

Abstracts 2014: Dr. Jacinta Mwendu Maweu

Herman Wasserman and Jacinta Mwendu Maweu, 2014. The freedom to be silent? Market pressures on journalistic normative ideals at the Nation Media Group in Kenya, *Review of African Political Economy*, pp. 1-13 DOI: [10.1080/03056244.2014.928277](https://doi.org/10.1080/03056244.2014.928277)

Abstract

Corporatisation and financialisation trends have had a tremendous impact on the media market in Kenya after political and economic liberalisation in early 1990s. Market pressures to make business-friendly editorial decisions have increased, especially as a result of media conglomeration. Such pressures have negatively impacted on journalists' normative values. Using a critical political economy approach, this article examines how interlocking directorships, owner and shareholder interests at the Nation Media Group (NMG) in Kenya exert pressure on journalists' freedom to pursue their normative ideal of the promotion of public interest. Findings of an analysis of the composition of the board of directors, the main shareholders and the qualitative interviews with journalists show that internal pressures from senior management trickle down to individual journalists to protect corporate interests. Journalists therefore resort to self-censorship to protect the status quo. The result is a commercial hegemony with journalists guided by commercial rather than ethical ideals.

Key Words: Conglomeration, corporatisation, financialisation, Nation Media, Kenya, political economy

Maweu, Jacinta and Wasserman, Herman. 2014. "The tension between ethics and ethnicity: Examining journalists' ethical decision-making at the Nation Media Group in Kenya". *Journal of African Media Studies* Volume 6, Number 2, 1 June 2014, pp. 165-179 (DOI: 10.1386/jams.6.2.165_1)

Abstract

This article analyses how ethnicity influences the ethical decisions of journalists at the Nation Media Group (NMG) in Kenya. Ethnic identity is regarded as one of the key factors that shape the political beliefs of Kenyans in general, and for journalists and media practitioners in particular ethnic identities also influence their normative positions. The conflicting loyalties between ethnic belonging and journalistic norms of professionalism and independence especially come to the fore during democratic processes such as general elections and national referenda. Based on Shoemaker and Reese's Hierarchy of Influences Model, the article draws on qualitative interviews of journalists at the Nation Media to argue that the highly ethnicized publics as audience and the media institution at the macro level and individual journalists at the micro level act as key levels of ethnic influence in the news production process at the NMG in Kenya. Shoemaker and Reese in their model argue that the power to shape content is not the media's alone, but is shared with a variety of other sectors in the society, including the public. The article

then proposes the inclusion of ethnicity as a 'key level of Influence' in Shoemaker and Reese's model, especially when applying the model to the African media context. The article will address the following questions: How does ethnicity at the micro level of individual journalists and at the macro level of the media institution influence the ethical decisions of journalists at the NMG in Kenya? How do the highly ethnicized publics in Kenya influence the decisions of journalists at the NMG? How does this ethnic level of influence impact on the Nation Media's capacity to fulfil its democratic roles in the society?

Maweu, J.M. 2014. "A Clash between Journalistic and Capitalist Values? How Advertisers Meddle in Journalists' Ethical Decisions at the Nation Media Group in Kenya" *Journal of African Media Studies*, Volume 6, Issue 1 pp. 27-43, Cover Date: March 2014 (<http://www.intellectbooks.co.uk/journals/view-issue,id=2660/>)

Abstract

This article seeks to examine how advertisers meddle in journalists' ethical decisions at the Nation Media Group (NMG) in Kenya. Grounded in the critical political economy of the media tradition, it is argued in the article that, in the highly commercialized media environment in Kenya today, market forces pose the greatest threat to media freedom and responsibility. Through in-depth qualitative interviews of twenty journalists from the NMG, the article shows how the expectation of private media to be purveyors of public interest while trying to maximize profits for shareholders leads to a clash of journalistic and capitalist values. The article answers the following questions: how do advertisers meddle in journalists' ethical decisions at the Nation Media? How do journalists respond to advertisers' influence? How does their response compromise their professional ethics? The findings show that there is a clash of journalistic values and capitalist values as journalists strive to meet shareholders' expectations and maximize profits for owners.

