

## **DECODING DIPLOMATIC NARRATIVES: CHINA'S POLITICAL DISCOURSE WITH AFRICAN PORTUGUESE-SPEAKING COUNTRIES – A FOCUS ON ANGOLA**

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## Abstract

This study contributes to a broader research project examining China's high-level political discourse (HLPD) with Portuguese-speaking countries (PSCs), with the present study focusing specifically on the Republic of Angola. Previous analyses within the project have addressed China's engagements with Portugal and Brazil (Peng et al., 2025). Political discourse serves as a strategic tool through which leaders shape public perceptions of foundational principles, diplomatic priorities, and policy orientations - an approach that is explicitly articulated in Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy. As China's Head of State, Xi Jinping has consistently emphasized the construction of a narrative system aimed at enhancing the country's international communication capacity and projecting a comprehensive national image. The Annual Report on the Development of Cooperation between China and Other Countries (2017–2019) documents a marked intensification of high-level exchanges between China and PSCs. Against this setting, the present study investigates China's HLPD in its diplomatic engagements with Angola, representing the African PSCs within the broader project framework. The overall research design categorizes PSCs into three regional groupings: Ibero-American, Asian, and African. Angola is examined as a case study within the African grouping. This study draws on official Chinese sources, primarily the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and analyses English-language translations of high-level statements and communications. A total of 23 high-level political communication events (HLPCEs) between China and Angola - featuring President Xi Jinping, former Premier Li Keqiang, and Foreign Minister Wang Yi - were examined. These events, spanning from March 2013 to October 2022, were subjected to a discourse-semiotic analysis to decode their textual content and identify recurring narrative elements. The findings reveal a consistent emphasis on mutual and sustainable cooperation, particularly in the domains of trade and technology, alongside efforts to foster interpersonal ties and joint development. The analysis also highlights a discernible trend toward the deepening of bilateral relations between China and Angola. The study is structured as follows: (1) Introduction; (2) Literature Review; (3) Critical Discourse Analysis; (4) Methodology; (5) Discussion and Findings; and (6) Conclusion..

## Keywords

Angola, China, Political Discourse, Semiotics, International Relations, Portuguese-speaking Countries.

## Resumo

Este estudo contribui para um projeto de investigação mais amplo que examina o discurso político de alto nível (DPAN) entre a China e os países de língua portuguesa (PLP), sendo o presente estudo focado especificamente na República de Angola. Análises anteriores no âmbito do projeto abordaram o envolvimento da China com Portugal e Brasil (Peng et al., 2025). O discurso político constitui uma ferramenta estratégica por meio da qual dirigentes moldam percepções públicas sobre princípios fundamentais, prioridades diplomáticas e orientações políticas - uma abordagem explicitamente articulada no Pensamento de Xi Jinping sobre a Diplomacia. Na qualidade de Chefe de Estado, Xi Jinping tem enfatizado de forma consistente a construção de um sistema narrativo destinado a reforçar a capacidade de comunicação internacional do país e a projetar uma imagem nacional abrangente. O Relatório sobre o desenvolvimento da cooperação entre a China e outros estados (2017–2019) - documenta uma intensificação das relações bilaterais marcada das trocas de alto nível entre a China e os PLP. Nesse contexto, o presente estudo investiga o DPAN da China nas suas interações diplomáticas com Angola, representando o grupo africano de países de língua portuguesa no âmbito do projeto mais amplo. O desenho geral da investigação categoriza os



PLP em três agrupamentos regionais: ibero-americano, asiático e o africano. Angola é analisada como estudo de caso dentro do agrupamento africano. Este estudo baseia-se em fontes oficiais chinesas, principalmente do Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros, e analisa traduções para a língua inglesa de declarações e comunicações de alto nível. No total, foram examinados 23 eventos de comunicação política de alto nível (ECPAN) entre a China e Angola - envolvendo o Presidente Xi Jinping, o ex Primeiro Ministro Li Keqiang e o Ministro dos Negócios Estrangeiros Wang Yi. Estes eventos, decorridos entre março de 2013 e outubro de 2022, foram submetidos a uma análise discursivo semiótica para decifrar o conteúdo textual e identificar elementos narrativos recorrentes. Os resultados revelam uma ênfase consistente na cooperação mútua e sustentável, particularmente nos domínios do comércio e da tecnologia, bem como esforços para promover laços interpessoais e o desenvolvimento conjunto. A análise também evidencia uma tendência discernível para o aprofundamento das relações bilaterais entre a China e Angola. O artigo estrutura-se da seguinte forma: (1) Introdução; (2) Revisão da Literatura; (3) Análise Crítica do Discurso; (4) Metodologia; (5) Discussão e Resultados; e (6) Conclusão..

### Palavras-chave

Angola, China, Discurso Político, Semiótica, Relações Internacionais, Países de Língua Portuguesa.

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### **Introduction**

The economic foundations of China–Angola relations are pivotal to understanding the broader political dynamics that underpin their bilateral engagement. Since the acceleration of Angola’s post-war reconstruction in the early 2000s, oil-backed credit lines extended by China’s policy banks have financed a substantial portion of the country’s infrastructure development. This arrangement established a resource-for-infrastructure model that strategically linked Angola’s export profile to China’s energy security needs (Corkin, 2013). Consequently, trade - particularly in crude oil - emerged as the centrepiece of bilateral political discourse, accompanied by narratives emphasizing project contracting and macro-level economic cooperation.

By 2022, China accounted for over 40 percent of Angola’s total exports, underscoring the enduring economic interdependence and the centrality of commodities in the relationship

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<sup>2</sup> Abbreviations: CDA – Critical Discourse Analysis; HLPCE – High-Level Political Communication Events; HLPD – High-Level Political Discourse; HLPN – High-Level Political Narrative; HoS – Head of State; PRC – People’s Republic of China; PSCs – Portuguese-Speaking Countries



(International Trade Administration, 2024). Understanding how political discourse is shaped by these material foundations is essential for analysing China's strategic posture in Lusophone Africa and Angola's reciprocal diplomatic responses. This interdependence also informs the structure of diplomatic engagement, shaping discursive themes around development, economic diversification, and governance reform.

Building on this foundation, high-level visits and multilateral forums have served as key platforms for strategic signalling. During Premier Li Keqiang's 2014 visit to Luanda, Angola was characterized as an "important cooperative partner," with Li noting that "both sides are each other's opportunity for development" - a formulation that encapsulates official narratives of complementarity, mutual benefit, and practical cooperation (State Council of the PRC, 2014). Similar rhetorical patterns were evident during the 2018 Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), where President Xi Jinping and President João Lourenço reaffirmed their commitment to deepening cooperation and expanding exchanges across economic and social sectors (FOCAC, 2018; Xinhua, 2018). These diplomatic moments positioned Angola as a central actor within China's Africa policy and linked it to the institutional framework of China-Portuguese-speaking Countries cooperation, anchored in Macao - a platform established in 2003 to facilitate trade, finance, and policy coordination with Lusophone partners (Alden, 2017).

