

# The coverage of China in the Mozambican press: Implications for Chinese soft-power

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## Contents

Introduction .....	1
1. China in Africa.....	2
2. Mozambique-China cooperation in media & telecommunication .....	4
3. How is China portrayed in the Mozambican Press?.....	6
3.1 Classifying news reports on China according to the tone/bias.....	8
3.2 On China, according to the newspaper section .....	10
3.3 On China, topics and themes.....	12
3.3.1 Overall findings of the case analysis: topics organized by tone/bias .....	13
3.3.1.1 Negative reporting, a description.....	13
3.3.1.2. Positive reporting, a description.....	15
3.3.1.3. Neutral reporting, a description .....	16
3.3.1.4. Soft power and coverage, some interpretations .....	17
4. Private over public interest: the case of illegal logging.....	18
5. Conclusions .....	21
References.....	22

## Introduction

This paper looks at China and its role in Mozambique, one of the African countries in which Chinese presence has grown evermore significant the last decade. The paper has three parts. The first one summarises Chinese engagement within the African media and telecommunications sectors in general and Mozambique in particular. The second part shows how the Mozambican media covers China. We follow Li and Rønning’s opinion that there are “attitudes of Chinese citizens and companies, and even from the Chinese state in Mozambique, [which] are hampering the efforts of ‘winning the hearts and minds of the Africans’” – with obvious implications for its “soft power” possibilities. With this in mind, the third part uses a case study of the Mozambican media’s opinions

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on illegal logging to show how alliances between Chinese and Mozambican companies linked to the local political elite contribute to damage the image of China and Chinese people in Mozambique.

We have studied the contents of articles on China published by three Mozambican newspapers from November 2012 to June 2014: *Domingo*, a weekly public newspaper, known for having been very close to Frelimo, the ruling party in the country; *A Verdade* and *O País*, two independent daily newspapers.<sup>2</sup> The authors have chosen to work with these newspapers in the given timeframe due to the varying availability of their articles online. It is important to note that whereas two of the newspapers were available before the start of the chosen period this is not the case with *Domingo*, which first appeared online in November 2012. At the moment, *Domingo*, *O País* and *A Verdade* are the only newspapers in Mozambique with a reasonably functioning website.<sup>3</sup>

## 1. China in Africa

The strength of the economic relationship between China and Africa has increased dramatically in the last decade, in particular after the first Forum on China-Africa cooperation (FOCAC) held in 2000. The relationship, however, has attracted criticism and scepticism, in particular from Western countries. According to the critics of the Chinese-African economic relationship, China is a “neo-colonialist” or “neo-imperialist” power because it exploits African natural resources, often without significant benefit to the greater national or local interests in Africa. This suggests that the relationship between China and African nations is not a “genuine” one since it predominantly benefits Chinese interests, and not their African partners. Moreover, critics claim that China reaps the economic benefits of African raw materials with the complicity of the local antidemocratic and corrupt political elite, whose involvement facilitates questionable political practices. In order to counter this criticism, particularly from Western countries, China has established a public diplomacy offensive, inspired by Joseph Nye (2004) and the *soft power* debates,<sup>4</sup> initiated through cooperation

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<sup>2</sup> Borrowed from Li, S., Rønning, H. (2013).

<sup>3</sup> We initially intended also to include *Notícias* in the analysis, which is the daily printed newspaper with the greatest distribution in the country. Unfortunately, this proved impossible since their website recently experienced such grave technical problems as to make its backlog of issues lost or unavailable. There are a few other prominent newspapers, yet whose websites do not work properly either. That is the case, for example, of *Savana*, an independent newspaper.

<sup>4</sup> For a better understanding of the China’s “soft power” debate see for example Li, S. & Ronning, H. (2013), according to whom, discussions about “soft power” in China “date back to the democratisation setbacks in China in 1989.

with African countries in the sector of media and telecommunications. African leaders have welcomed this cooperation not only because China supports the development of African countries, but also because China has promised to use the media relationship to promote a better image of Africa throughout the world. Cooperation in the media sector was one of the eight principles of the Chinese policy of cooperation with Africa that was announced during the first FOCAC. FOCAC formalized this principle between 2011 and 2012 with the organisation of the first China-Africa Media conference in Nairobi, and of the first China-Africa Media forum in August 2012 in Beijing. These conferences outlined the key steps of cooperation in this sector. The fact that FOCAC organized a similar event in August 2013, only one year after the first conference, further conveys the importance of this media cooperation in the Africa-China relationship.

FOCAC's decisions prompted the launch of new companies that serve to illustrate this African-Chinese cooperation: the Xinhua Mobile Newspaper, in partnership with Huawei; Safaricom, a Kenyan telecom company, started what is arguably the first-ever mobile newspaper in sub-Saharan Africa. The opening of the African CCTV channel in Nairobi; the inauguration of the ChinAfrica Media and Publishing (Pty) Ltd. in Pretoria, which is a new publishing base of the Beijing Review, a subsidiary of China International Publishing Group (CIPG). CIPG publishes *ChinAfrica*, a monthly current affairs magazine focusing on the African audience in both English and French. In Nairobi, the company has also launched a weekly African edition of *China Daily*, the most important Chinese newspaper in English. It is also important to point out the increase in the number of Xinhua News Agency branches in Africa from 18 to 25 in 2013, and the creation of the first institute for African media research — the Africa Communication Research Center at the Communication University of China. The aim of this institute is to be “a first-class academic platform for research of and cooperation between Chinese and African media” (Xinrui, 2013), being one of most representative examples of Chinese engagement in the African media landscape. African and Chinese media are asked to present a positive relationship between China and Africa, or, as said by Liu Guangyuan, Chinese ambassador in Kenya, “[to] tell the real story of China and Africa” (Guangyuan, 2013). The Chinese-African relationship is thus re-defined by cooperative media outlets.

