

非洲与中国研究的新方向

Mienendo Mipya kwenye Utafiti wa Afrika na Uchina

ما بين الصين وإفريقيا: مقاربات مغايرة لعلاقات متجددة

Dhel e Yam bi ok China ku Africa Ngic

Sabon matsayi a cikin nazarin Afirka da Sin

litaelo tse ncha ho ithuta Afrika le Chaena

Mitsva itsva mukudzidza kweAfrica neChina

NEW DIRECTIONS IN AFRICA-CHINA STUDIES

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Nuwe rigtings in Afrika-Sjina studies

Izinkombandlela ezintsha ekutadisheni kwe-Afrika ne-China

Novas direções no estudo da África e da China

Nouvelles orientations dans l'étude de l'Afrique et de la Chine

Ònà tuntun fún ìwàdìí lórí Aáfíríkà àti Şáínà

Edited by
Chris Alden and Daniel Large



NEW DIRECTIONS IN AFRICA–CHINA STUDIES

Interest in China and Africa is growing exponentially. Taking a step back from the ‘events-driven’ reactions characterizing much coverage, this timely book reflects more deeply on questions concerning how this subject has been, is being and can be studied.

It offers a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary and authoritative contribution to Africa–China studies. Its diverse chapters explore key current research themes and debates, such as agency, media, race, ivory, development or security, using a variety of case studies from Benin, Kenya and Tanzania, to Angola, Mozambique and Mauritius. Looking back, it explores the evolution of studies about Africa and China. Looking forward, it explores alternative, future possibilities for a complex and constantly evolving subject.

Showcasing a range of perspectives by leading and emerging scholars, *New Directions in Africa–China Studies* is an essential resource for students and scholars of Africa and China relations.

Chris Alden is Professor of IR at the LSE, UK, Senior Research Associate at the South African Institute for International Affairs and Research Associate, University of Pretoria.

Daniel Large is Assistant Professor at the School of Public Policy, Central European University, Hungary.

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Edited by Chris Alden and Daniel Large

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CONTENTS

<i>List of illustrations</i>	<i>viii</i>
<i>List of contributors</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>xiii</i>
<i>Preface: New Directions in Africa–China Studies</i>	<i>xiv</i>
<i>List of abbreviations</i>	<i>xvii</i>

Introduction	1
---------------------	----------

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| 1 Studying Africa and China | 3 |
| <i>Chris Alden and Daniel Large</i> | |

From China in Africa to global African studies	37
---	-----------

- | | |
|--|----|
| 2 From field work to academic field: Personal reflections on China–Africa research | 39 |
| <i>George T. Yu</i> | |
| 3 African studies in China in the twenty-first century: A historiographical survey | 51 |
| <i>Li Anshan</i> | |
| 4 Themes and thoughts in Africanists' discourse about China and Africa | 73 |
| <i>Kweku Ampiah</i> | |
| 5 Media as a site of contestation in China–Africa relations | 88 |
| <i>Cobus van Staden and Yu-Shan Wu</i> | |

6	“China in Africa” in the Anthropocene: A discourse of divergence in a converging world <i>Ross Anthony</i>	104
7	Doing ethnography beyond China: The ethic of the ignorant foreigner <i>Gabriel Bamana</i>	118
8	Global African studies and locating China <i>Jamie Monson</i>	131
	Views from downstairs: ethnography, identity, and agency	143
9	Chinese peanuts and Chinese <i>machinga</i> : The use and abuse of a rumour in Dar es Salaam (and ethnographic writing) <i>Derek Sheridan</i>	145
10	Reflections on the role of race in China–Africa relations <i>T. Tu Huynh and Yoon Jung Park</i>	158
11	Kenyan agency in Kenya–China relations: Contestation, cooperation and passivity <i>Maddalena Procopio</i>	173
12	Bureaucratic agency and power asymmetry in Benin–China relations <i>Folashadé Soulé-Kohndou</i>	189
13	Dependency and underdevelopment: The case of the Special Economic Zone in Mauritius <i>Honita Cowaloosur and Ian Taylor</i>	205
14	Ivory trails: Divergent values of ivory and elephants in Africa and Asia <i>Stephanie Rupp</i>	225
	Views from upstairs: elites, policy and political economy	241
15	Neo-patrimonialism and extraversion in China’s relations with Angola and Mozambique: Is Beijing making a difference? <i>Ana Cristina Alves and Sérgio Chichava</i>	243
16	Between resource extraction and industrializing Africa <i>Mzukisi Qobo and Garth le Pere</i>	260

17	A Chinese model for Africa: Problem-solving, learning and limits <i>Chris Alden</i>	279
18	New Structural Economics: A first attempt at theoretical reflections on China–Africa engagement and its limitations <i>Tang Xiaoyang</i>	290
19	China, Africa, and global economic transformation <i>Alvin Camba and Ho-Fung Hung</i>	298
20	China and African security <i>Lina Benabdallah and Daniel Large</i>	312
	Conclusion	327
21	Conclusion <i>Chris Alden and Daniel Large</i>	329
	<i>Index</i>	343

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figures

13.1 Frank's Model of Dependency	208
13.2 Expected Structure of Relation of China–Mauritius–JFET as per traditional Dependency Theory	215
13.3 Phase One Dependency	218
13.4 Phase Two Dependency	219
14.1 Overlapping systems and values involved in international ivory trade	227
19.1 Sectoral Distribution of Chinese Overseas Direct Investment in Africa	300
19.2 Regional Distribution of Chinese Overseas Direct Investment in the World	307

Tables

3.1 Statistics of Graduate Theses on African Countries (1981–2005)	54
3.2 Classification of Articles on Specific African Countries (1997–2005)	55
13.1 Overlapping Activities of Mauritian Domestic Trade Area and JFET	214

CONTRIBUTORS

Chris Alden is Professor of IR at the LSE UK, Senior Research Associate at the South African Institute for International Affairs and Research Associate, University of Pretoria. His publications include *China in Africa* (London: Zed, 2007), *Mozambique and the Construction of the New African State* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave, 2001) and the co-edited *China and Mozambique: From Comrades to Capitalists* (Auckland Park: Fanele, 2014), with Sérgio Chichava, and *China Returns to Africa: A Continent and a Rising Power Embrace* (London and New York: Hurst Publishers and Columbia University Press, 2008), with Daniel Large and Ricardo Soares de Oliveira.

Ana Cristina Alves is Assistant Professor at Nanyang Technical University, Singapore. She was Senior Researcher at the South African Institute for International Affairs between 2010 and 2014 and co-edited, with Marcus Power, *China and Angola: A Marriage of Convenience?* (Oxford: Pambazuka Press, 2012).

Kweku Ampiah is Associate Professor of Japanese Studies at the University of Leeds. His publications include *The Political and Moral Imperatives of the Bandung Conference of 1955: The Reactions of US, UK and Japan* (London: Global Oriental, 2007); *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon? China and Africa* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2007), co-edited with Sanusha Naidu; and *The Dynamics of Japan's Relations with Africa: South Africa, Tanzania and Nigeria* (London: Routledge, 1997).

Li Anshan is Professor at the School of International Studies at Peking University and Vice President of the Chinese Society of African Historical Studies. His publications include *A History of Overseas Chinese in Africa to 1911* (English edn., New York: Diasporic Africa Press, 2013), *British Rule and Rural Protest in Southern Ghana* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2002), *FOCAC 2015: A New Beginning of*

China-Africa Relations (Pretoria: Africa Institute of South Africa, 2015) with Garth Shelton and Funeka Yazini April.

Ross Anthony is Director of the Centre for Chinese Studies, Stellenbosch University, South Africa.

Gabriel Bamana is Associate Researcher at the Centre for East Asian Studies at the University of Groningen, and Researcher at the National University of Mongolia. A native of the D.R. Congo, he holds a PhD in Anthropology (University of Wales, UK). His recent publications include a manuscript on *Tea Practices in Mongolia*.

Lina Benabdallah is Assistant Professor of Politics and International Affairs at Wake Forest University. Her current book project examines China's multilateral foreign policy in continental Africa and seeks to theorise the power dynamics within seemingly equal Global South diplomatic relations.

Alvin Camba is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Sociology at Johns Hopkins University and a non-resident fellow at the Stratbase ADR Institute.

Tatiana Carayannis is Program Director of the SSRC's Understanding Violent Conflict Program. Her publications include *Making Sense of the Central African Republic* (London: Zed Books, 2015), co-edited with Louisa Lombard.

Sérgio Chichava is Senior Researcher at the Institute of Social and Economic Studies (IESE) in Mozambique. He co-edited *China and Mozambique: from Comrades to Capitalists* (Auckland Park: Fanele, 2014), with Chris Alden; and *Mozambique and Brazil: Forging New Partnerships or Developing Dependency?* (Auckland Park: Fanele, 2017), with Chris Alden and Ana Alves.

Ho-Fung Hong is Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology at Johns Hopkins University. His publications include *The China Boom: Why China Will Not Rule the World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), and *Protest with Chinese Characteristics: Demonstrations, Riots, and Petitions in the Mid-Qing Dynasty* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

Honita Cowaloosur is Head of the Africa Division at Enterprise Mauritius, the export promotion agency of the Government of Mauritius. She has a PhD in International Relations from the University of St Andrews, UK. She was previously a Phandulwazi Nge Fellow at the Centre of Chinese Studies, University of Stellenbosch.

T. Tu Huynh is Acting Associate Professor at Jinan University, Guangzhou, and Co-Founder of the Chinese in Africa/Africans in China Research Network.

Daniel Large is Assistant Professor at the School of Public Policy, Central European University and a Non-Resident Senior Fellow at the China Policy Institute, University of Nottingham.

Jamie Monson is Professor of African History in the Department of History, and Director of African Studies, at Michigan State University. She is also a visiting Professor of African Studies at Zhejiang Normal University, China. She is the author of *Africa's Freedom Railway* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009).

Yoon Jung Park is Executive Director of the Chinese in Africa/Africans in China Research Network, Adjunct Associate Professor at Georgetown University, and Senior Research Associate (non-resident), Sociology Department, Rhodes University. She is author of *A Matter of Honour: Being Chinese in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Jacana Media Pty; Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), and is completing her second book on Chinese migrants in Africa.

