

Concerned Africans Forum



SOUTH AFRICA'S AFRICA AGENDA



Prospects and challenges

Edited by Garth le Pere
and Anthoni van Nieuwkerk

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Youth volunteers mobilising against COVID-19, Addis Ababa, August 2020 ... 'the pandemic is the biggest setback to Africa's development since the Cold War'. (UNICEF Ethiopia / Nahom Tesfaye via Flickr)

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May 2021



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Cover and above: The African Union in session, Addis Ababa, 10 February 2019. Since then, the COVID-19 pandemic has presented African multilateralism with unprecedented challenges. (Paul Kagame via Flickr)

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As can be appreciated, a project of this nature would not have been possible without drawing on the intellectual creativity, academic excellence, and commitment of the authors. We thank them all for their contributions and cooperation throughout the drafting and editing process.

As readers will discover, the project has been substantially enriched by the wisdom and experience of former president Thabo Mbeki, and we are grateful to him for his participation. The conclusion also captures some of the ideas and suggestions of the many attendees of the webinar on 25 February 2021; to them my thanks as well.

I would like to reserve a special appreciation for the CAF project team that managed the process from beginning to end. Many thanks to the editors, Dr Garth le Pere and Prof Anthoni van Nieuwkerk, who commissioned the essays and guided the process conceptually and administratively. They were ably assisted by Ms Motlatsi Tsiane of the Thabo Mbeki Foundation who was seconded to CAF to help with the planning and administration of this project.

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Mongane Wally Serote

April 2021

Introduction

THIS PUBLICATION encapsulates the results of a project aimed at assessing the future of South Africa's 'African Agenda'. It focuses on the normative and strategic imperatives of this country's engagement with the African continent, in the context of relevant global dynamics and emerging systemic challenges.

The project was motivated by the need to review South Africa's role in Africa in view of President Cyril Ramaphosa's presidency of the African Union for 2020/2021, against the backdrop of a growing range of growth and development challenges across the continent, plus the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. The publication is the final product of this year-long project, undertaken by the Concerned Africans Forum (CAF) and supported by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES). It started with a strategic conversation at a meeting of CAF members in March 2020. As such, it will be useful to provide some background about CAF as well as its work.

CAF was conceived in 2011, in the aftermath of regime change in Libya. An influential and prescient open letter about Libya by 15 prominent CAF founding members – led by Aziz Pahad, a former South African deputy minister of foreign affairs, and the founding CAF chairperson – provided the impetus for regular dialogues in three main dimensions: interrogating challenges to South Africa's democratic consolidation; examining important dynamics affecting the African continent; and keeping an informed eye on developments on the global stage. In these dimensions, CAF promoted a critical perspective, refracted through a progressive lens.

Its efforts were generously aided and supported by the Thabo Mbeki Foundation. CAF also created the 'soft' infrastructure for distributing the outcomes of these dialogues, most of which were led by invited experts. Progress during those initial years provided the inspiration for the first CAF-sponsored book, a collection of papers by selected authors, amplified by open letters and public statements, titled *Promoting Progressive African Thought Leadership*, and edited by Aziz Pahad, Garth le Pere and Miranda Strydom. The title reflected CAF's growing contribution to South Africa's discursive canon, and its thematic coverage remains impressive. A sampling from the book's contents will suffice:

- Implications of the Malian conflict on the Sahel region;
- A Fanonian perspective on nation-building in post-apartheid South Africa;
- The Egyptian crisis, coups, and military control;
- Critical reflections on the 2013 elections in Zimbabwe;
- US geopolitical interests and the militarisation of Africa;
- The Al-Qaeda threat in Africa;
- Why inequality in South Africa matters: trends and interventions;

President Cyril Ramaphosa chairs the Second Mid-Year Coordination Meeting among the AU, Regional Economic Communities, Regional Mechanisms and Member States, 22 November 2020. (GCIS via Flickr)



- Open letters on Libya and Syria; and
- Statements of concern about East Jerusalem and Israel/Palestine.

This volume was published almost five years ago. Since then, South Africa, the continent and the world have experienced tectonic shifts and changes, manifested in different ways, but all with volatility, uncertainty and complexity as a leitmotif. South Africa has been caught in a vortex of ‘state capture’ that has sullied its constitutional integrity and democratic progress. Africa continues to struggle with tensions between the inertia of the post-colonial state and the promise of Pan-African unity and integration, and the global theatre has experienced a toxic alchemy of disruptive developments. Its ingredients – with Trump and Trumpism adding to and stirring the pot – include rising military tensions; adversarial trade and commercial relations; environmental and ecological decay; hard and soft cyber abuse; atavistic bigotry and racism; and corrosive nativist identities.

The COVID storm

However, nothing prepared the global commons for the storm unleashed in 2020 by the COVID-19 pandemic. In South Africa, across the continent, and in every other country and region, we are left with the imponderable question of how to endure the unendurable, and how to find certainty in a universe with few remaining verities other than what the Horsemen of the Apocalypse will bring next. Indeed, we have been left humbled, without any safe moorings, since nothing seems certain except death and taxes, as the American founding father Benjamin Franklin famously proclaimed.

The people of South Africa, Africa, and the rest of the world have little choice but to accept the absurdity of our current situation and the vectors that drive it – yet we must fight back, as ‘communities of fate’. Immanuel Kant observed almost two centuries ago that as a human species we are ‘unavoidably bound side by side’, joined by our common vulnerabilities and our interconnectedness. As such, we ought to stubbornly persist, rather than yield to despair.

South Africa's leadership ambitions in Africa have been subject to controversy, contested on various institutional fronts as well as by certain countries that straddle the Anglophone and Francophone divide.

This brings me to the motivation behind this publication. Since South Africa's democratic transition in 1994, Africa has been at the centre of its foreign policy and diplomatic strategy. According to its White Paper on foreign policy of May 2011, titled *Building a Better World: The Diplomacy of Ubuntu*, its foreign policy is decidedly Afro-centric, 'rooted in national liberation, the quest for African renewal, and efforts to negate the legacy of colonialism as well as neo-colonialism'. This stems from the recognition that the country's fate is inextricably intertwined with that of the continent.

Leadership role in Africa

Hence, its ambition to play a leadership role in Africa has been bolstered by its economic power and recognised stature. In this setting, South Africa has attempted to promote a developmental and cooperative approach as part of its overall leadership role in Africa. This has included: contributing to building regional and continental institutions; improving the peace and security complex; promoting norms of good governance, democracy and human rights; resolving and mediating conflicts; and providing support for peacekeeping.

However, its leadership ambitions in Africa have been subject to controversy, contested on various institutional fronts as well as by certain countries that straddle the Anglophone and Francophone divide. This stems in part from South Africa's own challenges, especially in respect of its strategic and diplomatic competencies. These have been tested while navigating the complex political economy of Africa and coming to grips with the nature of the African post-colonial state and its weighty sovereign-based interstate system. There have been serious diplomatic deficits in managing its demanding 'African Agenda', while the ANC government has struggled to establish its legitimacy and project its identity across the African landscape in a manner that promotes a recognition of its 'soft power' attributes.

Indeed, the image and influence of its government as well as its business sector have declined markedly since the efforts of President Thabo Mbeki to promote a revivalist Pan-African ideology in the form of an 'African Renaissance'. The negative – often unfounded and self-serving – reactions to 'xenophobic violence' in South Africa by broad segments of Africa's political class, business leadership, and citizenry are symptomatic of South Africa's problematic image and declining influence in Africa.

The simple fact is that if Africa is to grow and develop, it needs South Africa as much as South Africa needs Africa. The 50-year African growth and development vision of the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the growth and welfare benefits of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) provide a fertile arena in which South Africa could exercise decisive and creative leadership in driving the continent's integration efforts.

Prior to the pandemic, African Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was due to reach \$3 trillion by 2030, and the economies of some 20 countries were due to grow by more than 5% a year. Although former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan once lamented what he called the 'democratic recession' in Africa, considerable progress has also been made with democratisation, peace and security, good governance, and popular electoral participation.

However, exacerbated by the pandemic, economic conditions are likely to remain difficult. This is particularly the case in respect of domestic revenue resources, levels of poverty, welfare and service delivery, capital flows, the political climate, and terms of trade. At the level of the AU and its Regional Economic Communities (RECs), there are persistent institutional and managerial deficits, capacity vacuums, and implementation shortcomings.

Moreover, Africa's international relations are compounded by ongoing dependent trade and cooperation relations with the West, asymmetric and unequal engagements with China, fractured multilateralism, and economic nationalism and protectionism. The newly elected American president, Joe Biden, is unlikely to restore the liberal world order as we once knew it, since the effects of the toxic alchemy we have referred to – fuelled by Trumpism – reside deep within the anatomy of international relations.

Therefore, in thinking about how South Africa could redefine its diplomatic, strategic, and political calculus vis-à-vis Africa, we, as editors, assumed that the challenge would be to deal squarely and honestly with the impediments to South Africa's leadership role in the context of the fast-changing continental and global dynamics we have attempted to describe. With this as a premise for the project, we developed a conceptual framework with indicative themes that could lend analytical coherence to a deeper appraisal and wider examination. Once approved by the CAF committee, and with the FES on board as a project partner, we solicited five authoritative essays illuminating these themes, which appear in this publication.

The webinar

On 25 February 2021, these essays were presented to a webinar attended by a select but broad audience of academics, diplomats, politicians, government officials, business people, civil society representatives and others, most from within South Africa but also from elsewhere in Africa as well as abroad. Former president Mbeki not only participated in the webinar, but also delivered a cogent summation of the proceedings. In the course of doing so, he provided an invaluable overview of South Africa's efforts in its post-transition period to help spur the continent's economic regeneration, resulting in the adoption of the ground-breaking New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), in which he played a leading role. A summary of this account comprises the first substantive contribution to this volume.

Drawing on his profound knowledge and personal experience, former president Mbeki describes the changed landscape in which this role was conceived and implemented, underlining that the conclusion of the struggle against colonialism and apartheid

The abuse of power and a lack of accountability have been pervasive features of the post-colonial state in Africa, and South Africa's attempt to play a constructive continental role must confront these ambiguities.

introduced a new chapter in African history, allowing South Africa and other African countries to turn their gaze to the continent's economic regeneration. He provides vital insights into how South Africa, with its dynamic comparative advantages, could generate the force multipliers for driving this project, but then failed to live up to expectations. We gain a better understanding of the forces that shaped the logic of NEPAD and its partnership ethos; problems and obstacles encountered in the course of its implementation; the subsequent decline of Pan-Africanism; persistent problems of African leadership; prospects for the continental free trade area; and lessons South Africa should bear in mind in thinking about a new compact with Africa. This provides an enduring backdrop to the five essays that follow.

The five essays

In the first essay, Joelen Pretorius and Thomas Mandrup wrestle with the interlinked questions of the future of the liberal international order, its impact on Africa, and how the dynamics on both fronts could shape South Africa's foreign policy. Their account is insightful for its sensitive treatment of the age of anxiety and fear we now live in as well as the recent geo-political and geo-economic convulsions that have weakened the fabric of interdependence. Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic highlights the 'normative chaos' in current international relations. The authors consider two logics in a global environment marked by turbulence, uncertainty and insecurity: a strategic reorientation of South Africa's foreign policy, and how African countries can develop their own capacities for agency and autonomous action.

In the second essay, Ademola Araoye deploys his arsenal of philosophical aesthetics, a reflective analytical critique, and vast practical knowledge and experience of Africa to assess the nature of Pan-Africanism. His assessment is based on two mutually reinforcing motifs. The first is what he calls 'the contrived dehumanisation of the black being' by the West, but especially by France, and the redemptive redress that is necessary. In the second, he refers to Africa's 'current unedifying state' which is attributable to the damaging false narrative and myth-making about Africa by the West, aided and abetted by the 'feeble consciousness' and complicity of early African leaders.

Both motifs, he argues, have contributed to the dysfunctional inter-state architecture of post-colonial states. In Araoye's aesthetic, Pan-Africanism provides a register of thought and action capable of transcending the strictures of this inheritance. As philosophy and praxis, Pan-Africanism is all about reaffirming the African self, propelled, in turn, by self-confidence and self-respect. This presents South Africa with an opportunity for moral leadership, drawing on its own example of liberation.

Third, Richard Jurgens and Luz Helena Hanauer bring a sharp scalpel to the problems that beset African leadership, engaging in an interesting dialogue with Araoye's essay in the process. Their main concern is to locate the place of psychology in African history through an explanatory rather than a reductionist post-modernist lens. The abuse of power and lack of accountability have been pervasive features of the post-colonial state in Africa, and South Africa's attempt to play a constructive continental role must confront these ambiguities. This calls for a consideration of how public accountability and the neutrality of power can be recrafted to reflect new ethical realities and governance imperatives linked to solidarity, cooperation, responsibility and empathy. Linkages must be forged between vertical state-driven and horizontal society-driven forms of leadership potential that could invigorate 'decolonised' forms of governance and democracy.

Fourth, Scarlett Cornelissen investigates the prospects of African multilateralism in view of the impact of COVID-19 on the continent's growth and development. The exhortation of 'The Africa We Want' that has given life to Agenda 2063 will have to confront serious structural impediments and constraints in a difficult and changing global environment as a result of the pandemic. Her assessment is sobering: 'the more the global health crisis deepens, the starker its systemic fallout becomes.' Given this, she calls for a normative reorientation, a 'co-constitution between South Africa's African Agenda and continental multilateralism', as a means of enhancing agency to address the morbid symptoms of the systemic fallout. Such a co-constitution already has the necessary connective tissue which includes the programmes of Agenda 2063, integration projects such as the AfCFTA, and possible synergies with South-South initiatives such as China's Belt and Road Initiative.

In the final essay, Jakkie Cilliers offers important and insightful empirical material that underpins his formulation of how COVID-19 will affect the development of Africa and South Africa, especially as far as debt and instability are concerned. The three scenarios which he develops – with economic impact and mortality as the main referents – bring the catastrophic reality of the pandemic into stark relief. Through the essay's insights, we gain a better understanding and appreciation of the pandemic's impact on South Africa and the African continent as well as options for socio-economic recovery. This essay further reflects the need for fundamental policy redesigns at the national, regional and continental levels, and highlights key challenges that policy-makers must grapple with in order to make the most appropriate interventions.

As noted earlier, these essays were presented to a webinar which provided a valuable opportunity for discussion, interaction, and the canvassing of diverse views. Ultimately, 130 people from South Africa, southern Africa, Africa and other world regions participated, with former president Mbeki delivering the summation. The results of the webinar and the project as a whole have been synthesised in the conclusion, together with suggestions for taking this project forward.

South Africa's role in Africa: looking back and forward

AFTER SOUTH Africa's liberation, we in the African National Congress (ANC) began to discuss what this meant for the rest of Africa, as well as the country's future role on the continent and on the global stage. The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) had largely focused on developing a common African response to the challenge of eradicating colonialism and apartheid. With this concluded, we could collectively turn to economic development.

Clearly, we required a cohesive approach, in order to address the issues of poverty and underdevelopment as well as economic relations between Africa and the rest of the world. Politically, we had gone through a process of decolonisation, but Africa's economic relationship with the rest of the world essentially remained a neocolonial one. How could this be changed? By then, we already had the Lagos Plan of Action for Africa's economic development, as well as a process for establishing regional economic communities (RECs). Therefore, we concluded that South Africa's liberation provided the continent with a renewed opportunity to focus on the issue of economic development and integration.

How could South Africa contribute to this process? Given that the ANC had maintained representatives in many African countries, we had a sense of what the continent thought of South Africa – not just the ANC, but the country itself. We were perceived as a relatively developed African country with enormous economic potential, and with significant capacity to contribute to the continent's economic development.

The establishment of NEPAD

We then said, let us take the initiative to return to the Lagos Plan of Action and the Abuja Treaty, which focused on the challenges of economic development and integration. We engaged with the presidents of Nigeria and Algeria, Olusegun Obasanjo and Abdelaziz Bouteflika, and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) came into the picture.

Whatever its merits or demerits, NEPAD was an economic development plan elaborated by Africans themselves. It talked about a partnership among ourselves as Africans, as well as a partnership between Africa and the rest of the world. It contained detailed targets and programmes for various economic sectors, whether infrastructure, industrialisation, agriculture or education. It also emerged very clearly that we needed a stable and enabling political environment. For this reason, the discussion was not only about economic



NEPAD's architects ... Presidents Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria and Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria during a summit in Algiers, March 2007. (Alamy)

development, but also about peace and security. So, in a sense, NEPAD was a comprehensive development model.

Challenges to African economic integration

Two aspects were seen as particularly important. The first was the need for strong RECs, which were meant to be the main building blocks of continental integration. However, they were unevenly developed, in institutional and other terms, with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) perhaps being the most advanced. For various reasons, the actual impact of RECs on the global African agenda was minimal, and their institutional and organisational weaknesses remained a challenge.

We also faced various practical challenges. For example, economic integration would clearly require a lot of infrastructure – roads, rail, and so on. So we decided to set up an African fund to enable the development of this infrastructure with our own resources in the first instance, which we could discuss within NEPAD. This fund still exists today.

Where would the money come from? We set out to establish whether African pension funds would be willing to make this kind of investment. South Africa's Public Investment Corporation (PIC) agreed, took a lead, and started talking to other pension funds as well. But the response from the rest of the continent was very poor. In fact, when we started, the only two countries that put money into the infrastructure development fund were South Africa and Ghana. When approached by the PIC, a sizeable public sector pension

fund in a certain African country responded by saying it could not invest these funds on the continent because the risk levels were too high. Instead, it was investing on the London Stock Exchange.

Relations with the developed world

We also agreed that we should restructure the relationship between Africa and the rest of the world, particularly the developed world. This resulted in a systematic process of constructing a relationship between Africa, represented in this instance by NEPAD, and the G8, a group of eight leading developed countries. We said to the G8, you should structure your own economic relations with the continent in terms of this new African development plan, which represents an African concept of where it wants to get itself. They agreed, and formulated a G8 Action Plan for Africa in response to NEPAD.

