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Realized by: **Noura OMRI**

Supervised by: **Pr. Khaled LALAOUI**

Jury:

President: Dr/ Djamel Bouchakour

Supervisor: Pr/ Khaled Lalaoui

Member: Dr/ Samir Ardjoun

Academic year: 2024 - 2025

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لعلاوي خالد

أعضاء لجنة المناقشة:

الرئيس: د/ بوشاقور جمال

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The ones I'm most grateful for. You are the reason I face this world with confidence. Your words are craved into my spirit, and I will carry them with me in every step to come. Making you proud is not a goal; it's a lifelong promise.

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May you remember every joy and sorrow, every triumph and setback that shaped this journey, so you can create even greater ones in the future.

“In The Name of Allah

The Entirely Merciful

The Especially Merciful”

Abstract

This research examines how Xinhua News Agency employs media diplomacy to enhance China's public image in Africa. Drawing on Entman's framing theory, we conducted a qualitative content analysis of 52 articles published between September 1 and December 1, 2024, selected through stratified systematic sampling from Xinhua's Africa section.

The findings reveal that Xinhua operates as a state-controlled institution that uses strategic framing to promote three narratives: "China as a Solution Provider and Strategic Partner," "Unity and Solidarity," and the "Critical Frame," which includes the strategic omission of negative content. Selective sourcing, repetitive positive themes, the avoidance of criticism or conflict-related topics, the use of positive visual elements, and soft language all contribute to reinforcing the Dragon's ideology in Africa.

Ultimately, our research argues that Xinhua's media diplomacy is a deliberate and structured strategy. It constructs a favorable and uncritical portrayal of China's image in Africa, aligning closely with Beijing's foreign policy objectives and supporting the expansion of its influence across the continent.

Key words:

Chinese media diplomacy Framing theory Xinhua News Agency Sino-African relations

الملخص

تتناول هذه الدراسة كيفية توظيف وكالة أنباء شينخوا للدبلوماسية الإعلامية من أجل تعزيز الصورة العامة للصين في إفريقيا. بالاستناد إلى نظرية التأطير لإنتمن، أجرينا تحليلا نوعيا لمحتوى 52 مقالا نشرت بين 1 سبتمبر و1 ديسمبر 2024، تم اختيارها باستخدام العينة المنهجية الطبقية من قسم إفريقيا في وكالة شينخوا.

تكشف النتائج أن شينخوا تعمل كمؤسسة خاضعة لسيطرة الدولة تستخدم التأطير الاستراتيجي للترويج لثلاثة سرديات: "الصين كمزود للحلول وشريك استراتيجي"، "الوحدة والتضامن"، و"الإطار النقدي" الذي يتضمن الإغفال الاستراتيجي للمحتوى السلبي. كما تسهم المصادر المنتقاة، وتكرار المواضيع الإيجابية، وتجنب الانتقادات أو المواضيع الخلافية، واستخدام العناصر البصرية الإيجابية، واللغة اللينة، في تعزيز أيديولوجية التنين في إفريقيا.

في الختام، ترى هذه الدراسة أن الدبلوماسية الإعلامية لوكالة شينخوا هي استراتيجية متعمدة ومنظمة. فهي تبني صورة إيجابية وغير نقدية لدور الصين في إفريقيا، بما يتماشى مع أهداف السياسة الخارجية لبكين وتدعم توسيع نفوذها في القارة.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

الدبلوماسية الإعلامية الصينية، نظرية التأطير، وكالة الأنباء شينخوا، العلاقات الصينية-الافريقية

Résumé

Cette recherche examine comment l'agence de presse Xinhua utilise la diplomatie médiatique pour améliorer l'image publique de la Chine en Afrique. En s'appuyant sur la théorie de Framing d'Entman, nous avons mené une analyse de contenu qualitative de 52 articles publiés entre le 1er septembre et le 1er décembre 2024, sélectionnés selon un échantillonnage systématique stratifié à partir de la section Afrique de Xinhua.

Les résultats révèlent que Xinhua fonctionne comme une institution contrôlée par l'État qui utilise un cadrage stratégique pour promouvoir trois récits : « La Chine comme fournisseur de solutions et partenaire stratégique », « Unité et solidarité » et le « cadre critique », qui inclut l'omission stratégique de contenus négatifs. Le recours à des sources sélectionnées, des thèmes positifs répétés, l'évitement de critiques ou de sujets conflictuels, l'utilisation d'éléments visuels positifs et d'un langage modéré contribuent tous à renforcer l'idéologie du Dragon en Afrique.

En fin de compte, notre recherche soutient que la diplomatie médiatique de Xinhua est une stratégie délibérée et structurée. Elle construit une image favorable et non critique de la Chine en Afrique, s'alignant étroitement sur les objectifs de politique étrangère de Pékin et soutenant l'expansion de son influence sur le continent.

Mots-clés :

Diplomatie médiatique chinoise, Théorie de Framing, Agence Xinhua, Relations sino-africaines

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full Form
AFP	Agence France-Presse
AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
AU	African Union
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CGTN	China Global Television Network
CPC	Communist Party of China
CRI	China Radio International
DSR	Digital Silk Road
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FLN	Front de Libération Nationale
FM	Frequency Modulation
FOCAC	Forum on China-Africa Cooperation
KBC	Kenya Broadcasting Corporation
MW	Megawatt
PIDA	Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa
PRC	People's Republic of China
SEZ	Special Economic Zone

SGR	Standard Gauge Railway
TEDA	Tianjin Economic-Technological Development Area
USF	Unity and Solidarity Frame
WTO	World Trade Organization
ZBC	Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation
ZCCZ	Zambia–China Cooperation Zone
ZTE	Zhongxing Telecommunication Equipment Corporation

Introduction

Introduction

"We must focus on shaping China's national image, tell China's story well, spread China's voice, and strengthen our international communication capacity[1]", said President Xi Jinping during the 12th collective study session of the 18th Politburo of the Communist Party of China.

This directive has since become the foundation of China's global media strategy. The expression *讲好中国故事* (Jiǎng hǎo Zhōngguó gùshì), "tell China's story well," signifies the Dragon's aspiration to expand its narrative presence internationally and shape how China's public image is perceived globally.

In this vision, media diplomacy plays a key role as a tool to bolster China's soft power and further its geopolitical ambitions, notably in the Global South.

China considers Africa as an essential part of its international plans. Since the early days of the People's Republic of China, Beijing has established close relationships with African countries, beginning with backing liberation movements and later expanding into economic partnerships, infrastructure development, and cultural exchanges.

Today, China stands as one of Africa's leading partners, with this strategic alliance encompassing not only trade and investment but also media and information diplomacy. Within this framework, Chinese media diplomacy functions not just as a means of persuasion but as a strategic approach to improve the public image. Drawing from Joseph Nye's concept of soft power, it focuses on shaping the preferences of foreign audiences by appealing to them instead of using coercion. This portrayal is often emphasized through delivering stories that reflect China's ideological stance under the approach of mutual respect, shared interests, and South-South solidarity that underpin the Sino-African relationship.

Furthermore, as China's footprint in Africa has expanded, especially through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), so too have international criticisms. Many Western Media outlets have accused Beijing of debt-trap diplomacy, resource exploitation and lack of transparency, which have led it to invest in mechanisms that can shape these narratives. Chinese leaders have frequently

[1] **شي جين بينغ حول الحكم والإدارة**، الطبعة الأولى (بكين: دار النشر باللغات الأجنبية،2014)، ص178.

expressed dissatisfaction with the Western-dominated media landscape, arguing that it misrepresents China's actions and intentions abroad. In response, China has intensified efforts to amplify its voice through media outlets like Xinhua News Agency to counter negative portrayals and disseminate alternative discourses that frame China's role as cooperative, peaceful, and mutually beneficial partner.

As China's official state-run media institution, Xinhua News Agency is at the forefront of this effort. It serves not only as a provider of international news but as an instrument of China's media diplomacy, constructing narratives that align with Beijing's foreign policy objectives and enhancing China's public image on the continent.

This research follows the IMRaD structure and is grounded in Entman's Framing Theory. It adopts a content analysis of 52 articles published between September 1 and December 1, 2024, selected through stratified systematic sampling from the Africa section of Xinhua's official English website. We structured this study into four chapters: the first chapter outlines the research problem, motivations, objectives, and the conceptual framework that guides the study, the second chapter presents a literature review of Sino-African relations, Chinese media diplomacy strategies, and theoretical underpinnings based on framing theory. While the third chapter details the research design, data collection methods, sampling strategy and the analytical framework applied to the selected corpus.

The fourth chapter delivers the content analysis of Xinhua articles, presents key findings and offers a critical discussion of how media narratives are constructed to serve diplomatic objectives.

Chapter 1:

Problem statement, research significance and conceptual framework

Opening:

This chapter provides an overview of the current situation along with a discussion on the research problem. It then introduces the research questions, outlines the study's objectives, and highlights its contribution. The chapter concludes with a conceptual framework and an abstract of three relevant studies, offering key insights that will help the to grasp the main concepts explored in this thesis.

1.1 Problem statement:

China is a strategic partner for Africa in various fields, including economics and politics. This partnership is prominently reflected in the strong Sino-African relations, which both Chinese and African media portray as being founded on cooperation and friendship. Since its founding on October 1st, 1949, China has supported African liberation movements, fostering a revolutionary friendship rooted in shared anti-colonial struggles. Over time, what once began as revolutionary solidarity has evolved into a multidimensional collaboration that extends beyond economic ties.[2]

In parallel with its growing investments and infrastructure projects, China has become increasingly attentive to how it is perceived abroad. As Chinese economic engagement in Africa has deepened, the Dragon has simultaneously intensified efforts to project a positive image on the rising continent.

China views the global media system as Western-dominated, often portraying it negatively. Criticisms surrounding neo-colonialism and debt exploitation have compelled China to counter these narratives by amplifying its media presence. State controlled platforms such as Xinhua have been instrumental in providing an alternative narrative that frames China's engagement in Africa as mutually beneficial and anchored in South-South cooperation.

[2] **Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China**. China's foreign policy and international relations, last modified May 31, 2024, available from https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/zy/wjls/3604_665547/202405/t20240531_11367569.html , retrieved March 8th, 2025 at 4:16 pm.

In 2024, China's media diplomacy has expanded significantly. Xinhua News Agency now operates bureaux in 37 African countries[3] out of a total of 55 providing extensive coverage of Sino-African affairs and regional developments.

Media diplomacy has thus become a central pillar of China's international strategy, particularly in Africa. Despite growing academic interest in China's role in Africa, the function of its state media in shaping perceptions and constructing favorable narratives remains underexplored. Scholars have addressed economic and political dimensions of Sino-African ties, but fewer have studied the strategic media mechanisms underlying China's influence. This gap is especially pronounced with regard to how Chinese media content is framed, structured, and delivered to African audiences.

The purpose of this research is to gain a deeper understanding of Chinese media diplomacy in Africa. It seeks to examine the techniques employed by Xinhua News Agency to promote its narratives, focusing on its articles in the Africa section of Xinhua's official website as a key tool in enhancing China's public image.

As such, the research addresses the following pivotal question:

How does Xinhua News Agency employ media diplomacy to enhance China's public image in Africa from September 1 to December 1, 2024?

To address this issue comprehensively, the research focuses on the following sub-questions:

1. **What is the main strategy of Chinese media diplomacy in Africa?**
2. **How does Xinhua News Agency use media framing to reflect these strategies?**
3. **What image of China does Xinhua's articles build in the African context?**
4. **How does Xinhua respond to or frame Western critical narratives in its coverage of Africa?**

[1] Nantulya, Paul. **China's Strategy to Shape Africa's Media Space**. Africa Center for Strategic Studies, last modified April 16th, 2024,available from https://africacenter.org/spotlight/china-strategy-africa-media-space/ , retrieved March 8th, 2024 at 5:50 p.m.

1.2 Research motivation:

- ✓ Addressing the lack of previous studies and field research regarding Chinese media diplomacy in Africa, particularly through the case of Xinhua News Agency.
- ✓ Exploring China's intensified efforts to enhance its image in Africa and understanding how these efforts are reflected through Xinhua News Agency's media coverage.
- ✓ Analyzing the growing role of Xinhua News Agency in China's media diplomacy strategy and its impact on shaping public perceptions of China within Africa.
- ✓ Bridging the academic gap by providing a content analysis of Xinhua News Agency's articles as a tool of media diplomacy to promote China's narratives and values.

1.3 Research importance and contribution:

This research is significant as it highlights the role of Xinhua News Agency in shaping China’s broader media diplomacy strategy in Africa. Its relevance stems from the growing presence of Chinese media diplomacy on the continent and the ongoing debates surrounding China’s engagement, often framed by Western narratives as neo-colonialism or debt-trap diplomacy.

Furthermore, this study provides a valuable perspective on China's localized efforts to reshape its image in Africa by analyzing how Xinhua News Agency constructs narratives of cooperation, cultural exchange, and mutual development.

Given the limited research on media outlets as active players in Chinese media diplomacy, particularly in the African context, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms behind these efforts. It offers valuable insights for scholars, media professionals, and policymakers interested in the intersection of media, diplomacy, and geopolitics in Sino-African relations.

1.4 Research aims:

- **To study the strategic narratives used by China in its media diplomacy toward Africa, as reflected in Xinhua's news coverage.**
- **To analyze how Xinhua News Agency applies media framing techniques to construct China-Africa relations in alignment with Chinese foreign policy goals.**
- **To analyze how the image of China is constructed in Xinhua's coverage of Africa, particularly through narratives of partnership, development, and soft power.**
- **To explore how Xinhua addresses or counters Western critical narratives in its reporting, and how this contributes to shaping China's global image.**

1.5 Conceptual framework:

a- Media diplomacy :

Dictionary definition: Media diplomacy refers to the use of mass communication systems such as newspapers, magazines, radio stations, television channels, and websites[4] in the conduct of international relations through negotiation and the management of diplomatic affairs by ambassadors and envoys[5] .

Procedural definition: According to Gilboa "Media diplomacy refers to officials' uses of the media to communicate with state and non-state actors, to build confidence and advance negotiations, and to mobilize public support for agreements"[6]

Operational definition: media diplomacy is a long-term, structured approach that China uses to shape international perceptions, promote its political and economic interests, and strengthen global influence through media. It is a deliberate plan, using state-driven outlets such as Xinhua

[4] Marcel Danesi, **Dictionary of Media and Communications** (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2009), p192.
[5] Oxford English Dictionary. "Diplomacy." *OED Online*, available from: https://www.oed.com/search/advanced/Entries?sortOption=AZ&textTermOpt0=WordPhrase&dateOfUseFirstUse=false&page=0&jumpTo=diplomacy , retrieved February, 9th 2025 at 10 pm.
[6] Gilboa, Eytan. "Diplomacy in the Media Age: Three Models of Uses and Effects." ***Diplomacy and Statecraft***, Vol. 12, No. 2, 2001, p. 10.

to shape China's image as a reliable global partner, counter Western narratives, and reinforce its soft power in Africa.

b- Public diplomacy:

Dictionary Definition: Oxford dictionary defines it as Diplomacy conducted openly; (in later use) spec. official efforts to persuade foreign public opinion in service of diplomatic objectives.[7]

Procedural definition**:** the process and practice by which nation-states and other international actors engage global publics to advance their objectives.[8]

Operational definition: public diplomacy is a strategic effort to shape the international environment by engaging with foreign publics, particularly through media, cultural initiatives, and educational exchanges. In Africa, China's public diplomacy is exercised through platforms like Xinhua, Confucius Institutes, and infrastructure projects like the Road and the belt initiative, aiming to foster a positive image of its development model, values, and international partnerships.

c- Soft power:

Dictionary definition**:** the ability to achieve one's goals without force, especially by diplomacy… the opposite of hard power.[9]

Procedural definition: Nye defines it as "an intangible attraction that persuades people to go along with others' purposes without any coercion, explicit threat or payment"[10]. It rests primarily on three resources: culture, political values and foreign policies.[11]

Operational definition: Soft power is the ability to influence others through attraction rather than coercion, relying on cultural appeal, political values, and diplomatic strategies. It operates through non-military means such as media, education, and public diplomacy to shape perceptions

[7] Oxford English Dictionary. "Media." **OED Online**. Available from: https://www.oed.com/dictionary/media_n2?tab=meaning_and_use , retrieved February 9th, 2025 at 11 pm.
[8] Cull, Nicholas J. "**Public Diplomacy: Taxonomies and Histories**." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 616, 2008, pp. 31-54
[9]Collins English Dictionary. "Soft Power." **Collins Online Dictionary**. HarperCollins Publishers. Available from: https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/soft-power ,retrieved February 8th, 2025 at 5:40 p.m.
[10] Nye, Joseph S. **Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics**. PublicAffairs, 2005, p. 18.
[4] Ibid., p20.

and preferences. China exercises its soft power through platforms like Xinhua, which aim to promote China's image, values, and narratives by leveraging media as a tool of influence.

d- Strategy:

Dictionary definition: A plan, scheme, or course of action intended to accomplish a specific objective, especially a long-term or overall aim.[12]

Procedural definition: "The creation of a unique and valuable position, involving a different set of activities."[13]

Operational definition**:** A strategy is a carefully designed long-term plan that defines how a country shapes its image and distinguishes itself in global communication.

e- Narratives:

Dictionary definition: a particular or a specific way of explaining or understanding events.[14]

Procedural definition: narrative refers to the structured way a media text presents its story to the audience, encompassing the selection and arrangement of events, characters, and settings to convey a specific message or meaning. This involves the use of various codes and conventions, such as audio, visual, and symbolic elements, to guide the audience's understanding and interpretation of the story.[15]

Operational definition: refers to the deliberate construction and dissemination of stories, messages and articles by the media to shape international perceptions and advance geopolitical objectives. This involves selecting specific events, perspectives, and themes to present a cohesive story that aligns with China's strategic interests.

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[12] Oxford English Dictionary. "Strategy." **Oxford English Dictionary Online**, available from: https://www.oed.com/search/advanced/Entries?sortOption=AZ&textTermOpt0=WordPhrase&dateOfUseFirstUse=false&page=0&jumpTo=strategy , retrieved February 18th , 2025 at 8:15 p.m.

[13] Michael E. Porter, "What Is Strategy?" **Harvard Business Review** 74, no. 6 (1996), p 68.

[14] Cambridge Dictionary. "Narrative." **Cambridge Dictionary Online**, available from https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/narrative?q=narratives , retrieved February 18th, 2025, at 9:07 pm

[4] BBC Bitesize. **What is Narration? ,** available from: https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zqdhrdm/revision/1 , retrieved February 18th, 2025.at 10:45 pm

1.6 Previous studies:

To build a strong foundation for this research, it is necessary to examine previous studies that have explored China's media diplomacy and soft power strategies in Africa. The following studies provide valuable insights into Xinhua's role in shaping China's image, the strategic use of soft power narratives, and their reception in African countries. Through a critical analysis of these studies, this section identifies commonalities, gaps, and contributions to the existing literature, highlighting how they inform and differentiate from the present study.

First study:

The Dragon Shapes Its Image: A Study of Chinese Media Influence Strategies in Africa, by **Michael Leslie**

Purpose:

The project's main objective was to examine China's media influence strategies in Africa, focusing on how it uses soft power, media partnerships, journalist exchanges, and infrastructure investments to shape public opinion and counter negative narratives about its role on the continent.

Abstract:

As China continues its human, cultural and commercial expansion into Africa it has a clear strategic interest in managing its image on the continent. The leadership in both its government and private sectors know China must find ways to counteract negative reports that accuse China and some African leaders and their regimes of being complicit in China's accelerating exploitation of African labor and resources, undermining and weakening regulatory controls, and illegal profiteering in their countries. In addition, there are continuing attempts by Western media to portray China as the new colonizer in Africa, creating a perception that China is the new bully on the block, and positioning it as a country that should be watched and monitored with suspicion regarding its Africa intentions. It would appear that the continued expansion of Chinese trade and investment in Africa will depend on China's success in developing and deploying a vigorous "soft" and "smart power" strategy that counters such allegations and

media representations. This paper examines the extant research on Chinese government media-related strategies in Africa, suggesting directions future research on this topic might take.

Findings:

- China actively shapes its media image in Africa to counter Western portrayals of exploitation and neocolonialism.
- Soft power strategies include journalist training, media partnerships, and infrastructure investments to influence African narratives.
- China-funded media outlets (e.g., Xinhua) promote pro-China narratives while competing with Western media influence.

Relevance to the research:

Table (1): First study relevance to the research

Commonalities	Differences	Contribution
-Both studies examine how China uses media to influence African narratives. **-Both explore China's soft power and media diplomacy.**	**Methodology**: The article is purely literature-based, while my dissertation includes an empirical content analysis.	-It reinforces my dissertation's premise that Chinese media is a key diplomatic tool in Africa. Provides theoretical background that complements my analyzing study.

Source: Author's own work.

Second study:

Structural Analysis of the Xinhua Information Agency in the 21st Century

by **Yichen Gu, Fernando Peinado Miguel**

Purpose:

The study aims to analyze the structural evolution of Xinhua News Agency, examining its technological advancements, digital expansion, and global influence in the modern media landscape.

Abstract:

A media company or mass media is a communication channel dedicated to informing its audience about current facts and events. People need to be informed about political, social, economic, local, international, and other events. This information can be used to make business and governmental decisions; to influence the way we see the eyes of the environment we live in, and to allow us to remain cognizant of what is happening in the world. The investigation of the structural and commercial strategies applied by Xinhua during the last 20 years allowed us to reach the main objective of this study, which could reveal a company with a long history of more than 90 years, able to evolve and adapt to its environment, to changes in the media and to new technologies, so as to be able to compete internationally with other institutions in the world. This research has enabled us to find some data of great value to academics in terms of technological breakthroughs generated by media, information agencies and Internet communication technologies.

Findings:

- Xinhua has expanded its global presence, integrating digital media technologies to increase its reach.
- The agency operates under a structured model that supports China's media diplomacy and soft power strategies.
- Despite technological advancements, Xinhua remains state-controlled, aligning with government narratives while competing with Western media outlets.

Relevance to the research:

Table (2): Second study relevance to the research.

Commonalities	Differences	Contribution
- Both studies focus on Xinhua News Agency and its role in media influence. **- Both studies address how Xinhua aligns with China's geopolitical strategies.**	- **Scope of Analysis:** The study examines Xinhua's global structure, while my dissertation focuses on its media diplomacy in Africa. - **Methodology:** The study uses structural analysis, while my dissertation employs content analysis of Xinhua Africa articles.	- Highlights Xinhua's structural role in China's global media expansion. -Provides valuable information about Xinhua's organizational structure, which will help contextualize my dissertation's analysis of its media diplomacy.

Source: Author's own work.

Third study:

The media image of China in Africa: a frame analysis of Kenyan, Nigerian, and Zimbabwean newspapers

by **Mthulisi Mathuthu.**

Purpose:

This study examines how newspapers in Kenya, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe frame China's presence in Africa through a five-year content analysis (2014-2018), identifying dominant media narratives and their stability over time.

Abstract:

While China-Africa relations date back to the 15th century, China's interest and involvement in the continent increased in the last two centuries leading to the formation of the Forum on Africa-China Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2000. Mainly, the relationship is characterized by huge Chinese migration, business investments and loans across the whole of Africa as well as cultural

exchange programs. As a result, there has arisen a concept which researchers commonly refer to as China in Africa. However, parallel to the growing academic interest in China's presence in Africa, has been accusations that China is plundering Africa's natural resources and exploiting the local workforce leading to Beijing making strenuous efforts to shape its image by framing its relationship with Africa as a mutually beneficial partnership. Nevertheless, despite growing academic interest, the phenomenon of China in Africa is still under researched with need for more studies including on how China is represented in the media. This study, therefore, accesses a cross-national media image of China over its involvement in Africa from three Anglophone countries namely Kenya, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe through frame analysis and over a five-year period (2014-18). Totally, 1 384 news stories from six newspapers (Two from each country) were analyzed. As opposed to a straightforwardly positive or negative media image, this study found a balanced African media image of China in the form of a contest of pessimistic and optimistic frames. Although this finding resonates with the hypothesis of a balanced image, the thesis, mainly, establishes the image's stability over years. The thesis found that although gravitating towards some degree of complexity this image has remained stable for many years. Because this image is accessed from three distinct African regions (East, Southern and West Africa), the thesis argues that this is enough for it to be said to represent an Africa wide situation and to propose the testing of the ubiquity of the image in the broader Global South. The thesis also argues that while China's soft power and economic statecraft are evident in Africa, their effect on its [China] image have been slow so far hence the stability of the image.

Findings:

- African media portray both positive and negative frames of China's presence, rather than a purely optimistic or pessimistic image.
- Positive frames emphasize economic cooperation, investment, and historical ties, while negative frames highlight exploitation, labor abuses, and neocolonial concerns.
- China's soft power strategies (e.g., media training, cultural exchange) have had limited success in reshaping its image in African media.
- The study argues that the balanced portrayal has remained stable over time, suggesting a persistent contest between competing narratives.

Relevance to the research:

Table (3): Third study relevance to the research

Commonalities	Differences	Contribution
- Both studies analyze China's media strategies in Africa. **-Both use content analysis and framing analysis.** **-Both explore China's media diplomacy and soft power efforts.**	**Scope of Analysis**: This study examines African newspapers' framing of China, while my dissertation analyzes Xinhua's news articles. **Case Selection**: This study covers Kenyan, Nigerian, and Zimbabwean newspapers, while my dissertation examines Xinhua's articles on China-Africa relations. **Timeframe**: This study covers 2014-2018, while my dissertation focuses on a one-month period in 2024.	- Provides insights into how African media respond to China's messaging, complementing my focus on how Xinhua frames China-Africa relations. - Strengthens my theoretical foundation by showing the persistence of certain frames over time.

Source: Author's own work.

- Based on the previous studies reviewed, we have chosen to focus only on those directly relevant to my research. Most available studies examine China's public diplomacy or soft power strategies, which include media diplomacy as one component. However, this research is specifically dedicated to media diplomacy in all its dimensions, providing a more detailed and focused analysis of its mechanisms and techniques.

