

**ONLINE LECTURE AT THE WITS SCHOOL OF GOVERNANCE ON THE
THEME 'SOUTH AFRICA'S PLACE IN THE CHANGING GLOBAL ORDER'
DELIVERED BY DR NALEDI PANDOR, MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL
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Your Excellencies Ambassadors, High Commissioners and Members of the
Diplomatic Corp at Large;

Representatives of International Organisations;

Senior Government Officials;

The Student Body of Wits School of Governance;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Thank you for inviting me to speak with you today on the theme of South Africa's
place in the changing global order.

The subject of global relations is enjoying significant attention this year for several
reasons. This year is the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the United
Nations and it has been witness to a colossus struggle between the United States
of America and the United Nations for influence and shaping of global peace,
security and development.

Many observers of the geopolitical terrain agree that the present character of
global affairs and the arrangement of the global order results from increasingly
volatile global processes re-shaping traditional notions of unipolarity, including the
noted swinging of the pendulum from the West to the East and the reaction this
has prompted in the formerly uncontested unipolar power status of the United
States of America (U.S.A).

While the world is still making sense of the emerging trends the impact of the old order still persists. The Cold War, a period which saw the world divided into mainly two camps under the rubric of bipolarity between the U.S.A and the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), came to an end in 1991 with the implosion of the latter superpower. The ensuing of the so-called unipolarity, was widely interpreted as the triumph of Western thought-systems, institutions and models of governance represented by the sole super-power status of the U.S.A. It is important to point out that Africa freshly emerging from post-colonial recovery did not feature as a likely beneficiary of the changing world affairs. Rather, Africa continued to be an afterthought to be exploited and abused.

It follows that any reference today to the changing global order implies a shift in this unipolar geopolitical landscape. In other words the global ideological and political hegemony of the U.S. is being relentlessly contested by non-Western, antithetical forces, with profound implications for the rest of the world, especially the Global South of which South Africa is part.

At the same time, the other sense in which the changing global order can be understood is with reference to the demise of the post-war inter-state system constructed from 1945 chiefly under the influential political leadership of the U.S., following the end of the Second World War. Citing the current U.S. government's retreat from some of the key international treaties, protocols and agreements, and its apparent aversion to the multilateral order, critiques of the Trump Administration have accused the U.S. of unravelling this post-war international system.

Ironically, it was the then international climate of increased unilateralism, ascendant populist ideologies, ultra-right wing nationalism, zero-sum politics, racist demagoguery and religious intolerance among other toxic variables which, having sparked World War Two, prompted the post-war victors to entrench a multilateral order as the bedrock of the new international system.

With this foregoing scenario in mind, the exercise of reflecting on South Africa's place in this changing world order is an urgent task for government and from a pan-African point of view an imperative for the African continent under the stewardship of the African Union (AU).

There are other factors to consider. The world is currently in the throes of a debilitating global pandemic which has disrupted the pre-existing business-as-usual paradigm, forcing nations to re-think their strategies within these unfolding undefined conditions. The pandemic has starkly exposed weaknesses in public institutions, the inadequacy of social security support in poor countries, weak health systems and lack of digital capabilities.

In the case of South Africa the pandemic happened at a time when our country was grappling with a plethora of socio-political challenges which include the task of strengthening governance institutions, the honour and privilege of assuming the Chairship of the AU for the year 2020, while saddled with the task of re-imagining our country's place within the changing global socio-economic conditions as well as the continent-wide implications of this reconfiguration of global forces. The pandemic severely affected the key objectives of South Africa's 2020 Chairship of the AU as priorities and focus shifted to mitigating the adverse effects of the pandemic on Africa.

South Africa and Africa's ability to successfully combat COVID-19 within fluid global processes has been framed by structurally weak and deteriorating socio-economic conditions which pose a threat to the ongoing political sovereignty of the continent given national indebtedness to the international financial institutions and lenders.

Despite attaining independence in the post war period and thus having the opportunity to frame a new African socio economic profile, the continent has remained largely reliant on former colonisers and external funders. South Africa as a late comer to political freedom has also allowed itself to be hostage to

outdated economic practices while constitutionally embracing progressive socio economic rights and political values.

