



# BAR

BRICS ACADEMIC REVIEW



# BRICS:

ECONOMIC RECOVERY,  
CLIMATE CHANGE,  
RENEWABLE ENERGY,  
MULTILATERISM

FOSTER HIGH QUALITY BRICS PARTNERSHIP, USHER IN A NEW ERA FOR GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

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# CEO NOTE

## Promoting high-quality partnerships and ushering in a new era of global development through robust discourse

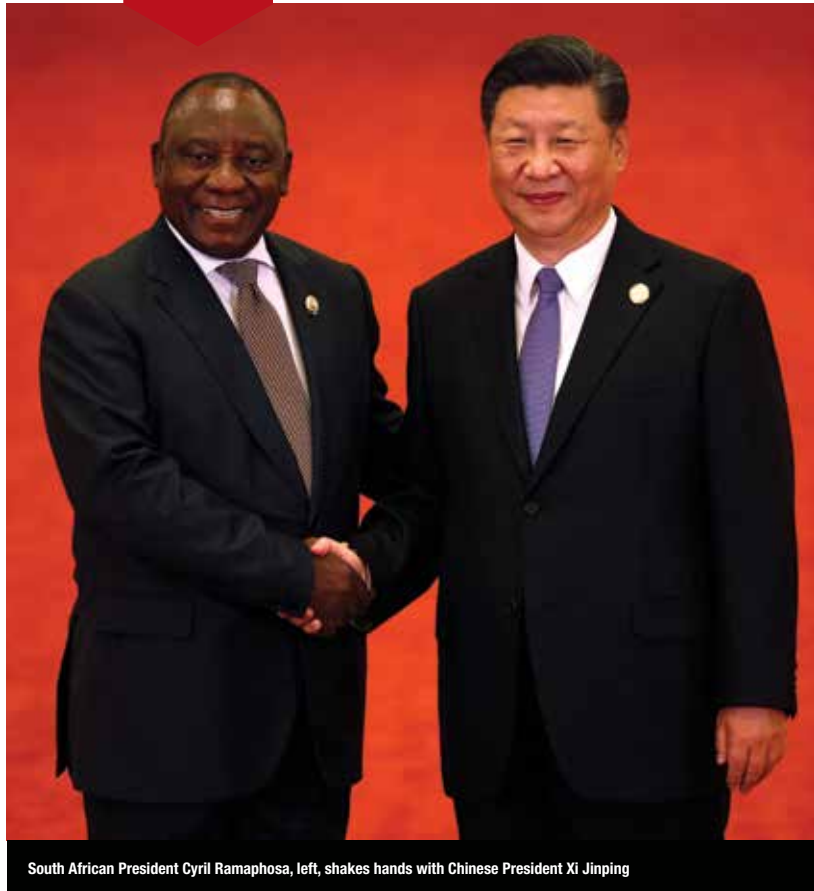


2022 is the BRICS year of China, and the global superpower has assumed its Presidency for 2022, with many exciting initiatives already underway.

China announced its priorities at the beginning of this year with the central theme of promoting high-quality BRICS partnership with the aims of ushering in a new era for global development. To execute on this, China's focus areas include the digital economy, economic recovery, scientific and technological innovation, industrial development, poverty alleviation, common prosperity, green development, climate governance, epidemic prevention and control and public health.

These are, of course, critical areas of development, particularly given the changes and challenges experienced in every corner of the globe over the last two years, given the Covid-19 pandemic. They also continue to build on the priority areas from all the previous BRICS Presidencies and Summits that have been held since its formation 16 years ago.

Cooperation, consistency and continuity within the BRICS have yielded several ground-breaking results that have contributed to world economic growth, changes in the global governance system, and international peace and stability.



South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, left, shakes hands with Chinese President Xi Jinping

2023 will again be South Africa's turn to take the reins of the BRICS Presidency, and I want to impress the importance of keeping in mind that South Africa's BRICS Presidency does not start in 2023. We have already hit the ground running and have deployed our academics and project leaders to various spaces to represent us. We are also already imagining what the BRICS Academic Forum might look like in 2023, and we are discussing hosting a postgraduate forum that might run parallel to the Forum. In other words, we are already building towards 2023, and several exciting developments are underway that will build on current research and deepen intra-BRICS cooperation across regional and thematic issues.

“What has become undeniably clear in times of crisis is our shared global fragility and the importance of solidarity during these times.”

As the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS), we are the custodians of the South African BRICS Think Tank (SABTT) and are thus responsible for the academic portfolio of the Presidency. This is a shared responsibility with our project leaders and requires that every member of the academic community feels a part and contributes actively towards a successful Presidency in 2023.

Following more than a decade since South Africa's inclusion into the BRICS, our priorities within the BRICS this year have also come into sharp focus, particularly considering the current changing domestic and global milieu.

What has become undeniably clear in times of crisis is our shared global fragility and the importance of solidarity during these times. In rebuilding its economy, South Africa is paying particular attention to pandemic preparedness and vaccine self-sufficiency, as witnessed through the launch of the NantSA Vaccine Manufacturing Campus in Cape Town in January. This is a significant milestone to accelerate the domestic production of pharmaceuticals, biologics and vaccines.

The importance of having efficient and effective public health systems and institutions has also risen on South Africa's developmental agenda. These are important for both domestic and global safety and security.

The BRICS economic and political project remains as important today as ever. Our academic and policy work should generate new ideas and foster the implementation of agreed BRICS economic, energy, digital, and institutional plans. We have essential global questions that need to be resolved amongst ourselves as a BRICS family. For the globe, what has transpired in the world to date are serious and historical global challenges that need our urgent attention. The COVID-19 pandemic, climate crisis, and rising inequalities should be collectively resolved.

I would like us to remain comforted that there is more to BRICS than political leaders. There are sectoral negotiations



NantSA Vaccine Manufacturing Campus in Cape Town

“There is more to BRICS than political leaders. There are sectoral negotiations and people-to-people exchanges across the arts, humanities, social, natural, commerce, and built sciences.”

and people-to-people exchanges across the arts, humanities, social, natural, commerce, and built sciences. Robust academic debate and consultations, coupled with policymaking based on sound discourse, should continue to pave the way for BRICS cooperation that leads to improved lives for our various populations.

In closing, as custodians of the SABTT, we remain committed to shaping the strategic vision of South Africa and the broader African region around global

financial, economic and governance issues. We will continue to conduct sound policy analysis informing the long-term strategy of BRICS to ensure we recover from this economic slump and gain a prosperous future. **BR**

**PROF SARAH MOSOETSA**  
Chief Executive Officer  
National Institute for the Humanities  
and Social Sciences (NIHSS),  
custodian of the South African  
BRICS Think Tank (SABTT)

# ED'S NOTE

AURIEL NIEMACK

## BRICS achievements and reflections - moving towards more dialogue and engagements



As we draw towards the end of 2022, I am constantly reminded of the three pillars of BRICS engagements: political and security, economic and financial, and most significantly, cultural and people-to-people engagement. I am also increasingly mindful of the notion that BRICS transcends its five individual leaders. BRICS consists of 40% of the global population, a population of diverse peoples and communities who underpin the various consultations, dialogues, partnerships and collaborations initiated by governments and then nurtured through multiple sectors. Indeed, the annual BRICS Leaders' summit, a culmination of BRICS meetings and



consultations among the three pillars of engagement, is an example of the sum of voices within the Global South coming together to harness our common issue areas and work together within global platforms. The past two years have shown that we, more than anything, need to encourage more dialogues and cooperation. In considering the past year, it is perhaps too early to mull over what future writers, researchers and academics may say about these early post-Covid years (whether this was a zeitgeist that proved our ultimate resilience through an inclusive multilateralism or one that ultimately reinforced economic and political nationalism). What we know of it in the here and now is that one impact amplifies the vulnerability of marginalised groups, notably women.

level. The BRICS policy advancement and inclusivity through dialogues, schools, seminars and conferences during 2022 are discussed by the SABTT Secretariat's own Dr Babalwa Siswana and Mr Senkhu Maimane.

As we move towards 2023, we look forward to South Africa's championing of vital issues for BRICS and Africa. Both 2021 and 2022 saw India and China take the helm during the immediate "post-Covid-19" timeframe, a time where globally there have been supply-chain challenges, inflation hikes among developed and emerging economies alike, and increase in conflict and further economic upheaval. Amidst the many disruptions of 2022, this year, we also witnessed the launch of the BRICS Vaccine Research and Development

“The cost of the gender gap in the global workforce, and the implications for developing nations, especially within the sphere of economic cooperation, must be noted and resolved.”

The cost of the gender gap in the global workforce, and the implications for developing nations, especially within the sphere of economic cooperation, must be noted and resolved (especially by leaders and policymakers across BRICS). This impact is discussed in a report discussing dialogues that have included the SABTT's interim Chair, Prof Sarah Mosoetsa. Indeed, the seeds for sustained cooperation are sown at an early career

Centre. This initiative was conceptualised and formally recommended in 2018. Indeed, in the coming year, the opportunities for further engagement through the BRICS Plus platform could prove beneficial to BRICS' goals and aims. Peruse the articles and reports, from the concise to the pithy, and draw your conclusions about the way forward for BRICS.

Above all, enjoy the read.





# BRICS 2022 CHINA



## BRICS China 2022 Summit logo

THE LOGO FOR THE XIV BRICS SUMMIT INHERITS THE STYLE OF THE LOGO FOR 2017 BRICS XIAMEN SUMMIT. THE MAIN IMAGE RESEMBLES TWO FULL SAILS AND A ROTATING EARTH, AND IS PAINTED IN FIVE COLOURS REPRESENTING THE FIVE BRICS COUNTRIES. AT THE BOTTOM ARE THREE WORDS: BRICS 2022 CHINA AND A RED SEAL HIGHLIGHTING CHINA'S BRICS CHAIRSHIP FOR 2022. THE SEAL WITH THE CHARACTERS 中国 (CHINA) IS ENGRAVED IN DAZHUAN, AN ANCIENT CHINESE CALLIGRAPHIC STYLE. THE SYMBOLISM IS THAT BRICS COUNTRIES ARE BREAKING WAVES IN THE SAME BOAT TOWARDS A BRIGHT FUTURE AS THE BLOC PLAYS AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN GLOBAL POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS.

Find out more about the China 2022 summit on their website <http://brics2022.mfa.gov.cn>



Overview	India Chair Report	China Chair Report	Women's Leadership	BRICS Summer School	South Africa and BRICS
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# OVERVIEW

INSIGHTS, NEWS AND COMMENTARY ABOUT BRICS

COMPILED BY DR BABALWA SISWANA



## BRICS Launches Vaccine R&D Center

KESTER KENN KLOMEGAH



In what has been described as an important milestone, not only for the BRICS but also for other regions of the world, the five member countries have launched the BRICS Vaccine Research and Development Centre initiative.

Launched on 22 March 2022, the internet-based virtual centre will link up with a national centre in each of the five BRICS countries, enabling them to share best practices and cooperate in the research, development, production and distribution of vaccines.

The five national centres are the South African Medical Research Council, the Immunobiological Technology Institute in Brazil, the Smorodintsev Research Institute of Influenza in Russia, the Indian Council of Medical Research and Sinovac Life Sciences in the People's Republic of China.

An employee works on the production line of COVID-19 vaccine at a workshop of the Beijing-based Sinovac Life Sciences Co. Ltd., affiliated with Sinovac Biotech, on April 5, 2021 in Beijing, China.

“This initiative will significantly bolster global capacities to prepare for and respond to pandemics; it is an example of best practice in international cooperation in science, and it will further deepen BRICS partnership, solidarity and friendship,” said Dr Bonginkosi Blade Nzimande, Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, at the virtual

Photo by Getty Images



The launch ceremony for the BRICS Vaccine Research and Development Center was held online, March 22, 2022.

launch of BRICS Vaccine R&D Centre.

All five member countries were represented at the launch, which Dr Nzimande described as a historic occasion. The other dignitaries included Mr Wang Zhigang, China’s Minister of Science and Technology, Mr Marcelo Queiroga, Brazil’s Minister of Health, Mr Mikhail Murashko, Russia’s Minister of Health, and Mr Mansukh Mandaviya, India’s Minister of Health and Family Welfare and Chemical and Fertilizers.

Initiated in South Africa in 2018

Outlining the steps leading up to the launch of the BRICS Vaccine R&D Centre, Dr Nzimande said South Africa first proposed the creation of such a centre during the country’s BRICS Chairship in 2018.

“We are grateful for the subsequent support and efforts of the Brazilian, Russia and India Chairs, which ensured progress in this forward this commitment. I would also like to pay tribute to and express our appreciation to Minister Wang and the People’s Republic of China for the decisive leadership during China’s Chairship, which resulted in our readiness to celebrate

“The establishment of the BRICS Vaccine R&D Center demonstrates the determination of BRICS countries to focus on vaccine cooperation, deepen public health cooperation and build a BRICS line of defense against Covid-19.”

the launch of the initiative today.”

He went on to say that the new centre, underpinned by BRICS’ shared values of commitments to multilateralism, solidarity and equality, would be a significant contribution to ensure that vaccines, as a “global public good”, would become accessible and affordable to all who need them.

“South Africa also fully supports for the initiative to have a broader focus, which will also include the development of new diagnostics and therapeutics, aligned with

the One Health approach of the World Health Organization,” Dr Nzimande said.

Another priority for the partnership would be cooperation in epidemiological surveillance and the leveraging of disruptive new technologies and their applications, including artificial intelligence and big data to develop capacity to prevent and fight pandemics.

Source: <https://www.gov.za/speeches/minister-blade-nzimande-launch-brics-vaccine-rd-centre-initiative-22-mar-2022-0000>



## How BRICS could become the basis of a new world order

In order for BRICS to become the basis of a new world order, the bloc must offer other countries of the world economy new paradigms for global development – a new world economic architecture, writes Yaroslav Lissovlik, Managing Director of Research at the Eurasian Development Bank (EDB).

“In the context of an unprecedented growth of geopolitical risks in the world, there is a growing awareness that the old architecture of the world order is being replaced by a new configuration of international relations and regional blocs,” writes Mr Lissovlik in an article on the BRICS International School’s website. “One of the most important driving forces of this kind of transformation in the world economy are the countries of the global South, which create their own institutions, regional integration associations and financial settlement systems.”

The largest emerging markets, primarily the BRICS countries, would be among the leaders of these processes, he says, noting that Russia’s Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov had predicted in March 2022 that the BRICS countries would be one of the backbones of the new emerging world order.

In his article, Mr Lissovlik writes that new paradigms on a global scale could be implemented within the framework of the broad BRICS+ format, initiated by China in 2017. Although this format had yet to be solidified, some possible models for cooperation have already been announced by BRICS countries’ representatives. “China’s chairmanship in BRICS in 2022 creates a favourable basis for the development of the BRICS+ format.”

