BRICS Politricks

new subimperial power plays

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A brics-from-below reader for the Johannesburg Teach-In July 23-24, 2018

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What are the BRICS?

Patrick Bond

Together as a bloc, the five BRICS countries – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa – control a quarter of the earth's land mass but 42% of its population. The BRICS are relatively inward-looking economies; although they host 46% of the global workforce, they are responsible for just 14% of world trade and 19% of world Gross Domestic Product (although this rises to 27% if measured in purchasing power parity terms – in which per capita GDP is also low, with only Russia enjoying an income higher than the world average of ($11,800).

The bloc was, however, initially named and celebrated – as BRIC, without South Africa until Beijing invited Pretoria to join in 2010 – by Goldman Sachs Assets Management chair Jim O'Neill in 2001. The first formal BRIC gathering was in 2006 when foreign ministers met at the United Nations, followed by heads-of-state summits at Yekaterinburg hosted by Vladimir Putin in 2009, by Lula da Silva at Brasilia in 2010, Wen Jia Bao at Sanya in 2011, Manmohan Singh at New Delhi in 2012, Jacob Zuma at Durban in 2013, Dilma Rousseff at Fortaleza in 2014, Putin at Ufa in 2015, Narendra Modi at Goa in 2016, Xi Jinping at Xiamen in 2017, and Cyril Ramaphosa in Johannesburg in 2018.

There is extensive ceremonial pageantry and back-slapping at these events, although they usually last just two days. Parallel conferences of business leaders typically have access to the state officials, unlike other official civil society BRICS events, which are kept on the sidelines and are usually held weeks before.

(There is also usually an 'uncivil society' summit held by leftwing critics simultaneous with the BRICS leaders' summit, e.g. in Durban in 2013, Fortaleza in 2014, Goa in 2016, Hong Kong in 2017 and Johannesburg in 2018 – under the 'brics from below' or People's BRICS rubric, which in

Johannesburg will be expressed as a "Break the BRICS" protest.)

Beyond state and business summitry, there have also been regular meetings of BRICS trade unions, since Moscow in 2012, but in the form of a parallel summit starting with Durban in 2013. The 'Civil BRICS' of civil society groups began meeting in Moscow in 2015, sponsored by the Putin regime (along with Oxfam) and hence carrying so little credibility that the main Brazilian development network (Rebrip) formally boycotted the inaugural Civil BRICS.

Dozens of other BRICS-related events occur in between on different schedules, including meetings of ministers responsible for economies, security, agriculture, health and municipal government, as well as think tanks and interested academics.[1] These have had a degree of official support, in large part because they generally refrain from offering tough criticism. As a result, the 'academic' analysis is causing substantial controversy in South Africa, as shown below.

BRICS' alleged anti-imperialism

If on February 14 2018, South African President Jacob Zuma had mustered greater political power against Cyril Ramaphosa and the executive committee of the African National Congress (ANC), he would have stayed in his job through July 2018, for the heads-of-state meeting of the Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa (BRICS).

As he put it in a nationally-televised interview that day, "When the summit comes, the BRICS, I should be in a position to

1 The following are some of the institutions and networks that have been catalysed by the BRICS: New Development Bank, Contingent Reserve Arrangement, BRICS Business Council, BRICS Contact Group on Economic and Trade Issues, BRICS Think Tanks Council, BRICS Academic Forum, BRICS Trade Union Forum, Civil BRICS, Customs Cooperation Committee of BRICS, BRICS Economic Partnership, BRICS Anti-Corruption Working Group, Anti-Drug Working Group, BRICS Network University, BRICS University League, Young Diplomats Forum, BRICS Diplomatic Academies, BRICS Young Scientists Conclave, BRICS Working Group on Research Infrastructure and Mega-Science, BRICS Global Research Advanced Infrastructure Network, BRICS Joint Task Force, BRICS Youth, BRICS Urbanisation Forum, BRICS Friendship Cities Conclave, BRICS Parliamentary Forum, BRICS Women Parliamentarians' Forum and BRICS Railways Research Network.

introduce to you (Ramaphosa) to other leaders to say this is the comrade who is taking over from me. So also to remove the perception out there that Zuma is being elbowed out."

And according to Zuma, the week before, his successor had "agreed. He said this is a good proposal. We all agreed." The double-cross on that agreement came a few days later, for reasons still unexplained.

If Ramaphosa had kept his word (and thank goodness he didn't!), the "BRICS from Above" group featured in this booklet would have led with an exploration of outlandish statements about the BRICS and his own sacrifice to lead them: *specifically Zuma's poisoning at the hands of his fourth wife, MaNtuli.*

Zuma's conspiracy theories were shared by colleagues like then Water Minister Nomvula Mokonyane, who was heard mocking the junk rating South Africa received in April 2017 once Zuma replaced Pravin Gordhan as Finance Minister with a Gupta associate.


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How Zuma camp mocked junk status, foreign investors

'It's actually better Western investors will pull back and we have an opportunity to bring them back in our own terms, after we have consolidated our relations with Africa and Brics'

Mokonyane's message (written on Whatsapp) was revealing: "It's actually better Western investors will pull back and we have an opportunity to bring them back in our own terms, after we have consolidated our relations with Africa and BRICS. We must rearrange our foreign debt repayments."

(Under pressure to retain some Zuma loyalists, in March 2018, Ramaphosa shuffled Mokonyane to Communications Minister.)

The BRICS enjoy a mythical status as an anti-Western saviour within the more paranoic African nationalist nightmares. Again and again and again in 2016-17,

Zuma alleged during his waning presidency that he was the victim of a major Western conspiracy, just as was Dilma Rousseff and Lula da Silva, the two Brazilian Workers Party presidents who, respectively, were dislodged in a 2016 coup and 2018 frame-up arrest on petty corruption charges.

Under Temer, Brazil's mega-scale political corruption left Lula a political prisoner, yet still the country's most popular politician after his 2003-11 term in office. He would likely win an October 2018 election if allowed to run.

In mid-2018, there are fewer political operatives who openly make the case that the BRICS represent anti-Western politics. Two still make the case that *BRICS anti-imperialism provides hope for the future of humanity, and that Zuma's support for the BRICS was why White Monopoly Capital urgently desired his exit.*

One, Andile Mngxitama, runs the Black First Land First movement, and has regularly linked defense of Zuma to the BRICS. Below, his line is rebutted by Mbuyuseni Ndlozi of the Economic Freedom Fighters.[2]

Another, Gayton McKenzie, offered a book-length analysis of the forces that were arrayed against Zuma in December 2017, *Kill Zuma by Any Means Necessary.* Although the book contains lurid gossip about MaNdlovu's liaison with a CIA agent, which she immediately denied, there are nonetheless serious arguments about the BRICS. They warrant more consideration than given him in SA's mainstream circuits.

Finally, there is the business-centric BRICS-from-Above, as articulated regularly by Iqbal Survé. He became Business Council chair after the disgraced Brian Molefe left in 2017. Survé's rhetoric about the 4th Industrial Revolution is unpacked below. But it is worth briefly introducing readers to the owner of SA's largest English newspaper chain, the Independent, to better understand the flimsy character of BRICS-from-Above narratives.

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2 Notes taken at an African National Congress Youth League meeting, 2 February 2017, http://www.capemessenger.co.za/2017/02/03/state-capture-settlers-mngxitama/

In 2013, the Public Investment Corporation (PIC) and Chinese state capital had funded Survé's Sekanjalo to buy the Independent Media and News company for R2 billion, of which at least half was a PIC loan.

At the time, Wits Journalism professor Anton Harber predicted, "the ANC is working with their Chinese allies – ruling party to ruling party, in the way the Chinese government so often works – to increase their influence in our local media and counter what they view as a hostile media sector."

Survé soon collected numerous powerful enemies within the media and white business, thanks to his erratic managerial approach and further destruction of the Independent group. According to Harber, "the only fresh narrative we got at the new Independent Media was extensive, laudatory coverage of their boss, Survé… When one of the respected, critical journalists Survé had fired, Terry Bell, took a close look at his CV, this new media owner was exposed as a charlatan and fantasist."

Survé's ego certainly is on display in his July 5 interview, reproduced below: "Are we equal partners in BRICS? Absolutely – but we never acted like that until I took over. We hadn't seen real exports from South Africa to BRICS countries. We started engaging in meetings on more of an equal footing. We sort of woke up, started giving the other countries a hard time and not giving them their way all the time."

Survé's enemies struck twice in 2018, first against an attempt to consolidate his empire through the R50 billion 'Sagarmatha' listing which the Johannesburg Stock Exchange cancelled after it was widely ridiculed as a financial sham in April 2018.

Worse was to come in July 2018, just before he was to host 500 BRICS business elites. Finance Minister Nhlanhla Nene made clear in parliament that the PIC was "working on an exit strategy in respect of its investment in Independent News and Media... The PIC was approached to invest in Sagarmatha but, following a thorough due diligence process, the PIC resolved not to invest."

Such statements cannot be written off as a conspiracy of White Monopoly Capital; they reflect the underlying hucksterism of Survé and, tragically, his journalists and op-ed page managers.

In these respects, it is easy to see why – in an era of Donald Trump – the BRICS-from-Above claim that the bloc is somehow pursuing a form of anti-imperialism, represents a talk-left walk-right process. Regrettably, as seen next, this perspective is often endorsed by upward-gazing admirers from the intelligentsia and civil society, whom we can term 'Brics from the Middle.'

BRICS fantasies from the middle

Anti-imperialist analyses appears regularly in BRICS academic, trade union, civil society and youth rhetoric. These are discussed in the pages below, especially when the authors should know better, e.g. in arguing on behalf of BRICS reforms of international finance, climate governance and trade.

The most exuberant are University of Johannesburg Confucious Centre leaders David Monyae and Bhaso Ndzendze. But two other analysts from Russia – Victoria Panova and Yaroslav Lissovolik – confirm that the fairy dust is spread not only in South Africa.

More concretely, BRICS Think Tank chairperson Ari Sitas adds to the world-shaping narrative a series of admirable scholarly and professional projects to improve BRICS societies. But how much of Sitas' narrative is a pipe-dream?

And in view of mounting evidence of intellectual weaknesses, how much can a think tank leader even as sharp as Sitas avoid the accusation that

his institution is reduced to the classic scam: *people paid to think by the people who control the tanks*?

When that assessment was put to Sitas by Radio Islam (31 May 2018), he rebutted that it was

> a vacuous radicalism that is being articulated and is an argument by contamination. "You know 'so and so smells bad, therefore this must stink'. So it is tough, it needs navigating skills. You have to be clear as a country and a country can only be a balance of the kind of forces that can speak in the country."

A critique of the 2018 BRICS Think Tank and Academic Forum conference is offered below, as well as a more nuanced rejoinder by an activist (Bandile Mdlalose) and a scholar (Lisa Thompson) working on the inside to improve these two institutions.

The proper model for this is to have a "tree shaker" and a "jam maker" division of labour. But in spite of tree-shaker efforts, this approach has not yet been arrived at by either the insiders or outsiders.

Instead, there is a danger of the Civil BRICS repeating what Mandeep Tiwana and Cathal Gilbert describe as 2017's fate:

> As a symbolic exercise in civil society engagement, a "Civil BRICS" meeting was held in June. It was tightly controlled by Chinese authorities, however, and the concluding declaration was pre-drafted before the meeting even took place.

The Civil BRICS' problem is also evident within BRICS Youth, as argued by Njabulo Maphumulo and Lynford Dor, as well as in the BRICS Trade Union Forum.

One central test of whether the BRICS offer anything different, and whether civil society reformers can open up 'engagement' opportunities, is the BRICS New Development Bank.

Regrettably though, at least one civil society watchdog project – by African Monitor and

Oxfam – endorsed perhaps the most objectionable aspect of modern development finance: the privatisation of profits and the socialisation of losses. Not only did the 'watchdog' promote NDB co-financing with multilateral development banks (the neoliberal World Bank and African Development Bank to choose from in South Africa), this additional endorsement also suggests a network out of touch with on-the-ground realities:

> The use of Public – Private Partnerships as an important instrument for the bank to leverage resources of private sector and increase its participation in major infrastructure.

Moreover, according to African Monitor and Oxfam, "civil society appreciates the work and progress that the NDB has made thus far." This may have been true for civilised society but for the large group of civil society watchdogs of the BRICS bank, the institution was practically impossible to work with, repeatedly failing the most basic tests of communication, transparency and consultation.

There are much less civil critics in relation to the BRICS Bank, including those in South Durban (such as community leader Desmond D'Sa) who are disgusted with the bankers' lending criteria and unwillingness to engage local critics, even when widespread debtor corruption appears to run rampant.

The South Durban case – in which the parastatal Transnet is attempting to raise funding for expansion of Durban's controversial port-petrochemical complex – is illustrative, given long-standing eco-social protests against Transnet.

Subimperial BRICS

But there is an even greater concern about the BRICS positioning in global circuits. The cases of finance, trade and climate negotiations are discussed below in detail.

Geopolitical processes are also revealing. Vijay Prashad observes

"BRICS in the ruins of the present." A major problem is the ongoing failure of the BRICS 'centripetal' strategy of capital accumulation, as shown in general by Bond and in South Africa by Lisa Thompson, Pamela Tsolekile de Wet and Franklin Ondah Awaseh.

Add to this regional repression, e.g. the way Modi's colonial-style control of Kashmir is unfolding, with crimes so severe that the UN Commission for Human Rights issued another report in June 2018 condemning India. Even South Africa's moribund National Prosecuting Authority began investigating Modi's role prior to his BRICS visit, as noted in reports below by the *Voice of the Cape* and Iqbal Jassat.

As for BRICS in the Middle East, according to Ramona Wadi in an essay below, they are merely "paying mere lip-service to a legitimate demand is harming Palestine's prospects, rather than enhancing opportunities for anti-colonial, legitimate resistance."

In reality, notwithstanding the occasional bursts of anti-imperialist rhetoric from some pro-BRICS politicians and analysts, these are sites where '*subimperial*' politics are on display. The term comes from a Brazilian political economist, Ruy Mauro Marini (1932-97), and will be referred to periodically, below, where it is useful to indicate overlapping interests of Western and BRICS powers, or ways that BRICS firms penetrate their societies and hinterlands in a manner comparable to Western Multinational Corporations.

The BRICS also play a role as 'deputy sheriffs' in their respective hinterlands. Regions surrounding each of the BRICS' hosts are also important. Since 2013, leaders from neighbouring states and regional blocs have also been invited to spend time with the BRICS leaders (usually a half-day after the members' meeting has closed):

- In Johannesburg, in addition to select African heads of state, five major guests are regional leaders who are also heads of state of: Egypt (as Chair of the

G77+China), Argentina (Chair of the G20 and a MERCOSUR member), Indonesia (Co-Chair with SA of the New Africa-Asia Strategic Partnership and an ASEAN member), Jamaica (incoming Chair of CARICOM), and Turkey (as Chair of the OIC).

- In Xiamen, the BRICS-Plus group was initiated to include Egypt, Guinea, Mexico, Tajikistan and Thailand.
- In Goa, notably, regional collaboration did *not* include Pakistan, but did include India's Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation neighbours: Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Bhutan and Nepal.
- In Ufa, the BRICS overlapped with the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, which includes Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan along with the observer states Afghanistan, India, Iran, Mongolia and Pakistan.
- In Brasilia just after the Fortaleza meeting, the Brazilian hosts invited leaders from the Union of South American Nations, including Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay and Venezuela.

The tradition of drawing in the host's friendly neighbours was begun in Durban when more than a dozen African leaders (never formally named) joined the summit at the Zimbali Lodge. SA's deputy foreign minister Marius Fransman (later disgraced and fired in a #MeToo incident) expressed these objectives just before the March 2013 summit: "South Africa presents a gateway for investment on the continent, and over the next 10 years the African continent will need $480 billion for infrastructure development."[3]

In some cases, depending partly upon which political party is in power, such outreach is welcomed as genuine

3 At the same time, however, the South African National Defence Force was airlifting more than a dozen coffins from the Central African Republic where a firefight had occurred in the course of the troops' reported defence of Johannesburg businesses' operations in Bangui during a rebel overthrow.

partnership; in other cases, this strategy appears to be akin to a co-optation process, in which weaker neighbours are seen mainly as the BRICS' hinterlands. Geopolitical and material benefits accrue mostly to the strongest BRICS countries and firms. The case of IMF reform – which disempowered many BRICS neighbours by lowering their voting power (so four of the BRICS could rise, as discussed below) – makes clear this latter sub-imperial dynamic.

As a bloc, BRICS issues periodic communiques and occasionally acts in concert. One example was the successful lobbying by BRICS foreign ministers against the proposed expulsion of Russia from the 2014 G20 Brisbane summit following sanctions imposed on Moscow by the West after the March 2014 transfer of power in Crimea.

However, BRICS will ultimately be known not for its generally anti-Western rhetoric, but for what it does, concretely, to change the world. The most important innovations are institutional: the BRICS New Development Bank (NDB) for project loans and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) for potential financial crises. The CRA stands ready to augment the IMF in the event bail-out credits are required by BRICS members.

There was also a proposed internet cable rerouting to avoid US interference, and a credit ratings agency alternative to Moody's, Fitch and Standard&Poors. Such a ratings agency may be moot, however, if BRICS countries continue to float their bonds in international markets where those "three brothers from Manhattan" (not Saxonwold) continue to exercise "state capture" of weaker BRICS' treasuries and central banks. (SA remains a case in point.)

The latter two strategies appear to be largely conceptual, with a less than certain chance of coming to fruition in the near future. BRICS countries' invasive surveillance of their citizenries is nearly as obnoxious as the US National Security Agency, and a "market-oriented" approach to a new BRICS credit ratings agency

(as discussed in most such meetings) would leave such an institution operating much as do the existing agencies.

Reviewing BRICS Politricks in this way, we find far more in common with the worst of the Western imperial powers: aggressive geopolitics, self-interested economics, social repression and environmental irresponsibility.

Which brings us to ask, why would BRICS-from-the-Middle scholars, NGOs and labour strategists within civilised society want to spend so much time and political capital *legitimising these leaders and states?*

To that question, we have only the standard answer that critics of petit-bourgeois centrism have always offered: opportunism.

There is another answer, too: *the forces of uncivil society that meet annually to delegitimise the BRICS have not achieved powers of persuasion to change all the minds we will need to.*

Until then, political tricks will be apparent on the surface of society – tricks we would like to ignore but simply cannot…

TWO VIEWS OF THE BRICS: OPTIMISTIC or PESSIMISTIC

…the expectation from civil society is for BRICS to promote Southern agency and seek balance, equality and justice on the global stage. Civil BRICS believe the objective of BRICS is to seek change, to ask a new set of questions about how things are done in global governance and to give voice to some of the key demands of the South. It is a platform on which many in civil society in the South place their hopes, aspirations, and ideas that they want to materialize in their lifetime. – Civil BRICS (as articulated by Oxfam & African Monitor)	… the expectation from uncivil society is for BRICS to promote Western systems of exploitation, and amplify uneven development, inequality and injustice on the global stage. Uncivil society believes the objective of BRICS is to seek to join *not change* existing systems of economic and geopolitical power, to reaffirm how things are done in global governance, and to repress the key demands of the South. It is a platform on which no one in uncivil society, *anywhere,* can reasonably place their hopes and aspirations.

“You dropping BRICS from above? We’re throwing bricks from below!”

Patrick Bond

The rapper Ewok captured the spirit of progressive social forces in South Africa with his condemnation of elite politics at a March 2013 protest outside the Durban International Convention Centre: “You dropping BRICS from above? We’re throwing bricks from below!”

For the second time, the leaders of the Brazil-Russia-India-China-SA (BRICS) summit in South Africa, this time at the Sandton Convention Centre from July 25-27. The bloc has great potential to change the world in positive ways. But under increasingly desperate capitalist rule in each country, this potential simply cannot be realised, and evidence has accumulated of much more harm than good.

The best example of intra-BRICS collaboration combining top-down and bottom-up politics was fifteen years ago, when Treatment Action Campaign activists won free AIDS medicines (which once cost $10 000/year) for four million South Africans (hence raising life expectancy from 52 to 64) thanks partly to a Brazilian state precedent and Indian generic pharmaceutical support.

Progressive BRICS crumbling

But that was then – now the BRICS are mainly corrupt and undemocratic under Michel Temer, Vladimir Putin, Narendra Modi, Xi Jinping and Cyril Ramaphosa. Thanks to the ruling parties’ policies, the five countries are more unequal, patriarchal, homophobic, racist and polluting.

There is not space here to explore systematic policy critiques of BRICS countries, which range across feminist, environmentalist, generational (especially youth), class and race lines. Brutal versions of

neoliberal ideology prevail in all five BRICS, aside from Brazil during Workers Party rule, which ended in a 2016 coup by the corrupt politician Temer – against which no other BRICS country came to prior President Dilma Rousseff's assistance in spite of appeals by the Movement of Landless Workers.

Inequality subsequently rose in each of the BRICS. Even in Brazil, "After falling for years, inequality and poverty increased during the [2015-16] crisis," according to a May 2018 International Monetary Fund (IMF) study. To make matters worse, the main theme of the 2018 conference is the so-called "4th Industrial Revolution" (emphasising robots, cybertechnology and Artificial Intelligence). Unemployment, state-corporate surveillance, repression and social engineering will worsen.

The subimperial position

One central problem is that the BRICS elites fit too snugly within – not against – Western imperialism, especially the most destructive multilateral agencies: the G20, UN Security Council, Bretton Woods Institutions (IMF and World Bank), World Trade Organisation (WTO) and UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). There, the BRICS supposedly pursue 'reforms':

- G20 – in the most powerful network, where SA is the only African member (and hence is often used as a Northern/BRICS ally against the interests of the continent), the BRICS are promoting *pro-corporate mega-projects and 'extractivism' against people and environment*s (through the German conservative party's 'Compact with Africa' in 2017, which offers new guarantees to G20 corporations partly at African expense);
- UN Security Council – ensuring that the three weaker BRICS (Brazil, India and South Africa) are *never allowed to acquire full-vote, full-veto permanent membership* in the UNSC, since

that would dilute the power of Moscow and Beijing (given that the bloc is extremely divided in geopolitical terms, with Delhi and Brasilia extremely close to Washington, and Pretoria generally considered unreliable);

- International Monetary Fund (IMF) – demanding and winning *ownership 'quota' restructurings* (2010-15) that *disempower most poor countries by lowering their voting share* (e.g. Nigeria by 41 percent), and extending the term of corrupt (convicted) former French finance minister Christine Lagarde as IMF leader, *without any change in the neoliberal Washington Consensus philosophy* that wrecks African economies, societies and environments;
- WTO – *ending poor countries' food sovereignty* at the 2015 Nairobi summit (chaired by a Brazilian) by agreeing with Washington and Brussels to make pro-consumer/farmer agricultural subsidies a free-trade violation, at a time Xi Jinping is rebooting pro-corporate trade (given that Trump appears to be self-sabotaging Free Trade Agreements); and
- UNFCCC – agreeing in the Durban (2011) and Paris (2015) summits to *permit the North's and BRICS' ongoing destruction of the climate*, thanks to the deals' *non-binding, unambitious emissions cut targets* (in spite of Global South and climate justice calls for binding, accountable and effective mechanisms); *reinstatement of carbon trading* (the 'privatisation of the air,' a false solution); *omission of the military, shipping and* air transport sectors; and *cancellation of their own North/BRICS' climate debt* to the victims of extreme weather, droughts, floods and other conditions that are already doing extensive damage to the world's poorest and most vulnerable regions.

Supposed BRICS 'alternatives' to Western power include the New Development Bank (NDB), Contingent Reserve

Arrangement (CRA), a potential credit ratings agency, and BRICS corporations' Foreign Direct Investment. These are not genuine alternatives. In reality they *amplify* imperialist processes. These specifically empower the World Bank and IMF (through mutually-reinforcing deals), and also confirm ongoing world reliance on the US$. (The $ is the currency unit used in 70 percent of NDB loans so far, and in all CRA financing – even when project expenditure should occur with local currency.)

Even more tragically, the BRICS have not offered any way for the world to defend against U.S. President *Donald Trump's threats to our planet.* To be sure, Russia has very dangerous new missiles which Putin claims can evade all known defence systems and blow up the United States within a half hour of being launched. Also, Xi's new naval aircraft carrier will defend its South China Sea fake 'islands' far away from its shores. But world civilisation has entered a lethal stage with geopolitical, nuclear, conventional military, climate and economic dangers.

A global movement against Trump began on the very day of his inauguration in January 2017, and occasionally takes the form of protests at U.S. embassies. BRICS elites could support this through sanctions, but instead engage in periodic relegitimisation of Washington's proto-fascist regime – especially Modi, Temer and Xi. Although anti-Trump rhetoric is occasionally articulated and trade wars are underway, the BRICS are nevertheless falling into line with his commands when it comes to the pro-corporate character of multilateral institutions.

One of the main threats to Middle East peace and global justice is the Trump-Israel axis that bulldozes over the most fundamental rights of Palestinian people and promotes hatred, racism, walls and wars across the continents. While people are building a new global anti-apartheid movement calling for

boycotts, divestment and sanctions, BRICS policies promote corporate impunity, undermine democracy and adapt to imperialist agendas against Palestine. India imports 50 percent of all Israeli weapons exports while Brazil ranks among the top six markets for Israeli weapons. Much of it foments repression against their own people and surveillance policies.

China and India are today among Israel's main trade and investment partners, and there remains a strong impetus for South African corporations to increase trade with the Zionist-Apartheid state, or for SA firms to mind Africa hand-in-glove with notorious Israelis like Dan Gertler. Chinese, Russian and Indian companies collude with Israelis on 'Big Data' – which translates into more surveillance of societies. Russia is getting cosy with Israel as witnessed in Benjamin Netanyahu's guest appearance in Red Square with Putin on May 9th (commemorating the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany), heralding growing ties and potential converging interests in gas and oil exploration off the Levantine-Israel-Gaza coast. China trades heavily with Israel. None of the BRICS countries bans products of corporations complicit with Israeli settlements in Palestine, as should be done under international law since production on illegally occupied land is considered an international crime.

BRICS elites subvert citizenries' democratic instincts

BRICS elites are crushing their own societies' instincts for democracy and justice. Ongoing examples are Temer's frame-up arrest of Workers Party leader Lula da Silva in Brazil in May, preventing his (otherwise certain) victory in October presidential elections; Putin's disqualification of Alexai Navalny's liberal candidacy in April's Russian "election"; Modi's proto-fascistic religiously-bigoted leadership; Xi's Chinese Communist Party dictatorship (and now his potential for decade+ personal rule); and here

in South Africa, the 'Ramazupta' governance problem.

South African political rulers still reveal corrupt leadership within the Presidency and Deputy Presidency, the ANC's Luthuli House and various provinces. ANC leaders are ruthless, with intra-ANC murders continuing in many jurisdictions. In 2012, Ramaphosa emailed in a request for the police to take "concomitant action" in a "pointed" way against workers on strike at his Lonmin platinum mine at Marikana, and so within 24 hours, 34 were massacred – with no one yet punished. He had consistently redirected money (which he should have paid the workers) into Lonmin's Bermuda tax haven, and notwithstanding a mandate to build 5500 houses for workers at Marikana backed by the World Bank, he built just three. BRICS leaders are guilty of Illicit Financial Flows, having been exposed in 2016 'Panama Papers' and 2017 'Paradise Papers' leaks.

When the BRICS countries' elites do business in Africa, their ethics reflect some of the most anti-democratic and predatory practices that we have seen since the Berlin conference of 1885 and the likes of Cecil Rhodes and King Leopold. Similar to Western corporate behaviour in corrupting local leaders, Africa suffers malevolent BRICS state, parastatal and corporate interventions in local politics. For example,

- The Brazilian firm Odebrecht made R600+ million in known bribes of Angolan and Mozambican rulers.
- Rosatom did nuclear deals with corrupt political regimes in Pretoria, Kampala, Lusaka, Accra, Nairobi, Abuja, Windhoek and Cairo.
- The Gupta brothers' state capture of wide swathes of South Africa's political, bureaucratic and corporate management was supported by one of Delhi's state-owned banks, with no extradition from India likely.

- Beijing compelled Pretoria to reject the Dalai Lama's visa applications to South Africa on three occasions, put decisive pressure on Zuma to change finance ministers in 2015, and pre-approved the Zimbabwe army's coup against Robert Mugabe late last year.
- Pretoria repeatedly dismissed the democratic will of neighbouring countries, instead nurturing dictatorships in the DRC, Swaziland, Zimbabwe and the Central African Republic.

BRICS firms operating in Africa have become voracious, especially since the commodity super-cycle peaked in 2011 and more extreme extraction (and social protests) are evident. It is hard to argue that there is any worse predatory corporate presence in Africa than the BRICS:

- From Brazil, both Odebrecht and the world's second-largest mining company, Rio-based Vale, have faced regular protests over mass displacement at construction projects and coal-mining operations in Tete, Mozambique, as has the Brazilian government (dating to Workers Party rule) over its ProSavana corporate-agriculture land-grab.
- Russia's potentially disastrous Rosatom nuclear reactor deals across Africa are noted above, but so too are Russian mining houses moving into Zimbabwe's platinum and gold fields in dubious ways.
- Indian companies in Africa have been especially exploitative, led by Vedanta chief executive Anil Agarwal – caught bragging to investors of having bought the continent's largest copper mine for just $25 million after fibbing to Zambian president Levy Mwanawasa and each year returning $500 million to $1 billion in revenues. ArcelorMittal's Lakshmi Mittal's major African steel operation, South Africa's former state-owned ISCOR, was accused by even Pretoria's trade minister of milking the

operations. Jindal's super-exploitative arrangements in Mozambique and South Africa are regularly criticised.

- Chinese firms – both state-owned and private – have been convincingly accused of major financial, human rights, labour and environmental abuses in Africa, perhaps most spectacularly in the case of Sam Pa whose operations included mining diamonds in eastern Zimbabwe along with the Chinese military firm Anjin. In 2016, even President Robert Mugabe alleged that of $15 billion in revenues, only $2 billion were accounted for, in mines mainly controlled by the local military and Chinese companies.
- South African businesses have a record of looting the rest of the continent dating to Cecil Rhodes' (19th century) British South Africa Company, the Oppenheimer mining empire, and current President Ramaphosa's pre-2012 chairing of Africa's largest cell-phone company, MTN. The latter was exposed – along with two other companies he led, Lonmin and Shanduka – in 2014-17 for having offshore accounts in Bermuda and Mauritius used to illicitly remove funds from Africa. South Africa's corporate elites regularly rank as the most corrupt on earth in the biannual PwC Economic Crimes Survey – especially in money-laundering, bribery and corruption, procurement fraud, asset misappropriation and cybercrime – with one recent report showing that "eight out of ten senior managers commit economic crime."

BRICS spies surveil our societies, within '4th Industrial Revolution'

Through high-technology surveillance, censorship and digital repression strategies, BRICS countries are at the cutting edge of cyberwar against their citizenries.

For example, South African investors are implicated in

China's totalitarian control of that country's internet, which prevents the Chinese people from interacting with most of the rest of the world on major social media platforms. Moreover, in August 2015 alone, there were 15 000 arrests – including progressive clicktivists – for so-called 'cyber crimes.' In 2017, *The Feminist Voice in China* was booted off the country's Twitter-equivalent after merely posting an anti-Trump article from *The Guardian*.

Unfortunately, the largest South African firm listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange – Naspers – holds a massive (R1.7 trillion) investment in Tencent (China's FB equivalent), which is used by Beijing for Orwellian 'social credit' monitoring to prevent social activism against Beijing and local targets of genuine grievances, whether governments and corporations.

In the same spirit of profiting handsomely from intra-BRICS repression, a South African arms dealer – Ivor Ichikowitz – sold high-tech repressive machinery to the Brazilian government so as to help its local municipalities repress 2013-14 protests that began because of unreasonable public transport price increases and World Cup excesses. Already, collaboration between BRICS spy agencies is well underway.

And in 2016, UN officials from Moscow, Delhi, Beijing and Pretoria voted against the main resolution on protection of human rights and privacy on the internet, a resolution *co-authored by Brazil* and co-sponsored by 70 other countries. (Even by far the world's most predatory surveillance regime, the United States under Barack Obama, was shamed into supporting the resolution.)

In Pretoria, the Domestic Branch of the State Security Agency (formerly National Intelligence Agency) regularly monitors citizens' communication, just as does the U.S. National Security Agency, with occasional embarrassing public incidents of spy-versus-spy or spy-versus-politicians, such as at the 2015 State of the

Nation address when communications were jammed. Last August, there were revelations about the SSA tapping of in excess of 150 000 SA cellphone accounts.

In the ruling party's Luthuli House, a "black ops war room" in 2016 generated fake news and Twitter posts against political opponents during a disastrous election campaign (it lost four of the five largest metro areas), before being exposed after failing to pay a PR consultant, who took the ANC to court.

This unregulated high tech power of surveillance, censorship and repression becomes especially important because of the ultra-destructive 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR). Experts admit that 4IR Artificial Intelligence (AI), robotics and cyber-security such as blockchain technology could wipe out half the world's current jobs. Leading ex-South African practitioner Elon Musk warns that AI could destroy humanity within the coming few decades.

Yet dissemination of 4IR into Africa appears to be a very high priority of the BRICS' so-called 'Sherpas' (though we should respect the Nepalese people's desires to banish the term from such discussions).

It is also a major project of BRICS Business Council chair Iqbal Survé, who relentlessly pushes both BRICS and 4IR rhetoric in his *Independent* group newspapers, in part through the Sagarmatha Johannesburg Stock Exchange listing proposal. That R50 billion proposal died when journalists uncovered illicit relations between Survé and the R2 trillion Public Investment Corporation, forcing a halt to the deal.

Notwithstanding myriad problems keeping his empire afloat, it is likely Survé will try to raise new capital from allies to move his personal for-profit 4IR agenda forward, at the same time he and other BRICS elites try to confuse society with further pro-4IR rhetoric.

Corrupting states, societies and economies

Finally, when it comes to relations with South Africa, the BRICS countries and companies stink of corruption. It's not just the Rosatom nuclear deal, so devotedly pursued by Zuma and thankfully dropped by Ramaphosa (we hope).

In addition, the chair of the SA branch of the BRICS Business Council, Survé, grew wealthy through his firm Sekunjalo, which was accused by the SA state public protector in 2013 of R800 million in "improper" tendering (for marine fisheries), after which he fired the *Cape Times* editor for putting this information on the newspaper's front page.

Survé took over the Business Council chair from a man even more discredited from shady deals done at the BRICS 2013 summit: Brian Molefe. As Transnet's chief executive, Molefe borrowed $5 billion (in US$) from the China Development Bank, mainly used to buy locomotives from China South Rail – alongside massive bribery directed into the Gupta empire.

Another BRICS NDB loan to Transnet was arranged in May 2018, for $200 million to expand the port-petrochemical complex, without any community consultation, even though Transnet's leadership was increasingly implicated in Gupta-era corruption investigations entirely visible to NDB staff at the time.

In 2016, Molefe was replaced as head of Eskom (and as chair of the BRICS Business Council) after he again arranged a $5 billion loan from the same bank (plus $200 million from the BRICS New Development Bank for a link to privatised solar supplies which Molefe then decided he didn't want).

At the same time Molefe was helping the Guptas penetrate Eskom, he visited the so-called Saxonwold Shebeen (the Gupta's Johannesburg mansion) dozens of times.

Two other BRICS Business Council members are Transnet head Siyabonga Gama (with his

long history of corruption charges), and Stavros Nicolaou, who was Aspen Pharmaceutical's exports director when Italy's government found Aspen guilty of price gauging life-saving cancer medicines, fining it R65 million.

Communities fight back

The BRICS are among the societies with the greatest contradictions and repression – but also the most active resistance. Anger is rising whether in Brazil over the Lula jailing; or Russia because the main opposition candidate was prevented from contesting the recent election; or India due to the ruling party's tolerance for gender and ethnic violence as well as monetary repression; China due to workplace, land and environmental grievances; or here due to myriad problems. The SA working class remains the most militant on earth, for example (according to the World Economic Forum's *Global Competitiveness Survey*).

Indeed, the main research institute studying this anger, at the University of Johannesburg, recently identified "a rising trend in frequency of community protests and a tendency towards those protests being disorderly."

In our own region, resistance is taking many forms, because across Africa and the world, it is not only western imperialism but also BRICS subimperialism that is putting extreme pressure on communities, environments, labour forces, youth, the elderly and everyone. And resistance is sometimes very passionate:

- In Mozambique, there are regular community protests against Brazilian land-grabbing in Tete Province (against Vale coal mining) and Nampula (against ProSavana).
- In SA, social protests against Zuma prevented his acquisition of eight Russian Rosatom nuclear reactors for $100 bn.
- In Zambia, community protesters regularly criticise the Vedanta operation at Konkola, which is wrecking the

local environment in addition to looting national resources.

