

China's Path to Sustainable Economic Development Through Democracy and Peaceful Coexistence:

Any Lessons for Africa?

Phindile Lukhele-Olorunju¹

Clear government and military structures and the ability to implement government policies and integrate minority groups into the political, economic and other spheres of government can contribute to national stability and economic development. China has addressed most of its challenges related to governance and democracy and peace and security; it has therefore developed economically and is gaining recognition by the developed world. African leaders are aware of the challenges Africa faces with regard to governance and democracy, peace and security, most of which are similar to those China has confronted. China seems to be interested in partnering with Africa and offers African leaders assistance in overcoming some of the challenges. The quality of assistance and drive towards China-Africa shared developments will depend on the seriousness of Africa in engaging China and desiring to extricate itself from the malaise of underdevelopment and exclusion in a globalising world. This paper analyses information obtained from Chinese officials and extracts what could be useful for Africa to emulate.

Introduction

This paper is based on a trip made to China by African delegates from nine African countries, the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (Codesria), the African Union (AU) and inter-region economic network institutions. The trip was organised by the Institute of West Asian and African Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), and sponsored by the China-Africa Joint Research

and Exchange Programme established at the 4th ministerial meeting of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). The purpose was to promote broad and in-depth understanding of China's development by African intellectuals and to compare experiences of Chinese and African development.

The seminar was structured in such a way that delegates met with China's leading research institutions and think-tanks that specialised in specific areas of development, and included a visit

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to an industrial park, a university in the southern province and a rural area.

The institutions visited were: the Contemporary China Institute, discussing the course of development of modern China; the Industrial Economics Research and Agricultural Development Institute, which advises government on China's reform and opening up, and the development of industry and agriculture. The delegates visited the State Council Leading Group Office of Poverty Reduction and Development, discussing China's poverty reduction strategy and achievements; the National People's Congress (NPC), overseeing China's fundamental political system; the National Commission of Ethnic Affairs Research Centre, addressing China's national policy on ethnic issues; and the Party School of the Communist Peoples' Party of China Central Committee (CPPCC), handling China's leadership and cadre training. Also visited were the College of Defence Studies and National Defence University, addressing China's defence policy; the Industrial Park, which displays a number of economic development strategies spanning up to 20 years (including the New Energy Trail Zone of Beijing Energy Investment Holding Co. Ltd); Yunnan University, representing China's higher education and economic development in ethnic minority areas; the Daili Autonomous Prefecture of Bai Nationality, and finally ethnic minority villages and towns, where regional development was discussed.

This paper presents an analysis of the information received from the Chinese officials dealing with governance and democracy and peace and security issues and also draws lessons that could be learnt by African governments and the Chinese government if the China-Africa partnership is to improve. Under each subtopic the Chinese experience will be discussed first, and the lessons/opportunities for both Africa and China will be raised where appropriate.

China-Africa shared developments in the area of governance and democracy

Good governance and democracy are paramount to the economic development of any nation; a nation that is governed properly will enjoy peace and security because poverty and unemployment, which are usually the cause of internal strife, will not be the problem; sustainable development and significant economic development will be evident not only nationally but also internationally.

According to Yang Guang¹ from the Institute of West Asian and African Studies, in order to understand the Chinese approach to democracy one needs to appreciate China's history and progressive moves towards democracy. The history of China reveals that in 1911, the revolution gave birth to the new republic and this resulted in a number of civil wars and wars with neighbouring countries such as Japan. China became a communist country called the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949. This brought with it anticultural revolutions, low productivity, poverty and insignificant economic development. At the end of the 1970s, however, China opened up and found real development, economic achievements and new discoveries.

The visit to the NPC revealed that at present China is governed in a much more structured way; the NPC, established in 1954, plays a great role in the current governance system. The term/tenure of the NPC is five years and now it is on its eleventh tenure/term. The NPC has evolved and changed and now lays emphasis on people participation. Elections take place at the local/grassroots level (counties/villages), then at provincial to national levels. The NPC is represented in every part of the country: gender, religious groups and minority groups are all represented. Within the NPC is the Central Government, made up of the State Council and council committees, which have various functions. The Permanent Committee receives draft reports from subcommittees, discusses these and submits them to the Central Government.

