



Situating the Future of BRICS in Changing Global Dynamics

Proceedings report of a symposium hosted by the Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD)
associated with UNISA, and South African BRICS Think Tank (SABTT)

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South African
BRICS Think Tank

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

AAI	African-American Institute
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
AU	African Union
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
DIRCO	Department of International Relations and Cooperation
FOCAC	Forum on China-Africa Cooperation
G20	Group of 20
IBSA	India, Brazil and South Africa
IGD	Institute for Global Dialogue
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IORA	Indian Ocean Rim Association
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NDP	National Development Plan
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
SABTT	South Africa BRICS Think Tank
SMMEs	Small, Micro and Medium Enterprises
TMALI	Thabo Mbeki African Leadership Institute
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNSC	United Nations Security Council

Note on the contributors

Keynote address



Mr. Dave Malcomson, Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO), joined the then Department of Foreign Affairs in December 1991, where he has served on the Russia, CIS, Turkey, Zimbabwe, and Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Desks. In 2001, he was seconded to The Presidency and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Secretariat as International Advisor and thereafter served as the Director of the NEPAD Desk. In 2007, he held the position of Minister Plenipotentiary at the South African Embassy in China. From 2011 to 2013 he fulfilled the role of Director at the NEPAD, African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), ARF and Partnerships Desk. Since 2015, he has been the Chief Director of the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS), India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) & Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) (with special responsibility for the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) Summit) desk.

Respondents:



Prof. Serges Djoyou Kanga, Thabo Mbeki African Leadership Institute (TMALI), holds an LLD from the Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria and is currently an Associate Professor at TMALI, UNISA where he teaches Thought Leadership for Africa's Renewal and Human Rights for Africa's development. He is a member of the 'building committee' of the Cross-cultural Human Rights Centre, a consortium of ten Chinese and four African universities aimed at bringing Southern concepts and ideas in the area of human rights to Northern audiences. His areas of interest include Leadership and African renaissance, Development and human rights, BRICS and human rights, human rights from a cross-cultural perspective, and disability rights. He publishes in these areas.



Mr. Francis Kornegay, Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD) associated with UNISA, is a Senior Research Fellow at the IGD. He has a Masters Degrees in African Studies from Howard University and in International Public Policy from the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins. Kornegay served two stints in the US Congress as a professional staffer, among other things, developing financial sanctions legislation on South Africa. He established the Research and Evaluation Unit for the African Development Foundation, an independent US agency. In South Africa, he served as the country director of the African-American Institute (AAI) and was involved in electoral support activities. Since then, among other things, he has focused on South-South cooperation issues on which he has written and published extensively. He managed a Ford Foundation-funded project on IBSA and has organised seminars on IBSA both in South Africa and India.



Mr. Ashraf Patel, South Africa BRICS Think Tank (SABTT) Associate, is a graduate on the Masters in Management (MM) ICT Public Policy and Regulation Management from the Graduate School of Public and Development Management (P&DM) at Wits University. He has an Advanced Certificate in Company Law from the Mandela Institute, Wits Law School, South Africa. Currently he is part of the SABTT research cluster on innovation and knowledge; with a keen interest in issues of innovation for development, environment and energy policy; Intellectual property and impacts on regional and global trade. He also is an alumni of the UNIDO-GEF Global Cleantech Innovation Fund program in 2015. He recently became a research associate at the IGD, where he will work on matters pertaining to the knowledge economy and digitisation.

Introduction

With preparations for the 9th BRICS Summit under the Chinese Presidency in progress, question marks on the future of the BRICS are repeatedly raised. The following symposium, organised into a panel discussion, breakaway sessions, and plenary, sought to explore some of the future scenarios of the BRICS in changing global dynamics. It looked into existing power dynamics in the grouping, with Russia, China, and India vying for influence, while South Africa and Brazil seemingly lagging behind as they confront various domestic challenges.



