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Article:

Representation of China and the US in Africa in online global news

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Abstract

This article examines global representation of the primary continental imperialisms reshaping contemporary Africa: the parallel expansionist exercises of China (centering on commercial expansion) and of the United States (centering on military expansion). Our analysis assesses the current state of these continent-wide involvements and sets out the background of how US-African and Sino-African relationships have been portrayed by news media. We then analyze how both Chinese and US expansions in Africa are represented by three prominent global media organizations online: Al Jazeera English, BBC and CNN. This research concludes that global media report modern imperialism in Africa mostly in ways that support the imperial project rather than mobilize resistance toward it.

Representation of China and the US in Africa in online global news

Africa has long been subject to the interests of foreigners who take much and offer little. In many parts of Africa there is little sign that imperialism in the form of economic exploitation by external powers was extinguished with the end of colonialism. This article examines the ways and extent to which global media report continent-wide, exploitative and profoundly unequal relationships which have developed between Africa and the two contemporary global superpowers – the US and China.

Our interest is the global representation of the main imperialisms reshaping contemporary Africa. Specifically, these are China's rapid commercial expansion across Africa, but in the case of the US (for which commercial expansion is mostly longstanding and publicly reported) our focus is shadowy and extensive military expansion. While Amin (2004, p. 71) describes a single "collective imperialism" emerging from competing imperialisms of the past, we suggest this duality of imperialisms as appropriate to the analysis of the modern exploitation of Africa. These classically consist of asymmetrical and exploitative relationships between center and periphery necessitated and enforced by contemporary capitalism; but with one dependent on economic power and the other relying on substantially covert military power to underpin the United States' "twin and interlinked concerns of oil and security" (Carmody, 2011, 65) We analyze news stories published on the Al Jazeera English, BBC and CNN news websites to determine a) the relative extent to which these expansions in Africa are visible in global media, b) how these respective involvements are framed and represented, c) how Africa is represented in this process, and d) if there are significant differences in representation between these media outlets.

This study is grounded in a postcolonial approach to media representation. This perspective holds that contemporary societies are shaped by structures and systems of

knowledge and power inherited from the colonial era. An objective of this approach is "to show the resilient discursive colonial connections to be found in contemporary cultural texts" (Fürsich & Robins, 2002, p. 207). Media play a role in constructing persistent representations that sustain colonial ideologies of racial hierarchy and Western supremacy decades after the formal end of colonialism. This representational matrix of knowledge is embedded within broader systems of domination, including the naturalized discourse of a Third World dependent on a superior North (Escobar, 1995). Said (2003) argued that colonial discourse about the Orient combined the symbolic with the military and economic ordering of the world in a system of knowledge. Following this line of enquiry, we contextualize our analysis within the broader political economy sustaining such postcolonial media representations.

A further feature of postcolonial scholarship has been the engagement in perspectives beyond the nation, entailing, "geopoliticizing the nation and locating it in larger (and unequal) histories and geographies of global power and culture" (Shome & Hegde, 2002, p. 253). In this vein, we examine representations by global media of the involvement of two superpowers in Africa. By contextualizing media representations in a postcolonial perspective and in the political economy in which they are implicated, we seek to deconstruct the contribution of global media to neo-imperial projects in Africa to "challenge the colonialist assumptions that underwrite the neo-colonial discursive regimes of globalization" (Parameswaran, 2002, p. 288). We will set out the current state of the political economy of Chinese and US expansion in Africa, and then examine how the relationship between Africa, China and the US has been portrayed by news media. Subsequently, we outline our methodology and examine how Chinese and American activities are represented by three prominent global media organizations.

The background to Chinese and US expansion in Africa

China was aiding some African liberation movements when the US was still supporting colonial control in Africa. Chinese efforts to build ties to resource producing African countries – especially oil rich ones – are similarly not novel, and can be seen as a parallel to what the US and European powers have been doing for decades. But foreign policy Conservatives dominating the post 9/11 US Congress warned of grave danger if Chinese expansion was to continue unchecked. Congressman Christopher Smith, for example, cautioned in 2006,

> China is playing an increasingly influential role on the continent of Africa, and there is concern that the Chinese intend to aid and abet African dictators, gain a stranglehold on precious African natural resources, and undo much of the progress that has been made on democracy and governance in the last 15 years in African nations. (in Klare & Volman, 2006, p. 305)

China has since become Africa's top business partner ("Africa and China," 2013), altering the economic, social and political landscapes of many African countries with total trade of over $200 billion in 2012. Africa provides 35% of China's oil ("Trying to pull together," 2011) and China has a commercial presence in nearly every African country (Tjønneland et al., 2006, p. 4). Sino-African relations have spurred polarized discussions (French, 2014a; Wasserman 2013) with China presented as a partner that, unlike the "West," treats African countries as equals, or conversely as exploitative and neglectful of human rights. At the core of China's involvement has been a policy of non-interference in national politics; a position that many African politicians, eager to highlight this shift from Western approaches, welcomed.

