

Chinese Values and Narratives

ON DEVELOPMENT & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ABROAD

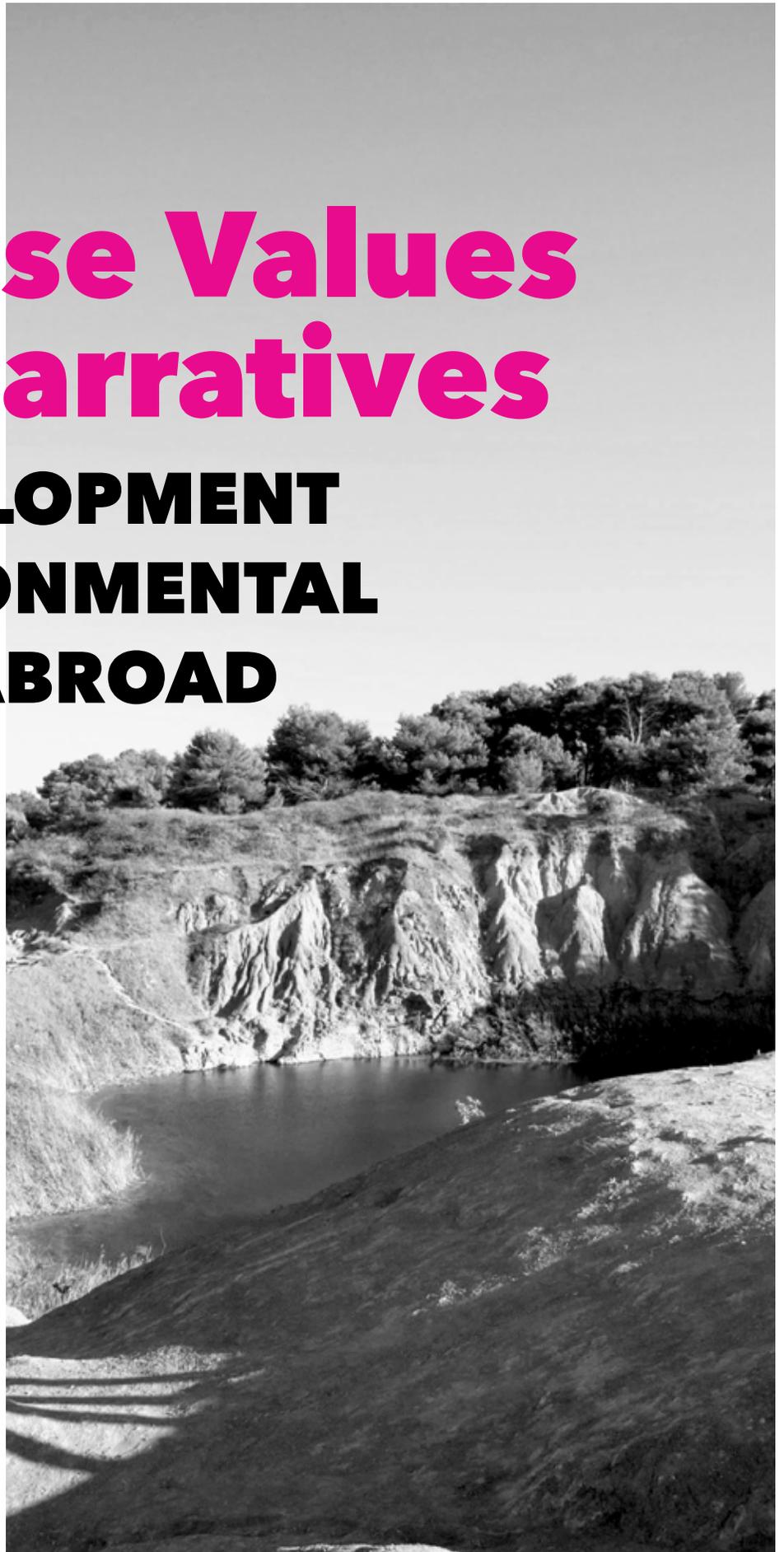
*Insights for NGOs
and communities
in Guinea when
approaching
chinese audiences*

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2021



 **NEW MEDIA
ADVOCACY
PROJECT**



T.O.C.

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Société Minière de Guinée started exporting bauxite from Guinea in 2015.¹⁴ In the first quarter of 2021, it accounted for 38% of Guinea's total bauxite production.¹⁵



CHINESE AUDIENCES AND THEIR PERCEPTIONS ABOUT CHINESE DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ABROAD.

This report is a summary of research conducted in late 2020 into Chinese audiences and their perceptions about Chinese development and environmental impact abroad. **It includes additional findings on the difficulties that local communities and NGOs in Sub-Saharan Africa can encounter when trying to approach Chinese entities to seek remedies.**

It includes additional findings on the difficulties that local communities and NGOs in Sub-Saharan Africa can encounter when trying to approach Chinese entities to seek remedies. NMAP and CTEA undertook this research to better understand the beliefs and principles—what we call values—that influence decisions and actions made by Chinese stakeholders. These insights are intended to help advocates working in Guinea develop more effective language and storytelling when approaching Chinese stakeholders, or getting the attention of wider Chinese audiences. Advocates are usually trained to formulate arguments and remedies using a human rights lens. Not only is this ineffective with Chinese audiences, but it is likely to backfire. As a result, communities often find themselves unable to obtain desirable results despite devoting substantial time and efforts into the advocacy process.

