

How much 'Soft Power' does China have in Africa?

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I have over the past years been intrigued by why Chinese scholars and policy makers have found the term 'soft power'¹ so useful. Can it have something to with its loose connotations, and that it one the hand signifies power, and on the other hand does not really do so? It is an oxymoron, and thus an efficient rhetorical figure, but does it serve as a good description of what the Chinese going-out policy implies? Soft power is but one and not such an important element of the tri-annual FOCAC meetings² between Chinese and African political leaders.

The concept of 'soft power' has become a hot topic in Chinese policy debates as well as in academic analyses.³ This is linked to different perceptions of China's increasing strength economically and rising influence in international relations, as well as the growing interest in the Chinese development model in Africa. There is a clear awareness in China that the country must present an image to the world that is related to more than economic power and political and military ambitions.

There seems to be two dominant Chinese ways of analyzing the role of 'soft power' in Chinese politics. One school of thought is centered on culture in a wide sense of the word as the most important element in soft power initiatives. This leads to another quite odd concept, namely 'cultural soft power', which of course is a pleonasm. The other approach is wider and seems to more clearly emphasize political elements that among others include a promotion of the Chinese model of development as well as Chinese participation in multilateral diplomacy, overseas aid programs, involvement in peace-keeping and conflict solution. The focus of this way of thinking is on how 'soft power' initiatives are linked to state policies.

The Image of China

China's development assistance to Africa, which takes many forms – loans and direct economic support, health, agriculture, education, training, academic, infrastructure construction, culture, and media – is an important element of the general Chinese engagement with Africa. Some of these projects are linked to economic investments; others have the form of direct assistance. Aid is growing but the Chinese development assistance to Africa is still much below what traditional donors provide. And it will remain so in the foreseeable future. It should be mentioned that it is not easy to acquire reliable statistics of the aid provided by China, because aid figures remain a state secret and only a minimum of information is provided. However, it should be borne in mind that Chinese assistance at times is more grass-root oriented than aid provided by other donors. It is also more directly aimed at governments, and it does not involve NGOs. It is also clear that aid is a tool of China's foreign policy, but this is also the case for other donor countries.⁴ Thus development assistance is an essential element of the Chinese soft engagement in Africa. It is politics, but it is also ideology. In the perspective of a combination between political, ideological and military power it should be mentioned that Chinese troops as of June 2013 took part in the peacekeeping mission in Mali, as well as in peace keeping initiatives in South Sudan in 2014.

The principal source of China's increasingly positive image in Africa is linked to economic engagements of many kinds – not only mega-projects and investments in extractive industries, construction, infrastructure, and finance. But also small and medium scale Chinese economic presence in trade, agriculture contribute to the image of a partner who sees Africa as a continent of the future, and did so also at the time when the image in the West of Africa was "The Hopeless Continent" as was the infamous cover story of an issue of *The Economist* in 2000.⁵ The radical rise in trade between China and Africa is obviously an economic power element, but it also contributes to strengthening the ideological and political power of China. China's trade with

and investments in Africa are growing, and was in 2014 in the process of overtaking EU and US. In 2013 the trade stood at over US \$170 billion.⁶

In an article from 2013 ⁷*The Economist* reported that a growing number of Africans thought that the Chinese created jobs, transferred skills and spent money in local economies. A BBC poll⁸ on attitudes towards countries found that China in general was viewed positively in Africa – Senegal (73 percent positive); Nigeria (68 percent); the Democratic Republic of the Congo (59 percent); Kenya (59 percent); Tanzania (53 percent); Ghana (46 percent); Zimbabwe (34 percent); and South Africa (34 percent). The results for Zimbabwe and South Africa are interesting because in Zimbabwe China is seen as a strong supporter of President Mugabe, and he is a very divisive figure in the country, in addition there have been conflicts between Zimbabwean workers and Chinese businesses. In South Africa where civil society and the press are strong there has been wide spread criticism of Chinese businesses from among others the strong trade unions. Chinese products have been regarded as undermining South African industry e.g. textiles.

