongst African news agencies and that the answer is “somewhere in the middle.” The following argument was proposed: on the one hand, there are the Western news agencies who report Africa primarily for their main markets, which are in London, Paris, Hamburg, and New York. Africa is a secondary market to the global news agencies (SAPA Editor). According to SAPA Editor, there is the extreme side of this debate that everything that the Western global agencies report about Africa is negative, bad news, and therefore biased. On the other hand, there are the African news agencies that accuse Western media of bias and negative reporting, but which allow their own governments to intervene in how and what they may report. These are the two extremes.

SAPA Editor (2005) believes that “the global agencies [do] report Africa fairly accurately,” but in previous studies, De Beer & Steyn (1996, 1997), and Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., (1985) state that the selection and content of news about Africa that is problematic and not the accuracy of news. SAPA Editor believes that many

more stories that are positive and that go unreported and unnoticed about Africa could balance out the more negative approach that global agencies are accused of taking. A combination of Africa reporting itself as accurately and objectively as possible (i.e., no government interference) and some Western news coverage would be the ideal situation, according to the SAPA Editor. Other news agencies should also have a role so that there is better (i.e., more diverse) coverage of Africa.

Reuters reports Africa primarily as part of a package to their main customers that are not in Africa. They are mostly stockbrokers in New York, London, and the East “who have an interest in news about Africa for their own strategic commercial reasons” (SAPA Editor, 2005). As such, these clients are interested in mortality figures, how these will influence their business strategy to set up an African operation, and that kind of information (SAPA Editor). Therefore, although Reuters sells its news to African markets as well, these are not their primary markets (SAPA Editor). This implies, largely, that the news markets will affect or influence the news focus of an agency, especially if clients require a certain type of information. Reuters’ news agency is an example, as are the various news agencies adopting a specific “niche.” Therefore, important future studies will include investigations of news markets, their characteristics, and the kinds of news stories that sell or that these audiences are interested in.

AP news agency is interested in Africa “from a distance,” and the coverage of Africa is more for their American news markets than for Africa itself (SAPA Editor, 2005). The French and the English commercial entities are said to be more active in Africa than the Americans are, but the Americans are very interested in stories about “strategic things like oil,” for instance (SAPA Editor). The global news agencies are said to be unconcerned when they hear that Africa would prefer to report itself and break loose of the dependence on the global agencies reporting Africa (SAPA Editor). Several of the respondents (from AFP, AP, and Reuters) expressed that it would be to the benefit of the global news agencies if Africa reported itself because this would

save them the time and cost it takes to set up a news bureau and maintain it with reporters and equipment. However, unless Africa improves its reporting and becomes independent of government, they do not see this happening.

When we were talking about the PANA regeneration in the early 1990s . . . we went to talk to the Reuters people, to the BBC, the Voice of America, AFP, and even DPA, to a whole lot of people. And we said to them, “Would you like a decent functioning, credible news agency across Africa sending you news which you could rely on and use?” And they said, “If you could do that, [we] would love it. [We] would reduce the costs for covering Africa, and [we] would subscribe to [that] pan African news agency like Reuters subscribes to SAPA today as a good tip-off. Africa’s difficult to cover. It’s a big place. Its logistics are a nightmare. So if someone was going to present that to them [the global news agencies] on a platter, and it was a relatively credible product, they would say thanks a lot. (SAPA Editor, 2005)

The global news agencies have considerable influence over their audiences’ perceptions of a country or a continent, but this influence comes from the news that they carry (cf. Crigler, 1999; Tuchman, 1978). Information (news) has the ability to affect voting behaviour as well as investor confidence (Bennett, 2003). Previous studies (De Beer & Steyn, 1997; Sreberny, 2000; Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., 1985) also confirm that news about developing social contexts tends to be overwhelmingly negative, whereas the developed Western countries are portrayed more positively in global news reports. This argument also emerged at the political debates at UNESCO in the 1980s when the “MacBride Report” that investigated global imbalances in information flows was published (cf. Vincent et al., 1999).

