

China's Foreign Policy in the 'Going Out' Era: An Analysis of China's Zambia Policy



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秦人不暇自哀，而后人哀之；

后人哀之而不鉴之，亦使后人而复哀后人也

——《阿房宫赋》杜牧

Declaration

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Abstract

This dissertation analyses Chinese foreign policymaking in the context of Sino-Zambian relations in the 'Going Out' era (1997-2022). China's foreign policymaking system tends to be regarded as a 'black box' by foreign observers, owing to their limited access to it. In particular, Western researchers' ability to understand Chinese foreign policymaking is stymied by impediments such as language barriers and difficulties in gaining access to key actors inside the system. Unusually in this context, this dissertation presents the findings of twelve elite interviews with senior officials that shed new light on the Chinese foreign policymaking process. Situated theoretically within a fragmented authoritarianism framework that rejects the conventional image of Chinese foreign policymaking as centralised, top-down, and highly coordinated, the dissertation instead explores how Chinese foreign policy is made "on the ground," with all the messiness, confusion, and contradictions this entails. In the process, the dissertation develops the concept of "policy lagging" in order to explain some of the notable failures of China's foreign policy when it comes to Zambia. It finds that China's foreign policymaking system is surprisingly ineffective at coordinating the various actors involved in the process. Furthermore, communication between those actors is compromised by a system of policy-related information flows that is not fit for purpose. China's foreign policymaking system proves to be insufficiently proactive: policy adoptions are slow to occur, and important matters escalate before resolutions can be found. These problems are exacerbated by policymakers' willingness to justify policy failures and their unwillingness to make timely policy adaptations.

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Selected Acronyms and Abbreviations

ATA	Applied Thematic Analysis
b/d	Barrels per day
BPM	Bureaucratic Politics Model
CASS	Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CDB	China Development Bank
Chexim	The Export-Import Bank of China
CNMC	China Nonferrous Metal Mining (Group) Co., Ltd.
CNOOC	China National Offshore Oil Corporation
CNPC	China National Petroleum Corporation
FA	Fragmented Authoritarianism
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FOCAC	Forum on China–Africa Cooperation
FPA	Foreign Policy Analysis
IR	International Relations
LSGs	Leading Small Groups
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (of China)
MOF	Ministry of Finance (of China)
MOFCOM	Ministry of Commerce (of China)
MOFTEC	The Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations and Trade
NMC	National Mining Company
NOC	National Oil Company
Sinopec	China Petrochemical Corporation (Sinopec Group)

SOEs China State-owned enterprises

WB World Bank

Chapter 1. Introduction

At the beginning of the new millennium, the People's Republic of China (PRC) was nowhere near the position of a global economic superpower that it is today. Nevertheless, the economic influence of China had already been observed internationally due to its large volume of investments, massive-scale infrastructure projects, and tremendous share of global trade. The economic boom, starting in the 1990s, has dramatically shaped China's global outlook as a result of China's shift of its global strategy, aimed at uncovering the country's economic capacity with the proclamation of a 'Going Out' narrative (Mwanawina, 2008).

After a decade of experiential practice with no policy guidelines in place (1990-2000), the concept of 'Going Out' was officially introduced as a national strategy under the 10th 5-year plan (2001-2005), when the Chinese central government encouraging its reformed state-owned enterprises (SOEs) to expand their resource-seeking activities abroad to fuel China's continued economic growth (McMichael, 2020) in a move that has significantly deepened China's integration into the global political economy. Whilst China's SOEs have been actively seeking resources of every kind, the amount of mineral imports – including iron ore, cobalt and copper – has been sharply increasing. Consequently, Chinese National Mining Companies (NMCs) enjoy a high degree of priority amongst Chinese SOEs under the 'Going Out' strategy.

The destination of Chinese NMCs in the 'Going Out' strategy was mostly the continent of Africa (Li, 2013). This is not only because of the relatively ample mineral reserves in that continent, but also due to China's relative inexperience of operating within international markets and their inability to compete with the much more technically advanced corporations of the developed world (Carmody and Strauss, 2010). In this regard, the so-called 'trouble zones', with ample natural resources, were the primary focus of Chinese NMCs. Their successful entry into a host of African mining industries, from Congo and Zimbabwe to Nigeria and Zambia, has critically shaped the form of engagement and interactions between China and African countries, which are the destinations for Chinese businesses in terms of 'Going Out' with deepening economic ties between China and African countries.

The scale and volume of China's investment activities differ from country to country and vary by sector but, nonetheless, they represent a continually growing phenomenon across the African continent. China's state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and the private sector accounted for \$14.7 billion of foreign direct investment (FDI) in 2012, a growth of more than 60 percent from 2009 (Shinn and Eisenman, 2012). Overall, during the 2009-2012 period, China's investment in Africa exceeded \$40 billion in FDI, through various kinds of investments (Shinn and Eisenman, 2012). These state-owned companies and private sector businesses have gradually supplemented the Chinese government's role in areas spanning trade, investment and large-scale infrastructure construction. However, in spite of this successful engagement and the economic profits brought about by the implementation of the 'Going Out' strategy, China also faces various challenges resulting from its increasingly deepening economic engagement with African countries.

To illustrate, due to the increasing interactions between China and resource-rich African nation states and the continuation of its 'Going Out' strategy, China's commercial interests in Africa have become more sensitive to the domestic socio-economic situation of those African nation states that have been the target destinations for Chinese investment from the early stages of this strategy (Hodzi, 2019). Consequently, China has begun to face considerable challenges in consolidating and protecting its political and economic investments in host environments mired by socio-political instability (Hodzi, 2019). Economically, in Zambia's Chambishi copper mine, owned by Chinese SOE China Nonferrous Metal Mining (Group) Co., Ltd. (CNMC), labour unrest caused by disputes over the welfare of local employees occurred on several occasions from 2006 to 2010, resulting in economic losses for CNMC as the actions taken by Zambian mining workers caused severe disruptions to the company's production plan. Politically, Zambia's then-opposition party leader, Michael Sata, ran a presidential campaign in 2006, publicly calling for Zambia's resistance to Chinese engagement, as anti-Chinese sentiment was perceived nationwide. Despite Sata failing to take office in 2006, the potential political turbulence in Zambia raised concerns from the Chinese government in terms of the safety of Chinese citizens and the security of Chinese assets.

Additionally, China's engagement with African countries has increasingly become a source of international controversy within China's broader foreign policy, in which

narratives of 'anti-Chinese sentiment' and 'debt trap diplomacy' have repeatedly emerged in Western media. Despite the challenges and difficulties China has faced in Zambia in the 'Going Out' era, which have damaged China's policy objectives both politically and economically, there have been few, if any, satisfactory policy responses to tackle those issues, something which the scholarly literature struggles to explain. In order to make sense of these issues, this thesis presents a detailed case study of Sino-Zambian relations during the 'Going Out' era, drawing particular attention to the actors, contexts, and processes involved in Chinese foreign policy making.

This introduction is divided into three major sections (1.1, 1.2, and 1.3). The first section (1.1) deals with the 'Going Out' strategy by providing background information, illustrating the contents and the evolution of the strategy since 2001 and elucidating the changes in terms of Sino-Zambian engagements before and after the 'Going Out' strategy was implemented; it also briefly introduces the challenges China is facing in terms of its foreign policy towards Zambia. The second section (1.2) will briefly summarise the findings in the existing literature regarding China's challenges in Zambia in the 'Going Out' era, identify the gaps in the existing literature, illustrate the contribution of the present study, and elucidate how the research aims and objectives framed by the author may help to fill those gaps. The final section (1.3) will present the main research question, main findings of the research, and the structure of this thesis.

1.1 China in the Post-Mao era: economic reforms, energy (in)security, and economic-focused foreign policies

1.1.1 The evolving debate on China's 'reform and opening up (Gai Ge Kai Fang)'

The Death of Mao Zedong in 1976 marked the end of the chaotic ten-year Cultural Revolution, the aftermath of which left a huge scar on the PRC's socio-economic situation, with a low economic growth rate, a large proportion of the population in destitution, and poor infrastructure (Pollay et al, 1990; Kraus, 2012). Facing such severe conditions, the Deng Xiaoping government of the late 1970s continued on the traditional pathway, emphasising that the 'struggles between classes' had very limited effect in addressing the issue that China was facing in the 1970s (Lanquying, 2010; Zhang, 1996). To resolve the urgent economic problems, Deng Xiaoping effectively scrapped Mao's declared strategy of prioritising class struggles and proclaimed the 'reform and opening up' policy to admit the existence of a market within Communist

China (Naughton, 1993; Zhang, 1996; Tisdell, 2009). From the late 1970s to the early 1990s, China saw a dramatic economic increase, with relatively successful poverty alleviation and heavy infrastructure constructions. Moreover, the framework of Deng Xiaoping's 'opening up' policy, which respected the market, emphasised fair competition and encouraged both state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and private businesses to develop and expand, has shaped and directed the degree of internationalisation of Chinese enterprises, with various SOEs entering into foreign market sectors, including oil and mining (Morris et al, 2002). However, the policy's implementation has not been without its hurdles. Below are three of the most prominent challenges that affected the further development of Chinese enterprises in the 1990s.

First, China has increased its energy consumption, requiring more natural resources from outside of its borders. Between 2000-2009, China's energy consumption more than doubled its expansion rate between 1990 and 1999, with fossil fuels – namely coal, natural gas, and oil – representing 93% of China's primary energy consumption in 2009 (British Petroleum, 2010). While China's vast coal reserves will continue to provide a considerable bulk of its energy in the foreseeable future, the Chinese government planned to cap coal use to below 65% of total primary energy consumption by 2017 in an effort to reduce heavy air pollution (Energy Information Administration, 2014). By 2011, oil was the second-largest source of energy consumption, accounting for 18% (Wang et al, 2018). Moreover, China's oil demand in 2022 has reached 13.4 million barrels per day and is predicted to increase another 16% by 2030 to over 16 million barrels per day (mb/d) (Kemp, 2022). Although domestic oil output has been on the rise, China's energy insecurity emanates from the reality that the nation's oil and natural gas supply is increasingly unable to satisfy demand (Wang et al, 2018; Gong et al, 2022). In this context, China has become increasingly dependent on foreign oil, and it went from being a net exporter to being a net importer of oil in 1993. The chart below (Figure 1.1.) indicates that China's oil consumption reached 10.7 mb/d in 2013; Since then, its reliance on oil imports has only grown:

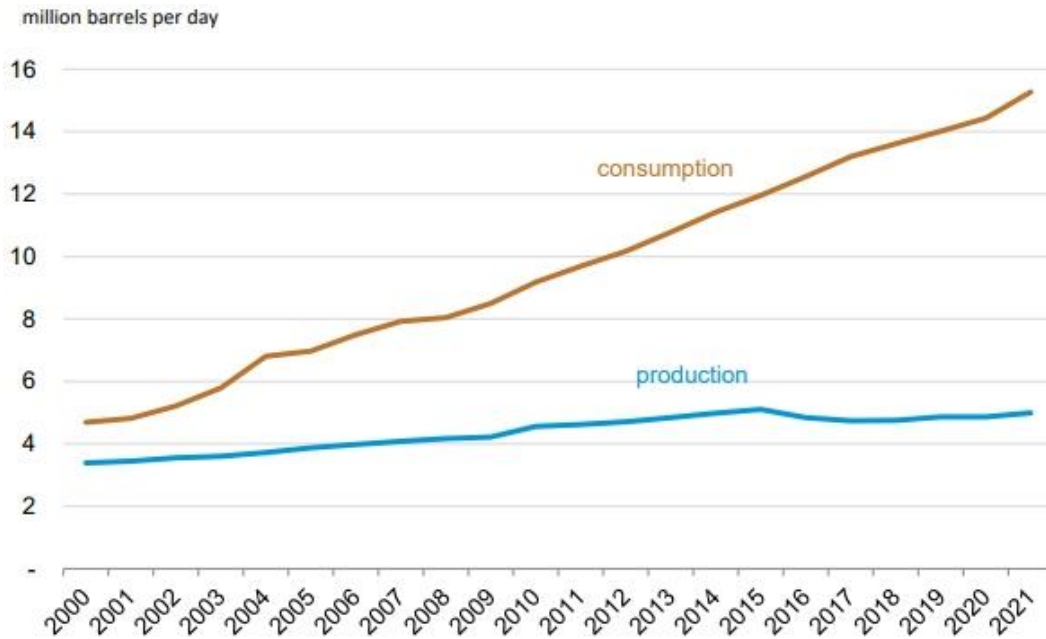


Figure 1.1: China's oil consumption and production

(Source: Compiled from: US Energy Information Administration (EIA), 2022, p, 4)

Of equal importance to China's increasing demand for international supplies of oil is the increasing demand for mining products, notably iron ore and copper. As China had been developing as the global hub for manufacturing, while encouraging construction of heavy infrastructure, its demand for electricity also increased as more factories were built. Copper is considered a crucial material for the aforementioned sectors. Along with China's scale of construction industry expansion and increasing demand for electricity, China's consumption of copper also witnessed a relatively sharp increase. From 1950 to 1999, the consumption of refined copper amounted to 23.39 million tons. Over 75% of this was consumed during the period of 1980 to 1999, which is almost three times more than in the period from 1950 to 1979 (Zhang et al, 2010). From 2000 to 2010, the consumption of refined copper further reached 43.25 million tons (Li et al, 2017). Excluding China's consumption, the consumption of other countries declined from 13.26 million tons in 2000 to 11.26 million tons in 2013 (Zhang et al, 2015). Thus, it can be seen that China's contribution was not only the major impetus of the growth of refined copper consumption, but also offset the reduced demand of other countries. China's demand for copper also led to the increased price of bronze in the late 1990s and early 2000s, during which the copper price hit a historical high of 4,400 US dollars per ton.

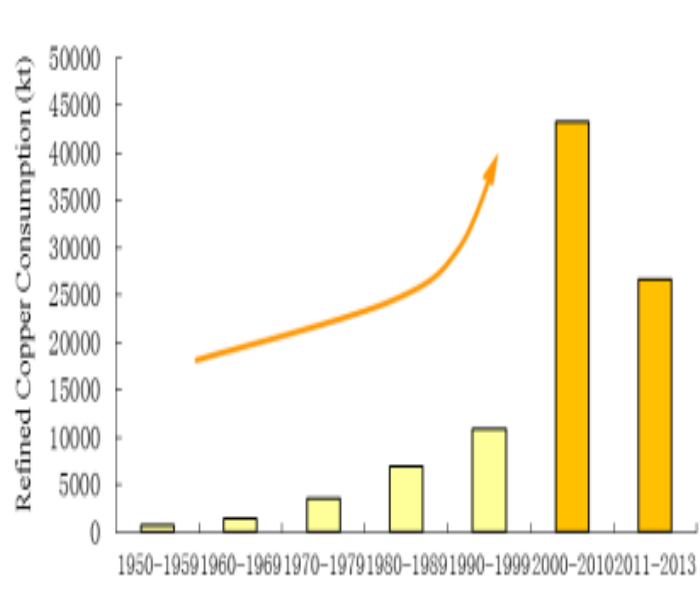


Figure 1.2: The consumption of refined copper in China
(Source: China Nonferrous Metals Industry Association)

The Chinese copper strategy was similar to that for its oil sector. China has become increasingly dependent on foreign imports of copper, even though the domestic output for copper has been improving. To that end, China Nonferrous Metal Mining (Group) Co., Ltd (CNMC) was founded as one of the vital energy SOEs, monitored and guided by the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council, to explore crucial mining material abroad to satisfy domestic demand (Xiaoyuan, 1997). CNMC has spread its business interests to over 80 countries and regions around the world, covering more than 40 nonferrous metal varieties, including copper, lead, and zinc. It has also invested and run a batch of landmark mining projects across Africa, notably in Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), to secure resources outside of China's territory (Zhu, 2008).

The second challenge to the 'opening up' policy was the limited access to foreign markets for Chinese businesses in the late 20th century. Given China's huge land mass, population, large growing economy, and strategic ports, it lent itself freely to huge international trade in the 1980s. As Figure 1.3 indicates, as China opened up its economy, it gradually transformed itself towards an export-oriented economy in the 1980s. The amount of exportation and the proportion of exports as a share of GDP showed a rapidly increasing trend. By December 1988, China's total exports reached 44.92 billion US dollars, equal to 14.38% of China's annual GDP in the same year (Yu,

1998). This is an almost 400% increase compared to China's export in 1980, at the very beginning of its 'opening up' reform, which showed just over 11 billion US dollars of exportation relevant to 5.91% of its annual GDP in the same year (Yu, 1998; Mah, 2007). China, in this regard, has become increasingly dependent on the markets outside its own territory for its products.

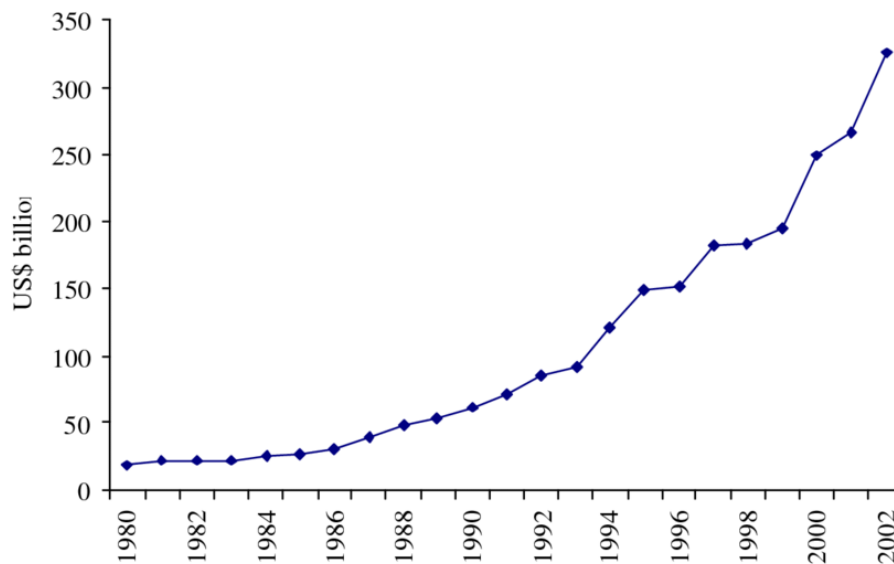


Figure 1.3 The volume of China's exports from 1980-2022

(Source: Wu, 2003, p.23)

Notes: Unit is US \$ billion

Despite China's steady increase in exports and the relatively large proportion of manufactured goods throughout the 1980s, China's exports were still mainly driven by primary products, with crude oil, textile and garment products being three of the most important commodities, accounting for 19% of China's export volume in 1988 (Macrotrends.com, 2021). Labour-intensive industries were the driving force of China's economy during that period (Wu et al., 2015). Due to the relatively low technical barriers of such industries, China failed to take advantage of its massive cheap labour to expand its overseas market in developed regions further, notably in Europe and North America. Workforces in Taiwan and Southeast Asian countries were challenging PRC's lead role in exporting labour intensive products (Shenkar, 1990). The market in Europe and North America for low skill products was at a near-saturation point and China, by that time, was not capable of promoting its competitiveness via

technical upgrades (Zhao et al, 2016). To that end, China needed to develop new overseas markets for its labour-intensive products. Although China was at that time primarily focusing on Japan and Western markets, the huge opportunity in developing countries, notably in Africa, attracted the attention of Chinese enterprises, as its export volume in Third World markets represented a relatively large proportion of its overall exportation at 15.6% in 1988 (Li, 1990). SOEs and Chinese home-grown firms were keen to enter into new markets in most of the African countries, but lacked government policies, regulations, guidance, and funding to implement such a plan.

Finally, although China today suffers from a low birth rate, with 11.416 per 1,000 people (just slightly higher than the UK and France) and increasing numbers of people receiving pensions, in the 1980s, China benefitted from its large population, with the majority being aged between 20 and 55 (Cai and Feng, 2021; Li, 1997). With such a large population entering into the market following the 'opening up' policy, it is no wonder the labour-intensive industries were the driving forces of China's exportation. Shortly after the 'opening up' policy was implemented, Chinese investors began to grab land in rural areas to build factories due to the relatively cheaper price of rural land compared to industrial land in cities. As rural land was used as a base for manufacturing, farmers soon became workers in factories across China in the 1980s (Li, 1997). This led to a remarkable number of farmers entering into the Chinese labour market. At the beginning of the 1980s, less than 2 million rural labourers transformed into industrial employees, but this number increased throughout the 1980s following the 'opening up' policy (Li, 1997). By 1998, the number of rural labourers working in factories and cities had increased to 95.46 million (Bai and Li, 2008). This demographic was under the age 35 and low-skilled. In this regard, in 1998, 73.99% of rural labourers were working in low skill industries, including hospitality and construction, for wages lower than the national average (Liu, 2013). This subsequently caused a labour surplus in industries with lower technical barriers, particularly in the construction industry, and a severe unemployment problem.

According to Kong and Liu (2006), it is difficult to calculate how many rural labourers were actually unemployed, as factory owners and employers hired rural labour on a zero-hour contract basis, with no social insurance given. Additionally, many of these labourers failed to report their employment to the National Bureau of Statistics. However, despite the harsh conditions provided by employers, the rural workforce was

having trouble securing jobs, with only 20% in employment for three to six months, and many of these then being replaced by younger labourers. Even those labourers employed in construction industries may have been out of work for months, due to the fierce competition within the sector. The excessive number of rural labourers in urban areas also caused increasing rates of crime. In 1994, 12,349 rural labourers committed crimes in urban regions, which was equal to 53.4% of the overall crime for the same year (Li, 1997). During that period, especially in the construction industry, both labourers and employers tended to look overseas, so that the employers could make greater profits and the labourers could get better rates of pay. Nevertheless, in the late 1980s and 1990s, despite the environment of 'opening up', there was no guidance in place regarding industries entering foreign markets, while for rural labour, it could be costly for them to go abroad, with complicated application procedures in place.

1.1.2 Natural resource (in)security and the 'Going Out' strategy in Africa

As China's rapid domestic economic development required the consumption of huge amounts of energy, concerns about energy (in)security and access to oil and natural resource supplies first surfaced during President Jiang Zemin's era in the 1990s, when Chinese state energy companies were encouraged to expand investment in domestic natural resource production capacity. There were initial attempts to address the security of international energy supplies from the early 1990s, largely due to Chinese National Oil Corporations (NOCs) and National Mining Corporations (NMCs) urging the government to support their initial overseas quest for oil and gas assets during this period (Meidan et al., 2009, p.603). The initial decision of these energy SOEs to search for oil abroad during their first phase of international expansion (1993-2000) not only resulted from rising consumption and declining production, but also domestic structural restraints within China's oil and mining industry.

During the 1980s, the Chinese government created four large natural resource corporations, each in charge of an industry sector. These were The China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC), which controlled most offshore oil business; China National Petrochemical Corporation (Sinopec), responsible for refining and marketing; China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), created in 1988 and responsible for exploration and production onshore and in shallow offshore areas (Lieberthal and Oksenberg, 1988); and China Nonferrous Metal Mining Group (CNMC), responsible for international engineering (mining) business. The latter changed its operational

name to China Nonferrous Metal Mining in 2005. These four companies provided the major proportion of China's oil and mining supply in the 1990s, with CNPC alone providing over 90% of China's oil from 1990 to 2000. These companies, therefore, were hit hardest by a series of downward pressures on domestic petroleum prices imposed by the central government, which resulted in heavy losses for CNPC, leaving the company with limited funds for investment in domestic exploration activities at a time when its petroleum reserves were depleting (Bo, 2010, p.33). Within this context, the head of CNPC, Wang Tao, announced a new strategy in February 1991, whereby the company would expand its foreign economic and technical cooperation, open up to the international market, and grow China's petroleum and overall energy industry through participating in international competition (Bo, 2010, pp.37-38). Largely because of their limited funds and lack of experience in overseas exploration and production of China's energy corporations, they focused on purchasing small assets and signing production-sharing contracts in older oilfields and abandoned mining sites, such as the underdeveloped oilfield in Sudan and the Chambishi copper mine in Zambia.

The strategy of obtaining 'equitable energy' stakes abroad, whereby China's energy companies gained ownership of the oil and refined mining it produced at the source, was broadly supported by the government both because it sought to address China's growing energy and natural resource demand and because it was in line with the leadership's strong historical preference for energy self-reliance since the Maoist period (Downs, 2000, p.5). Indeed, the Chinese government has long been suspicious of foreign powers' capacity to manipulate the international energy market, including mining and oil, and it was thought that a policy of self-reliance would shelter the Chinese economy from the impact of crises within the international market (Raine, 2009, p.149). Nevertheless, energy security and overseas oil supplies did not reach the Chinese government's international agenda until the era of President Hu Jintao during the 2000s. Zweig and Bi asserted that Beijing's access to foreign resources became increasingly necessary, not only for continued economic growth but also for the survival of the CPC regime, because "growth is the cornerstone of China's social stability" and, as such, "an unprecedented need for resources is now driving China's foreign policy" (2005, pp.25-26). With energy security being highlighted as essential for China to achieve its strategic goal of quadrupling its GDP from 2000 to 2020, an

objective that was reiterated in China's 2007 energy 'white paper', 'energy diplomacy' (*nengyuan waijiao* 能源外交) became a key component of Chinese foreign policy in the new century (Zhu, 2010, p.2).

In addition to the idea of building energy ties with foreign countries to relieve the energy insecurity perceived by Chinese leaders, the Chinese government also noticed the potential for a so-called investment package to encourage construction companies and surplus rural labourers to go overseas to further increase the diversity of China's economy, developing new markets and exporting its labour surplus (Sautman and Yan, 2015). To illustrate, once a Chinese energy corporation makes the decision to acquire a mining or oil site abroad, considerable amounts of money will be invested to refurbish the facilities, construct industrial areas and build necessary facilities such as office buildings and accommodations for staff (Ming et al, 2014; Gopal, 2018). Heavy infrastructure around areas such as paved roads, pipelines, and rail facilities were also required for the transportation of refined products (Davies, 2008). However, because Chinese construction corporations investing abroad lacked the necessary experience in interacting and communicating with local businesses to construct these aforementioned facilities, this provided them with the opportunity to take with them a significant number of Chinese rural labourers, many of whom were expected to benefit from this new overseas market through improved wages (Burke, 2007). This also, to some degree, relieved the problems of the surplus labourers in China during that period.

To achieve this new objective, China began to evolve its economic and diplomatic strategy beyond that of 'opening up' (*yinjinlai* 引进来), which had prevailed during the early reform era after 1978, when China had enthusiastically attracted Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) (Zhu, 2010, p.6). Under the tenth Five Year Plan in 2001, China moved to further deepen its integration into the international political economy at the start of the 21st century, as the government laid down a 'Going Out' (*zou chuqu* 走出去) strategy for China's large SOEs (Zhu, 2001).

1.1.3 The 'Going Out' strategy: contents and evolution

Even though the Chinese government in the early 1990s started to tackle some of the problems regarding its energy insecurity, requirements for global markets, and excess workforce, no official documents were released until 2000. The first formal reference to the strategy, however, can be seen in the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee (CCPCC) Opinion on the Formulation of the 10th National Economic and Social Development Five Year Plan (the Opinion), adopted in December 2000. As the first formal reference to the 'Going Out' strategy, the Opinion, in its 12th Article, stated the following as one of the goals of the Five Year Plan:

"Implement the 'Going Out' strategy, and strive to achieve new breakthroughs using domestic and foreign resources and markets. Encourage outward investment that can bring into play China's comparative advantage, widen the areas, channels and methods of economic and technical cooperation, support the transnational operations of competitive enterprises to go abroad to develop processing trade and develop resources, and provide help in the areas of loans, insurance, etc. Grasp firmly the formulation and regulation of the system of supervision for domestic enterprises going abroad to invest, strengthen the administration of Chinese companies abroad and the coordination of investment services" (Freeman, 2008, pp.4-5).

This quote attracted attention from the top leaders and policy makers in the State Council, and eventually was used in the 10th Five Year Plan in 2001. While the government began, in 2001, encouraging Chinese home-grown businesses to 'go out', to seek new markets and find new resources, no detailed policy regarding the 'Going Out' strategy, nor clear guidance on how to ensure the business global market survival without the policy protection (e.g. low tax rates, cash and policy supports) available within China's territory was presented. The former Chairman of CNMC publicly addressed the concern by identifying the lack of guidance and policy support for 'Going Out'. This lack of guidance not only hampered the pace of many Chinese companies in developing their businesses overseas, but also led to confusion for some of the so-called pioneer corporations, which had already actively engaged with foreign markets. CNMC, for instance, was amongst the first group of companies to 'go out' in the 1990s.

In 1998, CNMC bought a controlling 85 percent stake in Zambia's Chambishi copper mine for US\$20 million (US\$27 million in 2011 dollars) and invested a further US\$130 million in reopening the mine (Xiaowei, 2007). However, despite the considerably large amounts of money invested into Zambia's Chambishi copper smelter, the company lacked the knowledge of how to operate its businesses overseas due to lack of management skills, language barriers, and limited understanding of Zambia's environment (Xiaowei, 2007). Even at the start of the 21st century, when the 'Going Out' strategy was formally launched, the slogan of 'crossing the river by feeling the stones (i.e., pragmatically responding to challenges as they arise)' was still the dominant strategy advocated by Chinese leaders (Zhang, 2015). CNMC, under such circumstances, operated its mining smelter in Chambishi by directly replicating its mode of operation in China. This subsequently caused tensions between the company and its Zambian workers, and between the company and local citizens, due to the long working shifts, lack of protection for employees, and environmental concerns. Moreover, the lack of proper safety inspections and shortage of adequate safety equipment caused a serious incident in Chambishi, with 51 miners tragically losing their lives while working underground. Furthermore, other major Chinese SOEs operating overseas encountered similar difficulties in dealing with the company's relationship with its employees and residents living nearby.

In 2006, after noticing the problems Chinese corporations had encountered, the Chinese government reiterated the 'Going Out' strategy with detailed guidance, highlighting the following seven aims (Huang & Wilkes, 2011, p.9):

- i. To encourage overseas investments to enhance China's competitiveness and expand the scope and modalities of China's international economic and technical cooperation;
- ii. To continue to develop overseas project contracting and labour service cooperation, and encourage competitive companies to explore processing and trading overseas, thereby promoting export of products, services and technology;
- iii. To support companies in exploring resources overseas that were in short supply domestically and promote adjustment of the sectoral structure of resources trade;
- iv. To encourage the use of foreign intellectual property resources to establish research and development and design operation centres overseas;

- v. To support capable companies in developing transnational operations to achieve internationalized operations to achieve internationalized development;
- vi. To improve the overseas investment service system and create a good investment environment for companies through improvements in systems governing finance, insurance, foreign exchange, taxation, intellectual property rights, laws and regulations, information services and entry and exit management; and
- vii. To improve corporate governance structures and internal regulatory mechanisms to regulate and supervise overseas investments

Section 1 of Chapter 37 of the Five Year Plan spells out China's 'Going Out' strategy as follows:

“Support qualified enterprises to engage in outward direct investment and global operations. Give priority to competitive industries, provide guidance to enterprises to engage in overseas processing trade.....Encourage enterprises to participate in infrastructure construction overseas, improve the level of project contracting overseas, and steadily develop labour cooperation...”
(National People's Congress, 2006).

From the contexts quoted above, it can be observed that the Chinese government explicitly pointed out the sectors and areas in which it expects to see 'Going Out' to happen. The energy (natural resource) sector was at the forefront of the 2006 version of the strategy, with the word 'resource' being mentioned multiple times. The Chinese government also highlighted the expected outcome that the 'Going Out' strategy must achieve, by effectively highlighting the need for resolving labour surplus (develop labour service cooperation) and entering new overseas markets (promoting export of products). The 2006 version of the 'Going Out' policy, therefore, emphasised the challenges the 'opening up' policy had encountered during the 1980s and 1990s, which were energy insecurity, the need for overseas markets, and surplus labour problems. These three issues also constituted the major factor contributing to the very logic of the proclamation of the 'Going Out' strategy (Mumuni and Murphy, 2018). To illustrate, the Direction Policy (the Outward Investment Policy in relation to 'Going Out'), released by NDRC in 2006, stipulates the sectors in which outward investment is

encouraged, allowed or prohibited, with clarification of the types of government support that will be granted to companies. The sectors that are encouraged are:

- i. Those that can acquire resources or raw materials for which there is domestic shortage and which is required urgently for the development of the national economy.
- ii. Those that can promote the exports of domestic products, equipment or technology in which China enjoys a comparative advantage, as well as the export of labour services (NDRC et al., 2006).

China's desperate need to resolve the aforementioned problems was the driving force for the implementation of the 'Going Out' strategy and its evolution in 2006 was echoed by social scientists. Alden (2005), for example, describes the key factors propelling Chinese engagement in Africa as a combination of domestic Chinese dynamics and a desire to expand into new markets and international political factors. Bajpaee (2005) also believes that "China's political, economic and military relations with Africa have been subordinated to its quest to secure energy resources". Kachiga (2013), though criticising what he called an academic 'myopia' focusing too much on energy, markets, and labour in terms of Sino-African relations, still admits the importance of these factors in tightening the diplomatic ties between China and African countries.

1.1.4 From ideology to resource: the revolution of China-Africa relations and the case of Zambia

Sino-Africa diplomatic ties started in 1949 under Chairman Mao Zedong's leadership. Having won the civil war against the Kuomintang and founded the PRC in 1949, the CCP claimed that China had 'stood up' and rid itself of 'foreign domination', that a positive perception of the African continent had developed, and that Africa had begun to occupy a key position within Chinese international relations. Mao believed that PRC set a positive example for Africa in its anti-colonial and pro-independence revolutions, and, as independence movements arose across the continent, the Chinese leader compared the state of Africa with China's position in the period between the Boxer Rebellion and the Fourth of May Movement (Snow, 1994, p.284). In the 1950s the Chinese government began drawing on its common experiences under European oppression during the 19th century (Alden and Alves, 2008). Within Chinese official rhetoric, the most prominent symbolic connection linking China and Africa within this framework of anti-colonial solidarity was that of the British imperial figure General

Charles Gordon, who participated in Britain's operations in both China and Africa. Although Gordon was not directly involved in any invasion operations against the Qing Empire in the 1860s and had actually helped the Chinese Empire to boost its military capacity (Platt, 2012), the Chinese Communist Party leadership reformulated this narrative to foster ties based on shared experiences with African countries in the 1960s, by describing Gordon as a ruthless invader who had brutally begun the colonial war against the Qing Empire at the cost of thousands of innocent Chinese citizens' lives (Large and Patey, 2011).

To differentiate itself from the so-called imperialistic capitalist countries, China proclaimed its unique 'Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence' in 1954 as the overarching foreign policy principle for interacting with other countries, especially those in the global south. The 'Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence', which were developed in response to China's perception of geo-political realities at the time, include respect for sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, non-interference, equality and mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence. During the 1955 Bandung Conference, Chinese premier Zhou Enlai and the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, along with 29 other leaders from Africa and Southeast Asia, reemphasised these five principles, which became the "basic principles of Chinese foreign policy" and were characterised as a "joint Sino-Third World normative venture" (Kim, 1989, p.152). China called on Africans to fight against Western imperialism, attempting to export its own ideology to the continent.

It is worth noting here that Beijing's tactics were also "astutely pragmatic", as it intended to build diplomatic ties with various countries across Africa on several levels with both communist and non-communist governments (Van Ness, 1971, p.16). The core preference of Beijing's strategy was to build a broad group of alliances with stable established governments, rather than calling for the overthrow of existing governments. China's diplomatic objective was to help those governments gradually conduct the process of 'decolonising' which, in China's view, "provided firmer opposition to the superpowers, rather than to cultivate revolutionary groups" (Shichor, 1979, p.5). Such pragmatic considerations were evident throughout China's Third World engagements at the time, such as in Sudan, French Somaliland, and Zambia, where in each case Beijing had established and was maintaining diplomatic relations with the governments

under attack from revolutionary movements, with which China sought to oppose the superpowers (Van Ness, 1971, p.99).

