



Discussion Paper

STRENGTHENING AFRICA-CHINA RELATIONS:
A PERSPECTIVE FROM BOTSWANA

Frank Youngman

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a preliminary consideration of issues relating to the relationship between Botswana and China. There is little existing research on the subject and the paper seeks to develop the basis for further conceptual analysis and empirical study. It provides a country-level exploration of Africa-China relations and how they might be strengthened. The paper addresses three general questions on Africa-China relations in the context of Botswana, namely:

- What are the different dimensions of Africa-China relations?
- What are the issues currently facing Africa-China relations?
- What specific measures can be taken to strengthen Africa-China relations?

Firstly, the paper identifies the different dimensions of relations between Africa and China so that the multi-faceted and complex nature of these relations is emphasized. The next section considers the historical development of Botswana-China relations, after which an assessment is made of the issues present in the current situation. On the basis of this analysis, possible measures to strengthen relations are examined. A case study is provided of the role of the University of Botswana in promoting Botswana-China relations. In conclusion, it is proposed that empirical research on the topic is necessary.

This paper was initially presented at the Third Meeting of the China-Africa Think Tanks forum in Beijing in October 2013. It should be noted that the sequence 'Africa-China' is used deliberately to emphasize that an Africa-centred perspective has been taken. Furthermore, the paper relies predominantly on African and Chinese writers and sources in order to circumvent the problem of the over-reliance on Western analysts in the study of Africa-China relations.

The author is a member of the Africa-China Research Group, an inter-disciplinary network of University of Botswana academics and graduate students with an interest in the study of the relationship between Africa and China, particularly with respect to Botswana. It promotes research by University of Botswana scholars and partners on issues connected to the Africa-China relationship. Its ultimate aim is the establishment of a Centre for Africa-China Studies.

Frank Youngman is Professor of Adult Education at the University of Botswana and was Deputy Vice Chancellor –Academic Affairs from 2005-2011.

E-mail: youngman48@gmail.com

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The views expressed in this paper are those of the author.

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1. INTRODUCTION

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2. DIMENSIONS OF AFRICA-CHINA RELATIONS

Since the establishment of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2000, there has been a heightened interest in the relationship between Africa and China by policy-makers, the media and academics as the practical impacts of China's engagement with the continent have grown. An increasingly wide range of studies in English examine the relationship from a variety of different perspectives. However, it is important to note that the overwhelming majority of studies look at the relationship within the context of Africa and therefore there are few studies on the nature of the relationship *within* China (an interesting exception is the study by Bodomo (2010) of the African trading community in Guangzhou). Discussions of how to strengthen Africa-China relations must be reciprocal and consider the situation in China as well as in Africa. For example, what is the experience of Africans who study in China? This is the topic of a current Master's dissertation being undertaken at the Institute for African Studies, Zhejiang Normal University (Li,L. personal communication, July 20, 2013).

The literature reveals a relationship that has evolved over time and which is becoming more and more complex. As Zhang Chun (2013) has stated: In the past six decades, Sino-African relations has significantly upgraded from a linear and single-dimension relationship to a multi-layer and multi-dimensional one, with the support of institutional efforts, especially the establishment and development of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation. (p.32)

The conception of Africa-China relations as 'multi-layer and multi-dimensional' is an important one for those concerned with strengthening relations. For example, whilst the competitive threat of Chinese shop-owners in a given African country may strain relations with local retailers, the work of Chinese medical personnel may be met with warm appreciation. In such a situation, different approaches would be required to sustain relations. A nuanced analysis can therefore help to avoid problems of generalization and over-simplification. Such an analysis requires a framework that disaggregates the different dimensions of Africa-China relations.

The Chinese Government's White Paper of 2006, *China's Africa Policy* (People's Republic of China, 2006) identifies four fields in the section 'Enhancing all-round cooperation between China and Africa', namely

1. Political; 2. Economic; 3. Education, science, culture, health and social; 4. Peace and security. Within each of these fields, there are sub-domains, totaling thirty in all (- see Appendix 1). The document provides an official view from the Chinese side of the multiple dimensions of cooperation that the Government seeks to promote. From the perspective of state-to-state relations it is comprehensive and it can help in the categorization of relations. It is particularly useful for showing that within major categories there are sub-categories that embody different issues and challenges for relations. But of course it does not provide for consideration of the unofficial social interactions between Africans and Chinese in everyday situations such as shops, workplaces, hotels and health facilities. This is particularly important as many tensions in Africa-China relations occur at the grass-roots level, for example, in the interaction between Chinese-owned companies and African communities (see, for instance, Ching Kwan Lee, 2009). Furthermore, in a number of areas, especially in the economic field and in the engagement of civil society, non-state actors are an increasingly important part of the relationship on both sides.

