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Editorial

BRICS in a world at crossroads?

Siphamandla Zondi , Norman Sempijja  & Thulisile Mphambukeli 
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.

Editor-in-chief: Siphamandla Zondi

Editors: Norman Sempijja Thulisile Mphambukeli

Book editor: Odilile Ayodele

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A comparative overview of Brazil and South Africa's BRICS Agendas, 2011-2017

Murilo Gomes da Costa 

Institute of Social and Political Studies

Rio de Janeiro State University

Abstract

This paper presents a comparative overview of Brazil and South African diplomacy towards the BRICS group in the period 2011-2017. Using the conceptual framework from the regional power studies, we present Dilma's Rouseff (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; Duarte, 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", 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?

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. Flesmes 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 (Flesmes & 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).

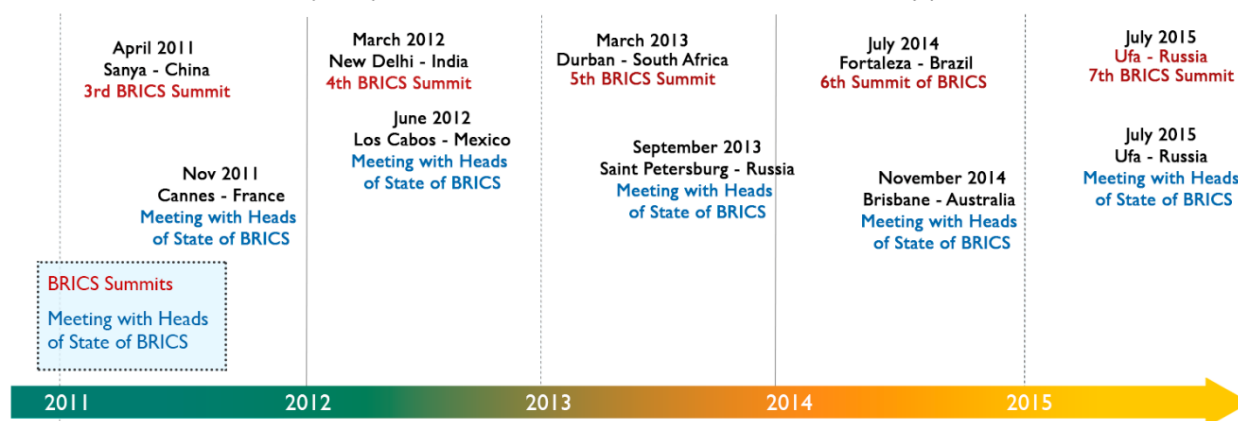
Therefore, during the Dilma administration, Brazil continued to play a central role in political forums, as a platform for promoting multilateralism and defending a more representative order that also included the countries of the South. The priority axis of relations with other regional powers continued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

CHRONOLOGY OF DILMA ROUSSEFF'S PRESIDENTIAL DIPLOMACY IN THE BRICS (2011-2015)

Main international missions for participation in BRICS-related events between 2011 and 2015, by place and event.



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) (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. 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:

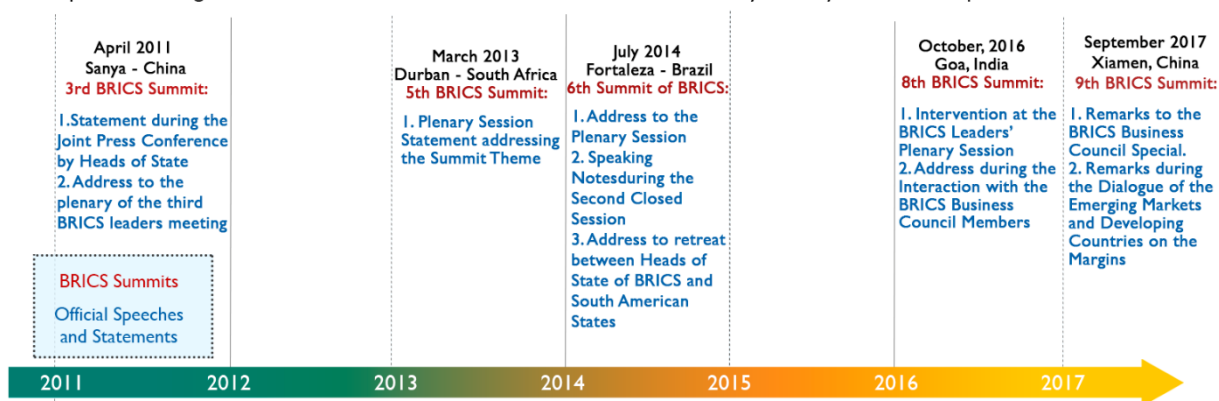
to advance the country's national interests as outlined in the President's State of the Nation Address; (ii) to promote its regional integration programme and related continental infrastructure programmes; (iii) to partner with key emerging world actors on issues related to global governance and its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

CHRONOLOGY OF JACOB ZUMA'S PRESIDENTIAL DIPLOMACY IN THE BRICS (2011-2017)

Main speeches during BRICS Summit and related events between 2011 and 2017, by country location and speech theme



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 countries 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.

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Health Diplomacy and Intellectual Property Cooperation within BRICS

From Beijing Declaration to the BRICS Vaccine Research and Development Centre

Elen de Paula Bueno

Lawyer and professor at the Brazilian School of Law. Researcher at GEBRICS/USPAbstract

Luiza Maria Martins 

Researcher at GEBRICS/USP, CEA/UFF and NEEGI/UNILA

Maria Antônia Melo Beraldo

Researcher at GEBRICS/USP; Center for Comparative Constitutional Studies (CECC/UnB)

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of multilateralism in global health governance, as well as the potential of South-South cooperation on projects aimed at improving health, capacity building and innovation in developing countries. Since the beginning of BRICS and especially from 2011 onwards, the five countries have established strategic partnerships in the areas of health, science, technology, and innovation, resulting in a wide range of exchanges and availability of resources for scientific projects. This paper aims at analyzing the development of BRICS health cooperation, the understanding of its members regarding patent breaking in WTO, as well as the future perspectives on health and science and technology cooperation within the group, especially while considering the BRICS Vaccine Research and Development Centre. In view of the formal establishment of the Vaccine Centre as determined by the BRICS Foreign Affairs Ministers, this article aims at specifying the state of the art of intellectual property cooperation and health diplomacy within BRICS.

Keywords: BRICS; Health Diplomacy; Intellectual Property; Cooperation.

Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) did not emerge spontaneously. It resulted from international cooperation and the immense efforts required to address a global health emergency. During the nineteenth century, cholera was the main subject of discussion and stimulated the nations to persist in their efforts to reach agreement on the measures to be taken to limit its spread (Jones, 1975). Historically, international law has played a key role in global communicable disease surveillance. Throughout the nineteenth century, international cooperation played a dominant role in harmonizing the inconsistent national quarantine regulations among states; facilitating the exchange of epidemiological information on infectious diseases; establishing international health organizations; and standardization of surveillance (Aginam, 2002). The effect of globalization on infectious disease control and prevention demonstrates that states cannot deal with challenges adequately without cooperation. Global challenges require cross-border collaboration, innovative approaches, and multilateral mechanisms in which global rules are calibrated towards the overarching goals, shared prosperity, and environmental sustainability.

The current COVID-19 pandemic exposed and exacerbated vulnerabilities and inequalities between developing and developed countries, deepening poverty and exclusion and pushing the most vulnerable even further behind. Unilateral efforts and the current global health governance based on the assistance are not sufficient to deal with common challenges, as well as not efficient to improve domestic public health, access to vaccines and affordable medicines in developing

countries. Frustrations with the inadequacies of technical assistance provided from the perspective of the early North American and European responses to the epidemic resulted in the emergence of Southern networks and institutions for research and capacity-building. Thus, the prominence of South-South Cooperation (SSC) in the international development dialogue has grown in the last decade (WHO, 2014).

South-South Cooperation refers to the technical cooperation among developing countries in the Global South and can be understood as an exchange of resources, technology, and knowledge among developing countries in order to reduce their excessive dependence on the world-dominated markets from the North. Through exchange of technology, knowledge, or skills among low-income or middle-income countries, the SSC appears to be pursuing a novel paradigm of mutual assistance and shared development.

Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa are increasingly active in initiatives to promote health through SSC. Since the beginning of BRICS and especially from 2011 onwards, the five countries have established strategic partnerships in the areas of health, science, technology, and innovation, resulting in a wide range of exchanges and availability of resources for scientific projects.

This paper aims at analyzing the development of BRICS' health cooperation, the understanding of its members regarding patent breaking in WTO, as well as the future perspectives on health and science and technology cooperation within the group, especially while considering the BRICS Vaccine Research and Development Centre. In view of the formal establishment of the Vaccine Centre as determined by the BRICS Foreign Affairs Ministers, this article aims at specifying the state of the art of intellectual property cooperation and health diplomacy within BRICS.

Beijing Declaration: Shifting Paradigm in Global Health Governance

BRICS' ministers of health met for the first time in Beijing in July 2011 and discussed better access to affordable, high-quality medicines to achieve the U.N. Millennium Development Goals, the importance of technology transfer between BRICS countries and other developing nations to stimulate their capacity to produce medicines at affordable prices. Committed to support and undertake inclusive global public health cooperation projects, including South-South and Triangular Cooperation, the health ministers signed the Beijing Declaration, which emphasized the need to reform WHO; the importance and the need of technology transfer as a means to empower developing countries and enable them to establish efficient health systems; the necessity of cooperation in order to advance access to public health services and goods in developing countries, as well as promoting innovation and access to affordable medicines, vaccines and other health technologies of assured quality.

Furthermore, BRICS' ministers of health supported the agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) safeguards to preserve and promote the provisions contained in the Doha Declaration on TRIPS and Public Health and of the Global Strategy and Plan of Action on Public Health, Innovation, and Intellectual Property. At that occasion, the ministers encouraged the development of innovative mechanisms of transfer of intellectual property rights for priority technologies, to open avenues for BRICS countries to supply these medicines to low and middle-income countries.

The Beijing Declaration has been the first and one of the most important documents in terms of health cooperation among BRICS countries, and it clearly defined a shift in global governance by emphasizing cooperation instead of aid or assistance. The technological and scientific training has been considered as a significant mechanism to transform a governance system that favors the concentration of the global pharmaceutical market, dominated by the monopoly of powerful

pharmaceutical industries from developed countries. From a different perspective, BRICS countries have been playing a new role aiming at remodeling the system in a way more favorable to developing countries, contributing to the reduction of inequalities.

By contributing their respective strengths, developing countries have the potential to enhance their research and development activities to lead to new health products and services aimed at their often-dire health needs. In addition, SSC has the potential to extend capacity in science-intensive fields, such as health research, to an increasing number of developing countries. As some developing countries have a track record of producing relatively affordable health products, SSC is able to distribute lower-cost health products among developing countries. In this sense, SSC in health shows great potential to contribute to improved health, capacity-building and innovation (Chaturvedi; Thorsteinsdóttir, 2012).

In 2012, the BRICS Health Ministers decided to meet over the side-lines of the World Health Assembly at WHO, Geneva. During the second meeting of BRICS Health Ministers, in 2013, the Ministers reiterated their support to the continued discussions on the process of reform of WHO to better respond to global challenges; renewed their commitment to strengthening international cooperation in health, in particular South-South cooperation, with a view to supporting efforts in developing countries to promote health for all; and agreed to cooperate in all international for a regarding matters relating to TRIPS flexibility with a public health perspective (BRICS India, 2021). In addition, BRICS countries resolved to collaborate to develop capacity and infrastructure to reduce the prevalence and incidence of Tuberculosis (TB) through innovation for new drugs, vaccines, diagnostics, and promotion of consortia of TB researchers to collaborate on clinical trials of drugs and vaccines.

The Ufa Declaration signed by BRICS leaders in 2015 enlarged concerns and priorities on health, aiming at contributing to international cooperation and to support the efforts of countries to achieve their health goals, including the implementation of universal and equitable access to health services, and ensure affordable, good-quality service delivery. The leaders highlighted that the international community is struggling with increased antimicrobial resistance, which contributes to multiplying health risks and express concern with the continuing spread of major diseases and with the emergence of infections with a pandemic potential, such as highly pathogenic influenza, novel coronavirus, or Ebola.

Considering that BRICS countries have significant experience in combating communicable diseases, the leaders demonstrated willing to cooperate and coordinate efforts, including with relevant international organizations, to tackle global health challenges and ensure that BRICS countries jointly contribute to improve global health security, prioritizing areas such as management of risks related to emerging infections with pandemic potential; compliance with commitments to stop the spread of, and eradicate, communicable diseases that hamper development; research, development, production and supply of medicines aimed at providing increased access to prevention and treatment of communicable diseases (BRICS Russia 2015).

Approved in the 6th Health Ministers Meeting in New Delhi, 2016 and supported by BRICS Heads of States, as agreed in the Xiamen Declaration, 2017, the BRICS Tuberculosis Research Network is the most important outcome of BRICS cooperation in the health area. The newly launched network is a platform for collaboration and its goal is to strengthen mutually beneficial research amongst the BRICS countries, particularly in the areas of product development, technology transfer, and capacity building. Priority activities include the development of common protocols and implementation of multicountry studies to speed up product development in TB diagnostics, vaccines, drugs, and to facilitate effective adoption of innovative interventions (BRICS TB Research Network, 2021).

Intellectual Property Cooperation within BRICS

The possibility of developing new vaccines, drugs, and innovative interventions as a product of BRICS research cooperation requires further analyzing the state of the art of Intellectual Property (IP) cooperation within the group. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance and potential of BRICS IP cooperation, considering that half of the 20 vaccines for the disease were being researched, tested or produced in BRICS countries (Buss; Hoirisch; Alcazar, 2021). This also demonstrates the scientific and technological knowledge of each country, which is of great relevance to multilateral cooperation on health matters.

Furthermore, the five countries are recognized for their national health policies, whether focused on research and development innovation or their public health systems (Buss; Hoirisch; Alcazar, 2021). In this sense, BRICS countries have great potential of generating a more beneficial South-South multilateral collaboration through health diplomacy. A World Health Organization editorial entitled "BRICS and global health" already highlighted the five countries' capacities and advantages for providing positive contributions to address global health challenges (Acharya et al., 2014).

The development of diagnostics, vaccines, and drugs is one of the main priorities defined by BRICS in the Tuberculosis (TB) Research Network. While facing infectious diseases and pandemics, which is one of the six most important trends in global health issues, according to the WHO¹, intellectual property matters should be a facilitator for cooperation and access to research products. However, when COVID-19 vaccines were starting to be approved by each countries' regulatory agencies and WHO, conflicts arose regarding patent break.

The New Delhi Declaration (2021) underlines that COVID-19 extensive immunization is a global public good. Considering the inequity in access to vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics, especially for the world's poorest and most vulnerable population, BRICS leaders recognised the importance of safe, efficacious, accessible and affordable vaccines, as stated in paragraph 8 of the recently released declaration. Multilateral mechanisms created by WHO, such as the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) facility, were essential to consolidate global efforts for providing access to vaccines.

In addition, BRICS nations noted the ongoing discussions in the World Trade Organization regarding a COVID-19 vaccine Intellectual Property Rights waiver and the use of flexibility of the TRIPS Agreement and the Doha Declaration on TRIPS Agreement and Public Health. The discussions are a result of India and South Africa's initiative in the WTO² for a temporary waiver of patents on useful products to prevent, contain and treat COVID-19. The initiative aims at reducing the cost of vaccines, as well as increasing global production. The issue of COVID-19 vaccine patents exposes only the tip of the iceberg. (2021). SBMT - Sociedade Brasileira de Medicina Tropical.

India and South Africa, in Communication IP/C/W/669 to the WTO Council for Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights regarding the waiver, highlighted that WTO members should cooperate to ensure that intellectual property rights do not hinder timely access to affordable medical products, including vaccines and medicines to combat COVID-19. The initiative is still being discussed, however, 60 WTO members have already co-sponsored the proposal, which has also been supported by BRICS members as stated in the Leaders' Declaration and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs/International Relations Media Statement of 2021.

Even though a part of BRICS countries has not yet co-sponsored the initiative brought by India and South Africa, the statements issued indicate the important role played by the five countries

1 Global Health Issues, Challenges and Trends. (2021). AUC School of Medicine.

2 IP/C/W/669.

as facilitators and even providers of access to vaccines and other medical goods. In this context, supporting the temporary waiver of patents is aligned to the health diplomacy that has been shaped by BRICS cooperation. By 2014, BRICS countries were already jointly promoting access to affordable, safe and efficacious medical products through the use of the WTO's Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights, as demonstrated by Ilona Kickbusch (2014).

It is possible to recognize the coordinated action regarding TRIPS flexibility with a public health perspective as a result of the compromise undertaken by BRICS Ministers since the first meeting of BRICS Health Ministers in 2011. The initiatives that align health diplomacy and intellectual property rights integrate a key area of the global governance for health that is being built by BRICS (KICKBUSCHA, 2014, p. 464). Furthermore, the importance and potential of the area for BRICS health diplomacy is also revealed in joint efforts made by IBSA and BRICS to strengthen IP cooperation and build a flexibilities agenda (Menezes, 2018).

The flexibilities agenda is identified in the Doha Declaration on TRIPS and Public Health (2001), as well as in the WIPO Development Agenda (2007) which points out the flexibilities, exceptions, and limitations in IP rules. Considering the impact of international IP norms on national legislations, BRICS countries, except for Russia, have implemented or reformed its internal norms to benefit from the flexibility's agenda (Menezes, 2018). Therefore, it is possible to consider that the TRIPS flexibility compromise established by BRICS countries in 2013 have also echoed in the countries' legislation, in a way to harmonize the positions assumed in the global governance and national regulatory norms.

The initiative proposed by India and South Africa in the WTO underlines the importance of "TRIPS flexibilities to safeguard public health, including issuing compulsory licenses and placing limitations on or making exceptions to exclusive rights" (India, South Africa, et al., 2021)³, as well as the crucial role played by the Doha Declaration on TRIPS and Public Health in promoting access to medicines. However, the co-sponsoring countries have also recognized the magnitude of COVID-19 health crises, which could hinder the proper application of TRIPS flexibilities. Furthermore, it states that many countries lack the institutional capacities to apply such flexibilities.

In this sense, the initiative initiated by India and South Africa does not intend to replace TRIPS flexibilities with a temporary waiver, because the proposal encourages countries that have the capacity to implement flexibilities in a timely manner. However, the purpose of the TRIPS waiver is to guarantee all countries are able to have accessible and affordable vaccines, in a way that already existent flexibilities ought not create barriers to international collaboration aiming to allow a sufficient supply of healthcare products for COVID-19.

As stated in the Communication issued by the co-sponsors of the initiative (IP/C/W/672), "the waiver is more than just a legal mechanism, it is a statement of intent by all countries that they accord the highest value to protecting human lives rather than protecting private profits". This perfectly emphasizes the gravity of BRICS joint health governance, which meets the goals of South-South collaboration to protect the interests of developing countries (Menezes, 2018), as well as the fundamental rights of their populations.

Beyond the cooperation in this multilateral forum, BRICS countries have also developed internal structures specific for IP cooperation. The Contact Group on Economic and Trade issues (CGETI) was established in 2011 as a deliverable of the Sanya Summit and was further assigned during the Second Economy Ministers Meeting (29/03/2012) to strengthen i) IP cooperation; ii) increase the exchange

3 IP/C/W/672. Waiver from Certain Provisions of the Trips Agreement for The Prevention, Containment and Treatment of Covid-19. (2021). Communication from the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Eswatini, India, Kenya, Mozambique, Mongolia, Pakistan, South Africa, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Zimbabwe.

of legislative and regulatory information about IP on seminars, capacity building development programs in the area; and (iii) promote cooperation within IP Offices.

