

What is the Influence of Chinese Media in West Africa?

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Introduction

The “going out” campaign of the Chinese media was launched in response to the Western media’s framing of events leading up to the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. The perceived “anti-Chinese” coverage of these events in the Western media came to a head on April 9, 2008, when the host of CNN’S *Situation Room*, Jack Cafferty, described Chinese products as “junk” and remarked that Chinese people were “basically the same bunch of goons and thugs they’ve been for the last fifty years.”¹ This attracted strong condemnation from the Chinese government and CNN was compelled to issue a public apology.² China’s increasing bilateral trade with Africa also provides an important background to China’s media expansion as it has been accompanied by waves of perceived “misinformation” that China was giving aid to only resource-rich countries in Africa.³ Hence, the Chinese government was eager to balance international media coverage of China’s engagement within Africa.⁴ The objective to tell a different story of China-Africa relations received support from former Premier Wen Jiabao,

¹ Jim Yardley, “China Demands CNN Apologize for Commentary,” *New York Times*, April 16, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/16/world/asia/16cnn.html>.

² “CNN Apologizes After Commentator Calls China a ‘Bunch of Goons and Thugs,’” Associated Press, April 16, 2008, <http://www.foxnews.com/story/cnn-apologizes-after-commentator-calls-china-a-bunch-of-goons-and-thugs>.

³ Deborah Brautigam, *The Dragon’s Gift: The Real Story of China in Africa*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3.

⁴ Li Anshan, “Neither Devil Nor Angel: The Role of the Media in Sino-African Relations,” *Pambazuka*, May 16, 2012, <http://www.pambazuka.org/security-icts/neither-devil-nor-angel-role-media-sino-african-relations>.

who urged China to extend its cultural engagement with other countries. Wen emphasized Chinese media outlets going international would receive funding to enable them “present a true picture of China to the World.”⁵ It is estimated that China spends about \$10 billion annually on its media internationalization project.⁶

Consequently, in 2006, the Africa regional editorial office of Xinhua News Agency relocated from Paris, France, to Nairobi, Kenya, and commenced mobile news delivery in 2010. These developments were followed in 2011 by the establishment of China Central Television (CCTV), now renamed China Global Television Network (CGTN), in Nairobi, Kenya, the first and largest bureau of CGTN outside China and the launch of the African edition of Xinhuanet, an online service of the Xinhua News Agency (XNA) in 2012.

The expansion of Chinese media into Africa has often been conceived as a challenge to the dominant Western media establishment in Africa. CGTN’s African bureau was the first full-grown bureau of CCTV established outside China. The bureau broadcasts a one-hour bulletin from 13:00 to 14:00 GMT and another from 21:00 to 22:00 GMT (this time may have changed). Before the entry of CGTN, there was hardly any global media corporation providing two hours of broadcast time exclusively on coverage of African issues on the continent. It could also be argued that there was hardly any global media corporation that had specific broadcasting content solely dedicated to Africa, and the arrival of CGTN changed the whole dynamics of global media attention to the continent. While this is considered a positive development, it also set off a competition between China’s state-led media and the Western media organizations for the African audience. This is evident in the launch of several African-focused broadcasting programs by some Western media corporations. For instance, the BBC’s *Focus on Africa* commenced on June 18, 2012, while CNN’s *Inside Africa* started in

⁵ Yu-Shan Wu, “The Rise of China’s State-Led Media Dynasty in Africa,” South African Institute of International Affairs, June 2012, http://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/146130/saia_sop_%20117_wu_20120618.pdf.

⁶ “China is Spending Billions to Make the World Love It,” *Economist*, March 25, 2017, <http://www.economist.com/china/2017/03/23/china-is-spending-billions-to-make-the-world-love-it>.

2014. All this was after CGTN Africa started on January 11, 2012. While CGTN Africa offers daily two-hour broadcasts, CNN Africa and the BBC Africa offer only thirty minutes each.⁷

Scholars have examined China's media expansion in Africa through two broad categories: audience and journalistic studies. The audience studies focus largely on audience perception and influence of Chinese media in Africa, while the journalistic ones investigate journalistic practices in Chinese media.⁸ While prior scholarship has focused on audience perception of Chinese media in Southern and Eastern African contexts, there is limited academic scholarship on audience perception and influence of Chinese media in West Africa. This study fills this gap in the academic literature on Chinese media expansion in Africa through an analysis of journalists as well as policymakers' perception of Chinese media sources in Ghana and Nigeria.

