

January 2018

UJ Centre for Africa-China Studies
OCCASIONAL PAPER

5



***Sino–South African Relations at Twenty:
Key Lessons***

Dr David Monyae and Gibson Banda



UJ Centre for Africa-China Studies

Occasional Paper No 5

Sino–African Relations at Twenty: Key Lessons

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Series editor: Dr David Monyae

First published in January 2018 by:

The University of Johannesburg Confucius Institute

Republished in January 2019 by:

The University of Johannesburg Centre for Africa-China Studies

9 Molesey Avenue, Kingsway Campus, Auckland Park

Johannesburg, South Africa

www.confucius-institute.joburg

External language editor: Riaan de Villiers

Designed and produced by Acumen Publishing Solutions

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Cover: Chinese President Xi Jinping inspects a Guard of Honour at the Union Buildings in Pretoria during his state visit to South Africa in December 2015. Picture: GovernmentZA.

NOTE: This Occasional Paper was initially published under the aegis of the UJ Confucius Institute. Following the launch of the CACS in November 2018, the Occasional Paper series has been republished to create a unified series under the aegis of the CACS.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2018, China and South Africa will celebrate 20 years of formal diplomatic ties. This relationship is vital for regional African prosperity, South–South solidarity, and North–South dialogue. It is important for South Africa, which has increasingly sought alternatives to the western-dominated international arena, as well as China, which accounts for 15% of the global economy and 37% of all developing markets, but is also seeking more active strategic partners as well as a greater role in Africa.

According to a report by the Centre for Chinese Studies, ‘Sino–South Africa relations are developing at a steady pace, from the onset of formal diplomatic ties in 1998 to the multifaceted partnership we see today’ (Alden and Wu 2014). The fundamental features of this relationship include historical links, multilateral co-operation, diplomatic relations, public media engagements, and trade and investment.

Some South African politicians, government officials and business people regard its expanding trade and cultural relationship with China as a chance for South Africa to achieve its strategic development goals. Conversely, South Africa, as a fast-paced developing market, forms part of China’s growing interest in Africa in terms of resources acquisition, market expansion and diplomatic support. Wasserman (2011) contends that Beijing has come to regard South Africa as the continent’s mineralogical treasure house, the world’s largest producer of platinum, and substantial reserves of important industrial minerals. Given these considerations, the relationship between South Africa and China mainly rests on overt as well as covert vested interests. South Africa is China’s most important business partner in Africa, followed by Angola. While the dynamics of China’s engagement with Africa are changing, and it has begun to build direct and indirect business linkages with other African countries, South Africa remains its biggest partner not only in terms of trade but also in respect of cultural exchanges.

Against this background, this paper assesses South Africa’s relationship with China, seeking to gauge its cost and benefits for both parties. What benefits has South Africa obtained from switching recognition from Taipei to mainland China in 1998? We could argue that this has

