

# Emerging Powers and Africa: From Development to Geopolitics



by Chris Alden

## Sustainable Energy Transition Series

### ABSTRACT

Emerging powers are playing an increasingly important role on the economic landscape of the African continent as trading partners, sources of finance and models of development. Understanding this phenomenon requires not only an analysis of the economic content of the relationship but an assessment of the broader dynamics that shaped, and continue to influence, ties between them. Moreover, it is important to understand how the promotion of emerging power experiences are impacting upon the development trajectories of African countries, and in particular the SDGs, as they navigate a global economy in the midst of a profound transition.

*Africa | Sustainable development | China | Turkey | BRICS*

**keywords**

## Emerging Powers and Africa: From Development to Geopolitics

by Chris Alden\*

### Introduction

Emerging powers are playing an increasingly important role on the economic landscape of the African continent as trading partners, sources of finance and models of development. From global behemoths like China and India to regional economies like Turkey and Indonesia, these developing countries from the South are funding and building new infrastructure, investing in African markets, and introducing new technologies into the continent. Expanding their involvement in Africa has challenged the neo-liberal consensus that guided Western development policy for decades and, as emerging power influence on the continent has grown over time, ushered in a new era of commercial opportunities, challenges to governance and even fostered geopolitical competition. At the same time, deepening engagement by emerging powers in Africa, in particular China and the question of debt financing of infrastructure, has raised concerns as to the overall impact of emerging powers on development prospects for the continent.

Understanding this phenomenon requires not only an analysis of the economic content of the relationship but an assessment of the broader dynamics that shaped, and continue to influence, ties between them. For instance, how the drive for resources characteristic of leading emerging powers like China at the outset of its economic expansion into Africa differs from Turkey's market and efficiency seeking conduct in its investments and aid policy towards the continent. Equally, how these emerging power drivers are paired with emerging power ambitions for international recognition as global powers and, concurrently, draw on devices such as historical narratives to frame their ties of affinity with Africa. Finally, what the promotion of emerging power experiences and models of development mean for the development trajectories of African countries as they navigate a global economy in the midst of a profound transition.

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· Paper prepared in the framework of the IAI-Eni Strategic Partnership, November 2019.

This paper will investigate and assess the changing role of emerging powers in Africa and in particular their motivations, conduct and impact on the development prospects of African countries. It will do so by setting the context of emerging power engagement on the continent, including their search for resources and markets; the unique place that Africa holds for states aspiring to global leadership and how they cement ties with the continent; and finally, an examination of the growing application of development models derived from emerging power experiences to Africa and implications this holds for the achievement of the sustainable development goals.

### 1. Emerging powers and Africa as “the last frontier”

The significance of Africa for emerging powers is commonly held to be its material wealth in resources and, more recently, as a growing market for goods and services. Certainly oil, strategic minerals and timber have featured as drivers for state-led and private firms’ engagement in these sectors and, as such, can exercise a determining influence over aspects of relations. Moreover, Africa’s “lost decades of development” between 1980 and 1999, when Western investors largely abandoned the continent while Western donors and multilateral aid agencies came to dominate its economies, left Africa open to new opportunities presented by emerging powers.<sup>1</sup> The battery of annual trade data, detailing how emerging powers have balance sheets with African economies that are heavily weighted towards exchange of commodities, is a stark reminder of the fundamental content of these bilateral economic relationships.

For instance, Africa’s exports to Asia have increased from 20.6 per cent in 2000 to 35.8 per cent in 2016 while Europe’s declined from 48 per cent in 2000 to 37 per cent in 2016.<sup>2</sup> Natural resources remains the main export from Africa, accounting for 56 per cent of all exports in 2016, and therefore the drive to diversify exports remains critical to African development.<sup>3</sup> The overall share of the trade composition of the iconic emerging power, China, with Africa has varied only slightly over the last two decades, with resources (fuels) accounting for 75 per cent of all imports from Africa in 2017.<sup>4</sup> This differs very little from that of traditional global economic powers like the United States and Japan, whose two-way trade profiles with Africa are overwhelmingly composed of energy resources overall all other sectors. Even the European Union (EU), with the largest trading relationship with the continent and

