



## EDITORIAL

INDIAN CORPORATES HAVE led the country's foray into Africa, with a significant and growing footprint on the Continent. With trade and investment continuing to grow between India and Africa, the India-Africa Forum Summit was also initiated in 2008, establishing a structure for future political ties. As engagement deepens and expands, studies have begun to explore the nature of this development beyond statistical data. This has included reports looking into Indian investment and impact of land acquisition in Africa, for example, most recently with research from the Oakland Institute profiling the involvement of Indian companies in land deals in Ethiopia (<http://media.oaklandinstitute.org/understanding-land-investment-deals-africa-ethiopia>) and a report for GRAIN and the Economic Research Foundation ([http://www.networkideas.org/featart/aug2011/Rick\\_Rowden.pdf](http://www.networkideas.org/featart/aug2011/Rick_Rowden.pdf)). Although comparatively less attention has been placed on Indian investment activities, the growing interest in understanding it has illustrated that India has become an important partner for African states.

Rahul Goswami provides his observations of these developing ties, specifically in the context of India's

domestic development challenges. He notes that the human impact of large investment activities should not be overlooked, as social justice is denied in favour of profit seeking motives.

In our second commentary piece, Prof Adams Bodomo, University of Hong Kong, provides an overview of the first China-Africa Think Tank Forum that took place recently in China (the Forum declaration can be found at the following link: <http://www.ccs.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/Declaration-of-CATTF-1-final.pdf>). The Forum brought together experts, researchers, policy makers and politicians amongst others to discuss topics under various themes of Sino-Africa relations. Prof Bodomo poses the question of the role of the Forum in the current Africa-China engagement, and what Africa's response to this development might be.

We hope you will enjoy this edition of the newsletter,

Hayley Herman

*Programme Officer  
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## COMMENTARY

## An opera of studied exploitation: Indian business and Africa

By Rahul Goswami

THERE IS ABUNDANT need for civil society and independent academia in sub-Saharan Africa to look at India's economic incursions into their regions with critical suspicion. Viewed from Asia, national governments in Africa customarily claim the collection of benefits from the investments made by Chinese and Indian businesses in their countries. For industrial India, such claims are held up as proof of the need in African countries for investment, management, a variety of goods and services, employment opportunities, and finally, for reliable contributions to their national growth rates.

This is familiar ground for Indian industry, for they employ the same set of justifications domestically when demanding that a state provide them deal sweeteners so as to commit investment in a 'backward' district. For state governments, the reasons for granting concessions - such as low power tariffs or preferential land allotment - are usually couched in economic terms. The promise of new jobs is held out, the promise of infrastructural development is made, the carrot of better standards of living for nearby populations (usually rural) is held up. In every case, the additional new contribution to inward investment for the state, which is said to have some kind of 'multiplier' influence on potential investors, is placed above all other considerations, whether social or environmental.

This has been the pattern of the state-industry relationship in India for the last twenty years, for it was in 1991 that a watershed is generally considered to have been established - that of the beginning of the process of economic 'reform', or 'liberalisation', of the Indian economy. Until the late 1980s, India's economic growth rate remained at a plodding, apparently comfortable 3% per year. When, after 'liberalisation', 5% and even 6% growth began to be recorded by central planners, the focus widened to examine the effects of this new rate of growth, in a large country, on the middle class.

It is in the name of this middle class, economically re-enfranchised and numerous, that the Indian business and trade interest in Africa is being furthered - just as the same interest is being protected on all fronts at home in India. In so doing, a lie is being rationalised, not once but twice, once in Africa and once in India. In Africa, the lie has to do with the familiar set of promises - underwritten by administrations who are either too weak to negotiate meaningfully, or too greedy for the partaking in the super-profits expected - which Indian capitalists have long employed at home. In India, the lie has

to engage a troublesome range of opponents - these are regulatory, these take the form of civil society and activism, and these are also the results of 20 years of economic expansion at home. I will expand on this shortly.

If one listens to government alone, to the portentous pronouncements made by ministers and bureaucrats in both India and Africa, the themes of 'partnership' and of 'mutual benefit' resound. A recent example is from Anand Sharma, India's Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, who in August 2011 delivered the latest numbers - that bilateral trade between India and Africa has increased 15-fold within a decade from a level of around US\$ 3 billion in 2000 to US\$ 46 billion in 2010. He then referred to the development bank touchstone about Africa - its so-called "consistent growth in excess of 5%" in the last few years - and then applied the boilerplate phraseology, that there are numerous examples of the India-Africa "shining partnership", that there are "win-win initiatives" and that all such "mutually beneficial" agreement is guaranteed by "long-term commitments".