Garth le Pere teaches international political economy at the University of Pretoria and has published widely on Africa–China relations and South African foreign policy. His publications include the edited volume *China in Africa: Mercantilist Predator, or Partner in Development* (Midrand, ZA: Institute for Global Dialogue; Johannesburg: SAIIA 2007), and *China, Africa and South Africa: South-South Cooperation in Global Era* (Midrand, ZA: Institute for Global Dialogue, 2007) co-authored with Garth Shelton. Dr le Pere is the former executive director of the Institute of Global Dialogue.

Maddalena Procopio completed her doctorate at the LSE and was previously affiliated to the University of Nairobi. She is an Associate Research Fellow in the Africa Programme at the Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI), Milan, Italy.

Mzukisi Qobo teaches international political economy at the University of Johannesburg, and is the former head of the Global Powers Programme, South African Institute of International Affairs, and former head of research at the South African Department of Trade and Industry. He is co-author, with Prince Mashele, of *The Fall of the ANC: What Next?* (Johannesburg: Picador Africa, 2014).

Stephanie Rupp is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Lehman College, City University of New York. She is the author of *Forests of Belonging: Identities, Ethnicities, and Stereotypes in the Congo River Basin* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011).

Derek Sheridan received his PhD in Anthropology from Brown University in 2017. His dissertation ‘The Ambivalence of Ascendancy: Chinese Migrant Entrepreneurs and the Interpersonal Ethics of Global Inequality in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania’, examines how Chinese expatriates and ordinary Tanzanians in the urban

economy negotiate the emerging interdependencies and inequalities of South–South connections through the interpersonal ethics of social interactions. He was Visiting Assistant Professor with the Department of Anthropology at Brandeis University, 2017–2018.

Tang Xiaoyang is the Deputy Director at the Carnegie–Tsinghua Center for Global Policy and Associate Professor in the Department of International Relations at Tsinghua University. He is the author of *Zhongfei Jingji Waijiao Jiqi Dui Quanqiu Chanyelian De Qishi* [*China–Africa Economic Diplomacy and Its Implication to Global Value Chain*] (Beijing: World Knowledge Publishers, 2014), and has published extensively on Asia–Africa relations.

Folashadé Soulé-Kohndou is a postdoctoral researcher in International Relations at the University of Oxford with the Oxford–Princeton Global Leaders fellowship programme.

Cobus van Staden is a Senior Researcher: China–Africa, at the South African Institute of International Affairs, and a visiting lecturer at the Department of Media Studies, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. He is also a co-founder of the online multimedia platform, the China Africa Project.

Ian Taylor is Professor in IR and African Political Economy at St Andrews. His other positions include Chair Professor at the School of International Studies, Renmin University, and Professor Extraordinary in Political Science at the University of Stellenbosch. His publications include *Global Governance and Transnationalising Capitalist Hegemony: The Myth of the ‘Emerging Powers’* (London: Routledge, 2017), *Africa Rising? Diversifying Dependency* (Oxford: James Currey, 2014), and *China’s New Role in Africa* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2009).

Yu-Shan Wu is a PhD Candidate (International Relations) at the University of Pretoria, and a Research Associate at the University of the Witwatersrand’s Africa–China Reporting Project, and the South African Institute of International Affairs.

George T. Yu is Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign. His books include *China and Tanzania: A Study in Cooperative Interaction* (Berkeley: Center for Chinese Studies, University of California, 1970), and *China’s African Policy: A Study of Tanzania* (New York: Praeger, 1975).

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PREFACE: NEW DIRECTIONS IN AFRICA–CHINA STUDIES

The twenty-first century has witnessed China's emergence as Africa's largest trading partner and the leading contributor to United Nations' peacekeeping personnel of any of the five permanent members of the Security Council. The first decade of the new millennium saw the emergence of a small cottage industry of publications on China's role in Africa, as well as a growing number of graduate students across disciplinary fields choosing to write doctoral dissertations on some aspect of the China–Africa relationship. The scale and speed of China's growing engagement in Africa and Africa's engagement with China in terms of human and capital flows, and the growing convergence of China's economic and security interests in Africa marks a moment of unprecedented global change. These global transformations are particularly manifest in China's growing trade, investment, aid, and security engagement with the African region both bilaterally and multilaterally, as it is here that China is testing out its new 'going out' policy of global investment and its new role as a global leader. In the last decade, Africa has become an important laboratory for Chinese public policy, which suggests that understanding China's engagement in Africa is a key case for, and window on to, understanding China in the world. It is also important to understanding the transformations underway in the global south.

A preliminary mapping study of China–Africa research and knowledge networks undertaken by the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) in January 2012¹ identified three general trends and recurring themes in academic and policy research activities around China and Africa: 1) the impact of Chinese economic engagement in Africa, especially in the resource sector but also large-scale infrastructure projects, on the economic development of African states; 2) China's interaction with African security, including its growing involvement in international peace operations as well as the impact of Chinese economic interests on ongoing and emerging conflicts in the region; and 3) historic as well as more

recent migration patterns, their resulting diasporas, including both African trading communities in China and Chinese labour and independent migrants in Africa, and questions of identity. A subsequent SSRC mapping study published in 2017² identified two additional, emerging thematic concentrations of research: 4) environment and public health and 5) media studies, including media representations of the Africa–China relationship. Despite the vast amount of research produced in recent years on Africa–China relations, the work has remained largely under-theorised and fragmented, and mostly driven by events of the day.

This changing global context has challenged researchers to build new intellectual partnerships and cross-regional knowledge networks, and to develop new frameworks, theories, and approaches with which to understand and explain these dynamic social processes and inform public conversations. Within China itself there are ongoing efforts to build the country's own knowledge base and approach to the African region as part of its 'going out' and more recent 'responsible stakeholder' policy. African universities, on the other hand, have well-established departments for the study of Europe and the West, but relatively little capacity for the study of contemporary China or other regions of Asia.

This book grows out of the China–Africa Knowledge Project, a multi-year initiative of the SSRC supported partially by two generous grants from the Henry Luce Foundation. In 2013, as the volume of scholarly and public policy work on Africa and China reached a critical mass, the SSRC saw both a window of opportunity and an urgent need to provide the rigorous theoretical groundwork necessary for future research, mobilise collaborations across scholars and institutions in China, Africa, North America and Europe, and help set priorities for research and teaching. The SSRC China–Africa Knowledge Project thus responded to the need to build connections and coherence across this work, and to the need to critically integrate work on China and Africa (and, more broadly, China and the world) with scholarly discourses and theories about global and transnational structures and flows. It also began to address the teaching and learning needs of graduate students interested in the study of China, Africa, and their international relations, and raised critical questions about the politics of knowledge production on this topic. By studying how China's emergent role in the world is itself being studied and analysed, we actively built more generative connections between scholars across disciplines and regions, while organising a growing and fragmented body of knowledge and connecting it to important trends in the social sciences relevant for understanding Africa's and China's new international relations. The Project reflected two central components of the SSRC mission: bringing social science knowledge and thinking to bear on important global issues, and catalysing innovation in social science research through interdisciplinary, comparative, and cross-regional intellectual encounters. We are certain that along with the Project's many activities, this book will inject a measure of useful reflection and direction into an emerging body of inter-disciplinary and

trans-regional work that has the potential to inform critical research and policy across multiple regions.

Dr. Tatiana Carayannis
Program Director, SSRC Understanding Violent Conflict Initiative & Project
Director, SSRC China–Africa Knowledge Project

Notes

- 1 Tatiana Carayannis and Nathaniel Olin, *A Preliminary Mapping of China-Africa Knowledge Networks*, New York: Social Science Research Council, January 2012 (www.ssrc.org/publications/view/392EA92D-FF5E-E111-B2A8-001CC477EC84/).
- 2 Tatiana Carayannis and Lucas Niewenhuis, *China-Africa: State of the Literature 2012–2017*. New York: Social Science Research Council, December 2017 (www.ssrc.org/publications/view/china-africa-state-of-the-literature-2012%E2%80%932017/).

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFRASO	Africa's Asian Options project, Goethe University, Frankfurt
AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
AGETIP	National Agency of Works of Public Interest (Benin)
AUPSC	African Union Peace and Security Council
ARPONE	<i>Associação dos Agricultores e Regantes do Bloco de Ponela para o Desenvolvimento Agro-Pecuário e Mecanização Agrícola de Xai-Xai</i>
ASA	Africa's Security Architecture
ASI	African Studies Initiative, University of Minnesota
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
CAAC	Chinese in Africa-Africans in China Research Network
CAAS	Chinese Association of African Studies
CARI	Johns Hopkins China-Africa Research Initiative
CASS	Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
CATTF	China-Africa Think Tanks Forum
CCTV	China Central Television
CDB	China Development Bank
CFA	West African or Central African franc
CI	Confucius Institute
CIF	China International Fund
CITES	Convention against Illegal Trade in Endangered Species
CNMG	China Nonferrous Metal Mining Group
CNOOC	China National Offshore Oil Corporation
CNPC	China National Petroleum Corporation
CPC	Communist Party of China
CRI	China Radio International
CSEZA	Chinese Special Economic Zones in Africa

CSAHS	Chinese Society of African Historical Studies
DAC	OECD Development Assistance Committee
DTAA	Double Tax Avoidance Agreement
EIA	Environmental Investigation Agency
EPZ	Export Processing Zone
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ECTZ	Economic Cooperation and Trade Zones
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FNLA	Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola
FOCAC	Forum on China-Africa Cooperation
FONGZA	Zambézia Forum of Non-Governmental Organisations (Mozambique)
FRELIMO	Frente para a Libertação de Moçambique
HIPC	heavily indebted poor countries
ha	hectare
HS	human security
ICBC	Industrial and Commercial Bank of China
ICC	International Criminal Court
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPSS	Institute for Peace and Security Studies, Addis Ababa University
IR	International Relations
ISI	import substitution industrialisation
IWAAS	Institute of West Asian and African Studies, CASS
JFET	JinFei Economic Trade and Cooperation Zone Co. Ltd (Mauritius)
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
LPA	Lagos Plan of Action
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MPLA	Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola
NEPAD	New Economic Partnership for African Development
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NTS	non-traditional security
NOC	national oil company
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PKU	Peking University
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRB	Popular Republic of Benin
UNEC	United Nations Economic Commission
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme

SEZ	Special Economic Zones
SOAS	School of Oriental and African Studies (University of London)
SOE	state-owned enterprise
SPV	Special Purpose Vehicle
SSRC	Social Science Research Council
SYNTRA-TTP	Syndicat des Travailleurs de l'Administration des Transports et des Travaux Publics (Benin)
TAZARA	Tanzanian-Zambian Railway
TISCO	Taiyuan Iron and Steel (Group) Co. Ltd
TRAFFIC	The Wildlife Trade Monitoring Network
UCLA	University of California, Los Angeles
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
UNITA	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola
WTO	World Trade Organization

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Introduction

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1

STUDYING AFRICA AND CHINA

Chris Alden and Daniel Large

The exponential growth of studies concerning Africa and China relations has only relatively recently begun to more systematically consider questions about the nature of scholarship on these themes and their relation to established academic disciplines. With scholarship on Africa–China now more seriously reflecting on questions of theory, method, and, with these, epistemology and the politics of knowledge, this book seeks to contribute towards this end.