We even set up joint structures, including a monitoring committee aimed at ensuring mutual accountability. One of the conditions was that G8 representatives should have immediate access to heads of government, to make sure the plan was implemented. For instance, the French representative on the committee was Michel Camdessus, former head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), who had direct access to the French president, Jacques Chirac. The committee met regularly. Among others, it began to discuss debt relief, and began to work towards concrete commitments in this regard. As a result, for a certain period, this issue appeared on the agenda of the G8 summits. For example, when Tony Blair was British prime minister, certain decisions were taken and acted upon.

South Africa's retreat from its Africa policy

On the NEPAD side, there was a committee, chaired by President Obasanjo, and the deputy chairs were Algeria and Senegal. It was suggested that South Africa should act as the secretariat, but we declined, because we felt we should not be seen as a dominant player. For instance, when the African Union (AU) was launched in 2002, we agreed with Nigeria that it was not necessary for countries like us to be members of the AU Commission. The Commission has ten members, and the argument was that it should not be dominated by the biggest countries on the continent, as this might deter participation by smaller countries and hence undermine their commitment.

At the time, this argument was presented to us by the Tanzanian foreign minister, Jakaya Kikwete, who said South Africa should not compete with smaller African countries because they would not want to be bossed around by a big brother. He argued that South Africa and Nigeria did not need to be members of the Commission to play a leadership role. So we agreed, and this is why, for many years, we did not put up a candidate for membership of the AU Commission. The later decision by South Africa to seek to chair the Commission – which resulted in Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma becoming the chair – was incorrect, and its impact has been to lower South Africa's prestige as well as its capacity to lead.



President Thabo Mbeki, British prime minister Tony Blair and German Chancellor Angela Merkel prior to a meeting with African heads of state at a G8 summit in Heiligendamm, Germany, June 2007. (Alamy)

As regards NEPAD, we also said we did not want any official position. It had a chair and deputy chairs, and that was its entire leadership. Then the ANC suggested that NEPAD's operational headquarters should be in South Africa. This was done, and the secretariat was headed by a South African, Professor Wiseman Nkuhlu. But South Africa was not represented in the top leadership structure. This is an enduring issue in respect of South Africa's relationship with the rest of the continent.

The decline of South Africa's foreign policy in Africa

In 2009, South Africa effectively underwent a change of government. This is when South Africa's Africa policy experienced a decline. It started with bilateral relations in the context of the NEPAD process. We had also sought to build good relations with our neighbouring countries in the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). To give a small example: Many tourists come to South Africa and go to the Drakensberg, but we share those mountains with Lesotho. Why not encourage those tourists to cross the mountains and spend time in Lesotho as well? Therefore, let's look into building the roads needed to enable this kind of interaction.

We also had a major discussion with Namibia about the boundary along the Orange River. The colonial boundary was on the northern bank, which meant the whole river was located inside South Africa. The Namibians were saying that, in terms of international practice, boundaries could also be in the middle. We responded by saying, why go on like this, having to change maps? A better solution would be to agree that Namibia should have full access to the river.

But even that system of bilateral relations began to untangle, and effectively ceased to exist. It was part of the process of South Africa's retreat from a coherent Africa policy.

We have been through a period when we destroyed the respect the rest of the continent had for South Africa. For us to play a positive role beyond a purely selfish one, we need to redevelop a Pan-African perspective.

In one manifestation, when we were contending for the chair of the AU Commission, we said the reason we didn't win the first round was because of the Francophone factor, where French-speaking countries did not support the South African candidate. South Africa cannot talk politics of this kind, but we did.

In terms of our thinking about where South Africa should be in relation to Africa, we should go back to these kinds of issues, to assess: Where were we? Where did we want to get to? Why didn't we get there? Why did we fail? Part of this arises in the context of the persistent question: How do we become active agents of our own development? If you look around the continent and its political leadership, it is evident that the commitment at the time of NEPAD to a Pan-African perspective has weakened greatly over the years. The idea that drove NEPAD is much weaker now than it was in the past.

Prospects for the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)

The AfCFTA is an important development, but it has been overmarketed and oversold. It's being presented as though, in a couple of years, Africa will suddenly become prosperous. SADC took decisions about transforming itself into a free trade area, and it was decided that South Africa should reduce tariffs first and do so fast to develop and expand the regional market for goods and services. However, a few years later, we found this had done nothing to change the economic relationship between South Africa and the rest of the region.

Similarly, it will take a long time for the African free trade area to produce positive results. Also, South Africa should carefully consider its own position. Correctly, Nigeria was hesitant to sign the agreement, because no country should enter into such an arrangement if this would detract from its own industrialisation. It should certainly not accept it if it means that South Africa will simply use Nigeria as an additional export market.

That is why there is still a continuing discussion about the rules of origin – the rules about the sources of goods to be traded freely on the continent. Effectively, someone could bring in shirts from outside Africa, put a 'made in South Africa' label on them, and sell them on the continent duty-free. In the end, the question must be answered: what products do African countries have to export to one another? The capacity to export to one another and trade in this very transformative way requires transformed economies. For the most part, these do not currently exist, and establishing them will take time.

South Africa must examine itself in this context. My own view is that we should still avoid appearing to be a dominant – in reality an imperial – power that benefits from African integration to the detriment of other African countries.

Chinese President Xi Jinping during a BRICS Summit in Johannesburg, South Africa, July 2018 ... Africa also needs to agree on an appropriate relationship with China.
(Alamy)



African leadership

Another issue is the nature and quality of leadership on the continent. For one reason or another, the commitment to a Pan-African perspective has diminished. How do you recover this? If you were to say, let's pick a dozen leaders on the continent whom we can call progressive, put them together, and let them lead us, finding those people would be a challenge. In the end, we need to go back to basics. What is it that we can do together as Africans to become active agents of our own development? How do we position ourselves vis-à-vis the rest of the world? Today, this includes determining an appropriate relationship with China.

In order to contribute to this process, South Africa also needs to go back to rethinking its own role. Unfortunately, we have been through a period when we destroyed the respect the rest of the continent had for South Africa. For us to play a positive role beyond a purely selfish one, we need to redevelop a Pan-African perspective.

It is correct to argue that this should be based on a new social compact, and even to ask whether we are capable of forging such a compact. Clearly, both our business and government sectors have major roles to play on the continent. Are we able to return to a situation where we can say, we've agreed on a joint approach? To give a small example: the Zambian government told us that a big South African supermarket was trading in Zambia, and doing good business. But the fruit and vegetables were flown in from South Africa every morning. Why could it not sell Zambian products instead? Management then told us that local products did not meet their standards. We then asked the management: Why don't you take on board a group of Zambian farmers and mentor them to grow produce to the standards you require? They agreed, and that is what happened.

This kind of cohesion becomes important when we think about playing a positive role on the continent. We also need a social compact to address the socio-economic crisis in South

Becoming agents of our own development must include the capacity to redefine our relationship with the rest of the developed world.

Africa, now worsened by the COVID pandemic. This conversation should be taking place in the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC), but this is just not happening.

Translating visions into plans

I've been saying for years that the National Development Plan is not a plan but a vision, and there is no plan to implement the vision. We now need to decide on the practical steps needed to translate this vision into reality. Similarly, the Economic Reconstruction, Development and Recovery Plan is not a plan – it's a hope, a wish, and a vision. To get there, we need a concrete plan to get beyond the current reality.

Clearly, commuter rail is an important part of any economic recovery. Over the past few years, however, commuter rail infrastructure has been damaged, with people ripping up railway lines and cabling, and destroying railway stations. It's correct to say we must rebuild commuter rail, to take workers to and from work efficiently and safely, and bring down the costs of transport.

But where is the plan to rebuild 100 railway lines that have been ripped up, and 20 railway stations that have been vandalised? This will require R10 billion a year over five or so years. The fiscus doesn't have the money, so where is it going to come from? There is no such plan. There is a vision for restoring commuter rail and improving the functioning of the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (PRASA), but the plan to achieve this objective does not exist.

By way of conclusion, when reconsidering our engagement with Africa, these are among the issues we need to address. Our own social cohesion is relevant in this context, but whether we have the will and the capacity to address these issues is unclear. We also need to reflect on our relationship with the developed world, because the system that was put in place under NEPAD has disappeared.

However, the interaction between South Africa and the developed world is more important than ever before, and becoming agents of our own development must include the capacity to redefine our relationship with the rest of the developed world.

The future of the liberal international order, and implications for Africa

[T]here is a stage where realism is the necessary corrective to the exuberance of utopianism, just as in other periods, utopianism must be invoked to counteract the barrenness of realism. Immature thought is predominantly purposive and utopian. Thought which rejects purpose is thought of old age. ... Utopia and reality are thus the two facets of political science. Sound political thought and sound political life will be found where both have their place. – E H Carr (1939)

WE ARE told that this is an age of anxiety; that recent geopolitical and geo-economic convulsions signal a retreat from international cooperation and a weakening of the fabric of global interdependence; and that liberal-democratic values are under threat. It is the age of drawbridges pulled up (*Economist* 2016), populism, nationalism and xenophobia. Added to this, we are told that the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the ‘normative chaos’ in current international relations. In the midst of this image of a global environment marked by flux, turbulence, uncertainty and insecurity, and the liberal international order in crisis, we are asked to pause and consider what all of this means for South African foreign policy and for Africa more generally. Could this be a hinge moment for South Africa and the continent – for the former, to reorient its foreign policy, and for African countries, to develop their own capacities for agency and autonomous action?

Before responding to these questions, we need to put the sense of alarm about the international order in some kind of context. With almost infallible regularity, global analysts warn us that ‘things are falling apart’ – that certain trends or events are either signalling or triggering the disintegration of the international order. The end of the Cold War, the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the Iraq War, and the 2008 global financial crisis all provoked alarmist prophecies about a rise of ethnic and intra-state conflicts, the withering away of the state, a clash of civilizations, and a crisis of neoliberal economics.

We don’t necessarily dismiss these claims out of hand. However, drawing on E H Carr, we wish to develop a better understanding of this sense of an imploding international order before providing our own perspective on the signs of our times. In what follows, we will juxtapose popular images of the future of the international order, and synthesise these into a more factual and nuanced picture of the global context inhabited by African states – a picture that makes it possible to develop a sound political response.

Fear, order, and the pursuit of sound political life

The introductory quote from Carr's seminal work *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919–1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (1939) provides us with a framework for thinking about the construction of world order. 'Order' is created when institutions structure, manage and govern relations among various actors, and international order is created when institutions do so on the global stage. For Carr, an international order supposedly based on idealist (or utopian) principles often winds up promoting the interests of the privileged. This imbalance must be attacked and redressed by using the tools of realism, primarily by recognising the predominance of power in societal and international relations. Pure realism, however, offers 'nothing but a naked struggle for power which makes any kind of international society impossible' (1962: 87). Therefore, while realism can be a corrective, it provides a transition to yet another utopia, and international society becomes the product of an endless interplay between the antithetical poles of realism and idealism.

In our view, the regular alarms about the deteriorating world order fits neatly into Carr's foundational framework. Contemporary anxiety about the state of the world is not about the crisis of the liberal international order per se, but about the end of 'sound political thought and sound political life'. Anxiety becomes productive when it motivates us to pursue a corrective for grim realism on the one hand and the blind pursuit of ideals on the other.

Africans are co-creators of international order in two ways: by participating in the negotiation and renegotiation of international institutions, or via performative action. The latter entails either abiding or spurning international norms, defined as expected and accepted behaviour, validating or invalidating international ordering principles in the process. In the first instance, foreign policy-makers and planners develop frameworks for dealing with the global context, but foreign policy should also be built on a strategy for co-constructing the world order.

The liberal international order: its discontents and future

Sound political life seems under threat because, for the past four years, Donald Trump, president of the world's most powerful state, and the other heads of state following his lead have pursued a form of realism antithetical not only to liberal organising principles, but to international society itself. Trump's infamous statement at the United Nations in 2019 that '[t]he future does not belong to globalists [but] to patriots' has been followed up by a disregard for and dismantling of some key international institutions, even those historically considered essential for US security.

Political cartoonists have often depicted Trump as a clown, and his defeat in the most recent presidential election can be seen as vindicating this depiction. However, unless we understand his foreign policy as part of a broader movement – some time in the making – to unmask liberal hypocrisy, a sound political response will remain elusive.



American soldiers board a C-130 Super Hercules at Camp Lemonnier, a key AFRICOM military base in Djibouti. Over the past four years, the number of US special forces deployed on the continent has doubled. (Alamy)

The principles associated with a liberal international order are economic openness, the sovereign equality of states, the promotion of human rights and democracy, multilateralism, security cooperation, and the rule of law. These principles have been embedded in a dense web of international norms and institutions that structure and manage international relations and govern international behaviour. Trump's realism has gained traction in the US because of a sense that US economic and military investment in liberal internationalism has not delivered tangible benefits for its citizens.

Some aggrieved voters – as well as analysts – feel that liberalism has watered down American culture by allowing a massive influx of immigrants through increasingly porous borders, and losing American jobs as productive domestic value chains are sliced up and outsourced to states with lower wages and fewer labour regulations. In this view, the biggest beneficiary of US global hegemony and its provision of international public goods is the People's Republic of China. In Europe, the political right has developed a very similar critique, but with greater emphasis on the European Union's intrusion on national sovereignty.

We have come to understand the phrase ‘led by liberal democracies’ as code for a global order commanded by the United States, supported by Europe and Japan.

The discontent of the political left is less with liberal principles as such than with how the liberal order has unfolded in practice: in one description, as ‘hierarchical, imperial, elitist and racialized’ (de Graaff 2020). For a short while, in the early 1990s, many thought the global community had at last attained the ideal of openness, equality and multilateralism. But by 2003, the US-led invasion of Iraq (in the face of overwhelming international public opinion) had thoroughly undermined that notion.

Inequality and wealth disparities have persisted and worsened, both within and among states. It is clear that, at best, we have been living with G John Ikenberry’s watered-down vision of a liberal order ‘in which sovereign states – led by liberal democracies – cooperate for mutual gain and protection within a loosely rules-based global space’ (2018:12). We have come to understand the phrase ‘led by liberal democracies’ as code for a global order commanded by the US and supported by Europe and Japan, in which the interests of Western states prescribe the boundaries for China, Russia, and the rest of the world. Similarly, we have come to understand the phrase ‘loosely rules-based’ as powerful states bending the rules when they don’t correspond with their own interests.

We can debate whether these states’ interests are driven by a transnational capitalist class that seeks to expand unfettered capitalist operations in the wake of increasing military control of the planet, as Samir Amin (2006) and Noam Chomsky (1996) have been arguing, or whether their interests are driven by overzealous good intentions, some would say the hubris, of their sense of civic virtue. This virtue is projected internationally to fashion a supposedly safer and more prosperous world by promoting democracy (including regime change, where deemed necessary) and imposing neoliberal economic policies. We have yet to see US politicians or senior officials express any real acknowledgement, let alone remorse, about the stark fact that its hegemonic wars and the ‘Washington Consensus’ have left those at the receiving end worse off than before.

To be sure, it is not just US hegemony that stands to be indicted. China has effectively exploited the liberal international order for its own benefit, making use of all its features that would help its economic and military rise and leaving aside the rest, including the observance of human rights. Russian conservatism and a nostalgia for its superpower status has led to the trampling of international law in its annexation of Crimea (Arbataov 2018). Russia’s covert interference in the 2016 US presidential election that helped bring Trump to power is widely believed to have been aimed at undermining the liberal international order in general and US democracy in particular.

The BRICS effort as a corrective to the liberal order skewed in favour of Western interests may have produced some institutional alternatives to balance the latter’s economic domi-

nance, but has fizzled out as a vision of political solidarity and justice. It only really had a reformist rather than a revisionist focus. The authoritarian elements of the Chinese and Russian political systems leave question marks over whether this reform agenda is worth the negative impact on domestic processes in the less assertive democratic members of BRICS.

So where does this leave us in terms of proposed corrections to the liberal international order? One option was reflected by, but not confined to, Trump's foreign policy approach, namely a world ordered by big state economic competition and underwritten by their military power. Whatever institutions may be negotiated for managing economic relations among states will not have the multilateral flavour of the post-Cold War era, and as for security cooperation, the best we can hope for is lip service to arms control. In this version, China is America's nemesis. The two states may vie for Russia's support, but the latter will play its own game, and so will other states (Mearsheimer 2019).

This may be a realist order in terms of power balances, similar to the Cold War, but different to it in important respects that have been some time in the making. It will be executed in a much more unilateral fashion, it will be capitalist, and its military footprint will increasingly be of a 'surrogate' nature, i.e. outsourced to substitutes such as secret forces and private military companies, and technologies such as drones (Krieg and Rickli 2019). Trump's exit from the US presidency does not mean that this vision can be ignored; elements of it are already visible, and will be hard to reverse.

The corrective liberal vision evident in the Joe Biden camp is to rebuild domestic social cohesion, based on an imagined US identity of multiculturalism, civic virtue and democratic values, while curbing international overextension (hegemonic hubris) by applying more soft power, rebuilding the transatlantic relationship, reinvigorating multilateralism, and creating an image of benign US leadership (Nye 2019).

In this vision, China's and Russia's more assertive foreign policies (i.e. their reluctance to play along with US global leadership) as well as terrorism will be framed as justifications for continued American military expansion, though probably also in a surrogate manner. It is also questionable whether this supposed corrective to what has brought us to this point meets our criteria for 'sound political life'. Rather, it seems like applying a Band-Aid to the ills of the liberal international order.

