

# Any trace of “soft power”?

- a review of Angolan newspapers portrayal of China

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## Intro: Looking for Chinese soft power in Angolan newspapers

Population size taken into account, Angola is the country where the recent surge in Chinese economic cooperation in Africa has had the greatest mass and impact. According to the Global Trade Atlas, by 2012 only South Africa (30 per cent) surpassed Angola (19%) as a trading partner in Africa.<sup>1</sup> Though trustworthy statistics are hard to come by, a conservative estimate is that more than a hundred thousand Chinese citizens are probably found in Angola at any given time. Chinese companies and workers have been absolutely crucial in the Angolan Government’s reconstruction efforts after the civil war (1975 – 2002). To finance this effort, the Government has to a large extent drawn upon the various credit lines arranged by Chinese interests. The massive Chinese intervention in Angola, as generally in Africa, has attracted a constant increasing attention from the established North American and European powers, also in academia. But due to the immense Chinese interests in the topic of “soft power”, and this global power’s strengthening presence in Africa, it is worth examining how the concept works in Africa.

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics in synopsis by the African Trade Law centre at <http://www.tralac.org/files/2013/08/Africa-China-trading-relationship-Synopsis.pdf>

According to Sino-observers, the country's leadership is very concerned with China's existing or potential soft power (Li and Rønning 2013; Shambaugh 2013: ch.6). Soft power is a hard concept to define and deal with analytically. In contrast to hard power, soft power, argues Shambaugh (2013:ch.6), 'relies on co-optation rather than coercion' and has to do with a country's "attraction abilities" linked to culture, language, values and morals. If it is not economic, political, military or otherwise force or "hard power", soft power must be like the 'magnet that pulls and draws others to a nation simply because of its powerful appeal by example' (Shambaugh 2013:ch.6). Does China wield such powers in Angola?

One way of shedding some light on the role of China in Africa is to look at the case of Angola through the lens of local newspapers. How is China in general, and Chinese economic, political and socio-cultural practices portrayed in Angola's newspapers? Which tendencies can be discerned with regard to the topics dealt with, the tone of journalism, the level of critical investigation? Who are the principal interlocutors on "Chinese matters" in Angola? Most crucially, is there any trace of the exercise of Chinese "soft power" percolating through the Angolan newspapers?

The ambition in the following chapters is to describe these tendencies as observed in the review of a selection of the newspapers we believe to have the highest impact over time. Together, they also represent what we believe to be a qualified selection of the diversity of printed news media available to Angolans. They are, in addition to *Jornal de Angola*, the *Angolense*, *Folha 8*, *Novo Jornal*, *O País*, and *Semanário Angolense*. We<sup>2</sup> also reviewed the widely distributed and free thrice-a-week paper called *Jornal Popular*. The latter has not withstood the test of time,<sup>3</sup> but was nevertheless reviewed due to its assumed connection to the Government/ruling party interests. In order to limit the catchment, we chose the year of 2012 of which our archive of newspaper editions is sufficiently complete.<sup>4</sup> We reviewed the content in entries and articles which once or repeatedly mentioned the word China.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, all the newspapers categorise their entries (articles, news stories) according to sections such as economy, politics, society, culture and opinion. We chose to sample the entries of those five sections – leaving out some sections such as "world news" and "sports". It left us with a total of 974 news articles on "China" to review.

When analysing how China and its people and enterprises are portrayed in Angolan newspapers, it is necessary to remind oneself about the precarious situation in which printed texts are produced. It is a challenging environment indeed. Thus, in the first section, journalism and newspapers in Angola is presented in a social, economic and political context. In the second section, China's recent influence in Angola is outlined, with a focus on the most

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<sup>2</sup> I am very grateful to Lara Cortes for her dedicated assistance in organising the newspaper archive for this research project, as well as for helping in the filtering and categorising the material. I am also grateful to the work of Nelson Pestana for constant advice and to his assistants Eduardo Sassa and Cláudio Fortuna for scanning the newspaper originals in Angola.

<sup>3</sup> *Jornal Popular* appears to have ceased to be printed sometime in April 2013.

<sup>4</sup> For *Jornal de Angola* and *O País* the archive includes all editions for 2012; for *Novo Jornal* and the *Semanário Angolense* the archive is near complete (48 and 45 of the weekly editions, respectively); the archive includes nearly half the editions of *Jornal Popular* (73), and for *Folha 8* and the *Angolense* the archive includes 20 and 20 editions out of around 50 respectively.

<sup>5</sup> The selection of articles is based on the following assumption: that few if any articles discuss "Chinese" matters without at least once mentioning the word China. Hence, our word search for "China" includes all articles on China, or a very representative selection without any kind of bias or lacunae.

obvious arena: economic cooperation. The third and fourth section looks at how China is reflected in Angolan newspaper articles throughout the year 2012. They analyse the circumstance and tone of texts that deal with or mention China or Chinese peoples' activities in Angola and elsewhere, as well as categorising according to content. The fifth and concluding section returns to the question: Is there any trace of Chinese soft power in Angolan newspapers?

## **Newspaper journalism in Angola – constraints and possibilities**

Newspapers reflect and shape the societies from which they emerge in both direct and subtle ways. Their journalists write of things they see, hear and know about. They write about things that they don't know about, and they know things they don't write about. They include and omit out of their own liking as well as to please others – usually their readers, but frequently their paymasters in boardrooms and perhaps more often than we think: the censors. Whereas the most heroic journalists have Hollywood films made in their honour, most journalists find themselves in jobs and life situations that prevent them from pursuing “heroic” challenges to power-holders, and instead work within the frames accepted by these. The structures and qualities of societies themselves also determine whether or not its Journalism, as a profession and collective enterprise, manages to rise above the immediate interests and whims of individual journalists, editors, owners and political masters, and contribute to society at large.

A few contextual remarks about governance in Angola is therefore necessary. Political power circulates around the President, José Eduardo dos Santos, who has been in power since 1979. He has also been the ruling MPLA party's president during this period. The MPLA party held power in Luanda since independence in 1975 and, despite disagreements with the other liberation forces that resulted in immediate civil war, it constituted itself as the “vanguard” in a one-party “Marxist-Leninist” system. Dos Santos led the MPLA vanguard through a transformation into a “free-market economy” and to a liberal constitution from 1990. He then led the country into a peace agreement with the rebel Unita forces in 1991 and the first multi-party elections. After the electoral debacle in 1992, the country returned to war, a situation that only saw a definitive end in 2002 as dos Santos long-term opponent Jonas Savimbi was killed in battle. MPLA won 82 per cent of the votes in the second parliamentary elections in 2008, yet there were no Presidential elections, as these awaited the new Constitution. In early 2010, the current Constitution was signed unilaterally by the MPLA party. It gave extremely wide powers to the President of the Republic. In addition, the constitution allowed him to continue as President without being directly exposed to elections. As the head of list of the party receiving most votes (the MPLA) he automatically became President of the Republic. Tailor-made for him or not, the new constitution certainly legitimised dos Santos' already concentrated power.