The NPC preliminary conference is held annually for 10 days every March with 2 500 participants, including representatives of minority groups, female groups and migrant labourers. This conference discusses, among others, issues of monitoring and evaluation, budget, special laws (on enterprises, trade, etc.) and appointments. Reports are studied by various subcommittees that report to the Permanent Committee. The NPC has nine affiliated subcommittees, such as the Economic Commission, which discusses reports on economic, financial and fiscal matters. All draft reports from the subcommittees are submitted to the Permanent Committee of the NPC, which then submits them to the Central Government. Within the government there is supervision of annual budget reports and planning for the future; supervision of everyday activities (projects and research reports from lower to upper government structures); supervision regarding laws in detail – inspections and enquiries carried out and suggestions taken to the NPC. The governance structure ensures that the State Council is

responsible for all ministry activities. All parties, including the Communist Party of China (CPC), abide by the laws and regulations enacted by the NPC and State Council.

The everyday life of the Chinese people (income, employment, housing, education, social insurance) is important to the government. Also of high priority are energy saving and environmental-protection strategies. A special committee on environment and natural resources was set up in recent years. The Central Government helped to find new approaches, such as infrastructural development: improving highways, railways and electrical systems. The government realised that for the country to develop fast it was important to build highways first, as these would allow connections within the country and promote economic development. This encouraged entrepreneurship in western China and gave more scope for development in eastern China through foreign investors.

The government adopted the progressive approach of promoting economic reform and development in special zones all over China, later extended to all areas. Reform started with the Ministry of Agriculture and then progressed to other ministries, and it extended from the economic to the political arena. China is developing its economy by improving energy usage and finding a balance between development of different regions, especially poor rural areas.

Education of government officials: The Central Party School

The Chinese government believes that education of senior government officials is a necessary process to achieving the revolution and reform in China. The Central Party School of the CPC has different levels in the training of government officials and party leadership. The school's history dates back to the establishment of the school of Marxism and Communism in 1933, which in 1978 became the school of Marxism and Leninism. Before the CPC came to power, the school trained students for an anti-Japanese invasion. The CPC produced a large number of officials when it was the ruling party, and the emphasis is still on training of government officials (ministerial, provincial, county-level officials and young cadres). The school has been running for the past three decades, as has the College of Administration of China. Other institutes, such as universities in different provinces, also educate government

officials and chiefs of various parties. Schools at provincial or county level train officials according to the needs at these levels. The training is in administration, Marxism, basic policies of the CPC and Chinese socialism: candidates are sent to the Party School according to need. Needless to say, most of the government officials in China are highly educated people and not just political party stalwarts.

Compulsory education of government officials is aimed at helping them to understand their responsibilities with respect to Chinese socialism and the history of China, basic principles of the party and loyalty to the country, and also to understand what is going on in the rest of the world and to be able to analyse current international issues. The school also invites specialists from various schools to lecture in Science and Technology, Religion and Culture. Students perform research on other countries in order to gain a world view, and are taught strategic analysis to help them analyse issues strategically. About 3 000 students graduate yearly. Special seminars needed by central government are also given at this school.

In a summary of the discussion, delegates were informed that the CPC is now an open party with slightly different views on economic development, such as a shift towards capitalism. China has learnt from the development experiences of developed countries and now insists on power being supervised and balanced. The Chinese also discuss freedom, democracy, economic issues and human rights with their Western counterparts to improve their development. China is in a process of change and transformation: Marxism is the top ideology in China, but the understanding of socialism has greatly changed, as the Chinese now emphasise the essence of socialism for development:

- Every official must go through training and repeat this every five years. Training periods range from two months to one year. Every official has to go for training for at least three months.
- Most students are senior officials of the CPC, the Government of the People's Liberation Army and enterprises.
- The percentage of women students is lower than that of men.
- There are party schools at county and district level.
- No foreigners are trained at this school.

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What does all this mean for China-Africa cooperation?

The composition of China's governance system brings notable lessons for the various governments in Africa. One is aware that China is just a country, while Africa is a continent, and therefore the two cannot be compared. Yet the different African governments could emulate China in some of its governance policies, such as people-centredness, enforcing of economic development in rural areas, concern about environmental degradation, economic development, the role of agriculture in the country's development; and ensuring continued education/training of government officials to ensure accountability and loyalty to the people.

