

Why are Chinese media going to Africa? Evidence from Xinhua's news content

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4 September 2014, Ningbo

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Background

Sino-African media relations



China is relying on its own media to try to secure its trade relations with the resource-rich continent.

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Chinese media in Africa: What you need to know



GEOFFREY YORK

Why China is making a big play to control Africa's media

GEOFFREY YORK

NAIROBI — The Globe and Mail
Published Wednesday, Sep. 11 2013, 10:14 PM EDT
Last updated Thursday, Sep. 12 2013, 10:37 AM EDT

Can China tell the African story?

Chinese media in Africa



NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER

By JOHN T. KING

The relationship between China and the African continent is one of the most significant relationships in the world today.

It is growing and complex and not always understood – and just for those in other parts of the world, let alone African-Chinese, too. We hope to set that right and first in why China does, China's leading public-language newspaper, is launching an Africa Weekly edition today.

The Africa edition, which will be the first addition to our stable of international publications in the United States, Europe and the Asia-Pacific, will take to the airwaves for news, information, comment and analysis on issues that affect both China and Africa.

Over many years in the thick of issues that link the economies between the world's second-largest economy and Africa, and another where the 21st century will be made in Africa's embrace, the high-growth trends from China and other Asian countries.

The weekly edition, which will be distributed throughout the continent, will feature teams of dedicated reporters in both Africa and China and will be a focus for many of the world's leading commentators who will contribute international and regional articles.

It will also include regular interviews with leading African politicians, business leaders, African heads and states as well as foreign international experts on the China-Africa relationship.

It will be the only publication on the continent that will do so, in what the premier nations of "China's investment" in Africa, it will also be the premier one in Africa. African are now playing in China's market with commercial and industrial partners.

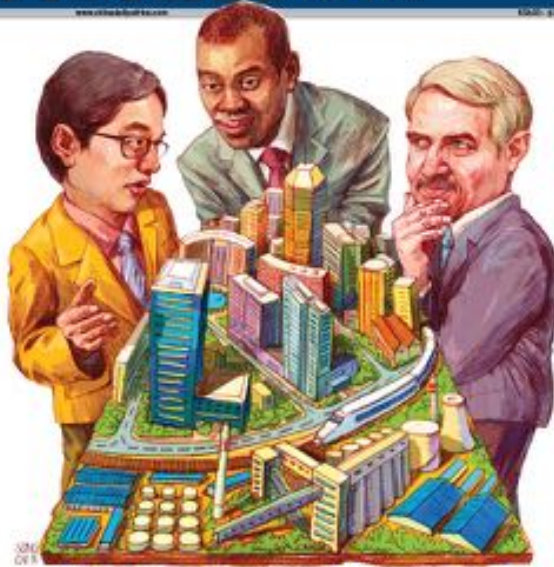
We will want to look behind the economic progress that which has seen Chinese investment in Africa increase eight-fold from \$1.4 billion in 2005 to \$11.6 billion at the end of 2011, the last one for which official figures are available, as well as trends forecast to be more than \$100 billion.

We will regularly feature interviews with leading figures from Chinese enterprises in Africa and ask them about issues in which our African readers are interested.

We will also interview African working for Chinese companies about the issues affecting them.

Many Africans today also want to know Chinese – and they need to know it. China – and we will produce features and other content on those who have done just that.

Most of all, however, we want you to enjoy a unique publication that is being launched for you, the reader.



EMERGING AFRICA

KEY ROLE FOR CHINA IN TRANSFORMATION, GROWTH PROCESS

By ANDREW MOORE and JEREMY HALE

Africa is now experiencing some of the highest growth rates in the world. Over the past year, nine African countries featured in the top 25 fastest growing nations, according to IMF figures, with Ghana with a growth rate of 12.5 percent, behind only Qatar. Some now believe Africa could be one of the economic powerhouses of the 21st century. Can Africa adopt a similar growth model to China, which has been transformed beyond recognition over the past 30 years? China and other Asian countries have built their success on manufacturing and exporting to the rest of the world. — DEYI@PRICENT.PAGE 4