### Developing BRICS+

“From the point of view of practical implementation, one of the most accessible formats for BRICS+ is the association of three continent-wide regional associations,” says Mr Lissovlik. These include the African Union, an association of Latin American countries known as CELAC and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and SCO+ in Eurasia.

“This kind of alliance provides maximum coverage of the countries of the global South,” he writes, adding that relatively favourable conditions are emerging in 2022 for the formation of such an expanded circle of interaction among developing countries. These conditions include steps being taken within each association to strengthen cooperation with BRICS countries.

Mr Lissovlik notes that the second track within BRICS+ may be a platform for interaction between regional integration blocs in which the BRICS countries participate. Such a platform could include priority regional integration projects of the BRICS countries – MERCOSUR, the South African Customs Union, BIMSTEC and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), as well as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) or the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area.

“All these regional blocs can cooperate in a coordinated manner towards harmonization of standards and a more open economic space for trade and investment of the BRICS countries and their regional partners.” This existing integratedness could lend itself to further economic integration and the opening of markets through the “integration of integrations”.

Creating such platforms would hinge on a spirit of multilateralism and the construction of a new architecture in the interests of the entire expanded format of the global South, he writes.

“Attempts to form BRICS+ on the basis of exclusively narrow national interests may have a negative impact on the prospects for the development of the BRICS+ initiative itself and other multilateral initiatives of the BRICS countries,” writes Mr Lissovlik. “For BRICS+, as a new format of interaction between the BRICS countries, the key to success lies in the multimodality of various formats of interaction within the framework of BRICS+, which can take into account the full range of national interests and priorities of the BRICS countries and their regional partners.”

Source: <https://www.nkibrics.ru/posts/show/6255d2df6272699b15470000>



## China expected to adopt economic stimulus strategy

HE JUN



Just one month after China's economic growth targets and macroeconomic policies were formulated at its annual parliamentary meetings, known as the "Two Sessions", the challenge of policy adjustment has arisen.

This is according to Mr He Jun, partner and director of the China Macro-Economic Research Team and chief researcher at the Anbound Research Center, in an article titled "Economic stimulus policy has become inevitable for China", published in *Modern Diplomacy* on 8 May 2022.

He writes that government targets of 5.5% GDP growth, 11 million new urban jobs and an unemployment rate within 5.5%, among others, were set under "normal circumstances". They "did not take into account major events such as the Russia-Ukraine war, the resurgence of Covid-19, and the re-imposition of strict pandemic prevention and control measures."

Noting that current conditions both within and outside China are not conducive to the country's economic development, Mr He Jun says these challenges have placed new pressures on China's economic decision-making.

"To stabilize the economy and assure people's basic livelihoods through supportive economic activities within a fair range of employment and price stability, the Chinese economy may need to enhance the execution of macroeconomic policies, as well as deepen the country's reform and opening up."

He adds that Anbound's analysts predict China may have to implement a significant economic stimulus strategy in 2022, with a focus on economic impetus.

Eight policy issues are mentioned in the article, including national fixed asset investment, major state-run projects, real estate development and market policies, direct consumption and reductions in taxes, fees, rental and interest. "Each of the above issues has its own advantages and disadvantages," writes Mr He Jun, "and the effect is different."

He singles out three other issues that might require further attention. These are China's urban transformation policies, the revitalisation of the capital market and the

Workers in protective suits transfer vegetables and fruit at Shanghai Xijiao International Agriculture Product Trade Centre on 24 May 2022 in Shanghai, China. Shanghai will gradually reopen businesses such as shopping malls, vegetable markets and hair salons after weeks of being closed to prevent and control the spread of Covid-19.

implementation of an expansionary fiscal policy under special circumstances to make up, to some extent, for the economic deficit.

However, approaches that differ from those of recent years might be required.

"In past policies, the Chinese government adopted some systematic expansionary monetary and fiscal policies. By providing large liquidity, the 'capital excess' mitigated the impacts of a lack of economic momentum. The massive economic stimulus policy we now propose is mainly to restore the Chinese economy in the post-pandemic period... If the Chinese government allows the market to adjust itself, there is a risk of economic stagnation."

Source: <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2022/05/08/economic-stimulus-policy-has-become-inevitable-for-china/>

# REPORT



AKSHAY MATHUR

## Stocktaking and recommendations for consolidation

IN 2021, BRICS COMPLETED 15 YEARS SINCE THE FIRST MEETING OF THE BRIC NATIONS IN 2006 (SOUTH AFRICA JOINED THE GROUP IN 2010). SINCE INCEPTION, THE BRICS AGENDA HAS WITNESSED A STEADY EXPANSION OF ITS SCOPE.



During the initial years, the agenda was focused on responding to the trans-Atlantic financial crisis with a special focus on multilateralism, particularly the need to reform the international monetary and financial architecture. Subsequently, the BRICS established the New Development Bank (NDB) and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA), two flagship financial initiatives that remain the biggest success stories of the plurilateral to date. Notably, since the outbreak of Covid-19 in 2020, there has been a special focus on responding to the pandemic and coordinating recovery.

As BRICS celebrates 15 years of

existence, it is worth examining the initiatives launched since inception. A review can help provide suggestions for streamlining and consolidating the agenda.

The establishment of the NDB has been the most successful example of economic cooperation under the BRICS. The idea of setting up the NDB was conceived in 2012 at the New Delhi summit. In 2014, the BRICS leaders signed the agreement to establish the NDB during the 6th BRICS Summit in Fortaleza.

The NDB has played an instrumental role in funding infrastructure and sustainable projects in the BRICS countries. In 2021, the NDB approved the admission of its first new member countries: the United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, Bangladesh and, most recently, Egypt. Regional offices of the NDB have also been established in Brazil, South Africa and Russia, and plans for a regional office in India have been announced.

The establishment of the CRA is the other shining example of BRICS

### Four areas of cooperation are noteworthy:

1. Economic Cooperation
2. Science, Technology and Innovation
3. Sustainable Development
4. Multilateralism and International Cooperation

economic cooperation. It aims to provide liquidity support to member countries through currency swaps during a balance-of-payments crisis. Multiple test-runs of the CRA have been conducted successfully and efforts are underway to strengthen its framework and analytical support.

Beyond the NDB and the CRA, the economic agenda boasts several initiatives linked to inter-bank cooperation, customs, trade, intellectual property rights, a local currency bond fund, payment system, export credit, e-commerce, trade in services and the new industrial revolution.

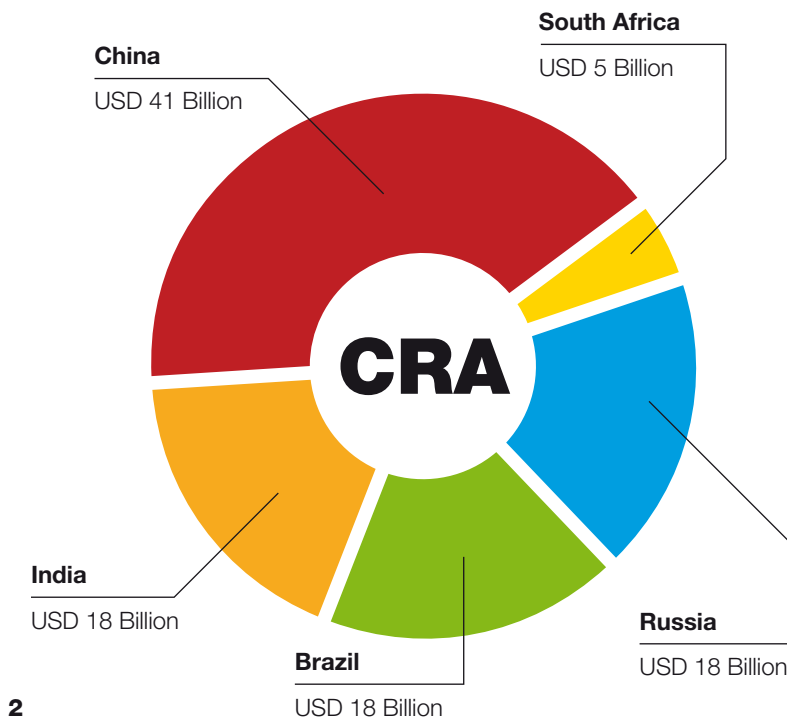
India's Chairship in 2021 saw progress in several areas. For instance, the BRICS Agreement for Cooperation on Mutual Administrative Assistance on customs matters was finalised after years of discussion and consensus building. Also, the BRICS Framework for Ensuring Consumer Protection in E-Commerce was introduced and the BRICS Framework for Cooperation in Trade in Professional Services was launched.

### Science, Technology and Innovation

BRICS cooperation on outer space is worth noting. Discussions for collaborating on outer space began as early as 2011. However, it was in 2016 that the idea of sharing data from a "virtual constellation" of earth remote sensing satellites seems to have gathered momentum. Negotiations on setting the framework for cooperation continued and culminated in 2021 with the formal agreement on cooperation in virtual remote sensing satellite data sharing. Meanwhile, the BRICS Astronomy Working Group has remained active, with a particular focus on the BRICS Intelligent Telescope and Data Network (BITDN).

Other priorities under science and technology cooperation include a focus on entrepreneurship, information and communication technology, high-performance computing, research infrastructure, ocean and polar science, material science and nano technology.

Under India's Chairship in 2021, the BRICS members agreed on the Innovation Cooperation Action Plan 2021-2024 at the 11th BRICS Science



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and Technology Steering Committee meeting. This agreement will guide cooperation going forward.

### Sustainable Development

There are specific initiatives for healthcare, agriculture, energy, environment and skilling.

The BRICS Agriculture Research Platform was proposed by India in 2015 to collaborate on research, technology, capacity building and knowledge

1. The headquarters of the BRICS New Development Bank (NDB), Shanghai Expo Park in Shanghai, China

2. Contingent Reserve Contribution of each BRICS member

3. BRICS Exhibition on New Industrial Revolution, at the 21st China International Fair for Investment and Trade in Xiamen, Fujian Province of China.



“ The establishment of the New Development Bank (NDB) has been the most successful example of economic cooperation under the BRICS. ”

Minister of Industry and Information Technology Xiao Yaqing (front L9) and guests pose for a group photo before the 2021 BRICS Forum on Partnership on New Industrial Revolution on 7 September 2021 in Xiamen, Fujian Province of China.

sharing. It is perhaps a flagship initiative for cooperation in sustainable development and was operationalised in 2021 as a virtual platform to facilitate interaction among member countries. Going forward, the BRICS cooperation in agriculture will be guided by the third action plan (2021-2024) adopted in 2021.

The notable development in health cooperation is the launch of the virtual BRICS Vaccine Research and Development Centre, which was launched virtually in 2022, and the BRICS Online Declaration in 2021 on Applying Traditional Medicine to Combat Covid-19. Other priorities in health include collaborating in developing better health systems, health financing, communicable diseases, non-communicable diseases, R&D of medicines and diagnostic tools, digital health, human milk banks and research networks.

The BRICS cooperation in energy

is guided by the Roadmap for Energy Cooperation endorsed by the BRICS energy ministers in 2020. The aim is to establish mid-term prospective priority areas, stages and actions. Specifically, the BRICS Energy Research Cooperation Platform has taken the lead in studying energy trends and requirements. The first BRICS Energy Report and BRICS Energy Technology Reports were released in 2020. More recently, the BRICS Alliance for Green Tourism was adopted in 2021 with the objective of mainstreaming sustainability into the tourism sector's policies, support conservation efforts and encourage investment in nature-based solutions.

The BRICS Social Security Cooperation Framework and network of labour research institutes have been key initiatives for cooperation in labour, employment and skilling, as has the BRICS Action Plan for Poverty Alleviation and Reduction through Skills. Other priorities in this area

include formalisation of the economy, employment support during pandemics, protection of worker rights, professional education, participation of women in the workforce and the platform economy.

### Multilateralism and International Cooperation

Finally, under Multilateralism and International Cooperation, the BRICS have made progress in articulating their position and lobbying for several changes to strengthen multilateral institutions, global trading system financial architecture and international security.

Its USD 10 billion contribution to the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) bilateral borrowing programmes in 2013 during the Eurozone financial crisis is a case in point. Since then, the BRICS have repeatedly called for reforms of the international institutions, including the IMF, World Bank, World Trade Organization (WTO) and the other principal organs of the United Nations.

Photo by Getty Images

The June 2021 BRICS Joint Statement on Strengthening and Reforming the Multilateral System is a seminal statement from the foreign ministers of the member countries on the need to strengthen and reform the multilateral system. It demands a more resilient, efficient, effective, transparent and representative system and a “reinvigorated and reformed multilateral system” that should be reconfigured to “adapt to the realities of today’s world”. The guiding principles published in the statement include calls for greater voice in global decision-making, inclusive consultation, better access to global public digital goods, building state capacity for addressing international challenges and a focus on people-centred international cooperation.

A similar statement was made by the BRICS Trade Ministers in 2021 on “Cooperation on the Multilateral Trading System”. It calls for the early conclusion of text-based discussions of the TRIPS waiver proposal for vaccine access and restoration of the normal functioning of the Appellate Body, particularly the independent, automatic and binding two-tier multilateral disputes settlement system.

The adoption of the BRICS Counterterrorism Action Plan at the 2021 summit demonstrates that international security remains a priority. BRICS national security advisors have met regularly to expand dialogue on security issues and exchange information. To streamline these efforts, a BRICS Joint Working Group on Counterterrorism was also set up and held its first meeting in 2016. The international security agenda for BRICS includes cooperation on countering terrorist financing and radicalisation, disarmament and security of information and communication infrastructure.

### Recommendations for the way forward

The progress made by BRICS in the areas of economy and finance, science and technology, sustainable development, and multilateralism and international security shows that BRICS has a large, complex and rich agenda.

Clearly, the NDB and CRA have been successful initiatives. Other areas of good progress include cooperation for outer space, inter-bank cooperation mechanisms, information and communication technologies and counter-terrorism.

BRICS cooperation on global governance can be further strengthened with diplomacy. The two joint statements in 2021 by the foreign and trade ministers are seminal documents. Both provide guiding principles on how multilateral institutions and systems can be reformed and reconfigured to address the challenges of the 21st century.

Some platforms launched by BRICS are still “works in progress”, such as the Agriculture Research Platform, virtual Vaccine Research and Development

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“India’s Chairship of BRICS in 2021 has set a definite example for streamlining of the BRICS agenda.”

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Centre, Energy Research Cooperation Platform, BRICS Environmentally Sound Technology Platform, iBRICS Network and PartNIR. These initiatives are likely to produce tangible results in the coming years.

In specific areas such as taxation, intellectual property rights and energy efficiency, cooperation remains limited to capacity building. Officials from the respective tax authorities, intellectual property offices and energy departments have met routinely with limited scope and activity.

