

Botswana-China Relations: A Curated Reading List

This bibliography guides readers through the existing scholarship on Botswana-China relations. The academic study of this relationship has been quite limited, and this topic still requires further conceptual analysis and empirical research. Nonetheless, below are seven peer-reviewed journal articles, three discussion or occasional papers, five book chapters, one book, and several additional resources on Botswana-China relations. Each source is followed by a brief description.

Several authors provide general overviews of the Botswana-China relationship. These sources describe the bilateral relationship as one that has shifted from political-based to economic-based. While the main Sino-Batswana issues in the 1960s-70s revolved around foreign policy and diplomatic interests, bilateral economic engagement in terms of trade, Chinese merchants, investment, and infrastructure work increasingly dominate the academic conversation. While some scholars have published “overview” journal articles (Taylor, 1998) or papers (Youngman, 2017; Youngman, 2013), most comprehensive analyses on Sino-Batswana ties come from books (Bloom and Poplack, 2016; Bolaane, 2007; Shinn and Eisenman, 2012; Taylor, 2006). Nevertheless, there are still very few books that solely focus on Botswana-China relations. Even within those on Africa and China, Botswana often shares a chapter with other Southern African countries. This is indicative of both the lack of research on the topic as well as Beijing’s more limited engagement with Gaborone in comparison to neighboring states like Angola, South Africa, and Zambia.

Aside from the seven aforementioned “overview” sources, the other nine references in this reading list primarily focus on specific economic factors. In fact, almost all of the sources in this guide -- especially those that have been published in the last ten years -- concentrate on the economic ties between Botswana and China. The two sources from the 1990s either provide a general overview (Taylor, 1998) or explore the political foundations of the Sino-Batswana relationship (Taylor, 1997).

Several of these “economic” references discuss the people-to-people level of Chinese merchants and businesspeople (Akhidenor, 2013; Zi, 2015; Zi, 2017). Other scholars explore larger-scale economic interaction, such as the impact of Chinese trade (Sekakela, 2016) and investment (Kalusopa, 2009) on Botswana’s economy, bilateral divergences in labor laws (Yang and Doh, 2014), and Chinese infrastructure projects in Botswana (Chen, 2009; Kalusopa, 2009). This construction aspect is a significant component of contemporary relations.

Current-day media coverage of Botswana and China usually focuses on these people-to-people and larger-scale economic topics. Although the media portrays very conflicting views on the bilateral relationship (Moahi, 2015), the scholarship presents a more optimistic perspective. While areas of concern still exist -- such as a widening trade imbalance, labor disputes, and delays on construction projects -- the robust democratic structures of Botswana’s economy and government ensure an overall mutually-beneficial relationship.

Finally, three larger resources are included in this bibliography: CARI, the PRC Embassy in Botswana, and FOCAC. CARI's data on Botswana, however limited, helps illustrate the strengthening economic ties between Beijing and Gaborone. Both the Embassy and FOCAC include articles on bilateral affairs.

Journal Articles:

Akhidenor, Anthonia. "Code-Switching in the Conversations of the Chinese Trading Community in Africa: The Case of Botswana." *English Today*, 29.4 (December 1, 2013): 30–36.

This paper discusses the code-switching linguistic structures employed in the interactions between Chinese traders and customers in Botswana, and how traders use these structures to build cordial business relationships. The data reveal intra-sentential, inter-sentential, and emblematic switches as strategies used by Chinese traders and customers when code-switching in English and Setswana and/or Chinese. The paper also recommends that the Chinese and Botswana governments build language and culture centers to enable multilingual communication.

Moahi, Kgomo. "An Analysis of Botswana-China Relations in the Botswana Print Media." *Botswana Journal of African Studies*, 29.1 (2015): 61-75.

This study gathers content analysis of stories and features appearing in four newspapers in order to determine how Botswana-China relations are depicted in the media. The findings reveal that the coverage of the relationship cannot be neatly categorized as either positive or negative, but rather as a collection of contrasting views depending on the topic covered. The study also shows that most media coverage on Africa-China relations is economic, specifically regarding Chinese conduct in the construction, retail, and manufacturing sectors.