- **2006** | CRI opens FM station in Kenya
- **2010** | Xinhua launches CNC's English language channel
- **2012** | CCTV opens broadcasting center in Nairobi
- **2012** | China Daily launches a Africa Weekly

Sino-African relations

- In 1956 the PRC and Egypt establish diplomatic relations.
- Zhou Enlai visits Africa in 1963 and puts forward China's first Africa Policy.
- Dilution of contacts during the Cultural Revolution.
- Mao's 'three World's theory' (三个世界划分)
- Establishment of FOCAC in 1997

FOCAC and the media

- The 2006, 2009 and 2013 FOCAC Action Plans contain direct references to Sino-African Media relations.

«Recognizing that increased contacts between their respective news media contribute to comprehensive and objective news coverage of the other side, the two sides encouraged their respective news media to play a positive role in enhancing mutual understanding and friendship.»

(FOCAC 2006)

Reasons – An official view

- Politics
 - “Chinese media need to take responsibility to promoting bilateral relations with Africa”
- Economy
 - “[Our] economic strength provides strong support for our broadcasting in Africa”

Yan Chengsheng, Deputy Director-General of the International Cooperation Department of SAPPRFT (2014)

Reasons – An official view

- Technology
 - “Chinese radio and television entertainment has better cost performance.”
- Culture
 - “Chinese news reports made progress and provided a different perspective.”

Yan Chengsheng, Deputy Director-General of the International Cooperation Department of SAPPRFT (2014)

Theoretical framework

Table 1. Competing Explanations about China's Involvement in Africa

Locus of explanation	Examples of China's media presence in Africa
Market expansion and diversification	Huawei's contract with the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation to put in place a digital terrestrial television network across the country.
Ideology and political alignment	Provision of telecommunications equipment to the Zambian government prior to the celebration of elections from 1996 to 2006.
Counter-hegemonic narrative	Launch in 2006 of a local FM radio station broadcasting in Mandarin, English and Kiswahili in Nairobi, Kenya.
'Cultural reproduction'	Series of workshops for African Journalists in Beijing organized under the FOCAC agreement for human resource development.

Market expansion and diversification

«China's influence over the media in Africa involves looking at China as a partner, as an actor providing resources to African countries to implement projects that are deemed important for social and economic development.»

(Gagliardone, Stremlau & Nkrumah 2012, p. 179)

Ideology and political alignment

«[A] careful analysis of Chinese involvement in African media demonstrates that China is actively engaged in expurgating or expunging those Euro-American views of it which it considers inimical to its foreign policy in Africa.»

(Banda 2009, p. 350)

Counter-hegemonic narratives

«China's international image has been historically and commercially managed by easy narratives and assumptions by the Western media (...) China recognised the international media as an important outlet for managing and communicating a non-threatening, responsible and peaceful image.»

(Wu, 2012, p. 9)

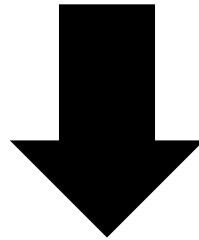
'Cultural reproduction'

«Although 'training' seems to suggest an impartation of practical skills, it also carries with it the cultural and political values associated with those practical skills. It is thus not value neutral.»

(Banda, 2009, p. 352)

Research questions

What does Xinhua's news coverage of Africa reveal about its involvement in the continent?



Why is Xinhua expanding operations across Africa?

Method | Why Xinhua?

- Xinhua is the world's largest news agency.
- It has over 170 bureaus all over the world, many of which are in Africa.
- It offers the most comprehensive and continuous source of information of all Chinese media.
- It is under the control of the State Council...

Method | Xinhua

«Xinhua's editorial policy towards Africa had always aimed to be in line with China's foreign policy, while at same time satisfying its own journalistic concerns.»

(Xin, 2012, p. 121)

Methods | Selection

- Unit of analysis: Xinhua news wires
- Access through LexisNexis full-text database
- Search factors
 - ‘Index Terms’: Africa & China
 - Article length > 100 words
- Time frame 1982-2012 [two weeks]
 - Sample size 506 stories
- Intercoder reliability over 0.8 (Scott’s Pi)

Geography of news

Table 2.