In addition to his formal powers as PR, dos Santos is also seen to be the paramount of informal power, not least as the cluster of economic interests of his family members and close associates have a vested interest in regime stability. His children are all rich and involved in various businesses; his most famous daughter, Isabel dos Santos, was rated by Forbes as Africa's

richest woman, and his son José Filomeno was in 2013 handed the presidency over the newly established Angolan Sovereign Wealth Fund (FSDEA). Angola is enormously rich in oil revenue, and the windfalls of the oil industry have generated high economic growth that has lifted an expanding but small elite to great wealth during the last decade and a half. A somewhat larger but still narrow layer of middle class professionals, solely urban and principally Luanda-based, also expanded. Still, poverty is everywhere to be seen in the country, as at least a third of the population lives below the official poverty line, according to the UNDP.<sup>6</sup>

### The newspapers: owners, journalists and buyers

A principal distinction to be made in the discussion of Angolan newspapers is that between *Jornal de Angola* (“the Angolan newspaper”), the only daily paper, and the rest. *Jornal de Angola* has been issued almost continuously since its foundation shortly after independence in 1975. It claims a daily circulation of 50 000 copies, although sales figures are likely to be far lower. In any case, it only prints one paper per about 300 inhabitants. The bulk of the distribution takes place in Luanda – the capital city with somewhere around five million inhabitants – and largely through an elaborate system of “paper boys” (*ardinias*) selling in the streets and to institutions. It is still the only paper in Angola with a network of journalistic correspondents covering all eighteen provinces and it is also the only paper which distribution reaches all provinces – although less than perfectly, and in many provinces only to the capital towns. *Jornal de Angola* has an established reputation as the loyal “mouthpiece” of the Presidency and the MPLA. It *never* publishes direct criticism of President dos Santos, and only rarely of senior MPLA leaders.

Most other newspapers are weekly papers, the so-called *semanários*. When looking back at the last five to ten years, the titles that have been sold most consistently on the streets are *A Capital*, *Actual*, *Agora*, *Angolense*, *Expressão*, *Folha 8*, *Novo Jornal*, *O Independente*, *O País*, and *Semanário Angolense*. These papers are to a varying degree “independent”, in the sense independent from the Presidency/Government and the ruling party. *O Independente* has an editorial line that is very pro-government and is commonly taken to be an organ linked to the Government’s “counter-information” agencies. *Folha 8* is owned by William Tonet, who is a businessman and member of parliament for an opposition party (CASA-CE). The other newspapers, including all in our selection, are weekly newspapers owned by private, presumably commercial interests. The other papers vary in their editorial line with a varying emphasis on business/economy, politics, debate and society.

The elite’s and middle classes’ media consumption constitutes the market for the print and broadcast media. *O País* states that it prints around 15 000 copies per edition, while journalists in the other papers stated figures between five and eight thousand copies,<sup>7</sup> which means that they are only sold to a tiny fraction of the population. Yet these low sales figures don’t do full justice to the influence of these newspapers, as they may be read by several people and their

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<sup>6</sup> <http://mirror.undp.org/angola/Poverty%20Reduction.htm>. As no census has been made in Angola since 1974, all demographic statistics are to be treated with some care.

<sup>7</sup> Interviews in Luanda, November 2012.

journalistic content may be widely referred; in ether broadcasting as well as in the social media.

It would, however, be naïve to think that the extreme concentration of economic power in Angola would not also result in the concentration of media powers. There are indications of such a development in recent years. Private business groups closely linked to the very top echelons of Angolan society have recently invested in Angolan newspapers, such as the Madaleno family and Medianova.<sup>8</sup> These groups also have strong connections in the media sector in Portugal. The Angolan newspapers, radio stations and TV-stations are either firmly in the control of the Angolan state (Jornal de Angola, TPA, RNA) or in Angolan and Angolan-Portuguese private investors. With the limited circulation of the newspapers, one may expect that there are other benefits than profit that motivates the private sector as they have bought sufficient shares to control many of the newspapers. Clearly, it could be to control the printed information, although this does not automatically imply a radical curtailment of journalistic liberty. To our knowledge, no businesses of Chinese or other foreign origins have invested in Angolan newspapers or other media.<sup>9</sup>

The above arguments are important for our current analysis, since it means that the view China is portrayed in the Angolan press is therefore a largely “Angolan view”. In contrast to the Chinese attempts at penetrating the African media through investments in English language media infrastructure, no such attempt seems visible in Angola.

Journalism in Angola, since colonial times up until today, has always been under pressure and been tightly controlled by the state and its socio-economic elite. Today, Angola scores poorly on international indexes of democracy.<sup>10</sup> Reporters Without Borders (RWB) has its Press Freedom Index that scores Angola as with “noticeable problems” of press freedom, ranking Angola as 130 out of 179 countries in 2014. The RWB’s major concerns for press freedom in Angola is judicial persecution of journalists, harassment and unlawful detention of journalists and the anti-libel law that works to arrest, prosecute and censor journalists, and finally three murdered journalists the last few years. A recent example of systemic harassment of journalists affected a radio journalist who attempted to question officers at a police station when apparently hearing screams from prisoners. He was arrested and held for a week, and summarily tried in a local court, which condemned him to 6 months of prison with a suspended sentence to two years.<sup>11</sup> Following this case, the leader of the independent National Union of Journalists, Luísa Rogério, expressed in an interview to Deutsche Welle her worry about the lack of press freedom and the ever rising number of journalists who are taken to court.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See [www.medianova.co.ao](http://www.medianova.co.ao).

<sup>9</sup> To our knowledge, the only major Chinese “incursion” into the Angolan communications sector through the Chinese communications giant ZTE. In 2008 the Angolan cell phone company Movitel was partly privatised and ZTE became heavily involved in its management. Among other smaller contracts, in 2012 ZTE also won a contract to assist Movitel in developing the country’s first 4G mobile phone network. See [http://www.zte.com.cn/en/press\\_center/news/201202/t20120228\\_351245.html](http://www.zte.com.cn/en/press_center/news/201202/t20120228_351245.html)

<sup>10</sup> The three most well-known indexes are Freedom House, ranking Angola as “not free”; the Economist Intelligence Unit ranking Angola as an “authoritarian regime”; and finally, the Polity IV project ranking Angola as a “closed anocracy”.