- In Zimbabwe, not only the Marange community – where 2000 protested renewed mining in May – every single citizen was adversely affected by Chinese and Zimbabwean military looting of $15 billion worth of what Robert Mugabe in 2016 calculated as missing diamond revenue.
- Across Africa there are periodic protests against South African corporations – e.g. MTN in Nigeria – which peaked in April 2015 when a variety of company and embassy offices witnessed demonstrations against that year's xenophobia.

From the standpoint of activists working for social, economic and environmental justice from below, BRICS elites are their opponents, for:

- adopting reactionary policies;
- assimilating into imperialist agencies to the detriment of the world's most vulnerable;
- offering only bogus 'alternative' institutions;
- suppressing democracy;
- allowing their firms' unlimited corporate irresponsibility;
- imposing extreme forms of surveillance, censorship and digital repression, including expansion of the ultra-destructive 4th Industrial Revolution; and
- engaging in prolific corruption.

But in each case, *people are standing up to resist*. Activities to "Break the BRICS" will give greater voice to these communities, unions, women's and youth groups, ecologists and many other social movements.

For information on events from July 23-26, contact: bricsfrombelow2018@gmail.com

SA welcomes Ministers of Foreign Affairs

Lindiwe Sisulu[1]

Over the last 10 years, the BRICS Agenda has evolved and expanded beyond the economic focus that initially brought us together, to also include global political, security and social matters.

There can be no doubt that our shared commitment to BRICS will bear fruit and we will make advances in confronting our common challenges and realising our common objectives for peace, harmony and greater representation in global governance institutions.

Following the successful First Formal of Meeting of the BRICS Ministers of Foreign Affairs and International Relations, organised by the People's Republic of China last year, I think we can all agree that there is a need for the continuation of a meeting of this nature. We should acknowledge the initiative as a very sound one that has given us more time to plan better and work closer. Through this Forum, we are uniquely poised to make further concrete contributions to BRICS cooperation through our deliberations.

Furthermore, the current global geo-political realities make a meeting of this nature, not only necessary but timely. We meet in the face of multilateralism under siege; when the integrity of international agreements can be hastily and expediently compromised; when more and

1 Speech by the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Pretoria, 4 June 2018.

more countries take an inward-looking position at the expense of others.

South Africa remains deeply committed to multilateral diplomacy, in principle and in our demonstrable actions – and we hold true to this stance in the United Nations system; in our regional interactions, as and in particular through our close collaboration in BRICS.

The BRICS Forum must reassert its collective responsibility of providing new perspectives and solutions to the current international order. As we work collectively, not only in our interest but in also advancing the interests of our shared global community, we must do so with a view to protect the sacred and shared values of multilateralism and international law that underpin our union.

We meet at a time when the world is undergoing serious seismic changes in many spheres: strife in Turkey, migration to Europe, the intensification of conflict between Israel and Palestine and the re-emergence of national protectionism that threatens multilateralism.

Against these challenges we each face our own national challenges and our own continental challenges. We have earned our place of pride in this august body to represents the broader interests of the peoples and countries of the African continent.

The evolving world in which we live requires of us to keep track with its multifaceted and dynamic changes. We are also beholden to our resolutions and ensuring that we realise them in this changing world. This year will mark the tenth anniversary of the establishment of BRICS, new multilateral forum that holds the hope of most developing countries.

It is fortuitous for South Africa to hold the Chairship of this august Forum, and to have the responsibility of hosting the 10th BRICS Summit in this year that coincides with the Centenary commemoration of a world icon, former President Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela. Throughout the year, we will honour the life

and legacy of our leader, a distinguished global statesman and father of our nation. We are excessively proud that out of a deplorable inhuman system, we produced one as he. The life of this remarkable human being urges us to recall that nothing is impossible to achieve, no matter the magnitude of the task and irrespective of how daunting it may seem at the time.

South Africa's BRICS Chairship in 2018 is thus anchored in this belief. We intend to build on the legacy of Madiba, as well as on the achievements of the past decade of BRICS Summits in order to further enhance BRICS cooperation in the next decade that will guide our countries and peoples, as well as those of the Global South into the new era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution in a way that maximises opportunities and minimises threats, and especially in an era where we all seek prosperity for all, inclusivity, equality, good governance and economic development. We remain conscious, however, that the prospects of inclusive growth and shared prosperity that we strive for, cannot, and will not, be realised in the absence of lasting regional and international peace and security.

Colleagues, I am encouraged that this platform has gained momentum, and I am excited that we are hosting it. We are committed to make the Summit worthy of what our peoples collectively expect from us. I look forward to our robust deliberations.

BRICS summit opportunity for SA

Shannon Ebrahim[1]

South Africa's BRICS sherpa Dr Anil Sooklal says the upcoming BRICS Summit will be a critical platform for SA to amplify its voice on the global stage.

There is no question that BRICS is a critical platform for South Africa as it amplifies our voice on the global stage - that is according to South Africa's BRICS sherpa Dr Anil Sooklal. Our hosting of the BRICS Summit, July25-27, is an important opportunity for South Africa to leverage support from Brazil, Russia, China and other partners for the African agenda and our development priorities.

Over the past 10 years, BRICS has proven to be an important global bloc, and while South Africa may have the smallest economy of the five nations, we are equal partners in decision-making and agreements.

The truth be told, BRICS is far more relevant now than it has been at any other time since its formation, and that is because the polarisation and increasing protectionism of the traditional global powers are at an all-time high. This trajectory has negative consequences for the developing south, which means the new emerging powers of BRICS need to collaborate more effectively in order to offset the effects of the north pulling up the drawbridges. BRICS is not in competition with other global formations dominated by Western countries, but it is a platform to push for greater global equity - both political and economic.

That will be the theme South Africa envisions for the upcoming BRICS Summit - working towards a more equitable and inclusive global environment. It will place the reform of the UN high on the summit's agenda.

1 *Pretoria News,* 2 February 2018.

But this has always been a priority of the global south, and concrete discussions on how to implement the reform of UN decision-making has been ongoing for the past two decades.

The key challenge of this summit will be for South Africa to guide the BRICS discussions towards how to realise those reforms, particularly given that Russia and China are permanent members of the UN Security Council and should drive a reform agenda.

If nothing tangible comes out of such discussions, then talks about furthering global equity will ring hollow.

As host of the summit, South Africa is able to set the agenda, and beyond the focus on multilateralism and UN reform, our four priorities speak directly to Africa's urgent needs.

South Africa has prioritised access to medicine for the continent and developing research opportunities in the health sector.

Our tangible proposal is to establish a virtual vaccine research centre, which will capitalise on our collective intellectual knowledge within BRICS in order to devise vaccines to address numerous health challenges.

This is arguably the most important of the four identified priorities.

The other three priorities are also innovative and relevant and include: to establish a working group on peacekeeping given that the BRICS members are major troop contributing countries; to establish a dedicated BRICS women's track to look at empowerment issues; a working group to look at the impact of the fourth industrial revolution.

South Africa last hosted the BRICS Summit in 2013, giving it the chance to set the agenda for the group only every five years.

It was South Africa that initiated a BRICS outreach programme at the last summit it hosted in 2013.

This was to ensure that BRICS was not a closed shop, and reached out to states wanting to engage on issues affecting the global community.

Given the need to reconfigure the political and economic global environment, this engagement is still considered key.

For the upcoming summit, South Africa will revert to the same formula it used in 2013, which is to invite the chairs of the Regional Economic Communities, the chairs of Nepad, the AU and the AU Commission, as well as leaders from five countries of the global South.

Given China's initiative at the Xiamen summit last year to create "BRICS Plus," it may be that the eventual expansion of the group is on the cards. While South Africa would welcome an inclusive approach, a formal expansion of the grouping at some point would mean South Africa's influence in terms of setting the agenda may be diluted. This makes the agenda and outcomes of the upcoming summit all the more important, and we should leverage this opportunity to the maximum in order to push forward the African agenda.

The summit is also an opportunity to further capitalise on track 2 - the interaction of the private sector under the aegis of the BRICS Business Council chaired by Dr Iqbal Survé.

It is expected that a thousand business people will attend the business forum, and it presents a golden opportunity for South African chief executives to network and establish relations with executives from the BRICS countries on their home turf. In terms of boosting investment in South Africa and increasing our trade volumes with the largest emerging economies, this is an opportunity that South African business should be preparing for.

The power of the BRICS

Gayton McKenzie[1]

Do not underestimate the power of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) bloc and the change in the balance of world power that it represents.

Especially for Africa, BRICS represents the first major opportunity in centuries to break the grip of colonialism and post-colonial oppression for the continent.

Jacob Zuma understands that, and the West is none too happy about it either. In numerous interviews he has given on the subject, it's obvious he understands what is at stake. The world and its economy is at a cross-roads, and for the first time an alternative is becoming available that could challenge the centuries of oppression the developing world has had to endure.

Finally, the ANC's old friends in the form of China and Russia, along with Brazil and India, have reached the point where they will be able to offer developmental finance to the world without the onerous conditions the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank are notorious for imposing.

Zuma already warned Western corporations in 2013 that they should abandon their colonial approach to Africa. He told *Russia Today*: "We had to fight the anticolonial wars to free ourselves. They were bitter wars. Very bitter. When Africa became free there was no arrangement to make them develop. They were left as they were."[2]

The armies of former colonial countries could still be found throughout Africa, he pointed out, adding the sardonic question: "What do they want there? You still have the mentality that they look at you as a former subject when they do business with you. The fact that we have not shifted in terms of how the economic relations are – that's a bigger problem. The companies that dominate

1 Excerpted with the author's permission from McKenzie, G. (2017), *Kill Zuma by Any Means Necessary,* Johannesburg.

2 RT interviews Jacob Zuma President of South Africa. RT Live: http://rt.com/on-air

these [African] countries come from the former colonial countries. In no way do you have the indigenous companies growing to be in charge. So that's the kind of relationship that's very skewed – it's not balanced – and there's been no effort from those who have the means to help balance the relationship."

Zuma skewered the West completely while employing the diplomatic understatement of the century: "At times there's a bit of interference with what Africa is doing."

He referenced Libya and the years of crisis and destabilisation that could have been avoided had the West agreed to the African Union's plan to have Muammar Gaddafi relinquish power. "The Africans were there with a roadmap out of the crisis, but they thought the best thing would be to bomb Libya out of this world – knowing very well we don't agree. That is using their colonial position against those they colonised. We have ended up with that region totally undermined, and they [the West] are no longer there to solve the problems. That's the relationship I'm talking about. The AU with a clear roadmap was undermined by Western countries. That's a reality."

Asked whether he believed whether the Western countries who had abandoned their colonial projects, leaving broken economies in their wake, were morally indebted to fix these historical problems, Zuma was unequivocal: "Of course, yes. They messed up Africa. They are not just indebted, they should have corrected their mistakes. But in the majority of cases they sucked the wealth of the continent into their countries and made their countries rich, and did not develop Africa. They did nothing. If things were equal they would have said 'let's do something to develop these free Africans.' But they just abandoned Africa. And [today], China is not colonising anyone. Europe had a conference to discuss how to colonise Africa. They took a resolution collectively. China has not done so. China is coming to do

business with Africa. It's the wrong equation to say China is coming to colonise Africa. China has brought better development in a short space of time than what the colonialists did in decades, if not centuries."

A new financing option

Zuma made it clear that Africa had been trying to diversify its trade so that the continent could move away from the imbalanced relationships it still suffered with Europe, which was based primarily on ongoing postcolonial influence and the West's grip on economic power. "We have been trying to do so. We are in the process of that. BRICS is just one of the steps to allow the continent to look after itself more than [looking after] the partners it works with."

When asked what would make BRICS' New Development Bank different, Zuma said: "You know for a fact that there's a hue and cry from the developing countries that the established banks or financial institutions today are very discriminatory. They are not allowing other regions of the world to participate. There's been a lot of debate about the need to transform the financial institutions. They are resisting. In the manner in which they are dealing with those who need to be helped, they are using the rules that were established decades and decades ago, but the world has changed. These institutions have not changed with the world."

Offering an indictment of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, he said: "There would be very few countries, if any, who would be able to say that as a result of them approaching these institutions they were able to grow and get out of trouble. There are very few that you could think of. This [BRICS] bank we have agreed to establish is going to operate differently. It's going to focus on the developing world … on the economic development of the Third World. It's going to look at, for example,

engaging in massive infrastructure development in Africa in different countries as a collective in the continent."

Critical projects and economic growth plans for Africa had been around for a long time, but there had always been the problem of how to fund them, "precisely because of the rules [of the IMF and World Bank] that I'm talking about. The BRICS bank is going to be user-friendly to the developing countries. Very deliberately. So that it is helpful to develop economies. The kind of conditions they are going to place are not there now, but certainly they will be designed to help those countries that are in trouble out of those troubles."

The BRICS bank, says Zuma, will not be restricted to only the concerns of the five member countries but would look to assist the entire developing world. "This is a new bank that reflects the changed world that's going to be dealing with people differently than the banks that are dealing with the kind of thinking of the old world."

This radical thinking by Zuma that is indeed a major threat to the established world order. In August 2017 Zuma famously told his supporters in Phongolo in the north of KwaZulu-Natal: "I was poisoned and almost died just because SA joined BRICS under my leadership. They said I was going to destroy the country."

He didn't make clear who "they" were. "Since we fought for freedom why can't we fight for complete freedom? We are being attacked because we are asking for economic freedom."

Zuma's government did not survive to see the BRICS project through. But Africa is in desperate need of more than just a sign that its centuries of oppression are going to end. It needs radical, concrete change, and it needs it now. First it was slavery and then industrial-scale colonialism.

As Zuma has pointed out on numerous occasions perfectly accurately, the Berlin Conference of 1884 to 1885 formalised and regulated European colonisation and trade in Africa and carved most of the continent up into

European possessions for exploitation and control. Says Zuma: “If you looked at the [colonial-era] map, the roads and rail began where the mines were … to the harbours. Nothing more.”

Even in the postcolonial period, at the point when Africa was supposedly declared “free” – especially from the 1960s onwards – richer countries came to understand that giving aid to poorer countries, especially those in Africa, was not simply a generous gesture. It could be used to impose control.

They could buy the loyalty of poorer countries by giving them aid. By the 1980s, everyone was using the same language of aid – that richer countries must donate money to poorer ones in order to alleviate poverty and promote development.

But it didn’t work out that way. The World Bank and the IMF became the primary decision-makers in the matter of where aid money went and it openly favoured those countries that liberalised their economies and, in effect, did exactly as they were told. The aid always came with firm conditions and most global donors imposed their own economic and political policies on developing countries in return for the “aid.”

To this day, the World Bank and IMF still call the final shots on where most of the world’s aid should be spent, and how. Much the same goes for loans. African countries have long taken huge loans from richer countries, but the positive evidence of where and how that money has been spent in African countries is hard to find.

The problems are twofold, since many corrupt African leaders have been only too happy to mortgage the wealth of their nations, placing future generations in debt bondage. And these debts have to be paid, and so wealth flows out of Africa each year.

So there has been African complicity in the undermining of the continent. But that is precisely how the West operates in Africa. They install their

henchmen and ensure they keep them in power.

Beware the African who is all too keen to talk to the IMF and World Bank, and who considers Western corporations his friends. The effect on Africa has been nothing short of utterly devastating.

Years ago, the European Network on Debt and Development estimated that $600 billion flows from poorer countries to richer ones each year, but very little ever makes its way back to the poorer countries. The same organisation revealed that a third of all aid was simply an accounting trick, with money moved from one donor ministry to another, calling into question whether the $130 billion or so "given" as aid every year is even real.

Aid figures are falsely inflated in many other ways, too, such as via debt cancellations and spending on refugees and foreign students in donor countries. Almost half of all official development aid gets tied up in paying for "products and services" offered to poor countries by richer ones (a lot of it in "consulting fees," where consultants from rich countries are paid to advise clients from poor countries on how to spend what little aid money remains after the aid agencies have taken their cut, defrauded even more and after the regimes running the countries have looted as much of it as they can).[3]

Development aid and loans were supposed to build the continent and develop it, but since more than $2.5 trillion in aid over the last fifty years has not really improved the conditions of living in Africa for most of its people, what has been the point? Africa has continued to make richer countries richer, and become inexorably poorer itself. It suits richer countries to keep the poorer ones in poverty.

Poorer countries use less of the world's diminishing energy resources. They pollute less. They do not pose great military

3 European Network on Debt and Development. 2012. Future of development aid under threat in eleventh hour negotiations, http://[www.eurodad.org/future-of-development-aid]

or security threats to the balance of world power. They remain sources for primary natural resources that can be extracted and resourced from badly run nation states incapable of setting up secondary or tertiary industries and service sectors that would cut into global industrialised market share. They also offer enormous pools of cheap labour that can be exploited by transnational corporations.

The 2012 Credit Suisse Global Wealth Report revealed that the richest 200 people on earth now have more money combined than the poorest 3.5 billion people combined (that was half the world's population, by the way).[4] In what twisted reality can 200 people have more than 3.5 billion? Inequality between poor countries and rich countries has only been increasing, according to the United Nations Development Program.

Global Financial Integrity calculates that up to $900 billion flows out of the developing world into Western accounts each year through trade misinvoicing, and Raymond Baker has estimated another $900 billion flows out through abusive transfer pricing.[5]

Developing countries pay $600 billion each year in debt service, according to the World Bank's International Debt Statistics databank, much of it on the compound interest of loans accumulated by illegitimate rulers long since deposed. Developing countries also lose about $500 billion each year as a consequence of trade rules imposed by rich countries through the IMF and World Bank.

Land exceeding the size of Western Europe has been grabbed from developing countries by corporations from rich countries in the past decade

4 Credit Suisse. 2012. *Global Databook 2012*. Credit Sussie, http://piketty.pse.ens.fr/files/Davies%20etal%202012

5 Baker, R. 2015. *A Brief Biography of Illicit Financial Flows: The Most Damaging Economic Condition Facing the Developing World*. Global Financial Integrity, http://www.gfintegrity.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Ford-Book.

alone. The value of that land is estimated at about $2 trillion flowing from poor to rich.

Add all of that together and the $130 billion rich countries transfer to developing countries each year starts to look like the kind of money we should be inclined to start looking at with a smirk and the standard response: "You know what? You go ahead and keep that. We'll be fine."

An Oxfam report has suggested: "The richest 1% has increased its income by 60% in the last 20 years, with the financial crisis (of 2008) accelerating rather than slowing the process."[6]

Jacob Zuma sums it all up when he says:

> *"We are very cautious with the Western banks, because the experience in Africa is that the more you got help, the more you got into trouble. We have had difficulties. Even the help you get has had so many strings attached. They don't give to you and say, 'Okay, do what will help you. They want to dictate, as well, what it is you should do. And this is a problem. It has conditions that will keep you dependent all the time. That's what we are trying to take ourselves out of. And we believe that an alternative bank like BRICS does provide an opportunity for us to have a bank that we can deal with at a level where we're satisfied, where we're not looked down upon … I am certain we are going to go where there is more advantage and possibility than where there is less of that. If you don't realise things have changed, you are going to be left behind."*

Indian-American economist Ravi Batra put it quite simply: "The theories offered by economists rationalise the self-interest of big business and the wealthy. Such theories claim to benefit society and the public's well-being. But they do just the opposite: they make the great mass of people

6 Oxfam. 2016. An Economy for the 1%: How Privilege and power in the economy drive extreme inequality and how this can be stopped, http://www.oxfam.org.

poorer while making the rich fabulously richer."[7]

Dollar power challenged

Brazil, Russia, India and China had their first summit in 2009 in the wake of the 2008 crisis. They wanted to discuss the economic situation and how to reform financial institutions, as well as how they could improve cooperation and play more of an active role in global affairs.

The mere fact alone that these countries then announced that the world needed a new global reserve currency that would be "diverse, stable and predictable" led to a fall in the value of the dollar, which has been running scared ever since.

South Africa joined the group in December 2010 after a formal invitation, and Zuma attended the 2011 summit in China as a full member. By March 2013, during the fifth BRICS summit in Durban, the member countries agreed to create a global financial institution that would rival the western-dominated IMF and World Bank. In September that same year, China committed $41 billion towards the pool; Brazil, India and Russia $18 billion each; and SA $5 billion.

In July 2014, the governor of the Russian Central Bank claimed: "If the current trend continues, soon the dollar will be abandoned by most of the significant global economies and it will be kicked out of the global trade finance."[8]

Zuma has said: "BRICS as a bank is very big, backed by strong countries, and is establishing its regional office in Africa in a serious sense. All other big economies … they've never done so. It says something about how Africa must be helped. That in itself indicates something. I think it could worry some people."[9]

He pointed out that the moment the bank begins to

7 Batra, R .2007. *The new golden age: the coming revolution against political corruption and economic chaos*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

8 Hedge, Z. 2014. The BRICS are morphing into an anti-dollar alliance: The ongoing de-dollarization of the world, http://[https://www.infowars.com/]

9 RT interviews Jacob Zuma President of South Africa. RT Live: http://rt.com/on-air .

invest on a large scale in countries with growing economies, benefits that would normally have accrued to the traditional players would help to grow the BRICS bank instead. And that cycle would only grow and compound, further enriching the BRICS bank and weakening the World Bank and IMF.

Following a trip by then US president Barack Obama to India in 2015, the former US assistant secretary of Treasury for economic policy under Ronald Reagan, Paul Craig Roberts, admitted that the US government was "very disturbed about the formation of BRICS."[10]

He described Obama's trip (the first ever by a US president to India) as an effort to disturb the relationships among BRICS, with the possibility of these countries abandoning the US dollar posing a "direct threat to the exchange value of the dollar," which would disempower America to be able to "control all the outcomes" worldwide.

"So it [America] will do whatever it can to break it up. They [BRICS] are purposely trying to create a trade system in which the role of the dollar disappears, because that means the demand for the dollar falls, and then the currency falls, and that helps accelerate the loss of the role of world reserve currency for America."

Ex-Indian foreign secretary Kanwal Sibal told *Russia Today* that the West's problem with BRICS centred on Russia and the fact that America had still not overcome its "Cold War mentality. Russia looms very large. It's still the largest country in the world despite the fact that the Soviet Union collapsed. It has very powerful strategic forces, it still has considerable influence globally and is sitting right next to Europe where there are small countries."[11]

Credit ratings agency blackmail

Just as importantly, BRICS has, at the suggestion of Russia's

10 https://gotube.site/video/-AUf3Pgz3WA

11 RT Question More. 2014. West scared of BRICS since it can't control bloc from within- Ex Indian Foreign Secretary Accessed: www.rt.com/shows/sophieco/brics-russia-world-system.

president Vladimir Putin, been keen on developing an alternative credit ratings system to the current big three from the USA – Moody's, Standard & Poor's and Fitch Ratings – all of whom have been hard on Jacob Zuma's presidency and management of the economy.

Zuma, in turn, has questioned both the approach and the motives of these agencies. "You don't in fact know what it is that people [at the ratings agencies] look at because you are not part of it in any way. You also need people who can look at these things in such a way and with an understanding that is more balanced. We could then understand some of the causes of some difficulties. It's not to say they should not be there. But you need other people to look at things differently. Because, generally, they've got a particular way of looking at Africa. We've got a particular way of looking at them. We need some balance somehow. At times, the reasons why they downgrade or don't downgrade … we don't agree at times with the reasons. At times they are reporting unfairly. At times they just get influenced by the media and how the media reports. We want something that is very objective, very scientific and realistic. We're not saying they're not, but at times when we're trying to find out what [the ratings agencies'] reasons are, we realise, for example, that whether the economy is going or not – if there is a big strike or protests, even before you can see if it's had an effect on the economy – they already have a view. And on the basis of their view, they take a decision. They don't even look at how you solve the problem. So in my view you do need different approaches to look at these matters so that you could have some people – particularly people who come from a different background – who will look at it differently and perhaps arrive at a slightly different conclusion. It will be healthy if that was happening."[12]

12 RT interviews Jacob Zuma President of South Africa. RT Live: http://rt.com/on-air

What he said there was putting it mildly. The ratings agencies are all based in the USA, and are the merciless enforcers of neoliberal policy. If you don't dance according to the free market principles that primarily favour Western investment, expect to be downgraded, whether you are capable of paying your debts or not.

It is economic warfare. They have created a monopoly, holding about 95% of the global market. S&P and Moody's hold 40% each and Fitch has 15%. For the most part the media plays right into their hands, elevating them and affording them the superiority to maintain this uncompetitive environment to the detriment of the nations, companies and investors they are meant to serve.

This would be fine if they had a track record that made them deserving of their dominance, but they don't. Their decisions are largely unregulated and have often been shrouded in controversy.

Some of their decisions display a concerning lack of true understanding of the markets. Their predictions have left many economies in financial turmoil and upheaval. This has left many to not only question their reliability, but the very need for their existence. Their credibility has been tainted by one too many recent blunders.

In 2009, Moody's released a report titled, "Investor fears over Greek government liquidity misplaced."[13] Fast-forward six months and the Greeks were seeking a bailout. Several key reports have been released asking: "Who rates the credit rating agencies?"[14]

After several less-than-pleasing experiences with the ratings agency trio, the Russian government has taken action. Russian authorities have accused the Big Three of deliberating underestimating their country's economy. They have seen that they are indeed tools of American financial capitalism, as stated by Finnish politician Olli Rehn in response to S&P's

13 Moody's Investor Service. 2009. *Risk lies with long-term solvency, not short-term liquidity*.
14 ibid

downgrade of the €440 billion European Financial Stability Security bailout.[15]

When Russia's sovereign rating was downgraded as a result of Western sanctions, they imposed new accreditation laws that the major rating agencies refused to sign up to. Russia responded by creating a new rating agency called ACRA.[16]

Russia is not the only country under attack from these agents of the West. With rating agencies facing increasing geopolitical pressure, we've also seen sovereign credit rating downgrades dished out to China and Hong Kong. This only highlights the true political and financial agendas of the agencies.

How else can one explain how a country like China, which has more capital than the US and which holds about $1.2 trillion in US debt, can be downgraded.

It's clear that these countries and their allies are becoming too influential for the liking of the established West. The IMF cannot allow a financial powerhouse like China to introduce rivals on the global stage, such as the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank without at least attempting to use their weapons, the agencies, to destabilise them and thus hang on to their dominance a little longer.

As BRICS continues to grow and as the Zuma administration resolves to remain committed to their allies, we can expect continued negativity and downgrades from the agencies. We have already witnessed S&P and Fitch downgrade our credit rating to full junk status. Moody's is yet to follow suit and is notably the only one that has yet to rate SA as junk since the advent of democracy.

On a recent visit, the IMF mission leader, Anna Lucia Coronel, painted a bleak picture for SA, a country that has shown

15 https://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/debt-crisis-live/9016985/Debt-crisis-as-it-happened-January-16-2012.html

16 https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-ratings-acra/russian-ratings-agency-acra-sees-portfolio-growing-as-foreigners-leave-idUSKBN19P1VC

less submission to the West in its recent policy suggestions.

She said: “IMF staff anticipate that the subdued economic growth of 0.7% projected by the authorities for 2017 is not likely to improve much in 2018. Growth would recover only gradually in the medium term unless the pace of implementation of structural reforms accelerates quickly enough to prompt a clear recovery in business and consumer confidence.”[17]

The local agents of the West are well aware of the factors that are at play here and this is why they aggravate the onslaught on Zuma and his administration, proposing their “New Deal.” The overrated ratings fit their long-term political and social plans just fine.

Undermining dollar power

But what makes the big three ratings agencies matter more than anything else is the power of the dollar. And the threat against the dollar from BRICS is stark. The USA found itself in the lucky position after World War 2 to be able to pick up the pieces and turn itself into the undisputed global superpower, a position it contested for with the Soviet Union for about four decades before it stood above it all triumphantly, powered by the dollar.

After World War 2, the US dollar steadily became the global currency and, most importantly, a reserve currency for much of the world. Particularly from the 1970s onwards, when the world was bullied by Richard Nixon to move away from the gold standard, to a reliance on the dollar, it meant the USA was now the undisputed banker of the world and could create value simply by declaring that value existed. The world wanted ts dollars, and the USA was only too willing to keep printing as many dollars as would be required in exchange for whatever the USA desired.

Reserve currency status has allowed America to spend far

17https://www.imf.org/~/media/Files/Publications/WEO/2018/April/c1.ashx

more, year-in, year-out, than it has raised in tax and export revenue. Unlike the rest of the world America has not had to worry about a balance of payments crisis for decades.

It can simply pay for imports in dollars that its Federal Reserve can just print. As a result, there's virtually no limit to how much the USA can spend and the status of the dollar has allowed Washington to bully the rest of the world both financially and through the funding of foreign wars.

In 2014, however, an article by Liam Halligan in *The Telegraph* recognised that the BRICS summit in Brazil that year was the clearest sign that the dollar's reserve currency status is on the ropes: "It's long been obvious the BRICS are coming … tomorrow is almost today. Consider that BRICS collectively hold sway over 50% of global currency reserves, rising to almost three-quarters if you take the emerging markets as a whole. The G7 nations between them control only 20% – and less than 8% if you exclude Japan. Based on such balance sheets, we're now seeing institutional change. The new BRICS Development Bank, modelled on the IMF, will have a $100bn currency reserve available to lend around the world, giving distressed debtor nations an alternative to the 'Washington Consensus.'"[18]

Halligan recognised that BRICS countries have had to pay money into the IMF for years, and have increased their contributions substantially over the decades, and yet have been "denied additional influence over what happens to the money. Belgium has more votes than Brazil, Canada more than China. Modest reforms giving the large emerging markets more power, agreed with much fanfare in 2007 and again in 2010, have been stalled by Washington lawmakers. The BRICS have now called time, setting up their own rival institution."

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18 https://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/comment/liamhalligan/10978178/The-dollars-70-year-dominance-is-coming-to-an-end.html

For America, the party is almost over, and popular cryptocurrencies like bitcoin are only hastening its downfall. “The US currency accounted for just 33% of all foreign exchange holdings in 2013, on IMF numbers, down from 55% in 2001,” wrote Halligan. “The world’s emerging giants now have thumbscrews on the West.”

The fall of the US dollar and, by extension, America itself, will come with economic pain for the world, and precipitate a financial crisis that will make the 2008 disaster look like a picnic. For America in particular there will be massive inflation, higher interest rates and major increases in the cost of food, clothing and petrol.

We need nuclear

Nothing illustrates the fervent hatred of Russia more than the concerted media response against any nuclear deal with Rosatom, Russia’s state-owned nuclear agency.

It’s generally accepted that Russia’s nuclear power technology is among the best, if not the very best, in the world. We know that most of our old coal power stations are on their last legs and burning coal cannot be defended at the cost of further global warming.

We know that nuclear power in the long term is the most reliable form of power and comes in far more cheaply than coal. We also know that renewable power will not be able to supply all SA’s power needs.

It’s nearly impossible, though, to find a single positive story in our media about the benefits that could accrue to SA by partnering with Russia. That should be no surprise, though. If the UK or USA were the ones bringing us a nuclear power station or two, you can rest assured that the PR spin machine would have been working in overdrive, and the media would have felt far more conflicted about how to report on the deal. But it’s Russia, and that makes it very easy. It’s just completely bad.

Few in our privately owned media seem to understand that we live in a world in which it's often very difficult to separate the "good guys" from the "bad guys" and to effectively work on the premise that the private sector is "good" and the public sector is "bad" is naivety at best and active collusion at worst. It leads to the kind of cognitive dissonance that when the private sector is eventually caught out engaging in tax evasion, transfer pricing, collusion, paying bribes, committing frauds, and so on, this is treated as a mere aberration instead of the order of the day.

Our media basically expects and assumes the private sector to mostly be "clean" and expects and assumes the public sector to mostly be "dirty." The West is almost by definition superior to the BRICS countries and the developing world.

But the truth is that the world is not neatly divided between the good guys and the bad guys. In many ways, everyone is the bad guy in their own particular way and everyone has their skeletons. Our media should not be picking sides – the tragic thing is that most journalists have no idea that they even are picking sides, or that there even are sides.

Moving SA towards a new order

But a new order will emerge, and SA's alignment with BRICS is a strategic manoeuvre that could shield SA in a way that we may find ourselves crediting Jacob Zuma's presidency with for generations to come. It's likely you have never known a world in which the USA was not the dominant force, the de facto controller of the world. So it may be hard to imagine any of that changing.

But any reading of history should teach us that empires can fall relatively quickly after years of gradual decay. The day it will no longer be allowed to repay its debts in dollars will be catastrophic for not just America, but the West as a

whole. It could herald a new age in which the formerly downtrodden countries will be the new global giants.

By aligning with BRICS, Jacob Zuma has looked far beyond the present day and the petty politics of our time. He has set SA up as the African beachhead for a continent on the rise. The fact that the NDB Bank has a regional headquarters in Johannesburg will ensure that SA becomes a focus point of influence and authority.

It may sound outrageous, but we may yet live to see the USA and Europe having to approach Africa and the rest of the developing world for aid. There's no reason the shoe cannot be on the other foot, and the long view of history has also taught us that no one is ever on top forever.

For now, the world continues to live in the shadows of a summit that took place in early July 1944, when delegates from 44 countries gathered at the Mount Washington Hotel in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, where the current system to regulate the international monetary and financial order after World War 2 was agreed upon.

But there are new summits now, happening every year, and each one is becoming increasingly more important than that distant meeting more than 73 years ago. China is set to surpass the USA as the number one economy any day now, with some economists predicting China's economy will be three times larger than America's by as early as 2040. They may not be showing their panic, but trust me, the US government is very concerned, and should be.

And many may have scorned Zuma when he revealed that the assassination attempts against him were linked to his partnership with BRICS – but when you consider how much of the world's fate rests on what will happen within the BRICS grouping, as well as how each of the member countries relate to the rest of the world going forward, should we really just be treating these numerous assassination attempts as little

more than the normal thrust and parry of politics?

And then consider the character and history of the man who has been waiting in the wings since 2012, ready to take over at a moment's notice should anything untoward happen to the president. Do you really believe that man, with his particular record of "negotiating" with the West, would show nearly the same enthusiasm towards the BRICS countries and hold the West's feet to the fire in the way that Zuma appears to have no qualms about?

In August 2017, Zuma told a cadres' forum meeting that he knew the liberation movement was under attack. "The issue of the unity of the alliance, who ever thought that one day the alliance would say the kind of things they are saying? No one. Why? The amount of money that has been poured to destabilise SA, you will never believe," said Zuma.

He said the money being used against the country had turned comrades he used to know against him, but said we "will leave it there" because he was wary of saying to much in the presence of the media.

He referenced the poisoning attempts against him and declared: "Our revolution is under attack. I know that we are under attack, no matter how bright and eloquent some people are, I know that and I often have a heart to heart with myself, just like Jesus, and say 'Please forgive them, lord for they know not what they do,'" said Zuma to rapturous applause.[19]

At this point, of course, before we get too many romantic notions about BRICS and the possible good it might do, it may be good to remind ourselves that even if the USA stops being the dominant neocolonial force in the world, that doesn't mean that the ultimate nature of global capital will change. America took over the mantle of power from Great Britain, but

19 RT interviews Jacob Zuma President of South Africa. RT Live: http://rt.com/on-air

that didn't change much in the end.

Much the same could happen with China, and SA has itself been accused of behaving like a neo=colonial power in Africa through its banks and other multinationals. Christo Wiese, for example, today has Shoprite stores all the way through Africa right up to Nigeria, and is only planning to build more.

Jacob Zuma must know only too well that the bulk of his problems stem not from the fact that he is a supposedly awful president with a history of corruption. They stem from the fact that he remains rooted in his liberation ideologies and that he remembers who SA's true friends were during the struggle.

Quite simply, Jacob Zuma is the last choice that white monopoly capital and the neoliberal market economies would have wanted as president. He knows it too.

He knows that if he simply cosied up to Western imperialism and picked Europe and the USA over Russia, China, India, Brazil, the rest of Africa and most of the developing world then his problems would probably evaporate. He would, in time, even become the darling of the media in SA as our credit rating improves along with the strength of the rand. Economic growth would be restored.

He should have been finished off in 2005 already when Thabo Mbeki fired him for supposedly being corrupt in an Arms Deal with the West that Mbeki himself actually facilitated and in which Jacob Zuma was a minor player. He should then have been destroyed by the allegations of rape against him.

Thanks to the endless attempts of civil society and the opposition to treat him like a criminal, he has had to spend vast chunks of his time as president in fighting the ongoing legal battles against him in a bid to simply stay out of jail, which he has managed to do and will continue to do.

It's when he speaks isiZulu and addresses those he considers his friends that you often hear the real Jacob Zuma and his views, such as when he addressed a

Cadres' Forum gathering at Bushbuckridge in Mpumalanga in 2016. He pointed out the obvious: it was China, Russia and other eastern socialist countries that assisted in defeating apartheid.