For the purposes of this paper (and its practical focus on strengthening relations), it is proposed to adopt a framework of analysis with five key dimensions:

- a) Diplomatic and political cooperation;
- b) Economic relations;
- c) Education, health and cultural co-operation;
- d) Peace and security;
- e) Community relations, defined as ‘the particular state of affairs in an area where potentially conflicting ethnic, religious, cultural, political, or linguistic groups live together’ (Collins, 2013) and encompassing the actions to prevent or mitigate conflict and to strengthen relations (for example, through people-to-people exchanges).

As noted, each of the key dimensions can in turn be further differentiated. It is argued that a disaggregated approach to analysis can help clarify the different measures that may be adopted to optimize relations. It also shows that whilst some studies may appear to be comprehensive, most are more narrowly focused. For example, Bwalya’s useful study on Zambia is entitled ‘South-South cooperation: A case study of China-Zambia relations’ and it seeks ‘to suggest ways in which the relationship can be improved and enhanced for the benefit of both countries’ (Bwalya, 2011, p.213). However, despite some general elements, its focus is essentially the economic dimension and on trade and investment within that dimension.

One advantage of treating Africa-China relations in a disaggregated way is that it facilitates country-specific analysis and consideration of different priorities. For example, the peace and security dimension has relatively low salience in a politically-stable country like Tanzania but is prominent in current relations in conflict areas such as Sudan and Southern Sudan. There is need for country-level studies that are historically-informed and take into account specific political and economic contexts and how they shape the relationship with China.

3. THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF BOTSWANA-CHINA RELATIONS

This section covers Botswana-China relations in the period 1966 to 2006, a period bracketed by Botswana’s independence in 1966 and the third meeting of FOCAC in 2006. Botswana became independent from British colonial rule in 1966. At that time, it was one of the ten poorest countries in the world. Furthermore, the landlocked country was surrounded by the white minority regimes of South Africa, South West Africa (Namibia) and Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) with a single border point to an independent country, namely Zambia. Its development prospects were poor. Its geo-political situation

made it vulnerable and cautious in its foreign relations. In 1967 it established diplomatic relations with Taiwan, which began to provide aid in the field of agriculture. However, the first president, Seretse Khama, recognized the significance of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and, over-riding the objections of his Cabinet, he ensured that Botswana voted in favour of the PRC taking the seat for China at the United Nations in 1971 (Bolaane, 2007, p.146). Following internal debate within the Government, a one-China policy was adopted and diplomatic relations with Taiwan were terminated and established with the PRC in January 1975. Subsequently, President Seretse Khama visited China in 1976 and 1977. As the liberation struggles intensified within the region during the 1970s and 1980s, China's diplomatic/political support for Botswana was important.

The good bilateral relations continued as the regional situation changed with the end of apartheid in South Africa in 1994 and as China's policy towards Africa from the mid-1990s became more motivated by economic concerns (Zhang Chun, 2013, p.32). A high point in the diplomatic/political dimension of the Botswana-China relationship came with President Festus Mogae's attendance at the FOCAC Beijing Summit and Third Ministerial Conference in 2006. In an interview in Beijing at the time (quoted by the Sunday Standard Reporter, 2013, p.2) President Mogae said 'I find that the Chinese treats us as equals. The west treats us as former subjects...I prefer the attitude of the Chinese to the west's...' He made clear that he placed a high value on Botswana's bilateral relationship with China, including its economic benefits.

The economic dimension of the relationship was low key for many years. In 1977 President Seretse Khama signed an agreement on technical cooperation, mainly focused on railway rehabilitation (Bolaane, 2007, p.156). In 1984, the first Chinese construction company, China Civil, started business in Botswana and was followed by other companies which concentrated on small projects like housing, junior secondary schools and individual buildings like the Air Botswana headquarters. However, following the opening of the Jwaneng diamond mine in 1982, Botswana's economic growth accelerated rapidly so that by 1996 the World Bank declared it an upper middle income country. Botswana's political stability and strong economy made it increasingly attractive for Chinese investment and trade and these grew rapidly after 2000 with state support, such as the bilateral agreements on investment and on preferential loans signed in June 2000 (Bolaane, 2007, p.162). Chinese companies came to play a dominant role in the construction industry and Chinese shops in the retail sector spread country-wide. Thus by 2006 the economic dimension of the bilateral relationship was very prominent.

