

Editorial

BRICS and Africa in Perspective

Siphamandla Zondi

Department of Political Sciences, University of Pretoria, South Africa

The Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) platform has passed the ten-year mark. In the process, it has also managed to expand its presence beyond the five founding countries by reaching out to African, Euro-Asian, South-east Asian, South Asian and Latin American countries. This expansion began when South Africa hosted the BRICS summit in 2013, the first summit to take place on African soil. South Africa wisely invited a number of key African countries – representing various regions and types and sizes of economies – to an outreach meeting with BRICS leaders on the sidelines to discuss BRICS' cooperation with Africa. This was used to firm up the process of making Africa's interests a key part of the BRICS strategic agenda, which now includes Africa's economic renewal, peace and security, social and human development. At both the 2013 and 2018 BRICS outreach to African countries, the leaders of African countries unanimously indicated that Africa was ready to become a key factor in the global economy, especially in relation to investment and trade that is meaningful for their peoples and the world.

This begs the question: What areas and forms of cooperation suit this convergence of interests between the BRICS and Africa? What areas have the potential to have a meaningful impact on Africa's interests? This special edition is designed to provide a platform for reflections on these and other questions on the basis of research articles discussed at BRICS Academic Fora in 2016 and 2017, further developed in light of discussions, peer review and editorial counsel. Two papers in this edition deal with the global BRICS and its implications for Africa. Philani Mthembu's article critically discusses how BRICS responds to tectonic shifts that come with the emergence of a multipolar world in which opportunities abound for alternative ways of organising world affairs, for managing the global economy, and for increased global dialogue across civilisations. The paper argues that with multipolarity comes both diffusion of power and the diffusion of ideas, presenting precious changes for alternative Southern powers to become norm entrepreneurs and problems solvers in international politics and development. In this context the emergence of BRICS provides a platform to incubate these shifts in the interest of all – including Africa. The paper by Siphamandla Zondi advances this discussion further by reflecting critically on how BRICS could contribute to transformation of global governance in a manner that makes Mthembu's suggestion possible: the agency of Southern powers – including Africa – is poised to shape political and developmental outcomes of world change. Zondi suggests that ideas and strategies generated by the South over the past six decades should be harnessed by BRICS for this purpose.

Two articles discuss the role of China in Africa today and in future as a case in point. They discuss how the BRICS might impact on Africa's politics and economy. David Monyae and Fritz Nganje look into how Chinese investments and economic roles are affecting the Southern African ambition

to industrialise on a grand scale. They conclude that the BRICS, and China in particular, present the region with a dilemma: while China can offer win-win solutions in trade, investment, international partnerships, peace and security in its interaction with the region, it can also erode the region's infant sectors, such as the textile industry. Lebohang Legodi and Kgothatso Shai cast their sharp analytical eye on what to glean from China's political engagements with Africa. They make special reference to the case of Sudan, where China's political strategy is perhaps most apparent. There they find that mutually beneficial trade and investment relations coexist with the assertion of Chinese national interests. Bilateral relations between the two countries can be strengthened in a manner that undermines both Western designs over Sudan and the popular agenda for change in that country. Again, we see this Janus-faced scenario of win-win outcomes plus losses facing Africa in its relations with China and other BRICS.

Victor Okorie, Thulisile Mphambukeli and Lere Amusan take on the question of water and food security in order to ascertain how cooperation and collaboration within BRICS in human development might present itself. The paper provides a broad BRICS-wide review of the political economy of water and food security, identifying such incentives for cooperation as inequality of access to food, nutrition and water; uneven development in the fields of politics as well as food and water capacity; the growth of technologies; and new knowledge in these areas. They make an argument for particular mechanisms to deepen intra-BRICS cooperation in these areas and for BRICS to champion improved policies and programmes in water and food security in Africa. Adrino Muzenda, Ajuruchukwu Obi and Tyanai Masiya discuss how South Africa's food policy fares in the context of varied food trade systems among the BRICS.

Two papers have a South Africa-centric orientation on account of the fact that this special edition arises from discussions that started when South Africa hosted the BRICS engagement with Africa in 2013 and the anticipation of the second BRICS summit on African soil, which finally took place in late 2018. One article by Maxwell Shamase focuses on the role of South Africa in BRICS' response to Africa's development agenda. It problematises South Africa's inclusion on the reasoning that it was to represent Africa in BRICS, by posing the question whether South Africa can deliver on this expectation through helping the BRICS know how to respond to the continent's development agenda. This critiques South Africa's ability to be a catalyst for Africa's interests within BRICS. The second article by Muresan seeks to understand how South Africa uses lessons from successes and failures of its public diplomacy and image-building towards Africa to enhance its role as a champion of African interests within the BRICS. In this regard, South Africa is implored to ensure that the BRICS endear itself not just to African leaders, but the ordinary peoples and civil society in Africa as well.

Reinsurance is said to provide opportunities for diversifying African economies and for attracting substantial local, regional and international investments to these economies. Reggie Naidoo and Edwin Ijeoma present an analysis of the challenges of reinsurance in Africa and the opportunity in relation to this that comes with the growing relationship with BRICS. They analyse institutional models and an impact-assessment framework for growing harmony and effectiveness in the reinsurance industry in Africa. Their analysis makes special reference to South Africa, where this industry is big and sophisticated. BRICS countries have lessons to share with Africa in this regard for more long-term economic transformation than donations and gifts.

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