China in Africa: Phoenix nests versus Special Economic Zones

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C.C.J.
Occasional Papers

n°7

December 2018

ABSTRACT

Many articles and studies proclaim special economic zones (SEZ) as the solution for boosting Africa's development. This *Occasional Paper* will not discuss the accuracy of this vision. It will focus only on the question of whether the Overseas Economic and Commercial Cooperation Zones (OECCZ) model that China is proposing to African countries – as well as countries along the New Silk Roads – matches the definition of a SEZ as understood by Chinese researchers and commentators themselves. At this stage of research, the most accurate answer seems to be provided by Lin Yifu, who said that establishing an OECCZ is above all "building a nest to accommodate the Phoenix" [筑巢引凤 *zhu chao yin feng*] – *i.e.* China – without much consideration for the host countries' needs.

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Abstract

Many articles and studies introduce special economic zones (SEZ) as the solution that would boost Africa's development. In this *Occasional Paper* we will not discuss the accuracy of this vision. We will only ask whether the model of Overseas Economic and Commercial Cooperation Zones (OECCZ) that China is proposing to African countries – as well as those along the New Silk Roads – matches the definition of a SEZ as understood by Chinese researchers and commentators themselves. At this stage of our research, the most accurate answer could be Lin Yifu's for whom establishing an OECCZ is above all "building a nest to accommodate the Phoenix" [筑巢引凤 *zhu chao yin feng*] – *i.e.* China – without much consideration for the actual needs of the countries hosting these OECCZs.

Keywords

China, Africa, Special Economic Zones, SEZ, Overseas Economic and Commercial Cooperation Zones, OECCZ

The author's recent publications on Sino-African relations

2

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Billboard advertising the Eastern Industry Zone (Ethiopia) — © Thierry Pairault 2012

Contents

For the past fifteen years or so, there has been a trend for Special Economic Zones (SEZs), which have been announced as the long-awaited panacea of developing countries. The World Bank has set about exploring the question of SEZs, which, for Africa, is exemplified by Thomas Farole's work (2011) and is supplement by another study on the role of Chinese investment in African SEZs co-authored by Deborah Bräutigam and Tang Xiaoyang (2010). Robert Zoellick, then the new President of the World Bank,[1] strongly upheld this approach by seeking the appointment of Lin Yifu (Justin Lin) as Chief Economist and Senior Vice President.[2] Lin Yifu theorises China's economic development strategy from a neo-liberal economic perspective. He explains the solution adopted by China as a gradual shift towards a dual economic system, where one sector transforms slowly, while a second sector, *based precisely within the SEZs*, embraces the two conditions necessary for emergence: a government with little direct economic involvement and a free and well-functioning market. This is the reason SEZs are the *primum principium* of any efficient industrial and developmental policy (Pairault, 2018).

During his time at the World Bank, Lin Yinfu was, and still is, the tireless spokesman for this strategy. He is said to have convinced former Ethiopian President Meles Zenawi to try out a Chinese industrial park (Chen, 2017:34). On 9 May 2016, he submitted a report to Omar Guelleh, the President of Djibouti, entitled *Djibouti's pilot free zone and economic transformation: towards a new structural economy.*[3] From 29 to 31 January 2017, he was in Poland, at the invitation of the Polish government, to present his insights and thus to support their development strategy and their creation of industrial parks (Chen, 2017:32-34). He has undoubtedly visited other countries along the New Silk Roads (land or sea), including countries in Africa.

INDUSTRIAL PARKS, SEZS, OECCZS

In this respect, the subheading of the latest (n°19) *Yellow Book of Africa* is particularly enlightening: *African Industrialization and China's Construction of Industrial Parks in Africa* (Zhang and Wang, 2017). The first thing to note, however, is the terminology that is used. Here, the phrase is *chanye yuanqu*, which refers to "industrial parks," and not to "special economic zones" or any other conventional designation. In the recent Chinese publications I have perused, it has become customary to reserve the term "special economic zones" for references to the experiments carried out *in China* by the Chinese authorities. In this instance, it is referred to as *jingji tequ*, or even *women 'tequ'* (*i.e.* our "special zones").[4] When these texts have a comprehensive approach, they then speak of "industrial parks" (*chanye yuanqu* or *chanye qu*), which, strictly speaking, are industrial zones designed in such a way that the concentration of infrastructure and companies reduces industrial, administrative, environmental and social costs. This is therefore a broader concept than the SEZ, which designates industrial parks that set up a system of fiscal, customs and legal incentives to attract investors. SEZs, found all over the world in various guises, are not a Chinese invention. The economic history of the 19th century, or even earlier, provides many examples. The first person to formulate this concept was Alfred Marshall, who devoted the tenth chapter of the fourth book of his *Principles of Economics*, published in 1890, to it (Marshall, 2013 [1890]:222-231). By contrast, the reversal of its logic is Chinese.