Bringing together over 50 stakeholders from government, academia, think tanks, civil society, business, labour, embassies, and other non-government organisations, this symposium also considered the potential impact of closer relations between the US and Russia under the Trump Presidency, while addressing the question of a consolidated BRICS agenda and enhanced BRICS strategic cooperation and coordination of regional agendas. This especially holds true given China's floating of the 'BRICS Plus' idea, aimed at an outreach with other countries of the global South as an enhanced strategy of South-South Cooperation. These questions are ever more important because of the possible consequences they may present to the South African Presidency of the 10th BRICS summit in 2018. The following proceedings report summarizes the vibrant discussions held at Burgers Park Hotel on the 20th April 2017 which were organized by the Institute for Global Dialogue associated with UNISA (IGD) and the South African BRICS Think Tank (SABTT).

Keynote Address provided by Mr Dave Malcomson, DIRCO

BRICS, A South African Perspective

The address introduced South Africa's participation in BRICS by noting the various activities: i) The BRICS Leaders meet at the BRICS Summits on an annual basis as well as on the margins of the G20 Summits; ii) The Ministers of Foreign Affairs/International Relations meet annually on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Sessions and, as required, the National Security Advisors meet annually, as well as the other Ministerial tracks as outlined in the Summit Action Plans (supported by preparatory Senior Officials' meetings); BRICS Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs/IR also meet annually to discuss issues in respect of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) – role of Sherpas and Sous Sherpas; iii) Business and research sector stakeholders engage amongst each other and government representatives through the Track 2 structures, i.e. the BRICS Business Council and BRICS Think Tanks Council; and iv) Track 3 and other structures, including fora for Civil Society, Youth, Academics, Business, Labour as well as Parliament.

South Africa's interest in BRICS supports domestic level objectives whereby the BRICS partnership may link sources of finance for infrastructure development; intra-BRICS trade and investment will contribute towards delivering economic growth. It is anticipated that these will contribute towards addressing the triple challenges of reducing poverty, inequality and unemployment. South Africa's partnership with BRICS supports regional level objectives. Firstly, the BRICS partnership complements the development of the African continent. South Africa is supported by African partners via the African Union, as South Africa represents the African Agenda at BRICS.



The Sanya Declaration stated that "We support infrastructure development in Africa and its industrialization within the framework of the NEPAD". Therefore, upon joining BRICS, South Africa immediately brought the agenda of the AU to the attention of its BRICS partners. And secondly, South Africa's participation in the BRICS partnership complements South-South cooperation through reinforced political, economic, trade and investment engagement. Through BRICS, South Africa continuously endeavours to put the Agenda of the Global South on the forefront as captured in the Goa Declaration, which states that "We welcome the African Union's (AU) vision, aspirations, goals and priorities for Africa's development enshrined in Agenda 2063, which is complementary with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We reaffirm our support for Africa's implementation of its various programmes in pursuit of its continental agenda for peace and socio economic development."

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 International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank – in particular to expand representation for Sub-Saharan Africa. Through BRICS, South Africa may take up concerns and needs of the developing world in fora, such as the Group of 20 (G20). There are significant multi-disciplinary synergies between the goals and targets of the SDGs and Agenda 2063 with the goals and targets of the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 adopted in 2012.

The BRICS VIII Summit in 2016 was hosted by India on 15 and 16 October. It was themed "Building Responsive, Inclusive and Collective Solutions" and marked the tenth anniversary since the formal establishment of the BRICS formation. The key outcomes were the Goa Declaration and the Goa Plan of Action. The Summit concluded the signing of three Memoranda of Understanding, which further contribute to enhanced sectoral cooperation, namely: the MOU on Mutual Cooperation between Diplomatic Academies; the MOU for the Establishment of BRICS Agricultural Research Platform; and the Regulations on the Customs Cooperation Committee of the BRICS. BRICS Leaders welcomed new initiatives to further the BRICS institution-building agenda, as aligned to the Chair's projected strategic objectives in this regard, notably setting-up the BRICS Agriculture Research Centre as well as exploring proposals for a BRICS Credit Rating Agency, BRICS Railway Research Network and BRICS Sports Council. The Goa Declaration further iterated BRICS Leaders support for, as well as solidarity with the African Continent, citing in particular Agenda 2063 and its articulation of the development, peace and security agenda of the continent



