

# Towards the Creation of Wiser Futures: Sino-Africa Relations and Futures of African Development

Tim Kumpe  
Tamkang University  
Taiwan

Kuo-Hua Chen  
Tamkang University  
Taiwan

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## Abstract

*Elaborating on previous wisdom discourse of futurist scholars, this paper identifies humility, flexibility, teachability, and morality as the major characteristics of wisdom. What sets wisdom as the highest form of knowledge apart from knowledge with human significance is that it is not only academically understood knowledge but also connotes that the possessor of wisdom has the ability to apply that knowledge to experience. The application of wisdom becomes the prerequisite for moving towards wiser futures. Following the wisdom discourse, the article then focuses on the delineation of scholarship and expertise on Sino-African relations which present knowledge with human significance on the characteristics of Sino-African relations with its inherent threats and opportunities. Scenarios for the creation of wiser futures are derived for African development. Putting together the expertise provides an operational basis for the function of wisdom and the creation of wiser futures.*

**Keywords:** wisdom, future, globalization, China, Africa, development

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## Introduction

Over the past decade, Sino-African relations have become more interdependent. According to Raine (2009), “China, as the world’s largest developing country, is posited as a natural ally of Africa, the world’s largest development continent” (p.14). As the second largest net oil importer behind the United States and projected to overtake it by 2014, “China’s oil consumption growth accounted for one-third of the world’s consumption growth in 2013” (U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2014, p.1). In 2009, China overtook the United States and became Africa’s

major single-country trading partner (OECD Factbook 2011-2012), and African oil amounted to more than 30% of China's oil imports (Raine, 2009). Mineral rich Africa needs manufacturing giant China to make up for its infrastructure bottlenecks, and China needs African oil and minerals to fuel its fast growth (Akpör, Lukhele-Olorunju & Muchie, 2013, p.302).

Yet despite the growing economic ties between China and Africa, critics identify many asymmetrical components in Sino-African relations, showing little difference to previous patterns of African-Western imperialist relations (Tull, 2006) and the evolving pattern of inadequate local learning and local participation in economic cooperation zones established by China in Africa (Bräutigam & Tang, 2011). For Songwe & Moyo (2012, p.5), areas of untapped potential in Sino-African relations which could become more meaningful for Africa include "infrastructure development, technology transfer, job creation, institution building and even international aid reform."

Thus, achieving a more balanced status quo of mutual benefit in China-Africa relations is a crucial factor in securing a long-term strategic partnership between China and Africa. Wisdom is the principle element which, we argue, enables both sides to pursue this objective. Without wisdom there is no sustainable development, and there is no room for the evolution of wise futures.

According to Futures Studies theory, the concept of wisdom is the highest form of knowledge in an hierarchical ordering of knowledge. It is the pinnacle of knowledge because it is a synthesis of data (raw factual material), information (categorized data: useful and otherwise), and knowledge (information with human significance) which have preceded it (Slaughter and Bussey, 2005). Markley (2005) argues that for the evolution of wise futures a moral or wisdom component has to occupy a central place. Etheredge (2005) further suggests that if political wisdom could be applied in public policy there would be an increased potential to create a better world. He concludes:

"Wisdom in public policy is good judgment about important matters, especially embodying a genuine commitment to the well-being of individuals and to society as a whole. In international politics wisdom is the core statesmanship, extending a commitment to the well-being of peoples of other nations, and often reconstructing the international system to work better for future generations." (p. 297)

The foundational volume on ethics, values and wisdom, Wendell Bell's *Foundations of Futures Studies Volume II*, also focuses on the creation of a better world. Moving beyond forecasting possible and probable futures, Bell dwells upon the question of creating a desirable future. This is done by examining the bedrock assumptions of ethical and moral issues that underlie futures studies (Bell, 1997). While agreeing with Bell that ethical and moral issues underpin the success or failure for the creation of a better world and that "moral assertions and value judgments can be as logically and empirically sound as scientific predictions" (p.69), the authors of this study attempt to provide a new twist to this topic by incorporating a careful examination of wisdom as a mediating factor.

But what are the major traits of wisdom and how do they operate and relate

to the process of acquiring wisdom as a means of creating wiser futures? The following exposition elaborates on previous wisdom scholarship from futurists and identifies humility, flexibility, teachability and morality as the major characteristics of wisdom. By identifying wisdom's major characteristics, this paper sheds light on the operational characteristics of wisdom and how wisdom can be applied to real world challenges. It is argued that practitioners operating on the basis of information with human significance are at best applying premature wisdom if their standard operating procedures of applying and learning about knowledge lacks any of those major characteristics in their *modus operandi*. Only if wisdom is characterized by those traits does it merit to be designated the highest form of knowledge.