Beyond commodity trade, China's political discourse has increasingly incorporated themes such as people-to-people connectivity, technology transfer, and governance exchange. In his remarks at the 2018 FOCAC Summit, President Xi Jinping reiterated China's willingness to "deepen cooperation in all areas" - a phrase that, alongside recurring expressions like "mutual benefit" and "win-win," reflects a stable and strategic lexicon in China's high-level diplomatic rhetoric (FOCAC, 2018). While oil and infrastructure remain the economic core of the relationship, both Angolan and Chinese officials have increasingly emphasized industrialization, agricultural modernization, and economic diversification. These themes collectively reframe development cooperation as a long-term strategic agenda rather than a series of discrete projects (Xinhua, 2018). Such discursive shifts are significant, as they not only legitimize existing ties but also articulate future pathways for cooperation in terms that are intelligible to both governmental and public audiences.

This study therefore investigates how China articulates its high-level political discourse (HLPD) in its engagements with Angola, analysing the rhetorical strategies and thematic patterns that structure bilateral communication. The research window is March 2013 to October 2022, aligning with the first two terms of China's Head of State. The corpus consists of 23 high-level political communication events (HLPCEs) involving the Head of State, the Head of Government, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, drawn from official English-language sources and analysed using a discourse-semiotic approach to decode textual content and recurrent narrative elements. This Angola case is part of a broader project on China's HLPD with Portuguese-speaking countries and follows the same design and coding strategy. Section Two briefly reviews the China-Angola relationship and the theoretical frameworks that inform the analysis. Section Three presents the semiotic approach to interpreting HLPD and explains how the discourse is constructed within the



bilateral interaction framework. The conclusion synthesizes China and Angola’s cooperative preferences, future development trends, and potential challenges for the partnership.

## Literature Review

The primary objective of this research is to examine how Chinese political actors strategically integrate multiple discursive elements to construct coherent political narratives, with particular emphasis on high-level political speeches.

Discourse extends beyond simple conversations: it represents a structured sequence of statements and devices that form what is known as a “discourse world” or “discourse ontology.” Through carefully chosen language and terms, discourses create a narrative framework in which ideas and information are organized to present a particular version of reality, which the audience (or receiver) interprets (Chilton, 2004). Political discourses are especially influential, as they organize and sometimes manipulate information, events, and actions into stories: defining who did what, to whom, when, where, and why. The elements of these stories, known as discourse referents, each serve a specific role within their context. Political discourses thus provide the foundation for narratives that advance particular political agendas. In other words, combining different discourses into a storyline creates a platform for building and promoting political narratives (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; Costa, 2020 a, 2023). The power of discourse lies in its capacity to shape, steer, and influence public beliefs and perceptions of society and the world. Political discourses leverage this capacity to transform abstract concepts into reasoning and justifications for political actions (Chilton, 2004; Tannen et al., 2015). Such discourses can significantly affect public behavior and decision-making on issues such as national identity, security, societal structures, and governance. Empirical corpus-assisted analysis of longitudinal public texts demonstrates that sustained lexical patterning influences national representation over time, reinforcing the analytical view that political discourse functions as a site where meanings are structured and stabilized (Yu & Feng, 2025).

**Figure 1. The Formation of Political Narratives**

Types of Political Discourses ▶	Political Narrative ▶		Audiences ▶ Perceptions	
Congratulatory messages Political speeches Meetings Editorials (newspapers and magazines) Interviews (...)	Storyline Discourse referents “Good stories” Ideologies Power structures	Intended to foster positive public perspectives	Simplicity Appealing Positive Seeking retribution, Adherence support	and General Public Decision-makers Media Outlets
Source: Authors				



Narratives are carefully constructed assemblages of discourses, selectively organized into coherent, logical, and persuasive stories (Livholts & Tamboukou, 2015). Language and rhetoric are essential in shaping these narratives, weaving together events, characters, and settings to reveal layers of meaning beyond mere facts. As Hinchman and Hinchman (1997) and Riessman (2008) emphasize, the power of narratives lies in their ability to “select, organize, and emphasize various discourse elements,” thereby influencing how an audience interprets and engages with the information presented.

Building on this, political narratives are particularly influential because they consist of logical sequences of political discourses that fit within specific contexts, often arranged chronologically. Driven by political intentions, they deploy characters, settings, and plots to simplify complex issues, shaping public perceptions and individual stances. Effective political narratives combine logical structure with emotional appeal, transforming political matters into compelling, accessible stories. By intertwining political discourses with narratives, political actors frame their messages in ways that resonate with audiences, generating strong effects on public opinion and decision-making.

Understanding the dynamic interplay between what politicians intend to communicate (the narrative) and the reality of political events requires careful narrative analysis (Shenhav, 2006, p. 247). As Costa (2020 b, p. 27) argues, “every political or social fact needs a story,” and a well-constructed story can capture the audience’s attention and provoke engagement. In the case of the Belt and Road Initiative (B&RI), narratives play a crucial role in shaping public perception, guiding how political events and intentions are communicated and understood, and ultimately driving responses and participation in political discourse.

While narrative analysis focuses on structure and storytelling, discourse analysis examines the language itself. Adding a semiotic perspective allows the analyst to explore the signs and symbols embedded in texts, revealing deeper, layered meanings. This combined approach is particularly effective for dissecting political narratives, as it uncovers the strategic use of symbols in shaping messages. This analytical convergence is also reflected in studies of strategic storytelling in government communication, which show that symbolic framing plays a central role in cultivating legitimacy and aligning audiences with foreign-policy agendas (Arceneaux, 2024). It clarifies how narratives are constructed, conveyed, and interpreted, and offers insight into political communication’s role in shaping public opinion and the broader political landscape.

For example, Sengul’s (2019) study of Australian right-wing populism demonstrates how linguistic choices and symbolic imagery create compelling narratives around “national identity,” “otherness,” and “crisis.” These narratives shape public sentiment by positioning national identity against perceived threats, thereby mobilizing support and influencing political discourse. Similarly, El-Nawawy and Elmasry (2016) use semiotics to analyze the “strongman” leadership archetype, highlighting the interplay between visual and textual symbols. In China’s high-level political communications, symbolic terms such as “prosperity,” “harmony,” “common destiny,” and “(consultative) democracy” are frequently used to infuse Confucian and patriarchal ideals into political discourse. Corpus-



based analysis of Chinese diplomatic speeches further shows that the systematic repetition of official terminology contributes to processes of political legitimation and audience alignment (Zhang & Tang, 2024). These words tap into cultural values and social norms to enhance the speaker's appeal and legitimize authority. A semiotic lens enables the analyst to unravel these meanings, revealing the ideologies, power structures, and cultural frameworks that drive political narratives into action.

Ultimately, semiotic discourse analysis provides a comprehensive tool for understanding how political entities use language and symbols to shape meaning, establish authority, and influence societies. This approach deepens comprehension of the complex role that political rhetoric plays in shaping both the political landscape and public consciousness, as Costa (2020 a, pp. 27–28) argues:

*"Through the merge of spaces, time and channels, political discourses became a product to be received by peers and by the public sphere in general. Media and political communication share attention and develop different channels of communication, which are mingled. The globalization of the communicational flows made of international communication a much attractive way to design international relations. Discourse became a crucial factor for the international narrative of the countries."*

Semiotic discourse analysis has been used to examine the rhetoric of various political figures, including former U.S. President Reagan (Lewis, 1987), former Israeli Prime Minister Sharon (Shenhav, 2005), Russian President Putin (Bacon, 2012), and Indonesian President Widodo (Surdiasis & Eriyanto, 2018). Empirical corpus-based critical discourse analysis of English-language Chinese diplomatic speeches identifies recurring official lexicon as a structuring element in narrative construction (Lu & Zhou, 2024). Despite extensive research at the global level, political discourses and narratives in China remain underexplored. This study seeks to address this gap by shedding light on Chinese political communications. Specifically, the research conducts a qualitative analysis of Chinese political discourse in relation to Angola. The selected samples consist of political speeches, which serve as public declarations of political intent directed toward specific audiences. As a form of political discourse, these speeches can become central to the development of political narratives. By organizing these speech samples chronologically, the study illustrates how a comprehensive narrative emerges, considering a broader political context.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis**

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) treats language as social practice that is both shaped by and constitutive of power relations and ideological commitments. It asks how texts position actors, authorize courses of action, and naturalize particular worldviews through recurring linguistic choices and argumentative structures (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000; Fairclough, 1992, 1995; van Dijk, 1993; van Leeuwen, 2008; Wodak & Meyer, 2001).



