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# BRICS in a world at crossroads?

Siphamandla Zondi (iD), Norman Sempijja (iD) & Thulisile Mphambukeli (iD)
Editors

The cross-roads that have been crystallized by global positions on the war in Ukraine reignite the Cold War. The West is united in asserting, sometimes crudely, its geopolitical positions in international affairs. It has over the past decade and a half decided to bring Russia into West's fold in defence of a US - anchored western international order. Russia has also decided to fight back and assert its independence from this order. In the process, the west has threatened the strategic security of Russia and Russia has also flouted the national sovereignty of its western neighbours that the West tries to use to bring Russia into submission. The expansion of NATO westward, like its expansion south with the invasions of Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya is not an innocent expansion of a regional body but an extension of a highly problematic security complex in defence of Western dominance of the world order.

The Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) forum is one of the most significant developments of the post-Cold War era. This is so because it brought together some of the key emerging powers of this period to help define a new world order that may be in the making right now. They emerge as witnesses to the decline of the old order of bipolar (Cold War) to unipolar (post - Cold War) systems of global power. This is what has sometimes been called a uni-multipolar world to explain the dominance of the US on behalf of the West in the presence of other pillars emerging all over the world including in the global south.

The BRICS represent about half the world population and just under half of the world's gross domestic product. They account for a significant portion of world trade and investment volumes. In China and Russia, the BRICS include two of the current permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and major military powers. In Brazil, India and South Africa, it has three leading nations of the global south formations with a significant voice in changing international relations. Together BRICS countries have a major influence on what positions are taken by the non-Western world in global platforms. This applies to matters of social development, economic development, technology and innovation, and politics and security.

United in their intension to change the global power configuration by supporting the direction towards a multipolar order and determined to assert their independence from an American system of global power, the BRICS have a concerning development in Washington and other western capitals. The Russian military incursion in Ukraine in response to what it sees as imminent Ukraine

membership of NATO and the perception of Russians in Ukraine by Ukrainian nationalists has thrown BRICS into a sort of proverbial whirlwind.

In a climate where countries are being forced to support Russia or support the punishment of Russia, or the West's geopolitical position on Russia or Russia's posture on western moves towards its western border, all BRICS countries have chosen to choose neither option. They have rejected the us-against-them binary framework and decided to stand for an end to hostilities and a peaceful settlement of conflict.

The BRICS positions are a lot more united in this regard than we realize. But this unity is strategic and could be anticipated because of how the West handled the matter from the word go. The West basically told the world the options they had were Cold War-like instead of opening the possibility for countries to develop together what could be done first to prevent the war and later to end the war. They did not convene any international meeting to discuss the impending war and decide on ways to prevent it. Instead, the West wanted to lead the prevention on its own when it was conflicted as a party to the conflict. The US threatened military action if Russia invaded, France and Germany undertook a mediation with Russia whom they are fighting. They completely ignored that there are many other emerging powers not conflicted in the developments that could have mediated between Russia, the West and Ukraine. This is an astounding attitude from the West, this idea that it was the only actor that could prevent and now end the war. Kwasi Kwarteng describes how former colonial and imperial powers continue to display an audacity of self-belief that in the first place enabled them to invade, conquer and dominate large parts of the world for centuries. It is a sheer audacity that developing countries and BRICS into a non-alignment formation in this us-against-them atmosphere the West has created.

BRICS countries oppose the use of war to solve problems and want national sovereignty respected. This means they oppose the Russian incursion, but equally NATO expansion. The best way to end these is via a negotiated settlement. This dialogue will have huge implications for how a new world order is brought about. It will inevitably touch on redefining the role of superpowers in a more multipolar world. It will have to create conditions to discuss a shift from militarism to development and technological innovations as central motive forces for international relations. It will most likely set conditions for understanding a better configuration for managing world power in a manner that prevents future conflict and this could create conditions for greater regionalisation of global governance, stronger commitment to multilateral diplomacy and governance.

One can just hope that the BRICS will realise that their current position on Ukraine is of little consequence unless it is designed to catalyse a rethinking of world affairs in a manner that places the interests of peoples of the south and emerging world at the centre.

The *Journal of BRICS Studies* will dedicate itself to understanding the current and future directions of world orders and the role of BRICS as an institution and as countries in catalysing futures that make the realization of sustainable development goals more likely. This inaugural edition announces this journal and invites deliberations from all disciplines, beyond social Sciences. This edition has articles looking mainly at intra-BRICS matters including case studies on individual BRICS countries. The issues dealt with are various. There is a mixture of experienced and emerging scholars featured in this edition.

The process of getting the journal indexed in various scientific platforms is in progress. We wish to invite authors, reviewers and volunteers to help us build going forward.

On behalf of the editorial collective, I wish to thank editors, reviewers and support staff for making the launch of this journal project a success. We look forward to many productive years.

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**Editor-in-chief**    Siphamandla Zondi

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# Increased Child Labour in Brazil in the Pandemic: Myth or Reality?

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## Abstract

This article aimed to analyze the reality and changes in child labor in Brazil during the period of the pandemic caused by the Covid-19 virus and how the State dealt with this fact led to an increase in inequality and social difficulties in the country, resulting in the current situation, as well as understanding what are the possible ways to reduce this practice, increasing the rights of these children and adolescents and improving their experience. According to UNICEF (United Nations Emergency Fund for Children), globally, 8.9 million children and adolescents are at risk of being pushed into child labour by the end of 2022, thus, the ways to fight the virus used by the government may have failed with this class, since the Brazilian Federal Constitution of 1988 places it as the duty of the State, society and the family, to ensure health, education, and freedom, in addition, to protect them from any form of exploitation, cruelty, neglect, and oppression, therefore, this type of work should be decreasing rather than increasing. That being said, the research used the qualitative methodology in its development, presenting information that explains the subject, through primary and secondary sources, such as laws, articles, and news, presenting numbers and measurable information to exemplify the reality and arguments discussed in the process.

**Keywords:** Brazil. Covid-19. Child labour. Pandemic, Exploitation, Neglect, Development

## Introduction

The general objective of this article is to analyze the consequences of the pandemic caused by the Covid-19 virus in the area of child labour in Brazil and how the government is dealing with this reality. Focusing on delimiting what is child labor and the coronavirus pandemic, defining whether there was an increase in cases of exploitation of these young people in this period, and analyzing what measures were applied by the government to combat this modality in these years.

To facilitate the understanding of the topic to be debated during the research, it is necessary to understand what child labour and the coronavirus pandemic are. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), "the term "child labour" is defined as "work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential, and their dignity, and which is harmful to their physical and mental development", of this Thus, there are several movements for the protection of these people, both from organizations and the government itself, such as articles in the Brazilian Federal Constitution of 1988, which seek to define and apply the protection of children and adolescents, aiming to deprive them of this practice and protect their rights and integrity, taking article 227 as an example.

Art. 227: It is the duty of the family, society, and the State to ensure children and adolescents, with absolute priority, the right to life, health, food, education, leisure, professionalization, culture, dignity, to respect, freedom, and family and community coexistence, in addition to keeping them safe from all forms of negligence, discrimination, exploitation, violence, cruelty, and oppression. (ILO, [n.d] *apud* BRASIL:1990).

However, even with laws that prohibit this practice, in 2016 about 1.8 million children and adolescents aged 5 to 17 years were living the reality of child labour in Brazil (GOVERNO DO BRASIL: 2021), making it possible to say that this action is still widely used in the country.

In December 2019, according to a PebMed report, the first case of Covid-19 was identified in China and two months later the first infected person in Brazil was recognized. In March, the World Health Organization (WHO) defined the disease and the outbreak as a pandemic, as the cases were already present in several countries around the world.

This fact led to a global economic crisis and "several people lost their income or experienced a strong reduction in income" (PERSON: 2021), thus, several families began to need financial assistance, which influenced the practice of child labour in Brazil, which is analyzed and debated.

For the development of the article, a qualitative methodology will be applied, as it is defined as a form of descriptive research, which is developed through the collection of information from reliable sources, to explain facts, in addition to using numerical data to facilitate the visualization of some arguments of the study. Thus, bibliographic research was prepared, applying primary sources, such as laws, having the Brazilian Constitution of 1988 as an example, as well as secondary sources, such as reports and articles on the subject, which will portray the facts, exemplify the current reality and explain the measures applied by the government during this period, one of them being the article "UNICEF warns of an increase in the incidence of child labour during the pandemic in São Paulo", published by the institution itself.

Therefore, the choice of this study is aiming at how the Covid-19 virus pandemic had a worldwide influence, mainly in the Brazilian reality as a whole, but with a focus on child labour, as well as exemplifying which were the auxiliary measures taken by the federal government, seeking to understand how the current reality of the Latin country in the fight against the virus was formulated and applied.

According to the website of the government of Brazil (2021), the country has one of the best laws against child labour in the world, with strict rules that define the possible forms of legal employment, as well as those that determine the concept of child labour. According to this same source, over the years the state has shown a clear improvement in the number of cases, that is, the number of children and adolescents who are subjected to this type of work is decreasing. As mentioned earlier in the article, in 2016, 2.1 million young people experienced this reality, in 2019, this number dropped to 1.8 million. But that same year, the entire organization of the country was modified with a new obstacle, the Covid-19 virus.

The Lowy Institute group in Sydney conducted a survey that analyzed the way that more than 100 countries dealt with the coronavirus pandemic, ranking Brazil as the worst in its fight, due to its nationalist ruler, who did not support the basic protection measures proposals by the World Health Organization (WHO), such as the use of masks, confinement, and closures, thus causing more than 218,000 deaths. (NCS: 2021)

Morales (2021) quotes in her report a speech by Fore, the executive director of UNICEF, who explains that the second global lockdown directly influenced the lives of several families, because, with economic disruptions and reduced national budgets, these people are forced to take drastic measures to maintain their basic survival rights, such as food. Thus, these actions can have a direct influence on the lives of children and adolescents, modifying the number of young people who are engaged in child labour.

Thus, the paper discusses how the pandemic period changed the organization of Brazil in all its aspects, focusing on the economic issue, as the measures taken by the government to combat the virus caused the current reality experienced by all Brazilians, in this way, several families found themselves in difficult situations and needed to find ways to stay alive, even if these actions were not ideal, producing a big difference in the number of children and adolescents present in the practice of child labour and unhealthy situations. After the presentation of this content and the topic under discussion throughout the article, the themes presented will explain the definition of child labour in Brazil and the world, which is the Covid-19 pandemic, how child labour is occurring during this period, what are possible ways of solving the problem under discussion, and finally, the final considerations of the work will be made. Thus, the main questions in debate in the research are: Did child labour increase during the Covid-19 pandemic period? What actions led to this result? Is there any way to help these young people?

## Child Work: What Is It?

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), not all work can be classified as child labour, it is characterized as the type of work that deprives children of their childhood and refers to jobs that follow the characteristics described below. Child labour is any form of work performed by adolescent and children below the minimum age allowed, according with the legislation of each country (Criança Livre: [n.d]).

> It is mental, physical, social, or morally dangerous and harmful to children; It interferes with their schooling; Deprives children of the opportunity to attend school; Forces children to leave school prematurely, or Requires that school attendance be combined with work excessively long and heavy. (ILO: [n.d])

The organization also describes that under ILO Conventions No. 139 and No. 182, which define some aspects of this way of exploitation, namely:

> - Child labor is considered to be work performed by children and adolescents below the minimum age for admission to employment/work established in the country;
>
> -Hazardous work is considered the Worst Form of Child Labor and should not be performed by children and adolescents under 18 years of age. Dangerous work is defined as activities that, by their nature, or the conditions in which they are carried out, endanger the child's physical, mental, or moral well-being. These activities must be established by each country;
>
> - Slavery, human trafficking, forced labor, and the use of children and adolescents in armed conflicts, sexual exploitation, and drug trafficking are also considered the Worst Forms of Child Labor. (ILO: [n.d])

Equally worrisome are the types of work performed by children and teenagers that are often accepted by society, such as street vendors, car keepers and tour guides, making childhood work invisible, which increases their cycle of acceptance (Criança Livre: [n.d]).

In Brazil, specifically, child labour consists of survival or economic activities, whether paid or not, which are performed by children or adolescents under 16 years old, with an exception if you are an apprentice, from the age of 14 (Governo Do Brasil: 2021). In the country, any form of child labour is prohibited until the age of 14, however, between 14 and 16 years of age, work as an apprentice is legally accepted; between 16 and 18 years of age, there is partial permission for teenagers to work - however, any night work, unhealthy, considered dangerous and painful for children and teenagers

is prohibited by law (Childhood: 2019). According to the IBGE of 2015, about 2.5 million children and adolescents are in a situation of child labour in Brazil. (Bezerra: [n.d]).

Child labour in Brazil has existed since colonial Brazil when slavery was predominant, and children were seen as targets of exploitation. With the beginning of urbanization and industrialization, the activity continued, and many children became workers in factories in different fields. In addition to the country's history and culture, another factor that influences the existence of this illegal activity is poverty and lack of quality education, so the lower the family's income and educational level, the greater the chance of the child being subjected to work children (Childhood: 2019). According to UNICEF (2019), child labour has consequences for the physical and mental development of children and adolescents.

Work can limit the opportunity to be present at school and learn, that is, it ends up compromising the future of children and adolescents, reproducing situations of poverty. Furthermore, those who work against what is determined by law end up being subjected to different forms of exploitation and violence.  Child labour is a serious violation of human rights, fundamental rights, and principles at work. Child labour is recurrently a cause and effect of poverty and the absence of opportunities to develop skills; it can impact the level of development of nations and frequently leads to forced labour in adulthood (OIT: 2021).

Brazil is considered a reference in the international community in terms of efforts to prevent and eliminate child labor. Since the mid-1990s, Brazil has officially acknowledged the existence of the issue and affirmed its willingness to solve it (OIT: [n.da]) Through a graphic represented in the article on Toda Matéria website, it is possible to notice that the incidence of child labor in Brazil is higher in the states of São Paulo and Minas Gerais. Another piece of information acquired by the same graph is that the southern and southeastern regions of Brazil are the leaders in terms of child exploitation, even though they are the richest states in the country.

Despite this information, a South American country has many child protection policies to eradicate this practice, it was the "pioneer in the preparation of the list called TIP (Forbidden Child Labor), which contains the worst forms of child labour", among them are forestry, fishing, agriculture, the tobacco industry, domestic child labour, among others. (Bezerra: [n.d])

Other policies applied in Brazil to protect children and adolescents, according to Saldanha, are:

• Child and Adolescent Statute: defines the fundamental rights of children and adolescents and has municipal, state, and federal competence;

• Consolidation of Labor Laws - CLT: establishes activities that are prohibited for minors;

• Organic Law of Social Assistance - LOAS: determines a social protection system for the neediest groups of the population.

In addition to those mentioned above, the author also defines several other programs and social actions in various areas, such as in education (School Health Program); at work (Job and Income Generation Program); in health (Family Health Program), among others. Therefore, it is possible to understand that the country still has several cases of child labour even with several public policies to eradicate it, presenting a failure when applying for these laws and programs.

## The Pandemic

A pandemic can be characterized, using the WHO definition, cited in a G1 report (2020), as an epidemic that has spread across two or more continents, becoming a worldwide transmission, maintained from person to person. But not every disease that affects several countries at the same time can be considered a pandemic. An endemic disease that is in various parts of the world and is stable cannot be considered epidemic. Per example, the seasonal flu, which affects the northern hemisphere every winter; what defines a pandemic is, primarily, the analysis of the intensity of the rate of contamination in the prolonging of the disease through the WHO (Politize:2021). The Spanish flu, which happened in the year 1918 and killed more than 50 million people within a year, is an example of this definition, being considered the worst pandemic in "recent memory". (G1: 2020)

The last time the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a pandemic state was in 2009, due to the H1N1 disease, which had infected around 1 billion people in its first semester and killed thousands in its first year. Covid-19 went beyond these data (G1:2020). In December 2019, the first case of SARS-CoV2, socially known as coronavirus, was reported in China and since then cases have started to spread around the world. Two months later, the disease arrived in Brazil, and in a matter of days it made its first victim, and thus, the beginning of the disease outbreak in the country happened. (Pebmed: 2020).

As a way of trying to count and combat the spread of the virus, some protection measures were applied, including wearing a mask when you are in a public place, as it makes the risk of contagion drop by 95%; avoid agglomerations and public spaces, as social distance reduces contamination; do the test and isolate yourself when you notice any symptoms of the disease - fever, loss of smell or taste, cough or sore throat - so treatment can be started momentarily and increasing the patient's chances of getting well; get vaccinated when you have the chance so that the person will protect and immunize themselves (Schiavon: 2021).

In addition to the high number of deaths caused by the disease, totalling more than 577,000 (G1: 2021), the pandemic also drastically shook the country's economy, causing 3 million to be unemployed. This increase in the number of people who lost their jobs was due to the need and difficulty of entrepreneurs to adapt to the measures adopted to contain the virus, thus, many families lost their income and needed to look for other ways to support themselves financially (Earth: 2021).

According to the bulletin *Direito e pandemia: Ordem jurídica e sistema judiciário não foram suficientes para evitar graves violações[1],* an institutional strategy for spreading the virus occurred, promoted by the Brazilian Government under the leadership of the presidency of Republic. By withholding resources destined to covid-19, the Government hinders assistance to patients in the public network of states and municipalities. Additionally, the war against governors and mayors who try to implement measures to prevent and fight the virus, like the obligatory use of masks, is constant (Elpais:2021). Therefore, it is possible to state that the coronavirus pandemic directly affected all people, having a clear impact on the low-income group, and thus causing a change in the number of children and young people in child labour, which will be discussed below.

## Child Labor During the Pandemic

After the confirmation of the first case of Covid-19 in Brazil in February 2020, the country started to adopt some measures suggested by the World Health Organization (WHO) to reduce the spread of the virus, such as the use of masks, hand hygiene, avoid touching the nose and mouth, seek care when presenting the first symptoms, social distancing, among others (Oliveira: 2020). To combat

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1    Law and pandemic: Legal order and judicial system were not enough to prevent serious violations.

the reality of hunger and poverty generated by the pandemic, as well as contain the health crisis by maintaining social distance, reducing inequality, and injecting resources into the economy, the Brazilian government developed another protective measure, called emergency aid, in 2020 (Beghin: 2021).

However, according to *Jornal da USP* (2020), the amount of the aid, R\$ 600.00, is not enough to help the neediest and needy families, thus, this most vulnerable group would still have to leave home to work and get more income, increasing the spread of the disease and not fulfilling its function. According to Souza (2020), after recording almost 20,000 deaths of Brazilians caused by the coronavirus, eleven states in the country increased their restrictions on the issue of social isolation and applied the lockdown, which can be defined as a total closure, that is, it is a more rigid social withdrawal. Thus, it is possible to say that with isolation, families started to live together all day long and many had to stop or adapt to new ways of working to maintain themselves, changing the whole reality of a people, including children and adolescents, which intensified the risk of an increase in child labour in the country.

As explained above, child labour according to ILO Conventions No. 138 and 182 can be defined as any work that deprives children of their potential and dignity, as well as their childhood, hindering their development. Other characteristics of the same are the jobs that endanger the child's moral well-being as well as the physical and mental, being considered as the worst forms of child labour human trafficking, sexual exploitation, drug trafficking, slavery, and the use of these young people. in armed conflicts (ILO: [n.d]). Since young people were away from schools and socially distanced due to the pandemic, the danger of increasing this form of work was accentuated, as in many cases, these children and adolescents could stay at home taking care of the environment and their younger siblings while their parents are looking for a job or even exchanging cheap labour in exchange for capital to help with the family income, as reported in some complaints, according to Ribeiro (2020). The same author explained that this form of abuse can be considered as housework, which normally comprises 94.1% of girls, 73.5% of whom are black, which can cause physical, psychological, and intellectual consequences. Due to the accumulation of workloads, these young women usually drop out of school due to fatigue, in addition to the risk of sexual and physical abuse that these children experience daily, as their employers may believe that these young women are there to serve them in all ways. ways and in these cases, they use the salary and employment of the girl in question as a form of blackmail to get what they want. (Ribeiro: 2020)

Another reason for this group of people to drop out of studies during this pandemic period is the lack of access to the materials needed to monitor distance learning applied to distance learning. According to Idoeta (2020), "in all these places, there are several reports of students without equipment or internet connection, families in an increasingly fragile economic situation". The same author explains that dropping out of school can cause future problems for these people who are without support, as without schooling, it will be more difficult for them to get a qualified job in the future. This reality of change in child labour is global, according to UNICEF (2021), for the first time in two decades, there has been an increase in this modality, reaching a total of 160 million children and adolescents, presenting the risk of more young people entering this number until 2022 because of the pandemic if they do not have access to "critical social protection coverage" (UNICEF: 2020). The organization explains that due to the closing of schools and economic crises, these people may be in worse working situations and with an increased workload. However, in another UNICEF report (2020), the organization expressed concern about the increase in child labour in Brazil, specifically in São Paulo, during the pandemic. According to the text, "the incidence of child labour was 17.5 per 1,000 before the pandemic, and rose to 21.2 per 1,000 after the pandemic, an increase of 21%." (UNICEF: 2020).

Therefore, with this information, it is possible to affirm that the increase in child labour in Brazil in the last two years is directly linked to the pandemic and to the way the Brazilian government dealt with it, given that due to the little support and assistance provided to the families in need, these people had to adapt on their own to survive and have their basic rights, such as food. Therefore, this social group put itself at risk during this period, going out to work and not complying with social distancing as they did not have the option of staying at home, including children and adolescents, who were put to work to help family income or even self-support. These young people often also had to give up their studies, as they did not have the time or means to study online, the well-known ead (e-learning), which can directly affect their future and make it difficult when they are looking for a qualified job, containing your chances of improving your income and getting out of poverty.

## Conclusion

After analyzing the consequences of the pandemic caused by the Covid-19 virus in the area of child labor in Brazil and how the government is dealing with this reality, it was possible to understand that work among children and adolescents has always existed, but in the last two years, it has increased relatively due to the pandemic and the policies adopted to eradicate it.

According to data presented by UNICEF, child labour exists and is undergoing changes in the number of cases worldwide, however, there is a greater concern with the Brazilian reality, since its occurrences are growing considerably and affecting other parts of the life of these young people, as many are suffering physical and psychological exploitation and abandoning their studies.

As seen throughout the article, it is possible to note that child labour is not a current problem but something that has been ingrained in our society for years. Thus, the article answered the questions initially proposed, as child labour increased during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic, due to the actions applied by the government and the weak public policies that should help and protect families/people in greatest need and to combat child labour during the pandemic, there needs to be a long-term vision and a more urgent solution for the moment.

The pandemic in Brazil has created an even greater gulf between the economic and social classes in the country, not only as a consequence of the virus itself but also of decision-making coming from the federal government. Thus, to combat child labour during the pandemic in Brazil, greater investment in aid was offered to needy families and a broader fight against COVID-19 was so that the country's economy did not suffer so powerfully.

Aiming at a long-term solution, greater commitment by the country's powers to combat child labour is needed, reinforcing existing laws such as the young apprentice, punishing those who insist on hiring minors, and greater investment in the education of Brazilians of all social classes. Education must be seen as the best and possibly the greatest way to combat child labour, as it encourages children and adolescents to follow a new path. In the fight to combat child labor, it is important that society recognizes the impacts and consequences of such labor, whether physical or psychological, on the lives of working children and teenagers, thus, deconstructing the false idea that early work is an important path to social development.

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# Vaccine diplomacy and the South African Sovereignty Maintenance Struggle within BRICS cooperation

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## Abstract

The Covid 19 pandemic has brought an unprecedented litany of challenges diplomatically and in the procurement of vaccines globally. Among the nations and regional blocs that it affected, the pandemic greatly exposed the weaknesses of the diplomatic ties between BRICS nations; Russia, China, Brazil, India, and South Africa. As the pandemic broke out three of them, Russia, China and India quickly reacted with the invention of vaccines which were donated and circulated to many countries throughout the world and Africa in particular. Surprisingly while Brazil quickly accepted the readily available Sinopharm vaccine from China which is a fellow BRICS bloc member, South Africa though being the worst affected country in Southern Africa seemed to dither on finding a solution from either China or Russia. South Africa put more faith initially in AstraZeneca ahead of Sinopharm and Sinovac vaccines from China and Sputnik V from Russia. She relied enormously on Johnson & Johnson (Netherlands/USA), AstraZeneca, and Pfizer. In the light of these developments, this paper seeks to explore the seeming South African reluctance to procure vaccines from her BRICS allies Russia and China. The South African attitude towards vaccines from fellow BRICS bloc members and the time taken to approve the Sinovac vaccine leaves analysts with many questions. We ask in this paper; why was South Africa sceptical about receiving medical assistance or procuring vaccines from China and Russia? In an attempt to answer the question this paper used various published sources including books and journal articles, newspaper articles, and abundant online reports on the pandemic. It concludes that being aware that as part of the arsenal of soft-power diplomacy, big powers including China and Russia tend to bolster their diplomatic presence in Africa and other developing regions through strategies such as vaccine diplomacy, South Africa made the bold move as a way of maintaining unfettered sovereignty.

Keywords: Vaccine, Diplomacy, Sovereignty, Cooperation, and Covid-19

## Overview

The BRICS multilateral diplomatic bloc was formed in 2006 with an initial membership of four nations namely Brazil, Russia, India, and China. In 2010 South Africa was invited to join the forum by China as a fifth member of the bloc. The BRICS forum was initiated to foster diplomatic relations and economic activities amongst the member states. The choice of South Africa ahead of other emerging African economies like Nigeria and Ghana is not much surprising since in southern Africa and the African continent in general she is the most thriving economy with a huge GDP and offers great geopolitical advantages to any power that befriends her. The relations among the BRICS member countries are pinned on the virtues of non-interference, equality, and mutual benefit. One thing uniting the countries was a shared interest in countering the influence of western capital markets and that of the Bretton woods institutions in particular. At the Sanya Summit of 2011, the BRICS nations agreed to cease mutual trade payments in United States Dollars and "instead henceforth give credits to one another in their national currencies alone" (BRICS, 2011). BRICS has also initiated cooperation

in other areas such as scientific development, trade, energy, the curbing of transnational organised crime and healthcare (BRICS,2015). However, in all this, they do not appear to be a unitary force bound by clearly laid down rules of engagement. Each member country has the freedom to chart its course in order to achieve its goals. At best their diplomatic arrangements should be looked at as a framework for cooperation, more than anything else.

Though the multilateral formation has produced enormous results in the line of multi-lateral and bi-lateral relations, differences amongst member states have also been immensely evident. A case in point is the territorial military impasse between China and India over the Doklam plateau since 2017 which has resulted in bloody military clashes (He, 2020). Furthermore, the intrusion and expansion of the Chinese Belt and Road initiative have also culminated in tension with emerging India over the growing Chinese influence in Africa and other parts of the globe (Fallon, 2015). India on the other hand has aroused the ire of China through undertaking strategic partnerships with the United States (Hall, 2016).

Though there has been great cooperation among BRICS countries in line with the set goals of BRICS, the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic became an acid test for the cooperation among member countries. In line with the 17th sustainable development goal which calls for integration and partnerships at all as in economic development projects and research on disease control, the BRICS member countries seem to be failing in this regard (Mpungose, 2021). Each of the member countries seems to follow a secretive agenda with no sharing of information on research about vaccines produced by the three big powers Russia, China, and India. South Africa and Brazil have lagged in the vaccine development race whilst the Chinese manufactured Sinovac and Sinopharm vaccines and, the Russians, Sputnik V vaccine and India the Indian Covaxin (Mpungose, 2021). So puzzling and shocking is how South Africa reacted to the breakthrough inventions of her BRICS counterparts. She showed little trust in the Chinese and Russian vaccine inventions, by openly opting for western vaccines Astra Zeneca and Johnson and Johnson ahead of Sinovac, Sinopharm, and Sputnik V.

The paper utilised qualitative research methodology due to the complex nature of phenomena, qualitative research significantly helps to analyse and understand unique events and interpretations (Hammerberg, 2016). Secondary sources namely books, accredited journal articles, reports, electronic documents, and organisational publications were utilised. The thematic data analysis approach was used to analyse the relevant data. Braun and Clarke (2006) assert that thematic analysis helps identify, organise and group pure data in varying patterns so as to determine themes addressed in the paper. The major themes in this paper are South Africa and Sino Vaccines and South Africa and Sputnik V Diplomacy.

## BRICS Historical Politicking Dilemmas

BRICS as an organisation has been immensely affected by several diplomatic tiffs between some of the forum's member states such as the China-India clashes on the Himalayan region border dispute in the year 2020 (He, 2020), whilst South Africa and Russia have severed relations over the nuclear plant deal nullified in the year 2017. It looks like these tensions continue to be played in other possible areas of cooperation including collaboration in the fight against COVID 19. Tensions have also rocked the BRICs boat as relations between China and India have been tense over the years since the annexation of Tibet by China in 1950 in which India still recognises Tibet as an autonomous state. Rahmati (2020) believes that the geo-political tension between India and China is having detrimental ramifications on the BRICS forum as long as the border issue remains unresolved. The lack of harmonisation and bilateral fallouts on the border issue has been highlighted by Sebastian (2020), who has also attributed the lack of harmonisation and bilateral fallouts between the two countries to the unresolved border dispute as evidenced by the latest clashes at Ladakh and Galway

Valley. In addition, Russia and South Africa also have tense diplomatic relations arising from the collapse of the nuclear energy plant deal which would have seen Russia supplying nuclear reactors to South Africa nullified (Thamm, 2019). Though the countries established strategic partnerships in 2006 the deal was reignited through the Cooperation in Nuclear energy.

 The administrative and human rights abuse track record of Russia and China have also been at the core of divergence of bilateral interests with South Africa which is a more liberal and democratic country.  It must be remembered that the BRICS coalition has set limited targets for the grouping as it was virtually founded on the principle of dismantling western hegemonic economic, geopolitical, and institutional prowess without clearly spelling out how it must be achieved (Mpungose, 2021). The BRICS coalition's development has also been drawn back by the pursuit of member countries of national interests at the expense of those of the forum, as witnessed by the Sino-India and Sino-Russian conflicts and mistrust. The Sino-Russian relations have also been tested in the Middle East where Russia has had long-term influence and the Chinese are fairly new players in the region seeking to strengthen their Belt and Road initiative, which is also perceived by both Russia and India as a threat to their established economic interests. So a lot of conflict and mistrust exists between BRICS member countries.

With such intra-bloc conflicts in existence, member countries are justified when they seek help from elsewhere. The conflicts arising within the forum's member states have been a major impediment to the maximum utilization of vaccines and have seen South Africa turning to other players at the expense of fellow trade partners in the BRICS forum. Lack of harmonisation due to diverging nationalist ideas has seen multilateralism failing at the expense of bilateral relations. As such in BRICS a coherent bloc approach failed to materialise due lack of strategic partnerships to counter COVID-19 pandemic. Though having established the BRICS Vaccine research and development centre to counter the influence of the World Health Organisation to ensure an effective response in the wake of any pandemic BRICS (2015), the covid 19 vaccine procurement raised alarm on the levels of cooperation as a grouping. The South African response to the western vaccine accreditation and procurement vis a vis those of BRICS allies is an indication of trying to protect its sovereignty or guarding against being exploited by the bigger Bloc members.

## South Africa and the Sino-Vaccine Diplomacy

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic allowed China to unleash its soft power strategy through vaccine diplomacy to spread its influence globally. As the first country to be affected by the Coronavirus, China was miles ahead of other nations in finding solutions to the pandemic. Hence when the virus spread to other parts of the world, they looked up to China for assistance (Heisbourg, 2020). China's positive response to European, American and other nations' call for help was interpreted by many scholars and political commentators in different ways (Heisbourg, 2020). Some commentators saw China as a nation trying to take advantage of the pandemic to spread its influence into European, East Asian, American, and African spaces (Christensen, 2020). China was seen by the United States of America as a nation that was desperate to spin the pandemic which began at its doorstep for its propaganda purposes. In this regard, European analysts quickly designed the term 'mask-diplomacy' for it (Campbell, 2020). The Chinese "mask-diplomacy" involved supplying medical masks and dispatching teams of Chinese doctors, ventilators, and personal protection equipment from early 2020 to countries like Italy, Spain, Iran, Iraq, and the Netherlands which were heavily affected by the virus (Rudolf, 2021).

In the United States of America, China was blamed for not being forthcoming in providing full information about the virus (Campbell, 2020). As the West continued to bash it and blame it for the outbreak of the pandemic, China retorted by boosting her soft power by recasting itself not

as the source of the problem but as the provider of much-needed aid and expertise to fight the pandemic and the United States of America's influence (Campbell, 2020). Thus the shortage of the much-needed equipment and expertise to fight the pandemic globally and attacks from the USA and the Western powers prompted the Chinese to use the mask-diplomacy to further their geopolitical goals. When the Sinopharm and Sinovac vaccines were invented in early 2021 the 'mask-diplomacy' became the 'vaccine-diplomacy' as vaccines became the most sought-after items and over a billion vaccines were distributed to over a hundred countries in the form of sales and donations (Rudolf, 2021). Many of the beneficiaries of the vaccine donations were said to be countries in coherent support of the Belt and Road Initiative through which debt would bond them to no conflicting allegiance to Chinese policies as high demand but suppliers were failing to cope with the demand. Hu and Cheng (2021) assert that the effectiveness and efficiency data of the Chinese drugs have been subject to scepticism but, the World Health Organisation approved the use of Sinopharm on May 7th and Sinovac on June 1st, 2021 in what is seen to be a 'realpolitik' approval process.

Bozzatto (2021) acknowledges that though festering debates the regulation and approval had taken centre stage the vaccines proved and passed the efficacy test of providing immunisation and this presented an opportune damascene moment to counter western health hegemony through the Covid19 vaccine availability. From then onwards the Chinese became actively involved in the distribution of the vaccines to allies of the Belt and Road Initiative and in turn, also cemented its geopolitical prowess.  China is believed to have pledged donations to fifty-six countries and of the recipients, fifty-five were members of the Belt and Road initiative (Think Global Health, 2021). However, what is clear is that though China took the opportunity to influence and steer its ultranationalist goal of being a global superpower challenging western imposed hegemony, a BRICS member country South Africa was not an early beneficiary. We, therefore, turn to look at this bizarre relationship between these two member countries in the light of the Chinese vaccine diplomacy.

In early 2020 South Africa became the country with the highest Covid-19 cases and deaths in Southern Africa, but surprisingly when the vaccines were first availed South Africa did not turn to China for a solution (Mpungose, 2021). China had made two inventions the Sinopharm and Sinovac vaccines, but when South Africa began to vaccinate her population on 1 February 2021, she turned to India and received a million doses of the AstraZeneca/Oxford-19 produced by Astra-Zeneca-SK Bioscience and the serum Institute of India (Mpungose, 2021). When the vaccine was suspended on the 8th of February 2021 for the low efficacy rate against the 501Y.V2 variant of coronavirus which was most common in South Africa then, the South African government began a roll-out of the Johnson and Johnson Covid-19 vaccine (Dzinamarira, *et al*, 2021). The country imported more than 9 million doses of the Johnson and Johnson vaccine within the first quarter of 2021 and was expecting to bring in 20 million doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech, within the same period (Dzinamarira, *et al*, 2021). Surprisingly in that period, there was no mention of Chinese vaccines, though other nations like Zimbabwe, were already forcing citizens to get the Chinese vaccine. In fact, in Zimbabwe, a non-BRICS member, over 90 percent of the vaccines are from China (https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/zfhzlt2018/eng/zfzs1/t1893006.htm). This leaves people wondering why the situation is like that, between China and South Africa. It was not until 3 July 2021 that the South African regulatory body approved the use of China's Sinovac vaccine in emergency cases only (Cocks, 2021).

