

# D+C

DIGITAL MONTHLY

DEVELOPMENT AND  
COOPERATION

D+C

ENTWICKLUNG UND  
ZUSAMMENARBEIT

E+Z

International  
Journal

ISSN  
2366-7257

2022 08

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### FOCUS

## Global governance

Humanity has a lot of multilateral institutions. They are useful and contribute in meaningful ways to global governance. However, their landscape is fragmented and disorganised. This is especially evident in view of the several serious disruptions that are affecting the international community. Global problems require global solutions, and that implies that multilateral policy-making must improve fast. If we postpone reforms to better times, we will wait in vain. Without better global governance, our problems will only get worse.

Title: Flags at the UN headquarters in New York.  
Photo: picture-alliance/AA/Cem Ozdel





 **Our focus section on global governance starts on page 16. It pertains directly to the UN's 17<sup>th</sup> Sustainable Development Goal (SDG): global partnerships. It has a bearing on every other SDG as well.**

is being centralised in London once again, and the country's social fabric is disintegrating. The next prime minister may manage to rebuild some trust, but restoring Britain's international standing will take time.

With prudent multilateralism, humankind can solve global problems, but escalating crises mean that cooperation must improve. All countries must take part.

High-income nations matter in particular. They are the most prosperous, dominate most international financial institutes and are over-represented in the UN Security Council. No doubt, they are not doing enough to rise to their responsibilities. Other countries, however, matter too. Big emerging markets are actually quite strong, but disorganised as a group. Low-income countries, moreover, too rarely speak with one voice.

What is absolutely clear, however, is that the Russian approach to global governance is destructive. Trying to impose one's ideas on a neighbour by military means leads to disaster – which is precisely why sovereignty was invented in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.



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In our interview (page 23), she shares insights and argues that the international organisations ECOWAS, AU, EU and UN all have a role to play.

► We post all items of our focus section online, and they'll be compiled in next month's briefing section.

## Pooled sovereignty

A recent judgement by the US Supreme Court has undermined its nation's claim to global leadership. The Court decided that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) may not use some policy tools to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions, arguing that such regulation would be so transformative that it would need an explicit mandate from Congress.

The judges have thus made it yet a bit harder for President Joe Biden to implement his climate agenda, which is stuck in the Senate. They did not consider how transformative global heating is. They also ignored that Congress established the EPA five decades ago precisely because legislators then – unlike many Republican ones today – accepted that modern society's long-term viability depends on environmental health. A world power that does not do its part in rising to the most urgent global challenge, however, obviously lacks credibility.

Humanity is facing global challenges that individual nations cannot effectively rise to on their own. Global heating, ensuring financial stability and managing migration are only three examples. The idea that sovereignty allows a national government to do as it pleases within its borders is outdated.

This principle helped to restore peace after the devastating Thirty Years' War in Germany four centuries ago, but the big conflict then was between Catholics and Protestants. Sovereignty meant both could exist side-by-side, though not in the same country. The feudal lords decided which camp their land and people would adhere to.

By contrast, the big issues today transcend borders. What happens in one place, affects others, so cooperation is indispensable. That does not make national governments obsolete, just as national governments do not make subnational governments obsolete. A well-run nation state needs well-run municipalities and districts and perhaps other administrative levels too.

A useful principle of Catholic social teaching is called subsidiarity. Its point is that, whatever a lower-level entity can handle on its own, should be left to that entity, with higher-level authorities only being in charge of things that would otherwise be unmanageable. Indeed, the EU has a pattern of pooling sovereignty that way to manage things like foreign trade, the common currency and – to an increasing extent – climate action.

It is useful to pool sovereignty. Britain has opted out, and its economy is now performing below the European average. Power

## INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

# Laws of the jungle

**In India's forest areas, indigenous Adivasi peoples have lived in harmony with the natural environment for ages. Many communities still have rather little interaction with society. Commercialised ideas of modernity, however, are causing severe conflicts, in particular where corporate powers are keen on exploiting natural resources. Legislation to protect both nature and local communities is in force, but hardly makes a difference when tensions escalate.**

By Suparna Banerjee

India's indigenous communities are collectively referred to as "Adivasis" and officially enjoy special protection as "scheduled tribes" (see box next page). To a large extent, they remain marginalised nonetheless. Many villages do not have much contact to the outside world. The villagers live according to customary laws that have evolved over centuries. They allow Adivasi communities to make use of natural resources whilst also serving as stewards of the forests.

The Forest Rights Act of 2006 acknowledged the symbiotic relationship between Adivasis and their natural habitat. It explicitly gives village assemblies a role in managing the forests and empowers them to safeguard their culture.

India's Supreme Court has interpreted these rights in a quite expansive way. In a landmark case, it banned further mining of bauxite in the Niyamgiri hills. Vedanta Aluminium wanted to exploit the resource, but the court decided in favour of the Dongria Kondh, an Adivasi community, in whose eyes the hills are a religious site.

Unfortunately, things are not often resolved this way. There is a huge gap between what the government perceives as development and how indigenous communities live. The government is keen on mining, resource exploitation and economic growth. It tends to side with corporate interests. For several reasons, laws meant to protect the Adivasis are often not enforced and even blatantly violated:

- The legal situation is bewilderingly confusing, as national and state-level legislation are often inconsistent.
- The Adivasis speak languages of their own, but the laws are written in English and Hindi. Both feel alien to them, and may actually be incomprehensible. Moreover, the Adivasis typically lack access to lawyers. Moreover, it can be very difficult to go out to court for cultural reasons.
- Officers of state agencies typically do not understand any Adivasi language.
- Across India, the implementation of laws tends to be incomplete, not least because formal legislation often does not fit grassroots realities. Hierarchies of wealth and caste often supersede the rule of law.
- Indian state agencies have a reputation of corruption.

The situation is particularly tense in the Bastar district of Chhattisgarh state, where iron-ore mining and logging are going on. The Gond, Halba and other local Adivasi communities do not benefit from the resource exploitation.

They depend on the forest for medicinal herbs, burying their dead, religious rituals, grazing cattle, fetching fuels and collecting food. The forest cover has been

continuously degraded, however. Neglect of local people's customary forest rights is a primary reason. Bastar is one of India's most backward regions. Relevant issues include low literacy rates, inadequate health care and poor infrastructure.

The government's market-driven development paradigm means that demand for natural resources has been growing fast in the past three decades. Both the forest and mining sector are largely unregulated. Since the onset of liberalisation in the early 1990s, tensions have increased dramatically in forest areas like Bastar. Recurring grievances include displacement, lack of proper relocation and meagre compensation for land claimed by government institutions.

While the Forest Rights Act was definitively a step in the right direction, it was always at odds with some state-level regulations. Ordinary Adivasis are unable to navigate the legal complexity.

In this scenario, left-wing extremists were able to build bases among the deprived. Some Adivasis – though certainly not all – joined them. Violent clashes have become common. Apart from the formal security forces, right-wing vigilante groups play a role too.

Around the world, anti-insurgency strategies often prove incompatible with the rule of law. That is not different in central India. Wrongful convictions and allegations of involvement with extremist groups occur frequently. Indeed, activists who insist on principle enshrined in the constitution and



Paramilitary troops on patrol in Chhattisgarh after a gun fight with leftist extremists.



national laws are often labelled “terrorists” and prosecuted accordingly.

In this setting, even outside interventions that look benign can actually be divisive. An example is the Kalinga Institute of Social Science (KISS), a large residential school for Adivasis in Odisha state. The school is cooperating with corporations like Adani, the mining conglomerate, and training youngsters to become skilled labourers in that sector.

This approach is not as noble as it might seem. Yes, it does provide an educa-

tion to young people, but it also co-opts them and pits them against the interests of their communities. More generally speaking, educational institutions often make the young Adivasi generation give up their language, food habits and indigenous clothing.

For 30 years, Adivasis have been continuously displaced from their own land and forced to become contract labourers for the mining sector. One result is migration to other states, but it means considerable sacrifices. An Adivasi group’s special rights are often limited to the state where it has traditionally lived. In the diaspora, moreover, indigenous languages are likely to wither away fast and many cultural traditions cannot be maintained.

Each Adivasi group is unique. Each has its traditions and culture which date back centuries. The groups have constantly tried to preserve their lifestyles, adhering to their own norms and customs. Conflicts only begin when their land is found to be rich in natural resources which the govern-

ment wants to see exploited for commercial purposes.

Peace must be restored. The big issue is whether the indigenous communities can keep living the way they do or whether they must assimilate. Mutual learning is important. For it to happen, the Adivasis’ constitutional and legal rights must be upheld. They must get their rightful say in what happens with their land. The assumption that modern Indian society is more civilised is misleading. Current consumerism is unsustainable, whereas Adivasi culture is not only compatible with ecological diversity and climate mitigation, but actually conducive to both.



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## India’s Adivasis

The term “Adivasi” derives from the Hindi “adi”, which means original or earliest, and “vasi”, which means inhabitants. Officially, Adivasis are classified as “scheduled tribes”, but the designation and status vary from state to state. Some communities are listed as a scheduled tribe in one state but not in others, so they may lose special rights when they migrate.

To an outsider’s eye, the lifestyle of an Adivasi forest village may look unorganised, but it is based on carefully crafted customary laws. For example, villages in the Mandla district of Madhya Pradesh depend upon forest produce for their income. In March and April, they collect mahua flowers, with people plucking blossoms seemingly at random. However, there is a set of rules which gov-

ern what they do. According to their custom, each tree is allo-



Gond woman after taking part in a state election.

cated to a specific household, the members of which may collect its flowers.

Adivasi customs often diverge considerably from what is considered normal in Indian mainstream society. In the Bastar district of Chhattisgarh, for example the tradition of Ghotul allows unmarried men and women to explore their compatibility before marriage. The couple can spend a fortnight together getting to know each other in a domicile they share. Afterwards, they may marry or go separate ways. This practice is far more liberal than arranged marriages with husband and wife often meeting for the very first time on their wedding day.

According to India’s 2011 census, 104 million people belong to the country’s scheduled tribes. They constituted almost nine percent of the total population and more than 11% of the rural population. They speak

more than 100 languages and vary in terms of their social structure, customs, language, religion, food habits, dress, economic sustenance and cultural manifestations.

Even in densely populated areas, Adivasi communities tend to live in separate villages, though they interact regularly with others. In forest areas, however, tribes are largely left to themselves. Conflicts arise when corporate powers with government backing want to extract resources from their lands.

In late July, Droupadi Murmu, was elected Indian president by the parliament. She is the first one from a tribal community, but is known as a well-aligned politician in her party, the Hindu-supremacist BJP. Since the president’s role is largely symbolic, she will not make much of a difference to village people in central Indian forests.

SPB

## MEDIA DEVELOPMENT

# Dealing with false information and repression

**False information, hate speech and bullying are not social-media-era innovations. They existed in the past, too, as the example of Zimbabwe shows. A symposium in Hamburg will examine the role the media plays in coming to terms with the past and how it can confront fake news.**

By Werner Eggert

In the 1980s, the regime of autocratic President Robert Mugabe had over 20,000 members of the Ndebele people murdered. They belonged to the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and were therefore Mugabe's

Technology (CITE) in Bulawayo says: "We have been trying for several years, through documentation and public discussions, to unearth and record the horrors of that time. The families of the victims have a right to know what happened." Ndebele and his fellow activists at CITE give very little advance notice of the locations and times of their activities in order to avoid being harassed by the state. The Zimbabwean security forces keep a close watch on the organisation because the governing party has no interest in coming to terms with the past.

In researching the Gukurahundi, Ndebele discovered the extent to which the

literacy. Since 2021, the organisation has been training volunteers to improve the media literacy of the people in their communities.

Ndebele and some of his team members will explain in detail what exactly that looks like and what contribution CITE is making to accounting for the Gukurahundi at this year's symposium of the Forum Media and Development (fome22) in Hamburg. And there will be other speakers from all over the globe who will share their experiences.

Editor-in-chief Soe Myint from Myanmar will report on how the media organisation Mizzima pre-emptively prepared for crises and therefore was able to respond quickly to the military coup in the Southeast Asian country last year.

A representative from Rappler, the critical Philippine news outlet of Nobel Peace Prize winner Maria Ressa, will report on how her editorial office is preparing itself for attacks by the state. Bosnian experts will describe what lessons their media has learned from dealing with the past. Other topics will include the communication strategies of truth commissions, as well as efforts to better prosecute offences against journalists. Participants will also discuss how media development organisations can better assess their activities in the context of violent conflicts and the situation of the media in Ukraine.