The West had been the enemy, and it's obvious that the president still sees his old foreign enemies as the enemy today. "Our foreign enemies don't love us. They give our own comrades a lot of money to destroy the ANC."

He pointed out that the ANC had sent OR Tambo to ask for support from foreign countries for the armed struggle against the apartheid government. When he went to Western countries to ask for help "they refused because they were friends of those who oppressed us."[20]

This is a simple fact that is so often lost in the mythology that swiftly grew up around Mandela and the transition to democracy.

The Soviet Union (Russia) offered financial aid to the ANC. It helped to train the ANC's soldiers in modern warfare. "They are the ones who fought for our liberation, not the West. The Western countries who are seen to be showing us love today are the ones who supported and loved the apartheid regime. The reason they now want to destroy the ANC is because we have now strengthened our friendship with those who helped us."

He made it clear that it was too difficult a thing to so easily turn your back on your friends and become friends with those who didn't want to help you. That is the reason the West is crying so much."

SA's membership of BRICS has been a major thorn in the side of the ANC's old enemies. "If you don't know, you will believe the lies of those who speak for those countries. Some of them are even wearing ANC uniforms."[21]

20 ibid

21 ibid

The BRICS, state capture and #ZumaMustFall

Andile Mngxitama[1]

Why did white capital led by the Oppenheimers, Johann Rupert and supported by opposition parties like the Economic Freedom Fighters and London agents like Cyril Ramaphosa and Pravin Gordhan, want President Jacob Zuma gone? It is in furtherance of the anti-BRICS western imperialist agenda. All the countries that are part of BRICS block have come under imperialist onslaught.

To this end we have seen how the same imperialist forces have successfully removed a democratically appointed President of Brazil through media manipulation and corruption and subsequently replaced her with a puppet of its choice.

Evidently, the same regime change agenda is planned for execution in South Africa. To this end the calls for regime change are part of the anti-BRICS imperialist agenda.

The World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have been historically used by western imperialism as tools of maintaining its hegemony. It is now threatened by the BRICS bloc and the consequent BRICS Development Bank as the latter offers countries freedom from the WB and IMF stranglehold.

Our engagement regarding the BRICS process indicates that we are no longer a colony insofar as being controlled by the IMF and the WB is concerned. It also suggests that there's now a chance to run our own economy and to put in our own infrastructure etc via the BRICS Bank.

1 Notes taken at an African National Congress Youth League meeting, 2 February 2017, http://www.capemessenger.co.za/2017/02/03/state-capture-settlers-mngxitama/

Dispelling the myth: BRICS against imperialism

Mbuyiseni Ndlozi[1]

In April 2017, just after Pravin Gordhan was fired by Jacob Zuma as finance minister, there emerged a myth used by those who defend Zuma's Cabinet reshuffle. This is about the idea that the BRICS countries are under siege from Western powers for putting up a fight against Euro-American led global capitalism – a.k.a. White Monopoly Capitalism.

It is said that Pravin Gordhan and Mcebisi Jonas were removed from Cabinet because they are representatives of Euro-American imperialist capital seeking the destruction of the BRICS initiative. In addition, that National Treasury under their leadership is a stumbling block to "radical economic transformation." In the narrative tropes of this myth,

> *Brazil's popular protests that led to the impeachment and ultimate removal of President Dilma Rousseff from office were the creation of Euro-American imperialist capital seeking to destroy the emerging south-south co-operation outside traditional Bretton Woods Institutions i.e. World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Co-operation which led to the BRICS initiative.*
>
> *In the same way, the South African popular protests demanding the impeachment or removal of Zuma, are also a creation of Euro-American capitalist imperialism trying to destroy the BRICS initiative.*
>
> *BRICS through financial co-operation and creation of financial institutions like the BRICS Bank i.e. New Development Bank, seeks to create an alternative to Euro-American Bretton Woods Institutions. This allows the world to break the monopoly,*

1 *Daily Maverick,* 10 April 2017, https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2017-04-10-dispelling-the-final-myth-brics-and-imperialism/#.Wy8Md1UzbZ5

control and domination of world debt by Euro-American powers who enforce structural adjustment programmes disguised as terms of lending money to developing countries.

With the BRICS' New Development Bank, developing countries will be able to secure alternative credit paths for currency stability, and in times of a balance of payment crisis with a favourable repayment programme and contribution towards lasting infrastructure development orientated spending.

The destabilisation of Brazil and South Africa will thus be followed by the same in India, China and Russia, maybe even war with the last two. All in an attempt, by Western powers, to destroy the rise of the alternative global power of BRICS which will compete with the World Bank.

Let us say for a moment that all this is indeed true; that Euro-American imperialist capital is working on the destabilisation of BRICS countries so that they can continue to financially depend on the West. To say the same with the South African case, you need to prove that Pravin Gordhan and Mcebisi Jonas worked against the interests of South Africa in the building and consolidation of BRICS financial institutions which they were directly responsible for.

If so, this means they are agents of Western imperialism, or as the so-called "intelligence report" of Zuma suggests, that they were working to destabilise the economy of our country. Thus, Zuma was right to remove them from Cabinet.

The Brazilian analogy

In Brazil, the demand for the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff was in relation to the biggest corruption scandal in Brazilian history. Here, a semi-state-owned petroleum company called Petrobras was used by a number of top officials who colluded with an organised cartel of 16 companies to overcharge Petrobras for construction and service work in

return for bribes and kickbacks. The cost of the entire corruption was estimated at a shocking $22-billion.

The result was millions of ordinary Brazilians taking to the streets in popular protests and demanding the impeachment of Rousseff. The Brazilian Senate (the equivalent of Parliament in our case) held impeachment hearings against Rousseff, and after thorough investigations, they removed her from office.

Let us forget the Nkandla scandal, which directly involved Zuma and contractors who overcharged the government for the undue benefits of construction of his private home. This only led to limited protests by 25 MPs of the EFF without any accompanying millions of popular support on the streets.

Following this, the EFF took to the streets as it approached the Constitutional Court to force Zuma to pay back the money that was unduly spent in Nkandla. The Constitutional Court not only ruled in favour of #PayBackTheMoney, but it also ruled that Zuma violated his oath of office. Still, there were no popular protests across the country in demand of Zuma's resignation.

In addition, EFF and other political parties took to the streets and to the North Gauteng High Court to force the release of the Public Protector Report which made serious allegations that there is indeed a corrupt relationship between Zuma and the Gupta family. Here, still, these protests were limited to political parties; South Africa did not see millions or even hundreds of thousands of people take to the streets and demands Zuma's removal.

So, it was only when Zuma reshuffled his Cabinet that our streets saw hundreds of thousands of people demanding the removal of Zuma from office.

Mcebisi Jonas revealed that the removal of Nene was linked to the Guptas' attempt to take over Treasury… he says they had offered him the post of finance minister first before giving it to Des van Rooyen. We know for a

fact that Nene had resisted a nuclear deal costing the country over R3 trillion (twice the country's annual budget).

However, it is the recent removal of Pravin Gordhan as finance minister by Zuma (his own making) that led to the popular protests which have now come to be known as the #AntiZumaProtests. Those who defend Zuma's decision say Gordhan is an agent of the West in a broader campaign to destabilise BRICS countries.

But wait, let us share a quick history. Pravin Gordhan was appointed Minister of Finance in 2009. In his 2010 Budget speech (February) Gordhan acknowledge that Brazil, India, China and a host of other middle-income countries are actively taking steps to improve their competitiveness, raise their skills levels, and invest in infrastructure. He emphasised that South Africa must not be left behind. In 2010, Gordhan was part of a bilateral engagement upon an invitation for South Africa to join the BRICs.

In his 2011 Budget Speech Gordhan had this to say, "Up until the turn of the century, developing countries accounted for about 20 percent of global output. This will increase to 40 percent by about 2015. Developing economies in Africa, Latin America and South Asia will play an increasingly important role in the global economy in coming years as incomes rise and poverty falls. South Africa's invitation to join the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) economies reflects this broadening of the sources of economic growth. Over the next five years, these economies will account for 36 percent of world economic growth. We have to construct our own growth and development strategies to propel our economy forward, create jobs and compete on the global stage."

He was well aware of the dynamics at play when South Africa was included at the BRICS and not at any point was there a sign of undermining BRICS initiatives.

In his Minister's statement on policy and commitment of 2012 annual report, Gordhan said: "Although times are tough, we (South Africa) have opportunities available to us. These include opportunities arising from the improved economic performance in most of the African continent and the shifting dynamics in the global economy, especially the rise of fellow BRICS nations as major contributors to global economic growth."

In 2012 under the leadership of Gordhan, National Treasury was part of a delegation that participated in the 4th BRICS Summit and provided objectives for South Africa to pursue during the summit. It was Gordhan who co-ordinated with Development Bank of South Africa to organise meetings of stakeholders to draft the BRICS economic strategy which would provide the country's economic objectives in the BRICS.

In his 2013 Budget speech, Gordhan announced that, "Next month, we (South Africa) will host the 5th annual BRICS Summit, which brings together Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. The Summit will unveil the work we have been doing without BRICS partners on the following projects: 1. The possible establishment of a BRICS-led bank is intended to mobilise domestics savings and co-fund infrastructure in developing regions; 2. The pooling of members' foreign exchange reserves with the view of using them to support each other at times of balance of payments or currency crisis. Collectively, BRICS countries hold reserves totaling 4.5 trillion USD."

These were projects that Gordhan was working on as a minister before he was moved to CoGTA in May 2014. However, most of this BRICS work continued with Nhlanhla Nene who was his deputy and who had also fully participated in BRICS initiatives. By the time Gordhan came back to Treasury in December 2015 after the "Nene Saga," most of the BRICS work

had been done, including making payment to the BRICS bank.

Let us also recall that Zuma's reason for removing Nhlanhla Nene from office was a "strategic deployment" later to be revealed as Head of BRICS Bank. Zuma was quoted by EWN to have said: "… urgency of the changes in the leadership of the National Treasury" was because nominations needed to be sent to Shanghai in terms of the head of the African Regional Centre of the New Development Bank/BRICS Bank, which will be based in Johanesburg… Mr Nene is our candidate for this position. We are fully backing his candidature, knowing full well that he will excel and make the nation proud in his next assignment."

Even in Parliament Questions for Written Reply, Zuma said: "I have publicly stated on several occasions that South Africa nominated Mr Nhlanhla Nene for the position of head of the African Regional Centre of the New Development Bank, also known as the BRICS Bank. Processes to make an appointment to that position are under way under the aegis of the New Development Bank in Shanghai, China."

Surely you would not deploy a person to BRICS that you think is part of a ploy to undermine the very BRICS efforts.

Eventually, the BRICS Bank officially opened in China on 27 February 2016. The National Treasury announced this as it marked the completion of legal procedures that will now allow the bank to begin its operation. During his 2016 (first Budget speech since his reappointment) Gordhan announced that the New Development Bank will open its Africa Regional Centre in Johannesburg in March.

What does this all mean? The processes of BRICS are actually the hard work of the ANC BEE elite which has been in the pipeline. In fact, Gordhan has been a key mind and resource in establishing South Africa's participation in BRICS. So, it is simply not comprehensible how those who defend Zuma's removal of Gordhan can say

Gordhan was working on the destruction of BRICS.

What is our equation now: There are no policy shifts intended with Gigaba's appointment, Nene and Gordhan are the ones who worked to establish South Africa's inclusion into BRICS and the consolidation of BRICS financial institutions It cannot be that Gigaba's appointment was about stopping finance ministers who were destroying the establishment of BRICS institutions. In fact, Nene and Gordhan were key to the consolidation of BRICS institutions. Neither is Gigaba going to implement radical economic policies like "free higher education," "nationalisation of mines, banks and other monopoly industries."

Therefore, it is a MYTH that the reason why Zuma removed Gordhan has something to do with resisting Euro-American imperialism. In fact, if the West is working on the destabilisation of our country (South Africa) in the same way we saw in Brazil in that people take to the streets to remove a president, it is not Gordhan that is aiding them. The agent of the destabilisation of the country is Zuma himself. He is the one who has caused our streets to fill up in demand of his removal by removing people who were working hard to establish and consolidate BRICS and its alternative financial institutions.

Conclusion

The Constitutional Court ruling that Zuma violated the Constitution, including the Public Protector's State of Capture report, never saw the type of popular street presence we witnessed on Friday the 7th of April. It was Zuma's removal of Pravin Gordhan, replacing him with Malusi Gigaba, that sparked the popular protests.

Why? Not because of resistance to imperialism. The real reason why Gigaba is Finance Minister is because Zuma wants access to Treasury for his personal interests and those of his business partners,

the Gupta family! In this corrupt desire to use Treasury money for his benefit, Nene, Gordhan and Mcebisi were obstacles, and Gigaba is a full-on puppet who will do as the Guptas say.

The EFF has thus chosen to be on the side of the people. We will march against kleptocracy and corruption, demanding to remove Zuma from office. This removal is also underpinned by the fact that Zuma violated the Constitution to secure corruption in Nkandla; this means, as an individual, he is willing to do everything in his power to secure his personal interests, much to the detriment of the country and its people. He Must Fall!

Time for business to get out of its comfort zones: Dr Survé elaborates on the challenges and benefits of BRICS[1]

Dr. Iqbal Survé, Executive Chairman of Sekunjalo, Siboniso Nxumalo, Joint Head of the Old Mutual Global Emerging Markets Boutique, and Yunus Hoosen, head of investment at the dti kick off the Raging Bull Summit with a discussion on BRICS.

Dr. Survé began the discussion by explaining the development of the BRICS business council and the new BRICS development bank. While he was in Davos, Switzerland at the World Economic Forum he stressed the importance of SA investment opportunities.

The world is changing, Survé acknowledged China's growing dominance over the United States and India's new tech development has made the world take notice.

We as the investment community need to see these developments and given the fact that South Africa is part of the BRICS group, we need to take the lead, Survé explained.

Siboniso Nxumalo, Joint Head of the Old Mutual Global Emerging Markets Boutique began his presentation on the importance of BRICS states. He stressed the already growing partnership within the BRICS states and emphasised that South Africa is one of the countries which presents "phenomenal opportunity."

1 *Independent online,* 31 January 2018

According to 2016 data conducted by Old Mutual Emerging Markets Boutique, investment prospects from 2008 to 2016 proved fruitful for BRICS countries. The data shows that if $100 dollars was invested in 2008, South Africa would give one of the best returns. However, this does not exclude the economic drive that China, India, and Russia have.

China is identified as one of the biggest players in BRICS. "BRICS is all about China," adds Nxumalo. He says that in order to expand BRICS into the global emerged market, BRICS countries should either buy from China or sell to them. Nxumalo says that China performed an "economic miracle." It re-emerged as a competitive country, adding great value to investments and returns.

China and India both will determine the global drive of BRICS.

"India has the largest potential in BRICS. It has lots of people and the highest STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) graduates," said Nxumalo. Hoosen echoed this sentiment as he addressed the attendees on BRICS. "India had a modest recovery and rebounded fast. The BRICS states will become a dynamic force in the global arena," Hoosen empahsised.

South Africa can definitely learn from this. The optimistic stance is that we are not far behind. "We have a modern financial system, we have a demanding market and it is easy to do business with South Africa," said Hoosen.

The BRICS market will soon become a market that will be tapped on globally, producing a profitable outcome and will become global leaders in the economic forefront.

BRICS to prioritise digital economy[2]

BRICS countries – led by South Africa – are going to prioritise the digital economy in the development of cheaper, quicker

2 *Independent online,* 4 April 2018

and faster digital and mobile technology.

BRICS comprises five major emerging national economies – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. The incoming chairman of the BRICS Business Council, Dr. Iqbal Survé, said the "4th Industrial Revolution (4IR)" was characterised by dramatic and disruptive change in the ways societies are run.

He said that if the third Industrial revolution was associated with the rise of computer technology – the 4IR would be associated with supercomputing, blockchain technologies, and artificial intelligence.

"[This] is fundamentally different to the previous three revolutions because for the first time that which was a figment of our imagination can begin to happen – humans can be replaced in virtually every sphere of productive life," said Dr. Survé, in his address at the BRICS Business Council 2018 Midterm meeting held in Shanghai on Thursday, 27 March.

"At its most promising, the Fourth Industrial Revolution is an unprecedented opportunity for the BRICS countries and Africans, who have hitherto been largely excluded from the 4IR tidal wave, to embrace and fully participate in the technology metamorphosis, to co-create Africa's own digital future and assist its people to move from low to moderate prosperity and better living standards."

He said as part of the work plan, the Skills Development Working Group of the BRICS Business Council would host the second BRICS Skills Competition in South Africa at the end of September 2018, with a focus on skills required in the future.

"Focus areas will include Cyber Security, the Internet of Things, Data Analytics; Industrial Robotics and Intelligent Manufacturing. An MOU to be proposed on Cooperation on Skills development for the 4IR for the BBC Annual Meeting in July," he said.

The news comes as Singapore-based veteran investor, Jim

Rodgers, on Tuesday said that South Africa was a highly bankable investment destination for Africans and for international investors alike, adding that the country's recent ascendancy to the chairmanship of BRICS also puts it in the highly enviable position as a leader of the developing world.

Sagarmatha Technologies, an integrated multi-sided platform technology group in which Quantum Fund co-founder Rodgers is a shareholder, will list on the main board of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) on Friday.

The listing is contingent on raising a minimum amount of R3 billion, in conjunction with a private placement of 189,298,334 ordinary no par value shares at R39.62 per share in a bid to raise R7.5 billion.

The company has identified key strategic points for citizen growth and knowledge empowerment within the context of the 4IR as it rolls out across Africa.

"I'm not an expert at actually creating technology, but I know it has the power to re-shape Africa, providing countless opportunities for new businesses and profits. Through what Amazon and Google have done in other countries around the world, they have pretty much laid the blueprint for Africa," Rodgers said.

"Companies with a footprint like Sagarmatha Technologies, with their expertise and leadership, are now perfectly positioned to apply these learnings to what is essentially virgin territory. There's a market of at least one billion people across the continent, all hungry for information, the ability to transact and they are primed to be unlocked."

Far from detracting from the potential for Africans to be doing it for Africans, Rogers said he believes that the rapid spread of technology will enhance this burgeoning promise.

"Africa as a continent is under-developed, but it has a gigantic, innovative and extremely hardworking population who are hungry for advancement and

who are prepared to grab it with both hands," Rodgers said.

"They are primed and ready to push the right buttons. If you can find competent management in African-based companies, jump in with both feet. The sky will be the limit."

In the statement released on Tuesday, Dr Survé said the Council approved the release of the BRICS Digital Economic Development Initiative and endorsed the proposal of setting up a working group on the digital economy.

The BRICS countries represent more than 40 percent of the global population and said the opportunity for developing countries to leapfrog technology, unencumbered by needing massive investments in legacy infrastructure and technologies, offered an incredible opportunity for training and developing human talent within the countries.

The BRICS economies seek to unlock the potential for growth through the digital economy through the aggressive adoption of a fully inclusive mobile economy.

Dr Survé said that this was particularly exciting for the South African economy, with its highly developed digital infrastructure and highly prized lifestyle.

BRICS as game changer[3]

South Africa might be a small country relative to its BRICS partners, Russia, China, Brazil and India, but it punches well above its weight – and can do so much better if it channels more of its focus to collaborating with other emerging economies.

It's a no-brainer, believes Dr Iqbal Survé, the chairman of Sekunjalo Investment Holdings and current chair of the South African chapter of the BRICS Business Council.

With access to a market of more than 3 billion people and a combined gross domestic product (GDP) of around R19 trillion – or 23 percent of the gross world product – South

3 *Independent online,* 5 July 2018

Africa's engaged membership of BRICS is central to its ability to meet President Cyril Ramaphosa's plan to raise R1.2trillion in new investment.

Weeks before the annual BRICS Summit, which will be held in Joburg from July 25 to 27, Dr Survé said the BRICS Business Council was on track to receive more than 750 delegates in Durban, including 100 dollar billionaires, business leaders, and the heads of state of five neighbouring countries, on July 22 and 23.

It's the second summit in South Africa: the first rotational summit was held in 2013, three years after the country was admitted to the association of major emerging economies.

The councils comprise five prominent people in business: the chairperson is appointed by the cabinet.

"The way we've structured our council, in consultation with the ministers of finance and of trade and industry, is to include a representative of Business Unity SA, the Black Business Council, a stateowned enterprise, and two business leaders or entrepreneurs," he said.

"The council has 25 members, but in each country there are working groups. There are currently nine working groups: on financial services; agriculture; the green economy; infrastructure; manufacturing; the digital economy; deregulation; and skills development."

The working groups essentially carve policy direction for their governments, aligning the positions of business to the government on things like deregulation.

"We are not there to execute those things; business people, working with the government, do that. We are there to facilitate and set policy.

"So, if someone says we want to do business between India and South Africa, or Brazil and South Africa, but it's impossible to get visas or it's difficult to get registration about businesses, or we want verification that the people we will be doing business with are legitimate and we're not dealing with any nonsense,

our role is to create platforms for people to be able to do all of that. It's about transfers of technology, sharing of knowledge."

BRICS isn't only an economic partnership; during the summit, in parallel to the business and politicos meetings, there are think-tank meetings, in which academic institutions discuss collaborations; as well as meetings of labour and youth groupings.

At the Durban meeting, which the South African chapter is hosting in partnership with the KwaZulu-Natal provincial government, the council is pulling out all stops. Not only is it responsible for the full organisation, including logistics, security and hotel accommodation, it has also set aside a session to attract investment.

"The president has asked for a R1trilllion investment into the country, so we've set aside a special session presented by Mcebisi Jonas and Trevor Manuel. The president might come on the second day of the summit, subject to his availability, because there's a state visit from China."

The council meeting is very important, because it's an opportunity to showcase our excellence.

Dr Survé said the Chinese government spent $100 million (R1.37 billion) on their business council meeting, which was "world class, fantastic", but this meeting was mostly funded by South African business and the KwaZulu-Natal government.

"We're not spending a fraction of what the Chinese did, but I think we've done well, with less. Our attendance for this meeting has already exceeded China's, which was held last year. With less than two weeks to the meeting, Durban already has 450 confirmed attendants. We were actually quite surprised that we have such a huge number of people coming. I believe we'll punch above our weight and give the meeting a Southern African flavour.

"This is our opportunity to host 500 of the wealthiest people from BRICS, showcasing our country and telling them what a great place it is to invest in. But sometimes we don't think that way."

As the longest-serving member of the council, Dr Survé said he was proud of his contribution over the past eight years.

"Are we equal partners in BRICS? Absolutely – but we never acted like that until I took over. We hadn't seen real exports from South Africa to BRICS countries. We started engaging in meetings on more of an equal footing. We sort of woke up, started giving the other countries a hard time and not giving them their way all the time. Instead, we put forward our position as South Africa and Africa."

The point of BRICS was not to oppose the West, he said, but was to promote multilateralism.

"We live in a multipolar world, which is very healthy. It's not about us not using the World Bank and using the New Development Bank; it's about having access to all of them. In any case, the biggest creditor for the US government is the Chinese government. So why are people complaining about us getting funds from China, because if China had to sell its US bonds, the US would be in huge trouble, to the value of $3 trillion."

Joining BRICS was a significant achievement, Dr Survé said. "Whatever anyone says about former president Jacob Zuma and his foreign minister, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, we shouldn't squander this opportunity because it was a Zuma project: that would be a terrible mistake.

"I think it's a gift that we got to participate in BRICS. We need to get rid of any notion that BRICS is from the Zuma era, that it's being anti-West: it's a fantastic opportunity to actually get foreign investment into our country."

"We have too much debt, reaching 70 percent of our GDP, which means you have to service debt with no money for schools,

health, housing. We're spending $80bn just in interest on debt.

"The government isn't going to be able to create jobs; the private sector has to create the jobs, start investing in job creation projects, or if foreign investors start investing in projects that create jobs."

Citing the example of China's transformation into a superpower, Dr Survé said that 35 years ago, the country was one of the poorest in the world, with mass starvation. In 1978, Deng Xiaoping was appointed leader and instituted far-reaching market reforms.

"He came in and basically said that if he doesn't open up the economy, Chinese will starve. Money started pouring in, and even today, China still receives huge amounts of foreign direct investment.

"In just over a generation, China was able to move from an extremely poor country to almost a middle-income country."

With 66 percent of South Africa's population aged below 35 and about 70 percent of them unemployed, Dr Survé said we needed to create opportunities for the youth on the continent by partnering with other emerging economies.

"This opportunity for us to be part of a much bigger economy (through BRICS), to engage with other investors to attract capital in order to create jobs, is vital.

"It's difficult for us to export to the US, because they've got so many tariffs; the EU is also difficult. But by creating this wider market for your goods and services and products, we can access the Chinese and Indian markets with more than 3 billion people."

It was about having the vision as entrepreneurs to think differently about other countries and to get out of traditional comfort zones and not targeting "safe" markets, because the youth were the engine for growth.

Reformulation of global order

David Monyae and
Bhaso Ndzendze[1]

It would appear that with each BRICS summit, lying at the flanks are naysayers criticising and counting down the days for the association – now in its 11th year of existence – to crumble and fall to pieces.

Yet the grouping continually reaps outcomes, no matter how gradually, despite the mounting challenges from within and outside the club of emerging economies.

Perhaps the greatest signifier yet has been the New Development Bank which has in its infancy managed to issue its first green bond, and successfully raising RMB 3 billion in the Chinese bond market, enabled by the achievement of a triple-A domestic credit rating in China.

The NDB has also committed $1.5bn in loans to BRICS countries so far, emphasising its investment in renewable energy.

In addition, plans are under way to reach the target of between $10bn and $15bn of loans by 2021, and to expand lending outside the BRICS membership.

Ever ambitious, the grouping still has a number of plans on the drawing board and there is every reason to believe they will achieve a sizeable portion of them.

Likely to be on the cards this year is the development of the BRICS Rating Agency.

The time has never been riper for such a formation.

The cry for the rating agency stems from the fact that the post-1945 world order is sapping under the weight of its own contradictions.

The need has never been starker for an alternative, or set of alternatives, from the Western-centred world order, and one of the sorest areas in need of this balancing is that of global financial institutions.

The rot is displayed most blatantly in the fact that the US ratings agencies Fitch, S&P and Moody's failed to predict the

1 *Independent Online*, 21 June 2018

then oncoming global financial crisis of 2008/09, leading the second Basel Accords to discourage reliance on the ratings agencies by banks.

Further symptoms of decay are to be found in the fact that America is bent on a trade war with a myriad states, including China, Canada and the EU, its closest and most important trading partners. South Africa has not been spared, particularly its steel sector.

This lends all the more weight to the pragmatic quarters in South African foreign policymaking.

The country needs both the BRICS and the West, and therefore cannot afford over-reliance on either.

South Africa must hedge and formulate its foreign policy according to the dictates of its needs in this era.

What BRICS represents, especially for Africa and the global south in general, is the reformulation of a global order along the lines of parallel institutions.

Indeed, some of the beneficiaries of this are the developed states themselves. With the world in such a fragmented state, the reality is that there has been, and there can be, no attempt at reform.

The only option is the reformulation of the global order. This is part of what BRICS represents.

For Africa this carries a lot of importance. Importantly, the BRICS countries do more trade with African states (even excluding South Africa) than they do with one another. But if they are to represent a shift in the global order, that shift needs to be concomitant with a shift in relations vis-à-vis the continent.

As China and India (with Japan) propose grand plans of the Belt and Road Initiative and the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor, respectively, they should co-operate with African states so they can co-plan the infrastructural framework to prevent them from replicating the infamously extractive

railways and port systems of the colonial era.

This is probably the last BRICS summit before the formal declaration of a new Cold War. The contours of this are already apparent in the increasing rate at which many global players, including the BRICS states themselves, are militarily posturing.

Notwithstanding the fact that three of them are nuclear powers, these states have got into the business of developing military bases overseas, and particularly in Africa.

At the same time, the North American Treaty Organisation has seen expansion into new territory into Latin America with Colombia joining the fold.

It is clear by now: we are on the brink of seeing the fabric of the international global order shaken as there is an increased fear of developing countries catching up, especially in the areas of hi-tech, artificial intelligence and other signposts of the fourth industrial revolution.

This summit holds a particular importance for South Africa on two fronts. First, this is to be President Cyril Ramaphosa's first chaired BRICS session.

Further underlining this is the economic downturn in the country of -2.2% in a year-on-year basis despite "Ramaphoria" following his rise to the presidency earlier this year.

Unemployment figures are also looking dim, and the rand/dollar exchange reached a six-month low at ZAR14.00/US$1.00.

Second, South Africa has been elected on to the UN Security Council for the 2019/20 term.

This represents a golden opportunity for the country to be seized on. In this area, South Africa's i
nterests include the unemployment crisis and need to be dealt with, and both the UN and the UNSC are potential avenues to be harnessed for growth.

At the same time, a point in need of constant awareness is the fact that BRICS is not a revolutionary force in world

politics, nor are there many indicators that it seeks to be.

Contrary to the views held by those in both the ultra-right and the ultra-left who (for different reasons) perceive BRICS as bent on upsetting the global order of things, the latter inevitably reprimand it for not going far enough.

In doing so they castigate it for not reaching standards it never declared as aspiring to.

In truth, these countries, however unevenly, are – as is the nature of states – only pursuing their national interests in the global arena.

They just happen to be formerly peripheral states now ascending to the core.

South Africa needs to be just as effective as its BRICS counterparts at staking its own claim, with a conscience for the African agenda as well as matters of mutual concern and development that go back to Bandung in 1955, and which have remained at the front burner of the priority list for the global south.

Shining BEAMS on BRICS

Yaroslav Lissovolik[1]

With South Africa's chairmanship in BRICS this year and its 10th summit expected to take place next month, the group has come full-circle in its outreach efforts vis-à-vis other developing economies.

In 2013, it was South Africa that launched the first outreach exercise with respect to its regional partners in Africa. The onset of the new five-year cycle marked by South Africa's chairmanship will build on China's earlier innovations with BRICS+ and will feature new approaches pointing to qualitative transformations in its dialogue with the developing world.

The outreach exercises at the outset were framed in a regional context, with all core BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) members inviting their regional partners to take part in the 2013-2018 summits.

Further innovations along the BRICS+ road may involve progression to forming a unified platform of regional integration arrangements that featured in the outreach activities of the past five-year cycle of summits.

Such an aggregation of regional arrangements from the past summits for each member would then feature the AU, Mercosur – Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay (given the difficulties experienced by Unasur – Union of South American Nations), the Eurasian Economic Union, the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO) as well as Bimstec (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Co-operation).

The resulting acronym – BEAMS is suggestive of the role of the aggregating platform of regional integration blocks as supporting structures to the edifice built on BRICS. The BEAMS platform is to denote the aggregation of regional integration groups, with BRICS+ being a broader concept that incorporates other forms of

1 *Independent Online*, 22 June 2018

BRICS interaction with developing economies such as platforms of regional developing institutions or regional financing arrangements.

BEAMS is a direct, almost one-for-one reconstruction of the sequence of BRICS outreach exercises with their regional partners throughout the 2013-2017 period. In effect it is the "revealed preference" of the BRICS economies with respect to the composition of the BRICS+ aggregating platform of regional integration groups.

The contribution from China was that of launching a diversified, global approach within the BRICS+ format that, taken together with earlier outreach exercises, lays the foundations for what China's foreign minister Wang Yi termed as the "most extensive platform for South-South co-operation with a global impact." In other words, BRICS+ and BEAMS as its sub-component, is a synthesis of earlier BRICS experiments and innovations in the field of building ties with the Global South.

While in the case of the BRICS grouping the key criterion was the selection of the largest heavyweights in terms of gross domestic product and market size across EM, in the case of the BEAMS/BRICS+ platform of "integration of integrations" the criterion is more geared towards selecting those groups of countries that are the closest allies to the respective BRICS core members.

Nonetheless, looking at the league table of regional arrangements formed by developing countries, it does appear that the regional groupings in the BEAMS platform such as in Eurasia, or Mercosur in South America are among the largest in terms of GDP in their respective regions. Accordingly, one may also consider the BEAMS/BRICS+ platform as the aggregation of some of the largest regional integration groups across the developing world.

The IMF's and World Bank's figures for 2016 suggest that the BEAMS platform comprising Bimstec, EAEU, the AU, Mercosur and the SCO would account for 27.4% of global GDP, well above 15% of the International Monetary Fund quota and 66% of the global population. This is a notable improvement compared with the BRICS core, which accounts for 22.3% of global GDP, less than the 15% benchmark for the IMF quota and 42% of the population.

Both modifications are roughly on par in GDP terms with the largest regional integration arrangements in the world, namely Nafta (North American Free Trade Agreement), which in 2016 accounted for 28.1% of global GDP and only 6.5% of the world's population. At the same time in terms of GDP size BEAMS is notably behind such potential platforms as Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) (together with the US) and Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) – these account for 38.3% and 46.5% of global GDP respectively.

The way for an alliance of developing economies to edge closer to these levels of aggregated GDP weight would be to bring together all of the main regional trading arrangements of the Global South on top of BEAMS/TRIA such as Asean (Association of SouthEast Asian Nations) and the Gulf Co-operation Council. This in turn would also serve to bridge the gap with what currently appears to be the largest potential alliance in the world, namely a combined TPP and TTIP platform which would account for more than 60% of global GDP.

Aside from the quantitative considerations of the size of GDP and populations, compared to the BRICS core, the BEAMS/BRICS+ framework presents a qualitatively more diversified structure, which dilutes the prominence of one single country and presents greater diversity and variety of economic models and types of regional integration.

An “extended format” for BRICS via expanding economic co-operation with regional partners also renders such a platform more promising for increasing the use of national currencies across the developing world. The formation of the BEAMS/BRICS+ platform also allows participating economies to exploit the sizeable potential of reducing the South-South protectionism – the signing of the African Continental Free Trade Area is one of the most important recent advances in this area.

In this respect the regionalism (including mega-regionalism) of the Global South offers more scope for trade liberalisation and variability in integration patterns and formations compared with the largely structured and in some respects ossified regionalism of the developed world.

Perhaps the most important reason the BRICS+ platform based on aggregating regional groups is expedient and urgent is due to the trends observed in the world economy, namely the formation of mega-regional blocks such as the TPP and TTIP. While the formation of the latter has been postponed by tensions between the US and the EU, there are signs that the TTP partnership is brought back to life. The main race in the world economy today is the creation of aggregated platforms of regional integration arrangements that have enough mass and leverage to attract trade and investment flows from across the world economy.

In this respect the BEAMS formation may be the best that the Global South can come up with in terms of building a large enough platform (in effect its own mega-regional platform) to limit the adverse impact of trade diversion and losses in investment flows emanating from the emergence of other mega-regional blocks.

Closing the second cycle: A surprise or business as usual?

By Victoria Panova[1]

All the BRICS countries are either at a major turning point or going through various processes of political, economic, and social transformations and speculations of various degrees continue of how each internal or external process will influence the whole of the BRICS grouping.

Among other issues, it is worth considering recent elections in Russia and the course set for the country, which became clearer not just with the elections themselves – hardly anyone doubted the outcome – but rather with the appointment of the new government. Stability and continuity, the two words appropriate for description.

This year is the jubilee year for BRICS – this is the end of the second hosting cycle, when the latest-coming South Africa has come out as the chair of the group. Over the years, the BRICS has also become more orderly and got established rules of its own: settled the presidency periods, reached the status of global agenda setter, established its own outreach formats and gained reputation among the developing countries.

On the one hand, at the time, global and internal fluctuations are believed to have the BRICS shuttering. On the other hand, it is exactly the flexible "club" format, that allows the group to survive temporary ups and downs caused by a variety of factors. That said, it is high time to look into the state of affairs of the grouping before the 10th Summit takes place in Johannesburg.

What is it that we see in each of the BRICS countries, as mentioned earlier and opposing to what was seen at the beginning as their common ground – different paces of moving forward into the global agenda and varying degrees of internal and external political confidence.

1 https://www.e-ir.info/2018/06/06/closing-the-second-cycle-in-brics-a-surprise-or-business-as-usual/, 6 June 2018

The quite solid position of the leadership in Russia, China or India stands out, even if all, especially the first two to a different extent, are involved in the global competition and economic and/or politico-military confrontation with the group of the rich developed countries, the so called Golden Billion. At the same time, we see relatively uncertain cases for Brazil and South Africa with regards to their path forward due to internal fluctuations.

Brazil

Ongoing crisis around Brazilian domestic politics, that came in open fire after the ousting of Dilma Rousseff, the weak position of Michel Temer's government, and more so – ongoing judicial procedure against Lula da Silva, a former president, and his continuing resolve to run for the next elections even counter to court decision – leave the once almost undoubted Latin American leader on a shaky path with an unclear future.