New areas of engagement such as the BRICS local currency bond fund, payment system, credit rating agency, export credit and services trade are

currently being discussed and hold promise for strengthening BRICS cooperation. For instance, the BRICS Framework for Cooperation in Trade in Professional Services, published in 2021, is a major step forward in promoting trade in services. An action plan that encourages professional bodies to discuss recognition of professional qualifications, licensing or registration could be considered as the next step.

Finally, there are some initiatives on which there is limited data in the public domain or which have presumably stalled. These include initiatives such as the BRICS Railways Research Network, BRICS Cooperation on Population Matters for 2015-2020, the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Collaborative Research on Distributed Ledger and Blockchain Technology in the Context of the Development of the Digital Economy, Multilateral Agreement on Infrastructure Co-Financing for Africa, BRICS Single Window Cooperation, BRICS Exchange Alliance, BRICS MoU on Regional Aviation, BRICS Network of Human Milk Banks, and Multilateral Agreement on Cooperation and Co-Financing for Sustainable Development. A review of the scope and progress of these initiatives is required.

### Conclusion

The BRICS remains a prominent plurilateral in the global governance architecture due to the individual influence of each member state and the collective size of their economies. The level confidence in BRICS from within and the perceptions outside the grouping are shaped by its successes in institution building and resource mobilisation.

India’s Chairship of BRICS in 2021 has set a definite example for streamlining of the BRICS agenda. As the agenda consolidates, future Chairships will find room for emerging themes that require urgent attention. Consolidation does not always only mean weeding out weaker sprouts, but also having comprehensive approaches towards setting common goals so that even relatively weaker initiatives can be scaled with resources. **BR**

# REPORT



## Opportunities go together with crisis: The BRICs year of China – key priorities and opportunities

**G**lobal superpower and supporter of multilateralism, China, has announced its key priorities as it resumes the rotating BRICS Presidency for 2022.

In a BRICS dialogue held on 27 January 2022 and hosted by the NIHSS, Minister in the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in South Africa, Minister Li Zhigang, announced fostering deepened cooperation and trust within BRICS as the theme for China’s Presidency in 2022, dubbing it: “Foster high quality BRICS

partnership, usher in a new era for global development”.

This theme continues to build on the priority areas from all the previous BRICS’ Chairships and Summits that have been held since the bloc’s formation 16 years ago.

“There is a need for strong and healthy cooperation between the governments of the BRICS countries in the new era,” said Minister Zhigang in his opening address to a virtual audience of fellow BRICS leaders, scholars, academics, activists and other stakeholders.

“Over the past 16 years, the joint efforts of the five BRICS countries have witnessed increasing political trust, deepening practical cooperation and closer people-to-people exchanges. BRICS cooperation has resulted in several groundbreaking results that have contributed to world economic growth, changes in the global governance system, as well as international peace and

stability. BRICs has become a force to be reckoned with on the international stage,” the Minister said.

China begins its BRICS Chairship in the third decade of the 21st century, at a time when the world has seen significant changes, many of which have been brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Of particular importance and urgency for China during its Presidency are the following five key areas.

First is to address the Covid-19 pandemic in solidarity – a global issue which has become a threat not only to lives but also livelihoods.

### Addressing the pandemic in solidarity

As the world works together to confront Covid-19, BRICs countries have intensified cooperation in vaccines, health and traditional medicine and have



Minister Li Zhizang



Prof Siphamandla Zondi

supplied over one billion doses of vaccines to other countries.

“Our five countries help each other and actively work together to maintain security and stability for our industrial and supply chains. China and South African cooperation for example has maintained smooth trade channels. South Africa has made significant progress in exporting high-quality agro-products to China; the bilateral trade for example has reached over USD 54 billion in 2021, up over 50% year on year since 2015, which represents a new high for the two countries,” remarked the Minister.

China used the dialogue platform to

announce that it plans to host a high-level meeting on traditional medicine and enhance early detection systems in the fight against the pandemic.

The China Council for BRICS Think Tank Cooperation was represented by Dr Shen Yi from Fudan University, who echoed the Minister’s sentiments on strengthening cooperation in countering the threat posed by the pandemic. Dr Yi highlighted the need for vaccines to be declared a public good.

“China already aids countries in need through the delivery of necessary materials and technologies to counter the threat raised by the pandemic. It is

important for us to maintain a positive perspective and outlook for this year’s BRICS cooperation to make a valuable contribution to positive transformation of global governance in this world full of uncertainty and challenges,” said Dr Yi.

The second priority for China is to work jointly to promote economic recovery, especially for emerging and developing countries which still nervously look at the ongoing unravelling of the global economic climate. Minister Zhigang said BRICS countries are working actively and tirelessly to deliver the Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership 2025.

“There is a need for strong and healthy cooperation between the governments of the BRICS countries in the new era”

Minister Li Zhizang

#### NDB helps promote economic recovery

“The New Development Bank has provided a total of USD 10 billion to member states in emergency loans,” he said. “Last year, the Bank welcomed four new members, including Egypt, which has provided a new strategy and alternative trajectory to maintain its financial stability.”

The virus has accelerated the development of new technologies in the world, thus, taking advantage of and maximising the opportunities brought about by the digital era, is China’s third priority during its Chairships.

“Opportunities go together with crisis, and we now see the problem of the North-South divide in terms of technology development become more prominent. BRICS countries have actively accelerated use of their innovation framework to strengthen partnerships in green energy, internet technology and exchange of know-how among scientists and technology experts,” said Minister Zhigang.

The five countries have also recently launched a New Industrial Revolution Centre to generate new development and momentum in technology, science, innovation and digital transformation.

“BRICS countries are working actively and tirelessly to deliver the Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership 2025”

Minister Li Zhizang

Fourth, China will prioritise increased cooperation in climate change, which has intensified in recent years and highlighted the need to respect accords such as the Paris Agreement, both in letter and in spirit. The five BRICS countries remain in full support of the full implementation of the agreement, with common but differentiated responsibilities.

**Upholding multilateralism**

China’s fifth priority is to uphold multilateralism, address the challenge of unilateralism and accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to foster more balanced and sustainable development, especially in the emerging and developing markets.



Dr Shen Yi



Dr David Monyae

“The Arab Spring witnessed 10 years ago has endured like a long winter – unilateralism and hegemony have continued with those seeking to go their own way with exclusive circles or groups in the international system. On the other hand, BRICS countries continue to speak with one voice on issues related to international peace and development to promote a more just and reasonable order,” said Minister Zhigang.

Given its experience in poverty alleviation and improving food security, China has also committed to providing the necessary resources in the framework of the BRICS countries to fighting poverty and food insecurity and increasing its contribution to sustainable development.

The BRICS Think Tank cooperation has carried out a significant amount of work in strengthening the dialogue amongst the BRICS countries and promoting BRICS research. It is hoped that as South Africa prepares to take over the BRICS Chairship in 2023, it will continue to align its commitment for Africa’s development goals with those of the BRICS.

China’s key areas have been met with support and positive responses by its fellow member states since it kickstarted its Chairship on 1 January 2022. Minister Zhigang said China looks forward to building on the gains that have been made from previous years in opening up a brighter future for BRICS’ common development. **BR**



# TIME TO TALK?

We'd love  
to hear  
from you!

**BR**  
BRICS ACADEMIC REVIEW

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# BRIEF

03 - 06 AUG  
2021

**BRICS**  
2021

**BRICS Agenda for Women's Leadership and Women-led Economic Growth**

**Prof. Sarah Mosoetsa**  
Associate Professor of Sociology,  
University of the Witwatersrand, & Chief Executive Officer,  
National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences,  
South Africa

**BRICS ACADEMIC FORUM 2021**

ORF OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION

RIS Research and Information System for Developing Countries

## BRICS agenda for women's leadership and women-led post-Covid-19 economic growth

**H** History and the Covid period are a reminder that pandemics amplify the gender vulnerability of women. They disproportionately and negatively impact on women's ability to be socially and economically active.

At the same time, history also highlights how women have survived, overcome and rebuilt from past pandemics. Important also, history provides evidence that because of the gender vulnerability that emanates from previous pandemics, women are more sidelined from "formal" socio-economic activities and plans.

During India's Chairship of the BRICS, in the month of August 2021,

which is celebrated as Women's Month in South Africa, the role of women in leadership and economic growth came to the fore. This was during the BRICS Academic Forum, held by the Observer Research Foundation (ORF) and the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS). One of the panel discussions held during the Forum was on the BRICS agenda for women's leadership and women-led economic growth.

The panel was chaired by Senior Visiting Fellow at the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations, Radhicka Kapoor. The speakers on the panel were Prof Sarah Mosoetsa, CEO of the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences in South Africa, the former Chairperson of the National Commission for Women in India, Lalitha Kumaramangalam, Researcher at the Institute for Applied Economic Research (Ipea) in Brazil, Marcela Torres Rezende, Vice-President for International Relations in Russia, Victoria Panova, and Deputy Dean at the College of Humanities

and Development Studies at China Agricultural University, Wu Huifang.

The panel sought to delve deeper and produce possible solutions as to what policy measures need to be put in place to ensure that women are at the heart of the post-pandemic recovery process. In essence, what role is envisaged for the BRICS to support a women-led agenda?

The discussion was held 18 months after the first case of Covid-19 was reported and was in response to the significant challenges confronting women as a result of the pandemic. Globally, one of the many major impacts of the pandemic has undoubtedly been on women's participation in the labour force.

The meeting occurred at a moment when the world was experiencing a human and economic crisis which threatened to roll back years of hard-won economic and social gains for women.

### Sectors where women work were hard hit

It had become abundantly clear that women shouldered a disproportionate

burden of the Covid-19 shock because of the work they do in sectors hardest hit by lockdowns, particularly hospitality, tourism and retail.

Women are also the primary caregivers in households and have had to carry the burden of unpaid care work at home. In fact, research confirmed that unpaid work by women sharply increased during the Covid pandemic, highlighting unequal power dynamics. With schools and childcare facilities closed, women had to drop out of the labour market. In certain developing countries, women remain only largely represented in the informal sector where they face low pay, lower job security and lower social protection. In these countries, for example India, more girls have dropped out of school compared to boys to help with household work.

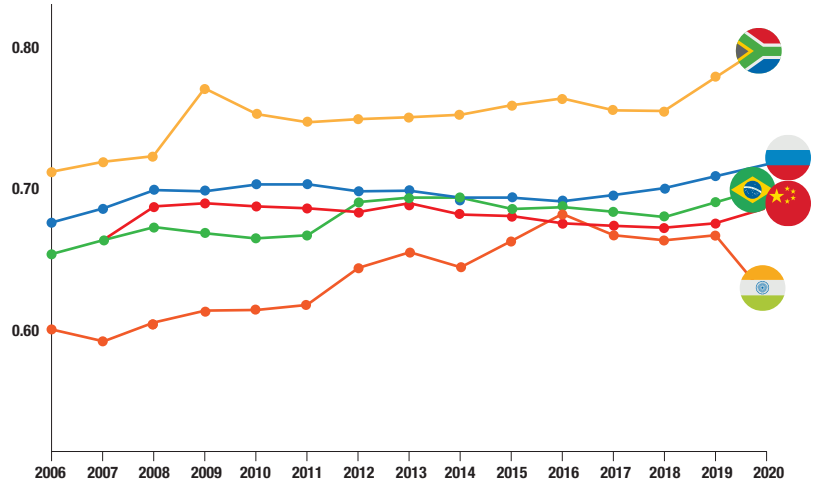
For the post-Covid-19 recovery to be inclusive and equitable, it needs to be women centred. Gender equity and women empowerment are a moral and economic imperative today.

Gender empowerment is critical for the economic well-being of all people, regardless of gender and societies as a whole. Empowering women by improving access to health, education, earning opportunities, labour market access, political rights and participation can be an economic gamechanger for any country.

### Quantifying the cost of the gender gap

A large body of research corroborates these assertions. The BRICS Global Gender Gap Index, the World Bank's Gender statistics and the World Development Indicators demonstrate challenges that have been exacerbated by the pandemic. For example, it is well established that gender equity in the labour market can deliver significant gains to national income. Better economic opportunities and equal pay for women not only lower gender inequality but also income inequality. Lower income inequality in turn brings about higher and more robust economic growth.

While it seems fairly clear that investing in women would be the key to robust post-pandemic economic recovery, policy responses and recovery efforts thus far appear to have largely ignored the needs of women. This is particularly striking given



Overall gender gap index, BRICS

the gendered implications of this crisis.

In her response during the panel discussion at the Academic Forum, Prof Sarah Mosoetsa highlighted the need for an economic framework that breaks the cycle of marginalisation and intentionally supports women where they are, post the pandemic.

She emphasised that Covid-19 had only compounded what was already a difficult position for women and the youth in South Africa. This has also been the case in the broader BRICS family.

“Covid-19 happened in a context of rising inequalities in South Africa, declines in growth, high levels of poverty, unemployment and also declining investment. It also happens in a particular socio-cultural context of high gender-based violence. Covid has exacerbated those problems and challenges,” said Mosoetsa.

It is for this reason, she said, that South Africa had introduced its Covid-19 recovery plan with an emphasis on particular sectors that are staffed predominantly by women, for example the food security and tourism industries. Particularly interesting in South Africa is how government has responded to the challenges through gender mainstreaming.

“But what does the notion of gender mainstreaming mean for the BRICS family in its global governance and various initiatives, in trade, investment, finance, science, technology, innovation

and in the digitisation of our economies?” Mosoetsa asked.

### Development must be inclusive

“To lead, transform and sustain development, women need to be actively included in planning and implementation of policies and plans. This means South African women need to be part and parcel of the economic reconstruction and recovery plan. This plan needs to be gender and youth inclusive, must be aggressive in infrastructure investment and should focus on reindustrialisation, energy security and support for recovery in the tourism sector. It should also explore and implement green economy interventions, along with mass public employment interventions and the strengthening of food security,” said Mosoetsa.

In closing, panel chair Radhicka Kapoor emphasised the need for a human-centred recovery process that is sustainable, inclusive and resilient.

In 2021, the BRICS labour and Employment Ministers did endorse the International Labour Organisation's Global Call to Action for a human-centred approach. Furthermore, the BRICS Women's Business Alliance 2021 recommendations included addressing the twin challenges of access to credit and financial/digital literacy faced by women entrepreneurs that limit their potential to grow and develop. **BR**

# BRIEF



## Policy advancement and inclusivity through dialogues, schools, seminars and conferences



DR BABALWA SISWANA  
& MR SENKHU MAIMANE

**S** Schools have long been a gathering place for scholars. Since the formation of the BRICS bloc, and particularly the BRICS Think Tank Council (BTTC) structures, summer and winter schools have become a

regular feature on the BRICS calendar. These, along with international youth conferences, enable young scholars from the bloc and other countries to learn, share knowledge, ideas and experiences, and collaborate on cooperative projects.