The title of the symposium, which will take place on 13 and 14 September in Hamburg, is "Media Development: Dealing with the Past – Preparing for the Future". Workshops, presentations and discussions will be devoted to the question: what role can the media play in dealing with past armed conflicts and preventing future armed conflicts, and what contribution can media development cooperation make?

## LINK

Programme, tickets and tips on the symposium  
[www.fome.info](http://www.fome.info)  
[www.interlink.academy](http://www.interlink.academy)



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Memorial stone for the Ndebele regime opponents who were murdered in 1983 in Zimbabwe.

political opponents. The atrocities became known under the name Gukurahundi and are classified as a genocide. Even today, it is dangerous in Zimbabwe to report on this event and give a voice to witnesses and the families of the victims.

Activist Zenzele Ndebele from the media organisation Centre for Innovation and

Mugabe regime distributed false information four decades ago in order to conceal the scope of the genocide and justify the actions among his own supporters. "It's like on social media today: false information stokes hate, and hate leads to violence," Ndebele explains. For that reason, CITE has begun a large project on media and information



Second hand bookstore in Hanoi, Vietnam

## Culture Special

As every summer, the D+C/E+Z editorial team presents books and films that we appreciate and would like to recommend to you, dear readers. The oeuvres are tackling issues of developmental relevance, and we would be pleased if our recommendations inspired you to read or watch them. This year we are presenting our culture special in two Digital Monthlies – in August and September.

### INTEGRATION

## They did not belong anywhere

**In her novel “In the country of others”, young French-Moroccan writer Leïla Slimani tells the story of Mathilde from Alsace and her husband Amine in the turbulent post-war decade in Morocco and shows the stony road created by cultural differences.**

**By Dagmar Wolf**

The young French woman Mathilde meets her husband Amine in 1944 during the celebrations marking the liberation of Alsace by the French army. The handsome officer is

one of 35,000 Moroccan soldiers who fought alongside the French against the German occupation. The two marry. Happy to escape the confines of her bourgeois parents’ home in Alsace and anticipating a completely different, exotic life, the adventurous Mathilde moves to Morocco with Amine. He has inherited a piece of land from his father and the couple plans to create a farm on it, with orange trees, wine and cereals, and start a family.

Temporarily, the couple lives with Amine’s mother and siblings in the medina,

the old town of Meknès. The city is divided into two parts at the time: the medina, with its maze of narrow streets, where the Moroccan community lives, and the modern Ville Nouvelle, where the French colonialists have their stylish homes.

Life on the farm also fails to live up to Mathilde’s dreams. Amine tries hard to transform a barren piece of land outside Meknès into fertile soil. In her letters home to her sister Irène and her father Georges, however, Mathilde seeks to impress them both by portraying the life she leads as an exciting adventure.

She finds it difficult to adapt to local customs and culture. As an immigrant French woman, she is not bound by the strict rules of Moroccan society – she drives a car, sends her daughter to a Christian school, moves freely through the city – but



The medina (old town) of Meknes.

being married to a Moroccan, she is treated with disdain by French colonial society. At the same time, Amine, torn between different role expectations, turns increasingly into a tyrannical patriarch demanding observance of the laws and taboos of traditional Moroccan society. Mathilde soon realises that she is expected to live by a rigid moral code. “That’s just the way it is here” is Amine’s brusque response when she rails against injustices.

The couple encounters rejection from both the Moroccan community and French colonial society. Even when Mathilde tends to the sick in the poor local farming community and slowly gains their trust, it becomes clear that she will always remain an outsider. She and Amine do not belong anywhere. Their children also suffer humiliation and racism. Their daughter Aïcha is ostracised by her French classmates. Nevertheless, urged by Mathilde, she invites them to her birthday party, only for a humiliating scene to ensue when one of the girls demands to be taken home by the “chauffeur” (Amine) – and Amine makes no attempt to correct her mistake.

Politically, the post-war years in Morocco are marked by the fight for independence from France. There is violence from both sides, assaults on Protectorate Authority buildings and on French landowners’ farms. Mathilde and Amine find themselves caught between the fronts. Moroccan nationalists are suspicious of Amine because

he served in the enemy’s army. When Aïcha asks her father whether they are with the good guys or the bad guys, he points to an orange tree onto which he had grafted a lemon branch for Aïcha: “We are like your tree, half lemon, half orange. We are not with either side!”

The novel is a polyphonic mosaic of characters and their lives: in addition to the Christian, educated French woman Mathilde and her Moroccan husband Amine, there is his mother Mouilala, a traditional Muslim woman who attends to her sons’ needs like a maidservant, Mourad, Amine’s former comrade-in-arms, and the gynaecologist Dragan, a Hungarian Jew who ended up in Morocco after escaping from the Nazis.

Key characters include Selma, Mathilde’s teenage sister-in-law, who defies convention and openly protests at her older brother’s patriarchal violence, and Omar, who has always been overshadowed by his older brother Amine and becomes a radical nationalist in the wake of the independence movement. Slimani tells the story from each person’s perspective, without judging or condemning.

Slimani herself was born in 1981 in Rabat, Morocco, and grew up in a well-to-do family where French was spoken. Her mother was a doctor, her father an economist, who served as the country’s minister of economic affairs from 1977 to 1979. In 1999, Slimani moved to Paris to study at the renowned Sciences Po institute of political

studies and has worked as a journalist for the weekly magazine “Jeune Afrique” since 2008. In 2016, she was awarded the Prix Goncourt for her novel “Chanson douce” (published as “Lullaby” in the UK and “The Perfect Nanny” in the United States). She turned down the post of minister of culture offered to her by President Emmanuel Macron in 2017 in order to continue working as a writer. In an interview on the publication of her book “In the country of others”, she explains that she always has a sense of living in the country of others, whether she is in Morocco or in France.

This novel is the first part of a trilogy in which Slimani plans to retrace the history of Morocco from 1945 to 2015. And she will do so by drawing on her own family history. Mathilde and Amine are inspired by her maternal grandparents. In the second part of the trilogy, Slimani wants to tell her mother’s story.

#### BOOK

**Slimani, L., 2022: In the country of others. London, Penguin Books. (Original title “Le pays des autres”, published in 2020 by Gallimard, Paris).**



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## MIGRATION

# American joy and sorrow

**Two families in New York at the time of the financial crisis: one white, privileged and rich, the other black without secure residence status. Their fate forms the subject of the novel “Behold the Dreamers” by Imbolo Mbue. Both families are almost destroyed by the cliché of the American dream.**

By Sabine Balk

Jende Jonga came to the US from Cameroon as an asylum seeker and is hoping to obtain a residence permit. While American authorities review his application for asylum, he is able to bring his wife and son over from Cameroon. In a particular stroke of luck, his cousin helps him get a well-paying job as a chauffeur for a wealthy banker at Lehman Brothers. Jende seems to have arrived in the country of his dreams.

While Jende's employer Clark Edwards and his family recreate the dream of American success, Jende and his family experience the typical lot of an immigrant family: they live in a small, shabby apartment in Harlem, New York's historically

Black neighbourhood, and work every day until late at night. But Jende and his wife Neni firmly believe in the American dream that through hard work, anything can be achieved. And Neni has big plans in America. She wants to become a pharmacist. Every minute that she is not working or taking care of the household she is studying for college, hoping that her degree will gain her admission to pharmacy school. Even at night she hardly lets herself sleep.

The Jongas admire the Edwards' wealth and lifestyle, which is so different from their own. The Edwards live in a large mansion with servants and the wife, Cindy, can buy everything she can dream of. Neni is also able to work there as a housekeeper occasionally. In time, the Jongas recognise that the lives of their rich employers are not as perfect as they seem. Clark Edwards works around the clock and enjoys the company of prostitutes in hotels for hours on end, while Cindy is depressed and prone to abusing alcohol and drugs.

Then the crash comes. When Lehman Brothers goes broke and triggers a global

banking crisis, the American dream comes to an abrupt end for both families. Clark loses his position and fires Jende, who now struggles to support his family with poorly paid temporary jobs. The authorities then deny his application for asylum. As deportation looms, he suffers a physical and psychological breakdown. He resolves to return to Cameroon.

Neni is completely opposed to this idea and their marriage is almost torn apart. After an excruciating process, Neni finally concedes, as she believes a good Cameroonian wife should. The book does not close with a hopeless, destructive ending – quite the opposite. Both families are able to find hope in the crisis. Clark Edwards recognises how valuable time with his family is, and Jende and Neni look forward to a pleasant life in Cameroon. With the thousands of dollars they have saved, they are wealthy by Cameroonian standards, and hope to acquire a large house and send their children to a good school.

The author, who was born in Cameroon in 1982, put much of her own biography into her debut novel, for which she won the prestigious PEN/Faulkner Award in 2017. At the age of 17, she herself came from Cameroon to the US, where relatives financed her education. She graduated from Columbia University in New York and subsequently worked in market research for a media company. Following the American financial crisis, Mbue lost her job and was unemployed for a year and a half. According to her, she was disillusioned about life in the US and the American dream, which is not accessible to everyone. She toyed with the idea of returning to Cameroon.

In contrast to the characters of her novel, however, Mbue found success in the US. She has held American citizenship since 2014 and her novel, which was published in 2016, was a surprise hit.

## BOOK

Mbue, I. 2016: *Behold the Dreamers*. Random House, New York.



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A woman from Cameroon tries to enter the US with her child at the Mexican border.

## EMPOWERMENT

## “No women, no revolution”

A documentary filmed in northeast Syria explores the link between liberating women from the patriarchy and developing a broader democracy.

By Aviva Freudmann

The personal is political, and vice versa. Nowhere is that close connection clearer than in war-ravaged north-eastern Syria. On the political front, violence still flares up occasionally between government forces, the fundamentalist Islamic State (IS), Kurdish and Arab-led insurgents and various international armies. Some combatants, such as the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces,

zone. The Syrian Democratic Forces, composed mainly of Kurdish militias, was in the process of driving the IS out of the city.

As the city was too dangerous for filming at that time, Kilian was referred to a police academy for women on the other side of the Euphrates River, about 30 kilometres away. There she met 19-year-old Hala Mostafa, who had fled Manbij to escape her father's plan to marry her off to an IS fighter.

The documentary, based on a year of filming, tells the story of Hala's experiences during her training on “the other side of the river” and her eventual posting to Manbij as a policewoman, where her job was to protect women against violence. The film shows her

open the door and kick you out, if he could.” A third says, “Marriage is an instrument for suffocating women, and women are supposed to just believe it is their destiny.”

Hala absorbs these lessons and is strengthened by them. In a personal victory, she persuades her sister Sosan to join her at the academy, against their father's strenuous objections. This works out well for the sisters, at least for a while.

But eventually Sosan buckles under the paternal pressure. The father, who may have ties to the IS, tells Sosan that if she returns and agrees to an arranged marriage, she can erase “the dishonour that Hala has brought on the family”. Sosan obliges and is married off to a man of her father's choosing.

A scene just before Sosan's wedding shows how patriarchy maintains control. Sosan sits in the small family courtyard in all her wedding finery, surrounded by her younger sisters. A young man, ostensibly an IS fighter, bursts in, shoots his rifle several times in the air and delivers this message: “Tell Hala her father says he can take care of her with one bullet.”

Hala, however, is undeterred. She continues her police work in Manbij. However, she is so upset by Sosan's decision and so determined to save her other sisters from a similar fate, that she does something illegal and hot-headed: she tries to extract her younger sisters from the family home by force. This, naturally, lands her in trouble with the police, who are also her employers. Hala spends a few days in jail, and it is not clear what consequences her act will have for her policing job.

In their police work, the recruits try to bring the message of emancipation to civilian women as well. In one scene, a woman fleeing domestic violence seeks help from the police and receives it. That is one of the connections the film makes between the personal and the political. The subtitle of the film says it all: “No women, no revolution”.

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### FILM

**The Other Side of the River, 2021, Syria.**

**Director: Antonia Kilian, Pink Shadow Films (Germany)**



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Hala trains to become a police officer in Syria.

aim to establish grass-roots democracy in the regions they have wrested away from the IS.