Leaders met with the *BRICS Business Council* and received a report on the activities of the *New Development Bank (NDB)*. The Leaders welcomed the operationalization of the NDB and the approval of its first projects in the renewable energy sector. India's Prime Minister Modi targeted BRICS trade to double by 2020. The BRICS Trade Ministers meeting, held on the margins of the Goa Summit, discussed a pertinent new focus area, which pertains to the role of Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), considering that more than 40% of BRICS economies are driven by the MSME sector, according to estimates. The Trade Ministers adopted Framework for Cooperation in the area of Small and Medium Enterprises. In addition, South African companies participated in the first BRICS Trade Fair.

China's BRICS Presidency, in 2017, marks the ten years since the first meeting of the then "BRIC" Foreign/International Relations Ministers in New York in 2006, and the beginning of the second decade of BRICS. South Africa's subsequent BRICS presidency in 2018 will hold a special significance in the BRICS historical trajectory, as it completes the first decade of BRICS Summits. To ensure maximum synergy and continuity for BRICS endeavours over the next two years (2017-2018), South Africa will seek to strategically align its presidency of BRICS in 2018 with that of China in order to plan towards the goals of the next decade of BRICS cooperation. This year's Summit theme "*Stronger Partnership for a Brighter Future*" will reflect on a decade of fruitful cooperation focused on the following areas: world economic growth, improving global governance and promoting democracy in international relations. South Africa's objectives and agenda for the BRICS IX Summit will be shared in due course.



Finally, as a closing, China in 2017 will ensure continuity, coordination and consolidation. This is to be followed through into South Africa's chairship in 2018. This will ensure synergy of BRICS actions through outreach dialogue sessions, e.g. the African Union and NEPAD (2013), the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and Eurasian Economic Union (2015), and BIMSTEC (2016) will be continued. 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. The BRICS partnership will also assist in realising foreign policy cooperation and objectives that are related to South-South cooperation, emerging markets and developing countries. BRICS has also led through advocacy and policy on key issues such as climate change and the SDGs. BRICS, compared to the initial conception by Goldman Sachs is vastly different today. South Africa aims to use this summit as an opportunity to prepare for the 2018 summit.

Panel respondents

From this address, the panel discussants were afforded the opportunity to provide feedback and discuss the position of South Africa in the BRICS partnership. A number of thematic areas were discussed:

Prof Serges Kamga agreed that there is motion towards multipolarity but that the issue of human rights centred development and locating human rights within the BRICS partnership is vital. Economic growth would be meaningless if human development does not drive the agenda. As a reality, poverty is often considered as a by-product of the West, colonialism and institutionalised discriminative methods of interaction. BRICS has the potential to be most relevant if it makes this link between rights, development and multipolarity. Most observers are anticipating that this may be seen by reforming key institutions like the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), and changing perspectives and increasing accountability. A Global South agenda endeavours to pursue development as a human right. Kamga argued that BRICS needs to advance human rights and development in order to ensure that BRICS becomes the tool for restitution of socio-economic rights.

In relation to his argument he proposed considerations that could aid in realising the potential of BRICS in the restitution of socio-economic rights. A number of questions can be identified in this theme; firstly, how can people exert pressure on BRICS to take the idea of human rights and the right to development forward? Secondly, within the context of respect for human rights, how can BRICS ensure that poverty becomes part of history. And lastly, what is the role of China and Russia in this conversation? These two players hold substantial leverage to drive these conversations internationally. As it stands the conversation on the development and respect of the right to development is underutilised and realised.