Media on the Belt and Road

China launched its twenty-first century Maritime Silk Road initiative, also known as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), in 2013 focusing on connectivity and cooperation between China

⁷ The information in this section has been previously published in the author's book, *Chinese Media in Africa: Perception, Performance and Paradox* (Rowman and Littlefield: Maryland, 2020).

⁸ For audience studies, see, for instance: Herman Wasserman, "China's "Soft Power" and on Editorial Agendas in South Africa," Paper Presented at the China and Africa Media, Communications and Public Diplomacy International Conference, Beijing, China, 2014, <http://www.cmi.no/file/2909-.pdf>; Dani Madrid-Morales and Herman Wasserman, "Chinese Media Engagement in South Africa: What is Its Impact on Local Journalism?," *Journalism Studies*, 19, 9 (2018): 1218–1235; Abdirizak Garo Guyo and Hong Yu, "How Is the Performance of Chinese News Media in Kenya? An Analysis of Perceived Audience Reception and Motivation," *New Media and Mass Communications*, 79 (2019): 54–67; and Herman Wasserman and Dani Madrid-Morales, "How Influential Are Chinese Media in Africa? An Audience Analysis in Kenya and South Africa," *International Journal of Communications*, 12 (2018): 2212–2231. For journalistic studies, see, for instance: Iginio Gagliardone, "China as Persuader: CCTV Africa's First Steps in the African Media Space," *Equid Novi: African Journalism Studies*, 34, 3 (2013): 25–40; Vivien Marsh, "Mixed Messages, Partial Pictures? Discourses Under Construction in CCTV's *Africa Live* Compared With the BBC," *Chinese Journal of Communication*, 9, 1 (2016): 56–70; Melissa Lefkowitz, "Chinese Media, Kenya Lives: An Ethnographic Inquiry into CCTV Africa's Head Offices," China Africa Research Initiative, (2017), <http://static1.squarespace.com/static/5652847de4b033f56d2bdc29/t/5890c864ebbd1a33c539387d/1485883493360/kenya+v4.pdf>; Emeka Umejei, *Chinese Media in Africa: Perception, Performance, and Paradox*, (Rowman and Littlefield: Maryland, 2020); Mwaona Nyirongo, "From Watchdog to Lapdog: Political Influence of China on News Reporting in Malawi," *Afrika Focus*, 33, 2 (2020): 27–48.

and countries along the maritime Silk Road. The initiative has been described as China's most ambitious push for a dominant role in global geopolitics and trade. There are five components underlying the BRI: policy coordination, facilities connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration, and people-to-people bonds.⁹ "Policy coordination" is aimed at encouraging countries to collaborate and cooperate with one another to achieve projects. "Facilities connectivity" is concerned with building facilities to engender connectivity among countries on the Belt and Road. This also involves the construction of massive infrastructure projects such as ports, highways, and railways, and the deployment of fiber-optic lines among countries along the BRI. "Unimpeded trade" focuses on China's attempt at encouraging trade and investment and enhancing economic integration among countries along the Belt and Road. "Financial integration" seeks to encourage monetary and financial integration and currency exchange among countries along the Belt and Road, while "people-to-people bonds" seeks to enhance cultural exchanges, friendly interaction, and deeper cultural understanding to build international cooperation.¹⁰ These focal points are geared towards achieving three fundamental objectives: to explore drivers of global growth in the post-Great Recession era, to rebalance globalization, and to create new models for regional cooperation in the twenty-first century.¹¹ With connectivity as its central objective, the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in the ramping of other components of the BRI such as the Digital Silk Road (DSR) and the Health Silk Road (HSR).¹² DSR is a digital component of the BRI through which China seeks to expand its digital footprint in Africa and countries along the BRI, while the HSR is focused on providing medical assistance to countries along the BRI. This has manifested in the forms

⁹ Zhai Kun, "Five-Connectivity measures BRI impact," *China Watch*, January 24, 2019, <http://www.chinawatch.cn/a/201901/24/WS5c493294a310df3a7f3711b9.html>.