Sekakela, Kedibonye. "The Impact of Trading with China on Botswana's Economy." *Journal of Chinese Economic and Foreign Trade Studies*, 9.1 (February 1, 2016): 2–23.

This paper examines the bilateral trade relationship between Botswana and China. Botswana's trade balance with China has widened in recent years, with Botswana mainly exporting primary products and importing intermediate and capital goods (which are used for infrastructure development). China's Textile, Clothing and Footwear (TCF) exports are also gaining market share from Botswana's TCF exports in South Africa. The paper emphasizes the need to reevaluate Botswana's export competitiveness. These trends in trade can be seen elsewhere in Africa-China relations.

Taylor, Ian. "Botswana's 'Independent Foreign Policy': Gaborone-Beijing Relations." *Botswana Notes and Records*, 30 (1998): 79–86.

This article discusses historical and contemporary relations between Botswana and China. Ideological and political ingredients shaped the early relationship, especially linkages around opposition to apartheid South Africa's regional hegemony. Modern relations centrally revolve

around economic ties and investment. This shift reflects wider changes in Southern Africa and Asia over the past 50 years.

Taylor, Ian. "The 'Captive States' of Southern Africa and China: The PRC and Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland." *Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 35.2 (1997): 77-95.

During the Apartheid era, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland (BLS) had a subordinate relationship with their regional hegemonic neighbor -- South Africa. This inhibited Chinese attempts to create long-lasting relationships with BLS, with the exception of Botswana. After tracing ties since independence, the article argues that Sino-Botswana relations have been mutually satisfactory.

Yang, Liu, and Doh, Cyprian Nugah. "China and Botswana: Legal and Cultural Differences in Labour Laws." *African East-Asian Affairs*, No. 4 (January 7, 2014): 50-71.

The case of Botswana provides insights into China-Africa labor conflict, an increasingly problematic issue in the relationship. This paper highlights the legal-cultural gap in labor laws, specifically the probation and termination of employment, between Botswana and China. Understanding this issue is important for fostering a peaceful and productive investment environment in Botswana and in Africa at large.

Zi, Yanyin. "The Challenges for Chinese Merchants in Botswana: A Middleman Minority Perspective." *Journal of Chinese Overseas*, 11 (2015): 34-55.

This paper discusses the challenges faced by Chinese retail merchants in Botswana. It argues that merchants' self-imposed isolation creates circumstances in which they are rejected by local society. Thus, this paper provides insights on the social and micro-economic dynamics of Chinese merchants in Botswana.

Papers:

Chen, Anna Ying. "China's Role in Infrastructure Development in Botswana." SAIIA: China in Africa Project, September 2009.

https://media.africaportal.org/documents/SAIJA_Occasional_Paper_44.pdf

Infrastructure development is crucial to Botswana's successful long-term economic planning, making it a favorable location for FDI. Chinese investment in Botswana is diverse and complex. With the latter's robust regulatory environment, Chinese construction companies have faced many challenges in the country. While Chinese firms bring competition to the industry and now have considerable market share, they must work to observe quality standards. Nonetheless, recent development projects set an example for the rest of Africa.

Youngman, Frank. "A Study of Perspectives on How to Enhance Botswana-China Relations," CCS Discussion Paper, Stellenbosch: August 2017. <https://www0.sun.ac.za/ccs/?p=13033>

This paper examines the state of Botswana-China relations based on qualitative research. The findings show that economic issues are fundamental to the relationship, while development assistance and diplomatic interactions are important at the state level. People-to-people interactions are important, too, according to Chinese respondents. In addition, perceptions of problems and tensions in the Sino-Botswana relationship far outweigh positive elements, confirming a straining of tensions over the last five years.

Youngman, Frank. "Strengthening Africa-China Relations : A Perspective from Botswana," CCS Discussion Paper, Stellenbosch: November 2013.

<http://scholar.sun.ac.za/handle/10019.1/86138>

Although little research exists on the subject, this paper aims to develop the basis for further analysis and empirical study on Botswana-China relations. It argues that Botswana's relationship with China is an increasingly important aspect of the former's economy, politics and society. The paper also provides a case study on the role of the University of Botswana in the strengthening of bilateral relations.