Key words:

Advertising, Nation Media, political economy, journalism ethics

Papers in International conferences July- Sept 2014

Is Looking East a Lesser Evil? The Politics of China's Soft Power in Kenya and its implications for media Freedom and cultural Values (Paper presented at the International Symposium on China's Soft Power in Africa: emerging media and cultural relations between China and Africa at Nottingham University's Ningbo Campus – China on 3-6th Sept. 2014)

Abstract

China has been investing heavily in Africa for more than a decade, and critics have argued that both China and its migrants are in what could be called a settling-in period as the story of a fast-growing Africa and a rising China unfolds. According to China's Customs, in 2012, China-Kenya trade volume increased to \$2.84 billion, 20.7 times than in 2000 making China the second-largest trade partner of Kenya. The Kenyan government under the former President Mwai Kibaki adopted a “Look-East Policy” strategy in a 2005-2007 hiatus to forge closer co-operation with emerging economic powerhouses, particularly China. The current President Uhuru Kenyatta has now perfected this “Looking East” Mission. There is also increasing Chinese media presence in Kenya with about six media outlets: China Central Television (CCTV), China Daily Newspaper (Africa edition), Xinhua News Agency, China Radio International, CNC World (Africa edition) and Star Times Kenya Media Ltd. This is already causing disquiet especially after the government of Kenya awarded Chinese-owned Pan-Africa Network Group's (PANG) the sole license to facilitate the country's Digital Migration process amidst complains from mainstream private media houses. Pan African Network becomes the second Chinese firm to seek a piece of the of Kenya's digital TV market after Smart DTV secured the contract to supply set-top boxes that allow viewers to access digitized content using their analogue TVs instead of buying expensive digital sets. Xinhua's partnership with Kenya's largest mobile phone subscriber (Safaricom) also enables about 17 million Kenyan mobile subscribers to receive the latest news released by Xinhua.

After the award, the three leading Media Houses in Kenya (The Nation Media, The Royal Media Services and the Standard Group) sued the government hence the Court of appeal in Kenya revoked the license in April 2014. The main complaint from the three leading media houses that control over 85% of the television coverage in the country was that the award gave the foreign owned

company undue advantage over the local firms. Granting PANG the sole rights would create a monopoly that would negatively impact on public interest. Under the PANG arrangement, local TV broadcasters would be reduced to only producing content as PANG and SIGNET – a subsidiary of the national broadcaster Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) serve as middlemen between local TV stations and consumers of media content. Both PANG and SIGNET would provide all transmission at an agreed cost with the respective local media houses. As of now, each of the media houses owns both their content and the transmission of the same to the consumer.

The controversial award comes closely after the passing of a “draconian” Media Bill in 2013 that is regarded by the media fraternity as a move by the government to muzzle media freedom. There are therefore fears that the increasing Chinese media presence in Kenya is a ploy by the government to “borrow” Chinese style of media regulation. This paper will therefore seek to answer the following questions: What is the cultural impact of the increasing Chinese media presence in Kenya? What is the nature of China’s soft power in Kenya? What are the implications of adopting a “Looking East policy” for media freedom in Kenya?

Key words: China, Media, Africa, Kenya, Soft power

Peace Journalism or Self Censored Reporting? How news Coverage of 2013 General elections in Kenya compromised the Media’s Watchdog Role (paper presented at IPRA 2014 conference in Istanbul, Turkey, 10-15 August 2014)

Abstract

This paper examines if the main stream media in Kenya dropped its watchdog role in the name of “Peace” in the 2013 general elections. After the 2007 Post election violence, there were fears of a possible repeat in the 2013 general elections. Several institutions among them the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) in Kenya, therefore organized several workshops for media practitioners urging them to exercise caution in their reporting. Although such efforts paid off, questions were raised as to whether the media neglected its

democratic role of being the critical observer of the electioneering process. The Kenyan media did not turn a completely blind eye to all the critical issues, but it is their reluctance to critically pursue these issues and extensive self censorship in the name of “peace” that was worrying. Our argument is that Peace Journalism ought not compromise media’s watchdog role. Using the third and fourth filters of the Propaganda Model on “official sources and Flak” we argue that the media did not engage in Peace Journalism per se, but extensive self censorship to protect the status quo. Data will be collected through qualitative content analysis of how two Daily newspapers covered the elections and qualitative interviews of journalists. The paper will seek to answer the following questions: Did the Media’s peace campaign compromise its professionalism? Is there a relationship between media incitement to violence and media playing its watchdog role of being a critical observer? Does Peace Journalism necessarily mean a mute media?