¹⁰ "The Belt and Road Initiative," *Lehman Brown*, <http://www.lehmanbrown.com/insights-newsletter/belt-road-initiative/>.

¹¹ Wang Yiwei, "China's Belt and Road Vision Comes Down to Connectivity," *GlobalAsia*, 12, 2 (2017), http://www.globalasia.org/v12no2/debate/chinas-belt-and-road-vision-comes-down-to-connectivity_wang-yiwei.

¹² Lee Dong Gyu, "The Belt and Road Initiative After COVID: The Rise of Health and Digital Silk Roads," Asan Institute for Policy Studies, March 15, 2021, <http://en.asaninst.org/contents/the-belt-and-road-initiative-after-covid-the-rise-of-health-and-digital-silk-roads/>.

of China's "vaccine diplomacy" and "mask diplomacy" platforms that have enabled it to provide vaccine assistance to fifty-three countries.¹³

Media efforts fall under the "people-to-people bonds" and include China's state-led media organizations and the Belt and Road News Network (BRNN). The major focus of China's state-led media is to influence the global narrative of China's Belt and Road initiatives and provide a positive framing of its activities across the world.¹⁴ For its part, the BRNN emerged from President Xi Jinping's address at the first Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in 2017, where he announced the development of new people-to-people exchange platforms such as a Belt and Road news alliance and a music education alliance. The BRNN facilitates its members to tell the stories about the BRI in a way that "shapes healthy public opinion and helps the BRI yield more substantial results for people living in countries along the Belt and Road."¹⁵ It comprises 208 media organizations from 98 countries. While there are many media organizations from Africa that are part of the BRNN, seven are on the forty-member media council.

China in West Africa

China in West Africa shares certain similarities with China-Africa relations. The engagement is tilted in favor of resource-rich countries in the region, even though China also engages with countries that are not endowed with natural resources. China's incursion into Africa has always been framed through the Manichean lens of predator or partner, suggesting that China is on the one hand a partner while on the other it could be a predator. However, the role that China plays in a particular country is informed by the internal regulatory framework in such

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Anna Fifield, "China is Waging a Global Propaganda War to Silence Critics Abroad, Report Warns," *Washington Post*, January 15, 2020, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/china-is-waging-an-aggressive-propaganda-campaign-to-distort-media-landscape-report-warns/2020/01/15/30fd4d58-374a-11ea-a1ff-c48c1d59a4a1_story.html.

¹⁵ Belt and Road News network, "A Brief Introduction to the Belt and Road News Network," *BRNN*, April 11, 2019, <http://en.brnn.com/n3/2019/0411/c414872-9565686.html>.

countries. Unfortunately, most African countries do not have a clear-cut China policy and even the African Union (AU) does not seem to have one. Hence, the majority of the countries on the continent engage with China in an on-demand basis, meaning that Chinese assistance is sought when there is a demand to meet local infrastructural requirements or when countries need loans for local development projects. This approach is also the same for much of the West African sub-region. Hence, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) does not have a China policy and individual countries interface with China as they deem fit. This haphazard approach to engagement with China in much of Africa differs significantly from the West, where the EU and many other regional blocs have a coherent China policy.

Chinese Media in Africa

In West Africa, China broadcasts directly into much of the sub-region through satellite. For instance, CGTN Africa reaches several homes through the DSTv Africa and StarTimes.¹⁶ In Nigeria, for instance, there is a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on information exchange between Xinhua and the News Agency of Nigeria; Xinhua also has an information exchange partnership with the Ghana news agency signed under the Belt and Road Economic Information Partnership.¹⁷ In 2019, Xinhua signed a media content exchange and partnership agreement with Africa China Press and Research Centre based in Lagos, Nigeria. China Radio International reaches Ghana through shortwaves while CGTN and CNC form part of packages offered by Cable Gold, a Chinese enterprise in Ghana.¹⁸

¹⁶ DSTv is a direct broadcast satellite service owned by MultiChoice Group of South Africa, while StarTimes is a Chinese multimedia group with operation in thirty African countries.