Mr. Francis Kornegay expressed that South Africa's role in the BRICS is pivotal, but it is not being utilised to its full potential. Although South Africa's BRICS foreign policy and agenda has been reiterated through statements and the alignment of the BRICS agenda to national policies, the South African BRICS strategy remains very vague. It is important to show how South Africa intends to interact in terms of a broader geostrategic partnership, which may be done by championing the African agenda and focusing on creating a sustainable Blue Economy, improving maritime security in the Indian Ocean and Mediterranean Sea, and having a big picture look over peacekeeping, peacebuilding and mediations in Africa. However, since the changeover at the AU South Africa has been losing its leadership momentum on the continent. An example of the peace, security and mediation nexus is Morocco's attempts at de-recognising the Saharawi Republic without resolving the issue, which remains a real challenge to the continent in terms of how the AU system is recognised through structures. Western Sahara, in particular, is a very difficult issue due to three intersecting dimensions: (1) the occupation of Western Sahara is unacceptable and inhibits the functioning and unity of the AU; (2) another independent African state of approximately 200 000 people adds to the complexity of ensuring unity across Africa; and (3) the AU has a missing regional economic community in the form of the Arab-Maghreb Union.

This issue should be a point of concern for BRICS, especially in the face of Morocco's proposition of joining ECOWAS. There is an inherent expectation that South Africa's role in BRICS is a function, or a reflection, of its leadership on the continent.

South Africa's role in BRICS and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) needs some strategic thinking and synergy, and this should be accommodated by the role that it can play in the New Development Bank (NDB).

Looking at the global environment wherein BRICS countries operate is the scenario where a triangular relationship between Russia, USA and China is prominent and that has an effect on the regional relations of these states. When one looks at BRICS regional dimensions, you have BRICS EURASIA and BRICS-IBSA. There lies a problem because BRICS currently has a very Sino-Russia character. India, Brazil or South Africa tend to operate within this gravitational pull. China has its one belt one road silk route linked to the Asian Investment and Infrastructure Bank (AIIB) and wants to extend its global outreach. Russia has its Eurasian Economic Union and at some point there may be some accommodation between the US, Russia and China where some of these dynamics will be sorted out. Having a stronger regional partnership would promote the African agenda globally, and similarly the focus of BRICS may be more inclusive. Kornegay concluded by highlighting that Africa's continental sovereignty depends on it controlling its maritime boundaries. He proposed that it means the requirement of a system that considers the Indian Ocean, the Mediterranean and the Americas.



Mr. Ashraf Patel provided feedback from a civil society perspective whereby he highlighted that BRICS is still in the process of developing. The partnership is thus still rather new, in comparison to other institutions, and so it is difficult to determine the exact trajectory and future of BRICS right now. He argued that BRICS is a political relationship that needs to be sensitive to the members' self-interests, but at the same time is rooted in an alternative world vision that is counter hegemonic and counters dominant Western narratives. Mr Patel's feedback was cautiously optimistic and remained critical of the trend of 'deal-making', based on personalities and leadership, at the cost of the environment and social well-being of society. While this may indeed bring industrialisation, it is important to defend environmental and human rights issues because mega-infrastructure and technology projects are becoming increasingly opaque.

He proposed that environmental justice groups and civil society broadly need to bring their discussions about climate change and the effects of climate change into the work of BRICS. This is important, especially in an era of rising populism and the continuation of opacity in the energy sector. The inclusion of youth and women will also remain an important factor in the growth of BRICS. This may be the niche area that civil society may focus on.



Break Away Session 1: Interrogating the future of BRICS under changing global dynamics

The most prominent issues that drove the discussion of this session was the ownership of BRICS and associated power dynamics. Discussants asked where we, as individuals, members of civil society, business stakeholders, decision-makers etc., fit into BRICS and who may have ultimate ownership in the partnership. The general public still needs the government to communicate effectively on “What is BRICS and where does South Africa fit in?” General comments revealed that confusion still exists with regard to simple information as well as more nuanced information on “what is the meaning of BRICS in Africa, who is benefitting from the engagement and who should benefit – leaders, elite groups, and the general public. More information is needed at grass roots, civil society and working class levels especially because a core misconception drives public perception that BRICS is a unified force and so South African observers of BRICS want to see a clear and unified programme of action. From the Keynote and panel discussion it was explained that BRICS should benefit a wide variety of actors, and that benefitting from BRICS may be brought about through other partnerships such as education, science, technology, art, culture, etc.