This approach does not rethink unfettered global capitalism and its ills. After the 50th meeting of the World Economic Forum, Joseph Stiglitz (2020) noted that 'Davos Man', Samuel Huntington's label for the wealthy global elite that gathers at this event, still welcomes deregulation, does not pay a fair share of taxes, and does not promote increased bargaining power for labour. The liberal corrective also does not think through the security implications of a global military presence, or the implications for those populations and regions that become hosts to military bases and surrogates. Finally, the pundits of this vision are not quite ready to give up US (or Western) exceptionalism.

It would be a mistake to see Africa as the geopolitical playground of the big powers without acknowledging its co-creator role in this manifestation of the world order.

Our contribution to thinking about an international order that may bring us closer to sound political life is to emphasise the nuances of the global context rather than the abstract images of power balances, competitive security, democratic solidarity and global leadership punted in these visions. Political life is made up of a myriad of networks and relationships among people and groups inside and among states, all of which can be courted. We argue that the liberal ordering principles (properly understood) are still relevant, notwithstanding the way in which the liberal order has unfolded. The normative power of liberal ordering principles still permeates many international institutions, providing a basis for cooperation among activist states and civil society organisations aimed at promoting policies that improve the everyday lives of people, and scrutinising those that do not.

In 2017 the power of such cooperation was on display when 124 states, supported by an international coalition of civil society campaigns to ban nuclear weapons, negotiated the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, using the UN General Assembly as a forum. Despite efforts of the nuclear-armed states to derail this process, the treaty entered into force in January 2021. It not have an immediate effect on these states' possession of nuclear weapons, but it does institutionalise an alternative view of the world. In realist tradition, we must understand how power drives the wheels of the international order, but we also have to understand that there are wheels within wheels. Getting those to turn is 'the art of the possible', germane to pressing issues such as climate change, pandemics and poverty.

Implications for Africa

In many ways, Africa reflects these broader international dynamics. Initial optimism on the continent about liberal internationalism has made way for a largely justified scepticism about liberal organising principles. The liberal international order unfolded in a myriad of disappointments for Africa, from the failed economic partnerships meant to lead to good governance in exchange for an economic step-up from Western powers and the Bretton Woods institutions, through reform of the UN Security Council by adding permanent seats for Africa and other developing regions, to the ongoing Libya fiasco.

But Africa has also made remarkable progress under liberal internationalism. It did so firstly by changing its image at the end of the Cold War of a 'forgotten' continent crippled by an unresolved colonial past, liberation politics, corrupt elites, and various social and environmental ills. In its stead, Africans created continental and regional institutions based on liberal values properly understood, including those of a security community, economic integration, and the building and consolidation of democracy. Moreover, these

institutions have often been infused with unique African characteristics, like *Ubuntu*, and respect for the wisdom of elders. It allowed for solidarity against the Iraq War, and for peace on the continent.

Today, the crisis of the liberal international order and threats to global security have started to undo these advances, reinforced by the fact that dominant international actors mistrust the very same liberal institutions established on the continent. In what follows, we explore some trends that have developed over time and will accelerate under realism, or persist – albeit at a slower pace – in a watered-down liberal international order.

Global competition among a range of foreign actors, notably the US, China and Russia but also among the BRICS members Russia, China and India, has diminished the capacity of the UN in general and the UN Security Council in particular to achieve their mandated goals. Defining and achieving international security and economic development has become a unilateral rather than a shared project as the UN has been subordinated to the achievement of conflicting national interests, manifested in Africa in increased foreign economic competition as well as military power.

The US military presence and activities in Africa have grown since 9/11 set off the Global War on Terror in 2001, and eventually the establishment of AFRICOM in 2007. Under the Trump presidency, however, the US has been more involved in training and setting up regional security structures, often through surrogate organisations. Over the past four years, the number of US special forces deployed on the continent has doubled. They are largely involved in setting up regional capabilities, typically as part of anti-radicalisation initiatives. In 2019, Africa housed the second highest number of US special forces, outnumbered only by the Middle East. There are 34 known US military outposts on the continent. AFRICOM's most recent Africa strategy confirms its intention to sharpen its focus on the continent, but not in the front line. In practice, US military expansion in Africa could continue under an international order built on Trump's version of realism, or Biden's version of liberalism.

However, the US military presence is partly a response to an increased presence by other foreign powers as well. Today, 13 states have a military presence in Africa. On the Horn of Africa alone, a range of international actors have established as many as 11 military bases, seven of which are in Djibouti. Current geopolitical rivalry is driven by the same motives as the notorious scramble for Africa in the 19th century: to benefit from its resources and strategic location. The current scramble will grow and develop a dynamic of its own, as more states join, and use less restrained tactics.

But there is a caveat. It would be a mistake to see Africa as the geopolitical playground of the big powers without acknowledging its co-creator role in this manifestation of the world order. The foreign military presence in Africa is in the first instance facilitated by states like Djibouti which exploit their strategic location to generate state revenue. Second, the foreign military presence is made possible by the relative weakness of con-



An election rally in Kampala, Uganda ... 'the continent remains politically unstable, with norms of good governance and democracy replaced by hybrid democratic principles and a focus on stability'. (Alamy)

tinental powers like South Africa and Nigeria, as they progressively turn their energies inwards and are less involved in peace operations than just ten years ago.

This means that 'African solutions to African problems' is more of an ideal or a stated ambition than an actual strategy, or a reality on the ground. Mozambique recently looked to the EU for military assistance rather than to SADC. AU member states are still assuming responsibility for continental security management, but often in partnership with international actors and organisations. The French-led Operation Barkhane and the international financial and operational support for the G5 Sahel Joint Force and the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) around Lake Chad are just three current examples.

Foreign military bases were a contested issue among AU members even before the establishment of AFRICOM. The national interest-driven approach pursued by most of the foreign powers with a military presence on the continent is often incompatible with the principles of an African security community outlined in the AU's charter. A good example is the French military presence in the Sahel, and in Mali in particular. The main

objective of that mission is to defeat the radical Islamic groups in the northern and central parts of the country which constitute a threat to the whole region, but especially to France itself. However, as illustrated by the recent military coups, the question is whether radical groups constitute the biggest challenge to creating sustainable peace in Mali, or whether the root causes of this conflict lie elsewhere. Another example is the presence of the Gulf States in Somalia and on the Horn of Africa in general, where the fault-lines in the Yemeni conflict are being played out.

The crisis of the liberal international order is also visible in other conflicts, political instabilities, authoritarian tendencies and xenophobia on the continent. Recent elections in Tanzania, Mozambique, and Guinea are a testament to this negative trend, with the liberal norms of good governance and democracy replaced – at best – by hybrid democratic principles and a focus on stability. Conflict hot spots are often caught in a ‘conflict trap’, when forceful government responses to local political and security problems create yet more local resistance, and more support for insurgents. The Lake Chad basin and northern Mozambique are clear examples of this dynamic.

Although this is not a new phenomenon, the weakening of global liberal ordering principles curtail what can be done by African and international institutions, both normatively and in practice, to support democracy on the continent. The international presence on the continent plays into this dynamic because neither Russia, China, the US or Turkey seem interested in supporting the AU security system, built on the principles of common and human security. Rather, these international actors support ad-hoc bilateral and regional security projects which serve their perceived national interests more directly.

Implications for South African foreign policy-makers and planners

South Africa’s foreign policy capacity has been weakened by the damage done to the country’s international image during the Zuma years. In terms of the model of ‘sound political life’ developed above, we propose that South Africa’s African agenda should aim to achieve liberal principles (properly understood), but with a sensibility rooted in realism. With the understanding that foreign policy is both direct – in the form of negotiating relevant institutions – as well as performative, how can the current anxiety about the international order be harnessed to produce effective South African foreign policy?

Nelson Mandela’s human rights foreign policy and Thabo Mbeki’s African Renaissance were anchored in liberal values, but perhaps over-optimistic about what could be achieved in the shorter term. Like the Non-Aligned Movement during the Cold War, the BRICS initiative – joined under Zuma – was an effort to reclaim options for autonomous action beyond the edges of the major powers’ geopolitical chessboard. Rivalry among BRICS powers, related to Russian orthodoxy, Chinese authoritarianism and growing Hindu nationalism in India, has undermined this effort.

Ultimately, the corrective for the failures of liberal optimism is not to turn away from liberal values, as has happened in some instances, but to refine those values over time, while

building in reasonable margins of error. The liberal order cannot continue feeding Davos Man while millions suffer; capitalism cannot be unfettered. The global context will not always favour the project of a strong Africa, and the project will at times disappoint, but this should spur a resolve to seek out those individuals, groups, states and institutions that can help Africans to achieve their rightful place as co-creators of an international order in which states work together for mutual gain. This is the dedicated work that 'sound political life' requires from South African foreign policy-makers and planners.

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Pan-Africanism and the curse of African statehood: recasting the narrative

PAN-AFRICANISM distils a vision of and blueprint for the reappropriation of the future of black humanity by the emancipated black being. Mobilised by a courage born of horrendous existential realities, Pan-Africanism has recognised that black life is fundamentally and variously a life of abandonment, enslavement, resistance, and attempted redemption. Two decades into the third millennium, this situation has not changed. Rather, black life, whether on the African continent or in its Diaspora, has worsened.

Pan-Africanism, in a sharp cognitive appreciation of the existential and psychic ruins of the black self and race, is thus founded on the reaffirmation of the self in the promotion of racial dignity and a consciousness of the commonality of black identity, interest and destiny, wherever black humanity is located. Premised on self-confidence and respect, Pan-Africanism is a philosophy of and for action, thereby challenging the contrived dehumanisation of the black being. This social contrivance was the main instrument deployed by the inimical External Other in order to subjugate the black self and spirit. Pan-Africanism has therefore sought – and still seeks – to demystify the false, hegemonic groundings of the dehumanisation of black humanity.

The poverty and paucity of independence set in early. It drained the vitality of the people, and dimmed the revolutionary fervour associated with struggles for freedom and liberation. The people were weaned off their radical consciousness, while the state was totalistic. Every principle associated with liberty was up-ended. The nation, albeit a false one, was personified in the one and only true leader: the one-man state was the modal state, and the one-party state camouflaged the one-man enterprise. It was also a family business, as the National Treasury doubled as the wallet of the president, other political leaders, their cronies and their families. Mass euphoria was stoked in the context of a conditioned nationalist mass disorientation. The flag independence of the colonial holdings of imperialists in Africa thus unleashed a second wave of fundamental violence against the revolutionary fervour of Pan-Africanism.

The perpetrators of this shameful violence were the new class of African leaders, now unmasked as the overseers of the imperialist estates. In the wake of this quasi-independence of fractionalised African spaces of the late 1950s into the 1960s, Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah was prescient in his strident call for the concretisation of the core Pan-African condition

for emancipation: his was an unequivocal call for continental unity. Instead, the inherited colonial legacy of social compartmentalisation in post-colonial settings evolved into a new governing paradigm.

The imperative to revalidate the authentic parameters of Pan-Africanism has therefore become increasingly compelling in the face of the tragic consequences of the historic derailment of its philosophy in the service of the evolved folly of African statehood. Such statehood is associated with the emotional, physical, psychic, and spiritual migrations from the black universe, and has consequently been the main vessel for creating the ghettos of Pan-Africanism. As a result, the African state is no more than a concrete myth; permanently ephemeral, and irretrievably burdened by its historic lack of solidity. Indeed, the workings of post-colonial statehood have denuded the African sense of self-worth. This is amply demonstrated and given effect by the traumatic out-migration and exodus of our times, resulting in some 19 000 African migrants reported dead or missing in the Mediterranean Sea since October 2013.

The role of Europe and the West

There is a disjuncture between mainstream perceptions of European and global relations with Africa on the one hand and its reality on the other; a logical derivative of the supposed magnanimity of Europe and the West. Indeed, Europe presents itself as the External Other, trusted by Africa as the emissary of science and progress, compassion, and a higher intelligence. However, this convenient false narrative flies in the face of experienced political reality. Africa, saddled with a leadership notorious for conniving with its own traducers for petty personal gain, has remained at the receiving end of this false narrative. This fundamental premise on which interaction in the international system has been grounded has been lost on virtually all the early thought leaders in Africa. France has played a leading role in exploiting the lack of intellectual rigour and discipline of the local helmsmen it appoints as proxies in its compartmentalised African post-colonial settings.

Africa's current unedifying state, especially its seeming inability to forge a common will as a condition for articulating a truly strategic consensus for its own emancipation, may be traceable to the false narrative of the West. But equally responsible is the assistance offered by the feeble consciousness of Africa's early presumed leaders, despite the larger-than-life images fostered by their cult-like followings in the obscure compartments of their fictional states. Overall, the relentless failure of Africa can be located in the thorough defeat of Pan-Africanism as a philosophy and ideology of political action and its associated drive to consolidate Africa's inherited colonial and post-colonial weaknesses into a continental unity, with the capacity to effectively leverage its interests as a legitimate global player. For example, in a defence review published in October 2012, the French government reiterated unambiguously that France views Pan-Africanism as a threat to Western – but especially French – interests in Africa.

An uncomfortable reality for the 154 million citizens of Francophone Africa is that, five decades after independence, France still calls the economic shots. Indeed, French

*Ghana's Kwame
Nkrumah ... a
prescient advocate
of continental unity
as an antidote to
the colonial legacy
of fragmentation.
(Alamy)*



troops intervened militarily in Africa no fewer than 19 times between 1962 and 1995. And during the past 15 years, in response to challenges to its African hegemony, France has deployed troops 35 times to protect its interests, including recent invasions of Côte d'Ivoire, Libya, Mali and, most recently, the Central African Republic. These and the horrors of unmitigated hegemonic control of Africa, together with the entrenchment of the CFA currency in Francophone West and Central Africa and the horrendous concept and praxis of FrancAfrique, reflect the permanent schisms authored by France to prevent the emergence of a truly autonomous and radically transformed Africa.

What emerges is a treacherous Hobbesian world view of critical impediments to Africa's feeble and uninspiring will to develop its own meaningful partnerships as a basis for legitimate and equal participation in the global system. Recently, we have seen the adoption of NEPAD and Agenda 2063 as the AU's blueprints for and visions of autonomous continental agency and unity-in-development, but it remains doubtful whether they can challenge the dominant ideological-philosophical shibboleths that underpin Africa's peripheral engagement with the global system.

The role of France in currency manipulation

Transformation in the international strategic landscape in general, and specifically in relation to Africa, has forced some fine-tuning of France's tactics in Africa. Its macabre dance, especially in West Africa, is a serious matter. As the contours of the proposed West African currency, the ECO, to replace the CFA franc continue to emerge, the desperation of France to consolidate its hegemonic status in West Africa becomes clearer. The ECO will be pegged to the Euro at the same exchange rate as the outgoing CFA franc, due to be phased out as the ECO is consolidated. But there is no agreement yet on whether the exchange rate will be flexible, as preferred by a minority of countries, or fixed, the preference of a majority of countries. However, the biggest obstacle to the transition from the CFA franc

South Africa's foreign policies have been impeded by internal political constraints as well as a difficult strategic terrain, in the form of the African political landscape.

used exclusively by the eight French-speaking members of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) to a single all-embracing ECOWAS currency, the ECO, is that Anglophone states of West Africa are not part of the current CFA franc zone.

Were it possible to surmount this challenge, France would remain responsible for managing the external reserves of countries participating in its guaranteed ECO regime, which reveals that nothing, except the usurpation of the ECO as a name, has really changed from the old CFA franc currency regime. Without its exploitative grip on Francophone Africa, France would be greatly diminished. This strategic imperative has been imposed on it by the challenging certainties and frightful uncertainties thrown up by the rapid transformations in the global strategic configuration. Nigeria, with its internal warts, is still a key role player, and a Nigeria with expansive influence in its subregion significantly alters France's balance of influence in Africa.

Meanwhile, Africa remains exposed and vulnerable to global currents, including the rise of China, the debility of the liberal world order, and the associated revalidation of extreme right ideology across Europe as well as North and South America. Added to this are the dwindling internal cohesion of and depleting coherence within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the largest post-World War Two military alliance in the world, and a very assertive Moscow, in league with Beijing at the slightest indication of systemic tension. These complexities have been compounded by Brexit and the reinvigoration of the historic alliance between Great Britain and the US, which seems to endure irrespective of the character, personal proclivities and ideological orientations of the occupants of the White House and No 10 Downing Street.

All these factors have unsavoury implications for a continent that seems incapable of moving away from its destructive sovereign fixations, thus opening the door to external forces that aim to perpetuate their control of Africa well into the new millennium. The Chinese incursion into Africa is unfolding amid a deterioration in French relations with Africa. In the renewed competition to extend foreign spheres of interest in Africa, the US, France, and Great Britain are the leading Western players, and therefore the pre-eminent Western forces opposing China's enlarged and enlarging footprint.

The ECO is a major feature of French efforts to consolidate its hold on its fiefdom in West and Central Africa. Given the ineluctable reality of its sliding hold on West Africa, France's currency initiative is only the first step in an titanic struggle. In the face of the massive transformations of West African societies, and their rude and uncivil demands for the disengagement of its entrenched institutions from neocolonial subjugation, the struggle by France to consolidate the status quo in West Africa via the ECO ambush is

*Ivory Coast president
Alassane Ouattara
welcomes French president
Emmanuel Macron in
Abidjan, December 2019.
Ouattara, also chair of
the Monetary Union of
West Africa (UEMOA),
has played a key role in
the adoption of the ECO.
(Alamy/Luc Gnago)*



only the beginning. France will react violently to any Francophone head of state which rejects its hollow attempt to deceive the world into believing that the ECO represents a new and fresh beginning of respectable relations with Africa.