Chinese audiences have distinct values—meaning their worldview, attitudes and beliefs are different from those of

Western audiences. Cognitive science and psychology have shown that, instead of confronting the audience with ideas unfamiliar to them or that are likely to trigger confirmation bias (the tendency of people to favor information that confirms their existing beliefs or hypotheses), tapping shared hopes and values can create more resonant messaging, and so, motivate people to shift their mindsets and behavior.

Motivated by the above observations, our research focused on collecting examples of media, and we conducted desk research and interviews to discern these values, beliefs, attitudes and cultural narratives of Chinese audiences.

American vs. Chinese cultural values

American	Chinese
Individualistic	Collectivist
Egalitarian	Hierarchical
Information oriented	Relationship oriented
Reductionist	Holistic
Sequential	Circular
Seeks the truth	Seeks the way
The argument culture	The haggling culture

Adapted from Graham and Lam. 2003 HBR (October): 85.



Photo by Human Rights Watch

CHINESE COMPANIES ADVANCE INTO GUINEA'S BAUXITE MINING SECTOR

WHY LANGUAGE AND FRAMING MATTERS

THROUGHOUT THIS REPORT, WE REFER to the term “values,” which are moral or ethical beliefs and principles that help people decide what is most important in life. For example, one could say that Islamic values include “helping people in times of need,” “being an honest person,” “respecting one’s parents and elders,” and “being kind.” These Islamic values—beliefs and principles—help guide Muslims’ actions and shape their attitudes about important things in life. Values are inherently different from material or physical needs, such as access to food and shelter. However, someone who values “being an honest person” would not steal to satisfy a material need for shelter. In this way, a value can impact decisions related to material needs.

Values play a large role in orienting our decisions and judgments about our own conduct and the conduct of others. Individuals hold their own individual values, but values are also shared by large groups of people—shared practices and beliefs—helping to shape culture. Because values are embedded in the culture we are a part of, they play a vital role in helping us understand, predict, and change the actions and decisions of others in our culture, but it can be especially important to learn the values of those from other cultures to better understand how they influence their beliefs and actions.

This dynamic plays out quite saliently between Chinese and Western publics. Consider the example of access to water. The Western public may associate access to water with the value “human rights” especially when such rights are infringed upon, since the negative rights aspect is especially prominent for the Western public. The Chinese public, on the other hand, associate the same issue with values such as community security, which feed into a belief in the importance of basic infrastructure and the government’s role in guaranteeing it,

progress in quality of life, and development in general. When an entity hinders a community’s access to water, instead of framing this as a human rights violation, the Chinese public tend to ask whether such actions actually constitute a violation of a particular law or whether it is due to ineffective government regulations on community water access. They are also likely to question whether the local government has taken enough care to accommodate and balance all needs and interests. When faced with an accusation of human right violation linked to hindering access to water, the Chinese public will be befuddled at best, if not completely dismissive of such an argument.

A narrative is a generalized way to frame a group of stories that often employs a simple line of story to propagate a certain idea or viewpoint. In simple terms, it can mean “collections of related stories we tell ourselves,” and that can mean both in public discourse at the cultural level, and in our own minds about 3 our lives. For our purposes, an example of a story would be a press article about the opening of a single mining site, whereas a narrative would be the overall position of a particular actor—say, the state or a corporation—about mining development more generally. Narratives also reflect the values of those who form the narrative.

An example would be a state creating a narrative around mining development. The narrative is positive about mining development, claiming that it is good for the country and will benefit all citizens, regardless of the shape or form that it takes, or the way mining development is carried out. The narrative also implies that all the state’s choices around mining development are necessary. To effectively influence and convince, this narrative must find itself through many positive stories in multiple media channels and remain consistent and coherent. Formal press releases, media reports, and other

channels may disseminate news stories or other stories about specific incidents that reflect this narrative, and the Ministry of Mines might release a statement about a particular project in a local community, whose story is careful to comply with the narrative. Since narratives are simplified story lines, they can easily fail to capture all the nuances and possibilities within the complete “truth”. The extent of such failure varies from narrative to narrative, and it is clear from history that a narrative does not need to be “true” in order to be effective and powerful. This report does not intend to address this issue of narrative veracity. It simply seeks to draw attention to the fact that, like values, different societies can create very distinct narratives around the same issue. And like values, these narratives can also shape people’s perceptions and influence their decisions and are therefore important to consider in advocacy.

CHINESE COMPANIES ADVANCE INTO GUINEA’S BAUXITE MINING SECTOR

To better present the challenges faced by communities impacted by mining in Guinea and to properly introduce findings and recommendations from the research, this section provides a brief introduction to China’s involvement in Guinea’s mining sector. The appendix provides a detailed account of the Chinese mining companies’ activities.