Concessional loans for major and conspicuous construction projects are important elements of China's economic role and contribute to the image building strategy towards African countries. One example is the loan provided to Angola in 2004 and 2007 by China's Exim Bank for reconstruction of infrastructure – roads and railways. The 1,344-kilometer railway linking coastal city Lobito in the west and Luau on Angola's Eastern border with DRC was opened on February 14, 2015. The China Railway Construction Corporation (CRCC) built the line and plans are that it will later be linked to the TAZARA railway between Zambia and Tanzania that China constructed in the 1970s.⁹ Once the Angolan railway loan had been negotiated and approved Chinese companies started undertaking the work, bringing its own materials, equipment and quite a few workers, particularly foremen.¹⁰

There are many infra structure projects of the same kind all over the continent. A more recent and less spectacular example is the construction of

the new presidential offices in Maputo. They were inaugurated on 24 January 2014. The report in the very government supportive newspaper *Domingo* the following Sunday is revealing. The headline said that the new building would contribute to the self-esteem of Mozambicans. In the report it was written that the building was the fruit of the co-operation between China and Mozambique, but not that it was financed through a loan. The article mentions that 5000 Chinese and Mozambican workers were involved in the construction, but not how many of these were Chinese.¹¹

In a wider analysis of what is implied by Chinese ‘soft power’ strategies the role of communications enterprises and media initiatives play a central role. If we are to move beyond the more simple models for soft power analysis such elements assessed in a wider context are essential for a comprehensive understanding of China's presence in Africa. Here we are going to take a look at two of the most prominent such Chinese ventures in Africa, which both may be analyzed as economic as well as ideological power investments. They are StarTimes as an example of digital broadcasting activities, and CCTV as a model for Chinese media expansion.

StarTimes – a Key Cultural Exports Enterprise

StarTimes¹² represents one of the most spectacular Chinese success stories in Africa. Pang Xinxing founded the company in 1988 in Beijing as a wholly privately owned enterprise. In the beginning it concentrated on business in China in broadcasting services. It is reportedly the largest Digital TV system integrator, technology provider and network operator in China. However, it was when it started to create operations in Africa 2002 it really established it self as a major international player. Star Africa Media Co. Ltd. was created 2007 in Rwanda, which was the first African country with a full StarTimes subsidiary. The company has specialized in Digital Terrestrial Television and has benefitted from the decision by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) that all countries with the exception of a few

territories should complete the migration from analogue to digital television broadcasting by June 17, 2015. In this process StarTimes managed to place itself in the forefront by offering cost effective services and set-top boxes as well as being able enter into profitable agreements with governments and public broadcasters.

It has also helped that the Chinese Ministry of Culture has identified StarTimes as a “Cultural Exports Key Enterprise”, as well as being the only private Chinese company that has been authorized by The Ministry of Commerce to go into foreign projects in the radio and TV industry. It also has the advantage of having close relations with The Export-import Bank of China, which among others provided the company with a \$163 mill loan in 2012 to help it expand its operations in Africa. In June 2014 it received an additional loan of \$60 million for the same purpose. It is also advantageous for the company that China-Africa Development Fund is supporting it. The Fund is also the second largest shareholder of StartTimes. By 2014 the company had set aside \$220 million for its African operations.

StarTimes has a three-tier subscription system in Africa consisting of three bouquets. The prices per month differ from country to country, but in 2013 it was for instance in Uganda UGX 30,000 for the basic bouquet (36 channels) UGX 33,000 for the classic bouquet (46 channels) and UGX 60,000 for the Unique bouquet (51 channels). The package use has been estimated for the whole continent in the following manner: 85 percent of the subscribers use the basic bouquet, 10 percent the classic, and 5 percent the unique bouquet. Thus it seems that StarTimes appeals to the lower income tiers of audiences. This is further indicated by that the subscription fees for StarTimes in general are lower than for its competitors such as MultiChoice, DStv. It has also benefitted from privileged agreements with governments. At the moment StarTimes has businesses in 23 different African countries, and currently has network operations in 12 countries in relation to the migration from analogue to digital.