<sup>11</sup> <http://en.rsf.org/angola-six-month-suspended-sentence-for-11-02-2014,45846.html>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.dw.de/jornalista-da-r%C3%A1dio-despertar-condenado-a-seis-meses-de-pris%C3%A3o-com-pena-suspensa/a-17418446>

In addition to these issues that are picked up by international media, our own interviews<sup>13</sup> with journalists have revealed mechanisms of direct and indirect censorship as well as the self-censorship that journalist of a power-critical mind-set testify to. There are other powerful tools to control and “discipline” newspapers, such as the control over advertisement (the lack of which can ostracise a small paper) and the printing presses (of which there are few in Luanda, with limited capacity).

All this does not mean that it is impossible for journalists to express critical thoughts or pursue critical topics in Angola. Most journalists state that despite the pressure they feel on their integrity, they are fondly aware of the “unseen limits” and many attempt to challenge these constantly. Usually, the limits are pressured when criticising individuals of power directly and in detail. In principle, there seems to be nothing from keeping journalists to put China’s role in the country under critical scrutiny unless drifting too close to individual interests.

## **Chinese engagement in Angola – and its interpretations**

China “bet on the wrong horse” in the power struggles following independence in Angola. It therefore played practically no role in Angolan politics and economy until, as says Assis Malaquias, ‘China returned to Angola in a major way in 2004’ (Malaquias 2012:37). Many frustrated attempts at analysing the China-Angola relationship have got stuck on the relative scarce access to reliable information on the extent and character of the cooperation (Brautigam 2011:28). Apart from the usual communication difficulties, there is the additional challenge of observing a meeting between two government systems which seem to share each other’s interest in limiting public access to the workings of their respective economic governance.

The only book published on the China-Angola relationship is tellingly entitled with the question: ‘China & Angola: A marriage of convenience?’ (Power and Alves 2012). In contrast to the Angolan government’s unswerving praise for its Chinese partner, the book’s nine chapters take a much more hesitant and critical stance. Much more so, as we shall see, than the total body of newspaper articles in the Angolan press.

On the positive side, no one questions that the Chinese funding and man-power that suddenly arrived in Angola in the 2000’s has allowed for the frantic speed of reconstruction that has taken place. As is often pointed out too, China’s “willingness” to assist Angola provided a welcome alternative to a reliance on the “old” European and American powers (Alden 2012; Malaquias 2012). The initial deal between China and the Angola government was a straight forward one: China needed oil, Angola needed quick cash for reconstruction. Hence, the assertion of a “marriage of convenience”. Contrary to the widespread myth surrounding China’s involvement in Africa, that China simply “vacuum-cleans” the continent for natural resources, this has far from been the case in Angola. China buys Angolan oil at world market prices, and in return for a guaranteed access to Angola’s oil, it has provided upwards of USD fifteen billion in credit lines to the Angolan government. Some Chinese attempts to venture

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<sup>13</sup> Interviews with 17 journalists in Luanda in the period 2011 to 2013.

into the production-side of the Angolan oil business appear to have failed – as it crossed the Angolan government’s interests (Alves 2012; Corkin 2012). China’s relations with Angola differ from that of many other African economic partners in another respect, namely that no “special economic zones” for Chinese industrial investment (Brautigam 2011) have been created. Most Chinese companies in Angola are involved in the construction sector.

One of the major controversies is regarding the use of the enormous sums made available to the Angolan government through the credit lines, dwarfing the sums made available by credit lines from other countries (Brazil, Canada, Germany, Spain, Austria, India and more). It is generally assumed that they have been used to finance rapid reconstruction. Much of it was initially handled outside of the state budget, directly by the National Reconstruction Office (the GRN) controlled by President dos Santos and his closest collaborators or through the state investment office, ANIP (Alves 2012; Corkin 2012; Croese 2012; Weimer and Vines 2012). This system has been held as synonymous with non-transparent management and allegations of corruption, as it is very difficult to trace the spending of the credit lines.

Another major controversy is that of the massive immigration of Chinese workers invited by Chinese companies (Fernandes 2012; Quintão and Santos 2012). The standard “model” of Chinese construction companies is that they win contracts – presumably facilitated by a privileged access to financing through the various credit lines – and bring workers, equipment, building materials and practically all that is needed by the contractors. Angolan elites may have entered into joint ventures with Chinese companies, as a precondition for contracts. While Angolan regulations on “local content” may have been upheld in terms of ownership, in terms of labour may not have been. Thus, local controversy is spurred by rumours that the Chinese credit lines and companies are associated with elite corruption, while the immigration of Chinese workers (numbered at anything from 70 000 to 400 000) is associated with Angolan unemployment (Fernandes 2012:76-7). There is, however, nothing that indicates that the Chinese migrants have come to Angola to stay permanently. There are some cases of intermarriage, but the majority come to Angola to work and make a good earning, and then return. Hence, there is no major permanent Chinese diaspora in Angola.

Finally, while the Angolan government is traditionally astute at balancing big power interests, and certainly knows better than “throwing all its eggs into one basket”, there has been some debate that China has become too dominant in the Angolan economy. As seen above, China is the major external funder of Angola’s reconstruction. After Portugal, China is the second largest provider of goods and services to Angola – around 11 per cent in 2012.<sup>14</sup> Next to Portugal – still the country from which Angola imports the most, by far – China is battling with the Netherlands as the second biggest source of imports.<sup>15</sup> And only Portuguese and Brazilian nationals rival the Chinese in terms of foreign nationals in the country’s formal labour market.

China is currently the largest single export market for the all-important Angolan oil production – by far, and its importance has been steadily increasing.<sup>16</sup> In the year of 2004

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<sup>14</sup> From Banco Português de Investimento, <http://bit.ly/1fPkCkG>

<sup>15</sup> Import statistics from Banco Nacional de Angola, [www.bna.ao](http://www.bna.ao).

<sup>16</sup> Export statistics from Banco Nacional de Angola, [www.bna.ao](http://www.bna.ao).

Angolan petroleum exports to the US and to China – for long the two biggest, representing half of the annual export volume – stood at slightly less than USD 4 billion to each country. In 2007 China surpassed the US as the biggest export destination of Angolan oil. For that year, exports had now surged to an official USD 11.2 billion and USD 10.2 billion respectively. Yet by 2012 petroleum exports to China had risen to a whopping USD 36.2 billion. This figure now represented exactly half of the annual exports from Angola (49.5 per cent), while the export to the US fell sharply both in monetary value (to USD 6 billion) and as a share of the total exports, now only 8.7 per cent.

In the “soft power sectors” of media, culture and education, there is fairly little Chinese activity compared to some other African countries (Li and Rønning 2013). No Confucius Institute has been set up as yet, and Chinese language is not taught at the universities. There are according to our knowledge no Chinese publications in Portuguese with wide circulation, nor is Chinese TV or radio broadcast in Portuguese language in Angola. CCTV is available to a limited number of cable-TV subscribers. There is also some cultural interaction, to which we shall return below.

