

Charles Goddard<sup>1</sup>

**TRANSFORMING THE WORLD - PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS**  
**A LESSON FROM UGANDA**

*Dedicated to the Ambassador of Uganda to the Russian Federation, His Excellency Moses K. Kizige*

***Problems and Prospects – and Patriotism***

The “problems” we face as a world are to be found daily in our newspapers, and other media outlets. The growth of so called “fake news”, AI generated materials, and algorithms that put onto our news feeds what others want us to see, yield a constant diet of human greed, misery, bullying and man-made disasters. These are not the values of our society, nor the values of the BRICS community. Basic decent humanity appears to have been forgotten, not least by the country whose First Lady was instrumental in bringing the UN Declaration of Human Rights into fruition.

The “prospects” before us are surely utopian in ideals yet necessarily grounded in reality. The novelist, Jack London’s “The Iron Heel” imagines a future that has cast off the capitalist oligarchy - the “Iron Heel” of the book - replacing it with the “Brotherhood of Man”. We have a community in BRICS, of like minded but very different peoples, united by consent into a powerhouse of good for the citizens of the constituent States. Who cannot be but enthused by the prospects for humanity in that? In my view, the prospects we are asked to consider start with patriotism.

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<sup>1</sup> Visiting Professor MGIMO, Dosent RGGU, Formerly tenured professor of International Private Law, MGYuA, Academic Consultant and Editorial Team member for Academic Journals to MGU and HSE. UK Chartered Royal Architect (RIBA), Engineer, Chartered International Arbitrator (FCIArb), Construction Lawyer, Fellow Royal Society of Arts (FRSA), Official Multichildren parent of the Russian Federation, Recipient of the Russian Federation State Medal of the Order of Parental Glory.

States often “demand” patriotism. For example, the Constitution of Uganda commands every citizen of Uganda to be Patriotic and loyal:

“The exercise and enjoyment of rights is inseparable from fulfillment of duties. Among the duties is that every citizen of this country must be Patriotic and Loyal to this country.”<sup>2</sup>

Uganda trains and develops patriotism within its Patriotism Societies (controlled by a special department in the Office of the President), whose purpose is

“...to inculcate values and norms of Patriotism in students and youth of Uganda in order to develop resourceful, responsible, disciplined and resilient citizens who are loyal and ready to defend and transform Uganda”<sup>3</sup>

Many such programmes involve military objects. For example, the President of Uganda’s webpage about the Patriotic Societies has a young person firing a gun. Such imagery can be misunderstood. It is a mistake to regard such Patriotic Societies, or our own “Patriotic Studies” groups and classes (where our kindergarten children meet young military veterans) as “militaristic” or “glorifying war”. We will soon be celebrating the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Great Victory – which with each passing year brings an enhanced appreciation of what was achieved against great odds, coupled with the unbelievable heartbreak at the dwindling number of veterans who celebrate the holiday with tears in their eyes. The sacrifices made to give us our freedoms and rights we enjoy today were made by people who were truly patriotic. There will be many in the West who will disrespect our forthcoming Victory Day celebrations, and those taking part in our parades. The people that we will see in these celebrations will surely represent some of the very best of us – young people who understand that with freedoms come responsibilities to the rest of the country, and act accordingly.

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<sup>2</sup> See the 1995 Constitution of Uganda, under section xxix of National Objective and Directives principles of State Policy

<sup>3</sup> See the website of the Office of the President of Uganda: <https://op.go.ug/departments/national-secretariat-patriotism-clubs>

But what do I mean by labelling these people as being patriotic?

Each and every person in State service – be that in the military or our civilian agencies – is fulfilling their duty – in Ugandan terms – of “defending and transforming our society”. And this is the lesson from Uganda that I allude to in my title – as we heard in the Ambassador’s words to the students. The inseparability of the exercise and enjoyment of rights with the obligation to fulfill duties. The recently departed Pope Francis is reputed to have said – “the only time you can look down on someone is when you are trying to help them up”. A person cannot be a patriot until their values and conduct are rooted in these simple truths. The logical extension of this is that these are values that are worth defending from threat, and if need be, fighting to protect.

