

**THE DRAGON IN THE NEWS: HOW MALAWIAN JOURNALISTS PERCEIVE THE
POLITICAL INFLUENCE OF CHINA ON NEWS REPORTING IN MALAWI**

A thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Of

Rhodes University

By

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April 2021

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my friends Barbara Bencini, Marcia Fingal, Barb Hall, Wendy Prescott, Dr Martha Turner, Ruth Cione, Dr Anika Wilson, Cathy Hartman, Kathy Hurty, Lori Pfeifer, Mary Jo Stangl, Dr Emma Lochery, Madalitso Mphepo, Tammie Follet, Jeff Nelson and Henry Bromelkamp for showing me that there could be a genuine selfless connection among people.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Words fail me to express my gratitude to my research supervisors, Dr Vanessa Malila and Roderick Amner, for their patience, intellectual guidance, and interest in my study. My appreciation also goes to Prof Lynette Steenveld, Prof Larry Strelitz, Prof Anthea Garman, Kyla Roux and Prof Lorenzo Dalvit for introducing me to media studies through various courses that laid the foundation for my research. The masters and honours classmates of 2018 were also amazing!

My heartfelt indebtedness goes to Barb Hall and Dr Anika Wilson. They read the entire thesis and guided me on technical aspects, especially on stylistic words and continuity, which are a typical issue for non-native speakers. Ruth Cione, Marcia Fingal, Martha Turner, Marte Bruu Tanum, Chavuta Mpunga and Marla Kapperud also read parts of the thesis. I am grateful to Gospel Kazako, Grey Phiri, Joab Chakhaza, Ephraim Munthali, Nathan Majawa, Gorge Kasakula and Roselyn Makhambera, who opened doors so that I could conduct this independent study. I am also grateful to all journalists who participated. Though I appreciate all this help, I do take responsibility for all the errors and weaknesses this thesis may have.

My master's degree would not have been possible without the financial support from friends whom I am proud to call my family; Barbara Bencini, Henry Bromelkamp, Kathy Harty, Cathy Hartman, Emma Lochery, Alinda Lauer, Viljar Grutle, Mary Jo Stangl, Marcia Fingal, Lori Pfeifer, Barnabas Muvhuti, Marte Bruu Tanum, Nnamdi Lupe Kristen, Houston Shaw and Ruth Cione. Thanks for believing in me. I would also like to thank Madalitso Mphopo, Kingsley Lupande, Mercy Malikwa, Thumbiko Nyirongo, Sekanayo Nyirongo, Jolly Ntaba, Trisha Velarmino, Sandile Ngidi, Paul Ngulube, Wendy Prescott and Alinafe Banda, who supported my studies in so many ways.

The world has shown me so much kindness and love that I feel indebted and all I can do is simply assure you all that I am planning to pay back as soon as I finish school by supporting young people from disadvantaged families so that they can also attain higher education.

ABSTRACT

The arrival of China in Malawi has been characterised by a growing sense of uncertainty where academics and social commentators at large have expressed concern over the intentions of the super power in the country. There are fears that China would like to extend its influence to Malawi as part of a broader push, to have greater influence in global politics and economics. That push is in part exercised through the media.

The thesis examined the perception of Malawian journalists on how news media reports on Chinese activities in Malawi. It used content analysis to understand how the mediascape had changed from 2001 – 2007 when China had not established diplomatic relations with Malawi, and January 2008 – 2020 when China had established diplomatic relations. The thesis examined these shifts in journalistic representations of China in Malawi and developed prompts and probes from which journalist interviews were conducted.

From the content analysis, it appears there is a remarkable change in the way China has been covered from 2001 – 2020. From 2001 – 2007, Malawian media, especially *The Daily Times*, was very harsh on China, uncritically reproducing Western representations of China as an aggressive country with no respect for human rights and dignity. This changed after January 2008 when the media leaned towards tolerance and acknowledgement of Chinese activities.

Through interviews, journalists have indicated that the Chinese government offers opportunities, such as scholarships, fellowships, and exchange visits to journalists, making it difficult for them to bite the finger that is feeding them. This ‘soft power’ is backed up by the repressive power of the Malawi government, which uses intimidation to force journalists to report in their favour, thereby helping create a positive picture for China in Malawi. Journalists report that the significant shifts in journalistic representations of China have been mirrored by changes in the conceptualisation of journalistic roles in Malawi’s mediascape.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACC	Africa Classroom Connection
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ATI	Access to Information
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BNL	Blantyre Newspaper Limited
BoC	Bank of China
CCTV	China Central Television
CD	Compact Disk
CDC	Centre for Disease Control
CGNT	China Global Television Network
CRI	China Radio International
DPP	Democratic Progressive Party
FOCAC	Forum on China-Africa Co-operation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GOP	Government of the People
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MACRA	Malawi Communication Regulatory Authority
MCP	Malawi Congress Party
MIJ	Malawi Institute of Journalism
MISA	Media Institute of Southern Africa
NBM	National Bank of Malawi
NPL	Nation Publications Limited
PR	Public Relations
RoC	Republic of China
TV	Television
TNM	Telecom Networks Malawi
UDF	United Democratic Front
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights

UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
ZBS	Zodiak Broadcasting Station

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

This thesis is a qualitative study of the perceptions of Malawian journalists on the influence of China on their coverage of China. The introduction gives a brief background and context to media theory and practice in Malawi, explains the theoretical underpinnings of the research, and how the weaknesses of the theories were augmented. It also describes the research goals, methods, and ethical considerations. Finally, the chapter describes the limitations and layout of the thesis.

1.1. Background and Context

When travelling in Malawi's capital city, Lilongwe, it is difficult not to notice the imposing structures that have been built with Chinese aid, such as the Bingu International Conference Centre (Banik, 2013: 11). In villages across the country, Chinese shops are proliferating (Banik, 2013: 22), and agriculture-related projects are expanding (Tang, 2019: 1). This influence is escalating and impacting Malawi's news media. A content analysis of newspaper coverage in just one key newspaper – *The Daily Times* – over the past twenty years reveals a considerable change in the tone and amount of coverage of China's role in Africa and the world and Chinese projects in Malawi. More recently, there has been a marked increase in the number of news articles that report on the burgeoning Malawi-China relationship in more positive terms.

From the analysis, it can be observed that few Malawian journalists covered China before Malawi and China established diplomatic relations. For example, in *The Daily Times* publications of the early 2000s, most articles related to China were 'lifted' from Western media outlets, especially the *Reuters News Agency*. The paper did not bother to invest resources to develop these syndicated stories, rarely even obtaining local comments. Most of the articles portrayed China in a broadly negative light, i.e. as a patron with ulterior motives towards Africa.

After the establishment of diplomatic relations in 2008 (Banik, 2013: 4), coverage changed in frequency, tone, and in its objectives. There are now many Malawian journalists writing original

articles on China. More of the coverage is positive, presenting China as a generous partner to Africa and as a global innovator. There now is minimal reporting that is critical of China.

This thesis provides a detailed critical analysis of this phenomenon. It provides a qualitative content analysis of a representative sample of *Daily Times* coverage of China over time. Through in-depth interviews with journalists, it explores some of the influences on news representations of China in Malawi. Scholarship in this regard is limited in that most of the discussions on Africa China mediascape has been reduced to South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya. The Malawi case, which the researcher has advanced, is unique because China was a ‘new friend’ for Malawi and was therefore not in the Chinese media expansion purview. The study thus provides a new perspective from an African country that was late in embracing China and helps broaden understanding of the factors that have driven the reframing of China in Malawian and Africa news coverage. This is significant as shifts in news coverage have a potential impact on Malawian/African views of China, development, and relationships with other ‘superpowers.’

1.1.1. The Malawian News Media and Government

Soon after Malawi attained independence from Britain in 1964, the media became a mouthpiece for the repressive Kamuzu Banda regime (Gunde, 2016: 21). This changed significantly after the establishment of multiparty democracy in 1994: there are now six private newspapers and many private radio and TV stations (Macra, 2018). Malawian media primarily draw on a Western media framework (Manda and Tsitsi, 2017: 2), which assigns to journalists roles that are concerned predominately with promoting democracy through ‘monitorial’ and ‘watchdog’ functions (Zhang and Matingwina, 2016: 94). However, the media’s perceived ‘Western framework’ often clashes with the government’s wish for a more compliant media that publish more ‘positive’ news (Manda and Tsitsi, 2017: 6). Despite a move to more democratic rule, Malawi's government continues to regard the media as a key tool for maintaining power.

The Malawi government uses various methods, including outright intimidation, to force journalists to cover its work favourably (Gunde, 2015: 7); a situation that White and Mabweazara (2018: 54) describe as connected to the development of an increasingly ‘neo-patrimonial’ state [in Malawi]. This concept captures a more self-interested government that sees itself as a ‘parent’, able to cajole

and punish citizens and journalists into supporting its government strategy (Gunde, 2015: 7). For example, at the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), critical journalists have been transferred to Kaning'ina studios in Mzuzu, where few programmes are made, leaving them with no route to progress in their careers. The government also cajoles journalists in the private sector (Gunde, 2015).

A key hypothesis explored was that Chinese influence on Malawi's news reports, aided by the Malawian government, is changing the visibility and perception of China in Malawi's media. The hypothesis was put forward because Banda (2009) and Farah & Mosher (2010) in Umejei (2018) argue that China's media expansion aims to move journalism away from 'watchdog' to a 'lapdog' role, 'where the government's interests are the paramount concern in deciding what to disseminate.'. The Chinese encourage or incentivise positive coverage, whereas the Malawian government cajole, and in some instances, 'force' journalists into toeing the state line. This study aimed at exploring this hypothesis by collecting the perspectives of Malawian journalists and exploring their perceptions about how China is covered in Malawian media, how this is changing, and what is driving this change.

A key part of this shift seemed to be engineered by exposing Malawian journalists directly to Chinese 'constructive' journalism. This is often facilitated by tours to China, where journalists are exposed to different philosophies of journalism, i.e. in line with China's 'harmonious' approach to social relations, total control of all media, and relentlessly positive stories (Weseka, 2016: 140). Such journalism is characterised by far less freedom of topic choice, or even of 'angle' of coverage and writing style than is available to media in most democracies (Zhang and Matingwina, 2016: 94). Research questions that were explored by the researcher include whether this 'constructive journalism' is being taken on board by journalists in Malawi, how it is affecting coverage of China and how journalists conceive of their roles and journalistic identity.

1.2. Theoretical Framework

The research draws on several theories developed in the field of Journalism and Media Studies, such as the 'hierarchy of influences' theory', journalistic role theory, African journalism 'culture' theory, the global media systems (including Chinese media systems), normative theories of the

media and sourcing theory. The hierarchy of influences model, primarily developed by Pamela Shoemaker and Stephen Reese in the 1970s and 1980s, theorises layers of interacting influences on news media. These range, in their schema, from ‘macro’ influences such as the nature of the social systems and ideological tropes of particular societies to the ‘meso’ nature of particular social institutions, which considers work culture, routines, and daily practices of media organisations. The theory is rounded off with a focus on individual roles, perceptions, and skillsets of individual journalists at the micro-level (Reese, 2016: 7). The ‘media organisation’ level was particularly useful for this study because it examined how journalists negotiate values to satisfy organisational needs (Reese, 2007: 36) and mesh these with routines and practices, which they characterise as naturalised rules, norms and procedures. The study drew on all these levels to understand where and how China is influencing Malawian news production, journalistic practice, and identity.

The hierarchy of influences model does not, however, provide a holistic framework that allows researchers to easily separate the effects of one level from the other. To achieve this, this study drew on journalistic ‘role theory’ to better locate the sense of what it means to be a journalist and how what journalists ‘do’ is understood (by journalists) to establish how those ‘role conceptions’ play out and interact with the levels of the Shoemaker and Reese model. Journalistic roles theory goes as far back as the 1950s but has, in the past decade, been significantly refined by a global research project, The Worlds of Journalism Project, which elicited views of thousands of journalists on issues such as ethics and autonomy (<http://www.worldsofjournalism.org/>) in dozens of countries. Thomas Hanitzsch and Tim Vos (2018: 152), drawing on this decade-long project, suggest that journalism roles exist as part of a wider framework of meaning within a discourse that sets parameters of what is desirable in a given institutional and national context (Hanitzsch and Vos, 2017: 118); and they are subject to (re)creation, (re)interpretation, appropriation and contestation in discursive fields (Hanitzsch and Vos, 2018: 151). This theory helped in exploring questions such as: Who takes up what roles and power in creating this discourse? What roles do money, state actors, and patronage networks play in the news media, and how do these affect news coverage? To better locate the sense of the roles of journalism, the study also drew on normative theories of the media’s role in a democracy (Christians et al, 2009), which articulates a collaborative role of the media, explaining why and how Malawi and its allies sometimes exert influence on the media.

All three theories primarily used Western lenses to understand roles. To augment this, the study drew on recent African ‘journalism culture’ theory, which was developed in its more recent form by White and Mabweazara (2018). This approach suggests that post-colonial political forms and neo-patrimonial arrangements influence African journalists in ways that make it more likely that they will create content that is acceptable to editors, who in turn tend to publish or broadcast what is acceptable to local political elites (White and Mabweazara, 2018: 55), which the editors are often part of. Elites of course control (Thomson, 2010: 112) and share these resources “to strengthen personal and/or partisan power and favour allied news organisations” (Waisbord, 2013: 154). Journalists in private media have, in some countries, created interesting cultures of resistance, such as seeking legal protection against external influence (Kasoma, 2010: 536), but there is a tendency to ‘buy’ personal allegiance that seems to be accelerating in many African countries (White and Mabweazara, 2018). The study employed media systems theories, and specifically Chinese media system theories, to better locate and understand the potential influence of China on Malawian media. Lastly, the study employed the news sourcing theory to better locate the sense of how news sources might have shaped reports on China.

1.3. Research Goals

The study aims to understand the perceptions of Malawian journalists of Chinese influence on Malawian journalism. A detailed content analysis was conducted to track and analyse shifts in newspaper representations of the role of China in Africa. However, the main goal was to understand how journalists themselves make sense of the changes in media coverage of China and to explore possible changes to their normative conceptions of what they ‘do’ as journalists and what journalism is ‘for’. In particular, how do they perceive the influence of China on the way China is reported? What do they perceive are the biggest influences on their coverage of China? What societal, institutional, media organisations, routine practices, and personal backgrounds, role conceptions, and skill levels of the journalists impact the way Malawian journalists report on China, and how does this, in turn, impact the national discursive contestation about journalism roles?

1.4. Methodology and Ethics

The research used a qualitative design and drew on a social constructivist epistemological approach within the interpretive tradition (Bryman, 1988: 3). A qualitative design helped to obtain in-depth data (Creswell et al., 2007: 238) and provided an ‘insider perspective’ on the study (Schreier, 2012). The research used qualitative thematic content analysis to understand content from *The Daily Times* newspaper, one of the biggest print media organisations in Malawi. Qualitative content analysis goes beyond counting words to examining language to classify text and to examine meanings, themes, and patterns in a text (Weber in Hsieh and Shannon, 2005: 1278). Two articles per year mentioning China between 2001 and 2020 were randomly selected to gain an understanding of the trends in coverage of China over this period.

While the information provided insight for the thesis, the main aim of the analysis and the reason only one publication was chosen was to provide a small sample from which to gain a broader understanding of trends in media coverage of China, to provide prompts and probes for the interviews conducted with journalists. The analysis examined issues around tone of coverage, bylines, sources used in stories, language and meaning, and changes in the style of journalism.

While the content analysis focused on one newspaper, in-depth interviews were conducted across Malawian media platforms to gain a holistic perspective of how influence, practice, and perception is changing in Malawian journalism. Eight journalists from MIJ radio, *The Daily Times*, *Nation*, and Zodiak TV were interviewed as these are the biggest media with the largest audiences in Malawi (Pasungwi, 2018; Kainja, 2009: 9). The selection of journalists was purposive by selecting those that had previously covered China. Two journalists from each publication were approached for the interviews after having accessed media coverage by those organisations and identified journalists with the most experience. In-depth interviews were used to allow participants to openly engage with issues around perception and practice (Byrne, 2016: 182).

The ethical protocol was adhered to throughout the research by seeking permission to carry out the study from the Rhodes University Ethics Research Committee and media institutions in Malawi. The participants were informed that they were entitled to withdraw participation at any stage of the research and that their participation was confidential.

1.5. Limitations of the Study

The study took place when there was political uncertainty in Malawi, forcing media houses to raise their guard. This was so because the opposition political parties in Malawi refused to accept the results of the 2019 elections. The media houses were worried that politicians are trying to infiltrate their institutions through researchers, making them reluctant to participate in the study. After convincing them, they did accept, but it might be possible that they didn't reveal some information to me due to these suspicions.

The other limitation of the study was that content analysis was narrow; the researcher did not view most of the reports that were made on China. If the content analysis was wider, equally important data would have been uncovered, which would have enriched the study. To augment this, the researcher interviewed journalists who legitimised the content analysis. However the findings of this content analysis were provisional and circumspect. Furthermore, if there had been enough time to interview more journalists, editors, and managers, the study could have been richer.

1.6. Chapter Layout

The thesis has been divided into eight chapters. **Chapter one** is the introduction and comprises a summary of the context, aims, and methods of the study. It explains the significance of the study and briefly describes its theoretical underpinning.

Chapter two presents the context of journalism and media practice in Malawi. The contextual background has information on the history of media practice in Malawi and the current mediascape. It also outlines media freedom in Malawi and how journalists continue to fight for their independence in a country where elites compete for its control.

Chapter three explores the historical background of China in Malawi and Africa, and how China uses soft power both in Malawi and Africa at large. The chapter also explores the Chinese impact on African mediascapes and the reasons for the same.

Chapter four explains the theoretical underpinnings of the study. The hierarchy of influences, journalistic roles, African journalistic cultures theories, normative theories of the media, global

media systems (including Chinese media systems), and sourcing theories employed for the study are discussed. The limitations associated with the theories and how they were appropriate for the study are explained.

Chapter five outlines research methods, the epistemological underpinnings of the study, how they were used in the research, and the actual methods of collecting and analysing data that were employed. The methods are explained in terms of their relevance, weaknesses, and how the weaknesses were resolved.

Chapter six is a presentation of the content analysis conducted on *The Daily Times*. It shows changes in tone, rhetorical language use, news sources, and journalistic style.

Chapter seven presents the perceptions of Malawian journalists on my content analysis and on the forces that influence news reports on China in Malawi. The chapter also describes what journalists think journalism is for in this geopolitical context.

Chapter eight summarises the study and concludes by reflecting on how the research questions were answered in relation to the theories employed in the study. It also offers recommendations on areas for further study.

1.7. Conclusion

This chapter has looked at the background that has informed the study. It has also looked at the design and theoretical foundations on which the study has been built. The chapter also explored the research methods, literature available on the area, and theoretical framing. In the next chapter, the thesis will look at the context of journalism and media practice in Malawi.

CHAPTER 2

JOURNALISM AND MEDIA CONTEXTS OF MALAWI

2.0. Introduction

Chapter 2 provides the contexts within which journalism and media is practised in Malawi. It provides ‘a map’ of how Malawian media has evolved since 1891 and the country’s media market. The chapter also describes how media practitioners fight for their freedom as they press for a more independent media. This background provided a foundation on which media influence was observed to understand where and how the influence is exerted.

2.1. Historical Background to Journalism and Media Practice in Malawi

Journalism and media history in Malawi is over 130 years old (Chitsulo and Mang’anda, 2011: 2) and can be understood in colonial, one-party state, multi-party political transition and democratic epochs (Manjawira, 2009: 9).

2.1.1. The Colonial Epoch

The colonial epoch is from 1891 to 1964 when Malawi, then known as Nyasaland, was under British control (Manda, 2018: 38). During this time, there was only one commercial newspaper, and there was no mass circulation (Kapiri, 2017: 30).

2.1.2. The One-party Epoch

The one-party state media phase began in 1964 when Malawi gained independence and ended in 1992 (Kapiri, 2017: 31). During this time, Malawi was under the repressive rule of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) under president Hastings Kamuzu Banda, who introduced a one-party system of government and ruled for 30 years (Patel and Meinhardt, 2003). The Malawi Congress Party took hold of *The Central African Planters* and renamed it *The Daily Times* (Kapiri, 2017: 31), and began publishing a new weekly, the *Malawi News* (Chitsulo & Mang’anda, 2011: 6). The MBC Act of 1968 was also enacted to create the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (Mhagama, 2015: 13), which MCP used as its propaganda tool (Kapiri, 2017: 31) under the control of Dr Banda’s right-hand minister, Aleke Banda (Manda, 2018: 39). Malawian media continued to

replicate the polarised pluralist model (Kapiri, 2017) because Dr Banda believed independent media would encourage disagreement among citizens (Manjawira, 2009: 10) and that journalists were fundamentally liars.