The transformation of the CFA franc into the ECO is also an obvious attempt to checkmate Nigeria as the potential pivot of economic and political life in West Africa. The ECO is one element in the larger framework of consolidating the contrived fragility of Francophone West Africa. France's guarantee of the new ECO is conditional on the exclusion of Nigeria from the currency zone. It is clear that Anglophone West Africa will be left with no choice but to demonstrate its determination to forge ahead with its own economic integration project as a Regional Economic Community of the AU. West Africa must therefore brace itself for systemic instability should any or more presidents of Francophone countries reject the French-backed ECO in favour of the original ECOWAS-driven common currency for the subregion. Indeed, the management of Franc-Afrique provides the platform for the consecration of grand institutional corruption in the African inter-state system.

The African inter-state system: a failure of development

Africa groups together 55 countries in a complex universe of hierarchically arranged state actors in the global system. The workings of the international system are defined by principles governing interaction between and among these state actors, and increasingly among emerging transnational and supra-national arrangements, acting bilaterally or in the context of numerous multilateral institutions. This lends a degree of structure to the complex international system, often defined as the distribution of power among its constituent units. In this system, there are embedded power alignments or configurations of power. It is this structure, which is based on the coefficient of power accumulated by each state actor or groups of states with certain affinities, often ideological, even ethno-regional,

which underpins the hard protocols that govern international life. These protocols relate to the use of power to achieve the goals of the most powerful in this universe of state and non-state actors. The 'soft' protocols consist of the fine sensibilities emanating from certain inherited principles related to universally acknowledged sovereignty and the resultant rights of states, including the legal and fictional sovereignty of most African states.

Against this backdrop, the state of the African continent is unedifying, given the preeminent deployment of 'hard' protocols relating to the use of power to achieve the goals of the most powerful in the universe of state and non-state actors. Even though states are the basic units of interaction in this universe, the most powerful often band together as dominant power cartels. Their collective impact overwhelms the political, social and economic as well as the collective ability to manage the most catastrophic of human disasters – such as climate change, the global financial crisis, and now the COVID-19 pandemic – that often directly result from the projection of their interests in the system. Not unexpectedly, Africa's post-colonial states, with few exceptions, have failed in the fundamental mandate of development towards the full emancipation of their citizens.

Nigeria is the most populous of these states, and its natural mandate flows from harbouring at least 15% of all Africans. It is the pre-eminent first of Africa's five most populous states – followed by Ethiopia, Egypt, the DRC and Tanzania – accounting for about 45% of their total population. However, all five these states are in the throes of varying crises, and as such compound Africa's woes with a litany of unviable statehoods. The challenges of bigger African states notwithstanding, the fate of Africa's medium and small nations have not been salutary either, as they continue to display various forms of weakness, fragility and failure with no real will for determinate national policy.

Nigeria is therefore no exception to the often crippling challenge of forging a nation from a diversity of peoples. Despite its sturdy all-round potential, Nigeria is rated poorly by Nigerians in the integration and deployment of its social capital. It is stunted in its political development in terms of penetrative and extractive ability, and tied historically to extreme reliance on coercion rather than suasion, while its unrivalled human capacity remains underdeveloped. After the breakaway of Eritrea, what remains of Ethiopia, the second most populous African state, can be described as a house of cards that might easily topple.

Ambo, the capital of Oromia, the largest and most populous of Ethiopia's nine ethnically based regions, has a reputation for political dissent. The problem of partisan appropriation of the totality of state space is a pressing challenge in Ethiopia, as in Nigeria. Oromo identity is especially powerful. Oromos are vehemently angry about being marginalised by ethnic Tigrayans, who they say have dominated government despite making up less than 6% of the population.

The narratives of the DRC from its very inception in 1960 have been dystopian. It has not fared any better since the ousting of the autocratic dinosaur Mobutu Sese Seko in 1997. His exit instigated the world's bloodiest conflict since World War Two. Described as the 'Great War of Africa', this seemingly unending conflagration has involved soldiers and

British-Nigerians demonstrate in London against brutality by a Nigerian police unit, October 2020 ... Africa's most populous country still relies on coercion rather than persuasion. (Alamy)



civilians from nine countries and countless armed rebel groups who have been manipulated by deeply entrenched external interests.

For its part, Egypt has betrayed the democratic promise of the Arab Spring. Instead, under military strongman Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, there has been a systematic 'upgrading' of authoritarianism, characterised by a ready recourse to the torture of political opponents, enforced disappearances of regime critics, extrajudicial killings, and home demolitions.

Assessing South Africa's role

Given that this publication deals with South African diplomacy in Africa, it is fitting to examine its status as a continental military and economic powerhouse, and seemingly the most stable of the African 'big five'. However, it also seems to be descending into a spiralling political and economic crisis, exacerbated by COVID-19. The country is scarred by growing levels of fraud and corruption, bad governance and institutional decay, and racialised poverty, inequality and unemployment. Taken together, these factors and dynamics point to an increasingly unfortunate post-liberation trajectory.

Transcending the pathologies and malignancy ossified in African statehood also remains post-liberation South Africa's main challenge. Its toxic history remains relevant to its foreign policy, especially in relation to Africa. Its foreign policies have been impeded by internal political constraints as well as a difficult strategic terrain, in the form of the African political landscape. The latter was clearly manifest in South Africa's engagements with the crisis of the Abacha regime in Nigeria, the transition away from the Mobutu regime in Zaire, the defence of the status quo in the Central African Republic (CAR), an attempt to mediate the Ivorian upheaval, and in first falling prey to and then challenging the dictates of the West in Libya.

Escaping from this historical cul de sac will require moving towards a true African renaissance, capable of redefining African unity in the context of changing continental and global dynamics.

In all these interventions designed to advance Africa's will and agency, South Africa faced the granite realities of African statehood, especially the fickleness of intra-African relations in the context of puritan Pan-Africanism. Also at play in these episodes was the reality that progressivism in Africa is seriously impeded by the inimical External Other in conjunction with Africa's entrenched political entrepreneurs. These constraints constrict the space for radical policy articulation by South Africa.

Deploying the renaissance discourse and renewal template as the foundation of its engagement with Africa imbues post-apartheid South Africa with an unarguable moral leadership, even if dented by its internal political evolution. However, it retains the credentials and revolutionary consciousness to lead a revitalised charge towards concretising the Pan-African vision of a consolidated Republic of Africa. This mandate is consistent with the renaissance objectives of the youth wing of the ANC in the mid-1940s. More recently, Thabo Mbeki articulated the idea of an African Renaissance based on a bold advocacy of self-determination, unity, identity and development – in short, from an Africanist perspective, transforming the political economy of the continent into a bulwark against the excesses of imperialism and capitalism, and undergirded by a resuscitated Pan-Africanism.

This context remains important for understanding South Africa's continental policies and initiatives, since it underpins its strategic effort to energise the AU with renewed developmental vigour. This has been expressed by integrating Agenda 2063 into its foreign policy agenda as well as its bold support for the African Peer Review Mechanism's injunction for countries to improve their governance and economic management. Finally, South Africa will be a key player in realising the ambition of the African free trade area as far as driving its integrative impulses are concerned. President Cyril Ramaphosa's role as chair of the AU for 2020/21 provides South Africa with a unique opportunity to recast the narrative about African statehood in terms of these vital continental initiatives.

Concluding remarks

The curse of African statehood lingers on. Given this, a thesis about Africa's future rests on four pillars. These are, first, that Africa is the single most endowed continent in material and non-material terms. Second, Africa is historically associated with a weak capacity for penetrating its internal and external systemic environment. Consequently, hardly any African state is financially self-sufficient, while the continent remains the most dependent region in the world. Third, as a result of a lack of self-sufficiency, Africa is profoundly constrained structurally in the highly Hobbesian process of global value extraction and appropriation. Fourth, flowing from the first three propositions, Africa remains a largely

subordinated continental space, often with the moral acquiescence and political complicity of factions of its elites. African countries are acknowledged as the largest recipients of global value disbursement in the form of grants, aid and humanitarian interventions. All of this combine to push Africa to the margins of global relevance.

The way forward out of this historical cul de sac must therefore be a radical de-conditioning of the black self, socialised to internalise his or her innate inferiority. This is a fundamental condition for advancing the total repudiation of the current status quo through its constructive destruction (to lend and amend Joseph Schumpeter's term). A revamped progressivism must revolve around the realignment of the internal structural configurations and normative underpinnings that sustain the status quo, and a recognition and validation of the domestic and global nexus of relations among African peoples.

This must be complemented by a wide array of related interventions, such as widening narrow identities and loyalties; uprooting discredited neo-patrimonial governance paradigms and their entrenched purveyors; de-validating Africa's pervasive dysfunctional spirituality that undermines the essence of its humanity; and recasting Africa's shackled intellectual firmament that historically has served as ancillary machinery, to wit as ideational, conceptual, and institutional manifestations that reproduce Africa's tangential relevance in world affairs.

This will require an ontological and epistemological movement towards a true African renaissance that is capable of redefining African unity in the context of changing continental and global dynamics characterised by growing uncertainty, complexity and volatility. Such a redefinition should be directed towards a totalising reconstruction, reimagination, and concretisation of a singular vision of a Republic of Africa. The ensuing structural consolidation must be mobilised on the visionary path, moral authenticity, ethical code, and strategic intent prescribed by the Pan-Africanism of Marcus Garvey, Kwame Nkrumah, and Cheikh Anta Diop, among many crucified others.

The elusive psychology of Africa's leaders

SOME TIME in the 1990s, after South Africa's transition to democracy, a report on the concept of leadership was prepared for senior leaders of its new ruling party, the ANC. Among other things, it said many contemporary African leaders believed it was 'time for Africa to produce leaders with the requisite capacity for high performance and moral impact, to ensure that the people of the continent secure their fair share of opportunities in the 21st century'.

Given the failures of so many African governments in the earlier post-colonial period, the report continued, future rulers would need to 'restore the credibility and integrity of African traditional leadership'. It noted that previous leadership writing had been largely in the realm of anthropological studies, which tended to centre on 'primitive societies'. Remarkably, it then set out to 'identify among South Africa's multi-ethnic communities, the group or groups with a leadership model or system that came closest to representing the ideal effectiveness "x-factor"'.

A 2015 review of 60 years of research on leadership in Africa by three University of Pretoria academics records considerable and growing interest in the topic. It shows that, during the 2000s, the main themes of interest to African authors were leadership and management, leadership and gender, leadership styles, leadership and African values, and political leadership. However, meaningful research on the specifically psychological aspects of African leadership was virtually non-existent.

At present, then, a psychological understanding of individual leaders in African politics can only be arrived at indirectly through other disciplines such as history, anthropology and political studies. For example, African statesmen often argue that they have to contend with a (post)-colonial inheritance. Most African countries, they say, consist of disparate geographic areas and diverse populations that were artificially yoked together by colonial projects. This has made their constituencies easy to fragment because divisive politics, with all its underlying ulterior motives, was impossible to avoid. This view agrees remarkably closely with dependency theory, which holds that Europe's underdevelopment of Africa has left a structural inheritance of inequality that is impossible to escape.

Zimbabwe is a case in point. According to Clifford Mabhena (2014), ZANU-PF, its ruling party, is now largely regarded as a project of Shona domination, with most of the party's senior officials belonging to that grouping. Moreover, according to Owen Gagare (2014), competition for power within the ruling party is often a matter of affiliations to different Shona clans.

Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe blamed the failure of his own policies on Western powers, the IMF, the Asian financial crisis, and drought. (Alamy)



On the other hand – although far more rarely – an inheritance of group dynamics can also provide an ideological denial of their existence. Infamously, Rwanda's politics have been shaped by hostilities between its Tutsi minority and Hutu majority, culminating in the genocide of 1994. Yet, according to Marie Béatrice Umutesi (2006), its ruling party, the RFP, is widely regarded as Tutsi-dominated, although Paul Kagame's government officially denies the existence of ethnic groups.

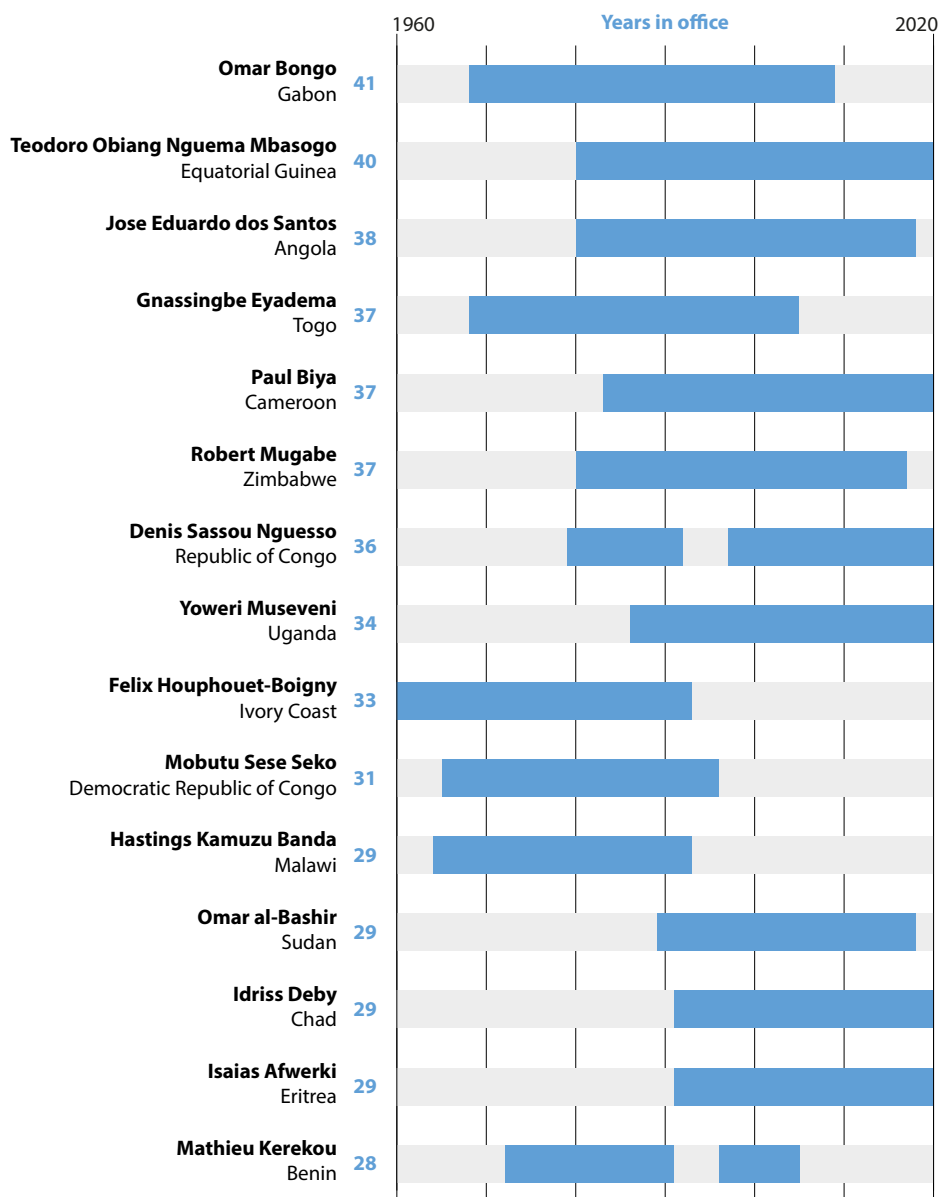
However, Zimbabwe represents an extreme case of the more common pattern throughout sub-Saharan Africa: the lack of a specific vision of what a state should look like in a country comprising several or many identities. This impedes efforts to create wealth in and restore dignity to previously colonised populations. The disdain of post-colonial African governments for their constituents, except at election time, also expresses a fairly common pattern across the sub-Saharan region. Between elections, governments appear to govern mainly by means of strategies for rent extraction, supported by tactics for containing their citizens and distracting their critics.

Education and 'containment'

The 'containment' of citizens relates, in the first place, to policies that result in under-development, which hinders the capacities of citizens to engage with their politics and pursue life choices that benefit society, such as opening businesses. Development, of course, involves many factors, including supporting the rule of law, improving education, widening access to health services, building infrastructure, and providing efficient public services. In the meantime, despite many continental agreements and expressions of intent, African governments' achievements during the post-colonial period have been patchy at best.

For example, while average African education spend improved from just more than 3.5% of GDP in 1999 to about 4.5% of GDP in 2015, this was only marginally more than the

Sub-Saharan Africa's longest-serving leaders, 1960–2020



Note: This table excludes monarchs.

Source: Council on Foreign Relations at <https://cfr.org>.

global increase in the same period (African Centre for Economic Transformation 2014). Meanwhile, sub-Saharan countries spent about \$1.5 trillion a year on public education, while North America spent \$32 trillion and Europe some \$24 trillion (Africa-America Institute 2015). It follows that sub-Saharan countries would have to invest a far greater proportion of their GDP in education to start clawing back their educational deficits. From

this perspective, the challenges of development in Africa might seem insurmountable. Yet other developing countries, the ‘early transformers’ – Brazil, Chile, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam – began their trajectories with similar deficits and have succeeded in eradicating them, or are in the process of doing so (ibid).

Policies inevitably involve choices among priorities. Africa’s continuing deficit in education is not merely a consequence of malign external influences or of subjection to external factors: it is, in some sense, a decision. As Egbe Ojong Tandu and Mary Anyie Tandu argue (2017), the ‘bazaar mentality of African leaders ha[s] starved the continent of the necessary funds for development’. Whether conscious or not, the lack of serious attempts to narrow developmental deficits results in populations that are less threatening to political elites, and can therefore be more easily contained.

The externalist thesis and ‘distraction’

A second tactic frequently employed by African governments is distracting critics from the realities of their governance. This is not a new phenomenon. As the Ghanaian-born academic George Ayittey has pointed out (2005), the ‘externalist doctrine’ that ‘totally absolve[s] the leadership of any responsibility for the mess in Africa has been around since the 1960s, soon after the independence of many African countries. Thus one of Africa’s longest reigning dictators, Zimbabwe’s Robert Mugabe, often blamed the failure of his own policies on external factors, among them greedy Western powers, the IMF, the Asian financial crisis and drought.’ Within Africa, most of his support came from a coterie of political mavericks who had normalised the unacceptable through the frequent use of force against their fellow citizens.