## Wisdom as the Principle

The inability to apply information with human significance to experience is tantamount to a state of ignorance. Possessing wisdom does not only mean that a person is cognizant of the various forms of knowledge but also is capable of applying that knowledge to experience<sup>1</sup> and derive benefit from that state of cognizance which enables them to bring about change. Hoover and Donovan (2008) also describe knowledge with human significance as knowledge which has to be applied to experience. "Knowledge is socially powerful only if it is knowledge that can be put to use." (p.5)

In other words, wisdom is about problem solving. Wisdom is a problem solving mechanism guided by higher-order ethical norm which is the only long-term solution to human meta-problems (Slaughter and Bussey, 2005, pp.104-105). It is the basis for a wise culture having the capacity to achieve wise futures which, according to Oliver Markley (2012, p.6), "may be envisioned as being ecologically sustainable, socio-economically just, psycho-spiritually fulfilling, and protective of the needs of future generations."

Therefore, incorporating wisdom —or the notion of a wisdom culture, as Slaughter and Bussey (2005, p.103) put it— in the equation of future planning is a principal thing providing "a rationale and method for transcending the destructive conflicts of industrial culture and establishing a different dynamic for cultural development" as well as for achieving a correct balance between human and social development.

Dispelling ignorance and achieving a state of cognizance coupled with the application of wisdom is the means for creating wiser futures. The strength of wisdom is that it is characterized by tremendous flexibility<sup>2</sup> while simultaneously also characterized by strict adherence to higher-order ethical norms, and thus wisdom only seeks the best for the physical, psychological and spiritual wellbeing of people.

As the highest form of knowledge and characterized by humility, wisdom recognizes the principle of complexity and accepts the fact that "there are many factors that explain change and that there will be unknown factors." (Inayatullah, 2007, p.88) Humility connotes both objectivity and teachability. If a person is humble he is both objective and teachable because these are the two major characteristics of humility. Objectivity (the objectivity of humility), as a major characteristic of wisdom, constantly challenges and questions the already acquired state of knowledge. When executed properly the flexibility of wisdom creates a process of thinking about the future that is characterized by constant learning about

learning and gives enough leeway for necessary adjustments as a part of its strategic *modus operandi*. “Rather than merely installing an official senior planner or futurist,” as Sohail Inayatullah put it, the process of thinking about the future makes “institutionalizing (and retaining space for dissent) cycles of action, reflection, futures questioning and then action again” a basic component of its *modus operandi* (Inayatullah, 2007).

Although, in theory, wisdom ought to base its decision-making on an ideal state of knowledge, wisdom does not require omniscience to operate efficiently. Morality and good judgment take up the slack for this limitation. Therefore, for wisdom to be designated as the highest form of knowledge marked by intrinsic-high value quality, morality and good judgment also have to be incorporated into the group of the major characteristics of wisdom.

“Because people inevitably have to act in the absence of complete evidence for decision making,” write Hoover and Donovan (2008, p.6), reasoned judgment plays a very important role. “Judgment connotes decision making in which all the powers of the mind are activated to make the best use of available knowledge” (Hoove and Donovan, 2008). Good judgment has to be based on facts, and is therefore oriented towards reality. Thinking always relates to reality. Consequently, wisdom as the highest form of applying knowledge to experience recognizes environmental imperfections and constrains — factors of environmental determinism—but at the same time does not retreat into fatalism and inordinate passivity. Knowledge is power because knowledge and the application of wisdom have the power to transform our environment in a favorable way. Recognizing the transformational power of knowledge resulting from the application of wisdom, wisdom operates on the basic assumption that environment does not create decision-making, but decision-making creates environment. Without a proactive approach in pursuit of the higher goals of wise futures, the creation of wiser futures becomes a matter of chance at best.

Based on the availability of knowledge on given issues, wisdom also finds itself limited. Consequently, the decisions made using wisdom are only as good as the information on which to make the decisions, so that very often wisdom finds itself not in a position of solving a problem (with good information) but instead has to cope with the problem of lack of information with the onus of decision making. Yet the high principles and standards by which wisdom is understood in this article will increase the chances that, despite limitations in knowledge for a solution to a problem (or a certain way of coping with a problem), a proactive approach to applying wisdom will produce better outcomes generally.

Inayatullah (2007) recognizes the importance of reducing ignorance to a minimum in order to solve a given problem. Therefore, Inayatullah argues in a general sense, there is no easy solution to tackle the problem of ignorance or an uncertainty of knowledge. Inayatullah proposes problem solving mechanics which include three steps: First, an environmental futures scanning process. Secondly, the employment of multiple methods; i.e., empirical, interpretive, and critical modes of analysis. Thirdly, ensuring the greatest possible objectivity and reliability of resources. This can be achieved by tapping resources which rely on data and insights which originate from arenas outside of official power. And, finally, the assessment of the information has to be based on generally accepted principles of “what is, what is sane, what is conventional or acceptable reality” (p.89). Thus, teachability, or the

constant process of learning which strives to reduce ignorance and uncertainty to a minimum, is another key component of wisdom. Without being teachable one cannot learn from one's own mistakes, and there won't be any significant progress. In other words, decision-makers who knowingly reject knowledge with human significance in their decision-making process are tantamount to being unteachable, which means retrogression or standstill at best.

## The Application of Wisdom as a Prerequisite

Wisdom→ Thoughts → Motivations→ Actions →Decisions→ Wiser Futures

The logical causal chain of thoughts-motivations-actions-decisions is a basic concept in psychology (Aldo, 2010; Bechara et al., 1997). It illustrates in logical sequence how decision-making originates and how it is processed. As illustrated above, the best thing to ensure the creation of wiser futures is to put wisdom at the beginning of this logical chain. If the entire thought process of decision-making is fed by wisdom from its very inception then wisdom becomes the environment for decisions.