1978 saw the defining moment of China's change of strategy and policies, both internally and externally, as Deng Xiaoping's enthusiasm in addressing China's poor economic situation in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution indicated. The 'reform and opening up' policy was subsequently announced by the Chinese government, as it sought to open its market for investors from all over the world. Indeed, a general shift took place within policymaking, from the primacy of ideology (the 'politics in command model') to an emerging economic pragmatism (the 'modernisation in command model'), which inevitably caused "a general decline in Chinese normative politics" (Kim, 1984a, p.183). With China's emphasis on economic reforms starting from 1978, Chinese activism in strengthening diplomatic ties with Third World countries in the international arena declined dramatically, as it withdrew from any international conflicts and kept a rather low profile in the UN Security Council (UNSC), abstaining on most decisions, despite China being a permanent member of UNSC.

The reason for this is that China's foreign policy objective of breaking the diplomatic dilemma set by the USA and the former USSR had been accomplished with China's entry into the UN's security council in 1971, followed by Nixon's visit to China in 1972, which resumed the traditional diplomatic ties between the two countries. China's policy priority, therefore, started to focus on repairing the economic damage caused by the Cultural Revolution. Within the realm of foreign policy, China's enthusiasm in supporting Third World countries from the control of superpowers generally declined as China progressed. However, to reassure the Third World of its 'independence' from superpowers, despite this recent rapprochement, China announced a new 'independent' foreign policy at the Communist Party Twelfth National Congress (September 1982), and reaffirmed that China's relations would continue to be governed by the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence (Yu, 1988, p.856).

During the Sino-African interactions from 1978 onwards, the narratives of the 'Five Principles' and 'south-south, win-win' were re-emphasised by the Chinese government, especially after the 1989 Tiananmen incident, which led to fierce criticism from both Western democratic regimes and human rights observers and resulted in deteriorating relationships between China and the West. The reapplication of the Cold War

narratives between China and Africa was not only in line with China’s attempt to seek international allies sharing the same values in opposition to the West, but also due to the burgeoning Sino-African economic (natural resource) ties, which were materially based. As China’s domestic economic development accelerated, the government became more willing to encourage its SOEs and manufacturing businesses to take advantage of the commercial opportunities presented by Africa’s economic reform programmes in the 1990s through joint ventures and economic cooperation (Taylor, 2010). The rapid growth of Sino-African commercial interactions in the 1990s benefited from high-level government exchanges between Chinese leaders and African ruling elites. The Chinese Foreign Minister, Qian Qichen, then visited 14 African countries within three years, starting at the end of the 1980s, which were a “preparatory stage for the full revival of Africa in China’s foreign policy” that emerged at the start of the 21st century (Alden and Alves, 2008, pp.53-4). As previously mentioned, the Chinese government and its SOEs became more interested in using the natural resources of African countries to boost the economic development of China and to relieve the feeling of energy insecurity. The Chinese importation of copper from Zambia increased from a negligible level in 1995 to over six million tons in 1997 (Figure 1.4).

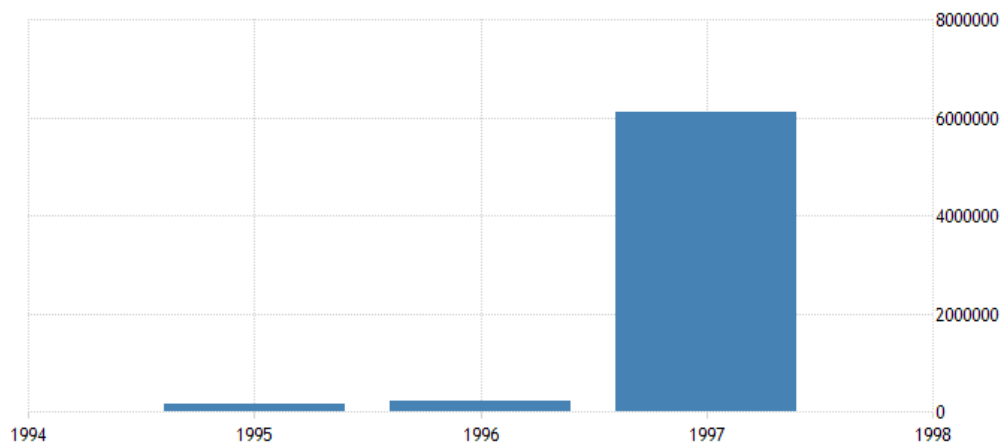


Figure 1.4: China’s importation of copper from Zambia

(Source: Tradingeconomies.com)

1.1.5 Conflicts and challenges faced by China under the implementation of 'Going Out'

China, at least in rhetoric terms, has been keen to depict itself as a benign investor, with the terms 'win-win' and 'equal relationship' being used with a high degree of frequency during FOCAS conferences (Taylor, 2010). The use of such narratives can benefit China in a twofold manner. On one hand, from a theoretical perspective, China uses these narratives to forge a completely different international outlook as an investor; the 'win-win' effectively places China on a level field with its African counterparts. China intends that the usage of these narratives should mark a fundamental difference between it and traditional investors from the West, which China describes as 'win-lose' and 'predatory' (Huang and Liu, 2013). In doing so, broadly speaking, China can present itself as an independent global power that does not play by the rules created by the West, but according to its own ideology and strategies. On the other hand, by using equal narratives, China can effectively trace its relationship back to the early 1960s while interacting with African countries.

By highlighting the 'selfless' contribution China has made to help its 'African brothers' in the Cold War period, China intends to portray itself as a benign investor that comes to Africa not only for its own commercial interests, but also to improve the livelihood of the locals. These narratives, from a commercial point of view, constitute a well-designed form of propaganda, enabling China to win more contracts and bids over its Western competitors (Naidu and Davies, 2006). Indeed, in 1998, Chinese mining SOE CNMC successfully entered Zambia with its acquisition of the Chambishi copper mine based in the Copperbelt Province. Furthermore, the period from 1998 to 2006 saw an increase of China's growing investment in the region. The first major challenge China faced in Zambia under the implementation of 'Going Out', however, was in the period from 2006 to 2015, when anti-Chinese sentiment was observed across the entire country, as locals resisted further investments from the Chinese (discussed in Chapter 4).

Despite China's narrative of 'win-win', Chinese investors' behaviours, however, demonstrated a completely different approach on the ground. Chinese investors in Africa, especially in mineral resource countries, became notorious for their deteriorating human rights records (Obuah, 2012). There were three major concerns regarding Chinese investors' behaviour at the Chambishi mine in Zambia. First, the

local employees suffered from incredibly long working shifts and a lack of proper safety equipment. Employees on site made several complaints regarding the lack of systematic training before being sent to underground mining sites (Lee, 2018). Second, Chinese employers preferred to hire part-time workers and sign zero-hour contracts with local employees, rather than hiring full-time employees (Leslie, 2016). Rounds and Huang (2017) have highlighted CNMC's attempt to bypass the workers' union to negotiate with its employees for low settlement fees. Strikes took place several times within CNMC's compound, where local employees refused to work until a more favourable contract had been signed.

Third, Chinese investors were accused of potential racist behaviours, with local employees' accommodation being geographically set apart from Chinese employees, a phenomenon called 'working place apartheid' by some of the local employees (Lee, 2018). Chinese managers on site also refused to learn the local Zambian language, creating communication barriers. It was not rare for Chinese managers to get involved in rows with local employees, and offensive language from those managers was often reported. Eventually, a massive explosion at the Chinese-owned Chambishi caused dozens of casualties among Zambian mining workers, triggering nationwide dissent over the labour exploitations by Chinese investors. This not only severely caused political tensions and damaged China's international reputation as a benign investor, but also resulted in economic losses of CNMC, as labour disputes caused disruptions to the company's production plan.

Another challenge arose for China during the period of 2015 to 2022, when Chinese banks have been criticised for creating a 'debt trap diplomacy' (discussed in Chapter 5). Indeed, the amounts of loans being granted by Chinese official banks increased in the 2010s and peaked in 2018, with the Zambian government securing at least \$1.34 billion funding in the same year. Despite the huge volumes of loans to Zambia that China approved for multiple mining- and infrastructure-related projects, the revenue obtained from those projects was insufficient for Zambia to repay the Chinese loans. Researchers issued warnings about Zambia's precarious position in terms of debt as early as 2015; however, China's lending continued, despite Zambia's debt situation deteriorating until 2020, when the latter finally defaulted on its debts.

Although China is not the only lender who approved loans to Zambia in that period, it significantly contributed to the country's debt problem as the single largest bilateral lender. Thus, China faced severe criticism for its lending in relation to Zambia's debt crisis. Challeney (2017) claims that China adopted a 'debt trap' diplomacy, whereby China intentionally drove Zambia into a debt crisis. Challeney's assertion gained momentum as his work was echoed by both academic and non-academic sources. China, on the other hand, has suffered political damage as a result of this argument, with its image as a benign donor being challenged by the deteriorating debt situation in Zambia. Furthermore, Chinese banks have also suffered from economic losses. Indeed, as Zambia defaulted on its debts, the loans approved by China to Zambia are not retrievable until the debt has been restructured, a process that often takes years, if not decades, to negotiate.

1.2 Literature Review

Conflicts between Chinese and local Zambians in the era of 'Going Out' and the disputes over China's lending to Zambia mark two major challenges that China faced in Zambia in that period, with anti-Chinese sentiment and the claim of 'debt trap diplomacy' causing both political and economic damage to China (see Ofstad and Tjønneland, 2017; Negi, 2008; Matambo and Onwuegbuchulam, 2021). Despite the severity of those challenges, China made little adaptation to its policy in order to tackle them, nor did China make any attempt to prevent a similar crisis from recurring. Indeed, since the labour disputes at Chinese owned Chambishi mine were highlighted by both researchers and journalists, clashes between Chinese managers and Zambian miners continued, showing little sign of stopping, with riots taking place at Chambishi mine in 2008 and 2011 (see Lee, 2009; Lee, 2018). Furthermore, despite there being early warning signs in regard to the debt situation in Zambia, China ignored the signals and continued approving loans to Zambia until Zambia defaulted on its debt in 2020 (discussed in Chapter 5).

With regard to this, two puzzles emerge from China's Zambia policy in the era of 'Going Out', which are: 1) one of the core policy objectives of 'Going Out' strategy is to secure natural resources from foreign countries, such as coppers from Zambia, but the labour disputes and riots at Chinese-owned Chambishi endangered production and affected copper exports back to China, which is not in line with China's interests. However, China took little action in tackling the labour dispute, resulting in similar events

occurring again in 2008 and 2011; and 2) Zambia's debt crisis affected China's narrative of 'win-win', as the Chinese loans granted to Zambia had little impact on Zambia's development, but dragged the country to the verge of economic collapse. Although both internal and external sources warned Chinese policymakers about the potential default on Zambia's debt, China did little change to its policy and kept approving loans and allowed the unfolding of Zambia's debt crisis. Moreover, even though Zambia explicitly expressed its difficulties in repaying its debts in 2018, instead of making adjustments to its policies, China allowed things to escalate to a stage at which radical action had to be taken to resolve the matter. This research will focus on these two puzzles in relation to China's foreign policy decision-making process.

This literature review section will, therefore, focus on the literature related to these two puzzles. Section 1.2.1 will present findings from the existing literature regarding these two puzzles within the context of Sino-Zambian relations. Section 1.2.2 will identify the gaps in the existing literature, and section 1.2.3 will elucidate how this research can fill in those gaps and contribute to the understanding of China's policy outcomes from a policy decision-making perspective. This literature review section will only briefly discuss the existing literature, as well as the gaps identified, as a more detailed discussion will be presented at the beginning of Chapters 3, 4, and 5.

1.2.1 Existing literature on Sino-Zambian relations in the 'Going Out' era

1) Sino-African relations

Due to the economic reform and the focus on internal financial restructuring in China, there was a period of neglect towards Africa, with few diplomatic or commercial interactions in the early 1980s. This resulted in little attention being paid in academia to China's re-approaching Zambia and other African countries in the 1990s. It was not until 2006, China's self-proclaimed 'Year of Africa', when a rather high-profile FOCAC conference hosted by China in Beijing, with over 40 African leaders in attendance, led to widespread interest across academic, media and official circles. Indeed, a number of single and edited volume academic studies were published that sought to provide a condensed overview of China's contemporary economic and political relations with Africa (Alden, 2007; Manji and Marks, 2007; Alden et al., 2008; Broadman, 2007).

The 'first wave' of literature on Sino-Zambian relations focused exclusively on the potential impacts of China's engagement with Zambia and other countries across the

continent. This debate centred around whether China had implemented a neo-colonial strategy in Zambia and other African countries with ample natural resources, by using cheap local labour to extract raw materials, before selling expensive refined products back into the African market; a secondary focus was the effects of Chinese loans and investments to the continents (Walsh, 2006; Frynas and Paulo 2007; Brautigam, 2009). Haglund (2009) claims China's model of investment would not last for the long term, as problems began to emerge in the copper industries in Zambia. This view has been echoed by other scholars. Brooks (2010) highlights that the Chinese factories in textile industries have low safety standards and workers suffer from low wages. Ferguson (2012) utilises the Chambishi copper mine in the Copperbelt Province in Zambia as a case study, stating that the Chinese-owned mine exploited its African employees, violating basic human rights regulations and offering low wages.

The notion of China being a neo-colonial power in Zambia has been refuted by Chinese scholars led by Yan Hairong (2013), who effectively accuses Ferguson of employing fake data in discussing the wage of Zambian workers and claimed a positive Sino-Zambian relationship. This debate provides a foundational background for some editors and journalists to criticise China's behaviour within the context of its engagement with Zambia. The news article 'Chinese imperialism' can still be found on Western mainstream media, even in the 2020s. Nevertheless, this research is situated not in the 'first wave' of the debate but rather on the literature conducted with more reliable evidence and concrete analysis after 2008. Academics from that point onwards have effectively stressed the need to disaggregate both China and Africa, which should not be considered as two monolithic entities. In the second wave of the literature, the research has become more nuanced with the involvement of a variety of disciplines and methodological approaches (see Taylor and Xiao, 2009).

2) Puzzles with regard to China-Zambia relations in the 'Going Out' era

In regard to the puzzle around the labour disputes that first emerged in 2005, triggered by the massive explosion of the Chambishi copper mine that left dozens of Zambian miners buried underground, the first wave of literature narrowly focused on CNMC's behaviours on the ground from 1998 onwards, providing detailed descriptions of the escalation in disputes between Zambian miners and Chinese managers at the company's Chambishi compound. Specifically, the first wave of literature regarding

this puzzle centred around uncovering how the labour disputes at Chambishi unfolded and whether Chinese investors were guilty of any misconduct that had contributed to the dispute (see Kragelund, 2009; Yan and Sautman, 2013; Chama, 2010; Sinyangwe, 2011). Despite this wave of literature providing ample and detailed data regarding the behaviour of CNMC in Zambia and the everyday interactions between Zambian miners and their Chinese managers, it fails to investigate the dispute further, choosing to adhere to the dichotomy in considering China's investment as either good or bad.

As China's engagement in Zambia deepened, with more policy documents being published, the literature investigating the puzzle in relation to labour disputes in Zambia revealed more nuances from 2006 to 2015, as researchers started to look beyond the China 'good-bad' dichotomy by examining the causes of labour disputes in relation to China's foreign policy decision-making as well as the structure for policy implementation (see Brautigam et al, 2010; Brooks, 2010; Alves, 2011; Mohan, 2013). As a result, the principal-agent problem was highlighted by Gill and Reilly (2007) as the pattern to explain CNMC's ruthless behaviours on the ground, despite China's policy prioritising the securing of natural resources and portraying itself as a benign investor who cared genuinely about the development of Zambia. According to Gill and Reilly (2007), Chinese policymakers in Beijing were determined to build friendly diplomatic ties with African countries to facilitate the pace of 'Going Out' in order to secure the natural resources China needed for its own economic development. However, due to the high degree of autonomy and the arbitrary power of Chinese SOEs, they were able to disregard Beijing's guidance to prioritise the company's core interests (i.e. commercial gains). Gill and Reilly (2007)'s point has been echoed by multiple researchers studying China-Africa relations, with various case studies investigating Chinese SOEs in Zambia (see Brautigam, 2021; Shrestha and Martek, 2015).

In terms of the puzzle surrounding China's handling and responses to Zambia's debt crisis, the connections between China and Zambia's debt problems did not attract too much academic attention because of the relatively healthy credit rating of the country from 2005 to 2015. In 2017, as Zambia's credit rating started to deteriorate, Chellaney (2017) published a ground-breaking study, publicly accusing China of deliberately creating a 'debt trap', whereby China intentionally granted billions of dollars' worth of loans to Zambia to destabilise the economic status of the country. Although

Chellaney's work was soon refuted by both Western and Chinese researchers for faulty data and miscalculations, it nevertheless opened a new page for the investigation of Sino-Zambian relations, as researchers started to pay attention to China's involvement regarding Zambia's debt issues (see Ofstad and Tjønneland, 2019; Maluki, and Lemmy; 2019; Brautigam; 2020; Rapanyane, 2021).

The second wave of literature in relation to the issue has been dedicated to uncovering the causes of Zambia's debt problems. Instead of paying exclusive attention to China's role in the problem, attention has been paid to Zambia in relation to its debt issues. Brautigam (2021) has summarised Zambia's debt issues as being due to domestic pressures, whereby the Zambian government under PF rule made unrealistic promises during election campaigns for massive-scale infrastructure building in the Copperbelt Province and nationwide. Then, in order to obtain support from its constituencies, the government had to deliver on its promises via massive borrowing. Moreover, the Zambian government has also been blamed for its irresponsible borrowing, poor planning, and inappropriate management of the debts it has borrowed. Despite the Zambian government having made mistakes in terms of its irresponsible borrowing, Huang et al. (2020)'s opinion is that China is not innocent in Zambia's debt problems, and only half part of the picture can be obtained if the attention is put solely on the wrongdoing of Zambia.

According to Huang et al., although Zambia made many loan applications to China, it was up to the policy banks (i.e. Chexim and CDB) to decide whether those loans were to be approved. More attention, therefore, should be paid to China's part in it. The third wave of literature, therefore, emphasises China's policymaking process in relation to debts, as well as the processes for approving loans. The complexity of China's policymaking, as well as the process for loan approvals, is highlighted by the third wave of literature, wherein researchers identify the existence of multiple debtors within China, causing control and coordination problems for Chinese authorities (see Brautigam, 2022; Zajontz, 2022; Huang et al, 2020). The lack of transparency during the loan approval process is also raised. Furthermore, researchers highlight the loosened regulations and supervisions for loan approvals, whereby loans were easily awarded to Zambia without the proper feasibility studies being conducted (see Jansson, 2013; Brautigam, 2021).

1.2.2 Gaps in the existing literature

Despite the numerous efforts the existing literature has contributed in attempting to uncover the puzzles regarding Chinese SOEs' behaviours on the ground, as well as labour disputes, and the issue regarding Zambia's debt problems in relation to China's lending, they are not without gaps and limitations and are not capable of explaining the inaction from China's policy decision-making organisations. Although China's engagement with Zambia in the 'Going Out' era has attracted various researchers to investigate labour abuses as well as the subsequent anti-Chinese sentiment and Zambia's debt crisis in terms of China's policy outcomes, and more nuanced explanations for those policy outcomes in Zambia in relation to China's foreign policy decision-making have now been presented, they still fail to provide a viable explanation with regard to the two puzzles highlighted above. Indeed, the existing literature fails to explain 1) the inaction in terms of China's policy adaptations to tackle the labour abuses in Zambia, which significantly impacted China's interests in Zambia, both politically and economically.

To illustrate, irrespective of the first wave of literature in relation to China's labour disputes in Zambia, which focuses on fact-checking and providing detailed descriptions of China's behaviours on the ground, the second wave of literature, although having acknowledged the complexity of the actors involved in the policymaking and the high degree of arbitrary power of SOEs operating in Zambia (namely CNMC), the principal-agent framework provided by Gill and Reilly (2007) continues to follow an over-simplified dichotomy between the Beijing-based policymakers and SOEs operating overseas. According to the principal-agent framework, multiple Chinese corporations on the ground (agents) are considered to be the 'arms' of government bureaucracies based in Beijing (principals); and, more importantly, agents are designed to follow the orders and guidance of the principals, but the long geographical distance creates communication barriers and, therefore, gives agents de facto power to distort the instructions from the principals to prioritise their own interests (Gill and Reilly, 2007; Jones and Hameiri, 2021). The framework, however, mistakenly considers that the principals back in Beijing are acting in an aligned and coordinated way to focus on the priorities of China's policies. Indeed, China's foreign policy decision-making process involves various organisations that have different or even conflicting interests. In this regard, it is inappropriate to assume

that the principals in Beijing can act as a distinct entity, giving orders to agents. Moreover, the agents should not be considered as passive recipients of policies made by actors in Beijing. In fact, Chinese SOEs can resort to multiple channels to actively shape the policy decision-making process (discussed in Chapter 3).

2) Chinese policymakers made few changes to the policy in relation to loans and allowed Zambia's debt crisis to unfold and escalate, despite early warning signs of the potential debt distress of Zambia. Despite the efforts of the existing literature to uncover the internal processes for loan approvals and identify the loosened regulations and lack of transparencies within the process, it still fails to explain the reason why China kept such loosened regulations for loan approvals even though the money being lent to Zambia may not be repaid, which would cause significant economic loss for Chinese banks. More importantly, China, in its Africa policy, had been advocating the 'win-win' narrative in the 'Going Out' era, with Chinese loans being described as an important tool to achieve 'win-win', whereby African countries would win by using the Chinese funding for infrastructure-building to boost development, and China would win from the profits obtained through repayments (Alves, 2013; Brautigam, 2020). This can to some extent explain the relatively loosened regulations in approving loans, as China intended to grant more loans to Zambia and other sub-Saharan African countries to demonstrate its determination in supporting the development of Africa. Nevertheless, as Zambia suffered from debt burdens and the Chinese loans became a source of disruption to China's 'win-win' narrative, the existing literature fails to explain China's inaction in maintaining the status quo and allowing the problems to escalate to the point of damaging the validity of its narrative.

Given the gaps in the existing literature, a more nuanced examination is needed to uncover the two identified puzzles and to fill in the gaps in the literature. Despite the detailed investigations conducted by researchers in relation to Sino-Zambian relations, the existing literature is limited in the study of China's foreign policy decision-making process in relation to China's policy outcomes in Zambia. Although China is often considered as an authoritarianism regime, with its policymaking process being presented as top-down and straightforward, the actual process for policy decision-making often involves multiple actors from different levels of the administration. Without knowing the way in which those actors interact with each other while making

policies, the explanation based on the assumption that China makes policies that reflect its national interest, with all involved actors acting in a unified manner, is invalid and problematic. This research, however, is not suggesting that China's policy outcomes within the context of Sino-Zambian relations in the 'Going Out' era can only be explained via an investigation of China's foreign policy decision-making process but, by paying more attention to China's policymaking, it can provide more nuances to the explanation of China's policy outcomes.

1.3 Research question, findings, and the structure of the thesis

Core Research Question:

How is Chinese foreign policy making to be explained in the "Going Out" era, specifically with respect to Zambia?

Research aims:

- To critically evaluate Sino-Zambian relations from 1998 to the present.
- To examine China's foreign policymaking processes in the case of China-Zambia relations.

Research objectives

- To understand the history of Sino-Zambian relations.
- To identify the actors involved China's foreign policy making with respect to Sino-Zambian relations and to evaluate the impact of those actors to the policymaking process.
- To examine critically the interactions of different Chinese policymaking institutions in the context of Sino-Zambian relations.

1.3.1 Research question and research aims

The main aim of this research is to explain the outcomes of China's Zambia policy during the "Going Out" era, as well as China's failure to adjust its policies to tackle challenges encountered on the ground. The research is, therefore, driven by the core research question: **How is Chinese foreign policy making to be explained in the "Going Out" era, specifically with respect to Zambia?** To answer the core research question, two research aims are designed as follows:

- To evaluate Sino-Zambian relations from 1998 to the present.

- To examine China's foreign policymaking processes in the case of China-Zambia relations.

The first research aim is to present a thorough analysis of Sino-Zambian relations in the 'Going Out' era. The changes in the pattern of interactions between China and Zambia, the challenges China encountered within this period, and any policy (in)actions can be captured. Although the 'Going Out' policy was not officially announced until 2001, CNMC's acquisition of Zambia's Chambishi copper mine marks the starting point of China's 'Going Out' policy in Zambia, as the acquisition is considered as a landmark event for 'Going Out'. By presenting a detailed analysis of Sino-Zambian relations in the 'Going Out' era, the nuances of China-Zambia interactions can be obtained. The second research aim is to uncover China's foreign policy decision-making process within the context of Sino-Zambian relations. For this, a deeper analysis into the actors involved within the policymaking, as well as their pattern of interactions, will be examined. In doing so, this research can determine how decisions were made within the Chinese government during this period and understand the ways in which the actors involved were able to influence the decisions and eventually amend the policy outcomes.

1.3.2 Findings

Reflecting the research questions, this research has first confirms that China's foreign policy decision-making process within the context of Sino-Zambian relations has been fragmented, with the involvement of multiple actors situated across various layers of administrations and all having different interests and policy priorities. Despite the CCP's establishment of Leading Small Groups (LSGs) as a mechanism to coordinate the various actors involved in the process, the efficacy of LSGs is limited as it lacked the necessary resources and knowledge to provide precise guidance to lower-level administrations and has instead to rely on them to materialise vague slogans into implementable policies. Moreover, this research has identified a defining feature of China's foreign policy decision-making, namely 'policy lagging', which means that China's Zambia policy was reactive in nature, with limits capability in making timely responses to the challenges unfolding in Zambia; nor was the Chinese policymaking system capable of preventing future crises.

The 'policy lagging' consists of four aspects; the first two highlight a problematic system for information flow from lower-level administrations to the top-layers and the

lack of a set of unified and precise criteria for determining whether a piece of information was sufficiently important to be relayed to higher-layer administrations. These two aspects contribute to China's inaction in response to labour disputes and the widespread anti-Chinese sentiment. Moreover, this research also confirms the unwillingness of Chinese actors in tackling the labour disputes in Zambia, as they tend to use them as the scapegoats for China's policy failures. This resulted in labour disputes recurring in Zambia from 2006 onwards.

China's policymakers' preference for maintaining stability and the status quo, and the policymakers' desire to find resolutions versus a practice-based reactive system, which are the last two aspects of 'policy lagging', contribute to the escalation of Zambia's debt issues with no effective policy interventions. This is because Chinese policymakers have tended to treat policy adaptations as a sign of instability. Consequently, as long as the policy was being implemented in a relatively smooth manner, they chose to avoid making any adaptations to the policy, despite early warning signs. Furthermore, Chinese policymakers have tended to suppress any voices that raised questions about the policies being implemented and emphasised instead the importance of having solutions rather than questions. However, the pragmatism-based policymaking system is retrospective, based on the practice of practitioners, and therefore prevents solutions from being found in advance. This contradiction further delays China's ability to make policy adaptations to react to the unfolding crisis (i.e. Zambia's debt problems). These findings will be discussed in detail in Chapters 3, 4, and 5, and will be reiterated in greater detail in the conclusion.

1.3.3 Thesis outline

Including this introduction, this thesis consists of six chapters. The second chapter will discuss the theoretical framework, namely fragmented authoritarianism. In the second chapter, the feasibility of FA in investigating China's foreign policy decision-making process in comparison to other theories will be examined in detail. A detailed methodology will also be presented in the second chapter, with discussions including the methods adopted, the research design, and the way in which the ethical concerns are being addressed. The third chapter focuses on the period from 1998-2006, which is the initial stage for Sino-Zambian relations within the context of 'Going Out'. This chapter will identify the actors involved within the policymaking process, discuss the means of interactions amongst various actors during the policy-making process,

demonstrate the low efficacy of the coordinating mechanism imposed by CCP, namely LSGs, and illustrate the role of CNMC as an actor involved in policymaking, rather than being the 'arms' of CCP for policy implementation.

The fourth chapter focuses on the period from 2006 to 2015, when labour disputes were at their height in Zambia and anti-Chinese sentiment was felt nationwide. This chapter will meticulously examine the channels used for information flow within China's policy decision-making system, as well as the criteria imposed by administrations at different layers to determine the importance of a piece of information and examine how these two factors contributed to China's inaction regarding the labour disputes in Zambia. The fifth chapter examines the period from 2015 to 2022 by emphasising Zambia's debt crisis in relation to China's Zambia policy within this timeframe. The way in which Chinese policymakers' obsession with maintaining the status quo, as well as the internal contradiction between a pragmatism-based system for policymaking and CCP's preferences for having solutions for policy adaptations, impede China's capability for making policy adaptations and allowing the situation to escalate will be thoroughly examined. The sixth chapter presents a short conclusion, wherein the analytical framework and methodology will be revisited, the main findings and arguments will be reiterated, the original contribution of this study will be presented, and avenues for future research in a similar domain will be discussed.

Chapter 2. Theory and Methodology

2.1 Theory

This thesis adopts fragmented authoritarianism as the theoretical framework for investigating the policy decision-making process within the context of China–Zambia relations in the ‘Going Out’ era. Section 2.1.1 will present a comprehensive introduction to the theory of fragmented authoritarianism as well as its development and key features; thereafter, the limitations of foreign policy analysis frameworks (which are often utilised for analysing policy decision-making processes) in examining Chinese foreign policy will be addressed in section 2.1.2. Section 2.1.3 will elucidate the reason as to why FA could be used for the analysis of China’s foreign policy decision making.

2.1.1 Fragmented authoritarianism: origin and development of the theory

The theory of fragmented authoritarianism (FA) originated in the 1980s during the period in which China was restructuring its economic and bureaucratic systems, seeking to offer a nuanced explanation as to China’s governmental organisational structure (i.e. the bureaucratic Party–state structure) as well as its policy decision-making process. The development of the theory contributed significantly to the examination of the Chinese domestic policy decision-making process by showcasing how China’s policymaking system in the post-1978 era had been profoundly impacted by its organisational structure. FA was first introduced as a concept in Lieberthal and Oksenberg’s ground-breaking volume titled *Policy Making in China: Leaders, Structures, and Processes* (1988). The theory is deemed to be the cornerstone regarding the understanding of China’s decision-making processes; it brings about a new dynamic for the understanding of China’s disjointed bureaucracy and, more importantly, illustrates how the decision-making process takes place amongst different bureaucracies at various levels in China, both vertically and horizontally.

Shortly after the publication of Lieberthal and Oksenberg’s volume, another seminal volume titled *Bureaucracy, Politics, and Decision Making in Post-Mao China* was published. The research described in this volume is based on China’s deepening process of decentralisation (triggered by Deng Xiaoping’s post-1978 reforms) and the growing body of academic works on this matter (Lieberthal and Oksenberg 1988;

Lampton 1987). This volume tests the applicability of FA to different levels of the Chinese bureaucratic system, attempting to gauge its value as a more general model for bureaucratic policymaking processes; it pays exclusive attention to the effects of China's decentralisation in the 1980s, pointing out that a major feature during this period of time was the redistribution of resources and the bureaucratic structure and decision-making process underpinning this. The FA model notices the withdrawal of ideology as a main factor influencing China's politico-economic objectives and priorities, and accesses the underlying logic of the policy decision-making processes of China in a rapidly changing, opening, and experimental period (Lieberthal and Lampton, 1992).

FA considers China's bureaucratic authority to be 'fragmented and disjointed', and this very feature of fragmentation can result in a situation in which a collective agreement has to be reached among an array of bodies for a policy to be finalised, because no one has authority over others. With regard to this, bureaucratic entrepreneurship advocates proposals or the prominence of an idea and describes its defining characteristic as its willingness to invest its resources, time, energy, reputation, and sometimes money in the hope of a future return (including) in the form of policies of which it approves (Kingdon and Stano, 1984), and bargaining is often required (Lieberthal 1992, pp.8–9). The FA model views Chinese bureaucratic structural features and the particular processes to which they lead as the determining factor influencing decision-making processes in contemporary China. To illustrate, the economic reform in the post-1978 era and the decentralisation process implemented simultaneously reshaped the bargaining and opportunity constellation through institutional restructuring, changing and diversifying authority over budgets and resources vertically and horizontally, as well as across bureaucratic systems and constituencies.

Although FA has been utilised by researchers over the past decades since it was first outlined in the 1980s, the theory itself saw few updates from the 1980s to the mid-2000s. And with the increased pace of Chinese reforms, China's contemporary bureaucratic priorities, policy agendas, and missions are not comparable to what they were in the 1980s (Gilley, 2008). Nevertheless, this does not suggest that FA as a theoretical framework has lost its credibility in analysing the Chinese policymaking system's structural features and operational mechanisms. Indeed, although the

contemporary Chinese socio-political situation is different from when FA was first outlined, 'fragmentation' and 'authority' remain two of the most defining features of the Chinese political setup. Mertha (2009) updated the conceptual inventory of the fragmented authoritarianism analytical framework to make the theory more capable of explaining the decision-making process in contemporary China. According to Mertha's (2009) work, the Chinese policymaking system has become more pluralised, and bargaining still plays a significant role in Chinese decision making with more actors at the table. Mertha's argument is echoed by He and Thøgersen (2010), who notice the role of non-governmental actors in impacting China's decision-making process. Others have since referred to the concept of FA, pointing out China's effort in combining decentralisation and authoritarianism through elite integration by the Communist Party of China (CCP) as being the integrative agent, working against the centrifugal forces of fragmentation (Landry 2008; Brødsgaard 2012; Heilmann, 2008). While only making use of the FA model indirectly, these researchers agree on its key features, namely the central roles of authority (in the form of CCP leadership) and structural fragmentation, rendering policymaking and decision making a complex process played out among multiple actors of different kinds.

While the position of the Party as the overarching authority in the 'Chinese model' is hardly disputed by anyone, much more has been said about the fragmenting forces. Institutionally, the built-in fault lines of the Chinese system run both horizontally across organs at the same level/rank (*kuai*), leading to bargaining over resources (e.g. MOFCOM and MFA competing for policymaking resources), and vertically (*tiao*) within bureaucratic systems [i.e. national-level administrations (MOFCOM/MFA) and sub national-level administrations (SOEs)] (Tsai and Liao, 2020; Jones and Hameiri, 2021). Examining these structural fault lines, the FA model, or rather the institutional rationality that it describes, lingers today, even though China has reformed its Party–state structure several times (Brødsgaard, 2017). Given these continued similarities in spite of structural and institutional changes, a review of the analytical value of the FA model today seems to be adequate. This is even more the case when considering that the early work mostly focused on the centrifugal force of decentralisation and the disruptive effects of bargaining among bureaucracies, while more recent research has tried to understand the integrative, centripetal mechanisms keeping China from falling apart (i.e. Zheng, 2010; Brødsgaard, 2012). Moreover, leading small groups are

moving into focus of FA framework, as they represent and illustrate the system's reliance on vertical (CCP) authority as a kick-starter for decision making, as well as the structural 'fix' against horizontal fragmentation and implementation biases. As chapter 3 explains in greater detail, despite LSGs are acting as the executive actor in the policy decision-making process, its role as a mechanism holding fragmented actors together may vary.

2.1.2 Theoretical perspectives on Chinese foreign policymaking

China's foreign policy in the case of Sino-Zambian relations is not immutable and frozen, but rather has been changing and adapting over the past two decades in the 'Going Out' era (Barber, 2014). Exploring the causes of those policy changes and adaptations can help to offer a better understanding of China's foreign policy decision making, as this process reflects policymakers' preferences and conceptions regarding China's diplomatic relationships with other countries across a certain period of time and reveals the interactions amongst internal policymakers. With regard to this, to acquire a comprehensive picture of China's foreign policy decision making, a close examination of the unit-level variables is required in order to portray a full account of policy formation within the context of Chinese foreign policy. Indeed, the sources which impact China's foreign policy formation and adaptations can be found in multiple dynamics (Barber 2014; Lieberthal, 1992; Brautigam, 2011), including at national (central government and ministries), subnational (SOEs) and even transnational levels (Sino-Zambian relations), that permeate China's bilateral relations with Zambia. In this regard, the shifting of China's policy from a low profile on the international stage to actively engaging with Africa cannot solely be understood in relation to constraints at the systemic structural level by viewing the Chinese government as a unified body for foreign policy decision making.

