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Chinese media in Africa: News, entertainment, and technology

Dani Madrid-Morales | The University of Sheffield | @DMadrid_M

September 14, 2022, Department of Media Studies, Stockholm University



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Context

... on the importance of information flows in
Africa-China-Africa relations today & in the
past



Globalizing media

1. The media sector worldwide starts a process of **convergence and concentration** in the 1980s
2. Private news organizations and **transnational conglomerates** were at the center of debates in 1990s
3. State-sponsored global media organizations outside **“traditional” nodes of content production** grow in the 2000s.



China's (media) “going out” policy

1. Global **media “exchanges”** have been at the core of China's foreign policy for decades



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Antecedents



Source: https://www.sohu.com/a/343180564_738143

PEKIN 1 INFORMATION

4 mars 1963

Numéro spécial inaugural

北京周报

**Proétaires de tous les pays,
unissons-nous contre
l'ennemi commun!**

Ce numéro comprend aussi les autres articles importants du
Revue Riba et du Hongqi sur les questions vitales
du mouvement communiste international

LE POINT DE VUE ET LES NOUVELLES DE CHINE



L'Afrique centrale et orientale en lutte pour l'indépendance nationale

par Houo Ki-tche

Le mouvement pour l'indépendance nationale se développe rapidement en Afrique centrale et orientale. Tandis que le Mouvement Océanien continue de progresser et que les deux Rhodesies et le Nyassaland, en Afrique australe, et le Kenya et le Soudan, en Afrique orientale, sont entrés sous domination britannique, deux anciennes colonies britanniques, la Tanganyika et l'Ouganda, et le Rwanda et le Burundi, anciens territoires sous tutelle belge, ont récemment accédé à l'indépendance.

Importance base de colonialisme

En tant que zone d'investissement des puissances impérialistes, l'Afrique centrale et orientale revêt une importance telle qu'elle vient, pour tout le continent africain, immédiatement après l'Afrique du Sud. L'Afrique centrale est riche en ressources minérales. Elle possède la plus abondante zone capricieuse du monde et bien d'autres richesses naturelles d'importance stratégique. L'Afrique orientale a toujours servi de base stratégique importante aux puissances impérialistes, qui ont fait d'importantes investissements dans ces régions. Après la Seconde guerre mondiale, des capitaux étrangers se sont vus à plus de 20 millions de livres sterling furent investis en moyenne chaque année en Afrique centrale. Avec la création de la "Fédération de l'Afrique centrale" par la Grande-Bretagne, la péninsule du capricieux a été créée. Le total des capitaux étrangers investis dans le cadre de cette "Fédération" s'élève en moyenne à 20 millions de livres sterling. Les investissements de la Grande-Bretagne en Afrique centrale et orientale ont représenté un quart de la totalité de ses investissements en Afrique. Le capital impérialiste étranger contrôle entièrement l'industrie minière de cette région, de même que toutes les autres branches importantes de l'économie nationale, le commerce extérieur compris. Ainsi l'Afrique centrale et orientale constitue une source importante des richesses amassées par les capitalistes impérialistes des pays occidentaux.

Les blancs possèdent les mines, les terres les plus fertiles ainsi que les plantations et créent la plupart des plantations industrielles. Ils se sont appropriés 80% des meilleures terres arables du Kenya, 80% des terres cultivées du Rwanda et 80% des terres cultivées du Tanganyika. Avant même que leur empire sur l'économie locale, ils contrôlaient en même temps les régions coloniales stratégiques dans plusieurs de ces pays. En cumulant le gain d'argent des puissances impérialistes pour exploiter et évincer le mouvement de libération nationale dans la région.

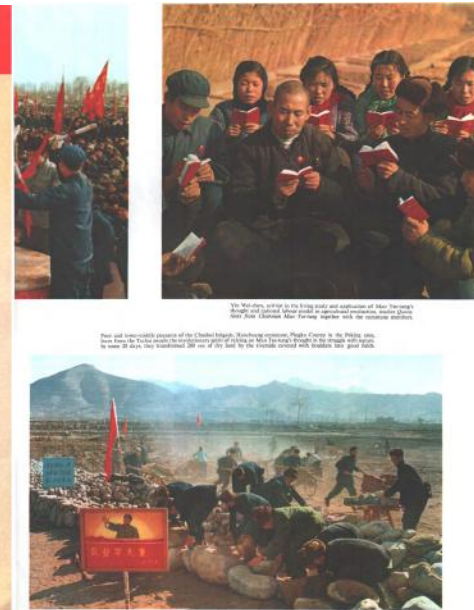
L'Afrique centrale et orientale occupe une position stratégique d'importance vitale. Elle joue un rôle capital dans les plans stratégiques des puissances impérialistes qui veulent dominer le contrôle des vastes territoires de la région afro-asiatique, et constituer un moyen matériel reliant l'Afrique du Sud à l'Asie de l'Ouest et du Sud-Est. C'est pour cette raison que le bloc impérialiste a installé un grand nombre de bases militaires. Par exemple, à Kabona, près de Nairobi, capitale du Kenya, se trouve la plus grande base militaire britannique en Afrique, alors que Mombasa est un des plus grands ports de la mer indienne britannique sur l'Océan Indien. De plus, la Grande-Bretagne a une sur pied sa "Commandement de l'Afrique Orientale" au Kenya pour renforcer son contrôle militaire sur cette partie de l'Afrique et sur les régions avoisantes. Les Etats-Unis ont établi une base d'ingénierie à Mombasa au Kenya, et ont orienté le Portugal à porter une base aérienne et une base stratégique au Mozambique. Si les pays impérialistes considéraient cette région comme une zone vitale, c'est précisément parce qu'elle est la d'importance stratégique, économique et économique. En vue d'y maintenir leur contrôle, ils recourent à tous les moyens — de la répression armée à la diplomatie politique — pour empêcher et entraver le progrès du mouvement d'indépendance nationale.

Mouvements insurrectionnels pour la libération nationale

Si le mouvement de libération nationale en Afrique ne cesse de progresser dans son ensemble, il s'est développé, ces dernières années, à un rythme sans précédent en Afrique centrale et orientale. Il y a à peine plus d'un an, aucun pays indépendant d'orientation socialiste en Afrique centrale et orientale. Mais aujourd'hui, grâce aux progrès dans l'unité anti-impérialiste, quatre pays ont accédé à l'indépendance dans cette région. Le Tanganyika, qui est le plus grand pays dans cette partie de l'Afrique.

4 mars 1963

41





China's (media) “going out” policy

1. Global **media “exchanges”** have been at the core of China's foreign policy for decades
2. Chinese (state-owned) media have been trying to become **more international** since the early 2000s.



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Hu Jintao promotes cooperation and development

The first World Media Summit took place in Beijing on October 9, 2009.