This introductory chapter contextualises how China–Africa relations have been studied to date, and seeks to open up questions about the study of the study of Africa and China. It begins by tracing, in descriptive and chronological terms, the evolution of studies about China and Africa. More analytically, it then problematises this. Is China–Africa a field of study? How has this been changing? Such methodological, epistemological, and ultimately ontological questions can advance different types of inquiry, and open up important questions concerning the politics of knowledge. China–Africa studies is a field of power embedded in deeper, historically produced questions about African Studies, and is also at the forefront of ongoing global shifts in the nature and future direction of these. The chapter ends by outlining the book’s aims and contents.

The evolution of China–Africa studies: one account

The Forum on China–Africa Cooperation III (FOCAC) Beijing summit in November 2006 was a catalyst behind the widespread current interest in China’s relations with Africa. A decade earlier, in 1996, Chinese President Jiang Zemin’s tour of Egypt, Kenya, Ethiopia, Mali, Namibia, and Zimbabwe, and his address to the Organisation of African Unity, attracted far less attention. FOCAC III, however, was the first heads of state summit and marked a very public culmination of China’s Year of Africa that had begun with the release of Beijing’s first Africa

Policy. FOCAC III was notable as a political spectacle showcasing the nature, ambition and mounting power of attraction China had in its relations with all but a handful of Taiwan-recognizing African states. It also showcased the centrality of business ties, and efforts not just to celebrate historic relations but selectively harness these to the pursuit of enhancing political and economic relations. More substantively, it was notable for rendering connections that had been growing after 1989 visibly manifest and, following the Africa-focused G8 Gleneagles summit of July 2005, for declaring an ambitious set of economic, political and other goals that contrasted with the aid-based Gleneagles process.

FOCAC III stimulated greater interest and scholarly engagement concerning China and Africa relations (e.g. Gaye 2006; Alden 2007; Taylor 2009; Bräutigam 2009). While gathering pace with expanding interest in China's Africa links from 2006, this phase followed earlier periods of scholarly interest (Ogunsanwo 1974 and see George T. Yu chapter in this volume). Indeed, many of the challenges scholarship on China–Africa relations is grappling with today have antecedents in these previous engagements.

While the circumstances were markedly different, some of the underlying questions about how to research, frame and attempt to understand China–Africa relations that surfaced in the 1960s remain pertinent. Knowledge of the different layers of scholarship across time remains necessary and highly instructive, even if the context, scale and magnitude of Chinese relations with Africa now represent a marked departure from late and post-colonial African politics. Research on China's post-colonial and more recent Africa relations has, in different ways, grappled with questions about the politics of formal claims and self-presentation contrasted with actual political realities and conduct. For instance, much like recent efforts to de-sensationalise crude narratives of China's role in Africa, and rebut myths through verified empirical analysis, Emmanuel Hevi attempted to tell "Africa what Communist China is really like" and, while warning Africa about Chinese communism, also criticised the "holier-than-thou air" through which Western countries "arrogated to themselves the sacred duty of protecting Africa from the encroachments of the East's ideological invasion" (Hevi 1963, 9; 1967, 66). In an effort to address variations on the "red menace" or "yellow peril" in Africa (see Cooley 1965), the journalist Alan Hutchinson attempted to investigate actual Chinese conduct, rather than imagined, assumed or projected to Western audiences (Hutchinson 1975). In more scholarly fashion, Bruce Larkin offered a theoretically informed, "more complex understanding" of China's Africa relations (Larkin 1971, 8).

Scholarship expanded and contracted in tandem with the changing dynamics of China's relations with African states from the mid-1950s. Integral to these were relations with Taiwan, the US, and the Soviet Union. In this way, George Yu's in-depth case study of China's multidimensional "policy of selective interaction" with Tanzania helped not just understanding of China's relations with a single, important case but also China's wider policy in other parts of Africa (Yu 1975, xv; 10). The methodological problems of studying relations between China, a country of continental scale, and the African continent were very present at this time, but the context

was different in being dominated by other concerns and geopolitical rivalry. Pointing to underlying continuities, as well as notable departures concerning the study of China and Africa, Yu's chapter in this volume historicises questions of method and theory.

Despite multiple post-colonial African trajectories, the single most influential underlying factor in China–Africa relations – and efforts to research these – was Chinese domestic politics. Following the Maoist periods of China's Africa relations, a transitional phase unfolded reflecting and externalizing aspects of the reforms inaugurated under Deng Xiaoping. These combined, significantly, with changes in Africa during the 1980s, a comparatively quiet, if important decade from China's perspective due to the Communist Party of China's (CPC) primary focus on domestic reform. Its engagement in Africa underwent reform, reflecting the economic changes underway in China. Scholarship waned, with notable exceptions (Snow 1988; Taylor 2006; Monson 2009). Deborah Bräutigam's seminal work on Chinese aid in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and the Gambia, was thus published at a time when interest in China, but not China–Africa *per se*, was rising (Bräutigam 1998).

FOCAC III did much to change this, but its impact should not be overstated. It was preceded by more than a decade of research engagement, notably in South Africa, which was indicative of deeper processes of change afoot. For South Africa in transition from minority rule to democracy in the early 1990s, the contestation over diplomatic recognition of Taipei or Beijing generated a heated public debate amongst scholars, journalists, and policy makers. Nelson Mandela's quixotic promotion of "dual recognition" extended this early academic interest in China and lay the foundation for what was to become an active local research community (Alden 2001).

Underscoring the important African contribution to scholarship and policy-related analysis concerning China and East Asia, this also provides the basis for revising conventional accounts of the development of Asian studies in Africa. For some time, and not uniquely, Japan and East Asia had been leading poles of attraction, including around questions of industrial policy and development (see Hart 2002). Sectoral studies of China and Taiwan's economy explored the content of their development experiences and relevance to South Africa (Lin and Shu 1994; Shelton and Alden 1994; Liu and Hong 1996; Davies 1998). Alert observers in southern Africa detected various kinds of growing connections between, and direct and indirect impacts of China as an increasing economic influence in the region (e.g. Kaplinsky and Posthuma 1994; Cornelissen 2000; Kaplinsky, 2008). More dedicated analysis of China's evolving role and its implications beyond southern Africa followed (e.g. Muekalia 2004; Abraham 2005; Haugen and Carling 2005; Ali 2006; Draper and Le Pere 2006; Sidiropoulos 2006; Gaye 2006; Alden and Davies 2006; Alden 2007; Davies and Corkin 2007; Le Pere and Shelton 2007; Le Pere 2007; Ampiah and Naidu 2008). The growth of interest in China as more than a subject of scholarly interest, but one regarded as important to South Africa's international re-engagement, economic policy and development strategy, continued in an elevated, expanded sense when interest in China's wider continental role became the subject of more global research, analysis and media commentary.

In contrast, despite a number of scholars being active in the field within China, African studies in China languished until Africa became more prominent in foreign policy.

The high profile staging of FOCAC III in Beijing, and obvious importance attached by the Chinese government to Africa, stimulated wider media attention, and engagement with the policy implications of China's expanding engagement in the continent for development policy, Western interests and research (e.g. IPPR 2006; Tjonneland 2006; Gill et al., 2007; Mawdsley 2007). The starting point for many of the waves of scholarship on China and Africa that followed was embedded within the terrain of classic IR, with its concern for great power politics, hierarchies of states, and systemic drivers of change. The realist thrust of much work dominated lines of enquiry but there emerged efforts to explore the relationship along alternative theoretical lines. In the larger context of China's rise in global affairs, Africa therefore became the subject of debate over Chinese foreign policy, and a case-study in the "China threat" (e.g. Naim 2007). Argument over discerning China's real motivation became a staple and tended to employ economic reductionism and monolithic explanation (resource exploitation by an authoritarian unitary state). Counter-arguments stressed benevolence, benign or positive intentions and the possibilities for win-win outcomes (e.g. Li 2007).

Increasing publications on China–Africa meant a diversification of themes, countries, and macro analysis (see Strauss and Saavedra 2009).¹ New initiatives undertook more rigorous research, often using collaborative partnerships and fieldwork.² The broadening and deepening of scholarship gained momentum (Strauss 2013). The subject of China–Africa grew to involve a large, expanding and diverse range of scholarly publications and activity, as well as dynamic and diverse policy engagements. Country case studies ploughed new ground, exposing through detailed examination of Chinese ties in Sudan, Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, and beyond, greater insight into everything from the particulars of the political economy to the history of local Chinese migrant communities (Ali 2006; Large and Patey 2011; Power and Alves 2012; Alden and Chichava 2014; April and Shelton 2015; Dobler 2017). It partly contributed to – and joined – mounting interest in "emerging powers" like India, Brazil or Turkey (e.g. Chaturvedi et al. 2012). This contrasted – quite conspicuously, for the most part – with the relative lack of comparable interest in, and attention to, Africa's relations with former colonial powers like France or the UK, and the US (see Engel and Olsen 2005; Gallagher 2011). China in Africa was branded a "burgeoning cottage industry" (Cornelissen et al. 2012, 2). The ever more prominent attention in subsequent years only elevated interest further.