By comparison, other areas of the relationship were relatively low profile. In the education sector, there was little activity. For example, during the period 1984 to 2005 only five scholarships a year were provided for long-term study in China (Liu Huanxing, 2010, p.2). Despite an agreement on cultural cooperation being signed in 1991, there were few exchanges in this field. Perhaps the most notable field of cooperation was in the health sector, with Chinese medical teams being sent regularly to work in Botswana hospitals after 1981. However, the increased presence of Chinese construction workers and shop-owners after 2000 did mean that community relations became more significant. Tensions in community relations began to emerge, which attracted negative media coverage. In 2005 the Chinese Embassy gave a press briefing to encourage more positive reporting because of its concerns about stories 'targeting the Chinese people as a whole and their business operation in Botswana, which serve to mislead public opinion and even plant seeds of resentment towards the Chinese community in the mind of local people.' (Bolaane, 2007, p.167)

4. THE CURRENT SITUATION OF BOTSWANA-CHINA RELATIONS

Since 2006 relations between Botswana and China have intensified and within Botswana they have taken on greater significance in national life. However, as yet there has been no empirical study of the different aspects of the current relationship although a small-scale research project by a University of Botswana Masters student has recently been initiated (Chelenyane, M. personal communication, September 17, 2013). This section therefore provides a preliminary analysis of the different dimensions of the current situation whilst indicating that further empirically-based research is required.

At the diplomatic and political level, relations have continued to be positive until recently. China's view was well captured in a speech by Ambassador Liu Huanxing in 2010 which reviewed the 35 years of diplomatic relations under the evocative title 'Memories and blessings of China-Botswana relations'. He gave a warm account of 'our all-round friendly and cooperative partnership' (Liu Huanxing, 2010, p.3), noting for example the Government of Botswana's donation to China after the Sichuan earthquake disaster of 2008 as an example of true friendship. He expressed optimism about the future of the relationship.

Frequent high-level exchanges have taken place involving government ministers and political delegations. In 2010, for example, Vice President Merafhe visited the World Expo in Shanghai and then Vice President Xi Jinping visited Botswana. Lower level political and administrative exchanges have also taken place, for instance between Gaborone City Council and its twin cities of Nantong and Chongqing. However, diplomatic problems have recently arisen. For example, in 2012 Botswana formally condemned China's veto in the UN Security Council on the conflict in Syria. Most significantly, in early 2013 President Ian Khama gave an interview to a South African newspaper in which he was highly critical of the performance of Chinese construction companies and their performance on Government contracts. He also 'complained about what he considers excessive migration of Chinese to take jobs that should be done by Botswana' (Kotch, 2013, p.2). The tone of the interview was very negative towards China. When asked if other African presidents had similar views he responded:

'They probably won't say it publicly, but when I've spoken to others they've expressed frustrations as well,' he said. 'People feel that China is now the second-biggest economy in the world. You say things like that, do you really want to upset such a huge power? But there's no point in having a huge power investing in a country if those investments at the end of the day don't do you any good' (Kotch, 2013, p.2). The interview signaled the extent of the Government's dissatisfaction with aspects of relations with China.

This theme was taken up in July 2013 when the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation spoke at a reception at the Chinese Embassy for the incoming Chinese Ambassador. Although he acknowledged that China is a strategic partner, he criticized the substandard work and unscrupulous practices of some Chinese contractors and warned the Ambassador that he should ensure better standards by the Chinese community:

Shoddy workmanship has become synonymous with Chinese contractors. In order to solidify relations between Botswana and China, the Ambassador is the right person to get the Chinese community in Botswana to act like true Chinese people. (Basimanebotho, 2013)

It may be that as the 2014 general election approaches, the ruling party feels it must express public criticism of China in order to counter the potential appeal of opposition politicians who have been strident in their denunciations of Chinese enterprises for some time (Sautman and Hairong, 2009, pp.752 to 754).

Beyond the public pronouncements, there are other indications of a deterioration in relations. For example, there is anecdotal evidence from the Chinese community that it has become much more difficult to obtain visas for Botswana since early 2013. It can be concluded that there are greater challenges at the diplomatic level than at any time since 1975.

It is clear that the area of economic relations that has become the main source of problems in the bilateral relationship. The significant growth in economic activity by Chinese state-owned and private companies in Botswana since 2006 has meant that this area has been the most visible aspect of Botswana-China relations in national life. Chinese companies have operated primarily in the construction industry, textile manufacturing and retail sector, leading to an inward migration of construction workers and small shop-owners as well as creating jobs for Botswana. The Chinese Ambassador stated in 2010 that 20,000 job opportunities had been created for locals (Liu Huanxiing, 2010, p.1). New restrictions on foreign-owned businesses are likely to reduce Chinese activity in the retail sector but some diversification may be expected. For example, the Shanghai Fengyue Glass Company (in conjunction with the Botswana Development Corporation) has been developing a glass factory, Huawei is active in the telecommunications sector and the TouchRoad Group is planning to build an industrial park. Recently, Chinese companies acquired mineral prospecting licenses. However, there is no evidence of Chinese investment in other areas that the Government has identified as strategically important for its economic diversification drive, such as agriculture and tourism.