Meanwhile, on the personal front, some young women are becoming aware of the entrenched patriarchal norms that keep them powerless. These women, while few in number, are challenging the repression they face personally, while also fighting for a broader grass-roots democracy.

This juxtaposition of the personal and the political drew German filmmaker Antonia Kilian to the region in 2016. Her initial destination, the city of Manbij, was a war

growing resolve to support self-determination for women in general and for her own nine younger sisters in particular.

The training consists of both physical drills for the young women and lessons on the rationale for their future police work. Both trainers and trainees share their experiences, and they do not mince words. One tells the harrowing story of a woman stoned to death by her own family and neighbours. Another warns that men use women sexually: “A man is interested in that one night to satisfy his lust; after that night he would

# Suggestion to legalise industrial hemp

A presidential candidate in Kenya's 2022 polls is promising to legalise industrial hemp to raise the much-needed funds to cut public debt and boost the economy. The controversial suggestion has sparked debate on the pros and cons of the widely illegal cash crop.

George Wajackoyah, a 63-year-old professor, who has a background in law, is one of the four candidates running for presidency in the August 2022 Kenyan elections. He is worried about the country's rising public debt which now stands over \$70 billion. Whereas he is popular for ridiculous suggestions, his proposal to legalise industrial hemp has gotten the attention of various stakeholders.

Sections of the Kenyan public opposed to Wajackoyah's proposal are concerned that such a move could have tragic consequences for the youth. Victor Okioma, chief executive at the Kenya National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse (NACADA) refers to the experience of countries like Mexico to show the dangers of legalising cannabis. "I hope that the politicians supporting its legalisation shall come out clearly and give us examples where this has happened."

His concerns could be validated by a review done in Canada after three years of legalising recreational marijuana. The review shows that the industry is worth millions of dollars. The justice system

has also recorded less drug use convictions. However, there seems to be more Canadians using marijuana, increasing the danger of addiction.

Supporters of the proposal argue that its economic impact outweighs the associated dangers. "Maize is no longer a profitable cash-crop because the rains keep failing," says Maria, a small-scale farmer in Central Kenya who owns a two-acre piece of land. "When we harvest, we hardly break even. It is loss after loss. I hear marijuana is easy and grows in the wild without care. Now imagine if it is cared for, it could be as lucrative as tea," she adds. Tea has been Kenya's leading foreign exchange earner for years.

Some African countries such as Uganda, Zimbabwe and Lesotho have started small projects to test the viability of legalising industrial hemp. Whereas no studies yet show its impact on GDP, private investors speak of its profitability.

In Kenya, some firms hold legal licenses that allow them to carry out research on industrial hemp. One such company is Green Corporation Global that has a partnership with Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) and private companies to develop several industrial hemp products. Its chief executive Michael Karanja likes the presidential candidate's proposal. "It is exciting because Kenyans are finally having an open discussion without prejudice. Industrial hemp can produce over 25,000 different products. This means a potential of setting up factories to mass produce each of those products. With the ever-growing unemployment among Kenyans, it is a good solution."

The fact-checking website "Africa Check" has described Wajackoyah's plans as misleading. The prices he gives for marijuana are excessive. We rate the claim as incorrect, writes fact checker and D+C author Alphonse Shiundu. Nevertheless, it has made Wajackoyah a talking point on social media and has excited many youth, who are badly affected by unemployment.



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# MASTHEAD / IMPRINT

## D+C DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION

Sustainable development requires global awareness and local action.

Vol. 49, 2022

D+C is the identical twin of the German edition E+Z

Internet: [www.DandC.eu](http://www.DandC.eu)

ISSN 2366-7257

The production of this Digital Monthly was finalised on 29.7.22.

D+C Development and Cooperation is funded by Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and commissioned by ENGAGEMENT GLOBAL. D+C does not serve as a governmental mouthpiece. Our mission is to provide a credible forum of debate, involving governments, civil society, the private sector and academia at an international level. D+C is the identical twin of E+Z Entwicklung und Zusammenarbeit, the German edition.

We invite people who work in different sectors and live all around the world to contribute to D+C/E+Z. The editors request that no unsolicited manuscripts be sent, but proposals for contributions are welcome. After editing manuscripts according to journalistic standards, we ask the authors to approve the final texts before publishing their items. As we edit interviews for clarity and brevity, we also ask our interviewees for approval of the final manuscripts to ensure we do not distort their message. That is standard practice in German journalism.

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[www.engagement-global.de](http://www.engagement-global.de)

**ADVISORY BOARD:**  
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**PUBLISHER:**  
Fazit Communication GmbH  
Executive directors: Jonas Grashey, Hannes Ludwig

**ADDRESS OF THE PUBLISHER AND EDITORIAL OFFICE:**  
Frankenallee 71-81, D-60327 Frankfurt am Main, Germany

This is also the legally relevant address of all indicated as responsible or entitled to represent them in this imprint.

**EDITORIAL OFFICE:**  
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Disclaimer according to § 5,2 Hessian Law on the Freedom and Rights of the Press: The shareholder of the company is FAZ Fazit Stiftung.

**ADVERTISING AND SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE:**  
Fazit Communication GmbH  
c/o Cover Service GmbH & Co. KG  
PO Box 1363  
D-82034 Deisenhofen, Germany  
Phone: +49 (0) 89 8 58 53-8 32  
Fax: +49 (0) 89 8 58 53-6 28 32  
[fazit-com@cover-services.de](mailto:fazit-com@cover-services.de)

**PRINTING:**  
Westdeutsche Verlags- und Druckerei GmbH  
Kurfürstenstraße 46  
D-64546 Mörfelden-Walldorf, Germany

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**PRINT SUBSCRIPTION PRICES (INCL. MAILING CHARGES):**  
single issue: € 2.20  
annual subscription, Germany: € 14.00  
annual subscription, world: € 18.00





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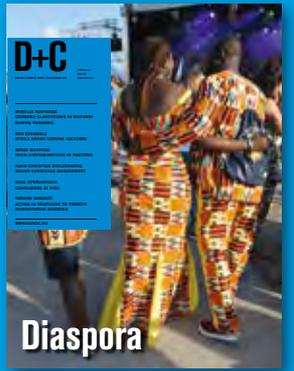
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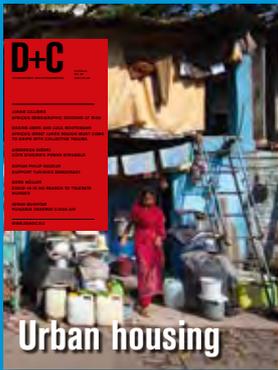
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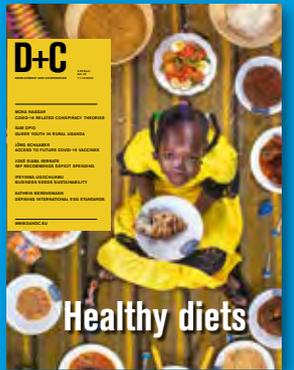
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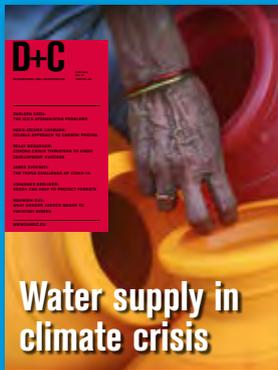
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Why the world needs the EU

## DEMOCRACY

# Colombians' hopes matter

**In the elections of 19 June, Colombians for the first time ever elected a left-wing candidate. Gustavo Petro was indeed a guerrillero 30 years ago. His vice-president will be Francia Márquez, an Afro-descendant environmental activist. The voters' choice shows their discontent with inequality and poverty.**

By Fabio Andrés Díaz Pabón

While media have portrayed the two new leaders as revolutionaries, their recent track-record shows they are reformers. Petro has been a prominent and fairly mainstream person in Colombian politics for decades. He has served as senator and mayor of Bogotá, the capital city, pursuing change by constitutional, not revolutionary means.

The rise of Márquez to a top-level state office yields even more symbolic power. The former maid until recently depended on social subsidies. She has faced several death threats since becoming an environmental and social activist. She represents the communities that have been left behind by Colombia's current development model. Almost 40% of the people live in poverty.

Moreover, Afro-Colombians and indigenous communities remain marginalised in society. Pejorative terms like "negro", "indio" and "campesino" are still in use. Colombia has not reckoned with the blood-stained heritage of European colonisation. It thus matters that the new vice-president will also lead a new ministry with the mission of tackling inequality.

Márquez has been a social leader and an environmental defender since the mid-1990s. She has consistently demanded that state agencies respect the 1991 constitution, recognising people's rights and hearing all voices. Her calls for deeper democracy have been misrepresented as being "dangerously revolutionary". That is not uncommon in view of the country's history of armed violence.

Indeed, millions of Colombians, who live in remote areas where the state has been largely absent, remain caught in the crossfire of various armed groups. A peace agreement was achieved the past decade,

but it did not find approval in the 2016 plebiscite, not least due to fake-news propaganda. In the past four years, President Iván Duque did not support the agreements and opposed important institutions such as the truth commission. Since 2019, however, there have been mass protests against Duque, and peace was a recurring demand. Unsurprisingly, Afro-descendants, indigenous communities and victims of violence voted massively for Petro and Márquez.

Colombia's new leaders will have to rise to huge challenges. Inequality and racism are closely linked and have deep roots in society. Petro and Márquez represent the hope for change.

The new government must thus deepen democracy and bridge social divides. This will prove very difficult. Some political actors continue to cooperate with illegal armed groups. Activists continue to be assassinated. In many places, including even provincial capitals, warlords hold sway. About one third of the age-group 15 to 28 are currently neither working nor studying. The pandemic and its shocks have disrupted livelihoods.

The international scenario remains worrisome. There is the risk of a global recession. It remains to be seen to what extent international finance institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, foreign governments and private-sector investors will fall for the propaganda of Colombia's new leaders being "hard left". That US President Joe Biden called Petro to congratulate is seen as promising.

Like its left-of-centre counterparts in Chile, Bolivia and Peru, Colombia's new government will need a political programme to reduce inequality and a national narrative to promote cohesion. If the new leaders succeed, they will prove encouraging in a world struggling with greed, inequality, and violence. Humanity needs examples of how governments can make their citizens feel that they own their country and are empowered to shape its fate. If people are reduced to being mere tenants to greedy landlords, however, we must expect democracy to erode further, with authoritarian narratives taking hold on both the right and the left.



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Election winners Gustavo Petro and Francia Márquez.

SRI LANKA

## New leader lacks voters' mandate

**On 20 July, Ranil Wickremesinghe became Sri Lanka's president. He does not enjoy people's trust, but legislators chose him as top leader nonetheless. In a time of crisis, he is considered to be well-connected internationally. On the other hand, politicians may simply be hoping he will protect them.**

By Arjuna Ranawana

Sri Lanka's economy is in freefall. It has been severely mismanaged. In May, the country defaulted on most of its international debt of close to \$51 billion. The government sought and received support from India, Bangladesh and China. It has also been in talks with the International Monetary Fund. Prices are rising fast and an increasing number of families are forced to skip meals. According to the UN, 4.9 million people urgently need food aid.

After months of angry protests, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa fled to Singapore in July and declared his resignation there. His family has dominated Sri Lankan politics for a long time. His brother Mahinda

Rajapaksa was president from 2005 to 2015, and Gotabaya served as defence secretary under him. Both have strong authoritarian leanings. When Gotabaya became president after winning the general election in 2019 with 52%, he made Mahinda prime minister. Other siblings have held government offices too.

The clan's grip on power loosened in May, when wide-spread protests forced Mahinda to resign. Wickremesinghe became prime minister – not for the first time. He has had several stints in this office since 1993 under different heads of state. He is well-known, but not popular. He lost his Colombo constituency in the parliamentary elections of 2020. The United National Party (UNP), which he led, suffered a crushing defeat. Its share of votes was so small that it did not win a constituency, but only gained one single seat thanks to rules meant to ensure some proportional representation. Defying convention, Wickremesinghe decided to occupy that seat himself.

Wickremesinghe is seen as an ally of the Rajapaksas. He became president thanks

to legislators close to them. Their party had won a two-thirds majority in 2020. Many believe that the new head of state will protect the clan. Its members face potential prosecution not only for fraud and corruption, but even for alleged assassinations and war crimes. Mahinda and Gotabaya played decisive roles when Sri Lanka's decades-lasting civil war ended in a pool of blood.