### *Prospects and Patriotism*

The patriotism that we will see – and that we should be striving to grow in our youth - is not the patriotism of the mindless flag-waving, rifle-toting, and intolerant MAGA type, but a patriotism that is born out of love and care for one’s fellow man (and it starts with the person nearest to you), in a country that you call home. Further, for me, patriotism is multifaceted – requiring intimate - and by that, I mean with an emotional connection to - the culture and characteristics, the values and traditions, and the songs and dances of your country. It is typified by a sense of belonging, of connection, and of responsibility to each and every person in that country. You can see it everyday on the Moscow metro, where young Gen Z types, often with a slightly intimidating presence, volunteer cheerfully to help less able people with their heavy bags up and down the stairs, or jump up – unbidden – to offer seats to those who need them more than they do. When I lived in London, I never saw this, people always had to be asked. A small – but telling example – of how our society here is infinitely superior. At its most simple, patriotism is care – real

care – born out of love for your fellow citizen

Taking that one step further in a community of States who have aligned themselves with each other for the mutual benefit of their citizens, such patriotism surely must expand transnationally. There is surely a prospect for our shared future where each citizen of BRICS feels patriotic towards the community, as well as their own country. In my case, I knew from the first step I took onto Russian soil, that I belonged here. As I have described it before, I felt something flowing into me, and part of me flowing out into the landscape. Some are born to a country, others are adopted by it. Such an instant and Damascene type of personal connection is perhaps rare, and certainly not the experience of someone born in a country who grows up surrounded by the culture and develops within the society. But it does beg the question of what the “something” was that flowed into me – and how it is – or should be acquired by those who are not natural citizens. Is this “something” something that can be taught? If so, is it capable of being something that can be sensed, appreciated, or ingrained as an emotional response to a multivariate community of differing States such as BRICS – with the purpose of building our brighter future?

### *Education – and students*

The future is our youth, and our duty is to educate them. The length of papers allowed here is too short to consider all facets of this question, so I shall confine myself to university students in the context of BRICS. In addressing this question, I am minded of two categories. The first are those on a career trajectory into diplomacy and international relations – the “engine room” of our BRICS community. The second is wider – students pursuing other educational opportunities. Each of our countries has universities, with many programmes open to foreigners.

Russia has been steadily increasing its attractiveness to foreign students as

a destination of choice for higher education. One recent report from the Russian Ministry of Science and Higher Education reveals that the number of foreign students coming to Russia to study went from 297 993 people in 2019 up to 355 765 people in 2023 - certainly a very promising upwards trend. A chance to experience what I experienced perhaps. This year, my MGIMO students have accounted for over 50 of these, and about 20 or so from the countries of the BRICS family.

Many here will be familiar with the full range of students that grace our lecture rooms – ranging from the active and attentive, through varying degrees of disinterest and distraction, up to and including absence. One of the courses I teach at MGIMO is “English for Professional Purposes” – which was introduced to teach professionalism, not for the purposes of upgrading their existing linguistic abilities.

Professionalism is a concept that is much talked about, but little understood outside those jobs that are regulated by a Code of Conduct. Not any Code, (such as an “office code of conduct” but rather one that is drafted and imposed by a State appointed Regulatory Board, where any breach of said Code can mean the offender is “struck off” from the Register of persons licenced to do that job, and unable to practice in that job again.