In addition to present Africa in a positive light to the rest of the world, the Chinese media also spreads Chinese culture to Africa. For instance, it transmits several Chinese television series —some of them in local African languages such as “Mao Doudou and Her Sweet Days”; “Father’s Wishes” and “Mother’s Glorious Days”. The exposure of Chinese culture to the Africans is also reinforced by

the introduction of a number of other measures: the establishment of *Confucius Institutes*, the granting of scholarships for African students to study in China, the training of African journalists in China, and the initiation of cultural exchanges programs.

Besides the aim of building a “new image” of China in Africa and legitimizing the “sincerity” and “genuineness” of its engagement on the continent, China-Africa media cooperation is a business opportunity. Chinese companies are working with many African governments on telecommunication infrastructure, technical assistance, and on the transition from analogue to digital broadcasting. The Chinese private media group Startimes, which since 2012 has received 1 billion yuan (\$163 million) in loans from the Eximbank to expand its presence in Africa, has activities in 23 African countries, with the goal of reaching 30 within 2019 (*China Daily*, 2014). Apart from the business of radio and TV digital transition, Startimes also provides a digital TV network and television programs in many African countries (*China Daily*, 2014). Huawei and Zhong Xing Telecommunication Equipment (ZTE) are the other two major Chinese telecommunication companies actively engaged in Africa. These are also involved in the transition to digital broadcasting as well as the supply of equipment and technical assistants to the local telephone companies. The expansion of the influence of these media companies encapsulates the goal of the “China-Africa” cooperation to not only represent Africa in a positive light, but also to open the African markets for Chinese economic interests.

The expansion of the influence of these media companies encapsulate the goal of the “China-Africa” cooperation to not only represent Africa in a positive light, but to access the African markets from a Chinese standpoint.

## **2. Mozambique-China cooperation in media & telecommunication**

The most recent agreement between Chinese and Mozambican cooperation within the media sector can be dated from 2011, when a Chinese delegation visited Mozambique and various agreements were signed concerning radio, cinema, television and the establishment of the Confucius Institute (Macauhub, 2011).

Following these agreements, the Confucius Institute was established in October 2012 at Eduardo Mondlane University in Maputo. Several other agreements with local media (public and private) were

also made, the content of which was essentially to facilitate an exchange of programs for broadcasting, and the training of Mozambican journalists.

Among these agreements, one was signed in 2012 between the main public TV channel in Mozambique, *Televisão de Moçambique* (TVM) and TDM (Macau), where the two proclaimed that programs from both institutions would be introduced in both countries and broadcasted by the countries' respective TV channels. The agreement also states that TDM will introduce CCTV programs in Mozambique to be broadcasted by TVM. Further, it states that TDM will subtitle CCTV and TVM programs into Portuguese and Chinese, respectively. In February 2014, TDM signed another agreement with *Agência de Informação de Moçambique* (AIM), a public news agency. This agreement has the same characteristics as the one signed between TVM and TDM, allowing the introduction of TDM and CCTV programs in Mozambique through AIM, and, equally, to introduce AIM programs in Macau and China through TDM. The agreement entails the training of Mozambican journalists (Lusa, 2014).

Chinese media also cooperate with Mozambican independent media. The agreement between CCTV and Mozambican owned Soico Group dating from 2014, which essentially concerns program exchange, is so far the first case, and it has been described by *O País*, the newspaper owned by Soico, as a way for “Grupo Soico to take Mozambique to China” (O País, 2014).

The telecommunication companies Huawei and ZTE are also very active in Mozambique, working with government institutions and private companies. The companies have worked with the Mozambican government since 2006 to establish and operationalize the e-government (GovNet). The agreement between the Mozambican government and the two companies asserts that ZTE will support Mozambique technically and financially in the implementation of the GovNet, whereas Huawei will provide equipment and services. In this area, the construction of the Mozambican National Data Center (CND), or The Science and Technology Park in Maluana (Maputo Province), which is valued to \$25 million and inaugurated in July 2014, is the most expressive example (INTIC 2010; INTIC 2012).

Huawei and ZTE also provide technical assistance to the local mobile companies Mcel and Vodacom, as well as the public phone company, *Telecomunicações de Moçambique* (TDM), which is the only fixed-line operator in Mozambique. As an example, it was Huawei which built the national Fixed Intelligent Network (FIN) for TDM. In 2010, TDM also received a loan of \$21.4 million from

China Exim bank to expand landline services to the remaining 42 Mozambican districts (Chichava, 2014).

In 2011, Vodacom entered a project with Huawei to modernise its 2G and 3G networks, to double the capacity of its network, and to extend it across the country (Macauhub, 2011). On the other hand, Mcel, which also works with Huawei, signed a contract in 2013 with ZTE, which stated that it will adopt ZTE soft as its multiple channel campaign management (MCCM) vendor (Junzhong, 2014).

