



ISSN 2336-3274 (Print) ISSN 2570-7558 (Online)

<https://edu.uhk.cz/africa>

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Recommended citation:

Řehák, V. (2016). China-Kenya Relations: Analysis of the Kenyan News Discourse. *Modern Africa: Politics, History and Society*, 4(2), 85–115. Retrieved from <https://edu.uhk.cz/africa/index.php/ModAfr/article/view/35>



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CHINA-KENYA RELATIONS: ANALYSIS OF THE KENYAN NEWS DISCOURSE¹

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Abstract: Although virtually all states in the world adhere to market economy, they have different visions about how the market economy should work properly. We may identify three main ideal-typical models of market state, welfare state, and developmental state, which are in practice realised by the US, the EU, and Pacific Asia. These ideas about global economy serve as strategic narratives, which are formed within the respective regions, projected into other regions, and received in these other regions. The reception of narratives, particularly by ordinary people, has attracted scholarly attention only very recently and still remains under-studied. This article focuses on the reception of the Chinese narrative towards Africa, which stresses a win-win cooperation based on the “business as usual” approach, with no political interference and no strings attached. Kenya was chosen as a representative case, the discourse analysis of media news discourse as a method, and the leading newspaper *The Daily Nation* as the source of data. The analysis reveals that the newspaper reproduces this Chinese narrative, while simultaneously challenging it. At least two main constituent parts of this narrative are openly contested on the pages of *The Daily Nation*: that the Chinese aid to Africa is without conditions and that the Chinese engagement in Africa is selfless and mutually beneficial. Thus, the present article confirms that while Kenyan leadership seems to be charmed by the Chinese narrative, this is not accepted unreservedly within Kenyan society.

Keywords: *Global economic governance, market economy models, strategic narratives, China-Kenya relations, media discourse analysis*

1 This study was supported by the Charles University in Prague, project GAUK No. 834214, “Trade regimes in sub-Saharan Africa.”

2 The author gratefully acknowledges the research assistance of Dr. Adéla Brožová in the McMillan Memorial Library, Nairobi, Kenya.

The end of the Cold War brought the ideological battle between capitalism and communism to an end, with an overwhelming victory of the former. Similarly, many developing countries left protectionist import substituting strategies, which did not lead to development but rather escalated the debt crisis. Neoliberalism and the “imperialism of free trade” (Nye 2004: 136) seemed to be the norm in the global economy. However, this by no means implies that all states have the same economic policy. We are still witnessing a battle of ideas. As Joseph Stiglitz (2010: xii) put it: “The battle between capitalism and communism may be over, but market economies come in many variations and the contest among them rages on.”

Gilpin (2001) recognises three national models: the US, Germany, and Japan. These models differ in answering three fundamental questions: what is the purpose of economic activity, what should be the role of the state in the economy, and what are the mechanisms of corporate governance and private business practices? As different regional economies share similar foundations of their economic system, it is possible to view these models as the American, European, and Asian model. Thus, the three component parts of the economic core of the world, the so-called Triade (the US, the EU, and Pacific Asia), differ substantially in their visions how the market economy should work properly. Analytically, we will treat these models as three ideal-typical models of *market state*, *welfare state*, and *developmental state*.

One of the important questions is how these models resonate in other regions. For example, Africa is a region where these ideas undergo a fierce competition to gain attraction. This opens a wide space for academic research. One of the most under-studied questions is how do people in Africa receive and reflect this battle of ideas. This article tries to fill this gap by focusing on how China and its narrative are received in Kenya.

Kenya is a representative case. It has long-term deep relations with the European Union. Although the government of Mwai Kibaki (coming to power in 2003) started the rapprochement with China, it did not substantially alter the existing patterns. April 2013 may have been a turning point: Uhuru Kenyatta was elected as a new president, which caused reserved reactions in the West. The reason is that both Kenyatta and his Vice-President William Ruto faced charges by the

International Criminal Court of committing crimes against humanity during the post-election violence in 2007–08. Contrarily, China warmly congratulated the new President on his election, which initiated a new era of close cooperation under the officially proclaimed “Look East” policy. Similarly, the visit of Barack Obama, the US president of Kenyan origin, in July 2015 resulted in promises of close political and economic cooperation between the two countries. In October 2014, the EU and the East African Community (EAC) signed the Economic Partnership Agreement. Thus, Kenya is closely cooperating with the US, the EU, and China. It may be of a great interest to explore perceptions of these partners, particularly if we go beyond the elite perception. As leading scholars argue, there is an evident disjuncture between elite and popular perceptions of China in Africa (Carmody 2011: 88) and the Chinese engagement is viewed differently by African governments and citizens (Taylor 2014: 115). Thus, the perception of China in Kenya was chosen as the focus of this article.

Theory

My research falls within the so-called “new regionalism,” which is a broad spectre of academic works focusing on the interplay between the processes of *globalisation* (the growing mutual linkages of global and local social, cultural, economic and political conditions and structures leading to increased mutual interdependence), *globalism* (attempts to create some rules of global governance, currently identified with liberal multilateralism), *regionalisation* (objective bottom-up process of the regional delimiting of international economic relations) and *regionalism* (top-down strategy of states to influence regionalisation). Contrary to the closed “inside”-oriented Cold-War regionalism, the new regionalism is “inside-outside-regionalism.” It means the activation of internal factors to utilise the internal potential and strengthen the internal resistance towards global competition and simultaneously the expansion to foreign markets based on comparative advantages aimed at gaining a greater global competitiveness and widening the operational range for domestic companies by ensuring comparable economic and institutional conditions (Kučerová 2014: 101–105). What is inherently linked to such a version of regionalism is the creation of a discourse concerning specific issues of relevant actors. This discourse is focused both internally to express common values and identities

and to strengthen the internal structure, and externally as an outward demonstration of regionalism (Kučerová 2014: 97, 102).