This is what the change in terminology illustrates. Some Chinese officials saw that the development model they were proposing in Africa, and elsewhere along the New Silk Roads, did not replicate the "Chinese model" of the SEZ. The first chapter of the latest "Yellow Book of Africa" (Wang, 2017:001-028), which is in fact the core chapter of the book, presents an analysis of different typologies of the so-called *jingwai jing mao hezuo qu* or "Overseas Economic and Commercial Cooperation Zones" (OECCZ). Although OECCZs are industrial parks, they are very different from traditional SEZs. In both cases, it is definitely a matter of providing fiscal, legal and other benefits to investors who would otherwise abstain. While a SEZ, in the most traditional sense, is a zone created by a country on its own territory to attract foreign investors – whatever their country of origin – and to promote the development of the host country, the same is not true of an OECCZ. The latter is an enclave designed by a Chinese company appointed by China to create a haven in another country's territory to accommodate Chinese companies, which are *de facto* subject to Chinese law, and thus boost Chinese economic development.

[1] Held office from 1st July 2007 to 30 June 2012.

[2] Held office from 1st June 2008 to 30 June 2012.

[3] I could not find the exact French or English title of the report, so the title provided is my English translation of its Chinese title (*Jibuti ziyou qu xiandao qu yu jingji zhuanxing: Xin jiegou jingji xue zhi lu*) (CNSE, 2015 & 2016).

[4] The Chinese characters for the phrases which appear in their *pinyin* transcription are listed in Appendix 4 with the exception of the references.

OECCZ OBJECTIVES

Li Chunding, in a frequently quoted article (Li, 2008), clearly explains the objective of these OECCZs, the promotion of which has been specifically endorsed by the Chinese government:[5]

> *OECCZs are a strategy for Chinese companies to "go out", they are conducive to the formation of industrial clusters and alleviate the implementation of subsidy policies. […They allow] Chinese companies to group together and pool to invest abroad; when such areas are created and after an audit has been carried out, the [Chinese] government may grant public aid of 40 million dollars [per company] and long-term loans of up to 350 million dollars [per company].*

A very obvious example of these objectives is provided by the failure of the Jiangling OECCZ in Algeria. Undoubtedly, the Algerian government has always shown a great reluctance to create a special economic zone in the classic sense of the term, but it is certainly the Chinese intention to bring in their Chinese subcontractors – the New China News Agency announced a hundred of them (Xinhua, 2008) – instead of turning to Algerian companies that best explains why the integration of the automobile manufacturer Jiangling failed and why it abandoned the project to create an OECCZ of this type in Algeria (see Appendix 1).

Such incompatibility is immanent to the very nature of the OECCZs. It is in no way the result of the unpredictable conjuncture of divergent objectives between a Chinese actor and a host country, but of the OECCZs roadmap itself, as stipulated in a text distributed jointly in 2015 by the Chinese Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) and the Ministry of Finance (MOF) (MOFCOM, 2015):

> *In this document, the term Overseas Economic and Commercial Cooperation Zone will refer to an industrial park under a holding company with Chinese capital (the principal) incorporated within the national territory of the People's Republic of China (excluding Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan) which, through a Chinese owned entity incorporated abroad (the agent), invests in the construction [of this industrial park] with a complete infrastructure, a clear industrial orientation, comprehensive functional public services and ensuring the clustering and dissemination [of Chinese enterprises].*

This provision precedes a whole series of other provisions listing the Chinese conditions that OECCZs – which are overseen by Chinese companies as specified in the above text – must meet in order to be accredited by the MOFCOM (see below) and to satisfy the annual audits.

Lin Yifu defines the establishment of OECCZs as "building a nest for the Phoenix" *zhu chao yin feng* (Chen, 2017:34). Lin Yifu is not the first to have officially used this image. A bilingual Chinese-English report from the Beijing office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was published on 17 December 2015 with two different titles.[6] While the Chinese version clearly reads: "If Africa builds nests, will it attract the Phoenix?" *Feizhou zhu chao, neng fou chenggong yin feng*, the English version is more tactful and says: "If Africa builds nests, will the birds come?" – suggesting that the nests could accommodate anyone.

Even if this quadrisyllabic catachresis (*zhu chao yin feng*) has only recently been forged, [7] it holds a great deal of significance, because in China the appearance of the Phoenix is a prodigy with a very political meaning – if we understand "political" in the broad sense of human intervention in the shaping of the world (Diény, 1989:10). The Phoenix here is China, which, far from exporting its model, is inventing another to use in developing countries. It is actually a distortion of the "Chinese model," with the World Bank's endorsement, since it is the latter that has entrusted China with the role of development model, with Lin Yifu as its herald.