Since 1994 democratic South Africa has been a principled exponent of advancing the African Agenda and contributing to the maintenance of global peace and security, as well as building a better world. Whatever the emphasis and variance on the theme, the integrity of this grounding framework has remained intact over more than two decades of democratic South Africa.

I must also emphasise that South Africa's place in the changing global order is indivisible from its broader African context. At the core of South Africa's self-identity is the Pan-Africanist vision of unity, solidarity and a common African destiny. Pan-Africanism is a vital facet of South Africa's notion of progressive internationalism which entails opposition to the perpetuation of the legacy of global imperialism, colonialism, racism, the dominance of the global North over the South as well as global structural inequality and poverty.

Although world affairs remain in flux, we do know from the current state of geopolitics that the Coronavirus outbreak is both worsening and ossifying existing global animosities among powerful nations, as well as exacerbating global inequality. We have also felt its devastating impact on national economies of poor and developing nations, including our own.

Therefore South Africa can no longer re-think its place within the changing global order without taking into account the impact of the COVID-19 influenced geopolitical reality.

The effect of COVID-19 adds a significant new dimension to international relations for all countries. Many countries are facing major economic contraction which will affect every aspect of life and citizens' livelihoods, and will invariably impact on their international relations as well as on international peace and security.

In the face of this changing global order South Africa is guided by its national interest, which has in turn shaped its foreign policy. In broad brushstrokes, South Africa's national interest revolves on promoting the well-being, socio-economic development and upliftment of the country's people, protecting the planet for future generations and ensuring the prosperity of the country, region and Continent.

This framework of South Africa's national interest underpins our foreign policy, which is driven by the pursuit of human rights, development, conflict resolution, nuclear disarmament, climate change and championing the Agenda of the countries of the South.

In pursuit of these strategic goals, South Africa seeks to reposition itself as a consistent moral compass and a principled voice of reason in a changing world that is increasingly characterized by selfish and narrow interests.

South Africa's position is affected by its normative approach, which can largely be considered as driven by the founding values and provisions enshrined in its Constitution (human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms; non-racialism and non-sexism; and supremacy of the Constitution and the rule of law; and democracy) and based on its history of overcoming apartheid and importantly its relatively peaceful transition to democracy and efforts at reconciliation.

It is these values that have resulted in South Africa being a consistent voice in solidarity with the people of Palestine, of Saharawi and for peace in Africa and the Middle East.

In sum, the changing character of the prevailing global order is shaped by destabilisation of the post-war multi-literalism legacy by the unilateral imposition of the U.S.A of its notions of global leadership; the economic rise of China and India as well as the attempts of Russia to assert alternative global poles of power; and the disruptive effects of COVID-19 pandemic on the inter-state eco-system.

Importantly, the outbreak of Coronavirus is compounding this already fluid global geopolitics where some of the dominant Western states are seen to be opting for foreign policies which undermine the stability of the inter-state system as they face draining counter-claims to global influence from emerging powers, which throws up massive repercussions for the existing balance of forces. So for the first time since the end of the Second World War and the collapse of the so-called Eastern bloc the world is experiencing a seemingly seismic shift in power from unipolar condition to a plausible multipolar world, mainly due to the relative rise of the new global forces mentioned above.

Africa should be concerned that as we discuss shifting global forces, the continent remains on the margins observing rather than reshaping. The continent needs to use the current crisis to define a new relationship with the world based on African terms.

There are other objective developments shaping the international scenario including: the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Digital); the impact of Brexit on the global economy; the rise of anti-immigrant nationalism in the European Union (EU) zone and US and increased terrorism and extremism activities worldwide.

Generally, the age of broad notions of bi-polarity and unipolarity have given way to more complexity, an absence of collective global leadership and challenges to collective multilateralism and with this a need to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the world and South Africa's position and aspirations in it. The implications for South Africa of this evolving landscape of global relations must be considered and approaches should be developed to advance South Africa's strategic objectives.

In terms of the broader global approach, South Africa continues to defend multilateralism, the rules based multilateral system and the reform of global institutional of governance which underpins the global power asymmetry. South Africa also deploys efforts to strengthen the G77 and the Non Alignment Movement as well as other multilateral agencies.