At these summer and winter schools, professors from the BRICS countries present lectures on various political, economic, humanitarian and other topics. The hosting think tank determines the focus of thematic areas and the duration of the school or youth conference. In 2021, the themes covered in the summer school and international youth conference included international trade issues of the digital and post-Covid-19 economy, BRICS perspectives (Russia) and sharing experience on national governance in Belt and Road (B&R) countries (China).

An outstanding quality of these events is the integration of cultural exchanges, feeding into the diversity of thoughts

Scholars gathered virtually for the Think Tank Seminar of the Belt and Road (B&R) countries.

that characterise the BRICS countries. This contrasts strikingly with knowledge production approaches undertaken from the vantage point of global north views. The gathering of BRICS researchers, mostly from the Global South, indicates that ideas and knowledge production are shifting toward a “decolonised” framework, leading to more relevant, appropriate and people-centered ethical knowledge creation based on personal stories and relevant frameworks.

Furthermore, these schools provide a space for scholars to share research from their nations, as well as the experiences of research participants. This is significant because the participants in research are the direct owners of the

knowledge created, which cannot be misappropriated or distorted.

### **NIHSS participation in the summer schools**

In addition to the summer schools that BRICS hosted in 2021, important learning experiences of the year were the seminar hosted by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) in September, the Russian International Youth Conference in November and CASS's International Forum on Democracy in December.

Mr Senkhu Maimane and Dr Babalwa Siswana of South Africa's National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS) attended CASS's two-week seminar, titled "Experience sharing on national governance of B&R countries". The scholars who were from B&R countries were given the opportunity to present their countries' national governance systems on the final day of the conference.

In November 2021, Dr Siswana attended the Russian International Youth Conference and presented on the impact of Covid-19 on the South African economy. The conference was hosted by the National Committee on BRICS Research, the Russian think tank. The main aim of this conference was to bring together young scientists to discuss the development of digital technologies and trade cooperation within the framework of BRICS, as well as the challenges countries faced during the Covid-19 pandemic. The youth delegation attended both the BRICS conference and a seminar, demonstrating BRICS' willingness to include youth in furthering knowledge sharing.

Mr Maimane then attended the International Forum on Democracy and delivered a presentation on shared human values. The event was organised by CASS's Bureau of International Cooperation. The topics discussed at the forum included the principles of democracy and the all-round development of people in relation to democracy, and highlighted how international collaboration can contribute to achieving collective resolutions.

### **Think tanks and the policy arena**

Since 11 March 2013, when the BRICS think tanks signed the declaration on the establishment of the BRICS Think Tank Council in Durban, South Africa, the policy development arena has been an area of growing interest among the think tanks, which conduct research in the public interest to influence policymaking. Effective policy development is critical for any country in ensuring research-based and informed development.

For the think tanks to play a meaningful role in providing in-depth views of different issues and guiding policy decisions, they need to engage with the public, including women and youth, as data obtained through humanities and social sciences research can potentially advise political and other decisions.

The tanks should also work to engage in more dialogues among themselves, as well as with decision-makers, who stand to benefit from considering the research and recommendations provided by think tanks.

Another benefit of the BRICS summer and winter schools and international youth conferences is their potential to reinforce communication and cultural exchanges among the youth generation, who make up a significant portion of the BRICS countries' populations.

### **Expanding the network**

In striving to further expand the scope of the BRICS network, increased emphasis should be placed on people-to-people dialogue, referring to exchanges that bring together people from diverse cultures and backgrounds. People-to-people exchanges have great potential to deepen understanding among the people of the BRICS countries and encourage citizen-based action in addressing common global challenges and working together in fields such as health, poverty alleviation, education, e-learning, science and innovation and, most importantly, youth participation in development. The BRICS countries have rich cultural heritages and high levels of mutual understanding through people-to-people exchanges which enable greater cooperation, encourage the adoption of

best practices and open up avenues for collaboration with other countries in the Global South.

Raising public awareness across BRICS countries about what the bloc has accomplished since its formation is important. At the same time, the think tanks and other academic structures of the BRICS should be transparent about the difficulties the bloc has faced. The public will recognise that, as with any other groupings, the BRICS members are not a homogeneous group. There is recognition of differences and similarities related to population size and political frameworks, among others, noting that

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“ Universal inclusion is a cornerstone of the BRICS and no one should be left behind. ”

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there is mutual respect for sovereignty among BRICS members.

Despite difficulties, the BRICS countries have made significant progress and continue to be a powerful group whose influence in the rest of the world has grown and which is becoming more and more inclusive, forming partnerships with other countries, particularly in the Global South, and involving them in initiatives such as the BRICS seminars, summer schools and conferences.

Universal inclusion is a cornerstone of the BRICS and no one should be left behind. Persons living with disabilities must participate as valued and essential contributors to the bloc. Another priority should be finding new ways to reach women and youth, particularly in rural and peri-urban areas, as well as youth with physical or mental disabilities. **BR**

# REPORT



South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa speaks during the BRICS Business Council prior to the 11th edition of the BRICS Summit, in Brasilia, on 13 November 2019.

## South Africa and the BRICS: Revisiting Developmental Priorities

**G**iven the shapeshifting of the world over the past couple of years, it has become necessary to revisit developmental priorities within BRICS. This was the purpose of a panel discussion on 23 February 2022, hosted by the South African BRICS Think Tank (SABTT) and the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA).

The global coronavirus pandemic has

underscored the fragility of economies, South Africa's included, to sudden, adverse and unpredictable exogenous shocks across the globe. This fragility has been exposed at both a macro and a grassroots level.

At a macro level, emerging markets and developing economies have faced acute fiscal challenges, as revenue streams from trade, tourism, remittances and natural resources contracted sharply, while increased spending and fiscal stimulus sought to manage the health and socio-economic impacts of the pandemic.

At the grassroots level, people have experienced failing businesses, retrenchments or increased economic hardship because of the pandemic.

For South Africa, the BRICS carry the potential for significant cooperation and partnership to deal with both domestic

and regional socio-economic challenges – whether existing challenges that have become more pressing over the past two years or emerging challenges thrown up by new global and regional developments.

The SABTT-SAIIA webinar brought together a panel of experts to consider ongoing international and domestic developments and reflect on South Africa's and the BRICS' engagement on these issues. Panellists in the discussion included SAIIA's Chief Executive, Elizabeth Sidiropoulos, Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD) Sanusha Naidu, Lecturer at the Wits School of Governance Lihle Ngcobozi and Chief Researcher at the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) Krish Chetty. The panel was chaired by Cyril Prinsloo who is a Senior Researcher at SAIIA.

### Solidarity in times of crisis

In setting the scene for the discussion, Elizabeth Sidiropoulos of SAIIA remarked that in times of crisis, solidarity takes time to galvanise, but what is evident is that the pandemic has taught the BRICS nations the need to learn to help ourselves and others simultaneously.

“The issue of solidarity really looms large not just in the context of the African continent but also with other external actors that South Africa has successfully engaged with on these matters,” she said. “Pandemic preparedness remains a big problem that we haven’t as a global community addressed. In addition to this, is the pressing matter of the green transition and the cost associated

and financial architecture of the world economic system, particularly given the 2007/2008 financial crisis and also the Asian financial crisis of 1997.

It has been over 15 years now since the formation of the BRICS so 2022 is an opportune time for internal reflection, especially considering the fluidity of the international system and the BRICS countries’ positioning in it.

It is against this backdrop therefore, that Naidu opened her address by stating that: “It is very important for us to understand where they were in 2009 when BRICS initially came together in solidarity of addressing this financial architecture, where it is today and what

“Pandemic preparedness remains a big problem that we haven’t addressed as a global community.”

Elizabeth Sidiropoulos, SAIIA Chief Executive

with it for emerging and other developing countries in the face of a very strained fiscal space and rising debt,” said Sidiropoulos.

Over the past two years especially, the world has witnessed the significant fragility of supply lines – something that appears to be bottoming out according to reports from the World Trade Organization (WTO) earlier this year. These vulnerabilities have an impact on issues of agriculture and food security and have been on the BRICS agenda and discussed within BRICS working groups.

We have also come to see the significant and critical role that effective, efficient, public health institutions mean, not just for domestic safety but also for global safety and security. This issue has risen on the agenda of critical elements of development and the need to have effective public health systems.

### Reimagining the BRICS in 2022

The BRICS grouping emerged as a formalisation of a group of countries whose primary goal was addressing the global

has been the evolution of the BRICS.”

At the time of the BRICS formation, there was no Covid-19 pandemic even though the world had been dealing with other disease outbreaks.

“For me the starting point is that the pandemic actually brought into focus a reality not only of the fragility of the system but also that the development model that has been used by the world is intrinsically flawed. The development model was exposed in the pandemic,” argued Naidu.

South Africa was already in a technical recession in 2019 so the lockdown restrictions that were imposed in 2020 and 2021 only compounded problems that had resulted from years of continued fiscal constraints, rising debt challenges and wasteful expenditure.

Naidu suggested perhaps looking at the specific domestic political environment challenges of each of the BRICS countries and how they have addressed them.

Each country continues to experience



Elizabeth Sidiropoulos,  
SAIIA Chief Executive



Ms Sanusha Naidu is Senior Research  
Fellow at the Institute for Global Dialogue



Lihle Ngcobozi, Lecturer,  
Wits School of Governance

issues of delivering better quality of life, addressing the poverty trap and unemployment challenges, as well as certain government deficits when it comes to implementation. Some countries, like China for instance, have moved and advanced far better than their counterparts in the BRICS and it is worth looking at how they achieve this, Naidu suggested.

“The coronavirus pandemic has thrown everything into disarray and if you were doing something pre-pandemic, well maybe it is time to reimagine some of that and become better; if you were not doing anything at all, it exposed your vulnerability. The virus has exacerbated

serious structural impediments around specifically transforming the economy and enabling previously dispossessed countries who have been at the receiving end of structural adjustment programmes,” remarked Ngcobozi.

BRICS was intended to focus South-to-South relations around developmental financing that would be distinctly different from the political implications (i.e. dependency, postcolonial linkages, etc.) that come with Global North interactions with the Global South.

“BRICS was trying to pioneer this different way of arranging and managing resources within this particular cohort of countries but also trickling down into

### Preparing for 2023

Going forward, remarked Sidiropoulos, “these are critical issues that we must engage on as we prepare for discussions in 2023. These issues also have consequences for the discussions in the G20 where all five BRICS members participate.”

Another major challenge is the rising geopolitical tensions witnessed since the beginning of this year. How the BRICS grouping navigates these issues, particularly where South Africa and even Brazil are largely bystanders, will be key.

“To say that we cannot afford geopolitical tensions at a time of significant global development challenges [and] climate and sustainable development targets that we have to reach by 2030, may be quite trite, but such geopolitical ruptures may very well make our chances of addressing systemic and existential challenges in the next decade extremely difficult, not just for South Africa, but the world,” she said.

The panel discussion was thus an important opportunity to begin to revisit BRICS developmental priorities and how these have been shaped over the past few years. It is important to keep everyone focused on these issues as the BRICS programme for 2022 unfolds, under the Chairship of China, and also as South Africa prepares for its Chairship in 2023.

This will be the third time South Africa will chair the grouping but will do so in a very different climate from when South Africa last chaired it in 2018. This time, South Africa will be chairing the BRICS in the aftermath of the pandemic and while the world is still grappling with the “new normal”.

The February 2022 conversation on developmental priorities was the first in a series of dialogues and research efforts between SAIIA and the SABTT. It is clear that further conversations will be of great value as developing countries seeking to recover from the economic fallout from the pandemic, which has so starkly highlighted humanity’s shared fragility and interconnectedness. **BR**

Email [bar.editor@nihss.ac.za](mailto:bar.editor@nihss.ac.za) to request a link the recording of the entire discussion.

“It is very important for us to understand the evolution of the BRICS; where it was in 2009 and where it is today.”

Sanusha Naidu, Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Global Dialogue

marginalisation and vulnerability but this has not been because of dependence. It is time for the BRICS to move beyond rhetorical language and make the economic development priorities much more engaged and aligned with the citizenry they serve,” said Naidu.

### The strategic framing of the BRICS

As a former political science student, Lecturer at the Wits School of Governance Lihle Ngcobozi reflected on the BRICS as an intervention that was aimed at introducing a new geopolitical dynamic, not only within the global financing space but also within the general global economy and the political economy as well.

“At the time, BRICS was trying to find ways to destabilise or rather diffuse long-standing power dynamics and the nexus of power within the Global North. They wanted to change how they interact with the Global South and how these have created quite

the blocs that these particular countries represent. In trying to introduce these new management systems and new ways of economic interactions and to some extent, foreign policy, we wanted to find ways of shifting the assumptions of where the nexus of power tilts within the global order, not just politically but in how the nexus of power sits within the financial terrain of the global markets,” said Ngcobozi.

She posed the question of whether the BRICS, in the face of this particular pandemic, had indeed been able to position itself in a fundamentally different way in the context of the global mix of power.

“When we think about the politics around vaccinations, patents and what a lot of people have dubbed ‘vaccine apartheid’, you begin to question if there really is a space for cooperative alliances such as BRICS to fundamentally shift and change the terrain of power within moments of crisis and beyond that.”



# SABYA

South African BRICS  
Youth Association

The South African BRICS Youth Association (SABYA) is trailblazing new paths for youth voices in the BRICS community. Founded after the 2018 BRICS Youth Summit in Limpopo, SABYA continues to implement programmes and projects to usher in a new generation of BRICS-conscious experts, leaders and activists.

SABYA hopes to host these Forums annually, drawing youth to become more intimately involved in the BRICS community. In the first two quarters of 2022 SABYA is hosting a bilateral Youth Forums series between young leaders in South Africa and each of the BRICS nations, acting as a springboard to establishing bilateral youth working groups that promote peer-to-peer cooperation between youth from the different nations.

In March and April, the Association hosted the SA-China Youth Forum and the SA-Brazil Youth Forum, in partnership with the GEBRICS think tank at the University of Sao Paulo. In May the organisation will host the SA-India Youth Forum, followed by the SA-Russia Youth Forum in June.

SABYA is a registered membership-based organisation open to all South African youth. Website: <https://sabya.org.za/membership/>



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# GLOBAL AFFAIRS



Prof Tulio de Oliveira, Minister Blade Nzimande, Prof Derrick Swartz and Dr Phil Mjwara on a walkabout of the NantSA Vaccine Manufacturing Campus in Brackenfell, Cape Town.

## Africa moves closer to vaccine self-sufficiency

**A**frica and other developing regions were last in the queue when the first Covid-19 vaccines made their appearance early in 2021; and that state of vaccine inequity is still in evidence.

