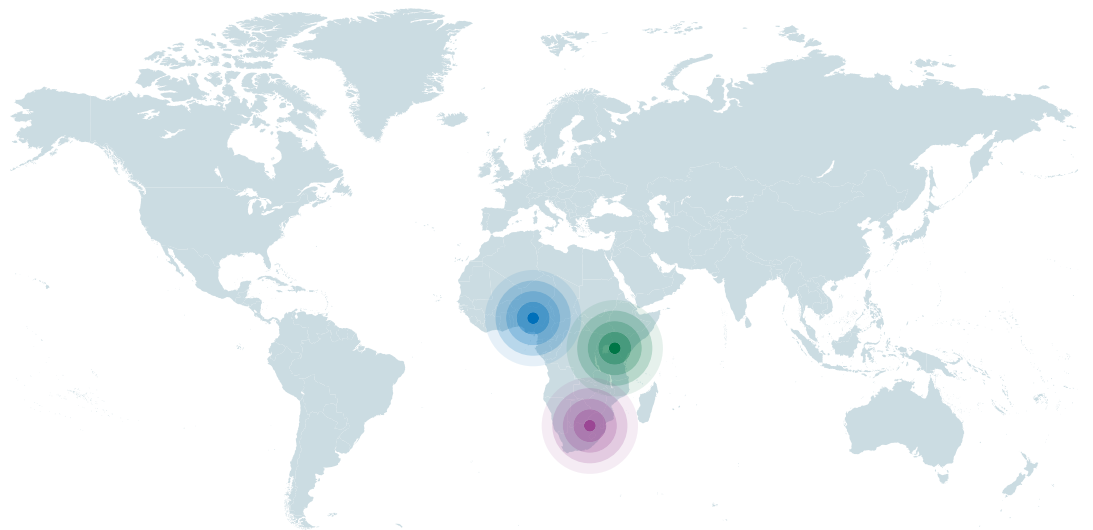


# What if Africa's Regional Powers Did Better?

South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya  
as Potential Drivers of Peace and Prosperity

Terence McNamee



Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa are some of the biggest regional powers in Africa. Although they possess an estimable economic and political potential, they do not manage to fulfill it. Quite to the contrary, Africa is the least integrated region in the world economy and repeatedly troubled by internal security issues. Doing better domestically is the first step towards overcoming the obstacles to playing a more important role in global policy making.

---

## Introduction

For many years the best performing states in Africa have been tiny. Atop the list of most major human development rankings are Seychelles, Mauritius and the “big” one of the lot, Botswana. Along with the latter two, the tiny island state of Cape Verde is the best governed, according to the 2015 Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance. Of the top five countries ranked by GDP per-capita, Botswana is the largest by population at just over two million. That is about one-tenth the size of Nigeria’s largest city, Lagos.

Apart from all the benefits accruing to their own people – they are usually safer, healthier, richer and better ruled than other Africans<sup>1</sup> – Africa’s smallest states have not had much impact beyond their borders. The only countries carrying considerable weight are the regional powers.<sup>2</sup> Such states can generate substantial political and economic effects – positive or negative – in their region and continent in ways that smaller states typically cannot. That is why their performance bears particular attention. Here, the United States, Japan and Germany instantly come to mind.

Since independence, Africa’s regional powers have not done very well. Their large territories and populations amplified the Herculean challenges faced by the first generation of post-independence African leaders. Notwithstanding their own failings, none could have been prepared to manage relations between the fragmented ethnic groups perilously bequeathed into their new states by colonial rule. At the same time,

basic economics would suggest that big states have inherent advantages in creating economies of scale and lower costs of trade. But for various reasons Africa’s larger states cannot fulfill their potential. Thus we rarely consider how different the continent would look if the reverse were true.