The bureaucratic politics model developed by Allison (1971) based on the empirical study of the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 has been widely recognised as an effective model within the domain of foreign policy analysis in examining the internal bargaining process amongst governmental actors involved within the policymaking process (Rosati, 1981, Jones, 2010; Marsh, 2014). Indeed, along with China's decentralisation in line with its economic reform in the post-Cultural Revolution era, reforms took place that emphasised the decentralised distribution of resources, delegating power to lower-level institutions with regard to decision making and implementation, and

lessening the degree of value integration (Lieberthal, 1992; Rosen, 1985), therefore enabling more governmental actors to become involved within both domestic and foreign policy decision-making processes. This, however, does not mean that parallel comparisons can be drawn between the Chinese government's decision-making process and the USA's system of foreign policy making.

This thesis argues that China's foreign policy decision-making process as well as China's policy changes occurred along with the trajectory of China–Zambia engagement cannot be understood or explained entirely by one of the most prominent models within FPA, namely the bureaucratic politics model. Firstly, in the BPM model, power struggles constitute one of the key factors determining the behaviours of the actors involved within the decision-making process. Indeed, as Dawisha states (1980, p.301), 'in those [bureaucratic] systems where players in the central game (metaphors of games, players, and rules are used throughout the model) aspire to the position of Chief Executive, then their personal interest in remaining in the game and advancing toward the top frequently dominates their stand on most issues'. Power struggles, even though they cannot be completely ruled out of Chinese foreign policy making, do not have the same degree of importance in the Chinese system in comparison to those in the policymaking process of the United States.

China's foreign policy decision making, despite showcasing ostensible similarities to that of the USA due to the existence of multiple unit-level actors and the complex process of policymaking, differs from that of democratic regimes. The Chinese Communist Party is the ultimate leader and the decision maker in the current regime and is always placed at the top as the Chief Executive (Brødsgaard, 2016; Zhang, 2019). The CCP also acts as the core coordinator in the government's decision-making process by connecting different ministries via meetings, and there are no governmental bodies attempting to challenge the CCP's central role under any circumstances. With regard to this, the BPM's assumption that actors' different stands are determined by their desire to become the dominant player is not entirely valid in the Chinese system (Brødsgaard, 2017). In fact, as chapter four will illustrate in greater detail, the CCP-led decision-making system is rather loose, and the actors involved are motivated by the vacuums of the system in pursuing their organisational interests.

Secondly, the BPM asserts that at the post-decision stage, organisations will implement a course of action, and as Allison and Halperin (1972) have shown, the action intended by central players is frequently in contrast to the action taken by organisations. However, in China, the CCP do not often see any organisation behave in a way which is in contrast to its policy agendas. In fact, broadly speaking, the CCP is fairly satisfied with its 'Going Out' policy with regard to the policy outcome achieved in Zambia and in other African countries, as China secured the energy sources and mining materials and developed the African market. Chinese actors generally followed, or at least did not explicitly disobey, the policies agreed by the CCP (Tsai, 2015). Policy changes and adaptations are the results of the emergence of unprecedented challenges that China has faced in Zambia, including anti-Chinese sentiment and the accusation of creating a debt crisis, which will be examined in the main chapters of this thesis.

Thirdly, the BPM was developed based on the interactions amongst governmental organisations and individuals involved within the decision-making process, with little attention having been paid to non-bureaucratic actors (Brummer, 2009). This has affected the BPM's capability of analysing China's policy decision-making process. Indeed, the reform of ministries has significantly impacted China's decision-making system (Schroeder, 1987). Some of the ministries have been transformed into state-owned enterprises (SOEs), making their activities more economically driven. Nevertheless, despite the fact that a group of ministries have changed their form from governmental organisations to corporations, their employees still enjoy the same political influence and ministerial rank (Brødsgaard, 2016). Mertha (2009) has effectively noticed this change and argues that this reform has further strengthened the arsenal of these newly established SOEs to bargain with their governmental counterparts, as the economic advantages of large SOEs would give them more leeway with which to manoeuvre. Brummer (2009) also asserts that the BPM is not the most favourable option when it comes to explaining political reform processes, due to the neglect of non-bureaucratic actors.

Fourthly, the BPM model offers little insight into the complexity of domestic institutions and the difficulties it might bring to a coherent foreign policy. Indeed, BPM insists the internal differences amongst domestic policymakers could be resolved authoritatively into a binding decision. However, as chapter 3 examines in greater detail, the central

authorities of China, notably the high-ranking leaders from the Chinese government and the CCP, do not always have the wisdom to resolve differences due to a lack of knowledge and understanding towards the issue being discussed. Further, the central government also lack effective measures to coordinate various actors into a binding decision. Indeed, as Lampton states (2001, p.21), it could be the case that the government has no clue regarding 'what it wants'. This further exacerbates the complexity of the foreign policy decision-making process in China (see chapter 3) as lower-level organisations must independently interpret vague policy guidelines.

Jones and Hameiri (2021) developed a new analytical framework, 'The Chinese-Style Regulatory State (CSRS)' model, that aimed to depict the policy decision-making process amongst Chinese actors, despite attracted limited attention amongst researchers investigating the formation of China's foreign policies. The model, compared to BPM, is more capable of analysing China's foreign policymaking process not only because it highlights the existence of multiple actors within the system of China's foreign policymaking, but that it also indicates the central government and CCP's limited capability in coordinating various actors involved in the process due to the limitations in knowledge available to the top-level leaders. Indeed, the CSRS model is developed based on six years of empirical research into China's foreign policymaking across various sectors. The explanations it offers are more nuanced than the BPM, which ignores the uniqueness of China's policymaking. However, this does not suggest that the CSRS is a viable framework for this research into China's foreign policy decision-making process within the context of Sino-Zambian relations. The following paragraphs will interpret the key factors blocking the CSRS model as a functional analytical framework to this research.

Despite CSRS as an analytical framework designed for the examination of China's foreign policymaking as well as for the explanation of policy outcome, it is not a viable framework for this particular research. To illustrate, the key argument of the model, where 'a Chinese-style regulatory state has emerged; wherein top leaders use a range of mechanisms to define broad policy platforms and steer a diverse array of actors towards often loosely defined goals.....central guidelines typically require subsequent interpretation by diverse actors tasked with implementing them' (Jones and Hameiri, 2021, p.26), is not a constructive new finding that has the capacity to reshape the academic ecosystem for China's foreign policy analysis. Instead, it is a repetition of

what has been argued by FA researchers over two decades. Indeed, in Lieberthal and Oksenberg's (1988) work, 'Policy making in China: Leadership, structures, and processes', where the concept of fragmented authoritarianism was first defined, the very argument highlighted by CSRS about top leaders' vague policy objectives and the range of mechanisms they have used to steer various actors in policymaking has been thoroughly discussed as early as 1988 through two authors' direct face-to-face interview with former Chinese president, Zhao Ziyang (1988, p.53).

In Lieberthal and Oksenberg's book (1988), Zhao admits that this delegation of power is a deliberate attempt to prevent the Party from being too powerful and being overwhelmed by numerous things which could have been resolved at the lower level. The need to monitor the behaviour of lower-level delegates. Further, the mechanisms used were also discussed by various FA scholars in various writings. For example, the CCP uses a fivefold mechanism to control lower-level actors, according to Jones and Hameiri (2021): a) ideology, b) the use of vague terms for policymakers to interpret, c) the adoption of Leading Small Groups (LSGs), d) control over resources, and e) using nomenklatura system to appoint party members. Amongst those five points, a), c), and e) were already discussed in FA writings (see Wang et al, 2018; Zhang, 2019), and point b) and d) have been found to be problematic based on the empirical data collected in this research. This is because the vague slogans and policy guidelines were not an intentional product of the Party but were due to top leaders' lack of knowledge in a certain policy domain. Further, the central Party does not always have control over key resources as Jones and Hameiri suggest (see Chapter 3). Jones and Hameiri's model ignores the pragmatic feature of China's foreign policymaking (see chapter 3). Indeed, their model insists that another potential factor contributing to China's vague policies is that the Chinese want to achieve, for example, economic growth, and that they make abstract slogans to 'facilitate the experimental pursuit of economic growth (2021, p.31)'. However, as both chapter 3 and chapter 4 would argue, slogans are made based on the practices, and as the practice goes deeper, the slogans and guidelines are adapted.

2.1.3 Fragmented authoritarianism in Chinese foreign policymaking

Fragmented authoritarianism (FA), evidently, is more applicable for this particular research, which investigates China's foreign policy making and adaptations in the 'Going Out' era. FA shares certain key elements with the FPA model, most specifically an understanding of a state-centric system, with FA's emphasis mainly being on the role of governmental organisations (Wang et al, 2018). However, as a theory formed from the daily practice of China's domestic policy making, it diverges from FPA by considering different politicised units operating within a state and highlights China's chaotic system of foreign policymaking in multiple layers (Lieberthal and Oksenberg, 1988; Mertha, 2009; Brødsgaard, 2017). Indeed, unlike how the FPA model suggests that differences amongst various actors are resolved into a binding decision, FA points out the peculiarity of the Chinese system for policymaking, and that national-level policy frameworks are frequently vague and imprecise (Mertha, 2009).

More importantly, FA reinforces the rejection of a coherent and unified state actor and recognises diverse facets of power and the importance of non-state/sub-state actors, factors which are pertinent to this thesis (Lieberthal and Oksenberg, 1988; Mertha, 2009; Brødsgaard, 2017). Indeed, FA has effectively pointed out the functions of non-traditional actors within China's policymaking system that are not captured by mainstream IR theorists, namely Chinese SOEs (state-owned enterprises) (Mertha, 2009). Indeed, SOEs are a unique feature within the contemporary framework of China's foreign policy decision-making. Whilst they operate as corporations with no major differences in their business model compared to their international counterparts, they are still considered as part of CCP's broader network and accountable for CCP's commands and guidelines. With a failure in understanding the role of SOEs (CNMC in this specific research), a significant picture of China's foreign policymaking might be missed, leading to incomplete interpretations. In this regard, by investigating the role of SOEs within China's policymaking process under the FA framework, this thesis may extract a more nuanced picture of Chinese foreign policy within the context of Sino-Zambian relations.

Another factor making FA a viable analytical framework to this research is the model's emphasis on China's pragmatism. Indeed, Chinese policy experts and people who make everyday practice of foreign policymaking are empiricists; they do not theorise their insights, treating them implicitly as *sui generis* (Jones and Hameiri, 2021).

Moreover, in everyday practice, policymakers tend not to have a concrete plan on policy implementation, nor do they conduct viable feasibility studies (Brautigam, 2021; Jones and Hameiri, 2021). Actors involved in China's policymaking, tend to do things first before any policies are formed at the top level, prioritising practice over theory (see chapter 3). This counters China's top-down policy implementation, as many have asserted (see Cao et al, 2008; Zhang, et al, 2011). The bottom-level agents who are supposed to be the arms of the central government for policy implementation could exert their power as policy implementors to define the way central slogans and guidelines are followed (see chapter 2). Indeed, Zhao (2018) insists there is a need to examine the role of policy implementors to better capture the way China's foreign policies are formulated. Kirkegaard (2017) also highlights the importance of China's pragmatism and experimentalism to correctly examine the complexity of China's policy decision-making. In this regard, granting more attention to the pragmatism feature of China within its policymaking process, rather than assuming a top-down/theory-practice structure, could better uncover how exactly the policies are formulated in the 'Going Out' era within the context of Sino-Zambian engagements.

Lastly, the FA model captures the transformation processes of actors involved within the foreign policy decision-making processes. To illustrate, the current climate for policymaking in China involving multiple actors compared to the 1970s chain of command mode did not occur overnight. Rather, it happened through a gradual disassembly and replacement of the existing chain of command as more actors entered the arena of foreign policymaking (Mertha, 2009; Wang, et al, 2018). Other existing frameworks tend to present a plain description showcasing the existence of multiple actors within the Chinese policymaking process, ignoring how the pattern of interactions between top-level actors and lower-level actors have also changed (see Gill and Reilly, 2007; Braugitam, 2021).

As chapter 3 explains in detail, Gill and Reilly (2007) highlight the principal-agent problem of China's foreign policymaking within the context of Sino-African relations. Agents at the lower level enjoyed a high degree of autonomy and the principal had limited capacity in regulating the behaviours of the agents, yet Gill and Reilly (2007) failed to explain how the system was transformed. Highlighting the transformation of policymaking patterns is important, especially in regimes such as China which has a constantly evolving foreign policymaking system. Recognising the current mode of

policymaking as the status quo not only loses the nuances of the interactions amongst various actors involved in the system, but also misses the opportunity to explore the evolving process of China's rapid-changing system for policymaking. In this regard, FA, which highlights the transformation process of China's policy decision-making process, is adopted to capture the evolvement of Chinese Zambia policy and to provide a more nuanced picture of the research topic.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 Overview of the research design

Having adopted fragmented authoritarianism as the theoretical framework aiming to investigate China's foreign policy within the context of China–Zambia relations, it is vital for this research to examine Chinese disjointed policymaking bodies in their decision-making processes and open the black box of the Chinese foreign-policy-making system. The research has to be carefully designed in a way that is centred on uncovering the policy decision-making process as well as the actors involved. With regard to this, this research design is based on qualitative research, involving the triangulation of elite interviews with published Chinese documents on China's African policy. The entire research was conducted via a two-step procedure, namely desktop-based research and empirical elite interviews. The desktop-based research is to consult published literature and publicly available policy documents to acquire a basic understanding of the research background, understand some of the key debates, identify the organisations involved within the process, and, lastly, serve as a source of triangulation to check against the data acquired from elite interviews. The elite interviews are to open up the black box and acquire empirical data on Chinese officials' daily practice regarding decision making.

Elite interviews are a valuable methodological tool with which to obtain valuable 'inside' information and, thereby, begin to open the 'black box' of China's foreign policy decision making. For researchers who are native speakers, elite interviews tend not to be an option due to the language barrier, a lack of channels through which to approach Chinese policymaking elites, and the reluctance of Chinese officials to conduct interviews with external (Western-based, English-speaking) researchers. My research, therefore, makes an original methodological contribution by bringing new insights gleaned from elite interviews to an English-speaking audience.

Elite interviews must be carefully planned while investigating background knowledge related to the research topic to build a solid framework for the research design. Triangulation, in this regard, is important in research that involves elite interviews in order to acquire as full a view as possible regarding the situation under investigation, particularly when researching politically sensitive areas (Davies, 2001). Kezar (2008, p.415) notes that because access to elites can often be challenging to achieve, investigators must 'conduct extensive analysis of documents and background work before conducting interviews'. Similarly, Harvey (2011, p.434) states that investigators should 'show that they have done their homework' when interviewing elites, and Stephens (2007, p.206) highlights 'the importance of studying [elites'] histories and works in preparation for the interviews'. Desktop-based research (which consults both academic literature and published Chinese policy documents) can help to accomplish this. Indeed, desktop-based research is employed to acquire basic background knowledge, identify Chinese governmental organisations involved in the policymaking process, and, more importantly, check against the data collected via interviews. As Merriam and Tisdell (2016, p.245) explain, 'what someone tells you in an interview can be checked against what you observe on site or what you read about in documents'. Indeed, policy documents and other secondary resources are important, as is official texts being 'produced, shared, and used in socially organised ways' (Atkinson and Coffey 1997, p.47). Furthermore, documents can be considered as a valid source for triangulation because they do not include the researcher's intervention (Rapley 2007).

By examining secondary resource policy documents acquired via desktop-based research, how the specific issues that they raise are structured and organised can be better captured (Rapley 2007). Moreover, analysis of existing secondary resources is useful because it facilitates historical research with which to formulate an understanding of past influences on present policies, legislation, service systems, and/or programmes (Makieson et al., 2018). Furthermore, existing governmental documents are a particularly good data source because of the official provenance of such records; generally, they provide high-quality content (Danto, 2008). In this regard, research into the case study of China's Zambian policy relied on policy documents published by the Chinese government as well as secondary academic resources acquired during the desktop-based stage of the research as a major source of triangulation before, during and after the interviews. The reason as to why secondary

materials are included as a source of triangulation is that policy documents also need triangulating with independent evidence of the effects of Chinese foreign policy. In this sense, triangulating elite interviews with policy documents and secondary materials acquired through desktop-based research contributed significantly to this thesis in achieving 'a comprehensive understanding of a complex social situation' (Flick 2018, p.528).

Elite interviews were conducted with 12 Chinese officials and state-owned enterprise representatives via Microsoft Teams. Of those 12 interviewees, two were from the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM), three from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), two from the China Nonferrous Metal Mining Group (CNMM), two from the Export-Import Bank of China (Chexim), one from the China Development Bank (CDB), one from the Ministry of Finance (MOF), and one from provincial-level government (Hunan). Four-and-a-half months was spent interviewing the participants and transcribing audio tapes. I secured a visiting researcher position in the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), one of the official think tanks in China that regularly provides policy recommendations based on government-funded research. The CASS assisted the participant recruitment process and contacted more than 40 officials on behalf of the principal investigator. The CASS, however, was not involved in the actual interview stage, nor did it provide any assistance regarding the data analysis and thesis-writing process. Empirical data for this research were collected via semi-structured interviews. Approaching interviewees was not an easy process, the difficulties of which are elucidated in the data collection section.

2.2.2 The justification for the usage of a single-case study of Sino-Zambian relations

Apart from elite interviews, the methodological approach of this research is based on the use of an empirical, holistic single-case study of China's relations with Zambia, which also includes analysis of China–Zambia relations from 1998. The rationale behind using the method of a single-case study is to undertake the 'essential task [...] not [to] codify abstract regularities but to make thick descriptions possible, not to generalise across cases but to generalise within them' (Geertz, 1973, p.26). According to Stake, the case study methodology overlaps between an intrinsic case study (a better understanding of a particular case) and an instrumental case study (examining a case will provide insights into an issue or redraw generalisation) (Stake, 2000, p.437).

In this regard, the adoption of a case study to investigate Chinese foreign policy in Zambia could help this research not only to understand the dynamics of China's foreign policy decision-making processes within the context of China–Zambia relations, but also to make generalisations regarding (and open up new research space for) understanding of the pattern of Chinese foreign policy decision making under the 'Going Out' strategy and the processes through which its foreign policy institutions may interact with one another.

The case of China–Zambia relations has been selected for analysis because, in addition to Sino-Zambian ties becoming the single most consequential African relationship within China's broader international relations, energy-based and raw-material-based cooperation with Zambia was the first of its kind in Africa under the 'Going Out' strategy; thus, a study of the relationship provides a unique opportunity to assess the changes and adaptations of China's foreign policy within this context over time. Indeed, the establishment of copper-based Sino-Zambian ties, in fact, predated the official proclamation of China's official 'Going Out' strategy in 2002. As the early stages of the 'Going Out' of Chinese SOEs was being formulated during the 1990s, Zambia was targeted as a long-term copper supply base and as an arena with which to support the global development of CNMC.

Secondly, Zambia was considered to be one of the most important countries for China's 'Going Out' policy in Africa in 1998 due to the ample reserve of copper. What is more, Zambia was the country that served as the testing field for China's policies: one of the first destinations for 'Going Out', the first to pioneer a special economic zone, and the first to restructure its debt with China. The successful implementation of CNMC's engagement in Zambia and the establishment of the special economic zone based on natural resources set a pattern for China's foreign engagement and later served as a role pattern for China's engagement in Sub-Saharan Africa. Moreover, China's 'all weather friendship' with Zambia and the ties that were established and cultivated with Khartoum's elites under Jiang Zemin's leadership during the 1990s served as a model for China's later engagement on the continent under the formal 'Going Out' strategy, coined by Hu Jintao as the 'new type of strategic partnership' (cited in: People's Daily, 2009a). To that end, Chinese foreign policy towards Zambia could have a profound impact on the way in which China engages with the entire SSA region. Taking Zambia as the chosen country for the investigation into the decision-

making process of Chinese foreign policy, therefore, has the potential to promote the capacity of generalisations of the findings of this research.

Thirdly, as Zambia remains one of the earliest and largest successful overseas energy projects undertaken by one of China's major state-owned energy companies, i.e. CNMC, it also serves as a crucial case through which to assess the shifting relationship between the Chinese state and its predominant state-owned company in the recent context of its global expansion. Indeed, the role of China's SOEs is still in a transitional phase 'between pursuing their own commercial interests and carrying out the evolving geopolitical strategies of their principal owner, the Chinese government' (Lewis, 2007, p.26). SOEs have long been considered the passive implementers of China's 'Going Out' policy, but the transition of SOEs in Zambia can provide some insight with which to rethink their roles as actors within the policymaking process. In the wider context of a globalised world in which 'geo-economics' is increasingly taking over from the geopolitics of the Cold War, many analysts and scholars in the West view China's NOCs as a strategic arm of the government, competing with Western firms for control of strategic assets in the developing world. As such, uncovering the nature and dynamics of this relationship is of interest to students of China's contemporary international relations (Raine, 2009, p.144).

A case study is likely to be more persuasive and enable an understanding of the nuances if it is being investigated within a suitably chosen timeframe (Bennet and Elman, 2006). The timeframe selected for this research is the 20-year period between 1998 and 2022. The year 1998 (as the starting point of this research) marks the formal critical juncture for China's Zambian policy shifting from an ideology-based policy towards a more commercially and resource-based one, when the Chinese SOE CNMC purchased the Chambishi copper mine (one of the largest copper mines) in Zambia. The nine-year period from 1998 to 2006 marks the successful entrance and expansion of CNMC's mining interests in Zambia's mining industry, with moderate and close ties forged between the CCP, the ruling party MMD, and its three presidents, i.e. Frederick Chiluba, Levy Mwanawasa, and Rupiah Banda. The MMD party have been enthusiastic about supporting Chinese SOEs' investment in Zambia by praising the 'contributions' of CNMC on the one hand, while on the other hand, depressing media coverage has minimised the negative influence of the Chambishi Mine incident, which caused dozens of deaths.

The period from 2006 to 2015 covers a rather challenging period during which the opposition party fiercely attacked China's 'predatory engagement' and the potential collusion between the CCP and the MMD. Moreover, it also represents a period of increased insecurity in Zambia within the context of rapidly growing anti-Chinese sentiment around the area of the Chambishi Mine and the Copperbelt Province. This resulted in conflicts between site managers and local Zambian workers, with strikes also taking place, which caused severe delays to mining processes and eventually affected production. Nonetheless, the Chinese government and CCP leaders continued to implement a tactical approach defined by the separation of politics from economics; the CCP–MMD relationship has been increasingly close (despite the prevalence of the opposition party led by Michael Sata). The elite-based ties between the Chinese government and the MMD were maintained, and no actions were taken on the ground within the territory of Zambia with adherence to the non-interference policy.

The period from 2015 to 2022 represents an evolving period of policy adaptations and tactical changes to China's foreign policy approach in which China tried to forge close ties between the CCP and the ruling party Patriotic Front, with the approach having moved towards a more commercially oriented stance. During this period, Zambia had steadily fallen into a debt crisis, largely because of its huge borrowing from the Chinese government and its policy banks to finance its own infrastructure-building objectives. In this regard, this seven-year period represents a watershed moment in Sino-Zambian engagement, as China attempted to cool down its infrastructure funding to Zambia and made unprecedented attempts at restructuring Zambia's debt. The end point of the analysis is that of July 31st, on which China agreed, in an unprecedented manner, to a debt restructure deal with Zambia, a manoeuvre that was never observed during the 'Going Out' era.

2.2.3 Methodological limitations

Adopting elite interviews as the main approach for empirical data collection is not without limitations. Indeed, elite interviews may be limited by elites' faulty memories, self-serving statements, misrepresentations, or elusiveness (Kezar, 2003; Martin, 2013; Petkov and Kaoullas, 2016). Kezar (2008, p.415) notes that, as access to elites can often be challenging to achieve, investigators must 'conduct extensive analysis of documents and background work before conducting interviews.' Similarly, Harvey

(2011, p.434) states that investigators should 'show that they have done their homework' when interviewing elites, and Stephens (2007, p.206) highlights 'the importance of studying [elites'] histories and works in preparation for the interviews.' Further, to ensure reliability, elite interviews must be carefully planned through while investigating the background knowledge related to the research topic to build a solid framework for research design. Triangulation, in this regard, is important in research that involves elite interviews in order to acquire as full a view as possible of the situation under investigation, particularly when researching politically sensitive areas (Davies, 2001). Indeed, triangulation with multiple methodological resources can address these issues by providing 'corroboration' for initial findings, as well as 'the incorporation of additional information' at a level above the knowledge a single data source may provide (Davies, 2001, p.78). To mitigate this, this study employs multiple-methods triangulation via the adoption of more than one qualitative data collection procedure to acquire basic background knowledge, identify Chinese governmental organisations involved into the policymaking process, and more importantly, check against the data collected via interviews.

As Merriam and Tisdell (2016, p.245) explain, 'what someone tells you in an interview can be checked against what you observe on site or what you read about in documents.' Documents are important, and official texts are 'produced, shared, and used in socially organised ways' (Atkinson and Coffey 1997, p.47). They also do not include the researcher's intervention (Rapley 2007). Qualitative document analysis consists of examining the 'rhetorical work of the text [to see] how the specific issues it raises are structured and organised' (Rapley 2007). Moreover, analysis of existing documents is useful given that it facilitates historical research to formulate an understanding of past influences on present policies, legislation, service systems and/or programmes (Makieson, et al, 2018). Further, existing government documents are a particularly good data source because of the official provenance of such records; generally, they provide high-quality content (Danto, 2008). In this regard, research into the case study of China's Zambia policy relied on policy documents published by the Chinese government and relevant official organisations as a source for triangulation before, during, and after the interviews. Other secondary sources such as published academic literature and media coverage related to the research topic will also be used for triangulation purposes to policy documents. It specifically focused on the emphasis

of those policy documents and the change of policy emphasis along with the trajectory of Sino-Zambian engagement, the issues raised in high frequencies, and the way in which these policy documents interpret those issues. In this sense, triangulating elite interviews with document analysis (and other secondary sources) contributed significantly to this thesis to achieve 'a comprehensive understanding of a complex social situation' (Flick 2018, p.528), and mitigated the weaknesses of adopting elite interviews.

2.2.4 Data collection process and addressing ethical issues

Prior to conducting elite interviews, I began the desktop phase of the investigation by searching for Sino-African/Zambian documents on a year-by-year basis. Documents preceding 1998 were also acquired to reference China's Zambian policy prior to the 'Going Out' era and to fill in background information on Sino-Zambian relations. Starting from the mid-1990s, the degree of transparency regarding China's policy documents has significantly improved, partially due to China's attempt to transform into a more democratic regime and attach itself to the global market dominated by Western democracies. I utilised a keyword search strategy on the Chinese government website to obtain the policy documents related to Sino-Zambian engagement. Keywords used included the following: Zambia policy, Zambia, Sino-Zambia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Africa, and China-Africa. Surprisingly, I received over 200 search results from Chinese government website across different ministries. From these, 141 results redirected me to the website of Forum for China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), which is an official government-level mechanism for bilateral economy, medicine, and education cooperation.

In fact, FOCAC is the only Chinese official platform for the publication of Chinese foreign policies in relation to African countries. However, there are only two policy documents made publicly available online, which are the first version (2006) and the second version (2015) of China's Africa policy. This is because Chinese diplomatic practice follows a pragmatic ideology and not all of the actions taken by China with regards to Africa will lead to the output of a policy. As such, I accessed all of the archives published by FOCAC, including political leaders' address to the Forum and the declarations announced by FOCAC, as they are equally important to the policy documents, ranging from 2004 to 2021. Not all the documents, declarations or speech were analysed, as most of them are not related to the research topic or were irrelevant

to Zambia. Except for the two versions of the documents, the six other archives selected are FOCAC Action Plan [(2007-2009), (2010-2012), (2013-2015), (2016-2018), (2019-2021), (2022-2024)]. Those action plans reflect what both Chinese and African countries have agreed upon and serve as a precursor of China's intended pattern of practice within a three-year period. Furthermore, those action plans starting from 2007 to 2024 resonate the change of China's perceptions and practice within this time period. As such, the documents collected could be analysed in accordance with the timeline, and the trend regarding the evolution and adaptations of China's Zambian policy would be better captured.

Having collected policy documents related to Sino-Zambian engagement, the next step was to identify the actors involved in the decision-making processes of Sino-Zambian policy. The process of actor identification was carried out with relative ease, as the actors involved in a policy are listed either at the beginning or at the end of a policy document. There were 33 governmental organisations/policy banks identified which have participated in the processes of Sino-Zambian policymaking. An overarching policy entity responsible for the publication of China's complete foreign policy towards Africa was also identified, namely the Forum for China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). To ensure that no policy documents related to Zambia were missed or ignored, I visited all websites of the 33 identified governmental organisations. The same keyword search tactic was applied to all 33 websites to cross-check all collected policy documents. Despite the involvement of more than 30 governmental organisations, they do not share the same degree of importance in the processes of China's Zambian policymaking. To define the actors who had been involved within the policymaking processes in the 'Going Out' era as well as those who had played significant roles in certain period/policy adaptations, a keyword frequency method was applied to all policy documents identified to count the number of appearances of the name of each actor: I understood that the more an organisation was mentioned, the greater the role it played in China's Zambia policy, as the high frequency of their involvements into the policymaking processes.

Having applied the method for counting word frequencies, there were four organisations considered to be significant players within China's policymaking processes in the context of Sino-Zambian engagement, as the frequencies of these were predominately higher than those of their governmental counterparts, namely the

MOFCOM, the MFA, Chexim, and the CDB. It is worth noting that SOEs were not mentioned in any documents, as they are not designed to be involved in a decision-making process. Nevertheless, numerous published literatures suggest that SOEs are significantly embedded within policymaking processes through both formal and informal channels (Zhao, 2008; Zhao, 2018; Yu, 2018). Owing to this, I assume that SOEs hold a significant role in China's Zambia policy. Their role within the policymaking processes and their relations with other actors involved will be thoroughly investigated in the second phase of the research.

I then began the participant recruitment process by contacting CASS to build connections with officials/representatives currently working or who used to work in the four organisations/CNMC. However, not every official working in these organisations qualified for the interview process: MOFCOM, for example, is a considerably large governmental organisation in charge of both China's domestic and international commercial behaviours yet interviewing an official who is in charge of domestic affairs is unlikely to extract any valuable information regarding China's policy towards Zambia. Additionally, employees in those identified organisations may not have sufficient knowledge regarding China's Zambia policy if they had just joined the organisation and had little experience regarding the issue. In this situation, to identify the qualified interviewees capable of unfolding China's Zambia policy in the era of 'Going Out', the following inclusion criteria is adopted:

- For officials: must work (or have previously worked) within the related department responsible for African/Zambian affairs in one of the following organisations/companies: the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, the Import and Export Bank of China, or the China Nonferrous Metal Mining Group.
- For representatives of state-owned enterprises: must work (or have previously worked) for a company involved in Sino-Zambian relations.
- Participants must have worked in those organisations/companies at some point between 1998 and 2018.
- All participants must have worked for at least two years in their position at those organisations/companies.

I sent the inclusion criteria to CASS, and the latter then searched for those officials and company representatives qualified for the criteria and made initial contact. To

protect the privacy of potential participants, I did not have access to any names or contact details of any of the potential participants at this stage. Instead, my contact details were provided so if any potential participant was interested in participating in the research or wanted to acquire more information, they were able to contact me directly. Only after connections were formed with potential participants were they asked to present an email address to the principal investigator to be provided with further information and documents (e.g., participant information sheets).

Despite 12 interviews being successfully secured through the assistance of CASS in the participant recruitment procedure, the participant recruitment was not an easy process. CASS contacted 49 officials within their radar who qualified for the inclusion criteria, of which 17 responded and showed interest in contacting the principal investigator for further information. Having made initial contact with the principal investigator (the conductor of all interviews), 11 out of those 17 potential participants either questioned the motivation of this research as being in relation to espionage (which is certainly not the case), or they expressed their concern in terms of the sensitivity of the study. One potential participant emailed me furiously by calling me a vicious researcher and described me as 'unpatriotic'. Having explained the purpose of the research in very detail to all 16 potential participants (excluding the one who cursed me via email), nine people decided not to take part in the interview process. Seven people agreed to participate. The Covid-19 situation back in China poses as another factor of uncertainty to the interviews. The proposed starting period for all the interviews was at the beginning of April, when massive lockdowns were put in place in Beijing and Shanghai, the location of most of the potential participants. One potential participant said he might take part but could not provide confirmation due to Covid-19 related difficulties in Shanghai in April 2022. Two others encountered similar problems in Beijing. Luckily, those three potential participants later responded and confirmed their participation. Five more interviewees were identified via snowball sampling, including a provincial level official working for Hunan province based in the city of Changsha.

Semi-structured, detailed interviewing techniques helped make the best use of these interviews as they did not restrict respondents with strictly defined questions. Instead, participants were able to respond to open-ended questions from whichever starting point they felt comfortable with (Bryman, 2011). Given the fact that this study is

exploratory, semi-structured interviews offered the opportunity for respondents to provide information related to the topic potentially missing from other sources, therefore bringing new insights to the field of research. Moreover, by formulating a similar framework of interview questions, it is easier for me to compare the information and codes extracted from different interviews. The interviews did not go in a smooth way either, as participants were trying to dodge questions which they think were too sensitive to answer and refused audio-tape recordings. Having conducted the first two interviews, I adapted some of the research questions considered as being 'too sensitive to answer', changed the way in which some of the questions are formed, and prepared more tools for notes taking as audio recordings are not in place. In the third interview I had with a retired senior official (senior enough to have had a meeting with Chinese premier Li Keqiang on the same table), having answered a question, he said: 'you know, if anyone ever knows I told you this, I would have my pensions taken away [laugh]'. Interestingly, amongst 12 participants, he was amongst the only two people allowing me to use audio tapes to record the entire interview; because he considered himself senior enough to say certain things.

As such, to protect the safety and privacy of all participants, strict ethical protocols were followed before and throughout the entire research. An ethical form containing a detailed plan for participant recruitment, informed consent, confidentiality, and data storage was submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval and to confirm whether the research design was aligned with related ethical regulations. I did not start conducting any research with human participants until a favoured opinion was provided by the Committee. The elite interviews strictly followed the regulations by the Ethics Committee and the guidance by CASS. Research data was collected and analysed in line with UK GDPR and CASS guidance to make sure the data was used fairly, lawfully, and transparently. Although the Chinese government does not rule out its employees from participating in interviews and discussing policy decision-making with academic researchers, CASS informed me prior to the interviews that most officials remain cautious and are unwilling to reveal their identity. Having considered this, participants were asked to sign a consent form informing them that they were under no obligation to answer questions, and that they had the option to withdraw from the interview at any point. They were also reminded of this at the start of the interview. In terms of confidentiality, on the consent sheet participants were informed that the

interview would be recorded, that their identity would be kept secret, and that I would not ask about sensitive or confidential information. Interviews were conducted securely using Microsoft Teams. No participant's identity will be revealed in the published thesis.