This approach is appropriate for high level political discourse because leaders' speeches, joint statements, and official media are not simple records of events. They are carefully designed interventions whose wording organizes expectations among domestic and foreign audiences, and whose uptake is mediated by institutional channels that lend authority and reach. Applications of Fairclough-inspired critical discourse analysis to state policy and institutional genres demonstrates how modality, evaluation, and intertextual framing operate together to articulate and legitimize governmental positions within broader political contexts (Gulestø et al., 2025).

Building on this vantage point, the present study reads interstate communication as patterned selections from a shared repertoire of terms and moves. In official Chinese sources, formulations such as "mutual respect", "win-win cooperation", "common development", and "non-interference" appear as more than stylistic flourishes. They function as signifiers that project roles for leaders and ministries, cue policy instruments, and prompt audiences to interpret bilateral engagement through a cooperative frame. A semiotic lens complements CDA by treating these tokens as signs with social functions and by asking how their repetition across events builds a recognizable storyline that is intelligible to multiple audiences (van Leeuwen, 2008). Related work has applied a semiotic reading to Chinese political communication with Portuguese-speaking partners, which underscores the value of integrating discourse analysis with attention to signs and symbols in official texts.

The Angola case requires situating discourse within a political economy that connects oil-anchored finance, large project contracting, and long-term development pledges. Scholarship on Angola's credit lines and construction sector explains how state policy, policy-bank lending, and enterprise activity became entwined during the reconstruction decade, creating institutional pathways through which official discourse about cooperation and development is made actionable (Alves, 2013; Corkin, 2012, 2013; Wolf, 2017). This structural configuration continues to shape Angola's fiscal and development landscape, as International Monetary Fund (2025) analysis underscores the economy's ongoing exposure to oil price volatility, while World Bank (2025) assessments foreground debt sustainability as a defining parameter of medium-term planning. These constraints delineate the material conditions under which political language is produced and circulated. Critical discourse analysis does not reduce texts to these conditions, yet it treats them as the context of production within which words like cooperation, enterprises, relations, and development can do legitimating work. This linking of textual form to institutional setting clarifies why high-level statements often pair abstract values with concrete vehicles such as investment promotion, enterprise participation, or specific cooperation mechanisms.

Operationally, the analysis draws on an Angola-specific corpus assembled from authoritative public sources in English, including statements and readouts from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, official summit texts associated with the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, and reports by Xinhua that consolidate leaders' remarks. The corpus is organized as high-level political communication events that involve the Head of State, the Head of Government, and the



Minister of Foreign Affairs during the window from March 2013 to October 2022. This structured repository, referred to as corpus of Chinese HLPD towards Angola, provides the unit of analysis for the CDA-semiotic reading in this study. As the corpus consists of English-language institutional texts, translation and circulation are incorporated into the analysis rather than assumed to be neutral processes of transfer (Zhao & Wang, 2025).

The procedure proceeds in two linked stages. First, it treats each event text as a purposeful artefact and codes lexical items that anchor roles, instruments, and goals in the discourse. Recurring tokens that function as signs are identified and grouped into thematic nodes, with attention to co-occurrence that indicates how tokens are bundled into familiar policy formulas. Second, it reads across events to reconstruct the higher order narrative that the texts assemble over time, asking how official news copy, summit declarations, and ministerial releases circulate the same repertoire to varied audiences. This design relies on reproducible coding of public documents and avoids any inference about hidden motives that cannot be grounded in the texts themselves. Such staged coding enables diachronic analysis of representational change through systematic lexical tracking (Yu & Feng, 2025).

Two clarifications arise from the research design. The first pertains to scope: the application of critical discourse analysis in this study is limited to examining the pragmatic functions of language in official sources. It does not extend to inferring authorial intent beyond what is explicitly conveyed in the texts. The second concerns sequencing: Section 2.1 outlines the analytical framework and source base but does not present empirical findings or interpretive trajectories. These are reserved for the subsequent analysis. This structure ensures that interpretation remains methodologically grounded, avoiding premature conclusions while situating the study firmly within the Angola-specific material and the institutional channels through which that material is produced and disseminated (FOCAC, 2018; MFA, 2014, 2015; Xinhua, 2018).

## Methodology

The study is structured in three distinct phases. First, data collection was conducted within a defined timeframe, followed by the encoding of selected texts into line codes. Second, high-level political discourse (HLPD) was analysed using grounded theory to identify dominant thematic patterns. Third, these HLPD codes were assembled to construct the overarching high-level political narrative (HLPN) (Table 1). This methodological design enables a systematic interpretation of bilateral communicative events. Through semiotic decoding of HLPD, the study uncovers recurring narrative structures and identifies areas of potential cooperation between China and Angola, thereby clarifying shared strategic objectives and plausible trajectories for future development. Such progression from coding to cross-event synthesis facilitates diachronic reconstruction of representation through systematic textual annotation (Yu & Feng, 2025).



## Step 1 Collecting and organizing sources of HLPN relating to High-Level Political Communicative Events (HLPCEs)

In this section, the analytical model used to examine China's political narratives toward Angola is outlined (Table 1). The aim is to standardize how events are sampled, categorized, and prepared for coding so that narrative patterns can be compared consistently across the research window.

Step 1A: The research period is March 2013 to October 2022, aligning with the first two terms of China's Head of State (HoS) (Figure 3). This window is appropriate for two reasons: first, China and Angola further consolidated their strategic partnership during these years under the broader framework of China–Africa cooperation; second, under Xi's leadership, China's external profile expanded, making it analytically relevant to observe how China's discourse was received among Portuguese-speaking African partners.

<b>Figure 3.</b> <i>The Chinese HoS's Terms in Office</i>		
First term	Second term	Third term
From March 2013 to March 2018	From April 2018 to October 2022	From November 2022 to November 2026
Source: Authors		

Step 1B: The sample includes only HLPCEs featuring three core Chinese principals: HoS President Xi Jinping, former Head of Government Li Keqiang, and Foreign Minister Wang Yi—given their agenda-setting roles. Political relevance guided inclusion. The final Angola dataset contains 23 HLPCEs, capturing the breadth of high-level interaction. Illustrative entries include Xi's 2015 talks with President José Eduardo dos Santos, Wang Yi's 2018 joint press appearance with Minister of External Relations Manuel Domingos Augusto after talks in Luanda, and a 2022 exchange between Xi Jinping and President João Lourenço.

Step 1C: Records of bilateral engagement were compiled from authoritative Chinese websites in English, notably the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Xinhuanet. HLPCEs were classified as: (1) speeches and messages, (2) meetings, and (3) newspaper articles. This typology structures the corpus and supports consistent interpretation of China–Angola interactions across event types.