This could lead to extra challenges for the BRICS, which is to be hosted by Brazil next year and is vulnerable to neglect and low profile if the situation does not stabilize by the end of this presidential term. This could have been hedged by the Sherpa and Ministers of Foreign Affairs team, allowing for business as usual, no matter who comes out as the leader of the country.

But not in the case of Brazil, which has overwhelmingly conservative officers in the Ministry and is rather oriented for cooperation with IBSA (India, Brazil, and South Africa Forum) and the West with lower priority given to BRICS issues.

South Africa

The situation in South Africa, with the resignation of Jacob Zuma in February and the incoming of the new President, Cyril Ramaphosa, has its own difficulties. While the new President is seen as the

champion of the fight against corruption and someone able to lead long-awaited reforms, the current economic situation in the country does not give much optimism – the country is found in the situation of practical stagnation with 1.1% of maximum growth to be reached in 2018, according to the World Bank estimates; 10% of the 55-million population has control over 90% of the country's wealth, etc.[2]

At the same time, the change of power itself does not seem, so far, to have much of an effect on the BRICS chairing, with the continuation of all the main formats and the priority agenda being rather forward looking. The topic of the Summit remained focused on inclusive growth and shared prosperity in the age of the 4th Industrial Revolution – center stage of global deliberations. The South African presidency aims to launch a number of new cooperation schemes, including a working group on peacekeeping, new initiatives on health management, as well as fostering the topic of women empowerment. All of those issues were kept for consideration, but the resulting document and resolve to pursue the decisions reached are to be evaluated later when first results come to fruition. It probably brought a little less certainty about a number of newer outreach formats (Women outreach is still in the making) and expectations of a more cautious stance of the new President.

China and India

At the same time, the internal political situation in the other three BRICS states is of more stability and predictability, which ensures sustainable foreign policies as well. The decision to remove the limitations on the duration of tenure of the Chinese leader, Xi Jinping, this

2 Source: World Bank data. The World Bank predicts just 1.1% GDP growth for SA in 2018. More information and data on South African economy could be found in "YUAR: uspekhi I problemy razvitiya" (South Africa: successes and problems of development), January 2018.

March did not cause much international negative reaction.

On the contrary, for example, President Trump called this move 'great' and even mentioned the possibility to "give it a shot one day" in the USA.

The next parliamentary elections in India are foreseen for 2019, while the strong position of Narendra Modi and last year's Presidential elections, which led to the victory of Ram Nath Kovind (someone starting from an underprivileged section of society and the Dalit), only strengthened Modi's populist stance supported by efficient economic policies.

Today, both China and India compete for the first places in the world economic ratings – if rated by PPP, China's GDP stands first and India third globally.

Russia

Russia recently went through its Presidential elections and the appointment of the new, but in a way old, government.

Vladimir Putin's victory in the elections was hardly a surprise for anyone either inside or outside the country. While there were some expectations of new faces in the government, this, rather, would have had internal implications and could barely influence outcomes of the main international events.

What we are to see is the obvious continuity of international communications of President Putin – the foundation of his policies remains stability and sustainability – both internally, and externally especially since he could allow this, due to wide support he himself and his policies have by the Russian population.

This support stems from a state of stability as the opposite feature of chaos that was seen in Russia economically and socially in the 1990s; the same feature of stability applies to foreign relations of Russia with the other countries. While in order to achieve political détente with the West there will be the need of explicit concessions on both

sides, we are unlikely to witness serious breakthroughs in the short-term. It is also seen as good to have the same President at times of need of consolidation against pressures from the non-friendly Western countries, mostly featuring Anglo-Saxon world.

At the same time, the Russian President is here to demonstrate positive continuity as well. While it will take ten times as much efforts on both sides to overcome existing confrontation with the West, it is much easier for Putin to continue deepening relations with the leaders of the rising rest, especially the ones he established great relations with during his earlier term (and as we know, clubs are mostly about trust and good personal relations among its leaders).

Another very important aspect, relevant for the strength and efficiency of any international club, is the strength and internal legitimacy of country member's leaders, which offers good prospects for the BRICS to have their decisions implemented.

We have the two strong leaders of Russia and China having friendly personal relations (the best example cited was the presenting of Russian ice-cream to Chairman Xi, who is a big fan of this desert).

Both are confronted by the American superpower, both eager to bring bilateral relations to new heights, and contribute to safeguarding a multifaceted global order featured by multiculturalism, stability, and diversity, both active in promoting international institutions that are able to promote alternative views from all actors present on the scenario.

Implications for the BRICS

We have pragmatic and wise Indian Prime-Minister Modi, who proved unwilling to be played as the trump card against the current American-designated Chinese opponent. Obviously, difficulties between the two countries experience in territorial and maritime issues is often seen as the most possible

scenario to start skirmishes between the two giants. Nevertheless, the two countries have had a very productive series of meetings and outcomes in the recent Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit, which proved those hopes from the West for rising confrontations futile. Russia and India at the same time have a smoother path of friendship not overshadowed by serious misunderstandings of political or military kind (although there are issues like Pakistan or too close relations with China that bother Indian counterparts). While there is still existent dominance of the political agenda over the economic one, with the two leaders in power, we see the gradual upscaling of business ties of the two countries.[3] Even though economic and trade cooperation needs further impetus to get a real go. Personal relations of the two leaders also remain very warm, having personal encounters not just within multilateral groupings, but meetings for the bilateral agenda as well. That said, nothing is bound to hamper fostering further relations within the BRICS, the G20, or the SCO by the newly re-elected President Putin and the two Asian giants.

Could the same be claimed of the other two partners, mentioned in the beginning, the ones experiencing political unrest and in the process of uncertain transformation from previously very pro-BRICS leaders to someone unknown? Here we see two main components to discuss – relations with Russia of BRICS partners, on the one hand, and the attitude towards the BRICS as a phenomenon, on the other hand. Brazil seems to be more in conundrum and in need of settling its internal affairs first, without taking sides within the ongoing global divide, at least

3 Even though we could cite recent rise in cooperation between Russian and Indian companies, like that of Rosneft and ONGC Videsh Ltd., Tata Power signing agreement with the Russian government on investments into the Russian Far East, quadrilateral cooperation with the KGK Group etc. Alexander Galushka interview to Economic Times, January 11, 2016.

until we see the final outcome and the possibility of Lula da Silva to return to power or of another strong candidate, able to consolidate the country, to emerge. Relations of the two Presidents – Russian and South African – are still to be seen, but there is one thing that needs to be remembered. Indeed, currently, pro-Western media in South Africa has an ongoing really severe anti-Russian campaign.[4] Indeed, President Ramaphosa is from the Forbes list and is closely engaged with big transnationals like McDonald's or Coca-Cola. But at the same time, Cyril Ramaphosa used to be one of the activists of the anti-apartheid movement, and most of the people who were part of this struggle remember well the role of different countries in this process, as well as the contribution of the Soviet Union towards the attainment of their long-awaited goal to have their own country for themselves, but not for the ruling minority.

If we talk about the importance of the BRICS as an entity, this wouldn't have changed no matter what the personal or ideological changes within the ruling elites in the five countries are. BRICS is the global club that allows its member-countries to have a louder voice in the international arena and offers additional benefits (but also responsibilities) of first-tier global players.

Will anyone be willing to give this up? Personal views of political elites could be different, while reality offers us ten years of BRICS together and even more consolidated than other comparable institutions, if judged by real achievements (enough to cite the New Development Bank launch).

Thus, if we remember the first decade of the G7 existence back in the 1970s-1980s, when those seven countries, having very similar political and ideological systems and bonds, couldn't arrive at tangible economic

4 One of the vivid examples would be Sunday Times publication on alleged intervention into the reshuffle of the South African cabinet. "Russian Foreign Ministry comment regarding an item from South Africa's Sunday Times titled 'From Russia with love: How Putin had a hand in Cabinet reshuffle,'" November 1, 2017.

cooperation schemes (it should also be mentioned, that this first period of time, five of the seven countries of the club retained exclusive finance ministers meeting, not allowing Italy and Canada in until mid-1980s).

BRICS is and will remain an important factor of global politics championing inclusivity, sustainability, fairness, and incremental reform in the interest of the world community as a whole. While like any other international body it will continue to live through waves of higher and lower relevance for its members and the outside world, as well as varying degrees of internal integrity, determined by subjective (e.g. personal interactions of the leaders, their position vis-à-vis the rest of the world, etc.) and objective (phase of economic development, technological patterns, etc.) factors. BRICS has by now turned into a brand. This brand imposes responsibility on its members to respond to global challenges and serves the interests of the global community – the case when collective brand influences the individual brands of each country making it impossible for each of them, individually, to fail their collective responsibility and collective role. Russia with Putin as its leader, as well as China with Xi as its leader, as well as any other of the five countries are no exception to the case – long-term evolution of the BRICS and its role for the global community is to remain constant positive trend.

Reconfiguring the world system: Envisioning inclusive development through a socially responsive economy

Ari Sitas[1]

As South Africa takes over the BRICS Chairship, 2018 serves as a serious moment to take stock of achievements made collectively by the BRICS formation since its inception a decade ago. Perhaps the fact that we promulgated then the initial ideas around the creation of a New Development Bank and also that we insisted that BRICS Plus should be about African pathways of development were two critically important contributions. What else are we to be bringing onto the agenda?

We are taking the lead at a time when the world system is experiencing unprecedented challenges and shocks and where world economic growth has diminished from the 4.4% per annum during our 2013 stewardship to 2.5% per annum now, with only India and China still pulling the statistics up above the average and Russia and Brazil plummeting into negative figures and with us growing at 1%, lower than our annual population growth.

As we are taking the lead after a year of decisive Chinese leadership, we take heed of Premier Xi Jinping's caution that all of us all need to respond creatively to what he called the "new normal," as the "pattern is changing from large-scale and high speed extensive growth to high quality and efficient intensive growth" Xi Jinping (2017).

1 *Sunday Independent*, 18 February 2018.

GDP expansion for him is not a panacea anymore. Rather, he urges, “ecological progress, advances in science and technology and all-round innovation,” are the factors that will hold the key to the door of the future. And here, not all innovation, “but innovation based on research and technologies of public benefit”

We are also taking the lead in a context where for our purposes the crises of poverty, unemployment and a gnawing inequality persist as serious impediments to the better life for all that our democratic breakthrough promised back in 1994. That is why the themes for our Think Tank for the year, Envisioning inclusive development through a socially responsive economy. We would like to inform our Chinese counterparts that we have taken to heart their Premier’s take on a new development concept: “the concept of innovative, coordinated, green, open and inclusive development.”

As you shall see we are working in tandem with critical priorities brought forward by the Government’s Track I task teams to take the lead: in peace and security, in innovations for development based on the fourth industrial revolution, in the creation of a Women and Gender BRICS forum and the creation of a Platform for an R&D Centre for Vaccine Development, Implementation and Innovation.

What follows is firstly a description of the prisms through which our work will be conducted and the priorities for the BRICS Think Tanks Council and its Academic Forum in late May 2018. Then we will try and make transparent the framework through which we see our priorities as Thinkers in the BRICS domain.

We are living in the midst and are witnessing a major reconfiguration of the world system which is nudging us away from the unipolar world that emerged with seeming confidence under the USA’s

stewardship on the eve of the Soviet world's collapse.

Caught between the "end of history" talk and the enticing idea of the "information age" and its "global village," we were rather late in understanding a tectonic shift. But it was there in 2003 when the World Trade Organisation talks collapsed in Cancun and very much there in 2008-9 when the economic meltdown scuttled parts of the global economy.

For a while the Braudellian School around Immanuel Wallerstein have been arguing is that we are living through a systemic crisis and that the US's hegemony was waning. Their arguments were dwarfed by the post-1989 dominance of neo-conservative thinking in politics and neo-liberalism in economics. The reconfiguration we are experiencing was ofcourse punctuated by the emergence of BRICS as a developmental pact, rather than a "growth alliance."

At first it was shaped by a series of multilateral and bilateral interactions. Picture this: at a certain point of their endogenous development as industrial societies, each one of the BRICS partners sought a move towards an openness to the world economy: China's Four Modernisations Policy, Gorbachev's Perestroika, India's 4th Plan, Brazil's Cardoso-led globalisation and even Apartheid's New Economic Policy (later taken over by the ANC's macro-economic policy after 1994) nudged all of these societies into a world of markets that were self-serving for those who deemed themselves to be "developed."

Thus what followed as we say… followed: thus, the breakdown in Cancun, thus IBSA (India Brazil, SA cooperation), thus Russia-China Friendship agreement, thus China-Africa (Beijing Consensus), thus BRIC and later, BRICS. And by the Summits of Fortaleza and Ufa, the concerns moved beyond the economic, to deal with inter-state relations and a range of norms and agreements that will need a number of talks and discussions like these to seriously explore. It is through

them that the principle of a multi-polar world emerged as an architecture for and a commitment to the world system.

In other words, we are living through an epochal change, similar to the period between 1400-1700 which saw the gradual ascendance of the West and the involution of the Rest. But let us stay with the 1500s where China was undergoing an industrious revolution during the last century of its Ming period, of the 21 cities with more than 100 000 people, 15 were located East and only 3 in Europe, with Paris catching up with Genoa and Venice.

Like in that prior period, what is emerging and declining is highly interconnected, uneven and contradictory. For us in South Africa, the BRICS initiative is beyond the obvious new trade winds as well: the creation of a world system with a cooperative set of relations, respectful of sovereignty and difference was appreciated. What was also appreciated is that it may create a structured opportunity for Africa to move out of the blockages that rendered most of the continent to be a vassal state of the World Bank and the IMF. However frightening and uncertain a move away from the Washington Consensus might be, it seems like an unavoidable reality.

But we cannot remain with clichés: science demands us to understand what do hegemonic powers “systematise” and here we have only two case studies in world history, but we can also look at smaller units of absolutist states in interaction from the 11th to the 15th century CE.

The clearest was what Britain achieved between the 1790s and the 1890s. It was remarkable and unprecedented in world history. For a brief period it reconfigured the world system to by the late 19th century manage to combine control over material and symbolic value. What it achieved in the eras of colonialism and imperialism was beyond industrialisation and pure competitive advantage.

Looked at with a cruel eye: it was a system that aimed and systematised Unipolarity but which compromised on variety to immunise deviance and threats. It is the very system that the US tried to re-steer after the 2nd World War.

It is the challenge to our academic community to decipher what about BRICS is novel in terms of its reconfiguration efforts, despite the fact that it is work in progress. But the critical work needs its time: in nudging the world towards a "cautious" multipolarity, how do the new steering systems work around equality of voice, what the Chinese are arguing for "win-win" relationships, "people to people" encounters and new developmental priorities?

And what about SA? What do we bring to the agenda?

BRICS is not challenging the existing multilateral system, nor is it trying to subvert or create alternatives to the UN system's working institutions. What it is trying to do is to strengthen it whilst at the same time create a multipolar framework for cooperation. How we understand "reconfiguration" must have this in mind.

Finally, on narratives of success: whatever is articulated it will not be heard clearly in networks that have already cast BRICS as a negative and short-term phenomenon. The fact that these countries, represent 40 percent of the world population, that they generated 20 percent of world output in 2016, and have accounted for 50 percent of global growth since the end of 2009 (even though SA joined later) should add some gravitas.

There is a lot to do and to steal from the late poet Bra Willie Kgositsile: "it is always possible to do more and to do it better, always because the difference that a day might make celebrates the day that makes the difference"; and the late Nelson Mandela had this to say:

"It always seems impossible until it's done." Let's do it.

A BRICS think-tank for emerging economies

Ari Sitas[2]

A multitude of entities and ideas have been proposed at the fifth BRICS Think Tanks Council (BTTC) meeting and 10th BRICS Academic Forum, namely centres, institutes, networks, platforms, programmes, hubs and committees, as well as a forum. Each one is based on already embryonic work being undertaken in the BRICS domain – these proposals bring urgency for their consolidation. Each one, we have agreed, nudges the spirit of co-operation further.

Key to the deliberations was the broader continental dimension of identifying priorities and invitations that reached Angola, Burundi, Ethiopia, Gabon, Namibia, Uganda, Togo, Rwanda and Senegal.

A forum on women's equality. The Academic Forum of 2018 theme was about "Envisioning inclusive development through a socially responsive economy," and under its banner not only was there a plenary focus on gender and inequality, but through the deliberations, a Forum on Women's Equality was proposed. Such a forum will share experiences on the progress of women-led developments in the economic, social and political life of our respective countries; identify the obstacles to inclusivity in the BRICS domain; and strive to establish a panel of experts on gender equality under the framework of the BTTC.

It is the position of the forum that economic prosperity and wellbeing is indeed unthinkable without gender equality.

Smart manufacturing hubs. There is a greater need to work together to nurture smart manufacturing hubs that take our industrial fate to new levels. Instead of competing, economic development that is smart, labour absorbing and pro-active has been encouraged; a development that is at once

2 *Sunday Independent,* 3 June 2018.

technologically savvy and labour sensitive. From the South African perspective, respect for labour rights is inalienable and recommendation for strong programmes encouraging small farmers and food security-linked MSMEs, as well as the move towards nutritional democracy is being mooted.

The discussions in the Academic Forum touched in earnest on the implications of "digitisation" and its implications for inclusion. While recognising the negative possibilities of further labour substitution and informalisation, it was argued that the BRICS could lead in driving developments in this domain to ensure national protection of incomes and also in revising the models of governance especially at local levels (villages, towns, and cities).

An African academy for development. We do note that the most vital post-colonial ambition was to turn the continent's abundant resourcebase into virtuous industrialisation and self-sufficiency (the Lagos Plan of the 1980s, Africa's Accelerated Industrialisation Plan of the late 2000s). Therefore, the recommendation is for the establishment of an African Academy for Development and Beneficiation. In this, BRICS countries and BRICS-related tertiary institutions and experts would participate in assisting in the creation and definition of priorities for the academy.

Vaccine research platforms. If economic prosperity and addressing the pressing challenges of inequality, poverty and unemployment was a major preoccupation of thiss gathering, so was the need for breakthroughs in health, health provision and research and development in new frontiers of cure. To meet new health challenges such as noncommunicable diseases, infectious diseases and drug-resistant tuberculosis, it was felt that BRICS should play a greater role in global norm setting and in health global governance.

It would also be important to explore BRICS co-operation for

finding out appropriate forms of comprehensive national healthcare systems and contextual-sensitive systems of social protection. Noting that sustaining a healthy society and the provision of basic health services is a precondition for the development of our respective countries, and noting too that all departments of health in our domain are working closely together towards a health and development consensus, the BTTC can only play a supportive role. It therefore recommended the establishment of a Vaccination Research Platform to respond to communicable and noncommunicable disease challenges, such as zika, HIV/Aids, tuberculosis and malaria.

Knowledge sharing and collaborative efforts. As this was an academic forum, the theme of enhancing educational, creative and scientific powers was regarded as a must. Co-operation ought to be prioritising the BRICS' productive, creative and scientific powers. And it has to translate into strengthening the BRICS university and post-school systems. Noting too that to be drivers of innovation and on the forefront of new technological revolutions, our systems have to become co-operative and innovative.

In this case, it was important to make a call that the realities of the Fourth Industrial Revolution be integral to the post-school, higher education sector that reinforces synchronised cross-national curricula to facilitate knowledge-sharing and collaborative efforts in universities and vocational training institutions in the BRICS.

As was to be expected, the Commons received emphasis both as a threatened terrain or as a prop for responsible development, from climate change to the need to establish Resilient Eco-Systems Networks; in turn, issues of energy and its relation to economic growth and development, to the recommendation for the creation of a BRICS Centre for

Policy Research on Energy, Innovation and Sustainable Development.

A peace research institute. Reflections around peace and security were the most self-critical and introspective. Encounters in China last year set a high standard in understanding the necessity for new norms of global governance to achieve a pacific new world system.

Does BRICS have the capabilities and capacity to maintain peace and security? The Eurasian-Russian initiatives and China's Road and Belt initiatives were discussed as new ways of engaging on the basis of mutual interest. Although peace and development were imaginatively linked, the capacity of BRICS countries to be decisive in peace-keeping was questioned. But there was consensus around the need for the establishment of a BRICS Peace Research Institute.

Finally, the BTTC recommended the creation of a multilateral BRICS Research Consortium to conduct research and present reports to track the public on specific issues.

Eventually, the BRICS Research Consortium could undertake the mission to monitor the implementation of the agreements within BRICS in order to identify urgent areas of necessary intervention.

It was encouraging to be heard and supported by a cohort of scholars and thinkers who are not trapped by the West-centric currents of the Washington consensus or even its "dissensus-rhetoric" that traps everything inside the clutches of a Bretton Woods world.

My thanks go to the delegates who made their way here from near and far to enrich the perspectives of the BTTC. We were ready to argue, listen and learn. Our countries come from a long way back and are searching for a way to reconfigure our life-chances in the world system. After all, these are the only countries we have.

BRICS in Africa: "You are either at the table, or on the menu"

At a BRICS think tank, scholars get drunk on their own rhetoric

Patrick Bond[1]

A "think tank" is sometimes a group of people paid to think, by the people who control the tanks (as Naomi Klein once remarked). In Johannesburg, one of SA's highest-profile intellectual vehicles appears to be a victim of drunken driving by scholars from whom we otherwise expect much stronger political navigation skills.

In the luxurious central business district of Sandton, a large gathering of state-funded intellectuals (staying at the 5-star Intercontinental Hotel) is conferencing in heart-warmingly hedonistic style, replete with national Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa (BRICS) songs and dances.

The 28-31 May BRICS Academic Forum and South Africa (SA) BRICS Think Tank meeting at the Sandton Convention Centre must be South African scholars' most expensive event of the year, in spite of the theme, "Envisioning Inclusive Development through a Socially Responsive Economy."

The mandate from Higher Education and Training Minister Naledi Pandoor's opening speech was framed with unabashed talk-left ideology, regardless of obvious walk-right realities. She asked academics to "develop a collaborative set of interventions that advances the agenda of the bloc. The BRICS formation is one that is based on a progressive view of how the world should develop; and the world is in need of progressive ideas, of ideas

1 *Mail & Guardian,* 30 May 2018.

that come from issues of social justice and inclusion."

But to advance that agenda entails active avoidance of major class contradictions within and between the BRICS, and between the BRICS and Africa, especially host South Africa's rampant corporate and state corruption. The point, according to BRICS facilitator Anil Sooklal, Deputy Director-General of Pretoria's Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO), is state-business-intellectual "synergy":

"We found that the Think Tank and Academic Forum is working in one compartment, and our business [sector] was working in another compartment, and government in another compartment. So we took the initiative to bring them all together."

As the gathering this week illustrates, being embedded within a state-corporate power and funding system – at a time South Africa's National Research Foundation is cutting back drastically on scholars' research subsidies – risks transmission of the worst disease intellectuals can catch: failure of analytical nerve.

For the BRICS Academic Forum is occurring in a Johannesburg neighbourhood where, regular PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) studies show, "eight out of ten senior managers commit economic crime," within a country that PwC regularly rates as having the world's most corrupt bourgeoisie. (Paris and Nairobi usually compete for silver and bronze status.)

BRICS-from-above rots from the public-private head

Two months from now, BRICS political rulers Michel Temer (Brazil), Vladimir Putin (Russia), Narendra Modi (India) and Xi Jinping (China) will join host president Cyril Ramaphosa, also at the Sandton Convention Centre. Each of their governments exudes an overwhelming stench of malfeasance.

Last November, to take just one example, the International Consortium of Investigative

Journalists' "Paradise Papers" revealed secretive tax haven activities by these presidents or their close associates. While Temer and Putin may be most profoundly exposed, Ramaphosa himself has been implicated by investigative journalists in massive illicit financial flows via his mining houses Lonmin and Shanduka, and cellphone giant MTN which he chaired.

The local BRICS Business Council will convene simultaneously in late July, led by controversial "Fourth Industrial Revolution" proponent Iqbal Survé, who succeeded disgraced Eskom boss Brian Molefe as Council head last year. Survé's *Independent* newspaper chain carries non-stop cheery news about the BRICS, especially his Council leadership.

Three of the four other Council members are Transnet's Siyabonga Gama, Aspen Pharmaceutical's Stavros Nicolaou and Mediterranean Shipping Company's Sello Rasethaba. All acquired prolific wealth amidst very serious charges of tender fraud (Survé, Gama and Rasethaba), price fixing (Nicolaou), Gupta-denialism (Gama), spying on anti-corruption whistle-blowers (Gama), and even sexual harassment in the course of BRICS-related travel duties (Rasethaba).

The Business Council was founded in March 2013, when the BRICS heads of state summit came to Durban. As its enthusiastic chair, Molefe pronounced, "Our overarching goal as the SA BRICS Business Council is, therefore, to bring tangible projects to fruition more quickly and to strengthen the interface between the governments and private sectors of the BRICS economies."

Before losing his job running Eskom in 2016 due to the Gupta brothers' bribery scandals, in which he became one of the country's most reviled officials, Molefe was chief executive of Transnet. During the 2013 BRICS summit, he signed a high-profile US $5 billion loan from the China Development Bank to pay for

Durban port improvements and new locomotives.

However, as investigative journalists at Amabhungane reported, "Transnet bought seven of the world's most expensive port cranes because its Chinese state-owned supplier [Shanghai Zhenhua Heavy Industries] inflated the price to pay off the Guptas," and then the South China Rail supplier of locomotives gave 21 percent kickbacks to the Guptas worth more than US $400 million.

This rancid state-corporate nexus can be termed "BRICS from above." In contrast, there are four active networks we might call "BRICS from the middle." For although many (not all) intellectuals in Sandton this week seek ideological pro-BRICS synergy with the big boys, the BRICS Academic Forum members actually fit rather more comfortably within the upward-gazing BRICS Trade Union Forum, BRICS Youth and a "Civil BRICS" network driven by non-governmental organisations.

All retain a generally positive attitude about promoting the BRICS bloc. None dare mention the specific stains of corruption spreading all around them.

Moreover, all were told by DIRCO in no uncertain terms that their messaging must be provided in the form of polite policy "asks," spelled out at least a month before the BRICS summit. That way their ideas can be integrated into the formal agenda, with no distracting July counter-summits or protests to compete for the media's and society's attention.

(Dissent is left to traditional BRICS-from-below gatherings which since 2013 in Durban have offered constructive critique – e.g. in Hong Kong in 2017 and Goa in 2016 – and which in 2018 will be hosted by the United Front-Johannesburg under the slogan, "Break the BRICS." Indeed there is thus in academia a close parallel between what Brazilian gender activist Laura Trajber Weisbich describes as a conflict between uncritical "civilised" and critical "popular" spaces when engaging the BRICS.)

Against mental colonialism

To be sure, unbridled pro-BRICS dishonesty is simply impossible in this extreme context, and some of the intellectuals gathered in Sandton are quite critical of existing regimes.

SA BRICS Think Tank chair Ari Sitas, a University of Cape Town sociologist, even cited a Russian interview with Brazilian philosopher-lawyer Roberto Mangabeira Unger: "Our whole tendency is to accept the general blueprint of the market economy imported from the North Atlantic world and then to compromise it or qualify it with elements of state capitalism, political authoritarianism and compensatory social democracy – that is what we do. It is a set of compromises, qualifications and evasions, rather than strong national projects. We lack these projects."

Unger continued with an autocritique that should make the Sandton set squirm: "Not only we have political and plutocratic elites that subordinate national interests to the self-serving objectives, but in the midst of all our bluster about national self-searching we are all tainted by mental colonialism. What is shocking to see in these countries is that the intelligentsia and the political elites are to a very large extent servile, they are submissive to the intellectual fashions and alternatives that are imported from the Academy of the North Atlantic countries."

For a while, at least prior to 2015, such fashions included the idea that a united BRICS would offer a genuine challenge to imperial power. But by mid-2017 when the Chinese hosted similar gatherings of academics and civil society, there were such intense geopolitical and economic conflicts between Beijing and New Delhi that Modi nearly boycotted the BRICS heads of state summit, as he had done the Belt & Road Initiative conference four months earlier.

Perhaps serving as a precedent for the Sandton meeting, a Quanzhou seminar of BRICS

intellectuals last August, at the time tensions were hottest, "paid little attention to the on-going India-China military stand-off" on the Bhutan border, remarked the Delhi-based Observer Research Foundation's chair, Sudheendra Kulkarni: "Obviously, the Chinese hosts did not want a divisive bilateral issue to get any kind of focus in the midst of deliberations at a BRICS seminar."

Reflecting servility to local power, many of South Africa's state-funded intellectuals and commentators remain pro-BRICS, albeit in often-schizophrenic ways. At the extreme end of this spectrum, the most actively "anti-imperialist" voices are those of Gayton McKenzie – whose BRICS chapter in the book *Kill Zuma by Any Means Necessary* last December loyally provided the Zuma narrative – as well as Black First Land First led by Andile Mngxitama and *Black Opinion* ezine.

According to these (pro-Gupta) analysts, Cyril Ramaphosa is a Western-oriented saboteur of BRICS – in a way similar to current Brazilian president Temer's congressional coup and prison sentence, respectively, against his two Workers Party predecessors, Dilma Rousseff (2016) and Lula da Silva (2018).

These claims are unpersuasive, typically lacking concrete evidence – aside from McKenzie's request to anyone disagreeing with his often-wild allegations, that they sue him in court where he will provide proof. No one has done so.

Indeed, *The Mail & Guardian* recently quoted an unnamed DIRCO official, suggesting that Ramaphosa "is warming up to the West, almost recalibrating our relations to focus on the West because those are his friends, at the expense of BRICS… It's almost like Zuma had put all his eggs in that [BRICS] basket."

A similar tale was spun by Zuma himself in 2017 – "I was poisoned and almost died just because South Africa joined BRICS under my leadership" – but there has been no hard evidence beyond McKenzie's

mysterious assassination-attempt gossip about MaNtuli (Zuma's fourth wife) and her seducer at Durban's Musgrave Mall, the Central Intelligence Agency agent Bill Harvey.

Arguments by the McKenzie-Mngxitama conspiratorial crew find Sandton scholarly allies, who also assert that the BRICS are actively undermining Western power over global finance and geopolitics.

The BRICS Academic Forum programme profiled an abstract by University of Zululand historian Maxwell Shamase claiming: "BRICS calls for the democratisation of the interstate system and opposes Western and US dominance of global governance… Most scholars do indeed agree that BRICS have rejected the dominant political economy paradigms of the liberal order, including a market-oriented regulatory system, fiscal austerity and comprehensive liberalisation of trade."[2]

Residual anti-imperial fantasy

In another example of dubious Sandton scholarship, one of South Africa's most insightful technology analysts, Rasigan Maharajh from Tshwane University of Technology, has gone on record advocating a BRICS alternative to the Western-controlled Internet, albeit with not a single mention of Beijing's extreme surveillance, censorship, active net repression and official Orwellian "social credit" attempts at citizens' behaviour modification – the latter carried out by Tencent, in which the Sandton scholars have made large investments (as have all of us with Johannesburg Stock Exchange pension portfolios, via Naspers).

2 Sadly, it turns out that the confident words above were not originally Shamase's, they were borrowed verbatim without attribution from an Observer Research Foundation paper. But this was not an instance of South-South solidaristic resonance; they were actually penned in 2015 by idealistic Finnish PhD student Marko Juutinen and his colleague Jyrki Käkönen. And yet, as it became increasingly obvious that BRICS did not actually reject the dominant neoliberal world order, Juutinen reversed himself last September: "the BRICS on one hand seek to promote some form of pluralism in the international arena, and on the other do not seem to offer an alternative."

And India's capacity for Internet censorship was on display (the week before the BRICS Think Tank meeting) in Tamil Nadu province in the wake of a police massacre of 13 anti-pollution protesters against Vedanta's Sterlite copper plant. The resulting uproar was so great that a court ordered Sterlite to permanently close.

In the same spirit, regarding climate change, Maharajh wrote in the *BRICS Academic Review* (a new journal launched at the Sandton event), "the BRICS are resolute in their efforts to continue to meet this commitment [to the Paris Climate Accord]… and have all indicated plans to moderate their own developmental expansions and curb their respective emissions."

But Maharajh must be excluding from consideration the extreme carbon-addicted features of South Africa's National Development Plan:

- the US $60 billion Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission (PICC) first priority mega-project, which aims to export 18 billion tons of coal from Limpopo, Mpumalanga and KZN;
- the US $20 billion PICC second priority mega-project, a Durban port-petrochemical expansion, to which the BRICS New Development Bank this week committed US $200 million;
- the US $35+ billion Medupi/Kusile coal-fired (and also public-private corruption-riddled) power plants;
- new Operation Phakisa "Blue Economy" offshore oil/gas drilling being carried out by ExxonMobil, Eni, Statoil and Sasol;
- the state's massive new fracking plans (probably in excess of US $8 billion);
- worsening suburban sprawl due to the developer-driven search for cheap land for low-cost faraway housing; or
- higher levels of high-emissions meat

> consumption plus higher pesticide and fertiliser use.

Also in the *Academic Review*, Maharajh claims that endorsement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals is the basis for the BRICS' "principles of constituting an alternative to the multilateral edifices of global capitalism." (Given that Xi is the world's highest-profile proponent of corporate-driven free trade, this is truly outlandish.)

Less grandiose and far more critical in his *BRICS Academic Review* contribution is the progressive economist Seeraj Mohamed. However, even he spreads the fairy dust: "BRICS countries should continue to push for reform that gives increased voice, democracy and accountability to the International Financial Institutions."

This line of argument, while incorrect, is widely repeated, e.g. by Sooklal's DIRCO colleague Dave Malcomson when last year he addressed an Institute for Global Dialogue workshop:

"South Africa's engagement in BRICS may also assist in achieving the reform of: global political and financial architecture; the UN, particularly the UNSC, to deliver representivity, promote collaborative responses to global challenges, and make the UNSC more effective; and the IMF and World Bank – in particular to expand representation for Sub-Saharan Africa… BRICS will continue to serve as a vanguard of the process of realignment in the new global order in cooperation with its partners in the Global South for the collective promotion of the interests of the Global South."

In reality, the BRICS have been doing exactly the opposite. In the UN, three of the BRICS – Brazil, India and South Africa – have repeatedly asked for permanent Security Council seats, but as is often lamented (even by Thabo Mbeki), the fear of diluting their votes to unreliable and often pro-

Washington regimes prevents China and Russia from supporting any of them.

As for alleged Bretton Woods voting reform in Africa's interest, consider how the December 2015 BRIC countries' increase in International Monetary Fund (IMF) shares – China up by 37 percent, Brazil 23 percent, India 11 percent and Russia 8 percent – occurred at the expense of Nigeria and Venezuela which both lost 41 percent of their votes, and even South Africa lost 21 percent, with a dozen more in between. (And as for accountability, the five BRICS IMF directors joined the West's in endorsing a second term for Managing Director Christine Lagarde, in spite of on-going French prosecution for her €400 million corruption during her prior job in Paris as finance minister, a vote which was reaffirmed a few hours after she was convicted of negligence on the charges.)

It is important to cite the likes of Maharajh and Mohamed here – because they are usually very sensible, comradely analysts (i.e., they are among the best thinkers, not the most hackish), which suggests that because of their urgency to promote the BRICS, those in the academic consultancy zone twist and turn from interpreting what is in reality a "subimperial" link with the West, into an anti-imperial fantasy.

BRICS-Western subimperialism-imperialism

The BRICS record of amplifying Western control of global governmental institutions is already prolific, including in world finance, trade and climate politics.

As formerly pro-BRICS analyst Vijay Prashad recently wrote, "the BRICS bloc – given the nature of its ruling classes, and particularly with the right now in ascendency in Brazil and in India – has no ideological alternative to imperialism… In fact, the new institutions of the BRICS will be yoked to the International Monetary Fund and the dollar – not willing to create a new platform for trade and

development apart from the Northern order."

The IMF is actually strengthened by the oddly-named Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA), a supposed BRICS "alternative" which in reality forces borrowers to obtain an IMF structural adjustment loan programme before receiving the bulk of their BRICS CRA loans. This is a likely scenario in the event of the kind of foreign debt repayment crisis Pretoria is likely to face within a year (as are Argentina and Turkey now). Likewise, the BRICS New Development Bank adopted a five-year strategy, which includes staff sharing, "joint projects and knowledge exchanges with the World Bank… to make the most of their decades of experience."

As for trade, the (Brazilian-headed) World Trade Organisation's December 2015 Nairobi summit gained crucial last-minute support from Brazilian and Indian leaders, to destroy food sovereignty as part of the long-awaited United States-European Union agricultural deal. Prashad complains, "Eagerness for Western markets continues to dominate the growth agenda of the BRICS states. The immense needs of their own populations do not drive their policy orientations."

And as a third case, the UN's December 2015 Paris Climate Agreement contains no binding provisions (unlike the 1997 Kyoto Protocol). This was due to a private deal driven by Barack Obama to make emissions cuts voluntary. It was agreed – to the consternation of the rest of the world – by four BRICS leaders (Zuma, Lula, Wen Jiabao and Manmohan Singh) with Obama at the 2009 Copenhagen summit.