#### *5.4.3 Global news agencies: debating “negative” reporting in Africa*

The global news agencies tend to express surprise and concern with the criticism they receive on their production and selection of negative news stories about Africa and other developing contexts. They feel that they are merely “reporting facts,” and the situation as it is (cf. Vincent et al., 1999). The selection process of news is discussed in finer detail in the next chapter with regard to news values, but the specific focus in the section below concerns perceptions of global news agencies in Africa about Africa.

In comparing the apparent failure of PANA on the African continent, the Reuters' Bureau Chief used the BBC as a successful example of how a media organisation can develop independently of government despite being funded by government. PANA has a history of interference in its operations by African governments or the AU governing body. There were attempts in the late 1990s to privatise PANA, but according to the PANA Deputy-editor (2006), PANA is still substantially under the influence of African governments.

The Reuters' Bureau Chief (2006) expressed his opinion on the problems with the current pan-African news agency:

I think that PANA's problem . . . is the fact that they just don't have the resources. To have the human resources and the material resources would make it possible for them to [present] an image of themselves that becomes a marketing image. . . . Whether or not [they are] government [financed] . . . they need to break away from the image of the government and come up with a reputation for [themselves]. Look at the BBC for having a strong reputation of independence and objectivity. In fact, if you know the kinds of problems they had with the British government over their [reporting] on Iraq, where they, the BBC, took a big knocking because in fact they were inaccurate in their view of what the British government was doing. . . . This all goes to show that you can be funded and started by the government, but if you can move on to establish yourself and credibility . . . That's easier said than [done] in terms of Africa because the governments cannot resist the temptation to interfere.

Part of the failure of PANA to establish a credible reputation in Africa and especially abroad amongst global news agencies has to do with the people who run the organisation, the people who "ended up in PANA," according to the Reuters' Bureau Chief (2006). He questions whether these are people chosen on the merits of their objectivity and professionalism or simply chosen by governments and arrangements based on nepotism (Reuters' Bureau Chief). The problem lies with the fact that PANA has not developed a news sense and a niche that would attract business partnerships or news contracts with the global news agencies such as Reuters. It is said that PANA may have the capability and the potential to report Africa, but that they have not developed this capability or exploited it (Reuters' Bureau Chief).

The Reuters agency does not have any news agreements with PANA, although Reuters does have some agreements with other African national news agencies. These agreements with other African news agencies are similar to the news exchange arrangement between Reuters and SAPA. News from the national news agencies in Africa is more about the national context of these countries than about Africa as a continent. Reuters has news bureaus staffed by their own journalists that cover news from Africa. When it comes to PANA, Reuters has never received or exchanged news with them, according to the Reuters' Bureau Chief (2006).

They should for instance, have more access to people who would be more reluctant to speak to, say, the Western media. [Robert] Mugabe might be more inclined to give PANA an exclusive interview, and if PANA interview Mugabe and he says things that are newsworthy, we'll pick it up, Gadaffi [as well]. If PANA goes and interviews former Ethiopian ruler . . . who has been hiding in Zimbabwe and doesn't talk to anybody, if PANA gets an exclusive interview with him, we'll pick that up. That is the strength that should be exploited by them in my view [i.e., access to inaccessible people], but I don't think they do it enough because I haven't seen an interview they have done with anybody that we so desperately want to hear from. (Reuters' Bureau Chief)

Apart from the aforementioned lack of resources that affects the success of PANA in Africa, it is also stated that the problem might also be a pure misjudgement on their part because they want to compete with the global news agencies like Reuters by "going after the stories that Reuters is doing" (Reuters' Bureau Chief; cf. Forbes, 1998). In this, they "know very well that they cannot beat Reuters at those stories [because] wherever Reuters is present, they cannot do better than us" (Reuters' Bureau Chief, 2006). This comment was made with regard to the resources of Reuters and its history established over centuries as a reputable, reliable agency worldwide. According to the Reuters' Bureau Chief, PANA should develop their own niche, which is reporting from Africa stories that the global news agencies cannot get (by default of being Western news agencies). In that way, if Reuters sees a story that PANA has put out and that others have picked up, they will subscribe to PANA and it will earn them respect (Reuters' Bureau Chief).