Aluminum is a metal with wide usage in various industrial sectors, which practically can only be obtained from bauxite. While China produces the most aluminum in the world, its own bauxite reserve lacks both quantity and quality, making bauxite one of the most important mineral imports for China. Before 2016, Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia and India were China’s major bauxite import sources.¹ China’s mix of bauxite import sources then changed, when Guinea rose to the second in rank, just behind Australia in 2016.² Guinea became China’s top bauxite import source in the next year, with its share in China’s total bauxite import rising ever since, firmly establishing its place among the world’s top bauxite exporters.³

This rapid growth of bauxite export to China originated from the swift expansion of Chinese companies’ investment in Guinea’s mining sector since 2014. Currently, five Chinese or Chinese-backed mining companies operate in the country, namely Société Minière de Guinée (SMB), Aluminum Corporation of China Limited (Chalco), Compagnie de Développement des Mines Internationales Henan–Chine (CDMChine), China Power Investment (CPI) and Alliance Guinéenne de Bauxite, d’Alumine et d’Aluminium (AGB2A). This mining boom did not happen without enormous costs, as mining activities unheeded of their impact dramatically altered their surrounding natural environment and created disruptions to the lives of local residents.⁴ **Now the largest bauxite producer in Guinea with concessions and construction projects spanning four prefectures across Guinea,**

SMB nevertheless has not displayed a level of care for the environment and the local communities commensurate to its scale, according to residents and civil society organizations.⁵ While local communities and NGOs have been in constant contact with SMB complaining about its environmental impact, they have encountered substantial challenges in obtaining a desired outcome.⁶ Even though SMB did respond to the communities’ grievances by giving out compensation and carrying out livelihood support projects for local communities, these efforts remain unsatisfactory for the impacted communities, since they did not find SMB willing to fundamentally improve its mining practices and address the root of the problem.⁷

In fact, challenges in effectively engaging Chinese entities (including Chinese companies, government, financial institutions among others) present themselves quite often in Chinese overseas investment projects with significant environmental and social impact. Communities can fail to secure the desired outcomes despite having invested significant amounts of time and efforts into the advocacy process. It is therefore important for communities to understand the nature of why their advocacy messages are not heard, draw up solutions accordingly, and consistently apply them to obtain better outcomes in the interactions with Chinese entities.

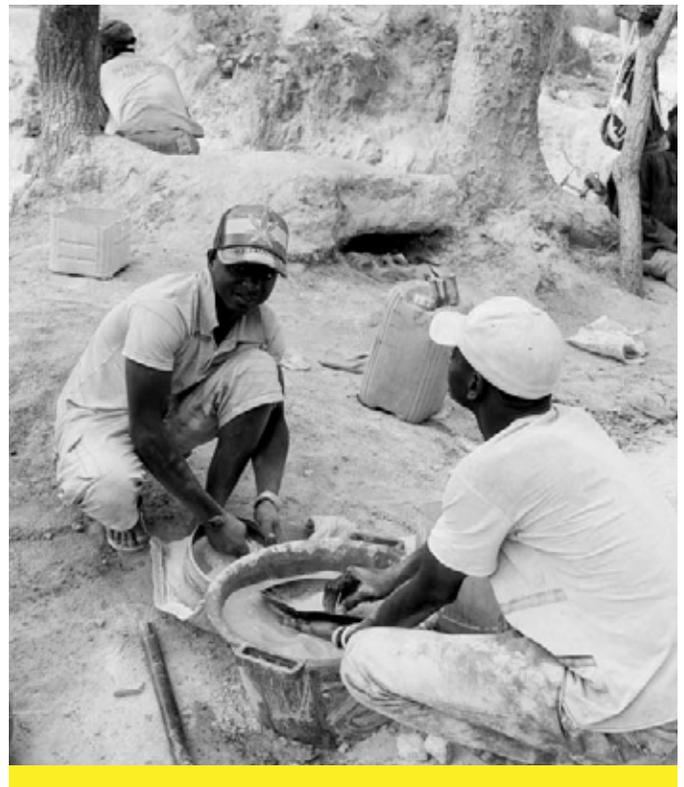


Photo by Carsten ten Brink

1 “China Aluminium Ores and Concentrates Imports by Country | 2018 | Data.”

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Ibid.*

4 “What Do We Get Out of It?”

5 “What Do We Get Out of It?”

6 “What Does the China-Backed Mining Group Bring to the Community?”



challenges

CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN APPROACHING CHINESE ENTITIES

Facing Chinese mining companies, NGOs and local communities often encounter three main challenges, namely the inaccessibility of Chinese entities, and the difficulties in getting the message across and prompting actions. Chinese entities can come across as closed and inaccessible, as their community engagement practices tend to be less developed, and outsiders sometimes struggle to find points of contact, get response from the Chinese entities or establish regular communication with them. Even if Chinese entities and local communities successfully establish a communication mechanism, communities can still have a hard time obtaining the solutions or remedies they desire. The inaccessibility of Chinese entities and their lack of incentive to satisfy community demands stem from various factors:

1 PERCEPTIONS ABOUT OBLIGATIONS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

In the governance space, the state enjoys a special status as it possesses a unique power to make bottom line rules and to act as the ultimate arbitrator through law-making and coercive enforcement. Chinese entities operating overseas often attach an additional layer of importance to the state, either through the lens of economic cooperation as part of bilateral relations between nation-states, or through the lens of China's domestic governance structure in which the state unquestionably maintains a central position.

