China’s Belt and Road Initiative in Africa

Assessing the viability of China’s expressed aims in the context of Djibouti, Senegal and Zambia

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# Abstract

This thesis presents an analysis of the aims that (sections of) the Chinese government has expressed in the context of Djibouti, Senegal and Zambia and assesses the extent to which these expressed aims are viable. The findings suggest that although the expressed aims are viable, the viability these aims is constrained primarily by the lack of support from local populations.

**Keywords:** Belt and Road Initiative, China-Africa relations, public discourse, public diplomacy

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# 1. Introduction

Since China started to engage in international trade in 1978 as part of the ‘reform and opening up’ campaign implemented by Deng Xiaoping, its economy has increased thirteenfold. By doing so, China has sustained the most rapid economic growth any country has achieved in modern history.[[1]](#footnote-1) This growth has not been perceived as positive by all countries, primarily because China’s increasingly prominent role in the global economy coincides with military prominence. From this perspective, several critical theories about contemporary China have emerged, among which the ‘China Threat Theory’, which assumes that China’s aforementioned rise poses a threat to world peace and security.[[2]](#footnote-2) As a response to the emergence of the critical theories, China adapted its foreign diplomacy strategy under the leadership of Hu Jintao (2003-2013) by reassuring other countries that it would promote a peaceful international environment. This notion is referred to as ‘China’s peaceful rise’ and sets the tone for the nation’s self-image and public diplomacy efforts.[[3]](#footnote-3) Within this concept, the framework ‘Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence’ was articulated which reflects China’s approach to its engagement in the international sphere.[[4]](#footnote-4)

In September 2013, China’s public diplomacy took on a new form as Xi Jinping, President of the People’s Republic of China, announced his vision to establish an economic belt that would enhance international cooperation and trade by connecting China’s economy with other economies globally. This land-based economic belt is referred to as the ‘Silk Road Economic Belt’ (SREB). Two months later, Xi introduced a similar initiative: the ‘21st Century Maritime Silk Road’ (MSR), which, instead of being focused on continental development, is aimed at maritime development to which the Indian Ocean is central. These initiatives together are referred to as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The format of the program is for China contribute to the development of infrastructure of participatory countries primarily by lending financial resources to these countries for the construction of infrastructure in transport, power, water supply and other sectors.[[5]](#footnote-5) By doing so, it is envisaged that implementing the BRI will (1) promote economic prosperity of the countries along the Belt and Road as well as economic cooperation; (2) strengthen mutual learning and exchanges between civilizations and (3) promote world peace and development.[[6]](#footnote-6)

The BRI has been praised as one of the largest infrastructural projects to be launched in the modern era[[7]](#footnote-7), and is expected by many to be a key determinant of China’s as well as the entire world’s future.[[8]](#footnote-8) However, the project’s relative ‘newness’, its vast geographical reach and the different geographical contexts in which it manifests make it challenging to exactly pinpoint the magnitude and implications of the BRI. Critics of China’s foreign diplomacy argue that China lending financial resources to developing countries is undesirable for the international community as it can create a debt that the lending country may not be able to repay. This is said to result in a dependency relationship in which China has the upper hand. In turn, this is seen to cause an increase of China’s sphere of influence and power, resulting in a decrease in the West’s sphere of global influence. On the other hand, advocates of China’s public diplomacy argue that the BRI is a foreign-investment model which features political equality and is an economic win-win cooperation.[[9]](#footnote-9) Albeit, the impact of the Initiative goes beyond national borders and provides China with significant economic and political power as it encompasses over half of the world’s population in over 70 participating countries. As the BRI directly as well as indirectly affects a high number of politicians, enterprises and local and national societies, it is imperative to reach a scholarly consensus and have an understanding of the BRI’s objectives, goals and possible consequences on regional, national and international levels based on empirical evidence.

One of the main geographical areas on which the BRI focuses is Africa, as it is considered as a key area of global growth.[[10]](#footnote-10) Chinese lending to Africa is a significant source of infrastructure financing for the continent as it has averaged more than US$15 billion per year since 2012. This accounts for about 30% of Africa’s total external finance that supports infrastructure investment.[[11]](#footnote-11) Suchlike investments have resulted in an intertwined relationship between Africa and China which, in turn, has created a discourse in which practically every aspect of the BRI and China’s activities in Africa (as part of the BRI) is criticized. This discourse (henceforth referred to as ‘the Western discourse) adopts the notions that the BRI lacks transparency, only benefits Chinese interests, serves to facilitate China’s export of its authoritarian model and brings about environmental and social problems. In a report released by the US Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) in 2006, the CFR argues that with its investment practices, China protects rogue states and undermines Western efforts on African states to pressure African nations to engage in good governance and improve human rights.[[12]](#footnote-12) Furthermore, the Western discourse on China-Africa relations characterizes China as colonizer of Africa as it deploys aforementioned ‘debt-trap diplomacy’. Yet, the official discourse that the Chinese government has created with regard to the BRI outlines a completely different narrative. As stated in the Action plan on the Belt and Road Initiative, published by China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2015, the BRI is in line with the principles of the United Nations Charter, is harmonious, seeks mutual benefit and provides a way for win-win cooperation that promotes common development and prosperity.

The lack of compatibility between China’s official discourse on the BRI and the Western discourse calls for a better understanding of the connection between China’s expressed and intended aims of the BRI and the implementation of the BRI in practice. Rather than placing China’s BRI-related activities in either of the aforementioned public discourses or assessing whether or not the aims that are reflected in China’s official discourse have in fact been realized, this research aims to gain a better, more nuanced understanding of the BRI by analyzing China’s official public discourse on the BRI and assessing the viability of its expressed aims.

This thesis proceeds as follows. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the existing body of literature that is relevant to this research and situates the present research within the literary framework. In addition, Chapter 2 serves to prove the relevance and importance of this study. Chapter 3 explains the research design and the theoretic and analytic framework. Chapter 4 elaborates on the context of China-Africa relations and presents the findings of the textual analyses of China’s official public discourse. In Chapter 5, the case studies are presented. Chapter 6 concludes this research by summarizing and reflecting on the findings, stating the answer to the research question and providing an overview of the insights that have arisen from this research.

# 2. Literature review

The following chapter provides a comprehensive overview of how scholars have addressed the BRI and China’s involvement in Africa. The aim of this literature review is to justify the relevance and importance of this thesis and to indicate how this research-project relates and contributes to existing scholarship. In order to do so, this literature review analyzes, evaluates and synthesizes the body of existing academic literature that has been dedicated to understanding China-Africa relations and the BRI. The chapter is structured as follows. First, it will identify a dichotomy in the way that realist scholars perceive the motivations and incentives that ground the BRI and uncover the ongoing scholarly dialogue that revolves around this dichotomy. In the second paragraph, it will elaborate on a predominant element in the academic discourse on the BRI that builds upon the economic line of thought and understands the BRI in terms of a global network. Following this, a paragraph will be dedicated to evaluating the literature that focuses on assessing China’s relationships with African nations in-depth. Although this thesis is focused on the BRI which has been introduced in 2013, the literature on China’s relations with Africa is embedded in a history of scholarly debate. Therefore, this chapter will not limit itself to sources that have been published since the introduction of the BRI, but will instead include sources that are relevant to this topic regardless of their publication date.

## 2.1 The BRI as part of Chinese public diplomacy

Within the extensive body of literature that has been devoted to researching the BRI from a realist perspective, a distinction can be made between two general perceptions: the BRI primarily as a capitalist undertaking vs. the BRI primarily as a strategy to construct a new Sinocentric world order. Or, as Nordin and Weissmann (2018) articulate it: scholars have either an economic or a geopolitical point of view.

Scholars who argue that the BRI is mainly motivated by economic interests base their arguments on the notion that the BRI is a means to contribute to China’s GDP growth while it simultaneously enriches Chinese stakeholders.[[13]](#footnote-13) The context in which this perception lies is the structure of China’s domestic economy, which has a persistently high national saving rate.[[14]](#footnote-14) In addition, China has a surplus of productive capacity in many sectors such as steel production, textiles and electronics. Both characteristics (primarily) find their origin in the relatively low domestic consumption rate.[[15]](#footnote-15) In order to efficiently utilize aforementioned resources and restructure the sectors that are burdened by overcapacity, China has to turn to alternative markets. However, the trade potential with other countries in the region has long been constrained by connectivity barriers such as a lack of infrastructure. According to Junxian and Mao (2016), the BRI is designed to catalyze economic growth by taking on the issues that lay at the basis of aforementioned circumstances. Casarini (2016) elaborates on this idea by stating that the Chinese economy finds itself at a historical juncture as it transitions from export-oriented growth to a new growth model based on outward investment. This new growth model is linked to the ‘going out’ strategy which aims to spur outward investment.[[16]](#footnote-16) Yet, Chinese policymakers draw on the idea which finds its origin in the reform-and-opening-up era that signifies that the only way to achieve sustainable and long-term economic growth is by emphasizing big, state-led projects.[[17]](#footnote-17) This leads to assume that, instead of being a newly introduced model, the BRI is a continuation of China’s national development plan and simultaneously an improved version of the opening-up strategy in which China’s economic structure will be reformed in order to reduce dependence on foreign direct investment (FDI).[[18]](#footnote-18) Although all scholars understand the BRI as a project which is focused on investment, managed by the Chinese government, non-legalistic and market driven, there does not seem to be a consensus on whether or not the BRI represents a new model or is a continuation of existing policies. Another reason why scholars understand the BRI as a vision to achieve economic growth is the unambiguous language used by Xi Jinping when he addresses the BRI in his speeches: “*[the BRI is] designed to uphold the global free trade regime and the open world economy […] It is aimed at promoting orderly and free flow of economic factors, highly efficient allocation of resources and deep integration of markets”*. Nordin and Weismann (2018) refer to suchlike expressions by Xi as a ‘language of capitalism and economic growth’.[[19]](#footnote-19)

