

Countering China's
Monopolization of African
Nations' Digital Broadcasting
Infrastructure

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### **Summary**

The majority of people living in the African continent access their news and information from broadcasted television and radio. As African countries follow the directive from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to migrate from analog to digital broadcasting, there is an urgent need to sequester the continent's broadcast signal distributors (BSDs). BSDs provide the necessary architecture for moving broadcasted content (e.g., television and radio) into the digital sphere.

Most BSDs in Africa are owned and operated by Chinese companies. Of 23 digitally migrated countries, only four BSDs (Burkina Faso, Ghana, Guinea, and Zimbabwe) are officially known to be outside the influence of China-based companies. The implicit capture of the BSD marketplace by the People's Republic of China (PRC) threatens African democracies and could undermine international partnerships among African nations and with the United States. Excessive Chinese control over African BSDs also raises security concerns and impedes establishment of a robust, competitive, and rules-based global market in communications infrastructure.

The United States should therefore consider the following actions to support African civil society, media regulators, and legislators in securing an information ecosystem that advances democratic values:

- Creating a Program on Traditional and Digital Media Literacy within the Department of State's Bureau of African Affairs 2021 Africa Regional Democracy Fund.
- Supporting a Regional Digital Broadcasting Coordinator for each of the five African sub-regional groups, via the Digital Ecosystem Fund and the Digital Connectivity and Cybersecurity Partnership.
- Enhancing U.S.-based competitiveness by expanding the Digital Attaché Program to promote alternative BSDs in Africa.
- Leveraging the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit proposed in the U.S. Innovation and Competition Act to advance a regulatory and liability framework governing the relationships among BSDs, content producers, and constitutional protections.

# **Challenge and Opportunity**

An estimated 74% of people in Africa receive their daily news and information from broadcast media.<sup>2</sup> However, directives from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) are driving African nations to transition from analog to digital television.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The switch is intended to recover part of the UHF and VHF bands of the analog terrestrial television spectrum for broadband and other services. Digitization also improves consumer experience and makes spectrum use more efficient.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Conroy-Krutz, J.; Appiah-Nyamekye Sanny, J. (2019). *How free is too free? Across Africa, media freedom is on the defensive.* Afrobarometer Policy Paper No. 56. May.



Digitization will dramatically improve the delivery of timely, impactful information. But the transition also creates new vulnerabilities for the future of free society in Africa. In analog broadcasting, the same entity produces and transmits content to viewers. Digital-broadcasting policies in Africa unbundle the television value chain into two separate operations: (1) content producers, and (2) a broadcast signal distributor (BSD) with sole authority over transmission. Without the BSD, no content can reach viewers. By government policy, all BSDs in Africa have been established as monopolies. Most of these monopolies are owned and operated by Chinese companies. The implications are considerable.

In analog mode, the federated nature of content transmission makes it difficult for governments to censor broadcasts. A government seeking to do so would have to take action against each individual station it wanted to target. In digital mode, though, all content flows through a single BSD. A government seeking to censor broadcasts need only control the BSD in order to control the entire broadcast landscape. Kenya's 2017 general election illustrates the worrying potential of a centralized BSD to subvert democratic processes. Following those elections, the Rainbow Coalition (led by Raila Odinga) disputed the victory of incumbent president Uhuru Kenyatta, citing foul play, intimidation, and a rigged electoral system. As a symbol of its opposition to the results, Raila Odinga swore himself in as president even after Kenyatta's official inauguration. Digital channels were shut off during Odinga's swearing-in under circumstances that indicate government interference. Kenyans (and the world) were able to follow the political turmoil mainly because the country was in simulcast, the period when both digital and analog channels were still running. It would be easier for the Kenyan government to suppress information should similar resistance occur today.