Hence when Donald Trump rejected multilateral climate policy a year ago, there was no punishment, even though Joseph Stiglitz argued, "If Trump wants to withdraw the US from the Paris climate agreement, the rest of the world should impose a carbon-adjustment tax on US

exports that do not comply with global standards."

A month later, Trump was at the Hamburg G20 summit having jovial meetings with BRICS leaders, whom he tweeted were helping him "Make America Great Again."

An exemplar of imperial-subimperial collaboration, the Paris deal also prohibits poor countries from legally invoking the "climate debt" owed by major emitters, of which China is now the most pollution-intensive in absolute terms and India is most responsible for rapid emissions increases. Paris negotiators ignored military, maritime and air transport emissions, and reintroduced carbon trading (the privatisation of the air) as a bankers' solution to the climate catastrophe now unfolding. These features all suited not just the United States State Department's global climate policy managers but also the BRICS elites, though they will certainly be fatal to hundreds of millions of Africans this century.

As for larger geopolitical concerns, the BRICS have made only defensive military gestures in their immediate vicinities. These include China on the Korean Peninsula and South China Sea, Russia in Eastern Europe and Syria, and India on the Pakistan and Bhutan borders.

If Trump attacks Iran or Venezuela, as seems likely given his elevation of warmongers John Bolton and Mike Pompeo, Prashad concludes that, "the BRICS project has no ability to counter the military dominance of the US and NATO." Instead of facing up to the bully in Washington and, for example by arranging a world climate sanctions movement, the BRICS are busy elsewhere, including Africa – and not necessarily to the benefits of its peoples, economies and environments.

Africa on the BRICS menu

Across the world – even if not yet articulated in South Africa – there is growing doubt about the BRICS agenda by intellectuals who since the Durban summit of 2013 have lowered their expectations. Some follow the tradition of Brazil's leading dependista theorist, Ruy Mauro Marini, who linked the internal and external characteristics of subimperial regimes.

Prashad does so, too: "The domestic policies adopted by the BRICS states can be described as neoliberal with southern characteristics – with a focus on sales of commodities, low wages to workers along with the recycled surplus turned over as credit to the North, even as the livelihood of their own citizens is jeopardised, and even as they have developed new markets in other, often more vulnerable, countries which were once part of the Third World bloc."

When facing an imperial-subimperial combination, the vulnerable countries include most of Africa, and this is where the BRICS' Sandton scholars have shirked perhaps their greatest responsibility: to unveil and criticise that neighbourhood's predatory role on the continent – what with all the nearby headquarters of banks, mining houses, retail and wholesale empires, and cellphone companies that drain Africa of wealth.

Most BRICS have profitable business arms in Africa, including the likes of Brazil's land-grabbing Vale coal mining and bribery-addicted Odebrecht construction, Moscow's nuclear-toting Rosatom, India's brutal Vedanta, Chinese corporations such as those that ran off with Zimbabwe's diamonds, and Johannesburg's own AngloGold Ashanti and Glencore (Swiss-headquartered but run by South African Ivan Glasenberg) which have ravaged both minerals and the people of the Congo and many other sites that can be termed Resource Cursed.

It is here, finally, where the pampered academics explicitly fail in their historic task of speaking truth to power. It is ironic that instead of the critical scholarly consideration needed from the Academic Forum, the principle of Western-BRICS imperial-subimperial aggression against poorer countries was instead explained earlier this year by a politician. Leading neoliberal Indian Member of Parliament Shashi Tharoor deserves the last word, one of warning to Africans aghast at the Sandton scholars' failure of intellectual nerve:

> *"As countries acquire economic and military power, they start exercising their geopolitical muscle. The challenge for advocates of world order is to accommodate emerging powers... It is important to note that countries like China and India – unlike, say, Germany and Japan a century ago – are not seeking to overturn the world order. They seek to obtain redress within the broad framework rather than destabilize the framework itself. All that the 'emerging powers' want is a place at the high table. After all, countries realize that in the global system, you are either at the table or on the menu."*

Power plays in Civil and Academic BRICS

Bandile Mdlalose and
Lisa Thompson[1]

As the heat picks up around BRICS 2018, chaired by South Africa, debate from the BRICS Think Tank and from the left is coming to the boil as to the value of BRICS participatory processes. Patrick Bond's critique of the BRICS Think Tank and Academic Forum meetings held at the Sandton Convention Centre between the 28th and 31st of May is that the lack of critical commentary on BRICS state corruption, amongst many other factors, 'reflect(s) servility to local power' (Mail and Guardian online, 30 May).

If BRICS Summit rhetoric is to be taken at face value, BRICS pose an alternative, counter-hegemonic, South-South bloc in the global political economy. The radical critique of BRICS argues that this is simply rhetorical window dressing to further socio-economic exploitation.

Ari Sitas (BRICS Think Tank leader) argues in return that Bond's argument amounts to an argument by contamination, "you know so and so smells bad, therefore this must stink" (Radio Islam News, 31 May).

The pragmatic view held by Sitas and most academics and activists participating in the BRICS Academic Forum and Civil BRICS, is that progressive critique and policy strategies will help effect transformation at Summit level. This is toeing the diplomatic line, as oft intoned by the South African BRICS Sherpa, Anil Sooklal who stated at a recent public seminar held at the University of the Western Cape, 'we have no choice, we are part of BRICS.'

Much of what has been written by academics within the BRICS Think Tanks, as well as those who buy into the idea of BRICS as an incremental 'balancer' of the post-Cold War unipolar system, emphasise the norm setting and ideational potential of the BRICS in the global system.

1 *Mail&Guardian,* 6 June 2018

The sticking point between radicals outside and progressive civil society forces within these spaces is on the question of knowledge control and co-optation of academics and activists.

Are we alibis to the bad smells emanating from BRICS poor governance and exploitative socio-economic practices, making resistance from outside (what we might term 'tree shaking') more viable to effect change? Or, through a Gramscian inspired war of manoeuvre, are gains ('jam making') achievable through constructive engagement?

Also referred to as people-to-people engagement, Civil BRICS have been grafted onto the state-led processes in order to deal with BRICS Summit many promises to ensure inclusive collective development. Navigating between the rhetoric and reality, this year Civil BRICS has included a process of grassroots consultations to scale up community priorities to help guide Civil BRICS recommendations to Summit from South Africa. Ironically this form of 'bottom up' direct representation was funded by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) and not the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO).

The culmination of people to people engagement, the Civil BRICS event, is being organised by Oxfam and the Economic Justice Network (EJN). While the new Minister of DIRCO, Lindiwe Sisulu emphasises BRICS critical role in multilateralism and inclusive development and Sooklal waxes lyrical as to BRICS prioritisation of people to people engagement, the 4th IR and the developmental impact of BRICS,

DIRCO has made no funding available to Civil BRICS in 2018. This despite Lindiwe Sisulu bragging to an *Independent* interviewer about drawing in community activists.

The Academic and Civil BRICS inputs have been divided into categories such as Gender Equality and Inequality; the New Development Bank; Peace and Security; Inclusive Economic Development; Environment,

Land and Energy; and Youth. In each of these areas, vague and often unrealisable recommendations nestle alongside with a few policy recommendations that could make a difference in social justice terms to massive socio-economic inequalities and forms of discrimination that characterise BRICS governance, despite a varying degree of commitment to democratic development practices.

William Gumede's op-ed article on the importance of Civil BRICS in monitoring and evaluation overemphasises the positive role of Civil BRICS and the potential of this form of co-opted participation in a state invited space (oddly, controlled by an absent DIRCO).

The 'Pre-Civil BRICS' meeting, held in late April, was well attended by a wide spectrum of grassroots activists and movements, and BRICS INGOs and NGOs (including African delegates). Tellingly, it was not attended by DIRCO or NIHSS officials (despite their names being on the programme). Activists were left with an impression of tokenistic, box-ticking participation, followed by an even more confident bureaucratic dismissal of their grievances around their role in agenda setting.

As a result, the 2018 Civil BRICS process has been criticised by the activists and social movements involved. The grassroots activists on the SA Civil BRICS steering committee have experienced the space as primarily managed by the NGOs on behalf of DIRCO, leaving them unable to influence the process of agenda setting.

Until recently, the grassroots activists and movements coordinated by the steering committee have adopted a 'wait and see' approach to the outcome of Civil BRICS even though they have found it hard to represent their communities in ways that scale up their concerns.

Activist criticisms of the recommendation formulation process have included the

technical language used to make recommendations across sectors, with one participant stating "… we need to use language which is understood by communities and not misinterpreted by them."

The 'wait and see' approach from academics and NGOs involved in Academic and Civil BRICS process, as well as the BRICS Trade Union Forum and Youth BRICS, may not deliver results, and may instead just legitimate the BRICS governments and corporations. The question is what visible gains by insiders (jam making) will occur at the heads of state summit in Sandton from 25-27 July.

Precedents over the last decade aren't encouraging. Aside from the New Development Bank (and a Contingent Reserve Arrangement that is merely an IMF-related bailout fund), BRICS has no other multilateral institutions with which to implement policy.

The Civil BRICS steering committee members represent a broad constituency of social forces, but the low-income members are experiencing the economic downside of formal participation, first-hand. Like the communities they represent, they themselves lack resources. Their commitments to the BRICS consultative processes, including those at provincial level, are offered voluntarily as part of their commitment to social justice – while many other academics and NGO staff are salaried staff.

It's an old problem: whether assimilation of social movements into Civil and Youth BRICS yields anything in terms of social justice, or whether the agenda-setting Oxfam and EJN will simply help activists 'polish the chains' of BRICS inequality and social injustice, rather than break them.

The Civil BRICS steering committee members from the grassroots have voiced real concerns about such co-optation and even about their freedom of expression, for their voices are often explicitly managed and

controlled by 'diplomatic protocol.'

Even more scandalous, then, in view of DIRCOs prioritisation of civil BRICS, is that for the hosting of Civil BRICS 2018 there is no funding available from DIRCO. Perhaps it was all spent at the Sandton Convention Centre this last week at Academic BRICS, or perhaps people-to-people engagement is important but not that important for DIRCO and state diplomacy in the era of Ramaphoria.

Footing the Civil BRICS bill has fallen to Oxfam, EJN and FES with help of a shoestring budget from the National Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS). Many of the activists included in the process earlier this year may be excluded at the crunch time later this month due to lack of funds.

Many of the scholars and activists (including INGO activists) involved in both Academic and Civil BRICS recognise the limits to participation and critique offered by these processes. Yet, the ways in which the limitations are assimilated and translated into forms of engagement and participation differ, and pragmatism is found in both optimistic and pessimistic versions.

In both the Academic Forum meetings and to a some extent in the meetings held in the lead up to Civil BRICS, the rationale amongst most participating academics and activists is that a pragmatic approach, or 'influencing from within' is worth the somewhat stilted and officially managed debates, in order to influence policy outcomes at Summit level (jam making).

Others participate to understand the limits and opportunities of the participatory space with a pragmatic pessimism: they are there to participate but do not expect much by way of outcomes because of the state controlled nature of engagement. There is also a certain amount of careerism involved, in that opportunities

and perhaps even funding for BRICS research or (state controlled) activist engagement will depend on adhering to the rules of participation.

An example of this pragmatism as reflected by INGOs is evident in the Oxfam 2016 publication entitled Improving Governance through Engaging with Civil Society. The report acknowledges the top down state-centric organisation of Civil BRICS in Ufa, 2015, yet concludes that "… despite these problems, the Civil BRICS process was a valuable exercise and provided a platform for civil society to discuss common experiences and formulate some initial policy positions."

Ironically, or perhaps more likely illustratively, despite this foreknowledge, even while DIRCO was not present at the 2018 pre-Civil BRICS meeting hosted by Oxfam, the types of verbal inputs from civil society speakers were still tightly circumscribed. The majority of presentations and papers were made by professional INGO and NGO academics.

Likewise, the Academic Forum presentations, many of which were published in a glossy coffee table edition (replete with photos and advertising) called BAR (BRICS Academic Review) reflect a similar process of what we refer to as 'self-editing.' This process of self-editing is seen as fairly essential to protocol and papers are screened prior to presentation through pre-Academic BRICS meetings.

The forms of academic analysis and input within the Academic Forum, on display in BAR, are perfect examples of self-censorship. Similar forms of self-censorship take place in Civil BRICS in relation to what is edited out from meeting dialogues.

Broadly speaking, what we refer to as academic/activist self-editing or self-censorship takes two forms. Either a deliberate denialism of the types of socio-economic interactions taking place within BRICS states with regard to trade and investment flows, and thus an active 'buying into' the narrative that the BRICS states seek to maintain, or a

cognitive dissonance within the processes of engagement whereby academics make critical commentary and constructive inputs while not fully believing in, or committing to, the process.

Due to the way Civil BRICS is managed, activist leaders have self-critiqued the legitimacy of their roles in the Civil BRICS invited space because of INGO and NGO control of agenda setting. Activists and social movements who have participated have also had to endure the professionalization of their concerns into shopping lists of recommendations that raise serious doubt as the impact of Civil BRICS on civil society.

Similarly, with Academic BRICS, 22 recommendations, including the establishment of a BRICS Women's Forum and Gender Equality Monitor will be put before Summit leaders. Both Academic and Civil BRICS Inputs will be presented by the Think Tank leaders of the two processes. Sovereignty before cooperation is also parroted at official academic gatherings by the Think Tanks responsible for presenting the recommendations. In the case of Civil BRICS, these recommendations have yet to make any visible impact on policy in multilateral terms with the possible exception of BRICS bursaries and academic exchanges which is managed and funded bilaterally.

In the case of Academic BRICS, recommendations are pre-formulated by selected academics who are members of the Think Tanks together with DIRCO before the Academic BRICS Forum takes place. This puts the participatory legitimacy of the Forum at issue, as well as the integrity of those academics who believe their role is to make a difference through critical engagement.

Perhaps activists and academics have already served their purpose for 2018. DIRCO's box marked BRICS academic and civil society participation has been ticked. Whether or not the Academic BRICS academics and Civil BRICS activists are left

feeling powerless supporters of a diplomatic legitimation processes, or of having made genuine change possible through Summit uptake of even two or three recommendations, remains to be seen.

The final test is the Summit. Will it be business as usual, lots of diplomatic fanfare, followed by the recommendations in their entirety finding their way into DIRCO filing cabinets as has happened before?

July 2018 will determine whether Academic and Civil BRICS activists have (again) participated in a state endorsed charade of jam making, where in fact the process is virtually entirely devoid of policy content. As insiders to both processes, we have to face up to the fact that we will be endorsing state fairy tales of alternative development if our critique and input is insufficient in terms of policy gains.

In the absence of these, involvement in these processes should be reconsidered by those who commit to speak truth to power. In this context we have need to be reminded of the value of tree shaking: action outside of the state controlled spaces that disrupts and challenges the BRICS rhetorical overstatements of alternative development.

BRICS bloc's lofty aims lack legitimacy without civil society

Mandeep Tiwana and
Cathal Gilbert

From September 3-5 2017, the leaders of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa are gathering in Xiamen, China, for the 9th BRICS Summit. Strengthening economic partnerships, enhancing cooperation on development and seeking ways to preserve international stability will be high on their agenda.

In terms of the issues to be discussed, this BRICS meeting has similarities with the recent G20 Summit in Hamburg. But one thing will be noticeably absent: the voices of citizens. There won't be tens of thousands of protesters on the streets of Xiamen, loudly calling for BRICS leaders to listen to their demands.

Due to severe civic space restrictions in China, it's highly unlikely that there will be any protestors at all; and civil society will have very little influence over the discussions that take place. While this might comfort BRICS leaders, the absence of citizens' voices in fact represents a missed opportunity.

Notably, the Goa Declaration from the last BRICS Summit in India in October 2016 makes several references to the group's vision of a "just, equitable and democratic multi-polar international order."

If BRICS is to achieve such lofty aims in any meaningful way, the group's leaders have to allow for robust civil society participation in agenda setting, in key discussions and in ensuring accountability for decisions taken at summits.

Civil society organisations (CSOs) contribute to sustainable development in myriad ways. They assist in service delivery activities and find innovative solutions to complex problems, while exercising a watchdog role over the disbursement of public resources.

To discharge these responsibilities effectively, CSOs need to act independently and

rely on the availability of resources from multiple avenues.

Fundamentally, they need an enabled civic space where core civil society freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly are respected, protected and fulfilled.

Repressed, obstructed and narrowed

The deliberate targeting of human rights lawyers in China, LGBTI activists in Russia and organisations and activists receiving international funding in India have been widely documented.

The situation in host country China is particularly serious, with the government recently carrying out a sweeping crackdown against human rights lawyers and human rights defenders, introducing laws severely restricting the activities of international and internationally-funded CSOs and further tightening controls over internet access through virtual private networks (VPNs).

Recent research from the CIVICUS Monitor, a collaborative new research platform, shows that civic space is worryingly "repressed" in China and Russia, "obstructed" in Brazil and India and "narrowed" in South Africa

Alas, if BRICS' civil society voices are silenced at the national level, they can have little positive influence over the direction of BRICS at the international level in resolving interlinked global political, social, economic and environmental crises. To disregard independent civil society input is a lost opportunity for the world's pre-eminent powers.

As BRICS leaders sit down in Xiamen, new forms of mobilisation, organising and associational life are taking root across the planet.

BRICS countries need to open up and recognise the power and legitimacy of people's voices if they are to achieve their stated aim of creating a just, equitable and democratic international order.

As it stands, this Summit's focus on "people-to-people"

exchanges is limited to discussions on culture, education and sports, with little space for critical conversations on the state of human rights and democratic standards across BRICS member states.

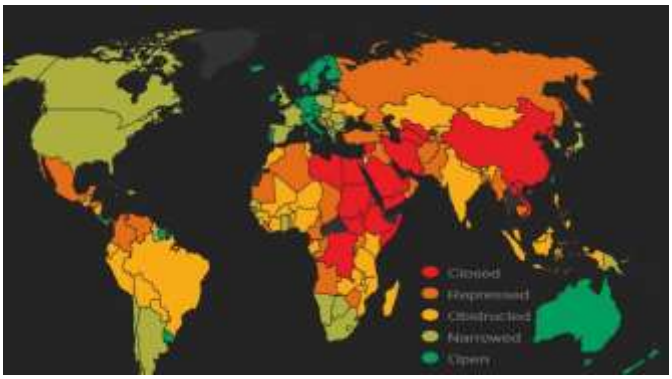
As a symbolic exercise in civil society engagement, a “Civil BRICS” meeting was held in June. It was tightly controlled by Chinese authorities, however, and the concluding declaration was pre-drafted before the meeting even took place.

It’s high time that BRICS governments expanded the scope of these exchanges to discuss avenues for citizen participation in the future direction of BRICS cooperation.

Healthy involvement of civil society can only enhance the legitimacy of the outcomes of BRICS summits in the eyes of the world. Guaranteeing respect for citizens’ fundamental freedoms at home is also essential.

If this happens, BRICS will tap into an unlimited pool of ideas to spur innovation, social cohesion and better standards of living. These are the true unexplored resources of BRICS countries.

Civicus Monitor



The BRICS need greater civic involvement

Civil BRICS

In 2018 South Africa is hosting the Summit of the world's leading emerging economies – BRICS. This year's theme is "BRICS in Africa: Collaboration for Inclusive Growth and Shared Prosperity in the 4th Industrial Revolution."

A greater civic involvement is taking shape in the lead up to the summit. Here are five things you should know about the Civil BRICS and in favour of greater civic involvement in the BRICS summits.

1. With Civil BRICS the legacy of a strong global South agency is a likely reality

Some view the significance of BRICS in narrow economic terms – expanding the consumer base for global goods. Others regard the group with fear of an economic upsurge without corresponding democratic credentials, and anxiety that they help to maintain the status quo in return for small and largely insignificant concessions.

But there is a strong legacy of a more social solidarity going back to the early days of the bloc. The Asia-Africa Solidarity Conference in Bandung (Indonesia) in 1955 that launched the group saw the formation of a bold organized Southern agency through solidarity, alliance-making, cooperation, coordination, and collective action.

Bandung saw global South liberation from global hegemony and power asymmetry through cooperation among developing countries and coordination, including on matters of global public goods, multilateral trade and environment.

People-to-people engagement was recognized early in the onset of BRICS as an avenue for cooperation.

To echo the voices of those in the developing South, South African CSOs and activists have been engaging local, regional and international partners to craft recommendations for the Johannesburg summit.

2. No more tradeoffs with people's interests

BRICS countries represent 42 per cent of the world's population. Its potential impact can therefore be immense in relation to improvement in the material conditions of peoples haunted by poverty, unemployment and inequality, which combine to produce despair and anger among the poor.

This makes it ever more important to promote within BRICS a model of governance that places ordinary people at the centre, advancing care for the dispossessed in society and creating platforms for people's inclusion and participation in decision-making.

In the lead up to the July summit in South Africa, the Civil BRICS will issue recommendations that embody a call for a BRICS which is responsive to the needs of the citizens, and where the interest of big business and profits is balanced.

More importantly, sustainable employment opportunities by new businesses should be targeted at locals with skills training being at the centre. Keep an eye out for the Civil BRICS Recommendations 2018 for more details.

3. The world doesn't need more summit diplomacy

In a world where the richest 1 per cent own half of all the household wealth in the world the expectation from civil society is for BRICS to promote Southern agency and seek balance, equality and justice on the global stage. Civil BRICS believe the objective of BRICS is to seek change, to ask a new set of questions about how things are done in global governance and to give voice to some of the key demands of the South. It is a platform on which many in civil society in the South place their hopes, aspirations, and ideas that they want to materialize in their lifetime.

4. The process behind Civil BRICS is strengthening the consultation aspect

The process to establish the agenda for Civil BRICS within South Africa has given stakeholders an opportunity for effective participation, and has also been an opportunity to communicate the objective of the Civil BRICS to those stakeholders and the wider public.

The Civil BRICS Steering Committee for this year's summit is itself an exercise in diversity, including representatives from a range of communities and institutions. To craft the agenda, the committee gathered input on a range of topics, from inclusive economic development to gender equity to land, energy and the environment. The resulting recommendations have been endorsed by stakeholders across the country at all levels. This endorsement process not only ensures that the recommendations reflect the stakeholders' priorities, but also increases awareness of those challenges and of the work done by the Civil BRICS to address them.

5. Ensure implementation of commitments; let's start with gender equality

The New Development Bank (NDB) is testament to the BRICS mission to develop a financial instrument that will create a more just world order.

Although established to mobilize resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects, so far the bank has been accused of fitting the same mould of corporate-led finance it was intended to replace, protecting investments over people's interests.

Looking at the male-only board, civil society has also questioned NDB gender responsiveness, among other expectations.

Guarding the civil society interests to reduce poverty and inequality, the Civil BRICS have kept a close eye on the NDB's current process of developing strategies and policies. They recommend that the NDB and African Regional Centre establish a gender policy, a gender advisory committee and regional gender desks in consultation with civil society.

This comes on top of earlier recommendations by Civil BRICS that the NDB make its project selection criteria more transparent and accountable, to indicate how a chosen project is expected to be gender-responsive and to promote inclusive and sustainable development.

In order to fulfil these expectations of diversity and inclusivity, civil society calls for a reasonable balance between large, medium and small-scale infrastructure projects that directly provide services to smallholder farmers and micro-enterprises.

Civil BRICS Policy Recommendations

Submitted for consideration by the official BRICS Summit, South Africa, 25-27 July 2018[1]

Since 2014 South African civil society organisations (CSOs) have requested that their engagement with BRICS be formalised. This Track 3 approach is known as Civil BRICS and would complement formalized tracks such as Track 1 (Diplomacy, consisting of the official governmental engagement between the BRICS partners) and Track 2 (government-affiliated institutions such as the BRICS Think Tanks Council and the BRICS Business Council, both institutionalised in 2013).

This document puts forward policy recommendations raised by South African CSOs with regional and BRICS partners for consideration by the South African BRICS Sherpa office of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO). They comprise the following thematic areas: Inclusive Economic Development

1 The Civil BRICS policy document has been endorsed by the following organisations:

- Action Aid (South Africa)
- Africa Solidarity Network (Africa Region)
- African Forum and Network on Debt and Development – AFRODAD (Africa Region)
- African Monitor (South Africa/Africa Region)
- BRICS Feminist Watch (Brasil, Russia, India, China and South Africa)
- Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability – CBGA (India)
- Centre for Rural Studies and Development (India)
- Centre for Youth and Social Development (India)
- Diakonia Council of Churches (South Africa)
- Eastern and Southern Africa Farmer's Forum – ESAFF (South Africa)
- Eastern Cape Environmental Network (South Africa)
- Economic Justice Network (South Africa/ Southern Africa Region)
- EKTA Resource Centre for Women (India)
- GRIP- Rape Intervention Programme (South Africa)
- Human Rights Institute of South Africa (South Africa)
- Mining Affected Communities United in Action (South Africa)
- North East Network (India)
- Open Medical Club Charitable Foundation (Russia)
- Oxfam (Brasil, Russia, India, China and South Africa)
- Pathey Budget Centre (India)
- South Africa Climate Action Network
- South African Council of Churches (South Africa)
- South African Green Revolutionary Communities (South Africa)
- Uganda Debt Network (Uganda)
- Vasudha Foundation (India)

(as an umbrella group for urbanisation, taxation and fiscal justice); Land, Mining, Agriculture and Climate Change; Gender and Inequality; Peace and Security; New Development Bank (NDB) and Youth.

The recommendations are a result of several consultations that took place at a provincial level in South Africa, namely in Gauteng (with participation from CSOs in Free State and Northern Cape), Kwa-Zulu Natal, Eastern Cape (with participation of CSOs from all regions of the province including the Western Cape) and Limpopo (with participation of CSOs from Mpumulanga). A pre-Civil BRICS meeting was held on 24-25 April 2018 with various national, regional and BRICS stakeholders, including civil society, social movements and academics. Following this meeting, additional consultations took place with BRICS CSOs. A Civil BRICS meeting will be held in Johannesburg on 25-26 June 2018 in Johannesburg.

This document also builds on the policy recommendations that were developed during the 2016 Civil BRICS in India as well as subsequent civil society meetings held with New Development Bank and African Regional Centre Staff over the past 2 years during the 2016 Civil BRICS. This includes the Second NDB Annual Meeting (April 2017), and CSO Meetings held with the NDB Board in Shanghai (November 2017) and with the NDB African Regional Center (ARC) in Johannesburg (March 2018).

Under the South African Presidency, we urge BRICS leaders to formalise the third track of diplomacy, Track 3, which includes interaction with civil society organisations and people-to-people engagement, “Civil BRICS.” We further urge the DIRCO to incorporate Civil BRICS views and policy recommendations in the 2018 BRICS proceedings and the 2018 BRICS Leaders Communiqué, whereby Civil BRICS is

acknowledged as a formal mechanism.

About Track 3 "Civil BRICS"

The formalisation of a Track 3 mechanism seeks to strengthen the role of Civil Society (CS) in in BRICS public policy making processes, focused on people-centred development. The platform aims to establish a formal dialogue between BRICS Civil Society and BRICS decision makers; to make a substantive contribution to BRICS policy formulation based on civil society recommendations on key policy issues, especially from a people's perspective; and to contribute to the South-South Development cooperation and to strengthen people-to-people solidarity. The track 3 mechanism to date has not been uniform among BRICS member states, leading to differences in the effectiveness of engagements. As such, civil society across BRICS countries requests a standardisation of specific governance structures and operating principles.

Recommendations (related to Governance Structure and Principles)

- Civil BRICS should be formalised as an outcome of the 2018 BRICS Summit and held on an annual basis as per the rotational chairing of the BRICS Chairship.
- Civil BRICS should be an autonomous and self-determining platform for civil society (non-state actors) in organising its processes for engagement, including its agenda, thematic priorities and non-governmental organisation (NGO) participants from BRICS countries and regional partners. These include community-based organisations, members of affected communities and social movements.
- Civil society space should be recognised and supported by BRICS governments to promote an enabling environment for civil society to engage meaningfully in the BRICS Summit process. Support must come with full

funding from government to the Civil BRICS Secretariat (as nominated by civil society) for preparatory Civil BRICS processes and activities, and the convening of Civil BRICS as done for Tracks 1-2.

- Civil BRICS will be a self-determining platform, regardless of the source of its funds, including those provided by the BRICS Summit host government. BRICS civil society should be empowered to utilise public funds generated largely by BRICS citizen taxes to determine how to organise Civil BRICS and people-to-people engagements.
- The host government should also support Civil BRICS with logistical arrangements, such as invitations to other relevant ministries to participate in Civil BRICS, and with visas for BRICS and regional delegates.
- The BRICS Summit host government will work with an independent Civil BRICS secretariat formed by non-state actors to determine the process of meaningful engagement of civil society in the BRICS Summit and related ministerial meetings. This includes ensuring that the Civil BRICS process, such as the submission of civil society policy recommendations, is in alignment with those of the official BRICS Summit. Such an alignment will ensure that the BRICS host government receives the Civil BRICS policy recommendations in a timely manner for incorporation in the BRICS Summit Declaration and Action Plan.
- The BRICS Sherpa and other relevant government entities (of the BRICS host government) will be expected to take part in the Civil BRICS forum to receive civil society policy recommendations for incorporation in the BRICS Summit Declaration and Action Plan.

Inclusive economic development

BRICS countries must promote the principles of redress, redistribution and transformation by reforming policies and laws that disenfranchise ordinary citizens. BRICS leaders have emphasised practical economic cooperation as a cornerstone of cooperation, encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship with increased participation of academia, businesses, civil society and other stakeholders in this process. BRICS also supports industrial cooperation including in the spheres of human resources, social security and employment. Moreover, BRICS leaders have acknowledged the importance of clean and renewable energy and committed to implement the Paris Agreement. It is imperative that the Fourth Industrial Revolution does not leave anyone behind, unlike the three previous revolutions that left Africans behind, and women in particular. Women make up half of the African population, are an important part of the workforce and bring different skills and perceptions to bear on challenges.

The theme of the 2018 summit is "BRICS in Africa: Collaboration for Inclusive Growth and Shared Prosperity in the 4th Industrial Revolution." However, the world is still faced with extreme poverty and inequality. Abuse of state power and resources, corruption and narrow self-interest threatens economic growth. Illicit financial flows (IFFs) cost developing countries trillions of dollars that could be used to promote more inclusive economic growth, including public investments towards improving access to housing, transport, essential services, and ICT. In this regard there is a need for fiscal justice in relation to tax collection. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will need substantial domestic resource mobilization – hence the need to urgently address the foundational structure on which IFFs are based – namely the network of imbalanced double tax agreements, bilateral investment treaties, multilateral investment

treaties, resource concession agreements and advance pricing agreements. Furthermore, there is a need to reduce the negative impact of the Organisation for Economic Development (OECD), the Group of Twenty (G20) and African tax havens, which limit domestic resource mobilisation.

Moreover, the Fourth Industrial Revolution has the potential to create a "winner takes all" economy particularly in the context of hyper-globalisation. To address this, there is a need for a continued focus on human and social development to act as enablers of the revolution, including education and skills training to prepare communities to adapt to changing labour market conditions. BRICS leaders must mitigate the negative consequences on employment caused by the Fourth Industrial revolution by engaging in timely dialogue between BRICS leaders, the BRICS Tracks including Civil BRICS, and other BRICS initiatives such as `labour'.

Additional considerations on human and social development include housing and basic services. In an effort to protect and acknowledge the existence of informal settlements, the principle of social production of habitat should be considered. Social housing and public investment in and basic services like water and sanitation should be framed as public investments. To enable this, it is important that spatial planning and urban design considers planning for the growing informal spaces of production. It is imperative that we take into account processes of gentrification and deindustrialization. Informal sectors must be protected and there must be social security support. Safe, affordable and sustainable transport systems that are accessible by all and especially focusing on the low-income groups must be prioritized.

BRICS leaders must ensure that education is adapted to the changing environment. This includes a focus on STEM

(Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) that is focused on interdisciplinary learning and will result in innovative and home-grown solutions to address real needs on the continent. Aside from this, there is a need to strengthen technical and vocational training related to requirements in the job market. Investing in research and development will also create an environment for private enterprises to invest in. All marginalized sections of society must be protected. As unemployment and education is unlikely to be addressed in the short term, there should also be an emphasis on employing people that have not been able to achieve higher education degrees or technical qualifications, thus providing opportunities to those who have been formerly disadvantaged.

Policy recommendations

Inclusive (human and social) Economic Development

- In order to ensure inclusive, pro-poor economic growth, BRICS governments must ensure social security in terms of employment opportunities, decent working conditions, safety, and security at work places.
- Develop capacity in the services sector to allow for greater employment of unskilled/less skilled workers.
- Protect informal sectors through human-rights based policies.
- Develop programs to provide basic facilities such as food security, housing, education, health, drinking water, and sanitation facilities for all. These programs should be provided with adequate funds by respective governments to ensure coverage of all people.
- Prioritise and emphasis green energies for sustainable development.
- Allow cross-fertilisation of skills and education training to wide sectors of society across BRICS member states, with a particular focus on STEM.
- Ensure inclusive national industrialisation based on small and medium enterprises

that are integrated in regional value-added chains and focussed on national demands.
- Invest in small-scale agriculture projects to build an inclusive economy and redress inequality.
- Invest in technical and vocational training related to requirements in the job market and invest in research and development exchanges across BRICS.
- Engage in on-going dialogue on strategies to mitigate the negative consequences of the Fourth Industrial Revolution on employment. This engagement needs to be formal, structured and on-going between BRICS leaders, all BRICS Tracks including Civil BRICS, and other BRICS initiatives such as `labour'.

Fiscal Justice

- Focus on the principle of fiscal justice respecting tax collection under a progressive tax system perspective (who makes and owns more, pays more). Orient public spending to prioritise the poorest and activate the economy by generating employment and income.
- Establish a BRICS IFF policy that facilitates the establishment of multi-agency units within BRICS country governments to address IFF's.
- Review double taxation agreements, bilateral investment treaties, multilateral investment treaties, resource concession agreements and advance pricing agreements.
- Undertake tax spill-over assessments (the impact of laws, policies and agreements on other countries ability to raise tax revenue) when developing new fiscal policies and laws, when reviewing current agreements and when entering into new agreements.
- Call for an international tax body to respond to the negative impacts of IFF's
- The NDB should respond to the development strategy needs of the countries it will be serving. The development of a robust, consistent, and integrated framework on country systems

is essential to ensure strategic and operational coherence across all the dimensions of DFIs activities, including the NDB - from the development of country strategies, to the establishment of operational policies and the design of innovative financial instruments.

- Promote good governance by effectively addressing corruption and abuse of power by top government officials within the BRICS countries and adopt regional/international statutes that prohibit trade mis-invoicing.
- Promote financial transparency by establishing a BRICS tax information-sharing network that allows open exchange of tax information amongst BRICS countries.
- Form and/or strengthen transfer pricing units within tax authorities especially in the African region to enhance the technical expertise needed to tackle transfer pricing risks.
- End offshore secrecy and tax havens and prevent IFFs destined for their countries or jurisdictions from Africa.
- BRICS Countries should ensure an inclusive and conducive operating space for CSO's to advocate for an end to IFFs both at national and international levels.
- Assist African countries to establish common and acceptable standards for tax incentives guided by cost-benefit analyses.

Land, mining, agriculture and climate change

BRICS Civil Society are concerned with negative developments on issues of environment, mining, land and inadequate management of agriculture in relation to climate change in all BRICS countries. Of all these issues, only agriculture and climate change are mentioned by BRICS leaders. On climate change leaders have affirmed their commitment to the Paris Agreement and the principles of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). On agriculture, leaders have noted the need to

adapt agriculture to climate change, enhance agricultural technology cooperation and innovation, agricultural trade and investment, and ICT application in agriculture.

BRICS governments should prioritise food security. Specifically, the lack of access to food is a significant issue for the global community and particularly for developing nations as it adversely impacts their economic growth and resilience. The increased concentration of global policy-making in the hands of a few are shifting even as national-level policy decisions continue to be directed to varying extents by global and private actors such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and transnational or multinational corporations. Small-scale producers play a critical role both in the global food supply chain as well as in food security and economic independence of the world's poor. However, many of these small-scale producers are disadvantaged by policies that limit their decision-making power in markets and fail to protect their rights.

Africa is rich in minerals and should follow resource-based industrialisation strategies if it wants to build on its comparative advantage. However fair agricultural and trade policies are needed at the global level. Policies must also be done in a way to benefit local communities and small-scale farmers.

In addition, there is a need for effective responses and interventions in addressing issues on mining, land access, agriculture, environment and climate change that protect the poor and marginalised. Interventions and initiatives must enable and strengthen the ordinary people of BRICS countries. Laws and respect for human rights must be enforced in this regard.

