

# THE NATIONAL INTEREST OF CHINA IN THEIR ECONOMIC COOPERATION WITH THE GAMBIA

<sup>1\*</sup>Omar Samba, <sup>2</sup>Ebrima Jatta

<sup>1</sup>University of Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta

<sup>1</sup>omsamba@gmail.com

## **Abstract**

*This paper aims at finding out the national interest of China in conducting economic cooperation with the Gambia from 2016. Relying on qualitative inquiry, this research is informed by the theoretical concepts from national interest. In terms of national interest, the political aspect of the national interest of Morgenthau and the economic aspect of Donald E. Nuechterlein is used to analyze the national interest of China in the Gambia. To answer the research question: What is China's national interest in their economic cooperation with the Gambia? With the qualitative research method, primarily and secondary data are collected through documentation and in-depth interview. The research finds that China has political and economic interests in the Gambia. Politically, China's interest in the Gambia is clearly stated in the joint communique signed between China and the Gambia when they were resuming their diplomatic relations in 2016. As a form of this agreement, the Gambia is supporting the One-China principle by not opening official relations with Taiwan. Finally, China retains an economic interest to secure the Gambian market for Chinese products and natural resources for Chinese manufacturing industries. Most importantly, is the port of the Gambia which has a strategic location in the west Africa region and is crucial to the China's belt and road initiative. China has become one of the major sources of financial support for the Gambia since resuming economic cooperation in 2016. This financial support includes giving loans, grants, aid, and trade. As can be seen from the analysis of the dependency perspective, this research shows that China uses its loans and grants to monopolized the Gambia market for Chinese goods and Chinese investment which likely creates contracts for Chinese companies and provide job opportunities for Chinese citizens.*

**Keywords:** national interest, China, The Gambia, economic cooperation, one-china principle.

## **Introduction**

On 1st October 1949, the People's Republic of China was established, China and most countries in Africa established ties among themselves because of the historical

experience they both shared from the colonialism of the capitalists and imperialists (Lahtinen, 2018). The shared history in fighting against colonialism and imperialism and strive for national

independence and economic revitalization. The shared history was the main motive behind China's political support to African countries. China supported most of the African liberation movements to fight against the colonialists in the African continent. A year after the Asia-Africa Conference that was held in Bandung, Indonesia, China makes its first diplomatic ties with Egypt in 1956 which was later expanded to other African countries (Lahtinen, 2018).

After a long-term diplomatic relation with nearly most of the African countries. In the 1990s, the diplomatic relations between Africa and China shifted from ideology to more economic oriented. The trade between China and Africa accelerated from \$10.5 billion in 2000 to \$40 billion in 2005 and \$166 billion in 2011. In terms of trade, China became the major trading partner with the African continent outstanding the USA and Europe (Lahtinen, 2018).

Africa and China have long term political and economic affairs since the past decade which has grown rapidly recently. From 2000 to 2008 trade between Africa and China has grown by 1000 percent. China is heavily investing in Africa and supporting developmental projects which

have increased the economic relation between Africa and China (Mlambo, Kushamba, & Simawu, 2016).

China has been and still using the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), which was found in 2000 to strengthen the China – Africa cooperation. The FOCAC is organized every three (3) years to bring together leaders of African countries that have diplomatic ties with China and the Chinese leaders. The forum is important to China and Africa because, during the FOCAC trade, cooperation, aid, and grants are discussed. So, the importance of the FOCAC is to help the smooth running of China-Africa engagement (Mlambo, Kushamba, & Simawu, 2016)

The Gambia is on the virtue of recovering her economy after a twenty-two (22) years of an authoritarian regime, which ended at the end of 2016. The GDP of the Gambia expected to grow by 5.4% from 2017 to 2018. To boost its economy, Gambia depends largely on tourism and trade, agriculture, financial services, and insurance, which expanded by 10% in 2018. The Gambia is a coastal economy country; therefore, its economy depends mostly on agriculture and foreign aid (Wahome, 2019).

As of 1974 to 1995, China had strong diplomatic relations with The Gambia. However, Gambia's surprising announcement that it had inked a diplomatic relationship with China on Taiwan (ROC) back in 1995. This has led China to terminate its long diplomatic relations with The Gambia. The PRC (mainland China) runs its diplomacy on a one-China policy that automatically shuns all countries recognizing the breakaway Taiwanese government (Mendy, 2018).