Although South Africa accepted the use of Sinovac she appeared to be treading cautiously when it came to Chinese products. She appeared to be refusing to be a dumping ground for Chinese products and maintain her sovereignty, knowing how much China wants to dominate African countries. South Africa, unlike Zimbabwe, which just accepted the Chinese drug without adequate information as revealed by a doctor who received the first load of donated vaccines from China, rejected the Chinese vaccine early on citing doubts over a lack of transparency in clinical trial data (Cocks, 2021). Still,

after accepting the use of Sinovac, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa continued to appeal to the Western drug Companies and their allied governments to temporarily waive vaccine patents so other countries could manufacture them and not China (Cocks, 2021). This shows how much the South Africans wanted to control their destiny and would not sell their sovereignty for vaccines that they could source from elsewhere and be found cheering another sovereign for being its saviour like a majority of poor African countries always waiting in the corridors of China for donations in exchange for their resources. A statement from the Chinese embassy of South Africa on 11 August 2021 shows that Sinovac was only authorised with conditions for the emergency use of the Sinovac vaccine. This shows that what South Africa was saying was that she could not be pushed by another power to do as the other power wanted.

The Chinese claim that they do not engage in Vaccine diplomacy and neither are they using their vaccine as a tool for seeking political interests (Cocks, 2021). However, in an embassy statement, they seem to contradict themselves by indicating that "not long ago China launched the Initiative for Belt and Road Partnership on Covid-19 Vaccines Co-operation which received positive responses from the BRI [Belt and Road Initiative] partner countries. South Africa and others were welcome to join the initiative" (Za Chinese embassy, 2021). The Belt and Road Initiative is a policy to promote Chinese influence throughout the globe and is entirely funded by the Chinese. It is therefore clear that in this case, China was playing vaccine diplomacy to spread and exert its influence on recipient countries. It is for this reason that South Africa seems to have chosen to stay out of the Chinese plot. Many African countries desperately needed the vaccines but could not afford them, and if China was genuine about wanting to defeat Covid-19 in Africa it should have started from there. It is quite apparent that South Africa is not unaware of Chinese machinations to bring her under Chinese influence like the rest of Africa. China seemed to be begging the South Africans to accept Chinese vaccines. The Chinese embassy indicated its willingness to "actively implement President Xi Xinping's solemn commitment to continue to do its best to assist South Africa in delivering Chinese vaccines to South Africa as soon as possible and help the South African people fight and ultimately defeat Covid-19" (Za Chinese embassy, 2021) Interestingly China by end of September 2021 had not yet defeated Covid-19 in her backyard. In July 2021, the Chinese embassy in South Africa claimed that 2.5 million vaccines had been approved for delivery (Cocks, 2021). This was possibly meant to put pressure on South African citizens so that they would call upon their government to source Chinese vaccines. It cannot be forgotten that with a population of close to 60 million people South Africa would be a big market for Chinese vaccines. It was no surprise that the opposition party of South Africa the Economic Freedom Front mobilised its members to demonstrate against the government demanding the government seek vaccines from Russia and China which the government was not doing (Sguazzin, 2021).

Although China sounds like a benevolent aid giver, her statements and actions quickly betrayed her. South Africa was not unaware of China's schemes to dominate African economies.  However, what happened between China and South Africa, both BRICS member states also reflects the weaknesses of the bloc. One other problem of depending on China is that the weaker partners always have to be displayed on Chinese and national TV channels and be shown to the world as beneficiaries of the great generosity of Xi Jinping. History has now shown everyone that Chinese money is always followed by Chinese men. Everything has to be publicised, and Chinese government officials are seen presenting the aid items together with leaders of African countries receiving the aid.

### Sputnik V Vaccine Diplomacy and the South African Response

 The global demand for vaccines due to surging cases of Covid-19 infections and deaths precipitated a global vaccine race in which many countries forgot about strengthening multilateralism but

instead opted to catalyse and further their nationalist goals. BRICS was one of the organisations that failed to achieve most of its goals due to a lack of coherent policy formulation and implementation. Though most of its member countries had been ravaged, by Covid19 resulting in high mortality rates, the forum failed to amalgamate and collaborate to find a solution to the pandemic. Without any cooperation in research among the BRICS member countries, Russia became one of the countries in the world to lead in the production of vaccines.

Sputnik V, the Russian Covid-19 vaccine was created by the Gamaleya National Research Centre for Epidemiology in early 2020. By August 2020 Russian authorities approved its use and mass vaccinations began in Russia (Eby, 2021). This was quickly followed by a roll-out of the same vaccine at the international level by the end of 2020 in countries like Belarus, Argentina, and Serbia. By June 2021 it had been approved in sixty-six countries Eby (2021), but not in South Africa a BRICS member country. Whilst its quick spread to about 66 countries points to the use of the vaccine to spread Russian influence, it is again surprising that South Africa did not quickly embrace the vaccine, though as proven above it had the highest mortality rate in Southern Africa. The question remains, why was South Africa not willing to accept the Sputnik V vaccine?

South Africa's failure to accept vaccines from BRICS member countries reveals that the BRICS bloc has no laid down procedures on how member countries should act in given situations or circumstances. It has no laid down principles on expected group members' behaviour. This is undeniably one of the weaknesses of the group. The Covid-19 pandemic has therefore helped reveal that BRICS is not an international alliance of global powers, but a mere framework for cooperation in certain specific areas, but with no directly binding rules of engagement or operation. Members do not seem to have any obligations towards each other. It is very certain that in BRICS each member country is free to act as determined by its peculiar interests at any given time. South Africa has therefore used her right of choice and chose not to use the Sputnik V vaccine.

The South African preference for Western vaccines ahead of the Russian Sputnik V Covid-19 vaccine also demonstrates that the Ramaphosa regime preferred leaning more toward the West than the East in bilateral relations. The Pretoria administration had more faith in the Western system and seemed to trust their judgments more than those of China and Russia. In rejecting the Russian Sputnik V vaccine, South Africa proved that she follows the leadership of the Western powers and the European Medicines Agency. Though the Sputnik V vaccine has been accepted in many countries in South Africa a BRICS member state refused the vaccine basing her argument on the western narrative of inadequate data or information about the vaccine to give the regulatory authorities something to work with (News24, 2021). Most Western observers were quite sceptical and appeared not convinced by the speed with which the drug was invented. As Eby (2021) states "their reactions display surprise that Russia is capable of such a scientific feat." The Russians were accused of failing to make available to the European Medicines Agency any data about the vaccine's manufacture and the clinical data availed was (in?)complete (EconomicTimes, 2021). The pro-Western Ramaphosa regime in South Africa simply mimicked the words of the west in justifying its non-acceptance of the Russian vaccine. The excuse it gave for not using the Sputnik V vaccine irrespective of the fact that it had been approved by the World Health Organisation on 24 August 2021, was that the South African regulatory body was still waiting for more information on the jab for it to be approved. Secondly, it was reported that the South African government was also still waiting to hear from "other reputable regulatory bodies", such as the European Medicine Agency since none by then had approved the vaccine because of the secrecy around it from Russia. Russia also did not help matters, as it continued to hold up critical data (Reuters, 2021).

National pride and a desire to pursue independent policies as a sovereign nation also seemed to be at the centre of South African actions. It is reported that in February 2021 South Africa turned

down a Russian donation of 15 million doses of its Sputnik V vaccine to South Africa because of the uncertainty over the efficacy of this vaccine against the Beta variant (Sars-Cov-2) which was first identified in South Africa (News24, 2021). The regulators also indicated that they still needed more time to assess the best vaccine to bring into the country in the face of more emerging variants like Delta (News24, 2021). This shows that though South Africa was a member of BRICS it chose to maintain its sovereignty by refusing to be dependent on super powers especially China and Russia whose impact on other African states like neighbouring Zimbabwe and Zambia have been so detrimental to the sense and path of national economic development. In Zimbabwe, the Chinese now participate at the ruling party's congresses showing that they are even closer to the politburo, which is the national decision is making body.

One other dimension of looking at it is that of assessing the perceptions of the current South African government on doing business with Russia since the foiled nuclear deal of 2017   Russia's role in the US$76 billion shady nuclear deal during the presidency of Jacob Zuma made her to be seen as a superpower of unethical conduct which promoted corruption in Africa (Chutel, 2018). The deal which was to see Russia constructing a nuclear power plant in South Africa which would cost the nation US$76 billion involved the Zuma family, the Gupta family and Russia lacked transparency and everything about it was shrouded in secrecy (Chutel, 2018). It was only scuttled by the country's well-established legal and administrative institutions and norms, independent media and vibrant society, which saw two lady activists mobilising the people against the deal. This tarnished the image of Russia in the eyes of South Africans, and any deals involving Russia seem to be attracting close scrutiny. It is for this reason that we can conclude that a potential Russia-South Africa Sputnik V vaccine deal was scuttled permanently. Russia made scepticism and suspicion about its vaccine worse by refusing to release information on the vaccine's manufacture and other crucial clinical data that South African regulators wanted to analyse.  It is clear from this that, Russian, just like Chinese vaccine diplomacy failed to weaken the power of South African sovereignty.

## Conclusion

The survival of nation-states on the international fora has been solemnly on the power struggle. Any global state will always use their advantage to leverage itself in the power struggle. The outbreak of COVID 19 presented a case for developing nations to be exploited by the great powers which were quick to grab the opportunity to spread their influence through vaccine diplomacy. The majority of countries in the global south have been victims of stringent conditions in vaccine diplomacy (Ribeiro, 2021). However, while a number of African, East Asian and Latin American countries were reading about a strengthening of bilateral relations through vaccine donations, South Africa a BRICS bloc member surprised many by not making it easy for China and Russia, her fellow BRICS bloc members to bring their vaccines into the country. This study has shown that, there is no simple answer to the puzzle, but that South Africa was being pragmatic, and fighting hard to maintain her sovereignty. By not accepting to be an easy recipient of vaccines donated by Russia and China, she was making a clear statement that she is not dependent on any of them and that she is an equal partner in BRICS. It may also have been a way of showing them that her loyalties are elsewhere, especially in the West and she could not let the donated vaccines sway her towards the East. One other thing that comes out clearly in all this is that the BRICS bloc is not a unified alliance of global powers with any binding clauses of engagement. If they were an alliance then they should have placed major emphasis on joint vaccine manufacturing and health-related research and equitable distribution of vaccines to combat the pandemic within their bloc. The BRICS bloc is big in name but divided and small in practice. Xi Jinping at the China-Africa summit articulated the advantages of the "Chinese public good" Vaccine and that it had very "expedient conditions." Fareed Zakaria (2021) in his book on post-pandemic period alludes that plagues are associated with conflicts whilst business boom and

capitalisation thrive in pandemics. South Africa refused to be trapped in the big powers' economic and power games.

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# From ideology to inequality: Examining the socialist effect on South Africa's pandemic politics

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## Abstract

The BRICS grouping presents itself as a catalyst for global economic reform. As an inter-state association, the grouping is particularly concerned with transforming economic development in the Global South. However, global and national policy efforts to solve socio-economic inequality are hamstrung by the pervasive influence of rigid ideologically driven thinking. In light of the Great Reset and growing calls for economic reform centered on socialist principles, it remains imperative to test the efficacy and sustainability of the ideas responsible for our current socio-economic failures. Importantly, the complexity of our social contexts demands testing the validity of ideological claims before establishing them as uncontested truth. At present, the covid-19 pandemic presents the opportune moment to examine the socialist and social justice influence on South Africa's socio-economic policy architecture. Specifically, using a qualitative approach to investigate the ideological impact of socialism on misdiagnosing disparate socio-economic policy outcomes. To this end, an evaluation of human nature, the social contract and economic organization provide insights into the limitations of social justice as the primary policy response to inequality. This study makes the case that socio-economic inequality can be traced to policy issues where ideological assumptions have been prioritized over empirical evidence. The findings indicate the centrality of redistribution as the unanimous victor able to ensure roughly equal economic outcomes for all social groups. An assumption with disastrous and even counterproductive consequences. Since ideologies are largely closed systems of thought, they conceal socio-economic realities which can only be addressed when policy preferences are revisited and re-evaluated.

Keywords: inequality, socio-economic policymaking, ideology, social justice, socialism, South Africa

## Introduction

History rehearses the uncomfortable reality that governments, not the market, are the protagonists in the suffering of mankind. Hence, the failure to consult history allows for the repetition of policy mistakes to persist without revolt. These have dire consequences on the civil liberties, economic growth and political stability their intellectual prowess claim to protect. Lack of testing ideas and interrogating their real-world applicability has thus enabled policymakers to betray the very people their ideas and policy prescriptions are meant to serve. Firstly, inequality is universal. Still, almost all forms of inequality are treated with suspicion. Having said that, this paper addresses the universal evil commonly known as socio-economic inequality. The persistence of inequality at the international and national levels is further exacerbated in the case of the covid-19 pandemic. Moreover, crises come to test the resilience of our existing economic systems and is often followed by a call to change the existing state of affairs. But before embarking on a radical reform agenda, it is important to assess the policies responsible for our current socio-economic failures. This paper will provide reasons to take seriously the role and nature of socialist ideology and social justice in misrepresenting and misdiagnosing socio-economic development in the case of South Africa.

Among the most popular calls to reform hail from social justice rhetoric and the new world order. The 'new world order', is simply a phrase used to describe normative principles that prescribe a socialist informed pattern of world affairs. The new world order is conceptually identified in the language of fairness, equity, inclusion and diversity. Hence, new language is used to explain the same

ineffective social justice strategy that substitutes elite control and government handouts for socio-economic development. Before considering the proposition to transform all existing institutions, laws and policies, one must evaluate the cause of institutional defilement and corruption. The demand for a response to inequality span regional and continental boundaries as seen in the rise of multilateral platforms from the global South. Specifically, the BRICS platform emerges as the most prominent. While any international grouping exists based on common values, it follows that individual members still pursue self-interested goals in the advancement of their national economic visions. A review of the dominant ideas behind the establishment of the BRICS grouping, reveals the importance of shifting power relations in the global political economy. Thakur (2014) notes that BRICS countries came to the global governance table with a mutually reinforcing sense of historical grievances and claims to represent the interests of all developing countries. While all the BRICS nations have experimented with socialism and Marxist-inspired economic visions, the case of South Africa is chosen to review the socialist and social justice effect on South Africa's socio-economic architecture and its policymaking preferences.

Socioeconomic inequality remains a consistent hindrance to humanity. Govender (2016) goes on to add that even South Africa's constitution and progressive policy interventions have not absolved the state from dealing with inequality. Govender qualifies the statement by linking the persistence of inequality to the legacy of apartheid whereas, Piketty (2014) advances the claim that inequality is a consequence of capitalism. Contrary to the above, history records an unfavourable recurrence of scarcity and inequality- a fact that politicians and even social scientists selectively ignore. It follows then that unmet needs, on account of scarcity, are increasingly susceptible to political prioritization. Once political prioritization occurs, polarization follows. This is especially evident when it stands in stark contradiction to what their proposed policies can achieve. Because ideologies have both functional and operative elements, their claims must be audited before they graduate into established economic policies (Seliger, 1976). Schwab and Malleret (2020) record that covid-19 (so far) in probabilistic terms, unlike previous pandemics, boasts a significantly lower lethality and mortality. The authors of the Great Reset, go on to add that post-June 2020, covid-19 has killed less than 0.006% of the world population. Now consider this in contrast to the Spanish flu which killed 2.7% of the world's population and HIV/AIDS 0.6%. Contextually then, this low figure brings into question the urgency through which economic, political and social reform should be sought by national governments. Notably, the covid-19 pandemic does not constitute an existential threat. Nevertheless, in the words of Schwab and Malleret (2020) 'the post-pandemic world will be preoccupied with the issue of fairness, stagnating real incomes and the redefinition of social contracts'. This viewpoint reflects the pervasiveness of egalitarianism and fairness espoused by social justice thinking. However, the practical consequences tend to violate the integrity of their proposed claims and assumptions.

Schwab and Malleret (2020) advance that the 'post-pandemic era will usher in a period of massive wealth redistribution, from the rich to the poor and from capital to labour'. He goes on to add that covid-19 is likely to sound the 'death knell of neoliberalism, a corpus of ideas and policies that can loosely be defined as favouring competition over solidarity, creative destruction over government intervention and economic growth over social welfare'. Note, the language used to define neo-liberal economic thought as though it has not substantially contributed to global poverty alleviation. These statements all echo with great fervency, the need for a fairer alternative. This thinking is deeply embedded in a socialist understanding of economics that emphasizes the government's role in the equal distribution of resource and economic outcomes. Amid both international and national calls for social justice and the growing favouritism of socialism, there is a need to dissect the assumptions, claims and functionality of the beloved ideology. Secondly, the impact of this type of thinking on policy visions of the African National Congress (ANC) will be examined. In particular, the psychology

behind South Africa's social justice driven socio-economic architecture. Among the key strategies which precede changed economic conditions is addressing the misdiagnosis of economic and social inequalities. South Africa is beset with economic and social crises. Inequality is more pervasive than ever. In light of the socialist proliferation of ideas in the policy space, it remains important to understand the origin and appetite for the call to social justice as the only morally justifiable answer to the 'great problem of South African inequality', in all its various forms. This paper explores the covid-19 crisis as an opportunity to identify the effect of progressive social politics on economic policy development. The success of this paper hinges on its ability to clearly distinguish facts from ideological fiction. Further, it accounts for the limitations and inadequacies of social justice as the primary policy response to socioeconomic inequality. To this end, section one focuses on the purpose of ideology; section two expands on methodology; section three identifies the role of ideology; section four then reviews alternate ideological responses to socio-economic inequality; section five goes on to identify the limitations associated with the social justice position on the social contract, social group identity and the mechanics of operation in a socialist economy. While most discussions recognize the faults of capitalism, this paper reveals the ideological limitations of socialist solutions to socioeconomic inequality. The research exclusively focuses on the role of socialist ideology within South Africa's socio-economic context and therefore, limits the application of its findings to other BRICS nations. The main claim is that much of the socio-economic problems in South Africa are a direct consequence of social justice policies such as the welfare system and affirmative action programs.

## Approach

This study uses a qualitative framework to fully grasp the ideas, motivations and behaviours associated with ideologies. Mair (1996) provides a synoptic review of the tradeoff between the level of abstraction and the scope of countries. Despite efforts to provide clear measuring instruments, methods are blurred based on research specifications and contextual environments. Sartori (1970) points out that many single-country studies embed their studies in a comparative context in addition to using concepts that apply in other countries irrespective of the political system. Simply put, the use of concepts applicable to more than the specific country under investigation qualifies the study as comparative (Lichbach and Zuckerman, 1997). Moreover, it is plausible to have a single-country study with many observations thus providing comparative credence. Similarly, it can be said that a given relationship can be demonstrated to exist with a greater degree of certainty. In sum, qualitative analysis demands a resource-rich archive of information that tracks history, making it significantly more difficult to synthesize. Hence, the plethora of socio-economic development indicators spotlights the consequent problems of validity. Variables in political science are a function of real-world politics and therefore, difficult to control owing to social, political and even cultural specificities. The interactions between variables themselves, present a further challenge to correlation and causation efforts. Finally, multicausality rehearses the uncomfortable truth that in the real world, there is no single and easy answer to fluctuating socio-economic problems.

## Locating ideology as the root cause of the socio-economic struggle

The previous section set out to trace the growing popularity of socialism and social justice reforms as the most appropriate response to socioeconomic inequality. Note, the perceived focus on moral superiority as opposed to economic viability. Next, the nature and purpose of ideology will be discussed, before contrasting opposing ideological frameworks. Attacks abound concerning capitalism and its inadequacies; however, social justice remains relatively unscathed despite its growing economic influence on policymaking today.

Foucalt (1991) advances that ideologies contain a claim to uncover the truth and can thus be described as 'regimes of truth'. By extension, they provide a language of political discourse, a set of assumptions and presuppositions about how society does and should work. It follows that when articulated in this context, ideologies maintain a strong connection to power. Power unrestrained by moral principles corrupts. Evidently, in a complex international system, where it is natural to have competing values and theories, ideologies concentrate on value prioritization and invest in legitimizing certain sets of meanings and concepts. For this reason, postmodernism posits the argument that certainty is non-existent. It argues that universal truth is a mere representation of pretence and bias. Instead, the focus is diverted to the role of discourse and debate in giving consequent expression to the existence of reality. To put it succinctly, postmodernism argues that knowledge is completely shackled by subjectivity. Saad (2020) terms postmodernism, 'anti-science and anti-foundationalist, because it refuses to accept that sensory knowledge when triangulated prove that an objective reality exists. The presumption of truth impresses the idea that it is inessential, if not altogether illogical, to qualify a statement with empirical evidence, non-contradiction and relevance. This is problematic because of the postmodern understanding of ontology and epistemology. On the whole, the impracticality of ideas that emanate from the social sciences (because of the dismissal of reality and its imposed consequences), are fundamentally limited in their ability to affect change.

Examining the impact of postmodernism on ideology formation is significant, as these ideological claims often manifest in policymaking. Investigating the properties of ideology informs that there is an amicable attempt to simplify complex phenomena. This births political discourse able to give linguistic substance to world politics. The common dialogue created further contributes to the unity of thought and action (Siegler, 1967). Ultimately, the binding nature of language serves to cement ideological claims as irrevocable. Although ideology represents early efforts to understand political relationships and phenomena, there is significant danger in the oversimplification of multivariate challenges. A persistent fault associated with ideological discourse is the tendency to reduce multifaceted phenomena to a single issue upon. This responsibility cannot be sustained by regimes of truth that are untouched by the complexity of reality. Owing to the reductionist nature of ideological formation, it follows that misrepresentation of the nature and pervasiveness of socio-economic phenomena are likely to occur.

Popper (1945) among other scholars have been more reserved in their application of the term ideology owing to its designation as a closed system of thought. Further, this view holds that 'ideologies claim a monopoly of truth, indignant of rival beliefs' (Freeden, 2006). In this way, ideologies are more accurately synonymized with 'secular religions'; possessing a totalizing character and serving as instruments of social control, compliance and subordination. Because ideologies create oneness between ideological thought and action, its postmodern origins blur the lines between fact and fiction. This means that policymaking intended to improve the material living standards of the public refused to account for the complexities of the real world. Heywood (2017) notes that for ideologies to be measured against an objective standard of truth is irrelevant. Simply put, ideologies embody values, dreams and aspirations making it unsusceptible to scientific inquiry. But because ideologies are both idea and action-oriented- meaning that it finds expression in policy frameworks, it is extremely dangerous to concretize socio-economic policy based solely on 'aspirations, dreams and hopes'. At the same time, ideologies are free to roam the academic space as they attempt to answer the questions which arise in a given political and economic environment. Albeit, in light of their operational dimension, individuals are now mobilized to champion policy positions not based on or verified by empirical evidence. Policymaking affects the livelihoods and the standard of living of citizens. Therefore, their economic fate cannot rest in an ideological disposition that is not consistent with economic principles and their realities. If this is the case, politicians, policymakers and activists are absolved of all accountability because they simply could not have known the outcome…. Despite

the blatant policy failure or the counterproductive outcomes produced, reminding of racism will continue to exonerate political parties from the consequences of their ideologically based socio-economic policies. This way, the majority of its voter base will excuse performance results and vote based on the intention of the promise and not the results thereof. A social justice driven understanding of inequality creates the impression of despondency. Previously disadvantaged groups and blacks in particular, are dissuaded from taking action in solving their economic problems simply because the issue of inequality will forever be tormented by the enormity of its historical legacy. Definitional dilemmas surrounding structural racism and the ghost of apartheid as a persistent hindrance to socio-economic equality today, must be evaluated. Of course history has consequences, still, the assertion that every socio-economic inequality is due to the inequity currently taking place, must be verified by a factual analysis. This vicious cycle that can only be countered by correct information, critical thinking and demanding evidence for proposed policy measures. Next, taking seriously the weightiness of the evidence must be at the forefront of guiding socio-economic policymaking.

### A review of alternate ideological positions causes and remedies of socio-economic inequality

Research abounds as it relates to the degree of economic inequality and interethnic differences in income and economic outcomes. Usually this happens without understanding the multivariate nature of these issues. To address current socio-economic outcomes, it is useful to study trends in socio-economic thinking responsible for creating those conditions. The consequences of socialist thinking on economic realities will be explored below.

Acknowledging that while different ideological and otherwise theoretical positions exist, there seems to be a common critique- a joint rejection and hatred of capitalism. To grasp the growing national and international disdain, it is useful to interrogate the merit of the critiques as well as the feasibility of their proposed alternatives. Trends in socio-economic thinking and social policy reveal the preeminence of, and even aggressive push towards welfare as the only 'sustainable' solution able to reduce inequality (World Bank, 2016). World-renowned international figures from both the United Nations (UN) and the World Economic Forum (WEF), espouse the expansion of the welfare state as the champion of 'shared prosperity for all'. Principally, this notion depends on 'rethinking capitalism'.

Notably, considerable attention should be apportioned to the linguistic preferences used in articulating the nature and accuracy of economic conditions and outcomes. Politicizing language is an ideological technique able to impress specific meanings to concepts detached from their (objective) mainstream understanding (Freeden et al, 2015). Because of socialism's conceptual rigidity, difference in political thought reached by members of the same social group is not permitted. Moreover, the difference in thought about the economy and government responses to inequality is demonized. Even more so, the difference in opinion is both weaponized and militarized. Simultaneously, it is used as a measuring stick to determine one's allegiance to their ethnicity or sexuality. Socialist inroads into liberal democracy then, violate the sanctity of democratic values such as the freedom of expression. Certainly, the UN, WB and WF are insistent on using morality to explain and understand economic behavior and organization. Why? Morality evokes an undeniable emotive dimension in human beings. Wherever morality is discussed, emotion emerges as the transcendent force to whom there is no rival in sight. Similarly, the World Bank's campaign towards 'a world free of poverty' is based upon two goals. This includes 'ending extreme poverty by 2030 and promoting shared prosperity' (World Bank, 2015a). Overall, the language used, remind of an inclination toward socialism as the moral superior. The presumed moral superiority promises the eradication of all inequality, especially in the socio-economic context. Terms such as 'shared prosperity for all' and

'fairer', are used to express economic goals and misrepresent economic realities. Further, these terms perpetuate the cycle of delusion regarding what slogans and policy measures can achieve.

Similarly, Rawls (1970) argues that social justice is resource equity and is achieved through the redistribution of resources by those who have unjustly gained them. All who have, are assumed to have unjustly gained them, provided they are a member of a historically marginalized group. Again, the goal is redistribution of resources, decision-making and power. Sowell (2001) elaborates by stating that cosmic justice presents resource redistribution as the only way to address income inequalities. This view refuses to accept that scarcity is a consistent feature of economic life and not a cleverly devised linguistic technique to protect the wealth of the 'rich'. Among the many failings of this rhetoric is the obsessive focus on income distribution as opposed to wealth creation and income earned which will be discussed later. So, the pursuit of substantive equality is more complicated if the focus is on equality of outcomes as opposed to equality of opportunity (Gelb, 2003). When referring to substantive equality, the focus is on eliminating what can be termed institutional impediments that limit social and economic equality. Diamond and Morlino (2004) argue that these limitations affects 'the full development of the human person and the effective participation of all workers in the political, economic and social organization of the state'. Although equality is rightfully entrenched in the legal culture in most societies today, the problem of implementation as it relates to economic equality persists. Given the operation of economic principles, irrespective of the type of economic system at play, perhaps it is plausible that substantive equality is not compatible with economic realities. This paper argues that the fundamental issue with administering equal outcomes is not necessarily institutional capacity. Alternatively, it is the moral and legal limits embedded in the human experience. Sil and Katzenstein (2010) argue that it is necessary to go beyond academic and ideological systems to grasp political realities that are increasingly multifaceted and multidimensional. Clearly, no ideology, on its own, can- with a degree of certainty, explain the infinitely complex realities it purports to disclose.

Mills (2014) advances that racism and white supremacy – as outlined in Critical Race Theory (CRT), argue that race continues to be the dominant organizing principle of society. Further espoused is that institutions are created to suppress the development and success of historically marginalized groups. In concurrence with Mills, the United Nations (UN), opines that racism is the chief reason given to explain differences in economic outcomes among different ethnicities. Owing to South Africa's racial experience, it remains important to distinguish between correlation and causation in explaining disparate economic outcomes for different groups in society. If racism is the organizing principle of society and is structurally embedded in institutions, then it follows that direct and indirect violence emerges (Galtung, 1996). The only appropriate solution, at least morally speaking, socialism argues, is redistribution. The problem with the Marxist ideological stance is its intolerance of other explanatory alternatives. Most commonly, this occurs when insights transcend the bounds of the socialist trinity- race, sex and class. In accounting for disparate economic outcomes then, social justice refuses to acknowledge education, skills development and attitude as worthy avenues for self-development and wealth creation. Perhaps, championing personal development and agency is refused since it potentially reduces historically marginalized groups' dependence on political parties and politicians to solve their problems. What if true transformation is an 'inside job'?

 Therefore, any and most importantly, all disparities in- group interethnic outcomes are due to racist systems. Closely tied to this CRT doctrine is the issue of systemic racism which expands on the view that differences in outcome are always due to systemic biases (Shapiro, 2021). An attribution of group differences to vague 'systems' imposed by others can only be remedied by a forcible redistribution of public and private goods. As a derivative of Marxism, social justice focuses on group outcomes by reframing certain political demands as universal moral imperatives (Bankston, 2010).

Then, equity deals with equality of outcomes as well as reparations. Considering the constitutionality of this position, it violates equality before the law. If the historical argument for reparations holds weight, it would mean that the social justice doctrine of fairness attributes the generational transfer of guilt and punishment for acts committed by a specific ancestry. A most unfair attribution. Individuals today have no control over the behavior and decisions taken by members of the same social group centuries prior. Moreover, social justice argues in favor of the state's management of society by redistributing resources, opportunity and access (O'Neill, 2020). Textual tension persists in social justice philosophy which argues that discrimination alone prevents social groups from rising economically. Contrastingly, the assertion is refuted by numerous historical examples where different ethnic groups have endured discrimination and nonetheless managed to rise higher than indigenous groups. It follows that measuring socio-economic improvement on a group basis tends to misrepresent the economic progress and realities of historically marginalized groups. Irrespective of the attempts to legislate 'away' discrimination by policymakers and intellectuals, it is impossible to minimize the flaws of mankind inherent in human nature. The conceptual elasticity of human nature as understood by socialists, argues that all pain and suffering are institutionally imposed. Rather, this study looks at suffering as the consequence of an inherently unfair world inhabited by flawed and limited individuals. Sowell (2002) recalls that the prevailing social vision dominating political discourse, functions on the premise that human nature is malleable. Therefore, the right leaders with the right policies and the right laws can completely erase the social evils of socio-economic inequality, discrimination and racism. Notably, the inability to recognize the flaws inherent in the human experience is the ultimate restraining factor to the intention of 'well-meaning' policies. Misunderstanding this reality- irrespective of legislation and institutional reform, enable the successive repetition of policy failure to persist without revolt.

Concretized policies must succeed the prism of optical impressiveness and be assessed based on its functional capacity. The following question must be answered: is social justice the most effective vehicle used to drive social change? Of thematic priority then, is explaining the thinking driving social justice reforms as the primary vehicle for socio-economic improvement. Because political thought translates into organized political practice, there is a need to test ideological claims. Testing must precede implementation. Hence, avoiding their premature integration as indispensable components of South Africa's socio-economic policy architecture. As indicated, the perpetuation of policy measures unable to deliver on their promised objectives, is mostly due to them having little to no tangential relationship to reality.

## Defining features of the socialist influence on socio-economic policymaking

All ideologies are flawed. Having this statement in mind, it follows then to investigate the degree to which each ideology is flawed. This is followed by an analysis of the proposed attempts to mitigate the consequent suffering and shortcomings. Capitalism is no stranger to criticism, nor should it be in the trade of meaning in the intellectual marketplace. It is simply not enough for the reiteration of an idea to echo its supposed significance. There is no substitute for providing evidence for an idea's alleged factual superiority. Contrary to popular belief, the world has gotten richer as more people have been born because brainpower exceeds consumption (Riddley, 2012). This fact comes as a surprise to early economists and social theorists who initially thought that population growth would affect resource abundance. Hence, the dominating influence of scarcity thinking elucidating that population reduction is a necessary safeguard against human consumption. But, human beings are both consumers and creators of resources. Therefore, innovation increases production. Humans produce ideas that result in innovation. This includes the production of tangible and intangible goods and services. At its most basic level, capitalism facilitates the free exchange of goods and services by rational beings. Still, in light of this knowledge, institutions such as the World Economic

Forum (WEF) have made plain their disgust for capitalism and its imposed constraints of scarcity, inequality and greed. The attribution of blame to capitalism for conditions of inequality, greed and discrimination, entrenches the need to consult the nature of socialist ideology in arriving at these critiques. Infused in the social justice objections to capitalism lie the amalgamation of ideas about human nature and the role of government in the structure of the economy. A summative view on the alternate modus operandi for international economic development, is none other than socialism. The rising preference for a socialist economy demand that the origin, assumptions, and consequences implicit in this manner of governing, be subject to study.

Policymakers, academics, politicians and interest groups are all heralding the same thing: for us to see improvement and progress globally, everything needs to change. What precisely is everything? Firstly, it depends on the frame of reference used to analyze achievement or regression. For the most part, both the cost of living and cars are cheaper relative to wages twenty years ago (Bailey and Tupy, 2020). Similarly, both access to healthcare and education has significantly improved. Shockingly, if we are not careful, we could be undoing economic progress.

## 5.1 Socialism and the economy

Sowell (2014) refers to an economy as a system of producing goods and services and distributing them. Economics, then, is the study of the use of scarce resources which have alternate uses as elaborated by Dobbins. This involves both rationing and competition which are inherent in these circumstances. Moreover, competition in the market is not a matter of choice, it is implicit within the paradigm of economic thinking. Subsequently, the only choice policymakers have is how the competition is carried out (Sowell, 2014). Similarly, rationing is inherent whether under socialism, capitalism or feudalism. Accordingly, various economies are just different institutional ways of making trade-offs that are unavoidable in any economy. Now that one has an understanding of what an economy is and what the discipline of economics aims to achieve, it is necessary to highlight the main socialist observations concerning economic organization. Next, the relevance and reliability of social justice propositions regarding the remedy of inequality will be examined. Key to testing the reliability of an idea involves assessing its logical consistency, empirical relevance and the predictability of outcomes across time.

The socialist and social justice economic observations as seen in the case of South Africa include:

- Scarcity exists because the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer (the rich are overwhelmingly white while the black population remains poor)

- Political institutions can be restructured to overcome inequality and ensure equal economic outcomes (affirmative action programs, employment equity and the welfare state)

- If it were not for apartheid, all social groups would have something roughly equal economically speaking

- Racism and discrimination must be held liable for every difference in interethnic economic outcomes

According to social justice, the only appropriate policy strategy able to address and unequal interethnic economic outcomes, is resource redistribution. However, a redistributive framework cannot contribute toward economic growth or sustainable development. Notably, resource redistribution has no economic growth proposition. Most ideas of western origins such as capitalism are discussed in terms of their tradeoffs with little to no mention of their positive economic consequences.