It is a fact that some African governments, like Nigeria, South Africa and Zimbabwe, have policies similar to those of China in terms of political schools and cadre deployment. Whether these have worked or not is a different subject. Other African countries do not have policies like those of China but have been effective in some of their policies. One may therefore rightly say that effectiveness may not be about governance policies but political will. There are, however, countries that are far from moving in this direction. The economies of Swaziland and Zimbabwe have collapsed and they are seeking assistance from South Africa, China and other world organisations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. According to Heyns and Killander² in their *Compendium of key human rights documents of the African Union*, Africa has 340 million people who live on less than US\$ 1 per day, and the life expectancy at birth is 54 years. In the Declaration of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) (2001),³ Africans declared that they would no longer allow themselves to be conditioned by circumstance but would determine their own destiny and call on the rest of the world to complement their efforts.

The continuous education of government officials in China is impressive because education should be one of the criteria for being in government. Africa needs government officials that are humble enough to agree to be trained and improved so that they deliver what is expected from them by the people who vote them into power. Most African leaders are educated; that is, they have university degrees and those with a military background have attended various respected military training colleges. What is important and needful is for them to keep abreast of new ideas and technologies and develop them

for the improvement of their people. They have to lead as informed people who command respect wherever they are. Many do attend countless international training programmes, relevant and irrelevant, but the application becomes an issue. Most government officials in China are educated and respected by their people and viewed as people who know what they are doing.

The 2012 Mo Ibrahim report⁴ indicates that:

just over half of the countries in Africa have improved in overall governance quality, and just under half have declined. This masks large differences in performances between countries and across categories. The majority of countries have improved in both *Sustainable Economic Opportunity* and *Human Development*, but this progress is not mirrored in *Safety and Rule of Law* and *Participation and Human Rights*. Over the last five years, the countries that have consistently ranked in the top five for overall governance performance (Mauritius, Cape Verde, Botswana, Seychelles and South Africa) have, up to now, performed highly in *Safety and Rule of Law*, *Participation and Human Rights*, *Sustainable Economic Opportunity* and *Human Development*. Similarly countries that have improved significantly over this period have improved evenly in all four categories. **But the general trend in Africa is one of imbalance.** Many countries have improved in both *Sustainable Economic Opportunity* and *Human Development*, while the majority of countries have regressed in *Safety and Rule of Law* and *Participation and Human Rights*.

Africa needs people of integrity in the positions of power and not people with records of corruption, embezzlement of government coffers, disregard of and inability to implement policies and, worst of all, greed, selfishness and hangers on to power. Education does assist in reducing some of these negative characteristics in government, because educated government officials know that it is not only politics but also relevant academic qualifications that matter. China seems to be able to plan ahead and strive for the goals set and actually go to any length to achieve its goals (this planning ability can be scientifically demonstrated by China's five-year plans and achievements, including its recent five-year plan), while in most African countries plans and strategies are developed but never executed. In some cases these are kept on the shelves waiting for foreign consultants to come and convince us that our strategies are not good for us. We in Africa tend

to partner with governments that have no interest in our development as a continent but influence us on whom to relate with. We need to identify our strategic partners and engage in cooperation agreements that are based on mutual economic development and not perpetual dependence on the stronger partner.

Cooperation with China would be one of the good moves, provided our African leaders are prepared to be frank on issues of national laws and policies that guide smooth cooperation. Investors should be informed about the investment policies and laws of the country before the investors come to the country. FOCAC could be the vehicle to promote a balanced cooperation.

African governments should not employ double standards in implementing policies and applying national laws, especially on sensitive issues such as human rights and labour laws. Nationals should be educated on the advantages of cooperation with other countries, and the government should constantly monitor the impacts of the cooperation. Governments who have policy research institutes should make use of these institutes to monitor and evaluate cooperation projects. Some civil society organisations working within the ambit of government structures could be the best groups for governments to use in educating nationals and monitoring impacts of cooperation.

China should also understand the different challenges African countries offer, and not take advantage of their desperation by providing projects that would not make much difference to the economic development of the country or its people. A paper presented by Professor Vusi Mashinini entitled *Sino-led development in Lesotho: Power cruise or sustainable development?* clearly illustrates both the positive and negative effects of Lesotho's cooperation with China.⁵ China's strategy for Africa is not a blanket one. It is seen that China prefers to deal with individual African countries and not the regions, yet it is also a fact that African countries are the ones promoting bilateral trade and agreements, and they have not really combined as a strong AU body in dealing with China. In this regard, the roles of FOCAC and NEPAD seem to be undermined in most cases.

China-Africa shared developments in the area of peace and security

This section discusses China's approach to peace and security, bringing out China's current situation, which could be used by Africa to either

develop its own strategies for peace or improve those of China where needed.