Under Gotabaya, the constitution was amended, giving the president untrammelled power. His leadership was poor however. After promising farmers free chemical fertiliser, he decreed in view of dwindling foreign-exchange reserves that they had to switch to organic farming almost overnight. His tax cuts benefited the rich, but drained government finances. Already burdened with considerable foreign debt, his administration found it increasingly difficult to get new loans. Bonds were downgraded to junk status. Eventually, even public servants could no longer be paid, so the central bank started printing money.

To a large extent, the debt results from vanity projects launched during Mahinda's presidency. Chinese institutions provided generous loans for building a major harbour, an additional airport, a huge cricket stadium and other prestigious facilities. None of them is generating revenues anywhere close to the credit-servicing need.

Opposition parties have refused to join any government headed by either Gotabaya or Wickremesinghe. Large demonstrations demanded that both step down and that the presidency be stripped of executive powers again. The official residences of both the president and the prime minister were stormed.

As people's standard of life collapsed, members of the middle classes joined the protesting urban youth. Civil-society groups backed the agitation, and so did clergy of all religious denominations. Opposition political parties have shown tacit support at the least.

Wickremesinghe now holds the office he always aspired to, but he is a president without popular mandate. He is considered to have good international connections and even a vision for the country, which, however, voters so far did not appreciate. Can he succeed? The odds are against him.

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Protesters wanted neither Gotabaya Rajapaksa nor Ranil Wickremesinghe to stay – graffiti in Colombo in mid-July.

# Letters to the Editor



**Garments production**

## PROMOTING DEMOCRACY

Hans Dembowski: "Pluto-crat populism" (D+C Digital Monthly 2022/05, p. 19)

I am very happy that you wrote your point of view.

I particularly appreciate the following sentence in that article: "If western countries are serious about promoting democracy internationally, they must control dangerous subversion at home as well." The whole editorial is very good and helped me to understand a few of the more complex issues facing the modern world – especially war and peace, the power of the rich, et cetera.

D.K. Oza, Chennai, India

## AFRICA IS NOT A HOMOGENOUS CONTINENT

Hans Dembowski: "What kind of teachers Africa needs" (D+C Digital Monthly 2021/12, p. 8)



**Forced migration**

As a matter of principle, I agree with your analysis. You are correct, children in first grade should be taught in their mother tongue. However, neither are all teachers up to modern didactical standards, nor are those who

train them. Across Africa, the state of education and educational institutions varies so much at all levels that different approaches to reform are needed. The civil-society organisation I am involved in is building schools in Benin, Ghana and Kenya. In these three countries, the way schools are equipped is so different that the systems really are not comparable at all. In Benin, a country I know well, regional differences are striking too. I always become quite doubtful when people speak of Africa as though it were a homogenous country.

Heike Kunter, Citizens Committee for Development Cooperation, Steinhagen [www.buergerkomitee-steinhagen.de](http://www.buergerkomitee-steinhagen.de)



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FOCUS

## Global Governance

„The global economy faces its biggest test since the Second World War.” **JOSÉ SIABA SERRATE, P. 17**

“Effective environmental management should take bottom-up approaches.” **DAVID MFITUMUKIZA, P. 19**

“The Doha Development Round turned out to be a dead-end road.” **ALPHONCE SHIUNDU AND HANS DEMBOWSKI, P. 21**

“The ultimate fear is that West Africa could become a breeding ground for international terrorism.” **LORI-ANNE THÉROUX-BÉNONI, P. 23**

“Financial secrecy facilitates corruption and money laundering.” **CHIMEZIE ANAJAMA, P. 25**

“The BRICS do not agree on much apart from rejecting US hegemony.” **PRAVEEN JHA, P. 26**

“Practice ‘real cooperation’ on equal footing: cooperation should not be based on conditionalities.” **SABINE BALK, P. 28**

“Whether the WHO will become able to make its normative goals come true, remains to be seen.” **ANTON SUNDBERG AND ANDREAS WULF, P. 30**

“China’s rise is expected to continue for a number of years.” **BERTHOLD M. KUHN AND DIMITRIOS L. MARGELLOS, P. 32**



**SPRING MEETINGS**  
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IMF building in Washington  
decorated for conference.





“The unequal distribution of medical supplies was frustrating”: South African nurses in 2021.

#### WORLD ECONOMY

## Toughest test since World War II

The global economy must cope with serious disruptions. The Ukraine war is compounding problems that have emerged in the course of the Covid-19 pandemic. Even before the advent of coronavirus, moreover, sovereign debt issues had been growing fast, and the climate emergency keeps escalating. To get a grip, the international community needs to fix the global financial architecture and reframe political relations.

By José Siaba Serrate

Globalisation in the sense of ever-increasing world economic integration looked like a force of nature in past decades. That was then. The Ukraine war may indeed sound its death knell. Even Christine Lagarde, the president of the European Central Bank (ECB) and former top leader of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), has cast doubt on the future of an integrated global economy. Two years ago, the prominent economist Carmen Reinhart declared she expected coronavirus to put the last nail in the coffin of the globalisation era.

There are other doomsayers, and serious snags in international supply chains support their predictions. Indeed, policy-makers are once again focusing more on national and regional advantages. The pandemic reinforced a more nationalistic approach to the provision of essential goods. The trend may lead to the “deglobalisation” of the world economy and reduce its growth potential.

The Ukraine war, moreover, has triggered a wave of distrust, aggravated after western governments imposed unprecedented sanctions on Russia. Central banks froze Russian assets and some Russian banks were disconnected from the vitally important SWIFT transfer system. To some extent, these steps amounted to an economic declaration of war. No matter how they assess the Russian invasion of Ukraine, governments of emerging-market nations now worry that they themselves may at some point be targeted by similar action coordinated by western high-income countries.

The current situation is indeed worrisome. After the Cold War, fast growing glob-

al trade and deregulated financial services created strong international connections. This system is now on the verge of collapsing. Financial stability is at risk around the world, and a global recession is likely.

For decades had globalisation expanded at a solid pace – helped by pro-market policies, fast technological change and favourable geopolitical trends. In 2008, the collapse of Lehman Brothers, a New York-based investment bank, brought the world economy to a standstill. The ensuing global financial crisis cast doubt on the promise of ever-expanding trade and prosperity.

### G20 – THEN AND NOW

The leaders of the world’s 20 largest economies (G20) cooperated with an eye to preventing a global depression with coordinated stimulus programmes. Emerging markets were not affected dramatically and could serve as locomotives of recovery. Their potential role was appreciated by western leaders. However, the recovery proved excruciatingly slow in high-income countries, and the euro crisis added to problems.

In retrospect, one can say that the G20 managed to prevent a global depression in 2008/09, but the members soon reverted to more narrow-minded nationalistic approaches. In particular, the rivalry between the USA and China became more harmful.

Today, the G20 seem like a spent force, not least in view of disputes regarding whether Russia should still participate. The need for global governance, however, is arguably now bigger than ever.

### BACK TO BRETTON WOODS

In reaction to Covid-19 and the escalating climate crisis, Kristalina Georgieva, the IMF’s current top leader, spoke of “another Bretton Woods moment” in 2020. She was alluding to the conference in Bretton Woods, the small US town, where diplomats had decided to create the IMF and the World Bank at the end of World War II. They wanted to make sure economic disasters like the great depression of the 1920s/1930s would never happen again. The new multilateral agencies would use pooled resources to support national economies in crisis in ways that would prevent a global depression.

In 2020, Georgieva’s point was that Covid-19 was challenging the notion of glob-

al interconnectedness and interdependence. It spread fast internationally. Governments closed borders. The governments of high-income nations responded with massive spending on health care, social protection and economic stimulus programmes. Georgieva pointed out that the climate crisis required equally determined responses – and that governments with little fiscal space had to be enabled to act too. Her message was thus that more, not less government spending was needed.

She emphasised the necessity to invest in health care and other social services, sustainable infrastructure and building human resources. The implication was that the IMF now worried more about these things than about growing government debts. The paradigm shift away from austerity and strict budget controls towards more state interventionism had been becoming increasingly evident since the financial crisis.

David Malpass, the president of the World Bank, basically endorsed Georgieva's views in 2020. He spoke of the urgency of "addressing poverty, inequality, human capital, debt reduction, climate change and economic adaptability as elements in ensuring a resilient recovery." In theory, a coordinated global effort is possible. Whether it is politically feasible, is an entirely different question. Indeed, many issues regarding the global financial architecture must yet be sorted out, including conditions for debt

relief but also equitable climate finance and effective development assistance.

In retrospect, the economic slump caused by Covid-19 was not as bad as feared. The oil price briefly dropped below zero, and stock markets crashed around the world. They rebounded fast, however, and the main reason was that stimulus programmes of many different countries basically addressed the same problems with similar means at the same time. In effect, that added up to a huge global programme. It ultimately even proved excessive, with inflation spiking as lockdowns ended.

The lack of global cooperation had other serious impacts as well. Nations with little fiscal space could not afford stimulus programmes, and the G20's temporary suspension of debt servicing did not make a big difference. The unequal distribution of medical supplies was frustrating too. Once vaccines became available, that applied to them as well. In many ways, low and middle income countries were left behind.

International disparities have increased, and important supply-chains have not been restored. The global system is obviously still in crisis. The Ukraine war is adding to the problems. Combined with high inflation, volatile stock markets and lingering Covid-19 issues, it adds up to an explosive mix, and the increasingly devastating impacts of climate change are making it even more combustible. Georgieva now speaks of a "potential confluence of calamities" as the

global economy faces its "biggest test since the Second World War."

Global problems need global solutions. International cooperation is indispensable. National political systems and core values certainly vary significantly around the world, but they must not distract policymakers from the global common good. Multilateral institutions are important, but they are only as strong as national governments allow them to be.

### USA AND CHINA MUST LEAD

The revival of a constructive US-China dialogue is essential. Together, the two superpowers can provide leadership. Mature cooperation may look unlikely at the moment, but it is possible. Both countries have benefited spectacularly from globalisation. Their leaders know that their nations have much to lose from further global disintegration. It may help to focus minds, moreover, that Chinese lending contributed to the over-indebtedness of a number of countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, so those issues cannot simply be blamed on the west. The meltdown currently paralysing Sri Lanka is likely to be replicated in other places.

It is promising, moreover, that China is neither supporting nor challenging the western sanctions on Russia. There should thus be scope for cooperation on matters that concern all. Preventing a massive global food crisis tops the list. Uncertainty and fragmentation will be especially painful for low and middle-income economies.

Quite clearly, the international architecture of political relations needs to be rebuilt. In doubt, nations should press ahead in alliances tackling common causes even if not all major powers participate. Climate change remains a pressing threat that recognises no borders. Well defined rules for security, trade, investment, technology transfer and clean energy are essential – for each and every nation.



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"The meltdown currently paralysing Sri Lanka is likely to be replicated in other places": monk protesting in Colombo.



Inger Andersen, the executive director of UNEP, speaking at the agency's headquarter in Nairobi.

UNEP

## “The UN must adapt to global change”

**The UN system is poorly coordinated, says David Mfitumukiza, an environment scholar from Uganda. As a result, it does not use resources efficiently. In his eyes, bottom-up approaches that start at the grassroots level are more promising.**

David Mfitumukiza interviewed by Hans Dembowski and Jörg Döbereiner

**The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) is celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. It is based in Nairobi. Does that make a difference in the eyes of East Africans?**

Well, to some extent, having UNEP in the neighbourhood does lead to a sense of belonging and closeness. It also offers an opportunity for exchange, making it easier to contribute to the environmental agenda. If you consider the global role of UNEP, however, it is really only of minor relevance where the agency is based.

**There are tangible projects, however. Last year, UNEP joined forces with private-sec-**

**tor companies to publish air-pollution data on digitised billboards in Nairobi. The idea was to make people aware of the issue.**

Yes, I have heard about this initiative and about similar ones too. They obviously make sense, but they should not belong to the core mission of UNEP. The agency should focus on more important and strategic things.

**What do you have in mind?**

The big issue is to redirect the global agenda towards integrated environmental protection and climate action. UNEP should ensure more is done around the world, but it shouldn't be involved in individual projects. Its real job should be to organise and coordinate at a higher level. The world is changing, and environmental problems have been getting worse. Business as usual is not an option anymore, but the UN system has remained the same. The UN must adapt to global change.