By the end of the 20th century, Ayittey argues, African citizens’ attitudes to their leaders had reached a new nadir. He quotes an unemployed Kenyan, speaking in 2002: ‘All these people [African leaders and elites] do is talk. Then, if they do get any money from the *wazungu* [white men], they just steal it for themselves. And what about us? We have no food. We have no schools. We have no future. We are just left to die.’

Ayitteh detects a growing gap between African leaders and the people they govern. The continent’s leaders are ‘increasingly insecure, sensitive, repressive and less responsive to the wishes of society’. By contrast, the people increasingly regard the state ‘with fear, suspicion and cynicism’, and as ‘no longer legitimate or relevant in their lives’.

The ‘externalist’ pattern of locating responsibility elsewhere was designed to appeal to collective sentiments, irrespective of their rationality. This phenomenon is far from unique, and not exclusively African, but on this continent it is part of a specific recipe for holding on to power: a chauvinist tribalism mixed with a dogmatic rejection of ‘imperialist and colonialist’ influences. The privileges of the new elites are defended by a disingenuous political correctness that publicly claims hostility to the West while privately enjoying its services and consumer goods. Platforms for acknowledging past deprivations of dignity and compensatory development are denied to outsider groups.

African leaders often complain about an uneven economic playing field that shuts them out of the mainstream global economy. In outline, this is a version of dependency theory. Yet, just as often, their governments are quite prepared to exploit the world trade system for their own purposes. A good example is Lesotho's use of its status as a Least Developed Country (LDC), which entitles that country to pay zero duties on imports. In fact, Lesotho's textiles are produced entirely by Chinese capital, labour and equipment. This defeats the purpose of LDC protection, and sends the profits out of Africa. Basothos, meanwhile, are denied the real jobs and investment that the LDC provisions are meant to promote. The only locals who benefit are connected members of the elite, in the form of kickbacks which are (relatively) small change.

Bad leadership: less sustainable?

Approaches to governance based on the externalist justification can look like a mixture of indolence, ignorance and ineptitude, and these factors probably do play a role in Africa's failures of governance. But looked at more closely, the externalist deflection is often used as a rhetorical and psychological tool for helping African elites to use their public roles to pursue their private interests. Ideology – including the ever popular anti-Western stance – often plays an instrumental role in African leaders' strategies of power hoarding. This may seem lazy and superficial, but it plays on a deep understanding of political landscapes, collective insecurities, historical inheritances, socio-economic aspirations, emotional biases and cultural sensitivities.

Africans' approval of their leaders – even when they are, to all intents and purposes, the apex predators of their societies – appears to have slightly increased over the past 20 years. In a 1999/2000 survey in 12 countries by the research network Afrobarometer (Mattes et al 2004), some 29.1% of respondents said they 'trusted the president a 'lot', while in a 2018 survey of 31 countries (including the previous 11), this figure increased to 35.3%. However, these averages conceal wide disparities. Africans' approval of their presidents varies widely among countries. In the 2018 survey, it was 21.8% in South Africa (a multiparty democracy), compared to 61.8% in Tanzania (effectively, a one-party state).

So to some extent, the externalist deflection works. However, it is likely to face growing challenges. Most African countries have moved to a form of democracy (either formal or real), which is creating expectations of better governance. Africa's middle class is growing, and with it the economic and social requirements of people who see themselves as contributors to the common wealth through production, job creation and taxes. Moreover, technological advances, specifically the Internet, are allowing people to access more information and combine in more effective interest groups than ever before. Greater urbanisation is also providing citizens with more networking opportunities, and contributing to their awareness of the more abstract values central to national civil participation and governance.

Yet these developments are also exposing cracks in leadership capabilities, the quality of public administration, inconsistencies in the rule of law, and breaches of basic liberties. These problems, in turn, reveal the need for a transformation of the implicit social



Senegalese president Leopold Senghor and French president Georges Pompidou parading through Dakar, February 1971 ... some of Africa's most revered statesmen are regarded as tricksters of a kind. (Alamy / Keystone Pictures)

contract in African nations. They are compelling African citizens to observe and evaluate their leaders and their governance structures more critically, and to ask questions about the motives behind the behaviour of their public servants.

A kleptocratic state in which the greed of a small elite creates economic mayhem and generates armed conflict is less sustainable in the current Africa than it was a few decades ago, when a country like Sierra Leone was brought to its knees by the malice of its leaders. The word 'malice' might seem too strong, but some evaluation of this sort must spring to mind when the ideological and policy claims of many African leaders are put alongside their actions and achievements, and those of their governments.

At this point, we may recall Ayitteh's argument that the externalist arguments about the causes of Africa's governance crises are largely a quasi-ideological smokescreen, and that an internalist critique, according to which some important causes lie within the nature of African governments and how they run their countries' affairs, needs to be brought into play. As he puts it: 'This school of thought maintains that while it is true [that] Western colonialism and imperialism did harm Africa, and continues to do so, Africa's condition has been made immeasurably worse by such internal factors as misguided leadership, misgovernance, systemic corruption, capital flight, economic mismanagement, declining investment, collapsed infrastructure, decayed institutions, senseless civil wars, political tyranny, flagrant violations of human rights, and military vandalism.'

A kleptocratic state in which the greed of a small elite creates economic mayhem and generates armed conflict is less sustainable in the current Africa than it was a few decades ago.

Explanations of some of these aspects at least have generated a vast literature, including studies in dependency theory and Marxist or Marx-inspired studies. More recent studies in development theory and postmodernism have urged the importance of adding some nuance to previous structural accounts that appeared to deny agency to African political actors. But, as noted earlier, there is a notable lack of specifically psychological studies of African leadership.

The place of psychology in African / black history

One reason for this lack can be located in an ongoing debate about the place of psychology in the context of African or black history. Kevin Cokley and Ramya Garba (2018) identify black psychology as a discipline that challenges 'the hegemonic paradigms and racist beliefs perpetuated by Eurocentric approaches to psychology'. In a parallel attempt to outline a specifically African psychology, Augustine Nwoye (2015) argues that an African psychology would represent 'a psychology of rehabilitation ... that will derive anchor not in comparing Africans and Europeans but rather in people's everyday needs, epistemologies, and world view'. However, he bases this on the claim that Africans have a fundamentally communalist world view, as opposed to the individualistic world view of Western or Eurocentric psychology.

Ongoing attempts to reorient this discipline have resulted in forms of academic protest and 'engaged scholarship' that pitch themselves against supposedly 'Western' psychology. However, rather problematically, this important enterprise can be, and often is, framed in ways that do scant justice to the object of criticism. Nwoye, for example, holds that Eurocentric psychology is dominated by a 'mechanistic or machine-model of human mental life', and based on an obsession with quantification. This ignores the very real contributions of figures such as Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung and Jean Piaget, among many others.

These attempts to re-orient the discipline are often based, as Mwoye's is, on the idea that African societies are essentially communalist. Indeed, a large literature exists in a range of disciplines which assumes that communalism is both distinctive and typical of African societies. As Wiredu puts it, '... there can be little doubt that traditional African society was communitarian, unless it be a matter of exceptions that prove the rule. There may be some traditional African societies that do not fit this description. If so, they must be rare' (2008: 332). He then assumes that this is still the case by shifting into the present tense. African communalism is both typical and distinctive of Africa, he argues, because it is based 'on kinship relations, which begin from the household and expand to lineage and clan proportions' (333).



Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni at an election rally ... after a violent and contested poll in January 2021, he has entered his sixth term of office. (Alamy)

Yet valorising communalism as an essential characteristic of African societies runs into serious problems when it does not take account of past and present realities. The Nigerian philosopher Olúfemi Táíwò points out that the claim cannot apply to notable African societies such as the Òyó Empire, for example. That empire, which existed from the seventh to the 18th century, comprised 'a multinational polity that had within its borders different national and ethnic groups' (2016: 85). Moreover, even if it could be shown that African societies were historically largely communalist, today they are 'economically and culturally mixed' (87). In an important argument, he shows that axiological or normative arguments in support of the desirability of African communalism are often confused with empirical claims that it exists.

The idea of distinctive and typically African communalism faces other challenges. In the contemporary context, for example, Jackson M Wafula argues that neo-communalism in post-independent Africa can result in 'epistemological authoritarianism' or 'a situation where knowledge and wisdom [i]s tied to old age' (2003: 159). He also traces the introduction of the political authoritarianism around the continent after independence to the wish of the leaders of the time to orient African societies on historical 'no party' systems (169).

As regards our main theme, then, the communalist assumption in political psychology could explain the fact that many states in Africa today fail to serve the community good in terms of the externalist thesis. But, as we have seen, internal factors also play an important role. Here, communalism might be useful in explaining contemporary political systems that claim to represent the will of the people while in fact representing the interests

Bayart argues that African leaders and governments have developed certain modes of agency, or 'formalities of action', for gaining some advantage from their highly unequal relations with the rest of the world.

of a small group of people, often with close traditional affiliations, as we saw in the case of Zimbabwe – but as the problem, not the solution.

'Some psychologists 'don't want to talk about "groups" because it brings back apartheid-era discourses of difference,' says Dr Wahbie Long, a lecturer in psychology at the University of Cape Town. 'On the other hand, decolonisation discourse within psychology is obsessed with difference. So there's a paradox, if ever there were one.' Therefore, there are serious questions about whether an approach to African psychology is aided by an insistence on identity-based theory. Substantive and specifically African studies of the psychology of leadership on the continent must therefore await the outcome of theoretical and ideological debates.

Psychological types and 'trickster' presidents

For glimpses of this subject, we still need to turn to studies in other areas. For example, Tom Kelsall (2008) argues that the frustrations of Western donors and international agencies with African leaders and governments partly result from their failure to understand 'the grain of African ways of doing things'. His study is an example of a new trend among non-African academics to take the continent's long history much more seriously and, in particular, to understand emerging African governance styles as a continuance of deep traditions. In this view, as argued by Mahmoud Mamdani in a pioneering 1996 study, the 'Big Man' phenomenon in Africa can be understood as the product of long-standing traditions of colonial rule.

In another path-breaking postmodern study, Jean-François Bayart (2000) argues that African leaders and governments have developed certain modes of agency, or 'formalities of action', for gaining some advantage from their highly unequal relations with the rest of the world. He identifies these modes as 'coercion; trickery; flight; mediation; appropriation and ... rejection'. According to Bayart, these forms of action demonstrate an agency long discounted by thinkers in a lengthy Hegelian tradition which sees the continent as excluded from, and peripheral to, world history. For our purposes, however, the most significant aspect of his study is its (implicit) use of notions that can be given a specifically psychological interpretation.

Firstly, Bayart analyses the history of Africa's relationship with the rest of the world in terms of its 'extraversion', namely a tendency to seek external support for internal struggles by whatever means available. Borrowed from Jungian psychology, this term denotes a tendency to seek validation and satisfaction from sources external to the self. Meanwhile, for Bayart the term 'trickery' refers to an ability to 'manipulate hostile forces which are too powerful to be confronted directly, but can be turned to good account in spite of

their hostile nature'. He points out that the trickster features prominently in African folklore, and suggests that 'the truly hybrid character of so many [African] presidents represents the most up-to-date version of such a type'. This begins to point to a specifically psychological understanding of the personalities of many of Africa's 'Big Man' leaders.

We return to the word 'malice'. What psychological characteristics allow civil servants to seek rents on top of their salaries in countries with high unemployment, such as Lesotho? In the same way, we may ask what kind of personal mentality is involved in the 'grand' corruption that has plagued the continent, and held back its development. The historical, anthropological and political aspects of this problem have been studied extensively, but the psychological aspects still await serious study. Bayart's image of the Big Man as trickster is perhaps a good start. Like other archetypes, this notion has tremendous potential as an exemplar and explicator of a certain type of personality on the continent.

As Bayart points out, this figure has deep roots in African traditions as well as contemporary society. Tricksters include 'those picaresque individuals who are the true pioneers of modern Africa ... smugglers, diamond diggers, currency changers, fraudsters and simple migrants ... who find ways of evading laws, frontiers, and official exchange rates'. Others include 'practitioners of illegal immigration, the drug trade and fraud on a larger scale'. These sorts of tricksters are not always controversial – indeed, some of the most revered African statesmen have been tricksters of a kind. The Senegalese leader Léopold Senghor, for instance, features in that country's national imagery as 'the prototype of the astute politician ... the political version of the *léek*, the hare of Wolof folklore whose cunning is legendary' (ibid).

Conclusion

The report compiled for the ANC and referred to at the start of this chapter was an unusual, possibly unique, effort by an African political party to get to grips with an age-old problem of politics and governance, and to locate it in the broad stretch of human cultures and history: the question of what constitutes effective leadership, and how to recognise or educate good leaders. Yet this effort was largely in vain. As it turned out, Jacob Zuma, who ascended to the ANC and national leadership a decade or so later, was the epitome of the political trickster, whose characteristics exacerbated the 'Big Man' problem the party thinkers were trying to pre-empt and resolve. Such people are simply not amenable to the intellectualisations of 'clever' people, whether black or not. For them the issue, if there is one, is simple.

In an ancient Greek play, a slave asks a politician about his job. The latter replies: 'I'm the supervisor general of all things here, public and private too.' The slave says: 'A great profession. What did you do to qualify for it?' The politician replies: 'I wanted it.' Moving forward 2 500 years or so, we find Nigerian protesters using humour to express their dissatisfaction with Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida's military dictatorship. 'IBB = 419', their slogan went, indicating that his claim to democratisation was nothing less than another Nigerian fraud.

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The future of African multilateralism post COVID-19

THE COVID-19 pandemic has simultaneously exposed the strengths and fault-lines of current global governance. To be sure, the pandemic has emanated from a ‘perfect storm’ of factors that were long in the making, and all of which were foreseeable. While, understandably, a lot of attention has been focused on the public health and economic crises that have unfolded in tandem around the globe, COVID’s longer-term implications for global governance and multilateralism more generally remain unclear.

This is mainly because some of the pandemic-induced strains on multilateralism – including the intended US withdrawal from the World Health Organization; the multiple, competing tracks along which the global race for a vaccine are taking place; and signs of intensified bloc formation in the Atlantic and Pacific worlds – have come at a time when multilateralism has already been under pressure. Notably, pre-COVID geopolitics were definitively shaped by the anti-institutionalism and unilateralism of a new class of populist world leaders who not only challenged the foundations of the liberal, rules-based international order created under the post-war US hegemony, but also managed to drive the multilateral domain into a defensive, reactive space. The five years preceding the pandemic saw little substantive progress on essential global commons concerns, and issues of global justice seemingly fell by the wayside.

The rapid geopolitical shifts of recent times primed Africa’s multilateral interests in various significant ways. Pre-COVID priorities for the continent were largely reactive, shaped by the changing geopolitical environment. These included questions around how the continent could and should position itself in the emerging global trade landscape; the meaning of the mounting US-China trade war for Africa’s participation in global value chains; the implications of a more protectionist Global North migration regime and the politics of bordering that go along with it; and the construction of an equitable climate governance architecture responsive to legitimate Global South concerns. Moreover, the international discourse on peace maintenance became decidedly more statist and less globalist in outlook, with Africa expected to assume more of the financial burden of settling its conflicts. The spectre of militarised ‘peacebuilding’, shaped by external players’ national interests, continued to loom over the continent.

In the COVID and foreseeable post-COVID worlds, these issues will not go away. Indeed, their importance has been amplified, principally because of the pandemic’s com-

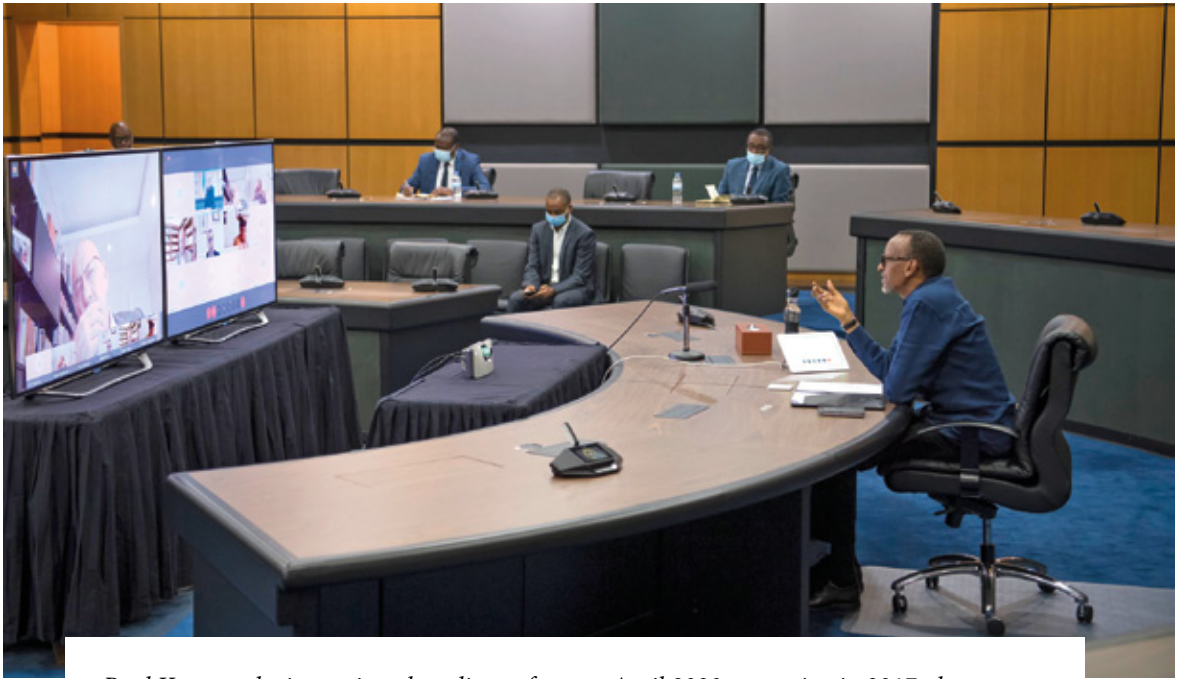
pounding effect on extant inequalities. If anything, the pandemic has thrown the major fault-lines of the current world order in sharper relief. The more the global health crisis deepens, the starker its systemic fallouts become. This is clearest in terms of the impacts on markets, labour economies and production systems; indeed, much of the developing world faces a slide into a structural economic decline that will compound food and human insecurities.