However, it was necessary for the research to collect personal data from participants to carry out the following: 1) arrange the date and time for a formal interview and answer any questions that participants may have before and after the research; 2) send documents (e.g., participant information sheets) to participants; and 3) inform participants about the research findings. Each participant's personal data is stored in an individual Microsoft Word file on the university's OneDrive. If a participant was to withdraw from the research, their file would have been extracted and deleted. After the research is finished and participants are informed of the research findings, the entire file will be deleted from the OneDrive. For participants who do not wish to be informed about the research findings, the principal investigator will not make further contact with them, and their personal data will be deleted immediately after the research has ended. In regards of the length of personal data storage, the personal data of participants who do not wish to be informed about research findings will be deleted immediately after the research has ended. Further, the personal data of participants who wish to be informed about research findings will be kept for one month after the research has concluded to enable me to write to them about the research findings. All personal data collected from participants will be deleted immediately after this process has been completed.

2.2.5 Data Analysis

As desktop-based research started prior to the interviews, policy documents acquired from the FOCAC were analysed in the first place, and they were still being analysed during and after the interviews to serve as an important means for triangulation purposes. This was conducted via the constant comparisons between data collected from elite interviews and data acquired from policy documents. Government documents in general constitute an invaluable source of textual data for qualitative research because of their official provenance (Danto, 2008), meaning they have high validity and trustworthiness. Specifically, six out of eight documents selected by this research are action plans agreed by both Chinese and African sides based on the discussion outcomes of FOCAC conferences. The finalised action plans, in this regard, showcase the genuine direction in which Sino-African relations move forward within a

three-year period. Furthermore, both versions of China's Africa Policy (CAP) published after FOCAC meetings reflect China's long term policy emphasis from a strategic perspective, and any changes made to CAP can resonate China's changed pattern of practice and shifted perceptions towards Sino-African relations. As such, policy documents were analysed based on the timeline from 2004 to the present to track the changes of Sino-African relations in the 'Going Out' era by highlighting any changes made by China to its policy emphasis. This is a relatively straightforward process because all eight documents are well-categorised with each section focusing on a specific perspective of China's Africa policy. By making comparisons to the different versions of documents, changes are easily tracked and noted.

The analysis of interview notes and transcripts, however, can be challenging. To illustrate, qualitative data tends to be unstructured, yet to be systematic and rigorous in conducting research, the researcher must start by imposing some order on the data (Neale, 2016). Qualitative researchers often find themselves with voluminous sets of data to analyse, and their confidence can rapidly disappear when confronted by large and conceptually complex information (Connolly, 2003). Indeed, despite the rather small scale of this research – merely 12 interviews were conducted – there were still over a hundred pages of transcripts and notes taken from them. The failure to effectively analyse qualitative data can lead to repetition or data missed, affecting the credibility of the research through neglect. In this regard, a valid data analysis approach must be employed to systematically address the data. This study, therefore, adopted applied thematic analysis (ATA), developed by Guest, MacQueen, and Namey (2012) as the methodological approach in the systematic collection and analysis of data.

The ATA framework was specifically developed to assist researchers to prepare for purposeful and systematic text-based qualitative analysis, regardless of the size of the data (Guest et al, 2012). ATA focuses on the objectives of the research, the data, and the relationship between the two (Peel, 2020). For this reason, a key consideration in applying the ATA framework involves establishing the boundaries of the analysis (text segmentation), which tends to be the first step for text-based qualitative analysis. Indeed, data segmentation is particularly helpful in extracting codes and making inter-source comparisons. To illustrate, interview notes and transcripts are typically lengthy and contain information from various categories. To begin analysis through direct,

reckless line by line coding may lead to the generation of hundreds of codes which may take disproportionate and unnecessary lengths of time to categorise and compare (Guest et al, 2012). Some useful themes and codes may also be ignored or even forgotten due to the large numbers of existing codes (Neuendorf, 2018).

For interview notes and transcripts, as the interviews are semi-structured and the interview questions are uniform across the interviews, the text segmentation was conducted based on interview questions, where each interview question formed a segment. Segments with similar topics or under the same structural code were put together. Initial line-by-line and sentence-by-sentence coding began at this point, not on a piece-by-piece basis, but segment-by-segment. This initial coding was carried out to identify and extract preliminary themes and transform them into appropriate codes, as well as beginning the development of a code map depicting how the codes are linked to one another. Each code definition included a code name (up to 12 characters), a code level, a short definition of the code (up to 80 characters), a full definition of the code (up to 10 sentences), guidance regarding when to use the code, one or more direct quotes from the data exemplifying when to use the code, and guidance regarding when not to use the code. A total 78 codes were acquired in the initial coding phase.

Despite the qualitative nature of the ATA, the usage of basic arithmetical analysis and quantitative methods while analysing qualitative data was not eliminated (Guest et al, 2012; Neuendorf, 2018; Peel, 2020). Indeed, there is basic arithmetical analysis through simply counting the frequencies of themes and codes. This is particularly helpful for data reduction as the principal investigator attempted to deal with relatively large-scale text data: codes recurrently appearing in one or multiple segments were highlighted, emphasised, and investigated further for code refinements, as they were likely related to the segments they belonged to and could potentially be helpful in answering research questions (Guest et al, 2012). However, the adoption of this data reduction technique did not suggest codes with low frequencies were likely to be unrelated to the research questions; conversely, some codes later recognised core themes that did not appear frequently in the text (Mackieson, et al, 2019). For this reason, code frequency counting was only adopted at the initial phase of the research as a basic data deduction technique. Overall, codes with high and low frequencies

were analysed on a case-by-case basis to ascertain their relevance to the research topic.

Codes and themes extracted from different transcripts/document segments were constantly compared with each other for their relation; codes with similar meanings were combined and interrelated codes were formed into uber-themes (a code at a higher abstract level) in the second coding phase. This was carried out through the ongoing comparison between themes to themes, codes to codes, and codes to segments, and the relationship between codes and the research objective were ascertained. As a result, 47 codes were identified and categorised under eight themes; eight codes were not categorised but still preserved due to their relevance to the research topic. A codebook was developed to systematically record all the codes that had already been developed. Further, as work related to the interpretation of the themes and the development of the corresponding codes progressed, the decisions made and recorded in the codebook were frequently reviewed to assess congruity, after which they were either confirmed or amended. This process also informed the refinement of the schedule for the sequencing of subsequent steps in the research. Although the qualitative coding procedure is a highly subjective process that is dependent on the researchers, through use of a codebook, the degree of transparency for coding and data analysis can be significantly improved, and external viewers can routinely check the principal investigator's coding process based on the codebook presented to check the credibility of the analytical process.

Chapter 3. Decentralisation in the Reform Era: The Entry of Multiple Actors into the Decision-Making Process

This chapter examines the changes to China's Zambia policy and the transformation of Sino-Zambian relations by emphasising the changes made within the Chinese foreign policy decision-making system prior to and in the early stage of the 'Going Out' policy. Brødsgaard's (2016) proclamation of CCP is integrated from the top-level with the establishment of Leading Small Groups (LSGs). Jones and Hameiri's (2021) assertion that Chinese big policy slogans are deliberately kept vague to accommodate the competing and diverse interests of actors involved in the decision-making process will also be challenged through a thorough examination into the Chinese policymaking process within the context of Sino-Zambian relations. The purpose of this chapter is twofold: 1) to elucidate how China's opening up reform and decentralisation led to the involvement of economic related actors into the decision-making process of China's Zambia policy; and 2) to showcase that Chinese SOEs do not act as passive recipients to China's Zambia policy but are actively involved within the decision-making process. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section will briefly introduce the decentralisation process undertaken by the Chinese government within the broader context of China's economic reform. It will also examine within the context of Sino-Zambian relations the way in which decentralisation has changed Chinese policymakers' incentives and encouraged actors entering the arena of foreign policymaking. More importantly, the chapter will interpret how, despite the central's effort in integrating the policymakers, the foreign policy decision-making process remains fragmented. The second section will illustrate how SOEs, especially CNMC in the context of Sino-Zambian relations, are not merely the 'arm of the government' that passively implement 'Going Out' policies but have already affected the policy decision-making processes via different channels to actively shape the direction of China's Zambia policy.

3.1 Fragmentation by intention: Deng Xiaoping's reform for economic growth

Decentralisation has been considered as a vital policy implemented as part of Deng Xiaoping's economic reform, intentionally diverging from the existing set up where the central government would control everything from the delegation of power to ministry-level institutions and local governments (Naughton, 1993; Butt and Sajid, 2018). Indeed, the post-1978 era has observed how China's decision-making power and control over resources have been extensively devolved to sub-national level government institutions and agencies. The process has had profound impacts to China's policymaking system in the era of 'Going Out', as Chinese economic actors utilise their delegated power to involve themselves in the policymaking system to achieve economic gains and their own organisational interests (Gill and Reilly, 2007). Contrary to researchers who have asserted that diversified organisational interests were unpredicted and the result of CCP's miscalculation towards its power delegation (Shirk, 1994; Chan and Shi, 2022), the following paragraphs will interpret how the decentralised allocation of political and economic resources is the intended consequence of a series of policy redirections and institutional adjustments implemented by Deng Xiaoping to resolve the underdevelopment issue of China in the 1970s. More importantly, it will look to how this was intended to deviate China from the aftermath of Mao Zedong's policy failure during the culture revolution, which caused massive famine, economic stagnation, and social instability from 1966 to 1976 (Vogel, 2011).

Shortly after the death of Mao Zedong and the collapse of the gang of four (a group of senior advisors during cultural revolution), Deng Xiaoping and his advisors identified three of the most prominent aspects in need of urgent reformation for future development: the distribution of resources; CCP's decision-making and implementation processes; and the overly integrated value of Communism (Shirk, 1994; Vogel, 2011). The distribution of resources in Mao Zedong's era strictly followed the Soviet model, in which the Party was the country's ultimate administrative institution, enjoying a higher decision-making power over the government with a relatively straightforward top-down manner controlling both political and economic resources (Kampen, 2000). This led to two serious problems that negatively affected the development of China. First, the intention of CCP to get everything under the centre's control resulted in overcrowded centre CCP institutions: to make sure

provincial and municipal level governments are 'correctly' following the guidance of Chairman Mao, huge numbers of officials were assigned to regularly monitor the behaviour of the locals (Lampton, 1992). Second, with the centre controlling the majority of the resources urgently required by some of the remote areas for development, the planned resource distribution did not always satisfy the requirements of local governments, which resulted in a deepened gap between the rich and remote provinces (Lampton, 1992; Jiang and Zhang, 2005). In this regard, China's economy in Mao's era was heavily underdeveloped due to the central's priority in gaining the maximum degree of resource control.

The decision-making and implementation during Mao's era were also considered as problematic and counter-productive in the opening up reforms (Gao, 2008); in a rather centralised system, it is not rare for the centre to make 'one-for-all' policies for the entire nation without necessarily considering the local conditions (Qingmin, 2016). This issue led to several policy failings across China between the late 1950s to the early 1960s, notably the 'Great Leap Forward', in which the enthusiasm of the centre to produce more steel than Western democracies meant farmers had to move from their own farmland to factories that produced low-quality metal products (Li and Yang, 2005). This resulted in the Great Famine due to a lack of labour in farms across the country (Li and Yang, 2005). Value integration is perhaps the last aspect Deng Xiaoping intended to make dramatic reforms in (Lieberthal and Lampton, 1992); this was demonstrated by the late days of Deng's administration that denied the very idea of general elections and, of course, the tragic events at Tiananmen in 1989 that shocked the entire world.

However, in the 1970s, Deng insisted the CCP must think beyond ideology while making policies, and that people should not treat Mao Zedong as the god of the Communist China (Li and Yang, 2005). Under these circumstances, to unfold China's economic capacity and to bring the nation out of the shadow of culture revolution, critical decentralisation reforms took place emphasising decentralised distribution of resources; delegated power to lower-level institutions for decision-making and implementation; and lessened the degree of value integration (Lieberthal and Lampton, 1992; Rosen, 1985). Indeed, in 1980s, powers were delegated to local governments and different ministries to generate economic developments by allowing ministries to privatise SOEs and permitting local governments to actively attract investments.

Economic resources once exclusively available to the Central were delegated to Ministries and province-level governments, allowing them to distribute resources based on their status quo in order to make allocated resources more economically viable. This series of reforms, although creating the unprecedented economic miracle for China PR labelled as the victory of Deng Xiaoping, also resulted in the fragmentation of Chinese foreign policy decision-making.

Structurally, China's bureaucratic ranking system consists of various functional divisions of authority, with each authority supervising a specific functional aspect (e.g. Ministry of Railway, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Coal and Oil). Under Mao's era, divided functional authorities merely served the role of executive branches of the CCP. However, the structural reforms granted them the power to set their own agendas, given the nature of China's strategic policy which often tends to involve multiple functional authorities; a situation in which it is often necessary to achieve agreement among an array of bodies, where no single body having authority over the others have emerged (Lieberthal and Lampton, 1992). Additionally, the decentralisation reforms enabled sub-level authorities (e.g. policy banks) to acquire funds outside of those allocated through the central budget, which could be effectively utilised in pursuing their own policy preferences. This cushion of "extrabudgetary" funds in turn permitted many locales to become less sensitive to the policy demands from higher levels (Lin, 1992).

Procedurally, substantial changes have been made by CCP to produce more effective information and incentive systems, which has effectively caused an additional effect: the top leaders starting from Deng Xiaoping have effectively reduced the use of coercion against those party members who hold different opinions to the so-called 'mainstream thoughts' (Lieberthal and Lampton, 1992). This encouraged participants to argue forcefully for their proposals in the party meetings. To avoid the mistakes the CCP made in the Great Leap Forward, feasibility studies were required to take place before any policy could be implemented (Lieberthal and Lampton, 1992). However, these feasibility studies encouraged various units to marshal information to support their own project preferences, often in competition with others (Jones and Hameiri, 2021). The encouragement given to many organs to become increasingly self-supporting through bureaucratic entrepreneurship also strengthened the tendency of these units to work vigorously to promote and protect their own interests in the policy-

making process (Naughton, 1993; Lin, 1992; Lieberthal and Lampton, 1992). The general decline in the use of ideology as an instrument of control increased the "looseness" of the system, and decentralisation in personnel management permitted many bureaucratic units additional initiatives. All these changes combined to reduce the extent to which members responded in a disciplined fashion to instructions from higher levels.

3.2 Fragmentation in Chinese foreign policy decision-making: CCP's failed attempt at a unified system

3.2.1 CCP's mechanisms for policy coherence

Despite the internal fragmentation observed within China, in the domain of Chinese foreign policymaking, China wishes to be seen on the global stage as a unified entity with one voice (Ning, 2018). Indeed, an interview was conducted with an official working in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, C (2022), who recalls CCP's determination for controlling and regulating all of the policies in relation to foreign affairs in the early 2000s, stating that China and the CCP want to be seen as 'strong and coherent (团结一致)'. The CCP's tenth Five Year Plan (2001, p.4) which sets the foundation for China's 'Going Out' policy highlights the importance of 'sticking to CCP's theory, CCP's roadmap, and CCP's guidance' as a prerequisite for the successful implementation of the Going Out policy. Similarly, in the Addis Ababa Action Plan published in 2004, despite multiple-sector cooperation between China and Africa (which requires the involvement of various of Chinese ministries) highlighted throughout the document, no names of any ministries were explicitly mentioned; instead, the terms 'China' and 'Chinese government' were used throughout. This sort of wording, according to C (2022), is intentionally chosen to showcase China's unity as a sovereign country without revealing the complexity of the internal ministries which were still in the process of decentralisation. From a pragmatic perspective, the CCP does have a special mechanism to ensure the centrality of itself, namely the Leading Small Groups.

The Leading Small Group (领导小组), also known as the 'Central Leading Group (中央领导小组)', is a body of the CCP charged with decision-making on major functional issue areas (Tsai and Zhou, 2019). Despite there being no shortage of researchers who have acknowledged the fragmentation of power and resources amongst Chinese

ministries, Brødsgaard (2016) insists that the existence of the LSGs have effectively prevented the Chinese policymaking system from becoming entirely fragmented; LSGs, according to Brødsgaard, are a well-functioning mechanism for CCP to present relative stability despite the decentralised nature of lower layer agencies. Brødsgaard's assertion also gained momentum amongst Chinese speaking researchers, Tsai and Zhou (2019), who highlight that LSGs are organised directly by the Party and that the ministerial rank amongst group members are not decided upon their positions in the government but rather are determined by their rankings in the Party (Tsai and Zhou, 2019). By utilising LSGs, the party leader (i.e., Chinese president) can summon key individuals to discuss and even make policies. For example, China now has a LSP for foreign affairs, Xi Jinping himself is in charge of this particular group, and group members consist of key individuals from foreign affairs-related sectors such as MFA (Jones and Zeng, 2019). By utilising LSGs, the CCP can bypass the lengthy process of policymaking which often includes monitoring mechanisms which may block the CCP's intention to implement policy. Since the beginning of the reform period, the CCP leadership has frequently made use of leading small groups. Zeng Peiyan (曾培炎), a former State Council deputy premier, once commented on their functions:

We form cross-departmental leading small groups to organize and implement major strategic tasks. Leading small groups are an effective method that our Party and government have developed through a long period of practical implementation.....Special offices are usually created to host the leading small groups..... These are headed by the lead department with the most responsibility for the group's given task. In general, establishing interdepartmental cooperative groups to tackle major tasks is an effective way of reducing hierarchy and improving efficiency (2001, p.17).

Leading small groups consist of four main elements (Tsai and Zhou, 2019). First, there is the group leader, the choice of whom reflects the leading small group's importance. Second, there are the constituent departments, of which there may be many, depending on the nature of the group's tasks. The heads of these departments become members of the leading small group. Third, there is the lead department, the most important of the various constituent departments in the leading small group. Finally, there is the group office, the organisation that performs the day-to-day tasks

and routine administrative work of the leading small group. The office is traditionally set up in the lead department; the Leading Small Group on Foreign Affairs, for instance, is set up in the MFA. The structure of a typical leading small group is illustrated in figure 3.1.

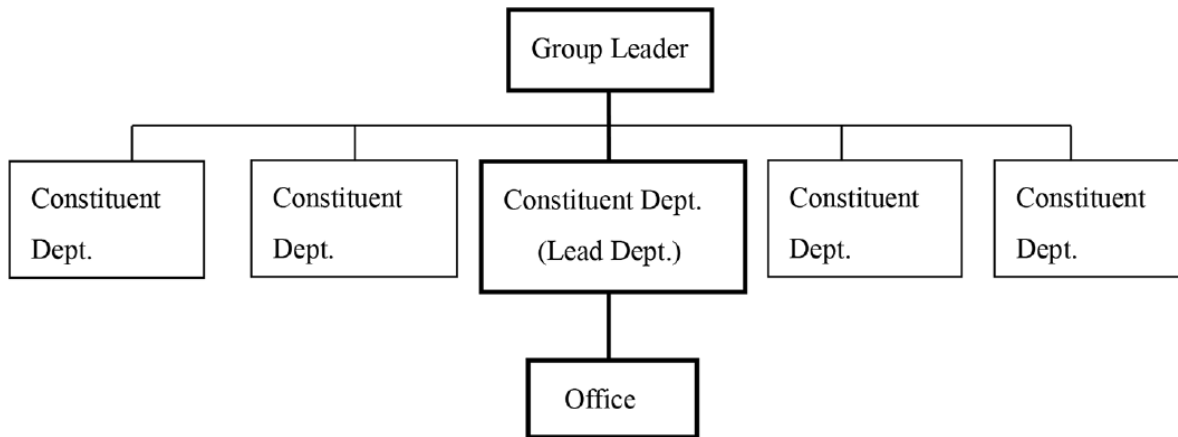


Figure 3.1 Organisational structure of a typical leading small group

Notes: The bold boxes contain the most important elements in the leading small group. (Source: Zhou Wang, Zhongguo xiaozu jizhi yanjiu, p.139).

Besides CCP’s adoption of LSGs to control actors involved in foreign policymaking; based on their model of ‘Chinese-style regulatory state’, Jones and Hameiri (2021, p.29) proclaim that the CCP has effectively used another steering mechanism named ‘discretionary control over laws, regulations and finances’ to achieve coherent control over foreign policy decision-making, with the exception of the LSGs. According to Jones and Hameiri (2021, p.31), actors who need resources to ‘pursue their organisational objectives’ are ‘constrained at least to act as if their goals are commensurate with formally agreed national policy’. Although Jones and Hameiri admit CCP’s ‘discretionary control’ is only partially functioning, and the efficacy of the mechanism varies in different cases, they do consider it as a proper mechanism which could be effective in achieving unities in large schemes (e.g. securing energy resources and infrastructure building), because China’s central government does control certain amounts of key resources at the very top level; for example, central policy banks such as Chexim and CDB supervise purse strings (as the following paragraphs will illustrate, it is a misunderstanding to consider policy banks as an arm of the central government). Jones and Hameiri’s statement is also reflected by Ji

(2022), who highlights that the CCP still has the capability to control multiple actors in lower layers of the policymaking system via control over finance and resources.

3.2.2 Intended fragmentation with unintended consequences: a decision-making system involving multiple actors within the context of Sino-Zambian relations

Despite the CCP's attempt at neutralising the shockwaves of decentralisation via LSGs and 'discretionary control' over resources to consolidate unity and Party control, decentralisation has become well rooted in the foreign policy decision-making system within the context of China-Zambia relations in the 'Going Out' era. Indeed, decentralisation has completely reshaped China's ecosystem for foreign policy decision-making by introducing the involvement of multiple actors with diversified interests. The assertions that China's policymaking system is integrated at the top level and the central government has control over lower-level actors through resource allocations are not genuine reflections of the current fragmented policy-decision-making process in China. To illustrate, policy banks, in contrast to Jones and Hameiri's (2021) argument, rather than being an arm of the central government to maintain the central coherence, contributed significantly to the fragmentation within the foreign policy decision-making system.

Additionally, as Chinese ministries adapt to the modern world and actively engage in the decision-making process, no reforms have taken place in the decision-making system itself, in a contrast to China's desire for a unified foreign policymaking system. Furthermore, in spite of LSGs seemingly having secured the position of executive player in the decision-making process, there is a lack of knowledge for modernising policies, as well as a reliance on lower-level bodies for the implementation of such policies. This chapter, therefore, challenges Brødsgaard (2016), Tsai and Zeng (2019), and Jones and Hameiri's (2021) assertions and argues that these three points contributed to the fragmentation of China's foreign policy decision-making within the context of Sino-Zambian relations. These failings in trying to coordinate a policy decision-making process have led to further policy failings in certain areas (this will be further discussed in chapter 3). The following paragraphs discuss these three points in greater detail by illustrating how they have contributed to the fragmentation within China's decision-making system.

During the post-reform period and the early period of Deng's opening up era, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) had been one of China's most important ministries (Duggan, 2019). The MFA divided each area of foreign relations either geographically or functionally, forming departments for each division. Each department is overseen by a vice minister or assistant minister (Ning, 2018). In terms of policy formation and implementation, the MFA works out the details of foreign policy, and helps with its implementation according to the principles and 'spirits' from the Standing Committee and the Small Leading Groups (Yang, 2019). In this regard, most of the communications and the maintenance of bilateral relations between China and other foreign countries were overseen and conducted by MFA (Ning, 2018; Yang, 2019). L (2022), a former senior-level official with over 25 years of working experience in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, echoes this point and states that MFA played a prominent role in foreign policymaking and is accountable for the everyday practice of the implementation of Chinese foreign policy beyond the scope of China-Africa relations.

L (2022) also notes that the Ministry used to be 'very important (十分重要)' for the entire process of Chinese foreign policy decision-making. According to L (2022), in spite of the existence of higher-level institutions for Chinese foreign policymaking, MFA officials have often been summoned by LSGs for policy consultancies. Strategies and guidance decided by LSGs must rely on the work of MFA officials before they can be materialised into implementable policies. Moreover, given that all Chinese consulates were within the system of MFA, foreign countries would rely heavily on Chinese ambassadors as the primary channel through which to deliver messages to CCP leaders in Beijing (Chen, 2009; Vhumbunu, 2016; L, 2022). In this regard, MFA in the late 1990s and early 2000s was indeed the single most important organisation responsible for foreign policymaking, controlling both the process for implementing policies and the channels for communication between foreign countries and CCP.

Despite the important role MFA played in China's foreign policy, China's gradual deepening of its opening up reform and its shift away from existing foreign policy that was guided by ideology and economic and financial issues became increasingly important element of China's foreign affairs (Alden, 2017). Indeed, China's rapid economic development had outpaced its domestic ability for natural resource supplies, leading to a growing interest from both the Chinese government and Chinese companies in Africa's natural resources (Gu, 2011). The acquisition of natural

resource sites in Africa, such as oil fields and mining sites, was widely carried out by SOEs, such as CNPC's acquisition of equity stakes in Sudan, China MOLY's purchase of cobalt mines in DRC, and Winning Consortium Simandou (WCS)'s purchase of iron ore in Guinea. Amongst these acquisitions, CNMC's procurement of the previously abandoned Chambishi mine in Zambia was considered a landmark event for the transition of China's Zambia policy, as well as China's Africa policy in a broader context. This held significance not only because this acquisition was amongst the first batch of purchases in the mid-1990s before the 'Going Out' policy was formally launched, but that the acquisition indicated the transformation of power amongst Chinese government organisations in an era where economic considerations dominated Chinese foreign policy agenda (Rapanyane, 2020).

The Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations and Trade (MOFTEC), later renamed as MOFCOM, was established to deal with both external and domestic economic, financial, and trade issues (Duggan, 2019). Along with the trajectory of MOFTEC/MOFCOM's practice, the ministry has shown an inclination towards external rather than internal economic issues. MOFCOM consist of a total of 28 internal organs, of which 16 play a direct role in foreign policy formation (Duggan, 2019; Ning, 2018). Indeed, as part of the consolidation of China's foreign trade, more foreign policies on the regulations of international trade and economy were required to prevent pitfalls and chaos. However, this increase of decision-making power of the MOFCOM caused the retreat of MFA in terms of its role in foreign policy decision-making and implementation (Barnett, 2019). In an interview, C (2022) admits the current policymaking structure involves multiple actors, and that MFA does not play a leading role amongst those actors involved. E (2022), an official of MOFCOM, echoes this point by stating that the impact of MOFCOM in the foreign policy decision-making is 'enormous'. Indeed, as the economy and natural resources have become primary channels of China's foreign engagement, Chinese foreign aid, development projects, and most importantly, foreign direct investment (FDI), by Chinese SOEs, they must be approved by MOFCOM before any plans can happen on the ground (E, 2022). As Ning (2018) pointed out, this has severely challenged the position of MFA as the leading ministry in both its decision-making and the implementation of China's Africa policy; foreign countries would bypass MFA to directly contact the MOFCOM for aid and investment projects.

The relatively strong position of MOFCOM has been confirmed by multiple researchers from both English and Chinese resources: Davies (2007), for example, takes MOFCOM as the leading organisation in the decision-making and implementation process of China's Zambia policy. Similarly, Lai and Kang (2014) state that even though the Politburo is the de facto decision-maker of China's decision-making hierarchy, it is MOFCOM that determines the guiding principles advocated by the top leaders into tangible policies. McKinnon (2010) also emphasises the role of MOFCOM in delivering FDI to African countries, highlighting high trade and investment volumes. Officials from both MOFCOM and MFA also admit that MOFCOM is in a better position in terms of economy-related foreign policymaking. L (2022) recalls that in the early 2000s, due to MOFTEC/MOFCOM still existing in a transition period with lots of structural changes taking place, MFA was the most influential actor amongst all ministries involved within the decision-making process. However, since completing the transformation, the fully functional MOFCOM has overtaken MFA to become the pivotal actor in the decision-making process.

The CCP prioritises economic development over ideology under the framework of the 'Going Out' policy (Salidjanova, 2011; Wang, 2016). Thus, MOFCOM, as the only ministry-level government body responsible for supervising Chinese companies to secure materials such as copper and cobalt, coordinate investment behaviours, and approve FDI proposals, have been allocated more resources and granted more arbitrary power compared to MFA to turbocharge the expansion of Chinese overseas investments (L, 2022). This has further fragmented the foreign policy decision-making process, as MOFCOM utilises its resources to establish its own networks for communication and channelling information. As A (2022) (a former CNMC employee working in Zambia) and B (2022) (an official from MOFCOM) have said in two separate interviews, Chinese economic actors (Chinese companies and SOEs) are more likely to communicate with MOFCOM via the Economic and Commercial Office (an overseas department established by the ministry) with regard to the situation they face. MFA, according to B (2022) and L (2022), is rarely updated with any information in regard to Chinese actors' economic behaviours overseas. MOFCOM, in this regard, has created a closed loop in terms of China's Africa policy for investment, which has left little leeway for MFA to intervene.

On top of the involvement of MOFCOM, other financial and economic organisations have also actively engaged within the foreign policy decision-making process. Two of the most prominent actors in this regard are the Export-Import Bank of China (Chexim) and China Development Bank (CDB). In an elite interview, J (2022), the director of an office in Chexim, stated that the Chexim is founded under the background of Chinese business 'Going Out', and that the purpose of the bank is to provide necessary support for Chinese companies engaging with foreign countries and expanding overseas markets. Chexim has been allocated with relatively a large amount of funding to provide loans to Chinese businesses both directly and indirectly. CDB, on the other hand, is more infrastructure-focused and operates as a commercial bank similar to its international counterparts, such as Santander and Barclays. The interest rates offered by CDB are significantly higher compared to Chexim, and due to China's emphasis on infrastructure-building, CDB is also well embedded into the 'Going Out' policy as it provides loans to Chinese companies for overseas infrastructure constructions.

Although these two organisations do not have the lawful status to directly intervene in the decision-making processes, by controlling the loans to Chinese enterprises who intend to invest in Zambia and other SSA countries (Moss and Rose, 2006), they can obtain a level of control over both SOEs and private companies. To illustrate, as officials from both banks are involved in the provision of funding to support the 'Going Out' strategy, employees from these banks have often been invited to consultancy meetings where they exchange opinions and discuss policies with policymakers such as MOFCOM and MFA (J, 2022). In this regard, these two banks are also involved in the process of China's FDI and impact the decision-making processes by approving or blocking loans. As J (2022) notes, Chexim have at times expressed their opposition to provisional policies drafted by other vital actors, causing delays to the implementation of policies (see chapter 5 'policy lagging' for a more detailed interpretation). In this regard, in contrast to some research which may suggest that policy banks are used by the central government to control the behaviours of various actors, policy banks themselves actively contribute to the fragmentation to China's foreign policy decision-making system.

Indeed, the term policy banks could be misleading, making researchers assume they are operating in line with commands from the central government. As per stated, CDB operates as a commercial bank. According to K (2022), a senior CDB official, the bank

has an independent status with a high degree of autonomy from any top-level financial regulators, nor does the central government have the ability to directly ask the bank to reallocate its funds. Profits gained from financial behaviours such as loans are kept in the Bank's own treasury, and its employees who complete a 'big loan deal (大单)' receive cash and allowance rewards based on the size of the loans indicated on the contract. This, therefore, has created a strong culture amongst CDB staff to make more commercial loans, despite CCP's call for a greener, more sustainable engagement. For example, in 2013, CDB approved road construction from Mansa to Luwingu in Zambia despite concern expressed by MOF towards Zambia's debt and the possible damage the construction may cause to the local animal habitat. This has been proved by H (2022), an official who used to work in the MOF from 2008-2015. According to him, the Ministry found the potential negative impacts of the road project in Zambia and reported these to the State Council. Although the State Council agreed a more careful approach should be taken to address the environmental concerns, it opined that the project was legal and could go ahead as CDB, the Zambian government, and the Chinese construction company (who is contracted to construct the project) are committed to the road construction.

3.2.3 Fragmentation as a result of an outdated system for policy decision-making

CCP's intention for a unified policymaking system in the 'Going Out' era has not changed despite the presence of multiple actors in the policy decision-making system. However, the lack of proper reforms to the policy decision-making process hampered CCP's intentions, resulting in an even more fragmented situation for the actors involved. Indeed, having conducted all 12 interviews with Chinese policymaking elites working in government bodies, none were able to clearly illustrate how exactly a policy is made and what procedures are involved. All 12 interviewees stated that policies are made through numerous meetings. Based on these answers, the policymaking process within the context of China-Zambia relations appears to be vague and chaotic. L (2022), a retired senior official, had over 40 years of experience working in the Chinese government and spent over 25 years in MFA. He still remembers the meetings that had taken place with MOFCOM, Chexim, think tanks, and SOEs in 2002, known as 'deepening the process of Going Out policy and boosting development'. The meeting itself is an example of how China's foreign policy is crafted within the context

of China-Zambia relations under the framework of 'Going Out'. The meeting amongst ministry-level actors was not held spontaneously by any of the participants but rather as the result of a meeting of an LSG. To illustrate, before the meeting L participated in took place, a very high-level LSG meeting was held behind closed doors, the contents of which were unknown to the then middle-level official L. The only message concluded from the LSG meeting was in relation to 'deepening the process of Going Out policy and boosting development', and MOFOM was informed to hold a meeting to take this 'spirit' from the LSG meeting (L, 2022). Indeed, as LSG is the executive player in policy decision-making, they do not offer detailed policies themselves, but rather offer a general guidance for ministry-level actors to materialise.

Eleven out of 12 interviewees agree that the term and narrative offered by the LSG is often abstract and vague and would require officials like L to come to his own understanding (L, 2022). The explanation offered by Jones and Hameiri regarding this phenomenon is that the vague wording of guidance and slogans are intentionally framed by the LSGs and CCP to accommodate the diversified interests of lower-level policymaking organisations such as MOFCOM and MFA. Indeed, the fragmented nature of China's foreign policy decision-making system has attracted more actors into this crowded arena of policymaking than it was in 1970s before the economic reform. Even L (2022), the most senior official amongst those 12 interviewees, admitted the fractions and confusions amongst different policy makers cannot be appropriately addressed. However, this does not suggest the LSGs have to intentionally develop vague guidance and slogans to reduce the potential fractions amongst ministry-level policymakers. Indeed, L (2022) strongly denies the assertion, despite admitting the vague guidelines did objectively result in various interpretations being offered by different actors involved within the decision-making process. Those vague terms and slogans were not designed deliberately, but as the consequence of an outdated system for policymaking wherein the top leaders have limited understanding and knowledge about the object of their investigation, and the unwillingness of the lower-level organisations in communicating to the top asking for clarification. Further, these two factors have significantly contributed to the fragmentation of the Chinese decision-making process within the context of China-Zambia relations.

Indeed, despite the formation of LSGs having secured the central's leading role in initiating grand strategies and pointing the direction of policy, within the context of

China-Zambia relations, the central have little clue about what occurs in Zambia. As L (2022) states, the central has limited knowledge in regard to Zambia and even struggles to point out the country on the map. The information channel they rely on is briefings from LSG members. The LSG members, on the other hand, are top-tier leaders in charge of a large ministry, namely the MOFCOM and MFA, which also have limited knowledge towards Zambia. They rely on lower-level civil servants who have rather ample knowledge about Zambia to provide the information for briefings. However, as LSG briefing is a senior-level event, only important events taking place in a specific country will be relayed to CCP senior figures. In this regard, the flow of information to LSG about Zambia is often subjective, vague, selective, and lacks nuance. Subsequently, the policies set in response to this information are vague and abstract due to LSG's lack of knowledge. Both MOFCOM and MFA, on the other hand, have actively cultivated their own overseas offices in Zambia to set up information channels with which to acquire up-to-date news about the country.

According to an official who used to work in such an office in Lusaka, her job was to collect Zambian news on a daily basis and create a news briefing for all of her colleagues back in China (E, 2022). Indeed, over the past two decades, MOFCOM has established a mature system for information collection and processing not only in Zambia, but in countries which have large trade dealings with China (MOFCOM, 2020). MFA also have similar networks through oversea Chinese embassies and consulates. In this regard, ministry-level organisations have resources and knowledge exclusively available for them for decision-making that LSGs lack. The task of making detailed implementable policies, therefore, has to be delegated from the centre to ministries. In an informal conversation L had with a senior official believed to be an LSG member, that senior official found difficulty figuring out if Tanzanians spoke French or English. 'Given the incredibly limited knowledge some of the senior officials have, how could they (LSG members) possibly make viable policies to SSA region?' says L (2022).