Resumed, China is the major external funder of Angolan reconstruction (with its oil backed credit lines), the market that consumes half of Angola’s oil exports, and finally, and not least, the country that has delivered the companies and know-how to execute a significant chunk of the Angolan reconstruction programme. It has reached a unique position in the Angolan economy that may only be rivalled by Portugal, and possibly the US which oil companies have a strategic position in the paramount sector; oil. While certainly exercising economic “hard power” in Angola, its newspapers may be the ideal place to start looking for its “soft power”, insofar as it has one (Shambaugh 2013).

### Media filtering China: between the government, popular perceptions and Chinese activities

Topically, the debate about the Chinese presence in Angola does not differ much from the general debates about the China and Africa (Brautigam 2009; Tjønneland 2012 ). Is China’s economic activism a blessing or curse? Is there a Chinese “master plan” behind its African intervention? Does Chinese investments contribute to development or does China merely negatively affect governance? As academics debate these questions with limited access to data, popular murmurs build from direct observation of Chinese intervention on the ground – combined with a rich array of preconceptions. The following example is taken from a facebook-discussion in January 2014 that was started by a renowned liberal journalist. On the news that Obama has invited a lot of African leaders to the White House in August 2014, one female commentator wrote:

‘I think he is worried about the “yellow” pest that has invaded the Africans! This pest (the “Chinocas”) is worse than the possible imperialist intentions of the [United] States: the Chinese came to Africa to conquest the continent for themselves! And it is quite possible that they pretend to do the same as the Europeans did in the Americas: [...today] inhabited primarily by the descendants of Europeans... If Europe conquered America, the Chinese will conquer Africa. They already started the cleansing, running over and killing people with cars or with more silent methods, such

as gas poisoning, poorly built buildings which fall over on top of Angolans, poison they sell as if it was medicine ...’

This rather shocking rant received dozens of praises and likes in the following commentary thread during the next days. Though an extreme example, such hostile attitudes are not infrequent in contemporary Angola. Many people express the fear that China, perhaps in cahoots with the Angolan government, will plunder and dominate Angola, prejudicing ordinary people. However, as documented in one study (Quintão and Santos 2012), the myths are many about Chinese companies and workers in Angola, but the more one gets into close working relationships one tends to get a more positive and nuanced view. As we shall see below, the Angolan media is generally of limited help when it comes to informing Angolans about *actual* Chinese people and Chinese activity in the country. The Angolan media reporting is of course inspired by popular conceptions and preconceptions.

A perhaps even stronger influence is the parameters set by Angola’s government. China’s activity is wanted and invited, and – as we shall see, praised – by Angola’s political leaders and economic elite, with which it has a favoured relationship. The Chinese activity is therefore likely to be reported and interpreted as a function of each media house’s and journalists’ relationship with Angola’s own elite. The media journalists are constrained by lack of access to information.

Finally, the general image of China as a world power on the world stage will also play a major role. Some are inspired by undercurrents of Angolan or pan-African nationalism and anti-imperialism which tend to see China as a friend of the developing world. Others in turn are more concerned with the influence of Chinese authoritarianism and big-power aspirations.

## Reporting on China in Angola

### How much reporting on China?

With the significant economic activity and migration patterns that now connect the two countries, it seems a reasonable expectation that also Angolan newspapers take a strong interest in all that is related to China. Is China frequently referred to in Angolan newspapers? The easiest way of starting to attack that question is through comparison of simple hit statistics. We compared the number of times the word “China” is mentioned in our newspaper archive<sup>17</sup> (2012- apr. 2013) as compared to a selection of twelve other countries. Some were chosen for their obvious relevance to Angola, others for being neighbours and a few were chosen quite randomly.

This simple exercise produced some interesting results. Firstly, with 2052 hits, China *is* frequently mentioned in articles in Angolan newspapers, as only two countries are more often mentioned. Perhaps not surprisingly, but also a bit perplexingly, the only two countries more often mentioned in Angolan media were the fellow Lusophone countries. Angola’s old colonial master, Portugal, is most frequently mentioned, with 2609 hits. Brazil comes in second with

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<sup>17</sup> *Angolense*, *Novo Jornal*, *O País* and *Semanário Angolense*.

2538. The biggest economy and global “soft power” super-power, the USA, is mentioned 1627 times, significantly less than China. South Africa comes in fifth in our selection with 1466 hits. Angola’s other neighbouring countries, DR Congo, Mozambique, Zambia and Namibia are each mentioned less than half of what China is. Finally, China is mentioned almost ten times more than Argentina, Norway, Denmark and Uruguay.

In short, being the country with the third most references, China is present in the Angolan media to a degree that corresponds to its relative importance in world affairs and in the Angolan economy. Another general finding is worth mentioning; that Angolan newspaper reporting on China tend to recycle information from European and American news agencies and other Lusophone media – but also from Chinese sources (principally Xinhua or China Daily). Reuters is quoted approximately four times as frequently than Xinhua. Let us now further describe the reporting on China.

### Classifying reporting on China

For the analysis of how China is portrayed in Angolan newspapers and presented to its readers, we started out with something simple, the number of news articles on “China” in our sample year, 2012. The year 2012 was the first year for which we had a near complete archive. More importantly, it was among the top years in Angola-China economic relations, plus it was an important year politically in Angola, with the first legislative elections under the new 2010 constitution.

By way of a preliminary analysis, we decided to lump the news articles into three simple categories: Negative, neutral and positive. Each of the 974 news articles were reviewed and categorised. If the reference or references to China or Chinese people and enterprises were mainly set in a negative or critical tone or circumstance, the hit would count under “negative”. If the references were mainly positive in tone, or it came in connection with a mainly positive news item or story, it was regarded and counted as “positive”. The reference to “tone” is important, as the categorisation tried to reflect how the journalist or newspaper framed it, not what we might think of the matter at stake. The researchers subjective evaluation is therefore not about the intrinsic political or ethical sides of the story, but rather about how the article in which the hit was found comes across in tone or attitude. We found that very few of the news articles, only 8 per cent of the total, were in settings where China was mentioned in a negative tone. Unsurprisingly perhaps, 63 per cent was framed in a neutral tone, whereas as much as 29 per cent of the reporting was positive in tone.

