



# South Africa in the World 2020: Pragmatism versus Ideology

Dialogue report 25 August 2020

This event was hosted by the Institute for Global Dialogue and the  
Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, South Africa





Written by: Arina Muresan, Researcher at the Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD) associated with UNISA

Cover image: President Cyril Ramaphosa participates in the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) Summit on Coronavirus COVID-19, GovernmentZA,

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/governmentza/49968814113/in/photolist-2j8zexP-2j8zezH-26FoA8t-26WeaD9-KUZrYw-25gQ9kW-KVtqjU-2hVzC38-QVAndD-24giv8S-2iqJcpg-2iqFAeT-24gitVS-2hVzTRx-23VFtwN-QosoeQ-25ixBxJ-25ixBGB-FFDm1Z-22zZLbm-2hVzC19-2hVC8Lf-2hVDekk-2hVDedm-22zZLK7-2iDuFmu-2iDtgUq-2iDqvzu-2iDtgXM-2iDuFmj-2iDqvAG-2iDuFi8-2iDtgRV-2iDth3G-2iDth3m-2iDqvGZ-2iDqvFG-2iDqvE9-2hVDeiB-2hVDeoM-28FQbHK-2iDqvBP-2iDtgR4-2hVzC9v-2hVzCfN-2hVzCcB-2hVDeuP-2hVzC5N-2hVzC2b-2hVDeRC>

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

The IGD strives for a prosperous and peaceful Africa in a progressive global order through cutting-edge policy research and analysis, and catalytic dialogue and stakeholder interface on global dynamics that have an impact on South Africa and Africa.

3rd Floor Robert Sobukwe Building  
263 Nana Sita Street  
Pretoria South Africa

Tel: +27123376082

[info@igd.org.za](mailto:info@igd.org.za)  
[www.igd.org.za](http://www.igd.org.za)

All rights reserved. The material in this publication may not be reproduced, stored or transmitted without the prior permission of the copyright holder. Short extracts may be quoted, provided the source is acknowledged.

## Contents

Abbreviations and Acronyms .....	ii
Zoonotica .....	iii
Introduction .....	1
Directions for a South African foreign policy in 2020 .....	1
Strengths of and challenges to the bureaucratic environment .....	2
Institutional governance, linking foreign policy to the domestic environment .....	3
Zoom in on Africa .....	3
Perspectives on SADC .....	4
Trends in 2020 .....	5
Coherence in the policy environment .....	6
Understanding the role of the BRICS partnership: strategic ways forward.....	8
Conclusions .....	9
Addendum: Invitation and programme .....	11

## Abbreviations and Acronyms

AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
ANC	African National Congress
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa partnership
DA	Democratic Alliance
DHA	Department of Home Affairs, South Africa
DIRCO	Department of International Relations and Cooperation, South Africa
DSBD	Department of Small Business Development, South Africa
dtic	Department of Trade, Industry and Competition, South Africa
EFF	Economic Freedom Fighters
EU	European Union
FDI	foreign direct investment
GERD	Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam
NDB	New Development Bank
Nedlac	National Economic Development and Labour Council
SACU	Southern African Customs Union
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SRF	Sudan Revolutionary Front
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
WTO	World Trade Organisation
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front





Rethinking the spaces we occupy

# ZOONOTICA

An Institute for Global Dialogue series on re-imagining post-pandemic international relations encompassing perspectives on contemporary politics culture, economics, geopolitics, governance, ICT, science and much so much more.

**CALL FOR WRITTEN, AUDIO AND VIDEO  
SUBMISSIONS**

Visit <https://www.igd.org.za/> for more information

This is a moment emphasizing the urgency of enhanced international cooperation for world peace-building in advancing an agenda of climate

change defense in pursuit of an ecologically sustainable world order; one reconciling natural and man-made ecosystems amid a human population projection of 10 billion by 2050.

How does this new era of zoonotic disruption

affect the international system? As we have known it, international relations and the global geopolitical, economic, social and cultural landscapes? How will it affect our changing African landscape and particularly regionally as we've been discussing, does it compel us to accelerate regional and continental integration towards a more pan-African reality?