Since The Gambia cut ties with China from 1995, Gambia and China didn't have any diplomatic relations until the later end of Yahya Jammeh's regime, who cuts relations with Taiwan in 2013 and resume all diplomatic relation with China in 2016 (Saine & Gold, Gambia to cut ties with Taiwan, China says unaware, 2013). With the change of government after the presidential election in 2016 from Yahya Jammeh to the new president of The Gambia Adama Barrow, who normalized and straighten the diplomatic ties between Gambia and China and also attended the FOCAC that was held in Beijing (2017). Since then the Gambia and China's diplomatic relations have advanced in many fields like economics, trade, investment,

technology, infrastructure construction, human resources development, and financial aids (Mendy, 2018).

The Gambia which is a coastal economic country has its economic backbone on agriculture including the sea. The export of the Gambia in 2017 has increased by 8.5% to \$54.9 million and which fish exportation range at the second mainly primary products. In 2017 fish export range to 21.6% of the total exports (Wahome, 2019). From 2016, Chinese fishmeal factories have started investing in the Gambia, catching fish with big fishing trawlers, which are processed in these Chinese fishmeal factories and exported to China. These factories are been accused of exploiting the Gambia sea and take all the fishes in the river (Gbadamosi, 2018).

Recently, some young people of Gunjur village protested against the Chinese fishmeal factory named Golden Lead Factory in Gunjur for environmental pollution. The resident complained of bad smell from the Chinese fishing factory, the Golden Lead Chinese Company and the same company polluted the nearby river by dumping their discarded products in the river. This activity by the Chinese factory has also affected tourism as tourists couldn't

visit the polluted area because of the bad smell (Gbadamosi, 2018).

China became one of the major sources of financial support for Africa, which includes giving loans, grants, and aid. The Gambia is among the African countries that receive loans, aid, and grants from China, through the FOCAC summit, in turn, the Gambia will support the “One China Policy” and will not institute official relations or diplomatic relations with Taiwan (Mendy, 2018).

In the Gambia, The Chinese companies have also engaged in construction or infrastructural sectors by building roads and bridges in the Gambia. This building of roads and bridges happened after the president of the Gambia Adama Barrow visited China, where Gambia and China signed series agreements with China in 2017. These agreements include developmental assistance in the building of roads and bridges, loans, and trade agreements (The Voice, 2018).

China has been funding and constructing Bridge and Roads, Conference Hall, and the expansion of the Gambia National Port. One of the projects is the Bridges and Roads project which is

launched in December 2018. This project is the three-years Upper River Region (URR) Bridge and Road project, Funded through a grant of Eighty Million US Dollars (US\$80,000,000) by the People’s Republic of China. The expansion project has been planned to ease movement and enhance economic activity within the region (Barrow, 2019).

The Gambia has also taken a loan that is amounted to Twenty-Five Million US Dollars (US\$25,000,000) concessionary loan from China to enhance the National Broadband Network (NBN) and also to improve the internet service in the Gambia (Barrow, 2019).

There are many debates on China’s involvement in Africa, some scholars argued that China is exploiting Africa's natural resources. Whilst, other scholars argued otherwise. Like Mlambo, Kushamba & Simawu (2016) argued that China’s investment in African countries are contributing to the deindustrialization of Africa and also that China is trying to control the African market for Chinese goods and service (2016) and today in The Gambia, Chinese products has dominated the local market.

Mlambo suggested that for the China-Africa relationship to be a “win-win game”, African leaders including The Gambia should make a reform of its policy agreements with China. Ironically, African countries still need China in terms of loans, aid, and other financial supports. Africa relies on China for development purposes such as economic development, and infrastructural development. China and Africa need each other for their national interests, as China also relies on Africa’s natural resources for its economic growth while Africa needs China to help financially by giving out loans, foreign aid, and grants (Mlambo, Kushamba, & Simawu, 2016)

Furthermore, as there is little research on Gambia and China relations especially on the economic aspect, therefore I deem it very necessary to make research on this issue in answering the research question, what is China’s national interest in their economic cooperation with the Gambia? This paper will focus on finding out China’s national interest in their economic relations with the Gambia, besides, it shall investigate the China-Gambia relationship from 2016.

## **Conceptual Framework**

### *National Interest*

In this paper, the concept of national interest is used to find out and also explain China’s national interests in holding economic cooperation with the Gambia from 2016.

National Interest is a concept in International Relation that is used widely, but it is the most difficult notion that has no formal, rigorous definition (Potvorov, 1994). National Interest is one of the most significant key concepts in International relations. States in international relations are perpetually engaging with one another with the motive of fulfilling or securing their national interests. Each state’s foreign policy is developed and based on its national interest, and they act to secure or archive its national interest (Potvorov, 1994). The formulation of foreign policy is based on the national interest of a state. Therefore, the national interest should be clear, fixed, and politically bipartisan. Each state in the international arena has a desire for power and this is driven by the behavior of the state.

