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## **DIPLOMATIC DYNAMICS: CULTURAL EXCHANGE, FINANCIAL TRADE, AND CONSERVATION IN SA-CHINA RELATIONS**

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**Abstract:** This article examines the South Africa-China relationship during Jacob Zuma's administration from 2013 to 2017, with a focus on whether it was mutually beneficial from an Afrocentric perspective. Through a desktop qualitative research approach using secondary data analysis, the article emphasizes the importance of studying and understanding African phenomena from an African perspective rather than using a Eurocentric lens and highlights key areas like cultural exchange, financial trade, wildlife conservation, and tourism. The study establishes that South Africa's shift towards the East brought about changes in foreign policy with a greater focus on "realpolitik" rather than human rights. Despite this, the relationship proved to be mutually beneficial, with agreements signed between both countries in mining, energy, environment, and transport. The article recommends the strengthening of bilateral relations further to overcome challenges that may arise and maximize mutual gains. However, the article also highlights concerns such as the de-industrialization of South Africa's economy as a result of China, China's contribution to the destruction and marginalization of South African indigenous languages, China's usage of South Africa and the African continent as a testing ground for alternative policies, and poaching by Chinese nationals posing a threat to South African tourism and the identity of some African South African communities.

**Keywords:** South Africa-China relationship, Jacob Zuma's administration, Afrocentric perspective

### **Introduction**

Succeeding Thabo Mbeki whose administration had cordial but not strong relations with China, Zuma deepened South Africa-China relations through a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in 2010. Under Beijing Declaration which marked the upgrading of the relationship to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, the two parties signed 38 bilateral agreements through which they undertook to cooperate in political dialogues, trade, investment, mineral exploration, and agriculture. On matters pertaining to global affairs, they agreed to join efforts in forums such as the United Nations and the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation. The

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reciprocal visit by the then Deputy President (now President) Xi Jinping to South Africa, saw the two countries signing agreements to cooperate in mining, energy, environment, and transport (Xiong 2012). The exponential economic growth of China and other BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) partners coupled with the low demand of commodity products from Euro-American developed countries prompted by global economic crisis made China and other emerging countries alternative trade partners to South Africa (Kim and Tukić 2015; Maphaka 2020a; Prinsloo 2017).

The Deputy President in Zuma's first tenure, Kgalema Motlanthe, undertook a visit to China in 2011, to promote exportation of South Africa's value-added products to China and attract foreign direct investment towards sectors targeted by the South African economy (DIRCO 2012). During his state visit to China in 2014, Zuma underscores that his administration intended to deepen economic partnership with China to advance inclusive growth and create jobs. The visit mirrors the importance South Africa attached to China as her strategic partner to respond to Pretoria's (the Capital City and Administrative hub of South Africa) national development priorities (Naidu 2015).

It is within this context that the two countries signed various agreements. Among others, the two parties signed the 5-10 Year Strategic Programme on Cooperation which entails cooperation in various areas such as mutual political trust and strategic coordination, economy and trade, and people to people exchanges. The agreement covers cooperation on the African and international affairs and multilateral platforms such as BRICS. The two countries also undertook to enhance economic cooperation in trade and investment through the South African Ministry of Trade and Industry and the People's Republic of China's Ministry of Commerce. An Action Plan on Agricultural Cooperation committing the exchange between the two countries within a period of 2014-2016 was amongst the agreements signed during President Jacob Zuma's state visit. Moreover, they signed Protocol of Phytosanitary Requirements through which China commit to import maize and apple fruit from South Africa, and the latter country undertook to import Dates from China. In supporting South Africa's human resource development, China commits to surge short-term development courses and increase training programmes extended to South Africans to 2000 from 2015-2020. South Africa's industrialisation agenda received attention during the visit with China agreeing to support Pretoria in areas such as science and technology, industrial and railway parks. For its part, South Africa urged China to surge her investment in economic zones and industrial parks (Naidu 2015; Maphaka 2020b).

President Zuma and his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping reviewed the Five-to-Ten Year Strategic Cooperation ahead of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in 2015. It is in this context that China agreed to align industries with South Africa to boost the latter country's effort at accelerating industrialisation. Beyond that, the two parties agreed to enhance cooperation in Special Economic Zones and maritime, infrastructure development, cooperate in human resource development and financial service industry (Benyi 2017).