As a result, Chinese entities tend to favor the state in its engagement with foreign countries and establish a center-periphery perception of the state and non-state actors. When it comes to issues of obligations and accountability, therefore, Chinese entities may believe that they only have to answer to laws and regulations that have jurisdiction over them as well as requests by the host-country government, and that they are not obliged to respond to community and civil society demands beyond

7 "How Does 2020 Bode for China's Overseas Investment?"; "What Do We Get Out of It?"

8 "Few Options Left for Local Communities Opposing Ecuador's Largest Copper Mine."

9 "Few Options Left for Local Communities Opposing Ecuador's Largest Copper Mine."

10 NMAP's survey of MDT

the extent of legal requirement and the state's ability or will of enforcement. Even if they fail to reach a final agreement with local communities, consent by the state alone usually is sufficient for providing a legal and ethical go-ahead for them to operate. An example is the Mirador project in Ecuador, where the Chinese company justified not fully resolving land conflicts with local residents by claiming that the mining area involved a national strategy, which granted an eminent domain-like power to the government.⁸ The Chinese company was not preoccupied with the means the government used to assert this power and rested under the umbrella of governmental consent.⁹

The Ecuadorian case shows that such a mindset can easily cause problems when the state itself engages in legally or ethically questionable conducts, as is often the case in resource-rich countries where Chinese companies seek to invest. Furthermore, SMB in Guinea has demonstrated that Chinese companies can use political connections or status to deny access. Since the company is directly connected to the presidency, any demand that fails to meet the criteria of access to the presidency will be denied, causing additional barriers to local communities and NGOs.¹⁰

2 SUSPICIONS OF POLITICALLY MOTIVATED ACTIONS

Chinese companies have generally been wary of politically motivated actions against them. In the Letpadaung copper mining project in Myanmar, the Chinese company involved believed that it became a target for different factions in Myanmar's political transition, judging from the well-planned, coordinated and publicized manner of the protests as well as the political symbols and instigation that emerged.¹¹ Such attentiveness will only heighten as overseas investment becomes a theater for greater power competition between China and the U.S. or the West in general, and Chinese companies

are increasingly embroiled. Activities against Chinese companies' investment and operation therefore tend to spark off suspicion as to whether they are solely aimed at maximizing local residents' welfare or are driven, at least partly, by political motivations. Such motivations effectively provide Chinese companies with a basis upon which to dismiss local communities' demands as lacking legitimacy. With the suspicion of political undercurrents, Chinese entities will also grow more cautious in coming into contact with communities and NGOs, making Chinese entities even less accessible.

3 DIFFERENCES IN VERSIONS OF FACTS

The phenomenon in which the Chinese company and local communities give out different versions of facts is highly visible in environmental and social disputes, ranging from differences in measured levels of pollution, amounts of compensation paid, and whether demands by local communities have been satisfied in general. Disagreements about facts can create obstacles for local communities and NGOs in their attempt to urge Chinese government, financial institutions and other entities to put pressure on the Chinese company executing the project.¹² Not only do they necessitate additional work in investigating the facts, but they can also stir up suspicion that the communities and NGOs' motivations are politically motivated or directed toward reaping undue benefits from the company.

Moreover, the Chinese entities' general lack of abilities and experience in interacting with the local communities and NGOs can also amplify the factors described above and further exacerbate the problem of inaccessibility and unwillingness to sufficiently engage.

Given these difficulties, it is important to approach Chinese entities skillfully, demonstrating the indispensability of including local communities and NGOs in the conversation and of caring for their needs, and avoiding actions that may lead to unnecessary mistrust. Local communities and NGOs can thus benefit from familiarizing themselves with the Chinese value system and the cultural narratives that shape their worldview on topics such as environmental protection and overseas investment, in order to understand how to best approach Chinese entities and what potential triggers to avoid.

¹¹ “中緬合作大手筆頻遭反對 中資銅礦受污染等指責_要聞_中國環境。”

¹² “中緬合作大手筆頻遭反對 中資銅礦受污染等指責_要聞_中國環境；

“Few Options Left for Local Communities Opposing Ecuador's Largest Copper Mine.”



Photo by Rio Tinto

CHINESE VALUE SYSTEMS AND THE CULTURAL NARRATIVES THAT SHAPE CHINESE WORLDVIEW

Facing Chinese mining companies, NGOs and local communities often encounter three main challenges, namely the inaccessibility of Chinese entities, and the difficulties in getting the message across and prompting actions. Chinese entities can come across as closed and inaccessible, as their community engagement practices tend to be less developed, and outsiders sometimes struggle to find points of contact, get response from the Chinese entities or establish regular communication with them. Even if Chinese entities and local communities successfully establish a communication mechanism, communities can still have a hard time obtaining the solutions or remedies they desire. The inaccessibility of Chinese entities and their lack of incentive to satisfy community demands stem from various factors:

1 NARRATIVES REGARDING CHINA'S VIS-À-VIS OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD

CONFUCIANISM & ITS VALUES

The values of China as a nation have their roots in During the drastic political, social and cultural transitions that China experienced in the 20th century, Confucianism was seriously challenged and even for a time utterly denounced. However, its long history and unique importance have nonetheless left ineffaceable marks on Chinese culture and values. Confucianism promotes “benevolence” as one of the most important values for individuals and “harmony” as a major vision for the world order. A harmonious world, created and maintained by benevolent people, entails a collective, shared society governed by meritocracy, where people not only care for their own needs but also those of others. Such a vision influenced Chinese principles today by creating the wish to share knowledge and experience with other developing countries and to assist in their development processes, and even in

fostering Chinese actors' belief that they are indeed doing so. Confucianism, a school of thought created by Confucius, a philosopher active in the 6th and 5th century B.C..Even though various other schools of thought emerged in the same historical period, Confucianism alone acquired a special status in the 2nd century B.C. when the Han Dynasty at the time adopted a policy of “dismissing the hundred schools and revering only Confucianism”, promoting Confucianism to be the dominant ideology of the Chinese society, a situation that more or less endured in the following 2,000 years until the 20th century. Especially since the establishment and maturing of civil examinations in the 8th century, virtually all educated Chinese studied Confucianism, as such studies were essential for entering the ranks of state officials and functionaries.

THE WIN-WIN NARRATIVE

This narrative essentially claims that China's cooperation with Africa, carried out on the basis of friendship, brings about outcomes that are beneficial to both parties. Chinese actors often draw upon historical relationships between China, Africa and the West to attest to China's good intentions and capabilities in providing help. Unlike Western countries who arrived in Africa to colonize and enslave African people for centuries, the Chinese fleet that first came to Africa 500 years ago only had a brief and peaceful contact with the continent. Moreover, China itself has been a victim of colonization by the West who then gained the abilities to challenge Western hegemony and has become one of the major players on the international stage in a short period of time through rapid economic development. China thus sees itself as Africa's equal and friendly partner with a head-start in development coming to offer lessons and knowledge and to exchange resources according to each party's comparative advantages. The aspiration is to supposedly achieve shared growth, or win-win. While this narrative clearly reflects Confucianist values about the self and the world, resentment toward colonialism and imperialism developed throughout China's modern history has very likely been essential in its forming. Chinese actors thus place great emphasis on being different and better than their Western counterparts. As a result, claims that they have failed to do so are likely to stir up reactions, though the nature of these reactions will depend upon the circumstances and the manners in which such claims are made.

"RESPONSIBLE MAJOR COUNTRY"

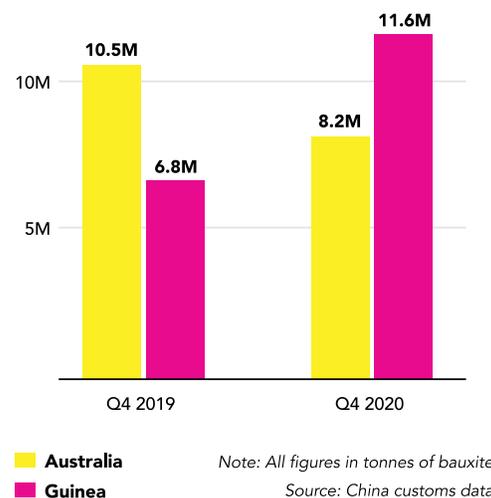
This term represents the role that China wants to play on the international stage, namely a major driving force for addressing global challenges, which notably include development, environmental and ecological conservation, and addressing climate change. Pointing out gaps between this image and the reality can therefore potentially be effective in urging Chinese entities to take actions. While this term is usually translated as "responsible major power" by the West, the Chinese government intentionally avoids using the word "power" because of its negative connotation associated with hegemony and dominance that run counter to China's foreign policy.

MULTILATERALISM

The commitment to multilateralism has gained prominence in China's foreign policy principles especially since the U.S. withdrew from multiple multilateral mechanisms and turned inward looking during the Trump presidency. China used this opportunity to differentiate itself from the U.S. by emphasizing its commitment to multilateral organizations and the role it can play in facilitating global agendas in multilateral organizations. Though the narratives described above took shape in different time periods and have various nuances in their meaning, they nonetheless share a set of core values that summarize how China sees itself vis-à-vis the world. China has a strong incentive to set itself apart from the U.S. and the West in that it works toward shared well-being instead of enriching itself at the expense of others. While priding on its progress in development and bringing the associated experience and resources to the table, China also wants to avoid appearing hegemonic and instead emphasizes equal partnership, multilateralism and global agendas.

China switches to Guinea bauxite as it shuns Australia:

Bauxite imports from Australia dropped 22% while imports from Guinea jumped 71%



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROMPTING REACTION AND INCENTIVIZING CHANGE

NGOS SHOULD USE THESE NARRATIVES and show how they are not being complied with. Instead of saying human rights are not being respected, NGOs should say that the win-win model is not being respected. Point out the fissure between China's claimed goodwill and care and actual outcomes. Emphasize how such fissure is damaging the credibility of the "win-win" and the China-Africa friendship narratives as well as the image of a "responsible major country" that China wants to establish.

CONSIDER MAKING THE POINT THAT CHINESE companies or other entities are acting in ways that are no different from (or are even worse) than their Western counterparts and that this behavior deviates from China's vision for friendly and equal cooperation.