**In what ways do you want the UN to change?**

Effective environmental management should take bottom-up approaches. To solve problems, we must first consider what is needed at local and national levels – and that is what I said in our previous conversation (on [www.dandc.eu](http://www.dandc.eu)). At the UN level, the task is to create appropriate preconditions for such action. Least developed countries have not caused the climate problems, for example, but they are suffering the impacts. They need fast and efficient access to funding. There are currently too many institutions and too many layers of hierarchy. We do not need many specialised environment programmes. What we need is fewer, but better coordinated institutions. The goal should be to have one strong agency, rather than a broad range of agencies. At this point, UNEP is in charge of the environment, the Secretariat of the UNFCCC (UN Framework Convention on Climate Change) is dealing with climate issues, and the UNDP (UN Development Programme) is promoting the sustainable development agenda, and they are only three of many relevant UN agencies. Of course, the World Bank, the African Development Bank and other multilateral institutions matter too.

**Are some institutions superfluous in your eyes?**

Well, my Ugandan experience shows that, when you're working at the grassroots level, it can be very hard to tell the difference between UNEP and the UNDP. Both insti-

tutions, moreover, should focus on international coordination. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) actually provide a good opportunity. If all UN agencies systematically used them as guidelines, their action would probably be coordinated better. After all, the SDGs spell out a coherent agenda, and none of them should be considered in isolation. The job of institutions like UNEP or the UNDP is to coordinate national governments for this purpose, but without duplication of efforts. The UN must become better at coordinating itself in order to become better at coordinating the global agenda.

**Where exactly do you see deficits?**

Just consider financing, for example. According to the London-based International Institute for Environment and Development, only about 10% of global climate finance meant for adaptation reached the local level for action in the years 2003 to 2016. A mere 10%! Too much of the rest is spent on engaging intermediary organisations, consultancies and institutional overheads. A lot of money is being wasted because of very many unnecessary layers. Environmental finance should flow to where it is needed most to bring about the greatest impact.

**Various development banks and funds are making money available for development projects.**

Yes, exactly. We have the Adaptation Fund, the Green Climate Fund and various other institutions. Each one has its own application procedure. Each one has its own mechanisms for disbursing money and its own system of monitoring and reporting. In terms of both time and resources, all parties concerned are paying a very high price. If you want to get funding from one of them, you'll need specialised professional advice. It took the government of Uganda five years to get accreditation at the Green Climate Fund, for instance, and another two years went by, before it could access funding. Such a complex procedure would be acceptable if things were coordinated and coherent at later stages. They aren't. Everything keeps changing with different actors. Even if you have some experience with one institution, you have to start anew with the next one. That is not only Uganda's experience, but other countries' experience as well.



**People know what they need.**

**What does that mean for local-level projects?**

Typically, several donors are involved in funding different projects, so funding for an individual project often runs out of breath fast. For example, a climate-adaptation project in village A will get money for a year, which is normally too short. When funding stops, the village is left to itself – with harmful impacts on the entire ecosystem. Far too many lessons are never learned. A few kilometres away, another donor may be funding similar efforts in village B. That project does not take into account what worked out well in village A – and what failed. The same mistakes are thus made again and again. Successful projects are rarely scaled up. Instead, we see pilot project after pilot project, which is quite inefficient. Inadequate coordination at the higher level thus has impacts at the lower levels.

**Governments that get international funding are not speaking in one voice either. Should African governments do more to coordinate their stance?**

Yes, absolutely. Generally speaking, I think that developing countries should do more in terms of questioning the status quo. Some African governments, however, tend to

prevent better coordination. Instead, they intentionally foster a certain ambiguity because it serves powerful interests. It makes corruption easier to have a broad variety of funding agencies that all operate in their own special ways. African countries not only need better coordination, but governance as well.

**The African office of UNEP hosts a forum that is meant to coordinate African governments in regard to environmental issues. Is the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) up to task?**

There are various settings that are supposed to make Africa speak with one voice in environmental affairs, including at the level of ministers like the AMCEN. The Nile Basin Initiative is another supranational forum for discussing matters such as water-resources management or energy infrastructure. These bodies give governments scope for taking joint decisions and even settling disputes. The big challenges, of course, are always implementation and consistency.

**Aid effectiveness has been a hot topic for decades. It does not look like the international community is heeding the lessons of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. In 2005, it emphasised issues such as national ownership, donor harmonisation and mutual accountability.**

I do not expect the system to change top-down. If at all, change will have to happen bottom-up. The good news is there is some momentum. When representatives of grassroots initiatives and local governments are invited to meetings by UNEP or other global agencies, they increasingly ask: "Is this about meetings and policies – or is this about action on ground?" They are tired of rhetoric and fancy sounding agreements. They want to know what exactly will happen in their community – and how that will relate to local needs. I think the hope is in the emerging locally-led revolutions. We need to see aid that fits people's needs, not the other way round.

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In spite of some recent agreements, the WTO does not seem revitalised: Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, WTO director general during a press conference in Geneva in June.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

## Disappointing Doha Development Round

**The World Trade Organization (WTO) was supposed to be a driver of globalisation. Today, it looks quite shaky, though it has not collapsed. The big promises made at the summit in Doha in 2001 did not come true.**

By Alphonse Shiundu and Hans Dembowski

When the WTO was formed in 1995, “globalisation” became a buzzword in Africa. The subtext was that, after the cold war, a new era of liberalisation had supposedly begun. Henceforth, the same rules would apply to everyone on the world market and free trade would drive growth.

Before the WTO, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) had regulated international trade. However, it had started as a club of western high-income countries and had mostly adopted rules that suited them. The WTO, by contrast, was supposed to have a truly global membership.

With more than 160 sovereign members, that is indeed now the case.

The big promise of globalisation was that every nation would prosper. Indeed, there was some progress for developing countries. For example, trade barriers that protected textile and garments production in high-income nations were terminated. The GATT’s multi-fibre agreement ended in 1994 and its less oppressive successor expired in 2005.

Moreover, new global rules on agriculture subsidies have limited – though not ended – destructive practices in Europe, North America and Japan, where governments had stimulated farm production with high subsidies and then paid even more subsidies to export surplus goods to poorer nations. Such “dumping” obviously hurt African, Asian and Latin American farmers. Gradual change began before the GATT became the WTO and continued later, certain-

ly making the WTO attractive to developing and emerging economies.

In 1995, the idea was thus to use the WTO to further liberalise global trade. Reforms were to be adopted by consensus of all members. Decisions must indeed be taken unanimously, with each member country having one vote. Unlike most UN agencies, moreover, the WTO is a guardian of its rules. It has a dispute settlement system, and its arbitrators can allow litigants to impose tariffs on partners who do not comply with WTO rule.

Things did not come as planned. In 1999, a ministerial summit in Seattle ended in acrimony. Representatives from developing countries were appalled that they were not involved properly when their counterparts from the EU and the US tried to settle agriculture disputes among themselves. Moreover, riots in the streets showed that ever more deregulation geared to increasingly open trade was controversial even in the USA, the country that had always been a standard bearer of free trade.

The next summit in Qatar in 2001 did not fail in such a spectacular manner. Some progress regarding agriculture subsidies was made, for example, and the summit agreed to launch the Doha Development Round. The promise was that a series of negotiations and summits would result in rules to make trade easier for developing countries.

### IT TURNED OUT TO BE A DEAD-END ROAD

In the longer run, however, the experience was disappointing, especially in the eyes of policymakers from low and middle-income countries. Before the summit in Qatar, high-income nations had insisted that the international community needed a single and coherent trade regime. After the event, however, both the US and the EU started bilateral trade initiatives.

The reason was that they had wanted to include issues such as competition policy, investment rules, government procurement and trade facilitation in the Doha Development Round. Less prosperous WTO members, however, had rejected these so called “Singapore issues”, fearing that new rules on these issues would hurt, rather than serve their interests.

Before 2001, the high-income nations had warned against a confusing “spaghetti bowl” of many competing and overlapping

rules that would result from a host of bilateral trade agreements. After 2001, they prioritised bilateral talks which included Singapore issues over multilateral WTO negotiations. The Doha Development Round largely turned out to be a dead-end road, even though a deal on trade facilitation was eventually struck in 2013, streamlining customs procedures and other minor matters.

Another Doha decision resulted in disappointment too. The summit agreed that governments should be entitled to granting compulsory licences for the production of patented pharmaceuticals should that be needed for public-health purposes. The background was that large emerging markets needed such medications in view of the HIV/AIDS crisis. This decision, however, never became fully operational. The WTO never adopted the necessary mechanisms. On the other hand, patent-holding pharmaceutical corporations made their products available at lower prices. However, the debate re-erupted in the context of Covid-19 vaccines 20 years later.

While the WTO did not prove to be an engine of further globalisation, it was not toothless either. For many years, its trade-litigation mechanism meant that the existing WTO rules did have some bite. That changed under US President Donald Trump however. His administration not only resorted to imposing trade sanctions unilaterally, but also crippled the WTO's dispute-settlement system by blocking appointments of new adjudicators.

The US thus sent the clear message to all other countries that any WTO member that had sufficient leverage was free to ignore multilateral rules. Trump's primary motive was the growing rivalry of the USA with China. However, US policymakers were disappointed in unrelated decisions made by WTO arbitrators as well.

In African eyes, the trend of WTO erosion is most worrisome. To some extent, forming regional trade blocks can help. Moreover, after long excruciating talks, economic partnership agreements with the EU have proven to be more development-friendly than originally feared. Since humanity needs global rules for global issues, however, the multilateral institution is indispensable.

While the WTO and its trade regime have not collapsed, both look shaky at a time when the international community

is rocked by multiple crises. The Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted the supply chains many economies depend on. The climate emergency is escalating, with extreme weather events causing increasing damage around the world. Inflation is a resurgent phenomenon. Various countries are once again struggling with sovereign-debt issues. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has compounded problems.

### THIS YEAR'S MINOR PROGRESS

In this troubled setting, this year's ministerial conference in Geneva did deliver some minor results:

- The summit decided to prohibit subsidies for illegal fishing. This may sound absurd, but the background is that, so far, governments with the fiscal power to pay subsidies typically do not care much about where exactly fish is caught in far-away waters. Moreover, subsidies for fishing on high seas is to be discontinued too. These are relevant, though insufficient steps towards better management of maritime resources.
- The summit also agreed that export restrictions for food must not apply to purchases of the World Food Programme, making it a little easier to provide supplies to regions threatened by hunger.
- Patents for Covid-19 vaccines have been temporarily suspended. However, non-governmental observers bemoan that other relevant intellectual-property rights remain in force, so the decision will make

little difference for practical purposes (see Anton Sundberg and Andreas Wulf on page 30 of this issue).

- Partners agreed to sort out the dispute-settlement controversy within two years in order to appoint new adjudicators.

All summed up, these decisions are better than nothing, but they are too meagre to add up to a convincing effort to fully reinvigorate the ailing multilateral organisation. As Bernd Luderhann argued in the German magazine *welt-sichten*, the summit result shows that many members are more afraid of the WTO's death than of its prolonged wasting away.

In Doha 21 years ago, the Afghanistan war had focused the minds of summit participants. This time, the Ukraine war may have served the same function. While there is no consensus on decisive trade rules, member countries' diplomats decided in Geneva that, at this point, they did not want to destabilise the global system any further.



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Rules regarding subsidies for fishing have become more restrictive.



When a family member joins an extremist group, the cattle are safe: herder near Mopti in 2019.

## SECURITY

## Local grievances, global impacts

To better understand West Africa's security crisis, the Institute for Security Studies (ISS Africa) has been conducting grassroots-level research. Lori-Anne Thérroux-Bénoni shared insights with D+C/E+C.

Lori-Anne Thérroux-Bénoni interviewed by Hans Dembowski

**According to the conventional wisdom, West Africa is currently witnessing a struggle between violent Islamism and democratic statehood. Is that the ground-level reality?**

The conventional wisdom is not very helpful. If it were, we would not be witnessing a spill-over of the crisis from the Sahel region to the southern fringes of the Sahara to coastal states. Let me deconstruct both concepts. The recent wave of coups has shown that typically there was only a democratic façade. Yes, there had been elections with voters casting ballots, but the elected leadership was largely ignoring people's demands. There was no real social contract, according to which people have rights and duties and which defines how the state relates to its citizens. This disconnect is especially pronounced in remote rural areas.