While the question of whether the relationship is mutually beneficial received large scholarly attention, the interrogation of this research phenomenon has not received attention from an Afrocentric lens. In view of the above, the current article revisits South Africa-China relations during Zuma's administration to identify the benefits and challenges brought by the relationship using an Afrocentric perspective. In so doing, the article looks at South Africa-China cooperation in areas as cultural and academic exchange, financial trade, wildlife

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conservation and tourism. Methodologically, this a desktop qualitative article that relied heavily on secondary data and the collected data is analysed through discourse, and document analysis. In 2013, South Africa and China celebrated fifteen years of diplomatic relations. Additionally, South Africa hosted the BRICS Summit in the same year. The two countries signed a joint Inter-Ministerial Working Group (JIMWG) at the said Summit, aimed at identifying and addressing problems that arise in the relationship. Against this backdrop, the paper seeks to determine whether the relationship is mutually beneficial using Afrocentricity as an alternative perspective.

### **Aim**

- The paper seeks to interrogate a question of whether South Africa-China relationship is mutually beneficial from an Afrocentric perspective

### Objectives

- To identify benefits and challenges emanating from the relationship
- Make policy recommendations to address those challenges

### Theoretical and Methodological Interpretation

Afrocentricity emanates from Pan Africanist movements, writers, and leaders. Prominent amongst its proponents is Molefi Kete Asante who is credited to be its founder. He adopted and sharpened the works of Pan-Africanist writers in formulating the theory in his works: *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change*; *Kemet, Afrocentricity and Knowledge*; and *The Afrocentric Idea*. Afrocentricity is rooted on the tenets of cultural centeredness, paradigmatic pluralism, liberation, and cultural agency (Schreiber 2000; Asante 2007; Ntseane 2011, Maphaka, Rapanyane & Maphoto 2020). The tenet of cultural centeredness is premised on a conviction that African phenomenon and communities cannot be understood better when studied with foreign lenses. In this regard, researchers should be grounded on African experiences to have a better view and understanding of African phenomenon. In view of the above, the center refers to a location, place, or position. Unlike Eurocentric perspective deployed to study South Africa-China relations, the research will be rooted on African culture, ideals, values, and history. The tenet of centeredness goes beyond the perpetual subjection of Africans to historical and cultural disorientation by unmasking the marginalization of African economies as well. It is in this context that Afrocentricity calls on Africans to reclaim their culture, ideals, values, history, and interests to relocate their economies from languishing at the periphery to the center of the global economy (Schreiber 2000; Mazama 2001; Maphaka 2020a).

On the other hand, paradigmatic pluralism negates the dominance of Euro-American theories in multicultural studies. Given that the world is composed of diverse cultures, non-Europeans should be studied from their perspective as opposed to the imposition of Eurocentric ethnocentricity in non-Europeans. In other words, the perspective for each nation should be given its legitimate space to improve coexistence as the world is characterized by multiple cultures (Schreiber 2000; Ntseane 2011). In the context of South Africa-China relations, Afrocentricity is drawn to reclaim the position of African perspectives in the global intellectual space that has skewed the production of knowledge in favour of Euro-American theories. The latter should be understood in the context that scholarship in the two countries relations is dominated by the mainstream Euro-American theories, making an impression that Eurocentricity is supreme while is just a perspective among

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others. Thus, Africans are repositioned epistemically to think based on their experiences as the bedrock of their reasoning to study and understand an African phenomenon.

Liberation and cultural agency are premised on Afrocentric quest to re-centre, revive and liberate African societies. The latter include African history, views on epistemology, ontology, axiology, and the liberation of minds. In this context, Afrocentrists negates the marginalization of Africans contribution to the world knowledge and development. This should be understood in the context that Greek civilization was predated by African civilization. But it is the only Greek civilization that is credited to be the cradle of civilization, history, knowledge, and development. To remedy this epistemic injustice, African scholars and academics should engage into epistemic rebellion to call for the acknowledgement of the continent contribution to the production of knowledge, particularly Greek civilization (Schreiber 2000; Asante 2007; Maphaka 2020b).

The adoption and use of Afrocentricity in this article is premised on the epistemic location of the author as the South African marginalized decolonial thinker who forms part of the genuine voices of Africans that are perpetually marginalised in the studies of South Africa-China relations. Thus, the author shifts the analysis and understanding of South Africa-China relations to the experience of Africans. In view of the above, the study will form part of decolonial epistemic justice that negates the Eurocentric conviction of universality, neutrality, and single truth in the production of knowledge. The negation is largely premised on the fact that individual arguments are driven by their position to a certain class, sexuality, gender, spirituality, linguistic, location and race on the globe (Grosfoguel 2010). Thus, the author is not hidden or delinked from the analysis of South Africa-China relations, as Euro-American perspective does.