Even today, vaccine supply is dominated by a few major pharmaceutical companies in North America, the United Kingdom and Europe. Nothing concrete has yet come of calls – led by South Africa and India and supported by around 100 other countries – for companies to waive their intellectual property rights temporarily and enable more companies to legally produce Covid-19 drugs, vaccines and testing kits.

In fact, it was only in March 2022 that South Africa, India, the United States and the European Union, all World Trade Organization (WTO) members, reached consensus on a patent waiver for Covid-19 vaccines specifically. But the agreement is still tentative and would have to be accepted by all 164 WTO member states before it could be adopted.

Meanwhile, the pharmaceutical industry has for the most part dug in its heels and held onto its Covid-19 pandemic-related intellectual property for dear life. In March this year, for example, American pharmaceutical company Pfizer blocked a request by the non-profit organisation Knowledge Ecology International (KEI) for a compulsory licence in the Dominican Republic for Paxlovid, one of the latest Covid-19 treatment pills.

(Interestingly, in February 2022, Pfizer posted a net profit of some USD 22 billion for 2021, more than double its previous

year's profits. In the same month, World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Dr Tedros Adanom Ghebreyesus noted that more than 80% of Africa's population had yet to receive a single dose of a Covid-19 vaccine.)

There are apparently all kinds of complicated legal reasons why patent waivers would supposedly not be the answer to the vaccine vacuum in developing countries. Yet other arguments have also been advanced, including the claim that lower income nations would not have the means to produce vaccines on their home soil.

This is despite Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) having identified at least seven African pharmaceutical companies that could produce a Covid-19 vaccine in under six months, if existing producers shared their technology, according to a February 2022 editorial on the website of the Heinrich Boll Stiftung.

In any event, doubts over Africa's

ability to produce its own vaccines have been firmly dispelled by several important recent developments.

### Breakthroughs for Africa

In January 2022, Afrigen Biologics, a biotechnology company based in Cape Town, South Africa, became the first company in Africa to produce an mRNA vaccine, using publicly available data from Moderna, another American pharmaceutical company. This followed Afrigen's selection as host of the mRNA Technology Transfer Hub, a WHO pilot project aimed at assisting lower income countries to develop their vaccine-manufacturing capacity.

While Afrigen's vaccine milestone was a breakthrough for the continent, production so far is limited to laboratory-scale batches. The next step is to scale up, producing enough vaccines for clinical trials. Afrigen has reportedly set its sights on becoming the first South African company to have a manufacturing site certified to produce clinical-grade vaccines.

Meanwhile, also in January 2022, African vaccine-manufacturing capacity reached another milestone when President Cyril Ramaphosa officially launched the NantSA Vaccine Manufacturing Campus in Brackenfell, Cape Town, aimed at accelerating the domestic production of pharmaceuticals, biologics and vaccines.

"Africa should no longer be last in line to access vaccines against pandemics," President Ramaphosa said, making it clear that the new campus is part of a "far broader initiative" that would propel Africa into a new era of health science. "Today, we are marking the establishment of a company that aims to develop next-generation vaccines that will reach patients across the continent."

NantSA will be the first African facility to produce vaccines from beginning to end, meaning it will manufacture the drug substance used in vaccines through to the final product. The facility is being developed at a cost of "at least ZAR 3 billion", according to Dr Patrick Soon-Shiong, a South African-borne scientist whose US-based company NantWorks is providing the funding, know-how and technology transfer for the campus.

The company has also entered into a partnership with the South African Medical

Research Council (SAMRC) and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) to expedite and expand the manufacturing of biologics, immunotherapeutics and vaccines in South Africa.

In addition, the Shan Soon-Shiong Family Foundation has provided a ZAR 100 million endowment to support the education and training of a skilled workforce in the biotechnology and life sciences industry.

### Progress only possible through collaboration

President Ramaphosa emphasised the importance of collaboration, noting that the NantSA facility would complement the work already being done by companies such as Aspen, Biovac and Afrigen in South Africa, and by other companies elsewhere on the continent.

### Better prepared for the future

Dr Bonginkosi Blade Nzimande, Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, who also spoke at the NantSA launch, said government's thinking went beyond the Covid-19 pandemic.

"As we all know, global health organisations have indicated that Covid-19 will more than likely not be the last global health pandemic. We know the human world will never be free of microbial threats, but science and technology greatly enhances our understanding of how to effectively manage its impact on human health," he said.

"The South African government strongly believes that it is vital to better prepare for a future marked by new kinds of zoonotic and climate-driven health threats. This requires massive public

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“Africa should no longer be last in line to access vaccines against pandemics.”

President Cyril Ramaphosa

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Referring to South Africa's capabilities in genomic surveillance, which are recognised worldwide and have been vital in detecting the emergence of new Covid-19 variants, he said this had only been possible through collaboration.

"Here we talk about the collaboration between the laboratories, scientists and academic institutions that established the Network for Genomic Surveillance in South Africa. We also talk about the collaboration between the public, private and non-profit sectors in funding this work."

Similarly, President Ramaphosa acknowledged the role of collaborative networks across Africa, including the Access to Advanced Healthcare Coalition and the collaboration between the African Union, the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention and numerous institutions across the continent. "... With the support of many international partners, we have mounted a formidable response to Covid-19 in Africa," he said.

and private investment in a whole range of predictive, diagnostic, surveillance, therapeutic and health management capabilities."

Referring to the NantSA campus, Dr Nzimande said the hope was it would "strike as wide a range of public-private sector partnerships as possible" to expand South Africa's strategic capabilities for the future. "Our fundamental policy objective is to promote and secure access to affordable and universal healthcare products and services to ensure our national sovereignty."

Africa is well on its way to vaccine self-sufficiency. As President Ramaphosa said at the NantSA launch: "The pandemic has revealed the huge disparities that exist within and between countries in access to quality healthcare, medicines, diagnostics and vaccines. At the same time, the pandemic has revealed the depth of scientific knowledge, expertise and capacity on our continent." **BR**

# Covid-19

## STATISTICS



### Tracking the impact on BRICS

**W** Since the outbreak of the pandemic in 2019, daily new Covid-19 cases in BRICS countries have been affected by socio-economic and demographic status, health vulnerabilities, resources and policy response. It has never been more important to prioritise pandemic preparedness to reduce socio-economic inequalities and strengthen the resilience of health systems to better respond to public health emergencies. The past two years have shown the global community that resources are needed to explore ways of strengthening public health and health system resilience in all countries to utilise interventions on curbing the pandemic effectively.

#### SOUTH AFRICA



Total cases	4 041 890
Total deaths	102 311
Active cases	13 491



#### BRAZIL

Total cases	34 870 394
Total deaths	688 205
Active cases	139 513

At the time of going to print, all five member states have collectively

### RUSSIA



Total cases	21 429 506
Total deaths	390 175
Active cases	237 497

### CHINA



Total cases	259 959
Total deaths	5226
Active cases	3987

### INDIA



Total cases	44 654 638
Total deaths	530 446
Active cases	16 543

confirmed 105 256 387 coronavirus cases and 1 716 363 deaths.

Source: COVID Live - Coronavirus Statistics - Worldometer (worldometers.info)

# VIEWPOINT

## ABOUT AUTHOR

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KATLEGO SCHEEPERS

## Call for China to play a catalytic role in Africa's development



On the strength of China's Chairship of the BRICS in 2022, Africa looks forward to the country playing a catalytic role in dealing with issues on the continent and in advancing Africa's demand for greater multilateralism in world affairs.

Dr David Monyae, Director of the Centre for China Africa Studies at the University of Johannesburg, issued this call during the South African BRICS Think Tank (SABTT) dialogue on

27 January this year on China's Chairship. Dr Monyae spoke immediately after the address by Mr Li Zhigang, Minister in the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in South Africa, who spoke about his country's priorities for the BRICS Chairship.

Noting that the dialogue on China's priorities for the year 2022 came at a critical moment, Dr Monyae said the world was constantly shifting in directions that were unpredictable and over which Africa had no control.

"Given this context, this is precisely why the BRICS exists – to give the Global South a voice. BRICS came about to give us a voice in a world that has historically, since 1945, been dominated by Western countries. Since its formation, BRICS has done exceptionally well," Dr Monyae remarked.

One of the major BRICS achievements that he pointed out was the formation of the New Development Bank (NDB). However, in the past three or four years, the NDB had encountered

global challenges and factors beyond the control of any one state.

He encouraged the audience to ask the critical question - Do we need the BRICS? His answer was yes, he said, conceding that he, as an African, was biased towards the African continent and hopeful that China's Chairship would be to Africa's advantage.

### China's catalytic role in Africa

"As China takes Chairship in 2022, as Africa we look forward to our BRICS partner playing a catalytic role in dealing with issues in our continent. We need to strengthen multilateralism, particularly in the United Nations (UN). It is the expectation that China as a partner will advance Africa's demand for greater transparency and the opening up of the United Nations Security Council. This is a struggle that has been going on for decades – a struggle to include the representation of 55 countries and 1.2 billion people - but the UN has remained unchanged. There needs to be representation not just for Africa but also for Latin America," said Dr Monyae.

He went on to say that China is a country that has dealt extremely well with the issue of poverty alleviation since 1978. Poverty alleviation has been a central theme in the BRICS since its formation and continues to be an ever-present topic in the United Nations as well.

"China has made great strides in alleviating poverty through massive infrastructure development, making educational opportunities available, women empowerment, closing the gap between rural and urban and maximising the use of technology to ensure that the rural populace is digitised. For example, tomatoes have been sold speedily and efficiently on big markets using emerging e-commerce. It is important that we (Africa) take lessons from China," said Dr Monyae.

Poverty alleviation is a central theme that China is continuing from its BRICS



South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, left, shakes hands with Chinese President Xi Jinping

predecessor as Chair, India. There was a general consensus during the dialogue that African countries need to look beyond just agriculture but also start to speak about appropriate technology, scientific education, understanding ever-changing weather patterns and meeting new global challenges.

**The rise of terrorism is a concern**

“As we have seen, there have been many military take-overs as a domino effect, which is a worrying factor for the African Union (AU) and the UN. This instability speaks to the rise of terrorism squeezed from other conflict zones such as Iraq. That is a critical area that BRICS needs to discuss and bring to the fore – the threat brought about by terrorism, particularly in the West Africa region,” remarked Dr Monyae.

He expressed concern about the economic policies applied in these political developments. He noted that these policies have implications for BRICS and the Global South, and that there is an urgent need to air out these issues. Africa remains the poorest region and requires stability.

Photo by Getty Images

“ We see the digital divide is worsening poverty in the African continent. We need to address the digital divide and ensure that Africa has data sovereignty. ”

Another concern brought to the fore by Dr Monyae in his address was the issue of managing pandemic vaccines and vaccine inequality. For example, while people in some developed countries have had their fourth jabs of vaccines, there were countries whose people had not had even a single dose of the vaccine by January 2022.

“This is an issue BRICS can engage on. In South Africa, we welcome China’s role in building manufacturing hubs and the exchange of students among the BRICS countries in the areas of health,” Dr Monyae said.

Concluding his talk, he expressed

concerns about the impact of the digital divide.

“The world is increasingly moving from physical to digital space, and that brings challenges of governance, ethics and know-how. We see the digital divide is worsening poverty in the African continent. We need to address the digital divide and ensure that Africa has data sovereignty. Thus, the role of BRICS is to bring these issues [to the forefront] at a multilateral level,” he said, such as by establishing rules on the governance of data and ensuring that there is knowledge transfer. **BR**

## BRICS cooperation in the field of astronomy and higher education

South Africa is a key partner of Russia in the field of science and education on the African continent. The main joint projects of Russia and South Africa are being implemented through BRICS.

During the first quarter of 2022, at a meeting of the BRICS Steering Committee on Science, Technology and Innovation, among other issues, a collaboration of flagship projects was discussed. Areas of cooperation on them have already been developed by the BRICS working groups on astronomy, ICT and high-performance computing systems, biotechnology and biomedicine, including human health and neuroscience.

Research in astronomy in South Africa is coordinated by the National Foundation for Scientific Research. Mansur Ibragimov, Senior Researcher at the Institute of Astronomy of the Russian Academy of Sciences, noted that in the 21st century, South Africa is experiencing a real breakthrough in the field of astronomy.

Russia and South Africa also cooperate in the field of higher education. Today, 638 citizens of the Republic of South Africa are studying in higher education programmes (bachelor's, specialist's and master's degrees) in Russian universities, including their foreign branches. The most popular specialty among South African citizens who arrived to study at Russian universities within the quota of the Government of the Russian Federation in the 2021/22 academic year was medical care.

Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation Press Centre, 20 April 2022

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01



## A united BRICS agenda on climate change

*By Krish Chetty, Chief Researcher at the Inclusive Economic Development (IED) division of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC).*

The Paris Agreement, adopted in 2015 under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), was an important milestone in global efforts to combat climate change. The process established by the Paris Agreement provided for countries to develop Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to outline their climate ambitions, which must be revised every five years, ideally with an ever-higher level of ambition on key areas of climate action such as mitigation, adaptation and finance.

Despite the progress that has been achieved, serious concerns remain around the scale and efficacy of global cooperation on climate action. NDCs submitted to date, if implemented as proposed, will not achieve the Paris Agreement goal of keeping global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, but ideally below 1.5 degrees Celsius. The Covid-19 pandemic, moreover, has disrupted policy processes and diverted attention from climate action.

In this context, the imperative for the BRICS countries to pursue ambitious climate action is evident, particularly considering their emissions and carbon-intensity profile.

BRICS countries are among the highest carbon dioxide emitters globally: 2019 data ranking countries by carbon emissions indicates that China is the top emitter, India third, Russia fourth, South Africa 12th and Brazil 13th.

Despite certain commonalities in energy profiles, climate vulnerabilities and other climate challenges, it must be recognised that the engagement of individual states in multilateral climate action, including the UNFCCC Paris Agreement process, is driven by a complex set of national, regional and multilateral considerations. Alliances and groupings such as G77 and China (G77+China), small island

developing states and the Africa group of negotiators have come to play an important role in global climate diplomacy.

Climate change has consistently featured on the BRICS agenda since the grouping's establishment. A united BRICS agenda on climate change could play a pivotal role in global climate change policy responses.

### An emerging agenda

Climate change has consistently featured on the BRICS agenda since the grouping's establishment. The outcome statement of the first BRIC summit in 2009 called for constructive dialogue on dealing with climate change but also insisted that such dialogue should be based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibility, noting the need to combine climate action with steps to fulfil socio-economic development tasks. BRICS Ministers of Environment have been meeting formally on an annual basis since 2015, the year in which both the Paris Agreement and the UN Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals were adopted.

