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**Master's Thesis of International Studies**

**South Africa's Struggle of Power  
within the Continent:  
BRICS and Neighbors**

**아프리카 대륙내 남아공의 권력 투쟁:  
BRICS와 주변국가**

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**Graduate School of International Studies  
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**South Africa's Struggle of Power  
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## **Abstract**

The recognition of South Africa's role on the African continent is decreasing with its stagnating economic status, along with geopolitical issues. While joining the forum of BRICS in 2010 and serving its third two-year term in the UNSC allowed South Africa to take up the symbolic role of the representative of Africa. However, the rising recognition of China in Africa and the fast-growing regional rival Nigeria challenges South Africa's quest for hegemony on the continent. Furthermore, South Africa's influence in the nearest countries, such as Namibia and Botswana, has weakened in areas of trade as well as foreign direct investment. This study analyzes South Africa's status as the representative of the African continent and seeks to explore the question of whether it still holds the position of a hegemon, or at least as a continental representative, by examining South Africa's role in the BRICS, UNSC, and the AU in terms of both economic and political issues.

The research reveals that South Africa tries to gain back its reputation on the global scale after their successful transition to democracy by precisely structured foreign policies of their presidents. However, they were neither fully successful in becoming recognized as a global leader of the continent, nor were they accepted by the states within the continent due to their fluctuating economic status, hostile neighbors, and continental rival. Furthermore, South Africa was the biggest trade partner within the SADC but with the rising

recognition of China and their investment towards overall Africa, South Africa could not position itself as the hegemon of the continent.

Keywords: South Africa, Africa, BRICS, regional hegemon, geo-politics

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## List of Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
AU PCS	African Union Peace and Security Council
AU	African Union
BC	Before Christ
BECZ	Border Economic Cooperation Zones
BLNS	Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, and Swaziland
BRIC	Brazil, Russia, India and China
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
CADF	China-Africa Development Fund
CEBR	Center for Economics and Business Research
CIRD	China Institute for Reform and Development
DIRCO	Department of International Relations and Cooperation
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECOMOG	ECOWAS Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EPZ	Export Processing Zones
ETDZ	Economic and Technological Development Zones
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FOCAO	Forum on China-Africa Cooperation
FZ	Financial Zones
G20	Group of 20
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNI	Gross National Income
HHMI	Hillebrand-Herman-Moyer Index

IBSA	India, Brazil, and South Africa
IF	International Futures
IMF	International Monitoring Fund
NDB	New Development Bank
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OBORI	One Belt One Road Initiative
PIGA	Partnership for Investment and Growth in Africa
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
RIC	Russia, India, and China
SACU	South African Customs Union
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADCC	South African Development Coordination Conference
SEZs	Special Economic Zones
SWAPO	South-West Africa People's Organization
Touch	New and High-Tech Industrial Development Zones
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNTAG	United Nations Transition Assistance Group
US	United States
USSR	Union of Soviet and Socialist Republic
WITS	World Integrated Trade Solution



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# **1. Introduction**

## **1.1 Argument overview**

Since its democratization in 1994, South Africa has been named “the economic giant of Africa” or “Champion of Africa’s development” (Alden and Schoeman, 2013; Smith in Ebert and Flames, 2018). These labels reflect the country’s growing importance on the African continent. For, through its successful economic development and presence as the African leader in multilateral institutions, such as the forum of emerging economic BRICS (acronym for Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), South Africa has gained significant importance in the region. Yet, these labels could also have been attached to South Africa not to further mention its escalating economic development and prominent roles in the global realm. However, who assigned these labels and why were they attached to South Africa? Are those terms developed by South Africa’s own political agenda? The objective and purpose of this thesis is to find out whether South Africa is still the hegemon of the continent withholding these labels. If not, why and how the labels are removed and to a certain extent, to which state is the hegemon shifting within the African continent? The present thesis seeks to explore these questions by examining South Africa’s role in the BRICS and its relationship with its co-members, especially with China, with the continent’s rival Nigeria, and with its closest neighbors Namibia and Botswana. To better understand the context in which these power dynamics take place, it is

indispensable to first provide a brief historical background of South Africa after 1994 and, given the timing of its democratization, to touch upon the political influence of the Cold War.

## **1.2 Historical Background and Influence of the Cold War**

The Afrikaner nationalism began with the roots of the economic, material, and social conditions of the white minority group. It was a historical identity that was constructed from the Dutch settlers who spoke Afrikaans and their skin was white in southern part of Africa. The triumph of the National Party, an anti-British party, in 1948 allowed political domination and attainment of state power of the Afrikaner community, which were South Africans descendent of Dutch settlers, over the ethnically heterogeneous black majority, the English-speaking minority white, and other colored groups. As the eruption of the Cold War and the Berlin Blockade occurred in the same decade, it led scholars and observers to conclude that the establishment of apartheid was entirely defined by the rise and fall of the Cold War. Indeed, during and after the Cold War, the African continent was a significant battlefield of ideological and geopolitical confrontation between the two major competing powers of the era, the Union of Soviet and Socialist Republic (USSR) and the United States (US). Broadly, while the US aimed for the establishment of democracy and capitalism, the USSR supported communism.

The white minority rule in the African continent used the threat of communism to demonize the African liberation movements as radical and subversive to disperse domestic and international attention from the real causes of racist rule. The white minority government claimed that they were facing a 'Total Onslaught' from the radical black nationalism which, they maintained, were also supported by the forces of communism. It was a battlefield and many African states were physically fighting for their independence. As of 1960, the year of Africa, seventeen different countries became independent and liberation movements were widespread (Shubin, 2008). The southern part of the continent faced post-colonial violence, which resulted in battlefields. However, the white minority did not appreciate that their policies and activities were the cause of these threats and violence in the region. The nationalist movements for independence, such as SWAPO (South-West Africa People's Organization) in Namibia or the ANC (African National Congress) in South Africa, supported the idea of communism and socialism and were backed up by the USSR. As their ideal objective was to fight for their rights and struggle for 'anti-imperialism' from the British origin, many nationalist movements were attracted to a more equal and less oppressive communism.

Following the 1994 general election, which was a historical moment of liberation in terms of race repression, the National Assembly and the South African government of the African National Congress (ANC) needed to construct a coherent and effective policy not only for South Africa, but also for

the whole continent. In his article “South Africa’s Future Foreign Policy” of 1993, the South Africa’s first black president, Nelson Mandela, who was a leading figure in the anti-apartheid revolutionary movement, points out that South Africa cannot escape from its African destiny and therefore, diplomatic and economic performance with commitment towards regional and international cooperation are needed for economic development (Mandela, 1993). By then, South Africa had to restore its relationship within the African continent and towards the rest of the world. By working together with other neighboring states in Africa, Pretoria tried to assume regional hegemony by taking responsibility of its economic, diplomatic, and military influence in the region (Hamill, 2018). However, these aspects were ideals of what the South African government wanted to achieve. In the reality, there was no sophisticated roadmap for implementation. As a result, just during Mandela’s one-term presidency from 1994 to 1999, there were many failures which are regarded as a disaster of the time, such as military incursion into Angola in 1994, immigration problems with Nigeria in 1995, Africa’s First Congo War in Zaire and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 1996-97 (The Economist, 1998), and the most devastating Lesotho civilian government intervention by South Africa in 1998 (Evans, 1999). The latter occasion escalated into a coup, but it is now seen as an event that allowed for Lesotho to preserve its democracy and triggered change in South Africa’s view towards strong opposition to military interventions (Hamill, 2018).

After Mandela's term, the baton was handed over to Thabo Mbeki, whose ideas of foreign policy were different from those of Mandela. If the foreign policy of Mandela was towards the whole world, Mbeki concentrated his policy towards Africa only, including the Southern African Development Community (SADC). As a result, the Mbeki administration developed four strategic themes consisting of the 'African Agenda', South-South Cooperation, North-South Dialogue, and the socio-economic and political security (Landsberg, 2012). The so called 'African Agenda,' in the words of Glaser (2010), is defined as making a positive link within Africa for their growth, governance, democracy, peace, and security, also concerning international cooperation and reintegration into the global economy. Having said that, to successfully implement its policies, South Africa with partnership with other states in Africa developed New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) in 2001 and the African Union (AU) in 2002. Furthermore, under AU, South Africa initiated the African Peace and Security Architecture which aims at managing conflicts within the continent. Apart from that, the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) was formed to secure Africa's own economic reform, democracy, the rule of law, good governance and anti-corruption measures. However, as Ian Taylor (2002) phrases it, 'supposed blueprint for Africa's regeneration' tragically NEPAD lost its credibility only six months after its formation, as the partnership in Africa was not taken seriously.

According to The Economist, the presidency of Jacob Zuma, the fourth

democratically elected president of South Africa, was ‘all over the place’ (The Economist, 2011). Contrary to Mbeki’s foreign policy which amplified the recognition of South Africa as the representative of the continent through his thorough foreign policies, Zuma’s foreign policy had less intellectual substance and lacked policy ideas for development and innovation (Alden & Le Pere, 2009). Zuma’s ‘African Agenda’ was less ambitious than that of Mbeki, but his administration stressed to continue regional and continental partnerships and security cooperation, albeit he focused more on the economy and national interests of Africa, which eventually led to South Africa joining the BRIC nations in 2010 after considerable lobbying (Asuelime & Jethro, 2013).

Since the fall of the apartheid regime in 1994, South Africa has been fighting to take off its image as the black majority country that is ruled by the white minority. As a matter of fact, its democratic transition and its political efforts increased its value within the international society and overtime, South Africa became part of G20, the UNSC and the BRICS. Africa needed a representative and by joining these international forums, South Africa assumed this role. However, from a democratic perspective, a representative is being elected through an authorized body of institution or a legislative process. However, considering the complexity of global politics and the efforts to be made to elect a representative, it is question of who will become the representative is difficult to answer on. Thus, as in the case of South Africa, states tend to self-appoint themselves as representatives by pursuing certain



policies aiming to increase their influence in the region to be represented. South Africa as the representative of Africa pursues the ‘African Agenda’ and the renaissance of Africa in terms of economy, politics, economic growth, governance, democracy, peace, security, and international cooperation (Hamill, 2018). Serving its third two-year term as a non-permanent member of the UNSC since 2007, South Africa has certainly gained more importance in the area of international security. In economic terms, South Africa was not only the first African country to join the ranks of emerging economies with its membership in the BRICS in 2010, but also became one of the world’s 20 most developed economies by becoming a member of G20. Against this background, it is hardly surprising that South Africa was able to appoint itself as the representative of Africa. However, some African countries have not only criticized South Africa’s self-appointment; but have also questioned its quest to be the ‘representative’ of Africa on the one hand and its ability to be a ‘gateway to Africa’ on the other by pointing to South Africa’s small economic size (Boulle, 2011). Apart from that, the rising recognition and unstoppable immense growth of China in Africa, whether it is through the ‘gateway to Africa’ since joining the BRICS or before that, also challenges South Africa in its quest for regional hegemony as well as its role as Africa’s representative (Dhar & Mutalib, 2020). In this context, this thesis examines how South Africa has gained its representative role on the continent and why their role is declining in economic and political terms.

### **1.3 Literature review**

The question of how South Africa has become the representative of Africa and how its role is declining has attracted considerable scholarly attention. The literature review in this section covers South Africa's role as the representative of Africa, its role in BRICS, and the competition between Nigeria and South Africa in economic, political, and military terms. Apart from that, also China's rising status on African continent and South African decreasing influence on its closest neighbors, Namibia and Botswana, are discussed. Thereby, most of the studies presented have been conducted in South Africa.