Be extra careful, however, when making such a statement, since similar accusations have been used extensively by the U.S. government in its attempt at pushing back against Chinese presence in Africa and are thus extremely politicized. Avoid using terms such as "neo-colonialism" "neo-imperialism", as well as "exploitation" or "human rights" explicitly, since such terms are widely used in commonplace western criticism against China and will almost certainly trigger unwanted reactions. Focus instead on presenting valid facts that attest to this point.

LEVERAGE CHINESE INDIVIDUALS' DESIRE TO avoid public shaming and embarrassment, both at the organizational entity and national level (this is discussed further in a section below).



Photo by Inclusive Development International

2 CHINESE THINKING TOWARD AND EXPERIENCE WITH ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, AT HOME AND ABROAD

THE IMPORTANCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Chinese society as a whole attaches great importance to environmental protection and ecological stewardship. People believe that sustainability and survival are linked, and that future prosperity depends on environmental protection efforts today. Global actions are equally fundamental because all countries share one global ecosystem, and our destinies are intrinsically interconnected. To fulfill the commitment of a “responsible major country”, China also wants to pioneer global efforts in environmental protection, biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation.

THE TENSION BETWEEN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The ideas above have not always enjoyed today’s level of attention and attraction in Chinese society. For a long period of time, the needs for economic development and growth overrode environmental concerns: environmental impact assessment was lax and monitoring and law enforcement were weak. Negative consequences ultimately became hard to ignore. Environmental protection efforts later caught on, bringing about improvements in China’s overall environment, although previous years of pollution have already imposed costs upon the people and the environment. This “pollute first, treat later” approach was ultimately criticized and discarded within China. Despite this change of course, some Chinese companies stuck to this old perception, which also influenced their activities abroad. This is now what is being done abroad, but given that it is how China first developed, it will affect how they perceive activities abroad.

TOWARD ENVIRONMENTAL SOLUTIONS

The process of strengthening environmental protection and solving the tension between environment and development in China involved multiple actors and mechanisms. Bottom-up initiatives and spark media (stories design to ignite change and have an impact) raised public awareness on environmental issues and put pressure on the government. Good environmental governance then came as a result of effective top-down policy design and enforcement, buttressed by economic rationale and business sense. Development cannot endure without a good environment because of the human and economic costs imposed by pollution. Development can also contribute to environmental solutions as it enables the advancement and adoption of environmentally-friendly technology. The Chinese government basically claimed that development and environmental concerns are intertwined—one would not be possible without the other—and are equally important.⁸

CHINA AND ITS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ABROAD

While Chinese society already has ample awareness and experience related to environmental protection, **the issue of Chinese entities’ environmental impact abroad has yet to become a widely-discussed topic among China’s general public.** Investors and regulators also have limited access to information about investment projects’ reality on the ground. Such information gaps are in part preventing stricter monitoring and other regulation efforts coming from within China.



Photo by Inside Climate News

Raising the issues of Chinese companies' environmental impact abroad can be very challenging for civil society groups, especially when Western NGOs are perceived as being involved. The U.S. has already been clear in its intention to compete with China in the international development realm, and this strategy can lead to suspicion within Chinese entities that environmental advocacy against Chinese overseas investment projects is in fact veiled anti-China propaganda from the U.S., essentially creating a convenient reason to dismiss it. Moreover, Chinese authorities may also have a certain degree of reluctance toward tighter regulation on overseas investment, since they want to encourage such activities instead of suppressing them. However, if real consequences of such negligence emerge, this approach may be prone to change in a fashion similar to the evolution of environmental regulation in China.



Photo by José Gabriel Rodríguez

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENGAGING CHINESE ACTORS AROUND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

GIVE HARD EVIDENCE ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL

impact of the Chinese investment project in question and eliminate any information gaps, such as third-party test results of soil and air quality, and records of compensation attested to by both parties. Fully address any disagreements in facts, as factual validity would play a key role in avoiding being perceived as politicized propaganda.

ADDRESS THE TENSION BETWEEN DEVELOPMENT and environmentalism by raising the undesired Chinese experience of “pollute first, treat later”, and how this approach has been critiqued in China’s domestic discussion on environmental protection. Emphasize that the approach toward development and environment within and outside China should be equivalent.

ADDRESS THE TENSION BETWEEN PROFIT and environmental care and provide economic incentive by pointing out that if the company does not reach real consensus with the local community, its investment projects will continue to encounter problems and difficulties, making it less profitable and riskier.

BE MORE CONSTRUCTIVE RATHER THAN

confrontational when engaging Chinese actors. Suggest potential solutions such as promoting education on local law, prompting the company executing the project to adopt impact mitigating technology, and be consistent, clear and well-argued in presenting demands.

BE AWARE OF THE TOP-DOWN PRESSURE coming from government and financial institutions that can potentially be effective in driving change and be mindful to incorporate strategies and plans to approach them in the advocacy project.

POINT OUT THAT GOOD ENVIRONMENTAL practices abroad constitute the obligation and commitment of a responsible major country, especially when approaching Chinese state institutions.

3 TOWARD MORE EFFECTIVE ARGUMENT: PSYCHOLOGICAL AND BEHAVIORAL MOTIVATIONS OF INDIVIDUAL CHINESE PEOPLE

THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS AND CAPITAL

Social networks and capital play a significant role in the operations of Chinese entities. Trust, sense of solidarity and incentives for reciprocity between people can facilitate organizational goals while suspicion, divergence in goals, perceived disrespect and hostility do the opposite. Personal relationships between those who occupy key positions in different entities therefore influence the information flow and interactions between them as well as decision-making and deal-making on the organizational level.