Since 2011, China has also supported Mozambique in the move from analogue to digital broadcasting. This operation is carried out by the Chinese company Startimes in a joint-venture with the Mozambican Focus 21, and it is expected to be completed within 2015. It must be underlined that Startimes also has a digital TV channel and mobile TV. According to *Domingo* weekly in 2014, the number of Startimes's clients was estimated to 90 thousand. Nonetheless, the partnership between Startimes and Focus 21 has sparked huge criticism, since the latter is associated with the family of the Mozambican President, and the process of the attribution of digitalization was made without public tender (Mapote 2014, Nhamirre 2014). The most critical voices came from within the private press and CSO. In response to the criticism, the government alleged that there had been no public tender because the move from analogue to digital broadcasting is supported by bilateral funding, in the form of a loan from the China Eximbank, which demanded that the digitalization process be granted to a Chinese company (AIM 2014, A Verdade, 2014).

The criticism has led some parts of Mozambican political elite linked to the Frelimo party, such as the former premier minister Luisa Diogo, to say that Mozambique need to be cautious towards China. According to Diogo, even if unlike the “traditional donors” China does not impose conditions on the way in which Mozambique should conduct its internal policies or affairs in order for it to grant aid, it imposes certain conditions in matters of development aid: ‘China wants Mozambique to give some guarantees, such as natural resources’ (Chichava, 2014:28). To Diogo, this means that, even if Mozambique recognises the ‘strategic’ importance of China, it does **or should** not neglect its ‘traditional’ partners (Ibid).

### **3. How is China portrayed in the Mozambican Press?**



Given the above description of the many areas of social and political life where China or Chinese people and companies have increased their presence in Mozambique, how is China portrayed in the Mozambican press? In order to answer this question, we have conducted a case analysis using 242 articles published from November 2012 until June 2014 in three newspapers in Mozambique, which offer their articles online, namely *Domingo*, *O País* and *A Verdade*.<sup>5</sup> It is important to note the exceptionally low circulation of newspapers in Mozambique. *O País* is the paper with the largest circulation, around 30 000 copies daily. However, it hardly sells outside the capital Maputo. *Domingo* hardly exceeds 10 000 copies, and the free newspaper *A Verdade* claims to circulate around 50 000 copies. Although radio and television are forms of mass communication that reaches millions rather than the tens of thousands of newspaper readers, many have emphasised the newspapers disproportionate role in opinion formation, given that their journalism and framing is passed on in the ether media.

A short overview of the selected newspapers will give us a better understanding of our findings. *Domingo* has a weekly edition and is widely considered to be a *Pro-government* newspaper. *Domingo* is owned by the *Sociedade Notícias SARL*, a public limited company. Its main shareholders are state or public enterprises, such as *Banco de Moçambique* (the central bank) and EMOSE (the state/public insurance company). *O País*, on the other hand, is a private newspaper created by Daniel David, head of Soico Group and former high employee of Television of Mozambique (TVM), the main public channel and close to the ruling party Frelimo. David is also a former vice-president of African Union of Broadcasting (AUB). The newspaper *O País* started originally with a weekly edition in 2005, but has appeared daily since 2008. It is considered by the other Mozambican private press and other sectors of Mozambican civil society as independent from the government. Apart from the newspaper *O País*, the Soico Group owns a TV and radio stations (Chichava & Pohlmann 2010).

Like “*O País*”, *A Verdade* is a private newspaper and is the first and only newspaper distributed for free in Mozambique. Founded by Eric Charas, a young Mozambican entrepreneur described by the World Economic Forum (n.d) as the “*managing Director at Charas LDA, a Mozambican private sector company investing in and driving growth in Mozambique with investments in construction, real estate, transport,*

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<sup>5</sup> According to data from 2013, Mozambique has a total population of 25,83 million people and 5.4% of them have access to internet (The World DataBank, 2013). According to data from 2008, the illiteracy rate in Mozambique is 49,7 (Relatório sobre os Objectivos do Desenvolvimento do Milénio de 2010, Ministério da Planificação & Desenvolvimento, 2010).

*media, telecoms and mining*?. *A Verdade* is also the only newspaper that is printed outside the country (South Africa). Charas, one of the most critical voices of the Frelimo elite's corrupt practices, says that he created a free newspaper not out of his own economic or financial interests, but in order to keep Mozambicans informed in a country where people don't have money to buy newspapers. According to Charas, "*A Verdade*" is mainly supported by advertisements, but one may still expect the newspaper to defend its own private interests.

Since the newspaper *Domingo* has no online articles available prior to November 2012, the selected period for our analysis commences on that date. By using the word *China* as our search criterion, we have identified a total of 242 relevant<sup>6</sup> articles: 33 in the newspaper *Domingo*, 74 in *O País* and 135 in *A Verdade*. We have used the software NVivo 10 for processing the collected data. The articles were initially classified according to two criteria:

- a) the tone or bias of the journalist/newspaper (negative, positive or neutral), and
- b) the topic (agriculture, natural resources, etc).

We are aware that conclusions drawn from quantitative measures of news stories have their natural limitations. However, it is an instrument that may reveal *tendencies* of a more general kind, which case studies and purely qualitative analyses alone may miss. Thus, with this limitation in mind, we believe that our approach offers a partial, but useful instrument in understanding the image of China in Mozambican Press.