The first meeting of the BRICS Heads of IP offices took place on the margins of the World Intellectual Property Organization General Assemblies in 2012. The first formal meeting of BRICS Heads of Intellectual Property Offices (HIPOs) occurred in Magaliesburg in 2013. In the meeting, HIPOs adopted a roadmap for BRICS IP cooperation which identified six key areas of cooperation: i) Training of Intellectual Property Office Staff and Examiner Exchange; ii) National IP Strategy and Promotion of Public Awareness on IP; iii) Information Services on IP; iv) IP/Patent Processes and procedures; v) IP Strategies for SMMES; and vi) Collaboration in International Forums. Since then, HIPOs have been meeting regularly. As a result, BRICS HIPOs established the Intellectual Property Rights Coordination Group (IPRCG). The joint action of IPRCG and HIPO is known as IP BRICS, which is the general organization of the BRICS IP offices.

In light of the above, it is possible to note how IP cooperation within BRICS has developed through internal mechanisms of the group as well as multilateral forums such as the WTO. The joint action promoted by BRICS countries regarding TRIPS flexibilities and waivers has been of great relevance for health diplomacy matters, for instance, the access to affordable, safe and efficacious medical goods. This demonstrates the potential of internal and external BRICS IP collaboration to shape a new form of IP cooperation in the international system.

Other initiatives in BRICS also have the potential to generate new forms of IP protection and further discussions aimed at improving IP norms through multilateral forums deliberations. The BRICS TB Research Network and the BRICS Vaccine Research and Development Centre are important initiatives that will generate research products in the future as a result of the five countries' investments and collaboration. In this context, BRICS internal mechanisms such as the HIPOs may collaborate to provide and shape new strategies of IP cooperation considering TRIPS flexibilities, waivers and other legal instruments available.

BRICS Vaccine Research and Development Centre

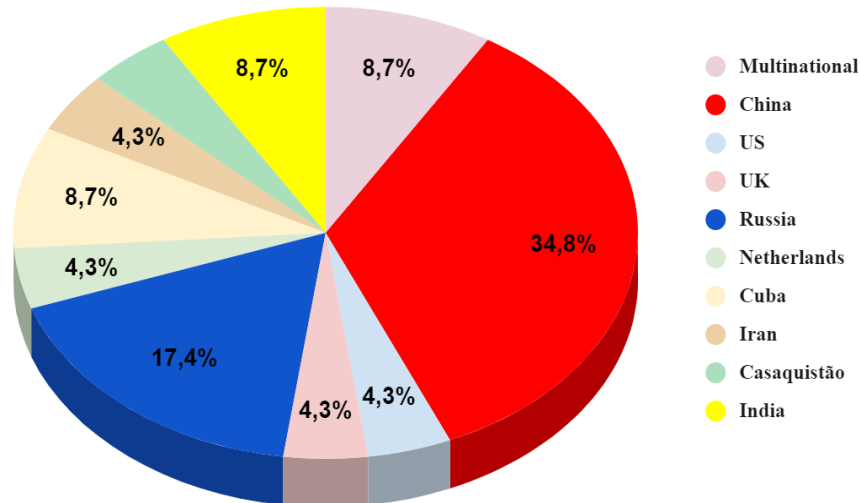
The Covid-19 pandemic has shown us the striking global dependence of vaccines and their inputs, as for example the active pharmaceutical ingredient (API), on the technological capabilities installed in BRICS countries (Buss, Hoirisch, Alcázar, 2021). Likewise, it has demonstrated that equal access to vaccines and other medical goods require further strengthening South-South Cooperation. Most African countries are facing challenges to acquire vaccines for their populations, which reveals the failure of vaccine equity, as recognized by Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the WHO (United Nations, 2021).

Considering the health diplomacy established by BRICS since 2011, there is ample opportunity in intra-BRICS health cooperation with the Vaccine Centre, as a way to provide better access to vaccines for low and middle-income countries. Chart 1 displays the nationality of currently approved and applied vaccines.

Half of all 20 Covid-19 vaccines have been researched, developed, and produced by BRICS countries. China is responsible for six and is currently a major player in innovative vaccines for several contagious diseases. India produced two vaccines and hosts the world's biggest pharmaceutical companies, with enormous capacities to produce bioproducts for immunization. Russia is responsible for two vaccines and has massive capabilities in medicine and in the biological sciences. South Africa has an outstanding performance in public health programs and has important continental leadership. Brazil has two internationally recognized public biopharmaceutical institutes, Biomanguinhos/Fiocruz and

Butantan, with large-scale production capacities and a bulky market that includes Mercosul and all Latin America (Buss, Hoirisch, Alcázar, 2021).

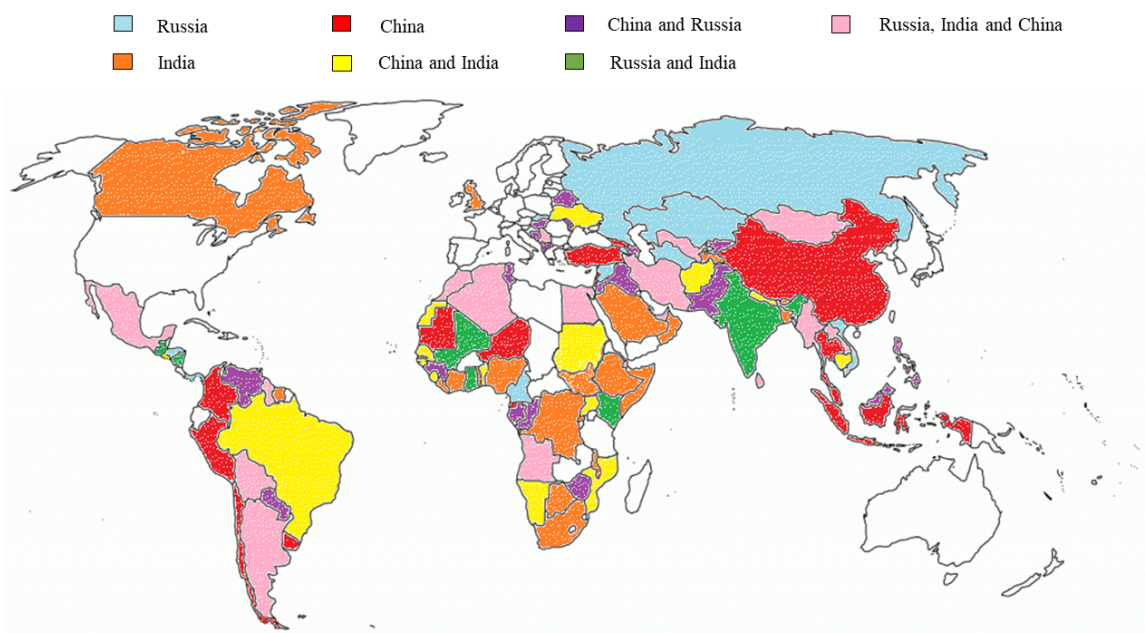
Chart 1: Nationality of COVID-19 Vaccines Applied



Source: Regulatory Affairs Professionals Society, 2021

BRICS countries have played a critical role by providing vaccines to developing countries, as well as by reducing global health inequalities facing an unfair distribution of vaccines around the world. As observed in the Figure 1, the Global South depends on the vaccines produced by the three countries, which demonstrates the potential for health diplomacy through South-South Cooperation.

Figure 1: Global Usage of Russian, Indian and Chinese Vaccines 2021



Source: Compilation of Sputnikvaccine.com; Veronika Blablova (Choice, 2021)

During the BRICS Summit 2021, BRICS members noted with satisfaction the intra-BRICS cooperation to strengthen preparedness and response to the pandemic, including in vaccine cooperation and

welcome the progress towards the early launch of the BRICS Vaccine Research and Development Centre in a virtual format. They supported the progress towards establishing a BRICS Integrated Early Warning System for preventing mass infectious diseases risks, in accordance with the International Health Regulations (2005), and the WHO's Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network for identifying future pandemics and forecasting outbreaks through institutional collaboration.

In this sense, the BRICS Vaccine Research and Development Centre is a catalyst for scientific development in countries without national vaccines (Brazil and South Africa). In addition, there is the potential for greater economic-scientific coordination with the preference for vaccines and inputs of the BRICS member countries. According to Devonshire-Ellis (2021), "Of the BRICS nations, India has the world's largest vaccine production capability, while China and Russia possess significant viral research facilities and are upgrading and improving production capability. Brazil and South Africa have the largest production capabilities in Latin America and the African continent respectively. All are additionally members of significant free trade blocs, with Brazil the lead member of the Latin American Mercosur, Russia the lead of the Eurasian Economic Union, India the lead member of SAARC, China a member of the upcoming RCEP East Asian bloc, and South Africa a lead member of AfCFTA".

The regional power, characteristic of each BRICS member country, may also be considered as a relevant element of the BRICS Vaccine Research and Development Centre. In addition to the capacity of influencing their national realities, BRICS countries have the potential to act regionally. By supporting TRIPS flexibilities, BRICS countries may assist countries in their zones of influence and partners in other trading blocs with needed vaccination products.

BRICS Vaccine Research and Development Centre has potential to boost cooperation not only with BRICS countries but also with other regions, and enhance ties with universities, scientific research institutions as well as health and disease control institutions worldwide to monitor contagion changes and virus mutations in order to promote vaccine research and industrialization (Yang Guang, 2021).

Moreover, New Delhi Declaration represents the effort of mutual vaccination recognition — which is an issue with the European Union, inasmuch as it does not recognize vaccination in BRICS countries. In this regard, the BRICS Vaccine Research and Development Centre promotes the expansion of mutual recognition of vaccination, given the possibility of regional effects on all continents with BRICS leadership in supplying inputs.

Conclusion

The establishment of BRICS Vaccine Research and Development Centre is a valuable deliverable of BRICS health cooperation and has the potential to become a landmark in BRICS IP cooperation. Besides the TB Research Network, the Vaccine Centre presents the possibility of developing new products as a result of the five countries' investment and collaboration. In this context, intra-BRICS initiatives regarding IP matters are of utmost importance to provide appropriate mechanisms on the legal aspects of those products.

Since the first BRICS ministerial health meeting, the ministers have been encouraging the development of innovative mechanisms to aid the transfer of intellectual property rights for priority technologies, to allow an adequate supply of medical goods to low and middle-income countries. Considering the COVID-19 pandemic and the trends of infectious diseases worldwide, the access to health is substantially correlated to the access to priority technologies in the production of medical goods. Therefore, IP BRICS cooperation has the ability to provide a fairer and more equitable access to medical goods, as a result of its intra and multilateral initiatives.

The Vaccine Centre is presented as a common ground for the development of new strategies in IP cooperation, such as the strengthening of TRIPS flexibilities and waivers. In this sense, the impact of the Vaccine Centre will considerably depend on the support provided by the development of those innovative mechanisms through IP cooperation within BRICS. The more BRICS countries collaborate to promote the advancement of IP BRICS, for instance, the transfer of intellectual property rights for priority technologies related to health, the more successful the Vaccine Centre will be in achieving the goals of BRICS health diplomacy.

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Re-Branding China's Battered Image in Nigeria amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic

A Qualitative Analysis of Chinese Diplomatic Communications

Floribert Patrick C. Endong 

University of Dschang, Cameroon

Abstract

The outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic made China to witness not only high mortality rates and heavy economic losses in its national territory, but also an international image crisis which has since remained a veritable albatross for the Chinese government. In effect, by the time the epidemic was declared a pandemic, China's image on the international stage had perceptibly become negative as both governments and citizens across the world tended to associate the Asian emerging nation with the origin and propagation of the Corona virus in the world as well as with many other crises/challenges derived from the pandemic. If China's image crisis has attracted the attention of several commentators, little or no research has been done so far on how the Chinese government has sought to re-brand China's image in the early stages of the epidemic as well as after the public health situation was declared a pandemic. This paper attempts to fill this gap in knowledge, through an examination of Chinese diplomatic communications in Nigeria during the early stages of COVID-19 pandemic. Using critical observations and a qualitative analysis of newspapers and online articles generated and published by China's Embassy in Nigeria, the paper specifically seeks to show how China's diplomatic communications sought to rebuild China's image as Nigeria's major partner in development and a friend on which Nigeria should always count to mitigate or overcome the pandemic.

Keywords: COVID-19 Pandemic, Diplomatic Communication, Chinese Cooperation, China's African Policy

Introduction

The outbreak of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) came with a host of serious socio-political and economic problems for the People's Republic of China. According to commentators like Richard McGregor (cited in Krishnan, 2020), the outbreak of this disease is China's biggest crisis since the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests. In effect, when the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared COVID-19 a global pandemic on 11 March 2020, China was not only one of the world's countries witnessing the greatest mortality rates and economic downturns, but also one of the world's nations whose image on the international scene was the most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic (Chang & Fung, 2021; Christensen, 2020; Verma, 2020). The outbreak of the pandemic actually gave birth to all manner of conspiracy theories that depict China as the origin and the principal propagator of the disease as well as the root of various global crises related to the COVID-19 pandemic (Gu, Yingwen, Xinyu, Jian-Feng, 2021; Argentino & Amarasingam, 2020). Some of these theories – notably the Wuhan lab-leak, the “zoonotic” myth and the Qanon conspiracy beliefs – even depict China as part of a dark plan aimed at releasing a bio-weapon and instituting a new social, economic and political order in the world (BBC News, 2021; Zeng, Mike & Schafer, 2021). In line with various rumours, China has been accused of concealing vital information about the pandemic and enabling the propagation of the Corona virus in the world (Imhoff & Lamberty, 2020; Sudworth, 2021). The above conspiracy theories coupled with a number China's controversial policies – notably the subjection of African nationals to mandatory screenings and forced quarantine in the city of Guangzhou in mid-April 2020 – to aggravate China's image crisis. This negative development happened as from the early stages of the pandemic.

Evidence for China's image crisis could be found in the social, media and political discourses of countries across the globe right from early January 2020. Jia and Lu (2021) on one hand and Krishnan (2020) on the other hand explore how media outlets in many Western countries, particularly in the US, tended to use the naming/shaming as well as the blaming techniques to tarnish China's image as a virus and a place not conducive for foreign investors. A great part of the Western media thus, popularised the image of China as "the real sick man of Asia" (Jia and Lu 2021). In the popular imaginary across the world, the Coronavirus came to be christened, framed and seen as "the Wuhan virus", the "Chinese virus" and the "Belt & Road Initiative pandemic" among other derogatory terms (Jia and Lu 2021; Chang & Fung, 2021). Furthermore, many world leaders – notably President Trump of the US – tended to lambast and blame the Chinese leadership, political system and eating cultures for the birth and propagation of the pandemic in the world (Christensen, 2020; Verma, 2020). All these media and political discourses contributed to tarnishing the image of China not only in the West but also in the Pacific and Africa. McGregor in particular even notes that such a negative image is bound to persist in future. He points out that because of China's mishandling of the early phases of the crisis, its relationships with Western countries such as the US, Britain, Germany and France are bound to break down. Actually, relationships between China and the above countries have, according to McGregor, remained strained because "of the lack of transparency and because of the distaste at what many people see as China's efforts to exploit the turnaround in their country and gain sort of a propaganda or PR win from it" (cited in Krishnan 2020, p.12).

The COVID-19 pandemic – particularly the incidents of the maltreatment of African migrants in Guangzhou in 2020 – also seriously affected China's image in Africa, pushing the Chinese government to adopt various policies and communication strategies to salvage the situation. One such communication strategy – which many have viewed as propaganda – has been to frame early governmental responses to the pandemic as "local level mistake" while depicting China spectacular economic and public health recovery as a "vindication of China's political system" (Krishnan 2020; Muller, Brazys & Dukalskis, 2021). A second form of Chinese response to the COVID-19 has been Beijing's "Mask Diplomacy" which, though variously received, has illustrated China's interest in Africa. Thus, China's global image took a hit during the early stages of the pandemic; but the country was the first to bounce back from the crisis.

If China's image crisis has attracted the attention of several commentators, only few scholars have focused on the strategies leveraged by China to rebrand its image particularly in Africa, during the early stages of the pandemic. No research in the theoretical and professional literature available has particularly focused on how the Chinese government has sought to re-brand China's image in Nigeria during the early stages of the epidemic as well as after the public health situation was declared a pandemic. This paper attempts to fill this gap in knowledge, through an examination of Chinese diplomatic communications in Nigeria during the early stages of COVID-19 pandemic. Using critical observations and a qualitative analysis of newspaper and online articles generated and published by China's Embassy to Nigeria, the paper specifically seeks to show how China's diplomatic communications sought to rebuild China's image as Nigeria's major partner in development and a friend on which Nigeria should count to mitigate or overcome the pandemic.

Theoretical Framework

This paper is anchored in two theories namely Benoit William's (1995) Image Repair/Restoration theory and Avraham Eli's (2018, 2009) concept of multi-step model for altering place image. Originally, the Image Repair Theory was conceived to analyse phenomena in public relations, precisely in crisis communication. Rooted in political rhetoric and social sciences, the theory has mainly been used to describe personal and organisation's communication in times of crisis. However, nation branding

scholars and professionals have found the theory relevant in countries' image repair strategies. Thus, several studies in nation re-branding hinge on various tenets of Benoit's theory (Avraham & Ketter, 2016; Low, Varughese & Pang, 2011; Avraham, 2009).

As its name indicates, the Image Repair Theory refers to a set of strategies aimed at helping individuals, organisations or nations to restore their positive public image. It stresses the various tools and strategies an organisation or nation (communicative entity) employs when facing a situation that can damage or has already damaged their image. The theory is rooted in the two concepts of *apologia* and *accounts*. An *apologia* refers to a formal defence or justification of an entity's opinion, position or action, while an *account* is a pronouncement generated by a person, an organisation or a country to explain events that may be unanticipated or transgressive and harmful to a community. Grounding his theory in the above concepts of *apologia* and *account*, Benoit (1995) argues that the use of the Image Restoration Theory in image branding should focus on identifying working options rather than recommending infallible solutions.

The theory proposes five image repair strategies namely denial, evasion of responsibility, reducing offensiveness, corrective action and mortification (Benoit & Pang, 2008). These strategies have subcategories as explained below:

- a. *Denial*: this is when a communicative entity employs a simple denial to reject responsibility after a transgressive act has been committed. It is also a situation where such communicative entity shift blame by attributing responsibility to another person, organisation or country.
- b. *Evasion of responsibility*: A communicative entity can claim that their transgressive actions were just *provoked*, or a reaction to another organisation or country's act or policy. Such communicative entity may also defend themselves by using the *defeasibility* argument by which they lacked information or ability to avoid the transgressive/harmful action. The unit can also categorise the harmful action as an accident, or an act paradoxically driven by *good intentions*.
- c. *Reduce the offensiveness of an act*: By this strategy, a communicative entity may use *bolstering* by which they emphasise or foreground their own good traits. The entity may also use minimisation in which they present the damaging act as being not as serious as depicted by other sources. Three other techniques under this image repair strategy is *differentiation* (where the act is presented as not being as offensive as other similar ones), *transcendence* (where the communicative entity stresses more important consideration), *attacking the accuser* or *compensating victims*.
- d. *Corrective action*: Here, the communicative entity proposes a plan to arrest or prevent a problem
- e. *Mortification*: this entails *apologizing*.