To be admitted to the Register of licenced persons, a student has to pass a State approved course of theoretical and practical training. A medical doctor is the example most people will recognise – and part of the reason for Registration is the protection (by the State) of the public from incompetent or unlicenced persons doing medical procedures. There are only a few jobs – called “professions” where such State control exists – including advocates, architects and doctors. The Codes of Conduct apply obligations of standards of behaviour to those you provide a service to, as well as obligations to society. One example is the requirement to complete annual continual professional development studies – to acquire new knowledge and keep old foundational knowledge fresh. Another is

the obligation to reveal to the Regulatory body any convictions that one may receive, which can also give grounds for being struck off. The interested reader can look at the Code which British lawyers have to sign up to and follow.<sup>4</sup>

Now many people will find themselves employed in jobs where there might be an internal Code – such as the aforementioned “office code”. Breach of these may well involve disciplinary steps, even being fired. But in most cases, the miscreant is free to seek similar employment elsewhere. Unless one has been through the training programme for a “profession” – that is one regulated by a State imposed Code of Conduct – a person is unlikely to have the full range of behaviours and skills necessary to conduct their affairs professionally. They simply are not taught. Whilst some people can have these behaviours and skills and values – simply by virtue of having honesty and integrity – my course was designed to give *all* our students knowledge and practice in acting professionally and what it means, irrespective of the field into which they are ultimately employed.

Remember the Ugandan Ambassador’s words. The clear message - each and every one of them was being exhorted to be the best face possible for the country. To not disgrace it, but simply be (by word and deed) someone who deserves respect, and is trusted. In short, someone who acts with honesty and integrity – demonstrating what to me are such “professional values”. As to the students mentioned above, those who do not improve their professionalism do not pass my course, irrespective of how good they are in English,

### ***Developing professionalism – and patriotism for BRICS***

Every journey starts but with a single step. But the vector of that step should be correct. The decisive factors to decide a vector that answers the questions of this conference are found in two places. The first is in Foreign

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/code-conduct-solicitors/>

Policy, and the second is in humanity.

Our BRICS community foreign policies are increasingly aligned. The foreign policy of the Russian Federation is of course established by the President<sup>5</sup>, who does so having regard to the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation<sup>6</sup>. The Foreign policy of Uganda is to be found in the Ugandan Constitution<sup>7</sup>, in Objective No. XXVIII of the National Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy.

As regards prospects for the future, the Russian Foreign Policy Concept (FPC) part IV sets out our Foreign Policy Priorities. In the seventh of the subsections to Part 4, “International Humanitarian Cooperation”, Article 43(1) includes the objective of “...strengthening the image of Russia as a state attractive for life, work, education and tourism”.

Uganda’s Foreign Policy is described as

“an aggregation of the domestic policies projected into the international arena... (and) is to support the promotion and protection of Uganda’s national interests abroad – anchored on three broad pillars: national security, national prosperity; and national well being.”<sup>8</sup>

Our FPC is rich, multilayered and insightful – and includes our vision of the world, our place in it and what we seek to bring to it. By contrast, the Ugandan Foreign Policy seems more introverted in the sense of declaring it to being an extension outwards of what is important for Uganda with not quite so much detailed consideration of what Uganda can bring to the world. Considering what the Ugandans in Russia show by example, this is surely both an oversight and a missed opportunity. Food for thought perhaps for the Ugandan Foreign Ministry?

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<sup>5</sup> Art 80(3) of the Constitution of the Russian Federation

<sup>6</sup> Authorised version in Russian, is at [https://mid.ru/ru/foreign\\_policy/official\\_documents/1860586/](https://mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/official_documents/1860586/). The unofficial English version can be accessed at [https://mid.ru/en/foreign\\_policy/fundamental\\_documents/1860586/](https://mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/fundamental_documents/1860586/)

<sup>7</sup> See Objective No. XXVIII of the National Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy, which can be accessed at <https://www.parliament.go.ug/page/constitution>.

<sup>8</sup> See <https://rome.mofa.go.ug/basic-page/ugandas-foreign-policy-and-economy>

As to humanity, we can turn to the “Concept of the Humanitarian policy of the Russian Federation abroad”<sup>9</sup>. This policy is aimed at proliferating a view of Russia abroad that is objective, including promoting traditional spiritual and moral values. (The reader will see a connection to my earlier “something”). A number of tasks are outlined in this document, three of which apply to education:

- “5) popularisation of Russian achievements in culture, science, education, sports, information and communication technologies;
- 6) increasing the competitiveness of Russian education and using its potential to expand Russian humanitarian influence in the world;
- 7) development of international cooperation in culture, research, education, sports and tourism”