## Step 2 HLPD analysis of each HLPCE – Employing NVivo 14 for textual analysis, and transforming content of HLPCEs into HLPD textual codes (Table 1)

Step 2A: NVivo 14 was used for import, coding, and thematic visualization. Parent nodes were created for each period (for example, “Period 1: March 2013–March 2018,” “Period 2: April 2018–October 2022”), with child nodes to capture finer categories such as “Cooperation,” including sub-themes like “Global Cooperation” and “Practical Cooperation.” Queries for word frequency and co-occurrence were run to surface recurrent lexemes, thereby refining theme boundaries and ensuring interpretive depth within the China–Angola narratives under review. NVivo-assisted coding facilitates transparent reduction and systematic documentation of analytical decisions in qualitative content analysis (Nicmanis, 2024).

Step 2B: Sentiment labels (positive, negative, neutral) were assigned to coded references. This layer enriches the analysis of both parent and child themes, allowing the study to track how tonal variation aligns with shifts in topic salience across events and periods.

Step 2C: Matrix coding queries generated periodized outputs—Period 1 (Table 2) and Period 2 (Table 3)—and a consolidated overview (Table 4) presented in the conclusion. This enables a granular view of theme intensity and sentiment across the two phases of the China–Angola discourse, highlighting change and continuity over time.

## Step 3 Decoding of HLPN via Semiotics

Step 3A: Discourse analysis is integrated with semiotics at both the text and narrative levels. Semiotic discourse analysis identifies meanings, symbols, and communicative devices within specific statements, while semiotic narrative analysis traces how these elements combine to form the overarching HLPN that structures China–Angola relations.

Step 3B: The final interpretive pass evaluates cooperation priorities, development pathways, and challenges in the relationship, and it outlines plausible directions for future engagement based on how the narrative is assembled and repeated across the corpus.

**Table 1.** Research Methodological Design  
(China → PSC: The Case of the Republic of Angola)

<b>Text Analysis</b>	→	<b>High Level Political Discourse Analysis (HLPD)</b>	→	<b>High Level Political Narrative Identification (HLPN)</b>
Themes, patterns, meanings and language structures	☑	The social and political decoding and relationships of the language: Audiences, keywords, figures of style, adaptation and	☑	The assembly the analysis of several discourses and unveil the story they tell all



	<p>impact (negative, positive or neutral). "(...) <b>discourse as a particular way of talking about and understanding the world</b> (or an aspect of the world)" (Jørgensen &amp; Phillips, 2002, p. 1).</p>		<p>together. Narratives (stories) (...) <b>are discourses with a clear sequential order that connect events in a meaningful way</b> for a definite audience and thus offer insights about the world and/or people's experiences of it. (Hinchman &amp; Hinchman, in Elliott, 2005, p. 5)</p>
<p><b>Step 1 – Preparation:</b></p> <p><b>Data Selection, Collection, Organization and Sources</b></p>	<p><b>Step 2 – HLPD Analysis of Each HLPCE</b></p>		<p><b>Step 3 – Semiotic Decoding - The HLPN</b></p>
<p><b>1A:</b></p> <p><u>Setting</u> the <b>study timeline.</b></p>	<p><b>2A:</b> <u>Identify</u> the <b>keywords frequency</b> in each HLPCE, to establish the theme correlation with the dominant message of the discourse.</p>	<p>Nvivo 14 Data Analysis Software</p>	<p><b>3A:</b></p> <p><b>(ALL CE TOGETHER)</b></p> <p>↓</p> <p><u>Apply</u> the semiotic decoding of CE, <b>to unveil the HLPN</b>, as the result of the constructed sense of whole HLPD.</p>
<p><b>1B:</b></p> <p><u>Select</u> all relevant <b>High-Level Political Communication Events (HLPCE)</b> originated in China and politically addressed to the Portuguese Republic: (1) Speeches and Messages (SM); (2) Meeting Transcripts (MT); (3) Newspaper Articles (NA).</p>	<p><b>2B:</b> <u>Decoding keywords</u> adapted or not and its perceived impact in (1) Positive; (2) Neutral; (3) Negative.</p>		<p><b>3B:</b></p> <p><u>Identify</u> the China's cooperative preference, future development tendency and challenges may meet during engagement with Portugal.</p>
<p><b>1C:</b></p> <p><u>Identify</u> the HLPCE <b>official sources</b> in English.</p>	<p><b>2C:</b></p> <p><u>Evaluate</u> <b>keywords</b> in the political context.</p>		
<p>Source: Authors – Version 25.</p>			



## Discussion and Findings

This section analyses the thematic content of high-level political discourses (HLPDs) between China and Angola during the first two terms of President Xi Jinping's leadership (March 2013–March 2018 and April 2018–October 2022). Across this period, notable shifts are observable in key themes aligned with the three analytical perspectives outlined earlier. These shifts are systematically presented in Tables 2 and 3, which illustrate the evolving narrative structures and discursive priorities within bilateral engagements.

### Between March 2013 and March 2018

Across the first term of China's Head of State, the Angola corpus shows a tightly clustered lexicon around four parent themes: cooperation, enterprises, relations, and development shown in Table 2, with "cooperation" most salient (59 references; 19 positives, 40 neutral), followed by "enterprises" (42; 17 positives, 25 neutral), "development" (34; 11 positives, 23 neutral), and "relations" (21; 8 positives, 13 neutral). All four are cast in positive or neutral tones, underscoring a consistently affirming diplomatic register. This pattern, derived from NVivo matrix queries on 15 HLPCEs in Period 1, provides a comparable base for interpreting shifts in emphasis across periods.

Cooperation. The discourse positions cooperation as the master frame that organizes other motifs (enterprises, relations, development). In Johannesburg on December 4, 2015, Xi Jinping told President José Eduardo dos Santos that China–Angola ties were "at the best level in history," adding that both sides should "convert the consensus reached by the two heads of state into more impetus for win-win cooperation and common development." (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China [MFA], 2015). This formulation binds bilateral aims ("win-win") to a development telos ("common development"), a coupling that recurs in the period's neutral references to "China–Africa cooperation" and "bilateral cooperation." The prominence of this vocabulary is not purely rhetorical: Angola was one of the largest users of resource-backed credit during 2004–2018, with World Bank analysis noting that Africa's RBLs were concentrated in a handful of borrowers and that Angola accounted for nearly half of the identified total by value, linking cooperation discourse to large-ticket finance for infrastructure and oil-sector projects (Mihalyi, Hwang, Rivetti, & Cust, 2022). Together, the corpus and the finance evidence make cooperation the semantic hinge of Period 1: it frames goals (mutual benefit), instruments (policy-bank credit lines), and outcomes (development). (MFA, 2015; Mihalyi et al., 2022).