Outcome documents emerging from BRICS summits and meetings of BRICS Ministers of Environment have over time addressed a number of climate- and environment-related proposals and calls to action, yet at the same time key themes have remained relatively constant, particularly related to climate change. The BRICS group has underscored the importance of a collective, multilateral response to the climate crisis through the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement. This is evident again in the New Delhi Declaration, which emerged from the BRICS summit convened on 9 September 2021, where the BRICS group reaffirmed its commitment to the full implementation of the UNFCCC, including its Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement.

A commitment to multilateral responses to global challenges was also evident in the call for cooperation and collective action on the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity and other multilateral platforms and processes.

### **Common but differentiated responsibilities**

A further principle repeatedly emphasised by the BRICS group has been an insistence that climate action under the UNFCCC and its Paris Agreement takes account of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities in the light of different national circumstances. This principle is an essential component of the Paris Agreement and the NDC process, emphasising that states' contribution to global climate action should be "nationally determined". The Paris Agreement enjoins all Parties to contribute to the peaking of global greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible, but recognises that peaking emissions will take longer for developing countries.

The principle of common but differentiated responsibilities is further reflected in the Paris Agreement's call for developed countries to take the lead in undertaking economy-wide absolute emission reduction targets, while developing countries are enjoined to continue enhancing their mitigation efforts and move over time towards economy-wide emission reduction targets in light of different national circumstances.

BRICS summit outcome statements have reiterated the Paris Agreement's call for developed countries to support developing countries to achieve ambitious climate action, including through funding, capacity building and technology transfer, while emphasising that climate actions must be implemented on the basis of equity and in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty. The BRICS group have emphasised the need to ensure a holistic approach to climate change, focused on all dimensions, including mitigation, adaptation, financing, capacity building and technology transfer. Individual BRICS countries, such as South Africa, have also made statements in domestic support of climate justice and a rights-based approach to climate change.

In these and other respects, there is a clear alignment between the messaging of the BRICS group and the broader group of developing states convened under G77+China. On the issue of climate finance, for example, there is a clear sense that a breakthrough is needed on financing for developing

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“There is an urgent need for new and additional, sustained, predictable, adequate, transparent and timely finance, with a significant public-funded component, with less conditionality and more reasonable co-financing requirements.”

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countries as a key enabler of enhanced ambition and climate action. There is an urgent need for new and additional, sustained, predictable, adequate, transparent and timely finance, with a significant public-funded component, with less conditionality and more reasonable co-financing requirements.

COP26 was an important opportunity to achieve progress on a multilaterally agreed definition of climate finance and the related methodologies for accounting, and for developed countries to present a clear roadmap on their past, existing and continued obligations to mobilise climate finance of USD 100 billion annually to support climate action by developing countries.

In the area of adaptation, the BRICS group is also aligned with developing country ambitions for a greater balance between mitigation and adaptation in global climate action. This includes enhanced climate finance for adaptation activities. The UN Environment Programme has estimated that annual adaptation costs in developing countries alone are in the range of USD 70 billion and will likely escalate to USD 140 billion to USD 300 billion by 2030.

While the proportion of climate finance allocated to adaptation has been increasing, it still represents only about

a quarter of total climate finance, and the majority of climate financing continues to be channelled to mitigation activities. For South Africa and the Africa region at large, adaptation and resilience building are key priorities. Many African countries stand to bear the brunt of climate impacts and are ill-equipped to manage increased climate risks related to natural disasters, food and water security, health and other areas.

### **BRICS and biodiversity**

There are important linkages between the adaptation agenda and global efforts to address the biodiversity crisis, protect and restore ecosystem services, and develop a post-2020 global biodiversity framework under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Nature-based solutions are increasingly prominent as part of global climate action, and there is growing interest in how such solutions, in the context of the restoration economy, can play a role in contributing to multiple priorities simultaneously, particularly in relation to climate, biodiversity and job creation.

The 2020 UN General Assembly Summit on Biodiversity provided an opportunity for BRICS countries to individually highlight these messages, as evidenced in President Cyril Ramaphosa's call for pandemic recovery efforts to "foster greater and not less harmony with nature" and President Xi Jinping's call for countries to find development opportunities in the protection of nature, ensuring both ecological preservation and high-quality economic development.

With China hosting the 15th CBD Conference of the Parties, through which the post-2020 global biodiversity framework is to be finalised, the emphasis on biodiversity-climate-development linkages will undoubtedly remain an important theme in multilateral forums and groupings in which it plays a part, including BRICS.

Regarding the energy transition, it must be acknowledged that fossil fuels continue to play an important part in the energy mix of all BRICS countries. BRICS countries are also reliant, whether as importers or exporters, on global trade in fossil fuel resources. It is noteworthy, however, that BRICS countries have been increasingly investing in research and development, as well as manufacturing, relating to renewable energy technologies. Thus, there is considerable potential for cooperation in the areas of technology, financing, investment and research in support of the energy transition.

The 2012 BRICS Summit highlighted the need for multilateral cooperation on energy within the BRICS framework. In subsequent years, further steps were taken to institutionalise such cooperation, including the convening of the first BRICS Energy Ministerial meeting in 2015. The BRICS Energy Research Co-operation Platform (BRICS ERCP) was established in 2018, a BRICS Committee of Senior Energy Officials has been convened, and a Road Map for BRICS Energy Cooperation up to 2025 has been adopted.

The communique adopted by the BRICS Energy Ministerial meeting of 2 September 2021 explicitly recognises the relationship between energy and climate and the importance of lowering greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions for mitigation, as well as the need for adaptation of the energy sector to climate change as envisaged in the Paris Agreement. The communique also noted agreement on "pragmatic, equitable and economically viable approaches towards reaching energy and climate goals, including Paris Agreement temperature goals, through building cleaner, sustainable, low-GHG emission energy systems in accordance with national priorities".

While there is a continued emphasis on respect for national sovereignty and the interests of participating states, and given that energy cooperation will be undertaken on a voluntary basis, there is clearly an acknowledgement that the energy transition is a fundamental component of global action on climate change. This has been coupled with a strengthening of platforms and processes through which energy cooperation can be facilitated within the BRICS framework. Given the importance of fossil fuels in BRICS economies, there is also potential to deepen engagement and lesson sharing concerning the just transition and management of risks related to stranded assets (fossil fuel reserves that cannot be exploited in the context of climate action and the energy transition).

### **Covid-19 and calls to 'grow back better'**

Beyond its immediate toll in terms of lives and health, the Covid-19 pandemic has caused enormous economic damage and disrupted policy action at national, regional and global levels. COP26, initially set to be convened in November 2020, was postponed to 2021 [and took place then despite calls for a further postponement].

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“The UNFCCC COP and the CBD COP15 gatherings are important opportunities for BRICS states to flesh out strategies for such integrated responses.”

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The health, economic and social policy responses to the pandemic, including vaccine development and access, have understandably dominated the global agenda since the pandemic's emergence. It is noteworthy, however, that calls quickly emerged for an inclusive green recovery and efforts to “grow back better”. This framing acknowledges that the disruption caused by the pandemic to global social and economic systems also presents an opportunity to reassess, reimagine and redesign these systems.

BRICS summits convened since the emergence of the pandemic have engaged with cooperation around pandemic responses and broader health cooperation, while BRICS states have individually used forums such as the 2020 UN General Assembly Summit on Biodiversity to highlight the linkages between health/social, economic and environmental agendas and the need to maintain momentum on climate and biodiversity action as countries respond to the pandemic. The UNFCCC COP and the CBD COP15 gatherings are important opportunities for BRICS states to flesh out strategies for such integrated responses. This also represents fertile ground for cooperation through BRICS platforms and processes related to research, innovation, technology transfer, knowledge exchange and financing.

Looking ahead to COP27 in November 2022, which will be hosted by an African state [Egypt], the climate


priorities and principles emphasised by BRICS are likely to remain prominent on the COP agenda. This includes collective, multilateral responses to climate change, in accordance with common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities in the light of different national circumstances, an emphasis on a balanced focus on both mitigation and adaptation, improving the scale and efficacy of climate finance, and emphasising the importance of support by developed countries to developing countries in terms of technology, financing and capacity building.

There will be further opportunities to strengthen alignment between the BRICS climate agenda and other important groupings such as G77+China, also recognising the important role that processes and dialogues convened through the BASIC group (Brazil, South Africa, India and China) continue to play in global climate policy processes.

#### **Looking to BRICS for leadership**

The UNFCCC and its Paris Agreement remain the preeminent institutional processes for multilateral cooperation on climate change. NDCs are the building blocks of the Paris Agreement process and the vehicles by which countries contribute fair, equitable and self-determined climate action. It is thus very important that BRICS countries illustrate leadership in this regard by ensuring that their NDCs are not only ambitious in terms of both mitigation and adaptation pledges and content, but that they are developed and implemented in a manner that reflects climate justice considerations, inclusivity and efficacy.

Progress on the energy transition remains critical to achieving the Paris Agreement climate goals, and technical, financial and diplomatic cooperation in this regard should be further strengthened within the BRICS framework. Fully embracing the energy transition and broader mitigation and adaptation action will not only ensure effective climate responses but also allow BRICS countries to create green jobs and strategically position themselves to benefit from the technological, economic, and geostrategic shifts that are reshaping the world. In this context, the BRICS framework provides an important platform for dialogue, consensus building and cooperation, with significant potential to support a broader shift to longer-term low carbon development.



## 02



## Searching for markers for a post-Covid-19 globally recovered economy: Shapes and forms

*By Dr Kagiso Pooe, Public Policy Specialist, Wits School of Governance*

The Coronavirus disease (Covid-19) can, without much debate, be considered one of the single most defining moments for the globalised world and economy. For states in the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) alliance, Covid-19 arguably represents a forced review of each state's individual socio-economic policy choices over the past few decades and, finally, raises key questions about how BRICS as a multilateral institution can and will operate after or under the new normal of Covid-19.

Understanding that there is no perfect form of analysis for this, a look into the future offers some possibilities as to “shapes and forms” of a globally inclusive economic recovery post-Covid-19 and BRICS-informed.

This analysis focuses on three main markers that work on a simple model of analysis. These markers are, first, external BRICS considerations such as the operations of non-BRICS states, and second, the internal considerations and mechanisations of BRICS states in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic, and specifically which economic tools or sectors might influence the choices of the BRICS alliance. Finally, it seems that, oddly enough, the previous BRICS Declarations have sown the possible seeds of the future BRICS alliance's vision of a post-Covid-19 sustainable economic recovery for the coming years.

### Forks in the road

For the first marker, external considerations, the basic premise is to ponder which immediate and external factors exist for the BRICS alliance to consider.

The traditional usage of the metaphor “fork in the road”

speaks to the idea of an individual or institution being asked to make a long-term decision between two options, and that the decision once made does not allow for a reversal. A great example of this metaphor is seen in a Russian folktale where a vityaz (knight) is told, “If you ride to the left, you will lose your horse, if you ride to the right, you will lose your head.”

Yet, in the context of the present day, the immediate external factors for the BRICS states and alliances to consider are too numerous and in fact, there will be multiple sets of “forks in the road”. However, each of these “forks” is linked to an external factor unique to each BRICS state but not necessarily removed from the broader BRICS alliance.

For instance, in the near past, development had come to be framed in two ways: either follow the Western states' liberal democratic order or risk being seen as a pariah experimenting with ideas such as socialism/communism or totalitarianism. However, the development of states such as the People's Republic of China or even the Russian Federation means that the Western states' monopoly on cultural, economic, social and political indicators of power is no longer the only discourse in how states can develop. There are now multiple roads for this, each with ramifications for natural resources, democratic practices, foreign policy and the like. In the case of the BRICS states, their choice to work formally as an alliance means that there are numerous forks in the road for them to consider in working towards a Post-Covid-19 existence and searching for new, inclusive and sustainable economic choices.

To begin with, how will the United States of America (USA) regime under President Joe Biden approach

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discussions about the post-Covid-19 global economic recovery and alternative political regimes, in relation to the declared interests of other, non-Western states? While the rhetoric of the USA regime under President Biden differs from that of the previous incumbent, President Donald Trump, the new Biden regime will likely carry out or depend on some of his established “America First” practices. The forthcoming actions of the Biden Presidency will likely create numerous sets of scenarios and forks in the road for the BRICS alliance to consider; some might be advantageous or disadvantageous to the individual BRICS states. For instance, what does the Biden regime’s exit from the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan mean for BRICS member states such as the People’s Republic of China and the Republic of India?

Consequently, it will be important for BRICS as an alliance to carefully calculate whether working with the Biden regime advances a healthy, globally inclusive economic recovery for all, or simply for the USA and Western states only. In addition to the various sets of permutations that will emanate from the Biden regime’s actions, it will also be important to consider how a more aggressive European Union and recently “exited” United Kingdom may try to play a more active role in Africa, South America and Asia, with the pretext that they are looking to re-spread “Western” values and systems.

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“It is foolhardy for the economies of North America and Western Europe to attempt to lock developing countries out of new technologies and finances, only to insist that they abandon their most available and abundant resources, such as fossil fuel resources.”

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However, attempts to track the different “forks in the road” for the BRICS’ contribution to an inclusive post-Covid-19 global economic recovery will also be heavily dependent on the internal dispositions of BRICS states.

### Impact of internal dynamics

The internal dynamics of BRICS states will ultimately shape the approach of any post-Covid-19 global economic recovery. Thus, it is important for each BRICS state to carefully consider and re-evaluate what positive and negative lessons the Covid-19 pandemic has had on their internal ecosystems as states. If this reflection is not carried out in an honest and systematic manner, the BRICS alliance risks being an alliance low on substance and an ineffectual partner for shaping an alternative global economy and political agenda.

In the case of the Republic of South Africa, Covid-19 has brought to the fore the failure of the government over the last few decades to craft and implement economic development measures such as high-quality bulk infrastructure, eradicate mass-scale unemployment and close the development gap between rural and urban areas. These problems have long been in the government’s purview and have featured in numerous planning documents such as the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (Gear) economic programme, Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), the National Development Plan 2030, and others. However, the pandemic has also highlighted some positives, such as how the South African private and education sector can jumpstart the South African economy in many areas such as digital education, smart health products and imaginative economic tools for the digital economy, providing proper imagination and state-craft are exercised going forward.

If South Africa is to become a stronger contributor to the BRICS alliance, it needs to address these problems or risk being seen as the weakest link in the development aims of the BRICS alliance. However, the criticism of South Africa here should be seen as positive rather

than negative, as the government under the African National Congress (ANC) has been quite forthright and open to looking for possible remedies. And it would not be wrong to argue that Covid-19 has shown that all BRICS states have room to improve on certain economic and governance matters. Some examples follow:

- Brazil needs to reform and build its economy to counter pre-Covid-19 problems such as unemployment and ensure the state has the requisite skills to enable economic growth and assist the most vulnerable in society.
- Russia is overreliant on natural resources such as oil and gas, and needs to better leverage its sound education system/human capital to advance new industries of the future.
- India needs to build an economic agenda (through tough choices) that better reflect the strengths of the Indian economy and can close the economic divide in the country.
- China is too reliant on being an export-orientated market and needs to build its domestic economy, in line with historic growth levels. The country needs to carefully consider how to use its growing political and economic strength in the increasingly hostile post-Covid-19 global environment.