14 July 2014 StarTimes Media announced that it would create an African headquarters of 20.000 square meters in Nairobi, which would serve as a center for TV and film production and distribution on the continent. One of the main tasks of the center would be to dub its productions to African languages. It would also house a digital TV research and developments center. The center is aimed at fulfilling the demands from steadily more African countries for increased local contents. This is among others the case in Kenya where the goal for its radio and TV stations is to fulfill a quota of at least two thirds local content. The plans for the center are also linked to plans to introduce more Chinese programs to the continent. This objective was emphasized by the fact that the announcement took place at the same time as the launch of the Beijing Television Series Exhibition in Nairobi, which was aimed at promoting Chinese TV series, films and documentaries to African media and audiences

The model for how StarTimes operates in Africa may be described in the following manner. It establishes itself as a company with local partners often in a minority position. It starts by offering cheap subscriptions through set-top-boxes that offer access to digital television and many more channels at a higher quality than the analogue possibilities that exist. At the same time the company enters into negotiations with state broadcasters and governments aspiring to obtain the contract for being the provider of digital migration before the deadline of the closing down of analogue signals have been reached.

This model has generally worked well. It has come up with some problems in some countries such as Zambia, where in September 2013 the government tender for the digital migration project with StarTimes was cancelled due to suspected irregularities in the bidding process. Ironically it was the Chinese companies ZTE and Huawei that launched the complaint. However in April 2014 StarTimes won back the contract after it had been re-advertised. The company has also been criticized for selling out dated first

generation decoders DVB-T, instead of the adopted second generation DVB-T2 decoders in countries like Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda.

The story of how StarTimes won the contract for the migration in Mozambique illustrates the many intricacies of media and communications investments and relations between China and Africa.¹³ On April 1, 2014 the Mozambican Ministry of Transport and Communication signed an agreement for 133 million dollars with Startimes Software Technology for undertaking the migration from analogue to digital television in Mozambique. The tender for the contract was not an open one. The reason given for this was that the Exim Bank of China had provided a loan for the project on the condition that an exclusive agreement was signed between the Ministry of Transport and Communication and Startimes Software Technology. The day after the deal it was announced that a new company TMT SA consisting of Radio Moçambique (RM), Televisão de Moçambique (TVM) and Telecomunicações de Moçambique (TDM) would be responsible for the transmission of the digital signals. The three companies are all state entities. . Thus while it is true that the three companies involved in the migration from analogue to digital television in Mozambique – namely StarTimes Software Technology, StarTimes Moçambique and TMT SA – are separate units, they are also closely related.

There was severe criticism from private operators within the sector that they had been excluded from the process and had not been informed about the technical and organizational aspects of it. This is serious so much the more as the company responsible for the distribution of the signals may cut off or block or delay the signals for other channels.

In addition there is an enterprise in Mozambique that is called StarTimes Mozambique, which is owned 85 percent by a company registered in Mauritius called SDTV Holdings, which again is a subsidiary of SDTV Hong Kong. The Mozambican company Focus 21 owns the other 15 percent. Former President Guebuza's family controls this grouping of companies and his youngest daughter Valentina is the director of StarTimes Mozambique. The

role of StarTimes Mozambique is to provide the equipment for the daily running of the services in the country – subscriptions, importation and distributions of the set-top-boxes etc

The strategy of StarTimes Mozambique has been to increase its public image up to the time of the digital migration. There have been publicity campaigns, not only in relation to the migration process itself, but also to promote the StarTimes trademark and services. One example is that the company sponsors the new Mozambican football academy named after the great Mozambican footballer Mario Coluna. StarTimes also sponsors the national football team and use it in its promotional campaigns.

StarTimes is an example of the wielding of economic with political and economic power. As it serves as a conduit for Chinese media StarTimes also has considerable ideological and symbolic power.