Key words: Peace Journalism, elections, Kenya, watchdog journalism, Propaganda Model

Worthy and Unworthy Victims? The Nexus between Media and Political Power in validating the Role of the International Criminal Court in the Kenyan Cases

(paper presented at the IAMCR 2014 conference in Hyderabad, India, 15-19 July, 2014)

Abstract

This paper examines how mainstream media in Kenya have been used by the political and economic elite to play a propaganda role of portraying the President, Uhuru Kenyatta and his deputy William Ruto who are facing trials at the International Criminal Court (ICC) as the “worthy victims” while portraying the thousand of voiceless Kenyans directly affected by the 2007/2008 post election violence as “unworthy victims”. Kenyan political elite led by the supporters of the president Uhuru Kenyatta and his deputy William Ruto, have called for Kenya’s withdrawal from the Rome statute of the International Criminal Court. They have also lobbied the African Union (AU) to portray the ICC which represents the genuine victims

(thousands of Kenyans affected) as the perpetrator and enemy. It is observed in the paper that, the debate about the “injustice” meted out by the ICC has centered only on the two prominent personalities (the president and his deputy) who have since played victims at the expense of the genuine victims of the post election violence whom the media have deliberately chosen to either ignore or down play their plight.

Using a Critical political economy approach, the paper argues that there is a systematic and highly political dichotomization of the way mainstream media in Kenya have reported the ICC cases geared to favour the interests of the minority political and ruling elite. The quality of treatment of news about the interests of the thousands of Kenyans directly affected by the post election violence vis a vis those of the two prominent personalities differs sharply. Even when African Union calls for ‘mass withdrawal’ of African countries from the Rome Statute, neither the AU leaders nor the media highlight the plight of the helpless Kenyans. In line with the overall conference theme, the paper will therefore also seek to examine how the African Union as a regional frame and the media institutions have been compromised to promote the narrow selfish interests of African leaders at the expense of millions of helpless African citizens.

Data will be collected through a qualitative content analysis of how two Daily news papers in Kenya (*The Daily Nation* and *The People Daily*) have covered the proceedings of the ICC Kenyan cases and the African Union meetings to lobby for the termination of the cases in September and October 2013. Focus will be on the quality of treatment of the plight of the prominent personalities vis a vis that of ordinary citizens.

Key words: Kenya, media, ICC, African Union, political economy

I am Because We Are? The Irony of *Ubuntuism*, Ethnic Conflicts and the Crisis of Identity in Africa, paper presented at the the 9th Annual International Conference on Philosophy, 26-29 May 2014, Athens, Greece

Abstract

This paper seeks to examine the crisis of identity in Africa, the recurrent ethnic conflicts in the continent and the irony of preaching the philosophy of *Ubuntuism* in the midst of such conflicts. The questions of what constitutes “African Identity” or who is an “African” and the place of ethnic identity in defining “Africanness” are at the core of African Philosophy. One of the ‘answers’ fronted in search of “African Identity” has been *Ubuntuism*. The philosophy of *Ubuntuism* is presented as a unifying worldview for the different ethnic communities in Africa to live as “One”. Ideally, *Ubuntuism* is said to encompass the ‘unique universal humanness’ that makes Africans to relate with each other communally in contrast to the Western Philosophy of Individualism. The essence of *Ubuntuism*, is therefore “I am because We are”. It is therefore often argued that in the true spirit of *Ubuntuism*, Africa can address the various challenges facing her among them ethnic conflicts. But the irony is that although *Ubuntuism* holds that one’s identity is rooted in one’s connection with others making it in theory a universal human value, in practice, it has often proved to be loosely limited to those who are of the same tribe, race, religion or nation.

In the spirit of “We ness, One ness and “my/ our people”, ethnic communities have risen and killed one another most notably in Kenya, Rwanda, the ongoing inter ethnic fights in South Sudan and the xenophobic attacks in South Africa. Our argument in this paper is that the crisis of self identity and what constitutes “African identity” lies in the narrow and limited living out of *Ubuntuism* which only stretches as far as one’s tribe, and/ or national border. The spirit of “One ness and Humanness” embedded in *Ubuntuism* can only offer solutions to the crisis of identity in Africa if such values are regarded not as ‘unique’ values defining ‘Africanness’, but as universal human rights values that are binding regardless of one’s ethnic, racial, or geographical belonging.

Key words: African Philosophy, *Ubuntuism*, Ethnicity, Africa, Identity