Morgenthau, one of the founding fathers of the realist school of international

relations. In his work, Morgenthau explains national interest by first explaining the concept of interest. According to him, interest is well-defined in terms of power. The concept of power includes economic, ethnics, aesthetics, and religion. So, therefore, the interest of states in the international arena is to acquire power (Burchill, *The National Interest in International Relations Theory*, 2005).

According to Morgenthau, the international arena is primarily a strive for power between states, therefore to him, national interest is the strategy and economic capability to gain power, but he additional, stated that the definition of power could change at some point in time meaning that sometimes economic power will be more relevant for states while sometimes military power will be more relevant (Burchill, *The National Interest in International Relations Theory*, 2005). Morgenthau's political interest, which explains that each state or nation protecting or securing its political, physical, and cultural entity. He claims that the fundamental national interest of a state is to protect its political, physical, and cultural identity (Morgenthau, 1951).

To understand and analyze the national interest of a state only the above definition is not enough. Thus, the aspect of national interest Donald E. Nuechterlein (1976) in his work identified and divides national interest into four (4) basic interests as follows

*Defense/ security interests:* the protection of states and its citizens against the threat of physical violence directed from other states, or externally inspired threat to its system government

*Economic interests:* the improvement of the nation-state's economic well-being in their affairs with other states.

*World order interests:* the preservation of an international economic and political order in which the nation-state might be secure, and in which its citizens and trade may function peacefully beyond its borders.

*Ideological interests:* the security and continuance of a set of values which the people of a nation-state share and believe to be unanimously good (Nuechterlein, 1976).

According to Frankel's definition of national interest, He divided it into two (2) broad categories: Objective and subjective approaches. For Frankel, the objectives

approach defined or explain national interest as a notion that is determined by some objectively definable principles and Subjective approach understand national interest as a continually transforming diverse set of subjective references (Frankel, 1970).

Thus, using the realist perspective of national interest states decisions on pursuing their national interest can be regarded as a rational choice, which is fixed and permanent. There are some limitations to explain and analyses the concept of national interest, the realist approach can be particularly helpful in examining visible phenomena of international politics with regards to the content of interests that are usually regarded as material forces.

Consequently, under a realist framework, examines the national interest of China in its economic cooperation with the Gambia, focusing on the political aspect of Morgenthau; and the economic aspects of national interests of Neuchterlein. With this, it is expected to discover China's objective national interests in the Gambia.

### **Methodology**

Qualitative research method is used in this research. Qualitative research is a

research strategy that puts more emphasis on words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data (Bryman, 2012) The method or technique that was used in the study to collect data focused on two methods namely: interviews and documentations. The researcher purposively targeted certain informants, who are experts, and have experience in the field of Sino-Africa relations. Five (5) interviews were conducted, in which four (4) of them are scholars or researchers in the field of international relations and economy, focusing mostly on China- Africa relations and a Gambia government official. Documentation includes the following minutes of a meeting, websites, case notes, mission statements, newspapers, policy documents, available literature, etc. which are in line with the research topic (Hancock, Ockleford, & Windridge, 2009).

The type of data that are collected in this research is primary and secondary data. The primary data includes government documents and official speeches obtained from the government of the Gambia or government of the People's republic of China through their official websites. The secondary data were obtained from library sources, an online database like jstor, and

reliable websites. Many academic journals have provided online versions, which can be found in online databases with the university account.

### **The National Interest of China in Its Economy Cooperation with The Gambia**

States engage with each other in the international system and build bilateral or multilateral diplomatic relations base on their national interest and they make sure that their national interest is secure. As lamented by Munafrizal Mana “National Interest remains the main reason for countries to involve in international relations and have international cooperation with other countries” (Manan, 2017).

Historically, Since China first had contact with African countries during the Bandung Conference in 1955, that is where China saw some common ground and empathy for African countries, as they share the same experience and the same history of colonialism and imperialism by the capitalist. They all when through the struggle for independence after the second world war. With these shared experiences, China in 1964 issued the “Eight Principle of Foreign Economic and Technological

Assistance” to aid African countries. China used this aid as an instrument to also promote its political interests (Sun, 2014).

China has been supporting many African countries during their struggle for independence and during their post-independence period. This has brought China's relation to a group of African countries. One of the most visible and famous foreign aid of china to Africa is the Tanzania-Zambia railway. According to Sun (2014) in the 1970s, Chinese foreign aid highly contributed to building diplomatic relations with a bunch of African countries, about nineteen countries including the Gambia (Sun, 2014).