Every false decision limits options for future decisions. It is true that many valuable lessons in life are learned by making mistakes and going the wrong way first. Whereas sometimes the unintended consequences of decisions, like the reforms of the church initiated by Pope Gregory I and Pope Gregory VII, motivated by greed and power lust might turn out to be blessing in disguise leading to the rise of individualism, which together with factor endowments underpinned the European miracle, as illustrated in *Unintended Consequences*, authored by Deepak Lal (Lal, 2001); but very often the butterfly effect also is operational so that many small differences in initial decision-making can have larger consequences and their long-term impact is difficult to reverse<sup>3</sup> (Gleick, 1987).

The theory of path dependence is another argument that undergirds the authors' assertion that false decisions limit future decisions. As defined by Lerma and Nissenson (2011, p.612), the theory of path dependence explains:

how the set of decisions one faces for any given new circumstance is determined and limited by the decisions one has made in the past, even though past circumstances may no longer be directly relevant to present ones. This almost intuitively self-evident truth of social behavior applies to the science of decision-making in general and has led to three Nobel Prizes [...]

Path dependence approaches also posit that "Key decisions at choice points produce outcomes that set history on a course whose mechanisms of reproduction make the initial selection unstoppable" Kazelnson (2003, p.290).

Therefore, the sooner wisdom influences the entire thought process, the greater the potential for good decisions from a position of strength, and the smaller the chance of limiting one's future options by opting in favor of bad decisions. Put in military jargon, the logical steps in the sequence elucidate that victory in thinking precedes victory in battle. On the battlefield of life and in the permanent quest for the creation of wiser futures, it is the function of morality or the adherence to higher-

order ethical norms that determines the course of a nation. Failure to apply wisdom to experience can often result in the self-inflicted limitations of options (self-induced misery), because decisions are made which at best are second best choices, rather than first best choices. Morality is a key characteristic of wisdom.

While first best choices have to be based on true morality motivated by wisdom so that the objective of achieving wise futures can be attained (see Markley quoted above), second best and lesser best choices are a manifestation of the preoccupation with false standards of morality to the exclusion of true morality and its purpose for a society or a nation. In other words, if leadership or decision-makers superimpose their false and personal standards of morality over a true and collective standard of morality in a nation, then the creation of wise futures becomes severely hampered<sup>4</sup> (Bell, 1997, pp.224-227; Bell, 2004, p.317). Moral futures cannot be morally neutral, argues Inayatullah (2007), which is why there is a necessity for strict adherence to a code of ethics (or agreed upon values) by any given leadership or decision-makers (p.91). This is why true morality is future-oriented because it bases its legitimacy on the perception and application of “moral discourse (concerned with tapping desired visions to create ethical futures)” (p.88). As the pinnacle of knowledge, wisdom operates by strict adherence to a code of ethics (morality) which learns from the past, the present, and the future. The attainment of wisdom and its function as a problem solving mechanism becomes the basis for being constantly oriented to reality, recognizing that, as Inayatullah (2007) put it, “scenarios of the future cannot just be idealized pictures of the future that do not take into account who are the losers of any particular future as well as who is privileged to create particular futures.” (p.91)

The ethical and moral dimension of wisdom becomes the driving force for extrapolating timeless principles on which decision-making can operate with great flexibility. Therefore, wisdom learns from the past to transform the present, from the present to transform the future, and from the future to transform the present as well as the future.

A state of cognizance of knowledge with human significance is only the first step towards the edification of wisdom in the mental compartments and thought patterns of decision-makers. Without the willingness to accept sound knowledge the greatest breakthroughs in science and greatest insights from academia neither benefit an individual nor a nation as a whole. In other words, an understanding of wisdom is not enough, it has to be applied to experience in order to be beneficial for the recipients of academic knowledge with human significance.

This is what Acemoglu and Robinson (2012), in their landmark book *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*, slightly touch upon, although from an entirely different angle.

In chapter two, Acemoglu and Robinson debunk the ignorance hypothesis which asserts that “some nations are poor and some are rich and that world inequality exists because we or our rulers do not know how to make our countries rich” (p.57). The commonly accepted ignorance hypothesis reads as follows:

“poor countries are poor because they have a lot of market failures and because economists and policymakers do not know how to get rid of them and have heeded the wrong advice in the past. Rich countries are rich because they have figured out better policies



and have successfully eliminate these failures” (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012, p.58).

Acemoglu and Robinson apply the ignorance hypothesis to Ghana to see whether or not it can be confirmed. Their finding is that market failure and the encouragement of economic growth in Ghana didn’t result from the ignorance of politicians but from “the incentives and constraints they face from the political and economic institutions in their society” (p.61). Yet, as Acemoglu and Robinson rightly point out and demonstrate throughout their book, the crucial factor which determines success or failure is not environmental constraints but self-determination. They maintain that “poor countries are poor because those who have the power *make choices* that create poverty. They get it wrong not by mistake or by ignorance but *on purpose*”<sup>5</sup> (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012).