**Table 2.** Analysis on China and Angola HLPN from March 2013 to March 2018

Parent theme	Most frequently mentioned child themes	Total number of references (among 15 events)	Sentiment		
			Positive	Negative	Neutral
Cooperation	China-Africa cooperation; bilateral cooperation; international cooperation; trade cooperation; win-win cooperation.	59	19	0	40
Enterprises	Chinese enterprises; financial institutions and enterprises; China-funded enterprises.	42	17	0	25
Relations	China-AU relations; China-Africa relations; bilateral relations.	21	8	0	13
Development	In-depth development; development partner; development overseas; social development; raw materials development.	34	11	0	23

Source: Authors

Enterprises. Enterprise talks functions as the operational arm of the cooperation frame. During his Luanda visit (May 9, 2014), Premier Li Keqiang explicitly linked state-to-state cooperation to firm-level action: "The Chinese government supports capable and reputable Chinese enterprises to invest in Angola, participate in Angola's economic and social development and boost local employment" (The State Council of the PRC, 2014). In the same trip he met representatives of the local Chinese business community, reinforcing the idea that enterprises and financial institutions are the transmission belt of policy (Xinhua, 2014). Academic work clarifies the institutional mechanics behind this discourse: Angola's "Angola mode" of resource-backed credit knits together government, policy banks, and SOEs to deliver infrastructure for oil - an architecture that naturally surfaces "enterprises" in public statements (Corkin, 2013; Alves, 2013). Earlier sectoral studies show how Chinese contractors' presence created procurement channels and selective local linkages in construction, again mapping the discursive salience of enterprises to concrete project pipelines (Corkin, 2012). Read against Table 2, the frequent, mostly neutral references to "Chinese enterprises" and "financial institutions and enterprises" thus signal an implementation logic: cooperation is articulated at the political level; enterprises make it legible on the ground. (The State Council of the PRC, 2014; Xinhua, 2014; Corkin, 2013; Alves, 2013; Corkin, 2012).

Relations. References to relations legitimize this implementation with a narrative of strategic continuity. On arrival in Luanda (May 8, 2014), Li Keqiang called Angola "an important cooperative partner for China" and pledged to "expand cooperation areas... and



inject new impetus into the development of China–Angola relations” (MFA, 2014). The next year Xi’s “best level in history” remark cast the relationship as both historically elevated and forward-looking (MFA, 2015). In semiotic terms, relations acts as the ethos-building layer: it stabilizes expectations (strategic partnership), widens scope (from oil to education, health, culture), and primes audiences for pragmatic cooperation while avoiding adversarial cues. The absence of negative sentiment in Table 2’s relations node fits this ethos: the relational script furnishes the affective warrant for enterprise-led cooperation, but in a measured, low-temperature register. (MFA, 2014, 2015).

Development. Finally, development frames the purpose and yardstick of cooperation. In Luanda on January 14, 2018, Wang Yi pledged that China would “support Angola in advancing the strategy of economic diversification and industrialization,” as well as “building up its capacity for independent development” (MFA, 2018). This aligns with Xi’s 2015 emphasis on “common development,” and with scholarly accounts showing how Chinese demand and construction activity fed domestic-market formation in Angola (e.g., building materials, beverages), particularly in the post-war reconstruction surge (Wolf, 2017). Large resource-backed facilities channeled to infrastructure and selected energy projects further embed development discourse into financing modalities (Mihalyi et al., 2022). That Table 2 codes most “development” references as neutral (with a substantial positive share) reflects a pragmatic, agenda-setting tone: development is both the promised dividend of cooperation and the referent that organizes diversification narratives beyond crude. (MFA, 2018; MFA, 2015; Wolf, 2017; Mihalyi et al., 2022).

### **From April 2018 to October 2022**

As shown in Table 3 for Period 2 and building directly on Section 5(1), the April 2018 to October 2022 window compacts eight high-level political communication events into six interlinked themes: “cooperation” remained the dominant theme (18 references), closely followed by “affairs” (13) which is a category encompassing international and internal affairs, while “relations”, “development”, “support”, and “enterprises” appeared with moderate frequency. Notably, the sentiment of these discourses was overwhelmingly positive. Across the period, Chinese officials consistently struck an optimistic tone, highlighting mutual benefit and friendship. Negative sentiments were almost absent, with only a handful of references (under “support”) carrying a critical connotation – largely in the context of rejecting external interference or emphasizing challenges to be overcome. Overall, the discourse in this second period projects confidence in the China–Angola partnership, framing it as a model of South–South engagement and a cornerstone of China’s outreach to Africa.



**Table 3.** Period 2 (April 2018 to October 2022) China and Angola's HLPN Analysis

Parent theme	Most frequently mentioned child themes	Total number of References (among 8 Events)	Sentiment		
			Positive	Negative	Neutral
Cooperation	China-Africa Cooperation; practical cooperation; bilateral cooperation; the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC); investment cooperation.	18	9	0	9
Affairs	International affairs; African countries' internal affairs	13	12	0	1
Relations	China-Angola relations; bilateral relations.	8	6	0	2
Development	Common development; social economic development.	7	3	0	4
Support	Long-term support; public support.	6	4	2	0
Enterprises	Chinese enterprises.	5	3	0	2

Source: Authors

Cooperation supplies the grammar around which the other motifs are organized. At the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China–Africa Cooperation and in subsequent readouts, leaders framed Angola as a key partner and pledged to deepen “practical cooperation” across trade, infrastructure, and investment. Xi Jinping stated that China is “confident of the future of bilateral cooperation” and urged both sides to “cement political mutual trust,” converting optimism into an expectation of implementation (Xinhua News Agency, 2018). In this period, cooperation is not a free-standing value but a policy method that folds the other themes into its operational logic (FOCAC, 2018). The material basis for this confidence lies in the finance-and-contracting architecture that underwrote Angola’s reconstruction. Scholars describe how oil-anchored credit lines and state-linked contractors formed the “Angola model,” aligning ministries, policy banks, and enterprises in resource-for-infrastructure bargains that made cooperation legible in roads, power, housing, and logistics (Alves, 2013; Corkin, 2013). World Bank analysis shows Angola captured a large share of Sub-Saharan Africa’s resource-backed loans, which helps explain the persistence of enterprise and investment tokens in official phrasing during 2018–2022 (Mihalyi, Hwang, Rivetti, & Cust, 2022). The discourse rarely rehearses loan mechanics, yet its repeated pairing of cooperation with investment and construction



signals the material pipelines through which political rapport becomes visible in projects and jobs.

Affairs rises to prominence by fusing respect for sovereignty with coordination in multilateral venues. In Beijing in 2018, Xi emphasized that China “firmly supports the people of African countries in opposing foreign interference, and [in] independently choosing their path of development,” a formulation which Angolan leaders publicly welcomed (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China [MFA], 2018; Xinhua News Agency, 2018). The theme also looks outward: in 2020 Xi said China was ready to “closely coordinate and cooperate with the Angolan side on multilateral occasions and international affairs” to “jointly safeguard international fairness and justice” (MFA, 2020). Affairs thus elevates practice into doctrine and supplies a vocabulary that answers external criticism without naming critics.

References to relations are fewer than references to cooperation but carry cumulative pragmatic weight. Leaders repeatedly invoke the strategic partnership, stress continuity, and promise elevation. On the 2020 call, President Xi told President João Lourenço that “Angola is an important cooperative partner of China in Africa” and that China stood ready to “steer the direction of bilateral relations and take the China–Angola strategic partnership to a higher level” (MFA, 2020). Read semantically, relations functions as ethos: it stabilizes expectations, widens scope, and signals that the partnership is robust to shocks without recalibrating its premises.