<sup>1</sup> William Easterly, “The Lost Decades: Developing Countries’ Stagnation in Spite of Policy Reform, 1980-1998”, in *Journal of Economic Growth*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (June 2001), p 135-157, [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DEC/Resources/27272\\_The\\_Lost\\_Decades.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DEC/Resources/27272_The_Lost_Decades.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Mesut Saygili and Ralf Peters, *Key Statistics and Trends in Regional Trade in Africa*, Geneva, United Nations, 2019, p. 17, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3813156>.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>4</sup> African Development Bank (ADB), “Africa Is the Place to Be,” *African Development Bank President Tells Chinese Business Leaders at the China-Africa Forum*, 5 September 2018, <https://www.afdb.org/en/node/2568>.

despite a better balance of economic involvement as well as being the continent's biggest long-term investor, has a trading relationship skewed towards resources with 65 per cent of imports from Africa composed of primary products.<sup>5</sup>

More distinctive in their engagement with Africa are ascendant emerging powers like India, that is to say ones which have global aspirations but whose commercial and diplomatic power projection is still partial in its international reach, as opposed to those regional emerging powers whose outreach is principally given expression in regions of near geographic proximity, like Turkey.<sup>6</sup> Indian firms' outreach to the East and Southern African pharmaceutical sector and ICT sector, reflecting India's economic strengths in these areas, is markedly different from China's singular focus, in its first decade, on resources.<sup>7</sup> In the case of Turkey, the combination of investments in manufacturing and services have led to a targeted presence in Ethiopia, Sudan and parts of West Africa.<sup>8</sup>

Expanding interests in Africa have, over time, inspired change in emerging powers' focus and conduct. Amongst the most consequential is the shifts in policies, practices and institutional orientation by countries like China. While the push into Africa initially targeted the resource sector and was facilitated by the tremendous financial resources available to Beijing to lubricate these high profile oil-for-infrastructure deals, exposure to opportunities in Africa encouraged a myriad of Chinese entrepreneurs to open up businesses as well. This in turn produced closer local and foreign scrutiny of Chinese companies conduct in areas such as labour relations, environmental impact and transparency, leading to changes in their management practices and introducing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies by some firms. Changes in China's approach to Africa was shadowed by other emerging powers such as Brazil which had deliberately mimicked Beijing's comprehensive approach to securing resource exploitation licenses in Africa with only limited success.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Data is for 2018. Eurostat, *Statistics Explained: Africa-EU - International Trade in Goods Statistics*, updated 7 November 2019 [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Africa-EU\\_-\\_international\\_trade\\_in\\_goods\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Africa-EU_-_international_trade_in_goods_statistics).

<sup>6</sup> Theorising emerging powers in relation to Africa has been relatively limited but in recent years is being taken up by scholars. See for example, Justin van der Merwe, "Theorising Emerging Powers in Africa within the Western-Led System of Accumulation", in Justin van der Merwe, Ian Taylor and Alexandra Arkhangelskaya (eds), *Emerging Powers in Africa. A New Wave in the Relationship?*, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, p. 17-38.

<sup>7</sup> Emma Mawdsley and Gerard McCann (eds), *India in Africa: Changing Geographies of Power*, Cape Town, Pambazuka Press, 2011.

<sup>8</sup> Mehmet Ozkan, "Turkey's Religious and Socio-Political Depth in Africa", in Chris Alden (ed.), *Emerging Powers in Africa*, London, LSE IDEAS, June 2013, p. 45-50, <http://www.lse.ac.uk/ideas/publications/reports/emerging-africa>.

<sup>9</sup> Ana Cristina Alves "China and Gabon: A Growing Resource Partnership", in SAIIA *China in Africa Reports*, No. 4 (2008), p. 17-19, [https://saiia.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2008/04/chap\\_rep\\_04\\_alves\\_200805.pdf](https://saiia.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2008/04/chap_rep_04_alves_200805.pdf); also see Ana Cristina Alves, "Chinese Economic Statecraft: A Comparative Study of China's Oil-backed Loans in Angola and Brazil", in *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (2013), p. 99-130, <https://doi.org/10.1177/186810261304200105>.

Following on from these growing interests of small and medium enterprises in Africa was a pool of strategic investments by Chinese firms in the textile and shoe sector, as well as the opening of light manufacturing and even automotive assembly plants in Ethiopia, South Africa, Morocco, Nigeria and Kenya amongst others. This shift into investment has inspired development economists like Justin Yifu Lin to propose a theory of “new structural economics” predicated on the Chinese example and its role in contributing to African development (see below).<sup>10</sup> Though it must be said that these are still nascent and, as such, have only limited impact on aggregated structure of bilateral trade, nonetheless these investments in labour intensive manufacturing are harbingers of a deepening of economic ties between emerging powers and Africa that goes beyond the resource sector.