¹⁷ “China, Nigeria Sign MoU on Information Exchange,” Xinhua, August 12, 2017, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1060964.shtml>; “Chinese Embassy Equips Ghana News Agency to Deliver Effectively,” Ghana News Agency, November 9, 2018, <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/business/Chinese-Embassy-equips-Ghana-News-Agency-to-deliver-effectively-699481>.

¹⁸ Ikenna Emewu, “China News Agency, Xinhua, Signs MoU With Africa China Press,” Africa China Press Center, March 29, 2018, <http://africachinapresscentre.org/2018/03/29/china-news-agency-xinhua-signs-mou-africa-china-press/>.

On the other hand, China provides communication infrastructure and technical support to many of the countries in the West Africa sub-region. In 2005, China donated audio-visual equipment and a building to the National Radio of Guinea; in 2008, the Liberia Broadcasting System received technical support and a grant of \$4 million to improve FM radio expansion; and, in 2011, the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Cooperation was the recipient of donated media materials.¹⁹ China's donation to the broadcasting industry in West Africa is framed as an instrument of foreign policy with the view to engendering bilateral cooperation and win-win engagements.

However, there are fears that Chinese media expansion into Africa may impede freedom of expression and engender limited professional autonomy for journalists in the sub-region.²⁰ This accounts for why Chinese media's increasing presence on the continent has continued to elicit widespread anxiety both within the industry and academia. While some express concern over the authoritarian model of the Chinese media, some others think it may impinge on the freedom of expression and indirectly impact the continent's fragile democratic space. Additionally, Chinese media subscribe to a model of journalism that emphasizes "positive reporting" over the Western model of watchdog journalism that seeks to hold leadership to account. The "positive reporting" model of journalism entails collaboration between the media and government which runs counter to democratic ideals, because when leaders are not criticized they are more likely to turn autocratic and become dictators. Hence, there are concerns that Chinese media will replicate this model of journalism in the sub-region and empower political leaders to become dismissive of critical journalism and celebrate adulatory journalism. If this happens, democratic governance will take a nosedive and authoritarian regimes may become entrenched in the sub-region.

¹⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "Ambassador Kuang Weilin Donates Equipment to Sierra Leone Broadcasting Cooperation," *fmprc*, November 23, 2011, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/zwjg_665342/zwbd_665378/t880130.shtml

²⁰ Mohamad Keita, "Africa's Free Press Problem," *New York Times*, April 15, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/16/opinion/africas-free-press-problem.html>.

Literature Review

While China has transformed the global media ecology in Africa, the perception and influence of Chinese media on African audiences has remained, at best, modest. Abdirizak Garo Guyo and Hong Yu pointed out that “despite the increasing presence in the continent, Chinese media are yet to decisively convince their audiences in terms of their independence and their level of trustworthiness because a majority of the respondents perceived their contents as being biased, and government propaganda.”²¹ Their finding resonates with the findings of Herman Wasserman and Dani Madrid-Morales that China’s media appendage to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) discredits it in the eyes of African audiences.²² Wasserman argues that “China’s state control of the media and bias towards official views discredit it in the eyes of South African journalists.”²³ Also, Madrid-Morales and Wasserman emphasize that the impact of Chinese media on South African media is limited because both media systems are “opposed.” While “data suggests a slow incorporation of certain Chinese media sources, mainly Xinhua, into the toolkit of some journalists, there is still widespread skepticism.”²⁴ In another study of the influence of Chinese media on students in Kenya and South Africa, Wasserman and Madrid-Morales reached the same conclusion that attitudes towards Chinese media are prominently negative.²⁵

On the other hand, studies examining journalistic practices in Chinese media in Africa have focused on the professional autonomy of African journalists working in Chinese media, the impact of “positive reporting” on journalistic practices in Chinese media and sociological factors underpinning work in CGTN. This author’s own study of journalistic practices in

²¹ Guyo and Yu, “How Is the Performance of Chinese News Media in Kenya? An Analysis of Perceived Audience Reception and Motivation,” 64.

²² Wasserman, “China’s “Soft Power” and on Editorial Agendas in South Africa;” Wasserman and Madrid-Morales, “How Influential Are Chinese Media in Africa? An Audience Analysis in Kenya and South Africa.”

²³ Wasserman, “China’s “Soft Power” and on Editorial Agendas in South Africa,” 14.