MOTIVATION TO PRESERVE ONE'S REPUTATION AND AVOID PUBLIC SHAMING

Chinese individuals generally highly value protecting their reputation, which, in a professional setting, includes promoting an image of competence, reliability, and ability to avoid mistakes or, if mistakes are unavoidable, at least effectively and discretely correcting them.

Reputation also matters to organizations and nations, since Chinese people tend to personify them in constructing and understanding relationships between these entities. In the context of Chinese overseas investments' environmental impact, the exposure of environmental carelessness, deviation from China's policy on environmental protection and the damage done to China's desired image all have potential to cause a degree of embarrassment and harm to the reputation of the individuals and organizations involved and China as whole. Since Chinese individuals have strong incentives to avoid such a consequence, threats of public shaming can potentially lead them to action. It should be kept in mind, however, that public shaming needs an audience that is accessible and likely to be convinced, and whose reactions and responses matter for the subject being shamed. Such an audience may be difficult to come by. Another factor demanding caution also involves the politicization of advocacy against Chinese economic activities overseas. Displaying an elevated level of hostility and threat may very likely backfire and should be approached with caution.



Photo by Julien Harnais

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPEALING TO CHINESE ENTITIES AND APPLYING PRESSURE

WHEN TRYING TO EXERT PRESSURE ON A CHINESE ENTITY:

- Stay within the Chinese value systems and narratives to avoid being seen as dictated by or associated with Western propaganda efforts.
- Clearly identify the potential audience of public shaming when using this method. To make relevant claims more credible, consider making progress in reaching the potential audience first before any public shaming attempts. Provide options for the entity to take actions to avoid the public shaming.
- Be extra cautious when approaching an international audience about criticism of Chinese activities to avoid appearing politically motivated, i.e., as part of the anti-China propaganda efforts. Avoid using narratives and values often employed by Western media in their criticism and opt for narratives from China's own value system. Lay out grievances and facts plainly without politically elevating them.

WHEN TRYING TO APPEAL TO A CHINESE ENTITY AND WIN ITS SUPPORT:

- Avoid appearing morally superior; objectively point out the issue while sincerely expressing concerns instead of making strong accusations or displaying hostility.
- Emphasize any common ground, mutual goals or agreements shared by the opposing sides.
- When possible, foster relationships of trust with people who can potentially drive change. Such trust can potentially ward off suspicion about political motivations. Look out for Chinese scholars or NGOs that can potentially help establish personal connections.



Photo by Ollivier Giard, CIFOR

CHINESE AUDIENCES AND THEIR PERCEPTIONS ABOUT CHINESE DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ABROAD.

After a detailed explanation of Chinese value systems and recommendations for advocacy derived from them, key points and take-aways are summarized below: Use China's own discourse and values about international cooperation, environment and economic development to criticize Chinese entities' activities. That is, focus on environmental protection, fulfilling legal obligations, sustainable and socially responsible business practice, finding solutions in a constructive and pragmatic manner, instead of centering the advocacy around human rights violation or other narratives widely employed by Western entities in their criticism against China. Arguments constructed in this way tend to be more effective since they resonate better with China's own values and experience and lessons gained from its own development trajectory. The fissure between China's ideal image and realities on the ground also create incentives for Chinese entities to take action, given the high importance attached to reputation by individuals, organizations and China as a nation. They are also less likely to be viewed by Chinese entities as anti-China propaganda compared to those that resemble the commonplace anti-China propaganda too much. Avoid appearing overly confrontational and politically motivated; be more factual, constructive, and willing to find common ground. Due to the current global geopolitical situation, Chinese entities are highly vigilant about politically motivated actions aimed at curbing Chinese activities overseas. If Chinese entities perceive local-level advocacy activities in this light, they will be more likely to dismiss local criticism and demand. Therefore, it is vital not to be confrontational to the extent of appearing hostile, and not to overly employ political narratives and symbolism in all communication, whether directed at Chinese or international audiences. By presenting solid factual evidence of legal

rights violation and environmental or social negligence by Chinese entities while expressing willingness to find common ground that leads to pragmatic solutions, advocacy is more likely to be effective. Be aware of the psychological and behavioral inclination of Chinese individuals—social network, trust and solidarity, reputation. Such awareness can inform tactical decisions such as which entities to appeal to and which entities to pressure, how to order different steps of advocacy, and what kind of communication method to use. It can help communication content align better with goals that it wants to achieve. For example, advocacy efforts should avoid questioning the reputation of an entity that they want to appeal to, and instead try to establish a sense of trust and solidarity. On the other hand, reputational threats can be applied when some pressure is desirable, but not to the extent of resembling anti-China political narratives. The general principles mentioned in this report can be applied across all types of communication aimed at Chinese audiences, including letters, press releases, preparation of legal documents and in the day-to-day interactions with Chinese entities. When correctly implemented, these methods of communication have the potential to mitigate some common challenges encountered by local communities and NGOs in their advocacy activities. That said, this report should only serve as a point of departure in designing local communities and NGOs' communications strategies with Chinese entities. While the value systems and narratives apply generally to China or Chinese individuals, different types of entities have their unique motivations and priorities, and individuals in these organizations also have diverse psychological profiles. It is equally important to adjust strategy or tactics of communication according to those factors.