The example of SAPA reporting the South African domestic context as their developed niche was mentioned in comparing how PANA could find a niche for reporting Africa that would attract news exchange agreements with the global news agencies. Reuters' Bureau Chief (2006) pointed out that certain African contexts, like Zimbabwe officials who do not trust Western media and journalists, may trust the African news agency and give them an exclusive interview that others cannot get. The previous state-run Russian news agency TASS (now ITAR-TASS) was given as another example when, during the Cold War, the Russian state owned and controlled the organisation. Despite this, all Western media had to rely on whatever news TASS had put out concerning matters behind the "iron curtain." In that, TASS is said to have been undeniably important. The Russian TASS news agency found a niche in focussing on news from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union (Reuters' Bureau Chief).

Several responses regarding PANA reflect the view that a lack of human and economic resources in the African agency contributes to its stunted development on the African continent. According to the Associated Press Bureau Chief, there have been "good faith attempts to start regional news agencies in Africa," but these attempts have failed for many different reasons. Firstly, this may be due to the lack of financial backing and the lack of the right professional personnel that is needed to start and keep a news organisation running (AP Bureau Chief). Another possible reason is the lack of overseas market interest in news about the African continent, outside of their interest in South Africa (AP Bureau Chief). PANA, for instance, would find it difficult to break into an international news market and obtain overseas clients (AP Bureau Chief). PANA would also have to compete with the global news agencies in order to do this.

The AP Bureau Chief (2006) stated, apart from South Africa, there are few clients in Africa with which AP has news agreements. If a regional news agency such as PANA is going to set up a continent-wide operation, they have to go to the expense of setting

up bureaus in strategic locations and staff these with professional journalists. The AP Bureau Chief questions who would finance such an operation and how it would be paid for. He believes that the Western news agencies will not buy that news because they already have their own reporters covering the African continent. This contradicts an earlier point raised (by the global news agencies' respondents) that the global news agencies would welcome a credible, independently run pan-African news agency because this would cut their individual costs of reporting from the continent. According to the AP Bureau Chief, the global news agencies only use a few stories per day about the African continent, and they only want the "main stories on the continent."

If you've got the editor of Germany's daily [interested in news about Africa], [they would] want a more global outlet, not a regional outlet. True, it is hard for them [PANA] to compete with us just because of the expense. It's expensive to put reporters all over [a continent]. (AP Bureau Chief)

According to the AP Bureau Chief (2006), another possible problem in developing an independent and successful African regional news agency is that "they are political." He added that the global news agencies are blamed for the failures and problems with running a successful African regional news agency. Like other participants in the study, the AP participant again raised the issue of government interference as a real concern: "If you have an agency that's run by government, you're flirting with disaster" (AP Bureau Chief). For example, the Zimbabwean news agency, ZIANA, illustrates that government interference and control has stunted the operations of that African national news agency (AP Bureau Chief).

Politicians should not be deciding what news stories can be covered. There are also government appointees who are in charge of state-owned news agencies (AP Bureau Chief, 2006). This reiterated the Reuters respondents' views on the lack of credibility with the PANA operation. If a country has a minister of information in place, according to the AP Bureau Chief, the democracy of that country becomes questionable because information is then being managed in such a way that it is not

free of the conflicting (political) interests within that country. If a government appoints people that run a news agency, newspapers all over the world would be very suspicious of (using) that agency as a news source (AP Bureau Chief).