This rise of China in Africa has been closely monitored by the US, as suggested by embassy cables revealed by WikiLeaks, where an assistant to the Secretary of State described China as a key competitor in terms strikingly reminiscent of 19th century racial stereotyping

of Chinese ruthlessness: "a very aggressive and pernicious economic competitor with no morals" ("US wary of China," 2010). The perception of Chinese imperialism, or colonialism, is often portrayed as an invention of Europeans determined to view Africa as victim. However, there has also been African criticism of Chinese economic activity; for example, "in 2013, Nigeria's former central bank governor, Lamido Sanusi, described China as perpetrating a new 'colonialism'" (Pew Research Center, 2014) arguing that the billions of dollars of Chinese investment has done little to improve the lives of Africans. Some African commentators have argued that Chinese expansion will continue unchallenged in the absence of African consensus about its implications ("The New Scramble for Africa", 2014).

Long-time Africa correspondent for the New York Times Howard French wrote in his investigation of Chinese expansion in Africa that most of this involves Chinese state owned companies funded by Chinese government owned "policy banks," such as the China Development Bank, mandated to fund projects in support of state policy (French, 2014a); but he explains that China also is providing loans to fund expensive infrastructure projects with natural resources being promised by local governments as collateral. According to French, "China has gone from country to country in sub-Saharan Africa and used natural resources as a hedge or a guarantor of their investment exposure" (French, 2014b).

There are parallel, but rarely intersecting, literatures revealing an expansive US originating fundamentalist religious expansion in Africa which is, like the military expansion which is our focus, largely hidden from media scrutiny despite a rapid spread across the continent and evidence of significant influence over both US policy toward Africa and domestic policy in African countries. In 2005 the BBC observed "Africa is being colonised and Christianised all over again. The colonisers this time are Americans, not Europeans, and the brand of belief they are bringing to Africa is Evangelical Christianity" (cited in Huliaras, 2008, p. 162). Evangelical lobbying in Washington had much to do with what are widely

regarded as some of the most damaging US policies in Africa, including the promotion of abstinence for HIV/AIDS prevention which resulted in disastrous limitations on condom distribution in some countries (Vasagar & Borger, 2005) and delayed and restricted constructive responses.

Various analyses link US evangelicals with lobbying for anti-gay laws, such as the draconian anti-gay law passed in Uganda in 2014 (Smith, 2012; "Gay people's rights," 2014; Kaoma, 2014). A US focus on Sudan was substantially driven by US evangelical campaigns which led to funding for rebels fighting the Khartoum government and would transition into US support for the peace agreement which divided Sudan in 2011 (Huliaras, 2008). In the case of Sudan and the hunt for "Lord's Resistance Army" leader Joseph Kony, the priorities of US-based Christian groups have transitioned into, and justified, components of the US military build-up in Africa which we next turn to.

Since the onset of the US "war on terror" analysts have been warning of a militarization of Africa stemming from a struggle for resources and influence. US military interest in Africa is rooted in the Cold War, when it was mostly conducted by proxy, amid friendly media coverage in the US (Easterly, 2006; Windrich, 1992). In the mid-1990s Africa suffered attacks on the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, and Osama Bin Laden was based in Sudan. This set the stage for increased military involvement which intensified after 9/11. Within months, the US established its first African base in Djibouti, but to this day US military activity in Africa is coordinated from the headquarters of AFRICOM in Germany, the location determined by longstanding African resistance to a US military presence in Africa once led by Muammar Gaddafi.

France and the US went to war in Libya in 2011. While the US was portrayed as "leading from behind," the intervention was initiated by AFRICOM and later taken over by NATO. The defeat – and subsequent death of Gaddafi – sent a message to African states

about the consequences of defying Western power. Months later, Gaddafi's arsenal was circulating throughout the Sahel in the hands of Islamist groups, creating a justification for continued intervention.

In 2008 AFRICOM became one of six geographic "commands" of the US military. While the amount spent in Africa pales in comparison to the billions spent yearly in Iraq and Afghanistan, the sums are staggering: $1.2 billion was invested, for example, in the Djibouti base; in 2014 alone, AFRICOM organized 10 training exercises, 55 operations, and 400 seminars in 49 African countries, and installed 9 drone bases. Journalist Nick Turse (2014) found it nearly impossible to obtain information about most of what AFRICOM is doing but concluded that it conducts, on average, more than one mission every day and "the U.S. military was involved with at least 49 of the 54 nations on the African continent during 2012 and 2013 in activities that ranged from special ops raids to the training of proxy forces."