The primacies that flow from this from an African international relations perspective are as follows: Which states will get to shape the substantive bases of a post-pandemic world? Which actors will be in the forefront of this effort, and with what objectives in mind? And what should the normative underpinnings be of the more equitable and fairer world that many would like to see? These – the ‘is’ and ‘ought’ questions of the constitutive nature of world order and the related problems with this order – make the principal task of global governance explicit. It is not merely to navigate the transient (short-term) fallouts of the pandemic, but to prevent them from morphing into permanent, systemic conditions.

African multilateralism and the evolving geopolitical context

In this setting, the erstwhile promises and ambitions of South Africa’s ‘African Agenda’ are more relevant than ever. To be sure, the African Agenda was never a singular South African foreign policy project; it changed in scope, latitude and diplomatic expression over time. Indeed, the African Agenda can be characterised in terms of its ideological, political-strategic, discursive and operational elements. Its substantive content – and many of its institutional legacies – come from the Mbeki-era diplomacy. With its projection of the ‘African Renaissance’ as philosophical foundation, the Mbeki-defined African Agenda combined various diplomatic goals in an overarching vision. First and foremost, this was ideological and political: to change the ‘idea of Africa’ (following Vumbi Yoka Mudimbé), and with that the continent’s bargaining position in the international arena. Discursively, the African Agenda relied on a loose amalgam of political values and projections, including Pan-Africanism; African solidarity; and newly crafted cosmopolitan, Afro-pride identities.

The co-constitution between South Africa’s African Agenda and continental multilateralism is often overlooked, but important. The African Agenda, in all its manifestations, gave structure to continental multilateralism by helping to redefine continent-wide diplomatic objectives and engendering organisational renewal and innovation. At the same time, continental multilateralism provided a platform for leveraging the African Agenda. Operationally, the latter had two pillars: the first was to devise and implement new governance and development blueprints for the continent, as expressed in the transformation of the OAU into the AU; the upgrading and strengthening of the AU; and its adoption of NEPAD at the start of the new millennium. The second was to shore up efforts to achieve peace and stability on the continent, principally through the AU’s newly minted peace and security architecture.



Paul Kagame during a virtual media conference, April 2020 ... starting in 2017, the Rwandan president has led a vigorous drive to reform the AU, but it is still unclear whether this attempt will succeed. (Paul Kagame via Flickr)

The current relevance of the African Agenda resides in the way it was given institutional *gestalt* as well as the extent to which it shaped continental multilateralism in operational terms. As such, dealing with the current and forthcoming complexities of global governance requires taking stock of the merits and demerits of both the substantive and organisational aspects of the Agenda, and where and why its efforts to steer continental multilateralism succeeded and failed.

There are distinct reasons for this. First, the emerging geopolitical arena contains constraints on the developing world that differ significantly from those during the last crisis of global order, namely the 2007/8 financial shock. Africa's relative shielding from the worst of that crisis could be attributed to the buffering effect of its rising, commodity-driven trade with China, along with the nature of the continent's global economic integration. The multilateral will of that time, evident in the attempts of the G20 and other international organisations to combat global food price distortions and related food insecurity, put in place some international safeguards that complemented continental and national efforts.

Today, the asymmetry of China's economic and diplomatic engagements with Africa is even more pronounced. The combative posturing by China and the US – and the general hardening and unilateralisation of foreign policy this signifies on the part of the major powers – leave Africa in an uncertain position in the realigning geopolitical order. This is compounded by shifts in regional orders across Europe, the Pacific and Indian Oceans as well as the Latin American world. What's more, the enlightened, optimistic multilateralism of a decade ago, an important part of overcoming the challenges of that era, has now been

Given current shifts in the geopolitical context, the goals and goalposts of African multilateralism need to be rethought.

replaced with a nationalistic tide that has been washing away the ramparts of the global governance system.

Given current shifts in the geopolitical context, the goals and goalposts of African multilateralism need to be rethought. Substantively, multilateralism serves a number of purposes, including helping states to navigate the exigencies of the global order; managing global public goods and the global commons; and, for smaller states, managing vulnerabilities through astute alignments. In the current circumstances, these general grounds for multilateralism should be framed in terms of the continent's economic and developmental needs and interests, including the need for more rapid industrialisation. These have been swiftly redefined by the pandemic, with a slow and only partial recovery seemingly in the offing. This implies that the continent's policy-makers and planners should rethink the strategic foundations of its multilateral activities, and pursue a more targeted engagement with the Global North and South alike. Health, science, economic and education diplomacy should be key areas of focus.

Multilateralism's institutional and political successes in Africa

The pandemic's longer-term economic, welfare and governance ramifications present the continent's multilateral architecture with a range of challenges. While the institutional reinvigoration during the heyday of the African Agenda was significant, it is not clear to what extent these institutions are geared for dealing with the post-COVID world. Therefore, it is useful to take stock of continental multilateralism and its political and organisational features in three domains, namely development; trade (including the trade integration agenda that has become operationalised in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)); and peace and security.

In each of these domains, there have been measurable successes, but also notable failings. Agenda 2063, the AU's development blueprint for Africa adopted in 2013, outlines a schema of socio-economic transformation in both aspirational and programmatic terms. It served as an umbrella for a range of continent-wide and regional frameworks that span various economic sectors and seek to address the continent's transport and infrastructure deficits. It has helped Africa to ratchet up its engagement with external multilateral and bilateral funders, particularly in respect of infrastructure development. The Programme for Infrastructural Investment in Africa (PIDA), for instance, has received significant support from major players in the international infrastructure development domain, including lenders like the World Bank and Japan. For a good number of years, PIDA has served as a vehicle for their focus on advancing 'big development' on the continent.

The ambitions of Agenda 2063 are offset by a range of factors. Connectivity – both in the form of physical infrastructure linking regional economies as well as ICT – has improved,

but is still insufficient to drive integrated continental development programmes. This has implications for AU member states' goals of regional and continental trade integration. Large-scale infrastructure development has been a key focus of many national development efforts in recent years. However, national infrastructure programmes have often been marred by graft, or failed to achieve their stated socio-economic objectives. A plethora of 'vanity projects' across the continent speaks to the latter. In the process, AU frameworks for continent-wide infrastructure development have become fragmented.

More importantly, AU leaders have not made full use of the opportunities to advance Agenda 2063 created by the jostling between rising powers seeking a foothold on the continent, and the grand infrastructure designs accompanying this new geopolitical trend.

African member states and the AU itself have swiftly signed on to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), first launched as the One Belt, One Road strategy in 2013, without a clear idea of what Africa would or should gain from it. The ascent of rival grand strategies, notably the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) promoted by Japan and India and now subsumed under Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) initiative, has inserted new interests and players into Africa's infrastructure development landscape. They join capital and other interests from Turkey, Saudi Arabia and South East Asia, all of which play complicated roles as financiers, constructors and operators of Africa's new infrastructure.

Thus far, the continent's leaders have demonstrated little collective vision in engaging with the rising powers' grand strategies; they have largely played receptive and reactive roles, and have done little to steer these initiatives towards meshing with the continent's development blueprints. Whatever form these rising power programmes like the BRI and FOIP will assume in the post-COVID era, it will be imperative for African multilateralism to establish greater bargaining power in these, and other, similar configurations.

Given the way in which infrastructure undergirds economic development, meeting the continent's infrastructure development needs will be even more significant. At the same time, sector-specific frameworks such as the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP), the Science Technology Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA), and the Accelerated Industrial Development for Africa (AIDA), all part of Agenda 2063, will be important to sustain continental processes towards growth in key sectors such as agriculture and in broader industry. The continent's leaders should focus on leveraging continental frameworks in their engagements with external powers, and coordinating them effectively at national levels.

The AU's current attempt to establish the AfCFTA – encompassing the continent's 1.2 billion people, and harnessing the GDP of 55 member states – promises to ring in a new economic era. The agreement establishing the AfCFTA was adopted in March 2018, and entered into force on 30 May 2019. To date, 30 countries have both signed and ratified the agreement. Of the 55 AU member states, only Eritrea has yet to sign.



The Nairobi Expressway under construction by the China Road and Bridge Corporation, January 2021. The AU needs to deal more effectively with the involvement of competing rising powers in African infrastructural development. (Alamy)

Should the AfCFTA come to pass, it will be largest area of its kind in geographic terms in the world. It certainly has ambitious goals – among them, to create a single continental market driven by the free flow of goods, as well as shared investments. Trade liberalisation, the harmonisation of national and regional policies and instruments (such as finance) and the elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers are intended to lead towards a single customs union. Greater trade and economic integration and higher levels of cooperation in respect of the distribution of resources are expected to drive sustained development on the continent, and ultimately to improve the welfare of its people.

Critics have pointed out that demographic size does not necessarily translate into market size and buying power, and that various structural conditions, including high levels of informality and unemployment and a lack of physical and economic connectivity, are impediments to trade integration. Moreover, while the AfCFTA should draw together Africa's various Regional Economic Communities (RECs), a lot of political work will be needed to address the fragmentation resulting from multiple and partially overlapping regional organisations.

Prior to the pandemic, the launch of the AfCFTA was repeatedly delayed, and COVID has set it back still further. Its July 2020 starting date, by which intra-African trade was supposed to begin, has been postponed to 2021. The economic boost the AfCFTA was

supposed to bring to the continent is now offset by losses in revenue, currency depreciations, and increased debts resulting from the pandemic. The continent's GDP was forecast to contract by more than 2,5% in 2020. When one considers that all these metrics multiply to significant employment and livelihood loss and the expansion of poverty – according to the UN Economic Commission for Africa, 29 million more people on the continent are likely to fall into poverty in the foreseeable future – the challenges faced by African leaders are daunting. Given this, the objectives of the AfCFTA are even more relevant to a post-COVID era, as is the need to overcome any obstacles to its progressive realisation. On its own the AfCFTA will not be enough, however. Dealing with the pandemic's socio-economic impacts will require resourceful linkages among various continental programmes, underpinned by a clear set of human security objectives.

Lastly, the continent has seen both progress and regress as far as one of the AU's major objectives, namely advancing peace and stability, is concerned. While not fully resolved, some major conflicts have turned into uneasy, simmering impasses, while others have flared up once again, fuelled by a combination of power, resources and identity strife.

In various states there had been signs of improved governance and democratisation, at least in the holding regular (if mostly uncontested) elections. In others, progress towards democratisation has been reversed. Attempts to settle African conflicts via intra-African diplomacy have met with mixed success; indeed, one of the cornerstones of the African Agenda – namely collective peace-bargaining – has claimed numerous casualties over the years, including the DRC, Madagascar and the CAR.

As chair of the AU in 2020/21, the South African president, Cyril Ramaphosa, has singled out Libya and South Sudan as two sites of conflict requiring urgent attention. This task has been complicated by the growth in extremism across the Sahel, as well as fresh insurgency in southern Africa. The continent's leaders understand that stability is a precondition for development. Yet the 'silencing the guns by 2020' initiative has seen set back by the pandemic, and a summit scheduled for May 2020 did not take place. In the post-COVID era, the multifaceted process of promoting peace on the continent will be as important as ever.

'The Africa we want'

African multilateralism has a vital role to play in guiding the continent through the rapids of the COVID-19 pandemic. The task for continental multilateralism is two-pronged, geared towards the systemic and intra-African contexts and the ways in which both contexts are changing. The systemic shock wrought by the pandemic necessitates systemic responses and systemic thinking.

First, African leaders and institutions need to participate vigorously in the discussions about global reconstruction. They need to have a clear understanding of the continent's needs and interests, and articulate them clearly and forcefully. COVID presents the continent with obstacles, but also with opportunities. One of the latter is to mobilise around

Agenda 2063 and to contribute to both the ideational and material processes related to international efforts towards recovery. Thus far, the African voice, needed to set out African aspirations in respect of transformed global economic governance arrangements, natural resource management and recovery financing, has been muted.

The aspirations of the erstwhile African Agenda and the broader system of continental multilateralism it set out to influence remain relevant for continental leadership today, but both require reframing in the current geopolitical context, with redefined priorities and different strategies. On the one hand, South African and African policy-makers and planners should adopt a more integrative approach to continental development, marked by 'joined-up' thinking and a focus on synergies between sectoral policies and strategies. This is because the longer-term economic and welfare impacts of the COVID pandemic will require harmonised responses across sectors, industries and labour economies. On the other, science, health and education diplomacy should play a more prominent role in the continent's engagement with the Global North and South.

Third, African leaders and institutions should do more to leverage their engagement with emerging geopolitical blocs with an interest in Africa, and present them with clearly defined objectives for contributing to African development. Provided internal disagreement about the rules of the continental free trade area is resolved, AfCFTA could play a valuable role in Africa's engagement with rising power blocs. Linking AfCFTA's trade integration agenda more explicitly to the AU's infrastructure development agenda – and ensuring that they feature in the deals struck with external players – will go some way towards meeting the continent's development ambitions. Infrastructure development on the continent will continue to rely on external financiers, but African leaders should try to improve its bargaining power, and access finance on more equitable terms. Continental policy-makers will also need to anticipate shifts in the continent's industrial needs, in line with shifts in global conditions.

All of these tasks are contingent on realising the goals behind the AU's institutional renewal nearly two decades ago, many of which have not been met. Agenda 2063's own progress has been derailed by weak administration, poor implementation, and a lack of political will. The effective functioning of the AU's peace and security architecture has been hampered by politics and long-standing capacity and implementation deficits. Among others, the continental standby force, a key component, has not been established.

Given this, the main challenge facing continental multilateralism, particularly if the spirit of the African Agenda is to be revived, is to operationally strengthen the continent's multilateral architecture. Ultimately, this is a political task, requiring astute political leadership. The nature of the future global multilateral order is unclear. It remains to be seen whether we will face a recast liberal international order, or one configured along North–South or – conceivably – East–West axes. Both scenarios have their implications for African agency in the international arena.

South Africa and Africa: towards a vision beyond COVID-19

THE COVID-19 pandemic is undoubtedly the largest setback to Africa's development since the Cold War. According to the IMF, the African economy might have contracted by 4.4% in 2020. While the 2007/8 global financial crisis only really hit Africa in 2009, it took the continent, and the rest of the world, several years to recover. Given its negative impacts on tourism, education, government revenues and public health expenditure, the effects of COVID-19 will linger much longer. The current expectation is that COVID-19 will undo several years of progress in the fight against poverty, towards achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and implementing Agenda 2063. The purpose of this chapter is to gain a greater understanding of the extent of this setback, and then to present an appropriate developmental and foreign policy vision for South Africa in this challenging landscape.

In what follows, I first outline the revised prospects for Africa to 2030, focusing on the pandemic's implications for debt and instability. This analysis is based on a recent scenario-building exercise undertaken by researchers from the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) and the Gordon Institute for Business Science (Cilliers et al 2020), utilising the International Futures (IFs) modelling system. Next, I outline more specific prospects for South Africa and the southern African region, again based on a series of scenarios developed by the ISS. I then move on to considering opportunities for an integrated regional strategy that could galvanise thinking and action in South and southern Africa, followed by a conclusion.

COVID-19 in Africa

To gain a sense of the impact of COVID-19 on the continent, it is useful to start with a profile of its expected development prior to the pandemic. In October 2019, the IMF expected African economies to grow by more than 2.7% on average in 2020, and the International Futures (IFs) forecasting system produced an average annual growth rate for Africa of 4.1% to 2030. Levels of extreme poverty were expected to decline from about 37% of the total population (some 483 million people) to about 31% (some 546 million people). The increase in absolute numbers is due to expected population growth from 1.3 billion to more than 1.7 billion people.

Table 1: Interventions and assumptions, three scenarios to 2030

Scenario	Economic growth	Mortality*	Social transfers**
Reference	IMF forecast released in October 2019	None	None
V	Revised IMF growth forecasts released in April and June 2020	344 000 additional deaths in 2020***	For 2020 only. Country data where available, continental average for rest
U	Same as V but recovery in 2022	897 000 additional deaths in 2020 and 468 000 in 2021	2020 same as V, half of that in 2021, none in 2022
L	Same as V but recovery in 2023	1 450 000 additional deaths in 2020, 886 000 in 2021, and 518 000 in 2022****	

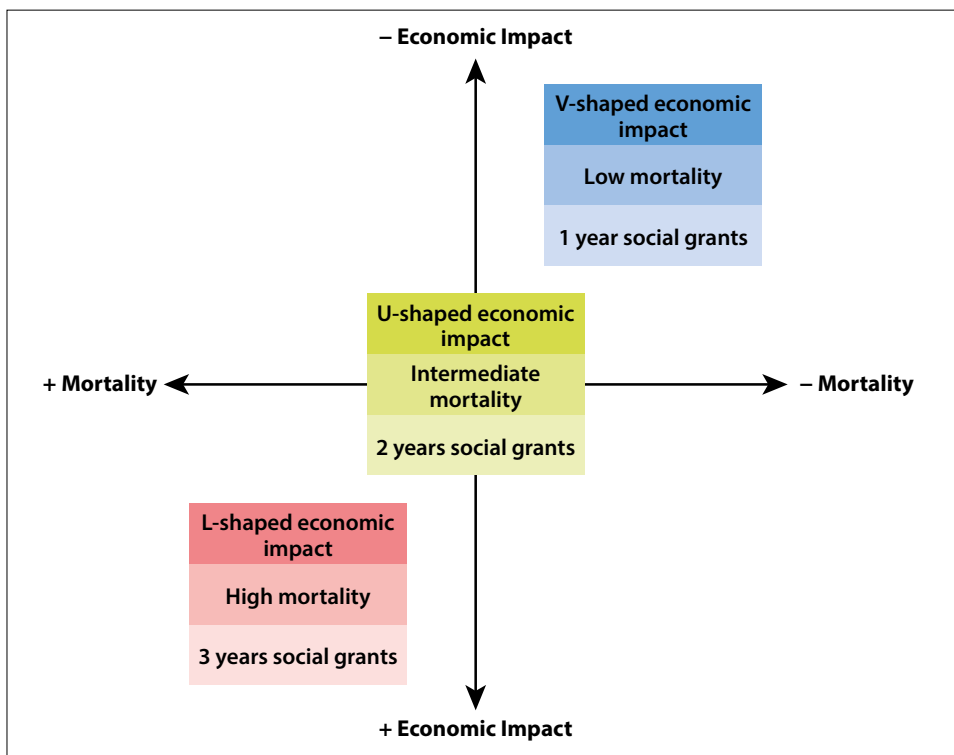
* Additional deaths due to communicable respiratory diseases.

