

# Call for Papers

## International Conference on the **Past, Present and Future of African-Asian Relations**

University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland  
April 25-27, 2019

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the relations between Africa and Asia. This is mainly due to what is perceived as increasing Chinese influence and presence in Africa. Initially hardly noticed in Western Europe and Northern America, a key moment in this gradual process was the “Five Points Proposal” presented by then-President Jiang Zemin during his tour of Africa in 1996. What was termed a “new relationship with Africa” included catchwords such as non-intervention, reliable friendship and mutually beneficial development. Among the earlier scholars to analyze these developments, Alden (2005, 2007) described China’s need for energy (especially oil), strategic minerals, and arguably stable sources of key foodstuffs. He pointed to China’s drive for new markets, especially for low-value consumer goods sold through a growing network of Chinese merchants. Africa is also a considerable market for Chinese construction firms using contracted Chinese labor, especially in the domains of infrastructure and housing. Finally, there is growing Chinese direct investment in land and businesses. Not only Africa’s ties with the world economy are redefined, but also its ties with the international community, as Brautigam’s (2009) widely known analysis of Chinese development aid shows.

While unrivalled in its scope, the Chinese relations with Africa is only one example of growing ties between Asian and African countries. Among the other examples are Japan and India, not least with their joint Asia-Africa Growth Corridor efforts. Maritime Southeast Asian countries such as Singapore, Malaysia or Indonesia have also intensified their relationship with Africa in trade, FDI and beyond. Additionally, various oil states in the Persian Gulf (Iran, UAE, Oman, Qatar) have turned their gaze to Africa. Both Asian and African countries frequently describe their relations as being different to relations with European or North American countries. In the rapidly growing body of scientific literature on the topic, but also in media reports, the influence of China and other Asian countries is the source of controversial debates. Particularly China is seen as a rogue donor and neocolonial exploiter causing multi-dependency of African countries or as a (potential) new hegemon in the world economy. More benevolent perspectives on Asian relations with African countries see Asian countries as healthy economic competitors, as development partners that help African countries pave a pathway out of poverty or even as liberators that help end the postcolonial dependence of African countries.

Prudent voices such as Chaponnière (2008) remind us that quite similar debates were abundant in the 1960s, when revolutionary China became increasingly active in Africa. Taking an even broader and more long-term view of the relationship between Asia and Africa, the current interaction is seen as a shift of the center of the world economy to the East or as (cyclical) re-emergence of the centers of the early world economies as described, for example, by Abu-Lughod (1991), Frank (1998), or Chaudhuri (1985). These early world economies did not originate in Europe, but in Asia, reaching, as expressed by Sheriff (1987), the Indian Ocean to the littoral southeast of Africa. In yet another perspective, not least taken by Chinese sources, the current developments are described as the advent of a multipolar world.

With this call for papers, the organizers encourage researchers to investigate sociological theories and conceptual tools for the analysis of the relationships between Asia and Africa. They welcome reflections on questions of methods and data for analysis of these relationships. The organizers are interested in past and current developments in the social structure of the world society. They invite papers on the economic, political and social changes triggered by African-Asian relationships, both on the African continent but also in China and other Asian countries. Finally, this call is interested in the driving forces behind these developments and their interests, again on both continents.

Issues that may be addressed by papers include (but are not limited to):

- Institutionalized Asian-African relationships, such as China's "One Belt, One Road Initiative" or the FOCAC, the India Africa Forum Summit, or Japan's TICAD.
- Consequences of the Asian-African relationships such as changing inequalities, unequal exchanges, indebtedness, changes in poverty, (dis)continuities in labor movements
- Other social consequences including changes of gender and generational relations
- Changes in the economy triggered by foreign direct investment, the diffusion of agricultural and other technologies, labour migration and changing trade patterns
- Political issues such as the shift of military power, new conflict lines or human rights issues
- Ideational aspects of the Asian-African relationships such as Asian (developmental) states as blue print for development strategies in African countries, Gulf States as models for non-Western modernity, or mutual (racist) stereotypes.
- Transnational aspects such as the role of networks and diasporas or forms of migration for business, recreation, health care or education
- Ecological issues such as the consumption of resources and its impact on the environment or the potential for green technologies

Highest priority will be given to papers that combine a general theoretical discussion with new empirical findings. These papers may be based on new comparative research as well as single-case studies, and on qualitative as well as quantitative research methods. Papers can take a long durée perspective or focus on limited time periods, including contemporary ones.

**Submission procedure:** Please submit a 500 word paper abstract in English before **September 30, 2018 (CET)** to [africa-asia.conference@unine.ch](mailto:africa-asia.conference@unine.ch). The abstract should include the title of the paper, all author(s) names and affiliation as well as contact information. It should contain clear information on the research methods, data sources and analytical tools to be used. Please note that the organizers are seeking original contributions. Papers that have already been published or submitted for publication will not be accepted. Authors will be notified before the end of October 2018 of paper proposal acceptance. Successful applicants are invited to elaborate their proposals into full papers and to participate in the World Society Foundation Award of Excellence Program for Research Papers.

**World Society Foundation Award for Research Papers:** Successful applicants of abstract proposals interested in having their papers considered for the World Society Foundation Award for Research Papers are invited to submit their full paper (25-30 pages, but no more than 8000 words) in English before **January 6, 2019 (CET)** to [africa-asia.conference@unine.ch](mailto:africa-asia.conference@unine.ch). The authors of the most outstanding papers will be invited to the conference and they become candidates for the Foundation's 2019 Award. Notification of selected papers will be given by February 15, 2019. The Award, with a prize of US \$ 10'000 (first prize) and US \$ 5'000 (second prize) will be presented at the Neuchâtel conference.

**Travel grants:** The organizers award a limited number of travel grants covering airfare and accommodation (in full or in part) to researchers from the Global South (International Sociological Association country categories B and C) and to doctoral students. Travel grants will be allocated on the basis of a competitive assessment of papers submitted. To apply for travel grants, please submit as paper proposal a 500 word abstract before **May 1, 2018 (CET)** to [africa-asia.conference@unine.ch](mailto:africa-asia.conference@unine.ch). The abstract should comply with the requirements mentioned above. Authors of accepted abstracts will receive notification by May 31, 2018 and asked to elaborate their proposals into full papers to be submitted by **September 30, 2018 (CET)**. Authors will be notified before the end of October 2018 of full paper acceptance. Accommodation and travel will be provided for one author per accepted full paper using the most economical travel route.

**Publication:** A selection of outstanding papers will be published in a conference volume.

**Organizing committee:** Marilyn Grell-Brisk (University of Neuchâtel), Daniel Künzler (University of Fribourg), Christian Suter (University of Neuchâtel), Patrick Ziltener (University of Zurich).

**Conference Sponsorship:** The conference is supported by the World Society Foundation (Zurich, Switzerland), the Swiss Society for African Studies, the Swiss Sociological Association, and the Sociological Institute of the University of Neuchâtel. For more information on the conference and for updates, please check at: <http://www.worldsociety.ch/>.