Although plagued by several weaknesses, the Image Repair Theory has proven relevant in various nation re-branding strategies. The application of the theory has always warranted countries to designed well organised plan of action where the most relevant strategies are components. For instance, in the first half of the 1990s, Northern Ireland spectacularly corrected its terrorist-caused negative image by devising strategies to attract tourism through the development of new tourism products and tourist attractions, supported by heavy promotions (Witt and More 1992).

Theorists recommend that organisations and countries always carefully choose the specific strategies they wish to adopt, in order to avoid worsening or escalating the crisis or fuelling a new one. This entails the adoption of clear guidelines for choosing the relevant image restoration strategies and crisis response techniques. The adoption of the wrong strategy may therefore lead to detrimental outcomes instead of restoring the positive image of a country. Citing several authors, Murugi (2019:61) points out that:

Unlike organizations, destinations [or countries] cannot promise to change overnight, apologize, assign blame, or take responsibility for a problematic image and reality that were created by various factors over the course of years. The argument is that after the crisis is over; restoring a positive place image is a challenging, long-term and resource-demanding task which requires a multi-step approach.

The above citation reveals some of the weaknesses of the application of Benoit's Image Repair Theory in nation re-branding. Indeed, the use of most of the above strategies in the specific contests of country re-branding campaigns might be problematic (Avraham, 2018). In view of these weaknesses, Alder-Nissen (2014) has developed a different theoretical approach for nations' image restoration. This approach includes three strategies namely stigma recognition, stigma rejection and counter-stigmatisation. In the same line of thought, Avraham (2018) has advanced the concept of multi-step model for altering place image. This model includes 24 image repair strategies organised in three main categories: source, audience and message (SAM strategies). Avraham (2018:1) explains this model thus:

Source strategies concentrate mainly on marketers' efforts to influence or replace the source that is perceived as being responsible for the nation's negative image ("Come see for yourself", using celebrities as an alternative source, buying news space, establishing rapport with the news people, exploiting background similarity, blocking media access and applying physical/economic threat). Message strategies focus on tackling the negative messages (ignoring the crisis, acknowledging a negative image, reducing the scale of the crisis, tackling the crisis, hosting spotlight events, hosting opinion leaders, using films, TV and books, engaging celebrities, delivering a counter-message, spinning liabilities into assets, ridiculing the stereotype, branding contrary to the stereotype, geographic isolation and changing the place's name). Audience strategies are concerned with a specific audience (similarity to the target audience, patriotism and nationalism, and changing the target audience).

This paper focuses on how China's embassy to Nigeria used some of the above-mentioned image repair strategies to restore China's image. The paper thus examines how the above strategies enable the embassy to rebrand China as one of Nigeria's major partners in development and an ally on which Nigeria can count to mitigate or overcome the COVID-19 pandemic.

China's Image during the early Stages of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Nigeria

To clearly appreciate the magnitude of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on China's image in Nigeria, it will be expedient to explore the available literature on Nigerians' perceptions of the China before the pandemic. The following subheading gives attention to this issue.

Image of China before the Pandemic

China's image in Nigeria has, in "normal circumstances" and over the years, been very ambivalent. This reading follows the observation that the Chinese nationality and government have, in the Nigerian popular fantasy, been associated with both positive and negative stereotypes. The positive stereotypes have their roots in both myths and facts around China's cooperation in Africa as a whole and Nigeria in particular (Bodomo, 2018; Umejie, 2015). Actually, over the years, China has increased its Direct Foreign Investment in Nigeria. In the last five years the Beijing government has even been among Nigeria's major investors and partners in development. Studies in the literature reveal that the Nigeria-China trade has galloped from about US\$1.8 billion in 2003 to US\$13.5 billion in 2018 (Oshodi, 2020). Literature also reveals that China's direct investment has increased from US\$ 1,026 in 2009 to US\$ 2,862 in 2017 (Jackson's 2019; SAIS-CARI, 2019). This investment has mainly been

in sectors such as transport, energy, telecommunications, agriculture, manufacturing and finance. Many Chinese companies have built or are building high profile projects in the country, this with funding from China's ExIm Bank. Some of these projects include the Ajaokuta-Kaduna-Kano gas pipeline (still in progress), the Sagamu Independent Power Plant and the Lekki deepwater Port which is expected to increase Lagos area's shipping capacity. All these developments considerably contribute to China's soft power in Nigeria.

China's status as an emerging nation, its African cultural policy – which, among other things, creates opportunities for Nigerians to study in China – and its remarkable involvement in various development projects in Nigeria have contributed to spreading China's soft power in Nigeria (Axelsson, 2010). No doubt, a 2018 Pew study indicates that 61% of Nigerians have a favourable view of China's involvement in their country. The Pew study also reveals that only 17% of Nigerians have negative views of China. Similarly, a 2017 study conducted by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) shows that 83% of Nigerians perceive China's presence in their country in a positive light. Detractors of China's presence amounted to 9% in this BBC study.

The image of China as Nigeria's development partner is present in the popular fantasy in Nigeria. In fact, China's Nigerian policy, its presence and influence in the country have made many Nigerians to perceive the Asian giant as a nation Nigeria should emulate in terms of economic and cultural policy (Umejie, 2015; Endong, 2018; Jackson, 2019; Barometre, 2020). Axelsson confirms this observation in a qualitative analysis of online contents generated by hundreds of Nigerian "netizens" in view of assessing China's presence in Nigeria. The scholar notes that many Nigerians do believe that there are immense opportunities for their nation in the Sino-Nigerian cooperation. These opportunities depend on the degree to which the Nigerian government will take its responsibilities.

An evidence of Nigerians' positive view of China is the growing interest Nigerians have, over the years, developed for the Mandarin language. The Lagos State government for instance developed a pilot program in 2014 to teach Mandarin in selected schools within the State (Adewale, 2014). Several studies reveal that many Nigerians seek to acquire the mandarin language with the prospect of one day travelling to China for better opportunities. Others simply perceive this Chinese language as the language of the future, given the growing influence of China in the world geopolitics.

Despite these positive perceptions reviewed above, China's national brand has faced some problem in Nigeria, a situation which has vindicated the popular theory that China's hegemony in Nigeria is only fragile. By this theory, China's image in Nigeria has constantly remained fragile in spite of its laudable engagement with Nigerian and African development which keeps growing year after year. Onoja (2020) relays the above theory thus: "China's hegemony or soft power or "charm offensive" is experiencing a reversal in its impact on popular consciousness in Nigeria. What is thus at stake here is the paradox about hegemony: its inherent vulnerability to counter-narratives even as it is the most effective form of power" (para 3).

The apparent successes of China's cooperation in Nigeria have easily been downplayed by both western and local narratives that depict China's essence in Africa as a whole and Nigeria in particular in a negative light. Onoja (2020) writes:

The paradox [of China's fragile hegemony in Nigeria] is complicated [...] by the great power competition and the associated representational practice of power. The imagining and representation of "China in Africa" as a bogeyman, to an extent the world has not seen since the end of the Cold War, is specifically playing the counter-narrative against China. Led by the United States, this framing of China, especially of "China in Africa," has sedimented in the public sphere over the years. Now, the idea is producing the reality it invokes

– China as a predatory, amoral intruder. The resultant weakening explains China’s current vulnerability to discontent in Nigeria. (para 3)

Actually, the People’s Republic of China has over the years been associated with a number of negative stereotypes. According to Axelsson (2010), the negative stereotypes of China surpass the positive ones, an observation which however, contradicts the Pew and BBC studies earlier cited in this section. One popular negative stereotype of China is that it is viewed as a producer of fake cheap products that do not last long (Patrick, Ladipo & Adada, 2016; Page, 2018). Actually, the issue of fake Chinese producer and consumer products have constantly fuelled or inspired both media and political discourse in Nigeria. An article published in the Nigerian tabloid *ThisDay* in 2015 aptly illustrates Nigerians’ perceptions of the made in China product. The article which was describing a meeting concerning the UN Millennium Development Goals states that: “As regards quality of Chinese products, everyone admitted that China has the capacity to produce very qualitative goods. Mention was made of several Chinese exports of high-quality products to many parts of Europe and America and questions were therefore raised as to why Nigeria should be the destination of inferior quality of goods” (ThisDay, 2015).

Another gloomy stereotype is that Chinese business is unfair competition to local industries and a threat to the human rights of many Nigerians (Geerts, Xinwa & Rossouw, 2014; Obiorah, 2008). It is common to come across media or political discourses which associate Chinese companies with unfair business practices, anti-Nigerian racism and labour exploitation. Jackson (2019) reviews cases of endogenous media reports, politicians and social critics who deplored the ill treatment of Nigerian labour in various development projects executed by Chinese companies in Nigeria. Kobus and Bryan (2018) similarly capture the above negative perception of China. They observe that the Nigerian intelligentsia has in various instances censured Chinese companies in Nigeria over their apparent reluctance to employ local experts and their labour practices which conform neither to the International Labour Code nor the Nigerian legislations. Kobus and Bryan (2018, p. 68) write:

Chinese companies in Nigeria have been criticized for being ‘closed’ due to perceived low levels of employing local experts. There was even a submission that they sometimes maltreat their workers. According to some reports, the conditions of employment of Nigerians in certain Chinese firms conform neither to the Nigerian Labour Laws nor to that of the International Labour Organisation. This was highlighted when a number of Nigerian workers died after being trapped inside a locked Chinese-owned factory that caught fire in 2002.

Another negative stereotype is that, in the eyes of many Nigerians, China is just a neo-colonial power. In effect, myths around Chinese companies dominating various sectors of the Nigerian economy and adopting exploitative labour practices have fuelled negative perceptions of China as a colonial power whose involvement in Nigeria has many strings attached to it and little to do with the long-term prosperity of Nigeria (Umejie, 2015; Onoja, 2020). Geerts, Xinwa and Rossouw (2014) highlight this negative stereotype in a study devoted to Africans’ perceptions of Chinese business in 15 countries including Kenya, South Africa, Benin, Cameroon and Nigeria among other. The three authors note that majority of Nigerians are negative about the reputation of Chinese businesses in their country. Only 33.1% of the Nigerian respondents in the study expressed positive views of China’s businesses. The authors also point out that over 82% of the Nigerian respondents think Nigeria and China are not equal business partners which could mean that many Nigerians see China as a neo-colonial power. Geerts *et al* (2014, p. 9) write that: “there is a widespread perception that Chinese investment in Africa is not benefitting Africans. China stands accused of being a ‘new colonial power’, extracting resources for their own benefit with little return for Africa”. The three authors add that “Chinese

presence in Africa is viewed with suspicion, especially from Western countries, and their human rights record, labour practices and environmental practices are often questioned”.

Negative Impact of COVID-19 on China's Image

The COVID-19 pandemic gave birth to various conspiracy theories and myths which seriously affected China and its citizens' image in Nigeria. The simple Chinese origin of the disease pushed many Nigerians to develop various forms of suspicion against Chinese expatriates and businessmen in Nigeria. Under the fear of being contaminated and out of mere ignorance, many Nigerians developed a phobia for Chinese living in their neighbourhoods. Chinese expatriate quickly became popularly viewed as contaminators and public health dangers, this was in line with the global negative image of China as the “sick man of Asia” and “a virus” (Jua & Lu, 2021). As early as January 2020, there emerged various media reports of incidences where Chinese expatriates found themselves stigmatised in public places, resented and even discriminated upon by Nigerians who suspected them (BBC News, 2020). For instance, on January 30, 2020, Nigerian authorities raided and closed a popular Chinese supermarket in Abuja over concerns of Coronavirus propagation (Obiezu, 2020). The Panda supermarket was a major gathering point for the Chinese people living in Abuja. The authorities shut down the market on suspicion that it might become a vector of Coronavirus contamination and propagation. Thus, many Chinese-run businesses quickly became viewed or suspected as threat to public health.

Not just Chinese expatriates, but also products made in, or imported from China became suspicious in the eyes of many Nigerians (Obiezu, 2020). In the Nigerian popular imaginary, the Chinese made products became viewed as a (potential) host carrier of the virus or at least as a potential vector of the virus propagation. This somewhat reinforced all the age-old stereotypes which depict Chinese products as being fake and not reliable. The development also contributed to tarnishing the image of the made in China label. The growing “sinophobia” in Nigeria prompted Chinese diplomatic missions in towns like Lagos and Kano to develop communication strategies to neutralise the stereotype and mitigate the stigmatisation of Chinese in Nigeria. A good illustration of such efforts is Chinese Consul Mike Zhang's meeting with the emir of Kano in January 2020 where he called on Kano dwellers to develop more friendly attitudes towards the Chinese community in the town, in view of cultivating a more conducive business climate for both Chinese and Nigerian businessmen (BBC News, 2020).

Another major cause of anti-Chinese sentiments in Nigeria could be found in China's mishandling or controversial tackling of some COVID-19 related crises in the early stage of the pandemic. In other words, the Chinese government adopted a number of mitigation policies in its territory, which turned out to accidentally prove detrimental to Nigerian communities in China. These policies provoked some anti-China sentiments in Nigeria. A Kafkaesque example is China's adoption of national disease control strategies in which Nigerian students and expatriates among other Africans were subjected to forced Coronavirus testing and arbitrary 14-day self-quarantine, irrespective of recent travel history. The maltreated Nigerian nationals also saw their passport being seized by Chinese authorities. The application of the above-mentioned strategies in the southern Chinese city of Guangzhou fuelled misunderstandings between the Chinese government and the Nigerian political class and the general public. The public health policy actually sparked virulent criticism from Nigerians, after a video emerged on the Internet on April 10, showing a Nigerian diplomat in China, Razaq Lawal, publicly censoring the Chinese authorities for some ill treatment against Nigerians in Guangzhou. Members of the Nigerian political class, social critics and most ordinary Nigerians quickly read the above-mentioned Chinese policy as a racist and harsh initiative. This contributed to fuelling the popular belief in Nigeria that Chinese are racist and unfriendly to Africans (Oshodi, 2020).

A third threat to China's image in Nigeria emanated paradoxically from China's COVID-19 aid to Nigeria, particularly its "Mask Diplomacy" which remained tinted by its surrounding policies, which have not always or entirely been seen in a good light by many Nigerians. For instance, in a bid to boost Nigeria's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Chinese government sent an 18-person medical team to Nigeria. Although, Nigeria clearly needed foreign assistance to mitigate the pandemic on its territory, the Chinese aid witnessed a massive Nigerian backlash as local politicians, medical officials, journalists and other social critics promptly pushed back against Chinese medical team, claiming that the aid was not necessary. Several commentators have observed that the massive rejection of Chinese aid in such a period of dire need of foreign assistance, was more a way of expressing anti-China sentiments. The aid happened shortly after incidents of alleged racist treatment of Nigerians in China. This racist treatment influenced Nigerian politicians, journalists and medical officials in their reception of China's "Mask Diplomacy".

Besides the maltreatment of the Nigerian Diaspora in China, reports of the inefficacy of Chinese medical assistance in some other parts of the world fuelled Nigerians' hostility to the envoy. In effect, reports of faulty Chinese test kits and Personal Protective Elements (PPE) in several nations fuelled doubts about the relevance of the Chinese aid (Gupta, 2020). A third reason for the massive backlash is also found in the fact that the Mask Diplomacy has, like many other forms of Chinese investments in the country, been perceived as having neo-colonial strings attached to it. Although the Chinese diplomacy has devoted many resources in popularising the narrative that China is exclusively driven by a "win-win" partnership with Nigeria (Power & Mohan, 2010), many Nigerians have continued to see China as an opportunist (Umejei, 2015). Thus, growing debates about the underlying motives of China's aid in Nigeria as well as its perceived neo-colonial influence on the country have been analysed by commentators as some of the reasons justifying the massive hostility to China's "Mask Diplomacy". According to Onoja, bursts of discontent against China as manifested by the backlash against China's "mask diplomacy", have longer history. Such a backlash "draws mainly on anger over the timeline of the COVID-19 pandemic in Wuhan, China dateline; questions about Huawei's participation in 5G networks; claims of uniquely Chinese racial practices against Nigerians; and the image of 'China in Africa' more broadly" (para 1).

It could therefore be argued that the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to intensifying China's image crisis in Nigeria. At least four age-old negative stereotypes of China were brought to the fore by events related to the pandemic. These include: (i) China viewed as the "sick man of Asia", (ii) Chinese products – including medical equipment and PPE – viewed as problematic, (iii) the Chinese government/nationals perceived as being racist and anti-Nigerian and (iv) China's engagement in Africa viewed as a neo-colonialist strategy more than good will and win-win partnership.

The Rebranding of China's Image in Nigeria: The Chinese Embassy's Efforts

Scholars such as Power and Mohan (2010) and Adam (2021), have argued that China has sought to neutralise negative information about its policies in Africa in a systematic manner. Any time negative narratives have arisen over Chinese financed debt in Africa, its problematic labour practices or the lack environmental responsibility in its infrastructure projects, Beijing has most often tended to utilise its traditional forms of influence to quash criticism and reshape the dominant narrative to its favour. Some of these traditional forms of influence include information operations, economic dependency and relationship with African elites. Krishnan (2020) notes that, in the early stages of the pandemic, the Beijing government leveraged propaganda as a strategy to downplay the negative narrative and stereotypes about them.

In Nigeria, such an effort was visible in a number of communication strategies designed promptly by the Chinese embassy to among other things, repair the image of its country of origin. In this section,

this author uses a qualitative content analysis to examine eighteen newspaper articles generated by the Chinese embassy and consulates to Nigeria visibly to inform Nigerians about China's response to the COVID-19 and the Chinese aid to Nigeria, in view of mitigating the pandemic in the country. The articles were published in elite Nigerian tabloids. The analysis specifically seeks to examine the various image repair strategies China's diplomatic missions to Nigeria employed in order to address/arrest the four negative COVID-19-related stereotypes of China mentioned in the preceding section.

The articles selected for the content analysis were published from January to May 2020 (five months into the pandemic) in over ten (10) Nigerian elite newspapers including *Leadership*, *Sun*, *Vanguard*, *Guardian*, *Daily Trust*, *New Telegram*, *People Daily* and *Premium Times* among others. The articles were mainly written by senior Chinese diplomats such as the Chinese ambassador and China's Consul General in Lagos. Online versions of these articles were also made available on the website of China's embassy to Nigeria.

Putting to Question the "Sick Man of Asia" and "Coronavirus Propagator" Stereotypes

The "sick man of Asia" and Corona virus propagator stereotypes are rooted in the popular belief that China is the origin of the COVID-19 pandemic and that, the perceived ineffective policies adopted by its government immediately after the outbreak immensely contributed to the spreading of the pandemic in the world including Nigeria. The Chinese diplomatic missions to Nigeria have sought to debunk or downplay these two stereotypes by mainly employing the *reduction of offensiveness* strategy as well as the *corrective action* technique. In their efforts to reduce the offensiveness of China's ineffective policies, China's diplomatic missions tended to foreground the spectacular policies and efforts made by China from early January 2020 to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic in its territory and abroad. In all the eighteen articles considered for this study, the Chinese embassy and consulates to Nigeria reported these spectacular mitigating efforts made by their country, stressing particularly on their relative successes in China as well as in various other parts of the world. For instance, in an article titled "China will defeat the Coronavirus" and published on the 31st of January, the Chinese Consul for Lagos, Chu Maoming underscores what he presents as the drastic measures taken by China to control the COVID pandemic. He notes that "China's measures against the epidemic explicitly show China's efficiency and the advantages of China's system" (Chu 2020b, p.47).

