

Symposium – High Time For a Common Integrated African Policy on China, Johannesburg, 20 July 2017

Closing remarks

China has an African policy (2005 & 2016) – but Africa has no China policy, some African countries don't even have their own declared foreign policies.

So the onus is on Africa to get its house in order, to develop concrete plans towards engagement with China. It's essential for Africa to take care of its own business, use empirical knowledge of the Africa-China relationship to make informed decisions.

As part of this effort Africa also has to ask what such an African policy would look like, and how to best embody African agency by means of a coherent road map, especially as much of the current taxonomy and paradigms are based on colonialism. Africa must base its deliberations on a thorough understanding of China (e.g. *face/mianzi*, *networks/guanxi*) so it can then approach China in a more prepared manner.

Africa has various structures in place to engage with China, notably FOCAC. But must Africa look beyond FOCAC and OBOR? Are these institutions that can properly facilitate African agency?

There has been progress in developing African positions towards China but not in terms of an overall African policy towards China. How is China able to engage with 54 African countries as a whole, and is it even possible for Africa to be expected to speak with one voice, to integrate more closely? Who would lead such an integration of African policy? Also, will it be possible for both sides to mobilise their private sectors so it's not just left to government?

A start can be made by attempting to formulate common African positions on specific issues of common interest, and then to build from there. Start with what we agree on.

So what might emerge from this is not necessarily a common African policy but a common African framework that utilises a multi-pronged

approach. To do this, various African networks like this one here today can be integrated and operationalised to feed into this common African framework. Specific issues of common interest, e.g. environmental issues, industrialisation, etc. can be highlighted that African agency can stand unified on.

Starting from today, these networks can continue practically via working groups to develop this framework, developing a coherent document and involving more stakeholders, aiming to make a decisive impact on developing an African policy/framework towards China by the next FOCAC meeting in 2018.