### 3.1 Classifying news reports on China according to the tone/bias

For this classification, we have analysed the tone or bias in which the journalist/newspaper has framed the article that deals with or mentions China. The references to China or Chinese people, its enterprises or activities have been classified as: positive, if *mainly* positive in tone or framed/ set in connection with a positive news item or story; negative if *mainly* set in a negative or critical tone or circumstance; and neutral if *mainly* without any obvious tone, and simply factual, even-handed or disinterested. The reference to *tone* is important, as the categorisation is an attempt to reflect how the journalist or newspaper framed it, not what we (the researchers) might think of the matter in question.

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<sup>6</sup> The only category of articles excluded was sports. They were a total of 24 articles and in all of them China was mentioned in an incidental way.

The subjective evaluation of the researchers is therefore not about the intrinsic political or ethical sides of the story, but rather about how the article in which the search term is found, comes across in tone or attitude. This means that we have tried to be sensitive to questions of framing. In mass media or politics there is always a choice of how to frame the facts available on an issue. The frame is a more or less subtle signal to the reader or audience of how the matter should be considered or interpreted, to decide which arguments and facts are relevant, and how the matter in question relates to other topics. In this way, the frame has a decisive function for encouraging certain interpretations and for discouraging others. For political purposes, framing is often used to present facts in such a way that implicates a problem that is in need of a solution. Members of political parties attempt to frame issues in ways that favour their own political leanings, choices and solutions (Daphne, 2014). The same argument can be made for other agenda makers, such as the media, whether it is independent, or represents special interests.

Our data reveals that 37% of the articles on China have a neutral tone and that there are more articles with a negative tone (33%) than with a positive one (30%). Nevertheless, it is important to point out that there is a variation in tone among the selected newspapers. *Table 1* below illustrates this variation. The column with the percentage indicates the incidence of articles with positive, negative and neutral tone in relation to the total number of selected articles of each newspaper.

*Table 1: Tone/bias according to newspaper*

<i>Tone</i>	<i>Domingo</i>		<i>O País</i>		<i>A Verdade</i>		<b>Total</b>	
	<i>No</i>	<b>%</b>	<i>No</i>	<b>%</b>	<i>No</i>	<b>%</b>	<i>No</i>	<b>%</b>
Neutral	20	<b>61</b>	30	<b>40,5</b>	40	30	90	37
Negative	1	3	14	19	65	<b>48</b>	80	33
Positive	12	<b>36</b>	30	<b>40,5</b>	30	22	72	30
Total	33	100	74	100	135	100	242	100

*Table 1* shows a great variation in tone if we consider each analysed newspaper. There is a considerable variation among them, especially in the number of articles with a negative and positive tone. The positive tone is predominant both in *Domingo* and *O País*. While *Domingo* has just one single article with negative tone, *O País* has twice as many articles with a positive tone towards China than with a negative tone. On the other hand, *A Verdade* has almost half part of its articles with a negative tone.

Referring back to the short overview of the selected newspapers, we see that the pro-government newspaper *Domingo* contains just one single article with a negative tone/bias against China. This may reflect the Mozambican government’s interest in preserving a positive image of China, and to avoid “unpleasant” coverage in the critical mass media against an important partner. The only critical article on the newspaper *Domingo* (published on 21/04/13) states that the Ministry of Science and Technology is dissatisfied with the performance of the Centre for Research and Transference of Agricultural Technologies in Umbeluzi (CITTAU), a centre financed by the Chinese Government. According to the Minister, the problem is that the centre has focused on Chinese products, while recommendations from the Ministry in 2012 highlighted the importance of focusing on products with a national origin, since it is cheaper and more feasible for the population to deal with local products.

By contrast, *A Verdade*, a newspaper that was created by a person described as one of the most critical voices against the Frelimo government, has the most critical view on China as well. In conclusion, it seems there is a clear correlation between the general positions the newspaper has on the Frelimo government and the way it frames its material on China.

### 3.2 On China, according to the newspaper section

Our intention now is to present the number of articles within each section, and to indicate whether these were classified as negative, positive or neutral. In our classification, we have used the same names as those given by each selected newspaper. *Table 2* below gives us two important pieces of information: (i) in which sections China is most frequently mentioned, and (ii) in which sections one finds the articles on China with the more neutral, negative or positive tone/bias.

*Table 2. Tone/bias according to the newspaper sections*

<i>Section</i>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Total</b>
Economy	11	<b>33</b>	28	72

International	<b>19</b>	9	20	48
Politics <sup>7</sup>	10	8	<b>12</b>	30
National	<b>7</b>	3	4	14
Opinion	<b>6</b>	1	4	11
Environment	<b>5</b>	2	3	10
Society	3	2	<b>4</b>	9
Culture	1	1	3	5
Other sections	<b>18</b>	12	13	43
Total	80	72	<b>90</b>	242

The great majority of articles on China are published in the sections *Economy* and *International*. These two sections alone encompass almost half the articles published for the analysed period. China is also frequently mentioned in the following sections: *Politics*, *National*, *Opinion*, *Environment* and *Society*.<sup>8</sup>

The positive tone in articles of the section *economy* is much more frequent than a bad tone. There are three times more positive articles than negative ones. On the other hand, articles of the sections *international*, *national*, *opinion* and *environment* are clearly more negative than positive. It is also important to highlight that all sections have an expressive number of articles with a neutral tone on China, being this tone more prevalent in the sections *international*, *politics*, *society* and *culture*.