The Gambia has been shifting between China and Taiwan since Gambia’s independence in 1965. In 1968, The Gambia had bilateral relations with Taiwan and this was motivated because The Gambia and Taiwan have similar experiences and a lot in common. Stated Bukhari Sillah and Mohammed Jammeh, the Gambia get into a relationship with Taiwan because the Gambia sees Taiwan as a good example and they both have common similarities. Gambia and Taiwan are both agrarian countries with a resource-poor country. They are both curved by the neighboring



countries that are more powerful than them. They both have the only sea as their only access to the rest of the world and both Gambia and Taiwan adopted democratic free-market policy. This are some of the factor or similarities that led the Gambia to choose Taiwan over China (Sillah & Jammeh, 2007) this has prompted the 2005 agreement of agricultural technical cooperation between the government of Taiwan and The Gambia. Among the things in the agreement is the extension of technical assistance for development of rice production and tidal irrigation system. Also, training nominated Gambian personnel's in a study tour or seminars on agricultural technology.

China plays a vital role in helping many African countries during this period of post-independence and also helping African nations that were struggling for independence. The role that China plays in helping many African countries brings China into diplomatic relations with many African countries after their independence. Until 1971 when the Gambia broke up with Taiwan and start bilateral relations with China. This was also motivated by the involvement of China in many African countries that had a strong relationship with

China that influence The Gambia to shift its relation from Taiwan to China (Jeng, 2006-2016: *The Gambia's Foreign Policy: The gradual shift toward China and Gulf*, 2018).

In 1995 when the AFPRC government overthrow and took over. Jammeh's government broke diplomatic ties with China and resume diplomatic relations with Taiwan. The diplomatic relations of the Gambia and Taiwan went up to the ambassadorial level with diplomatic respective in Taipei and Banjul. Taiwan took over all Chinese interest sectors in The Gambia and provide support for The Gambia. They provide assistance in all fields that China was doing for the Gambia expect? in sport. Taiwan offers grants and loans to the government of the Gambia, while The Gambia help in promoting the international recognition and sovereign nation of Taiwan (Sillah & Jammeh, 2007)

After 18 years of diplomatic ties with Taiwan. In 2013, the government of the Gambia announced that they will cut all ties with Taiwan with immediate effect saying that "this decision has been taken in our strategic national interest" (Saine & Gold, *Gambia to cut ties with Taiwan, China says unaware*, 2013). The Gambia remains neutral between China and Taiwan, until

2016 The Gambia resume ties with China instead of Taiwan.

As stipulated by Burchill (2005) “the national interest came to be seen as an explanatory and evaluation tool” (Burchill, *The National Interest in International Relations Theory*, 2005). To finding out the national interest of China in the Gambia, the concept of national interest as an analytical tool will be used to analyze China’s interest base on three distinguished aspects: Political interest, economical interest, and security interest.

### ***Political Interest***

China's political interest has been a long-standing interest in which China build its diplomatic relations on. This has gone a lot way back in history since 1949 and the end of the Chinese civil war. This is when both China and Taiwan claimed they are representing the whole of China. After the formation of the one-china principle, the government of the People’s Republic of China (mainland China) declared that “This government is the sole legitimate government representing the entire people of the People's Republic of China. It is ready to establish diplomatic relations with all foreign governments that are willing to

abide by the principles of equality, mutual benefit, and mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty.” (A. White Paper: *The One-China Principle and the Taiwan Issue: The Taiwan Affairs Office and the Information Office of the State Council*, 21 February 2000, 2000).

For 13 years from 1995 – 2013, The Gambia that was recognized Taiwan as a sovereign state and established diplomatic relations. During this period the Gambia has been advocating and supporting Taiwan in the international community like the UN. Taiwan has used its diplomatic relations with a few African countries to sure a seat in the UN again. In 2007, The Gambia with other four (4) African countries had a gathering in Taipei, and they make a declaration that “As a sovereign country, Taiwan should not be deprived of its right to participate in the United Nations, the World Health Organization and other international organizations,” (Taiwan: *Summit Results in Support for UN Bid*, 2007).

The antagonistic international recognition and establishing diplomatic ties between China and Taiwan, on the base of who is the legitimate representative of the Chinese people either the People’s Republic of China or the Republic of China rely on

their international recognition and support from their allies.