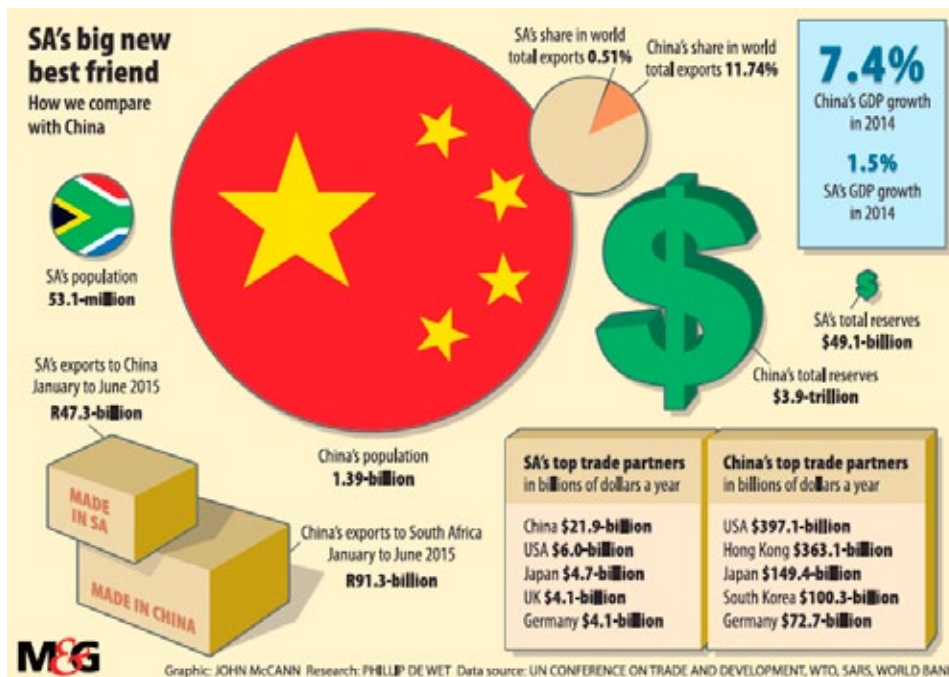
substantially benefited both parties, but, after 20 years of bilateral relations, some areas need attention. To this end, the paper offers a number of policy prescriptions for the next two decades and beyond.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Scholars agree that South Africa has emerged as an important strategic partner in China’s Africa policy (Le Pere and Shelton 2007). But how has this relationship unfolded over the years? South Africa’s relations within China date back to the late 19th century when Chinese labourers were brought to work on the gold mines (thus sowing the seeds for a future Chinese community in South Africa numbering about 350 000 today – the largest in Africa). The two countries then co-operated during World War Two as part of the Allied effort against the Axis powers. A mere three years after the end of the war, two major developments soured relations between the two countries. In 1948, a new white minority regime rose to power in South Africa, and in 1949, the People’s Liberation Army defeated the Kuomintang, prompting the formation of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) led by the Chinese Communist Party. As a result, up to the demise of the apartheid regime, formal relations between South Africa and China were hostile and more or less non-existent (April and Shelton 2015). For instance, the two countries fought on opposite sides during the Korean War. The apartheid government also enjoyed a strong economic relationship with the Republic of China (ROC) in Taiwan (McNeil 1996). Diplomatic relations between South Africa and Taiwan were established at the consular level in 1962, and upgraded to ambassadorial level in 1976 (Le Pere and Shelton 2007). Trade and investment as well as defence contracts grew steadily. A large number of South African military personnel were trained in the ROC. Conversely, Taiwanese firms invested heavily in South Africa, thus strengthening the economic foundation for diplomatic ties.

In the same period, South Africa was exposed to sanctions by the international community due to the oppressive government policies that favoured whites at the expense of the black majority and Chinese and other minorities. Despite this, Taiwan intensified its interactions with South Africa in trade as well as politics. Despite

Figure 1: The Sino-South African economic relationship



Source: John McCann, Mail & Guardian. Reproduced with the artist's permission.

this fertile relationship, South Africa began to deliberate about switching to 'a greater China', which would require it to recognise the PRC while maintaining relations with the ROC (Le Pere and Shelton 2007). In 1989, relations with the PRC were established at the request of the South African government through the president of the Chinese Association of South Africa, and both countries made commitments towards establishing formal relations. For example, after the South African foreign minister undertook a secret visit to China in 1991, China established a Centre for South African Studies in Pretoria, and South Africa established a Centre for Chinese Studies in Beijing (Le Pere and Shelton 2007). However, as preconditions for official relations, Beijing required that South Africa cease its diplomatic relations with Taiwan, and end apartheid.

In 1992, the Chinese and South African foreign ministers and top ANC officials met in South Africa, laying the foundations for formal diplomatic ties between China and South Africa. Taipei donated US\$25 million to the ANC's campaign prior to the 1994 elections. Some scholars have argued that this contribution was motivated by

fears of a recognition switch after 1994. However, following the elections, Taipei continued to invest in South Africa, including a US\$1.5 billion investment in manufacturing which helped to create about 40 000 jobs, and a dozen other joint projects. All this reassured Taipei of its continued diplomatic relations with South Africa. Indeed, the new ANC government delayed its diplomatic recognition switch for some time.

South Africa maintained its close contact with Beijing, especially in view of China's continued support for liberation movements in South Africa and the continent in general. In the same period, the ANC-aligned South African Communist Party (SACP) also forged close ties with the CCP, despite the latter having had closer relations with the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) due to Soviet support for the ANC. Pretoria was caught between a rock and a hard place. Policy inertia weighed heavily in favour of continuing relations with Taiwan. However, given the bond of Bandung, the PRC's support of the liberation movements, a larger economy to benefit from, and the pending return of Hong Kong, Beijing won the day.

Officially, the South African government switched its recognition from Taiwan to Mainland China in 1996, but the decision took effect in the last quarter of 1997. From 1999 onwards, President Thabo Mbeki forged a new relationship with China ‘unencumbered by the legacies of the recent past’ (Black and Hornsby 2017). In April 2000, President Jiang Zemin undertook a successful state visit to South Africa during which he and Mbeki signed the Pretoria Declaration. This paved the way for closer economic ties, and a spirit of partnership and constructive dialogue between the two countries (Shelton and Kabemba 2012). It also committed South Africa and China to joint initiatives to advance peace, security and development in Africa. Officially, Sino–South African relations broadened into a strategic partnership in 2004.