Bilateral trade volumes have steadily increased since 2006, with Botswana importing consumer goods and exporting minerals, such as nickel. At this point, Botswana does not sell diamonds directly to China, which is the world's second largest consumer of the gem. In some years, Botswana has enjoyed a trade surplus but generally the balance of trade favours China. There seems to be little formal data regarding entrepreneurial activity by Botswana in China though anecdotal information indicates that some small business owners go to China to purchase stock directly. Sautman and Hairong (2009, p.754) cite an interview in which the Chinese ambassador states that 2000 Botswana retailers visited China in 2007.

In the construction sector over twenty Chinese construction companies have been involved in infrastructure development, mainly working on large public sector projects. These have included hospitals, housing, dams, airports, roads, stadiums and educational buildings. They have included the Government's most high-profile projects, such as the Morupule B power station 'megaproject'. Some of the projects have been financed through grants and concessional loans by the Chinese Government. The Chinese companies made low bids with which the previously dominant South African and European companies could not compete. Chen, writing in 2009, made a positive assessment of China's role: 'Setting aside some individual problems, the overall benefits of Chinese engagement in this sector to Botswana have been to substantially lower the costs of infrastructure projects and create new employment opportunities for the local people.' (Chen, 2009, p.8) However, since then public controversies have arisen around many projects with respect to tendering procedures, delivery delays, quality of workmanship, allegations of corruption, poor labour relations, occupational health and safety problems, lack of skills transfer and so forth. A prominent case is that of Sinohydro, which undertook five major Government projects, including roads, a dam and a terminal building for the main airport in Gaborone, and which became embroiled in allegations of poor workmanship and corruption (Kavahematui, 2012). In 2012 the Government terminated its contract for the airport building and in 2013 the company left the country. The departure in negative circumstances of such a significant Chinese company (which ENR (2013) ranks as number 14 in the world among international contractors) is an indication of the scale of the problems currently facing economic relations between the two countries.

In contrast, the dimension of education, health and culture has been the least controversial part of the relationship. China has had a long-standing policy of offering scholarships for long term study and training opportunities through short courses. The scale of these has increased considerably since the

commitments made at FOCAC in 2006 and 2009. In 2007 China also donated two primary schools. Educational cooperation seems to be seen in a positive light by all concerned. Similarly, official development assistance in the area of health dates back to 1981, with China sending medical teams every two to three years to serve in the major hospitals in Gaborone and Francistown. The Chinese Ambassador recently stated that since 1981, 373 medical experts have treated more than 2 million Batswana patients (Zheng Zhuqiang, 2013, p.2). This dimension of cooperation remains highly valued by the Government as attested by the remarks of the Minister of Health, Dr Seakgosing, in 2011: 'It is without doubt that this support is highly commendable and will always be in the hearts of Batswana ... The increase in the number of health workers symbolizes the true spirit of friendship, partnership and brotherhood by China...' (Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Botswana, 2011). There are an increasing number of visits by Chinese cultural groups though relatively few visits to China by Batswana artists. It can be concluded that this dimension of relations is quite small scale but is officially recognized for the positive contribution it makes to Botswana's development.

Cooperation in the field of peace and security is the least significant dimension of Botswana-China relations. Whilst China maintains military relations with Botswana, the level of cooperation is minimal and the Chinese Embassy has no defence attaché, in contrast to the situation in the neighbouring countries of Namibia, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe (Think Security Africa, 2013). China has provided training courses in China for a small number of personnel from the Botswana Defence Force, as well as for police personnel. The peace and stability of Botswana and the small size of its security sector make this field relatively unimportant in the bilateral relationship.

With respect to community relations, it is difficult to get an accurate figure on the size of the Chinese community in Botswana. Sautman and Hairong (2007, p.89) estimated there were between three and ten thousand Chinese in 2006-7, Mogae estimated the number was between five and six thousand in 2009 (Mogae, 2011, p.16), whilst Xu Wei (2013) gives an estimate of thirty thousand in 2013. There is also a lack of data on their demographic profile in terms of important variables such as length of stay in Botswana, education level, skills profile, gender, and place of origin, though Xu Wei (2013) asserts that 60%-70% come from Fujian Province. They are predominantly self-employed business-people in the retail trade and employees of Chinese companies in the construction sector. Whilst the construction workers are concentrated on specific sites, the retailers can be found in small shops throughout the country, including in rural areas. Chinese people are a visible presence in a society of 2 million Batswana but there is little analysis of the interaction between the two communities.