Chapter 2:
Literature Review

Opening:

To explore how Xinhua News Agency employs media diplomacy as part of China's strategy in Africa, we conducted a review of relevant literature. This chapter is structured into five sections: the first provides an overview of Sino-African relations; the second examines the main strategies of Chinese media diplomacy in Africa; the third discusses the impact of this diplomacy on the African context; the fourth introduces the theoretical foundations underpinning the research and the fifth presents a visualization of the theoretical framework guiding the study.

2.1 Overview of Sino-African Relations.

2.1.1 Historical Context: The Revolutionary Friendship.

China's engagement with Africa dates back to the mid-20th century when it positioned itself as a key ally to developing nations. The formalization of diplomatic ties began in 1956, marked by the signing of China's first bilateral trade agreement with Egypt. This period laid the groundwork for China's long-term economic and political involvement in Africa, shaping a partnership based on trade, infrastructure development, and ideological solidarity.[1]

China, having recently gained its own independence in 1949, strongly supported African independence movements, seeing them as part of a shared anti-colonial struggle. China's first permanent African bridgehead followed in Cairo, 30 May 1956, when Gamal Abdel-Nasser recognized the PRC and allowed a commercial counsellor's office that doubled as a conduit for liberation funds.[2] Within 2 years, the PRC provided rhetorical, financial, and military aid to groups like Algeria's FLN, recognizing Algeria's Provisional Government in 1958 and offering arms and training. Over time, China shifted from supporting revolutionary movements to diplomatic and economic cooperation with newly independent African states.[3]

China's engagement with Africa was heavily influenced by the Cold War's geopolitical landscape, where the world was divided between Western capitalist nations, led by the United States, and the socialist bloc, dominated by the Soviet Union. Seeking to establish itself as an independent force within the communist sphere, China positioned itself as an alternative to both Western and Soviet influence, using its support for African liberation movements and economic cooperation to expand its global presence and strengthen ties with newly independent nations.[4]

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[1] David H. Shinn and Joshua Eisenman, **China and Africa: A Century of Engagement** (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), p 35.
[2] Alyaa Wagdy El-Shafei and Mohamed Metawe, "China Drive toward Africa between Arguments of Neo-Colonialism and Mutual-Beneficial Relationship: Egypt as a Case Study," **Review of Economics and Political Science 7**, no. 2 (2021), p 141.
[3] Shinn and Eisenman, **China and Africa**, p 36.
[4] Chris Alden, **China in Africa: Partner, Competitor or Hegemon?** (London: Zed Books, 2007), pp 32–34.

Furthermore, the Bandung conference of 1955 held in Indonesia was a key point in Sino-African relations. Premier Zhou Enlai represented China in front of 29 Asian and African nations attended, including Egypt, Ghana and Sudan. Zhou delivered a speech emphasizing mutual respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all States, equality, the right of states to defend themselves, and the importance of cooperation for mutual benefits.[1] Zhou's presence at Bandung signaled China's serious commitment to fostering long-term relations with Africa, a strategy that would become more pronounced in the following decades.

In conclusion, in the period between the 1950s and the late 1970s, Sino-African relations were driven primarily by politics: Beijing aligned itself with African anti-colonial and liberation movements, framing the partnership as a shared struggle against imperialism.

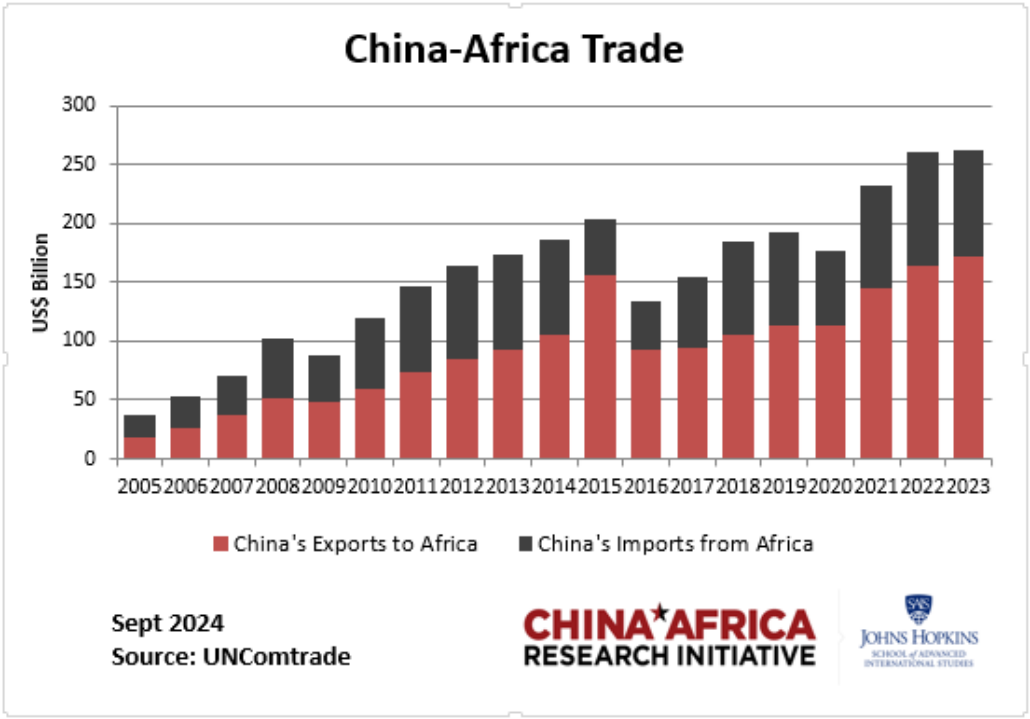
2.1.2 Contemporary Relations:

The ideological solidarity, mutual support for national liberation movements and shared revolutionary values that once defined Sino-African relations during the Cold War, have given way to a more pragmatic, strategically calibrated economic partnership. This shift was catalyzed by "China's going out policy" or "走出去政策 *zou chuqu zhengce*", first articulated in 1992. This policy was a turning point in China's foreign economic strategy. Its primary objective was to liberalize China's outbound foreign direct investment (FDI) by encouraging Chinese enterprises to expand internationally. This shift was driven by internal and external pressures, especially after China's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, which intensified domestic competition and pushed firms to seek new markets abroad. Hence, it enabled large-scale infrastructure projects in Africa, trade expansion and deeper economic integration.[2] According to UN Comtrade data, total trade volume between China and Africa rose from less than $40 billion in 2005 to over $250 billion in 2023**,** a more than sevenfold increase. The surge is driven by both exports of Chinese manufactured goods to Africa and significant imports of African raw materials, including oil, minerals, and agricultural products.

Notably, China's exports to Africa have consistently exceeded its imports, indicating a trade relationship embedded in industrial supply chains and infrastructure financing. These trade dynamics highlight China's deliberate repositioning as a global economic power with embedded interests in African markets, moving beyond political symbolism to long-term strategic economic engagement.

[1] Sajjad H. Alwan, Hawraa Abdul Ameer Hussein Ali, and Sarah Abdullah Sahib, "The Chinese Participation in the Bandung Conference of 1955," **Journal of Lifestyle and SDGs Review 5**, no. 5 (2025), p 9.
[2] Reddy, Rahul Karan. "China's Going Global Policy: A Prelude to the BRI." Organization for Research on China and Asia (ORCA), last modified January 16, 2023, available from https://orcasia.org/chinas-going-global-policy-a-prelude-to-the-bri , retrieved April 30th , 2025, at 10:00 p.m.

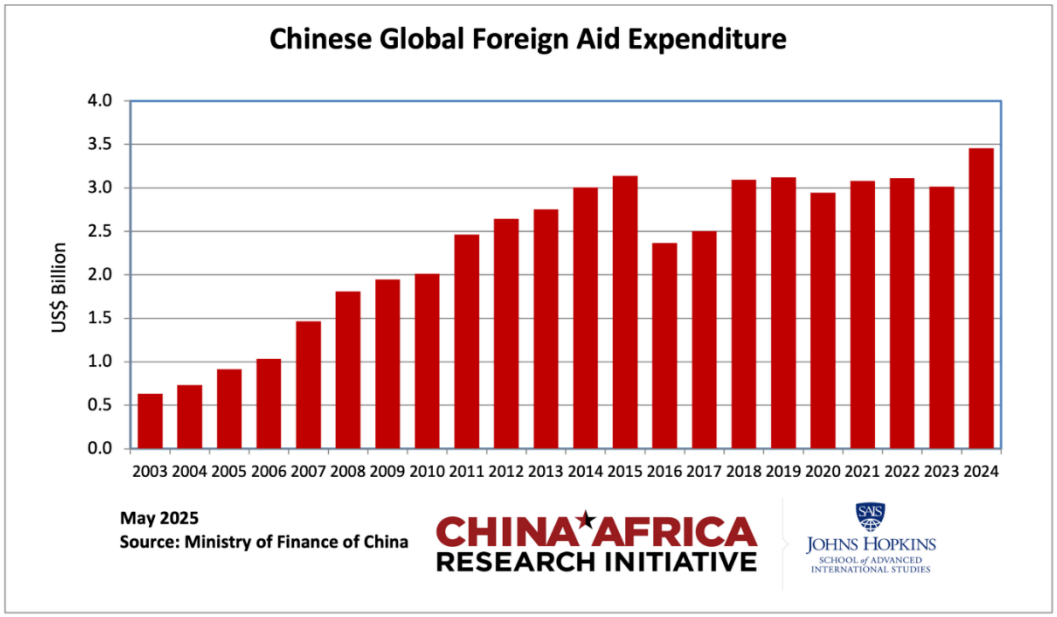
Figure (1): China-Africa Trade.



Source: UNComtrade, China Africa research initiative.

In parallel, China's global foreign aid expenditure also surged from $0.6 billion in 2003 to nearly $3.5 billion in 2024, reflecting its broader effort to institutionalize development partnerships in the Global South (Ministry of Finance of China, 2025). Africa has been a major beneficiary of these aid flows, particularly in infrastructure, health, agriculture, and education.

Figure (2): Chinese Global Foreign Aid Expenditure.



Source: Ministry of Finance of China, China Africa research initiative.

FOCAC: the Institutionalization of Economic engagement.

The Forum on China-Africa cooperation (FOCAC) established in 2000, institutionalized the evolving relationship between China and Africa. Its emblem a red "C" for China and a green "A" for Africa, embodying the principles of solidarity, peace and shared prosperity. FOCAC is governed by three-tier consultation mechanism, including triennial ministerial conferences and regular diplomatic meetings.[1]

The last 2024 FOCAC Summit held in Beijing resulted in a new Action Plan (2025–2027) which promised support for African development through infrastructure, trade, and industrialization. The plan integrated major African frameworks like Agenda 2063, the African Continental Free Trade Area AfCFTA, and Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa PIDA. China also emphasized its Global Development, Security, and Civilization Initiatives during the summit. Moreover, it cancelled some loans for selected countries, and announced new investments in digital, green, and manufacturing sectors. However, the summit did not propose clear solutions for Africa's rising debt or trade imbalance with China.[2]

The Belt and Road Initiative BRI: China's Grand Strategy in Africa.

The Belt and Road initiative BRI is China's global development strategy, launched in 2013 by President Xi Jinping. It aims to enhance connectivity through land and maritime corridors. It includes projects that link China to Southeast Asia, Central Asia, Europe, and East Africa. This initiative was Inspired by the ancient Silk Road, now involves over 140 countries in the world and 52 countries in Africa[3], with China lending over $1 trillion to developing nations, making it one of their largest creditors.[4]

Key Regional Partners in China's BRI.

Algeria:

Algeria is one of China's top BRI partners in North Africa, receiving over US$10.5 billion in BRI-related loans and projects from 2013 to 2023. Major Chinese-funded infrastructures include the Grand Mosque of Algiers, the East-West Highway, and Houari Boumediene Airport. In energy, China invested around US$3 billion, with solar projects adding 1,550 MW by 2025. These deals reflect Algeria's

[1] Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), "Long-Term Mechanism of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation", available from: http://www.focac.org/eng/ltjj_3/ltjz/, retrieved April 30, 2025, at 10:45 p.m

[2] Paul Nantulya, "Reimagining African Agency in Africa-China Relations—Lessons from FOCAC 2024," **Africa Center for Strategic Studies**, October 7, 2024, available from: https://africacenter.org/spotlight/reimagining-african-agency-in-africa-china-relations-lessons-from-focac-2024/, retrieved May 2nd, 2025, at 09:00 a.m.

[3] "Xi Calls for Synergy Between BRI, Africa's Development Plans as China-Africa Cooperation Enters Golden Era," Global Times, August 29, 2024, available from: https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202408/1318702.shtml, retrived May 5th , 2025, at 10:00 a.m.

[4] "Belt and Road Initiative," **Encyclopaedia Britannica,** last modified March 28, 2024, available from https://www.britannica.com/topic/Belt-and-Road-Initiative , retrieved May 5, 2025, at 3;15 p.m.

strategic importance in China's Mediterranean and energy supply plans under the Maritime Silk Road strategy.[1]

Kenya:

This country is often portrayed as a BRI success story. The flagship Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) funded by China Exim bank and constructed by China Road and Bridge corporation, was promoted as a symbol of regional integration.[2]

Ethiopia:

Ethiopia has hosted several BRI-linked transport projects, including the Addis Ababa–Djibouti Railway and Africa's first light rail system in Addis Ababa, financed with Chinese loans Ethiopia currently owes over $13 billion to China, making the second largest foreign debt in sub-Saharan Africa.

Djibouti:

China considers Djibouti as an entry point to the Middle East. Moreover, it represents the military and geopolitical arm of the BRI. It hosts China's first overseas military base, located near one of the world's most critical maritime chokepoints, the Bab al-Mandab Strait.[3]

Tanzania

In Tanzania, China is financing the construction of two major ports: Lamu and Bagamoyo, with an estimated investment of $10 billion. These ports are expected to become key trans-shipment hubs, potentially challenging existing regional ports like Mombasa. If completed as planned, the Bagamoyo port alone could handle 25 times more cargo than Dar es Salaam by 2045.[4]

Egypt

The China and Egypt bilateral relationship has deepened into a comprehensive strategic partnership under the leadership of Xi Jinping and Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. Egypt has always played a pivotal role in the BRI through the Suez Canal Economic Zone (SCZone), which attracted over US$3 billion in Chinese investments and accounted for 40% of Egypt's foreign direct investment in the past two years.

[1] Observer Research Foundation, *The Dragon in the Maghreb: Assessing the BRI in North Africa*, 2024, accessed May 7, 2025, at 12:30, https://www.orfonline.org/research/the-dragon-in-the-maghreb-assessing-the-bri-in-north-africa/.

[2] dward A. Lynch, "China's Belt and Road Initiative in East Africa: Finding Success in Failure?" **Military Review**, May–June 2023, p 117, retrieved May 5, 2025, at 5:00 p.m., available from: https://www.armyupress.army.mil/journals/military-review/english-edition-archives/may-june-2023/lynch-bri-east-africa/.

[3] Lynch, "China's Belt and Road Initiative," p 119.

[4] Ibid., p 117

Furthermore, China and Egypt have also strengthened financial cooperation through a US$2.6 billion currency swap, loans from the China Development Bank, and funding from institutions like the AIIB, which allocated US$210 million for solar power projects. Although trade volume is growing, the balance remains strongly in China's favor, with Chinese exports to Egypt totaling US$13.3 billion in 2023, while Egyptian exports remain dominated by raw materials. Still, cooperation is expanding in technology, energy, and infrastructure, with Egypt serving as China's critical gateway to both African and European markets.[1]

Also, While SCZone provides the national legal and logistical framework, the China-Egypt TEDA functions as a localized industrial base, managed by China's Tianjin Economic-Technological Development Area Group (TEDA), and is home to over 170 companies across sectors including steel, solar panels, petroleum equipment, electric vehicles, and mobile technology.[2]

Zambia

Zambia is part of BRI through the establishment of two major special Economic Zones: The Lukasa East Multi-Facility Economic Zone and the Chambishi Multi-Facility Economic Zone. These zones reflect China's broader global strategy of using SEZs to facilitate economic expansion while minimizing host government intervention.

Notably, the Zambia-China Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone (ZCCZ) in Lusaka, launched in 2006, was the first Chinese SEZ in Africa and primarily targets sectors such as agriculture, infrastructure, tourism, and energy. The Chambishi zone, inaugurated in 2007, complements this by focusing on mining and construction. These zones are not merely economic enclaves but function as gateways through which China projects its "going out" strategy. Scholars argue that while these zones ostensibly support Zambia's development goals, they primarily serve Chinese interests by offering a controlled environment for Chinese firms abroad, aligned with the objectives of the BRI.[3]

Zimbabwe

One of the key Chinese projects in Zimbabwe was the US$200 million Chinese-funded parliament building. Furthermore, Zimbabwe has also become a major lithium hub for China, which holds the largest portfolio of lithium mining investments in the country with over US$1 billion to date. Also, trade

[1] "China-Egypt Bilateral Trade and Investment Prospects Are Bright," *China Briefing*, April 2024, retrieved May 10, 2025, at 11:30p.m., available from: https://www.china-briefing.com/news/china-egypt-bilateral-trade-and-investment-prospects-are-bright/.

[2] Hossam Rabie, "Chinese Investment Drives Egypt's Economic Growth," *China Daily*, February 25, 2025, retrieved May 30, 2025, at 5:00 a.m, available from https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202502/25/WS67bd23dda310c240449d714f.html .

[3] Natasha Mwila, "Gateway Theory of Internationalization: The Case of OBOR/BRI in Zambia," **Journal of International Business Research 19,** no. 1 (2020), pp 6–7.

grew by 30% in 2022, with China importing Zimbabwean agricultural and mineral resources, while exporting machinery and industrial goods.[1]

Ghana:

Ghana joined the BRI in 2018, expanding its ties with China. One of the key projects is the Tema Port Expansion that set to become the largest West Africa, boosting trade and investment. China has also invested in railways, rural electrification, and digital infrastructure, with firms like Huawei and StarTimes active in Accra. Economically, China is Ghana's top trading partner. Projects like the Asogli Power Plant and the China-Ghana Free Trade Agreement (2021) illustrate deepening cooperation across energy and trade sectors.[2]

Rwanda:

Rwanda's engagement under the BRI was through notable projects including the upgrading of major roads in Kigali and Bugesera, the construction of the Nyabarongo II hydropower plant, and the expansion of Masaka Hospital into one of the country's largest. Moreover, cross-border e-commerce and agricultural exports such as Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). "China and Rwanda Continue to Deepen Practical Cooperation." Last modified July 26, 2022.[3]

Uganda:

After joining the BRI in 2018, Uganda has attracted approximately $1.8 billion in Chinese-funded infrastructure projects. Some of the major initiatives include the $480 million expansion of Entebbe International Airport, construction of the Kampala-Entebbe toll road, and large-scale hydropower plants at Karuma and Isimba, all financed by the Export-Import Bank of China. Additionally, the China-Uganda Agricultural Industrial Zone, backed by the Kehong Group and valued at $220 million, aims to boost local agricultural output and export value.[4]

In conclusion, the expansion of Chinese lending under the BRI has fueled the debt trap narrative surrounding China's engagement in Africa. Many African countries grown debts to China that most likely can't repay it, including Djibouti where 70% of foreign debt is owed to China, Kenya 33%, and Ethiopia 17%. While Beijing rarely cancels large debts, it has occasionally written off minor amounts

[1] Mufaro Makubika, "Look East: Zimbabwe and China, a Case Study," *Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, The Open University*, June 9, 2023, accessed May 10, 2025, at 9:30 a.m., https://fass.open.ac.uk/polis/outreach/blogs/look-east-a-case-study.

[2]Michael Oduro, "The Belt and Road Initiative: Impact on Ghana's Development," *China Daily*, September 18, 2024, accessed May 30, 2025, at 1:00 p.m., https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202409/18/WS66ea49b5a3103711928a86ea.html.

[3] Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), "China and Rwanda Continue to Deepen Practical Cooperation," last modified July 26, 2022, accessed May 6, 2025, at 5:00 p.m, http://www.focac.org/eng/zfzs_1/202207/t20220726_10727878.htm.

[4] Pascal Abb, Robert Swaine, and Ilya Jones, *Road to Peace or Bone of Contention? Belt and Road Initiative in East Africa* (Addis Ababa: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2021), 23–24.

under specific conditions, such as forgiving $78 million of Cameroon's debt to secure strategic influence in Central Africa.[1]

2.1.3 Chinese Ideology in Africa:

China's ideological engagement with Africa started with the Premier Zhou Enlai, who in 1964 articulated the "Eight Principles for Economic Aid and Technical Assistance to Other Countries." that emphasized equality, mutual benefit. By 1982, He reaffirmed this ideology with a revised version that focused on practical outcomes: Chinese aid must be varied in form and bring tangible advantages to both donor and recipient.[2] This shift signaled that China's aid had evolved to reflect both ideological commitment and commercial pragmatism. Moreover, this message was still accompanied by gestures of solidarity and humility. One of the legends that widely circulated among African diplomats, claimed Zhou once offered to clean the shoes of African ambassadors in Beijing hotel as a gesture of honor, signaling China's intent to meet Africa as an equal rather than a superior. Furthermore, Zhou's personal warmth led to slogans such as *"Zhou is our brother"* being seen in the streets of Tanzania.[3] This foundation matured into a modern narrative built around the concepts of a shared future, win-win cooperation, and China as a new development partner in Africa distinct from historically coercive Western models.

China's current approach is further institutionalized through platforms such as FOCAC, which consolidate this ideological model. President Xi Jinping proposed the creation of an "all-weather China-Africa community with a shared future," grounded in high-quality Belt and Road cooperation and strategic partnerships free from political conditions.[4] The 2024 Beijing Declaration reaffirmed this vision, emphasizing support for Africa's integration and growth while promoting mutual respect, national sovereignty, and collective prosperity. We can see this clearly in the way the declaration was cited using the pronoun We, which is a symbol of shared future, prosperity and benefits.[5]

Moreover, Central to this ideological framework is the Chinese policy of non-interference in Africa. For instance, companies such as Sinopec and CNPC have been able to expand into sectors like oil and infrastructure through non-conditional aid agreements, gaining credibility by portraying China as a non-

[1] Lynch, "China's Belt and Road Initiative," p 116.
[2] Philip Snow, **The Star Raft: China's Encounter with Africa,** (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 181.
[3] Snow, *The Star Raft*, p 89.
[4] Xinhua, "China-Africa Cooperation Sets Stellar Example for Advancing Shared Prosperity," **State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China**, January 7, 2025, retrieved May 15, 2025, at 10:00, available at: http://english.scio.gov.cn/m/internationalexchanges/2025-01/07/content_117649507.html
[5] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, **Beijing Declaration on Jointly Building an All-Weather China-Africa Community with a Shared Future for the New Era**, last modified September 5, 2024, retrieved May 15, 2025, at 10:00 a.m, available from: https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/xw/zyxw/202409/t20240905_11485993.html

intrusive, respectful alternative to Western influence. Giving the example of the case of China National Offshore Oil Corporation and China Petroleum and Chemical Corporation (Sinopec) in Angola.[1]

2.2 Strategies of Chinese Media Diplomacy in Africa.

2.2.1 Understanding Media Diplomacy.

Media diplomacy is a multifaceted concept that has evolved in response to the interplay between global media systems and diplomatic practices.

Jyotika Ramaprasad (1983) defines media diplomacy as "the role the press plays in diplomatic practice between nations"[2]. She further explains that media diplomacy can encompass various forms, such as newspaper diplomacy, television diplomacy, and satellite diplomacy, all of which contribute to shaping international relations.

According to Eytan Gilboa (1998), media diplomacy refers to the strategic use of mass communication tools by state and non-state actors to influence diplomatic processes, manage international perceptions, and advance foreign policy objectives. In his seminal work, Gilboa distinguishes media diplomacy from traditional diplomacy by emphasizing its reliance on public visibility and real-time engagement with global audiences. He argues that media diplomacy operates through three interconnected frameworks:[3]

1. **public diplomacy**, where actors use media to shape foreign public opinion (e.g., international broadcasting).
2. **media diplomacy**, where officials leverage media to communicate directly with foreign governments (e.g., televised summits).
3. **media-broker diplomacy**, where journalists temporarily assume diplomatic roles, mediating conflicts or facilitating negotiations. This tripartite model underscores the media's dual function as both a *tool* for policymakers and an *independent actor* shaping diplomatic outcomes.

In this context, China's media diplomacy through Xinhua has played a significant role in projecting China's foreign policy agenda. As the official state-run news agency, Xinhua serves as an instrument for Beijing to frame narratives on global events and influence public perception both domestically and internationally.

[1] Fragkiskos Filippaios and Caroline Fon, **The Effect of China's Non-Interference Policy on Its Oil and Infrastructure Engagement in Africa** (Canterbury: Kent Business School, University of Kent, 2016), p 19.
[2] Jyotika Ramaprasad, "Media Diplomacy: In Search of a Definition," **Gazette 31, no. 1** (1983), p 70.
[3] Eytan Gilboa, "Diplomacy in the Media Age: Three Models of Uses and Effects," **Diplomacy & Statecraft 12**, no. 2 (2001), p 4.

"Media diplomacy is associated with the concept of influence: the media determine what areas and subjects are covered by the media; and the media change policy."[1]

This concept is particularly relevant to China's media diplomacy strategy through Xinhua. As the state-controlled media agency, Xinhua plays a pivotal role in shaping international narratives by determining which global issues receive attention and how they are framed. By consistently highlighting China's economic achievements, diplomatic efforts, and geopolitical stance, Xinhua not only sets the agenda for public discourse but also influences foreign policy decisions by reinforcing China's strategic interests on the global stage.

Furthermore, media diplomacy plays a crucial role in democratic societies, where public opinion can influence foreign policy decisions. The study by Le Thi My Danh (2021) highlights how governments strategically use media to frame diplomatic narratives and garner domestic and international support during conflicts, such as the South China Sea disputes.[2] Similarly, China has utilized Xinhua to promote its stance on geopolitical issues, portraying itself as a peaceful global actor while countering Western narratives in Africa.

