

Africa China Policy Formulation Strategies

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Understanding China Through Chinese Culture: Does Africa Need a Collective China Strategy?

Why Africa China Policy

Find a **rational** and **operational** framework for the **promotion** of **African agency** in the China-Africa cooperation.

Question

How Africa can **best draw a coherent roadmap** – working in tandem, at collective continental and regional block levels – that will **help draw maximum shared benefits** from its relations with China.

Bilateral Relations

Overarching analysis is in favor of bilateral relations between individual African states with China to draw a China policy based on their own individual country's developmental priorities.

Old Paradigm

- The parallel trajectory of anti-colonial struggles by the African and Chinese people;
- Attempts by the African elite to replicate China's economic successes on the continent;
- The Western-media fueled anti-China rhetoric on the African continent.

The China we Know

- China known to Africa is that perceived through lenses of anti-colonial struggles solidarity and post-independence alternative partner of the African people.
- How can Africa then know and understand China beyond premises of romanticized solidarity?

Proactive China

- FOCAC VI Action Plan 2016 and on China's Second Africa Policy as its point of departure.
- Emphasize complementariness between China and Africa with the latter's interests expressed in terms of the Africa Agenda 2063.

Complementarities

- Customary China-Africa rhetoric of win-win cooperation and mutual development.
- However, it is that same rhetoric that tends to reveal asymmetries in a variety of China-Africa frameworks.

New Paradigm

- Africa's policy towards China ought to be preceded by a thorough understanding of China by Africans in terms of China's history, politics, society, technology, and economy.

How can Africa enhance its China Knowledge?

- Understanding China through Chinese Culture.
- What are the cultural characteristics that may help Africa better understand a complex China?

***Mianzi* (Face) & *Guanxi* Social Networks**

- *Mianzi* and *Guanxi* have been identified as central tools employed in negotiations and dealings in China since time immemorial.
- The two concepts apply from an individual level to include dealings between cultures and nations.

Mianzi (Face)

- Yutang (1935) observes that the Chinese concept of *Mianzi* 'psychological face' it is not a face that can be washed or shaved, but a face that can be 'granted' and 'lost' and 'fought for' and 'presented as a gift'."

Mianzi (Face)

- *Mianzi* although **abstract** and **intangible**, is the most delicate standard by which Chinese social intercourse is regulated.
- Entails a **lifelong indebtedness** on the side of the recipient who has been accepted back into cycle of 'honor'.

Types of *Mianzi* (Face)

- *Liu mianzi* 'granting face' by not allowing the other party to lose face.
- *Gei Mianzi* 'giving someone or a group of people a chance to regain lost honor'.
- *Shi Mianzi* or *diu lian* 'losing face' or 'losing honor' and it is therefore avoided by both parties at all costs.

Mianzi (Face)

- *Mianzi* 'face' as being at the center of China's dealings with Africa and the world at large. Although referred to as 'face', *Mianzi* should be understood as an expression of 'honour' in China's dealings with foreign nationalities.

***Mianzi* as a primary variable**

- **Knowledge** of the workings of *Mianzi* by African negotiators may be leveraged upon when negotiating with a variety of Chinese entities.

Guanxi (Social Networks)

- The concept of *Guanxi* alludes to 'safeguarding social networks and relationships.'
- *Guanxi* carries great social and cultural currency as it is the vehicle for a gift economy.

Guanxi as cycle of extended relationship

- It is difficult to determine where kin relationships end and those of extra-kin takeover.
- *Guanxi* consists and serves to cement all types of relations from those of a traditional core family, schoolmates, comrades and work colleagues.

Guanxi: from individual to public

- Given the fact that in China, all social networks and relationships start from a **small group** and grow into **larger** and **looser** types of **bonding**, a **collective approach** by Africa towards a China policy would yield **poor results**.

***Guanxi*: concentric circles**

- Africa would then draw more benefits if individual African nations were to approach China
- *Guanxi* networks and relations stronger at each turn with a possibility of higher gains at each encounter.

***Mianzi* and *Guanxi* in China-Africa Relations**

- The 1971 African support for the (PRC) admission to the United Nations General Assembly.
- Africa **provided space** for China to **regain *Mianzi*** on the **international arena**.

Central thesis of *Mianzi* & *Guanxi*

- In the **eyes** of China, current China-Africa relations are in accordance with the precepts of *Mianzi* for safeguarding *Guanxi* through its heightened sense of **gift economy**.

Advantages of individual African nations drawing China Policies

- The two Chinese traditional concepts argue **against a united front** as a **strategy** for formulating Africa's China policy.

African Colonial identities

- The majority of **African nations** and **regions**, albeit symbolic at times still carry **colonial identities**, such as the Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone Africa.
- **Diverse priorities** in national **development strategies**.

Reconciliatory Rationale

- African **collective resolutions** do not take into consideration **individual** nation's **domestic policies** and **developmental priorities**.

Individual National efforts vs. African Unity

- The recent 'Africa Rising' rhetoric;
- Continental collective efforts;
- Domestic policies as is the case of Rwanda and Ethiopia.

Recommendations

- Individual African nations should each separately setup strategies;
- Formulate China policies in accordance with their own developmental priorities.

Recommendations

- Africa's China Policy formulation initiatives should **look beyond** FOCAC and other China-Africa **frameworks**.

Recommendations

- South Africa as the co-chair of FOCAC mechanism has to find solutions beyond peripheries of China-Africa frameworks. The move is aimed at preventing a possible replication of the well-established China initiated framework such as the FOCAC. Solely relying on the platform provided by the FOCAC and other China-Africa frameworks may confine the intended policies to the very asymmetries the new efforts aims to avert.

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Thank You