The People's Republic of China (PRC), understanding that those who control broadcast signal distribution can exert significant influence by strategically strangling broadcast transmission, has applied strategic pressure to gain a monopoly over BSD infrastructure. Of 23 digitally migrated countries, only four BSDs (Burkina Faso, Ghana Guinea, and Zimbabwe) are officially known to be outside the influence of Chinabased companies. The Chinese company StarTimes owns BSDs in a stunning 19 African countries. StarTimes' contract in Ghana was canceled in 2015 due to "crude tactics"<sup>4</sup> — such as paying over \$100 million in commitment fees — the company used to compel the Ghanaian government to do its bidding.<sup>5</sup> such as paying over \$100 million in commitment fees. But in 2017, Ghanaian Minister for Communication Ursula Owusu publicly announced that the government would re-award the BSD contract to StarTimes to avoid a diplomatic row with the PRC.6 The new contract also planned to give StarTimes the right to create 100 additional channels on the signal distribution multiplex to supply its own content. The Ghana government backed down on the StarTimes contract only after protracted protests by industry players. Many other African countries have contracted with China-based companies to build their BSDs under similarly problematic terms.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> BBC News. (2018). <u>Kenya TV channels still off air despite court order</u>. February 1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Forrester, C. (2015). <u>Star Times sues Ghana over cancelled contract</u>. Advanced Television, July 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> News Ghana. (2015). China angry with Ghana over Contract Abrogation. July 20.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Amorse, A.B. (2018). <u>Ursula Owusu Gaining Notoriety for 'Secret' Contracts</u>. Modern Ghana, September 24.



Extensive control of BSDs also creates an opportunity for the PRC to drive BSD standards. This in turn could enable the PRC to secure a long-term commercial advantage over American companies (and companies based in other nations) in manufacturing and selling set-up boxes, television sets, receivers, and other digital devices.

PRC campaigns to influence media operations in Africa (and other emerging nations) tend to follow a pattern that involves capturing the broadcasting space for propaganda, shutting down criticism of the PRC, colluding with African governments on mutually beneficial censorship, manipulating technical and commercial aspects of the BSD marketplace, and generally corrupting local media and politics. The PRC also leverages its BSD control to wield influence through subsidized, underhand barter arrangements in which stations carry PRC-friendly content in exchange for transmission favors. Examples of each are described further in the FAQ section below.<sup>7</sup>

Several factors make it difficult for African nations to effectively resist pressures from the PRC.

- First, African civil society which could advocate transparency around BSD contracts and offer independent perspectives on digital-migration policy in general does not possess strong understanding of technical issues at play, and how those issues might impact democracy. Until the shutdown of digital channels in Kenya following that country's 2017 elections, for instance, Kenyan civil society had not realized the political significance of BSDs. Support is needed to increase public recognition of the risks of concentrating BSD control in the hands of foreign-owned monopolies, and to strengthen the capacity of civil-society institutions and leaders to push back against the commandeering of technologies to subvert free speech and undermine democracy.
- Second, many African governments struggle to find resources needed to comply with ITU directives under mandated timelines. Relying on China-based companies, flush with financing from the China Africa Development Fund and the China Development Bank, to lead the digital migration is an easy solution.
- Third, the power of BSDs to censor content may appear attractive to some governments as a mechanism of stability, especially since media and communications regulators often lack the legal tools needed to respond to the fair-trade and free-expression imperatives wrought by digital migration. While Western countries are grappling with liability for platform intermediaries, African countries have similarly not defined the relationship between what BSDs can and cannot do.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> See FAQ "What tactics is the PRC using to influence media operations in other countries?"



#### **Plan of Action**

The PRC's capture of African BSDs is a work in progress, easier to halt while ongoing than to remedy after the fact. Proactive intervention can counter growing Chinese control over digital infrastructure in Africa, safeguarding the right to free expression while protecting and promoting fair competition in the broadcast equipment market. Acting to democratize the African information space — a goal that is in the best interest of both the United States and African nations — aligns with the Biden-Harris administration's renewed commitment to international cooperation in science and technology as well as President Biden's promise to the African Union (AU) that the United States "stands ready to be Africa's partner, in solidarity, support, and mutual respect." Action also aligns with the recently enacted U.S. Innovation and Competition (USICA) Act, which communicates the need to counter PRC "disinformation and propaganda in traditional and digital media," help African civil society identify "tools and assistance to enhance and promote digital democracy," and develop explicit policy on "Africa Broadcasting Networks." Below are a series of steps that the Biden-Harris administration could take towards these goals.