China's ambassador to Nigeria Zhou Pingjian adopts a similar approach in his article titled "COVID-19: How China did it" which was published on 3 April 2020 in *Leadership*. In this article, the ambassador meticulously explores all the Coronavirus prevention and control strategies adopted by his country with a visible intent to sell a positive image of his country. He particularly underscores the international community's positive assessments of China's efforts thus:

By sharing the genome sequencing of the virus at the earliest opportunity as well as the control and treatment experience without reservation, China has won admiration and support from the international community. Leaders of over 170 countries and heads of more than 50 international and regional organizations have sent messages of support and 79 countries and 10 international organizations have provided medical supplies to China (Zhou, 2020b, p. 22)

While outlining the positive assessments of China's efforts, ambassador Zhou mentions Nigerian president's favourable rating of Chinese handling of the COVID pandemic. He writes:

President Buhari made a statement of solidarity on February 2, "China's efforts to contain the spread of the coronavirus have been exemplary, as well as the country's collaboration with international agencies and

other countries on the matter.” Indeed, China received strong political support and assistance in various means from the Government and good people of Nigeria at the most difficult moment in our fight against the COVID-19 outbreak. Such expressions of friendship boost our confidence in no small measure and will always be remembered and cherished by the Chinese people. (Zhou, 2020b, p.22)

In the same vein, the Secretary of Press at the Chinese embassy to Nigeria, Seum Sandong (2020) sought in an April 28 newspaper article to underline the acclaims received by China for adopting drastic but effective mitigation approaches. He writes that: “through unremitting efforts, positive trend in preventing and controlling COVID-19 has been constantly consolidated and expanded. In this process, we have received care and support from consulates general in Guangzhou, foreign governments, NGOs and friendly people, which we highly appreciate and will always remember and cherish,” says the letter” (Seum, 2020, p.27).

The three above mentioned citations clearly show how the Chinese embassy in Nigeria sought to change the narrative in favour of China. The image of China as the propagator of the Coronavirus in the world is challenged or downplayed in these citations. This is done in favour of the idea that China adopted efficacious approaches to fight the pandemic in its territory as well as to help other countries grapple with the pandemic. The citations downplay the conspiracy theories to claim that Chinese authorities’ policies instead attracted due endorsement from the international community and influential Nigerian opinion leaders.

Still in a bid to reduce the offensiveness of early Chinese ineffective policies, China’s diplomatic missions to Nigeria utilised *minimisation* in which they tended to present the failures of China’s public health system in the beginning of the epidemics as a regional rather than a national problem. In an article titled “China’s Response on COVID-19”, the Chinese ambassador to Nigeria, Zhou Pingjian utilises such *minimisation* strategy. He declares that:

Stereotyping the story of Wuhan or Hubei and applying it to all China or the whole world cannot be more misleading. Take the confirmed cases. As of 24:00 February 15, a total of 68500 cases had been reported in the China’s mainland. Among them, 56249 cases were in Hubei (82.12%), 39462 cases were in Wuhan (57.61%, and 70.16% of the total cases in Hubei). (Zhou, 2020a, p.44)

Also, in line with *reducing the offensiveness* of Chinese policies, the Chinese diplomatic mission in Nigeria employed the *differentiation* strategy by which it tended to present the virulent propagation of Coronavirus and the high rates of mortality in the city of Wuhan as a development which is not as uncommon and destructive as many detractors of China have claimed. By this *reduce the offensiveness* strategy Chinese diplomats tended to present the COVID-19 pandemic as being not as destructive as a number of pandemics that have happened in the US, Middle East countries and West Africa. By downplaying the severity of the COVID-19 epidemics in Wuhan, these Chinese diplomats sought to attack the logic of commentators and foreign audiences who believe that the severity of the Coronavirus as a sufficient justification for the negative profiling of China. In tandem with the above, China’s ambassador to Nigeria, Zhou, writes that:

I wish to stress that, as of February 8, the mortality rate of the NCP is 2.18% (811 deaths out of 37198 confirmed cases), and the mortality rate in Chinese provinces and cities other than Wuhan is merely 0.91% (203 deaths out of 22210 confirmed cases), even lower than that of ordinary pneumonia. The mortality rate outside Hubei is 0.31% (31 deaths out of 10098 confirmed cases). In contrast, the H1N1 flu of 2009 in the US had a mortality rate of 17.4%; the mortality rate of the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) of 2012 was 34.4% and Ebola of 2014 in West Africa 40.4%. In fact, according to a recent CDC report, the US

flu from 2019 to 2020 has caused 19 million infection cases and at least 10,000 deaths. There are 200 or so NCP cases of infections worldwide, far less than 1% of the case count in China, while the H1N1 outbreak in the US spread to 214 regions and countries. (Zhou, 2020d, p.30)

Finally, the Chinese diplomatic mission in Nigeria also sought to utilise *corrective action* as an image repair strategy. By this *corrective action* strategy, they emphasised the efforts made by their country towards arresting the propagation of the pandemic not only in China but also in African countries including Nigeria. All the articles considered for this study have contents which reflect the above line of action. This will be illustrated in subsequent parts of the paper.

Rejecting the Racist Stereotype

Through their communication strategies, China's diplomatic mission in Nigeria sought to reject the stereotype that China is racist or unfriendly to foreigners, particularly Africans and Nigerians. In over seven out of the eighteen articles considered, the mission deployed *bolstering* by which they highlighted the various policies adopted by the Chinese government to give special attention and a favourable treatment to African diasporas in China in general and Nigerians in particular. By this strategy, the mission reported with a clear spin, the various programs conceived by the Chinese government to accord a preferential or friendly treatment to Nigerians and other African diasporas in Chinese cities. In his January 31st article, the Chinese Consul for Lagos noted for instance that "China's measures are not only protecting our own people, but also protecting the people in the whole world" (Chu 2020a, p.47). With the same reassuring tone, the Chinese ambassador to Nigeria Zhou notes in his article titled "China's Response on COVID-19" that:

China will continue to take good care of foreign nationals in China like its own. We will stay in close communication with Nigeria and provide updates on latest developments, protect the life and health of the Nigerian nationals in China, thereby safeguarding the health and safety of people in both countries. Foreign nationals are safe in China. (Zhou 2020a, p.44)

The act of rejecting racist stereotypes also involved the *denial* strategy. By this strategy, China's diplomatic mission rejected allegation of racist treatment of Nigerian after the Razaq Lawal video emerged on the Internet. The Secretary of Press at the Chinese Embassy in Nigeria deployed this *denial* strategy in his article titled "Guangzhou: Facts, Solidarity and Cooperation". In this article, Seum relays China's Foreign Ministry spoke person Zhao Lijian's remarks on Nigeria Foreign Minister's address to the press after the Guangzhou incident. Zhao's remarks say "We treat all foreign nationals equally. We reject differential treatment, and we have zero tolerance for discrimination" (Seum, 2020, p.27).

Besides, this, Seum nuances the alleged harsh experiences of Nigerian nationals in China during the Guangzhou incident. In so doing, he hinges on online contents generated by the *Agence France Press* (AFP) which attack the veracity of Chinese authorities' racist treatment of African. He writes that:

Recently, some Nigerian friends offered to share with me photos and videos circulating on social media. I have responded with my comments. Here I wish to share some latest findings by AFP Fact Check on its website. Africans living in southern China say they have been victims of arbitrary evictions and discrimination as the country steps up its fight against imported infections, as AFP reported. On April 11, 2020, as reported by AFP, the African Union expressed its 'extreme concern' about the situation and called on Beijing to take action. However, the video circulating on social media has nothing to do with China. In fact, the clip shows

a fight in a district of the Bronx in New York and first appeared online on March 18. You may double check it for yourself at <https://factcheck.afp.com/video-was-filmed-new-york-not-china>. (Seum, 2020, p.27)

At some points, the Chinese embassy in Nigeria deployed the *evasion of responsibilities* strategy, by presenting the Guangzhou incident in which Nigerians and other members of African diasporas in China were allegedly maltreated by governmental institutions, as an accident/act which was paradoxically driven by good intentions. In his April 28 article, the Secretary of Press at the Chinese embassy to Nigeria, Seum Sandong claims China's drastic prevention and control measures were not driven by racist motivations but the desire to arrest the propagation of the COVID on Chinese soil and safeguard the common health and wellbeing of all. He cites an Open Letter published by the Guangdong Provincial Foreign Affair Office on April 18. The Letter states that "Governments [...] have strictly applied undifferentiated health management service to both Chinese and foreign nationals in Guangdong in accordance with laws and regulations. All foreign nationals in China are treated equally" (Seum, 2020, p.27).

Debunking the Myth of China's Neo-Colonialism in Nigeria

The debunking of the neo-colonialism stereotype was done through *bolstering*. By this *bolstering*, the diplomatic mission mainly emphasised how beneficial the China-Nigeria cooperation has been for Nigeria; and how such cooperation is a sine qua non to defeat the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria as in China. An egregious illustration is the Chinese missions' tendency to over emphasised China's medical teams and PPE aids in Nigeria and other African countries in seven of the eighteen articles considered for the study. In his February 2 article titled "COVID-19: Hardship reveals true friendship", Ambassador Zhou notes that:

China firmly supports Nigeria's fight against the virus and stands ready to assist, if needed, to the best of its capacity. Despite the daunting task of epidemic control remaining at home, China will try its best to provide medical supplies to Nigeria and do whatever it could to support Nigeria. We have set up the online COVID-19 knowledge centre (<https://covid19.21wecan.com/>) that is open to all. We will continue to share information and experience with Nigeria, and strengthen cooperation on containment, treatment and vaccines in response to the COVID-19 challenge, with a view to building together a community of shared health for mankind. (Zhou, 2020c, p.22)

Elsewhere (in his article entitled "China's response to COVID-19), Ambassador Zhou emphasises how China's assistance to African countries including Nigeria is an integral aspect of its African policy and a culture China has observed during major epidemics in West Africa. He notes that:

The health sector is an important area in China-Africa cooperation. China has sent medical teams of altogether 21,000 members to Africa and has treated 220 million African patients. They are deeply respected by local people as some Chinese doctors even sacrificed their lives in this cause. After the Ebola epidemic raged through Africa in March, 2014, certain countries closed their embassies and evacuated diplomats and citizens from three West African countries hit by the epidemic. By sharp contrast, the Chinese government helped Africa at the earliest time possible. China sent not only urgently needed supplies but also medical teams of over 1,000 military and civilian doctors to areas stricken most severely by the epidemic. Chinese diplomats and medical experts chose to stay there instead of withdrawing. They fought together with local people until the virus was defeated. (Zhou, 2020a, p.44)

Thus, Chinese diplomats strategically debunked – or at least downplayed – the myth of China’s neo-colonialism in Nigeria. In their various articles, they painted the picture of a China ever ready to partner with, and help Nigeria address its development issues even outside the public health sector. The explicit and implicit message conveyed by their articles is that China is a major partner on which Nigeria can count to overcome or defeat the COVID-19 pandemic. China is thus, not a neo-colonial power working exclusively for its interest in Nigeria as many “unfounded” theories tend to say (Zeng, 2021; Power & Mohan, 2010). As the Secretary of Press at the Chinese Embassy puts it, “China and Nigeria are allies in this ongoing global war against the COVID-19 pandemic. To defeat the virus, solidarity and cooperation is our most potent weapon” (Seum, 2020, p,27).

Conclusion

The outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic made China to witness a serious international image crisis. China’s image perceptibly became negative as both governments and citizens across the world tended to associate China with the origin and propagation of the Corona virus in the world as well as with many other crises/challenges derived from the pandemic. In Nigeria, the outbreak contributed in intensifying various negative stereotypes of China. Three of such stereotypes are (i) China viewed as the “sick man of Asia”, (ii) Chinese products – including medical equipment and PPE – viewed as problematic, (iii) the Chinese government/nationals perceived as being racist and anti-Nigerian and (iv) China’s engagement in Africa viewed as a neo-colonialist strategy more than good will and win-win partnership.

To debunk or downplay the above stereotypes, the Chinese diplomatic mission in Nigeria adopted image repair strategies that integrated denial, evasion of responsibilities, reduction of offensiveness and corrective action. In various newspaper articles, China’s ambassador to Nigeria, consul in Lagos or some other senior staffers at China’s diplomatic missions in Nigeria sought to rebuild China’s image as Nigeria’s major partner in development and a friend on which Nigeria should count to mitigate or overcome the pandemic.

The above image repair strategies are classical ways in which organisations or countries tend to respond to crisis that tarnish or are susceptible to tarnish their image. If their popularity is without doubt, their effectiveness in cases like China’s image crisis in African countries, remains grossly unascertained. Subsequent research works could focus on the effectiveness of the application of Benoit’s Image Repair theory to the rebranding of China in Nigeria or other African countries.

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Efficacy of Lockdowns in Africa

A Continental Perspective

Daglou Makumbe

Department of Political Studies
University of the Western Cape

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

¹ The view 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.

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.

The Efficacy of Lockdowns: A 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

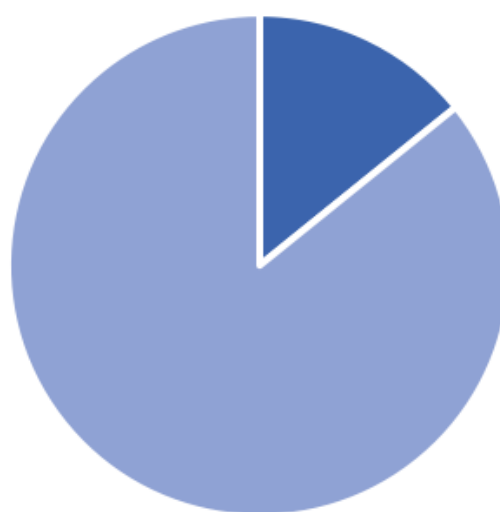
The African context rendered lockdowns inefficient and ineffective due to the high rate of informality. Africa has the highest rate of informal employment rates (ILO, 2018). Lockdown measures in Africa need to be implemented differently as compared to other continents. A blanket approach has proven to 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.

Figure 1: Share of Informal Employment in Africa

Share of Informal Employment in Africa



■ Formal Employment ■ Informal Employment

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 tap 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.

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.

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.

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The South African Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan as a response to the South African economic crisis

Seshupo Mosala 
North-West University

Abstract

The impact of the current Covid-19 pandemic on the economy presents an opportunity for an economic reset in South Africa. The economic reset will provide a chance for structural transformation that will underpin economic growth and sustainable development. The Covid-19 pandemic has entrenched and exposed South Africa's inequality. Unemployment is at an all-time high and over half of South Africans, the majority which is African live in extreme poverty. This inequality has created a conducive environment for the recent instabilities that led to mass looting and property destruction. In response to the economic crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic, the South African government adopted the *South African Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan* to reconstruct and reset the economy. However, the *South African Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan* do not present an opportunity for the economic reset but it's a perpetuation of neoliberalism. Therefore, the call "to build a new, inclusive economy that benefits all South Africans" is nothing but buzzwords without any meaning. The plan mimics rhetorical calls for job creation and industrialization made by previous policies i.e. *National Development Plan* (NDP) and *New Growth Path* (NGP) without any operational plan and a new course of action. In addition, the plan is intended for South Africa to move towards the target set in the NDP, vision 2030. This paper analyses the *South African Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan* as a response to the economic crisis. Through the analysis, the paper will illustrate how is the plan neoliberal. In conclusion, the paper demonstrates how some developmental states were able to address challenges such as poverty and unemployment.

Keywords: Buzzwords, developmental state, neoliberalism, and structural transformation.

Introduction

"Never let a good crisis go to waste" (Churchill, n.d.). Winston Churchill (1874-1965), the then Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (UK) was referring to the Second World War which presented an opportunity for an alliance between the United States of America (USA), Britain, and the Soviet Union against the Nazi aggression and this led to the formation of the United Nations (UN). Moreover, the economic crisis that followed the Second World War led to the adoption of Keynesian Economic policies by European countries in the Post-World War Two in which the state played a key role in the economy. Similarly, the Covid-19 pandemic crisis presents an opportunity for economic reset especially in South Africa, where structural problems such as poverty, inequality, and unemployment continue to run amok.

The economic reset is warranted in South Africa given the continued apartheid legacy and the status quo. The unemployment rate in South Africa rose by 0.5 of a percentage point from 34.4 percent in the second quarter of 2021 to 34.9 percent in the third quarter of 2021 and subsequently, the expanded unemployment rate increased by 2.2 percentage points to 46.6 percent over the same period (Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), 2021; Naidoo, 2021). As a result, South Africa's unemployment rate is the highest in the world. The highest unemployment rate has entrenched inequality and poverty which mostly affect the majority of African and female-headed households. The Covid-19 pandemic has undermined the fight against poverty and also entrenched and exposed South Africa's inequality.

Nevertheless, the South African economy was in a crisis way before the pandemic. The South African economy was in recession months before the outbreak of the global pandemic. In response to the economic crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic, the South African government adopted the *South African Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan* in October 2020. The recently adopted Plan is seen as another attempt by the African National Congress (ANC) government in addressing the structural problems and job creation. However, the article argues that this is not the right response that South Africa needs. The *South African Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan* is similar to its predecessors such as *Growth, Employment and Redistribution strategy* (GEAR), *Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa* (ASGISA), *New Growth Path* (NGP), and *National Development Plan* (NDP) which have failed to address the structural problems and entrenched neoliberalism. South Africa needs to break with neoliberalism that has been pursued by the ANC government since 1994 to address structural problems such as poverty, inequality, and unemployment. The following section is a brief history of South Africa's post-apartheid political-economic policies.

A brief history of post-apartheid political-economic policies

To understand the status quo a brief historical analysis of post-apartheid political-economic policies is warranted. To have a better grasp of the post-apartheid political economic-policies, it is imperative to judge the policies and programmes by their results, not their intention.

The post-apartheid economic policies have entrenched neoliberalism in South Africa. Accordingly, it is important to define the neo-liberalism concept. Neoliberalism has its roots in Adam Smith's free-market school of economics (Narsiah, 2002, p. 3). According to Harvey (2005, p. 71), neoliberalism is a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. In South Africa, this meant the government had to adhere to the free market principles such as fiscal austerity, deregulation, and privatisation (Bond, 2000, p. 1; Narsiah, 2002, p. 3).

In South Africa, neoliberalism can be traced to the National Party (NP) government in the 1980s with the adoption of the *White Paper on Privatisation and Deregulation in the Republic of South Africa* (Hentz, 2000, p. 203). The NP government under pressure from International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and Mineral-Energy Complex (MEC) adopted through the President's Economic Advisory Council a neoliberal, supply-side approach, emphasising a smaller role for the public sector, a greater reliance on market forces, and greater scope for the private sector (Mohr, 2010, p. 20). Accordingly, this led to the privatisation of ISCOR in 1989 and National Sorghum in 1991 (Hentz, 2000, p. 203).

In 1993 the NP government published a policy document for post-apartheid called *the Restructuring of the South African Economy: A Normative Model Approach*. The *Normative Economic Model* (NEM) as it was known had a similar thrust to the earlier White Paper that was formulated by the Economic Advisory Council (Mohr, 2010, p. 22). The economic model was advocating for the minimal state in the economy and it contained all the basic elements of the *Structural Adjustment Programmes* (SAP) advocated and sponsored by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (Hentz, 2000, p. 213; Mohr, 2010, p. 22). Due to opposition from ANC and its alliance partners, Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), and South Africa Communist Party (SACP) the NEM was never adopted officially.

As illustrated above the NP government adopted free-market policies of deregulation, privatisation, and non-intervention in the 1980s. The ANC fully embraced neoliberal orthodoxy after coming to power in 1994 and adopted macro-economic policies that rapidly led to the containment of fiscal deficit, advocated for single-digit inflation, and lower interest rates (Jones, 2002, p. 20; Hentz, 2000,

p. 204). This embracing of neoliberalism by the ANC is the result of the compromise that was made during the 1980s and 1990s negotiations. The compromise was based on two things, the failure of either party (ANC and NP) to claim victory over the other and the class interests of the ANC leadership. Many ANC leaders were co-opted to the neoliberal economy in the post-apartheid epoch through the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE). Therefore, the negotiations to end apartheid were in the event premised upon the achievement of political equality whilst leaving the structure and functioning of the economy intact (Ashman et al., 2011, p. 182).

