

Academic Cooperation between Africa, Asia and Latin America: The Place of diasporas

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Abstract

Interest has grown in the role of diaspora in advancing higher education and scientific research as academic mobility continues to generate more transnational communities with a high educational profile. The academic literature is picking up on how diasporas and their organisations facilitate academic and research collaboration between institutions in their 'host' and 'home' countries. However, this discourse largely focuses on those residing in industrialised countries, particularly Europe and North America. There is limited research on the diasporic relationship between and within regions in the Global South, and even less on diaspora-mediated academic collaboration between Africa, Asia and Latin America. Against this backdrop, this article explores the role of diaspora in academic and scientific collaboration within and between these regions. It highlights some historical and contemporary migratory relations between them, along with student mobility as a means of formation of academic diaspora. The article argues that, among other things, the limited academic collaboration between countries of the Global South can be attributed to structural issues such as inequality in the geopolitics of knowledge and the characteristics of migrant communities. It also suggests possible future scenarios including trends in migration and the potential to foster scientific collaboration.

Résumé

Le rôle de la diaspora dans la promotion de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche scientifique suscite un intérêt croissant, car la mobilité académique continue de générer des communautés transnationales de plus en plus nombreuses et au profil éducatif élevé. La littérature

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académique s'intéresse à la manière dont les diasporas et leurs organisations facilitent la collaboration académique et de recherche entre les institutions de leurs pays " d'accueil " et " d'origine ". Cependant, ce discours se concentre en grande partie sur les personnes résidant dans les pays industrialisés, en particulier en Europe et en Amérique du Nord. Il existe peu de recherches sur les relations diasporiques entre et au sein des régions du Sud, et encore moins sur la collaboration universitaire médiée par les diasporas entre l'Afrique, l'Asie et l'Amérique latine. Dans ce contexte, cet article explore le rôle de la diaspora dans la collaboration universitaire et scientifique au sein de ces régions et entre elles. Il met en lumière certaines relations migratoires historiques et contemporaines entre ces régions, ainsi que la mobilité des étudiants comme moyen de formation de la diaspora universitaire. L'article soutient, entre autres, que la collaboration universitaire limitée entre les pays du Sud peut être attribuée à des problèmes structurels tels que l'inégalité dans la géopolitique de la connaissance et les caractéristiques des communautés de migrants. Il suggère également des scénarios futurs possibles, notamment les tendances en matière de migration et le potentiel pour favoriser la collaboration scientifique.

Introduction

There is relatively little academic research collaboration between Africa, Asia and Latin America. Instead, those regions tend to focus on collaboration with universities and research institutions in Europe and North America. The reasons include the fact that, firstly, there are well-established connections between American and European academic institutions and those in the regions under consideration. Strong historical ties between African, Asian and Latin American countries and their counterparts in Europe and North America (especially in the case of Africa) partly explain this connection. Secondly, young academics and researchers who undertake doctoral and postdoctoral studies in the United States (US) and Europe retain connections in these countries after they return home and engage in joint projects. Thirdly, the national policies of countries in the three regions, such as government scholarship programmes to study abroad or research grants, tend to reproduce and strengthen pre-existing academic relationships with the Global North. Northern partners' provision of scholarships and grants to academics and institutions in the Global South is a further factor.

That said, the past couple of decades have witnessed growth in academic cooperation between countries on the three continents. However, this often benefits a limited number of major players in countries such as Japan, China, India and South Korea in Asia, South Africa and Nigeria in Africa, and Brazil and Mexico in Latin America.

This article examines the role of diaspora in shaping and sustaining academic collaboration between Africa, Asia and Latin America. It argues that collaboration is very limited due to global structural imbalances in the higher education landscape and the particular characteristics of diasporic communities in these regions. The article begins by highlighting broad historical and some contemporary migratory patterns between the regions, followed by a brief examination of specific diasporic communities to demonstrate the diversity in their formation and characteristics. Student mobility as a potential path for the formation of academic diaspora in these regions is also examined. Finally, the article discusses some of the structural issues that condition the emergence and development of academic diasporas, and presents hypotheses in relation to possible future trends.

Migratory patterns: A historical overview

This section discusses selected cases of historical migratory patterns in the three regions under consideration.

Africans in Latin America: the legacy of slavery

Immigrants of African origin started entering Latin America as slaves between the Conquest and 1820. Slavevoyages.org, an independent database on the slave trade, estimates that around 10 million African slaves arrived in America during this period. Brazil, the British and French colonies in the Caribbean, and Cuba were their main destinations. Since the end of the slave trade, the flows of people from Africa to Latin America have been substantially reduced and immigrants of African origin currently represent a small percentage of the total number of immigrants in the region. The arrival of the last African slaves in Brazil and Cuba was followed by the great wave of European migrations to America, providing the region with workers to support the expansion of agricultural exports (Skidmore, 1989; Moreno Fraginals, 2001; Fausto, 2003). The slave trade is, therefore, a critical aspect of the economic foundation of the South

American region. Similarly, the massive presence of Afro-descendants is an important feature in several Latin American and Caribbean countries, with a strong cultural and social influence (Williams, 1973).