Scholars who take the geopolitical point of view generally understand the BRI as a strategy to rearrange political and economic structures that construct the current world order. A pivotal publication that shaped the direction of research within the IR framework devoted to the BRI is William A. Callahan’s *China’s “Asia Dream”: The Belt and Road Initiative and the new regional order*. In this article, Callahan (2016) argues that the BRI is part of a larger vision to include Asian countries in a new Sino-centric network which encompasses economics, politics, culture and security. Callahan understands the BRI as a vision that combines a set of ideas (e.g. The Chinese Dream which will be elaborated on further in this paragraph), policies (e.g. policies aimed at unimpeded trade and financial integration), institutions (e.g. the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Silk Road Fund) and projects (e.g. the New Silk Road Economic project and the MSR) to jointly build aforementioned Sino-centric network.[[20]](#footnote-20) Central to this perception is the interpretation of aforementioned ‘Chinese Dream’, a concept vital to China’s public diplomacy and promoted by Xi Jinping, which manifests the notion of China’s pursuit of national prosperity, national rejuvenation and the happiness of the people.[[21]](#footnote-21) However, the precise meaning of the Chinese Dream is kept vague, possibly in order to allow Chinese people to project their own aspirations and dreams on the concept.[[22]](#footnote-22) D’Hooghe (2014) perceives the Chinese Dream as a vision to realize a world shaped by China along Chinese values which will benefit the people of all countries globally.[[23]](#footnote-23) She continues her argument by noting that the Chinese Dream does not purport a vision for China’s place in the current world order, instead the Chinese Dream subtly entails the realization of a new world order in which China takes a central role.[[24]](#footnote-24) China refutes suchlike claims by arguing that it holds a cooperative and conforming attitude in global politics. This claim is invigorated by emphasizing that Beijing supports Western initiatives and established institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the United Nations (UN).[[25]](#footnote-25) However, Benabdallah (2019) approaches China’s cooperative attitude as a way to bring about legitimacy and a positive image in international spheres. She further argues that supporting Western initiatives is not conclusive evidence of Beijing being socialized into the existing global order. Instead, Benabdallah suggests that in order for China to be accepted as a producer of norms, it must first be perceived as a responsible international power. This can be obtained by integrating in the existing international order. She expands on this argument by stating that the legitimacy that China gains from participating in international affairs facilitates China’s strategic goal to position itself as a responsible actor. Furthermore, Benabdallah finds that China’s official discourse on the BRI is a “carefully worded narrative” which emphasizes its respect for established international institutions. This might lead to assume that China does not intend to deviate from the existing global order. Yet simultaneously, BRI implementation mechanisms put Chinese financial institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank at the center of global trade.

This paragraph has contrasted two realist perceptions of China’s motivations behind the BRI. Although there is no consensus in the realist perception of China’s motivations, both strands of thinking agree on the idea that the BRI is an expression of China’s national interests and acquisition of power. Albeit, implementation of the BRI will inevitably lead to a new type of major power relations, in one way or another.

## 2.2 The BRI as means to achieve global interconnectedness

As described in Section 2.1, many Western onlookers frame the BRI as a project for China to gain more influence and power in the global sphere. However, as the world is becoming increasingly interconnected, the BRI can also be understood as a means to achieve interconnectedness and global development. This paragraph will focus on the literature that is devoted to the conceptualization of the BRI as a network of interconnected relations.

Manuel Castells has introduced the ‘network society’ concept in his influential book which was released in 2016: “*The rise of the network society*”. The conceptualization of the network society aims to gain an understanding of the dynamics of global connections and frames the global political economy as being [increasingly] dominated by networks that connect (metropolitan) regions with each other. Within this strand of thinking, the BRI is framed as a network of metropolitan nodes connected to each other.[[26]](#footnote-26) Although Castel’s perception does not necessarily concern itself with power structures, the scholar states in his book: “The technological infrastructure that builds up the network defines the new space, very much like railways defined economic regions and national markets in the industrial economy”.[[27]](#footnote-27) In light of China controlling the BRI, this might imply that China has decisive power in redefining the regions to which the BRI extends in. In 2015, the State Council of the PRC released a document: ‘the Vision for Maritime Cooperation’, which is tied to the BRI. In this document, the PRC prioritizes the development of five types of connections: (1) policy coordination; (2) facilities connectivity (e.g. infrastructure, energy infrastructure, logistics, communications); (3) unimpeded trade; (4) financial integration (internationalization of the renminbi and establishing new development banks); (5) people to people bonds. In the same document it is stated that prioritizing these types of connections will contribute to “closer links between world economies, deeper mutually beneficial cooperation, and broader space for development. […] Enhancing maritime cooperation also enables various countries to jointly tackle challenges and crises, thus promoting regional peace and stability”.

Within the perception of the world as a network of interconnected relations, Ogbuebor et al (2016) have examined the connectedness of African economies with other economies and the global economy as a whole. They have found that the connectedness between African economies and economies of Asian giants such as India and China have increased significantly since 1981. In the same period and especially after the 2008 financial crisis, the authors have found a decrease of connectedness between the US and African economies. However, if and how these findings correlate has intentionally not been addressed in this study as it is “only a pairwise measure of association and it is nondirectional”.[[28]](#footnote-28) The authors have also found that interconnectedness among African economies remains less significant. The same study characterized African economies in general as small, open economies that are systematically unimportant as their stability is determined by the stability of the global economy.[[29]](#footnote-29) This implies that, although increasing connectedness with the global economy pushes development, African policymakers and monetary authorities should be aware and mindful of the fragile position of African economies as a result form engaging in trade with Asian partners.

## 2.3 China’s BRI activities in Africa: win-win or win-lose?

China’s increasingly intensifying relations with African nations have brought about a heated debate in politics, media and academia. Central to these debates lies the question whether aforementioned relations promote African development or primarily serve China’s interests: fueling economic growth and/or expanding its sphere of influence at the expense of African societies. Whereas some scholars perceive China deploying its BRI formula in Africa as consistent with the logic of capitalism and liberal trade and a convergence of interests between China and African countries,[[30]](#footnote-30) others condemn China for exploiting Africa’s (alleged) weak position for personal gain and even brand China as a neocolonist. The following paragraph elaborates on this debate and expose the underlying context, arguments and assumptions that the debate is founded upon.

In order to have a better understanding of the debate, it is imperative to be aware of the context of China’s relations with Africa. As stated in the Introduction, China-Africa relations in modern times are built on the shared sentiment of anticolonialism.[[31]](#footnote-31) In addition, the ‘Chinese Miracle’ is a huge appeal to African countries as China once found itself in the position that many African countries are currently in. Alves (2013) describes the circumstances in which China-Africa relations intensified as follows. At the beginning of the 21st century, China had accumulated significant wealth and a prosperous construction industry. To support the growth pace of its economy, China needed commodities. Simultaneously, the African continent sat on a large base of unexploited natural resources but lacked the infrastructure and capital to monetize them. In light of these circumstances, both parties could mutually help each other to solve each other’s problem, thus creating a win-win cooperation.[[32]](#footnote-32) In other words, Chinese stakeholders can provide help to developing countries that face infrastructure deficiencies and a scarcity of resources to overcome them. The help presents itself in the form of loans to fill the infrastructure gap. These loans are generally on the basis of ‘infrastructure for resources’, which provides China with the resources it needs to support the growth of its domestic economy.[[33]](#footnote-33)

As China pursues international relations in correspondence to the ‘Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence’, it aims not to engage in other nations’ internal affairs. This modus operandi receives fierce criticism and is in stark contrast to Western involvement in Africa, which explicitly bases aid and trade deals on the conditionality of good governance practices in the recipient country. One of the main recurring themes in the Western discourse on China’s relations with Africa is that China, directly or indirectly, contributes to the violation of human rights in African nations as it provides aid or engages in trade regardless of African nations’ governance practices. A prominent example in the discourse is Sudan, which is controlled by an oppressive regime. The CFR stated that, by entering into a partnership with Sudan, China supports its oppressive regime and thereby contributes to the violation of human rights.[[34]](#footnote-34) Thus, the CFR publicly criticizes China for cooperating with Sudan’s Islamist politicians. Yet, as Sautman & Hairong argue in their 2008 article, a more detailed look reveals that although the US (of which the CFR is part) does not cooperate with Sudan’s “oppressive regime”, it does cooperate with authoritarian rulers in almost all oil-producing states.[[35]](#footnote-35) In addition to the lack of context, reality is more complicated and could be directly opposed to CFR’s stated perception. Large (2009) argues that political instability and armed conflicts in Sudan create an unfavorable climate for Chinese oil companies that are based in the African nation. Empirical evidence pointed out that Chinese stakeholders, contrary to what the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence prescribe, prioritized investment protection by concerning themselves with preserving peace and political stability between North- and South-Sudan.[[36]](#footnote-36) Given that a peaceful political climate is inherently tied to a favorable economic climate and thereby serves the PRC’s interest, Large concluded that the case of Sudan proved that China’s trade engagement can have a conducive impact on the political situation of an African nation.

Another theme that scholars address in researching China-Africa relations is African oil export to China. The discourse revolves around the assumption that Africa’s development is hindered as its economies are dependent on earnings from the export of raw materials such as oil to China.[[37]](#footnote-37) Consequently, the growth of other, labor-intensive industries is deterred.[[38]](#footnote-38) This suggests that China extracting oil from Africa mainly benefits the rich elite and disadvantages the poor. Sautman & Hairong proved in their 2008 article “*The Forest for the Trees: Investments and the China-in-Africa Discourse*” that although the discourse represents China as the main extractor of African resources, China hardly dominates Africa’s oil markets as in 2006 the US received 33% of African oil exports, Europe 36% whereas China accounted for only 8.7%.[[39]](#footnote-39) This implies that if the assumption is true, it is not China but instead the US and Europe who play a prominent role in hindering Africa’s labor-intensive industries to develop. Linked to ‘China’s hunger for oil’ argument is the perception that China lures African nations in a debt-trap. Critics argue that Chinese infrastructure deals with African nations are exploitative, as African nations don’t have the means to repay the debts. The asymmetry in power gives China the leverage to extract resources for a below-market price from the indebted party which will leave African nations destitute and worse off than before. However, proponents of China’s engagement with Africa state that instead of being exploitative and a possible debt-trap, Chinese investment is vital for economic development and allows Africa to engage in the global flows and exchanges of goods, information and services. In addition to China’s import from Africa, its export to the continent is also debated on. China exports low-end consumer goods to African markets. Critics argue that not only these products are of low quality, they are also cheap which further negatively impacts the offset of local African industries as it creates unfair competition. Yet, other scholars counter this claim by arguing that Chinese export favors African societies as it serves as an alternative option for expensive Western goods.[[40]](#footnote-40)

## 2.4 Gaps in the literature

Although above chapter has not included all components that are relevant to the discourse on China-Africa relations, it has demonstrated the discourse’s versatility and polarization. The general weakness in the literature that has been devoted to the discourse is twofold: (1) most works feature a lack of (accurate) context and comparative perspective. Oftentimes Western norms are used as the benchmark against which China-Africa relations are analyzed and evaluated. Although it is inevitable to analyze China-Africa relations within the context of the West, it is problematic to conduct the research according to Western values with little consideration for local contexts. China’s engagement in Africa could be better understood if the literature included an examination of internal logic. (2) Despite both critics as people in agreement with Chinese practice provide convincing arguments, the analyses are generally subject to interpretation, which results in skewed representations and assumptions. An external discourse that is ill-founded and does not correspond with empirical evidence is problematic because it informs policy, as exemplified by the involvement of the CFR in the debate. An ill-informed policy will be ill-suited to deal with (assumed) challenges.