CCTV and Media Power

CCTV (China Central Television) figures prominently on list of channels that the StarTimes provides. This is the case for both the CCTV 4 (News) and CCTV 9 (documentaries). When CCTV launched its African services on 11 January 2012, it was not only an element in CCTV's international expansion. It was an aspect of the extension of a Chinese media strategy for Africa, as well as an integral part of making Nairobi the hub of Chinese media ventures in Africa. This of course coincides with that other international media organizations have chosen the city as their African headquarters. Thus Chinese media to an increasing degree have become part of a broad international media presence in Africa. In comparison to other international actors on the African media scene Chinese media, and in particular CCTV, seem to have access to vast financial resources.

In 2006 China Radio International (CRI) moved its African headquarters from Paris to Nairobi cooperating with Kenya Broadcasting Corporation. It broadcasts on FM and provides 19 hours daily programming in

English, Chinese and Kiswahili. The move to Nairobi also meant that CRI increased its coverage of the continent – broadcasting both in European languages English and French – and in African languages Hausa and Kiswahili as well as Arabic. CRI also has offices in Cairo, Lagos and Harare. It broadcasts on shortwave and has numerous AM and FM relays. In addition CRI is on Internet, webcast, and provides apps. CRI covers all types of programs, news, entertainment, cross-cultural issues, dealing with China and Africa in diverse manners. As regards print on December 14, 2012 *China Daily* launched its weekly African edition in English. It is available on paper and Internet and as an app with video content. Its editorial office also is in Nairobi. The Chinese news agency Xinhua, which has had its African central bureau in Nairobi since 2006, now has correspondents in most African countries either in the form of permanent branch offices (28 at the end of 2012) or stringers.

CCTV may be regarded as the flagship for the Chinese media and news expansion in Africa. At the beginning of 2015 CCTV Africa had three main programs – a one-hour daily newscast “CCTV Live”, a weekly half an hour debate and the talk and reportage program “Talk Africa” and a half an hour weekly documentary and features broadcast “Faces of Africa”. In addition to being on the CCTV News Channel and partly on CCTV 9, the programs may also be accessed on an especially designed app “I Love Africa”. There are plans to expand the coverage to establishing a 24 hours African News Channels focusing on the continent along the lines of for instance the Portuguese RPT África or France 24. That is to broadcast a mixture of especially produced African programs and the general menu of CCTV news, but with a distinct African identity. By expanding in this manner the hope is to become a prominent competitor to the big international TV News channels – BBC, CNN, and Al Jazeera.

Quite a lot has been written about how principles of Chinese journalism and media regulations in China influence the way CCTV covers African issues. While there are certain aspects of the coverage that are supposed to follow a principle of providing “good or positive news” CCTV also

reports on the continent in a quite clearly critical and professional manner. This presupposes a certain balancing act. There are issues that obviously are touchy particularly if they are of a highly politicized nature. This is particularly the case in relation to countries that China has especially close relationships to, and where China has clear interests economically and politically in the stories that are being covered.

In order to check this particular aspect of CCTV journalism I looked at the coverage of US-Africa Summit in Washington DC from August 3 till August 6 2014, which might have been treated as an event involving the competition between China and the US over influence. It was among others interesting to see that it was reported at length about how American businesses looked to the continent, as well as the challenges for and advantages and disadvantages that the U.S. faces in Africa illustrated with interviews by CCTV's American journalists with experts on US African relationships. A stringer in Harare reported on the exclusion of Zimbabwean President Mugabe from the summit and interviewed a ZANU-PF spokesman. The punch line was that President Mugabe's visit to China later in the month probably would be more important for Zimbabwe than the summit in Washington. All in all the coverage did not really differ much from the way the event was treated by other international news broadcasters.

CCTV Africa has more than 100 people in total working in its Nairobi office, of which there are a majority of Africans and other journalists, and probably around 30 to 40 Chinese journalists and technical staff. The channel has made a point of recruiting prominent and highly competent African anchors and reporters, and in all interviews the staff emphasize the professionalism that is the mark of the channel and that they are free to report as they wish. The production standards are high and do not differ from those you find in other high-end international newscasts. Now it should be remarked that news and contemporary reportage and feature magazines keep to extremely standardized formats and it is very difficult to veer from what is the basic layout and forms of presentation.