In the African context there are three specific reasons why the performance of regional powers merits particular scrutiny. The first relates to regional integration. Africa’s economic prospects are strongly linked to how effectively clusters of neighbouring states cooperate, club resources and support each other. A recent study by Yale University found that Africa is the least integrated region in the world economy. Comparative advantages exist within all its sub-regions – in building infrastructure, diversifying supply chains, combining tourism products – but are almost never exploited. The second reason is security. Global experience suggests that regional powers have a propensity to use diplomatic and, if necessary, military might in order to counter regional security threats and are generally better “stabilisers” than external interveners. The third reason is Africa’s role in the international system. Africa is at the margins of global politics. The interests of the great powers still prevail on issues of international justice, finance and security. But the global distribution of power is not static. Resource-rich Africa, with a population predicted to reach two billion by 2040, must play a greater part in shaping that new future. Strengthening Africa’s voice globally will rest to a significant degree on the ability of regional powers to forge a common narrative and approach to





Gloomy outlook: The three promising powers Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa are in a difficult phase amid their struggle for peace and prosperity as they have to build up their efforts on conditions heavily burdened by a turbulent past. [Source: © Zohra Bensemra, Reuters.](#)

issues of concern to Africa and the world, such as reform of the UN Security Council. Ideally the African Union (AU) should play that role but the organisation is still finding its feet and unable to represent the African agenda internally or globally as effectively as joined-up regional powers (potentially) could.

For the catalytic power of these states to be harnessed for the betterment of their regions, the continent and the world, their domestic powers need to be made efficient. They cannot manage or develop regional economic bodies if their own economies are mismanaged or dysfunctional. They cannot act as a stabilising force in their region if they themselves suffer from major internal conflict and violent divisions; instead

they become exporters of insecurity. And they cannot galvanise regional or continental consensus around the key issues of our time if they are not acknowledged as leading nations, which represent and advance certain shared values and interests.

This paper examines three countries in sub-Saharan Africa – South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria – which are particularly illustrative of the importance of regional powers to the continent's prosperity. Relative economic and diplomatic weight, location and level of international integration (regionally and globally) are key factors which *could* make these countries engines of regional growth and stability. But these qualities are not exclusive to the countries examined here.

Ethiopia, Angola, even resource-rich Democratic Republic of Congo – owing to its capacity to spread insecurity inasmuch as its potential to ignite economic growth in Central Africa and beyond (if it ever got its house in order) – also have characteristics of regional powers.

## Nigeria

Until 2016, Nigeria was the largest economy in Africa, with a GDP of 510 billion U.S. dollars, which exceeds all the countries of the ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) region combined. Nigeria's population is 180 million, by far Africa's largest. Both are predicted to grow much more. Estimates suggest that Nigeria's population will rise to 320 million by 2040, making it the fourth most populous country in the world after China, India and the U.S. Its economy is projected to grow to 4.2 trillion U.S. dollars over the same period. Projections such as these fuel talk of Nigeria as the "giant of Africa", the only country on the continent capable of being a global power in the future. A recent Institute of Security Studies (ISS) report even suggests that, "to a large extent, the increase in Africa's role globally will therefore be driven by the future weight of Nigeria".<sup>3</sup>

### Long-term forecasts for Nigeria's economy make the country a contender for becoming a global power in the future.

---

Nigeria's large numbers have yet to translate into success at home or in its region. The language of (perennial) crisis and state fragility has dominated the narrative about Nigeria within and outside its borders. For more than half of the period since independence in 1960, Nigeria has been under military rule. Eruptions of violence along the country's numerous ethnic, religious and social fault lines have been frequent. The Biafra War (1967 to 1970) alone claimed more than

a million lives. For all the particularities of the Boko Haram insurgency in north-eastern Nigeria, which has claimed more than 17,000 lives since 2009, its origins and potency are profoundly symptomatic of wider failures of the state. Even as the Boko Haram insurgency appeared to de-escalate in 2016, a militant group in Nigeria's oil-producing Niger Delta region threatened to renew an insurgency in the oil-producing South East that could potentially cripple the economy.

The structural dynamics that historically have characterised the state of Nigeria are well known: endemic corruption (in its latest index on corruption perceptions Transparency International ranked Nigeria 136 out of 175), misallocation of resources, high levels of poverty, the resource curse (between 90 and 95 per cent of Nigeria's export revenue still comes from oil) and insecurity. That Nigeria has performed well below its enormous potential is unquestionable. Infamously poor governance and muddled foreign policy have led to Nigeria's relative lack of influence internationally. There have always been question marks over whether Nigeria's internal challenges are simply too grave for the country to ever project power effectively. Even within its own region, Nigeria has been unable to exercise weighty authority in the 15-member ECOWAS, despite being the largest donor and one of the driving forces behind its establishment in the 1970s. Nigeria's desultory record of being out-manoeuvred by smaller, "smarter" members of the bloc on various matters is legion. In part, Nigeria's relative lack of influence eschews from ECOWAS's "one country, one vote" system and the preponderance of non-English speaking member states (there are eight French-speaking and two Portuguese-speaking), who tend to collaborate and support one another better than Nigeria and the other four English-speaking members.