There have been some media reports on local perspectives of relations at the grass-roots, for example Mogae (2011, p.16) refers to a newspaper article in 2009 that found that 'Some locals accuse Chinese business people of violating labour laws by coercing employees to work long hours, whilst other praise them for the low cost goods they offer.' Problems in labour relations between Batswana workers and Chinese managers on construction sites have been reported in the press (for example, *The Telegraph Reporter*, 2010, p.2) and in a research report by Kalusopa (2009, pp.140-142). There is anecdotal information and media coverage of complaints by the general public about 'Machaena' (which is Setswana for 'Chinese people') but there have been no reports of violent incidents of xenophobia against the Chinese community.

An insight into Chinese perspectives of Botswana is captured in a study of Chinese traders by McNamee (2012) which is based on 200 interviews in five Southern Africa countries. The study records that hitherto the situation of Chinese traders has been better in Botswana 'than in most – and perhaps all – other African countries.' (McNamee, 2012, p.32). However, this appears to be changing:

What made traders in Botswana increasingly uneasy was the apparent shift from an accommodating approach by government to an antagonistic, even hostile attitude to small-scale Chinese businesses. Some believe they are scapegoats for a wider change in attitude nationally, which has more to do with politicians

and local businessmen stoking up resentment over the dominance of Chinese companies in the construction business, which has pushed many Batswana out of the industry. (McNamee, 2012, p.32)

This conclusion seems to bear out the point made by Sautman and Hairong (2009) that national attitudes are shaped by the national political discourse, in which politicians seek political advantage from raising the 'Chinese problem'. So far, there appears to have been no empirical research on the nature of everyday interactions between Batswana and the Chinese living and working in Botswana.

Furthermore, there seems to have been no empirical studies of the experiences of Batswana studying, working or visiting in China. An interesting insight is however provided in a newspaper article entitled 'A Motswana girl in the Orient' (Mogae, 2012), which is a warm and humorous account of one student's experiences in Shanghai: 'What it's been like for a black African woman living with and in-amongst the Chinese.' (p.1) The article tells of the initial culture-shock and the slow, convoluted process of learning the language and cultural norms as well as the realities of everyday life. It describes personal interactions and the human similarities beyond the cultural differences and concludes: 'Personally, my China experience ... has been positive and outcomes have far outweighed expectations.' (Mogae, 2012, p. 3) Only in-depth research could reveal whether this positive individual experience is generalizable and what interventions could be adopted to enhance the experience of Batswana in China.

This brief review of the current situation of Botswana-China relations shows that there is need for more evidence-based analysis of the different dimensions of the relationship in order to reach robust conclusions that could guide action at various levels. Two major themes emerge from the review. First, whilst the relationship as a whole is asymmetrical, with China clearly the dominant partner, Botswana has begun to assert itself in the economic field within a political discourse of economic nationalism and citizen economic empowerment. Second, and linked to the first, it is clear that a deterioration in political and economic relations has taken place in recent years. It is likely that this will have a negative effect on community relations within Botswana. This situation gives urgency to measures to strengthen relations.

5. POSSIBLE MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN RELATIONS

The argument made in this paper is that the relations between the two countries have to be disaggregated so that issues can be differentiated and addressed accordingly. Some possible measures to strengthen relations are discussed below. However, the development of a comprehensive set of measures requires empirical research and full stakeholder involvement for each of the five dimensions and its sub-fields.

In terms of the diplomatic/political dimension it is clear from recent newspaper interviews that the new Chinese Ambassador is fully aware of the need for damage limitation measures. For example, he noted that he was having 'endless meetings' with construction companies – 'the embassy encourages and educates Chinese companies to fulfill the contract obligations and properly solve the disputes through friendly negotiations...' (Batlotleng, 2013, p.2). The tone of his interview responses was conciliatory and positive, whilst acknowledging the growing criticisms: 'I am however confident that the country to country relation is very cordial and will ride out the negative sentiments.' (Sunday Standard Reporter, 2013, p.1) On the Botswana side, it would seem that the lack of a formally published and approved foreign policy is a limitation. Such a document is under preparation by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and it is expected that it will articulate the principles and strategic interests that will guide the country's bilateral relations. Ideally this will provide for a more strategic and diplomatic approach to relations with China. For example, the current Minister in his speech criticizing China at the Ambassador's reception mentioned above, said: 'I am not a big fan of diplomacy so I will say things as I see them because I believe it is a sure way to rectifying the mistakes.' (Basimanebotlhe, 2013) Perhaps a more explicit policy context will encourage a more circumspect approach to public statements by senior Government officials. It will be the responsibility of professional diplomats on both sides to take

measures to ensure a constructive public discourse and meaningful private discussions that recognize the national interest of both parties.

