Between BRICs’ Promise and Past Western Trauma: Whither, Africa?

INTRODUCTION

The 1960s presented Africa with opportunities borne of liberation, but also persistent challenges. Europe had faded into the arena of US-USSR competition, everything was Washington and the Kremlin, African nations were peripheral. Cold War arms races made even European tiffs against Egypt pale. New players were rising and contending for global influence; China was shedding shadows of empire, warlords, Japanese occupation and increasing its influence and socialist future. Whereas Russia was still the USSR and China its client state, and all BRICs could potentially have risen to global contenders, it was China that distinguished itself. It received Soviet aid during its civil war, had exerted military muscle in Korea and Vietnam, and portended a new path to success for African countries. Rather interestingly, China and India were catching great powers’ bug, with intrastate and interstate conflicts.

The USSR broke up on Christmas day in 1991; Rossiyskaya Federatsiya (Russia) assumed USSR’s debts, privileges and immunities. It started dealing with ‘divorce’ issues: allocating military bases, and other equipment, nuclear missiles, Baikonur Cosmodrome and other separation issues. In the west, the EU was progressively watering down states’ central raison d’être—critical functions like border control, immigration and common Euro currency through the EU and EMU. China grew rapidly despite many ill-advised social and economic programs that led
to the deaths of millions. Yet the US failed to capitalize on support for
decolonization to garner even more influence.

As constituted, BRICs have the human capital: Brazil (210 million),
Russia (146 million), India (1.35 billion) and China (1.45 billion); this
3.15 billion (2020) is 42.1% of the global population. Africa’s 1.39
billion is in the same category. Economically, the countries’ ~US$21 trillion
economies approximate the US,’ almost 25% of the world’s total.
In particular, China and India, the former growing rapidly, portended
a growth model that African countries could follow. China’s massive
investments in Africa have raised concerns about nefarious intentions
and outcomes: corruption, human rights violations, conflict, bad govern-
ance, etc., a valid concern given China’s past. However, China decid-
edly would want a return on investment, an incentive to assure peace.
China’s interactions with Africa are seen to positively impact “industri-
alization, urbanization, education, communication, mobilization, [and]
political incorporation”. This chapter assesses BRICs–Africa relations:
durability and being beneficial to other countries.

**Brazil: Portugal’s Twin and Reluctant Suitor?**

BRICs and their growing impact on world order have received increasing
scholastic scrutiny, but their interactions with the Global South (besides
China) rarely have. Brazil’s interactions with African countries and insti-
tutions are affected by relations with Portugal, reticent colonial power
that incurred the OAU’s collective wrath. Brazil has also been stymied
by domestic politics, military leadership and asunder, the bipolar domi-
nance of the US vs. USSR. Brazil’s relations with Africa and Portugal
goes back to the 1500 s and the sale of 10+ million Africans into
slavery, many who departed ports in Angola, Congo and Mozambique,

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1 Kofi Addo, *Core Labour Standards and International Trade: Lessons from the Regional Context* (Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag, 2015).

2 Gizachew Wondie, *China’s Foreign Policy and Its Human Rights Impact in Africa. A Comparative Study of Ethiopia and Uganda* (Berlin: Grin Verlag, 2015).

3 Meine Pieter van Dijk, “The Impact of the Chinese in Other African Countries and Sectors.” In Meine Pieter van Dijk, Ed., *The New Presence of China in Africa* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009).

4 Adam Przeworski, Michael E. Alvarez, José Antonio Cheibub and Fernando Limongi, *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950–1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 88.
were carried on Portuguese vessels (45 percent) and mostly ended up in Brazil (~40 percent). Africans were not the first go-to as sources of labor to produce sugarcane, tobacco and coffee: “Indian slaves […] proved themselves (or contrived to prove themselves) inferior to blacks, in endurance, commitment and docility.” To meet demand for coffee, “Brazil’s coffee plantations expanded at an astronomical rate, feeding the world’s soaring demand for caffeine,” resulting in the sale and transport of up to 100,000 from the 1830.

After slavery was outlawed in 1807 and the 1837 Abolition of Slavery Act, the Royal Navy established in 1808 the West Africa Squadron based in Sierra Leone, designed to board suspected slavers. By 1820, slavery was deemed “an act of piracy” punishable by death. US President Monroe authorized deployment of US Navy ships to West Africa and the South Atlantic, specifically to seize American ships involved in the Atlantic slave trade. By the 1840s and 1850s, the British West African Squadron had 27 warships; and unlike taming piracy in the Indian Ocean and South China Sea, anti-slavery as humanitarian acts became a source of pride to its sailors. Portugal abolished slavery in 1836 and Brazil in 1888; abolition was favored by King Dom Pedro II and Brazilian elites. Dom Pedro II “never had slaves, was contrary to slavery and promoted abolition” and strove to “consciously avoid the bloody course taken by the United

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5 Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade: 1440–1870* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997).

6 Thomas, *The Slave Trade*, 1997, 220–221.

7 Edward E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), 197–198.

8 Baptist, *The Half has never Been Told*, 2014, 298.

9 W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States of America 1638–1870* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007), 245.

10 John Broich, *Squadron: Ending the African Slave Trade* (New York: Overlook Duckworth, 2017).

11 Bernard Edwards, *Royal Navy Versus the Slave Traders: Enforcing Abolition at Sea, 1808–1898* (Dulles: Potomac Books, 2006).

12 Mary Wills, *Envoys of Abolition: British Naval Officers and the Campaign Against the Slave Trade in West Africa* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2019).

13 Enrico Dal Lago, *American Slavery, Atlantic Slavery, and Beyond: The U.S. “Peculiar Institution” in International Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

14 Alessandro Nicoli de Mattos, *Understanding Brazil for Foreigners* (Smashwords, 2014), n.p.
States” while managing Brazil’s abolitionist movement. Dom Pedro’s efforts ran into opposition by powerful republican property owners who favored the continuation of slavery.

Brazil’s path to independence from the Portuguese Kingdom was long: despite Dom Pedro I’s famous oratory: “Brazilians, Independence or death,” he abdicated in favor of his son in 1831. Dom Pedro II’s daughter, Princess Isabella signed the emancipation decree and the Brazilian Empire and Dom Pedro II’s reign ended in 1889; but its version of caudillismo was afoot. Dom Pedro desired that “Brazil should develop as a European country and enjoy European standards of civilization.” He presided over “political stability and economic growth through railroad, telegraph and trade developments [which] allowed Brazil to emerge as a hemispheric power, as did success in wars against Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay.” Through the nineteenth century, its plantation, slave-fueled economy would soon recalibrate, but the question of former slaves lingered. The latter’s “bondage so crippled Afro-Brazilians as a social group” that integration into Brazilian society was not achieved. Further, Brazilian “military governments also built on a traditional notion of gradenza […] proclaiming the goal of transforming