According to the AP Bureau Chief, it is in their (the global news agencies) interest for agencies, both regional and domestic, to be strong because, according to him, “they help me do my job better by telling me things I don’t know” (2006). The Reuters’ respondent expressed a similar point of view that if PANA could obtain news from Africa that the global agencies could not, then Reuters would pick up that news if it were reliable news and not a government perspective. The AP Bureau Chief used the relationship between SAPA and AP as an example of a symbiotic news exchange relationship, one that, in his opinion, is working amicably in Africa.

For instance, SAPA and AP have a good working and social relationship. It’s in our interest for SAPA to be strong, and we would not want to drive them out of business. I don’t have as many reporters in South Africa as they [SAPA] do. If they do a good job, I’m going to have a bit more [news] about South Africa. We would love to have a Pan African news agency that was responsible, because [that] is stuff you can look at. . . . We’re in favour of it, not against it, and there’s no sense of competition with the regional news agencies. I’m sure that’s true of Reuters and AFP; we don’t feel like we’re competing with these people [PANA news]; we feel like, at some level, we need them. They’re not being driven out of business by us on purpose. If they can’t compete with us, [it is] because they can’t sell to Europe as a [possibility] and other things, but we are not going out of our way to put these people out of business. We actually would like them to survive and do well. I’d like for them to thrive, to make more money, to hire more reporters, to do better coverage in their region. (AP Bureau Chief, 2006)

The AP Bureau Chief believes that it is important for governments to be sources of information, but that there is a big distinction between “governments being sources of news and governments actually telling news people what to write or how to write it” (AP Bureau Chief, 2006). According to him, diversity of opinion is important and can be approached in different ways. Another potential problem is having journalists that come from the same place covering news for a global audience. “If they’re writing for people who come from Paris [and they are from Paris], no big deal, but if you’re a global news agency and you’re trying to write for people all over the globe, having different points of view is important” (AP Bureau Chief). In the AP system of news

production, there are editors and journalists that they employ from all parts of the world (AP Bureau Chief). “Every editor that handles my story isn’t [an] American; they’re from all over the world” (AP Bureau Chief).

The AP Bureau Chief (2006) stated that the global news agencies “do not create these stories,” that they “do not start the wars or the genocides and the famines.” He further maintained that these events happen more often in developing contexts than in developed contexts and that when they happen, these are issues that must be covered (AP Bureau Chief).

I remember when I was in Kenya and one of the ambassadors [there] was decrying the fact that foreign correspondents only wrote bad news stories [and] that we should write the good stories. . . . I mean, your job as a journalist isn’t to tell people good news or bad news. Your job is to tell people news and whatever [is happening]. But, we all like positive stories. I like them. There are a lot of positive stories compared to the total of news that is reporting on an event that’s happened. So, when is a story bad and when is it good? When there’s a famine in Ethiopia and it’s not getting reported, you are accused of not reporting the news and people are dying. Then you report it and more countries don’t ignore it anymore. People send aid. . . . So you don’t dictate what the stories are going to be; you respond to what the stories are. (AP Bureau Chief, 2006)

According to the AP Bureau Chief (2006), local news agencies tend to rely on the global news agencies to cover the “big news stories” because they do not have sufficient resources to do so. The point was also made that there is not a single news agency that only covers good news stories or that does not cover bad news stories. In fact, it may be that other non-global news agencies do about as much bad news reporting as the global news agencies do in their mix of news (AP Bureau Chief). Furthermore, and very importantly, other non-global news agencies may be serving different clients and news markets than the global news agencies, and therefore their news stories may differ significantly because of that (AP Bureau Chief).

The AFP Bureau Chief believes that it is a very good idea to have a pan-African news agency for Africa. AFP did exchange news with the pan-African news agency, but they no longer do. The relationship fell away because PANA reportedly were unable

to pay their subscription fees (AFP Bureau Chief, 2005). The problem with PANA that has led to its being identified as an unsuccessful attempt at becoming a regional news agency for Africa is, among other things, its lack of a developed business sense or core area in which it could market itself. According to AFP Bureau Chief, “PANA, like a lot of things in Africa, [has] been a waste of money.”