SINO—SOUTH AFRICA RELATIONS

Sino-African relations are not a new phenomenon, driven by China’s current economic and national interests; rather, they are a continuation of older relations prescribed by the Beijing Consensus and the Bandung Conference of Non-Aligned Nations (Konings 2007). They have developed from minimal contact to deep economic engagement. Since China and South Africa established formal diplomatic relations in 1998, relations between the two countries have passed through three stages: from partnership, to strategic partnership, to comprehensive strategic partnership. In terms of the most recent phase, both China and South Africa are committed to deepening co-operation in the areas of trade and investment, energy, culture, education, academic and research, health, and tourism, as well as global co-operation on shared international interests. Besides the bilateral agreement, this partnership is also operational at the continental and multilateral levels. Moreover, both are members of the G20 as well as the BRICS group of emerging economies. Given that their relationship has both regional and global implications, South Africa and China have good reason to work together for their own benefit while promoting development in Africa.

Trade between the two countries has grown enormously. China is now South Africa’s largest trading partner. Even outside the BRICS arrangement, the two-way trade between South Africa and China has grown from R121

billion in 2008 to R270 billion in 2013 (Alden and Wu 2014). Encouragingly, South African firms such as SAB Miller, Naspers and Investec have made investments in China, demonstrating that South Africa is not a mere recipient of foreign aid, but an active investor and participant. We therefore partially agree with the assertion that the relation between South Africa and China differs significantly from China’s relation with most African countries, in which China imports African minerals while exporting manufactured goods to expanding middle income consumers at the same time. In the past few years, South Africa has played a significant role in Africa, especially in terms of infrastructural projects in southern Africa, east Africa as well as other regions. However, its relationship with China affords South Africa enormous economic and political benefits on the international stage, especially given China’s international status and its veto power in the United Nations Security Council.

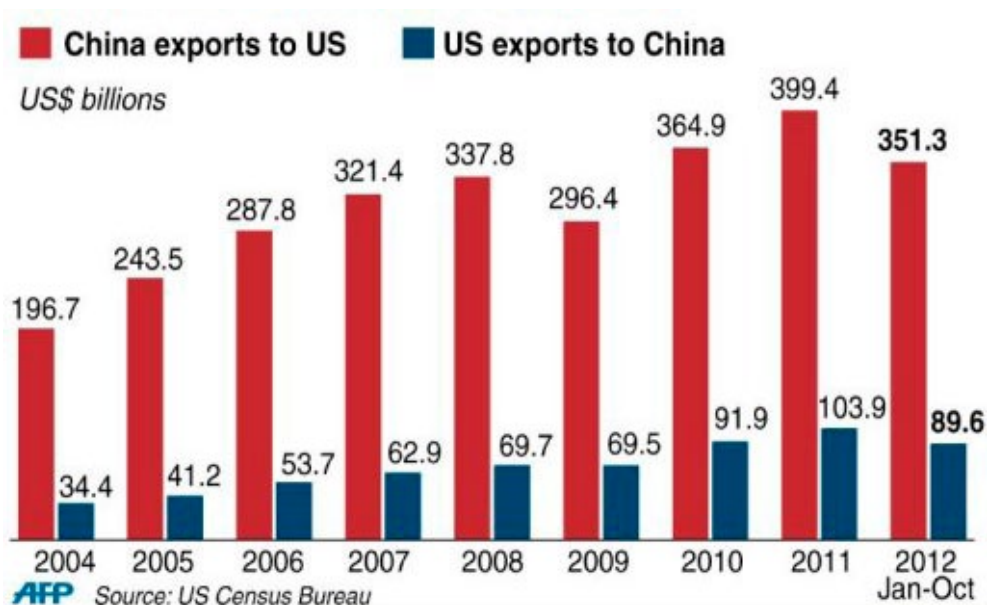
TRADE AND INVESTMENT

A look at Sino–South African trade relations reveals significant achievements under the Zuma administration. This can partly be attributed to the contraction of global trade following the financial global crisis in 2008. During the first half of 2009, imports from the European Union (EU) and Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries dropped by 32.8% on average. China grabbing the opportunity offered by this decline in trade with traditional sources to become South Africa and Africa’s largest trading partner (Alden and Wu 2014).

Furthermore, according to data released by the South African Reserve Bank, China had been a relatively meagre source of foreign direct investment (FDI) in South Africa from 1997 to 2010 when compared to the United Kingdom, United States and even Germany, except for 2008, when it was South Africa’s most important source of FDI. In 2010, Chinese FDI in South Africa totalled US\$5.6 million, compared to the EU at \$116.7 million, and the US at US\$8.68 million.

