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BRICS: The African Expansion and its Implications for a Redistributive Global Economic Architecture

The recent expansion of the BRICS bloc to include, among others, the African nations of Egypt and Ethiopia signifies a profound geopolitical and economic recalibration. Comprising originally of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, the BRICS coalition represents a conglomerate of emerging economies with increasing sway in global financial governance. The integration of Egypt and Ethiopia into this alliance serves multiple purposes, particularly for these African nations, by enhancing trade efficiency and formulating a more equitable global economic order.

The incorporation of Egypt and Ethiopia into an expanded BRICS alliance constitutes a transformative moment in the geopolitical and economic architectures of the Global South and, more broadly, across the African continent. This augmentation is a radical departure from the extant global trade equilibrium and offers these African nations unprecedented access to expansive markets for their commodities and services. The significance of this inclusion is not merely transactional;

it is a politico-economic strategy deeply entrenched in the philosophy of trade liberalization that pervades the BRICS consortium.

This realignment has far-reaching implications for recalibrating the global trade matrix toward a more equitable distribution of power and resources.

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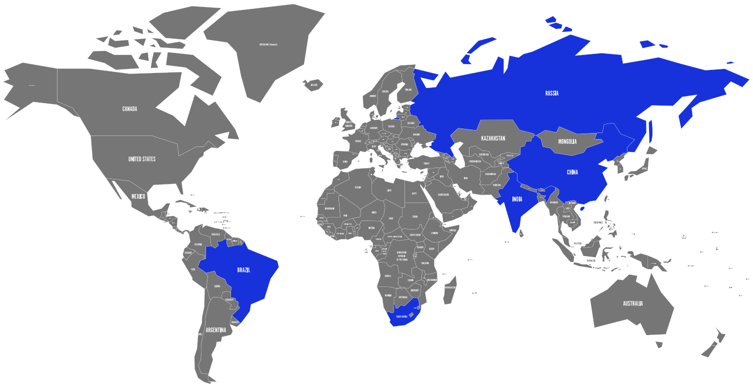
It challenges the hegemony of current economic models, which have disproportionately marginalized emerging economies by perpetuating an asymmetrical distribution of capital, technology, and know-how. The African continent, long marginalized in international economic engagements, stands to gain enormously from this development, mainly when assessed in its quest for economic self-determination and sustainable development.

It is crucial to underscore that the BRICS nations collectively account for over 40% of the global populace. This demographic enormity translates into vast consumer markets, offering Egypt and Ethiopia considerable economies of scale. Within the context of the BRICS, the implicit endorsement of trade liberalization acts as a catalytic mechanism.
It attenuates transactional inefficiencies, minimizes costs associated with exports, and engenders a promising environment for these countries to penetrate markets otherwise inhibited by protectionist policies or trade barriers.



Furthermore, the structural configuration of global trade has often been critiqued for its inequitable architecture, which disproportionately favors developed economies at the expense of their developing counterparts. The prevailing economic order, the crucible in which modern global trade functions, has been particularly salient. Thus, membership in an expanded BRICS bloc provides Egypt and Ethiopia an institutional pathway to negotiate more equitable trade terms. They are enabled to diversify their trading partnerships, thereby reducing economic vulnerability to market shifts or geopolitical instabilities in their traditional trading zones.

Moreover, the discourse surrounding contemplating a unified currency within the BRICS alliance could serve as a strategic counterpoint to the prevailing unipolar economic hegemony primarily orchestrated by the United States and the European Union. The introduction of a standard monetary system within the BRICS configuration has the potential to mitigate two interconnected risks endemic to developing economies: exchange rate volatility and transactional overheads, both of which have a cascading and inequitable impact on domestic inflation and economic stability amongst these “weaker” economies.

The prevailing financial architecture has historically privileged the Global North, allowing currencies such as the U.S. Dollar and the Euro to dominate international transactions. Such monetary arrangement accentuates vulnerabilities for emerging economies by exposing them to exchange rate risks and higher transaction costs, which can exacerbate domestic inflationary pressures.
A unified BRICS currency, however, could serve as a bulwark against such asymmetries, thereby redistributing some measure of monetary control to the Global South.

Therefore, a common monetary initiative among the BRICS nations should not be perceived merely as a functional instrument to facilitate trade but as a significant structural reconfiguration aimed at democratizing the global financial landscape. Such an endeavor posits a challenge to conventional financial structures, potentially paving the way for a more equitable international economic order.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's assertion that joining the BRICS bloc will "raise the voice of the Global South" is not merely rhetoric but a representation of a changing paradigm. Membership in the BRICS coalition offers countries like Egypt and Ethiopia a platform to participate actively in shaping global economic policies. This fosters a dual-axis approach: firstly, it allows these nations to advocate for a fair financial system, mitigating the imbalance of power that characterizes the current global economic architecture. Secondly, it amplifies their geopolitical influence, allowing them to exert a collective bargaining power beyond regional constraints.