### 2. Emerging powers, Africa and international recognition

While commercial interests in Africa certainly explain the economic push into the resource sector and the concomitant expansion into other sectors, it alone does not capture the significance of the continent for emerging powers. In fact, beyond economic factors, the meaning of Africa is twofold: for emerging powers a role in Africa is of direct diplomatic importance to their international standing on particular issues of the day and, concurrently, serves as source of transcendent power for ambitious states seeking international recognition as global powers. In other words, garnering African votes in multilateral forums can be critical to the passage of resolutions of direct interest to an emerging power while claimants to status as global power understand that to realise this claim requires a position and presence on the continent.

For the People’s Republic of China (PRC), denied a seat on the UN Security Council by the United States’ support for its diplomatic rival, the Republic of China (Taiwan), from the founding of the UN in April 1945 until the US-PRC rapprochement of the early 1970s, the significance of African support was clear in overturning that situation. Indeed, Chinese diplomacy in Africa makes much of its obligation to Africans for unseating Taiwan and laying the foundation for its ascension to international standing if not yet at that stage global power.

More generally, the great power status coveted by emerging powers is something that is conferred through recognition by the society of states in the international system. In the aftermath of the Cold War, the United States came to occupy a position as a “hyper-power” in the liberal international order, actively situating regional powers in a “hub and spoke” arrangement within the unipolar international system.<sup>11</sup> American support for Brazilian leadership of a UN peacekeeping operation

<sup>10</sup> Tang Xiaoyang, “New Structural Economics: A First Attempt at Theoretical Reflections on China-Africa Engagement and Its Limitations”, in Chris Alden and Dan Large (eds), *New Directions in Africa-China Studies*, London/New York, Routledge, 2018, p. 290-297.

<sup>11</sup> See Laura Neack, *Middle Powers Once Removed: The Diminished Global Role of Middle Powers*

in Haiti in 2004 is an example of this application of the principle of subsidiarity to global governance.<sup>12</sup> Even George Bush's comment in 2003, that South African President Thabo Mbeki was "the point man" on the Zimbabwe crisis, summarised in a colloquial fashion the American expectations about South Africa's leading role in regional affairs.<sup>13</sup> The inclusion of China, India, Brazil, Mexico and South Africa at G8 summits from 2007, as part of the Heiligendamm Process under the auspices of the "Outreach 5", signalled that these regional powers were in line for integration into the mechanisms of global governance.<sup>14</sup>

Following the global financial crisis of 2008, China's own standing as a global power assumed greater visibility amongst African states as they launched a plethora of "Look East" policies. These sought to capture new financial resources and accompanying opportunities available through bilateral and multilateral (i.e. Forum on China-Africa Cooperation or FOCAC) engagements. The hasty elevation of the G20 to summit level in 2009 to address the global financial crisis became the most representative gathering of leading countries outside of the UN and, as such, put into sharp focus how emerging powers had become a key component to global governance. South Africa's privileged status as the only African country offered a seat on both the G20 and BRICS (following Beijing's invitation to join Brazil, Russia, India and China in 2010), again underscored how significant recognition of emerging power standing is to acquiring the trappings of formal power.

For all of these reasons, any emerging power aspirant to global power status necessarily has to be able to articulate and even deliver on an "Africa policy" to declare credibly to have an international stature. What are operationally speaking *regional powers* (with the exception of China) with global aspirations but little to no African presence signal their intention to assume a global role in international affairs by putting forward African agendas. Indeed, since 2000, the Global Partnerships Office of the African Union (AU) has been inundated with requests by emerging powers to establish regional summits such as the Turkey-Africa Forum and the Africa-South America Summit, so much so that they have had to put a moratorium on new partnerships after 2008. Emerging powers have not been deterred, and approached other continental institutions or sub-regional bodies: for instance, the African Development Bank co-sponsors the Korea-Africa Economic Cooperation Ministerial Conference while the Brazil-Africa Forum is co-hosted

and *American Grand Strategy*, paper presented at the 41st Annual ISA Convention, Los Angeles, 14-18 March 2000, <https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id:media/pressrel/OOG26>; also see Chris Alden and Marco Antonio Vieira, "The New Diplomacy of the South: South Africa, Brazil, India and Trilateralism", in *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 7 (September 2005), p. 1077-1095.