2.1.3. The Multi-party Political Transition Epoch

The epoch of a multi-party political transition started in 1992 and ended in 1994; this was the time when Malawians successfully fought for multi-party democracy (Manda, 2018: 39). It marked the dawn of press freedom in that more than 20 independent newspapers were registered to compete with *The Daily Times* and *Malawi News* (Kapiri, 2017), among the notable of which were the *Democrat*, *Michiru Sun*, and *The Nation* (Manda, 2004: 164). Independent journalism flourished, but there were concerns that the publications were sub-standard: they could not adhere to demands for ethical journalism (Kapiri, 2017: 32) and they lacked critical, in-depth journalism and analysis, in part because there were no schools of journalism at that time (Manda, 2018: 40) and the journalists had not gone through formal professional training.

2.1.4. The Democratic Epoch

The last phase is the democratic period which began in 1994 and continues to date (Manda, 2018: 40). This period began after the Malawi Congress Party was voted out of power and was replaced by the United Democratic Front (UDF) under Dr Bakili Muluzi (Patel and Meinhardt, 2003: 12). In this phase, newspaper circulation is limited to urban areas (Kapiri, 2017: 35). Since 1995, several institutions have begun training journalists, including Chancellor College, Malawi Polytechnic, and Malawi Institute of Journalism (Manda, 2018: 40). Malawi media practice is seen as transitional, leaning towards the liberal pluralist model (Manda and Tsitsi, 2017: 2), which promotes fact-based discourse but allows audiences to share their opinions.

2.2. Malawi Media Market

The Malawi media market comprises a variety of media outlets such as newspapers, radio stations, television stations, online news, and magazines. News reporting in Malawi is event-driven, with a paucity of critical and investigative reporting (African Media Barometer, 2012: 10). Some of the main media houses in Malawi are the Times Group, Nation Publications, Zodiak, and MIJ radio.

The Times Group has subsidiaries that include *The Daily Times*, *Times Online*, *Malawi News*, Times Television, and Times radio. It was found by MCP's president Kamuzu Banda (Gunde, 2015: 28) such that its audience sometimes suspects it of siding with MCP in its publications. However, Kakhobwe (2009: 63) notes that the Director of *The Daily Times* newspaper was a DPP sympathiser. The Times Group is generally a 'neutral' media. At the 2019 MISA Malawi (2019) media awards, *The Daily Times* journalist, MacDonald Thom, won the Human Rights Journalist of the Year for his article '*Suspects left to rot in jail.*'

The Nation Publication Limited has subsidiaries that include *The Nation*, *The Weekend Nation*, *Nation Online*, and *Nation on Sunday*. It belongs to Aleke Banda's family, who served as a cabinet minister in the UDF government (Gunde, 2015: 28). MISA says such political alignment influences media coverage, but Gunde (2015) argues that it is neutral. The neutrality of the NPL can also be affirmed by the various awards that the house has won, such as the 'Anti-Corruption Journalist of the Year 2019 by Archibald Kasakura.

Zodiak media house has subsidiaries that include *Zodiak Online*, Zodiak radio, and Zodiak Television. It is a private media and was formed by Gospel Kazako. It has won several awards for its neutrality in reporting news, such as Media House of the Year for the radio category (MISA-Malawi, 2019).

MIJ radio belongs to the government-run journalism school, Malawi Institute of Journalism. It began as a community radio station with funding from the Danish aid agency, but in 2004 the Danes pulled out, forcing the MIJ to re-register as a commercial broadcaster so that it could attract advertisers to help meet the costs of running the institution (Masina, 2013). In 2011, MACRA shut down the radio station for five hours for covering violent anti-government demonstrations (Gondwe, 2011).

2.3. Malawi Media under Attack

The Malawi media is under attack from elites who would like to use it to advance self-motivated ambitions. Kakhobwe (2009: 63) notes that media houses are either owned directly or indirectly by politicians who, in the long run, dictate the tone and bias of stories. This instils a spirit of self-

ensorship in journalists to protect themselves from both their managers and politicians. Powerful advertisers such as Telecom Networks Malawi (TNM) and National Bank of Malawi (NBM) also pose a threat (Kakhobwe, 2009: 64). Apart from that, legislation in Malawi also sometimes prevents journalists from practising freely. For example, the outdated and unnecessarily draconian Penal Code Act 22 of 1929 limits freedom of expression of journalists by criminalising defamation.

2.4. Searching for Independence

The media, through organisations such as MISA-Malawi, presses for an independent media through activities such as demonstrations (African Media Barometer, 2012: 21). One such demonstration was conducted in 2017 during Press Day. In Figure 1, journalists carry placards with slogans such as ‘MBC *ndiyatonse siyophangira*,’ which translates to ‘MBC is for everyone, not just a few’, challenging government use of MBC as its propaganda tool. Another journalist carries a placard with words *’kusadziwa ndikufa komwe, kudziwa kudzafika ndi ATI,*’ which translates into ‘*not knowing is as good as being dead, people will have information if ATI comes into effect*’, which pressures government to commence the Access to Information (ATI) Act that was passed in Parliament over two years ago. The government is reluctant to declare its commencement.



Figure 1: Journalists demonstrating. Source: Media Institute of Southern Africa (2017)

2.5. Conclusion

The chapter has shown that Malawi has a variety of news outlets such as television stations, radio stations, newspapers, text message services and online news. These services are supported by the provision in the Malawi Constitution that calls for the establishment of the Media Council of Malawi and Malawi Communication Regulatory Authority to enforce the Journalism Code of ethics. The Constitution also has sections that guarantee the freedoms of the press. However, the government and elites at large continue to strangle the media so that it should be their ‘mouth and throat’. The press in Malawi, including the *Daily Times*, *Zodiak*, *MIJ*, and *The Nation*, has developed interesting levels of resistance where they demonstrate against bad laws and demand freedom.

CHAPTER 3

CHINA IN AFRICA/MALAWI

3.0. Introduction

Chapter 3 reviews literature related to perceptions of Malawi journalists on the political influence of China in their coverage of China in Malawi. Of particular interest are the following issues: Africa-China relations, Malawi-China relations, Chinese soft power, and Africa-China media interaction.

3.1. Africa-China Relations

The first China-Africa contact dates back as far as 1418 when the Chinese, under the directive of Admiral Zheng He, visited the east coast of Africa several times between 1418 and 1433 with about 28 000 men and 63 vessels (Brautigam, 2009: 23; Madrid-Morales, 2016: 80). Unlike the Western countries that were fond of colonising African states (Rønning, 2016: 74), in their initial visit to the continent, the Chinese did not occupy and did not enslave a single African. They only collected natural resources such as herbs, probably to fight infections back home (Brautigam, 2009: 23).

Relations between China and Africa have grown such that by 2002, China had developed ties with about 60 African political parties in 40 sub-Saharan African countries both in government and opposition (Anshan, 2007: 73). China describes its engagement with Africa as focused on helping Africa help itself (Anshan, 2007: 74), based on what China calls ‘win-win’ relations, where both China and Africa have to work as partners in uplifting the lives of their citizens, considering that history has proven that aid alone has failed to transform Africa. Moyo (2009: 10) argues;

We live in a culture in which those who are better off subscribe ... to the notion that giving alms to the poor is the right thing to do. In the past fifty years, over US\$1 trillion in development-related aid has been transferred from rich countries to Africa. But ... aid has helped make the poor poorer ...

Moyo calls upon Africa to walk away from aid, increase trade among African countries and with emerging markets such as China, promote foreign direct investment, entrance into international capital markets, and increase domestic savings through remittances and microfinance (Wales,

2009). Smith (2019) writes that China is encouraging industrialisation in Africa and this is likely going to transform the continent. He argues that rising labour costs in China and the threat of USA tariffs are causing manufacturers to diversify their supply chains such that some of them are now looking to Africa. There are over 10,000 such factories on the continent. Chinese industries in Africa have been characterised by poor safety work measures and low wages, but Smith (2019) argues that such conditions are common in the early days of industrialisation as was also the case in Western countries when they were beginning to industrialise. Brautigam (2009: 5) argues that poor work conditions in foreign investments in Africa are not uniquely Chinese and apply to Western investors as well.

3.2. Malawi - China Relations

During the independence struggle, the founding fathers of Malawi looked forward to aligning Malawi with communist Eastern countries (Chipembere, 1970: 15). Realising that most of these fighters were young and could not earn people's respect in Malawian society, they invited Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda, who had been educated in the West, to become president. Barely two years after his rise to power (1964), his entire cabinet, which had encompassed some of the founding fathers, resigned while others were fired in what was called the cabinet crisis (Chirwa, 2001: 7). Among the reasons for this was that Banda was refusing to align the country with the communist East (Chipembere, 1970: 15).

Since then, Malawi has continued to align itself with the West to the extent that in 1966 it supported the Western position of recognising China's rival, Taiwan, as an independent state (Banik, 2013: 3). Taiwan became a critical donor, but it is not clear how much it donated (Msompha, 2010: 36) because the aid was not being publicly disclosed - it was not managed under a centralised system, and the Department of Aid and Debt became operational in 2005 and was not well placed to trace donations as far back as 1966. Msompha (2010: 37) writes that Taiwan has been claiming that it was donating funds directly to the United Democratic Party (UDF) Members of Parliament and Cabinet Ministers during their rule from 1994 to 2003, but it is feared that some of these funds went into politicians' pockets. After President Bingu Wa Mutharika won the 2004 elections under the UDF ticket, Taiwan was assured that its interests in Malawi were protected.

Surprisingly, Mutharika decided to leave the party and created his own Democratic Progressive Party (Westberg, 2015: 5). This created fears in Taiwan about whether the relations between these two countries would thrive considering there were rumours that Mutharika would leave Taiwan for China as a means of consolidating his position in domestic politics and ensure stability in the organisational structures of the DPP (Msompha, 2010: 48). Taiwan continued to cultivate good relations with the government and coaxed cabinet ministers to report to it any scenario where the president would seem hesitant to maintain relations (Msompha, 2010: 48). Each time the president seemed pessimistic, the Taiwanese government would go to the president with promises of more aid.

In 2004, at the Africa-Taiwan summit, it became clear that Malawi was not benefiting as much from Taiwan as other African countries were benefiting from China (Banik, 2013: 3). Malawi was forced to seek a more productive relationship with China, which took place on 28 December 2007. However, the relationship was officially announced in January 2008 by Joyce Banda, who was then Minister of Foreign Affairs. The very same day that Malawi established relations with China, Taiwan severed relations with Malawi and accused China of using “coercive tactics and monetary incentives” to turn Malawi against it (Banik, 2013: 6).

Since then, Malawi has enjoyed financial aid in loans and grants from China that have contributed to infrastructure development. Among the notable infrastructures are the Malawi University of Science and Technology and the Malawi Parliament (Banik, 2013: 11). Since these projects are predominantly constructed by a Chinese labour force, local people do not fully benefit from them. The Chinese government has also offered scholarships and training to Malawians to study in China. The agricultural sector has also benefited significantly from Malawi-China relations. For example, Thindwa (2014: 45) reveals that when China reduces its import expenditure of agriculture goods there is up to a 3.58 per cent reduction in Malawi’s agriculture exports.

The intrusion of the Chinese has also brought complaints that some Chinese traders come as small-scale business persons who compete for market share with local small-scale business persons, which is not supposed to be the case. The Malawi government introduced the Business Licensing Act of 2012, which prohibited the Chinese from engaging in business in rural areas and restricted

them to a minimum capital of US\$ 250,000 (Thindwa, 2014: 45). However, Chinese shops can still be seen in some rural parts of Malawi, raising suspicions that the Act was simply ‘window dressing’ in response to the complaints from Malawians.

3.3. Chinese Soft Power

The term soft power lacks consensus in its definition. Nye (2004: 5) defines it as “getting others to want the outcomes that you want”. He argues that sources of soft power of a country rest in its culture, political values, and its foreign policies. Kurlantzick (2007: 6) argues that Chinese soft power can be perceived as exerting influence through the use of any possible means except military and security power, including coercive economic and diplomatic means. It recognises Nye’s argument that countries with good communication will attain soft power (Zhang, Wasserman, and Mano, 2016: 4). Rønning (2016: 76) argues that China is facing problems in using soft power in Africa because there are other players in the continent, especially Western countries, that have diffused their languages and structures, including education, popular culture, and politics. Li (2009: 2) quotes Fareed Zakaria as arguing that China uses the phrase ‘soft power’ because they do not use a bullying tone when advancing their interests. Shambaugh (2013: 222–223), in Gagliardone and Nyíri (2017: 1052) writes that in 2010, China’s director of the State Council’s Information Office, Wang Chen said;

a leap in our country’s international media development ... is a necessity. The purpose is to improve international society’s understanding of China ... actively participate in international cultural competition; recognise the necessity of enhancing our country’s soft power; defeat the Western monopoly on public opinion [...].

3.4. Africa-China Media Interaction

Africa-China interaction in the media can be grouped into three phases: expansion (1958 - 1977), adjustment (1978 - 2000), and ‘going out’ (2001 – present) (Li, 2017). The expansion phase followed the Asia–Africa Conference in Bandung in April 1955, which marks the first official diplomatic relations between China and Africa. A month after this meeting, Egypt signed a Memorandum of China–Egyptian Culture Cooperation that provided frequent exchange visits of Egyptian and Chinese journalists. A delegation of Egyptian journalists was also invited to China, where they had a guided tour, and they signed a contract with *Xinhua News Agency* to use each other’s wired news and pictures (Li, 2017: 77). In 1958, the first Chinese news outlet known as

the *Xinhua News Agency* was established in Cairo. This first encounter between China and Africa contains elements that can be noticed even today in Chinese involvement with African media: official visits, guided tours, free access to Chinese media content, and the establishment of media bureaus in Africa (Li, 2017: 77).

The early media interactions were aimed at helping Africa fight Western dominance in their territories (Stahl, 2016: 2). This involved helping countries that were colonised use propaganda to promote independence; those that had just attained independence were helped in developing a de-Westernised media paradigm which, according to Glück (2018) is “based on criticisms of a dominant elitist ‘Western’ axiology and epistemology of universal validity, leaving aside indigenous and localised philosophical traditions originating in non-Western settings.’ In this regard, China was ready to share its news experience, skills, and technology (Li, 2017: 78). China promoted revolutions in Africa through their foreign propaganda system called *Wai Xuan*, which in the 1960s involved the dissemination of information through the following institutions: Peking Television Station (renamed China Central Television [CCTV] in 1978 and later China Global Television Network - CGNT), *Xinhua News Agency*, Radio Peking (renamed China Radio International [CRI] in 1978) and the Foreign Language Bureau, which published books and magazines in various foreign languages (Li, 2017: 78).

In the ‘adjustment phase’ from 1978 and 2000, China focused on changing its principles in international propaganda (Jijun, 2015: 48). Li (2017: 79) argues that the name does not adequately reflect the demand for autonomy by Chinese journalists that happened in the 1980s. China changed its international propaganda principles as it no longer saw it necessary to facilitate revolution, considering that it made China seem pompous. Instead, it began to target ordinary foreigners so that they could improve the understanding and friendship between China and the rest of the world (Li, 2017: 78). China began to seek partnerships with African media so that it could implement more effective communication tactics, messages, and methods (Jijun, 2016: 52).

3.4.1. The Phase of ‘Media Going Out’

The ‘media going out’ phase began in the year 2001 after the Forum on China-Africa Co-operation (FOCAC) was heard, and it gained momentum in 2008 at the Beijing Olympic Games (Li, 2017:

84-85). In 2009, China claimed to have invested US\$7 billion for overseas propaganda, and after the Beijing Olympic Games, *Xinhua*, *China Daily*, CCTV, and CRI teamed up to investigate the feasibility of a Government of the People (GoP) project so that they could fight Western media hegemony (Li, 2017: 85). Li (2017: 85) argues that the GoP project was motivated by the negative and bullying tone of reports made by Western media during the disruption of the Olympic torch relay in 2008.

The ‘media going out’ is characterised by the institutionalisation of Africa-China media relations (Li, 2017: 85). Gagliardone, Repnikova, and Stremlau (2010) note that there is a similarity between African and Chinese media philosophies in that African media is guided by the philosophy of Ubuntu, which is similar to the Chinese philosophy of Confucianism. Ubuntu derives from Zulu and Xhosa maxima that roughly translate in ‘humanity toward others’ (Christians, 2004: 241). It is an African world view and an indigenous belief system that promotes basic respect and compassion for others (Louw, 2006: 161). Christians (2004: 242) also observed that “the role of community in making the human world” is not exclusive to Africa and therefore conceptualises Ubuntu as a universal philosophy. Ubuntu guides journalism practice; where Western framework encourages journalists to be neutral and objective, the complexity of the Ubuntu world view makes objectivity undesirable as it ignores important themes such as power and ideological influences and “casts the citizens into a disempowered role of a student” and journalists to “brokers of communication” (Christians, 2004: 247). Ubuntu encourages authentic disclosure where reports are grounded historically and biographically so that the reports can reflect what is happening on the ground (Christian, 2004: 247). Furthermore, Western media sees truth as completely rooted in facts, while Ubuntuism argues that values such as truth and justice are constructed interdependently by and within the community (Fourie, 2008: 65). However, Ubuntu is just a normative ideal; some people do not even practice it because of foreign forces such as Islam, Christianity, and colonialism that impacted on Africa (Fourie, 2008: 68).

Just like Ubuntu, Confucianism considers proper human relationships as the basis of every functional society (Yum, 1988: 374). Confucianism was founded by Confucius, who believed that a country must be administered with high moral values to strengthen human relations. He argues that economic development must go hand in hand with cultural development and that people must

not only be benevolent to each other but objects as well (Lee, 2015). However, just like Ubuntu, Confucianism is normative and is not necessarily practised in everyday life.

The poor application of Ubuntu in Malawi mediascapes can be seen through the continued political influence in news reporting to silence oppositional views (Kapiri, 2017). This is contrary to the demand for a more harmonious society advocated by Ubuntu. The Western framework is common in African media because of coloniality and postcolonial ties (Wakesa, 2013: 66) where the West left the Continent, but their structures are still on the ground. Farah and Mosher (2010: 11) argue that the authoritarian Chinese media system is being ‘exported to’ Africa, creating fears that strides for media freedom in the Continent would be hampered and that the new form of journalism would not be responsive to Africa's problems that are being addressed through the transitional media.

Contrary to Confucianism, the Chinese government believes in state-controlled media (or what is referred to in China as ‘constructive journalism’) (Rønning, 2016: 72) that reports positive stories characterised by far less free reporting than media in democracies (Zhang and Matingwina, 2016: 94) to defend the authoritarian interests of the Chinese government, as well as the governments of African countries where they are working. MacIntyre and Gyldensted (2017: 22) and Bro (2019: 2) point out that constructive journalism is a term that has been used to describe a relatively recent journalistic reform movement that has sprung up in Europe, with a similar offshoot in the United States called ‘Solutions Journalism’, meaning that it is certainly not unique to China. Wasserman (2016: 2000) says that Chinese constructive journalism, which has its origins in development journalism, aims at preventing social divisions, and “works within a positive and solution-focused frame”. Gagliardone and Nyíri (2017:1054) look at what others call constructive journalism as positive journalism, which is a journalism “practice that focuses on collective achievements, rather than divisive issues or sensational news,” even if doing so would violate widely held journalistic ethos. For example, Gagliardone and Nyíri (2017) write that when an experienced reporter at Xinhua in Nairobi wrote about a slum, editors killed the story, because was negative and harmful to the image of Kenya and Muslims.

Umejei (2018: 352) observes that positive reporting has been received with mixed feelings in Africa, where some journalists argue that positive stories would help create a good picture for

Africa because, for a long time, the media has been so obsessed with negative reporting. Africa is now commonly known for hunger, HIV/AIDS, and senseless wars, in part, because of the media. Other journalists argue that it is not wrong that the negative side of Africa is exposed because African leaders do not respond to propaganda but rather critique (Umejei, 2018: 352).

The Chinese government has signed agreements with African governments that map their interaction with the media. Forum on China-Africa Co-operation (2016) explains Chinese intervention in Africa's media platforms, including the China-Africa Press Exchange Centre programme that holds training and capacity-building seminars for African media practitioners so that they can learn from their Chinese counterparts. China trains 1,000 African media professionals each year and supports exchanges of reporters among media organisations. Wu (2012: 14) traces the training as far back as 2006 when 20 radio and TV journalists from Africa were trained by the Chinese Media University. Weseka (2013: 68) writes that journalists who visit China under the support of the Chinese government are given lectures on Chinese philosophy and society. Apart from these short-term initiatives, the Chinese government also offers scholarships to train African journalists at the degree level.

The other intervention notable in the action plan is that China is providing technical support and personnel training for the digitalisation of radio and TV services and industrial development in Africa. Broadcasting in Africa has largely remained analogue despite the migration to digital technology in many parts of the world. Digital mass communication is advantageous in that it allows the compacting of television as well as radio signals, such that it becomes easy for a country to have more space in the bandwidth, and more stations can be accommodated in a region. Users are also able to get rid of interference ; hence the reception is clearer, and the sound is better as compared to the analogue system.

This is part of China's attempt to promote 'infrastructure alignment' with African media (Banda (2009: 348).

3.4.1.1. Infrastructural Alignment

China has been ‘aligning’ infrastructure in Africa by donating communication technology that will encourage Africa to become dependent on it for technical support (Banda, 2009: 348). Each time an African country receives equipment from China, there is a need that Africans be trained in maintenance of the technology, and sometimes experts are sent from China to repair technology. This means that with an increase in Chinese communication technology in Africa, Africans will have to cultivate good relations with China so that the technology can be maintained. Such technological alignment is also likely to shift Africa from relying on the West for technology and expertise to relying on China (Banda, 2009: 348).