#### Bolstering Civil Society

First, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Digital Ecosystem Fund and Digital Connectivity and Cybersecurity Partnership should create a strategic initiative with the African Union that supports a Regional Digital Broadcasting Coordinator (RDBC) for each of the five African sub-regional groups. This initiative should be established as a Track 2 initiative of USAID's Digital Strategy. Each RBDC would assess the trends and current status of BSDs operations and controls within its region, monitor positive and negative impacts of the digital migration on free expression, and identify emerging and recommended policy options to ensure a free and democratic broadcast ecosystem.

Second, the Department of State Bureau of African Affairs' 2021 Africa Regional Democracy Fund (ARDF), which is intended to strengthen democracy, human rights, fundamental freedoms, and good governance, operates through open-call funding awards distributed via U.S. Embassies across Africa. ARDF should create a Program on Traditional and Digital Media Literacy, whereby selected organizations receive funding to improve digital literacy within their respective communities. For instance, organizations could be funded to support journalists drawing attention to threats and opportunities inherent in the digital migration; empower media regulators, media associations, and academic researchers to advocate for policy and legislation that strengthens democratic governance of BSDs; or create general media-literacy programs that help content consumers (i.e., the general public) assess the trustworthiness, accuracy, and truthfulness of digital broadcasts.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> U.S. Embassy Kenya. (2021). <u>President Biden's Message to African Union Summit Participants</u>. February 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Southern African Development Community (SADC), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), East African Community (EAC), and Sahel-Sahara.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). (2020). <u>Annex II: Implementation Initiatives</u>. USAID'S Digital Strategy.



#### Increasing Competition in Digital Media Markets

The United States should strive to break Chinese monopolistic power over BSDs in Africa by expanding the Digital Attaché Program into African markets. The Digital Attaché Program is an International Trade Administration initiative that trains and supports Digital Trade Officers (DTOs) to "promote and defend U.S. digital commercial interests" in markets worldwide. Currently, the only DTOs operating in Africa are in South Africa. Additional DTOs should be deployed across the continent to enhance the competitiveness of U.S.-based manufacturers of BSD equipment (e.g., set-top boxes, television sets, and receivers). DTOs would work closely with RDBCs to coordinate market, policy, and regulatory responses and to tailor responses to priority regional interests.

In addition, the USICA-requested report on creating an organization within the U.S. Agency for Global Media to combat PRC capture of African media markets should include mechanisms to support BSD manufacturers based in the United States or other non-Chinese nations. Examples of possible mechanisms include working with DTOs to host regional trade shows in Africa, or providing financial and travel support to help African policymakers and broadcasters attend relevant exhibitions in the United States (e.g., the annual show of the National Association of Broadcasters).

Efforts to increase competition in digital media markets enhance should be coordinated with other relevant USICA components, including the Sec. 3272 Report on Increasing Competitiveness of the United States in Africa and the Sec. 3273 Working Group on countering PRC cyberaggression in Africa.

#### Supporting Rule of Law

At the USICA-proposed United States-Africa Leaders Summit, representatives from the State Department, the FCC, and the Commerce Department's Commercial Law Development Program should encourage leaders of African nations to more clearly define the relationship between BSDs and content producers.

BSDs, as intermediaries between content producers and the public, face the same legal conundrum confronting the global technology industry as to whether search engines, information location tool services, hosting sites, and other platform owners (including video sharing and social networking sites) should bear responsibility for content generated by third parties. The traditional approach is to hold each contributor to a wrongful publication responsible to the extent of their contribution. In practice this has been difficult to enforce. The United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and Ireland had to set up commissions to examine how to deal with it especially in relation to the Internet. The United States positively excluded online intermediaries from liability by enacting the safe harbor provision in Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act. Even then, cases like *Reno v. American Civil Liberties Union* (1997) and recent bipartisan calls for reform demonstrate the matter is not free

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce. (n.d.). <u>Digital Attaché Program Information</u>. International Trade Administration.