## Introduction

The Institute for Global Dialogue's (IGD) flagship project, *South Africa in the World*, is aimed at promoting a greater understanding of the changing geopolitics and inculcating strategic thinking in South African foreign policy. In the last 25 years, South African and African international relations have been influenced by an unfavourable global balance of forces that acts negatively against progressive internationalism. This has shifted the international strategic landscape to the right, affecting both the Global North and the Global South.

In understanding the impact of the pandemic, countries have become more insular, mirroring policies similar to those followed during the Great Depression of 1929, which contributed to a rise in nationalism as a result of the financial, social and emotional hardships that resulted from the Depression, and later created conditions for the Second World War. There has been a similar movement towards inward-looking policies in Africa, beginning in March 2020, when nations closed international borders to protect fragile health systems, lives and livelihoods. Regionally, synchronisation of lockdown measures and the attendant measures to protect the lives and livelihoods across the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region and across the African continent has been lacking. Government responses have varied and the global response has been to provide support, where possible in the form of personal protective equipment (PPE), medical equipment and staff, but the most common trend witnessed was countries turning themselves into fortresses.

How will foreign policymakers deal with the unpredictability and aftermath of policy decisions brought on by the pandemic?

## Directions for a South African foreign policy in 2020

South Africa's national interests in Southern Africa and Africa are linked to the key concept of solidarity in the ruling party's ideology. However, solidarity on its own is not sufficient for achieving significant foreign policy aims backed by material resources and actions in line with the country's strategic objectives. What is needed is a nuanced application of solidarity backed up with the smart use of power in South Africa's international relations, as well as an assessment of the state's capacity and the diplomatic tools available for implementing foreign policy priorities.

Managing South Africa's agenda on a changing international landscape will need to include the following:

- Coordination of South Africa's development finance with subregional actors and the various diplomatic tracks.
- Manoeuvring traditional partnerships in a politically charged multilateral context. For example, the European Union (EU), which is also searching for some kind of strategic autonomy in an era of "America First", and includes a balancing act between Beijing, Russia and Brexit.
- South Africa's Africa agenda requires closer attention to situations in Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Libya, the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), continued expressions of solidarity with Western Sahara and

Palestine, and monitoring the roles of external actors on the African continent. The operationalisation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is also an important aspect of Pretoria's stated commitment to promote regional integration.

### Strengths of and challenges to the bureaucratic environment

In order to engage the international environment effectively, South Africa will also have to examine its diplomatic culture, which faces internal debates on its own role and presence in the region, and challenges to how it is perceived in the region. Its style of diplomacy has to remain consultative and rooted in humility and partnership. In addition, it is important to understand and be prepared for other actors acting in their interests, which will not always align with South Africa's strategic priorities. Therefore, South Africa should assert itself on certain issues within the continent and globally that go beyond solidarity.

The bureaucratic environment is deeply politicised in most instances. In the case of foreign policy, the associated role players (the President, Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) and other key departments, and engagement via Parliament) are required to navigate between long-standing ideological constraints on the one hand, and the demand for pragmatism on the other. Furthermore, the opacity of the foreign policy decision-making structures has added a layer of complexity to foreign policy analysis and public scrutiny.

It is anticipated that this challenge may be mitigated by the Foreign Service Act 26 of 2019, whereby the minister and DIRCO are located as the primary source of foreign policy. In addition to the contentious issue of

political appointments, the professionalisation of the foreign service places immense emphasis on continuous training, and DIRCO is already taking more diverse approaches to training. There are various opportunities for understanding the potential of strategic personnel placement. This was noted in the current South African non-permanent tenure of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). It was noted that DIRCO had taken into account concerns and critiques from its first two terms (2007–2008 and 2011–2012) and applied them to the third term (2019–2020). Simple yet strategic interventions, like incorporating diplomats who have cultivated experience and networks, may engage counterparts in foreign missions, as well as South African missions and headquarters in Pretoria. In addition, a number of diplomatic missions abroad are resource hungry, and South Africa's middle power capacities cannot rationalise the volume of associated costs with human resources and assets abroad in an economy under pressure. Representation abroad could become more dynamic; for example, mobile units could be coordinated and remain on standby to be dispatched on an ad hoc basis, especially where the basic functions of the embassy are consular services.