One of the key issues in economic relations between states is whether there is mutual benefit with respect to the economic interests of both sides. Clearly in the current situation in Botswana there is a growing public perception that China's economic involvement in the country is disadvantageous as it has apparently restricted citizen participation in the construction industry, squeezed out citizen small businesses, delivered low quality buildings and shoddy goods, and failed to provide skills and technology transfer. The benefits in terms of infrastructure development, job creation, competitively-priced consumer goods, official development assistance and access to a significant export market, particularly for diamonds and coal, receive less attention. It seems that a balance sheet of economic benefit has not been drawn up to provide the basis for a more objective public discourse, nor has Botswana articulated the strategic agenda that it wants to achieve from its economic relations with China, such as optimizing inward investment for job creation. Economic research and policy analysis are therefore required to define strategic options, accompanied by public discussion of the findings.

A major problem area within the economic relationship is the construction industry. It is in the interests of both sides to improve relations in this area to ensure the delivery of good quality infrastructure on time and within budget. Chen (2009) indicates that the Chinese Embassy plays an active role in briefing the senior management of registered Chinese companies and also providing guidance and assistance. This level of intervention is important and ongoing. The Chinese companies themselves need to do more to promote good public relations and some do already advertise their corporate social responsibility activities in the newspapers. Recently, the Botswana Chinese General Chamber of Commerce (2013) wrote a letter to the editor of a local newspaper making the point that not all Chinese contractors are guilty of poor performance and that it is misleading and unfair to treat them all the same. The Chamber proposed there should be an open discussion about the problems surrounding construction projects in order to establish clear performance benchmarks and accountability processes. This is a significant proposal because the problems also include parties other than the Chinese contractors and involve issues of design, technical specifications, project management, supervision, regulation and so forth. As a practical response to the current situation, the Ministry of Infrastructure, Science and Technology could establish a standing forum of stakeholders to discuss general issues whilst developing the Government's capacity to supervise individual project implementation. The forum could tackle difficult questions such as the need to reduce the number of low-skill Chinese workers in the industry. Such practical pro-active measures could go a long way to improving relations in the industry and to reassuring the general public.

The earlier discussion of the dimensions of education/health/culture and of peace and security suggested that they are unproblematic components of the bilateral relationship. However, it is notable that these areas were given greater importance than before at the 5th FOCAC Ministerial Conference in July, 2012 (Zhang Chun, 2013, pp.31-2) and at the recent specialized Ministerial Forum on China-Africa Health Development of July, 2013. This being the case, a systematic review of each field would be helpful to determine what improvements could be made to ensure that the partnerships are strategic and beneficial. For example, what contributions have those who received scholarships for study in China made to the economy and society? Is educational cooperation meeting Botswana's development needs? Evidence-based evaluation of each area of cooperation would be beneficial to both sides.

Finally, there is the dimension of community relations. Within Botswana it is evident that for some time there have been growing tensions between the two communities. At the centre of this problem are language barriers and cultural differences. Many Chinese working in Botswana speak little Setswana or English, whilst few Batswana speak Mandarin. In fact, a pidgin language called 'sewala' based on the three languages is emerging as a medium of communication for those working in shops and construction sites (Mokgaoganyi, O.P. personal communication, September 10, 2013). Nevertheless, more formal language

acquisition is needed by both Chinese and Batswana to reduce the language barrier. Whilst the Confucius Institute of the University of Botswana offers training in Mandarin, there is also need for language learning by at least key people in the Chinese community such as managers, foremen and shop-owners. More broadly, there are also significant cultural differences which impact on relationships. Xu Wei (2013) in her empirical case study on the problems of the joint Botswana-China glass factory project identifies the misunderstanding and distrust that have arisen as a result of cultural differences, for example, over conceptions of time and punctuality. She concludes: 'Chinese should not just work hard blindly. It is more important for them to learn the local rules and policies, culture and customs, pay attention to the cultural difference and reach a balance between the two cultures.' (Xu Wei, 2013) It can be argued that this intercultural learning should be reciprocal and be undertaken by both the Chinese and Batswana. International people-to-people exchanges are important in this respect but more needs to be done within Botswana, for example, by educational institutions and by civil society organizations like the Botswana-China Friendship Association.

Ultimately, the goal of measures with respect to improved community relations must be to meet one of the five priorities set out by Hu Jintao (2012) in his speech to the 5th FOCAC Ministerial Conference, namely 'to lay a solid foundation of public support for enhancing China-Africa common development' (p.4). To achieve the goal of greater public support for Botswana-China relations will require concerted action by the governments, businesses, media, civil society organizations and educational institutions on both sides.