In the past, the only beneficiaries of the Chinese donations were state-owned media houses, but over time, private media also benefited (Weseka, 2013: 71). Examples of state-owned broadcasting houses that have benefited are the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) and the National Radio of Equatorial Guinea (Banda, 2009: 348). Malawi has also benefited from the aid in several ways, including the US\$22.94 million for the installation of fibre-optic technology (Banda, 2009: 348).

China argues that the donations are made in good faith, but there are worries that this is a direct expression of the Chinese ‘charm offensive’ (Jedlowski & Rösenthaller, 2017: 2) where it is feared that it is using the donations to influence despotic African leaders and suppress media freedom (Wakesa, 2013: 65). For example, Banda (2009) writes that countries such as Zambia and Zimbabwe have greatly benefited from Chinese aid that might have influenced local politics. In Zimbabwe, China donated military grade radio frequency jamming technology that Zimbabwe used to prevent opposition parties from exercising their freedom of expression during the 2005 parliamentary elections campaign (Brookes and Shin, 2006). In Zambia, Banda (2009: 348) writes that China donates communication equipment each year before elections to keep in power the pro-China Multiparty Democracy (MMD).

Wasserman and Madrid-Morales (2018: 2214) indicate that these attempts have given way to a concern that “Chinese media values, practices, and culture will exercise a significant influence on the way media content in Africa is produced and that Chinese news making standards will impact

audiences' normative expectations of the media's role in African societies and their understanding of African society and politics". However, research conducted in South Africa by Madrid-Morales and Wasserman (2017) and Wasserman (2016) indicates that there have been minimal impacts of Chinese interventions on the routines and attitudes of the journalists. While some journalists have adopted Chinese media as a source of information, others have rejected it, arguing that it is a mouthpiece of the Chinese government, while others do not see the value of Chinese news sources in their work. This observation seems to be in line with Xin (2009: 365), who observed that *Xinhua*, CRI, CCTV, *People's Daily* and *China Daily* are government mouthpieces. *Xinhua* sets the diplomatic tone of news which other Chinese media follow (Xin, 2009: 364). However, *Xinhua* has limited influence in Africa because its operations are very much influenced, directly or indirectly, by the strategies and performance of its international counterparts operating in the continent (Xin 2006a in Xin 2009: 364). Xin (2009: 366) indicates that African media is now more diverse and popular among locals than in the 1970s and 80s, such that it is now capable of resisting Western or Chinese influence.

Ngomba (2012) argues that the Chinese soft power in the mediascape may not work in Africa because African is too open politically, as compared to China, for it to adopt constructive journalism. African government do not also have the resources to fully control the media as China does. China has been exposing African journalists to its media so that Africans can copy the same, but Umejei (2018: 345) writes that these attempts influence not all journalists; hence Africa would not adopt Chinese constructive journalism, but rather produce a hybrid journalism practice that would be in-between Chinese constructive journalism and the Western liberal pluralist system.

3.5. Conclusion

This chapter has shown that Africa-China relations have existed for a long time. At first, China was interested in fighting Western domination in Africa, but now it has changed its focus to pragmatism, where China now supports African countries to improve their economy and that of their partners in what is called a 'win-win' situation. There is a need to find out the perception of Malawian journalists on the forces that influence news reports on China.

CHAPTER 4

THEORETICAL CONTEXT

4.0. Introduction

This chapter discusses the theories that were put in use during the research to study the perception of Malawian journalists of the way China is represented in the country's news media. These theories are global media systems (including Chinese media systems), normative theories of the media and journalistic roles, African journalism culture, hierarchy of influences, and sourcing theories. The chapter critically discusses each of the theories and considers their utility to the study.

4.1. The Media Systems Theory

The Media Systems theory was developed by Hallin and Mancini to describe media systems in Western Europe and North America (Hallin, 2016). They argued that there are three media systems, and these are the polarised pluralist, liberal pluralist, and democratic corporatist. Polarised pluralist media describes a media system where political elites have firm control over media content to propagate ideologies (Hallin and Mancini, 2010: 58). The media does not provide a platform that Jürgen Habermas (Keller, 2014) calls a 'public sphere' so that people can voluntarily associate with others, participate, and engage in a rational critical argument. The model is known for its low circulation of content; journalists have strong political connections, higher levels of corruption in media practice and emphasis on commentary. Countries practising it include Spain and Italy, where there is a strong tradition of regarding media as means of polarised ideological expression and political mobilisation.

The liberal pluralist model is found in countries such as the United States of America (USA) and the United Kingdom (UK). The word liberal means freedom of choice and expression, while pluralists mean to encompass different views and expressions (Mohammed, 2015). This media system allows people to share their opinion freely, promotes fact-based discourse, and promotes news at the expense of '*political parallelism*' where there is limited political influence in news media (Hallin and Mancini, 2010: 58; Yasin, 2015; Mohammed, 2015). Divisions of political parties in a country or the world can still be observed in the media, but internal plurality is

encouraged, and objectivity is highly encouraged in news reporting. Journalists assume the watchdog role (Mohammed, 2015) and look at themselves as professionals who are offering a public service (Yasin, 2015). Malawi media practice is transitional and seems to lean towards the liberal pluralist model (Manda and Tsitsi, 2017:2), but politicians continue to attack the media, sometimes successfully.

The democratic corporatist model is practised in countries such as Switzerland and Australia. Its market structure comprises '*segmented pluralism*' where it has several religious and ideological groupings tolerating each other on media platforms both for internal and external plurality. There is also an expansion of '*omnibus commercial press*'. The media operates in an environment characterised by what Hallin and Mancini (2010: 58) call '*partisan press or Political Parallelism*,' where the media landscapes reflect political divisions in a country. Countries adopting this approach have laws against hate speech and have strong protection for press freedom.

4.1.1. Critique of the Media Systems Theory

The main weakness of the Media System theory is that it is a Western media framework. Some of its arguments may not apply to non-Western countries such as Malawi and China. For example, though Malawi seems to replicate the liberal pluralist model, there are constant battles between elites and the media when producing news. Hallin and Mancini (2012) accepted this criticism, and in an attempt to resolve the status quo, they collected essays in a follow-up volume called "*Comparing Media Systems Beyond the Western World*," which had a chapter on Africa, where Hadland (2012) argued that media audiences in Africa, particularly South Africa, are demarcated by race, ethnicity, and language. He also argued that all three media systems could be observed in South Africa, however, the liberal pluralist model is dominant.

To further understand media beyond the Western world, the study also uses the African journalism culture theory, which tries to explain how African media functions under such circumstances.

4.1.2. Utility of Media System Theory

The theory was essential in understanding media practice in Malawi, to see where media practice stands in Malawi and how China is influencing the same

4.2. Chinese Media System Theory

The study employed ‘Chinese media theory’ as developed by Yuezhi Zhao (2012) through her article titled, ‘*Understanding China’s Media System in a World Historical Context.*’ In this article, she traced patterns in Chinese media for as far back as 1949 (Zhao, 2012: 148) and observed that the Chinese government exerts strong control over the media so that the media can help support development such as conducting awareness campaigns.

There are private media houses in China, but this has raised concerns that it threatens China’s system of government because, in a communist state, press freedom is first and foremost freedom from capitalistic control. The adoption of private media is seen as taking a step towards ‘capitalist restoration’ both in theory and in practice (Zhao, 2012 154). The entry of non-party players in media has prompted the Chinese government to expand its structural management of media where the government has put in place the Central Propaganda Department to implement a three-tier news review system since 1994, where it deploys ‘news reviewers’ to monitor news media daily (Luo, 2015: 52). Li and Rønning (2013: 117) write; ‘The Central Propaganda Department, the most important institution in terms of media control, has overarching authority when it comes to managing top executives of the Ministry of Culture, General Administration of Press and Publication, *People’s Daily*, *Xinhua News Agency* and State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television.’

The power of the CPD is not absolute; sometimes aspiring journalists agitate for autonomous practice (Li and Rønning, 2013). This has been a result of the commercialisation of the media market that took place in the mid-1990s where the private sector was allowed to own up to 49% of shares in the media. The Chinese press, therefore, at times, exhibits elements of Christians et al. (2009) and Hanitzsch and Vos (2018) monitorial role. However, journalists need to contribute to ‘half free-style’ reporting where they have ‘to bite the bullet to soften the edges of their reporting’ so that their stories can be accepted by the CPD and eventually get published (Li and Rønning 2013: 118; Wasserman and Madrid-Morales, 2018: 2213).

4.2.1. Critique of the Chinese Media System Theory

Though the theory gives a comprehensive account of how media is practised in China, it is weak in that it tries to understand Chinese media from the Western lens. At some point, the theory to recognise traditional Chinese culture; especially Confucian, to explain media practice, but this seems to be overshadowed by the Western lens. In Confucian philosophy, the government is conceptualised as “the conscience of society and voice of the people” - hence the media has a duty “to enlighten the public to recognise their, and the nation’s interests” (Zhao, 2012: 164) but journalists sometimes resist government influence. Dirlik (1995) observes that Confucian life in China is dying.

4.2.2. Utility of Chinese Media System Theory

Though the Chinese Media System theory is drawn from a Western lens, it gives a useful account of media practice in China and provides a framework for understanding the possible influence of the norms and practices of Chinese media on Malawian media.

4.3. Normative Theories of the Media

Normative theories of the media were first written in 1956 by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm in the book titled *Four Theories of the Press*. Amner (2010: 20) argues that they are badly outdated such that in 2009, Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng and White, wrote a new text titled *Normative Theories of the Media: Journalism in Democratic Societies* that explores the philosophical and political underpinnings of a normative approach to the question of the role of journalism in a democratic society. These theorists argue that there are two theories of the press: those that explain what media roles ought to be (normative theory) and those that explain the ‘factual role’ of media in society (media sociology). They propose four key normative roles of the media: monitorial, facilitative, radical, and collaborative roles. It is important to note that while Malawi is, formally, a democracy, China is not.

4.3.1. Collaborative Role of the Media

The collaborative role of the media advocates that the media needs to work side by side with the state (and other sources of social power) considering that the state in developing countries is under intense pressure to foster “economic and social development under conditions of scarce resources

and immature political institutions” (Christians et al. 2009: 127). Many journalists look at collaborative journalism as an obligation or patriotic duty (Christians et al., 2009: 197). For example, when a radio station in Malawi covers the presidential debate, the public does not question why the media is collaborating with debate organisers while the journalists themselves think they are offering a public service. Understood normatively, collaboration in the tradition of development journalism usually involves a partnership with the state, though not always a formal one, so that the press would play a positive role in the processes of development (Amner, 2010). The collaborative role of journalism may be viewed as a lack of commitment by the media to stand for the hegemonic libertarian and professional journalistic ideology of an independent press (Amner, 2010) as journalists can challenge the state but not the point where they would undermine a government’s basic plans.

In the African context, development journalism was used as a “revolutionary tool of African liberation from the fetters of colonialism and imperialism” and a way to build fragile post-colonial nation-states through the creation of a trans-ethnic national consciousness (Domatob and Hall, 1983: 10; Amner, 2010). African governments were keen to use the media in informing, educating, motivating and mobilising their citizens, but Zikarge (2016: 34) observed that in the postcolonial era, development journalism was soon used by those in authorities to consolidate and perpetuate power (Domatob et al. 1983: 12) by suppressing press freedom. Solomon (2014: 11) writes that development journalism is the journalism theory and practice that serve ordinary people by highlighting their development problems and solutions. Mabweazara (2018) writes that though development journalism is there to promote social-economic development, the trend has been that development media is just a publicity cover-up for their self-serving and exploitative political practice.

To augment the challenge of having a media that serves elites instead of development needs, Galtung and Vincent (1992) in Amner (2010: 18) pointedly avoided clear claims to support a state-press partnership and instead argued that the press needed to promote citizen participation in programmes of social change. However, Christians et al. (2009: 202) argue that advocates of development journalism fail to address the excessive power of the state that is geared to control

the media. In the case of Malawi, there are effectively two states trying to maintain these collaborative roles: the Malawian and Chinese states.

Amner (2010) asks, “are collaborations with the state always dishonourable and indefensible?” If Malawi can be said to suffer from a number of conditions of crisis and emergency which pose a threat to society – poverty, hunger, HIV/AIDS, for example – then “fully normative agreements” to cooperate between the Malawian media and state on selected issues of crisis and emergency, may indeed be possible and desirable. The state-press partnerships are supposed to be partial, meaning that the press does not abandon their other roles, such as the monitorial and facilitative roles.

The collaborative role of the media relates to development journalism in that they both aim at supporting the government development agenda.

4.3.2. Critique of the Collaborative Role

Although the theory seems to explain the significance of a collaborating media in developing countries such as Malawi, it could be argued that China’s soft power approach to encouraging a collaborative role for the media is undergirded by the hard (repressive) power of the Malawian state, which does not constitute a voluntary, ‘fully normative agreement’ for co-operation between the Malawian media and the Malawian and Chinese states. Christians et al. (2009 cited in Amner 2010: 18) write that a fully normative agreement is “when journalists take into account all that needs to be known about the particular arrangements and outcomes of collaboration, including the assessment of the consequences of cooperation for the larger community, and judge a collaborative role to be ‘correct’ or ‘proper’.”

Furthermore, the normative roles of the media outlined by Christians et al. (2009) were developed as a model for democratic societies and therefore do not apply to China. In the collaborative role, for example, Christians et al. argue that in a democratic society, collaboration between the state and the media should be voluntary, should meet the needs of both parties, and should be legitimated on the grounds of immediate necessity. Shramm et al.'s (1956: 121 cited in Li and Rønning, 2013) old characterisation of the Soviet-Communist model is more applicable to describe media practice in

China. However, Ronning (2013) says that this is limited due to some autonomy of Chinese newsrooms. This flaw was augmented by the Chinese media system theory.

4.3.3. Utility of the Theories of the Media

Normative theories of the media added an essential dimension to the study in that they helped understand the normative framework invoked by the Malawi government and its Chinese allies to curry a closer collaboration between the media and the state(s) in the name of serving the development needs of the developing Malawian state. However, the researcher was careful to note that some of the intentions for the ‘collaborations’ may not have been in good faith.

4.4. African Journalism Culture Theory

The African journalism culture theory has been developed by White and Mabweazara (2018), who argue that there are issues on governance, media resistance, laws, chequebook journalism, and investigative journalism, in African journalism that implicate (and contest) neo-patrimonial dominance and related efforts towards democratisation. These are explained here.

4.4.1. Government Image in African Mediascape

White and Mabweazara (2018: 54) observed that in African mediascapes, the government had established a ‘falsity of the neo-patrimonial governance image of the loving father’ where the government has a pretentious duty of ‘fatherly authority’ to make sure that journalists treat actions of presidential figures with unthinking, childlike obeisance. Where journalists have lost their way, the ‘father’ has to ‘punish them’ so that they can turn back from their ‘wild ways’ that are disrespectful of this ‘kingly,’ arbitrary government. In trying to protect the journalism profession from the harsh and imposed father, journalists across Africa have attempted to self-regulate by formulating professional bodies that monitor irresponsible journalism (Gnonzion, 2011: 31) while some have resorted to protests and legal redress. But, there have been concerns that the legal protection is weak as sometimes the government prefers initiating individual loyalty rather than adhering to legal provisions. Examples of professional bodies in Malawi include the Media Council of Malawi and MISA Malawi. The professional bodies have financial challenges that affect their operations.

4.4.2. Media Resistance

Private media in Africa are dedicated to fighting abuse of power in African governments, including violations of human rights and corruption. The media fights side by side with non-governmental organisations, and White and Mabweazara (2018: 59) observed that when media is working without the support of the civil society, churches, business associations, and women's organisations, it is easily silenced. The media also challenge editorial policies in their own media houses that serve the interests of political elites. Sometimes even editors themselves align with journalists. This puts their jobs at risk, but the action reveals the zeal among African journalists to pursue a culture of thorough and independent journalism (White and Mabweazara, 2018: 60-61) which is cultivated by African thinkers, such as Chinua Achebe, who celebrated honesty and courage. In fighting back, sometimes African governments try buying them off, bullying them into submission (White and Mabweazara, 2018: 62-65) or developing convincing discourse mostly through public media to defend their self-enriching forms of government (Ogbondah, 2002). Journalists are exploring alternative media, especially the internet, to challenge government influence on media content.

4.4.3. Media and the Law

White and Mabweazara (2018: 65) argue that neo-patrimonial regimes have deliberately maintained some bad laws that have colonial roots in African constitutions so that they can defend and increase their concentration of power. Some African countries have passed laws that safeguard freedom of information, which allows journalists to demand information from public officials. In other African countries where similar acts have been passed, 'freedom of information' has little impact because most journalists have not been oriented to the law (Ashong and Udouo, 2012) and sometimes journalists are just not ready to fight the stiff resistance that they encounter when invoking the law. Journalists also do not always trust the courts to safeguard their freedom (White and Mabweazara, 2018: 67-68). In Malawi, the Access to Information Bill was passed in 2016, but the president is reluctant to declare its commencement.

4.4.4. Cheque-book Journalism

White and Mabweazara (2018: 68) observed that there is a widespread culture of cash-for-coverage journalism, a practice that the Media Council of Malawi calls 'cheque-book journalism', while

Skjerdal (2018: 163) calls it ‘brown envelope journalism.’ Journalists are bought (Mare and Brand, 2010: 411) to overlook or misrepresent facts to protect the image of politicians. Some journalists maintain their integrity and commitment to protecting rights and democratic processes (White and Mabweazara, 2018: 68).

Cheque-book journalism in Africa is not always corrupt in a straightforward sense - it is also about getting journalists to write about an event by giving them the money to attend the event, etc. (Skjerdal, 2018: 164). Some journalists argue that without these extra payments, they would not cover some events because the media houses are so badly resourced (Nwabueze, 2010: 501).

4.4.5. Investigative Journalism

Investigative journalism is becoming an important part of journalism across the world to uncover stories that otherwise would not have been known. There have been complaints that African training prepares journalists to treat people as mere entertainment spectators who do not take part in democratic processes (White and Mabweazara, 2018: 70) and does not fully expose students to political theories that would help them unsettle power dominance in societies (White and Mabweazara, 2018: 70). They have been reduced to reporters of political feuds among politicians instead of investigating power interactions that promote inequality even when they are not reported or are poorly reported. Shaw (2018: 36) notes that African journalism is simply mimicking Western journalism as the schools are not contextualising their media training programs to the African experiences.

Furthermore, African leaders are exercising such extreme grips on journalists that it is hard for one to practice investigative journalism. For example, as a way of controlling media content, the government awards advert opportunities to their favourite media houses, which paralyses critical media because most advertisements in African media are from the government (White and Mabweazara, 2018: 71). Despite the challenges that the journalists face, African journalists have not given up on investigative journalism.

Journalists work as watchdogs to investigate how public officials interact with society. In that way, they can uncover malfeasance and abuse by public officials who are destroying African countries.

This allows the public at large to decide on whether to maintain public officers or not. For example, in Malawi, having heard of rumours of gross cross-border corruption at the Songwe border, a Malawian journalist disguised as a traveller, exposed it which led to calls for a prudent immigration department.

4.4.6. Critique of the African Journalistic Culture Theory

African Journalistic Culture theory is sometimes weak in that it treats Africa as a country, although Africa has many communities with different experiences. It generalises experiences of African media to categorise African media, yet some of the experiences do not apply to Malawi. For example, the Access to Information Act is yet to be implemented in Malawi, although it has already been implemented in other African countries.

4.4.7. Utility of African Journalistic Culture Theory

Though the African Journalistic Culture theory is weak, it gives a framework that would be more related to Malawian journalistic experience as compared to Western-based theories. For example, just like in other African countries, Malawi is experiencing a growth of neo-patrimonial state repression, resulting in government interference in media practice. The theory was used to understand such controls to see how China influences Malawian news reporting without explicit and direct collusion between the Malawian and Chinese authorities.

4.5. Journalistic Roles Theory

Whereas normative theories of the media interrogate the overarching roles that journalism could play in the service of democracy, journalistic roles theory is more concerned with the specific roles played by journalists in their everyday professional practice. Hanitzsch and Vos (2017: 115–116) synthesised data collected under the *'Worlds of Journalism Project'* where they were concerned that the study of journalistic roles tended to come from within a Western framework oriented toward the media's contribution to democracy and citizenship, often failing to account for non-democratic and non-Western contexts. Hanitzsch and Vos (2018) explored how journalistic roles have been debated as far back as 1963. They recognise Cohen's (1963) work that a journalist's role is to work as either 'neutral' or 'participants'. Where they are neutral, journalists attempt to undertake an impartial broadcast of information (similar to the 'monitorial role'). In the participant role, a journalist plays an active role in the development of what is 'newsworthy' (Johnstone et al.,

1972: 523). They also took note of Janowitz’s (1975) argument that journalists have, ‘gatekeeper’ and ‘advocate’ roles.

Weaver and Wilhoit (1996) have also enriched the study of journalistic roles by arguing that journalists have professional roles as the disseminator, interpreter, adversarial, and populist mobiliser.