In an earlier interview, the SAPA Editor (2005) stated that there is a tendency for African news agencies, in general, to waste money on peripheral things like expensive hotels and car hires rather than focussing on reporting the news and prioritising the use of their finances in that endeavour. In much the same way, the AFP Bureau Chief (2005) mentioned that a lack of funds tends to be a trend with most of the African national news agencies because they rely on government funding (cf. Curran & Leys, 2000). SAPA was seen as a more successful African news agency because they are independent of government and rely on private funding (AFP Bureau Chief).

AFP had news agreements with all of the other African national news agencies, but many of these agreements did not last because these news agencies were unable to pay their annual subscriptions (AFP Bureau Chief, 2005). This is a problem for AFP and the other global news agencies, in general, because they rely on subscription fees as part of their operations, to finance and pay expenses. Furthermore, like the AP Bureau Chief (2006), the AFP Bureau Chief stated that the AFP news agency does not make a profit from any of their operations (bureaus) based in Africa:

We don't make money in Africa apart from South Africa and a bit in Nigeria and Morocco, but that's it. We waste money in Africa. But AFP wants to stay in Africa because it's part of [our] originality [that] we cover [it]. We have a lot of offices in Africa and give [broad] coverage of Africa. So it's sort of proud for AFP to be [here]. It's historical, and even if it costs money, we [will] stay in Africa. We have to do it, and people are interested [in receiving news from Africa]. Some clients are interested. (AFP Bureau Chief)

The main problem with news agencies in Africa, as identified by AFP Bureau Chief (2005), is that they are “not news agencies; they have just been created by the

governments; they are state news agencies.” Because of this, it is extremely difficult for them to operate in a balanced way (AFP Bureau Chief). AFP Bureau Chief used SAPA as the only successful example of an independent news agency in Africa, one that is independent of government. While it is believed that there is a market for African news agencies and journalists with an African vision, the problem again is identified as a lack of finances because most African governments are seen as not prepared to pay for and maintain the development of independent news agencies. This therefore prevents the development of a strong inter-African news agency (AFP Bureau Chief).

Part of the criticism of African governments not supporting the development of independent news agencies in their countries is that the governments are not open to criticism when news is about them.

So that is a problem. It's difficult to operate as a journalist, as an African journalist, in an African country most of the time. They are under pressure always. So it's quite difficult. But there is a space for [a] good, independent, inter-African, pan-African news agency. But I think it's a dream [at the present time] because of the way of thinking of the leaders of most of the African [countries]. They don't like critics. They are not used to that. The independent press, the free press in Africa—you have Senegal, you have Nigeria, you have South Africa, the rest—I mean it's bad; it's really bad. I think for the time being, forget the possibility [of] an independent pan-African news agency. (AFP Bureau Chief, 2005)

The above comment reflects the thinking of the global news agencies' respondents, in general, with regard to the necessity of an independent news operation in Africa. The AFP Bureau Chief, who is French, expresses the opinion that these agencies cannot think about a pan-African news agency until they become free of government interference, improve their business plans, and develop a culture of criticism in Africa (based on the fourth estate principle) in their journalism.

The issue of different definitions and purposes of news was again brought up at the interview with the AFP respondent. The definition of news, its purpose, and how it is produced were themes present in all the respondents' rhetoric. The AFP Bureau Chief

(2005) agrees that this is an issue relevant to Africa and all social contexts because many of the African countries tend to propagate news rather than report it. He is of the opinion that African media tend to be “the voice of the government” or a spin-off of the government’s views (AFP Bureau Chief).