This research builds upon the existing body of literature by generating knowledge and analyzing it within its local contextual framework. The knowledge will be generated by conducting three case studies, each focusing on a country that represents a different part of the African continent. The case studies research the viability of n China’s BRI-related aims in the particular country in-depth. This approach allows to take the local context into account and to analyze the data from various angles. In addition, this approach generates insights and knowledge that provide the entire narrative of China’s BRI activities in Africa. Furthermore, this research moves beyond the binary constructions of the discourse on China’s involvement in Africa as either good or bad by researching the viability of China’s expressed aims of the BRI in Africa.

# 3. Research design

This chapter outlines the research design and justifies the operational choices that have been made in collecting data and conducting the research. Furthermore, it includes the research questions, the theoretic- and analytical framework and provides a brief overview of the three countries that have been selected as a case study.

## 3.1 Research questions

This research will answer the following question:

*How viable are the intended aims of China’s Belt and Road Initiative in Africa as expressed in Chinese public official discourse?*

As this question focuses on the interpretation of language on the one hand, and empirical observation on the other hand, the main question is divided into two sub-questions that will both address a different research method.

*How are the intended aims of China’s Belt and Road Initiative reflected in China’s public official discourse?*

*To what extent are these aims in the case of Djibouti, Senegal and Zambia viable?*

The first sub-question examines the language that is used by policymakers to create a discourse on China’s BRI-related aims in Africa. It focuses not on explaining, but rather on generating and analyzing knowledge in order to deepen our understanding of the vocabulary that appears in documents published by (sections of) the Chinese government. After gaining insight in the intended aims, the second research question focuses on gathering empirical knowledge in order to ascertain to what extent China’s intended and expressed aims are viable.

## 3.2 Research methods

In order to generate an answer to the research question and sub-questions, a set of qualitative research methods has been used. Qualitative research methods refer to data collection and analysis strategies that rely on non-numeric data.[[41]](#footnote-41) The research is based on inductive reasoning, as this allows to generate new theoretical propositions and insights. Collecting the data is done according to the following strategies. A range of digital records of official documents such as transcripts of speeches and official (policy) statements released by (sections of) governments has been consulted. Analyzing linguistic artifacts provides insight for example into how the BRI and its intended aims are expressed (and how they are not) and framed in China’s official discourse. In addition, secondary sources such as media reports are consulted as these provide valuable information about the context in which this research is situated. In order to interpret the set of linguistic data, a discourse analysis has been conducted. This type of analysis focuses on the interpretation of aforementioned data and, according to Lamont (2016) “aims to understand how language constitutes and produces the world around us”.

This research includes three in-depth case studies, each case study focusing on a particular nation in Africa. The case studies focus on ascertaining to what extent China’s stated motivations are viable and identifying challenges that may constrain viability. The results of the case studies are being compared in order to ascertain whether or not the challenges that are tied to executing BRI plans in Africa form a pattern and can thereby be classified as structural. Furthermore, conducting case-studies allows to pay attention to details and by doing so, provide a complete picture. As described in section 2.4, when researching China-Africa relations, details and local contexts should be taken into consideration in order to discover a viable and truthful projection of reality.

The three nations that are included as a case study are: Djibouti (which represents East Africa); Senegal (which represents West Africa); and Zambia (which represents Southern Africa). The following paragraph and subparagraphs are dedicated to explaining the selection process of the multiple case studies.

## 3.3 Case selection

This research focuses on Africa specifically because Africa is considered as one of China’s focus points of strategic international development. This is emphasized in the establishment of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2002. FOCAC was founded in order to promote and sustain development between China and Africa and focuses on political exchanges, economic cooperation, cultural exchanges and peace and security between China and 53 African member states.[[42]](#footnote-42)

Bennet and Elman (2007) identify five strategies of case selection, among which the ‘Least-Similar Case Comparisons’ (LSCC) strategy. This type of case study selects different cases that all share one same independent variable. In this research, the independent variable is a nation’s BRI-related ties with China. The LSCC strategy allows cross-case comparison which, as mentioned in paragraph 3.2, allows to discover recurring patterns or demonstrate disparities between cases. Another advantage of applying this strategy is that although disparate cases are being compared, it still ensures conceptual validity. In order to ascertain that the cases are relevant to the phenomena this research seeks to observe, the countries that are included in this research for case study are selected on the following criteria: 1) participation in the BRI; 2) geographical location, the selected countries should all represent a different part of Africa; 3) demonstrable distinctive links with China, each country that is included as a case study must have distinctive links with the Chinese government. In the following paragraphs, a brief introduction on the countries will be provided and the selection process will be elaborated on.

### 3.3.1 Djibouti

Djibouti, one of the smallest countries in Africa, is located at a geographical key point for the BRI in East Africa. The World Food Programme, an initiative by the United Nations, estimates that poverty rates in Djibouti stand at 79 per cent with 42 per cent of the 900.000 people population living in extreme poverty, whereas according to the World Bank, 23 per cent of the population lives in extreme poverty.[[43]](#footnote-43) One of the reasons for the nation’s domestic economic situation is the relatively small size of its economy, which limits its ability to diversify production.[[44]](#footnote-44) Domestic agricultural production is hindered due to the climate being hot and dry. Therefore, the country relies for over 90 per cent of its food commodities on import.[[45]](#footnote-45) Since June 2008, Djibouti found itself in a border dispute with Eritrea. This led to major instabilities in the region. However, in September 2018, peace in the Horn of Africa was consolidated which has brought about a more conducive investment climate.[[46]](#footnote-46) Djibouti is of major interest to the international community seeing its strategic location on the Bab el Mandeb strait, an access point to the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. For example, the US, France, Japan and China all have military bases situated in Djibouti. Although cooperation between Djibouti and China dates back over a decade, the ties intensified in 2018. In September that year, Djibouti and China signed a document which declared a strategic partnership and Djibouti’s participation in the BRI. Ever since, China has provided extensive financing for infrastructure projects in Djibouti, among which the establishment of a free-trade zone, the development of port facilities, a railway, two airports and a pipeline to supply Djibouti with water from Ethiopia. In addition, the Marine division of the Chinese enterprise Huawei has linked Djibouti with Pakistan via a 7500-mile data cable which is financed by the China Construction Bank.[[47]](#footnote-47) On April 28 2019, Xi Jinping met with Djibouti President Ismail Omar Guelleh. During this meeting, both Presidents agreed that the bilateral relations between the countries are based on trust and achieving win-win results. Xi stated that China will continue to provide support for Djibouti’s economic and social development.[[48]](#footnote-48) In addition, President Guelleh visited China three times in the period between 2017 and 2020.

Above paragraph demonstrated Djibouti’s participation in the BRI and the nation’s distinctive links with China, which proves the suitability of using Djibouti as a case study for this research.

### 3.3.2 Senegal

As part of a larger tour visiting several countries in Africa, Xi Jinping visited Senegal in 2018. During this visit, Senegal officially joined the BRI as the first country on the African west coast by signing an official cooperation document. Whereas China and Senegal had pre-existing cooperation in various areas such as infrastructure, the signing of this document formalized and intensified the bilateral cooperation.[[49]](#footnote-49) The BRI was previously mainly focused on East Africa. However, Wang Yi, China’s Foreign Affairs Minister, stated that Senegal’s participation will have a driving effect for the BRI in West Africa.[[50]](#footnote-50) Some of the projects that are established in Senegal as part of the BRI are the Diamniadio Industrial Park, the Museum of Black Civilizations, several highways connecting Senegal’s main cities to each other and sports facility complexes for the Youth Olympic Games in 2022. China is Senegal’s second largest trading partner and biggest source of financing. Besides China-Senegal cooperation in the context of the BRI, Senegal is China’s co-chair of FOCAC. The World Bank states on its website that Senegal’s national monetary poverty was measured in 2011 at 46.7 per cent. The country’s economic growth, mainly driven by agriculture and the export of oil and gas, has been over 6 percent every year since 2014.[[51]](#footnote-51) These circumstances, where an African country faces an infrastructure deficit while possessing significant natural resources align with Alves’ (2013) perception as stated in section 2.3. Furthermore, although neighboring countries face security issues due to terrorist groups being active, Senegal is considered to be politically stable.[[52]](#footnote-52)

Altogether, Senegal participates in the BRI, represents West-Africa and has distinctive links with China. These factors combined indicate that Senegal is a relevant country to involve in this research as a case study.

### 3.3.3 Zambia

Located in Southern Africa, Zambia is a middle-income country that is endowed with natural resources such as copper. In the period between 2004 and 2014, Zambia experienced a period of rapid economic growth. However, this growth has mainly benefitted the urban elite whereas the rural population of Zambia, which constitutes 58 per cent of the total population, remained poor.[[53]](#footnote-53) Although Zambia was the first country in Southern Africa to establish diplomatic ties with China, the countries in have agreed to intensify cooperation in 2018, when Zambia signed a Memorandum of Understanding and thereby officially became a country of the Belt and Road Initiative.[[54]](#footnote-54) China is Zambia’s third largest trading partner and invests in various Zambian sectors including mining, infrastructure, agriculture and manufacturing. Some of the main infrastructure projects in Zambia which were (partly) funded by the BRI are the Tanzania-Zambia Railway, the upgrading of the Mbala-Nakonde road and the expansion of Lusaka International Airport.[[55]](#footnote-55) On September 1, 2018, Xi Jinping met with Zambian President Edgar Lungu ahead of the 2018 FOCAC summit in Beijing. During this meeting, both Presidents expressed their contentment on the relationship and confidence in the cooperation.[[56]](#footnote-56)

## 3.4 Theoretic framework

This research is positioned in the field of International Relations, which is characterized by its plurality of approaches to explain and understand the world.[[57]](#footnote-57) This thesis interprets data from a constructivist perspective. Constructivism comprehends reality as shaped by actions, interactions and perceptions and explains state behavior not only by material power, wealth and geographical conditions, but also by ideas, identities and norms.[[58]](#footnote-58) Furthermore, constructivism assumes that discourse is a valuable lens through which to understand International Relations. Therefore, this framework is especially a suitable perception to center this thesis on as it regards discourse as something important and real. This allows to research and understand the viability of China’s expressed aims in the African context and understand the factors that render China’s aims or pose a challenge.