Journalistic roles have been faulted in that they are discursive (Hanitzsch and Vos, 2017: 118); meaning that journalists who practice journalism differently are cast as the crude ‘other’ to proper journalism (Nerone, 2013: 446). This is problematic because the roles exist because they are talked about, yet they are limiting and enabling, constraining, and constructive (Hanitzsch and Vos, 2017: 119) through formal structures, such as laws, and informal rules and procedures, such as customs and codes of conduct. Hanitzsch and Vos (2018) suggest a discursive turn that can allow people from different parts of the world to easily identify themselves with journalism roles by accommodating the roles that are practised in their particular societies, thereby creating a theory that would be inclusive of non-Western journalism cultures. They fundamentally suggest that journalists have roles that affect political life.

4.5.1. Journalism and the Domain of Political Life

Political life domain includes the role of journalists in providing citizens with the information they need to act and participate in political life; to be free and self-governing. Hanitzsch and Vos (2018) suggested 18 roles in the political realm;

Function	Specific Role	Description
Informational-instructive	Disseminator	Distributes information and serves as an ‘official register’ or a ‘minute taker’
	Curator	Finds, organises, contextualises, and shares content
	Storyteller, or narrator	provides backgrounds and explains events in context

Analytical-deliberative	Analyst	Synthesises information and provides subjective opinions for the audience
	Access provider	Provides platform and forum on which people can express themselves.
	Mobiliser	Promotes mass participation in politics.
Critical-monitorial	Monitor	Observes misconduct in political activity
	Detective	Scrutinises claims and statements considered suspicious
	Watchdog	Critiques society
Advocative-radical	Adversary	Serves as a ‘mouthpiece’ of the people
	Advocate	Serves as a lobbyist
	Missionary	Propagates ideologies
Developmental-educative	Change agent	Champions social change
	Educator	Works as a teacher.
	Mediator	Practices peace journalism and prevent conflicts
Collaborative-facilitative	Facilitators	Assists government in promoting development
	Collaborator	Acts as part of state apparatus, hence takes propagandist or agitator role.
	Mouthpiece	Serves to provide legitimacy to the government by explaining political decisions and guiding public opinion

Table 1: Political roles of journalists, source; researcher’s compilation

4.5.2. Critique of the Journalistic Roles Theory

As much as the journalistic roles theory is essential in understanding values that most journalists consider to be their roles, the theory was conceptualised from Western lens to achieve a global synthesis, and a single questionnaire was used to investigate journalist’s roles. Such a ‘universal questionnaire’ might not have taken into account individual factors that affect Malawian journalism, and there is a need to augment this theory with theories of media and African journalism culture theory.

4.5.3. Utility of the Journalistic Roles Theory

Though this theory is general, it was helpful because Malawian journalism has adopted many values from the Western world. The research interrogated how these were put into practice and whether and how Malawi's recent political and economic affiliation with China has had a regressive effect on its media culture; to explore if it has been re-triggered, harkening back to a less democratic era.

4.6. Hierarchy of Influences Theory

The hierarchy of influences theory was explicated by Pamela Shoemaker and Stephen D. Reese in their book, "*Mediating the Message: Theories of Influences on Mass Media Content*" (Reese, 2001: 178). It draws content from media sociology and psychology to understand the forces that influence what journalists report and explains how the influences at one level may affect the other levels. Each level of the theory is equally important, and there is no pattern on which the influence moves within the model. The influences are multifaceted, and there would be no single factor that would explain all media influences at all times (Reese, 2001: 179). Figure 2 shows the model.

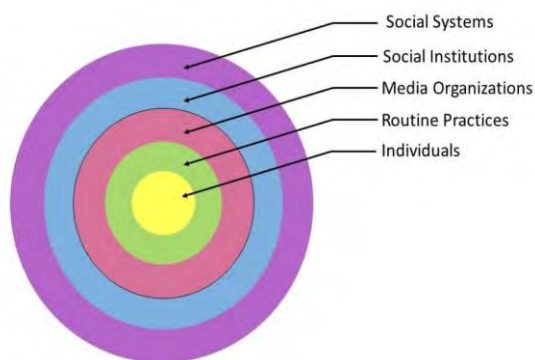


Figure 2: Hierarchy of Influences Model. Source: Shoemaker and Reese (2014)

4.6.1. Social Systems / Social cultural / Ideological level

The social systems level is a macro/outermost level (Reese, 2016: 8), and it can be divided into ideological, economic, political, and cultural subsystems.

The ideological subsystem goes to deeper levels of norms and subconscious meaning rather than overt beliefs like democracy. These influence media institutions, journalists, editors, etc., who all work within a system of beliefs, norms, and ideologies and defines certain behaviour and situations as deviant (Shoemaker and Reese 2014: 70).

The media house relates to the economy in that it may influence economic activities or it may be influenced by economic changes. Media houses also run under varying economic principles, such as capitalism and socialism, which may influence representation (Shoemaker and Reese 2014: 70).

Politics is viewed as something that shapes and is shaped by the media (Shoemaker and Reese 2014: 72). The political environment in which a media house operates may influence how the media operates; for example, in an authoritarian political system, one cannot find free media.

News media operates in cultural environments that influence news reports. In his theory titled 'world system,' Immanuel Wallerstein (1997) argues that cultural values move from the core to the periphery, and this might be conceptualised as cultural imperialism where those in the core force their values on those living in the periphery (see Figure 3).

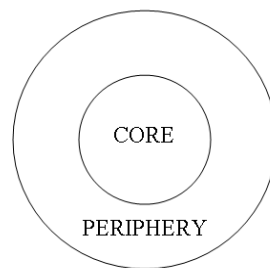


Figure 3: The Core Periphery Model

The core is the developed world, while the periphery is the developing world. Economic power among developing countries also varies such that some developing countries, such as China, may be seen to be more potent than other developing countries, such as Malawi.

4.6.2. Social Institutions/Extramedia

Social Institutions/Extramedia is a meso level of influence (Shoemaker and Reese, 2014: 64) where the word 'extramedia' means everything outside of media organisational boundaries (Reese and Shoemaker, 2016: 402). In this level, the media is a 'social actor' (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014: 64) in that it may be influenced by rich people, government officials (Gans, 1979: 147-148) or even other media organisations.

4.6.3. Media Organisations

The media organisations level conceptualises journalistic identity as a negotiated set of values, worked out to satisfy the organisation's needs (Reese, 2007: 36). The organisation level is placed between social institutions and routine, not necessarily because it is independent of the two but to allow researchers to easily investigate influences on content that cannot be attributed to individual journalists or their routines so that media organisations can be conceptualised as entities whose actions are not completely dependent on their routines or their relations with other social institutions (Shoemaker and Reese, 2014: 135). The level also includes how media houses hire journalists and allocate resources to newsgathering processes. Media houses are challenged to negotiate tensions between the promotion of journalistic values and the organisations' business interests (Reese, 2007: 36). The organisational level influences the routine that journalists should take (Reese, 2001: 181).

4.6.4. Routine Practices

When reporting news, journalists are expected to follow routines that are sometimes not made explicit (Reese and Shoemaker, 2016: 399). If a journalist does not follow these routines, s/he is taken to task (Høyer, 2005: 14). Shoemaker and Reese (2014: 168) note that news is associated with the following routines: the event, news values, interviewing, the inverted pyramid, and objectivity.

4.6.5. Individuals Level

Individuals is the most micro level and considers the characteristics of individual journalists as another force that shapes the way news is reported (Reese and Shoemaker, 2016: 398). Individual journalists may have varying judgements of the significance of the story (Gans, 1979: 152) depending on their ideology, sex, ambition, education, religion, age, ethics, and race. It is important to know the position from which journalists are reporting, but it is not easy to know their positions because the concept of identity is fluid (Shoemaker and Reese 2014: 205). Hence, the best way to study media at this level is to understand it from the perspective of the journalists themselves.

4.6.6. Critique of the Hierarchy of Influences Model

The hierarchy of influences theory helps in the critique of media performance by scrutinising how different forces and players exert influence on news production (Reese, 2007: 35). Every force or player can influence, and power can flow in any direction of the levels – it is hence necessary to analyse news in the context of all the levels (Reese, 2001: 178).

The idea that each level is assumed to influence news production makes the theory vague as it does not offer a clear direction that researchers can use to empirically separate the effects of one level from the other or compare two levels. The pioneers of the theory, Shoemaker and Reese (2014) also contradict themselves by writing that their model does not “single out any one level as more powerful” (Shoemaker and Reese 2014: 8), yet the pair has also recently argued that the government is very powerful in shaping news content (Reese and Shoemaker, 2016: 397).

Lastly, the theory is somewhat flawed in that it looks at the individual as powerless to challenge the successive layers of influence (Reese, 2007: 37). For example, the routines are seen to be very powerful in limiting what a journalist can do at the organisational level and ensure that journalists negotiate their identity so that they can fit in. This is an underestimation of the role of the individual because journalists usually work away from their supervisors, making it difficult to fully control them (Soloski, 1989: 208). In addition, the levels of influence in the theory are always seen as constraining, yet sometimes they are enabling and could encourage the journalist to perform even more independently (Reese, 2007: 37).

4.6.7. Utility of the Hierarchy of Influences Theory

As much as the theory was constructed through an American lens, the theory is useful because there are a number of Western journalism elements such as media ‘independence’ that can be observed in Malawian media.

As regards the challenge that the theory is vague, DeCillia (2017) argues that if the researcher is focused, he/she can select the elements of theory that s/he wants to test. This study focuses on how China has been represented in Malawian news reports over time and what Malawian journalists make of these representations and their shifts over time. The thesis considers the influence exerted

by the social systems and social institutions layer and is also especially interested in Malawian journalists' conceptions of how their journalistic routines, practices and role conceptions might have been influenced by the Chinese and Malawian states, along with their journalistic routines and practices which would have an impact on the representations themselves.

4.7. News Sourcing Theory

The study used news sourcing theory as advanced by Daniel A. Berkowitz (2009) in his article titled *Reporters and Their Sources*. The theory interrogates bias, power, and influence in news reporting. Berkowitz (2009: 102) questions if news sources favour or excludes some issues over others and how this shapes the news. To achieve this, he interrogates the reporter-source relationship and power-meaning making relationship discussed herein.

4.7.1. The Reporter-Source Relationship

Berkowitz (2009: 102) argues that to understand the relationship between the journalist and source, one needs to understand the basic demands of journalism ideology, and second, the procedures that journalists apply to accomplish their work. He argues that journalism's paradigm follows a science-like model, where reporters gather authoritative data and then present it objectively. This argument is flawed because news sources have vested interest in news reports to further their own success as elites to try to remain in a position of authority or maintain social permission to continue their current course of doing business (Berkowitz, 2009: 102).

Berkowitz (2009: 104) explains that journalists organise their work by routinising their tasks. Coleman, Thorson, and Wilkins (2011: 951) write that news conventions usually call for a minimum of three sources to develop a story, but Berkowitz (2009: 104) argues that the sources are not always available. He also points out that most of the news comes from sources that deliberately assemble news to have their voice be heard, while Nordheim, Boczek, and Koppers (2018: 807) explain that news sources from social media give ordinary people a chance to have their complaints heard by those in power.

4.7.2. The Power-Meaning Making Relationship

Berkowitz (2009: 104) argues that the collection of news hinges on power relations between the journalist and the source. When the source has too much power, efforts to gather information can

be thwarted, while if the journalist has high power, rich information may be gathered. Berkowitz (2009: 105) argues that the power of the reporter depends on the attributes of the reporter himself and the organisation for which he or she works for. Reporters with longer experience tend to have more power than recent reporters. The journalists' track record in reporting news and intra-organisational relations also affects power. Journalists, who have autonomy, tend to thoroughly investigate their stories before reporting instead of struggling with the deadline. The reporters' organisation influences the power of the journalists, but this is not absolute. News agencies with broader coverage, such as national or international outlets, have a greater impact than reporters from local organisations. However, Berkowitz (2009: 105) argues that when a news organisation from a larger sphere covers news in a smaller sphere, that large-scale power might be irrelevant. In terms of source power, Berkowitz (2009: 105) argues that sources that are located within a power structure tend to be most powerful, and in the case of this study, it is the Malawian and Chinese government.

Journalists and sources produce and reproduce particular viewpoints to maintain and propagate social order (Berkowitz, 2009: 105). Reporters are confronted with duality of meaning from their *professional interpretive community* and the *interpretive community* of their sources. From their professional interpretative community, journalists need to consider their professional ideals such as independence as well as their institutional policy. Reporters also need to consider 'the present-day localised meanings for occurrences and issues, and a broader historical reference point that provides a constant comparison between what has happened in the past and what is happening in the present' (Zelizer, 1993 in Berkowitz, 2009: 107).

Sources' interpretive communities have different dimensions on how meaning is generated. For example, when an event occurs, sources would like to produce a dominant meaning among possible interpretations. Politicians aim at protecting their image so that they can maintain their power or even amass more power. Businesses, on the other hand, would like their audience to view their initiatives positively so that they can continue selling their products and services.

4.7.3. De-Westernising News Sourcing Theory

The basic relationship between reporters and their sources can be seen in all press systems, from authoritarian to libertarian. For example, in Malawi, where there is a mixed press system model, the power of the journalists is highly related to his or her political connections. Journalists, who have great political connections, such as Brian Banda, tend to have greater power in sourcing rich news. However, Malawian journalists sometimes have a measure of power to decide when and how they can let the politicians in as compared to the Chinese, who seem to have a greater demand to comply with what the politicians want them to write. Hanitzsch (2006) argues that this is as such because in every case, a fundamental belief of journalists is that they cannot simply make up news but instead must rely on what they have been told by somebody holding a perceived level of authority.

4.7.4. Utility of the News Sourcing Theory

The news sourcing theory was applicable for the study in that it helped in understanding how sources shaped news on China. By understanding the sources of the news, the researcher was able to understand why a specific tone was used in the reports. The tone of the news report refers to the attitude that a news report carries, and it is “indicative ‘good’ versus ‘bad’ dichotomy and implicitly carry positive or negative elements, or both” (Evers, 2016: 10). Tone dictates the journalism style that one employs.

The researcher also interrogated the rhetoric language and meaning of the reports so that he can appreciate how the news sources related to language in use and the meaning that was being generated. Rhetoric refers to human use of figures of speech and compositional techniques such as hyperboles to manipulate human perception (Karen, 2009: 1) while Van Dijk (in Broersma, 2010: 23) defines style as “the total set of characteristics, variable structural features of discourse that are an indication of the personal and social context of the [journalist or media house], given a semantic, pragmatic, or situational invariant”. It is a subjective term, but in this study, journalistic style included an analysis of the different journalism approaches that are used when reporting news, such as positive and negative journalism.

4.8. Conclusion

The chapter has highlighted that the study used global media systems (including Chinese media systems), normative theories of the media and journalistic roles, African journalism culture, hierarchy of influences, and sourcing theories. The hierarchy of influences theory provides a framework for understanding how and where China is exerting influence, while the journalistic roles theory helped to understand the potential shift in role conception that are emerging as a result of the coming of China in the country. The challenge associated with journalistic roles is that it tries to explain journalism at a global scale hence may not fully explain the African journalistic experience. To augment this, the African Journalistic Culture theory was used. The study also used the China media systems theory to better understand how the Chinese and Malawian state are exerting pressure on journalists and this relates to the media systems theory. The study also used normative theories of media to understand what the media ought to do, while the news sourcing theory was used to understand how news sources might influence news.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH METHODS

5. Introduction

This chapter explains the research design, epistemological foundation, methods of collecting data, physical location, and the research procedure that informed the study. The chapter explains how the methods were used, their associated weaknesses, and how they were augmented in relation to the theoretical framework and their relevance to the goals of the study.

5.1. Research Design

The study used a qualitative design not to find a universal claim of knowledge, rather establish knowledge in the social context of the journalists (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 29), to gain an insider perspective on the issue at hand (Creswell, 2007).

This qualitative research design also used the researcher as a key tool for collecting data (Babbie, 2001: 273) where the researcher personally collected data and synthesised texts (Babbie 2001: 270). He understood concepts using deductive and inductive reason (Babbie, 2001: 273). Inductive reasoning in research is where a researcher collects data, analyses it, and develops a theory that makes broad generalisations from specific observations. Unlike inductive reasoning, the deductive approach focuses on a systematic analysis of text from a prior formulated theoretical base

5.1.1. Epistemological Position

‘Epistemology’ refers to the foundation of the study of society and its manifestations (Bryman, 1984: 75). The study views the world from a social constructivist perspective (Bryman, 1988: 3), also known as the interpretative tradition, which argues that meaning in a text does not have an inherent property, but it is rather generated by people by reflecting on their realities (Charmaz, 2006). He used this approach to understand how the environment in which journalists work shapes their practice.

5.1.2. Rationale for Qualitative Study

A qualitative research approach was appropriate because it promised to offer rich data. The researcher collected data until he was no longer able to generate new data, and knowledge saturation had been achieved. This makes findings from qualitative research useful in predicting the behaviour of individuals or groups who share common characteristics.

The other advantage of the qualitative design was that complex data could be incorporated into the research. The modern world prefers statistics and verifiable facts of the quantitative approach (Hansen, Cottle, Negrin, and Newbold, 1998: 91), but there are complexities of life that cannot be quantified (Bryman, 1988: 18). In this study, the perceptions could best be understood through descriptive statements, which are an important part of everyday life.

Apart from the above points, qualitative research was also advantageous because it encouraged flexibility when giving responses (Creswell, 2007: 238). When responding to interview questions, respondents were given enough time to develop their answers to give them the flexibility needed to express themselves fully. I was careful to ask the respondents to be honest to share openly and not necessarily say what they thought I wanted to hear. In doing so, I hoped to be given a true picture of the situation on the ground.

5.2. Research Procedure

After the proposal had been approved and ethical clearance had been given, the researcher visited the National Archives in Zomba, where he obtained and read news articles on China from 2001 to 2020 to learn how China had been represented both before and after the coming of China in Malawi. The study supervisor, Dr Vanessa Malila, looked at the findings and helped streamline them in line with the study objectives. She then helped develop guiding questions from the findings that were used for the in-depth interviews (see Appendix 1).

Thereafter, pilot interviews were conducted with two freelance journalists to make sure that the questions were able to generate rich and relevant data. After the pilot test, interview questions were refined, and the researcher was ready for the study, which took about two months. The Rhodes

University ethics committee approved the letter of introduction that I used to get access to media houses (see Appendix 2).

Considering that most journalists wear smart casual when at work in Malawi, the researcher was careful to dress like them during the interviews so that they could easily associate themselves with him. To prevent suspicions, the researcher told the journalists that the study was an academic one and that the interview would not take more than an hour. The appointments were made in advance because journalists are busy, usually out in the field, and challenging to find them without an appointment.

5.3. Methods of Collecting Data

The study employed in-depth interviews and qualitative content analysis so that they could augment each other's weaknesses (Deacon, 1999). Moyo (2015: 28) also notes that triangulating methods ensures that a study yields rich data and would allow one to obtain multiple perceptions of data and allow respondents to participate in the research process fully.

5.3.1. Qualitative Content Analysis

Krippendorff (2004: 18) defines content analysis as a technique that is used to make replicable and valid inferences from texts. Replicability means that if researchers are investigating the same phenomena under the same conditions, they are supposed to find the same information. In contrast, valid inference means that the findings can be upheld in the face of independent evidence. Content analysis is something that all of us do informally to understand text (Stempel, 2003), but for research purposes, academics take a formal approach by studying texts systematically using specified *procedures* to make valid inferences (Weber, 1990 in Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). In this study, the researcher was systematic by analysing news articles as a primary source that is empirical evidence. From these artefacts, he objectively identified key terms in representing China, specified possible relationships among terms, and assessed if they affected each other.

Content analysis can be quantitative or qualitative (Krippendorff, 2004: 15). Quantitative content analysis is the systematic and replicable examination of symbols of communication, which have been assigned numerical values to describe communication, draw inferences about its meaning, or

infer from the communication to its context (Riffe, Lacy, and Fiko, 2005). Qualitative content analysis is ‘an approach of empirical, methodological controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication, following content analytical rules and step by step models, without rash quantification’ (Mayring, 2000).

This study took a qualitative approach within the constructive epistemological stance, which is rooted in literary studies, social science, and critical theory (Krippendorff, 2004: 17). Qualitative research involves a reading of a small amount of text, rearticulating the text into new narratives, and applying hermeneutic skills to engage texts from their own socially or culturally conditioned understandings.

The qualitative content analysis helped identify themes in texts (Drisco and Maschi, 2016: 83), and the researcher did not pursue an analysis of the frequency of words because concentration on frequency sometimes deters one from capturing the way meaning arises from the complex interaction of symbolic texts and context and framework of interpretation (Hansen, Cottle, Negrine and Newbold, 1998: 95- 97).

The study took Krippendorff’s (2004: 30) framework, which demands that an analyst pay attention to the text, research questions, conditions, inferences, and validation of inferences, as shown in Figure 4. For this study, the text was the news articles on China, and the researcher intended to use this text to answer research questions listed in Chapter 1. He took note of socio-cultural background to understand the conditions in which the texts are produced and made inferences by looking at the tone of coverage, sources used in stories, language and meaning, who wrote the texts and changes in the style of journalism, all stemming from the sourcing theory discussed in chapter 4. To validate and further interrogate the content analysis, he interviewed journalists.