CCTV's broadcasting approach must be seen in the context of the broad Chinese media strategy for Africa. It includes three main elements. The *first* is linked to a broader context of China's expansion on the continent, and the way this has been reported and analyzed in the past decade or so. Here both internationally and in African media and discussions there have been critical analyses and reports about the role of Chinese businesses and political advances. China has had a clear need for establishing alternative images of its African presence. This is again linked to that African journalism in spite of that much of it is marked by a certain degree of self-censorship and caution particularly in government media, strives to be critical and investigative. In this perspective the international image of Chinese media practices¹⁴ is not a model to emulate.

The *second* perspective is the attempt to create a new way of reporting Africa, which may serve as alternative to the negative coverage that for many years was the standard fare of Western news from the continent often focusing on conflicts, war, famine, and poverty. Now it is of course difficult to avoid conflicts in journalism, but on the other hand there has also been a strong case being made by Western media scholars and journalists that the coverage of Africa has been skewed towards the negative and with a clear Northern slant. An example is the glorified role that international and Western aid organizations and workers have been given, also in the interest of raising funds for these in the West. In such a perspective CCTV's so-called 'positive reporting' and the additional attempts to avoid critical political analyses may be interpreted as being both a new way of telling African stories with another perspective, as well as promoting a Chinese form of journalism. Now this has been a problem because in Africa there exists intensively politically and critically interested publics and they may regard such coverage as shying away from the problems.

The *third* element¹⁵ is to regard the journalism practiced by CCTV Africa as a way of trying out other journalistic standards and practices than those which one can find coming out of Beijing. Now it should be mentioned

that also the coverage from CCTV Beijing in the last years have been more open than previously. Maybe CCTV Africa can be seen as a kind of journalistic laboratory for new forms of news dissemination with a Chinese perspective. If this is the case it also represents a challenge in the struggle over how to interpret not only Chinese but also other major interests in African markets and economies. Be they from other BRICS countries or from the traditional Western actors in Africa.

While it is clear that it takes time to build a stable audience, it is also a question whether CCTV has been able to penetrate the African market for news. The studies that have been done of TV audiences in Kenya show that for instance for the period April – June 2013 CCTV had not reached any significant audience in the country. It did not figure among the ten most popular channels, where the smallest had only 1 percent.¹⁶ Now it may be a consolation for CCTV that none of the other international channels figured on the list. There has been a very limited and preliminary study done of how CCTV is being perceived, and it showed that some viewers from the very narrow sample accessed the channel, and that they found it attractive.¹⁷ It is also interesting to note that these were viewers who accessed digital TV on other set-top boxes than DStv, e.g. StarTimes. It is obviously too early to conclude whether African audiences have taken to CCTV as an important news source for the understanding of Africa and Chinese African relations, but there is on the other hand no doubt that the competition for audience attention and thus for cultural and ideological power in the area of TV is fierce.

CCTV is the prime example of Chinese media power in Africa. Its main role is to enter the power game about definitional power in relation to presenting a Chinese agenda for understanding Africa, China and international politics. The main adversaries in this struggle for gaining a foothold among African audiences are obviously the big international news broadcasters CNN, BBC, Al Jazeera, but also African channels.

The Narrative of the Search for 'Soft Power'

In an attempt to assess how much 'soft power' China really possesses, and whether the term lends itself to understanding China's communications, media and public diplomacy, I propose an actantial analysis. It builds on the narratological theories of A. J. Greimas.¹⁸ Originally it was launched as a model for understanding structures of narratives in literature. It is, however, also useful as a way into the role of different forms of power understood as narratives. The point of departure for this model is that all stories can be structured according to three actantial oppositions, which each form the axes of the narrative. The first is called the axis of desire, which has two components – a subject and an object. The subject desires the object. The second axis is one of power and the elements are helper(s) and opponent(s). The helper (s) assists the subject in achieving the object of desire and the opponent(s) prevent the same from happening. The third axis is one of transmission and consists of sender(s) and receiver(s). The receiver is the element that initiates the quest. Sender elements are often also receiver elements. And subjects may function as receivers.