Therefore, although ignorance may be considered as one of the most crucial factors for bringing a nation on to a path economic decline, the key factors for success or failure are human volition and decision-making. As noted above, humility connotes both objectivity and teachability. The willingness to accept something such as academic knowledge means to be teachable. This means that a person who lacks the characteristic of teachability cannot be wise. Negative volition towards sound knowledge is tantamount to being unteachable. An unteachable person cannot advance academically and fails to mature as a person. A lack of teachability will stop someone from attaining wisdom. Only in a state of humility can human volition be teachable and give its consent to sound knowledge so that change for the better can occur. In a general sense, as goes the individual related to the principles of wisdom so goes the entire nation on its pathway towards wiser futures. This applies especially to those who are in authority, those who wield power through the agency of political and economic institutions. Every individual counts; yet ironically, a nation simply is not the sum total of the accumulation of the decisions of its individuals.

According to Putterman (2013, p.470), the main argument of *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty* is that “presence or absence of inclusive economic and political institutions is the most important determinant of the comparative economic success of nations.” Therefore, concludes Putterman summarizing Acemoglu and Robinson (2012), “organizational arrangements of societies- including the economic restraints that bind, or fail to bind, their political leaders- matter to economic outcomes” (Putterman, 2013).

If this insight of knowledge with human significance is incorporated as a key component in the operational basis for the function of wisdom, the first step of moving from a virtual reality of wiser futures towards a tangible reality of wiser futures has been taken. The theoretical discussion of wisdom has demonstrated the great benefits which can be derived from wisdom if it does not merely remain a theoretical concept but is applied to reality. The same applies to wisdom. The application of wisdom becomes the prerequisite for moving towards wiser futures. Just as sound knowledge<sup>6</sup> is the environment for objective thinking so wisdom is the environment for good decisions which provides greater opportunities for greater decisions as life progresses, laying the very foundation for the creation of wiser futures.

## Key Drivers of Sino-African Relations

Social, cultural and economic realities broadly accepted by scholars and experts can be classified as knowledge with human significance. When this form of knowledge has been put together by various processes which are scholarly and scientifically recognized then it can be designated as sound knowledge. The rigorous quality mechanisms that have to be passed become the very basis for ensuring the greatest possible objectivity and reliability of resources, minimizing problems of ignorance and uncertainty of knowledge which have to be tackled in every process of attaining sound knowledge. Sound knowledge then becomes the operational basis for wisdom.

The following paragraphs briefly sketch the characteristics of Sino-African relations. All in all, these accounts, complying with broadly accepted expert views in the academic community, present a very neutral and balanced evaluation of the current state of Sino-African relations. Thus these research findings can be designated as sound knowledge and become a good starting point to apply wisdom as a problem solving mechanism to create wiser futures.

## Economic Marketization

Sanusha and Mbazima (2008) evaluate China's current engagement in Africa and its consequences. While for pessimists China's engagement represents a terrifying threat, optimists view China as a tantalizing opportunity. Consequently, Africans should think about China's engagement and its consequences in the following dimensions. First, it gives Africa leverage in its relations with the North. Secondly, African governments and their counterparts in the South should reflect on and adopt initiatives that address the challenges of globalization that China's emergence on the global stage brings along. Thirdly, a more nuanced understanding of African policy-makers regarding the varied impacts that China can have on their economies and on Africa's development path is required.

What makes China's engagement so compelling is China's soft power. Not only the ideological dimension but also the mutually beneficial trade relations, as well as the development assistance and cooperation which are part of China's attractive power for African states. Africa's state and elite circles gain leverage through China's engagement and it helps some of them to consolidate their power base and perpetuate their positions of authority, specifically through resource deals.

Nonetheless, China's engagement is viewed as a threat for a variety of reasons. First, Sino-African trade relations show that both are not equal partners but that the inequality between China and Africa is profound. Secondly, China's increase in its aid packages to Africa shouldn't be viewed as a permanent panacea to Africa's developments ills, because there are legitimate concerns that this won't always be the case in the future. Especially, for Africa's citizenry China's engagement creates uncertainties in the market and to their livelihoods.

## International Relations System

Sanusha's and Mbazima's evaluation of current Sino-African relations reflects the optimism of futurists. Despite viewing chances for alternative futures, the authors nevertheless confront the reader with the facts about the characteristics of



China-Africa interaction. Sanusha and Mbazima honestly portray that from its very inception China's original initiation of relations was based on pragmatic motives rather than being on an equal footing with the African states. First, China, in competition with the former Soviet Union (SU), tried to keep pace with the SU by strengthening its influence on the African continent. Second, feeling internationally isolated by the West after the Tiananmen massacre, China sought new markets and trading partners that would decrease its Western dependence both politically and economically. Sharing common ideological features, African states can function as a political bargaining chip to counter Western hegemony. The political dimensions also affect the economic dimension of Sino-African relations. This pertains to dictatorial African states that benefit from Chinese engagement on the continent which helps them to perpetuate their power. Thus, compared to Western countries, economically, China has gained huge advantages both in terms of resource exploitation on the continent and with its presence of companies in the domestic markets of Africa.