A US defense establishment publication reported that "on any given day, there are 5,000 to 8,000 US military personnel on the ground in Africa, participating in an increasing number of exercises with partners across the continent" (McLeary, 2014). Since the mid-2000s, the US military has taken precautions to avoid the appearance of a permanent presence in all but a few countries, while still developing capabilities in most, using what Klare & Volman (2006, p. 302-303) explain are "'lily pad' facilities, because American forces can hop in and out of them in times of crisis while avoiding the impression of establishing a permanent – and potentially provocative – presence." Turse cites reporting that the United States mentored the military officer who overthrew Mali's elected government in 2012, and trained a Congolese battalion implicated by the United Nations in mass rapes and other atrocities that year (Turse, 2014). His research expanded upon insights into secret US military operations in Africa provided by journalist Jeremy Scahill. Apart from some exposure given to their investigations by Al Jazeera and progressive US publications, there is

little indication of mainstream reporting of their revelations about the secrecy and scale of US military operations in Africa.

The growth of AFRICOM, and a massive increase in US arms sales to Africa suggest the link between the fight against terrorism and escalating interest in African resources (with the Sahel and Gulf of Guinea hosting vast oil resources). From a secretive start, AFRICOM increasingly embraces publicity, but consistently couches its public activities in terms of "partnership" with African governments and humanitarianism. But as Easterly argues, like the Cold War interventions that came before, "the new humanitarian interventions were distorted by serving the interests of the West rather than supposed beneficiaries in the Rest" (2006, p. 291).

Media representation of the Chinese and US expansion in Africa

Discussion of Africa in the world's major media outlets has long been condemned as incomplete, insufficient, and rife with damaging stereotypes. As US news media took an interest in Africa, mostly from the post-war period of independence movements and Cold War proxy struggles, it mostly echoed what Hawk (1992) called "the primitive archetype," reinforcing the image of an Africa available for exploitation and dependent on US benevolence.

International reporting of the relationship between the US and African countries is, paradoxically, quantitatively considerable relative to coverage of relations between Africa and other nations, but quantitatively insignificant relative to reporting of the US relationship with non-African countries, especially the group of "elite" nations of the northern hemisphere dominating global news (Golan, 2008; Larson, 1984; Wu, 2004).

A broad assumption – inherited from cultural and postcolonial studies – of this literature is that representations of Africa ultimately tell us more about the societies that produced them than about Africa. Scholars such as Chouliaraki (2006), Dahlgren and

Chakrapani (1982), Fair (1992), Hawk (1992) and Mody (2010) have argued that Africans are seen in the North as the most distant of Others. In studies of US television coverage of Africa during mid-1980s famines it was found that information sources were generally non-African, naturalizing the concept of Africa as a victim dependent upon Western aid, and reinforcing images of Western power and good will (Paterson, 1992; Rome report, 1987). In a study of how US media construct the topic of hunger in Africa, Kogen (2015) concluded that some US media have moved beyond simply failing to notice Africa, or presenting the US as the solution, to dismissing the possibility of any active humanitarian role for the US in Africa. But Kogen also observed, echoing Bennett's (1990) indexing theory, that when the US Congress expresses interest in a story, overall news coverage increases and news stories that propose solutions are more likely.

China has not escaped discursive processes of stereotyping and Othering that have characterized Western representation of non-Western cultures, people and places "rooted in nineteenth-century nationalisms and in the pseudoscientific rationalists of racial difference" (Pickering, 2001, p. xii). Western empires represented the colonial peripheries in ways that dialectically constructed the center around categories of modernity, progress and freedom as opposed to repression, violence and backwardness. Both postcolonial and cultural studies have described these discursive processes with a particular focus on the Orient (Said, 2003) and sub-Saharan Africa (Hall, 1992; Mudimbe, 1988).

For China, Pickering identifies two dominant stereotypes that emerged in the 19th century and infused Western popular imagination. First, there is a positive and unthreatening stereotype of Chinese "as humble, quiet and successful, an image grounded in white paternalism" (2001, p. 141) and echoed in contemporary narratives of Chinese people as model minorities. Second, a common stereotype associates Chinese people with cunningness, secrecy, deceit, thief and cruelty (p. 137). This representation is often associated with the

trope of the "yellow peril," a racist expression developed in a context of rising Sinophobia in the late 19th century Western world.

This legacy of racial stereotyping has infused contemporary representations of China (Frayling, 2014) as well as debates surrounding the role of China in Africa. These debates have been polarized between viewing China's intervention as "either a reinvention of old style colonialism, or exploitation, or a refreshing new kind of geopolitical relationship, which is helping African development, free of the constraints often attached to Western aid" (Franks & Ribet, 2009, p. 129). Despite criticisms of the role of China across the political spectrum, some commentators express concern about vilifying China in ways that echo older stereotypes of the "yellow peril" (Mawdsley, 2008).