If the BRICS states individually do not learn the lessons of Covid-19 for their socio-economic development, they will dilute their potential to influence and ultimately lead global policy discussions on the manner and form of the long-term future of the inclusive global economy, once more becoming bystanders to the Western states. It therefore becomes critical not to allow internal weaknesses to undermine the vision and mission of the BRICS alliance. This in turn will necessitate serious and sometimes exacting policy discussions and positions to be taken amongst the BRICS states. However, a unifying avenue could be how and in which direction the BRICS alliance could navigate the shape and form of the economic recovery.

### Mixing new tech and old fuel

It could well be that the BRICS contribution to the post-Covid-19 global economic recovery lies in how each BRICS state individually and collectively addresses its current and future human resources development in key sectors,

“The BRICS states are fully invested in a post-Covid-19 economic agenda and future based on clean energy. Developing countries must be allowed the opportunity to be part of the new clean-energy future.”

most notably the technological/digital economy (fourth industrial revolution) and the agricultural and green economy. There is no doubt that how the BRICS states invest and advance in these economic sectors will determine where and whether they will be able to compete with Western states or, more importantly, create industries that can address the employment losses created by Covid-19 and the fallout associated with it. However, as much as Covid-19 has accelerated the development and value of the technological/digital economy, a lot of the developments in this sector for the BRICS states will be about the medium and long term.

This then raises the question of what sector will and can be used in the short and near-medium term to advance internal economic goals and objectives?

Many of the BRICS states, while rightly needing to invest and ensure they can develop the green economic sector, also have to strategically consider how they will use and leverage out the use of fossil fuels. While it is not popular to advance the idea of fossil fuels as a basis for short and medium-term economic advancement, it will be necessary for the developed states that are so eager for BRICS and other non-developed states to stop using fossil fuels to put some solutions on the development table. Examples are technology exchanges and capital investment for this sector with no-political strings attached.

It is foolhardy for the economies of North America and Western Europe to attempt to lock developing countries out of new technologies and finances, only to insist that they abandon their most available and abundant resources, such as fossil fuel resources. Similarly, it would be counterproductive for the Western states to refuse to provide the requisite technological intellectual property associated with implementing and running green technology-based economies for free or at an equitable level, or attempt to influence institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund not to invest in BRICS or other developing states because of their energy choices. The BRICS states are fully invested in a post-Covid-19 economic agenda and future based on clean energy. Developing countries must be allowed the opportunity to be part of the new clean-energy future.

In this regard, the BRICS states and their alliance partners need to be seen as champions of advancing a technological vision of old and new technologies for the greater global world. They should also be asserting the rights of other developing states to stand up against the Western states and their unfair practices. The basis for this has already been put in place at past BRICS events and the declarations that emanated from them.

### Seeds of hope for the future

It is fascinating to consider that, at BRICS meetings and in official documents over the past decade, some foreshadowing of what the future economy might look like, pre-Covid-19, was discernible. For instance:

- the Sanya Declaration 2011 spoke to the idea of a “Broad Vision, Shared Prosperity”, which could be considered as an early discussion around a sustainable and equitable economy for all;
- the Goa Declaration 2016 echoed the Sanya Declaration in expressing the need for the BRICS states to be busy with “Building Responsive, Inclusive and Collective Solutions” in their economies;
- at Johannesburg 2018, the BRICS meeting advanced the idea of “BRICS in Africa: Collaboration for Inclusive Growth and Shared Prosperity in the 4th Industrial Revolution”. It is worthwhile considering how things might have gone for the majority of developing states if the BRICS alliance had advanced this particular declaration pre-Covid-19. It is not wrong to assume that this declaration

captures perfectly how the South African government, as a key partner in the BRICS alliance, could advance this vision among the African states.

These declarations indicate that the foundation is already in place for the BRICS alliance to play a pivotal role in the global post-Covid-19 recovery narrative. Furthermore, there are opportunities around which the BRICS alliance partners can coalesce and possibly lead in expressing the Global South’s much-needed voice on what form and shape the post-Covid-19 recovery should take.

### Concluding thoughts and recommendations

There are three main areas of activity that the BRICS could consider towards ensuring an inclusive and sustainable post-Covid-19 economic recovery plan:

- The New Development Bank (NDB), building on the NDB’s General Strategy: 2017–2021, should factor in the existence of the Covid-19 pandemic and then select three key sectors in which each BRICS state could become a global leader.
- A dedicated Research and Advisory entity could be established in each BRICS state, via the NDB, to give economic and international market policy advice to key players within the state, while also looking into BRICS linkages.
- In the region in which each BRICS state is located, encourage regional players to join in BRICS projects as a means of building inclusive and regionally relevant BRICS-influenced initiatives. This does not have to take the form of large investments, but rather strategic ones to build the regional economies.
- Finally, it is important to remember that the Covid-19 pandemic has been a human catastrophe and not only an economic one. It would seem that to make use of the lessons from the pandemic, governments, including those in the BRICS alliance, should ensure that the post-Covid-19 economic narrative puts people’s socio-economic development front and centre, creating something better we all can look forward to.



## Prospects for green energy cooperation within BRICS

*By Romy Chevallier (SAILA)*

Individually, BRICS member states have made varying degrees of progress in introducing different types of green and renewable energy sources into their economies. Their progress could be significantly accelerated with greater cooperation across BRICS countries – something that is lacking at this point in time.

Within the green and renewable energy discourse, cooperation among member states is desperately needed to accelerate BRICS' collective energy transition. The BRICS account for over a third of global energy demand and therefore carry a substantial responsibility for environmental protection through green and renewable energies.

As is clear from the BRICS Heads of State Summit Declarations, the member states appreciate the role and importance of green energies, especially in reducing the BRICS' reliance on fossil fuels and creating employment.

Appreciating the need for cooperation on energy, BRICS announced the launch of the BRICS Energy Research Cooperation Platform (BERCP) during the 2018 Heads of State Summit in Johannesburg. The aim was to allow leading experts and representatives of key energy organisations within the bloc to connect, strengthen partnerships and promote the growth of the energy sector, including renewable energy.

Two years later, in 2020, the first BRICS Energy Technology Report was produced, containing inputs from

more than 550 companies and a number of international experts that identified the shared interests and potential areas of knowledge exchange among BRICS. This was followed by the second report in 2021, providing an update on BRICS countries' energy sectors and developments. Some of these insights are summarised below.

### Member states' strengths and gaps in green and renewable energy

#### Solar energy

China is one of the global leaders within the sphere of solar energy, accounting for 9.2% of the world's total installed photovoltaic energy generation capacity, according to the BERCP. In 2021, China was expected to add 65 GW of solar capacity, bringing total solar installations to over 300 GW, double the total capacity of the European Union.

The Chinese solar sector continues to grow and mature, contributing to a sharp decline in production costs. With these gains in solar generation, China projects it will source 62% of its energy from non-fossil fuels by 2030 and has committed to share knowledge produced by its photovoltaic industrial sector with other BRICS nations.

Brazil, Russia and South Africa have indicated a need to develop their solar production capacity, with expressed

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interest in developing capacity for the production of components needed during the installation and expansion of existing plants.

As reflected in the BERCP, Brazil needs heat-resistant products that are based on thin-film technologies, while Russia requires components for photovoltaic installation, including photovoltaic modules, inverters, converters and distribution cabinets used for low and medium voltage generation. These provide scope for cooperation needed to strengthen BRICS.

#### Wind energy

China and India have progressed considerably in developing their manufacturing capacity to produce gearboxes and towers in the wind energy sector. India, for instance, exports many of these products to Brazil and

In turn, India's and China's advancements in wind turbine technology clearly fit a specific need that has been identified by Russia. Russia intends to expand its local wind turbine manufacturing, with several companies investing in the production of such components. The country has set up special investment contracts which will fund this expansion and is seeking to improve the efficiency of component manufacturing.

South Africa has also identified wind power as an essential component of its renewable energy mix. It has earmarked ideal locations in the Western Cape and Eastern Cape provinces, which could be developed to meet the country's 2030 renewable energy targets. Thus, there is scope for South Africa to collaborate with India and China to promote the adoption of wind power within BRICS.

South Africa has also expressed interest in expanding its battery production capacity so as to participate in the electric vehicle (EV) industrial sector. The country recognises that the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region produces the raw materials needed to manufacture batteries for EVs. Strengthening the manufacturing of batteries within the SADC is an opportunity for South Africa and the rest of the region to enhance employment and economic growth.

A partnership with China in this sector would bear substantial benefits for South Africa, given that China is the largest manufacturer of EV batteries and a leading supplier of lithium ion batteries. China has invested substantially in the innovation

and development of batteries and promoted research into standards for battery charging and the development of complementary accessories.

What is needed is for BRICS to modernise the infrastructure and adopt new technical approaches that will improve energy efficiency.

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“A partnership with China in this sector would bear substantial benefits for South Africa, given that China is the largest manufacturer of EV batteries and a leading supplier of lithium ion batteries.”

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China, and has reported having 20 different companies producing 50 different types of wind turbines.

India's advancement of wind turbine technology has expanded the limits of wind power generation within BRICS, promoting the reliability of wind energy as an alternative power source, into which BRICS can tap.

**Table 1 - Summary of knowledge-sharing opportunities in BRICS**

	<b>Brazil</b>	<b>Russia</b>	<b>India</b>	<b>China</b>	<b>South Africa</b>
<b>Solar</b>	Aims to expand up to 2035, interested in heat-resistant products	Needs components for photovoltaic installation		First in the world with installed capacity	Has good locations for solar projects
<b>Wind</b>		Needs components such as gearboxes, blades	Strength in gearbox manufacturing and tower construction. Supplies Brazil and China	Rapid acceleration of wind capacity	Has good locations for wind projects
<b>Hydro</b>		Needs telemetry systems, hydraulic drilling wrenches', etc		Ability to produce turbine engines for power plant	Rivers offer potential sites for new projects
<b>Clean coal</b>		Will be expanding coal plants	Exploring the utilisation of carbon capture and storage (CCS) systems	Needs to promote CCS. Needs supply of high-quality coal products	Plans to invest in CCS
<b>Batteries</b>	Plans to expand energy storage and storage processing		Needs to decentralise storage	Largest manufacturer of EV batteries and the leading global supplier of lithium ion batteries.	Southern Africa produces relevant raw materials, plans to expand manufacturing
<b>Biomass/ biofuels</b>	Has a competitive advantage		Interested in collaborating in extracting biodiesel raw materials	Strength in utilising/ recycling waste raw materials	Expansion could boost municipal revenue, sites available across the country
<b>Smart grids</b>	Mathematical models, Internet of Things (IoT) software systems	Needs digital modelling techniques	Has had success in smart grid technology	Advanced smart-grids	Needs to expand transmission infrastructure
<b>Energy efficiency</b>			Has had success in LED lighting	Has advanced energy-efficient equipment	
<b>Energy strengths and development needs within BRICS</b>		Needs industry safety techniques and technology for Arctic conditions	Strength in software development, engineering and consulting	Manufacturing engineering, chemical, light products	Need to expand component manufacturing and construction to create jobs. Policy framework needs development at local level

Table 1 - Summary of knowledge sharing opportunities in BRICS (Red highlights areas where support is required, green highlights where support can be provided) - Source - BRICS Energy Research Cooperation Platform (2020a, 2020b).

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### **The importance of BRICS renewable energy associations**

At present, energy-related engagements conducted in the BERCP are facilitated and coordinated by the BRICS Energy Ministers. Still, there is a need to increase the scale of interaction while streamlining the process. Renewable energy associations within member states have much to offer in promoting the development of human

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“ The BERCP is the ideal platform for building partnerships among renewable energy associations, as well as linkages with experts and representatives of the broader energy industry, beyond government. ”

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capital and business interactions among BRICS nations in the domain of green and renewable energy. Industrial associations are also ideal for networks that can be used to advance knowledge sharing.

The BERCP is the ideal platform for building partnerships among renewable energy associations, as well as linkages with experts and representatives of the broader energy industry, beyond government.


For example, the South African Wind Energy Association (SAWEA) advocates for its members to be engaged in the production of wind energy or the components used to supply such energy. SAWEA has the involvement of policymakers and facilitates the sharing of best practices and information among its members. Further, it regularly conducts detailed market research and therefore possesses deep insights into the unique opportunities across the country.

In China, the Chinese Renewable Energy Industries Association (CREIA) was established in 2000 to promote the broad adoption of renewable energies and relevant technologies. The association was formed in response to a policy imperative established as part of China's 10th Five-Year Plan, recognising that renewable energy promotion is essential for national economic and social development.

CREIA differs from its South African counterpart SAWEA as it acts as an umbrella association supporting various renewable energy businesses and serves as a bridge between regulators, research institutions and industry professionals. It has a much larger membership than SAWEA and can draw upon an extensive network to identify relevant experts, if needed, to promote international exchanges and engagements.

In Brazil, the Wind Energy Association (ABEEolica) was launched in 1992 to promote the wind industry's growth in the country by maintaining solid relationships with the state, private sector and civil society. As a non-profit organisation, ABEEolica can engage broadly within Brazil and with its counterparts across South America. Thus, ABEEolica can provide the BRICS with access to regional stakeholders and may provide an opportunity to access expertise outside the immediate BRICS network of businesses.

These associations were predominantly launched in the last decade and have demonstrated their value as custodians of local green energy cooperation and knowledge sharing. They understand the market and regulatory environment in their countries and have representation from across the private sector, academia and in some instances regulators. Integrating these associations



into the BERCP has significant benefits for sharing knowledge across BRICS borders, as well as for building mutual trust – an essential requirement for successful cooperation and knowledge sharing.

**Trust as the cornerstone of cooperation among BRICS nations**

Cooperating in sharing knowledge requires relationships built on mutual trust, especially if member states need to share proprietary information.

Establishing trust is critical given the challenges of distance, language and cultural barriers within BRICS, and for traversing the gaps between knowledge silos, which are prevalent within BRICS, including in countries’ renewable energy industries.

For BRICS to cooperate successfully in green energy, there is a need to break down these barriers and open up spaces for knowledge exchange. Energy diplomacy through the ministries of international affairs must use diplomatic resources to address barriers that impede knowledge exchanges on energy technologies and know-how. Typically, through their consular offices, the ministries have access to relevant personnel who can identify potential barriers that might hamper cooperation, including cultural and language barriers.