New momentum: FOCAC VI and Chinese foreign policy under Xi Jinping

South Africa's staging of FOCAC VI in December 2015, and use of the summit in which President Xi Jinping participated as a means to advance South Africa's place

within Africa and on the global stage (Alden and Wu 2016), injected new impetus. Assisted by an increasing volume of multi-lingual publications (e.g. Adel et al. 2017), scholarship, in turn, endeavoured to keep pace with developments and the changing nature of relations, as evident in a number of thematic areas.

First, economics and trade continue to attract wider interest from global corporate quarters, in the context of a new phase of slowing growth rates within China and concern about the implications of this for Africa (Chen et al. 2016; Sun et al. 2017). One theme attracting scholarly and policy interest concerns efforts to establish Chinese industry in Ethiopia, and other countries, as part of renewed interest in industrialisation (see Tang in this volume). Supplementing macro-economic studies were the growth of micro-processes sensitive to fluctuations in trade. Analysis of formal economic sectors and official data has also moved into various aspects of informal African economies (Xiao 2015; Makungu 2013; Hilson et al. 2014). Other themes rooted in economics, such as labour relations (Giese and Thiel 2015; Rounds and Huang 2017), urban development (Benazeraf 2014; Huynh 2015; Dittgen 2015), or agriculture (Qi et al. 2012; Bräutigam and Zhang 2013), have also been the object of further studies. With expanding economic relations, questions of environmental impact have inevitably become prominent in a range of ways. International NGOs have expanded advocacy efforts on China's role in Africa, testifying to the ongoing importance of a range of policy engagements, in which ivory stands out together with a range of other issues involving illicit trade (e.g. Greenpeace 2015).

The use of global frames and methodological approaches has taken scholarship beyond the limiting confines of methodological nationalism in diverse ways. One concerns the human processes bound up in and contributing toward different, embodied forces of "low-end globalisation" (Mathews 2015). The connected themes of human movement, Africans in China (Bodomo 2012; Bodomo 2015; Castillo 2016; Zhou et al. 2016) and Chinese in Africa (Park 2009) have been amongst the most interesting. One aspect, raising issues extending beyond migration, has been more attention to the hitherto neglected, overlooked, or marginalised theme of gender (Huynh 2015; Giese and Thiel 2015).

Media studies is perhaps the most prominent growing sub-field (e.g. Wu 2012; Li 2016; Puppini 2017) and demonstrates, as van Staden and Wu put it in this volume, how intensely "mediated" China–Africa relations are. This has involved the creation of new research centers and media developments.³ Debates about China's "soft power" ambitions and spread of culture, including through Confucius Institutes, continue (King 2013; Hartig 2015). One aspect connected to discussions about the propagation of values concerns ethics and culture (Metz 2015).

Efforts to better locate and examine Chinese engagement in African politics, as a number of chapters in this volume demonstrate, form an important trend. Scholarship has moved beyond conceptions of China as a unitary actor to explore the diverse Party-state and non-state entities previously subsumed under the label China. This reflects a move from when China was relatively, if not entirely, new to Africanist circles, and when Africa was the same for scholars of Chinese politics

and IR. The opening up of scholarship to more disaggregated Chinese engagements, such as at the provincial level (Shen and Fan 2014) or interest in Chinese social organisation and NGOs in Africa (Hsu et al. 2016), has been fruitful. Another part of this involves the better location of Chinese engagements within African politics to the point of rendering this, not China, the starting point for analysis. Notwithstanding the wide variations in African regime types, China was previously held in some quarters to be undermining democratic African politics in a zero-sum manner. The incorporation of the Chinese role as one part of globally connected political economy structures and processes and, crucially, as used by governing African regimes, has meant a more realistic analysis (e.g. Burgis 2015). This begins with African politics and extraverted techniques of managing and benefiting from China as one of a number of external partnerships (e.g. Soares de Oliveira 2015).

The shifting political dynamics of relations, occurring at multiple levels, reflect processes of evolution. The linear teleology informing assumptions about a somehow inexorable Chinese ascendancy have been disturbed by political and economic changes, taking relations into more uncertain, less determined areas. At the same time, as Alves and Chichava argue here, from the perspective of African politics this is less a story of change and more a historically familiar pattern. On the back of an extended period of more concerted Chinese government engagement in Africa since 2000, the theme of Chinese “learning” and the evolution of its engagement has also become the object of more attention (Giese 2015; Patey 2017). One part of this, China’s expanding security role, is another emerging area of inquiry (see Benabdallah and Large in this volume). Debates about the shrinking or expansion of African “policy space” has also developed in more nuanced ways. Whereas after 2006 much Western analysis posited Chinese competition with established OECD engagements, more recent analyses suggest China’s engagement has in fact been converging not diverging with Western interests and practice (Kragelund 2015; Swedlund 2017). How what is called China fits into different levels and types and processes of African politics is a theme of wider relevance to many questions concerning the status of China and Africa studies as a field of study.

Another, related and overarching theme concerns geopolitical changes. With Taiwan firmly relegated to a minor, marginal position (Cabestan 2016), Africa in China’s changing global politics, through and outside of such forums as the BRICS or the G20, has become more significant. Most saliently, China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is stimulating new waves of attention featuring different kinds of detached and involved scholarship (e.g. Ehizuelen and Abdi 2017). China under President Xi has already seen an ever stronger contrast with the Hu Jintao era of “peaceful development (rise)” in which China–Africa relations took off. China’s growing power and determination to enhance its foreign policy capacity to conduct “big power diplomacy” (Hu 2016) have taken its Africa relations, and scholarship in turn, into a new era. China’s changing foreign policy and global role under President Xi involves confronting the challenges of establishing the human and institutional resources required to better understand and deal with overseas affairs beyond its neighbourhood. Equipping itself to be a global power necessitates

a role for knowledge, including academic. If the US had to build its intellectual and policy capacity to engage the world as a superpower, of which Area Studies was notoriously a part, then China now appears to be facing the same challenge (Ferchen 2016).

The descriptive, chronological summary of China and Africa studies over time presented here is one, more obvious way to set the scene for this book. It should, however, be questioned. It is broadly based on the main trends in China's domestic politics as the determinative influence in Africa relations, meaning that China–Africa relations are organised according to different generations of Chinese leaders or, broadly, revolution, reform and opening, post-1989 China and the “go global” policy, and, more recently, the China Dream and national rejuvenation. As Li Anshan explores in this volume, and Jamie Monson also notes, Chinese academic institutions have their own histories and traditions in African Studies. Inverting such a framework, however, and beginning instead from 54 African country histories (or other sub-national or regional points of departure) would naturally give very different results. African–China historical periodization might resonate with this broad historical pattern of Chinese encounters and the scholarship these have produced. Privileging the respective political trajectories of any given African country as the basis for tracing the evolution of China relations would render any such analysis quite different, partly because China would be one of a number of external partnerships.

Various alternative tellings of the evolution of studies of Africa and China relations are conceivable. Discipline-based accounts, such as from economics, anthropology or history, would offer different perspectives on the ways through which scholarship on China–Africa has evolved. Or, as Li Anshan and Kweku Ampiah do here, different starting perspective from, broadly, China and Africa would form the basis of different accounts. These would likely also raise questions about the evolving status of Africa–China as a field of study. Given the expansion of work in this area, and its continued growth, however, it seems almost impossible to adequately cover China–Africa. The difficulties inherent in such an endeavour suggest that the days of totalizing China–Africa studies, even quantitative studies for which data continues to pose challenges, are highly questionable given the growing complexity of relations.

Themes and sub-fields

The process by which “China–Africa” has grown as a meta-organizing subject for scholarship and policy related research has involved a gradual and informal organization into subthemes and clusters of interest (Monson and Rupp 2013). Some of these involve the social sciences or humanities. Many concern continuing, unresolved questions about methodology and theory. The spread of China–Africa research has become more global and multilingual, despite the dominance of English, French and Mandarin Chinese. The expansion of Africa studies in China, and the expansion of China studies in parts of the African continent, has proceeded

in tandem with an expansion of global interest in Africa and China. Impetus has derived not merely from the stimulus China provides but also the prominence and associated support given by the BRICS at a time when Africa Rising narratives were ascendant. The result is a more globally diffused geography of studies amidst evolving patterns of transnational research collaboration.

A number of more salient sub-themes can be identified. The first concerns the effort to ensure accurate data through positivist methodologies in the pursuit of an enhanced, empirical understanding of the nature of China's engagement. With media attention and narratives about China's conduct in Africa after FOCAC III, it became apparent that the quality of information and analysis was lacking. The proliferation of speculative commentary in a relative vacuum of hard data was frequently characterised by binary tropes (China as development competitor or partner, good or bad, win-win or unequal, and, in turn, the Chinese government promoting or defending its Africa engagement). Against these, efforts were made to provide more considered analysis and accurate data. Investigating problems of data and interpretation in China–Africa studies, Bräutigam (2015) harnessed forensic research methods in the pursuit of empirical accuracy. Such work was particularly notable given the uneven, problematic and at times sensationalist Western media coverage of China's role in Africa. While bringing important issues into focus concerning the basis of knowledge claims, some of the issues raised by the “myth-busting” turn in China–Africa studies (Hirono and Suzuki 2014), such as data about investment or growth, are symptomatic of deeper, prior challenges concerning, for example, the study of African economics (Jerven 2016).

Development is a second, diverse area attracting wide interest, due to its policy relevance and political role in foreign policy and domestic politics. Much attention has been directed toward economic development, development aid and cooperation (Dent 2011; Zhao 2014; Li et al. 2014; Kragelund 2015). Africa's position as the epicenter of development, at least until 2006 when FDI flows exceeded aid flows from the external world to the continent, contributed to this debate. Development engagement has involved policy research collaborations of various kinds (e.g. China–DAC Study Group 2011) as well as more theoretically attuned academic interest (Bräutigam and Tang 2012). In both economic and political areas of development, the notion of a – or *the* – “China model” has been prominent. At one level, this resurrected historical interest in China as a post-colonial socialist alternative for Africa, which gained purchase in some African quarters during periods of the Cold War when multiple Chinese, Soviet or Yugoslav Communist models were contending in the continent, also contributing to hybrid, indigenised forms of “Afrocommunism” (Hamrell and Widstrand 1964; Ottaway and Ottaway 1986).