Source: Peter Parks (AFP)



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Xi Jinping's first message on Weibo

A computer is set up in the newsroom of the People's Daily (the mouthpiece of the Communist Party of China) on 25 December 2015. Source: CNTV



The media's family name is the Party (媒体姓党)

Xi Jinping visits the study of *Xinwen Lianbo* (prime time evening news show on China's national broadcaster) on 18 February 2016 (Source: Xinhua)



China's (media) “going out” policy

1. Global **media “exchanges”** have been at the core of China's foreign policy for decades
2. Chinese (state-owned) media have been trying to become **more international** since the early 2000s.
3. North America and, particularly, **Africa** have been at the center of China's media internationalization



Types of mediated engagements

Type of Involvement

Example

(Madrid-Morales & Wasserman, 2019)



Global Chinese media main actors

1. The most active

State-owned media such as Xinhua (news agency), CGTN (the international branch of CCTV), China Radio International (CRI) or China Daily (English-language newspaper).



Global Chinese media main actors

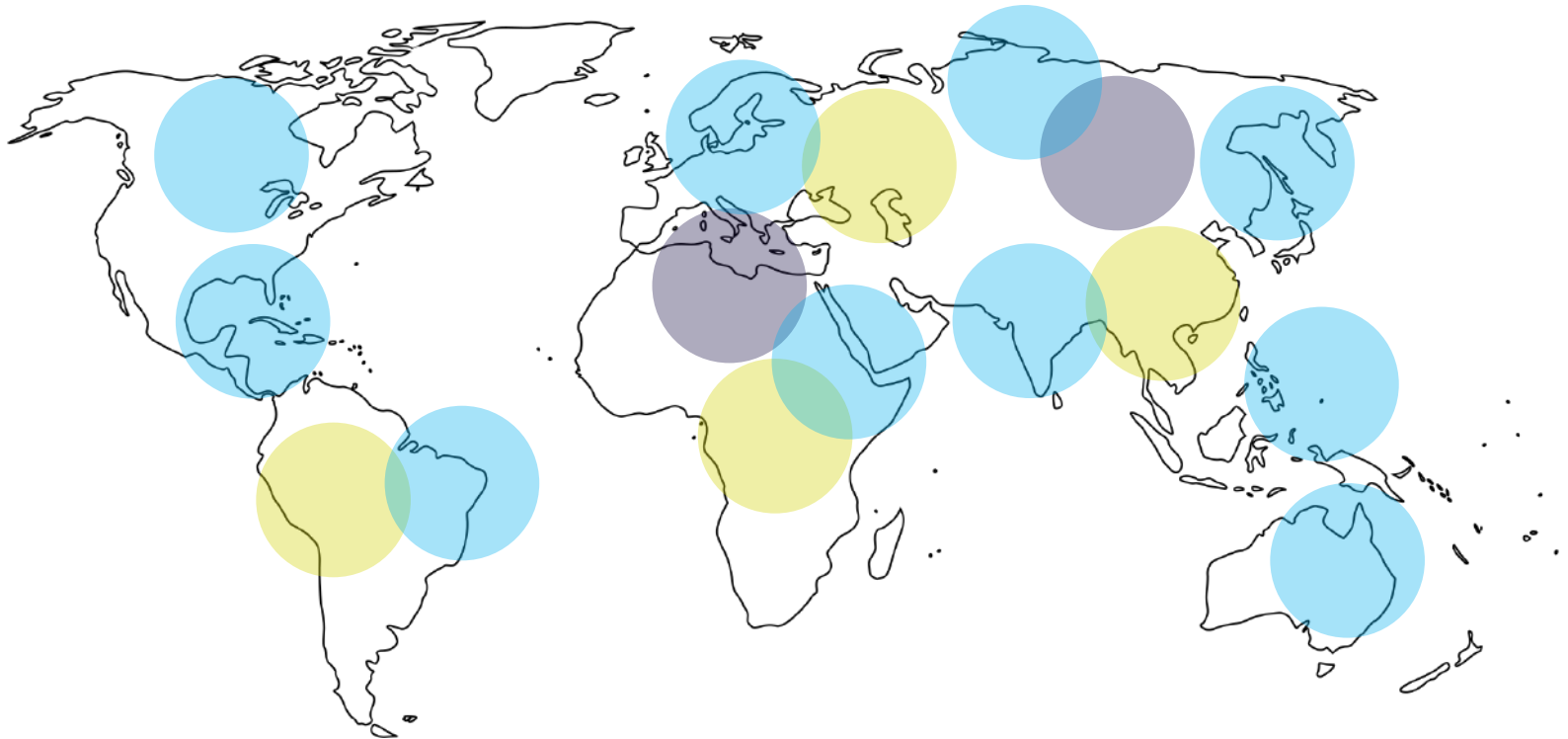
2. The most impactful

Profit-oriented corporations such as ZTE, Huawei or StarTimes, all of which have the backing of the Chinese State through capital or political support.



Primary areas of operation

-  **Xinhua**
-  **StarTimes**
-  **Huawei**





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News industry

... on the multiple strategies used by Chinese media companies to shape global narratives



Chinese media in Africa

- **2006 | CRI** opens FM station in Kenya
- **2010 | Xinhua** launches CNC's English language channel
- **2012 | CCTV (now CGTN)** opens broadcasting center
- **2012 | China Daily** launches an Africa Weekly Edition
- **2012 | Chinafrica** sets up an office in Johannesburg

