Communicating Soft Power
Contrasting Perspectives from India and China

Is the 'Chinafrica' Dream an Expression of 'Soft Power'?
The Chinese Business of Communication and Cultural Diplomacy in Africa

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Abstract

'Soft Power' has been a very catchy phrase since Joseph Nye introduced it in his 1990 book Bound To Lead. The Changing Nature Of American Power. He has since discussed the concept further in the book that is titled after the concept in 2004. And from then this oxymoronic term has been widely used to describe many aspects of the policies of the new and rising economic powers of China and India, particularly in Africa.

This paper questions whether the binary opposition of soft and hard power is useful for the understanding of how China (and India) is engaged in communication and culture in Africa. We question whether the concept can be consistently applied in such a context, as it is so different from the situation when Joseph Nye coined the idea to warn against an American retrenchment policy promoted by the Bush administration. Nye prioritizes the prowess in using culture, political value, and foreign policy over the hard, military clout, especially when tackling transnational issues like terrorism, international crime and climate change.

This article takes a broad view of China’s exertion of influence via cultural forms and technologies as a case study. Most of these engagements are either influence or image oriented, driven by state funds, serving as symbols of Chinese economic might in Africa. The present Chinese interests in communication and culture – technology and media – must be viewed as the fifth element of the Chinese engagement with Africa, after extractive industries, construction, finance, agriculture and immigration. The paper analyses how most embodiments of the Chinese 'Soft Power' are far from soft. More than obvious is the asymmetry of power underlying the 'Chinafrica' dream. Inequality is reflected in almost every aspect of the China-Africa partnership.
**Commercial Engagement and South-South Co-operation: The Potential and Limits of Chinese Soft Power in Africa**

Elling Tjønneland

This paper will explore the relations between the emerging Chinese soft power and China’s commercial/corporate engagement on the African continent. After briefly summarising the main trends and profile of China’s Africa policy and engagement the paper will discuss the sources of Chinese soft power in Africa and the coherence between economic/corporate intervention and political South-South co-operation.

It has often been claimed that although China is a very powerful and an expanding economic actor in Africa, it still struggles with how to convert its increasing national power and global economic power into constructive international influence. The paper will argue that the Africa case suggests that this may be linked to an increased divergence of Chinese interests and an emerging contradiction between the principle of non-interventions and the commercial/corporate drivers of economic intervention. China’s Africa engagement may have reinforced those tensions.

The paper will explore this through a case study of development co-operation – which provides a good link between economic and political engagement – and through a comparative assessment of the soft power policies of Brazil, South African and especially India.

**Media and Chinese soft power in Uganda: The quest for investment and political influence**

NASSANGA Goretti Linda & Sabiti Makara,

The study explores the impact of China’s increased investment in media and communication industries on the African continent using Uganda as a case study, where China has had substantial investments. Premised within the globalization theories, the study will assess how the Western imperialism paradigm and the participatory paradigm that is associated with the East have been applied in Uganda’s development approaches and how these have been integrated with the political economy theory. An analysis of the media coverage of China’s engagement on the continent will be made by the media in Uganda and China, with a view to establishing how the coverage is influencing public perception of China’s soft power. The study will also examine the communication and media strategies used to promote China’s image in Uganda and how China’s entry on the Ugandan media market is countering media imperialism. From the study findings, good strategies from China’s development model and engagement with Uganda’s media and communication industries will be identified, which could form the basis for policy review so as to facilitate the narrowing of the information and digital gap to enhance Uganda’s development.
China in Angola – as portrayed in newspapers

Aslak Orre

Angola tops the list of China’s trading partners in Africa. China had tense relations with Angola’s Soviet-Cuba inclined MPLA government, but from the early 2000s a strategic relationship (or a “marriage of convenience”) developed. China managed to secure a steady delivery of Angolan oil, whereas the Angolan government secured several credit lines from Chinese financial institutions – now worth close to USD 15 billion – to finance its post-war reconstruction programme. In the wake of the credit lines, Chinese companies are taking a leading role in the massive development of infrastructure in Angola. Hundreds of thousands of Chinese live and work in Angola every year.

Chinese economic muscles have certainly flexed in Angola, showing China’s outreach as a global power. However, there is every indication that, whether for historic, linguistic or cultural reasons, China cannot (yet) match its economic strength with the “soft power” influence of other global powers in Angola. That conundrum begs for a closer look at China’s public image in Angola. To tap into it, this paper will analyze how China is portrayed in Angolan media.

Its principal source of data will be a complete collection of news stories from the four or five principal newspapers in Angola for the year 2012 – both public/official and private/independent – as well as a large collection of more sporadic news cuts about China in Angolan newspapers from about 2005 to 2011.

The research questions are: In which connections and about which topics do China and its people, policies and companies get discussed and reflected in Angolan newspapers? We will also assess changes in the coverage of China and China in Angola over time. Lastly, a more qualitative analysis of the content will assess how the different media outlets portray China in Angola positively and critically. These findings will be used to propose hypotheses on the consequences for Angolan politics, as well as on the possibilities for the extension of Chinese “soft power” in Angola and Africa.