The article is anchored on a desktop qualitative approach that relied on secondary data. Leaning on Afrocentric theory, the acquisition and examination of data is informed and shaped by African people, norms, values, and culture. In this regard, the findings and recommendations of the study are shaped and informed by African values, interests, and problems, needs, history and their contemporary experience (Schreiber 2000; Mazama 2001; Asante 2007; Ntseane 2011; Reviere 2001; Mkabela 2005; Shai 2016). The article gleaned data from official policy documents, briefs, books, academic thesis/dissertation, and journal articles.

### ***South Africa-China Relations, 2013-2017***

South Africa's apartheid regime did not have formal diplomatic ties with the Peoples Republic of China before the 1990s. It was apartheid South Africa that joined the West to fight against Chinese People's Liberation Army during the 1950's Korean War. After 1994, the newly elected African National Congress government established official diplomatic relations with China and focused South Africa's foreign policy less on the West. Henceforth Africa and other developing countries were prioritised with a view to reintegrating the country into the wider international community and in growing and diversifying the economy after years of isolation triggered by the apartheid legislation (Yu 2018). With the West experiencing grave economic and liquidity crisis in the early days of President Zuma's government, the natural resource-thirsty but booming economies of India and China became the potential allies of resource exporting countries of the Third World. South Africa was thus gradually inclined to "Look East" for economic salvation (Alden and Wu 2016; Kotze 2012; Leso 2017).

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Zuma's government sought out trade opportunities presented by those countries. Over time trade with Asia grew to R760 billion while with the Middle East, it grew to R166 billion in 2014. Given the large populations of these countries, the potential for substantial growth was enormous. It is not surprising therefore that DIRCO opined that the region is critical for South Africa to expand trade and investment, technical cooperation as well as skills development opportunities (DIRCO 2016). Under Zuma South Africa thus gravitated towards the East with growing emphasis on trade with other BRICS countries (Neethling 2017; Qobo and Dube 2015). The move also reduced the dominance of Western companies in the South African economy (Alden and Wu 2014).

This policy shift brought about a number of subtle effects. The first was that human rights, up to now a cornerstone of South Africa's foreign policy, was replaced by "realpolitik". An example in this regard was when South Africa abstained on the United Nations Security Council vote intended to refer North Korea to the International Criminal Court (Carmody 2017). The second subtle shift came about in a speech during Zuma's interview with the CNBC Africa on 27 February 2014. During the interview, the President mentioned then that when doing business with China, South Africa is treated as an equal partner whereas Western countries acted as superiors and "masters". Zuma said that "China is doing business rather than telling its partners what they should do". He further emphasised that South Africa should learn from China how to extract high-level benefits from its mineral wealth to reduce unemployment and poverty (Matambo 2014).

At face value Zuma's comments carries water especially when one considers China's commitment to not interfere into the affairs of African countries. However, Chinese development aid was tied with conditions that respond to China's foreign policy objectives. For example, during the construction of the South African Agricultural Demonstration Centre in Gariep Dam in the Free State Province of South Africa, the role of the South African workforce was limited to provision of general labour and support services. On the other hand, China imported her engineers and artisans to work on the project. The agreement pertaining to the Demonstration Centre did not entail any provision for the employment of the South African engineers and artisans (Tshetlo and Naidoo 2015). In view of the above, South Africa responded to China's Global Going Out Strategy of 1996. Under this economic expansion policy, Chinese companies are encouraged to invest in various sectors and generate employment for Chinese at home and abroad. In this regard, South Africa served as a foundation to advance China's foreign policy objectives at expenses her interests.

Zuma further said the lessons from China should also dovetail with both national and continental development needs (Singh and Dube 2013). In this vein, he pledged to use Chinese investments to fund the development of infrastructure, notably transport and renewable energy projects. An example in this regard was when South African State-owned Enterprise, Transnet, concluded a R5 billion agreement with the Chinese Development Bank to fund the development of railways and port networks in South Africa, on 06 July 2017 (Valjilo 2018). The Chinese model of development also drew the attention of other governmental institutions, especially the South African Parliament. Out of the Chinese development model idea, a Sovereign Wealth Fund and State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission were set to be created to spur economic growth (Shoba 2018).