Development acquires sharper definition as leaders reframe it from reconstruction to transformation. In January 2018, Wang Yi pledged that China would “firmly support Angola in exploring a development path suitable to its national conditions,” including “advancing the strategy of economic diversification and industrialization” and “building up its capacity for independent development” (MFA, 2018). At FOCAC the same year and again in 2020, Xi linked cooperation instruments to Angola’s plans, calling to “promote new development in practical cooperation between the two countries, and boost Angola’s economic and social development” (MFA, 2020). External work is sober about localization and downstream linkages, yet it also documents domestic-market formation in sectors aligned with the official storyline (Wolf, 2017). In this corpus, development becomes the horizon against which the sufficiency of cooperation is judged (FOCAC, 2018; MFA, 2018).

Support fuses the political and economic strands and validates loyalty through reciprocal acts. Chinese statements promised that China would “firmly support Angola” across diversification, industrialization, and stability, while Angolan statements reciprocated with endorsements of China’s positions on questions described as core interests (MFA, 2018, 2020). During the pandemic, the language of support anchored itself in observable deeds: Xinhua announced that China would “send [an] anti-epidemic medical expert team to Angola,” a move that supplied concrete referents for a consistently positive tone (Xinhua, 2020). The few negative labels coded here target third-party obstacles rather than bilateral divergence, strengthening a back-to-back posture against external turbulence.



Enterprises appear as the on-the-ground agents that translate policy into outcomes, even if the node registers fewer mentions than in Period 1. Xi said China would encourage “competent Chinese enterprises to undertake investment cooperation in Angola,” and Angolan leaders “welcome[d] more investment from Chinese enterprises in Angola,” a reciprocal signal that links commercial activity to practical cooperation (MFA, 2020; Xinhua, 2020). Official texts begin to register quality and localization by praising job creation, industrial parks, and alignment with national needs. Independent research warns that some contractors can become enclaves with limited linkages, a concern Angola has tried to address through reform, which explains why statements pair investment language with training and sustainability (Corkin, 2012).

Seen as a system, the six themes assemble a single high-level political narrative rather than six parallel tracks. Cooperation supplies the grammar; affairs articulate doctrine and international posture; relations confer ethos and continuity; development provides the horizon against which sufficiency is judged; support demonstrates reciprocal commitment; enterprises furnish the mechanism that makes the story visible in projects and jobs. The sentiment profile is overwhelmingly affirmative, and the rare negative notes are aimed at unnamed externals. Read cumulatively, the storyline suggests a mature partnership that moves beyond oil-for-infrastructure toward a development alliance grounded in sovereignty and South–South solidarity.

The cumulative effect is to turn cooperation from a declaration into a program of action. Pledges to “promote new development in practical cooperation” and to “boost Angola’s economic and social development” are coupled to support commitments to “firmly support Angola,” and to affairs language that commits both sides to “closely coordinate ... on multilateral occasions and international affairs” (MFA, 2018, 2020). In this composition, relations supply the stable frame within which development objectives and enterprise activity can be sequenced, portraying implementation not as ad hoc contracting but as an integrated pathway to common advancement.

Period 1 established a grammar of win-win cooperation and project-led rebuilding, Period 2 writes the next chapter, bundling sovereignty, multilateralism, and transformation into a more articulated script. Angola is cast as an “important cooperative partner,” Chinese leaders voice certainty about the “future of bilateral cooperation,” and both sides pledge to align instruments with national plans (Xinhua News Agency, 2018; MFA, 2020). These statements cue ministries, policy banks, and firms that the partnership’s centre of gravity is shifting from quantity to quality. The corpus therefore records a forward-leaning narrative in which vocabulary, institutional channels, and enterprise activity are braided into a single storyline of common advancement.

In sum, the April 2018 to October 2022 storyline consolidates the earlier repertoire and broadens it into a full-spectrum partnership that integrates economic delivery with geopolitical signalling. The NVivo counts and sentiment labels, the authoritative quotations, and the supporting scholarship point in the same direction: a confident narrative that treats Angola as a long-term peer in China’s Africa policy. In this sense, Period 2 reads as consolidation plus recalibration toward higher-value, locally embedded



growth and clearer joint positioning in global forums and rule-making arenas. As shown in Table 3, cooperation remains the master frame, affairs and relations furnish principles and ethos, and development, support, and enterprises provide the vehicles that make the story measurable in infrastructure, jobs, and capacity-building.

### Comparative Discussion

China–Angola high-level political discourse from March 2013 to October 2022 unfolds within a political-economy nexus that links oil-anchored finance, enterprise-led delivery, and an increasingly institutionalized strategic partnership. Authoritative statements by President Xi Jinping, Li Keqiang, and Wang Yi consistently tie cooperation to development outcomes and political trust, for example, Xi urged both sides to “convert the consensus reached by the two heads of state into more impetus for win-win cooperation and common development,” later committing to “promote new development in practical cooperation between the two countries, and boost Angola’s economic and social development,” while Wang Yi pledged that China would “firmly support Angola in exploring a development path suitable to its national conditions” and advance diversification and industrialization (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China [MFA], 2015, 2018, 2020). With this backdrop established, the next subsection reads the decade-level pattern reported in Table 4 before comparing Period 1 and Period 2 along the axes of economic cooperation and bilateral relations.

### Common Themes

This section sets the common-information baseline for March 2013–October 2022; as Table 4 shows, it is the consolidated NVivo matrix of all 23 high-level political communication events in the corpus and it enumerates the four anchor themes and their sentiment profile: cooperation (77 references), enterprises (47), development (41), and relations (29), all coded positive or neutral with no negatives, which furnishes the decade-level profile against which the period shifts are interpreted. Read semiotically, this is not an accident of phrasing but a communicative choice that normalizes the instruments of statecraft (investment promotion, contracting, trade facilitation, policy coordination) and reserves explicit affirmation for moments of reassurance, upgrade, or doctrine. In other words, Table 4 captures a calm center in which economic and political tokens point in the same direction and never contradict each other.

The co-occurrence logic embedded in these anchors is consistent. Cooperation names the work to be done; enterprises mark the transmission belt from pledges to projects; development specifies the horizon against which sufficiency is judged; relations supplies ethos and continuity. When Xi called ties “at the best level in history” and urged both sides to “convert the consensus reached by the two heads of state into more impetus for win-win cooperation and common development,” the statement paired relations-as-ethos with cooperation-as-mandate and development-as-telos, all in one move (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China [MFA], 2015).



**Table 4.** Analysis on China and Angola’s HLPN from March 2013 to October 2022

Common Parent theme	Most frequently mentioned child theme	Total number of References (among 23 HLPCEs)	Sentiment		
			Positive	Negative	Neutral
Cooperation	China-Africa cooperation; bilateral cooperation; international cooperation.	77	28	0	49
Enterprises	Chinese enterprises.	47	20	0	27
Development	Social economic development.	41	14	0	27
Relations	China-Angola relations; China-Africa relations; bilateral relations.	29	14	0	15

Source: Authors

When Wang Yi pledged to “firmly support Angola in exploring a development path suitable to its national conditions” and in “advancing the strategy of economic diversification and industrialization,” support and development were locked together to define what worthwhile cooperation would mean going forward (MFA, 2018). And when President Xi told President João Lourenço in 2020 that both sides should “promote new development in practical cooperation between the two countries, and boost Angola’s economic and social development,” while also calling to “cement political mutual trust,” the statement tied cooperation and development to relations as assurance (MFA, 2020).