That such language is still used to signal new rounds of industrial and trade relations between two regions is more worrisome today than it was in an era earlier, when it was also used to describe the ambitions of the non-aligned movement, for at least then there were ideological exchanges and an understanding, however workmanlike, of occupying shared spaces in human and social development. Used today, such language takes on a zombie nature, conceals the predatory impulses that underpin such a "shining partnership" and obscures the anti-people, anti-environment conditions that are demanded in order for this partnership to work.

The description of a country in Africa vis-à-vis an Asian giant then suffers intrinsically from the limitations of a vocabulary that is dreadfully dated, and which in any case is unequal to the task in 2011. It is important however to recognise that this is an ontological shortcoming to be found far more often within a state (such as within India) than it is to be found between India and Africa. Within India, a district that has been selected for market development, or to receive the capital attentions of a favoured investor, are similarly described. Substitute a district administration in India with one in Africa - at whichever scale is appropriate - and the same mechanisms and instruments are to be found at work. This is the important link that I would urge a critical audience to draw. This in fact is the zone

of shared experience that ought to be named and studied together.

Thus at any time we are now describing the approach and practices of a consortium which has as its members (1) the Union of India as a state party; (2) an industrial / business / trade house from India; (3) a recognised administrative authority of a country or sub-national region in Africa; and (4) supportive trade associations and financial institutions from both sides. When we recognise the nature of this consortium of interests it becomes that much easier to place within the overall framework of subjugation the 'official' pronouncements that are used to cloak it with acceptability. Hence we in India and you in Africa are told that "India is also committed to work with our partners in Africa for addressing the infrastructure deficit" and that "India's infrastructure investments in Africa are in the range of US\$ 500 million annually", that major universities of Africa are to be linked with those in India and that hospitals in Africa will be linked with super-specialty institutes in India in anticipation of which "30 countries have already joined this initiative to provide quality tele-education and tele-medicine", and that "over 80 Indian agricultural companies have invested over US\$ 2.5 billion in Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Senegal and Mozambique" while "another 70 companies have lined up investments for Africa" in order that Indian farmers can "provide meaningful employment training and critical knowledge support to the farmers of Africa through various initiatives".

Today we find among these claimants many of the companies and corporations whose ability to regularly deliver what is blandly called 'shareholder value' is matched by an equal ability to service political interests - indeed in India these are inseparable indicators of corporate success. They include companies in the automobile, communications, medical care, mining and minerals extraction, petroleum and fossil fuel processing, highways and dam building, ports and container terminals managing, banking and financial services, fast moving consumer goods and retail sector, a host of back-end suppliers to these major sectors and of course the agricultural domain which includes seeds, farm equipment, cold chain logistics, terminal market builders, warehousing and trade - all in the industry part of the domain - and the private sector crop and biotechnology companies with their usually underplayed links to agricultural universities at home and their revolving doors with India's national agricultural research system. They are all in the vanguard of the movement to pursue the doctrine of steadily rising GDP which itself depends upon the tenet of a steadily growing middle class.

To illustrate, corporate and industrial India is used to reckoning with sub-national administrative units - our states - whose domestic product and populations are as large as countries. Thus a list of the 20 biggest economies taken together from the African continent and from India's states, 10 each, ordered by GDP for 2010 in US billion dollars would place Kenya (32.2) and Tunisia (44.3) in the last two positions. The next

three would be occupied by the Indian states of Delhi (58), Kerala (59) and Rajasthan (67). Positions 15 to 13 are taken by Sudan (pre-split, 68.4), Libya (pre-recolonisation by Nato, 74.2) and Angola (85.3). India's Karnataka (89) and West Bengal (102) states are next. Morocco (103.5) is tenth. Four Indian states follow - Gujarat (110), Tamil Nadu (122), Andhra Pradesh (126) and Uttar Pradesh (131). Africa's fourth, third and second biggest economies by GDP are a distance ahead of the rest on this combined list - Algeria (160.3), Nigeria (216.8) and Egypt (218.5). India's Maharashtra state (229) is second on this list, with South Africa (357.3) at the top.

A list of this kind demonstrates that across two shores of the Indian Ocean, within this established investment space, countries and states are adjudicated merely as risk/benefit ratios and their administrations, democratic and social institutions are reduced in significance and otherwise deliberately emasculated, so as to diminish them to being caretakers of the profit-seeking actions of capital. Missing from this one-dimensional GDP-ordered list of administrative units (African countries and Indian states) are those states in India which exemplify, dramatically but little noticed, the degree to which they are treated by corporate and industrial India as wells of profit. These are the states in the vast central Indian region, which until the middle of the 19th century were densely forested tracts inhabited by indigenous and tribal populations that had, over centuries of carefully accumulating local knowledge, maintained their civilisations in marvellous equipoise. They lived in and prospered in the states we today call Orissa, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar.

