International human resource management strategies of Chinese firms in Africa

Abstract: Little is known about Chinese MNEs and their HRM policies and practices in developing countries. China's presence in Africa is still an underexplored area. Among a limited number of studies, attention has been drawn to approaches to international staffing (Cooke, Wang, & Wang, 2018), knowledge transfer and reverse knowledge transfer (Peng, Qin, Chen, Cannice, & Yang, 2017), and management of both expatriates and local employees (Cooke, 2012; Wood, Mazouz, Yin, & Cheah, 2014). This chapter summarises and develops thinking in this controversial area by setting it within a framework of Chinese investors' international business strategies in Africa. Chinese FDI and its purpose and effects in Africa is first examined, suggesting that strategic motives and types of company ownership might affect how Chinese companies manage their employees in subsidiaries. International HRM policies are then examined, subsequently narrowing the focus to examine expatriation. Finally, the chapter summarises what we know so far and suggests potential research trajectories.

Running Head Right-hand: HRM strategies of Chinese firms in Africa
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International human resource management strategies of Chinese firms in Africa

Chengcheng Miao

China has become the largest investor in Africa in terms of foreign direct investment (FDI) flow (Panitchpakdi, 2010), with its investment crowding out that of Africa's traditional partners, such as the USA and Germany (Donou-Adonsou & Lim, 2018). Over the past decade, the China-Africa Development Fund has encouraged into Africa many enterprises in agriculture, manufacturing, mining, infrastructure and industrial parks (Finance.sina.com.cn, 2017). China's FDI in Africa increased from US$7.48 million in 2003 to US$2.112 million in 2010 (Xu, 2014). According to Gill, Huang, and Morrison (2007, p. 9), 'China needs Africa': for resources to achieve its development goal, for markets to sustain its fast-growing economy, and for political alliances to support its ambition to be influential globally.

China's involvement with Africa dates back to the 1950s when China tried to win recognition in the international arena by supporting African countries as an element of its government aids projects (Mlambo, Kushamba, & Simawu, 2016). From the mid-1990s, large state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and private companies started entering the manufacturing sector in Africa, involving resource-based and infrastructure investments (Gu, 2009). The Sino-Africa relationship had a breakthrough in 2000, after the first Tri-annual Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, a Ministerial Conference that was held in Beijing, and this led on to the first declaration of China's African Policy (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2015). Almost ten years later, a new edition was published in 2016 to enhance Sino-

Africa cooperation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2015). It is believed that the Belt and Road Initiatives (Finance.sina.com.cn, 2017) announced in 2015 will continue to encourage cooperation between China and Africa. Understanding these historical ties between China and Africa helps us draw a clear and complete picture of why China invests in Africa, which we will argue is closely related to management strategies and practices.

China's increasing presence in Africa has aroused intense debates about its motivations and its impacts, particularly on the host countries. Does China harbour colonial ambitions (Jauch, 2011) or is it a win–win cooperation (Morris & Einhorn, 2008)? Does China's FDI have a positive effect on standards of living in Africa (Donou-Adonsou & Lim, 2018) or has it done too little to increase local employment (Adisu, Sharkey, & Okoroafo, 2016)?

Even though there are controversial issues about China's investment in Africa, it is undeniable that China has become an important player in Africa, economically and socially. Chinese outward FDI, in general, has attracted great attention in academia (Kaplinsky & Morris, 2009; Kolstad & Wiig, 2012; Ramasamy, Yeung, & Laforet, 2012). However, international business (IB) journals seem to have shown little interest in China in Africa (Ado & Su, 2016). In contrast, a substantial number of works on this topic can be found in development-related journals (e.g. *The European Journal of Development Research*, *African Development Review*). On the other hand, with the growing influence of China as a key player in outward FDI, academics have begun to show increasing interest in topics related to international human resource management (IHRM) in Chinese multinationals. However, most of these studies link IHRM in Chinese multinational enterprises (MNEs) to comparisons based on the WEIRD (western, educated, industrialised, rich, developed) countries (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010), and even to Anglophone countries: the UK (Fu, Sun, & Ghauri, 2018; Khan, Wood, Tarba, & Rao-Nicholson, 2018; Shen & Edwards, 2004; Shen, Edwards, & Lee, 2005; Zheng & Smith, 2018), Australia (Fan, Zhang, & Zhu, 2013; Zhang & Fan, 2014; Zhu, 2018) and the USA (Peng et al., 2017). Thus, there is a significant gap in the literature, as little is known about Chinese MNEs and their HRM policies and practices in developing countries. China's presence in Africa is still an underexplored area, which remains full of mysteries. Among a limited number of studies, attention has been drawn to approaches to international staffing (Cooke et al., 2018), knowledge transfer and reverse knowledge transfer (Peng et al., 2017), and management of both expatriates and local employees (Cooke, 2012; Wood et al., 2014) and we summarise and develop thinking in this controversial area by setting it within a framework of Chinese investors' international business strategies in Africa.

This chapter takes the following form: we start with Chinese FDI and its purpose and effect in Africa, arguing that strategic motives and types of companies (ownerships) might affect how Chinese companies manage their employees in subsidiaries. Then we examine their IHRM policies and subsequently narrow our focus to examine expatriation. Finally, we summarise what we know so far and suggest potential research trajectories.

Chinese FDI

The strategic motives of Chinese FDI

Location advantages in host countries attract MNEs to engage in FDI (Verbeke, 2013). There is a common perception that rich natural resources such as oil and other minerals are the main driving forces for FDI in Africa (Asiedu, 2006). China has experienced three decades of economic growth and the expected growth in the future indicates an increasing demand for natural resources (Davies, 2009). Data from 2003 to 2007 also show that the resources-seeking motive of Chinese FDI in Africa is quite distinct, with statistical significance in energy and mineral output variables (Cheung et al., 2012). Ramasamy et al. (2012) explained that since 2009, China has become the largest market for passenger cars, which means oil and energy are urgently required for the development of the industry. By studying the correlation of Chinese FDI flows and natural resources investment, Wood and his colleagues (2014) found that Chinese MNEs invest in Africa in order to secure access to natural resources to meet domestic Chinese demands. It is interesting to note that China is a latecomer in the resource-extractive industries in Africa compared to western investors. One interpretation from Cheung and his colleagues (2012) is that China is trying to catch up with other foreign investors in the resources extraction sector in Africa.

Africa is endowed with rich natural resources, but it is a continent with uncertainties and risks. One question that has frequently been asked by scholars is why China holds a perverse attitude to risk (Buckley et al., 2007). Even though Cheung and Qian (2009) found Chinese investment is not affected by risk characteristics, Ramasamy and his colleagues (2012) argued that Chinese FDI seems to be attracted to countries which are politically risky or have a weak political system. Some scholars argue that MNEs from emerging markets might have competitive advantages over western companies in African markets.