Brazil has developed very active policies predicated on the historical legacies of the slave trade. These embrace both inward and outward looking dimensions. The inward looking aspect focuses on recognition and repair of the legacies of slavery. It also acknowledges and supports the advancement of Afro-descendants' cultural contribution. The outward looking dimension of these policies concerns Brazil's international relations, with particular interest in Africa. Unlike former colonial powers such as France and Britain, or emerging economic powers like China, Brazil's relations with Africa are marked by acknowledgement that the country is a former colony whose economy was built by African slaves. This unique orientation has been accompanied by a broad, diverse social and cultural movement that values Afro-Brazilian culture and the establishment of cultural ties with Africa, especially sub-Saharan Africa (Wade and Bailach, 2005).

No other cases in Latin America are comparable to the Brazilian one. Cuba, which also has a history of slavery, has had an important presence in Africa – e.g., Angola and Ethiopia; however, this was mainly in the context of the Cold War.

Africans to Asia

The movement of Africans to Asia has a long history with archaeological evidence indicating their presence in China during the Shang Dynasty (17th to 11th century B.C.) (Anshan, 2015). However, there is broad consensus among Chinese historians that the first Africans arrived during the Tang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.). The reasons for this migration are the subject of debate. On the one hand, the slave trade was believed to have caused migration across the Red Sea and Indian Ocean for centuries (Jayasuriya, 2009), leading to the presence of a significant number of people of African origin in eastern Asia and the Middle East. On the other hand, African migration to Asia is believed to be a more complex and much older phenomenon than the one across the Atlantic that needs to be studied in its unique context. African migrants' military involvement and impact in Asia is another crucial element of this migratory history. For instance, the *Sidis* (also spelled *Siddi*, *Sheedi* or *Siddhi*) – black people of

African origin who live in present-day India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka with an estimated population of close to two million – first arrived in South Asia with the army of Arab commander Muhammad Bin Qasim in the 8th century (Paracha, 2018). Across Asia, African soldiers were valued by both local rulers and foreign powers such as the Portuguese, French and British colonial forces, the Ottoman Empire and the Dutch East Indies (Jayasuriya, 2009; Kessel, 2006).

Asians to Latin America: a diverse history

Asian migration to Latin America since the mid-nineteenth century has consisted of three main groups: Chinese and Indian, Japanese, and migration from the Middle East, especially Syria and Lebanon. In all three cases the number of migrants was small compared to the flow of Europeans.

Chinese and Indian migration was originally linked to the abolition of slavery, with Chinese workers indentured to replace the slaves on Cuban or Peruvian plantations, or to engage in public works, such as the construction of the Panama Canal. Between 1847 and 1874, Cuban landowners undertook a large-scale effort to hire Chinese immigrants, onboarding some 125 000 on eight-year contracts (Hu-DeHart, 2004). These migrants were hired for demanding work contracts and hard jobs, and were predominantly male, which had an important impact on the reproduction of communities in the diaspora and the characteristics of the generations born in the Caribbean (Hu-DeHart, 2004). The vast majority of the Chinese hired in Cuba left the island when their contracts ended, and at the beginning of the 20th century there was a much smaller number working on the sugar plantations.

Similarly, Indian migration, which was concentrated in British Guiana and some Caribbean islands was sparked by the abolition of slavery in the British colonies in 1833. Between 1838 and 1917 about 230 000 Indians, mainly from northern India, came to work in British Guiana with the vast majority working on the sugar plantations and a slightly larger number working on various Caribbean islands – especially in Trinidad and Tobago, and in Dutch and French Guiana. The retention rates of Indian workers were higher than those of the Chinese, which helps to explain the current influence of their descendants in the Guianas and the Antilles.

Japanese migration to Latin America did not follow the same rationale. It can be seen as a consequence of the reforms of the Meiji

period (1868-1912), especially modernisation of the agrarian sector that led to rapid migration from the countryside to the cities and emigration promoted by the government (Carranco, 2006; Lesser, 2013). In the first stage, Japanese emigrants went to Hawaii, the US and Canada. When the US closed its borders to Japanese immigrants in 1908, and Canada followed suit, they migrated to other countries in the Americas. Brazil was the main destination, receiving 188 000 Japanese between 1899 and 1941. Some travelled from Brazil to Argentina, while others returned to Japan, but the majority remained, creating an important community.

A differential feature of Japanese migration from its initial stages to the present has been the Japanese government's commitment to emigrants. Japanese immigrants worked on the coffee plantations, but for a limited period. With the support of the Japanese government, they formed agricultural colonies, which introduced important innovations to Brazilian agriculture. Migratory management, control of hygiene and food on trips, consular services, and assistance to Nikkei communities – descendants of Japanese born in Brazil – have been a constant in Japanese migration (Lesser, 2013).

