

## MASTER'S THESIS

# The influence of Chinese news in English on mass media in Sub-Saharan Africa: a case study of Kenyan and South African journalism and media content

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis considers the conditions for news reporting in two post-authoritarian African nations, and places focus on Chinese media's influence on the local journalism and media system. The question of how much influence China's international media has in Africa, has been brought up by communication scholars, but not yet empirically studied. Based on a theoretical framework of how the structure of the media system dictates the practice of journalism, this research enquiry scrutinises the mass media coverage and framing of the news that involves Chinese engagements in Africa. The research question concerns whether China's investment efforts in the area of media, culture and education have discernible impact on journalism and mass media content in Kenya and South Africa. The context which gives rise to the research question consists of a collection of sometimes instrumentalist literature, describing the nature and the intention of China's expanding engagement in Africa, as well as an academic debate about what consequences the relationship has for social and political development in African countries. In such debates it has been discussed whether the Chinese commercial investments or direct aid is benefitting social justice in Africa or rather serve to widen existing inequalities. It is in this debate assumed that while Western countries have, since the end of the Cold War, promoted a democratic development model on the African continent, China is currently advertising an alternative model for development. However, there has not been any study to date, which tests this assumption. This study was conducted to gather empirical evidence for a better understanding of the scope and implications of Chinese international media and cultural exchange in Africa. The research is based on interviews with media practitioners who worked for Kenyan and South African media organisations, and content analysis of newspaper articles in the respective countries. The methodological approach forms two separate parts, which both help to answer the research question. By triangulation of the results from the two-pronged study, some significant findings have been drawn. The media practitioners in the majority display a critical view towards Chinese international media as source of information and forum for debate. The result of the content analysis indicates that any influence of China's international media on local reporting is limited to certain publications, depending on media funding, ownership, and relation to the government.

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