**And what about violent Islamism?**

We did interviews with hundreds of people who are involved in violent extremism at the grassroots level. We found that foot soldiers and lower-level leaders are engaged for various reasons, but rarely as a result of religious indoctrination. The top leadership uses fundamentalist rhetoric, which they may believe in, but faith doctrines are quite obviously not motivating all members of their organisations.

**So what were the drivers?**

There are many, but the need for protection is a key motivation. People want to be safe, and they want their families, their communities and their income generating activities to be safe too. If a family member joins a specific extremist group, that group will generally not attack his family.

**That sounds like a typical Mafia-type protection racket.**

My point is that there is actually no major difference between jihadists and other armed groups, whether you consider rebels, Mafia gangs or vigilantes. They all need to recruit fighters, need means of operation

and need financial means. The idea that extremist violence was all about religious fundamentalism did not allow us to see that the modus operandi is not new at all. It makes more sense to think in terms of an insurgency. The patterns of recruitment are the same. The extremists are very good at linking their operations to locally specific grievances which result from failures of governance. Basic social needs are not met, starting with security and ranging from infrastructure to the rule of law and economic opportunities. Moreover, many people feel neglected or even abandoned by state agencies.

**So the conflict is driven by the disconnect between the governments and their peoples? Vladimir Antwi-Danso of the Ghana Armed Forces Command & Staff College recently pointed that out too.**

We are witnessing a comprehensive failure of governance. In the lack of a meaningful social contract, the political system, the legal system and the economy aren't working – and certainly not in ways that would allow people to prosper. Instead, many see their very survival at risk.

**What about economic drivers?**

Well, we keep being told that unemployed young men join the extremists, but that is not the full picture. Our research showed many recruits actually want protection for existing income generating activities. In

central Mali, for example, some wanted their families' cattle herds to be safe – and not only from robbers, but also taxation by a government agency that they see as unfair. In other cases, people said they were hunters, but the government considered them poachers. People involved in illegal artisanal gold mining have also sought protection with violent groups.

**Are there lessons for policymakers?**

Yes, of course. Projects geared to job creation are not enough when people also need the preservation of existing income generating activities. That should be on the agenda too, as well as attempts to make them more attractive. The issue of protection and the role of states as providers of impartial security are also key. This should not be only the job of international agencies. National governments should lead. All too often, however, state action comes late or is not perceived to be fair, so frustration grows.

**Do tribal, linguistic and faith differences matter?**

To some extent, they do, but not in an essentialist way. Both state actors and extremists exploit such differences in manipulative ways. We have to be careful about using easily available categories. There are not only clashes between communities, but within communities too – for example, when leadership is contested.

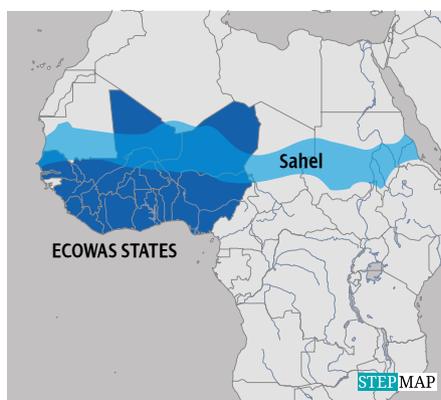
**What are the international dimensions? After all, the conflict is spilling over from one country to another.**

It would indeed be wise to pay more attention to international linkages. Our research showed that motorbikes which were used for attacks in the border region of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger had been brought to the region from Nigeria via Benin. That is a long supply chain. The extremists need fuel, ammunition and arms, for example. They make money, for instance by selling stolen cattle or illicitly extracted gold from the Sahel to coastal countries. Better policing of the trade routes might make a difference. However, that would have to be done in ways that do not cause additional frustrations. At the ISS Africa we insist that all interventions should be based on a deep evidence-based understanding of local contexts. The goal must be to put out flames, not to stoke the fire. And if governments invest more in pre-

ventive action, it could avoid flames from starting in the first place.

**Who should assume responsibility? The governments of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) or of the more encompassing AU?**

The national governments have a role to play. And both ECOWAS and AU are relevant. For a long time, the conventional wisdom focused on the Sahel as though it had no connections to the rest of the region and the continent. Linkages and supply chains are still largely being neglected, and some of them extend beyond ECOWAS.



**Is there a role for the UN?**

Yes, and it is already paying close attention, with the UN mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the UN office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS). The ultimate fear is that West Africa could become a breeding ground for international terrorism. UN involvement is important, and so is EU involvement.

**The French mission in Mali failed however.**

Yes, many mistakes were made. We should remember, however, that things were difficult from the outset. Various responses from ECOWAS and the AU were being discussed in 2012 and 2013, but the USA and the UK opposed an African-led mission funded with UN assessed contribution. So it caught everyone unprepared when, in January 2013, separatists and violent extremists looked likely to march on Bamako, Mali's capital, soon. After the French Serval intervention and the holding of election in 2013, the compromise was to complement a UN stabilisation mission with a French counter-terrorism operation.

**And that was nobody's preferred choice?**

No, but it was what could be agreed upon and funded. The French counter-terrorism objective was to defeat the extremists by eliminating the leadership. The problem is that this strategy does not address the underlying frustrations on which the extremists thrive. So when some leaders are killed, new leaders step in fast. More attention should have been paid to what allows extremists to recruit, operate and expand. That was not necessarily the French troops' job alone, but it should not have been neglected. Adding to the problems, Malian soldiers felt belittled by their French counterparts, and post-colonial resentments kept growing. All of this played a role in the French decision to withdraw.

**Are you saying that there can't be a military solution, so we must focus on a political solution?**

This is not a question of either/or. The military response is necessary, but it is not sufficient. Other issues matter too, in particular taking into account the needs of the people, and this requires crafting solutions that will address multiple governance deficits on the political, justice, security and economic fronts.

**How do you assess the Russian involvement in Mali?**

There is a lot of propaganda on all sides, so the picture is not clear. What is clear is that there were high levels of dissatisfaction with existing military and security arrangements in place in Mali since 2013. The Russian support has given Mali's army a feeling of being almighty, not least due to new equipment they always wanted. They now have capacities for aerial surveillance and airstrikes. In addition to human-rights abuses, the great risk is that efforts towards a stronger army may distract Mali's military regime from the underlying, non-military problems which, to achieve stability, must also be addressed.



Jonathan Rees

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## FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY

# G7 members accused of slowing down global progress

The Tax Justice Network has recently released this year's Financial Secrecy Index (FSI). The civil-society organisation is in favour of establishing a global asset registry. Such an institution would help to stem illicit financial flows and tax evasion.

By Chimezie Anajama

According to the Tax Justice Network (TJN), a Britain-based civil-society organisation, G7 nations are complicit in having allowed Russian oligarchs hide their wealth. At a time when they are trying to make sanctions effective in response to Russia's war in Ukraine, "they need to be looking at themselves", says Alex Cobham, the Network's chief executive. Financial secrecy facilitates tax evasion, corruption, money laundering and illicit financial flows in general. It also makes it harder to impose sanctions effectively.

The TJN uses 20 indicators to assess to what extent a country facilitates financial secrecy. The indicators include laws on banking secrets, registers of company ownership and cooperation on sharing tax information internationally. The more loopholes a country's financial system has, the more it provides "financial secrecy services" in the FSI jargon.

According to the TJN, transparency is generally improving due to reforms in various countries and more international cooperation. However, it accuses five G7 nations of slowing down the trend. "The US, UK, Germany, Italy and Japan cut back that global progress by more than half," Cobham stated in May.

According to this year's Financial Secrecy Index (FSI), the top twelve sinners are:

- The USA
- Switzerland
- Singapore
- Hong Kong
- Luxembourg
- Japan

- Germany
- United Arab Emirates
- The British Virgin Islands
- Guernsey
- China
- The Netherlands

Britain follows in the 13<sup>th</sup> spot, ranking below two of its dependent territories (Guernsey and Virgin Islands).

How countries foster financial secrecy differs, but there are common patterns. Transactions made by companies, which do not disclose their owners, help mafia gangs or corrupt politicians to launder black money. Real estate investments are a way to store hidden wealth, especially when shell companies make the payments. Where whistleblowers at financial institutions are penalised, moreover, illegitimate secrets are more likely to be kept. Lax law enforcement is another issue. The TJN explicitly accuses Germany of only "underwhelming implementation" of new transparency laws.

The FSI is compiled every two years. This time, 141 jurisdictions were assessed. The FSI includes estimates concerning how

important a specific jurisdiction is to the world economy. The countries that top the FSI thus do not necessarily have the most secretive financial systems, but their impact on other countries is reckoned to be particularly strong.

Financial secrecy is an international issue because it helps super rich actors to escape regulations. The TJN is in favour of establishing a global asset register. Such an institution could cover all individuals internationally who own assets worth more than €10 million. The most prominent policy-maker to endorse this idea is probably Mario Draghi, Italy's prime minister and former president of the European Central Bank. Prominent economists such as Joseph Stiglitz, Thomas Piketty or Gabriel Zucman support the proposal as well.

## LINK

Tax Justice Network, 2022, press release: US tops financial secrecy ranking as G7 countries upend global progress on transparency.  
<https://taxjustice.net/press/us-tops-financial-secrecy-ranking-as-g7-countries-upend-global-progress-on-transparency/>



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Luxembourg is a small country with a big impact.



This year's BRICS summit was a digitised event.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

## A brief history of the BRICS

**The BRICS started as an acronym invented by an investment banker. They oppose the US-led G7 and have started a multilateral development bank of their own. Otherwise, they do not have much in common. What Russia's invasion of Ukraine will mean for the group's long-term future, remains to be seen.**

By Praveen Jha

Two decades ago, Jim O'Neill, a manager at Goldman Sachs, the New-York based investment bank, coined the acronym BRICs. It stood for Brazil, Russia, India and China. In his eyes, these four emerging economies stood out due to high growth rates and large populations. The political systems, however, were very different, ranging from representative democracy to full-blown dictatorship. The economic models were very different too, and so were history, culture and geography. Russia spans half of the Arctic Circle, while India and Brazil are mostly tropical countries.

Nonetheless, the new term became popular, including in the countries concerned. In 2006, the four foreign ministers of the BRICs met on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York. In 2009, the inaugural BRICs' summit took place in

Yekaterinburg, Russia, and annual summits have taken place ever since. The latest one was a digitised event, hosted by China's president Xi Jinping in June.

When South Africa joined in 2010, the "s" in BRICS was capitalised. By that time, the global context had changed considerably. In 2008, Lehman Brothers, another New York investment bank, had collapsed, triggering a financial crisis which spread around the globe. The G7 (Group of seven major high-income economies) had been hit especially hard. That emerging economies were faring better bolstered their international standing. From late 2008 on, the top leaders of the 20 largest economies (Group of 20 – G20) had begun staging annual summits. They involved the G7, what was yet to become the five-member BRICS as well as several other nations.

The BRICS account for roughly one quarter of global GDP in dollar terms and one third in purchasing power parities. About 40% of the world population lives in a BRICS country.

Several other developing countries and emerging markets have stated their interest in joining the group. They include Indonesia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, Nigeria, Senegal and

Argentina. Given that the BRICS do not have a clear agenda, its appeal seems awkward. What it shows, however, is that many governments are uncomfortable with the US-led G7 dominating the global arena. Quite obviously, they see the BRICS as a potential counterweight.

So far, however, the BRICS have not been able to play such a role. They lack a coherent agenda. There has been a lot of talk regarding various economic issues, of course, but apart from one exception, big announcements did not result in tangible projects or meaningful multilateral initiatives. So far, the BRICS have only one new joint institution: the Shanghai-based New Development Bank (NDB) (see box). Other announcements concerned things like an innovation partnership, a contingent foreign-exchange arrangement or a BRICS credit rating agency. None of them materialised.

### AWKWARD ALLIES

Part of the problem is that the BRICS do not agree on much apart from not accepting a unipolar world and rejecting US hegemony. As the macroeconomic situations of the five countries and their strategic interest diverge considerably, they struggle to find common ground. In particular, India and China are not natural allies, but rather fierce competitors. The security situation along the Sino-Indian border in the Himalayas is tense, and soldiers are indeed killed occasionally.

India, moreover, is largely bypassed by China's Belt and Road Initiative, a massive international infrastructure-investment programme which has financed projects in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. In view of mounting sovereign-debt problems, however, it is not clear that they are really beneficiaries. In any case, the Belt and Road Initiative shows that Beijing sees New Delhi as a rival and that it is dealing with international debt issues on its own and not in concert with BRICS partners.