Developing India saw these regions not as living proof of the universal nature of sustainability, refracted through dozens of tribal and community lenses, but as storehouses of mineral and forest riches that belonged to the State. And so the State set about writing into law, at levels national and local and in-between, the reasons why their original guardians had neither ownership rights nor ease of use over them any more. When, during the transformation from a public sector-dominated economy to private enterprise, this vast interconnection of legislation became case law, the interests of India's corporates ascended to tower above all others - the people of India whether rural or tribal or urban, the enfeebled public sector and also above the obligations of government. This is the reason why today we have in India a revised land acquisition act which claims to include resettlement and rehabilitation rights for those dispossessed of their lands, but which surpasses in its interpretation of the State's 'eminent domain' the law of 1894 it was apparently designed to contemporise. This is also the reason administrations of states such as Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka have joined seamlessly with industry to prosecute a sustained campaign of grabbing forested tracts which are mineral bearing - metallic and mineral ores and coal seams. Just as with the new land acquisition act, the rights of communities dependent on forests for their sustenance - and



who have for generations been the guardians of the same - have been severely truncated by a new forest rights law dressed up in 'progressive' garb. It will be well for the critics of emerging powers' actions in Africa, and in particular those of Indian industry's actions, to recognise the predatory nature of the government-industry compact at home and the destruction this partnership has visited upon India's own population.

"What has worked in India must certainly work in Africa," is a comment made in a leading business magazine in India recently, "It is a continent with a large population, spread over arable land, with little or no infrastructure, much like India was 20 years ago. A billion people slowly being economically emancipated, will be a big business opportunity - just as the India growth story over the last couple of decades provided a big opportunity for Indian entrepreneurs and corporates." The benchmarks of success at exploiting this India-like opportunity are being set by Indian companies such as Bharti Airtel, HCL and the Tata group, by the number of shops which stock Emami's 'Fair and Handsome' fairness cream for men and Dabur hair care products, by the number of case studies of affordable generic drugs provided by Lupin, Dr Reddy's Laboratories and Ranbaxy, by the ubiquity of Bajaj motorcycles on the streets ("they don't need regular oil changes like the Chinese bikes do", a news report gushed in appreciation of this stellar convenience), the number of urban centres in which NIIT training classes are run for those who must have 'computer skills' on their bio-datas, the number of Lava mobile phones sold a month and the superiority of Godrej soaps to local (and MNC) competitors, and the value-for-money of Kirloskar water pumps. Through these brands and their visibility in the urban centres of Africa, India is seen at home, by the government-industry combine, as more robustly securing the beach-head from which to plan speedy GDP growth rates for the next generation of trans-Indian Ocean capital.

As is the need in India, genuine nation-building in Africa places social justice, resource equity, unconditional human and community development, support of grassroots and social institutions, and a culturally sensitive participatory economics at the centre of its efforts. It has therefore not helped that organisations which ought to have supported such efforts have in fact done the opposite, that is, replaced a humanist path out of poverty with 'markets' that ensure all such paths are cul-de-sacs. This is the convenient, retail-oriented logic which explains the views of major guiding documents such as the African Economic Outlook 2011, co-authored by the African Development Bank, the OECD Development Centre, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA).

Hence, when we are solemnly informed by the multilateral lending banks and any number of central banks and industry associations in Africa that the continent is becoming more integrated in the world economy and its partnerships are diversifying, thereby creating unprecedented economic opportu-

nities, what this simply means is that the creation of a new middle class - so celebrated recently by the African Development Bank - is a sign that the global project to transfer assets from the poor to the rich is satisfactorily at work. The usual practice is to provide benign trade data and apposite socio-economic data to support the thesis that globalisation - and not conscientious nation-building - is the route to prosperity. That is why we are told that in 2009 China surpassed the USA and became Africa's main trading partner, and that in the last ten years. Africa's top five emerging trade partners are now China (38%), India (14%), Korea (7.2%), Brazil (7.1%), and Turkey (6.5%). The names of these 'emerging trade partners' are no more than placeholders for the nominal origin of capital. It is instead in the networks of corporate and government control that exist in these countries - the important trade partners of Africa - that we in fact seek those responsible for the new trans-continental instruments of impoverishment, for they are as much in evidence at home as they are, by proxy, in Africa.