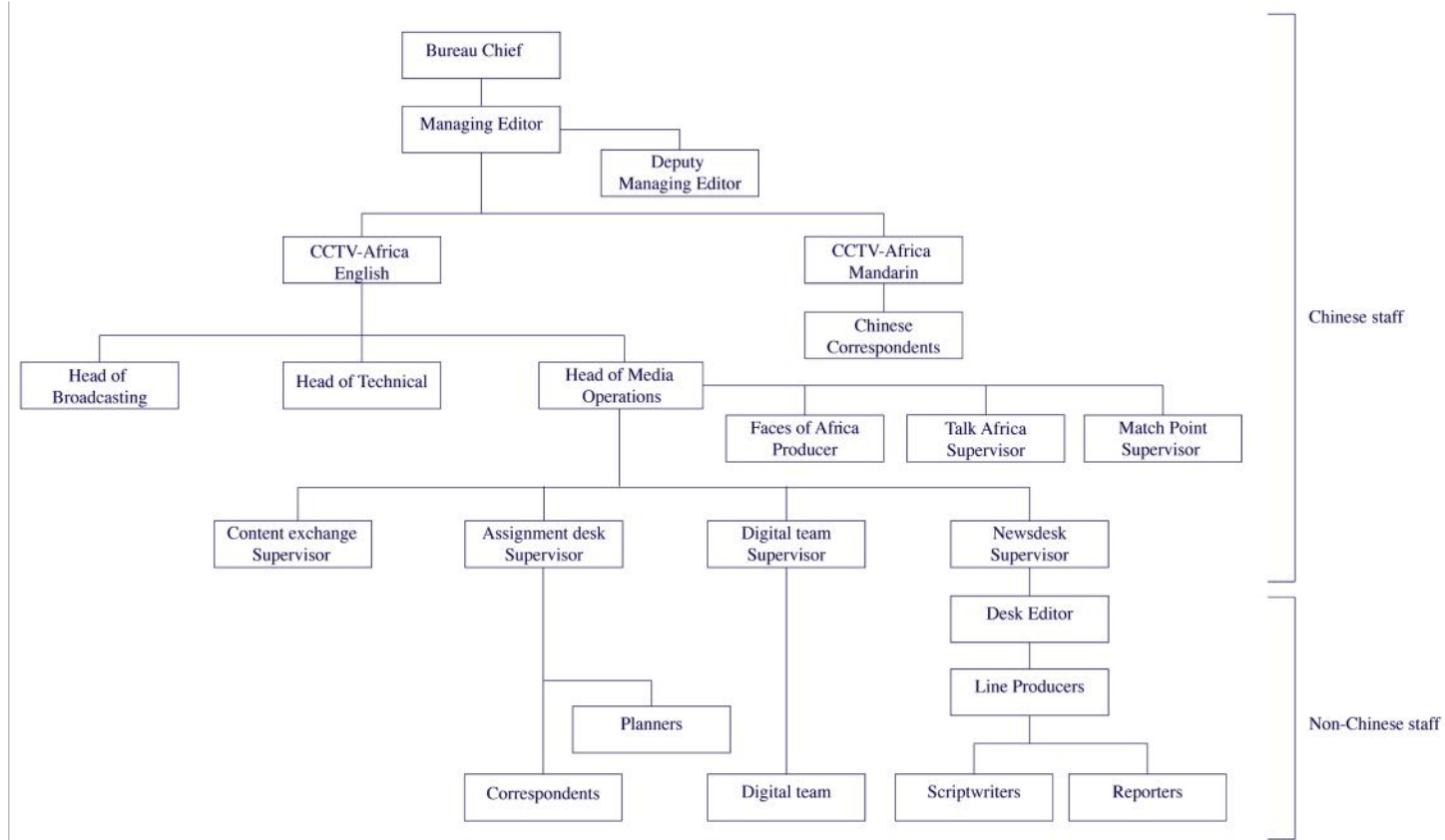




CGTN Africa

- Launched in 2012, it is a **production and broadcasting center** based in Nairobi. It produces two+ hours of content on African affairs daily.
- It employs over 120 staff, mostly Africans, but also Kenyans. CGTN Africa operates as the **regional office for CCTV's Africa operations.**

Structure of CGTN





CGTN Africa's “purpose”

«We have the news of what is happening in Africa. We tell a
positive story of African people»

(CGTN Africa Managing Editor, Pang Xinhua)



CGTN Africa's “purpose”

«Some people from a few countries are always painstakingly
distorting the facts of China-Africa friendly ties (...)
[Chinese media] is bound to tell the whole world the true
picture of China-Africa exchanges»
(Chinese Ambassador to Kenya, Liu Guangyuan)

“Borrowed boats” I

Beijing calling

Location of radio stations that are part of three networks backed by the Chinese government and broadcasting China-friendly programming around the world.

(借船出海)



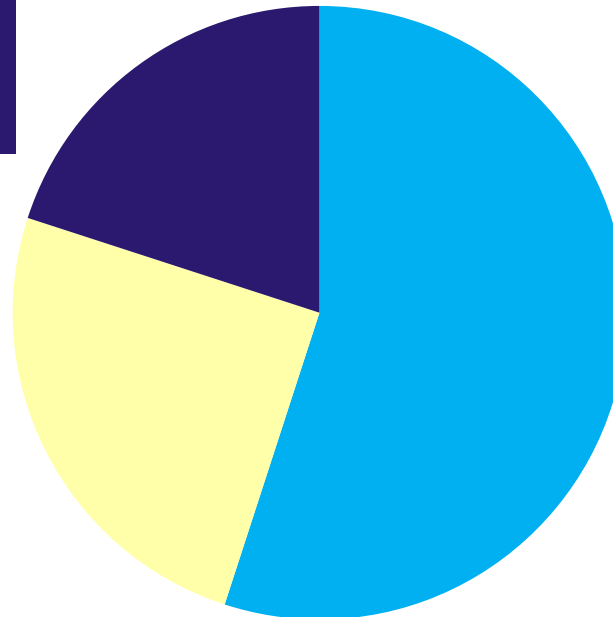
Source: <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/china-radio/>



“Borrowed boats” II

China International Television
Corporation & China-Africa
Development Fund -- 20%

Public Investment
Corporation (PIC) --
25%



Sekunjalo Independent
Media Consortium (SIM)
-- 55%

Source: <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/china-radio/>

“Borrowed boats” III

- Since 2015, Xinhua has contributed its content to the Africa News Agency (ANA), created by Independent Media.
- Similar agreements exist with other news agencies such as Ghana News Agency.

NEWS / AFRICA



A Nigerian policeman gestures at a driver to pull over his car for proper checking at a roadblock in Lagos as the city faces a two-week lockdown with residents told to stay in their homes and vehicle movement banned in an attempt to halt the spread of the new coronavirus. Picture: Sunday Alamba/AP

MPs to donate salaries to Nigeria's coronavirus fight

By Xinhua and ANA  Apr 1, 2020



Lagos - The Nigerian House of Representatives Tuesday announced that its 360 members have agreed to donate their salaries for the next two months toward the fight against the dreaded Covid-19 pandemic.



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24

Chinese narratives



164 reports on Ukraine
124 provided by Xinhua
75% of Ukraine stories



Vaccine-preventable diseases outbreaks on the rise in Africa: W
Home / WORLD / Russia begins second phase of special military operation in Ukraine: Lavrov

Russia begins second phase of special military operation in Ukraine: Lavrov

The Independent April 19, 2022 WORLD Leave a comment



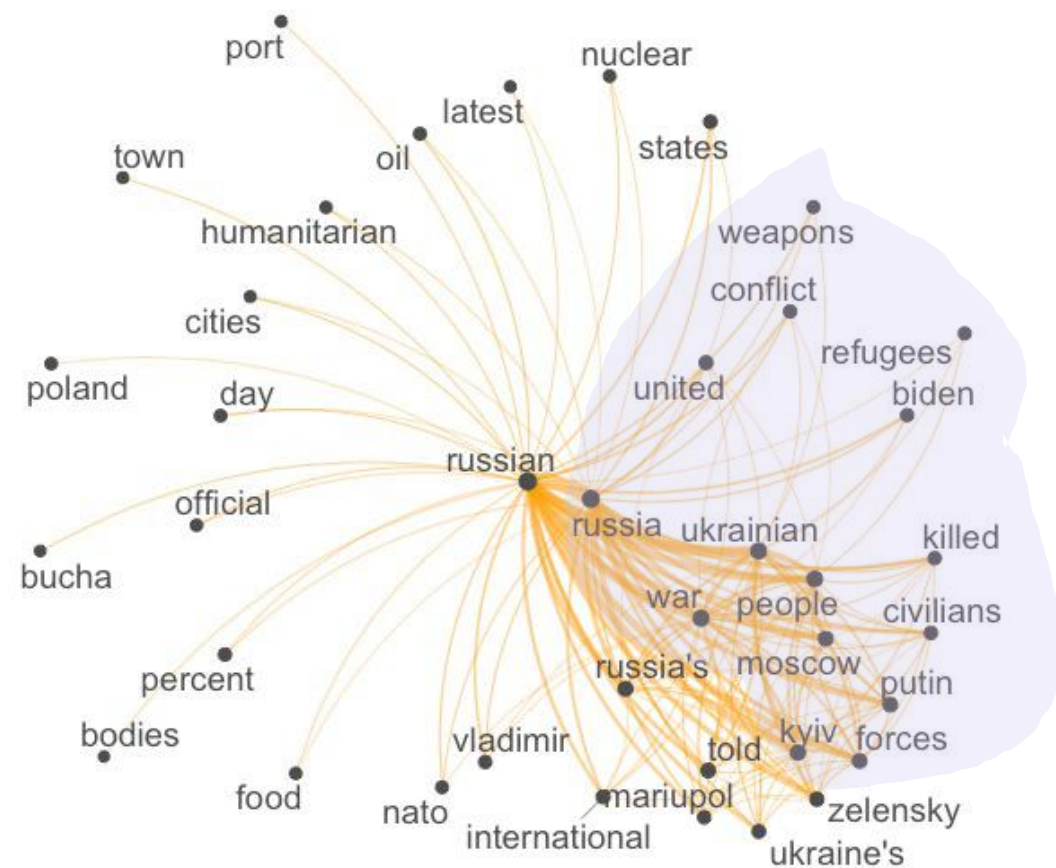
Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. File Photo