When Nigeria has managed to deploy diplomatic power, the results have been impressive. During the 1970s it was a leading voice in the global anti-apartheid movement and in the 2000s it was a central actor in various peacekeeping and diplomatic missions across the continent. Its former President, Olusegun Obasanjo, in



Pivotal moment: The peaceful election in Nigeria in 2015 could mark a milestone in the country's difficult transformation to a democracy. Source: © Finbarr O'Reilly, Reuters.

partnership with South Africa's former President Thabo Mbeki, spearheaded the creation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and together they inspired the idea of the "African renaissance" for millions on the continent. Obasanjo's election in 1999 marked a shift towards democratisation that, for all its imperfections, has since embedded itself ever-deeper into national life. The peaceful election in 2015 and subsequent orderly transfer of power could prove a pivotal moment in Nigeria's history.

Economically, Nigeria's historic addiction to petro-dollars has suppressed the development of manufacturing, commercial agriculture and other sectors. The informal sector still accounts for around 70 per cent of total employment. Low oil prices took a heavy toll on the economy

in 2015, enfeebling the nation's currency and prompting foreign investors to pull out of its stock and bond markets. Nigeria fared no better in the first six months of 2016, as its new President Muhammad Buhari struggled to make good on his promises to rein in corruption and stabilise the economy. The continued fall of its currency saw South Africa overtake Nigeria and reclaim its position as Africa's largest economy.

Beneath the gloom, however, glimpses of a brighter future for Nigeria are evident on the ground. The country holds together despite near-constant predictions of its imminent collapse. Nigeria has witnessed an explosion in entrepreneurs, innovators and professional services development. Cell phone penetration is now 100 per cent. Across banking, entertain-



Reaching for accountability: The mismanagement of public funds by Kenya's government officials repeatedly stirs public outrage. In 2013, activists symbolically burnt empty coffins in protest against a legislative plan that included an entitlement to state funerals for the Members of Parliament. [Source: © Thomas Mukoya, Reuters.](#)

ment, telecommunications, agriculture and building materials sectors, the green-shoots of a more diversified economy are sprouting. An increasingly dynamic economy and a more open political space is good news for businesses in the region eyeing up Africa's largest consumer market. Nevertheless, without addressing the underlying structural dynamics that produce deepening poverty, inequality and insecurity, Nigeria is destined to be an ever-turbulent and volatile swing state.

## Kenya

Based on numbers alone, Kenya is a less clear-cut regional power than either Nigeria or South Africa. Its neighbours Tanzania and Ethiopia have more people, in the case of the latter twice as many. Eight African countries have bigger economies. Historically, Kenya has not been a

robust diplomatic or political force on the continent. It was not a significant player in the establishment of key organs such as the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) or AU, nor were its leaders especially influential internationally, unlike Tanzania's long-serving President Julius Nyerere.

Yet for most of its history since independence in 1963, Kenya was "Africa" for much of the outside world, at least the Africa it wanted to see: of preternatural landscapes and wildlife, of vibrant, liberal-minded people, of social harmony.<sup>4</sup> Western countries viewed Kenya as "one of its own", a political oasis amidst the chaos of Africa. Then came the disputed 2007 election. The widespread communal violence which erupted in its aftermath altered the image of "Kenya" in the West's popular imagination. This led to Kenya being better understood now for what it actually

is, a complex country facing immense social, economic and security challenges – but also a subtle powerhouse, epitomical of the Africa Rising story.

Kenya boasts East Africa’s strongest international trade and investment links, and serves as its transport, logistics, tourism, banking and services hub, all underpinned by major infrastructure development. It has a strong blueprint for the country, “Vision 2030”. Human resource capital is perhaps Kenya’s biggest asset. Its educated, professional class has long been a source of national pride. Its culture of innovation is strong and growing. That the world-leading mobile money system, M-PESA, was created in Kenya is not an accident. M-PESA and technology in general have seeped into the fabric of life in Kenya as almost nowhere else in Africa. Such innovations give Kenya the potential to widen public access to myriad services and leapfrog traditional phases of development and industrialisation in a way few African countries could aspire to. Kenya is increasingly defined by a private sector that is multi-ethnic and arguably the most dynamic in Africa. That the 2013 elections passed off peacefully in the face of dire predictions of violence and chaos was due, in part, to the ambitious peace-building program undertaken by the private sector to ensure a free and fair outcome.