The power debate in BRICS remains prominent. How can BRICS limit structural power and is it prudent to look to normative power or cooperation? There are a number of issues associated with structural power in liberal orders and thus there is a

critique emerging that BRICS, although it presents itself as an alternative, may have the effect of another liberal order whereby it benefits an elite class. Discussants asked if BRICS can be equal, if BRICS will be anchored towards a developing world elite, or if it is possible that BRICS be directed in favour of the many? Although the global South has greater access to international dialogue platforms and may thus present a global South agenda, it may not necessarily be an equitable agenda. It is thus important for BRICS countries to ensure that the BRICS partnership has tangible benefits for citizens in those countries.

There is excitement that alternatives to the existing neoliberal world order are presenting themselves, especially in the context of a possible US in decline. One such alternative is the importance of the geopolitical and economic partnership of the BRICS as emerging powers. Question marks remain if there is a clear alternative to the existing Bretton Woods institutions, or if the BRICS would continue with a similar governance model. Although it appears that global governance is moving towards a more multipolar order, we are still in the process of identifying trends and their imminent implications.

Feedback from DIRCO representatives expressed that when South Africa was invited to join BRICS, it could draw on commonalities and complementary elements of the partnership, while it was within South Africa's own foreign policy interests in terms of the reform and democratisation of global governance. DIRCO views BRICS as an opportunity to set the global agenda and engage in new thinking and initiate change through participation. South Africa has the potential to participate through its roles as a bridge builder, or moderator, and innovator. Moreover, DIRCO's strategy has been to integrate and align the core agenda points to South African foreign policy. However, participants have remained concerned at the number of agenda points that have been tabled and in terms of South Africa's national, global and regional agenda, it is important for South Africa to remain realistic in its BRICS engagement and anticipate the implications of self-interest and what alternative BRICS may be pursuing. There is a concern that Africa is not a greater priority and there is a misunderstanding or lack of effective communication on how to access BRICS through South Africa's membership.



Break Away Session 2 and 3: Navigating BRICS Power Dynamics, how can South Africa leverage its position; and how does the idea of a BRICS Plus influence the increased coordination of regional agendas?

This session interrogated how South Africa is able to leverage its position within BRICS, in order to navigate the prevalent power dynamics. Furthermore, it set out to consider issues related to the idea of a BRICS Plus outreach forum.

It was generally observed that South Africa had its own interests that it seeks to pursue despite being viewed as the “smallest” country in the BRICS group. Seeking to answer the question of how South Africa can leverage its position necessitated an interrogation of what South Africa's interests are, as well as its strengths that made it visible and respected within BRICS. South Africa's historical relations with China and Russia were identified as strengthening its position within BRICS and providing it with some leverage. Among the BRICS countries South Africa has been accepted as a trusted partner, a balancer and mediator particularly as it plays a counter balancing role in relation to the other powerful states.

South Africa's emphasis on international morality, human dignity, human rights and against domination and oppression of people, has defined its membership and activities in the UN system and were noted as strengths. However due to the recent positions adopted by South Africa, and matters related to its domestic political realm it is a strength that is perceived to be diminishing. South Africa's leadership on the African continent was also highlighted as a form of leverage that South Africa could continue to utilise within the BRICS group. An example was given that South Africa could propose an increased BRICS involvement in Africa in order to bring agreements into effect and see to the implementation and completion of projects, such as the Grand Inga Dam project.