Moscow, Russia | Xinhua | The second phase of Russia's special military operation in Ukraine has begun, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Tuesday.

The operation in eastern Ukraine is aimed at "completely liberating" the populations of Donetsk and Lugansk, Lavrov said during an interview with India Today.

"This operation will continue, the next phase of this operation has now begun. There will now be an important moment during this special operation," he added.

Co-occurrence network – *Capital FM* (KE)





Russian narratives

interfax



Home > Newsroom > Top Stories > Kyiv tried to urgently conceal traces of military biological program funded by U.S. Defense Dept - Russian Defense Ministry

6 Mar 2022 18:59

Kyiv tried to urgently conceal traces of military biological program funded by U.S. Defense Dept - Russian Defense Ministry



MOSCOW. March 6 (Interfax) - Facts of the urgent concealment by the regime in Kyiv of the traces of a military biological program funded by the United States Department of Defense and implemented in Ukraine were exposed during the special military operation, Russian Defense Ministry spokesperson Igor Konashenkov said at a briefing on Sunday.

"We have obtained documents from employees of Ukrainian bio laboratories that the especially dangerous pathogens of plague, anthrax, Tularemia, cholera and other deadly diseases were urgently destroyed on February 24," Konashenkov said.

"Russian expert of the Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Protection Troops are now analyzing the documents," he said.



Kiev a détruit des échantillons mortels provenant de laboratoires de guerre biologique financés par les Etats-Unis (MAE russe)



French.xinhuanet.com | Publié le 2022-03-09 à 13:52

MOSCOU, 8 mars (Xinhua) -- Les autorités de Kiev ont détruit des agents pathogènes dangereux de maladies mortelles stockés dans des laboratoires en Ukraine financés par les Etats-Unis, a confirmé mardi le ministère russe des Affaires étrangères.

Le ministère a reçu des documents d'employés de laboratoires biologiques ukrainiens confirmant la destruction en urgence d'agents pathogènes dangereux tels que la peste, l'anthrax, la tularémie, le choléra et d'autres maladies mortelles le 24 février, selon une déclaration de la porte-parole du ministère, Maria Zakharova.

Elle a ajouté que ces laboratoires étaient financés par le Pentagone et faisaient partie d'un programme d'armes biologiques.

Selon le ministère, ces agents pathogènes ont été immédiatement détruits pour dissimuler les preuves indiquant que les Etats-Unis et l'Ukraine ont violé l'article I de la Convention sur l'interdiction des armes biologiques.

Mardi également, le ministère chinois des Affaires étrangères a appelé les Etats-Unis à publier les détails de leurs laboratoires biologiques en Ukraine et a exhorté les parties concernées à assurer leur sécurité. Fin



xinhuanews

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xinhua



« Kiev a détruit des échantillons mortels provenant de laboratoires de guerre biologique financés par les Etats-Unis » (Min Aff russe)