Trade between the five countries has actually been in decline, and the Covid-19 pandemic is not the only reason. Trade frictions between India and China are becoming increasingly evident.

The G7 are eager to exploit tensions within the BRICS. India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi and South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa were both invited to the recent G7 summit in Bavaria. They attended a side-event, and that must have made alarms ring in Beijing. China has indicated an interest in expanding the BRICS, but other members seem to prefer keeping it small. All five are doing what suits their national interests.

International disappoint in the G7 has many reasons (see interviews with Anna Katharina Hornidge and Vladimir Antwi-Danso on [www.dandc.eu](http://www.dandc.eu)). For the purpose of this essay, I will restrict myself to pointing out that the global South has heard many long lectures on prudent macroeconomic management and fighting corruption. We notice, however, that no one is held accountable when reckless Wall Street speculation plunges the world economy into recession. Nor is anyone held accountable when German automobile manufacturers cheat customers around the world by systematically manipulating the documentation of car emissions. G7 hypocrisy did not start with US President Donald Trump. It was evident long before him – and it has not left the global state with him either.

In the current multilateral system, the G7 are aligned with financial capital and wield disproportionate power. It would be good to have a counterweight. The BRICS are too disparate to serve that function. So far, their big announcements have even largely neglected important issues like the climate crisis. They are unlikely to adopt the kind of

coherent agenda that would be needed, not least, because they all want to benefit as best they can from the currently prevailing order. Russia's invasion of Ukraine, moreover, has made things even more difficult than they already were.

On the one hand, the other four BRICS members have all condemned Moscow's aggression. On the other hand, they are eager not to make things difficult for Russia. To some extent, they are trying to benefit from Russia's isolation, for example by importing its commodities at discount prices. At the same time, the NDB has frozen its Russia programme. The reason is that it wants to keep its western AA+ rating, which shows how limited the BRICS' range of action really is. How the BRICS as a group will cope with an increasingly unstable global order remains to be seen.



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## Different multilateral banks

The Shanghai-based New Development Bank (NDB), also known as the BRICS Bank, was founded in 2014. It is a significant institution, but so far not a major player among the multilateral development banks. To date, the NDB has disbursed about \$15 billion in infrastructure financing. The World Bank Group, by contrast, disbursed more than \$60 billion in 2021.

The major shareholders of the NDB are Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. The governance system is well designed. The BRICS members are in control. The bank is a worthy start, but not making a difference in global affairs yet.

The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is an-

other new international financial institution. It is headquartered in Beijing.

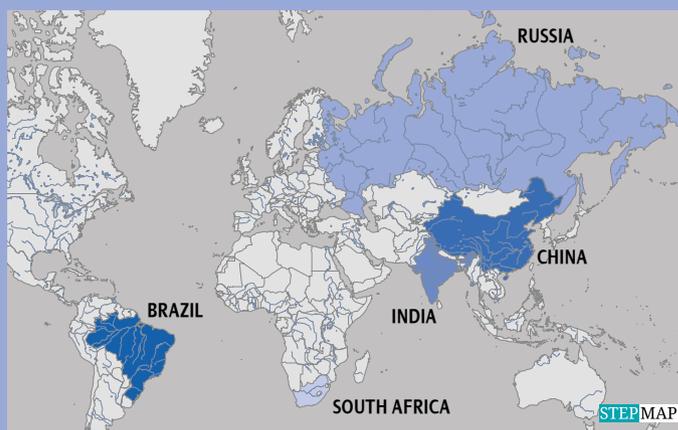
With total disbursements worth about \$20 billion so far, it is not a big player either. China is the dominant power, though the AIIB now has 103 member states, including major EU countries such as Germany, France and Italy, which joined in spite of the USA's request not to do so.

Beijing took the initiative to start the AIIB before the NDB was even discussed in the BRICS context. There is no resident board of directors, so the president has a lot of leeway. Rules concerning social or environmental protection are quite loose, and efficiency and

flexibility have been declared to be the top priorities.

It is quite obvious that the AIIB is more important in the eyes of China's leaders. To a large extent, it supports the regime's foreign policy, including its massive international infrastructure programme called the Belt and Road Initiative.

Moreover, China is running many other international funding programmes which are geared to forging partnerships with countries in several world regions, including Africa, Central Eastern Europe or Latin America. Region-specific summits are held in Beijing regularly as well. PJ





Team of the SLE post-graduate study programme.

## DEVELOPMENT POLICY

## Real cooperation instead of paternalism

How does the future of development policy look like in times of the pandemic, the climate crisis and the military conflicts taking place around the globe? That is a key question that the Centre for Rural Development (SLE) at Humboldt University Berlin asks itself on the occasion of its sixtieth anniversary. The majority of the SLE leadership and graduates agrees that a new kind of cooperation is needed in order to address all of these crises.

By Sabine Balk

The SLE employees agree that development cooperation (DC) has to change. The staff have gathered their ideas in a transformation agenda and decided that a new mindset

towards DC is needed that includes the following:

- DC must be aware of its responsibility: “In our opinion, the most important aspect of a transformative DC mindset would be freedom from paternalism.” That means that the funding that is provided would not be understood as “aid”, but rather as “reparations” for the overuse of human and natural resources with which the global North built up its wealth.
- Practice “real cooperation” on equal footing: this means that cooperation should not be based on conditionalities. Instead, partners should agree on joint outcomes – which already often happens in practice.
- Acquisition and transmission of transformation knowledge: in order to achieve

transformative development, we must depart from our usual technologies and ways of thinking. We have to draft approaches and measures that will bring about the successful transformation to ecological and sustainable development. These measures should function as win-win strategies, meaning that one crisis is not weighed against another, but instead multiple goals can be achieved at the same time. In the process, the global North and global South should constantly be learning from each other.

The SLE has revised its post-graduate study programme “International cooperation for sustainable development” and identified three transformation areas it wants to pursue: (1.) Ecosystems and nutrition, (2.) Socio-ecological business and (3.) Governance and participation. In the first area, ecosystems and nutrition, SLE researchers believe that the increasing competition for resources will have to be overcome.

With regard to land use, moreover, diverse goals such as the preservation of biodiversity, climate protection and food security will have to be integrated. Multifunctional systems should be implemented in

agriculture; examples include agroforestry and agrophotovoltaic systems. In order to replace chemicals, these systems could be ecologically intensified, meaning that the ecosystem services of nature are systematically increased (for instance through self-regulation processes, beneficial organisms or a protein plant strategy). “Closing nutrient cycles” is another strategy, which would prevent the production of excess nitrate while still keeping enough nutrients in the soil. Ecological agriculture must also be improved. The SLE plans to research the corresponding agroecological concepts.

With regard to the second transformation goal, socio-ecological business, the SLE is striving towards an equitable distribution of resources particularly between richer and poorer countries, but also within societies, along with the systematic inclusion of disadvantaged groups. Economic activity that only is oriented toward growth is also under investigation. The SLE wants to develop new concepts in this area and is asking whether green growth is possible and how green innovations can be achieved.

With regard to the transformation of governance and participation, SLE researchers are concentrating above all on rural areas. Such regions often only have weak political systems, structures and institutions and are therefore in need of “good rural governance”.

The latter should facilitate participation and equal opportunities for people in the countryside and promote cooperation and networking among rural people and with urban areas. The goal is also to achieve a new balance between the country and the city, which would allow rural areas to develop and contribute significantly to the cities’ food supply.

These considerations were expanded on in multiple workshops on a variety of subtopics, to which SLE alumni and other DC professionals contributed ideas. The SLE lecturer for development policy and anti-racism, Boniface Mabanza Bambu, pointed out that DC is still based on colonial narratives. He argued that conceiving of African or Latin American people and societies as “other”, and characterising them as “under-

developed” and “undemocratic”, can lead to negative stereotypes.

He also criticised the fact that DC is dominated by “western concepts” and “development expertise”, claiming that they often deprecate other knowledge as “marginal” or “utopian”. He advocated for a critical (self-)deconstruction of DC, which would involve finding opportunities for marginalised groups to speak for themselves instead of having someone else do it for them. He believes the poor should be the main architects of their fate.

The SLE wants to take up all of these ideas and incorporate them into its education programmes and research. Doing so will require a lot of effort. SLE director Susanne Neubert summed it up best: “We all have to develop.”

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Manufacture of the Covid-19 vaccine in a new BioNTech facility in Marburg.

WHO

## Crisis management with mixed results

**Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, the World Health Organization (WHO) has been in the public eye as never before. So far, the results of its ongoing crisis management are mixed. Its multilateral mission is constantly being hampered by national interests. The WHO needs greater independence in terms of reliable financing and well-defined authority.**

**By Anton Sundberg and Andreas Wulf**

When the pandemic began in 2020, the WHO was accused of reacting too slowly. Critics stated that it waited too long to declare a public health emergency and recom-

mend the wearing of masks. Its constitution and the International Health Regulations (IHR) require the WHO to fight pandemics. The IHR are a legally binding WHO agreement to prevent and combat the spread of diseases across national borders.

Independent experts have indeed determined in retrospect that the WHO should have declared a public health emergency not on 30 January 2020, but a week earlier. The delay was likely of a political nature. Evidence was mounting that the virus spreads easily between people even if they are not in close contact, but China's leaders continued to deny it. WHO Director-General Tedros Ghebreyesus thus felt the need to invest

in a "charm offensive". Visiting Beijing on short notice, he explicitly praised the crisis management of this powerful member state. He then got the Chinese government's permission to carry out an initial WHO mission in the country.

Critics saw this move as an unacceptable politicisation of the WHO leadership. Donald Trump, then the US president, used the tensions to advance his "America first" policy. He announced the withdrawal of the USA from the WHO, blocking financial commitments that the US had already made. He had withdrawn from other multilateral institutions previously. The WHO lost its most important donor in the middle of the world's worst public health crisis since the Spanish flu after World War I.

Whether a recommendation to wear medical masks is needed, essentially depends on how easily the virus spreads through the air. The WHO hesitated for several weeks. Apart from inconclusive data, a likely reason was panic buying in affluent countries would restrict the supply of personal protective equipment to medical staff, and that would especially affect poorer countries, where shortages were already evident. This concern was sensible, even though mask wearing was ultimately found to be scientifically correct and essential to pandemic containment. Things were similar in the second year of the pandemic when the big issue was equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines and treatments.

### THE WHO'S ACHIEVEMENTS

In spite of its limited resources, the WHO actually did remarkable work, serving its normative function early on. In the initial weeks, it informed the public through regular press conferences. In six world languages, it offered free online lessons on Covid-19 for health-care workers. Its science division was processing the latest insights. The WHO also put together a model for the targeted and coordinated research of SARS-CoV-2. What's more, regular reports issued warnings about the increased risks faced by vulnerable groups, such as refugees, prisoners and staff in certain low-wage sectors with precarious working conditions.

Early on, the WHO insisted on transparent cooperation in regard to the development and production of vaccines, medical

technology and equipment. In April 2020, it issued a joint statement with the World Trade Organization regarding this matter. However, this episode showed how limited the WHO's power is in regard to enforcing its norms.

In 2021, over 100 countries supported a waiver of intellectual-property rules for Covid-19-related innovations. The result is sobering. Instead of an agreement to rapidly waive patents, only a weak compromise was reached. At its core, it merely eases export restrictions and is limited exclusively to vaccines. Negotiations regarding medication, diagnostic tools and other necessary medical technology are expected to last at least another six months.

### MANY INITIATIVES – LIMITED SUCCESS

Intellectual property is formally beyond the WHO's jurisdiction. However, the agency's enforcement powers also proved limited in regard to other things. It started many initiatives and pursued parallel approaches in order, for instance, to provide rapid and equitable access to medical technologies. Politics often hampered implementation however.

As early as May 2020, the new COVID-19 Technology Access Pool (C-TAP) was launched. Costa Rica had made this proposal with an eye to coordinate research

on Covid-19. Scientific insights and resulting products were supposed to be accessible to all, so the C-TAP would facilitate the voluntary transfer of knowledge. Two years later, the results are disappointing. Only two government-run institutions from Spain and the US have shared licenses. In terms of implementation in summer 2022, the license from the Spanish institute for the production of a Covid-19 antigen test by a South African firm has made the most progress. This is too little, too late – even though it does amount to small steps towards equity and accessibility.