For Africa, this event signifies more than just the inclusion of two countries in a robust economic alliance; it represents a paradigm shift. It punctuates Africa's evolving role from a historically peripheral actor to a consequential stakeholder in global economic governance. This transition could catalyze the renegotiation of Africa’s standing in international economic forums, thus affording the continent the agency it has often been denied in global discussions.

Moreover, it might induce a ripple effect that could inspire further integration of other African nations into global economic alliances, fostering regional solidarity and presenting an alternative narrative to the monolithic view often applied to Africa.

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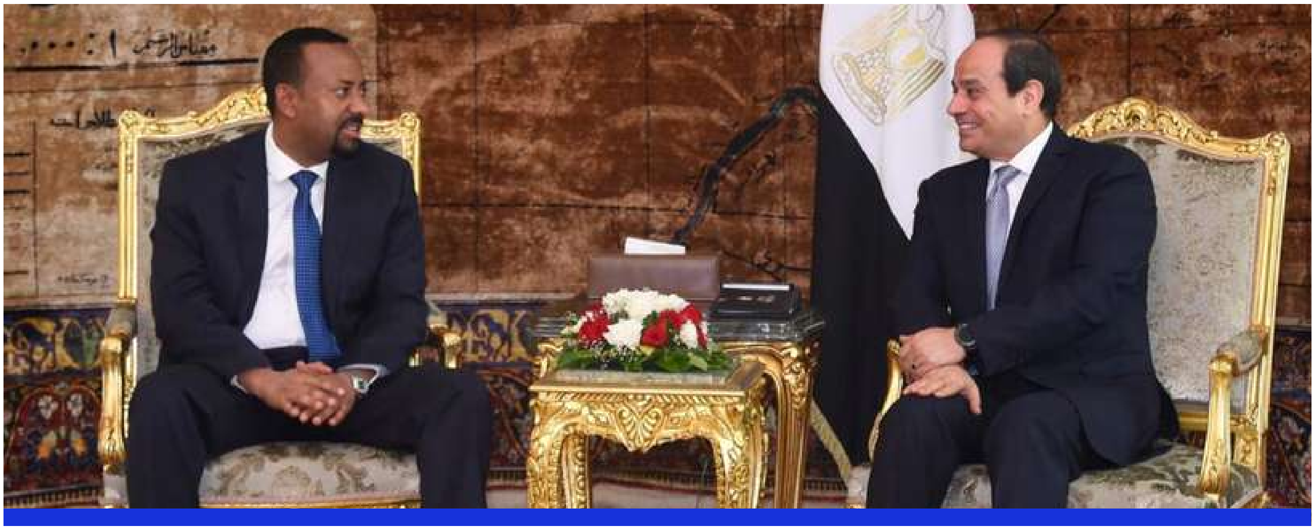


By unpacking the implicit promise of trade liberalization within the BRICS bloc, this expansion reveals it as a counter-narrative to current trade policies. It provides the scaffolding for an alternative trading paradigm, potentially rectifying historical imbalances and facilitating socio-economic development in traditionally marginalized nations. Therefore, Egypt and Ethiopia's accession to the BRICS alliance should be comprehended as an influential lever in the broader realignment of global economic power structures. Their integration may be a harbinger of a more inclusive and equitable international trade ecosystem. FT. Al. WSJ.

The Evolution and Significance of the Eastern and Southern African Trade and Development Bank (TDB)