© 9 mars 2022 | administrateur | 00 Environnement | 0

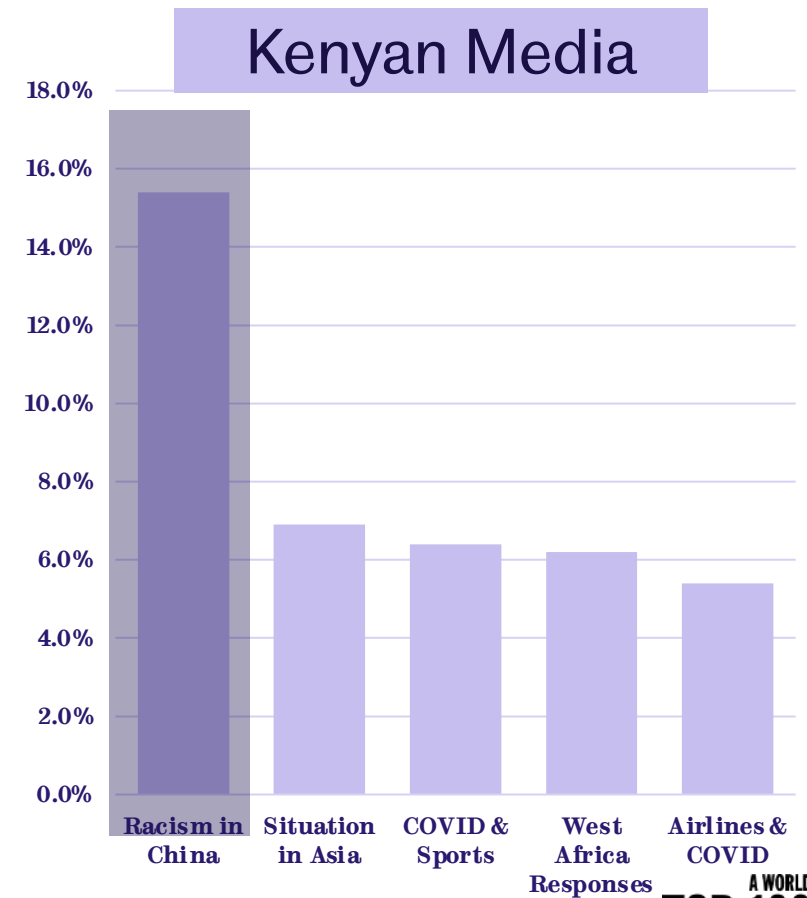
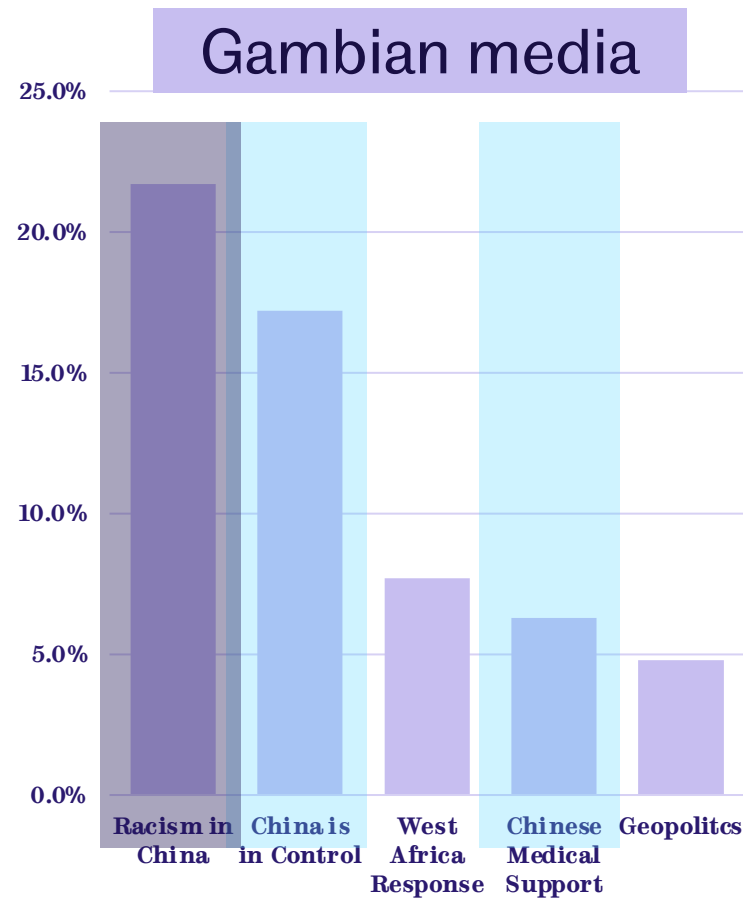
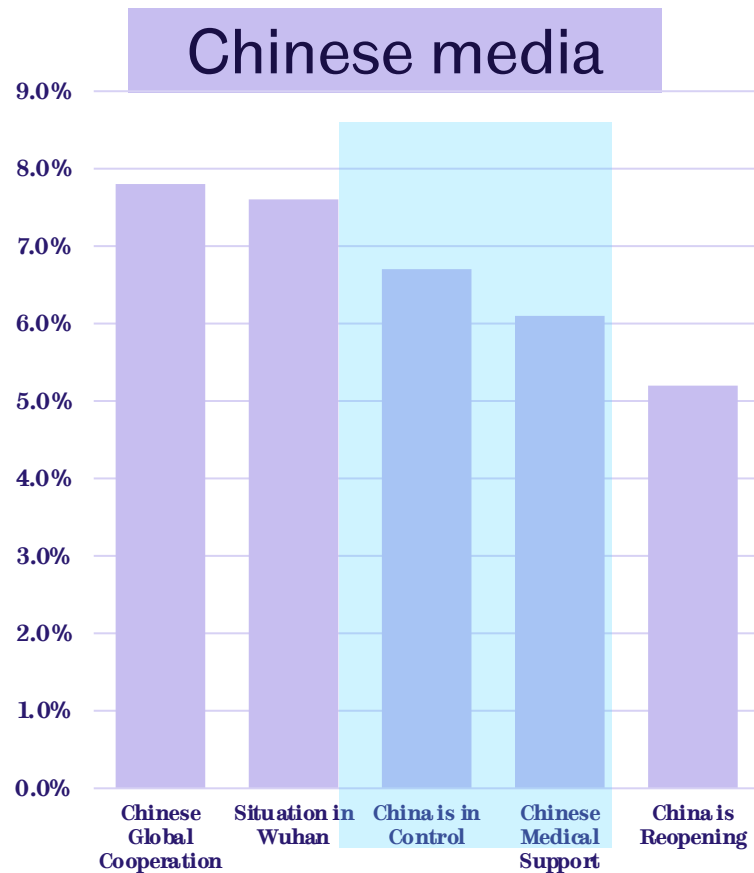


« Les autorités de Kiev ont détruit des agents pathogènes dangereux de maladies mortelles stockés dans des laboratoires en Ukraine financés par les Etats-Unis », a affirmé mardi 8 mars 2022 le ministère russe des Affaires étrangères.

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Chinese narratives on COVID-19





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Entertainment

... on how television programming makes its way from Beijing to African countries.

Chinese blockbusters



WOLF WARRIOR 2 - Official Trailer

44,858 views · May 19, 2017

65 11 SHARE SAVE ...



Imports/exports of TV content (in hours)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Exports to Africa	500	48	113	1,294	283	1,240	314	891	347			
Imports from Africa	0	0	3	9	1	11	3	49	0	0	1	0
Exports to US	1,464	1,372	3,032	8,455	15,538	9,380	4,559	5,761	3,318			
Imports from US	7,463	8,697	8,526	6,905	4,061	4,603	6,074	5,918	6,861	6,621	41,653	7,354
Exports to South Korea	410	525	668	1,039	695	763	505	784	1,207			
imports from South Korea	2,869	1,328	1,285	583	1,299	1,383	3,348	1,038	1,343	147	46	70

Source: China Statistical Yearbook



The ubiquity of StarTimes

1. Privately owned company, founded in Beijing in 1988 as 四达时代集团 and specializing in **digital TV** services.
 1. A subsidiary in Rwanda was established in 2008.
 2. Now present in 23 African countries (operating in 16).
2. It is the only private company in China allowed by the Ministry of Commerce to move into radio and TV **content production** in Africa.

StarTimes Model

- Close relationship of CEO to Chinese leadership
- Quasi monopoly over multiple sectors of pay TV industry:
 - Content distribution
 - Provision of equipment
 - DTT signal distribution



Chinese platform, Chinese content



Chinese platform, African content





10,000 villages project in Kenya

A partnership between the Chinese and Kenyan governments, and StarTimes to “bring” satellite TV in rural Africa (November 2021)



StarTimes – Digital TV in Kajiado (Kenya)

120 households in Saina Village
received free access to StarTimes
PayTV through by satellite



The event was attended by Sun
Zhijun, vice minister of the
Publicity Department of the CCP





StarTimes' 10,000 villages “purpose”

«Digital broadcasting platforms will **expose Chinese culture to Kenyan people** (...) It will enable local people to access content that **enriches their cultural and spiritual awareness**»

(Vice minister of the Publicity Department , Sun Zhijun)



StarTimes' 10,000 villages “purpose”

«We hope to use our satellite TV service, which has 100 percent coverage in Rwanda, to showcase and promote
Sino-Rwandese cultural exchange»

(CEO of Star Africa media, Jess Jing)