Corruption has been argued to have a negative influence on FDI (Habib & Zurawicki, 2002). More specifically, corruption might be responsible for the withdrawal of some western companies from countries with weak institutions, as it creates pressure and difficulties (Desai, Foley, & Hines, 2004). According to Khanna and Palepu (2006), MNEs from developing countries might have experienced and survived similar bureaucratic pressures, and they are more experienced and more flexible in dealing with corruption and political constraints (Khanna & Palepu, 2006). Wood and his colleagues' findings support such approaches as they suggest that Chinese MNEs are more competitive in highly corrupt markets and understand that corruption is a double-edged sword that might give the company the chance to buy their way out of some burdensome regulations (Wood et al., 2014). In Cooke and her colleagues' study of Chinese stated-owned mining companies in Africa, interviewees confirmed that in order to build good relationships with local authorities for business development they give them money, place their friends or relatives in management positions, build roads and schools, lend transportation and even bring them gifts (Cooke, Wang, et al., 2015). Local contacts believe it is 'normal' to bribe in the Chinese culture. Another reason, according to Buckley and his colleagues (2007), is that the political connection between China and other developing countries gives Chinese MNEs bargaining powers in those host countries.

But the value of generalisation about Chinese investment being attracted to politically risky countries is inevitably limited because of the overlap of countries which are both corrupt and have natural resources. There are many cases of western MNEs operating in countries with a high level of corruption (Wood et al., 2014). Kolstad and Wiig (2012) argue that weak institutions should be discussed alongside large natural resources when talking about Chinese outward FDI. They criticise the credibility of the data on FDI from Buckley et al. (2007) and Cheung and Qian (2009) as those data only reflect approved investments rather than actual investment. That means those data might be biased; there are believed to be some different characteristics between publicly approved investment and less visible investment. Further, Kolstad and Wiig (2012) argue that Buckley's findings on weak institutions cannot capture reality as the effect is unconditional. Instead, their results indicate that the weaker the institutions are in the host country, the more Chinese investment is attracted by that country's natural resources; conversely, the larger the county's natural resources, the more Chinese investment is attracted to weak institutions. That is to say, weak institutions and large natural resources interactively affect Chinese outward FDI (in non-Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries). But what if it is because China is the latecomer in FDI and only has access to natural resources from poorly governed countries? Kolstad and Wiig (2012) argue that their findings rule out this possibility.

While some scholars believe Chinese firms invest in Africa primarily to get access to natural resources (Frynas & Manuel, 2007), others do not find substantial evidence for that proposition (Cheung & Qian, 2009). An alternative explanation for Chinese FDI, in particular, might be to promote domestic exports – market-seeking (Buckley et al., 2007). Apart from the co-effect of rich resources and weak institutions, another important result suggested by Kolstad and Wiig's (2012) finding is that Chinese FDI is attracted to large markets. China's fast-growing export industry requires new markets beyond the developed economies, and Africa appears to have a huge but undeveloped market with great potential (Cheung et al., 2012). However, Wood's finding suggests that MNEs from emerging markets are less likely to use Africa as an export base and when they target less competitive markets they focus on local market share (Wood et al., 2014). For example, the presence of Chinese telecom giants Huawei and ZTE (Zhongxing Telecommunications Equipment) in Africa follows China's 'go-out' policy to gain local markets as part of their strategy for competing in the global market (Agbebi, 2018). Besides, they found that the local market might not be the only interest of emerging MNEs in Africa, they might also be interested in exporting their African products to other non-Chinese markets.

Some scholars challenge the idea of a single motive for Chinese FDI in Africa. It is believed that multiple motives, multiple strategies and multiple players led China to the continent (Brautigam, 2009). Africa has a huge but undeveloped consumer market combined with rich natural resources, which offers a great complement to China (Xu, 2014). Gill et al. (2007) argue that China is looking for resources to achieve its development goal, for markets to sustain its fast-growing economy and for political alliances to support its ambition to be influential globally. More specifically, investment has been used as a commercial and political channel for the Chinese government to build diplomatic bridges to countries that will benefit other projects that might be in China's national interest (Brautigam & Tang, 2011). This is also why there is a huge debate about the involvement of the Chinese government in FDI in Africa, as it arouses concerns about national security risks for host countries (Deng, 2013).

Companies' strategic motives are important yet easily overlooked when discussing their management policies and practices. We argue that companies with different motives might adopt different HRM strategies. For example, motivation might affect the level of pre-departure training (Jackson & Horwitz, 2018) for expatriates:[1] When a firm is more market-seeking, it is likely that expatriates will need to interact more with local communities and so more pre-departure training may be necessary. Similarly, a politically motivated firm might encourage interaction with local communalities for mutual learning and cooperation, which will also lead to a higher demand for pre-departure training. In contrast, firms who are seeking natural resources might pay less attention to the cross-cultural adjustment of their expatriates as limited interaction with local culture is required.

The characteristics of Chinese FDI in Africa

There are four main characteristics of Chinese investment in Africa (Liu & Ge, 2018). First, China's investment base in the continent is low but is growing rapidly. Especially from 2010 to 2014, the average annual growth rate of China's investment in Africa was 25%, while the growth rate of western countries in the same period was about 10%. Second, various industries are represented. Construction, mining and manufacturing are the major sectors. In terms of the number of firms, up to 2014, China had established 3,031 foreign companies in Africa, of which 1,029 were involved in manufacturing projects (Ministry of Commerce, 2017). However, Gu (2009) argued that those figures might not capture reality. According to a senior Chinese official she interviewed, a lot of private companies do not register with local governments, and this number could be ten times more than the published figure. Third, the proportion of investment in resource-based economies has dropped significantly, and investment in non-resource-based economies has grown more rapidly. This supports the argument that China's investment in Africa does not just focus on natural resource extraction (Liu & Ge, 2018). Fourth, private enterprises have become the mainstay of China's investment in Africa. In 2002, only four out of the 21 Chinese companies investing in Africa counted by the Ministry of Commerce were private companies. In 2013, the proportion of private companies investing in Africa reached 53%. In 2017, according to a survey from the McKinsey Group, of the total Chinese investments in more than 10,000 companies in eight host countries, 90% of them were private companies (Sun, Jayaram, & Kassiri, 2017).

Types of firm ownership

Ownership has been discussed by many scholars trying to understand the nature of Chinese multinational enterprises. The simple dichotomy, SOE versus private firms, does not capture the possible options (Chen, Firth, & Xu, 2009; Gu, 2009; Ramasamy et al., 2012; Wegenast & Schneider, 2017; Xu, 2014). Chen et al. (2009) group China's listed companies into four types by tracing the identity of large shareholders: firms controlled by State Asset Management Bureau, SOEs affiliated to the central government, SOEs affiliated to local government, and private investors.