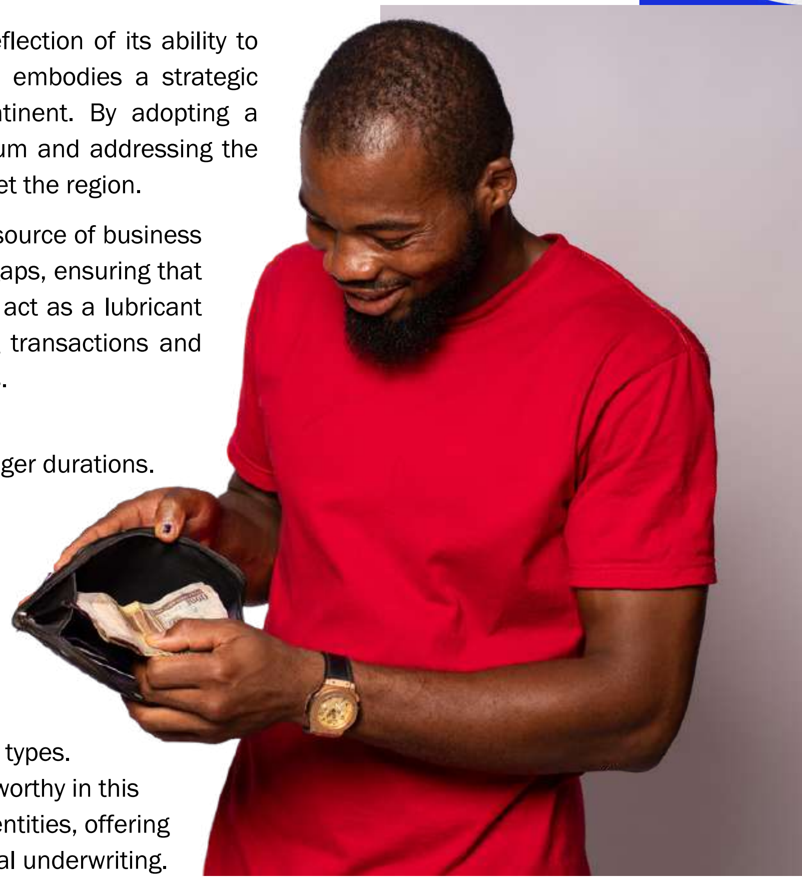
Established in 1985, the Eastern and Southern African Trade and Development Bank (TDB) has significantly transformed over the past several decades. Originally conceived as a regional development finance institution, it has transcended its foundational mandate to become a pivotal player under the expansive umbrella of the Trade and Development Bank Group (TDB Group).

Within the broader TDB Group, there are distinct yet interconnected entities. These include the Trade and Development Fund (TDF), the Eastern and Southern African Trade Advisers Limited (ESATAL), TDB Captive Insurance Company (TCI), the aforementioned Eastern and Southern African Trade and Development Bank (TDB), and the TDB Academy.

Each plays a unique role, yet collectively, they work towards fulfilling the group's overarching mission.
This interconnected nature of the TDB Group's entities underscores the institution's integrated approach to realizing its mandate.
By working in tandem, these entities have amplified their reach and successfully orchestrated projects across sectors and regions.
Furthermore, the scope of the TDB’s affiliations paints a picture of its expansive influence and credibility.

Boasting a shareholder base of 37, the bank is supported by diverse entities, from sovereign nations to globally recognized financial institutions. Notable stakeholders include the African Development Bank, the People’s Bank of China, the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID), BADEA, and several prominent pension funds and insurance companies.The TDB Group currently serves 23 member states spanning the vast landscapes of Africa, from the pyramids of Egypt to the coastal cities of Mozambique and the mountainous terrains of Eswatini. At its core, the TDB Group remains steadfast in its commitment to bolster trade, champion regional economic integration, and propagate sustainable development.

The Trade and Development Bank (TDB) Group encompasses a diverse spectrum of credit offerings tailored to various economic needs. Within the realm of financial institutions, diversification can serve as a potent indicator of an entity's resilience and strategic adaptability. Particularly, when one situates this within the African economic landscape, the significance of such an approach is amplified. With its rich history and diverse economies, Africa has unfortunately grappled with persistent financial constraints.



The choice of the institution to diversify is not merely a reflection of its ability to adapt to dynamic market conditions. More profoundly, it embodies a strategic commitment to fortify commerce within the African continent. By adopting a diverse portfolio, TDB is broadening its operational spectrum and addressing the deeply rooted financial challenges that have historically beset the region.

As is implied by the bank's name, trade loans are a salient source of business for TDB. These are designed to bridge short-term financial gaps, ensuring that day-to-day commerce continues smoothly. Essentially, they act as a lubricant for the intricate machinery of short-term trade, facilitating transactions and maintaining the steady flow of economic goods and services.