Another key concept in this research is discourse. The term discourse itself has several meanings, but in this context, discourse is referred to as ‘how the interpretation of language constructs meaning’. Godinho (2017) states that central to discourse analysis is the relationship between text and context. Based on this assumption, the scholar argues that texts should be understood as simultaneously reflecting on and producing a certain context. Furthermore, critical discourse analysis assumes that social structure and language are closely related. This allows political systems to be analyzed as a linguistic system. Based on the concepts of discourse and discourse analysis, studies in the field of International Relations can be divided into a few approaches, among which the functionalist approach, which this research takes. This specific approach emphasizes the relationship between text and the context in which the linguistic artifact is written.[[59]](#footnote-59)

## 3.5 Analytic framework

This research examines how China’s official discourse on the BRI should be understood and aims to contribute to a better understanding of it. This section outlines the framework that is used to analyze China’s public diplomacy statements related to its BRI-practices in Africa.

### 3.5.1 Public diplomacy

In order to understand the rhetoric that is used in official speeches and documents published by (departments of) the Chinese government, it is essential to have a broader understanding of China’s public diplomacy efforts. Therefore, this paragraph is devoted to illustrating the Chinese bureaucracy that is concerned with public image building. Although China has increasingly gained relevance in global politics and the global economy, it still suffers from a poor international image which obstructs China from being accepted as a global great power in the international community. A large part of representations of China in Western media can be placed in the frameworks of the ‘China threat theory’, ‘resource plundering theory’ or the ‘China collapse theory’.[[60]](#footnote-60) In turn, these representations of China are set against images of African weakness and Western superiority.[[61]](#footnote-61) Suchlike negative representations of China targeted at African and Western audiences has resulted in a bad reputation of China and particularly with regard to its engagement in Africa. The negative image is problematic to Chinese leadership as public perception is believed to influence the behavior of foreign governments toward China. In turn, this impacts the ultimate goal of advancing China’s agenda. In order to improve foreign perceptions and create support and understanding for China’s political model and policies, Chinese leadership actively engages in public diplomacy.[[62]](#footnote-62) China’s public diplomacy efforts are mainly targeted at Africa and Western audiences.[[63]](#footnote-63) D’Hooghe (2015) defines public diplomacy as: “*an instrument used by states, associations of states and some sub-state and non-state actors, to influence thoughts and mobilize actions to advance their interests and values abroad by building and managing relationships and developing an understanding of cultures, attitudes and behavior*”.[[64]](#footnote-64) In other words, the fundamental aim of public diplomacy is to exert influence on the public perception of the entity that engages in public diplomacy in order to win sympathy. In this research, the ‘entity’ is China. In a bid to counter the negative perception of China in international media and to create a favorable image of China, the CCP has installed an extensive bureaucracy to carry out international propaganda activities and has devoted significant resources to these efforts. According to Brady (2009), information management is regarded as a top priority for the Chinese government. International reports have estimated that China’s annual investment budget in foreign public diplomacy ranges from US$7 billion to US$10 billion.[[65]](#footnote-65) One of the main goals of contemporary Chinese foreign propaganda is to tell a good Chinese story, which Brady (2009), interprets as ‘promoting a selective version of traditional Chinese culture to global audiences’. This becomes apparent in a 2014 speech by Xi, when he stated that “*China should be portrayed as a civilized country […], and as an Eastern power with good government […]. China should also be known as a responsible country that advocates peace and development, safeguards international fairness and justice, makes a positive contribution to humanity and as a socialist country which is open and friendly to the world […]*.”[[66]](#footnote-66) Altogether, maintaining a favorable public image is important for any nation in the international community, however, few nations are as sensitive about it as China.[[67]](#footnote-67)

Within the framework of public diplomacy, D’Hooghe (2015) distinguishes four subsets of public diplomacy: citizen diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, strategic communications and nation-branding. Citizen diplomacy entails unofficial people-to-people relations and is seen as a useful form of diplomacy when political relations between countries are problematic. Instruments of this practice include student exchanges and cultural activities. The second type of public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, is defined by D’Hooghe as “the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understanding”. Instruments of this type of diplomacy are art exhibitions, film festivals and language promotion. Similar to citizen diplomacy, cultural diplomacy helps to overcome conventional barriers that separate peoples. The subset of strategic communications serves to build long-term relationships that are aimed to achieve mutual understanding. The final subset, ‘branding’ is based on the idea that the reputation of a country is pivotal to the progress and prosperity of that particular nation. The subsets *branding* and *strategic communications* are similar in the way that they both combine foreign policy goals with soft power strategies.[[68]](#footnote-68) Further in her book, D’Hooghe (2014) elaborates on the categories of public diplomacy instruments: (1) media such as newspapers, television and online social networking platforms; (2) organized events; (3) strategic communication projects such as seminars; (4) people and institutions such as student exchanges and tourism and (5) publications and promotional materials such as books and brochures. In order to understand and analyze China’s official discourse on its engagement in Africa, this research concerns itself with all four subsets of public diplomacy and pays attention to all five categories of public diplomacy instruments.

### 3.5.2 Data collection and analyzing textual resources

This research analyzes China’s official discourse on the BRI and its intended aims on three levels: the discourse in the universal dimension, the discourse on the BRI in Africa specifically and statements that were made in the separate contexts of Djibouti, Senegal and Zambia. It has been chosen to analyze these three levels separately because doing so provides relevant insight into how China’s discourse on the BRI on local and regional African levels fit into the over-all discourse on the BRI. Furthermore, this allows to analyze whether or not specific aims and challenges of the BRI are unique to Africa or the countries therein. The data that is analyzed to understand China’s stated aims consist of transcripts of speeches and official statements published by (sections of) the Chinese government and is gathered as follows. The textual resources that are included in this research to understand China’s discourse on the BRI in the universal dimension are: ‘the full text of the Action plan on the Belt and Road Initiative’, released by the State Council of the PRC in 2015; Xi Jinping’s speech at the opening ceremony of the first Belt and Road forum in 2017 and finally, Xi Jinping’s speech at the opening ceremony of the second Belt and Road Forum in 2019. The resources that have been selected to analyze China’s discourse on the BRI in Africa specifically are: the transcript of Xi Jinping’s keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the 2015 FOCAC summit in Johannesburg, the transcript of Xi Jinping’s keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the 2018 FOCAC summit in Beijing and the head of Chinese Mission to the African Union’s keynote speech at the Belt and Road Dialogue for China-Africa Cooperation in 2019. The release dates of abovementioned sources range from March 2015 to May 2019. Although the BRI was introduced in 2013, no sources of that and the following year are included because they are less relevant to this research considering Djibouti, Senegal and Zambia only joined the BRI respectively in 2017 and 2018. The sources that are selected to analyze China’s stated aims of the BRI in the context of Djibouti, Senegal and Zambia consist of a variety of official statements released by The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China and transcripts of speeches given by Chinese government officials on several pivotal occasions prior to- and after the African nation in question joined the BRI.

As indicated in section 3.2, interpreting and analyzing linguistic artifacts has been executed based on inductive reasoning. This implies that the data is observed and analyzed without a predetermined coding scheme. This allows to identify new patterns and relationships in order to build a theory. The appendices provide a schematic overview of the data that was analyzed. These overviews are compiled by analyzing the linguistic context within which China expresses its aims. It must be noted that a count of the times that a specific aim is mentioned in the data is not included as it does not necessarily provide insight into the importance of that aim.

The nations that are selected as a case study joined the BRI in 2017 and 2018. It is relevant to consider the relative infancy of the partnerships as this may influence the degree to which China’s expressed aims are found to be viable. Another remark with regard to collecting and analyzing data has been addressed in the Literary Review, which concluded that China-Africa relations have oftentimes been addressed and researched in the context of the West. This research aims to primarily include African and Chinese sources in order to yield more accurate insights.

## 3.6 Scope and indicators of viability

In order to assess the viability of China’s expressed aims, several factors that indicate and demonstrate (the absence of) viability of aforementioned aims in the three countries that are included for case study are examined. Because of time and resources constraints, the scope of this research is limited to a selection of factors and will therefore only take local African factors in consideration, thus leaving out international- and domestic Chinese factors.

An indicator for viability is local reception. As elaborated on in section 3.5.1, China’s national image in the international sphere plays a key role in the success of the government’s (international) efforts. With regard to bilateral relations with Africa, the BRI and the projects that it brings about, (substantial) community support increases feasibility and is a decisive factor for the success of aforementioned projects. Therefore, this thesis takes the local reception of the BRI and the African nation’s attitude towards China in consideration. In order to assess the local reception, support from local governments and grassroots communities with regard to the BRI will be examined by consulting local media reports and if available, the database of Pew Research Center.

Another indicator for viability is the suitability of China’s expressed aims to the local contexts of the countries. The projects, policies and promotion and implementation thereof are more viable, feasible and effective when they align with the domestic circumstances of the African country in question. The suitability of China’s expressed aims to the local contexts of the countries will be assessed by analyzing the extent to which the aims align with the needs of the African nation’s domestic social, political, economic and environmental circumstances.

A theme that is prominent in the Western discourse is the alleged lack of sustainability of the debt that African nations build up by joining the BRI. Considering that African nations generally have a low disposable income, a high debt burden can become a structural issue which in turn offsets the benefits of improved infrastructure. Although debt sustainability is an interesting indicator of viability in the context of this research, it is not feasible to apply it for several reasons. First, the bilateral loan deals operate on a long-term horizon.[[69]](#footnote-69) Considering Djibouti, Senegal and Zambia officially joined the BRI no earlier than 2018, it is too early to draw conclusions with regard to debt sustainability. Another reason why this indicator is not included in this research is the lack of transparency of the loan deals. There is little to no information on the (terms of the) loans that China provides to any nation. The final indicator of viability that this research distinguishes is bilateral policy alignment. As BRI projects are generally major, long-term projects, it is likely that challenges or complications will occur over time. Governments or parties involved in the execution of policies and projects should actively communicate in order to come up with short-term workarounds and long-term solutions to unforeseen problems. However, due to time- and resources constraints, this indicator of viability will not be taken into consideration in this research (an exception was made for Senegal).

# 4. Context of China-Africa relations and textual analysis

This chapter is concerned with explaining the context and historical background of China-Africa relations. It is important to understand the historical background as it composes the foundation for current relations and explains why China enjoys goodwill in many African countries. Section 4.2 presents the findings of the textual analysis of China’s official discourse on the BRI and its intended aims. A more detailed overview of China’s expressed aims can be found in Appendix I-V.