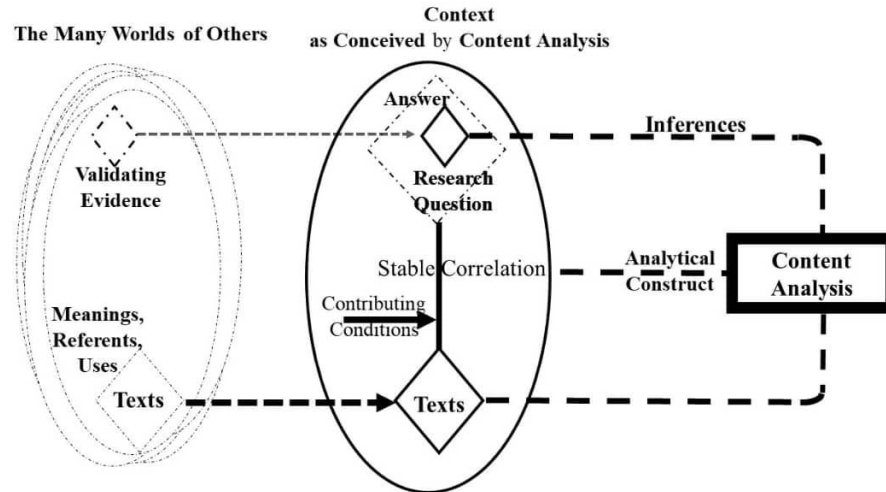


Figure 4: Framework for content analysis. Source; Krippendorff (2004)

5.3.1.1. Why Qualitative Content Analysis

One of the reasons why the study needed a qualitative content analysis approach is that the technique helps in finding themes from texts (Drisco and Maschi, 2016: 85), which helped to give a full description of the changes in themes in the covering of China from 2001 to the time when China came to Malawi in 2007. The researcher compared these themes with how the media reported from 2008 to 2020.

Although the approach was appropriate for the study, it had a flaw in that it was difficult to determine the reliability of data (Drisco and Maschi, 2016: 92). Reliable data is the data that gives the same findings all the time. The qualitative content analysis takes a constructivist epistemology foundation where knowledge and meaning is determined by people. To resolve this challenge, the researcher asked for comments from journalists on the content analysis so that wider views could be captured.

5.3.1.2. Sampling for Qualitative Content Analysis

Hansen, Cottle, Negrine, and Newbold (1998: 100) suggests four steps in content analysis, and these are as follows:

1. Selection of media/titles;
2. Sampling of issues/dates;
3. Sampling of relevant content.

When sampling media content or titles, a researcher must consider the form of media such as television, radio, and newspapers to analyse, which depends on the nature of the research topic or question s/he is addressing (Hansen, Cottle, Negrine and Newbold, 1998: 101). The researcher must consider audience size, geographical reach, audience type, content characteristics, political stance, and availability of research material. For this study, *The Daily Times* newspapers were easier to find in the northern part of Malawi than other papers because newspapers are not obliged to submit their papers to the northern region archive office. *The Daily Times* was also chosen because it has national coverage which makes it one of the most accessible papers in the country and addresses issues of national concern.

Drisco and Maschi (2016: 92) argue that when one is selecting a sample for qualitative analysis, one must consider a sample that must be appropriate for the research question and must be information-rich. In this study, any news article on China was appropriate and offered rich data. The researcher randomly (Krippendorff (2004: 114) selected two articles for each year from 2001 to 2020, and a total of 40 articles were studied. Sampling allowed for economisation of research effort to a manageable number of articles (Krippendorff (2004: 84), and random sampling in particular encouraged objectivity.

5.3.2. In-depth Interview

In-depth interviews were used to study the perceptions of representation of China in *The Daily Times*, discuss the social system and extramedia factors influencing news reporting, ideological, political and structural influences, changes in how the Malawi Government influences news, normative roles of journalism in Malawi, contestation of journalistic roles and changes in the role of journalists. The study particularly used face-to-face confidential interviews because they were viewed to be essential to obtain optimum results (Lewis, 2010: 67 & Manjawira, 2009: 39). Confidential interviews provide a conducive environment for the interviewee to give their views without thinking of implications that arise when one has granted permission to be interviewed so that they freely provide detailed information necessary for the study (Bower cited in Jensen, 1982: 240). In the event where the data being given is not clear or shallow, the method offered an opportunity to seek clarity to achieve ‘depth validity of individual interviews’ (David and Sutton, 2004: 87). The technique leaned on the interpretative tradition, where the researcher tried to

understand their answers from their very own experience as expressed by their words (Creswell, 2003: 144).

Though this method was suitable for the study, it is hard to use, and it requires time and training for it to be conducted successfully (Lewis, 2010: 67). This did not affect my study because the researcher had experience in using the techniques through his engagement with the Tufts University Refugees in Town project.

5.3.2.1. Interview Location

The study was conducted in Malawi, in public spaces. The researcher was following journalists who have reported on China, wherever they were, and in due course, he ended up following them in Blantyre and Lilongwe.

5.3.2.2. Sample Selection and Size

Since in qualitative study size of the sample is not critical, the researcher chose a manageable sample of eight journalists to find out what they think about the content analysis. Although a researcher has discretionary power in choosing the sample (Chikunkhuzeni, 1999: 53), he was careful to pay attention to Miles and Huberman's (1994) sample selection criteria as follows;

- a. The sample must fit in the theoretical framework;
- b. The selected sample should be able to provide rich data;
- c. The sample must be free from bias;
- d. The sample selection method must be ethical;
- e. The sample must be manageable.

Concerning these prescribed considerations in research sampling; I used the following sampling criteria for my study;

- a. **Media house:** My selection for media houses was purposive in that I wanted to engage media houses that are influential and can provide me with rich data.
- b. **Participants' characteristics:** My selection for the participants was purposive by deliberately choosing journalists who are not afraid to share their views and had experience in reporting on China.

5.3.2.3. Human Subject Ethical Consideration

After permission to conduct the research by the Rhodes University Ethics Committee and media stations managers had been given, the researcher visited media archives of media to see journalists who have reported the most on China because these were well placed to give rich data. He approached them for permission to interview them to make sure that the journalists who decided to participate were indeed volunteers and not people who have just been forced to participate by their managers. He assured the volunteers that he would not reveal their identities in the report. The researcher asked the respondents to read the consent sheet (see appendix 3), and if they agree, they could complete it. All data has been stored in password-protected computers for five years and only accessible to the researcher and his supervisor.

The participants had a risk of exposure to embarrassment, considering that they were talking about how China is influencing them. To prevent this, journalists were adequately briefed about the nature of the research and their rights as participants. All the participants were entitled to withdraw their participation at any time during or after their participation, and participants were assured of their anonymity at all times and that no identifying features would be referred to in any publications. The questions posed to participants aimed to understand their perceptions without any judgement on their actions or answers. By doing individual interviews, the possibility of embarrassment was lessened as participants were not sharing their views with anyone other than the interviewer. The researcher was also careful to explain to them that since the findings will help improve media practice in Malawi, it was important that they do not get embarrassed as their participation is for the greater good.

5.3.2.4. Data Analysis Procedure

All the recordings from the interviews were transcribed. In the cases where the journalists had used the local language, this was translated. Although the interviews gave a verbatim account of the participants' perceptions, it did not fully give meaning to what the participants were saying because the communication was made in context, hence a need to generate its salient features and coherent form. Since I used Fiske's ethnographic coding to identify themes from the conversations that as suggested by Jansen (1982: 247), I could compare and contrast to generate meaning.

5.4. Conclusion

The Chapter has shown that the study was rooted in the social constructivist tradition. This epistemological approach was implemented using qualitative content analysis and interviews. Through qualitative content analysis, I was able to develop an analysis of how China has been represented in Malawi from 2001 to 2020. From this finding, I developed interview guiding questions to see what journalists thought of my content analysis and to probe their analysis of the factors that are influencing media coverage of China in Malawi. All these were done with adherence to the Rhodes University ethics protocol.

CHAPTER 6

CHINA IN NEWS REPORTS

6. Introduction

This chapter presents a content analysis of how *The Daily Times* reported on China in the past 20 years by analysing how China was covered before Malawi and China established diplomatic relations and compared the findings with the period after they were established to observe changes that took place in news reporting on China, and journalism practice as a whole, at *The Daily Times*.

6.1.China in the News from 2001 – 2007

This section analysed *The Daily Times* reports based on tone, rhetorical language use, news sources, and journalism style. From 2001 – 2007, China did not have diplomatic or significant economic relations with Malawi, and all of these reports emanated from a Western news agency, *Reuters*, which was broadly reflective of Anglo-American foreign policy towards China at the time. It was also reflective of Western journalistic style, rhetorical language use, by-lines, tone, etc. So, in effect, the paper at this stage was analysing Western journalism about China in a Malawian newspaper. Malawian editorial resources were not deployed to covering China as it was not deemed important enough at the time, *The Daily Times* merely reprinted articles framed and produced in the West, a rather passive editorial stance.

6.1.1. Tone in Covering China

From 2001 – 2007, China was reported using a contemptuous tone. For example, *The Daily Times* on Wednesday, February 7, 2001, published an article titled, “*Chinese relatives reunite after half a century*,” written by the *Reuters News Agency* where the article seems to carry a joyful tone, but it is negative about China. In the first sentence, the article reads, “more than a century of family division ended in hugs and tears of joy yesterday after the first mainland Chinese ship to sail legally to the Republic of China since 1949 arrived at the heavily fortified island of Quemoy.”

The article celebrates the triumph of China’s opponent after China had been heavily guarded for about 52 years under arbitrary Chinese policies, thereby representing China in a broadly negative light. The conduct of China was portrayed as unacceptable, considering that it prevented even

civilians from visiting. The journalist paints China as solely responsible for the issue by indicating that it was China that banned direct trade and postal links between the two in 1949 after Chiang Kai-shek's nationalist troops were defeated by the communists and fled into exile.

The Daily Times article of February 22, 2001, titled, “*China set for new image,*” strikes a condescending tone that seemed to patronise China as a deviant country that needs redemption. In the article, the *Reuters News Agency* wrote, “On the first working day of inspectors evaluating Beijing’s bid to host the 2008 Olympics, Major Liu Qi sought to shake off the city’s dark past yesterday and present a new image of democracy, openness and prosperity.” This statement portrayed China as using the Olympics as a public relations (PR) stunt to create a good image for itself. The journalist quoted Mayor Liu Qi, who claimed that China had made dramatic changes to encourage a more open society. The journalist does not substantiate this quote by including examples where China had registered progress, leaving the audience wondering if the change could be true. The journalist seemed interested in sustaining this pessimism by arguing that China was still being shunned by Western media; implying that things have not changed. The *Reuters News Agency* wrote that Tiananmen, where the Olympics would be conducted, has a dark history; for example, the 1989 massacre derailed the country’s bid to host the 2000 Olympic Games. The article argued that the country still banned oppositional views, which led to radical protests such as suicide, including a middle-aged woman who burnt herself to death to make a statement of her discontent with the country's poor human rights record.

Failure of the Chinese government to respect human dignity topped coverage on China. The *Reuters News Agency* in articles titled, “*Merkel to seek help from China over Darfur*” and “*Merkel prods China on rights*”, both published in 2007, reported that China was failing to uphold human rights globally. China was said to provide sanctuary to repressive leaders through its non-involvement in other country’s affairs. The *Reuters News Agency* in the article, “*US urges China to use global clout wisely*”, published in 2006, wrote that China also condones aggressive countries that are developing nuclear weapons that have been banned by the UN. The *Reuters News Agency* in the article, “*China is key to resolving nuclear crisis – Annan*”, published in 2006, quotes the United Nations (UN) secretary-general, Kofi Annan, calling on China to start upholding human rights. Ironically, the UN wants China to start promoting human rights by interfering in other

countries' affairs because by doing that, it means China is violating the right to self-determination, which is provided for in Article 21 (3) of the UDHR. The idea of forcing foreign ideas and power on Africa also perpetuates the thinking that Africa is a dark continent (Franks & Ribet, 2009: 129 - 133).

The *Reuters News Agency* also wrote an article on July 2, 2003, titled, “*Bank of China cleared of wrongs,*” where it employed a disapproving tone toward the Chinese government. They challenge the government’s decision to clear the Bank of China by bringing forth evidence that this was done in an evasive manner. The journalist quoted a bank official to demonstrate that even some bank officials themselves had doubts about the government’s claims of the innocence of Liu Jinbao, former Chief Executive Officer of Bank of China (BoC) Hong Kong (Limited) holding, who was accused of approving a \$269 million credit line to Shanghai tycoon Zhou Lu. The article indicates that Zhou was under house arrest for fraud, and his bank holdings in China were under investigation. This had tarnished the image of China-owned banks and insurers, thereby making it hard for them to raise money abroad. The article argues that even though they cleared Liu of wrongdoing, the incident had already exposed weaknesses in China’s risk controls and would not help clear the country’s poor image.

The Daily Times also published articles written by *Reuters News Agency* that pleaded for Western countries to rescue China from its social ills. For example, in the article published on July 4, 2003, titled, “*China, India may face Aids ‘catastrophe’*”, the paper argues that China, which had a population of about 1 million people living with HIV/AIDS, was likely to witness an overwhelming growth of the number of people living with HIV/AIDS. What was strange with this article was that the journalist only interviewed Julie Gerberding, the head of the Centre for Disease Control (CDC), a USA-based centre for the control and prevention of diseases, to confirm the challenge and provide solutions. Section 2.1 of the Media Council of Malawi code of conduct demands that papers in Malawi publish balanced articles. In this case, a balanced piece could have also sought views from Chinese authorities and try to encompass local solutions to the challenge at hand.

Articles on China also employed an accusatory tone, blaming China for the majority of disputes it gets into. This was done by focusing on the aggressive advances made by China without shedding enough light on the causes of the same. For example, in the article published on January 2, 2004, titled, *“Taiwan urges China to seek peace”*, the *Reuters News Agency* revealed that China had pointed its missiles toward Taiwan in readiness to attack the country, and this made China seem hostile. However, China placed the missiles in the same way that Taiwan had. Taiwan was accumulating weapons donated from the United States, and it was instead Taiwan that had started preparing for an imminent war. Similarly, in the article titled, *“RoC cancels war games”* published in *The Daily Times* of August 8, 2002, the *Reuters News Agency* blamed China for the fact that Taiwan had cancelled her games to avoid an imminent war with China. Though this was the case, it was RoC (Taiwan) that had first considered conducting a referendum to decide whether they should declare war on China or not, which might have already alarmed China and the games would not have made much difference to China’s war preparations.

Articles also reflected a tone of concern toward socio-economic events happening in China. For example, the article published in 2005 titled, *“Poisoned River shows dark side of China’s boom”*, captured environmental challenges that China was facing as a result of its heavy industrialisation endeavours. The article indicated that 70% of rivers in China had been contaminated, and seven of its cities were some of the world’s top 10 most polluted cities, with smog killing about 400,000 people every year. The article took note of the environmental standards that were ignored by companies as they tried to minimise costs in the hunt for profits or market share. In the article published on December 1, 2005, titled, *“China mine blast kills 74,”* the *Reuters News Agency* also expressed social concerns, especially on the way miners are poorly treated in China, leading to the deaths of 74 people.

As much as most of the articles reflected a negative tone towards China, there seemed to be a few that were positive. An article published on August 27, 2002, titled, *“Another storm forecast in China”*, demonstrated the country’s readiness to contain floods. The *Reuters News Agency* wrote that China Wuhan flood control unit was working around the clock to prepare for the flood crescent that was expected to hit the country so that people should not be as affected as the 1998 floods, which saw 4,000 people die.

China was also represented positively as a country that sometimes condemned aggression. For example, in the article published in 2005 titled, “*Koizumi visits war shrine, China, S. Korea protest*”, the *Reuters News Agency* wrote that China condemned the visit because such an act would glorify a war that saw many civilians die in 1910-1945 during colonial struggles when Japan wanted to colonise China, North Korea, and South Korea.

6.1.2. Rhetorical Language Usage

In terms of language usage, the articles used words that invoked people’s emotions so that they develop a negative attitude toward China. For example, in the first sentence of the article, “*Chinese Relatives Reunite after half a century*”, the *Reuters News Agency* used the words ‘heavily fortified’ to illustrate the commitment by China to separate civilians using extreme measures. The Cambridge Dictionary defines a fort as a place designed to be defended from attack, consisting of an area surrounded by a strong wall. The use of the word produces a shocking feeling that China was using the same to contain civilians, although this did not physically happen. The use of hyperbole can also be seen in articles such as, “*China, India may face Aids ‘catastrophe’*”, published on July 4, 2003, where *Reuters News Agency* used the word ‘catastrophe’ to show that there would be a rapid growth of the population of people living with HIV/AIDS in China, because as much as the figures are high and the development is heartbreaking, the National Bureau of Statistics of China (2003) indicated that China is also a highly-populated country.

The articles also used words aimed at making China look inferior and, in due course, hold its silence as the US continued to patronise in its affairs. For example, in an article published in 2004 titled, “*China tells US to back off on Hong Kong*”, the *Reuters News Agency* used the words ‘superpower’ to describe the US. The article quotes China’s foreign ministry as urging the United States to stop ‘meddling’ in Hong Kong internal affairs. To show that the US had the power to override the demand, the *Reuters News Agency* describes the US as a ‘superpower’, thereby making a point that China was not well placed to ask the US to ‘back off.’

6.1.3. News Byline

The study has revealed that *The Daily Times* simply reprinted stories directly from the *Reuters News Agency* and *Reuters* appeared as the writer of the story instead of giving the actual name of the journalist. The *Reuters* (2012) in the article ‘*How the byline beast was born,*’ and The

Economist (2012) in the article ‘*Why are The Economist’s writers anonymous?*’ argue that the absence of by-lines in papers protects journalists’ privacy, allow them to assume different voices and give an impression that the editorial teams were more powerful than they really were.

The *Reuters* might have been used in *The Daily Times* because of unfamiliarity with Chinese sources of information, lack of agreements on content sharing, lack of trust in Chinese media and also due to the hegemonic power and reach of Western media organisations even though the Chinese media might have had direct access to the sources and context of the stories. Malawian editorial resources were also not deployed to covering China as it was not deemed important enough at the time. It is therefore not surprising to note that *The Daily Times* is replicating the subjective negative truth from the *Reuters*. It must be noted that the *Reuters News Agency* has a policy to present objective news reports, but this is contrary to observations made in the sourcing theory that sources present subjective information to support, in this case, their geopolitical interests.

It can be noted that the *Reuters News Agency* sometimes tries to add local views in the news by getting some of the information from interviews with local Chinese as well as getting news stories from China’s media. For example, in a 2001 article titled, “*China set for new image*”, the *Reuters News Agency* included the voice of the Chinese mayor, which was important to present a balanced representation of China. This was also important to maintain what the news sources theory calls ‘*sources’ interpretive communities*’.

The continuing repression of alternative views in news reports on China may have signified an attempt to represent China negatively which is contrary to section 2.1 of the Media Council of Malawi code of conduct. *The Daily Times* could have considered reconstructing the stories to include views from different media platforms such as the *Xinhua News Agency*. This tendency was not in line with the sources theory idea of ‘*professional interpretive community*’ where journalists needs to demonstrate impartiality when reporting news.

Foreigners wrote news reports at this phase, and there was not a single instance where local journalists had reported. This might have been because of the geopolitical context where Malawi

did not have significant economic and political relations with China, making news on China less important for Malawi and *The Daily Times* to dedicate resources towards it. Even the citizens at large were not interviewed to give their opinion on any news having to do with China, thereby side-lining the ‘*sources’ interpretive communities’* in meaning-making.

On the other hand, *The Daily Times* had local journalists covering Taiwanese activities in Malawi where development projects being supported by the Taiwanese government were reported. There were other articles from the *Reuters News Agency*, but just like Malawian reports, they were also positive about Taiwan and aligned themselves with Taiwan over China on issues such as recognising Taiwan as a separate country.

6.1.4. Journalism Style

News coverage of China before the coming of China to Malawi was negative because most of the articles were just copied from *Reuters News Agency*, which is aligned with Western foreign policy. Though some stories had positive and optimistic reporting, the coverage was mostly negative, impacting the reputation of China in the international space, signifying a lack of ‘*professional interpretive community’* values. This reporting replicates Hallin and Mancini’s (2010) liberal pluralist model where the media assumes the watchdog role when reporting on China and the democratic corporatist model when reporting on Taiwan where it can be noted that its reports on Taiwan are influenced by the political alignment between the West and Taiwan.

The style of the reports changed with the coming in of a new political environment in 2008, showing new Chinese influence, especially at the political subsystem of the hierarchy of influence theory. The media also employed a collaborative role concerning coverage of Taiwan during 2001-2007 and a monitorial role concerning China. They were monitoring China’s power, human rights record, etc., from a Western perspective and supporting Taiwan. In terms of Hanitzsch and Vos journalistic roles, *The Daily Times* took the roles of monitor, detective, and watchdog toward China and a collaborative role towards Taiwan. Concerning the Chinese media theory, *The Daily Times* reflects the political priorities of its elite political establishment.