** Additional social transfers, meant to soften the impacts of the pandemic.

*** Imperial College London best case scenario.

**** Imperial College London worst case scenario.

Figure 1: Framing of the three scenarios



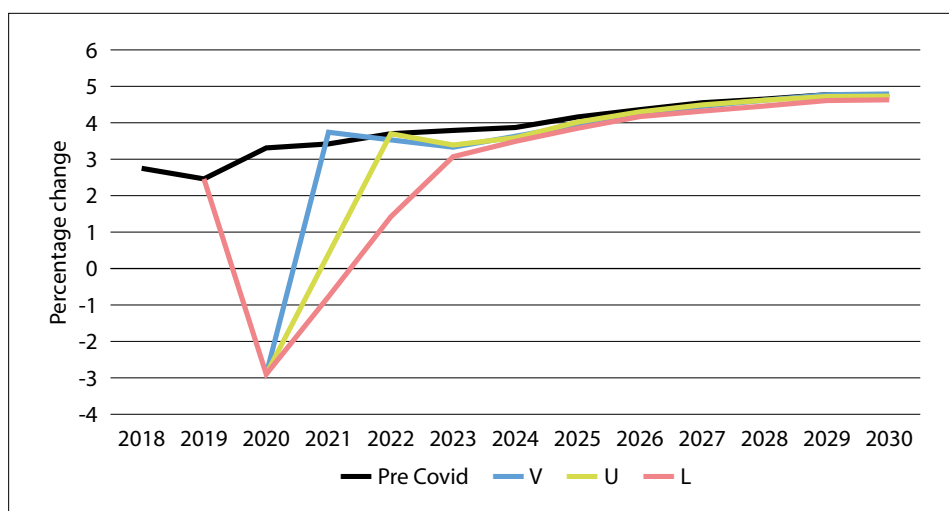
This pre-COVID scenario was used as a baseline for three further scenarios modelling the impact of the pandemic over the next decade, until the year 2030: a V, U and L scenario, each named after the shape of the associated economic contraction and recovery. They result from three sets of interventions in the IFs forecasting system reflecting negative impacts on economic growth, additional mortality, and additional expenditure on social grants. The adjustments made for each scenario are summarised in Table 1. The subsequent forecasts were generated automatically by the IFs system. The positioning of the three scenarios on a matrix formed by two main axes – economic impact and mortality – are outlined in Figure 1.

Assumptions of economic growth were based on the forecasts released by the IMF in April and June 2020, factoring in the potential impact of COVID-19. Pre-COVID growth rates plus the growth rates assumed for each scenario are summarised in Table 1, and presented graphically in Figure 2.

Table 1: Average annual growth rates of African countries, 2020–2030

Africa Pre-COVID	4.1%
Africa V	3.5%
Africa U	3.1%
Africa L	2.7%
Rest of world	2.0%

Figure 2: Average growth rates of African economies, 2018–2030 (excluding Libya)



Source: IFs v7.54 initializing from IMF growth forecasts in October 2019, April 2020 and June 2020.

As economic activity declines, the ability of governments across the continent to maintain previous levels of delivery of social services such as health and education will decline.

The mortality assumptions were based on estimates by the Imperial College London (Hogan et al 2020). The data on efforts to roll out additional social grants by African governments were drawn from an IMF report on policy responses to COVID-19 (IMF 2020).

Some outcomes

The short-term impact of COVID-19 on extreme poverty is particularly severe. Compared to the pre-COVID trajectory, up to 30 million more Africans will descend into extreme poverty in 2021, using a poverty line of US\$1.90 per person per day – the measure used to track progress towards Goal One of the Sustainable Development Goals.

A vaccine did not become available in 2020. This implies that the impact of COVID-19 on Africa could be akin to the U-scenario that is premised on the discovery, bulk manufacture and roll-out of an effective vaccine in the course of 2021. In this scenario, Africa will, by 2030, have about 51 million more extremely poor people than in the pre-COVID-19 forecast – an increase from 31% of the total population to 33%.

In the U-scenario, average levels of income will only return to the 2019 pre-COVID levels in 2026, and Africa will lose several years of progress. However, with well-planned urbanisation, effective implementation of the continental free trade area, and accelerated digitisation, along with the right policies and decisive leadership, some of the damage could be undone.

Due to Africa's youthful population, COVID-19 mortality rates are expected to remain quite low, but given poor data and limited testing, the actual numbers of Africans infected by the virus, and those who die as a direct result, will probably never be known. We believe that, in the long term, indirect mortality as a result of the pandemic will roughly equal direct mortality. In other words, from 2020 to 2030, as many Africans are likely to die due to reduced health expenditure and contractions in other forms of state support as those succumbing to COVID-19. The U-scenario, for example, in which growth rates recover to pre-COVID levels in 2022, produces about 1.8 million direct deaths from 2020 to 2030, and a roughly similar number of indirect deaths.

The impact of the pandemic on economic growth means that governments will have significantly less money to spend on water, sanitation and other services. In 2020 alone, the aggregate revenue of African governments was projected to decrease by about US\$55 billion, and cumulatively by 2030 by about US\$1.2 trillion. Among other things, this means that, by 2030, five million fewer Africans are likely to be connected to electricity, and two million fewer to have access to improved sanitation compared to the pre-COVID

forecast. These broader economic and social impacts are also set to have other negative consequences. Two are particularly cogent: an emerging debt crisis, and an increase in instability.

Debt and instability

Concerns about Africa's growing debt burden have grown for several years, fuelled in part by large loans for infrastructure development taken by Angola, Kenya and Ethiopia. Many African countries have also shifted away from concessional loans from multilateral creditors such as the IMF and the World Bank to non-concessional commercial loans at higher interest rates, with shorter terms to maturity, and higher refinancing risks. Under COVID-19, African countries are borrowing even more money to fund initiatives aimed at mitigating the immediate impact of the pandemic, such as business relief and social grants for the poor.

Whereas a debt burden of 70% of GDP may not be a problem for an economy growing at 6%–7% a year, it becomes a very large problem when growth rates decline to 2%–3%. This is particularly the case if money is lent commercially at higher interest rates than the concessional funding available through the IMF. A 2020/21 budget report recently presented to Kenya's National Assembly revealed that US\$8.5 billion (56%) of total projected government revenue of US\$15 billion would go towards servicing the country's US\$58 billion debt (Mutua 2020). At this level, debt repayments squeeze out social investments, and undermine the fight against poverty and inequality. This is sure to translate into violence in the streets, and accelerate instability in poorly governed rural areas and elsewhere.

Besides the Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Somalia, South Sudan and São Tomé and Príncipe, all of which are already in debt distress, the World Bank believes that Burundi, Cape Verde, Cameroon, the CAR, Chad, Djibouti, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritania, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Togo and Zambia are all at high risk of entering this category as well (World Bank 2020).

COVID-19 could therefore become a tipping point, turning Africa's high debt burden into a crisis. This would doubly penalise Africa. Besides the severe economic and financial impact of the pandemic, which is not of its own making, it will also make borrowing more money even more expensive, as investors grow more cautious and raise their interest rates. The open-ended question is whether there is any appetite internationally for a response akin to the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative by the World Bank and the IMF in 1996. Fortunately, several years of quantitative easing in the US and Europe have created significant pent-up liquidity that may find its way to Africa, where returns on investment have traditionally been higher than elsewhere. Time will tell if this excess liquidity could reduce the rates at which Africa borrows money, and even the nature of relief.

In the meantime, as economic activity declines, the ability of governments across the continent to maintain previous levels of delivery of social services such as health and education will decline. This will be particularly evident in rural areas such as the Sahel

If South Africa is to avoid living out these dismal projections, it urgently needs to achieve higher levels of economic growth that will create more formal sector jobs, and reduce poverty and inequality.

and the eastern DRC, and will provide insurgent and terrorist groups with additional opportunities to expand their areas of operation. Even large capital projects offer little guarantee of stability. In northern Mozambique, the site of the largest investment in liquefied natural gas in Africa, instability is steadily unfolding. Here, the gap between impoverished locals and a hugely corrupt FRELIMO government in Maputo is patent, and will be exacerbated by COVID-19.

Sadly, democracy will not be a panacea. Democracy in many African countries is improving, but is often still quite thin. Countries such as Zimbabwe, Angola, the DRC and Mali go through the motions of staging multiparty elections, but the results are often predetermined. In these countries, nominal democracy does not translate into greater accountability. In fact, democracy in a number of African countries is little more than a façade, concealing the continued grip on political and economic power by entrenched elites which retain state control because this serves as the major – and sometimes the only – gateway to prosperity. The result is a steady increase in anti-government protests and demonstrations in urban areas and, in those countries that have never actively governed certain areas, such as northern Mali, a greater opportunity for armed opposition groups (such as the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa) to expand their operations.

Our projected economic growth rates of 2.7% (L scenario) to 3.5% (V scenario) for Africa are far too low to substantively change the continent's development prospects up to 2030. Things will improve, but slowly. Much more robust and inclusive growth is required, particularly in South Africa and other countries with the potential to promote regional growth. However, except for a brief period of growth under President Thabo Mbeki, post-apartheid South Africa has not done well either economically or politically.

South Africa's prospects

Average incomes in South Africa have declined consistently since 2014 and, in terms of current forecasts, will only return to that level some time beyond 2030. In other words, the country is set to lose more than 15 years of income growth – a legacy of apartheid, poor post-apartheid governance, and the years of misrule and corruption under President Jacob Zuma.

In 2020, the IMF expected the South African economy to contract by eight percent. The pre-COVID forecast was for 1.6% – a staggering difference of almost ten percentage points. In the U scenario, the South African economy will grow by a mere 0.9% from 2021 to 2030. Poverty and inequality will increase, and given lower government revenue earning and spending capacity, the ability to maintain social services and basic infra-

structure will decline. South Africans are set to become poorer and more frustrated, and the key question is whether they will vent that anger on the streets or at the ballot box.

As in most countries, job creation in South Africa largely depends on economic growth, and at these low rates of growth unemployment, inequality and poverty will increase. Whereas, in 2019, 52% of South Africa's population (30 million people) lived in extreme poverty, this number will increase to 34 million by 2030.

Constraints on growth

A previous study by the ISS, conducted for the Water Research Commission, found that in the long term water will be the biggest constraint on the country's development. South Africa is a water-scarce country and, largely due to a lack of investment, poor maintenance and bad management, it is overexploiting its water resources. This is the next electricity crisis in the making – without timely corrective action, decades of underfunding, mismanagement and incompetence will converge in a perfect 'water storm' that will dwarf the problems surrounding Eskom (the country's state-owned power utility) of the past few years.

When all this is considered, it becomes clear that South Africa is rapidly approaching a crossroads. Its current development path is increasingly untenable, and the country is steadily falling further behind its upper-middle income and regional peers. For example, South African economic growth is expected to lag behind growth in other SADC countries by more than three percentage points up to 2030 – significantly more than could be expected, even when factoring in the differences in levels of development between South Africa and most other countries in the region, which means that their growth is achieved off a much lower base.

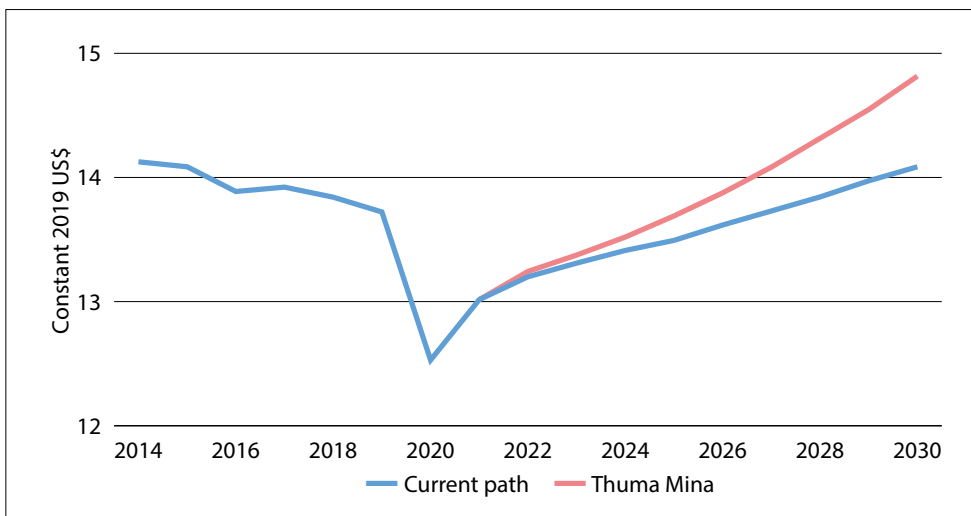
If South Africa is to avoid living out these dismal projections, it urgently needs to achieve higher levels of economic growth that will create more formal sector jobs, and reduce poverty and inequality. This could only be achieved by reversing the premature deindustrialisation of its economy, and making far greater use of its natural market in the southern African region through trade integration and facilitation. Better growth will translate into more tax revenue, which will also enable the state to maintain and expand its extensive system of social grants and employment schemes for jobless people. At the moment, dwindling state revenue – exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic – is constraining social welfare spend at a time when it is most urgently needed.

None of this will be possible without a governing elite that is firmly and genuinely committed to development and good governance. Instead, as poverty and unemployment increase, and corruption and patronage continue unabated, South Africa's population is becoming more xenophobic and inward-looking. Its moral capital, founded on the visionary leadership of Nelson Mandela, has been squandered, and foreign visitors and observers are often left wondering what happened to the self-congratulatory atmosphere that was so evident in South Africa the early 1990s. However, our future is not pre-ordained, and much can be done to avoid these dismal forecasts. Cyril Ramaphosa, who was elected by a wafer-thin majority as ANC president in December 2017 and succeeded

Table 2: Components of the Thuma Mina growth scenario

1	Health: Improve health care through better management and increased efficiencies in the public sector. Drive down costs in the private sector. Once the economy has stabilised, pursue a national health scheme that levers partnership with the private sector towards the provision of universal health care.
2	Education: Improve primary, secondary and tertiary survival and graduation rates with a greater focus on quality. Prepare the country for the Fourth Industrial Revolution by focusing on science, technology, engineering and mathematics.
3	Electricity: Reform the electricity sector through unbundling as well as public-private partnerships. Amend the Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) to adopt the least-cost energy solution as proposed by Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR).
4	Manufacturing: Invest in research and development and accelerate the expansion of ICT infrastructure, with an emphasis on widespread internet access. Support and promote value-added technology exports in partnership with the private sector.
5	Investment and economic freedom: Create an environment conducive to doing business and attracting investment, among others by achieving greater policy certainty, and encouraging skilled inward migration. Reduce the regulatory burden.
6	Land, agriculture and water: Pursue land reform in the former homelands by providing security of tenure and the ability to legally transfer ownership. Support commercial agriculture, reduce food waste, and improve water management.

Figure 3: History and forecast of GDP per capita for South Africa



Source: Forecasts done in IFs 7.45.

Zuma as national president shortly thereafter, has promised to reform governance and the country. But he is constrained by his limited power base in a deeply divided party that has been thoroughly corrupted.

Getting to Thuma Mina

In February and May 2020, the ISS published the results of two scenario building exercises modelling the impact of a cluster of six interventions on development in South Africa before and after COVID-19 (Cilliers 2020a; Markle & Cilliers 2020). Reflected in Table 2, the interventions comprised appropriate policies in health, education, electricity, manufacturing, economic freedom and agriculture that were combined into a positive Thuma Mina ('Send Me') growth scenario.

Even if all six of these intervention clusters are successfully implemented, it will take several years of concerted and joined-up efforts by government, business, labour and others for South Africa to regain the lost ground. Figure 3 presents the history and forecast of average levels of income in South Africa from 2014 to 2030. It shows that without pro-growth policies, South Africa will only return to its peak 2014 average levels of income in 2031. With huge effort and the measures modelled in the combined Thuma Mina scenario, this is possible by 2028. The impact will, however, accelerate sharply thereafter, and the situation will become far more positive in each subsequent year. All of this provides us with a sound foundation for assessing the challenges facing South African policy-makers, and the options for charting a course to recovery.