We infer from this that in Mozambican media, China is positively associated with the economy. Critical or negative framing is rather more common, although no uniquely negative, in the sections on politics, and national and international material. It seems to confirm the widespread assumptions that China thrives on its economy. In terms of China's possible soft power "assets" these data seem to indicate that it has rather more to gain from its "strong economy" image, than anything else. These patchy findings begs one to look deeper into the topics and themes that elicit a positive, neutral or negative framing in our selection of Mozambican newspapers.

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<sup>7</sup> For the newspaper *A Verdade*, we have considered the section *Democracy* as *Politics*, since they do not have a section with this exact title.

<sup>8</sup> The group *other sections* includes sections which only appeared in one of the selected newspapers, and/or sections with only a few articles related to them. For that reason, we have decided to keep them together in one single group.

### 3.3 On China, topics and themes

We thus move on to classify the articles according to the topics or themes they deal with. We acknowledge that there are articles that mention more than one topic, but here we have only considered the topic that is most dominant in relation to China. Following this, based on the criteria supplied in item 3.1 above, we will present the articles for each topic according to their classification as negative, positive or neutral, and point out their most frequent themes.

Table 3: Topics on China

Topic					%	
<b>In Mozambique</b>	<i>Trade, industry and finance</i>		40	117	48	
	<i>Infrastructure</i>		30			
	<i>Natural resources</i>	Forest	11			21
		Animals	4			
		Natural gas	4			
		Coal	2			
	<i>Agriculture</i>		11			
	<i>Bilateral relations Mozambique-China</i>		9			
	<i>Quality of Chinese products</i>		5			
<i>Labour issues</i>		1				
<b>In China or international</b>	<i>Domestic affairs</i>		40	79	33	
	<i>International affairs</i>	China and Asia	13			39
		China and Africa	12			
		China and the West	8			
		BRICS	4			
		ONU	2			
<b>Other subjects</b>				24	10	
<b>Incidental</b>				22	9	
<b>Total</b>				242	100	

Table 3 shows the most frequent topics involving China in the Mozambican Press. Most of the topics were grouped in two main clusters: *In Mozambique* and *In China or internationally*. The topic *Other subjects* contains articles with different contents that could not be sorted under the former topics, and that were not specific or relevant enough to justify the creation of new topics. The topic *Incidental* contains articles that only mention China in passing or incidentally, usually along with other countries and with no focus or relevant topic associated with China in particular.

The table also makes the special importance attributed to topics such as *trade, industry and finances, infrastructure* and *natural resources* clear. The high number of articles on *trade, industry and finances* is more to be expected. *Domestic affairs* in China is also of remarkable importance.

The results of *Table 3* become more interesting when we consider the classification of the articles as negative, positive or neutral. It allows us to evaluate which topics contribute more towards a good or a bad image of China in Mozambique (assuming that positive articles contribute to a *good image on China*).

### 3.3.1 Overall findings of the case analysis: topics organized by tone/bias

Our aim for this item is to present the articles on China according to the tone/bias in which they were written (negative, positive and neutral) and to provide the topics that most markedly contribute to a good or a bad image of China in Mozambique. This step will give us a clearer picture of what has been said about China by the Mozambican Press. In order to facilitate the comparison between the three different tables, we will use the same structure as *Table 3*.<sup>9</sup>

Even if the neutral articles are slightly more numerous than the negative and positive ones, we have decided to present them at the end. The reason for the less thorough interest in these articles is that it is the positive and negative articles that most clearly contribute to an identification and understanding of the critical, sensitive and controversial issues related to China’s image in the Mozambican media.

#### 3.3.1.1 Negative reporting, a description

As already seen in *Table 1*, among the 242 selected articles, 80 exhibit a negative tone on China. The table below shows an equal distribution of negative articles related to China in the clusters *In Mozambique* and *In China or internationally*.

*Table 4: Negative Reporting*

Topic	%
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<sup>9</sup> Even though we have identified more neutral articles than negative or positive ones, we have decided to start our analysis with the negative and positive articles because they more obviously reveal the image of China in the Mozambican Press.

<b>In Mozambique</b>	<i>Trade, industry and finances</i>		3	40	50	
	<i>Infrastructure</i>		<b>13</b>			
	<i>Natural resources</i>	Forest	<b>10</b>			<b>14</b>
		Animals	4			
		Natural gas	0			
		Coal	0			
	<i>Agriculture</i>		3			
	<i>Bilateral relations Mozambique-China</i>		1			
<i>Quality of Chinese products</i>		5				
<i>Labour issues</i>		1				
<b>In China or internationally</b>	<i>Domestic affairs</i>		<b>30</b>	40	50	
	<i>International affairs</i>	China and Asia	3			10
		China and Africa	3			
		China and the West	3			
		BRICS	0			
		UN	1			
<b>Other subjects</b>			0	0		
<b>Incidental</b>			0	0		
<b>Total</b>			80	100		

In the cluster *In Mozambique*, the main problem is associated with natural resources, where *forest* is the most predominant topic. All the articles on *forest* are related to the timber export from Mozambique to China, and almost all of them are explicit in their use of terms such as *illegal*, *smuggling* and *traffic*. Being so salient, and indeed for knowers of Mozambique, a well-known issue of contention, we have included the case study on illegal logging in chapter 4, to illustrate the way the Chinese involvement in the extraction of Mozambique's natural resources has been critically reflected in Mozambican media.