## 4.1 Historical background

Interaction between Africa and Asia is built on a historical network which includes economic, political and cultural connections. The earliest connections between Asia and Africa date back to precolonial times and were part of a larger global trade- and commercial network, which peaked from the eighth century to the late sixteenth century. One of the main trade routes was the Trans-Saharan trade route, which brought trade from North Africa, Asia and Europe to sub-Saharan Africa.[[70]](#footnote-70) Relations between China and Africa have been ongoing throughout modern history. Before the 1990s, China-Africa relations were mainly political. China proved to be in solidarity with African states as it took an anticolonial stand in international politics and supported African nations with the liberation struggles they faced at the time.[[71]](#footnote-71) China’s support for Africa continued throughout the following decades. For example, China installed aid programs in the 1970s in more countries than the USA did. These efforts resulted in a rise of popularity of China in African states and still provides China with goodwill among Africans.[[72]](#footnote-72) Since the 1990s, Chinese ‘activism’ on behalf of developing states in Africa has diminished and is replaced by profit-centered activities.[[73]](#footnote-73)

Another reason why China has an advantage over other countries when engaging in Africa is China’s unique development model. As mentioned in section 2.3, China’s successful development path, referred to as ‘the Chinese Miracle’, is appealing to African nations as it provides African nations with another approach to development than the classic Western model. This is emphasized by Xi Jinping when he connected the concept of the ‘Chinese Dream’ to the ‘African Dream’ in a 2013 speech in Tanzania.[[74]](#footnote-74)

The final reason why China enjoys goodwill in many African countries is because China and Africa can exchange knowledge and expertise on a relatively equal basis as China is also still considered to be a developing country.[[75]](#footnote-75) Infrastructure development has been central to China’s own development path. Deploying the BRI in Africa can therefore be understood as China sharing and deploying its own development experiences with/in Africa. This type of partnership is also referred to as ‘South-South cooperation’.

## 4.2 China’s official discourse on the BRI

This research analyzes China’s stated aims and its official discourse on the BRI on three levels: the universal dimension[[76]](#footnote-76), the African dimension and the official discourse on Djibouti, Senegal and Zambia separately. This section presents the findings of the discourse analysis of all three levels. A more detailed overview of the analyzations is presented in the Appendix section.

### 4.2.1 The universal dimension

The analyzed documents which represent the universal dimension of China’s official discourse on the BRI describe a number of focus areas and corresponding aims which are recurring in every source.[[77]](#footnote-77) The overarching goals of the BRI as stated in the sources are to enhance connectivity, deepen international economic integration and accelerate international cooperation in order to achieve prosperity and mutual development of all countries along the New Silk Road. In the 2015 document, five categories of focus points (which the document refers to as ‘cooperation priorities’) are distinguished and outline the primary goals and the key areas within which China and participating countries should cooperate. These focus areas are: (1) policy coordination, which refers to the BRI’s aims to promote intergovernmental cooperation, enhancing mutual political trust and to coordinate international development strategies. Pursuing these aims will help to create an international community of common destiny and to facilitate the implementation of other cooperation priorities. (2) Facilities connectivity; the set of focus points in this category is aimed at improving connectivity by improving physical- and communication infrastructure. (3) Unimpeded trade, this category aims to increase the potential for cross-border cooperation by facilitating investment and trade through removing trade barriers. (4) Financial integration; this refers to China’s aim to deepen international financial cooperation. (5) People-to-people bonds; the final focus area aims to gain support for the deepening bilateral and multilateral cooperation from the local populations. This domain connects to the subsets of public diplomacy as discussed in section 3.6.1. In both Xi’s 2017 and 2019 speeches, the same set of abovementioned focus areas are emphasized. Furthermore, the President elaborates extensively on the BRI’s achievements thus far per focus area. This implies that within the universal dimension, China’s public official discourse and the aims that it expressed with regard to the BRI is continuous in the period 2015-2019. Other recurring themes are environmental sustainability, digital connectivity, intellectual property protection and China’s commitment to further open-up its economy and integrate into the global economic system.

Throughout the sources, the Chinese government emphasizes that BRI cooperation can only be pursued on the basis of the overarching ‘Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence’ as elaborated on in the Introduction, implying that nations should respect each other’s sovereignty and security concerns. Another recurring theme is pursuing “a peaceful and stable international environment” in order to achieve the BRI’s goals. In all three sources, the need for regional security and counter-terrorism efforts are emphasized. In addition, the sources highlight that BRI-based cooperation should be in accordance with the principles of mutual complementarity, mutual benefit and should create a win-win situation.

### 4.2.2 The African dimension

In 2015, Xi Jinping delivered a speech at the opening ceremony of the FOCAC summit in Johannesburg. In his speech, Xi elaborated on the aims of China-Africa cooperation in the context of the BRI. The aims that were mentioned generally match with the aims as stated in the universal dimension (see Appendix I and II). However, Xi also introduced a set of ten (reduced to eight in 2018) major initiatives that will be executed and implemented in close collaboration with African countries along the BRI. The focus areas of these initiatives as of 2018 are: industrial promotion, infrastructure connectivity, trade facilitation, green development, capacity building, health care, people-to-people exchanges and finally, peace and security. Along with elaborating on the aims of each initiative, in both his speeches Xi mentioned plans and measures that will be (or already are) implemented in order to achieve the aims. For example, with regard to the focus area of ‘green development’, Xi listed that besides starting 50 projects for environmental protection, the Chinese- and African governments will jointly set up environmental protection research centers, raise public awareness and strengthen Africa’s human capacity for environmental management. Xi explicitly stated that many of the measures that he outlined in his speech are designed to help young Africans in particular. Furthermore, besides vowing to extend US$60 billion to finance these initiatives and to encourage Chinese companies to make substantial investments in Africa, Xi announced that China will exempt the debts that Africa’s least developed countries have incurred. In his 2015 speech, Xi addressed the complementarity that characterizes China-Africa cooperation. He stated: “Africa enjoys abundant natural and human resources and has reached the stage of taking off in industrialization. China […] has the technology, equipment, professional and skilled personnel and capital needed to help Africa realize sustainable self-development”. This resonates with the literature as discussed in section 2.3, which reason that a win-win cooperation is the starting point for China-Africa relations.

In 2019, Liu Yuxi, Head of Chinese Mission to the African Union, addressed the audience of the Belt and Road Dialogue for China-Africa Cooperation. The speech highlighted the same set of focus points as mentioned above. However, Liu stated that the dialogue between China and Africa especially focuses on the domains of Africa’s connectivity, the digital economy, energy sources, industrial development, human resources and financial resources. Furthermore, the convener explicitly stated that the ultimate goals of China-Africa cooperation under the BRI are to build Africa’s economic corridors and transport arteries, cultivate new engines for economic development and improve Africa’s endogenous development capacity. Another interesting remark of the speaker is that he emphasized the non-conditional nature of collaboration between China and Africa: “*China attaches no pollical conditions and seeks no political self-interests in its cooperation with Africa*”. In none of the sources that were consulted to understand the BRI’s aims in the universal dimension, non-conditionality was mentioned.

### 4.2.3 Expressed aims in the context of Djibouti

China’s BRI aims in the specific context of Djibouti emphasize eradicating poverty, maintaining peace and security and improving the livelihoods of the people in Djibouti. Although nothing related to one of the BRI’s main focus points ‘financial integration’ was mentioned, the stated Djibouti-specific aims over-all align with the aims that were expressed in the African dimension. However, some recurring themes in China’s official discourse on cooperating with Djibouti did not appear in the other previously discussed discourses, namely: enhancing cooperation in the “blue economy”. This term refers to a concept which underpins the linkages between the oceans and the wellbeing of mankind and encourages better stewardship of our oceans or ‘blue resources’.[[78]](#footnote-78) Furthermore, on several occasions, the Djiboutian president Guelleh expressed his welcoming attitude towards the eight major initiatives as proposed by Xi Jinping at the FOCAC summit in Beijing.

### 4.2.4 Expressed aims in the context of Senegal

In general, the specific aims that China expressed through its channels of public diplomacy in the context of Senegal align with the expressed aims in the African dimension. However, the Senegal-specific aims are primarily targeted at improving Senegal’s infrastructure, cooperating in agriculture, supporting Senegal’s healthcare system and strengthen cooperation on peacekeeping in the region. Although China states that it aims to increase bilateral trade with Senegal, the aim of this domain is primarily focused on facilitating Senegal to integrate in existing regional trade networks. In turn, it is envisaged by China that this will bring about sustainable development of the Senegalese industries. With regard to the focus area of ‘people-to-people bonds’, the aim in the Senegalese context is mainly focused on consolidating existing bonds rather than establishing them. Furthermore, analyzing the sources has revealed that China intends to exploit Senegalese resources more efficiently and to support Senegal in modernizing several sectors. The strategy that China takes in its cooperation with Senegal is ‘teaching a man how to fish’, which implies that China focuses on enhancing Senegal’s ability to develop independently.[[79]](#footnote-79)

### 4.2.5 Expressed aims in the context of Zambia

Similar to Djibouti and Senegal, China’s BRI-related aims in the Zambian context generally align with its expressed aims in the African dimension. China’s BRI-related aims with regard to its relations with Zambia are formulated as follows. Most sources dedicate significant attention to building- and maintaining bilateral relations with Zambia that are based on the principles of ‘friendship’. Furthermore, China expressed that it encouraged Zambia to engage in local in regional trade. A large share of the consulted sources emphasizes the accomplishments of China-Zambia cooperation with regard to the Tanzania-Zambia railway (Tazara). Furthermore, the sources emphasize economic complementarity as the starting point of cooperation between the two countries. Also, establishing a positive image of China among the Zambian people can be considered as an essential part of China’s aims in the Zambian context.

# 5. Research findings

This chapter analyzes China’s expressed aims within the realm of each nation’s unique circumstances and presents the evaluation of viability.

## 5.1 Djibouti

Measuring the support of local communities in Djibouti is problematic for several reasons. Pew Research Center, an independent investigative body, has not included Djibouti in its ‘Global Indicators’ research. Therefore, for assessing local support, this research relies on local media coverage. However, it is difficult to access reliable information because there are no privately owned, independent media outlets in Djibouti. The only national, widely-read newspaper of the country, La Nation, reflects a highly positive attitude towards its bilateral relations with China and the BRI.[[80]](#footnote-80) However, this newspaper is state-owned and considering the Chinese government’s public diplomacy policies as elaborated on in section 3.5.1 and the strong bilateral ties, it is unlikely that reports published by this newspaper or any other Djiboutian newspaper represent a reliable image of Djibouti’s public opinion towards China and the BRI. In 2016, the leader of the Djiboutian opposition party (which has not served in government since 2010) has voiced criticism of Djibouti’s involvement with China by sending an open letter to Xi Jinping. In the letter, China is accused of luring Djibouti in a debt-trap and having an over-all negative impact on Djibouti.[[81]](#footnote-81) For obvious reasons, the letter has not been published by any media outlet in Djibouti. There is no further information available that provides insight in the scale of this grassroots movement. It is therefore unknown to which extent the opinion as voiced in the open letter represents the opinion of Djiboutians. For this reason, the relevance of the letter for determining the local reception cannot be ascertained. All in all, considering the biased nature of all media outlets in Djibouti and the lack of reliable, representative data on factors that indicate the national attitude towards China and the BRI in Djibouti, the local reception and its effect on the viability of China’s expressed aims cannot be determined.