Furthermore, there is a culture amongst CCP members to not ask senior leaders for clarification, as asking questions in this manner may cause senior CCP officials to doubt the official's capability in working, therefore affecting their promotions (B, 2022; L, 2022). With regard to this, each department has to present their own understanding of the narrative provided by LSG based on their experience and organisational priorities. Moreover, the interpretation of a certain individual or a single organisation is

relevant, but a consensus has to be made amongst all participants of the meeting before a policy can be finalised thanks to the chaotic meeting system for policymaking. Indeed, policies are formed within meetings through the participation and agreement of all relevant actors. If a consensus cannot be reached, even if only a minority of the participants express different opinions, another meeting has to be held to discuss the issue further, causing constant delays to the policy. This was the case for L's meeting in 2002: despite all participants acknowledging the importance of development, different interpretations to the very concept of 'development' were presented by various participants. As L (2022) recalls, '谁都知道发展是关键议题, 但谁都不知道什么是发展, 怎么发展, 还有关于谁的发展 (we all know it is about development, but what we do not know is what is development, how to develop, and development to whom)'. MOFCOM, Chexim, and SOEs prioritised the development of Chinese companies, emphasising the need for increased investment, especially to the SOEs. However, MFA took an ideological point of view, illustrating the importance of mutual benefit, mutual development between China and Africa, and the need for sustainable development. Despite an unwillingness to reveal details of the meetings held for policy discussions, A, B, and C all confirm the meeting L experienced in 2002 is a close reflection to meetings they have attended, where different interpretations offered by various of participants using key terms and concepts have to be combined into a general consensus before any progress is made.

With such divergencies between participants, the concept of development was discussed for several hours before an agreement was reached on the policy itself. As a result, to achieve progress, both sides took a step backwards, and MFA's narrative of 'mutual development' was presented in the final policy output. Further, MOFCOM, Chexim, and SOEs' interpretation of the development, in regard to heavy investment, loans to mining, oil extractions and infrastructure building, were also highlighted in the policy. The FOCAC published documents have highlighted mutual support in section 3, and the need for infrastructure was mentioned in section 4.1 (Addis Ababa Action Plan, 2004). With regard to this, the policy decision-making processes with the involvement of multiple actors have exacerbated the fragmentation of Chinese foreign policymaking and cancelled the unity proposed by LSGs. As a consensus has to be reached on a meeting for policy finalisation, compromises have to be made for consensus building. Therefore, the result of the policy may not be in compliance with

LSG's intention as the concepts they highlighted have been reinterpreted by ministry-level organisations. As chapter 4 examines in greater detail, these divergencies in the interpretation of key concepts have been utilised by lower-level agents to maximise their own interests and have caused partial failings of Chinese foreign policy as a whole.

3.2.4 SOEs reshaping the ecosystem of China's policymaking

From policymaking to policy implementation in the Chinese system of hierarchy, SOEs have long been considered in the lowest regard and are analysed as a passive agent with only the ability to implement policies set by top tier agencies. Yu (2018) defines SOEs in Africa as the representation of Chinese government policy intentions and as the end product of Chinese policy outcomes. Liu (2005) echoes Yu's point and asserts the successful expansion of Chinese SOEs, notably CNMC's acquisition of a Zambian copper mine, is because of the wisdom of the Party's 'Going Out' policy. Indeed, Chinese SOEs are different from privately owned businesses: they are founded directly by the party with the entire board committee consisting of Party members, and their missions are to serve the interests of the Party and the people before pursuing their own organisational interests (Brødsgaard and Li, 2013). Some SOEs were even transformed directly from old government bureaus, such as the current China Railway (Ministry of Railways of China) and the Chinese National Grid (partially transformed from Ministry of Electric Power Industry). In this regard, according to Lieberthal and Lampton (1992), these SOEs do have a 'sense of mission' in prioritising CCP's interests.

Although SOEs are not considered to be able to impact policy decision-making processes, the role they have played in China's decision-making process is more than that of a passive recipient of Chinese policy. Indeed, in the case of China-Zambia relations, CNMC, one of the earliest SOEs engaging with Zambia, plays a vital role in shaping the way Sino-Zambian policy is formed. Moreover, the way CNMC engages with Zambia also has a wider impact in regard to China's broader engagement with Sub-Saharan African countries. This section argues that CNMC acts a prominent actor within the context of Sino-Zambian foreign policy, decision-making, and relations in the following three aspects: first, the way in which Chinese policy is formed and adapted follows Deng Xiaoping's doctrine of pragmatism, and Deng's famous quote 'crossing the river by feeling the stones' is still very much valid and pinpointed by

Chinese policymakers. CNMC, as one of the 'river crossers', define the way in which China engages with Zambia. Second, although SOEs are defined as agents compared to ministry-level policy makers which are considered the principal, the Soviet Communist legacy nomenklatura system enables CNMC to put its influence directly into the Party to impact the policy decision-making.

To examine CNMC's role within the Chinese foreign policy decision-making system, Deng Xiaoping and his economic reform cannot be avoided. Indeed, it was Deng Xiaoping who brought the decade-long Cultural Revolution and ideological policymaking to an end (Naughton, 1993). It is under Deng Xiaoping's economic reform that pragmatism is highlighted within the entire Chinese policy decision-making system through a focus on what works for the country (Pye, 1986). Pragmatism gained its momentum in policymaking in the establishment of China's special economic zone in Shenzhen, which then led to the economic boom in the Zhujiang Delta region. It also influenced successful negotiations with the UK that consolidated China's sovereignty over Hong Kong. Here, Deng abandoned the idea of enforcing communism to the city (Holliday, 2004). With regard to this, pragmatism was the doctrine that influenced a generation of CCP cadres, including those who have implemented the 'Going Out' policy.

As L (2022) admits, when 'Going Out' was first mentioned in an internal CCP meeting, none of the participants had the wisdom or the experience to materialise the idea into policy. It was agreed that some pioneers would 'cross the river'. According to L (2022), if the practice is a success, others can follow and make generalisations. From this, policies based on practices can be formed (see chapter 5 on policy lagging for a more comprehensive analysis regarding this). China's policies in the early 2000s in relation to 'Going Out' and Sino-African engagement very much reflected the Chinese policymaking philosophy of 'crossing the rivers by feeling the stones'. In the Addis Ababa Action plan, there was nothing but a vague framework with no mention of measures to achieving promises. For example, in 4.2.2 (p.4), the document states

'同意继续将基础设施建设作为双方合作的重点领域,积极探讨多种形式的互利合作 [both sides agree to make infrastructure building as the vital sector for cooperation, and (Chinese) will actively discuss the way of cooperation with Africa for mutual benefits]'

From the language China used in this document, especially with the usage of the future tense ‘将(will)’, it can be seen that China does not have any concrete plan but to keep discussing the measures for infrastructure cooperation. Similarly, in the 2006 version of China’s Africa Policy, despite highlighting multi-sector cooperation, the wording was rather vague and abstract with the use of ‘将加强合作 (will keep enhancing cooperation)’ mentioned throughout the paper with no action plans followed. B (2022) believes the word ‘will’ is deliberately chosen to describe an idea which China struggles to materialise. Unlike in English where the word ‘will’ may indicate that someone is actively working on the issue, according to B, the use of the Chinese character ‘将’ in policy documents is a clear indication that policymakers have ‘absolutely no clue (摸不着头脑)’ in implementing the policy stated. B also states if the policy is really being planned, phrases such as ‘积极构建 (actively engaging)/努力促成 [(China is) working tirelessly to promote……]’ would be normally used, followed by fairly concrete ideas. Indeed, in the same document, section 2.2.2 has outlined a detailed plan for conflict prevention, wherein the term ‘共同努力促成…… (working tirelessly together to promote……)’ was adopted. With regard to this, the practice of CNMC in Zambia in the 1990s significantly contributed to China’s ‘Going Out’ policy and the formation of Chinese-Zambian policy. This was because policymakers back in Beijing lacked a knowledge of Zambia, and the experience of CNMC in Zambia was considered as an important channel for them to access and explore China’s economic engagement (B, 2022; Liu, 2022).

In an elite interview, B (2022) admits it is not possible to neglect the role of CNMC in terms of its role in Chinese-Zambian policy, because consulting with CNMC’s employees’ experience on the ground in Zambia is a ‘very important method’ taken by MOFCOM while they attempt to make policy changes and adaptations towards Zambia. Indeed, CNMC’s acquisition of a copper mine in Zambia does open a new chapter for China’s ‘Going Out’ policy. Other mining companies such as China Moly followed suit and made similar acquisitions in DR Congo. B (2022) also noted a ‘special economic zone’ that was inspired by CNMC’s practice in the Copperbelt province of Zambia. SEZs are designated geographic areas with liberal policies and tax incentives to attract foreign companies (Brautigam and Xiaoyang, 2011). In the Zambian case, CNMC intended to create a system for copper extraction, refining, and transportation

(infrastructure building). CNMC then reported its idea in a communication meeting with MOFCOM, and two years after CNMC's initiation, the first Chinese overseas economic zone was established in Zambia. This thesis does not intend to argue that CNMC should take full credit for the SEZ in the Copperbelt, but that it certainly had a degree of impact on policymakers back home in Beijing.

As CNMC deepens its engagement with Zambia, relative policies have also been updated based on the enterprise's practice. This can be seen in the Beijing Action Plan (BAP) published in 2006, which was intended as an updated version for the Addis Ababa Action Plan. In the 3.2 section, BAP specifies the link between investment and cooperation which did not appear in the previous version of Addis Ababa. Further, the BAP referenced the successful establishment of SEZ in Zambia, highlighting the importance of free trade and tax cuts by stating the following:

避免双重征税协定，营造良好的投资合作环境，保护双方投资者的合法权益。承诺对双方的投资企业在许可手续、物品通关、人员出入境等方面给予必要的便利 [(To further boost the economic cooperation between China and Africa), heavy tax burdens imposed by both China and African countries should be avoided to create a sustainable environment for investment. The interests of investors should be protected. (China) promises to simplify the process for commodity flows through the customs].

This section drew from the practice of SOEs such as CNMC in Zambia and the difficulties they encountered. Indeed, as CNMC employee G (2022) explains, during a couple of years of operations in Zambia, difficulties hampering its engagement were identified, most of which were related to high taxes charged by China for imported goods and the lengthy process for coppers to be cleared from the custom. Benefiting from the meeting mechanism of Chinese policymaking, SOEs representatives are often invited to policymaking meetings held by ministries and the CNMC. Other SOEs have utilised the opportunity to report the difficulties required for policy support to China. Further, the difficulties raised by SOEs in Zambia and other SSA countries will be 'seriously considered' by MOFCOM, according to the official from the ministry (2022), as resolving Chinese SOEs' problems is compliant with China's grand strategy of 'Going Out'. Indeed, the successful expansion of Chinese SOEs led by CNMC has created a pattern of engagement for Chinese policymakers, and the BAP explicitly states the importance of SOEs in the African market. [鼓励和支持有实力、有信誉的中

国企业到非洲投资兴办有利于提高非洲国家技术水平 (encouraging credible, honourable, and capable Chinese businesses actively investing in Africa)]. With regard to this, rather than acting as passive implementors of Chinese policies, SOEs have the capability to shape the way policies are formed.

Aside from the formal routines of foreign policymaking that the CNMC can influence, the mining giant has also evidently implemented actions through the sophisticated Party-government system in order to affect foreign policy decision-making. Although hosting meetings with all actors in the sector is the normal practice of Chinese policy decision-making, there are other methods that exist in the Chinese system for policymaking. One of the most prominent channels for initiating policies that is often ignored by non-Chinese researchers is the National Congress of China. Ironically, despite China being widely recognised as an authoritarian regime, according to the Chinese Constitution, it does have a parliament-style congress consisting of people representatives (PRs) (Chinese equivalent to MPs) elected by their constituencies (Wang and Zheng, 2007). Due to the fact the process for electing PRs is not transparent, the PRs are often not fairly elected but are chosen based on their wealth, position, and influence in their local community (Zou, 2003). For the National Congress in 2003, 968 out of 2985 PRs were CCP government officials, and another 480 non-Party member civil servants were also selected (Jiang, 2002; Zou, 2003). This meant the majority of PRs would ensure any legislation initiated by the CCP was passed by holding a vote. A total of 631 PRs were representatives from SOEs, which are non-governmental organisations (according to China's own definition).

Chinese researchers have questioned the election process of the PRs, as people in some constituencies have never heard of their PRs, nor did they vote for any of the candidates (Jiang, 2002; Zou, 2003). This means candidates were not selected from peoples' votes but from the Party's preferences. It is no secret that the powerful figures of Chinese SOEs, namely the leaders of CNMC, who benefit from this untransparent process often make their appearances in the National Congress. Indeed, Luo Tao, the General Manager of CNMC from 2005 to 2015 has been selected as PR for ten years in a row. Some of the bills he presented to the National Congress were not traceable, but from the four publicly available bills he submitted, three (2005, 2007, and 2014) were directly related to CNMC's further expansion in Zambia and required further legislation support from the CCP (Baidubaike, 2020). Two of the bills were supported

by congress and resulted in a further tax cut to CNMC's copper export from Zambia in 2007 and the infrastructure update around CNMC's compound in Zambia in 2014 (CNMC, 2016). The influence of CNMC's leaders as PRs have also been echoed by both of the interviewees, A (2022) and G (2022), who used to work in CNMC. A (2022), who used to work in the Copperbelt compound, stated that the general manager was a PR, which was a powerful way to protect the company's interests. The issue of taxation on raw coppers being exported to China was raised in November 2006, and despite no formal legislation being made, the issue, according to A (2022), was resolved within a matter of months after it was raised by Luo in early 2007. With regard to this, CNMC could be considered as an influential figure within the context of China's Zambia policy. Indeed, although the SOEs are not normally counted as a part of the government body, with leaders' position in the National Congress, CNMC could take advantage of the system by directly raising its issues to the very centre of the CCP.

Despite the fairly strong position of SOEs within China's policy decision-making system, Brødsgaard (2016) insists the special nomenklatura mechanism – the legacy of the Soviet Union adopted by the CCP for cadres to rotate amongst different roles within government every ten years (Kung and Chen, 2011) – could effectively protect China's foreign policy integration and avoid SOE leaders derailing CCP's strategies. This argument is also highlighted by Jones and Hameiri (2021). According to these authors, although CCP's mechanism for cadre rotations might not always be effective, nomenklatura system constrains senior appointees to toe the party line, particularly if they seek future promotion. However, the very system of nomenklatura is a significant factor strengthening the role of SOEs within the process of foreign policy decision-making. Indeed, despite Deng Xiaoping's efforts in decentralisation and reforming government ministries into enterprises, the process has never been completed. This means that SOEs may be directly involved in the decision-making process regarding their position in the party. Brødsgaard (2016) highlights that although SOEs no longer belong to the category of ministries in China, the appointment of a CEO and board still follows the nomenklatura system, which is directly appointed by the CCP. To illustrate, although SOEs are not counted as a part of government, the legacy of economic reform allows the cadres working in SOEs to enjoy civil servant status (编制 *bian zhi*), and high-level cadres still have a relatively higher ranking in the Party.

In China, the Party is recognised as an institution more important than the government. Cadres are told to 'put the Party in the first place (把党放在第一位)' and to 'always follow the Party's lead (永远跟党走)'. If there are conflicts between the Party and the government (e.g., cultural revolution resulting in the standing down of the Chinese government led by Liu Shaoqi), cadres are asked to 'stick to the Party's plan without any hesitations (坚决跟党走不动摇)'. (Gao and Zhu, 2010, pp.6-7). A cadre's position in the Party is, therefore, more important than their position in government. In this regard, SOEs could effectively utilise their leaders' positions in the Party to bypass the policymaking system, which is controlled by the government bodies, and exert their influence directly via the Party system. Indeed, as stated by A (2022) in an elite interview, in a general meeting with all cadres in the company, current Chairman Xi Jinping has often mentioned the internal Party meetings he has had in Beijing with other Party members, and most of those meetings were to deliver the 'spirit of the Party'. From this perspective, given the close connections CNMC has with the Party, the existence of both governments, CCP systems, and the SOEs (namely CNMC) has further complicated the foreign policy decision-making process. These bodies could utilise the Party system to avoid the government system.

Nomenklatura was adopted so that the centre could wield more control over SOEs to prevent them deviating from principal policies (Burns, 2019). In practice, however, the cadres of SOEs have effectively utilised the system for accumulating resources for future bargains. To illustrate, associated with the nomenklatura system is the so-called cadre transfer system (Kung and Chen, 2011). According to regulations, cadres have to be transferred after their second term, i.e., after a maximum period of 10 years in the same position. In reality, leading cadres are transferred more frequently (Chan, 2004). The rotation system makes it possible for the Party to control and manage the career paths of state and Party cadres, and through the rotation system, vested interests are tied into the political system. Company executives transferred to political positions maintain links to their former workplace and networks, and political leaders are dependent on the resources provided by large enterprises (Brødsgaard, 2016). The cadres of SOEs may effectively utilise economic resources to pave the way for promotions in the next ten years.

For example, Wang Liqun, who was previously the vice governor of the Shaanxi province, has been reported to have made investments in some of the most remote areas to please his leaders who had the right to appoint Wang's future role in the CCP. This has also happened in CNMC. Indeed, when asked about the potential role of nomenklatura in decision-making, A (2022) and G (2022) both referenced Yang Qi, the deputy general manager of CNMC. Yang was appointed to his position as the deputy general manager in 2019. During his tenure, he actively took advantage of his position in the Party to try and bring about policy supports for CNMC in Zambia and China Moly in DR Congo without interference of any government bodies, such as MOFCOM and MFA. Indeed, despite MOFCOM overseeing all SOEs, the rank of the leaders in the Party is not significantly higher than Yang, thus blocking any effective supervision in the Party. Yang, on the other hand, by gaining policy support for CNMC's assets in the Party, made profits for himself. He directly took the extra profits made by the company into his own pocket and attempted to bribe higher figures for a promotion in the next rotation. From this perspective, the existence of the nomenklatura system has offered an incentive for CCP cadres to actively engage in policymaking procedure for personal profit and promotion, resulting in a paralysed government monitoring system that is based on Party rankings. Yang was jailed for life in 2022 (A, 2022).

3.3 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed how decentralisation, as a key policy during China's economic reform era highlighted by Deng Xiaoping, has contributed to the fragmentation amongst actors involved within the Chinese foreign policymaking system. The contemporary Chinese-Zambian policy decision-making process has grown increasingly fragmented as a result of the entrance of new actors such as MOFCOM and SOEs into the system thanks to CCP's emphasis on the economy-driven 'Going Out' strategy. Indeed, despite China's aims to create a unified system for foreign policymaking using LSGs to bypass chaotic policymaking processes, the lack of resources and expertise means the CCP has no choice but to delegate the policymaking power to lower-level ministries for the implementation of Party strategy. LSGs, therefore, should not be considered as an effective mechanism in coordinating various actors and maintaining integrations at the top level, as Brødsgaard (2016) asserts. Further, in contrast to Jones and Hameiri's assertion that LSGs deliberately

make vague slogans and policy guidelines to offer more leeway for lower-level organisations to interpret policies based on their own organisational interests to address conflicts amongst various policymakers, LSGs have limited knowledge about certain countries (e.g. Zambia). Because of this, the power of making detailed implementable policies has to be delegated to actors such as MOFCOM. Moreover, SOEs have been actively engaging with the decision-making process by acting as pioneers and practisers for China's 'Going Out' policy. This has been possible due to the prevalence of pragmatism in China's policymaking. Further, the way CNMC engages with Zambia has very much defined the broader pattern of Sino-African engagement. The existence of the Party system and the leading role of the CCP have benefited the SOEs. Their cadres can bypass routine policymaking processes through their ranks in the Party and directly raise issues in the National Congress as PRs. The existence of the nomenklatura system has created incentives for SOE cadres to take advantage of economic resources and seek promotions in the next rotation.

Chapter 4 China's Foreign Policymaking

Encounters Frictions from within: an Ineffective System that Delays Policy Responses

This chapter focuses on China's decision-making processes for its Zambian policies between 2006 and 2015. This nine-year period witnessed a shift in perception in Zambia towards China's 'Going Out' policy and CNMC's engagement in the Copperbelt Province. Indeed, despite China's use of 'win-win' and 'mutual beneficial' policy slogans, several incidents occurred in the Chinese copper compound resulting in dozens of casualties. Accusations of inadequate working conditions, low wages, and the unsafe working environments provided by Chinese employers, namely CNMC, were raised by local employees. Michael Sata, the candidate competing for presidency in 2006, launched an unprecedented campaign based on an anti-Chinese platform. Strikingly, no significant policy change has taken place in response to the situation in Zambia, although there has been no shortage of research attempting to unravel the puzzle of China's inaction in this regard. Ferguson (2012) suggests that this is due to the neo-colonial nature of China-Zambia relations, indicating that the very purpose of China's engagement was to take advantage of Zambian resources and labour. Gill and Reilly (2007) offer a more nuanced explanation, citing the principal-agent problem as the cause of the situation in Zambia. According to Gill and Reilly (2007), the Chinese government in Beijing cannot effectively monitor the behaviour of its actors operating overseas due to the inefficient governing system, conflicting interests between agents and the principal, and the limitation of geographical distance between China and Zambia impairing the regulating capacity of Beijing towards agents operating in Zambia.

This chapter challenges both Ferguson (2012) and Gill and Reilly (2007)'s narratives and argues that the two existing explanations offer little insight into the inaction of Chinese policymakers in adapting policies to tackle a series of incidents in Zambia which severely damaged China's international reputation. Based on the elite interviews conducted as part of this research, this chapter argues that 'policy lagging'

persists in the Chinese policy decision-making system and contributes to China's inaction in adapting policies, despite the situation in Zambia in 2006. In addition, rather than taking action to resolve the problems they encountered, actors involved in China's Zambia policymaking chose instead to use cultural gaps and Great Power competitions as excuses to justify and 'whitewash' their behaviours. Policy lagging is the result of various combined factors in the Chinese policymaking system. This chapter will examine the concept of 'policy lagging' in detail and explain the way in which it affects China's ability in adapting policy.

The structure of this chapter is as follows: the first section will offer background information to the China-Zambia dispute in the 2006-2015 period. Following this, the second section will discuss the existing explanations for China's policy inactions; the limitations of these will also be discussed. Next, the third section will focus on the concept of 'policy lagging' as well as its impact on the policy decision-making process in China; and the fourth section will elucidate the various excuses used by Chinese policymakers to justify the situation in Zambia, and the way in which this has further contributed to China's inaction in making significant changes to policy.

4.1 Sino-Zambian relations: the 'all-weather friendship' weathering the storm

China and Zambia had already built close ties decades before the economy was considered an important factor in Sino-Zambian relations. Ian Taylor noted that the importance of China's relations with Zambia in the late twentieth century can be explained by two defining factors, which are Zambia's geo-strategic position, and the personality of Zambia's late president, Kenneth Kaunda, as well as his political orientation (Taylor, 2006, p.165). Indeed, despite the negligible role that China played in relation to Zambia's economic development in the 1980s, it was President Kaunda's personal relations with Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, as well as their common objective in fighting against Western interference, that helped to maintain Sino-Zambian diplomatic ties (Kopiński and Polus, 2011). The narrative of the 'all-weather friendship' (AWF) was formally initiated by President Kaunda himself to remark on the close relationship between Zambia and China amid the Cold War period (Kopiński and Polus, 2011). The AWF was referenced frequently by both Zambian and Chinese officials and politicians, when asked to comment on Sino-Zambian relations (Kim, 1989).

This narrative of the AWF remained in place after Kaunda stepped down as Zambia's president, and China–Zambia relations entered a new era in which the economy became the dominant factor in the relationship between the two countries. Moreover, Chinese politicians and SOE representatives have referred to the AWF in describing the ever-increasing economic interactions, wherein China has invested heavily in the Copperbelt Province for both mining extraction and infrastructure construction for local communities (Guan and Yue, 2014). Indeed, the dynamic of the 'all-weather friendship' has, therefore, been widely expanded to depict various forms of economic cooperation between China and Zambia; the direct investment from CNMC, the concessional loan provided by Chexim, and the commercial flow of products between the two countries have all been cited as evidence of the all-weather friendship (Guan and Yue, 2014; Wang, 2013).

In fact, the sustained emphasis on the AWF can serve the economic interests of both sides. For China, it can: 1) more easily open up Zambian markets and facilitate the export of more products to Zambians; and 2) allow the acquisition of more raw materials and mining sites to maintain its smooth economic development (Duggan, 2015). Similarly, Zambians have also utilised the AWF narrative to 1) attract more direct investment from the Chinese side to support its own gradually declining mining industry; and 2) look to China as an alternative source in securing concessional loans and aid funding (which the IMF is reluctant to provide) (Duggan, 2015). In this regard, the narrative is crucial for both China and Zambia for pragmatic reasons. Furthermore, the AWF has indeed brought about tangible results: in 2003, Zambia's Copperbelt was the first region outside Mainland China to open a Special Economic Zone, with then-Chinese President Hu Jintao attending the inauguration ceremony (Brautigam and Xiaoyang, 2011). Since the establishment of the SEZ in Zambia, China has dramatically increased its cash flow to the Copperbelt region. Indeed, China's direct investment in Zambia increased from just below 150 million US dollars in 2003 to 874 million US dollars in 2008. Furthermore, as the economic ties between the two countries strengthened, the AWF narrative has been adopted more frequently to mark the successful economic interactions between the 'two close friends' (Lee, 2020, p.41).

The narrative of the AWF is not limited to the scope of 'lip service' from politicians, but rather has led to concrete impacts on the process of Sino-Zambian economic interactions in the 'Going Out' era, with increasing imports and exports in both

directions, greater investment, and a surging number of both concessional and commercial loans granted by Chexim. Moreover, Chinese investment in Zambia has also provided jobs, which are urgently needed by the unemployed locals. CNMC's operation in Zambia alone has created more than 2,100 jobs, both directly and indirectly (Li, 2010; CNMC, 2021). In fact, China as a whole became the largest investor in Zambia as well as the SSA region in terms of job creation in 2011 and remains the largest source of job creation from 2016 to 2021 (with more than 170,100 jobs offered to Zambians as well as Africans) (Sibiri, 2021; CNMC, 2021).

Despite the deepening economic engagement and the direct benefits that CNMC has brought, there is a growing feeling amongst Zambians that China is of no help in supporting the sustainable development that is urgently required by local communities. Indeed, there has been a number of reports focusing on the conflicts and contradictions between Chinese investors and local community households, as well as the anti-Chinese sentiment held by the majority of Zambians (see Negi, 2008; Brooks, 2010; Yan and Satuman, 2013). 'Anti-Chinese sentiment' here refers to any public discontent, dissatisfaction, or negative perception in relation to Chinese engagement in a country. This could include Chinese business and investment practices and activities, trade and commerce activities, policy actions, aid policies, bilateral agreements and more. Historically, anti-Chinese sentiment is well documented. It 'resonated across the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans' (Harris, 2006, p.177), and was also observed in Africa at the start of the new millennium.

The region that has witnessed one of the highest levels of anti-Chinese sentiment is Zambia's Copperbelt Province, notably CNMC's Chambishi compound and its surrounding communities. There are two major reasons for this: firstly, since the Chambishi was acquired by a Chinese mining company, the welfare of local employees has remained at a relatively low level in comparison to the pre-acquisition period as the company tries to save labour costs for a larger profit margin (Lee, 2018). Indeed, amongst the 2,100 workers employed by CNMC in Zambia in the early 2000s, only 52 people had a permanent contract with healthcare insurance and pensions (Sibiri, 2021). Meanwhile, 687 people had contracts of varying duration, from one to five years (Sibiri, 2021). Furthermore, the company has attempted to impose upon its workers an extremely unpopular 'scientific encouragement scheme', whereby half of each worker's salary is delivered in a fixed amount and another chunk 'floats'

according to the managerial assessment of the performance of the company overall, the worker's division, and the individual (Sibiri, 2021; CNMC, 2021).

The remaining 100 or so employees taken on directly by the CNMC are classified as casual workers. They have no job security and experience generally poor conditions of employment in comparison with other employees. Further, CNMC makes extensive use of subcontracting firms (Chambishi Mines, 2021). For instance, 1,093 workers are employed indirectly and come to CNMC via two Chinese subcontracting firms. The draft Environmental Impact Assessment for CNMC claims that 'it has been reported that the majority of those working in the underground mine are employed on either temporary contracts or a casual basis, and many receive minimal wages whilst working in difficult conditions. Some casual workers at the underground mine are reported to earn between K120,000 to K150,000 per month' (Chambishi Mines, 2021, p.48), i.e. significantly below the legal minimum wage and representing merely 10% of the Basic Need Basket.

Second, a major incident happened within the Chambishi compound in 2005, when an explosion was reported that led to the death of 46 Zambian workers working underground (Leslie, 2016). This led to a furious mood amongst Zambian nationals, who questioned the CNMC safety standards and the quality of equipment. Moreover, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs remained silent regarding the issue and refused to comment on the question of CNMC's safety standards. Even though the incident damaged China's image as a benign investor, China took little action in terms of policy adaptations, instead blaming the Western media for exaggerating the event as propaganda. No inquiries or investigations were launched to examine the potential misconduct of CNMC (Leslie, 2016). Chinese media were also reluctant to report on the incident that happened in Zambia — only a few sentences on the incident can be found on the CCTV News website (Leslie, 2016). The inaction on the Chinese side further worsened the existing anti-Chinese sentiment in the Copperbelt Province, with massive protests and wildcat strikes against CNMC being held on several occasions.

The erstwhile leader of the Patriotic Front (the opposition Party) in Zambia, Michael Sata, effectively utilised an anti-Chinese populist strategy in his presidential campaign in 2006. Part of the wedge appeal was a vow to deport the primarily Chinese foreign investors and business owners, if elected. Reflecting public discussion, Sata's

campaign messaging portrayed Chinese investors as ‘exploiters’ of the country’s natural resources (Sibiri, 2021). Furthermore, he branded the Chinese as ‘infesters’, and accused Chinese companies of practising ‘slave labour’ and, accordingly, promised concerned constituents that he would not only oversee the deportation of the Chinese, if elected, but also initiate a fiscal regime barring Chinese investors from repatriating their income from the country. Despite Sata’s concession to MMD in 2006, his PFP obtained the constituency of the Copperbelt Province with the support of 52.6% of voters (Larmer and Fraser, 2007). Owing to Sata’s presidential election campaign, the populist anti-Chinese slogan spread further from the Copperbelt Province to most other regions in Zambia, including the capital city of Lusaka (Larmer and Fraser, 2007).

4.2 Existing Sino-Zambian engagement and the inaction of the Chinese government in adapting its policies

There are two waves of literature on contemporary China–Zambia relations that attempt to explain China’s engagement in Zambia as well as the related policies. The emergence of a ‘first wave’ of literature on contemporary China–Africa relations within Western media, academic journals, and governmental reports from 2006 has largely focused on China’s potential impact on African development, Western efforts to promote good governance and human rights, and on American and European international oil companies’ (IOCs) interests on the continent. One of the core debates has centred on the question of whether China has been practising ‘neo-colonialism’ in a ‘new scramble’ for African resources, or whether Chinese loans and investments have in fact opened new policy options and external partners for African leaders (see Walsh, 2006; Frynas and Paulo, 2007; Brautigam, 2009).

Although this first wave of literature certainly provides a foundational background to some of the normative and strategic external criticism that China has faced in the context of its Zambian ties, the majority of the work does not provide an in-depth analysis of the dispute between China and Zambia, but rather offers detailed descriptions of China’s engagement with Zambia. Indeed, despite the first wave of literature having provided ample observational data regarding Chinese SOEs’ behaviour on the ground, it offers limited insights into the potential causes of Chinese behaviour that may damage China’s grand strategy of ‘Going Out’. Explanations given in the first wave of literature effectively capture the conflict between China’s official rhetoric and its SOEs’ practice on the ground, but they do not go far enough to capture

the nuances in regard to the complexity within China's internal policymaking processes and the number of actors involved. Indeed, dichotomous explanations portraying China as being either good or bad for Zambia's development dominated the first wave of literature in the early era of Sino-Zambian engagements (see Yan and Sautman, 2013; Hess and Aidoo, 2014; Matambo and Onwuegbuchulam, 2021).

Although some researchers note the limitations of this dichotomous view of China and refer to China's sophisticated system for foreign policymaking, they still fail to acknowledge the impacts that various Chinese organisations may exert on China's foreign policymaking process. Carmody and Taylor (2010), for example, argue that China's economic- and natural resources-driven foreign policy in the 21st century showcases a different pattern to its previous ideology-driven policies and highlight the involvement of multiple actors in the implementation process of China's Zambia policy; similarly, Davies (2007) also remarks that the implementation of Chinese foreign policies requires cooperation amongst various government institutions. Neither, however, digs deeply enough to investigate the impacts that various governmental organisations have had on the Chinese system of foreign policymaking; instead, they treat those actors as if they are unified under the guidance of CCP with the same policy priorities. Indeed, despite a significant number of actors being identified within the Chinese Zambia policymaking process, all of them appear on equivalent terms to 'China', and both waves of literature consider the actions taken by a specific organisation as reflecting the intentions of the Chinese government (see Carmody and Taylor, 2010; Davies, 2007).

As China's engagement with Zambia has deepened, researchers have increasingly started to look beyond the neo-colonialist narrative. Indeed, in the second wave of the literature, academic research has grown in nuance, drawing from a variety of disciplines and methodological approaches, and has stressed the need to disaggregate both 'China' and 'Africa' under the belief that they should not be viewed as unitary entities (Taylor, 2009, pp.3-13). Researchers have highlighted that (under the rubric of 'China') one can discern an emerging proliferation of state and private enterprises now implementing China's foreign economic policy in Africa (Alden and Hughes, 2009), and have increasingly questioned the coherence of China's diplomatic strategy and the capacity of the central government to control the behaviour of actors pursuing their own commercial agendas overseas (Gill and Reilly, 2007). Indeed, Gill

and Reilly (2007) highlight two factors (discussed below) that persist within China's policymaking system, which block the central government's ability to monitor and regulate the actors operating outside Chinese territory, especially those who are Africa-based.

The first factor is the over-complicated system for supervision and responsibilities. According to Gill and Reilly (2007, p.44), China relies heavily on coordination among a complex array of corporations and government bureaucracies to achieve its policy objectives in Africa. These companies are ranked at city, province, and national levels and are responsible to different bureaucracies, impeding government oversight to China's Africa policy. Qian (2018), following Gill and Reilly's works, took a step further by arguing that China's policymaking requires the collective actions of a variety of actors. Indeed, as the chain of command has gradually evolved into a coalition-building system, which requires coordination and negotiation amongst the actors involved, the responsibilities of Chinese regulating bodies towards SOEs are complex.

Confirming the views of Gill and Reilly, and Qian, interviewee D (2022) describes his experience of the chaotic system involved in regulating SOEs outside of China:

‘这个管理关系很复杂，不怕你笑话，我工作了三年半的时间也只是大概了解整个体系的基本流程，如果说你现在让我说出来我们具体负责海外国企的哪些方面，具体有什么措施，那我讲不出来，就是这样。

(This system of regulating SOEs is rather complex, with chaotic relations amongst actors involved, it might sound tricky, but even for myself as a formal government employee with three-and-a-half years of experience in dealing with SOEs, may find it difficult to clearly point out what our responsibilities are to SOEs, nor could I tell you about the specific measures adopted by us to supervise SOEs)’.

As Figure 4.1 shows, not only are there multiple actors involved at different layers of China's foreign policy decision-making in relation to SOEs, but the interconnections amongst the actors at different tiers are far from straightforward. Gill and Reilly (2007), therefore, claim that this chaotic system blocks the Chinese government's ability to efficiently regulate the behaviours of SOEs on the ground, resulting in the situation in Zambia, where anti-Chinese sentiment has been well spread in the Chinese-owned compound in the Copperbelt.