Ramasamy et al. (2012) merged state asset managed bureaux with SOEs affiliated to local government on the grounds that the former includes FDI by provincial or city governments. Furthermore, Kaplinsky and Morris (2009) argued that nuanced qualifications are required for the terms 'state-owned' and 'private' as the boundary between them is not clear, a unique feature of Chinese economic development. They explain that many 'state-owned enterprises' act as channels for private gain: profits are partially captured by key individuals who are not official owners of the companies. Similarly, the returns and decisions of many apparent 'private' companies reflect the direct decision-making power of national institutions, especially provincial governments. It is noteworthy that in China, 'private' means the state holds less than 50% of the shares. Another reality is that government officials might also have their own companies but in a 'private capacity' (Kaplinsky & Morris, 2009, p. 552). They make use of guanxi (关系) connections (Ip, 2009) through their government positions. Nolan uses 'ownership maze' and 'vaguely defined property rights' to explain the characteristics of such a situation (Nolan, 2004, p. 169). This inevitably increases the difficulties for scholars who are not used to such arrangements when studying Chinese enterprises.

Chinese state-owned companies were the pioneers in entering Africa. They are usually larger and enjoy greater support from the central or local government compared to private companies. It is easy to overlook the fact that the 'state' is not a single entity (Xu, 2014). Several government agencies promote China's participation in Africa, each with its own mission. For example, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Africa identifies the national interest and makes a connection with the local government, cooperating with the Ministry of Commerce. The State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission was established in 2003 to be responsible for managing and increasing the value of state assets. It is also the owner of central SOEs. State banks such as the China Development Bank and the Export-Import Bank are charged with assisting Chinese enterprises to expand overseas. Apart from helping with infrastructure projects, China Development Bank also created an independent subsidiary in 2007 to encourage and support Chinese enterprises to invest in Africa: the China–Africa Development Fund. This Fund's investments include in agriculture, infrastructure, manufacturing, industrial park and resource development.

Some scholars believe that state ownership is harmful to listed companies (Wei, Xie, & Zhang, 2005). However, according to Chen et al. (2009), SOEs actually have better performance. There are, of course, all sorts of problems about the definition and measurement of performance. Given this caveat, their research suggests that SOEs owned by central government perform best, followed by SOEs owned by local giovernment. Private firms are not superior to SOEs but are slightly better than state asset management bureau organisations. But SOEs also have relatively more operational constraints compared with private companies (Chen et al., 2009): For example, while private companies usually pay attention to immediate interests and ignore their social responsibilities, central SOEs are usually required to incorporate 'corporate social responsibilities' (CSR) into their plans (Xu, 2014). So why are there complaints about the 'bad' behaviours of Chinese SOE – such as corruption, human and labour rights violations, environmental pollution and even crimes? Compared with the central government, the provincial and local governments seem to pay less attention and are less enthusiastic about China–Africa relations (Gu, 2009).

To understand the contradiction between inappropriate behaviours and the objectives of the central government, Xu (2014) examined large central SOEs in the resources and infrastructure sectors. Surprisingly, she found that the central government in Beijing seems to have limited control of large SOEs, let alone those small enterprises affiliated to provincial or local government. When competing with large SOEs for projects, provincial SOEs may conflict with Beijing's strategic goals, but the central government has limited capacity to even monitor, let alone control, provincial or local enterprises. Besides, the commitment of large SOEs relies on small public and private contractors. Even though the central government encourages SOEs to 'go out', it has only tenuous control over those contractors (Xu, 2014).

Unlike large SOEs, private companies usually enter the African market by following their own path. Market-seeking motives drive them to maximise their interests (Zhang & He, 2015). According to Gu (2009), Chinese private companies in Africa usually have a 'Three-Jump' pattern of enterprise growth: Trading – Investing – Building industrial parks. Most companies started trading with Africa, and it gradually led them to make the decision to invest there. From her fieldwork, Gu (2009) learned that most of these private companies initially established contacts with the Chinese diaspora in Africa before investing. Because of weak infrastructure and supply systems, some firms had to source their equipment from China or other countries, which promoted the interaction between trading and investing. Eventually, the spillover from gatherings of other Chinese enterprises encourages the decision to establish industrial parks. So far, there are more than 100 industrial parks built by Chinese firms in Africa, most of them still in construction (Zhang & Wang, 2017).

China's FDI in Africa does not come equally from all regions of the country. 'China's private firms are highly concentrated in origin, as the majority come from several Chinese provinces and coastal regions: primarily Zhejiang, Guangdong, Fujian, Jiangsu, and Shandong' (Gu, 2009, p. 575). Among all the provinces in China, Zhejiang ranks first in investing in Africa. Up to 2014, there were 464 enterprises from Zhejiang province invested in Africa with 459 projects. The total investment was more than $1.4 billion (US dollars). As mentioned previously, private firms establish contacts with the Chinese diaspora in Africa before investing. This gives firms from Zhejiang province an advantage since they have traditionally had a large number of business merchants in both China and abroad, called *zheshang* (浙商) in Chinese. It is also one of the five provincial business groups (Zhejiang, Guangdong, Fujian, Jiangsu and Shandong) in

China. In Europe, people adopting a racist stereotype call them 'Eastern Jews' (Li, 2016, p. 7). Building an industrial park is one of their important business modes for large enterprises in Africa. In addition, they also form a strategic alliance with African companies by technology transfer. Entrepreneurial spirit might be the internal cause for the *zheshang*'s success, but it is also because of the external support from the provincial government. The Department of Commerce in Zhejiang province provides strategic consulting, personnel training and legal aid to support firms to 'go out'. For example, in the 'Outline of the 13th Five-Year Plan for the National Economic and Social Development of the Province' published by the Zhejiang government in February 2016, it emphasises its participation in giant projects in Africa such as Congo-Brazzaville Potash Fertilizer Production Base and China Strategy Holdings/Nigeria Oregon Industrial Park.

Voices about Chinese FDI in Africa

National leaders and opinion leaders in Africa generally embrace the Chinese model and welcome Chinese investment in Africa (Adisu et al., 2016), encapsulated by Nigerian human rights activist Ndubisi Obiorah:

> Ndubisi told me that part of him welcomed China's interest: "You remember," he said, "a few years ago, the Economist did a cover story on Africa: 'The Failed Continent.' My friends and I, we talked about that for weeks. It was depressing: 'Africa, the failed continent!' And now China comes, and they are talking about business, about investment, about win-win cooperation." He smiled a bit ruefully: "Who knows? Maybe this change will be good for Africa."
>
> (Brautigam, 2009, p. 2)

China wins a great amount of credibility among African authorities for two reasons. First, as a developing country, it shows the world its success in fast economic development and reduction of poverty (Brautigam, 2009). Second, from the perspective of locals 'China has an advantage of not having a colonial hangover' (Brautigam, 2009, p. 10). Overall, there seems to be no conclusion to the debate about whether the cooperation of China and Africa is win–win or win–lose. However, partly owing to the deep involvement of the Chinese government in FDI in Africa, there is increasing concern about the nature of Chinese investment in Africa. Ado and Su (2016) critically assessed 41 academic journal papers examining China's presence in Africa from 2001 to 2011 and found that a great deal of work shows negative results, particularly with regard to the local economic development and social development. For example, China is selling manufacturing products with very competitive prices in African markets which, it has been argued, has contributed to the deindustrialisation of Africa (Mlambo et al., 2016). Specifically, it leads to the closure of factories, unemployment and low-income issues. According to Alden (2006), in South Africa, because of Chinese competition in the textile sector, 60,000 workers are unemployed directly and 200,000 indirectly. In Nigeria, such numbers reach 350,000.