A third important contingent of immigrants came from the Middle East. Since most of the region was under Ottoman rule at the time of the great migrations, the official documentation listed them as Turks, but the majority came from Syria and Lebanon. It is difficult to specify their number, but it is estimated that around 110 000 arrived in Brazil with more than twice this number in Argentina (Lesser, 2013; Liberali, 2007). Unlike other migrants, they did not dedicate themselves to agriculture, but concentrated on commerce. This group included Catholics, Orthodox Christians, Muslims and Jews.

Asians to Africa

While the literature on Asian emigration to Africa is limited, Indians and Chinese historically comprised the majority of migrants. There is some evidence of Indian trade activities along the east African shores of the Indian Ocean in the 12th century (Wood et al., 2012); however, Gupta (2014) claims that this phenomenon dates back more than 3 000 years. Similarly, the treasure voyages of Zheng He in the early 15th century during the Ming Dynasty (Finlay, 2008) established contact between Chinese and Africans. While these were temporary travels and encounters, in both cases some Asians settled in eastern Africa.

The arrival of a small group of Chinese workers (convicts and company slaves) with the Dutch East India Company in South Africa in the mid to late 17th century is considered the first confirmed emigration of Chinese to Africa (Park, 2009). In the early to mid-19th century, a number of contract labourers and artisans arrived in South Africa's early colonies, followed by tens of thousands of contract miners in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In the post-World War II era China's Africa policy, anchored on fostering anti-colonial and post-colonial solidarity with African countries, offered an overarching framework for Chinese emigration to Africa (Terry, 2021). As Park (2009) notes, this geopolitical policy was exemplified by Mao's decision to send as many as 150 000 Chinese to work in African countries in various areas, including agriculture, technology, and infrastructure development.

The arrival of 342 indentured Indians in 1860 to work on plantations in the Natal Colony in South Africa is considered to mark the beginning of the long history of Indians in Africa (Desai and Vahed, 2010). Over the next half century, more than 200 000 Indian workers are believed to have come to Africa to work in areas such as the mines and railways. A considerable number of workers were also brought from British India to work in other former British colonies in eastern and southern Africa. During World War II, a number of Indian soldiers were also brought to Africa to fight on the side of the British and the Allied forces.

While it is difficult to obtain accurate figures, it is agreed that a substantial number of Indian and Chinese workers remained in Africa, establishing a permanent life that has continued for generations. However, it is also important to note that although the above account highlights the history of emigration from two major Asian countries to Africa, it does not provide a complete picture. For instance, the interaction between northern Africa and the Middle East, and the subsequent settlement of Arabs in the Maghreb region is another major aspect of migration to Africa. Therefore, this article only offers a broad context of the Asian diaspora in Africa, with in-depth historical and sociological studies still required.

The Ethiopian Jews, who arguably arrived in Ethiopia with King Menilek I, the legendary son of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, constitute another significant group. Also known as *Bete Israel* (House of Israel), they occupy a significant place in Ethiopia's socio-political and religious history (Quirin, 2011), having maintained their identity and

tradition for thousands of years. Since the 1980s Ethiopian Jews have been returning to Israel in their tens of thousands, creating a noticeable community in that country (Offer, 2007).

Latin American emigration to Asia and Africa

Emigration from Latin American countries to Asia and Africa has been and remains negligible. This is despite the fact that since the middle of the 20th century – and in some cases even earlier – most Latin American countries have shifted from being a destination to a source of global migratory movement. Three major migratory currents can be identified. The first and most prominent is emigration to the US with Mexico as a prominent source. Around 11 million Mexicans are currently residing in the US, with Colombia and Venezuela being the other major contributors. The second current is emigration to nearby countries with Paraguayans, Bolivians, Chileans and Uruguayans moving to Argentina and Peruvians to Chile as examples. The third is transoceanic emigration to Europe – especially to Spain – which was facilitated by the granting of dual citizenship to descendants of European emigrants (Esteban, 2015). An additional case of great importance that is difficult to fit into these categories is that of the massive emigration of Venezuelans, which, according to some estimates, represents around 15% of the country's population (García Arias and Restrepo Pineda, 2019).

There is thus limited emigration of Latin Americans to Asia and Africa. However, due to their common colonial history, a small number of Brazilians are found in Portuguese-speaking African countries such as Angola and Mozambique (Alden et al., 2017). Latin Americans' emigration to Japan in the latter half of the 20th century – which can be construed as the return of Japanese diasporas in Latin America rather than the formation of a Latin American diaspora in Japan – is discussed elsewhere.

Diasporas: snapshots

Given the diverse and complex nature of migratory movement between the three regions, it is difficult to provide an elaborate characterisation of each diaspora group in each region. This section therefore draws on available data to provide a brief description of the major diasporic groups in the regions. It is also important to note that the availability of literature (and data) varies across different countries and diaspora groups.