According to Williams and Taylor (2010, p. 22), the neoliberal influence was evident in the ANC pronouncements, such as the 1990 *Discussion Document on Economic Policy*, the 1992 draft policy guidelines, and both the 1994 *Reconstruction and Development Programme* (RDP) and the 1996 GEAR strategy. In these ANC policies that emerged in 1992 and 1993, the influence of the World Bank was apparent (Narsiah, 2002, p.4).

According to Terreblanche (2012, p. 64), the ANC through Transitional Executive Council (TEC) firstly agreed to neoliberalism as conditions to the United States Dollars (hereafter USD) 850 million International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan which was the GEAR policy of 1996 in embryo form. As a result, the ANC changed its economic policies throughout the transition period (Marais, 2011). However, under pressure from COSATU, the ANC government adopted RDP. RDP was declared to derive from the *Freedom Charter* and called for the provision of the free health care system, free education, housing, and electrification. Nevertheless, the *RDP White Paper* was revised many times to accommodate business and IFIs, it omitted any reference to nationalisation and indicated a firmer commitment to fiscal and monetary discipline (Jeffery, 2010, p. 240). Accordingly, the objectives of RDP were compatible with privatisation and liberalisation (Marais, 2001, p. 237).

In 1996 RDP was replaced by GEAR, a more market-friendly political-economic policy that was formulated with the help of IFIs. When GEAR was adopted the Rand was depreciating and foreign exchange reserves were at an extremely low level (Heintz, 2002). This explains the non-negotiable stance that the ANC leadership had when it launched GEAR. As per Habib and Taylor (2007, p. 265), GEAR had a striking resemblance to the NEM that was advocated by the NP government in 1993.

GEAR advocated for job creation, to achieve annual economic growth of 6 percent by the year 2000, boost exports by an average of 8.4 percent per annum and improve social infrastructure (Marais, 2011, p. 113). However, GEAR led to capital flight due to liberalising financial controls, privatisation, and liberalising trade. Through GEAR, the ANC government was cutting tariffs more deeply than required by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) (Carmody, 2002, p. 258). According to Bond (2000, p. 47), the tariffs were reduced by 36 percent which affected various sectors and led to thousands of jobs being shed. Moreover, GEAR had social devastation, as levels of inequality and poverty increased which was accompanied by unemployment despite economic growth (Habib, 2013:81). To many commentators, GEAR was a home-grown SAP.

GEAR was followed by another trickle-down economic policy – ASGISA. The government introduced ASGISA as a new developmental strategy in 2005 that advocated to halve poverty and unemployment and bridge the gap between the first and second economies, intending to eliminate the second economy (Jeffrey, 2010, p. 255). Similar to its predecessor, ASGISA advocated for 6 percent economic growth from 2010 onwards (Burger, 2018, p. 40). However, ASGISA perpetuated state withdrawal from the economy, privatisation, and trade liberalisation. As a result, poverty and unemployment worsened under ASGISA, the unemployment rate increased among Africans from 25,8 percent in 2007 to 27,0 percent in 2008 (Mosala, 2016, p. 97; Stats SA, 2008). By the end of 2009 and before the introduction of NGP, the unemployment rate had increased to 28,6 percent among Africans (Stats SA, 2009). The programme was replaced with NGP in 2010.

The NGP called for restructuring the economy and changing the structure of production and ownership through realigning the economy (exports and imports), balancing production for the domestic market, and diversifying industrialisation (Turok, 2015, p. 125). It wanted to break the country's dependence on exporting commodities and rather produce goods (Turok, 2015, p. 125). However, the NGP was short-lived and was replaced by the NDP in 2012.

The NDP is a macro-economic policy that seeks to run until 2030. It aims to create 11 million jobs, eliminate poverty and reduce inequality from 0.69 Gini Coefficient to 0.6 by 2030 (NPC, 2012). Nevertheless, similar to its predecessors, it is premised on neoliberalism. It continued to call for the minimalist role of the state and for labour deregulation despite the declaration to create a developmental state. Its land reform is still rooted in the willing buyer, willing seller model (Mosala, 2016, p.100). According to Jim (2013), the NDP reinforces dependence on raw material exports and has no plan to support industrialisation and manufacturing. To Terreblanche (2012:122) the NDP is a carefully crafted ideological propaganda document that is meant to lull the general public and especially the impoverished majority, into contentment until 2030.

Other policies such as the *Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) Act, Act 53 of 2003*, and *Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act (MPRDA), Act 28 of 2002* advocated for co-optation of the comprador bourgeoisies to the economy without addressing the structural problems. According to Mbeki (2009, p. 78), BEE was meant to preserve and perpetuate the exploitative system under the post-apartheid government. As a result, mining companies continue to exploit the country's natural resources, leaving behind only a trail of environmental hazards (Mbeki & Mbeki, 2016, p. 2). In addition, policies such as B-BBEE and MPRDA attributed to growing inequality especially amongst blacks, and rampant corruption.

The aforementioned illustrate decades of free-market policies advocating for minimal state intervention (Khambule, 2021, p. 1). As a result, despite these economic policies and legislations that were meant to address structural problems in South Africa, the country is still faced with devastating unemployment and poverty. The adoption of neoliberalism by the ANC government has economic, political, and constitutional implications. First and foremost, the neoliberal policies have deepened and perpetuated socio-economic inequalities along racial lines in post-apartheid South Africa and increased concentration of wealth in the hands of the privileged few (Mfete, 2020, p. 270; Williams and Taylor, 2010, p. 37). Moreover, the implementation of neoliberal economic policies has meant disaster for the vast majority of South Africa's poor, increasing unemployment through deindustrialisation (Habib, 2003, p. 236). Secondly, the increasing inequality gap has the potential to undermine our democracy as illustrated in the recent riots.

As demonstrated above, these neoliberal economic policies have made little progress in solving South Africa's economic problems (Schneider, 2003, p. 23). This is evident that structural transformation and economic diversification never took place in the post-apartheid epoch. Neoliberalism in South Africa was home grown but did not begin with GEAR as demonstrated above, it was adopted in the late 1980s by the NP government and led to the privatisation of ISCOR in 1989 (Cornell, 2011, p. 10). The ANC government perpetuated neoliberalism in the post-apartheid era which led to financialisation, capital flights, and entrenchment of structural problems. Mohammed (2010) attributed the economic crisis illustrated below to neoliberal policies which resulted in internationalisation, financialisation, and deindustrialisation. The discussion above put the South African status quo, explained below into perspective.

The South African status quo

It is imperative to understand that before the global outbreak of Covid-19 the South African economy was already in a crisis. The economy was in a recession and the rate of unemployment was at its highest level in over a decade (RSA, 2020a). This combined with growing public sector debt, constant power cuts, and a downgrade to junk status in March 2020 was detrimental to the country's economy (Shiplana, 2021). Accordingly, Covid-19 hit South Africa on the back of a technical recession and debt crisis.

The Covid-19 pandemic has entrenched and exposed South Africa's inequality. Over two million jobs have been shed during 2020 (Stats SA, 2020). This has undermined the fight against poverty and led to an increase in the official unemployment rate at 34.6 percent in the third quarter of 2021 and an expanded unemployment rate stands at 46.6 percent (Stats SA, 2021). Moreover, the youth unemployment rate stands at 46 percent between the ages of 15-34 (Stats SA, 2021). Consequently, this has exacerbated inequality and poverty rates in South Africa.

According to the World Bank (2020), 55.5 percent (30.3 million) of South Africans are living in poverty at the national upper poverty line, ZAR 992, while a total of 25 percent (13.8 million) are experiencing food poverty. African and female-headed households are mostly affected by poverty. Inequality has been growing since 1994 and extreme poverty was expected to increase by 9 percent in South Africa by 2020 (World Bank, 2020). This is evident that the ANC government is failing in its developmental task. As a result, over 18 million South Africans are dependent on social grants for survival (Statista, 2021). The number has increased because of the Covid-19 pandemic with 61 percent of South Africa's population receiving some form of grants (Bhorat & Kohler, 2020). Over 6 million people had applied for the Covid-19 Social Relief of Distress Grant in the previous opening cycle (Letsatsi, 2021). According to Mosala (2016, p. 106), this illustrates the failure of the ANC government to address the structural problems in the economy and attempts to contain popular discontent.

As a result of neoliberalism, South Africa is over reliant on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) which has undermined economic growth. Despite policies adopted to attract foreign investment, FDI inflow to South Africa remains modest. Accordingly, Egypt and Nigeria have surpassed South Africa as a major FDI destination in Africa (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), 2019, p. 42). According to the former finance minister, Tito Mboweni (2021), South Africa's real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) stopped growing 14 years ago. Moreover, he added that South Africa's decline reflects low economic growth combined with relatively fast population growth. This explains the 2019 and 2020 recession which saw GDP falling by just over 16.4 percent (Stats SA, 2020).

The rampant corruption in South Africa also hinders new investments and service delivery (Jumanne & Keong, 2018, p. 16; Campos et al., 2010). Billions have been lost to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) corruption during the Covid-19 pandemic. This followed the State Capture which its extent was exposed during the Zondo Commission. Due to State Capture, State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) such as Eskom, Transnet, South African Airways (SAA), PetroSA, and Denel among many were looted out of billions of Rands and left dysfunctional. The local governments are the worst hit by corruption. According to Corruption Watch (2021), corruption in municipalities entails bribery, inflating prices, procurement and employment irregularities, and embezzlement of funds. Most of the corruption happens within the office of the municipal manager, representing 34 percent of all reports received which demonstrate a leadership crisis at the local government (Corruption Watch, 2021). For instance, JB Marks Local Municipality purchased PPE items at inflated prices and spent ZAR 47 million in the space of 3 months (North West Provincial Treasury, 2020). The municipality purchased 5 litre sanitiser bottle at ZAR 720, exceeding the National Treasury's stipulated market-related price of ZAR 327,27 per 5 litres (Auditor-General, 2021). In addition, out of 257 municipalities, only 21

municipalities achieved clean audit in 2020, more than ZAR 1 billion spent on consultants and over ZAR 32 billion in irregular expenditure (Makwetu, 2020).

In addition, the recent riots that were accompanied by property destruction and looting which have cost the South African economy USD 3.4 billion will contribute to unemployment, capital flight, and investment strike. According to Business Tech (2021), several foreigners are pulling their money out of South Africa. This demonstrates the need for structural transformation to address structural problems.

The status quo illustrates the failure of the post-apartheid neoliberal policies in addressing structural problems. As argued above this crisis can also be attributed to neoliberalism that has been perpetuated since 1994 by the ANC government. In response to this crisis, the ANC government adopted *South African Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan*. However, the question remains, whether this is the right response by the post-apartheid government in addressing the structural problems that were worsened by the Covid-19 pandemic. Whether this response will lead to the required results. In attempting to find answers to the aforementioned questions the following sections analyse the *South African Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan*.

The objectives of the South African Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan

In response to the economic crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic, the current administration has declared the creation of a “new economy”. According to the RSA (2020b), to the 6th administration, the Covid-19 crisis presents an opportunity to address long-term structural deficiencies in the South African economy and place the economy on the new path to growth and job creation. To achieve this, the administration has adopted the *South African Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan* which advocated for infrastructure development, energy security, industrialisation, and employment stimulus (RSA, 2020a). The plan does not seek to return to the pre-Covid-19 economic realities but to build a new economy for the future – an inclusive economy that benefits all South Africans. As per President Ramaphosa (2020), this will result in the transformation of social and economic relations in South Africa.

The *South African Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan* is aimed at stimulating equitable and inclusive growth. The plan has three phases: Engage and preserve – which includes a comprehensive health response to save lives and curb the spread of the pandemic; recovery and reform – which includes interventions to restore the economy while controlling the health risks; and lastly, reconstruct and transformation – which entails building a sustainable, resilient and inclusive economy (RSA, 2020a). These three phases will require the following priority interventions: Aggressive infrastructure investment; employment orientated strategic localization, reindustrialization and export promotion; energy security; support for tourism recovery and growth; gender equality and economic inclusion of women and youth; green economy interventions; mass public employment interventions; strengthening food security; and macro-economic interventions.

To ensure that those interventions and subsequently, the successful implementation of the *South African Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan*, there are key enablers. As a result, the following key enablers will be put in place: Resource mobilization, regulatory changes; a supportive policy environment and enabling conditions for ease of doing business; building a capable state; social compacting; skills development; as well as economic diplomacy and further integration into the African continent (RSA, 2020b). These will result in the following structural reforms: Modernizing and reforming network industries and associated state-owned enterprises; re-orienting trade policies and pursuing greater regional integration to boost exports, employment, and innovation; lowering barriers to entry to make it easier for businesses to start, grow, and compete; supporting

labour-intensive sectors such as tourism and agriculture to receive more inclusive growth; creating greater levels of economic inclusion, including through addressing high levels of economic concentration; addressing the weak job-creating capacity of the economy; boosting education and skills development; promoting greater beneficiation of raw materials; and addressing racial, gender and geographical inequalities which hamper deeper economic growth and development (RSA, 2020b). With these structural reforms, the plan seeks to place the economy on track towards the path of vision 2030. However, it remains to be seen if this plan would achieve the desired results and whether the plan is what is needed to address the economic crisis. The section below analyses the plan to determine if this is the right response by the 6th administration to the economic crisis.

The analysis of the South African Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan

The aforementioned objectives would require the structural transformation of the South African economy. Since the plan advocates for stimulating equitable and inclusive growth, it cannot continue to be business as usual. To build a new and inclusive economy that benefits all South Africans, the plan has called for a capable and developmental state. As per the plan, a capable and developmental state is an important enabling factor without which this plan will not achieve the determination to revive the economy.

As per the document, *“the successful implementation of the plan depends on a capable, developmental state with the capacity to plan and to implement in a coherent and integrate manner across the three spheres of the government and subsequently, revive the economy”*. Despite this call, the plan does not give any indication of the role of the state in the economy. The call for state intervention by the plan as demonstrated above is paradoxical. On the one hand, the plan calls for state intervention in the economy through a developmental state. However, without addressing the public procurement issues, corruption, and rent-seeking behaviour, the state intervention within the economy will remain parasitic and not developmental. In this case, the state intervention is not meant to address market failures such as poverty, unemployment, and inequality but to enrich the few and subsequently, hide citizens' discontent. On the other hand, the state has perpetuated privatisation of SAA and Eskom which is described as unbundling. Furthermore, the call for sectoral intervention as per the document is limited to creating a conducive environment for businesses not to address market failures.

The role of the SOEs in economic reconstruction and recovery is not clearly explained. The SOEs can play a developmental role in the South African economy. According to Turok (2015), institutions such as Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) played a role in the establishment of big SOEs such as Iscor and Eskom. However, the plan has mentioned little of the SOEs, despite their continued looting and dysfunction. SOEs such as Transnet and Denel can play a big part in manufacturing, skills development, and infrastructure development. The SOEs are not the only institutions subjected to looting, all the three spheres have lost billions due to corruption which has worsened with the pandemic. This does not only undermine the call for a capable and developmental state but it negatively affects service delivery, development and weakens state institutions. According to Chibber (2002, p. 956), states can foster development if their functionaries' goals are shaped by the duties of their station, rather than by a calculus of personal gain. The state is further weakened by patronage and clientelism which is perpetuated through cadre deployment.

The plan has made bold declarations regarding industrialisation and manufacturing through localisation, economic growth at the rate of 5.4 percent, and job creation. However, these calls remain hollow unless they are backed by an operational plan and they improve the lives of the majority of Africans. Industrialisation through localization and beneficiation will require addressing trade liberalization. Trade liberalization as demonstrated above has perpetuated joblessness in South Africa through exporting of jobs by exporting unprocessed minerals. Cheap manufactured

products have undermined industrialization which was also accompanied by financialization and malls proliferation in the country. Value addition and beneficiation from the raw materials can only take place by minimizing exports of unprocessed minerals. For instance, ceasing exports of chromium ore (South Africa is a leading producer) to China will ensure South Africa returns to converting chrome into ferrochrome, an important ingredient in steel production. Nonetheless, the plan mentions nothing about addressing trade liberalization which has been the source of deindustrialisation and joblessness. Furthermore, the call for a green economic strategy embodies no concrete plan in case of any event of recurrent waves of the pandemic in South Africa (Ede & Jili, 2021, p. 63). The call for revitalising mining also illustrates the economy's reliance on mining and primary production.

The plan says nothing about land reform which is critical for alleviating poverty especially in rural areas and South African development. Successful land reform will be the foundation of development in South Africa. It will ensure an increase in agricultural production and job creation. According to Studwell (2013), land reform was critical to the development of north-east Asian countries such as Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, and China.

The *South African Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan* has made some bold declarations that are unlikely to be achieved. Its call on infrastructure investment and delivery is hard to believe because, since the start of lockdown, railway infrastructure has been vandalised and looted. Despite this, the plan calls for "*reversing delays in Metrorail modernisation including prioritizing the refurbishment of the Mabopane line in Tshwane and the Central line in Cape Town*". This was supposed to be addressed in the first six months of the plan, but the year has passed and nothing has happened. Moreover, the current looting and burning as a result of Free Zuma calls have also contributed to the vandalism of infrastructure in South Africa.

In addition, the plan has advocated for the creation of 3.6 million jobs in ten years but the constant lockdowns and power cuts will undermine this drive for job creation. The constant power cuts and expensive electricity have been identified as factors detrimental to economic growth. As a result, the plan advocates that the reforms will lead to lowering the prices of electricity. This is inconceivable, especially since the National Energy Regulator of South Africa (NERSA) has approved the 2021/22 average price increase of electricity in South Africa.

One of the reasons for joblessness is the lack of skills in South Africa and the plan has prioritised skills development. However, the Skills Education Training Authorities (SETAs) institutions are failing in their role to provide skills development since they are looted and politicised (Turok, 2015). This makes the people sceptical about the implementation of the plan and the seriousness of the comprador bourgeoisie in addressing the structural problems.

In responding to the high unemployment rate, the plan and the 6th administration have called for Public Employment Programmes through Presidential Employment Stimulus, Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), and Community Work Programme (CWP) (Mudiriza et al., 2021, p.23). However, these types of jobs are not sustainable, they failed to provide skills development and lift people out of poverty. Moreover, these programmes have been used as part of the patronage system by ANC leaders in different municipalities. In addition, the government under the Presidential Employment Stimulus had vowed to create over 400 000 jobs through various sectors in the first three months of the plan, however, as illustrated above unemployment rate has increased since the adoption of the plan. This illustrates the ANC's failure to create a conducive environment for job creation.

The call for support of tourism yet worsening of crime which can be attributed to defunding of crime prevention reduces such calls to rhetoric, nothing more. Crime has affected tourism badly, yet the police department's budget presented by Bheki Cele (2021) would see cuts to crime-

fighting programmes and an increase in the VIP protection budget. This is evident that the calls for structural transformation and reconstruction of the economy are nothing but buzzwords by the ANC government to lull the people while the neoliberal economy continues.