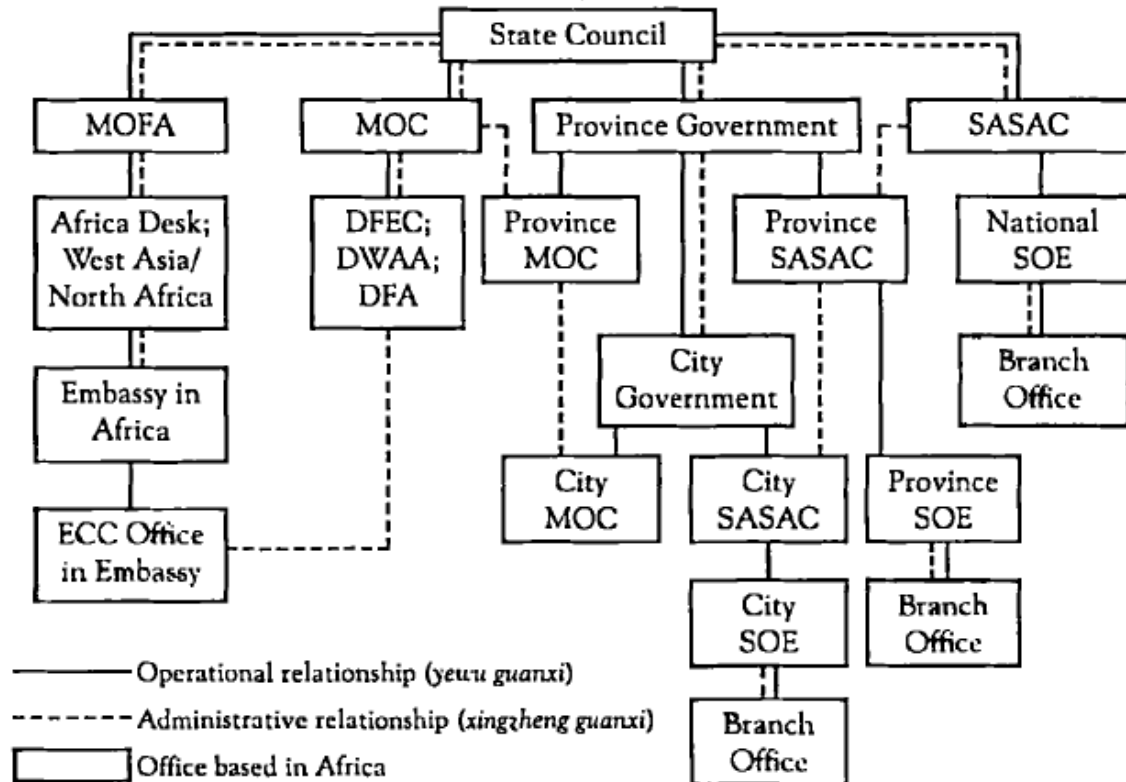


Figure 4.1 Oversight and implanting agencies in China's Africa policy

(Source: *Africa in China's global strategy*, 2008)

The second factor contributing to the 2006 situation in Zambia, according to Gill and Reilly (2007), is the geographical distance between China and Zambia. The large range between the two countries hampered Beijing's capacity to monitor the actions of SOEs. According to an ancient Chinese proverb: 将在外，君命有所不受 (A commander-in-chief is exempted from the king's dictations from a far distance). Given that Zambia and China are over 8,000 miles apart, Beijing has limited capacity to provide regular supervision to Zambian-based SOEs. This point has been echoed by both Western and Chinese researchers. Jones and Hameiri (2021), for example, argue that Chinese SOEs operating outside of Chinese territories could hide information from the administrations back in Beijing. Wang (2018) claims the great geographical distance and the existence of China's non-interference policy impeded China's ability to effectively supervise its SOEs. Interviewees A and C reflect this argument and use the phrase '天高皇帝远 (the emperor is far away as the sky)', meaning that one may do whatever one pleases, without fear of interference.

Due to a lack of effective supervision and the agencies' deliberate intentions to hide information (Jones and Hameiri, 2021), Beijing does not always have up-to-date information about the actions of its SOEs. G (2022), an CNMC employee working in Zambia, echoed this point by highlighting the company's reluctance to provide negative information to Beijing. This is because those at the top levels of CNMC Zambia believe that such behaviours would cause CCP leaders in Beijing to think they were 'incapable of managing the situation (能力不足)', thereby affecting the SOE cadres' careers. Gill and Reilly (2007) summarise these two factors as comprising the 'principal-agent' dilemma, citing this as the major factor contributing to the chaotic situation in Zambia, as Beijing cannot effectively monitor and hold accountable the SOEs residing there. Furthermore, it has become increasingly apparent that Chinese SOEs do not always act in line with the Chinese government's broader strategic and political goals of ensuring energy security without damaging key international strategic relationships (see Brautigam, 2021; Garlick, 2019; Kou, 2017). These are goals that the government is increasingly struggling to balance with ongoing support for the long-term development and global competitiveness of its SOEs (Gill and Reilly, 2007; Raine, 2009).

Although China prioritised the commercial gains in Zambia in its 2006 foreign policies, incidents that damage the international outlook of China are not tolerated by the CCP (Zhang, 2005). Indeed, after the Chambishi explosion occurred, the CCP sent a group of envoys from MFA and MOFCOM directly to Zambia, bypassing the complex system of decision-making, in order to minimise the impact within a short period of time (Zhang, 2005). Sending special envoys for crisis management is a normal practice of the CCP (Lv and Zhang, 2012). Moreover, the 'windows' for speedy policy adaptations would normally be opened through the deployment of special envoys to prevent the incident from recurring. One example occurred in roughly the same period as the Chambishi incident, late in 2008, when Kenya expressed its concern over the survival of the country's wild elephants due to China's demand for ivories (Douglas-Hamilton, 2009). China, in response, took speedy action in passing legislation banning all imports of ivories and limiting the trade of ivory products (Chinese State Council, 2016). However, despite Zambia also expressing its concerns to the Chinese government about the Chambishi explosion and the issues over labour abuses, China took little tangible action to tackle the issue. Indeed, China's response to the explosion was mainly

issued by MFA, with no detailed plans for resolving the issue but only reminders of the need for all Chinese actors in Zambia to follow local laws and regulations (MFA, 2006).

There were no large explosions in Chambishi after 2005, but the factors that contributed to the explosion – including a poor working environment, long working hours, and a lack of safety equipment in the Chinese copper compound – persisted (Lee, 2019). As a result, riots occurred in 2008 and 2011. Yet, no policy adaptations were made to tackle these issues. Although the Beijing Action Plan in 2007 and the Sharm El-Sheikh Action Plan in 2009 were designed to summarise past experiences to form better practice in the future, these documents ignore the urgent need to address the conflict between Chinese employers and local African employees. Both documents reemphasise the ‘positive contributions (积极贡献)’ of Chinese investment in Africa, and plan for investment and financial loans on a larger scale, with no mention of the difficulties China has faced on the ground.

The conflict between Chinese SOEs and local communities has become a widespread phenomenon across the SSA region. One of the manifestations of this was when the DRC threatened to cancel Chinese mining giant China Moly’s mining license in a cobalt mining compound (Sun, et al., 2022). Zhang and Zhou (2010) identify the issue of SOEs in Africa, blaming them as a ‘distraction’ from China’s grand strategy, while questioning why no action has been taken to challenge their behaviour. Yang et al. (2013) echo Zhang and Zhou’s point, believing that a more nuanced explanation is needed to uncover the conflict between China’s ostensible act as a friend to African countries and the actual misconduct of SOEs on the ground. Indeed, while a limited number of journal articles (see Haglund, 2009; Braugitam, 2009) have sought to examine the company and have undertaken individual levels of analysis to assess the degree of central control, as well as different Chinese commercial actors operating on the African continent, so far there has been a lack of in-depth case studies charting and analysing the evolution of such complex relationships over time. Moreover, although the second wave of literature is more nuanced than the first wave, it still falls into a principal-agent dichotomy, wherein the policymakers back in Beijing act as ‘principals’ as if they have unified policy objectives. Chinese SOEs, on the other hand, are treated as purely the implementors of China’s policies, who have limited role in policymaking but have to utilise tactics such as information-hiding to prioritise their own objectives. This oversimplified explanation ignores the nuances of the complex

relations between SOEs and the policymakers back in Beijing, with no viable explanations provided to uncover China's policy inactions in tackling SOEs, despite the persistent nature of the problem.

4.3 Policy lagging as the defining feature of China's system for foreign policymaking

4.3.1 China's mechanism for information flow amongst administrations: a complex 'tube map' system

This chapter argues that 'policy lagging (政策滞后)' and the Chinese actors' rejection in tackling the Zambian labour disputes are the two major causes that prompted China's intention to maintain friendly ties with Zambia, while accounting for SOE behaviour leading to anti-Chinese sentiment and the problems of China's policy inaction. Policy lagging as a concept was developed from the empirical data collected from 12 interviews, and it is the original contribution this research brings to the studies investigating China's foreign policymaking within the context of Sino-Zambian relations. It describes China's foreign policymaking and adaptations within the context of Sino-Zambian relations: reactionary and lacking the capability to prevent future crises. The concept of policy lagging consists of four factors, each of which significantly affects Beijing's capability in coordinating the behaviours of the various actors involved within the decision-making system, making timely policy adaptations, and preventing the same situation from occurring in the future. The following paragraphs explain the first two factors in detail and examine how they have blocked potential policy adaptations. The last two factors of policy lagging are discussed in Chapter 5 with Zambia's debt issues.

The first factor is China's chaotic institutional framework, which inhibits information flow. As discussed in the previous chapter, chief policymakers such as LSG members and top-level ministry leaders do not have sufficient knowledge about Zambia, nor do they have the resources to acquire up-to-date information. However, as interviewee L notes (2022), information is arguably the single most important factor for Beijing-based policymakers when making policy changes and adaptations. Interviewee E (MFA) echoes L's point, stating '决策是要慎重的, 必须要综合各方面的信息全面考虑 (We must be cautious in making any policy changes and adaptations, and thorough consideration of information from all of the aspects is required before any changes

could be made)'. Indeed, E continues, policies are the product of several meetings involving all of the actors who may be impacted by any policy changes. The first couple of meetings held during this process were termed '信息分享会 (Meetings for information sharing)', wherein all the participants from various sectors exchanged information gathered through their own channels in a process known as '互通有无 (sharing information on a *quid pro quo* basis)'.

Gill and Reilly (2007) and Qian (2018) recognise the limited capabilities of top-level actors in providing effective supervision to SOEs, but they fail to identify the chaotic and inefficient nature of information flow between parties. Indeed, despite the significance of information for China's policy decision-making process, there is no efficient channel for information flow from the agencies (SOEs) to the principal. Within the Chinese system of administration, when an organisation at the lower level intends to escalate a situation to a higher governmental level, the message has to go through a process termed '层层上报 (layer by layer)' (B, 2022, L, 2022). This means that a message from an organisation or a unit (单位) may only be sent one layer above its current tier. After each transfer, the message is not then automatically sent up to the following layer; instead, meetings have to be held to discuss the matter. According to L (2022) and E (2022), investigations would normally be conducted to decide whether the message requires intervention from institutions at a higher level. Even if the message is delivered to the next layer, the same procedure is followed. This has significantly slowed the ability of the top layer to react to situations in a timely manner. Indeed, both CNMC employees and government officials based in Beijing have confirmed the slow nature of information flow. According to G (2022), a report made onsite at CNMC's Chambishi compound expressing concerns regarding local employees' strike action was stuck at one layer for over two weeks before finally being blocked and returned to Chambishi.

Even though a message can be sent across a number of levels, the higher the message goes, the slower the procedure is. This is because, in the arena of foreign policymaking, the responsibilities at the top level are not clearly defined. Especially for SOEs operating overseas, whose actions have both economic and political impacts, input from both MOFCOM and MFA are required to address the issue.

The system for information flow from the bottom to the top level is not akin to a pyramid, as some would argue, but rather a convoluted system, such as the London underground network. Let us imagine that a message is a tube passenger who wants to travel from Wimbledon in the south (the lowest level of China's administration system) to High Barnet in the North (the highest administration level). Unfortunately, there is no direct express train for this long journey, and the passenger has to make at least two transfers before he/she can finally board the Northern line, which will take him/her to the final destination. The route for a message from CNMC's Chambishi mine in Zambia to Beijing looks similar to this long underground journey, wherein the message has to travel to several different places and be transferred a couple of times before it can reach the intended institution.

Owing to the bottom-up feature of information flow, it is left to the lower-level administrations to decide where the message is to be sent when there are multiple parallel higher-level institutions. However, higher-level institutions have the arbitrary power to decide whether they are able, or willing, to take the message and process it. If the final decision of a top-level administration is not to process the information, the message will be returned to the level below. This was the case for the CNMC in 2006, according to A (2022). Four months before the explosion took place in Chambishi in 2005, A's direct leader gave a briefing to the Committee of CNMC in Zambia regarding the unrest of local employees, emphasising the need to be aware of the dissent of Zambian workers to prevent any disruptions that may affect the production plan of the company. The Committee agreed upon the importance of the issue and reported it to CNMC headquarters in Beijing, which is also the administration one layer higher than CNMC Chambishi. As the matter involved a Chinese SOE operating overseas and Zambian workers, the headquarters then decided to inform MOFCOM (the executive organisation supervising SOEs) about the situation. However, MOFCOM dismissed the information and suggested that MFA should handle Chambishi's situation. CNMC headquarters then had to re-update Chambishi's enquires to MFA to get the issue investigated, in an overly arduous process.

This process has significantly affected Beijing's capability to adapt its policies in a timely manner, as it often takes weeks if not months before any information moves from the bottom level to higher administrative tiers. This is even more disruptive as MFA is not an administration that is allowed to interfere with the behaviours of SOEs.

Indeed, although the situation involves Zambian employees (which may be a diplomatic concern for China), MFA cannot directly impose any measures for CNMC to follow, as any legislation involving SOEs must be ratified by MOFCOM. In this regard, a situation of ‘踢皮球 (ball kicking)’ is often observed in Chinese politics, whereby neither organisation considers the matter as part of their responsibility and simply redirects the information to the other. Furthermore, until command from the top level is ultimately received, actions are rarely taken by the SOE to avoid ‘making unnecessary mistakes’ (Han, 2010; Lieberthal and Lampton, 1992).

Even if one of the organisations does start tackling the issue (for example, in CNMC’s case, MFA took the report seriously and held a meeting to investigate the matter), the cooperation of other organisations is still required (namely MOFCOM), in order to bring about any tangible changes to the behaviours of SOEs. Indeed, as MFA official H (2022) claims, Chinese businesses operating outside of China act with a high degree of autonomy. Moreover, the MFA is not capable of directly commanding any SOEs and is only allowed to make suggestions. According to A (2022), MFA staff are welcomed in ceremonies hosted by SOEs as a display of Chinese government endorsement, but MFA’s role is strictly ‘ceremonial’. Similarly, Chinese researcher Wang Cungang (2012) echoed A’s viewpoint regarding MFA’s role in regulating SOEs. Wang (2012) acknowledges the absence of MFA in China’s commercial-related foreign policymaking. H (2022) also expresses MFA’s inability to make any tangible changes due to the chaotic relationship of responsibilities. This has also been confirmed by former CNMC employee A (2022), as the response they received in regard to the situation about Zambian employees from the MFA was simply a statement that ‘希望有关中资企业与赞比亚方面妥善解决合作过程中出现的问题[(MFA) wishes any disputes emerging during the process of cooperation between Chinese investors and Zambians to be properly resolved]’. This hollow and vague statement reflects the rather weak position of MFA in directing CNMC.

Interestingly, L (2022) blames a lack of information within the organisation for MFA’s vague response to Chambishi’s report: ‘我们在外交部例行记者会上说我们不知道，不是因为我想逃避问题，而是因为我们真的不知道 [‘we don’t know about the situation’ is the term you often hear from our press conferences. This is not because the issue is too sensitive to tell; it is simply because we really don’t know (about the situation)].

No one has updated us of any information]’. Indeed, the importance of a message is not determined by higher-level organisations but is judged by the lower-level institutions in the bottom-up reporting system. Furthermore, given the complicated system for information flow, the information could be lost or blocked at any layer, preventing top-level administrations from ever becoming aware of the situation.

4.3.2 The lack of criteria in assessing the importance of information

The second aspect of policy lagging relates to those actors involved in policymaking not having any unified criteria for measuring the importance of the information updated from lower-tier administrations. When – or indeed whether – those meetings are held is determined by the subjective judgement of policymakers regarding the importance of the information they have received. Indeed, as the following paragraphs will argue, in the case of Sino-Zambian engagement, it could take months, if not years, before any actors would become aware of the seriousness of an issue in Zambia that may damage China’s policy objectives.

It has been confirmed by multiple interviewees that only ‘important’ information would make actors involved in China’s policymaking process raise an eyebrow. Indeed, as former CNMC employee A claims, ‘important’ information is being updated regularly from Zambia back to Beijing, via various channels such as regular monthly telephone meetings and email/QQ (earlier version of WeChat, the Chinese equivalent of WhatsApp) messaging. Current Chambishi employee G (2022) also notices the significance of updating higher level administration with important information from the ground level so that the policymakers back in Beijing can perform strategic planning at a macro-level.

“那么什么情况算作需要汇报的重要情况呢，有没有什么衡量标准 (So what sort of information is considered as ‘important’; do you have any criteria in place measuring the importance of certain information)?” I asked a follow-up question to G.

“……嗯……这是个好问题…… (……Well……That’s a good question……)” G (2022) replies after a good couple of seconds of silence: “简单来说就是没有，我不觉得我们考虑过这个问题，因为这个是一个很主观的东西你知道吧，你比如说一个员工生病了这算个小事我们不会汇报，但是几十个员工同时生病了就是大事，我们一直都是这么来的 [I honestly do not think we (CNMC) ever considered such a thing (setting up

criteria for measuring the importance of information), because it is a very subjective thing. For example, we would not consider the sickness of a random employee as a big matter, but if dozens of our employees are sick at the same time, that would be a big thing, you know. We have been acting like this (making subjective decisions on the importance of an incident)].”

CNMC’s former employee A (2022) also confirms the absence of criteria in measuring the importance of a situation. In October 2011, Chambishi mine experienced its largest crisis since the 2005 explosion, wherein over 90% of Zambian workers onsite held a strike asking for 100% pay rise (The Guardian, 2011). The strike was painful for CNMC because, economically, the six-day strike severely delayed the production target set by CNMC headquarters back in Beijing, and without the raw copper, the refinery facilities back in China were forced to shut down due to lack of resources, which significantly affected the company’s sales on the international market. Politically, the strike attracted worldwide attention from major international media such as the Reuters (2011) and the Guardian (2011), all of which reported the strike action in Chambishi, causing great political damage to China. As a result, the Chinese Embassy in Zambia had to respond to the incident to calm things down.

The strike action was certainly considered an important incident by CNMC; in fact, the CNMC top cadres back in Beijing and MOFCOM were all informed about the matter once the workers had decided to join the picket line. However, according to A (2022), the dissent of Zambian employees regarding their wages and working conditions did not erupt suddenly. Indeed, both interviewees and secondary sources confirm that the problem of unrest among Chambishi’s workers had existed for months, starting from the beginning of 2011 (A, 2022; G, 2022; Sautman and Yan, 2014; Li, 2011). A (2022) recalls that there were small-scale clashes between Chinese managers and Zambian workers on a weekly basis. As a CCP cadre back then, he foresaw the possibility of a potential large-scale crisis if the issue was not immediately resolved. Therefore, A held a meeting with high-level CCP cadres in May 2011. During the meeting, A reemphasised his concern about the potential for widespread strike action and urged the top cadres to take action and report the matter to CNMC back in Beijing.

Despite the efforts of A and other cadres, the meeting concluded that the matter was not sufficiently important to be referred to Beijing; instead, the intention was to resolve

the issue independently. As a result, small-scale negotiations took place starting from late June. However, due to the lack of a concrete process, those negotiations eventually broke up in August, resulting in massive strike action. With hindsight, it can easily be argued that, had the matter been reported in May 2011, the labourers' dissent could have been resolved without the large-scale disruption caused by the strike. According to A (2022), this is the normal practice of Chinese administrations trying to '把事情压下来 (calm things down at its own level)'. An incident would be reported to a higher administration only when it was '压不住了 (failed to be resolved)' by an administration.

K (2022), a Chinese official working in CDB, echoes A's point, stating that there is a culture amongst Chinese CCP cadres of not reporting issues to a higher-level administration; instead, they try to '克服困难 (overcome the difficulties)' in the first place. Chinese researcher Zhou Shulian (1998) also highlights this tradition amongst Chinese cadres, who tend to resolve any issues on their own, or at least at their own administrative level. Qian (2018) suggests that this tradition of resolving issues at one's own level is encouraged by the CCP, as the top administrations are responsible for multiple things. Lower-level agencies, by resolving issues on their own, can prevent the top-level administrations from becoming overwhelmed. MOFCOM official E (2022) reflects both Liu and Qian's arguments and states that it is a ubiquitous phenomenon for administrations not to report an incident unless it is absolutely necessary. This tradition amongst CCP cadres of not reporting issues but attempting instead to 'calm things down', therefore, further contributed to the issue of policy lagging.

According to Chambishi's case, there is no unified set of criteria for measuring the importance of an event or an incident; this allows the administration to opt not to report small-scale labour dissents to its higher-level administrations. The spirit of 'overcoming difficulties' further delays the information being thrown into the already slow and chaotic system of information flow. The policymakers back in Beijing, in this regard, were put in an impossible position in terms of making timely policy adaptations or interventions. The lack of coordination and communication amongst top-level actors further contributed to the inaction. When asked how often officials from MOFCOM and MFA held meetings for communication purposes, L (2022) says there is no such mechanism for communication amongst ministries, as government employees tend to

resolve issues within their own ministry, rather than cooperating with others. If an issue cannot be resolved by a single ministry, a larger-scale meeting would normally be held with the various ministries involved. According to L (2022), this is when ministries start to consider the matter seriously. However, in a collective meeting with the participation of multiple ministries, according to interviewee E (2022) from MOFCOM, it is often hard to generate productive solutions to the issue being investigated, as the policy priorities and interests of those ministries may vary. Several meetings would normally be held, with negotiations going back and forth until an agreement can be finally reached. This has further impaired China's manoeuvrability in making quick responses to any incidents that have happened in Zambia, or elsewhere around the world.

4.4 ‘他们根本就不在意! (They simply do not care!)’

Academic literature investigating China's foreign policymaking within the context of Sino-African relations has attempted to uncover the reasons for China's lack of tangible actions to tackle the widespread labour issues (Shacinda, 2006; Lee, 2009; Gadzala, 2010; Sautman and Yan, 2012). Indeed, labour issues in African countries in relation to China's engagement have been a key cause for debate amongst researchers. Early literature on the issue takes on a fact-checking nature, confirming the existence of systematic labour abuses and raising concerns over workers' safety and security, wages, and even mental health problems. Later studies have captured more nuance as to the labour disputes at Chambishi compound, treating the complaints of Zambian labourers with a high degree of seriousness, while pinpointing the desperate need for China to resolve issues before permanent damage is done to China's international image as a benign investor and an all-weather friend (see Warikandwa, 2016; Lee, 2019).

Wu (2020) also notes that the complaints of labour abuses, reported in various SSA countries, need to be addressed by China urgently, as they not only invalidate China's official rhetoric of 'win-win', upon which Sino-African diplomatic ties are built, but also have the potential to affect China's access to natural resources in those countries due to the resistance of locals as a result of these labour disputes. The assumption made by the existing literature is that Chinese policymakers do consider labour disputes as having a high degree of significance and are, therefore, willing to tackle the issue by making policy adaptations (see Yan and Sautman, 2013; Mohan and Lampert, 2013;

Ayodele and Sotola, 2014;). However, researchers may need to reconsider their starting point. As the following paragraphs argue in detail, based on the exclusive interviews I have conducted, CCP cadres, instead of attempting to resolve the conflicts between local labourers and SOEs, are more likely to justify their behaviours and allow others to take the blame. CNMC employees, who interact with Zambian employees on a daily basis, tend to cite cultural differences as justification for their behaviour. Indeed, when asked why there are still no measures in place to tackle labour issues, G (2022) gave a very long and emotional reply, accusing Zambian workers of being “lazy, incompetent, and lacking the spirit of ‘eating bitterness’(吃苦)”.

‘Eating bitterness’ is a certain type of culture cherished by Chinese people; it encourages Chinese people who wish to be rich and successful to work hard and to endure the pains and difficulties they encounter (Lai et al, 2020). Rather than fighting against the unfair treatment they receive, the phrase ‘eating bitterness’ advises Chinese people to accept the inequalities and unfair treatments because they are only temporary and are the necessary steps through which they can ultimately flourish. This narrative of ‘eating bitterness’, therefore, has often been utilised by Chinese officials to justify their behaviours in Zambia. Indeed, one of the key themes I summarised from the interview notes and transcripts was a ‘缺乏尊重 (lack of respect)’. This main theme is extracted from four themes that reveal the attitudes of CNMC employees and Chinese policymakers towards local Zambian workers. When CNMC first established the Chambishi compound in the Copperbelt, the company little understood Zambia in terms of its culture, workforce, or related laws and regulations (lack of understanding). CNMC simply ‘copy and pasted’ the Chinese style of operation to Zambia, including long working hours and low safety protections for the miners, in order to save costs. Wu (2020) highlights the unwillingness of Chinese SOEs to adapt their mode of operations while investing overseas. In Wu’s paper (2020, p.41), he proclaims: “中国海外经营的企业保留了其大部分‘陋习’ (Chinese SOEs keep most of their ‘bad habits’ when they operate overseas)”, including long working hours and being aggressive towards their employees. When Zambian workers complained about the harsh working conditions, the Chinese managers often blamed their lack of spirit as ‘eating bitterness’ and labelled them as ‘lazy’ (A, 2022; Lee, 2018) (unwilling to communicate).

In an ethnographic study conducted by Lee (2018) in Zambia, a Chinese manager onsite informed her that the Chinese become rich through 'eating bitterness' and working tirelessly to earn as much money as possible. Furthermore, if Zambians did not follow suit, the manager believed they would stay poor, with little room for development (Driessen, 2019). Similarly, G (2022) considers Zambian workers onsite as being reluctant to learn from the Chinese investors who are there to teach them how to develop. According to G (2022), Zambians have a culture of enjoyment. Unlike the Chinese, who tend to work hard and save their money, Zambian workers often spend their wages in pubs and nightclubs; most of them have no money left by the middle of the week and have to ask their managers for an advance on their salary. Thus, there is a consensus amongst frontline Chinese SOE managers that the disputes between Chinese and Zambians are due to the cultural difference between 'eating bitterness' and 'enjoying life'.

The cultural explanation given by Chinese managers in Zambia is problematic. Indeed, the dichotomy of 'eating bitterness' and 'enjoying life' only highlights the limited knowledge the Chinese have regarding Zambia and their unwillingness to adapt to local conditions there (unwilling to adapt). For example, despite having realised that conditions such as long working hours do not align with Zambia's labour code, CNMC made no adaptations to the situation and allowed the friction to keep developing until the explosion took place (A, 2022). A's point has been echoed by Chinese researcher Ke Shanshan (2011), who highlights the lack of actions from Chinese SOEs to ease the tensions between the Chinese investors and African labours in early 2000s. According to A, a former CNMC employee who has now permanently settled in Western Europe, the last thing the company would consider is the dispute it has against Zambian workers. When Zambian employees attempt to discuss their unfair treatment with their Chinese managers, they are often turned away (A, 2022), or even get pushed out of the manager's office in the worst-case scenario. The Chinese managers in Chambishi speak little English, or do not speak English at all (A, 2022, Lee, 2018) (lack of communication); they have neither the willingness nor the skills to communicate with their workers, and often label Zambian employees as troublemakers because of the complaints they have made. In this regard, the more attempts Zambian workers made in trying to discuss their treatment with Chinese

managers, the deeper the tensions between the two sides became. Strikes and labour unrests, therefore, became the last resort for Zambian workers fighting for their rights.

Even though Zambian employees have achieved pay rises from strike actions, it was not because the Chinese managers or policymakers realised the importance of those labour disputes. Indeed, the pay rises do not signal an attempt by the Chinese policymakers to tackle the issue; they were merely the result of CNMC's concerns about the production objectives set by their bosses back in Beijing. In this regard, compromises between Chinese managers and Zambian workers had to be reached in order to resume production. The relationship between the Zambian employees and Chinese managers may even have worsened after reaching those compromises. For example, G considers some of the employees are being too 'greedy' asking for pay rises. G insists it was the cultural difference that set the two sides apart and refuses to admit to any wrongdoings committed by CNMC. According to A (2022), this is a ubiquitous phenomenon amongst Chinese CNMC employees working onsite. And it is not rare for African local workers to become the victims of discrimination (Zhang, 2015). In fact, racist words were often used deliberately by the Chinese managers for whom A was working in Chambishi. When someone raised a concern about the appropriateness of such language, the most common reply from a manager was: '那又怎么样, 我说的是实话啊 (What is the matter? I am simply telling the truth).'

According to A (2022), problems regarding Zambian workers are rarely reported to higher administrations, as the cadres in the Chambishi compound do not consider them to be important. However, A (2022) confirms that no matter how hard CNMC tries to conceal negative information about the Zambian labourers, Chinese policymakers back in Beijing must have a certain degree of knowledge about the situation in Zambia. Indeed, outside of the internal channels of information flow amongst Chinese administrations, Chinese officials receive information from other sources. They watch news programmes on television, browse social media regularly, and read multiple newspapers. Although the chaotic system for information flow does contribute to the delayed response from China in making policy adaptations, it remains highly unlikely that the Chinese officials have not heard about the disputes in Zambia (L, 2022). The official statements from MFA, reminding Chinese businesses to act in

accordance with local laws and regulations, have further demonstrated that Beijing is aware of the widespread labour disputes in Africa.

In fact, both MOFCOM official E (2022) and MFA official C (2022) explicitly expressed that 1) they do know what has happened in Zambia regarding labour disputes, and 2) they do not view labour disputes in Zambia as being a particularly significant issue and confirm that no discussions are being held amongst high-level administrations to create new legislation to resolve the dispute. Thus, one of the reasons China did little to tackle the labour abuse issue in Chambishi is because officials do not consider them to be an issue at all. As A (2022) says: ‘他们(中国的政策决策者) 根本对于 (赞比亚工人的问题) 毫不关心 [they (the Chinese actors) simply do not care about the (labour) disputes]’. And, instead of making attempts to resolve the dispute, cultural differences between Zambians and Chinese are often used by CNMC employees to scapegoat their wrongdoings. The Zambian culture of enjoying life’ is to be blamed, from CNMC staff’s perspective. Towards the end of the interview with L (2022) (the most senior official amongst all 12 interviewees), he notes that problems such as labour disputes and massive-scale strike actions in SSA countries are unlikely to be fundamentally addressed by any actors of the CCP, because the tradition of finding excuses to disguise emerging disputes is a general behaviour among policymakers across the entire CCP system in various layers. Consequently, Chinese policymakers have only been able to make ‘contingency plans’ rather than concerted efforts to tackle the ‘cause’ of the disputes because of their constant denial of the existence of the dispute and consistent attempts to justify their failings. ‘这个系统就是这样的，没有人认识到错误，所以就更不会有人改正错误 (This is one of the most defining features of the system: no one is trying to right the wrongs they have made, because they do not think they have made any mistakes at all).’ ‘除了我没人会跟你讲这些，有些级别低一些的同志跟你说完这些他的养老金就没了 (I am senior enough to tell these things, had other lower-ranking comrades told you this, they may have their pensions taken away)’.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has described the challenges China has faced in its engagement with Zambia in the period of 2006 to 2015, whereby China’s development efforts have encountered widespread resistance on the ground in the Copperbelt Province. Although many researchers have attempted to examine this phenomenon, neither the

neo-colonialism narrative nor the principal-agent explanation captures the nuances of the internal conflict within China's foreign policymaking system. Nor do they provide a convincing explanation for China's policy inaction in tackling the issues faced in Zambia.

Having conducted exclusive interviews with Chinese policymaking officials and CNMC employees, this study argues that 'policy lagging' is the major cause of China's inaction in tackling the issue in Zambia, which may affect China's international image. Two major factors that contribute to policy lagging are 1) the existence of a complex and sophisticated system for dealing with information flow, and 2) the fact that the actors involved within the Chinese system for foreign policymaking do not have a unified set of criteria for measuring the importance of information, causing further delays in the response to the situation developing on the ground. Furthermore, there is a ubiquitous phenomenon amongst CCP cadres, who use cultural differences as an excuse to justify their wrongdoings, and there is no willingness from any of the policymakers within CCP to take the issue seriously. Officials in Beijing have confirmed that no discussions are being held in regard to the widespread labour dispute issues, and probably never will be. China, therefore, can only make contingency plans to resolve the imminent crisis, instead of tackling the fundamental causes of the problems.

Chapter 5. China's Inaction to Zambia's Debt Issues: A Reactive System that Allows Important Matters to Escalate

Irrespective of the change of government and the political chaos brought by Sata's controversial presidential elections in both 2006 and 2011, as well as the widespread anti-Chinese sentiment felt across Zambian society during the period of 2006-2015, China maintained a strong presence in Zambia. In fact, during that period China increased its investment and development loans to this landlocked African country (Brautigam, 2021). A more diversified and dynamic model of engagement was also developed, with increased Chinese aid and investment and the engagement of more Chinese SOEs not limited within the scope of mining, but also involved in manufacturing and construction (Vaidyanathan, 2018). Indeed, starting from 2009, over \$5 billion of loans flew to Zambia from China for mining-related infrastructure-building (GDPC, 2022). Nevertheless, alongside China's deepening engagement with Zambia across various sectors, there has been a dramatic increase in terms of the latter's foreign debts.

Upon Sata's death in 2016, the amount of Zambia's debt nearly tripled under the PF-led government in comparison to the pre-Sata era. Although numerous researchers have attempted to investigate the relationship between Zambia's mounting debt pressures and China's deepening engagement, the majority of the literature focuses narrowly on whether China had deliberately created a debt trap for Zambia, while the nuances of Sino-Zambian engagement in the period from 2015-2022 remain unexplored. Although researchers such as Brautigam (2021) attempt to look beyond the 'debt trap' narrative and study the causes of Zambia's debt issue in relation to China, the existing literature fails to provide a viable explanation as to why the Chinese government would allow this debt problem to occur in the first place. As Chinese researcher An Liwei and Ma Yeqing (2019) note, the crucial issue to be investigated in terms of the Sino-Zambian debt problems is not the causes of Zambia's debt distress, but the reasons why China allowed it to happen in the first place. Indeed, as China has been forging a 'win-win' relationship with African countries, this debt

situation which clearly negates this may affect China's manoeuvrability in making further engagements in the future.

Based on the 12 elite interviews I have conducted, as well as the secondary materials gathered, this thesis argues that the existence of multiple sources in loan-provision in China, the feature of policy lagging that persists in the Chinese policymaking system, and the existence of policy factions have collectively contributed to China's delayed response to Zambia's debt distress and hampered China's ability to make policy adaptations. The Chinese policymaking system is reactive in nature and has a strong inclination towards maintaining the status quo, despite the early warning signs of policy failures.

This chapter splits into five sections: the first section aims to present the necessary background knowledge to Zambia's debt issues and to examine the explanations offered by the existing literature, as well as their limitations. The second section will focus on the existing interpretations of the dispute of Zambia's debt issues in relation to China; the limitations of those studies will also be discussed. The third section will elucidate how the Chinese narrative of 'win-win' was managed when Zambia fell into debt distress, partially due to China's massive lending over the past decade. The last two factors contributed to the feature of policy lagging within the Chinese policymaking system, which resulted in China's delayed response in making policy adaptations; this will be examined in the fourth section, while the fifth section will focus on the various 'policy factions' within the CCP and explain how those various factions affected China's capability in making policy adaptations.