Alden and Schoeman (2013) argue that South Africa's expression of hegemony can be seen in diverse institutions that are formed within Africa and made by South Africa. For instance, the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), which includes the nearest countries of South Africa consisting of the BLNS (Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, and Swaziland) states, and the 14 south-central countries of SADC, has provided South Africa with the opportunity of taking advantage of these countries in terms of trade. However, Alden (2009) points out that South Africa's role as the economic giant in Africa is declining due to the rise of new countries, such as Nigeria, Angola, and Libya whose economies are growing due to the abundant availability of natural resources. Similarly, also Alden and Schoeman (2015) argue that while its political

inclusion in the aforementioned international and regional forums allow for South Africa to be the symbolic representative of Africa, its weakness in material terms limits its ability to take up the role of the regional hegemon. Regardless of the lack of material resources, Abegunrin & Manyeruke (2020) argue, South Africa have already developed the infrastructure and technology which provided South Africa with a comparative advantage vis à vis the aforementioned countries in that it could manufacture goods that other countries could not. Initially, comparative advantage materialized in a trade advantage with these countries. However, with the increasing recognition of China and its provision of cheap labor and products in return for much needed natural resources, China has been greatly impacting Africa by becoming the main import and export country and replacing South Africa as the biggest trade partner in Africa.

Yet, various studies (Landsberg, 2009; Moore, 2012; Hamill, 2018) demonstrate that South Africa was and still is the hegemon of the African continent. Thereby, a hegemon, in James Hamill's definition, refers to "a power which aims to lead in a manner that employs a wide variety of foreign policy instruments, and rather inspires than compels" (Hamill, 2018). Its foreign policy instruments are not limited to its capacity of deploying military and economic power, but also include values which have a considerable appeal for other states. In this sense, South Africa upholds values and represents political policies which covers the whole continent to be one continent. However,

considering cases such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, Lesotho, Libya, South Africa's responsibilities as a hegemon is beyond its capacities.

Thies (2013) argues that in international relations, it is necessary for states to take a role and they will take role in terms of their needs. But if they have the material power, their role becomes very successful and are able to defend their choice. That is, in order to successfully taken an active role, appropriate material power is required. Also, every role requires a counter-role to form a meaningful social relationship. Thus, to be a regional leader, a state needs regional followers.

Dependency theories by scholars, such as Chaudhary et al. (2000) or Huang & Słomczyński (2003), have argued that the global South, i.e. developing countries, is dependent on the global North, i.e. developed countries. They argue that the global South cannot escape from the dependency with respect to the economic issues, such as foreign direct investment, loans, debt and grants. Since the more they are dependent on the global North, the more they are trapped in their increasing debt which is exacerbated by rising interest rates. This, again, partly hinders the recipient country's economic development. While these studies solely focus on the relationship between the global South and global North, only few studies have explored the intra-regional dependencies between the countries of the global South.

## **1.4 Research Question and Outline of Thesis**

While the existing literature has considerably examined how South Africa became the representative of the African continent, the shift in paradigm and South Africa's decreasing role on the continent has remained only rudimentarily explored. Thus, in order to close this gap, the present research paper seeks to explore the following three questions: (1) How is South Africa lacking in its foreign policy to attract its neighboring countries. (2) Why is the closest neighbors' dependency on South Africa is decreasing in diverse aspects such as trade, foreign policy, and media. (3) How has South Africa's relationship with China changed after becoming a member of BRICS in 2011.

The structure of this thesis is organized as follows. The next chapter, Chapter 2, consist of the research design of this thesis. It is combination of core theories such as role theory and dependency theory which sums up to the analytical framework to examine the aforementioned research question. Chapter 3 offers a brief history of BRICS and examination of South Africa and its status within BRICS on whether they are suitable candidate for the forum. Also, it mentions the decreasing role of South Africa in the continent by comparing the rising power Nigeria. In Chapter 4, this thesis analyzes and compares two states that are the closest to South Africa, Botswana and Namibia. It analyzes their history with South Africa and their current political and economic stands towards South Africa. Lastly in Chapter 5, it concludes with a brief summary and limitations of this thesis.

## **2. Research Design**

### **2.1 Analytical Framework**

There can be many reasons for losing the role of a regional representative and hegemon, respectively. The decline of a regional hegemon entails that the power in question is being challenged within the region in economic as well as political terms, which, in turn, weakens its symbolic recognition as the regional hegemon. Moreover, the decline of a regional hegemon may coincide with the rise of new powers within the region. With those new powers becoming more influential in the region, the nearest countries in the region become less dependent on the hegemon. However, although there is a rising awareness that in the discourse within the South-South Cooperation, South-South Cooperation is no longer a friendly cooperation, but serves the purpose of assimilating the comparatively less developed countries to the more developed country and that the rising powers, such as China, are practicing a ‘Southern neo-colonialism’ (Gray & Grills, 2016). Since most existing studies largely focus merely on the relationship between the global South and global North and studies on the South-South dependency are rather scarce, analytical frameworks for analyzing the latter are missing. Hence, to analyze South Africa’s decreasing role on the continent, the present paper suggests the following analytical framework which aims to provide a tool for examining the

intra-regional power dynamics in economic, political as well as military terms.

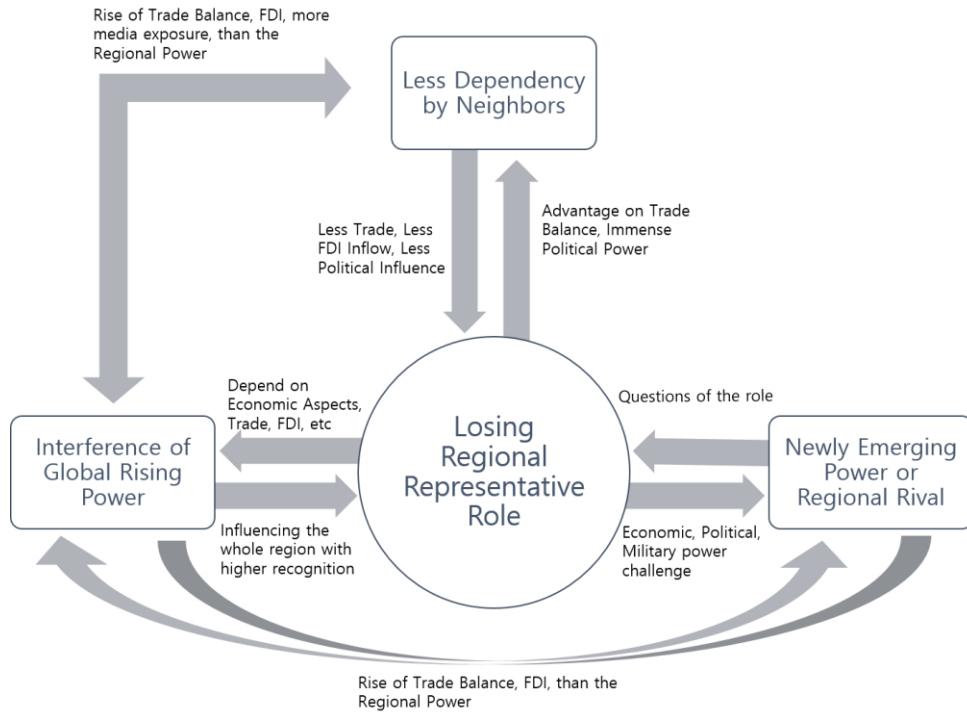


Figure 1. Analytical Framework

Source: developed by the author

In the following, I explain the concepts and analytical framework conducted in order to answer research questions of this paper. As illustrated in Figure 1, firstly, a newly emerging power within the region starts questioning the hegemony of an existing power in the region, which is South Africa in this thesis. Thereby, the newly emerging regional rival challenges the original hegemon in various respects, including the economy, international politics, and military power, which, according to Hart (1976), are features that a hegemon should hold in order to attain control over resources, actors, events and outcomes. The challenge continues by a global rising power in this case, China,

which also is part of the global south, in terms of trade, investment, grant, and loans. Mainly, the impact of trade shift of the neighboring countries from the regional hegemon to the global rising power and the amount of FDI, including investment, grants and long-term loans, weaken the influence of the regional hegemon in its region sphere of influence. Lastly, as there is a shift of trade balance and FDI flows of these neighboring countries, the dependency of other countries on the hegemon decreases. Thus, the regional hegemon loses its power position in the scene. Hence, the deeper the connection between the global rising power, newly emerging regional power and the neighbors results not only in the isolation of the original hegemon in the region, but also in the loss of its role as the representative.

## **2.2 Methodology**

In order to examine the losing representative role in economy and politics of South Africa, this thesis conducts an exploratory study as the issue has not been thoroughly studied in the past. It relies on primary and secondary sources from government publications, official statements, published books, academic journals, policy documents, annual reports, newspaper articles, internet sources and other sources that are relevant. This study adopts an instrumental case study in order to answer the question of whether South Africa is losing its role on the African continent. According to Mills et al (2009) “[a]n instrumental case study is the study of a case to provide insight into a particular



issue, redraw generalizations or build theory”. This study conducts a thorough descriptive analysis of China’s influence on the African continent, and of how the rise of the regional power Nigeria pushes South Africa away from its representative role by examining two case studies: Botswana and Namibia. The examination of the two cases is elaborated in Chapter IV. It is assumed that the two case studies will serve as a useful examination of how they interact with China and how South Africa is losing its game in their home ground.

### **3. Status within BRICS**

#### **3.1 Formation of BRICS**

BRICS is an acronym referring to **Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS)** and was first an informal economic forum between Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC) formed in 2003. BRICS was institutionalized to make changes within the field of international cooperation or aid and to appeal to the top-down North-South traditional cooperation. The term was first coined in a report of an investment bank by Jim O'Neill (2001), Chief Economist at Goldman Sachs. In the document, it was reported that the growth achieved by BRIC (initial acronym before the joining of South Africa) would exceed that of the industrialized economies together. According to Wilson & Purushothaman's Goldman Sachs Report of 2003, the current G6 (US, Japan, UK, Germany, France and Italy) will not be the same by 2050 in terms of GDP. They predict that only the US and Japan will be among the current six largest economies (Wilson & Purushothaman, 2003). The 2018 Joint Statistical Publication of BRICS shows that the BRICS account for almost 30% of the total land of the Earth and 41% of the total population. Most importantly, they accounted for 22% of the total GDP of the world in 2018. China alone accumulated 15% and is still growing.

The history of the formation of the BRICS began in 2003 in New York at the UN General Assembly. The RIC club (Russia, India, and China) had informal meetings during the assembly and the foreign ministers began meeting

annually in 2005 (Gu et al, 2016). In 2006, the Brazilian foreign minister was invited to the informal meeting on the sideline of the UN General Assembly in New York. A second invitation in 2007 eventually successfully attracted the Brazilian government to join the BRIC (Cooper, 2016). The first summit of the BRIC was held in 2009 in Yekaterinburg and was a success for two reasons. First, they successfully institutionalized different type of states as one. This a success in and of itself, given that it still exists while many other international forums fail before institutionalizing. Second, they successfully developed their international statues which is recognized at the international level (Stuenkel, 2014). By the end of the year of the second summit in 2010, which was in April in Brasilia, South Africa got the invitation from China to join the BRIC as the last member. At last, the acronym of BRICS was generated with the approval of the other BRIC members in December 2010. Already at the third official summit meeting in Sanya, China in 2011, South Africa had acquired full membership. (Stuenkel, 2014; Gu et al, 2016).

Although it is said that South Africa was “invited” by China to become a member, it was rather South Africa’s diplomatic efforts that turned the minds of BRIC members. During IBSA (India, Brazil and South Africa) summit, which was held in Brazil in August 2010, in separate bilateral meetings, South Africa tried to convince the Brazilian and Indian delegations of the benefits of South Africa joining the BRIC forum. Already in the same month, President Zuma, the president at the time, visited Russia for a bilateral summit. During

the meeting, Zuma argued:

Our delegation on this visit comprises eleven Ministers and a business delegation of more than 100 people. The business delegation represents sectors such as agro-processing, Aviation, Banking and Finance, Defence and Aerospace, Energy, Engineering, information and communications technology, Infrastructure, Logistics, Medical and Health Services and Tourism. The size of the government and business delegation emphasises our commitment to consolidate and further deepen bilateral relations with this country, within the context of the Treaty of Friendship and Partnership that was signed in 2006. (Government of South Africa, 2010).