**Table 1: A rough categorisation of newspaper articles mentioning China**

	Newspaper	Negative		Neutral		Positive		Total	of total
<i>Gov’t controlled</i>	Jornal de Angola	43	7 %	362	58 %	216	35 %	621	64 %
<i>Assumed gov’t</i>	Jornal Popular	2	6 %	22	63 %	11	31 %	35	4 %
<i>Neutral private</i>	O País	7	4 %	142	78 %	32	18 %	181	19 %
	Novo Jornal	10	13 %	50	65 %	17	22 %	77	8 %

<i>Critical private</i> « <i>Oppositional</i> »	Semanário Angolense	3	9 %	21	64 %	9	27 %	33	3 %
	Angolense	5	56 %	4	44 %	0	0 %	9	1 %
	Folha 8	4	22 %	12	67 %	2	11 %	18	2 %
	<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>8 %</b>	<b>613</b>	<b>63 %</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>29 %</b>	<b>974</b>	

Here's a few examples of how we categorised the news articles:<sup>18</sup>

**Positive** China, that supports the national reconstruction process of Angola with credit lines, also has agreements in the areas of technology, health and agriculture. (Jornal de Angola, Jan 11, 2012)

Following a memorandum of understanding signed yesterday between the attorney general of the Republic of Angola and China, China will provide training for Angolan specialists in the fields of combating cyber-crime, economic crimes and in transferring of various technology to be applied in the fight against crime. (Jornal de Angola, Apr 4, 2012)

In accordance with Chang Zhenming, the departure of 28 Angolan technicians to China is planned for the next few days. They will stay for a two-year period in order to receive superior training in this area, with a view to taking care of the centre's operations. (Novo Jornal, Sept 21, 2012)

**Neutral** The OECD countries will consume less petroleum than last year, while the consumption of the big emerging countries, with China and India up front, will grow, said the organisation. (Jornal de Angola, Jan 18, 2012)

The Chinese economy grew at 8.4 per cent in the first trimester of 2012, announced the vice-minister of the National Commission of Development and Reform, Zhang Xiaoqiang. [...] China is the second largest economy in the World, after the USA, and its GDP grew at an average 9.9 per cent a year during the last three decades. In 2011, growth in China slowed to 9.2. (Jornal de Angola, Apr 6, 2012)

**Negative** There's a list of suspicious medical drugs, such as antibiotics and malaria treatment like [brand names] originating in countries like China, Malaysia [...] (Jornal de Angola, Oct 26, 2012)

The [Angolan] oil business is a state secret, the diamond business idem, the loans and credits they get from international financial institutions such as the World Bank, the IMF, from China, from Russia, etc., are all state secrets ... it is all business belonging to JES' family, secrets of the JES [President dos José Eduardo dos Santos] family. (Folha 8, Nov 3, 2012)

When breaking the findings down to the various newspapers, we found quite some variation in the extent of reporting on China and Chinese people and enterprises. The only daily, Jornal de Angola, unsurprisingly comes out on top with the most references to China, but that merely reflects a much higher volume of articles in the daily newspaper compared to the weeklies. More tellingly, it has the most positive portrayal on China – 35 per cent of coverage is positive and only 8 per cent negative. On the other hand, the other paper in the sample assumed to be government controlled, Jornal Popular, is second with regard to being “positive on China”.

<sup>18</sup> Author's translation from Portuguese.

On the other hand, the newspaper O País – which editorial line cultivates a “serious”, “in-depth” and “factual/objective” coverage – is both the least negative (only 4 per cent) and carries the highest percentage (78) of neutral references to China (which also explains its low score on “positive” portrayals).

In the other two privately owned and well-resourced “independent” papers, *Semanário Angolense* and *Novo Jornal*, only nine and thirteen per cent of the articles were critical or negative in tone.

The papers with the highest percentage of negative portrayal of China is the papers that are most consistently critical or in outright opposition to the Angolan government, these are the *Angolense* and *Folha 8*.<sup>19</sup> The total number of news articles mentioning China is also lowest in these papers. Based on a reading of the articles, we assume that when the most critical papers occasionally do refer to China, it is largely negative due to the country’s privileged association with the Angolan government.

From this brief analysis we dear propose the preliminary conclusion that the great volume of reporting on China is positive or neutral/factual. Given the intense surge of Chinese engagement with Angola, and the many obvious questions associated with it – previously outlined – the overall level of critical/negative reporting in the sample newspapers should be considered as low.<sup>20</sup> Yet when breaking down the figures per individual newspaper, we find that reporting follows a general pattern of newspapers in Angola: They appear to align with political interests. The papers closest to the MPLA government and President dos Santos are most positive and least negative to China and Chinese involvement in Angola.

The most critical and negative are the newspapers with a general editorial line opposed to the government. The privately owned independent weeklies are focussing on neutral reporting, but tilt towards a positive rather than negative portrayal. We shall look at some of the concrete articles to paint a more detailed picture. Before moving to describe more of the content under analysis, a quick categorisation of the news provides us with a further insight.

**What kind of reporting mentions China?**

The table below presents how the news articles on China distribute according to newspaper section. The figures show us that the majority of the reporting mentioning China takes place in the Economy section of the newspapers.

**Table 2. Newspaper sections: where is China mentioned?**

	Negative	%	Neutral	%	Positive	%	Total	% of total
<i>Economy</i>	24	4 %	395	72 %	126	23 %	545	56 %
<i>Opinion</i>	17	11 %	94	59 %	47	30 %	158	16 %
<i>Politics</i>	14	12 %	36	30 %	69	58 %	119	12 %
<i>Society</i>	16	16 %	56	57 %	27	27 %	99	10 %

<sup>19</sup> The sample of these two papers is also low.

<sup>20</sup> Of course, whether such reporting is high or low would ideally be measured against an international standard by comparing with reporting in other countries.

<i>Culture</i>	3	6 %	32	60 %	18	34 %	53	5 %
	<b>74</b>	<b>8 %</b>	<b>613</b>	<b>63 %</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>29 %</b>	<b>974</b>	

With 56 per cent, the weight of China in the economics section is significantly higher than the relative weight of the economics section in the newspapers (the economics sections do not occupy more than half of each edition!). We can also consider that in connection to the “politics” section, the number of articles is relatively low compared to the weight of the section in the papers. Even taken together, there is relatively little mentioning of China in the society and culture sections (only 15 per cent), which deal with everything related to culture and arts to trends and fashion.

Rather more interesting is the internal distribution within each section. We found that the most negative/critical and least positive association of the word China takes place within the opinion/commentary pages. This may suggest that journalists and others have critical thoughts about China and Chinese people that somehow do not find an expression in the economics and politics sections. By far the most positive framing of China seems to take place within the politics sections, since this is where many of the news about China-Angolan politicians praising each other is found. The least negative – and most neutral – association with China is to be found under the economy sections.

## Content: What Angolan newspapers write about China

The essence of this analysis must essentially rely on some qualitative or interpretive evaluations of the ways China and Chinese people and activities are portrayed and presented in Angolan media, as well as the topics that reach publication. The first step is therefore to categorise our *cases* of China according to categories, with the aim of getting an overview of the content.