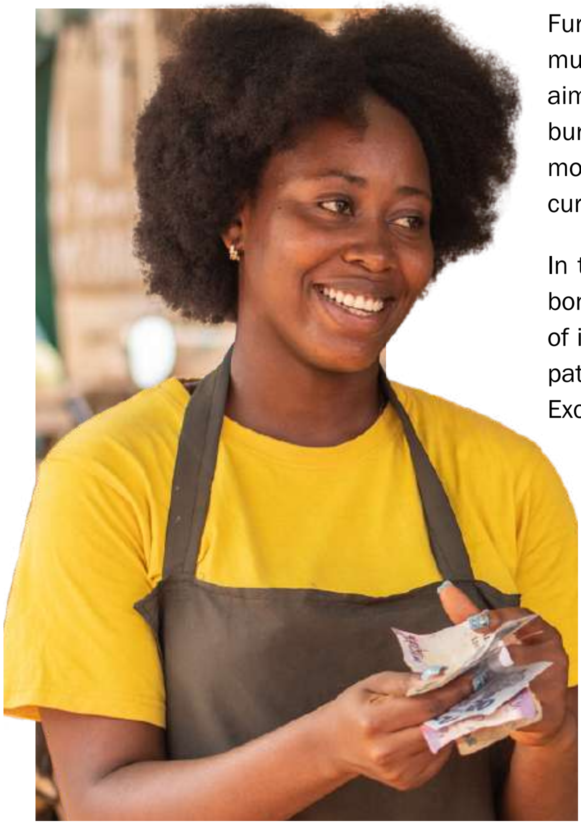
In juxtaposition, term loans cater to endeavors that span longer durations. These credit types, by nature, are meant to inject funds into projects that require sustained financial backing, from infrastructural projects to large-scale business expansions. Their design demonstrates the Bank's acknowledgment of the varied temporal needs of economic ventures.

However, TDB Group's commitment to engendering trust in the financial sector extends beyond these conventional loan types. The introduction of agency-backed loans is particularly noteworthy in this regard. Such loans come with the endorsement of external entities, offering an additional layer of credibility due to the process of external underwriting.

The TDB Group enhances its reputation as a reliable financial intermediary by integrating these underwritten loans into its credit array.
Concurrent to these are guarantees, with letters of credit being particularly salient. These aren't merely financial tools but robust pillars of trust in the intricate dance of international trade.

They vouchsafe the credibility of trading entities, engendering a climate of trust that is indispensable in global commerce.Within the intricate tapestry of potential financial engagements, the Bank's modus operandi stands out for its discerning rigor. Instead of indiscriminately navigating the myriad transactional opportunities, there's a discernible proclivity towards those that offer more than mere fiscal returns. Beyond their immediate financial implications, these chosen transactions serve a dual purpose: they promise discernible developmental dividends and act as catalysts fostering interconnectivity among Member States.

In contrast to its proactive approach in other areas, the Bank's foray into equity financing is marked by circumspection. Each proposition undergoes rigorous scrutiny, ensuring it aligns with the Bank's overarching ethos and objectives. The message is unambiguous: the Bank's involvement in equity financing depends on projects that inherently reinforce development and promote impactful African economic initiatives.



Further, the Bank's impetus for issuing local currency bonds is multifaceted in capital market endeavors. Primarily, this strategy aims to diversify its financial reservoir while it seeks to intensify the burgeoning financial markets of specific sub-regions. Another vital motive is to equip nation-states with tools to hedge against foreign currency vulnerabilities by availing loans in local denominations.

In the context of capital market dynamics, the funds procured from bonds and notes have been strategically reinvested in their countries of issuance. An analysis of the procedural steps reveals a consistent pattern; every bond promulgated finds its place on the relevant Stock Exchanges.

This integration validates the bond's authenticity and considerably amplifies its liquidity potential—a crucial aspect for investors seeking flexibility.

Turning our analytical gaze toward specific nations, Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda emerge as exemplars. These countries have experienced the proficient issuance of local currency bonds orchestrated by TDB.

One discerns a dual objective by delving deeper into the institution's modus operandi regarding capital markets. Beyond the immediate financial prerogative, TDB Bank's endeavors reflect a broader vision: to fortify the robustness of local currencies and, by extension, catalyze domestic economic development. In navigating the nuanced economic terrains of varied African nations, the Bank's role has not merely been transactional; it has actively shaped resilient economic landscapes.

In a mere seven years, The TDB Group has undergone a transformative journey that has seen the bank become a significant player not only in Africa but globally. Within this relatively brief temporal window, the bank has witnessed a series of rating upgrades, a progression not merely of numerical significance but indicative of its burgeoning financial health and heightened operational efficacy.

The quantitative manifestation of this ascendancy is striking: a 400% amplification in its capital and funding reservoirs. While such figures are undoubtedly remarkable, their true import lies in the ramifications they bear for the bank's broader standing. This formidable financial surge has not only facilitated TDB in attaining an enviable investment-grade rating but has also unequivocally positioned it as a paramount economic entity within its regional jurisdiction.

TDB's ascent signifies more than institutional success. It embodies the bank's commitment to pioneering advancements in Africa's economic and developmental spheres. By steering the narrative, TDB is not just reflecting progress but is at the vanguard, championing initiatives that promise to mold the continent's economic and developmental prospects. This period encapsulates a pivotal phase in TDB's evolution, epitomizing its journey from a regional player to a leading architect of Africa's financial and developmental renaissance.