Another key aspect of media diplomacy is its ability to bypass traditional diplomatic barriers. Unlike confidential diplomatic meetings, media platforms enable nations to communicate directly with foreign publics, making diplomacy more transparent and immediate. For instance, televised addresses by world leaders serve not only to reassure domestic audiences but also to send strategic messages internationally[3].

In China's case, Xinhua's English-language services and global bureaus facilitate direct engagement with foreign audiences, ensuring that Beijing's perspectives reach an international readership without reliance on Western media channels.

In addition, media diplomacy fosters soft power, allowing nations to cultivate favorable images abroad. As Nye describes, soft power rests primarily on three resources: culture, political values and foreign policies.[4]" Media diplomacy plays a vital role in projecting national culture, values, and policies in ways that resonate with international audiences. Xinhua, as a key player in China's soft power strategy, disseminates content that highlights China's development successes, cultural heritage, and diplomatic efforts, reinforcing its global influence.

[1] Yehuda Cohen, *Media Diplomacy:* **The Foreign Office in the Mass Communications Age** (London: Frank Cass, 1986), p 8.
[2] Luong Thi Mai Danh, **Media Diplomacy in the South China Sea Disputes: Vietnam, China and the Philippines (2012–2016)** (master's thesis, University of Waikato, 2021), p 2.
[3] Gilboa, "Diplomacy in the Media Age," p 6.
[4] Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power:* **The Means to Success in World Politics** (New York: PublicAffairs, 2005), p 20.

In conclusion, media diplomacy is a dynamic and evolving field that integrates public diplomatic practices with modern media strategies. It allows the Chinese governments to communicate directly with foreign publics, frame international narratives, and influence political outcomes on a global scale.

2.2.2 History of Media Diplomacy

The concept of media diplomacy emerged with the advent of mass communication technologies. Historically, diplomacy was conducted through private negotiations among state representatives. However, as media became more influential, governments started leveraging it to advance foreign policy objectives.

The shift from "old diplomacy" to "new diplomacy" began in the early 20th century. As Ramaprasad (1983) notes, British Foreign Minister Lord Palmerston recognized the transformative impact of the telegraph on diplomacy, predicting that rapid communication would challenge traditional diplomatic secrecy.[1]

During the Cold War, media diplomacy played a vital role in U.S.-Soviet relations. The use of radio broadcasts, such as Voice of America and Radio Free Europe, aimed to shape public opinion in Eastern Bloc countries. Gilboa (2001) identifies this era as a turning point where media became an active tool for international diplomacy.[2]

The globalization of television and the rise of 24-hour news networks, like CNN, further amplified media diplomacy's role in international relations. The "CNN Effect" describes how real-time global news coverage influences government decision-making. This phenomenon was evident during the Gulf War and humanitarian crises, where media coverage pressured governments to act. [3]

In the digital age, social media has transformed media diplomacy. Governments now use platforms like Twitter and Facebook for real-time diplomatic engagement. The South China Sea disputes illustrate how states strategically use media to shape narratives and influence international opinion. According to Danh (2021), China, Vietnam, and the Philippines deployed media diplomacy to assert territorial claims, mobilize public support, and counter rival propaganda.[4]

Beyond crises, media diplomacy has also been used to foster international cooperation. For example, during the 2015 Iran nuclear negotiations, both Iran and Western countries utilized media to shape public perception and reinforce diplomatic efforts. The strategic use of press conferences, interviews, and official statements allowed for greater transparency and public engagement. [5]

[1]Ramaprasad, “Media Diplomacy,” p 69.
[2] Gilboa, “Diplomacy in the Media Age,” p 5.
[3] Ibid., p 7.
[4] Danh, *Media Diplomacy in the South China Sea Disputes*, p 5.
[5] Gilboa, “Diplomacy in the Media Age,” p 10.

Additionally, media diplomacy is crucial in multilateral diplomacy. Institutions like the United Nations rely on media coverage to promote global initiatives and mobilize international support. The role of media in peacekeeping missions, climate negotiations, and public health campaigns demonstrates its expanding influence in international relations.[1]

In conclusion, media diplomacy has evolved from traditional state-controlled messaging to a dynamic, real-time engagement tool. Its history reflects a continuous adaptation to technological advancements, making it an essential instrument in modern international relations. As the role of media continues to expand, understanding its influence in shaping diplomatic narratives will be increasingly important for policymakers and scholars alike.

2.2.3 From Public Diplomacy to Media Diplomacy

Many scholars recognize the central role of media in public diplomacy, as governments rely on mass communication to shape their global image and influence international opinion. Since the primary objective of public diplomacy is to publicize a nation's desired image, the media serves as an essential tool for reaching foreign publics and promoting specific narratives. In this context, the concept of media diplomacy emerges as a specialized strategy where states utilize media platforms to advance their foreign policy objectives, manage global perceptions, and engage in diplomatic discourse.

The media serves not only as a channel for transmitting official messages but also as an arena where states interact, negotiate, and compete for narrative dominance. Countries express their national identity and foreign policy priorities through various media formats, including news reporting, commentary, interviews, and international debates. This dynamic interaction between states via the media underscores the versatility and power of media diplomacy, as it enables nations to engage in both direct messaging and subtle influence tactics.

According to Zhao Kejin, public diplomacy relies on "two-way communication with foreign publics through media, public relations, and strategic communication" to shape national image and improve international reputation . Unlike traditional diplomatic negotiations, which are often conducted behind closed doors, media diplomacy allows states to engage with global audiences in real time. This open communication not only enhances a country's visibility and credibility but also helps in countering competing narratives and managing international perceptions.[2]

China's media diplomacy reflects this approach, as state-driven outlets like Xinhua play a strategic role in protecting the country's image and framing key global issues. Through media channels, China communicates its diplomatic positions, strengthens relationships with foreign publics, and asserts its

[1] Danh, *Media Diplomacy in the South China Sea Disputes*, p 5.
[2] Hongxiu Li, "Public Diplomacy in the Belt and Road Initiative within the New Media: Theories and Practices," **Athens Journal of Mass Media and Communications 4**, no. 3 (2018), p 224.

perspectives in international discourse. This use of media diplomacy ensures that China remains an active player in shaping global narratives, reinforcing its role as a key influencer in international relations.

With the evolution of media as a diplomatic tool, the shift from traditional public diplomacy to media diplomacy highlights the growing significance of information control and narrative power in global affairs. In a world where public perception can influence foreign policy decisions, mastering media diplomacy has become an indispensable element of international engagement.

2.2.4 Key Strategies of Chinese Media Diplomacy in Africa

a. The Role of Chinese state driven media.

a-1- Xinhua news agency approach:

Xinhua News Agency serves as a crucial pillar in China's global media diplomacy efforts, particularly in Africa. As a state-controlled entity, Xinhua plays a dual role as both a news service provider and an instrument of Chinese soft power.

In Africa, Xinhua's expansion is driven by Beijing's long-term goal of creating a central platform for the promotion of its global narrative, ensuring that China's engagement on the continent is portrayed in a favorable and strategic light.

Through extensive foreign bureau expansion, Xinhua has developed a widespread presence, with correspondents stationed across 162 bureaus worldwide, including major African capitals. This network allows Xinhua to collect real-time, on-the-ground information while maintaining editorial control over how events are framed.[1]

Xinhua operates on a traditional news agency model, producing news content and distributing it to media outlets worldwide. Unlike commercial agencies such as Reuters or AP, Xinhua functions as both a state news service and an information tool for diplomatic engagement.[2] In Africa, through this model China seeks to influence the news narratives within African media landscapes, ensuring that its diplomatic and economic initiatives are framed in a favorable light. This competition over media influence is a key aspect of modern international relations, where nations strive to establish their narratives while countering rival perspectives.[3]

Xinhua, like other party-owned media, has historically served both the Communist Party and "the people," though the definition of "the people" has evolved over time. With media marketization, Xinhua

[1] Youna Kim, China's Public Diplomacy Towards Africa (PhD diss., Durham University, 2018), p 96.
[2] Zhenis Cheng, Guy J. Golan, and Spiro Kiousis, "The Second-Level Agenda-Building Function of the Xinhua News Agency: Examining the Role of Government-Sponsored News in Mediated Public Diplomacy," **Journalism Practice 9**, no. 1 (2015), pp 2–3.
[3] Ibid., p 4.

has shifted towards treating the public as news consumers. Traditionally, it primarily catered to media outlets and institutions, but in the digital era, individuals can now access Xinhua's content directly via mobile devices and platforms like Xinhuanet.com. To adapt, Xinhua has expanded its online presence, targeting over 730 million Internet users, mostly young smartphone users. Its online output is more market-oriented compared to its traditional wire services. This transformation is not just a business move but also a strategic effort in China's ongoing battle to win hearts and minds at home and abroad. As younger generations increasingly turn to digital media, the CPC sees the adoption of more engaging and popular media styles as essential for maintaining ideological influence. Rather than a radical shift, this evolution reflects a gradual adaptation, similar to how Fiske (1989) describes the nature of popular culture.[1]

a-2- CGTN Africa's approach: television as a narrative tool.

China Global Television Network Africa (CGTN Africa) serves as one of China's primary instruments for media diplomacy, utilizing television as a powerful narrative tool to shape perceptions of China in Africa.

China's goals for CGTN Africa focus on three key areas. First, the network aims to improve China's image by prioritizing localized African content over direct promotion of Chinese perspectives. Second, it emphasizes positive reporting on China-Africa relations while avoiding contentious issues like politics and religion. Lastly, CGTN Africa seeks to ease neocolonialism concerns by portraying China as an equal partner rather than a dominant force[2] . This approach reinforces China's soft power strategy, portraying its presence in Africa as a force for progress and development rather than competition or exploitation.

Another significant aspect of CGTN Africa's media diplomacy is its adaptation to local media ecosystems. Unlike other global broadcasters that simply translate content, CGTN Africa localizes its coverage, employing African journalists, featuring regional stories, and incorporating narratives that resonate with local audiences [3]. This not only enhances credibility but also allows CGTN to frame China's role in Africa as collaborative rather than externally imposed.

CGTN Africa also plays a strategic role in crisis reporting, particularly in shaping perceptions during political or economic challenges. A comparative analysis of CGTN Africa and BBC Africa's coverage of Cyclone Idai found that CGTN Africa focused extensively on recovery efforts and Chinese humanitarian aid, reinforcing China's image as a dependable partner in disaster relief. In contrast, BBC

[1] Xin Xin, "Popularizing Party Journalism in China in the Age of Social Media: The Case of Xinhua News Agency," **Global Media and China 3**, no. 1 (2018), p 9.
[2] Youna Kim, *China's Public Diplomacy Towards Africa*, p 177.
[3] Herman Wasserman and Dani Madrid-Morales, "How Influential Are Chinese Media in Africa? An Audience Analysis in Kenya and South Africa," **International Journal of Communication** 12 (2018), p 2216.

Africa highlighted government accountability and structural vulnerabilities, demonstrating a more critical perspective[1] . This editorial decision reflects China's broader media strategy promoting stability and positive engagement while avoiding contentious or politically sensitive discussions.

Additionally, CGTN Africa's broadcast model relies on partnerships with local media houses, ensuring that Chinese narratives reach African audiences beyond CGTN's direct viewership. Through syndicating content to African television stations, CGTN Africa extends its influence into national media landscapes, effectively amplifying China's diplomatic messaging through third-party credibility[2] .

a-3- China Radio International's approach: linguistic outreach and local adaptations.

China Radio International (CRI) is a state-run broadcaster that plays a significant role in China's media diplomacy in Africa. With services in over 61 languages, including Swahili, Hausa, and Arabic, CRI ensures that its content is accessible to diverse African audiences. This linguistic approach helps strengthen China's presence and foster closer connections with listeners across the continent.[3]

A key aspect of CRI's approach is its partnerships with African radio stations, allowing its programs to be aired on popular local FM channels. This integration into existing media landscapes increases credibility and reach, ensuring that China's narratives are delivered through familiar and trusted sources.

CRI's programming in Africa is diverse and engaging, moving beyond traditional news to include cultural storytelling, feature program, regular news bulletins and in-depth news analyses. CRI aims to convey Chinese values such as collectivism, harmony, and benevolent governance, while also incorporating elements of democracy. The goal is to present a well-rounded image of China to international audiences, rather than focusing solely on economic growth, as doing so would provide an incomplete portrayal of the country.[4]

Through linguistic outreach, local collaborations, and adaptive content strategies, CRI strengthens China's media presence in Africa, shaping public perceptions while positioning itself as a reliable source of information.

[1] Paul O. Ansah and Ke Gao, "Comparing CGTN Africa and BBC Africa's Coverage of Cyclone Idai in Africa: A Social Responsibility Standard and Geographical Proximity Approach," in **Proceedings of ADVED 2019 – 5th International Conference on Advances in Education and Social Sciences** (Istanbul: OCERINT, 2019), p 672.
[2] Joshua Eisenman**, China's Media Propaganda in Africa: A Strategic Assessment** (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2023), p 12.
[3] Kim, China's Public Diplomacy Towards Africa, p 100.
[4] David Shambaugh, **China Goes Global: The Partial Power** (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p 214.

b. Media Cooperation Agreements with African Outlets.

Media cooperation agreements between Chinese state media and African outlets have expanded, enabling Beijing to shape narratives and build influence. These agreements often involve content-sharing, co-productions, and direct investments in media infrastructure.

- Content-Sharing Agreements

One of the primary forms of media cooperation involves content-sharing agreements between Chinese media and African outlets. Through these agreements, Chinese state media provide African news agencies, TV stations, and newspapers with free or low-cost news reports, images, and video content. These partnerships allow African media to fill gaps in their international coverage while amplifying Chinese narratives. For instance, state broadcasters such as the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) and Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) regularly air Chinese-produced content through agreements with China Global Television Network (CGTN) and China Radio International (CRI). [1]

- Joint Productions and Co-Branding

Chinese media have also invested in co-production projects, where African and Chinese media outlets collaborate to produce news reports, documentaries, and cultural programs. These initiatives often emphasize themes of China-Africa friendship, economic development, and infrastructure cooperation. For example, CGTN Africa, based in Nairobi, produces news segments featuring African journalists who report on China's role in the continent's development.[2]

Among the various Chinese media actors engaging with Africa, **Xinhua News Agency** plays a crucial role due to its long-established presence and extensive content-sharing agreements with African outlets.

1. **Expansion and Partnerships**: Xinhua, China's state-run news agency, has more bureaus in Africa than any other foreign news organization. As of 2023, it operated 37 bureaus across the continent, providing African media outlets with news reports, opinion pieces, and images.[3]
2. **Syndication with African News Agencies**: Many African newspapers and news websites reprint Xinhua content directly, sometimes without attribution. This is partly due to financial constraints, as Xinhua offers international news free of charge, unlike Western agencies such as Reuters or AFP. Some African media houses, including state-run agencies in Zimbabwe, Kenya, and Nigeria, have signed formal syndication agreements with Xinhua.[4]

[1] Iginio Gagliardone and Sam Geall, **China-Africa Media and Telecommunications Cooperation** (Oslo: Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre, 2014), p 2.
[2] Hangwei Li, **Chinese Media Engagement with Africa and the Role of African Agency** (Berlin: Megatrends Afrika, 2024), p 5.
[3] Eisenman, *China's Media Propaganda in Africa*, p 8.
[4] Ibid., p 14.

c. Training Programs for African Journalists.

China's media training programs in Africa are part of its broader strategy to foster positive relations and build media capacity.[1]

These programs are often tied to official exchanges and are driven by the Chinese government. The primary objective of China's training programs for African journalists is to improve the perception of China and its activities in Africa. These programs are designed to build a positive narrative and foster a sense of partnership.[2]

The training programs include workshops, seminars, and exchange visits. Participants are often provided with materials, resources, and sometimes financial incentives to produce favorable coverage.[3]

c.1 Early Training Programs (2004-2011)

Between 2004 and 2011, China hosted at least eight major journalist training workshops for African media professionals under the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). By 2011, over 300 African media officials from 48 countries had attended training courses in China, covering:

- "China's Economic Reforms and National Development"
- "The Taiwan Question"
- "China's Journalistic View and Media Operations"

c.2 Expansion through the China-Africa Media Forum

In 2012, China formalized journalist training programs under the China-Africa Media Forum as part of FOCAC. By 2018, over 400 African media professionals had participated in training, with workshops focusing on:

- Digital journalism and new media.
- Content development strategies for China-Africa cooperation.[4]

Additionally, China has been hiring local journalists and providing them with language training to anchor and report on Chinese media platforms. This approach helps in presenting a more nuanced and culturally resonant narrative.[5]

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[1] Yu-Shan Wu**, The Rise of China's State-Led Media Dynasty in Africa**, Occasional Paper no. 117 (Johannesburg: South African Institute of International Affairs, 2012), p 18.
[2] E. M. Hansen, **Training Programs for African Journalists: An Assessment**, **Policy Brief** no. 12 (Washington, DC: China-Africa Research Initiative, Johns Hopkins SAIS, 2012), p 2.
[3] Ibid., p 3.
[4] Eisenman, China's Media Propaganda in Africa, p 13.
[1] Wu, The Rise of China's State-Led Media Dynasty in Africa, p 23.

d. China's Digital Diplomacy in Africa.

China has increasingly leveraged digital diplomacy to shape its influence in Africa. Digital diplomacy, also known as e-diplomacy or cyber diplomacy, refers to the use of digital tools, primarily social media and online platforms, to conduct diplomatic engagement and public diplomacy.[1] The Chinese government has strategically used platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and WeChat to engage with African publics and promote its narratives on economic cooperation, development, and mutual respect[2] .

China's Digital Engagement Strategies in Africa

China's digital diplomacy in Africa primarily revolves around social media, government websites, and digital news outlets. Chinese embassies in African countries use Twitter extensively to communicate official messages, counter criticism, and reinforce narratives on China-Africa cooperation.[3] The use of hashtags, retweets, and coordinated messaging ensures that China's viewpoints reach a broad audience. For example, Chinese diplomatic missions frequently share content from state media outlets like Xinhua and CGTN Africa to reinforce their official positions[4] .

Another key component of China's digital diplomacy is "diaspora diplomacy," where Chinese embassies engage with the African diaspora through targeted content on social media[5]. This allows China to foster goodwill among African elites, students, and business communities living in China.

Wolf Warrior Diplomacy in the Digital Sphere

China's digital diplomacy is also characterized by a more assertive and combative approach known as **Wolf Warrior Diplomacy**. This strategy, named after a popular Chinese action movie, involves Chinese diplomats and officials aggressively countering criticism and promoting China's image on social media.[6] Chinese diplomats in Africa frequently use platforms like Twitter to discuss controversial issues and criticize Western interference[7]. This approach has led to heated exchanges between Chinese officials and foreign diplomats, media outlets, and activists on African digital platforms.

e- Media Infrastructure Development.

[1] Bob Wekesa, Yarik Turianskyi, and Odilile Ayodele, "Introduction to the Special Issue: Digital Diplomacy in Africa," **South African Journal of International Affairs** 28, no. 3 (2021), p 335.
[2] Chris Alden and Kenddrick Chan, **Twitter and Digital Diplomacy: China and COVID-19** (London: LSE IDEAS, 2021), p 6.
[3] Ibid., p 7.
[4] Daniel O. Ong'ong'a, Strategies and Challenges in Digital Diplomacy: A Case Study of U.S., UK, and China Diplomats in Kenya (Nairobi, 2021), p 6.
[5] Ilan Manor and Geraldine Adiku, *From "Traitors" to "Saviours***": A Longitudinal Analysis of Ethiopian, Kenyan, and Rwandan Embassies' Practice of Digital Diaspora Diplomacy** (2021), p 3.
[6] Alden and Chan, Twitter and Digital Diplomacy, p 5.
[7] Alden and Chan, Twitter and Digital Diplomacy, p 7.

China has significantly expanded its investments in media and telecommunication infrastructure across Africa, establishing a dominant presence in broadcasting, digital connectivity, and telecommunications networks. These investments align with China's Digital Silk Road (DSR) initiative, a key component of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which aims to enhance global digital connectivity through Chinese-financed and -constructed infrastructure[1] .

Key Areas of Chinese Media Infrastructure Investments

1. Telecommunication Networks and Digital Connectivity

China has been instrumental in financing and constructing Africa's telecommunications backbone, ensuring greater digital penetration across the continent. Huawei and ZTE, two of China's largest telecom companies, have played a major role in building undersea cables, national broadband networks, and mobile infrastructure.[2]

The following table outlines key Chinese-funded projects in Africa, highlighting their impact on telecommunications, digital connectivity, and broadcasting:

[1] Motolani Agbebi and Zheng Yu, **China-Powered ICT Infrastructure: Lessons from Tanzania and Cambodia**, Policy Briefing no. 252 (Johannesburg: South African Institute of International Affairs, 2021), p 2.
[2] Ibid., p 7.

Table (4): List if selected Chinese financed and led telecom infrastructure projects in Africa 2010-2020

Country	Project	Financier	Borrower	Implementation	Amount	Year
Tanzania	National ICT Broadband Backbone (NICTBB) Phase II	Exim Bank	Tanzanian government	CITCC, Huawei	$100m	2010
Cameroon	National Broadband Network Phase I: 4G mobile broadband (LTE)	Exim Bank	Cameroonian government	Huawei	$168m	2011
Nigeria	Communications Satellite-NigComSat-1R (replacement of the NigComSat-1 $300m)	Exim Bank	Nigerian government	China Great Wall Industry Corporation	N/A	2011
Kenya	National Optic Fibre Backbone Infrastructure (NOFBI), Phase II: E-government	Exim Bank	Kenyan government	Huawei	$71m	2012
Nigeria	Galaxy Backbone project for National Security development system	Exim Bank	Nigerian government	Huawei	$100m	2012
Ethiopia	Telecom Transformation and Expansion (4G network and mobile expansion) 6 Circles-ZTE	Exim Bank	Ethiopian government	ZTE	$300m	2013
Ethiopia	Telecom Transformation and Expansion (4G network and mobile expansion) 7 Circles-Huawei	Exim Bank	Ethiopian government	Huawei	$800	2013
Tanzania	National ITC Broadband Backbone (NICTBB) Phase III	Exim Bank	Tanzanian government	CITCC, Huawei	$94m	2013
Nigeria	National Information Communication Technology Infrastructure Backbone (NICTIB), Phase I	Exim Bank	Nigerian government	Huawei	$100m	2013
Guinea	National Backbone fiber optics	Exim Bank	Guinean government	Huawei	$214.2m	2014
Cameroon	National Telecommunications Broadband Network Project Phase II	Exim Bank	Cameroonian government	Huawei	$337m	2015
Ivory Coast	Abidjan Video Surveillance Platform	Exim Bank	Ivory Coast government	Huawei	$56.7	2016
Cameroon	South Atlantic Inter Link (SAIL)	Exim Bank	Cameroonian government	Huawei	$85m	2017
Nigeria	National Information Communication Technology Infrastructure Backbone (NICTIB), Phase II	Exim Bank	Nigerian government	Huawei	$334m	2018
Sierra Leone	Fibre Optic Backbone Network Phase II	Exim Bank	Sierra Leonean government	Huawei	$30m	2019

Source: Motolani Agbebi and Yu Zheng, ***China-powered ICT Infrastructure: Lessons from Tanzania and Cambodia***, SAIIA Policy Briefing No. 252 (Johannesburg: South African Institute of International Affairs, November 2021), pp 7–8.

China's investment in Africa's digital infrastructure, as reflected in the table, is a critical pillar of its broader media and technology expansion on the continent. Through substantial financing from the Export-Import (Exim) Bank of China and the strategic involvement of Huawei, these projects not only enhance Africa's digital connectivity but also embed Chinese technology within key communication networks. The focus on fiber optics, broadband expansion, and even surveillance systems underscore China's dual interest in fostering economic growth and deepening its digital influence. This infrastructure lays the foundation for expanding Chinese media presence, enabling platforms like Xinhua to operate within a China-backed digital ecosystem. As Africa's dependence on Chinese-built networks grows, so does Beijing's ability to shape information flows, influence media narratives, and potentially establish long-term partnerships that align with its geopolitical and economic interests.

2- **Broadcasting and Satellite Infrastructure**

China has also played a crucial role in modernizing Africa's broadcasting infrastructure, enabling state-controlled Chinese media to expand their influence.

StarTimes: StarTimes, a Chinese satellite TV company, has been a major player in Africa's media landscape. In 2019, it had over 13 million subscribers across 30 African countries. StarTimes has facilitated the transition from analog to digital transmission in about 20 countries, providing content that prioritizes Chinese state media and local channels over Western news networks.[1]

2.3 The Impact of Chinese Media Diplomacy on Africa.

2.3.1 Shaping Narratives.

Western Narratives: Debt Diplomacy and Neo-Colonialism

Western media frequently portrays China's involvement in Africa through a lens of skepticism, emphasizing risks such as debt diplomacy and economic dependency. For instance, outlets like *The New York Times* have accused China of withholding debt relief during Africa's economic crises, framing its loans as tools of geopolitical coercion.[2] Such narratives draw on historical parallels to colonialism, suggesting China's infrastructure investments -such as ports, railways, and mines- are mechanisms to extract resources while undermining African sovereignty.[3]

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[1] Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA), "China's Multi-Billion-Dollar Telecommunications Investment in Africa Poses Threat to Independent Media," **CIMA Blog**, 2021, retrieved March 5, 2025, at 12:08 a.m., available from: https://www.cima.ned.org/blog/chinas-multi-billion-dollar-telecommunications-investment-africa-poses-threat-independent-media/.

[2] CGTN, "Western Media Are Misreporting Reality of Chinese Lending in Africa," **CGTN**, May 1, 2020, retrieved March 7, 2025, at 10:05 p.m., available from: https://news.cgtn.com/news/2020-05-01/Western-media-are-misreporting-reality-of-Chinese-lending-in-Africa-Q85wFlwu7C/index.html.

[3] Embassy of China in Eritrea, "China-Africa Cooperation: A Partnership of Mutual Benefit," **Embassy of China in Eritrea**, December 21, 2024, retrieved March 7, 2025, at 10:12 p.m., available from http://er.chinaembassy.gov.cn/eng/sghdytz/202412/t20241221_11513415.htm.