This is done within the context of Pan-Africanism, where South Africa is building strategic alliances with other countries on the continent in pursuance of common objectives.

These alliances start with SADC countries and then include other countries in the rest of the continent. The integration of SADC is critical for the region's economic development and for South Africa's global competitiveness.

Beyond the SADC region, South Africa was able to advance the African Renaissance agenda when there were close relations and exchanges with Nigeria, Algeria, Ethiopia and Senegal, which led to the drafting and then adoption of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

This intra-African configuration constituted what are normally referred to as anchor states; states which are able and willing to bring their strength to bear on the achievement of set goals of a collective. While this began well Up to a point it is true that there is room for improvement in effectively using this strategic cooperation and alliance to push the African Agenda. Under the leadership of President Ramaphosa, South Africa must continue to build on some of those early successes. These include work on issues of peace and security, integration of regional bodies and economic integration.

We are also aware that the world is not monolithic and that the normative aspects of South Africa's positioning could run counter to certain geographical, developmental or economic partners such as with regard to respect for human rights and democratic values. These nuances need to be taken into consideration when finally deciding South Africa's approach to specific issues, notwithstanding the need to be guided by South Africa's identity and values in the international system. Ultimately, pragmatism and idealism need to be balanced on a case by case basis.

In this regard, South Africa aims to continue to advocate for the strengthening of the key pillars of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), which is regarded as pivotal to Africa's endeavours to take collective responsibility and

ownership of the Continent's peace, security and development agenda. As the overarching framework for continental efforts to instil a culture of democracy, good governance, conflict resolution and preventive diplomacy across the entire peace continuum, inclusive of mediation, peacekeeping, peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction and development, the APSA serves as an enabling platform to accelerate efforts in this regard.

South Africa's Chairship of the AU is happening under the theme, *"Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa's Development"*, a theme endorsed by the 33rd Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly in February 2020.

South Africa is also determined to continue to utilise high-level multilateral and bilateral meetings and fora attended by political principals to promote and advance South Africa's and Africa's peace and security interests internationally, in support of key AU flagship initiatives. Key among these are the strengthening and capacitating of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA); implementation of the AU Master Roadmap on Silencing the Guns by the Year 2020; advocating for adequate resourcing for AU-led UN mandated peace operations; and promoting higher levels of gender mainstreaming and responsiveness across the AU and UN architecture.

South Africa is a proud member of the AU, which was established in 2001 with its strong focus on promoting human security, peace and stability on the continent and codifying in its Constitutive Act the principle of humanitarian intervention against war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity.

We continue to play an active role in AU structures and processes for the advancement of peace and security, conflict prevention, resolution and management on the continent.

This includes the strengthening of mechanisms to consolidate peace and prevent post-conflict countries, such as South Sudan, from backsliding into civil unrest.

In 2019, South Africa assumed tenure as a non-permanent member of the United Nations (UN) Security Council, and was expected to use this membership to promote international peace and security through advocating for peaceful dispute resolution and inclusive dialogue; and enhance cooperation between the UN, the AU and other regional and subregional organisations.

Continental unity is at the centre of our strategy. This aspiration emphasises that the political unity of the Continent is the culmination of the integration process, which includes the free movement of people and the establishment of continental institutions, leading to full economic integration. South Africa will therefore be part of collective Continental efforts aimed at realising consensus on the form of Continental government and institutions by 2030.

South Africa particularly continues to advocate for a reform of Global Governance institutions such as the UN and its technical bodies, which do not represent the current global political, economic and development configuration.

It is imperative and urgent that the United Nations, and in particular the Security Council, should be reformed. South Africa will continue to call for the fundamental reform of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in order to ensure the representation of Africa.

Although this matter continues to be informed by the Common African Position, also known as the Ezulwini Consensus, which explicitly calls for not less than two permanent seats for Africa on the UNSC, five non-permanent African seats and the extension of the veto right to all permanent UNSC members, it is highly unlikely that the Permanent Members of the Security Council will agree to the extension of Veto powers to additional permanent members of the Security Council.

In the ten years since Ezulwini has been adopted, the AU has not evaluated our performance in advancing the Common African Position. This should be done urgently with a view to identifying actions that will advance our goals.