from legal controversy.<sup>12</sup> Austria and Liechtenstein have approaches similar to that of the United States, while Hungary, Portugal and Spain have a modified version where liability applies only where the intermediary has actual knowledge of the harm. In a sense, these complications are not new. The information and communications sector has grappled with it since the introduction of the printing press, where the courts struggled whether to hold printers and publishers liable or limit liability to writers. In the African context, effective policy answers must acknowledge the disruptive impact of digital migration on broadcasting regulation and legislation. In analogue mode, one entity, the "broadcaster," produces and transmits content. The same entity had constitutional protection for free expression as well as bore legal liability for offensive content. With the unbundling of the services, there's the need to clarify which of the BSD and the content producer would now be the "broadcaster." Specifically, the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit should aim to answer the following:

- When existing television services are unbundled, does the signal distributor or the content producer bear the label "broadcaster"? In other words, who benefits from constitutional protections afforded broadcasters and who suffers the liabilities that legal breaches may produce?
- Where there is offensive content or any breach of standards, should liability be assigned to the content producer, the BSD, or a combination of the two? If the BSD could be held partially or fully liable, under what circumstances is it appropriate for the BSD to protect itself by rejecting problematic content? If so, what would that mean for censorship and prior restraint generally?

These questions are complex. If the BSD were considered the "broadcaster," it would mean the BSD would enjoy constitutional protection and at the same time bear liability for content it does not produce. In that case, the BSD would have the tortious right to limit its liability by rejecting content they do not like —making the BSD a private censor. On the other hand, if the content producer were considered the "broadcaster," it would bear liability for the content produced and possibly for the transmission it does not carry out. In return, the content producer would have constitutional protection for free expression. But that would leave the BSD, the de facto gateway to public communication, without constitutional protection and vulnerable to government interference, structurally endangering free expression and undermining democracy. If both BSD and the content producer were considered "broadcasters," it would still mean the BSD has joint liability for content and the right to limit its liability by rejecting content it does not like. In the same vein, the content producer would be saddled with joint liability for transmission even though it has little power to influence transmission activities, creating an imbalance in the allocation of liabilities and rights.

Policy should then be developed to clearly define responsibilities, liabilities, and remedies and provide adequate safeguards for securing the public interest. BSDs

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Reno v. American Civil Liberties Union, 521 U.S. 844 (1997) 117 S. Ct. 2329; 138 L. Ed. 2d 874; 1997 U.S. LEXIS 4037; Business Insider. (2021). What you need to know about Big Tech's Section 230 shield, the internet law that Trump hated and Biden might reform, July 8.



would need to be regulated through clear, objective, and transparent statutes. Content producers would have an obligation to serve the public interest, but also have the right to broadcast their information: that is, BSDs would no longer have free reign over content censorship. To achieve this, there are two possible legislative interventions for representatives at United States-Africa Leaders Summit to consider:

- Eliminating the ambiguity inherent in the terminology "broadcaster" and providing separate legal recognition to content producers and BSDs as unique entities each with its own rights and liabilities.
- Designating BSDs as common carriers by introducing safe harbor provisions similar to Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act in the United States to exclude BSDs from intermediary liability.

#### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### 1. What exactly is the digital migration?

The term "digital migration" refers to the shift from analog to digital terrestrial (as opposed to satellite) distribution of broadcast content. The aim of the digital migration is for all audio-visual content to be born digital and stay digital, because digital airwaves have greater capacity for more channels. To expedite the migration, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has stated that it will not protect any analog broadcasting from international interference after 2015. In addition to refitting distribution systems, the digital migration requires viewers of analog television to purchase set-top boxes to convert digital signals into visible content.

#### 2. All BSDs have been established as monopolies in Africa?

A close study of various countries' digital migration policies supports this — generally, there is only one BSD constructed. One reason is that digital migration is intended to conserve and optimize use of the spectrum, but licensing more than one BSD would demand more spectrum usage. There is also less of a business case for multiple BSDs, considering that construction is quite expensive and there are not enough TV stations in most African countries to fill more than one BSD. In the case of South Africa, the government intended to build an extra BSD for the sole use by the state broadcaster, but this still leaves all other South African broadcasters dependent on the commercial BSD providers.

