

## Chapter 7

# BRICS Plus and Economic growth: what if Africa becomes an option?

*"Africa has a shape of a revolver of which the trigger is in the Congo-Kinshasa"*  
(Franz Fanon)

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## Concluding Remarks

in these concluding remarks, I would like to share a few thoughts about the topic "BRICS and Economic Development" and to suggest where to from now. please allow me to indulge in the liberty of giving a slightly different title to this conclusion: BRICS Plus and economic growth - what if Africa is the option.

This e-book addressed the BRICS phenomenon from different perspectives.

As a high-level academic task, the project brought together academics, policymakers, researchers, business economists and industry players, either directly or indirectly through research – this is the known side of the coin.

It was discussed that, the BRICS has several issues to grapple with in order to revamp the economy in the time of Covid-19, how to accelerate cooperation among the partners is another issue that was raised. Within the BRICS the societies are unequal, and the disparity is so huge that stringent measures must be taken to redress the situation amid and beyond the pandemic.

South Africa has currently the most unequal society in the world (unemployment, poverty, health crisis, poor education...and landlessness). There are at least 2700 informal settlements in South Africa. Top 10% people control 70% of SA's assets in 2015, other 60% who are blacks (Africans, coloureds and Indians) own only 7% of SA's net wealth. 50% of the population in SA live with less than \$5 a day [1].

A pro-employment development path that needs to be taken into account should help countries such as India, South Africa and Brazil where joblessness (and as is the case for South Africa, a zero-growth economy and 27% unemployment in 2016 persists [2]). The papers should also look at how the influence of BRICS member countries could be in favour of offering the partnership better chances for regional integration through trade and cooperation. The future research should focus on the regional integration plans and could add value to the discourse in that aspect.

Could the issue of BRICS plus be one way of addressing developmental needs of the Global South? There were suggestions that the Asian tigers, namely, (Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore...) are the leading emerging economies [3] and as such should be considered into the BRICS. While the suggestion could be plausible for Thailand and Singapore, it would be provocative and dangerous to treat Taiwan as a separate country from China in an attempt to introduce it into the BRICS – China would simply oppose that with a "veto" at the UN Security Council (UNSC). This is not to say that claims of the Taiwanese should be disregarded all together but that a different platform could be more effective in addressing such claims - not the BRICS.

Africa has always been lagging behind in such important debates (BRICS Plus), but her time has now come. Change is inevitable in the context of BRICS and Africa, like it is elsewhere. If one doesn't see it coming, it simply means one hasn't checked it out properly. If one does not see it coming one must cause it. One must cause the change to happen. The BRICS as an organisation needs change and a good one. Change that will sustain it, help it keep momentum in the concert of the nations. One such changes could be the advent of BRICS Plus in general and as this book advocates, an African friendly BRICS Plus change is needed - as opposed to just having the so-called tigers (for example Singapore, Thailand and Taiwan).

So, again a particularity of this book is that it also advocates for BRICS Plus and call for would be African (countries) candidates to be considered going forward. Countries such as Egypt, Nigeria, Kenya, Ethiopia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) would be great candidates to observe the functioning of the BRICS countries and ultimately in the future to be given an opportunity to join the partnership. The idea that a country must be an emerging economy to join the BRICS doesn't hold. It doesn't hold the test of time as the economic situation is everchanging, and all the time other emerging economies would ultimately emerge. I think the criteria should be the potential of a country in addition to other criteria.

A single African country in the BRICS does not weigh much and is not capable of counterbalancing the power of her counterparts (especially China, Brazil and Russia, countries that are like half a continent). These are countries with huge potentials, numerous populace and who appear to be great representatives of their respective regions. India is equally important and culturally rich as an ancient civilisation just like China.