China's movement towards peace has not been a smooth one and is still clouded by a number of problems. The threats to security and the path China has taken to address these were demonstrated by the senior officials that addressed the African delegates. According to Commandant Zhang Yingi⁶ of the College of Defence studies and National Defence University, peace and security in China seems to be guided by policies on national defence and coexistence of all the ethnic groups.

The Chinese White Paper on defence was issued in 1998 as an overview of the security environment that China faced and its strategic choices. China sticks to a road of peaceful development; it makes use of a peaceful international environment, with no aggression, expansion nor undermining of self-development. Commandant Zhang Yingi reiterated that the policy is based on China's tradition of always advocating for peace, and stems from China's subjective aspiration of not having strategic intentions to seek hegemony and lead the world, but to be integrated into the world!

This reflects the development trend of the world after World War II, when many countries have chosen the road of peaceful development. The Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) cooperation is one of such choices, in that these countries have agreed to cooperate among themselves on various development issues. This meets the objective demands of China in relation to overcoming problems emanating from gaps between regions that do not allow for peaceful coexistence.

China's security concept relates to mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation. The concept holds that all countries should go beyond differences of ideologies but understand each other; respect each other's security interests; enjoy equal security with no interference in other countries' internal affairs; and promote common security to discourage war but encourage common, mutually beneficial cooperation. Such a new security concept represents idealism, and China has tried to practise this. Its peripheral environment is stable and it is building friendships and partnerships to establish mutual trust, especially with neighbouring countries.

The relative peace that China enjoys may be attributed to its clear military policies that are understood not only by the military forces but also by government and the people of China. The military is not there solely to defend the government from political opponents, as one

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sees in most African countries, but to safeguard national sovereignty and guard against aggression. Heads of states that turn the defence force against the people they are to defend should be charged in criminal courts, not necessarily the International Criminal Court, whose operations and impartiality seem to be questioned even by member states of its mother body.

The White Paper on China's National Defence in 2010⁷ contains the defence policy that guides issues of security. Zhang Yingji⁸ reported that China's security is confronted with potential problems that need immediate attention. These include national unification (Taiwan's separatist threat is a problem that has not been fully addressed), Afghanistan's internal politics and the nuclear issue with Iran. There are also severe non-traditional threats like terrorism, energy security, climate change, food security, public health and degenerated/degraded infrastructures. China also experiences severe national disasters; 33 per cent of earthquakes worldwide occur in China, and 50 per cent of populated areas are prone to natural disasters. The Chinese government has to provide relief to millions of people affected by such disasters.

China's security challenges are shared by many African states: problems of national unity, peripheral environmental complications due to hot spots and border crossing and internal tribal politics are common threats to African security and unity. Continental integration is one way of uniting Africa, but it is mostly overpowered by national sovereignty. Regional integration seems to be the best unifying force in Africa, and this could be used as a stepping stone to continental integration which, it is believed, could assist Africa to develop faster economically than it does at present.

Like China, Africa is confronted by most severe non-traditional threats: terrorism (religious, political and economic), energy security (resulting from internal wars such as that in Libya and vandalism reported in South Africa); climate change, as was reported in the COP 17 (Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)) in November/December 2011; food insecurity due to wars, land grabs and drought; public health problems; and degenerated infrastructures which are in most cases a result of poor governance.

Africa does not suffer severe national natural disasters as reported in other continents. Reduced agricultural production, low commodity prices and social instability in Africa are linked to poor governance, ineffective policies and poor

priorities, some of which can be linked to ethnic differences. Most of these threats could be overcome by having people in government who are capable of developing and implementing policies that are directed towards national peace and security, energy and environmental protection, food security and infrastructure development. Continuous government engagement with nationals and education of government officials would make this possible.

The National Defence College/University of China provides professional training for senior defence officials and also foreign officials. It has a high-level military academic mission: bilateral/multilateral. English, Spanish, Russian and French are the languages of instruction at the university. At the time of this visit, 120 officers from 90 countries in five continents, including Africa, were attending seminars/training at this college. Even though the Defence Studies College of the National Defence University could be considered as the main institute relevant to peace and security, other institutes such as the National Commission of Ethnic Affairs and the National Issues Research Centre also play a great role in ensuring peaceful coexistence in China.