### **Kenya’s private sector is arguably the most dynamic in Africa.**

---

Intra-regional trade in the East African Community (EAC) is higher than in any other region on the continent. Kenya is the chief beneficiary of the trade in manufactured products, but in driving deeper integration across other spheres it has generated positive spillover effects and helped boost neighbouring national economies, even if growth has been uneven. President Kenyatta’s government has put tighter integration within the EAC at the fore of its external policies and sought to promote the region as a single market to potential investors. According to the latest Visa

Africa Integration Index, Kenya has the highest economic integration score in the East Africa region. Globally, Kenya has effectively pursued a pragmatic approach, balancing “the best from China and the best from the U.S.” for investment and market expansion.

Kenya has been characterised as a “burning platform for change” but formidable obstacles are to be found aplenty. At independence there were about five million Kenyans, today there are nine times as many and increasing by a rate of one million a year. There are acute concerns over Kenya’s rising debt and its ability to finance the maintenance or procurement of public facilities. Kenya is poised to grow its economy above six per cent annually for the next several years but much of it recently has been “jobless growth”; the fastest growing sectors are not labour-intensive. As with Nigeria and South Africa, inequality is growing. In the latest UN human development index, Kenya ranks a lowly 147 out of 187 countries. Also as with Nigeria, institutionalised corruption has often been cited as a major factor in Kenya’s poor development performance. Gross financial impropriety and mismanagement of public funds by government officials is such that, according to the 2013/14 auditor general’s report, only “1.2% of the country’s \$10bn (£6.4bn) budget was correctly accounted for. About \$600m could not be accounted for at all”.<sup>5</sup> Kenya’s President Uhuru Kenyatta recently declared that corruption was so pervasive it had become “a national security threat”.

Kenya’s new constitution, passed in 2010, is meant to enhance accountability, promote a more active citizenry and build national cohesion – and there are tangible signs that democratisation is deepening. But more open and competitive politics risks exacerbating the religious and tribal divisions that Kenya has struggled to mitigate since independence. A persistent refugee crisis and attacks by the Somalia-based Islamist extremist group, *Al Shabaab*, which have escalated since Kenyan troops intervened in Somalia in 2011 to help the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) end piracy in the Horn of Africa and to stabilise the country,

amplify the challenge of nation building. Kenya is now on one of the frontlines of the global fight against Islamic extremism. Parts of the country are becoming more difficult to govern effectively and internal cohesion in Kenya is under strain. With another election slated for 2017, the opposition mobilised thousands of people in various protests in the first half of 2016. Yet, overall, peace has been maintained. The Kenyan parliament has passed strict laws prohibiting hate speech. Politicians bent on stirring ethnic tensions to get votes – a recurrent feature of past elections – should find it more difficult. Public opinion surveys carried out in 2016 suggest that the President’s Jubilee administration – a multi-party coalition – is favoured by most Kenyans as the party able to foster greater harmony in a country where tribal loyalties have traditionally meant more than political ideology.

### South Africa

For decades prior to 1994 South Africa was a malign regional power. During the apartheid era (1948 to 1994) the white regime did not confine its insidious methods to its own borders; it fomented instability in its neighbourhood in order to consolidate its domestic political order. Its vastly superior military was frequently deployed externally to counter any perceived threats to its rule at home. South Africa also towered over its neighbours economically, but apartheid precluded economic integration and much (though not all) trade within what was then known as the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC) region.

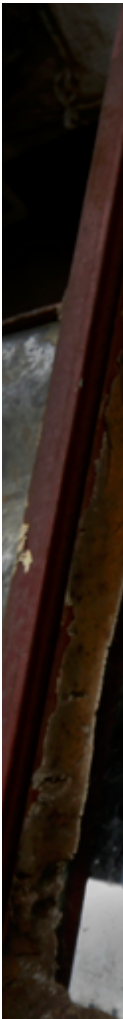
Only after the end of apartheid could South Africa emerge as a force for good. The country embarked on a massive investment and trade promotion push throughout the region and continent. Its comparatively advanced companies swept into a host of new markets with the lifting of the restrictions imposed by apartheid. Globally, South Africa enjoyed unprecedented clout for a country of its size, due mainly to the almost mystical reputation of its chief political liberator, Nelson Mandela, and the country’s remarkable transition from international pariah to non-racial

democracy which brought him to power. After 1994 Mandela’s erudite deputy and later president of the republic, Thabo Mbeki, guided the country through nearly 15 years of macro-economic stability and healthy, if unspectacular, economic growth. The concomitant change in South Africa’s external relations is nicely summed up as follows:

“Enmity gave way to amity and isolation was replaced by integration. The friendless, marauding regional power of old was transformed into an initially reluctant regional giant professing the highest altruistic intentions ... the ‘old’ South Africa’s realist thinking informed by the imperatives of survival in a hostile world, was replaced by a liberal idealist approach in which democratic South Africa would promote an ambitious reformist agenda abroad based on its internal experiences and values.”<sup>6</sup>

South Africa’s return to international respectability helped pave the way for the resolution of longstanding conflicts in the region, notably in Namibia and Mozambique. Today, South Africa is Africa’s most sophisticated economy. It is the only African country that is a member of the G20 and BRICS<sup>7</sup> (the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa grouping), as well as one of the European Union’s ten global strategic partners.

The colours of the so-called Rainbow Nation have never been dimmer, however. The language of crisis has become ubiquitous as debates rage over how close South Africa might be to a tipping point. 2015 witnessed various forms of mass action, chaos and violence in the national parliament, fraught labour relations, national electricity shortages, a resurgence of xenophobic attacks and increasingly racialised politics, critical failures of state-owned enterprises and rising corruption. Factionalism and leadership gaps within the governing African National Congress, which has ruled South Africa since 1994, impaired policy implementation across government. The country’s economic growth prospects have fallen sharply and investor confidence has plummeted. In a recent Ipsos Socio-Political Trends Survey, only 44 per cent of South Africans now believe





that the country is “moving in the right direction”, down from 76 per cent in 1994 and 71 per cent in 2004. Various data could be marshalled to explain why, though perhaps the unemployment rate offers the most potent explanation: 40 per cent of black South Africans, who comprise nearly 80 per cent of the total population, are unemployed.

More than two decades on from the end of apartheid, South Africa is still at peace with its region, unlike Nigeria and Kenya. But South African foreign policy lacks the clarity and muscle shown in

its first decade of democracy. At his inauguration Mandela averred that South Africa would engage the world with a principled, highly moral foreign policy. For a time, it appeared to be more than just rhetoric. South Africa became a leading voice in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) regime, head of the Non-Aligned Movement and peacemaker in Burundi, Sudan, the DRC and Zimbabwe.<sup>8</sup>

Yet today South Africa confronts a host of legitimacy problems. Crass patronage appointments have tarnished its once-vaunted diplomatic



Ambivalent perspective: The South African youth sees clouds looming on the horizon while the country's leading party is becoming more regressive after Mandela's death, seemingly abandoning important parts of his legacy in order to enhance the wealth and power of its leadership. Source: © Yanniss Behrakis, Reuters.

service. Critics charge that post-apartheid South Africa's initial moral stature and diplomatic finesse on the continent have given way to coarse exceptionalism and bullying, exemplified by its bellicose campaign to elect one of its own – Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma – as African Union Chairperson in 2012. “South Africa can be heavy-handed when it comes to diplomacy”, observes Jakkie Cilliers, “and there is a sense that South Africa speaks more than it listens in Africa”.<sup>9</sup> Globally, the lustre of Mandela's rainbow nation has melted away, with no less than *The Economist* suggesting that South Africa's foreign policy could become a “laughing stock”, and deriding an ANC discussion paper published in 2015 as “clueless and immoral”.<sup>10</sup> If South Africa – once touted as Africa's “natural leader” – is becoming more “regressive”, opting for “ideology over content and outcome”, as two analysts recently questioned,<sup>11</sup> then what might that portend for southern Africa and the continent as a whole?