When we apply this analytical model to the narrative of China's desire for 'soft power', China is the subject, and the object is soft power. The recipient is Chinese influence and also its diverse forms of power aided by soft power initiatives. The sender is the Chinese government as well as cooperating African governments. China's helpers in this quest are many.

FOCAC and other forms of international political cooperation – BRICS etc. contribute to political power. The Chinese development model provides ideological and symbolic power. China's economic strength is the core of the country's economic power. Investments in construction projects and investments in extractive industries mainly serve economic power and to a certain degree political power. Chinese aid programs are an important element both for ideological and political power. All of the above contribute to what may be called 'reputational power'. Communications investments contribute to economic, ideological and political power. Media initiatives,

cultural cooperation and Confucius institutes build cultural capital, and are elements in ideological and political power. Building a positive image through prestige buildings also contribute to increasing ideological and political power. These are elements of what may be called 'representational power'. The beginning of military peacekeeping missions may be seen as an initial part of military power.

The adversaries may be lined up according to the same form of power perspectives. Western powers have in general more cooperation with Africa than China, and thus more political power. The image of the West in Africa is to a certain degree marked by ambivalence – colonialism, imperialism – but in general it must be said to provide a stronger ideological force than the Chinese model as such. This is related to a long history of contacts, and that African political systems are modeled on those of the former colonial powers. China is economically strong in Africa and it has an economic power that is most impressive. Chinese aid programs are, however, much smaller than Western ones. The role of Chinese telecommunications companies is one of the areas where China in Africa really provides power almost at the same level as the West. But here also African actors are building strength. When it comes to media power, Western media are much stronger than the Chinese attempts to build its media in Africa. TV and radio channels like BBC, CNN, RTP, and France 24 together with a plethora of popular media products contribute to a formidable Western cultural power. American popular culture, for example Black American music, is dominant, and so are Brazilian telenovellas in the Lusophone countries. While China is expanding its educational presence, there is no doubt that Western universities have much more prestige and power. The advantage of the previous colonial languages over Chinese is formidable. Prestige buildings give China an edge, but also here there is competition. Western military influence in Africa is far more powerful than China's. China also has a negative public image to overcome linked to illegal activities in poaching and illegal logging and perceived corruption. The lack of democracy and inability to cooperate with civil society also contribute to a Chinese

ideological power deficit. Finally the other BRICS countries particularly India and Brazil are powerful economic adversaries, as are South Korea and Japan.



Challenges

There is no doubt that China faces formidable challenges when it comes to confronting the hegemony of the former colonial powers in Africa – as well as other Western actors such as the Nordic countries. This emphasizes the importance of viewing power in a relational perspective. There is no doubt

that the previous colonial powers and the US have an influence in Africa through language dominance, inherited institutional frameworks – political, educational, artistic, popular culture – that far surpasses any form of cultural and media power strategies that China can launch. But China is also faced with competition from other ‘new’ powers in Africa that in this context have great advantages – India, through its diaspora and long presence on the continent, and Brazil through language and cultural links to Lusophone Africa. In such a relational perspective China’s power strategies may be up against internal contradictions when it comes to harmonizing the attempts to wield economic, political and ideological power at the same time.

There are some aspects of soft-power policies that are problematic for China. It concerns the relationship to civil society organizations and the independent media. China focuses on dealing with governments and related institutions first, and then businesses, but to a little or no degree with actors in civil society. In African countries political space is expanding, hence the role of China is being increasingly debated and Chinese presence and engagement challenged. Civil-society groups have stood up against Chinese businesses and interests and pressured their governments to intervene in particular aspects of Chinese engagements.¹⁹ One case is a strike against the Chinese company (China Road and Bridge Corporation) building the ring road around Maputo and the bridge between Maputo and Katembe, because the company had flouted regulations concerning work contracts. The workers got support from The Ministry of Labor, and the company was ordered to issue proper work contracts.²⁰

Another more amusing story is the report that was brought by Xinhua on the march to honor then President Guebuza on his seventy-first birthday eighteenth of January 2014. The news agency wrote: "[...] around 250,000 people, including members and sympathizers of Frelimo are participating in the march, which kicked off from the Eduardo Mondlane Statue to the Independence square in the capital city of Maputo." The ironic truth is that

even the Mozambican government media did not report that there were more than 3000 people present.