It was proposed that South Africa can make use of its position in BRICS, in relation to regional outreach, as follows:

- South Africa has the potential to play a catalytic role as a leader in Africa by emphasising the sovereignty of African countries;
- South Africa needs to be tuned in to the relationships of China, Russia and India with the West in order to understand its role within BRICS and the prospects of its global strategy and the production of an alternative world order;
- BRICS should not be pegged to any leaders, but must be further institutionalised;
- There is a trust deficit between South Africa and African states particularly due to the activity of corporate South Africa, which has been perceived negatively because of the extractive nature of a number of businesses. The group recommended that emphasis should be placed on a new discourse and relationship that strives to be equitable;
- South Africa could act as a dual promoter of BRICS within Africa and Africa within BRICS, especially within Francophone Africa;
- South Africa should look to enhance and add value to the idea of people-to-people relations within BRICS;
- The absence of South Africa's BRICS strategy affects how it ultimately engages in BRICS and how it promotes BRICS; and
- South Africa can still be promoted as a gateway to African economies. Regional value chains need to be created from an African perspective, and South Africa could champion it.

Conclusions and way forward

With many policy decisions emanating from individual BRICS member states as well as declarations from the annual BRICS summits having a bearing on South Africa's domestic and foreign policies, it becomes ever more important to have an informed public dialogue in order to bring about maximum benefits from South Africa's BRICS membership. Through the dialogue series, the Institute for Global Dialogue and the South African BRICS Think Tank will continue to seek to contribute to an informed public dialogue on some of the most important developments within and amongst the BRICS countries. The dialogue series thus serves as an interface between dialogue, debate and informed policy making, which in turn will serve the bigger purpose of understanding South Africa's position in an ever changing world and its relations with external partners. Being the first of the 2017 dialogue series, the policy dialogue thus contributed to entrenching a deeper understanding of South Africa's position within the BRICS and some of the early preparations for the country's own BRICS Presidency in 2018.

Appendices: Programme



South African
BRICS Think Tank

IGD and SABTT Symposium: Situating the future of BRICS in changing global dynamics

Programme, 20 April 2017

Burgers Park Hotel, Corner of Lilian Ngoyi and Minnaar Street, Pretoria

9:00 - 9:30	Arrival and registration
9:30 – 9:45	Welcome and opening remarks by Dr. Philani Mthembu (Executive Director, Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD)) and Dr. Elias Phaahla (Programme Coordinator, National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences)
9:45 – 11:00	Keynote address: Mr. Dave Malcomson (DIRCO) Panel discussion: Prof. Serges Djoyou Kamga (Thabo Mbeki Leadership Institute) Mr. Francis Kornegay (Institute for Global Dialogue) Mr. Ashraf Patel (SABTT Associate) Q & A facilitated by Dr Philani Mthembu
11:00 – 11:30	Tea break
11:30 – 12:00	Break away sessions Session 1: Interrogating the future of BRICS under changing global dynamics Session 2: Navigating BRICS power dynamics, how can South Africa leverage its position? Session 3: BRICS Plus and the prospect of increased coordination of regional agendas
12:00 – 12:30	Rapporteur session facilitated by Dr. Elias Phaahla
12:30 – 12:45	Vote of thanks and closing remarks
12:45	Lunch

About the Institute for Global Dialogue, associated with UNISA



The IGD is an independent foreign policy and diplomacy think tank dedicated to the analysis of and dialogue on global dynamics that have a bearing on South Africa in Africa. It advances a balanced, relevant and policy-oriented analysis, debate and documentation of South Africa's role in international relations and diplomacy.

The IGD's research agenda has three broad programmatic focus areas: foreign policy analysis with special reference to the making and management of foreign policy and diplomatic tools like economic, developmental, and public diplomacy; African studies focusing on the role of regional and continental integration in African politics and development as well as the study of peace diplomacy; and international diplomacy, analysing dynamics in international diplomacy that have a bearing on African peace and prosperity.

In 2010, following a strategic review the institute entered into its strategic partnership with the University of South Africa, the biggest university in the southern hemisphere to pursue through research, publications and community engagement the shared vision of a prosperous and peaceful Africa in a progressive global order.

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