



# Cyril Ramaphosa and the rhetoric of a coordinated African response to the Covid-19

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## Abstract

The unprecedented effects of Covid-19 have been felt in the whole world. The impact of the pandemic has drawn sharp fault lines of the world's inequalities. Covid-19 has changed the Global North and the Global South's social life, respectively. Whilst Covid-19 appeared to spread rapidly in certain parts of the world, and it seemed as if the pandemic would spare Africa. The state of world affairs has made African governments feel uncomfortable. Some African governments have started making pronouncements given the long-standing grievances about the region's status in global affairs. African governments have seen that the threats of the spread of Covid-19 demands collective and individual action. The geopolitical tussle leaves the developing countries stranded in the new economic order. Covid-19 has shaken the foundations of various institutions and states. Africa's profound failings are noticeable in public health, food security, governance and infrastructural development. Effective coordination of the Covid-19 crisis requires functioning state institutions, application of judiciary norms, and balancing power for the practice to adapt to the realities across the African continent. The second wave of Covid-19 requires the African Union to use this opportunity to integrate its economic pillars into the Africa-wide response strategy by using Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the sub-regional blocs of African countries that have existed for decades. The paper concludes that various isolated efforts made by African countries to deal with the disease and the failure of the continent to adopt a coordinated effort in responding to Covid-19 remain a major challenge. It then recommends that there should be a coordinated approach that goes beyond the rhetoric espoused by South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa in his capacity as AU Chairperson.

**Keywords:** covid-19, Cyril Ramaphosa, rhetoric, South Africa, realities

## 1. Background and Introduction

The unprecedented effects of Covid-19 have been felt in the whole world. The impact of the pandemic has drawn sharp fault lines of the world's inequalities. Covid-19 has changed the Global North and the Global South's social life, respectively. Whilst Covid-19 appeared to spread rapidly in certain parts of the world, it appeared as if the pandemic would spare Africa. A sharp contrast between the rich and emerging countries has emerged, which has plunged the impoverished and fragile economies into disarray. The impact of the pandemic has been exacerbated by socio-economic inequalities and the nature of the spread of the pandemic. Since the beginning of the virus, there has been over-reliance on science experts without input from human and social scientists, which scientists from the global north dominate. The state of world affairs has made African governments feel uncomfortable. Some African governments have started making pronouncements given the long-standing grievances about the region's status in global affairs. African governments have seen that the threats of the spread of Covid-19 demands collective and individual action. For the African continent, Covid-19 pauses a huge crisis. The situation is dire considering the catastrophic effects of the virus. The destructive potential of the virus has not been fully tested, and the truth about its humanitarian impact has not been revealed. Multilateralism that has been kept alive over the years is slowly fading away. The world is starting to disintegrate due to a rancorous geopolitical struggle. The geopolitical tussle leaves the developing countries stranded in the new economic order.

Covid-19 has shaken the foundations of institutions and states. Africa's profound failings are noticeable in public health, food security, governance, and infrastructural development. The virus's impact has varied considerably across the continent, reflecting countries' varying degrees of global integration and capacity to respond. One country that stands out in both regards is South Africa (Motala and Menon 2020). In South Africa, the implications of Covid-19 are serious. Hence, the responses to Covid-19 public health pronouncements had serious implications on the economic and social activities. Household income has been depleted, particularly for the vulnerable groups who depend on wage earnings for their livelihoods. Not only that the country found itself confronted by a virus that has infected more than a quarter of a million people across the

globe, but also by the prospects of a very deep economic recession that will cause businesses to close and many people to lose their jobs (Bell 2020). The realisation of the magnitude threat of the virus has forced South Africa to marshal every resource and energy to fight the pandemic. The actions by the government needed a concerted effort from business and other stakeholders in developing mitigating measures to respond and minimise the impact of the virus on the economy.

This article reviews relevant public and academic debates and literature to unpack Cyril Ramaphosa's rhetoric on covid-19. The paper seeks to navigate, discuss, and justify South Africa's leadership of African response to the disease and the challenges faced in delivering a coordinated African response to Covid-19. Moreover, this article seeks to understand how South Africa dealt with the uncertainty and unpredictability of the pandemic and how these experiences can inform the coordination of future crises in Africa. It refers to functioning state institutions, application of judiciary norms, and balancing power if the practice must be adapted to the realities across the African continent. The second wave of Covid-19 will require the African Union to use this opportunity to integrate its economic pillars into the Africa-wide response strategy by using Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the sub-regional blocs of African countries that have existed for decades. The paper looks at various isolated efforts made by African countries to deal with the disease. Lastly, the paper evaluates the failure of the continent to adopt a coordinated effort in responding to the Covid-19 menace and Ramaphosa's rhetoric on Covid-19.