In addition, 'bad behaviour' on the part of Chinese SOEs in Africa has been reported, such as labour rights violations, environmental pollution, and criminal activity (Xu, 2014). Other critiques have focussed on aid projects; with a noninterference policy from the Chinese government, they have been accused of ignoring human rights abuses in some countries (Mlambo et al., 2016). Chinese MNEs have been accused of using prison labourers or bringing a great number of unskilled Chinese labourers to Africa, leaving limited job opportunity for local employees (Ajakaiye, 2009). Although such information might be anecdotal and biased (Ajakaiye, 2009), some academics and western media tend to perceive China's presence in Africa as neocolonial (Jauch, 2011).

However, Ado and Su (2016) argue that there seems to be a lack of empirical evidence to support such negative views. Most of those views come from low-quality journals and journalists in the business press or magazines (Wang, 2012). According to Ado and Su (2016), at that date no specialised IB journal had published any paper with interest in China's presence in Africa. Instead, most papers are published in Chinese or African journals with no international ranking nor worldwide accessibility. Reports from journalists are argued to be prejudicial and unreliable and based on anecdotal information. They are mainly western-centre writing for those audiences who feel threatened by the Chinese economy (Ademola, Bankole, & Adewuyi, 2009).

Few studies have identified any positive effects from China's presence in Africa. Donou-Adonsou and Lim (2018) found that Chinese FDI improved the standard of living in Africa between 2003 to 2012. In terms of income, the effect of Chinese FDI in Africa is nearly twice as large as that of American FDI. While some scholars claim that Chinese MNEs use large numbers of expatriates and rarely employ local workers or offer training to local staff, Agbebi (2018) found positive results from an in-depth qualitative study of Huawei. As a part of its CSR policies, Huawei has launched education and training programmes for both employees and non-employees in African countries: for example, *1000 Girls in ICT* and *ICT For Change-Nigeria 2000 Youth ICT Training*. In the former programme, successful trainees at the final stage were sent to the headquarters in Shenzhen, China, for a one-week training session. So far, more than 50,000 people have been trained at Huawei's training centre in Abuja, Nigeria. It is important to note that, as a telecommunication giant, Huawei is not representative of most of Chinese MNEs in Africa. However, it at least shows us the determination of Chinese firms to engage in local development by following the central government's initiatives.

There also remains contrary opinions of China's presence in Africa among locals, especially among local governments, local academics and media. Makoye (2014) warns African countries to be careful, as China is using them as testing grounds for products they might not be able to sell elsewhere. Local consumers complain about the poor quality of Chinese goods. They label those goods 'Zhing Zhong' and 'Fong Kong' in Zimbabwe and South Africa, respectively (Agbebi, 2018). A study by Manyeruke (2006) revealed that Chinese goods of poor quality have higher replacement rates than local products from the perspective of Zimbabwean female consumers, with some products even asking for 'no guarantee', 'no refund' and 'no return'.

Companies with different ownerships embrace different motives when they enter new markets. Ownerships of Chinese companies are complex but crucial for understanding firms' overall strategies. Van Tulder (2015) also pointed out that different ownership structures create different questions to those who manage the organisations, which are poorly addressed in academia. Motives are inevitably associated with the companies' internationalisation, such as why and how IB activities are organised and operated (Benito, 2015). To understand companies' strategic motives will help us to gain a deeper understanding of Chinese organisations and their activities in Africa. Having focused on China's FDI in Africa and the nature of firms engaging in Africa and their motivations, we now turn to cultural aspects that may impact on the nature of this engagement and the implications for HRM policies and practices.

The impacts of traditional culture on HRM in China and Africa

Confucianism has received attention in the management literature related to China (Xing, Liu, Tarba, & Cooper, 2016; Yang, 2012; Yao, Arrowsmith, & Thorn, 2016). Influenced by Confucianism, China embraces a high collectivism culture (Hofstede, 2001). It works together with particularism, paternalism and authoritarianism to shape a Chinese style of people management (Farh & Cheng, 2000; Ip, 2009). Since group and collective interests are above individual interests, individual well-being is only realised as a family, or as group goals are fulfilled. In this sense, equality of employees might not be recognised in a firm since collectivism denies independent value to the individual (Ip, 2009). Firms might sacrifice employees' rights for the interests of the company (Xu, 2014). Family collectivism indicates similar ideas of self-sacrifice for family needs.

Externally, bids for public projects, big commercial deals or loans from state banks may be won through guanxi (Ip, 2009). Internally, paternalism is associated with authoritarianism: transferred from the family to the firm level, it reflects the authority of leaders in a hierarchical relationship, reflecting high power distance (Hofstede, 2001; House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004). In this situation, employees may find it difficult to express their ideas freely and honestly (Ip, 2009).

Scholars have compared Confucianism with *ubuntu* in the African tradition, arguing that the two cultures share some similarities, which might have significant implications for HRM practice (Horwitz, 2015; Jackson & Horwitz, 2018; Xing et al., 2016). Ubuntu is an old practice but one that has been introduced as a new management concept to improve labour coordination in organisations since the 1990s (Mbigi, 1997). Its core ideology is ubuntu ungamntu ngabanye abantu, which means people are people through other people (Karsten & Illa, 2005; Mbigi, 1997). It indicates that people are defined through community and society, providing a solid philosophical base for the community concept of management (Karsten & Illa, 2005; Khoza, 1994). The humaneness of ubuntu appears to be close to Ren (仁，humanity) of Confucianism (Jackson, 2014; Jackson & Horwitz, 2018). 'Treating others as you would like to be treated; never imposing upon others what you dislike yourself (己所不欲，勿施于人)' (The Analects，论语). Both cultures evince high collectivism (Horwitz, 2015; Xing et al., 2016) and both emphasise the importance of connection (*guanxi*, 关系) within groups and communities. If African and Chinese traditions share similar values, Chinese MNEs in Africa may confront fewer problems in people management.

But the reality is that Chinese enterprises in Africa have been criticised by both media and scholars for their ignorance of humanity (Jackson & Horwitz, 2018). One possible reason might be that the group boundary has been ignored in such a situation. Ren might only apply to in-group members and those with Chinese guanxi; in the African ubuntu tradition, Chinese managers and colleagues are conceived as out-group members as well (Jackson & Horwitz, 2018), although Mutabazi (2002) argues that ubuntu applies to strangers to African communities as well. Also, Ren is just one aspect of Confucianism. Chinese managers might choose to sacrifice local employees' interests and needs for the benefits of the company when there are conflicts between Ren and other ideologies. It is still unclear whether or not the cultural synergies between Chinese expatriates and African employees proposed by Jackson and Horwitz (2018) strengthen friendship and cooperation and lead to mutual cooperation and learning at the organisational level.