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### ***Challenges emanating from the relationship***

South Africa-China relations were not however without challenges. At the political level, South Africa reneged on a promise to grant the Dalai Lama a visa to enter the country at the invitation of his fellow Nobel Peace Laureate, Bishop Desmond Tutu, in 2015. This uncharacteristic shift was interpreted by many observers as an attempt by the country to curry favour with and appease China (Anthony, Tembe and Gull 2015). From an Afrocentric perspective, this could be described as an encroachment of the South African space for policy making and implementation. A phenomenon that resembles coloniality as China replicates the tendency of the West by handing policy direction to South Africa. In this regard, South Africa's foreign policy principle of promoting human rights at home and abroad was relegated to the periphery, while "One China Policy" occupied the apex in the asymmetrical relations between the world second largest economy and Africa's second largest economy.

Another problem was highlighted by Thulare (2015) study. In that study he indicated that there were huge job losses resulting from the importation of cheap Chinese manufactured products into South Africa. As such, steel imports from China prompted the dis-industrialisation of the South African steel industry in 2015. With China undergoing overproduction and facing a rising labour wages, Beijing steel enterprises relocated their operations to South Africa. The net effects of this relocation were that the South African steel producing companies, Evraz Highveld and Vanadium was bailed out and Tata Steel's Operation in Richards Bay went to auction. On the other hand, small steel enterprises such as Alert Steel and Duro Pressings became liquidated. As a result, the South African government-imposed tariffs in 2016 (Maphaka 2020b). Equally Soko and Qobo (2016) state that in changing its development model, China outsources and moves her labour-intensive industries as well as low skilled jobs to Africa, thus more capital-intensive and high-tech industries are developed at home. This development is prompted by increasing labour costs at home which made it necessary for manufacturing companies to move their operation to cheap areas.

Consequent to the above, South African unemployment rose from 75 000 to 85 000; a 25% job loss in the manufacturing industry alone for the period under study. The cheap Chinese imports inhibited the South African efforts at reducing unemployment and diversifying its economy (Ehizuelen and Abdi 2018). South African nationals are thus consigned to the margins of their national wealth which benefits their Chinese counterparts. In view of the above, it is safe to argue that the foregoing Chinese practices were not in keeping with the enhancement of manufacturing and acceleration of industrialisation advanced by Zuma's administration through the National Development Plan Vision 2030 and other domestic development policies. In this context, South Africa was responding to China's contemporary development priority of reforming her economy by relocating manufacturing industries to cheaper destination. As such, the prioritisation of China's development priorities at the expenses of those of South Africa created a situation wherein the latter country remained trapped to the margins of the global economy, while benefitting Chinese nationals and their country. This should be understood in the context that de-industrialisation by Chinese companies created wealth for Beijing and jobs for her nationals. Thus, South Africa's development priorities were overshadowed by those of China advanced through the Global Going Out Strategy Policy.

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South African Multinational Companies found it difficult to penetrate the African market because of Chinese competition (Alden and Wu 2014). Thulare (2015) is of the view that Chinese companies have an advantage over their South African competitors because of state subsidiaries. The Asian giant takes advantage of Africa to enter both the United States and European Union markets. It does this by relocating some of its companies to take advantage of the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act. Against the foregoing, it is clear that in as far as South Africa-China relations are concerned, the body of evidence cited above indicates that South Africa always comes second when doing business with China. This development corroborates Sun's (2014) argument that Africa serves as a foundation, a means rather than an end to China's engagement with its neighbouring and developed countries. In the context of Afrocentric theoretical framework adopted by the study, these asymmetrical relations do not advance the interests of South Africa and the continent in general. They inhibit the South African effort at relocating from the margins of the world economy and ceasing to be a net exporter of raw materials and net importer of manufactured goods. This means that trade ties resembling pre-independence ones, persist today.

### **Cultural and Academic Exchange**

2013 marked fifteen years of formal diplomatic ties between South Africa and China. To celebrate that achievement, the South Africa-China Friendship Association was established. The Association is aimed at enhancing friendship, understanding and cooperation through cultural and academic exchanges. It also seeks to promote economic and cultural interaction as well as facilitate skills and technology transfer. Subsequently, anniversary celebrations were held in South Africa and China respectively during that time. Thus, 2014 was celebrated as the "South African year in China" while 2015 was "China year in South Africa" (Wu and Alden 2014; Monareng 2016).

