

MASTER'S THESIS

China's influence on media in southeast Asia: a case study of the Philippines, Thailand and Cambodia

Chen, Cong

Date of Award:
2020

[Link to publication](#)

General rights

Copyright and intellectual property rights for the publications made accessible in HKBU Scholars are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners. In addition to the restrictions prescribed by the Copyright Ordinance of Hong Kong, all users and readers must also observe the following terms of use:

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from HKBU Scholars for the purpose of private study or research
- Users cannot further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- To share publications in HKBU Scholars with others, users are welcome to freely distribute the permanent URL assigned to the publication

ABSTRACT

This thesis interrogates how China influences one of its neighboring regions, Southeast Asia, in the aspect of media. Issues of how China's growing influence extends to media coverage and framing of news involving China and China's engagement in Southeast Asia have been brought up but has not been examined with empirical evidence. The research questions of this thesis concern how China is presented in local reporting in Southeast Asian media and why it is framed as it is portrayed in news media in the region. This research considers whether China's political and financial interests through media ownership, funding, soft power, and other factors are exerting influence on media coverage in Southeast Asia. Drawing on theoretical contributions from the theory of the political economy of media, comparative media systems theory and the theory of public diplomacy, the thesis assesses the situations based on a case study of the Philippines, Thailand and Cambodia by collecting and analyzing empirical data from these three Southeast Asian countries. The mix-method approach has been adopted in this study, which includes a quantitative content analysis on the news content of the selected Southeast Asian newspapers, and a qualitative analysis depending on semi-structured interviews with local media practitioners who share their understanding of journalistic routines and personal experiences in reporting China-related news in the field study. Some noteworthy findings have been drawn from the analysis. China has observable impacts on the media content in the Philippines, Thailand and Cambodia, limited to certain aspects in relation to China's growing regional power. Philippine newspapers adopt considerably more negative frames than newspapers of Thailand and Cambodia. There are unwritten guidelines in their news outlets and certain principles that media practitioners in Southeast Asia need to follow when covering China-related issues.

Table of Contents

Declaration	i
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Chapter1 Introduction.....	1
Chapter2 Contextualization	9
2.1 Rise of China: Growing Global and Regional Influence.....	9
2.2 China’s Foreign Policy and Relationships with ASEAN Countries.....	11
2.3 Case Study: The Philippines, Thailand and Cambodia.....	15
-2.3.1 The Philippines and Its Media	16
-2.3.2 Thailand and Its Media	18
-2.3.3 Cambodia and Its Media	21
Chapter 3 Literature Review.....	24
3.1 Political Economy of Media.....	24
3.2 Media Systems Theory.....	27
3.3 Public Diplomacy.....	31
Chapter 4 Research Questions and Methodology.....	34
4.1 Framing Theory.....	34
4.2 Quantitative Approach.....	37
-4.2.1 Quantitative Method and Content Analysis	37
-4.2.2 Procedures of Quantitative Content Analysis.....	38
---4.2.2.1 Sampling and Data Sources.....	38
---4.2.2.2 Variable Operationalization	40
---4.2.2.3 Coding and Inter-coder Reliability	41
4.3 Qualitative Approach	41
-4.3.1 Field Research and Qualitative Interviews	41
-4.3.2 Procedures of Qualitative Semi-Structured Interviews.....	43
Chapter 5 Analysis and Findings of the Quantitative Study.....	46
5.1 News Sources	46
5.2 News Types	50
5.3 News Frames	53

Chapter 6 Analysis and Findings of the Qualitative Study.....	56
6.1 News Sources	57
6.2 News Types	61
6.3 News Frames	65
6.4 Journalistic Routines and Obstacles	70
Chapter 7 Conclusion	78
7.1 Discussions and Summary of the Findings	78
7.2 Limitations and Future Research	86
Reference	88
Appendix	102
Appendix I: Code Book	102
Appendix II: Interview Protocol	105
Appendix II: Interview List	106
Curriculum Vitae	107