15 David B. Davis, The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 226.
16 Clayton Sedgwick Cooper, The Brazilians and Their Country (London: William Heinemann, 1919), 47.
17 Encyclopedia America Corp., The Encyclopedia Americana: A Library of Universal Knowledge (Albany: Lyon, 1919).
18 Rebecca Scott, “A Note of Introduction.” In Rebecca Scott et al., Eds., The Abolition of Slavery and the Aftermath of Emancipation in Brazil (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1988).
19 Tom Winterbottom, A Cultural History of Rio de Janeiro after 1889: Glorious Decadence; (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).
20 Jacques Lambert, Latin America: Social Structure and Political Institutions (Berkeley: UC Press, 1967).
21 Malyn Newitt, The Braganzas: The Rise and Fall of the Ruling Dynasties of Portugal and Brazil, 1640–1910 (London: Reaktion Books, 2019), 305.
22 Winterbottom, A Cultural History of Rio de Janeiro, 2016, 136.
23 George Reid Andrews, “Black and White Workers: São Paulo, Brazil, 1888–1928.” In Rebecca Scott, Seymour Drescher, Hebe Maria Mattos de Castro, George Reid Andrews and Robert M. Levine, Eds., The Abolition of Slavery and the Aftermath of Emancipation in Brazil (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1988), 85.
Brazil into a great power of imperial dimensions.”24 Its growing influence was regional and rarely directed at Africa.25

Brazil recognized its ‘new relationship with Africa’ was predicated on negotiating its relationship with Portugal. Gibson Barboza, a former Brazilian foreign minister, stated that he “immediately confronted the tremendous obstacle that the Portuguese colonial problem presented […] as an Atlantic country, Brazil will have interests and responsibilities on the other side of the ocean that bathes our shores.”26 He aimed to “eliminate the climate of mistrust, coldness and even veiled hostility toward Brazil that could take root in Africa because of the position we have traditionally taken on the problem of Portugal’s territories.”27 Portugal finally gave up its African colonies in 1975, potentially improving relations with Africa; yet its support for and providing weapons to apartheid South Africa, then locked in a conflict with an independence-seeking Namibia all but assured that Brazil was not out of the woods yet.

Brazil desired greater global influence through the Non-Aligned Movement. From 1961, it shifted “its traditional alignment with the United States and the Western world [and] gave primacy to its place in, and relations with, the non-Western world, especially the countries of Africa and Asia.”28 Jânio Quadros’ rule saw an ‘independent foreign policy’; diplomatic overtures toward Africa, government scholarships and a mini-Student Airlift of African students to Brazilian universities occurred, but was terminated by Quadros’ resignation 7 months later and his successor’s (João Goulart) overthrow in 1964. Brazil’s foreign policy ‘reset,’ realigning with Portugal, and declining to participate in a ‘multilateral peace force’ to Namibia.29 Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva’s presidency favored better relations with Africa. Brazil sought membership in a

24Jörg Husar, Framing Foreign Policy in India, Brazil and South Africa: On the Like-Mindedness of the IBSA States (Cham: Springer, 2016), 101.
25Pedro Feitoza, “Historical Trajectories of Protestantism in Brazil, 1810–1960.” In Eric Miller and Ronald J. Morgan, Eds., Brazilian Evangelicalism in the Twenty-First Century: An Inside and Outside Look (New York: Palgrave, 2019).
26Jerry Dávila, Hotel Trópico: Brazil and the Challenge of African Decolonization, 1950–1980 (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 142.
27Dávila, Hotel Trópico, 2010, 142.
28Wayne Selcher, Brazil In The International System: The Rise of a Middle Power (New York: Routledge, 1981), n.p.
29Selcher, “Brazil–Africa Relations”, 1981.
restructured UN Security Council and aimed to enlist Africa’s 54 countries to neutralize Argentina or Mexico’s chances. Lula’s increased contact with Africa included 11 official visits (25 countries), doubling embassies and increasing trade especially with resource-rich African countries.\textsuperscript{30}

Lula began a “Brazil–Africa Forum on Politics, Cooperation, and Trade”\textsuperscript{31} initiative and was involved in convening the IBSA Dialogue Forum (India–Brazil–South Africa Dialog Forum), ‘deepening ties’ with the community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP), the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), ECOWAS, NEPAD and AU.\textsuperscript{32} Brazil was granted AU observer status in 2005 (together with Mexico and Argentina), signed a technical cooperation framework in 2007, and was represented at the 2010 ECOWAS Summit.\textsuperscript{33} Brazil convened a conference on Africans and Africans in the Diaspora that attracted 6 African heads of states, OAU Chair and several other delegations.\textsuperscript{34} Brazil has not held a formal forum in the tradition of FOCAC; the Brazil-Africa forum mostly featured scholars. Brazil’s ~US$2 trillion GDP (nominal) ranks it 9th, its GDP (PPP) per capita just US$16,000 but Brazil faces issues like poverty, COVID-19 infections, economic stagnation and other issues that constrain its ability to influence global politics.

\textbf{Russia: Still No Strategy}

The history of Russia/USSR/Russia again is replete with missed (in)actions in Africa, giving rise to suspicions of no sound strategy. This is not exceptional: the US didn’t have one until 1958. Most of Soviet actions in Africa were primarily a Cold War strategy—to thwart the US and its allies’ influence in a decolonizing Africa. Russia shows

\textsuperscript{30}Samuel Bodman, Julia Sweig and James Wolfensohn, Global Brazil and U.S.-Brazil Relations (New York: CFR, 2011), 60.

\textsuperscript{31}Christina Stolte, \textit{Brazil’s Africa Strategy: Role Conception and the Drive for International Status} (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 96.

\textsuperscript{32}Stolte, \textit{Brazil’s Africa Strategy}, 2015.

\textsuperscript{33}Danilo Marcondes de Souza Neto, “A Renewed Partnership? Contemporary Latin America-Africa Engagement.” In Dawn Nagar and Charles Mutasa, Eds., \textit{Africa and the World: Bilateral and Multilateral International Diplomacy} (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 221.

\textsuperscript{34}Rita Kiki Edozie and Keith Gottschalk, \textit{The African Union’s Africa: New Pan-African Initiatives in Global Governance} (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2014).
neither interest in, nor strategy for African countries beyond weapons sales. Russia’s distance from Africa is considerable (although Cuba and Venezuela are too), but proximity, geography, ethnicity and ideology make the distance greater. Russia was always a limited power in Europe, Asia and its ambitions were directed at Eurasia. Its interest and intervention in Africa were more opportunistic than purposeful, the highest goal being to thwart the US and European powers, peeling support from them on account of colonialism.

Unlike the US and Europe, Russia’s geographic location denies it a direct line of sight. Its closest point, Egypt, is smack amid Arabian societies; the historical interactions between the Christian Orthodox religion, Constantinople’s capture by the Ottoman Empire in 1453, and the see-saw of control of the region made recovering Constantinople Russia’s most important goal together with recognition by Europe.35 Russia’s first bilateral relations in Africa were with Ethiopia, the first diplomatic exchange occurring in 1897. Relations remained robust until World War I, though its importance progressively declined.36 After the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, Ethiopia “allied with the entente [and] refused to accept representatives from Soviet Russia.”37 Diplomatic relations were restored in 1924, but Russia’s attempt to control some territories liberated from Italy would challenge relations.38 In the post-colonial period, Soviet interactions in Africa were haphazard, besides the grand strategy of weakening the US due to its failure to denounce colonization, and allies, the colonial powers. The paradox of democracy vs. colonialism gave the USSR unlimited ammunition, while its centrally planned economic models were attractive to Africa.39

Some African leaders professed socialism, based on African concepts of communitarianism infused with nationalism. The US and its allies often failed to grasp that most African leaders were nationalist and desperate more than they were socialist, that to unshackle their people

35 Lindsey Hughes, Peter the Great: A Biography (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004).
36 Radoslav A. Yordanov, The Soviet Union and the Horn of Africa during the Cold War: Between Ideology and Pragmatism (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2016).
37 Yordanov, The Soviet Union, 2016, 3.
38 Yordanov, The Soviet Union, 2016.
39 Elizabeth Schmidt, Foreign Intervention in Africa: From the Cold War to the War on Terror (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
from colonialism, they asked for help everywhere and the USSR helped. Soviet leaders exploited this, including awarding Lenin Peace Prizes to Nkrumah, Modibo Keita and Sékou Touré. Early in the 1960s, the USSR backed its support by deploying ‘technical experts,’ although their true purpose was contested, and some suggested they were there to exploit them. The aid was tangible, utilitarian and beneficial: “the Soviet airline Aeroflot provided technical assistance and equipment to get the airline [Société Nationale Air Mali or Air Mali] underway.” That Soviets were making inroads into Africa led to founding the Peace Corps, although Jim Crow laws in the US’ south only complicated the narrative for the west.

Soviet support of decolonization was part of Cold War global strategy. “Soviet-African relations in the 1970s reflect a willingness in Moscow to back a wide range of causes and regimes which have little in common apart from their need for external support and their readiness to accept Soviet support if no other source is available.” Some countries were selected for strategic regions, some for political reasons but also because liberation implied defeat for the US and its allies. The USSR aided the African National Congress (ANC) in its Zambian offices, as a counterweight to the US-South Africa alliance and assisted Joshua Nkomo’s (socialist) ZAPU against Mugabe’s ZANU in Zimbabwe. Soviet moves and gains were countered by the US with incentives, Guinea in the

40 Michael O. Anda, International Relations in Contemporary Africa (Lanham: University Press of America, 2000).
41 Young-sun Hong, Cold War Germany, the Third World, and the Global Humanitarian Regime (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
42 Young-sun Hong, Cold War Germany, the Third World, and the Global Humanitarian Regime, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
43 Ben R. Guttery, Encyclopedia of African Airlines (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1998).
44 United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Perceptions, Relations Between the United States and the Soviet Union (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979), 234.
45 Odd Arne Westad, The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
46 Westad, The Global Cold War, 2007.
1960s a perfect example. Soon, other regions were of greater import, including Afghanistan, the Middle East (Egypt) and Afghanistan.

**Old Games and New Players: Russia in Africa in the Post-cold War Era**

The collapse of the USSR bequeathed the Russian Federation to global order. Russia is a large country that occupies 12.5 percent of earth’s inhabited area and spans 11 time zones. Its first decade involved ‘self-care’ before engaging with the world. As Russia assumed debts and responsibilities of the former USSR, as capitalism thrived, deficits increased, taxes remained uncollected, corruption, mismanagement and suspicion of political instability persisted, a “too nuclear to fail” Russia appeared highly unstable. As Yugoslavia disintegrated, Somalia failed and the Rwanda genocide started, Russia was quiet, unable to effectively address emerging global events given its own circumstances. When engaged, Russia addressed issues territorially proximate to Asia such as Kosovar Albanians’ repression in the newly constituted Serbia and the situation in Bosnia. Interestingly, some Somalis fleeing the 1990 collapse resettled in Russia.

Russia began previewing its future strategy and took unusual positions regarding Africa; in Rwanda, as the magnitude of the genocide became clear and fearing American overreach, Russia and China opposed deploying a peacekeeping force more effective than the Roméo Dallaire-led UNAMIR, or accept RoE change to allow the protection of civilians. Russia and the US opposed military intervention despite death tolls rising by the hour. Finally, a force of 2500 was urged, against US,

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47 Okoth, Pontian Godfrey, *USA, India, Africa During and After the Cold War* (Nairobi: UoN Press, 2010).

48 Michael Mandelbaum, *Mission Failure: America and the World in the Post-Cold War Era* (Oxford: OUP, 2016), 59.

49 William Shawcross, *Deliver Us From Evil: Peacekeepers, Warlords and a World of Endless Conflict* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).

50 Migration Information Programme (IOM), *Transit migration in the Russian Federation* (Bloomington: IOM, 1994).

51 Linda Melvern, *Conspiracy to Murder: The Rwandan Genocide* (London: Verso, 2004).

52 Michael Barnett, *Eyewitness to a Genocide: The United Nations and Rwanda* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016).
France and Russia’s 500–1000 troops’ figure and UNAMIR’s proposed ‘necessary force’ of between 5500 and 8000.\textsuperscript{53} The past 20 years have seen Russia’s drive to recover empire and remain relevant, in part, given the global order, the US’ ‘unipolar moment,’ NATO’s expansion, expanding Europe and a rising China. The US’ war on terror, troops in Afghanistan, Iraq, drones in Syria, Libya, Somalia, West Africa and involvement in Yemen, Pakistan and Somalia have challenged Russia’s ability to influence world order. Vladimir Putin’s rise to power epitomized a ‘new’ Russia, recalling that “first and foremost it is worth acknowledging that the demise of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century. As for the Russian people, it became a genuine tragedy.”\textsuperscript{54} Putin is considered to be rebuilding the now-defunct Soviet empire with most its actions directed at countries in the region. Invasion of Georgia in 2006, Ukraine in 2014 and its long-term involvement in Syria and backing Iran do preview Russia’s dreams of empire.

Resurgent Russia: New Pro-Africa Global Actor or Stridently Anti-West (Again)?
A few areas define recent Russia-Africa interactions. As one of two BRICs on the UNSC, it joined forces with the EU’s Operation ATALANTA, considered Libya’s outcomes in shaping its response to the Arab Spring and in October 2019, held the first Russia-Africa Summit and Economic Forum in Sochi. Russia and Africa have some related experiences: swiftly after USSR’s collapse, Somalia followed suit. Instability, conflict and warlords soon led to piracy off Somalia. A raft of UNSC resolutions led to the 2008 establishment of the European Union’s Naval Force ATALANTA (EU NAVFOR). This allowed the EU to implement “a coordination unit with the task of supporting the surveillance and protection activities carried out by some member States of the European Union off the coast of Somalia, and the ongoing planning process towards a possible European Union naval operation, as well as other international or national

\textsuperscript{53} Romeo Dallaire, \textit{Shake Hands With the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda} (Toronto: Random House, 2004).

\textsuperscript{54} Associated Press, “Putin: Soviet Collapse a ‘Genuine Tragedy,’” \textit{NBC News} (April 25, 2005).
Within the EU, Operation ATALANTA was authorized by EU Council Joint Action 851; it set the goals of ATALANTA as protecting of WFP ships, AMISOM mission, preventing armed robbery and piracy, monitoring fishing off Somalia’s coast and increasing EU and other IGOs capacity to working in the region, focusing on maritime security and capacity. Russia did not contribute to ATALANTA, or the 33-nation Combined Maritime Forces (150, 151 and 152) but it has often taken part in anti-piracy activities with Japan, India and China, under the “Shared Awareness and Deconfliction (SHADE) mechanism” where naval anti-piracy operations were underway. Russia was able to rescue one of its vessels and arrest the suspected pirates, later releasing them.

Russia’s re/actions to Libya’s Arab Spring protests are intriguing. Russia abstained on the vote for UNSC Resolution 1973 (2011) establishing the No-Fly Zone. It established “a ban on all flights in the airspace of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya in order to help protect civilians and […] to take all necessary measures to enforce compliance with the ban on flights imposed.” The resolution set conditions for civilian protection, enforcing an arms embargo, a ban on Libyan aircraft and flights, an asset freeze and travel restrictions on Libyan government and high-ranking officials, and allowed the UNSG to create a ‘Panel of Experts’ to implement the resolution. Ten countries including US, UK and France voted in favor, none opposed and five (China and Russia inclusive), abstained. Libya’s No-Fly Zone was the first major test on the use of R2P, where the ‘principle of non-intervention yields to the international responsibility to protect.’

55 UNSC, “Resolution 1838 (2008)—S/RES/1838 (2008)”, https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/. Resolution 1838 was adopted during the 5987th meeting on 10/7/2008. See also: UN Oceans & Law of the Sea, “United Nations Documents on Piracy: Security Council resolutions on piracy off the coast of Somalia”, May 24, 2012.

56 EU NAVFOR Somalia, “Mandate”, European Union External Action. Available at https://eunavfor.eu/mission/.

57 UK House of Lords & European Union Committee, Combating Somali piracy: the EU’s Naval Operation Atalanta, 12th report of Session 2009–10 (London: Stationery Office Limited, 2020).

58 UNSC, Resolution 1973 (2011) / S/RES/1973 (2011), UNSC, 6498th meeting, March 17, 2011. https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/s/res/1973-%282011%29.
Other instances where R2P intervention seemed desirable and inevitable include Kenya’s 2007, Zimbabwe’s 2008 and Iran’s 2009 elections. Suspicions abound about Libya: that Europe was pre-empting the fallout of a failed state within sailing distance and millions of Libyans and African refugees pouring into Europe; after all, Rwandan genocide was worse, easier to resolve but far from Europe. The no-fly zone execution was a successful failure: it succeeded in confirming Russia’s suspicion that NATO was a hostile, expansionist, conflictual and untrustworthy partner, its (US) puppet master’s goal was regime change in Libya, perhaps as payback for the Berlin nightclub bombing and deaths of American servicemen, and the downing of Pan Am 103 over Lockerbie. But enforcing a No-Fly Zone without eliminating Libya’s offensive weapons was risky. Still, nothing did more to negatively impact future R2P actions than Libya. Russia, China and South Africa believed “NATO was exceeding the mandate approved in Resolution 1973 and had crossed the line between civilian protection and regime change. The resolution only provided for limited strikes to prevent violence against innocent civilians.”

Beyond Russia’s ‘aggressor’ rhetoric, it saw Libya as a continuation of Iraq and Afghanistan. Russia (USSR and after) and Libya had shared commercial and historically close relations. Libya was a weapons importer from the USSR and its proxy power in Africa; Russia was also building a railway line from Sirte to Benghazi. To the east, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and Vladimir Putin signed deals for the purchase of Russian military hardware. Regarding the Arab Spring, Russia’s responses to events in Libya oscillated. First, it opposed sanctions, then agreed to support them, then opposed a no-fly zone by abstaining in Resolution 1973, and then critiqued NATO’s implementation of the no-fly zone. It then offered to mediate between rebels and the government, encouraged Gaddafi to step down while opposing regime change, although late in 2011, calls

59 Chris Chivvis and Jeffrey Martini, *Libya After Qaddafi: Lessons and Implications for the Future* (DC: Rand, 2014), 5.

60 Karina Fayzullina, “The Arab Spring Through Russian ‘eyes’.” In Larbi Sadiki, Ed., *Routledge Handbook of the Arab Spring: Rethinking Democratization* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

61 Andrea Beccaro, “Russia: Looking for a Warm Sea.” In Karim Mezran and Arturo Varvelli, Eds., *Foreign Actors in Libya’s Crisis* (Milano: Ledizioni Ledi Publishing, 2017).

62 Robert O. Freedman, “Russia and the Arab Spring.” In David Lesch and Mark L. Haas, Eds., *The Arab Spring: The Hope and Reality of the Uprising* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2017).
to revisit the no-fly zone and curtail NATO’s mandate grew.\textsuperscript{63} Gaddafi’s death and two rival rebel governments in Tripoli and Benghazi validated Russia’s fears; Iraq, Afghanistan and now Libya were good examples good intentions gone rogue.\textsuperscript{64}

Russia convened its first Russia-Africa Summit in Sochi in 2019.\textsuperscript{65} While the outcomes of the summit were unclear, Russia discussed increasing its investments in Africa in future. Russia’s economic footprint in Africa faint and only in arms sales, mostly to Algeria, with one of largest ever Russian arms sales post-Cold War era going to Algeria at US$7.5 billion.\textsuperscript{66} One might be forgiven for proposing that Russia’s trade with Africa is more harmful than helpful. Russia-Africa future relations are still indeterminate. Greater regional integration in Africa and the newly inaugurated African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) portend major opportunities for Russia. On the other hand, it may be the start of a new rivalry with its southern neighbor, India, as India seeks greater engagement with the African continent.

\textbf{The India–Africa Complexity}

By virtue of colonization, African countries’ experiences more closely mirrored those of India than any of the other BRICs. Brazil’s path to BRIC was different, but that of India is even more unlikely. Granted, at US$2.72 trillion, India has the world’s 7th largest economy in the world as measured by nominal GDP (Brazil’s US$1.87 trillion ranks it 9th) but the population tells a different story: Brazil’s population is 15 percent of India’s. Its GDP (PPP) is US$2104.20, HDI score of 0.65 (ranking 118) while 18 percent of its population, larger than Brazil’s entire population, lives in poverty. India’s membership of BRICs and its great-power politics is confounding, considering the proposition that it could do ‘rising’

\textsuperscript{63}Horace Campbell, \textit{Global NATO and the Catastrophic Failure in Libya: Lessons for Africa in the Forging of African Unity} (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2013).

\textsuperscript{64}Andrea Dessi, “The OSCE Mediterranean Partnership, Libya and the MENA Crisis.” In Andrea Dessi and Ettore Greco, Eds., \textit{The Search for Stability in Libya: OSCE’s Role Between Internal Obstacles and External Challenges} (Roma: Edizioni Nuova Cultura, 2018), 43.

\textsuperscript{65}Landry Signé, “Vladimir Putin Is Resetting Russia’s Africa Agenda to Counter the US and China”, \textit{Brookings Institution} (October 22, 2019) (Web).

\textsuperscript{66}Riad A. Attar, “Arms Modernization in the Middle East.” In Andrew T. H. Tan, Ed., \textit{The Global Arms Trade: A Handbook} (New York: Routledge, 2010), 105.
or ‘great power’ politics things. A revisit and potential improvement of relations between India and Africa is necessary, almost overdue even if such relations are not necessarily based on what India can do for Africa.

Historical and trade relations between Africa and India date back to 740 AD. Contacts were facilitated by Arabs who traveled to Sofala, Madagascar to India and Ceylon. Coastal Swahili people and Arabs served as trade intermediaries. “The Zanzibaris used Indian currency, issued and used by Arab and Indian representatives of Indian finance houses in Bombay and elsewhere.” The British found Indians’ knowledge of the oceans, currents, harbors invaluable; “the laboual sheetr of officers of the Indian Navy have been the chief means of bringing the Somali coast of Africa to our knowledge.” The nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw Indians migrate to Africa for many: as pliant agents of British colonial expansion, as rail and port workers and businessmen.

Initially, Indian labor was used to plant sugarcane by the 150,000 laborers sent to South Africa in the 1860s. Deemed insufficiently hard-working, they were divvied up between Durban and the north coast, taking jobs “on the railway and in the municipal Government.” They were in diverse occupations besides plantations. “Indians were employed in various sectors, such as the railways, the dockyards, coal mines, municipal services, and domestic service.” The numerical increase was reflected by suspicion they were opportunistic colonial collaborators. “The Indians who acted largely as customs officers, bankers, money-lenders and money-changers were the object of resentment, evident in

67 Mary Gunn and L. E. W. Codd, *Botanical Exploration Southern Africa* (Cape Town: A. A. Balkema, 1981).

68 Graham Connah, *Forgotten Africa: An Introduction to its Archaeology* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

69 John Middleton, *African Merchants of the Indian Ocean: Swahili of the East African Coast* (Long Grove: Waveland Press, Inc., 2004), 87.

70 Clements R. Markham, *A Memoir on the Indian Surveys* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 24.

71 Paul Younger, *New Homelands: Hindu Communities in Mauritius, Guyana, Trinidad, South Africa, Fiji and East Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 14.

72 Felicity Hand and Esther Pujolràs-Noguer, “From Cane cutters and Traders to Citizens and Writers.” In Esther Pujolràs-Noguer and Felicity Hand, Eds., *Relations and Networks in South African Indian Writing* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 2.
the stereotypes of the time.” Indians were universally unpopular: they were described by European observers as opportunistic ‘birds of passage’ who would go back to India after making a profit […] the bureaucrats may have looked down on Indians, but could not really do without them if the colonization of East Africa was to bring profits.”

Where they settled in numbers, “Natal’s Legislative Council argued that Indians should also be barred from consuming or acquiring liquor as this would serve to halt the sale of liquor to Africans.” Outflows continued; 32,000 Indians worked as indentured laborers building the Kenya-Uganda railway. Almost 7000 settled in Mombasa and 1000 were in Nairobi by 1905. Transitioning from laborers to dukawallahs, colonialism and need for administrators meant the British could recruit Indians (1500), pay them less than Europeans for similar work, and keep them out of areas Europeans dominated, such as commercial agriculture. Over time, they took part in politics: Jeevanjee was appointed to Kenya’s LegCo. Discrimination was rife: during Nairobi’s 1908 plague outbreak “the colonial state stepped in, restricting ‘lower class Indians and the African natives’ to specific quarters for residence and small trading.” Indians chafed at this treatment; in South Africa, passes were required, precipitating Mahatma Gandhi’s 1908 protest by 3000 who burnt their passes. In East Africa they objected to ‘an inferior status,’ denial of participation, segregation and limits on where they could own land.

73 Dan Ojwang, Reading Migration and Culture: The World of East African Indian Literature (New York: Palgrave, 2013), 10.
74 Ojwang, Reading Migration and Culture, 2013, 10.
75 T. J. Tallie, Queering Colonial Natal: Indigeneity and the Violence of Belonging in and the Violence of Belonging in Southern Africa (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota, 2019), 74.
76 Sana Aiyar, Indians in Kenya: The Politics of Diaspora (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015).
77 Aiyar, Indians in Kenya, 2015.
78 Aiyar, Indians in Kenya, 2015, 43.
79 Hand and Pujolràs-Noguer, “From Cane cutters and Traders to Citizens and Writers”, 2015.
80 David Sunderland, Ed., Economic Development of Africa, 1880–1939: Labour and Other Aspects of Development, Volume 5 (London: Routledge, 2011).
Self-inflicted Wounds? Inclusion, Rejection, Ejection

Across Africa, despite treatment as 2nd-class persons, conflict between Africans and Indians was rife, e.g., in South Africa in 1949. As successful settlers in East Africa, the South Asian community composed the middle stratum that created a cushion between the ruling British and the subjugated Africans. The divisions were discernible, “Africans generally accusing the Asians of non-integration” although Africans were accused of adopting ‘pseudo-European values.’ Indians’ retention of cultural heterogeneity and culture rarely allowed ‘others’ in, especially Africans. As independence approached, it was unclear how African governments would address the ‘Indian question’ with over 360,000 Indians in the Diaspora. Nehru envoy, Apa Pant “reminded the Asians of East Africa that they were ‘visitors’ in this African land” despite participation in Legislative Councils (LegCo) as stakeholders. Some rose to prominence, e.g., Pio Gama Pinto, a close ally of Kenya’s first president Jomo Kenyatta.

Responses to the Indian question varied across the continent. In Kenya, “in spite of his harsh treatment by the British, Kenyatta favoured reconciliation; whites who decided to stay on after independence were fairly treated provided they took Kenyan citizenship.” He inaugurated “democratic African socialism” and retained the status quo (capitalism) although a “majority of the former settlers in this country […] when they learned that this country was to achieve independence they went away because they were not prepared to come under the leadership of

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81 Anthony Lemon, “The political position of Indians in South Africa.” In Colin Clarke, Ceri Peach and Steven Vertovec, Eds., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
82 Maya Parmar, Reading Cultural Representations of the Double Diaspora: Britain, East Africa, Gujarat (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 6.
83 Marie C. Lall, India’s Missed Opportunity: India’s Relationship with the Non-Resident Indians (London: Routledge, 2001), 11.
84 Ravindra K. Jain, Nation, Diaspora, Trans-nation: Reflections from India (London: Routledge, 2010).
85 Younger, New Homelands, 2010, 219.
86 Younger, New Homelands, 2010, 219.
87 Norman Lowe, Mastering Modern World History, 5th ed. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 546.
88 ______, AF Press Clips, Volume 13, Issues 18–35 (Detroit: University of Michigan Library, 1991).
our President, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta." 

Piecemeal, there was friction, expulsion and deportation. In 1967, “Moi declared seven Indians and five Europeans to be prohibited immigrants, giving them twenty-four hours to leave Kenya” for “adopting a ‘racist attitude,’ insulting and referring to Kenya as a ‘terrorist government,’ aiding the Shifta, calling KANU youth as ‘dogs,’ being ‘anti-African and not maintaining racial harmony.’

Idi Amin’s decree in 1972, mandating that all Asians depart Uganda within 60 days, is more widely known. Without addressing its merits or validity, it alleged ‘Africanization’ actions to fix Europeans and Asians taking advantage of Africans during colonization. Appropriation of land from White farmers in Zimbabwe in the early 2000s and South Africa’s land redistribution are pertinent, especially given the racial protests across the world in 2020. The count ranges from 23,000 citizens and 60,000 non-citizens, other stats show 13,000 citizens and 40,000–49,000 non-citizens; figures of 50,000 and a final tally of “40 per cent of the total 60,000.”

Amin’s justification appealed to a need to rebalance economic affluence. After rebuilding the railway and becoming dukawallahs, they started running cotton ginneries (100/155 in 1925) and investing in the coffee business. Europeans dominated government and the economy was split between Europeans and Asians, totaling to 2 percent of the population. Amin’s solution did not Africanize businesses; rather, it brought about significant upheavals and sowed doubts in the rule of law. Despite OAU’s begrudging objections to Amin’s actions, Uganda hosted the

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89 Republic of Kenya, *Kenya National Assembly Official Record (Hansard) June 1–July 30, 1965, Vol. V.* (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1965), 1642.

90 Aiyar, *Indians in Kenya,* 2015, 273.

91 Mike Bristow, Bert N. Adams and Cecil Pereira, “Ugandan Asians in Britain, Canada, and India: Some characteristics and resources.” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies,* vol. 4, no. 2 (1975): 155.

92 Vali Jamal, “Asians in Uganda, 1880–1972: Inequality and Expulsion.” *The Economic History Review, New Series,* vol. 29, no. 4 (November, 1976): 602. [https://www.jstor.org/stable/2595346](https://www.jstor.org/stable/2595346).

93 Jamal, “Asians in Uganda”, 1976, 604.

94 Mahmood Mamdani, “The Uganda Asian Expulsion Twenty Years After.” *Economic and Political Weekly,* vol. 28, no. 3/4 (January 16–23, 1993): 94. [https://www.jstor.org/stable/4399801](https://www.jstor.org/stable/4399801).
12th Annual OAU Summit in 1975, burnishing Amin’s credentials, although elsewhere, Britain was an ardent advocate for the expulsion of Uganda from The Commonwealth, whose meetings which Amin avoided attending. In 1983, Obote invited Ugandan Asians to return and help rebuild; in 1986, Yoweri Museveni repeated the call, with assurances that 1972 was history.

Predictably, reaction to Amin’s actions accused Nyerere of plotting with Obote to stage an invasion of Uganda from Tanzania in 1972 with “British intervention in Uganda to protect the Asian community who were being expelled.” In response, Amin requested help from Nigeria, Guinea, Egypt to shore up Uganda and Libya, which actually sent troops (from the PLO). At the OAU, Nyerere voiced opposition to Uganda’s actions but was condemned by some OAU members for attempting to interfere in Uganda’s internal matters, contrary to the OAU Charter; the OAU “was responsible for blocking a vote at the United Nations on the ‘moral issues raised by Amin’s’ expulsion of Uganda’s Asian population in 1972.”

India appointed Government boards to resettle more than 10,000 returnees but took no further actions. Majority of those expelled (29,000) were British passport holders who settled in Britain. Britain’s role in colonizing Uganda and creating the socioeconomic conditions robbed it of standing to raise much ruckus. Over time, relations between India and most of the other African countries stabilized, although internal dynamics and relations between Asians and Africans are akin to armed peace, including conflict borne of “the experience of Africans working for Asian employers as housemaids and those who work in Asian-owned businesses

95 Amii Omara-Otunnu, Politics and the Military in Uganda, 1890–1985 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1987).
96 W. David McIntyre, The Significance of the Commonwealth, 1965–90 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991).
97 ———, AF Press Clips (Madison: University of Wisconsin Library, 1991).
98 Roy May and Oliver Furley, African Interventionist States (New York: Routledge, 2001), n.p.
99 May and Furley, African Interventionist States, 2001.
100 Brooke N. Coe, Sovereignty in the South: Intrusive Regionalism in Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 108.
101 Ronald Aminzade, Race, Nation, and Citizenship in Postcolonial Africa: The Case of Tanzania (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
[who] complain of underpayment and poor conditions of service.”

The new India-African engagement efforts might yet produce positive outcomes for both societies.

**India Arica Forum Summit**

The India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS) convened for the first time in New Delhi, India, in 2008, one of a flurry of attempts at engagement by countries seeking to burnish their global influence; others included FOCAC and Korea-Africa Summit. The first IAFS was different; India did not want to appear to be replicating TICAD, or FOCAC. “Its invitation list is symbolic: fourteen heads of state and the heads of all eight regional groups,” with anticipated cooperation in the areas of human resources, technology, industrialization, SMEs, minerals, health, ICT, security and judicial reforms. IAFS goals are ambitious and illuminate potential South-South partnerships; another goal of IAFS has been the improvement of relations between India and African countries. India also committed “to providing 50,000 scholarships for Africans to study in the country.”

India’s investments in Africa are increasing; its “total commerce with Africa grew rapidly from $25 billion in 2007 to $70 billion in 2015” and aims to provide a US$5.4 billion credit facility to Africa, provide preferential market access for 34 LDCs in Africa, while inking a deal with SACU. The numbers and rising trade conceal that South Africa spoke for US$7.5 billion of the total US$7.7 billion trade value.

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102 Kevin Shillington, *Encyclopedia of African History: Volume 1, A–G*, (New York: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2005), 192.

103 Brittany Morreale, “Asian Powers in Africa: Win, Win, Win, Win?” *Book Review—Prosperity*.

104 Alex Vines and Elizabeth Sidiropolous, “India Calling.” *The World Today*, vol. 64, no. 4 (April, 2008): 26–27.

105 Vines and Sidiropolous, “India Calling”, 2008.

106 Rosaline Daniel and Dawn Nagar, “Africa’s Key Bilateral Relations in Asia: China, India, and Japan.” *Centre for Conflict Resolution* (2016): 16. https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep05137.8.

107 Daniel and Nagar, “Africa’s Key Bilateral Relations in Asia”, 2016.

108 James Thuo Gathii, *African Regional Trade Agreements as Legal Regimes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)
India inked an Indo-Kenyan Trade Agreement bestowing reciprocal MFN status in 1981; Indo-Africa trade exceeded US$1.2 billion in 2008. In an age of globalization and COVID-19, insularity can progress constrain. Tiffs between African and Indian populations in Africa and India often dampen prospects for cooperation. India’s ability to project power and repatriate 13,000 citizens from Libya during the Arab Spring is to be lauded, although its support for a no-fly zone contradicted AU’s position. Much common ground exists, IAFS can nurture it, and cooperation can be achieved in agriculture, trade, industry and investment, peace and security, good governance, civil society and ICT.

The Great Suspicion: What Is China Doing in Africa?

China’s increased engagement and relations with Africa especially blossomed early in the twenty-first century, although they predate Zheng He’s voyages with fleets of up to ~ 28,000 sailors on 63 ships, early in the 1400s. Although the scale of these voyages dwarfed those of Europeans—Columbus, for instance, with his 3 ships and 270 men, China looked inward during the Ming and Qing empires. Its return to Africa resumed after World War II, engaging with Zambia, Tanzania and Angola. Building up its economy and manufacturing base, in the 1990s, it became the ‘factory of the world’. China declined from its eighteenth century global dominance to grave humiliations, end of Qing Empire and the warlords’ era, invasion by Japan between 1915 and 1945, post-World War II civil war, to supporting communist allies (Korea, Vietnam). Khrushchev’s 1956 speech denigrating Stalin and denial of nuclear technology pointed to new paths, greater assertiveness and potential opportunities. Most importantly, coming out of a century of decadence and humiliations by the west through Opium Wars and unequal treaties, trade expansion might yet bring glory. China’s relations with Africa then were

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109 Seema Shekhawat, “India, Africa and the IOR-ARC: Potential for Collaboration.” In Renu Modi, Ed., *South-South Cooperation: Africa on the Centre Stage* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

110 Satish Kumar, “National Security Environment: Developments Pertaining to Asia, Africa and Latin America.” In Satish Kumar, Ed., *India’s National Security: Annual Review 2012* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2013).
on trade and aid; its investments surged past US$ 100 billion in 2007, accompanied by questions and doubts on its motivations. Was it a new imperialist or a better capitalist? These are addressed in Chris Alden’s (2007) *China in Africa*; van Dijk’s 2009 volume addresses China in Africa’s; Shinn and Eisenman study a century of China-Africa interactions; and Kachiga’s study of China’s Africa policy which debuted in 2013.

China’s investments in infrastructure development projects—airports in Ethiopia and Kenya and the Tanzania-Zambia Railway (TAZARA)—have had notable impact. But even before the newest trajectory of capital-intensive projects, during the Cold War, China sympathized with Africa’s colonization and attendant consequences, supported liberation—from Bandung to Bangkok, advocated at the UN, engaged with especially socialist-leaning African countries and even as the US sent Peace Corps Volunteers, the UK sent VSOs and the USSR sent ‘technical experts’ to Africa, China sent ‘barefoot doctors’ and agricultural technicians to Africa, supported freedom fighters through training and weapons, and availed grants and low-interest loans. Granted, China has always denied any global ambitions, but in recreating institutions such as assisting newly independent countries with development assistance or technical expertise suggested that China was becoming assertive, and perhaps shedding its isolationist mantle.

Colonialism and subsequent independence produced a flurry of interesting scenarios. They offered especially independent African nations the chance to pursue independence in their policy-making, separate from

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111 Jean-Raphaël Chaponnière, “Chinese Aid to Africa, Origins, Forms and Issues.” In Meine Pieter van Dijk, Ed., *The New Presence of China in Africa* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009).

112 Chris Alden, *China in Africa* (New York: Zed Books, 2007).

113 Meine Pieter van Dijk, ed., *The New Presence of China in Africa* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009).

114 David Shinn and Joshua Eisenman, *China and Africa: A Century of Engagement* (Philadelphia: UPenn Press, 2012).

115 Jean Kachiga, *China in Africa: Articulating China’s Africa Policy* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2013).

116 Shinn and Eisenman, *China and Africa* (2012).

117 Elizabeth Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa: From the Cold War to the War on Terror* (New York: Cambridge, 2013).
the colonial powers. Not that the colonial powers were eager to let go; indeed, nations that picked fights with former colonizers and their machinations, such as Guinea, fell out or pursued similar policies benefitted from China’s largesse and projects, beloved because they offered a new development approach that helped them and validated China as a rising power. They included Algeria, Angola, Egypt, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. 118 By 1990, China was soaring on decades of sustained economic growth and was challenging the US regionally. Its resurgence was almost inevitable: for 5000 years it ebbed and flowed, a center of technological and economic prosperity. Its new engagement was circumspect, allowing computer imports and banning music videos, investing in human capital and education in the west even as accusations of intellectual property appropriation persist.

China’s major competitor in Africa is a reticent US, its approach mostly ‘problematization’ and support for powers and positions opposed by Africa—supporting NATO ally Portugal and its continued colonization, apartheid South Africa, stoking and supporting conflicts in Congo and the Horn of Africa. Its 1992 Somalia debacle marked abandonment of its new world order (human rights, democracy) and stood by in Rwanda. Here, China reverted to its purported helplessness and non-intervention, but pursued “resource intensive” investments, mining and oil extraction. 119 China’s exploitation of long-dormant natural resources was critiqued, though a continent sitting on wealth but dying of hunger defied logic. China’s attention shifted from its Cold War-focus on socialist-leaning states. In 2015, Nigeria, Angola, Ethiopia, Kenya, Zambia and South Africa were the top five recipients of China’s investments. 120

At US$70 billion, China led in Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) to Africa from 2014 to 2018 although it supported fewer projects than the US, UK or France. China’s FDI led to 137,000 jobs, twice the second

118 Schmidt, Foreign Intervention in Africa, 2013.
119 David Dollar, China’s Engagement with Africa: From Natural Resources to Human Resources (DC: Brookings, 2016).
120 Mariama Sow, “Africa in Focus: Figures of the Week: Chinese Investment in Africa.” Africa in Focus—The Brookings Institution (September 6, 2018). https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2018/09/06/figures-of-the-week-chinese-investment-in-africa/
highest investor.\textsuperscript{121} China’s FDI addressed job-creation and infrastructure, whose neglect, posited against Africa’s youth bulge can positively impact the continent. China’s activities reflect priority areas, such as transport and energy (66 percent).\textsuperscript{122} For countries and citizens, Chinese investments are building railways (e.g., the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) in Kenya, where the last railway was built by the British in 1899.

**FOCACs: Fleeting Fair-Weather Friends or True Partnership?**

Global, cataclysmic events are relatively—thankfully—rare. Granted, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the 1983 near-accidental nuclear launch, The Spanish Flu, the Bubonic plague and the occasional flare-up of Ebola have come close. In 2020, the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses (ICTV) named a new pulmonary illness, the 2019 novel coronavirus (severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2, or SARS-CoV-2, or COVID-19,\textsuperscript{123} a global pandemic with monumental impacts. Reactions to COVID-19 across the world have differed; China, accused of either purposely or otherwise releasing the virus, or hiding its magnitude, had numbers that demonstrated what to do, limiting infections to under 100,000 as 2021 dawned. Beyond the disputed figures and the shutdown of regions, China’s total infections were 12,000 short of US’ one-day highest tally on July 16; US was recording almost 200,000 daily cases. African countries largely avoided the high case counts; their containment strategies closely mirrored those of China. It dispatched PPE and experts to assist contain the outbreak in Africa, although the quarantine treatment of Africans in China was quite shoddy.

China-Africa engagement is both continental and bilateral at state-level. FOCACs abbreviated for joint Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, began convening in 2000; the fifth was slated for 2021. The Follow-up Mechanism after FOCAC I and II resulted in “signing bilateral investment protection agreements with over 20 African countries and

\textsuperscript{121}\textsuperscript{121}Payce Madden, “Figure of the Week: Foreign Direct Investment in Africa.” *Africa in focus*—*The Brookings Institution* (October 9, 2019). https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2019/10/09/figure-of-the-week-foreign-direct-investment-in-africa/.

\textsuperscript{122}Sow, “Africa in focus”, 2018.

\textsuperscript{123}World Health Organization (WHO). “Naming the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) and the Virus That Causes It.” *World Health Organization* (May 10, 2020). https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance/naming-the-coronavirus-disease-%28covid-2019%29-and-the-virus-that-causes-it.
establishing China Trade and Investment Promotion Centers in 11 countries on the continent […] 245 new agreements with African countries with regard to economic assistance […] which accounted for 44 percent of the total value of new agreements Beijing committed itself to with regard to foreign aid in that period.”