Sino-Africa relations are also viewed from three contrasting perspectives in which China simultaneously plays different roles in its interactions with Africa (Alden, 2009; Edoho, 2011). One perspective views China as a development partner in Africa. This perspective considers the Sino-Africa interactions as mutually beneficial (Edoho, 2011; Langmia, 2011). Another perspective maintains that China is a voracious economic competitor (Alden, 2009) that is competing for resources in Africa (Edoho, 2011, p.107). Proponents of this perspective argue that the forces of globalization necessitate China's competitive edge and that China's aggressiveness often challenges Western interests in Africa. The third perspective holds that China is "repositioning itself to be a new colonizing power in Africa" (Edoho, 2011; Langmia, 2011).

All of these perspectives provide a different facet of reality. Singling out one sole perspective and overemphasizing it at the expense of the other perspectives would distort our understanding and turn a blind eye to the existence of other dimensions of Sino-African relations. Taken as a whole, however, these different perspectives provide a very nuanced and balanced picture of the true character of China-Africa relations.

And it is objectivity that it desperately needed to make a sound judgment on Africa's present status quo. With a clear picture of the opportunities and threats, and the benefits and burdens that characterize Sino-African relations, Africa should be able to minimize the inherent threats and leverage the opportunities, which arise from China's engagement on the African continent, into maximum benefits. Every African state which interacts with China has to make its own assessment of its current relations with China. And the above mentioned perspectives provide a very good analytical framework to do so. As a rough analytical framework, these perspectives enable us to identify opportunities as well as threats which help to position each state's status quo in accordance with its needs and make the necessary adjustments to create a more preferable future for its nation and its citizens. Or as Felix Edoho, speaking on behalf of the African people, aptly put it: "Our collective efforts should be focused on asking how Africa can derive maximum benefits from China's engagement in the region. Ultimately, Africa is the one to define the terms of its relationship with, and what it needs from, China. China cannot do this for Africa" (Edoho, 2011).

## Global Idealization and Reflective Individuation

Taking the initiative to change their destiny rather than relying on others as a crutch is the basic mental attitude which Africans have to adopt so that they can embark upon a pathway towards wiser futures. African scholar Kehbuma Langmia urges his people on the continent: "It is now time for Africa to take the upper hand of assuming an active role in shaping the destiny of the continent rather than relying all the time on outside help" (Langmia, 2011).

Globalization is said to create winners and losers (de la Dehesa, 2006; Kapstein, 2000). This pertains to both China (Dauderstadt and Steeten, 2005) and Africa (Sanusha and Mbazima, 2008). Giddens (1999) paints a vivid picture about the new opportunities and pressures which the phenomenon of globalization has created. Due to globalization nations have a diminished sense of self-determination and therefore a more limited capability to influence events. The phenomenon of globalization is political, technological, economic, as well as cultural. One of the most crucial barriers which have been reduced to a minimum is the availability and dissemination of information. Instantaneous electronic communication has altered the very texture of our lives. On the one hand, globalization creates opportunities which have never existed before; and, on the other hand, it creates new pressures for local autonomy. Although the changes which are brought about by globalization are very powerful we are not helplessly shaped by them. When the institutions in our society fail to successfully cope with the new forces and pressures we have the responsibility to adapt to new circumstances, either by creating new institutions or by reconstructing those we have, so that the new challenges can be met appropriately.

Instead of viewing themselves in a position of weakness, Africans need to be aware of their strengths. Being aware of the current state, African leaders and decision-makers then have to correspondently articulate this position of strength in the agreements with China and the West. Agreements should be based on this *modus operandi* and reflect a more balanced win-win situation in favor of Africa<sup>7</sup>. Apart from knowledge-transfer African decision-makers should ensure that the proper training of its indigenous workers and an appropriate participation in given projects be given top priority. Just as the Chinese require from their Western trading partners that the Chinese side becomes the majority stakeholder of a joint venture company and make knowledge-transfer and technical training of its indigenous workers a prerequisite for the realization of projects, so should Africans attempt to design their future agreements in accordance with this pattern. This would ensure that an inappropriate long-term dependency is deprived of its very basis, giving African countries the opportunity to develop its own industrial sector<sup>8</sup>. In this way, instead of being the beneficiaries of borrowed strength, Africa can acquire real strength.

## Futures of African Development

One striking feature of globalization is the dissemination and availability of knowledge. The dissemination and application of pertinent wisdom related to Sino-African relations is a crucial factor which might turn the tide and be the very basis for the reconfiguration of the present and the creation of wiser futures. Guided by ethical principles, wisdom's basic interest is to find and implement solutions which promote a sustainable long-term satisfaction-satisfaction state, i.e. a long-term win-win Sino-African partnership. The combination of this diverse group of

drivers mentioned above inevitably creates a variety of possible scenarios which are plausible in order to achieve wiser futures of African development. This paper proposes the following four scenarios:

- 1) Copy and Paste; 2) Sustainable Development; 3) Collaborative Competition; 4) Go Green, Go Global.

It is important to note that these four different scenarios are ideal types. In reality the boundaries between them can blur and states, like portfolio managers, pursue mixes and matches to hedge against future risks.