In other ways, recent interest in “the China model” occurred in radically different circumstances, stimulated by the demonstrable achievements of China's post-1978 economic reform and opening, not claims about the efficacy of ideological fervor and faith. As China has become more involved in global development policy, amidst increasing efforts to consider whether and how aspects of China's domestic development could be selectively applied in other parts of the world, the issue of

the China model became the subject of wide, diverse interest. This raised questions about whether the China model was to be understood narrowly, as a set of development policies and practices to achieve principally sectoral aims, or rather, as composites of a whole that included a political system dominated by a single party.⁴ It was also advanced by the CPC's efforts to promote its approach to political and economic management as a means to mobilise soft power. However, where early considerations tended to implicitly assume, or more explicitly call for, exporting the China model, more recent analysis has begun to consider an arguably more important dynamic: the role of ideas and selective appropriation and application by African ruling elites as part of processes involving importing and customizing ideas according to political circumstances and needs (see Fourie 2015).

Migration and the flows of peoples within a changing geography of global trade has been a further significant area of academic research and related forms of media-driven attention (e.g. Park 2009; Cisse 2013; Mohan et al., 2013). This has been one part of growing interest in China as an immigrant country (Pieke 2012), of which African immigrants have been one part (e.g. Bodomo 2012; Haugen 2012; Ho 2017). Migration, and the ethnographic methods often utilised to study flows of people, have been especially illuminating in terms of diverse and fine-grained human dimensions of Africa and China relations. This has contributed toward balancing the state-dominated ontology of much IR coverage of China and Africa. As seen in debate generated by Howard French's book, *China's Second Continent*, there has been robust argument about how to understand migration, its implications, and logic of development (French 2014). If migration has been expanding as a sphere of academic interest, it has also been the subject of a number of news items, documentaries, and films.⁵

The move toward comparative analysis – approaching China as one of a number of external powers in Africa – has been a further trend (Adebajo 2010; Cheru and Obi 2010). Partly out of recognition of the limitations of any singular focus on China, and the significance of growing relations between other parts of Asia and Africa, there has been a broadening into various forms of comparative research. One direction has concerned the emerging theme of Africa–Asia relations, in which India's relations with Africa have been prominent (Mawdsley and McCann 2011; Beri 2014; Dubey and Biswas 2016; Modi 2017). Japan has received more attention (e.g. Lumumba-Kasongo 2010; Kato 2017), as have South Korea–Africa relations (e.g. Kim and Gray 2016; Asongu 2015).

Political economy approaches seek to better locate and explore China's role (e.g. Mohan 2013), beyond forms of methodological statism that ignore wider structural forces (Ayers 2013). The tendency to isolate and magnify China's role has been criticised, with Sautman and Yan, for instance, arguing that studies of China–Africa engagements throw broader processes like neoliberalism in Africa into starker relief (Sautman and Yan 2008). Studies utilizing a global political economy framework have thus offered reflections on the extent to which economic investment in Zambia, for example, is or can be considered “Chinese”, or reflects qualities and political relations and patterns of exploitation generically familiar to the global

behaviour of capital (Lee 2014). Rather than approaching corporate engagement through the prism of its nation-state origins, this perspective recasts the Chinese role as a new chapter in global capitalist relations (Li and Farah 2013). Such an approach, taken too far, runs the risk of downplaying Chinese characteristics and connections. In the attempt to demonstrate conformity to historical extraversion or the logic of capital, the Chinese qualities of these dynamics, mediated though these can be by hybrid global dynamics, can be stripped away and questions about forms of Chinese power avoided. At the same time, China's role risks being overstated. To overcome such analytical challenges, Ian Taylor situates China's engagement within a historically structured global political economy of resource extraction and trade. Instead of emancipation through market-means and economic growth, he argues that China's engagement is one part of the entrenchment of African economic dependency in context of vulnerability to and dependence on global commodity prices, rendered more important due to failure to successfully diversify economics (Taylor 2014).

China–Africa: a field of study?

“What is ‘China–Africa’ studies?” Jamie Monson's question, explored in her chapter here, gets to the heart of the issue. What is a field of study? is a related, higher-order question about just how China–Africa studies can be understood to date – and might advance in the future.

Questions start with the very choices of description. The choices and preferences implicit in the shorthand language used to distil the subject is evident in the use of even basic vocabulary. The various permutations used to consider China and Africa can convey meanings that inhere to their formulation: “China–Africa” (connections between); “China in Africa” (an interventionary presence); and “China and Africa” (a partnership). In turn, some advocate a re-ordering into “Africa–China”, “Africa in China”, or “Africa and China” to signify and advance a substantive re-orientation of scholarship. The difference between “in” and “and” has generated debate, amidst critique of “the China in Africa discourse.” In turn, this shows how language plays an important role. The dominance of English-language sources outside of China itself is revealing. Publications in French on China and Africa have increased, and Lusophone Africa has its own sub-theme that partly involves Portuguese language sources, but English predominates. The barriers imposed by language, within the context of China's domestic approach to managing controlling information, means a risk of self-referential coverage.

Although the limitations and limits of “China–Africa” as a combination of singular, shorthand abstractions is invariably the first qualification to be made, it remains, unavoidably perhaps, part of the basic framing in coverage and studies. While problematic, at the same time this continues to be routinely employed as a form of necessary shorthand. Emanating from the prior problem of the abstraction of ideas about and representations of Africa, this framing question is hard to avoid and constitutes “a familiar paradox: we cannot generalise about Africa, and yet we

must do so” (Cooper and Morrell 2014, 2). One challenge facing analysis stems from this binary combination.⁶ For all the interest in finding a vocabulary of description and analysis better able to capture and engage complexity, however, there is also a sense that the basic framing of China–Africa will endure, if only because it frames official interaction and the media coverage flowing from this, thereby serving as a gateway. In this regard, scholarship has a duty to engage in more critical analysis and not merely replicate and amplify state-sponsored discourse.

Area Studies and beyond

The shift in China–Africa studies from being under-researched to under-theorised has been noted (A’Zami 2015). A number of studies have sought to integrate different types of theory into China–Africa work, including efforts to reconceptualise these as indicative of new emerging formations in global politics or economics (Mason 2017). In general, efforts to engage in overt, intentional and systematic theorizing followed the initial empirical focus of many studies. Some efforts to engage theoretical frameworks based these around empirical cases (Power et al. 2012). Perhaps the subject that stimulated most interest and debate of a scholarly kind thus involved a salient “turn” in China–Africa studies toward “African agency,” becoming perhaps the main possible exception to the general lack of systematic treatment of theory and method in China–Africa studies. The agency turn rested upon a critique of China–Africa for variously neglecting, ignoring, or erasing African agency (Mohan and Lampert 2012). Followed by other works exploring the theme (Corkin 2013; Gadzala 2015; Lopes 2016), such studies were bound up in a wider conversation about African agency in international politics (Brown and Harman 2013).

Efforts to address and go beyond China–Africa have featured frameworks such as the “Asian drivers”, framing China in global political economy terms, and differentiating myriad direct and indirect connections and effects of economic links across multiple different economic cases (Kaplinsky 2008). Other approaches include those framing dynamic human mobility and trade flows in terms of transnational connectedness according to competitive, complementary, and cooperative dynamics (Haugen 2011). Further efforts, including comparative work, and interest in global transformations in terms of interactions between Africa and Asia within a changing geography of the global South, have produced notions such as the “Afrasian imagination” (Desai 2013), “Afrasia” (Mazrui and Adem 2013), and efforts to reconceptualise Area Studies from transregional perspectives.⁷ The founding of Association of Asian Studies in Africa, in Accra, September 2015, gave further impetus to new scholarship.

Jamie Monson and Stephanie Rupp underlined the potential of historically grounded, ethnographically derived and theoretically attuned work. They moved the focus from national-level macro analysis to multiple levels of dynamic connection, from community and individual to transnational and transregional, and identified a connected need to factor in a multiplicity of actors. The additional combination of

a temporal dimension, that is, approaching and locating “engagements between Africa and China within both historical processes and newly emerging realities,” offers further benefits, notably the sense in which China is part of wider questions and issues involving African spaces and protagonists, befitting changing patterns, modes and the critical function of disciplinary theory in analyzing this data. Such a use of carefully grounded ethnographic and historical methods has the potential to enhance understanding not only of area processes but also of global transformations in Africa, in China, and beyond (Monson and Rupp 2013, 41).

Africa in China studies, China in African studies

African studies has undergone radical changes in research methods in the last three decades. While Walter Rodney, Giovanni Arrighi and Edwards Alpers, amongst others, provided a strongly theorised critical and historicised understanding of the political economy of Africa and its international manifestations in the aftermath of independence, by the late 1970s, the majority of work about the continent in fields such as history, politics, or anthropology was predominantly qualitative and characterised by wide theoretical differences.

Qualitative IR research on Africa has tended to become more explicitly theoretical and draw upon insights from, amongst other areas, critical security studies, feminist theory, or postcolonial literatures. Indeed, explorations of discursive power relations using textual analysis have become a feature of articles on African IR (Abrahamsen 2003). Such innovations and departures from the set menu of disciplinary concerns in African studies, broadly conceived, appear conducive to integrating and exploring aspects related to China and Chinese in a global setting. More recently, in the context of an identified decline in long-term immersive field work (see Duffield 2014), the notion “that new ways of analysing the continent have created a greater distance between the researcher and the people they are researching” has become apparent (Cheeseman et al. 2016, 4). In contrast, one problem facing research on Africa within China noted by Li Anshan in his chapter here, namely the initial lack of in-depth fieldwork-based research and immersion leading to direct first-hand knowledge of context, was identified and is being addressed through a new generation of younger Chinese scholars from Chinese, African and Western universities able to conduct longer-term fieldwork.