In 2018 a Journalism Department of China-Africa Reporting Project was established at the University of Witwatersrand. That Department brings Chinese journalists to South Africa to attend workshops concerning African issues. The first South Africa-China Dialogue was consequently held under the auspices of Africa-China Reporting Project & China Daily Africa at Witwatersrand University on the 22 February 2018 (Tutu 2018).

In 2014 the South African Department of Basic Education signed an agreement with China's Ministry of Education to incorporate mandarin into South Africa's public schools' curriculum. The agreement covers the training of teachers, vocational education, research, and development (Du Toit 2015, Yu 2018). For several observers and scholars (Du Toit 2015; Moinogu 2015; Yu 2018), South Africa stands to benefit immensely from that agreement as mandarin is likely to be the language of the world's leading economy. Mastering that language could potentially open opportunities for South African business in China (Wang 2013). Through the 2014\2015 anniversary program, Ministers of Arts and Culture from both countries were attempting to merge and finding common ground between their respective cultures. Several state-sponsored cultural activities were set-up to entertain people in schools, theatres, and town halls. These were also meant to increase trade in tourism. In this regard, direct flights from Johannesburg to Beijing were introduced in 2015 (Benyi 2017).

The South African Broadcasting Corporation also established offices in Beijing (Alden and Wu 2014). These cultural exchanges are meant to deepen people-people relations (Du Toit 2015). Beijing seeks to elevate its

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global role by spreading Chinese culture and language. For this purpose, it has started building Confucius Institutes on the continent as well as awarding scholarships to African students to study in China. In South Africa, those institutes were established at the Universities of Stellenbosch, Witwatersrand, Cape Town, Rhodes, and Pretoria, respectively (Liu Guijin 2014). During the 2016 South Africa-China Bi-National Commission meeting, China committed to increase short-term skills development programmes to reduce the skills gap in South Africa. It also undertook to provide training opportunities for South Africans until 2020 (DIRCO 2016).

In tertiary education, China is providing 200 scholarships for South African students while the South African Confucius Institutes are receiving funds from the Chinese government for academic purposes (Alden and Wu 2014). In 2017 alone, over 2600 South African students were studying in China (Wenjun 2018). The incorporation of mandarin in the South African basic education curriculum has raised eyebrows. Some critics, like Alden and Wu (2016), state that this move could further side-line South African indigenous languages. Others are questioning whether China is willing to facilitating studies in South African culture, norms, and languages.

From an Afrocentric viewpoint, the net effect of that would be “cultural disorientation” as South African indigenous languages are placed at the margins. In other words, China contributes to the colonial project of destroying and marginalising South African indigenous languages, while promoting her languages in the global intellectual space. Thus Euro-American linguistic and epistemic injustice is complemented by Chinese linguistic and epistemic injustice. South Africa should collaborate with China to incorporate her languages in the Chinese school curriculum. The recent introduction of Isizulu by Beijing Foreign Studies University through its Department of Zulu in 2019, has a potential to promote the South African languages. President Ramaphosa’s administration should in this regard put more effort in ensuring that the Zulu language is integrated in other Universities across China and cultural practices of indigenous South Africans are introduced in the Chinese basic and higher education curriculum.

### **Tourism and Wildlife Conservation**

To boost job creation, in 2010 South Africa opened a tourism office in China, later followed up with a Memorandum of Understanding on tourism signed in 2013. Since then, the number of Chinese tourists to South Africa rose from 84,000 in 2015 to 117, 000 in 2016, spending about R1 billion. According to Leso (2017) for each \$1million spent, 51 jobs were created. It is however not uncommon for Chinese nationals who visited South Africa under the pretext of tourism to be caught engaging in nefarious practices such as rhino poaching. The 2015 sixth Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Summit took place at the time South Africa was facing illegal rhino poaching. It was in that same year that the country hosted a Summit of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wildlife Fauna and Flora (CITES). South Africa is home to 80% of the 1015 rhinos lost in 2014 (Anthony, Terhuyse and Burgess 2015). The monetary value of rhinos killed between 2008 and 2014 is estimated at ZAR 421.3 billion (Wu 2015). Reportedly, rhino horns and ivory are sold to China and many other Asian countries. But a joint South Africa-China, CITES and Interpol co-operation has since 2014 led to the arrest of 400 poachers (Benjelloun 2015).