This outward-oriented discourse can be analysed by using the theory of *strategic narratives*. It is an interdisciplinary approach trying to capture the communicative dimension of world politics and economy. A strategic narrative is a representation of a sequence of events and identities, which entails an initial situation, a disrupting problem, and a resolution of the problem. It is a tool for states to articulate interests, change the discursive environment, extend influence, and shape the behaviour of others. Its five key components are: it is future-oriented, it is an identity claim, it has a fluid content, it is bounded by prevailing understandings and expectations of the state, and it is oriented both towards the domestic and the international audience (Miskimmon et al. 2012: 3–5). We can assume that all actors in the international system try to arrange their ideas about themselves and the international system and to formulate a coherent vision of the future world order. The global economic crisis represents a disruption of the existing order, offering global actors an opportunity to construct strategic narratives about the future global economic order (the formation of narratives), to extend them globally (the projection of narratives), and to persuade others to adopt them (the reception of narratives).

Strategic narratives are closely interlinked with the concept of soft power (Nye 2004). While hard power is based on coercion (force, sanctions) and inducements (payments, bribes), soft power is based on agenda setting (institutions, diplomacy) and attraction (values, culture, ideas, government policies). Soft power, as defined by Nye, has the same dynamics as strategic narratives. First, soft power depends on how we frame our objectives (Nye 2004: 61) – this is related to the formation of narratives. Second, the world is full of information, which decreases the attention of the receivers. Contemporary politics is about “whose story wins” (Nye 2004: 106). To make their story victorious, states engage in different forms of public diplomacy – the projection of narratives. Third, soft-power effects depend on their acceptance by the receiving audiences (Nye 2004: 99) – the reception of narratives. To sum up, when analysing soft power, the “question is what messages are sent and received by whom under which circumstances, and how that affects our ability to obtain the outcomes we want” (Nye 2004: 44).

Some may object that strategic narratives are not an appropriate analytical tool, as they may fall short of recognising whether states are serious or whether they play a rhetorical game. This objection is partly true. We can hardly expect that states behave constantly in the same manner. Contrarily, the new regionalism has many different motivations and one state can pursue different goals in different negotiations. It will also use a different rhetoric. However, this does not deny the fact that all parts of the Triad have different views about how to manage and organise global economic relations. It is very likely that both foreign economic policies (what states do) and strategic narratives (what states say) will reflect these differences and that there will be a high level of convergence between the two. It does not make sense to negotiate trade agreements violating basic principles in which I believe. Similarly, it does not make sense to invest into public diplomacy and defend different principles than those in which I strongly believe. In this sense, the link between vision, narrative, and action is rather straightforward. I have a vision how to organise global economic relations; I negotiate trade agreements, which reflect this vision and incorporate its basic principles; I formulate a strategic narrative around this vision; I invest into public diplomacy to disseminate this narrative and to justify my policy; and finally I hope to persuade other states to adopt my vision. Issue narratives probably have a hidden potential for rhetoric games, when it may be useful to bluff about my real interests, at least in the initial phases of the negotiations. It does not make sense to bluff about system narratives, which are more stable and generally well known, at least those of superpowers. In fact, there is no “say-do” gap, because saying is doing (Miskimmon et al. 2013: 177).

Methodology

The new regionalism brings innovative features to academic research. On the one hand, it may still study global relations through a state-centric prism, but use interpretive methods, particularly those focusing on discourse. This shift is indeed logical: if our world is characterised by a competition between different ideas and narratives, it may be necessary to turn to interpretive methods in order to capture these processes in their entirety. Thus, instead of searching for causal explanations or causal mechanisms, researchers conduct interviews

with key stakeholders or study relevant documents to uncover their meanings. On the other hand, the new regionalism may go beyond state-centrism and focus on other actors, including the marginalised groups. Researchers realise in-depth analyses of a concrete societal group in a concrete country or region based on interviews, a study of documents, or ethnographic research. One representative collection of such innovative research is that of Lorenz-Carl and Rempe (2013). However, both directions of current research have their limits. The former cannot capture perceptions and identities of local societies; the latter is focusing on quite narrow parts of reality. In order to make generalisations it would require the comparison of a large sample of studies.

I have chosen an intermediary path, which is to focus on local media and news discourse. Obviously, such research has also limits. Although news discourse is non-persuasive in principle or intention, media are not neutral mediators. Media indirectly presuppose positions and help to reproduce pre-formulated ideologies (van Dijk 1988: 179). Not all voices appear in the media and those that do appear are not expressed on equal terms (Phillips and Hardy 2002: 85). We should not underestimate the danger that news discourse will repeat official discourse as it is an important site “for the reproduction, and occasionally the contestation, of official discourses, and especially those dominant discourses that circulate among elites” (Weldes 2006: 182). However, the discursive reality is a complex one in which the contestation of official discourses is possible. All information goes through cultural filters of the receivers. It is rarely heard as intended, and always interpreted by audiences in the context of their own experience (Nye 2004: 111; Miskimmon et al. 2013: 169). In case of news discourse, there are two filters. Writing an article means to transform the input information, which is usually provided to the journalist from outside. Media news do not reproduce facts, but their interpretation by journalists. Secondly, readers rarely construct their knowledge solely on the basis of an article they are reading. Rather, they compare it with their existing subjective situation models about events, which are based on previous knowledge and collective ideologies.

Obviously, this re-interpretation by readers can only be marginally captured in the analysis of news discourse. However, this does not

make such an analysis less valuable. News is a specific form of public discourse; it is a frame through which the social world is constructed (van Dijk 1988: vii, 8). News reports “are the main form of public discourse that provides the general outline of social, political, cultural, and economic models of social events, as well as the pervasively dominant knowledge and attitude structures that make such models intelligible” (van Dijk 1988: 182). Media news serves as a connection between pre-formulated ideas of elites and everyday stories of people. This is their advantage in relation to interviews: media news is naturally occurring text appearing in normal day-to-day activities, which the interviews are not. If our focus is on broader societal discourse, it is better to analyse widely disseminated texts such as media news than to rely on interviews (Phillips and Hardy 2002: 71–72).