If China–Africa has become a loose, *de facto* field of study, at best this process has been driven by accidental and unbounded interest in China–Africa. It is now perhaps less a field, in the sense of a dedicated, organised area of inquiry, and more a dynamic starting point and intersection featuring multiple possible avenues of inquiry and emerging combinations of various kinds of approaches and fields of study. The unifying meta-theme of China’s relations with Africa belies such messiness and the diversity of different kinds of academic treatments and media coverage. As this book seeks to begin to do, it is clearly a subject that demands more engaged debate and reflection about the study of the study of China–Africa or Africa and China. In this, and amidst critique of Western scholarship on China in

Africa, questions concerning knowledge and power inevitably and necessarily arise (Foucault 1980). What reasons are there to think that the power-knowledge dynamics familiar to Western scholarship will not apply in China's case?

Power-knowledge

The study of China–Africa is a field of power relations connected to, but going beyond, those already present in African studies. This has been an enduring characteristic of China–Africa as a subject of study, policy and politics, as post-colonial relations showed. The issue of how knowledge is constructed, by whom and to what ends is crucial (see Monson, in this volume). Underpinning questions about knowledge are questions about method, which is fundamental to epistemology: “*how we know determines what we know*” (Ashcroft 2014, 65). Looking forward, as the Conclusion to this book discusses, epistemological questions about China and Africa require further interrogation.

Much interest in China–Africa relations before and certainly after 2006 reflected an asymmetrical privileging of China, whose ascendancy in the African continent and the world was the big story. Interest in African agency marks a counter-reaction to this, with arguments favouring a reframing of China–Africa studies into Africa–China studies part of an effort to overhaul and advance a wave of new scholarship from – and for – the continent. Within Africa and African studies, however, China has attained a more prominent position. It is now no longer possible for textbooks on African politics and IR to omit China (see Large 2008). In comparative terms, Africa is not as important in Chinese foreign policy as the other way round. This is perhaps one indirect reason accounting for mounting African interest in China on the one hand, and the growing, significant but still comparatively small (in relation to, for example, the US) Chinese interest in Africa on the other. This is not to diminish African studies in China, or broader interest and engagement; far from it, both have undoubtedly grown in recent years. It is, however, to point out a macro-contrast applicable at different levels to a related combination of scholarship, policy interest, and relative importance structured in asymmetrical ways. While China's role in African politics is receiving more serious attention than previously, there is little sense that African dynamics have serious political impacts in China, beyond certain foreign policy episodes or issues such as migration and race, which themselves mostly fail to attain sustained national political significance.

Several contributors in this book critique “the ‘China in Africa’ discourse,” situating this in the context of the deeper power relations in which scholarship on Africa – and African studies – has historically developed within. This ultimately concerns colonialism and is partly why debate about decolonizing knowledge is topical (see Alden and Large, Chapter 21, in this volume). One contention founded in a longer historical perspective is that China in Africa as a scholarly subject was “invented in the West” due to the way in which China approached Africa “through the West,” particularly in the form of former colonial powers and knowledge.⁸ That knowledge has been one aspect of African studies in China is

undoubted, reflecting more global trends. Whereas China's African studies has in part used knowledge produced in the West, the more recent official push toward less mediated forms of knowledge production is significant.

The emergence of China as a research funder, if sustained and expanded, has the potential to be of great consequence for African studies and knowledge production. A notable development in this regard came in March 2010 when the China–Africa Joint Research and Exchange Program was launched in Beijing. The FOCAC IV Action Plan (2010–2012) contained provisions to enhance cooperation and exchanges between scholars and think tanks. Addressing a seminar on “Development Strategy for the Originality of African Studies in China” in 2017, and couched in terms of President Xi's diplomatic thinking, China's Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Ming called for China's research on Africa to be strengthened. He urged participants:

to stick to China's own road, do more original thinking and research with theoretical and in-depth meaning, and practical and operable significance as well, strive to mark ‘Chinese Brand’ on the international research on Africa, hold the discourse right of China–Africa relations in China's own hands, and make the research on Africa more active, in-depth and solid.⁹

Such directions, if continued, can be viewed as part of a process of eroding the dominance of Western funding. At the same time, amidst China's emergence as an attractive destination for higher education students, new generations of African university students educated in China are already beginning to impact changing trends in scholarship and knowledge production (Haugen 2013). China's domestic context, however, is such as to mean it is not just scholarship that is bound up in political trends but other forms of knowledge and control. Moreover, one telling measure of focus of scholarship emanating from China is that, according to one Chinese academic, it too often aimed at “China–Africa” topics rather than the study of Africa itself; meaning, rather than disinterested scholarship, too often there can be political directives behind research (see Strauss 2009. This is clearly not unique to China, e.g. see Martin and McQuade 2014).

The context of African studies in China is unavoidably conditioned by political circumstances, and has wider ramifications. President Xi cited China's role in Africa as part of Beijing's commitment to open global order and carrying out international responsibilities, but such rhetorical gestures toward external openness contrast with the domestic crackdown that has intensified during his reign. The CPC's push for ideological control has intensified under President Xi.¹⁰ This has extended into the education sector, with the president calling for Chinese universities and colleges to serve as “strongholds that adhere to party leadership” and a tightening of the CPC's role in education together with the political responsibilities of professors.¹¹

Internet control in China, strengthened by enhanced policing and regulation, also has implications for African studies and China–Africa research and the ability to exchange information.¹² At a time when top Chinese universities are pursuing global ambitions, seen for example in 2017 when Peking University announced it

would open a branch in Oxford, foreign universities in China face more challenging political circumstances. Academic publishers have also faced dilemmas in the context of China's "authoritarian information order."¹³ A notable example was the demands made in 2017 by the Chinese authorities on Cambridge University Press to remove published academic content from its website in China, including articles on Xinjiang, Tibet and human rights published in the flagship China Studies journal *The China Quarterly*.

Such tendencies potentially have implications for academic freedom beyond China, and are also bound up in processes by which information orders are diverging amidst a fragmentation of state/corporate regulation of digital space. The rapid changes brought about by the internet, and different media technologies and forms of communication, now mean that categories defined by the media take on a life of their own. A striking amount of China–Africa coverage is now produced outside of established African or China studies and bypasses (while influencing and being used by) academic routes or publication outlets. Indeed, much of the energy and agency is being exercised via new forms of engagement, including social media. This has implications for the authoritative nature of different forms of knowledge.

Knowledge production

Calls for rigor, accuracy in data and other sources used as the basis of academic analysis are important. These are rendered even more so by the ease with which rumour, conjecture, falsehoods or simple inaccuracies can travel around the internet. There has been progress, part of a wider attempt to reset and improve the knowledge basis upon which, for example, economists study Africa. The empiricist ambition, however, has limits. Most obviously, the ideal of foundational knowledge is problematic, which is where contending approaches to epistemology become important. Alternative critical approaches, such as those exploring the nature, construction, or mobilization of discourses, challenge the empiricist ambition and do so in a markedly different and rapidly evolving context. China–Africa publications from the 1960s or 1970s had a fairly limited circulation, largely within the academy or policy-circles. Today, with media coverage and the internet, there is more dynamic and influential interaction, such that Chinese in African countries, Africans in China, or more globally, are influenced by a range of media and, crucially, are not merely objects but active subjects.

Academic scholarship is but one source of knowledge production amidst a proliferation of knowledge producers. Apart from the issue of existing infrastructure for social science in Africa, this raises the issue of what knowledge is being produced, how, by whom and for what purposes. The singular notion of knowledge production can be questioned in order to identify and separate different forms of knowledge. In exploring "how knowledge is made in African contexts," for example, Cooper and Morrell argue that knowledge must be understood in a plural sense, complementing an understanding that Africa is not homogenous or monolithic (Cooper and Morrell 2014). A historically more familiar theme accompanying African studies

concerns tensions of ownership ultimately rooted in power imbalances. Questioning the extent to which “so-called African Studies” are African, Hountondji thus argues that the study of Africa has been part of a Western initiated and controlled “overall project of knowledge accumulation,” which is “massively extraverted, i.e. externally oriented, intended first and foremost to meet the theoretical and practical needs of Northern societies” (Hountondji 2009: 1).

Trends in knowledge production concerning China and Africa have seen multiplying initiatives, widening geographical spread, new sources of funding, and new patterns of collaboration and exchange, such as initiatives falling under the BRICS remit or FOCAC. That a key source of information about China–Africa relations, the FOCAC website, is a state controlled information resource demonstrates how knowledge and information connect with political interests. In contrast, and involving a different web of initiative and funding, are Africa-based ventures. Many are African-led with a defined focus on China–Africa, such as the Centre for Chinese Studies at Stellenbosch University, or engage with China as one part of a broader mission. Many reflect activist ends, such as civil society and trade unions (e.g. Marks 2009), and inspired innovative platforms such as Pambazuka News or the Wits China and Africa Reporting Project. The number of new initiatives may or may not be sustainable, and join the established architecture of social science in Africa, including the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA).

The need to reimagine the global, and approach this from perspectives that transcend meanings deriving from a Western-centric perspective, is partly where Africa and China are situated. In such an endeavour, fresh interest in reclaiming and using African intellectual and practical engagement with China from past eras to illuminate the current period suggest an effort to attain more autonomous engagement (e.g. see Matambo and Mtshali 2016). This matters, partly because debates about changing African studies, Africa’s role in China knowledge, or China’s role in producing new African knowledge are subsets of larger structural conditions reflecting the subordination of the continent in global terms, including education and scholarship. One example is the under representation of scholars from Africa in publications in most highly ranked African studies journals (see Briggs and Weathers 2016). In this context, there have been recent renewed calls and initiatives aimed at Africa taking “the intellectual lead on the global discourse about Africa.”¹⁴ More generally, and connected to but going beyond China, during the March 2015 first African Higher Education Summit in Dakar, 15 African universities drawn from eight countries formed an African Research Universities Alliance. In the context of such efforts, China is a part of changing forms of research collaboration in the continent (Halvorsen and Nossun 2016).

Aims of the book

Overall, this book aims to contribute to the burgeoning area of China–Africa studies. Drawing on various disciplinary perspectives, it reflects on hitherto neglected issues

of method and theory, and analyzes different aspects of China–Africa relations. Situated within wider debates in the social sciences, some chapters also reflect upon the significance of this transnational phenomenon for our understanding of the future of traditional forms of scholarship. The collection has four, more defined objectives.