Policy recommendations

- Promote inclusive and policies to protect land, roll-back dependency on mining and

localized agriculture at a national, inter-regional and global levels, centered on a human rights perspective and adhering to country laws and policies.

- Promote local and fair employment when conducting business in BRICS member countries so as to promote inclusive growth and make use of local resources in a just manner so as to enhance the economy.
- Ensure land access, with a particular focus on women and the previously disadvantaged, towards addressing address poverty alleviation by 2030.
- Ensure the transparency of trade and investment agreements in agriculture and food commodities provide the requisite policy space to Governments to protect and promote domestic food producers towards food sovereignty (and ensure that countries are not subjected to unwanted products/dumping practices).
- Promote small-scale production in international markets for enhanced food security and protect the rights of small-scale farmers. There should be a gender analysis at every step in the agriculture and food security value chain to ensure that there will be economic and social empowerment for women in agriculture.
- Poverty and food insecurity should be tackled through social safety (security) nets. Production-based food security should be preferred by adopting sustainable agricultural production. Adopt the 'Right to Food and GSF (Global Strategic Framework) for Food Security and Nutrition' and the United Nations Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA), Food and Agriculture Organisation, 2012.
- Promote national development strategies that protect land, natural resources and traditional production systems.
- Develop comprehensive initiatives to strengthen and enhance energy efficiency and ensure universal energy

access. Scale up renewable energy electricity generation and phase out fossil fuel subsidies in the medium and a total decarbonization in the long term. This includes socially-owned public support for renewable energy, infrastructure and the upgrading of technology to ensure affordable, reliable and sustainable resource access for rural areas and small-scale farmers. Initiatives must promote employment in sustainable industries and mitigate climate change to reduce adaptation needs and associated costs. Building resilience through such technologies would be ideal so as to decrease vulnerabilities, especially for those with high exposure to climate change impacts and those that are currently suffering from poverty in all its forms and particularly energy poverty.

- Reiterate the urgency and importance of pre-2020 and post-2020 ambitions with the provision of means of implementation as a necessary building block to achieving the Paris Agreement temperature target.
- Commit to developing economy-wide, long-term, low-GHG emission and climate-resilient development strategies, informed by the 1.5 IPCC report and consistent with the Paris Agreement and SDGs, as soon as possible and ahead of 2020, through a fully participatory process involving engagement with stakeholders through national dialogues.
- Ensure energy and infrastructure investment decisions are compatible with a 1.5ºC pathway, as identified in the long-term strategy, and commit to establishing clear guidelines for infrastructure decisions to ensure that strict environmental and social criteria are met, including through implementing the Task-force for Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) recommendations and implementing a 1.5ºC stress test into decision-making.

- Recognise that investments in "clean" fossil fuels and fracking for natural gas are false solutions that are likely to result in higher long-term costs, exacerbate impacts from climate change and carry a large risk of asset stranding.
- As a result of the UNFCCC facilitative Talanoa Dialogue, and for some BRICS countries as a result of their over-achievement of their respective Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)submitted under the Paris Agreement, the countries should initiate inclusive and transparent national processes aimed at revising and enhancing of successive NDCs for submission in 2020.
- Reduce sectoral emissions, especially with respect to the energy generation, land use and transportation sectors.
- Plan and hold national level Talanoa Dialogues in 2018 with the aim of identifying national level solutions and opportunities for achieving climate targets.
- Recognise adaptation as a global challenge, requiring action at local, national, regional and global scales; commit to progressively higher levels of ambition on mitigation, which will mean less need to adapt to impacts (some of which are already unavoidable); and regular cycles of both adaptation NDCs and reporting transparently on adaptation.
- Explore the potential and opportunities among BRICS industries in the energy efficiency sector (South Africa and India) and in mitigating land use emissions (Brazil, India, China).

New Development Bank (NDB)

BRICS civil society groups took note of BRICS leaders' commitment to promote sustainable infrastructure development through the NDB and its African Regional Centre.

BRICS civil society calls for the NDB to maintain its strategic focus on financing projects that promote inclusive and people-centred sustainable

development and must consider a balance between its support for large, medium and small-scale infrastructure projects.

While civil society welcomes the NDB's commitment to environmental and social safeguards as expressed in its interim Environmental and Social Framework (ESF), several areas can be further strengthened such as establishing clearer sustainability criteria and due diligence requirements for project selection, supervision, and implementation.

Moreover, BRICS civil society calls on the Bank to enhance its transparency and accountability policies and practices by strengthening its processes for public consultation and engagement with civil society, including information disclosure especially at national and regional levels.

Policy Recommendations

- Demonstrate and proactively disseminate information to the public on how inclusive growth is a core principle and guide for NDB's sustainable infrastructure investments, and how they have a strong emphasis on reducing poverty and inequality.
- The NDB's projects currently focus primarily on large-scale infrastructure. The Bank must ensure it achieves its mandate of reducing poverty, inequality and gender inequality by providing Special Funds for projects focused on, but not limited to, women's economic empowerment, small scale agriculture, education, skills development, renewable energy, humanitarian response, disaster mitigation, climate adaptation, skills training, education, and healthcare, across BRICS countries, new members and other EMDCs.
- Directly related to the previous recommendation, the Bank must set aside a minimum 3% allocation of total paid-in capital (US$50 billion) – i.e. US$1.5 billion – over a 5-year period as Special Funds. This amounts to US$300 million per

annum across the five founding members i.e. US$60 million per founding member per year.
- These Special Funds must be utilized for community-led small development projects ranging between US$1 million and US$5 million in the aforementioned sectors.
- Ensure private-public partnerships (PPPs) are guided by the UN Standards on Business and Human Rights, develop accountability measures for the NDB/ARC and include civil society to facilitate exchange of best practices, particularly from the BRICS but globally as well.
- Promote transparency and accountability by providing mandatory access to information and proactive disclosure at all stages of the project cycle in accessible languages and formats for affected communities/CSOs.
- While aiming to use national systems as the best way to strengthen a country's own capacity, the Bank must effectively manage social and environmental impacts by setting minimum standards and facilitating exchange of best domestic and international practices. Importantly, the NDB's country systems analyses must be made publicly available.
- Develop frameworks and action plans in partnership with civil society to establish participatory and consultative processes with CSOs and local communities throughout the project cycle.
- Strengthen the Environmental and Social Framework by including clear sustainability criteria or operational indicators and due diligence for project selection, supervision, and implementation.
- Ensure NDB policies enhance implementation of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Addis Ababa Action Agenda (Financing for Development), and the Paris Agreement on climate change.
- Ensure that the Africa Regional Center promotes inclusive

African priorities linked to Agenda 2063.
- Address gender inequality and youth challenges (see specific recommendations under gender and youth sections).

Gender and inequality

Previous BRICS summits have recognised the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment, particularly in light of the 2030 Agenda. However more can be done to enhance accountability for the implementation of these commitments. Gender must be mainstreamed throughout the BRICS agenda and gender analyses are vital. There is a need to challenge and transform harmful social norms and respect the identities of all.

Policy Recommendations

- Ensure that New Development Bank and African Regional Centre establishes a gender policy, gender advisory committee and regional gender desks in consultation with civil society.
- Develop gender sensitive fiscal policies of BRICS countries. These policies must include gender responsive budgeting and should include all sectors and areas of government intervention.
- Adopt and implement inclusive economic development policies in the workplace towards addressing the gender pay-gap in all countries by 2030. Women must be guaranteed labour rights and conditions of decent work in all sectors particular promotion for women in the digital economy and positions of leadership.
- Recognize all forms of work undertaken by women, including unpaid work and unpaid care work, and address this through legislation, policies, and services.
- Implement the recommendations of the UN High Level Report on Women´s Economic Empowerment that was endorsed in 2017.
- Implement all of the general recommendations of the

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), including expanding the definition of gender to include LGBTIQ+ people and see gender as diverse.

- Increase investment in comprehensive and inclusive gender equality education, training, and research to address all forms of gender stereotypes and discrimination and violence.
- Increase provision and promote uptake of comprehensive and non-discriminatory sexual and reproductive health and rights services to help ensure time-bound reductions in preventable maternal morbidity and mortality
- Ensure equal access to quality education for all citizens regardless of identity and implement comprehensive and inclusive sex education in education settings at all levels. Invest in STEM (Science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education, information communication technology for all women and girls.
- Acknowledge women's rights to productive resources including natural resources such as land, water, forests; financial resources such as credit, sustainable livelihoods and social resources such as housing and social security.
- Ensure the BRICS gender and women's forum is accessible and includes representation of women from all sectors of society and engages adequately with civil society. Its mandate should extend beyond entrepreneurship and business.
- Ensure that each country implements gender equality legislation and repeals any gender discriminatory legislation.

Youth

The BRICS focus on youth and increased people-to-people exchanges are welcomed, as is the creation of a youth forum and action plan. However, civil society calls on BRICS leaders to examine the underlying

conditions that prevent youth from accessing opportunities, and to ensure that opportunities are accessible to all. Of the 7 billion people in the world, approximately 51% of the population is under the age of 30 years. With the size of the populations in the BRICS countries, there are over 720 million people between the ages of 10 and 24 in the BRICS countries. South African youth are over 60% of the population. Despite this, there is a significant lack of participation of youth in actual decision-making processes around the world. We recognise the diversity and magnitude of the youth populations of the BRICS countries, as well as their needs and aspirations. We commit to make all efforts to develop the potential of young people and contribute to the overall development of the BRICS countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Policy Recommendations

- Develop and implement BRICS policies to promote access to free quality education and higher education.[2]
- Promote a standardised education system to match the quality and breadth of educational opportunities in BRICS member states.
- Promote life education and global citizenship education in BRICS countries.
- Develop a one-stop centre to promote information related to BRICS that integrates to multi-faceted dimension of all areas of development for youth.
- Develop a visa free regime within the BRICS countries to promote mobility, trade and inter-cultural exchange amongst young people.
- Enhance the BRICS Network University visibility, including the development of an accessible and interactive virtual platform, and enhance linkages with other universities.

2 The issue of education is a societal issue, and can help to generate future income.

- Create economic conditions and a conducive environment to enable youth opportunities (promotion of youth entrepreneurship, skill sets and enhance flexibility for youth loans from credit providers in BRICS member countries).
- Continue to enhance research and educational exchanges amongst the youth.
- Establish and implement a BRICS Youth Council to implement all BRICS Youth Summit recommendations and to sustain linkages with other BRICS institutions.
- Ensure that the NDB/ARC carry out projects with a specific youth focus, including funding entrepreneurial, agricultural, health and educational activities.

Peace and security

BRICS leaders have continued to emphasise a fair and equitable world order and, while emphasising the central role of the UN, have insisted on its reform. They have also committed to human rights and fundamental freedoms, with an emphasis on sovereignty and non-interference. BRICS recognises the comprehensive approach needed to address the root causes of violence and the links between peace and development and the importance of Agenda 2063. They have also stressed the importance of African regional and sub-regional organisations and committed to contribute peacekeeping troops.

However, BRICS leaders can do more to uphold human rights instruments and the responsibility to protect and to act preventatively. This includes addressing socio-economic imbalances, addressing a wide range of crime, promoting peaceful, just and inclusive institutions (SDG 16) and recognising the role of civil society in contributing towards peace and security. Partnerships (SDG 17) are also necessary. Freedom of speech, assembly and association is imperative. A gender perspective throughout all engagements is welcomed, as is the appreciation of African agendas and African solutions.

The importance of BRICS contributions to peacekeeping is welcomed, but requires greater transparency, better protection of peacekeepers as well as standards for troop contributing countries. In addition, sustaining peace goes beyond peacekeeping and requires broader activities linked to addressing the root causes of violence.

Policy Recommendations

- Support SA's membership during its non-permanent member of the UNSC, and continue to call for a more equitable reform of the UNSC and other international institutions.
- Develop a common understanding of what conflict prevention entails among member states. This would include understanding the right time to intervene (robust peacekeeping and the responsibility to protect) in relation to principles of non-interference and sovereignty.
- Uphold human rights principles and instruments, including on freedom of association and assembly, counter terrorism, cybercrime, human trafficking and migration.
- Better define policies for engagement which link peace and development initiatives, including linking BRICS policies to Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030.
- Ensure greater transparency on peacekeeping operations in respective member states and frameworks for security engagement internationally.
- Develop a position of regional solutions and the principles of subsidiarity.
- Promote sharing of peacekeeping experiences among BRICS member states to enhance performance and safety of peacekeepers, in alignment with UN serviceability standards, exploitation and abuse.
- Understand that sustaining peace and security requires a coherent, inclusive and holistic approach that goes beyond

peacekeeping and addresses the root causes of violence, therefore supplementing peacekeeping activities and funds with sustaining peace activities and making sure peacekeepers are trained in human rights and rule of law.

- Protect the freedom of speech while establishing counter-terrorism policies and cybersecurity monitoring.
- BRICS States should implement UN mechanisms such as the Universal Periodic Review and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 for states to address domestic, sexual violence and gender-based violence and ensure women are included in sustaining peace activities.

BRICS Youth: Everything about us, without us?

Njabulo Maphumulo and
Lynford Dor

The leaders of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa will meet in Johannesburg from 25-27 July for the 10th BRICS Summit. Prior to the Summit a number of other BRICS dialogues are taking place, including the Business Council, Academic Forum, Civil BRICS and BRICS Youth. BRICS Youth was set up in 2013 to put youth voices on the BRICS agenda and to promote and popularise BRICS amongst young people ages 15-34 in each country.

At the time, in March 2013, President Jacob Zuma promised that the Durban BRICS Summit would "contribute immensely to satisfying the employment and development needs of our young population" and that youth employment would be "central to our engagements and discussions with the grouping." But the fight against South African youth unemployment has been lost.

We reflect here on whether, five years later, SA's hosting of the BRICS Youth participatory processes show any indication of improving prospects for youth in BRICS countries and South African youth in particular.

Raymond Matlala plays a leading role in BRICS Youth SA through his NGO "SA Youth International Diplomacy," the G20 Youth Forum and the Euro-BRICS Youth Platform and he led a recent process formulating BRICS Youth recommendations for a civil society meeting called "pre-Civil BRICS."

In a May 2018 interview, he admitted that the immediate concern facing BRICS Youth is its lack of sufficient representivity when taking positions on behalf

of millions of young people. This means that a disconnect may exist between the positions and strategies undertaken by BRICS Youth and those taken by more representative or legitimate youth movements.

Representivity is entrusted to the National Youth Development Agency, a controversial statutory body set up by parliament in 2008. Each BRICS state has its own equivalent government youth agency that selects delegates. There is no formal elective process, which immediately raises questions around the intended political function of the structure.

Matlala, who attended the 2017 BRICS Youth Summit in Beijing, agrees that BRICS Youth has a problem: "BRICS Youth is regarded as an official platform where the decisions taken are binding to all member countries. We are still advocating for a permanent structure. We don't reach the majority of young people, particularly those in rural and peri-urban areas. This information honestly reaches mostly young people in universities."

If representatives are hand-picked by government agencies, their independence of perspective and legitimacy is questionable. With authoritarianism on the rise in Russia and India, with China even more totalitarian, and with the closing of democratic spaces in Brazil following the 2016 coup, the other BRICS countries provide even less opportunity for these types of initiatives to present independent views.

Matlala acknowledges that BRICS Youth lacks a constituency, but insists they can put the concerns of youth on the BRICS agenda: "There are a few policies that as young people in the BRICS countries we all agree on. One is on collaboration in education, and to advocate for free, equal and quality education amongst all the BRICS member states. We also agree strongly on the issue of climate change, of reducing the carbon footprint. We say 'as the BRICS countries, what are you as leaders doing on this front?' We then challenge

our leaders on these particular issues, on education, on youth unemployment, on climate."

Matlala continues, "You also know that there is the New Development Bank now. In this year's recommendation we will say 'we need a certain percentage in the Development Bank in developmental projects that are mainly focused on young people.' We also need diversity in the NDB. When you look at the current committee there are no young people and also no women there. In this year's recommendation we are going to say that we want women and young people to be in those structures. Not just old people and men. The NDB says that the funds are reserved for infrastructure development. So when you talk about infrastructure development you have to talk about issues of land!"

Matlala's comments here reveal the potential for BRICS Youth to position itself as a progressive tendency within the bloc. However, the official documents drawn up at the various BRICS Youth fora are far more diplomatic. BRICS Youth demands in 2018 are packaged for state level consumption in the form of mild 'policy recommendations' that mostly concern petit-bourgeois interests such as knowledge sharing for youth entrepreneurship, university exchanges and easing visa requirements between the five nations.

On the other hand, they do demand gender and age diversity in structures like the NDB, but without a strategy to ensure change in the material conditions of poor youth in BRICS countries.

In SA, the NDB has disappointed youth in South Durban given that its only borrower so far, Transnet, will be expanding the port with a $200 million loan in a manner that entails environmental damage and job destruction, given the rapid automation processes in shipping and container handling.

Meanwhile, immediate youth concerns such as access to land,

free education, decent work and combating climate change are significantly watered-down in BRICS Youth documentation. In SA, youth demands for free education, decent work, gender equity, environmental protection, healthcare, housing, affordable municipal services and land redistribution have been placed firmly on the national agenda over the last two decades, with the Treatment Action Campaign winning free AIDS medicines, and with thousands of service delivery protests drawing society's attention to unaffordable or inaccessible water, sanitation and electricity.

Progress has been achieved, not through a top-down approach from government nor from having government's ear in various elite political fora, but thanks to daily struggles waged by thousands of young people in communities, in workplaces and at universities, struggles which have consistently been met with the full might of the state. The #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall struggles are victories also linked to oppressed people's broader identity, to the need to transform neocolonial-capitalist power relations, and to the interests of casualised 'outsourced' university workers who won 'insourcing' in 2015 thanks to student support – none of which appear in BRICS Youth programming.

The BRICS Youth strategy of putting forward watered-down policy recommendations reflects a theoretically naive understanding of how progressive change is achieved. If the SA delegates in BRICS Youth sincerely believe in the need to address the type of issues that Matlala raises, then they would do well to draw lessons on political strategy from those young people organising on the ground.

The greater concern, however, is that the BRICS Youth programme may represent a mere tick-box exercise which can be used by the BRICS leadership to claim that they have "engaged all role players." Most recently, box ticking took the form of an event promoting BRICS and

BRICS Youth that was held at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) on May 18. The BRICS Youth Dialogue was co-hosted by the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) together with the SA Student Congress Organisation-led Student Representative Council in conjunction with the Department of Energy and Department of International Relations and Cooperation.

Yet, disillusioned comments of student leaders after the event reflect the empty nature of the participatory process: “Dialogue was more a monologue for those people (BRICS Representatives) to tell us (students) that they (the BRICS) are hosting the summit in SA. I am not sure we really raised our thoughts and ideas because the session did not allow much.”

Another student leader put it more bluntly: “BRICS represent the true reflection of capitalism in Africa, it is a tactic to steal state resources… what have we achieved since the inception of the alliance, where is the evidence, these people are just playing with SA people. The worst scenario is that hypothetically even if we were to benefit from trading with BRICS countries, show me SAs who have shops in Russia or China, but look around SA, on every corner is a Chinese enterprise, it already causing lots of rigidity with locals. Wake up Africa!”

Whereas in past decades, youth would leave school with some hope of employment at labour-intensive manufacturing employers in the major cities, since the mid-1990s many industries were closed due to import of either capital-intensive machinery or more commonly, cheaper East Asian products. Youth xenophobia is also a danger, given that there are many African township retail shops run by immigrants from the African continent and Asia, whose pricing advantage from bulk buying undercuts the local spaza shops. The potential for generating international solidarity with Chinese and

Indians, given cut-throat township capitalism, is dim.

The opinions of the BRICS Youth Dialogue participants demonstrate the issues that arise from BRICS role in promoting collective development in South Africa. The Dialogue doesn't really help to inform students or to involve them. These forms of BRICS engagement appear to be very ritualistic. There was no real content because there is no dialogue, only the sharing of mostly irrelevant information. As one student leader put it, "BRICS representatives (are) not speaking the same language as young people, for South African youth we only concerned about job security, skills development… the BRICS Youth is not useful to (our) struggle."

The BRICS Energy Youth Dialogue and BRICS Youth as participatory mechanisms do not seem to be able to capture the voices of BRICS Youth. Reflecting the bias, a June 22 BRICS Youth event also held at UWC, is advertised as a "business casual" dress code. No other BRICS Youth activities in South Africa are discernable on Twitter in the run-up to the BRICS heads-of-state summit.

Despite the catchy BRICS Youth slogan, "nothing about us, without us," and President Cyril Ramaphosa conceding that "… our most grave and pressing challenge is youth unemployment" in his State of the Nation speech in February, it is an inescapable reality that BRICS Youth is set up and run by government, and reflects government priorities, not the priorities and activism of the youth.

If the BRICS Youth network develops a radical public image in order to secure its position as a progressive tendency within the bloc, yet continues to make mild-mannered policy proposals and support intellectually-empty Youth Dialogues, it will simply fulfil the function of a political buffer between the collective leadership of the BRICS and young people in BRICS countries.

BRICS Trade Unions: Did *class snuggle* replace *class struggle*?

By Patrick Bond

Workers prepare to host BRICS

Across the world, trade unions are under unprecedented threat, as just witnessed in the United States where the Janus vs. AFSCME Supreme Court decision denudes an already weak labour movement of public sector power, for conservatives are aiming at "starving unions of funds and eventually disbanding them altogether." Where, then, does organisational hope for working people lie?

By far the world's largest proletariat lies within the Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa (BRICS) bloc, whose state leaders meet in Johannesburg from July 25-27 and union officials gather in Durban the following weekend. Since 2012, the BRICS Trade Union Forum (BTUF) has attempted to traverse extremely difficult terrain, using an ever-changing roadmap.

Unfortunately, it's becoming obvious that along this path, BTUF leaders suffer a well-known problem: signalling to the left while driving the vehicle towards the right, as ground underneath the vehicle keeps shifting. For the BTUF to reach the desired location would require major adjustments in navigation, new passengers and very different manoeuvers.

Overall, BTUF membership is uneven across the BRICS' working classes. The absolute size of trade union membership and density (i.e. the percent of the workforce unionised) vary, with China's numbers reflecting workers' often frustrating 'company union' status:

- China: 240 million; 90% of workforce
- India: 87 million; 33% of workforce
- Russia: 24 million; 32% of workforce
- South Africa: 3.3 million; 30% of workforce
- Brazil: 17 million; 17% of workforce

South African BTUF affiliates are the Congress of SA Trade Unions (Cosatu), allied with the ruling African National Congress (ANC) since the 1980s, with 1.7 million members; the traditionally most conservative (and historically white) Federation of Democratic Unions of SA (Fedusa), with 700,000; and the National Council of Trade Unions (Nactu), which has radical pan-Africanist rhetoric but suffers substantial internal strife, with 260,000.

Membership figures ebb and flow. Aside from Fedusa which won back a public sector union last year, all have lost support. After the traumatic 2012 Marikana Massacre of 34 Lonmin platinum mineworkers who were on a wildcat strike, Cosatu's National Union of Mineworkers (Num) surrendered much of its membership (down from 300,000 to 187,000) to the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (250,000 workers).

Even if greatly divided and weakened, South Africa probably hosts the most advanced and coherent of the BRICS union federation affiliates, and certainly boasts the most militant proletariat. Yet due to internal rivalry, the BTUF specifically excludes the SA Federation of Trade Unions (Saftu) and its 680,000 members. Saftu's formation last year, after Cosatu's leader Zwelinzima Vavi and the 350,000-strong National Union of Metalworkers of SA (Numsa) were expelled, followed by the Food and Allied Workers Union (with 130,000 members) and a few others. The reason was Saftu's much stronger opposition to ANC neoliberalism and state corruption than Cosatu's loyalist members, at the time led by Num.

Saftu is excluded from the BTUF on spurious grounds: it has not been admitted to the National Economic Development and Labour Council (Nedlac), a corporatist institution which critics argue is a 'toy telephone,' often irrelevant. As Cosatu itself warned in 2016,

> Government continues to boycott and undermine Nedlac by sending junior bureaucrats with no decision making powers, while big business continues to condescendingly treat Nedlac as a platform, where they think that they can go make presentations and not engage. We will shut down Nedlac if these social partners keep undermining and undercutting it in this manner.

The boycott of Saftu – especially of its leader Vavi and Saftu's metalworkers union (South Africa's largest by far) led by Irvin Jim – shifts the BTUF ideological orientation much more to the centre. As a result, the BTUF is likely to maintain its *status quo* approach, no matter how dangerous this is for members, societies and the environment.

That route forward is merely continuation of predictable annual meetings in which trade unionists endorse the business-as-usual BRICS agenda, even while huge changes are underway in geopolitics, economics and environment – nearly all of which undermine labour, the broader society and ecology.

A different route would be to confront these contradictions head on, and locate greater shopfloor and grassroots unity. On July 21-22, the weekend before the BTUF meeting and just before the BRICS leaders' summit, Saftu will gather thousands of its members plus civil society allies for a Workers' Summit, which will more clearly spell out major policy and political differences with the other federations.

For example, in April, Saftu put tens of thousands of workers on the streets against a proposed

minimum wage – one strongly supported by the other three federations but which ranges between just $0.80-$1.50/hour, i.e., 'paltry' according to Vavi. (The realistic poverty line is $110/person/month.) However, there are occasionally signs of potential unity amongst left-leaning trade unions.

Such shopfloor resistance was witnessed when in mid-June, tens of thousands of Num mineworkers and Numsa metalworkers at the parastatal electricity supplier Eskom engaged in wildcat protests – allegedly using intimidation and 'sabotage' – sufficient to create a rolling national blackout. The unions' objective was to discredit Eskom's 0% wage offer (the inflation rate is 4.5%), and they immediately succeeded in gaining a new offer above 6.5%. South Africa's capitalist class was visibly unnerved by this show of strength, a precedent that might even lead to formal institutional Num-Numsa reconciliation, as Num's more critical leaders won greatly increased power at their recent electoral convention.

Moreover, Num is now threatening to end electoral support for the ANC and transfer it to the SA Communist Party (SACP), a party itself debating whether to enter the 2019 election probably as a pressure point to make SA president and ANC leader Cyril Ramaphosa more amenable to its demands. The SACP already has several cabinet positions, yet core ANC policies are still neoliberal. (Recent exceptions include free tertiary education won through intense student battles, land "expropriation without compensation" – so far more rhetorical than real – and a National Health Insurance plan that appears perpetually underfunded.)

BTUF labour remains repressed, super-exploited but unevenly militant

In contrast to such rising militancy, also witnessed in massive recent truck-driver strikes in Brazil and China, the BTUF's annual efforts are mostly aimed at social dialogue:

promoting state-capital-labour tripartism in areas of common concern with BRICS leaders and the BRICS Business Council. But whether in Russia (2012), South Africa (2013), Brazil (2014), Russia (2015), India (2016) or China (2017), these efforts have not been successful.

The BTUF will meet on July 27-28 on the sidelines of the BRICS labour ministers' Durban meeting, not at the Johannesburg leaders' summit. The BTUF acknowledges lack of agency: "The Government of the Republic of South Africa has determined the time and venues of events with the participation of trade unions under the South African presidency in BRICS."

Over six years, the BTUF has made reform proposals in the fields of global trade, finance, investment, climate and geopolitics, all areas in which workers and the rest of the world had hoped BRICS leaders might provide a genuine alternative to Western imperialism. Instead, the BRICS amplify neoliberal and anti-Southern multilateral perspectives, as argued below.

This is also apparent on home turf, for in some BRICS countries, the labour movement is extremely weak, e.g. China, which is characterised by state control, lack of autonomy, migrant labour discrimination, low wages and wildcat strikes (often harshly repressed). Conditions are worsening due to new technologies and to fewer freedoms to organise.

In the current International Trade Union Congress Global Rights Index, South Africa is in the second rank of countries where workers have won basic rights (i.e., among the world's best 38), a decline from 2014 when it was in the highest group, alongside European social democracies. Next is Russia, in the third rank of countries, i.e., facing "regular violations of rights," followed by Brazil in the fourth rank, with its "systematic violations." The worst group – including China and India – are labeled as countries with "no guarantee of rights."

One result is a relatively low level of absolute wages in the BRICS, illustrated within a sectoral case study: the textile industry. In 2011, South African textile workers were paid €3.8/hour, compared to €2.8 in Brazil, €0.8 in coastal China, €0.7 in India and €0.5 in inland China (the average wage in rich countries was €16.8/hour, but lower still are prevailing wages in places with vast labour reserves such as Vietnam and Bangladesh, at €0.3/hour).

Profits soar up the value chain, to the copyright owners and brand managers usually in the Global North, for as the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) remarks, "Even in a simple jacket, physical components, including labour, fabric, lining, buttons, sleeve heads, shoulder pads, labels and hangtags, account for only 9% of the price; the remaining 91% of the value is for intangible assets, including a wide range of services such as retail, logistics, banking and marketing."

In other words, within a complex world division of labour characterised by global supply chains, the power of corporations controlling upstream value-chain components means that both BRICS and hinterland economies continue to suffer from super-exploitative processes: a wage rate that is often lower than the cost of reproducing labour-power.

As an example, South Africa's Bantustan system was typical of the migrant labour relations that left caring for children, sick workers and the retired as a task for women in far-off settings, with little or no state support. This form of internal migrancy has usually emerged because it is extremely profitable, insofar as the employer does not bear the full cost of social reproduction. Such a system characterises most labour on the east coast of China, as well as sites like Marikana where mineworkers killed in 2012 were all migrants.

As a result of low wages paid to the majority of BRICS workers, labour's input into GDP is relatively low. In most of the five (except South Africa), the recent

period (2011-15) has witnessed a deterioration of the contribution of labour to GDP, according to UN DESA. Fixed capital investments that would raise labour productivity have been weak. Instead of incoming Foreign Direct Investment taking advantage of wage differentials, recent years witnessed much less capital-deepening investment.

One additional factor in labour productivity is worker militancy. One way to measure business-labour relations is the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual listing – based on polling 14,000 business executives from 137 economies – of shopfloor collaboration on a spectrum from most 'confrontational' to most 'cooperative.' In the 2017-18 *Global Competitiveness Report,* three of the BRICS – South Africa, Brazil and Russia – rated amongst the most confrontational third of the world's national workforces.

Indeed, South Africa has ranked as having the world's most militant proletariat since 2012, the year of the Marikana Massacre. The other two BRICS, India and China, are measured as having amongst the world's more cooperative half of national workforces.

Country WEF militancy rank

- South Africa: 1
- Brazil: 32
- Russia: 48
- India: 82
- China: 88

Of course, supposed average-level 'cooperation' in the two largest BRICS may disguise intense pockets of labour militancy:

- In China there are several thousand illegal wildcat strikes per year.
- In India in September 2016 there was a national strike of an estimated 180 million workers, the largest in world history.

Workers in the 4th Industrial *Counter*-Revolution

There is extreme variability in these BRICS labour experiences, resulting in unevenness and diversity of trade unions and federations. Still, universal trends are bringing BRICS workers into closer alignment, especially worsening casualisation and the 4th Industrial Revolution's technological displacement of workers, as well as growing surveillance and privacy threats.

The 4th Industrial Revolution – conjoining cybertech, robotics, Artificial Intelligence, nanotechnology, biotechnology, etc – is a major theme in the 2018 BRICS summit. Official rhetoric has downplayed the likelihood of vast service sector unemployment, intensified social engineering such as China's 'social credit,' or technological disasters.

In their official BTUF statements, the trade unions asked leaders to assist in the "de-monopolisation of the world market of software and IT-equipment, internet infrastructure management" (2016). This was based upon a valid critique of tech-corporate power, and was especially appropriate in India from where the resolution emanated. In 2017, however, "We appeal to the BRICS governments to seize the opportunities brought by the new round of industrial revolution and the digital economy" – but the BTUF failed to identify the many associated dangers.[1]

Against these trends, resistance to surveillance, robotisation and casualisation is not impossible. In South Africa there was an outcry by Cosatu's banking union the South African Society of Bank Officials in 2018 against a major bank (Nedbank) for its planned replacement of 3000 workers with 260 robots.

More successful were campaigns in 2015 for the

1 At the same time, a Fuzhou Initiative statement by academics and civil society reflected how much faith BRICS-aligned 'watchdogs' place in state surveillance, social engineering, and other threats to privacy: "BRICS countries should also increase cooperation in cyber security and promote the development of Internet technologies and the governance of cyberspace globally." Ominously, such intra-BRICS spymaster collaboration is already underway: http://www.dailypioneer.com/nation/chinese-nsa-meets-separately-with-counterparts-from-s-africa-brazil-india.html

'insourcing' of thousands of university workforces across the country, with a consequent rise in wages by a factor of two to four. However, the South African labour movement's consistent demands to ban outsourcing in all sectors have been rejected by the ANC, and workers also lost campaigns against the introduction a sub-minimum youth wage in 2015, and against new labour legislation which includes a weakening of unions' ability to call strikes.

The most important legal cornerstone of the 4th Industrial Revolution is corporate intellectual property, and destruction of these commercial rights applied to essential medicines was also the objective of South African workers during the early 2000s, in the case of Big Pharma's monopoly control of AIDS drugs. Just as stigmatisation of HIV+ South Africans was peaking, Vavi and Cosatu trade unionists formed a courageous alliance with the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), demanding free medicines for more than five million affected people.

Although this campaign fatally soured relations with then-president Thabo Mbeki, an AIDS denialist, international allies joined TAC and Cosatu to win a Trade Related Intellectual Property System exemption in 2001. As the medicines then became free by virtue of generic companies' provision, via South African state health clinics, life expectancy rose from 52 in 2004 to 64 over the subsequent dozen years.

And in a battle against President Jacob Zuma lasting through most of the 2010s, Cosatu (along with the Opposition to Urban Tolling Alliance) undermined state surveillance capacity and Public Private Partnerships – both also crucial to the 4th Industrial Revolution – with successful activism against e-tolling on Johannesburg-area highways.

In campaigns that have not yet been won, trade unions have also worked closely with the Right2Know movement,

demanding free data and airtime so as to achieve the right to communicate, and opposing surveillance and Big Data social control. R2K welcomed Cosatu's crucial support against Zuma, to continually derail the so-called secrecy bill ("Protection of State Information" bill) which would have hampered whistle-blowing.

At the time, in 2011, the unions also strongly opposed the commodification of information, lack of transparency, and other threats associated with the emerging 4th Industrial Revolution. Vavi endorsed the 1955 Freedom Charter: "The law shall guarantee to all their right to speak, to organise, to meet together, to publish, to preach, to worship and to educate their children… All the cultural treasures of mankind shall be open to all, by free exchange of books, ideas and contact with other lands."

All of this represents a 4th Industrial *Counter*-Revolution, in which technology (e.g. AIDS medicines) is appropriated as part of the world commons, and destructive Big Data and surveillance techniques are regulated or prohibited, *bottom up.* These are some of the most encouraging signs of counter-power. But within the BRICS, when it comes to discussions about the dangers of outsourcing and 4th Industrial Revolution, such signals are muffled to the point of silence.

Indeed, when trying to promote workers interests here and in nearly all other crucial socio-economic battles, the record of BTUF advocacy by national trade union leadership in the BRICS countries reveals many more disappointments than successes.

Trade Union Forum advocacy

In 2015, at its most expansive deliberation (at Ufa in Russia), the BTUF expressed ambitious expectations that BRICS leaders would address the world's problems:

> BRICS is an emerging structure of the new global management. Its flexible mandate allows the most

> dynamic economies of the world to consider a much broader range of issues than, for example, in the UN Security Council, and to find answers to many economic and environmental challenges. Decisions adopted by BRICS have a multiplier effect because the key States which have joined it are in a position to translate solutions from BRICS into deliberations of other leading international agencies. BRICS countries are brought closer together by their consistent joint efforts in favour of reforming the international monetary and financial system.

But the question today, especially after right-wing forces have ascended to power in so many countries, is whether 'new global management' is any different than the old. To explore that question, consider the BTUF's 2012-17 statements about its agenda, grouped into seven categories: institutional development; participation; vision; trade reform and regulation of transnational corporate investment; multilateral financial reform and innovation; climate change and environmental protection; and geopolitics.

In each case below, the most explicit advocacy statements are provided (in quotation marks with date of statement in parenthesis) followed by a preliminary assessment of results.

Institutional development

The BTUF in 2012 "declared the setting-up of a BRICS Trade Union Forum" and has followed through each year with a meeting, discussions and a declaration. "Our representation in the BRICS Trade Union Forum will be broad, pluralistic, democratic and inclusive of working men and women of our nations" (2014). "We also aim at identifying common programs and activities that build on each other's strengths and virtues, with research and policy

cooperation as a key element of that effort" (2014).