Discourse analysis denotes “methodologies that capture the creation of meanings and accompanying processes of communication” (Klotz and Lynch 2007: 19). It is a three dimensional approach. The first dimension is the text itself. The second is a discursive practice giving meanings to concepts and the processes of textual production and interpretation. The third dimension is the historical and social context, social practice and the institutional and organisational circumstances, which structure the knowledge and social practice and constitute social entities and relations (Fairclough 2010: 3–5, Phillips and Hardy 2002: 4).

Discourse analysis is a method based philosophically on anti-foundationalism and anti-essentialism. It does not deny the existence of an objective reality, but it rejects the possibility that this can be the ontological foundation of our knowledge. However, there is an epistemological foundation of knowledge: social facts are created by agents, but then they are reified, taken for real, and they make the social world to come into being. Thus, we focus not on what is real, but on what social agents take to be real (Pouliot 2007: 362–364, Pouliot 2010: 58). Reality is not based on the nature of things, but on the attachment of meaning and function to physical objects by human action and interaction. This philosophical position may be called interpretive constructivism.³ Its core is that our knowledge is

3 To distinguish this position both from conventional constructivism based on a positivist or realist philosophy and from radical constructivism based on postmodernist philosophy.

not a reflection of the reality out there, but historically and culturally conditioned and interlinked with social processes and social action. Our knowledge is just one representation of the world among many other possible representations (Phillips and Jørgensen 2002: 5, 22).

Discourse analysis is an umbrella term. Using two axes of whether the analysis focuses on text or on context (forming rather a continuum than two sharply separated positions) and whether the analysis focuses on process or power, we can distinguish four basic varieties of discourse analysis: social linguistic analysis (text/process), critical linguistic analysis (text/power), interpretive structuralism (context/process), and critical discourse analysis (context/power). I use the interpretive structuralist version, which focuses on the social context and the discourse that supports it (Phillips and Hardy 2002: 25). While traditional content analysis focuses on key words or statements and their appearance in the text (coding and counting), the interpretive textual content analysis (ITCA) attempts to understand the process and character of social life and meaning as appearing in texts (Altheide 1996: 42–43). Altheide (1996) distinguishes six stages and steps in conducting the ITCA.⁴

First, we must decide what kind of documents to use and select the unit of analysis. In my analysis, I use articles from the leading Kenyan newspaper *The Daily Nation* as a data source and take whole articles as the unit of analysis. There are three good reasons why to use daily newspaper as the data source. One reason is practical. *The Daily Nation* is the most widely circulated Kenyan newspaper, which is read by up to ten percent of the Kenyan adult population.⁵ Although Kenya is the first country in Africa with an Internet penetration rate of over 70%, the real penetration rate is lower. The vast majority of users access Internet via their mobile connections and the penetration rate cannot capture if one person has more SIM cards. Moreover, only 11% of the population use Facebook (Otieno and Ng’ethe 2016). This may signal that the number of real everyday users of the Internet is rather

4 Altheide uses the term “ethnographic content analysis.”

5 *The Daily Nation* is published by the Nation Media Group (NMG), the largest private media house in East Africa. NMG was founded in 1959 by Aga Khan, a British business magnate. The shares of stock are listed at the Nairobi Stock Exchange. There are approximately 10,000 shareholders in this company, the biggest being the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development holding 45% of the shares (www.wikipedia.org).

meagre and does not exceed the number of *The Daily Nation* readers. While readers of *The Daily Nation* are spread across regions and across different strata of the society, the users of the Internet are supposedly concentrated in large cities and can be found among the middle and upper classes. Obviously, TV or radio broadcasting would offer a higher penetration rate, but these sources are difficult to obtain and analyse.

The second reason is methodological. The projection of narratives is done through public diplomacy, which has three dimensions and three tools (Nye 2004: 107–111). The first dimension is daily communication, which is done through media. The second dimension is strategic communication, which is done through branding central themes. The third dimension is lasting relationships with key individuals, which is done through cultural and academic exchanges. The three tools are broadcasting (closely connected with the first dimension), actions (closely connected with the second dimension), and direct talks (closely connected with the third dimension). Thus, analysing local media is one possible direction of research when analysing Chinese soft power.

The third reason for using *The Daily Nation* as a data source is that Nairobi has become a regional hub for Chinese media houses. They aim at balancing the information asymmetry in Africa, which is in favour of the Western media, and to improve the image of China among the ordinary population. *The Daily Nation* has become part of this game as it entered into a partnership with the Chinese state press agency Xinhua in 2011.

As a second step of interpretive textual content analysis ITCA, we have to prepare a protocol – a list of questions, items or categories that guide the data collection from documents. My protocol is based on van Dijk (1988) and Fairclough (2010). Its first part comprises background data about the article (date, section, author, length). Its second part focuses on information about macrostructures – properties of the text. We analyse what is the message (the headline), what happened (the main event), what is the direct consequence of this event, what is the actual context and the non-recent history of the actual event, whether someone has reacted to the event, what is expected to happen, and how the whole event was evaluated. The most important category is the topic (see below). The third part focuses on

information about microstructures – the properties of the sentences. We analyse connotations (who is agent/subject, whether agents are explicit/absent, the use of the active/passive voice, the use of the positive/negative mode, the use of promises/requests/threats etc.), the wording (which words are used to describe agents or processes), the use of semantic operations (comparisons, metaphors, parallels, irony, understatement), the quotes (who is quoted or which documents are cited), and the exactness (precise numbers, places, time). The fourth part of the analysis is made up of important propositions, i.e., sentences that cannot be sorted into categories, but which are worth being quoted at length.

The third step of ITCA is sampling – which articles will be used? My research covers the period between 1 January 2012 and 30 September 2015. This period was chosen as it covers several milestones related to the global and regional trade agenda.⁶ The fourth step is data coding, which means reading articles, writing protocols, and searching for topics. A topic is defined as a “strategically derived subjective macroproposition, which is assigned to sequences of propositions (...) on the basis of general world knowledge and personal beliefs and interests” (van Dijk 1988: 34). To put it simply, a topic is a subjective perception of a reader “what is it all about.” Topics act on a higher level of abstraction: a concrete investment deal signed is the main event, while the identified topic may be “foreign direct investment in Kenya.”