Socialism on the other hand, though tried and tested, with far more devastating consequences, is praised for the moral superiority of its goals. Hence, the imminent danger in unilateral thinking and comprehension espoused by ideology (Peterson, 2018). Importantly, the centrality of scarcity in the discipline of economics does not imply a zero-sum game. However, Marxist and socialist ideologies have interpreted individual wealth as robbing someone else of what 'rightfully' belongs to them. Socialism then, automatically equates commodification to exploitation. In socialist circles, it follows that the commodification of labour makes all labour exploitive. Therefore, it regards the profit motive as incentivizing corruption and exploitive behaviour in the workplace. However, both public and private institutions have faced numerous corruption scandals, suggesting that perhaps it is not the 'inherent evil of a profit-motive' behind social ills. Instead, it is the understanding of human nature as flawed, imperfect and fundamentally constrained by the moral and intellectual limitations of human beings. Considering socialism as an alternative economic system then, suggests that it can guarantee production efficiency using incentives other than profit. Seeing that its foremost critique of capitalism is its immoral tendencies, socialism opines that individuals are instead, ethically persuaded (Sassoon, 2013). Again, morality and causation are not the same.  As such, socialism as an ideological lens misrepresents economic realities.

Nye (2008) notes that public diplomacy impresses the need for governments to engage both national and international audiences to influence public dialogue. Via the media, image cultivation and common ideological rhetoric, governments successfully gauge the public with the intent of relationship building. The oneness of language is essential to building the public's partnership with the state. Notably, both the media and the government are guilty of misrepresenting economic realities to the public. Facts sadly do not command the attention of the majority. After all, the framing of most economic conditions within the oppressor and the oppressed narrative certainly does. Hence, the rise and appeal of socialism and its unrivalled uni-dimensionality that allows competing arguments to be exclusively accountable for all adversarial conditions. Understanding perception bias and the human proclivity toward negative bias, make it easier for the media to benefit from human beings' threat susceptibility. Specifically, this includes the retention of bad news owing to its emotional and behavioral potency. For instance, it is widely published that capitalism is to blame for nearly all problems experienced in the world today. The lack of economic literacy foregoes the fact that the condition of scarcity is itself, among the primary motivations behind the need to economize. Evidence of this misrepresentation is seen in blaming global hunger and individual greed on capitalism. On the contrary, both scarcity and hunger have persisted as long as human history has been recorded. Note, the statement of fact does not negate the implicit moral condition of fairness. Put plainly, life is simply not fair and politicians' repeated attempts to make it fairer, has dire economic and social consequences. An uncomfortable truth, but a truth, nonetheless.

Hakizimana and Geyer (2014) expand that poverty's racial dimension must be studied to determine whether correlation or causation solves disparate economic outcomes in South Africa. The idea that cultural relativism blocks the transfer of working socio-economic principles centered on understanding the economy must be confronted. Importantly, problems persist when moral judgments are assigned to empirical phenomena in economic analysis. Discarding economic principles in favor of the ideological interpretation of free market realities and conditions of scarcity, rationing and competition tends to misrepresent interethnic economic outcomes. While economic conditions change based on different contexts, trends endure. And knowing the value of economic principles aids the correct interpretation of actors and their behaviour. Irrespective of culture, ethnicity and nationality, wherever socialism is applied, and social justice manifests itself in policy reform agendas, conditions of extreme inequality, increased poverty, unemployment and racial tension prevails.

Holmes (2017) expands that in 1917 Lenin's Bolsheviks overthrew the Russian government and established a communist dictatorship. In the wake of this new regime, Pipes estimates that 9 million people died, whereas Concrete estimates at least 20 to 30 million were killed in the Great Terror. This mass genocide is exceeded only by another communist dictatorship, Maoist China which destroyed between 44.5 – 72 million lives (Holmes, 2017). So, the Bolsheviks sought to modernize their societies through force- the gun and the central planning office. For the most part, both individual and societal freedoms are not a priority to a socialist run government. On that account, it is the ideal model for government control and the re-engineering of society. Wherever socialism and social justice policies have been enacted, poverty and human misery soon followed. The index of economic freedom notes that communists, former communists or some variation of a socialist economy, are among the poorest and most corrupt nations today. This is no coincidence. It takes a skillful ideologue to strip socialism of the atrocities committed in its name and defense. Socialism undressed is simply language redefinition in pursuit of a utopian vision that is willing to violate human rights to conform society into its image and likeness.

Capitalism, notorious for its negative publicity, should learn from its socialist alternative which has successfully managed to evade policy accountability despite its grotesque legacy of starvation, oppression and death. The Russian experience with socialism was willing to sacrifice millions of lives in pursuit of a classless utopian vision. Govender (2016) suggests that South Africa mirror the Latin American experience of government-led programs and expand its social security net. Similarly, Venezuela is praised in academic circles for its promises of free health care, free education, spreading the wealth, and defunding the police, all the while people are dying of starvation. Why is socialism stalked by extreme poverty, inequality and human misery? Again, the idea that 'the government knows best' and can act as a neutral arbitrator focused on ensuring 'prosperity for all', is a promise no government has been able to keep. No development can occur when its people are entrapped by a system that discourages productivity, innovation and individual autonomy. Data produced by Statistics SA (2014) informs that social assistance in South Africa continues to expand from about 3 million grants to 15 million by 2001. Reasons provided for the rapid increase in grants include child support grants which increased from about 150,000 recipients in 2000 to over 10 million in 2011. Gossel and Koelble (2020) present that now the fiscal problem that the Republic is faced with is that the 'number of grant recipients has increased from 4.2 million beneficiaries in 2002 to over 18 million in 2020'. Evidently, the social justice solution enacted to alleviate poverty has given rise to even more poverty. It remains useful to consider the extent to which the welfare system has financed the dissolution of the black family structure and facilitated the economic breakdown of the black family. In sum, social assistance is presented as a poverty reduction strategy, although it has been disastrously unsuccessful in this endeavor. The major reason for its colossal failure is the celebration of the imagined policy intentions of the welfare system rather than the results. Moreover, the consequences and expansion thereof, demand a critical evaluation of the thinking, methodologies and tradeoffs responsible for the counterproductive economic outcomes produced.

Socialists offer a progressive view of history as the scope for social development. Marens (2007) elaborates that Marxists believe that class conflict propels history forward and that a classless communist society is history's determinant endpoint. Problematic about this assertion is the value of class as a reliable instrument of measurement. Is it relevant to group people in class terms when individuals rarely stay in the same income bracket for longer than a decade? Moreover, class, as a variable can obscure economic progress among historically marginalized groups by not taking factors such as age, location, fertility into consideration (Sowell, 1978). Additionally, why is the class struggle tied exclusively to economics? Why is it likened to capitalism as opposed to a fundamental existentialist problem? Human beings struggle on multiple plains, not chiefly economically. Although the capitalist market has demonstrated efficiency, it cannot be said that this form of economic

organization has treated all social classes alike/equally. Who is to blame? Capitalism as a system, political institutions or discrimination? Marxism anchors itself to the presumption that differences in wealth were due to capitalists growing rich by keeping the workers poor, through 'exploitation' (Sowell, 2016). Subsequently, unequal economic outcomes are always attributed to the adverse treatment of the less fortunate as opposed to the level of value created, offered and rewarded by the market. To put it succinctly, the less fortunate are branded as victims affirming that Marxism relies on the oppressor versus oppressed framework to interpret human relationships. Primarily, this framework illustrates the relationship between the worker and the employer. Marxism appeals to basic human moral intuitions about fairness and equity which exclusively understands and interprets relationships using the hermeneutical lens of power. This thinking prevails in ANC policy provisions, especially the welfare state and the growing popularity of social justice as the dominant response to inequality. Subsequently, socialism, as an ideological lens misrepresents economic realities.

Therefore, the extent to which coloniality strong-arms the Global South today represents the inability of the African decolonized intelligentsia to escape the restricted pathways of consumerism. The reliance on an external actor to produce what we need, without an appreciation for trade specialization, is a recipe for unsustainable dependence. Sowell (2016) specifically cautions against sensationalized inequality, where academics and economists consistently 'ignore the source of income inequality: wealth production'. It is not enough to think for ourselves if we are unwilling to do for ourselves. Sustainability cannot be found nor pursued without self-production. And there is no sustainable way to maintain the demands of an ever-increasing welfare state.

## Socialism and the government: a new social contract

According to Zondi (2021), the covid-19 pandemic is reversing the neoliberal limitations on the state's role in social services and the economy. The global weakening of democracy begs the question of whether there exists an intellectual, economic or moral import able to take its place on the pending reform agenda. This section will show how an understanding of the social contract between the government and its people explains the South African governments' socio-economic policy preferences. In short, political theory gives expression to the relationship between the people and the government in what is known as the social contract. According to Schwab and Malleret (2020), the cause of decay in the value of the social contract is captured in the conjoined influence of inequality and unfairness. Further, socialism accepts the role of the state as arbiter and administer of resources and opportunities – but based on what expertise? It is useful to consider the illusion of impartiality surrounding the role of state intervention in ensuring equal economic outcomes for all social groups. Marxists believe that the state is an agent of class oppression. Liberals, however, contend that the state is a neutral actor. Therefore, the primary contestation lies in the role of the state as the general personification of the will of the people or a self-existing entity driven by its own interests.

Sowell (2019) remarks 'Politics is not useful in improving the economic conditions of disadvantaged groups'. At first glance, the abovementioned quote provokes initial confusion and perhaps even rage, depending on your position on the political spectrum. If politics is unable to provide an avenue for the practical realization of social and economic goals, what purpose does this institution serve? In this context, politics refers to the procedural aspects of attaining government. Firstly, one should locate the origin of government dependence. Second, one must decipher when individual autonomy was deemed incapable of delivering transformation to both individual and societal realities. Gelb (2003) comments that the waning relevance of individual autonomy can be traced to the suppression of individual and ethnic groups during the apartheid era. First and foremost, empirically speaking, social groups which compete openly do not end up with the same results. By extension, unequal

outcomes are automatically assumed to be a result of discrimination as espoused by social justice rhetoric. Sowell (2019) records that Jews in South East Asia, the Indians in East Africa and the Cubans in America have enjoyed greater economic prosperity than indigenous groups in the land. Simply put, you cannot confiscate the source of physical wealth which is a product of human capital, knowledge, skills, talents and other qualities. Because these qualities exist in the mind of people, they cannot be redistributed. Redistribution is temporary. It offers remedial prospects at best, therefore, cannot be the singular or dominant means through which development and economic progress can be fostered.

The first faulty bureaucratic assumption is that historical redress is possible and practically achievable. Born out of this assumption is the welfare system, affirmative action and employment equity programs. Gossel and Koelble (2020) note that among the main policies designed to reverse inequality, poverty, and exclusion were employment equity (EE), broad-based black economic empowerment (BBBEE) and the establishment of an expansive welfare system. Often these programs are championed with great enthusiasm, despite the counterproductive socio-economic outcomes produced as a result. Notably, the only legitimation for such policies is the transfer of historical guilt. Historical redress is among the main reasons behind the social justice informed socio-economic policy response in South Africa. This makes the socio-economic policymaking process contentious and susceptible to emotional manipulation. It is important to ask what the time frames given are to ensure equal representation in all sectors and who decides when the historical debt has been paid? Simply because of the biological continuity of generations, it is impossible for temporary quotas and preferences although instituted in the name of historical redress, to ever reach their prescribed target. Put plainly, no individual, institution or policy can satisfy the insatiable appetite of historical redress. In essence, there is a difference between redress and national racial representation. Socialist discourse orbits around the government's pre- planning of economic outcomes. Even more outrageous about affirmative action policies, is the audacity to prescribe actual outcomes and end-results. That is to overestimate institutional capacity and go beyond what is controllable and what policymakers can achieve. Wherever human beings are involved, provision must be made for human error. Imperfection is inherent in the human experience. Factors such as age, education, interest, individuality, attitude, geographic location and marriage all affect ones socio-economic condition. Resultantly, this makes its pre-planned outcomes elusive and far-reaching. Sowell (2008) puts it this way, 'that different ethnic groups rely on different mobility ladders'. Ideologues, academics, advocates and policymakers operate as social engineers who believe that it is possible to re-engineer society to a zero inequality basis. According to socialists, both policies and institutions can be restructured to remedy the flaws of humanity and human nature. Instead of individuals exercising choice from different options, if the government can limit the options available, they can 'control' the outcomes. A socialist utopia and the extent to which governments will go to violate human rights to ensure that its citizens conform to new ideas, attitudes and behaviours are seen in the tragedies of Maoist China and Communist Russia.

The Bolshevik revolution was among the first to mobilize mass violence in the name of revolution. Basically, South Africa's social revolts are not new but borrowed revolutionary tactics from its socialist mentors. Holmes (2017) adds that irrespective of the type of revolution albeit fascist or communist, the use of terror to revolutionize society is a historical precedent established by the Bolsheviks and French revolutionaries. Fundamentally, Russia's communist revolution set the precedent for the acceptance of violence to any detectable inequality. So, the socialist response to socio-economic inequality is not concerned with empowering historically marginalized groups but inciting division, envy, resentment and later violence. As noted earlier, socialism deals in the domain of absolutes. This means that there is limited room for debate and discussion. In this way, socialism takes on a totalizing culture, resembling that of a secular religion. These claims are assumed to be

true at all times. Notably, Communist China under Mao killed one hundred million people, followed by Stalin who starved six million during the Ukraine famine. Surprisingly, these facts are often disassociated with the regimes which pledged undoubtable allegiance to socialism. In spite of the penned amicable goals socialism aims to achieve, what accounts for the counter-productive results produced, warrants further investigation. Holistically, this discrepancy demands the studying of claims included in proposed policy positions used to 'empower and unify' social groups. Among the prevailing themes featured in socialist rhetoric is its rhetorical commitment to a common humanity. From this vantage point, it's supposed moral superiority is celebrated, unlike its ideological enemy, economic liberalism. Shockingly, more individuals died in Communist Russia than in both the First and Second World Wars. Sowell (2002) comments that socialism assumes that the government is absolved from the incentives and constraints that affect the average human being. Hence, the erroneous idea that there is no limit to what politicians and institutions can accomplish if elected. Put plainly then, politicians are not all-powerful, all-knowing beings able to make our economic problems disappear with the whisk of a wand? So, by penning a policy proposal, the constraints which impede implementation in every other domain prevail, except in the political? On the whole, politics and government decide how income is distributed not generated. The acknowledgement of this simple statement reveals the problem with socialized socio-economic development. In this way, the welfare system has become like a business - where the goal is to have permanent customers. The absence of self-production always makes the borrower a slave to the lender. Social assistance does not alleviate poverty, unproductivity or unemployment, it simply subsidizes it. Emphasized in this context, is the antithetical impact of social justice policies. Despite their quest to solve socio-economic inequality, social justice policies have created an entirely new set of problems, far worse than the initial condition. For instance, over-regulated sectors of economic development discourage innovation and productivity. Not only academics but politicians have skillfully used rhetoric to create an environment where fairness emerges as the moral antidote to socio-economic inequality. Riddley (2012) points out that innovation depends on the freedom of speech as well as the free exchange of ideas and criticism. Whereas government regulation drowns creativity by limiting the expression of disagreeable commentary, openness, on the other hand, governs creativity (Bailey and Tuby, 2020). Consequently, innovation follows deregulated spaces. In short, better products and services are produced because of the freedom of communication. The socio-economic policy process must therefore, be open to monitoring and evaluation processes. Ultimately, evidence-based decision making requires the devastation of popularly held socialist-inspired socio-economic beliefs. Importantly, every individual possesses the capability of learning from new evidence. As a result, you can change your mind.

## Socialism, social groups and individual autonomy

First and foremost, the principle of basic equality takes precedence, which allows for different hierarchies to be created. From this vantage point, nature itself is not a stable hierarchical system. When consulting geographic determinism, for instance, nature develops from within. Based on socialist tenants, socio-economic divisions are esteemed as the most destructive obstacles to cohesion and unity. This viewpoint assumes an egalitarian character that presumes governments, institutions and policymakers can prescribe economic outcomes for all social groups. The only reason socialism deems difference in value production by different social groups as destructive, is because it automatically synonymizes inequality with discrimination. Inequality manifests on multiple plains. It is not a consequence of capitalism, but rather of imperfect human beings inhabiting an imperfect world. Socialism and social justice assassinate values of self-reliance and ownership. Resultantly, it rejects the inherent capacity of an individual to change their value production based on the reception, retention and application of new information. Further, externally induced and internally confirmed insecurities are key informants of low self-esteem and self-worth. These inferiority

complexes accompany the legacy of spiritual poverty, as termed by Steve Biko. One's external and tangible value production capacity is derived from an internal confirmation and assurance of value. As such, the reconstruction of the human mind remains among the most difficult tasks. Furthermore, without the human will – the ability to choose and thereby exercise agency, mankind is doomed to misery by repetition.

Biko (2004) makes the case that spiritual poverty is the biggest hindrance to the economic progress of black people. He goes on to add that the apartheid government was strategic in its quest to dehumanize the black man. Material poverty was a mere consequence of the dehumanization agenda. Generally, the goal of oppression always transcends material deprivation to normalize the depersonalization of the black human being. In other words, you are the total of everything you have been conditioned to think. Interestingly, lies and untruths concerning individual potential, purpose and production capacity, function under the guise of truth when they are believed. Indeed, because the sub-conscience mind has no rationalization capacity, it simply believes what it is told- regardless of factual accuracy. In short, the goal of oppression is a broken spirit. The image of who the oppressor said you are is magnified in your understanding. So, despite the removal of external racial barriers, historically marginalized groups become hamstrung to a consciousness of self-doubt and dependence on any source except themselves. Now, self-identification is based on the interpretation of the oppressor. Again, the persistence of external conditions of poverty are only to solidify the internal condition of lack, self-doubt and even self-hatred. Academics and politicians, despite presumed intentions, continue to remind historically marginalized groups and blacks in particular, of their oppression. Having said that, there are no racial barriers to success today in comparison to the apartheid era. Contrary, a careful examination of the language used by the intellectual community, seem intent on recreating an atmospheric impression of racism as an inescapable reality. Not only this, but positioning racism as a perennial barrier to the economic progress of indigenous groups. Overall, collective potential is realized when historically marginalized groups begin to assume responsibility for their consciousness, self-actualization, awakening to self-determination and self-production capacity.

Language produces culture and culture legitimates certain attitudes, thinking patterns and behaviors. Thus language has ties to cultural identity. What makes socialist ideas difficult to divorce from the socio-economic policy process is that it has cemented itself as an indispensable component of social group identity. Thus, socialism derives its knowledge legitimacy based on belonging to a social group designation, in this case, race. Then, it proceeds to discount other explanations for disparate socio-economic outcomes irrespective of its truthfulness, intellectual merit and solution efficacy. Consequently, socialist' ideology is employed as an instrument of control and compliance used to silence and even excommunicate those who refuse to adhere to its sacred tenants. Hence, the imminent danger of a single factor analysis empowering South Africa's socio-economic architecture. As such, the victim consciousness perpetuated by the welfare system undermines the efforts of renowned political thinkers who championed self-reliance as the ultimate form of liberation. Biko (2004), for instance, persistently advanced the doctrine of black consciousness and self-reliance. Additionally, both the intelligentsia together with politicians, tends to excuse the reasons for previously marginalized groups to be productive and innovative- among the chief factors responsible for wealth creation. Rather than developing competence within historically marginalized groups, it is more beneficial for social justice programs to subsidize ignorance. Notably, there are no racial barriers to economic success in South Africa today compared to the Apartheid era, yet generational poverty seems to persist among historically marginalized groups. This paper suggests that the overlooked yet enduring legacy of spiritual poverty is key to the economic liberation of the black man. Remarkably, wealth creation capacity is not a racially exclusive enterprise. Similarly, the 2015 World Development Report: Mind, Society, and Behavior (World Bank, 2015b) recommends that

development interventions consider the twin impact of psychological and anthropological research. For certain, these insights inform that poverty can affect the mental model through which the poor view themselves.

For socialism to succeed, the individual must have seized to exist, becoming one with the respective social group (Sassoon, 2013). Precisely, it is the group distinction that makes society more manageable and therefore, amenable to government control. Ultimately, this creates the impression that the government knows best (uniformity and conformity created by social groups). Note, the increasing intolerance for individuality because it breeds the politics of difference. The acknowledgement of different interests leading to different value systems means that conflict is inevitable. Given this scenario, conflict can be prevented, managed, or resolved through peaceful processes. Strict allegiance to the state as demanded by socialist ideology must not be underestimated. The assumption that the government can deliver pre-planned economic outcomes represents an insidious attempt to instill self-doubt in an individual's capacity for self-production. By creating a deficiency in competency, individuals are dissuaded and unable to make decisions concerning their welfare, development, and even their health. This is demonstrated in the public health crisis today. While it can be appreciated that the government is trying to curb the spread of covid-19, does this crisis warrant that constitutional rights and freedoms be abated? Discrimination has consequences that are either benign or malevolent. Becker et al (1982) considers the act of making a distinction as the prerequisite to engaging in discriminatory practice against all non-preferred things. Discrimination defines individuality. It is perhaps the very act of choice that is despised by policymakers who desire to engineer and re-engineer society based on their socialist visions. There is an urgency to implement specific visions able to generate and guarantee specific outcomes. Fundamentally, acts of discrimination or preference are of more than superficial interest since they define the limits of individuality (Becker et al, 1982).

## Implications

The stench of communist Russia seldom finds its way into current political discourse as a powerful reminder of the tradeoffs associated with socialism in practice. Importantly, the emotive attraction of socialist ideology creates oneness with the idea (Mclellan, 2007). Now, a critique lodged against the factual correctness of an idea metamorphosis into an attack on personhood. Political correctness, social media's cancel culture and Big Tech censorship stimulates one of the most crafty forms of oppression, self-censorship. Self-censorship is among the most abominable forms of entitlement and control that should not find South Africa's democracy commonplace. Fast forward, should the ANC's management of the covid-19 pandemic permit the state to suspend individual constitutional freedoms and ethics in the name of safety? Notably, the public remains largely unaware of distinguishing between a factual and ideological statement.  Vaccine hesitancy is no small feat. Having said that, the growing effect of socialism lends further insight into the ANC's vaccine rollout agenda and campaign. Basically, socialism discourages individual autonomy and in doing so, reduces the individual to a member of a social group.  The growing depreciation for the exercise of individual rights attests to the pervasive influence of socialist rhetoric. In simple terms, human rights are still inalienable, indestructible and indivisible (Sen, 2005). Moreover, human rights are not based on good behaviour. So, the idea that human rights are being held hostage if citizens do not comply with a strongly advocated for vaccine policy, is deeply disturbing. At its core, it is insulting to the bloodshed of men and women who sacrificed their lives for the hope of a free and democratic South Africa.

Socio-economic development requires partnership. And partnership, is incompatible with a redistribution focused paradigm. Simply put, without individual participation in the development

agenda, the individual or social group is unable to transition from a recipient to a partner. Ake (1996) concurs that the people must be the means and ends of their development. Partnership thus invokes the expectation of reciprocity. If you do not expect anything in return, you are a recipient and not a participant. Development in the absence of partnership and participation is assisted oppression. As long as the state assumes a socio-economic strategy informed by social justice rhetoric, consulting the cause of unproductive behaviour. This will trap historically marginalized groups in cycles of poverty and unemployment for the foreseeable generations. Lastly, a rapidly expanding welfare system cannot sustain an economically viable, prosperous and peaceful South Africa.

Tyrannical leadership tendencies and policy positions witnessed during South Africa's management of the covid-19 pandemic, if not contested, will exceed being tolerated and will accelerate. Oppression does not come dressed as oppression. It comes dressed as an angel of light. It is subtle, gradual and manifested in the incremental sacrificing of values and choice spurred on by the seizing of individual autonomy to state control. If an individual is understood to be the microcosm of society and can exercise choice – a society comprised of individuals is said to be free. To limit that freedom that accompanies the recognition of the individual's ability to make a decision, socialism, seeks to reduce the choices available- outside of government. The thinking follows that if choices available are reduced, then 'freedom', can be managed and controlled. Therefore, increased bureaucratic hold over the management of society. Social justice goes further to decide who should be given preference. In most cases, socialist's language masks true revolutionary intentions. And for the socialist project to work – academics, the media and politicians have to re-engineer how mankind thinks. His thoughts, belief system and attitude become the playground for intellectual and emotional manipulation. The highest form of oppression is to control what someone thinks or says. Restrictions on speech are restrictions on individual sovereignty and rationalization. And in a culture that rehearses the tolerance mantra, it conveniently restricts its conceptual expression to those who display uniformity of thought. Hence, the rise of political correctness and cancel culture which reserves the cultural right to excommunicate anyone who dares to disagree.

To socialize an economy is to set institutional (government-sanctioned) limits and not only insult but restrict value production. It represents the erroneous assumption that politicians and academics can draft economic outcomes outside the bounds of rationality, biology, morality and individuality. The idea that these variables are amenable to change represents the speed at which society will begin to descend into lunacy. Socialism legitimates suffering in the name of ideological allegiance to the racially inspired decolonization agenda. Poverty today, is a policy choice. What social justice teaches is that social groups that have suffered historical oppression are too oppressed to produce items of value. Because of their generational oppression- their value has been stolen, rendering them unable and incapable of producing value for themselves in the form of goods and services. Therefore, the only means to ensure 'equity' is to redistribute what someone else has produced. Social justice rhetoric leads to misunderstanding the value of productivity and the production of value itself. Correcting false assumptions based on the market appropriation of value, misleads previously disadvantaged groups from alternative avenues which foster the creation of wealth through problem-solving. Hard work and more education does not automatically result in greater wealth creation capacity. Additionally, physical and managerial labour have a market cap on the income generated, however, the levels of imagination and innovation possess unlimited wealth creation capacity. The mind continues to be the greatest asset in wealth creation. The mind. Not the race. Not the ethnicity. And not the sex. Not affirmative action, but the mind. The education sector is key in championing the change from an ideologically driven public mind to a critical thinking and problem solving.

## Conclusion

The global resurgence of social justice as a policy response to remedy inequality appears to be somewhat of a new and untested means capable of ensuring roughly equal economic outcomes for different ethnic groups in society. In politics, however, understanding is itself a commodity that is exploited in the intellectual marketplace of meaning. It follows then that the nature of socialist ideology has caused academia, policymakers and the public to be appalled by the simplicity of truth. Even more alarming than the simplicity of truth is the postmodern forsaking of truth entirely. Moreover, there is a danger in disallowing questions concerning policy failure which both cripples the public mind and produces numb thinkers. The absolute status apportioned to certain concepts and values provides abstaining power from the burden of proving its carefully articulated assertions. More pointedly, every ideology has tradeoffs. Refusal to acknowledge these socialist tradeoffs, result in much public confusion and discontentment with the pace of change or lack thereof entirely. Careful analysis of the socio-economic policy process in South Africa reveals the need to dethrone socialist and social justice assumptions parading as universal truth. Inequality, in general, is deeper than a mere consequence of an economic system but is tied to an existentialist origin. Social justice is predicated on the assumption that all inequality can be traced to an institutional root. Thus, if not for socialization forces, everyone has equal potential. This implies that socialization can produce equal socioeconomic outcomes. However, racial representation is not a substitute for historical redress, nor can race account for 'overly represented sectors'. Socialism refuses to acknowledge that certain social evils are not institutionally imposed but a mere consequence of human nature and the inescapable flaws which accompany it. These ideas coincide with substantive egalitarianism, where governments and institutions believe that equal outcomes for different social groups are possible. In short, demographic diversity has taken precedence over the diversity of thought. Therefore, any serious inquiry into developing historically marginalized groups must shift from wealth redistribution as the primary framework to administer long-term economic gains. On the whole, social justice-informed socio-economic strategies are devoid of empowerment prospects. A further consequence is the downplayed understanding of the effect of spiritual poverty on productivity levels and the production of value in the market by historically marginalized groups. Overall, empirical evidence in favour of ideological persuasion and rhetoric- irrespective of its counter-productive policy results-reflects the extent to which politicians would go to preserve their intellectual ego. Lastly, scholars must not bypass the process of testing ideological claims and supplementing ideological arguments with evidence. The pursuit of factuality and truthfulness should be at the forefront in leading and guiding research that informs socio-economic policy and law-making.

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# COVID-19 as a Catalyst for Strengthening Research Practice in BRICS' Universities: A Reflective Study

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## Abstract

South Africa's National Development Plan 2030 (National Planning Commission, 2012) argues that there must be a simultaneous focus on research and teaching for South African universities to advance knowledge and society. However, since the dawn of COVID-19, most research focuses on teaching, leaving unattended research about doing and philosophising on research practice. Therefore, this paper rethinks ways of thinking and researching for postgraduate students who are based in South Africa's (SA's) historically disadvantaged institutions of higher learning. This paper proposes how COVID-19 should bring about a paradigm shift in research philosophy and research practice, including the necessary supervision support for post-graduate students. It employs the social constructivist paradigm as an analytical tool, drawing on the reflections of two postgraduate supervisors, and further reflects on broader paradigmatic issues within research. This paper relies strongly on the experiences of the authors as a primary source of data and is also conceptually harvested from the existing literature. The (auto)biographic element of the study allows the researchers to explore the intersection between themselves and the subject they are studying, thus permitting the reader to understand this intersection and reflect on their own experiences (Given, 2008). There are two main arguments in this paper: 1) A call for re-centring the ethics of care and the ethics of social responsibility as premises from which all research should start. This can be done by reflecting on and exploring the first-hand experiences of those who are in Historically Disadvantaged Institutions (HDIs). 2) It is a call for equitable distribution of resources across BRICS universities, focusing primarily on the improvement of the HDIs which is consistent with BRICS' multilateral developmental agenda.

Keywords: COVID-19, Research practices, BRICS, HDI, post-graduate students, social responsibility

## Introduction

This article is organised into two main parts. Part one (sections two and three) is a contextualization of the study within the intersectionality between the supervisors and students which occurred during the times of their supervision and are underpinned by two specific details: 1) knowledge and knowledge production are not independent of our subjective experiences. If anything, our experiences provide us with a standpoint from which we can engage scientific discourse in our endeavours of knowledge production; and 2) all knowledge and knowledge production are contextual – not only concerning who we are, but also, where we are – and this is true for all knowledge producers (Collyer, Connell, Maia, and Morrell, 2019: 1). Part two (sections four to six) of this paper focuses on the philosophy and practice of scientific research, and details how we find COVID-19 helps us to improve these.

In the preface of his seminal work on the philosophy of science (arguably the most influential work on the subject in the 20th century), Kuhn (1970: v) gives a short autobiography of why he undertook to write the book. His own experience with knowledge and knowledge production set the stage for his engagement with the philosophy and practice of science, a lesson we draw from him. In this

paper, we reflect on what the emergence of COVID-19 offers for our practice of scientific research and research philosophy within the Historically Disadvantaged Institutions (HDIs) in South Africa. Our contributions detail lessons being gained from studying and doing research, and how we make sense of such lessons under the COVID-19 pandemic. In doing this, we call on all knowledge producers to reflect on their own knowledge production experiences as catalysed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The (auto)biographic element of the study allows the researchers to explore the intersection of their experiences and that of the post-graduate students, located within the context of research supervision and knowledge production (as the subjects they are studying), allowing the reader to understand this intersection, meanwhile reflecting on their own experiences (Given, 2008).

Studies such as the ones conducted by David and Moala (2017), David (2019), and Sidorova (2018) have considered the quality and world rankings of the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) universities by relying on the neoliberal tradition of comparing universities. David and Motala (2017: 512) note that this ranking "give[s] meaning to notions such as excellent and world-class universities. The most fundamental aim in this regard is to provide an alternative economic force and the role higher education is playing…" Additionally, David and Motala (2017:513) assert that:

> The growing youth population and the ever-increasing competition in the knowledge space in Brazil and India, the strong scientific basis in Russia, the established academia in South Africa and the massive industrialization that demands innovation in China continue to provide some positive hope without clear indications if BRICS will be able to give a new meaning to the notion of 'world-class universities' and build ivory towers of excellence.

On the other hand, Altbach and Bassett (2014) argued that comparing the BRIC (South Africa is excluded due to that paper's broader argument) higher education systems was a futile exercise as the four countries' systems were so different that they could not be compared meaningfully. The criticism by Altbach and Basset (2014) is also relevant within the context of COVID-19. As a catalyst, COVID-19 shows that the exercise of ranking universities based on their performance cannot provide us with a holistic understanding of their nature if we do not explore their historical materialism, their impact on communities, students, and staff as a priority, particularly within the HDIs. Thus, considering the importance of research practice and research philosophy that guides the practice of research, this paper deals with the question of how best COVID-19 offers us an opportunity to rethink and relearn what is important, while we unlearn destructive research practices and research philosophies during the process of knowledge production within the HDIs in South Africa. The paper relies strongly on the experiences of the authors as primary sources and harvests conceptually from existing literature.

## Intersectionality between Supervisors and Students

This section expounds on the intersectionality of our experiences as supervisors and our students which Andriopoulou and Prowse (2020: 649)) term "The research supervisory relationship." Additionally, these authors argue that a "supervisory relationship is first and foremost a human relationship governed by the rules of human communication and interaction" (Andriopoulou and Prowse, 2020: 657), which ties in closely with our section on research philosophy.

We are young emerging academics pursuing our doctoral degrees, primarily responsible for teaching both undergraduate and postgraduate students. We supervise students' honours research projects and master's (MA) dissertations within an HDI, where we are expected to undergo rigorous research processes and practices. Mills (2000) counsels:

> We cannot adequately understand 'man' as an isolated biological creature, as a bundle of reflexes or a set of instincts, as an 'intelligible field' or a system in and of itself. Whatever else he may be, man is a social and a historical actor who must be understood, if at all, in close and intricate interplay with social and historical structures.

With this argument, Mills (2000) counsels that a reflection upon one's experience must consider structures in which the milieu of such experiences are organized. Both the authors have undergone enjoyable times and challenging times. Completing a master's (MA) dissertation or a thesis is a very lonely and seriously independent journey. Under any normal circumstances, it is a journey that demands self-reliance, resilience, focus, time, financial support, study materials, and many other important resources that may enable the completion of the study. Such resources may include, but are not limited to, access to the library, internet connectivity (for information search) and a conducive environment for studying. This understanding provides the authors with an insight into the experiences of the students regarding the fact that they co-produce knowledge through research. The supervision of students' research studies becomes such a practice – a co-production of knowledge.

## A Brief History of the Higher Education System and HDIS in South Africa

The HDIs in South Africa are universities that were established to serve the non-white populace (black, coloured, and Indian) when apartheid laws prohibited the mixing of different races in the same institutions of higher education. The establishment of these universities was based on racial and ethnic lines. In this case, Adonis & Silinda (2021) observes that race appears to continue being a characterisation mechanism of social life in South Africa to date. The main purpose of this establishment was to inculcate an institutional culture that would ensure that the non-whites received an inferior education while the whites received a superior education. Additionally, one of the mechanisms of guaranteeing this was by ensuring that most of these universities were built away from modern resources (such as being outside of urban centres). Another key feature of HDIs is that they were under-funded and are still heavily reliant on government funding (Bengu, 2021).