As mentioned in section 3.3.1, some of the major struggles that Djibouti deals with or has recently dealt with are a high poverty rate, regional political unrest and being highly dependent on import for food commodities. The textual analysis revealed that China’s BRI-related aims in the context of Djibouti focus on alleviating the nation’s domestic problems by promoting its strongest point: its strategically favorable location. The Chinese government has expressed that it intends to improve Djibouti’s physical infrastructure so that Djibouti can become a regional logistics- and trade hub. In turn, this will boost Djibouti’s economy, facilitate domestic employment, connect remote areas and gradually reduce poverty. Another focus point of China’s cooperation with Djibouti is to vitalize rural areas by improving Djibouti’s agricultural sector. Doing so will help to improve Djibouti’s self-sufficiency for food commodities and make the country less susceptible to changes in regional market prices. This implicates that China’s expressed aims are highly suitable to Djibouti’s local context.

Based on the available information and the fact that most of the aims that China has expressed are focused on government-to-government relations, the aims are considered to be achievable. An important condition for this finding is that during the phase in which the aims are being implemented, the involved parties should take the possibility of a negative sentiment towards China or the BRI in account as a hampering factor. Altogether, considering the local reception indicator being undetermined, yet the suitability to local contexts being indicated at highly suitable, the aims that China has expressed in the context of Djibouti are found to be viable.

## 5.2 Senegal

In order to measure the attitude of the Senegalese population towards China and the BRI, the coverage of a selection of articles published by independent national newspapers on China and the BRI has been analysed. The analysed articles published by economic newspaper ‘Nouvel Horizon’ report somewhat negative on China. For example, the newspaper holds China accountable for the spread of the Coronavirus.[[82]](#footnote-82) Another independent, Senegalese national newspaper, WalFadjri, has voiced criticism towards the lack of transparency of the BRI. The newspaper published an article about a wrestling arena that was built as part of the BRI in Senegal. According to the article, the structure of the arena is unsafe and does not support the intended capacity of 22.000 people. In a bid to conceal these problems, the costs to rent the arena are allegedly made disproportionately high.[[83]](#footnote-83) WalFadiri has published another article in which it expresses concerns about Africa being indebted to China.[[84]](#footnote-84) In addition, liberal Western media that generally represent an image of China according to the Western discourse such as The Economist and Time Magazine enjoy a wide circulation in Senegal.[[85]](#footnote-85) This suggests that the support among Senegal’s people for Senegal’s bilateral relations with China and the BRI is mediocre to low. According to Pew Research Center, the favourable attitude of Senegal’s population towards China is decreasing. In the period between 2013 and 2017, the research center has found that the percentage of Senegalese adults who have a favourable or somewhat favourable attitude towards China diminished from 77 per cent in 2013 to 64 per cent in 2017.[[86]](#footnote-86) Considering the generally negative representation of China and China-Senegal cooperation in the analysed newspapers and the downward trend of favourable attitudes towards China among the Senegalese population, the local support of the BRI is considered to be low.

Senegal’s economy is export-driven, with its main export products being agricultural products, oil and gas. China has anticipated on this by emphasizing its aims to deepen bilateral cooperation in the agriculture sector and exploiting Senegal’s natural resources more efficiently. Another aim expressed by China is to strengthen its cooperation with Senegal with regard to peacekeeping in the region. As the region in which Senegal is located faces serious security problems due to terrorist groups being active in neighbouring countries, this aim complements the security-based struggles that Senegal deals with. Furthermore, the World Bank has stated that due to an inefficient macro-fiscal framework, Senegal’s treasury is seriously under pressure.[[87]](#footnote-87) The textual analysis of China’s aims has revealed that China intends to help Senegal with increasing the sustainability of the nation’s financial system. Another aim that China has explicitly expressed is to improve Senegal’s infrastructure through major projects such as building industrial parks and constructing roads. This will presumably relieve the domestic struggles of Senegal related unemployment due to job shortages, as the execution of major projects requires significant labour. The final indicator of viability is the degree to which bilateral policies align. China and Senegal cooperate as chairs of FOCAC. This suggests that on the highest level of government, both countries cooperate well with each other.

Altogether, the viability of the aims that China has expressed in Senegal’s context is supported by a high degree of alignment with local contexts and policy alignment. Yet, considering the local support for China’s involvement in Senegal is existing, but deals with a significant downward trend, the viability is jeopardized.

## 5.3 Zambia

Although Zambia and China celebrated the 55th anniversary of their diplomatic ties in 2019, Zambia’s local sentiment is firmly anti-Chinese, as exemplified by the murder of three Chinese nationals in Lusaka in June 2020.[[88]](#footnote-88) Many Zambians believe that China’s interest in their country is driven by ambitions to exploit Zambia’s large copper reserves and is not beneficial to Zambia. The BRI is perceived by local communities as a way to lure participatory countries in a debt-trap and might allow China to be in charge of Zambia’s natural resources.[[89]](#footnote-89) The hashtag *SayNoToChina* is trending on Twitter every time that China makes it to local papers’ front pages. Furthermore, Zambians question the quality of Chinese-built infrastructure as several Chinese-built projects have proven to be of low quality.[[90]](#footnote-90) Therefore, Zambia’s bilateral relations with China and its participation in the BRI worries many Zambians. Despite the fact that the aims that China expressed in the Zambia-specific context are focused on promoting a positive image of China, it is not likely that this will bring about a significant increase in the local support for China or the BRI in the foreseeable future. Altogether, the widely adopted anti-Chinese and anti-BRI sentiments in Zambia have a detrimental effect on the viability of China’s expressed aims.

Although Zambia gained the middle-income status in 2011, the nation has one of the highest levels of inequality of all nations globally. The largest share of its 16.5 million people population lives in poor, rural areas whereas the relatively small urban population is rich. In addition, Zambia’s national fiscal framework performs poorly. Despite the fact that these circumstances bring about myriad socio-economic problems for Zambia, none of the aims that China has expressed are directly targeted at helping to solve these problems. Instead, the stated aims focus on exploiting Zambia’s natural resources more efficiently. Another recurring theme in China’s stated aims is facilitating industrial development along the Tazara, the railway connecting Tanzania and Zambia. Admittedly, this might bring about local job creation and development along the railway. However, the Zambian part of the Tazara spans from the border with Tanzania to Lusaka. This implies that the local communities in the entire region west of Lusaka do not (directly) profit from implementing the BRI as proposed by China. This indicates that the aims that China has expressed in the Zambian context do not meet the interest of entire Zambia and the entire population. Therefore, it can be concluded that the expressed aims fail to comply with Zambia’s local needs to such an extent that it does not increase the viability.

Altogether, as local support is practically non-existent and the expressed aims are ill-suited to Zambia’s local context, the Zambia-specific aims that China has expressed cannot considered to be viable.

## 5.4 Comparison of the case studies

The aims of the BRI in the context of Djibouti, Senegal and Zambia that China has expressed are generally comprised of the same set of focus areas and implementation plans. The aims that are recurring in the context of all three countries are: building or consolidating mutual political trust, improving infrastructure, deepening industrialization, facilitating cross-border trade and investment, enhancing public support for bilateral relations, improving livelihoods of the local population and maintaining regional peace and stability. Depending on the local context of the country in question, a selection of abovementioned aims is emphasized. This proves that with the BRI, China has taken an individual, country-specific approach. This applies to the formulation, promotion and intended execution of country-specific aims.

China has devoted significant resources to improve its image in the international sphere as well as in the separate contexts of Djibouti, Senegal and Zambia. Yet, in Senegal and Zambia, the poor image of China and the BRI among the local population has a seriously constraining effect on the viability of its expressed aims. Considering this issue is recurring in two of the three case studies and is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future, the absence or decrease of local support poses structural challenges to the viability of China’s expressed aims. The case studies have further found that although China’s expressed aims align with the local contexts of all three nations, the aims that China has expressed fails to complement the domestic needs of Zambia, which has a constraining effect on the viability in that particular country.

Altogether, the main structural issue that threatens the viability of China’s expressed aims in the context of the BRI is the lack of local support. Furthermore, the extent to which China’s aims align with local contexts is moderate, which has a slightly facilitating effect on the viability of the expressed aims. Therefore, this research concludes that the extent to which the intended aims of China’s BRI in Djibouti, Senegal and Zambia as expressed in its official public discourse is viable is slight.

# 6. Conclusion

The Western discourse on the BRI assumes that engaging with China will inevitably leave participatory countries destitute and poor due to the debt-trap. Yet, China’s public official discourse frames the BRI as a foreign-investment model which features political equality and is an economic win-win cooperation. These discourses on the BRI are thus not compatible with each other. The Literary Review has pointed out that most of the statements and accusations upon which the Western discourse is built are based on invalid, ungrounded assumptions and provide an incomplete, skewed image of China’s engagement in Africa. Furthermore, it became apparent that a significant share of the academic works that are dedicated to China-Africa relations feature a lack of (accurate) context, as events are interpreted according to Western values and contexts. This thesis has provided an analysis of China’s expressed BRI-related aims in the context of Djibouti, Senegal and Zambia in order to gain valid insight in China-Africa relations within the context of the BRI. This thesis has analyzed the BRI-related aims that China has expressed separately in the universal- and African dimension and has found that the aims that China has expressed in the contexts of Djibouti, Senegal and Zambia are comprised of the same set of aims that China has expressed in the African dimension. Furthermore, the viability of aforementioned aims was researched for Djibouti, Senegal and Zambia. This research has found that the lack of support for China and the BRI from local populations is a structural issue and has a constraining effect on the viability of the expressed aims. In addition, the extent to which China’s expressed aims align with local contexts is moderate, which has a slightly facilitating effect on the viability of the expressed aims. Altogether, considering the limitations of this thesis, this research has found that the aims that China has expressed in the context of Djibouti, Senegal and Zambia can considered to be viable. However, taking into account that the extent of the viability is slight, the viability is highly susceptible to challenges and issues that may present themselves.