While culture may be reflected in managerial philosophy and practice (Yang, 2012), it is important to note that culture is dynamic. Chinese contemporary culture is more than Confucianism. It is a combination of traditional and modern ideologies (Yao et al., 2016) resulting from Confucianism, socialism and capitalism (Yang, 2012). It is not surprising to observe strong capitalist influences in cosmopolitan cities such as Beijing and Shanghai or more individualistic values from young employees because of the 'culture invasion' from western countries (Yang, 2012). Similarly, ubuntu itself is not able to represent modern African culture (Horwitz, 2015; Horwitz, Kamoche, & Chew, 2002). Despite the influence of colonialism, Africa is also a continent with many diverse cultures. Both Confucianism and *ubuntu* are helpful for us to understand part of the story but are not able to show the whole picture.

IHRM strategies of Chinese companies

Within this complex and dynamic framework of Chinese investment in Africa, we focus on the controversial HRM strategies of Chinese investors. In order to understand these, we need to review briefly the development of HRM in China. HRM in China is a hybrid of modern and traditional management practices (Warner & Warner, 2008), which has undergone several transitional stages (Zhao & Du, 2012). A wide variety of ownership patterns emerged in the transition from a planned (command) economy to a market socialist one, generating significant changes in HRM (Shen & Edwards, 2004). One of the most notable changes was moving away from central job allocation and lifetime employment: the 'iron rice bowl' (铁饭碗) (Shen & Edwards, 2004; Warner, 2008; Zhu, 2018). There has been a transformation towards strategic HRM policies on the part of many businesses, achieved by learning and adapting western HRM systems to the context of China (Zhao & Du, 2012), but the degree of adaptation varies depending on the ownership and size of the organisation (Warner & Warner, 2008).

International staffing approach

These changes have impacted the highly controversial issue of labour in China's investment in Africa. There have been complaints, in particular, about SOEs importing Chinese employees rather than creating job opportunities for locals. This seems to be the case for about half the labour in the construction industry (Xu, 2014). This issue attracted the attention of the central government. Former President Hu Jintao promised that the Chinese MNEs in Africa would increase the employment of local labour at the 5th Ministerial Conference of the Forum of China–Africa Cooperation in 2012. However, it is unclear to what extent the promise has been kept considering the central government's limited control capacity (Xu, 2014).

The high usage of local employees does not necessarily lead to high-quality human resource management. Some small firms pay local employees less than suggested by the Chinese government (Xu, 2014). Such profit-maximisation behaviour creates negative images of Chinese firms in Africa. As one Chinese businessman in Africa described it, most local African people could not distinguish between state-owned companies or private companies; they only know you are Chinese (Gu, 2009). But private companies also expressed their embarrassment. Theoretically, the Chinese government is willing to work with private sectors in Africa to implement their policies. But few private firms feel included in reality in the overall project and strategy (Gu, 2009).

The paradox is that private firms are usually accused of not following the central government's strategic goals, neither paying attention to China–Africa relations nor interested in embracing CSR (Gu, 2009; Xu, 2014). However, compared to SOEs, they seem to have a much higher rate of employing local people. Some of them have more than 90% Africans in their workforces. For example, Haitian Suitcase and Baggage Company in Nigeria has around 93% of local employees, and the Songlin Company in Ghana has 91% (Gu, 2009). Considering the high costs of bringing workers from China, such as the higher wages, visa fees, accommodation, passages home, etc., these investors do not believe it is a wise decision to use a large number of Chinese expatriates (Kamoche & Siebers, 2015).

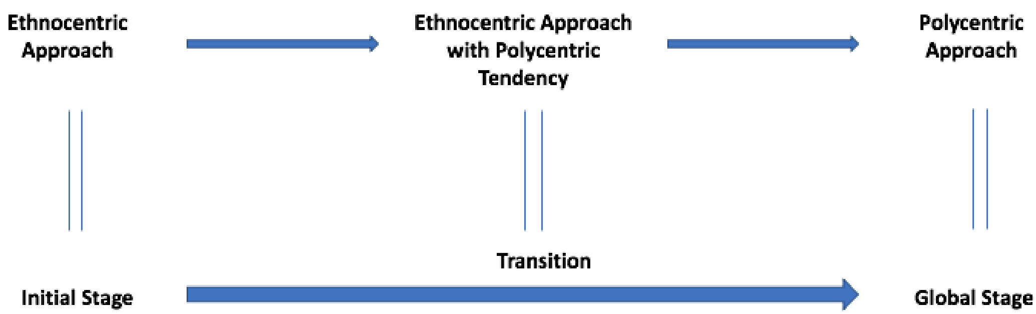
For managerial positions, of course, they are more willing to deploy Chinese employees because of the required level of skills, cultural differences, language issues and their ability to bridge subsidiary-headquarters relations. Chinese MNEs tend to adopt an ethnocentric approach to international staffing, with all of the key positions being filled by parent company nationals (PCNs) in both parent companies and subsidiaries (Zhong, Zhu, & Zhang, 2015). The number of expatriates in Chinese MNEs is considerably larger than those in American and European MNEs and even exceeds the number in Japanese MNEs, which are known for their ethnocentric approaches (Zheng & Smith, 2018). Gadzala (2010) points out that Chinese MNEs usually adopt ethnocentric approaches which place PCNs in key executive positions in subsidiaries (Horwitz et al., 2002; Zhong et al., 2015).

The major advantage of using such an approach is the convenience of communication with, and control of, the subsidiaries it provides. Since most Chinese firms have limited experience in foreign countries, it is difficult for them to trust local people, with different languages, culture and habits (Feng & Jacques, 2016). Thus, they assign a number of expatriates to manage their subsidiaries abroad. But this practice might arouse discontent among host country nationals (HCNs) and lead to a high turnover in subsidiaries as few management development opportunities are provided for local employees (Shen, 2006; Shen & Edwards, 2004).

Shen (2006) argues that changes in international staffing approaches, especially a change from the ethnocentric approach to the polycentric approach, are influenced by international experience, with international experience acting in a catalytic role rather than a determinate one. MNEs with some international experience might give certain decision-making autonomy to subsidiaries and hire predominantly HCNs: a polycentric approach. Zhu (2018) found her case-study subsidiary of a Chinese bank in Australia officially adopted a polycentric approach to staffing, but in practice the locals it employed were primarily from a Chinese ethnic background. Khan et al. (2018) found a similar thing for Chinese MNEs in the UK. These boundary spanners, ethnic locals or self-initiated expatriates living in the host country (Furusawa & Brewster, 2018), play an intermediary role between headquarters (HQ) and the subsidiaries, facilitating coordination and ensuring more adaptable HRM systems in the subsidiaries. The strategy avoids problems of unfamiliarity with culture and language, high labour cost of PCNs and potentially high turnover of HCNs. But it might also create a communication gap between HQ and subsidiaries (Shen & Edwards, 2004). There are fewer such potential boundary-spanning Chinese in Africa than there are in Australia or the UK.