Lastly also in the same month, a South African delegation of 17 cabinet members and 300 businessmen visited China. Pointing to their role on the African continent, they expressed the desire to be the gateway to Africa (Satchu, 2010). Essentially, as Zuma put it in a nutshell during a speech in Renmin University in China, it was argued that if South Africa joined BRIC, it “would mean that an entire continent that has a population of over one billion people is represented” With the inclusion of South Africa in the BRICS, the institution departed from its initial function as merely an economic and investment grouping, but rather developed into a political forum with an influence against the original Western powers positioning themselves as a

counterpart to the Western established institutions. Thereby, each of these emerging countries or the Global South members, as mentioned above, have their own strengths in their economic development field. For example, the strength of China and India, both of which are listed as the top two of world population, is based on their massive workforce with low-cost of resources and labor. Brazil's and Russia's strength is based on their reserved mineral resources. South Africa, again, holds the network within the African continent (Radulescu et al, 2014).

As mentioned above, although the characteristics of each BRICS member are completely different, the basic agenda of BRICS is to compete against the already established global governance norms and arrangements which were established by the West, especially the US, after the World-War-II in both the economic and political sector (Gu et al, 2016). At the 4<sup>th</sup> Summit of the BRICS in New Delhi, India, discussions arose on establishing the New Development Bank (NDB). This is a crucial point in the perspective of the global south since the current US lead financial institutions, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), have an impact on financial issues, but to a less account on political issues (Stuenkel, 2013). Not only that, the pressure of accountability and conditionality that are applied to developing countries when getting a loan or investment from these institutions are too heavy for them to handle. This again means that the current International Financial Institutions' (IFI) should increase the representation of the developing

countries and change their structure in the fast-changing world economy (Pant, 2011). Therefore, the objectives of the NDB in economic terms is to fund development and infrastructure projects in developing countries; to provide long-term lending in times of crisis, such as the Eurozone crisis or the 2008 global economic crisis; and to issue convertible debt which could act as barrier for risk-sharing. In political terms, the BRICS can be seen as the alliance of emerging economies which can be regarded as a representative of the developing countries. By joining forces, they have a stronger influence in the global society and can speak on behalf of the developing countries (Brazil, 2014). According to Yanshuo (2011), emerging economies play a critical role in reforming economic, political, and financial institutions in a way that they become more representative and unbiased.

### **3.2 South Africa's decreasing role on the African Continent**

The effort of Zuma visiting all four BRIC countries in 2010 was not solely for the purpose of being invited to join the BRIC, but also to attract investment for economic diplomacy as Zuma was accompanied by up to 400 businessmen on his trip. This was because Pretoria had to make diplomatic effort to be accepted as part of the BRIC, given that South Africa lacked hard power (economy) status compared to the other four members. As Table 1 shows, in 2010, South Africa had a GDP of just over \$375 billion and a population of

51 million. It was a dwarf compared to the other BRIC members and took only a small fraction of the total BRICS attribute (Petropoulos, 2015). Although the involvement in BRICS was widely celebrated nationally in South Africa, it could not avoid skepticism and criticism by national and international commentators (Naidu, 2013). As Jim O'Neil argued regarding the population size and economy of South Africa, the inclusion of South Africa into BRICS was not an obvious choice and should not be treated as a big economy compared to the other BRICS members (Mashego, 2011). Moreover, it is unclear why South Africa was chosen over larger economies, such as Indonesia or the fast-growing Nigeria (Mittleman, 2013). For, these two emerging countries' total GDP and the growth rate were much higher than those of South Africa (see Figure 2 and 3).

Table 1. BRIC countries' main figures and South Africa in 2010

Country	Population (in m)	Total area (in 1,000km <sup>2</sup> )	GDP (in b US)
Brazil	196	8,516	2,209
Russia	143	17,098	1,525
India	1,234	3,287	1,676
China	1,338	9,600	6,087

Total	<b>2,911</b>	<b>38,501</b>	<b>11,497</b>
South Africa	51	1,219	375
Percentage	<b>1.8%</b>	<b>3.2%</b>	<b>3.3%</b>

Source: World Bank

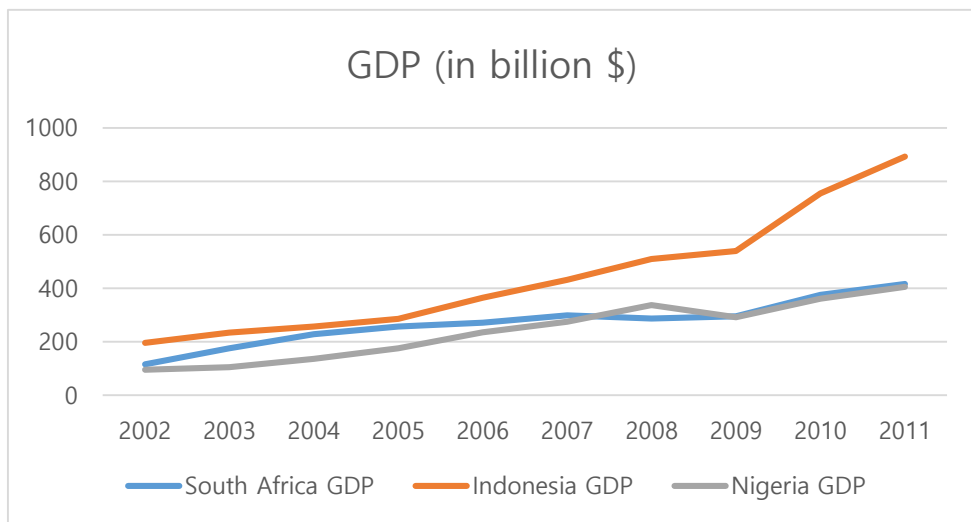


Figure 2. GDP of South Africa, Indonesia, and Nigeria from 2002-2011 (billion US)

Source: World Bank



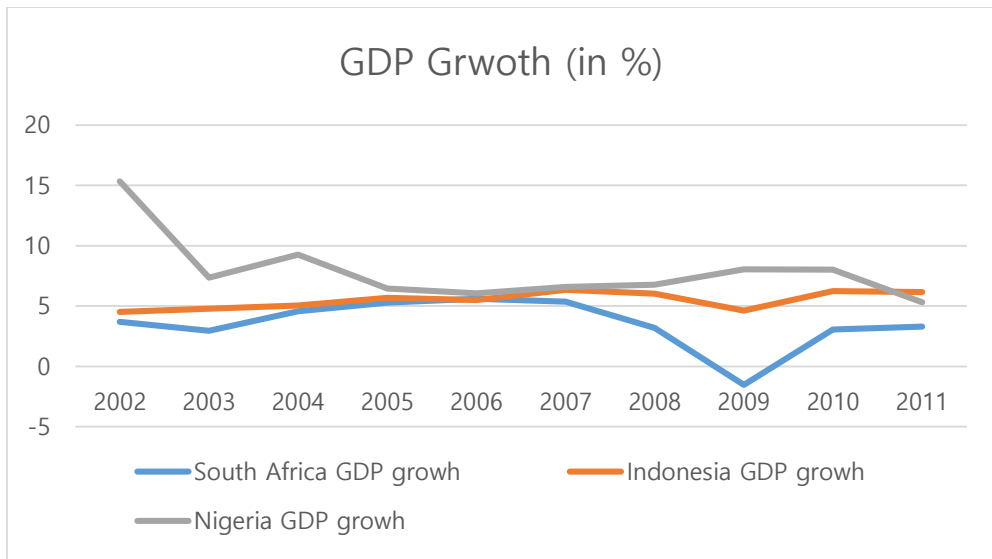


Figure 3. GDP growth rate of South Africa, Indonesia, and Nigeria from 2002-2011 (in %)

Source: World Bank

Against this background, the question arises why South Africa was invited to become a member of the BRICS even though its economic values are much lower not only than those of other BRICS members, but also those of other emerging countries. As mentioned above, the original grouping of BRICS was solely for the emerging powers' economic/financial status. However, with the inclusion of South Africa, it turned into a more political and geopolitical institution aiming for recognition in the international system and presenting themselves as the representative of developing countries (Petropoulos, 2015). It is assumed that South Africa as a 'gateway' to the African continent would allow for other BRICS members to successfully trade with, and invest in, the continent. Indeed, after the end of the apartheid government in 1994, South

Africa represented 50% of Sub-Saharan and 75% of SADC's GDP. Moreover, it is not only representing the African Union (AU) and New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), but is also included in the G20 and has taken one of the non-permanent seats in the UNSC three times for the terms of 2007-2008, 2010-2011 and 2019-2020, respectively. Apart from that, they are also involved in many economic groupings, such as the IBSA (India, Brazil, and South Africa) and forum SACU (Southern Africa Customs Union). Regarding the former, from the perspective of India and Brazil, there was no reason for South Africa to not be included as a member of BRICS, as the BRIC forum was formed in 2003 for the purpose of facilitating negotiations on international trade and global environment. As for SACU, it allows South Africa and the four neighboring to interchange products and goods without tax.

Moreover, it was South Africa's strong national interest to become a member of BRICS, whereby disregarding the interest or consent of other states on the African continent. Internally or at least within the continent, a true leader or a representative needs support from its followers. However, South Africa's role as a leader or representative has been facing substantial opposition. For example, during the election of African Union Commission in 2012, Dlamini Zuma contested the position while she was head of the Department of Foreign Affairs in South Africa. Tensions arose within the AU members. Considering that South Africa was the most powerful state in Africa at the time, they broke the "unwritten rule" (Maru, 2012; Affa'a-Mindzie, 2012) that major African

powers do not apply as a candidate of AU positions. Moreover, the then-President of South Africa Jacob Zuma was Dlamini Zuma's ex-husband. Apart from that, the Chairperson of AU is considered to be the unofficial prime minister of Africa (Du Plessis, 2017). Essentially, members of the AU states had high concerns about giving too much power to Pretoria, as they feared that this would influence their own national interests in their region (Maru, 2012).

Furthermore, the lack of support from the fast-growing Nigeria raises doubts about South Africa being a true representative of Africa. While both states are accounted as regional 'giants' of Africa (Maseng and Lekaba, 2014; Cilliers et al., 2015; Odubajo, 2017; Umezurike, 2018), their national interest and regional hegemonic ambitions are shown in their foreign policies. According to Myers (2019), "regional hegemons are states which possess power sufficient to dominate a subordinate state system". To be a regional hegemon, a consent should be met by the regional states in case of conflict. Also, a regional hegemon is expected to be willing to support and cooperate with the less-powerful states on their economic, political, and security issues (Odubajo & Akinboye, 2017).

Regarding their foreign policies, both states have made their national interest with purposeful antagonism, as their policies of protecting sovereignty, national security, democracy and enhancing the economy do not only refer to the national level, but to Africa as a whole (Odubajo & Akinboye, 2017). However, it is unavoidable that to pursue their own national interest, they

needed to be deeply connected as being the hegemon within the African continent.