AN INTERNATIONALISATION STRATEGY

The implicit approach of the OECCZ strategy is not to address the needs and wishes of African and other countries along the New Silk Roads, but primarily to consider all these countries as places where Chinese

[5] Li Chunding refers to an *Authorisation*, the title of which is known (*Guowuyuan guanyuan tongyi tuijin jingwai jingji maoyi hezuo qu jianshe yijian de pifu* [Authorisation of the State Council for the Promotion of OECCZs]), but not to the text itself, which appears to be impossible to access.

[6] These reports can be downloaded at http://www.cn.undp.org/content/china/zh/home/library/south-south-cooperation/if-africa-builds-nests--will-the-birds-come-.html.

[7] None of the dictionaries we accessed allows us to guess its historic origin. Tu Bingdao notes its use in the early 1990s in a column for the magazine *Yuyan jianshe* [Construction of Languages] (1992/10, p. 26).

enterprises should be deployed. In other words, the aim of this policy is therefore only to entice Chinese companies to move abroad. "Move abroad" is literally closer to the Chinese word *zouchuqu*, meaning "to go out," and is also closer to what is actually happening, than is the verb "to internationalise" *guojihua*, since the purpose of these OECCZs is to offer a cocoon for Chinese companies, a sinicised ecosystem with no need to relocate, as it does not entail ending production in China itself. Even if almost all the researchers and politicians whose literature I have read are satisfied with this state of affairs, some have, on the contrary, a much more critical point of view. In the conclusion of their recent article, the three authors (Ye'erken, Zhang and Liu, 2017:361) clearly state that:

> *Overseas industrial parks must change their development philosophy […] and move from the concept of "Chinese industrial parks abroad" to that of "host country-China parks" with a view to setting up locally in the long term and organising corporate social responsibility.*

At the Second China OECCZ Development Seminar, held in Tianjin at the end of June 2018, Former Deputy Minister of Commerce Chen Jian gave the same assessment, stressing the difficulty of implementing these parks. Journalist Xia Xutian reports in the columns of *21st Century Business Herald* (Xia, 2018:6):

> *According to Chen Jian, the legal status of the OECCZ is not clear. "Our domestic [industrial] parks have established a management committee system. These committees associate government authorities with companies and perform certain sovereign functions. However, if this model were to be replicated abroad, the difficulties would be considerable."*

In Chen Jian's view, if Chinese companies operating OECCZs were to collaborate with host country authorities on park management, two kinds of problems would surely arise. First, China would lose its grip over operations in these OECCZs, and second, contradictions between Chinese interests and objectives and those of host countries would so seriously exacerbate the problems that they could ruin the successful completion of the project.

Today, the OECCZs' operators are obviously still in the early stages of development and still seem unconcerned by such political considerations. The observations of Luo Yuze (researcher at the Development Research Centre of the State Council) summarise their major worries and leave little doubt about the *Sinocentrism* of their thinking. Journalist He Jia reports in *21st Century Business Herald* (He, 2018:6):

> *According to Luo Yuze, many OECCZs are confronted with political instability, deficient industrial framework, outdated infrastructure, considerable exchange risk, lack of legal protection and terrorist threat. […] "The most important problem is the lack of water and land. In most cases, the business environment abroad is significantly different from that in China. For example, to attract investors, local governments [in China] do a perfect job in building infrastructure, while foreign governments 'wash their hands of it'* shuai shou zhang gui, *they don't take care of anything, anyway, they can't. The work that local governments do in China, abroad it is the responsibility of park operators. If we don't think about all this, park construction and management will be inconsistent."*

CURRENT OECCZ SHORTCOMINGS

We must, however, recognise that the texts I have read denounce Chinese shortcomings as well. In the latest *Yellow Book of Africa*, Wang Hongyi reveals the shadows in the painting no matter what their origin (Wang, 2017:019-024):

- Regarding host countries:

1. The security environment: the author rightly notes that investing is a medium- and long-term activity involving more risk than trading and providing services. He stresses that very few African countries have experienced long periods of peace, making it so far impossible for those countries to complete their industrialisation.
2. The financial environment: the poor financial health of African countries, their underdeveloped financial markets, poor ratings, high interest rates…, everything gives cause to fear the depreciation of the invested capital.
3. The economic environment: here the author refers to the legal environment, trade barriers, tax policies, labour, electricity supply, insufficient communication networks.
4. The political environment: The author states that African countries, although formally independent, are still under the control of Western countries that would block the development of industrial parks in Africa. In this sense, the strategy of the New Silk Roads is a sort of challenge to Western

countries, because China has no other choice but to develop its industrial parks in order to counteract their influence in Africa.

5. Profit sharing: It would be difficult to achieve equitable profit sharing because many African countries do not keep their word or respect the agreements they sign.