With regards to Global Economic Governance, sub-Saharan Africa is under-represented within the Bretton Woods Institutions, and particularly within the

International Monetary Fund (IMF) where its 43 countries are represented by only two African chairs. South Africa will persist with its call for the inclusion of a third African chair on the Executive Board of the IMF as well as maintain its call for the removal of the veto power of some Member States.

Given the volatile global landscape, South Africa's foreign policy promotes participation in multilateral fora outside the UN as a force multiplier for the legitimisation of multilateralism. The BRICS nations as an alternative multilateral platform for South-South cooperation exemplify this tenet at the centre of South Africa's foreign policy. BRICS nations themselves have largely shown unshaken confidence in and reinforced their support for a rules-based international system and multilateralism.

South Africa became a member of BRICS in 2010, attended its first Summit in 2011, and chaired the partnership in 2013 and 2018. BRICS was established as a forum of like-minded, progressive emerging market and developing countries committed to the need to restructure the global political, economic and financial architecture to be more equitable, balanced and resting on the important pillars of multilateralism and international law. The members shared the values of global governance reform, support for multilateralism and opposition to unilateralism, protectionism, and regime change.

BRICS represents a powerful coalition of countries internationally that ensures the centrality of multilateralism, that speaks out against unilateralism, protectionism and populism, and that calls for respect for international law and a reformed global order that is more equitable, inclusive and representative of current global realities. It champions the cause of the Global South and of Africa. South Africa will continue to participate actively in all the pillars and sectors under BRICS.

South Africa's strategic engagement in the BRICS formation continues to provide a key platform for the achievement of our National Interests and domestic and foreign policy objectives, including support for the AU's Agenda 2063.

While many achievements have been registered over the past decade in BRICS, the COVID-19 pandemic poses a short-term challenge. Having said that, the BRICS partners are critical to South Africa's post-COVID economic recovery strategy, especially through trade, investment, and tourism cooperation. The BRICS Economic Partnership Strategy is currently being renewed for a further five-year period. The impact of the pandemic has highlighted the need for greater cooperation in the areas of health, technology, and cyber-security.

As a further element of a BRICS response to the pandemic, it has been agreed to accelerate the establishment of the BRICS Vaccine Research and Development Centre in South Africa.

South Africa has consistently placed the African Continent and the Global South on the agenda of BRICS and endeavoured to synchronise policies adopted in regional and international fora with those pursued in BRICS, such as Africa's Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The exponential institutional development of BRICS has yielded institutions that add practical value to South Africa's developmental goals. These include the New Development Bank (NDB) and its Africa Regional Centre (ARC), together with the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA).

The current global environment is dominated by the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It has affected all facets of life, from the global economy to international trade and travel and the functioning of international relations. It has the potential to erode the gains of globalisation. Reactions in some countries have encouraged nationalist, anti-globalisation and racist sentiments globally, including within BRICS countries. It has also exacerbated existing tensions in the global multilateral and trading systems. It cannot be denied that geopolitical

modifications have influenced debates within BRICS as well, but the core values that brought BRICS together in the first place, remain intact.

South Africa's current foreign policy principles and underpinnings were formulated following the end of the apartheid regime, over a quarter of a century ago, in a significantly different world set in a post-cold war environment. However, while its principles still apply, the overall positioning on a number of areas are being recalibrated to reflect the new challenges and opportunities posed by a changing global landscape. To this end, the process of mapping and understanding evolving trends is currently under way.

South Africa continues to defend multilateralism against attempts to regress into more nationalistic unilateral approaches. The global system is significantly more unpredictable than previously understood. Therefore, South Africa is always geared to adjust and adapt to emerging trends.

The advent of the Coronavirus across the world has led to discussions to seek appropriate global solutions and responses to the impact of the pandemic. South Africa maintains that efforts to respond to the pandemic should be underpinned by a strong commitment to human rights whereby the recovery plans must address the inequalities that vulnerable groups experience in an aggravated state of poverty.

South Africa's decisions continue to be based on the desire for a just, humane and equitable world order of greater security, peace, dialogue and economic justice. As the country engages with its region, continent and the international community, it seeks to build an environment in which it can realize its national socio-economic agenda.