It endeavours, first, to step back from the “events-driven” reactions and analysis characterizing much coverage of China–Africa relations and reflect more deeply on various questions concerning how this has been, is being and can be studied. Second, it aims to showcase perspectives by a range of scholars in order to demonstrate aspects of and potential for the theoretical and methodological pluralism in studies of Africa and China today. Different generations of contributors are featured, from established, well-known scholars, to younger, upcoming post-doctoral researchers, and from different parts of the African continent (Southern, Eastern, Western, Central and Northern Africa), China, Europe, and North America. This conveys a positive diversity of methodological, theoretical, and more empirically grounded perspectives. A third, wide-ranging aim is to raise questions concerning the politics of knowledge. The influence of a strong media dimension more readily shapes the contours – and provides some of the content – of China–Africa studies than found in other areas of academia. This is arguably a phenomenon common to the origins of many new research areas.¹⁵ At the same time, a discernible trend in the academic literature seems intent on re-producing nationalist-oriented discourses founded on epiphenomena and ideological precepts. All of this underscores the new and evolving conditions under which scholarship operates, challenging academia and researchers to reflect upon questions concerning the politics of knowledge and to find new ways of engaging a widening audience consisting of policy constituencies, students and publics.

Finally, this collection aims to help advance scholarly inquiry. It poses and encourages reflection on methodological and theoretical questions concerning Africa–China studies but also wider issues, such as how China–Africa relates to wider scholarship on Africa, higher education in Africa or the global impact of China on social science. Combined, these are intended to help generate debate and contribute toward new, critical scholarship. The starting subject of Africa and China, however, is by no means confined to scholarship, as the constantly expanding diversity of critical, celebratory and more considered interest spanning social, cultural, media, film, art, or literary coverage demonstrates.¹⁶ While these are important, and themselves the subject of new lines of scholarly inquiry, this volume proceeds from the perspective of academic research. It aims to contribute toward defining new frontiers, engaging emerging trends of global significance about the current state and future trends of social science in a world where Africa is no longer as marginalised and China’s influence is increasingly felt.

It is important to also be clear what this collection is not trying to do. One point of departure is the very dynamism and complexity of the area. While ethnographic studies have been able to capture the pace of change, much scholarship often has sought to catch up “with a rapidly evolving and changing situation” (Chan 2013b, 143)

The contributions assembled here can only thus mark a time-bound moment in this development. Second, this volume is not trying to be systematic or exhaustive; indeed, one implication arising from the chapters assembled here concerns the limits of any totalizing explanatory ambition regarding China and Africa relations. Finally, despite arguments favouring a reframing of China–Africa studies into Africa–China studies, this collection uses both interchangeably and does not imbue either with too much meaning. It seeks to open up rather than try to resolve such important current debates.

Overview of chapters

The book's three sections organise its contents into general but overlapping parts. Indicative of the fluid nature of the subject matter, these serve as broad categories organised along thematic lines. The chapters in the first section explore aspects concerning the origins, development, and possible futures of Africa–China studies. These encompass the shift from China in Africa as the predominant mode of studies, at least in Western scholarship, to current arguments about global African studies. George Yu provides personal reflections on how he came to first study Tanzania's relations with China, and the evolution of China–Africa academic studies since then. This is a story of how “a very small, peripheral and solitary field” became “a multi-disciplinary mainstream academic field of study.” Facing the impossibility of undertaking research in China, he identified east Africa as where it would be possible to “conduct field research directly observing Chinese behaviour and attempt to assess and verify developments first hand.” He was not merely undertaking empirical research but also attempting “to construct a conceptual framework to examine and explain China's foreign policy and behaviour” in an effort to move beyond monocausal explanations. Yu has also been active in important collaborations concerning Chinese and African scholarship. From 1982, he directed a Ford Foundation funded program to train and retrain Chinese Africanists in academic and government research institutions. Such collaborations are touched on by Jamie Monson in her chapter and, going forward, will continue to be important.

The distinguished Chinese Africanist Li Anshan surveys the historical evolution of the study of Africa within China and more recent trends in Chinese scholarship. His chapter provides an authoritative summary of the background, nature, and recent trends in Chinese scholarship on Africa, together with applicable key publications. He notes that: “Economics is the most studied subject, and South Africa the most studied state.” While concluding that Chinese scholars have “a long way to go,” he also concludes that Chinese scholarship on Africa is benefiting from better opportunities to conduct research in African contexts. This shows how much has changed in a relatively short space of time, and points to important changes underway in terms of expanding and deepening scholarly connections.

Kweku Ampiah evaluates the discourse regarding China's role in Africa's recent socio-economic development, and considers how Africanist scholars have discussed and interrogated the unfolding relations between the relevant stakeholders.

Following previous concerns that African perspectives on China's engagement with Africa were marginalised in a discourse largely dominated by American, British, and European researchers and media outlets, he notes that this ignited a counter-discourse, especially involving African scholars. More generally, noting the dominance of interest in economic questions, he exhorts Africanist scholars to "transcend the perennial focus on trade and development-based scholarship that is too often analysed in the discipline of International Relations, and to engage with and interrogate the underlying socio-cultural imperatives of the China-Africa matrix, the circulation of knowledge engendered through that medium and its power implications." Culture and sociality are significant and warrant further study (see Liu, 2008).

In their chapter, Cobus van Staden and Yu-Shan Wu note how "intensely mediated" China-Africa relations are. They examine China-Africa media relations "as a field of study," and examine how this has been delineated up to the present, including different methodologies and disciplines of study. It also considers what they term "the dual role of media": as not just a subject in China-Africa studies, but also "an instrument *for* the very analysis and deliberation of the relationship." Their chapter also explores new directions in media analysis, including the emergent interest in the Internet as a vector of China-Africa relations, and the role of social media. In considering ways China-Africa media scholarship could advance, they note that less is known "about how African respondents and local media players are impacting China's media practices and engagement." They conclude that irrespective of the shape the field of China-Africa media studies takes in the future, "it will be even more mediated than it is now." As such, "it is incumbent on researchers to trace the role of politics and power in this mediation."

Drawing on critical post-structuralist insights, Ross Anthony deconstructs mainstream "Euro-American discourses" on the Chinese engagement in Africa. The African continent is "a site of contestation in which Euro-American ideologies exert influence through championing, in many regards, their difference from China." He critiques "territorially based, binary, value imbued" Eurocentric thinking and discourse. Most importantly, he argues that this "signals a failure to locate an adequate representation of the world in an age of economic globalisation" in the context of the Anthropocene, the present ecological era in which human-based planetary alteration driven by market capitalism is being inscribed in the fossil record. While noting that in China "there exists a very different China-Africa discourse, couched in a positively charged language of historical struggles against Western imperialism and the championing of development assistance," and the complex discourses within Africa on China, these are subjects identified as needing more research. Overall, China's integration into the global economy has accelerated the problem of the Anthropocene and, in turn, underlined the imperative of "re-thinking global political economy in the context of the Anthropocene."

Jamie Monson explores "Global African Studies and Locating China," weaving in aspects of her career as a historian with reflections on the different phases of China-Africa studies. She also asks: "if scholars today were to ask a major foundation like the Ford Foundation to fund a new fifteen-year global research initiative

on Africa and China, what would it look like, and why?" In part, her answer is that African scholars, including those in the global African diaspora, and African universities would be central to any such future initiative. Epistemology would be a core primary starting point of inquiry for such a program. The history, current and future iterations of Area Studies would be "a critical element in moving forward to post-Area Studies scholarship." This would go much further than merely reformulating Area Studies into a transregional framework. She concludes by arguing that "African Studies has the potential to become an Africa-led field that is truly global – indeed it can only become truly global – through the collaboration of interdisciplinary and global partners." Not only are "new paradigms for the study of global Africa" needed, but also "new institutional models that are collaborative and consortial across national and regional boundaries."

Gabriel Bamana opens up an intriguing set of dynamics and questions by reflecting on his efforts to find his place as an African ethnographer in Mongolia. His starting point goes beyond the established convention of an "ethnographer and the ethnographic Other in an ethnocentric context defined by the West-Other power relations" by asking what happens when the ethnographer is "an individual traditionally identified as the ethnographic Other, yet he/she uses tools from a western intellectual tradition to process and mediate knowledge in the universe traditionally identified as that of the ethnographic other." By not conforming at first glance to China–Africa studies, and other established traditions, his chapter demonstrates and points to new lines of inquiry and research connected to but going well beyond China (see Pedersen and Nielsen 2013). As well as demonstrating new avenues in anthropological scholarship on Asia, this chapter offers insights into applied methods and discussion about method and epistemology in ethnographic encounters.

The second section assembles chapters from different disciplinary perspectives under the theme "Views from Downstairs: ethnography, identity and agency" (see Alden and Park 2013). Derek Sheridan's chapter explores the use and abuse of a rumour about Chinese peanuts in Dar es Salaam, extending this more widely to ethnographic writing. He examines the social lives of myths about Africa and China in ordinary discourse among those supposedly closest to the "real story," ordinary Africans and Chinese, showing that even the Chinese in Africa sometimes reproduce myths about the Chinese in Africa. What matters for an ethnographic stance toward myths is less empirical verification and more "intelligibility; why particular stories *make sense* to people, and what that *sense* can tell us about the social and cultural realities in which people live." As well as illuminating China–Africa from a different disciplinary perspective, and demonstrating revealing insights deriving from everyday encounters and worlds away from – yet interconnected with – macro grand narratives, he thus offers critical insights and reflections on method transcending China–Africa.

In examining race in China–Africa relations, T Tu Huynh and Yoon Jung Park note that "the racial assumptions embedded in existing 'China–Africa' discourses have yet to be unpacked." Their analysis proceeds to examine how race has been

treated in the existing body of work concerning China and Africa, seeking to “disrupt restrictive binary constructions and ahistorical conceptions of race, which appear in many of the available China–Africa studies”. Given that race and racism are ultimately socially constructed, they argue “that a focus on Chinese and African bodies and even (nation)states sometimes obscures our view of larger global structures and processes of power which have been, are, and continue to be racialised and racializing.” They conclude by observing that “race making, othering, and hierarchies of power are entwined and ongoing processes require rigorous analysis that disrupt and displace simplistic models, binary thinking, and application of existing theories based on experiences in the global North.”