The call “*to build a new, inclusive economy that benefits all South Africans*” will require the abandoning of neoliberal capitalism. It has been demonstrated that under decades of neoliberalism, the economy has benefited the few and the gap between the rich and poor has increased. It is evident with the recent unemployment rate increase that neoliberalism does not address the racial socio-economic inequalities that exist, but, it indirectly perpetuates them (Mfete, 2020, p. 276). The call for economic growth as per the *South African Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan* is commendable, however, the heavy reliance on market forces to redress the legacies of apartheid is misguided and unsustainable in a society marked by extreme inequality and poverty (Cheru, 2001, p. 521). As a result, to achieve an inclusive economy, neoliberalism will no longer be realistic in the new system and there is a need for state intervention to increase opportunities for all and achieve an egalitarian society (Ede & Jili, 2021, p. 61). Accordingly, to achieve this new economy will require leadership and a government with a new mind-set and course of action.

Moreover, the *South African Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan* seek to move towards the targets set in the NDP, vision 2030. The NDP as demonstrated above is a neoliberal economic policy. The NDP is not rooted in the historic mission of the liberation struggle in South Africa and is anti-working class and ultimately not in the best interest of the vast majority of South Africans (Jim, 2013). The NDP leaves intact the existing patterns of ownership and control of the economy. It calls for a minimalist role by the state and labour market deregulation (Mosala, 2016:100). Furthermore, NDP emphasizes the service sector instead of manufacturing and tends to focus on consumption-led growth (Turok, 2015, p. 128). Therefore, it is unlikely that the plan will lead to the transformation and reconstruction of the economy.

As illustrated above, the *South African Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan* is premised on neoliberalism which might prove difficult to address the economic crisis and structural problems. It was earlier demonstrated that neoliberalism and growth that took place under neoliberal economic policies had reproduced problems such as racial inequality, unemployment, and poverty (Cronin, 2015). As a result, the majority of South Africans continue to suffer as structural problems continue.

Therefore, the calls made within the *South African Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan* are nothing but buzzwords to gain legitimacy and authority and lull the previously disadvantaged people, the majority of them who are poor. To the ANC, the speeches delivered in support of the reconstruction, recovery, and transformation are theatrical plays, grand gestures, and performative enactment of legitimacy and authority (Death, 2011, p.1). The ANC since 1994 has failed to champion the developmental agenda and this is evident in the increase of structural problems under the democratic government. The neoliberal economic policies adopted by the ANC have worsened the structural problems and thus, there is a need for a very different approach, grounded in local realities and eco-social needs (Ngwane & Bond, 2020, p. 69). Consequently, the prospects for economic recovery, stabilisation, and transformation with the *South African Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan* are very slim, as the plan perpetuates neoliberalism and subsequently structural problems.

Developmental state

The status quo warrants the state intervention in the economy to address market failure. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic meant that the South African government had to play an intervention role to mitigate the social and economic effects of the pandemic. South Africa in response to

the pandemic adopted counter-cyclical fiscal and monetary policies (Khambule, 2021, p.1). These measures included wage support through the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF), supporting small businesses through grants, the release of disaster relief funds, and tax relief for businesses (The Presidency, 2020). However, these forced the government to borrow more which further weakened the country's fiscal position. In addition, the South African Reserve Bank (SARB) responded swiftly to protect price and financial stability (Shipalana, 2021). The SARB implemented a cumulative reduction in the repo rate, which was cut by 300 basis points and remained at 3.5 percent – the lowest in the history of South Africa and below zero in real terms (Shipalana, 2021). These measures were short of state intervention in the market to address structural problems and not enough for structural transformation. The government failed to use this opportunity to regulate the business sector, some companies continued with retrenchments despite receiving disaster relief funds and tax relief.

The need for a developmental state is evident in the shortcomings of the above-mentioned counter-cyclical fiscal and monetary measures. A capable and developmental state was critical for the development of East Asian countries such as South Korea, China, Taiwan, and Japan. This can be the case for South Africa, a capable and developmental state, not neoliberalism. In *Changing the colour of capital*, Ben Turok (2015) argues that South Africa needs a strong state-interventionist developmental state, which would include the following elements: 1) a mixed economy; 2) an interventionist state system; and 3) the role of the state as enabling, participatory, deliberative and policy projection. This would ensure much-needed industrialisation and structural transformation. According to Davies (2015, p.151), no country in history has gone from an underdeveloped to a developed economy without going through industrialisation, and this means the development of value-added production.

Developmental states have witnessed high economic growth in recent history i.e. Japan in the 1950s-80s; South Korea in the 1960s-90s; China since the 1980s and Brazil since 2000 (Burger, 2014, p.1). These developmental states have used land reform, protectionism, and investment regulation to industrialise and grow their economies. South Korea was able to subsidise and protect its manufacturing sector (e.g. Hyundai Motor Company and KIA Corporation) from premature competition from multinational corporations. As a result, since 1961 the per capita income grew 14 times, in purchasing power terms, making South Korea one of the wealthiest countries in the process. In the postwar period, Japan and South Korea's economies grew at the rate of 10 percent per year, thus outpacing Africa and Latin America economies (Wong, 2004, p. 349). South Korea which was at the same level of development as Ghana in the 1960s, has since surpassed Ghana (World Bank, 2000).

In South Africa, the creation of a genuinely capable and developmental state would require an overhaul of the current neoliberal state. The strengthening of institutions, especially the SOEs can play a critical role in a developmental state. This will require, first and foremost a separation between the party and state. The separation would ensure the depoliticizing of the state and the hiring of competent people. Secondly, cadre deployment in its current form will have to be scrapped. Cadre deployment has led to patronage system and undermining of institutions' integrity. Especially given the fact that cadre deployment, patronage, and corruption have been perpetuated in South Africa and consequently, they have undermined the process of creation of a capable and developmental state. Thirdly, the professionalism of the public sector is critical for the public servants to provide services to the citizens. Lastly, given that the comprador bourgeoisies have also undermined the developmental state through their implementation of neoliberalism, it will be imperative to have transformative leadership guided by thought liberation, thought leadership, and critical consciousness. These prerequisites are important since cadre deployment and corruption impinge the efficient functioning of the state. Most importantly, these prerequisites will assist in building

up the eroded confidence and morale of the investors and the citizens alike in the state. The *South African Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan* is not what is needed to get the country forward. The country needs a developmental state that will ensure addressing structural problems.

Conclusion

The *South African Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan* is premised on neoliberalism which has perpetuated the structural problems in post-apartheid South Africa. Given that neoliberal economic policies adopted by the ANC since 1994 have failed in addressing the structural problems and pushing for economic growth, it's unlikely that the *South African Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan* will lead to addressing the structural problems. Therefore, there is a need for a capable and developmental state for South Africa to come out of the economic crisis and build a new economy. The economic reset will require a new mind-set and a course of action from the leadership and the government.

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Africa and India

Looking to the future together in a post-Covid-19 World

Luqman SAKA PhD 

Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ilorin
Political Science Unit, Division of Humanities, College of Arts and Sciences, University of the Gambia

Abstract

Indo-Africa relations steeped back into centuries of shared historical experiences. Underscoring Africa's importance, India instituted the India-Africa Summits as a platform to advance relations between the two partners. Given rising optimism of economic re-opening following the Covid-19 pandemic induced global lockdown, India has the opportunity to reinvent her relationships with Africa by deepening existing collaborations and breaking new frontiers. To this end, this article discusses the politics of Indo-Africa's relations and advance the need to forge closer beneficial relations between India and Africa by looking together to the future in a post-Covid-19 world.

Keywords: Covid-19 pandemic, Diplomatic Relations, Economic Revival, India, Africa

Introduction

The connections between Africa and India dates back to many centuries and steeped in the rich history of the people of the Indian Ocean orbit. For centuries, Indian seafarers have crossed the Indian Ocean to trade with communities and people along the coast of modern Eastern and Southern Africa. Serving succession of imperial powers that control seafaring on the Indian Ocean across time, Indians established a strong presence in coastal cities and settlements along the south and east coast of Africa (Rao, 1973; Micklem, 2001; Robbins & McLeod, 2006; Afreximbank & Exim Bank, India, 2018; Ruchita, 2018). The commercial and economic ties between the people of Africa and India were solidified by activities of the British empire through the Imperial British East Africa Company and ultimately through colonialism.

The British colonial enterprise brought Indians into Africa to work for the Empire and the Crown resulting in the presence of Indian communities indigenous to the coast of South and East Africa. The early Indian sojourners in East Africa can aptly be characterized as the 'vanguard' in the context of Imperial British colonial expansion in the region (Jones, 2007, p. 19). The independence movements in colonial Africa were also strongly influenced by the independence of British India (present-day Bangladesh, India, & Pakistan). In the same manner, the shared history of colonial rule, the exploitation and iniquities that characterized both people's experiences helped to forge a consciousness of shared destiny and friendship in the post-colonial period (Jones, 2007; Hromnik, 1981).

The close relationship between Africa and India has grown in leaps and bounds as both sides continue to deepen it through diplomatic, political, security and economic agreements and engagements. The engagements between Africa and India transverse diverse issues and areas of human endeavours that include; agriculture, medicines, pharmaceuticals, sciences and technological innovations, manufacturing, energy (oil and gas), power generation, education, tourism, research and development among others (Krishna, 2010). While there are blights to Indo-Africa relations, in terms of people-to-people relationships notably as manifested by the criminal profiling of black Africans across major cities in India, the Indian state had consistently shown commitment to South-South cooperation and issues that affect Africa.

For India, the African continent has also been a strategic factor in foreign policy formulation and overall national interest consideration. Using the platforms of the Non-Aligned Movement and the G77 India has forged and deepened diplomatic relations with many African countries in the post-colonial era. Following the process of economic liberalization embarked upon by many African states in the 1990s, India has worked to deepen her economic relationship with Africa and aid Indian businesses and commercial dealings with the continent. Of strategic importance has been the institution of India-Africa Summits as platform to advance commerce and trade relations. Three of such summits were held in 2008, 2011 and 2015 respectively. With the Indian Ocean as a strategic thoroughfare, the need to protect merchant shipping in light of piracy activities in the Horn of Africa is clearer. India has placed a premium on ensuring security for seafarers and merchant ships in collaboration with partners in Africa (Wagner, 2019).

In the pre-pandemic period, India strategic engagement with Africa has been beneficial to Africa and economically lucrative to India. From investment in the energy sectors (oil and gas) to agriculture, information technology, medical and pharmaceutical and security cooperation and coordination, India has gradually emerged as a strategic partner and player in Africa's international politics. With the SARS-CoV-2 (Covid-19) pandemic and the blows to international trade, commerce and investment, India has opportunity to reinvent her relationship with Africa by deepening engagements in existing, pre-pandemic areas of cooperation, and break new frontiers of relationships in the post-Covid19 period. To this end, the article discusses the politics of India-Africa's relations focusing attention on areas of cooperation and collaboration before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. It also discusses the need to forge a strong relationship between India and Africa with the post-Covid-19 global politics era, in mind.

Exploring the nature and context of India-Africa relations before Covid-19

India's relations with Africa, whether at the bilateral or multilateral levels, have evolved in stages. Following India's independence in 1947, the country's post-colonial leaders expressed an unflinching commitment to the decolonization project. Within the context of aiding decolonization, India gave assistance and support to nationalist movements and leaders in Africa, especially in Eastern and Southern Africa. This commitment was intensified following attainment of independence by Ghana in 1957 and many other African states from 1960 onwards. At this stage, India sought to strengthen her commitment to and cooperation with Africa through the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

The diplomatic and political commitment given by India to Africa and the political relationship that evolved therefrom was largely a result of shared colonial historical experience. Re-stating this shared historical experience, former Indian Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, was quoted to have averred thus, 'India will never forget Africa's role in inspiring our own struggle for national liberation. It was here that Mahatma Gandhi developed his political philosophy and developed the concepts of non-violence and peaceful resistance' (Abraham, 2008, p. 196). This feeling of shared experience under Imperial British colonialism was highly instrumental in shaping the position of Indian political leadership and India's foreign policy engagements with Africa through to the 1990s (Abraham, 2008; Sumit & Manjeet, 2009; Chakrabarty, 2016; Rajesh & Sullivan de Estrada, 2017; Ruchita, 2018). Indeed, it is on record that India is the first nation to agitate within the United Nations for the abolishment of the Apartheid regime in South Africa.

In the post-colonial era, India continued to demonstrate her commitment to the cause of South-South cooperation and by extension issues as it affects Africa. Following economic liberalization policies introduced by African states in the 1990s, Indian foreign policy objectives in Africa increasingly became more focused on deepening economic relations and advancing security cooperation. As relations on these two important fronts deepens along with other issue areas starting from the

1990s, India sought to create a distinctive multilateral platform that will be devoted to addressing India-Africa relations. To this end, India initiated the India-Africa Forum Summits (IAFS). The inaugural India-Africa diplomatic summit was held in New Delhi in 2008 (Chakrabarty, 2016).

Subsequent to the inaugural meeting, two other summits were held in Addis Ababa in 2011 and New Delhi in 2015. The fourth in the series of India-Africa Summits was earlier scheduled to be convened in India in September 2020, before the Covid-19 pandemic forced a global shutdown. Aside from the wider continental platform that the India-Africa summit represents, India has also deepened engagements with Africa through her structured relationships with the eight African Union recognized Regional Economic Communities (RECs). These platforms complement the bilateral relationship that India has struck up with individual African countries over the years (Arora and Chand, 2015). Some of the notable policies that had been launched to push bilateral relations include the Exim Bank's Focus Africa policy initiated in 2002; the Techno-Economic Approach for India-Africa Movement (TEAM); and the Pan African E-Network initiative among others.

Indo-Africa summit diplomacy was not limited to the formal government to government platform as represented by the official India-Africa summits, there is also a business and corporate platform that had evolved to promote, advance and push India economic and trade relations with Africa. The most visible of such platforms was the Indo-Africa Virtual Summit first held in 2020 and put together by the IMC Chamber of Commerce and Africa Business News Group (ABN Group). The second in the series of the virtual summit was held between 23 and 24 March 2021. The 2021 edition of the Indo-Africa Virtual Summit was attended by prominent industrialists and business people. Participants in the summit explored areas of common interest between Indian and African business and economic elite straddling important sectors that include; power and renewable energy, knowledge, skill and education, automobiles, agriculture and food processing, extractive industry, and health infrastructure among others (Hopin, 2021).

India's economic engagement and commercial relationships with Africa took an upward swing starting from the early 2000s. The volume of trade between India and Africa continues to grow thanks to trade initiatives such as the Focus Africa (2002), Duty-Free Tariff Preference Scheme (DFTP) for Least Developing Countries (2008), and the India-Africa Forum Summit. In addition to the aforementioned state-led initiatives, there is also the private sector driven initiatives like the Confederation of India Industries-Exim Bank Conclave on India Africa Project Partnership. These initiatives have contributed to the improvement in the volume of Indo-Africa trade and investment. While India and Africa strive to expand the basket of the respective partners' trade and commercial dealings across the Indian Ocean, India continued to export manufactured products to Africa while her imports from Africa are mainly in the form of energy (crude oil and natural gas), agricultural products and solid minerals (ferrous metals). While private Indian firms are driving trade, commercial and investment in Africa's agricultural sector, the Indian State has been the centre of India's trade, with a particular focus on investment in the energy sector. Leading the charge as vanguard for India's trade and investment in Africa energy sector has been the state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation-Videsh Limited (OVL). The OVL was established in 1996 to facilitate the acquisition of energy assets abroad (Chakrabarty, 2018, p. 3). Notable Indian corporations such as the Reliance Group, Varun Beverages, Bharti Airtel, Essar Group and TATA Group have committed significant investment into national economies in Africa, especially in Mauritius and other countries on the Indian Ocean coast.

Indeed, Indian investments in Africa continue to witness appreciable growth, with the country's multinational corporations leading its investment drive in Africa. For instance, the Vedanta Resources had investments in copper mines in Zambia, while the OVL has equity investment in oil and gas projects in Libya, Nigeria and Sudan (Ruchita, 2011, p. 7-8). Similarly, investment by Tata Group is found in many countries in Africa. In the same vein, the Bharti group bought off the assets of

telecommunication giant Zain in 2010 in a deal worth around USD10 billion. The Kirloskar Brothers and Mahindra group also have business engagements and investments in a number of countries across Africa (Ruchita, 2011). Indeed, Indian corporations, firms and businesses continue their penetration of African economies, seeking new business frontiers. While China and Chinese business interests have become imbedded in Africa, Indian corporations are also engraving their footprints on the continent's economic landscape. The scale and pace of China and India's investment and trade with Africa are on a new pedestal and unprecedented (Broadman, 2007, p. 1).

Although hundreds of Indian companies and business entities engage in trade, commercial dealings and investment in Africa, there are about 11 companies that account for nearly 80 percent of the total Indian trade and investment flows to Africa between 2008 to 2016. OVL occupies the top spot with investments worth USD3.019 billion representing 59.8 percent of total Indian firms' investment in Africa, excluding in Mauritius. This is followed by Gujarat State Petroleum Corporation, USD319.7 million, Interlabels Industries USD121.4 million, Oil India Limited USD105.4 million, Coromandel USD97.5 million, The Indian Hotels Co Ltd USD93.8 million, Gujarat State Fertilizers & Chemicals USD92.9 million, Varun Beverages USD74.7 million, TATA Steel USD65.3 million, TATA International USD63.0 million and TATA Power USD48.8 million (Chakrabarty, 2018, p. 8-11). One major characteristic of Indian firms operating in Africa is that most of them have not expanded their operations and investment reach outside of one or two countries, with the exception of the oil and gas giant OVL and TATA.

Table 1: Geographical spread of Major Indian Companies in Africa and their area of Operations

S/No	Company Name	Countries of Operations	Sector's & Portfolio in US\$ m
	ONGC Videsh (OVL)	Congo, Egypt, Ivory Coast, Libya, Mozambique & Sudan	Oil & Natural Gas (3,019.1 m)
	Gujarat State Petroleum Corporation	Egypt	Oil & Natural Gas (319.7 m)
	Interlabels Industries	Kenya	Manufacturing (121.4 m)
	Oil India Limited	Gabon, Libya & Nigeria	Oil & Natural Gas (105.4 m)
	Coromandel	Tunisia	Fertilizers (97.5 m)
	Indian Hotels Company	South Africa	Hospitality (93.8 m)
	Gujarat State Fertilizer Corporation	Tunisia	Fertilizers (92.9 m)
	Varun Beverages	Morocco, Zambia	Beverages (74.7 m)
	TATA Steel	South Africa	Manufacturing (65.3 m)
	TATA International	South Africa	Manufacturing (63.0 m)
	TATA Power	Zambia	Power generation (48.8 m)

Source: Chakrabarty, 2018, p. 8-11.

While the leading companies mostly operate in the oil and gas, ferrous metals and manufacturing sectors, there is an increasing number of Indian companies that are tapping into the continent's agricultural sector.

Table 2: Selected Indian Companies with Investment in the Agricultural Sector in Africa

S/No	Country	Indian Company	Details
1	Ethiopia	Karuturi Agro Products Plc	Acquired 100,000 ha in the Jakao and Itang districts of Gambela region for growing palm, with conditional option to acquire another 200,000 hectares
2	Rwanda	Mcleod Russel	Owens five tea estates in Uganda and two estates in Rwanda
3	Ethiopia	Ruchi Soya Industries	Acquired 25 Years lease for soybean and processing unit on 152,649 ha in Gambela and Benishangul Gumaz States
4	Ethiopia	Chadha Agro Plc	Acquired up to 100,000 hectares in Guji zone in Oromia Regional State for a sugar development project
5	Gabon	Olam International	Acquired 30,000 hectares in Gabon for palm oil
6	Rwanda & Uganda	Jay Shree Tea & Industries	Acquired two tea plantations in Rwanda and one in Uganda
7	DR Congo & Ethiopia	ACIL Cotton Industries	Plans to invest nearly USD15 million (Rs. 6 8 crore) for land leases to start contract farming pulses and coffee
8	Ethiopia	Neha International	Leased land in Oromia region-in Holetta for floriculture and near Bako for rice, maize, oilseeds, and pulses
9	Mozambique	Nirmal Seeds Mozambique	Leased or purchased 2,000 hectares of land in 2013
10	Madagascar	Varun International	Varun Agriculture Sari leased or purchased 232,000 hectares to grow rice, corn, and pulses
11	Ethiopia	Sannati Agro Farm Enterprise Pv. Ltd.	Acquired 25 years lease on 10,000 hectares in Dimi District, Gambela region, for cultivation of rice, pulses, and cereals
12	Ethiopia	Vedanta Harvests Plc	Acquired a 50 years lease for 5,000 hectares in the Gambela region for a tea and spice plantation

Source: India Exim Bank (2019). Feed Africa: Achieving progress through partnership. *Working Paper*, No. 63. New Delhi: Export-Import Bank of India. Compiled by Viswanathan and Mishra, 2019: 26.