While their foreign policies are quite similar, their economic status, political influence, and military support are quite different. To begin with, as for the economy, Nigeria is being called the 'giant of Africa' because of its abundant natural resources, massive population, and its large size of land. Nigeria has become the largest economy of Africa after rebasing their GDP in 2014 (Oshodi, 2016). Since 1990, Nigeria has not changed the base year, and updating their emerging economic industries, such as airline, online sales, telecommunication, information and technology, music and film productions (Sy, 2016) allowed for their GDP to jump to an increase of around 60% in 2014 compared to what had been reported (Eboh, 2021). As a result, Nigeria was able to take the crown of being the biggest economy in Africa from South Africa. Although Nigeria's economy does not rank among the developed states of the world, it has long been the biggest economy in the sub-region and they accounted for 30% of the sub-Saharan states share of GDP in 2014. It is also projected by the Base Case forecast in the International Futures (IFs) that Nigeria will be covering 3% of the global economy by 2040 and the economic growth rate will be considerably higher than that of South Africa. Moreover, in the African Future Paper by Cilliers et al. (2015), forecasts with the HHMI (Hillebrand-Herman-Moyer Index) model of International Futures indicate that South Africa is currently being overestimated and that the future trend is turning

down on its global measures of hard power in terms of economic, demographic and military capabilities. This means that that currently their influence within the international actors, institutions and regimes considerably exceeds their capabilities, whereas Nigeria's influence is way below its capabilities.

Yet South Africa's material shortcomings hinder them from becoming the hegemon, as their deep-lying structural problems, such as slow economic growth, low quality of education, labor market rigidity, high unemployment rates, infrastructure backlogs and crime and corruption are rooted in their system (Government of South Africa, 2017). Not to mention is the problem with low savings rate, as savings and foreign direct investment act as a crucial factor contributing to higher inclusive and sustained growth. Also, unlike Nigeria, whose share of GDP in the sub-Saharan region has been increasing, South Africa's share has been declining sharply. Their economy accounted for 50% of the total share of sub-Saharan Africa's GDP when they were the most industrialized economy with appropriate infrastructure and high technology of manufacturing facilities producing finished goods, such as appliances, cars and mining equipment and natural resources (Alden and Schoeman, 2015). However, according to World Bank data, since 1994, the enrolled share of South Africa in the sub-Saharan GDP has decreased to 34% and accounted for only 20% in 2019. Estimates suggest further decrease in the upcoming years. The biggest concern is that, as the leader of SADC countries, South Africa is also showing disappointing statistics in that their total share of GDP has gone down

from more than 75% in 1994 to only 50% in 2019. Yet, South Africa shows strong trade advantages within the SADC area, but their stagnating and reluctant performance raises the question of whether the phenomenon will carry on, as the average GDP growth for the SADC countries is forecasted to be 2.9% while South Africa's GDP growth is likely to remain below the average, with only 2% (IMF, 2021).

In political terms, even though South Africa has shortcomings with respect to material aspects, their political power cannot be ignored. Pretoria successfully framed South Africa as the symbolic hegemon of the African continent (Alden and Schoeman, 2013) by serving in the UNSC for three terms, being a member of BRICS and taking its roles in the G20 and BASIC (Brazil, China, India, South Africa and the United States), respectively. All these political and economic forums with the great powers of the world is to flex their muscles under the influence and conditions of the western hegemony. Therefore, joining the BRICS was an essential step for South Africa to successfully wash off their image of white-minority rule in the apartheid regime. Moreover, it helped South Africa to present itself as the protector of democracy in the continent and to claim a leadership role not only in the region, but on the continent as a whole (Odubajo & Akinboye, 2017). The African Agenda is one of the key features of South Africa's foreign policy according to the Department of International Relations and Cooperation's 2010-2013 Strategic Plan (DIRCO). While it was a key item of the agenda of all the former presidents of

South Africa, from Mandela to Zuma and most recently President Ramaphosa, its implementation and evidence of successful foreign relations are mostly seen during Mbeki's administration. As mentioned in the introduction, the main features of the African Agenda are to make a positive link within Africa for their growth, governance, democracy, peace, and security, and to engage in international cooperation. This was the Mbeki's vision of an African Renaissance (Hamill, 2018). To some extent, the values that Mbeki stressed with his Pan-Africanism along with the African Renaissance continued to be upheld by his successor Zuma.

Opposing the Western intervention in the elections in Zimbabwe in 2008 was a way for Mbeki and Zuma to stress the need for 'African solutions to African problems.' The UNSC first suggested to send a fact-finding mission to Zimbabwe to investigate whether there was a threat to human rights and whether there was a crime against humanity committed by the government. Apart from that, there was the draft resolution by the Western allies lead by UK concerning the same agenda. However, both suggestions were opposed by South Africa, who was backed by China, Russia, Vietnam, Libya, and Burkina Faso. The opposing countries stressed that Africa, in the shape of AU Peace and Security Council (AU PCS) and the SADC, should have a chance to solve the problem in the Zimbabwe (Pasipanodya, 2008). Considering that South Africa rejected the vote on situation in the Zimbabwe situation, it was to a surprise that they have voted for the Resolution 1973 as a response to the Libyan civil war,

which occurred during Zuma's administration. The Resolution 1973 provided the legal basis 'to use all necessary means to protect life and property,' to protect civilian and civilian areas under threat of attack and to conduct a military intervention. South Africa argued that their decision was based on the principle of Responsibility to Protect (R2P). However, they reversed their opinion regarding the vote for the Resolution 1973 due to criticism from AU countries, which, again, made South Africa a peripheral bystander and largely hapless (Jeenah, 2015). Apart from that, questions were asked by the BRICS countries on why South Africa voted for the 1973 Resolution while abstained. The criticism levelled against South Africa is surprising, given that South Africa's second term as a non-permanent member in the UNSC in 2011 was endorsed also by the AU.

As for Nigeria, its political influence on the global stage in general and within the continent in particular is arguably to a lesser degree than that of South Africa. While South Africa has been involved in and is influential in SADC, SACU, AU, BRICS, and UNSC, Nigeria's involvement in international or intra-regional forums is less. The only influential forum Nigeria participates in is the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (Odubajo and Akinboye, 2017). Although Nigeria served in the UNSC during the same term as South Africa in 2010-2011, they positioned themselves as neutral and mostly contributed with military forces for international peace and security (Gambari, 2004; Nwolise, 2007; Imobighe, 2012; Abba, 2017).



In terms of military support, Nigeria holds Africa's most advanced and immense military in the sub-region. According to Global Fire Power 2021, Nigeria holds 120,000 active personnel whereas South Africa holds only 66,500, which is barely half of what Nigeria holds. Nigeria has participated in the UN peacekeeping activities within the African continent. Since its independence from Great Britain in 1960, Nigeria immediately joined the UN and participated in 48 operations as of 2017 (Abba, 2017). They were in the forefront to fight against the apartheid regime during the 1970s and 1980s and contributed to the decolonization of several African countries, such as Angola, Zimbabwe, and South Africa (Omeje, 2010; Abba 2017). Furthermore, leading the establishment of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1975 allowed for the creation of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in 1990s, which aimed at promoting peace and security with the Africans for Africans. As a result, led by Nigeria, they have successfully promoted peace in the troubled Sierra Leone and Liberia (Nwolise, 2007). In the case of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), as most of the member states of UN peacekeeping did not commit soldiers to this peacekeeping mission, it was Nigeria and Pakistan who supplied approximately 45% of the total number of troops in the UNAMSIL (Kathman & Melin, 2017). They willingly spent their resources, mainly crude oil export, and supported in terms of financing and advancing human rights in international peace and security. There is no competitor in Africa against Nigeria when it comes to peacekeeping missions in terms of both manpower and material resources

(Saliu, 2016). Nigeria participated in no less than 48 (as of 2017) different missions which is more than the total number of missions in which South Africa, Egypt, Ghana, and Senegal participated all together. Nigeria's senior military officers conducted not only the ECOWAS and AU missions, but also UN peacekeeping missions, unlike other African countries (Abba, 2017). Imobighe (2012) argues that if UNSC expands a slot for a permanent member from Africa, there is no doubt that Nigeria will get the seat. , Compared to ECOWAS, SADC is more a political body than an economic one and their willingness to foster security in the sub-region is limited (Tella, 2018). Rather than military support, South Africa concentrates more on political solutions for conflicts on the continent. For example, when a military coup against the Prime Minister Tom Thabane took place in Lesotho in 2014, SADC led by South Africa were able to mediate between the two parties (Akinola, 2019).

As examined above, both Nigeria and South Africa do have economic, political, and military support to be representatives of the sub-region or the continent, but as they lack in one or two aspects in those fields, neither countries can be the actual hegemon, as described by Hamill (2018) as Myers (2019). While Nigeria has the potential to lead the economy with its massive labor power and abundant natural resources, South Africa's already constructed infrastructure, ability to export finished goods, and deep connections within diverse international forums allow for it be the political representative of the sub-Saharan region.

### **3.3 China's Rising Recognition in Africa**

The existing liberal world order under U.S. leadership is changing (Yongnian & Xin, 2017; Lee, 2018; De Graaff, & Van Apeldoorn 2018; Abegunrin & Manyeruke, 2020). The rapid growth of China's economy and political influence is not only threatening the U.S. as the global hegemon but as the rising sun in the global scale. According to the World Bank Statistics, the Chinese growth rate per annum has never been a negative value since 1976.

The first Special Economic Zones (SEZs), opened between 1978 and 1985 in China, allowed for BRICS to emerge. China further built projects to attract foreign capital and established among others Economic and Technological Development Zones (ETDZ), Financial Zones (FZ), New and High-Tech Industrial Development Zones (Touch), Border Economic Cooperation Zones (BECZ), and Export Processing Zones (EPZ) (Oropeza García, 2014; Liu et al, 2018). According to Chi Fulin, the president of China Institute for Reform and Development (CIRD) point out:

[t]he birth of the Special Economic Zones is the most important event in China's policy of openness and reform and the most evident sign of its change toward the outside world.

Over the last impressive fifteen years, an enormous amount of

information derived from SEZs, which have been considered a miracle by most observers, has been gathered.

SEZ were developed by Deng Xiaoping to attract foreign investment and to provide labor to the more than 400 million active workers from countryside who were hungry, desperate and trying to survive the failure of the Great Leap Forward and cultural revolution from 1959 to 1976 (Li & Yang, 2005). It was an innovative instrument and it allowed for China to receive more than 530 billion dollars of FDI in the time period of 1995 to 2005. China exported less than ten billion dollars a year before 1980, but overtook the U.S. exports already in 2009 and as of 2019, their export amounts to 2.6 trillion dollars. . Also, within the industrial GDP, China saw an increase of 46% from 41% increase during 1990s to 2010s, whereas U.S.' industrial GDP decreased from 35% to 22% in the same period. This meant that China's main increase in GDP was in the industrial sector and it was possible due to their cheap labor which is called the 'Asian Model'. Through this model, China's gross national income (GNI) per capita grew by more than four times from 1980 to 2000 and from 2000 to 2019, it grew even more than eleven times whereas during the same periods, the U.S. saw an increase of 2.7 times and 1.8 respectively. Having said that, according to Center for Economics and Business Research (CEBR) 2021 annual report, given China's current economic growth, its GDP will surpass of the U.S. by the 2030. The initiative of SEZs was to attract FDI into China to build factories and establish manufacturing process for cheap labor.

Against the backdrop of China's rapid economic growth, it is evident that it has indeed met the expectations of its purpose (Oropeza García, 2014). The unstoppable growth by China resulted in consuming large amounts of raw materials, such as aluminum, zinc, lead, nickel, copper, soybean and oil. Most countries in the world are directly or indirectly benefitting from China's commercial activity, without exception of the BRICS countries. For BRICS, supplying food to satisfy the demand of the increasing Chinese population in gives a much more advantage than other countries around the world. As a matter of fact, there is no doubt in BRICS' economic success that China is contributing tremendously with their devastating need for raw materials and food and this will continue to unite the BRICS as long as China's growth continues.