TDB
TRADE & DEVELOPMENT BANK

Unraveling the Fiscal Enigma of Africa:

Tax Capacity, Policy, and Potential

Over the past three decades, sub-Saharan Africa has witnessed remarkable political advancements characterized by progressive governance, democratization, and stabilization. Concurrently, the region has experienced steady economic growth, enhancing its stature in the global economic landscape. Notwithstanding these significant strides, there emerges a critical void in the fiscal framework of this region - the declining efficacy of tax collection mechanisms.

Taxation emerges as a pivotal cornerstone within the comprehensive framework of a nation's fiscal architecture. While fundamentally centered around revenue accumulation, its role transcends this primary function. Tax is quintessential in underpinning infrastructural development, nurturing social welfare schemes, and bolstering the enhancement of public amenities and services. This multifaceted role enshrines its significance in shaping a country's socio-economic progress

Yet, recent empirical data presents a fiscal enigma that warrants methodical examination. Contrary to expectations, there has been a conspicuous contraction in tax revenues, evident when evaluated in both relative and absolute numerical dimensions.

To elucidate this anomaly with precision, data from Ernst & Young (EY) offers compelling insights. As per their assessment, Sub-Saharan Africa registered a weighted tax revenue average of 14.8% in 2018. When placed in a historical context, this figure indicates a discernible regression from the zenith of 19.9% observed in 2005.The dissonance between the forecasted trajectory and the tangible fiscal metrics accentuates a dilemma of significant consequence. This is not merely an academic or statistical quandary but one that harbors profound implications for the multifaceted stakeholders within African socio-economic landscapes.Governments entrusted with ensuring fiscal robustness confront challenges in resource allocation and long-term financial planning.

Policymakers attempting to draft efficacious strategies grapple with the unpredictability of these budgetary outcomes.

Most crucially, the citizens of African nations, the primary beneficiaries of state-provided goods and services, find themselves at the receiving end of this fiscal misalignment. The potential repercussions extend beyond mere economic considerations. A consistent shortfall in anticipated tax revenues could compromise the provision of essential public services, impinging upon the overall quality of life and hindering holistic development.

Despite governmental magnification of tax collection strategies, one of the pressing concerns revolves around the dissonance observed in anticipated and actual tax revenues. To decode this paradox, it becomes essential to dissect potential causal factors.

A primary contention lies in the domain of the tax collection methodologies themselves. Although governments have escalated their attention to these mechanisms, a pivotal question surfaces:

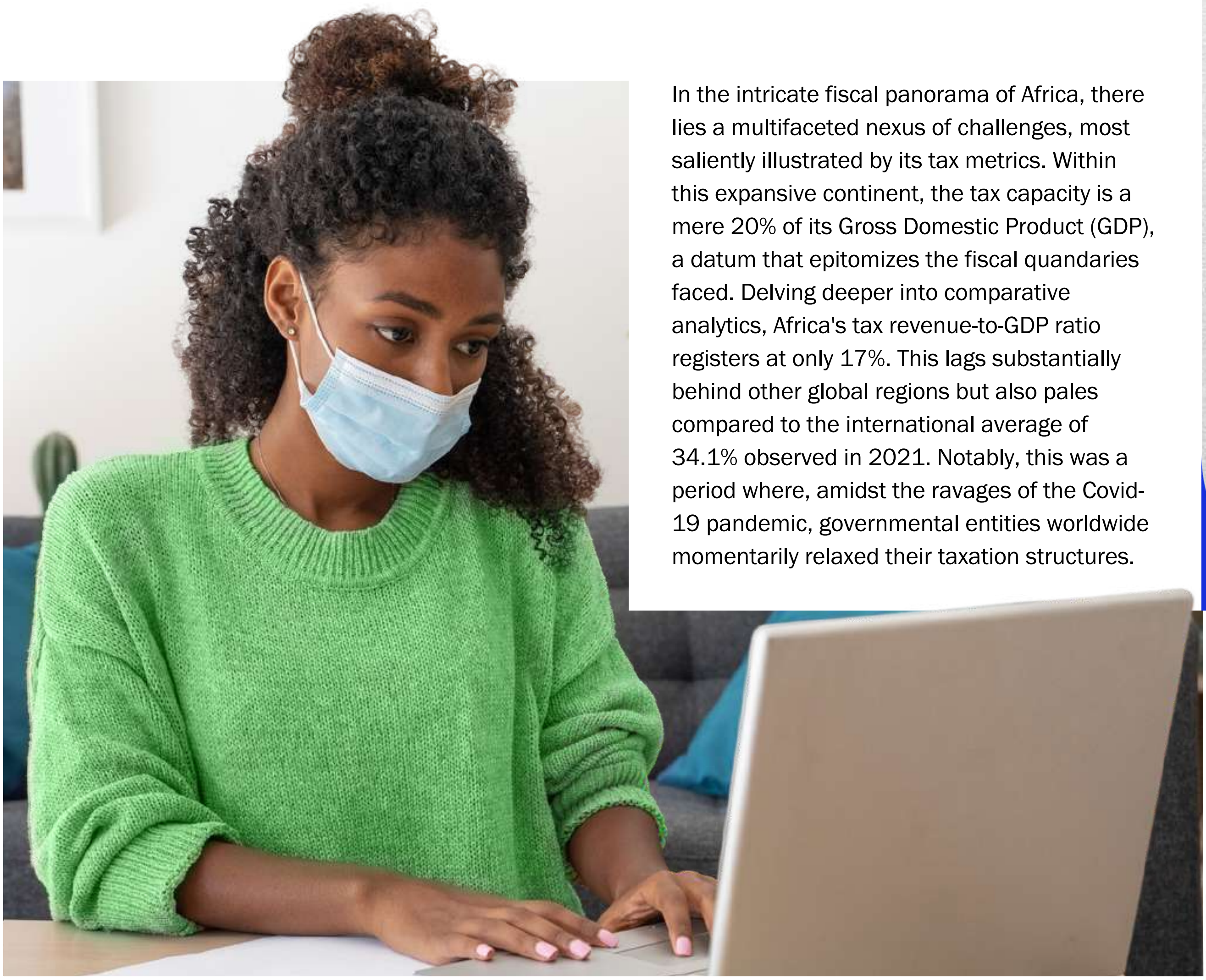
Is this increased focus commensurate with an enhancement in the quality and efficacy of the implemented methodologies?