<sup>12</sup> W. Andy Knight, "Towards a Subsidiarity Model for Peacemaking and Preventive Diplomacy: Making Chapter VIII of the UN Charter Operational", in *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (March 1996), p. 31-52.

<sup>13</sup> White House, *President Bush Meets with South African President Mbeki*, Pretoria, 9 July 2003, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/07/20030709.html>.

<sup>14</sup> Katharina Gnath, "A Group's Architecture in Flux: The G8 and the Heiligendamm Process", in *EUI Working Papers RSCAS*, No. 2010/06 (2010), <http://hdl.handle.net/1814/13097>.

with the East Africa Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture.

What is most striking, however, are the discourses that underpin engagement, that is to say, how an emerging power explains its relationship to the African continent and in so doing represents "Africa" as well as where the continent is situated in their visionary depiction of the international system. This narrative on Africa articulates, in effect, an insight into the moral purpose of power in the international system as projected by these countries.

Emerging powers frame their engagement with Africa along two axes, either restorative or transformative. The *restorative discourse* generally aligns itself with the pan-Africanist litanies on a renaissance in the making, bringing the continent back to a position of dignity rooted in its historical past. The *transformative discourse* emphasises the supine position of Africa in relation to ex-colonial European powers and the United States (sometimes conflating the two through use of the term "the West" or "North") and how deepening engagement with emerging powers will produce real economic upliftment while closer diplomatic ties will ultimately restructure an unjust international system to their collective advantage. In both cases, ideas of "Africa rising" feature prominently and the role of emerging powers is defined as one of being an ardent supporter of this process through their economic engagement with Africa. In this context, the international system is portrayed as being dominated by Western powers through its institutions, financial structures and productive capabilities – all legacies of the colonial and post-war eras. Emerging powers distinguish themselves from the West through their shared standing – or point of origin at least – in the international system, as developing countries, and through their experiences as victims of colonialism or imperialism. Common points of reference are the Bandung Conference in 1955 and foreign policy principles such as non-interference in state sovereignty, which give policy expression to the notion of international solidarity.

How emerging powers represent their own historical links with Africa differs considerably and is especially telling. For instance, the Chinese use of the 15th century Admiral Zheng He and his voyages to the Horn and Eastern Africa's coastal littoral are celebrated to communicate something about contemporary Chinese ties: first, that China arrived in Africa before the Western powers; and second, that the nature of the engagement was trade-based; and, finally, that they did not go on to colonise the continent. Beijing's role as a supporter of anti-colonialism and liberation movements features prominently in diplomatic utterances.<sup>15</sup> For Brazil, the story of the past is one which former president Inácio Lula Da Silva characterised as a debt that Brazil owes Africa. This emanates from the slave trade that brought so many Africans to the country and produced the vibrant Brazilian culture with its proximity to the continent.<sup>16</sup> Turkey's handling of its past as the core of the

<sup>15</sup> Chris Alden and Ana Cristina Alves, "History & Identity in the Construction of China's Africa Policy", in *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 33, No. 115 (2008), p. 43-58.

<sup>16</sup> Ernest Harsch, "Brazil Repaying Its 'Debt' to Africa", in *Africa Recovery*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (January

Ottoman Empire, which ruled over North Africa and part of the Horn, focuses not on imperialism and slavery but rather on the common heritage of Islam from that period and goes so far as to characterise its contemporary role in Africa as that of a “humanitarian power”.<sup>17</sup> Indonesia, when constructing its recent Indo-Pacific “maritime fulcrum power” policy, gives emphasis to the arrival of Javanese peoples in Madagascar in the 9th century to justify its reach across the Indian Ocean.<sup>18</sup>

### 3. The SDGs and emerging powers as models for African development

The influence of emerging powers on African economies is not limited to development finance, investment or even diplomacy. While the UN-endorsed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a universally recognised framework for creating a more sustainable basis for development, African policy-making communities are drawing inspiration from emerging powers’ development experiences to further their own development aspirations. These experiences, which inform the AU’s visionary development plan for the continent, “Africa 2063”, are predicated on industrialisation and export-led growth, which seems at odds with aspects of the SDGs.