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Technology

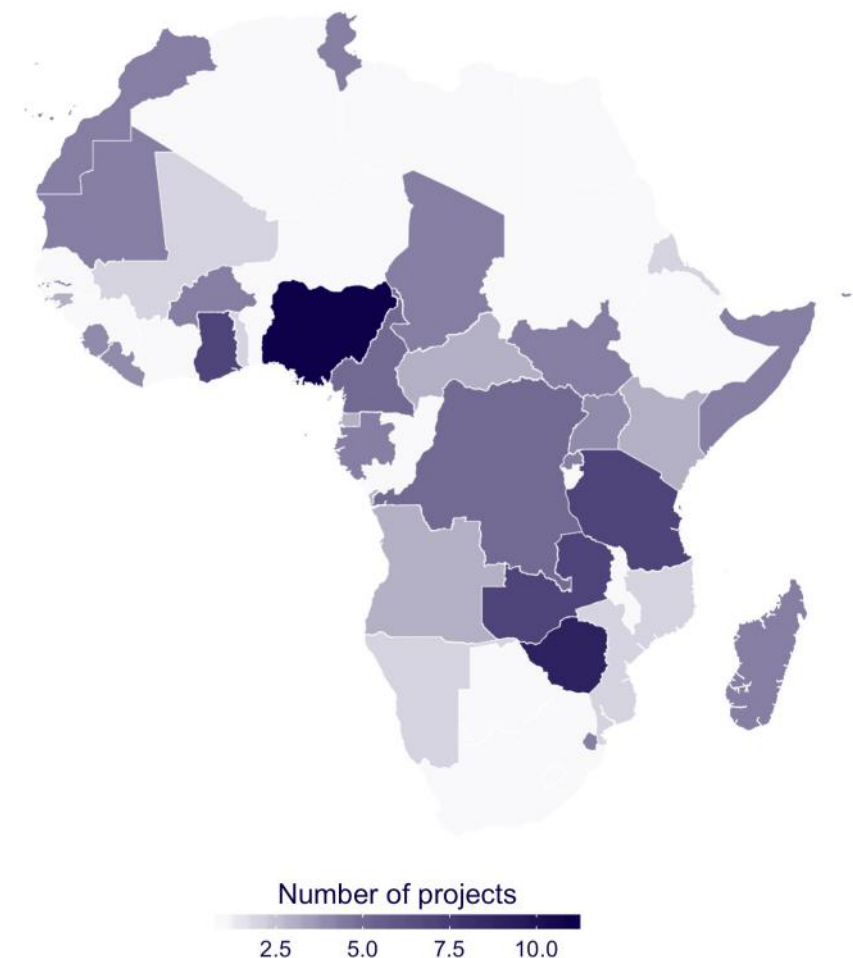
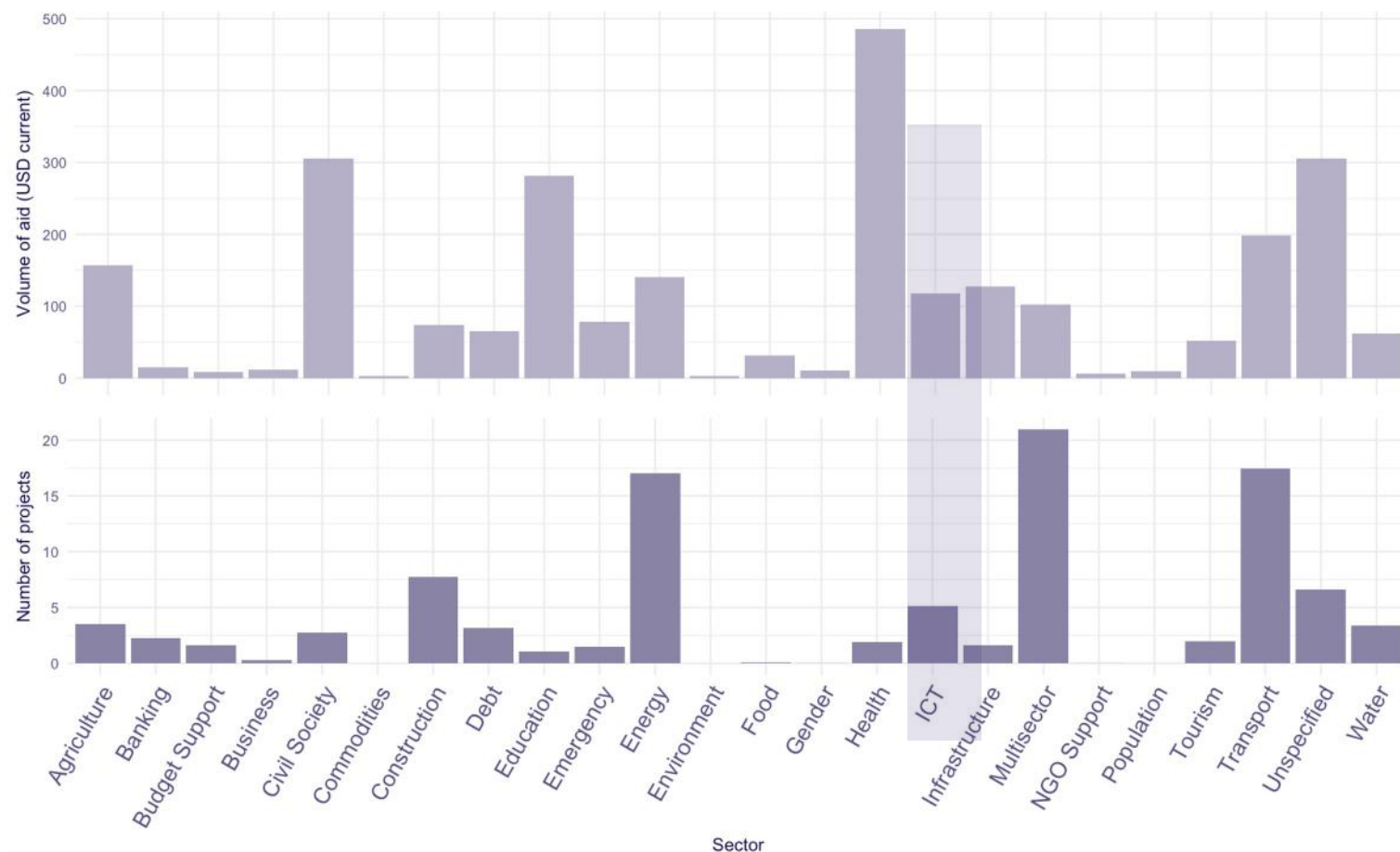
... on how digital technologies, from mobile to communication to surveillance, are added to China's global media mix.

ICT-related aid projects by China in Africa

Total number of projects by country (2000-2013)

Chinese Aid to Africa by sector

Number of projects and volume of aid (2000-2013)



Data: AfricaAid 2017



ICT-related aid projects by China in Africa

Total number of projects by country (2000-2013)

China grants 49.5 billion FCFA to Niger for telecoms services

Niamey, Niger (PANA) - China is to make 49.5 billion CFA francs available to Niger to finance the construction of fiber optic and other telecommunications services in the West African country, according to an agreement signed here Monday between officials of the two countries.