Most students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds continue to experience limitations regarding advanced infrastructure and technologies that best promote knowledge production and best research practice. In a Department of Higher Education and Training presentation to Norwegian delegates, Bengu (2021) explains the inequality and inequities embedded in the architectural and functioning of the higher education structural systems as a mechanism of ensuring that the education service to the non-white populace in South Africa remains inferior and that it provides no service to the communities. This is due to the "systematic political oppression, social discrimination, and economic exploitation of black people during colonial and apartheid rule" (Badat, 2010 cited in Adonis & Silinda, 2021: 74). Additionally, the Council on Higher Education (1996), as cited in Adonis & Silinda (2021: 74), emphasises that:

> The structuring of the higher education system was developed with these aims in mind and resulted in a fragmented higher education system consisting of highly advantaged institutions that catered for whites and that were well resourced, on the one hand, and, on the other, severely disadvantaged institutions with limited resources catering for blacks.

This structuring of the higher education system sought to undermine the non-white populace's education and their capabilities to autonomously achieve upward social mobility and contribute

to the development of their societies' economy. Thus, it is critical to consider this context in our reflection and analysis.

In the current epoch of the COVID-19 pandemic, we witness universities finding themselves faced with what Thomas Kuhn (1972) calls the emergence of a paradigm shift. COVID-19 as a global pandemic exposes the experiences that would otherwise be hidden. These include political, economic, and cultural inequality in the world. In the main, such inequality is the result of the legacy of colonial and apartheid rule, particularly, in terms of equitable distribution and access to resources within universities. In South Africa, this is a reality among the HDIs such as the University of Limpopo, Walter Sisulu University, University of Venda, and the University of Zululand where this inequality continues to exist. As explained by DHET (2013: 80),

> The disadvantaged universities, particularly those in the rural areas of the former Bantustans, are still disadvantaged in terms of infrastructure, teaching facilities and staffing. Coupled with this, there are some institutions within the system that continue to show signs of instability and dysfunction.

In their research which aimed at analysing the impact of the COVID-19 on the university activity directions in the framework, Rababah, *et. al.* (2021: 2) argue that in "BRICS countries education is seen as a tool for social and economic development, thus they need to ensure their systems and content are of high quality." However, in the context of South Africa, the challenges cannot be tackled using a one-size-fits-all model. The Historical Disadvantaged Institutions require specific urgent attention, mainly to improve their infrastructures such as computer labs, better-resourced libraries, and student residences, especially, for the universities based in the rural areas (DHET, 2013; Ayuk & Koma, 2017). Nyahodza and Higgs (2017: 39) noted that the historically disadvantaged university libraries are still faced with a challenge to meet what they call "patrons' demand through the provision of relevant infrastructure, services, and information-related skills to enable users to function in the digital information age." These include basic computer literacy and the use of online library catalogues, all of which are important skills for postgraduate researchers – perhaps more so when they cannot access campus due to COVID-19 and are expected to work more independently. Nyahodza and Higgs (2017: 42) call this challenges a "digital divide that occurs as a result of a lack of exposure to interact with ICTs, as a result, it affects access to e-services that enhance education."

Nyahodza and Higgs (2017: 39) show that although at the University of Western Cape (one of South Africa's HDIs), the students' access to the e-services is satisfactory, challenges "encountered include internet connection, security concerns, shortcomings in information literacy, problems of access and accessibility (including language), and reluctance to engage with unfamiliar technology." It must be noted that these are findings before the advent of the COVID-19; however, we have observed similar challenges with our students both before and during COVID-19 where they could not attend online research training workshops, consultations, and seminars because of a lack of access to advanced ICT devices.

### Destructive and Constructive Interventions

As a science, research philosophy and practice cannot escape what Kuhn (1972) calls destruction (what is done away with) and construction (what emerges) as they progress. In any form of world order, it is the human being who is the primary agent in the construction of the social sphere. Therefore, to take stock of how COVID-19 strengthens research philosophy and practice, we need to re-centre the human being in research philosophy, BRICS universities, and research practice. In other words, we need to inculcate the idea of Botho as a research philosophy that guides our research practice.

BRICS needs to trackback to ideas like *Botho* (which promotes people's individual and collective wellbeing on African humanism) and *Buen Vivir* (loosely translated as a good life), which inform pedagogies of sustainable relationships, genuine care for people, and supervision that comes from the ethics of care and social responsibility. Botho is an African philosophy that centres people as the most important beings, thus each person's actions must be considered concerning the effects they are likely to have on other people. This philosophy is underpinned by behaviours such as friendliness, generosity, kindness, and good treatment of the natural environment for the benefit of all people (Molefe, 2019). On the other hand, *Buen Vivir* is a South American philosophy of life that argues against the capitalist priorities of consumption (especially at the cost of the natural environment) and promotes that people see themselves as being part of nature and the ecological system, not above them. In doing so, it encourages austerity and enjoyment of life that is not linked to materialism (Chuchi, Regnifo, and Gudynas, 2019). On these bases, Kothari, Salleh, Escobar, Demaria, and Acosta (2019) argue that the implementation of *buen vivir* and *botho* encourages ethics of care and social responsibility, which we agree can be beneficial in the realms of supervision and knowledge production – where the processes and the outputs thereof will be to the benefit of both people and the natural environment.

An adoption of the ethics of care and the ethics of social responsibility will strike a balance amidst the fast development of new technologies that appear to fail to create sustainable moral guidance (De Villiers, 2020). According to Ntombana (2011: 27-28) "Moral regeneration of the nation formally became the 28 responsibilities of the government, communities, schools, households as well as individuals." For example, like the initiation schools (whose purpose is to improvement society) in Africa (Maharasoa and Majaraswa, 2004), the BRICS universities must have the communities in their research policies and rankings criteria when providing education as a social good. Moreover, while university rankings' methodologies and rubrics focus on the quality of research and outputs, the well-being of students and supervisors does not seem to be as much a priority as the research outputs are, which is a matter of concern as the outputs seem to be more important than their producers.

Thus, we need to rethink the meaning of research and the usefulness thereof under the COVID-19 era and consider what the role of research should be. This as we are called to social practices that show care for oneself and other through measures such as physical distancing to protect one another. We need to slow down the rate at which we consume products, produce research outputs, expect students to function, *inter alia* (Hartmen & Darab, 2021), to heal the person and the planet. Thus universities should not obsess with throughput rates at the expense of the quality of their research, supervision, and the wellbeing of their students and staff.

We consider the adoption of local philosophies in supervision as one important option. For instance, in Sesotho (one of South Africa's indigenous languages), the words for leader (*moetapele*), supervisor (*moelets*i – advisor), and student (*moithuti)* have the prefix "mo-", which denotes that before one is anything else in society, they are human (Mogobe, 2002). In applying such an ethics of care, we must see students as human beings before seeing them as potential outputs to increase throughput rates. We must approach them with care and sincerity, not with a materialistic attitude. This must be an organizing principle for any form of knowledge production that will improve the post-COVID-19 society.

Thus, the philosophies (such as *botho* and *buen vivir*) of BRICS countries need to be prioritized to create a world that is truly post-colonial, globalized, yet heterogeneous; we must recognise that not all people share the same worldview. Therefore, BRICS does not need to try and assimilate into the colonial past but must map new paths of existence for itself through research and education. In such a context, the above-mentioned philosophies offer better ways of caring about people and the environment.

The supervision relationship is critical for knowledge production and strengthens co-production of knowledge, as opposed to strengthening the power dynamics that come with the hierarchical arrangement of a supervisor and supervisee relationship. The latter is "influenced by the demands of the project itself and the institutional processes [as well as] factors such as social position, culture and unequal power, personality and identity, and relational patterns (Andriopoulou & Prowse (2020: 651).

It is in this light that this paper offers a reflection on the experiences of the young emerging scholars who are also bestowed with the responsibility of supervising postgraduate students. We realize that education is not an end unto itself, but people need to go back to communities and serve. This hits at the core of what it means to be a human being. In other words, this moves beyond the accessibility of resources and deals with how, as human beings, we relate to one another in the world, because it is this critical understanding of what it means to be a human being that appears to be a distribution vehicle for resources needed for our survival. As Illich (1971) argued, a good system of education cares about people's access to resources for their and the communities' wellbeing.

## In BRICS Universities

Under COVID-19, the BRICS countries' universities find themselves faced with what Kuhn would call destruction and construction, which are ties that bind them together. In a memorandum of agreement, Sanjay Dhotre, the Minister of State for Education, Communications, Electronics, and Information Technology, stated that:

> online learning and digital delivery of education have emerged as important means for achieving education sector development goals. It is, therefore, necessary that we recognize the importance of leveraging technology to promote access to inclusive and equitable quality education for all (Dhotre, 2021).

Moreover, Dhotre (2021), cited in Mint (2021) during the 8th education ministers meeting of BRICS countries, makes the following remark about digital and technological solutions:

> We also acknowledge the need to reduce and eventually eliminate the digital divide that restricts the full realization of this potential. There is, therefore, a need to intensify efforts to eliminate disparity in access to digital resources, including digital devices, especially in the case of socially and economically disadvantaged population groups.

Such an endeavour will enhance the universities' social responsibility (USR) as one of the important criteria for understanding universities' impact (Rababah, 2021). Additionally, if the scientific research practice in these institutions is urgently prioritized, it will also enhance their participation in the socio-economic and political decisions that appear during this pandemic. Thus, they will be more influential in the way strategies of mitigating the spread of COVID-19 are constructed and improve the research practice among postgraduate students (Jusuf, 2020).

In their paper titled "Business evolution in the lens of universities' sustainable impact: Russian lessons in BRICS", Belyaeva and Bentsion (2016) note that:

> Currently, the university's function is not only to train students for various vocations but also to enhance social relevance, rather than simply issuing diplomas, to encourage students to find their direction and think beyond individual interests towards societal interest. This means that through socially responsible behaviour, universities demonstrate that they know and can respond to current social issues both through

personal projects related to community development and through educational programs, which educate young people to become socially responsible individuals and equal participants in creating positive social change.

We argue that it is essential for the BRICS countries to construct their functionality in society and primarily train students to be socially responsible, particularly through research. As explained above, with the adoption of research paradigms that are drawn from philosophies such as *botho* and *buen vivir*, students can be equipped with ethics of care and social responsibility. While these two philosophies may be a good place to start at the level of research projects and supervision philosophies, we find that intervention at the structural level is also necessary to challenge how universities as institutions function. This is even critical in the context of COVID-19 where apprenticeship and day-to-day ethical dealings of the people are key social facts of knowledge production and knowledge dissemination. We follow Illich's (1971), albeit with some adaptations, view that a meaningful system of education prioritizes three main issues, and we believe that BRICS universities would benefit from positioning themselves as such:

• "It should provide all who want to learn with access to available resources at any time in their lives."

As we previously explained, it is not enough to accept students into HDIs or universities, there must be sufficient resources for the students to succeed. This includes having the right proportion of students to supervisors, electronic devices, and other resources explained above. These are some of the challenges South Africa's Department of Higher Education and Training (2013) has acknowledged; we believe that if they are overcome, there will be great progress in the country's research landscape. The DHET acknowledges that since 1994, there has been an improvement in the publication practices in SA, but there has remained a low increase in the number and demographics of researchers, and this is not healthy for research practice (DHET, 2013).

• "It should empower all who want to share what they know to find those who want to learn it from them."

Knowledge and expertise must be opened to the multiple sources from which it is available. It would be beneficial for universities to work with and learn from local communities within which they exist. This is key not only for the enrichment of the knowledge they produce but also for universities' response to the needs of communities. One way in which this is achievable is to ensure that the processes of research are deeply embedded in community engagement and that researchers build archives of local knowledge, both historical and current. According to Masoga (2002:5) "In this process, the opportunity arises for 'trained' researchers to gain deeper insight of the realities of the margin-space discourse." The very use of *botho* and *buen vivir* provides this opportunity as these philosophies are lived out by communities (Kothari et al., 2019; Molefe, 2019). Masoga and Shokane (2018: 4) counsel that the aforementioned "advocates collective responsibility for one another as a value and philosophy for mutual coexistence and compassion." Moreover, this practice would involve having local custodians of local knowledge collaborating with universities as organic intellectuals such as has been seen in the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Mvelashe, 2020).

• "It should furnish all who want to present an issue to the public with the opportunity to make their challenge known."

BRICS universities must always be open to multiple views and criticism. In SA, this has happened on multiple occasions such as the establishment of the National Qualifications Framework after democratisation (South African Qualifications Authority, 2020). Another critique of the education system that has was met with much consideration was the calls for decolonisation of the university

curriculum (Matthews, 2021), which is a continuing debate in SA institutions of higher learning. Our view is that this is good and should continue to take place not only in the curriculum but also in the very institutional culture of these institutions and that of the communities in which these institutions function. Additionally, we are of the view that the students with whom we co-produce knowledge through supervision and research become our peers and colleagues; therefore, we are collectively entrusted with the critical responsibility to prioritise the construction of an ethical, equal, and just society. In this case, COVID-19 provides us with an opportunity to cultivate such a habitus.

## In Research Practice

In dealing with serious strategies that may enable convivial access to digital resources and strike a 'balance' between universities while also promoting teaching and learning, research practice is still receiving less immediate attention (than teaching and learning). This places a great deal of focus on research as a primary business of the university for knowledge production. Thus, in the context of this paper, we argue that this gap should be given serious attention. It must also be noted that the attention is more reflective of the experiences we have encountered during our engagements with the students that we are supervising as well as our own experiences as researchers. It is also being observed that even in terms of digitalization of research practice, there is still a challenge on the question of immediate person-to-person contact – a traditional or conservative approach to research practice and supervision.

One of the implications and realities is that most of the student populace come from low-socio-economic families. This compromises the students' ability to afford data, as South African data rates are the third most expensive in the BRICS countries (IOL, 2018)). It is also important, at this juncture, to point out that South Africa is the most socioeconomically unequal of the 5 BRICS countries – and that HDIs tend to cater mostly to students in the lower end of SA's society. In addition to this, there are challenges with infrastructure such as network, which interfere with the ability to hold online meetings effectively universities are now forced to turn to new supervision and meeting methods, including blended learning. The COVID-19 has brought about a qualitative shift even in the communities that students are coming from and those they are conducting their research on and in.

The limitations of COVID-19 have meant researchers have had limited time and physical interaction for fieldwork. This calls for a re-thinking and creativity around methods like ethnography and participant observation. This calls for us to rethink the idea of "being there", in the field of research. Our reflexive journals would be filled with observations of our journeys to and from the field for data collection. These methods also come with their ethical considerations. The critical question is how we maintain the security of online meetings in the age of laws that change slowly to meet the fast-paced cyber-security challenges that we have (Sandor, 2002).

Emersion in the field either from the emic or etic perspective allows one to learn and relearn the different social dynamics that permeate people's life experiences, even outside of one's research questions, to learn what shapes people's lives. This has led to areas in research such as reflexivity, where a researcher documents experiences about their research which shapes the final output of their work (both their dissertation and the conclusions). The destruction of face-to-face data collection limits the researcher's ability to interact with participants in a natural setting. This also adds to the need for an added layer of privacy or security when communicating through online mediums which we argue must be undertaken without developing exploitative technologies and laws.

Furthermore, this raises questions about resources such as digital devices and networks for participants. Where qualitative data collection has come to lean heavily on seeing the participants,

how does the researcher verify the identity of the participant on digital mediums, especially phone calls? And if the researcher wants to interview participants on platforms like Zoom, who should pay for the participant's data? Therefore, there is a need to rethink some of the paradigms which promote or have led to the development of destructive technologies – these include forms of positivism that promoted destructive modernization which is insensitive to the environment. This raises ethical questions where participants are not to be incentivized or remunerated in the context of voluntary participation.  Construction speaks to the digitalisation of data collection that calls for innovative thinking about conducting fieldwork with limited resources. This is realised when COVID-19 opens the door for technological advancements for research methodologies and when it speeds up the need for thinking more urgently about research philosophies and practice. For this, we believe *Botho* and *buen vivir* as underlying philosophies are instrumental in BRICS countries.

## Conclusion

In this paper, we explored the impacts of COVID-19 on research and proposed how the pandemic offers an opportunity for scholars to slow down (Hartman and Darab, 2012) and reflect to improve their paradigms and practices as researchers. Drawing on the history and context of South Africa, we have shown how context can limit the ability to undertake high-quality research. Our call is for the re-centring of the ethics of care and the ethics of social responsibility such as *buen vivir* and *botho* as the starting point of all research. We argue that this is achievable through equitable provision of resources to BRICS countries' universities, which is consistent with BRICS' endeavours towards development. In doing so, we debunk leaning on the neoliberal fascination with university rankings that position outputs as more important than the people who produce them or see students themselves as outputs. By submitting our reflections as postgraduate supervisors and researchers in a South African HDI and how our experiences have shaped our views on the philosophy and practice of research as explained in section 2 of the paper, we suggest a path those other researchers can follow to strengthen research philosophy and the practice of scientific research (Kuhn, 1972). Thus, we host to the observation of COVID-19 as created an urgent space where the BRICS countries have to relook research philosophy and practice by equipping their HDIs with the advanced technologies that will improve their contribution into knowledge production and development.

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# The implication of Brexit on Africa's regional integration: The case of the African Union

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## Abstract

Brexit in contemporary International Relations has noticeable implications that Africa and other relating states should tentatively be on the lookout, as such the study contends that Britain leaving the European Union (EU) not only imposes negative attributes to African states, economically, politically, structurally and socially, but draws questionable attributes to the advocacy of Africa's integration processes. Because of the diverse and multiple regional organizations, the study utilizes the African Union (AU) as an example to illustrate the impact Brexit will bear on regional institutions and equally impact on individual states' quest to continue integrating with other states. Numerous scholars have paid sufficient attention to the economic, geopolitical, structural, and social implications on both Europe and Africa. However, little scholarly interest has been directed to the perceptions held by Africa regarding Brexit and its multi-dimensional implications on Africa's regional integration project on the auspice of Britain leaving the EU. The qualitative study utilises secondary data to describe the perception solely held by Africa on the continuation of its integration while one of its funding states on integration projects is preparing itself to exit its supranational organization. The study gives lessons to sovereign states to learn either to advance their regional institutions or to advocate for national autonomy just as Britain is endeavoring. In examing Africa's perception amidst Brexit, the study argues that Britain's endeavor for national autonomy threatens the principles and confidence of 'deep' regional integration processes, as such, contributing significantly to the studying of Brexit's multi-dimensional implications on Africa.

Keywords: Brexit, AU, Regional Integration, National Autonomy, Perceptions

## Introduction

The phrase "Brexit" is simply understood throughout the study as a shorthand word that signifies the United Kingdom (UK) exiting the European Union (EU), according to Hunt and Wheeler (2017). The phrase is a combination of the words Britain and exit, which results in Brexit. A snapshot of the various incidences that caused the uproar of Brexit is provided particularly to set the scene and to contextualize the issue that the study attempts to understand and untangle in order to provide insight for states which would attempt to avoid the same mistakes or however, to assimilate the endeavors of the UK. Brexit has profound geopolitical, economic, and social implications for Africa. On the European continent, structural implications, in addition, can be noted for the process to manifest. Cutting across the European continent, the leave referendum has ignited studies that specifically focus on the consequences of Brexit and the impact on the theoretical study on

regionalism; its practicality, and its promotion in the global community, more fundamentally in the case of Britain as EU's major actor and promoter for Africa's integration projects.

Since the inception of Brexit into world politics, the hurried scholarship on Britain preparing itself to exit the EU has majorly focused on economic, social, and political implications. Ansorg and Haastrup (2016) confirm this by stating that Brexit has profound geopolitical, economic, and social implications for Africa. Numerous scholars have paid sufficient attention to the economic, geopolitical, structural, and social implications on both Europe and Africa Troitiño, Kerikmäe, and Chochia (2018); Bulmer and Quaglia (2018); Kohnert (2018); Mold (2018); Wincott, Peterson, and Convery (2017); Ansorg and Haastrup (2016) and; Riley and Ghilès, 2016). However, little scholarly interest has been directed to the perceptions held by Africa regarding Brexit and its multi-dimensional implications on Africa's regional integration project on the auspice of Britain leaving the EU. The study intends to qualitatively assess the perception solely held by Africa on the continuation of its integration while one of the funding states on integration projects is preparing itself to exit the supranational organization. Africa's reality amidst Brexit possesses numerous questions central to regional studies as such the study aims to provide comprehensive insight into the perceptions held by African states on integration in the midst of Brexit.

The paper focuses on the literary work that various scholars have examined and documented on the multi-dimensional implications Africa is yet to brace itself for in the predicament of Britain leaving the EU. Despite the multifaceted implications that African states and the AU are yet to encounter, the study explores what Mold (2018) describes as an overlooked consequence of Brexit for Africa that could undermine the confidence of 'deep' regional integration processes.

## Theoretical Approach

The study adopts Andrew Moravcsik's (1993) contention of Liberal Intergovernmentalism theory to contextualize the significance of regionalism and integration as counteracted by the contention of anarchy and processes of negotiations and bargaining of Britain to exit the EU.

Moravcsik's (1993) argues that liberal intergovernmentalism views states as the main actors, and sees the EU as an international institution that can be studied by viewing states as the main actors in a situation of anarchy, where each state achieves its goal through negotiations and bargaining. Liberal intergovernmentalism specifically studies the process of these negotiations and bargaining between EU member states. The suitability and applicability of the theory to explaining Brexit are provided in the context of the AU's prospects in the 21st century.

### Theory vis-à-vis prospects of the African Union

Brexit poses a threat to the ideal perception held by African states in their continuous integration processes, projects and prospects of the integrated AU. On the other hand, the arguments held by Britain in leaving the EU arguably is anticipated to entice the integrated states to withdraw themselves from their respective organizations to strengthen their national autonomy. In this regard, rendering the advocacy of regionalism and integration impractical to their national interests. In how Troitiño *et al.,* (2018) explains the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) that the organization proposes a different model uniting Europe, one that is mainly based on trade and common agreements, however without integration or any loss of national independence, allows the UK to participate in various beneficial trade agreements without committing to integration.

Liberal intergovernmentalism theorists in their advocacy for states in an anarchic system argue for states to achieve their goals through negotiations and bargaining, however not compromising

their national independence. This is because not many states are as readily willing to subordinate their national autonomy and independence. States are in the pursuit of advancing their economy. For instance, in the Southern African Development Community (SADC), South Africa is a regional hegemon (Draper, 2016; Aldena and Schoeman, 2015 and Habib and Selinyane, 2006) and by far is the largest economy, with advanced technology and a population of 56 million, (Louw-Vaudran, 2018). The leave referendum may entice South Africa to exit SADC in an attempt to strengthen its national autonomy and its independence. Even so, South Africa as an unchallenged hegemonic leader in the SADC region is disputably less willing to subordinate its narrowly defined interests to the larger objective of maintaining a liberal international economy.

## Methodology and Significance

The study relied on secondary available materials that address the consequences of Brexit on Britain and Africa relations, and the multi-dimensional implications that African countries are yet to embrace themselves. The paper employed a descriptive analysis technique to qualitatively describe the perceptions held by Africa regarding Brexit and its multi-dimensional implications on Africa's regional integration projects on the auspice of Britain leaving the EU. In constructing and developing the paper; books, accredited journals, and online materials particularly on the multi-dimensional implications of Britain's exit from the European Union on Africa were analyzed in line with the aim objective of the study, paying specific attention to Africa's regionalism and integration (Thomas and Hodges, 2010). It is important to note that the exit of Britain from the EU undoubtedly questions the general perception of regional integration. The study sheds light on the vast knowledge of the multi-dimensional implications of Britain exiting the European Union on Africa, as such contributes significantly to the studying of Brexit and its diverse relations to Africa. The study further highlights Brexit as a threat to the principles and confidence of 'deep' regional integration processes that are encouraged across the globe. Regional integration may be achieved through economic ambitions, peace, and security as well as a for more political interconnectedness in the region.

## Understanding Brexit

In understanding Brexit, the paper takes an imperative attempt to provide a snapshot of various incidences that caused the uproar of Brexit. Various acts and incidents have ignited and compelled the UK to take this drastic decision of leaving the major supranational institution. The study reflects briefly on the causes of Brexit to shed light on other states to take note of as an advisory attempt to avoid the same mistakes or however, to assimilate the endeavors of the UK.

The reflection on the causes of Brexit is important because any discussion of Brexit would not be complete without discussing the factors that ignited the leave notion of Britain from the EU. According to Arnorsson and Zoega (2018), the advocates for Brexit claim that the arguments for Britain to leave the EU are centered on immigration and national autonomy. Norman (2005), explains that the concept of national autonomy means the self-governing of a particular state concerning its local and internal affairs. Riley and Ghilès (2016) explain that the idea of the UK being able to ultimately look after itself has accorded the country to set itself apart from the other European nations. Kohnert (2018) confirms this by stating that this deep-rooted sense of self-reliance by the UK leads to the country not being sympathetic to the European ideal.

The decision of the Blair government in 2003 that permitted the full freedom of movement rights to all the 2004 accession states had a significant impact on the deliberations of Britain to leave the EU (Riley and Ghilès, 2016). The scholars argue that the decision rested with only three states, the UK, Ireland and Sweden. The outcome of such a decision provided for full free movement, consequently

leading to people seeking work in the UK from the European Economic Community (CEE) and Baltic States. As a result of this drastic increase in influx, the economic crisis intensified.

Due to the failure of the Eurozone in delivering growth across its 19 members, scholars such as Wincott *et al.* (2017); Riley and Ghilès (2016) argue that the consequence is embedded in the economy of the debtor nations which contracts sharply. Numerous outcomes can be observed, however the most pertinent is an increased number of people arriving from Southern Europe and Ireland. Riley and Ghilès, (2016) explain that since the UK was in control of its currency, debt and could deploy effective fiscal stabilizers, its economy rapidly redressed itself after the Euro-crisis. Although to its dismay, London then discovered that due to the Eurozone's addiction to fiscally rigid economic policies, the UK resulted as the employment shock absorber. It is important to note that the increased volume of people moving to the UK from the CEE states, and Southern Europe appears to have been a major factor in driving the Leave vote (Riley and Ghilès, 2016; Wincott *et al.,* 2017).

Although there exist other factors and attributes that scholars can qualify as having ignited Brexit, the UK given the fiscal policies that European states are subjected to, which crushed their economic outlook and hindered future generation, was not good news to the UK. Riley, and Ghilès (2016) observed the economies of the European states for the last decade and noted the harmful economic effects emanating from the fiscal policies have significantly hindered the legitimacy of the entire European project.

## Africa and UK relations

Although the primary focus is on Africa's perception on regional integration, the study acknowledges other implications that Brexit will bear on African states. Ansorg and Haastrup (2016) and Mold (2018) argue that the result of the leave referendum held on 23 June 2016, inflated multi-disciplinary scholarships illustrating the obscurities awaiting Africa, ranging significantly from geopolitics to economics including social basis.

Paying specific attention to the economic implications such as trade barriers, aggressive inflation, drastic decline in foreign direct investments and hostile budgetary gap, Tetlow and Stojanovic (2018), Mustafa *et al.,* (2020); Mold (2018) on the one hand, explains that African countries such as South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, and Egypt, for instance, which significantly rely on trade with the UK will consequently suffer due to Brexit in any event of an immediate economic recession. African countries will also experience the uncertainty that is perceived to arise due to the re-negotiation of economic partnerships once Brexit materializes. This process may, however, take years to be accomplished, leaving the poor countries to suffer a gradual economic collapse.

Brexit has implications for Africa, on a political basis, Ansorg and Haastrup (2016) posit that the exit from the European Union Common Security and Defence Policy will have detrimental effects on the EU's security practices in Africa. The construction of Peace and Security in Africa is also implicated, this is because the effects will extend to the EU-led support in Africa, and equally affecting the donors' abilities, on the other hand, to continue maintaining the necessary support in this area.

## Brexit on the African Union

Brexit threatens the AU's structure, political, Socio-political, and economic outlook in both direct and indirect ways. The major changes might be felt or are already being felt in a short period. The membership of the UK in the EU has influenced some of the trade agreements which were between the EU and the AU (including with individual AU member countries). The Cotonou Agreement of

2000 defines the trade relations between the EU and Africa, Anderson and Wittwer (2017) explain that Britain played an important role in the agreement.

There are conjectures that the large economies of Africa will suffer due to Brexit. The UK's Minister for Africa has confirmed that relations with the continent will improve without the burden of the EU, nonetheless, agrees that the largest economies of Africa are likely to suffer. South Africa is also experiencing the effects that Africa's largest economies are enduring (Aniche, 2020).

According to Davies (2016), "the most internationally traded African currency; the South African rand is experiencing bumpy rides in the wake of the UK's decision to leave the EU". The South African rand has lost more than 8% against the US dollar because of Brexit. Together with its peers on the London Stock Exchange, a lot of companies in South Africa that are dual-listed in Johannesburg and London are being attacked (Mold, 2018). Nigeria, another big economy in Africa that trades with the UK and EU, is also significantly affected. The bilateral trade relations between Nigeria and the UK are valued at close to 8.3 billion dollars. The data provided by the National Bureau of Statistics show that the UK was Nigeria's biggest source of foreign investment during 2015. The economy of Nigeria on the occasion of a recession in the UK will crash due to Brexit (Haastrup, 2016).

Mold (2018) argues that when it comes to aid, the UK is the largest supporter of the EU aid programs in Africa, both financially and politically. While the UK honors its aid commitments to African states, a different attitude to aid might bring development to African countries bearing in mind that the majority of poverty-stricken African countries depend on EU aid. Concerning the socio-political consequences, various countries look up to Britain regarding independence, the quest for leave referendum provoked and strengthened the call for self-determination in other AU states, especially Nigeria. Following the Brexit pattern, "the pro-Biafra protestors aptly made a coinage #Biafraexit and fuelled the referendum call" (Mude and Chigora, 2017).

### Absences of the UK in EU negotiations on policy.

The exit of Britain from the EU will have direct implications on economic relations including development of aid, however, the withdrawal will also be felt indirectly in negotiations of EU's foreign policies vis-à-vis African states. The EU's relationship with developing countries has grown in terms of including former British colonies such as Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific Group of States (ACP) since Britain entered the Common Market. It is in this relationship that the EU involved its member states, making the EU the largest aid donor in the whole world (Kordos, 2019). The African, Caribbean, and Pacific Group of States is a respectable trading bloc and has facilitated a smooth operation between the developing countries. The relationship between the EU and ACP has given all the EU member states an opportunity to benefit better and have access to these markets while also gaining some leverage in the new negotiations of international trades. The EU had negotiations as one bloc with third parties, this meant that every benefit enjoyed by African states in terms of preferential access will not be available for the UK (Bergin and Smit, 2017). Britain's quest to leave the EU pushed for the need to renegotiate its economic agreements with African countries although the process may take years. For the AU, the UK's departure from the EU means a loss of a third partner voice within the EU. For instant, Britain's government has been supporting the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) in negotiations with Africa, it has been advocating for these countries and ensuring that they are compensated where they lost due to a new model of cooperation. Therefore, the departure of the UK means that other European countries will be the ones dominating in these negotiations (Thomson, 2017).

## Britain's National Autonomy a threat to Regional Integration?

According to Gilpin (1987), the uncertainty of providing insight to whether any government is willing to subordinate its national autonomy and independence in economic matters in the interest of international economic stability or whether international cooperation is possible for long in a capitalist world economy gives scholars the impression that undermines the practice of regionalism and integration in the 21st century. Gilpin (1987) further probes whether cooperation can be achieved without an unchallenged hegemonic leader willing to subordinate its narrowly defined interests to the larger objective of maintaining a liberal international economy.

In conjunction with Brexit, Troitiño *et al.,* (2018) explains that the United Kingdom during the preliminary negotiations proposed instead of a common market, a common trade area for industrial goods that excludes agricultural production and national autonomy to negotiate trade agreements with other partners in order to protect the British interest in the world and participate in an European market. Arguably, if Brexit is perceived as a failure in the process of regional integration, then it certainly problematizes the continued consolidation of integration on the African continent.

## African Union quest for Regional Integration

According to Asmelash and Henke (2016) the AU in advancing regional integration established frameworks such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) in 2002 and the Millennium Integration Plan, which was launched in 2009 to coordinate convergence and collaboration among the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) towards achieving the ultimate objective of the African Economic Community (AEC). In addition, Asmelash and Henke (2016) explain that the AU adopted Agenda 2063, a framework document that outlines the gradual creation of a continent that is fully integrated, both economically and politically. Other major steps towards advancing and strengthening regional integration in Africa, the AU signed the Tripartite Free Trade Area Agreement (TFTA), the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) negotiations as well as the launching of the AU Passport. Asmelash and Henke (2016) clarify that these efforts by the AU represent positive progress to justify the view that Africa's regional integration efforts are on track.

Despite the fact that Africa's regional integration efforts are on the track, challenges continue to impede the integration developments. This is noted from the slow implementation rates at national levels, security challenges in the form of rebellions, post-electoral violence, resource-induced conflicts that continue to undermine integration efforts on the continent (Asmelash and Henke, 2016). Added to the list, the lack of commitment from African states to cede power to regional communities has continued to hamper the capacity and performance of the RECs in leading the integration processes.

## Brexit vis-à-vis Africa's Integration Projects

Ansorg and Haastrup (2016) are of the view that Brexit defies the European project of integration and the institution's credibility in advocating for regional integration in both Africa and globally. The scholars further suggest that Brexit on the bright side nevertheless provides an opportunistic platform for African states to learn the process and pace of regional integration in the context of Africa. Although having assessed the East African Community (EAC), Mold (2018) confirms this by arguing that possibly as the most fundamental factor for the EAC, Brexit has arguably dealt a serious blow to confidence in the regional integration processes. On the contrary, Troitiño *et al.,* (2018) argue that various governments even though Britain is fostering its preparations to leave the EU, are likely to further embrace intergovernmentalism as protection from domestic populist forces.

Regional integration in Africa is understood as fundamental to increasing intra-Africa trade, peace, sustainability, and inclusion, and to decreasing the violent conflicts that are so devastating for people and states on the continent. Ansorg and Haastrup (2016) argue that if Brexit is perceived as a failure in the process of regional integration, then it certainly problematizes the continued consolidation of integration in the continent.

Furthermore, taking into account the historical context of Africa–EU relations, Brexit is, on the one hand, a sentimental loss. After all, it was the British entry into the European Community that brought about the largest trans-regional initiative in the world via the EU–ACP relationship, a cornerstone of Africa's relationship with Europe as well as its economic and development agenda (Ansorg and Haastrup, 2016).

The argument held by Mold (2018) provides a more comprehensive understanding of the intricacies and politics of the European Union (EU) as a perceived functional and operational supranational organization. The organization has been a long-standing model of integration, however, Mold (2018) negates the model's successes and functionality. This disapproval is noted in that the organization has suffered its fair share of setbacks, such as the European exchange-rate mechanism (ERM) crisis of the early 1990s, and the Euro-crisis of 2011. Much of the consideration of this model is rather argued more for the scale of its ambition, rather than operationality. As compared to the free-trade deals such as the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA), Mold (2018) argues that the European Union (EU) represents a rather bold project of the political and economic union, which he labels as "deep integration".  However, in the predicament of Britain that contends and craves for national autonomy, the exit of Britain from the EU contradicts the intended principles of integration. In this regard, it is not ideal for regional integration processes to be institutionalized elsewhere if the European project begins to be unstable.

Mold's (2018) evaluation of *The consequences of Brexit for Africa: The case of the East African Community* illustrates that the EAC is commonly recognized as one of the most ambitious programs of regional integration in Africa which contemplates both economic and political union. In conjunction with the perception held by Africa to regional integration, the ambitious EAC may attentively be questioned by the Brexit deal. That is, member states of the EAC may see the need to withdraw from the integration, and equally pursue national autonomy if held strongly by the states or as perceived to be beneficial to Britain after the leave referendum has materialized.