Though representivity is obviously in dispute given the conflicts especially involving BTUF member federations from China, India and South Africa (in relation to other workers not members of those federations), the objective of establishing the BTUF has been largely achieved. However, the BTUF could obviously be much better empowered for participation in BRICS summits, could generate alliances with other actors, and could establish the basis for genuine solidarity (e.g. when workers and citizens fight the same BRICS firm), in order to avoid the perception of a talk-shop. The need for research and policy coordination appears to have only begun; given that with perhaps one exception (Rio-based Instituto Brasileiro de Analises Sociais e Economicas), BRICS think tanks are hostile to organised labour's interests .

Participation

The BTUF has made a consistent request to the BRICS leaders to "include the issue of Social Dialogue and of cooperation with Trade Unions" (2012), including through "national and global tripartite dialogue structures" (2013). The BRICS leaders should recognise the BTUF "as an institutional space within the BRICS official structure. We express therefore our expectation to have the same treatment as the Business Council, having our conference as part of the official program" and "be represented in the various task teams" (2014). "The model of interaction in the social triangle trade unions-business community-government
structure has long proved its effectiveness at the national level in each BRICS country, and must find its logical extension into BRICS institutions" (2015). "We consider formal recognition of BRICS Trade Union Forum on an equal basis with BRICS Business Council as one of our priority objectives" (2016). "We appeal to the BRICS countries to improve the BRICS cooperation

mechanism, grant the BRICS Trade Union Forum a status on par with the BRICS Business Council…" (2017).

The attempt at reaching formal tripartite status has not been achieved, although there are efforts by BRICS Labour and Employment Ministers to at least briefly discuss matters of participation with the BTUF, and a BRICS Working Group on Employment has been established. The problem lies not only in BRICS mechanisms, but in each country. For example, most Indian trade unions boycotted 2016 BTUF proceedings on grounds of differences with the Modi government, just a few weeks after the historic September strike which witnessed 180 million labourers refusing to work.

The BRICS countries with the strongest social dialogue structures and collaboration between ruling party and trade unions are Brazil and South Africa. The tough Brazilian trade union critique of Temer's regime (as a corruption-riddled constitutional coup) reflects breakdowns in the former, especially after the jailing of Lula on an apparent corruption frame-up in 2018. South Africa's Nedlac has not functioned well in recent years, as noted above.

Further, the BTUF requested that **"**BRICS trade unions should be represented on the BRICS bank's highest decision-making body" (2013). This request was ignored in the Fortaleza construction of the BRICS NDB, which resulted in a small (10-person) management and directorship – all male – without any high-profile voices that represent the interests of poor and working-class people, or the environment. One result, in South Africa, is that the first two BRICS NDB loan offers promote privatised electricity supply through the corrupt Eskom parastatal agency, and port expansion through the corrupt Transnet parastatal.

Vision

The BTUF vision statements repeatedly stress the need to promote:

- "growth and sustainable development, along with food, and energy security, Green Economy in the context of Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication" (2012);
- "attainment of the MDGs" (2012);
- "Decent Work, boost employment, secure a universal social protection floor and promote the transition from the informal to the formal economy" (2013);
- "industrialisation, environmental justice and human progress for equitable and fair growth models" (2013);
- "peace, security, human rights and global sustainable development" (2013);
- "social protection for young people and women" (2013);
- the distribution of wealth; as well as food and energy security for our nations, and enhance joint efforts of BRICS countries in the studies and research on labour market" (2013);
- "the need for accelerated growth and sustainable development, together with the promotion of food and energy security, poverty eradication, the fight against hunger and malnutrition, as well as measures for job creation" (2014);
- "respect for local communities, sustainable use of natural resources and the search for a low carbon, clean energy matrix" (2014);
- "accelerated growth and sustainable development, together with the promotion of food and energy security, poverty eradication, the fight against hunger and malnutrition, as well as measures for job creation needed to improve living standards" (2014);
- "promotion and inclusion of women and youth in the labour market, ensuring the protection of their labour rights, must be at the center of employment policies" (2014);
- "trade unions are an effective force in defending democracy

and in the fight for justice and ecologically sustainable future" (2015);

- "the BRICS countries should take a head start to focus the efforts of the peoples and States on technological breakthroughs in the interests of all strata of society in our countries" (2015);
- "promote agriculture and agro based industry" (2016);
- "de-monopolisation of the world market of software and IT-equipment, internet infrastructure management" (2016);
- "vigorously implement the proposals in the Recommendation No.204 of ILO on formalising informal sector" (2016);
- "make decent work an active ingredient in employment generation especially targeting women, youth, marginalised and other disadvantaged groups" (2016);
- "maintain and improve social security and social protection systems" (2016);
- "we demand the BRICS Governments vigorously implement [the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals] with the active participation of national trade unions so as to generate more employment, eradicate the wage gap in the existing jobs, and rectify all decent work deficits" (2016);
- "we strongly request the BRICS Governments to evolve an alternative developmental model which will be more people centric" (2016);
- **"**Foster the concept of a community of shared future for mankind and deliver robust, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth in the global economy" (2017);
- **"**improve their labour policies, increase jobs, encourage innovation and entrepreneurship, raise financial input for vocational education and job training, establish an inclusive and efficient job training system, deepen cooperation with social partners, intensify efforts to provide employment

> and re-employment training for workers and enhance workers' competency and adaptability" (2017).

These vision statements are all appropriate as minimal common desires for labour, but they lack the sense of a proper workers' manifesto. The traditional goals of the working-class movement – socialisation of production and decommodification of the reproduction of labour power – are not mentioned much less elaborated.

BTUF statements never draw explicitly on the constitutions and policy documents of the member federations, several of which *are* explicitly socialist. One such labour manifesto stands out, the earliest one, from the International Working Men's Association: *The Communist Manifesto*. Such traditions of labour solidarity are vital for turning working-class values into practical cross-border collaboration. But it would be a quite extraordinary leap of ideological maturity for the BTUF to mention this tradition, one still too far to contemplate.

The big question remains whether these values can be implemented by BRICS governments which are in all cases – rhetoric aside – quite explicitly hostile to the BTUF agenda. Several examples of this dilemma can be considered next, in the four categories of trade and corporate investment, multilateral finance, climate change and geopolitics.

Trade reform and regulation of transnational corporate investment

The BTUF argue that "policies should aim at supporting industrialisation" and BRICS leaders "should work with other developing countries towards the transformation of the world trade system" (2013). With respect to Foreign Direct Investment, the BTUF insists "that all multinational companies comply with core labour standards, and do not exploit unequal conditions between countries" (2013). "The

time has come to establish real control over large-sized multinational corporations operating on our territories and to subordinate their activities to development objectives" (2015). "We must give support to the deserving people outside BRICS who are suffering extreme conditions of exploitation" (2016). Moreover, "BRICS governments should respect ILO Labour Standards and Recommendations as important part of all Trade and Services Agreements and take special measures to promote decent work in global supply chains" (2016). Meeting last year in China, the BTUF (2017) asked leaders to "strengthen their unity" and "make joint efforts to fight against protectionist policies."

Multilateral financial reform and innovation

The BTUF argue that the BRICS New Development Bank "should take a different form from the World Bank and the IMF. It should primarily developmental in character" and be "solely owned by BRICS, publicly funded, decisions on consensus, promoting trade based on own currencies of its member countries, with a core focus on infrastructure and development in consultation" (2013). The NDB and CRA should be "fundamental tools for the effective transformation of the current international economic architecture… and bring benefits to workers and promote sustainable development" (2014). The BTUF also aims to "stop the financial casino, but also to create mechanisms for taxing financial transactions, large fortunes and tax havens" (2014). NDB revenues should "be used to expand investment in the productive sector and infrastructure; in education, science and technology, training and professional qualification" (2014). The NDB should have "sovereign independence from the bankrupt Bretton Woods system" and "BRICS Governments should establish

their own Rating agency and a Stock exchange… to influence world economy" (2014). "We expect that BRICS Governments will pursue more vigorously the reforming of the IMF and of the World Bank" (2015). "The BRICS countries should participate in global governance on behalf of developing countries" (2017).

Geopolitics

The BTUF demands "that the BRICS agenda does not isolate regional and continental counterparts, and will work to advance the interests of the developing world in general" (2013). Further, the BTUF asked "Governments of BRICS countries to do their utmost to reduce political tension in the world, to ensure global security and stability, cessation of hostilities wherever they occur, to contribute to an active and unconditional application of the rules of international law" (2015).

Conclusion

The alternative approach to BRICS labour politics – based not on social dialogue but *social power,* based not on class snuggle but *class struggle* – entails, first, identifying as many other oppressed allies as possible (not simply gazing upwards in search of tripartite relationships which have proven so disappointing thus far). Making alliances with these social forces would expand the BTUF field of vision to more explicitly incorporate the interests of poor and working people, women, students and youth, environmentalists, the LGBTI community, and social movements across so many other issue areas.

(The BRICS counter-summits in Durban, Fortaleza, Goa and Xiamen had such 'brics-from-below relationships emerging, in contrast to government-sponsored BRICS Academic Forum, Civil BRICS and Youth BRICS events which have been essentially uncritical.)

As discussed above, the best example of brics-from-below dates back more than 15 years:

the economic attack against Western pharmaceutical corporate patents by two governments – Brazil and India – subsequently aided by South African HIV+ activists in the TAC, Cosatu and their allies. By opening a state-supported generic industry and ignoring international property rights, the Indians and Brazilians assisted progressive South Africans who overthrew the denialist AIDS policy adopted by former president Mbeki.

The combination of decommodification and deglobalisation of capital, and the coalition between progressive governments and radical community activists was decisive. Can that same alignment be repeated, and can it serve as the basis for an entirely different approach to BRICS, fusing states and people in the public interest?

Regrettably, as the pages above showed, the BRICS have chosen the course of undergirding – not undermining – imperialist multilateral agencies (the WTO, Bretton Woods Institutions and the UN climate process) whose role in commodifying all aspects of life and globalising capital is disastrous for poor and working people, within the BRICS as well as for Africa.

What that means for BRICS in the years ahead, it is fair to predict, is more top-down scrambling within Africa, and more bottom-up resistance. Where African governments emerge that have more patriotic instincts, there will be scope for campaigning on matters of economic justice: e.g. against mining and petroleum extraction, illicit (and licit) financial flows, and illegitimate debt.

With the profits of so many Western firms in Africa hitting new lows and their share value nearly wiped out (e.g. the 2011-15 cases of Lonmin, Anglo and Glencore, which each lost more than 85% of value), there are precedents for what BRICS firms now may find logical: yet more extreme metabolisms of

extraction and more desperation gambits to keep BRICS-friendly regimes in power, at the expense of the reproductive needs of society and nature.

But resistance is already evident. For example, the BRICS People's Forum counter-summit in Goa in October 2016 included a call by Indian social movements and labour for a People's Forum, one repeated in September 2017 in Hong Kong.

Further alliances of a horizontal nature are also obvious, not only with civil society – especially trade unions – and not only reaching out far into Africa where BRICS has had a destructive or constructive impact, but also with other trade unions across the world.

To illustrate the hopes for such solidarity, International Trade Union Congress President João Felício argued at a July 2015 Ufa BTUF plenary that "The BRICS have an opportunity to establish a de facto different political discussion on the direction of the economy, finance and the world of work… The new financial institutions of the BRICS cannot share the neoliberal rationale of the Troika, which puts the interests of big business above the rights of workers and the well-being of citizens in their countries."

But that opportunity was lost – as witnessed by the three choices to reform multilateralism made in December 2015 – and will probably not arise again. Indeed it is ever more likely with the turn to Trump, with economic conditions rapidly worsening, and with growing official hostility to trade unions in especially Brazil, India and South Africa, that the interests of big business will prevail even more in the years immediately ahead.

Felício remarked, "It is necessary to put solidarity before austerity, rights before profits, democracy before the market. If the BRICS succeed in becoming at least part of this process, it will create a political and economic frame of reference for other bodies, such as the G20, the IMF or the World Bank and even national governments."

The likelihood that the BRICS leaders will *oppose* these values has been demonstrated above. Hence, Felício concluded, "politicising the debate was the only way to combat the deepening of inequality, fight for better salaries, promote collective bargaining and reverse the downward trend in unionisation rates."

Further politicisation is evidently necessary. Indeed, the potential for fighting back – for class struggle instead of class snuggle – is enormous.

In the 2018 host city, Johannesburg, the week before the BRICS elites' summit, Saftu has called for a Workers' Summit, at which the main grievances of the BRICS working class will again be aired – and the inability of the elites to solve these problems will again be obvious.

Statement to BRICS Labour & Employment Ministers' Meeting

BRICS Trade Union Forum

In Beijing on July 24-25, 2017, trade union delegates from the Federative Republic of Brazil, the Russian Federation, the Republic of India and the People's Republic of China and the Republic of South Africa, conducted full, effective and practical discussions on such topics as promoting economic growth, creating jobs, enhancing employment quality and realizing decent work in the spirit of openness, inclusiveness and win-win cooperation.

The delegates expressed their unanimous support for the BRICS Xiamen Summit scheduled to be held in September 2017 to take "BRICS: Stronger Partnership for a Brighter Future" as its theme. The delegates unanimously agreed to put forward the following recommendations to the BRICS Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting:

1) Foster the concept of a community of shared future for mankind and deliver robust, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth in the global economy.

We realize that the world economy remains sluggish and lacks momentum. The situation is harming the interests of the broad masses of workers. We advocate that the BRICS countries should strengthen their unity, make joint efforts to fight against protectionist polices and to tackle global challenges such as terrorism, infectious diseases and climate change.

We appeal to the BRICS governments to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, work together in the spirit of mutual respect, common progress, mutual benefit and win-win cooperation, speed up the strategic integration of their development policies, and inject new impetus into international development and cooperation and the promotion of well-being of workers by employing new

ideas, new concepts and new measures.

2) Safeguard the rights and interests of workers of the BRICS countries and promote social justice and fairness.

We realize that work is the driving force behind social progress of mankind and that safeguarding the rights and interests of workers is the basic guarantee for sound social and economic development in the BRICS countries. We appeal that in their efforts to improve global governance mechanism the BRICS governments should listen to the voice of workers and their concerns and come up with more BRICS plans that are of benefit to workers.

The BRICS countries should participate in global governance on behalf of developing countries and better safeguard the interests of workers in emerging markets and developing countries so that more workers can be benefited from development.

3) Improve macroeconomic policies and measures and promote full employment and decent work.

We note that while the BRICS countries have contributed more than half of the global growth, they themselves are beset by some challenges in terms of making proper economic and social policies, particularly those on enhancing employment quality and safeguarding workers' interests.

We appeal to the BRICS governments to seize the opportunities brought by the new round of industrial revolution and the digital economy, improve their labour policies, increase jobs, encourage innovation and entrepreneurship, raise financial input for vocational education and job training, establish an inclusive and efficient job training system, deepen cooperation with social partners, intensify efforts to provide employment and re-employment

training for workers and enhance workers' competency and adaptability.

The BRICS countries should strengthen their social security systems, increase workers' income, improve working conditions, and safeguard and develop workers' legitimate rights and interests.

4) Push forward global climate change governance and promote green growth, green production and green living.

We realize that developing the green economy has an enormous potential for achieving sustainable development and creating new jobs and that a win-win solution to economic development and climate change has become a matter of common concern to mankind. We appeal to the BRICS countries to take the path of green, cyclic and low-carbon development, establish an interest-oriented and incentive mechanism so as to bring about a just transition to environmental sustainability.

The BRICS countries should put the green concept into practice, step up technical cooperation with the International Labour Organization, share climate-friendly technologies, promote green growth in line with the Paris Agreement, and work together to deal with global climate change.

When implementing regional and multilateral cooperation initiatives such as the building of the Belt and Road, the BRICS countries should enhance environmental protection and ecological progress, promote sustainable development and bring the benefits of development to more workers.

5) Enhance communication and cooperation with social partners and bring into better play the role of the BRICS Trade Union Forum in the BRICS cooperation mechanism.

We note that it is of great significance for the BRICS Trade Union Forum to voice workers' concerns and facilitate the proper operation of the BRICS

cooperation mechanism. We appeal to the BRICS countries to improve the BRICS cooperation mechanism, grant the BRICS Trade Union Forum a status on par with the BRICS Business Council, improve the tripartite mechanism, strengthen social dialogue, make it easier to incorporate issues of immediate concern to the world of work into the BRICS cooperation mechanism in a bid to deliver a major boost to development and cooperation in the BRICS countries.

Dialogue: New Development Bank and Civil BRICS

African Monitor and Oxfam[1]

African Monitor, in collaboration with Oxfam South Africa, held a two-day dialogue between the New Development Bank (NDB) and other Civil Society Organisations from 8-9 March 2018 in Johannesburg.

Oxfam and AM form part of the Civil Society Organizing committee for the BRICS summit in South Africa. These two organizations also Co-chair the New Development Bank South Africa. The aim of the dialogue was to provide inputs on BRICS NDB through a Civil BRICS working group.

The NDB's five areas of operation are Clean energy; Transport infrastructure; Irrigation, Water resource management and Sanitation; Sustainable urban development and Economic cooperation and integration of member countries.

The meeting comes as South Africa will host the 10th BRICS Summit in July 2018.

The NDB CSO workshop identified the following key issues that CSO would like to engage with the NDB emanating from the General strategy 2017-2021:

- Driving the implementation of SDGs – The bank will seek to become an important player in helping BRICS and emerging and developing countries achieve the Agenda 2030 for sustainable development and as well as Addis Ababa action agenda on finance for development and Paris agreement on climate change.
- Promotion of inclusive and broad based Economic growth that reduces poverty and inequality through investment on sustainable infrastructure. It is to be noted the operational strategy defines Sustainable infrastructure as infrastructure that incorporates Economic,

1 Johannesburg, 20 March 2018, http://www.africanmonitor.org/the-new-development-bank-civil-brics-working-group-dialogue/

Environmental and Social criteria are applied in design, building and operation. It further notes infrastructure as enabler for economic development and job creation. If properly implemented it can promote inclusive growth that reduces inequality.

- Special fund – Special funds set up by Multilateral Development Banks allow capital contributors to support projects and activities that address a variety of development needs.
- Environmental and social framework- it will consider the social and environmental aspects of the projects as reflected in the Environmental Institutional Framework.
- The NDB's commitment to using county systems – country legislation, regulations and oversight procedures including environmental, social, fiduciary and procurement systems.
- The use of Public – Private Partnerships as an important instrument for the bank to leverage resources of private sector and increase its participation in major infrastructure.
- Transparency, integrity and accountability – commitment for promoting transparency and accountability.
- Gender mainstreaming in NDB operation as well as staffing.
- Partnerships – NDB's commitment to build a relationship of mutual trust and cooperation with Non-Governmental Organizations.

African Monitor Director, Namhla Mniki-Mangaliso together with Marianne Bueneventura-Goldman from OXFAM South Africa, took the discussions further as they were invited by Channel Africa Radio to talk about the concerns raised by Civil Society. A representative from the NDB, Tumisang Moleke – who is the acting Director-General – also joined in the conversation.

As they were discussing, Ms Mniki-Mangaliso mentioned that civil society appreciates the work and progress that the NDB has

made thus far, and also noted the loopholes that the NDB need to address. The radio discussions can be listened here.[2]

Civil BRICS working group concluded that going forward and beyond the upcoming summit, the following action plans should be implemented:

- Develop a system of monitoring NDB funded projects
- Enhance CSO understanding NDB funding processes
- Ongoing CSOs engagement on the environmental and social framework
- Develop criteria for infrastructure that supports inclusive growth.

2 http://www.channelafrica.co.za/sabc/home/channelafrica/programmes/details?id=03101cec-0bc5-48cf-8f2c-e9836b477476&title=African%20Dialogue

New Development Bank should have consulted before lending corrupt Transnet $200 million for Durban port

Desmond D'Sa and Patrick Bond[1]

The May 2018 approval of a New Development Bank loan of $200 million (R2.5 billion) to expand the Durban container port occurred without the Sandton-based bankers doing adequate consultation or analysis. This is not only unacceptable in a democratic society, especially for such an important and controversial project. It also makes mockery of claims the BRICS bloc acts differently than arrogant Washington bankers.

For decades, the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA), with members from all races and classes, has opposed the ultra-polluting port-petrochemical complex.

Container trucks are especially damaging, with one careening off Field's Hill in 2012, killing two dozen kombi passengers – just one of an annual average 7000 truck crashes in Durban. SDCEA is opposed to the massive truck logistics park proposed for the Clairwood Racecourse due to its threat to nearby schoolchildren's safety.

Although concessions were belatedly won from Engen, BP and Shell on long-overdue sulphur scrubbing at the continent's largest refinery complex, it was not long ago that Merebank's Settlers Primary School had a 52% rate of asthma, the highest ever recorded at any school. Leukaemia is still a South Durban pandemic, with rates 24 times the national average.

Nevertheless, Transnet's new $1.8 billion (R24 billion) pipeline anticipates doubling both refining and Durban-Johannesburg oil transport capacity. Four multinational corporations – Italy's ENI, Norway's Statoil, ExxonMobil and Sasol – are doing exploratory oil and gas drilling 4km deep in the dangerous Agulhas Current offshore Durban.

1 *Business Day,* 4 June 2018.

This expansion is occurring not only when SDCEA demands a local fossil-fuel detox, but so does the world due to the looming catastrophe of climate change. Evidence is growing ever more obvious, especially in damage to Transnet's own Durban facilities during last October's super-storm: a ship lost its moorings and blocked the harbor, and overboard containers let lose 49 tonnes of plastic nurdles which continue to destroy marine life.

Transnet's oil pipeline was originally budgeted at just $45 million (R6 billion). In addition to incompetence in mega-project design – as even State Enterprises Minister Malusi Gigaba confessed in 2013 – one reason for massive cost over-runs was the line's rerouting from the white areas of Hillcrest and Kloof to South Durban's black neighbourhoods.

SDCEA is opposed to Transnet's environmental racism. Moreover, the UKZN Centre for Civil Society and Birdlife SA also challenged Transnet's Environmental Impact Assessments in 2012-14 due to historic climate denialism and the harbour's ecological degradation, forcing further delays until Transnet reworked its proposal – but still not to the critics' satisfaction. The likely collapse of the large sandbar near the container terminal will demolish vital bird and marine breeding grounds.

In addition, ordinary citizens now care much more about Transnet malgovernance. Few were surprised at this month's revelations: further fraud associated with CEO Siyabonga Gama's attempted $75 million (R1 billion) illegal procurement contract with the German firm SAP, a confessed ally of the Guptas in other improper deals.

BRICS bankers may need reminding that Transnet got a loan of $5 billion (R67 billion) from the China Development Bank during the 2013 BRICS summit in Durban. Gama and Transnet's then CEO Brian Molefe contracted Chinese state-owned Shanghai Zhenhua Heavy Industries to build the world's most over-priced container

cranes, which included pay-offs to the Gupta brothers' empire. Also thanks to the loan, South China Rail supplied locomotives, but with 21% kickbacks to the Guptas worth more than $400-million (R5.4 billion).

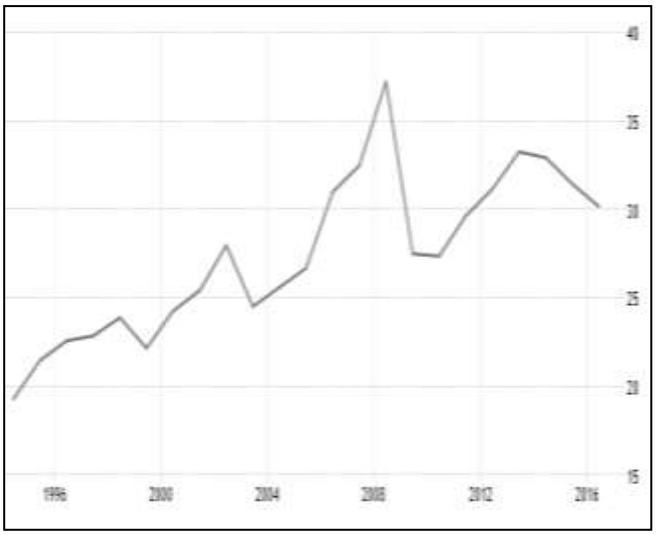
These sweet deals are economically irrational. "Blue economy" job creation promises don't hold water here, for port expansion typically includes "4th Industrial Revolution" robotics; the new mega-ships that carry upwards of 10 000 containers now have fewer than 20 crew.

Durban is already one of the world's most expensive ports for container handling, even before an expensive new foreign loan for overpriced infrastructure is factored in.

Transnet also fails to consider rising world economic volatility – such as Donald Trump's protectionism against SA steel, aluminium and car exports – and the general downturn in world trade (measured as a share of GDP since the 2007 peak).

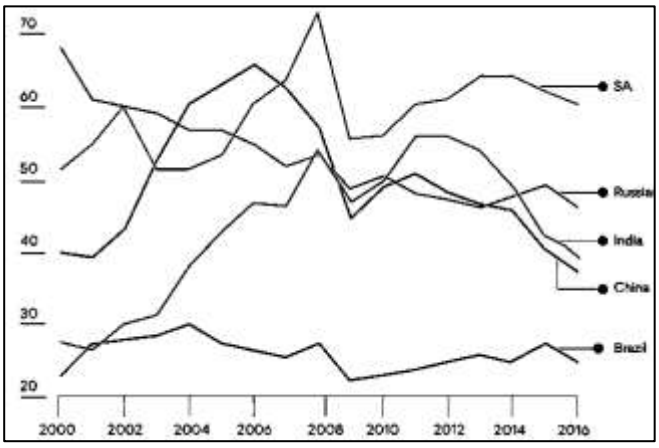
For example, total SA imports had risen from 18% of GDP in 1994 to 37% of GDP in 2009, but then fell to 30% last year.

SA imports as a share of GDP



Source: TradingEconomics.com

BRICS total trade as % of GDP



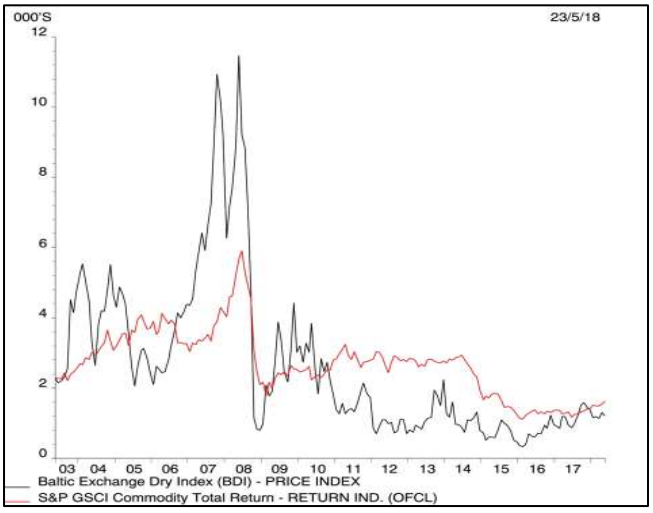
Source: data.worldbank.org

This is a problem shared by all the BRICS, measured as both imports and exports as a share of GDP in 2017: Brazil dropped from its historic peak of 30% in 1994 to 25%; Russia from 68% in 2000 to 45%; India from 56% in

2012 to 40%; and China from 68% in 2006 to 38%; and South Africa from 72% in 2009 to 61%.

Two other revealing indicators that move in tandem are the global commodity price index – though of more relevance to Richards Bay and Saldanha than Durban – and the Baltic Dry Index, which is the best indicator of world shipping's health. The S&P commodity price index reached 5900 in 2008 before falling to the 1500-2000 range since 2015. The shipping index fell even further, from 11500 in 2008 to below 1500 since 2014.

Shipping & commodity indices



Source: Thompson Reuters

Even several years after the 2008 crash, the 2012 National Development Plan insisted on expanding the port-petrochemical complex all the way into the old airport, as a new 'Dig Out Port.' Reality intervened, for in 2016, when digging was meant to commence, Transnet was forced to announce a delay until 2032 due to flat shipping demand and sky-high costs.

Transnet's dollar-denominated loan will add to South Africa's potentially unrepayable foreign debt, which recently rose to more than 50% of GDP for the first time ever. Severe repayment pressures are expected by Treasury within a year. Indeed this loan – like the $3.75 billion World Bank loan to fund the Medupi coal-fired power plant, which SDCEA led national opposition to in 2010 – should be declared "Odious Debt" for which a more democratic future government will declare to be in default due to lender liability, corruption and poor planning.

Last month, Finance Minister Nhlanhla Nene became chairperson of the BRICS Bank. He laudably fought against the $100 billion (R1.4 trillion)

Rosatom nuclear reactor deal in 2015, when that appeared imminent thanks to memorandums of understanding Jacob Zuma signed at the BRICS summit in Ufa that year. As a result, in December 2015 he was notoriously fired – supposedly so as to become the BRICS bank's local branch manager. That position was only a fig leaf and never materialised.

Nene should very quickly come up to speed and learn why the Bank's Africa Regional Centre in Sandton was slated by Auditor General Kimi Makwetu on grounds of "fruitless and wasteful expenditure" last November.

The employees there failed to even bother checking google, where they would have learned about ongoing SDCEA protests against Transnet.

Instead, BRICS bankers may be beholden to the BRICS Business Council, whose five SA members include Gama and Sello Rasethaba (a director of the Mediterranean Shipping Company).

SDCEA will be protesting this loan and other features of corruption, maldevelopment and climate change at the BRICS Business Council when it visits Durban and also the BRICS heads of state when they come to Sandton, in late July. Similar protests in 2013, when BRICS leaders were at the Luthuli International Convention Centre, apparently did not work – not even enough to get consultation on the $200 million loan – so activists must redouble their efforts and society must be vigilant against ongoing residues of these Zupta-style mega-projects.

BRICS in the ruins of the present

Vijay Prashad[1]

By the 2000s, the first major challenge at the inter-state level to the new imperialism emerged.

In 2003, many states in the UN questioned the U.S. desire to extend its warfare in Iraq while the emergent states at a WTO meeting in Cancun blocked the Global North's agenda for intellectual property. These two developments – among others – provided the basis for the emergence of the BRICS (Brazil-Russia-China-India-SA) project.

What was the BRICS bloc in its early stage? It was not an anti-imperialist platform. An anti-imperialist platform would have required the BRICS bloc to take on imperialism both at the institutional and ideological levels. The BRICS grouping was merely an institutional challenge to 'unipolarity,' a move by major states to craft a multi-polar world.

BRICS has certainly attempted a new institutional foundation beside that of the Global North – the New Development Bank against the World Bank; the Contingent Reserve Arrangement against the IMF; the demand for permanent seats for the BRICS states on the UN Security Council. There is talk of a Southern ratings agency against the hegemony of Fitch, Moody's and Standard & Poors. There is also talk of other currencies to denominate inter-state trade.

Least convincingly, the BRICS has begun a conversation toward the creation of a new security architecture. But the BRICS bloc – given the nature of its ruling classes (and particularly with the right now in ascendency in Brazil and in India) – has no ideological alternative to imperialism.

The domestic policies adopted by the BRICS states can be described as *neoliberal with southern characteristics* – with a focus on commodity sales, low wages to workers along with the recycled surplus turned over as credit to the North, even as the

1 Tricontinental Document, no. 1 March 2018.

livelihood of their own citizens is jeopardised, and even as they have developed new markets in other, often more vulnerable, countries which were once part of the Third World bloc.

There is little argument within the BRICS to defend food sovereignty or the right to food, to create decent jobs against hoarded wealth, and to fight against the power of the bankers.

In fact, the new institutions of the BRICS will be yoked to the IMF and the dollar – not willing to create a new platform for trade and development apart from the Northern order.

The Contingent Reserve Arrangement will continue to rely upon IMF surveillance and IMF agreements as a way to measure its own lending. The dollar is omnipresent in these mechanisms.

Eagerness for Western markets continues to dominate the growth agenda of the BRICS states. The immense needs of their own populations do not drive their policy orientations.

Finally, the BRICS project has no ability to counter the military dominance of the U.S. and NATO. When the UN votes to allow 'member states to use all necessary measures,' as it did in Resolution 1973 on Libya, it essentially gives carte blanche to the Atlantic world to act with military force.

No regional alternatives have the capacity to operate on such UN resolutions. The Russian military interventions into Crimea in 2014 and into Syria in 2015 are indications that U.S. military uni-polarity might be slightly weakened, but not at an end. The U.S. is a global force with bases on every continent and with the ability to strike almost anywhere.

Regional mechanisms for peace and conflict-resolution are weakened by the global presence of NATO and the United States' war machine. Overwhelming military power translates into political power. BRICS have few means, at this time, to challenge that power.

Russian and Chinese alliances across Eurasia on security and economic lines are not signs of the creation of an alternative pole to Western imperialism. They are merely signs of defensiveness against imperialist aggression, with sanctioned Russia seeking shelter in Chinese surpluses and with Chinese caution being given some boost by Russian confidence.

The Russian-Chinese naval exercises during the 2017 US-North Korean standoff and the entry of Russian forces into West Asia, backed by China, is a sign that they will not allow complete U.S. domination – as has been the case from 1991 to the present.

What they are jockeying for is to protect their sovereignty and the zone of influence around their territory – not for competition around the globe against U.S. imperialist power.

What we have rather than an inter-imperialist conflict is an inter-capitalist conflict, with the BRICS states (mainly China) pushing for market share across the world and pushing back a weakened Western bloc.

Tensions between Trump's America First policy and the political-economic order that has relied on the vast pools of labour brought into the capitalist orbit since the 1990s has led the inter-capitalist crisis to take on inter-state dimensions.

Western fantasies of Chinese domination go back a decade at least, when Chinese – and other – surpluses bailed out the Western financial order from collapse. But those fantasies were not always translated from rhetoric to policy. The danger now is that policies might appear that would confound the system as it operates.

China's premier Xi Jinping put it plainly at the 2017 Davos meeting, 'No one will emerge as a winner in a trade war.' What he meant is not merely a trade war but an inter-state conflict with confounding outcomes.

As inter-capitalist rivalries accelerate the tendency towards inter-state – and in time, to inter-imperialist – conflict should not be underestimated.

BRICS doomed by centrifugal economics?

'Deglobalisation' could crack the bloc even if internal geopolitical strife eases

By Patrick Bond[1]

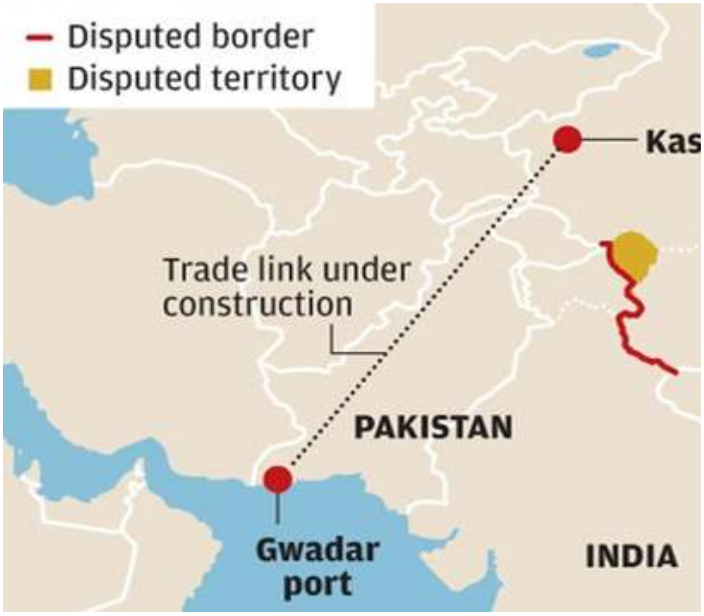
The Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa summit in Xiamen from September 3-5 is already inscribed with high tension thanks to Sino-Indian border conflicts. But regardless of a new peace deal, centrifugal forces within the fast-whirling world economy threaten to divide the BRICS.

Beijing's logo designers for this summit, perhaps unconsciously subversive, illustrated how the once-overlapping, interlocking BRICS are now thin and flimsy, wedging themselves apart. Such a prospect was predictable earlier this year as a result of Donald Trump's ascendance. Both Washington's neo-conservative 'Deep State' and the (fast-disappearing) paleo-conservatives were intent on ramping up conflict with China – though early on, BRICS splintering towards the US included not only proto-fascist India, for elites in Russia and Brazil also sought friendly relations.

A deeper reason for pessimism is that at the 2015 BRICS summit in Russia, just as world commodity markets began to collapse, Chinese premier Xi Jinping invoked the laws of physics. He asked fellow leaders "to boost the centripetal force of BRICS nations, tap their respective

1 30 August 2017, https://www.pambazuka.org/global-south/brics-xiamen-summit-doomed-centrifugal-economics

advantages and potentials and carry out cooperation in innovation and production capacity to boost competitiveness." That's the bloc's theory – but practices are very different.