Below we apply the term *case* in the following way: In most instances where China was mentioned, it was treated as *one* case. Where any given newspaper article mentioned China several times, but where the issues discussed were still the same, we categorised it as *one* case. In some articles, the same mention of China could fall into several of our chosen categories – these would then count as *several* cases. For instance, ‘Viriato da Cruz died in China’ counts in the respective categories of “Angolans in China” and “China in history/theory”. This usage of cases privileges content analysis at the expense of statistical rigour. This is not to say that number of cases involving China is irrelevant – as “much” and “little” are certainly relevant considerations for aspects of this analysis.

### Overall findings of the case analysis

The application of the above method inevitably produced more cases than there were articles. Our reading resulted in 1224 cases, of which 383 were positive, 766 neutral and 75 cases leaned

toward the negative/critical – roughly the same percentages as with the article counts.<sup>21</sup> One overall finding of the 1224 cases, whether they were positive, neutral or negative, the vast majority, 64 per cent (791), mentioned or discussed China’s domestic affairs or on the global scene. This meant that a mere third of the cases (433) dealt with the Chinese relationship with Angola.

Another general feature was the superficiality of the reporting on China. In most of the articles China is mentioned only in passing as part of a comparison with other countries, even when discussing China in Angola.

A striking feature was that in the entire material, we found no cases where any “ordinary” Chinese person, such as a construction worker, were quoted by Angola newspapers. The most quoted person was Gao Kexiang, the Chinese ambassador to Angola (perhaps 20 times). Other quotes were from ministers, senior officials or military brass at official ceremonies – but there were apparently no interviews with Chinese by Angolan journalists. The only exception were a handful of cases where officials in Chinese companies in Angola seem to have spoken directly to the journalists. The quoted messages are unvaryingly sung around the same theme: The China-Angola cooperation is successful and followed by success again! But hardly any detail is provided and the journalists seemingly never followed up with critical questions.

## Positive reporting

We categorised the positive cases as in the table 1 below.

<b>Table 3: Positive associations</b>	<b>Cases</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
<b>In China and globally:</b>		
Chinese economic development, global power & international relations	54	14 %
Cooperation on economy and politics China-other countries	35	9 %
Arts & literature: China's emerging market, openness	10	3 %
Chinese society, fashion, environment, heritage	6	2 %
Economic and political openness in China	5	1 %
Public health & education in China	5	1 %
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>30 %</b>
<b>China-Angola cooperation on:</b>		
... Unspecified; cooperation, bilateral trade, oil & diplomatic statements	88	23 %
... donations, financing, credit lines (by China)	39	10 %
... training of Angolans	30	8 %
... culture and arts	11	3 %
... security and public order	9	2 %
... the judiciary	7	2 %
... fighting corruption	2	1 %
... parliamentary affairs	2	1 %
<b>Chinese involvement in Angolan:</b>		
... infrastructure construction	62	16 %
... agriculture	15	4 %
... diamonds, mining	2	1 %
... railway operation	1	0 %
<b>Angola specific subtotal</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>70 %</b>

<sup>21</sup> 31 per cent positive, 63 per cent neutral and 6 per cent negative/critical, compared to the article count with 29, 63 and 8 per cent respectively.

<b>Total</b>	<b>383</b>	<b>100 %</b>
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The table brings out that the greatest amount of positive cases are found in the reporting relating to China in Angola. It is also very “economic and comercial” in focus, following the principal areas of Chinas involvement in Angola. It turns out also that there is some reporting of exchange at the elite and politician level. When reading:

On the posivite side of reporting, quite a few of the

For illustration, an illustrative case in point comes in Jornal de Angola on March 10, 2012, a few months before the 2012 elections:<sup>22</sup>

The first 1608 apartments of the new urbanisation of Dundo [capital of Lunda Norte province] will be handed over to the population in May, according to information passed over yesterday, during the visit of the President of the Republic, José Eduardo dos Santos, to the construction site. The project foresees the construction, until September, of 5004 apartments and three public buildings. Until 2020, the urbanisation will have 20 000 apartments. [...]

The new urbanisation includes other infrastructures, such as a hospital with 92 beds, one school for 1350 pupils, a crèche with 24 rooms, gas stations, supermarkets and a police station.

The project will take up 116 hectares, include 26 kilometres of paved roads, drinking water networks and electric energy grids and rainwater draining valleys. In order to minimise the enormous difficulties involved in supplying various construction materials, keeping in mind the distance between Luanda and the Lunda-Norte province, processing factories for sand and bricks were set up at the locality, cement and asphalt as well as various laboratories for quality control. Also on the spot, a centre for the capturing rain water was set up that will have the capacity to guarantee the consumption of the approximately 3000 Chinese workers that will ensure the various technical areas of the project. The construction plans will guarantee work for more than two thousand Angolans, after receiving professional training. Electric energy is guaranteed by 27 generators [...]. The construction of the new urban area is the responsibility of the Chinese company Pan-China.

Theis report – of truly magnificently ambitious construction projects – is illustrative in several respects. They illustrate the enormous scale of some of the projects the Chinese are associated with, as well as the lack of realism: Dundo can be considered a remote place which only industry of significance is the alluvial diamond extraction and its trade. The logistical difficulties of pulling off such a project in the few months it was promised – are truly daunting, and probably impossible even for Chinese entrepreneurs. Perhaps they were never intended to be constructed as outlined above in the first place: It was written in an election year, and it might have been “pork” meant for the eyes of the voters. Yet it is striking how the reports are not questioned at all by the journalists. Any critical reader is likely to shrug her shoulders about the lack of realism.

Furthermore, they are also phrased in way that leaves only questions about how the company Pan-China was given the contract in the first place or the values involved. As far as we can find, the Jornal de Angola did not go back in September 2012 to check on progress of the 5004 apartments promised.

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<sup>22</sup> Author’s translation.

Instead, on the 19<sup>th</sup> of September, Jornal de Angola follows up with a report on another mega-project in the same province: that the Lunda Norte provincial government signed a contract with the Chinese enterprise Sinomach for the construction of eight new projects, including a hospital and water systems, to the value of USD 100 million (!). Three other cases mention the Lunda Norte government's contracts with Chinese companies.

We can assume that this kind of journalism creates or is intended to create an association between China and the development and modernisation of Angola. One can only speculate how the readers interpret these messages, but there is of course also a strong connection in these and other articles between the Angolan government's grandiose development plans on the one hand, and on the other, its absolute dependency on Chinese capacity to implement these plans.

### Neutral reporting

As seen above, 56 per cent of news articles on China were found in the economics section in the newspapers. With the category of neutral reporting, 72 per cent of reporting is neutral in character. This is, perhaps, not very surprising, given that newspaper reporting on any economic activity is usually neutral or "objective" in style. A much more interesting finding appeared when we read all the content.