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# Appendixes

## Appendix I – Overview of China’s expressed aims in the universal dimension

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Cooperation policy / focus point** | **Mentioned aims** | **Application in the universal context** |
| Policy coordination | Promote intergovernmental cooperation.  Enhance mutual political trust.  Coordinate international development strategies. | Governments of nations should cooperate on a multitude of levels: intergovernmental, regional and local. |
| Facilities connectivity | Improve connectivity by improving physical infrastructure and communication infrastructure. | Form an infrastructure network which connects all sub-regions to each other.  Promote hinterland connection by giving priority to linking up unconnected road sections.  Standardize transportation mechanisms.  Improve the connectivity of energy- and aviation infrastructure.  Improve international communications connectivity.  Build industrial parks and promote industrial cluster development. |
| Unimpeded trade | Increase the potential for international cooperation.  Facilitate cross-border flows of investment and trade. | Establish a network of free-trade zones.  Remove investment- and trade barriers.  Develop cross-border e-commerce.  Increase cooperation in the exploration of energy sources. |
| Financial integration | Deepen international financial cooperation. | Build a currency stability system.  Develop the bond market in Asia,  establish investment/development banks;  Encourage commercial equity investment funds and private funds to participate in the construction of key projects of the BRI. |
| People-to-people bonds | Gain support for the BRI and deepening bilateral and multilateral cooperation from the public. | Carry forward the spirit of friendly cooperation by promoting cultural and academic exchanges, personnel exchanges, media cooperation; expand tourism; hosting major international sports events. Focus areas: the medical sector, science, technology, poverty reduction, education, biodiversity and ecological protection, culture and media. |
| Human resources |  | Improve the division of labor. |
| Environment and energy resources |  | Promote environmentally sustainable construction projects. |

Sources that were consulted to create this overview: Action plan on the Belt and Road Initiative, released in March 2015.; Transcript of Xi Jinping’s speech at the opening ceremony of the Belt and Road Forum on May 14, 2017.; Transcript of Xi Jinping’s speech at the opening ceremony of the Belt and Road Forum on April 26, 2019.

## Appendix II – Overview of China’s expressed aims in the African dimension

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Cooperation policy / focus point** | **Aim** | **Application in the African context** |
| Policy coordination | Strengthen strategic cooperation.  Increase political- and policy dialogue at various levels.  Boost coordination on major international and regional issues.  Enhance mutual political trust. | China follows the “five-no” approach in its relations with Africa: no interference in African countries' pursuit of development paths that fit their national conditions; no interference in African countries' internal affairs; no imposition of China’s will on African countries; no attachment of political strings to assistance to Africa; and no seeking of selfish political gains in investment and financing cooperation with Africa.  China will continue to speak for Africa at the United Nations and other for a to support Africa. |
| Facilities connectivity | Boosting regional linkages.  Build Africa’s economic corridors and transport arteries.  Cultivate new engines for economic development.  Improve Africa’s endogenous development capacity. | Improving Africa’s connectivity by building railways, roads, bridges, airports and seaports.  Implementing sustainable and high-quality key projects in transport, energy, ICT and industrial development.  Build industrial parks.  Jointly with the African Union launch an infrastructure connectivity initiative.  Chinese companies are encouraged to participate in Africa’s infrastructure development by way of investment-construction-operation.  Open more direct flights between Africa and China. |
| Unimpeded trade | Achieving mutual economic benefit not at the expense of others.  Provide business/investment opportunities to Chinese and African parties. | Help to integrate Africa into the global value- and industrial chain.  China vows to further open their doors to African businesses.  China launched a trade facilitation initiative, see “Aid and development facilitation”. |
| Financial integration | Provide a platform for China and Africa to jointly address the challenges related to financial resources.  Address the issue of capital deficit facing Africa’s development. | Provide loans to Africa through the China-Africa Development Fund, the China-Africa Industrial Capacity Cooperation Fund and the Special Loans for the Development of Africa’s Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises.  China facilitates bond issuance by African countries and their financial institutions in China.  China supports African countries to make better use of financing resources of several China-owned banks. |
| People-to-people bonds | Facilitating inter-civilizational exchanges.  Strengthen the bond between the people of China and Africa.  Promote cultural diversity. | Expand cooperation with Africa in the areas of culture, education and tourism.  Create platforms for the exchanges between youth, women, media and think thanks in the fields of culture and art, education, sports.  China will provide Africa with 50.000 government scholarships and 50.000 training opportunities. Furthermore, China will invite 2000 young Africans to visit China for exchanges.  China will establish an institute of African studies and open more African culture centers in China. Also, China will open more Chinese culture centers in Africa.  China and Africa will jointly organize fifty cultural- sports-, and tourism events.  China welcomes Africa’s participation in the Silk Road International League of Theaters and other cultural initiatives.  China encourages Chinese tourism in Africa. |
| Healthcare | Improve healthcare. | China has upgraded 50 medical- and health aid programs for Africa.  Set up a cooperation program that focuses on the prevention and control of communicable diseases, schistosomiasis, HIV/AIDS and malaria. This is primarily targeted at women, children and vulnerable groups.  China will send medical specialists to Africa and train African medical specialists.  China will provide Africa with mobile medical services to provide Africans with services like dentistry. |
| Human resources | Improve the well-being of Chinese and African peoples. | Create employment and increase income.  China will share more of its development practices with Africa and will set up several centers that promote personal/professional development of young Africans. |
| Environment and energy resources | Promote harmony between man and nature.  Strengthen exchange and cooperation to achieve ecological and environmental preservation. | Cooperate to pursue green, low-carbon, circular and sustainable development.  Improve and multiply water and energy resources.  Protect wildlife.  Launch a green development initiative constituted by 50 projects aimed at green development and ecological/environmental protection in Africa. Focus areas include: education of local people, conduct research, pollution prevention. |
| Aid and development facilitation | China supports Africa to achieve general food security by 2030.  China facilitates African over-all development. | China and Africa cooperate to formulate and implement a program of action to achieve agricultural modernization.  China implements 50 agricultural assistance programs, provides RMB 1 billion of emergency humanitarian food assistance to African countries affected by natural disasters.  Alleviate poverty.  China sends 500 senior agriculture experts to Africa and trains young African researches in agri-science and entrepreneurs in agri-business.  China will launch an initiative to facilitate African development. This initiative will: increase non-resource imports from Africa, African nations are invited to participate in the China International Import Expo, for which the least developed countries are exempted from paying exhibition stand fees. |
| Security | Promote peace and stability in Africa.  Support African countries to strengthen their independent capacity for safeguarding stability and peace. | China supports African countries, the African Union and other regional African organizations in solving African issues in the African way.  China is of the opinion that poverty is the root cause of chaos, while peace is the guarantee for development. Development holds the key to solving all problems, so China is committed to take an active part in Africa’s efforts to maintain and strengthen peace, security and support in Africa.  China supports the African initiative of “Silence the guns in Africa”.  China will continue to provide military aid to the African Union and supports African nations in combating terrorism.  A China-Africa peace and security forum will be established as a platform for conducting more exchanges in this area. |

Sources that were consulted to create this overview: Xi Jinping’s keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the summit of the Forum on China-Africa cooperation in Johannesburg on December 4, 2015; Liu Yuxi’s keynote speech at the Belt and Road Dialogue for China-Africa Cooperation in May 2019; Xi Jinping’s keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the FOCAC summit in Beijing in 2018.

## Appendix III – Overview of China’s expressed aims in the context of Djibouti

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Focus point** | **Aim** | **Application in Djibouti** | **Alignment with universal and/or African dimension** |
| Policy coordination | Facilitate Djibouti to play a larger role in regional and international affairs.  Forge a model for South-South cooperation.  Enhance mutual political trust. | China is willing to work with Djibouti to enhance communication and coordination on major international and regional issues.  Increase mutual learning about governance and development experience.  Enhance exchanges of experience in state governance and administration. | The aims align with the framework of expressed aims in the African context. |
| Facilities connectivity | Improve physical infrastructure.  Make Djibouti a regional commerce and trade and logistics hub | Build and improve railways, ports, water supply, liquefied natural gas pipelines.  Implement a flagship project of infrastructure and production capacity. | Improving physical infrastructure in the Djiboutian context is more focused on local and regional infrastructure and is primarily intended to improve the Djiboutian people’s livelihoods. |
| Unimpeded trade | Develop Djibouti’s economy through amplifying trade. | Build a free trade zone.  China encourages Chinese enterprises to invest and establish business in Djibouti. | In the Djiboutian context, less emphasis was laid on this focus point. |
| Financial integration | - | - | No aim or intention regarding this focus point was mentioned in the consulted sources. |
| People-to-people bonds | Consolidate the foundation of public opinion and social basis of bilateral friendship. | Deepen exchanges and cooperation in youths, women, think thanks and media.  Chinese provinces and municipalities are encouraged to carry out local cooperation with Djibouti. | In the Djiboutian context, the implementation of the aims is more focused on actual people-to-people relations instead of opening cultural/educational centers. |
| Healthcare | Improve Djibouti’s medical conditions | China stands ready to assist Djibouti in improving its medical conditions. | In the Djiboutian context, less emphasis was laid on this focus point. |
| Human resources | Expand cooperation in human resources development. | - | In the Djiboutian context, less emphasis was laid on this focus point. |
| Environment and energy resources | Cooperate to resolve regional issues as stated in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. | Xi stated to be willing to strengthen communication and coordination with Djibouti on climate change.  Enhancing cooperation in the ‘blue economy’. | The aims align with the framework of expressed aims in the African context. However, in the Djiboutian context, another theme was introduced: the ‘blue economy’. |
| Aid and development facilitation | Improve people’s livelihoods in Djibouti.  Achieve economic benefits.  Achieve social benefits | Help Djibouti to improve its economic and social development.  Alleviate poverty.  Cooperate on agriculture | With respect to the African and universal dimension, in the Djiboutian context, extra emphasis is laid on this focus area. |
| Security | Maintain peace and stability in the Horn of Africa | Cooperate on regional issues regarding security and peace.  Strengthen cooperation in aspects of peacekeeping, counter-terrorism and counter-piracy.  China is willing to strengthen its cooperation with Djibouti in fleet export | With respect to the African and universal dimension, in the Djiboutian context, extra emphasis is laid on this focus area. |

Sources: “Xi Jinping holds talks with President Ismail Omar Guelleh of Djibouti”, November 23, 2017.; “Li Keqiang meets with President Ismail Omar Gueleh of Djibouti”, November 24, 2017.; “Xi meets Djiboutian president”, September 2, 2018.; “Wang Yi holds talk with Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Mahamoud Ali Youssouf of Djibouti”, February 20, 2019.; “Wang Qishan meets with Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Mahamoud Ali Youssouf of Djibouti”, February 20, 2019.; “Xi Jinping meets with President Ismail Omar Guelleh of Djibouti”, April 28, 2019.; “Djibouti President Guelleh meets Wang Yi”, January 9, 2020.; “Wang Yi holds talks with Djibouti’s Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Mahmoud Ali Youssouf”, January 10, 2020.