There is surprisingly little research concerning media coverage of Sino-African relations, but one crucial analysis is that of Mawdsley (2008), who analyzed representations of China in Africa in six British broadsheets. She concluded that newspapers "tend towards a rather simplistic binary between the sometimes mistaken or frustrated but essentially well intentioned West (Dr. Livingstone), and the amoral, greedy and coldly indifferent Chinese (Fu Manchu) battling over a corrupt and/or helpless Africa (the Dark Continent)" (p. 523). Olorunnisola and Ma (2013) compared the coverage of several Forums for China-Africa Cooperation in Nigerian, South African, Chinese and US newspapers. They identified six media frames to discuss China's involvement in Africa. The competitor and watchfulness frames (expressing worries about China's involvement as a competitor to Western interests) dominated US coverage, while the partnership and refutation frames (emphasizing cooperation and denying claims of neocolonialism) dominated Chinese coverage. South African and Nigerian newspapers combined three frames: new power (China as a new model for economic development), controversy (questioning the Chinese presence) and partnership. Their results suggest a polarization of media frames supporting or attacking Chinese interests

(US and Chinese coverage), and a mixed assessment of China's involvement (African coverage).

Methodology

We analyze a corpus of news items published on the Al Jazeera English (AJE), BBC and CNN online news websites between January 2011 and September 2014. Our timeframe starts in 2011 where two events - the Libyan civil war and the creation of South Sudan – are regarded by many observers as significant milestones in the contemporary US military and Chinese economic expansion in Africa (Turse, 2014; Wallis & Manson, 2014) and continues to the most recent date available, August 2014.[1]

BBC and CNN have long held a hegemonic position in the flow of international TV news. Even in the age of digital news, they remain among the main sources of international news alongside news agencies such as Reuters and AP (Paterson, 2011). Despite claims by former US secretary of state Hillary Clinton that the US and the "West" were losing the global "information war," the BBC and CNN remain major players and contribute to set the international news agenda (Xie & Boyd-Barrett, 2015). Al Jazeera - through its affiliate Al Jazeera English (AJE) - has recently joined the BBC and CNN as a major global player (Barkho, 2010). While AJE hasn't significantly penetrated the US media market (Xie & Boyd-Barrett, 2015), it has both gained a reputation as leading global news provider and the trust of an international, non-Western audience. Along with the Venezuela based Telesur and powerful regional satellite news providers on the Indian subcontinent, AJE has demonstrated audience demand for challenges to traditional US/Europe dominated news frames.

This appeal of AJE was salient in their latest global promotional campaign "Hear the human story." It was launched from South Africa and featured a survivor of the Rwandan genocide. AJE thus signaled care about African lives (in implied contrast to other media). Thus, in including Al Jazeera we aim to account for a globalizing media market and assess

whether AJE significantly challenges Western hegemonic narratives about Africa. Chinese and African news sources were excluded because none constitute, yet, leading competitors in global English language news.

Our method consists of qualitative, interpretative and critical framing analysis. It assumes that media texts do not reflect reality but rather emerge from work practices, professional values, commercial incentives, structures of production and ideological worldviews. As such, media reflect and contribute to constructing a specific view of the world embedded in unequal power relations.

Framing analysis is concerned with selection and salience (Entman, 1993). Media are key agents of framing since the process of news production and journalistic writing always involve elements of selection and salience. When applied to media texts, the key task of framing analysis consists in identifying and describing frames found in texts with regard to a specific issue or topic (Entman, 1993, p. 57). In the context of this article, we use framing analysis to illuminate the discursive richness of media coverage and the various discursive processes that locate China and the US in Africa in relation to old and new post-colonial discourses. Rather than making claims about the pervasiveness of specific frames, we map the range of meanings available in the coverage: what types of topics are covered? How are the actors in these stories, and their actions, represented? Does the coverage rely on, or contribute to reproduce, stereotypes? Consequently, we did not use pre-determined frames to code media content; instead, we identified frames emerging from the data. Finally, our approach also takes into account the relatively large size of our sample (492 articles). We examined this sample to assess the African countries as well as events that were the most frequently covered. In doing so, we ground the qualitative interpretation of media framing of China and the US in Africa within the context of the overall coverage by focusing on coverage that was the most frequent (selection) and visible (salience).