If earlier analysis of China’s engagement in Africa sought to disaggregate China and go beyond a unitary conception of the Chinese party–state–military (e.g. Gill and Reilly 2007), then both Maddalena Procopio and Folashadé Soulé-Kohndou offer perspectives that can assist a more in-depth, representative and compelling understanding of African political dynamics. Procopio’s study of agency in Kenya–China relations critiques “first generation” research on China–Africa relations for paying disproportionate attention to the Chinese side. By shifting the focus to Kenya, and multiple scales of reference, she offers a different approach, exploring governance as the locus where different forms of agency are found and exercised. The Chinese role in Kenya is bound up in different types, and levels, of domestic politics. The unpacking of different Kenyan layers of engagement with China provides a lens through which to approach other African cases. Likewise, Soulé-Kohndou examines bureaucratic agency in the context of what she terms the “power asymmetry” in Benin’s relations with China. While exploring the specificities of a particular and less-studied case, her analysis has wider relevance and use in its applicability to other African contexts through the connecting analytical framework of bureaucratic agency, including in the circumstances of asymmetrical power relations.

Honita Cowaloosur and Ian Taylor employ a modified dependency theory prism to the case of the Mauritius special economic zone, examining how Mauritius has been “facilitating its own underdevelopment by employing strategies which incessantly reproduce dependency.” While acknowledging that Mauritius is a particular case, with its own specificities, this enables a set of questions to be raised about the broader African tensions in what they deem efforts “to merge cooperation with dependency, socialism with neoliberal capitalism, and Chinese socialist capitalism with African particularism.” Cowaloosur and Taylor’s theoretically informed research, which draws on fieldwork, raises questions about the nature, status, and implications of dependency dynamics today. Instead of treating SEZs as “empirical events,” they argue that the “absence of a theoretical prism” and the resulting dominant understanding of these as insular entities, matters; their analysis “is as much as a suggestion for reform as a critique of it.” By extension, their chapter also has implications for arguments concerning African agency.

Stephanie Rupp contributes not just an analysis of ivory and elephants in Africa and Asia but also reflections on how China and Africa can be studied in ways capable of properly engaging and capturing the dynamism and transcaler

complexity such relations can have. Drawing on fieldwork in the Congo River basin and Thailand, she examines the overlapping systems and values involved in the international ivory trade. This is not just a case study but a potentially transferable method and framework of analysis. Her analysis points to the limitations of short-term temporal frameworks, bounded geographies, or categories of public debate and discourse. She emphasises the importance of expanding the geographical scope of “China–Africa” studies, examining relationships concerning a particular commodity, such as ivory, in networks of flows between Africa and Asia over the *long durée* and of framing economic flows in terms of overlapping economic spheres, each shaped by distinct values (Achberger 2015).

The final section contains diverse chapters encompassing “View from upstairs: political elites, policy and political economy”. As such, it relates to many of the preceding themes but presents a range of perspectives on more macro and emerging themes in the study of Africa and China. Using Angola and Mozambique as cases, Ana Alves and Sergio Chichava draw on the notion of extraversion (Bayart 2000) to re-center questions of agency in African political terms. They problematise the issue of whether China’s outward difference, in terms of stated intentions, principles, and methods of conducting relations, matters in the face of appropriation and incorporation by political elites into time-honored strategies of extraversion. They also explore varieties of neo-patrimonialism and how the Chinese engagements fit into these, suggesting an essential continuity in the manner by which both cases incorporate China into their own agendas consistent with historical patterns.

Mzukisi Qobo and Garth le Pere examine China’s role as a development partner in the continent through the prism of its involvement in Africa’s resource-industrialisation complex, and assess how meaningful this involvement has been from an African perspective in influencing the knowledge-generating landscape of Africa’s growth and development. They consider the “enduring paradox in Africa’s post-independence development” of the continent’s “inability to use its manifold resource endowments as an impetus for generating sustained industrialisation.” One theme running through their analysis, signalling both epistemological and ontological deficits afflicting China–Africa studies and, in particular, its path to development, is “the extent to which Africa has been a reactive subject rather than an objective agent in setting the terms and conditions about the discourse and debates about its development.” With the ending of “the era where the West has the answers and African countries can only ask how high they should jump,” and the reality that “China is not the saviour either,” they therefore conclude by asserting that “African countries should be the drivers of their own development programs and policies and the role of other external actors should be supportive and complementary.”

Chris Alden offers a critical examination of the history, role and challenges of “models” in China–Africa relations. Models can be best understood as vehicles for policy learning but, as he discusses, can serve purposes beyond the content of policy in terms of cooperation strategies and co-constitution of shared identities. In examining the limits of Chinese solutions to African problems, and what is involved in the identification, transfer, and nature of learning itself, he identifies key problems,

including policy transfer and African institutions, and feigned learning rather than a process with meaningful, sustained impact on targeted actors and their policies.

Tang Xiaoyang's chapter explores the new structural economics of Justin Yifu Lin and Wang Yan (Lin and Yan 2016), partly presented as an alternative to Washington Consensus policy prescriptions and mainstream Western economics theory. As well as contributing to debates about development, and presenting a different perspective to that of Qobo and le Pere, Tang also raises questions about the more influential Chinese contribution to the theories and practices of international development. A key part of new structural economics, the notion that structural economic transformation can be propelled through measures like industrial policies and special economic zones, is supported by examples from China's domestic reform and international practices. Tang notes that Africa is a particular focus area of this theory. However, he also discusses the limitations of New Structural Economics, including its applicability to diverse cases and the political and economic challenges of industrialisation in underdeveloped countries. Tang concludes by affirming the potential of theoretically informed economic analyses and the value of multi-disciplinary research. This chimes with Li Anshan's conclusion about the dominance of economics but moves in Chinese scholarship on Africa involving different disciplines.

In a context whereby China is emerging as "an exporter of capital," Alvin Camba and Ho-Fung Hong suggest that the world "might be moving into a new global political economy in which Chinese overseas direct investment, as an example of South–South economic integration, can serve as a new engine of development in Africa." Their chapter offers a theoretically informed alternative research framework for approaching and understanding China's relations with Africa within the political economy of global transformations. Reacting against analysis of China–Africa economic relations at the national or sectoral level, they argue for the importance of China's domestic political economy, role in other developing regions and in the global political economy at large. Rather than obscure China's multiple concurrent engagements in various world regions, they unpack China's role and actions in Africa in connection with the rise and fall of the China boom, offering a comparison of how different regions in the world respond to the active overtures of Chinese state and private actors and considering the intersection between China's geopolitical ambitions and economic goals.

The relationship between economic development and security has attracted theoretical and applied interest, drawing attention to the growing area of security as a subject of study in China's relations with Africa. Lina Benabdallah and Daniel Large explore the relatively more recent theme of security. As a policy issue, security has travelled from a relatively marginal to a more prominent, manifest position in a fairly short space of time. The relative paucity of scholarly analysis thus far in the face of the growing importance of the theme suggests that this is a notable new frontier in China–Africa and Africa–China studies. While China's engagement with Africa's security can't be approached in isolation from other regional engagements and Beijing's evolving global role, the continent is a revealing theater showcasing Chinese foreign policy experimentation in the realm of security.

Notes

- 1 See David Shinn's periodically updated bibliography at <http://davidshinn.blogspot.co.uk>.
- 2 China–Africa Research Initiative, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies www.sais-cari.org/publications/.
- 3 The Center for African Film and Television Research was founded in 2015 at the Institute of African Studies, Zhejiang Normal University (<http://ias.zjnu.cn/en/>). The new, rebranded China Global Television Network was launched on December 31, 2016, with a broadcast center in Nairobi.
- 4 Daniel Bell is the strongest advocate of this interpretation of the China Model, though one rarely sees a comprehensive call for adoption amongst African elites or scholars. See Bell (2016).
- 5 For a range of films, see Roberto Castillo's blog <https://africansinchina.net>.
- 6 One ambitious study seeking to overcome this challenge by Shinn and Eisenman (2012), for example, combines macro China–Africa analysis with short individual African country entries, thereby reconciling the need for some continental scale but, concurrently, providing multiple levels of analysis.
- 7 Africa's Asian Options (AFRASO), an interdisciplinary and transregional research project with scholars from two area studies centers on Africa and East Asia at Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main.
- 8 Mamadou Diouf, speaking at the SSRC China–Africa Working Group meeting, June 4, 2015.
- 9 "Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Ming Makes New Requests to Chinese Research Institutes for Enhancing Original Research on Africa," September 14, 2017 at www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjbxw/t1493456.shtml.
- 10 Notably, Document no. 9, an internal communiqué instructing cadres to stop universities and media from discussing seven taboo topics: Western constitutional democracy, universal values, civil society, neoliberalism, the Western concept of press freedom, historical nihilism, and questioning whether China's system is truly socialist.
- 11 *Xinhua*, "Xi Calls for Strengthened Ideological Work in Colleges," December 9, 2016.
- 12 Indeed, unless accessed via other means, the CAAC Research Network Google group is not readily accessible in China. Many are concerned that internet censorship will hamper scientific research within China. Such trends also impact the China campuses of foreign universities. One US government report found universities it engaged with "indicated they have freedoms on campus that do not exist beyond it, suggesting that they operate within a protected sphere in China." The report found that "universities generally emphasise academic freedom at their institutions in China" but "the environment in which these universities operate presents both tangible and intangible challenges. In particular, Internet censorship presents challenges to teaching, conducting research, and completing coursework." "U.S. Universities in China Emphasise Academic Freedom but Face Internet Censorship and Other Challenges," US Government Accountability Office Report August 2016, GAO-16-757.
- 13 Jonathan Sullivan, "Censorship and China Studies", *CPI Analysis*, August 19, 2017.
- 14 T20 Africa Conference, Africa and the G20: Building alliances for sustainable development, February 1–3, 2017: Communiqué of the Conference Co-Hosts.
- 15 For instance, consider the early impact of Thomas Friedman's influential journalism on subsequent scholarly work on globalisation.
- 16 For example, *China Remix* (dir. Melissa Lefkowitz and Dorian Carli-Jones, 2015); and *Africans in Yuwu* (dir. Zhang Yong, Hodan O. Abdi and Fu Dong, 2017).

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