Egypt would ensure that cooperation between the BRICS and the Arab becomes smoother and anchored on economic development of northern Africa;

Nigeria as the first robust economy of Africa would be a game changer. As a petrol economy devoured by inequality, and Boko Haram terrorism in addition to the Anglo-crisis or the Igbo region instability, relationship of socio-economic nature would also prioritise anti-terror attacks – a major hindrance to economic growth in Nigeria. China has been effective in suppressing terrorist activities in the mainland, and therefore trade cooperation and exchange of expertise would benefit Africa and the BRICS. Without security and peace in Africa, there would be no sustainable development. Without bread and water, there wouldn't be peace!

Kenya is the biggest economy in the east of Africa and Ethiopia is a force to be reckoned with as the capital of the African Union, thus in a way the capital of the motherland Africa. The geostrategic position of Kenya at the port of Mombasa would work at the advantage of the BRICS countries and facilitate import and export of commodities. A win-win relationship of cooperation and trade between countries should be the way forward. More than Three to four decades ago Ethiopia was a country of hunger (1984-1985) [4], but the miracle is that the relatively modern economy that it has become impresses many.

China is already doing business with almost all African countries, and the formalisation of partnership in the context of BRICS Plus would just enhance existing ties between the two blocks (Africa and BRIC[S]). Critics have been vocal in pointing out that single countries are small and economically insignificant that they wouldn't weigh anything before the BRICS countries, thus the need of summit, trade and cooperation between the BRICS and African states (put together). There are those who also oppose summits between Africa and single European or Asiatic countries or between regional organisations and a single African state. Perhaps they are so strict, but countries need flexibility, and should be allowed to manoeuvre as they wish. In this way they will eke out their own path to economic and sustainable development.

The Democratic Republic of Congo with its 34 trillion USD (previous estimates were 24 trillion dollars [5], worth of minerals deposit has a great potential and is of geostrategic importance to the economy of the world. Since the end of the cold war, and the failure of perestroika envisaged by Michael Gorbachev, Congo has been enjoying an apparent break from imperialistic and sovietic disputes. However, another player of huge impact has invited herself in the game as if to replace the colonial master of Congo (Belgium) who stopped for a while only to invite herself again in the DRC. The DRC in the BRICS would ease the burden places onto South Africa which at times must behave like a big brother to other African countries, trying to be the gateway to Africa, while a plethora of problems in her midst are just unbearable to say the least. Almost 13 times richer than South Africa (which has +2.5 trillion USD worth of minerals deposits [5], the DRC could be the real force to be reckoned with in global economics.

Already the coltan and cobalt, two strategic minerals associated with the DRC, are dominating industrial activities and are sought after commodities in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The country possesses 80% and 70% of respectively coltan and cobalt [6]. Botswana, a country that outperformed all in Africa on diamond beneficiation [7],

which coupled with good governance and political stability remains a model of what countries could achieve in a clean manner (rather than promoting development with blood-dirt hands like it is the case of the post-genocide Rwanda).

There has been some negative environmental impact in Africa in the past, namely *El nino*, Tsunami (Kenya, Somalia) and recently inundation and flood in Mozambique and South Africa. The BRICS bank's branch in Johannesburg could look at how effective it would be to finance capital intensive projects that aims at infrastructure development including sustainable housing facilities. In my views I would say that, the impact of the COVID-19 on both humans and the environment needs research (and that also means it needs financing).

While China is deemed a champion in environmentally friendly policies and has redressed the CO<sub>2</sub> levels as well as the pollution effects in the sky [8], in Africa the ordinary citizens think the continent suffers the most despite the fact that it hardly pollutes the atmosphere (unlike developed and emerging economies which do).

Economic development within the BRICS can only be achieved to a greater extent when all sectors give their best in ensuring policy implementation and resolutions from summits materialise.

Shock waves that travelled throughout the BRICS countries have come from the transition towards the double-paced or double speed fourth industrial revolution. This revolution that anchors in digital activities, internet, Cell phone technology and ITC is more real in the developed economy. The situation affecting the BRICS is more of a complexity that it will take a world order change to also change the global economy for the better. Some of the above aspects have been covered in this e-book but a lot requires further research. In this way, we could understand better the other side of the coin.

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