India fights China leaving BRICS as collateral damage

The most obvious geopolitical wedges are actually not Washington's (for now), but instead Sino-Indian border conflicts. The most intractable is in Pakistani-held Kashmir, and concerns transport infrastructure needed by China to link its far western region to the sea.

A higher-profile fight unfolded over recent weeks where India and China share a border with Bhutan. When the Chinese built a small road on contested ground, fisticuffs were initiated by Indian soldiers. On Monday, India backed down and withdrew its troops, fortunately, but not before prime minister Narendra Modi's staff hinted he would boycott Xiamen just as he had China's Belt and Road Summit in May.

One analyst, Zhao Gancheng of the Shanghai Institute for International Studies, told the *Australian Financial Review, "*The BRICS summit is the immediate reason for this disengagement announcement. If there is a serious confrontation between China and India, the major members of BRICS, it doesn't look good for either country. This is an important meeting for China, which is hosting the summit and Modi is expected to attend."

Modi also lost a similar show-down when hosting the Goa 2016 BRICS Summit, trying unsuccessfully to have Pakistan declared a terrorist state; China and Russia refused. The Chinese

state mouthpiece *Global Times* ran a column last week headined, "New Delhi may disrupt BRICS Summit to blackmail Beijing." In part, such renewed Chinese nationalist posturing is useful ahead of the coming National Congress of the Communist Party where Xi aims to consolidate power.

For example, even before last Friday's outbreak of mob violence that left 36 dead in Punjab (caused when a close Modi ally – religious guru Ram Rahim Singh – was convicted of rape), Beijing had just issued its second travel advisory within six weeks to its citizens visiting India: "Pay close attention to the local security situation, improve self-protection awareness, strengthen security and reduce unnecessary travel." It's the very opposite of the BRICS' stated objective last month: "increasing people-to-people links."

But more durably, the Sino-Indian regional geopolitical turf battle also reflects the ungluing of economic globalisation, insofar as China is desperate to expand trade and investment opportunities to the south and west. Earlier this month at the Quanzhou Governance Seminar, participants "paid little attention to the ongoing India-China military stand-off," complained Sudheendra Kulkarni, who chairs the (pro-BRICS) Observer Research Foundation of Mumbai. Kulkanri worried that the bloc's "very credibility would be called into question if our two countries allowed the dispute to be escalated into an armed conflict. Obviously, the Chinese hosts did not want a divisive bilateral issue to get any kind of focus in the midst of deliberations at a BRICS seminar."

Censorship, spying and repression

In this context, the BRICS Think Tank, Academic Forum, Civil BRICS, BRICS Trade Union Forum and BRICS Youth initiatives have drawn more than a thousand well-mannered scholars and civilised-society leaders to China

over the past few months. But like the Quanzhou meeting, another revealing ethical-intellectual dilemma emerged in June in Fuzhou. There, the director of the Society for the Participatory Research in Asia, Kaustuv Kanti Bandyopadhyay, concluded that the main BRICS-from-the-middle conference was "mere symbolism." BRICS visitors "had no dialogue or exchange within China, or between countries before meeting in Fuzhou. Understandably, in the absence such dialogues before, during and after the Forum, it is unrealistic to expect that civil society organisations will come up with any specific policy ask from their leaders when they meet in September."

Reflecting the way such personnel typically toe the party line, the Fuzhou declaration failed to remark upon widespread repression and worsening austerity across the BRICS, often in the name of improved economic competitiveness. In contrast, explained *Hindu* newspaper commentator Anul Aneja, "political parties, think tanks and civil society organisations of the BRICS grouping counseled emerging economies to lead a new wave of globalisation, and step up the fight against international terrorism."

Such cheerleading echoes Washington's traditional (pre-Trump) fusion of neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism, and also reflects Beijing's worries about potential disruption to world trade, what with Brexit, Trump and high-profile trade deal cancellations. But beyond the economic deglobalisation threat, another Fuzhou Initiative statement by the academics and NGO staff is especially chilling: "BRICS countries should also increase cooperation in cyber security and promote the development of Internet technologies and the governance of cyberspace globally."

Ominously, such intra-BRICS spymaster collaboration is already underway. To be sure, global surveillance by the US National Security Agency and web manipulation by Google to direct traffic away from

progressive websites also appear to be worsening, with Trump's regime downplaying civil liberties at every opportunity.

But fighting fire with fire won't work, because not only is the record of the Chinese and Russian states in this area utterly invasive, they joined even India and South Africa last year to vote against the main United Nations resolution on protection of human rights and privacy on the internet, a resolution *co-authored by Brazil* and co-sponsored by 70 other countries. (Even by far the world's most totalitarian surveillance regime, the United States under Barack Obama, was shamed into supporting the resolution.)

Beijing's reputation for intellectual censorship is peaking, after widespread protest forced Cambridge University Press to reverse itself, having removed 300 articles about China from its website there last week. The world's main social media services are banned, and top Chinese scientists complain about their need to use Apple apps to bypass state internet restrictions on even scientific, academic and United Nations websites. Late last month, Apple surrendered to Beijing's demand to cancel that service.

Social justice activists face even tougher restrictions: for example, *The Feminist Voice in China* was booted off the country's Twitter-equivalent in February after merely posting an anti-Trump article from *The Guardian*.

In South Africa, which (mainly as a result of sustained uncivil-society protest) is the most open of the five BRICS, State Security Minister David Mahlobo is widely condemned for snooping. Last week came revelations about his tapping what are likely in excess of 150 000 cellphone accounts. As the leading watchdog group Right 2 Know put it when fighting Mahlobo's proposed intervention into social media a few weeks ago, "Giving State Security any role in 'regulation' is a sure path to internet censorship."

Mahlobo's party, the African National Congress (ANC) has ruled since Nelson Mandela's presidency began in 1994 and is widely credited with ending apartheid. But after a multiply-dubious $5 billion arms deal and the rise of Jacob Zuma to its leadership in 2007, the ANC is now notorious for corruption. A "black ops war room" last year generated fake news and bogus Twitter accounts against the ANC's political opponents during a disastrous election campaign (it lost four of the five largest metro areas), before being exposed after failing to pay an IT consultant, who took the ANC to court.

Dirty tricks and repression are becoming the watchwords of regimes that need to keep a lid on dissent. In Hong Kong last week, 20-year old Umbrella Movement leader Joshua Wong and his allies Alex Chow and Nathan Law were jailed (for eight months) after state prosecution for the massive 2014 peaceful uprising. Tens of thousands protested in solidarity last Sunday, so there's no question as to the democrats' durability.

Economic stresses from over-production to deglobalisation

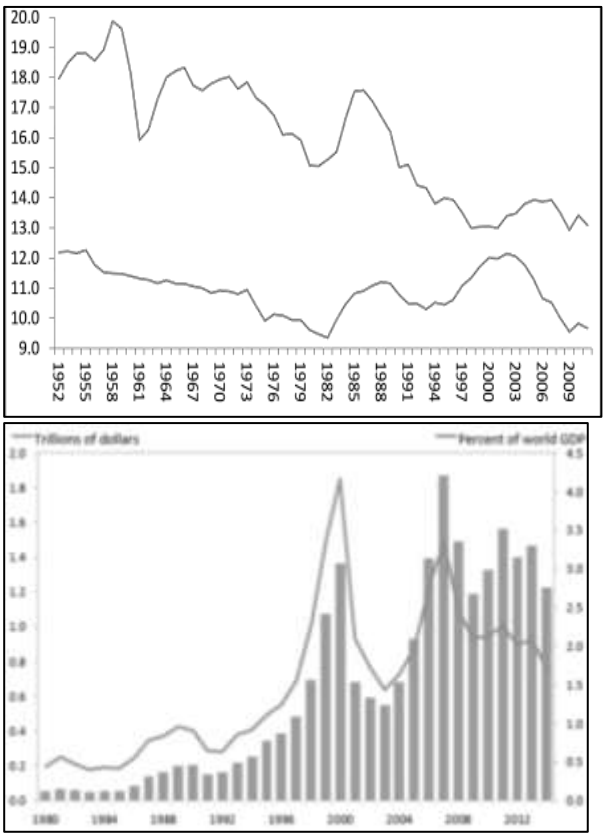
Indeed, two days before the BRICS meet in Xiamen, a Hong Kong People's Forum will be convened by the Confederation of Trade Unions, *Borderless Movement* Editorial Board, Globalization Monitor, the Catholic Diocese's Justice and Peace Commission, the Labor Education Support Network and the Neighborhood and Workers' Service Centre's Labor Committee. This follows the critical counter-summit traditions of brics-from-below in Durban, 2013; the BRICS Dialogue on Development in Fortaleza, 2014; and the People's Forum on BRICS in Goa, 2016. (Russia was too repressed to try a counter-summit in 2015.)

As the Hong Kong People's Forum argues, "Instead of offering an alternative, the BRICS actually offer a continuation to neo-liberalism. On top of BRICS there is also China's new mega

project, the Belt and Road initiative whose main purpose is to export China's surplus capital, and in this process seek the cooperation and 'mutual benefit' of big foreign TNCs and regimes which are often authoritarian. The price of these investments is often borne by the working people and the ecological balance."

Last week's International Monetary Fund report confirmed China's underlying capitalist crisis tendencies of over-production and over-indebtedness. Excess capacity levels had reached more than 30% in coal, non-ferrous metals, cement and chemicals by 2015 (in each, China is responsible for 45-60% of the world market). Chinese banks' high-risk ratio rose from 4% in 2010 to more than 12% since early 2015. *The Guardian's* Larry Elliott summed up IMF concerns over "methods used to keep the economy expanding rapidly: an increase in government spending to fund infrastructure programmes and a willingness to allow state-controlled banks to lend more for speculative property developments."

Declining rates of corporate profits (BRICS at top and G7) and Foreign Direct Investment



Source: World Bank, UNCTAD

The motors to expand capitalism rapidly – in China and everywhere – were meant to be foreign investment, trade and finance: i.e., economic globalisation. But all are running out of steam, or even veering towards collapse in the case of debt. According to the World

Bank, global trade peaked at 61% of world GDP in 2008, crashed to 52% the next year, rose back to 61% in 2012, and then fell back to 2015's 58% (although there has been a minor upturn in merchandise trade in early 2017).

The trade motor is sputtering in each of the BRICS, which from the early 1990s had raised their trade/GDP ratios by at least 10 points. But then,

- Russia peaked first at a 69% trade/GDP ratio in 1999, and then fell steadily to 45% by 2016,
- Brazil peaked at 30% in 2004 and is now down to 25%,
- China peaked at 66% in 2006 and plummeted to 36%,
- South Africa peaked in 2008 with 73% and is now 60%, and
- India peaked last, in 2012 with 56%, and is now down to 40%.

As further evidence of economic deglobalisation's centrifugal force, cross-border financial assets fell from 58% of world GDP in 2008 to 38% in 2016, in spite of fast-rising flows into high-risk (high-return) emerging markets and notwithstanding soaring overall indebtedness. In June, the Institute of International Finance announced that global debt has reached $217 trillion (327% of world GDP), up from $86 trillion (246% of GDP) in 2002 and $149 billion (276%) in 2007. Since 2012, emerging markets led by China have been responsible for all the addition to net debt.

Yet until a very recent uptick from extremely low levels, since 2008 (and indeed since the late 1980s) the BRICS' corporate profit rates dropped even faster than did those of western firms. That decline was one reason for the halving of relative global Foreign Direct Investment: from 3.7% of world GDP in 2008 to 1.7% in 2016. But the next recession – which HSBC, Citigroup and Morgan Stanley economists last week acknowledged is imminent due to vastly over-priced stock markets and unprecendented

corporate indebtedness – will also confirm how capitalist optimists have become over-exposed locally, even as they lose appetite for global markets.

Centrifugal realities crowd out centripetal fantasies

The centrifugal forces ripping apart world capitalism – first globalising, now deglobalising – have been forcing the metabolism of economic cycles into ever more intense bursts of crises since the 1970s, and ever-higher levels of world debt and central banks' loose-money strategies are unable to restore growth. Global uneven development gave the BRICS a huge opportunity once economic stagnation hit the US, Europe and Japan in the 1970s, after the investment wave of the 1980s-90s in Asia's smaller Newly Industrialising Countries ebbed. By the early 2000s, Goldman Sachs predicted the BRICs would provide capitalism's new motor force. As the *Financial Times* put it in 2010, these "building BRICs" would "change the economic order" by marshalling both their own raw resource production and manufacturing capacity to, in turn, achieve sufficient weight to reduce unfairness in world trade and finance.

Notwithstanding the centripetal capitalism Xi has hoped for, the centrifugal contradictions manifest in over-production, debt and deglobalisation may put an end to those fantasies. The only recent relief came from the Chinese state's massive urban construction investments (leaving scores of near-empty cities) and the Indian service sector-led boom, but the other three BRICS suffered recessions once the 2015 commodity price crash hit home (with South Africa yet to emerge into positive GDP growth). Xi's centripetal BRICS has become a centrifugal force spiralling out of control.

And as for changing the manifestly unfair global system, in late 2015 the BRICS simply grabbed three of Obama's

multilateral-deform batons: promoting the Paris Climate Accord because it is non-binding, unambitious and outlaws climate-debt lawsuits by victims of Western and BRICS emissions; amending the World Trade Organisation so as to phase out any semblance of food sovereignty; and shifting IMF voting shares to favour BRICS at the expense of poorer countries.

Explains the Hong Kong People's Forum, "China has now evolved into a global engine promoting a neo-liberal agenda: from free trade agreements to corporate-led integration across borders. The 2017 World Economic Forum in Davos was one site where Xi clearly took the lead in promoting world corporate power, as Trump leads the US-UK retreat into crony-capitalist protectionism."

The Brazilian government is no help, for as the Workers Party complained last week as its former leader Lula was convicted on an obvious petty corruption frame-up, "In the country of the coup, the big decisions are made in Washington and Wall Street, and the order given is to sell and loot Brazil." They pointed to the 57 major privatisations now underway, social spending austerity and anti-labour legislation, at a time 'President' Michel Temer is approving corporate gold mining in an Amazonian state nature reserve the size of Denmark.

Moreover, at the July 2017 G20 summit in Hamburg, BRICS leaders were even more callous about the economic damage to poorer countries they are inflicting in alignment with the G7 (and especially the G1 – in failing to materially punish Trump for climate change, e.g. through a major new carbon tax called for again in May by even Joseph Stiglitz). Consider the epithets of three seasoned political economists who in the past firmly favoured the BRICS:

- The Third World Network's Ravi Kanth complained, "For the first time, the Doha Development Agenda or the unresolved Doha issues were not even mentioned in the G20 leaders'

communique because of opposition from the United States as well as other major industrialised countries. China, India, Brazil, South Africa, and Indonesia who negotiated the Hamburg declaration along with their developed country counterparts seemed to have allowed the erasing of DDA" – i.e. what Kanth considers poorer countries' balanced trade interests.

- Added Yash Tandon (former head of the South Centre), "At the G20 Hamburg meeting, Africa was officially represented by only one country – South Africa, which was obsequiously behaving like a neo-colony that it is."
- The problem is even deeper than the BRICS' alliances with the West against rest, according to the Filippino politician and leading intellectual Walden Bello: "the stagnation of the once dynamic centers of the global demand — the U.S., Europe, and the BRICS — has made this model obsolete. It was, in fact, the non-viability of this once successful model of rapid growth in current global circumstances that pushed China, under Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao, away from an export-oriented path to a domestic demand-led strategy via a massive $585 billion stimulus program. They failed, and the reason for their failure is instructive. In fact, a set of powerful interests had congealed around the export-oriented model."

Xi and other Chinese Communist leaders committed to pro-corporate globalisation are inevitably going to seek more geographical band-aids like the trillion-dollar-plus Belt and Road mega-infrastructure to raise manufactured exports and energy imports through a restructuring Eurasia. But the BRICS' financial short-term fixes

– massive debt and stock market speculation – continue, too, as stock markets bubble in South Africa (today 90% higher than in 2010), India (70%) and Russia (50%). China's stock exchanges were in the same league, but just as the yuan was made an IMF-acceptable global currency reserve in 2015-16, the Chinese markets lost more than $5 trillion in two share bubble bursts. Capital fled the country, requiring a re-imposition of Beijing's tough exchange controls.

In what often seems a different universe entirely, Zuma pronounced last month to his ANC policy conference, "the ANC is part of the global anti-imperialist movement. We are historically connected with the countries of the South and therefore South-South cooperation such as BRICS is primary for our movement."

In reality, the centrifugal economic forces breaking up the bloc – growing ever stronger due to over-production, excessive debt and a deglobalising world economy – confirm the failure of Xi's desired centripetal capitalism. As this process unfolds, expect yet more talk-left walk-right politics, as sub-imperialists try to pretend they're anti-imperialists.

China's 'inclusive,' 'centripetal' investment – or super-exploitation?

Lisa Thompson,
Pamela Tsolekile de Wet and
Franklin Ondah Awaseh[1]

According to the Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa (BRICS) official discourse, collective development is at the core of future economic cooperation. At the Russian summit in 2015, Chinese premier Xi Jinping told heads of state, they should "boost the centripetal force of BRICS nations, tap their respective advantages and potentials and carry out cooperation in innovation and production capacity to boost competitiveness."

BRICS states collectively acknowledge China as leading the way in development assistance, while providing leadership within global political economy. BRICS analysts concede that China's leadership role sometimes carries political and economic conditionality, but insist that this is different to the rich countries' Official Development Assistance, characterised by unwanted interventions. Interrelationships between foreign direct investment and aid programmes are increasingly apparent in BRICS bilateral and multilateral partnerships.

In Africa, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation provides the official framings for development assistance to the continent, through various Chinese development banks, the BRICS New Development Bank (NDB) and the China-Africa Development Bank.

Chinese aid and FDI in Africa have ebbed and flowed over the last decade. Led by Chinese firms, Special Economic Zones (SEZs, previously called Industrial Development Zones) will likely become the main form of BRICS development collaboration. The official position is that SEZs will boost industrialisation, product diversification and job creation, three vital aspects of South

1 Presented at the 2nd International Symposium on Development and Governance in the BRICS, Fudan University, 22-24 September 2017

Africa's desired growth trajectory as articulated by Pretoria's national Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

President Cyril Ramaphosa is a fan of SEZs and following a 2015 trip to China he gushed, "(a)mong the key outcomes from bilateral discussions was a commitment from China to cooperate with South Africa in promoting industrialisation and improving our economic capacity and ability to create jobs." He reiterated the point in his February 2018 State of the National Address.

But there is no transformation underway, for the SEZ hype reinforces increasingly capital-intensive business as usual in South Africa and the region, albeit with a Chinese funded investment twist.

The case of the Coega SEZ in the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality – formerly known as Port Elizabeth – shows how investments that SEZs attract tend to heighten rather than ameliorate economic exploitation. There is minimal absorption of the large pools of unemployed and under-employed communities located in neighbouring areas.

For example, only 800 jobs are anticipated (not yet delivered) on a R11 billion ($820 million) Beijing Automobile International Corporation auto plant expected to produce 50 000 cars annually at Coega.

In 2016-17, there were repeated protests against the plant by local small and medium businesses which did not receive promised contracts, as well as by nearby unemployed residents in Motherwell. The anger delayed construction by months.

Skills creation and the diversification of the skills base, used as a selling point for SEZs, are marketing gimmicks. The types of investment and employment patterns enforce instead super-exploitation of labour.

There was also meant to be a boost from these SEZs to Southern Africa, yet patterns of trade and investment have done little to change patterns of economic dominance that have a predominantly negative impact.

The BRICS predominantly export to the North, particularly to the EU and United States, although intra-BRICS trade is increasing. BRICS trade and investment are weighted towards China.

China derives a strategic economic advantage (especially in Africa) in terms of access to raw materials and the expansion of an alternative sphere of influence. In addition, what is described as 'soft power' allows for greater diplomatic leverage in a context of exploitation and 'extractivist' accumulation.

The mainstream argument for SEZs is that they encourage a combination of investment and aid, including infrastructure and transport. According to this logic, China is driving a major part of its aid and trade relations with South and sub-Saharan Africa. The official logic goes further, insofar as Chinese-supported SEZs will allegedly develop value chains, large increases in employment and product diversification.

There has been significant Chinese investment in South Africa, indeed doubling between 2012 and 2014 to a total of US$8.2 billion. There were additional bilateral agreements in 2014, some of which – especially the $5 billion Hebei Steel joint venture with the state-owned Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) – never transpired (in that case due to Chinese steel overproduction).

Strategic cooperation between state-owned electricity producer Eskom and State Corporation China (SCC) included a loan agreement of R7.2 trillion ($500 million). In the wake of $11 million in 2012-13 corruption at Pretoria's Transnet transport parastatal – kickbacks by Durban port crane-suppliers Shanghai Zhenhua Heavy Industries to the infamous Gupta brothers – another deal was signed with Sinosure for $2.5 billion for electrical products and whole-set equipment.

There were other infrastructure and industrial

financing deals between China Construction Bank Corporation and the IDC, and many were to have been located in SEZs, which had not performed well up until then.

For example, Coega's nickname was 'the ghost on the coast' due to lack of private investment, in spite of at least R13 billion ($1 billion) in state infrastructure: a port, roads, offices and electricity provision.

Coega officials are open about the difficulties of attracting FDI, admitting in interviews that about half the statements of intent do not materialise.

In 2014, new legislation provided new incentives, yet investment activity was slow to pick up.

In December 2016, the SA-China Economic and Trade Association claimed SEZs would "stimulate foreign investment, especially in advanced technology, industrial restructuring and exports, power and energy infrastructure, transportation and communications, and agriculture and forestry."

In reality, according to Wits University's China-Africa project in 2015, decade-old plans for 50 African SEZs had failed: "Only six have actually opened, and none of those few are coming anywhere close to meeting the plan's lofty expectations. The SEZs were intended to provide Chinese companies with special tax incentives, improved infrastructure, and a more streamlined regulatory system to help drive trade between the host countries and China. To date, the only zone that is fully operational is at the Suez Canal in Egypt while the five others are bogged down in bureaucracy and bilateral disputes."

China's SEZs in Southern Africa – especially Zambia – were firmly criticised by Human Rights Watch for low wages, anti-union behaviour and safety risks. Workers avoiding extremely dangerous mining work were promptly fired.

In South Africa, SEZ minimum wage standards still apply, and trade unions are tolerated, although according to Coega officials, 'labour pacts' for the

zones are encouraged as a corporate strategy.

The Coega Development Corporation, on paper, promotes skills training and employment of the local population. The actual employment data cited in official documentation show such skills training is usually short-term, however.

And in the Nelson Mandela Bay area, suffering massive unemployment, only 7,500 permanent positions have been created over the 18 years of Coega's existence.

Moreover, the cost of job creation within South Africa's SEZs in terms of government subsidies alone is R1.2 million ($90,000) each.

Nearby Coega, the black townships of Wells Estate and Motherwell illustrate the limits of skills training and job creation.

Displacement of residents from the vast Coega SEZ zone where they once lived was another problem. Black farmers were promised RDP houses, jobs and education for their children. But two decades after Coega was established, displaced people live in absolute poverty, with the majority of families having no reliable income.

As one resident of Wells Estate put it in a February 2018 interview, "I came with all my three kids attending school, my last born was 5 years old. She just turned 23 and she failed grade 12 and is unemployed. There is a high rate of teenage pregnancy, young and old people are drinking and some have turned into alcoholics… People go to the Vegetable market where they pick up fallen vegetables and fruits so that they can feed their families."

Marketing material produced by the DTI and Coega on skills development and job creation masks a very different daily reality.

Some of the main reasons SEZs flourished in China were restrictions on trade unionisation, very low wages, and – similar to apartheid (and post-apartheid) – a migrant labour system that creates 'super-exploitation' in which

rural women subsidise the workers' reproduction, allowing for much higher profits to companies than if the families were located nearby the factories.

Because South African workers have prevented the worst of these conditions, it is unlikely that Coega can replicate the more successful Chinese SEZs. More likely is that FDI in these zones will exacerbate the exploitative, extractivist practices that characterise BRICS and Chinese FDI throughout the continent, but at a very low level, and increasingly with robots instead of labour-intensive processes.

India's repression of Kashmir

Voice of the Cape, Iqbal Jassat, UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Modi should be arrested over Kashmir

Voice of the Cape[1]

Two South African groups want Indian prime minister Narenda Modi to be arrested for war crimes should he set foot in South Africa for the Brics Summit later this month. The Muslim Lawyer Association and the South Africa Kashmir Action Group (SAKAG) have jointly lodged a complaint and request for National Prosecuting Authority to issue a warrant of arrest for Modi for "gross human right violations" in Indian occupied Kashmir.

Modi will be visiting the country from the 25-27 July, where the heads of state of the five member Brics states Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa will meet.

The MLA said an application has been brought to the South African judiciary for his arrest under international criminal law and other international convents which South Africa has ratified. "South Africa, under the jurisdiction of international law are duty bound to fullfill the requirement for bringing a case of war crime against any individual," said SAKAG founder Salman Khan.

During his stint as Gujarat Chief Minister in 2002, Modi was accused of deliberately allowing anti-Muslim riots in the state.

On 27 February that year, a train coach carrying Hindu pilgrims caught fire in Godhra station in Gujarat, killing 58 people.

Within hours and without a shred of evidence, Modi declared that the Pakistani secret services had been to blame; he then had the charred bodies paraded in the main city of Ahmedabad; and let his own party support a state-wide strike for three days.

1 https://www.vocfm.co.za/muslim-lawyers-call-for-modis-arrest/

What followed was mass bloodshed: 1,000 dead on official estimates, more than 2,000 by independent tallies. The vast majority of those who died were Muslim.

Modi has been blamed by a police chief over a series of “fake encounter killings” — the extrajudicial murders of terrorist or criminal suspects carried out between 2002 and 2007.

As the Commander in Chief of the armed forces during his tenure since 2014, there were extra-judicial murders, rapes and other human right violation committed by 700,000 Indian army personnel stationed in Indian occupied Kashmir.

The United Nations resolution on Jammu and Kashmir was passed on August 13, 1948, after India lodged a complaint with the world body against the Pakistani invasion in Kashmir. It proposes that Kashmir’s future would be decided in accordance with the will of the people.

“People are demanding the right to self-determination and the Indian government is circumventing this and using ugly tactics such as extra-judicial murders and rape. Rape is being used as a weapon of war.”

“We are saying enough is enough…Modi is not welcome. India wants to increase trade and industry between South Africa, but they cannot ask for this without upholding human rights in their country.”

Khan said they lodged an official complaint to the NPA to launch an investigation into whether there is possible cause for his arrest. If the NPA decides not to prosecute Modi, SAKAG will head to Parliament and the National Director of Public Prosecutions (NDDP), and as a last resort, the judicial courts.

“The South African courts are impartial and will look at it in the context of a human rights issue. By virtue of the Indian constitution, the serving prime minister is the commander in chief of the armed forces of India.” VOC

Kashmir from Nehru to Modi; what's changed?

Iqbal Jassat[2]

Generations of Kashmir's people have waited in vain for an end to India's brutal military occupation and to celebrate their independence and freedom. Alas, seven decades have passed and the deeply-felt objective of standing proudly alongside free nations of the world remains as elusive as ever.

Seventy years of struggle for a free, independent and sovereign Kashmir have instead been marred by countless killings, massacres, rapes and wanton destruction. The story line is no different to that of other freedom campaigns, from South Africa to the ongoing struggle in Palestine. The occupiers are the villains and the occupied are the victims.

As was the case in South Africa's epic battle against apartheid, the perpetrators of crimes against civilians, including war crimes, have been repressive state security institutions under the command of the executive. The Palestinians face a similarly horrendous situation where the occupying state — in their case a settler-colonial regime — remains engaged in what can only be described as a perpetual orgy of ethnic cleansing.

Kashmir and its people are on the receiving end of India's military domination. On orders from the powers in Delhi, the Indian army has a single goal, to crush the dreams of Kashmiris at any cost. Thus we see the devastation of broken limbs and shattered dreams. And, tragically, zero accountability.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi struts the global stage hoping that hobnobbing with the Trumps, Netanyahus and other right-wingers of this world will enhance his public image as a statesman. Unfortunately for him, his reputation as a warmonger precedes his current position as the leader of the world's largest democracy.

2 *Middle East Monitor,* February 12, 2018

Following the 2002 Gujarat massacre, for which he is generally held complicit, Modi was placed on America's terrorist list and barred from travelling there.

The ban was lifted following his election as Prime Minister; overnight, both the US and the UN seemed to erase his deplorable human rights violations from both the record and their collective memory.

Modi has cultivated an aura of invincibility amongst his millions of followers. His leadership of the BJP, an extreme right-wing party, has placed him on a path to reclaim India as a Hindu nationalist state.

This has, evidently, had a devastating impact on Kashmir.

The BJP regularly argues that the policies it pursues in the Occupied Kashmiri Territory are no different to those of the Indian Congress.

In fact, to deflect criticism of their harsh crackdown, Modi and the BJP insist that they are maintaining the same security measures as that of the previous government. Indeed, they point to the historic dawn of independence from the British Empire in 1947 to justify the current militarisation with Indian troops in Kashmir.

Though there's a huge gap between Modi and Jawaharlal Nehru, one of the leaders of the independence movement, many historians who have researched the issue of a plebiscite on Kashmir reveal how this fundamental pillar has been manipulated.

Shockingly, Nehru has been fingered as devious having arrived at an agreement with Pakistan on a plebiscite in January 1949 and a ceasefire, merely "to buy time".

The following excerpt by AG Noorani, a renowned authority on Kashmir elucidates the situation:

"Nehru had other plans. In private he had adamantly set his face against a plebiscite in 1947. In public, till 1954 he continued to make the most explicit – almost extravagant – and solemn pledge to hold a plebiscite. It was nearly fifty years later, in 1996, that the clue to Nehru's

entire Kashmir policy emerged, with the publication of Volume 22 of the Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru (SWJN)… Nehru wrote a secret note to Sheikh Abdullah, dated 25 August 1952, while camping at Sonamarg in Kashmir (SWJN Vol 22:32-30).

"It was one of the rare writings he authoured – cogent, comprehensive, unemotional, yet destructive in the ruthless course it foreshadowed. Its thesis was: (1) the people did not matter; (2) the UN was powerless; (3) so was Pakistan, as 'we are superior to Pakistan in military and industrial power', which would acquiesce while India professed friendship all along; (4) the accession must be rendered non-provisional, it must be made final; (5) Kashmir's leaders must banish doubt for 'doubts in the minds of leaders percolate to their followers and to the people generally.' There must be no debate or argument in future; accession is an accomplished and final fact, and nothing is going to unsettle it (vide Document 5)."

Such double talk has characterised India's record of non-compliance and deplorable subjugation of Kashmir.

Modi may have excelled in brutality, but in enforcing his government's will he has remained faithful to Nehru's double standards.

It is admirable that, as in Palestine, the people of Kashmir have remained resolute in their determination to resist occupation.

Kashmir is a breathtakingly beautiful mountainous area, with lush terrain. The land of Jammu, Muzafarabad, Gilgit, Baltistan and Ladakh borders Pakistan, Afghanistan, Xinjiang and parts of Tibet.

Just as Nehru assessed the geo-strategic importance of Kashmir, so too have all successive governments of India, including the current version led by Modi.

Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Kashmir

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 14 June 2018[3]

Decades of rights violations on both sides of the Line of Control in Kashmir have "claimed or ruined numerous lives" and should be the subject of a high-level international probe, the UN's human rights chief said on Thursday.

Flagging the launch of the first UN human rights report on the disputed territory separating India and Pakistan, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein noted his intention to ask the Human Rights Council in Geneva to set up a commission of inquiry at its next session, beginning on Monday.

The High Commissioner – whose mandate ends this summer – highlighted what he called the "chronic impunity for violations committed by security forces" and said that the political nature of the conflict had masked the "untold suffering" of millions of people.

The main focus of the 49-page report is the use of reported "excessive force" by soldiers in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir, although it also examines a range of rights violations in Pakistan-Administered Kashmir.

In Indian-Administered Kashmir, the report details how large demonstrations erupted in Jammu and Kashmir two years ago after Indian security forces killed the leader of an armed group.

It notes how "excessive force" led to the deaths of an estimated 145 civilians from mid-2016 to April this year.

Victims' lack of access to justice remains a key challenge in Jammu and Kashmir, the report from the UN human rights office, OHCHR, continues.

It details how bespoke legislation gives security personnel "virtual immunity" against legal redress unless the Indian government authorizes it, and says that "there has not been a single prosecution" in the nearly 30 years that the Armed Forces (Jammu and Kashmir)

3 https://reliefweb.int/organization/ohchr

Special Powers Act has been in force.

This “almost total impunity” has also hindered inquiries into enforced or voluntary disappearances, the report continues, citing allegations of mass graves in the state and the alleged mass rape of 23 women by soldiers in Kunan-Poshpora nearly three decades ago.

Turning to Pakistan-Administered Kashmir, the OHCHR report describes rights violations there as being “of a different calibre or magnitude”.

It details restrictions on freedom of expression and people’s right to peaceful assembly in two territories – Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and in Gilgit-Baltistan - and expresses concern at the “very broad definition of terrorism” amid reports that hundreds of people have been detained under Pakistan’s anti-terrorism legislation in Gilgit-Baltistan alone.

Any resolution of the political situation in Pakistan-administered Kashmir and Indian-administered Kashmir “must entail a commitment to end the cycles of violence and ensure accountability for past and current abuses by all parties”, Zeid said.

BRICS contributes to Palestine's oppression through two-state compromise

Ramona Wadi[1]

Israel's colonisation of Palestine has altered the dynamics of politics and expectation to one of permanent exploitation and compromise. The two-state compromise, in particular, has ensnared governments, as well as many prominent institutions and groups to the point that opportunities for Palestinians to define their aims from within their own history and rights have almost been depleted.

On Tuesday, foreign ministers from Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) met in Pretoria, South Africa, ahead of the 10th BRICS summit which will be held in July. The final statement following the meeting echoed South Africa's demand last March, that Palestine should be a priority on the BRICS agenda. However, paying mere lip-service to a legitimate demand is harming Palestine's prospects, rather than enhancing opportunities for anti-colonial, legitimate resistance.

On their part the BRICS statement as published by *Wafa* news agency calls for creating "an independent, viable, territorially contiguous Palestinian state living side-by-side in peace and security with Israel. The minister reiterated that the status of Jerusalem is one of the final status issues to be defined in the context of negotiations between Israel and Palestine."

There is no point in pretending to make Palestine a priority when statements convey otherwise. The BRICS rhetoric is identical to that regurgitated routinely by the UN, the Middle East Quartet, the EU and the majority of governments around the world. Increasingly, Palestine is becoming an agenda item to be discussed within the context of normalising colonisation. This is creating an abyss in which many forms of activism are

1 *Middle East Monitor,* 7 June 2018, https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/6-author/ramona-wadi/

falling prey to unsustainable campaigning, while Palestinians are marginalised from their own story, forced to compromise on their own aspirations for liberation and purportedly supported by entities that prioritise Israel's security within the context of creating a hypothetical Palestinian state.

From this meeting, it is important to place emphasis upon the fact that BRICS supports the two-state compromise.

Putting Palestine on the agenda has been a brief spectacle, the likes of which are seen almost daily and which portray the discrepancy between words and action. Worst of all, a consensus among international actors has now been generated that follows convenience, rather than rights.

There is no differentiation within these circles between "Palestine" and "agenda items." The underlying motive is to maintain Israel's status by defining Palestine's options from the fabricated colonial narratives. Since historic Palestine belongs to Palestinians, the indigenous population should be leading the strategy for liberation, after which peace can be discussed. Tethering the status of Jerusalem to international agreements and debates has resulted in Israel laying claims over Jerusalem, unilaterally supported by the US.

The ultimate hypocrisy is international insistence upon the two-state paradigm when it has been declared obsolete. Speaking over Palestinians to annihilate their voice – to the point that any possible diplomatic alternative can trace its origins back to the prevailing corrupted compromise – has become the norm.

The political option for Palestinians lies in aiding their anti-colonial resistance, which the international community has ruled out through its insistence that Palestinians subjugate themselves to definitions concocted to appease Israel.

Keeping this in mind, is it not time that obligations are

analysed from a Palestinian perspective?

BRICS, like other entities, is merely concerned with replicating the vacuum of symbolism for Palestinians and paving the way for Israel's "Greater Israel" project.

There is no obligation for Palestinians to abide by any international demands other than the legitimacy of anti-colonial resistance.

Upon international institutions and governments, there is no obligation other than to stand by their declaration to end colonialism. The latter is a farce – since 1990, the UN General Assembly has declared three decades "for the Eradication of Colonialism."

It is also an example of what Palestine is up against and how words are divested of their meanings to incorporate everything and nothing according to power.

Faced with the existence of an international community that is overtly dedicated to safeguarding colonialism, Palestinians have no obligation to anyone but themselves and their legitimate claims to historic Palestine.

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