By contrast, South African FDI in China was estimated at US\$800 million for the same year. This, coupled with

Figure 2: China-US trade balance, 2004-2012



Source: US Census Bureau.

the fact that only 80 of 4 100 officially registered foreign companies operating in South Africa are Chinese, or just over 1 percent, underlines that China has a long way to go with to matching the levels of investment of other countries (Xiong 2012).

Nevertheless, for such young relations, these figures are impressive, and there are more areas of co-operation on the horizon. South Africa, through its shared agenda with China of reordering global economic and governance, has managed to open its markets to the rest of the world, and has also successfully diversified its economy from operating mainly in Africa and the West to include Asian countries where its firms previously experienced challenges. Moreover, China has assisted South Africa and many other African countries with infrastructural and military projects (Gcoyi 2017), and has been generous in providing soft loans to South Africa and the rest of Africa.

Ideally, states behave in a rational way. They enter into partnerships with other states to maximise mutual benefits and absolute gains which they would not be able to achieve on their own. South Africa and China provide an example of such a partnership, via their extensive and

fast-growing bilateral trade relations. South Africa and Africa as a whole present Beijing with a range of business opportunities in emerging economies with fast-growing populations. In fact, over the past ten years, only four of the world's 10 fastest growing economies are non-African. By contrast, due to the Chinese government's one-child, one-family policy, the Chinese population is declining (Mao 2017).

Furthermore, China not only benefits from South Africa's natural resources, but also from its rising middle-income consumer market for its manufactured goods. Conglomerates such as Xiaomi, HiSense, Huawei and FAW Group Corporation which provide a range of consumer goods all benefit from China's strategic partnership with South Africa. China has also been given access to South Africa's significant range of natural resources. Similarly, South African companies are benefiting from a highly accessible and rapidly growing middle-class consumer market in China (Wasserman 2012).

South Africa imports more than it exports, with its trade deficit increasing from R36 billion in 2012 to R38 billion in 2013 and as much as R73 billion in 2015 (Global Edge

Table 1: South African agricultural trade with China, 2006

RSA exports to China	US \$Million	Duty	Imports from China	US \$Million	Duty
Wool	31.37	1.0	Sausage casings	25.19	0.0
Sugar	9.27	50.0	kidney beans	22.49	10.0
Fish Meal	5.04	2.0	fruit juices	7.69	0.0
Sheep Skins	4.23	7.0	Peptones	4.65	0.0
Sausage Casings	4.01	18.0	proc tomatoes	4.64	15.0
Tobacco	2.75	10.0	Herbs	3.90	2.5
Total agricultural exports from RSA to China	\$69.36m	13.96%	Total agricultural imports into RSA from China	\$127.21m	6.79%

Source: World Trade Atlas 2006.

2014; De Villiers 2015). However, this does not mean that South Africa did not gain anything from trade or investment relations, as trade deficits are a common feature of international trade, as demonstrated by the US-China trade deficit in favour of China (Figure 2).

In any case, the South Africa-China partnership is far from a zero-sum relationship, as both countries have gained from it. According to BusinessTech (2015), China has set up more than 80 companies in South Africa since 1998, bringing its cumulative FDI to nearly US\$6 billion (R83 billion). This includes the US\$5.5-billion (R76-billion) investment by China’s ICBC bank in Standard Bank in 2012 (ibid). By contrast, South African investment in China only amounts to about US\$700 million (R9.7 billion). However, as Alden and Wu (2014) have pointed out, the number of investment projects by South African companies in China far exceeds that of other African countries.

While South Africa has benefited from the presence of Chinese companies such as Huawei and Hisense, who are also employing South African nationals, China’s stature as the second largest economy in the world should by now have translated into far greater benefits. Put differently, China’s current investment in South Africa is far less than could be expected, lagging behind the heavy investments by other export-led economies.

Theminkosi Gcoyi, managing director and co-founder of Frontline Africa Consulting (who has served as Economic Counsellor at the South African Embassy in Beijing), has

pointed out that the United States alone has established more than 600 companies in South Africa; Germany another 600, and France more than 300, in various sectors of the South African economy. These companies and their products are more familiar to South African consumers, which gives them a competitive advantage.

Furthermore, despite South Africa removing most of its import duties on Chinese goods, China continues to maintain import duties on South African agricultural goods, resulting in a 7.17% duty asymmetry in favour of China. As a result, trade flows are concentrated in specific product categories, as the tariff barriers outside those product lines remain relatively high (Sandrey and Edinger 2009).

Engagement with China in South Africa currently revolves around government and big business. In order to garner positive engagement beyond this, China will need to add broader and more local value to the South African economy, and support economic transformation.