## Conclusion

The perceived continuation of regionalism and integration in the 21st century cuts across as having various ways in which it is achieved. Britain that is anticipated to exit the EU arguably contests for national autonomy and puts forward a rather different model uniting Europe, one that is mainly based on trade and common agreements, however without integration or any loss of national independence. Various causes that have ignited and propelled Britain to negotiate and bargain with EU's member states to leave the organization have been discussed noting arguments centered on immigration and national autonomy as major factors in the frontline. The study found that Britain's quest for self-sufficiency arguably entices integrated states to withdraw from their respective institutions and endeavor on trade and common agreements and selectively not integrating or posing any threats to states' national independence. The perceptions held by African states towards integrating are challenged by Britain's leave referendum. On the condition that Brexit is understood as a failure in the process of regional integration, the certainty of regional integration having complications threatens integrated states to continue consolidating their integration on their respective continents.

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# Efficacy of Lockdowns in Africa:
# A Continental Perspective

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## Abstract

The novel coronavirus has troubled the world, unleashing deaths and a social quagmire. The catastrophic implications of the pandemic pushed states to the brink, compelling them to institute country lockdowns in a bid to flatten the curve of infections, avoid new ones and ensure that the health systems are not overwhelmed at any one point in time. Many states went on lockdowns, leading to corrosive effects on their economies. The death toll in Asia and Europe was astronomical. In the United States of America, Brazil and India, it was unprecedented. Except for a few countries in Europe and Africa that did not act homogeneously, the rest of the world ceased to function. Whilst lockdowns were effective in western countries, in the African continent, it was a different case. Although there was a willingness to institute lockdowns in Africa, the context made it almost impossible for many countries to effectively and efficiently implement. These factors which hampered the workability of lockdowns included high informal employment rates, informal settlements, rampant homelessness, porous borders, a high population density, institutions with vulnerable populations as well as conflict settings. This paper discusses in detail the research findings of the author on the efficacy of lockdowns in Africa. The importance of the study is to equip policymakers with better strategies to make lockdowns more effective through the dissection of problems discovered in the research findings. The paper findings are that lockdowns are problematic to adhere to in the African context. Recommendations are that lockdowns should be context-bound and must get buttressed by government efforts and interventions.

Keywords: Lockdowns, COVID-19, Africa, Informal, BRICS

## Introduction

> *It's all death left, right and centre. If I continue going to work, I risk the contraction of the virus and death. If I continually stay at home, I will also starve to death. I suggest it's better to go to work and risk coronavirus infection than continually staying at home. The real enemy is no longer the coronavirus but the lockdown itself. This lockdown is trying to save our lives but at the same time destroying our livelihoods.[1]*

This paper discusses the effectiveness of lockdowns in the African context. While some African countries did not institute lockdowns, some did by adopting western-style lockdowns without modifying or tailor-making them to suit the African context. That led to a domino effect since a blanket lockdown approach was not suitable for Africa. The African continent's high degree of the informal sector, other factors such as homelessness, porous borders, and impracticability of physical and social distancing and institutions with vulnerable populations continued to bedevil the continent making the lockdowns ineffective (AUC/OECD, 2018; Jayaram, 2020; Cousineau, 2020; Moyo, 2020; Mbiyozo, 2020; Social Science in Humanities Action, 2020). Whilst lockdowns proved more effective in first world countries such as the United States of America (Beaubien, 2020; Sharma et al. 2021; Hsiang et al. 2020), in terms of reducing new infections and deaths, in Africa, efficacy remains questionable because the context made it problematic to adopt western strategies without modifying them to suit the African context. A blanket approach proved inefficient and ineffective. That was due to the contextual differences in regions and populations. That led to the number of

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1    Response of a vendor to the lockdown in Khayelitsha, Cape Town. 10 April 2020.

new infections and deaths, which continued to rise over time. South Africa, a member of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa), also witnessed a rise in COVID-19 cases over time (Smart, Broadbent and Combrink 2020). Irrespective of such a scenario, South Africa's lockdown saved the country from a more catastrophic situation.

## Methods

The paper adopts a qualitative research approach where the qualitative content analysis gets utilised as a data collection tool. It analyses books, journal articles and institutional reports. Policy briefs in print and electronic forms utilised. It adopts purposive sampling and identifies material related to COVID-19 and lockdowns in Africa, especially those focussing on the efficacy of lockdowns in the African continent. The paper follows Altheide's (1996) steps of document analysis. It provides an objective procedure for selecting and utilising documents in qualitative research. It encompasses setting the inclusion criteria and collection of documents. It also articulates the main areas of analysis, the coding, verification and analysis (Ibid).

On the setting of the inclusion criteria, the author selected the types of documents for review. Official publications focussing on the novel COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns in Africa got selected. Times of publication got also considered. Many academic papers published after the outbreak of COVID-19 got selected. Some documents written before the outbreak of the pandemic got selected for their background information. Selection of documents was through the adoption of physical and electronic sources such as books, magazines, newspapers, journal articles and media reports. On articulating areas of analysis, the author selected those documents relevant to the efficacy of COVID-19 induced lockdowns in Africa. Academic sources addressing the hindrances towards the adherence to COVID-19 induced lockdowns in Africa got selected.

When conducting document coding and analysis, each document got analysed. That was to determine which particular area that it was addressing. That ranged from informal employment, informal settlements, homelessness, high population density, porous borders and institutions with vulnerable populations. In the verification process, a second person verified the selected documents. That was to eradicate bias, ensuring credibility, consistency and reliability. In analysing the academic papers, they got aggregated. The most relevant (those that addressed the issue under study) got selected in the 'relevant' and 'good' categories.

## Detailed Discussion of Findings

This paper discusses the findings of the author in detail. It dissects the major hindering factors to the effectiveness of lockdowns in Africa. It deliberates the efficacy of lockdowns in the African continent in light of high rates of informal employment, homelessness, the prevalence of informal settlements, porous borders, the continent's high population density and institutions with vulnerable populations. It also analyses whether lockdowns reduced deaths and new infections. Recommendations get proffered to improve policy and practice in Africa.

### Informal Employment and Lockdowns in Africa

The African context rendered lockdowns inefficient and ineffective due to the high rate of informality. Africa has the highest rate of informal employment rates (ILO, 2018). Lockdown measures in Africa need to be implemented differently as compared to other continents. A blanket approach has proven to be retrogressive for Africa. The continent's informal sector activities contribute to jobs, incomes and livelihoods, and in many low-and middle-income countries, it plays a pivotal economic role. Workers in the informal sector lack the basic safety nets that formal jobs usually provide, including

social protection coverage. They are also disadvantaged in access to healthcare services and have no income alternatives if they stop working due to economic disruptions such as lockdowns. Income-generating activities are severely affected by the lockdowns. Unprotected workers face the most vulnerability and risk. That is because many vulnerable workers who do not have any safety nets are in the informal sector. Many of such workers are in low and middle-income countries where they do not have any health and social protection policies to cushion them in times of crisis. Without robust policy measures by governments in the developing world, informal workers will experience rough economic and social times. They are likely to face further difficulties in recovering in the post-pandemic recovery period.

The African continent has not yet noticed the benefits of lockdowns as new infections and deaths rise exponentially. In first world countries, they have significantly reduced the number of deaths from the virus. They also decreased the number of patients in intensive care and hospital admissions (Beaubien, 2020; Sharma et al. 2021, Hsiang et al. 2020.). However, such benefits and achievements are different in the African context. In developing countries, there is an interconnection between informality, weak capacity and high-density populations. That poses severe health and fiscal challenges for governments, making lockdowns unworkable. Only those workers formally employed are in a better position to withstand such economic shocks since they continue to earn their salaries even during times of crisis**.** That includes frontline workers, public and some private-sector employees.

**Fig 1:**   Share of Informal Employment in Africa
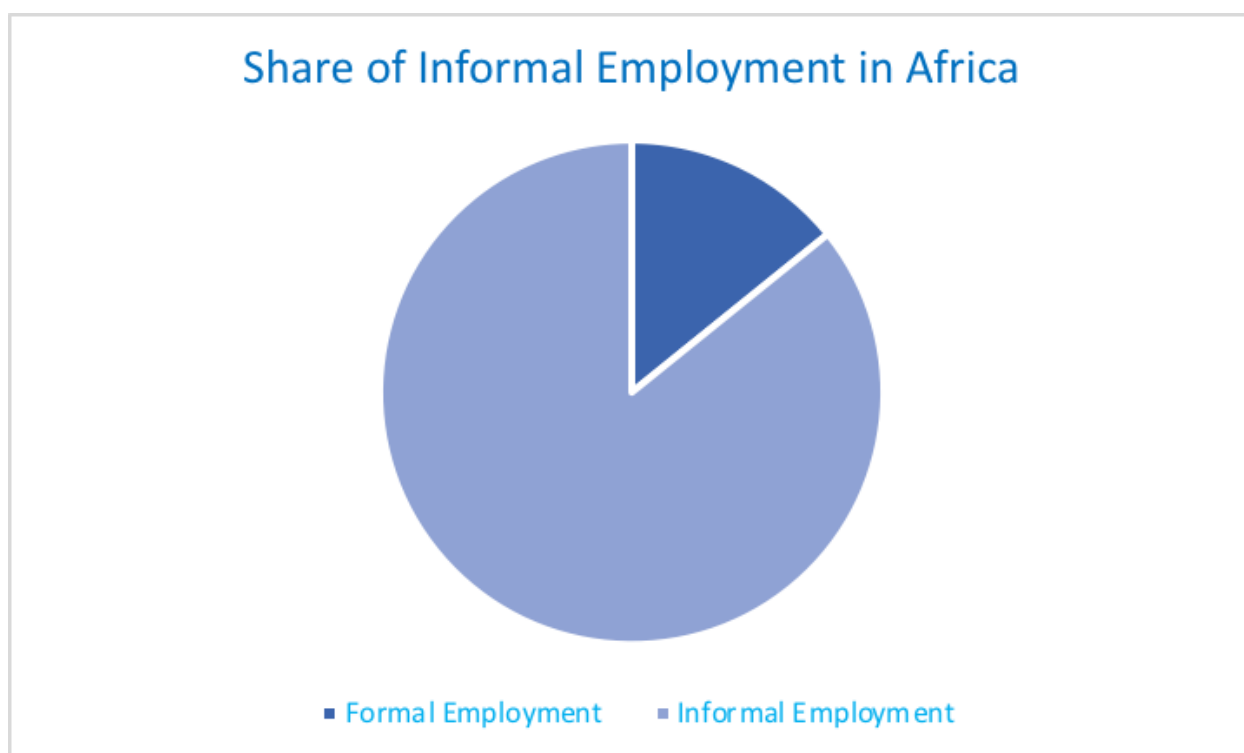


**Source:** ILO (2018), World Development Indicators 2020

Fig 1 indicates that in times of lockdowns, the majority is likely to be affected compared to just 25% who are formally employed. In times of lockdowns, the majority, employed-informally, are likely to be exposed to economic shocks. The high degree of informality in Africa makes lockdowns unworkable because there is a voluminous workforce in the segment compared to any other sector. That is because around 2 billion people work informally, most of them in developing and emerging countries. The informal sector in developing countries contributes to about 35 per cent

of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employs more than 75 per cent of the labour force. The size of informality institutes nearly 55% of the cumulative gross domestic product of sub-Saharan Africa, according to the African Development Bank (2014), even if further studies showed that it ranges from a low of 20 to 25 per cent in Mauritius, South Africa and Namibia to a high of 50 to 65 per cent in Benin, Tanzania and Nigeria (International Monetary Fund, 2018). Excluding the agricultural sector, informality represents between 30% and 90% of employment. The informal economy in Africa remains among leading worldwide and acts as a shock-absorber in major African cities.

In many African countries, up to 90% of the labour force lay in informal employment (AUC/OECD, 2018). When states institute lockdowns, few people will adhere to the restrictive regulations because they have to gather what they eat. Jayaram (2020) asserts that as many as 300 million people got employed in the informal sector in the African continent. Those in subsistence farming are fortunately less affected by the lockdowns since their lifestyles are undisrupted much. However, about 35 million jobs in the informal sales and services in retail, catering, tourism and wholesale are vulnerable. That scenario also affects about 15 million casual trade, craft and plant-operating jobs in the manufacturing industries. Informal workers in urban areas get also inclined towards working in economic sectors prone to a high risk of virus infection. They are also directly affected by lockdown measures, for example, street vendors, domestic workers, construction workers, food servers, waste recyclers and transport workers (Ibid, 2020). Lockdowns have proved ineffective in Africa due to the informality of the many jobs. Many will try by all means available to evade the lockdown rules and regulations of their countries so that they can put food on the table to survive. They will thus devise all possible avenues available to outsmart security officials to work, earn some income and sustain their daily needs because they work from hand to mouth.

Informal workers continue to defy lockdown regulations because they have no option. They are caught between two hard surfaces, either adhering to lockdown regulations and risk starvation and death or violating them to sustain a living. All of them prefer to pursue the latter option. Kazeem (2020) notes that even in Nigeria, where hard lockdowns got instituted in Abuja and Lagos, informal employees are outmanoeuvring law enforcement authorities to survive. Although larger and formal businesses shut down and towns almost deserted, many informal traders and public transport operators continued to operate surreptitiously, albeit risks of being arrested and their vehicles impounded. In Zimbabwe, similar situations got witnessed. Informal money-changers were inviting their clients to their homes to do business when the hard 21-day lockdown started. That is because the malls and streets that they used to conduct their businesses were closed and prohibited.

A similar situation got witnessed in Kenya, where informal traders were running battles with the police. In South African high-density suburbs such as Ekurhuleni, Alexandra and Hillbrow, casual trading continued flourishing in the hard lockdown. That is because the traders get facilitated by the help of local customers and residents who tip them off about police presence. Stats South Africa (2020) notes that around 9.6 million people work in South Africa's informal sector. They include street vendors, waste pickers and domestic workers. They have no cushioning mechanisms to alleviate them in times of such crises. Although the government availed some 500 billion to cushion the poor and R600 million directed to landlords, many said it was not enough considering the length of the lockdowns and the large and extended families that characterise Africa. By November 2021, the country is almost two years in lockdown, and no one knows when they will end. The inertia in the disbursement of the funds to individuals also led to overcrowdedness, long queues and desperation, potentially heightening the spread of the virus.

Lockdowns stand as a punitive measure for many Africans who have no alternative means of survival. Staying at home becomes impractical when people have no food supplies. Violating lockdown regulations should thus not be viewed as a recalcitrant move but as a desperate move to earn a

living. Mwendera (2020) corroborates by saying that South Africa has a relatively lesser percentage of informal workers (18%) (16.53 million) than other African and Asian states. The number is high in Ethiopia and India, where up to 50% of those employed are in the informal sector. The percentages are as high as 90% in Mali and Ghana and 99% in Zimbabwe. Many employees in the informal sector do not have any savings, bank accounts or cushioning mechanisms in times of crisis. They cannot also practice social distancing since they want to conduct informal business to sustain a living. Without any savings or financial backup schemes and social policies, informal traders continue to work and violate lockdown regulations, not out of stubbornness but out of sheer necessity desperation.

Instituting lockdowns in Africa is equivalent to severely sanctioning the African people. That will ultimately throw the continent into a social malaise. A month after the lockdowns, almost 1.1 billion workers in the informal sector worked or lived in countries with full lockdowns. They got added by another 304 million workers in the informal sector in countries with partial lockdowns. Altogether, these workers represent 67% of informal employment in sub-Saharan Africa. For such a large, disenfranchised and impoverished number of people to stop working or work remotely becomes unworkable. Earning income through formal means provides cushioning measures against temporary income disturbance in tragedies such as the COVID-19 pandemic or as a result of the enactment of lockdown measures (Kadt, J.D., and Naidoo, Y. 2020). Staying at home for them means gathering nothing for the day, and hence risking starvation and death. It also means losing their livelihoods. It impacts negatively on their dependents, whom they stay with and feed. The informal employee gets ground to powder between two excruciating stones: dying from hunger or the virus.

Many Africans employed in the informal sector prefer to evade the police, government and health regulations and continue to work rather than staying at home and risk starving. Many have the view that governments cannot subject people to starvation to protect them. Lockdowns in poverty-stricken Africa cannot be workable because many people cannot afford to buy and stock large amounts of foodstuffs for the periods of lockdowns, say two to three months. Since many of them are informally or not employed at all, they can only afford to buy small amounts of foodstuffs, creating a potential to continually go out to tuck shops, small shops and illegal small shop outlets to beef up their supplies. It gives rise to an avoidable violation of lockdown rules such as social distancing and staying at home. Kazeem (2020) corroborates by saying that since many informal employees cannot afford to buy and stock large quantities of food, they will do so in small bits, creating continuous business for small scale informal traders. It also becomes inevitable to violate the lockdown regulations because the coronavirus pandemic had an unannounced intrusion. No one got warned and prepared for it. It also becomes impossible for people employed informally to stock food that can go for one and half years or even beyond (considering that by the time of writing this academic work, we are already in November 2021). No one knows when the pandemic will end, and hence the restrictions as well. The lockdowns got abruptly announced and caught many informal employees unprepared.

Government concerns over the informal economy spring from the fact that people in the informal economy get exposed to impoverishment, disease and hunger. They lack the safety nets to cushion themselves under crises such as lockdowns. It also includes migrant workers, whether national or international, as they may well be without decent shelter under lockdowns, in addition to vulnerabilities of all workers in the informal economy. The closing of educational and training institutions is an investment loss in skills. It also disadvantages many informal learners who are unable to afford distance and e-learning for lack of connectivity. On the contrary, the very measures that are crucial to slowing the spread of the virus have a direct cost for more than three-quarters of the African population, whose livelihood is dependent on the informal economy. In simple terms,

reliance on the informal sector means not being able to afford to survive under quarantines and lockdowns (ILO. 2020).

By continuing to operate, informal traders put themselves at risk of being infected with and spreading COVID-19. Unlike formal businesses that continue functioning virtually with staff working from home and payments mostly happening online, informal ones and trade often involve close person-to-person contact and cash-based transactions, making it unsuitable and impractical in lockdown settings (Kazeem, 2020). If hunger compels considerable numbers of people to ignore the lockdown, that also renders them ineffective against COVID-19 (ILO, 2020). As was already happening in Africa, governments have faced pushback from their people through demonstrations. That was because of the arduous lockdowns. Disturbances in household income flow due to the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown pose serious threats. The disruptions happen not only to individuals and households but also to the effectiveness of the lockdown itself. When income flows get disrupted, household members may experience a reduction in food. They may also experience interruptions in managing chronic diseases and acute stress, increasing vulnerability to infectious disease. Even more trivial disruptions are likely to trigger trauma and interfere with protective behaviours. An example is the rapid consumers' shift from purchasing nutritious foods to more cost-effective ones, which they can afford under these circumstances. When households cannot meet their most basic needs, there will inevitably be non-compliance with lockdown restrictions, reducing the efficacy of the lockdown as a whole (Kadt and Naidoo, 2020).

Summarising the ineffectiveness of lockdowns in Africa on the points discussed, due to the high degree of informality in the continent, high population density and other social predicaments, restrictive measures against the virus will not be effective. Based on the economic situation in African urban settings and the population densities that make confinement unworkable, detractors point out that extensive lockdowns in Africa are ineffective and retrogressive. Without running water at home, many Africans have to go out daily to search for water. They also gather what they will eat for the day. Africa should not duplicate the strategies that western countries are adopting but should develop its home-grown strategies. South Africa, as a member of the BRICS countries, had its lockdown and restrictive measures affected. With 9.6 million people in the informal sector (ILO, 20218), it became difficult for the government to monitor and control compliance. It proved a mammoth task to protect lives without destroying livelihoods. That compromised the effectiveness of lockdowns in the country.

## Informal Settlements and Lockdowns in Africa

Western-style lockdowns are not suitable for Africa with its high volume of informal settlements that are overcrowded and jam-packed. A one-size-fits-all approach is thus not appropriate and African governments were supposed to establish home-grown strategies that suit the continent and its populations. In Africa, 60% of urban settlements are informal, and most of the population live in precarious housing where families share rooms and houses. Informal settlements and overcrowded public spaces such as buses and markets may spread COVID-19 in unimaginable ways. The lack of access to services as shelter, transport and land has two domino effects; it drives a higher risk for the virus and makes the country less robust to a tremor like this (UN Habitat, 2020).  The challenges faced by the developing world during the pandemic get compounded by informal settlements. That is because they are usually densely populated and lack decent sanitation infrastructure (Wilkinson, 2020). Masiphumelele in Cape Town, for example, is a denser settlement than, say, Klipfontein Glebe, with homes located close together. The distance to the first nearest neighbour in Masiphumelele peaks at <0.5m, the second nearest neighbour peaks at just less than 1m, and the third nearest

neighbour peaks at around 1.5 m. Masiphumelele poses a high risk for COVID-19 spread, as the groups of dwelling that would have to self-isolate together are typically large.

This micro example demonstrates that social distancing (short of a lockdown) would be problematic to achieve in the two selected settlements. Effectively maintaining the social distance norm, according to government regulations, means that people have to be rooted in their homes. That is impractical, given that many homes are not serviced and lack toilets and running water. Even in the case of a complete lockdown (as is currently the case), residents would be asked to do the impossible, as they would be unable to leave their homes to access toilets and water while maintaining a safe 2-m separation distance. In addition, the living conditions inside homes are generally cramped and overcrowded with inadequate ventilation and insulation, making staying indoors unbearably uncomfortable, particularly on hot days (Gibson and Rush, 2020).

Informal settlements residents do not have enough access to services such as water, sanitation and electricity. In the Eastern Cape instance, the current ratio of people per tape or toilet is far off from the national expectations and standards in the Buffalo City Metro and many provinces in the country. An East London Non-Governmental Organisation, Afesis-Corplan, revealed that in some of Buffalo city's informal settlements, more than 40 families share a single toilet (Tshazi, 2020). Another limitation is that many residents have to walk to a water stand and latrine. That is because the informal settlements never got serviced. That creates the inescapable movement of people, and the pathways taken from dwellings to these communal points will be frequently used. In addition, these collective points will themselves be locations for potential disease spread. Two hundred and thirty-eight million people live in slum settlements in Sub-Saharan Africa (UN Department of Economics and Social Affairs (2019). Water is in short supply, space-constrained, rooms often shared (Ibid). Around 60% of the Kenyan capital's 4.4 million inhabitants live in 2020 high-density informal settlements such as Kibera, which account for about 6% of the city's total land area. African leaders, scientists and the World Health Organisation (WHO) have expressed concern over the potential damage the virus could inflict if allowed to spread to such areas, home to nearly 43% of the continent's population (Smith, 2020).

Lack of access to health and medical services is one characteristic of the inhabitants of informal settlements, making it difficult to track and isolate infected people. The fear is that once COVID-19 reaches such areas, the unsanitary conditions will cause it to spread more rapidly (Drabble, 2020). Given that South Africa, as one of the BRICS states, has a total of 14% (1 in 7) of its population staying in informal settlements (Superliner, 2017), and 23% of its urban population staying in informal settlements (Van Niekerk and Le Roux, 2017), it was also affected by problems of overcrowding and lack of basic facilities in its informal settlements. That potentially heightened the spread of the pandemic, reducing the effectiveness of lockdowns.

## Homelessness and Lockdowns in Africa

Africa has large numbers of people who are homeless. They pose a potential threat to the spread of the novel coronavirus since this type of group is unmonitored. Homeless people seldom wash their hands or social distance due to the conditions in which they live. Governments worldwide have invoked "stay home," "self-isolate," "physical distancing," and "wash your hands" policies to flatten the pandemic curve and decrease the infection rate of coronavirus. These policies get predicated on the assumption that everyone has a home with adequate sanitation services. For the 800 million or so people living in homelessness globally, this might be a mirage. In addition, this medically high-risk population faces disparate health encounters such as high rates of respiratory illness. That might expose them more to the novel virus (Farha, 2020). The squalid nature of the conditions in which homeless people live and their absence of a fixed abode makes detecting, testing and treatment

impossible hence may render the motive of lockdowns ineffective. Those in shelters are better advantaged if the shelter does frequent cleaning or provides access to bathrooms and hot water and hand cleaners, which many do not. Even in such scenarios, in many shelters, people participate, eat and sleep in groups, which may likely increase the chances of transmission. In addition, many shelters are large spaces with cots or beds placed in close propinquity. In first world countries' winter months, homeless people are often transported by bus to winter shelters. Both the buses and mass shelters do not stop the spread of the virus and, therefore, expose their inmates to virus contamination (Cousineau, 2020).

Officials working in homeless shelters may also have limited training in identifying, preventing or isolating an infected individual showing signs of COVID-19 so the virus will continue to be transmitted. Homeless people have less access to health care providers who could otherwise order diagnostic testing and, if confirmed, detach them from others as recommended by the World Health Organisation. Without access, ill homeless people may be living on the streets and virtually unidentified by health officials and possibly exposing others to the virus. Homeless persons showing symptoms of COVID-19 may go to a crowded hospital emergency department, which even before coronavirus is where many homeless people go for health care services. But if the epidemic continues to spread, these facilities will become even more crowded, and wait times will increase, potentially exposing more people to an infected individual who has come seeking care (Cousineau, 2020). South Africa, a BRICS member state, gets affected by homelessness due to COVID-19-induced lockdowns. With its estimated total number of homeless people pegged between 100 000 to 200 000 (Hopkins et al. 2021.), it will be problematic to locate, trace and treat individual COVID-19 cases, reducing the effectiveness of lockdowns. These estimates could be much higher due to homeless people's high mobility rates that cause a lack of comprehensive data on the exact number (Cross et al. 2010.). The figures could be higher due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (Hopkins et al. 2021.).

## African Porous Borders and Lockdowns in Africa

African borders are porous. That leads to a high influx of undocumented illegal immigrants from neighbouring countries. Closing borders in Africa in general and in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region will not stop the spread of the coronavirus. That is because, by and large, borders in the continent are porous. Frontiers got capriciously imposed by former colonial powers and never respected. That includes cross border regions between South Africa and Zimbabwe and Botswana and Zimbabwe in which people have continued to cross the border at unsanctioned points despite the existence of fences. In some parts of the region, particularly on the contiguous border regions of Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique, people have long-established a strong cross border socio-cultural and economic clout that has diminished the significance and importance of the border. In the minds and lives of the people, boundaries do not exist. That is why in the contiguous borderlands of Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique, people move in between countries to access various services such as food and health across such borders. That is considered acceptable and normal (Moyo, 2020).

The nature of some borders also makes lockdowns in Africa a mockery. Most African frontiers have no clear demarcations such as fences, and some which had barriers before, those fences were sabotaged. That left no delineation at all. In some places, the physical border got marked by an insulated concrete pillar or beacon, a few centimetres above the ground. People have always ignored them, moving freely in-between countries conducting their everyday lives in line with their social, economic, cultural and other needs. For instance, at Mwami (Malawi-Zambia border), people simply walk or cycle freely between the two countries. In such a situation instituting a lockdown and closing a country's borders is not an effective way of stopping the spread of the coronavirus

(Moyo, 2020). African states on their own cannot detect, prevent and respond to infectious disease outbreaks without foreign cooperation. There is a need for assistance from other regional and international partners (Nsofor, 2020). Fear of persecution and deportation also grips illegal immigrants as they arrive in destination countries even when they contract coronavirus. Migrants and refugees are amongst the worst affected people by lockdowns in Africa. In some African cities such as Johannesburg, Pretoria or Cape Town, undocumented migrants remain fearful of being tested or going to the hospital due to fear of forcible detainment, separation from their families, and deportation (Muggah, 2020). That makes the virus to be continually spread in communities rendering lockdowns ineffective. The closing borders don't mean people stop trying to cross them but always lead to an influx of illicit travellers. That intensifies exposure and complicate health screenings and contact tracing. Many borders in Africa are notoriously porous. Migrants cross illegally and willy-nilly (Mbiyozo, 2020). South Africa as the only BRICS member in Africa, also experienced the same scenario of lack of control and containment to the influx of immigrants during this period through its porous borders. That compromised the effectiveness of lockdowns.

## High Population Density

A high population density in many African societies makes social distancing a mirage. One of the fundamental cornerstones of lockdowns in Africa was to institute physical and social distancing amongst individuals in families and groups in communities. African households are overcrowded due to extended families that stay together. They share rentals amongst occupants, social and physical distancing becomes a mirage. That renders lockdowns ineffective. Social proximity within families and neighbourhoods makes social distancing very difficult, if not impossible. In Africa, it is customary for several families to live under the same roof. Families have numerous children and extended. Household size is enormous than in western countries. According to the United Nations Population Division, 'among the 42 countries or areas of sub-Saharan Africa with a recent estimate, the median average household size is 4.8 persons per household' (United Nations Population Division, 2020). Intra-family transmission is considered a vector of spread for COVID-19. African social norms also focus on spending time with family, friends and associates. Many people thus inevitably live close to each other. Several factors make it hard to design and implement social distancing measures in Africa. That includes those that are low-income in particular, including large households, overcrowded dwellings, frequent and close contact between the young and elderly, constrained access to clean water, inability to earn a living while staying at home, or lack of liquidity to stock up on food and other supplies, which requires frequent shopping trips (Mysoon et al. 2020).

Lockdown measures in the African context endanger the livelihoods of many Africans who survive from hand to mouth through informal employment. A vast majority of Africans eat what they gather for the day. The nature of African informality doesn't allow Africans to do that business online but warrants their physical presence. Social distancing thus directly endangers many poor people's livelihoods. Many are street vendors and workers who rely on a daily wage to make ends meet. They cannot work from home. As a result, they lose their incomes under those circumstances. About 80% of the population works in the informal sector without contracts of any kind, let alone unemployment insurance or the possibility of continued salary payments if work suddenly dries up (Gunter, 2020). Social distancing will also be unworkable in Africa because they expose vast populations to acute financial shocks. Many countries, such as Nigeria and Cameroon, have introduced strict lockdown measures that closed businesses without sound alleviation strategies to assist the affected individuals and households. For the majority poor who cannot afford bank accounts and credit cards, the lockdowns may be as painful as the virus itself, compelling many to disobey the lockdown measures out of sheer desperation and a quest to make ends meet. Given

these devastating potential consequences, it is ethically questionable to bar people from working without offering any alternative means of survival for them (Rubenstein, 2020).

African countries did not cushion their populations from the adverse economic effects of the lockdowns, for example, hunger. That pushed many to the brink compelling them to resist the lockdown rules and continue their daily activities. In some cities such as Johannesburg, Nairobi and Lagos, there were violent resistances to lockdowns. That led to violent clashes with the police. In the two latter capitals, the situation even turned nasty as it led to some demonstrators getting shot by the police (Africa News, 2020). Without robust government support, micro-entrepreneurs are unlikely to abide by stay-at-home measures. That creates risks for themselves and their communities. In addition, since micro-enterprises use cash for business exchanges and deal with several customers daily, their return to business will dent ongoing efforts to contain COVID-19. The more restrictive the social distancing measures were, the excessive the impact on individual livelihoods and severe the subsequent economic shocks and the likelihood of social unrest amongst poor communities (Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 2020). As the only member state of the BRICS bloc in Africa, South Africa also faced a problem of a high population density in its urban areas. Coupled with resistance to lockdowns and lack of compliance to the restrictive measures, that threatened the efficacy of lockdowns.

## Institutions with Vulnerable Populations and Lockdowns in Africa

Africa has institutions with vulnerable populations that include incarcerated persons, children's homes and refugee camps. They accommodate vast numbers of occupants. That makes social distancing impossible hence making the efficacy of lockdowns redundant. In addition to prisons, refugee and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps in the region are overcrowded, usually with inadequate water and sanitation, making it very difficult to maintain social distancing under these conditions. Elderly residents in care facilities may also be affected and vulnerable (Social Science in Humanities Action, 2020). Africa hosts more than 25.2 million refugees and internally displaced people, and most of their appeals are underfunded. Displaced people get hosted in such countries with already under-resourced health systems. Africa houses four of the world's six largest refugee camps (in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Ethiopia) and, these camps are ideal spaces for transmission of the coronavirus. They are overcrowded and lack adequate water, sanitation and hygiene facilities. Many inhabitants have fled war or strife and have compromised immune systems due to malnutrition, high stress and other comorbidities. Healthcare facilities are basic; mechanical ventilators and intensive care beds are very rare. In these settings, social distancing or isolation will be extremely difficult. Kakuma and Dadaab refugee camps in Kenya accommodate 411 000 refugees (194 000 and 217 000 respectively (Ibid).

There are also displaced people who stay outside refugee camps. They live in very precarious health conditions. They are poorly resourced and unmonitored in terms of official support. They rely on philanthropic societies that faithfully and honestly offer support to them. These societies may be closed or overburdened due to the current pandemic era and government lockdowns. Many refugees and internally displaced people live in cramped conditions, including formal camps, informal settlements, and population-dense urban spaces. Multiple families get compelled to share the same bathing facilities if they have access at all. Some get obliged to share the same tent. In some countries, asylum seekers and irregular migrants get placed in detention, often in appalling conditions. The ease with which the coronavirus spreads makes these living situations potentially disastrous (Relief Web Issue Brief, 2020). South Africa as the sole member of the BRICS bloc in Africa, had to expeditiously release low-risk offenders from prisons to avoid overcrowding and

high transmission chances. By mid-June 2020, over 6 000 inmates of the 19 000-targeted low-risk offenders got released to mitigate the effects of the pandemic (Cabe, 2020; English News, 2020).

### Did lockdowns decrease the number of new infections and deaths?

Contrary to African expectations, lockdowns did not produce the intended effects. Amidst measures to reduce the spread of the pandemic and stabilise the curve, the total number of confirmed cases, new cases and deaths continued to sky-rocket. That signifies that lockdowns, physical distancing and other mechanisms adopted to control the spread of the virus were ineffective (See Table 1 for statistical evidence). Table 1 suggests that lockdown measures in the African continent were counterproductive since they did not yield the intended effects. Table 1 reports a three-month trend for COVID-19 in Africa using World Health Organisation (WHO) data. The number of confirmed cases, new cases, total deaths were lowest in March and continued to rise to May and beyond. That shows that lockdown measures have not been effective. The ever-rising number of confirmed cases, new cases, confirmed deaths and new deaths over the three months and beyond suggests the unsuitability of lockdown measures to the African context. By the time of the publication of this research, the figures of all the four categories had risen astronomically. For instance, the total number of new infections in South Africa by 20 March 2020 was 100 000 (ENCA News, 2020), surpassing the 6th March continental figure. The number of these four categories on the table continues to rise exponentially every day. That shows the unworkability and ineffectiveness of lockdown measures in the African continent.

**Table 1:** COVID-19 in Africa: A three-month trend analysis

| COVID-19 Africa Region | 6 March | 6 April | 6 May |
|---|---|---|---|
| Total Confirmed Cases | 19 | 6 616 | 33 973 |
| New Cases | 1 | 198 | 1 403 |
| Total Confirmed Deaths | 0 | 243 | 1 202 |
| New Deaths | 0 | 7 | 90 |

**Source:** World Health Organization, Situation Report, No. 46, 77 and 107

From the first day that each African country instituted a lockdown, new infections and deaths continued to rise sharply, showing the ineffectiveness of lockdowns in the African context. This author suggests that Africa needs to institute tailor-made and context-bound lockdowns that balance lives and livelihoods. Since people want to stay safe from the pandemic, they also want to sustain their lives by gathering what they eat. African states, therefore, need to strike a balance between the two.