Adopting robust techniques does not guarantee their pertinence or effectiveness in varied socio-economic terrains, potentially leading to suboptimal outcomes.

Furthermore, an alternative perspective probes deeper into the macroeconomic environment. It is plausible that this observed decline in tax revenues is emblematic of more significant economic fluctuations or perturbations. Economic downturns, sectoral shifts, or taxable base transitions might manifest as reduced revenues. If not agile and adaptive, state strategies may falter in capturing these dynamic shifts, resulting in a widening gap between projection and realization.

A comparative global analysis reveals a telling trend: out of the 49 nations registering tax collections below 13% of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP), an astounding 20 are nestled within sub-Saharan Africa. This statistic underscores the regional peculiarity and the magnitude of the challenge.

Several conjectures can be advanced to account for this anomaly. There may be an inherent limitation in the existing tax infrastructure, or the presence of robust informal economies may dilute the adequate tax base.
Alternatively, tax evasion and avoidance, fueled by inadequate enforcement mechanisms or legislative loopholes, could be at play.
The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) recently conducted a comprehensive analysis that offers profound insights into Africa's fiscal potentialities. The essence of this examination underscores the significance of optimizing tax collection systems within the continent. Central to the UNECA's findings is the assertion that through systematic identification and mitigation of fiscal impediments—often referred to as 'tax capacity bottlenecks'—and by streamlining the revenue collection mechanisms, Africa possesses the potential to galvanize an increment of approximately $110 billion in its tax revenues for the period spanning 2020 to 2025. Such a prospective elevation in internal revenue generation bears economic implications and symbolizes a paradigm shift toward fiscal autonomy.
For contextual gravitas, one must consider this projection vis-à-vis external financial inflows. According to data collated by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), in the period spanning 2018-2022, Africa was the recipient of development assistance to the tune of $51 billion.
The juxtaposition of this external aid with the potential revenue from optimized tax systems reveals a striking contrast.The prospect of more than doubling this amount through internal reforms and strategies accentuates the transformative potential inherent within Africa's fiscal landscape.



In the intricate fiscal panorama of Africa, there lies a multifaceted nexus of challenges, most saliently illustrated by its tax metrics. Within this expansive continent, the tax capacity is a mere 20% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP), a datum that epitomizes the fiscal quandaries faced. Delving deeper into comparative analytics, Africa's tax revenue-to-GDP ratio registers at only 17%. This lags substantially behind other global regions but also pales compared to the international average of 34.1% observed in 2021. Notably, this was a period where, amidst the ravages of the Covid-19 pandemic, governmental entities worldwide momentarily relaxed their taxation structures.

A discerning examination suggests that the genesis of this fiscal inadequacy lies primarily within the dual realms of policy design and its execution. Firstly, inherent limitations within the tax policies themselves cast a shadow of inefficacy. Secondly, and equally consequential, are the suboptimal mechanisms deployed for revenue collection, often needing more precision and adaptability.