In *infrastructure*, the second most frequent topic, allegations of corruption is the prevalent theme, especially in relation to the digitalization of broadcasting. Within *infrastructure*, the second most frequent theme is the violation of the rights of local communities in Mozambique by Chinese firms.

In the cluster *In China or internationally*, the topic *domestic affairs* is the most problematic one. The largest part of the articles deal with state violence against protest in China, poor living conditions of the population in China, the "bird flu" and lack of political freedom, freedom of press and censorship.



Most of the articles with a negative tone on China were published in the newspaper *A Verdade* (more than 80%) followed by *O País* (17%). As already mentioned in *Table 1*, only one article with a negative tone on China was published in the newspaper *Domingo* (1%).

### 3.3.1.2. Positive reporting, a description

As already seen in *Table 1*, among the 242 selected articles, 72 exhibit a positive tone on China. The table below shows that the positive articles related to China are much more frequent in the cluster *In Mozambique* than in the cluster *In China or international*.

*Table 5: Positive Reporting*

Topic				%		
<b>In Mozambique</b>	<i>Trade, industry and finances</i>			25	53	74
	<i>Infrastructure</i>			14		
	<i>Natural resources</i>	Forest	1	3		
		Animals	0			
		Natural gas	0			
		Coal	2			
	<i>Agriculture</i>			4		
	<i>Bilateral relations Mozambique-China</i>			7		
<i>Quality of Chinese products</i>			0			
<i>Labour issues</i>			0			
<b>In China or internationally</b>	<i>Domestic affairs</i>			6	19	26
	<i>International affairs</i>	China and Asia	1	13		
		China and Africa	8			
		China and the West	3			
		BRICS	1			
		UN	0			
<b>Other subjects</b>				0	0	
<b>Incidental</b>				0	0	
<b>Total</b>				72	100	

As we see from *Table 5*, the positive reporting is highly focused on China's role as an economic partner in Mozambique. Two other topics of great importance are *infrastructure* and *bilateral relations Mozambique-China*. The latter has articles that employ words such as *friendship* and *cooperative relations*.

In the cluster *In China or internationally*, the most frequent topic is *China and Africa*, where articles focus on China's role as an economic partner and on infrastructure, but now in relation to other countries in Africa. *Domestic affairs* is the second most frequent topic in this cluster, and half of the

articles are on China's commitment to fight pollution. The remaining positive articles are on China's monetary policy, its anti-corruption plan, and economic measures to fight poverty.

### 3.3.1.3. Neutral reporting, a description

As already seen in *Table 1*, among the 242 selected articles, 90 exhibit a neutral tone on China. All the articles on the topics *other subjects* and *incidental* were classified as neutral.

*Table 6: Neutral Reporting*

Topic				%		
<b>In Mozambique</b>	<i>Trade, industry and finances</i>		12	24	27	
	<i>Infrastructure</i>		3			
	<i>Natural resources</i>	Forest	0			4
		Animals	0			
		Natural gas	4			
		Coal	0			
	<i>Agriculture</i>		4			
	<i>Bilateral relations Mozambique-China</i>		1			
	<i>Quality of Chinese products</i>		0			
<i>Labour issues</i>		0				
<b>In China or internationally</b>	<i>Domestic affairs</i>		4	20	21	
	<i>International affairs</i>	China and Asia	9			16
		China and Africa	3			
		China and the West	2			
		BRICS	1			
		UN	1			
<b>Other subjects</b>				24	27	
<b>Incidental</b>				22	24	
<b>Total</b>				90	100	

*Table 6* shows that just a small number of articles in the cluster *In Mozambique* are neutral. It seems to indicate that the Mozambican newspapers tend to have an opinion on topics directly related to the country. Probably for that reason, most of the articles in this cluster have a negative or positive tone on China. It is also interesting to note that there are no neutral articles on the most sensitive theme for the image of China in the Mozambican Media: *forest* in *natural resources*. In the cluster *In China or internationally* the neutral articles are as frequent as the positive ones.

#### 3.3.1.4. Soft power and coverage, some interpretations

Resuming the above, we find that in the cluster *in Mozambique*, there are much more positive articles on *trade, industry and finances* (63%) than negative ones (8%). The positive and negative articles on *infrastructure*, on the other hand, are equivalent in terms of numbers. On *natural resources*, we have identified that a great number of articles (67%) have a negative tone on China and that almost all of them were published by the critical newspaper *A Verdade*. If we consider that the average of articles with a negative tone on China is one out of three, we may conclude that this topic is *the* most sensitive one. There are only three articles with a positive tone on China on *natural resources* (14%), and they were published by two of the newspapers (*Domingo* and *O País*). In the cluster *In China or internationally*, 75% of the articles on *domestic affairs* were classified as negative and only 15% were classified as positive.

Assuming, for simplicity, that negative coverage works against China's soft power ambitions, it is quite interesting that nearly half of the negative articles deal with topics *in China* rather than in Mozambique. The same tendency is confirmed if we peek below, to the positive and neutral reporting, where only a few articles deal with things positive in China. It seems that Mozambican journalists are mostly concerned to write about negative things *in China*, in fact, almost just as much as they are inclined to write negatively about how China, Chinese people or activities operate *in Mozambique*. Arguably, the Chinese presence in Mozambique manifests itself concretely in locations and settings familiar to journalists who observe and interpret them locally, whereas what they write about domestic matters in China is necessarily filtered through international media. This certainly reveals a certain "image problem", in that journalists finds it relevant to emphasise what is negative in China as much as what China does "wrong" in Mozambique. It may come down to a simple matter of journalists' individual prejudice or, alternatively, a symptom of China's "soft power deficit".