Given this, the Chinese government and Chinese companies should ensure that Chinese investments in South Africa benefit the broader public and not just shareholders. Furthermore, Chinese investors need to ensure that they support Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE); invest in technology and skills transfers as well as enterprise development; hire local workers; and source local inputs. Above all, they should adapt Chinese business models to South African economic conditions and regulations.

LESSONS FOR SOUTH AFRICA

Lessons for South Africa from its interaction with China thus far are as follows:

1. The notion of South Africa serving as a 'gateway' to Africa should be reconsidered. In recent years, China has begun to engage directly with many more African countries, including Nigeria, Ethiopia, Kenya, Egypt, Lesotho, Tanzania and Zambia. Moreover, through the One Belt, One Road initiative, China is strengthen its influence in East Africa and eventually the rest of Africa. In order not to be left behind, South Africa needs to move away from its conception of hegemonic leadership in Africa, and collaborate with these countries as well as China.

2. While South Africa remains the biggest economy on the continent, other economies – notably Kenya, Nigeria and Egypt – are growing far more rapidly. These countries are bolstering their positions in their respective regions, and the latter two have placed first and second on the continental growth rankings in the past two years. Given this, South Africa needs to co-ordinate its activities within BRICS with those of other regional leaders.

3. China has an African strategy and agenda, underpinned by extensive research. By contrast, South Africa and Africa are lagging in terms of Afro-Sino knowledge, and lack a comprehensive strategy for engaging with China. South African and African governments should foster co-ordinated research on China in partnership with institutions of higher learning. Young African scholars should gain a deeper understanding of Chinese culture, customs and business tactics.

4. South Africa needs to improve its manufacturing output and identify sectors in which it can gain a comparative advantage, thereby making it more globally competitive. Studying Chinese Special Economic Zones (SEZs) could assist this process. As pointed out by Africa Renewal (2013), among others, the future of Africa lies in industrialisation and not in primary (mineral and agricultural) products. Given this, South Africa needs to invest more in biotechnology, telecommunications, nuclear and renewable energy, and artificial intelligence (robot-

ics and many others). Besides generating future jobs, this will stimulate local innovation, serve as an engine of growth, and enhance the quality of life of all South Africans. China is a leader in artificial intelligence alongside the United States. South Africa should seize this opportunity and work hand in hand with China to improve and develop new technologies. Among others things, South African students should study biotechnology, telecommunications and artificial intelligence in China. Furthermore, through its Department of Science and Technology (DST) the South African government should bolster centres such as the Centre for Artificial Intelligence Research (CAIR), a partnership among five South African universities (the University of Cape Town, University of KwaZulu-Natal, North West University, University of Pretoria and Stellenbosch University) aimed at boosting research and capacity development in Data Science. The University of the Witwatersrand is also doing significant work on Artificial Intelligence and machine learning. The south African government needs to bolster investments in Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning, aimed at expanding this into other fields.

5. Untapped opportunities for Sino-Africa collaboration include the ocean economy, the green economy, and a host of others presented by the onset of the fourth industrial revolution.

6. The role of the media in strengthening engagement between South African and Chinese citizens cannot be ignored. It can do so by showcasing relevant Chinese, South African and African news, programmes and views that reflect the different cultures and business prospects of the two regions. This could also help to dispel negative stereotypes about South African and Chinese people. At the same time, the type of information being disseminated by official Chinese media should be avoided.

7. Along the lines of the Confucius Institutes, South Africa and other African countries should establish African centres in China that promote African languages and cultures. At the same time, the Confucius Institutes should be used to intensify knowledge of China so that South Africans and Africans in general can develop greater insight into Chinese histories, sensibilities and touchpoints. This would help to promote better informed

African consulates, delegations and negotiators.

THE NEXT 20 YEARS: PROSPECTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Rethinking barriers to trade

On 8 December 2015, the SA-China Economic and Trade Association (Saceta) – which tracks the progress of Chinese investment in South Africa, provides support services to Chinese enterprises, and assists in business management – released an interesting report on the development of Chinese enterprise in South Africa. According to the report, the main challenges experienced by Chinese enterprises in South Africa were poor public security, strained industrial relations, a shortage of technical professionals, and a cumbersome visa system. The report recommended that South Africa should build investor confidence by adopting more stable and transparent economic policies.

In order to do so, China and South Africa will need to embark on joint ventures similar to those undertaken by the US and Japan in several African markets. South Africa can learn from the way in which its neighbour, Botswana, deals with diamond production. In collaboration with the marketing arm of De Beers Diamond Trading Company, Botswana has engaged in sorting, cutting and polishing its own diamonds in a move that will see it shifting the selling function from London to Gaborone (Grynberg 2012). South Africa can undertake a similar initiative, given that as of 2010 it was only processing about 2% of its diamonds, with the rest being processed and polished externally.