### Scenario 1: Copy and Paste

Africa can learn from China and take it as a role model in the sense that it can copy the Chinese joint venture model as a blueprint for cooperation agreements with China and the West. The possession of strategic resources and minerals puts Africa in an advantageous position which it could leverage into a genuine advantage for itself.

However, Africans have to take measures against the tendency of China to stifle the growth of African goods and services. This pertains both to the growth of Africa's domestic market as well as its export market. According to Lyman (2005), Africa's current status quo suggests that it is on its way of becoming a loser on both fronts: "Exports of Chinese textiles to Africa are undermining local African industry while the growth of Chinese exports to the United States is shutting down the promising growth of African exports" (online source). To guard against cheap Chinese exports that are flooding African markets, Langmia (2011) calls on the need of Africans "to come to the realization that they need some kind of trade protectionist policy to counter the influence of Chinese goods in their local markets"(p.53). Without the implementation of protectionist policies and agreements in which "long term development goals of the countries and the lives of their citizens at large" are taken seriously into consideration, argues Langmia, Africa's economic power is in jeopardy to develop its full potential in the future (Langmia, 2011).

While it is true that "globalization has contributed to the marginalization of Africa in the global economy" (Lawal, 2006; Rocha, 2007; Edoho, 2011, p.105), China as a driving force of globalization (Dauderstadt and Steeten, 2005) could also play a decisive factor in the future of African development by *paying globalization forward*<sup>9</sup> in Africa (Barnett, 2012a). In a paper titled "China must pay globalization forward in Africa," the author stresses China's need to do so. Globalization's historical expansion from Europe to North America to Asia has featured a familiar dynamic: The last region "in" becomes the integrator of note for the next region "up". Europe was the primary investor, customer and integrator for the U.S. economy in its rise during the 19th and 20th centuries, and America subsequently "paid it forward" with East Asia in the decades following World War II. Recently, it has been Asia's turn, primarily through China, to pay it forward once again with Africa, arguably the hottest integration zone in the global economy today (Barnett, 2012a).

### Scenario 2: Sustainable Development

Western countries with a genuine interest in sustainable development in Africa can also make their contribution to better the situation of Africa without compromising their own interests. If Western companies would more often assume the role of a competitor of China related to business deals with Africa, African

decision-makers could draw on a larger pool of potential customers and would be given more leeway in decision-making to select the most attractive deal in favor of the African side.

As a general problem-solving mechanism, based on the findings of Acemoglu and Robinson (2012), African leadership, to turn the tide in favor of Africa, has the responsibility to strive for the creation of inclusive political institutions and inclusive economic institutions. Inclusive economic institutions have the following characteristics:

- 1) Inclusive economic institutions are those that allow and encourage participation by the great mass of people in economic activities that make best use of their talent and skills and that enable individuals to make the choices they wish.
- 2) To be inclusive, economic systems must feature secure private property, an unbiased system of law, and a provision of public services that provide a level playing field in which people can exchange and contract; it must also permit the entry of new businesses and allow people to choose their careers.
- 3) Inclusive economic institutions foster economic activity, productivity growth, and economic prosperity.
- 4) Inclusive economic institutions require secure property rights and economic opportunities not just for the elite but for the broad cross-section of society. (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012, pp.68-69)

Moreover, the existence of inclusive economic institutions has a tremendously positive impact on manufacturing prosperity in the areas of technology and education.

- 1) Inclusive economic institutions also pave the way for other engines of prosperity: technology and education.
- 2) Progress in innovation is made possible by economic institutions that encourage private property, uphold contracts, create a level playing field, and encourage and allow the entry of new businesses than can bring new technologies to life.
- 3) Intimately linked to technology are the education, skills, competencies, and know-how of the workforce, acquired in schools, at home, and on the job.
- 4) The low education level of poor countries is caused by economic institutions that fail to create incentives for parents to educate their children and by political institutions that fail to induce the government to build, finance, and support schools and the wishes of parents and children. As a result, there is no mobilization of nascent talent.
- 5) The ability of economic institutions to harness the potential of inclusive markets, encourage technological innovation, invest in people, and mobilize the talents and skills of a large number of individuals is critical for economic growth (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012, pp.70-72).

As claimed by Acemoglu and Robinson (2012), for political institutions to merit the designation of being characterized as inclusive political institutions they have to be sufficiently centralized and pluralistic, otherwise these political institutions then fall into the category of extractive political institutions.

### **Scenario 3: Collaborative Competition**

Exploring possible future scenarios of Sino-African relations, Wikistrat,

a massively multiplayer online consultancy<sup>10</sup>, taps into a network of hundreds of experts which “leverages the scenario-driven ‘Collaborative Competition’ methodology to generate unique intelligence, analysis and forecasting products” (Barnett, 2012b, p.2), ran a multi-week online simulation in which China was assigned the role of Africa’s *de facto* World Bank. The analysis effort of this economic “war game” was primarily based on two facts. First, China’s trade volume with Africa ranks second right after Europe. “Second, China’s investment and concessionary aid flow now outpaces that of the World Bank itself, a clear indicator of China’s pre-eminent role in integrating Africa into the global economy” (Barnett, 2012a, online source).