6. CASE STUDY – THE ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BOTSWANA

One educational institution which has sought to play a role in promoting relations between Botswana and China is the University of Botswana (UB). The University, which was established in 1982, is a public institution which is the country's premier institution of higher learning, with a student body of 18,500. In September 2005 it initiated discussions with the Chinese Embassy on the possibility of establishing links with Chinese universities. In 2006 a staff member was funded by the Embassy to attend the first seminar for African Higher Education Leaders at Zhejiang Normal University. In November 2006 the University Council approved a *Policy on Internationalisation* which stated that it was important for the University to 'form strategic partnerships with higher education institutions in countries which are the economic superpowers of the future', specifically naming China (University of Botswana, 2006). However, during 2005 and 2006 there was no progress at the level of forming institutional partnerships. The situation was changed significantly by the commitment made in the Action Plan of the third meeting of FOCAC in December 2006 to establish more Confucius Institutes in Africa. Subsequently a UB delegation was invited to China by Hanban (the Chinese National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language) to identify a partner university for the establishment of a Confucius Institute. UB chose Shanghai Normal University (SHNU) as its partner not only because of its expertise in training teachers of Chinese as a foreign language but because of its Centre for African Studies, which demonstrated an explicit interest in Africa. UB took the view that a partnership should be reciprocal and whilst SHNU would promote Chinese language and culture within Botswana, UB would support the development of African Studies at SHNU.

The Confucius Institute at the University of Botswana (CIUB) was established in 2008 and is conceived as the outreach arm of UB for the promotion of Chinese language and culture amongst the general public. It is funded by Hanban, SHNU and UB and currently has 15 staff, including the Chinese director and 10 language teachers from China. Its main activity is to offer evening classes in Mandarin to working members of the public. The enrolments have risen from 80 in the first intake in 2009 to 316 in the most

recent 2013 intake, totaling 2675 enrolments over the four years. These students have the opportunity to join annual study visits to China. CIUB has also provided specialized language training courses, for example for the Department of Immigration, and runs Confucius Classrooms in three schools. It has organized 10 scholarships for Botswana to study Chinese at SHNU. It also arranges cultural events, including hosting groups from SHNU, and some staff members have recently visited schools around the country promoting Chinese culture. It is evident that CIUB is already playing an important role in strengthening community relations by enabling Botswana to learn Chinese and develop awareness of Chinese culture. It has the potential to engage more with the Chinese community in Botswana with a view to bridging the gap that exists.

The UB Council agreed in 2010 to establish a BA in Chinese Studies. The programme was set up separately from CIUB within the Faculty of Humanities as a regular part of the University's organizational structure and budget in order to ensure its academic autonomy. In 2013 it was incorporated in a new Department of Chinese Studies. The degree is a four year programme including courses in Mandarin and non-language courses in Chinese history, culture and political economy. It is currently mandatory for students to spend the third year in China. The programme's intakes have been as follows: 2011 – 20, 2012 – 16, 2013 – 30. The issues facing its future development are well discussed by the Head of Department in Fang (2013) and include important questions of curriculum and pedagogy. There is an expectation that staff in the Department will undertake research related to their disciplines. The existence of an academic department of Chinese Studies with an undergraduate programme offering major and minor options is a significant resource for developing expertise about China within Botswana. This has the potential to strengthen Botswana-China relations in many ways.

In 2009 UB was approached by the Africa desk of Chongqing municipality to establish a link with Chongqing Technology and Business University and a Memorandum of Understanding was signed in 2010. UB itself took the strategic decision that because Zhejiang Normal University (ZNU) has an important role in African studies in China it would be desirable to establish a formal partnership and this agreement was signed in 2010. In line with its philosophy of reciprocity, UB is developing a relationship in particular with three key units at ZNU, namely the Institute for African Studies, the Institute for International and Comparative Education, and the China-Africa International Business School. Formal partnerships between academic institutions are an important part of the Africa-China relationship and UB has benefitted from specific Chinese government initiatives in this respect, such as the China-Africa 20+20 higher education cooperation plan announced at FOCAC in 2009. The 20+20 plan has funded a range of activities between UB and SHNU, including extended visits by UB academics to teach in the Centre for Africa Studies.