We found that 82 per cent of the cases of China being mentioned in is reporting on China as a global power.

<b>Table 4: Neutral framing of China</b>	<b>Cases</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
<b>In China and globally</b>		
Chinese economy & global significance	383	50 %
... Chinese economic statistics	39	5 %
International relations & diplomacy	129	17 %
About China (dedicated articles)	21	3 %
Cultural production in China	20	3 %
China in history & theory	18	2 %
Public health issues	6	1 %
Environment	6	1 %
Fiction, literature references	6	1 %
China in space	1	0 %
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>629</b>	<b>82 %</b>
<b>Angola specific:</b>		
Angola-China economic interaction	104	14 %
Angolans in China	14	2 %
Angola-China relations, political & diplomatic	14	2 %
Angolan natural resources	4	1 %
Sports, Angola-China	1	0 %
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>18 %</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>766</b>	<b>100 %</b>

Some issues were absolutely preponderant among those cases. They discussed – or usually just mentioned in passing – that China is the world's second largest economy, that China in 2012 showed signals of slowing growth – practically a wooing of China as an economic

superpower. Constantly, the journalistic articles as well as the tables of statistics referred to the most recent growth statistics on China released, for instance, by the IMF or the OECD. Not surprisingly, given Angola's dependency of oil exports and crude prices, the papers also referred to reports by the International Energy Agency discussing trends in China's need for oil imports.

Only 18 per cent of the articles deal with Angola-specific Chinese activities. A few of them (14) describe briefly the political and diplomatic relations. The major item is the Angola-China economic interaction. When broken down, this category included reporting on the Luanda Economic Fair and listing the countries present there, China among them. More than half of the cases were brief references to economic statistics at an aggregate level between Angola and China. In a good part of the cases we find Angolan officials who informs at meetings and press conferences that some company from China had received a contract – though without details being provided on how these companies got the contracts. Sometimes the contract values involved are referred to, and sometimes the extent of the contract services involved are given. Yet the reporting is never detailed to such an extent that it allows a real public scrutiny of the way the contract being handled from conception, contracting, execution and overall value-for-money (Søreide, da Rocha et al. 2011).

As mentioned above, very few articles were dedicated to China issues only – we counted only 21, of which only one (Novo Jornal, July 13 2012) actually dedicated two pages to the China-Angola relationship. It portrayed photos of Angolan and Chinese construction workers side by side, but there were no interviews. It did provide some listing of Chinese companies, their contracts in the various provinces of Angola and the values of contracts.

### Negative and critical reporting

As we have commented above, reporting with a predominantly negative or critical tone occurred in only one out of twelve instances where China was mentioned (8 per cent). Considering that this is a year in which several hundred thousand Chinese resided in Angola and Chinese labourers constructed roads, buildings, bridges and airports around the country – in addition to the above discussed macro-economic parameters – the Angolan papers puts China-Angola relations under surprisingly little critical scrutiny. The categorisation of this reporting brought out some very clear findings.

**Table 5: Negative associations of China**      **Cases**    **Per cent**

#### **In China and globally**

Problems in China	36	48 %
Authoritarianism and censorship	6	8 %
Poor quality products	3	4 %
Corruption in China and global	2	3 %
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>63 %</b>

#### **Angola specific:**

Propping up MPLA & dos Santos politically	8	11 %
Angola dominated by China	6	8 %
Poor quality products in Angola specifically	5	7 %
Immigration (illegitimate) to Angola	5	7 %
Corruption and China in Angola	2	3 %

Angolans in China	2	3 %
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>37 %</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100 %</b>

Firstly, the overwhelming majority of the references that placed China in a negative or critical setting, only did so in the sense that they discussed problems referring to China domestically or on the global scene (63 per cent). In this category the most typical were reports of problems for the Chinese economy after the 2008-9 financial crisis; environmental-, climate- labour- and other problems related to its “fast-growing” economy; crime (cybercrime, ivory trade), and finally public health challenges (like the bird flu). Even here, the majority of reporting was *en passe*, meaning that China and Chinese activity was rather mentioned as cases of wider international problems rather than putting a particularly critical light on China. In a few of the articles, almost all in the private papers, there were references to authoritarianism and media censorship in China, like the campaign against renegade artist Ai WeiWei.

Secondly, again we found a clear difference between the “official” Jornal de Angola and Jornal Popular and the other newspapers. These newspapers practically only printed critique or presented China negatively in the above discussed category of “problems in China”. Hence, Jornal de Angola published in 2012 almost no discussion were the Chinese activity in Angola was put under critical scrutiny. Such articles were found in the private-independent newspapers.

The third, and perhaps most provocative finding was the very low number of critical cases, throughout all the newspapers – 28, or only 2.2 per cent of the total – that discussed Chinese activity and influence in Angola in a critical or even enquiring way.

What kind of topics came up related to China in Angola? Next to “problems in China”, the second-most common form of criticism against China is of a sort where Chinese products, infrastructure or services in Angola is associated with poor quality. The most notorious case, which still in 2012 produced a several critical articles, was the case of the new Central Hospital of Luanda. It had been built by Chinese companies and inaugurated in 2006, but by 2010 it was clear that he building was in a so poor and dangerous condition that it eventually had to be torn down and rebuilt, yet again by Chinese construction companies. In the same category of “poor quality” we find the reporting of several cases of medical drugs circulating in the Angolan market that were considered dangerous.

An equally “strong” category of negative association is found in the most critical papers, the Folha 8 and Angolense. These papers report opposition politicians that draw a connection between the Chinese economic involvement and corruption on the one hand, and on the other, the way this corruption is propping up the political power of José Eduardo dos Santos and the MPLA party. Similarly, O País hinted in one article to a possible misuse of Chinese funds supporting the armed forces, and in another it referred to Unita’s claims after the 2012 elections that Chinese named individuals had assisted the MPLA in manipulating the electoral registers to its favour. Except in the latter case, none of the articles attempted to document these claims or criticisms with references to facts and figures and none of the articles went very deep in a critical scrutiny.

In yet other categories, six articles mentioned the dominant position of China in the Angolan economy, and the need to be alert to possible challenges for Angola. Five articles in *Jornal de Angola* mentioned illegal immigration from China as a problem, but always as part of a wider Angolan problem. Finally, the *Semanário Angolense* printed an opinion piece in which a renowned oppositional columnist pointed out that the Angolan regime's most strategic partners, like China, Russia, Cuba and some African neighbours rank alongside Angola on indexes of authoritarianism.

