



EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

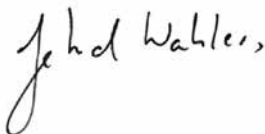
At the end of March, Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa will be coming together for the fifth summit of the BRICS. Under the motto "BRICS and Africa – partnerships for integration and industrialisation", the heads of state will be holding discussions on the economic rise of Africa and the consequences for more intensive cooperation. One end product is to be a separate BRICS Development Bank. What the five countries have in common is a steep, albeit frequently fluctuating, economic upsurge over the last 20 years. Thanks to their enhanced status as regional powers, their global ambitions to exert influence in matters of politics and defence have increased at the same time, linked to clear interests in raw materials and export. Through enhanced South-South cooperation, they intend to further strengthen their role as a counterweight to Western dominance in international processes.

Nowhere else is this currently becoming clearer than in Africa. This continent, which received mainly Western development aid for a long time, is expected to triple its trading volume with the BRICS states from 150 billion U.S. dollars in 2010 to 530 billion U.S. dollars in 2015. In 2010, China overtook the USA as Africa's largest trading partner, and in July 2012 it promised to double its financial commitment on the continent. This power shift is contributing to changes in regional and global power structures. Partly in fierce competition with each other, China, India and Brazil want to strengthen their role as powerful lobbyists for the Global South through an offensive on diplomatic, development and economic fronts. They demand a greater voice in international organisations; Brazil and India are aspiring to a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council. All three states are further linked by a rather reticent approach to the dissemination and enforcement of global values and standards. This represents a reversal compared to the situation of the last two decades when it was mainly Western influences that dominated international relations.

Regarding the involvement of the three BRICS states in Africa this means in concrete terms: governance is no

criterion in partner selection. Instead, economic gain is all-important. The focus is on commerce, raw material exploitation and infrastructure, while there is no call for or encouragement of democracy and human rights. Many African governments welcome this type of Africa policy, which does not ask questions about the right of the people to have their say or about criteria of the rule of law. After all, major investment is badly needed in Africa and the quality of Chinese products is rising all the time. But increasingly, criticisms are being voiced, particularly among the opposition and parts of the population. Especially Chinese companies frequently ignore environmental and social standards in Africa; but they are rarely punished. Where the exploitation of raw materials is concerned, hardly any of the created wealth stays in the country; revenues are relatively low and there is a lack of transparency.

In order for the strong involvement of the emerging economies in Africa to benefit the entire population, it must be possible for the people to demand greater accountability from their own governments. All too often, increased economic activity only benefits a small elite. This is why there is a need for clear rules regarding the adherence to standards and for a right for the civil society to have its say with respect to investments in their country involving billions in a climate of greater transparency. In July 2012, South African President Jacob Zuma said that inequitable trade relations with China were not sustainable in the long term and that one should not allow the mistakes from colonial times to be repeated. By encouraging the rule of law and democratic co-determination, Germany and the EU can help African states to clearly articulate and successfully pursue their interests vis-à-vis traditional and new partners from the BRICS countries to the benefit of their own populations.



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