While the problem of an official, political spin on news is evident in African media, it is not the case with all of the African news media. The AFP Bureau Chief (2005) reiterates his view that this is “because there is no *journalistic culture* in these countries, but that “it will come [in time]” (italics for emphasis on respondents reply). He reasoned that this explains the need for the presence of the global news agencies:

It [independent African news coverage] will come . . . I am sure, but for the time being, we’ve [the global news agencies] come. Everywhere, things are changing slowly. But for the time being, I don’t see it [an independent pan-African news agency]. Even in Zimbabwe, there was a free press before, but things went [wrong]; things became bad. For Senegal, it is a different case. There are independent media in Senegal, so very few countries in Africa [have independent media]. There is a free press in Kenya, but these are small [few] examples. I think a free press is seen as [opposing governments]. . . . When you are independent and want to write what you have to write, you are seen as an opponent; you are not seen as a journalist. If you are critical of government, you will be seen as an opponent. To be a journalist . . . it’s extremely difficult [under these conditions]. (AFP Bureau Chief)

None of the global news agencies has news exchange agreements with PANA, but they receive news from some of the African national news agencies. In other words, there may be ad hoc or sporadic news exchanges taking place between the global news agencies and the African-based national news agencies. SAPA has contractual agreements with all of the global news agencies.

The main concern for the DPA news bureaus in Africa is to contextualise the news from Africa and about Africa for the international media audiences. Like the other global news bureaus in Africa, DPA does not serve the African continent with news about Africa, although it has news exchange agreements on the African continent with some of the national news agencies. The idea is to produce and extract news about the continent for the overseas news markets and provide foreign news to the

local African market. However, information about Africa is limited to what the overseas markets would be interested in hearing about concerning Africa. In this, the global news agencies select only a limited number of stories about the African continent (DPA Bureau Chief, 2007).

IPS has been identified as an alternative news agency in the sense that they provide a different service from that of the global and national news agencies in Africa. They do not do daily spot-news coverage, but instead concentrate their efforts on features and in-depth reporting in developing contexts. Their mission has been identified as development-focused, especially in countries where media systems are underdeveloped (Giffard, 1998). IPS news focuses on social issues such as human rights, HIV/AIDS, gender and environmental issues, and other issues (Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen, 1998, p. 191). “Global issues and global interdependence are the core of the agency’s news agenda . . . and the emphasis on globalisation is the most recent phase in the agency’s evolution” (Giffard, p. 191).

IPS offers skills training for journalists in developing contexts with the hope of facilitating independent media reporting and capacity building (IPS Regional Director, 2006). IPS does not have any news agreements with PANA. The IPS Regional Director explained that the pan-African news agency and IPS are in competition with each other. Both PANA and IPS are competitors in the sense that they are both concerned with producing news about development issues in Africa. They are both trying to attract a market for a product of news that is exclusively covered by their own reporters.

It was mentioned that PANA attempts to compete with all the major news agencies in providing news about Africa. PANA has not identified a niche area for itself yet, despite reporting on and providing news in Africa to the national news agencies. Other news agencies—such as Reuters, AP, and AFP—have identified a possible niche where PANA could provide news that no other news agency can and news that



other agencies would want from PANA. That would include news from areas in Africa that are difficult for the global news agencies to report on because of, for instance, a lack of access to sources, such as officials who may not relate well to the global news agencies. The global agencies pointed out that some African contexts, like Zimbabwe, are reportedly inaccessible to the Western news agencies. As an African news agency serving Africa, PANA could gain entry, hold exclusive interviews with officials, and report on news from these places more easily than could the global news agencies.<sup>16</sup>

According to the IPS Regional Director (2006), IPS competes with other news agencies for writers of news. The IPS Regional Director maintains that the IPS news service lost writers to the United Nations' news agency, IRI [Interactive Radio Instruction], when UNESCO set up this service. IRI is very similar to IPS in its structure and focus, and they are aware that IPS writers are trained in the areas of news in which they also are providing a service (IPS Regional Director). This element of competition also operates therefore at the recruitment level of professional writers where one identifies the best writers for an agency and offers them incentives to join (IPS Regional Director). All the global news agencies in the Southern African region have local news journalists as part of their staff. It is not only the issue of competition, but perhaps also the question of accessibility and, local reporters are better informed about their local contexts than foreign reporters are.