The formal embrace of the SDGs notwithstanding, African governments have demonstrated in their interactions with emerging powers a preference for the AU’s continental plan when dealing with emerging powers. The overlap between “Agenda 2063” and the SDGs is considerable, with the seven aspirations of Agenda 2063 “captur[ing] most [of the] elements of the SDGs”, which undoubtedly reflects African assertiveness in promoting a regional-specific development agenda.<sup>19</sup> In terms of the contribution that emerging powers can make towards development, both Agenda 2063 and SDG 17 explicitly recognise that global partnerships are needed to achieve Africa’s development ambitions. The UN declared:

The universal nature of the agenda will provide an opportunity for engagement and a *new type of partnership* [italics added] to address the global challenges. In particular, Africa can take advantage of this universality of the 2030 [SDGs] Agenda to create partnerships across the goals and ensure effective implementation. Unlike the MDGs [Millennium Development Goals, a prior set of development aspirations endorsed by the UN in the early 2000s], the new agenda is applicable to all countries,

2004), p. 4, <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/node/8137>.

<sup>17</sup> Asya Akca, “Neo-Ottomanism: Turkey’s Foreign Policy Approach to Africa”, in *New Perspectives in Foreign Policy*, No. 17 (Spring 2019), p. 3-8, <https://www.csis.org/node/51945>.

<sup>18</sup> I.G.B. Dharma Agastia, “Indonesia’s Global Maritime Fulcrum: An Updated Archipelagic Outlook?”, in *The Diplomat*, 17 December 2016, <https://thediplomat.com/2016/12/indonesias-global-maritime-fulcrum-an-updated-archipelagic-outlook>.

<sup>19</sup> Kole Shettima, “Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Africa: Call for a Paradigm Shift”, in *African Journal of Reproductive Health*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (September 2016), p. 19.



developing and developed-rich and poor.<sup>20</sup>

With respect to this new type of partnership envisaged by the AU,<sup>21</sup> emerging powers' agenda for African development, at least as expressed through summit-level declarations, demonstrates that similarities in their stated aims for Africa outweigh any differences: all adhere to a policy of supporting the developmental aspirations of Africa and doing so within the context of the rubric of "South-South Cooperation".<sup>22</sup> Admittedly the specifics of policies do vary of course – for example, in some cases, there is a greater emphasis on the substance of programmes (technical cooperation in a given sector) or the modality of delivery (grant aid versus loans or project-based initiatives).

Actual adherence to the SDGs seems to vary from pro-forma inclusion in summit declarations to more arguably meaningful alignments of particular programmes. For instance, the FOCAC 2015 Declaration and accompanying Action Plan gave over space to the AU's Agenda 2063, which overlaps considerably with the SDGs, without directly naming them.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, the India-Africa Forum Summit's mid-term review in 2019 lauds Agenda 2063 as inspirational but neglects mention of the SDGs.<sup>24</sup> Closer examination of the FOCAC VII Action Plan speaks directly to several of the key components identified explicitly as a feature of Agenda 2063 that overlap with the SDGs.<sup>25</sup>

One reason for this is that, in the case of China, its support for African development is often framed within the larger ambit of its multilateral support for development. For instance, the setting up and implementation of China's Assistance Fund for South–South Cooperation, its financial support (1 billion US dollars over ten years) of the UN Fund for Peace and Development, its key status in backing the BRICS New Development Bank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) as well as the support given to the Silk Road Fund. African countries are singled out for special attention in China's position paper on Agenda 2030, the document entailing the SDGs. Pointedly, the Chinese government admonishes countries that are members of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation

<sup>20</sup> UN Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA) website: *The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, <https://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/peace/sdgs.shtml>.

<sup>21</sup> See point 6 of: African Union, *Revised Report of the Permanent Representatives' Committee (PRC) on the Evaluation of the Strategic Partnerships*, EX.CL/1104(XXXIV)iii Annex 1, 7 February 2019, p. 44, <https://archives.au.int/handle/123456789/6588>.

<sup>22</sup> See FOCAC VI Declaration; India–Africa Summit Declaration; Brazil–Africa Forum Declaration.

<sup>23</sup> Chris Alden, "New Actors, New Models, New Outcomes? African Countries' Engagement with China and Other Development Partners in Achieving the SDGs and Agenda 2063", in *Oxfam Research Reports*, July 2017, p. 21, <http://dx.doi.org/10.21201/2017.0254>.