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In 2015 China-South Africa Youth Volunteers Programme in Wildlife Conservation Forum convened in Pretoria. Together with the African Wildlife Foundation and the Aspen Institute, held a threeday workshop in the Kruger National Park at which they demanded that wildlife issues (poaching and conservation) be included in the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation agenda of Johannesburg Action Plan. For China, collaborating with the continent on wildlife matters also serves as a source of knowledge and strengthens relations with Africa. In 2017 China closed its local ivory trade in solidarity with efforts to nip the poaching of African elephants in the bud (Staden, Alden and Wu 2018).

Arguably, some Chinese nationals poses a threat to tourism industry which generate much revenue to the South African economy and contribute immensely to the employment. Beyond that, rhino and elephant are sacred family totems in many African communities and define them for what they are (Ntseane 2011). The fact that those animals could become extinct threatens the wellbeing of these communities in South Africa.

### **BRICS and the African Agenda**

Under Zuma South Africa strengthened its trade ties with BRICS countries. Doing so was necessitated by, among others, the 2011 uprisings in Libya. Though South Africa voted in favour of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1970 and 1973 respectively, Zuma was very critical of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation actions which led to the ouster and ultimate assassination of Muammar Gaddafi, the former Libyan President (Landsberg 2012). Given that his foreign policy had been guided by the core founding principles outlined by Mandela, at that point in time Zuma's priorities were to align his actions with those of the African Union. The latter was calling for, among others, African solidarity in the face of Western onslaught (Alden and Wu 2016; Langa and Shai 2019).

When South Africa moved closer to BRICS it brought with it a foreign policy with an African Agenda. This is so because the country views itself as an integral part of the continent whose interests cannot be attained without stability and prosperity in Africa (Neethling 2017). South Africa has thus committed to pursue a foreign policy dedicated towards African renaissance and the removal of all remnants of colonialism (Neethling 2017; Monyae 2012; Hengari 2014). In BRICS, South Africa seeks to advance African regional integration (RI) by providing support to regional economic communities (REC) and New Partnership for African Development. It also seeks to promote peace through peacemaking, peacekeeping, and post-conflict reconstruction. For this purpose, it contributes troops to the African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) (DIRCO 2016; Landsberg 2012). The African Agenda is linked with South-South cooperation to ensure that the continent reaps benefits emanating from rapid economic growth (Monyae 2012; Hengari 2014). South Africa's BRICS membership is thus dedicated towards advancing national, regional, and continental interests (Abdenur and Folly 2017; Sidiropoulos et al 2018).

In line with this policy, when the 2013 BRICS Summit convened South Africa invited the Chairs of continental and regional institutions (Mthembu 2019). Held in South Africa, that 2013 Summit was accordingly themed "BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Development, Integration, and Industrialisation". The Summit was therefore able to deliberate issues pertaining to infrastructure development, integration, and industrialisation with counterparts in Africa and on the African soil (Sidiropoulos et al 2018; Muresan 2019). These developments enabled South Africa to successfully lobby the BRICS New Development Bank to fund

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infrastructure on the continent. In 2017 a BRICS African regional centre was opened in Johannesburg for the purposes of, among others, providing the continent with the much-needed technical assistance and funding (Bertelsmann-scott, Friis and Prinsloo 2016; Mazenda and Ncwadi 2016).

### BRICS New Development Bank

South Africa together with its other partners created a BRICS development bank in 2015. Among others, New Development Bank seeks;

- To reform the global financial institutions so that they respond timeously to the contemporary world. BRICS countries regard the current global institutions as outdated.
- To provide alternative funding mechanisms as traditional financial institutions are considered unfair to emerging economies (Abdenur 2014). Traditional international financial institutions seem unwilling or reluctant to fund infrastructure development in emerging markets (Qobo and Soko 2015), and
- To provide a more coordinated funding approach by BRICS states (Bertelsmann-scott, Prinsloo, Sidiripoulos, Wentworth and Wood 2016).

Another reason for the New Development Bank is to provide the world with new ideas. These differ from those enshrined in the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. Collectively BRICS countries are essentially opposed to Western hegemony and together advocate that individual countries should formulate their own policies independently instead of the one-size-fits-all model of the West (Mthembu 2019).