Globally, the role of diplomatic personnel is vital. And in fulfilling bureaucratic or civil servant functions, the psychological impact of the profession is amplified with additional pressures; confidentiality, fundamental culture shifts and increased anxiety, in addition to keeping to strict procedural deadlines. There is a need to take greater pastoral care of diplomats, especially those at the career entry level.

## Institutional governance, linking foreign policy to the domestic environment

While foreign policy objectives are intrinsically linked to the needs of the state, South African citizens do not necessarily make the connection to the role of foreign policy in achieving these needs. This is also seen in the critiques that: 1) government departments often operate in silos; 2) there is confusion surrounding *who actually* contributes to foreign policy; and 3) the perception that DIRCO is a gatekeeper rather than a conduit for South Africans to access foreign policy.

Owing to the party–state dynamics, it is unclear to what extent this perception of gatekeeping is bureaucratized or politicized. There are a multitude of actors that contribute to foreign policy overall. What is vital to South African foreign policy is the oversight mechanisms that ensure it is kept in check. What has worked over time is oversight through two streams: the official stream, inclusive of government departments and parliament, as well as the executive. This is in addition to the unofficial stream that includes academia, civil society and business. There is scope for a more dynamic use of the various streams individually and in combination. In this regard, the role of parliament as a foreign policy actor has room to grow. In linking civil society through a designated programme, South Africa's second-generation review of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) is underway. The first review sets a historic litmus test for the challenges that would face South Africa for the next 10 to 15 years. Regrettably, these challenges have since been exacerbated. In addition to the dynamics presented by the Covid-19 pandemic, there is a concern that the review process will involve less public consultation and thus less oversight.

Now more than ever, South Africans are more concerned with the issues surrounding their immediate spaces which include immigration, lack of service delivery and corruption. There is an opportunity to thus link the national and international policy environment to the physical spaces occupied in cities. For example, city diplomacy is actively linked to the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda and the AFCFTA for the benefit of ordinary Africans (i.e. not part of elite structures) while embracing the utility and growing relevance of an increased scope of representation by sub-national diplomatic actors.

## Zoom in on Africa

South Africa is caught between advancing anti-imperialism and solidarity with the Global South, while fronting a neoliberalist economic outlook and endeavouring to be a human rights champion. South Africa has also sought to position itself as a bridge builder between the Global North and South. The pursuit of its African agenda also demands policy coherence in balancing both ideology and pragmatism, and constant institutional learning and adaptability.

The White Paper on South African Foreign Policy – Building a Better World: The Diplomacy of Ubuntu and the Foreign Service Act, 2019 (26 of 2019) broadly speak to the goals and priorities that South Africa is seeking to pursue, as well as its anchor in Africa and the Global South. While there is an expectation that South Africa will maintain the moral high ground in its foreign relations, this is a difficult terrain to navigate especially in Africa, where it is facing mounting challenges to its political and diplomatic capital, impacted by weak internal cohesion,



persistent governance challenges and tensions between ethics and interests.

### Perspectives on SADC

South Africa's 'quiet diplomacy' towards Zimbabwe has also been the object of much criticism, compounded by the fact that the dynamics in Zimbabwe have also become a domestic policy concern for South Africa. South Africa has been hard-pressed to justify its engagement strategy on the Zimbabwean issue apart from the rationale of a solidarist political culture and a camaraderie among national liberation parties. In the negotiations leading up to the creation of the Government of National Unity in 2009, Zimbabwean political parties and other stakeholders decried the lack of broad-based consultations and the pursuit of an elite bargain that was centred around the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF). South Africa's peace diplomacy will have to take stock of its strengths and weaknesses in full view of historical factors and evolving dynamics across various contexts. Robust policy frameworks as well as a hard-nosed assessment of capabilities are required in injecting strategic direction into South Africa's forays into peace diplomacy. Parliament could also play a stronger role in weighing in on certain foreign policy and matters that are close to the values that South Africa has enshrined within its Constitution.