<sup>24</sup> Joint Press Statement by India and the African Union on the Mid-Term Review Meeting of the Strategic Cooperation Framework of India-Africa Forum Summit III, New Delhi, 12 September 2019, <https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/31819>.

<sup>25</sup> FOCAC, *Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Beijing Action Plan (2019-2021)*, 12 September 2018, [https://www.focac.org/eng/zywx\\_1/zywj/t1594297.htm](https://www.focac.org/eng/zywx_1/zywj/t1594297.htm); also see point 146 of: African Union, *Revised Report of the Permanent Representatives' Committee (PRC)...*, cit.

for Economic Cooperation and Development to fulfil their development aid obligations, a critique that is replicated by Beijing at other summits and ministerial meetings by UN members and through other configurations like the G20.<sup>26</sup>

Most intriguing in this context is the growing African focus on emerging powers as models for development. The proliferation of “Look East” policies and the direct application of the “China model” of industrialisation or the “Brazilian model” of social income grants (*“bolsa familia”*, which lifted working families’ incomes and boosted the economy overall) to resolve African development dilemmas is a marked shift from the continent’s systemic reliance on Western donor or multi-lateral development agencies for ideas and policies.<sup>27</sup> Beijing’s active promotion of its development experience of industrialisation and agricultural as an inspiration for Africa, including numerous sponsors visits to Special Economic Zones for African researchers and politicians over the years. In addition to this, discussions with Chinese researchers on the efficacy of these approaches, have inspired countries like Ethiopia, Rwanda, Mauritius, Nigeria and others to invite China-sponsored initiatives such as the Economic Trade and Cooperation Zones and the Agricultural Technical Demonstration Centres in their countries. The idea of transfer of these experiences, bolstered by Chinese capital and technical assistance, to the African landscape seems vindicated by the success of Ethiopia’s growing network of industrial parks.<sup>28</sup> The theory of “new structural economics”, derived in part from China’s domestic development experience in conjunction with its more recent contributions to African development, represents a consolidation of these experiences into policy-relevant theoretical reflections.<sup>29</sup>

At the same time, there has not been much reflection or acknowledgement in emerging powers’ discourses on how openness of the liberal international economic order provided the context for export-oriented economies like China, Turkey and South Korea to industrialise and ultimately develop in these emerging power discourses on Africa. A tacit admission of this core economic condition for rapid export-led growth can be read into the global uproar that accompanied the rise of protectionism in the United States and, concurrently, Chinese President Xi Jinping’s forthright declaration at Davos in 2017 that China would step in to preserve and lead that same liberal international economic order.

<sup>26</sup> China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *China’s Position Paper on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 22 April 2016, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjdt\\_665385/2649\\_665393/t1357701.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/2649_665393/t1357701.shtml).

<sup>27</sup> Of course there were some exceptions like Tanzania which drew on China’s development experience in agricultural collectivisation in forming the “*ujamaa*” policy in the 1960s.

<sup>28</sup> Sonia Hoque, “Ethiopia’s Economic Transformation and Job Creation: The Role of Hawassa Industrial Park”, in *SET Comments*, 24 August 2017, <https://set.odi.org/?p=2773>.

<sup>29</sup> Justin Yifu Lin, *New Structural Economics. A Framework for Rethinking Development*, Washington, World Bank, 2012, <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/2232>.

## Conclusion

Led by China, emerging powers are assuming a position of increased influence in all spheres of Africa. The new discourses of transformative change, solidarity and historical affinity provide the ideological substructure for emerging powers' exercise of asymmetrical economic power in Africa, gradually displacing the neo-liberal consensus that has guided Western development policy in its paternalist approach towards the continent. The promotion of alternative sources of development finance, infrastructure provisions and even models of development are enticing African policy makers keen to make rapid strides in improving their economies and citizens' livelihoods.

African development aspirations as supported by emerging powers do offer a policy path that is largely commensurate with the SDGs; however there is evidence that tensions between declared global aims and the narrow pursuit of national interest by governments is threatening implementation of the SDGs.<sup>30</sup> Whether this African embrace of industrial export-led strategies and other emerging power models actually offers a sustainable route to development remains to be seen.

*Updated 20 November 2019*

<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the UN itself notes with concern that "global landscape for [SDG] implementation has generally deteriorated since 2015". UN Economic and Social Council, *Special Edition: Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals*, E/2019/68, 8 May 2019, p. 4, <https://undocs.org/en/E/2019/68>.

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