While BRICS New Development Bank no-strings attached policies provide an enabling environment for South Africa to use loans on its own terms or in a manner that is responsive to her development needs, implementing such policies in a colonial world order limits South Africa's growth potential. The latter should be understood in the context that South African growth and development objectives are tied to a transformed world order (Maloka 2019, and China and Russia are reluctant to support the inclusion of South Africa, Brazil, and India in the transformed United Nations Security Council (Maphaka 2020a). In this regard, South Africa, India, and Brazil acts like colonial subjects that respond more to the interests of China and Russia while their interests receive scant attention. The BRICS Outreach Dialogue which draws the African continent into BRICS Summits and the New Development Bank funding of the African infrastructure, enable China and Russia to draw the support of African countries in their multilateral engagements. Moreover, the no-strings attached policy advanced by the BRICS New Development Bank, provides an enabling environment for China and Russia to advance their alternative policies to those of the West in the Global South, including the African continent.

In agreement, Anthony *et al* (2015) indicates that the no-strings attached policy of the BRICS offers an alternative avenue to Western loans and development aid pretext as a tool of interference to advance Western neo-liberal policies in Africa and other parts of the Global South. With this, it is safe to argue that the New Development Bank is used by Russia in her endeavour to reclaim her erstwhile status and frustrate any threat from the West. Arguing on the BRICS New Development Bank, Hooijmaaijers (2021) asserts that the bank enables states such as Russia to evade sanctions imposed by the Western Europe countries and the United States of America. While other multilateral financial institutions cannot extend any loan to the sanctioned

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Russia, the country is receiving loans from the New Development Bank with the sanctions having no effect as the loans are extended through the local currency as opposed to the United States dollar. On the other hand, China is using the bank to advance her ambition of climbing to the peak of the globe.

The foregoing developments are corroborated by Besada and Tok (2014: 76) argument that “other countries, particularly China and Russia, are instrumentalizing the forum to get what they want out of African countries without formalizing the grouping’s policies and effecting change to global institutions at the global level, as was initially promised”. Senona (2010: 10) underscores that “countries of the South, in particular African countries outside of IBSA and the BRIC, need to be circumspect when dealing with these emerging powers. Africa should ask probing questions and not take these alliances at face value, as these countries are strong, fast emerging economies already claiming a serious stake in global economic dominance”. The presence of BRIC countries on the African continent is not largely driven by their wish to support development in the region. At the heart of their policy towards Africa is a strive to use the continent to advance their commercial interests, draw political and diplomatic support in the international community and multilateral institutions (Soko and Qobo 2016).

The implications of these developments are that South Africa and the African continent on its entirety remain what Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2014) calls the net recipient of norms, rules, and policies crafted for them without them. The selective reform of the International Financial Institutions (the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank) advanced by China and Russia perpetuates coloniality that position South Africa, India, and Brazil on the margins of the asymmetrical globe dominated by Euro-American developed countries. This is so because the un-decolonised Council sustain the Western control, domination, and exploitation of the Global South, including the Africa continent. Majority of the Council missions are undertaken on the Global South particularly the African continent, thus their absence in the organ implies that their destiny is designed for them without them. The latter is supported by Carvalho, Gruzd and Mutangadura (2019) argument that majority of issues addressed by the United Nations Security Council are on the African continent. The continent stood at number 27 out of 53 regions that the United Nations Security Council had to deal with in 2018, hosting 14 United Nations Peacekeeping missions.

New Development Bank funds poverty alleviation and gas and biomass projects intended as alternative energy sources (Mazenda and Newadi 2016). It also funds traditional projects like hydroelectric dams and coal-fired power stations (Qobo and Soko 2015). In 2016, New Development Bank issued loans of up to \$6.1 trillion to member-states for the development of green energy sources. South African state-owned power utility (Eskom) received a loan of \$811 million to construct transmission lines to connect 500 megawatts of renewable energy produced by independent power producers (IPPs) to the national grid (Neethling 2017; Mthembu 2019). If done properly, the New Development Bank loan to Eskom could reduce loadshedding in South Africa (Bertelsmann-Scott et al 2016). Continental projects in which South Africa is involved and funded by the New Development Bank include the Grand Inga Dam meant to generate hydropower from the Congo River in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Another New Development Bank funded project is the Lesotho Highlands water project intended to supply South Africa with water. The Mokolo water pipeline is intended to supply the Gauteng province with water (Bertelsmann-Scott et al 2016).

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With South Africa being largely rural and her development being skewed in favour of urban areas, the absence of small-scale infrastructure projects on the New Development Bank perpetuates the unequal development patterns of colonial-apartheid regime. The net effects of these are that South African rural areas receive scant attention on national infrastructure development funding and alternative multilateral financial institutions such as the BRICS New Development Bank. In view of the above, BRICS New Development Bank is delinked from the South African development disparities, and this limits its ability to respond to South Africa's development objectives. Apart from energy projects, South African rural areas are largely neglected in the projects funded by the New Development Bank. South African should develop and engage BRICS countries with a comprehensive Afrocentric policy that is informed by her interests, needs and problems including her development dynamics.