- Regarding Chinese operators:

1. The conditions of competition are far from perfect: asymmetry of information, competition between industrial parks, whether they are located in one country or several countries, too narrow specialisation of parks.
2. Park management requires financial support that Chinese banks are unable to provide outside of China's borders, which weakens operators. Moreover, operators often prove themselves very ignorant of the needs of manufacturing industries and even of how to manage industrial parks.
3. A great ignorance of the political, economic and social environment of the host country where the parks are located.
4. Limited management capacity: only China-Egypt TEDA Suez Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone has an adequate team to carry out their mission. Some operators simply reproduce the plans and organisation of Chinese economic zones without even worrying about whether these provisions are adapted to the African environment or whether they are legal. Moreover, believing they are helping Chinese investors, they offer solutions that they would apply in China.

- Regarding Chinese investors:

1. Internationalisation: In a nutshell, the author notes the unpreparedness of companies seeking to establish themselves in Africa, a world that is neither Chinese, nor truly Western. Hence the need for these parks, which operate in Chinese based on a "one-stop shop" principle for investors.
2. Indigenisation: Chinese companies must forget their traditional behaviour, such as "greed, disrespect for one's word, and disregard of ethics" *jigong jinli*, *hushi xinyong*, *jian li wang yi* and other such demeanours, and instead submit to local social and legal practices.
3. Compliance with local regulations and other legal standards: the author notes that Chinese ministries' management of corporate internationalisation lags far behind the development of Sino-African co-operation, with the result that companies are "indifferent to the rule of law and neglect their social responsibility" *zunji shoufa guannian danmo, shehui zeren bu zu*.

The above remarks – very critical, and even acrimonious – on Chinese practices in Africa were all made by a Chinese government think tank researcher and published in an official report. As far as we are concerned, we believe the Phoenix is likely to wait awhile before emerging from the nests that China is building for it. Moreover, even if the African host countries and China agree to manage these pseudo-SEZ jointly, "sharing a bed does not mean having the same dreams" *tong chuang yi meng* – as traditional Chinese wisdom reminds us.

Certified and non-certified OECCZs

The information disseminated by MOFCOM completes this image. There is, first of all, the publication of the list of twenty OECCZs which were "certified" *tongguo queren kaohe* by its services. Of these, only four are in Africa: Zambia, Egypt, Nigeria and Ethiopia, as per the order of the MOFCOM table, which is not the chronological order of certification, given in Table 1 below. However, the project initiated in 2005-2006, *i.e.* almost fifteen years ago, provided for the creation of some fifty such areas; this gap between the planned objective and actual results suggests that the difficulties encountered have been more numerous than expected – as suggested by the case of the Jiangling zone discussed above.

According to Luo Yuze, quoted by He Jia (He, 2018:6), the benefit of the certification is that it gives an honorary title *ming hao* which makes it easier to obtain additional financing and to attract Chinese companies wishing to move abroad in industrial parks. Furthermore, the certified areas appear to be mandated by China in the eyes of the host country authorities. However, if some OECCZs are certified, others are not. MOFCOM statistics reported by He Jia (see Table 2) show that the Ministry's services identified 99 OECCZs in 44 countries overall by the end of 2017. In other words, only one fifth of OECCZs have been certified to date. This observation indicates that Chinese industrial parks around the world are still in their infancy.

Chinese companies developing and managing these OECCZs have invested a total of nearly $31 billion to build these parks. They have succeeded in attracting 4,364 companies, and thus an investment of approximately $7 million per registered company as it stands. This investment covers all infrastructure work, the servicing of the park, the construction of industrial buildings… in short, everything businesses might need

Table 1. – The twenty OETCZs and their date of certification

Sihanoukville Special Economic Zone (Cambodia)	2006
Thai-Chinese Rayong Industrial Zone (Thailande)	2006
Haier-Ruba Economic Zone (Pakistan)	2006
Zambia-China Economic & Trade Zone (Zambia)	2006
Lekki Free Trade Zone (Nigeria)	2006
Longjiang Industrial Park (Vietnam)	2007
China-Egypt TEDA Suez Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone (Egypt)	2007
Russia Ussuriisk Economic & Trade Cooperation Zone (Russia)	2007
China-Russia Tomsk Wood Industry & Trade Cooperation Zone (Russia)	2007
Eastern Industry Zone (Ethiopia)	2007
Kawasan Industry Terpadu Indonesia China (Indonesia)	2007
Peng Sheng Development Zone (Uzbekistan)	2009
China-Russian Modern Agriculture Industrial Cooperation Zone (Russia)	2010
Asia Star Agricutural Industry Cooperation zone (Kyrgyzstan)	2011
Sino-Hungarian Borsod Industrial Park (Hungary)	2011
Central European Trade and Logistics Cooperation (Hungary)	2012
Ventiane Saysettha Development Zone (Laos)	2012
Russia Longyue Forestry Economic&Trade Cooporation Zone (Russia)	2013
Indonesia Morowali Industrial Park (Indonesia)	2013
China-Indonesia Julong Agricultural Industry Cooperation Zone (Indonesia)	2016