Another frequently used approach in Chinese MNEs is an ethnocentric staffing approach but with a strong polycentric tendency (Shen & Edwards, 2004). Companies assign expatriates to fill executive management positions in subsidiaries but fill middle-management roles with HCNs. This approach can be viewed as a result of the transition identified by Shen (2006).

Figure 4.1 Possible transition of international staffing policy in Chinese MNEs



One problem in expatriation studies is that there is no clear boundary of levels among expatriates. Most scholars refer only to those who possess managerial positions as expatriates; others include highly qualified specialists. Since most of the research has been conducted on assigned expatriates, who usually possess senior positions or high pay, it is taken for granted that expatriates are high status. McNulty and Brewster (2019) categorised three levels of expatriates, namely high-status expatriates (top management), middle-status expatriates (professionals) and low-status expatriates (such as construction workers and drivers) and that may be relevant, given the larger numbers of expatriates in some Chinese operations in Africa.

Chinese expatriates in subsidiaries

There is an extensive literature on the roles that expatriates play in the internationalisation of MNEs. Much of it repeats, or is based on, the three main objectives identified in the classic text by Edström and Galbraith (1977): filling skills gaps, coordination and control, and employee development. Cooke (2014) argues that Chinese MNEs use expatriates in Africa, rather than HCNs, because they share similar culture and language with Chinese managers; they are more willing to work long hours or work overtime in order to finish tasks before a deadline; they are generally highly skilled and can deal with multiple tasks; they are easy to manage as they usually live in the same compound; and they are less likely to quit the job or adopt a confrontational approach when handling disagreements with the management.

Shen (2006) concluded that Chinese MNEs in the United Kingdom usually localised HRM practices such as training, performance appraisals and employee relations while centralising recruitment, selection and reward, and compensation. In contrast, Cooke (2012) found Huawei is good at using local agencies for recruitment in its overseas operations. This outsourcing enables Huawei to leverage the expertise needed to effectively recruit local employees. Moreover, subsidiaries are able to develop rapidly without the need to build a full in-house HRM department. Similarly, ZTE uses agencies to help design HRM strategy, policies, procedure, performance management and even the employee Handbook (Cooke, 2012).

Subsidiaries usually adopt distinct management approaches for expatriates and local employees. For example, expatriates' performance is assessed by HQ with assistance from subsidiaries, while HCN's performance is assessed by the subsidiary HRM department (Zhu, 2018). The selection criteria for PCNs focuses on morality and peer opinion, but the one for HNCs is mainly concerned with technical skills and experience (Shen et al., 2005). This is easy to understand as most PCNs are assigned expatriates, and they are already employees in the parent companies, which means they should already meet the requirements for hard skills. Shen et al. (2005) found companies in the UK provided a higher salary to local employees than competitor businesses but fewer training and development opportunities. However, Zhu (2018) observed that MNEs in Australia use significant amounts of in-house and external training, because government policy in Australia demands 1.5% to 2% of payroll be spent on training. Zhu explained that a host country effect together with a dominance effect (global best practice) shapes the HRM practices of emerging market MNEs operating in developed countries, which can override the country-of-origin effect. We examine four issues related to Chinese expatriates that have been debated in the literature: family, selection, compensation and training and development.

Family. One important element affecting international assignments is the family (Yao, 2014). On the one hand, Chinese people accepting an international assignment may sometimes be motivated by the family's welfare and reputation; on the other hand, the responsibility of taking care of parents, especially for the generation under the 'One Child' policy (Yao, 2014; Yao et al., 2016) may make it difficult for people to accept international assignments. The Chinese pension system is weak, parental investment in offspring is a major expense in today's China (Yao et al., 2016) and it is socially expected that those offspring will take care of aged parents. For couples, most assignments in Africa require the expatriate to leave their partner and any children behind in China, so they may not be together for many months or even years.

Selection. Chinese MNEs favour internal recruitment and promotion and usually adopt preselection processes rather than post advertisements openly (Shen & Edwards, 2006). Otherwise, Chinese MNEs follow the same selection method for expatriates as their western counterparts. They use both internal and external recruitment, but the latter only happens when there is difficulty in finding suitable candidates inside the company (Feng & Jacques, 2016). Personal relationships, rather than individual ability and qualification, the phenomenon of guanxi (关系) (Ip, 2009), explain why nepotism and cronyism are not unusual among Chinese firms. In fact, Feng and Jacques (2016) find there seems always to be more candidates who are willing to be assigned to industrialised countries than is required. This is because of the attraction of the high salary, better living environment, high food safety, and so on. In addition, young employees are often ready to work in countries with 'bad conditions' in exchange for the potential improvement of both salary and position after repatriation. International assignments are usually compulsory when employees are asked, and employees who refuse might have to leave the company. However, this does not mean Chinese MNEs have no problems with selecting candidates with the right capabilities, such as the ability to speak host country languages and to adapt to the local environment. In the majority of the cases, the selection is made before the interview during 'work meetings' and the formal interview is just for assignment arrangement (Shen & Edwards, 2004), reflecting the 'coffee-machine' system that Harris and Brewster (1999) suggest is common in western MNEs.

Compensation. In terms of compensation, there is no distinct difference between Chinese MNEs and western MNEs (Feng & Jacques, 2016). Chinese MNEs usually follow a home-based policy, and the salary structure contains the base salary, foreign service inducement or hardship premium, and allowances and benefits including pension plans, medical insurance and so on (Shen, 2004). More specifically, the basic salary is determined by the parent company in China based on the number of years of employment and hierarchical levels. Foreign service inducements vary from (host) country to country, and accommodation allowances are associated with local standards (Feng & Jacques, 2016). Less commonly, a contracted package approach is used for some international assignments; a diplomatic-based approach is more hierarchy-focused; and some organisations use host-based plus home-salary policies, where expatriates receive dual salaries from both home and host countries (Shen, 2004).

Training and development. Training expenses are regarded as costly and have been tightly controlled in Chinese enterprises (Zhu, 2018). Chinese MNEs may include language and professional knowledge development in pre-posting training but rarely offer intercultural skills, even though they are seen as potentially very helpful by expatriates (Feng & Jacques, 2016). For those who are sent to dangerous countries, safety training is also provided. Generally, Chinese managers prefer learning by observing or doing on the job (Zhang & Fan, 2014), rather than through indoor seminars.

Managing Chinese expatriates in Africa

Expatriate management has always been an outstanding issue for Chinese enterprises in Africa. In the beginning, as Zhang and Wang (2017) describe, in TEDA (Tianjin Economic-Technological Development Area)/Suez Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone, the management team tended to use assigned expatriates. The contract for working abroad was usually three years long. After three years, they would return to work for the company in China, and new expatriates would be hired. But this is very costly, and work transfer between old and new expatriates causes some inefficiencies. Later, they adopted a rotation system. Two groups of people are hired to do similar jobs both in China and Egypt. Cooperation and communication between them are enhanced. For a certain period of time, the employees from China and Egypt exchange jobs. To some extent, this helps sustain the stability of employees, but other problems appeared at the same time. Employees have to rotate between China and Africa frequently, and they do not have a stable working environment, which causes problems in both individual health and families. In the long term, staff turnover increases under such circumstance. Meanwhile, the rotation system limits the promotion of local employees and, inevitably, Egyptian staff are not satisfied with this system.