The depth and reach of India's trade relations with Africa is demonstrated by the astronomical growth in the volumes of imports and exports between the two trading partners. There has been some serious growth in the volume of bilateral trade relations between India and Africa in terms of US dollar value. It grew from USD 7.2billion in 2001 to a peak of USD 78billion in 2014, before falling to USD 59.9billion in 2017. Accounting for India's rising imports from Africa were primarily minerals and energy needed to fuel India's increasing industrialization (Afreximbank & Exim Bank, India, 2018, p. 19). As India seek to diversify its energy imports away from South Asia, Africa's resource-rich states have readily become alternatives. India's oil imports from Africa, mainly Angola and Nigeria, stood at 18 percent of India's total imports from Africa. Aside from crude oil, India also imports coal from South Africa and Mozambique, natural gas from Algeria, Nigeria and Egypt, while Malawi, Namibia, Niger, and South Africa are important sources of uranium (Chakrabarty, 2016, p. 269). To that end, the fall in the dollar value of trade from the peak of US\$ 78billion in 2014 to USD 59.9billion in 2017 was a result of the fall in global commodities prices especially that of fossil fuels and ferrous metals and alloys and not necessarily a fall in the volume of trade.

Table 3: Volume of Trade between India and Africa 2008-2017 (US\$ billion)

Year	India's Export to Africa	India's Import from Africa
2001	2.8	4.4
2002	3.0	5.2
2003	3.7	4.6
2004	4.9	5.7
2005	6.7	8.4
2006	9.5	13.4
2007	12.4	17.1
2008	15.4	26.8
2009	13.3	21.0
2010	17.9	31.5
2011	23.3	41.9
2012	27.3	43.3
2013	34.1	40.6
2014	34.6	43.4
2015	25.6	36.3
2016	22.6	27.0
2017	23.8	36.0

Source: Afreximbank and Exim Bank, India, 2018, p. 24

Table 4: Trends in India-Africa Trade (US\$ Billion) 2001-2017

Year	India's Exports to Africa	India's Imports from Africa	India's Total Trade with Africa	India's Trade Balance with Africa
2011	2.8	4.4	7.2	-1.5
2002	3.0	5.2	8.2	-2.1
2003	3.7	4.6	8.3	-1.0
2004	4.9	5.7	10.6	-0.9
2005	6.7	8.4	15.1	-1.7
2006	9.5	13.4	22.9	-4.0
2007	12.4	17.1	29.5	-4.6
2008	15.4	26.8	42.2	-11.4
2009	13.3	21.0	34.3	-7.7
2010	17.9	31.5	49.4	-13.7
2011	23.3	41.9	65.3	-18.6
2012	27.3	43.3	70.6	-16.0
2013	34.1	40.6	74.7	-6.5
2014	34.6	43.4	78.0	-8.8
2015	25.6	36.3	62.0	-10.7
2016	22.6	27.0	49.6	-4.4
2017	23.8	36.0	59.9	-12.2
2018-2019	22.65	35.40	58.05	-12.75
2019-2020	23.55	32.15	55.70	-8.6
2020-2021	22.93	23.89	46.82	-0.96

Source: Afreximbank and Exim Bank, India, 2018, p. 24.

Source: Data on trade relations for the financial years 2018/2019 to the 2020/2021 was sourced from Government of India, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Department of Commerce, Foreign Trade (Africa) official website available at <https://commerce.gov.in/about-us/divisions/foreign-trade-territorial-division/foreign-trade-africa/> accessed on 12th January 2022.

Table 5: India-Africa Trade and its Share in Total Trade of India and Africa

Year	Total India-Africa Trade in US\$Billion	Percentage (%) Share in Africa's Annual Total Trade	Percentage (%) Share in India's Annual Total Trade
2001	7.2	2.7	7.6
2002	8.2	3.0	7.6
2003	8.3	2.5	6.3
2004	10.6	2.4	6.0
2005	15.1	2.8	6.3
2006	22.9	3.5	7.6
2007	29.5	3.7	8.1
2008	42.2	4.1	8.5
2009	34.3	4.3	7.7
2010	49.4	5.0	8.7
2011	65.3	5.6	8.5
2012	70.6	5.7	9.1
2013	74.7	6.1	9.3
2014	78.0	6.6	10.0
2015	62.0	6.8	9.5
2016	49.6	6.0	8.0
2017	59.9	6.4	8.0

Source: Afreximbank and Exim Bank, India, 2018, p. 24

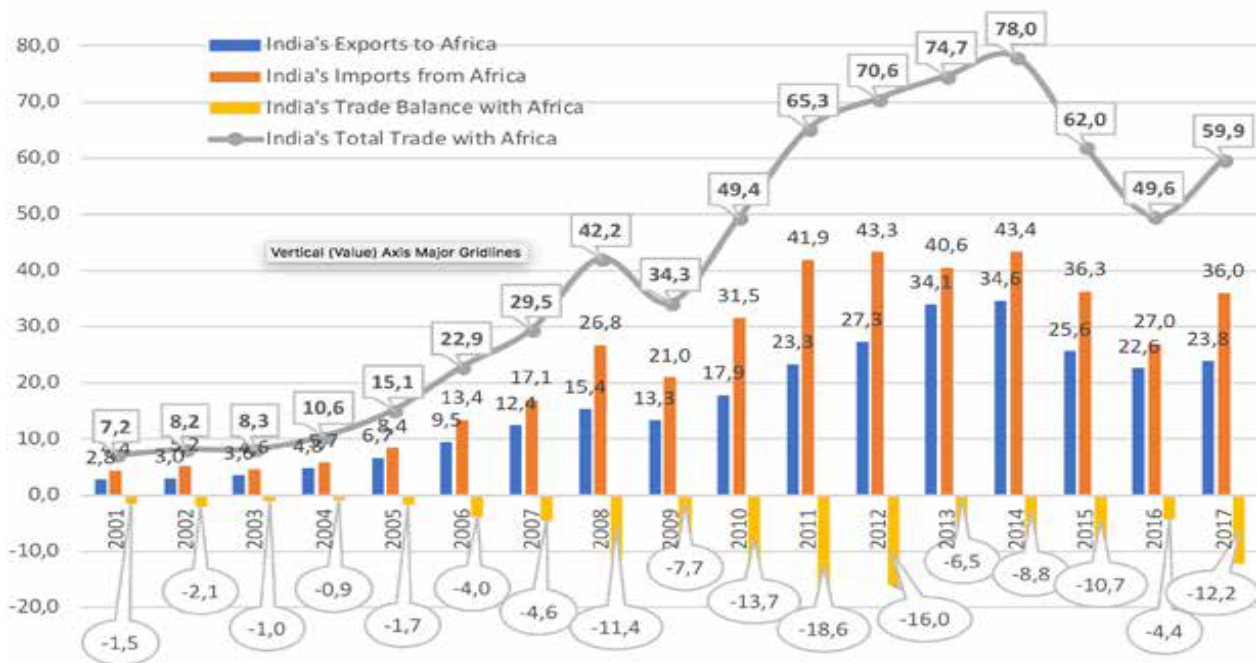
While bilateral trade relationship between India and Africa has witnessed tremendous growth, it is important to indicate that the growth did not just come naturally. The rise in trade and investment relations between India and Africa emanated from conscious policies and initiatives directed at enhancing bilateral trade relations between the two partners. Notable among the initiatives put in place for this purpose are the 'Focus Africa' initiative launched in March 2002 by the Indian government; the Duty-Free Tariff Preference Scheme for the Least Developed Countries developed by the Indian government in 2008; the India-Africa Summits and the Private Sector-Led Conclaves. These policy programmes and initiatives have largely been responsible for the rise in bilateral trade flows and investment relationships that have been witnessed between India and Africa especially in the last two decades (Afreximbank & Exim Bank, India, 2018, p. 23). The steady increase in the value of the volume of trade and the term of trade between India and Africa as shown in tables 3 and 4 was largely a reflection of the growth in trade relations between the two partners. The growth has also reflected in the steady increase in India trade with Africa as a percentage of India's annual total global trade and the corresponding increase in Africa trade with India as a percentage of Africa's total global annual trade as highlighted in table 5 above. The India-Africa trade and its share in total trade of India and Africa and the trends in India and Africa trade relations presented in tables above are depicted in figures 1 and 2 below.

Figure 1: India-Africa Trade and its Share in Total Trade of India and Africa



Source: Afrexim-India Exim, 2018, p. 24.

Figure 2: Trends in India-Africa Trade (US\$ billion)



Source: Afrexim-India Exim, 2018, p. 24.

While India's trade and investments relations with Africa have ballooned over the decades, there is still an opportunity for expansion and improvement. Of the twenty-two countries listed as India's largest trade partners with the value of trade (sum of imports and exports) running into billions of US dollars for the financial year 2019-2020, only two African countries featured. Listed as the Twelfth India's largest trade partner is Nigeria with India's export to Nigeria standing at 3.61 billion USD, import from Nigeria was put at 10.21 billion USD, total trade at 13.82 billion USD and trade balance

in Nigeria's favour standing at 6.6 billion USD. The other Africa country on the list was South Africa with the value of India's export to the country put at 4.11 billion USD, the value of India import put at 6.97 billion USD, total trade estimated at 11.08 billion USD and trade balance in South Africa's favour standing at 2.86 billion USD (Government of India, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Department of Commerce, 2022).

Notwithstanding the above, some countries in Africa have also emerged as major exporters to India and this can also be seen as an indicator of the increasing trade relation between India and African countries. However, the increasing dependence of these countries on India as export outlet for their commodities can be problematic in the long term, and the same can be said for India. Notwithstanding the rising dependence and other issues constraining India-Africa trade relationship, exports to India accounted for 6.4 percent of total African trade by 2017. India's rise to become Africa's fourth most important trading partner is a testament to the strength, vitality and dynamism of Indo-African trade, investment and diplomatic relationships. A relationship that is only surpassed by that of China and Africa.

Table 6: Africa Countries Listed among India's Largest Trading Partners with their total trade (sum of imports and exports) in US\$ Dollars for the financial year 2019-2020

Rank	Country	Exports	Imports	Total Trade	Trade Balance
1	Nigeria	3.61	10.21	13.82	-6.6
2	South Africa	4.11	6.97	11.08	-2.86

Source: Government of India, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Department of Commerce, 2022.

Table 7: Africa Countries that are Primary Export Partners of India (Export to India as Percentage of Country's Total Exports)

Rank	Country	Percentage
2	Guinea-Bissau	67.1%
5	Nigeria	30.6%
6	Mozambique	28.1%
7	Ghana	23.8%
8	Tanzania	21.8%

Source: CIA World Factbook 2017.

The volume of India's development cooperation with Africa has also witnessed rapid growth and starting from 2003, India has deployed the Concessional Lines of Credit (LoC) as a key instrument for the delivery of development partnership. This partnership is intended for funding the construction of railway lines, electrification and irrigation projects, farm mechanization projects among others in a mutually benefitting manner. The LoC financing is mutually beneficial because it boosts infrastructural funding for recipient countries while creating new markets for Indian companies and build relations with countries that are important sources of food, energy and resources for the Indian economy and the state (Chakrabarty, 2021). India has sanctioned 182 LoC projects in 41 African countries through the Export Import (EXIM) Bank of India with a total fund commitment running into 11 billion US dollars (Viswanathan & Mishra, 2019; Chakrabarty, 2018; India Exim Bank, 2017-18). This represents 42 percent of the total amount of LoCs offered by the Indian government through the Exim Bank of India.

Table 8: Government of India: Lines of Credit Statistics to Africa Countries for 2018-2019

S/No	Year of Approval	Region	Country	Borrower	Amount of Credit (in USD mn)	Purpose	Date of signing of LoC
1	2018-19	Africa	Burundi	Government of Burundi	161.36	Construction of Parliament building in Gitega and ministerial Buildings in Burundi	02-07-2019
2	2018-19	Africa	Central African Republic	Government of CAR	7.00	1. Capitalisation of all interest, penal interest and commitment fees overdue under the LOC of USD 29.50 million and future interest and other dues falling due under the LOC of USD 29.50 million till September 15, 2024. 2. Capitalisation of all future interest and other dues falling due under the new LOC of USD 20.00 million till January 16, 2023	16-08-2018
3	2018-19	Africa	Chad	Government of Chad	6.12	[i] Capitalisation of all interest, penal interest and commitment fee overdue under the LOC of USD 50 million and future interest and other dues falling due under the LOC of USD 50 million till June 2020, into new LOC of USD 6.12 million. [ii] Capitalisation of all future interest and other dues falling due under the new LOC of USD 15.90 million till December 23, 2023, into new LOC of USD 6.12 million.	27-04-2018
4	2018-19	Africa	D.R. Congo	Government of DR. Congo	33.29	Financing installation of 15 MW solar photovoltaic power project at Karawa, province – North Ubangi, Democratic Republic of Congo.	17-03-2019
5	2018-19	Africa	DR. Congo	Government of DR. Congo	25.27	Financing installation of 10 MW solar photovoltaic power project at Lusambo, province – Sankuru, Democratic Republic of Congo	17-03-2019
6	2018-19	Africa	DR. Congo	Government of DR. Congo	24.55	Financing installation of 10 MW solar photovoltaic power project at Mbandaka, Province – Equator	17-03-2019
7	2018-19	Africa	Malawi	Government of Malawi	215.68	Drinking Water Supply Schemes and Other Development Projects	12-06-2020

S/No	Year of Approval	Region	Country	Borrower	Amount of Credit (in USD mn)	Purpose	Date of signing of LoC
8	2018-19	Africa	Mozambique	Government of Mozambique	95.00	Procurement of railway rolling stock including locomotives, coaches and wagons.	23-07-2018
9	2018-19	Africa	Rwanda	Government of Rwanda	100.00	Development of two SEZs & expansion of the Kigali SEZ	23-07-2018
10	2018-19	Africa	Rwanda	Government of Rwanda	100.00	Three Agriculture Project Schemes i.e. (i) Warufu Multipurpose Irrigation Project, (ii) Mugesera Irrigation Project, and (iii) Nyamukana Irrigation Project	23-07-2018
				Total	840.77		

Source: India Exim Bank (2018-19). Government of India-Line of Credits Statistics.

While it is clear that India has an intrinsic interest in helping Africa achieve progress; it is important to acknowledge that the benefits accruable from robust India-Africa relationships is mutually benefitting. The spirit of developing together as equals defines the India-Africa bilateral relations. A resurging Africa and a rising India can offer strong impetus to the strengthening of South-South cooperation, especially when it comes to addressing challenges in areas like clean technology, climate-resilient agriculture, maritime security, connectivity, and Blue economy. Despite the upward swings, it is, however, important to highlight that the India-Africa relationship has not achieved its full potential. What is needed to take the partnership between India and Africa to the next level in a post-Covid-19 environment is the infusion of energy, of something new and concrete, and with a specific focus and direction (Viswanathan & Mishra, 2019).

On the security front, India's military institutions and training centres has hosted military personnel from national armed forces across Africa especially in the 1960s and 1970s. In recent times, India has been helping to develop military training facilities in some African states. India has continued to deepen its security cooperation and engagement with states in Southern and Eastern Africa. For some years, the Indian Navy has engaged in patrol duties and in operations directed at enhancing unhindered vessels navigation in the Indian Ocean. And more importantly, India has for long been a major supporter and leading troops contributor to United Nations Peacekeeping missions. A sizeable number of Indian troops and military personnel have served the cause of peace in Africa on the platform of United Nations peacekeeping missions.

Open for Business: Re-calibrating India-Africa's Relationship in a Post-Covid-19 World

Although the Corona Virus was slow to reach Africa, the economic impacts of the pandemic were quick to manifest. As traded volumes of commodities and raw materials took a nosedive and prices plunged, African economies that were heavily dependent on export earnings took a serious hit. In the same vein, as the global economy grounded due to the pandemic, the continent's growing, though largely informal, service-based economies were forced to close down in order to pre-empt the spread of the virus. The closure of national economies, coupled with a dip in the price of commodities, was a serious blow to Africa. Before the Covid-19 pandemic induced a global shutdown, economies across Africa were experiencing unprecedented growth. Indeed, the African region accounted for many of the world's fastest-growing emerging market economies (Brookings Institute, 2021). Likewise, India's economy had posted consistent growth before the pandemic, making it one of the fastest growing economies in the world (World Bank, 2021). Thus, India and Africa have much to gain in close cooperation in a post Covid-19 world. To this end, the need to grow and deepen India-Africa cooperation and engagement as the world gradually reopen for business becomes critical for the growth and progress of African economies and by extension that of India.

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic had given India the opportunity to further demonstrate her commitment to South-South cooperation. India's approach to diplomatic relations since the outbreak of the crisis can be said to be commendable. One of the first steps taken by India was to evacuate citizens of different countries along with her citizens from Wuhan, China, the epi-centre of the first Covid-19 outbreak. This was a big relief given the complexity that characterized evacuation from Wuhan following the Chinese government's imposition of strict lockdown on the region and the urgency of the need for such evacuation. Those evacuated on compassionate grounds and in the context of what was to emerge as Covid-19 diplomacy included citizens from Indian Ocean Region (IOR) countries notably Bangladesh, Myanmar, the Maldives, South Africa, and Madagascar.

In the context of 'vaccine diplomacy', India supplied the anti-malaria drug hydroxychloroquine or HCQ to the USA, Brazil and Israel, and many more countries (Akash, 2020; Nera & Sumit, 2020; Rezaul, 2020). This was done in the context of medical claims that Hydroxychloroquine, HCQ alone

or when combined with azithromycin can be used to treat patients with mild to moderate Covid-19 infection. Irrespective of the controversies that characterized numbers of medical remedies of which the HCQ efficacy was the most contentious and the debunking of the effectiveness of the combination for the treatment of Covid-19, it was to India's advantage that it responded swiftly to request for the drugs and was able to use this to boost her soft power diplomacy in the context of the pandemic response. More importantly, on vaccine diplomacy, India has been forthcoming with the promise to give support and assistance to global efforts on vaccination. India made an initial promise to supply 200 million doses of the AstraZeneca (AZ)-Oxford vaccines (COVISHIELD) licensed and manufactured by the Serum Institute of India (SII) under the auspices of Covid-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) arrangement. A sizeable proportion of Sub-Saharan African countries depend on the COVAX programme for their vaccines needs (Toulemonde, 2021). However, recent policies and media pronouncements coming from government officials in major vaccine manufacturing countries are raising concerns and fears about the emergence of 'vaccine nationalism' (Evenett, Hoekman, Rocha & Ruta, 2021; Toulemonde, 2021).