As regards the visa issue, some progress has been made. In 2016, the then South African Minister of Home Affairs, Malusi Gigaba, announced a 10-year multiple entry visa for citizens of BRICS partners. Similarly, earlier that year, the South African government approved 10-year multiple entry visas for business people and academics from Africa. In that year, the World Travel and Tourism Council estimates that tourism earned R120 billion in foreign revenue, and contributed more than \$25 billion to the

South African economy.

As regards the trade imbalance issue, as stated in the Beijing Declaration, both countries (South Africa and China) would benefit from the export of more value-added commodities from the former to the latter. Similarly, South Africa should identify specific value-added products from whose trade it can benefit.

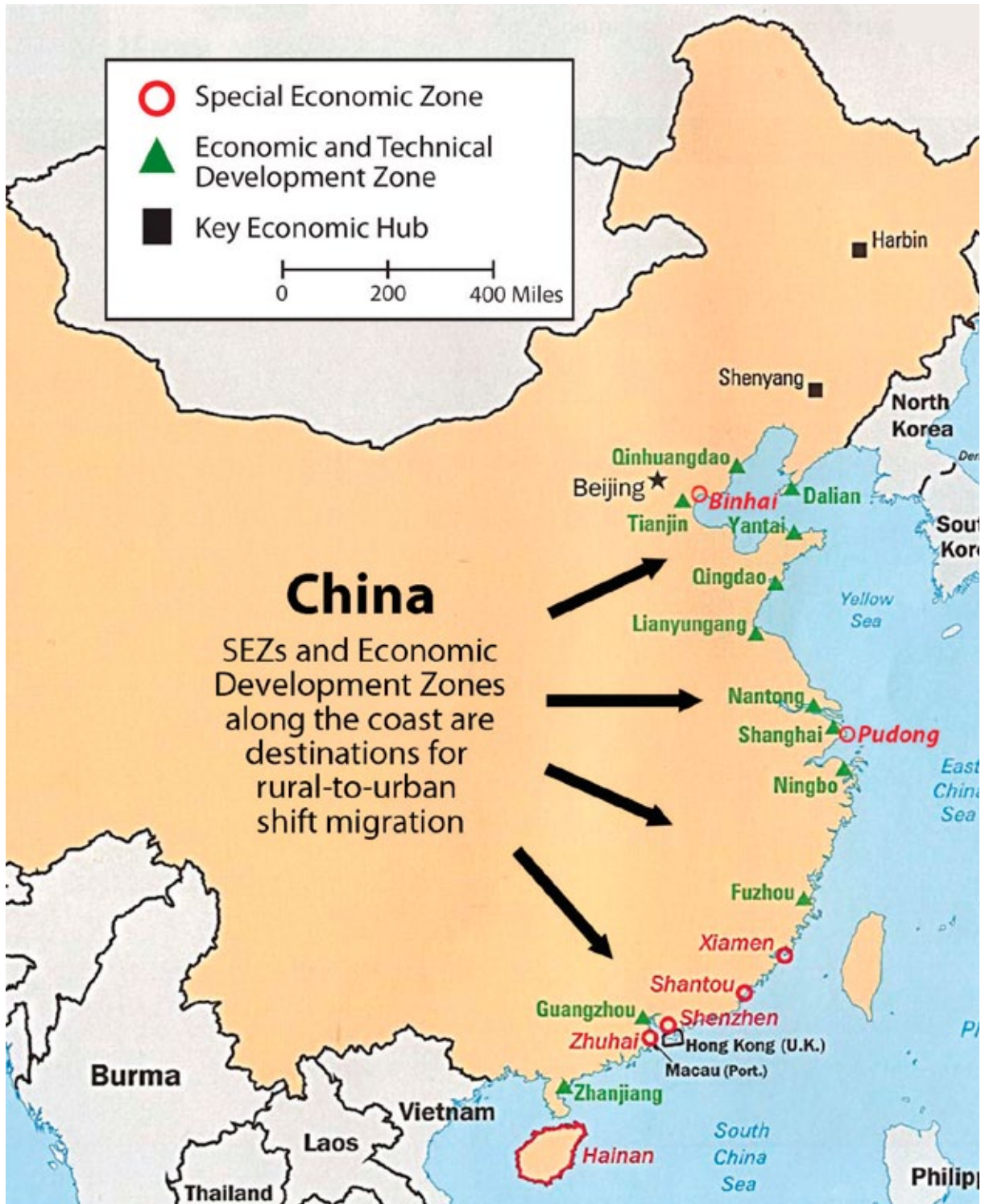
The foundation for value-added South African exports to China was laid by President Xi Jinping's state visit to South Africa in 2013 during which he signed the terms of reference for the joint interministerial working group (JIMWG), tasked with managing major projects and bilateral agreements. Proposed mechanisms included the following:

- To co-ordinate and promote major projects in trade, investment, infrastructure, energy, communication, agriculture, regional co-operation and human development.
- To exchange information on the above, and to explore opportunities.
- To conduct in-depth analysis of the challenges to finding solutions.