APPENDIX 1 – DETAILED INFORMATION ON THE ACTIVITIES OF CHINESE MINING COMPANIES IN GUINEA

1. SMB

Founded in 2014, the SMB (Société Minière de Guinée) consortium brought Shandong Weiqiao, a Chinese aluminum producer together with Singapore's Winning Shipping Ltd., the French UMS and China's Yantai Port Group, all shipping, transportation and logistics companies.¹³ SMB started exporting bauxite from Guinea in 2015.¹⁴ In the first quarter of 2021, it accounted for 38% of Guinea's total bauxite production.¹⁵

SMB currently carries out bauxite mining activities in Dabiss and Malapouya, both located in the Boké Region of north-western Guinea.¹⁶ In 2018, SMB signed an agreement with the Guinean government for future development of its bauxite and aluminum production complex, which involved exploitation of bauxite resources in Santou, located in the Télimélé Prefecture east of Boké, the construction of a 135km railway connecting the Santou, Boké and Boffa Prefectures with the port of Dapilon, as well as the construction of an alumina refinery in Boké.¹⁷ Feasibility studies for the Santou project were approved in February 2021, and the railway is already under construction.¹⁸

SMB's ambition also led it into the iron ore sector. In November 2019, the consortium won a \$14 billion tender to develop blocks 1 and 2 of the Simandou mine, situated in the inland forest of south-eastern Guinea.¹⁹ The agreement between SMB and the Guinean government requires SMB to build a 650km trans-Guinean railway linking Simandou to the country's Atlantic coast and a deep-water seaport.²⁰ Railway construction began in April 2021, while the Simandou mine's blocks 1 and 2 are projected to enter into production in 2025.²¹

2. Chalco

Aluminum Corporation of China Limited (Chalco), the world's second largest alumina producer, signed the agreement for mining rights in Boffa with the Guinean government in 2018 and began to construct its site in the same year.²² Its first shipment of bauxite export departed Guinea in January 2020.²³ The agreement also includes the construction of an alumina refinery.²⁴ Reports came out in June 2020 that the refinery's feasibility study was advancing toward finalization²⁵, but no further progress has been reported ever since. In the first quarter of 2021, Chalco produced 15% of Guinea's total bauxite output.²⁶

Chalco has been present in Guinea's mining sector long before it started its bauxite mining operation, as it acquired a 39.95% stake in Simandou blocks 3 and 4 in 2010, with Rio Tinto owning 45.05% and Guinean government owning the remaining 15%.²⁷ While the bauxite investment is carried out by a publicly traded arm of Chalco listed in Hong Kong (Chalco Hong Kong Ltd), the Simandou stake belongs rights violation and environmental or social negligence by Chinese



entities while expressing willingness to find common ground that leads to pragmatic solutions, advocacy is more likely to be effective. Be aware of the psychological and behavioral inclination of Chinese individuals social network, trust and solidarity, reputation. Such awareness can inform tactical decisions such as which entities to appeal to and which entities to pressure, how to order different steps of advocacy, and what kind of communication method to use. It can help communication content align better with goals that it wants to achieve. For example, advocacy efforts should avoid questioning the reputation of an entity that they want to appeal to, and instead try to establish a sense of trust and solidarity. On the other to unlisted Chinalco Overseas Holdings.²⁸ In 2020, reports came out that Baowu Steel, China's leading steelmaker, is seeking to acquire Chalco's Simandou stake with a consortium.²⁹

3. CDM-china

CDM-China (Compagnie de Développement des Mines Internationales Henan – Chine) is a subsidiary of China Henan International Mining Development Group in Guinea. CDM-China has signed a bauxite exploitation agreement with Guinea in 2010, and a new agreement was reached in 2018 in which CDMChina expanded its mining activities in Boffa and committed to developing a railway and an alumina refinery.³⁰ In the first quarter of 2021, 3% of Guinea's total bauxite output came from CDM-China.³¹

4. CPI

CPI (China Power Investment) signed a \$6 billion agreement with the Guinean government in 2012 that included a bauxite mine, an alumina refinery, a thermal power station, and a port, among other infrastructure.³² The project presumably stalled for a long time, and the first shipment of bauxite export by CPI set sail only in April 2021.³³

5. AGB2A

AGB2A is a partnership between a Guinean company and a Chinese one, who respectively hold 58% and 42% of the stake.³⁴ The company started production in 2020, and in the first quarter of 2021 produced 1% of Guinea's total bauxite output.³⁵

Besides the five companies who have already begun operation, TBEA, a Chinese company engaging in electrical power transmission and transformation equipment manufacturing, renewable energy EPC and aluminum production, signed an agreement with the Guinean government in 2019, which granted it mining rights for an area in Santou, Télimilé.³⁶ It pledged to build a railway that connects Santou and Port du Cap Verga, where it also plans to build a deep-water seaport. Other components of the agreement include an alumina refinery, a 300MW hydro power plant, and two solar IPP projects.³⁷

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