This dual impediment underscores the urgency for targeted interventions by policymakers. Such interventions should not be generic but meticulously crafted, factoring in the multifaceted socio-political and economic variables unique to the African milieu.

The UNECAs report adeptly underscores this narrative's gravity by positing a profound insight: should these fiscal impediments be strategically addressed; Africa stands on the cusp of unlocking a vast reservoir of latent economic potential. The transformational fiscal capacity, as delineated by the UNECA, beckons a reimagining of the continent's fiscal strategies.

Africa's fiscal challenges, while seemingly daunting, encapsulate a silver lining. By addressing the dichotomous challenges of policy and procedure, the continent can herald an era of robust economic resurgence, transforming challenges into unparalleled opportunities. UNECA. OECD. EY

Beyond Conflict in the Great Lakes:

DRC Resilience and spaces ofrejuvenation

This monthly review entry brings the reader up to speed with current political developments in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the largest country in the Great Lakes Region, which has been experiencing, for decades, civil wars and mass displacement of people across the region. It focuses on the DRC's pervasive geopolitical dynamics of what is known as the Congo Wars and resilience spaces of rejuvenation.

Concomitantly, the review, by focusing on the DRC, attempts to dispel the joint characterization of the Great Lakes as a place of doom and gloom devout of resilience, agency, and thriving spaces of rejuvenation despite the ferocity of the mayhem.

The DRC's abundant mineral wealth, where it has more than 70% of the World's coltan, used to make vital components of mobile phones, 30% of earth's diamond reserves, and vast deposits of cobalt, gold, copper, bauxite, and other natural riches.

The DRC's natural wealth cannot be separated from its precariousness, making it a magnet for looters from all corners of the globe. Sadly, competition for its riches has fueled the civil wars, which hampered its growth and the capacity of its people to flourish.

The First Congo War (1996-1997) began after the 1994 Rwandan Genocide. The Second Congo War (1998-) between Rwanda and DRC involved many regional players. Angola, Namibia, and Zimbabwe supported the DRC, while Uganda and Burundi militaries supported Rwanda. In 1999, the Security Council deployed the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), considered the largest Peacekeeping operation and later renamed (MONUSCO).

Despite the United Nations' continued efforts, the DRC's war continues unabated. The widely perceived Rwanda M23 rebels and other armed groups continue to destabilize the Eastern DRC.
Under these circumstances, two regional blocs decided to get involved in the peacekeeping operation in the DRC. These efforts, undertaken by the East African Community and the Southern Africa Development Community under what is known as the Nairobi and Luanda processes, included the deployment in 2022 of an East African peacekeeping force to restore security in the mineral-rich Eastern DRC. The regional initiative also encompasses inter-alia,the withdrawal of all foreign armed groups, verifications of accusations between DRC and Rwanda, and the normalization of relations between the DRC and its neighbors.

The December 2023 Elections

The fighting in Eastern DRC and its interethnic implications further complicate the already dire conditions and prevailing instability. The situation was so bad that the United Nations expressed concern about spreading hate speech in the buildup to the November 2023 presidential election. On February 27, 2023, President Felix Tshisekedi echoed the same in a speech to the U.N. Human Rights Council (President-Democratic-Republic of Congo).

DRC Resilience

After reading part one of this entry, the reader may consider the Great Lakes a doomed region after suffering over three decades of brutal conflicts. By some accounts, the battles have taken more than 1.3 million human lives and maimed and injured many more (1989-2022). The economic cost aside, the conflict displaced 11.71 million IDPs (by March 2023), which is a tragedy and the cause of great suffering and sadness (Uppsala Conflict Data 2023).

More specifically, this expose could have painted an agonizing prospect of a people broken by war and inundated by misery and hopelessness. However, the DRC was the most affected, and its natural resource wealth was looted; throughout the war, the country lost and gained large swathes of its territory while fighting 120 rebel forces of different sizes and many mercenaries. Despite these constraints and challenges, the DRC state has been fragile but has yet to succumb to statelessness. The centers of the DRC 26 provinces are intact and maintain a semblance of functioning but inefficient bureaucracies.

In conversations, it was often met with disbelieve that the DRC's real GDP grew 8.5% in 2022, up from 6.2% in 2021, attributable to the extractive sector (which grew 20.8%) and recovery in the non-extractive industry (which rose 3.2%), driven by services despite a deteriorating security situation in the east of the country in 2021-2022. On the side of demand, economic growth was driven by robust exports (23.8%) and investment (18.6%) despite a global energy crisis. Inflation reached 9.1% in 2022 due to high food and imported energy prices. The budget deficit widened to 2.8% of GDP in 2022 from 0.9% in 2021 due to exceptional spending (security, elections) and despite the extraordinary increase in revenue and aid, which rose to 17.2% of GDP from 13.7% in 2021. However, real GDP is projected to grow 8% in 2023 and 7.2% in 2024, driven by the extractive sector, which is expected to grow at least 12% between 2023 and 2024 (African Development Bank 2023).