How should African civil society, its activist groups, its independent academia and independent media view the agents of an emerging power such as India? Such views will be better grounded if they recognise, first, that these agents are in the vanguard of the global project to choke the old systems of stewardship of the commons, and to replace it with an inter-connected web of inter-governmental obligations reinforced by the police powers operated by states and sub-national administrations. How then to study their actions and intentions and how to encourage fraternity between similar fronts in India - where there are many, whose resolve is strong and whose independence is uncompromising? In place of the hearty solidarity that existed and was steadfastly practiced by trade unions and labour movements of half a century ago, there is today a less defined, far looser, perhaps more organic, network of entities and organisations which are alive and alert to the dangers, howsoever they may enunciate these dangers and according to their priority. These ebb and flow around events and incidents, and have done so with lasting effect in India on issues that are directly concerned with the industrial-government combine and its pursuit of a trans-Indian Ocean common market. These issues have had to do with the forcible, uncompensated robbery of land from villagers and agricultural centres, and of forests from tribal communities. They have also had to do with the steady construction of an infrastructural base - at public cost - to present as a bargaining chip to the global food and industrial agriculture industry. The terms of this exchange are slowly becoming visible, and it is a daunting revelation.

Impelled by the need to provide, for a small layer of the population, a country whose growth rate can be reliably forecast as maintaining 7%-8% per year for the next 20 years, the ruling circles in India rely on the maintenance of a middle class whose habits and political orientations make such a forecast possible. There is no doubt that its numbers have grown since the liberalisation watershed, and that in India's 53 cities with populations of a million and more, it is

this very large group of 'consumers' (rather than citizens) upon whose actions and desires that GDP growth rate will depend. Outside this central core of a resource-intensive economy lies the poor.

Their absolute impoverishment - designed on the basis of expropriation of output of the peasants, of primitive accumulation and redistribution of resources in favour of the urban middle classes, on the transfer of labour - also keeps down, and even reduces, the real wages of workers in the capitalist sector itself by lowering their reservation wage and hence bargaining strength. Such a mixture of conditions - which we see in all the ten states of India listed earlier as being equivalent in economic size to African countries - results in an increase in absolute impoverishment, of not only the agrarian workforce but also in the capitalist sector itself. The truth is - as we have seen for twenty years of liberalisation and 'reform' in India - that any increase in the growth rate in the capitalist sector will be expressed as an increase in the economic growth rate but will also be accompanied by increasing absolute poverty.

This is the opera of exploitation to which the set pieces of development for and in Africa are being scripted. Consider the sector of agriculture. The neo-liberal view - which is repeated with enough local contextualisation in Africa (as it is in India's states) to serve as electioneering propaganda - is that the reasons for Africa's poor agricultural performance are both complex and myriad. The trope of lies continues to suggest that yields are far lower than what they could be, that irrigation is lower than required, that the availability and quality of inputs (such as seed and fertiliser and pesticide) are much lower per hectare than global averages and lower also than Asian averages, that there is inadequate budgetary allocation for agriculture by African countries (4% is the average usually cited, compared to 14% in Asia) and that post-harvest grain losses due to inadequate storage and transport facilities (hence the need for rural infrastructure, modern terminal markets, cold chain logistics and similar retail food accoutrements) are equal in sub-Saharan Africa to around 15% of total output. To address such a list the solutions that present themselves are couched in a development economics techno-babble as being eminently sensible and tailored to the cause of nation-building. These solutions are to be delivered by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development programme (CAADP), the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) and - it is authoritatively claimed - will raise Africa's production of wheat by 30%, rice by 75%, and milk and sugar by 35% within the next decade. The promises are that approximately 25% of the source of crop production growth in sub-Saharan Africa between 2010 and 2050 will come from arable land expansion, 7% from increases in cropping intensity, and 68% from an increase in yields.

In this case too, with the cultivation of crops and the provisioning of food staples, the selection of numer-

ics to be applied is a symbol of the techno-economic rules to be applied by central banks, national agricultural research systems, industrial agriculture corporations and a whole host of collaborators from at home and abroad. As a strategy this is neither new nor unique to food and agriculture, for it follows the broad neo-liberal economic curricula practiced both by the agents of the emerging powers in Africa and the small section of all our societies - geographically distributed and globally homogenous - which apply the methods of financial and resource exploitation. It is however the scale of their calculations which stagger rational and humanist observers.