African diaspora in Latin America and Asia

Discussion on the African diaspora in Latin America centres on Brazil. As noted earlier, this is the largest diaspora in Brazil and it has a strong socio-cultural presence. A movement demanding greater recognition of historical injustices against Brazilians of African origin and acknowledgement of their contribution to contemporary Brazilian society emerged in the 1960s and 1970s (Lima, 2017). Successive governments formulated different policies to address this demand, including strengthening the links between Brazil and Africa (de Carvalho Winter, 2013).

From the early 2000s relations between Brazil and Africa featured in the former's international relations policies which reflect Brazil's political and economic position on the global stage (Rizzi et al., 2011). The unique feature of Brazil's relationship with the African diaspora is that it links a state with a powerful cultural construction which does not refer to specific groups of migrants from a specific African country. The networks of relationships between those who stayed and those who left, remittances, transnational communities or migrant organisations are not the main actors or means of the relationship. Rather, it is the appeal to a common identity, anchored in historical experiences – slavery and, to a lesser extent, the common colonial experience – and sustained by a very active policy, at least until Jair Bolsonaro became president of Brazil. It can thus be argued that, in this case, the notion of diaspora is associated with an 'umbrella' cultural category that gives meaning to a wide and diverse – and also imprecise – web of actions and relations between Brazil and Africa.

Overall, for Latin America, the analysis of immigration from African countries presents a dual problem. On the one hand, the number of African migrants in most Latin American countries is very small and is not separately presented in census reports. Brazil has the largest number of immigrants of African origin – around 15 000, which represents about 3% of all immigrants in the country. On the other hand, many of the Africans who arrive in Latin America are migrants in transit to the US (Yates and Bolter, 2021). Brazil is the main access point, followed by Ecuador. From there, migrants undertake a long and risky journey to reach Mexico and attempt to cross into the US. The main countries of origin are Eritrea, Somalia, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Ghana.

In Asia, Africans' recent migration to China and India is related to the continent's growing relations with the two countries which have offered

increasing economic and educational opportunities to both temporary and permanent migrants as business people, professionals, students, economic migrants, and asylum-seekers. Since 2010, China has been Africa's largest trade partner with a trade volume of US\$185 billion in 2018, a significant increase from US\$10.8 billion in the year 2000 (Amoha, Hodzi and Castillo, 2020). It is estimated that more than half a million Africans live in China (Bodomo, 2020) and that the number is growing steadily.

A similar pattern can be observed in India. Besides the *Sidis* who are historically of African origin and have been assimilated into Indian society, growing economic and political ties between Africa and India, especially since the economic and IT upturn in the early 2000s have resulted in an increasing number of African students, business people and tourists flowing to major Indian cities. Africans in India mainly come from English-speaking countries in East Africa (especially Tanzania and Uganda) as well as those such as Sudan and Nigeria that have strong economic ties with India (Bhushan, 2021).

The Ethiopian diaspora in Israel is also worth considering. While estimates differ, it is commonly believed that there are more than 150 000 people of Ethiopian heritage in the country, a significant number of whom were born in Ethiopia and emigrated to Israel. Despite a record of discrimination and marginalisation (Offer, 2007), the Ethiopian Jewish community in Israel is thriving, with those born in Israel a growing presence in Israeli politics, the military, and academia.

Asian diaspora in Latin America and Africa

The economic crisis of the 1930s resulted in a drop in the number of migrants from Asia to Latin America. Flows of Asian migrants intensified in the 1970s with the arrival of Chinese migrants – first from Taiwan and later from mainland China – and Koreans, predominantly oriented towards retail trade (Hu-DeHart and López, 2008). At first, the Chinese established small businesses that sold food and cleaning supplies. They then moved into the food industry. Koreans also established themselves in the textile industry. Statistics show that between 50 and 60% of employed Chinese and Korean immigrants in Argentina and Brazil work in the commerce, repair, hotel and restaurant sector. In Mexico the percentage reaches around 90%. Around 30% of Japanese immigrants in Brazil

participate in the same sector, with 30% also participating in agricultural activities and 10% in manufacturing. In Argentina and Brazil, 20% of employed Koreans work in manufacturing. As the East Asian economies continued to expand, a small but influential new segment has been added, made up of managers of subsidiaries of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean-based multinational companies (Morimoto, 2004).

There has been significant growth in the population of Asian origin in several Latin American countries. Table 1 presents data on the magnitude of and trends in migration between 1990 and 2010 (the latest census figures available). Although the number is small compared to migration trends in other parts of the world, the table shows the growth of Chinese and Korean migration and the stagnation or decline of Japanese migration. The drop in Japanese migration in Brazil can be attributed to the return migration of Japanese and Nikkeis from Brazil and Peru to Japan.