## South Africa's economy is an important anchor of economic stability in southern Africa.

---

South Africa's economic weight in the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) region is similar to that of Germany's in the Euro area. Across nearly all key sectors such as telecommunications, retail, finance and mining, South African companies are heavily invested throughout the region. They act as drivers of growth in those economies, impacting civil societies and people on the ground in myriad ways. That South Africa's economy is an “important anchor of economic stability” in southern Africa and even further into the continent is beyond doubt.<sup>12</sup>

### Becoming more successful regional powers

Banal as it may sound, being successful at home is key to being a successful regional power. “Success” does not mean being excellent on all levels *simultaneously*. Progress is bound to be

uneven and subject to reversals, especially in Africa where nation-building processes are still in their infancy. And the basic ingredients for success – effective and inclusive institutions, political stability, sound policy choices – are often easier said than attained. History, as historians continually remind us, always unfolds in a contingent way. Amidst the particular challenges affecting Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa, however, one key contradiction – elegantly framed by Johns Hopkins University scholar Peter Lewis – that all three must confront boldly is evident: transparency without accountability. Underway in each are a raft of commissions and investigations on issues vital to their future prosperity: official corruption, policing, state-owned enterprises – the list is long and growing. Transparency, a crucial component of good governance, is strengthening. But this is largely meaningless unless it translates into more prosecutions, reforms and *real* accountability, which has yet to happen on a concomitant scale in any of the regional powers.

A major hurdle to overcome for each, though to a lesser extent for Kenya, is convincing their neighbours and the continent as a whole that their external agendas are not entirely self-serving. No one should underestimate how deeply fear of dominance runs in Africa's middle and smaller states. The robust spirit of Pan-Africanism has always co-existed with strongly nationalistic tendencies. Africa's leaders have been fiercely reluctant to lessen the sovereignty of their states by surrendering powers to any supranational body despite the ethic of “African Unity”. In part this stems from fear that more powerful states will use Africa's regional economic communities (RECs) to further their regional hegemony. South Africa has come under particular scrutiny in SADC for what some neighbouring states perceive as “aggressive” economic policies and also for putting their own global pretensions – exemplified by their BRICS membership – ahead of regional commitments. West African states have long feared that Nigeria might use ECOWAS to extend its own hegemony, which may partly explain why other members cohere so frequently to frustrate Nigeria's agenda.

Kenya has arguably been most successful at achieving greater regional and continental influence through quiet diplomacy and collaboration. The indictments against Kenya's president and other officials by the International Criminal Court illustrate the point, however one might feel about the merits of the charges (later withdrawn). Kenya deftly marshalled broad African support behind its cause without disengaging from the institution or its international partners that support it. In doing so, Kenya escaped relatively unscathed from what could have been a potentially devastating diplomatic crisis. The country would appear to understand better that there is a particular onus on regional powers to build (or repair) trust in Africa's regional frameworks, not least because their own agendas are questioned the most. Kenya's demonstrable commitment to building and empowering the East African Community (EAC) – the most integrated regional bloc in Africa – affords the rest of Africa salutary lessons on the benefits of integration. Perhaps above all, it shows what is possible when the “politics” of regional integration give way to practical solutions.

Doing more to facilitate private sector regionalism should be a key priority. Business is already driving key regional initiatives. Corporate Pan-Africanism, exemplified in the major investments across borders by Nigerian cement mogul Aliko Dangote or South Africa's SABMiller or Kenya's ICT companies, is creating new identities and new connectedness outside the traditional spheres. By eschewing protectionism and instead promoting greater freedom of movement for business and labour, regional powers will help Africa address the pernicious “*us* (government) *versus them* (business, society)” dichotomy.

Relations between regional powers are vital to the success of continental organisations. The European Union's success would not have been possible without the complete transformation in relations between France and Germany in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. South America's leading trading bloc, Mercosur, would not have been possible if its economic giants and close strategic partners, Argentina and Brazil, did not put aside

mutual hostility and a dangerous nuclear rivalry in the 1980s. Both the EU and Mercosur currently face testing political and economic conditions, arguably the sternest since their respective inceptions. Navigating a way through the current tumult will rest disproportionately on the shoulders of their strongest members. In the same way, the future success of the AU and the attainment of its Agenda 2063 – the aspiration for “an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena”<sup>13</sup> – rests significantly on how the likes of Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa get along and club together.

### **Africa's regional powers need to do more to facilitate regional integration.**

---

People-to-people links between Africa's regional powers are a key part of their relations. Currently, they are unsteady. Educational, cultural and other types of exchanges between their respective citizens are, by international standards, comparatively meagre, and mostly confined to business. In the case of South Africans and Nigerians, levels of trust are low. Nigerians living in South Africa are often caricatured as gangsters or drug peddlers; the reputation of South Africans is scarred by the eruptions of xenophobia against other Africans and their own “delusions of exceptionalism”. In business, South African companies are very active in Nigeria but this is a one-way street: Nigerian (and other African) firms frequently cite South Africa's protectionist policies and BEE regulations as barriers to entering its market and a hard brake on intra-continental trade.