With the end of the Cold, the Chinese government saw an opportunity in expanding to the African continent the value of which was tremendous and the business climate had improved across the continent (Abegunrin & Manyeruke, 2020). It is not that China started to have relationships with the African countries right after the Cold War, but their trade relations go way back to 202 BC (Yuan, 2006; Gamora, 2010). In the contemporary world, their relationship strengthened during the 1950s and the Sino-Africa relationship began to bulk up. The Sino-African relationship refers to diverse aspects, such as history, politics, economics, military power as well as social and cultural connections between China and the African continent. Currently, the expectations of both parties are compatible in that China seeks for resources and unprocessed goods

while the African countries seek for financial investment to develop their infrastructure, such as roads, railroads, dams, ports and airports. Even though China is competing with other developed states, such as UK, U.S., Germany and France, they became the largest trade partner for the whole continent by 2009, surpassing U.S. (see Figure 4). Moreover, according to the IMF, as of 2011, China became the economy with the second largest GDP in the world accounting for \$6.5 trillion. Also in terms of demographics, China leads, holding a share of 18.47% (1.4 billion) of the world's population whereas U.S. accounts for only 4.25% (330 million). China's and Africa's population totals up to 2.6 billion, which is 34% of the world population. Their total land mass combined adds up to nearly 40,000,000 square kilometers, which equals to 27% of the world's total area. In Africa's perspective, there is no reason to not cooperate with China in order for both of their economies to develop. Irene Yuan Sun (2017), an expert in China-Africa economic relationship, describes their economic relationships as follows:

China is now the biggest foreign player in Africa. It's Africa's largest trade partner, the largest infrastructure financier, and the fastest-growing source of foreign direct investment. Chinese entrepreneurs are flooding into the continent, investing in long-term assets such as factories and heavy equipment.

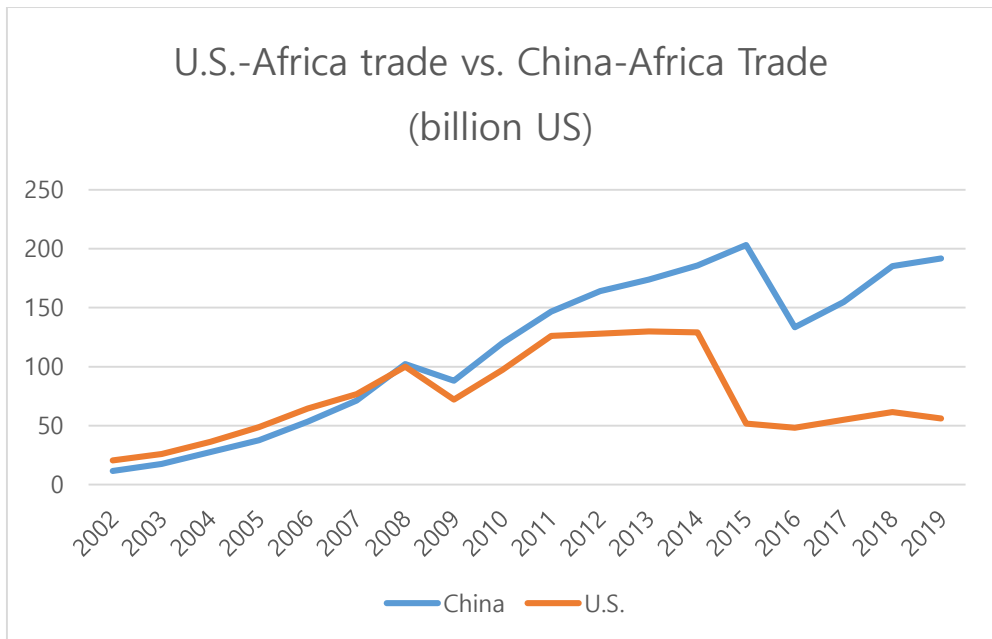


Figure 4. U.S.-Africa trade vs. China-Africa Trade (billion US)

Source: UN Comtrade

As mentioned above, China is the largest trading partner of Africa and has either bilateral or multilateral agreement with most of the African countries. This has allowed for the Chinese diaspora within the continent who have contact back home in China to create a portal for cheap manufactured products, industrial professionals, engineers and technicians such as mechanics, electricians, carpenters. As a matter of fact, these professionals built up the African industry from ground (Lanquing, 2010). Furthermore, since early the 1970s, the Chinese have been investing in constructions in Africa, such as building railways from Tanzania to Zambia and ports with \$10 billion worth Chinese development project in Africa.

However, the most intense relationship began in the new millennium and the establishment of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). In 2006, 48 African heads of state and government participated in FOCAC in Beijing. At the forum, they approved an action plan for three years to create a new strategic partnership based on equality and benefit (Taylor, 2010). While there had been other summits within the framework of the predecessor institution, the so-called Ministerial Conference, the FOCAC Summit was the most significant, as it started to deepen the relationship between China and Africa. This is reflected in the fact that the three-year plans for 2006-2009 doubled the aid to Africa, included five billion US dollars for China-Africa Development Fund (CADF), increased the export from Africa to China of 190 different products to almost 400 products, and included zero-tariff for number of products, thirty hospitals, malaria treatment centers and hundred schools in rural Africa (Bbaala, 2015). During the second FOCAC in Egypt in 2009, the second declaration action plan for 2010-2012 was established. 49 countries attended the forum and China announced a 10\$ billion low-cost loan, a one-billion-dollar loan for small and medium African enterprises. Not only that but also, 100 new eco-friendly energy projects such as solar power, bio-gas, a decrease of tariffs on most of the African products, and 100 joint demonstration scientific and technological research projects and 100 African scholars – post-doctoral – to conduct scientific research and return home to serve home countries. (FOCAC, 2009). In the 2012 FOCAC, China once again doubled the amount of loans to Africa to 20 billion US dollars and agreed to keep the



cooperation with the AU and NEPAD. Meanwhile, the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon emphasized that while the traditional North-South cooperation is necessary for advanced development, the South-South cooperation serves the important function of sharing knowledge but only used as a tool to supplement the North-South advanced development. In this sense, the FOCAC is a successful example of a South-South cooperation (FOCAC, 2012). During the 2015 FOCAC, more than 50 heads of state joined, including the Chair of AU and United Nations Secretary-General. Under the theme of China-Africa Professing Together: Win-Win Cooperation for Common Development, the summit addressed issues concerning emerging global challenges and how to tackle these challenges. Apart from that, China tripled the amount of loans to 60 billion US dollars and emphasized that FOCAC would integrate development for both China and Africa at the same time and would strengthen the idea of South-South cooperation. The forum very much focused on cooperation in fields such as Africa's most needed industrial and agricultural modernization cooperation. In the three-year action plan, the participants came to the following consensus in the Action Plan (FOCAC, 2015):

1. High-Level Visits and Dialogue: encouraging high-level visits in order to maintain friendship and to show enhanced political trust
2. Consultation and Cooperation Mechanisms: enhancing relations of planning and implementing and further strengthening

cooperation between the two sides, and improving bilateral relations with joint commissions, political consultations by ministers of foreign affairs, trade cooperation and joint missions on economic development

3. Economic Cooperation: cooperating in the field of agriculture, food security and safety, improving food security management mechanisms for times of emergency, and training young leaders for agricultural development
4. Infrastructure Development: enhancing the connectivity between the countries within the African continent, and focus on energy, information, telecommunication and transport
5. Enhancing exchanges between unions and governments, such as the National People's Congress of China and the African national parliaments, regional parliaments, the Pan-African Parliament, and the African Parliamentary Union, to further friendship and mutual benefits between China and Africa

By the 2018 FOCAC, people started to be curious about whether China would further triple or double the amount of investment to Africa just like they had been doing since 2012. However, in this forum, the amount remained the same, During the opening ceremony, Chinese President Xi Jinping reaffirmed that “China stands ready to strengthen comprehensive cooperation

with the African countries to build a road of high-quality development that is suited to national conditions, inclusive and beneficial to all (Embassy of China in UK, 2018).” The ‘road’ President Xi Jinping mentioned refers to China’s One Belt One Road Initiative (OBORI) which was launched in 2013 and has been regarded as the ‘Chinese Marshall Plan’ for Africa. . The OBORI plan is one trillion-dollar plan to connect 70 different countries from Asia to Europe to Africa, thereby enhancing infrastructure, trade, financial integration and to bond between people. Once finished, the project will encompass countries accounting for a quarter of the world GDP and half of the population. Moreover, the construction project also aims at improving the digital infrastructure by investing in telecommunication, satellites, fiber optic cables, 5G networks and devices which connects to these systems. Although it may seem an altruistic project, it has nonetheless been subjected to considerable criticism from Western powers. As the most outspoken critic of China’s investment projects, the U.S. argues that China is engaging in neo-colonialism by granting loans to developing countries which, again, aim at entrapping the recipient countries in huge amounts of debt they cannot pay. In a way the FOCAC is a measure for China to restore its reputation in the world and to increase its recognition (Abegunrin & Manyeruke, 2020).

Moreover, also within the African continent, critical voices have become louder. Although the massive amount of investment from China have flowed into Africa, the cultural difference where racism, not from North-South

but between South-South, on typical already made stereotype recognized Chinese as bossy and Africans (or blacks) as lazy (Sautman & Hairong, 2016) disharmonizing the integration of Chinese to the African culture. Also, the satisfaction level of the workers were low since the earning gaps and perception of African workers working in a Chinese company or a white-owned company showed a difference. The white-owned company paid more and when something happens within a white-owned company, no anti-white movements occur. For, example, when the South African police killed 34 miners during a strike in UK-owned mine in 2012, it barely received any attention and signs of 'no-British movement' occurred (China Daily, 2012). Essentially, no one says 'the British' nor 'the Americans,' but it is easy to say 'the Chinese' (Jauch, 2011; Abegunrin & Sautman, 2016; Sautman & Hairong, 2016; Manyeruke, 2020).

Issues on the inconvenient truth about the Chinese financially supporting the African continent started to rise on the surface. Beijing encouraged Chinese companies to invest at least 10 billion US dollars in Africa as part of the last FOCAC three-year action plan for the time period 2018-2021 (Sun, 2018). However, this investment was not what had been agreed on during the last FOCAC. That is, instead of 60 billion US dollars to be invested from China to Africa as government to government, the duties are shifted to the private sectors. Despite all financial support by China to Africa, the total investment still remains small compared to total value and ratio in other countries. For example, just in the year 2017, Chinese companies invested 18

billion US dollars in Latin America, whereas only 3.1 billion US dollars were allocated to Africa, which accounts for only 2.5% of China's total FDI. Also, the committed amount from China to Africa during the 2015 FOCAC was 60 billion US dollars, but only 3.3 billion were invested in 2016 and 3.1 billion US dollars in 2017, totaling to an amount of 6.4 billion US dollars. Against this background, Sun (2018) argues that those numbers manifest:

Most of the Chinese Financing to Africa are neither grants nor investment, but loans of various forms. However, China may not be the biggest creditor of Africa, but this serves to substantiate the wide-spread conviction that China is creating more debt for Africa, although the Chinese counterargument has been that the long-term economic capacity building effect of the Chinese loans significantly outweighs their downsides.

In fact, after South Africa joining the BRICS, China's total trade with Africa has been gradually rising and the FDI inflow from China to Africa and FDI stock have been increasing (see figure 5 and 6), but only during 2016, there was a decrease in trade, which was due to Chinese economic slowdown, the biggest stagnation since 2009. As mentioned above, FDI inflow usually consist of grants or investment where the recipient country does not have much burden. FDI stock, in contrast, is when the outflow country, i.e. China, owns what they have invested in the recipient country, i.e. Africa. Therefore, it is not the capital of the African countries, but stays as a loan that need to be paid back sometime.

China argues that since the African countries have the potential for economic growth, but do not have the capital to develop it therefore even though it might be a loan that needs to be paid back, it is giving an opportunity for the African countries, Hence, the long-term economic capacity building outweighs the downside of the loans (Sun, 2018).