Table 1: Number of immigrants of Chinese, Korean and Japanese origin in Argentina, Brazil and Mexico (based on the 1990 and 2010 census rounds)

Country of origin	Argentina		Brazil		Mexico	
	1990	2010	1990	2010	1990	2010
China	2 297	9 375	8 321	19 397	1 129	7 485
Korea	1 615	2 682	8 527	8 577	N/A	3 504
Japan	5 674	4 157	85 571	49 059	2 397	3 203

Source: Investigación de la Migración Internacional en América Latina - Centro Latinoamericano de Demografía [IMILA-CELADE], n.d.

In Africa the two prominent groups of Asian diasporas are the Indians and the Chinese. India and Africa have enjoyed partnerships for decades via a range of activities including ancient trade routes and cultural exchanges; and anti-colonial and nationalist movements (Sarkar and Panda, 2021). India-African engagement became more evident in the 1990s when India opened up its economy. The India-Africa Forum Summits (IAFS) of 2008, 2011 and 2015 fostered collaboration between the two regions in various areas including economic cooperation, socio-cultural ties, climate change, trade development, piracy, terrorism, nuclear disarmament and reform of the United Nations (Bhatia, 2011; Wagner, 2019).

In the second decade of this century, the Indian diaspora in Africa was estimated at more than 2.7 million with the number growing exponentially

(Gupta, 2014). Due to the long history of India-Africa relations, more than 2.5 million people or 93.6% of Indians in Africa are part of the diaspora, while the rest, around 174 000 are non-residents. Indian communities are dispersed across 46 African countries where they engage in different economic activities including trade, vocational and technical professions and highly-skilled positions. People of Indian origin whose families have lived in Africa for generations are well-assimilated and are citizens of their adopted country. Many hold important economic, scientific and political positions. As Thubauville (2013) noted in the case of Ethiopia, in many African countries a substantial number of Indians teach at different levels, mainly at universities and vocational schools. This represents a critical resource to strengthen academic ties between African institutions and their Indian counterparts.

China has established collaboration with Africa in a range of areas especially through trade and economic investment. The growing economic relationship between China and Africa, underpinned by major policies such as the Belt and Road Initiative of 2013, has resulted in a steadily increasing number of Chinese workers settling in Africa. Over the past two decades, African countries have become more open to Chinese workers who can travel to 27 countries without applying for a visa – either visa on arrival or visa free for a limited period (Harley, 2019). While it is difficult to come up with concrete numbers, it is estimated that about two million Chinese live in Africa (Bodomo, 2020). Chinese workers are found in every part of the continent, with larger concentrations in countries such as South Africa, Nigeria and Angola. Construction, major infrastructure development, telecommunications and trade are among the major areas within which they operate.

Latin American diaspora in Africa and Asia

The Latin American diaspora in Africa and Asia is small. For example, there are no more than 1 500 Mexican emigrants in any Asian or African destination, and the same can be said for Venezuela and Colombia. A small number of Brazilians reside in Lusophone African countries. It was reported that around 5 000 Brazilians were residing in Angola (Jover et al., 2012), mainly engaged in construction, mining and agriculture (Góes, 2008). Israel is the only Asian destination to attract a significant number of emigrants from Argentina and Chile, with more than 38 000 of its residents having been born in the former.

The two countries that go against this trend are Brazil and Peru. According to the United Nations Population Division (2020), it is estimated that 190 000 people who were born in Brazil and 50 000 born in Peru currently reside in Japan. Peruvian emigration to China is also significant, at around 15 000. These two cases can be considered as return migration by second or third generation Brazilians or Peruvians of Japanese or Chinese origin. It is debatable if this can be regarded as a return of Japanese or Chinese diaspora in Latin America or the formation of Brazilian and Peruvian diaspora in Japan and China.

The case of the *dekasegui* is of particular interest. *Dekasegui* means a temporary worker and refers to the migration – at first temporary, but often permanent – of descendants of Japanese immigrants in Brazil and Peru and, on a smaller scale, in Argentina and Bolivia – to Japan from the middle of the 1980s. The Brazilian *dekasegui* are the most numerous. According to Sakurai (2004), around 250 000 Brazilians of Japanese descent resided in Japan at the beginning of the century. This is an important process, which has redefined the links between Brazil and Japan in terms of migration. Although the appeal to Japanese ancestry is a legal facilitator of such emigration to Japan, it is above all a labour migration to save money, send remittances, and return to Brazil (Ikeuchi, 2016). However, beyond this initial aspiration, many *dekasegui* have become permanent residents, formed families, and educated their children in the Japanese system, such that short-term return is not a viable option. The experience of these workers marks the beginning of a new stage in the history of Japanese Brazilians.

Student mobility

Student mobility is one of the paths through which diaspora formation takes place, although this is mainly the case for a few highly sought-after destinations for study abroad. Student mobility is promoted through scholarship programmes, and academic collaboration. For instance, Asian cooperation agencies have used this instrument and Brazil and Mexico provide financial support for doctoral studies abroad. Chile and Colombia also have international scholarship programmes.

