China has gone from being a marginal to a leading power in Africa in just over two decades. Its striking ascendancy in the continent is commonly thought to have been primarily driven by economic interests, especially resources like oil. This book argues instead that politics defines the ‘new era’ of China–Africa relations, and examines the importance of politics across a range of areas, from foreign policy to debt, development and the Xi Jinping incarnation of the China model.

Going beyond superficial depictions of China’s engagement as predatory or benign, this book explores how Africa is – and isn’t – integral to China’s global ambitions, from the Belt and Road Initiative to strategic competition with the United States. It demonstrates how African actors constrain, shape and use China’s engagement for their own purposes. As China seeks to protect its more established interests and Chinese citizens, it also shows how security has become a particularly notable new area of engagement.

This innovative book provides a comprehensive and up-to-date guide to contemporary China–Africa relations. It will be essential reading for students and scholars working on global politics, development and international relations.

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