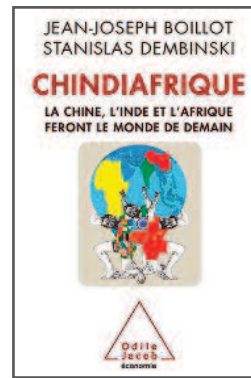


"Chinafrique, avez-vous dit?"
(Chinafrica, did you say?),
Outre-Terre (Revue européenne de géopolitique – European journal of geopolitics), No. 30, December 2011, 442 pp.



Jean-Joseph Boillot and Stanislas Dembinski,
Chindiafrique. La Chine, l'Inde et l'Afrique feront le monde de demain (Chindiafrica: China, India, and Africa will shape tomorrow's world), Paris, Odile Jacob, 2013, 370 pp.

JEAN-PIERRE CABESTAN

These two works are useful additions to the growing literature on China-Africa relations and on the emergence of South-South linkages in general.

Two very different books, to be sure: one is a special issue of the journal *Outre-Terre* that ambitiously sets out to draw up a multidimensional account of this new "Chinafrican connexion." The other is an essay seeking to chart the course of Sino-Indian-African Relations until 2030, its subtitle somewhat at odds with its main conclusion. While these two studies, or rather collections of studies, complement each other, neither seeks to cover the subject exhaustively. With 54 states (55 if Western Sahara is included), Africa is obviously diverse and fragmented. Moreover, works on relations between Africa and China (and Asia) tend to avoid North Africa, for wholly understandable reasons – its close links to the Middle East. While *Outre-terre* has chosen to omit North Africa, *Chindiafrique* has opted to include it, but rather vaguely, the kernel of its argumentation and examples being focused on Sub-Saharan Africa.

Those unfamiliar with the journal *Outre-terre* might be surprised by the structure and style of the special issue. The volume, divided into seven distinct parts and 47 articles, is a long collection of research analyses and many brief reports on a number of facets of Chinafrica. It is no doubt informative. But the choice of contributions was not motivated by a desire to identify and classify the main characteristics of the new dimension this relationship has taken. It seems to have stemmed from the primary aim of gathering together research on the theme in France. Of course, there are a number of foreign contributions, including Deborah Brautigam's previously published essay in English on Chinese special economic zones in Africa, and a short article by former US ambassador David Shinn focusing on American perceptions of Sino-African relations.⁽¹⁾ Similarly, an interview with Mthuli Ncube, Chief Economist at the African Development Bank, provides an "inside view" on the Chinese economic presence in Africa. The articles were mainly pulled together by sinologist Thierry Pairault, director of research at CNRS (France's National Centre for Scientific Research), and many were written by a research group and doctoral candidates he has led and supervised at EHESS (School for Advanced Studies in Social Sciences). This is not a criticism; quite the contrary. All the contributions, even the briefest ones, contain information or ideas on the true nature of Chinafrica. That said, if a criticism can be made, it is that of eclecticism or more precisely, the incomplete and at times arbitrary nature of the mosaic created.

It is impossible to do justice to all of the articles. Only the most useful and novel ones will be pointed out. In the introductory part, Lin Yue of the University of Applied Management in Beijing provides basic comparative

data on Sino-African trade. The much more original and detailed analysis of Ronan Morin-Allory, a PhD candidate at University of Paris IV-Sorbonne, on "Beijing's media machine" in Africa offers an excellent and welcome assessment. The volume's first part, entitled "Chinafrican Myth," includes two contributions by Thierry Pairault showing how limited Chinese direct investment has remained (\$9 billion in 2009), whereas trade topped \$200 billion in 2012. A good article by Laurent Hou, also a PhD candidate at Paris IV, sets the record straight on the so-called Chinese land grab in Africa: the real picture of so-called "land acquisitions" (mostly rented or leased) by outside operators (Chinese, Indians, or others) highlights among other things the extent of uncultivated arable land on the continent (31% of the world total, according to the FAO, and as cited by Boillot and Dembinski, p. 285): while such transfers pose several problems and must be dissected with care, the stand of African states and experts on this issue is more nuanced than is often surmised. The second part – "African Polygon" – notably includes an article on Chinese investments in central Africa by the Brazzaville-based academic Théophile Dzaka-Kikouta, and another by Lucy Corkin of the School of Oriental and African Studies on the role of the Exim Bank and what is known as the "Angolan Model" (oil for concessional loans). The third part – "Resistible Rise" – introduces other actors, especially European and including French, and tries to pinpoint sources of competition as well as factors of cooperation. The most original contribution is no doubt the one authored by Arnaud Chaumasse on what I would call the "competitive coexistence" between "Françafrrique" – or what remains of it – and Chinafrica. The last four parts are much shorter, containing rushed images rather than articles on, for instance, cultural frictions between Africans and Chinese, the now marginal competition between Beijing and Taipei on the continent, and the state of research on Africa in the People's Republic or on Africans in China.

All of these make up a kaleidoscope that provides the reader with a host of information on some of the multiple facets of the Chinafrica relationship.

Chindiafrrique presents other problems: like all other prospective works it is both stimulating and frustrating. Armed with statistics and citing authors and theories, notably Albert Hirschman and Amartya Sen (which is welcome), Indian economy expert Jean-Joseph Boillot and financial journalist Stanislas Dembinski raise useful questions, but the answers are a range of possibilities and potentially contradictory paths that may contribute to weakening and even undermining their thesis, or at least the one flagged in the title and introduction. What is it?

Chindiafrrique's main thesis is that of a "global rebalancing" benefiting not only China but also India and Africa, which unlike Brazil, Russia, or Japan constitute

1. David Shinn is also joint author (with Joshua Eisenmann) of *China and Africa: A Century of Engagement*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012, reviewed in this issue by Leïla Choukroune.