This year the 2011 Census of India showed the new extent of urbanisation in the country. For the first time since Independence, the absolute increase in India's population was more in urban areas than in rural areas, with the new rural to urban distribution of the country's population being 68.8% to 31.2% and in absolute numbers, 833 million rural citizens to 377 million urban citizens. During the decade of 2001-2011 the population of India increased by 181.4 million - by 90.4 million in rural India and by 91 million in urban India. This is the calculation that lies at the heart of the push, by India's government-business combine, into Africa. On the spreadsheets of the central planners and in the computable general equilibrium models of the macro-economists, India's economic growth rate for the last decade has been delivered by urban India, by the steady increase in the population of those classified as 'urban', and by the slower but statistically more significant shift within the urban population as more privileged households ascend the tiers of the middle class and above. That movement - according to the ruling calculations - is what creates the country's wealth and this is why it is to be encouraged and supported by every measure.

The corollary is that the methods that delivered such success can, with appropriate partnerships, be applied elsewhere too, and that is where India's economic designs in Africa gain a new, sharper and ultimately far more alarming relevance. The satisfaction that an African Development Bank notes at the artfully manipulated estimates of what it calls a significant and under-noticed new middle class in Africa has not to do with social equity and ecological justice. It has to do with the repositioning of the substantial reserve in capital and expertise gathered by corporate India and which, when carefully deployed, can all but guarantee rave rates of return over the next twenty years. Even so, attempting to duplicate in regions of Africa what India's business barons and commerce ministry functionaries alike call 'the India growth story', carries risks.

What makes bearing these risks worth it? Again it is the country's demographics that determine the longer-term decisions. By the time the 2021 census is taken, India's urban population will have once again grown more than its rural, but at a slower rate. The yawning inequities between the two population groups will represent a budgetary sinkhole, but that is seen as a problem of public finance. Where desirable as instances of 'capitalism with a human face', some social entrepreneurship



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will fill in the gaps for healthcare, education, water and sanitation, renewable energy and of course the provisioning of finance. If these measures serve to encourage the migratory passage of still more rural Indians to urban centres of consumption, those additions will be considered a bonus. Otherwise, India's government-business combine will continue with its strategy of legislatively acquiring the commons and, through a balanced mixture of economic repression and state-sponsored terror (violence wreaked on ideological antagonists by the police, paramilitary or special forces) that relies on the suspension of civil liberties and collective freedoms, enforce migration.

This is the outline of the direction the Indian emerging power in Africa is taking, driven by the patterns its economically significant cities will take for the next 20 years, and shaped by the ambitions of its government-industrial partnerships of today.

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*The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Emerging Powers in Africa Initiative or Fahamu*

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Herewith follows a short list of civil society groups, non-government organisations, social movements and campaigns and advocacy and support groups in India. These are active in almost all India's 35 states and union territories and their work spans a number of concern areas discussed in this article. They are: Adivasi Moolwasi Asthitva Raksha Manch, Alliance for Sustainable and Holistic Agriculture (ASHA), Birsa Munda Bhu Adhikar Manch, Chattisgarsh Mukti Morcha, Delhi Forum, Delhi Solidarity Group, Domestic Workers Union, Ghar Bachao Ghar Banao Andolan, Gosi Khurd Prakaalp Grashat Sangharsh Samiti, Him Niti Abhiyan, Indian Social Action Forum (INSAF), Indian Social Institute (ISI), Inter Cultural Resources (ICR), Jai Yuvak Kranti Dal, Jan Sangharsh Vahini, Kaimur Kshetra Mahila Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Samiti, Kisan Sangharsh Samiti, Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti, Loksakti Abhiyan, Maatu Jan Sangathan, Machhimaar Adhikar Sangharsh Samiti, Matu Jan Sangathan, Nadi Ghati Morcha, Narmada Bachao Andolan, National Alliance of People's Movements, National Campaign Committee for Rural Workers, National Domestic Workers' Union, National Forum of Forest People and Forest Workers, National Hawkers Federation, Nawa Chhattisgarh Mahila Sangathan, Niyamgiri Suraksha Samiti, Patha Dalit Bhu Adhikar Manch, Pennuruimai Iyyakam, Popular Education and Action Centre (PEACE), Posco Pratirodh Sangram Samiti, POSCO Pratirodh Sangram Samiti, Programme for Social Action (PSA), Renuka Baandh Sangharsh Samiti, SEZ Virodhi Manch, South Asian Peoples' Initiative (SAPI), Tarai Kshetra Mahila Mazdoor Kisan Manch, Tata Dharangrath Sangharsh Samithi, Tharu Adivasi Mahila Kisan Manch, and Vangram Bhu Adhikar Manch.