Source: MOFCOM at http://fec.mofcom.gov.cn/article/jwjmhzq/article01.shtml

Table 2. – Some aggregated statistics

at the end of the year	Number of countries involved	Number of OECCZs identified	Cumulative investments (billions of dollars)	Number of registered firms	Turnover (billions of dollars)	Taxes paid to host countries (billions of dollars)	New jobs created
2017	44	99	30.7	4,364		2.4	258,000
2016	36	77	24.2	1,522	70,1	2.7	212,000
2015		75	7.1	1,209	42,1	1.4	

Source: He Jia (2018:6)

while setting up. Actually, this average investment figure is expected to decrease with the arrival of new companies that will share these infrastructure. It is very difficult to assess what such investments actually represent and what the precise ambition of these projects is, for we do not know what the host countries are investing in order to develop them. Take the example of the Jinfei Economic Trade and Cooperation Zone in Mauritius where the Chinese promoter (a state-owned enterprise under the Shanxi Province government[8]) invests less than 15%, while the Mauritian government shoulders the rest of the expenses, either directly (15%) or through its public services (60%) (Ancharaz and Nowbutsing, 2011:12-14).

More generally, Chinese companies developing and managing these OECCZs complain, first, about the difficulties they encounter in obtaining financing, and second, about the lack of profitability of these parks. These promoters may be government funded entities, as well as privately funded companies.[9] Among the former, some are under the direct supervision of the central government: this is the case of the China

[8] The name of this zone includes a pun based on two groups of homophonic characters: *Jin-Fei* designating the relationship between the province of Shanxi (*Jin*, *i.e.* the monosyllabic denomination of this province) and Africa (*Fei*) and the expression *jinfei*, evoking dynamism.

[9] In Chinese, the first is called *guoyou qiye* and the second *minying qiye*. Actually, the meaning of these two terms is not at odds. The second, *minying qiye* refers to the management type and concerns enterprises (*qiye*) managed (*ying*) by a group of stakeholders (*min*) under private law, while the first *guoyou qiye* refers to the ownership type and concerns enterprises (*qiye*) belonging (*you*) to the nation (*guo*). In other words, *mingying qiye* can be wholly or mostly privately funded with minority shares which are publicly owned. In the latter case, the presence of the Chinese State may be decisive even if the companies are considered private. Except for some which are still under public law, the bulk of *guoyou qiye* are public undertakings under private company law – as are *minying qiye*. In the United States, this is the case for many companies, including ITT, Motorola, Samsonite… but also the Federal Reserve or General Motors…

Nonferrous Metal Mining Group, which manages the Zambia-China Economic and Trade Zone, or the China Merchants Group, which manages the Free Trade Zone in Djibouti (see Appendix 2). Others are under the supervision of a local government: this is the case of the TEDA Group, which is managed by Tianjin Municipality (one of the five metropolises with province status) and manages the Suez OECCZ, or the consortium of publicly funded enterprises, which is under the supervision of the province of Shanxi and manages the Jin-Fei Zone. Among the latter (those privately funded) are, for example, the Huajian group, which created the Huajian International Light Industry City in Ethiopia, or the Touchroad group, which launched the Touchroad Djibouti Special Economic Zone, or the Haite group (see Appendix 3), which participated in the creation of an industrial city in Morocco (Tanger Tech)…

It can be assumed that operators under Chinese governmental supervision (central or local) find it easier to finance their overseas projects than others who have to rely on financial institutions for support, since these institutions show a certain number of shortcomings. The sustainability of funding is a central issue for OECCZ developers. According to Luo Yuze, introduced earlier, the financial shortfalls they are facing result from China's low level of financial internationalisation. "Our financial institutions are slow to move abroad, their network is not perfect, their activity is not diversified and their operations are limited," he told journalist He Jia (2018:6). Huang Meibo (Professor at the Faculty of Economics of Xiamen University) confirms this analysis (He, 201:6). According to her, the main source of funding is bank loans, yet Chinese banks have few branches abroad, where, moreover, their capacities are limited. The worldwide credit system of these banks does not support parent companies for the activities of their subsidiaries abroad. In addition, host country banks lack financial strength, making it difficult for Chinese companies to obtain loans from local banks. [10] Therefore a kind of vicious circle is set in motion as this weakness creates an extra incentive to turn to Chinese banks in China, when the Chinese government seeks to tighten its control over the credits issued by its policy and development banks and to encourage Chinese companies abroad to finance themselves locally. [11] This encouragement is aimed more at privately funded companies than publicly funded companies, even if both are supposed to be "viewed with the same benevolence" *yi shi tong ren* (Fagaiwei, 2017).