In general, Chinese expatriates are socially isolated, living in a compound and even being equipped with a chef from China to take care of their diet, so they have few contacts with local people (Cooke, Wang et al., 2015). Such discriminant treatment not only makes it harder for expatriates to adjust but also creates more conflicts between HCNs and PCNs. One senior manager reported by these authors also expressed his helplessness in such a situation:

> We do believe that integration and harmonization are important between the expatriates and the local workforce. But our priority at this stage is our expatriates' personal safety. If any serious [security] accidents happen to our expatriates, then the Chinese government and international media will make a big fuss about it. That will have a very bad impact on our overseas operations

(Cooke, Wang et al., 2015, p. 2755)

So, some Chinese MNEs tend to adopt semi-military management with centralised control and strict disciplines (Cooke, Wang et al., 2015; Rui, Zhang, & Shipman, 2017). For example, there are checks on the time that expatriates return to their accommodation every night, to prevent them from drinking or gambling, which might affect working attitudes and productivity (Rui et al., 2017). Moreover, companies might transfer money and bonuses directly to the account of their partners or other family members, so that they have little money for gambling (Rui et al., 2017). It is believed that such a management style will not help these firms to attract, manage and retain the younger generation, who can find good jobs at home and might not be willing to work in harsh conditions, sacrificing their family life, though perhaps, influenced by western culture, the younger generation is more individualised and might challenge traditional corporate culture or 'inhuman' traditions (Rui et al., 2017).

One reason for the different narratives about expatriate management styles is that scholars rarely differentiate the level of expatriates. The two distinctive expatriate management styles mentioned above (semi-military management vs non-semi-military management) may be applied to different hierarchical levels of expatriates. For example, the rotating system is usually adopted to management middle-status and high-status expatriates, such as technicians and top management teams, while centralised control and strict disciplines are only applied to low-status expatriates such as factory workers.

Labour issues are challenging for Chinese MNEs in Africa. Skill shortages seem to be a constant problem in nearly all industrial parks and economic zones, for both managerial talents and front-line staff (Zhang & Wang, 2017). Most Chinese companies lack talent cultivation and supply systems. Thus, Huajian Group is trying to build a vocational school in its industrial park in Ethiopia. In addition, they also organise visits for key technical staff from China to Ethiopia, giving instruction and training for local employees (Zhang & Wang, 2017). Most of the African countries lack effective education systems, and training local employees for work is expensive.

Usually, it takes months or even longer to train them before they can start the job. Meanwhile, there are always shortages of training centres and even trainers in host countries. In addition, African employees have a strong awareness of safeguarding rights and in some countries trade unions have a significant influence (Wood & Brewster, 2007), which leads to a higher cost in the promotion, salary increase and dismissal systems compared to the same situations in China.

One of the most serious critiques of Chinese enterprises in Africa is related to labour issues. It has been argued, for instance, that Chinese MNEs bring large numbers of semi-skilled and unskilled workers from home, decreasing the employment rate of local people (Cooke, 2014; Cooke, Wood, & Horwitz, 2015); and that they provide minimum labour standards or violate national employment laws in Africa (Cooke, Wang et al., 2015). Whether anecdotal or real, such stories are easily found in the western media. But there are few scholarly empirical studies that allow us to develop any deep understanding of the phenomena. For Chinese MNEs in Africa, their HRM is usually less strategic and more administrative: focused on low-cost policies and short-term plans (Cooke, Wood et al., 2015; Horwitz, 2015; Wood et al., 2014). This might be attributed to the fact that China is a latecomer in internationalisation and lacks requisite experience. Thus, they usually adopt a trial-and-error manner; even at the risk that it might destroy their reputation (Cooke, Wang et al., 2015). It is unclear whether Chinese subsidiaries are any different from western MNEs' subsidiaries in this regard.

It could be argued that the lack of qualified workers from host countries gives Chinese MNEs no choice but to use expatriates in some cases. In general, the shortage of human resources in Africa exists at various levels from craft skilled workers to managers, while the few skilled and well-educated ones often seek opportunities abroad because of the limited choices in their domestic markets (Cooke, Wood et al., 2015). From the perspective of some Chinese firms, their main interest in Africa is to overcome tariff barriers, so they have less interest in accessing existing human and material resources (Wood et al., 2014).

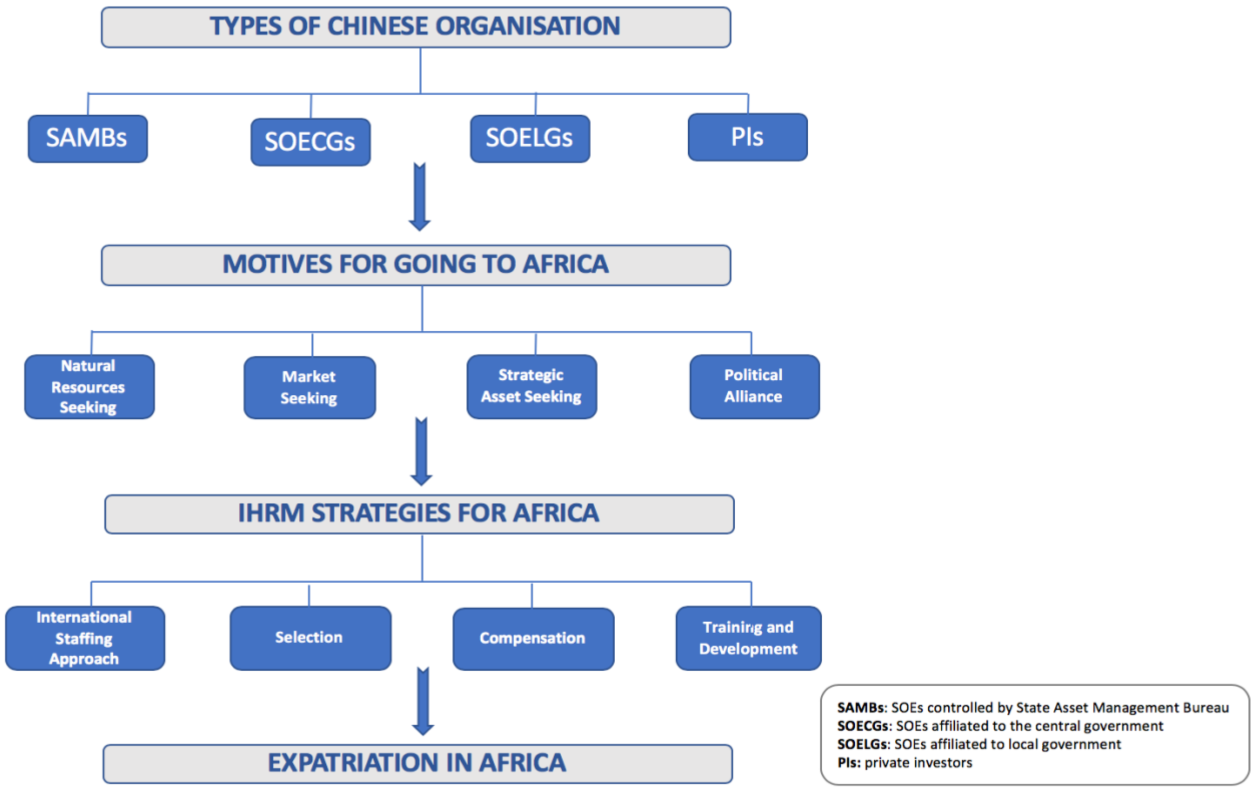
As emerging economies, India and Brazil take a completely different approach to FDI in Africa, which leads to different HRM practices. Driven by market-seeking motives, India seems to make greater use of local workers and unskilled workers (Wood et al., 2014; Jackson & Horwitz, 2018). Brazil is considered to be the best example of contributing to education programmes and infrastructure development in Africa (Wood et al., 2014). In addition, Brazilian expatriates have considerable advantages in adjustment and social connections in Lusophone Africa because of the strong cultural affinities (Wood et al., 2014).

