

## Research Project

### Dissertation Morell: Security abroad: How the People's Republic of China defends its interests in the Horn of Africa

#### Project funded by own resources

**Project title** Dissertation Morell: Security abroad: How the People's Republic of China defends its interests in the Horn of Africa

**Principal Investigator(s)** [Weber, Ralph](#) ;

**Project Members** [Morell, Selina](#) ;

**Organisation / Research unit**

Europainstitut / European Global Studies (Weber)

**Project start** 01.08.2022

**Probable end** 31.07.2026

**Status** Active

This dissertation interrogates the apparent irreconcilability between the People's Republic of China's (PRC) long standing non-interference policy and the ongoing expansion of its economic, political, and military presence abroad. Specifically, it aims to understand how the PRC mediates the tensions arising from this irreconcilability, and those that may emerge between the different aspects of its overseas presence. To explore how these tensions manifest on the ground, the dissertation focuses on the Horn of Africa (HoA) region<sup>1</sup>, particularly the Republic of Djibouti. The research question is as follows: Does the PRC's intensified economic, political and military presence in the HoA region challenge the credibility of existing foreign policy practices and conceptualizations related to the PRC's broader non-interference doctrine? Djibouti represents a unique case study to address this question, as it is the locus of the PRC's very first overseas military base while also hosting multiple projects within the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) framework. Furthermore, the PRC has also increasingly made use of 'non-traditional' means of securitization beyond military actors and infrastructures in Djibouti to stave off threats against its overseas nationals. Building on recent advances in Critical Security Studies and writings on the CCP/PRC's global influence networks, this dissertation takes the securitization of the PRC's overseas nationals and their economic and political embedment in Djibouti as a point of departure to study potential rifts in the PRC's non-interference policy. Unlike other diaspora groups, the PRC's overseas nationals are closely managed by the PRC and the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Methodologically, two approaches are pursued: On the one hand, the dissertation reconstructs the institutional links between the Chinese presence in Djibouti and the party-state through Chinese language open source research. On the other hand, it employs a field-based Qualitative Network Analysis (QNA) to examine the co-presence of PRC-associated people, companies, security details, and the military base in their local contexts. This research makes a key contribution to scholarly debates concerning an increasingly powerful and globally present PRC. Crucially, it also provides valuable insights for the formulation of government policy that addresses the political frictions that emerge between the PRC's non-interference doctrine and its expansive economic and political-military strategies overseas.

**Financed by**

Other funds

**Add publication**

**Add documents**

**Specify cooperation partners**