While essentially qualitative, our analysis is based on a corpus of news items gathered systematically to be representative of the news stories where the presence of the US and China in Africa are the most visible. Articles were gathered using a combination of the advanced Google archive search tool (for AJE and BBC) and Nexis (for CNN). First, we gathered all articles that contained in their headline references to either "China/Chinese" or "US/American" and "Africa/African." Then, we gathered all articles on the "Africa" news pages of these websites that referred to "China/Chinese" or "US/American" in their headlines. Therefore, this corpus should represent all the articles that appeared on the AJE, BBC and CNN news websites that gave salience to the American or Chinese presence or role in Africa. This core search was complemented by a more refined search using in-text keywords to identify additional articles dealing with the phenomena that concern us: the military US expansion ("AFRICOM," "US Africa Command") and the economic Chinese expansion ("Chinese investment, funds, funding, infrastructure"). We also sought coverage of US religious expansion, with keywords such as "US evangelist/m" and "Christian evangelist/m."

Our subsequent analysis thus focuses on the most frequent and visible coverage, and seeks to answer four key questions:

1) Between US military expansion and China's economic expansion in Africa, which phenomenon is more visible?

2) How are these respective involvements framed and represented?

3) How is Africa being represented in this process?

4) Are there significant differences between media outlets?

News analysis

Our corpus shows that across all three media outlets, the US in Africa is given more prominence than China (Table 1). Whereas the BBC comes close to a balance between the

two, AJE and CNN give significantly more visibility to the US presence. In the following two sections, we explore the respective coverage of China and the US in Africa.

Media framing of China in Africa

The countries most often covered in reference to China in Africa were Sudan, Kenya, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Nigeria and South Sudan. These account for more than 30% of all articles (55% of articles focused on "Africa" as a whole, and the 15% remaining are shared between 16 countries). Most of these countries are economic hot spots and all are former British colonies. This suggests that global media primarily take interest in China in Africa in connection with territory associated with prior British domination. For instance, Angola, a former Portuguese colony and until recently China's biggest trading partner in Africa was the topic of only two articles. Mauritania and Equatorial Guinea are among the top eight recipients of Chinese aid; yet neither were the main topic of any article. Zambia is home to the third largest Chinese diaspora community in Africa but was the topic of only four articles. Thus, media coverage didn't reflect the range and diversity of China's involvement in the continent. Rather, it was driven by a combination of two key factors: economic relevance and linguistic "proximity" (Galtung & Ruge, 1965).

No major news event gave visibility to China. The coverage consisted mainly of sporadic stories that fall into three broad categories: (1) diplomatic visits and meetings; (2) business deals and monitoring of Chinese capital; (3) negative impact of China's involvement and/or influence. The majority of the articles fall into the third category. Table 2 provides representative examples of different stories that fall into these three categories.

We identified three frames shared across stories and media outlets to represent China in Africa: (1) partner, (2) competitor and (3) predator with dubious interests. Several articles dealt with state-backed Chinese firms investing in large infrastructure projects. In this perspective, China was represented as an important economic partner "transforming" Africa.

This presence was notably signified by descriptions of the visual evolution of urban landscapes: "Throughout Africa - at building sites, on the street, and at ports and airports - the Chinese presence is growing" (Khare, 2013). Both the BBC and AJE published interactive slide shows to demonstrate "China shaping Africa," with AJE inviting its reader to "take a tour of the dams, stadiums, mines and super-highways financed, sometimes controversially, by Beijing" (Ottaviani, 2014).

Such visual accounts raised questions about China's motives and impact: "But China's growing influence has alienated some in Africa as well, who resent what they describe as a form of economic colonialism and decry Chinese companies' treatment of local workers" (Ottaviani, 2014). References to colonialism, neocolonialism or exploitation were quite common within news stories, although they did not appear in the titles of any article. CNN for instance communicated these concerns by quoting Hillary Clinton:

asked about China's growing influence in Africa, during her visit to Zambia in June, she said that Africa must beware of a "new colonialism."

"We saw that during colonial times it is easy to come in, take out natural resources, pay off leaders and leave," Clinton said from the mineral-rich country that has attracted heavy Chinese investment in mining (Kermeliotis, 2011a).

The "West" did not appear in every article, but when it did it was generally framed as a competing power and in positive terms. The most common rhetoric was to highlight the "West" as a competitor losing out to China because it imposes conditions for its economic involvement. Thus, China was presented as "a more attractive partner than the West, whose policy in the continent is usually linked to conditions about good governance and human rights reforms" (Kermeliotis, 2011a). Or, as AJE put it, "unlike many Western governments China does not urge them to respect human rights or foster democratic systems" (Ottaviani, 2014). While these conditions are presented as constraining (through directive verbs such as

"urge" or "demand"), they portray a highly positive image of the "West" as championing human rights and democracy. In doing so, they construct the "West" as a positive force for change, and China as a negative and predatory one that cares only for its economic interests. This was reinforced by a vocabulary reminiscent of animal-like predation, with China being "driven by [its] appetite for natural resources," "resource-hungry" and "scenting opportunity in Africa" (Kermeliotis, 2011b). As a result, the reliance on this vocabulary contributes to subtly framing China as an imperial force without explicitly referring to imperialism.