The key focus of the next stage of UB's engagement with China is the development of research. In 2011 an informal group of scholars across the institution with an interest in the study of China began to meet and in 2013 they organized a workshop on the theme 'Developing a research agenda on Botswana-Africa-China issues at the University of Botswana' (Moahi and Youngman, 2013). A key outcome of this workshop was the establishment in May 2013 of the Africa-China Research Group as an inter-disciplinary network with the purpose of promoting 'research by UB scholars and partners on issues connected to the Africa-China relationship' and the ultimate aim of establishing a research centre for Africa-China studies (- see Appendix 2). It is expected that the Group will provide a stimulus for increased research activity, including joint research projects with Chinese scholars and research fieldwork in both Botswana and China. Already, a number of PhD students of the Centre for African Studies at SHNU have done their fieldwork in Botswana and a researcher at the Institute of African Studies of ZNU is undertaking several empirical studies (Xu Wei, 2013). The development of research activity at UB has the potential to meet many of the research needs identified earlier in this paper as fundamental to strengthening the Botswana-

China relationship. A strong research centre at UB would be a national think-tank with the expertise to provide evidence-based advice and ideas on all dimensions of the relationship.

The BA Chinese Studies programme proposal document approved by the UB Council in 2010 clearly stated the overall strategy of the institution: ‘The University of Botswana plans to become an intellectual centre for the study of China and for advancing China’s understanding of Africa.’ (Fang, 2013, p.31) To fully implement this goal, a clear organizational structure is emerging with three distinct though inter-related units – the Confucius Institute, the Department of Chinese Studies, and an interdisciplinary research centre for Africa-China studies. The activities of these units are advanced by partnerships with Chinese institutions. With appropriate management and resources, this structure can provide a robust academic base for strengthening many dimensions of the Botswana-China relationship and for contributing more generally to enhanced Africa-China relations.

7. CONCLUSION

The relationship with China is an increasingly important aspect of Botswana’s economy, politics and society. It needs to be understood more fully so that it can be managed optimally for the benefit of both sides. At this point in time there is a lack of empirical information that can provide a reliable guide to those who wish to enhance the relationship. To meet this knowledge gap, a wide range of studies is required to identify the challenges and opportunities in the relationship. Such studies could make proposals for optimizing relations from the perspective of both Botswana and China, giving specific practical recommendations as well as providing more generalizable conclusions for the development of China-Africa relations.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Enhancing all-round cooperation between China and Africa

1. The political field

(1) High-level visits; (2) Exchanges between legislative bodies; (3) Exchanges between political parties; (4) Consultation mechanisms; (5) Cooperation in international affairs; (6) Exchanges between local governments.

2. The economic field

(1) Trade; (2) Investment; (3) Financial cooperation; (4) Agricultural cooperation; (5) Infrastructure; (6) Resources cooperation; (7) Tourism cooperation; (8) Debt reduction and relief; (9) Economic assistance; (10) Multilateral cooperation

3. Education, science, culture, health and social aspects

(1) Cooperation in human resources development and education; (2) Science and technology cooperation; (3) Cultural exchanges; (4) Medical and health cooperation; (5) Media cooperation; (6) Administrative cooperation; (7) Consular cooperation; (8) People-to-people exchanges; (9) Environmental cooperation; (10) Disaster reduction, relief and humanitarian assistance.

4. Peace and Security

(1) Military cooperation; (2) Conflict settlement and peacekeeping operations; (3) Judicial and police cooperation; (4) Non-traditional security areas

Source: People's Republic of China, 2006, pp. 2-7.

APPENDIX 2

University of Botswana

Africa-China Research Group

Terms of Reference (Agreed May 6, 2013)

The Africa-China Research Group is an inter-disciplinary network of University of Botswana academics and graduate students with an interest in the study of the relationship between Africa and China, particularly with respect to Botswana. It is an open membership group which holds regular meetings and elects its own Chairperson and Secretary annually. Its ultimate aim is the establishment of a Centre for Africa-China Studies. It operates according to the following Terms of Reference:

The overall purpose of the Africa-China Research Group is to promote research by University of Botswana scholars and partners on issues connected to the Africa-China relationship.

In order to achieve this goal, the Group:

- 1 Maintains a data-base of interested scholars at UB and their research outputs
- 2 Provides a forum for the regular exchange of information, ideas and experience
- 3 Assists UB scholars and students to develop research proposals and identify funding sources
- 4 Encourages dialogue with external stakeholders within Botswana on their information needs
- 5 Acts as a platform for research collaboration with other universities in Africa, China and elsewhere
- 6 Promotes staff and student research exchange visits with partner universities
- 7 Organises regular seminars, public lectures and research conferences
- 8 Promotes publication on Africa-China issues by UB scholars and partners
- 9 Undertakes other activities consistent with its overall purpose

Editorial Team

Clarissa Graham
Harrie Esterhuysen
Sven Grimm



**CENTRE FOR
CHINESE
STUDIES**
STELLENBOSCH - SOUTH AFRICA

Contact Us

Centre for Chinese Studies

Stellenbosch University

T: +27 21 808 2840

F: +27 21 808 2841

E: ccsinfo@sun.ac.za

W: www.sun.ac.za/ccs