²⁴ Madrid-Morales and Wasserman, “Chinese Media Engagement in South Africa: What is Its Impact on Local Journalism?,” 1229.

²⁵ Wasserman and Madrid-Morales, “How Influential Are Chinese Media in Africa? An Audience Analysis in Kenya and South Africa.” 2226.

Chinese media suggests there are an African and a Chinese level of gatekeeping and journalistic agency in Chinese media organizations in Africa. Stories touching on arts, culture, and tourism are left to African editors located in Nairobi, while those touching on Chinese economic and political interests in Africa are filtered by Chinese officials in Beijing.²⁶ For his part, Iginio Gagliardone's findings indicate that the positive reporting paradigm being promoted by Chinese media in Africa has the potential to influence journalistic practices of African journalists working in CGTN, while Melissa Lefkowitz found that cultural differences between Chinese and African journalists proved an "initial hurdle" to overcome in CGTN.²⁷

However, the majority of studies examining audience perception of Chinese media expansion in Africa has been limited to southern and eastern African contexts. This study provides a West African perspective on audience perception and influence of Chinese media sources through an analysis of qualitative interviews with journalists and policymakers in Ghana and Nigeria. The study is informed by the following research questions:

RQ1: How do journalists and policymakers in Ghana and Nigeria perceive Chinese media sources?

RQ2: To what extent do Ghanaian and Nigerian journalists, as well as policymakers, use Chinese media sources in their work?

RQ3: What is the level of trust in Chinese and western media sources among Ghanaian and Nigerian journalists and policymakers?

Methodology

²⁶ Umejei, *Chinese Media in Africa: Perception, Performance, and Paradox*, (Rowman and Littlefield: Maryland, 2020), 44

²⁷ Gagliardone, "China as Persuader: CCTV Africa's First Steps in the African Media Space;" Lefkowitz, "Chinese Media, Kenya Lives: An Ethnographic Inquiry into CCTV Africa's Head Offices," 10.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the reception and influence of Chinese media sources among journalists and policymakers in Ghana and Nigeria. The fifty-three journalists and policymakers selected for this study were interviewed over four years.

Interview Design

The study employed a semi-structured interview with fifty-three journalists in Johannesburg, Accra, Lagos, and Abuja. The journalists were interviewed at different fora over a period of four years beginning from 2016 at the Wits Power Investigative workshop in Johannesburg. Another interview was conducted in Accra at the Fisheries Communications Workshop for African Journalists in March 2016, another during fieldwork in Accra in 2018; and subsequent fieldworks in Nigeria in 2019 and 2020. The interview guide comprises ten questions relating to the reception and use of Chinese media sources by journalists as well policymakers in Ghana and Nigeria. The following were some questions journalists were asked:

- Do you use Chinese media sources in the course of your work?
- What is your perception of Chinese media sources?
- When you have the same event covered by Chinese and Western media, which one are you likely to trust?
- Do you think Chinese media is propaganda or development journalism?

Analysis Design

The respondents were interviewed individually at workshops in Accra and Johannesburg, while some others were interviewed at an agreed venue in Lagos and Abuja. The interview varied between twenty minutes and thirty minutes and interviewees agreed to be anonymous. Among the fifty-three interviewees, thirteen were policymakers who had a role in private and government enterprises. Twelve were males and only one was female. The interviews were

conducted via person-to-person sessions. The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed and analyzed manually.

Findings

The perception of Chinese media varies between respondents in Ghana and Nigeria. While Nigerian respondents do not see any difference between Chinese and Western media sources because they are perceived to promote the interest of their countries over those of the sub-region, Ghanaian respondents differ. One respondent, a Nigerian journalist, explained that the Chinese media practices “development journalism,” but Western media are attuned to promoting propaganda sponsored by their countries against Africa. The reason, he noted: there is more negative news about Africa in Western media than in Chinese media. Another Nigerian respondent said that she does not think that that Chinese media promotes propaganda in comparison with Western media. She noted that there are “some of the programs in the Western media that I could let my hairs down when watching them and there are others that all my hair stands because they are screaming propaganda, propaganda but I have not had that experience with CGTN Africa.”