The DRC has not been given the credit it deserves for hanging onto a hard-won multiparty democracy system following the 2005 referendum that approved the 2006 Constitution (amended in 2011) to pave the way for competitive multiparty democracy after 46 years of authoritarian rule and savage civil war. Multiparty elections were held in 2006, 2011, 2018, and 2019.

The voter registration (24 December 2022—17 March 2023) in preparation for the Presidential, National Assembly, and Provincial assemblies on 20 December 2023. These elections were held in the most unlikely political context for success, marred with election violence and irregularities. Still, the fact that they were born is a near miracle and should be commended.

Spaces for Rejuvenation

Commentaries on the Great Lake Region have often bypassed the non-material aspects of a region laced with exemplary cultures of modern and traditional rejuvenation and resistance. This section of the review contrasts the narrative, which presents the people of the DRC as passive onlookers, haunted by collective suffering and a victim's mentality. On the contrary, DRC's villages, cities, and towns have not lost their charm and craving for songs, music, theatre, and cinema to nourish the soul and rejuvenate the spirit.

For example, the UNESCO entry of Kinshasa in its Creative Cities Network portal laments its great cultural diversity and vibrant community of artists. UNESCO describes Kinshasa as a home to multiple recording studios, including the Olympia, Ngoma, and Loningisa, where pioneer musicians and bands such as African Jazz and Ok Jazz debuted as part of Congolese rumba's second-wave movement (Variations on the Beautiful in the Congolese World of Sounds).

The DRC is the home of the largest film festival in central Africa, the Fickin' International Film Festival Kinshasa, held annually for the last ten years. Submissions to get the honor of screening films at the festival came from hundreds of artists from all over the World.

The Congo International Film Festival (CIFF), formerly the Salaam Kivu International Film Festival, is organized by Yolé! Africa and Alkebu Film Productions under the guidance of Congolese filmmaker and activist Petna Ndaliko. The first audition was held in October 2005 in Goma, Eastern DRC, the country's first international film festival. CIFF is a ten-day festival that includes film screenings and community discussions, video production and editing workshops, audio recording, music composition and performance, live concerts, and a dance competition.
The people of the wider Congo use culture in the broadest sense as an instrument for championing conflict transformation and political reform. They deploy a wide range of media and outreach tools to provide information, foster dialogue, and strengthen the capacity of local actors to address fundamental social, economic, and political issues. For example, Search-for-Common-Ground-DRC has contributed to empowering citizens' knowledge of the ethos of participation and dialogue, human rights, and the tensions around refugee return and internal displacement.

Conclusions

During the last three years, the DRC has witnessed the culmination of EAC and SADC cooperation to bring peace and security to the Eastern DRC, including deploying an EAC peacekeeping mission. By agreeing to renew the EAC forces, the DRC government must have recognized the usefulness of the peacekeeping mission. The situation on the ground suggests that an African solution to the Eastern DRC conflict is contingent on the end of the war involving M23 and other armed groups, the acceptance by all local stakeholders of the EAC peacekeeping force under its impartial mandate and the capacity of the regional diplomatic initiatives to create a space of trust, normalization of ties and promotion of cooperation between the DRC and its eastern neighbors.

Beyond brutality of conflict, death, injuries, human rights abuses, and displacement, millions in the DRC defy the odds, keep the economy running the machinery of government functioning, and try harder every day to produce and reproduce a semblance of normality in abnormal circumstances. National, regional, and international institutions focus mainly on tragedy, which could be justified, given the gravity of the situation. In the process, spaces of resilience and rejuvenation are often forgotten at best and neglected at worst.

This entry has explored how most people struggle to defy calamity, engage in multiple spaces of economic opportunity and political struggle, and overcome formidable challenges to make a living and circumvent intolerable and unrelenting difficulties to survive. In the DRC, various art forms, music, cinema, and theatre are effectively employed to create and recreate social life in the most challenging circumstances.

Despite the elements, the Congolese spark, love for life, and beauty have never diminished. It continues to produce cultures of resistance, social and political discursive narratives, and genres to energize and uplift peoples' spirits. Theirs is not an abstract notion of high art but also a way of survival, generating incomes, enriching souls, and enabling a softer landing in a land besieged by hardship and inundated by the dialectical other.