On the more encouraging side (seen through the lens of things beneficial for China's image), it is China's operations in Mozambique – what is closest to the journalists – that is producing positive reporting, rather than what journalists recreate about China that they have not experienced themselves except through international media. Positive reporting centre's on China's role as an economic partner in Mozambique, or its bilateral relations in general. Again, it seems what wins China most esteem is its ability to bankroll Mozambique's development, and construction of its infrastructure. In this respect, it does not differ so much from how China comes across in the

separate study on the Angolan press coverage of China (ref: study on Angola). Notably, natural resource extraction is *not* included in what is positive about China.

#### **4. Private over public interest: the case of illegal logging**

The growth of Chinese investments has also been linked to suspected business interactions with the Frelimo political elite. This suspicion has tainted the image of these partnerships in the eyes of African media consumers. To the critics, the sincerity of these partnerships is dubious. The illegal logging case is the most controversial issue that has been highlighted in the Mozambican media, tarnishing the image of China and the Chinese, in spite of their efforts to change the perception of Africans and the rest of the world regarding the “genuineness” of their engagement in Africa. As previously mentioned, illegal logging constitutes 13% of the negative reporting about China in the Mozambican press during the period covered by our research, and is the single most negative item concerning the country over that period.

Because the timber industry does not require high investment costs and cutting edge technology, and in the absence of oil resources, like those in Angola or Nigeria, this industry has become, in a very short period – the main export product from Mozambique to China. In fact, in 2006, the timber covered more than 90 per cent of Mozambique's exports to China. On a list led by Gabon, Mozambique ranked sixth among the top ten exporters of timber to China. Within the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), only Swaziland surpassed Mozambique in exports of timber to China (Canby et al. 2008). In 2009, timber continued to be the main product of export to China.<sup>10</sup>

Besides involving Chinese entrepreneurs, illegal logging also involves Mozambican businessmen, most of whom entertain strong links to the current ruling power, Frelimo. The connection between the Chinese businessmen and local businessmen and government officials has sparked a great deal of controversy within Mozambican society. Indeed, the Mozambican civil society organizations (CSO) claim that their timber resources have been, and are continuing to be illegally exploited by the Chinese entrepreneurs. In 2006, a report commissioned by the Forum of Non-Governmental Organisations of Zambezia (FONGZA) entitled "Chinese Takeaway", and especially devoted to the

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<sup>10</sup> Between 2013 and the first quarter of 2014, Mozambique was considered by China as its largest supplier of timber import by value, among African countries. For more details see EIA 2014.

Zambezia province (one of the regions richest in forest resources), called into question the benefits that former Frelimo leaders derived from the timber industry. They accused, among others, the former President of Mozambique, Joaquim Chissano, and the former governor of Zambezia, the deceased Boniface Gruveta, of colluding with the Chinese in the deforestation of Zambezia for their own personal financial benefit (Mackenzie, 2006). The controversy over the timber logging industry in Mozambique threatens not only the Chinese-Mozambican cultural and business relationship, but also the Mozambican citizens' views of its former and current political leaders.

Another report from 2008, prepared by three Mozambican civil society organizations (CSO), the *Organização Rural para Ajuda Mútua* (ORAM) and *Justiça Ambiental* (JA) –, stated that there were no more timber to explore in Zambezia. CSO further claimed that some politicians linked to Frelimo were selling their licenses to foreigners and profiteering from this arrangement. These situations led some Mozambicans to publicly write to President Armando Guebuza – himself quoted as having interests in the timber business – asking for his intervention. During the visit of Hu Jintao, the former Chinese President, to Maputo in February 2007, some voices of CSO as well as a number of academics took advantage of the moment to denounce the state of the timber industry. Two notable critics at this time include Marcelo Mosse from the Center for Public Integrity (CIP) and sociologist Carlos Serra, who addressed open letters to President Armando Guebuza. The first, in addition to criticizing the obscure process of unjust enrichment of the Mozambican political elite in partnership with various Chinese companies, said that cooperation with China was welcome if made in a transparent manner that benefited the peoples of the two countries, but not if it came as a reprint of the colonial situation (Mosse, 2007). The second, called for the immediate appointment of a commission of inquiry to check what was really happening in Mozambican forests (Serra 2007a). These criticisms reveal the damage caused by the timber industry to the Mozambican image of China in academic circles.

The independent press expanded the criticisms offered by Mosse and Serra, which emphasized corruption on an individual level, to the questioning of the validity of these partnerships. Moreover, they hit back against criticism towards the press put forward by businessmen. A writer in Savana weekly newspaper claimed:

"Mozambique must cooperate with all countries of the world, since it brings benefits to their development plans. But Mozambicans have the right to express [their] outrage when its natural

resources are exploited so rampantly, and it is wrong to consider that they do so because they let themselves "become a passive feeding center ...", as it is understood in the West, since Mozambicans have no ability to see and evaluate what is going on around them. The constant references to China have much to do with the recurrence of incidents involving citizens of that country. In the specific case of timber, it is a fact that China is the main destination. Are the deeds of citizens from that country, in collaboration with their internal partners, who have been involved in less appropriate forestry practices, to be ignored simply for the sake of political expediency? The acts have actors, and these actors must become known, regardless of their country of origin. This cannot be interpreted as part of a cynical agenda to demonize the Chinese (Savana, 2011).

Despite all these criticisms and complaints, the public relations situation is not showing signs of improvement, according to a report published in 2013 by the Environmental International Agency (EIA). The report accused the former minister of Agriculture, Tomás Mandlate and his successor, Jose Pacheco (current minister of Agriculture) for being the main figures of timber traffic, in collusion with Chinese companies (EIA 2013). Some CSO, political opposition parties and some donors, such as Finland who support the Mozambican state budget, demanded the investigation of the ministers mentioned in the EIA report. However, the Mozambican Central Office for Combating Corruption (GCCC) concluded that the ministers were not involved in timber smuggling. Another report from the same organization published in June 2014 showed that few changes had occurred since the time of its first report (EIA 2014). If the weakness of the Mozambican state is one of the explanatory factors – since the state has few means to control illegal logging – the lack of “political will” is another: this business involves high ranking state officials and Frelimo members. In addition to the involvement of the political elite, the timber smuggling also involves the lower echelons of the civil service, the police and customs services.

There have been many allegations against the Mozambican political authorities: that they are complicit in and/or benefit from the exploitative practices of the Chinese timber industry; and that it has occurred without respect for the legislation on the area (such as the export of unprocessed timber). They have been accused of involvement in cutting timber beyond the limits established by the law; and that it all takes place without creating any added value for the country, but only for a small privileged group. If, as said by Nye (2004), “to obtain political, economic and cultural influence through soft power mechanisms is more difficult and requires time than hard power”, illegal logging and non-transparent “partnerships” with Mozambican political elites further damage the image of

China in Mozambique by suggesting that the former is only interested in its own interests, and not those of its African partners.

## 5. Conclusions

This paper started with an overview of the important milestones in Chinese companies' massive entry into the African media and telecom sectors which apart for its commercial possibilities also appears to have been part of a development wanted by Chinese political strategists. These companies could potentially serve as image building tools to advance China's coveted "soft power".

We then painted China's engagement with Mozambique with a broad brush, outlining how China's general advance into the media and telecom sector in Africa also had its repercussions in Mozambique. We also saw how China might have sought to expand its "soft power" through novel cultural institutions' presence in Mozambique – but those efforts have left next to no mark in the newspapers. The Chinese entry in the media and telecom sector is quite technology oriented, but there are also some considerable efforts to experiment with content delivery, although in this field the linguistic obstacles seem to be more impeding in Mozambique than in the English-speaking African countries. One more feature stands out: In particular one case of technology transfer the "Chinese" (however unfairly treated as one block) have been associated with grand-scale corrupt deals involving the presidential family in Mozambique.

In our analysis of China's portrayal in the Mozambican press some tendencies stood out. Firstly, the government- and party-state-oriented newspaper *Domingo* carried just one single article with a negative or critical tone against China, and it was also the most positive in tone. The more "neutral" *O País* carried some, yet few, critical or negative articles involving China or the Chinese. In the newspaper *A Verdade*, usually carrying a lot of critical and in particular government-critical journalism, half of the articles were negative. Put shortly, our selection confirms the expectation that the critical newspapers were also most critical towards the Chinese. This can be interpreted variously, but one question for China's soft power promoters is therefore if its strong association with an African party-elite – that may not be in power for very long – rubs off negatively on its image. In the subsequent sections we saw a strong association between critical or negative coverage of China and generally desirable issues like "democracy", and with negative issues like poor quality of products, human rights abuses, corruption and perhaps most notably, pillaging of natural resources.

On the other hand, the positive reporting emphasises the economic opportunities that the Chinese involvement in Africa brings. It is thus fair to hypothesise, that as a tool for winning hearts and minds, or in “soft power tactics”, China’s economic muscles is its most promising asset.

The case example in chapter 4 can be taken as illustrative for several of the tendencies we have seen that led to negative or critical reporting: Involvement with a corrupt national elite; disregard for local legal standards, the environment and human rights; and products at the low-end of the market.

This study gives support to some expectations that are commonly held among Mozambique’s analysts and observers, and gives some suggestive pointers for China’s image enhancers, or “soft power builders”. Where representatives of Western donor nations, so predominant in the Mozambican political landscape, actively attempt to mould the Frelimo-based elite into its own image, China’s politicians emphasise that it cooperates – and does business – with that elite no matter what it may privately think about its virtues and conduct. This may well be a successful diplomatic strategy in the short run. The above findings go in the direction of suggesting that in the long run, the close association – diplomatically, in business and in people’s minds – of China with Mozambique’s elite, could become an obstacle, in particular what concerns the question of Chinese soft power. At least if Mozambique’s newspaper reports on China are anything to go by, China’s soft power builders need to give some thought on how to make more of its positive image (“the bankroller”) and that which could potentially be positive but has not yet made a considerable mark on the Mozambican media, Chinese culture and language. Similarly, how can it play down what seems to affect it negatively the most: Illicit resource extraction and corruption in Mozambique, and authoritarian governance in China.

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