The fifth step is data analysis, which implies the repeated reading of protocols and the search for key differences within categories. Concretely, I take the topics and aggregate them into frame topics, which act on an even higher level of abstraction. One issue in time may evolve into several distinct topics. However, it is still a single frame topic. The different stages of the Economic Partnership Agreement negotiations can be an example. Or, different events may be identified

6 Particularly the 5th FOCAC summit intended to further enhance existing China-Africa relations (July 2012); the signing of the monetary protocol of the EAC (November 2013); the Bali Package adopted at the 9th Ministerial Conference of the WTO (December 2013); the signing of the Economic Partnership Agreement between the EU and the EAC (October 2014); the extension of the US preferential trade regime for African countries called AGOA with another ten years (June 2015); the launch of the Tripartite Free Trade Area in Eastern and Southern Africa intended to be the basis of whole-continental free trade area (June 2015). The end of the period investigated was determined by my research period at the McMillan Memorial Library in Nairobi.

as different topics, although having the same substance – for example, we may identify three different topics “tourism industry in Kenya during global economic crisis,” “changing trends of Chinese tourists,” and “marketing campaign of the Kenya Tourism Board in China,” which may be aggregated into one frame topic “tourism.” Or, one topic may be a subset of another topic. Both are slightly different, but can be aggregated into one frame topic. For example, “trade relations between China and Africa” and “trade relations between China and Kenya” are different topics, but the latter is a subset of the former. Both can be subsumed under a frame topic “trade.” When I identify frame topics, I search for differences, particularly whether the tone of the articles varies across different newspaper sections and/or different categories of authors and/or different frame topics. The findings are then used to write a report/paper, which is the last step of the ITCA. The fourth and fifth step are the most important as the role of the researcher is crucial. In interpretive research, the sources of data are accessed (be it people, events, conversations, or documents), but the data as such are generated by the researcher. Thus, data gathering and data analysis are two separate processes (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006: xix, 125). All references to empirical data are the result of the researcher’s interpretation (Phillips and Hardy 2002: 83).

Chinese “African” Narrative

As noted, three ideal-typical models differ in how they set the balance between states and markets.

The neoliberal model assumes that market competition is efficient as labour and capital get paid what they are worth for through the supply and demand process. All factors are fully employed; any government intervention or regulation distorts markets and leads to inefficiency. Neoliberalism stresses the role of individuals in determining economic outcomes. Thus, this model prefers the market over the state. It is based on a deregulation of financial markets, privatisation, the weakening of institutions of social protection, the weakening of labour unions and labour market protections, the shrinking of government, the cutting of top tax rates, the opening of international goods and capital markets, and the abandonment of full employment goals. In foreign economic policy, it stresses privatisation, free trade, export-led growth, financial capital mobility, deregulated markets, and policies of macroeconomic

austerity (Palley 2004). The role of the state is limited to pro-market interventions such as security for property rights, investments into infrastructure, or pro-growth services such as education.

The welfare model rejects the idea that labour is paid what it is worth for. By contrast, the general tendency of markets is to favour capital over labour. Thus, income distribution should not rest on market processes, but rather on institutional arrangements such as trade unions, laws on minimum wages, employee rights, or systems of social protection. According to this model, the market and the state must be balanced. A fair and open society must rest on solid values, broader intellectual foundations, and the combined efforts of market forces and political action, because “the private optimum and social optimum usually diverge” (Almunia 2011).

The developmental model reflects the substantially different historical and cultural circumstances in East Asia. Economic development requires a strong role of the state, even at the expense of the market. Before entering full global competition, developing states must let their industries grow to become competitive. The state should support private sector growth by means of different measures: protectionism towards imports other than technologies; good relations with conglomerates of manufacturers, suppliers, distributors, and banks; low-cost capital provided by state development banks; massive investment into infrastructure.

China represents the last model. Its cooperation with Africa relies on eight principles formulated by Zhou Enlai in 1964: mutual benefit; no conditionality; no increase of the debt burden; help to develop national economies without creating dependence; focus on projects with quick returns; high-quality aid at the world market price; transfer of technology; no extra benefits for the Chinese experts working in Africa. These principles relate to foreign aid and complement political principles adopted during the 1950s: peaceful coexistence, non-aggression, non-interference, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity. The institutionalisation of mutual relations under the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (2000) added new principle of moral relativism regarding human rights and good governance issues (Taylor 2004: 89–92). The message that China sends to Africa is straightforward: each state has its inviolable sovereignty, which

means that it should be free to independently assess its development needs, set appropriate goals, and define its means on how to achieve these goals. This process should not be conditioned by fulfilling any criteria set by the external actors. “China believes that its successful ‘growth at any cost’ strategy at home can be applied in Africa, and is not shy about it” (Condon 2012: 6). China provides Africa with a bundle of money in the form of subsidised concessional loans and requires that part of it must be spent on Chinese goods or services. Contrarily, China does not pay attention to the negative externalities that arise from its investment spending, including corruption and mistreatment of local workers. What China wishes is to do “business as usual.” Not surprisingly, this message echoes well in Africa, particularly in those states where strongmen are under growing Western pressure to democratise and liberalise their systems. As we already mentioned, the question is whether ordinary people in Africa are as much charmed by this Chinese narrative as their political leaders.

Analysis

The corpus of data consists of 764 articles related to external economic relations in the widest sense (trade, investment, development aid, sectoral economic cooperation, etc.). Of these, 134 articles deal with regional integration efforts in the context of the East African Community (EAC), 106 articles focus on China. Another 33 articles deal with the standard gauge railway (SGR), which is a major infrastructural project of the EAC financed by China, thus it cannot be sorted easily in one or another category. Similarly numerous are articles dealing with the EU (101) and the US (79). Another 13 articles deal with the economic rivalry between China and the West in Africa. These are by far the most important categories, which confirms the initial hypothesis that China, the EU, the US, and the EAC are all important features in Kenya’s external economic relations. Other directions of foreign economic policy lag behind: bilateral relations within Africa (56 articles), bilateral relations with Japan, India, Korea, and Taiwan (41 articles), bilateral relations with other states (36 articles), whole-Africa free trade zone (21 articles), and the World Trade Organization (9 articles). The rest of the articles deal with Kenya’s foreign economic policy (108 articles) and the general economic situation in Africa (27 articles).