# China Takes Steps to Comprehend African Complexities: A Report on the First China – Africa Think Tank Forum (CATTF2011 Report)

By Prof Adams Bodomo

IN SEPTEMBER 2011, WHEN I got an invitation to attend the 1st China-Africa Think Tank Forum (CATTF2011) in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province on the edges of the famous West Lake in Chinese History and Culture from October 27th to 29th, I imagined that I was being invited to a select group of top academics to engage in a small circle of intensive brain-storming sessions for improving Africa - China relations. Little did I know that I was joining an event comprising more than 300 participants from all walks of life, with more than 50 Africa-based participants (including one former Head of State, one former Minister of State and several top-level university administrators, but also staff of some rather obscure non-governmental organizations who seemed to know very little about Africa-China relations) flown in apparently by the Chinese government. As such, as is typical of large-scale Chinese conferences, the most time any participant had to present their contribution, including even so-called plenary speakers, was just 10 minutes. In my case I had to fly about 15 hours from San Francisco to Hangzhou just to present a paper for less than 10 minutes and fly 15 hours again back to San Francisco (I was on leave from HKU serving as International Scholar at Stanford University's Humanities Center). Nevertheless, despite this grandiosity, the organizers did an excellent job of putting people together to get to know each other and begin long-term planning, which I believe was one of the main aims of this first edition of the series of Africa - China think tank meetings to come.

A number of issues may be raised about this forum. What is a think tank forum, why is China taking the initiative to institute a think tank forum on Africa-China relations at this time, what is the African Union response to this, and how can future fora build on this first major experiment in Hangzhou?

A think tank is simply a not-for-profit policy body set up by governmental or non-governmental authorities to come up with research findings towards developing and refining policies for running a country or an organization or for improving the general socio-political, socio-economic, and socio-cultural well-being of our globalized world. There are upwards of 5000 think tanks worldwide, most of them in the West, but with a growing number in Africa and Asia. Think Tank fora are, or should indeed be, avenues for strategic discussions, especially in small circle, intimate meetings.

For me, a think tank forum, especially one like the CATTF that straddles countries of different cultural backgrounds, should be defined and conceptualized as a cross-cultural space for intensive debates. A think tank forum like CATTF should serve as a platform, a sounding board, for its sponsors, but not necessarily as a forum where sages hand down scientific and philosophical truths to listeners.

So why are the Chinese government and government-affiliated Chinese organizations taking the initiative to set up a cross-cultural, cross-continental, multi-lingual think tank at this moment in the history of Africa - China relations? Among the problems and challenges confronting contemporary Africa - China relations, a serious one is that the relationship is being grossly interfered with by some countries in the West, especially the former colonial powers, even to the extent of wanting to dictate the way Africa and China should run their bilateral affairs (for example, consider the controversial statements made by western politicians like Jack Straw of the UK and Hillary Clinton of the US on their Africa trips about China's intentions to colonize Africa.). However, an even greater problem, which in my opinion is not often discussed, is that China simply lacks enough expertise to understand contemporary African complexities. Compared to the situation in the West where there are established top-class African Studies programmes and centers of learning like SOAS in Britain and in most of the Ivy League and other top universities in North America, there are very few established African Studies Centers and academic programmes in China, and, worst still, very few African studies experts. While there are prominent Chinese scholars who are competent Africanists like Liu Hongwu, the main organizer of CATTF, He Wenping, Li Anshan, and Liu Haifang (these last two from Peking University were not present at CATTF2011), these are few and far between. Indeed the Chinese authorities themselves are worried about this situation. A headline in an important government mouth piece, The China Daily, runs as follows: "African Studies lags behind booming relationship with the continent" (China Daily, April 28, 2011). Wei Jianguo, the Director of the Chinese Society for African Studies laments in the article that there just are not enough experts to provide reliable policy advice to the Chinese government. And s/he is right. One of the most insensitive policy issues China got itself into was to give in to a pres-



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sure from the European Union to put Africa on the agenda in one of their recent China-EU fora; this was the genesis of the infamous idea of trilateralism (between Africa, China and the West) that so many African scholars rile against, as a “berlinist approach” to discussing Africa and partitioning it among themselves. This undiplomatic idea of China-EU bilateralism on Africa (disguised as “trilateralism”) was and is still mostly proposed by Chinese scholars who know rather little about Africa. (How would such Chinese scholars react if African scholars, in turn, suggested to their African governments that they should demand that Taiwan be put on the agenda for Africa-China discussions?) Many of these are international studies scholars with expertise on China-EU or China-US relations but with very little knowledge about African complexities, yet cannot resist the temptation to jump into the now academically lucrative Africa – China relations ‘market’. Obviously, the Chinese government has realized the problem and is now taking urgent steps with large-scale initiatives like CATTf. In addition to this, we can expect to see a lot of African Studies programmes being set up by Chinese universities to train young, competent Chinese and other scholars.