One Nigerian respondent explained that the difference between Western and Chinese media sources is that the “Western media promote an idea or agenda by focusing on a slant but Chinese media sources provide an alternative narrative of the same event.” For instance, he said he first saw what he described as “the failure of the United States and its allies in Syria in CGTN Africa, when it showed how Russian air strikes have significantly decimated ISIL.”

On the other hand, a Ghanaian respondent said that she would prefer Western media sources because they are more credible. She noted that “I would honestly go for Western media sources because I am not so used to the Chinese sources and there are some of the Western sources that are well known and so, you know in journalism, sources do matter.” Another Ghanaian respondent added that it is a matter of proximity and appeal of Western media

sources because it has become traditional with journalists in Ghana. One Ghanaian respondent explained that when it comes to sourcing information with international media, there are other sources to consider before seeking Chinese media sources. He explained that “I will first of all want to turn to BBC, CNBC Africa, Bloomberg, Reuters, and some other channels where you know that they are a good source that you can use.” The analysis of this segment suggests that Nigerian respondents and their Ghanaian counterparts have varied perceptions of Chinese and Western media sources. While Nigerian respondents argue that Chinese and Western media sources are not different in terms of propaganda because they both have their agenda, which is largely informed by national interests, Ghanaian respondents contend that Chinese media sources are less credible than Western media sources. The variations in both countries could be informed by the underpinnings of China-Ghana and China-Nigeria relations. While China-Ghana relations have come under strain in recent times, China-Nigeria relations are considered buoyant. For instance, Ghana is the first country in Africa to arrest and deport over 4,500 illegal Chinese miners in 2013 and tension remains over Chinese nationals’ involvement in illegal gold mining activities in Ghana.²⁸ Despite recent misgivings about treatment meted to Nigerians living in Guangzhou over COVID-19, Nigerians remain positive over China’s influence.²⁹

However, respondents from both countries agreed that they have not consulted Chinese media sources in their work. This differs for journalists who have participated in any media training sponsored by the Chinese government. Respondents argue that Western media sources have built their credibility over time, while there is a general perception that Chinese media sources are influenced by the CCP. Respondents explained that even though Western media sources frame Africa in a bad light, it is better than China’s claim to providing positive

²⁸ Afua Hirsch, “Ghana Deports Thousands in Crackdown on Illegal Chinese Goldminers,” *Guardian*, July 15, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jul/15/ghana-deports-chinese-goldminers>.

²⁹ Edem Selormey, “Africans’ Perceptions About China: A Sneak Peek From Eighteen Countries,” *Afrobarometer*, September 3, 2020, http://afrobarometer.org/sites/default/files/africa-china_relations-3sept20.pdf.

reporting of events emanating from the African continent. One Ghanaian respondent emphasized that the “enemy you know is better than good old friend,” suggesting that Western media sources are established and have had long-term relationships with journalists and media organizations on the continent, unlike Chinese media sources that are appendages to the CCP. There is the perception among respondents that it is difficult to predict China’s intention in the African media space but that is not the case with Western media organizations that are openly focused on framing the ills on the African continent. For instance, one Ghanaian respondent emphasized that, “I don’t use Chinese media sources in my work because of my readings about China and its involvement in Africa.” Another Ghanaian respondent, a policymaker, explained that it would be difficult to trust Chinese media sources when there is no media freedom in China. He noted that “If you control what they see in your country, why should I trust what you project outside the country? It is not as if I only trust Western media sources but I trust particular country sources based on how much media freedom that they allow internally.” For their parts, Nigerian respondents do not consult Chinese media sources in their work because they have been attuned to Western media sources. One respondent explained that “I am more exposed to western media and they are easily accessible through the internet such as BBC, Reuters, and Voice of Africa.”

The trust issue confronting Chinese media sources in Africa is largely informed by the authoritarian origin of Chinese media organizations. The audiences of West African journalists and policymakers, therefore, find it difficult to trust Chinese media organizations that are state-regulated to provide information that will enhance their work of freedom of information and political pluralism. This reinforces the findings of other studies that African audiences do not trust Chinese media sources because of their appendage to the Chinese government.³⁰

³⁰ See Madrid-Morales and Wasserman, “Chinese Media Engagement in South Africa: What is Its Impact on Local Journalism?;” Wasserman and Madrid-Morales, “How Influential Are Chinese Media in Africa? An

Conclusion

This study provided an audience analysis of Chinese media sources through an analysis of a semi-structured interview with journalists and policymakers in Ghana and Nigeria. The findings suggest that while Ghanaian journalists and policymakers have tended to push back against Chinese media organizations and have limited use of their media sources, which they describe as propaganda, their Nigerian counterparts hold a different view. While Nigerian respondents point out that Chinese media is propaganda, they argue that Western media is no different from Chinese media in that both have certain agendas that are driven by national interest.