The presented analysis is based on 119 articles focusing on China and China/West rivalry, while the SGR railway is set aside as a separate issue. I have identified 135 different topics and aggregated these topics into 17 frame topics. The most frequent are cooperation (53 articles), development aid (48 articles), the impact of China on Africa (39 articles), soft power (34 articles), trade (31 articles), investment (27 articles), infrastructure (25 articles), tourism (18 articles), transparency and corruption (17 articles), global balance (15 articles), and racism and discrimination (8 articles).

One article rarely contains just one topic. Usually, it contains more topics, sometimes, more than ten. In most cases, articles start with a general overview of cooperation with China and then proceed to give more detailed information about different aspects such as trade, loans, investment, etc. However, these frame topics are hardly separate issues. They are mixed together to form a complex picture of China-Africa relations. This is logical as China offers Africa a complex package of development initiatives, which includes debt relief, trade, grants, loans, investment, and industrial development. Thus, it does not make sense to search for differences among topics. Rather, I will focus on differences related to different types of authors and different sections of the newspapers. Due to the limited space of this article, it is not possible to present readers with a detailed analysis using more articles in all categories, thus I will focus on one or two most representative examples.

Eastern Press Agency or Media

There are 8 articles taken from the Chinese state press agency Xinhua. Not surprisingly, these articles repeat the Chinese narrative. When the Chinese Prime Minister visited Kenya in May 2014, readers could find a whole-page article taken from Xinhua, which was published in the advertorial section, thus probably paid for by the Chinese Embassy.

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang's trip will help create an upgraded version of China-Africa all-round cooperation. (...) The relations between the two sides have entered a golden period, and the two sides share closely-linked destinies. (...) In 2006, China and Africa agreed to upgrade their relationship to a new type of strategic partnership featuring political equality and mutual trust, economic

win-win cooperation and cultural exchanges. (...) Reaffirming the defining features of China-Africa relations as sincerity, friendship, mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit, (...) Li said past interaction are great treasures to his country. (...) The cooperation between the two will not only bring about mutually beneficial and win-win results, but also help promote world economic balance and inclusive growth.” (Article 422)

The day after, another article taken from Xinhua, this time published in the Sunday Review section, repeats the same narrative. This article also quotes several African scholars and ministers from different countries, probably to enhance the reliability of the message.

Francis Chigunta, senior lecturer of development studies at the University of Zambia, said this type of cooperation is long over-due and should assure Africa that China is not interested in imposing anything. (...) Calling China an “all-weather friend”, Peter Machungwa, senior lecturer of management and business at the Zambia Open University and a former Zambian minister, said China has been a very good friend of Africa for a long time and has helped Africa in many areas such as improving infrastructure and the economic well-being of many countries. (Article 433)

Chinese policy towards Africa was clearly defined in the article about the Chinese President’s speech at the United Nations in September 2015:

The Chinese leader said that his country would step up investment in the least developed countries – which are mostly in Africa – by at least \$12 billion by 2030. China has been an increasingly active investor around the world, although it has generally focused on seeking resources rather than broader humanitarian goals. (Article 763)

Western Press Agency or Media

There are four articles from the French press agency AFP, one article from the British media company BBC, and one article from the New York Times. The AFP articles are about Chinese investments in oil and gas production in Kenya, Chinese development aid, African traders

living in cities of southern China, and the Chinese Prime Minister's speech at the African Union.

The NYT article focuses on the fact that most Western broadcasting and newspaper companies are retrenching due to economic crisis, while China's state-run news media giants are rapidly expanding in Africa. It also notices the different role media play in the West and in China. The BBC article focuses on the rivalry between China and Japan in Africa:

China and Japan are criticising each other's policies in Africa as each country pledges more money for the continent. (...) Mr Abe's spokesman Tomohiko Taniguchi (...) said: "Japan's aid policy is to really aid the human capital of Africa." He said many African leaders believed through strong links with Japan they can obtain industrial expertise. China insists its aid and co-operation with Africa are completely selfless. (...) China does not approve of "certain countries" which try to compete with others for their own interests and offer aid to Africa out of purely political motives. This appears to be a reference to Japan's attempts to win the votes of African leaders in support of its bid to be a permanent member of the UNSC, something China opposes. (Article 341)

Although *The Daily Nation* has a partnership with Xinhua, there is not any difference in frequency of publishing articles from Chinese and Western sources. However, it seems that the latter are published only if they present neutral information and do not openly attack China, or if they reproduce the Chinese narrative (as for example the last AFP article, which, using the Prime Minister's words, repeats the Chinese narrative of iron-clad equal friendship with Africa).

Local Public Officials

Only two articles were written directly by Kenyan public officials. The first one was written by the Presidential Strategic Communications Unit and focuses on the results of the President's state visit to China. The second was written by the former Kenyan Ambassador to China, who asserts that:

We turned to China when the situation became desperate. (...) China understood Africa's problems. Every nation looks out for its

own interests, and China is no exception. The difference is that the Chinese policy was a win-win one. The African countries were to identify their interests and the Chinese would come in to do their part, not by giving aid but in a business-like fashion. As a result, our infrastructure has been fixed. (...) There is nothing wrong with looking West again, now that our problems have eased. After all, the West is our traditional friend. A large part of our economy comprises investments by European and American companies. Tourism relies on Western visitors. (...) But we should never vilify China. It helped us and we will always need our Chinese friends. (Article 648)

In this article, we can see a very typical tone of many articles in *The Daily Nation*. On the one side, the author praises China for its engagement in the infrastructural development of Kenya, particularly when the West became affected by the global economic crisis. On the other, he recognises that the West is a traditional partner of Kenya and rising China should not lead Kenya to repudiate the West. Rather, the current situation enables African leaders to balance between different external partners and to increase their leverage in negotiations.