Early cooperation between Mexico and Japan resulted in the Special Exchange Program for technical students and interns by the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Mexican National Council

for Science and Technology (CONACYT), and, currently, the Human Resources Training Cooperation Program in the Global Strategic Association (Fraga Salgado, 2020). Co-financed by JICA and CONACYT, it offers scholarships that enabled 2 509 Japanese students to study in Mexico and 2 286 Mexicans to conclude studies in Japan between 1971 and 2017.

Beyond such programmes, there are only a small number of scholarship holders in Asian and African countries. For instance, only 0.4% of Chilean scholarships for doctoral and master's studies in 2021 were granted for study in Asian and African destinations. Just under 1% of the scholarships awarded by the Mexican CONACYT were for studies in Asian countries. In the case of Brazil's Coordination of Higher Level Personnel Training (CAPES), scholarship holders for postgraduate studies in Asian universities represented around 0.8% of the total, and for African universities, about 1.2% – with just over half of these granted for studies in Mozambique.

China has become one of the world's leading destinations for international students after the US, the UK and Australia (ICEF Monitor, 2017) and it attracts the second largest number of African students after France (Breeze and Moore, 2017). According to the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (2019), as at 2018, 81 562 African students were studying in Chinese universities, accounting for 16.5% of the close to half a million international students in the country. Although this might seem small in the context of the global scale of student mobility, the number grew by 4 549% over a 15-year period (by about 303% annually) from 2003, when it stood at 1 793 (Kigotho, 2020).

The literature identifies a range of reasons why China has become an attractive destination for international students, including Africans. These include low tuition fees, various scholarship opportunities, visa opportunities, the low cost of living and a variety of education pathways (Min and Falvey, 2018; Petzold and Moog, 2018; Yang et al., 2017).

India has also become a popular destination for an increasing number of African students. Since 2008, collaboration between India and Africa has been fostered under the rejuvenated 'South-South cooperation' of the India-Africa Forum Summits (IAFS) (McCann, 2021). The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) scholarships, which were launched in the 1950s, have been offered to a large number of African students (ibid.).

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, about 25 000 African students were reportedly enrolled in various public and private Indian institutions, with Sudan and Nigeria having the highest numbers (Sawahel and Lillian, 2021). The number of Africans studying in India has increased due its growing relationship with the continent. In the case of countries like Ethiopia that are experiencing an expansion of higher education, Indian universities host government sponsored graduate students who commit to returning to their country to teach in different newly-established universities.

Academic diasporas: the missing link

The preceding sections painted a picture of historical migratory and contemporary diasporic relations between Africa, Asia and Latin America. Trends in student mobility, which is often associated with the formation of diaspora, especially academic diaspora, were also noted. Against this backdrop, this section explores some of the major structural issues that influence the formation and sustenance of academic diasporas, as well as their limited role in mediating academic collaboration between the three regions.

Structural dimensions: the geopolitics of knowledge and embedded inequality

Knowledge production and the institutions that produce it are unequally distributed across the world and are highly concentrated in northern countries. For example, the large industrial countries of Asia Pacific and the North Atlantic dominate the production of scientific articles. Brazil is the only Latin American country among the top 15 producers of such articles, with Mexico in 30th place, and the first African country, Egypt, is in 26th place.

Table 2: Top producers of scientific articles, 2021

	Country	Region	Number of scientific articles
1	China	Asiatic Region	860 012
2	United States	Northern America	726 552
3	United Kingdom	Western Europe	243 792
4	India	Asiatic Region	237 429
5	Germany	Western Europe	208 210
6	Italy	Western Europe	154 304
7	Japan	Asiatic Region	144 778
8	Canada	Northern America	130 786
9	France	Western Europe	128 210
10	Australia	Pacific Region	125 211
11	Russian Federation	Eastern Europe	123 849
12	Spain	Western Europe	122 688
13	South Korea	Asiatic Region	101 692
14	Brazil	Latin America	100 085
15	Iran	Middle East	77 346

Source: SCImago Country Ranking, 2021

This pattern is repeated in the case of patents, where Asian countries play a much greater role, with minimal participation by Latin American and African countries. Furthermore, American and European universities dominate international university rankings such as the top 100 list in the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), with very limited presence of universities from China, Japan, and Singapore. There are no Latin American universities among the first hundred. The University of Sao Paulo is the first to appear in the 101 to 150 band, followed by the National Autonomous University of Mexico and the University of Buenos Aires, between 201 and 300. Three Brazilian universities are listed in the 301 to 400 band, with two Brazilian, and one Chilean universities falling between 401 and 500. Five African universities are among the first 500 - four South African and one Egyptian.

It is interesting to note that China had 84 universities in the top 500 in 2020. In 2003 - the first edition of the ARWU ranking - it only had 19. This phenomenal growth was undoubtedly linked to Chinese institutions' ability to recruit professors and researchers from the enormous diaspora of Chinese doctoral graduates in American and, to a lesser extent, European

and Australian universities (Zweig and Wang, 2013; Fangmeng, 2016). Zweig and Wang (2013, p. 590) point out that "For some ... developing countries, the international flow of their human talent in the most recent decade has been more of a 'reverse brain drain,' rather than a terrible brain drain. South Korea (before it joined the OECD), Taiwan, Hong Kong and India have all seen a significant 'brain gain'." A similar trend can be discerned in China.