In Mozambique, South Africa is taking its cues from SADC and ultimately waiting for direction from Mozambique, which seems to be silent. However, this is also linked to the way South Africa is engaging diplomatically, which is not always in the public domain. There are several actors within the region already, including the growth of private security actors in Mozambique protecting commercial interests. A stronger bilateral approach is evident, while a regional response

seems slow because the region would need to pronounce a joint approach based on consensus from the region, which is part of South Africa's multilateral approach and respect for sovereignty. Added to the complexities of the insurgency in Cabo Delgado is the fact that there is a need for careful strategy with good intelligence on the ground that informs of the tactics employed by insurgents, existing supply lines and modus operandi. Mozambique has reached out to neighbours (Angola, Tanzania and Zimbabwe) in terms of bilateral security arrangements; in terms of a SADC regional solution, there is an issue of capacity in light of a yet to be operational SADC standby force, as well as the military doctrine, and how such a regional intervention will work alongside the very complex issue of private military contractors who are already on the ground in Mozambique. In addition, the question of capacity in the context of Covid-19 has caused a huge dent in national and regional finance mechanisms.

As much as all eyes are looking to South Africa as de facto principal actor in the issue, South Africa's previous experience in the Central African Republic, when it sent in contingents of South African special forces to try and secure the city from the rebels coming in, are evidence that such unilateral engagements are certainly difficult to navigate. This kind of action would also run counter to the regional debate and the focused approach that has been a key pillar of South Africa's SADC involvement. It may be a better strategy in terms of regional and continental relations to play a quiet and benign role and not turn into a big parochial actor in SADC.

Following South Africa's readmittance to the international arena, its reaction to Sani Abacha's dictatorship in the 1990s and the SADC intervention in Lesotho led by South Africa in 1998, South Africa became relatively

isolated on the African continent and other countries viewed its approach with ambivalence, unsure if South Africa was trying to act as a bully or a big brother on the continent. Following those incidents, it has tried to work much more behind the scenes and has attempted to gain consensus. In this, South Africa wishes to portray itself in a particular way and guide an overall positive perception, which is based on gaining legitimacy through consistently connecting its actions to the messaging it is communicating.

### Trends in 2020

South Africa's African agenda is focused not only on its geographical positioning in Africa, but also on the injection of a view-oriented and driven Afro-centric perspective in its foreign policy priorities. During the first six months of 2020, it is possible to map a number of trends across Africa; in considering the trans-regional dynamics of the Sahel in the Maghreb and the Horn of Africa, South Africa cannot ignore the developments unfolding and the engagement of private security and the dynamics arising from this. It would appear that something is not working. The lopsided focus on securitisation working at the expense of a focus on the human security question and the questions of addressing the structural drivers of violence and the drivers that actually lead to radicalisation. Another element, when considering the Sahel, is the very real possibility and risk of contagion, which is evident in the increase in violent events.

- Experts note that there is a risk of contagion from Jihadist violence which is gaining ground in coastal West Africa. In considering international media reports on France's role in the Sahel, which has been termed it's "forever war", the situation in **Mali** positions the

dominant narrative of the French press against African dysfunction, whereby politics revolves around this core narrative.

- Moving into the other parts of Africa, developments in the transition in **Sudan** to a transitional government are seen through an optimistic and positive lens. However, this process has also been beleaguered by domestic challenges notwithstanding the fractures within the security operators that also feed into the power struggles.
- Keeping track of the status and developments around the peace accord between **South Sudan's** transitional government and the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF), as well as in observing the popular evolutionary dynamics in South Sudan, whereby protests are used as tools to ensure that the transitional government stays the course and challenging some of the military appointments in Sudan.
- Another hotspot with broader regional dynamics involves the emergence of violence on the border of South Sudan and Sudan, where federal forces are engaged in a standoff.
- Turning to **Ethiopia** and its potential for regional economic renewal, ethnic tensions in the ethno-federalist model have surfaced as a result of the killing of the Oromo singer, Hachalu Hundessa, which led to a spate of protests. These pose a challenge to Prime Minister Abiy. Ethnic tensions are linked to the majority group, and internal entities have sanctioned violent dynamics that are feeding into long-held grievances in Ethiopia in



that that also is detrimental to the progress achieved in political reform.