6.2. China in the News from January 2008 – 2020

This section answered the question; were there any changes in tone, rhetoric language use, news sources, and journalism style in news reporting at *The Daily Times*?

6.2.1. Tone in Covering China

From January 2008 – 2020 after China had established diplomatic relations with Malawi, the tone of articles in *The Daily Times* began to change as they now portrayed China positively. For example, the article written by Chirwa (2019) titled, “*Chanco student qualifies for Chinese competition*” has a celebratory tone for the winning of a competition by a Chancellor College student, as a result of the benevolence of the Chinese government that had sponsored it. This tone portrayed China as supportive of Malawi’s intercultural initiatives. Of more significance, Malawian journalists even began writing positive editorial pieces on China, such as the one titled ‘*Ban on medical suppliers` export but....`*’ Published on *The Daily Times* in 2020, where the editor presents China as a superpower that supports Malawi with medical equipment.

The article titled, “*China pledges K 7 bn for relief food*”, written in 2016 by Boniface Phiri, also portrayed the benevolence of China where it reported that China came to Malawi’s rescue following floods. He wrote that China had donated K7 billion to buy maize, but he did not inquire where the maize for distribution would be bought and how best the donation would support those affected. Philanthropist and founder of Africa Classroom Connection (ACC), Henry Bromelkamp (2014) notes that there is a tendency among donors that sometimes instead of buying relief items locally, they tend to buy overseas; hence the money remains in the donor or foreign country instead of empowering local people.

Chirombo (2017) also wrote an article titled, “*Chinese Embassy donates office equipment to Times Group*”, about materials that his media house received from China and is an explicit example of how China’s soft power infiltrated newsrooms. Without biting the finger that was feeding him, Chirombo wrote of how important the materials were to Times Group. In the very same paper, Chirombo (2017) dedicated two pages for an article titled, “*Promoting national development, building media capacity*”, where he showed the Ambassador of China donating equipment to the group. Nankhonya (2017) in the article titled, “*Shanghai construction honours 32 employees*”, also

documented China's attempt to help Malawi by awarding employees essential items such as bicycles that would help them make strides in their lives, while in the article, "*China commends police*", Banda (2011) wrote about China's donations to the Malawi Police.

Articles in *The Daily Times* also used an aggrieved tone that portrayed China as being offended on several issues. The *Reuters News Agency* on June 3, 2019, published an article titled, "*China says US cannot force trade deal*," which demonstrated the tendency of the president of the United States, Donald Trump, to use force so that China would open its gates for trade. The article indicated that the US president suggested that he would meet President Xi Jinping even when he had not formally agreed to such a meeting. This article appealed to the emotions of its audience to sympathise with China after knowing that the United States was taking China for granted. However, this article was written by the *Reuters News Agency*, the same agency that wrote all the negative reports about China before 2008. Such a paradox may reflect *Reuters's* positioning concerning the conservative Trump administration than it does about Malawian media. However, *The Daily Times* had the power to review the article and discard it, but they maintained it, meaning that they might have agreed with *Reuters's* position.

News reports on Malawi-China relations were also characterised by an ardent tone, where journalists seemed to be enthusiastic that Malawi-China relations would bring about prosperity in Malawi. For example, Mangani (2018) in an article titled, "*Malawi uncovers \$140 million market in China*", wrote of the benefits of the Malawi trip to China that attracted export enquiries that would boost beans, cassava and groundnut businesses in Malawi. Katambe (2018) was also excited in the article titled, "*Parliament approves \$56.9 m loan from China*," where he wrote about how the amount would be used to build towers across the country as a way of improving internet access in the country. He ignored probing the implications of such a huge loan on an indebted country like Malawi (Kumwembe, January 24, 2018), which the World Bank (2019) categorised as a weak economy, vulnerable to external shocks, and harbouring widespread poverty.

Daily Times articles also represented China as innovative and creative. The innovation was seen through what was described as the 'ingenious programs' that the Chinese government was implementing in Malawi through different sectors. For example, having seen that the tourism

industry in Malawi was lagging, Suzgo Khunga (2012) writes that the Chinese government signed an MOU with the Malawi government on 'travel group' where tourism companies in Malawi would work with Chinese tour operators to allow people from China travel to Malawi as tourists with ease. This was seen as something that would boost tourism in Malawi as the article argued that China was becoming a tourism giant, with about 100 million departures annually. Growth of tourism would allow Malawi to fight unemployment, increase national income, and foster cultural exchange in Malawi. The article, "*Jaguar to assemble in China*," written by *Reuter News Agency* on June 10, 2010, also reflected innovativeness on the side of China to offer cheap labour that would allow Western companies to flock into the country, thereby fighting unemployment. The article, "*China agri-bank seeks record US\$23 bn IPO*," published in 2010 by the *Reuters News Agency*, also demonstrated China innovative stock investment and clientele management that was leading its economic growth.

Although the majority of the articles by Malawian journalists set a positive tone, there were a few cases where they wrote negatively. For example, in the article titled, "*Court stops Chinese company from producing fake acrylic*," published in 2015, Deogratius MMana wrote of the unethical trade conduct by the Chinese. However, the article would have made more sense to ordinary people if he had indicated what this meant to the Malawi population because Malawians were also victims of this malpractice as they bought counterfeit products. Similarly, in 2014, journalist Alick Ponje wrote of fake products being produced in the country by Chinese nationals, but he based his report by revelations made by a Malawian of Chinese descent, thereby portraying an image that not all immigrants from China are bad.

Furthermore, *The Daily Times* set a tone of discontent with the way the Chinese treat Malawians, representing them as oppressors. China was shown oppressing Malawians in many ways, such as taking away business opportunities from poor Malawians in rural areas. In her article, "*Chinese shop workers agitate better perks*," published in 2014, journalist Edith Gondwe wrote that the Chinese in Mzuzu paid their workers about K18600 per month, which was just K3,600 above the minimum wage which the Malawi Congress of Trade Union argued that there was a need for sectoral wages.

Lastly, *The Daily Times* sometimes represented China as aggressive and sometimes to blame for conflicts. For example, the articles; “*China slams the Dalai Lama Schenzlein*” and “*China launches new attack on Dalai Lama*,” published by *Reuters News Agency* in 2008, presented China as not willing to indulge in peaceful conflict resolution with European countries. The discussions were supposed to help resolve the challenge of China’s huge trade surplus with Europe and a means of coordinating efforts to solve the global economic crisis.

6.2.2. Rhetorical Language Use

In the later articles, *The Daily Times* continued to use rhetoric devices such as hyperboles to convey meaning, but the difference was that that the devices were mostly used to create positive stories about China in reaction to the support that the country is giving to Malawi. An example of an article where rhetoric devices were used was the article titled, “*China pledges K 7 bn for relief food*,” where Boniface Phiri used a hyperbole ‘history’ to show that the Chinese would help to make floods became ‘history’ in Malawi as they had done at home. This was an exaggeration because the Chinese, though they demonstrated preparations for floods in their country, continued suffering from the same not only in 2015, which was just a year before the article was written but also in 2016 – 2020. Boniface might have used the word just to show that the assistance would have been immense, but some people who do not follow international news would have taken the word literary. This is negligence of ‘*professional interpretive community*’ values such as being factual when presenting news.

6.2.3. News Byline

From 2001 – 2007, news articles were mainly lifted from Western media, especially the *Reuters News Agency*; however, from January 2008 to March 2020, *Daily Times* journalists began writing news on China themselves. They could interview Chinese officials, Chinese citizens, Malawian leaders, and Malawian citizens and present the reports from a Malawian context. For example, in the article, “*Security lapse irks Chinese community*”, Taynjah-Phiri (2013) interviewed the Chinese community in Malawi for his story. Of these stories, 19 were written by *The Daily Times* Journalists, and 7 were written by Western media. Most of the articles written by Malawians were about China in Africa, whereas most of the *Reuters* articles were about China.

The reason that there is deeper and more nuanced coverage of China after January 2008 is a result of the political and economic shifts that happened. In covering China more fully, *Daily Times* journalists would have followed conventional news values and in line with the news sources theory ‘*professional interpretive community*’ values in picking up news stories that they deemed were of consequence to their readership. However, the articles most of the time did not include views from all the parties involved in the stories; hence they were sometimes not balanced enough as required by section 2.1 of the Media Council of Malawi Code of Conduct. The sourcing theory also suggests that when journalists have limited sociological power compared to the people they are interviewing, in this case, the journalists had limited power over the governments. It was challenging for them to get all the information they might have needed from their sources.

The dedication of Malawian journalists to write about China reflected a change in priorities in *The Daily Times*, where China was not just another superpower, but it was primary to Malawian life experiences and was a reflection of the ‘reality’ of the new situation. Examples of local journalists writing about China in Malawi include Richard Chirombo, Boniface Phiri, Deogratius MMana and Susgo Khunga. The prominence of China in Malawi seemed to relate to political changes, especially the establishment of diplomatic relations, which has allowed China to start making donations in Malawi, influencing what and how Malawian journalists write.

The Daily Times also maintains non-Chinese articles, such as those syndicated from the BBC and Aljazeera, and these did not indicate the media houses as the authors of the stories instead of the journalists. The BBC is a Western news agency that draws its support from the British Parliament and is mostly negative about China. Aljazeera draws its support both from the host government and its audience and journalists from across the world, making the house more independent and not beholden to a specific country as is the case with the BBC (Powers, 2011: 17). Malawian media also used China’s *Xinhua* to develop stories that show a radical shift in the way Malawian media views Chinese news media. For example, journalist Foster Benjamin in his article titled ‘*Lightning kills 3 in Shire Valley*,’ published in *The Daily Times* in 2020, quotes *Xinhua News Agency* that Malawi has some of the world’s highest deaths stemming from lightening. However, Western syndicated stories do dominate, and it can be argued that this is as such because most journalists are still used to using Western resources, unlike resources from the ‘new friend,’ China. The

question that may arise here is ‘if China is interested in extending soft power in Malawi, why haven’t they tried to get Malawian newspapers to be publishing some of the stories that are in their *Xinhua News Agency* publications? The probable reason would be that the influence of China in Malawi varies from media house to media house. *The Daily Times* might not have used syndicated stories from *Xinhua News Agency*, but other news outlets such as the MBC do use media content produced in China without editing it. This might mean that *The Daily Times* does exercise some level of discretion, unlike the MBC.

6.2.4. Journalism Style

The articles have a mixture of negative and constructive journalism, where most of the articles are positive. Most of the negative reports were lifted from Western media, while most of the articles written by Malawian journalists replicate the ‘constructive journalism’ approach. This raises the questions, “why is *The Daily Times* reproducing negative Western articles, but at the same time writing their own more positive stories? Why not just ignore the *Reuters* stories altogether? A possible explanation for the status quo might be that there might be vestiges of the old political order at work, or maybe it’s simply a case of economic pressures. Most articles in *The Daily Times* are less critical of China, and they put much more focus on positive stories. For example, the article titled, “*China reassures of dollar before G8, markets subdued,*” published in 2009 by *Reuters News Agency*, reflected positively on China.

The lack of critical elements in news reporting was also reflected in the article titled, “*China tops as Malawi’s flue-cured leaf importer,*” where Jassi glorified the growing leaf trade between China and Malawi without scrutinising the implications of the same. Tobacco farming across the globe has faced growing criticism in that it is responsible for lung-related diseases, such as lung cancer. The use of large numbers of trees to treat flue-cured tobacco has also been argued to be one of the causes of deforestation in Malawi. If Jassi was critical enough in the article, he would have considered the implications of such trade on Malawi and international health and environmental concerns. The lack of critical engagement maybe as a result of poor journalism, allowing China to advance its geopolitical interests.

The story of Chinese donations in Malawi hospitals published on November 20, 2012, also reflected this tendency of a lack of critical eye when writing about China. Rose Cross wrote that each year the Chinese government sent about 12 medical experts to Malawi to help improve the medical sector. As much as this was helpful, it also caused another problem in Malawian society, unemployment. Each year young professionals in Malawi, ranging from medicine to education, were left without jobs, and it was arguable that one of the reasons is that some jobs are left to expatriates from Western and Asian countries even when the expatriates do not possess critical skills. If these countries wanted to help, they could have donated funds to the Malawi government so that it can employ its youth. Where critical skilled personnel were needed, the more sustainable solution was to help Malawian universities grow so that they could develop local practitioners at a cheaper cost to serve their people.

It can be noted from the papers that *The Daily Times* journalists mostly wrote about China if there was an event and when Malawi or Africa was receiving something from China. This meant that the mushrooming of the Malawian reporters in China suggests that journalists were simply applying universal standards of newsworthiness to stories about development aid as the aid directed to Malawi by China was real and therefore worthy of coverage. However, the lack of critical reporting during the same is noteworthy. If there were no donations, the articles about China in *The Daily Times* would have been few, and most of them would, just like before January 2008, be copied from Western media and would have been negative.

The Daily Times reports that were syndicated from the *Reuters News Agency* at this time continued to replicate Hallin and ManCini's (2010) liberal pluralist model to satisfy the watchdog role. However, the reports written by the Malawian journalists seem to lean towards Christians et al. (2009) collaborative role of the media where *The Daily Times* supports the Chinese and Malawian government development initiatives. It also replicates Hanitzsch and Vos's (2018) collaborative role where the government acts as part of state apparatus to takes 'propagandist' or 'agitators' role.

6.3. Conclusion

The chapter has shown that there have been changes in the way China has been covered in *The Daily Times* from 2001 – 2020. In the period from 2001 – 2007, the coverage of China took a negative tone that represented China as socially backward with a record of gross violation of human rights. Poetic devices were used to further paint such a negative picture, and the journalism style was negative. All of the articles were simply copied and pasted from the *Reuters News Agency*. After January 2008, the tone changed in that it was now more positive and represented China as an innovative and benevolent country. Poetic devices used in the articles depicted this positive image. Journalism practices were more positive, and local journalists were able to write original stories on China.

CHAPTER 7

PERCEPTION OF JOURNALISM PRACTICE

7. Introduction

Having conducted the content analysis, interview questions were created to explore journalists' perceptions of the content analysis and Chinese influence, if any, on their reporting about China. How journalists made sense of these changes to their notions of what they 'do' as journalists and what journalism is 'for' was explored. The chapter also looks into what journalists perceived as the biggest influences on their coverage of China, and the implications of this for the normative self-conceptions of their journalistic roles and the press in Malawi as a whole. These interpretivist accounts are then considered against the sociological theories and normative framework employed by the study.

7.1. Perceptions of Representation of China in *The Daily Times* News Reports

Journalists agreed with the content analysis that indeed China is now largely covered positively as compared to the time before diplomatic relations were established. Madhlopa said:

...the change in coverage makes sense because China is now one of the biggest financiers in Malawi's social projects [such as] the Malawi University of Science and Technology. Before then, we had Taiwan so coverage favoured Taiwan. When a country has established strong relations, it becomes necessary to change the way you cover the country.

With this argument, Madhlopa was suggesting that *The Daily Times* covered China positively because some activities of China in Malawi were in the public interest, thereby in line with journalistic roles, routines, and practices. His argument also suggests that journalistic roles have not changed at *The Daily Times*. He is implying that there was an indirect influence of China in news reporting in Malawi in that when the Malawian political elites jumped horses from Taiwan to China, the press followed this shift uncritically, reflecting the media's ongoing alignment with the neo-patrimonial political system and the 'collaborative' role of the press.

Commenting on the influence in *The Daily Times* reports, Zgambo said;

Every country wants to develop a positive image out there. The problem should not be whether China is using soft power, but whether we are willing to be manipulated. ... China may make the efforts, but the question is, how do we respond? It's very difficult

for journalists who have benefitted from the benevolence of the Chinese government to write anything negative about them.

The 'benevolence' of China in Malawi has been wide and deep such that many journalists have benefited from China in one way or the other, and they look up to China for more opportunities. Such opportunities include scholarships, fellowships, and direct donations to the media houses. Nsapato said;

I have to be honest that there is heavy Chinese influence... the media is ... influenced by people who make themselves available because we report what they say. We cannot report about something which is not there. If you were to ask us about Serbia or Montenegro, you would have found that we do not report more on them because they are not present in this country most of the time.

Gondwe said China's influence in *The Daily Times* reports was sometimes 'in the moment' where the paper wrote positively on China when there was a particular reason and not that they were subjected to overt pressure or had a normative arrangement with China always to write positively. For example, when they donated computers in 2017, *The Daily Times* felt compelled to write positively and even dedicated two pages to them because they wanted to reward them for their generosity. But, there were times when *The Daily Times* was critical of China, such as the reports on ill-treatment of workers by Chinese nationals.

On the issue that *The Daily Times* before the coming of China largely reported using *Reuters News Agency*, the journalists indicated that it was because of media houses' individual choices. Media managers always encouraged their journalists to copy news from media houses that they have good relations with, and during that time, it was *Reuters News Agency*. The agency might have been subjected to the hierarchy of influences, but the editor of *The Daily Times* had a responsibility to decide if the news reports being copied from *Reuters News Agency* subscribed to the institution's news ethics; implying that the editors of *The Daily Times* were also in agreement with such negative coverage. This negative portrayal was also in line with the official Malawian foreign policy at the time.

It is arguable that Malawian newsrooms have limited resources and cannot provide their own independently verified reports on the world – so, they rely on cheap copy from the most powerful news agencies in the world, which, in the case of *Reuters*, is a Western news organisation aligned

with Western geopolitics. The coming of China to Malawi created tension for these editors. Their government (with whom they are broadly speaking, aligned) shifted their allegiance from a Western-aligned power, Taiwan, to a broadly speaking, communist state, China. These editors still had mostly negative *Reuters* copy streaming into their newsrooms, but they (and the Malawian government) were now seeing China as an ally. In some cases, the news organisations were benefiting directly from the benevolence of the Chinese state. This was a contradictory situation and may account for the confused mixture of positive and negative news about China in the 2008-2020 coverage. The West still has power at the social systems level, but that power was now being contested by China.

Similarly, the journalistic roles of Malawian media were probably heavily influenced by liberal pluralist media theory before 2008 but are now being challenged by Chinese media theory/systems. Malawian media is transitional and differs from both the West and China in important ways like cheque-book journalism. Similarly, the authoritarian Malawian neo-patrimonial political system is in some ways similar to China, but there is probably more freedom of expression in Malawi than in China. This puts Malawi somewhere in between the West and the East.

7.2. Social system and extramedia factors Influencing News Reporting

The study has revealed that there were many influences on news reports in Malawi, among which were the Malawian politicians, advertisers, the West and China. Western countries such as Britain and the United States have influenced journalism in Malawi not only by dictating the direction of journalism curricula in Malawi colleges but also by providing scholarships such as the Chevening, Commonwealth, and Fulbright that offer Malawians to learn ‘liberal pluralist’ journalism in the West. Somanje said that Westernised Malawian journalists were encouraged by scholarship providers to come back home after their studies and put what they have learned into practice.

Similarly, the Chinese have adopted ideological, political, and structural strategies to influence Malawian media, which will be outlined here, and the researcher will focus on the social systems and extramedia layers of the hierarchy of influences.

7.2.1. Ideological Influences

Journalists indicated that before Malawi and China established diplomatic relations, the reports were negative because most journalists were not exposed to China, and China was not an official friend of Malawi. Since Malawi is a former colonial territory of Britain, most journalists knew China from the Western lens through Western cultural influence, education, and media houses.

With the establishment of Malawi-China relations, journalists, in particular, were getting more familiar with the Chinese role in the world, and Madhlopa said that most journalists have realised that China was not as bad as some of the Western media portrayed it. Through cultural exchange programs, fellowships and scholarships, just to mention a few, Malawian journalists reported becoming aware that China most of the time supports Africa, and there was no need to be unnecessarily critical of the Chinese.

Madhlopa said that Malawian journalists have learnt that the ‘state capitalism’ which is practised in China was not inherently evil as many sections of the mainstream Western media have tended to portray it. Malawi, being a former British colony, had always embraced economic liberalism even when it was not appropriate. For example, Madhlopa said the IMF used economic liberalism arguments in the structural adjustment program that it issued to Malawi in the 1990s, recommending that the country stop subsidising fertiliser; the result was starvation.

Respondents also argued that though people generally complained about the problems that were being faced in Malawi as a result of the coming of the Chinese, such as poor-quality phones and clothing, they saw China as a lesser evil as compared to the country’s traditional donors such as the United States. Chisale accused Western countries of “forcing their values, such as human rights, on the Malawi population” which was not the case with China. Malawians do believe in human rights, but some people think some rights are ‘foreign’ hence eroding the country’s cultural values. Tasokwa says that one of the examples of Western intrusion in Malawi was when the UN secretary-general flew to Malawi and forced the Malawi government to release Malawi’s first publicly known gay couple, Tionge Chimbalanga and Steve Monjeza, after they had been sentenced to 14 years in imprisonment with hard labour in a transparent Malawian court. Tasokwa says;

The challenge that I have noticed is that the United Nations is imposing something on a community that is not ready to accept it. For instance, on gay marriage ... I don't think if we do random sampling, we can even have 2/10 people endorsing same-sex marriages. Though the UN forced the change, the people are not ready to accept gay people in their communities - hence little has changed.