There is more to the Chinese African engagement in media, communication and culture than creating a form of 'soft power' as opposed to 'hard power' or 'economic power'. It must also be seen as part and parcel of China's steadily increasing economic interests in the continent in areas such as extractive industries, construction, agriculture, finance, and increased aid. It involves Chinese government agencies as well as private companies and cultural organizations. People can get confused when studying China's involvement in Africa, because it is so multifaceted and fragmented. Nevertheless much of it is underpinned by conspicuous and consistent state support, and thus it also part of a wider power strategy as outlined above. It involves clear *decisions* that must be seen as part and parcel of the Chinese multi-layered strategy in relation to building political influence and support for its foreign policy strategies; acquiring raw materials and building a strong economic presence in Africa – soft loans; large-scale construction projects in the form of infrastructure – roads and railways, and prestige buildings – national stadia, parliaments, presidential offices; aid initiatives – health programs; cultural and educational policies – Confucius institutes.

Investments in communications industries represent a kind of straddling between economic and ideological engagements. Now these ventures are in no way comparable to the ideological hegemony wielded by Western media in Africa, they are, however, indications of that the struggle over ideological interpretations is heating up.

Ideologically China has had some influence through its development model and as a provider of aid. But when it comes to knowledge of Chinese ways of life and culture the influence is minimal. This has partly to do with the language issue, but also that popular culture from the US, the former colonial powers, Brazil and India have much more influence than Chinese attempts to enter this arena. As a curious *apropos* was that on January 28, 2014, BBC reported that there was a state sponsored initiative to promote China's

cultural "soft power" through pop music by heavy sponsoring of the singer Ruhan Jia and trying to turn her into a world star.²¹

Does China possess cultural capital in Africa? Here the question arises whether its economic capital, which is the driving force, has been translated into symbolic power and cultural capital. There has been little embodiment of Chinese culture in Africa. Chinese practical goods in the area of technological gadgets etc. are of importance for media and communication. But as regards cultural content China does not figure prominently. Chinese artistic products do not really exist in African contexts. And except for the Confucius institutes, and some support programs in the area of journalism, cultural exchange projects and research cooperation, China does not have a strong institutional presence when it comes to cultural capital.

The struggle over ideology involves the shaping of agendas through the so-called Beijing consensus and the Chinese model of development, which combines a tough market economy with state interventions. An authoritarian and repressive political system provides incentives for high economic growth. This model serves as an important agenda setter for development strategy debates. But it has a serious democratic and human rights deficit, which weakens its ideological appeal.

As regards economic power there is no doubt about the Chinese importance in Africa as well as the rest of the world. But there is still a long way to go before China wields the "soft power" in Africa so many Chinese politicians and academics foresee.

¹ As is well known Joseph Nye first introduced the term in his 1990 book with the title *Bound to lead*. See: Joseph Nye, *Bound to lead: The changing nature of American power*. New York: Basic Books, 1990

² The "Forum of China-Africa Cooperation" meetings are being held every three years between 2000 and 2015: Three in Beijing, three in Africa – Ethiopia and Egypt and South Africa.

³ See: Mingjiang Li (ed) (2009) *Soft Power. China's Emerging Strategy in International Politics*. Lanham. (Lexington Books)

⁴ See Deborah Brautigam, *The Dragon's Gift. The Real Story of China in Africa*. Oxford: OUP, 2009 for a comprehensive discussion of the issue of Chinese aid to Africa. Among others pp. 171 – 172.

⁵ *The Economist*, May 13, 2000. Incidentally 5 months before the first FOCAC meeting in Beijing.