- In addition, the negotiations between Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan in the GERD continue. Two debates dominate: 1) the filling of the dam in conditions of drought – parties are yet to agree on what constitutes drought and mitigation measures; and 2) the dispute resolution mechanisms.
- **Somaliland**'s agreement to recognise Taiwan as an independent country is linked to regional pressure of the GERD, Taiwan–China relations, the China–US trade war, and dynamics in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.
- The internationalisation of the conflict in **Libya** is often linked to proxy warfare dynamics, which have implications for regional security in the Maghreb and the dynamics in the Sahara and the Horn of Africa.
- In **Algeria**, President Abdelmadjid Tebboune does not hold popular legitimacy following the 2019 elections. It is unclear whether the popular movement will be silenced, further undermining the president and the political manoeuvring that the government is enacting.
- In **Morocco**, King Mohammed the Sixth is engaged in redirecting attention toward an African-centric economic diplomacy. In 2018, 85% of Moroccan foreign direct investment (FDI) was targeted at Sub-Saharan Africa. Morocco is directing impetus toward diversifying African engagement and cultivating alliances in Africa and abroad.
- In **Zimbabwe**, multiple crises and an increasingly authoritarian regime under President Emmerson Mnangagwa further threaten regional stability.

- **Mozambique** is facing a humanitarian crisis in Cabo del Gado due to the Islamic insurgency, coupled with diverted funding for socioeconomic fall-out from the pandemic.
- Dynamics around the race for the position of Director-General of the World Trade Organization (**WTO**), which had been touted as a three-way race between African candidates from Egypt, Kenya and Nigeria. To an extent, the race has shown African disunity, which should have been an opportunity for greater African agency to lead the WTO.

## Coherence in the policy environment

The party–state landscape is entrenched in policymaking. While some may argue that South Africa has an ambiguous foreign policy that is inherently anti-pragmatic, and rigid, in a multiparty electoral system, it is important to consider that the electoral landscape in the next 10 years may be different and how different political parties would adjust policymaking in a radically altered political landscape heavily affected by domestic and international factors. When considering the three major parties in South Africa, the African National Congress (ANC) (inclusive of the Tripartite Alliance), the Democratic Alliance (DA) and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), each interprets current international relations and engagements differently, which is seen in election manifestos, the engagement in parliamentary committees, and statements. The ANC is more developed on foreign policy and adds more nuance to regional dynamics but enshrines its actions in a rights-based order that advances progressive internationalism and global solidarity. The DA emphasises balancing national interests with a rights-based agenda,

often pointing out inconsistencies in the human rights approaches of the ANC-led government. The EFF is more critical of the ANC and the current engagements that South Africa has, and calls for radical transformation of bilateral relations and multilateral blocs. Accordingly, they are much more overt in the kind of ideology that they want to pursue.

Progressive internationalism is important for the way foreign policy and international relations are pursued, but needs re-imagining and rethinking in the context of a changing landscape. One particular example is the nexus between the Foreign Policy White Paper (2006), the Foreign Service Act (2019), the Border Management Authorities Act (2020), and the highly anticipated AfCFTA, and the immediate inconsistencies in South Africa's economic diplomacy in Africa.

In the macro context, South Africa has continued to play a very active role in many different institutional contexts, highlighting different debates even during the Covid-19 pandemic. An added layer of complexity also becomes apparent with respect to the policy shift towards closer coordination between government actors and the private sector, as well as within government departments. In South Africa there is a distinction between trade and investment, encompassing the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (the dtic), DIRCO and Department of Small Business Development (DSBD), elevating the potential for a lack of integrated strategy and weak inter-departmental coordination. Traditionally, the private sector in South Africa is much more comfortable interacting with departments such as the DTIC and National Treasury. The private sector has a harder time navigating DIRCO because DIRCO's focus tends to be on a higher level. It is important to understand that the private sector is not homogenous with many different actors, sizes, interests, and

levels in the economy. The National Economic Development and Labour Council (Nedlac), the organisation that engages as an official social dialogue platform, has tended to be more protectionist. It is composed of representatives from traditional manufacturing sectors and agriculture, but services companies have a weak presence which is a point of frustration. This highlights a disconnect between businesses that lead the discussions externally and internally; businesses that have been the leading face of South African investment in the rest of the continent, which have predominantly services-based players. It is important to enhance private sector-government engagement to ensure seamless coordination between regulations and rules around services, trade and investment, which are much more dispersed and complex. Similarly, when a new business interested in coming into the South African market, there are many different government agencies, regulators and departments to understand the environment that you're working in. A trend is that investment is becoming harder in South Africa and the overall political environment plays an immense role. It is important to translate the political momentum behind the AfCFTA that is currently being negotiated to a reality on the ground. A greater concern is that real progress and bringing more private sector voices, and to not only South Africa's foreign policy, but engagements at the broader continental level will be hampered if the framework is not translated into concrete implementation by business.