During reestablishing diplomatic ties and cooperation in 2016, The Gambia and China had signed a joint communique and The Gambia affirmed China that they will respect and support the one-china principle and declare that the People's Republic of China is only China in the world. As indicated in the joint communique:

“The Government of the Islamic Republic of The Gambia recognizes that there is only one China in the world, and that the Government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legal government representing the whole of China and that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory. The Government of the Islamic Republic of The Gambia undertakes not to establish any official relations or engage in any official contacts with Taiwan. The Government of the People's Republic of China appreciates this position of the Government of the Islamic Republic of The Gambia.” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, People's Republic of China, 2016)

More importantly, The Gambia also affirmed that they will not establish any diplomatic and official relations with

Taiwan and recognized Taiwan as part of China. This is an important interest for China as they want the reunification of China and Taiwan. This is very paramount to china as the Gambia has been flip-flopping its diplomatic ties between China and Taiwan since its independence. China is doing everything possible to see that Countries like The Gambia not to switch again by giving huge foreign aid and economic assistance. Since resuming diplomatic relations from 2016 to 2018, China has given much developmental aid to the Gambia.

An example is the \$50 million grant for the building of the international conference hall signed on September 14th, 2017 (Jeffang, 2017), and also the Chinese \$165 million HFO project signed on 21st April 2017. This project was signed by between the National Water and Electricity Company (NAWEC), The Gambia, and Chinese Sinohydro Corporation. This project is aiming at providing an HFO Power Plan that will improve, provide an adequate and stable power supply in the Great Banjul Area with a capacity of more than 60MW. During the signing ceremony, the minister of Energy and Petroleum of the Gambia stated that the project if

implemented successfully, will increase accessibly to electricity, stable, and affordable power supply which would also lead to the establishment of more businesses and industries. According to Mrs. Xiaomin, the technical component of the project that was finalized includes the generation component of heavy-duty fuel oil power plant, transmission and distribution lines, and high and medium voltage substations (Baldeh, 2017).

Africa has about 54 countries which accounted for more than one-quarter of the UN members. Therefore, China relies heavily on the diplomatic cooperation and support of African countries on issues in the multilateral and international forums. China relies on Africa countries including the Gambia to vote and support its agendas then arouse in the UN and other international forums. (Sun, 2014)

Most importantly, China wants to end Taiwan's diplomatic ties with the Gambia. China didn't want the Gambia to have diplomatic ties with Taiwan again. The Gambia was the only a few African countries that have diplomatic relations with Taiwan. Lamented by Sun (2014) that "For Beijing, it is a matter of fundamental regime legitimacy that Africa embraces the One

China policy and accepts Beijing rather than Taipei as the only lawful representative of China." (Sun, 2014)

In an interview with Mr. Jeng, he argued that "China needs The Gambia more than the Gambia needs it. It needs The Gambia in order to counter Taiwan's influence, especially now that Taiwanese defiantly and decisively voted for Tsai-Ingwen" (Jeng, 2020)

However, China has won the diplomatic antagonistic between them and Taiwan in the African continent and is gradually pushing Taiwan out of Africa. Almost all African countries are having diplomatic relations with China instead of Taiwan. As of 2018, the only African country that still maintains ties with Taiwan is The Kingdom of Swaziland (Kawashima, 2018).

Therefore, this political interest of China can be categorized as a secondary interest to serve to guard its position and its international dominance over Taiwan.

### ***Economic Interest***

As argued by many scholars that china's engagement in Africa swift from ideology to more economic oriented and China has become the largest trading partner

for African countries including the Gambia. As stated by Lahtinen (2018), In the 1990s, the relationship between China and African shifted from ideology to more economic oriented. The trade between China and Africa accelerated from \$10.5 billion in 2000 to \$40 billion in 2005 and \$166 billion in 2011. China became the largest trading partner with the African continent outstanding the USA and Europe (Lahtinen, 2018).

China and African countries have a long-term relation politically and economically since the struggle for independence in Africa. After the Chinese 'going out' initiative. China becomes more economically oriented. Evidently, from 2000 to 2008 trade between Africa and China has grown by 1000 percent. China is heavily investing in Africa and supporting developmental projects which have increased the economic relation between China and Africa (Mlambo, Kushamba, & Simawu, 2016).

The longstanding friendly relationship between China and African makes Africa the top priority to the 'going out' initiative. China upon realizing the market potential in Africa as Africa is the second-largest continent. Chinese

manufacturing industries enjoy the unique advantage of producing textiles, electronics, and other products at a relatively low price, which fits the market demand of the less-developed African countries. This was because after the financial crisis in 2008, the demand for Chinese goods in the western markets has limited and China deemed the African market as an alternative for the export destinations for Chinese manufactured goods. This brings China to be the largest trading partner with Africa surpass United States (Sun, 2014).