In the most positive potential pathway analysts came up with a long-term scenario which identified the West “accommodating -- or even welcoming— China’s rising influence over the continent primarily because it could ultimately serve as a stabilizing factor,” says Barnett (2012a). Yet this positive pathway can only materialize if China “delivers on a host of key developmental issues for which Beijing offers developmentally appropriate approaches— namely, healthcare, education, green energy and, most importantly, biotech agriculture”(Barnett, 2012a).

Based on the assumption that China will continue to pay more attention to Africa, a long-term win-win strategy should put African citizens at the centre of development. If China prioritizes the needs of African citizens in such a manner then a bunch of policy options should be considered by Chinese policy and decision-makers. These options do not only involve the Chinese and Africans but also includes the West. In order to secure Africa as a permanent partner, Samy (2010) proposes three policy options which put ordinary Africans first.

First, instead of criticizing China’s aid practices Western donors should help the Chinese by sharing their experiences with them. This applies specifically to aid effectiveness, conditionality, and good governance. Samy recognizes that it is divorced from reality to coerce the Chinese side to publicly reveal its aid numbers. Thus, as a realistic approach, Samy proposes Sino-Western cooperation “through multilateral institutions such as the World Bank and the OECD-DAC to share best practices.” Secondly, Western donors should make efforts to increase the transparency of aid and assistance by leveraging their positions with African governments to disclose figures about “the sources of aid and assistance (including that of the Chinese) if their concern is about effectiveness, debt sustainability and good governance.” Thirdly, China’s efforts in Sino-African relations should focus on a reprioritization of China’s basic *modus operandi* with Africa. This means that strategic plans (long-term plans) must take precedence over tactical calculations (short-term plans). Therefore, China’s long-term strategy in its interactions with Africa must take the needs of Africans into consideration. Thereby China avoids the risk of damaging the reputation and long-term interests of China if Chinese policies come at the expense of African citizens. Having these principles in mind becomes the basis for avoiding “policies that have the potential to create conflicts and social upheaval” (p.88).

#### **Scenario 4: Go Global, Go Green**

The fact that China has already demonstrated that it is capable of coping with many realities and problems similar to those in Africa—such as infrastructure, though soil, corrupt local governments, and widespread poverty, which China also



faced about 20 years ago — makes it an experienced partner for Africa. Apart from that there are also huge compatibilities between China and Africa regarding China's needs and objectives and Africa's strengths and requirements. The four pillars of China's "go global" strategy, encompassing mining, energy, construction and telecoms, are said to perfectly dovetail with Africa's strengths and requirements, argues Barnett: "To take one example, China and Africa will urbanize -- on an unprecedented scale—in tandem over the next 3-4 decades, moving well more than a billion souls into cities yet to be build or radically expanded" (2012a, online source).

Both China and Africa face common challenges. Currently, they rank as the world's second (China) and third biggest (Africa) importers of grain while at the same time "both are experiencing rapid demographic growth, two dynamics that drive up grain consumption tremendously due to rising demand for water-intensive dairy and meat." In spite of Africa's better water supply situation compared to Asia's, it is estimated that in the future Africa will be more likely haunted by the more-devastating effects of climate change triggering deeper and longer droughts. As a pathetic underperformer in agricultural yields and heavily dependent on grain imports, Africa is in dire need of a renaissance in its agricultural sector. If China could deliver on genetically modified organisms that would usher in a new era in its own as well as in Africa's agricultural sector, much could be done to stabilize Africa. As a primary agent of globalization China first of all needs to provide for its own food security. By truly resolving the problem of food security in its own country, China in turn can have the necessary freedom of action to help Africa to do so.

By helping to revolutionize the agricultural production across the African continent, the basis for food security in Africa would be provided. This renaissance in the agricultural sector in turn would, if executed properly, be able to stabilize Africa and enable the rise of a middle class. Labor from the countryside would not needed any more in the agricultural sector could be employed in manufacturing and service jobs. Provided that these conditions could become true, Barnett describes Africa's potential development as follows:

And when that happens, manufacturing and service jobs better be waiting for them. On that score, with China's coastal regions already shedding low-end jobs as they move up the production chain, Africa will be in intense competition with three other potential landing spots: China's interior, Southeast Asia and India, with the latter two experiencing demographic dividends topped only by Africa's still explosively high fertility rate (2012a, online source).

Although no one knows how that "pie" will be divided, one thing is for sure: Just as Asia needs a politically stable Persian Gulf, transforming Africa into an agriculturally competent continent is the most significant step to stabilize Africa and becomes the decisive factor for undergirding Asia's continued rise, argues Barnett. Wise futures are morally demanding. If China wants to enjoy the image of a responsible stakeholder in the international community it can do additional efforts compatible with its desired image. The United States as a superpower "was put in a similarly demanding position in the 20th century, and since Asia now drives globalization's advance, it only makes sense that it places demands on China today," according to Barnett (2012a, online source).