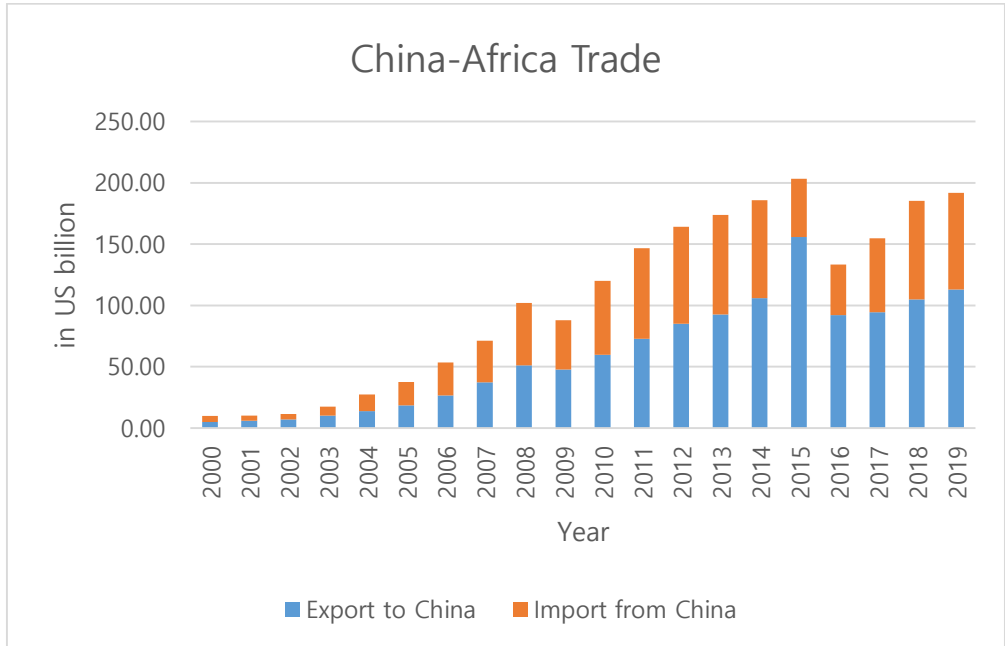


Figure 5. China-Africa Trade

Source: UN COMTRADE

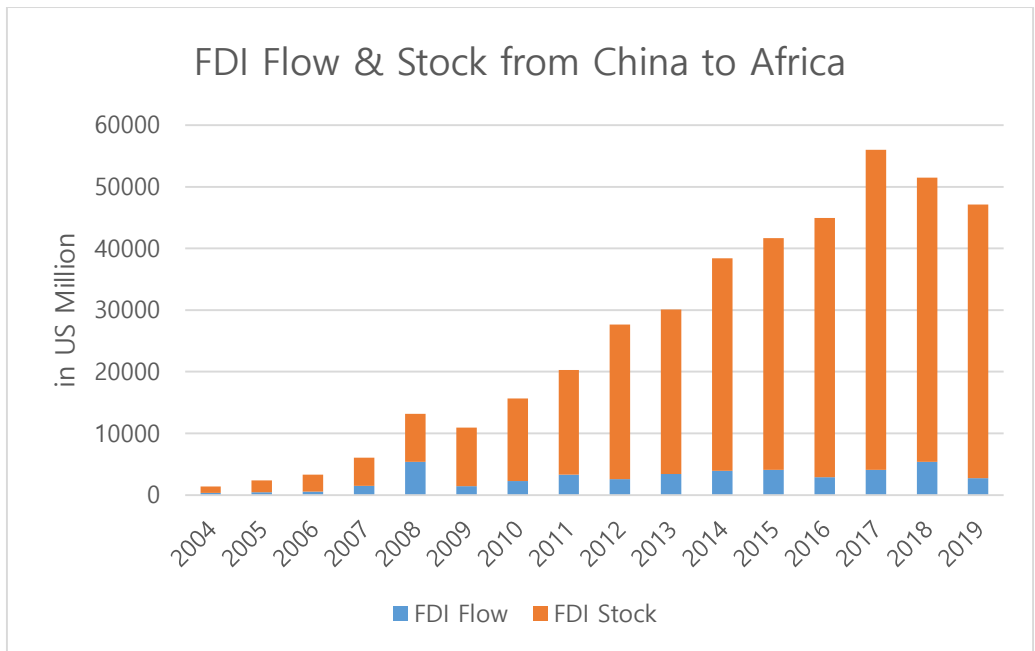


Figure 6. FDI Flow & FDI Stock from China to Africa

Source: Ministry of Commerce, People’s Republic of China & PIGA

Meanwhile, South Africa’s participation and share on the continent have been gradually stagnating in trade. South Africa’s total share of Sub-Saharan African trade balance in 2000 was up to 6% whereas China’s was below 3%. However, since then, there was no significant increase for South Africa, but rather the share was declining. In contrast, China’s share has been increasing enormously and overtook South Africa’s share already in 2005 and have already been rising even before South Africa have joined the BRICS in 2009 (see figure 7). Moreover, South Africa’s trade within the SADC area and its closest neighbors is also declining especially with Namibia as they share a

long history, and Botswana which supported enormously in overthrowing the apartheid regime in South Africa.

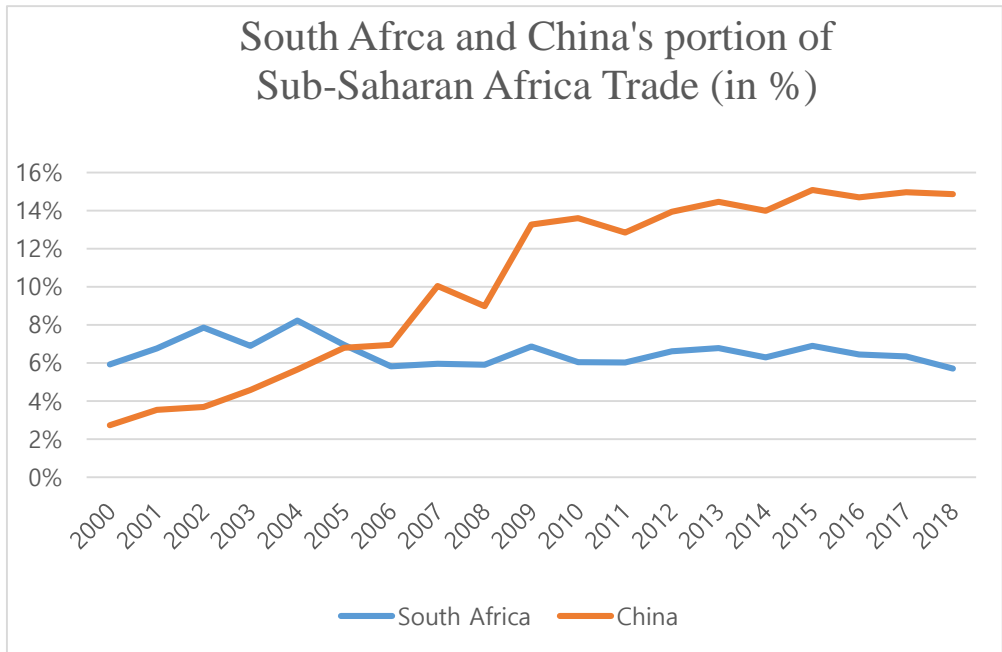


Figure 7. South Africa and China's Trade with Sub-Saharan Africa (total %)

Source: WITS (World Integrated Trade Solution), UN Comtrade



## 4. Case Study

In order to see the decreasing role of South Africa it is necessary to see how much the two countries, Botswana and Namibia are dependent to South Africa. Therefore, their dependency to South Africa should be measured at the same time as how the Chinese are influencing the scene. This is measured through analyzing indicators, such as the trade between states, share of foreign direct investment in terms of percentage of a state's GDP and political statements. These independent variables were chosen by consulting literature that is already available. For instance, in Ghosh's (2001) *Dependency Theory Revisited*, diverse dependency theories are explained. By examining financial dependency, such as capital inflows, foreign direct investment, loans, and such dependency of the developing countries to developed countries can be seen. Also, by examining political statements made by South Africa and see whether they are directly or indirectly interfering the internal and international affairs of both Botswana and Namibia.

There are many reasons for selecting Namibia and Botswana as case studies for this thesis. First of all, they are geographically closest countries that share borders with South Africa (see Figure 8). Secondly, they are the closest members of South Africa in that they share various institutions, organizations and a long history. They are both members of SADC, SACU and AU. Thirdly, the two countries show similarities in various respects, including among others the GDP, GNI, economic growth and demographics (see table 2). Although

some may ask why Zimbabwe and Mozambique are not included, it is because they are not in the members of SACU and the boarder South Africa shares with them is much shorter than that with Namibia and Botswana. Neither are Lesotho and Swaziland are included, although they have a significant connection with South Africa, BLSN (Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Namibia) and they are both members of SADC and SACU, is because both are land-locked by the South African borders, that is, everything that goes in or out of the respective country needs to go through South Africa. Against this background, these two states serve as dummy variables in the following analysis because even with a



stagnating economy of South Africa, the effect on these countries will be immense.

Figure 8. Map of Southern Africa

Source: Google Map

Table 2. Comparison between Namibia and Botswana

	Namibia	Botswana
Land size	824,292km <sup>2</sup>	581,730km <sup>2</sup>
Border between South Africa	855km	1,969km
Population	2,494,530	2,303,697
GDP (in US billion 2019)	12.37	18.34
GNI (in US billion 2019)	12.02	16.95
GDP growth average since 1990	3.86%	4.56%
Coefficient of GDP per annum	0.980	
Coefficient of GNI per annum	0.988	
Member of SADC	O	
Member of SACU	O	

Source: World Bank Indicators

## **4.1 Namibia**

Namibia became independent after 75 years of South Africa's brutal occupation. Namibia's economy was systemized by South Africa and there were many aspects that followed South African system of rule as South Africa wanted to keep Namibia (by then South West Africa) as South Africa's fifth province (Saunders, 2016). The end of Cold War with the triumph of neo-liberalism, issues of South Africa's apartheid came to the surface from previous international isolation during the apartheid regime. As a result, with the pressure of the UN, Namibia was finally independent with official pressure and processes of UN.

Under United Nations Transition Assistance Group's (UNTAG) auspices, peaceful elections were held in 1989 and the Namibian Constituent Assembly was accepted as a liberal-democratic constitution. This also influenced the negotiations of apartheid regime and the ANC in South Africa in 1993 (Saunders, 2011). Since Namibia's independence came four years earlier than that of South Africa, Namibia's relationship with South Africa in the first four years was with the former apartheid government. As a result, this relationship influenced the South Africa's transition from apartheid to democracy in various respects as president of Namibia consequently made official speeches during international conferences to liberalize South Africa.

Notwithstanding their history of antagonism and regardless of the fact that South Africa was Namibia's oppressor, Namibia had no other choice but to

work closely with South Africa, especially in the economic domain, but also politically. Before South Africa became a democratic country South Africa was on its transition and diplomatic relations were yet to be established. Yet, Namibia did not allow the apartheid regime to set foot on their soil but allowed the ANC to run a representative office in Windhoek (capital of Namibia) which had equal functions of an embassy. Initially, while Namibia became member of various international organizations such as the UN, the OAU (Organization of African Unity – former African Union), the Commonwealth, and SADC, South Africa remained excluded until the apartheid regime ended.

Until 1990, Namibia was included in the SACU as part of South Africa, but their independence allowed for them to be a formal member of SACU. As South Africa was the biggest market, it was dominated by South Africa. This led to frictions between Namibia and South Africa, which is still ongoing, because Namibia wanted a bigger share of the common customs pool (Gibb, 2006). Furthermore, Namibia introduced its own currency, the Namibian dollar, but it had no power itself, as it was fixed as one-to-one basis with South African rand and rand was used as the legal currency in Namibia. By the time Namibia was drafting its constitution, three of the experts were from South Africa and one of them, Arthur Chaskalson, was also the key player in drafting South Africa's constitution (Budlender, 2013). Therefore, their constitutions are very similar: they both adopt neo-liberal policies with some significant state ownership seeking for foreign direct investment.