The proportional story in Table 4 matters for comparison. Measured across the decade, cooperation contributes roughly two out of five anchor mentions, enterprises about one quarter, development about one fifth, and relations the remainder. That hierarchy remains intact across both periods even as emphases change. The period matrices show that the cooperation–enterprises–development–relations braid is delivery-heavy in Period 1 and quality-oriented in Period 2, but the aggregate never flips into conflictual language. Leaders’ phrasing keeps the same repertoire while shifting the centre of gravity. For example, Li Keqiang’s Luanda message that “the Chinese government supports capable and reputable Chinese enterprises to invest in Angola, participate in Angola’s economic and social development and boost local employment” welds cooperation, enterprises, and development into a single operational script (The State Council of the PRC, 2014). Later, President Xi’s promise to encourage “competent Chinese enterprises to undertake investment cooperation in Angola,” and President Lourenço’s welcome of “more investment from Chinese enterprises in Angola,” reposition the



enterprise node from EPC contracting toward investment composition and local value capture (MFA, 2020; Xinhua, 2020). The aggregate numbers reflect that rhetorical pivot without breaking the anchor hierarchy.

Table 4 also clarifies how doctrine overlays, rather than displaces, the economic core. In Period 2, two non-anchor themes - affairs and support - rise into view in the matrices, carrying sovereignty and reciprocity. Yet the decade aggregate remains anchored in cooperation, enterprises, development, and relations, and those anchors never carry negatives. When Xi stressed that China “firmly supports the people of African countries in opposing foreign interference, and [in] independently choosing their path of development,” and President Lourenço praised cooperation “without attaching any political conditions or interference in African countries’ internal affairs,” the doctrinal nodes reinforced the cooperative baseline instead of replacing it (MFA, 2018; Xinhua, 2018). This is why the aggregate feels steady even as world conditions grew more turbulent: negativity is displaced outward onto unnamed third parties, while the anchors remain positive or neutral.

Finally, Table 4 makes sense of the tone. Positives crest at visible moments of upgrade and reassurance - FOCAC cycles, leadership meetings, and pandemic-era pledges - while neutrals dominate routine references to instruments and sectors. President Xi’s assurance that China is “confident of the future of bilateral cooperation,” his promise to “promote new development in practical cooperation,” and Wang Yi’s repeated “firmly support Angola” formulation are the punctuation marks in an otherwise even register (MFA, 2018, 2020; Xinhua, 2018). The aggregate pattern thus gives us the interpretive key for reading the period shifts that follow.

### **Economic Cooperation Comparison**

Economic cooperation emerges as a unifying thread across both periods, but its emphasis and tone evolved markedly from Period 1 (March 2013–March 2018) to Period 2 (April 2018–October 2022). Economic cooperation is the grammar of action in both periods, but the meaning of delivery shifts from project throughput to investment quality and resilience. In Period 1, the matrix records 156 anchor mentions split as cooperation 59 (19 positive, 40 neutral), enterprises 42 (17 positive, 25 neutral), development 34 (11 positive, 23 neutral), and relations 21 (8 positive, 13 neutral). The cluster tells a clear story: state-to-state cooperation is translated into outcomes through firms, with development framed as the dividend and relations supplying legitimacy. Li Keqiang’s Luanda formulation - “supports capable and reputable Chinese enterprises to invest in Angola, participate in Angola’s economic and social development and boost local employment” - makes the implementation logic explicit (The State Council of the PRC, 2014; Xinhua, 2014). Xi’s 2015 line “convert the consensus reached by the two heads of state into more impetus for win-win cooperation and common development”, ties leadership rapport to executable cooperation (MFA, 2015). These are the verbs and objects that drive the Period 1 counts.



The institutional substrate behind that rhetoric is well documented. Oil-backed credit from policy banks financed large EPC contracts by state-linked firms, an arrangement often called the Angola model (Alves, 2013; Corkin, 2013). Sectoral work shows Chinese contractors established procurement channels and selective local linkages, which helps explain why enterprise and cooperation references were frequent and tonally neutral: delivery became bureaucratically routinized (Corkin, 2012). Country-level analysis of resource-backed loans (RBLs) indicates Angola accounted for a large share of Sub-Saharan Africa's stock by value, anchoring the discourse about "win-win cooperation" in visible project pipelines (Mihalyi, Hwang, Rivetti, & Cust, 2022). Period 1's development node already looks beyond reconstruction, as Wang Yi pledged to "firmly support Angola" in diversification and industrialization, and to help build "capacity for independent development," turning development into a yardstick for cooperation quality (MFA, 2018).

In Period 2, the economic lexicon holds but its predicate tightens. Cooperation remains the top anchor at 18 mentions (half positive), yet the rhetoric recasts what counts as success. In the 2020 call, President Xi promised to "promote new development in practical cooperation between the two countries, and boost Angola's economic and social development," and to "cement political mutual trust," coupling delivery to assurance during oil and pandemic shocks (MFA, 2020). The matrix shows enterprises contracting to 5 mentions, but the corpus is explicit that enterprise guidance is not retreat; rather, it is reframed as a push toward investment composition and local value capture. Xi said China would encourage "competent Chinese enterprises to undertake investment cooperation in Angola," and President Lourenço "welcome[d] more investment from Chinese enterprises in Angola," an exchange that locates firms inside a diversification agenda (MFA, 2020; Xinhua, 2020).

The development node also shifts from reconstruction dividend to transformation horizon. Wang Yi's 2018 pledge to support Angola's "economic diversification and industrialization," together with Xi's 2020 call to "promote new development," align HLPD with Angola's reform priorities under Lourenço (MFA, 2018, 2020). External scholarship tempers expectations about depth of localization, Chinese contractors can operate as enclaves, and RBLs carry cyclical risks, yet the Period 2 storyline actively moves toward quality and fit rather than raw project counts (Corkin, 2012; Mihalyi et al., 2022; Wolf, 2017). The tonal discipline persists, with positives reserved for upgrades and reassurance. Crucially, the aggregate shows no negatives attached to the four anchors; the few negatives in Period 2 appear under support and target "foreign interference," not bilateral friction. The comparative arc is therefore coherent: Period 1 institutionalizes a reconstruction-through-projects bargain; Period 2 preserves that grammar while pivoting toward investment quality, domestic capacity, and risk-aware delivery.

The continuities matter. Across both periods, cooperation remains the master frame and enterprises remain the mechanism. What changes is the centre of gravity: from EPC throughput and credit-for-infrastructure toward enterprise-led investment that is explicitly asked to serve diversification, technology transfer, and jobs. This is why the same vocabulary can credibly tell two different time-slices. In 2015, "convert the consensus... into more impetus" carried the flavour of pipeline expansion; by 2020, "promote new



development in practical cooperation” reads like a promise of composition and resilience. Both are cooperation; the metric of sufficiency has evolved (MFA, 2015, 2020).

## **Bilateral Relations and Diplomacy**

Diplomacy legitimates and amplifies the economic storyline, moving from ethos-building to articulate doctrine and reciprocal signalling. In Period 1, references to relations are fewer than cooperation and enterprises but carry decisive affective weight. On arrival in Luanda in 2014, Li Keqiang called Angola “an important cooperative partner for China” and pledged to “inject new impetus into the development of China–Angola relations,” widening scope beyond oil into education, health, and people-to-people exchange (MFA, 2014). In 2015, Xi’s superlative that ties were “at the best level in history,” coupled with his instruction to “convert the consensus... into more impetus for win-win cooperation and common development,” converts praise into program and binds political warmth to enterprise delivery (MFA, 2015). The Period 1 matrix codes all four anchors positive/neutral, and relations functions as ethos - stability without adversarial cues.