Young Asian graduates interested in a scientific career know that they need to pursue their doctorate in the US, United Kingdom, Germany, or France, and young Latin American and African graduates thought and still think the same. One way to illustrate this point is to note that a Mexican, a Thai, and a Ghanaian biologist can find each other more easily in the US, Germany, or Australia than in Mexico, Thailand, or Ghana. For a young Mexican scientist, pursuing an academic career in his/her own country with a doctorate from Brazil or South Africa is more difficult than with one from the US or Europe.

In short, the combination of the global distribution of knowledge production and incentives for the development of academic careers conspire against the possibility of building academic diasporas between Latin American, Asian, and African countries. In the few cases where collaborations can be identified - for example, between Brazil and Mozambique or Brazil and Cape Verde - they are related to Brazilian political initiatives, which finance African students, mediated by a common language from their common colonial history. Furthermore, these are somewhat short-term exchange programmes, which do not lead to the establishment of a group of Mozambican or Cape Verdean academics in Brazil. The flow of African graduate students to India and China is also often through government scholarships designed to ensure the return of students to their countries upon completion of their programmes.

Structural dimensions: the characteristics of migrants and diasporas

The second important structural dimension is the characteristics of migrants and diasporas. For instance, in the case of Africans in Latin America, the main conditioning factor is the very low presence of migrants from African countries, besides Brazilians of African origin. There are few contemporary immigrants and they are mainly concentrated in Brazil. Furthermore, many are migrants in transit to the US and they generally

have few qualifications. Thus, there is no critical mass of migrants with the requisite qualifications to sustain academic collaboration.

In the case of both Africans and Asians in Latin America, there are significant language, distance, and funding barriers. Brazil has chosen to focus its exchange programmes on Portuguese-speaking African countries, where the common language is an advantage. Distance is also a serious problem, not only with regard to the physical distance but also because of the lack of direct flights between most African and Latin American countries. In terms of financing, most of the countries in both regions do not have funding for cooperation projects and where they do it is not sufficient to sustain meaningful academic collaboration.

Language barriers are a significant problem in Asia-Latin America relations, although they are partially addressed by using English as the lingua franca, particularly in graduate programmes. The distances are greater, although there may be more availability of flights. However, East Asian countries have active cooperation policies, which enable the development of joint projects, although perhaps not in the quantity and diversity desired.

The characteristics of Asian migration to Latin America and vice versa do not facilitate the creation of academic diasporas. As noted earlier, Asian migrants primarily engage in commercial activities with family businesses common, especially among the Chinese. The children of migrants often study at university, but are more interested in careers in business than in science. Many young members of Japanese communities in Latin America have recorded outstanding university performance and are thus more likely to work in academic institutions. Sakurai (2004) notes that a 1986 survey of the 4 909 professors at the University of Sao Paulo, the largest in the country, found that 276 had Japanese surnames with strong concentration in the fields of engineering, nursing, physics, and medicine. This orientation of some descendants of Japanese makes it possible to identify a group that has probably participated in cooperative activities with Japan. However, as the generations go by, the link with the country of origin is attenuated, especially when there are significant levels of exogamy, as is the case of the Brazilian *Nikkeis*.

The jobs performed by Latin American emigrants in Asia and the terms of their contracts also render it unlikely that they will engage in academic collaborations. For example, emigrants to Japan were issued with temporary

visas to perform low-skilled jobs. However, it is possible that the second and third generations are potential players in academic collaborations.

Among Asian diasporas in Africa, Indians seem to have stronger potential to mediate academic collaboration. Firstly, the large majority of the Indian diaspora in Africa has lived on the continent for generations and is known to perform well in academia, as in other areas like business and politics. They occupy important positions that can be leveraged to mobilise resources and influence institutions to collaborate with Indian universities. However, given that they have lived in their adoptive countries for generations, their connection with India might have weakened over time. Second, a considerable number of contemporary Indian migrants to Africa come for professional engagements including as teachers in universities and vocational schools. Those working in African academic and research institutions are well positioned to mediate collaborations with Indian institutions. For their part, the Chinese in Africa are often engaged in economic activities far removed from academia such as commercial activities and skilled and semi-skilled professional work related to construction and infrastructure development.

African emigrants to Asia are also not in a suitable position to negotiate collaborative relations. As noted earlier, most Africans in India and China are students, professionals on limited-term contracts, traders on a temporary stay or are engaged in low-skill jobs. They rarely occupy academic positions.

Possible future scenarios: can the role of diasporas in academic cooperation grow?

The preceding sections highlighted the structural conditions that have influenced the role of diasporas in academic collaboration between Africa, Asia and Latin America. This section proposes hypotheses in relation to the evolution of this role in the near future, with some suggestions to strengthen it.