Towards a conceptual framework of Chinese expatriation in Africa

Based on our analysis of the literature, we offer a framework of expatriate management of Chinese MNEs in Africa (Figure 4.2). In general, three main motives have been identified: natural resource-seeking, political alliances, and market-seeking (Dunning, 1993; Dunning & Narula, 1995). Two other potential motives for MNEs to invest in a new country were also identified by Dunning, namely strategic asset-seeking (Myer, 2015), specifically applied to emerging market MNEs, and efficiency seeking. It does seem that Chinese MNEs invest in Africa to gain strategic assets, such as increasing their managerial expertise or ability to operate internationally (Drogendijk & Blomkvist, 2013), and that this is more important for Chinese SOEs (Ramasamy et al., 2012). Scholars (Buckley, Cross, Tan, Xin, & Voss, 2008; Drogendijk & Blomkvist, 2013) generally believe, however, that the efficiency-seeking motive is less relevant to Chinese MNEs than to more mature and larger global MNEs. Since China is not short of low-cost labour, the efficiency-seeking motive might be of less importance. Such statements from nearly ten years ago might not be applicable to today’s China and today’s Chinese MNEs and need further investigation.

Even through both SOEs and private companies invest for natural resources, the private companies seem to be more likely to offer value-added services (Ramasamy et al., 2012). It is interesting to note that despite the fact that provincial SOEs are controlled by local governments, their motivations are more diversified and similar to the private sector. We argue that both ownership and strategic motives fundamentally decide HRM strategies of expatriates from all levels.

Figure 4.2 Expatriate management of Chinese MNEs in Africa associated with ownership and motive



Research opportunities

The establishment of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) as well as the announcement of The Belt and Road Initiatives indicate that the ties between China and Africa will be tighter in the future. With an increasing number of Chinese firms investing in Africa, it is believed that the underexplored phenomenon of China's presence in Africa will attract more attention from scholars and particularly IHRM scholars. So far, excluding those in the current volume, there have been only a few qualitative studies (Agbebi, 2018; Cooke, 2014; Kamoche & Siebers, 2015; Rui et al., 2017; Xing et al., 2016) and quantitative studies (Nabil Khodeir, 2016) examining HRM related issues in Africa. Others are conceptual discussion or review work

(Jackson, 2014; Jackson & Horwitz, 2018; Jackson, Louw, & Zhao, 2013). We suggest future research opportunities.

Firstly, at the organisational level, company ownership and FDI motivation should be taken into consideration, alongside industry, in understanding firms' HRM practice and policies, including selection, compensation, training, and so forth. Ownerships of Chinese companies are complex but crucial for understanding firms' overall strategies. For example, as noted, there are three types of SOEs, and each might carry different motivations and have different strategies. In particular, SOEs directly managed by provincial governments are generally more profit-driven than other types. For future research, scholars might consider a more detailed division of ownership rather than making a generalisation of all SOEs.

Secondly, country-specific studies are appropriate to investigate Chinese MNEs in Africa. Much of the existing literature focuses on Africa at a macro level, rather than paying attention to its regional or national differences. Adisu and his colleagues (2016) suggest that country-based analyses might be necessary as each African country has its own unique history and culture. Chinese firms might have different driving forces or investment strategies in different regions of Africa, and there might be key motivational differences that vary from country to country.

Thirdly, at the individual level, future research will benefit from differentiating the different status levels of expatriates. Management practices are different for top management teams, professionals and lesser skilled labours. Low-status workers, in particular, are frequently overlooked in current research. Identity-related investigations will be helpful to study how expatriates from different status levels adjust in a foreign culture.

Fourthly, there is more research needed in the wider expatriate field on expatriates from the new generation. Pereira, Malik, Howe-Walsh, Munjal, and Hirekhan (2017) conducted a longitudinal study of Generation Y expatriates, young, highly qualified and mobile, in an Indian MNE. This may be a more practical problem for HRM in Chinese MNEs. In particular, Chinese society has undergone tremendous changes economically with the reform and opening-up policy.

Those who were born post-80 (八零后) and post-90 (九零后）may, it is argued, be fundamentally different from their parents as they have grown up in a socialistic market economy and are strongly influenced by western countries with their individualistic values (Yang, 2012). In addition, the challenges of globalisation and new technology development might lead the new generation to have a different perception of their jobs (Zhu & Warner, 2018). So far, there have only been limited numbers of papers on these new generation employees in China (Ren, Xie, Zhu, & Warner, 2018; Zhu & Warner, 2018), and none that have considered their role in MNEs. Future research could focus on how such people perceive international assignments in Africa; what they might bring to the future relationship and cooperation between Africa and China; and how they might be dfferent from previous generation expatriates in Africa.

In-depth qualitative studies are strongly suggested at this stage of our understanding of the HRM strategies of Chinese MNEs in Africa. Empirical studies are urgently needed to explore what is happening there. Ethnography, which has now built a relatively well-established record for researching business organisations (Garsten & Nyqvist, 2013), might offer unique advantages for such work. There are two reasons ethnography becomes valuable in business studies: contextual-orientation and emic positioning, or providing an insiders' point of view (Ladner, 2016). The unwritten rules about how things work in practice are usually not verbalised and can only be discovered by patient observation in actual sites (Myers, 2013). So, ethnographic studies might help researchers to gain a deeper understanding of how Chinese MNEs manage their employees in Africa and how their expatriates manage their work and life in that context.

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[1] We adopt here the definition of expatriates in McNulty and Brewster (2017, p. 46): expatriates are: "legally working individuals who reside temporarily in a country of which they are not a citizen in order to accomplish a career-related goal, being relocated abroad either by an organization, by self-initiation or directly employed within the host-country".