In Period 2, the diplomatic narrative retains its warmth while articulating its doctrinal commitments more explicitly. During the 2020 call, President Xi reiterated that Angola is “an important cooperative partner of China in Africa” and stated that China would “steer the direction of bilateral relations and take the China–Angola strategic partnership to a higher level,” transforming continuity into a logic of elevation (MFA, 2020). Two themes render this logic visible.

First, affairs links sovereignty to multilateral coordination. In Beijing in 2018, Xi affirmed that China “firmly supports the people of African countries in opposing foreign interference, and [in] independently choosing their path of development,” a position that Angolan leaders publicly welcomed. President Lourenço praised cooperation “without attaching any political conditions or interference in African countries’ internal affairs,” offering reciprocal validation (MFA, 2018; Xinhua, 2018).

Second, support establishes a back-to-back posture. Wang Yi pledged that China would “firmly support Angola” in its diversification and industrialization efforts, while President Lourenço “firmly supports the Chinese side’s position on issues concerning its core interests,” a pairing directed at unnamed third-party interference (MFA, 2018, 2020). During the pandemic, this support acquired a tangible referent when China announced it would “send [an] anti-epidemic medical expert team to Angola,” an instance that aligns rhetoric with concrete action (Xinhua, 2020).

The periodized reweighting mirrors the political calendar without breaking the aggregate calm of Table 4. Within the anchor set, relations rise in relative share from Period 1 to Period 2, echoing the language of elevation, while affairs become the second-most salient Period-2 node overall and support remains overwhelmingly positive with rare negatives directed at “foreign interference.” President Xi’s assurance that China is “confident of the future of bilateral cooperation” and his call to “closely coordinate and cooperate [...] on multilateral occasions and international affairs” show how relations now carry not only



ethos but also coordination (MFA, 2020; Xinhua, 2018). The diplomacy storyline thus does two jobs at once: it protects the development program with sovereignty language and amplifies it through multilateral alignment.

The comparative picture is a broadening from friendship-plus-projects to friendship-plus-projects-plus-principles. Period 1 stabilizes expectations and legitimates enterprise-led delivery; Period 2 makes those premises explicit as doctrine, elevates the partnership, and ties bilateral assurances to a shared stance in international forums. That is why the same corpus can plausibly predict the “future of bilateral cooperation,” call to “cement political mutual trust,” and promise to “take the China–Angola strategic partnership to a higher level,” while continuing to invite “competent [...] enterprises” to invest. The matrices, the quotations, and the aggregate in Table 4 point to one narrative: a trusted, mutually beneficial modernization drive, voiced in a calm register that treats disruption as exogenous and bilateral cooperation as common sense.

## Conclusion

This study asked how China’s high-level political discourse toward Angola between March 2013 and October 2022 constructs and evolves a high-level political narrative across two periods, and what that narrative reveals about the strategic trajectory of bilateral cooperation and relations. The answer is that authoritative Chinese discourse organizes recurrent tokens - cooperation, development, enterprises, relations, support, and alignment on international affairs - into a coherent storyline that moves from oil-anchored reconstruction toward a diversified, sovereigntist, and increasingly institutionalized partnership. The corpus shows that leaders’ language consistently fuses material delivery with political trust, turning economic interdependence and project execution into a legitimation script for long-term alignment. In this script, cooperation is the master frame, development is the telos, enterprises are the transmission belt from policy to projects, and relations and multilateral “affairs” supply ethos and doctrine. Read across both periods, the narrative is cumulative rather than cyclical, adding layers of sovereignty, multilateral coordination, and quality-oriented growth while retaining the lexicon of mutual benefit and South–South solidarity.

The implications for bilateral strategy are clear. The discursive braid of cooperation, development, and friendship signals a durable alignment in which each government now treats the other as a strategic constant. Analysts capture this trajectory by observing that China and Angola “see each other as necessary strategic allies for the foreseeable future” (Yoshikawa, 2025). Elite talk repeatedly pledges to “firmly support each other” on sovereignty and development choices (Xinhua News Agency, 2024), and Angola’s adherence to the One-China principle is mirrored by Beijing’s assurances that it backs Angola’s stability and diversification as a matter of principle (Xinhua News Agency, 2024). Such rhetorical solidarity maps onto practice: Luanda’s voting and coalition behavior in international fora tends to align with Beijing, while China has varied its tool kit - new investment, rescheduling, sectoral projects - to cushion Angola during adverse shocks (Forum Macao, 2017; Yoshikawa, 2025). The discursive pay-off is soft power: a positive



story about “trustworthy old friends” that helps convert repeated cooperation into long-horizon political goodwill.

Regionally, the narrative resonates beyond the dyad. Because Angola is the pivotal Lusophone economy in Africa, high-visibility wins in Luanda diffuse reputationally across the Portuguese-speaking sphere. The discourse of “mutual benefit” and visible delivery has coincided with a broader reweighting of external influence in Lusophone Africa, where China now “exerts the strongest developmental influence” in many contexts, above traditional Ibero-Atlantic actors (Peet, 2021). Forum Macao functions as a multilateral amplifier that re-packages the same themes - cooperation, development, pragmatic delivery - for Lusophone audiences (Forum Macao, 2017). The Angola storyline therefore serves a demonstration effect: a signal to peers that Chinese finance, contracting, and policy coordination can be mobilized without the conditionalities that often accompany Western engagements, or as Chinese sources frame it, to deliver growth without political strings (Xinhua News Agency, 2018).

Globally, the discourse stitches the bilateral case into Beijing’s claim to speak with and for the Global South. In set-piece moments, Chinese leaders describe the partnership as “mutual help between good friends” and exemplary cooperation “among developing countries,” casting China as a “reliable friend and sincere partner” (Xinhua News Agency, 2024). Angola’s reciprocal endorsements strengthen this projection, especially where Luanda echoes calls for an “equal and orderly multipolar world” (Xinhua News Agency, 2024). In this framing, the dyad is not an anomaly but evidence of a broader institutional imaginary: a solidaristic Global South reshaping norms of non-interference, development-centred cooperation, and a more representative multilateral order (Xinhua News Agency, 2018). This positioning incorporates Angola into a coalition narrative that amplifies China’s influence in agenda-setting arenas while enabling Angola to diversify partnerships and expand its policy space.

The forward trajectory implied by Xi’s third term is continuity with selective recalibration. The core idea of friendship, “win-win,” mutual support will persist; what shifts is the emphasis on the quality, sustainability, and localization of cooperation. With Angola entering a post-oil adjustment and seeking to upgrade value chains, Chinese discourse is already pivoting to themes of industrial policy, agricultural modernization, and technology-enabled diversification, vowing to help Angola “achieve agricultural modernization, industrialization and economic diversification” (Nyabiage, 2024). We can expect thicker references to signature concepts such as a community of shared future, as well as more explicit links to Beijing’s global initiatives. The multilateral register is likely to become more pronounced, with both parties reiterating solidarist language on multipolarity and developing-country representation (Xinhua News Agency, 2024). If previous patterns persist, forthcoming messaging will continue to tighten the alignment between political principles and enterprise implementation: directing firms to localize operations, expand training, deepen supply-chain linkages, and coordinate industrial parks and logistics corridors with Angola’s own development plans.



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