Foreign Public Officials

Three articles were written by foreign public officials. One was written by the World Bank analyst, who claimed that despite a massive flow of Chinese products into Africa, there is still a big space for Africa how to avoid direct competition with China, particularly in food processing and local services. The other two articles were written by the Chinese Ambassador to Kenya. On the occasion of the Chinese Prime Minister's visit to Kenya, he wrote:

This visit is of great significance for both the China-Kenya and China-Africa relations. (...) The past five decades have witnessed cordial China-African relations being handed down from generation to generation. China and Africa have been firmly standing together through storms and supporting each other no matter how the international climate changes. (...) Though geographically far apart, China and Kenya are well connected politically, economically, culturally and technologically. (...) As President Xi Jinping pointed out recently during his trip to Europe, "Now China the lion has

awakened, but it is a peaceful, amicable and civilised lion.” Kenya’s lion, strong but gentle, is also on the rise. The two lions have decided to march side by side and make bigger roars and take quicker paces together. (Article 419)

Again, it is not surprising that the Chinese Ambassador is repeating the Chinese narrative. Similarly, foreign officials from other countries reproduce their narratives. A significant feature of such articles is that they focus on depicting a positive image of their respective countries and avoid using negative images about other countries.

Journalists

There are 59 articles written by journalists from the Nation Media Group, the publisher of *The Daily Nation*. First, let’s look at “standard” articles published in the national news, county news, international news, or business news sections. The articles were written in a rather neutral tone when analysing the rationale for the growing Chinese engagement in Kenya and when mentioning both the benefits and the potential threats of it. Let’s show one representative example of such article:

Over the past 10 years, the relationship between China and Africa has literally soared, transforming a continent [...] (...) China does not beat about the bush about her need for resources [...] (...) Africa (...) has basked in the new development order. That new dawn has brought with it kilometres of tarmacked roads and a whole new development hegemony replete with modern infrastructure never before known in Africa. The ongoing facelift is moving with outstanding speed; it is a diplomatic approach that is couched as a meeting of minds without usual stultifying, meddling conditionality the West insists on and this is certainly a game-changer for Africa. (...) It can be assumed that the new government will embrace this goodwill and escalate the engagement of the two countries. But in doing so, Kenya must start contemplating fresh and practical rules of engagement with the land of the Dragon. (...) [T]he unfolding friendship must be encouraged but also bound by firm and well thought through strictures. Such strictures must rein in any excesses and anticipate as well as delineate a regime of cooperation guided by a stringent set of mutually beneficial

dos and don'ts. (...) Single sourcing as a method of procurement may have its occasional place or advantage but when practiced under questionable circumstances, poses more questions than answers and causes. More crucially, projects procured under cloudy manoeuvres end up causing untold injuries to both the taxpayer and the reputation of the government of the day. Going forward and in order to ensure that we get the best value for money, the secret in engaging China lies in ensuring that relationships with contractors are governed by the principles outlined in our Constitution and the laws on procurement. We are on a mutually beneficial journey with China and tackling this issue will secure our quest for modern technology, value for money and our journey towards Vision 2030. (Article 155)

Generally, journalists recognise that the main rationale for Chinese activities in Africa is the “growing hunger for resources and markets,” but also attempt to increase its soft power and image, which has been until recently created almost exclusively by Western media. However, the current level of partnership is the result of diplomatic pragmatism: Kenya supports One-China policy, while China supports the Kenya government's position in the trial at the International Criminal Court (Article 426). On the one side, this partnership is beneficial for Kenya as Chinese money is “a boost to overall development” and “infrastructure development ultimately provides support to the economy in the long term” (Article 219). Investment is also expected to help Kenya to establish industrial parks to support manufacturing sector (Article 426).

On the other side, *The Daily Nation* reporters do not overlook the substantial negative effects on the economy of Kenya: the inflow of counterfeits and sub-standard products (Article 72); large infrastructural projects attracting big political and financial lobbying locally and internationally (Article 98); trade imbalances between the two regions, which may eventually lead to trade dependency (Article 151); local businessmen losing their markets in favour of Chinese traders or Kenyan traders selling Chinese goods (Article 216); foreign debt rising at a pace, which may lead to the unsustainability of the debt (Article 219).

All statements are factual, not normative. The only exception is an article, which reproduces the words of Lamido Sanusi, then governor of the Nigerian Central Bank, from the *Financial Times*:

Sanusi warned that Africa's relations with China carry a "whiff of colonialism." He argued that China is pursuing extractive policies that are undermining local manufacturing and "deindustrialising" Africa. The continent, he says, is carrying a torch for the romance of the Non-Aligned Movement that united China and Africa. China has since ceased to be an underdeveloped state and has as much capacity to carry out mass exploitation as any Western power. "Africa must recognise that China – like the US, Russia, Britain, Brazil and the rest – is in Africa not for African interests but its own. The romance must be replaced by hard-nosed economic thinking," he wrote. (Article 151)

If we shift our focus to opinions and comments written by journalists, we can find eleven substantially different texts with strong normative content. These texts express a rather critical view on relations between China and Kenya, although they are by no means anti-Chinese. This criticism is related particularly to three aspects: low transparency of the deals results in high corruption risks; massive borrowing from China is increasing foreign debt; and the asymmetry of the "partnership". Let's show one example:

[Kenyatta and Museveni] are fed up with Western finger-wagging for their failings on matters such as good governance, democracy, corruption and human rights. They could not resist the temptation to let the West know it no longer has the leverage to apply pressure on such issues because Chinese aid will not come with such strings attached. The message is that Africa leaders now have licence to oppress their people, clean their national treasuries, and generally rob, loot, rape and plunder because their new masters will not hold them to account on how well or how badly they treat their subjects. (...) Chinese aid is welcome and invaluable to our development, but we should look East with wise and open eyes, not like foolish virgins who don't realise that the rich fellow bearing gifts is not a kind-hearted philanthropist. He will always want something in return. By all means, let us build on relations with China, but do so in ways that advance our national interests rather than just

opening ourselves up to exploitation. If we rightly are fed-up with neo-colonialism, we would be foolish to exchange one exploitative relationship for another. There's a lot to gain from China, but we must realise that the rich men from the East are here to expand their geopolitical tentacles, and need us as much as we need them. Therefore, we should be able to bargain hard to secure what we need rather than just opening up in total submission. President Kenyatta must not, for a moment, forget that it is not free cash he is getting from China, but loans that massively increase our foreign debt exposure, and which we all, and our children, will be paying for generations. That Chinese money does not mean that procurement laws designed to protect Kenyans from thieves must be thrown out of the window. Nor does it mean that quality, standards and oversight on the projects must be left exclusively to the vendors and contractors. And if President Kenyatta thinks that Chinese aid does not come with strings attached, let him try, tomorrow, inviting the Dalai Lama to Kenya, or sending an envoy to Taiwan. (Article 437)

If we compare Articles 155 and 437, we find that their content is very similar, but they differ substantially in wording and tone. The distinction between article and opinion is obvious: contrary to reporters, columnists are free to go beyond value-free facts, present relatively sharp normative statements, and ask uncomfortable questions such as “do we ever consider strategic interests when dealing with foreigners?” (Article 616). One of the most respected business journalists, Jaindi Kiseru, is clear in his view that “China is not Mr Santa Claus” (Article 662). China focuses primarily on its own interests and uses its leverage to get what it wants.

Businesspeople

Chinese managers wrote just two letters to *The Daily Nation*:

That Kenya has been selected among the few African countries to host the President [of China] is evidence of the huge premium both countries attach to this deepening and mutually beneficial relationship. (...) CRBC [China Road and Bridge Corporation, constructor of the standard gauge railway and many other

infrastructural projects] has forged a close relationship with the people by building infrastructure projects. (Article 420)

This incident [of a Chinese restaurant not allowing African guests to enter after 5pm] was deliberately planned by people who do not want the Chinese and Kenyans to do business. They do not want Kenyans to enjoy decent and affordable housing. They do not want Kenya to realise Vision 2030. (...) As we reflect on the common journey we have taken, let us ask ourselves who supported Kenya in the fight for independence? Who have supported Kenya in its economic and social development in the last 50 years, and especially in the last 10 years? Who are working day and night to build roads, bridges, hospitals, railways, affordable houses and working with Kenyans to do all flagship projects towards realising Vision 2030? Let's look at the facts and think with clear minds on our relations. (Article 646)

No local businessperson has written any comment, but some of them are quoted in standard articles. The supplement "Enter the Dragon" focused on small-scale traders in Nairobi and the competition they faced from Chinese traders.

Traders in Nairobi say small-scale Chinese competitors are undercutting them out of business. (...) "They usually come to our shops disguised as customers and ask for our prices, only to go back to their country and bring to the market the same products at a much lower price." According to Karis [a local trader from Luthuli Avenue], the Chinese employ Kenyan salesmen only to offload them after building a client base and learning local business dynamics. "Most of the Chinese don't have shops, which means they don't pay rent or tax, hence they can afford to sell their products cheaply," the trader lamented to DN2. "The government should step in and either tax them or expel them because I suspect most don't even have work permits." (Article 101)

Not surprisingly, Chinese businessmen replicate the narrative of partnership and mutual benefits. The attitudes of Kenyan businessmen depend on whether they gain or lose.

Academia/Analysts

University scholars, independent analysts or journalists not writing for the Nation Media Group wrote twenty comments. The range of opinions is very broad, from openly pro-Chinese to denouncing partnership between the two countries as a temporary pragmatic issue. Let's give an example of both comments.

China is no more interested in the continent's natural resources than are firms from any developed country. (...) Another widespread claim is that Chinese companies prefer to employ their own nationals rather than locals. (...) But Chinese firms say that few local workers have the necessary skills; if they do, African governments can dictate some employment terms, including the proportion of local recruits on a project [.] (...) Critics have also highlighted the poor living conditions provided for Chinese workers [.] (...) Again, this seems unfair, as Western employees tend to be hired for senior managerial or technical posts, which are more difficult and more expensive to fill. One must also recognise that low labour costs are an essential component of China's competitive advantage. Along with tighter margins, low-cost financing, and cheaper materials, this allows Chinese firms to compete for projects with tenders for as little as half the price sought by their Western competitors. (Article 272)

Mr Obama's trip hammered home the sobering reality that Kenya is heavily invested in a Western worldview and that our present look-East policy is superficial and very likely a momentary posture. While the embracing of China has dominated Kenya's foreign policy in the past decade, resulting in huge infrastructural projects, the reality is that unlike the West, most Kenyans share very little, social-culturally, with the Chinese. (...) Kenya's soul is nearer to the West than the East. (...) The reality is that our affair with China at the moment is purely transactional. It is nothing personal, just business. This does not mean that the Chinese, or any other Asian tiger, is necessarily bad for Kenya. (...) Kenya, like the rest of Africa, badly needs infrastructure. The harsh reality is that very few Western countries have the surplus to fund the vast infrastructural projects that Africa needs. (...) For Kenya, the lesson is that drawing distinctions between East and West is unhelpful. The so-called East

and West should never be seen as mutually exclusive. (...) President Kenyatta should therefore steer the country to primarily focus on the interests of the country rather than fall captive to the outmoded dichotomy of West or East, which in the strictest sense, does not exist. Thus, Kenya should be more pragmatic, clarify its interests, and partner with those states that identify with and meet those interests. (Article 710)

While the former comment sees Western accusations of China's African policy as unfair, the latter argues that Kenya is indeed a Western country and a shift to the East is a pragmatic step invoked mainly by the global economic crisis. The author of the latter comment also highlights that the division between the West and the East is outmoded and ideological. Instead, Kenyan leadership should be more pragmatic and assertive. Complementarily, Africa should build its own capacities to lower its dependence on others. This idea is nicely expressed in a story about donkeys, horses, and wagons:

The point is that because Africa had hitched its wagon either to the East or West's donkeys, and when they took away their animals, our wagons had nowhere to go. The lesson we should have learnt is that we needed to buy and raise our own donkeys. We didn't. Most African countries surrendered, and went with the winner of the Cold War – the West. Then along came China. (...) Unlike the West, it didn't demand that African governments observe human rights or stop stealing taxpayers' money before doing business with them. African leaders loved that. So we unhitched our wagons from the Western donkey, and hooked it up to China. And, for sure, we grew rich, and people started writing and talking about "Africa rising" and "looking East". Then it happened. China's economy started to slow, and it slowly reduced what it bought from Africa. (...) Part of the problem was that we left it to China's horse to pull Africa to development nirvana, and as happened in 1989, we have been again left stranded by the roadside with our wagons. (Article 737)

Civil Society

Representatives of civil society wrote two comments. Both deal with the issue of the growing presence of Chinese people in Kenya, including

troublesome day-to-day contacts and the language barrier. Enhancing the friendship between the people of Kenya and their Chinese friends is seen as a challenge for the foreseeable future (Article 651).

Readers

Readers wrote eighteen letters to *The Daily Nation*. Similarly to the academia/analyst category, the range of opinions is very broad. On the one side, the import of affordable manufactured goods is seen as beneficial to the local society:

Indian and Chinese motor bikes have reduced unemployment rate by a big percentage. Many youths wake up to transport bankers, teachers and other civil servants to their place of work using Chinese and Indian motorbikes. In the process, youths that engaged in crime a few years ago are able to make 10 Euros a day, get married and settle down. Hundreds of thousands of youths are nowhere near the poverty line they were in 10 years ago, this writer included. How did Europe expect poor Africans to afford Merc and BMW motorbikes and operate them as boda boda? I will not say that the Bajaj, TVS and Haojin motorbikes are as durable as European makes, but by the time they are worn out, they should have given you a return on investment to buy another. (Article 99)

Other readers are more cautious about China and see the business-only approach of China as problematic. Relatively more than other groups, readers are more sensitive to the cultural differences or even racism.

Instead of teaching us how to fish, however, the Chinese have decided to give us the fish. Chinese contractors usually import their own labour, material and machinery for all the projects they undertake. Only the unskilled or semi-skilled jobs are left to Kenyans. The question we should be asking ourselves is whether we want to remain dependent on the foreign knowledge and assistance. (Article 237)

China is in business, searching for profit. It never brokers peace. When Kenya burst into flames in 1992, 1997 and 2007, we didn't see Chinese anywhere trying to save Kenya. (...) We shouldn't keep

them too close to our chest. When a nation goes to the dogs, China keeps off. Let's stop chest-thumping. (Article 438)

Kenya spends lavishly on education, but all lucrative contracts are awarded to foreigners. What is the point of training a large pool if they remain under-utilised? (Article 439)

[T]he Chinese are not doing all their “development work” in Kenya for Kenya. They are doing it for China. Yes, they are “good” at what they do which, in essence, is extremely simple and costs a small sum compared to what they are planning to extract from us: All Kenya's natural resources they can lay their hands on. The Chinese enterprises here provide employment for their numerous people. And they put our own businesses at risk. Believe it or not, we can actually build our own roads and bridges if those at the helm were not so corrupt! (Article 629)

The Chinese restaurant at the centre of racist claims might just be a tip of the iceberg. After Boers, the next most anti-black people are possibly the Chinese. (...) Kenya invited them to come and build roads, bridges and railways (we pay of course), but now they think we are thieves and terrorists. Soon they might start spraying us with anti-bacteria. (Article 641)

We warmly welcomed the Chinese and they brought money, engineering prowess and speed in delivering infrastructure projects. But cases of racial discrimination (...) prove that there is a hefty price to pay for our hospitality. (...) They don't trust us but we entrust them with our billions of shillings and mega projects? They need to change their attitude. (Article 642)

Conclusion

An analysis of articles from *The Daily Nation* reveals that the Chinese narrative is certainly not accepted unreservedly within Kenyan society. At least two main constituent parts of this narrative are openly contested. First is the claim that Chinese aid to Africa is provided without conditions. The analysis has shown that co-operation with China is conditioned both in political and economic terms. China co-operates strictly only with countries that follow a one-China

policy, have established diplomatic relations with China and have not established diplomatic relations with Taiwan. Similarly, the terms of concessional loans are quite strict and the recipient countries are obliged to purchase a substantial part of goods and services in China. Such single sourcing and awarding that tenders to Chinese companies is hardly transparent. China is a status-quo-power (Carmody 2011: 79). It fosters rent-seeking and corruption practices rather than helps to eradicate them.

A second constituent part of the China narrative concerns the claim that the Chinese engagement in Africa is selfless and mutually beneficial. This is hardly the case, as the relation is asymmetric and “China has benefited far more from its growing relationship with Kenya than Kenya has” (Article 215). For many authors, it is time to establish new rules of engagement and become more assertive when dealing with China. Moreover, while Kenya is being assured of the highest level of partnership, it has been side-lined several times, for example during the Chinese President’s first foreign trip (he visited Tanzania, but not Kenya) or when China established the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and did not invite Kenya to become a founding member, although it invited several Western countries.

Thus, if we go beyond the elite perception, a very different picture arises. Kenyan opinion makers (scholars, analysts, or journalists) are much more cautious about the benefits of close co-operation with China. Letters from readers confirm that even the ordinary population may be highly critical of Chinese activities. The analysis has shown significant differences between the categories of authors and the newspaper sections, but not in time. Despite an official Look-East policy and its partnership with Chinese press agency Xinhua, *The Daily Nation* can hardly be accused of being pro-Chinese. The news sections inform in a rather neutral way and opinions and commentaries are often very critical to China. *The Daily Nation* seems to still adhere to a Western-style of media being the watchdog of democracy and public interests.

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