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that Angolan newspapers have failed to put the relationship with China under a critical scrutiny, be it the state controlled or the private newspapers. What may the reasons be? Even though newspapers and journalists – except in the opposition controlled papers – are generally careful in expressing outright criticism at the government, critical thought is definitely possible. Our hypothesis is that for individual journalists to publish critical and/or negative articles of this kind, there is just too many hurdles to overcome – which in turn linked up to our other findings. One is that access to information is so poor and irregular, and what there is tends to be superficial and/or untrustworthy: neither the government nor the Chinese companies publish systematic reports on, for instance, Chinese companies' role in the oil sector or in civil construction. The journalists would have to write letters to non-answering public offices or Chinese companies, or attempt to interview evasive Chinese workers, something which, in any case, presents a linguistic obstacle.

## Some conclusions

Some of the conclusions that may be drawn from our review of the way China is portrayed in Angolan newspapers are summarised here. They should give us more insight into Angolan society. For our purposes here, these insights can be used in the general analysis of China's voice in Africa – and China's aspirations to extend “soft power” over the continent.

### China manifested as a world power

Three quarters of the reporting on China did *not* deal with China in Angola – instead it reflected China status as a large country and a big power. Only a small fraction of this reporting was critical – the majority was neutral and some positive. This may be taken as an indication of the interest in China on the world stage in Angola. Alternatively, it may be taken as a failure of local news production in Angola, allowing news released from the larger media houses and news agencies around the globe take dominance over indigenous news production. Even on China-related issues, the dominant sources of news are from non-Chinese sources, although the Xinhua news agency also is quoted in Angolan newspapers hundreds of times a year.

### A “purely” commercial relationship?

We noted that there was markedly little reporting on Chinese culture and society. The overwhelming amount of reporting is concerned with China's role in the world economic

order and commercial aspects of the China-Angola relationship. More than half of the news articles on China are found in the economics sections of the newspapers. There is little trace in the society or culture sections that Chinese “culture” is permeating in Angola in any strong sense. Even reference to China as a millenarian civilisation and development were numbered to a few cases. Despite academic interest in the question of African and Chinese shared values, there is not much talk of it – as reporting sticks to “facts” and figures. In 2012 there were no incidence of feature journalism attempting to increase cross-cultural understanding by travelling to China or writing about the meetings between Chinese and Angolans (whether on official or non-official level).

### A relationship for the political/economic elite

When going into the contents of the articles mentioning China, we find that the only people “talking” is mostly the elites of the Angola and China. They are always positive and diplomatic in their statements, and always quite superficially dealing with any topic. It leaves the impression that they don’t intend to inform the public on their interchange and business deals.

### Chinese people don’t speak directly to Angolans

We counted very few cases of Chinese people speaking directly to Angolan media. Of these, we found no cases where any “ordinary” Chinese person, such as a construction worker, were quoted by Angola newspapers. Communication to Angolan newspapers (and media in general?) is an affair that is carried out by senior officials of the Communist party.

There is no indication that Chinese media houses have attempted to communicate directly through Angolan media. In the newspapers, Chinese actors in Angola only communicate directly through commercial advertisement.

The communication difficulties are still formidable. In general, while some Chinese are learning Portuguese, the national language of Angola, the linguistic development in the Chinese community is retarded by the fact that most Chinese see themselves as staying only temporarily in Angola. Most are still contracted workers who are looking to go home, not migrants and exiles.

### Most reporting is positive or neutral – critical analysis is absent

Overall, around a third of the reporting on China framed China and Chinese activities in a positive wrapping, and the vast majority of reporting was neutral or “factual” in character. A good part of the reporting emphasises the connection between China and Angolan development and modernisation – however unrealistic the claims.

Only a fraction of the reporting in Angola’s newspapers was critical or negative. A closer look at our case material revealed that in turn, only a third of the negative/critical reporting actually commented or discussed China and Chinese activity in Angola. Very few, if any, of the articles attempted to make an in-depth critical scrutiny of China’s activities in Angola. We found really no case of either Angolan or Chinese officials being questioned critically by journalists when reporting on China in general or in Angola in particular. This is not to say

that all is necessarily worthy of severe criticism, but it seems odd that the massive Chinese people and Chinese economic presence in Angola should not warrant a more critical attention in the press – given popular murmuring and academic queries of the phenomena. The reasons may be, as discussed above, the overall situation for critical journalism in Angola, but more specifically, the lack of transparency surrounding China-Angola relations. The material touching on China suggest that journalists it writing up generally feel on safer ground when sticking to official pronouncements and statistics, plans rather than results, and a positive twist rather than inquiry.

### Chinese business in Angola is obscure or incomprehensible

A myriad of Chinese companies, operating with a great deal of funding facilities and receiving thousands of contracts, are mentioned and referred to in the newspaper articles. But the reporting does not attempt to follow the processes and contracts in ways which allow for public evaluation of the value-for-money of this spending. Contracts are signed and closed with a complete lack of transparency for the public. Most of the criticism of China, the little there is, is linked to the “shady” character of its business in Angola – and its associated links with a corrupt Angolan elite.

### Chinese soft power?

The above analysis has clearly brought out that China is most strongly associated in the Angolan press with its hard powers; is its economic muscles, more than anything else. It is also richly portrayed as an economic superpower on a global scale, and a mighty player in international diplomatic relations.

There are elements of “soft-poweredness” in the portrayal of Angola. China is omnipresent: it has surpassed the United States in the number of times it is mentioned in Angolan newspapers. Xinhua news are recycled and find their way into Angola papers. More importantly, the association of China with Angola’s development and modernisation is strong and positive. If the Chinese government is looking for a source of “China traction” and influence-building, this field may be under-utilised. Yet this feel-good factor may perhaps be undermined by the fact that China does not appear to control communication to Angolan citizens directly – but is “translated” and “mediated” through state and elite controlled media which reporting the population does not necessarily accept at face value. Many, on the contrary, distrust the media. In the long-term, China’s position in Angola may be severely undermined by its strong association with the current regime. Our above study also tends to confirm David Shambaugh’s claim that China’s influence, in Angola as globally, is ‘wide, but not deep’ (Shambaugh 2013). In an Angolan setting, this may translate to something like: “China and the Chinese are seen everywhere – but we don’t really know them or what they are up to, yet”.

By way of conclusion, we can elaborate on Malaquias’ and Corkin’s expressions, for now China is Angola’s best friend, yet it is a marriage of convenience between elites, based on a commercial relationship in which ordinary people – Chinese or Angolan – have little say. For now, Chinese cash, consumer products and infrastructure may be accepted and bought, but not desired and preferred. China still has a long way to go if its “soft power” is to make an

indent in popular culture. Allow me a few “ethnographic” observations from Angola during the last decade: Angolan youth still appear to prefer American to Chinese movies, English language training to Chinese, Brazilian capoeira to karate, hamburgers and even sushi to noodles, and Portuguese wine goes best with the preferred dish, *bacalhau*. Apple, Sony or Toyota are widely preferred while the Chinese brands can only compete on price.

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