On the other hand, journalists and policymakers in Ghana and Nigeria agree that they have not consulted Chinese media sources in their work because of “trust” issues confronting Chinese media sources. Even though Xinhua has resorted to offering its content free-of-charge to some media organizations in sub-Saharan Africa, it is yet to gain traction among media organizations on the continent.³¹ Also, respondents were unanimous that the “enemy you know is better than the good friend” because in their view Western media sources have been long established in Africa and are credible even though they may not cover the continent in a positive light in comparison with Chinese media sources. This indicates that media practitioners in the sub-region are familiar with the Western media way of framing events but are yet to get to grips with China’s intention in the African media space. The limited environment of media freedom in China is a counter to the rising prominence of Chinese media sources in Africa because it dampens whatever gain Chinese media sources might have made on the continent.³²

Audience Analysis in Kenya and South Africa;” and Guyo and Yu, “How Is the Performance of Chinese News Media in Kenya? An Analysis of Perceived Audience Reception and Motivation.”

³¹ See, for instance, Umejei, *Chinese Media in Africa: Perception, Performance, and Paradox*, (Rowman and Littlefield: Maryland, 2020), 64.

³² See, for instance, Madrid-Morales and Wasserman, “Chinese Media Engagement in South Africa: What is Its Impact on Local Journalism?;” Wasserman and Madrid-Morales, “How Influential Are Chinese Media in Africa?”

However, the positive perception of Chinese media sources in Nigeria is a testament to the influence of infrastructural development facilitated on the platform of the BRI. For instance, at the completion of the Abuja-Kaduna railway by the China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC) in 2016, an analysis by Pew Research Center suggested that Nigerians living near the project grew more positive toward China.³³ China has completed additional rail line projects in Nigeria in recent times including the popular Lagos-Ibadan Standard Gauge Rail Line connecting Lagos, the economic hub of Nigeria, with Ibadan, a university town and the capital city of Oyo State in southwest Nigeria. The 156 kilometer rail line, which was completed at a cost of \$1.5 billion, was commissioned with pomp and fanfare by the Buhari administration in June 2021.³⁴ Some other projects that have been completed in Nigeria as part of the BRI include new international terminals at the Murtala Mohammed International Airport in Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt, and Kano. The completion of these projects is believed to have elicited wide media coverage in the Nigerian media resulting in positive perception of Chinese media organizations among Nigerian journalists. The implication is that China's funding of infrastructural projects, media training for African journalists and workshops as part of the BRNN, and donation of broadcasting equipment through the platform of the Belt and Road Initiative have the potential to influence audience perception of Chinese media in Africa. While it may take long for West African journalists and policymakers to begin to incorporate Chinese media sources in their work, it is anticipated that this may change in the long run, especially if China continues to pour massive funding into media projects on the BRI. However, the shape of the journalistic model that may emerge in parts of Africa, especially in loosely-held constitutional democracies, is a

An Audience Analysis in Kenya and South Africa;" and Guyo and Yu, "How Is the Performance of Chinese News Media in Kenya? An Analysis of Perceived Audience Reception and Motivation."

³³ Dennis Quin, "Nigerians Living Near a Major Belt and Road Project Grew More Positive Toward China After It Was Completed," Pew Research Center, April 23, 2020, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/04/23/nigerians-living-near-a-major-belt-and-road-project-grew-more-positive-toward-china-after-it-was-completed/>.

³⁴ Femi Adesina, "Buhari inaugurates Lagos-Ibadan rail project, takes ride," *Premium Times*, June 10, 2021, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/more-news/466908-buhari-inaugurates-lagos-ibadan-rail-project-takes-ride.html>.

combination of Western and Chinese models. This is likely to happen earlier in Nigeria than in Ghana, where tensions over illegal mining of gold remain between Ghanaian and Chinese nationals.