Chi-square Test Results for Frequency of Occurrence of Selected Countries

	1982 (n = 93)	2012 (n = 413)	
China	25.8%	10.9%	$\chi^2 = 14.330^{***}$
South Africa	16.1%	13.3%	$\chi^2 = 0.503$
Egypt	12.9%	12.6%	$\chi^2 = 0.007$
Kenya	4.3%	11.6%	$\chi^2 = 4.413^*$
Sudan	3.2%	10.2%	$\chi^2 = 4.517^*$
Nigeria	4.3%	7.7%	$\chi^2 = 1.365$
Zimbabwe	9.7%	2.7%	$\chi^2 = 9.837^{**}$

df=1, *p<0.05; **p<0.005; ***p<0.001

Topics

Table 3.

Chi-square Test Results for Frequency of Occurrence of Selected Topics

	1982 (n = 93)	2012 (n = 413)	
Diplomatic activities	69.9%	34.6%	$\chi^2 = 39.000^{***}$
Politics within states	18.3%	22.3%	$\chi^2 = 0.717$
Economic matters	19.4%	21.5%	$\chi^2 = 0.219$
Crime & police	2.2%	12.3%	$\chi^2 = 8.419^{**}$
Culture & arts	5.4%	0.7%	$\chi^2 = 10.548^{**}$
Sports	0%	9.0%	$\chi^2 = 8.989^{**}$
Accidents	0%	2.7%	$\chi^2 = 2.532$

df=1, *p<0.05; **p<0.005; ***p<0.001

Themes

Table 4.
Chi-square Test Results for Frequency of Occurrence of Selected Countries

	1982 (n = 93)	2012 (n = 413)	
Sino-African relations	23.7%	10.2%	$\chi^2 = 12.496^{***}$
People-to-people	8.6%	0%	$\chi^2 = 36.098^{***}$
Media industry	0%	1.7%	$\chi^2 = 1.598$
Natural Resources	5.4%	8.5%	$\chi^2 = 1.001$
Diplomatic visits	34.4%	4.8%	$\chi^2 = 71.963^{***}$

df=1, *p<0.05; **p<0.005; ***p<0.001

An example | 1982

Lome, september 17, 1982 – chinese ambassador to togo jin minsheng gave a dinner today to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between china and togo.

the togolese guests present at the dinner were boumbera alassounouma, minister of high education and scientific research, ouro-bangna, minister of rural management and nangbog barnabo, first vice-president of the national assembly.

A couple of examples | 2012

- **Feature: Delight clouded, Middle East longing for carefree Eid al-Adha**
 - DATELINE: by Zheng Kaijun CAIRO Oct. 28
- **Analysis: News Analysis: AL summit in Baghdad likely to chart future for Arab world**
 - DATELINE: by Wang Hongbin Chen Cong, Zhang Ning BAGHDAD, March 27

Findings

- Xinhua's output has changed enormously in the last decade and the agency can no longer be studied with Cold War-influence approaches
 - A new geography of news is perceivable;
 - There has been a diversification of topic, much of which seems to be market induced;
 - Foreign propaganda vices have mostly disappeared.

Findings

- Other changes that point in a similar direction include:
 - The increase in the number of stories (400%);
 - The increase in length of stories;
 - The diversification of genres (interviews, in-depth pieces, reportage...)
 - The attribution of authorship (mostly local journalists).

Findings

- As Xin (2006, 2012) and Hong (2011) have pointed out, Xinhua's changes need to be looked at primarily from a political-economy/marketization point of view.
- Overt and covert reasons coexist, but findings provide a new perspectives .
 - The consistent discordance between official discourse on China's involvement in Africa and the actual actions and activities.

A way forward

- The study of China's media engagement in Africa (and China's go-out strategy as whole) demands:
 - Different approaches and explanations for different media sectors;
 - More historical and diachronic analyses;
 - National and regional perspectives of receiving countries;
 - The diversification of the levels of analysis (individual and organizational levels).

Thank you

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