A critical dimension is the Border Management Authority and the role of the Department of Home Affairs in managing foreign policy at the borders. The Border Management Authority has been on the cards now for a number of years, but the Border Management Authority Act 2 of 2020 has only



recently been signed into law. The current phase encompasses negotiations on the implementation protocol for the Border Management Authority prior to the promulgation of the Act. From a foreign policy point of view, there is a tension between security concerns and economic issues. The Department of Home Affairs (DHA) needs to create an authority to manage the borders as well as staffing and requirements, but the department is facing budgetary constraints, and poor perceptions among the public as a credible service provider. While other countries employ a similar approach to immigration policy, South Africa's approach is driven by ideology and has the potential to affect the AfCFTA, as well as the green line corridors across the African continent that enable the fast and expedited movement of goods. South Africa speaks of regional integration but takes decisions from a nationalistic lens without multilateral engagement with neighbours. South Africa's Southern African Customs Union (SACU) and SADC partners provide critical North–South engagement at the Beitbridge border post, hence going ahead with the Border Management Authority without identifying a national set of priorities accounting for regional considerations is a poorly construed policy choice. The policy incoherence and insufficient public consultation also extends to Parliamentary processes on the BMA legislation, which have been rushed and poorly coordinated. In addition, the Border Management Authority issue has implications for African foreign policy and national economic interests in light of initial concerns about the porous border between Zimbabwe and South Africa and the anti-immigrant sentiment echoed by various sectors.

## Understanding the role of the BRICS partnership: strategic ways forward

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has raised concerns that the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) partnership has been weakened because so many resources have been diverted, consequently negative effects on the socioeconomic base could undermine its implementation of priorities. While news on the BRICS partnership has been quiet, there has been a move to adapt to new realities in the aftermath of the pandemic. Covid-19 has taken some momentum from Russia's envisioned hosting of the summit, and engaging the Eurasian Economic Union and Shanghai Cooperation Organization as its regional outreach for its presidency. In spite of tensions between India and China, member states have tried to keep channels of communication open; the initial BRICS agenda, aimed at the reform of global economic governance architectures and institutions to accept a changed reality, remains valid for member countries in spite of the prevailing circumstances. However, the political landscape is tempered by commercial realities and competition among BRICS players with regard to the rest of the African continent. South Africa's and India's positions on trade issues remain tightly aligned, evident in discussions taking place at the WTO and cooperation during the Covid-19 pandemic. In comparison to Russia, India and China, there has been minimal engagement on common approaches and evolved strategies going forward. South Africa would need to strike a balance between its relationships with China on the one hand, including through the BRICS, and its engagement with the US on the other.

Party-to-party dynamics within the BRICS add a different dimension to understanding the role of BRICS, although some of the political parties that have historically worked very

closely with the ANC when BRICS was formed are no longer in power. Sub-national diplomacy has to work in tandem with engagement at a state-to-state level.

At the end of Brazil's presidency in 2019 there was a commitment to strengthening interlinkages between the business track of diplomacy and the New Development Bank (NDB). More recently, the NDB has provided emergency relief funding to China, India and South Africa. Most projects are based on sovereign-backed loans, however there is scope to expand and include other partnership types like public-private partnerships, thus bringing in the broader commercial role that the Bank can play. The expansion of the BRICS Bank and the BRICS partnership itself is a subject of much speculation. The NDB may act as a potential litmus test for the expansion of the partnership under coordinated and policy-regulated environments. From the outset, the NDB has followed a regionalised strategy in anticipating the BRICS's leadership roles in the respective regions, with the institutionalisation of regional centres – Shanghai, Johannesburg, Sao Paulo, Moscow, and one to be confirmed in India – as well as regional synergies between the BRICS, NDB, and memberships of regional financial institutions. For South Africa and Africa the Bank has the potential to finance some of the regional infrastructure programmes within SACU and SADC. However, the dynamics among the BRICS – for example, India and China – are a key determinant of the trajectory and dynamics of the BRICS and is one that cannot be overlooked.