### ***Leveraging education in BRICS***

The BRICS Russia 2024 Conference included the 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the BRICS Ministers of Education, who issued their joint declaration on the 11<sup>th</sup> of June<sup>10</sup>. They met to discuss issues relating to educational cooperation within the BRICS community, with the stated purposes of fostering global knowledge. In particular, the Ministers noted the overarching spirit of BRICS, namely “mutual respect and understanding, equality, solidarity, democracy, openness, inclusiveness, strengthened collaboration and consensus by upholding the principle of sovereignty of nations”<sup>11</sup>. They went further, noting that educational cooperation between them would strengthen connections between the countries, and leverage a number of listed advantages.

They welcomed the new members of BRICS into the BRICS Network

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<sup>9</sup> Authorised version in Russian is at [https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign\\_policy/official\\_documents/1829856/](https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/official_documents/1829856/)

<sup>10</sup> Available at <https://brics.br/en/documents/collection-of-previous-presidencies/education-ministerial-declarations>

<sup>11</sup> Kazan Declaration 11 June 2024 Preambles



University<sup>12</sup> – currently comprising a league of 60 of the top research universities amongst the BRICS members. Russia has 12 universities in this network, including MGIMO, MGU and RUDN. So far, none of the Ugandan universities appear in this league.<sup>13</sup> Academic movement between universities is being enabled, which offers exciting training and research degree opportunities. There has been progress, thanks to South Africa hosting a workshop in December 2023, on mutual recognition of educational qualifications between countries – something long overdue and much needed. In a spirit of healthy competition there are proposals for an evaluation of quality between the universities and their work, with rankings. Those of us who survived the Covid pandemic online learning regime may be less pleased to hear about the proposals of the Ministers to cooperate in the field of digital education – for online platforms and “tickbox” assessments lack the degree of interpersonal communication needed for quality education.

Talented youth is identified as a particular topic of interest for the Ministers, with proposals coming for a BRICS Olympiad. I have yet to see details of this but I hope it is a scheme that will identify talent wherever it may exist within BRICS. That is, I believe there are talented children, who for many possible reasons, may not be identified – and I would like to see a kind of BRICS “talent spotting” programme – not just in schools but taken to each and every corner of the BRICS family (including the most remote parts of the Russian steppe and Ugandan bush)– to identify and nurture talent wherever it may be found.

Environmental literacy is another key initiative for the Ministers, who are looking at ways to encourage monitoring and environmental programmes across the community. There are two more technical matters in the Declaration – one concerning a forum for Rectors, and another for cooperation on technical and

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<sup>12</sup> <https://nu-brics.ru>

<sup>13</sup> See the top 10 here: <https://www.4icu.org/ug/>

vocational qualifications. But it is the last item the Ministers have looked at that particularly attracts me – and brings me to the conclusion of my contribution to this gathering.

There is a proposal to work to preserve the diversity of civilisations and strengthen humanistic values - and enhance the collaboration and exchange in this sphere. This is exciting beyond belief! I hope for the development of cross-cultural programmes, education, and appreciation of different parts of the BRICS family – not from textbooks, but by interacting with people from a different country, and even visiting that country. One of my children enters the Russian Presidential Academy Lyceum next September, and will be able to spend six months in China in 18 months time – immersed, not glued to an online video course. At the Ugandan Ambassador's event, - it was a delight to have the chance to discuss the Ugandan National Emblem, and understand what the different parts mean – with people to whom they mean something. The waters of the Nile for example, described by someone who has seen them. This was much more memorable than looking them up on Wikipedia. The Ambassador even had these emblems embroidered on his Kanzu (long white cotton gown).

### ***Conclusion***

Leveraging education within BRICS (finding and nurturing talent, teaching professionalism, immersing ourselves in each other's cultures and loving them as natives, and above all, being living examples of humanity with humane behaviours) surely provide our brightest and best vector of prospects to alleviate and eliminate the problems that face us.