### Recommendations

African states were supposed to act homogeneously as one continent and not as individual countries with varying policies and responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. In future crises such as these, Africa should be the first to institute lockdowns before the virus infiltrates its frontiers. Africa should do so as soon as it learns of such an outbreak, for example, emulating what New Zealand and Tonga did. African states in particular, and the continent, in general, could then homogeneously bar foreign travel and test returning citizens at ports of entry. Those who test positive for the virus would be kept in quarantine centres at the periphery without disrupting interior life and economic activities. That was going to keep the interior safe without instituting lockdowns. That was also going to outsmart some problematic issues such as the porous Africa borders because any movement of people from

one African country to the other, whether legal or illegal, will be a movement of virus-free people with no adverse health consequences to the receiving state(s). Those rare and isolated cases that may occur in the interior would be relegated to the quarantine centres at the periphery expeditiously, without disrupting social, political, cultural and religious life in the interior. There is also a need for massive health education through the deployment of community and peer educators to arm and inform Africans, nullifying and eradicating misinformation and disinformation surrounding the pandemic and vaccination issues. That will get buttressed by the provision of free masks, protective clothing and disinfectants. Such a move will ensure that livelihoods do not get disrupted. At the same time, it curbs the pandemic from infiltrating into communities. For those BRICS states with COVID-19 relief funds like South Africa, there was a need to expedite the disbursement of the funds electronically to deserving individuals. For South Africa, it was not about the availability of the funds but the speed and methods of their disbursing. The inertia and physical presence method adopted in disbursing the funds led to long and winding queues, desperation and misery, heightening the chances for the spread of the virus.

## Conclusion

From the above findings, lockdowns have proved ineffective in Africa. It is because of the complexity and uniqueness of the African continent and its people. The way lockdown measures got instituted did not take into consideration the African needs, values and ethos. They were unilaterally imposed by heads of states and governments, replicating from the European approaches without modifying them to suit the African context. That led to the ineffectiveness of such lockdown measures. Large numbers of informally employed people in Africa meant staying at home, practising social distancing was not workable. Informally employed people have no savings and social policies to cushion them in catastrophic times. They live from hand to mouth and have to gather what they eat daily. They also have to queue for public facilities such as water, sanitation and ablution facilities. That naturally makes lockdown regulations fall away as they do not become feasible. The prevalence of informal settlements that mushroom in all African cities and towns also made lockdowns unworkable. Informal settlements are cramped, with no spaces and overcrowded. The occupants of the settlements often form long queues for public water taps and ablution facilities. Many of them can't even afford to buy soap and cannot, therefore, clean their hands. That renders the efficacy of lockdowns because people cannot practice social distancing, stay at home and disinfect their hands. Rampant homelessness in the African continent also makes lockdowns impractical. Homeless people do not practice social distancing as they sleep under bridges and corridors in large numbers. Because of homelessness, many Africans cannot stay at home since they are of no fixed abode. That makes the efficacy of lockdowns redundant because the chances of the virus spreading rapidly under those conditions are very high. The porosity of African borders also makes lockdowns ineffective because people from any African country can easily transmit the virus anywhere on the continent. African countries' borders are permeable. People cross to and from unfettered. Lockdown regulations such as staying at home become futile. Institutions with vulnerable populations such as refugee camps are overcrowded. Their occupants queue for water and sanitation facilities. The shelters have little space. That heightens the spread of COVID-19, making lockdowns ineffective.

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# Women Economic Empowerment during Covid-19 Crisis and Transition in BRICS Countries

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## Abstract

The paper reviews the BRICS policies in rebuilding economies on the basis of equity and fairness. All economies are affected by the global pandemic, which has damaged most economies and led to a worldwide public health emergency. The paper adopts a qualitative approach by exploring secondary sources to analyse the role of the BRICS community on women economic empowerment during the Covid-19 pandemic. It presents a descriptive narrative in the context of the study. The findings suggest that the BRICS community still lacks strategic policy implementation that integrates women into the BRICS economy. As a result, there is a massive gap in women's economic representativeness and the need to promote access and affordable policies and education-related initiatives that enhance gender inclusion. It recommends that BRICS communities ensure closer cooperation with various stakeholders, national organisations, private businesses, and multinationals to promote gender equality in their respective economies.

Keywords: BRICS, Women Economic Empowerment, Covid-19, Policy Change.

## Introduction

Women economic empowerment has been identified as an important context to abort discrimination against women in developing countries and promote economic growth (Oshinubu & Asonga, 2021). The World Bank (2018) states that the global economy is losing approximately 160 trillion dollars in wealth annually due to gender discrimination and inequality in various economies. Women's empowerment allows disadvantaged women to make strategic life decisions relating to their economic activities, resources, and household expenditure and increases women's self-esteem and capacity training within the social context (Gangadhar & Malyadri, 2015). Women economic empowerment is a recent plan for the BRICS community. According to Khandare (2019), BRICS is a community of five developing economies growing faster than any other economy in the world. Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa are enlisted globally amongst the 25 top populated countries. In terms of land ownership. The BRICS economies have 26% but possess 46 % of the world's population. To date, BRICS contributed to global stability compared to the world's economic strength as they contributed to the world's growth by 22% between 2011-2016 (Khandare, 2019). Zondi (2021) argued that BRICS represents a significant component of the global power distribution even before the worldwide reformation. Therefore, the global power distribution possesses a residual power with the privilege of global influence. As of 2015, statistics on global economic growth reflects that BRICS accounts for 60% of the worldwide wealth and 40% of the world's population (Zondi, 2021). Accounting for more than half of the worldwide wealth, BRICS has added advantage and stable economic strength over other global communities of its financial stability in a changing global economic environment. However, most BRICS economies, except for South Africa, have struggled to initiate effective gender emancipation programs to facilitate gender equality. The Table below presents the report submitted by the world economic forum on BRICS ranking out of the global economies (145 countries) on sustainable development goals.

Table 1.1:     Global Gender Gap Index for BRICS on SDGs.

| Indicator | Brazil | Russia | India | China | South Africa |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Overall place | 92 | 81 | 112 | 106 | 17 |
| Economic participation and opportunity | 89 | 32 | 149 | 91 | 92 |
| Educational attainment | 35 | 1 | 112 | 100 | 67 |
| Health and survival | 1 | 1 | 150 | 153 | 1 |
| Political empowerment | 104 | 122 | 18 | 95 | 10 |

**Source**: (World Economic Forum 2019;Panova & Stapran, 2020).

From the Table, Russia is ranked first on the gender gap index on educational achievement, followed by Brazil and South Africa. The three countries, Brazil, Russia, and South Africa are also ranked first to achieve gender equity on health care in their communities while India and China are ranked 150 and 153 on the global scale. However, in terms of economic participation and opportunity and political empowerment, all BRICS countries need to up their game and foster gender inclusion. Overall, South Africa is still leading the BRICS community with the 17th position on the gender global gap index. Russia follows them on the 81st scale, Brazil on the 92nd scale and China on the 106th gender global gap index. The last country is India, with a rank of 112 on the Global gender gap index. The statistics indicate a massive gap amongst BRICS countries on women economic development.

The paper reviews the BRICS policies in rebuilding economies equity and fairness. All economies are affected by the global pandemic, which has damaged most economies and led to a worldwide public health emergency. The paper adopts a qualitative approach by exploring secondary sources to analyse the role of the BRICS community on women economic empowerment during the Covid-19 pandemic.   The report has three sections: the first part addresses women's economic empowerment in BRICS, the second paper addresses the Covid-19 crises in BRICS countries on women empowerment, and the last part debates BRICS post-recovery strategies on women's economic empowerment. The report concludes that the BRICS community still lacks strategic policy implementation that integrates women into the BRICS economy. As a result, there is a massive gap in women's economic representativeness and the need to promote access and affordable policies and education-related initiatives that enhance gender inclusion. It recommends that BRICS communities ensure closer cooperation with various stakeholders, national organisations, private businesses, and multinationals to promote gender equality in their respective economies.

## Women Economic Empowerment in BRICS

The importance of women empowerment is multifaceted; firstly, women's empowerment enables women to reduce their socio-economic vulnerability and dependency on male figures in each household (Banuri, 2007). As a result, women should participate in household decisions, economic activities, and resources without being subordinated or excluded from society. Secondly, empowering women enables them to acquire skills that can increase their financial status and allow them to live a good life (Aluko & Okuwa, 2018). The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2012, 1) argues that women's economic empowerment is needed to sustain society. Each state must implement sound policies and a long-term commitment to address gender-specific perspectives. The government must establish these policies to promote pro-poor growth and achieve active economic empowerment (OECD, 2012). Also, women's economic empowerment will increase women's rights to economic resources and opportunities such as having suitable employment and access to the right financial services (OECD, 2012; Aluko & Okuwa, 2018). The former United States President stated in a speech in September 2009 that: "Women perform 66%

of world's work and produce 50% of the food. Even with these efforts, they only earn 10% of the income of their workload and only owns one per cent of the property" (Aluko & Okuwa, 2018).

Empowering women is a significant factor in achieving a sustainable world for each economy made (OECD, 2012). Therefore, women's empowerment not only contributes to women's self-development and status in society, but it is an issue of social justice (Verdier-Chouchane, 2016). The factors restricting women's empowerment include state weaknesses, women's exclusion on all structural levels and other challenges hindering women from enjoying their rights to access opportunities, decision-making and essential services (Onditi & Odera, 2017). For Asaolu et al. (2018), economic issues, socio-cultural factors, education, and health are the underlying factors restricting women. Sell and Minot (2018) argue that the factors limiting women empowerment are diverse norms, gender-biased by-laws, lack of security or legal protection, and stereotypes. Other factors identified were unpaid household work and care and lack of access to property, technological and financial assets (Tiessen and Delaney, 2018). All these factors render women disadvantaged and marginalised, and the government must accelerate economic progress by tackling these barriers and bridging the gap of economic opportunities.

The World Bank in 2012 argued that bridging the gap of economic opportunities for women impacts society development through (i) productivity gains, (ii) international gains and (iii) positive results in the institutional and policy sectors (Verdier-Chouchane, 2016). Saeed (2019), on her part, proposes different measures such as placing women as leaders and decision-makers in gender-emancipated programmes, creating job opportunities, garnering investment in women's entrepreneurial ideas and emotions, acting against unpaid labour and mentoring women individually or in their professional careers. In support of these proposed initiatives, the African Union (A.U.) in 2015 introduced women's empowerment and development towards Africa's Agenda for 2063 (Department of Women, 2015). During the summit held in South Africa, all African heads of state made commitments to implement strategies to eliminate social, political, and economic challenges restricting women and girls by 2020. The responsibilities made at the African Union Summit (Department of Women, 2015) include:

1. The state must promote women's role and benefits in agriculture or the agro-business value chain.
2. There should be equal access to women's health.
3. Establish women's socio-economic and political empowerment.
4. Promote women's agenda on peace and security.
5. Enforce women's participation in governance.
6. Facilitate women's and girls' access to education, science, and technology; and
7. Assist women in having accountability for actions and results.

Gender mainstreaming strategies were not part of the BRICS plan; however, in 2018, BRICS academic forum formally included gender policies into the schedule. As a result, BRICS established the women business council to ensure full participation of women in all professional and social paths of life. However, despite each BRICS country setting gender equality initiatives in the individual countries before covid-19, the BRICS economies still lack this. As a result, there is a massive gap in women's economic representativeness and the need to promote access and affordable policies and education-related initiatives that enhance digital literacy. The Table below indicates the gender gap in health care, labour and women in business.

Table 1.2:        Number of Women on Economic Indicators in BRICS.

| Indicator  % | Brazil | Russia | India | China | South Africa |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Health Care | 45% | 71% | 17.1% | 56% | 43% |
| Labour force | 54% -   F | 54.9% - F | 23.6% - F | 61.3% - F | 61.3% - F |
|  | 74.4% - M | 70.5% - M | 78.6% - M | 75.9% - M | 75.9% - M |
| Entrepreneurship | 28.9% | 31.2% | 7.4% | 25.6% | 21.5% |
| Accessibility to Finance for Business Start-up | 2.9% | 13.6% | 3.2% | 10.8% | 5.1% |

**Source**: (Panova & Stapran, 2020).

From the Table, Russia has many women in the health sector, followed by China. However, India ranks the least amongst the BRICS community. In terms of the number of women in the labour force, all BRICS community has a wide gender gap of men dominating the workforce more than the women. The statistics of women in business in BRICS countries is worrisome, with the highest number of 31.2% in Russia and least number of 7.4% in India, bringing the average percentage of the communities to 22.92%. The result projects a low rank of gender inclusion in entrepreneurship which BRICS communities need to work upon.

Regarding accessibility to finance for business startups, the number of women is also low, with the highest number of 10.8% in China and the least number of 2.9% in Brazil.  This reflects the gender gap in financial inclusion in BRICS.  The results justify the reason for the objective of the study in the paper.

Women empowerment in BRICS countries have unique characteristics that bind the economies together. The first is the low involvement of women informal economic activities as compared to the developed countries. The second characteristics are the significance of inclusive development in globalisation that binds the five countries together. The third characteristics integrate gender emancipated policies to achieve the SDGs goals, an essential strategy that the BRICS government must set in BRICS economies. And lastly, the concern for the issue of insufficient literature on gender-inclusive development in BRICS economies. The remaining sections will discuss in the areas below.

### Brazil women empowerment

Like any of its Southern America counterpart, Brazil reaffirmed its support to uphold equality, empower women, and achieve women's rights in all structural levels of the government. The Global Leaders pledged this initiative at the meeting held on 27 September 2015. The Brazilian President, Dilma Rousseff, pledged to ensure that women are protected and that all gender-based violence is dealt with and victims are safe and protected. Through the Ministry of women, the Brazilian government also pledged to support and strengthened women development at all structural levels and encourage active political representation (UN-Women, 2020). The government implemented a strategic health plan that assists victims of sexual violence and a healthy working group for disabled women. The government also approved six-month maternity leave for military women. The Brazilian government also put strategic policies to ensure that babies register for new births without the father necessarily being present for registration. Finally, and most importantly, a new femicide law for harsher punishment was implemented for those who kill women or girls in the country (UN-Women, 2020).

In line with the world economic forum's report (WEF, 2018), South Africa has a higher representation in gender disparity and possess a global rank of 19th position. However, the rest of the BRICS

countries are yet to achieve this, Russia is ranked number 71 on the worldwide ranking, Brazil is ranked number 90, China is ranked number 100, and India ranks number 108. Despite South Africa, exceptional ranking, the gender equality experienced by the marginalised women daily points to economic inequality that needs to be addressed (Van Staden & Mpungose, 2018).

## Russia women empowerment

The Russian political system lacks gender representation and age imbalance, which affects women drastically. Russia remains a conservative country where the issue of feminism tends to be a political debate. To date, most women in leadership shy away from feminist activism to avoid challenges such as social issues serve as a stronger motivation to run political office. Even so, most of the political parties exhibit different versions of conservatism against feminist topics.

The transition of gender equality in Russia can be traced to the 19th century when social standing women began the social modernisation movement of enforcing equal gender education for women and girls (Rozhanovskaya & Pardini, 2020). The campaign led to the successful implementation of female educational institutes across the country, empowering women and girls. Other achievements by the movement were improving healthcare, training female physicians, Public Education, training on abstaining from abortion in favour of contraceptives, and reducing risky sexual behaviours. However, the campaign experienced a setback when Russia experienced a conservative turn where funding allocated for NGOs ran out. The government implemented legislative and administrative policies to restrict reproductive choices. As a result, women face conventional norms and values that plague society. Amongst many challenges, Russian women faces include 'poverty and financial debt' due to insufficient state support for single mothers; 'human rights problems' centred on violation of pregnant inmate's rights and medical challenges based on a high rate of prenatal mortality in rural areas, limited access to abortion and more adoption of C-sections usage in the hospitals. These challenges have confined Russian women from being empowered and active members of society. Literature also includes racial diversity, especially in terms of age, class, and nationality. Higher-class people tend to be less sensitive to gender bias since it is out of their sphere of concern. They believe they have the individual choice on belief systems. This ideology gives a big gap between the wealthy and the marginalised communities (Rozhanovskaya & Pardini, 2020).

The most prominent thing in Russia's politics is that the politics and economy are primarily informal. As a result, the government makes essential decisions pertinent to the economy outside the formal institutions, which exclude women from the policies entirely.

To achieve SDG5, the Russian government established the National Action Strategy for Women for 2017-2022 to bridge the wage inequality gap, which was at the rate of 72.1% difference by 2019's report. The initiative also aims to reduce gender-based violence and increase businesswomen's managerial positions. Russia prides itself as a nation with a higher human development index for women than men, with women having 0.823 compared to men's 0.808 (2017 report). The Russian government also aims to promote women's job opportunities and establish free access to education for children under three (Russian Federation, 2020). In addition, Russia needs more women and youth representation to create a new, free, equal, and unbiased political environment to facilitate social change.

## India Women Empowerment

Some authors have argued that India's low developmental rate is because of its patriarchal system. The patriarchal system has constrained mobility, reduced women's job opportunities, and low participation in socio-economic and political issues. Under-development for women has led to

most Indian women living in abject poverty, disparities in household allocation, inadequate health care and engaging in strenuous physical activities for survival (Davis et al., 2015). Sharma (2016) argued that gender inequality and discrimination against Indian women and girls is a continuous, pervasive, long-running phenomenon identified in every Indian community. To date, Indian's ranking and measurements on gender equality have been disappointing, and there has been a decline in female labour force participation with a 27% gender pay gap in corporate jobs (Dadhwal, 2016). In addition, statistics have shown repeated trends of increased crime rate against women, such as rapes, dowry deaths and honour killings (Mallapur, 2015). The significant challenges encountered on Indian gender inequality is 'patrilineality' (male descendants' inheritance) and 'Patrilocality' (women living with their husbands' families or close to them). These cultural belief systems have given male children more preference than women and leaving the women in a disadvantaged situation. The cultural system also engages a dowry system where the female family pay dowry to the male family. Unlike other global regions, this cultural dowry system has made most Indian households discriminate against girls as it means they need to invest in their dowry once ready for marriage. As a result, most parents invest in the male child more than the female and use the money to educate a female child to support future dowry (Sharma, 2016).

The current situation in India indicates a shift in policy initiatives for women empowerment as gender inequality has constrained Indian's economic growth. There is a call on active women representation in leadership positions since women leaders' communities presented positive affirmative-led actions than male leaders' communities. Furthermore, the women were more confident in reporting crimes that might be too difficult and stigmatising. The female leaders were also prone to enforcing educational and career aspirations to families with female children, which increased female-child education in the regions. This experiment revealed that if men are trained on gender bias and give women opportunities, it closes the gender gap in the community. Another policy change suggested was the issue of equalising land inheritance rights amongst male and female children. The policy met with mixed response in the society where those who embraced it had positive progress in educational attainment for girls and marrying at the right age. At the same time, the critics experienced domestic violence and marital conflict. Education for Indian children should be a priority for the country as it will facilitate inclusive development. The Indian government also needs to improve labour market policies that empower women and encourage active market participation and enrolment of professional training. India needs to strategise initiatives that bring parity for men and women to position itself as a global growth leader that facilitates gender equality.

## China Women Empowerment

China is still predominantly embedded with the traditional and communist system that rates women as lower than men inside their homes, rural communities, media, employment, and the health sector (Davies et al., 2020). Texter (2020) argued that China is like Africa as it remains a patriarchal country believing that women should constantly subject themselves to men. And these acts and norms continue to plague society in all structural designs. With the support of the communist party of China (CPC), the Chinese government also pledged their support to the United Nations on SDG5 towards achieving gender equality and protecting the legitimate rights of women and children (Jie, 2020). The President and the new leadership of "Äll China Women's Federation" further collaborated to develop women's emancipated programs in the next five years. China further ensured that the policies protected women's rights and interests into laws and regulations to elevate state and internalised social norms (Jie, 2020). Special attention was placed explicitly on women's rights to equal employment, land rights, sexual assault, or harassment in 30 provincial-level regions. The government also integrated gender emancipated policies into the country's primary education, available in the 15 provincial-level regions. In supporting the global women in diplomacy and

safeguarding world peace, the Chinese state dispatched 1000 women peacekeepers for international peacekeeping operations. As of 2018, the number of Chinese diplomats has increased to 2,065, 1695 in 2015. These efforts have been remarkable with an increase in female parliamentary. Compared to their BRICS counterparts, China does not have gender education inequality as all sexes have equal representation in the system for proper education. In addition, disability support has been put in place to assist disabled citizens, and the poverty rate has reduced marginally from 16.6 million in 2012 to 98.99 million in 2018. This statistic made the Chinese government stand out in economic empowerment more than all other member countries in the BRICS. Despite these achievements, China is still at its primary stage of gender equality. The government needs to put more effort to override traditional norms and practices that subject women to an inferior element. And there must be capacity training for societal engagement and effective implementation of the policies within the system (Feng, ChaiRuGan & Davies, 2020).

## South African women empowerment

To promote women's economic empowerment, the South African government committed itself as signatories of treaties and agreements regarding women's economic empowerment and equality. These treaties formulate the economic policies on financial inclusion addressed by government institutions in charge of the economic policy addressing women's empowerment.

According to the IMF report in 2014, South Africa is categorised as a middle-income country and the most developed country in sub-Saharan Africa (Stotsky et al., 2016). However, the report submitted to the Beijing+20 by the South African Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities in 2014 stated that despite the country making progress in addressing poverty and gender inequality, the gender gap in poverty and employment rate among women and men is still relatively high (Stotsky et al., 2016). The women's budget publication was initiated in 1995 to address policy prescription that specifies women's age and education issues. The magazine also projects gender issues on health care, welfare, housing, jobs and public employment, violence against women, extending time to cover revenue, donor, and intergovernmental finance issues. However, this initiative died out with the resignation of appointees in parliament and finance ministry over time (Stotsky et al., 2016).

The second initiative was initiated in 1998-1999 by the national treasury with the support of the former committee, which facilitated the women's budget scheme. This initiative became part of the Commonwealth Secretariat, endorsed by Commonwealth countries (Stotsky et al., 2016). Within the two years of this strategy's life cycle, the Commonwealth countries implemented policies surrounding gender in the structural levels of society and the (Stotsky et al., 2016). However, despite the disappearance of this initiative, some governmental departments, like the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), undertook gender budgeting-related projects. They were the first to identify the gender gap in providing a budget for women in small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs), which they tried to address. The Department of Social Development also provided five budget programs for women (Stotsky et al., 2016); the first was reducing the tax burden (zero-rating) on kerosene to assist women who rely on this fuel source. The second program provided a child support grant to primary workers and increased female SMMEs by the DTI. The fourth program was equity in time spent in prison rations by both male and female prisoners. In addition, the government made several fiscal policies or program changes at the national and provincial levels on women. For instance, the premier's office of Gauteng province in 2003 implemented a policy addressing women's needs and facilitating gender equality in the region to address gender financial exclusion (Stotsky et al., 2016).

The statistics for child support grants continue to rise over the years. Regarding agriculture, the government considers female farmers and tries to address the challenges facing the gender farming factor. In the energy sector, women's role in the household for lighting, heating and cooking is

accounted for, while the DTI proposed different programs to support and facilitate more women's participation in business (Stotsky et al., 2016). Another initiative implemented by the government was adjusting the tax system to suit women without discrimination. During apartheid, married women were regarded as "secondary earners and paid more tax rate than an unmarried man/woman" (Stotsky et al., 2016). However, the government amended this policy in 1995 and removed explicit discrimination against women in the tax code. Critics have reported pending concerns regarding this issue. They postulate that income tax still contains an element of bias. It does not consider the female single adult-headed households prominent in South African society since allowances for dependents accrue on the heads of households (Stotsky et al., 2016).

### The Covid-19 crises in BRICS countries on women empowerment

The current Covid-19 was not just a global health crisis but also an economic crisis. Covid-19 revived the interest of the worldwide reform in achieving a more inclusive, just and fairer system of global governance. BRICS countries were affected by the virus in different ways. China was the first country to identify with the virus and curtail it speedily using strict measures. Russia had a brutal hit and had the scientific infrastructure capacity to eliminate the virus's spread immediately. Brazil and South Africa were also severely impacted, with thousands of death records. The second new variant of the Covid-19 started in South Africa, which made the economy vulnerable.

The two countries are busy focusing on finding a new vaccine that aids economic recovery. And the economies have been impacted on issues of poverty, inequality, and low employment. India was also affected and had to develop laboratories that accommodate more than 1 million testings in a day beyond the world health organisation (WTO) recommendation. COVID-19 pandemic is reversing hard-fought progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. There is a need to help ensure more the global economy, especially the low- and lower-middle-income countries, are more inclusive and sustainable in pandemic responses (UNDP, 2020). The immediate health impacts of the pandemic have been devastating, as are the effects on the economy, livelihoods, poverty, and inequalities. In lower-income countries, governments' ability to implement supportive measures and economic stimulus are confined.

The pandemic may have reduced the ability to invest in these future opportunities. Women are disproportionately affected by these significant changes due to deep-rooted inequalities. The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified gender inequalities: women tend to be over-represented in the sectors most affected by COVID-19 lockdowns, they are bearing an even more unequal burden for care work, and gendered norms that disadvantage women may be strengthened during the pandemic (Rivera et al., 2020). Women-led initiatives and organisations have been central in addressing the impact of the pandemic and have the potential to play a vital role in "building back better" (Rakibul & Bahauddin, 2014). On its part, Dlamini (2021) argued that several factors contributing to the impact of covid-19 in BRICS countries on women economic empowerment vary from region to region. Brazil, Russia, and China have low political participation for women. Although South Africa had a high political charge, there were economic challenges for women in the country. Most significantly, there were health and survival issues. The common consensus on the impact of covid-19 on women economic empowerment in BRICS economies was that all five countries had low economic participation and opportunity for women. Furthermore, there are limited data on strategic policies for women economic empowerment, which remains an issue of concern (Pandor, 2021; Mosoetsa, 2021).

## BRICS recovery strategies on women economic empowerment.

The recovery from the pandemic might be opportunities to address persistent gender inequalities. The International Relations Minister' Naledi Pandor', in her speech on the BRICS approach to Post Covid-19 recovery, stated that BRICS countries tried their possible best to initiate a strategy that is based on shared principles, values, mutual respect (Pandor, 2021). The approach also stipulates BRICS democracy, inclusiveness, and a strengthened collaboration that serves as a common goal for BRICS establishment. The 12th BRICS Summit held virtually in November 2020 also addressed the post-covid-19 recovery strategies. The summit strategised different initiatives such as "BRICS Strategy for Economic Partnership", "BRICS Counter-Terrorism Strategy", and "BRICS Women's Business Alliance" and the first project on "Energy Research Platform." The strategies address three key issues: health issues, economic issues, and social issues.

Regarding the health issue, South Africa was the first to suggest a vaccine centre even before Covid -19 came and pledged its commitment to establish its vaccine research and development centre. Since the global pandemic was an issue of concern, especially in BRICS economies, the nation's came together to provide better-advanced research and innovation Center to develop vaccines that enable affordable access to quality, adequate healthcare, and diagnostic tools. The development of vaccines is currently an issue of concern in Africa, making the covid-19 post-recovery a current subject of debate. Regarding environmental and social issues, women were the most gender to be impacted economically with the covid-19 pandemic and have amplified gender inequalities. Most women have lost their jobs, and as stated earlier, the government may promote gendered policies that encourage equality during the pandemic (Rivera et al., 2020). Pannova and Stapran (2020) highlighted that South Africa have the highest unemployment rate of 27.3% amongst its BRICS counterparts. The unemployment rate significantly affected women with a ratio of 29.5% as compared to men's 25.5% job loss (Panova & Stapran, 2020).

The BRICS economy has initiated individual policies to address these challenges. Brazil implemented a new strategy for women empowerment through Article 461 of the Brazilian code, which enabled equal pay of work and equal value between men and women. The constitutional amendment no 72 of 2013 extended labour rights to domestic workers and established the constitutional employment rights that prevent gender inequality and make women redundant if pregnant. Policies such as maternity funding, Children's grants, free education for children under three years, amongst many, led to an increase in women leadership in 2018 from 41% - 68.9% (Panova & Stapran, 2020). They resulted in active economic participation from Brazilian women within the labour market. The Indian Ministry of women and child development oversaw gender emancipation policies. The gender policies address seven key priority areas in India: 'gender-based violence', 'governance and decision making, 'health and educational issues', 'economic', and 'environmental and climate change' (Panova & Stapran, 2020). Even though the government set these initiatives, the policies have yet to shift women's participation percentage in the labour market significantly. As of the 2018 report on Indian women labour market representation, the ratio still lies at 23.6%, with only 14% of women acting as entrepreneurs (Panova & Stapran, 2020). In China, gender policies were implemented to ensure that 40% of women occupy the labour force by 2020 to bridge the labour gender gap. This initiative increased women's economic participation in China by 35% and promoted equal pay for equal work. Currently, women own 31% of businesses in China and are 100% financially included. However, despite the policies, there is a significant huge gap in women's earnings than men. In China, women only earn 80% of men's monthly income, with a ratio gap of 2.5 % ( Copley et al., 2020).

In South Africa, the Department of women, youth and disabilities handles women economic empowerment by facilitating, implementing, and monitoring gender emancipated initiatives. Although South Africa was able to close the gender gap in education in the country, there is still

a massive gap in the unemployment rate for women, with a percentage of 29.5% and low self-employment at 12.9%. BRICS countries all have a high gender percentage in education and health but lacks good representation in economic and political participation (Maasdorp, 2020).

Other strategies enforced by BRICS to promote women's economic empowerment include digitalisation, which became necessary because of the covid-19 pandemic. All the BRICS countries came together to ensure citizens become digitalised. However, challenges of access, affordability and lack of education have limited the successful implementation of digitalisation in BRICS. Also, automation because of digitalisation is an issue of concern as it has replaced human jobs. As a result, the government made concrete policies to promote women's digital skills development and digitalised employment. Secondly, the BRICS economy also initiated strategies for women in BRICS countries to improve the quality of the products and diversity of import and export trades. Even so, only 15% of women are owners of exportation firms in BRICS, indicating that there is still a long way to achieving this initiative (Panova & Stapran, 2020). Thirdly, policies were set in place by BRICS communities to promote women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Awards and prizes are given to STEM women to promote and encourage active participation in these disciplines. Since there was inequality in women's wages compared to their male counterparts in BRICS countries, the last strategy was to assist women with unpaid work the opportunity to earn something.

## Conclusion

Women empowerment has been identified as an important context for aborting discrimination against women in developing countries and promoting economic growth. Women empowerment in BRICS countries have unique characteristics that bind the economies together. The first is the low involvement of women informal economic activities as compared to the developed countries. The second characteristics are the significance of inclusive development in globalisation that binds the five countries together. The third characteristics integrate gender emancipated policies to achieve the SDGs goals, an essential strategy that the BRICS government must set in BRICS economies. And lastly, the concern for the issue of insufficient literature on gender-inclusive development in BRICS economies. These issues led to BRICS economics setting up initiatives to bridge the gender gap for post-covid-19 recovery women's economic empowerment. The BRICS government implemented better education skills, professional development and access to digital technology, financial inclusion and access, entrepreneurial support systems, innovation and startup, and women's promotion in leadership to enhance women's economic empowerment programs.

Many recommendations have been proposed to promote and enhance women's economic empowerment, which has become a new initiative amongst BRICS agendas and post covid-19 recovery. The first is the current call for strategic policy implementation to integrate women into the BRICS economy. The BRICS economies are still lacking in this. There is a huge gap between women economic representativeness and the need to promote access and affordable policies and education-related initiatives that enhance digital literacy. Secondly, there should be closer cooperation with private businesses to encourage national organisations and multinationals in promoting gender equality. The world economic forums on World Economic Forum report that South Africa has a higher representation in gender disparity and possesses a global rank of 19th position. However, the rest of the BRICS countries are yet to achieve this, Russia is ranked number 71 on the worldwide ranking, Brazil is ranked number 90, China is ranked number 100, and India ranks number 108. Despite South Africa, exceptional ranking, the gender equality experienced by the marginalised women daily points to economic inequality that needs to be addressed.

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# A comparative overview of Brazil and South Africa's BRICS Agendas (2011-2017)

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## Abstract

This paper aims to present a brief comparative overview of Brazil and South African (2011-2017) diplomacy towards the BRICS group. Using the conceptual framework from the regional power studies, we present Dilma's Rousseff (2011-2016) and Zuma's (2009-2018) diplomacy towards BRIC/BRICS, seeking to understand their roles and contributions in broadening the group's thematic agendas. In addition, we also present a timeline of the BRICS creation and institutionalization throughout its annual summits.  The main sources of this research were both Brazil and South Africa's online archives and documents on foreign affairs, as well as the specialized literature from the International Relations and Political Science field. We conclude that both Brazil and South Africa's diplomacies towards the BRICS were part of the relational dimension of both regional powers in search for international protagonism. On the other hand, at the systemic level, it was a matter of bringing innovation to the South-South Cooperation field, promoting multilateralism, and contributing to the construction of a more diverse and inclusive international order.

Keywords: Brazil; South Africa; BRICS; Regional Powers; Comparative Analysis.

## Introduction

The international context that emerged from the 2000s allowed greater room for a modest international protagonism to Brazil and South Africa's diplomacies, given the reinforced role of regional powers and the growing rhetoric of an emerging "Geopolitical South" in international relations.

The concept of "Geopolitical South" seeks to highlight a political and autochthonous addition to the definition of the "South", beyond the traditional economic and geographical criteria.  The idea of adding the adjective "geopolitical" to qualify the word "South" denotes a caveat on identities and contexts of regional insertion, that is, the existence of diversities in the forms of production of politics from cultural, historical, and material identities (Braga; Duart, 2021).

The already 'traditional' concept of the "Global South" produces a homogenous image about this belonging, and one usually created by the 'other' - that is, the perspective that powerful actors have on countries of the South - rather than reflecting a self-constructed image. Consequently, the concept of the Global South, as well as others that have been created "from the outside", in addition to echoing a specific worldview, can simplify perspectives of countries that have very peculiar and distinct international insertions, regional environments, and socio-political and historical dynamics. From the perspective of the Geopolitical South, this historical perspective is relevant, but it has to be politicized by the political actors who formulate foreign policy (Braga; Duarte, 2021).

In 2001, the BRICS acronym was conceived by the economist Jim O'Neill, of the investment bank Goldman Sachs, in the study "Building Better Global Economic BRICs"[1], to designate the group of countries made up of Brazil, Russia, India, and China, characterized as emerging economies destined to occupy a position of growing relevance in the world economy. In that sense, how did that acronym end up creating a multilateral group that went through an institutionalization process and emerged as one of the main voices and players of the Geopolitical South?

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[1]    The report can be read at https://www.goldmansachs.com/insights/archive/archive-pdfs/build-better-brics.pdf

The 2008 financial crisis shook the international economic system and triggered a crisis in the economy of central emerging countries. Initiatives such as the IBSA Forum and the BRICS were the effective results of political concertation arising from the Geopolitical South rhetoric, which questions the Western monopoly on the definition of norms, the decision-making process, and the functioning of the main international institutions and organizations, such as the UN and the Bretton Woods system institutions, i.e., the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank (Braga, 2018).

This paper aims to present a brief overview of the Brazilian and South African diplomacy agenda towards the BRIC/BRICS and how they contributed to its institutionalization process. In the first section, we present a timeline of the BRICS Summits that explains both the BRICS creation and institutionalization. And it also demonstrates the main discussions about the African continent during each meeting. In the following sections, we present Dilma Rousseff's (2011-2016) and Jacob Zuma's (2009-2017) diplomacies towards the BRIC/BRICS, seeking to understand their roles and contributions in broadening the group's thematic agendas.