Centre for Ethnic Groups

Dr Li Hongjie,⁹ the Deputy Director-general for the Commission Centre for Ethnic Groups, explained to the delegates how China has managed its ethnic groups. China has 56 groups and therefore the ethnic centre is appropriate for social stability. Archaeological reports indicate the origin of the Chinese people and how every group has made contributions to development of China. A large number of the minority groups live in vast areas, including bordering regions. The 2010 census gave the total population of minorities as 113 million, or 8.49 per cent of the total population of 1.3 billion. Seventy per cent of the minority groups live in the western and bordering regions and have autonomous governments at different levels. China's minority areas have the best minerals and forest resources, but are not economically developed. The basic policy pays attention to various ethnic groups to guarantee stability and development of the country.

1. Government policy regarding minority ethnic groups advocates equality between different groups and autonomy of the regions: The Autonomy Law was amended in 2001 by the NPC, and in 2008, 637 regulations that were

published related to policy issues to facilitate democracy and development, including education and economic development.

2. The CPC established the first autonomous region – Mongolia – before the NPC came to power. There are now more than 100 000 autonomous sub-counties.
3. Every group enjoys legal status, equality in society and economic development. Ethnic groups have the right to participate in decision making: the legislative body (NPC) has 25 officials from minority groups (15,53%). There is freedom of religion and use of native languages and customs is encouraged.

Development was approached in three ways: development of western China, bordering regions and smaller minority groups. Development of western China infrastructure and bordering regions is related to improving the everyday life of the groups. In 1999 the Chinese Central Government invested RMB 7,7 trillion on infrastructure development. For example, in 2006 railways were constructed to connect provinces so as to improve services. The number of counties in border regions is 136, and 107 of these are autonomous counties of minority groups. Their economy has increased by 34,2 per cent.

The central government's contribution to regions has changed minority groups. Six hundred and forty villages boast an income of RMB 1 948 per individual. Investments in cultural areas and education are part of the government's policy and priority: in 1978, 36 000 university students came from minority groups, and this number has now increased to more than a million. The proportion of those who have senior education is higher than the average level in China. Development of these areas has improved living standard and life expectancy.

Improvement of government officials is important: the CPC established the Central University of Ethnic Groups in Beijing and various government policies have been set up in 15 universities to improve minority groups. Some comprehensive universities also have minority group studies. A part of government investment in university and high schools allows students from minority groups to study in Beijing. By 2008 the number of government officials from minority groups was seven per cent. Attention has been given to consolidation of ethnic groups; in the 1980s 2 500 groups and individuals received national honours for ethnic consolidation.

Protection of their culture is another approach to development. Every culture is considered equal

and ethnic balance is promoted. There is a sound legislative system to protect minority culture. Culture is important to Chinese civilization. After 2003, the government promoted the protection of cultural heritage, and since 2006, the first weekend in June has been set aside for protection of heritage. Out of 55 ethnic groups, 53 have their own languages, and 22 groups use 28 different writing systems. Ethnic languages have a role in publication and the media, and seven languages have been adopted as working languages. Protection of ancient literature and books on ancient ethnic cultures is important. There are Tibetan, Mongolian and other translations and well-developed dramas. The centre has published 1 393 articles on culture, and 425 (34,9%) of these are from minority groups. Nine of the 28 Articles in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco) collection are from ethnic groups such as those in Tibet and the Uighurs, who were suppressed in 2009.

The ability to integrate minority groups into the political, economic and other spheres of government gives China an edge over most African states. The peace and security of any country is paramount to its development. Africa has the drawback of not developing minority groups. Most issues of insecurity in Africa stem from the neglect of ethnic minorities. Some of these start as insignificant disturbances and escalate to great national wars that destabilise not only the nation but neighbouring countries.

The problem in Libya cannot be unconnected to the undermining of minority groups that have turned into an opposition group, now referred to as rebels. Almost all the wars that have been fought in Africa can be related to tribal wars – those in Nigeria, in Rwanda, in Kenya, just to mention a few. Africa should therefore emulate China in recognising minority groups and integrating them into all national systems, addressing economic development through infrastructural development that enables rural connection to urban places, education of the minority and respect for cultural differences, especially the language issues.