Similarly, the Chinese government is portrayed as aligned with corrupt and undemocratic regimes, for instance by presenting Zimbabwe as a "friend," or as corrupting democratic values and national sovereignty. An example of the latter was the coverage of a trip planned by the Dalai Lama to attend Archbishop Desmond Tutu's 80th birthday in October 2011. The South African government did not grant the Dalai Lama a visa on time. With South Africa a key economic partner, the Dalai Lama considered by China a dangerous separatist, and South African Deputy President Motlanthe visiting China in the previous weeks, this delay was portrayed as resulting from Chinese pressure. This prompted significant coverage by the BBC, leading to an episode of the "Africa have your say" program focused on this event, but generalizing to China in Africa with the title: "Is China interfering in Africa's affairs?"

The coverage framed the issue as one of Chinese negative influence and interference in South African sovereignty, and of South African political leadership "kowtowing to Chinese pressure" (Harding, 2011). In an opinion piece, BBC Africa correspondent Andrew Harding commented: "democratic South Africa has chosen to put its crucial trading relationship with China above its commitment to free speech and an old friend ... a cowardly, hypocritical pandering to Beijing's bullying" (Harding, 2011). China thus appeared as an

oppressor using its economic power to undermine the democratic ideals of South Africa; a concealed force that ultimately turns South African officials into "cowards" and "hypocrites."

While the three frames - partner, competitor, negative impact - can be isolated for analytical purposes, they generally overlap. China was rarely presented simply as a disinterested partner. Instead, media coverage of China – even when primarily framed as a partner - relies on a script that highlights the negative aspects of its involvement and/or contrasts China with competing, but progressive, Western powers. Consequently, media coverage was limited to a reductive and polarized representational repertoire simultaneously feeding stereotypes about China and Africa. These include: African workers as victims of Chinese managerial ruthlessness; corrupt leaders playing into the hands of the undemocratic Chinese power; Chinese workers as victims of African violence and madness, such as Boko Haram and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Magreb (AQMI). These observations support Mawdsley's conclusions about representations of China in British newspapers in that there is (1) a tendency to homogenize China and Chinese actors; (2) an emphasis on the negative impact of China; (3) the reproduction of binary stereotypes about Africans as victims (usually workers) or villains (politicians and terrorists); and (4) a positive framing of the "West."

Media framing of the US in Africa

The countries most often covered in reference to the US in Africa were Nigeria, Libya, Somalia, Uganda, South Sudan, Mali, Central African Republic and Sudan. They amount to 54% of the coverage, while a continental focus accounted for 26%, and the remaining 20% concerned 23 countries. Interestingly, the US involvement in Africa is less framed in continental terms (26%) than China's (55%). Media coverage contributes to a view of Chinese involvement in widespread and in totalizing terms, while the US involvement is portrayed in terms of relations with specific African countries. Again, there is an emphasis on English-speaking countries and economic hot spots. However, the key driver of media

coverage appears to be conflict. All these countries have been facing conflict situations in which the US was involved, including the 2011 Libyan civil war, the hunt for Joseph Kony and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and several conflicts embedded in the global war on terror, including Al-Shabbab in Somalia, AQMI in Mali and Boko Haram in Nigeria.

The US presence in Africa was mostly framed in terms of its military engagement in fighting terrorism, supporting opposition to undemocratic leaders, and contributing to restoring peace and capturing warlords. In order to shed more light on the framing of this military presence, we turn to the coverage of the two most prominent events: the hunt to capture (or kill) Joseph Kony and the #BringBackOurGirls campaign.

In October 2011, the US sent military advisors in Uganda to help fight the LRA, an extremist militant movement led by Kony. In all three media, the US role was emphasized as one of support to "assist the Ugandan army," "help hunt down the leaders of the notoriously violent LRA," "provide high-tech equipment," "help stabilize the region," "make a positive difference" and provide "humanitarian support." US officials promised the mission would last no more than a few months. Seven months later, another event would spur an intensification of the support for this involvement. A social media campaign by a US organization - Invisible Children – aimed at raising awareness of the atrocities committed by the LRA and its leader went viral. The 30-minute video reached an unprecedented 110 million views in only a few days (Nothias, 2013), and advocated US military support in Uganda. Early news reports mentioning the campaign were accompanied by an official statement by President Obama affirming the US would continue its involvement. But the buzz of the video backfired with many critiquing its misleading content (the video implied that Kony was in Uganda, whereas he had left the country six years earlier), its reliance on stereotypes, and the policy advocated (foreign military intervention). As the backlash

intensified, all three media discussed these questions, although AJE proved quicker to provide critical opinion pieces.