5.1 China-Zambia relations from 2015-2022: infrastructures and debts

5.1.1 Sata's infrastructure plan encounters the heyday of China's 'Going Out' policy

Having won the election in 2011, Sata's new government soon realised that it had fallen into the trap that Sata set himself with the non-achievable promises made to his constituents: first, despite the high degree of xenophobia in the Copperbelt Province, it would be almost impossible to eliminate Chinese engagement in the region, as the CNMC-owned Chambishi mine employed over 3,000 local Zambians with over four million dollars of investment (ZCCM-IH, 2016). Removing Chinese SOEs would inevitably worsen the employment rate and reduce the region's taxation revenues.

Second, the freefall in the copper price and the global financial crisis had affected the Zambian government's budget, leaving little leeway for Sata to carry out his ambitious infrastructure plan (Fraser, 2017). The only option left was for Sata's new government to seek foreign countries and financial organisations to fund Zambia's domestic infrastructure (Hurley, et al., 2019).

Although Zambia's credit rating was rather positive in 2015, this was because the country received debt relief from the IMF and the World Bank in 2005, with the cancellation of over \$4 billion debt (Weeks and McKinley, 2009). In this regard, it was hardly possible for the Zambian government to find sufficient funds through Western countries and West-based financial institutions, as Zambia's ability to repay its debt would be questioned, especially in 2015 when the copper price remained at a low level compared to the pre-2008 era (Ofstad and Tjønneland, 2019). Moreover, funds from Western borrowers are not without conditions: certain adjustments to government spending are often required; the usage of the funds also has to be monitored; the contracts for borrowing may need to be exposed for public supervision and review; and most importantly, applying for funds from Western financial institutions can take a long time—it may normally take some years until the decision is made (Lee, 2018). Given Zambia's difficulties in procuring sufficient funds, Sata's government was left with no option but to ask the Chinese for money (Brautigam, 2022).

China, on the other hand, was enthusiastic about financing infrastructure projects, not only in Zambia but also across the entire African continent (Ayodele and Sotola, 2014). Since the announcement of China's 'Going Out' policy, as shown in Figure 5.1, China's foreign direct investment (FDI) and cash flow to the continent increased exponentially from 2003 onwards. The loosened supervision by the Chinese government of overseas investments led to the massive expansion of the businesses of Chinese SOEs across various sectors, especially in resource-related industries and infrastructure-building (Hao, et al., 2015). In China's Africa Policy White Paper, published in 2006, the Chinese State Council officially encouraged the provision of economic and financial aid, infrastructure-building, and boosting Chinese direct investment. China's determination in infrastructure-building was reiterated in its second version of China's Africa Policy, published in 2015. Indeed, the document stated: '鼓励和支持中国企业和金融机构扩大参与非洲基础设施建设 [(China)

encourages and supports Chinese Businesses and financial institutions to expand their scale of operations in Africa in terms of infrastructure-building]’.

Dozens of infrastructure projects across Africa that had been struggling to find loans were financed and constructed by Chinese Banks and Chinese SOEs, respectively (Lee, 2018). Moreover, the distinguishing feature of China’s foreign aid, in comparison to its Western counterparts, is its non-attachment of political strings (Lv and Zhang, 2016). To illustrate, once the loan has been approved, there is no requirement from the Chinese side for recipient countries to reveal the contract to the public, which is welcomed by most African politicians. As Chexim official J (2022) notes in an elite interview, the non-attachment of political strings while granting loans is the ‘核心竞争力 (core competitiveness)’ of China’s financial institutions, compared to Western practice.

As a result, Zambia’s government had been under enormous pressure to find financing for Zambia’s domestic projects, until it encountered China’s enthusiasm for funding infrastructure projects in Africa. From 2015 to 2018, Chexim and CDB – two of the Chinese policy banks established for the provision of developmental loans – funded 16 projects in Zambia, with a total value estimated to be over \$2.4 billion (GDPC, 2022). Anti-Chinese slogans were rarely mentioned in the Zambian government’s public announcements after China expanded its loans to Zambia in 2015, despite the reports of labour abuse that kept emerging (Fraser, 2017). Moreover, China’s engagement towards Zambia had expanded from the mining industry across various other areas, notably construction (Lee, 2018). China’s cash flow to Zambia had been surging throughout the era of Sata, and Chinese SOEs were also actively operating their businesses within the territory of Zambia.

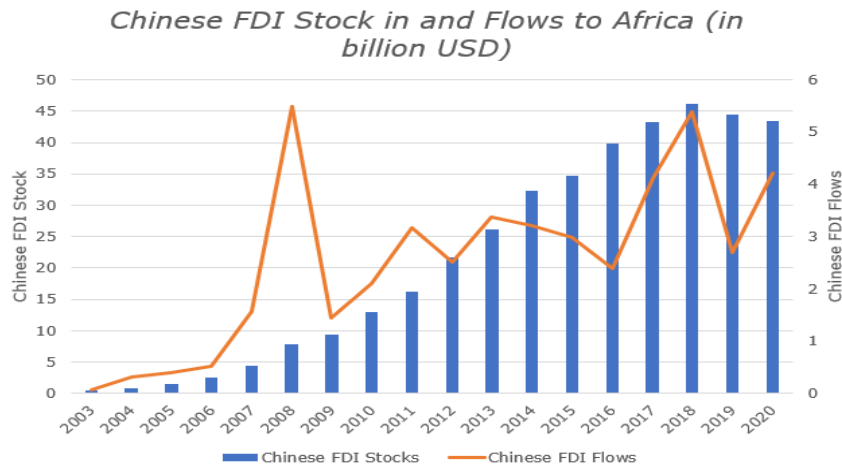


Figure 5.1 China’s FDI stock in and flows to Africa (Source: IMF, 2022)

5.1.2 The booming of China’s large-scale finance and Zambia’s mounting debt pressures

With Zambia’s demand for infrastructure, China became Africa’s largest bilateral infrastructure financier, accounting for about a quarter of its total infrastructure finance in 2018 (ICA, 2018). Chinese-sponsored infrastructure projects are framed within a ‘win–win’ narrative and official discourses centre on connectivity and mutual developmental benefits (Sum, 2019). Nevertheless, despite the idealistic and promising narratives framed by Chinese officials, due to the significant amount of infrastructure financed by Chinese development banks loans (i.e. Chexim and CDB), Mawdsley notes ‘[t]he contradictions and contestations of “development” have opened China up to criticisms more commonly associated in the past with [W]estern donors and companies’ (2019, p. 262). Amongst sub-Saharan countries, Zambia has the most concerning debt issues, with its debt in 2019 being equal to 91.9% per cent of its annual GDP (Ofstad, A. and Tjønneland, 2019). China, on the other hand, has become the single largest bilateral creditor of Zambia’s debt due to the increasing number of infrastructure projects signed off by the Zambian government and sourced by Chinese funds.

Despite some of the early signs of Zambia’s potential debt problems having emerged, as Zambia’s debt-to-GDP ratio surged from 44 per cent in 2014 to 56 per cent in 2018, both China’s FDI and loans kept increasing (Rapanyane and Shai, 2019; Lee, 2019). The worrying signs of potential debt distress in some of the SSA countries, including Zambia, were not emphasised by China. In fact, neither the Johannesburg Action plan

(December 2015) nor the Beijing Action Plan (December 2018) even mentioned African countries' debt situation. Conversely, both documents re-emphasised the importance of Chinese financial support and infrastructure-building as the correct pathway in ensuring the development of African nation states. As a result, China accelerated its financial loans to Zambia, with more infrastructure projects being promised by China in 2019. The loan commitments by Chinese financiers between 2000 and 2020 totalled \$10.3 billion, with 67 per cent (\$6.94 billion) committed since 2015 (GDPC, 2022); in the same period, China constructed two ultra-modern stadia as well as a hospital, which are two of the largest infrastructure projects built by China since the 1960s (Xinhua News, 2020).

Zambia's debt situation, however, has been worsening. Zambia's external debt-to-GDP ratio was 20.1 per cent, equal to 5,263 million US dollars, and this ratio increased by over 100 per cent in 2015, when Zambia's external debt equalled 43.1 per cent (Chikalipah, 2021). Zambia was reported for missing payments to its international creditors, notably Eurobond, and formally defaulted on its debt in early 2020 after lenders rejected a revised repayment plan that would have seen Lusaka's grace period increased by several months (Smith, et al., 2017; Chawe, 2020). Being in debt distress not only signals Zambia's financial difficulties to the world, but also has profound impacts on Zambia's domestic socio-economic situation. The expected impact of Zambia's debt distress affects the country's socio-economic situation in two ways. First, it highly impacts Zambia's social spending. As Zambia has missed its payments to the country's major debt owners, including Eurobond and China, Zambia must expect more money to be spent on debt servicing; namely, the need to pay more interest to repay the debt (Musamba and Phiri, 2020). High debt servicing costs weaken the economy by forcing the government to spend money on interest payments when it should be spending on national development (Nalishebo and Muleya, 2018). Health, education, and social protection are just three areas that are significantly impacted, as money spent on interest cannot be spent on these sectors. Zambia's debt situation was then considered at a negative level, as its huge debt equalled 91.9 per cent of annual GDP in 2019 (Nalishebo and Muleya, 2018).

5.2 The existing explanations for Zambia's debt distress concerning China's lending and the prevalence of debt-trap diplomacy

The situation in Zambia, whereby the country has fallen into a severe debt crisis and the living standard of its citizens is steadily deteriorating as the country's borrowing soars, is in contrast to China's assertion that an African country could flourish through borrowing for infrastructure-building. Instead of paying attention to Zambia's debt issue and rethinking its approaches in financing infrastructure projects in Africa, China again highlighted the importance of its 'development loans' for the further developments of the continent (Yang, 2018). This, as a result, has attracted academic attention to investigate a range of issues concerning China's lending. There are three waves of literature that pay exclusive attention to Zambia's debt distress in relation to China's lending from 2015 onwards. The following paragraphs will examine these waves of literature in detail and explain the limitations in uncovering the logic behind China's lending behaviours to Zambia.

As China further increased its pace in approving loans to Zambia for large-scale infrastructure-building, the debt pressure of Zambia was mounting. Indeed, in 2016, Zambia's potential for further debt distress was raised by multiple researchers, claiming the country's debt was unsustainable, because Zambia's heavy reliance on its mining resources would prevent it from repaying the huge amounts of debt it had borrowed (see Smith, et al., 2016; Oxford Analytica, 2015a), and the infrastructure projects supported by Zambian government were unlikely to generate enough revenue to repay the money Zambia had borrowed (Mweemba, 2015). Although the existing literature investigating Zambia's debt issues agrees that it was the massive infrastructure projects that exacerbated Zambia's debt burden (Oxford Analytica, 2015b), it was not until 2017 that researchers started to consider China as the potential cause that triggered Zambia's debt crisis. However, the first wave of literature makes limited contributions to the topic of China's lending in relation to Zambia's debt problems. Indeed, the viewpoints of the first wave of literature are oversimplified, with researchers trying to identify whether China had deliberately dug a hole for Zambia, resulting in the latter falling into a debt crisis. In this regard, although the first wave of literature was useful in terms of the ample data it provided, it offers little insight in terms of the nuances of China's lending within the context of Sino-Zambian relations (see Chellaney, 2017; Ofstad and Tjønneland, 2019; Carmody, 2020; Sharma and Lin,

2021). The conclusions those researchers drew from such oversimplified analyses are, therefore, problematic.

Chellaney (2017), for example, coined the term ‘debt trap diplomacy’ as an explanation for Zambia’s deteriorating debt problems, blaming China as a predatory lender who administered a huge amount of loans that the recipient country, namely Zambia, could not afford. China, in this regard, deliberately created a trap for Zambia so that the former could take over assets used as collateral by the latter, to generate profit at the cost of the suffering of Zambia. Chellaney’s work, although swiftly refuted by various experienced researchers and criticised for the unreliability of its data (see Singh, 2020; Shamar and Lin, 2021; Were, 2018), still opened a new chapter in terms of the study of Sino-Zambian relations, as it elicited more investigation of Sino-Zambian infrastructure cooperation in relation to Zambia’s debt distress systematically. The narrative of ‘debt trap diplomacy’ is refuted by CDB official K. In an elite interview, K (2022) reemphasises CDB’s priority in making profits and highlights China’s unwillingness to create a ‘lose-lose’ situation as Zambia fell into debt crisis along with the deficit of China’s lending.

As Zambia’s debt distress has attracted more academic attention, researchers have started to look beyond whether or not China adopted a ‘debt trap’ diplomacy in its engagement with Zambia. Indeed, the second wave of literature has attempted to uncover the causes of Zambia’s debt distress. The explanation it provides, while not denying China’s significant role in Zambia’s debt problem through the provision of loans, proclaims Zambia is largely to be blamed for its own debt distress due to the country’s poor debt management. Ayinla and Folarin (2019) state that Zambia is being over-optimistic about the country’s future revenues. Indeed, Zambia’s official paper for its future development ‘Vision 2030’ holds a fairly optimistic view of its economic development as an ‘extractive developmental state’. The document only highlights the need for a robust and competitive transport and communications network to further boost Zambia’s copper exports, showing little concern over the possible fluctuance of the copper prices on the international market (Ayinla and Folarin, 2019; Tang, 2022). This argument is echoed by Chinese political economist Yang Youming. In Yang’s work, the lack of proper feasibility checks within Zambia is highlighted and, according to Yang (2019), Zambia’s debt issue was caused by the unrealistic infrastructure projects made by the PF party during the election campaign, with the poor debt

management of the country further exacerbating the issue. Yang's point is supported by Brautigam, as a Zambian official said in an interview with her (2021, p.11): 'We want to borrow for infrastructure. We want to be able five years down the line to point at something and say: this is what we did with this loan'.

According to Brautigam (2021), it was the domestic pressure facing the Zambian government that forced them to borrow more to fulfil the promises they had made during the election campaign in 2011. Since 2011, 55 per cent of all Chinese loan commitments have been in the transport and power sectors, with another 16 per cent funding telecoms and water projects. At first, Zambia's infrastructure-intensive borrowing strategy appeared to be paying off. The country's annual, inflation-adjusted gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate averaged nearly seven per cent between 2000 and 2014. Zambia reached a lower-middle-income status in 2011 (which led to a drop in its access to concessional finance from the World Bank and other donor agencies) (Brautigam, 2021). However, the steady drop of copper prices, starting from 2015, and several years of drought set the economy back. Despite this, the Zambian government continued to seek loans from Chinese lenders, even accelerating its borrowing, and Chinese lenders failed to turn off the tap, despite the accelerating risk (Zhou, 2020).

Although the second wave of literature offers more nuances in comparison to the first wave, with more detailed examinations given to the borrowing behaviours on the Zambian side, it still fails to offer a viable explanation for the debt issue developing in Zambia. Indeed, as Pu (2020) notes, despite the miscalculations and the pressure to make good on promises made during election campaigns, Zambia should not be the only side blamed for its debt distress. Similarly, Brautigam (2022), having also recognised the mistakes and mismanagement by the Zambian government, claims that China is not innocent in Zambia's debt crisis. Huang et al., (2020) echo Brautigam's opinion, asserting that only half of the picture could be obtained if academic studies only looked at the problems from the Zambian side. According to Huang et al., although Zambia made many loan applications to China, it was up to the policy banks (i.e. Chexim and CDB) to decide whether those loans were to be approved. More attention, therefore, should be paid to China's part in it.

The third wave of the literature, in this regard, has taken one step further by investigating the process for approving loans in an attempt to uncover how those loans were approved by China's policy banks, despite Zambia's already looming debt situation. The third wave of literature tends to consider Zambia's debt distress in relation to China's lending as the 'tragedy of commons' (Brautigam, 2021, p.10). Except for the errors made by the Zambian government, Shieh, et al., (2021) point out the dysfunction of Chinese departments in conducting feasibility studies, arguing that those departments loosened the regulations so that more loans could be granted to Zambia. Bon and Cheng (2021) also highlight the fact that private sectors in China also provided loans to Zambia. Indeed, a total of 18 financial institutions provided loans to Zambia from 2001 to 2020 (Brautigam, 2021). This posed challenges for China in regulating all of the actors involved in loan-provision in relation to Zambia, as private sectors do not operate in accordance with the government's guidance (Bon and Cheng, 2021; Brautigama and Akerb, 2021).

A lack of transparency of Chinese loans in contracts was also highlighted by researchers. As Zhao effectively points out, 'Chinese loan financing is characterised by 'secret government-to-government agreements' and 'closed-door bidding process[es]' (Zhao, 2011, p. 67). This caused a systematic bypassing of transparency norms and competition standards, which are legally codified in Zambian public procurement law, and reinforced the 'not so public' procurement processes characterised by informal, highly personalised negotiations between Zambian political elites and Chinese enterprises about the terms and conditions of road projects (Shieh, et al., 2021). Moreover, the opacity of Chinese agreements and contracts also weakens the capacity for public interpellation, thereby rendering the public unable to intervene in the process. As Ofstad and Tjønneland underline, 'In many cases, contracts were awarded to Chinese contractors without public tendering. Accusations regarding "gifts" and corruption are rife' (2019, p. 7). Indeed, in the elite interviews I have conducted, three out of 12 interviewees admitted that corruptions do happen in China; six interviewees consider corruptions are likely to happen.

Despite the efforts made by the third wave of literature, with an even more nuanced explanation provided by the investigation into China's internal processes and regulations for loan approvals, it still failed to obtain the full picture of China's lending in relation to Zambia's debt, merely providing a more detailed explanation examining

the causes of Zambia's debt crisis. To illustrate, the existing literature has attempted to uncover the possible causes resulting in Zambia's debt situation, but it fails to consider a crucial question: given the fact that there were early signs of Zambia's debt crisis, why did China still allow the situation to develop until Zambia had defaulted on its debt? An Liwei and Ma Yeqing (2019) share a similar point of view and note that the core puzzle is what drove China to continue making massive loans to Zambia, despite the country's debt situation worsening since 2015. Indeed, as Zambia's debt situation worsened, China made few tangible policy adaptations in trying to stop the trend, and China's lending to Zambia did not stop until late 2019 when COVID-19 broke out.

China has been attempting to identify itself as a benign actor in Africa, compared to traditional Western donors, with the slogan of 'win-win' (Hairong and Sautman, 2010). Indeed, the inability of Zambia to make debt payments will lead the country towards a weak position for both its internal and external economies. This result contradicts China's 'win-win' narrative, which is a cornerstone of China's interaction with Zambia and may create obstacles for future investments, as well as damaging China's international outlook. Moreover, as one of the objectives for China's lending in Africa is to make profits through those loans, Zambia's debt distress has caused Chinese banks to lose millions – if not billions – of dollars, due to Zambia's incapacity to make repayments (Huang and Zhang, 2020). This 'lose-lose' situation is the last image China would like to portray. In this regard, a still more nuanced explanation is required to explain the puzzle of why China allowed the debt situation in Zambia to develop, despite the country's mounting debt pressure. The following section will, therefore, aim to examine Zambia's debt problems within the context of China's Zambian policy, as well as its policymaking processes. It will explain how China's foreign policy was formulated in a way that allowed Zambia's debt distress to happen and the logic behind such policies, as well as demonstrating exactly how China's organisations came together to influence Sino-Zambian policy in relation to its massive lending vis-à-vis the 'win-win' narrative.

5.3 Winning for whom? The targeted audience for Chinese slogans, and the power of Chinese agencies to offer reinterpretations

Various studies have confirmed that China is not the only factor that contributed to Zambia's worsening debt situation (see Brautigam, 2021; Ofstad, A. and Tjønneland, 2019; Zajontz, 2022; Zhou, 2020). Indeed, as of 2021, Zambia owes a total debt load of \$14.3 billion in external debt to international lenders, with just below 50% of that debt being due to Chinese loans (\$6.6 billion); the rest is owed to other major international funders such as IMF and Eurobond (CARI, 2022). However, China is still the single largest bilateral debt owner to Zambia. From 2015 to 2018, China approved over \$3 billion loans to Zambia for the construction of the latter's infrastructure projects, despite warnings from major international financiers that Zambia may fall into further debt distress (GDPC, 2022). According to China's own interpretation, infrastructure is the key to Africa's development, and China's loans for African infrastructure-building was the correct way to achieve a 'win-win' as China gained from the loans and African countries gained from the infrastructures (Hao, et al., 2015). However, Zambia's debt situation demonstrates that China's 'win-win' motto is not working in Zambia, not only because some of the infrastructures did not generate enough revenues to repay Zambia's debt so that China has also had to accept the loss of its money as Zambia defaulted on its debt (Brautigam, 2021; Huang, et al., 2020). However, 'win-win' is mentioned six times in Dakar Action plan, issued in late 2021; and the 'win-win' narrative, seemingly not affected by Zambia's debt crisis. The following paragraphs will explain how the 'win-win' rhetoric is maintained despite Zambia's debt distress.

As MFA official H (2022) explains, the Chinese rhetoric of 'win-win' was not only a core slogan for Sino-Afro engagement in the 'Going Out' era, but also serves China's propaganda purposes in differentiating itself from traditional Western donors (Luo, 2013). China's policy documents are not for everyone; they have targeted cohorts or audiences and the terms and words mentioned in those documents are carefully chosen to satisfy the targeted audience (Heilmann, 2009; Han, 2010). In this regard, when asked the question of how China maintained its rhetoric of 'win-win', instead of telling me the adaptations China made to maintain 'win-win' as a valid aim, H (2022) asked me a question: '你觉得这话是说给谁听的 (Who do you think the term is for?)'. Indeed, although it is millions of Zambian citizens who are living in poverty and require developmental aid, according to H (2022) and MOFCOM official B (2022), they were

never the intended audience for China's terms. The rhetoric of 'win-win' was used for the benefit African and Zambian politicians (B, 2022). This is because the 'win-win' narrative was developed to boost the processes of China's 'Going Out' policy by encouraging more businesses to invest in oversea markets (B,2022; H, 2022). To achieve this objective, access to African markets was crucial for China. The narrative of 'win-win', therefore, was designed for those who had the capability to determine China's access to African markets; namely, the African political elites. Davies holds a similar point of view and notes that the term was used by China to gain better access to the markets (Davies, 2008). In the Dakar Action Plan, published in 2021, the narrative of 'win-win' was mentioned six times in total, with five of those six times highlighting the narrative of 'mutual respect' along with 'win-win'. According to B (2022)'s explanation, the purpose of these two narratives being paired was to forge a picture of Chinese investors wanting to build a corporation relationship based on equal standing in contrast to Western investors.

B (2022)'s interpretation has been echoed by Chinese researcher Wang Changming (2006). In his research, Wang (2006) emphasises that those narratives such as 'win-win' and 'mutual respect' were intended to convince African political elites that China was a different investor. In this regard, as H (2022) notes, although it might sound disappointing, the intended audience of the 'win-win' narrative was not ordinary Zambian or African citizens, but those Zambian and African politicians who were in charge. Zambian citizens' perceptions of China's narratives for engagements have, therefore, little to do with China and, despite the widespread criticism over China's loans and its misconduct in Zambia, as long as they do not raise an eyebrow at any politicians, there is no urgent need to make any adaptations to the narrative. This could explain the lack of amendments to China's narrative of 'win-win' even after Zambia's debt problem occurred. Moreover, what Chinese officials B (2022) and H have said echoes one systematic failing that persisted within the Chinese policymaking system (as discussed in 3.2.2), whereby the policymakers of China simply did not care about the demands and requests made by the public, whether they were Chinese or Zambian. A (2022), a former CCP cadre and CNMC manager, claims the authoritarian regime of China made Chinese officials become irresponsible towards ordinary citizens, as they do not have the right to vote. In this regard, it is very difficult for them to bear ordinary people in mind while making policies (A, 2022).

China's use of vague terms also helps to maintain the narrative of 'win-win', despite Zambia's debt distress. Indeed, according to interviewee L (2022), in China, central guidelines often require subsequent interpretation by the diverse actors tasked with implementing them. This is because, first, the central government has limited knowledge and resources in terms of making detailed policies for lower-level actors; and second, China's policymaking system prioritises pragmatism with the doctrine 'crossing the river by feeling the stones' still being valid in modern Chinese policymaking. By deliberately leaving those vague terms, Chinese actors could make experimental practices without the risk of breaking Chinese laws or regulations (as discussed in chapter 3). Jones and Hameiri (2021) echo L (2022)'s viewpoint, highlighting the need for lower-level agencies to reinterpret the core narratives announced by the central government to implement them, otherwise the terms would be too vague to be acted upon. The need for lower-level actors to interpret central guidance has also been confirmed by various interviewees from different ministries and departments (B, 2022; E, 2022; H, 2022; A, 2022).

The narrative of 'win-win' is maintained via the reinterpretations of diverse actors within the system of Chinese policymaking. Indeed, although the term 'win-win' has frequently been mentioned as one of the core narratives for China-Zambia engagement in all versions of policy documents in relation to Sino-African relations, having scanned those policy documents, not even one policy paper has attempted to define the narrative of 'win-win'. This, according to L (2022), although is not deliberately designed by the top policymakers, those vague terms do have the capability to boost the manoeuvrability of lower-level actors such as MOFCOM and SOEs, who are in the frontline for China's 'Going Out' strategy. A (2022) confirms that being able to reinterpret key narratives in Zambia is indeed very useful while conducting business in Sub-Saharan Africa, because 1) it is easy for CNMC to categorise anything as 'win-win' in order to have Chinese administrations – notably MFA and the Chinese embassy to Zambia – endorsing the project. Such endorsement, according to A (2022), is free propaganda for CNMC in Zambia and makes it easier for the company to communicate with local politicians for further expansion in the future; and 2) the narrative could be used by CNMC to bypass inspections by the central government, especially from Chinese embassies and MFA. In 2011, when criticisms of China's labour abuses dominated Zambia's media coverage, which also

attracted the embassy's attention, CNMC actually described the situation as 'win-win', claiming that they provided thousands of jobs to local Zambians who would otherwise be unemployed (Cui, et al., 2013).

This unregulated reinterpretation of China's core terms has also been highlighted by Chinese researchers. Sun (2015), for example, notes that it is not sustainable for Chinese businesses to label everything they did as 'win-win'. Jin (2017) echoes Sun's opinion, claiming that such reinterpretations may cause tensions between Chinese businesses and the surrounding communities, and may also create an illusion to the local communities that the misconduct of SOEs is at the instruction of China's policies. Given such a high degree of arbitrary power from diverse actors, there has been no need for Chinese actors to change their narrative, and the term 'win-win' comfortably survived the dispute over Zambia's debt problems. This is because the narrative has been reinterpreted by various actors within China's policymaking system to cover its policy failures in Zambia. To illustrate, China's version of aid contends a broader meaning than the definition given by OECD and comprises 'development aid' and 'cooperation' (Davies, 2008).

Development aid is similar to the OECD's definition of aid, including the provision of concessional loans and other financial support. However, no precise explanation is provided by the State Council regarding the meaning of 'cooperation' (Davies, 2008). The agreed meaning amongst scholars and researchers refers to direct investment and technical support cooperation (mainly in infrastructure-building and mining) (Davies, 2008; Wang, 2013; Yu, 2013). In this regard, despite Zambia's debt to China soaring from 2011, China's aid to Zambia reached a historic high (by China's own definition) because of the multiple infrastructure projects constructed by China and the increased direct investment flows to Zambia. According to China's own interpretation, one of the most important criteria for measuring the standard of 'win-win' is by observing the amount of aid given to recipient countries (Dong and Fan, 2016). By this definition, Zambia is 'winning' in the period from 2011 to 2018 as a result of the increase in China's concessional loans and direct investment. As L (2022) notes, the narrative of 'win-win' will remain one of the core narratives of Sino-African engagement with no amendments required, because no matter what happens, China can always find a way to explain how Zambia 'wins' (L, 2022).

5.4 Policy lagging as a defining feature of Chinese foreign policymaking: Stability above all, pragmatism, and ‘be realistic (务实)’

Although China’s narratives for Sino-Zambian engagement could be maintained via reinterpretations, this does not suggest that China was not concerned by the negative impacts brought about by the debt crisis in Zambia. Indeed, as MFA official L states, the debt crisis of Zambia was categorised as a commercial/economic issue, so MFA had no responsibility for it. Having said that, L (2022) also highlights that Zambia’s debt has put MFA in a relatively uncomfortable position from a diplomatic point of view, as substantial efforts had to be made by MFA officials in trying to rebuild China’s international outlook in 2020 after Zambia had defaulted on its external debt. Another MFA official, C (2022), echoes L’s point, claiming that such an event with relatively severe international impacts creates difficulties for China’s future political engagements. Indeed, Zambia’s debt crisis did raise doubts over China’s mode of development with the combination of loans and infrastructure-building; even Chinese researchers who have praised China’s development could not deny the negative impacts of China’s lending on Zambia’s financial stability (see Lu and Gu, 2020; Zhou, 2020; Huang et al., 2020).

Moreover, since Zambia officially defaulted on its debt in 2020, there was no progressive cooperation between the two sides until July 2022, when China eventually agreed to restructure Zambia’s debt. The actual negotiation for debt restructuring may take years. This, according to Chexim official J (2022), is an exhausting and frustrating process, as lots of personnel from the bank have to be involved, some of whom may even have to travel to Zambia and France (Zambia’s debt restructuring committee is co-chaired by China and France). Moreover, with the number of personnel involved in this, the routine work of Chexim will also be impacted. Given all these negative consequences of Zambia’s debt crisis, an emerging puzzle is why Chinese policymakers allowed this to happen in the first place, when early signs of Zambia’s possible debt distress were developing. This and the next section will try to unravel this puzzle through the careful examination of the policymaking processes, as well as the actors involved. This section concerns the concept of ‘policy lagging’, whereby various factors prevent Chinese policymakers from making timely policy responses to an event.

5.4.1 ‘稳定大于一切! (Stability is our top priority!)’

One of the factors this thesis identifies as contributing to China’s policy lagging is the policymakers’ determination to maintain stability by making little change to the policies being implemented. As MFA official H (2022) says in an elite interview, the potential impacts of a policy on the stability of the (domestic/international) society are the first aspect to be investigated before it can be implemented. Even the efficacy of a policy is ranked behind stability in terms of priorities for policymaking (H, 2022). Chexim official F (2022) confirms H’s viewpoint and explains that due to the authoritarian nature of the Chinese regime, the CCP dislikes and is inexperienced in handling events such as protests, strikes and petitions which may contribute to the instability of CCP’s rule in China. In this regard, the fear of instability is deeply rooted in CCP, with all of the CCP cadres being told to consider stability before making any decisions. Gallagher (2005) also points to China’s obsession with pinpointing stability as the top priority for both its international and domestic policymaking, stating that stability is considered as a *sine qua non* for every single policy to be implemented.

Indeed, as F (2022) states, China’s pursuit of stability persists within the context of its foreign policymaking. This is because, in comparison to domestic affairs, international affairs tend to be more fluctuating, unpredictable, and subjective to the influences of multiple factors that may affect China’s strategic interests in a foreign country. Furthermore, unlike domestic affairs, the development of a certain issue could not be unilaterally controlled by CCP (F, 2022). In this regard, the need for making stability the top priority in China’s foreign policymaking has been repeatedly emphasised in various cadre meetings. Zhang et al. (2022) echo the Chinese officials, claiming that a ‘social risk assessment’ will have to be conducted prior to the implementation of policies. MOFCOM official E (2022) reflects on the point of ‘risk assessment’, explaining that CCP cadres have to find the ‘平衡点 (balance point)’ while making policy. The balance point refers to the status wherein everything is running smoothly, with no major crisis developing, while the policy is being implemented. This ‘balance point’, according to L (2022), is often hard to find and difficult to calibrate within the context of China’s Zambian policy, because the making of foreign policy requires the cooperation of various departments with many aspects to be considered (e.g. political impacts and economic prospects). Moreover, the Zambian government’s thoughts on China’s Zambian policy also need to be taken into account by Chinese policymakers

(L, 2022). The complexity of foreign policymaking has also been highlighted by Chinese researchers; Gao Wenjing (2020), for example, refers to the difficulties of prioritising one specific policy objective in China's foreign policymaking due to the involvement of various factors. In this regard, given the difficulties of foreign policymaking with the involvement of various factors which have to be considered to find the 'balance point', once a policy has begun to be implemented, it is 'extremely unlikely' for the policy to be amended in the short term. Indeed, according to L (2022), every policy has a flipside which may dissatisfy a certain group of people but, as long as there is no sign of instability, no major changes or adaptations will take place. This is because, once adaptations are made, recalibration may be needed to reidentify the 'balance point'; this process is in fact a factor of instability.

China's Zambian policy in relation to debt issues is no exception; stability remains the prerequisite for policymakers (B, 2022; F, 2022). Chexim official F (2022) states that the job of his department is to inspect and monitor the 'health' of the loans granted by Chinese financial institutions. He emphasises the economic qualifications of staff in his department and states that they are fully capable of making economic models to predict the debt situation of Zambia. In fact, F (2022) reported his concern regarding Zambia's capability of repaying the Chinese loans as Chexim was gradually increasing its loans to Zambia, and his team predicted that the Zambian government would struggle to repay any of its debts within the next three to six years. In hindsight, F (2022)'s team successfully predicted Zambia's debt default and some policy adaptations to tackle the problem might have been needed. However, in 2015, when F (2022) made an internal report trying to warn his colleagues about the issue, leaders within Chexim opined that 1) the increase in loans was in line with central guidance, 2) China's policy regarding loans was running smoothly with no major sign of instability, 3) Zambia had been repaying the loans to the bank on time, 4) Zambians were happy, Chinese were happy; and 5) if there were a risk of debt distress, it could be resolved once it had actually happened. Although J (2022) does not work in the same department as F and has no economic background (J is an official responsible for administrative works), she confirms F's statement and emphasises Chinese officials' determination in maintaining the status quo to ensure stability, because making any changes to a seemingly stable policy may be too risky for policymakers. MOFCOM official B (2022) had similar experiences; in 2015, when he was still a junior CCP cadre

in the department, he remembers a group of his colleagues raising concerns about the fast-growing FDI from China to Zambia. His colleagues did not think investing heavily in a landlocked country whose economy was heavily reliant on mining extraction was sustainable. Indeed, in 2015 280 Chinese companies had invested in Zambia, with projects worth an estimated \$5.1 billion (Xinhua, 2015). According to the GDPC database, over \$3 billion went straight into mining and infrastructure-building (GDPC, 2022). This group of MOFCOM officials doubted the mode of investment and expressed their concerns regarding the huge volume of demands for infrastructure (B, 2022). Nevertheless, the concerns of those MOFCOM officials were never put onto the ministry's agenda as leaders worried that the ministry's intervention may discourage Chinese businesses' investment, which was in contrast to China's Africa Policy, published in 2015, and may affect the stable implementation of the policy. L (2022) also echoes J's point of view, stating: '如果你不知道怎么做, 那就什么都不要做 [If (a cadre) does not know what to do (regarding a policy), he/she shall do nothing until something has happened].'

The issue over Zambia and other developing countries' debt situation kept being raised by Chexim staff from 2015 right up until 2020, when Zambia defaulted on its debt, with no concrete results in terms of tackling the issue (F, 2022). This feature within the Chinese policymaking system of prioritising stability and ignoring the issues occurring in the background gives leeway for the situation to escalate. The protocol for CCP cadres in policymaking is to 'calm down' and 'wait and see' (A, 2022; B, 2022; F, 2022); according to A (2022), this has further exacerbated the problem. Indeed, even in 2018, when Zambia's financial predicament was looming, no major changes or interventions were suggested by any of the Chinese institutions. This severely affected China's capability to make a timely response to any developing issues in Zambia because the window for tackling Zambia's debt problems was missed while Chinese officials did not dare to make any interventions that may challenge the stable status of China's 'Going Out' strategy, which prioritises investment, loans, and infrastructure-building. Having lost the ability to prevent the crisis, China's policy adaptations were reactive in nature. Indeed, according to F (2022), although 2019 and 2020 saw a downward trend of China's lending to Zambia, the top leaders did not take Zambia's debt issue seriously until Zambia formally defaulted on its debt in 2020. That was the point at which ministries and banks started to work together to produce a

solution, as the status quo had been broken. Chinese cadres' overemphasis on stability and their unwillingness to change the status quo, despite the situation that was unfolding in the background, hampered its ability to make timely adaptations and prevent the crisis, resulting in a delayed and reactive system which took no action until something had actually happened. According to L, there is no hope that this reactive policymaking system could be reformed in the short term, and CCP just keeps repeating the same mistakes. '劳工问题, 债务问题, 新冠问题, 很遗憾我们没有从中吸取教训 (Labour abuses, debt issues, and COVID regulations, sadly we learnt nothing from these things)' says L (2022).