China, on the other hand, should also take into consideration that Africa is a continent of diverse people with diverse cultures and different perspectives on foreign investors. Insofar as the Chinese have made good progress in integrating their different ethnic groups for good reasons, they should encourage the African governments to emulate them and not allow them to be the source of African disintegration. Chinese communities in Africa should not arrive and settle in Africa as another ethnic group, but mingle with the

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nationals in an effort to show that there is equality and respect for all people. The security of the nation they desire to have relations with should be an issue of paramount importance to them, because if ethnic trouble starts, they will be targets of the ignored dissident group, as in most cases they are seen as being favoured by the government of the country. They should study the laws and policies of the states they are dealing with to enable them to understand the rights local groups have and the sensitive areas that could cause a spark. Their development projects should include projects that involve the minorities of the country, not only as service providers but also as equal partners.

Africa and China should always keep in perspective the three promoters of development for developing countries: mutual understanding, mutual trust and mutual cooperation.

Recommendations and Conclusion

The following are recommendations for China and Africa that could assist in promoting shared development:

- African governments could emulate China in a few of its governance policies that promote economic development, especially agriculture's role in a country's development.
- Balanced strategic partnership requires cooperation agreements that are based on mutual economic development.
- African nationals should be educated on the advantages and implications of the bilaterals/multilaterals in cooperation agreements and how these are monitored.
- Continental integration needs to be promoted, and so China's strategy for Africa should not be a blanket one for the continent, but preferably regional, as Africa's regional bodies and the AU already have, in most cases, strategies on development.
- Africa needs governments that are capable of developing and implementing policies that are directed towards national peace and security, energy and environment saving, food security and infrastructure development. Continuous education of government officials would make this possible.

- Africa needs to recognise and develop minority groups by integrating them into all national systems in order to avert unnecessary tribal wars or internal conflicts.
- Chinese communities in Africa should not arrive and settle in Africa as another ethnic group but mingle with the nationals in an effort to show that they believe in equality and respect for all people. The many complaints about how China treats Africans in their own country make Africans doubt the sincerity of China's desire to partner with Africa.
- China needs to make an effort to study the intricacies of different African states; showing an understanding of the laws and policies of the states would prevent the negative and suspicious light in which China is already being viewed by some Africans.
- Listening to the Chinese government officials, one was tempted to think that China's development had been easy and that the government had little to worry about, but this is not so. China has worked hard to be where it is today and is not shy to state that it still has a long way to reach its goals. It still has challenges of environmental pollution, technology under-development and insufficient natural resources. China believes that partnering with Africa would encourage shared development.
- African leaders, on the other hand, are not ignorant of what Africa needs to develop. The NEPAD declarations of 2001¹⁰ state very clearly the challenges Africa faces on issues of governance and democracy and peace and security. African leaders have made declarations on sustainable development (Declaration 71) and the initiatives Africans can take to 'extricate themselves and the continent from the malaise of underdevelopment and exclusion in a globalising world' (Declaration 1).

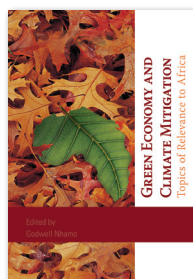
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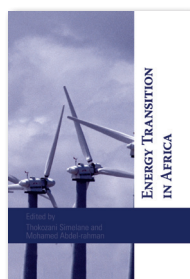
China has worked hard to be where it is today and is not shy to state that it still has a long way to reach its goals

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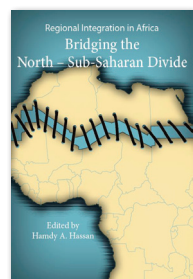
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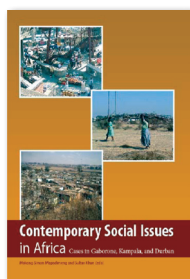
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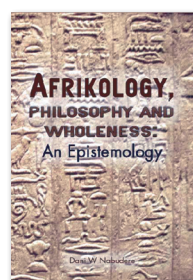
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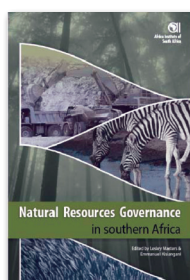
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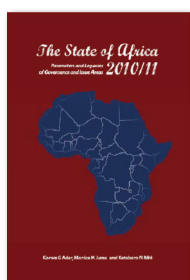
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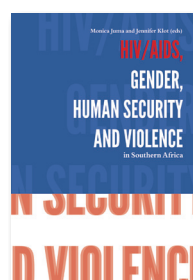
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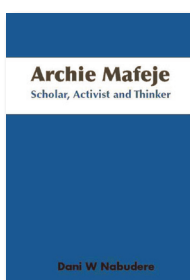
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