Once social barriers are addressed, the renewable energy association has an opportunity to act as the proxy for the country’s specific green/renewable energy sector. The association can identify relevant organisations,

specific experts and the appropriate areas for industry partnerships. Each association can act on behalf of its membership and help the BERCP identify appropriate representatives from the country that can facilitate the knowledge exchanges as highlighted in Table 1.

Cooperation between each country’s renewable energy associations and their embassies or consulates increases the opportunities to build trust among start-ups and innovators in BRICS. After that, through the BERCP, the renewable energy association can start dialogues on regulatory frameworks and insights about the market and available resources.

As the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has noted, the associations are well placed to promote partnerships to advance the just transition to green and renewable energies. When two nations wish to enter into a bilateral partnership, the associations act as proxies of the entire sector and determine which members can collaborate, based on the needs of each country.

Figure 1 below provides an overview of the broad elements required to develop a shared perspective when developing an international partnership. The BERCP provides the means for renewable energy associations to share perspectives and develop trust across their respective boundaries. The ministries of international relations and their embassies or consulate offices create an interface for the respective association members to communicate effectively.

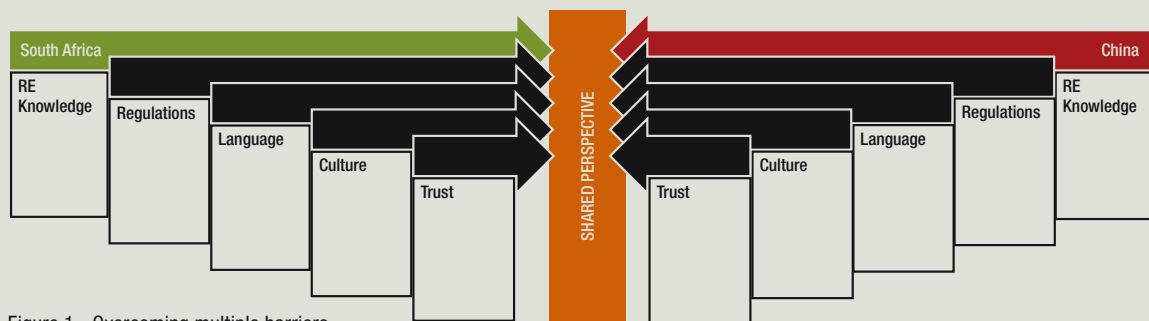


Figure 1 - Overcoming multiple barriers to knowledge sharing, Source: Author

## Recommendations

Cooperation among BRICS through knowledge sharing is key for BRICS countries to embrace green and renewable energies. The BERCP provides a platform for launching BRICS' migration to these energies, as highlighted in the BRICS Energy Technology Report of 2020, which provides the framework and an overview of the opportunities for cooperation and knowledge exchange.

The transition can be further facilitated through:

- BERCP membership being expanded to include representatives of renewable energy associations, and the BERCP's agenda being broadened to promote dialogue, exchange programmes and research initiatives among BRICS countries;
- Ministries of international relations establishing an energy diplomacy platform through which BRICS countries can share resources to promote open communication within the BERCP and during bilateral and multilateral engagements facilitated by the BERCP and
- The BRICS New Development Bank funding and nurturing knowledge development for deployment and management of green energy technologies among BRICS countries.

By cooperating in the green/renewable energy sector, BRICS will directly contribute to the international objectives of mitigating climate change. Through growing their respective renewable energy sectors, this supports the creation of sustainable job and economic growth, which will be beneficial to all BRICS countries. Cooperation and knowledge exchange are critical enablers for BRICS as a whole and for its member states individually. **BR**

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# BOOK REVIEW



## African Special Economic Zones: Lessons and investments from China

**Author:** Bryan Robinson

**Publisher:** Palgrave MacMillan  
[www.palgrave.com](http://www.palgrave.com)

**W**hile Special Economic Zones continue to proliferate globally, their limited success in Africa persists in frustrating policy makers and investors alike. On the other hand, China's adoption of Special Economic Zones has facilitated its miraculous economic

growth trajectory. The book takes an African perspective on what lessons can be gleaned from China's Special Economic Zones and asks what opportunities African Special Economic Zones pose to attract foreign direct investment, with a specific focus on Chinese investors.

It does so by firstly introducing the unique characteristics of African nations – “a continent of contrasts” – suggesting that Special Economic Zones be evaluated, and policies crafted, that are appropriate to the country context. The focus then shifts to a personal assessment by the author of Chinese Special Economic Zones to identify the key success factors for their eminence – these are presented as the “Chinese Model of Special Economic Zones” with “pillars” and “protocols” identified that contributed to their success. The attention then turns to Africa, and African Special Economic Zones are appraised in terms of the Chinese Model. This appraisal is based on the author's personal visits to Special Economic Zones in Nigeria, Ethiopia, Zambia, Rwanda and South Africa, as well as desktop research of other African Zones. Observations and discussions with Chinese Zone operators and investors provide a rich narrative, supplemented with an array of photographs, that provides a deeper understanding of the reasons investors choose to invest in certain Zones in Africa, while also identifying constraints to the Zones' attractiveness for investment.

The book concludes with a

depiction of the African Model of Special Economic Zones, benchmarked against the successful Chinese Model and adapted to the African context. The book will be of great interest to scholars, policy makers and business practitioners interested in the dynamic relationship between China and Africa and wanting to learn more about the opportunities that African Special Economic Zones offer for investors on a narrow perspective, and for sustainable development from a broad perspective. **BR**

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Bryan Robinson is a senior lecturer in Business and Society and International Business at Nelson Mandela University Business School, South Africa. He previously co-authored the book *China's Impact on the African Renaissance: The Baobab Grows with Prof Kobus Jonker and continues to research the relationship between China and Africa with particular reference to socio-economic development. He holds a doctorate in Business Administration from Nelson Mandela University Business School.***

# HUBS IN ACTION

**H**umanities Hubs are centres of knowledge with a focus on heritage at the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences. They offer ways to use existing resources to engage communities in creating or reproducing new ways of knowing. Primarily a research-based programme, it aims to catalyse and open new avenues for scholarship in the humanities and social sciences (HSS) and to assist in promoting the fields more generally, linking with the broader public beyond universities. Featured in this edition of BAR are exhibitions from the Javett Art Centre (Javett-UP) and the Wits Origins Centre, which have been made possible with the support of the NIHSS. **BR**

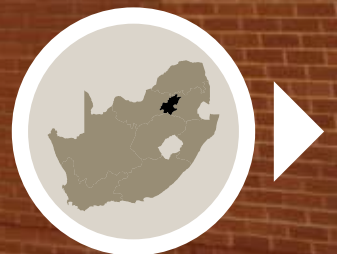


## JAVETT ART CENTRE

Situated in the heart of Tshwane, the Javett Art Centre (Javett-UP) is one of the NIHSS's Humanities Hubs and was this year's chosen host venue of the 7th HSS Awards. Officially opened on Heritage Day 2019, Javett-UP is a young and exciting museum that is fast becoming "home to the art of Africa".

It is the setting for countless pan-African artistic practices and is a space that enhances unique multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary learning through the arts, focused on engaging diverse publics through creativity in exploring the human condition and reimagining our futures.

This edition's photo essay features two exhibitions at Javett-UP that were funded by the NIHSS earlier in 2022.







*Handle with Care*

*Handle With Care* borrows its title from a mixed media work by Johannesburg-based artist Kagiso Pat Mautloa, which he created in 1994. In a world that is collectively experiencing the uneven effects of Covid-19, the administration of Care has become even more crucial. In prioritising Care, the artists appeal for a just society. *Handle with Care* features works by well-respected artists from South Africa and beyond, including Mmakgabo Helen Sebidi, Penny Siopis, David Koloane, Gerard Sekoto, Robin Rhode, Jo Ractliffe, Santu Mofokeng, Adrian Piper and Antonio Ole, among many others.



**HANDLE WITH CARE**

*Handle with Care* is an exhibition of selected works from the South African and international artists who have been invited to participate in the exhibition. The exhibition is a response to the current global health crisis and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The exhibition is a call to action for a just society and a world where care is a priority. The exhibition is a reflection of the current global health crisis and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The exhibition is a call to action for a just society and a world where care is a priority. The exhibition is a reflection of the current global health crisis and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The exhibition is a call to action for a just society and a world where care is a priority.



### *Word Woes*

The exhibition *Word Woes* is a retrospective of works spanning the duration of Willem Boshoff's artistic practice. The exhibition title, taken from a signature work by Boshoff, is understood in English and in Afrikaans. In either language the two words look identical, but their meanings differ sharply. Read in English, the title 'Word Woes' bemoans difficult issues around words and language. Read in Afrikaans, the same words liberate, prompting us to let go and be wild.

Boshoff's concern is often with the context in which we receive language and the power it wields to exclude or to privilege. As an artist working with words, Boshoff uses unconventional tactics to challenge the use of language as an instrument of cultural identity or exclusion. He describes all his works, whether sculptural or graphic, as conceptual books.





PHOTO  
ESSAY

WITS ORIGINS CENTRE

Opened by former President Thabo Mbeki in 2006, the Origins Centre is dedicated to exploring and celebrating the history of modern humankind.

It contains evidence of ancient stone tools, artefacts of symbolic and spiritual significance, and examples of the region's visually striking rock art. It also captures the impact of the colonial front and highlights examples of resistance.

The Origins Centre boasts an extensive collection of rock art from the Rock Art Research Institute (RARI) at Wits, affording visitors the opportunity to view some of the rich visual heritage found in South Africa and to learn about its history and meaning.

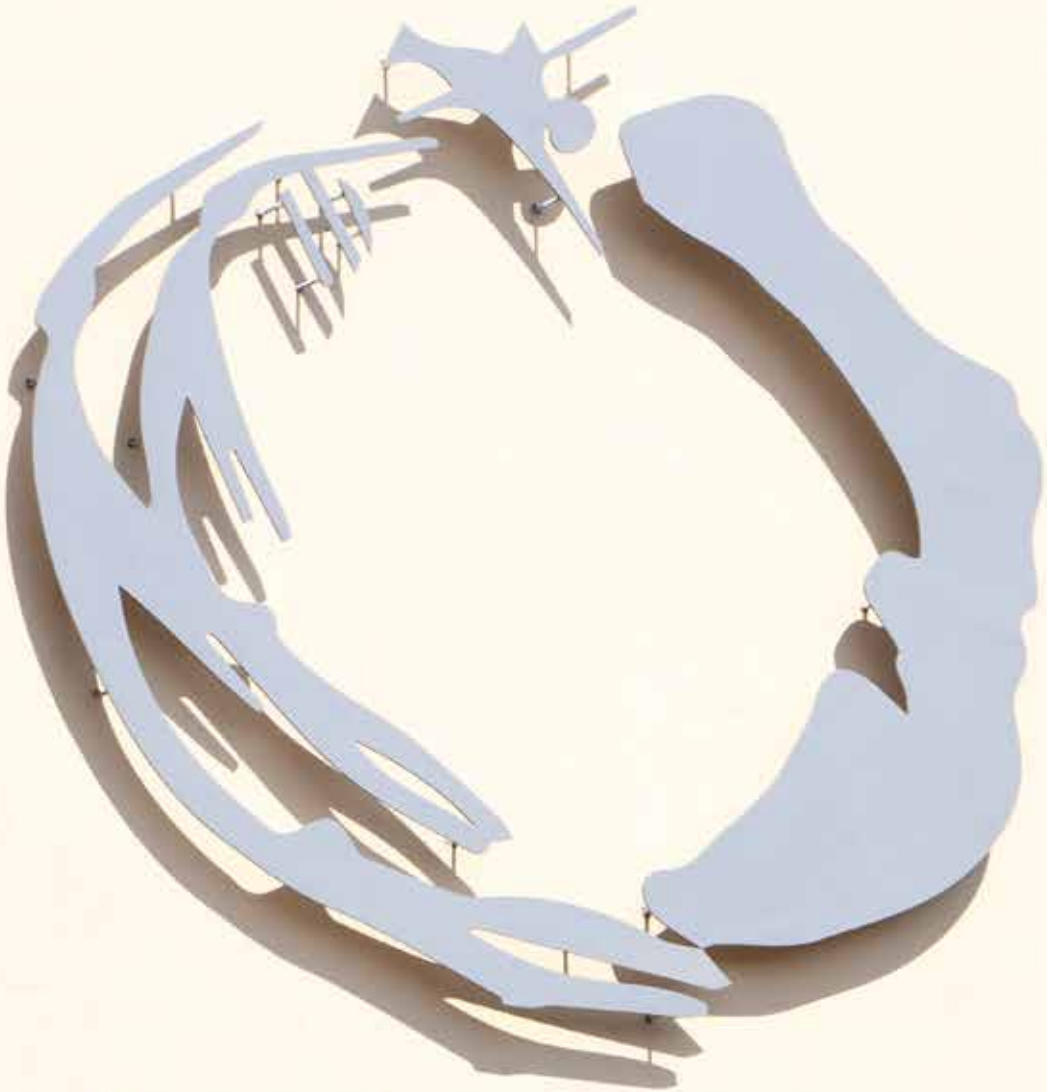




## the origins of technology

The origins of technology are a complex and multifaceted subject, involving the interplay of human ingenuity, environmental factors, and social structures. This section explores the early stages of technological development, from the first tools to the emergence of complex societies. It delves into the archaeological evidence that sheds light on the lives of our ancestors and the ways in which they adapted to their environments through innovation and collaboration.





# origins centre



## Navigating the past through glass beads: Global trade in southern and eastern Africa, 600 CE to the present

The story of global trade along the African east coast and its impact on the southern African interior has been mapped through the study of glass beads uncovered from archaeological excavations. Glass beads have been imported into southern and eastern Africa for at least 1 000 years, most often landing at ports on the African east coast before being traded inland. The chemical signature of early trade beads provided information about trade routes and sites of manufacture.

For centuries, there was a thriving and vibrant trade in glass beads and other luxury goods along the African east coast. Items were traded across the Indian Ocean, southeast Asia, China and the Middle East. These trading networks flourished from the 7th to the 15th centuries CE, prior to the arrival of the Portuguese and Dutch on the East African coast.

Decades of archaeological excavation and historical research have revealed the important role played by glass beads in early global trade politics in southern Africa. These finds enrich our understanding of the continuing significance of beads in art, personal adornment and design in the present.



K2, South Africa  
Garden rollers beads and  
fragments  
1030 to 1220 CE



### Augmented Reality App – Origins AR

The Origins Centre Origins teamed up with Tshimologong Makerspace Studios Collective to create an augmented reality (AR) application.

With this app, the engravings in the new Rock Engraving Archive and some of the contemporary artworks in the museum are brought to life. This offers an exciting way to interact with the displays in the museum, or from home.





scanning for rock art



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