Books and Book Chapters:

Bloom, Kevin, and Poplak, Richard. "Botswana." In *Continental Shift: An Investigative Journey into Africa's 21st Century*, 51-89. London: Portobello Books, 2016.

This book chapter adopts a narrative form to explore Botswana's origins as a successful development state and China's contemporary role in it. It argues that China's infrastructure presence in the country, represented by SOEs like Sinohydro, reflects Chinese companies' success in Botswana and the latter's recognition of Beijing's effective development model. The authors discuss recent projects that demonstrate the real and long-term benefits of Chinese engagement in the African infrastructure space.

Kalusopa, Trywell. "Chinese Investments in Botswana." In *Chinese Investments in Africa: A Labour Perspective*, edited by Anthony Yaw Baah and Herbert Jauch, 124-159. Accra and Windhoek: African Labour Research Network, 2009.

In this country case study, all economic aspects of the Botswana-China relationship are examined. This includes, but is not limited to, FDI, trade, different industrial sectors of the economy, and labor laws. Chinese investment in Botswana has largely been devoted to construction, manufacturing and retail trade. The study also confirms that most Chinese companies usually hire workers on a casual basis and that there is little trade union organization in most Chinese enterprises, which might necessitate the involvement of Botswana's trade unions.

M. M. M. Bolaane. "China's Relations with Botswana: An Historical Perspective." In *Afro-Chinese Relations: Past, Present and Future*, edited by Kwesi Kwaa Prah. Cape Town: Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society, 2007.

This book chapter explores China's relations with Botswana since its independence in 1966. As diplomatic bilateral ties have continued to develop, economic engagement between the two has evolved into a focal point in the relationship. For example, more Chinese nationals have expressed interest in conducting business in Botswana. Some tensions remain and continue to arise, though, such as isolated crime incidents of Chinese nationals.

Shinn, David H., and Joshua Eisenman. "China's Relations with Southern Africa." In *China and Africa: A Century of Engagement*, 323-61. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012.

This book chapter provides a general overview of Botswana-China relations since their founding, discussing specific events such as state visits and investment agreements. Once again, this chapter confirms a general shift in the relationship from political cooperation to economic engagement. It also discusses the challenges that Botswana faces as it balances Chinese financing with its democratic principles. Overall, China has had considerable success in dealing with Gaborone's concerns.

Taylor, Ian. "China's Policies Towards Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and Malawi." In *China and Africa: Engagement and Compromise*, 181-196. London: Routledge, 2006.

Taylor breaks up Botswana-China relations into several chronological periods: initial exclusion of the PRC, rapprochement with China, Khama's visit to Beijing, Beijing-Gaborone ties in the 1970s, post-Tiananmen relations, and economic linkages. He argues that China's policy towards Botswana has been successful both politically and economically. While commercial ties play an increasingly important role in the relationship, both sides also generally align on foreign policy.

Zi, Yanyin. *Iron Sharpens Iron: Social Interactions at China Shops in Botswana*. Cameroon: Langaa RPCIG, 2017.

This book explores the maturity of China-Africa relations at the grass-roots level, arguing that the hard work of both the Batswana and the Chinese has brought new vitality to the continent. It examines the everyday interactions of people in the context of China shops in Botswana. The book ultimately suggests that these interactions demonstrate how each individual has the power to become an ambassador in shaping international relations.

Additional Resources:

China Africa Research Initiative (CARI). John Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. <http://www.sais-cari.org/data/>

The China Africa Research Initiative collects a large amount of data on China-Africa relations. This includes empirical research on Chinese loans, trade, investment, contracts, workers, and foreign aid. Although the data on Botswana-China ties are relatively limited, this source still

contains valuable information.

“China-Botswana Relations.” Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the Republic of Botswana. <http://bw.china-embassy.org/eng/zbgx/>

This website page of the Chinese Embassy contains all of the events and speeches involving the Chinese ambassador in Botswana. Many of the articles discuss both historical and contemporary trends, data, and overall ties.

Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the People’s Republic of China. <http://www.focac.org/eng/>

The FOCAC website has multiple articles on recent high-level interactions between Botswana and China, including the July 2018 Memoranda of Understanding to improve trade relations and the 2018 FOCAC meeting between President Mokgweetsi Masisi and President Xi Jinping.