First, it is very unlikely that Latin American migration patterns will change significantly: outflows to the US and Europe - especially Spain - and cross-border migration within the continent will continue to predominate. Immigration of people of Asian origin to Latin America - especially Chinese - may continue to grow, but on a limited scale. The same can be said of African immigration. Latin American countries' economic performance in the past decade has been below expectations. While there have been

some improvements, it does not seem that the exceptional conditions of the first decade of the 21st century - the 'commodities super cycle' - will be repeated, thus weakening economic incentives for immigration.

Second, it is likely that the East Asian countries will continue to support cooperation with Latin America and Africa as part of their international relations strategies. There may be changes in instruments or priorities, but the more developed and emerging countries of Asia have important interests in the two regions and technical (and sometimes cultural) cooperation is part of their standard international policy agenda. China will probably intensify its efforts in keeping with its role as a global power, followed by India and Japan, while other Asian countries will try to gain a foothold in both regions. Japan has recently sought to strengthen its power and influence through internationalisation of higher education and research collaborations with an increasing number of countries. One of its target counterparts is African countries, demonstrated in Japanese investment in developing joint research projects such as those funded by the Core-to-Core Program of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science. Networks developed among researchers and countries as a result of these projects promise further and more extensive collaborations in the future at both government and individual academic levels.

Third, East Asian educational institutions - especially in China - are likely to continue along their path of academic progress and international reputation. China and Africa enjoy a long-standing friendship and collaboration in a range of areas, based on agreements such as the Proposals on China-Africa People-to-People Exchanges and Cooperation. China and Africa have launched initiatives to support cooperation among academics, and in research activities and publications. Both sides appear keen on research topics such as state governance, development paths, industrial capacity cooperation, culture, and law and more than 80 think tanks and academic research institutions have participated in the China-Africa Joint Research and Exchange Plan (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2021). The Fifth Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) held in 2012 proposed the implementation of the China-Africa Think Tanks 10+10 Partnership Plan for long-term paired cooperation (*ibid.*).

From this perspective, it is possible that Asian countries will increase their internationalisation activities, propelled by substantial

government funding. This would mean deliberate efforts to compete for students, attract graduate students with strong potential and develop research projects with colleagues from regions that until now have not been of great importance, such as Latin America and Africa. In such a scenario Latin American academic cooperation with Asia could change. Currently, such cooperation is mainly in the social sciences on topics that involve both regions - e.g., foreign relations, international trade, history, etc. Collaboration is lacking among professionals such as biologists, physicists, and chemists. This calls for material commitment in the form of scholarships and projects, while recognition and prestige make an important contribution.

Fourth, cooperation among Latin American countries will likely continue, apart from Brazil and, to some extent, Mexico and Chile reacting to or complementing the cooperation initiatives of Asian countries. However, in terms of the establishment and growth of research centres and groups, it is likely that relations with Asia and Africa will find greater favour in national international academic cooperation programmes. Growing economic opportunities in India, China and other Asian countries are intensifying collaboration with African countries in various areas, including higher education. African countries are likely to continue wooing these countries which are not only seen as model emerging economies, but arguably also impose less onerous conditionalities and are less inclined to interfere in their partners' political and governance affairs.

The emergence of academic diasporas or, more generally, of diasporas of knowledge depends on a set of diverse factors (Meyer, 2011). Some - probably the most decisive - concern structural characteristics, including the size and composition of migrant communities, the economic context of the countries of origin and destination, or the existence of linkages. However, multiple potential initiatives that are often inexpensive could be adopted to take advantage of qualified immigrants to connect academics from different regions. These initiatives are usually of low visibility and are not always part of formal university cooperation programmes. Government's role in terms of creating a conducive environment and providing support and resources for academic and research collaboration is critical. Indeed, in the past two decades, central and local governments and multiple actors (e.g., government officials, staff at research institutes) in different countries have started identifying different strategies to

strengthen exchange opportunities through diaspora professional networks and put forward recommendations to improve governance and synergise state activities and market mechanisms.

Academics from the three regions who are based in well-resourced institutions in Europe, North America and Oceania can play an important role in enabling collaboration with institutions in their regions of origin. Returning to our earlier example, the Mexican, the Thai, and the Ghanaian who meet in the US could initiate and support collaboration between the institutions in their respective countries of origin. This represents academic collaboration mediated by the diaspora, but not necessarily those in the regions of collaborating institutions.

It is also important to acknowledge the critical role of private foundations and other donors which facilitate collaborative engagement between diaspora academics and their counterparts in their home countries. These institutions draw on resources and advocacy to mediate between academics of the three regions, including those in the diasporas. The support of the Carnegie Corporation of New York through the African Diaspora Fellowship Program as well as the Higher Education Forum for Africa, Asia and Latin America (HEFAALA) is a worthwhile example. For instance, HEFAALA not only brings together academics of the three regions from around the world; it also creates opportunities and encourages them to collaborate.

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