Stringers, or part-time journalists, are also employed by all news agencies to supplement reporting from places inaccessible to full-time correspondents as well as in the case of a shortage of correspondents. A stringer may not work simultaneously for two or more competing news agencies. They are part-timers, but fall strictly within the framework of their particular employer. Like the global and national news agencies, IPS also makes use of stringers (IPS Regional Director, 2006).

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<sup>16</sup> The Pan African News Agency participant was not in a position, or not willing to respond to this questioning in the telephone interviews even when prompted by the researcher.

On the issue of Africa reporting itself but offering a diversity of coverage of news events other than the coverage given by the global news agencies, IPS Regional Director (2006) believes it is a matter of African media finding a balance. “One can also not pretend that one is not living in a value-laden society” (IPS Regional Director).

I witnessed a situation [in Zimbabwe]. Zimbabwe reached a situation where in order to really see or to glean what is really happening [there], you know, to buy this paper or to buy that one, and to say, “now, who should I believe from all these?” You don’t want that [situation]. A newspaper of choice should give one what one wants to know, and I don’t think we need to split all the issues, but again that’s the ideal. It’s not always possible. (IPS Regional Director)

On the one hand, she states that too many different positions (coverage) on the same issue may lead audiences into doubt concerning which of the (sources) positions is the most reliable (and believable). On the other hand, she maintains that audiences do not look at every different source of coverage on a news issue. Instead, they have their particular newspaper (or television channel) that they prefer and regularly consult. If audiences prefer reading one particular newspaper, then that paper should give them the facts on what they want to know about. This means quality reporting. However, a diversity of choice also means that audiences can compare the facts about a news item. It is therefore a matter of attaining a balance on all of these issues: reliability of news sources and information and diversity of coverage (IPS Regional Director, 2006).

## **5.5 Conclusion**

The chapter describes and discusses a further adaptation tendency in news flows—that is, that global news agencies expand their operations in other regions of the world. This is referred to as the ‘regionalisation of news bureaus.’ The chapter describes under what conditions global news agencies seek out new news markets and diversify their operations. This is attributed to the transforming media environment, globally, in which other media formats compete with news agencies for

news markets and news distribution. It is also an outcome of the rationalisation of agencies for survival in a more intense competitive news environment. Global news agencies compete for news markets or client markets, but their core clients differ. Reuters' news clients are predominantly financial and banking institutions and brokerage firms. AP, AFP, and DPA news clients are predominantly the retail media, including newspapers, broadcast, and new digital media.

The study challenges previous views of the monopolisation of news by global news agencies in domestic and international contexts. Similar to chapter 4, this chapter concludes that global news agencies operating in local markets do not have a monopoly over these markets, but instead seek to compete among themselves for exchange contracts with local media. For the moment, the terms of these news agreements between the global and national news agency, SAPA, protect SAPA from the global agencies encroaching on their domestic market by selling news directly to retail media in SA. The Reuters news bureau in South Africa, however, has had an on and off relationship with the local SAPA. The result has been that Reuters attempts to compete with the SAPA national news agency for domestic clients.

News agencies making the exchange of information possible through their extensive networks (bureaus) that reach across the globe enable news to “flow” globally. Global social changes referred to under the concept of globalisation are affecting the operations of news agencies. Intensified competition from new media formats, among other things, results in the global news agencies expanding their operations worldwide. They now compete in regionalised contexts for news markets. In other words, the global news agencies all compete in the same regions for news and, more importantly, in seeking to dominate news markets abroad. This is characterised by continents being divided into specific regions with global news agency bureaus being set up and from which these bureaus produce and manage coverage of news in local contexts.

National news agencies also contribute indirectly to the regionalisation of news and more directly to the fragmentation of news. The previous chapter revealed that a co-dependency relationship exists, especially between the global and national news agencies. The world systems perspective (Wallerstein, 1974) reveals this dominance more clearly than does the simple hierarchical arrangement amongst news agencies, but at the same time, world systems theory does not reveal the finer nuances and balances of power in a co-dependent relationship.