South Africa's interest in expanding its commercial ties with China remains firm. This was demonstrated by the 17th annual China International Fair for Investments and Trade held in Xiamen in 2013. For instance, the fair featured 62 South African companies chosen from the top 10 export and investment sectors that effectively showcased their projects (Alden and Wu 2014). There were also discussions about skills development in the textile sector and the establishment of Special Economic Zones in South Africa as drivers of economic growth.

At the same time, it should be noted that there are points of divergence between South Africa and China when it comes to trade. Besides the asymmetrical tariffs imposed on South African agricultural products, the two countries are competing for the African market. The Chinese presence on the continent has provided South Africa with strong competition. An infamous example is that of steel.

Figure 3: Chinese special economic zones (SEZs)



Source: University of Minnesota.

State-subsidised Chinese manufacturers have gained notoriety for ‘dumping’ their steel at slashed prices, thus crowding out domestic producers. This has led to hundreds of thousands of job losses in South Africa, prompting trade unions in the country to seek protectionist measures against Chinese steel imports.

Instead of ad hoc measures, there needs to be a greater understanding of Chinese global aspirations, and where South Africa fits in. A starting point would be an in-depth analysis of the implications of the One Belt, One Road initiative in terms of which China is gaining direct access to African markets. This may reduce South Africa’s share of African markets, but may also provide it with new opportunities, as it will contribute to inter-African infrastructure and therefore intra-African trade.

And at the same time, South Africa should intensify its research on China. Most of the literature on China is not relevant to South Africa; it is largely outdated and overly pessimistic. China is not blameless, as it actively remains secretive about its plans and financial calculations. Moreover, most of the data on China comes from conservative US think-tanks such as the Heritage Foundation, the Cato Institute, the RAND Corporation and the National Interest, all espousing the so-called China threat theory which reflects a fear of China rising to usurp US military dominance. At the same time, a lack of funding has helped to inhibit the development of an organic and original South African literature on China.

Towards global reform

South Africa and China can strengthen co-operation in the UN, the G20, BRICS, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, and other multilateral institutions and frameworks, and also ensure a strong BRICS bank predicated on non-interference, unlike the World Bank and IMF. This is particularly pressing, as some research has shown that China, despite its vocal shunning of interference, waits for Bretton Woods institutions to enact structural adjustment programmes and then sweeps into those markets, gaining additional soft power for not having interfered in the internal affairs of those countries. China, as an African ally, should also explore the prospects for using its market size and manufacturing leverage

to ensure that the EU lowers or removes its common tariff vis-à-vis African agricultural goods, which it has consistently refused to do.

Heading into the Fourth Industrial Revolution

The most fundamental difference between China today and during the first three industrial revolutions is the entrepreneurial spirit that has emerged over four decades of full-tilt development. Unlike the imperial system of the Qing Dynasty, when the first two industrialisations hit China, and under the Soviet-type economy, in which private ownership was banned until the time of the third industrial revolution, China’s leaders today encourage people to start companies and become their own bosses. As a result, in 2016, more than 15 000 new enterprises were registered every day (despite the popular image of China as a copycat, in the same year China ranked third after the US and Japan in international patent applications, and Chinese corporation Huawei won an IP lawsuit against South Korean giant Samsung). China is also preparing to participate actively in the fourth industrial revolution, armed with a number of advantages that give it a decided edge over other major economies.

South Africa can take advantage of this; the latest statistics indicate that 48% of South African youths are unemployed. The South African National Development Plan states that ‘South Africa must find ways to urgently reduce the alarming levels of youth unemployment, and to provide young people with broader opportunities’, adding that, ‘to address high levels of unemployment, particularly among youth, extraordinary measures will be required’ (National Planning Commission 2013). The extent of this challenge cannot be overstated. Projections show that an estimated 65% of children entering primary school today will work in roles that do not yet exist. Therefore, the ‘extraordinary measures’ referred to in the RDP should include apprenticeship or mentorship programmes between young South Africans and Chinese businessmen and entrepreneurs. Furthermore, South African scholarships to China needs to be revised and repositioned so that young people, and South Africa at large, may take better advantage of China’s technological edge. Encouragingly, China is already offering scholarships in areas such

as space science and technology, biotechnology, telecommunications, and nuclear and renewable energy.