The “mRNA Technology Transfer Hub” has the potential to become more relevant in the medium and long term. The WHO is creating it with support from South African biotech companies and universities. The idea is to give manufacturers in the global south access to this advanced technology without depending on corporations such as Moderna, Pfizer and BioNTech. After all, mRNA technology could prove key in the development of vaccines for HIV, tuberculosis, malaria and various neglected infectious diseases. Efforts to create vaccines against these diseases have been largely unsuccessful so far, but mRNA technology might make a difference. By promoting this cause, the WHO could indeed do greater justice to its mandate “Health for All” and its mandate as the representative of all people

than it can in various public-private partnerships (PPPs).

For over 20 years, many actors in global health have joined forces in PPPs, often outside the WHO. They are challenging the WHO's leadership in important health issues. The problem is that businesses with influence in such PPPs are maximising profits, not striving to improve public services.

In future, the WHO will have to choose. It can either support all initiatives, including PPPs, or get serious in a political sense about pursuing the goal of health equity. Recent decisions taken by the World Health Assembly (WHA) in Geneva in May offer a glimmer of hope. The WHO will get more independent funding, and the director-general was re-elected for another term. Whether the WHO will become able to make its normative goals come true, remains to be seen.



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## The WHO at the beginning of the pandemic

International organisations like the World Health Organization (WHO) were not in an easy position in early 2020, when the pandemic broke out. Nationalist and authoritarian tendencies were – and still are – growing, casting doubt on multilateralism based on human rights.

This trend is weakening the authority of the WHO. For example, its recommendations regarding the 2014 Ebola epi-

demic, a serious international health crisis, were implemented only insufficiently or not at all. Moreover, the WHO has long been chronically underfinanced and understaffed by member states.

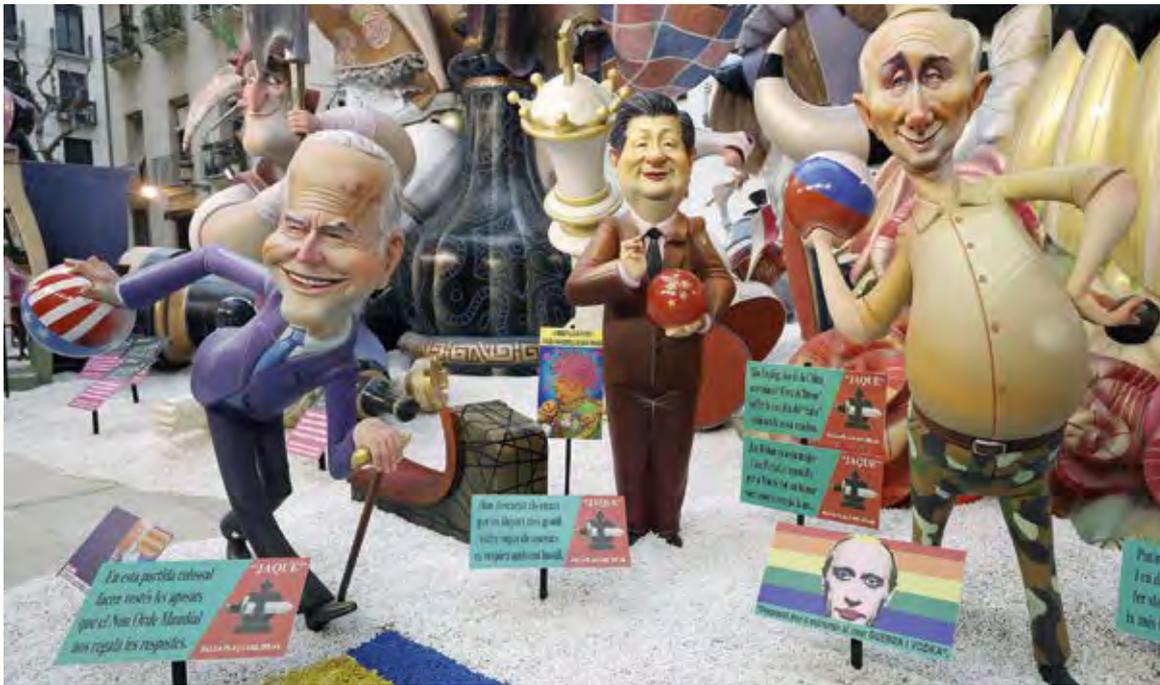
The geopolitical climate at the beginning of the pandemic was marked by economic and political tensions between the USA and China. They led to an early and pronounced politicisation of the Covid-19

debate and affected the work of the WHO.

The architecture of the WHO is conflict-prone too. There are inherent tensions between the independent work of the secretariat, the executive and the sovereign interests of the 194 member states. The duty to take care of all people's health rights is enshrined in the WHO's constitution, but it must also navigate centres of power in nation states. All too often, however, national governments focus more on corporate interests than on public health even in their own country.

This dualism is also evident in how the normative

function of the WHO on health issues diverges from its tangible work in member countries. Things are particularly striking when it comes to declaring a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC). In such emergencies, local operations of WHO country offices and onsite teams often have a bearing on national sovereignty. The dualism was obvious before the pandemic. The authority of the WHO and its ability to criticise member states in the name of global health are limited by its financial and political dependence on member nations.



Humorous portrayal of Joe Biden, Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin in Valencia, Spain.

RELEVANT READING

# Towards a multipolar world order

**In the wake of China's rise, the United States and Europe will need to adapt their foreign policies. Otherwise, they will lose geopolitical influence. Countries of the global south could benefit from the new world order by pursuing multi-alignment policies tailored to their interests.**

**By Berthold M. Kuhn and Dimitrios L. Margellos**

The balance of power between the world's political systems is shifting. The trend is towards a multipolar world order, with geopolitical influence spread over a number of actors. Countries and institutions will need to reposition themselves. That is the conclusion we reach in our book "Global Perspectives on Megatrends" (Kuhn, Margellos, 2022). We have cooperated with scholars and political analysts from various parts of the world to assess geopolitical trends and their implications for multilateral cooperation.

We completed the manuscript shortly after Russia started its war on Ukraine. We see our views concerning the emergence of

a multipolar world confirmed. So far, the course of the war and its consequences show how much geopolitical powers' interests currently diverge.

The US and EU have to date not succeeded in isolating Russia completely, and there is no realistic prospect of that happening in the foreseeable future. China, India, South Africa and other countries of the global south did not join the West's sanctions regime, even though an overwhelming majority of UN members adopted a resolution deploring the humanitarian situation in Ukraine at the UN General Assembly meeting in March. It was clearly directed against Russia.

Obviously, strong cooperation of EU and US will significantly hurt Putin's regime in the medium term. It may also make China's ascent more difficult. Nonetheless, western allies must come to terms with their influence becoming increasingly limited.

The trend towards a multipolar world order is being discussed in the think-tank community under the keyword "hegemonic

shift". The issue has figured prominently in high-level conferences. The Munich Security Report 2020, which was published after the 56<sup>th</sup> Munich Security Conference, coined the term "westlessness". In November 2021, the Bloomberg New Economy Forum in Singapore addressed Asia's growing share of global GDP and its increasing stock-market capitalisation.

Western influence is expected to diminish in the global south. The G7 leaders announced the intention to invest more in global infrastructure at their summit in Bavaria in June. Among other things, they promise to support developing and emerging economies' progress towards climate neutrality and strengthen health infrastructure in Africa. However, this is a very late response to China's global infrastructure programme, the "Belt and Road Initiative". China's influence in many developing countries is not going to be significantly scaled back by new G7 efforts in this field.

Developing countries could actually benefit from the hegemonic shift. Parag Khanna, an Indian-American political scientist and global strategy advisor, has stated that neither the USA nor China will emerge as winners from the present global rivalry. Other countries should be able to benefit by cooperating selectively with both of them. A number of Asian countries, including Singapore and Malaysia, for example, are trying to

build relationships with both super powers, balancing ties to maximise their own advantages.

### PAY MORE ATTENTION TO CHINA

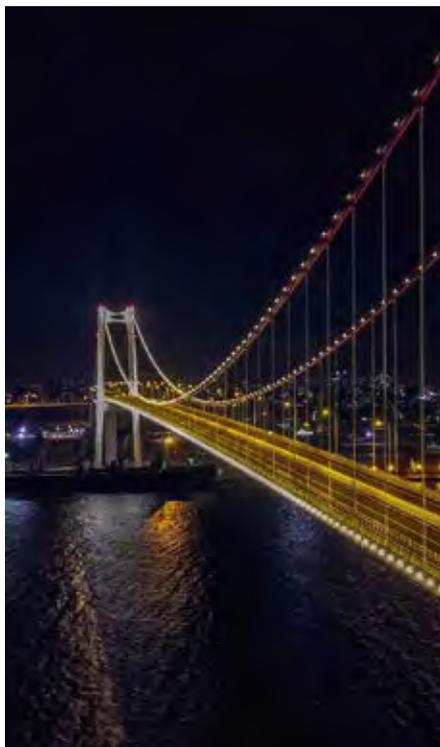
Since Donald Trump's presidency, China has been a primary focus of US national-security thinking. Trump's decisions, which were declared to "make America great again", intensified tensions. The trade war between the two countries culminated in escalating tariffs and a dispute over the World Trade Organization (WTO) after it ruled that the US had violated its rules.

At times, moreover, it seemed that China was more successful than the US or the EU in dealing with Covid-19. In the medium term, however, it may have paid a very high economic price for its zero-Covid strategy. The massive restrictions on personal freedom imposed in spring 2022 have severely tarnished the public image of China and especially the Shanghai Economic Region.

President Joe Biden is trying to get his country more involved in multilateral affairs and improve relations with the EU. Towards China, his administration is signalling that it will not accept co-leadership in global affairs – with one notable exception: climate policy. The hope to limit cooperation with China to climate matters seems unrealistic.

China has expanded its investment across various sectors in recent decades and has sought to forge new alliances. It has been successfully wooing partners in the global south for cooperation. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) are examples. Moreover, the BRICS alliance with Brazil, Russia, India and South Africa is useful in the pursuit of foreign-policy goals. It is also running an international finance institution of its own: the Shanghai-based New Development Bank (NDB). However, expert opinions differ to which extent China can capitalise on such cooperation formats which tend to lack features of deep political and economic integration.

China is also vigorously promoting the renminbi as an international trading currency and trying to expand its stock markets. Related efforts to weaken the role of the US dollar will add to the tensions. After all,



Maputo-Katembe bridge was built with Chinese lending – and by a Chinese company.

the hegemonic position of the United States is due largely to the dollar's dominance in international trade and the country's huge stock markets.

### CHINA'S RISE WILL CONTINUE FOR A WHILE

Looking ahead, China's rise is expected to continue for a number of years. However, it will not go unchallenged, not least by China's neighbours. The Taiwan conflict may also cloud relations with the US. Scholars disagree on the extent to which future multipolarity will be more unstable than the bipolarity of the Cold War or the unipolar dominance the USA in the years after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

NATO is currently experiencing a marked resurgence. Moreover, the US will become more engaged in foreign policy again, especially in Europe and Asia. The EU looks largely united in its solidarity with Ukraine. However, disengagement from Russia will take its toll. Energy prices are rising. On the other hand, efforts to transition to clean energy will pay dividends in the long run.

G20 meetings will continue to attract political attention, despite the difficult

question of Russian participation. However, even western governments will not want to lose the G20 channels for dialogue. Multi-lateralism is thus not in decline. It is transitioning and adapting to an increasingly multipolar global order.

The United Nations will continue to broaden and deepen its climate agenda with an eye to mitigation and sustainability. Related negotiations will remain very difficult, however. One of the most controversial issues is the extent to which vulnerable countries can claim financial compensation for losses caused by climate change. This will be a bone of contention at the upcoming UN climate summit in Egypt in November.

The USA and the EU still have a great deal of power to shape many areas of international cooperation. To retain that power, they should:

- sustainably modernise their economies in the sense of implementing something like Green New Deals,
- adapt their foreign policy to the conditions of an increasingly multipolar world order and,
- develop a prudent strategy for building alliances with other strong and reform-minded economies.

If they succeed in these things, Russia is likely to emerge from the war against Ukraine severely weakened in geopolitical, economic and military terms. China's chances of dominating the global economy and politics might also be reduced.

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