During the 2014 FOCAC Summit, China proposed to “connect up Africa via regional roads and aviation, and high speed rail networks.” The proposals are followed by investment in necessary infrastructure—the Road and Bridge Initiative (RBI), the ‘Growing Together Fund’ with ADB, and a China-Africa Infrastructure Cooperation Plan after the 2018 FOCAC Summit.

Chinese largesse benefits AU’s programs: US$1.8 million support to AU’s AMIS peacekeeping mission, AU Peace Fund, UN-peace activities in Africa, and generally supporting other AU institutional priorities. China is vocal about sovereignty, non-interference and pursues neutrality (except regarding Libya). “The Chinese stay out of African affairs and do not present themselves as saviors of desperate African souls.” It abstained in UNSC Resolution 1593 on Somalia/Darfur (deploying UN peacekeepers to Darfur), supported UNSC Resolution 1679 (strengthening the AU Mission in Sudan, AMIS)—according to China, “our political support for the AU.” When Libya’s Arab Spring protests turned into war, China “broke its traditional reticence to vote

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124 Ian Taylor, *The Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC)* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 50.

125 Jing Gu and Richard Carey, “China’s Development Finance and African Infrastructure Development.” In Arkebe Oqubay and Justin Yifu Lin, Eds., *China–Africa and an Economic Transformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 153.

126 Gu and Carey, “China’s Development Finance”, 2019.

127 Chiung-Chiu Huang and Chih-yu Shih, *Harmonious Intervention: China’s Quest for Relational Security* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

128 Taylor, *The Forum on China–Africa Cooperation*, 2011.

129 Marcus Power, Giles Mohan and May Tan-Mullins, *China’s Resource Diplomacy in Africa: Powering Development?* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

130 Samuel M. Makinda, F. Wafula Okumu and David Mickler, *The African Union: Addressing the Challenges of Peace, Security, and Governance* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 156.

131 Niall Duggan, “China’s Changing Role in Its All-Weather Friendship with Africa.” In Sebastian Harnisch, Sebastian Bersick and Jörn-Carsten Gottwald, Eds., *China’s International Roles: Challenging or Supporting International Order?* (New York: Routledge, 2016).
for UN sanctions against the Gaddafi regime, although Beijing reverted to its policy of abstention by refraining from the vote for military action against Libya,”132 fearing reputational costs.133 It kept tabs on AU and Arab League positions regarding UNSC Resolution 1970 on the No-Fly Zone and abstained from UNSC Resolution 1973 implementation resolution.134 China was vocal on NATO violations, meeting rebel leaders “in an effort to safeguard Chinese investments in Libya.”135 China-Africa relations show endless potential—non-tariff access, opening domestic markets to African countries and debt forgiveness for African LDCs and HIPCs.136 It is helping the AU set up a rapid response force and one expects these kinds of interactions to increase.

**Inevitability: Superpower Collapse, New Neo-Colonialism and Global Counterweights**

Even in Africa, apprehensions about China’s intentions abound. From its TV and radio broadcasts in local languages to the proliferation of Confucius Institutes, China is accused of neo-colonial tendencies and stealing Africa’s resources, mass-producing goods, flooding local markets, involvement in agricultural sector economic activities, competing against SMEs and replacing locals in markets. Yet in poverty-stricken countries such as South Sudan, China’s activities are improving lives. Many Africanists question China’s benevolence or whether it is propagating neo-colonialism. Its treatment of especially minorities, the Uyghurs, Tibetans and dissenters, dismal human rights record and ‘ask-no-questions’ stance, while funding oppressive African governments. Conversely, discussions better suited to other forums might show that China’s investment in Africa is likely to undermine government non-responsiveness, producing a most unintended consequence—now that African citizens have an idea of the

132 Yang Razali Kassim, *The Geopolitics of Intervention: Asia and the Responsibility to Protect* (New York: Springer, 2014), 38.
133 Courtney J. Fung, *China and Intervention at the UN Security Council: Reconciling Status* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).
134 Kassim, *The Geopolitics of Intervention*, 2016.
135 Ronald Bruce St John, *Libya: Continuity and Change*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2015), 162.
136 Zhiyue Bo, “China’s Design of Global Governance: The Role of Africa.” In Benjamin Barton and Jing Men, Eds., *China and the European Union in Africa: Partners or Competitors?* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011).
possibilities of government, political participation might increase and therewith, potentially lead to democratic norms.

China readily concedes its interest in Africa, but notes that, unlike its western competitors, it has not colonized anyone. It is quick to highlight the hypocrisies of the western world: on the one hand, they advocate for sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs of other countries but on the other, they readily do so in places such as Libya and Somalia and elsewhere. China also casts itself as Africa’s economic development partner, unlike the US and its western allies’ actions during six decades of colonialism. China is also quick to point out that concern expressed by former colonial powers conveniently ignores slavery and colonialism, decidedly black eyes in their righteous crusades. True, China might prop dictators—but...but Saudi Arabia, South Vietnam, Philippines and the Congo. That 70 percent of Africans surveyed across different countries have a positive view of China and its role in building infrastructure and facilities to access hospitals, travel better and more efficiently is difficult to dispute. It is helping African governments meet citizens’ needs; on this score, China is winning most of the arguments.

**Concluding Thoughts**

Global order changes, sometimes significantly. Nations rise and fall, coalitions are born and broken, and new challengers to the *status quo* manifest. For the current global realities, BRICs are seen as the next, perhaps major global compact. This is borne as much out of hope as it is the reality, and a search for alternative social, political and economic paths. BRICs have been heralded as a new way to think about global order, yet a careful examination points to both the promise but also challenges. One does not expect India to invest in assisting Kenya build housing for its estimated 100,000 to 800,00 residents of the Kibera slum, while neglecting the estimated 1 million in Dharavi’s Mumbai slums, or Brazil rushing to do the same despite that 1.5 million live in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. But perhaps this reflects the notion that relations between developing and BRIC countries are about how one group helps the other, as opposed to confronting the dilemmas of common interests and common aversions in a way that brings about relative, rather than absolute gains. Yet to the extent that BRICs seek to have some influence in other parts of the world, none have shown a more impressive effort than China. It is likely that
some, such as Russia, are confounded by Geography, but also the meager history of interactions between the USSR, its successor Russia and Africa. For both Brazil and India, their march to global power seems to have been interrupted, and COVID-19 is a clear example.

Many questions remain unanswered—some about the US and its role in the world, and others about China and what it is doing in Africa—whether the overall involvement of China in Africa is a net positive, negative or has no impact. As it continues to swing from one possibility to the other, depending on its interests, the region, and time period, these questions are still to be answered, its role in the world and especially in Asia resolved. China is here, it is invested in Africa, it is investing in Africa and its actions have transformed Africa significantly. Its internal structure appears to be more than a little troubling as a model for governance, but there is a corresponding withdrawal of the US from global affairs—at least as of 2020—and while this might change, much remains unclear. The devastation that has been, and will continue to be caused by COVID-19 may take time to determine, and all of these further complicate efforts to discern the future. China appears to play the long-game; it has an ‘African policy’ that supports continental-level initiatives, bilateral and regional engagements in pursuit of its Africa policy.

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