One of the most important economic interests of China in the Gambia is the Port of the Gambia. The port of the Gambia is located at a very strategic location in West Africa. The port was established in 1972 and it plays a significant role in the trade and distribution of cargo to neighboring countries, some of which are landlocked countries like Mali, Guinea Bissau, Senegal, and Guinea Conakry. Giving the strategic and geographical location of the Gambia and the port. The Gambia becomes proximity to as many as six countries in West Africa. In the dissertation of Ismaila Malang Bojang, He stated that The Gambia dubbed as the gateway to the outside world

and the supermarket of the sub-region (Bojang, 2000)

The port of the Gambia, which is located in the Atlantic Ocean connects the sub-region countries to Europe, America, and other African countries. The port is well-known in West Africa as a re-export center to the sub-region countries, such as Senegal, Mali, Guinea Bissau, and Guinea Conakry. Therefore, China having economic cooperation with the Gambia is very important to China because it will give access to the Port of the Gambia. And also, most importantly, the port of the Gambia is in line with the belt and road initiative of China.

The Chinese belt and road initiative proposed in 2013 to boost Chinese trade across the world through railways and ports. The belt and road initiative consists of a land-based Silk Road Economic Belt running from China's western parts towards Europe and the Middle East, and the 21st Maritime Silk Road that links China's coastal parts to the South Pacific and Australia and Europe and Africa through the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean and the Arctic (Suokas, 2018).

Just after China and The Gambia resumed diplomatic and economic cooperation a Chinese state-owned Communications construction company (CCCC) made a bid of about \$160 million for the expansion and upgrade of the Gambian ports (GlobalSecurity.org, 2017). This shows how important is the port of the Gambia to China and its belt and road initiative. The port is at the mouth of River Gambia is that the main and most navigated river in west Africa. The port is considered strategic potential because of its easy access to the Atlantic shipping lanes this is crucial for china's economic growth and its belt and road initiative.

According to Sidi, a former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Gambia and he is an economist, argued that the port of the Gambia which is very important to Chinese belt and road initiative is one of the most important interests of China and further argued that The Gambia is taking loans from China and should The Gambia defaulted of Chinese loan Sidi argued that the Gambia Port can be forfeiture to China (Sanneh, 2020).

Since the Gambia and China resume relations and have economic cooperation, according to the annual trading statistics

2017 of the Gambia. China continued to be the main source of imports from Asia, representing 36.4 percent of total imports from the region (Ministry of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration & Employment, 2017).

Among other economic interests of China to the Gambia is it brought investment opportunities for Chinese investors. The Gambia has many economic potentials in several sectors such as infrastructure, tourism, agribusiness, education, and tourism. Tourism is one of the essential sectors that contributes to 18% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the Gambia (Klomegah, 2018). After resuming ties Chinese investor in agriculture and fishery industry has escalated. Four (4) Chinese Fishmeal factory established in the Gambia that engages in catching and processing fish in the Gambian river to export it to China. Golden Lead is one of four Chinese-owned fishmeal plants currently operating out of the Gambia. Two others – the JXYG factory in Kartong and the Nassim fishmeal company in Sanyang – have both re-opened in 2018 after temporary closures following complaints about their waste disposal methods (Summers, 2019).

The Chinese government used concessional loans, aid, and grants to promote investment in African including The Gambia. Since 2016, The Gambia enjoys loans, grants, and developmental projects from the Chinese government. In turn, this has a form of creating business opportunities for Chinese construction companies and contractors. Sun (2014) stated that Africa is the second-largest service provider for Chinese service contractors (Sun, 2014) and most of the Chinese grants and developmental projects are facilitated by a Chinese company.

Almost all Chinese funded projects in the Gambia are implemented or implementing by Chinese state-owned companies. A typical example is the \$50 million Chinese grant for the construction of the international conference center was the first assistance the Gambia received from China after resuming ties. The project is contracted to China Jiangsu Provincial Construction Company Ltd. and the project management team will comprise China South-West Architectural Institute Corporation and the Ministry of Transport, Works, and Infrastructure (Jeffang, 2017).

The economic interest of China in the Gambia can be identified as primary interest

or vital interest because this is essential to China for its development and economic well-being.

### **Conclusion**

The Gambia, one of the smallest and the poorest countries on the African continent. After gaining its independence from Britain, the government of the first republic of the Gambia gets into diplomatic relations with Taiwan because of their common similarities. Both countries adopted democracy and open market systems, both are surrounded by its neighboring country and both depend on agriculture as the main source of economic growth. These are some of the factors that compel The Gambia to prefer Taiwan over China. The Gambia supported Taiwan in voting against China in the UN Resolution 2758 in 1971.