Understanding the future of BRICS in the context of complicated bilateral relations is inextricably linked to its original economic and financial governance agenda and internal relations. A regional approach should be

further emphasised; however, Africa should be taking greater initiative in dictating the kind of engagement it wants via an AU-led continental approach.

## Conclusions

Party-state dynamics have had an immense impact on foreign policy. In various cases they have determined foreign policy choices, but in terms of actions they have also contributed to weak cohesion and ambiguity. An important ongoing discussion is how national interests inform the synergies between the domestic and international environments and whether there is greater congruence between means and ends. The strategic use of resources is pivotal to crafting an independent foreign policy that is coherent and correspondent. Shoring up the legitimacy of the foreign policy constituency, particularly in a participatory democracy, can be further nurtured through the role that Parliament and civil society can play. Over the past few years, foreign policy has tended to be seen simply as the preserve of DIRCO; when it comes to commercial and economic diplomacy it is critical to return to enhanced inter-departmental coordination around key issues and with other actors, especially the private sector. Foreign policy is much more meaningful to the domestic agenda than its current state of implementation suggests. There is an urgency to domesticate foreign policy much faster than is currently occurring.

And lastly, there is a need to guard against a nationalistic view of foreign policy that is driven by the pandemic and influences societies to be inward looking. More recently, narratives in the media are also becoming more subjected to an environment besieged by misinformation and disinformation. In South Africa, local discourses around immigration and the region have had a



negative impact on South Africa's African agenda. The inevitability of pandemics and the challenges they present necessitate a foreign policy and governance outlook rooted in resilience and cooperation, such as the

development of regional production chains through the AfCFTA, where health equipment and other essential items can be manufactured.

## Addendum: Invitation and programme



associated with



The Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD) and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) invite you to a strategic dialogue titled:

### **South Africa in the World 2020: Between Pragmatism and Ideology**

the world has had to reorient its thinking, rapidly, to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic. Many discussions are centred around how countries are dealing with the crisis; but looking forward this is an opportune moment to discuss how South Africa deals with black swan events. South Africa's response to the virus has been lauded internationally by the WHO; Ramaphosa had issued a state of disaster in March 2020 and entered a period of nationwide lock down. However, the severe impact on the economically vulnerable and micro, small and medium businesses has re-emphasised socio-economic inequalities. The South African economy, already under pressure, is facing additional pressure from the global economic slow-down; and with the credit downgrade from Fitch, impacting on international investor confidence and application for loans from the IMF, World Bank, AfDB and NDB, South Africa finds itself in a precarious situation. Most countries of the developing world find themselves in similar situations, and socio-economic implications of the virus will impact on Africa's growth and development. Although some responses reinforce international cooperation, much coordination has been to reinforce a regional focus in the reality of the Covid-19 outbreak. South Africa would pursue its role as a norm entrepreneur/shaper and bridge builder across multilateral institutions, as well as bi-lateral strategic engagements in the context of its African agenda. South Africa, currently chairing the AU, is faced with a number of crucial points; the tensions in Mozambique, Libya and South Sudan, dynamics around the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) and the Silencing the Guns agenda. As well as The AfCFTA, which was expected to commence trading in July. In this context, how will South Africa use the resources at hand to ensure that this will not be another lost decade for Africa?

**Date: 25 August 2020**

**Time: 9:45 – 12:30**

**RSVP: [Click here](#) (meeting link will be shared with those who have RSVPed)**

**For more information contact Arina Muresan ([arina@igd.org.za](mailto:arina@igd.org.za))**



## South Africa in the World 2020: Re-shifting trajectories 2.0

Draft Programme

Date: 25 August 2020

Time: 09:45-12:30

9:45 –10:00	<b>Virtual check-in</b>
10:00–10:20	<b>Welcome</b>  Dr Mthembu (Executive Director, IGD) and Dr Mbuso Moyo (Programme Manager, FES)
10:20–10:30	<b>Zoonotica</b>  Francis A. Kornegay, Senior Research Fellow, IGD
10:30–12:00	<b>South Africa's Africa engagement in 2020</b>  Moderator and discussant: Sanusha Naidu, Senior Research Associate, IGD  Arina Muresan, Researcher, IGD  Faith Mabera, Senior Researcher, IGD  Catherine Grant Makokera, Director, Tutwa Consulting
12:00–12:30	<b>Close and way forward</b>