At the government level, much of the rhetoric suggests the two are in a battle for economic dominance in Africa and power projection globally. Much repair work will need to be done if the heady days of cooperation between then presidents Thabo Mbeki and his Nigerian counterpart Olusegun Obasanjo – originators of NEPAD – can

be reinvigorated. Nigeria and South Africa's approach appears to differ from Kenya's "softer" diplomacy although relations between Kenya and South Africa in particular have suffered on account of the latter's strict visa requirements which have deterred the flow of businesses and tourists. Regional powers need to do more to facilitate interaction between their citizens, not just in business and trade, but through the free movement of people and ideas. A common agenda and greater understanding will remain elusive otherwise.

Predictions based on quantitative data and trend analysis suggest that, from a global power perspective, for the next 25 years Africa is most likely to remain where it is currently: at the margins. Yet regional powers could alter that prognosis significantly if they become, for lack of a better word, successful. Everyone has a stake in thinking about how to achieve that aim.

---

**Dr. Terence McNamee** is the Deputy Director of the Brenthurst Foundation based in Johannesburg, South Africa.

- 1 The top three countries by life-expectancy in Africa are Cape Verde (75), Mauritius (74) and Seychelles (74) – significantly higher than the next ranking country, Namibia (68). Botswana is the outlier, ranking only 10<sup>th</sup> in Africa (64), though it is reasonable to assume that it would be ranked first or thereabouts were it not for the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS during the past two decades. Botswana currently has the third highest HIV infection rate in the world and life expectancy has only just returned to slightly less than 1990 levels, after plummeting to 35 in 2005. Between 1995 and 2002 total life expectancy fell by 36 per cent on account of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, cf. World Life Expectancy 2016: Life Expectancy Africa in: <http://worldlifeexpectancy.com/life-expectancy-africa> [16 Aug 2016].
- 2 For the purposes of this paper, the term "regional powers" is used. A larger paper and conference on which this paper draws used the term "swing states", though conceptually there are no substantive differences between the two.
- 3 Cilliers, Jakkie / Schünemann, Julia / Moyer, Jonathan D. 2015: Power and Influence in Africa: Algeria, Egypt, Ethiopia, Nigeria and South Africa, 25 Mar 2015, in: African Futures Paper 14.
- 4 McNamee, Terence 2015: Why Kenya Matters, The Strategist, 15 Jan 2015, in: <http://aspistrategist.org.au/why-kenya-matters> [16 Aug 2016].
- 5 Githongo, John 2015: Kenya's Rampant Corruption Is Eating away at the Very Fabric of Democracy, The Guardian, 6 Aug 2015 in: <http://gu.com/p/4b93g/stw> [16 Aug 2016].
- 6 Geldenhuys, Deon 2008: The Idea-Driven Foreign Policy of Regional Power: The Case of South Africa, Jan 2008, in: <http://bit.ly/2cKtz6> [16 Aug 2016].
- 7 See the contribution by Rieck, Christian E. et al. in this issue (p.8).
- 8 South Africa's role as "peacemaker" in Zimbabwe is fiercely contested by critics of Mbeki's "quiet diplomacy" approach. At the time, it was widely portrayed as cover for Mugabe's regime against what Mbeki argued was external interference in African affairs.
- 9 Louw-Vaudran, Liesl 2015: Nigeria will be Africa's first global superpower, Mail&Guardian, 2 Apr 2015, in: <http://j.mp/vaudran> [29 Sep 2016].
- 10 The Economist 2015: Clueless and immoral, 5 Sep 2015, in: <http://econ.st/2dCuUuF> [29 Sep 2016].
- 11 Ferguson, Malcolm / Mills, Greg 2015: South Africa's foreign policy: Progress or 'Progressive'?, Daily Maverick, 23 Sep 2015, in: <http://j.mp/ferguson-mills> [16 Aug 2016].
- 12 Alessi, Christopher 2013: South Africa's Economic Fault Lines, CFR Backgrounders, Council on Foreign Relations, 17 May 2013, in: <http://on.cfr.org/1d7kGkZ> [29 Sep 2016].
- 13 African Union n.d.: Vision and Mission, in: <http://au.int/en/about/vision> [29 Sep 2016].