Such sentiments make journalists wonder if the West cares about African independence, while others argue that they would feel thrown to the wolves if Western governments did not object to these violations. China, which did not interfere with local politics, was seen as more tolerant and respectful of Malawian independence. The question of independence and human rights raised an ethical question on whether it was important to let Malawians exercise their independence even when their actions infringed on equally important minority rights. It could be argued that China does not preach about human rights because to do so would expose its human rights failing and that their silence is less about their benevolence but about the preservation of their own economic and geopolitical self-interest.

China was also seen as a reliable partner who was always there for Malawi, unlike Western countries that leave vulnerable people when they need them the most, particularly when their human rights are being violated by authoritarian governments. Interviewees argued that though the intentions of the West for withdrawing direct aid were to encourage good governance, these acts affected the ordinary people more than the elites they were trying to punish, thereby causing more suffering in the country. For example, Madhlopa says that during the reign of Dr Bakili Muluzi, the country was in frequent famine episodes. When the Muluzi government was accused of gross corruption practices, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), left the country even when people were dying of hunger, making people doubt this World Bank institution that promised a better world but sometimes did not seem to wear a human face. The interviewees, however, noted that sometimes it is important for donors to withdraw aid, especially where corrupt authoritarian regimes pocket most of the money for themselves.

Chisale observed that the other ideological shift was the realisation that hard work pays. China, though a developing country, has become one of the biggest economies in the world over a short time. One of the reasons for such change is hard work. Chisale says Malawian journalists have been inspired by such progress, and when they think of a country that Malawi can emulate, China

comes to their mind. This ideological shift was reflected in the media – while the Western media were accusing China of creating debt traps, Malawian media were praising China for the loans.

7.2.2. Political Influence

The Malawian government exerts strong political pressure on the media – and it is strongly interested in positive media coverage of its political ally (China). This is a form of influence by proxy or indirect Chinese influence on media representations through the Malawian political elites. Journalists observed that the Malawi government protected the Chinese public image in Malawi through its direct control of the public, community, and private media. Zgambo said that the government used intimidation to force journalists to bend to its will, which helped create a positive image of China in Malawi.

The government in the past also used this force to influence media, but before China came to Malawi, the main beneficiary of this power was Taiwan because it had good relations with UDF. The Malawi government continued to exercise influence on the Malawian media, but now it was benefiting China because they were now allies. For example, when there was a press conference, some members of the DPP youth wing, called ‘Cadets’, stood at the back of the journalists and started issuing threats to deter journalists from asking questions that might be perceived as ‘critical,’ which makes it difficult for some journalists to gather courage and ask the much-needed questions. Commenting on the threats, Nsapato said;

I think to some extent this is cowardice from the side of the journalist because when you want to get to the bottom of an issue, you ask no matter what. Of course, there are rogues when journalists are asking [critical] questions [but the journalist has to stand on his ground]. I don’t have any experience where the Chinese embassy did the same.

Some journalists were ready to risk their lives and careers, but others were forced to exercise self-censorship. Chisale said:

There are silent policies. For example, if there is a minister, you try to be positive. In 2010 -2011, I don’t think that has changed, roughly, 40% of adverts were from the government. The bosses will not tell us to highlight a story [that involves government], but as an editor, you know that it is important to highlight it. [In due course] this reflects the Chinese positively. Sometimes we get informal demands such as questions; ‘are your reports helping Malawians’? This influences how we approach stories.

Following these two direct quotes, it can be argued that the Malawian and Chinese government normative conceptions of the proper role of the press in society are quite closely aligned (i.e. the collaborative role). While, in a democracy, this role is usually understood as a voluntary agreement between the media and the state, there appears to be an element of coercive force in the case of both the Chinese and Malawian states in securing this collaboration. However, following its soft approach, China does not use coercion inside Malawi but instead uses the Malawian state as a proxy. However, by not interfering, it could be argued that it colludes in the perpetuation of neo-patrimonial rule in Malawi and advances the interests of its authoritarian system.

The influence was not only noticed in the way the news was presented but also received by the masses. The DPP government was feared to have employed young people, Cadets, so that they could run internet trolls to any news writer or presenter who had written negatively of the president and his allies. They tried as much as possible to discredit journalists, their work and even attack their personal lives so that people could not trust them if they wrote something which did not reflect positively on the government's policy. Shumba said such an act created fears in journalists as the Cadets were known for violence. Hence, journalists are not sure if what the Cadets write on internet spaces will materialise in physical violence, which forces journalists into self-censorship. Apart from that, the Cadets made false online comments; this confused newsreaders on whether they should believe the news reports from the media houses or the Cadets. For example, if the *Nyasatimes* publishes a story that is against the DPP, Cadets sometimes claim that the *Nyasatimes* has been bought by the opposition hence leaving people wondering who to trust. The opposition political parties also had their own internet trolls that aim at creating a negative picture of government initiatives and the associated allies such as China. Madhlopa said, "Sometimes the opposition parties are more aggressive than the government."

The Malawi government also aided China to influence media in Malawi by encouraging journalists to attend media events in China. The events were ostensibly there to expose journalists to Chinese ways of living and not necessarily to force them to adopt 'positive journalism'. Madhlopa said:

[During media trips], they don't teach us how to write stories...they will leave it to you to decide. There are many media events; there is a media fellowship where journalists go to China for nine months. There are visits where journalists go there for three weeks. All these are funded by the Chinese government, directly.

In this sense, China was not trying to explicitly change the routines and practices of journalists or even their normative journalistic roles; their influence was subtle. These events were attended by journalists from both the private and public media, and they exposed the journalists to the positive aspects of Chinese culture, economic and political systems and, in due course, motivated them to write positively about China. Madhlopa said:

The media events' biggest advantage is an improved understanding of the way China operates. The problem with Malawi is that everything we do, we look at it from [oligarchic, big-firm, entrepreneurial and mixed entrepreneurial-oligopolistic capitalist] points of view. Anything that goes against that frame is viewed with a negative eye. But when I actually went there and saw how the Chinese ['state capitalism' embedded in capitalistic supply chains] operates and why they do what they do, my understanding was enhanced.

The biggest disadvantage is that there is a chance that you may be misinformed. This applies to everyone. Everyone would like to present to you the good side and hide the negative side.

Tasokwa says the Chinese government also offered an opportunity for Malawian journalists to study toward degree programs in China where students can learn about the Chinese conceptualisation of constructive journalism, which is aligned with the collaborative role of the press. Chisale says;

They literally [visit media houses] to say; "we have scholarships, and we can give you several...". But, Media goes together with democracy so I would like to be educated by a democratic country like the UK, USA or so, if I am to upgrade myself. *The Nation Newspaper* library also has a Chinese section, with books donated by China so that journalists can get familiar with China.

This finding is in line with research conducted Umejei (2018:345), who argued that China uses the degrees and overseas trips to influence journalism in Africa. The paper further argued that in practice, not all journalists who attend the trips or degrees get influenced.

Apart from that, the Malawi government has replaced journalists with Cadets at the MBC, and most of the seasoned journalists have been fired or forced to resign so that their positions would be filled with DPP Cadets who report positively on the president and China. The Cadets

deliberately avoid broadcasting news that would reflect negatively on the president and his allies such as China, thereby helping China to cultivate a good image.

Furthermore, since media houses are struggling financially, most of them are financed by the Malawi government if they are to cover China from abroad. The government has taken this as an opportunity to punish critical journalists in that it only sponsored journalists who wrote positive stories and were ‘friends of China’ and the Malawi government. Chisale said such a trend promoted positive reporting in that the journalists who went on these trips reported positively while those left behind were ‘disciplined’ to refrain from writing negative reports. This approach was effective because most journalists earn too little for them even to travel abroad; so, if they wanted to see the world, they had to strategically position themselves in an environment that would allow the government to appoint them for overseas trips. Apart from the Malawi government, the Chinese government also offered training opportunities in China; ambitious journalists were persuaded to conduct self-censorship.

There were also local events that were either sponsored or not, that journalists attend, such as press statements on a project that China is embarking on or has already executed. Because media houses do not usually have funds to attend such events, sometimes the journalists were given funds by the Malawi government or the Chinese embassy to meet costs, but the payments were argued to be too little. In such events, it sometimes became difficult for journalists to write a critical story because it was sometimes seen as disrespectful to be critical of someone who has done everything in his power to support you. Though in these functions China did not force journalists to cover it positively, it was very difficult for the poorly paid Malawian journalists to write negatively because if s/he did so, feared that s/he might not be shortlisted again for these functions, forgoing allowances that would have uplifted their lives. Madhlopa said;

“There is nothing like free media. Even institutions such as the University of Malawi, pay us. Sometimes journalists do not have transport, so this does help.”

Madhlopa, however, rejected the idea that the money influenced what journalists reported even though other journalists had indicated the malpractice. Madhlopa said:

Yes, even the IMF when they invite us to their meetings, they pay, and they actually pay more than what we sometimes receive from China or the Malawi government. This does not make us biased in any way. It’s not necessarily that they pay you for the

coverage; they pay you for the logistics. The concept of cheap journalism does not apply to this space. The problem is that you are looking at China as an isolated case. What China does is what everyone does.

The perception of Madhlopa on the role of the funds on news reporting is in line with the African journalism culture theory, which suggests that African journalists accept the funds not because they are corrupt but rather to help reduce reporting costs considering that most media houses on the continent are struggling financially.

Chisale said that though there were limited financial incentives from the Chinese, the Chinese-sponsored events themselves were designed to influence reports. He said:

The Chinese ... have a very subtle approach to issues. Sometimes they will not give you money, but they will say, for 32 hours can you fly to our country? And when you go there, they don't put you in cheap hotels; it's a five-star hotel, five-star treatment, police escort, with a convoy. You go to Shanghai, Beijing, then back to Malawi. You can eat any kind of food that you want in China. If they treat you like that, what can you do as a poor Malawian? You can't write anything negative.

This influence seems to be extramedia, but it is targeted not at media organisations or newsrooms but individual journalists.

Shumba argues that journalists, apart from being professionals, are individuals and citizens as well. The Chinese government has opened up opportunities for Malawians to go to China and conduct trade or buy products for personal use. Such products are cheap and affordable for Malawians, and the goods meant for businesses can be sold at a very high mark up, allowing businessmen to make supernormal profits. China now represents hope for ambitious Malawians, including journalists, and many of them would not want to jeopardise this opportunity. For this reason, sometimes journalists are afraid to critique China because they are afraid that they might get 'marked' and would in the future struggle to get a visa to China if they ever decided to visit. Journalists do not have the power nor protection to challenge China.

Furthermore, China made donations to media houses which made media houses want to return the favour by reporting on them positively. For example, Zodiak Broadcasting Station and China had an agreement to promote girl-child education, where ZBS identified gifted students and China

sends them to Chinese universities to attain higher education. Such initiatives created a good image for ZBS but also tied the media house to China.

Political influence was also seen in the way journalists in Malawi were sometimes “bought” by politicians to report news in their favour. This happened in so many ways, such as promising journalists that they would pay for their further studies or even buying them cars and houses, just to mention a few strategies. If such individual politicians have ‘bought’ a journalist of their own, each time they had a public event, the journalist writes positively about him or her, and such positive writing affects Chinese projects that are associated with local politicians. Chisale said:

It’s a complex issue because I don’t think we are recognised the way we are supposed to be. There are few media houses where journalists can survive such as MBC, *Times*, and Mana...I know of one radio station where they don’t even get a salary. At the end of the month, the bursar just comes to pay you for airtime. Journalists have to move from one event to another looking for allowances. This makes journalists vulnerable.

There have been cases where even senior journalists get bribed. Who doesn’t want a house? Who doesn’t want to be driving around? But these are regrettable because we are defeating the main aim of journalism, which is to provide checks and balances.

Issues of journalistic integrity and credibility largely hinge on the values of the individual. Even if the institution tries to put controls in place, the chances are that if the individual is corruptible, they are going to write a biased story. However, some media houses have attempted to put extensive checks and balances in place. For example, at Zodiak, if a reporter writes a story, it has to pass through several layers before it is broadcast. It has to go through the sub-editor and editor, who are the ones who finally put the story into the news. Sometimes things do not add up. They have a right to question the story and question the reporter about the verified facts or kill the story entirely. There have also been cases where issues of integrity affect an entire media house. Some media institutions deliberately broadcast biased information because they have political ties.

Furthermore, China is donating immensely to Malawi, thereby attracting Malawian journalists to start covering the associated events with interest. This is justified by its alignment with standardised journalistic news values and newsgathering practices. Before Malawi established relations with China, China rarely donated to Malawi. This made China less relevant in Malawi; hence Malawian journalists could not be persuaded to cover it or even interview Malawians on

what they thought of China. With the establishment of Malawi-China relations, China has become an important development partner and is a massive driver of economic change in Malawi that cannot be ignored by the journalists. Chisale said:

They completed the Chitipa road, connecting Karonga to Chitipa, and parts of Tanzania. We are human beings; we can see what they are doing. We are journalists, yes, but we can see that within a short time they have done what all of us can see. For example, if you are on the sports desk, I will speak on behalf of those on the sports desk, you can see a stadium. I will speak on behalf of my fellow journalists in the north, they can see a road.

Lastly, sometimes Chinese authorities encourage journalists to write positively. When negative stories are being published to the extent that the authorities thought that they were not being appreciated, the Chinese sometimes talked to journalists. Zgambo said:

I remember clearly, [the ambassador] called for a meeting at the Chinese embassy and he just lost it. He was literally shouting at people. He was like, why are you people doing this? He had a long list of what the government of China has done in Malawi, and he couldn't understand why the media in Malawi could report on China so negatively, and he went as far as calling Malawi a poor country and I remember the people were not amused by it. They said we might be poor, but we still have our pride, so please do not attack us on poverty. His understanding, and I believe it is the understanding of the Chinese government, was that because they are doing all these good things in Malawi; they deserve to be covered positively. Even when there are bad things, the media should look the other way.

The shouting could raise questions around whether China sometimes uses hard power, but this example could be more accurately categorised as a case of verbal admonishment, not coercive force.

Sometimes the Chinese nagged journalists, asking why they didn't take their pictures or cover a story that would have been in favour. Because journalists don't want to frustrate them, they played the 'diplomatic ball', and they ended up being influenced in some way, but this did not mean that they were chained. Nsapato said:

You can make a decision whether to shut them out or not. You have to learn how to strike a balance, where to stop. You have to know that as a media house, you are in business and you have to find a way to side with the people.

7.2.3. Structural Influences

The study revealed structures both in media houses and institutions in general that influence media content. The Malawi and Chinese governments have public relations personnel who control the outflow of information in their institutions regarding what, how, and when people should know about a particular story. They make press statements that set the agenda of how and what people can talk about. Journalists usually just adopt these statements and report them as news without further investigating them in ‘protocol news.’ Madhlopa said:

The Chinese are not forthcoming [unless they have something they want you to cover] with information. Other agencies such as the IMF also hide information; they never tell you how much you owe them. Some levels of diplomatic information are not supposed to be shared with the public.

Journalism is not just about ‘protocol news’; monitorial journalists need to be critical of the public statements being made to present objective news (Christians et al., 2009). Journalists reported that not all journalists have a critical eye to see donations from different angles. This might be because of unsatisfactory journalism training, which does not fully equip the journalists with skills to problematise development projects and critique national plans and their implementation. Zgambo said:

Our quality of reporting has gone down. In 1996, the government introduced free primary education [which was good news]... but, ...we were not ready for [it]. We didn’t have learning materials... human resources...[and]... infrastructure. As a result, the quality of education went down. ... Government has been in a panic mode since then. Look at the learner who started free primary school in 1996, eight years later, the learner is graduating into secondary school. Four years later, he is graduating [from college]. Journalism is a very tough field, you have to be well-read, intelligent ... inquisitive... you have to engage content. Most journalists do not have what it takes to be a professional journalist... and the interested parties have taken advantage of that.

Although Zgambo complained of the declining education standards, Malawi newsrooms do also have several educated academics, some with Masters degrees that have been earned from some of the world’s top universities, and they have senior positions such as director of programs. Ideally, these intellectuals should be in a position to develop and control the quality of news work. However, the truth on the ground has been that news work is a value chain; it needs teamwork. News work is also a system that needs different players to take different roles so that the news can be available in good time and good quality. Zgambo said:

If the water is spoilt at the source, it has to take a lot for you to purify it. Most of the foot soldiers (journalists) we have are not educated enough. Of course, we have guards (editors, etc. with good international education) who are working in the media houses, but how much can they do? They don't have the time, they don't have the energy, and it's just overwhelming. The assembly line has been affected, and it is affecting the entire output.

In-depth, critical coverage of China in Malawi requires journalists to break from the everyday coverage of events. Gondwe said journalists are supposed to conduct investigative journalism so that they can uncover stories that the Malawi and Chinese government would consider hiding from the masses. Some journalists do not have the skills needed to engage in investigative journalism. Media practice in Malawi does not have barriers to entry; any person given a job can become a journalist. Media houses are finding it expensive to employ university graduates, so sometimes they just employ secondary school graduates and give them short-in house training. Such journalists struggle to produce investigative pieces.

Lack of finances also prevents journalists from conducting investigative journalism. Media houses in Malawi are going through financial difficulties such that they even struggle to pay for the internet or even give the journalists fuel so that they can easily move in search of news. Gondwe said:

“China is a global power economy. For one to understand China, you need to dig deep; you can't even find their information on the internet, they don't do that. They are keeping information to compete with other economies.”

Failure of the Malawi journalists to have resources means that they cannot uncover such protected information and in due course contribute to poor investigative tendencies among journalists.

It was also observed that reporters did not write much on China before 2008 because China wasn't doing anything in the country; China helped countries that are in good terms with it. Malawian news media found it unappealing to fully dedicate resources to report on a country that Malawians did not find to be of prominence. Considering that funding has been a problem at the Malawi papers, it only made sense that they decided to allocate journalists to news that was primary to the Malawians. Madhlopa said:

China is doing projects that have national significance, such as the Kamwamba project; hence they appear in national papers. Even if it was not China who was doing all these things, whether if it was IMF, we could still have covered the stories because it is not the donor that we are following, we are following the projects that they are funding. Even if you look at Chinese maize aid in 2016, the Chinese were not donating as much as USAID; hence USAID featured more as compared to China because China had a lesser impact. Now the Chinese impact is greater.

Furthermore, at the extramedia level of the hierarchy of influences, individual journalists display charisma in the discharge of their duties to the extent that other journalists begin to emulate the way they make news reports. Journalists in Malawi were noticing that their colleagues from competing media organisations were taking an interest in China, and this made some feel that China was a force to be reckoned with, which needed coverage.

Lastly, wire services and syndicates also influenced news reports on China. Media houses had wire services and syndicates that provided them with information, and this depended on the kind of relations that had been developed. The wire services and syndicates had their ways of framing news, and they might have had their reasons for portraying China negatively, especially those from the West.

7.3. Changes in How the Malawi Government Influences News

Respondents indicated that there had been a remarkable change in the way the Malawi government has been controlling news media in Malawi. Madhlopa explains that during the times of Kamuzu Banda, the control was systematic and institutionalised in that there were repressive laws that were used to control news production. All media houses had to follow the MBC standards, and the government had the power to control the media, monitor civic spaces, and the media space was heavily limited. The country only had MBC as a Radio and *The Daily Times* was private but not private because it had political links. There was no journalism, just propaganda.

With time, MBC had no control over other media houses, and MACRA was responsible for monitoring all media, including the MBC. This theoretically ensured that even the MBC adhered to media standards, but the challenge has been that MACRA is pro-government, so the change isn't that great as it rarely monitors MBC and it concentrates on silencing private media.

Madhlopa explains that news reporting from the times of Bakili Muluzi to Peter Wa Mutharika was characterised by “terrorism”, where the government would never tell how to write a story, but chances were a negative story would result in being beaten or arrested arbitrarily. There were cases where Zodiak property was torched because of negative coverage. Shumba says there have also been times when journalists were beaten up over negative coverage, pushing journalists into self-censorship.

For example, when Bakili Muluzi came to power as Malawi’s second president, there was a bit of freedom because people had just moved from a repressive government, and he wanted to prove that the country had been freed and anyone could express himself or herself. Soon after Bakili, Chisale says President Bingu wa Mutharika showed little interest in sustaining the freedom, and the media was constantly involved in running battles with the government. Chisale said:

During the reign of Bingu wa Mutharika, there were some running battles with the police. I remember there was the Mtunthama saga where it was reported that the president was running away from the official residence of the president because it was [haunted] by ghosts. When the president heard [he was angry] and the person who had reported it was arrested. It was at the same time that a government minister stood at a political rally [accused *The Nation* of being too negative] and demanded all government departments to [stop buying] *The Nation Newspapers*. Between 2010 - 2011, the government literally stopped advertising in *The Nation*, and [the paper] lost about 40 % of its income; [it almost closed].