From silos to a coherent South African foreign policy vision

COVID-19 has underscored the importance of reconfiguring African economies to achieve much more rapid, sustainable and inclusive growth, and also points to the pathways towards such a transition, such as the need for responsible macroeconomic management (Cilliers 2020b). South Africa is well positioned in this regard, having championed the continental free trade area during its presidency of the AU in 2020. President Ramaphosa has also repeatedly underlined the importance of 'a new economy in a new global reality'. This, he has declared, should include 'more localisation (or import substitution) to produce our own food; own health care supplies, economic patriotism, a strengthened informal sector, an extended infrastructure and maintenance programme, more and bigger public works, and reindustrialisation, all necessary components of a 'pro-growth development trajectory' (Haffeejee 2020; Merten 2020). Glaringly absent from the various pronouncements and statements in this regard is a clear link between domestic and foreign policy, as is the recognition of the impending water scarcity challenge referred to earlier in this chapter.

The linkages should be apparent – manufacturing and regional trade are two sides of the same coin, since regional trade generally has a higher value. Southern Africa is South Africa's most profitable trade destination, and the only region with which it has a consistent trade surplus. South Africa, has also, for several decades, been one of the largest investors in Africa, although it has begun to lose out to China and others in recent years.

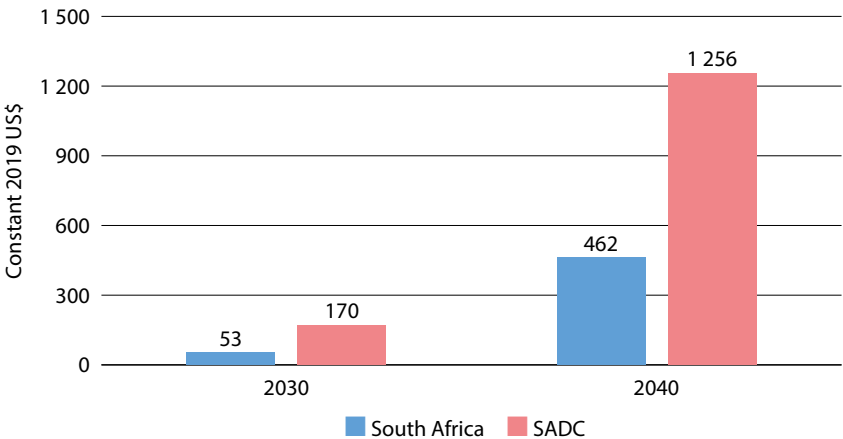
Slow growth, poor governance, mismanagement and xenophobia towards other Africans detract from our engagement with the region.

South Africa needs to develop a clear vision of economic growth that exploits the full potential of its linkages with its regional hinterland. This can best be achieved by taking a leaf from China's playbook and implementing a One Belt, One Road strategy for southern Africa – a concerted effort to improve regional infrastructure and connectivity, including streamlined border management, and to use this to establish new regional value chains involving South African services, industry and agriculture.

South Africa needs to combine these components, the structural transformations that will support industrial growth in the region, regional trade (through the continental free trade area), the potential of investment in infrastructure to unlock economic growth, and the potential of digitisation into a coherent vision for its engagement in Africa, starting with Botswana, Mozambique and Namibia, currently its largest regional trading partners. At the moment, South Africa's foreign and regional development strategies appear to operate in silos, pursued in haphazard and uncoordinated ways by separate departments.

Similar to other world regions, intra-African trade has a relatively higher industrial content than African trade with the rest of the world. The result is that the opportunity to trade freely in a much larger region will increase the value-add of trade with each passing year. This, as well as changes in global value chains (such as shifting manufacturing closer to consumers instead of closer to cheap labour), could all benefit the continent. South Africa (and the region) need to make it clear that it is open for business, and present investors with a stable and predictable environment. Instead of erecting regulatory barriers,

Figure 4: Difference in the size of the combined economy of South Africa and SADC in 2030 and 2040: Current path versus One Belt, One Road



Source: IFs 7.45 using combined scenario from the Potential to Prosperity (P2P) project, modelling the growth potential of African economies to 2040.

ers to skilled migrants, it should be courting them. It should eliminate non-tariff barriers, allowing traders, goods and services to travel seamlessly in the region, unencumbered by poor border management and bad infrastructure.

South Africa and indeed Africa must also push digitisation as a pathway to greater and more sustainable economic growth. Only a third of Africa is currently connected to the internet, and connections are often slow and unreliable. The AU's *Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (2020–2030)* provides a framework for the development of a digital single market for Africa, and implementation must be speeded up. African governments need to expand access to the internet by providing more bandwidth and greater national access. Digitisation would unlock other productivity-advancing initiatives, among others in education, and the formalisation of Africa's large informal sector.

COVID-19 also underlines the need for a faster transition to renewable energy such as wind and solar power. For example, on 28 May 2020, the International Energy Agency, the World Bank, the World Health Organization and the International Renewable Energy Agency declared that the real lesson from COVID-19 was that investments in renewable energy, both for homes and business, had remained profitable, while those in fossil fuel projects had declined (IEA et al 2020). Preliminary work on the potential of a regional One Belt, One Road-type initiative shows that the region could truly transform its future. Indeed, SADC's combined economy could be 243% larger in 2040 compared to 2020 instead of only 105% larger – a difference of US\$1.3 trillion (see Figure 4).

Conclusion

Africa faces immense challenges in alleviating poverty and improving livelihoods, now worsened by COVID-19. However, there is also reason to hope that the crisis could spur a leadership reset in South and southern Africa and the continent at large.

Much depends upon what happens in regional powers such as South Africa, Nigeria, Algeria, Egypt, Ethiopia and Kenya. All these countries face challenges specific to their domestic circumstances. For its part, South Africa remains trapped in the past – forever looking backwards, and unwilling to seize the future. It lacks a coherent vision of itself and its future engagement with the region. The time has truly arrived for South Africa's foreign policy to serve its growth imperative, which could be achieved by a home-grown One Belt, One Road strategy.

Endnotes

1. International Futures (IFs) is a large-scale, integrated modelling system aimed at assisting the analysis of near to long-term country-specific, regional, and global futures across multiple issue areas, developed by the Frederick S Pardee Center for International Futures at the University of Denver. It produces forecasts for 186 countries to the year 2100. See <https://pardee.du.edu/>
2. The IMF's October 2019 forecast stretches up to 2024. The forecast beyond that has been generated by the International Futures forecasting platform (IFs) v 7.54.

3. The IMF forecasts stretches up to 2021, the basis for the V-shaped scenario. The forecasts beyond that have been generated by the IFs system. For details, see Cilliers et al 2020.
4. Using US\$5.50 per person per day in accordance with the World Bank income measure for upper-middle income countries.

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Conclusion: Defining a progressive South African leadership role in Africa

AS OUTLINED in the introduction, this project set out to reassess South Africa's role in Africa. Inspired by President Cyril Ramaphosa's assumption of the Chair of the AU for 2020/2021, CAF members pondered how South Africa's current engagement with Africa should be evaluated, and what could be done to re-energise its regional and continental role in a challenging and fast-changing environment.

Our thinking was also informed by the outcomes of the Foreign Policy Review conducted under the auspices of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) in 2018/2019. Among its findings and recommendations, the Review Panel noted that: 'South Africa has not lived up to its earlier promise. The country has not sufficiently played the role it should have played in engaging a number of international issues. There is a general observation that there have been missteps which have reversed earlier gains that the country registered. As a result, strategic opportunities were missed, resulting in a decline of South Africa's influence regionally, continentally and globally.'

The key questions

Given this finding, this project set out to ask: What should South Africa do to restore its international and especially its continental standing and influence, to its own benefit as well as those of its partners? To this end, CAF invited selected IR and other scholars to contribute a series of essays pertinent to this theme. Next, with the support and assistance of the Thabo Mbeki Foundation, the Wits School of Governance and the FES, CAF organised a webinar during which these keynote papers were presented and then discussed by expert discussants as well as an invited audience. Participants included academics, diplomats, government officials, business people, civil society representatives and others, largely from within South Africa but also from abroad. We were fortunate to secure the participation of former president Thabo Mbeki, whose summation is included in this publication.

In what follows, we first identify some of the main themes that received attention during the discussions. We then distil the insights and lessons offered by the project into a set of three building blocks for a revised South African policy in Africa. They could equally serve as a point of departure for a policy revision as well as any initiative to take this project forward. The first building block is inward-looking, and the other two are outward-looking. Each building block encompasses two sets of imperatives in turn.

Issues raised by participants

Following abbreviated presentations of the various papers, lively discussions ensued. Participants were particularly concerned about issues surrounding African leadership. Among others, they questioned whether Africa was well served by its ageing leadership, and what could be done to give the youth a more meaningful role in determining the future of their countries and the continent as a whole.

Concerns were raised about the state of democracy and good governance, and the need for social cohesion. Another key concern, also emphasised by former president Mbeki, was the resurgent question of what Africans could and should do to become the agents of their own development. Provocative questions posed by participants included the following:

- How do we move towards Pan-Africanism amid so much corruption and internal enmity? We don't seem to have any idea how to change our attitudes towards our leaders and other Africans.
- Which models for political consolidation would be appropriate for advancing Africa's development? For example, does South Africa have the political will to relinquish significant aspects of political sovereignty in order to fast-track political consolidation?
- What role can young Africans play in promoting an agenda of political consolidation and economic integration, given that the willingness to transfer experience of governance and access to significant political platforms to the younger generation is largely absent?
- How do we move from a position of exporting raw materials to attaching value to internal economic development and processing our raw materials ourselves? How do we repurpose our economies in the era of pandemics?
- To what extent is growing European nationalism and the Islamisation of Africa a threat to Pan-Africanism, or Africa's political and economic union?
- European powers remain involved in the internal affairs of African states. In 2021, can 'imperialist' powers still be held entirely responsible for this phenomenon? How do African leaders and systems of governance contribute to post-independence domination or manipulation by European countries?
- Are we as citizens enabling our leaders to overstay their welcome? Are we actually enablers of these abuses of power?
- Moving towards a single African state is a sound ideal, but how do we achieve this when we still have such disjointed governance systems? And what about the deeply corrupt and ailing administrations of African states?
- During the Mbeki administration, South Africa assumed the role of Africa's voice in the international system. However, in the face of the crisis of multilateralism and the concentration of COVID-19 vaccines in the developed countries, what should South Africa's role be in promoting African interests?

- How can Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) be integrated into governance, especially at the local level? IKS seem to have lost their relevance in the global village, which has been conquered by advanced technology. However, there should be a way to introduce them, because they create opportunities for resolving post-colonial conflicts that have come about because of African culture being washed away.
- It seems clear that we need an effective social compact to take South Africa forward. Is the National Development Plan still active, or should it be refreshed? And if so, why would this help us to achieve greater social cohesion, if we failed to implement it previously?

South Africa's retreat from Africa

Former president Mbeki offered an invaluable perspective on South Africa's role in Africa, as well as Africa's relations with the rest of the world. As an activist foreign policy president between 1999 and 2008, he conceived the notion of the African Renaissance, and helped to drive an institutional overhaul of the OAU, leading to the AU and NEPAD, among others.

He drew a stark and revealing picture of South Africa's problematic retreat from an Africa policy from 2009 onwards, when, as he described it, the country 'effectively underwent a change of government'. He also referenced a weakening of Pan-Africanism in general, caused, among others, by a lack of progressive African leadership. Reversing these trends would require dealing with a range of hard realities that compromise the continent's prospects for growth and development.

While the continental free trade area was a good idea, it would take a long time to produce positive results. South Africa should carefully consider its own position, and should still avoid appearing like a dominant – or imperialist – power, benefiting from African integration to the detriment of other African countries.

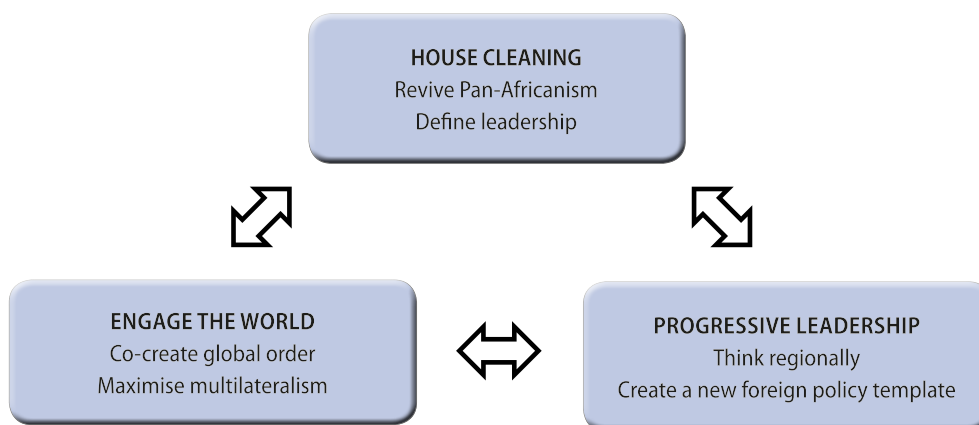
He suggested that the continent needed to go back to basics, and asked some pointed questions, including: 'What is it that we can do together as Africans to become active agents of our own development? How do we position ourselves vis-à-vis the rest of the world?' Today, this includes determining an appropriate relationship towards China. These questions provide a conceptual anchor for South Africa to rethink its role and reclaim its normative relevance and strategic currency on the continent.

Drawing on his experience in domestic and continental governance, former president Mbeki also emphasised the need to complement abstract vision statements with concrete implementation plans.

Three building blocks

This section distils the insights offered by this project into three building blocks of a progressive South African leadership role in Africa.

Building blocks of a South African leadership role in Africa



BUILDING BLOCK ONE: PUTTING AFRICA'S HOUSE IN ORDER
<i>Revive Pan-Africanism</i>
Working with networks of African intellectuals, undertake a radical de-conditioning of the black self as the way out of Africa's perpetual marginalisation.
Revive Pan-Africanism as the foundation of Africa's recovery and development.
Recognise and validate the domestic and global nexus of relations among African peoples.
Widen narrow identities and loyalties; uproot discredited neo-patrimonial governance paradigms; de-validate Africa's pervasive dysfunctional spirituality that undermines the essence of its humanity; and recast its shackled intellectual firmament.
<i>Define effective African leadership</i>
Drawing on the wisdom of former leaders, address the question of what constitutes effective leadership, and how to recognise or educate good leaders.
Commission a definitive study that charts the rise and fall of Africa's 'NEPAD moment', with lessons for the future.
Invite Africa's youth and women to act as agents of Africa's recovery and development.
Assess and improve the required institutional arrangements: the African Governance Architecture, the African Peace and Security Architecture, the AfCFTA and Agenda 2063.

BUILDING BLOCK TWO: FORGING NEW RELATIONSHIPS
<i>Co-create a new global order</i>
Make the argument for a unified post-COVID voice on the global stage.
Invite Africa's diplomatic corps to help re-establish Africa's place and role in a fast-changing and turbulent world.
Partner with business leaders to reshape Africa's currently neo-colonial relationships with the outside world.
Working with civil societies across the continent, seek out those individuals, groups, states and institutions that can help Africans to achieve their rightful place as co-creators of an international order in which states work together for mutual gain.
<i>Maximise the benefits of multilateralism</i>
Repurpose African multilateralism to guide the continent through the rapids of the COVID-19 pandemic.
Reframe the erstwhile African Agenda and the broader system of continental multilateralism with new priorities and strategies.
Working with experienced multilateral officials, maximise the engagement of African leaders and institutions with emerging geopolitical blocs.
Present those with an interest in Africa with clearly defined objectives for contributing to African development.

BUILDING BLOCK THREE: RESETTling SA'S EXTERNAL RELATIONS
<i>Reinvigorate regional integration</i>
Instruct the cabinet to prioritise regional integration as an opportunity for shared growth.
De-escalate the 'threat' narrative.
Working with NEDLAC, create a home-grown One Belt, One Road strategy – a concerted effort to improve regional infrastructure and connectivity.
Establish new regional value chains involving southern African services, industry and agriculture.
<i>Extend this approach to the rest of Africa</i>
Re-engage with continental governance institutions in a way that maximises South Africa's contribution without provoking perceptions of continental dominance or an imperialist role. In this way, South Africa's foreign policy will serve its growth imperative, and serve as a building block towards realising African free trade.

Concluding remarks

When nations – especially those in developing regions – think about their place and role in the international order, especially in the post-COVID world, they need to adopt integrated and forward-thinking policy frameworks that allow for the coordination of economic, security, and foreign policy objectives.

South Africa needs to create a new foreign policy framework reflecting such an orientation. Working with a range of stakeholders, it should redefine South Africa's national interest, incorporate this into an updated and improved National Development Plan and Vision 2030, and extend it into fresh national security, foreign, and defence policies and strategies. Its Africa policy and strategy should flow from this orientation. This policy development process should benefit from dedicated leadership, practical experience and academic expertise; consultation with stakeholders in the private sector, organised labour and civil society; and effective coordination and communication among all stakeholders.

An integrated and inclusive policy development process will be particularly important, given that South Africa will face increasingly interrelated challenges and opportunities in the coming years, whether recurring global pandemics, the spread of violent extremism in Africa, or enhanced opportunities for intra-African trade. South Africa will have to deal simultaneously with these interwoven socio-economic, security, diplomatic and humanitarian themes. Strategic approaches and responses should be based on an 'all-of-government' approach that will include the voices of civil society and the private sector in a collective endeavour to give real meaning to the three building blocks of a new Africa policy.

South Africa should make a determined effort to rediscover its self-worth and give effect to its historical imperative of contributing to Africa's peace and security, economic development and good governance. To this end, the Presidency, via the re-established National Security Council, should appoint a task team comprising experienced civil servants, academics and public intellectuals as well as representatives of organised labour, the private sector and civil society, charged with restoring South Africa's active and progressive role in Africa.



Members of Operation Barkhane, the French anti-insurgency mission in the Sahel region, on patrol in central Mali. The military presence in Africa of foreign powers remains a contested issue within the AU. (Alamy)

Concerned Africans Forum



*‘The forces that unite us are all intrinsic and
greater than the superimposed influences
that keep us apart.’*

– Kwame Nkrumah

AFRICA MUST UNITE (1963)



Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
South Africa Office