While public awareness of Kony faded US military support was maintained and even intensified. Over the summer of 2013, the White House authorized the US military to be involved on the ground, alongside the Ugandan army and the forces of neighboring countries, but without the authorization to engage the LRA forces. Three years from its start, the US military further increased troops numbers and sent CV-22 Osprey aircraft. Only AJE would question the reasons why the US remained involved "at a time when the threat posed by the LRA is vastly overshadowed by far more troubling armed violence in the three Central African countries [South Sudan, Central African Republic, DRC] where LRA fighters are located" (Titeca & Atkinson, 2014). This opinion piece constitutes an unusual exception among all the other stories which assumed US legitimacy in conducting the military operation.

In mid-April 2014, Boko Haram –an Islamist group affiliated with Al Qaeada – abducted 276 schoolgirls in Nigeria's Borno State. A week later, the #BringBackOurGirls hash tag was created and went viral, and by mid-May, there were over 3 million tweets mentioning it. The scale of this attack was unprecedented in Nigeria, but President Goodluck Jonathan only publicly addressed the issue on May 4. The same day, Secretary of State John Kerry declared that the US would do "everything possible to support the Nigerian government" to rescue the schoolgirls ("US to help Nigeria," 2014). This made the headline of several articles on the three media which frontloaded the supportive role of the US through expressions such as "join" and "help" efforts to "hunt," "rescue" and "bring back" the girls.

Soon, the promises of help turned into actions with a first team of 30 military personnel arriving shortly after Kerry's statement. On May 13, BBC and AJE reported that the US military was conducting aerial intelligence search and was sharing satellite imagery

with Nigeria. Ten days later, the US dispatched 80 military personnel to Chad to help in the search, as well as a predator drone.

As with the Kony2012 video, a social media phenomenon gave strong public visibility to an issue while providing broad support to legitimize US military involvement. The dominant media framing included a script consisting of familiar stereotypes: faced with irrational barbarity and the incompetence of local leadership, helpless African victims ought to be rescued by benevolent, white foreigners. This social-media led visibility thus did not offer an opportunity to interpret these events in relation to the increased US military presence on the continent. Instead, it contributed to seeing this presence as supportive, benevolent, and legitimate, while reproducing old stereotypes about Africa and Africans.

Our corpus included two news events that attracted significant media attention without falling under the "military" category: the African tour of Obama in Senegal, South Africa and Tanzania in June 2013, and the US-Africa summit in August 2014. Here, the US role was largely framed as a provider of opportunity, partnership, investment in human rights and democracy, and a support in the fight against terrorism. The President's visit was presented as an "opportunity for South Africans" and Obama offers a "new model of African development," "promotes investment and democracy," and helps "to upgrade power in Africa." Similarly, "US investment" is presented as an opportunity to "fight extremism in Africa," and the US-Africa summit is a chance to "invest in human rights."

At the time of the summit AJE published two opinion pieces, entitled "Why now?" and "Too little, too late"? Before the summit, it broadcast a special program – the "New Scramble for Africa" – dealing notably with the increased US military footprint in Africa. During Obama's tour, it published an opinion piece titled "Obama finally scrambles over Africa." In fact, the expression of "scramble" was most often used in the headlines of articles published on AJE referring to the US (three occurrences), and on one occasion to talk about

both China and the US. In contrast, the BBC only contained a single article referring to China, while CNN made no mention of it. This is indicative of a willingness of AJE to provide more critical discussions of the motivation and legitimacy of US military involvement in Africa.

When looking at the number of articles directly referring to AFRICOM 32% of the items on AJE made direct mention of AFRICOM. BBC made such references in only 24%, while CNN - arguably the media outlet most responsible for keeping its national audience informed about the military activity of its government abroad - made direct reference to it in 12% of the articles. This suggests that AJE and CNN, while giving similar visibility to the US presence in Africa (131 and 126 articles), frame the issues differently. CNN more actively supports AFRICOM's attempt to keep its scale of activity under the radar.

However, a significant number of the AJE articles mentioning AFRICOM are commentaries rather than news articles. Similarly, the three AJE pieces referring to a US "Scramble over Africa" in their titles were opinion pieces. This suggests a difference between news channels in terms of bringing critical voices to bear upon foreign expansion in Africa but is not necessarily an indication of a difference in journalistic style per se. Rather, this may reflect a strategy of AJE mainstreaming its journalistic content while differentiating itself in its provision of opinion.

Conclusion

These findings show that the US military expansion in Africa is routinely covered by global media and is given more prominence than China's economic expansion. Despite China becoming the largest economic power on the planet and Africa's foremost trade partner, the US remains a more powerful media magnet – especially when it is involved in conflict situations.