### ***BRICS Think-Tanks Council***

The foregoing idea is already evident in BRICS-Think-Tanks-Council (BTTC), established in 2013. BTTC was established among others,

- To conduct research pertaining to policymaking
- To make recommendations that guide the organisation (Mazenda 2016).

BTTC comprises of the Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA) of Brazil, National Committee for BRICS Research (NRC BRICS) of Russia, the Observer Research Foundation (ORF) of India, China Centre for Contemporary World Studies (CCCWS) and the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) of South Africa. For its part, the HSRC was mandated to oversee and finalise the establishment of BTTC long-term vision and strategy. It was further tasked with drafting the strategic vision of the African continent particularly on issues pertaining to global finance, economic and governance (Mazenda 2016). It promotes knowledge production and dissemination, included here is the student exchange program (BRICS 2015).

### ***BRICS Business Council***

Other BRICS institutions include the BRICS Business Council (BBC). It was established to advance and deepen business, trade, and investment relations amongst member-states by facilitating regular dialogue between business and governments of BRICS countries. Through these dialogues, problems and logjams are identified and remedies proposed. These measures are meant to deepen economic, trade and investment cooperation between BRICS states (Mazenda 2016).

BBC is composed of five (5) working groups tasked to address areas as infrastructure, manufacturing, financial services, energy and green economy and skills development. They also facilitate interaction between business communities. Among areas recommended for greater cooperation is agroprocessing, manufacturing of value-added goods, sustainable development, and financial services. Through the BBC, member-states commit to cooperate with the African continent in areas as agroprocessing, beneficiation, energy, development of infrastructure and skills (Mazenda 2016).

## **Conclusion**

The article revisits South Africa-China relations during Zuma's administration to interrogate a question of whether the relationship is mutually beneficial or China benefit at the expense of South Africa. It established that China benefits more at the expense of South Africa and to some extent Pretoria is subsumed to Beijing

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foreign policy objectives. In this regard, South Africa's foreign policy principle of promoting human rights at home and abroad is relegated to the periphery, while "One China Policy" occupied the apex in the asymmetrical relations between the world second largest economy and Africa's second largest economy.

In her quests to change its development model with high-tech industries in the face of high labour costs, China relocates its labour-intensive industries to South Africa and the latter lead to de-industrialization of the South African economy. China contributes to the colonial project of destroying and marginalising South African indigenous languages, while promoting her languages in the global intellectual space through the exportation of her Mandarin to South Africa, while giving little attention to South African languages and cultural practices at home. The BRICS New Development Bank no-strings attached policies turns South Africa and the African continent on its entirety as a testing ground for alternative policies from China and Russia, while the much-needed reformed global order to stimulate growth and development on the continent is undermined by the United Nations Security Council member states. Poaching by Chinese nations pose a to the identity of some African South African communities and the tourism industry which generates jobs and serves as a source of revenue to the economy.

## **Recommendations**

South Africa should disentangle itself from Chinese colonial practices by monitoring and enforcing the implementation of agreements meant to reduce trade deficit. South Africa should complement the foregoing agreements by imposing quotas against Chinese manufactured goods and imported labour force. This will facilitate the transfer of skills and technology as well as the creation of employment promoted by South African development policies. South Africa should collaborate with China to incorporate her languages in the Chinese school curriculum. The recent introduction of Isizulu by Beijing Foreign Studies University through its Department of Zulu in 2019, has a potential to promote the South African languages. President Ramaphosa's administration should in this regard put more effort in ensuring that the Zulu language is integrated in other Universities across China and cultural practices of indigenous South Africans are introduced in the Chinese basic and higher education curriculum.

South Africa should join efforts with other African Union member states to draft an Afrocentric policy through which they will lobby BRICS Bank to fund their infrastructure in a manner that is in keeping with their development patterns. The South African national government should coordinate with rural provinces and their local governments to identify infrastructure projects that could be funded by the BRICS New Development Bank. On issues pertaining to global reform, an Afrocentric policy tailored to make the reform of the United Nations Security Council a priority and binding towards BRICS should be adopted. This will curb contradictory postures undertaken by China and Russia on the Council reform.

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