#### 3. What are examples of U.S. digital communications policy efforts in Africa?

In 1999, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) launched Connecting the Globe: The Africa Initiative<sup>13</sup> to share a range of technical and regulatory expertise with Uganda, Ghana, and South Africa. As part of Connecting the Globe, the then-FCC Chairman embarked on an 11-day tour of Southern Africa, meeting with representatives of the Southern African Development Community, elected officials,

<sup>13</sup> Federal Communications Commission (FCC). (n.d.). <u>Development Initiative – Africa</u>.



telecommunications and broadcasting regulators, local journalists, and the private sector about communications policy.

More recently, the USAID's Digital Ecosystem Fund, in partnership with the Digital Connectivity and Cybersecurity Partnership, is endeavoring to place a long-term technical advisor within the African Union (AU) Commission who will help build the capacity of AU Member States in digital trade and e-commerce.

#### 4. Why not treat BSDs as common carriers?

"Common carriers" are private or public entities that provide essential public services. Treating BSDs as common carriers would insulate them from any liability for content, since they would be considered only a mechanism for supplying third-party content over which they have no control (rather than a content producer). In the African context, however, BSDs perform a function more delicate than traditional common carriers. The signal distributor is the medium through which content, including political discourse, ultimately reaches the people. As a result, the BSD stands at the gateway of public communication, with the capacity to determine whose ideas enter the public space. In short, it can monopolize — and arguably exercise prior censorship over — public expression. In addition, treating BSDs as a mechanism for supplying media rather than media itself would exempt BSDs from media-protection provisions included in most African constitutions — leaving BSDs vulnerable to outside encroachment and influence.

# 5. Why would a simple business-contract relationship between BSDs and content producers fail to ensure adequate protection for free speech and democratic values?

The relationship between BSDs and content producers could be viewed as a simple business relationship, for which they should have the power to agree upon mutual terms. However, if the relationship between BSDs and content producers is left as a matter of contract between the parties, remedies of damages and specific performance would not adequately protect the right to free expression. Consider a BSD that refuses, fails, or otherwise neglects to carry material from a particular content producer. Under a simple business-contract relationship, the only recourse the producer would have would be to sue for breach of contract. But remedies available in a lawsuit do not address larger issues of free speech and democracy at play when voices are censored. During an election, for instance, the political and social importance of the timely delivery of media content exceeds the value of any restitution paid after the fact. Financial damages cannot make up for the loss of avenues for freely communicating ideas and viewpoints to voters seeking to make informed decisions. The remedy of specific performance is equally ill-suited to this situation, since the content in issue would likely be well outdated by the conclusion of litigation. Using a business contract to govern the relationship between BSDs and content producers may also prevent citizens from initiating direct action against a manipulative BSD because the principle of privity of contract may exclude citizens from bringing an action upon a contract for which they are third parties. It is clear that the standard remedies of damages and specific performance do not provide



adequate protection for the right to free expression. This means then that the best way to regulate the relationship between BSDs and content producers is to set the terms by law. Policy is needed to (1) clearly define the responsibilities, liabilities, and remedies available to both sides in the event of a breach, and to (2) provide adequate safeguards for securing the public interest.

# 6. What tactics are the PRC using to influence media operations in other countries?

Though there is nothing inherently wrong with companies based in one country investing in the media landscape of another, the PRC's involvement in foreign media operations goes far beyond mere investment. The PRC has advanced the notion that national governments must exercise tight control over information resources on grounds of national security, cultural identity, and general preservation of state authority. The PRC has spent millions supporting government-owned media in Latin America, ferried journalists from other countries for "training", and generally bought leverage in foreign media as ways to shore up its international reputation. The examples below illustrate patterns in the PRC's efforts to control information flows outwardly, and encourage other governments to exact controls internally.

#### Example 1: Media capture

The PRC uses media to secure favorable public opinion in Africa through curated content, including by establishing a China Global Television News (CGTN) bureau in Africa, and by launching the *China Daily Africa* newspaper and the *Chinafrica* magazine. At the 2014 China-Africa Summit in South Africa, Chinese President Xi announced a project to target 100,000 African viewers with Chinese television content via satellite. The PRC's capture of BSD platforms on the African continent means that it is now easier, more efficient, and cheaper for the PRC to create additional television channels on their multiplexes carrying Chinese Communist Party (CCP) propaganda. There is evidence that the PRC uses media control to discredit liberal democracies, mute its human rights record, and extol its economic growth, thereby projecting its development as a model for Africa.

#### Example 2: Censorship of anti-PRC voices

State-affiliated Chinese companies may use their leverage to mute criticism against the CCP in Africa. A 2018 article in *The Economist* provides one example of Chinese censorship in Africa: "Ever since the Kenyan government signed a deal in 2014 for a state-owned Chinese company to build a railway between Nairobi and Kenya's main port in Mombasa, the project has attracted controversy. Its price per km was three times the international benchmark and four times the original estimate. Many Kenyans suspect corruption inflated its cost. Unsurprisingly, such issues have received little airtime on CGTN Africa, a branch of China's state television company, which opened its headquarters on the continent in Nairobi in 2012. When CGTN aired a

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Cardenal, J.P.; Kucharczyk, J.; Mesežnikov, G.; Pleschová, G. (2017). <u>Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence</u>. National Endowment for Democracy; International Forum for Democratic Studies; Network of Democracy Research Institutes.



package on the railway in July, the network praised it as 'a case study' of China-Africa relations."<sup>15</sup>

Additional examples come from Ghana<sup>16</sup> and Zambia.<sup>17</sup> In April 2017, the Ghanaian radio station City Fm carried a story alleging that the PRC Ambassador, Sun Baohong, had written to the Government of Ghana to complain about "a number of distorted or biased [media] reports and stories on Chinese people, especially some reports and cartoons that are defaming Chinese leaders and senior officials." The letter asked the government to "take the necessary action to … guide the media to give an objective coverage" of the activities of Chinese citizens involved in mining in Ghana. In essence, the PRC Ambassador was calling on the government of Ghana to censor the Ghanaian media on its behalf.

In 2018, Kenyan lawyer and recognized anti-corruption campaigner Professor P.L. Lumumba traveled to Zambia to deliver a lecture on Africa's relationship with the world. Lumumba had previously expressed critical views about the role of the PRC in Africa. Fearing that the lecture would be critical of the PRC, Zambian officials ordered Lumuba's deportation upon arrival.

These examples each demonstrate how the PRC is using its influence to censor critical media and dissenting voices in Africa.

Example 3: Collusion with African governments on censorship of mutual interest

The PRC has a history of helping governments in Africa halt the communication of critical material. Zambia initiated an internet surveillance and censorship campaign in 2013 with the help of PRC experts and equipment. The PRC extended similar support to train local experts in Ethiopia to monitor political opposition figures and groups. The Zimbabwean government used PRC equipment to jam shortwave broadcasts in 2005. As experts point out, "Beijing has compelled its domestic internet companies and news outlets to police their own content for violations of the regime's redlines, it hopes to school its international interlocutors on the boundaries of permissible expression and encourage them to self-censor in a manner that limits candid scrutiny of what the PRC views as sensitive topics." <sup>18</sup>

Example 4: Technical and commercial manipulation of BSDs

As controllers of the transmission gateway, Chinese-owned BSDs can apply multiple technical and commercial strategies to secure their interests. On the technical front, Chinese-owned BSDs hold the ultimate key to determine whose transmission goes well and whose doesn't. In other words, they can frustrate particular types of content while offering privileged transmission to others. On the technical front, Chinese-owned BSDs can offer better terms to content producers they consider friendly to the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> The Economist. (2018). <u>Soft power and censorship; Chinese media in Africa</u>. October 20.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> GhanaWeb. (2017). How a lone Ghanaian cartoonist stood up to China. November 25.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Shaban, A.R.A. (2018). Zambia churches slam deportation of Kenvan don critical of China. Africanews, April 10.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Gagliardone, I.; Geall, S. (2014). <u>China in Africa's media and telecommunications: cooperation, connectivity and control</u>. Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre. April.



PRC government and raise the commercial bar for others. StarTimes, for example, applies discriminatory trade practices in Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, and Tanzania to promote PRC interests.<sup>19</sup> The company provides access to PRC content either for free or at very low subscription rates and while increasing rates for international channels like BBC and Al Jazeera to levels higher than the average person can afford.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Center for International Media Assistance. (2017). <u>China's Multi-Billion Dollar Telecommunications Investment in Africa Poses Threat to Independent Media</u>. October 24.



#### **About the Authors**



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