He Liehui, Li Biao and others

In Djibouti, He Liehui endured the ordeals of an OECCZ small developer. He Liehui arrived in Ghana with $700 in his pocket to start a T-shirt business. In 2000, he created the Touchroad Company, symbol of his success. The name was chosen to indicate that the company was the channel through which He Liehui intended to forge worldwide contacts. It is composed of three characters, *da zhi lou*; which, read in Mandarin, give an approximate reflection of the English wording, whereas, read in Cantonese, they evoke it much more clearly. Two years later, the company was registered in Shanghai as Touchroad International Holdings Group (Zhiqiye, 2018; Touchroad, 2014). Not all "Chinese" companies abroad are born Chinese, especially the smallest ones, but their directors feel the need to sinicise them – as was also the case for Qin Jianjun in Algeria (Pairault, 2016).

He Liehui arrived in Djibouti in 2014 where he set up a new structure named Touchroad Djibouti Special Economic Zone (TDSEZ). According to the entry in the [Djibouti] Trade and Companies Register of 25 December 2014, his company was registered to engage in "financial and insurance activities" and in "the provision of services". To support this registration of activities, he decided to acquire the *Banque de dépôt et de crédit Djibouti*, a bank specialising in transactions payable in Chinese currency, which was created in 2008 by a Swiss financial company.

While negotiating this acquisition, he engaged in intense lobbying with the Djiboutian authorities, who, on 11 October 2016, eventually granted him the concession[12] of a plot of land (403 hectares) to set up his TDSEZ. This 20-year concession stipulated that 10% of the zone's surface must be serviced and developed each year and a royalty of $2.5 per square metre must be paid, for a total of ten million dollars per year (Présidence, 2016). Unfortunately, He Liehui ran into several obstacles in financing all his

[10] HSBC (through its Chinese subsidiary) received an award in 2017 because its international network helped Chinese companies participate in the New Silk Roads strategy (Xin, 2017).

[11] See *inter alia* statements by Zhang Jianping (researcher at the National Development and Reform Commission) in the *21st Century Business Herald* on 30 May 2016 (Liang, 2016:9).

[12] A concession grants an operator a long-term right to use all public service assets allocated to it, including responsibility for the entire operation and investment, but the public authority retains the ownership of assets.

commitments; the seller withdrew from the transaction to acquire the bank on May 23 2017 (ODPIC, 2017:2), while the concession was going to automatically terminate if the contractual obligations were not fulfilled. He Liehui himself admits that construction costs were going to be tremendously higher than budgeted because the "geological conditions are most appalling" *dizhi qingkuang tebie zaogao* – not to mention the human and material costs, which would have soared (He, 2017b:21).

In Morocco, another Chinese businessman apparently did not run into such obstacles. Li Biao, president of the Sichuanese Haite Group, found a sponsor to finance an industrial park project in Tangiers (Cité Mohammed VI Tanger Tech), the concession for which was signed on 20 March 2017. This sponsor, the *Banque marocaine du commerce extérieur* (BMCE), had agreed to back the operation (one billion dollars) from the outset.[13] On both, the case of He Liehui in Djibouti and Li Biao in Morocco, their operations aimed to exploit a kind of "ethnic niche," as described by Roger Waldinger (1994), which is the market of Chinese companies seeking to move out of China and seeking to "regroup to warm up" *baotuan qunuan*.

Mohammed VI and Li Biao

The Moroccan experience actually teaches us that the cocoon provided by industrial parks to migrant companies is not confined to "ethnic" parks. For instance, the Chinese electric car manufacturer BYD, whose arrival in the Chinese-operated park (Tanger Tech) was enthusiastically announced in the press, could have chosen a Moroccan-operated park (Tanger Automotive City, which is a specialised platform integrated into Tanger Med) where Renault and its equipment manufacturers already operate (El Yadari, 2017). One of China's largest auto parts manufacturers, Dicastal, has just announced its move into the Moroccan-operated park Atlantic Free Zone at Kenitra where Peugeot and its equipment suppliers are beginning to set up operations (H24Info, 2018). What is particularly interesting and significant is that Dicastal belongs to the Chinese investment fund CITIC established in 1979 at the behest of Deng Xiaoping and which is still today under the direct supervision of the Chinese government. Perhaps it is a political choice (to favour a public Moroccan-operated park over a private Chinese-operated park), but it is probably an industrial choice first: joining an already well-established business ecosystem[14] today does not preclude joining another one, not yet conceived, at a later date.

Isn't globalisation a lovely thing! In early July 2018, the *Banque marocaine pour le commerce et l'industrie* (BMCI), a Moroccan subsidiary of the French bank BNP Paribas, granted a loan to the Chinese equipment manufacturer Nanjing Xiezhong to finance its installation in the Atlantic Free Zone of Kenitra. Nanjing Xiezhong, which is under the supervision of the Bank of Nanjing, in which BNP Paribas is a major shareholder, is one of Peugeot's subcontractors in China (Kebe, 2018).