Surprisingly, there was almost complete silence about US Christian expansion in Africa and its consequences, such as generating support for homophobic public policy. While the media coverage of the US in Africa focused extensively on Nigeria and Uganda, two countries that recently passed some of the most violent anti-gay legislation in modern history, not a single article was found to reference US evangelical groups. Within the limit of our data, this suggests that global media treat the expansion of religious fundamentalism as unworthy of reporting when Christian in orientation. In addition, the coverage of the US was limited to a small number of specific African countries, whereas the coverage of China mainly dealt with Africa as a whole. The global media thus appear to emphasize a continent-wide involvement of China and downplay the US continental involvement.

China was framed through the combination of three roles: partner; competitor; and threat to democracy, human rights and good governance. While it would be an exaggeration to claim that media coverage systematically vilified China in strong, stereotypical terms, we showed that the global media's news selection process – and some of the rhetoric involved in this coverage - was likely to contribute to a vilification of China, and to feeding a discourse reminiscent of racial stereotyping of the "yellow peril." The US, in contrast, was primarily represented through the lens of its military support to humanitarian intervention and in the fight against terrorism, undemocratic leaders and war criminals. As such, this involvement was largely represented as being merely supportive of local armies, benevolent and morally legitimate. On this particular point, our analysis demonstrates how the global media contribute to a representation of the US military in Africa that supports AFRICOM's effort to construct a public image of "humanitarian mission and benign-sounding support for local partners" (Turse, 2014).

In the process of reporting these phenomena, the representational repertoire assigned to Africans reproduces disempowering stereotypes that have pervaded the headlines of

Western-led international news for decades, from the irrational and bloodthirsty warlord and terrorist, to the helpless victims and the incompetent, corrupt and undemocratic leaders. As a result, and as a large body of research has revealed, it fuelled an image of Africa as a dangerous place whose future relies on outside forces, with (mostly) China seeking to exploit its resources and the US (mostly) appearing as supportive in the fight against internal and external dangers. In addition, the coverage systematically favored Anglophone African countries over Lusophone or Francophone ones, suggesting another way the British imperial legacy impacts Africa's media image and the news values of global media.

Finally, our analysis did not reveal significant differences between AJE, BBC and CNN in their coverage of China in Africa, except that the BBC was giving it more prominence. Regarding the US, AJE provided a platform for more critical voices and tended to question – and thus make more visible - the expansionist US military agenda. However, these critical voices appeared primarily in opinion pieces rather than in journalistic content. This suggests that what differentiates AJE is not the way it covers African news but rather the ways in which it critically engages with US power.

From the vantage point of postcolonial critique, the global media coverage of new imperial projects in Africa testifies to the on-going impact of colonial discourse. Our research suggests that modern imperialism in Africa is reported by global media mostly in ways which support the neo-imperial project rather than mobilize resistance toward it, and that this coverage is guided by a Cold War lens which presents China as inherently illegitimate even when pointing to advantages that interaction with China has brought Africa. In an echo of Western reporting of the Iraq war and its discredited justifications, US actions are portrayed on mostly US terms, as legitimate and noble, while a significant part of that US expansion is hidden from exposure. We recommend that future research explore the dynamic of US/China news coverage more fully, especially in light of indications that Chinese involvement in

Africa itself is becoming military ("China's motive in South Sudan," 2015) and cultural

(through media expansion), as well as commercial.

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End Notes

1.   As noted previously, the 2011 war in Libya led to the removal of Gaddafi who was instrumental in mobilizing African resistance to the presence of non-African military forces and it spread the country's military arsenal to jihadist groups, contributing to heightened security concerns and offering justification for increased US military involvement. Following the 2011 independence, China invested massively in South Sudan's oil production, as well as in infrastructure and development projects through loans (*"China's motive in South Sudan,"* 2015); marking a new height in Chinese integration into an African economy and a milestone for Chinese economic expansion. Additionally, this timeframe accommodates the rise of AJE as a global news provider.

Table 1 – Amount of coverage of China and the US in Africa: percentage and number of

stories

	China	US
AJE	23% (n=40)	77% (n=131)
BBC	43% (n=65)	57% (n=85)
CNN	26% (n=45)	74% (n=126)

Table 2 - Types and examples of stories on China in Africa

Type of stories	Example of stories (authors' summary)
1. Diplomatic visits and meetings	- Visit of the Sudanese President to China - Forum on China-Africa Cooperation - African tour of Chinese President Xi Jinping - Visit of the Nigerian President to China
2. Business deals and monitoring of Chinese capital	- The kidnapping of Chinese workers in Sudan - The Exim bank of China providing funds to build a railway linking East Africa - Suspected Boko Haram fighters attacking a Chinese firm in Northern Cameroon
3. Negative impact of China's involvement and/or influence	- The poor manufacturing quality of Chinese products - The dangerous work conditions for local workers working for Chinese firms - Tensions between Chinese and African workers - Illegal trade activities by Chinese nationals - Impact on wildlife such as poaching