1,500 orphans, less privileged benefit from Huawei charity project

ON DECEMBER 16, 2013 8:44 PM / IN [NEWS](#) / [COMMENTS](#)



BY EMEKA AGINAM

namibian

13 SEPTEMBER 2006

Namibia: China Chips in At Outapi

Tagged: [Asia](#), [Australia, and Africa](#) • [Environment](#) • [External Relations](#) • [Namibia](#) • [Southern Africa](#)



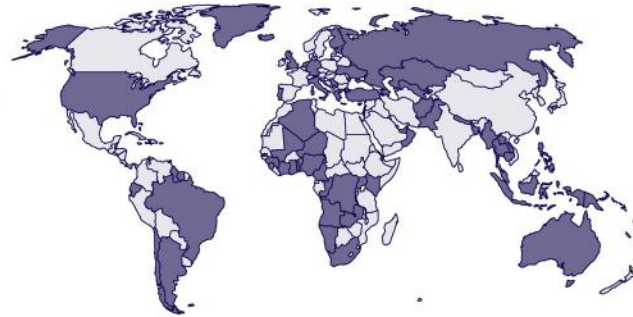
Windhoek — The Chinese Ambassador to Namibia, Liang Yin Zhu, donated 100 computers and 30 printers to the Outapi Town Council in the Omusati Region on Monday.



Data: AfricaAid 2017

BRI and Digital Silk Road

● Internet cables (fiber)
Number of countries: 76



○ "Smart city" initiatives; surveillance
Number of countries: 56



● Telecom equipment
Number of countries: 21



● Internet-connected appliances
Number of countries: 27



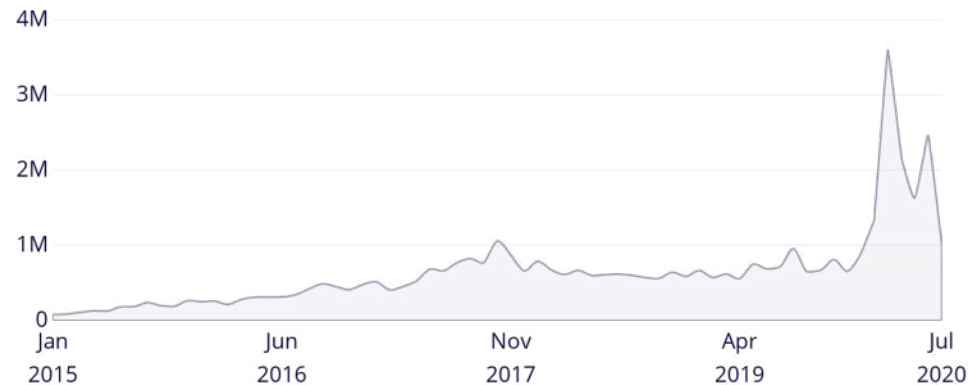
Source: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2019-01-10/china-s-digital-silk-road-is-looking-more-like-an-iron-curtain>

COVID-19 and social media

Volume

The total volume of the conversation is 43,071,832

This conversation peaked on Mar 1



China PD

Date range: Jan 1st, 2015 to Jul 15th, 2020



Crimson Hexagon



Chinese Embassy in South Africa @ChineseEmbSA · Jul 15

Amidst the surging numbers of confirmed cases of [#COVID19](#), China continues to provide assistance to Africa countries to combat the epidemic. [#ChinaLovesAfrica](#)



People's Daily, China @PDChina · Jul 14

[#Liberia](#) on Tue received 3rd batch of anti-[#pandemic](#) medical supplies from [#China](#) through the Organization of African First ladies for Development to help mothers and children combat [#COVID19](#). Donation includes disposable medical masks, infrared thermometers and surgical masks.



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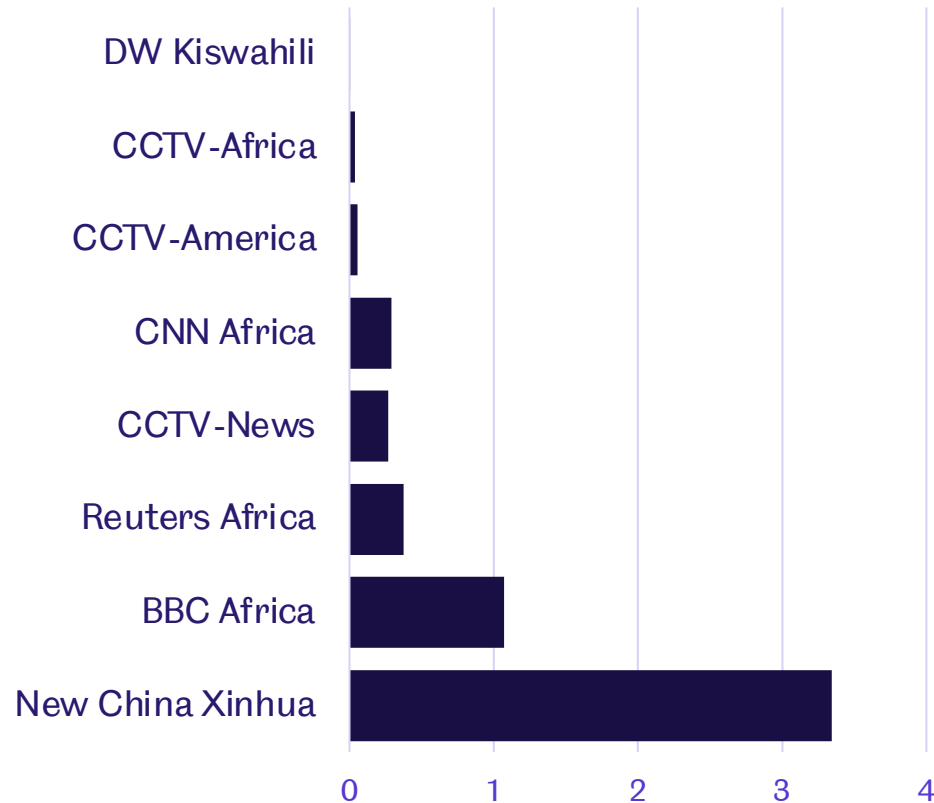