SEZ VS "CHINESE SEZ"

The Moroccan case is particularly interesting because Morocco is experimenting with two types of industrial parks. First are the special economic zones in the traditional sense, "ordinary" SEZs, like those of Tanger Med (put into service in 2007) or Atlantic Free Zone (launched in 2012). Both zones were designed by Morocco as part of its development strategy and are to host companies from other countries under favourable tax, legal and administrative conditions. These "ordinary" SEZs have demonstrated their usefulness; they are those that China adopted successfully for itself in the 1980s. Second are the OECCZs, or the so-called "Chinese SEZs". In this case, China promotes zones abroad as part of its own development strategy, in order to host Chinese companies under favourable tax, legal and administrative conditions. Such initiatives may, perhaps, provide some stimulus to the host country's economy, but there is no reason why such "Chinese SEZs" should actually serve the economic development of the host country when their priority is the internationalisation, expansion and protection of Chinese companies. Wei Jianqing,

[13] This financial arrangement was confirmed to me during an informal conversation with Fathallah Oualalou (former Minister of Finance of Morocco and former Mayor of Rabat) in Paris on 26 June 2018. On the Haite issue in Morocco, see Thierry Pairault (2017:143-145).

[14] Actually two ecosystems: the Peugeot ecosystem and the Moroccan PowerTrain ecosystem whose connections extend as far as Spain.

general manager of the China-Egypt TEDA Suez Economic zone, is straightforward: “China should establish a consultation mechanism with the host country’s government to guide their policy” (He, 2017a:4).

It should be mentioned that this paper in no way intends to pass judgment on China or on the relevance of industrial parks of any kind. Its only aim is to emphasise the importance for host countries to be proactive, starting with designing their industrial parks as part of a well-stated development strategy. Lamido Sanusi, Emir of Nigeria’s Kano state and former governor of the country’s central bank, says this exactly; he urges African countries to be proactive and make China work for their development strategy. He maintains that “the romance must be replaced by hard-nosed economic thinking” (Sanusi, 2013). This paper does, however, intend to warn countries of the danger of conceding any part of its territory to any foreign power, for there is no guarantee that the interests and ambitions of that foreign power will always converge with their own.

Appendix 1: The Jiangling Zone in Algeria

Jiangling arrived in Algeria through its Turkish representative, who opened a branch (ULTIPA) in Algiers in 2001 under Algerian law. Jiangling – or Jiangling Motors Corporation (JMC) – is an automobile manufacturer from the province of Jiangxi whose origins date back to 1947, according to Xiao Chuanqing (Xiao, 2008, 31-43). It is a publicly funded company (41%) in which the American automaker Ford has held 32% of shares since 1995 – the remaining 27% are traded on the Shenzhen stock exchange.[15]

Under its own brand or under the Ford brand, it manufactures light commercial vehicles, pick-ups and SUVs. In 2006, Jiangling decided to take advantage of the opportunity offered by MOFCOM with the OECCZs to change its integration strategy in Algeria by investing in local production. Jiangling partnered with ZIEC (also known as Zhongding), a wholly public construction company also under the supervision of Jiangxi province. ZIEC has been present in Algeria since the 1990s; it reached 127th place in the ENR international ranking in 2017.

These two companies applied to MOFCOM to be certified as the developers and operators of an economic and commercial cooperation zone in Algeria. Certification was granted during the second half of 2007. However, the project was never completed.

As an explanation for this failure, Tang Xiaoyang (Tang, 2010) cites a lack of understanding of the context and a poor evaluation of costs. It is proven that the conditions of access to land are crucial from the Chinese point of view, while, at the same time, this issue has always been sensitive for Algeria. The very conception of the zone proved their divergence: the Chinese partners envisaged a Chinese enclave exclusively welcoming and servicing Chinese companies, whereas the Algerian authorities legitimately wished for an Algerian zone preferably welcoming Algerian companies at the service of Algerian development. From the outset, Algerian and Chinese aspirations were highly incompatible.

It is most certainly the Chinese intention to bring in their Chinese subcontractors instead of using Algerian companies that best explains the project's failure. For the Algerian authorities, the arrival of a foreign investor should attract local subcontractors, in order to consolidate local production and employment opportunities, stimulate local industrialisation and promote local economic development, along the lines of what happened in China.

Appendix 2: The Djibouti International Free Trade Zone

There are several industrial parks in Djibouti, two of which are Chinese/ one called Touchroad Djibouti Special Economic Zone and the other called Djibouti International Free Trade Zone, operated by China Merchants, which will be discussed in this Appendix.

At the end of the 1990s, the Djiboutian government took up the challenge of transforming Djibouti into a platform for trade and services for the region. To this end, in 2000, a partnership was established between Djibouti and DP World for the expansion of the historic port of Djibouti, the extension of the Doraleh container terminal and the oil terminal… At the same time, DP World won the concession for the container terminal, while its subsidiary, Jebel Ali Free Zone, won the concession for the Jabanas Free Zone. Relations deteriorated quite rapidly due to the growing demands of DP World which, in 2004, would have

[15] See Jiangling's website at https://www.jmc.com.cn/contents/show/1699.