But how should the other side of the relationship respond to this Chinese initiative? Is Africa again staying passive on this issue of think tanks or should the African Union initiate its own Africa-China Think Tank Forum (ACTTF)? While Africa seems to be much better off than China in having scholars who know China quite well (a lot of African scholars have trained in China but very few Chinese scholars have trained in Africa), there are obviously inadequacies with regards to intricate knowledge about China in Africa as well. As mentioned above, many of the Africans who arrived at CATTf in Hangzhou appeared to know next to nothing about Chinese history, politics, language, and culture. Also African scholars tend to concern themselves only with relations between their own country and China and thus do not have encyclopedic knowledge about general Africa – China relations, probably with the exception of those Africans living in China who have to look at Africa holistically in many situations (for example, my course titled *Afri2005: Africa – China Relations* at the University of Hong Kong is one of the first courses on this topic that looks at both general Africa – China relations but also specific African country – China relations). The African Union needs to coordinate well on this issue of Africa – China think tanks so as to stay in step with China. African universities must soon start up appropriate courses and research programmes to train scholars on holistic Africa – China relations studies.

Finally, how can subsequent fora build on the first? At this first forum, more than 40 papers we presented and hastily discussed around as many as three main themes: security, investment, and culture (what they called people-to-people relations, a term that I am proud to note was taken from one of my Africa – China Studies project titles and articles published from that project). The most important change that I suggest should take place in CATTf2 (these are meant to be annual events, so CATTf2 will be in 2012) should be to focus on only one or two themes with far fewer scholars and other experts, thus allowing more time for presentation and discussion of issues. While the Chinese scholars seemed to be fine with 10-minute presentations and very few discussions during question time, and briskly and happily exchanged name cards, many of the Africans I spoke to at the forum were rather frustrated that they didn’t have enough time to either make their own presentations or ask questions and get answers about issues during discussion time. This is clearly an academic cultural difference between African and Chinese scholars – a rather important difference in cross-cultural communication. Subsequent fora should strive to resolve this cultural difference by allowing a reasonable time space for presentations and discussions to suit the Africans who are more inclined to loud, lengthy and, at times, heated but friendly and humorous discussions at conferences.

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*The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Emerging Powers in Africa Initiative or Fahamu*



## RESOURCES, LINKS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Phandulwazi nge China****Scholarship Programme for visiting scholars from Africa****Centre for Chinese Studies, Stellenbosch University, South Africa**

Phandulwazi nge China (Xhosa for Understanding China) scholarships offer opportunities for African researchers to spend research time at the Centre for Chinese Studies (CCS) in order to advance mutual learning and a better exchange on interpretations of political, economic or environmental impact of Chinese engagement in Africa.

The Phandulwazi nge China scholarship targets citizens of African states from Academia or the broader civil society with a proven research interest in China-Africa relations. The programme particularly addresses African scholars who are preparing for a stay in China or are returning from a longer stay in China. With the scholarship, African citizens are expected to continue working on China and China-Africa relations and to deepen their analytical work.

The scholarship involves:

- A fully funded 3-month visit at the CCS at Stellenbosch University, in the first or
- second half of 2012,
- A fully funded short research trip to China during the stay at the CCS.
- Providing space for- and strengthening experience in evidence-based research that
- feeds into policy recommendation.
- Work and interaction with research within the CCS, with an opportunity for
- intellectual exchange and public engagement on a topic relevant for China-Africa relations.
- Publication of research results in a CCS publication format or similar formats.

Applicants must:

- Be a citizen of an African state;
- Have a strong social sciences or economics background, e.g. Economics, Political
- Sciences, Sociology, Law, Journalism, Anthropology, etc.,
- Be diligent and reliable in their work and have proven strong writing and research skills;
- Provide an outline of a project to be researched and written during their stay at the CCS. This can be based on an existing research/PhD proposal, but should fit the general evidence-based orientation of the scholarship.
- (Basic) Mandarin language skills are not prerequisite, but will be an asset in the application.

Application Notes:

1. The CCS offers one scholarship March-May 2012 and another September-November 2012.
2. Application deadline is:
  - 31 December 2011 for the scholarship in the first half of 2012,
  - 30 June 2012 for a scholarship in the second half of 2012.
3. Applications must include a full CV, a motivation letter of no more than 500 words, and a brief research outline (max. 750 words).
4. Applications should indicate institutional affiliation as well as the specific thematic strand in which they would position their work, i.e. the political-, economic- or environmental strands.