The sources that were consulted to create this overview are all published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of China.

## Appendix IV – Overview of China’s expressed aims in the context of Senegal

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| **Focus point** | **Aim** | **Application in Senegal** | **Alignment with universal and/or African dimension** |
| Policy coordination | Consolidate political mutual trust.  Maximize economic complementarity.  Strengthen mutual support in international and regional affairs. | Mobilize resources with no political conditionality.  China will step up communication and coordination with Senegal on major issues relating to the UN and upholding the multilateral trading regime.  Work with Senegal under FOCAC to strengthen mechanisms of the forum as a whole.  China respects Senegal in its independence, sovereignty and culture. | Although the aims in the Senegalese context generally align with the aims in the African dimension, the aims in the Senegalese context focus more on China and Senegal mutually supporting each other in the international community. |
| Facilities connectivity | Improve connectivity through infrastructure. | Enhance cooperation in infrastructure, industrial park construction and transportation.  Continue to devote efforts in promoting industrial alignment.  Support Senegal in building industrial parks at strategic points.  Help Senegal to accelerate its industrialization. | Improving infrastructure is one of the main aims of China-Senegal cooperation. The Senegal-specific aims over-all align with the aims as stated in the African dimension. |
| Unimpeded trade | Increase bilateral trade.  Increase cooperation on facilitating cross-border trade. | Encourage Chinese enterprises to invest in the manufacturing industry of Senegal.  Elevate the level of economic and trade cooperation.  Reinforce cooperation in fields of trade and investment.  Increase production capacity. | The Senegal-specific aims focus more on the development on a national and local level instead of integrating in the global value chain. |
| Financial integration | Ensure sustainability of financing arrangements by China. | China mobilizes a significant amount of financial resources to help Senegal.  Ensure the sustainability of financing arrangements by ensuring that are based on sound planning, are economically feasible and done in a step-by-step manner. | Instead of determining the direction for Senegal’s financial institutions, China takes a more supporting role through ‘coaching’ Senegal on this matter. |
| People-to-people bonds | Strengthen people-to-people ties.  Deepen mutual learning between both civilizations.  Promote public opinion connection.  “Make sure that the express train of China-Senegal cooperation will speed ahead smoothly.” | Expand cooperation in culture, education, art, media and youth organizations.  Intensify high-level exchanges.  Expand cultural exchanges.  Expand tourism.  China supports Senegal in hosting the 2022 Summer Youth Olympics. | In the Senegalese context, the implementation of the aims is more focused on actual people-to-people relations through exchanges and tourism instead of opening cultural/educational centers.  Furthermore, the aim in the Senegalese context is more focused on consolidating existing bonds than on establishing them. |
| Healthcare | Support Senegal’s healthcare system. | Enhance cooperation in improving public health.  Expand exchanges in health care.  China sends medical supplies to Senegal in order to prevent the spread of Covid-19. | The aims align with the framework of expressed aims in the African context. |
| Human resources | Focus on Senegalese human resource development. | China is willing to share its experience in economic development.  China will invest in Senegal’s young talents. | The aims align with the framework of expressed aims in the African context. |
| Environment and energy resources | Water conservation. | Deepen cooperation in agriculture and fishery.  Intensify cooperation with regard to the processing of agricultural and aquatic products. | The aims in the African dimension are focused on preserving nature, whereas the aims in the Senegalese context are focused on exploiting resources more efficiently. |
| Aid and development facilitation | Improve Senegal’s ability of self-development.  Vitalize rural areas  Focus on high-quality and sustainable development. | Help Senegal to lift its level of agricultural modernization. | Instead of facilitating the early stages of development, China aims to support Senegal in modernizing. |
| Security | Jointly build the cause of peace. | Strengthen cooperation in peacekeeping and security areas. | The aims align with the framework of expressed aims in the African context. |

Sources: Special representative of the Chinese government on African Affairs Ambassador Zhong Jianhua visits Senegal”, January 12, 2016.; “Xi Jinping meets with President Macky Sall of Senegal”, September 2, 2016.; “Special representative of the Chinese government on African Affairs Xu Jinghu attends the fourth Dakar International Forum on Peace and Security in Africa”, November 17, 2017.; “Assistant Foreign Minister Chen Xiaodong visits Senegal and Mauritania”, March 13, 2018.; “Yang Jiechi meets with Foreign Minister Sidiki Kaba of Senegal”, June 20, 2018.; “State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi hold talks with Foreign Minister Sidiki Kaba of Senegal”, June 21, 2018.; “Full text of Chinese President Xi’s signed article on Senegalese media”, July 7, 2018.; “Chinese, Senegalese presidents pledge to create better future for ties”, July 22, 2018.; “President Macky Sal of Senegal meets with Wang Yi”, January 7, 2019.; “Wang Yi holds talks with Foreign Minister Sidiki Kaba of Senegal”, January 7, 2019.; “Yang Jiechi meets with President Macky Sall of Senegal”, December 20, 2019.; “Wang Yi speaks with Senegalese Foreign Minister Amadou Ba on the phone”, April 18, 2020.

The sources that were consulted to create this overview are all published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of China.

## Appendix V – Overview of China’s expressed aims in the context of Zambia

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| **Cooperation policy/ focus point** | **Aim** | **Application in Zambia** | **Alignment with universal and/or African dimension** |
| Policy coordination | Build/maintain bilateral diplomatic friendship.  Deepen multilateral coordination.  The bilateral relation should be based on economic complementarity. | Enhance exchange of experience in governance and administration of state affairs.  Strengthen coordination and cooperation in major international and regional affairs.  There are no privileges or political strings attached to assistance of loans provided by China.  Non-interference in each others international affairs.  Enhance bilateral all-round practical cooperation, intensify bilateral communication.  Support Zambia to modernize its national governance capability. | The aims that relate to this domain align with the framework of expressed aims in the African context. However, over all the sources that were consulted, this domain is by far the most recurring and emphasized theme. |
| Facilities connectivity | Tazara should become a road of cooperation and prosperity that drives the industrialization and agricultural modernization in Zambia.  China should have a conducive effect on Zambia’s infrastructure construction. | Deepen cooperation in the construction of infrastructure.  Propel Zambia to deepen industrialization.  Uphold the intensive development concept that large-scale infrastructure construction programs should be planned and promoted together with industry development.  Reforming the Tazara management system by integrating railways and ports and forging industrial and economic belts along the railway. | The aims align with the framework of expressed aims in the African context. |
| Unimpeded trade |  | Deepen cooperation in investment and trade.  A free-trade zone was established in Zambia: the Zambia-China Economic and Trade Cooperation Area.  The China Investment and Trade Promotion Center was installed in Zambia.  China supports and encourages Chinese enterprises to invest and develop in Zambia.  Construct economic cooperation zones in Zambia. | The Zambia-specific aims focus more on the development on a national and local level instead of integrating in the global value chain. |
| Financial integration | China facilitates Zambia’s infrastructure development by providing loans. | China is Zambia’s main investment source country.  Give full play to the role of Zambia-China Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone. | The aims align with the framework of expressed aims in the African context. |
| People-to-people bonds | Winning the trust of Zambian people. | Expand exchanges in education, culture, sports and news media and advance communication between the youth.  Expand tourism. | The aims as expressed in the Zambia-specific context are primarily focused on promoting a positive/conducive sentiment towards China among Zambians. No mentions were made regarding establishing cultural centers or organizing events. |
| Healthcare | Improve healthcare. | Help to fight health crises. | In the Zambian context, less emphasis was laid on this focus point. |
| Human resources | - | - | No aim or intention regarding this focus point was mentioned in the consulted sources. |
| Environment and energy resources | Cooperate on the extraction of resources.  Modernize the agriculture sector. | China installed the Agricultural Demonstration Center in Zambia.  Deepen cooperation in mining.  Deepen cooperation in agriculture.  Boost cooperation in electric power.  Support Zambia to modernize the agriculture sector. | The aims in the Zambian context were primarily targeted at exploring the possibilities for extracting resources and agriculture. Little emphasis was laid on protecting the environment. |
| Aid and development facilitation | Help Zambian people gain national independence and liberation.  Help Zambia in realizing independent and sustainable development. | - | In the Zambian context, less emphasis was laid on this focus point. |
| Security | - | - | No aim or intention regarding this focus point was mentioned in the consulted sources. |

Sources: “Xi Jinping holds talks with President Edgar Lungu of Zambia, stressing to cherish traditional friendship and advance China-Zambia relations”, March 30, 2015.; “Wang Yi expounds Tazara spirit: mutual respect, tenacity and perseverance and selfless internationalism”, July 23, 2015.; “Special representative of the Chinese government on African Affairs ambassador Zhong Jianhua visits Zambia”, January 10, 2016.; “President Edgar Lungu of Zambia meets with Wang Yi”, January 9, 2017.; “Wang Yi holds talks with Foreign Minister Harry Kalaba of Zambia”, January 9, 2017.; “Wang Yi: Build Taraza into a road of cooperation and prosperity”, January 9, 2017.; “President Edgar Lungu of Zambia meets with State Councilor Wang Yong”, June 8, 2017.; “Xi meets Zambian president”, September 1, 2018.; “Wang Yi: China-Africa cooperation is sincere and selfless and has no geopolitical purposes”, June 24, 2019.

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3. Simelane & Managa (2018): 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The Principles include the following: (1) mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty; (2) non-aggression; (3) non-interference in each other’s internal affairs; (4) equality and mutual benefit; (5) peaceful coexistence. Source: Simelane & Managa (2018): 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
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13. Nordin & Weismann (2018): 234. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Dollar (2019): 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Junxian & Mao (2016): 108. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Casarini (2016): 98. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Casarini (2016): 99. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Nordin & Weismann (2018): 240. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Nordin & Weismann (2018): 239. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Callahan (2016): 236, 237. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. D’Hooghe (2014): 1, [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. D’Hooghe (2014): 83. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
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27. Castells (2016): 412. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Ogbuebor et al (2016): 382. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
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30. Alves (2013): 208. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Sautman & Hairong (2007): 78. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Alves (2013): 208-210. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Alves (2013): 207. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Sautman & Hairong (2008): 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
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60. Brady (2009): 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. D’Hooghe (2014): 207. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. D’Hooghe (2014): 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
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64. Although this understanding of public diplomacy is based on the democratic political system and the Western notion of concepts such as soft power, it still is a valid concept to research China’s public international relations as China has explicitly incorporated this Western concept into its public-opinion management. For more information see: Brady (2009): 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
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67. D’Hooghe (2014): 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
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