Enhancing (and harnessing) people-to-people relations

Much use can be made of the ‘downstairs dimension’ of Sino-South African relations in countering negative views of China, and creating a China-South Africa community with shared experiences and futures. South Africa has made a start by launching Mandarin training in schools. The relaxation of visa requirements would also be helpful, as this would enable more South Africans and Chinese to visit each others’ countries, experiencing their counterparts’ cultures and lifestyles, and mitigating the roots of negative perceptions.

At the FOCAC Summit held in Johannesburg in 2015, African and Chinese leaders agreed on the need to upgrade Africa–China relations to a comprehensive strategic and co-operative partnership, identifying ‘mutually enriching cultural exchanges’ as one of the five major pillars supporting Africa-China relations, and a ‘cultural and people-to-people plan’ as one of the ten Africa-China co-operative plans. Steps have already been taken towards implementing these goals, and people-to-people exchanges have been massively expanded.

As noted by Liu Yandong, Vice-Premier of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China, relations between South Africa and China stretch as far back as 1 000 years ago, as shown by the fact that Chinese ceramics have been discovered on the site of the ancient Mapungubwe Kingdom. South Africa is home to a major Chinese diaspora (the largest in Africa). The countries share a long-standing history of resistance against colonialism South Africa hosts more Chinese students, Confucius Institutes and classrooms and has more sister provinces and cities with China than any other in Africa.

Moreover, South Africa is one of the most popular destinations for Chinese tourists, and the first country to include Chinese teaching in its national education curriculum. A Year of South Africa was held in China in 2014, and a Year of China in South Africa in 2015. The latter ‘set a record of over 200 events and the participation of about

100 000 people’ (Liu 2017).

People-to-people relations are the bedrock of the relationship between South Africa and China, and should continue to ensure that this relationship transcends mere economic interests, connecting these two civilisations in a way that enhances joint commitments, and giving them greater gravitas. As the enhanced relations between Africa and China complete their second decade, this is a moment which merits strategic reflection and dialogue about the role to be played by these two peoples in one another’s future.

A BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF SINO-SOUTH AFRICAN RELATIONS

YEAR	MAJOR EVENTS
1904-11	Chinese citizens brought to work in gold mines in South Africa. Origins of Chinese community in South Africa.
1939-1945	China and South Africa along with the Allies cooperate in defeating Japan, Germany, Italy and other Axis powers during World War Two.
1948	The apartheid regime rises to power in South Africa. Beginning of isolation between the PRC and the RSA.
1955	The Bandung Conference brings Afro-Asian-Arab leaders together. High point in South-South, anti-colonial solidarity.
1982	ANC leader Oliver Tambo meets Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang in Lusaka. Relations between the liberation movement and the Communist Party of China are rekindled, and the CCP commits itself to greater support for the ANC.
1994	End of apartheid rule in South Africa.
1995	Nelson Mandela visits China for the first time as President of the RSA.
1998	South Africa officially adopts the One-China policy.
2000	Pretoria Declaration by President Jiang Zemin during an official visit to South Africa. Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) launched.
2001	First bi-annual commission meeting.
2003	First meeting of the China-South Africa defence committee.
2004	Second bi-annual commission meeting, resulting in the elevation of ties between South Africa and China to that of a Strategic Partnership. South Africa grants China 'market status', and negotiations towards a China-SACU free trade agreement begin.
2008-09	South Africa gains a temporary seat on the UN Security Council, and forms a voting bloc with China.

YEAR	MAJOR EVENTS
2010	<p>South African President Jacob Zuma visits China, accompanied by 370 representatives of the South African business community. Case is made for South African entry into the BRIC grouping of developing countries.</p> <p>Fourth China-South Africa defence committee meeting.</p> <p>Chinese pilots receive flight training from former South African air force and navy personnel in Mafikeng.</p> <p>The Beijing Declaration commits both countries to including more value-added products in South Africa's exports to China.</p>
2013	<p>South Africa hosts the 6TH BRICS Summit. Two-way China-South Africa trade reaches R270-billion.</p>
2014	<p>The Year 2014 is declared 'South Africa Year in China'. Chinese capital investment in South Africa reaches R13.33 billion.</p>
2015	<p>The Year 2015 declared 'China Year in South Africa'. South Africa hosts the Sixth FOCAC VI Summit from 3 to 5 December.</p>
2016	<p>Sixth FOCAC summit held in South Africa. The Johannesburg Plan of Action spells out greater co-operation in respect of development aid, economic development, security, and global reform. Mandarin is introduced in certain South African public primary schools.</p>

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