The main sources for this research were the specialized literature in the field of International Relations and Political Science in both countries. As well as the use of data retrieved from the online archives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Itamaraty), in Brazil, and the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO), in South Africa, that contains data on Dilma Rousseff's and Jacob Zuma's agenda towards BRICS, respectively.

## Brazil and South Africa as Southern Regional Powers

Emerging powers have attracted increasing attention in the international political arena, mainly within the bloc formed by the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa). In this article, we assume that the two main units of analysis – Brazil and South Africa – are considered southern regional powers. Therefore, it is worth highlighting some conceptual and theoretical considerations over that concept, especially regarding the relational dimension of those regional powers.

As Braga (2018) points out, developing countries attain the status of regional powers by the preponderance of material and ideational power they excel in their regions, and, as a result, they play a relevant role in global governance. They combine forces to compose a reformist agenda in the international system and strengthen their position in the North-South dialogue (Nel, 2010). In this sense, countries such as India, Brazil, and South Africa, for example, are committed to ensuring the redistribution of power, wealth, and privilege in the global economy, and, at the same time, they seek recognition. Flemes and Wojczewski (2010) explain the distinctive place of regional powers in the South:

> The positions of Southern regional powers such as Brazil and India, located on the one hand between the center and periphery of the current world system and the other hand at the nexus of international and regional politics, demand particularly complex foreign policy strategies (Flemes & Wojczewski, 2010).

Therefore, the duality of being a regional power while having aspirations at the systemic level can lead to potential tensions, as the two levels may require different courses of action (Prys, 2012).

The analysis based on the concept of Regional Powers can be guided by two dimensions: the positional dimension, through which it is possible to compare material capabilities (such as geographical capabilities; demographic capabilities; economic capabilities – total GDP, GDP per capita, Gini index, trade flows, investment flows –; and military capabilities) and the relational dimension, through

which it is possible to analyse the ideational resources of power and the interactions of the Regional Power with the other actors of the international system (Batista, 2017).

Another brief conceptualization that further supports our understanding of Brazil and South Africa as southern regional powers is the debate on the International Development Cooperation (IDC) agenda.

According to Milani and Klein (2020), IDC can be defined as a political field that articulates a set of policies of states, international organizations, and non-governmental actors, as well as norms and criteria that orient their actions, and the common belief that development cooperation is the best tool to mitigate contradictions and inequalities generated by capitalism.

SSC has its roots in the multilateral activism that emerged after the Bandung Conference in 1955, the Non-Aligned Movement in 1961, and the First United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in 1964. At the outset of the twenty-first century, boosted by the Chinese, Indian, Turkish, and Brazilian economic reactivation, SSC and its narratives of solidarity and horizontal relations among developing countries were revitalized. In 2012, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in its resolution 67/39 decided to upgrade the multilateral relevance of SSC and to strengthen the special unit created within the United Nations Development Program (UNDP): the special unit to promote technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC), that became the UN Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) (Milani & Klein, 2020)

In the case of SSC, the most powerful countries from the South have also established primacy in this field. China, India, Brazil, Turkey, and South Africa, for instance, associate SSC with the promotion of their economic diplomacy, but also with their foreign policy interests, such as the building of multilateral coalitions of support, such as the BRICS and IBSA, leadership in international agencies (WTO, WHO, FAO) and reform of global governance structures and mechanisms (Milani & Klein, 2020)

In this sense, on the analysis that is produced in this article, we consider the development of the BRICS agenda by Brazil and South Africa as part of the relational dimension of the study of a Regional Power. Therefore, they are seen as regional powers in search of international protagonism, through the promotion of multilateralism, and political articulation in the South.

## A timeline of the BRICS Summits: the group creation and institutionalization

In 2006 the first step towards the creation of the informal mechanism that came to be known as BRIC took place. During the 61st United Nations General Assembly, the four foreign ministers of Brazil, Russia, India, and China met at the initiative of the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sergei Lavrov. At this first meeting, it was clear, therefore, that Russia and Brazil had the greatest interest in the dialogue mechanism (Silva, 2013). Chancellor Celso Amorim himself (2011) notes that the informal, poorly structured meeting was practically restricted to greater interaction between him and Lavrov. One year later, the 2007 foreign ministers' meeting was the result of a Brazilian initiative. During the meeting, a decision was made - viewed with some reservation by the Chinese - to convene a future meeting in one of the countries (Amorim, 2011).

Fonseca JR gives us a good picture of the creation of BRIC. In the early 2000s, with the frustration and inability of Western countries to lead the formation of a new arrangement, there was a lack of definition in the existing order, or, in the words of the author, there was a "[...] great demand for order and little supply" (Fonseca, 2012, p.15). BRIC emerged, therefore, in an attempt to give multipolar contours to the system - not in a radical way, but improving its legitimacy conditions (Fonseca, 2012).

However, it was between 2008 and 2009, with the financial crisis, that the BRIC growth potential became even more evident. With the slowdown in the economy of developed countries and a gradual economic recovery of the BRIC, there was a strengthening of identity among the four emerging nations. And it is precisely in the context of the crisis that the 1st BRIC Summit was held in 2009 at Yekaterinburg, Russia, having the economic and financial crisis as the main agenda.

This first summit inaugurated the cooperation at the level of Heads of State and Government of the BRIC countries. The objective of the meeting was to reinforce the coordination of the four countries in themes related to the reform of world governance, especially in the economic-financial plan (G-20, International Monetary Fund, and World Bank). The meeting also advocated for greater representation of emerging economies in international financial institutions, where directors and executives should be appointed through an open, transparent, and merit-based process. Finally, in addition to the release of the first Summit Declaration, the document *"Perspectives for Dialogue between Brazil, Russia, India, and China"* was also created, guiding the next steps of the BRIC articulation (Sapientia, 2018).

In the first joint statement made by the governments of Brazil, Russia, India, and China in Yekaterinburg in 2009, Africa was not explicitly mentioned in the joint statement, however, the countries acknowledged the realities that developing countries were facing with the 2008 global economic crisis. The second BRIC summit, hosted in Brasilia in 2010, expanded on the initial discussions of the first joint declaration that developing countries remain a priority, however, African countries were only briefly mentioned regarding the fight against poverty (Muresan, 2019).

In 2010, Brazil was responsible for hosting the 2nd BRIC Summit. At this meeting, the BRIC heads of state emphasized political concertation. The Brasilia Summit was, therefore, an important space for dialogue on the need to reform economic institutions. In addition to defending issues related to the reform of the global financial system, the meeting's agenda included new cooperation themes. During the meeting, the BRIC leaders signed a cooperation agreement to facilitate the financing of energy and infrastructure projects. In addition, development banks signed an understanding to study ways to expand lending among the BRIC (Itamaraty, 2019)

In summary, it is possible to argue that the first two summits were framed in a moment of internal tactical improvement of the group, in search of greater international prestige, through the joint political articulation of the four states, until it was possible to transform this group of countries into a new political-economic-diplomatic entity, which was able to create its institutions.

By 2011, in the multilateral sphere, a process of greater institutionalization of the BRICS happened alongside the entry of the South African state, during the 3rd BRICS Summit in Sanya, China. South Africa's formal entry into the then BRIC was of important value for the political expansion of the BRICS, contributing to reinforcing the discourse of building a multilateral international order, with the inclusion of a representative of the African continent in the group (Berringer & Belasques, 2020).

On this occasion, BRICS reaffirmed the need to reform global governance, including the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). The Sanya Declaration also mentions topics such as economics and finance; condemnation of terrorism; the use of renewable energy and the peaceful use of nuclear energy and, finally, the commitment to the Millennium Development Goals and the eradication of hunger and poverty (Itamaraty, 2019). The declaration also presented an opinion on the security situation in the North and West of the African continent, particularly Libya, and pointed to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) framework as a roadmap for infrastructure development in Africa and as a reiteration of sustainable growth and poverty eradication (BRICS, 2011).

The fourth summit, held in India, in the city of New Delhi in 2012, had the theme "The BRICS Partnership for Global Stability, Security and Prosperity". The summit advocated for nominations of representatives of developing countries for the presidency of the World Bank, reiterating that the heads of the IMF and the World Bank should be appointed through an open, transparent, and merit-based process. Discussions also began on the establishment of the New Development Bank. To promote trade among the BRICS countries, an agreement was signed to facilitate the granting of credit in local currency (Itamaraty, 2019).

The Delhi declaration stated that "(...) we attach the utmost importance to economic growth that supports development and stability in Africa, as many of these countries have not yet reached their full economic potential" (BRICS, 2012).

At the following summit, hosted by South Africa in the city of Durban in 2013, the central theme was "BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Development, Integration, and Industrialization". Durban closed the first cycle of BRICS summits, with each country hosting a meeting of Heads of State and Government. On this occasion, inclusive and sustainable development and the reform of global governance institutions were addressed. This summit marked the beginning of the BRICS external dialogue exercise to promote greater cooperation with emerging economies, developing countries, and relevant international and regional organizations (Itamaraty, 2019).

The Durban Declaration stated that is noteworthy to note how within the framework of the NEPAD, the BRICS leaders would support African countries in their industrialization process through stimulating foreign direct investment, knowledge exchange, capacity-building, and diversification of imports from Africa. They also acknowledge that infrastructure development in Africa is important and recognized the strides made by the African Union to identify and address the continent's infrastructure challenges through the development of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), the AU NEPAD Africa Action Plan (2010-2015), the NEPAD Presidential Infrastructure Championing Initiative (PICI), as well as the Regional Infrastructure Development Master Plans. Therefore, the BRICS leaders would seek to stimulate infrastructure investment on the basis of mutual benefit to support industrial development, job-creation, skills development, food, and nutrition security and poverty eradication, and sustainable development in Africa (BRICS, 2013).

In 2014, the 6th BRICS Summit was held in Fortaleza, with the theme of inclusive growth and sustainable solutions. At this meeting, there was an important step towards the institutionalization of BRICS. On this occasion, it was created both the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) and the New Development Bank (NDB), popularly known as the BRICS Bank (Itamaraty, 2019).

As pointed out by Vasconcelos (2018), the creation of the CRA and the NDB served not only to meet the particular demands of member states but also fulfilled the function of serving as examples of the BRICS vision for the constitution of a new architecture of international finance. However, the new BRICS institutions represent a process of conflicting subordination vis-à-vis the Bretton Woods institutions, since they do not break with them, but neither do they passively associate with them (Vasconcelos, 2018).

The Contingent Reserve Arrangement, in turn, would work along the lines of a monetary fund of the New Development Bank, which had reserves of US$ 100 billion, allocated by the BRICS member states, which could be used in case of liquidity crises or pressures on the balance of payments. It is worth noting that, although created by the five members of BRICS, the NDB provides in its resolution loans to other states and also for the accession of new members, provided they are members of the UN (NDB, 2014; 2017a). Finally, it should be noted that the Bank's contributions are directed to both public and private initiatives, with the aim of financing projects that fall under the themes of

sustainable development and infrastructure, such as renewable energy, mass transport, sanitation, and irrigation (NDB, 2014).

During the 6th BRICS Summit, the Fortaleza declaration praised the efforts of the UN, African Union (AU), and regional blocs such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), CPLP, and Southern African Development Community (SADC) in promoting development cooperation. In addition, it was decided that the Regional Centre of the New Development Bank for Africa would be based in South Africa (BRICS, 2014).

In Ufa, Russia, during the 7th BRICS summit in 2015, the meeting approved the agreements establishing the New Development Bank and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement. During the 7th Summit, the "Strategy for the Economic Partnership of BRICS", also known as the "BRICS Strategy" was approved. The BRICS Strategy provided guidance as well as the framework for the BRICS cooperation, paving the way for further elaboration of sectoral development strategies, programs, and roadmaps by the members to be then implemented under the leadership of respective signatories. In addition, agreements were signed on cultural cooperation and cooperation between the Development Banks of the BRICS countries and the New Development Bank.

During the UFA summit, the security situation of African countries was emphasized in particular, and the BRICS expressed their encouragement towards Ethiopia with its upcoming financing for development conference (BRICS, 2015)

Held in India, in the city of Goa, in 2016, the 8th BRICS Summit theme was "Building Inclusive and Collective Solutions". The summit discussed global economic recovery, addressing issues such as fiscal and social responsibility, NDB development, attracting investment, fighting terrorism, and economic growth (BRICS, 2016).

The Goa declaration resulting from the 8th BRICS summit highlighted the importance of the role of the African Union in shaping the development of the African continent with the creation of Agenda 2063. In addition, the declaration pondered on the steps taken to address security situations across the continent, as well as addressing other African initiatives, such as the Addis Ababa dialogue on international taxation issues (BRICS, 2016).

The 9th BRICS summit was held in China in the city of Xiamen in 2017. The theme of the summit was "BRICS: Stronger Partnership for a Brighter Future". At the meeting, the BRICS Action Plan for Innovation Cooperation 2017 - 2020 was signed, and the creation of the BRICS Tuberculosis Research Network was endorsed.

In addition, the BRICS Action Plan on Economic and Trade Cooperation, the BRICS Strategy for Customs Cooperation, and the Memorandum of Understanding between the NDB and the BRICS Business Council were signed. The 9th Summit also optimistically discussed African development and human security through AU initiatives. The statements also debated the need to deepen investments in African countries and developing countries (BRICS, 2017).

In 2018, the 10th Summit was held in South Africa, in the city of Johannesburg, with the theme "BRICS: Collaboration for inclusive growth and shared prosperity in the 4th Industrial Revolution". At the summit, an agreement was signed regarding the creation of the Headquarters of the Regional Office in the Americas of the New Development Bank, to be installed in Sao Paulo, Brazil. At this summit, the BRICS leaders also signed the Memorandum of Understanding on the Regional Aviation Partnership and created the BRICS Innovation Network, "iBRICS" (Itamaraty, 2019).

It is possible to recognise, throughout the holding of all the summits mentioned, that the BRICS have undergone a process of institutionalisation and thematic enlargement.

Bond and Gacia (2015) have proposed that while analysing the BRICS one can organize it through three different views: BRICS from above (the position of some government and business bodies), BRICS from the middle (the position of some academics, think tanks, and some NGOs), BRICS from below (grassroots social movements in struggle in the countries, which can create common bonds of transnational struggle and solidarity). In this article, the Brazilian and South African agendas will be detailed by a mixture of the first and second views.

## Brazil and the 'Assertive and Active' Foreign Policy: Strengthening relations within the South (2003-2010)

One of the main milestones in Brazil's relationship with its regional surroundings in the twenty-first century was the foreign policy development of the government of Luis Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2010), especially its emphasis on cooperation with Southern countries. This 'Assertive and Active' foreign policy - as it became notoriously known - sought greater international prominence to foster their socio-economic development and mitigate structural dependencies (financial, business, and technological) through multidimensional diplomacy, marked by concomitant action at the multilateral-global, regional and bilateral levels (Alves, 2018).

One of the starting points of this foreign policy was the fact that the Brazilian government recognized itself as a developing country that still faced serious economic and social vulnerabilities. Therefore, there was an effort to strengthen Brazil's international insertion and position to overcome the external vulnerabilities that limited its full development. Added to this, the context in which this policy was formulated that allowed the combination of two dimensions, both the emergence of systemic opportunities and national viability, which created conditions for an autonomous foreign policy (Lima & Pinheiro, 2018).

One of the main fronts of action of this foreign policy was the strategy of including alliances with non-regional partners, especially from the second term of Lula's government. This strategy, as observed in the analysis made by Cepaluni and Vigevani (2011), also served to increase bargaining power with the central countries, something that was represented during the Lula governments by diplomatic articulation in the G20 and G4, as well as coalitions such as the IBSA Forum and the BRICS.

## BRICS agenda under Dilma Rousseff's government

The foreign policy of Rousseff's government has moved forward considerably under the framework of continuity with Lula's predecessor government. However, as Dilma's foreign minister Antonio Patriota (2021) points out "continuing does not mean reproducing the previous policy automatically, without modulation or creativity" (Patriota, 2021, p. 3).

In this sense, President Dilma had her particular vision of international relations, which was a reflection of being the first woman to preside over Brazil, but also because of her fight for democracy, being a victim of torture during the Brazilian military dictatorship (1964-1985), her academic and professional experience, focused on economic and energy issues, as well as her humanist values.

In short, with this in mind, she would therefore commit to the promotion of human rights and gender equality (expressed, for example, by the change of vote in the condemnation of Iran in the Human Rights Council) and her concern to preserve and expand Brazil's efforts at integration in South America. Furthermore, Dilma viewed with a certain skepticism the prospects of the Doha Round, as

well as the interest in establishing relations of cooperation, trade, and scientific and technological exchange with the poles of the emerging multipolar world (Patriota, 2021).

Last but not least, Brazil under Dilma's administration had an enthusiastic adherence to various forms of interregional concertation, such as IBSA, BRICS, South America-Africa Summit (ASA), the summit of South American-Arab Countries (ASPA), G20 meetings, and the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP), in addition to engagement with the United Nations (UN) and the importance attributed to the environment and the promotion of peace (Alves, 2018).

Therefore, during the Dilma administration, Brazil continued to play a central role in political forums, as a platform for promoting multilateralism and defending a more representative order that also included the countries of the South. The priority axis of relations with other regional powers continued to be through the activities carried out mainly within BRICS frameworks.

The dynamism and initiatives within the BRICS group during Rousseff's government were quite significant. Between 2011 and 2014, in terms of participation, Rousseff joined all summits, meetings, and gatherings related to the mechanism, and took advantage of opportunities to strengthen bilateral coordination with all the member countries. A summary of Rousseff's trips to BRICS events can be seen below:

**Figure 1:** Chronology of Dilma Rousseff's Presidential Diplomacy in the BRICS (2011-2015)
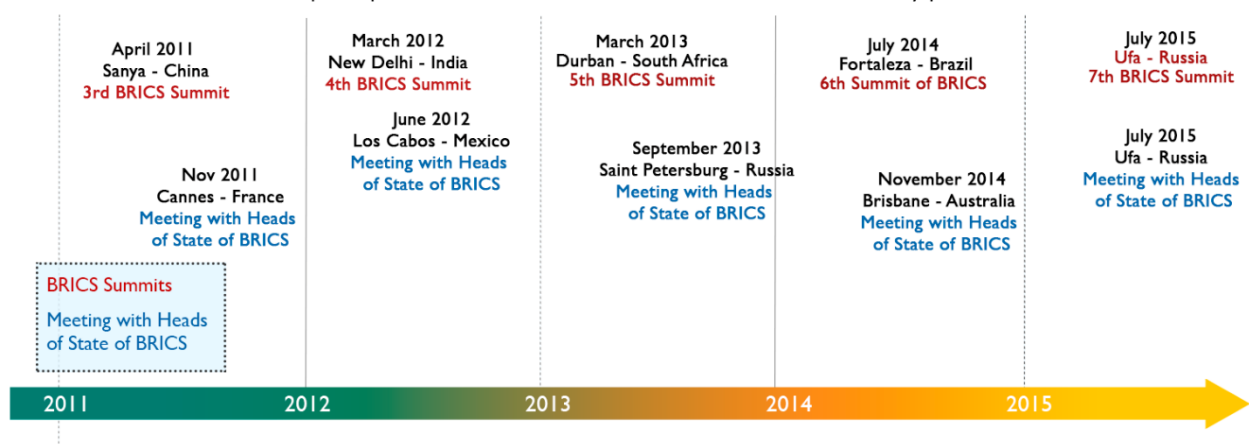


**Source:** Own elaboration based on Braga (2017).

Dilma brought some interesting topics to the BRICS agenda, during her speeches on these opportunities, such as the "fight against terrorism and the attention to human rights", with a greater emphasis on the Brazilian proposal of Responsibility while Protecting (RwP), the "Sustainable Development" agenda and the importance of including social topics on international agendas (Alves, 2018).

On the fight against terrorism and the attention to human rights topic, during the 4th BRICS Summit, in 2012, Dilma further emphasized the need for the use of preventive diplomacy as a strategy to reduce the risk of armed conflicts and the loss of human lives. Rousseff stated that the Brazilian government repudiates violence and human rights violations, and at the same time is against any rhetorical escalation of violence and any policy of blockade that is not defined within the framework of international law and the United Nations (Braga, 2017).

In addition, she also noted the need for the BRICS country to discuss the international norm of responsibility to protect (R2P), having in mind the previous proposal of responsibility while protecting (RwP), made by Brazil at the opening speech of the 66th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (Braga, 2017).

The concept of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), created by UNGA Resolution 60/1, was structured on three pillars. This resolution recognized the obligation of every nation-state to protect its population from gross violations of human rights and humanitarian law (first pillar) and emphasized the duty of the international community to assist societies that fail to achieve this goal (second pillar). However, the document also provided that, should peaceful means prove inadequate and insufficient, the international community itself would be empowered to take appropriate collective security measures, including the use of force, to enforce its goal (third pillar) (Lopes; Saliba, 2016).

The BRICS countries agreed on the general matter of "rethinking" R2P, as one can see in their Summit statements. The debate was intensified by the growing instability in the Middle East, due to the Arab Spring uprising in 2010-2011, which led to other serious humanitarian crises - e.g., Syria - and the expansion of the Islamic State and the outbreak of violence in Mali. (Rinaldi; Pecequilo, 2021). Examples of that rethinking include Brazil's proposal of Responsibility while Protecting (RwP) as a way to temper R2P; the frequent calls by South Africa for greater investment in conflict resolution through political dialogue; and the China-led proposal of the idea of "Responsible Protection" (Abdenur, 2016).

These points of view indicate that the BRICS countries have some common goals in terms of international security, which may help to develop joint positions and initiatives on specific topics in the areas of the BRICS international security agenda that are considered the least resistant.

Regarding Sustainable Development, in 2014, Dilma stated that the BRICS countries have a lot to debate on the environment and sustainable development agendas. During her opening speech at the 6th BRICS Summit in Fortaleza, Brazil, Dilma pointed out how the discussion on inclusive and sustainable growth was steered by the negotiations of the post-2015 development agenda. An important example of the Brazilian initiative was the organization of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development – the Rio+20 conference –, which had strong collective support from the BRICS and resulted in the creation of the document "The Future We Want" that served as the base for the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)[2] (Braga, 2017).

## South Africa's agenda towards the BRICS under Zuma's government

Zuma, who took office in the context of the 2008 global economic and financial crisis, saw in the rapprochement with other powers of the South, such as Brazil, India, and China, an alternative to the resumption of economic growth and a way to strengthen South Africa's position as a regional power. Furthermore, he saw in the political articulation of groups such as IBSA and BRICS an opportunity to guide South Africa's development jointly with its regional surroundings and coordinated by the states. Its foreign policy - guided by Ubuntu diplomacy - sought to associate domestic development with that of its region. Bilateral relations with African countries were intensified and regional integration was promoted, which became the focus of his government's African Agenda.

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2    The SDGs are a collection of 17 global goals, set by the United Nations General Assembly.  Paragraph 54 of UN General Assembly Resolution 'A/RES/70/1' of 25 September 2015 contains the goals and targets. The UN-led process involved its 193 Member States and global civil society. The resolution is a broad intergovernmental agreement that functions as the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The SDGs are based on the principles agreed in Resolution A/RES/66/288, entitled "The Future We Want". This was a non-binding document released as an outcome of the Rio+20 Conference held in 2012 (United Nations, 2012)

From 2010 onwards, Zuma was instrumental in securing South Africa's inclusion in the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) group after trips to Beijing, Brasilia, Moscow, and Delhi in support of South Africa's inclusion (Van Onselen, 2012).

Partnerships with countries of the South were critical to advancing not only South Africa's own development needs but also that of Africa and to create political, economic, and social convergence for the fight against poverty, underdevelopment, and the marginalisation of the South. Therefore, South Africa continued to promote the strengthening of South-South cooperation and supported the Agenda of the South through the BRICS; India, Brazil, South Africa Dialogue Forum (IBSA); Forum for China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC); Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC); India-Africa Forum; NAM; G77; and other South-South fora (DIRCO, 2012).

In this sense, South Africa's foreign policy objectives concerning its membership in the BRICS could be summarized in three broad points:

> (i) to advance the country's national interests as outlined in the President's State of the Nation Address;
> (ii) to promote its regional integration programme and related continental infrastructure programmes;
> (iii) to partner with key emerging world actors on issues related to global governance and its reform (PMG, 2013, p. 1).

Zuma had moderate presidential diplomacy regarding his participation at BRICS Summits and side-events or informal meetings. His main speeches happened during the BRICS Summit, with his absence during the 2012 and 2015 Summits. A summary of Zuma's trips and main speeches during BRICS Summits can be seen below:

Figure 2: Chronology of Jacob Zuma's Presidential Diplomacy in the BRICS (2011-2017)
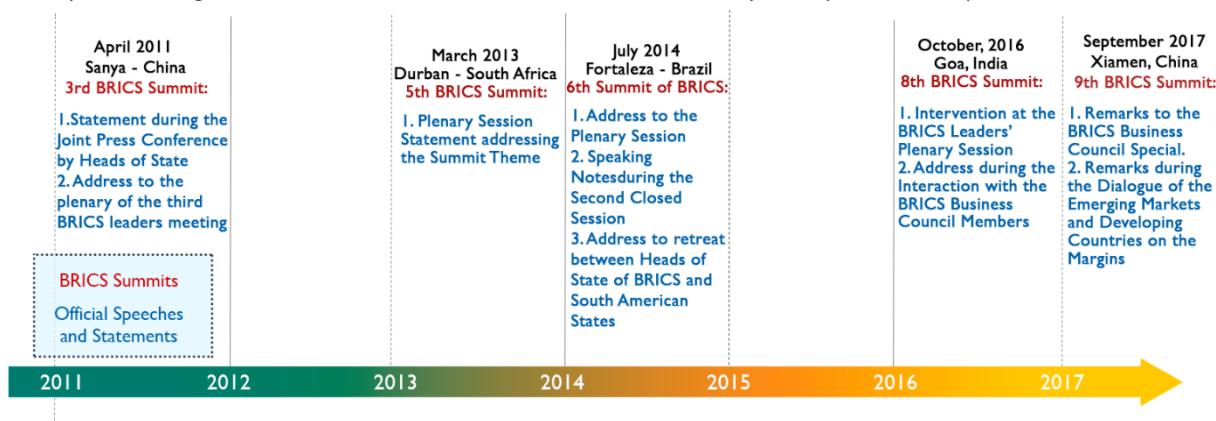


**Source:** Own elaboration based on DIRCO (2021).

By using data retrieved from DIRCO annual reports between 2012 and 2017 (DIRCO, 2012; DIRCO, 2013; DIRCO, 2014; DIRCO, 2017), we can also present some outcomes of South Africa's membership and rapprochement with the BRICS.

As the result of holding the 2013 Summit, South Africa steered the BRICS agenda towards the creation of three new important initiatives: i) the BRICS Leaders-Africa Dialogue Forum within the

proposal of the BRICS Plus initiative; ii) the launch of the BRICS Business Council (BBC); and iii) the launch of the BRICS Think-Tanks Council (BTTC) (DIRCO, 2012; DIRCO, 2013).

One of the main contributions held by South Africa was the BRICS Plus initiative. First introduced at the Durban Summit, it was intended to assist African developing countries to gain more access to BRICS members, to form their economic cooperation alliances that hopefully would lead to economic growth and development to the countries in the South, adding inclusivity and cooperation between African countries and BRICS (Sidiropoulos et al. 2018; Sempijja; Diko, 2020).

The BRICS Plus initiative would be strengthened through the establishment and solidifying of political dialogue between invited African leaders and BRICS, during their Summits. In a recent study held by Diko and Sempijja (2020), the authors further emphasized that the BRICS Plus initiative allowed South Africa to push for African countries to have access to BRICS members. In addition, the initiative aims to strengthen economic cooperation, promote economic growth and development in African countries, and provide African countries with another way to pursue it than the traditional ones from the North and its financial institutions (Sempijja; Diko, 2020).

Another important achievement that took place in Durban, in 2013, was the creation of the BRICS Academic Forum and the organization of the BRICS Think-Tank meetings. Those initiatives were coordinated in consultation with several South African departments and institutions, such as the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), the Higher Education South Africa (HESA), and the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), and had as the final result the establishment of a BRICS Think-Tanks Council (DIRCO, 2013)

The BTTC, which represents the respective think-tanks of the five countries in the BRICS, first met in Stellenbosch on 11 and 12 November 2013. The declaration committed the think-tanks, in the first instance, to a) form a platform for the exchange of ideas among researchers, academia, and think-tanks, b) to convene the annual BRICS Academic Forum; and c) by making policy recommendations and giving guidance to the BRICS leaders for consideration (DIRCO, 2014)

Finally, it should be noted that South Africa's rapprochement with the BRICS need also take into account the fact that South Africa perceived the countries of the group as important investors and catalysts for development on the African continent, especially China. The BRICS countries remain the main sources of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) among emerging investors (DIRCO, 2017). With South Africa's inclusion in the grouping, trade relations with most BRICS countries have had improved. South Africa's trade with BRICS partners has increased from R268 billion in 2011 to R529 billion in 2019 (DIRCO, 2020).

Another more practical example, in terms of results, is in the field of cooperation. Since the creation of the New BRICS Development Bank in 2014, in five years, the Bank has approved 65 infrastructure and sustainable development projects, totaling around US$21 billion. Of this total, nine projects, valued at about US$3.4 billion, have been approved for South Africa (DIRCO, 2020).

South Africa also had benefited from the opening of the New Development Bank's Africa Regional Centre (ARC) in Johannesburg in 2017. This is the BRICS Bank's interface with the African continent and is focused on identifying and preparing projects to make more bankable projects possible (DIRCO, 2020).

The ARC's initial emphasis was on the identification and preparation of sustainable infrastructure and sustainable development projects in South Africa in line with South Africa's National Development Plan adopted by the Government as a blueprint for future economic and socio-economic development

strategy for the country. The Bank's loans seek to enhance and complement the available founding sources in South Africa and the region (NDB, 2017b).

## Final Remarks

After this overview of the Brazilian and South African agendas towards BRICS, we can assume that BRICS played different roles in the international arena and brought a variety of benefits to the countries and their societies.  But we can also point out that the investments in that political concertation arena – during Dilma's governments in Brazil, and Zuma's in South Africa – became a commitment to the model of development allied with democracy, valuing social participation in the formulation of public policies. In this sense, Brazil and South Africa contributed to help the institutionalization process of the BRICS, as well as to give voice to the "BRICS from below" players. With the creation of the BRICS Academic Forum, the BRICS Civil Society Forum, also known as the People's Forum on BRICS, the BRICS Business Forum, different players from each of the BRICS counties held meetings and produced reports that reached the leaders and main players of the organization.

In a sense, while Brazil used the BRICS Summit and meetings to propose and promote the need for deeper discussions on norm-making and to establish a well-articulated and coordinated position on several serious issues on global governance reform, South Africa admission to the group emphasized the role of South Africa as a gateway for investments and the need for more South-South Cooperation projects in the African continent. In that sense, South Africa's commitment to the BRICS Plus initiative was an important landmark, but it needs further investments and results.

Besides, South Africa's inclusion into the BRICS legitimised the group in terms of representation, making sure that all leaders from all regions of the world are included. Without a participant from the African continent, the developing countries were not all included in the forum (Asuelime, 2018).

Over the last decade, the BRICS nations have increased their financial and technical assistance to developing countries, and established distinct projects of economic cooperation, especially through South-South cooperation with low-income countries. The impact on low-income countries through trade, FDI, and development financing is significant, and coherent with the BRICS aim of striving for more political influence in the world (BRICS Think Tanks Council, 2015).

On the other hand, at the systemic level, the BRICS initiative brought innovation to the South-South dialogue and strengthened the autonomy of these countries in comparison to the traditional countries of the North. But above all, we identify that both Brazil and South Africa's commitment to BRICS were envisioned and part of the rise of southern regional power-seeking for an international protagonism.

Furthermore, these political articulations have boosted the proposition of new agendas and the pooling of creative efforts to manage international crises. In other words, they have enhanced the possibility of reforming global governance so that it benefits not only the national interests of states but also the desires of their societies (Waisbich, 2013).

In conclusion, it is still difficult to see the BRICS as an institution that would deeply challenge the existing international order, but the agenda in defense of the reform of international institutions, which may reflect a new configuration of international power and increase the participation of BRICS countries in international decision-making processes, has been a constant in the Summit declarations (Carvalho, 2018).

At a time where the Bretton Woods international organizations suffer from a growing lack of legitimacy, initiatives to expand spaces for dialogue and to promote international cooperation, such as the BRICS-plus and outreach dialogues, are welcome, as they promote multilateralism and contribute to the construction of a more inclusive international order.

## Acknowledgements

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# Systems view of BRICS value chains and how South Africa can host some for BRICS participation in African Continental Free Trade Area

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## Abstract

Global value chains have shaped world production and trade. This research article examines the connections between the value chains of the BRIC economies and South Africa's role in positioning BRICS-Africa trade as a member of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) using BRIC value chains that has been tailormade to increase BRICS share of the AfCFTA market. It argues that in order for BRICS's to increase its competitiveness in AfCFTA and the global market, intra-BRICS trade should be based on value chains that has been developed specifically to support BRICS and provide it with the competitive leverage necessary to explore new market opportunities. AfCTA presents such a market. Additionally, the article reveals that for BRICS to succeed in AfCFTA through its value chains, it must recognise South Africa's potential (to host some of these) and its geographic location on the African continent. Furthermore, BRIC needs to appreciate that South Africa can successfully host some of BRIC nations' value chains. This indicates that South Africa's membership of BRICS and AFCTFA provides an opportunity that can benefit BRICS through its participation in AfCFTA using value chains approach. This however requires academic interrogation, which will yield information and knowledge that can be used to formulate programmes, policies and strategies of how BRICS value chains can be of significant support to AfCFTA.

**Key Words:** Systems view of BRICS value chains; African Continental Free Trade Area; BRICS; South Africa

## Introduction

BRICS countries are exclusively distinguished by rapidly growing economies that are emerging in character, have vast populations, and whose governments are eager to position their countries in global markets through collaboration, trade, and peer support. O'Neil (2007) predicted that BRICS would eclipse the G7 economies by 2032. Chen (2012) argues that BRICS' potential for growth and its strength to contribute to the world's economy present an obvious shift in the international balance of power, with gravity moving from the north to the south (Chen, 2012). There are some unique things about the BRICS, like the fact that its trade agreements allow members to get into new markets, improve their economic competitiveness through support, and gain geopolitical advantages through the help of other BRICS members.

To strengthen BRICS's competitiveness in the world market, intra-BRICS trade needs to be reinforced through value chains that have been specifically developed to support BRICS and give it competitive leverage so that it successfully explores new market opportunities. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) present such market opportunities. In fact, an integrated value chain system within BRICS is needed to bridge the existing fragments of trade and production within BRICS. It is important to establish and connect the geographically fragmented production processes into an interlinked system of production that is domiciled within BRICS countries (Hernández, Martnez-Piva, & Mulder, 2014). Through this system of value chains,

BRICS will derive the full benefits of market opportunities such as AfCFTA using technologies developed through collaboration among BRICS countries, which can then be deployed accross Africa to improve the production of high-quality goods that can be traded between BRICS and Africa.