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prohibited the Djiboutian government from building any new port on its territory. Similarly, Dubai's financial claims became so exorbitant by international standards that, in 2012, they would have prevented the Djiboutian authorities from meeting their budgetary commitments to the extent they had to sell 23.5% of the shares they held in the capital of Port de Djibouti SA to China Merchants in order to refinance themselves. The deterioration of relations was such that DP World stopped the payment of its royalties from 2014 to 2017, and the Djibouti State, on 22 February 2018, unilaterally terminated its contract with DP World. They signed with the Singaporean operator Pacific International Lines instead, who agreed to increase by a third the transit of goods from the Doraleh terminal.

Meanwhile, China Merchants undertook intense lobbying and solicited Lin Yifu's advice in order to convince President Guelleh to entrust them with a project to extend the free zone. Thus, on 15 January 2017, China Merchants signed a contract for the extension of the current Djibouti free zone. This contract was accompanied by a financial and organisational package under which it granted a loan of 150 million dollars to finance the development of the free zone. The mechanics of the loan are twofold. It is first of all an asset management structure (Khor Ambado Free Zone Company) in which the shares are divided between the Djiboutian State (60%), China Merchants (30%) and the Port of Dalian (10%). Secondly, it is a management and maintenance structure of the free zone (East Aden Holding Company), which is of course composed of the emanation of the Djiboutian Port Authority (40% of the shares), but also of a joint venture (60%) registered in the free zone representing China Merchants (40%), the port of Dalian (15%) and IZP (5%) (see Pairault, 2019).

Appendix 3: The Haite Group

Li Zaichun, the creator of the Haite group, whose given name means “new spring,” that is to say “rebirth,” is a member of the Chinese Communist Party, a “high ranking” military engineer who received training in France at Aérospatiale and did internships in the United States (Federal Aviation Administration) and in Germany (European Joint Aviation Authorities). His entrepreneurial venture was based on the idea that China should have modern aircraft maintenance centres on its own territory which could accommodate and repair Airbus and Boeing aircrafts.

Haite was created in Sichuan province in November 1992 as a public company (a collective company, *i.e.* under the supervision of a local government, usually sub-provincial) before being incorporated in July 1999 into a private limited company, and then, in September 2000, into a joint-stock company which, seven years later, was listed on the Shenzhen stock exchange on the market reserved for SMEs. The current share of public capital in its registered capital is not clear. The name “Haite”, composed of two characters – commonly meaning “sea” *hai* and “special” *te* – has no precise meaning; it was chosen for its phonetic proximity to the expression HiTec in English.

The group's expansion seems to have taken place mainly through mergers and acquisitions. In 2017, the group was expected to manage 48 subsidiaries. In 2008, at the age of 67, Li Zaichun retired from the group’s management in favour of his son, Li Biao. At this point, the family held a little less than 18% of the group shares. The Haite Group is at the forefront of the movement for integrated development of military and civilian industries *min can jun* launched by Xi Jinping in 2016 to modernise the Chinese army. Despite this involvement and its connections (including with Aérospatiale), Haite did not obtain a licence to produce H135 helicopters (Airbus Helicopters), nor the contract for the 100 helicopters which was won by a consortium of Chinese public companies.

Two sub-subsidiaries of the group are active in Singapore (2015) and Ireland (2016). These are aircraft charter companies created in response to a recommendation from the Chinese government in 2015. Li Biao has said that he seeks partnerships and has the necessary funds to do this. This statement could explain his Moroccan venture for which, *a priori*, his past did not prepare Haite (Baidu, 2017; Guowuyuan, 2015; Haite, 2016, 2017; Zhang and Li, 2017; Pairault, 2017: 144).

Appendix 4: List of Chinese characters used in the text except for references

Chanye qu 产业区

Chanye yuanqu 产业园区

Da zhi lou 达之路

Dìzhí qíngkuàng tèbié zāogāo 地质情况特别糟糕

Feizhou zhu chao, neng fou chenggong yin feng 非洲筑巢，能否成功引凤

Guojihua 国际化

Guoyou qiye 国有企业

Hai 海

Haite 海特

Jin-Fei 晋非

Jingfei 劲飞

Jingji tequ 经济特区

Jigong jinli, hushi xinyong, jian li wang yi 急功近利、忽视信用、见利忘义

Jingwai jing mao hezuo qu 境外经贸合作区

Min can jun 民参军

Minying qiye 民营企业

Shuai shou zhang gui 甩手掌柜

Te 特

Tongguo queren kaohe 通过确认考核

Women “tequ” 我们“特区”

Yi shi tong ren 一视同仁

Zhu chao yin feng 筑巢引凤

Zouchuqu 走出去

Zunji shoufa guannian danmo, shehui zeren bu zu 遵纪守法观念淡漠、社会责任不足

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