5.4.2 The internal contradiction of Chinese foreign policymaking: the policymaker's desire to find resolutions versus a practice-based reactive system

The last factor that contributed to the feature of 'policy lagging' in the Chinese system of foreign policymaking within the context of Sino-Zambian relations is the internal contradiction between CCP's obsession with finding a solution for any developing situations and China's pragmatism-driven policymaking. To illustrate, within the Chinese system, top-level cadres do not like problems to be identified by policymakers unless they have a resolution for the problem they have raised (F, 2022). CCP's preferences for having solutions have been well captured in various literature. Li Yuyan (2018), for example, claims the Chinese public has been denied access to participate in domestic policymaking, despite the fact that the impacts of the policy may be profound for them; the reason for this is that the public tends to raise lots of questions that policymakers may find struggle to answer. Li's (2018) research highlights Chinese domestic policymakers' preference for answers, rather than questions.

Zhang Xuewei (2018) echoes Li's view, asserting that, despite CCP's efforts in inviting more think tanks and university researchers into the process of policymaking, those researchers play only peripheral roles with negligible impacts. One of the reasons for this is that researchers merely bring questions and problems to the table without solutions. L (2022) confirms the findings of this research, and states that it is not uncommon for top cadres to become annoyed by the questions raised by external sources. In the opinion of some top cadres, think tanks are 'useless' as they merely

point out existing problems (L, 2022). A (2022) shares a similar point of view, claiming that the questions and issues raised by think tanks and researchers are often considered to be ‘factors for instability’; and from a top-level policymaker’s perspective, no matter whether someone raises it or not, the problem is still there; and concrete changes could only have been possible if there had been any resolutions (A). In Chexim official F’s case, he was informed by his leaders that the best thing to do was to maintain the status quo until a solution to the developing issue could be found. In 2018, F was also explicitly told not to ‘go further’ with the issue, as it would be pointless to discuss a problem to which the resolution was unknown. Any continuation of the discussion of the Zambian debt problems would be ‘妄议国策 (an irresponsible discussion to the enshrined national strategy)’ (F, 2022).

Within the Chinese system for policymaking, however, finding a resolution to a developing issue is difficult, if not impossible. In fact, it is a system that prioritises practice over theory. A slogan that is often mentioned by CCP cadres is: ‘在实践中发现问题, 在实践中解决问题 (finding problems via practice, resolving problems via practice)’. The pragmatic doctrine of policymaking has been well reflected by China’s Africa Policy, published in 2005. To illustrate, China’s Africa policy is in fact the product of practice and experiences based on SOEs in African countries (A, 2022; B, 2022). The policy was formed as a reflection of the experiences summarised by the practitioners (i.e. SOEs). Indeed, as F (2022) explains, China’s Africa Policy (2015) was based on Chinese SOEs’ practices from 2006 to 2013. Both B (2022) and E (2022) confirm the discussion that the second version of China’s Africa Policy started as early as 2010. The Chinese actors involved in Sino-African relations were all invited to meetings led by MOFCOM and MFA, under the advocacy of the State Council. By the end of 2013, the basic framework of the policy had been drafted (B, 2022).

Although small-scale meetings were held and minor changes were made to the framework in 2014 and early 2015, no large-scale meetings with the involvement of SOEs were held (B, 2022; C, 2022; F, 2022). Starting from 2014, an office was assigned by FOCAC to finalise the policy paper, and the majority of the discussions held after 2013 were about the wording, rather than the new situation emerging on the ground (C, 2022). That being said, the situation in Zambia was developing at a relatively fast pace. In 2010, when the policy was being discussed, Zambia and the

majority of African countries were in a relatively healthy position in terms of their debts (Fandamu and Phiri, 2017); they had the capability to repay Chinese loans and could make use of the infrastructures being built by the Chinese. Zambia's debt-to-GDP ratio was 22 per cent in 2011, compared to 44 per cent in 2014 (Rapanyane and Shai, 2019). This brought challenges for China's policymakers in identifying the problems with the policy, as the policies were the products of practices that had already happened; the process itself was lagging behind the actual situation on the ground. In this regard, China's Africa Policy, based on the interactions from 2006 to 2013, was not capable of tracking the latest changes to the situation, and the policy was based on delayed practices, failing to highlight the emerging debt problems of Zambia. This pragmatism-based mode of policymaking not only allowed problems to develop, but also hampered the system's capability for finding solutions. In other words, in order to acquire a solution to a specific problem, Chinese policymakers would have to allow things to escalate and observe how Chinese practitioners responded to the issue.

When Zambia's debt issue became extremely serious in 2019, despite having realised the significance of the issue, according to F, the top-level cadres had to keep waiting and allow things to keep escalating. This is because China's retrospective policymaking system is not designed to handle unprecedented problems; once problems do happen, the normal practice is to observe the practice of Chinese agencies and then form a policy based on those practices (F, 2022). In fact, the initiation of talks between Chexim and Zambia to restructure the debts (started in July 2022) referenced Chinese commercial debtors' practice (e.g. Chinese commercial banks such as ICBC approached Zambia for debt restructure as early as 2021) (F, 2022). The strength of such a mode of policymaking is that the stability of the policy could be maintained, as policies are summarised based on the successful practices of SOEs and other Chinese agencies. However, the disadvantage of this style of policymaking is that China had to allow its agencies to keep operating as usual before they could come up with a solution to any emerging crisis or event.

Furthermore, the overemphasis on pragmatism has resulted in the de facto marginalisation of theorists and policy analysts within the Chinese system. F's office, which is responsible for examining the implementation of policies, is relatively underfunded compared to other departments (F, 2022). Although they have reasonable salaries, the funding they receive for conducting policy analysis (e.g.

fieldworks) remains low. Moreover, theorists and policy analysts from internal and external sources, such as China's think tanks, have also been marginalised in China's policymaking process (L, 2022). Chinese think tanks have published various papers complaining about issues such as staff shortages and lack of funding (see Zhao, 2012; Li, 2013; Li, et al., 2011; Lu, 2013). In a worst-case scenario, Chinese researchers risked being removed from their positions, had they questioned the national strategy without having a resolution. In 2013, Professor Xia Yeliang from Peking University was forced to leave her role due to her 'inappropriate discussions' about China's domestic policy (Shizhengfengyun, 2013). This is because, within the Chinese system of policymaking, there is an oversimplified division between '务实 (being realistic and practical)' and '务虚 [being ideological/ not being practical (it is hard to translate the meaning of this Chinese term)]', whereby practitioners' work is encouraged and considered as '务实 (being realistic)' (L, 2022).

Theorists and policy analysts' work, however, is discouraged and deemed as '务虚 (being unrealistic)'. This brutal division between realistic and unrealistic has blocked theorists' potentials in openly identifying and discussing the problems they notice within policies, and with the limited discussions on the issues with theorists being identified as 'unrealistic', the potential for finding solutions to the identified problems is blocked. In this regard, CCP has a strong intention to encourage its policymakers to find a solution to the problems they identify; otherwise, any discussion of the problem would be blocked. On the other hand, they prioritise practice-based policymaking, which is outdated in terms of the developing situation, and the marginalisation of theorists and policy analysts further delayed the emergence of solutions. This internal contradiction within China's foreign policymaking system, therefore, significantly contributed to the 'policy lagging', which not only resulted in China's delayed response to a developing issue, but also allowed problems to escalate while the CCP waited for its practitioners to find a resolution.

5.5 The Gordian knot within Chinese foreign policy: 'the commercial faction'

The CCP is often understood as a regime capable of planning ahead (see Burns, 1994; Han, et al., 2013). Indeed, during the party conferences, CCP leaders would announce the country's strategic plan for upcoming years, if not decades. This, therefore, sends a message to domestic and international audiences that China has the capability to

look forward, make future plans and implement those plans in line with its long-term strategy. Furthermore, China, as a one-party regime, according to the view of Chinese language-speaking researchers, has fewer concerns over the public and can exert its power in a relatively opaque manner (Zhang, 2014). Importantly, China does not have to worry about potential changes of government, as many Western countries do. These factors combined, as argued by Chinese researchers, contribute to CCP's ability in the long-term planning and implementation of its policies (see Han, 2013; Xue and Lin, 2013). However, against expectations, the policymaking system within the context of Sino-Zambian relations is internally flawed, preventing CCP from making long-term plans and preventing crisis, despite its efforts to do so.

It is widely thought that policymakers within China's one-party authoritarian regime do not have factions (Teets, 2014). Indeed, from CCP's own narrative, the only body the policymakers should be considering is 'the party and its people (党和人民)'. This clichéd slogan simply means that any actors involved in policymaking should be loyal to the party, as loyalty to the party means loyalty to the Chinese people; at least from CCP's understanding (L, 2022). However, the party is not a monolithic entity, nor are the policymakers under the party's umbrella. Seven out of 12 interviewees have confirmed the existence of multiple interest groups with different policy agendas, and each interest group has its own means of policy implementation. In this regard, although the actors involved in the policymaking system of China do not have constituencies to be responsible for, they still have to be responsible for their own faction, which is the interest group to which they belong. In the case of Zambia's debt problems, there is a powerful interest group consisting of MOFCOM, Chexim/CDB, and SOEs investing in Zambia, including CNMC (B, 2022; F, 2022; L, 2022; H, 2022). This, according to L (2022) and H (2022), created a closed loop and dominated the commercial aspect of China's Zambian policy, with the policies made within this commercial faction prioritising the interests of its 'members' only, with little consideration given to others outside of this loop.

The faction led by MOFCOM is heavily commercial-focused, the performance of the MOFCOM in Sino-African relations is determined by whether the 'target' can be reached. Indeed, Both B (2022) and E (2022) have confirmed that MOFCOM has a '指标 (target)' to complete on an annual basis. The target is measured by the number of

investment projects conducted overseas and the completeness of the target is related to cadres' promotions, allowances, and the praise they receive from top-level bodies such as the State Council and the party. In this regard, MOFCOM has a strong incentive to complete the target, as failing to do so may affect the budget, leaders' promotions, and most importantly, the trust of top-level cadres. One way for MOFCOM to achieve its target is to encourage more SOEs to go out and keep investing in foreign countries (B, 2022). Back in 2010, according to E, MOFCOM had to encourage as many SOEs as it could, in order to achieve its target, irrespective of whether those companies were qualified to invest overseas. Indeed, both MOFCOM officials (B, 2022; E, 2022) consider the protocols for inspections were not '严格遵守 (strictly followed)'. SOEs that apply to invest overseas, especially in the SSA region, are 'extremely likely' to be approved. Brautigam (2021) also highlights the existence of the 'culture of approval' amongst Chinese ministries, whereby the applications of SOEs attempting to invest overseas would be approved without proper checks for qualifications.

Chinese SOEs, notably the construction companies from 2011 onwards, had a strong interest in expanding their businesses across the continent through infrastructure-building (Alves, 2013). Based on Chinese regulations for constructions, Chinese construction companies are paid 100 per cent of the money beforehand (Davies, 2008). Moreover, the profit for building an overseas infrastructure is significantly higher than building a similar project back in China (A, 2022; Lee, 2018). This therefore created a strong incentive for Chinese construction companies to invest in the Zambian market. CNMC lobbied the Chinese government to attract more construction companies to Zambia, as the former aimed to build a logistics route for the import/export and refinery of coppers extracted from Chambishi (A, 2022). Those companies' enthusiasm for expanding their businesses coincided with MOFCOM's desire to accomplish the ministry's target in approving foreign investments. By 2014, the Chinese had invested \$9.3 billion in mining and construction, which accounts for 76 per cent of the total Chinese investment (GDPC, 2022). However, the investments were not free for Zambia. In fact, according to Davies (2014), Chinese loans to Zambia for infrastructure-building also counted as investment, due to China's vague definitions on those terms. The funding for those infrastructures was provided by Chexim and CDB as loans to Zambia, despite the debt situation in Zambia making those banks struggle, as they were losing money (F, 2022). However, back in 2015, Chexim and

CDB were relying on those loans to make profits. Indeed, F and J from Chexim and K from CDB all confirm that the approval of loans to developing countries was encouraged by their leaders in 2015 due to the potential profits to be made on those loans. Zajontz (2020) highlights the relatively high interest rates of Chinese concessional loans compared to their international counterparts, notably the World Bank. This was echoed by Lee's field research, which was published in 2018, providing detailed figures. Chinese concessional loans, according to his research, actually charged higher interest rates than the World Bank (2 per cent vs 1.7 per cent), and had a smaller grant element (23 per cent vs 35 per cent) with shorter repayment periods (10–15 years vs 20–50 years) (2014, p. 41; Morris et al., 2020). In his memoirs, Zambia's former Vice President, Guy Scott, remembers the 'outstanding feature' of Chinese engagement in Zambia's construction industry as being 'the long-term and apparently "soft" financing that came through, say, Chexim and CDB (2019, p. 191).

Commercial-oriented connections between Zambia-based SOEs and MOFCOM were also close. A (2022) confirms that CNMC representatives could contact MOFCOM directly regarding any economic-related issues via the office in Zambia set by the ministry, namely the Economic and Commercial Office of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Zambia; other construction SOEs had similar privileges. This special mechanism was established for MOFCOM to make a timely response to CNMC's and other SOEs' enquires regarding their operations. In doing so, loans and infrastructure projects could be approved speedily. CDB employee K (2022) remembers that one of his former colleagues from another department told him that Zambia's \$30 million loan application for the Mansa to Luwingu Road Construction project in 2015 took CDB only 19 days to approve. Information concerns with political factors such as labour disputes, however, had to go through the complex system for information flow (A, 2022).

The early warnings of the potential debt problems of Zambia were also dismissed and blocked due to the de facto existence of the faction. Indeed, except for F's warnings from inside Chexim, MFA, despite not being directly responsible for economic affairs, openly queried the debt issues in Zambia, Kenya, and Sri Lanka in 2018 and 2019 (C, 2022). According to MFA official C, the ministry has a bureau called '政策规划司 [the Bureau for policy planning (BPP)]' under the direction of senior cadre Miao Deyu. The top priority of the bureau is to examine the foreign policies being implemented, identify

potential issues, and make strategic planning for China's future foreign policies. In 2019, when the debt situation of Zambia and Sri Lanka started to deteriorate, BPP co-hosted a hearing with the 'Bureau for African Affairs (非洲司)' and 'Bureau for Asian Affairs (亚洲司)' (both are departments under MFA). Representatives from Chexim, CDB, and other commercial banks were summoned to enquire about the debt issues in those countries (C, 2022). During the meeting, representatives from the banks strongly denied that there were any problems regarding the loans and insisted that approving loans was in line with China's grand strategy for 'Going Out' and 'mutual benefit'.

In early 2020, just before the breakout of the pandemic, MFA initiated a large-scale meeting to discuss the debt issue with representatives from SOEs, banks, and MOFCOM (C, 2022). During the meeting, MFA's suggestion of a further investigation into the issue to make policy adaptations if necessary, received a negative, if not hostile, response from other attendees (C, 2022). Adaptations to China's foreign policy would need the collective agreement of all of the other actors involved, meaning that policy amendments to debt issues could not be unilaterally changed by MFA. And despite MFA's efforts, the issue had been deliberately delayed by members of the 'commercial faction' until the COVID-19 pandemic broke out (C, 2022; F, 2022). Later, in June, Zambia became the first SSA country to default on its debt, as it failed to repay the majority of its loans (Oxford Analytica, 2020).

In summary, within the context of Sino-Zambian commercial connections in the early 2010s, Chinese SOEs, MOFCOM and Chexim/CDB, therefore, created a faction with strong commercial incentives with a closed loop for information sharing and mutual benefit, as MOFCOM needed more SOEs to actively 'go out' to achieve its annual targets; SOEs were attracted by the potential high returns from investing in Zambia, and Chexim/CDB profited from approving loans with relatively high interest rates. Within this closed loop, political factors were absent because MFA was not directly related to commercial policies, nor was the ministry responsible for approving any investments. The MFA's guidance, therefore, was often ignored, as actors within the commercial faction prioritised economic gain. When asked whether a 'commercial faction' existed, L gave a ruminative answer, stating: '主观上并没有, 客观上我们并不否认它的存在 (We do not have any factions within CCP from a subjective point of view;

however, we also do not deny the existence of any factions from an objective perspective)'.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter analysed the debt issue of Zambia in relation to China's Zambia policy from 2015 to 2022. Despite the fact that many researchers have attempted to uncover the causes of Zambia's debt crisis, they have nevertheless failed to answer the crucial question of "Why did China allow Zambia's debt crisis to happen in the first place, given the situation is in contrast with China's 'win-win' narrative?". This chapter investigated this question via the careful examination of China's policymaking process, as well as the actors involved, and argued first that the 'win-win' narrative initiated by China was not intended for ordinary Zambian or African citizens, but for the African political elites to differentiate China from traditional Western investors, thereby gaining access to the African market. Second, Chinese policymakers' obsession with having a stable environment limited the system's ability to make timely adaptations, as any changes that were made may affect the stability of China's policy implementation, and Chinese policymakers' preferences for solutions over problems discouraged their own staff from raising questions; therefore, this hampered the system's capability for internal corrections.

Moreover, China's pragmatism and practice-based policymaking system blocked its own capacity for raising awareness of the issue. Also, the pragmatic policymaking system contradicted top cadres' interests in finding solutions, as they had to wait to observe the practices before any solutions could be found. This, therefore, allowed Zambia's debt problem to escalate and deteriorate from 2015 to 2020. The abovementioned factors contributed to China's 'policy lagging', which is a defining feature of China's policymaking system within the case of Sino-Zambian relations, resulting in the policies made by China being reactive in nature, with limited capacity for preventing future crises. Lastly, the existence of the 'commercial faction', consisting of MOFCOM, banks, and SOEs within China's Zambia policy, caused further delays in the resolution to Zambia's debt issues, because of the commercial focus group's constant attempts to block any discussion of the issue, in order to prioritise their own interests.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

6.1 Research Methodology and Analytical Framework Revisited

China's Zambia strategy within the context of the 'Going Out' policy merits investigation as a case study through which to properly examine China's foreign policymaking, as well as its policy adaptations, not only because the 'Going Out' policy redefined the directions of China's foreign policy priorities, but also because Sino-Zambian engagement in the 'Going Out' era met with resistance from Zambian communities and posed a threat to China's strategic objective in securing natural resources from the SSA region. In studying the existing literature on China's foreign policymaking and China-Zambia relations, it becomes clear that the case of Sino-Zambian relations in the 'Going Out' era from 1998 presents certain puzzles that centred around the (in)actions of China's foreign policymaking. Indeed, if China was determined to maintain a healthy flow of natural resources from Zambia to China, why did the actors involved within the policymaking process turn a blind eye to the labour disputes that resulted in strikes and violations within Chinese SOEs in Zambia? Moreover, despite China's efforts in differentiating itself from traditional Western donors with the 'win-win' slogan in place, why did China ignore the early warnings of Zambia's debt problems, taking little action to prevent the trend and allowing things to escalate, even increasing the scale of its lending to Zambia?

The period between 1998 to 2022 was selected because 1998 marks the starting point of China's 'Going Out' practice in Zambia, as Chinese mining SOE CNMC formally acquired Zambia's Chambishi copper mine based in the Copperbelt Province. The 24-year timespan helps to ensure the provision of a solid and sufficiently long period to capture the evolution and disputes of Sino-Zambian relations in the 'Going Out' era as well as China's responses and policy adaptations in tackling the situation they encountered in Zambia. The research design is based on qualitative research, involving the triangulation of elite interviews and published Chinese documents on China's African policy. During the fieldwork, 12 semi-structured elite interviews were conducted, with 10 of those interviewees being Chinese officials/senior civil servants who are or were previously involved in China's foreign policymaking in relation to Zambia; the remaining two interviewees are CNMC/former CNMC employees who

have had years of experience of working on the ground in Zambia alongside local Zambian workers.

All interviews were conducted remotely via Microsoft Teams. As a result of these interviews, a nuanced picture of China's foreign policymaking within the context of China-Africa relations was acquired. This research also highlights the fragmented nature of China's foreign policymaking and finds that the practice-based system is reactive in nature, therefore delaying China's policy response to any situation emerging in Zambia. Published secondary literature was also consulted throughout the research. Based on this, the chaotic and complicated system for China's foreign policymaking has been identified. Despite there being no shortage of researchers' efforts to investigate China's Zambia policy, very few have attempted to make a connection between China's foreign policymaking process and the disputes that emerged in Sino-Zambian relations, nor is the existing literature able to fully explain the puzzles of China's Zambia policy in the 'Going Out' era.

The majority of the literature investigating China's foreign policy tends to consider China as a unified entity acting with coordinated objectives. Indeed, the one-party regime and opaque process for policymaking hamper the capability of researchers in examining the relations between foreign policy outcomes and the policymaking process. Although there are researchers who highlight the linkages between China's policymaking process (See Gill and Reilly, 2007; Brautigam, 2021), they still fail to present a comprehensive explanation of China's foreign policymaking that is capable of explaining the puzzles raised by this thesis, as they have limited access to the system itself, and try to draw parallel comparisons between China's fragmented system and the USA's system via the bureaucratic politics model of foreign policy analysis.

China's system of foreign policymaking, however, is inherently different from the USA's, and the BPM model that developed from the everyday practice of US politics is not capable of modelling China's foreign policymaking. Fragmented authoritarianism (FA), therefore, was chosen as the analytical framework through which to investigate China's foreign policymaking, because the model: 1) has an understanding of a state-centric system and is based on the observation of China's everyday practice of policymaking; 2) reinforces the rejection of a coherent and unified state actor and

recognises diverse facets of power and the importance of non-state/sub-state actors; 3) highlights the role of pragmatism within the process of Chinese policymaking; and 4) captures the transformation processes of actors involved within the foreign policy decision-making processes. Despite Brødsgaard (2016) develops a newer version of FA, namely the integrated fragmentation model. This thesis, however, adopts the first version of FA by Lieberthal and Oksenberg's (1992). Despite the first version having been raised as early as the 1980s, this thesis has demonstrated the validity of this version of FA in the modern system of Chinese policymaking. Brødsgaard (2016)'s integrated fragmentation, however, has numerous analytical weaknesses, as has been proven by both the secondary research and the interviews conducted in this thesis.

6.2 A Summary of the Main Findings

This research first confirms the fragmented nature of the Chinese system for foreign policymaking within the context of Sino-Zambian relations and, more importantly, it uncovers the pattern of interactions among various actors in different administrative levels (national and sub-national). In contrast to the stereotype many may have in mind that China has a top-down structure in place with the top-layer actors (leading small groups and ministries) being able to set the agenda for the lower-layer actors, the actual practice within the Chinese system is in a state of disarray, with actors at each layer having their own methods that influence and even distort the policy objectives. SOEs – which are considered to be at the very bottom level of the Chinese administration, often being described as the 'arms' of China's foreign policy – have taken advantage of China's pragmatism-based system to actively shape the practice of China's 'Going Out' policy in African countries to prioritise their own interests. Despite the CCP's attempt to coordinate the fragmented system for policymaking by having LSGs in place to provide coordination for various policymakers, the efficacy of LSGs is limited due to their lack of specific knowledge and resources regarding Zambia and other African countries. From the period of 1998 to 2006, CNMC, the Chinese mining SOE, has defined the pattern of interactions between China and Zambia in the 'Going Out' era.

'Policy lagging' is a term coined by this thesis. It has significant impacts on China's policymaking and hampers the system's capability in making timely adaptations to tackle the situation in Zambia. From 2006 to 2015, China's engagement encountered

strong resistance from both Zambian workers and politicians, as Chinese SOEs were accused of abusing Zambian workers with inhumane treatment, including long working hours, lack of safety equipment, and low wages. The explosion in Chambishi resulted in the death of dozens of Zambian miners in 2005 and Sata's presidential campaign in 2006 pushed the anti-Chinese sentiment to a historical high. Despite the seriousness of the problem in Zambia, China made no response to the crisis unfolding in Zambia and did little change to its Zambia policy to tackle the issue; this resulted in similar situations recurring in CNMC's compound in the Copperbelt Region, with Zambian workers campaigning for fair treatment, and resulting in strikes and violence.

From a foreign policymaking perspective, China's system for managing information flows is problematic. Unlike a pyramid-style top-down/bottom-up system for sending information, as many may have expected, that system resembles the London underground network. This highly decentralised system for managing information flows severely affected the top-level policymakers' ability in making timely adaptations to tackle any event that requires immediate intervention, as it normally takes weeks if not months for policymakers back in Beijing to be informed about the situation, being updated from a lower-layer administration. Moreover, within the Chinese system, information will only be passed up to a higher-level administration if it is considered to be 'important'; however, the lack of criteria for assessing the significance of information further impeded the flow of information, which may get blocked at any layer due to subjective judgment on the importance of the information. These two factors contribute to 'policy lagging', which hampers China's capability in making timely adaptations to its policies in response to the situation developing in Zambia. Furthermore, there is a strong tradition amongst CCP cadres of evading problems, blaming others, and finding justifications for their own misconduct and wrongdoings (L). In this regard, except for the systematic flaws within the Chinese system for foreign policymaking, the unwillingness of CCP cadres to start tackling the issue is also an important factor worth considering.

The effects of the 'policy lagging' persisted from 2015 to 2022, when Zambia faced debt pressures. Although early signs of Zambia's debt distress were observed by both external academic resources and internal policy analysts within Chexim, China's Zambia policy remained lending- and infrastructure-focused until 2020, when Zambia formally defaulted on its external debt. An overemphasis on stability and the dilemma

between 'finding a solution' and a practice-based policymaking system, impeded China's ability to make timely adaptations in accordance with Zambia's debt situation. Indeed, Chinese policymakers have constantly been told to make 'stability' the top priority when making policies, and any adaptations which may affect the stability of a policy tend to be discouraged, if not restricted. In Zambia's case, this has resulted in policymakers being reluctant to make any changes to 'destabilise' the situation, even though the debt situation of Zambia was deteriorating. Furthermore, the Chinese system for foreign policymaking encourages policy adaptations only when viable resolutions for Zambia's debt issue are on the table. However, the pragmatism-based system is reactive in nature, as policies are formulated from actors' practices. Finding resolutions in the Chinese policymaking system, therefore, often lags behind as policymakers have to wait for feedback from practitioners. The policy lagging not only affected China in making timely policy adaptations, but also allowed the situation to escalate and become more serious in the case of Zambia's debt. The existence of the 'commercial faction' meant that economic- and finance-focused actors from China further impeded any policy adaptations from being implemented to tackle Zambia's debt issue as the faction prioritises their commercial gains via lending and infrastructure building over China's policy objectives.

This thesis, therefore, argues that China's system for foreign policymaking is fragmented in nature, with the absence of an effective measure for coordinating various actors involved in the process. The communication amongst actors involved is also chaotic, with an ineffective routine for policy-related information flow. Policy lagging is a defining feature of the current system for Chinese policymaking, which is reactive in nature and overly emphasises pragmatism. This system often results in delays in making policy adaptations, allowing situations to escalate before a resolution can be found. Other factors, such as Chinese policymakers' preferences in finding justifications for their policy failures and unwillingness to make timely policy adaptations, have further contributed to a reactive, chaotic, and delayed system for foreign policymaking. This thesis, however, does not attempt to argue that China's Zambia policy can be explained entirely from a policymaking perspective; nevertheless, investigating China's foreign policymaking process can offer an important insight for understanding China's Zambia policy.

6.3 Original Contributions to the Field

Theoretically, this thesis brings a new dynamic to the analysis of China's foreign policymaking within the context of Sino-Zambia relations, with the application of fragmented authoritarianism. Existing literature on the topic of China's foreign policymaking, despite having realised the complexity of the internal Chinese system with the existence of multiple actors, has tended to treat China's behaviours on the international stage as a unified action, with the published policy representing CCP's strategic objectives. China's policy (in)actions in response to an unfolding situation in Zambia are understood in the existing literature as the intended action in line with the guidance of the CCP. And despite Allison's BPM model, which does highlight the sophisticated process for policymaking, the model cannot be applied to explain China's policymaking process, as Chinese policymaking organisations follow a different pattern of interactions. This study uncovers the impacts of Chinese policymaking actors on both the process and the outcome of foreign policymaking and highlights the fact that the (in)actions of China's policies in tackling the situation are not always the intended consequence of CCP but may be the result of the interactions amongst different actors. Additionally, actors with similar interests may form factions (as discussed in Chapter 5) to collectively influence policy agendas. The outcome of China's foreign policy, in this regard, should not be oversimplified as the intended outcome of CCP; instead, a more nuanced analysis is required to study the actors involved in the policymaking process.

A second key contribution to knowledge made by this thesis relates to its main finding. This study improves the understanding of China's foreign policymaking system within the context of Sino-Zambian relations in the 'Going Out' era through the investigation of China's foreign policymaking system as well as its processes. Furthermore, a more nuanced picture of the Chinese policymaking system is presented. The concept of 'policy lagging' is uncovered as the defining feature of China's system for foreign policymaking, whereby the system is reactive and retrospective in nature and allows for the escalation of problematic situations. This is because the cold-war narrative raised by Deng Xiaoping 'crossing the river by feeling the stones' is still treated as the doctrine in the modern system of policymaking in China, whereby Chinese policymakers prioritise practice over theory.

The policy outcome within the context of Sino-Zambian relations reflects the past experiences of Chinese practitioners in Zambia, resulting in the policies being retrospective and lacking the necessary capabilities for planning ahead. The Chinese system for information flow within its communication network is also problematic because 1) the channel for updating information from lower-level administrations to higher levels is complicated, which prolongs the process of information flow and further delayed the responses from Beijing; and 2) there is no unified set of criteria by which to assess the importance of information, and information considered unimportant could be blocked at a certain level of administration without the knowledge of top-level administrations. These two factors further contributed to the delayed policy response and policy inactions from China in the case of Sino-Zambian relations. China's Zambia policy, therefore, was out-of-date in comparison to the situation on the ground in Zambia and was not designed to be able to prevent the crisis from taking place.

China's foreign policymaking system allowed the escalation of the situation. Maintaining the status quo while a policy is being implemented is the top priority that Chinese policymakers are told to bear in mind. Any changes that may affect the stability of the government system are discouraged. Despite there being no shortage of policy analysts and think tanks involved in policymaking, their proposals for changes to an ongoing policy are likely to be rejected by top cadres due to concerns over a potential threat to the stable status of the policy. Chinese policymakers' reluctance to start discussing potential policy adaptations until a resolution is on the table further allowed the escalation of the issue, as China's pragmatism-based system would have allowed the situation to continue in order to reach a resolution. As such, this thesis fills the gap in the provision with a thorough explanation of China's policy (in)actions in Zambia under the 'Going Out' era.

This thesis also makes empirical contributions to the field. Indeed, China's system for policymaking is considered as a 'black box' with low degree of transparency. This creates difficulties for researchers who are studying the Chinese policymaking process, due to the lack of empirical data. This study, however, with the support of China's think tank CASS, manages to build connections with CCP cadres, government officials, and SOE employees. The conduction of 12 elite interviews has brought valuable first-hand data to the field of China's foreign policymaking in helping to open the 'black box'. The actors involved in the policymaking process in relation to Sino-Zambia relations were

also identified; the way in which these actors interact with each other in their everyday practice has also been described in a detailed manner. The findings of this research have the potential to be generalised despite its narrow focus on Sino-Zambian relations. This is because China's policies towards African countries that are rich in resources follow a similar pattern to China's Zambia policy. The features identified in China's foreign policymaking within the context of Sino-Zambian relations could also be reflected more broadly. This study does not suggest that the analysis of China's policy outcomes should be purely focused on China's policymaking process without paying attention to other aspects. However, analysing China's policymaking process, as well as the various actors involved, offers a new dynamic in explaining policy outcomes.

6.4 Avenues for Further Research

The analytical framework adopted by this thesis is fragmented authoritarianism, which pays special attention to the everyday interaction between various policymaking organisations within China; it is an effective tool for investigating the policymaking process within the context of China's foreign policy. Indeed, as discussed in three of the core chapters (3, 4, and 5), the arena of China's foreign policymaking involves multiple actors with various or even conflicted interests and policy priorities, and CCP's efforts in coordinating those actors has not always been effective. Fragmented authoritarianism could also be used as an effective framework for explaining China's policy outcomes by investigating the pattern of interactions amongst the actors involved in the policymaking process. Although this research is limited within the scope of China's Zambia policy in the era of 'Going Out' from 1998 to 2022, fragmented authoritarianism could be used for the analysis of China's policymaking in general, as the features identified in this thesis also exist in the broader system beyond the scope of China's Zambia policy. Similarly, the practice of 'policy lagging' developed by this thesis as a defining feature of the Chinese policymaking system within the context of Sino-Zambian relations is also valid in the broader system of China's policymaking, as the systems for both foreign and domestic policymaking in China follow a roughly similar pattern. This thesis is not suggesting that China's policy outcomes can only be explained via the analysis of its policymaking process as well as the interactions amongst various involved actors but paying attention to them could offer a new dynamic and provide a more nuanced picture to explain China's policy outcomes.

This study has also successfully built connections with 12 Chinese officials who are or were previously involved in everyday policymaking decisions in relation to China's African policy. Indeed, due to the nature of China's one-party authoritarian regime, with its cadres being discouraged from exposing any internal information to external sources, the exact way in which China's foreign policy within the context of Sino-Zambian relations is formed is almost like a 'black box' for external (notably, Western) researchers, due to the difficulties in approaching Chinese officials and collecting first-hand data. However, this research has demonstrated that it is possible to approach Chinese CCP cadres, civil servants, and even CNMC employees as senior as L [局长 (director-general)]. Despite the limited number of interviewees in this research, contrary to the preconceptions some researchers may have about the defensiveness of Chinese officials, all interviewees were willing to talk, to share information about their everyday work, and to point out the weaknesses and drawbacks of the system they have worked with on a daily basis. In this regard, future research investigating similar issues could also try to approach Chinese officials to acquire first-hand data to open the 'black box'.

Confidence in the successful communication of certain information to Chinese foreign policymaking officials can be strengthened with further investigation. Despite the current academic environment in China, Chinese think tanks are welcoming external researchers who are interested in Chinese politics and China's foreign policymaking. Approaching policymaking officials directly is not only helpful in strengthening the understanding of the structure and the process of policymaking, but also for simple fact-checking purposes. In this thesis, direct fact-checking questions were asked in the interviews such as "What do you make of the comments regarding China's labour abuse in Zambia?" and "What do you make of the literature suggesting China is creating a 'debt trap' diplomacy for Zambia?". Such questions can be quite effective in confirming the arguments made in other literature based on secondary sources, and also have the potential to elicit more nuanced comments on the policy directly from the people who made it. Moreover, one of the features identified by this thesis is China's chaotic and complicated system for information flow. It would be useful for research investigating communication between China's various organisations for the purpose of foreign policy analysis to determine what information is communicated to foreign policy decisionmakers, either directly or indirectly, i.e. do they or their advisors

read expert views or consume media that feature credible experts and, if so, how often? Such research could be done via a series of interviews, not necessarily with the high-ranking officials themselves, but rather with lower-ranking and more accessible officials in relatively close proximity to the high-ranking officials.

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