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Debt-Trap Concerns.

The Origin of the Debt-Trap Narrative

The debt-trap diplomacy narrative claims that China intentionally entangles smaller nations in unsustainable debt to later seize key assets when they fail to repay loans [1]. The term was first introduced by Brahma Chellaney, an Indian scholar, and later gained prominence in the United States following a 2017 research paper published by Harvard's Belfer Center. This paper cited Sri Lanka's Hambantota Port as an example of Chinese debt coercion, arguing that Beijing had taken control of the port through a predatory lending strategy. The idea was quickly amplified in Western media, particularly after *The New York Times* published an article in 2018 titled *"How China Got Sri Lanka to Cough Up a Port."* High-profile U.S. officials, including Rex Tillerson, Mike Pompeo, and John Bolton, further pushed this narrative, linking it to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)[2].

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the Debt Debate.

Beijing presents the BRI as a mutually beneficial economic development program, comparing it to historical trade routes such as the Silk Road [3]. However, Western narratives have often framed it as a geopolitical strategy designed to increase Chinese dominance. Some analysts argue that China uses its financial power to rewrite global trade rules and gain control over strategic assets, particularly through its investments in ports and infrastructure in regions like Southern Europe and the Indo-Pacific [4].

The Hambantota Port case has been central to these concerns. In 2017, Sri Lanka sold a majority stake in the port to China Merchants Port Holdings for $1.12 billion, leading critics to claim that China had seized the asset due to Sri Lanka's debt struggles[5]. However, scholars, particularly Deborah Brautigam from Johns Hopkins University, have debunked this claim. Research indicates that the transaction was a commercial lease agreement rather than a debt-for-equity swap, and Sri Lanka used the proceeds to repay multiple international loans not just those from China.

China's Counter-Narratives: Infrastructure and Mutual Benefit

Chinese media diplomacy emphasizes narratives of shared development and win-win partnerships. This is reflected in media coverage that highlights China's role in infrastructure development, investment, and technology transfer.[6]

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[1] Folashadé Soulé et al., **Exploring the Role of Narratives in China-Africa Relations** (Berlin: Africa Policy Research Institute, 2024), p 16.
[2] Deborah Brautigam, "A Critical Look at Chinese 'Debt-Trap Diplomacy': The Rise of a Meme," **Area Development and Policy 5**, no. 1 (2020), p 5.
[3] Soulé et al., Exploring the Role of Narratives, p 16.
[4] Brautigam, "Chinese 'Debt-Trap Diplomacy'," p 5.
[5] Soulé et al., Exploring the Role of Narratives, p 16.
[6] Sergio Grassi, *Changing the Narrative: China's Media Offensive in Africa* (Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2014), p 4.

Chinese leaders frequently employ language that emphasizes shared history and cooperation with Africa, referring to African nations as brothers and promoting a vision of modernization achieved collectively. This rhetoric reinforces the idea of China and Africa as partners facing similar challenges, particularly in contrast to Western nations. Beijing also strategically portrays itself as a developing country, ensuring that its engagement with Africa is framed as mutual progress rather than a hierarchical relationship.

Through both political rhetoric and large-scale investments like the BRI, China seeks to counter Western accusations and reshape global perceptions of its engagement in Africa. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) serves as a central component of this narrative, presented as a transformative opportunity for Africa's economic development, freeing the continent from the perceived constraints of Western influence. Chinese officials highlight historical injustices tied to colonialism and position China as a steadfast ally in Africa's fight against economic dependency. This approach not only strengthens China-Africa ties but also deepens the divide between African nations and Western powers by portraying China-Africa relations as a partnership of equals.[1]

In addition, Chinese media including Xinhua, contrast their reports with Western outlets by emphasizing positive stories about Africa. Unlike Western media, which are often criticized for focusing on Africa's crises and conflicts, Chinese media highlight economic growth, stability, and investment opportunities.[2]

2.3.2 Soft Power Expansion

China's media diplomacy in Africa has expanded its soft power by shaping public opinion and engaging political elites, while promoting its governance model as an alternative to Western paradigms. Through initiatives like state media outlets such as Xinhua, Beijing amplifies narratives about its economic rise and non-interference policy, positioning itself as a partner aligned with African sovereignty[3] .This strategy is part of China's broader public diplomacy efforts to strengthen bilateral ties, as seen in its emphasis on respecting African governments' political views and avoiding criticism of their governance.

Surveys indicate that 60% of Africans view China's influence positively, partly due to its infrastructure investments and media-driven narratives contrasting Chinese aid with Western conditionalities[4]. The relatively high approval rating suggests that Chinese media efforts are effective in presenting a coherent alternative narrative; one that underscores stability, respect for national sovereignty, and developmental progress. However, this positive perception, driven by carefully curated content, also points to the

[1] Joonas Aukia et al., **Strings Attached: China's Narrative Influence in Sub-Saharan Africa**, Hybrid CoE Research Report 13 (Helsinki: Hybrid CoE, 2025), p 18.
[2] Ibid., p 23.
[3] Dragan Tomic, Elma Saljic, and Mohammed Ben El Yattioui, "Specific projection of China's soft power in Africa: A new security paradigm," **Journal of Liberty and International Affairs 8**, no. 3 (2022), p 373.
[4] Statista, "Africans' Perception on the Positive Influence of China by Country," retrieved March 8, 2025, available from: https://www.statista.com/statistics/1189157/africans-perception-on-positive-influence-of-china-by-country/.

persuasive capacity of media diplomacy in framing China's image as a benign partner in Africa. This underscores a critical aspect of soft power: it hinges not only on the resources deployed but also on the ability to shape perceptions and set favorable agendas among both the public and political elites.

2.4 Research underpinning theory.

2.4.1 What is Framing theory?

Framing theory is a critical concept in media studies that looks into how information is selectively presented to shape audience perceptions. Goffman (1974) introduced the idea of frames as cognitive structures that help individuals organize experiences, enabling them to locate, perceive, identify, and label occurrences within their life space and the world at large.[1]

According to Gitlin (1980), frames are described as principles of selection, emphasis, and presentation about what exists, what happens, and what matters[2], highlighting their role in guiding journalists and shaping audience interpretations.

Building on these foundational concepts, Entman (1993) provided a precise definition of framing, stating that it involves selection and salience, where specific aspects of a perceived reality are highlighted in a communicating text to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation.[3] This definition underscores the power of media to influence public perception by emphasizing certain narratives while downplaying others.

Scheufele (1999) further refined framing theory by distinguishing between media frames, which refer to how journalists construct news, and audience frames, which describe how individuals interpret that content[4].

Furthermore, Tankard (2001) emphasized that framing involves presenting information in a way that creates a specific context or interpretation, using choices of words, images, sources, and story structure without showing an explicit bias[5].

In conclusion, framing theory provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing media narratives. It explains how news organizations like Xinhua News Agency construct particular portrayals of global affairs, such as China-Africa relations, by selectively emphasizing or omitting key elements to align with strategic objectives. Therefore, it reinforces specific narratives that align with China's broader geopolitical and soft power ambitions on the African continent.

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[1] Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis:* **An Essay on the Organization of Experience** (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), p 21.
[2] Todd Gitlin, **The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left** (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), p 7.
[3] Robert M. Entman, "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," **Journal of Communication 43**, no. 4 (1993), p 52.
[4] Dietram A. Scheufele, "Framing as a Theory of Media Effects," **Journal of Communication 49**, no. 1 (1999), p 104.
[5] James W. Tankard, "The Empirical Approach to the Study of Media Framing," in ***Framing Public Life: Perspectives on Media and Our Understanding of the Social World***, ed. Stephen D. Reese, Oscar H. Gandy Jr., and August E. Grant (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001), p 96.

2.4.2 Origins and historical development of Framing theory.

Framing theory has roots in both sociology and psychology. It emerged from the understanding that individuals and groups use cognitive structures to interpret, classify, and give meaning to social reality.

The earliest articulation of this idea is credited to Gregory Bateson (1955/1972), who introduced the concept of "frames" in his studies on communication and perception. Bateson conceived frames as psychological tools that help individuals organize their perceptions by distinguishing what is included or excluded within a certain boundary, much like a picture frame[1].

The concept was further developed by Erving Goffman (1974) in his seminal work *Frame Analysis*. Goffman described frames as schemata of interpretation that enable individuals to locate, perceive, identify, and label occurrences in everyday life[2]. His sociological approach viewed framing as a social process wherein individuals constantly interpret their experiences through shared cultural and communicative practices.

In the 1990s, framing theory gained prominence in communication studies through the work of scholars like Pan and Kosicki (1993), who introduced a constructivist perspective. They argued that the "constructionist conception of framing in the sociological literature makes strong assumptions about individual cognitive processes – structuredness of cognitive representations and theory guidedness of information processing"[3].

According to Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007), framing operates on two levels:

- as a macroconstruct.
- as a microconstruct.

According to Volkmer (2009), framing theory highlights how mediated communication constructs and reconstructs reality through frames that are culturally embedded and socially negotiated[4].

2.4.3 Relevance to the research:

Framing theory is used by journalists, media professionals, and policymakers to shape the way stories are told in a way that supports their goals. It helps them choose how to present information so the

[1] Alberto Ardèvol-Abreu, "Framing Theory in Communication Research. Origins, Development and Current Situation in Spain," **Revista Latina de Comunicación Social**, no. 70 (2015), p 428, retrieved May 30, 2025, available from: https://www.revistalatinacs.org/070/paper/1053/23en.html.
[2] Goffman, Frame Analysis, p 21.
[3] Zhongdang Pan and Gerald M. Kosicki, "Framing Analysis: An Approach to News Discourse**," *Political Communication*** 10, no. 1 (1993), p 56.
[4] Ingrid Volkmer, "Framing Theory," in **Encyclopedia of Communication Theory**, ed. Stephen W. Littlejohn and Karen A. Foss (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2009), p 408.

message is understood exactly how they want it to be. We picked this theory because it aligns perfectly with the research objective: to study how Chinese media shapes narratives about China's image in Africa.

Framing theory is very useful for this dissertation because it helps explain how Xinhua News Agency presents news about China's image in Africa. It allows us to look at what themes are emphasized, what information is left out, and how China is portrayed in a positive or strategic way. This helps us understand how media can be used as a tool in Chinese media diplomacy. In this research, framing theory will be used to identify and analyze the specific frames that Xinhua uses to shape African perceptions of China, focusing on partnership, friendship, and cooperation.

2.4.4 framing principles according to ENTMAN 1993:

In our research, we apply Robert Entman's 1993 framing theory as the conceptual foundation for analyzing how Xinhua news agency constructs narratives in its coverage of Africa.

According to Entman, the Framing theory consists of four major principles:

1- **Selection and salience:** selection is choosing which ideas or facts to show in the news story, while salience is making those ideas stands out to consolidate it in the reader's mind. In order to make something salient, we put it first, we repeat it or we use strong words or images that match people' schemata.

2- **Four framing functions:** story frames perform one or more of these four core functions:
   - Define the problem.
   - Name the cause.
   - Judge it morally.
   - Offer a solution.

3- **Omission:** strategic omissions are as powerful as inclusions, meaning that neglecting a fact or idea or not mentioning it is as powerful as talking about it, because omitted content constrains alternative interpretations.

4- **Cultural alignment:** framing aligns with cultural and ideological schemata, which are what people already believe or expect.[1]

[1] Robert M. Entman, "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," **Journal of Communication** 43, no. 4 (1993), pp 52–54, retrieved May 30, 2025, available from: https://fbaum.unc.edu/teaching/articles/J-Communication-1993-Entman.pdf.

2.4.5 Research hypotheses:

1- Xinhua African coverage emphasizes themes of economic growth, mutual cooperation and infrastructure more frequently than topics containing criticism of China, wars or political unrest.

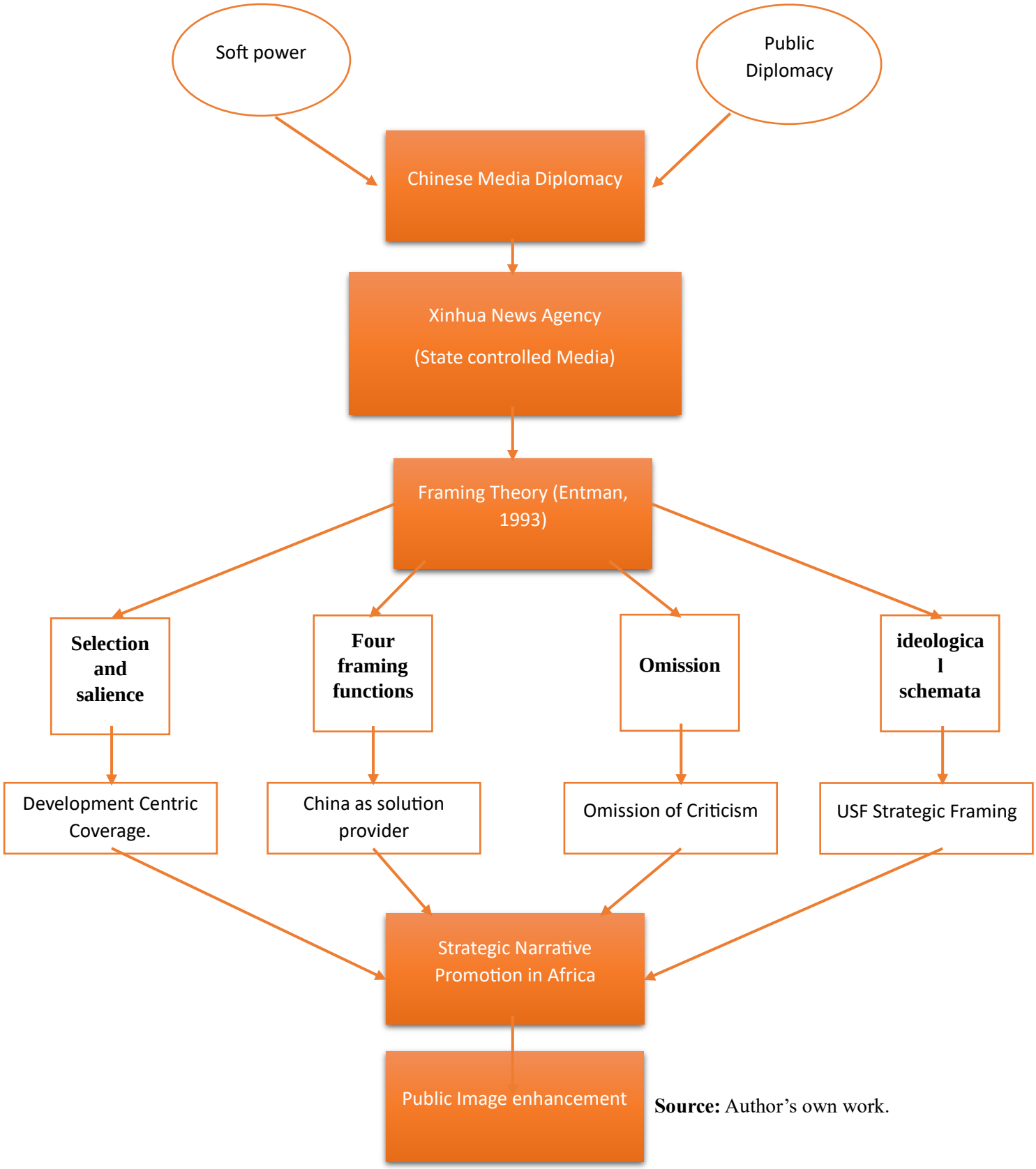
2- Xinhua prioritizes narratives that portrays China as a solution provider to African challenges, while it gives less important to causes or blame, especially those including China itself or a foreign power.

3- Xinhua's Africa section articles omit and neglect the critical frames including critical frames involving debt trap diplomacy or western skepticism about China-Africa ties.

4- Xinhua constructs China-Africa relations through the Unity and Solidarity frame, reflecting one of the core pan-African values, namely, win-win cooperation rooted in mutual respect and non-interference.

2.5 Visualization of the conceptual framework.

Figure (3): Visualization of the conceptual framework.



Source: Author's own work.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, this chapter has shown how China's media diplomacy in Africa is part of a broader geopolitical strategy supported by strong historical ties, economic engagement and controlled narratives. Xinhua News Agency plays a key role in promoting China's image, reinforcing narratives of partnership and development. Framing theory offers a relevant lens to understand how these narratives are constructed and delivered in the media.

Chapter 3:

Research design and methodology

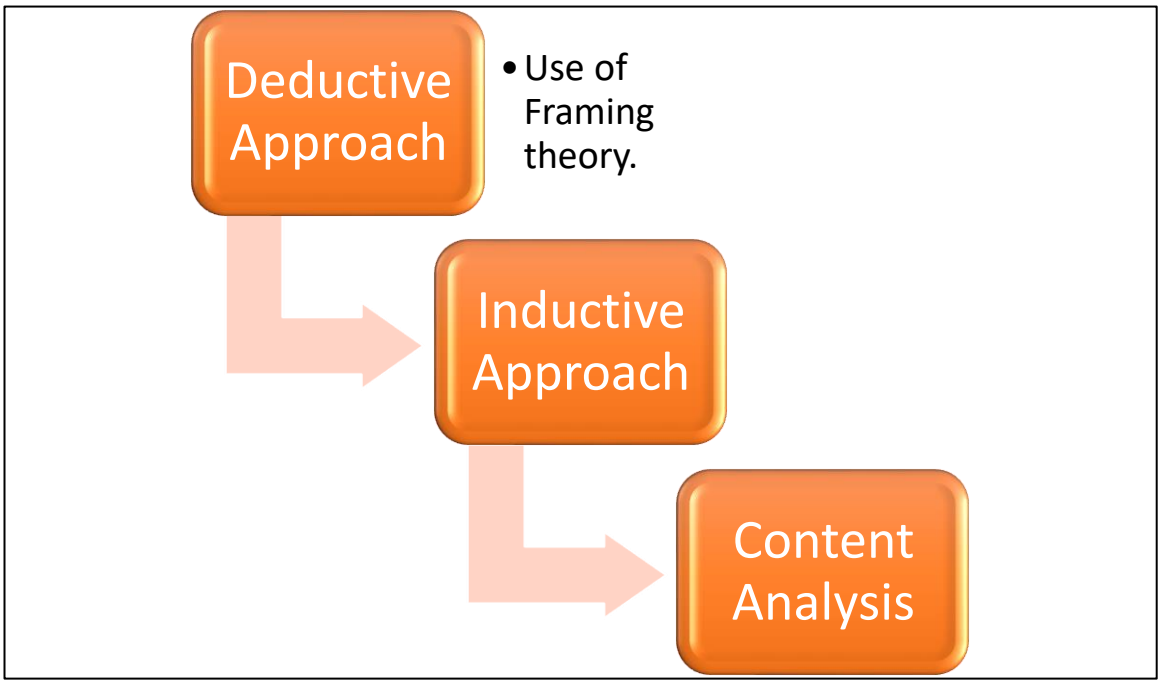
Opening:

This chapter presents the methodological framework used to test the hypotheses of this study. It begins by outlining the research approach, followed by the data collection process and sampling strategy. The content analysis method and coding procedures are then detailed, along with the variables and categories used. The final section provides a visualization of the overall methodological framework.

3.1 Research approach.

This research follows a hybrid approach that combines both inductive and deductive logic. According to Proudfoot[107], this approach implicates the use of predefined themes grounded in an explicit theoretical framework -which is Framing theory in our case- through engagement with existing literature, representing the deductive component. Simultaneously, the induction dimension is reflected in the distinctness of themes directly from the data. In our research, the actual frames used by Xinhua were not predefined by the theory but inductively. These two elements are then integrated in a complementary manner, each enriching and reinforcing the other to form a cohesive analytical framework.

Figure (4): the role of hybrid Approach in content analysis



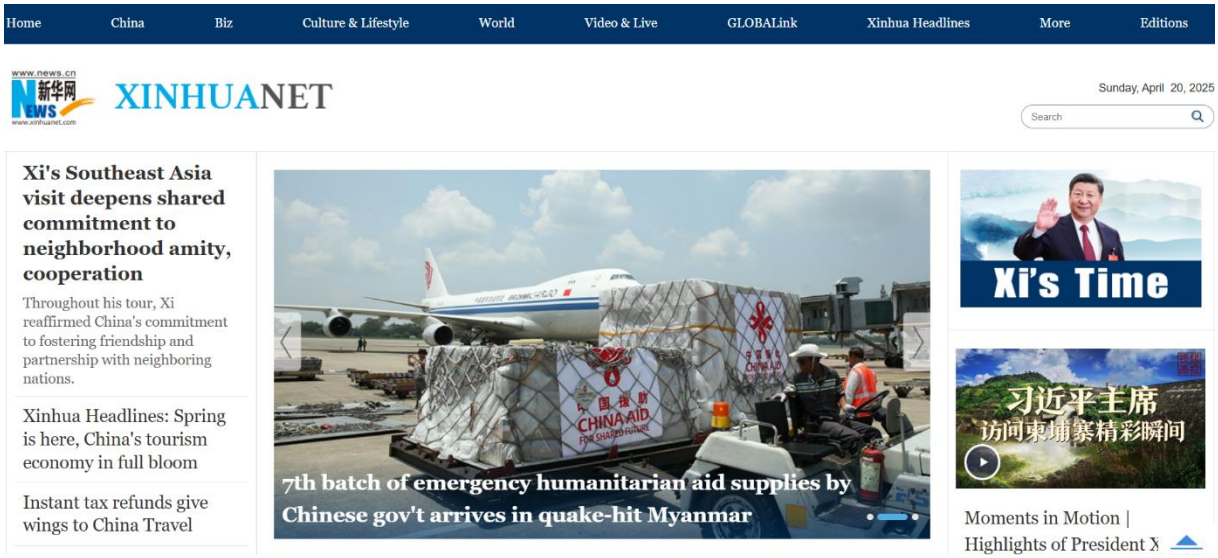
Source: Author's own work.

[107] K. Proudfoot, "Inductive/Deductive Hybrid Thematic Analysis in Mixed Methods Research," **Journal of Mixed Methods Research 17**, no. 3 (2023), p 310.

3.2 Research field:

Xinhuanet.com is the portal website of Xinhua News Agency.

Figure (5): homepage of the official Xinhua english website.



Source: Screenshot from Xinhuanet.com

It plays a significant role in the Chinese media diplomacy and in helping the world understand China and is the most influential media outlet China uses to influence global affairs. It operates 24/24 and publishes approximately 15000 media content per day.[108] Xinhuanet provides a multi-language service, offering content in Chinese, English, Arabic, French, Spanish, Russian… to target diverse global audiences.

Figure (6): homepage of the official Xinhua Chinese website.

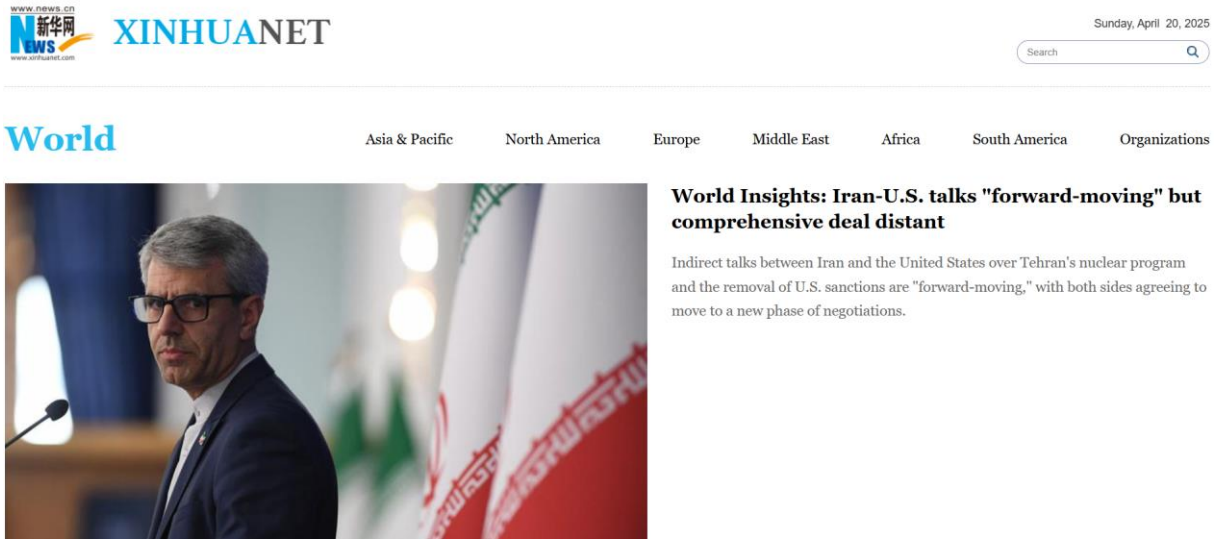


Source: Screenshot from Xinhuanet.com

[108] Xinhua News Agency, “About Us,” *Xinhuanet*, accessed April 20, 2025, at 9:59 p.m.,

The website is organized into different sections, including domestic news, politics, economics, international affairs, technology, science, health, culture and world which contains specialized regions such as Africa.

Figure (7): World section of the official Xinhua Chinese website.