This type of engagement, which seeks to help Africa improve the quality of its products through technology transfer, will position BRICS well in the AfCFTA. However, for BRICS to succeed in this, it must consider South Africa's potential and its geographic location on the continent of Africa. It further needs to acknowledge that South Africa can successfully host some of the value chains owned by BRIC nations. These may include the deployment of technologies; processing of raw materials from Africa for BRIC markets and Africa; processing of agricultural products such as fruits, nuts, and others; using technologies developed by BRICS countries; assembling and redistribution of machinery and other equipment developed within BRICS; strengthening of Africa's industrial sectors, such as mining, through the deployment of state-of-the-art technologies researched and developed within BRICS; and modernization of African pharmaceutical industries through BRICS developed technologies. These can be spread across the continent through South Africa as a springboard (Horner, 2021).

BRICS is certainly capable of developing value chain systems that are relevant to the AfCFTA. For instance, China has set the trend through the BRI, the Forum for China-Africa Cooperation, various bilateral agreements with African countries, and the policy of technology deployment to Africa, which intends to support Africa's industrialization. These initiatives have seen countries like Kenya, Tanzania, Morocco, Egypt, Senegal, Nigeria, Angola, Mozambique, the Democratic Republic of Congo and others benefit in various ways. On the other hand, Russia has increased its trade with North African countries, with a trade turnover of US $11.7 billion in investments.

Nigeria is India's African economic partner, while Brazil maintains links with its colonial allies in Africa, such as Mozambique and Angola. Nigeria and Angola are vital commercial partners for Brazil, with the latter exporting industrialized goods and purchasing crude oil (Vinicius de Freitas, 2016). What is obvious with these trades is that BRICS countries prefer to trade with Africa individually rather than as a bloc. This fragmented link between BRICS and Africa portrays a lack of a coordinated approach to the African market, and this might be a BRICS impediment towards full participation in the AfCFTA.

With the AfCFTA is focusing on increasing intra-African trade, BRICS needs to come up with a strong strategy that will make BRICS a bloc of choice in the African market. This gives South Africa a chance to demonstrate to BRIC partners that it is a trusted partner that showcase BRICS value chains and place them in the African market. There is therefore a need to conduct research that will identify these value chains.  For South Africa an assessment of which of these can be based in the country requires a systemic analysis.  Systems thinking is important when mapping value chains because they show how many different parts of product research and development, production, and distribution work together in a globalized world.

Globalization has definitely changed the way countries trade and engage with one another and across the world. Staritz and Reis (2013) have argued that the global economy is increasingly structured around GVCs that account for a rising share of international trade, global gross domestic product, and employment. This is a claim also supported by Gereffi and Fernandez-Stark (2011). Trading in goods and services from a global standpoint, especially in the age of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, has further emphasized the complexity of GVCs. Today, the bulk of goods and services are purchased online and distributed through a chain of interlinked warehouses.

Within this context, GVC offers opportunities to study how Africa's economies can be interlinked and how relevant they are to the global economy. The structure of the global economy is such that

transnational corporations break down their operations and locate them in different regions, none of which, or few of them, are located in Africa (Staritz and Reis, 2013). While several studies on GVC (see; De Backer and Yamano, 2011; De Marchi, Giuliani, and Rabellotti, 2018; Farole, 2016; Ignatenko, Raei, & Mircheva, 2019; OECD, 2007; Rasiah, Kong, & Vinanchiarachi, 2011; Staritz, Plank, and Morris, 2016; Vermeire, Bruton, and Cai, 2017) have presented different contexts and case studies, the argument that foregrounds a call to develop value chains that link Africa with BRICS technologies derives from the fact that Africa is treated as a pariah within the global value chain discourse. Hence, the continent supplies most of the natural resources used in various processes and goods produced by companies in the world. In addition, due to weak intra-African trade, industrial links in Africa are weak (Del Prete, Giovannetti, & Marvasi, 2018). This situation needs to be improved through the deployment of BRICS value chains.

## BRICS trade with Africa as basis for Value Chains development

Among BRICS countries, China has consistently been the top exporter of products among BRICS since 2000.  Its proportion of BRICS exports has expanded dramatically.  In 2000, China accounted for more than half of all BRICS exports.  Russia on the other hand has traditionally been the second highest exporter among the BRICS nations, while India overtook Brazil in 2009 (O'Neil, 2021), South Africa has been the lowest (Figure 1).
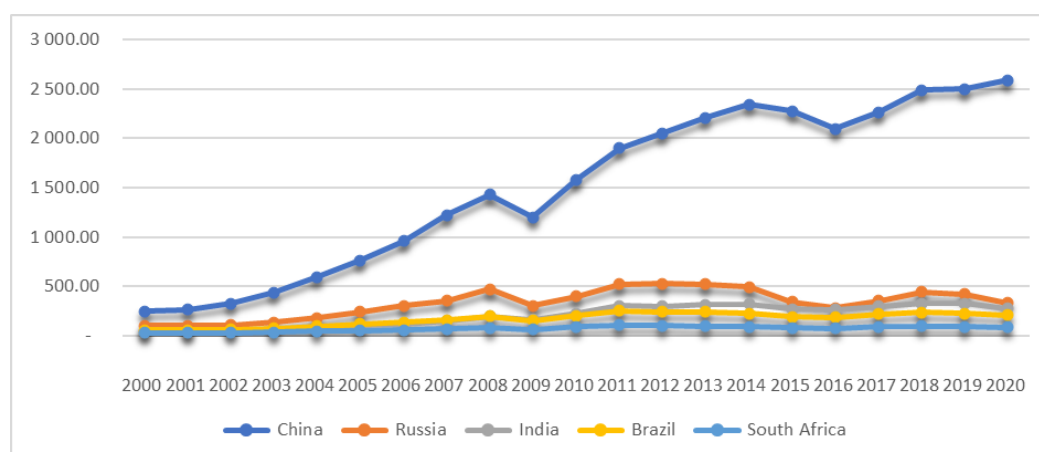


**Figure 1**: Export of goods by the BRICS countries from 2000 to 2020(in billion U.S. dollars)
**Source:** Statista (2022)

Within BRICS, while China's trade is well documented, Brazil has also been trading with Africa, although its focus has been with the Portuguese-speaking countries. In terms of overall assessment of exports, Brazil ranked 25th in 2019. Indications point to the fact that Brazil's exports to Africa surged to US$ 1296.39 million in December 2021, up from US$ 837.91 million in November 2021 (Trading economics,2021) (Figure 2). The country mostly exports raw food to Tanzania, South Africa, Mauritius, Zambia, and other countries.

While Brazil's products' value addition to Africa is not yet considerable owing to the nation's position as a developing country, the nation's services have formed the Youth Technical Training Program via the Brazil-Africa Institute and the African Development Bank (AfDB). The goal of the program is to teach young African professionals about research and technology transfer, which will help build local capacity (AFDB, 2017).

Consequently, Imports from Africa into Brazil decreased from US$622.78 million in November of 2021 to US$ 455.02 million in December 2021 (Figure 2). Like Brazil, Russia also offers raw

materials. Most of its total exports were natural resources, such as metals and electricity (Trading Economics, 2022).
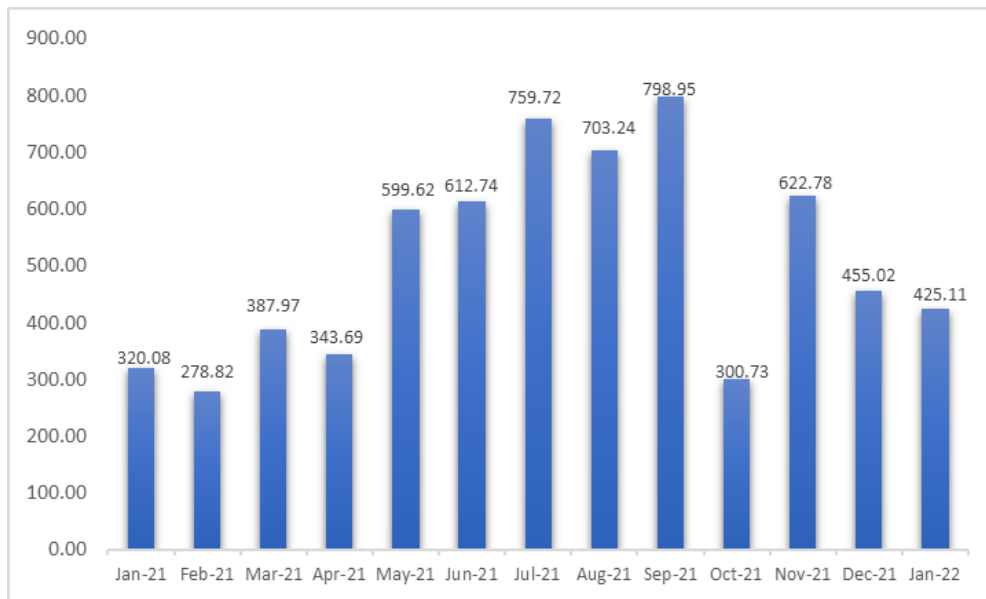


**Figure 2**: Brazil import from Africa

**Source**: Trading economics (2021)

Russia has stronger commercial ties with North African nations, with a trade transaction of US $11.7 billion in 2019 Trading Economics, 2021). In 2020, Russia sold goods worth US $335.5 billion to countries throughout the globe (Workman, 2021) (Figure 3). It principally exports hydrocarbons (more than half of total exports), solid fuels, wheat and meslin, iron and steel, precious metals, precious stones, and wood. Only 2.5 percent of Russia's total African exports are delivered (Trading Economics, 2021). Russia is also a key weapons exporter to Africa. Between 2016 and 2020, Africa accounted for 18% of all Russian weaponry supplies, with Algeria being the largest recipient (Clifford, 2021).
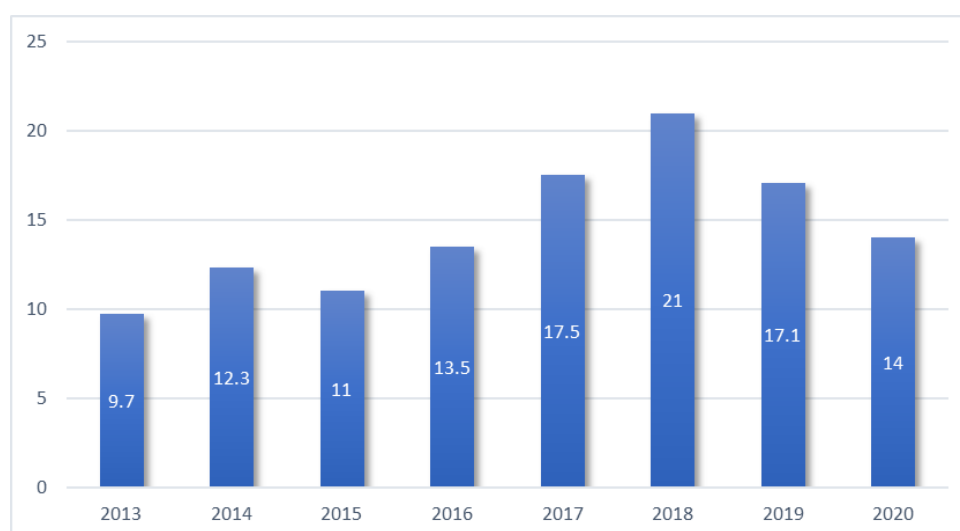


**Figure 3**: Trade revenue between Russia and African countries from 2013 to 2020 (in billion U.S. dollars)

**Source: Statista (2021)**

India is the only BRIC nation with a service trade surplus (Chen, 2012). In 2019, India's top exports included computer and information services (US $94.4 billion), personal travel (US $27.8 billion), transportation services (US $21.1 billion), financial services (US $4.82 billion), and other professional services (US $44.5 billion) (Figure 4). However, poor commercial transactions between India and Africa may be due to geographical distance, which results in high trade costs (Trading Economics, 2021).
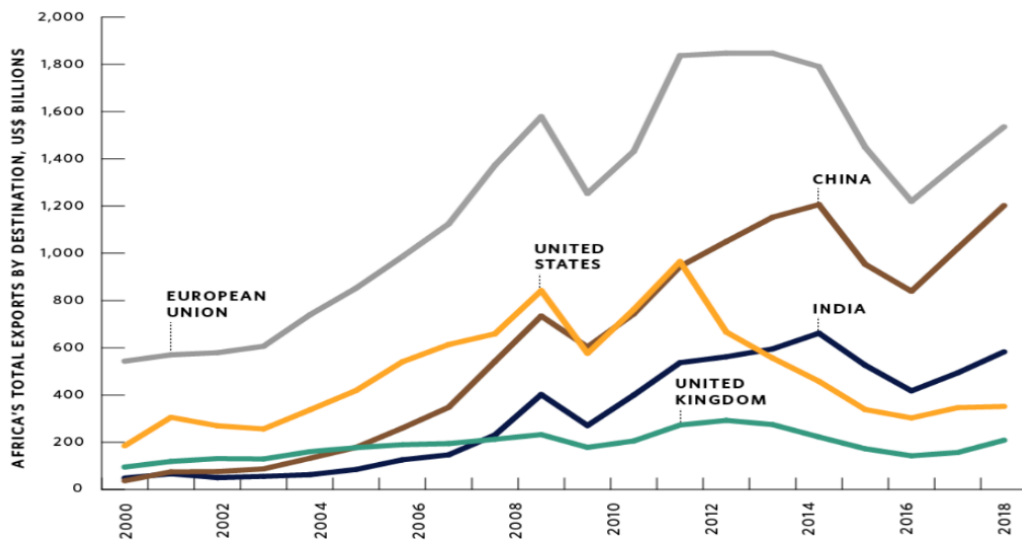


**Figure 4**: China and India share of Africa's Export

**Source**: Usman & Landry (2021)

The majority of value chain components throughout the BRICS countries are linked to a single cluster—the Chinese sector, validating the cliche that China is the "world's factory" (Ye & Voigt, 2014). In addition, China is a significant investor in Africa. It is quite visible in the light manufacturing sector, particularly in textiles and footwear (Zhang, 2021). It is also involved in digital GVC outsourcing across the globe. It is the world's leading supplier of artificial intelligence technologies.
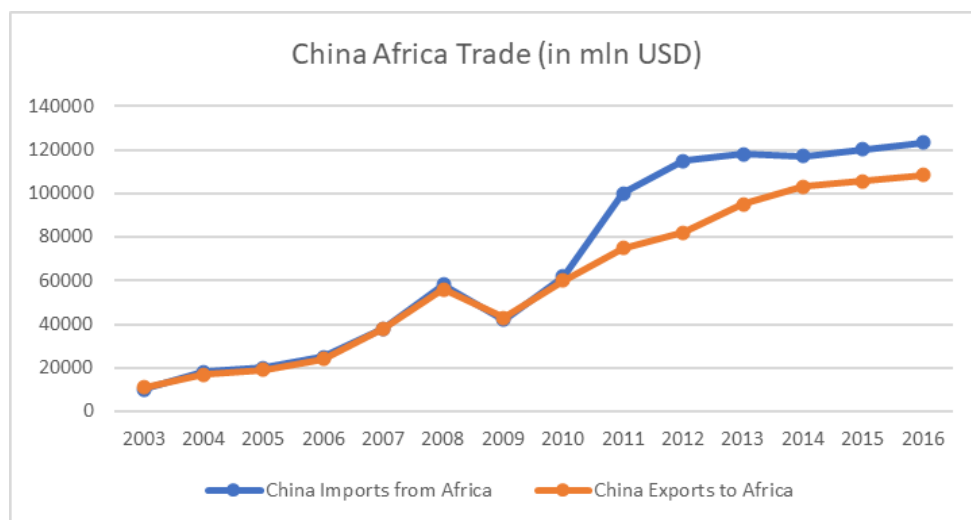


**Figure 5**: Africa-China Trade

**Source**: Author's calculation from using data from Miao & Borojo (2020)

Due to the health-care crisis caused by the COVID-19 outbreak, China emerged as a major provider of medical supplies to Africa during COVID-19 (UNCTAD, 2021). It has since become a central player in various GVCs and the most significant and leading contributor to the BRICS trade with Africa (UNCTAD, 2021; Makgetla, Levin & Mtanga, 2019).

South Africa's primary exports to the other BRICS countries seem to be mainly raw materials, semi-finished products, and fruits. With global markets becoming increasingly volatile as a result of trade disputes and the COVID-19, policymakers have shifted focus towards regional value chains as an alternative structural transformation impetus (Boys & Andreoni 2020). The AfCFTA could help BRIC countries work together to build value chains that seek to improve relations with Africa. This will shift Africa's participation in the global value chain by encouraging intra-regional trade and commerce. It is anticipated that manufacturing exports will rise significantly with intra-African trade (Zhang, 2021). As already emphasised, the AfCFTA provides South Africa with an opportunity to host some of the value chains developed by BRICS for the purpose of participating in the AfCFTA. South Africa currently has a 22 percent share of intra-AfCFTA exports, with a potential market share of 30 percent by 2035 (World Bank 2020).

## South Africa's potential of advancing trade in Africa through BRICS Value Chains -lessons from China

South Africa is one of the most industrialized countries in Africa. This is supported by a fully functional system of innovations. South Africa's national system of innovation derives its origins from the 18th century. The first formal documentation of scientific and technological activities in South Africa dates back to the 18th century. A functioning national system of innovation alone is not enough to position a country in the market. Thus, drawing from Chinese experiences, South Africa could well position itself in AFCFTA using BRICS-linked value chains. It can further develop and boost its GVC through its links with other BRICS countries who are keen to participate in the AfCFTA.

China benefited immensely from the GVC's "spillover effects by positioning itself as a country capable of adopting and adapting technologies developed by other countries." Chinese companies were able to increase the appeal of their products to foreign consumers by joining value chains as contract manufacturers. This further enhanced the global competitiveness of China. It is estimated that over 90% of all Chinese manufactured goods exports are via GVCs, which have eliminated conventional entry hurdles to overseas markets for made/assembled in China commodities. China's export miracle has been fuelled by the positioning and penetration of Chinese products into developed and emerging markets (Seamus, 2021). Once located in a country, companies are more likely to innovate in technology and product development. This strengthens the national system of innovation of a host country.

By hosting the value chains of high-tech companies, China provides an opportunity for Chinese enterprises to participate in the value-creation processes of high-tech products. This transformed China into one of the countries that exports iPhones to the world. Participating in the GVC also assists enterprises of the host country to participate in the distribution and retail networks. Chinese products are now sold via various global distribution and retail networks that have been built by GVC-led suppliers to multinational corporations.

As hinted previously, trade fragmentation, which exists within BRICS, can only be sealed through GVCs. With fragmentation being exacerbated by the manufacturing sector because of modularization, it is no longer necessary for a nation to create production facilities for an entire industry in order to manufacture completed goods. By participating in the GVCs, businesses in the host country are able to improve and increase their production capacity in areas where they have a competitive advantage.

GVCs provided Chinese enterprises with a one-of-a-kind channel for accessing new expertise and industrial know-how. This can be replicated in South Africa if the country successfully negotiates hosting some of the BRICS value chains.

Face-to-face engagement, information transfer from lead businesses, the need to embrace international standards, and training of the local staff by lead firms are all benefits of participating in the GVCs. Through locally developed technologies and know-how, Chinese enterprises were able to be innovative and be able to add value to goods. This transitioned China from being a pure assembly nation to one that designs and enhances production processes. Through their involvement in GVCs, Chinese firms have been able to accomplish "nonlinear upgrading." This means Chinese enterprises have been able to place themselves within GVCs by capitalizing on hosting value chains developed elsewhere. Through this model, South Africa will benefit immensely through this approach of acquiring technological know-how through participating in the GVCs.

South Africa is one of the influential economies on the African continent that are integrated into the world economy. The interaction of South Africa with the economies of the continent is such that its footprint has expanded considerably since its integration into Africa. Global value chains offer an opportunity to develop insights on how Africa can successfully trade with itself. The significance of South Africa as an example of a developing country with the potential to strengthen the continent's value chains provides limitless opportunities for academic research (Gereffi & Fernandez-Stark, 2016).

## Benefits of BRICS Value Chains to Africa

A slogan *"designed in Germany"* but *"made in China"* arose when European countries shifted their production to China. This came at a time when China was in desperate need of technology and job opportunities for its citizens. Through this, China today is the second largest economy in the world and has earned itself the status of being a global player in trade, investment, and technology development. Meanwhile, it improved its technological competitiveness and human capital, which are now the foundations of China's economy and contribution to the world. The AfCFTA presents Africa with a similar opportunity. Africa is endowed with a young generation, which can be used in a similar way to what China did a while ago. Therefore, a "design in BRICS" but "made in Africa" needs to be replicated for Africa to realize the AfCFTA. This will provide BRICS with the prospect of developing value chains that will reinforce its presence in Africa and allow BRICS to contribute to the realization of AfCFTA.

Value chains that link BRICS countries have become extremely necessary, especially for trade among BRICS countries and the competitiveness and economic prosperity of the bloc. Over the last few decades, two significant phenomena have shaped international trade. These are the increasingly integrated nature of world markets and the "disintegration" of production processes, which allows for the global dispersion of different value-added activities in value chains or global production networks (Hernández, Martnez-Piva & Mulder, 2014).

A country gets involved in a value chain through its specialisation, either upstream or downstream. Most importantly, the location of a country in the value chain is essential (Ye, 2014). While this is a common norm, African countries participate in global value chains as spectators rather than as active participants. Over the years, Africa's contribution to the global economy and value chains has been through the provision of unprocessed raw materials. The AfCFTA will overturn this through the establishment of value chains that connect African countries to the world. This will convert Africa into a distributor of goods and products "made in Africa". Through active involvement in AfCFTA and the establishment of Africa-centred value chains, South Africa stands to benefit as the only member of BRICS that is located in Africa.

These value chains will change the game of globalisation by allowing Africa to reap the benefits of the BRIC-Africa relationship without disrupting the entire global value chain of specific products. A path of production processes based on targeted products therefore needs to be developed to promote the equitable sharing of benefits between BRICS and African countries (Seniuk, 2019). South Africa's connection to BRIC will promote mutual and symbiotic benefits for African states in equitably distributing these value chains across Africa. For AFCFTA, South Africa's BRICS membership represents a potential to create and expand intra-BRICS commerce in Africa.

## Concluding Remarks

For decades, the European Union (EU) has pursued the interests of its member states as a bloc. Its interaction with the African continent has been both at the individual member level and at the EU bloc level. In recent years, the geopolitical influence of the EU has been softened by the exit of Britain (BREXIT) from the bloc. Additionally, the bloc has challenges of political instability, which need its attention. Influential countries like America have also adopted an inward-looking policy that prioritizes their internal interests over global issues and investments. Its withdrawal from Afghanistan provides a practical example.

While these drastic changes are happening internationally, Africa has pinned its hopes for development on the AfCFTA, Agenda 2063, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. BRICS countries share similar aspirations for the development of their member countries. Through well-crafted value chains, BRICS will be able to seize the void that has been left by the space provided by the EU and America. South Africa, as a member of BRICS, is the only country that can help the bloc understand African markets so that it can make a well-informed decision on how BRIC can support Africa to successfully implement the AfCFTA.

Global value chains offer an opportunity to develop insights on how Africa can successfully trade with itself. The significance of South Africa as an example of a developing country with the potential to strengthen the continent's value chains provides limitless opportunities for academic research.

In doing this, it is here proposed that systems science and modelling, such as system dynamics modelling, are techniques worth considering when studying linkages within the GVC. The primary reasons for using system dynamics in value chain analysis are improved ability to capture complexity via feedback, dynamic behaviours, and time delays, modelling the dynamics and roles of support systems over time, incorporating multiple causal factors, and measuring performance and policy interventions over time (Muflikh, Smith, and Aziz,2021). This can be broadly attributed to the need to improve the analytical rigour of value chain analysis. The applications of system dynamics in value chain analysis varied according to the commodities analysed, the modelling process followed, the dynamic complexity modelled, and the scope of the value chain components analysed.

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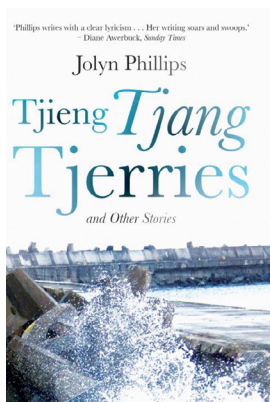
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# Tjieng Tjang Tjerries and Other Stories

Naledi Siphokazi Msimang 🆔

*Tjieng, Tjang, Tjerries* is a collection of thirteen (13) short stories set in Gansbaai, a working-class fishing town in the Western Cape, South Africa. Jolyn Phillips covers the stories of many of its residents. Phillips paints a colourful picture of the residents in the town and the issues that occupy their attention. She stays true to the characters of the town representing them as they are, warts and all. For all this, she handles her characters with care, and even affection. She stays true even to the mix of English and Afrikaans spoken in the town, and code-switches from one language to the other regularly and unapologetically so. The stories in turn cover issues concerning domestic violence, drug abuse, poverty, mental health issues and religion, amongst others. While these are commonplace in many South African communities like Gansbaai, Phillips' stories also, perhaps importantly, focus on interactions between families and amongst the community members, social attitudes towards each other, family secrets, taboos, colorism, death, town life/the geography of the town (the sea) that are peculiar to the town and to coloured people.

In the opening story, 'Photograph', Phillips tackles the death of a son/brother, and the grief that is left unsaid between the remaining family members, a mother and daughter. The character Jonie (full name Felicity Gibson) feels "bad for hating my brother for dying" and throughout the story contends with these mixed feelings the grief brings up. She narrates how she first understood that her brother had died by the gathering of neighbours in her yard where they gave her an "I'm sorry look but no one said a thing" and how she henceforth felt forgotten by her mother, who was overcome with grief. Ten years on, when she arrives home from university, Jonie still felt forgotten by her mother. She no longer recognizes her mother, nor the house she once called home as it "no longer smells like Jik and washing powder. The walls have turned yellow from all the cigarette smoke and the white ceilings are filled with specks of mould." Her mother has become neglectful of the house and her body; she is irritable towards her and Jonie in turn is resentful that she has lived in the shadow of her brother, both when he was alive and since his passing. Yet, they find a moment of closeness in looking at a photograph of their family and recalling the memories of those that have since passed.

In the story from which the title of the book is taken, "The Legend of Tjieng Tjang Tjerries", Phllips tackles the effects of mental health issues, alcoholism and childhood neglect. Skerul, the main character, begins his life with his mother having attempted to abort him by overdosing on pills, resulting in his birth with developmental issues. He is taken care of by his extended family who while capable of providing for his physical care, do not understand his developmental impediments and even exacerbate them by their emotional neglect of him. He is introduced to alcohol by his Uncle Bos whom he is fond of, "when the hair started growing on his face". This coincides with his first meeting with Mr Wong, an imaginary character who signals the beginning of Skerul's mental health

decline. He experiences sensations of bees buzzing in his head, struggles with routine memorisation at school, suffers humiliation from teachers and peers on account of this and lands up in hospital following what can be presumed to be a seizure or blackout from mental stress. He creates and befriends the imaginary character of Mr Wong as a result of this, who teaches him Japanese and offers him all sorts of concoctions to consume. So severe are his mental health problems, his Uncle finds him inebriated and almost drowned at sea.

In her short stories, Phillips foregrounds the coloured community of Gansbaai in the telling of many typical and delightful stories about their ordinary lives. She shows the reader that this community is like many others, concerned with individual and group survival, and experiences the joys and pains of life; even as they struggle with broader socio-political issues that plague them. In doing so, she helps the reader to see their world through their eyes, writing this forgotten community back in to the South African fold.

Phillips is a keen observer of her people and their experiences as they struggle and travail through their lives without being overly romantic or patronizing. Phillips casts her gaze at a diversity of characters within this community – men, women, children, the old, the young, the mentally unwell - and critically, sees from all of their perspectives how the broader social world affects them. This in turn provides the reader with a good general grasp of this community from both the individual and group perspective.

Phillips strongly weaves Afrikaans into her stories, speaking in the ways in which the people in Gansbaai speak. Instead of translating her people, their language and their experiences in order to comfort the English gaze/reader; she instead requires the reader to understand these people and their community away from the western lens/gaze and requires that they are understood on their own terms. The language itself can be seen as a character, as can the geography of Gaansbai, as much is set against this working class town.

Per the format, the stories are short and easy to read as single stories. As a collection of stories they make real a particular place, people and time.  The stories themselves are rather short, and could do with more character and plot development. This is often the limitation of short stories – just as they begin, they end, and one does not benefit from enjoying the story in full. It is the sincere view of the reviewer that there is potential to develop these stories further, whether into a broader short story format; or into a bona fide novel centering on Gansbaai and its coloured community. A defter hand would have weaved the common themes throughout the stories, that of place (Gansbaai), language (English/Afrikaans) and time (post-apartheid South Africa) with an even greater expounding of the geography of the area, and the effects of socio-political dynamics. But Phillip's is an admirable first effort nevertheless and makes the adage "giving voice to the voiceless" ring true.

# About BRICS

## Policy brief

# The BRICS Summit in 2022:
# Continuity of Change?

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2022 marks the real begin of the post-Covid era with the pandemic having subsided significantly and the ramifications of the past two years becoming ever more gruesome. It also marks a period where to Covid and the global financial crisis before it is added the war in Ukraine among challenges deepening age-old problems of global poverty, socio-economic inequality, the global divide between the north and the south, the rendering ineffective of the UN by this divide and geopolitical contestations, and others. The BRICS are looked upon to contribute to arresting these problems and accelerate the reforms towards an inclusive world development. The BRICS, aware of this, has tended to be big on dreams and plans, but short of what has been done so far to get to the targets. The BRICS still does not have a mutual accountability mechanism by which they could hold each other to account for the implementation of decisions made. This piece seeks to show that the BRICS is born in change, and they embody this, but it is long on plans and visions, no report back on what has been achieved.

### What is in the history?

The BRICS was established as a mechanism for cooperation at the meeting of foreign ministers from Brazil, Russia, India and China in 2006. South Africa joined in 2009 when the BRIC became BRICS, when it upgraded into a summit level. In 2022, BRICS leaders gathered at the 14th summit in Beijing, China, on 23-24 June 2022 to make decisions under the theme: 'Foster High-Quality BRICS Partnership, Usher in a New Era for Global Development'.

### 2022 Summit

As with all summits, this summit was a culmination of a series of meetings from which recommendations are escalated to heads of states to make final determination on. About 26 meetings were part of this build up. Many of these are by senior government officials in various sectors of public policy, including national security, health, education, agriculture, industry, investment, space, science and technology. There is a lot of negotiation and horse trading. Some of these meetings are consultative in nature, involving state agencies that are semi-autonomous like central banks, competition authorities, audit institutions, development banks and so forth. Some involve non-state actors like business associations, experts, political parties, trade unions and NGOs that seek to feed into the chain of decision-making. It is a long and protracted process of making the BRICS agenda often running into months ahead of each summit.

## BRICS on values and principles

The summit theme in 2022 is meant to discipline all this hive of activity towards a coherent set of decisions at the summit. In this case, the theme straddled the need to strengthen partnerships with the BRICS, which was the theme in India in 2021, with the intention of the BRICS to participate in fashioning the new post-Covid and post-financial crisis global development agenda. The first theme is out realization that without internal cohesion BRICS may not be able to deliver on their promises. The second is in recognition of opportunities that come with the universal sense that something needs to change in global affairs.

As usual, the BRICS reaffirmed its principles, values and objectives because these define who they are together in a changing work. These include the values of mutual respect and understanding, equality, solidarity, openness, inclusiveness, and consensus. The principles lifted up this time include "mutual trust, deepened intra-BRICS mutually beneficial cooperation, and closer people-to-people exchanges". The shared objectives emphasised are to improve "BRICS solidarity and cooperation based on our common interests and key priorities, and to further strengthen our strategic partnership".

Seven strategic priorities were emphasised, most of them as a build up from decisions of the past four years. First among this as usual is to strengthen and reform global governance. It is standing position of the BRICS to reaffirm their strong commitment to global governance and multilateralism first and then indicate the need to reform it in order to make it more inclusive, representative, participatory, responsive, effective, transparent, democratic, objective, action-oriented, solution-oriented and credible. It is hope shared with the developing world that these reforms would make the achievement of global development more feasible.

## BRICS Priorities

The second being 'Working in Solidarity to Combat COVID-19' is advancing solidarity and multilateral cooperation witnessed during the height of the pandemic. The idea is that there should be no reversals, but consolidation. They want World Health Organisation-guided international cooperation on prevention and treatment strengthened. This support of the WHO is critical at the time when there is attack on the body from right wing.

On 'Safeguarding Peace and Security', as usual they commit to the principle of respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations, in a manner that suggests non-approval of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. They actually discussed the war in Ukraine and decided to respect national positions as already vocalised in the UN General Assembly and UN Security Council. Of course, the positions of four BRICS not involved in the war emphasised peace, calling for an end to war, and recommended negotiations to give effect to this call. The call for peace through negotiated settlements is reiterated in reference to other conflict situations also. BRICS leaders also committed to disarmament, peaceful use of outer space, and peaceful ICT-environment. International cooperation in response to all security issues is stressed.

On 'Promoting Economic Recovery', the BRICS had an extensive list of decisions and commitments as usual. These include the continued implementation of the Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership 2025; the BRICS Digital Economy Partnership Framework, the BRICS Initiative on Trade and Investment for Sustainable Development, the BRICS Initiative on Enhancing Cooperation on Supply Chains, the BRICS Framework for Consumer Protection in E-commerce, and the BRICS Framework for Cooperation on Trade in Services. They stressed infrastructure development as a catalyst for economic recovery. BRICS leaders committed their countries to work together to strengthen the

Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) mechanism as a contribution to strengthening the global financial safety net. They want the new Agreement Between the Governments of BRICS Countries on Cooperation and Mutual Administrative Assistance in Customs Matters enforced.

'Expediting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' has become an apex priority for BRICS since 2016. They think global partnership as envisaged in SDG 17 is crucial to this end, so developed countries have to honour their pledge to contribute (finances, capacity and technologies) to SDGs implementation in poor countries. They called for stronger and demonstrable commitment to a shared climate change agenda by improving implementation of the Paris Agreement and the adherence to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. They think breakthrough in big data and artificial intelligence hold promise for the development agenda and therefore BRICS countries have set up platforms to enhance cooperation in digital technologies.

With regard to 'Deepening People-to-People Exchanges', what is new is the adoption of an Action Plan for the Implementation of the Agreement between the Governments of the BRICS States on cooperation in the Field of Culture (2022-2026). The BRICS want to improve digitalization in the fields of culture, heritage and arts in the hope that this will enhance mutual learning and appreciation. Educational exchanges are to be expanded. The intention is to also strengthen third-track diplomacy in the form of forums for universities, think tanks, youth, political parties and civil society formation.

It has become ever more urgent for the BRICS to look at how it is organised and institutionalised. In this regard, under institutional development, the BRICS countries committed to a structured process to discuss possible expansion of BRICS. It will continue to expand its cooperation with other emerging and developing countries as part of its BRICS Plus Cooperation strategy.

In all this, there are opportunities to grow intra-BRICS research collaboration to better understand what the BRICS are doing, how its actions might impact other processes by which the global agenda after Covid is being shaped and what might lead to meaningful benefits for the peoples of BRICS? The BRICS has not failed to inspire with its commitments and declarations of intents. All of them are in keeping with the latest thinking in the developing world. They all are commitments that if they were to be achieved would change much of the world for better. But the BRICS continues to report on intentions and not on what has been done, or what impacts have been realised. This is BRICS' next challenge, the proof that it can do what it envisions.

We, therefore, recommend that the BRICS should set up a monitoring and evaluation mechanism, a statistical platform to collect data on actions made, and mutual accountability mechanism. The Institute for Global African Affairs is developing a project to study ways in which this accountability in BRICS and related countries (BRICS Plus) may be enhanced.