There were still unsolved problems between the two countries after the independence of Namibia. Upon independence, Namibia had 13% of its GDP as external debt and with the total of 827 million dept, 698 million rand was owed to the South African institutions and the government of South Africa guaranteed the amount. South Africa raised this issue starting from 1991, but they postponed it until their political shift in South Africa. Namibia was in a position where they needed investors to invest in Namibia, but if this issue was not solved, their international recognition of credibility was going to go down. As a result, starting from 1995, Namibia had to repay the debt in instalments until 2012. Against this background, South Africa's influence in Namibia after independence was still immense. South Africa was still influential in various respects, such as economy, social structure, its constitution, tourism sector, and foreign relations. Just by looking at the trade difference, Namibia was importing much of the manufactured goods from South Africa, but there were no significant exports to the country so that Namibia has a trade deficit.

Namibia was occupied by South Africa for 75 years. After its independence, the ties between the two countries have continued to exist economically as well politically. The tension between the South Africa and Namibia have been going up and down, depending on the government and foreign policies that South Africa adopted. Although their ties remain deeply intertwined after the independence, Namibia has been seeking to reduce its ties with South Africa and settle history between the two countries. However, cutting ties is barely

possible, as most of the Namibia's import and export goes to South Africa and their retail and commercial factors are dominated by the South African companies and major banks (Saunders, 2016). This continues to be a problem as the retail shops are dominant only with South African goods, meaning that the Namibian goods are not consumed by Namibians.

Figure 9 shows the percentage of South Africa's import and export over the total amount of Namibia's import and export values. It shows that export stays on a similar line, which means that Namibia is constantly exporting goods to South Africa. However, the very dependent import from South Africa is decreasing. The left shares of import flew into the Northern states of the Africa such as Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

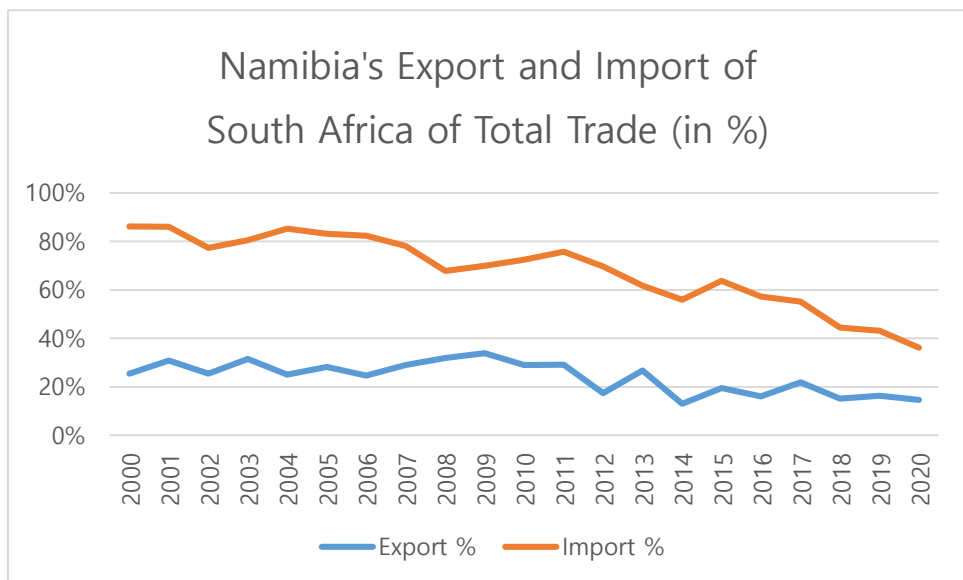


Figure 9. Namibia's Export and Import of South Africa of Total Trade (in %)

Source: UN Comtrade

Meanwhile, China's rapid interest and diplomatic ties with African countries allowed for Chinese companies and trade to be visible in Namibia as well. Although there are both critics and concerned voices regarding Chinese involvement in Namibia, China believes that their diplomatic relationship as 'all-weather friendship' would engage in enthusiasm among the local population, given the wide range of opportunities that are offered by Chinese companies (Harneit-Sievers et al. 2010; Shinn & Eisenman, 2012). Directly after the independence of Namibia, China opened its embassy in 1990 and in July 2004, the relationship between Namibia and China was deepened by signing Agreement on the Establishment of the Joint Commission of Bilateral Economy and Trade (Melber, 2018). As a result, their trade has been active ever since with trade commodities similar to that of South Africa's where Namibia is exporting raw materials and importing manufactured goods. Not only trade, but also the flow and stock of FDI has been increasing. According to UN Comtrade Database, as of 2020, China currently accounts for almost 18% of Namibia's total trade. This is a massive increase from only 0.25% in year 2000. Figure 10 shows the amount of investment and loans from China to Namibia. Although, unlike in South Africa, the increase has not been consistent, it has nonetheless remained relatively high with its peak in FDI stock in 2014.



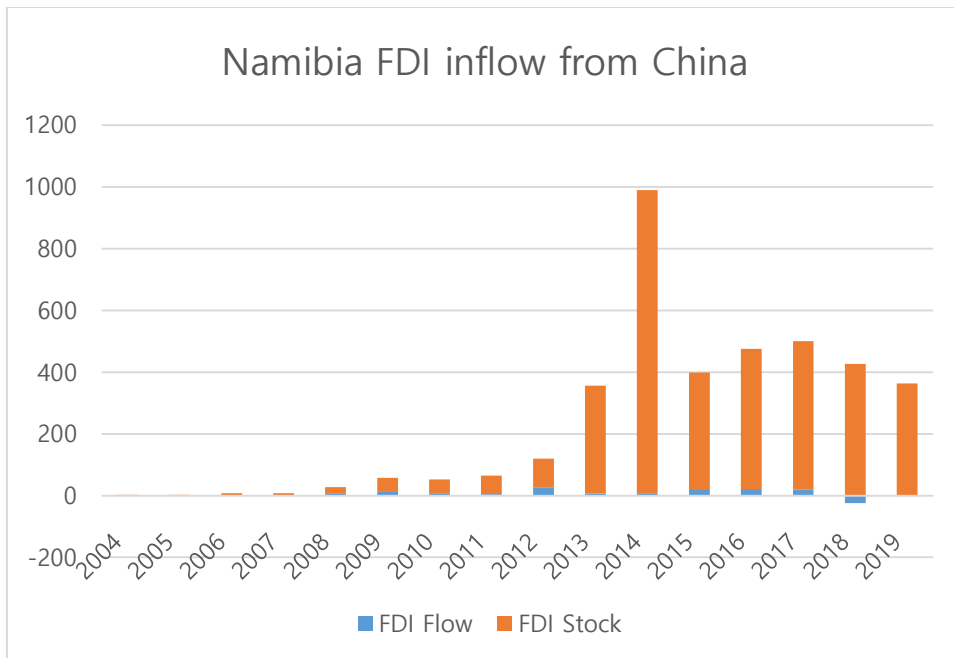


Figure 10. FDI flow and stock from China to Namibia

Source: Ministry of Commerce, People’s Republic of China & PIGA

Since independence from South Africa in 1990, Namibia has been impacting the values of democracy in South Africa as it is stated in the first article of the Namibian Constitution that the Namibian state is founded on the principles of democracy, the rule of law and justice for all (Constitution of Republic of Namibia, 1990). It further states that Namibia’s foreign policy will strive for international cooperation, peace and security, and that it upholds international law. Namibia, as a relatively newly established state, has been fighting for democracy in the region. Foreign policymaking, which was conducted by Pretoria before their independence, was conspicuous only after

their independence (Mushelenga 2020).

As mentioned above, by the time of the independence of Namibia, South Africa was still governed by the white minority and was lagging behind global standards with respect to racial discrimination and participatory democracy. Therefore, Namibian foreign policy put priority to the plight of South African people. This is reflected in speeches by President Nujoma, the first democratically elected president of Namibia. Only one week after the independence of Namibia during the summit of SADCC (South African Development Coordination Conference, which is a forerunner of SADC) in 1990, President Nujoma addressed the issue of democratization of South Africa and he expressed his concern regarding the negotiation dialogue between President De Klerk and the African National Congress (ANC). President Nujoma persistently advocated for democratization of South Africa. Thus, in most of his official speeches during his visits to other countries, he tirelessly called for the democratization and criticized President De Klerk for his violence in South Africa (Office of the President, 1999). Furthermore, Namibia made strong diplomatic position with South Africa that they would not embrace South Africa as a good neighbor, unless the apartheid regime was gone. In 1993 right before the first democratic elections in 1994, Namibia supported ANC and Pan African Congress (PAC) with two million Namibian dollars, which demonstrates that Namibia supported the revolutionary forces for democratization in South Africa (Office of the President, 1999).

Moreover, Namibia hosted two international conferences within one year after independence to discuss the situation in South Africa: The Conference of the Association of West-European Parliamentarians for Action against Apartheid (AWEPA), and the Association of West European Parliamentarians for Africa (AWEPA). The general agenda of these two conferences was to discuss post-apartheid South Africa in international relations within the region and, to a certain extent, the African region. Apart from that, talks regarding South Africa's peaceful transition to democracy were held between the President of Namibia and Mangosuthu Buthelezi, the leader of Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). The IFP party, which was the rival of ANC party, played a crucial role in ending the violence of apartheid. Thus, the party had to be at the negotiation table with other parties in order to find a compromise solution regarding the peaceful transition to democracy (Mushelenga 2020).

These actions of the President Nujoma were significant, as Namibia was a colony of South Africa and fought with the revolutionary parties for South Africa's apartheid regime and to some extent, a post-apartheid governance based on liberal-democracy. Considering that the newly-established small state reached out to key players in South Africa to push for democratization, Namibia acted as a key diplomatic player in the Southern African region and made a remarkable contribution to the creating of peace and democracy in the country.

## **4.2 Botswana**

As mentioned above, like other African countries, Botswana was likewise much affected by the Cold War considering its ties with the British High Commission territories. The Western countries, namely UK and the US believed that Botswana was ‘on their side’ during the Cold War and that it was upholding Western principles of democracy since its independence. However, Botswana’s non-aligned position was clearly shown on the question of Asia in UN for People’s Republic of China over Republic of China (Taiwan) and between two Koreas. During the 1970s, Botswana, yet inexperienced in the field of diplomacy and foreign policy within the Cold War frame, was vague. However, Botswana was one of the key players in liberating the Southern part of Africa from its colonial and from apartheid government, as demonstrated in the case of South Africa during the second half of the twentieth century.

That Botswana still has less attention in the base of world history is due to their nature itself on the one hand and the independence movements in the country on the other (Saunders, 2008). Botswana is strategically located in the heart of South Africa, and unlike in the neighboring South Africa, there were fewer white settlers. Hence, there was no need to stage an armed struggle to reverse colonial rule. Like other colonies in West Africa, the process of constitutional devolution, starting with the Gold Coast in the 1950s, made Botswana independent in 1966. Unlike the Gold Coast case, Botswana did not have much public nationalism pressuring for change before independence.

Rather, the quest for independence was initiated within the territory of colonial England. Botswana's transition was quite different from the start as the armed struggle in the early 1960s from the three South African incidents, Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa was more intense. However, although Botswana did not have a comparable liberation struggle, it is misleading to assume that Botswana, which had previously gained independence, was not affected at all by the liberation struggles that took place in Southwest Africa, Rhodesia, and South Africa (Saunders, 2008).

Since the independence of Botswana from the British High Commission territories in 1966, Botswana had had close ties with the apartheid regime of South Africa. Given Botswana's natural resources, mainly diamond, collaboration with the South African mining company De Beers, allowed for Botswana to rapidly gain economic growth in the period from 1966 to 1972 (Gapa, 2016). Until the Raid on Gaborone in 1985, in which South African Defense Force troops crossed the border of Botswana in order to attack the military wing on the ANC in Gaborone. Due to this, tensions between the two countries arose and economic relations weakened. However, following the 1994 elections in South Africa, in which the ANC won, economic relations removed, albeit they have not fully recovered.