Being a member of the 'privilege club' of Covid-19 vaccines producing countries, statements from Indian government officials and the Chief Executive Officer of the Serum Institute of India, indicating government directives to restrict the export of AstraZeneca vaccine to secure needed doses for India's national vaccination programme had raised fears that the government was embarking on a 'vaccine nationalism' among trading partners and African countries that had pinned their hopes of sourcing Covid-19 vaccines from India. The tweet by Mr Ponnawalla that the Serum Institute, 'has been directed to prioritize the huge needs of India and along with that balance the needs of the rest of the world' and his plea that foreign governments exercise 'patience' did little to assuage fears of export restriction and impeding vaccine nationalism (Evenett, Hoekman, Rocha & Ruta, 2021, p. 6-7). However, it is important to note that, following these initial hiccups, there had been a surge in production and deliveries to partners largely on a humanitarian and diplomatic drive at the bilateral level and within the context of the COVAX programme. Indeed, Indian experts and analysts are now quick to tout the success of the nation's vaccine diplomacy (Surie, 2021). Whether the euphoria that characterised their positions and sense of national pride align with realities is a different issue for discussion.

In fairness, there is a need to understand the position of India to prioritize and secure doses for local needs amid the rampage of Covid-19 infections since the beginning of 2021. It is also important to state that India was not alone in trying to restrict export with the intent to secure doses for national use. Indeed, the first salvo on export restrictions and impending 'vaccine nationalism' was shot by the European Union, while China and the United States have also battled balancing national needs with global needs. That said, it is important to underline the fact that, an attempt at export restriction and any semblance of 'vaccine nationalism' will do irreparable damage to India's soft power diplomacy especially in Africa. To this end, officials and policy experts in New Delhi had to find a balance between securing national needs for AstraZeneca and Covax in doses and the vaccines needs of important partners in Africa and the rest of the global south. How well they balance nationalism against internationalism as it relates to vaccine diplomacy might be very important for post-Covid-19 Indian diplomacy.

As the world embarks on a cautious re-opening, managers of India's foreign policy in New Delhi and across her missions in Africa need to evolve new policy of engagements that can better strengthen existing lines of communication between India and various capitals across the continent. In this sense, the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) initiative that was intended to be jointly implemented with Japan can become the flagship of India diplomatic relations with the continent in the post-Covid-19 era. The Asia-Africa Growth Corridor was largely conceived as a policy response to the Chinese

Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The conception of the initiative as a programme that will be jointly implemented with Japan might signal India's new strategic alliance in Asia directed at countering China's Belt and Road Initiative in the India Ocean Region in particular and broadly in Sub-Sahara Africa. According to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the AAGC was to serve as a diplomatic and investment vehicle directed at achieving closer developmental cooperation between India, Japan and Africa. Announced in May 2017 during the 52nd Annual Meeting of the African Development Bank (AfDB) summit held at Gandhinagar, India, the initiative had not taken off before the pandemic struck. To this end, if given the needed political, diplomatic and resource commitment from New Delhi and Tokyo, the AAGC can become India's launch-pad to Africa in the post-Covid-19 era (Chunhao, 2018; Prakash, 2018; Panda, 2017; RIS, ERIA & IDE-JITRO, 2017).

Envisioned as the main vehicle for driving India-Japan's cooperation with Africa, the vision statement of the AAGC was directed at achieving four strategic objectives. These are; development and cooperation; 'quality infrastructure' and digital and institutional connectivity; enhancing capabilities and skills; and establishing a people-to-people partnership. In a broader term, the grand objective of the initiative is to push growth and interconnectedness between Asia and Africa. This agenda is expected to be strongly anchored on people to people mutually benefitting cooperative engagements and partnerships (Chunhao, 2018; Prakash, 2018; Panda, 2017; RIS, ERIA & IDE-JITRO, 2017). Intended to connect Africa with all the sub-regions in Asia, Africa occupies the position of primacy within the framework of the AAGC.

However, it is important to note that as attractive as the vision of the Asia Africa Growth Corridor might have been, its success will largely depend on the political will and commitment of leaders from India and Japan and how well they push the objectives of the initiative. The change of leadership in Japan following the exiting of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and the ascension of Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga is critical as this change of guard might have informed the lack of activities as it relates to the discussion on how to move forward to the implementation stage of the plan of action between prime ministers Modi and Suga (Tanigushi, 2020). It is also important to note that the arrangement suffers from one major drawback that had largely characterized India's engagement with Africa, that of the narrow focus on the Indian Ocean contiguous countries in Southern and Eastern Africa. While one notes the strategic importance of the India Ocean Region to India's foreign policy and thus her deeper connections with Southern and Eastern Africa countries that fall within that orbit, that special relations should not necessarily translate to the neglect of other sub-regions within the continent. Thus, the crafting of India's foreign policy in the post-Covid-19 era needs to pay attention to this drawback especially if and when the implementation of the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor programme commences.

Another concern relating to the implementation of the AAGC and on whether the initiative can serve the purpose for which it was crafted is the extent of the resources that India and her partner Japan are willing and able to commit to the programmes and agendas set out in the AAGC document. Intending that the AAGC should serve as a counterweight to China's BRI is one thing, having the deep pocket of China and being able to muster the will to commit huge resources to the project like China has and continue to commit to Africa is another thing altogether. This becomes imperative given India's own competing resources needs at home and within her main sphere of influence, the Indian Ocean Region. Thus, it is doubtful whether the AAGC can have the depth and reach of China's BRI within the IOR and ultimately in Africa.

As vaccination programmes get underway across the world, the expectation is that the global economy will cautiously and gradually reopen for business. While India, is currently battling a resurging Covid-19 infection with devastating impacts; the nation has the resources and expertise to counter the renewed surge. It is also important to note that India will be embarking on the

most extensive vaccination programme in its history. If these are taken into consideration, it can be projected that India has the potential to reverse the surge and reopen for business as early as 2022. Before the pandemic hit, the Indian economy was the fastest growing in the world, outperforming the Chinese economy even though in comparative terms it remains smaller. As for Africa, the continent remains the most endowed with natural resources deposits especially fossil fuels and precious metals/alloys. Before the pandemic, Africa also housed the highest numbers of the fastest-growing emerging market economies. With a long history of diplomatic ties and rising trade, commercial and investment relations with the BRICS economies, of which India is a member, Africa and India already have the foundation on which the two parties can build as the global economy enter a post-pandemic phase (Hopin, 2021).

Before the outbreak of the pandemic and the forced lockdown of the global economy, India-Africa trade was valued at USD62 billion in 2018. This might seem smaller when compared to the volumes of Sino-Africa trade at the same period that was valued at USD204.19 billion according to data from the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China. But this figure was at variance with the USD 185 billion recorded for the same period by the John Hopkins University's China-Africa Research Initiative (John Hopkins University, 2021; Ministry of Commerce People's Republic of China, 2019). Irrespective of the figures that one intends to go with, what is incontrovertible is that China is far ahead of India as it relates to the volume and value of trade with Africa. That said, it is important to note that when compared with the volume of Indo-Africa trade valued at USD39 billion a decade earlier in 2010, the volume and value of trade between India and Africa has witnessed tremendous growth. The import of the data provided above was to demonstrate the commendable progress in the pace of Indo-Africa trade and this provides the foundation upon which trade and commercial relations between the two will be built, as the world reopen from Covid-19 imposed lockdown.

India still relies extensively on the Middle East to meet her energy need, with 80 percent of her oil and gas imports coming from that region. However, with India's increasing push for diversification of sources and determination to reduce dependence on the Middle East exporters, Africa's oil and gas producing nations are poised to gain a new customer in India. Before the pandemic hit, Africa's share of India's imports has been on the increase. In 2020, India imported 34 million tonnes of oil from Africa amounting to 15 percent of the nation's total import for the year. In the same vein, Africa's share of India's LNG import was also on the ascendancy. Africa's traditional exporters of oil and gas to India include; Nigeria, Angola, Algeria, Egypt and Equatorial Guinea. New suppliers in recent years include; Cameroon, Chad, Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire. With new LNG projects in Mozambique and Tanzania coming on stream, Africa's share of India's energy imports is likely going to increase (The Economic Times Newspaper, 2021).

As the world cautiously reopen, the oil and gas sector across Africa's established and emerging producers will be hoping to attract investments from abroad to help the continent jump-start national economies. This can in turn provide opportunities for India National Oil Company and private entities operating in the sector to engage in targeted direct investments on the continent's oil and gas sectors.

Given that Africa will continue to need technological expertise (inclusive of technology transfer) and investment to see to the realization of new projects in the oil and gas sector (upstream and refining), this will provide opportunities for India to leverage on and deepen relationships, especially with emerging energy producers on the East Coast of Africa. Strategic engagements in this all-important sector can become the linchpin for a robust post-pandemic India's re-engagement with Africa in the energy sector. Such partnership will provide win-win outcomes as it has the potential to aid India's energy diversification drive and enhance Africa's ability to return to a sustainable growth path. India can also leverage on her deep bilateral commercial, trade and investment engagements with select

countries like Angola, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa before the global lockdown in re-energizing her post-pandemic strategic relationships with Africa.

For instance, building on existing business links in Nigeria, India can deepen her trade relationships with the country and by extension West Africa, through expanding her footprints in telecommunications, pharmaceuticals, heavy machinery among others. In the automotive sector, Indian businesses can deepen engagement with Africa's market through the opening of new vehicle manufacturing and assembly plants, especially for cheaper compact cars. Business and investment opportunities also exist for Indian national corporations and Indian businesses to tap into in the area of agriculture, medicines and tele-medicines, information technology and similar other sectors.

Conclusion

Although the Covid-19 pandemic was slow to reach Africa, its negative impact on the continent's poorly resourced health sector was immediate. As resources and medical expertise were redirected to fight the pandemic, other pressing health issues suffered neglect. There was also the undesirable psychological effect on people induced by the hard lockdown measures necessitated by the pandemic. More than these areas, the pandemic has dealt a severe blow to the continent's economies, slowing down the pace of growth, and erasing the gains of decades of consistent progress. As for India, the pandemic has also been highly devastating in terms of its impacts on the Indian population, the health sector that is struggling to cope with the surge of Covid-19, and the nation's economy had also taken a serious hit. Indeed, while the pandemic seems to have been relatively contained in Africa, the reverse has been the case for India, with the country witnessing a devastating surge in infection rates and recorded deaths. Notwithstanding the grim outlook, India has the medical expertise, resources and organizational resilience to weather the storm.

India has been highly instrumental in assisting partner nations in the efforts to combat the Covid-19 pandemic. The country assisted its partners with the emergency medical evacuation of nationals from Wuhan; supplied millions of Hydroxychloroquine to partners based on requests, was a pivot for the supply of Covid-19 vaccines to the COVAX initiative, and India manufacturers are also supplying their Covid-19 vaccines to other countries via bilateral and business agreements. As countries across the world initiate cautious re-opening, India and Africa have much to gain from each other as they attempt to re-start their economies. India will need the immense natural resources of Africa to drive her economic growth after the pandemic, while Africa will need the expertise, technology and investments from India in order to galvanize post-Covid-19 economic growth. To achieve their mutual objectives of post-pandemic economic recovery, India and Africa can draw on centuries-old history of engagements and relationships. As Vaidyanathan (2021) notes, while one cannot discountenance the fact that India has huge domestic obligations to deal with; partnering with Africa to weather the storm of economic revival post-Covid-19 will add immense value to the rich historicity of the India-Africa relations.

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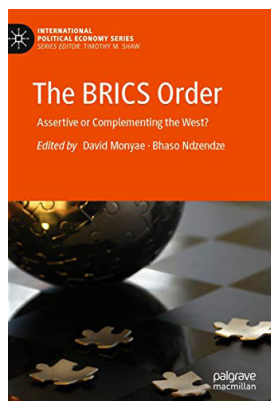
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Book review

The BRICS Order: Assertive or Complementing the West?

Isaac Bheki Khambule 

University of Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa



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The collection of chapters in the book, *The BRICS Order: Assertive or Complementing the West?* Edited by David Monyae and Bhaso Ndzendze, represents growing literature from global South scholars interrogating whether the BRICS complement the Western agenda or present a different world order. This vital book poses this critical question in an international political economy environment where the BRICS have unequivocally expressed their interest in forming a new global order representing the interests of developing nations. The book also adds to the growing debate on the relevance of the BRICS in international development and the role played by emerging powers in influencing the global political economy.

The opening chapter by Monyae and Ndzendze explains the book's central theme, the necessary ingredients for the BRICS to advance their interests and ideas in the global political economy. As the authors explain, the main emphasis of the book is on "infrastructure—hard and soft—as the nerve centre of development. Ports, airports, road and rail networks, are central to economic activity, backed by soft infrastructure—health, education and capacity development" (Ndzendze and Monyae, 2021: 1). These are central points of development for the BRICS, particularly how power-wielding countries such as China and India strategically use economic power to extend their influence through financing development in Africa.

The authors turn to the strategic role played by the New Development Bank (NDB) as an alternative financial institution to the Breton Woods Institutions, namely, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The BRICS and NDB's strategic role can also be studied from the BRICS Summit Resolutions from 2009-2018, as appended by the authors, particularly the need for a reformed global financial architecture after the 2008 global financial crisis. Inevitably, this remains one of the most contested spaces, as noted in the absence of the NDB in financing COVID-19 reliefs outside of BRICS countries.

Much like many other books on the BRICS, the commonalities related to the geographic location, power, economic size and influence of the BRICS countries are cited as some of the foregrounding features that make the BRICS a formidable bloc in creating an alternative power structure from the. From the book, it appears that the central grounding is that an alternative power vacuum leaves space for the emergence of new power groups, and the BRICS is one example. However, authors such as Bond (2013) argue that the BRICS bloc is not adequately constituted to challenge the West,

but is merely a structure that complements existing Western institutions and ideas. Therefore, it is unsurprising that this book touches on the optimism of the BRICS, yet with little to show for the BRICS as a force in global political economy over the last decade.

The varying modes of governance and regimes within BRICS countries are often touted as discerning features and possible challenges for the BRICS vision. Ndzendze considers the '*Autochthonous Routes to Democracy*' in BRICS three main fully-fledged democracies, Brazil, India and South Africa. An important consideration for Ndzendze is the origin of the democratic rule in these countries, with a particular focus on their linkages to the West. While democracy is viewed as an idea that emerged in the West, the chapter by Ndzendze argues that Western nations often frustrated democratic hopes in countries such as India and Brazil by supporting military rule. This can be extended to South Africa, whereby Western nations initially supported the apartheid regime, despite the repressive and brutal policies enacted by the system. A fundamental observation by Ndzendze is that, within these three countries, democracy has rather been an internal development based on endogenous struggles rather than the imposition of the West. History teaches us that this observation is accurate for these countries, particularly how they endured decades and centuries of colonial rule.

While many studies of the individual BRICS countries' relations with Africa mainly focus on India and China, the chapter by De Conti, Hiratuka and Welle, looks at the BRICS financial and economic relations in Africa. The chapter is significant because it presents a picture of how Brazil expanded its focus from Angola, to the rest of the African continent. The basis of this expansion is argued in the chapter to be from the discovery of offshore oil and the growing need for investment in Africa's oil and gas industry. The chapter is also essential because it takes cognisance of the dynamics brought by changes in political leadership in BRICS member states. This is an important observation as leaders such as Bolsonaro adopted a pro-West position, rather than supporting the BRICS agenda.

Similar to the need to focus on the influence of a change in political leadership mentioned by De Conti et al., Gasela finds political leadership to be a key determinant in intra-BRICS foreign policy. In reviewing the main aim of India's participation in BRICS, Gasela argues that India plays an essential role in ameliorating between the Western order and China, thereby suggesting that India presents itself as an alternative to these modern hegemonies. This assertion can be observed from the rise of India's influence in Africa and its ability to challenge the influence posed by China and the West. The chapters that consider the different political and economic interests of BRICS member states show that realism does dominate the international political economy.

While on China's growing influence in the international system, Shelton's chapter considers the importance of China's economic size and impact on the BRICS. The author argues that China's commitment is principal to the success of the BRICS project, and sees compelling reasons for China to pursue its national interests using the BRICS platform. While these assertions are fundamental, one must also consider the growing trade and relations under the China-Africa partnership that is pursued outside of the BRICS platform. In contrast to China, the chapter by Landsberg and van Heerden revisits the inclusion of South Africa in the BRICS. This is a significant consideration given that some authors see the inclusion of South Africa as a gateway to the African continent rather than inclusion based on influence and power. The authors find compelling reasons for the inclusion linked to South Africa's relations with other African countries and its influence on important platforms such as the Security Council.

Conflicts often shape the fortune of regional blocs. Ndzendze and Monyae revisit the challenges facing some of the BRICS member states, particularly the matter of the India-China rivalry and conflict in regions such as Kashmir. The authors are of the view that the BRICS' longevity is tied to the political and economic connectedness of other BRICS member states to India and China and

within other members. What seems to be missing is the coexistence of the BRICS with the common vision of establishing a world order representative of the needs of emerging and developing nations, as pointed out by De Coning et al. (2015).

Using the example of Eastern Africa, Shilaho studies the increasing cooperation between the BRICS states and African countries, both from a unitary and bloc perspectives. Despite noting that the West continues to play a dominant role in the trading system in Africa, Shilaho observes that China's investment in Africa has grown exponentially over the years. The other chapter by Wekesa goes a step further by focusing on Africans' perception of the BRICS and the meaning of the BRICS power for the continent. This is undertaken from a methodological approach that utilises data from media content of leading business news. The central idea from the author is that how media reports on the BRICS is likely to boost or diminish their soft power. The weakness in this approach is the media narrative of the BRICS, is that media tends to influence perceptions based on the projected interests of readers and investors.

Knowledge-sharing is one of the five BRICS strategic pillars as it enhances cooperation and is of growing importance in the knowledge economy. Khomyakov argues for an integrative approach that not only focuses on the political and economic aspects of the BRICS relations, but one that extends to involving citizens. While the chapter mainly focuses on the role of Russian universities in cementing BRICS via knowledge sharing, it also calls for global South-oriented developmental models. To extend on Khomyakov's analysis, platforms such as the BRICS Academic Forum and the BRICS Civil Society Forum could play a leading role in knowledge-sharing.

With the emphasis on the role of higher education institutions in the BRICS gaining momentum, technology development has also emerged as a leading strategy for countries in the global South to catch up to advanced nations. The two chapters before the last, written by Lamrechts, Sinha and Marwala focus on the use of technology and innovation as drivers of the modern economy, with a particular focus for BRICS countries to transform their economies to meet the demands of the fourth industrial revolution. While these are important assertions and observations from the authors, many challenges that face the global South need to be addressed to effectively benefit from the digital economy.

The last chapter by Monyae and Matambo focuses on the most debated aspect of the BRICS, that is the NDB. With the dissatisfaction of the financing system led by the World Bank and the IMF, the NDB is promoted as an alternative financier for development in the global South. The entanglement of the NDB and global South within an international system dependent on Western norms and regulations creates complex dynamics for the BRICS' vision to change the face of the international political economy.

The chapters in this book present a fair assessment of the BRICS project and some of the pitfalls it faces, internally and externally. While the main question posed in the title is whether the BRICS is assertive or complementary, the conclusion from the different chapters points to differing opinions. Overall, the future of the BRICS hinges on important factors such as the continued cooperation between member states and the ability to ensure trade-offs that benefit the BRICS, rather than individual member states. The book makes a significant contribution to the continued debate and literature on the importance of the BRICS.

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About BRICS

Policy brief

The BRICS Summit in 2022: Continuity of Change?

Siphamandla Zondi 

Institute for Global African Affairs
& Institute for Pan-African Thought & Conversation
University of Johannesburg

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.