In the times of Peter Mutharika, there hasn’t been much abuse and the media is relatively free. However, intimidation still exists; for example, the *Times Media* was closed by the MRA after it was accused of attacking the government in its program called *Hot Current*. Similarly, Chisale narrated:

They closed *The Nation* last month because it owes the Malawi Revenue Authority (MRA). People wonder why the MRA didn’t negotiate with them to come with a mutual understanding. Was it because they were investigating this issue that came out in the paper about some firm being arbitrarily given 7.4 billion kwacha, [a firm suspected to be run by the first lady and her son]? They knew that the bomb was about to drop, so they had to silence them before they dropped it.

Regardless of these attempts to control the media, the Malawi government is aware that whether they want to or not, they have to recognise that people need to express themselves and that compels them to allow space for public debate. Zgambo says the government is not a benefactor that is

generous and is giving journalists this space; it is what democracy demands. However, Malawi still has a hangover. All presidents have political links to one-party era politics; they have seen how the one-party era exerted itself on media, and they are tempted to repeat that. For example, Zgambo said President Bakili Muluzi was a secretary-general of the MCP while Bingu Muthalika was one of the sympathisers of Kamuzu Banda to the extent that during his reign, he built him a mausoleum. Peter Mutharika claims to despise one-party government, but he continues to adopt the one-party political tactics. For example, Dr Banda deployed the Young Pioneers, a group of violent young politicians who were terrorising opponents. Peter Mutharika also has the DDP Cadets that behave almost like Dr Banda's Young Pioneers.

7.4. Normative Roles of Journalism in Malawi

Journalists emphasised that they have important roles as far as news reporting is concerned. They believe that they have a role in informing their audience by providing up-to-date information so that their audience can be well aware of what is happening around them. Nsapato said that any journalist by nature of his or her profession needs to inform the masses where China is helping or not. The information needs to be accurate and balanced. Zgambo argues;

Our duty is sacred. We are supposed to be factual... fair ... [and] accurate. There are many things that guide our profession, but we have to be people full of integrity because we are people with privilege to speak to the masses and if you have that privilege, you cannot abuse it.

Zgambo said journalists try as much as possible to be factual, but there are cases where they lie by omission, whereby, with knowledge or unconsciously, they may omit some facts that are contrary to what they are reporting; and where they might not have done enough research. If they had done enough research, they might have found more important information that might have been contrary to the information they reported.

On analysis, the respondents argued that news is not just supposed to be a reflection of public statements made to journalists or the public, but it must also be verified and analysed to see what those particular statements mean to ordinary people. Malawian journalists have a responsibility to attend press briefing and then subject the presented materials to larger bodies of knowledge such as scientific theories, statistics, expert opinion, and general public opinion. Such exposure analyses the content in a more holistic approach, amplifying what such engagements mean for stakeholders.

In the transmission of social values, philosophies, and economic ideologies, Madhlopa said journalists need to use news as a means of promoting such attributes to champion human respect and dignity. Journalists indicated that there are some economic ideologies, such as 'state capitalism, that are usually portrayed in a broadly negative light, but they are not always bad. In reporting on China, values, philosophies, and economic ideologies are spread through positive reports that cover Chinese ways of life, such as those displayed during Chinese independence celebrations in Lilongwe annually.

The journalists also have a role in entertaining their audience by capturing entertainment news that would allow the audience to follow their passions, such as sports, music, and culture. Entertainment news is important because it brings families together. Zgambo said:

On entertainment, when they are celebrating their independence in China, they also do it here in Lilongwe. They have their celebrations at the embassy and there a lot of things that happen there such as dances. As an entertainment reporter, one can write a good story about it.

The journalists have a duty to educate the masses by tackling issues that the public is misinformed about so that they can get the right information and possibly change their perceptions. Journalists have the privilege of reaching out to so many people over a short time, meaning that they can help to provide civic education to so many people, thereby contributing to social change. Gondwe said:

Many Malawians think the Chinese are trying to depopulate their country, settling in Malawi and finding a home in Africa and that they are trying to take Malawian businesses. You would expect then that if they wanted to invest in Malawi, they would have bigger industries and not small-scale businesses. Some even operate grocery shops. The question is, how are we allowing this to happen? Those two perceptions provide that the journalists should be there to explain to people if this is indeed true or not.

Lastly, journalists work as watchdogs in that they report cases of injustice in need of public attention. Chisale said;

We also provide checks and balances and [work] to support organisations like the anti-corruption bureau, office of the ombudsman, and even the courts ... to make sure that good government works. Of course, it's not formal, but we do that. We also speak for the voiceless, those people who have a stake in their government but do not have a platform where they can articulate their issues.

7.5. Contestation of Journalistic Roles

Although a good number of journalists believed in the above roles, there was a contestation of journalistic roles where some expressed concern that there was a limit at which one would hold the above-mentioned roles. For example, though it is important that the journalists provided information that was critical to their audience, some journalists expressed concern that it was not always necessary to do as such. They indicated that there was some diplomatic information that needs not to be shared with the masses for the proper execution of development projects. This belief seems to be in line with Christians et al.'s (2009) idea of the collaborative role of the media where the media has a duty to willingly support government development agenda, which in the long run makes the media less critical. Such an influence on news content happens at the extramedia level of the hierarchy of influences when the media is developing content that is supporting government policy.

Furthermore, Zgambo argued that what has become critical among journalists was the issue of whether journalists should be activists. Some people have argued that the role has evolved; journalists have to do more than reporting, while others have contested that the role of a journalist is just to report. For them, one can't force them to start investigating and persuading people to change. For example, Madhlopa said that if the Chinese have built a good university and the journalist has reported it, that's all. Whether there is crack somewhere or some misappropriation of funds is none of their business. Such journalists are in for the money. This influence takes place at the individual level of the hierarchy of influence, where the journalists choose to reject some external forces that might corrupt reporting.

7.6. Changes in the Role of Journalism

The roles of journalism in Malawi are changing in that, unlike the days of Dr Banda and Dr Muluzi, where the journalists were mostly practising the collaborative and monitorial roles, respectively, now journalists are asking themselves about the importance of their reports. They want their reports to mean something; they don't want to critique just for the sake of arguing - they want to foster change. This has been one of the reasons why some journalists rarely critique China because they think that the Chinese are doing so much for the country and they need support from the journalists. This trend is in line with the collaborative role of journalism espoused in the theories of the media (Christians et al., 2009) and is in line with Chinese media system theory which presses

for a more compliant media. This collaboration is by both acceptance and coercion, where some journalists willingly collaborate while others are threatened to do so. The collaboration is essential in that it helps in fighting several challenges affecting Malawi, such as poverty and shortage of infrastructure such as good roads. Unlike the times of Dr Banda, this agreement is partial in that the media continues to maintain other journalistic roles such as monitorial.

Zgambo said that there has also been a change in that most journalists now think that they now need to reach people more by reporting on issues that directly impact ordinary people. As such, there has been a mushrooming of community radios that report on more relevant community issues. Examples of community radios include Voice of Livingstonia, and Radio Tigawane. This conduct is in line with Hanitzsch and Vos (2018) developmental-educative role where the journalists have a duty to act as teachers in communities and advocacy-radical role where the journalists serve as lobbyists.

Chisale observed that there is a growth of mercenary journalists who are writing for anyone who has money to give out. Such journalists are interested in self-enrichment, which negatively affects the quality of journalism in the country. Gondwe said this is difficult to check because the arrangements are made without the knowledge of media houses or sometimes an entire media house supports such acts. Paid journalism relates to the Chinese media system theory, where journalists demand money to write promotional articles.

Apart from that, Madhlopa explained that with the coming of Power FM101, most Malawians were using the media for entertainment. There were no compact disks (CD), and it was hard to find the latest music, so the media houses became more relevant. With the coming of CDs and even better technology, the media became irrelevant as the source of music recordings and entertainment as a whole. Gondwe said;

Since the coming of Capital Radio, the news role came into play and even the newspapers became influential because Capital Radio came in with the signature of news. At first ... newspapers were for the elites so most people didn't even mind what the newspapers were saying. In the early 2000s coming this way ... the radios were very critical in informing the masses.

On the other hand, the educational role is falling as educational programs are not seen to attract larger audiences and advertisers. There used to be educational programs, including actual classroom activities. Gondwe said:

There were educational programs that were being featured in most of the media houses. Even newspapers had some columns where you would put some school staff in there. There could be a class session on the radio, of course, they were targeting primary education, but there it's slowly fading....between 2009 -2015, there was Tikwere program on radio, and newspapers had quizzes.

In the context of education, it can be noted that the collaborative role of the media is stalling as the media is not fully supporting the governments drive for public education.

7.7. Conclusion

The chapter has shown that journalists in Malawi think that there has been a subtle and direct influence in news reporting from the Chinese, but the Malawi government has greatly influenced the news reports. The Malawi government exercises firm control of the media, and this has worked to the benefit of its allies. The control has been changing in terms of tactics as it now mostly bends the journalists will through intimidation as opposed to laws and terror in the times of Dr Banda such that the journalists ended up shifting positive coverage from Taiwan to China without critically looking into the issue. Journalism roles have also been changing in that journalists now are interested in making reports that would help promote socio-economic development in Malawi, which is a collaborative role. There is a growth of mercenary journalists, which has eroded the quality of journalism in Malawi.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

8. Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of the research and makes recommendations on areas for further studies. The discussion stems from the hierarchy of influences theory that argues that media influence takes place at different levels of media practice; the journalistic roles theory that argues that journalists aim to certify specific roles; the African journalistic culture theory that recognises the influence of government and economic pressures in shaping journalistic practice; and the Media systems theory that suggests that there are three media systems in the world and these are the polarised pluralist, liberal pluralist, and democratic corporatist. The study also employed the Chinese media theory suggests that suggest that the media systems theory does not fully describe the Chinese media, which normatively subscribes to Confucianism philosophy. It is against this background that the chapter will interrogate where and how China influences news reports in Malawi.

8.1. Discussion

The influence of China in news reporting seemed to occur at all the levels of Reese and Shoemaker's hierarchy of influences theory, namely, social systems, social institutions, media organisations, routine practices, and individuals (Reese, 2016: 7). At the social system level, China brought changes in the ideological, economic, political, and cultural subsystems. In the ideological subsystem, journalists were exposed to state capitalism ideology, and they realised that it is not always bad as some Western media had made it seem.

On the economic subsystem, the Malawi and Chinese governments offer funds so that journalists can ably report on China. Some journalists do not find this troubling, but some try as much as possible to report positively on China so that they can be invited to report again in the near future. Sometimes instead of giving journalists cash, the Chinese government sends journalists on fancy trips to learn about China, which also acts as a persuasive factor.

The political subsystem is reflected in the study in that the Chinese and Malawian politicians influence how China is reported on. The Chinese government has implemented robust development projects that journalists can see with their own eyes, persuading them to return the favour by reporting them positively, even when the projects have a negative side. The journalists also navigate through the Malawian political landscape as politicians from both government and opposition parties try to persuade journalists to take their sides as they are covering China.

Malawian culture is also turning most Malawian journalists toward China. There are several cultural aspects that are viewed by the West as human rights violations, and each time the West presses for change, some Malawian journalists think their independence is being threatened. China does not overtly force its values on the people - hence it gets viewed positively, and that is reflected in the reports, but this also brings in the challenge of the 'tyranny of the majority,' where those in the minority, such as gay people, think their rights are being violated.

Concerning the social institution /extramedia level, there are external forces that determine what news is and how it should be presented. In particular, the Malawi and Chinese governments have departments that handle public relations engagements, and they are responsible for inviting journalists when they have what they consider news. Journalists rarely critique these statements.

At the organisational level, media organisations in Malawi are challenged on whether they should follow journalistic values or business interests. Their desire to 'play diplomatic ball' reflects the business attitude where they sometimes give a blind eye to an event so that they can be on good terms with China. The media houses also know that they serve the people, and if they continue giving half-baked services, people will stop following them; hence sometimes they can report on negative news about China.

Routine practices also influence the reports in that they regulate journalism conduct in the discharge of their duties. For instance, in trying to adhere to the values of prominence in news selection, journalists ended up prioritising reporting on China as it has become a powerful force in Malawi.

Lastly, at the individual level, journalists determine the course of their news reporting (Reese and Shoemaker, 2016: 398). Individual journalists may have varying judgements of the significance of the story (Gans 1979: 152) depending on their ambitions, and this influences how susceptible they are to corrupt elites. The journalists that have a deep respect for their work resist external pressure, while those who don't find their work important tend to be vulnerable to corrupt leaders.

The perception of the journalists can also be discussed concerning journalistic roles theory, where the questions; who takes up what roles and power in creating this discourse? What roles do money, state actors, and patronage networks play in the news media? And how do these affect news coverage? The study established that journalists indicated that they have roles to inform their audience, educate the masses, analyse news, transmit social values, entertain their audience and act as watchdogs that relate to the 'domain of political life and domain of everyday life' as advanced by journalistic roles theory.

Journalistic roles are a contested field in that some journalists think that they are not static, and one has to continuously negotiate their application for him/her to remain relevant. For example, while a good number of journalists think that it is important to be objective and critique China-related projects in Malawi, some think that it is not important to be overly critical because China has been supporting Malawi and they can do that better if journalists only critique when it is necessary.

The power in creating discourse is negotiated where at some point, journalists report on China independently while sometimes they are influenced by incentives and intimidation. The journalistic roles theory considers the incentives as undesirable because they would influence the independence of the journalists. This might explain why state actors, Malawi and China, are powerful enough to encourage positive journalism in Malawi's news reports on China. It can also be observed that positive stories are geared to encourage Christians et al.'s collaboration role of journalism in Malawi, where the media promotes government policies for social change. The collaboration is limited in that there are times when the journalists evoke the watchdog role to challenge the government where it seems to be going astray.

The study also shows similarities with the African journalism culture theory where the journalists indicated that the Malawi government sometimes tries to behave like a father to punish or reward journalists if they write contrary to or in support of their expectations. However, the journalists indicated that government control in Malawian media is not as firm as in other African countries such as Zimbabwe, where journalists are always on the watch. They also indicated that the government influence in news reports is lessening as compared to the past. The challenge is that this lessening grip might be slowed or even be halted if China continues to support positive journalism.

The other trend in media practice that relates to African Journalism Culture theory is about cheque-book journalism. Malawian journalists are divided on the role of ‘lunch money’ in their news reporting. Some journalists look at the money that is given to them to cover a function as simply for logistics, and it does not compel them to report positively on the case. This is typical of most African journalists. While this is the case, some journalists argued that the amounts do influence news reporting, especially for journalists that are not paid and rely on allowances to earn a living. Such journalists try as much as possible to cover stories positively so that they can be involved again in projects in the future. Other well-established journalists are also involved in this malpractice because of greed. This explains why section 1.7 of the Constitution of the Media Council of Malawi prohibits cheque-book journalism.

The Malawian media also seem to embrace the collaborative role of journalism, which is also associated with development journalism, where some journalists argue that there is no need to be overly critical of issues. This role is related to the Chinese media theory in that the media is not only expected to collaborate with the government with consent but rather with even force. The Malawian media seems to be adopting some oppressive elements of development journalism and Chinese media theory that resemble the polarised pluralist media, which was prevalent in the reign of Dr Kamuzu Banda. Arguably, the influence of China in Malawi’s news reports is pulling Malawi towards the autocratic media ages.

The study has also established that some journalists believe that it is important for the media to assume the monitorial role, to produce reports that document the darker side of the Malawi China relations.

The African Journalism Culture theory also notes that there is a slow development of investigative journalism in Africa. The same can be noticed in Malawi, where financial constraints and the poor educational backgrounds of the journalists themselves are making it difficult for them to engage in investigative journalism. There are some cases where journalists applied the technique, such as in the Cashgate scandal, where journalists uncovered the looting of government funds by civil servants.

8.2. Recommendation

Qualitative research wisdom suggests that qualitative studies should not be used for generalisations because what has been found in a particular context may not apply to other situations. Considering that most media houses in Malawi operate under the same socioeconomic environment, one can cautiously use the findings to explain how China is influencing the media in Malawi in general. Such information can be helpful to the Malawi Communication and Regulatory Authority, non-governmental organisations that push for social justice and the government in general in understanding where and how China is exerting influence.

8.3. Areas for further study

This study is not exhaustive; there is a need to explore other areas related to the influence of China in Malawi's media, such as the perception of Malawians towards the influence of China in the news reports. This study would involve talking to the citizens to see if they are comfortable with the influence and explore the type of journalism they would like to have in Malawi. There is also a need to find out what journalists themselves think should be done in response to the influence. This would involve documenting suggestions on practical solutions concerning costs for their suggestions to take effect, implications to Malawi-China relations, and socioeconomic development at large. There is also a need to explore how the suggested actions/reactions would work with the current Malawi legal framework and explore if there would be a need to revise the legal structures that media policy and practice in Malawi is built on.

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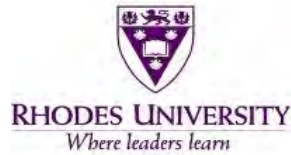
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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Interview Guide

1. How do you view the findings of my content analysis on how coverage of China has changed in Malawi's media between 2001 and 2020? What do you think have been some of the influences of those changes? Have you noticed changes in the way China is covered in Malawi?
2. How do you make sense of the changes?
3. Do journalists attend any Chinese government sponsored journalism training or any Chinese sponsored events? What have been the advantages and disadvantages of attending these?
4. Where do journalists get funding when they want to report on China?
5. How do journalists make sure that they maintain their identity when covering China?
6. What do you think is the role of journalism in Malawi generally?
7. Have you seen any changes over the last few years in the roles of journalists in Malawi generally?
8. How does China influence news media in Malawi?
9. What do you think are the biggest influences on the coverage of China?
10. Do you see any political influence on the way Malawian journalists report on China?
11. How does the influence, impact on the contestations about journalism roles in Malawi?
12. How does the Malawi government influence journalism and how has this changed over time?

Appendix 2: Request for Permission



ACCESS LETTER REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Rhodes University
Drotsky Road,
Grahamstown,
6139
South Africa

Date: 2nd October, 2019

Dear Ms/Mr

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am a registered Master's student in the Department of Journalism and Media Studies at the Rhodes University. My supervisor who is also the principal investigator, is Dr. Vanessa Malila.

The proposed topic of my research is: *The Dragon in the News; How Malawian Journalists Perceive the Political Influence of China on the Country's News Reports*. The objectives of the study are:

- a. To determine how newspapers are increasingly adopting a ‘constructive journalism’ approach more generally and with particular regard to the role of China in Africa.
- b. To understand perceptions of Malawian journalists of the way China is influencing journalism in Malawi.
- c. To understand what the journalists themselves make of these changes in normative conceptions of journalism and their roles as journalists, by interviewing them.

I am hereby seeking your consent to allow me interview two of your staff, as participants for a study that I am conducting across media houses in the country. To assist you in reaching a decision, I have attached to this letter:

- (a) A copy of an ethical clearance certificate issued by the University
- (b) A copy the research instruments which I intend using in my research

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor. Our contact details are as follows:

- a) Mwaona Nyirongo (Research Student) : mwaona@gmail.com, cell : +265994928485
- b) Vanessa Malila (Research Supervisor) : V.Malila@ru.ac.za, cell : +27832563765

Upon completion of the study, I undertake to provide you with a feedback

Your permission to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

MWAONA NYIRONGO

Appendix 3: Consent Sheet



RHODES UNIVERSITY
Where leaders learn

PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

(Participant)

Project Title: The Dragon in the News: How Malawian Journalists Perceive the Political Influence of China on the Country's News Reports

Mwaona Nyirongo from the Department of Journalism and Media Studies, Rhodes University has requested my permission to participate in the above-mentioned research project.

The nature and the purpose of the research project and of this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.

I am aware that:

1. The purpose of the research project is to make an academic inquiry of the perspectives of Malawian journalists towards the way China is covered in Malawi and the underlying factors for their perspectives.
2. The Rhodes University has given ethical clearance to this research project and I have seen/ may request to see the clearance certificate.

By participating in this research project I will be contributing towards an understanding of how Malawian news media is changing or not hence help journalists understand how they can better develop their identity.

3. I will participate in the project by expressing my perceptions in an in-depth interview.

4. My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.
5. I will not be compensated for participating in the research, but my out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed.
6. There may be risks associated with my participation in the project. I am aware that
 - a. the following risks are associated with my participation:
 - i. The participants may be exposed to embarrassment considering that they will have to talk about how China is influencing them.
 - ii. The data will also reflect on the *Daily Times* as a result of the content analysis conducted, hence *The Daily Times* journalists may be embarrassed to talk negatively about media house.
 - iii. The research may carry reputational risk for the media publications that participants work for.
 - iv. There is also a risk that media managers or owners may identify the comments of their employees, causing negative consequences for their professional lives.
 - b. The following steps have been taken to prevent the risks:
 - i. to prevent the embarrassment, I will be careful to encourage journalists to make general comments and not necessarily talk of their published work, unless if they are comfortable to do so. I will explain to them that the findings will help improve media practice in Malawi hence important that they do not feel discouraged as their participation is for greater good.
 - j. Reputation risk will be prevented by not expose their identities and the raw data will not be put to public use for 5 years and thereafter will be destroyed.
 - k. I will also make sure that I do not use suggestive words that would make it easy for managers to identify journalists` contributions.
- The researcher intends to publish the research results in the form of a journal article and thesis. However, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained