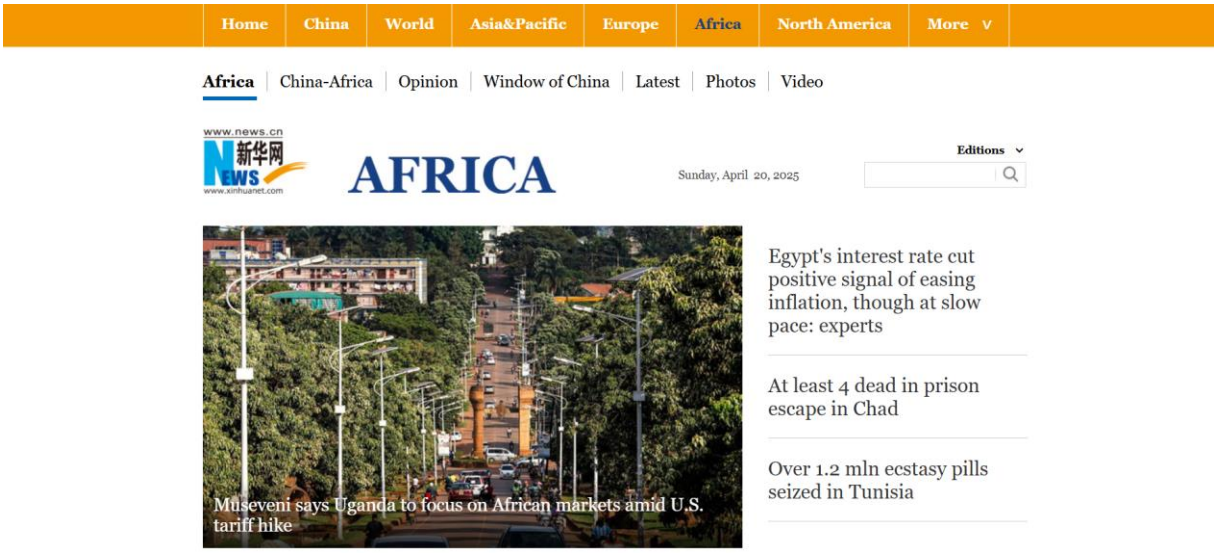


Source: Screenshot from Xinhuanet.com

Xinhuanet offers multimedia content such as videos, infographics and pictures, various types of articles such as news, opinion articles, features, interviews…

Our data corpus for this research drawn from the "China-Africa" section of Xinhua news Agency's official English-language website.

Figure (8): Africa section of the official Xinhua Chinese website.



Source: Screenshot from Xinhuanet.com

3.3 Data collection method:

We collected the data corpus for our study manually from the Africa section of the Xinhua News Agency's official English language website

The collection period extended from September 1st, 2024 to December 1st, 2024, deliberately selected for the following reasons:

- Ensure the corpus rich in diplomatic, economic and strategic media narratives between China and Africa.
- Enhance the representativeness and contemporary relevance of the data corpus without being constrained to a specific event-driven news cycle

In the Africa section, we focused on the China-Africa articles, excluding Opinion and window to China articles because:

- opinion articles are not regularly updated, are not event-driven hard news and are subjective interpretations, are not formal reporting.
- For Window of China focuses on Chinese internal culture, history, and society, is not about China-Africa relations, does not serve the research aim of studying China's media diplomacy toward Africa.

We collected the articles manually and we organized them chronologically according to their publication dates. No automated web-scraping tools were employed to avoid errors, duplications, or misclassifications. The final preliminary corpus consisted of 155 articles before sampling procedures were applied.

3.4 Research Sample and Sampling Strategy:

- Given the substantial size of the preliminary corpus and the time constraints of the research, we selected a sample for detailed analysis. We adopted 30% sampling strategy to ensure analytical feasibility while maintaining sufficient representativeness.

Mathematically, the sampling calculation was as follows:

$30\% \times 155 = 46.5$

Rounded up for methodological rigor, the final sample size was set at 47 articles.

- We employed a stratified systematic random sampling:

1- According to Neuendorf, stratified sampling involves segmenting the sampling frame into categories based on some variable(s) of prime interest to the researcher.[109] In our study, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) held from 4–6 September, represented a significant peak in diplomatic activity and media production concerning China-Africa relations[110]. Accordingly, we stratified the study period phases relative to the FOCAC summit, reflecting fluctuations in media intensity rather than focusing exclusively on the event itself.

This approach ensures that both extraordinary: summit-related and routine: day-to-day diplomacy media activities are proportionately represented in the final sample, maintaining the overall research focus on China's long-term media diplomacy strategies toward Africa rather than on a single event.

Hence, we divided the study period into the following four strata:

- **Pre-FOCAC Phase** (1–3 September 2024)
- **FOCAC Peak Phase** (4–6 September 2024)
- **Post-FOCAC Early Phase** (7 September–20 November 2024)
- **Post-FOCAC Late Phase** (21 November–1 December 2024)

A systematic random sampling: This method involves selecting every xth case from the preliminary corpus (Neuendorf, 2017, p. 84). Based on the corpus size and aiming for a manageable yet representative sample, we calculated a sampling fraction:

$$\text{Skip Interval(k)} = \frac{N}{n}$$

Where:

- N=155 (total articles)
- n=47 desired articles (approximately 30% of corpus)

Result:

$$K = \frac{155}{47} \approx 3$$

[109] Kimberly A. Neuendorf, **The Content Analysis Guidebook**, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2017), p 84.

[110] Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), "FOCAC Mechanisms," retrieved April 26, 2024, at 3:27 p.m., available from:

Therefore, we selected every 3rd article, following a random start (Neuendorf, 2017, p. 84).

the sampling began at the 2nd article in each phase to avoid selection bias and periodicity.

After applying the systematic sampling with stratification, the final sample consisted of **52 articles**, slightly higher than the theoretical 47 articles initially projected. This minor oversampling is methodologically acceptable and was caused by rounding needs and maintaining consistency across stratified phases.

Thus, the final sampling method can be described as stratified systematic random sampling with a random start, ensuring both probability-based rigor and temporal diversity without bias. The following table summarizes our final sample:

Table (5): Final Sample Summary.

Phase	Date	Total Articles	Sampled Articles
Pre-FOCAC	1-3 September 2024	11	4
FOCAC Peak	4-6 September 2024	11	4
Post-FOCAC early	7 September-20 November 2024	78	26
Post-FOCAC late	21 November-1 December 2024	55	18
Total	1 September-1 December 2024	155	52

Source: Author's own work.

3.5 Research Design.

Our study adopts content analysis as the principal methodological tool and interview as a supportive one.

- Content analysis: is defined as a systematic method for classifying, quantifying and interpreting communicative materials. It began as a way to measure units and symbols of content such as news articles, but evolved to combine quantitative rigor with qualitative interpretation, in order to uncover deeper meanings in media messages.[111]

In our research, we applied the content analysis through a mixed approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative techniques.

The quantitative component involves the use of Tropes software English version 8.4, a text analysis tool developed by Pierre Molette and Agnès Landré, based on the cognitive-discursive model of Rodolphe Ghiglione[112]. Tropes processes textual data by identifying key actors (actants), actions (verbs), descriptive qualifiers (adjectives), and semantic fields, providing a structured breakdown of the content into measurable discourse categories.

The qualitative component focuses on identifying and interpreting manually media frames, narrative tone, rhetorical strategies, and the balance of voices present in the texts. The coding grid was built based on both theoretical insights and empirical observation, enabling a deductive-inductive hybrid approach.

- Interview: we used one semi-structured interview as a supportive tool to complement and enrich the findings.

3.6 Psychometric properties.

In order to make sure our content analysis is valid and reliable; several measures were taken to assess the psychometric properties of the content analysis coding grid.

3.6.1 validity:

The content analysis grid was reviewed by three professors from different universities. Their feedback helped refine the categories and ensured that the variables aligned with the study's objectives and the theoretical framework of framing and media diplomacy. The final coding grid reflects both academic input and empirical testing.

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[111] محمد عبد الحميد، **البحث العلمي في الدراسات الإعلامية** (القاهرة: عالم الكتب، 2000)، ص 215.

[112] Pierre Molette and Agnès Landré, **Manuel de Tropes,** version 8.4 (Paris: Tropes, 2013), 6, retrieved May 30, 2025, available from

The following table shows the list of lecturers and experts who reviewed the content analysis Grid.

Table (6): list of lecturers and experts who reviewed the content analysis Grid.

Full name	Occupation	Institution
Dr. Samir Badri.	Researcher.	Sorbonne University.
Dr. Abdullah Mohammed Attebiqah.	Associate Professor of Media.	University of Sirte, Libya.

Source: Author's own work.

3.6.2 Reliability:

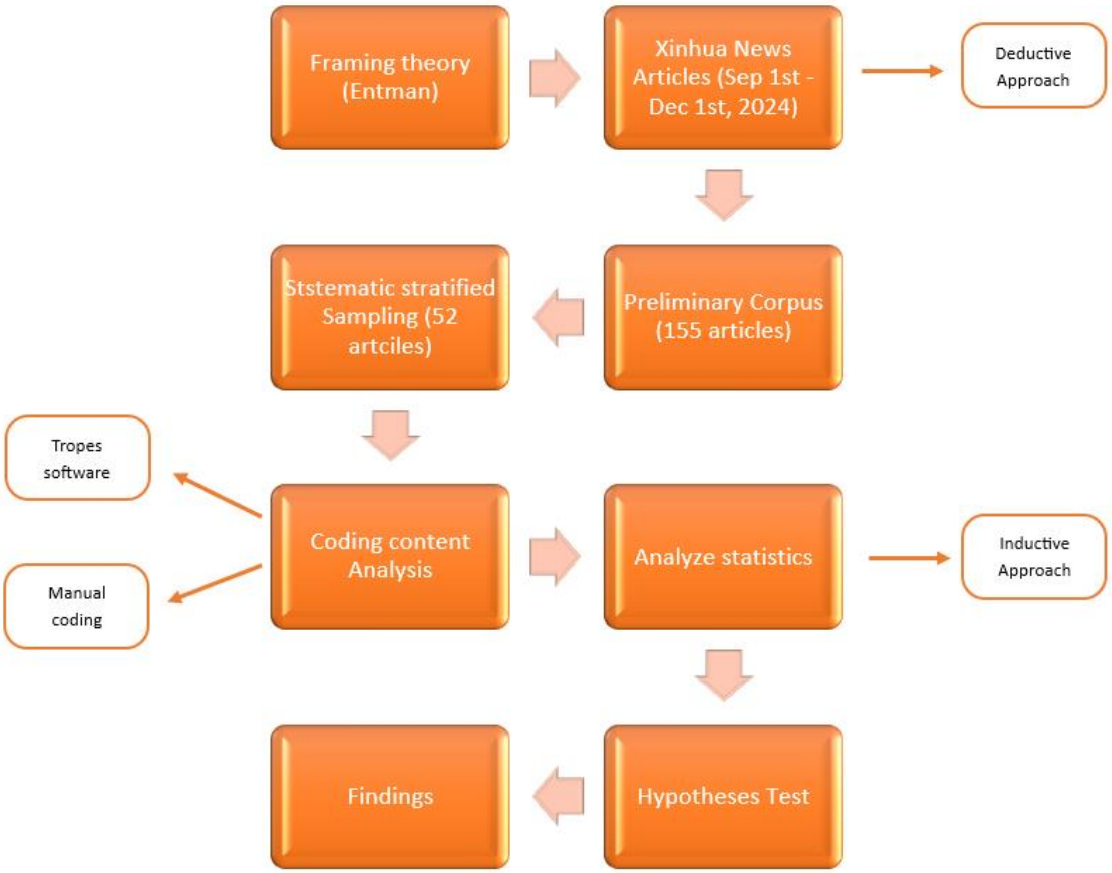
Due to the limited time available and the fact that the analysis was conducted by a single researcher, traditional statistical measures of reliability such as inter-rater agreement or test-retest procedures were not feasible. However, steps were taken to maintain consistency and minimize potential sources of bias:

- A standardized coding grid was used across the full sample.
- Tropes software supported objective extraction of word frequencies and semantic patterns.
- Manual coding decisions were revisited and verified during multiple coding rounds to reduce inconsistency or bias.

While statistical reliability could not be calculated, methodological consistency and transparency were ensured to support the trustworthiness of the findings.

3.7 Visualization of the methodology.

Figure (9): Visualization of the methodology.



Source: Author's own work.

Conclusion:

This chapter has detailed the research design and methodology adopted to test the hypotheses related to Chinese media diplomacy in Africa through Xinhua News Agency's coverage. By applying a qualitative and quantitative content analysis to a stratified sample of articles, and using a fixed coding grid, this study aims to identify the dominant frames, narrative strategies, and patterns of voice representation. This methodological framework provides a solid foundation for analyzing how Xinhua constructs China-Africa relations in line with media diplomacy objectives.

Chapter 4:
Content Analysis and Findings.

Opening:

This chapter represents a meticulous exploration of how Xinhua employs media diplomacy techniques to shape and enhance China's public image in Africa. Through a content analysis of Xinhua's Africa section articles collected between September and December 2024, this chapter aim to provide nuanced insights into Xinhua's approach and offer a robust confirmation of the hypotheses guiding this study.

4.1 Content Analysis:

1- Shape :

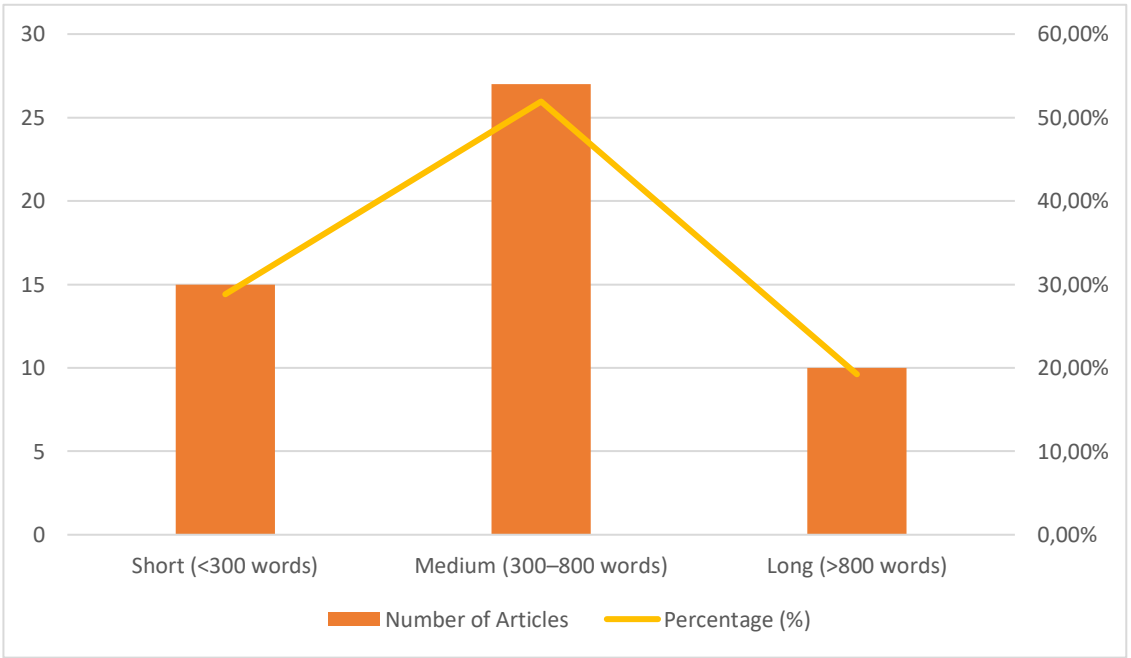
1.1 Article length:

Table (7): Classification of Articles by Length in the Xinhua Africa Section.

Article Length	Number of Articles	Percentage (%)
Short (<300 words)	15	28.85%
Medium (300–800 words)	27	51.92%
Long (>800 words)	10	19.23%

Source: Author's own work.

Figure (10): Distribution of Article Lengths in the Xinhua Africa Section.



Source: Author's own work.

Descriptive Analysis:

The data reveal that a clear majority of the articles published by Xinhua are of medium length, with 27 out of 52 articles falling within 300- 800 word range. This suggests that Xinhua prefers a dominant editorial for medium sized reporting. In contrast, 15 articles (28.85%) were classified as short, containing fewer than 300 words, such as the shortest article in our sample "Djiboutian president arrives in Beijing for 2024 FOCAC summit", which comprised only 77 words. As for long-form articles exceeding 800 words, accounted for 10 of the totals (19.23%), with the longest article "(FOCAC)Explainer: What makes China and Africa natural green partners" reaching 1292 words.

Critical Interpretation:

The predominance of medium length articles and the selective use of long form reporting within Xinhua's Africa coverage reflect a technique and a deliberate editorial strategy. They achieve a calculated balance between detail and accessibility which serves the geopolitical objectives of China's Media Diplomacy, supporting our first hypothesis that posits the predominance of positive framing, and our second hypothesis that suggests China is portrayed as a solution-oriented partner in Africa.

In addition to that, with approximately 300-800 words articles, Xinhua ensures the articles remain digestible for boarder audiences and at the same time constructs controlled narratives and express its ideology around infrastructure investment, trades and economy, health cooperation. Meanwhile, short articles give only the information.

Moreover, long articles while fewer in number, are strategically deployed for ideological deep dives, this signals seriousness and legitimacy in the diplomatic contexts. Also, these texts elevate Xinhua's voice from that of a simple observer to an active participant in international discourse.

Importantly, length serves as a framing intensifier, repetition of strategic keywords becomes more impactful in longer formats, which can help positively in enhancing China's image in Africa.

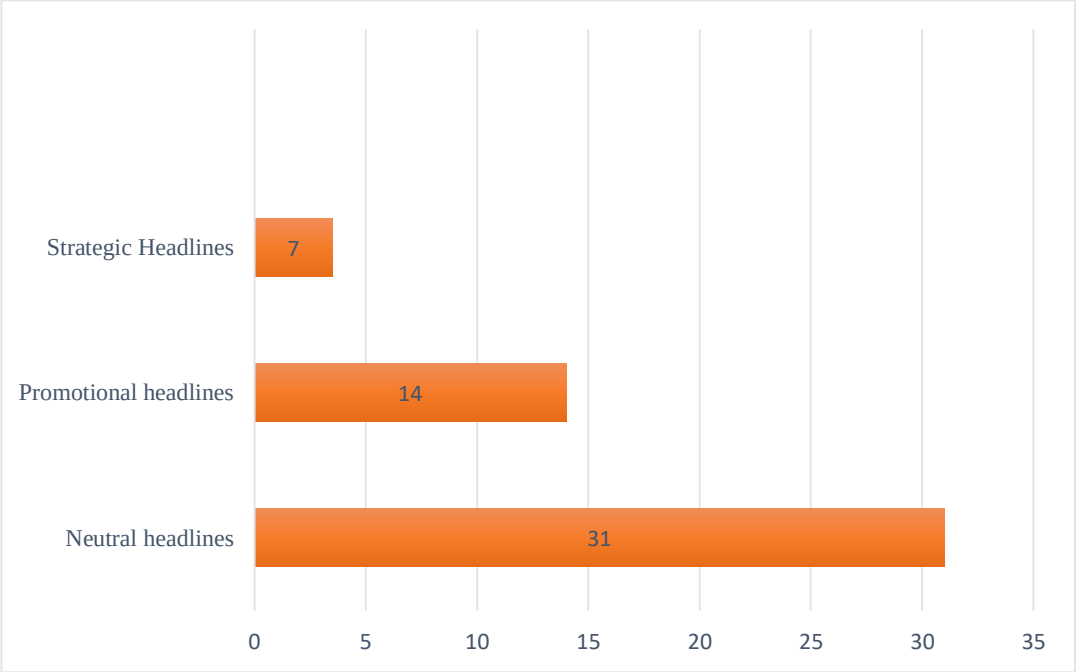
1.2 Headline Style:

Table (8): Headline Style Categories in Xinhua Africa Coverage.

Headline Style	Number of Articles	Percentage (%)
Neutral Headlines	31	59.62%
Promotional Headlines	14	26.92%
Strategic Headlines	7	13.46%

Source: Author's own work.

Figure (11): Horizontal bar chart showing the number of articles under each headline style.



Source: Author's own work.

Descriptive Analysis:

The data shows that neutral headlines are the dominant stylistic choice in Xinhua's coverage of Africa during the study period. We note that the majority of headlines used in the analyzed articles are neutral, with 31 out of 52 articles (59.62%) falling under this category. Promotional headlines come second with 14 articles (26.92%), while strategic headlines are the least frequent, appearing in 7 articles (13.46%). Neutral headlines typically present straightforward information without emotionally or ideologically loaded language. Promotional headlines emphasize achievements, partnerships, or assistance efforts, while strategic headlines incorporate broader geopolitical or ideological themes.

Critical analysis:

The dominance of neutral headlines reflects Xinhua's effort to project credibility and objectivity, which is essential in fulfilling its role as an important Chinese media diplomacy tool by aligning itself with international journalistic norms, making its content trustworthy when adopting a neutral tone. This functions as a deliberate technique: rather than overtly promoting Chinese ideology, the agency embeds such narratives more subtly within the article body.

Promotional headlines overtly construct China's image as a solution provider and development partner. These headlines are deigned to promote positive affect by highlighting China's active role in addressing African issues and challenges through investments, infrastructure, health cooperation and agricultural ais…which draws attention to the benefits of China's involvement and directs readers toward an interpretation of China as a strategic actor in Africa, and as we mentioned before this is the main purpose of Chinese media diplomacy in Africa.

Strategic headlines are limited; however, they carry an ideological weight. They often invoke terms such as win-win cooperation…which implicitly position the relation between China and Africa in a friendship and cooperation frame. Thus, it enhances China public image in Africa.

Overall, the variation in headline style illustrates a strategic layering of rhetorical tools, neutral headlines establish trust, promotional headlines generate positive sentiment, and strategic headlines embed ideological narratives. This tactic enhances the diplomatic efficacy of media discourse, positioning China as not only an economic partner, but also a political actor on the African continent.

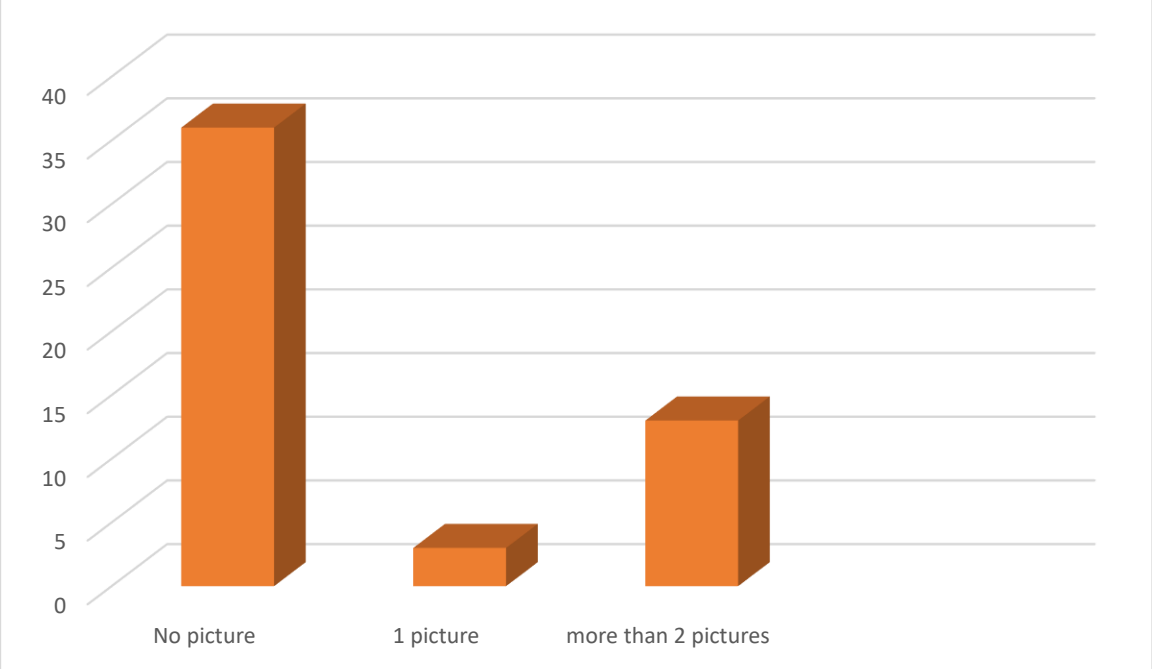
1.3 Picture Presence:

Table (9): Picture Presence in Xinhua Africa Articles.

Picture Presence	Number of Articles	Percentage (%)
No Picture	36	69.23%
1 Picture	3	5.77%
2≥ Pictures	13	25.00%

Source: Author's own work.

Figure (12): Visual Representation of Picture Usage Frequency in Xinhua Africa Coverage.



Source: Author's own work.

Descriptive Analysis:

The data reveals that 36 of the 52 articles (96.23%) carry no image at all, which suggests that text remains the primary dominant tool used in Xinhua news articles. We note that three articles (5.77%) include a single picture and 13 articles (25%) contain two or more pictures.

Critical Analysis:

The heavy reliance on text signals a deliberate preference for tight narrative control: without visuals, Xinhua can guide readers through carefully chosen language that defines problems, assigns causes, and proposes remedies . That's being said, Xinhua doesn't use many pictures because it's easier to control the narrative with only text. This helps them be more precise and save money, but it makes them look less transparent. Maybe they don't have enough journalists in Africa or don't want to buy photos. However, this interpretation is not uniformly supported by field evidence. In this context, we interviewed Mr. Ramy Kamar, a Chinese/English/Arabic translator and news video editor at Xinhua News Agency's Middle East Regional to gain a practitioner's perspective on editorial routines. Mr. Kamar has Successfully translated 350 interviews, edited over 3,200 news videos and Conducted 5 interviews with experts within his work at Xinhua. When asked about staff capacity, Mr.

Ramy Kamar, news video editor at Xinhua's Middle East Regional Bureau, clarified: "I can't answer this question fully because I don't have information about Xinhua's offices in other African countries. However, in Egypt, we have a reporting team that covers many news events and conducts numerous interviews. So, for Egypt, we do not have a limited journalistic presence. But I'm not sure about the situation in other offices."[1] This suggests that, at least in some locations, Xinhua does maintain sufficient journalistic resources, and the lack of visuals may be more a matter of editorial strategy or cost-saving than a strict consequence of staff shortages.

1.4 Picture Type :

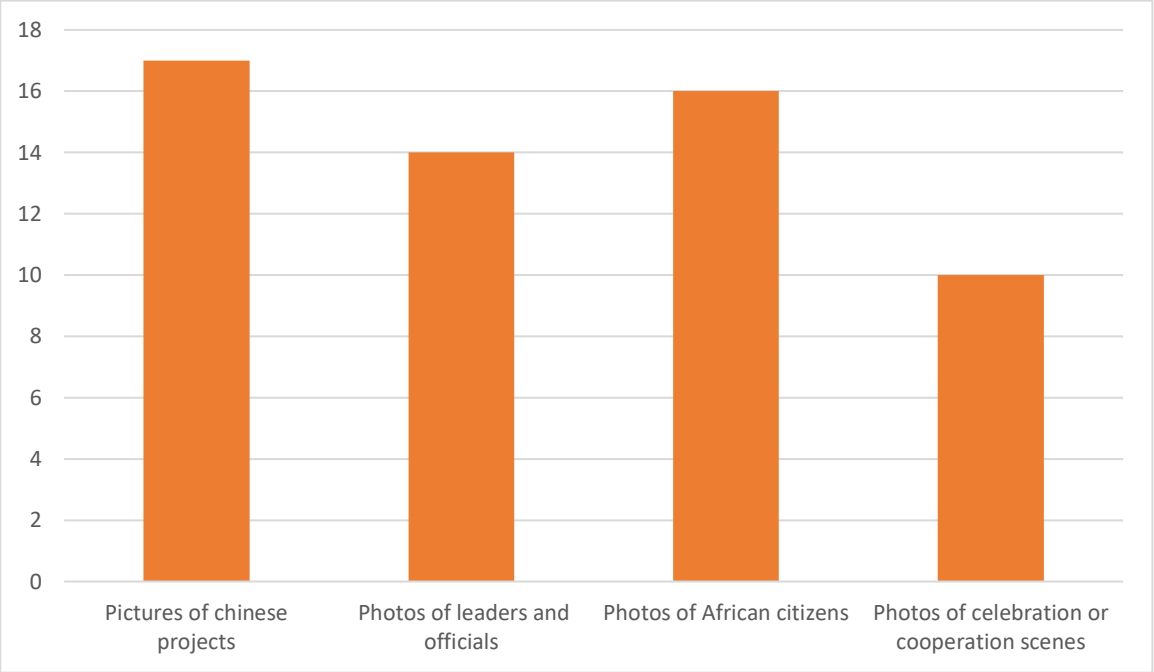
Table (10): Picture Types in Articles with Images.

Picture Type	Number of Articles
Photos of Chinese projects	**17**
Photos of leaders and officials	**14**
Photos of African citizens	**16**
Photos of celebration or cooperation scenes	**10**

Source: Author's own work.

[1] Ramy Kamar (Chinese/English/Arabic Translator and News Video Editor, Xinhua News Agency Middle East Regional Bureau, Cairo**), interview by the author**, May 30th, 2025.

Figure (13): Comparative Visualization of Picture Types in the Articles



Source: Author's own work.

Descriptive Analysis:

We note that, among the articles containing images, photos of Chinese-funded projects are the most frequent, appearing in 17 articles. Images of African citizens follow closely with 16 articles, while leaders and officials are pictured in 14 articles. Celebration or cooperation scenes are the least common, present in 10 articles.

Critical Analysis:

Xinhua strategically uses visual content to validate narratives about development and positions China as a practical partner in Africa as we mentioned before, by balancing images of Chinese projects with local beneficiaries. Showing Chinese projects most often is a proof of China's concrete contributions in Africa, making the solution provider frame instantly credible. Similarly, images of African citizens signal the genuine partnership, while leaders and officials pictures serve a dual purpose: they authenticate policy announcements and visually enact high-level reciprocity. Moreover, the share of celebration or cooperation scenes is a direct way to illustrate China as Africa partner. Thus, it enhances positively China's image within African audiences. Notably, China maintains a consistent visual presence across all image categories, whether through infrastructure, leadership, or ceremonial gatherings, subtly reinforcing its dominance and centrality in the portrayed partnerships. This omnipresence underscores a

broader strategy of narrative control, visually anchoring China at the center of the Sino-African relationship.

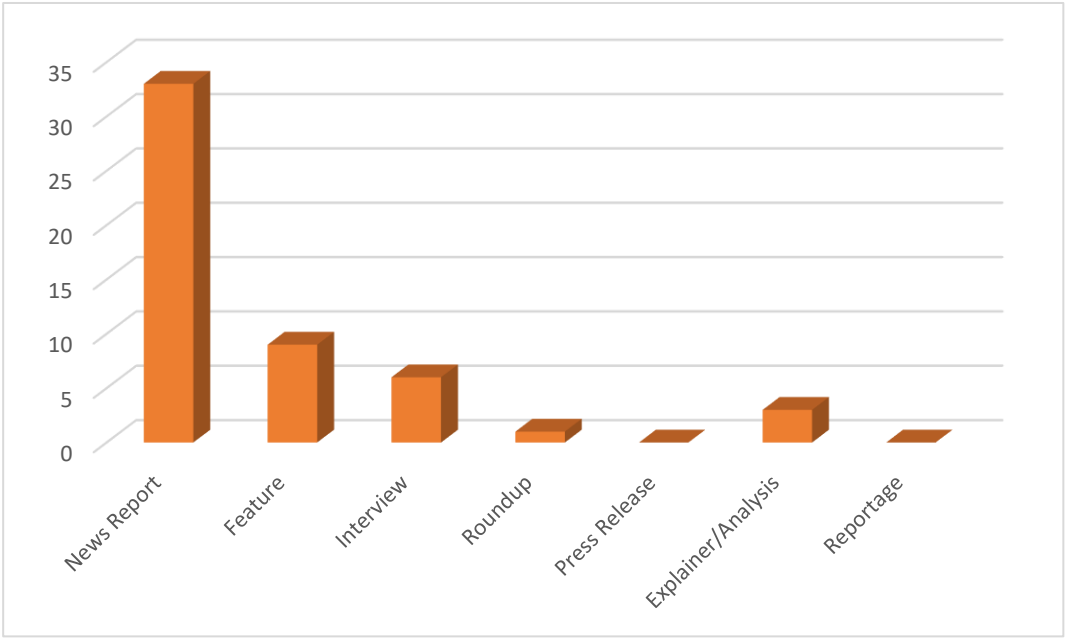
1.5 Article Format: (genre)

Table (11): Article Format Distribution

Article Format	Number of Articles	Percentage
News Report	**33**	**63.46%**
Feature	**9**	**17.31%**
Interview	**6**	**11.54%**
Press Release	**0**	**0%**
Roundup	**1**	**1.92%**
Explainer/Analysis	**3**	**5.77%**
Reportage	**0**	**0%**

Source: Author's own work.

Figure (14): Graphical Distribution of Article Formats.



Source: Author's own work.

Descriptive Analysis:

Data reveals that news reports dominate the sample, accounting for 33 of 52 articles (63.46 %). Features follow with 9 articles (17.31 %), and interviews come next at 6 (11.54 %). The remaining formats are marginal: explainers/analyses appear in 3 articles (5.77 %), round-ups in 1 (1.92 %), while press releases and reportages are entirely absent.

Critical analysis:

The use of diverse article formats supports multiple stratigic objectives. News reports give fact focused updates that feel objective which deliver credibility.Features and interviews put faces and stories to the facts. It enhances China's public image through showing African farmers, doctors or officials speaking about chinese help, they paint China as a practical problem solver and a respectful partner that believes in Unity and Solidarity. Similarly, explainers help Xinhua to get in depth and give more details about chinese project in the continent, which reinforce the idea that China understands African issues and always offor solution. Thus, it positions China as authoritative and trustworthy which automatically enhance it's image in Africa.

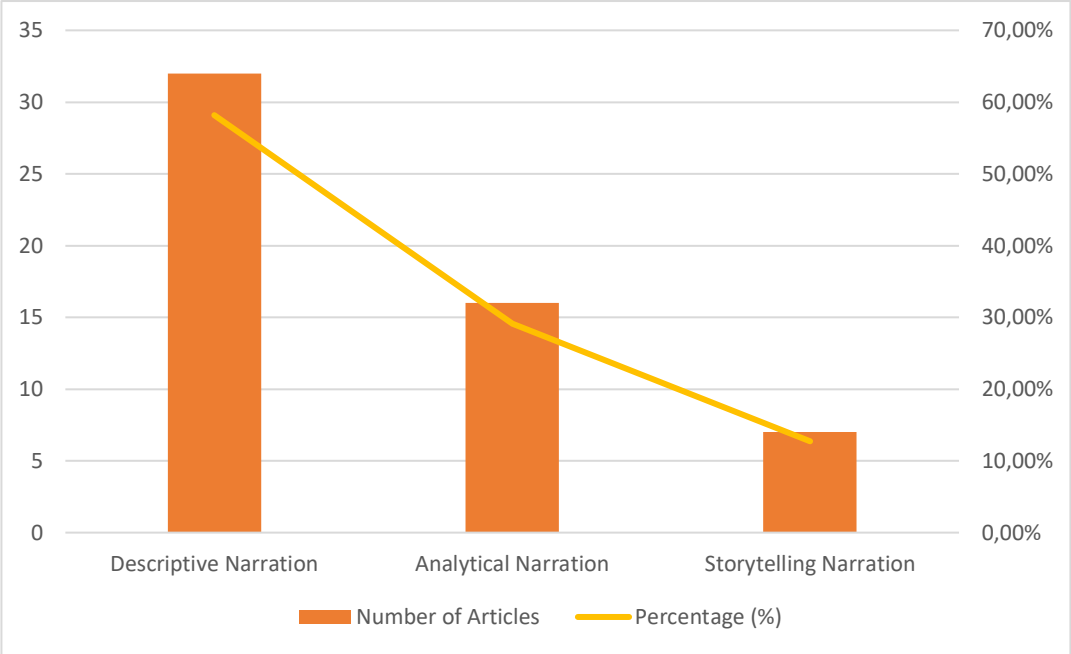
1.6 Narrative Style:

Table (12): Narrative Style Distribution

Narrative Style	Number of Articles	Percentage (%)
Descriptive Narration	32	58.18%
Analytical Narration	16	29.09%
Storytelling Narration	7	12.73%

Source: Author's own work.

Figure (15): Breakdown of Narrative Styles Used in the Articles: Descriptive, Analytical, and Storytelling



Source: Author's own work.

Descriptive Analysis:

We note that descriptive narration is the most common style, appears significantly across our dataset used in 32 of the 52 articles (42.3 %). Analytical pieces come next with 16 articles (38.5 %), and story-telling narration appears in 7 articles (19.2 %).

Critical analysis:

The predominance of the descriptive writing style across Xinhua's coverage is a direct outcome of its reliance on news reports. Furthermore, the descriptive narration sticks to facts which allows Xinhua to build a look of straight, objective reporting and offers factual clarity and credibility that reinforces Xinhua's image as a neutral and trustworthy source of information. Analytical narration adds the why matters angle. Through choosing this narration, Xinhua explains causes and effects which position China as a proactive solution provider. Moreover, storytelling articles are fewer, but they give the news a human face. It powerfully humanizes China's involvement in Africa, and help engaging audiences and vividly illustrate positive impact on individual lives. Overall, these narrative styles cohesively align with China's media diplomacy goals which is shaping China's public in African content.

2. Substantive Characteristics (Content)

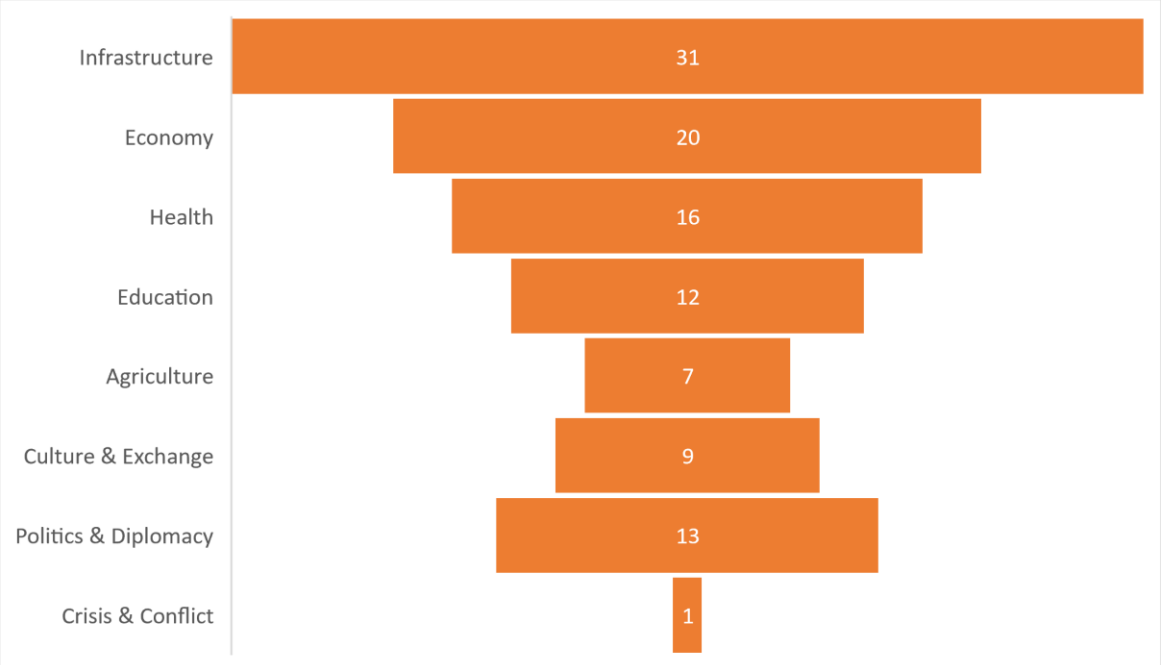
2.1. General Primary Topics

Table (13): General Primary Topics Covered in Articles.

Topic	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Infrastructure	31	59.62%
Economy	20	38.46%
Health	16	30.77%
Education	12	23.08%
Agriculture	7	13.46%
Culture & Exchange	9	17.31%
Politics & Diplomacy	13	25.00%
Crisis & Conflict	1	1.92%

Source: Author's own work.

Figure (16): Frequency of Primary Topics Covered in Xinhua Africa Section (September–December 2024)



Source: Author's own work.

Descriptive Analysis:

The table below shows proportion of total topic mentions and not proportion of articles. That's being said, one article may involve more than one topic. We see from the data that our 52 sampled articles focus predominantly on infrastructure, which makes up nearly two-thirds of the sample (31 articles out of 52, or 59.62%). Economic themes are the next most prominent, featured in 20 articles (38.46%). Health-oriented reporting accounts for 16 articles (30.77%), while political/diplomatic articles comprise 13 (25%). Education is present in 12 articles (23.08%), culture and cultural exchange in 9 articles (17.31%), and agriculture in 7 articles (13.46%). Crisis and conflict-oriented reporting remains marginal, comprising only 1 article (1.92%).

Critical analysis:

Across the articles studied, nearly two-thirds (31/52) focus on infrastructure, which supports our first hypothesis. This discursive emphasis aligns directly with China's real-world investments in African media and telecommunication infrastructure, as discussed in the literature review. Through initiatives like DSR, China has embedded itself in Africa's digital ecosystem via strategic projects led by Huawei and ZTE, often financed by the China Exim Bank. Similarly, platforms like StarTimes have enabled Chinese narratives to dominate the broadcasting space across 30 African countries.

Economic themes are also highly salient, appearing in 20 articles (38.46%). Over the past two decades, China has emerged as Africa's largest bilateral trading partner, accounting for approximately 20% of sub-Saharan Africa's exports and 16% of its imports. Trade volume peaked at $282 billion in 2023, driven largely by Africa's export of raw materials and China's export of manufactured goods and machinery.1

Moreover, as China transitions from state-led to private-sector-driven investment within the frameworks of the BRI and AfCFTA, the need to sustain Africa as a growing export market becomes even more important. This strategic logic explains why economic narratives dominate the corpus.

1 Chido Munyati, "Why Strong Regional Value Chains Will Be Vital to the Next Chapter of China and Africa's Economic Relationship," **World Economic Forum**, June 25, 2024, retrieved May 30, 2025,at 7:22 a.m., available from:

These activate the solution provider and strategic partner frame. Xinhua, by saturating its output with these topics, delivers what we mentioned before, as Entman calls “salience”: repeatedly defining problems and offering Chinese remedies.

Crisis or conflict appears in only one article (number 16), which means critical frames are intentionally minimized. Thus, it aligns with Entman’s framing principles that we mentioned earlier: omission. Smaller but steady attention to culture and diplomacy strengthens the Unity and Solidarity frame by highlighting shared values and people-to-people ties.

In strategic terms, as we outlined in our literature review, Xinhua’s selective visibility sets an agenda that elevates China as indispensable to Africa’s progress, strategically shapes narratives emphasizing cooperation, unity, friendship and solidarity.

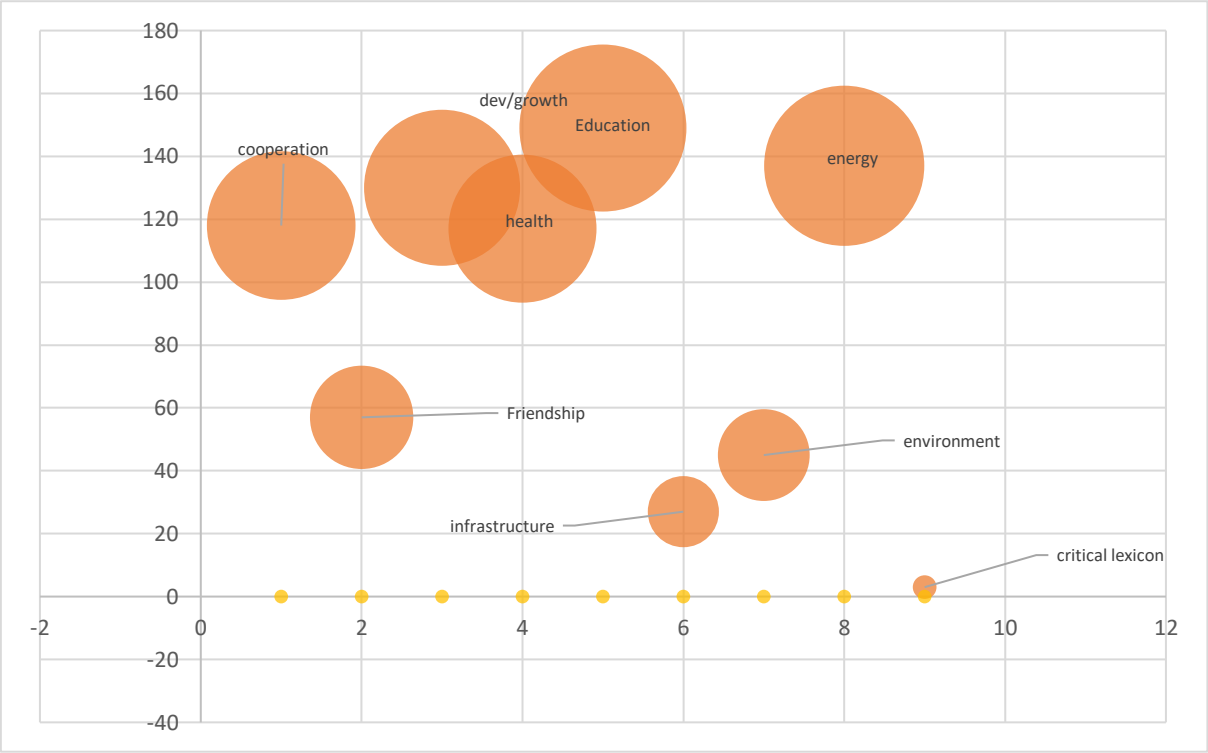
2.2 Specific Thematic Keywords Presence:

Table (14): Thematic Keyword Frequency Based on Tropes Data.

Theme	Number of Repetitions
Cooperation (Cooperation, Partnership)	118
Friendship (Friends, friendship, mutual respect)	57
Development, Growth	130
Health (Medecine, hospitals…)	117
Education (Training, school..)	149
Infrastructure (Construction, Road, Railway)	27
Environment (Climate Change, Environment, Flood)	45
Energy (Electricity, Energy, Solar)	137
Critical Lexicon	3 (minimal)

Source: Tropes Software.

Figure (17): Frequency of Key Themes in Xinhua's Africa Coverage (Sept 1–Dec 1, 2024)



Source: Author's own work.

Descriptive Analysis:

The lexical analysis of our articles using Tropes shows that the terms cooperation/ partnership and development/ growth each appear 188 and 130 times respectively. Other high visibility themes include energy (137 repetitions), health (117 repetitions), and education/ training (149 repetitions). References to infrastructure (29) and environment (45) occur at moderate levels, while friendship/mutual respect registers 57 mentions. In stark contrast, explicit critical vocabulary appears only three times.

Critical analysis:

The intensive use of cooperation and development themes, together with high frequency of energy, health and education keywords, amplifies the solution provider frame. Through these thematic words, Xinhua foregrounds China as a constructive, problem-solving partner for Africa. According to Entman's salience principle, the sheer volume of positive lexicon repeatedly suggests remedies aligned with Chinese media diplomacy objectives.

Finally, the presence of friendship and mutual respect vocabulary underpins the Unity and Solidarity frame and supports.

Overall, high-frequency positive lexicon constructs an image of China as an indispensable development ally, while critical terms are systematically minimized.

2.3 Language Features:

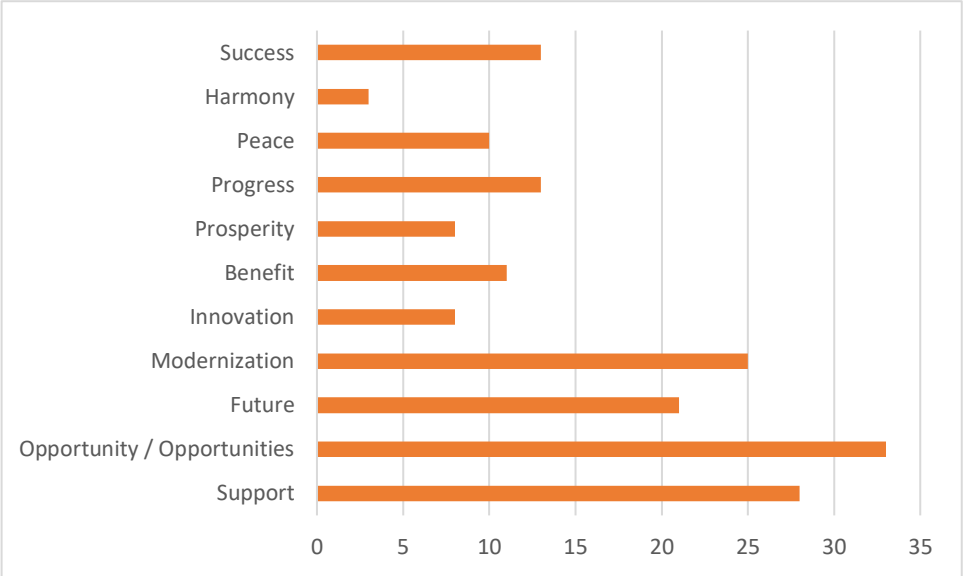
2.3.1 Presence of Positive Lexicon:

Table (15): Positive Lexicon Frequency Based on Tropes Data

Keyword	Repetitions	% of this positive-noun set (n = 173)
Support	28	16.2 %
Opportunity / Opportunities	33	19.1 %
Future	21	12.1 %
Modernization	25	14.5 %
Innovation	8	4.6 %
Benefit	11	6.4 %
Prosperity	8	4.6 %
Progress	13	7.5 %
Peace	10	5.8 %
Harmony	3	1.7 %
Success	13	7.5 %

Source: Tropes Software.

Figure (18): Bar Graph Illustrating the Frequency of Positive Lexicon.



Source: Author's own work.

Descriptive Analysis:

The data shows among the 173 explicitly positive nouns detected by Tropes in the corpus, the most common are opportunity/opportunities with 33 occurrences, support repeated 28 times and modernization with 25 occurrences. Meanwhile, both progress and success appeared 13 times each, benefit (11) and peace (10) appear slightly less often. Low incidence words; innovation (8), prosperity (8) and harmony (3) round out the set.

Critical Analysis:

The prevalence of opportunity, support and modernization animates the Solution provider and strategic partner frame. For instance, in the article "(FOCAC)Explainer: What makes China and Africa natural green partners", Xinhua states that China has set the pace in international green cooperation with Africa, creating significant opportunities for African countries to advance sustainable development, explicitly coupling cooperation with opportunities with modernization rhetoric. We mentioned in our previous chapters why these matters, according to Entman, repeated, prominent words guide audiences toward the wanted remedy which is China as solver of Africa's development gaps.

Even lower frequency words such as peace and harmony, reinforce the unity and solidarity frame, which is one of the Pan African values. For instance, in the article "China wins applause for peace support operations in Africa", Xinhua states that "African Union (AU) and Ethiopian

officials have commended China's "unwavering support and role" in helping realize peace and security across Africa", explicitly showing that China promotes peace and harmony between African countries. Thus, we can say that this is one of the aspects where Media diplomacy is used to enhance the Chinese public image in Africa.

Overall, Xinhua, by strategically using this lexicon, aligns with Gilboa's definition of Media diplomacy as we mentioned it previously in our literature review.

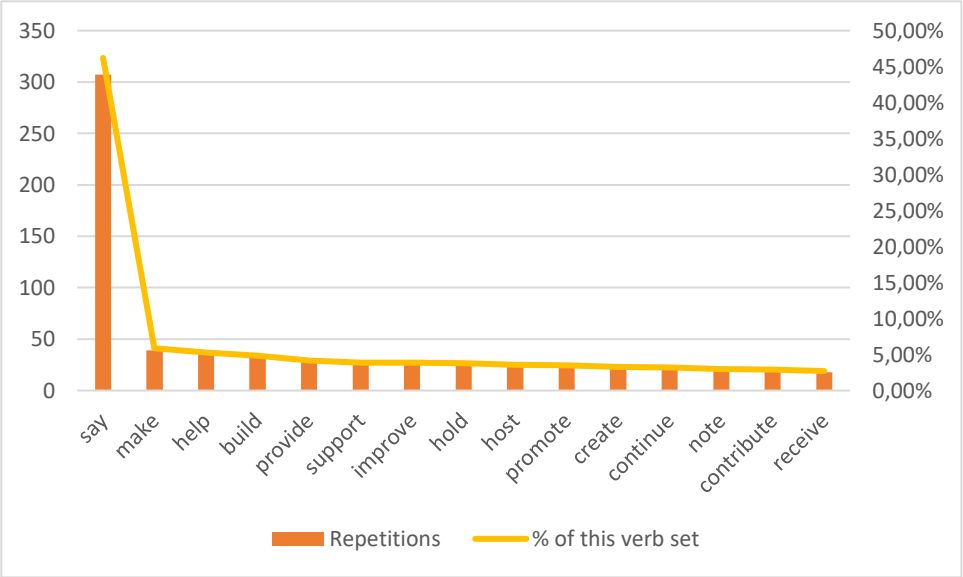
2.3.2 Type of Verbs Predominant

Table (16) : Predominant Verb Types in Articles

Verb	Repetitions	% of this verb set
Say	**307**	**46.2 %**
Make	39	5.9 %
Help	35	5.3 %
Build	32	4.8 %
Provide	28	4.2 %
Support	26	3.9 %
Improve	26	3.9 %
Hold	25	3.8 %
Host	24	3.6 %
Promote	23	3.5 %
Create	22	3.3 %
Continue	21	3.2 %
Note	20	3.0 %
Contribute	19	2.9 %
Receive	18	2.7 %

Source: Tropes Software.

Figure (19): Frequency Graph of Predominant Verbs Used in Xinhua Articles as Analyzed by TROPES.



Source: Author's own work.

Descriptive Analysis:

The Tropes data reveal, within the 664 verbs recorded, say dominates by a wide margin (307 uses); next is make (39), help (35), build (32), provide (28), support and improve (26 each); clusters around action verbs that connote assistance and construction. Another tier, hold, host, promote, create, continue, note, contribute and receive, appears between 25 and 18, rounding out the lexicon with verbs that emphasize sustained collaboration and acknowledgment.

Critical Analysis:

The high frequency of the verb say (307 occurrences) serves as a neutral attribution device and a tool of selective salience, allowing Xinhua to foreground authoritative voices. Thus, the cumulative effect is the construction of China as strategic partner and a solution provider.

Verbs such as help, support and provide amplify China's image as a supportive actor offering tangible development aid. For instance, the article "Chinese training program helps Tanzania's Zanzibar improve pediatric treatment", the verb "help" here places China as an active problem solver. Moreover, the verbs build and improve emphasize infrastructural commitment and progress, aligning with the logic of South-South cooperation. As an example, Xinhua states "building the China-Ghana Friendship Hospital", "build infrastructure that not only meets the

needs of today but also paves the way for a brighter and more sustainable future", which allows her to portray China as an active and powerful actor who speaks and acts.

However, the overwhelming dominance of discursive verb "say" compared to action ones, suggests a potential misalignment between China's projected role and its actual engagement in Africa. While the language of support and construction is present, its frequency and specificity are significantly lower than rhetorical declarations. This imbalance raises critical questions regarding the depth, scale, and transparency of China's concrete commitments on the ground. In this sense, Xinhua's language strategy may risk inflating China's soft power image without fully substantiating its operational footprint.

Therefore, Xinhua uses mass communication strategically to shape perspective about China in Africa, which aligns, as we mentioned in our literature review, with what Gilboa calls Media diplomacy. Meanwhile, verbs like "hold" and "host" activate the Unity and Solidarity frame. Overall, these lexical choices are not coincidental, they constitute a discursive construction of legitimacy and influence under the guise of objectivity.

2.3.3 Most Frequent Adjectives:

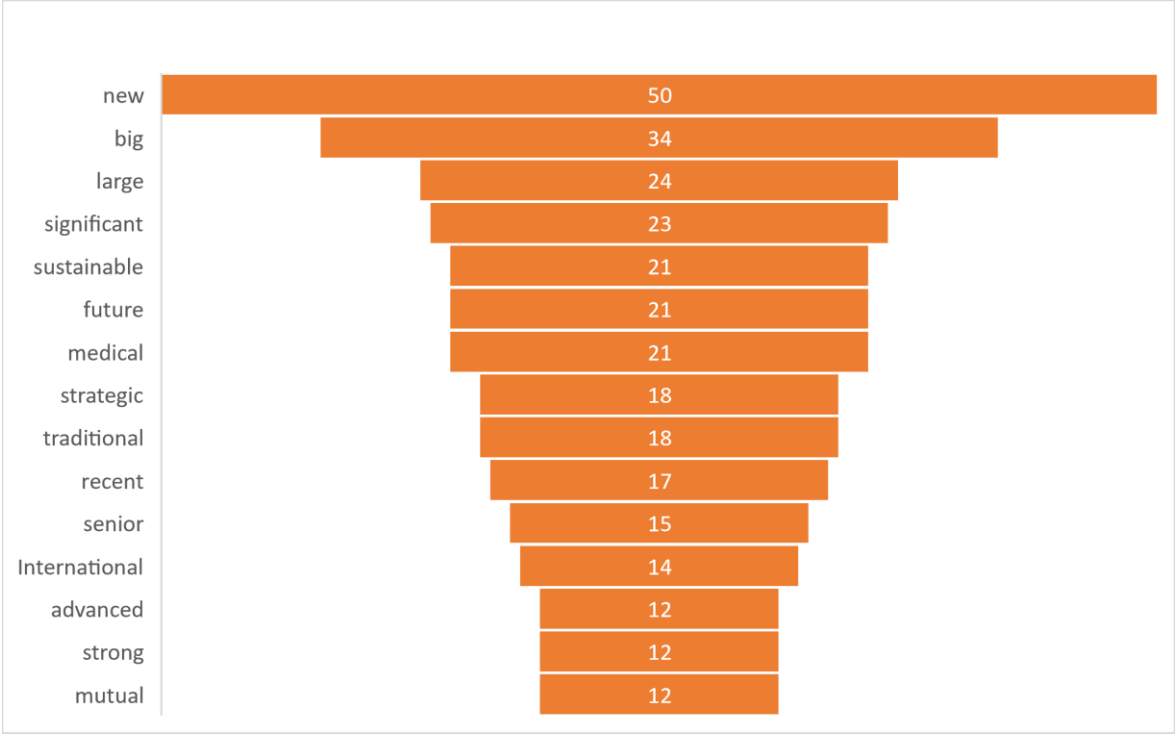
Table (17): Most Frequent Adjectives in Articles.

Adjective	Repetitions	% of this set
New	**50**	**16.0 %**
Big	**34**	**10.9 %**
Large	**24**	**7.7 %**
Significant	**23**	**7.4 %**
Sustainable	**21**	**6.7 %**
Future	**21**	**6.7 %**
Medical	**21**	**6.7 %**
Strategic	**18**	**5.8 %**
Traditional	**18**	**5.8 %**

Recent	**17**	**5.4 %**
Senior	**15**	**4.8 %**
International	**14**	**4.5 %**
Advanced	**12**	**3.8 %**
Strong	**12**	**3.8 %**
Mutual	**12**	**3.8 %**

Source: Tropes Software.

Figure (20): Chart Displaying the Most Common Adjectives Across the Corpus and Their Relative Proportions



Source: Author's own work.

Descriptive Analysis:

We note that out of 312 coded adjectives, "new" tops the list with 50 occurrences (16 %). Scale-words such as "big" (34; 10.9 %) and "large" (24; 7.7 %) follow, while positively charged qualifiers dominate the remainder: "significant" (23; 7.4 %), "sustainable," "future," and "medical" (21 each; 6.7 %), plus "strategic," "traditional," "recent," "senior," "international," "advanced," "strong," and "mutual."

Critical analysis:

The repetitive use of the adjective “new” by Xinhua, constructs a discourse of progress, modernity and renewal. It reinforces the Chinese ideology in Africa as we outlined in our literature review; China as an equal partner to Africa, a provider of modern solutions which aims to mutual benefit and shared prosperity. It also creates an implicit comparison with the old western alternatives without directly naming them. Moreover, this aligns with the framing theory principle; defining problems, diagnoses cause, makes judgments and suggest remedies. For instance, Xinhua sets in the article “(FOCAC)Explainer: What makes China and Africa natural green partners” that “As China's green industry, particularly its new energy vehicle (NEV) sector, continues to thrive” here, new subtly does all four.

Also, as we mentioned in our last chapter that according to Entman, frequent and prominent adjectives steer readers toward a preferred interpretation. Hence, adjectives like “mutual” and “traditional” bloster the unity and solidarity frame, invoking shared values and long-standing ties.

Overall, the use of scale adjectives such as “big” and “large” makes Chinese projects sound ambitious, while impact adjectives like “significant” and “strong” stress how much they matter. Forward-looking terms “sustainable,” “future,” “advanced,” “strategic,” “international,” and the health-specific “medical” present China as a high-tech partner offering long-term solutions. Timeliness and authority come from practical descriptors such as “recent”.

We note the absence of negative qualifiers such as *controversial, disputed, costly*, which mirrors earlier lexical asymmetry and further confirms that Xinhua suppresses descriptive cues that could invite critical readings.

2.3.4 USF frame lexicon:

Table (18): USF Frame Lexicon Frequency

Slogan-like Phrase	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Partnership / cooperation / collaborate	320	80.4%
Unity	28	7.0%
Shared prosperity / shared future	14	3.5%
Win-win cooperation	12	3.0%
Mutual respect / trust / equality	10	2.5%
Solidarity	8	2.0%
Peace / security / stability	6	1.5%

Source: Tropes Software.

Figure (21): Distribution Chart of Unity and Solidarity Frame Phrases in the Corpus.



Source: Author's own work.

Descriptive Analysis:

According to Tropes data, we note in the unity and solidarity frame word-bank: partnership/ cooperation/ collaborate appear for more than any other terms, showing up 320 times. The next

most common phrases are "shared prosperity/shared future" (14), "win-win cooperation" (12), "mutual respect/ trust/ equality" (10) and "unity" (28). Less frequent but still present are "solidarity" (8) and "peace/ security/ stability" (6).

Critical analysis:

The data proves that Xinhua leans hard on these terms to promote the idea of China and Africa moving forward together, exactly what USF hypothesis predicts. The repetition of "partnership" hundreds of times, for instance the article "Feature: Business insiders commend Cairo's Pharmaconex Exhibition for strengthening partnerships between Egypt, China"keeps China and Africa on equal footing in readers perspectives. Moreover, phrases like "win-win cooperation" and "shared future" underline the same important point: both sides benefit. The use of "solidarity" and "peace and stability"-even when less common- add moral weight to the message of harmony.

Thus, we can say that these phrases strategically invoke culturally and ideologically resonant frames, emphasizing mutual benefit, equality, and collective prosperity, echoing Entman's (1993) cultural and ideological alignment principle.

In this context, when asked about the use of USF terms, Mr. Kamar stated that they are often mentioned by both Chinese leaders and foreign officials, thus are shaped organically by reporters on the ground and news editors.[1] This confirms that Xinhua's frequent use of these terms mirrors the language of Chinese leaders; as a state-controlled media outlet, Xinhua's editorial choices are closely aligned with official discourse.

2.3.5 Frames:

Table (19): Frame Intensity per Article

Article Number	China as a Solution-Provider and Strategic Partner	Critical frame (Debt-trap - Western criticism)	Unity-&-Solidarity Pan-African values (USF)
1	**High**	None	**High**
2	**High**	None	None
3	**High**	*Low*	*Medium*

[1] Ramy Kamar, interview by the author, May 30, 2025.

4	**High**	None	*Low*
5	*Medium*	None	*Medium*
6	**High**	None	*Medium*
7	**High**	None	*Medium*
8	**High**	None	**High**
9	**High**	None	*Medium*
10	**High**	None	*Medium*
11	**High**	None	*Medium*
12	**High**	None	*Medium*
13	**High**	None	*Low*
14	**High**	None	*Low*
15	**High**	None	*Medium*
16	**High**	None	**High**
17	*Medium*	None	*Low*
18	**High**	None	*Low*
19	**High**	None	*Medium*
20	**High**	None	*Low*
21	**High**	None	*Medium*
22	**High**	None	*Medium*
23	**High**	None	*Medium*
24	**High**	None	*Medium*
25	**High**	None	*Medium*
26	**High**	None	*Medium*
27	**High**	None	**High**
28	**High**	None	**High**

29	**High**	None	**High**
30	**High**	None	**High**
31	**High**	None	**High**
32	**High**	None	*Medium*
33	**High**	None	*Medium*
34	**High**	None	**High**
35	**High**	None	**High**
36	**High**	None	**High**
37	**High**	None	*Medium*
38	**High**	None	**High**
39	**High**	None	*Medium*
40	**High**	None	**High**
41	**High**	None	*Medium*
42	**High**	None	*Medium*
43	**High**	None	*Medium*
44	**High**	None	*Medium*
45	**High**	None	*Medium*
46	**High**	None	*Medium*
47	**High**	None	**High**
48	**High**	None	**High**
49	**High**	None	*Medium*
50	**High**	None	*Medium*
51	*Medium*	None	**High**
52	**High**	None	**High**

Source: Author's own work.

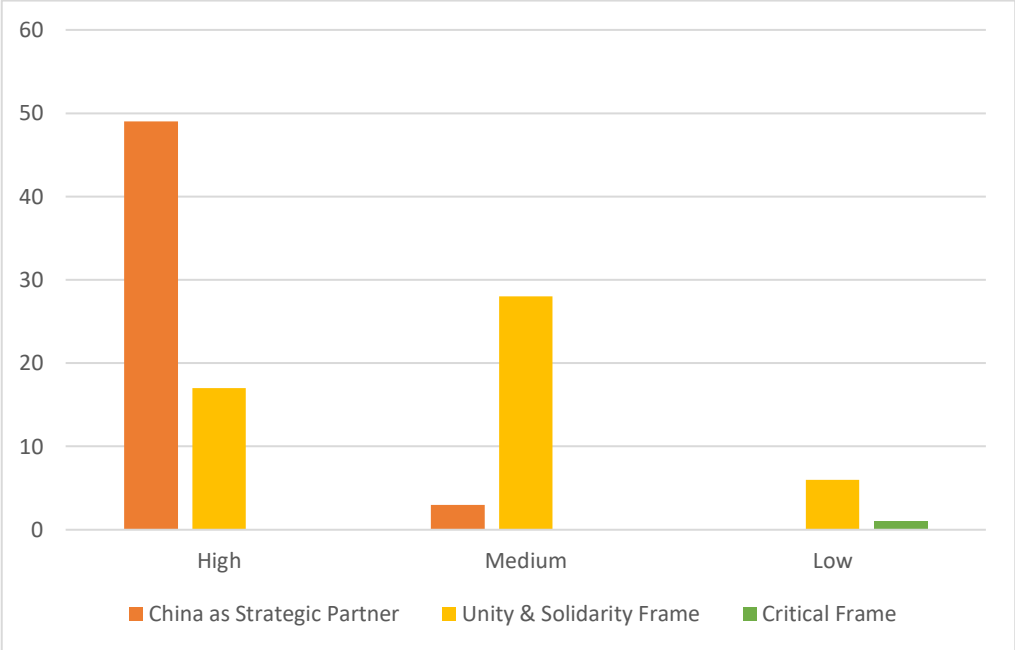
Summary Frames Table:

Table (20): Summary Table of Frame Intensities

Frame / Intensity	High	*Medium*	*Low*
China as Solution-Provider / Strategic-Partner	49 articles	3 articles (5, 17, 51)	None
Unity & Solidarity Pan-African values (USF)	17 articles	28 articles	6 articles
Critical frame	None	None	1 article

Source: Author's own work.

Figure (22): Summary Chart of Frame Intensity Across All Articles



Source: Author's own work.

Descriptive Analysis:

The table shows that out of 52 articles, 49 carry a high "China-as-Solution-Provider" score, while only 3 register as "medium" and none as "low." The critical frame is virtually absent: 51 articles show none, and just one (Article 3) shows even a low level of Western criticism. For the Unity-and-Solidarity frame, intensity is more varied, 17 high, 28 medium, 6 low, and 1 none, but still skews positive.

Critical analysis:

Across the corpus of 52 Headlines, the solution provider and Strategic Partner and strategic partner frame appears in 49 out of 52 articles. This demonstrates a deliberate strategy to keep the readers' attention squarely on Beijing's role in fixing Africa's development gaps. For instance, the article "Feature: China's aid helps Malawians rebuild lives after Cyclone Idai", Xinhua, through selection and repetition, makes China's remedial role the most salient interpretation of Sino-African relations. Typical articles such as "Chinese firms plan to increase investment in Zambia's mining sector", "Officials say Chinese investors help boost Kenya's economy" employ high impact verbs that we already mentioned in previous tables, and scale adjectives to foreground tangible benefits.

Similarly, the USF frame appears at medium to high intensity in 45 articles, frequently echoing the ideals of "win-win cooperation", "mutual respect", "shared future". Illustrative examples include "Feature: Culture center bridges Chinese, Tanzanian children, fostering friendship", here Xinhua emphasizes people-to-people ties rather than state-level transactions. Through using verbs "bridges" and "fostering", China is presented as a partner engaged in mutual cultural exchange that benefits both sides, thereby aligning with Pan-African norms of solidarity, equality and unity, and that's one of the most important Chinese media diplomacy impacts that we mentioned in our literature review, which is soft power expansion.

Conversely, the critical frame registers only once, "(FOCAC)Explainer: What makes China and Africa natural green partners", when Xinhua acknowledges Western criticism only in noting that "As China's green industry, particularly its new energy vehicle (NEV) sector, continues to thrive, Western politicians and media outlets have begun accusing China of "overcapacity," alleging it would threaten developing countries". Here, Xinhua clearly performs what Entman calls strategic omission. In a corpus of 52 articles, we only register one low intense critical frame, excluding the more potent "debt-trap" accusation identified in our literature review as the West's principal line of attack. Hence, the result is a controlled narrative that appears balanced, because even when criticism is mentioned, was used to reinforce China's credibility.

The result is a controlled narrative that appears balanced—because it admits some criticism—but in practice reinforces China's credibility by sidestepping the most damaging claim. This selective engagement with negativity further confirms Hypothesis 3: Xinhua minimizes critical frames to protect Beijing's soft-power posture while maintaining the appearance of transparency.

Overall, the frames analysis reveals Xinhua's three-pronged communication strategy;

1- To amplify China's problem solving and strategic partner image.

2- To embed unity and solidarity discourse to tap Pan African ideals.

3- To suppress and mute potentially damaging western criticism.

Thus, Xinhua enhance China's public image in Africa through tightly controlled narratives that depicts China as an indispensable, friendly and strategic partner.

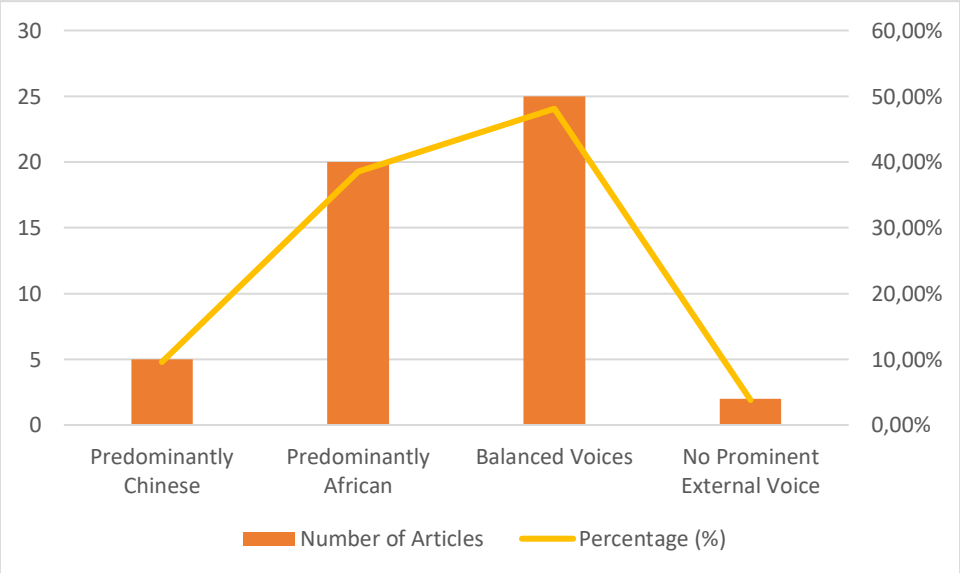
2.4 Voice Balance Description

Table (21) : Voice Balance in Articles

Voice Dominance Category	Number of Articles	Percentage
Predominantly Chinese Voices	**5**	**9.6%**
Predominantly African Voices	**20**	**38.5%**
Balanced Voices	**25**	**48.1%**
No Prominent External Voice	**2**	**3.8%**
Total	**52**	**100%**

Source: Author's own work.

Figure (23): Visual Distribution of Voice Balance Categories Across Articles



Source: Author's own work.

Descriptive Analysis:

The data shows that among our corpus, balanced voices dominate at a rate of 25 articles out of 52, while predominantly African voices appear in 20 articles. Predominantly Chinese voices are limited to 5 occurrences, and 2 articles contain no external voices.

Critical analysis

The heavy weighting toward balanced and predominantly African voices is a deliberate soft power tactic. As Mr. Ramy Kamar, news video editor at Xinhua's Middle East Office in Cairo, explained: "Local voices, especially those of regional experts, are regularly featured in our coverage. For example, when reporting on China–Egypt relations, we often consult Egyptian academics, analysts, and officials. Their perspectives are highlighted in interviews, which are then published on Xinhua's platforms, including websites and social media. In my view, voice balance is taken seriously, particularly when local context adds depth or credibility to the story." [1] This insider perspective confirms that Xinhua's editorial strategy deliberately foregrounds local and African voices to add credibility and legitimacy to its coverage.

Through highlighting African officials, expert or citizens, Xinhua instills in readers' minds development narratives as locally endorsed rather than Beijing imposed. Thereby, it reinforces the Solution provider image and the USF. For instance, the article "(FOCAC) Interview: China-Africa cooperation forum a platform for fruitful exchanges, says Senegalese president", Xinhua signals that FOCAC's value is affirmed by an African head of state. This external endorsement legitimates China's role as a solution provider and project genuine partnership.

Meanwhile, almost half of the simple is balanced quoted. For example, the article "Chinese medical team to extend free surgical treatment in Ghana", quotes both Chinese doctors and Ghanaian surgeons. Through this shared and balanced voice, Xinhua makes China look like an attentive partner and reinforces its soft power attraction.

Moreover, this calibrated voice-sharing also reflects China's cautious geopolitical posture in Africa: the dragon is careful never to contradict or confront African leadership, consistently aligning itself with local authorities to avoid political friction or jeopardizing its long-term strategic interests amid the continent's volatile governance landscapes.

[1] Ramy Kamar, interview by the author, May 30, 2025.

Conversely, through the small share of predominantly Chinese quoting, Xinhua demonstrates that China's voice is present but not overpowering, mitigating perceptions of dominance.

Overall, the voice balance serves a dual purpose; it lets African endorse China's project, which strengthens China as a strategic partner and solution provider image and avoids look of one-sided Chinese propaganda.

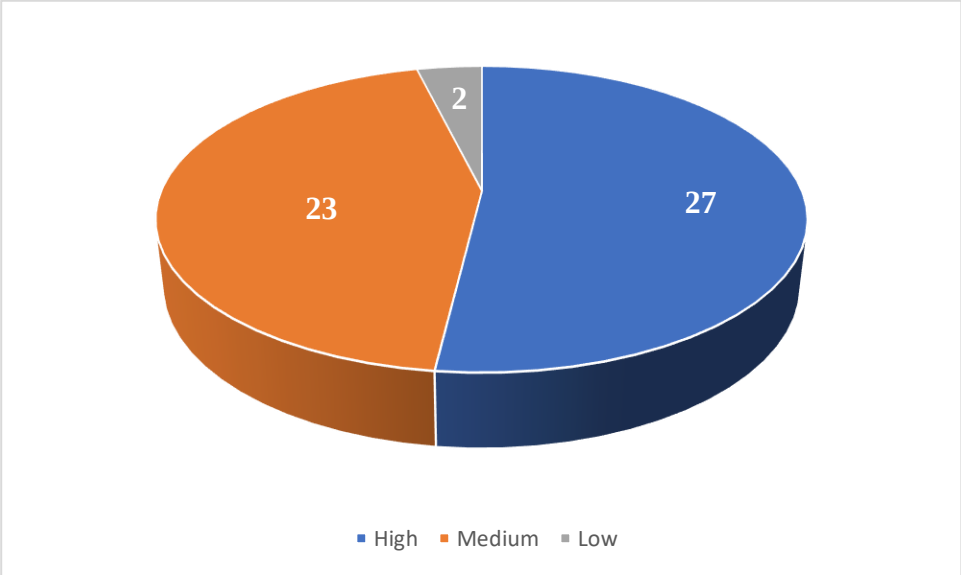
2.5 Authoritativeness of Sources :

Table (22): Authoritativeness of Sources

Authoritativeness Level	Number of Articles	Percentage (%)
High	**27**	**51.9%**
Medium	**23**	**44.2%**
Low	**2**	**3.8%**

Source: Author's own work.

Figure (24): Graph Showing the Authoritativeness Level of Sources Cited in Xinhua's Africa Coverage



Source: Author's own work.

Descriptive Analysis:

In this table, we note that out of 52 articles, 27 rely on high-level sources, heads of state, government ministers, ambassadors. 23 pieces mix top officials with mid-tier voices such as

experts, scholars, business leaders, while only 2 articles quote only low-level actors such as local individuals.

Critical analysis:

The use of high authoritativeness in over half the sample suggests that Xinhua give its stories strong official backing, when a head of state or cabinet minister for example praises a project, the message carries instant credibility. For instance, the article "Interview: China-proposed partnership actions chart path for China-Africa cooperation -- Zambian president" quotes the Zambian president praising Chinese partnership action, calling FOCAC a "path-setter", which signals that China's projects endorsed from the top, reinforcing the Solution-provider and strategic partner frame.

Meanwhile, many articles pair an authoritative quote with a medium or low one. For example, the article "Chinese medical team to extend free surgical treatment in Ghana" outlines the Chinese Ambassador and a Ghanaian Ministry of Health director, which keeps the narrative official but adds credibility and local resonance.

Moreover, two articles carry only low authoritativeness sources, that being said Xinhua prefer to quote most stories in mixed low and high or medium authoritativeness sources in order to make the narrative formal, legitimate and locally validated.

2.7 Geographical Focus

2.7.1 African countries mentioned :

Table (23): Mentions of African Countries

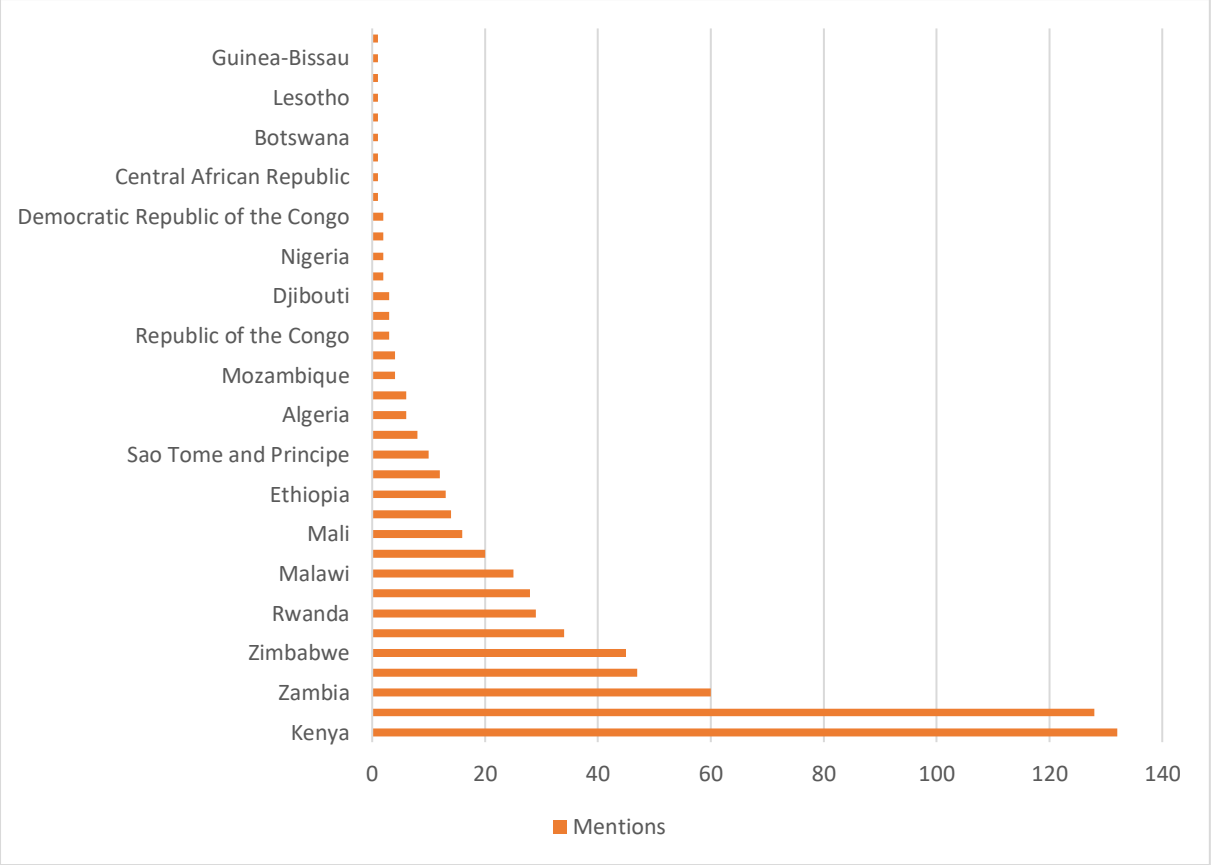
Country	Mentions	Percentage (%)
Kenya	**132**	**19.79%**
Egypt	**128**	**19.19%**
Zambia	**60**	**9.00%**
Tanzania	**47**	**7.05%**
Zimbabwe	**45**	**6.75%**
Ghana	**34**	**5.10%**

Rwanda	**29**	**4.35%**
Uganda	**28**	**4.20%**
Malawi	**25**	**3.75%**
Cameroon	**20**	**3.00%**
Mali	**16**	**2.40%**
Somalia	**14**	**2.10%**
Ethiopia	**13**	**1.95%**
Senegal	**12**	**1.80%**
Sao Tome and Principe	**10**	**1.50%**
South Africa	**8**	**1.20%**
Algeria	**6**	**0.90%**
Namibia	**6**	**0.90%**
Mozambique	**4**	**0.60%**
Niger	**4**	**0.60%**
Republic of the Congo	**3**	**0.45%**
Burundi	**3**	**0.45%**
Djibouti	**3**	**0.45%**
Guinea	**2**	**0.30%**
Nigeria	**2**	**0.30%**
Tunisia	**2**	**0.30%**
Democratic Republic of the Congo	**2**	**0.30%**
Sudan	**1**	**0.15%**
Central African Republic	**1**	**0.15%**
Chad	**1**	**0.15%**
Botswana	**1**	**0.15%**

Comoros	**1**	**0.15%**
Lesotho	**1**	**0.15%**
Gabon	**1**	**0.15%**
Guinea-Bissau	**1**	**0.15%**
Liberia	**1**	**0.15%**

Source: Tropes Software.

Figure (25): Bar Chart of African Countries Mentioned in Xinhua Africa Articles (September–December 2024)



Source: Author's own work.

Descriptive Analysis:

The table shows that country references are highly concentrated on Kenya (132/ 19.8 %) and Egypt (128/ 19.2 %) together account for nearly 40 % of all mentions, followed by Zambia (60/ 9 %), Tanzania (47/ 7 %), and Zimbabwe (45/ 6.8 %). The next tier, Ghana, Rwanda, Uganda, and Malawi ranges from 3 %-5 %, while 24 other countries like Algeria, South Africa, Senegal

appear only sporadically (less than 20 each). Although 34 African nations appear in the dataset, 18 countries (≈ 33 % of the continent) receive no mention during in the whole corpus we analyzed**.**

Critical analysis:

The highly selective geographic emphasis evident in Xinhua's Africa coverage is a calibrated communicative strategy aligned with Beijing's investment footprint in African countries. According to Tropes data, Kenya is the country mentioned the most in our corpus, which is unsurprising because it conforms to our prior literature review. Kenya is a central pillar of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), notably through the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) project that connects Nairobi to Mombasa. It is one of China's most prominent infrastructure endeavors in Africa. However, this is just one of many, for instance the article "Chinese-built Nairobi Expressway nominated for best technological innovation award" notes that the expressway's smart tolling and traffic-flow system has earned regional recognition for revolutionizing Kenyan transport. Thus, China isn't just investing in Kenya in Infrastructure but also in Technology, culture, economy. Through highlighting it extensively, Xinhua demonstrates China's image as a solution provider and a strategic partner in this country.

Besides Kenya, we have Egypt in the top of African countries mentioned in our corpus. As we mentioned in our second chapter, Egypt possesses unique strategic and historical significance. Historically, Egypt was the first African country to establish diplomatic ties with China. Moreover, what amplify Egypt significance in Chinese geopolitical consideration is its geographic and political importance as a major Arab-African state and its strategic location near global trade routes such as Suez Canal. Also, China has many substantial investment projects in Egypt including Manufacturing, renewable energy, telecommunications. For instance, the article "Egyptian party representatives hail China Egypt TEDA zone as promising model for BRI cooperation" underscores that the China-Egypt TEDA Suez Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone is praised across Egypt's political spectrum as a flagship BRI industrial park spurring local manufacturing, investment, and job creation. Thus, Xinhua's intensive focus constructs and reinforces a long-standing diplomatic friendship, shaping China's image in Egypt as a strategic partner that values unity and cooperation.

Other countries Xinhua focused on are Zambia, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. Similarly to Kenya and Egypt, and as we mentioned in our literature review, these countries represent important historical and economic partners to China.

Furthermore, countries like Ghana, Rwanda, Uganda, Malawi are featured due to their roles as important sites of specific China-Africa cooperative projects or initiatives, such as medical and agricultural cooperation in Ghana and Malawi, technology and innovation initiatives in Rwanda and infrastructure and energy investments in Uganda. The moderate yet significant attention reflects China's diversified diplomatic strategy, extending its solution-provider frame across different African contexts.

In addition to that, we noted Sporadic mentions such as Algeria, South Africa, Senegal, Nigeria. Despite economic size or regional influence, these countries receive minimal coverage. This selective visibility likely reflects a strategic narrative curation, where presence in Xinhua's media is not merely correlated with Chinese engagement, but instrumentalized to signal where China's influence should be perceived as meaningful. At the same time, we suggest that was due to the absence of significant new initiatives or projects during your analytical period. It might also reflect China's priority focus on East and Southern Africa, regions of more recent significant investment momentum. This interpretation is reinforced by Mr. Ramy Kamar who noted, "Xinhua's coverage is closely synchronized with China's foreign policy calendar."[1] That being said media attention intensifies around countries that are prioritized by official diplomacy and cooperation programs at any given time.

Conversely, roughly one-third of African states never appear in the Xinhua corpus demonstrates a deliberate narrative omission. These countries might attract little or no Chinese investment, hold limited diplomatic weight for Beijing, or offer few success stories that fit the China as solution provider narrative. By simply leaving them out, Xinhua avoids drawing attention to places where China's footprint is small or its image less flattering.

[1] Ramy Kamar, interview by the author, May 30, 2025.

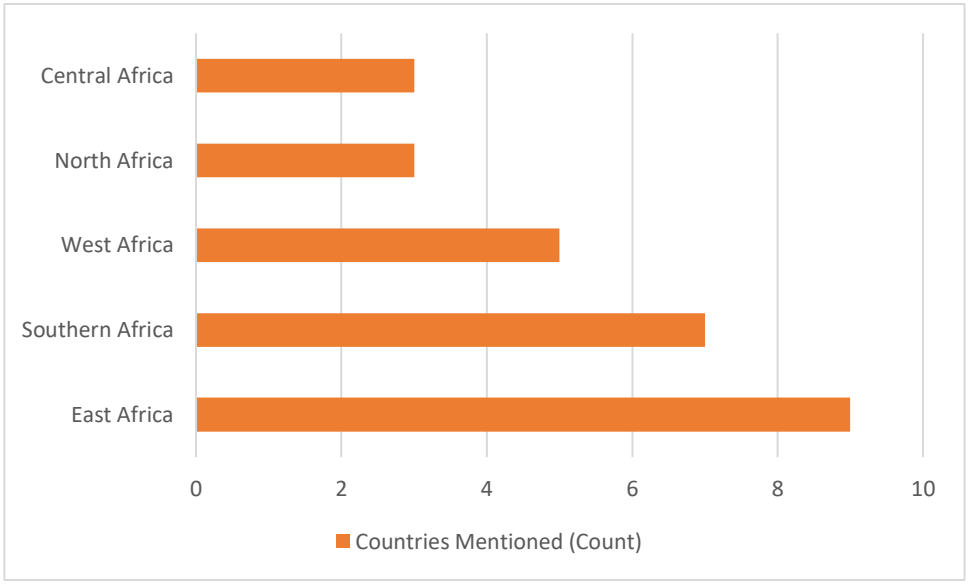
2.7.2 Regional Focus :

Table (24): Regional Distribution of Country Mentions

Region	Countries Mentioned (Count)	Percentage (%)	Mentioned Countries
East Africa	**9**	**33.33%**	**Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Somalia, Djibouti, Burundi, Sudan**
Southern Africa	**7**	**25.93%**	**South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Malawi, Mozambique, Botswana**
West Africa	**5**	**18.52%**	**Ghana, Senegal, Mali, Guinea, Nigeria**
North Africa	**3**	**11.11%**	**Algeria, Egypt, Tunisia**
Central Africa	**3**	**11.11%**	**Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad**

Source: Tropes Software.

Figure (26): Regional Map/Table Visualizing the Spread of Coverage by African Region.



Source: Author's own work.

Descriptive Analysis:

Data shows that East Africa dominates Xinhua's regional spread, accounting for one-third of all country mentions (9 of 27). Southern Africa follows at 26 %, while West Africa receives a

modest 19 %. North and Central Africa are tied for last place, each drawing only about 11 % of references.

Critical Analysis:

This distribution tracks clearly with the previous table of African countries mentioned: Kenya, Tnazania and Ethiopia already led the corpus, so East Africa's primary was expected. Regions that contain many of the 18 entirely omitted states receive the least attention, confirming Xinhua's preference for areas where China's investments are dense and narratives easily framed as solution provider.

4.2 Findings:

- Xinhua predominantly publishes medium-length articles, while long articles are selectively deployed for deeper ideological narratives. This demonstrates Xinhua's editorial strategy focuses primarily on medium length reporting to effectively communicate and deliver detailed content. Longer articles were selectively employed for in-depth narratives, strategically enhancing the impact of China's framing. This selective use reflects a calculated technique of amplifying ideological messaging only when narrative control can be maximized.

- Xinhua primarily emphasized objectivity and journalistic credibility through the dominated use of neutral headlines. This technique enhances Xinhua's appearance of impartiality while allowing consistent narrative framing that supports China's diplomatic and developmental role in Africa in the article's body. While promotional and strategic headlines explicitly and implicitly reinforced positive narratives about China's image in Africa.

- Xinhua's media coverage is overwhelmingly positive, dominated by economic topics, infrastructure and health. Conversely, crisis and conflict topics were notably marginalized. This clearly highlights Xinhua's strategic prioritization of themes emphasizing development, cooperation and practical benefits. This thematic selectivity suggests a deliberate effort to craft an optimistic perception of China-Africa relations, avoiding controversial or reputationally risky topics.

- The most frequent thematic keywords included development, energy, health, cooperation and education. In contrast, the critical lexicon was absent. This strategic keyword distribution highlights Xinhua's framing of China as a positive, constructive partner actively addressing Africa's development and cooperation needs.

- The most frequent positive nouns included opportunity, support, modernization, future, progress, success, benefit and peace. This extensive use of the positive terms allows

Xinhua to reinforces China's proactive and beneficial role, aligning closely with the solution-provider and strategic partner frame.

- The analysis reveals that neutral attribution verb « say » was most frequently used by Xinhua, providing a neutral authoritative tone. Furthermore, the use of action-oriented verbs such as make, help, build, provide, support and improve emphasize China's proactive, supportive actions in Africa.

- The most frequent adjectives used by Xinhua were new, big, large and positively charged descriptors such as significant, sustainable, strategic, traditional, advanced, strong and mutual. Through using these adjectives, Xinhua consistently depicted Chinese initiatives as modern, impactful, ambitious and beneficial, strongly reinforcing China's positive image in Africa.

- The lexicon associated with unity and solidarity prominently featured phrases such as partnership, cooperation, collaborate, unity, shared prosperity, win-win cooperation, mutual respect and solidarity. It explicitly reinforces the unity and solidarity one of the pan African values, which validates Xinhua's media diplomacy strategy in emphasizing unity and shared future.

- The "China as a Solution Provider and Strategic Partner" frame was overwhelmingly dominant, consistently highlighted China's practical initiatives and positive role in addressing Africa's developmental challenges.

- The Unity and Solidarity (Pan-African) frame was frequently used, explicitly emphasized culturally resonant values such as unity, mutual respect, and shared prosperity.

- Critical frames ("debt-trap" diplomacy and Western skepticism) were nearly entirely omitted, appearing only once at low intensity. This strategic omission demonstrates a deliberate effort by Xinhua to avoid narratives detrimental to China's image.

- Balanced voices were the most common in Xinhua's coverage, with articles foregrounding African perspectives also appearing frequently and far more often than those centered on Chinese voices. This pattern suggests a deliberate editorial choice to enhance perceived legitimacy and authenticity through African endorsement.

- Xinhua extensively used High-authoritative sources which reinforced the credibility and legitimacy of the narratives presented in its coverage.

- Coverage strongly concentrated on Kenya, Egypt, and East Africa, aligning directly with significant Chinese investments and geopolitical strategies. Conversely, around 33% of African countries were entirely omitted, demonstrating strategic omission.

4.3 Discussion:

Hypothesis 1: Xinhua African coverage emphasizes themes of economic growth, mutual cooperation and infrastructure more frequently than topics containing criticism of China, wars or political unrest.

This hypothesis is strongly confirmed by the findings we mentioned previously. Xinhua clearly prioritizes positive narratives. Economic, infrastructure significantly dominated the coverage. Moreover, the thematic keywords frequently used such as development reinforce these positive narratives. Finally, the deliberate marginalization of crisis and conflict topics emphasizes Xinhua's strategic preference for positive framing.

Hypothesis 2: Xinhua prioritizes narratives that portrays China as a solution provider to African challenges, while it gives less important to causes or blame, especially those including China itself or a foreign power.

This hypothesis is evident according to our findings. The analysis clearly shows that Xinhua consistently highlights China's proactive and strategic role through the extensive use of positive nouns such as opportunity, support, action-oriented verbs such as make, support, help, adjectives such as new, big, significant. This doesn't just reinforce China's active engagement and support in Africa, but illustrate China's ambitious and impactful initiatives, solidifying its image as a solution-provider and strategic partner. This aligns with Entman's (1993) "offer a solution" framing function, while the functions of naming the cause and assigning blame remain largely absent.

Hypothesis 3: Xinhua's Africa section articles omit and neglect the critical frames including critical frames involving debt trap diplomacy or western skepticism about China-Africa ties.

The findings clearly validate this hypothesis. Across the 52 articles, critical lexicon was notably missing. Moreover, the critical frames were almost entirely absent, appearing only once at low intensity. This strategic omission indicates a deliberate editorial choice by Xinhua to avoid any potentially detrimental narratives to China's image in Africa, which aligns closely with Entman's theory framing through exclusion.

Hypothesis 4: Xinhua constructs China-Africa relations through the Unity and Solidarity frame, reflecting one of the core pan-African values, namely, win-win cooperation rooted in mutual respect and non-interference.

This hypothesis is strongly confirmed by the analysis of the lexicon associated with unity and solidarity frame. The frequent use of phrases such as partnership, cooperation, unity, solidarity, shared prosperity, win-win cooperation and mutual respect highlight the unity and solidarity frame one of the Pan African values. Furthermore, balanced voice representation and frequent foregrounding of African perspectives in the articles enhance perceived authenticity, aligning closely with Pan-African ideals of solidarity and mutual respect.

Thus, each of our four hypotheses guiding our study has been strongly confirmed through detailed content analysis and findings.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, this analysis has explored how Xinhua strategically employs media diplomacy techniques to effectively shape China's public image in Africa. The findings strongly confirm the hypotheses guiding this research, demonstrating Xinhua's deliberate prioritization of positive narratives, systematic omission of critical perspectives and consistent emphasis on USF resonant Pan-African values. Hence, these insights provide a deeper understanding of how Xinhua's editorial choices, lexical strategies, thematic content, framing, voice representation and source credibility collectively contribute to enhancing China's public image in Africa.

General Conclusion

Conclusion.

In conclusion, the findings clarify that Chinese media diplomacy in Africa is defined by the use of state-controlled media to shape narratives that serve Chinese ideology in Africa.

Xinhua functions not merely as a journalistic outlet, but as a state-controlled institution used to promote narratives aligned with China's geopolitical interests in the continent.

The main strategy is implemented through a coordinated set of techniques and media practices, including strategic framing which consistently presents narratives that are overwhelmingly positive; selective sourcing with a dominance of balanced African and Chinese voices to enhance credibility and reduce perceptions of asymmetry; the repetition of key themes such as mutual respect, non-interference, win-win cooperation, and shared prosperity. This is strengthened by thematic saturation, which emphasizes cooperation narratives while limiting the visibility of alternative perspectives. Additionally, the strategy involves the deliberate omission of controversial topics such as debt traps or western critics. Visual imagery plays a key role, such as photographs of African leaders, Chinese projects, and celebratory events. Also, linguistic engineering through the careful use of soft, diplomatic terminology and voice dominance control which centers Chinese perspectives in storytelling, complete this multifaceted media strategy.

Through the dominant application of the "Solution Provider and Strategic Partner" frame, Xinhua emphasizes China's developmental contributions using positive language and themes centered on infrastructure, economy, health, education, and cooperation.

Alongside this, the "Unity and Solidarity" frame reflects one of the core Pan-African values by using specific sentences such as win-win, mutual respect. Also, through the inclusion of African voices, the emphasis on partnership, and rhetorical alignment with South-South cooperation. These findings confirm Hypotheses 1 and 4 on how Xinhua African coverage emphasizes themes of economic growth, mutual cooperation and infrastructure more frequently than topics containing criticism of China, wars or political unrest.

The analysis also confirmed Hypothesis 2, suggesting that Xinhua prioritizes narratives that portrays China as a solution provider to African challenges, while it gives less important to the causes and the blame, especially those including China itself or a foreign power. Meanwhile, Hypothesis 3 is validated by the near entire absence of critical frames, reinforcing Entman's concept of selective salience through omission.

To sum up, this research demonstrates that Chinese Media diplomacy in Africa isn't abstract or symbolic, it is a deliberate and strategic practice. Xinhua's coverage of Africa operates not only as an information source, but a state-led communication tool that delivers and promotes a controlled and favorable image of China in Africa. Hence, through using selective framing, controlled sourcing and avoiding sensitive topics, Xinhua shapes the public perception in ways that support China's foreign policy goals in Africa.

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Appendices

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Appendix 1	**Content Analysis Coding Grid**
Appendix 2	**List of Analyzed Articles**

Appendix 1

Content Analysis Coding Grid

This grid was developed strategically to align with the pivotal research question and hypotheses focusing on how Xinhua News Agency employs media diplomacy to enhance China's public image in Africa from September 1 to December 1, 2024, using direct analysis of linguistic, thematic, and framing patterns detected through combining Tropes software analysis with manual coding.

I. Formal Characteristics (Shape)

Variable	Categories
Article Length	1- Short (<300 words) 2- Medium (300–800 words) 3- Long (>800 words)
Headline Style	1- Neutral (straightforward/newsworthy headline) 2- Promotional/Positive (upbeat or praising tone) 3- Strategic/Slogan (uses slogan-like or strategic phrasing)
Picture Presence	1- No Picture 2- 1 Picture. 3- 2 Pictures.
Picture Type	1- Photos of Chinese projects 2- Photos of leaders and officials 3- Photos of African citizens 4- Photos of celebration or cooperation scenes
Article Format (Genre)	1- News report 2- Feature 3- Interview 4- Press release style 5- Roundup 6- Opinion 7- Explainer/Analysis 8- Reportage.
Narrative Style	1- Descriptive Narration 2- Analytical Narration 3- Storytelling Narration

II. Substantive Characteristics (Content)

1. General Primary Topics

Code	Theme	Number of articles
1	Economy	
2	Infrastructure	
3	Health	
4	Agriculture	
5	Education	
6	Culture and Cultural Exchange	
7	Politics and Diplomacy	
8	Crisis and Conflict	

2. Specific Thematic Keywords Presence (Based on Tropes Data)

Theme Detected	Number of repetitions in the articles
Cooperation (Cooperation, Partnership)	1- Mentioned 2- Not Mentioned
Friendship (Friendship, Friend, Mutual Respect)	1- Mentioned 2- Not Mentioned
Development (Development, Modernization, Growth)	1- Mentioned 2- Not Mentioned
Health (Health, Medicine, Hospital)	1- Mentioned 2- Not Mentioned
Education (Education, Training, Schools)	1- Mentioned 2- Not Mentioned

Infrastructure (Infrastructure, Construction, Road, Railway)	1- Mentioned 2- Not Mentioned
Environment (Climate Change, Environment, Flood)	1- Mentioned 2- Not Mentioned
Energy (Electricity, Energy, Solar)	1- Mentioned 2- Not Mentioned
Critical lexicon (dept trap…)	1- Mentioned. 2- Not mentioned

3. Language Features

Feature	Code
Presence of Positive Lexicon (Achievement, Success, Prosperity, Opportunity)	List of the positive lexicon with the number of repetitions.
Most Frequent Verbs	List Top verbs (Support, Develop, Promote, Build, Help…)
Most Frequent Adjectives	List Top Adjectives (Strong, Friendly, Fruitful, Historic, Prosperous)
Rhetorical Strategies Detected	Slogan-like phrases (e.g., "Win-win cooperation")

4. Frames

Frame Detected	Present or not
China as Solution Provider Frame	
Critical Frame (Debt Trap, Western Criticism)	
Pan-African Values Frame (Mutual Respect, Unity…)	
Frame Intensity	1- Low 2- Medium 3- High

5. Voice Balance Description

Code	Voice Balance Description
1	Predominantly Chinese voices – the article mainly features Chinese officials or representatives (e.g., Chinese diplomats, government spokespeople, company executives) as sources of information or quotes. Any African perspective is minimal or absent.
2	Predominantly African voices – the article mainly quotes African officials, experts, or citizens, with little direct input from Chinese voices. (The story might still be about China-Africa relations but is told chiefly through African voices).
3	Balanced voices – the article includes a mix of Chinese and African voices in a relatively balanced way. Both sides are quoted or cited to a significant extent, reflecting a two-sided narrative.
4	No prominent external voice – the article does not feature quotes from identifiable Chinese or African individuals (it may be mostly narrative by Xinhua's reporter, or uses generic attributions like "according to a report").

6. Authoritativeness of Sources

Code	Authoritativeness of Sources
1	High – The story relies on highly authoritative sources, such as heads of state, government ministers, ambassadors, or top executives/UN officials. These sources lend official weight to the content. (e.g., quoting a President's statement or a minister's opinion on China-Africa cooperation).
2	Medium – A mix of official and semi-official sources: the article includes some authoritative voices but also mid-level sources such as experts, scholars, business leaders…
3	Low – The sources cited are not high-level; the article may quote local individuals, minor officials, or simply describe events without any big names. These voices, while providing a human touch, carry less institutional authority.
4	None – No external sources or quotes are directly cited. The article is essentially written from the reporter's perspective or uses generic information from Xinhua without attribution to any individual.

7. Geographical Focus

Variable	Number of repetitions in articles
African Countries Mentioned	Countries: Egypt, South Africa, Ghana, Algeria…
Regional Focus	1- East Africa 2- West Africa 3- Southern Africa 4- North Africa 5- Central Africa