## Conclusion

The categorical exposition of expert views on creating wiser futures for both Africa and China presented in this paper do not pretend to be definitive. Since a very detailed delineation of possible measures would exceed the scope of this paper and systematic procedures to the variety of problems which have to be dealt with heavily depends on variegated as well as specific details, this paper only treated these subjects in a highly tentative and generalized manner. The presented expert views merely purport to suggest a fresh way of looking at the realities of Sino-African interactions. This in turn provides a strong operational basis for extrapolating problem solving mechanisms which can be implemented so that the creation of wiser futures can become a reality.

This paper has delineated and synthesized many ideas from scholars and experts in the field of Sino-Africa relations and Futures Studies, which in time should be better understood and applied to experience to create wiser futures for Africa and China. Possessing humility, flexibility, good judgment, and morality as basic characteristics in their mind set, policy-makers and decision-makers should be able to recognize good ideas and spot wisdom at any time and from any source. When wisdom becomes the environment for decision-making, wiser futures can follow as a logical result.

## Notes

- 1 Kupperman (2005) distinguishes between knowing-how and knowing-that (p.246-247). "Wisdom is primarily a form of knowing-how," writes Kupperman, and adds that "the knowledge that wisdom represents must be exhibited in the wise person's life." (p.246) Thus, while knowing-that is related to the state of being cognizant, knowing-how is linked to the ability of applying knowledge to experience.
- 2 Bales and Smith (1990) argue that wisdom has good judgment about important but uncertain matters of life (p.95; Kupperman, 2005, p.250). In order to make good choices despite limitations wisdom has to be very flexible.
- 3 See butterfly effect as the general idea behind it. The butterfly effect in chaos theory is defined as a property of chaotic systems (as the atmosphere) by which small changes in initial conditions can lead to large-scale and unpredictable variation in the future state of the system. (Butterfly effect. (n.d.). Retrieved on October 29, 2014, from [http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/butterfly effect](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/butterfly%20effect))
- 4 While there have been decades of debate challenging universalist arguments for morality, Bell demonstrates in his study that "many early icons of cultural relativism have been falsified and that the amount of cultural diversity has been overstated" (Bell, 1997, p.224). Bell even posits that "Contrary to the tenets of recently dominant views of cultural diversity, human universals or near-universals do exist" (Bell, 1997). Among the candidates for universal moral values Bell identifies values such as "trust, trustworthiness, honesty, justice and cooperation" (Bell, 1997, p.225).

The authors agree with Bell (2004, p.317) who argues that for the creation of wiser futures "futurists, like scientists and unlike artists, have an obligation to seek the truth." In this sense, the authors opine, if people try to make a difference and a contribution for the creation of wiser futures they should have a drive to seek universals.

Due to the positive individual and collective payoffs of human universals or near-

universals, this shouldn't be an impossible task for discerning leadership or decision-makers (Bell, 1997, p.225). Values such as "knowledge, evaluation itself, justice, and cooperation" are those that play an exceptional role for human well-being. Consequently, leadership interested in the permanent well-being and preservation of their societies should familiarize themselves with near-universal values because they have withstood the test of time (Bell, 1997, p.226).

- 5 Emphasis added.
- 6 Sound knowledge is tantamount to knowledge with human significance.
- 7 Tull (2006) traces China's engagement in Africa in part to its more active international strategy which is based on China's attempt to promote multipolarity. A win-win exchange situation for both China and African state elites has evolved. This mutually beneficial exchange is characterized by increased aid, debt cancellation, and a boom in Chinese-African trade, with petroleum as China's primary a strategic focus. Yet, on a grand scale, Tull's assessment characterizes Sino-African relations as asymmetrical and therefore showing little difference to previous patterns of African-Western imperialist relations.
- 8 The construction of the economic cooperation zones in Africa by China forms a unique, experiential model of development in Africa, argue Bräutigam and Tang (2011). Labeled by Beijing as a central component of China's "mutual benefit" engagement strategy in Africa, this development cooperation is characterized by market-based decisions and investment by Chinese companies and includes a combination of support and subsidies from China as an Asian development state. On the one hand, this cooperation seems to promise an alternative and new approach to sustainable industrialization in Africa. On the other hand, the authors also identify challenges in the political, economic and social dimensions. Specifically, the pattern of inadequate local learning and local participation emerges as the greatest challenge which could negatively impact the ability of the zones to catalyze industrialization, seriously questioning Beijing's claim of a mutually beneficial relationship.
- 9 *In the Garden of Delight*, written by Lily Hardy Hammond, the concept of *paying it forward* was apparently popularized in literature. It was extrapolated from Hammond's famous quote: "You don't pay love back; you pay it forward (Hammond, 1916, p.209)." In this context, the term *to pay it forward* connotes that the recipient of an advantage (China as the recipient of globalization and its positive impact on the transformation of the Middle Kingdom's economy) does not attempt to make up for the benefits it has received to the original benefactor (i.e. America) but instead repays it to others (Africa).
- 10 "This online network offers a uniquely powerful strategic consulting service: the internet's central intelligence exchange for strategic analysis and forecasting, delivered through asynchronous, distributed war-games and simulations." (Barnett, 2012b).

## Correspondence

Kuo-Hua Chen  
Graduate Institute of Futures Studies,  
Tamkang University  
Tamsui, New Taipei City,  
Taiwan, 251  
Email: sochen@mail.tku.edu.tw

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