Four (4) years later after voting against China, The Gambia broke its diplomatic relations with Taiwan and build relations with China. This was because of the support China was doing for other African countries. The Gambia was also influenced by other African countries that had ties with China. During this period the

Gambia had enjoyed huge foreign aid from China, such as building national places and support its agricultural and health sectors. Until the change of government in 1994, when the AFPRC took over by military overthrow. In 1995, this regime switches again to Taiwan and broke up with China.

The Gambia resumed diplomatic relations with China in 2016, after it broke up its Thirteen (13) years of diplomatic ties with Taiwan in 2013. This was the uncertainty of the Gambia flip-flopping between China and Taiwan. Resuming diplomatic ties with China from 2016 – 2018 attracted the attention of Chinese investors and contractors in The Gambia.

Therefore, to find out why China held economic cooperation with the Gambia is vital to look at China's national interest using the concept of national interest. The research finds out two (2) aspects of interests of China in its diplomatic and economic relations with The Gambia, these are the political, and economic aspects.

From the political aspect, china's interests in the Gambia is clearly stated in the joint communique signed between China and The Gambia when they resumed diplomatic relations in 2016 during the visit



of the foreign minister of The Gambia to China. It is stated that the Gambia will support the one-china principle that is to say that the Gambia agreed and accepted that there is only one China that represents the whole of Chinese people and Taiwan is a territory under China. China wants to push out Taiwan from Africa therefore it is important for China to have ties with the Gambia so that The Gambia would not go back to Taiwan. Another important political interest of china is the support in the international. China relies heavily on its African allies for support of its agenda and issues in the multilateral organizations like in the UN. The Gambia though small but it's a member of the UN, so therefore, China relies on its votes to support in the international arena and multilateral organizations specially to encounter Taiwan.

From economic aspects, though the population of the Gambia is just two (2), million people. That's means that the market of the Gambia is very small compared to other Africa countries. China has become the largest trading partner of the Gambia according to the 2017 trade statistics of the Gambia. Resuming ties with the Gambia brings investment and business

opportunities for Chinese companies and nationals to explore the natural resources of the Gambia for the economic growth of China. Another important economic interest of China in The Gambia is the Gambia Port which very paramount to China's belt and road initiative. The port will open a gateway for Chinese products to smoothly get into West Africa through the Atlantic Ocean. This will connect China to other west African countries.

The relationship is built based on mutual benefits and respect for the sovereignty of each country. The huge investments, foreign aid, and loans of China to the Gambia have risen alarm of China's involvement in The Gambia. As lamented by Sidi Sanneh in the interview that China is notoriously irresponsible when it comes to its treatment of the environment and it is manifesting itself in its investment program in The Gambia, particularly in the fisheries sectors. The country's fish stocks are depleting at an unsustainable rate that is impacting negatively on the local population. Fish which is an important part of the local diet is now in short supply and has thus become expensive and beyond the reach of ordinary Gambians. Chinese fish-meal factories are located in tourist/coastal

areas and have become a major source of pollution, threatening the tourism sector that contributes 25% of the country's GDP (Sanneh, 2020).

Therefore, China held a diplomatic relation, or economic cooperation with the Gambia is important for China because China has the technology and the technical

expertise to help The Gambia meet her infrastructural demand. The Gambia, on the other hand, can help China as the latter embark on consolidating herself in the global political and economic system.

## References

- A. White Paper: The One-China Principle and the Taiwan Issue: The Taiwan Affairs Office and the Information Office of the State Council, 21 February 2000. (2000). *China Report*, 277-292.  
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/000944550003600211>
- Baldeh, S. S. (2017, April 25). *NAWEC signs \$165M electricity project with China*. Retrieved from The Point newspaper:  
<http://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/article/nawec-signs-165m-electricity-project-with-china>
- Barrow, A. (2019, September 19). State Opening of the Year 2019 Legislative Year. Banjul, The Gambia.
- Bojang, I. M. (2000). *Proposals to transform the Port of Banjul into a transshipment and distribution centre with special emphasis on feederign*. Malmo, Sweden: World Maritime University.
- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods* (Fourth ed.). New York: Oxford University Press Inc.
- Burchill, S. (2005). *The National Interest in International Relations Theory*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.  
doi:10.1057/9780230005778
- Frankel, J. (1970). *National Interest*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gbadamosi, N. (2018, September 15). *Gambia's tolerance for Chinese fish factories tested as Beijing courts poor African nation with deals*. Retrieved from South China Morning Post:

- <https://www.scmp.com/news/world/africa/article/2164352/gambias-tolerance-chinese-fish-factories-tested-beijing-courts>
- Gbadamosi, N. (2018, September 11). *How Chinese Fishmeal Factories Leave Gambia Hungry*. Retrieved from World crunch: <https://www.worldcrunch.com/world-affairs/how-chinese-fishmeal-factories-leave-gambia-hungry>
- Greig A., H. D. (2007). *Challenging Global Inequality: Development theory*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hancock, B., Ockleford, E., & Windridge, K. (2009). *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*.
- Jackson, R., & Sorensen, G. (2005). *Pengantar Studi Hubungan Internasional*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- Jeffang, K. (2017, September 15). *President Lays Foundation Stone For \$50 Million International Conference Centre*. Retrieved from Foroyaa Newspaper: <https://foroyaa.gm/president-lays-foundation-stone-for-50-million-international-conference-centre/>
- Jeng, A. (2018). *2006-2016: The Gambia's Foreign Policy: The gradual shift toward China and Gulf*. Dalarna University.
- Kawashima, S. (2018, August 22). *Taiwan's Growing Diplomatic Isolation*. Retrieved from The Diplomat: <https://thediplomat.com/2018/08/taiwans-growing-diplomatic-isolation/>
- Klomegah, K. K. (2018, April 26). *Economic and Investment of Gambia*. Retrieved from Modern Diplomacy: <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2018/04/26/economic-and-investment-potential-of-gambia/>
- Lahtinen, A. (2018). *China's Diplomacy and Economic Activities in Africa: Relations on the Move*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing AG.
- Manan, M. (2017). Foreign Policy and National Interest: Realism and Its Critiques. *Global & Strategies*, 175-189.

- Mendy, D. (2018, September 21). *A Look Back At The China-Gambia Diplomatic Relationships*. Retrieved from Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry: <https://www.gcci.gm/a-look-back-at-the-china-gambia-diplomatic-relationships/>
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, People's Republic of China. (2016, 03 17). *JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ BETWEEN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA AND THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA ON RESUMPTION OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS*. Retrieved from Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the People's Republic of China: [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjb\\_663304/zzjg\\_663340/fzs\\_663828/gjlb\\_663832/2994\\_664004/2996\\_664008/t1348575.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/zzjg_663340/fzs_663828/gjlb_663832/2994_664004/2996_664008/t1348575.shtml)
- Ministry of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration & Employment. (2017). *ANNUAL EXTERNAL TRADE STATISTICS REVIEW OF THE GAMBIA, 2017*. Banjul: MOTIE.
- Mlambo, C., Kushamba, A., & Simawu, M. B. (2016). China-Africa relations: what lies beneath? *The Chinese Economy*, 257-276. doi:10.1080/10971475.2016.1179023
- Morgenthau, H. J. (1951). *In Defence of the National Interest: A Critical Examination of American Foreign Policy*. New York.
- Nuechterlein, D. E. (1976). National Interests and Foreign Policy: A Conceptual Framework for Analysis and Decision-making. *British Journal of International Studies*, 2, 246-266.
- Robinson, T. W. (1961). National Interest. In J. N. Rosenau, *International Politics and Foreign Policy* (pp. 184-185). New York.
- Saine, P., & Gold, M. (2013, November 15). *Gambia to cut ties with Taiwan, China says unaware*. Retrieved from Reuters News: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-africa-china-taiwan/gambia-to-cut-ties-with-taiwan-china-says-unaware-idUSBRE9AE04Z20131115>

- Sillah, B. M., & Jammeh, M. E. (2007). *AERC Scoping Studies on China-Africa Economic Relations: The Gambia*. Banjul: Africa Economic Research Consortiu.
- Summers, H. (2019, March 20). *Chinese fishmeal plants leave fishermen in the Gambia all at sea*. Retrieved from The Guarding News: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/mar/20/chinese-fishmeal-plants-leave-fishermen-gambia-all-at-sea>
- Sun, Y. (2014). *African in China's Foreign Policy*. Washington: Brookings.
- Suokas, J. (2018, July 27). *China invests in 42 overseas ports under Belt and Road project*. Retrieved from GB Times: <https://gbtimes.com/china-invests-in-42-overseas-ports-under-belt-and-road-project>
- The Voice. (2018, December 17). *Barrow unveil major projects of bridges, roads in rural Gambia*. Retrieved from The Voice newspaper: <https://www.voicegambia.com/2018/12/17/barrow-unveil-major-projects-of-bridges-roads-in-rural-gambia/>
- Wahome, J. (2019). *African Economic Outlook*. African Development Bank Group.