Chinese Diplomats on Twitter

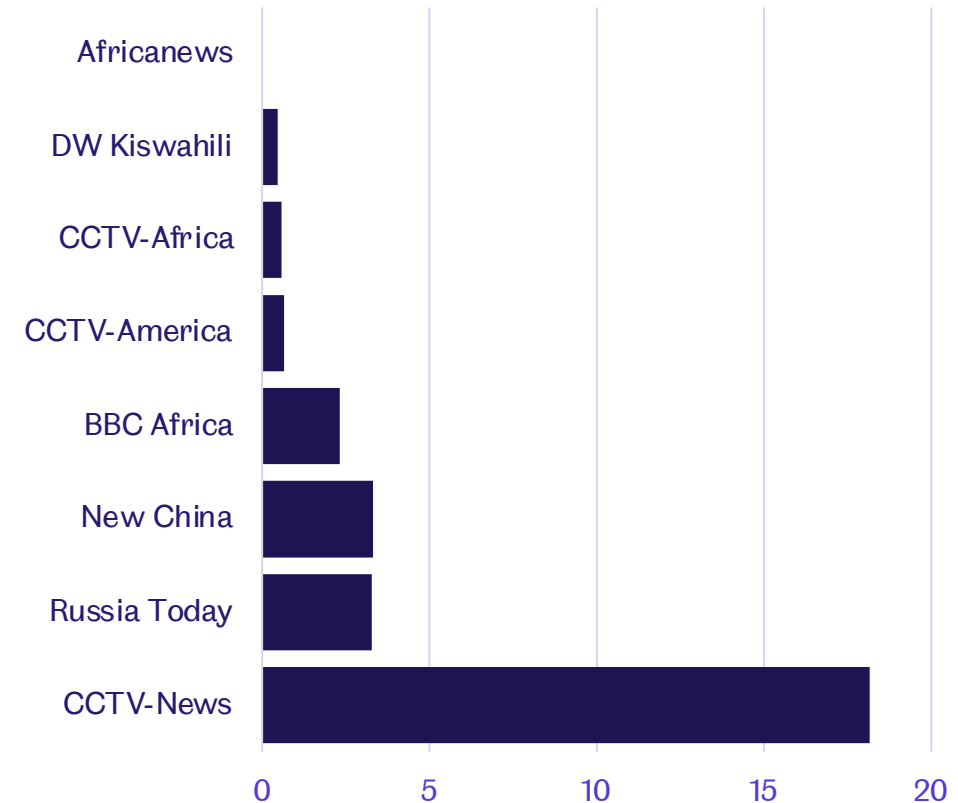




Chinese media on social media



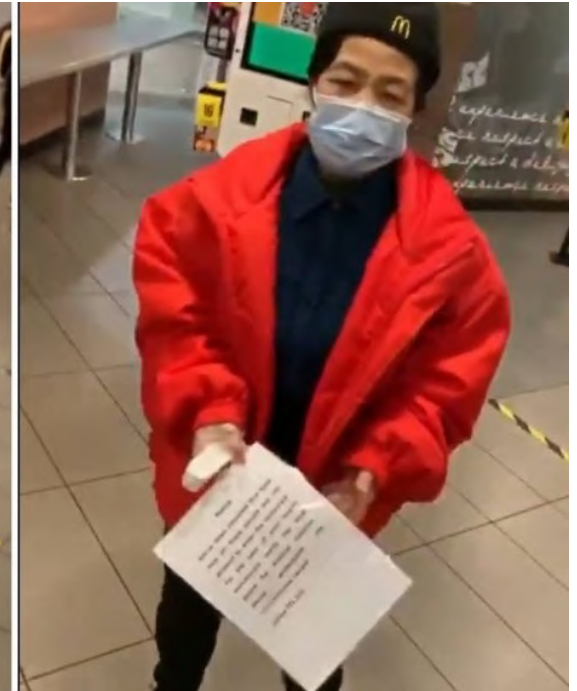
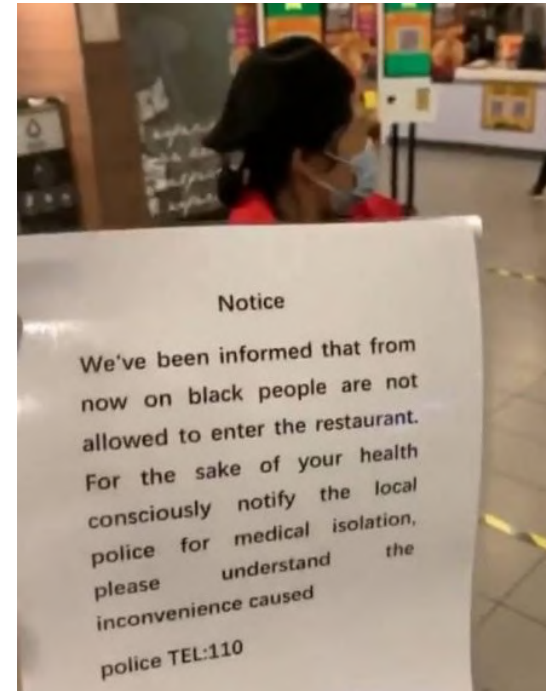
Twitter



Facebook



Sounding the alarm





Widening the reach



It gets political



Kwesi Quartey
@AmbKwesiQuartey

I invited the Chinese Ambassador to the AU, H.E. Amb. Liu Yuxi, to discuss the recent attacks on [#Africans](#) in [#China](#). He expressed regret for what had happened and intimated China's determination to use this as a lesson to improve relations with their African brothers.



Kwesi Quartey

7:58 AM · Apr 14, 2020 · Twitter for Android

62 Retweets 14 Quote Tweets 163 Likes





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Counter narrative

Opinion 09:19, 13-Apr-2020

Alleged harassment of Africans in China based on misinformation

Stephen Ndegwa

Share      



An African expat (R) learns the Chinese language at a service center for foreigners in Dengfeng Street of Guangzhou, south China's Guangdong Province, July 27, 2018. /Xinhua

Editors Note: Stephen Ndegwa is a Nairobi-based communications consultant and international affairs columnist. The article reflects the author's views, and not necessarily those of CGTN.

Society 18:42, 20-Apr-2020

The inside story of Africans in Guangzhou amid COVID-19 outbreak

Updated 12:25, 21-Apr-2020

Li Ruikang

Share      



Guangzhou, a metropolis in southern China, was caught in the global limelight after reports of Africans "being discriminated against and forced into quarantine" surfaced. The capital of south China's Guangdong Province is now trying to find a balance between preventing the recurrence of a second COVID-19 outbreak and staving off claims that it is acting against what is believed to be the core principle of international norms.



Minister Counsellor Zhao
@zhaobaogang2011

my friend in Guangzhou sent me video showing normal life of Africans. n
distorted video of



Rumor Buster: Videos showing discrimination in China's anti-epidemic measures are fake

Source: Xinhua | 2020-04-24 17:23:07 | Editor: huaxia

BEIJING, April 24 (Xinhua) -- Certain videos recently circulated online purport to show discrimination towards foreign nationals, particularly Africans, in China in its anti-epidemic measures. However, these are just groundless rumors.

French television France 24 in an article posted on its website debunked some fake videos, reproaching the disinformation that had nothing to do with the pandemic.



ice24.com
ce videos purport to show violence against Africans in

3, 2020

Reply  Copy link

[Read 28 replies](#)



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Takeaways



Final Ideas

1. Beijing's plan is very **long term**, with **generous funding** and no rush to achieve immediate goals



Final Ideas

2. While there is a clear united effort by many different actors involved in influence operations (part of CCP's United Front efforts), Beijing has long lacked a consistent “**grand strategy**”. This is **changing**.



Final Ideas

3. Under Xi Jinping, there's been a change in approaches (**less pragmatic, more ideological**), which has led to more global pushback than under Hu Jintao.



Final Ideas

4. There is strong **competition for attention**, and influence on the news media agenda on the continent. This involves authoritarian regimes (Iran, Russia, China), as well as liberal democracies (France, Germany, UK).



Final Ideas

5. A series of **systemic asymmetries** characterize Africa-China-Africa media relations that affect flows of content, capital and norms; regulatory frameworks and creative agency.



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Questions?