Although, in contrast to Namibia, the amount of import from South Africa to Botswana does not show a dramatic difference, it neither shows significant changes within the trade balance (see Figure 11). Furthermore, there is no

correlation between Botswana's case Namibia's case with regard to the FDI stock and flow, but rather it shows a gradual increase (see figure. 12)

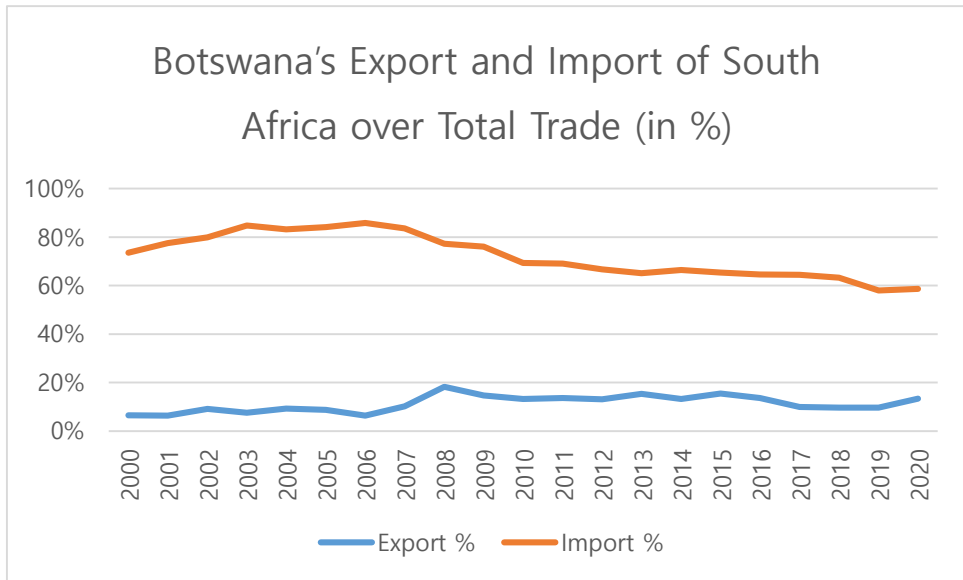


Figure 11. Botswana's Export and Import of South Africa of Total Trade  
(in %)

Source: UN Comtrade

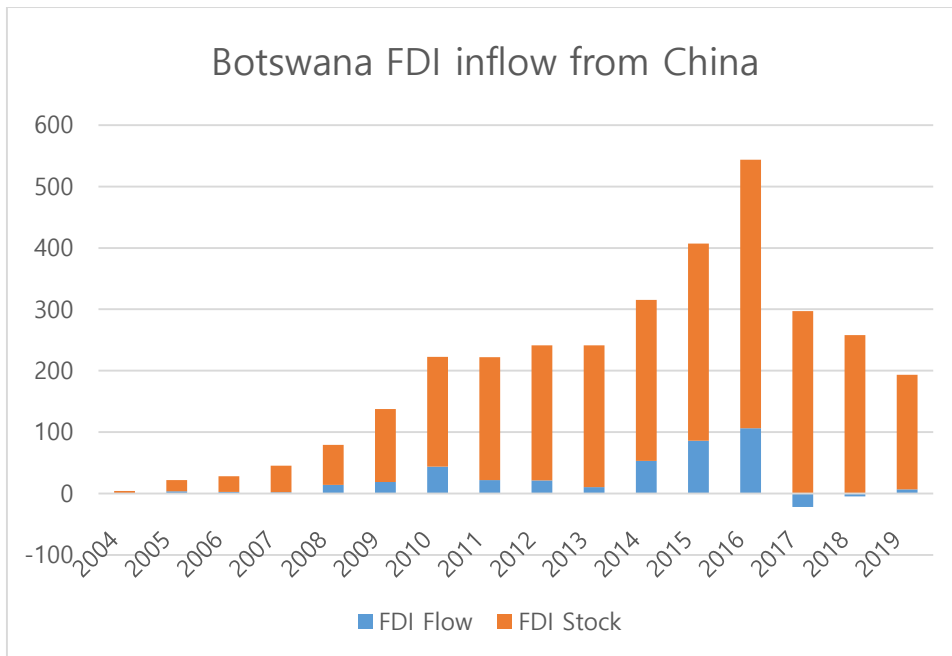


Figure 12. FDI flow and stock from China to Botswana

Source: Ministry of Commerce, People’s Republic of China & PIGA

From 1966 to 2014, economic relations between Botswana and South Africa began at different historical junctions between the two countries, but renegotiation of the Southern African Customs Union was necessary after the independence of Botswana from the British High Commission. The renegotiated agreement between Lesotho and Swaziland was not ideal, but was better than the original agreement in 1910. Botswana's transition from herding economy to minerals, especially diamonds in 1966 and 1972, is marked by significant economic growth in Botswana during this period. This was supported by a partnership between Botswana’s government and the South

African mining giant De Beers, which made De Beers to one of the world's largest diamond companies. This period was touted as Botswana's economic miracle, but Botswana's economic dependence on South Africa was significant. When the apartheid regime took advantage of Botswana during 1980s, the struggle to escape from South Africa's shadow started. Expectations that economic relations between the two countries have fundamentally changed since 1994 quickly disappeared (Sechele, 2019).



## **5. Thesis Findings**

### **5.1 Conclusion**

Since the end of the apartheid regime in 1994, South Africa has been trying to white minority rule and to become the representative of the African continent on the global stage. Thus, within framework of its ‘African Agenda,’ a key objective of South Africa’s foreign policy has been to foster intra-regional cooperation, integration of Africa into the international community and to level up the continent by promoting economic growth. Upon intense lobbying, South Africa was invited by the Chinese government to join BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China), the forum of the emerging economies. Being the first and only African country to join the forum, South Africa significantly gained influence in international politics. Essentially, the BRICS (the forum’s new acronym after inclusion of South Africa) consist of the fastest-growing economies which are said to be the next leading countries of the world. However, considering that South Africa is a relatively small economy in comparison to both, the BRIC countries as well as other African countries such as Nigeria, the question arises why South Africa was included into the group in the first place.

This is puzzling, given that Nigeria is the fastest growing economy on the African continent. They surpassed South Africa in terms of GDP already in 2012 and it is already the biggest economy in Africa. Apart from that, with its military power and abundant natural resources, such as oil, Nigeria will not

only be a huge economy within the African continent but also within the international society as well. Various studies have showed that if United National Security Council decides to add a permanent seat for the African continent, it should unquestionably be Nigeria instead of South Africa to take that seat and, thus, take the role of Africa's political representative in the international community. . Although South Africa does still have political power within the region, their stagnating economic growth will not follow the rest of the countries within the continent.

Furthermore, the 'gateway to Africa' theme, which was promoted by South Africa when joining the BRICS, had an immense impact not for South Africa but for other BRICS members, especially China. As the world's second largest economy, China is financially spending billions of dollars to invest in Africa. Since the BRICS' formation, China's total trade, FDI flow, and FDI stock towards the whole continent has been rising. Yet, the amount is still relatively small amount compared to the total amount of FDI outflows from China to other developing states in Latin America for instance. Africa's share of Chinese FDI in 2017 was only 2.5% of its total. Considering that it has mostly been in form of loans instead of grant or investment, the financial burden for Africa is soon to be seen.

The greatest problem is South Africa's position in the SADC region. South Africa accounted for 75% of the total GDP share of SADC in 1994, but fell to 50% by 2019. This a substantial decrease which is accompanying by a

decrease of power and influence, given that has become a more prominent actor in the region in economic terms. South Africa's loss of influence in the region is especially reflected in the fact that its closest neighbors Botswana and Namibia, both of which are part of the SADC and SACU forum, are slowly getting financially as well as politically independent from South Africa. Crucially, while South Africa's XYZ to these countries was more than 80% in 2000s, by 2020, it has considerably decreased to less than 60% and 40% in Botswana and Namibia, respectively. Given that both countries share a very long history with South Africa and are its closest neighbors, South Africa's weakening position in these two countries is indicative of its loss of influence in the region as such.

Against this background, South Africa's role has indeed weakened on the African continent. Thus, South Africa may not be able to fully and legitimately assume the role of a regional hegemon representing the African continent. However, considering their political status within the international system and economic values in SADC, it may nonetheless be regarded as a significant member of the rising multipolar situation on the continent. That is, unlike other African countries, in the recent years, South Africa has been engaged in multiple regional, e.g. SACU and SADC, and international organizations, e.g. G20, UNSC, and BRICS, which significantly increases its influence. Moreover, as a relatively successful liberal democracy in Africa, South Africa has, to some extent, also build up soft power which strengthen its

international standing.

## **5.2 Limitations and further research reference**

In order to explore the decreasing role of South Africa on the African continent, the present paper examined the independent variables of trade, FDI flows, the politics of its neighboring countries Namibia and Botswana, and the influence of rising regional (Nigeria) and international powers (China). Since only three different types of independent variables within certain number of countries around South Africa are measured, the approach of this paper contains various limitations.

Firstly, in order to fully grasp South Africa's role on the continent, it may be fruitful to also examine other countries in addition to its closest neighbors Botswana and Namibia. For instance, the studying South Africa's influence in comparison to that of Nigeria and China on SADC region may yield insightful results. Taking a closer look at the wider region by examining also rather peripheral countries on the continent may provide a more holistic picture of the regional power dynamics with respect to South Africa's role.

Secondly, this research paper has only focused on economic and political issues which are indicators for hard power. However, soft power indicators, such as values, culture, society, and media portrayal, may indeed also exert considerable influence on the international and regional position of a power. Therefore, by exploring these additional independent variables, a more

comprehensive and differentiated understanding of South Africa's role in Africa may be gained. Crucially, these additional factors may provide a more solid foundation upon which judgements regarding South Africa's capabilities of assuming a representative role for the African continent can be based.

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## 국문초록

### 아프리카 대륙내 남아공의 권력 투쟁: BRICS와 주변국가

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아프리카 대륙에서 남아프리카공화국의 역할이 지정학적 문제 및 침체된 경제적 지위로 인해 축소되고 있다. 2010년, 남아프리카공화국은 BRICS 포럼에 가입하고 3번의 안보리 임기를 수행하면서 아프리카를 대표하는 상징적 역할을 맡았다. 그러나 아프리카에서 중국의 영향력이 높아지고 대륙 내 경쟁자이며 빠르게 성장하고있는 나이지리아로 인하여 남아프리카공화국은 대륙 패권국으로서의 역할을 이행하지 못하고있다. 나아가 나미비아, 보츠와나 등 인접국에서 남아프리카공화국의 영향력은 외국인 직접투자는 물론 교역 분야에서도 약해졌다. 본 연구는 남아프리카공화국이 아프리카 대륙 대표로서의 지위를 분석하고, 경제·정치적 문제와 BRICS, 안보리, AU에서 남아프리카공화국의 역할을 검토해 패권국 지위를 여전히 유지하고 있는지에 대한 문제를 탐구하고자 한다.

남아프리카공화국은 성공적인 민주주의 사회를 이룩한 후 대통령들의 정밀한 외교정책을 구조화 하였다. 이것은 세계적인 국가로 진입함과 동시에 잃은 명성을 되찾기 위한 정책을 펼 것이라는 연구 결과가 나왔다. 그러나 이들은 대륙의 글로벌 리더로 인정받는데 성공하지 못했다. 그 이유는 안정적이지 못한 경제적 변동, 적대적 이웃,

대륙의 라이벌로 인해 대륙 내 국가들에게 리더로서 인정받지 못했기 때문이다. 무엇보다 남아프리카공화국은 SADC 내 최대 교역국이었지만 중국이 아프리카 전체에 대한 투자를 시작하면서 대륙의 패권국으로 자리매김할 수 없었다.

주요어: 남아공, 아프리카, BRICS, 지역 패권국, 지정학