"incomparable continental and human masses" and whose "trilateral relations are poised to play a role in structuring tomorrow's world" (p. 9). Europe rejects this rebalancing, which will determine the future of developed countries and fundamentally reduce their relative political influence and economic might.

In terms of changes in human resources (Part 1), Chindiafrica will account for half the world's population in 2030. And in 2050 it will also have half the world's human capital. In economic terms (Part 2), the grouping's total GDP (in purchasing power parity) will rise from a fourth to almost half of the world's in 2030 (China: 25%, India: 10%, and Africa: 11%) and 60% in 2050, the authors say, although they are careful enough not to come up with precise estimates. Of course, in 2030, the West will retain technological supremacy in terms of innovation (Part 3), but "Chindia" and then Africa will be able to adopt "low cost and frugal processes and business models" that are innovative and better suited to their needs. The authors cite the success of Huawei or the Indian "little cool" refrigerator in Africa as promising illustrations.

All these changes could lead to industrialisation and agricultural modernisation in Africa and as a result reduce pressure on natural and agricultural resources (Part 4). Here, Boillot and Dembinski sound more cautious but on the whole optimistic: oil-rich African countries could overcome the "curse of black gold," or the so-called "Dutch Disease," China and India have the capacity to become less voracious for hydrocarbons and other raw materials, and Chindiafrica has the potential to become self-sufficient in food. The authors also sound upbeat when it comes to the political consequences of the shakeup (Part 5), while noting the weaknesses and contestations of the "Chinese Model," India's soft state, the insurmountable fractures of the African continent, and the US capacity for rebound, as well as the attractiveness of the European Union's institutional norms.

What conclusion does this prospective analysis indicate? Many questions and propositions, but no real conclusion. Actually, that is what the authors have done. How will the main actors in this new grouping and other countries or groups of states, such as Europe, react and adapt to these changes? No one knows. What Boillot and Dembinski seek to promote is a "moderated globalisation" rightly inspired by the economist Dany Rodrik.⁽²⁾ It is difficult to disagree with this, seeing how China and India have sought to protect themselves selectively against what they see as the destabilising currents of "hyper-globalisation," strongly suggesting that African countries strengthen their states and do likewise, including vis-à-vis China and India. That is precisely what Nigerian central bank governor Lamido Sanusi proposed recently in a well-publicised op-ed highly critical of China.⁽³⁾

The main weakness of this work, it should be clear, lies not in observing the unprecedented emergence of South-South economic, political, and human linkages, especially among the three entities chosen, but rather in the nature, coherence, and density of the trilateral relationship that forms the basis of the authors' approach. It is questionable whether China, India, and Africa constitute a relevant grouping. The expanding relations and complementarities among these economies are known, but what is their future weight relative to US/EU relations, China/developed countries, and even Brazil/Africa or the famous BRICS? What this book lacks is a comparative and prospective analysis of the economic flows and diplomatic-strategic relations among China, India, and Africa as well as among the current and future main partners of these three entities. Thus, Sino-Indian economic and political relations would most probably remain a complex mix of relatively limited cooperation and lasting strategic competition. China's weight in Africa is heavy, India's lighter, but tomorrow the two powers will have to continue to face other major actors, such as the aforementioned Brazil, the United

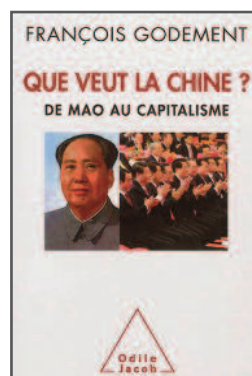
States, EU, Japan... and South Africa. Moreover, the persistent tensions among Chindiafrica – and within Africa – are not really addressed in the book's prospective construction. For instance, while the new Chinese diaspora in Africa (one to five million people) represents a small share of the emigration from the People's Republic, it greatly influences local economies (or at least some of them) and constitutes a source of real inter-community tension.

All in all, it is clear that the weight of Chindiafrica or of the South in general will keep growing, but neither constitutes a coherent grouping. Even less than the BRICS, in fact. One is a statistical aggregate with no real projects or common objectives, the other a convenient concept that includes not only political regimes and cultures that are bound to remain very different but also economies that, given the intrinsically unequal nature of development, have increasingly less in common. Rebalancing, yes, but Chindiafrica will not by itself make up tomorrow's world. China, India, and Africa will contribute to it no doubt by cooperating and also by squabbling occasionally.

■ Translated by N. Jayaram.

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2. *The Paradox of Globalization: Democracy and the Future of the World Economy*, New York, W.W. Norton & Co., 2011.
3. "Africa must get real about its romance with China," *Financial Times*, 12 March 2013, pp. 1 and 9.



François Godement,
Que veut la Chine? De Mao au
capitalisme (What does China
want? From Mao to capitalism),
Paris, Odile Jacob, 2012, 283 pp.

FRÉDÉRIC PUPPATTI

Far from being yet another panoramic account of China's economic and diplomatic breakthroughs, this latest work by François Godement takes readers (whether well-versed in contemporary China or not) through the arcana of Communist Party politics a few months after one of the worst political scandals in the history of the People's Republic and at a time when it is witnessing a top-level changing of guard that will guide it through the decade to come.

Chapter 1 briefly reviews the case of Bo Xilai, the former Party Secretary for Chongqing Municipality (pp. 17-34). Bo sought to turn the autonomous city into a political, economic, and social laboratory for China by promoting the Great Helmsman's thoughts (especially by encouraging "Red Songs" in the city's public spaces). He wanted to use his successful crackdown on crime as a launch-pad to the highest rungs of power. His downfall constituted the first real shakeup at the top since the 1989 Tiananmen events.