⁶ Ernst & Young's attractiveness survey: *Africa 2013. Getting down to business*. P. 3. [http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/Africa_Attract_2013_-_Getting_down_to_business/\\$FILE/Africa_attractiveness_2013_web.pdf](http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/Africa_Attract_2013_-_Getting_down_to_business/$FILE/Africa_attractiveness_2013_web.pdf) (Last accessed Feb 27, 2015)

⁷ More than Minerals" *The Economist* March 23, 2013.

⁸ http://www.globescan.com/news_archives/bbc06-3/ (Last accessed Feb 26, 2015)

⁹ http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2015-02/14/c_133996126.htm (Last accessed Feb 26, 2015)

¹⁰ Indira Campos and Alex Vines "ANGOLA AND CHINA. A Pragmatic Partnership". (Working Paper Presented at a CSIS Conference, "Prospects for Improving U.S.-China-Africa Cooperation," December 5, 2007)

http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/080306_angolachina.pdf (Last accessed Jan. 26, 2015)

¹¹ *Domingo*, 26 de Janeiro de 2014.

¹² Background material for what I write about StarTimes exists in many different sources, often not easily accessible. The most important have been company reports such as Dataaxis Report on *Operator Profile of StarTimes Africa*, (2013) (<http://dataaxis.com/operator-profile-startimes-africa/>) (Last accessed Feb 27, 2015) and The Balancing Act. *Analogue To Digital Migration in Africa*. (2013) (<http://www.balancingact-africa.com/reports/dtt-analogue-to-digi>) (Last accessed Feb 26, 2015)

¹³ The story of StarTimes in Mozambique builds on reports in the Mozambican press, and investigative reports by Centro de Integridade Publica (CIP). Borges Nhamirre, "Migração Digital entregue à Empresa da Família Presidencial" http://www.cip.org.mz/cipdoc%5C298_CIP%20Newsletter%20n%C2%BA02_2014.pdf (Last accessed Feb 27, 2015)

¹⁴ China is for instance reported to be number 176 of 180 countries as regards the World Press Freedom Index of Reporters without Borders for 2014. (<http://index.rsf.org/#!/>) (Last accessed Feb 27, 2015). It ranks behind all African countries except Eritrea.

¹⁵ This point of view is being proposed by Iginio Gagliardone. See Iginio Gagliardone, Iginio (2013) "China as a persuader: CCTV Africa's first steps in an African mediasphere." *Equid Novi* 34 (3) 2013.

¹⁶ See: Kenya Audience Research Snap Shot: Quarterly Tracking Q2 2013 (April - June). (<http://www.share-pdf.com/d83a1ade54334887be1c82b0fd508d96/KARF%20Q2%202013%20NMG.pdf>) (Last accessed Aug. 08. 2014, the site has since been taken down)

¹⁷ Lauren Gorfinkel Sandy Joffe and Yu-Shan Wu (2014) "CCTV's Global Outreach: Examining the Audiences of China's 'New Voice' in Africa", *Media International Australia*. June 2014. (<http://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=353905839712858;res=IELLCC>) (Last accessed Feb 27, 2015)

¹⁸ A.J. Greimas introduced this in his seminal book from 1966. A. J. GREIMAS, *Sémantique structurale*, Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1966. English version: A. J. GREIMAS, *Structural Semantics: An Attempt at a Method*, translated by D. McDowell, R. Schleifer and A. Velie. Lincoln (Nebraska): University of Nebraska Press, 1983.

¹⁹ See Jenifer C. Cooke, "China's Soft Power In Africa". Chapter 3 in Carola McGiffert (ed), *Chinese Soft Power and Its Implications for the United States*. A Report from the CSIS Smart Power Initiative. Washington: CSIS, 2009. http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/090403_mcgiffert_chinesesoftwarepower.web.pdf (Last accessed Feb 26. 2015)

²⁰ *Domingo* 19 de Janeiro, 2014. p. 19.

²¹ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-25910722> (Last accessed Feb. 27, 2015)

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