For more information, please consult our website at [www.sun.ac.za/ccs](http://www.sun.ac.za/ccs) under Scholarships or email CCS Director Dr. Sven Grimm: [sgrimm@sun.ac.za](mailto:sgrimm@sun.ac.za)

**New Book Announcement****Africans in China: A Sociocultural Study and Its Implications on Africa-China Relations By Adams Bodomo**

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Africa and China began to establish closer links, starting with the formation of the Forum for China Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2000. FOCAC and other Africa-China relations platforms aim to promote mutually beneficial sociopolitical, socioeconomic, and sociocultural relations between these two major parts of the world. However, these closer ties are also seen by some third-party analysts, especially many scholars and politicians from the West, as attempts by China to exploit African resources to fuel its fast-growing economy and, possibly, end up colonizing the continent. Africa-China relations are thus a topic of intense academic discussion. On the back of these closer government-to-government contacts between Africa and China are also closer people-to-people interactions in the form of travel and the establishment of Diaspora communities by Africans in China and Chinese in Africa.

While there is much discussion on Africa-China relations, the focus tends to lean more on the Chinese presence in Africa than on the African presence in China. There are numerous studies on the former but, with the exception of a few articles on the presence of African traders and students in China, little is known of the latter, even though an increasing number of Africans are visiting and settling in China and forming migrant communities there. This is a phenomenon that has never happened before the turn of the century and has thus led to what is often termed Africa's newest Diaspora. This book focuses on analyzing this new



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Diaspora, addressing the crucial question: What is it like to be an African in China?

*Africans in China* is the first book-length study of the process of Africans travelling to China and forming communities there. Based on innovative intermingling of qualitative and quantitative research methods involving prolonged interaction with approximately 800 Africans across six main Chinese cities—Guangzhou, Yiwu, Shanghai, Beijing, Hong Kong and Macau—sociolinguistic and sociocultural profiles are constructed to depict the everyday life of Africans in China. The study provides insights into understanding issues such as why Africans go to China, what they do there, how they communicate with their Chinese hosts, what opportunities and problems they encounter in their China sojourn, and how they are received by the Chinese state. Beyond these methodological and empirical contributions, the book also makes a theoretical contribution by proposing a cross-cultural bridge theory of migrant-indigene relations, arguing that Africans in China act as sociopolitical, socioeconomic, and sociocultural bridges linking Africa to China. This approach to the analysis of Diaspora communities has consequences for cross-cultural and crosslinguistic studies in an era of globalization.

*Africans in China* is an important book for African Studies, Asian Studies, Africa–China relations studies, linguistics, anthropology, sociology, international studies, and migration and Diaspora studies in an era of globalization.

For more information: <http://www.cambriapress.com/cambriapress.cfm?template=4&bid=487>

## Recent Publications and New Reports

### “You’ll Be Fired If You Refuse”: Labor Abuses in Zambia’s Chinese State-owned Copper Mines

Report by Human Rights Watch, November 2011

Report can be accessed at: <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2011/11/03/you-ll-be-fired-if-you-refuse>

### China Overseas Dams List

By International Rivers Network, November 2011

List can be accessed at: <http://www.internationalrivers.org/en/node/3110>

### To Bélinga or not to Bélinga? China’s Evolving Engagement in Gabon’s Mining Sector

Written by Romain Dittgen, SAIIA Occasional Paper No 98, November 2011

Paper can be accessed at: [http://www.saiia.org.za/images/stories/pubs/occasional\\_papers/saia\\_sop\\_98\\_dittgen\\_21001116.pdf](http://www.saiia.org.za/images/stories/pubs/occasional_papers/saia_sop_98_dittgen_21001116.pdf)

### Understanding China’s Agricultural Investments in Africa

Written by Helen Lei Sun, SAIIA Occasional Paper No 102, November 2011

Paper can be accessed at: [http://www.saiia.org.za/images/stories/pubs/occasional\\_papers/saia\\_sop\\_102\\_sun\\_20111129.pdf](http://www.saiia.org.za/images/stories/pubs/occasional_papers/saia_sop_102_sun_20111129.pdf)

### Nigeria and the BRICs: Diplomatic, Trade, Cultural and Military Relations

Written by Abiodun Alao, SAIIA Occasional Paper No 101, November 2011

Paper can be accessed at: [http://www.saiia.org.za/images/stories/pubs/occasional\\_papers/saia\\_sop\\_101\\_alao\\_20111129.pdf](http://www.saiia.org.za/images/stories/pubs/occasional_papers/saia_sop_101_alao_20111129.pdf)



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