## **2. Relevant Local and Global Issues Surrounding the Covid-19 Outbreak**

The effects of the pandemic are likely to be different between the affluent Global North and the impoverished Global South. The latter is more likely to be the 'hardest hit by the virus and face a debt crisis' (World Bank 2020:4). The impact of the pandemic was anticipated to have serious ramifications in Africa. This notion is true based on certain conclusions. For instance, Sanchez-Paramo (2020) asserts that the pandemic will hit emerging countries the hardest because of existing social and economic problems, pushing upwards of 49 million people into poverty, whom she refers to as the 'new poor.' So, based on the above conclusions, African leaders sought to demand to be heard in the world arena. The global

issues require the forging of ties and equitably conducting multilateral forums. However, traditional multilateralism is fragmented; hence African leaders need to reassess their role in the international system. In his national address for South Africa, President Cyril Ramaphosa (2020a) noted,

The world is facing a medical emergency far graver than what we have experienced in over a century. The World Health Organisation has declared the coronavirus outbreak as a global pandemic. Given the scale and the speed at which the virus is spreading, it is now clear that no country is immune from the disease or will be spared its severe impact. Never before in the history of our democracy has our country been confronted with such a severe situation. From the start of the outbreak in China earlier this year, the South African government has put in place measures to screen visitors entering the country, to contain its spread and to treat those infected.

Following his pronouncement, Ramaphosa cautioned that the Covid-19 cases would rise. In consultation with his cabinet, he warned that no half measures were taken. After careful consultation with his cabinet, Ramaphosa decided to take drastic measures to reduce and manage the impact of the virus on society and the economy and protect the people. The Disaster Management Act was activated to deal with the virus in a coordinated manner. Mechanisms embedded in the act were used to manage and prevent the spread of the virus.

In his proclamation, Ramaphosa (2020b) said,

We will also be able to set up emergency, rapid and effective response systems to mitigate the severity of its impact. Following an extensive analysis of the progression of the disease worldwide and in South Africa, Cabinet has decided on the following measures: Firstly, to limit contact between persons who may be infected and South African Citizens, we are imposing a travel ban on foreign nationals from high-risk countries such as Italy, Iran, South Korea, Spain, Germany, the United States, the United Kingdom and China as from 18 March 2020.

His pronouncements resonated well with measures taken by other African

countries. As African countries started cancelling flights from former colonial countries and putting their citizens under quarantine, the myth of Western invincibility fell apart, alongside its corollary that only the Global South is susceptible to infectious epidemics (Mwambari 2020). Following the World Health Organisation's announcement of the Covid-19 pandemic, Ramaphosa (2020a) announced that,

We have cancelled visas to visitors from those countries from today and previously granted visas are hereby revoked. South African citizens are advised to refrain from all forms of travel to or through the European Union, United States, United Kingdom and other identified high-risk countries such as China, Iran and South Korea. This is effective immediately. Government will continue to regularly issue travel alerts referring to specific cities, countries or regions as the situation evolves based on the risk level. Any foreign national who has visited high-risk countries in the past 20 days will be denied a visa. South African citizens returning from high-risk countries will be subjected to testing and self-isolation or quarantine on return to South Africa.

As a result, most governments were forced to start developing social and economic policies to ensure that their citizens cope with the new reality. The policies were meant to guard against the spread and effects of the virus and possibly curb future threats. The pandemic is not just a health crisis; it is a crisis of inequality and neoliberalism, a crisis of disaster capitalism and decades of austerity programmes and sustained attacks on fragile public systems and services provided by the state (Sayed and Singh 2020). However, adopting such drastic health measures was seen as being punitive and disruptive, considering that the poor depended on the informal sector for survival. So, adopting the all-securitarian model of 'containment' of northern countries, often without much care to specific contexts, many African countries have imposed a brutal lockdown upon their populations; here and there, violation of curfew measures has been met with police violence (Erondu 2020). African governments did not consider chronic poverty cauterising their populations in taking the austerity measures. Without being complacent, Africa has been faced with managing large health crises before, like the Ebola virus. The continent is not new to pandemics. So, African governments could have used their experience dealing with the Covid-19

crisis.

On 27 March 2020, different kinds of businesses remained closed. Those allowed to open were involved in producing essential goods and services. People were confined to homes; only those performing or obtaining essential services were given permits to leave their place of residence. Non-essential travel outside South Africa was prohibited for all spheres of government. Others who were allowed to leave their homes included those offering or receiving emergency care or chronic medication attention. Movement of people and commuter transport services between provinces, districts and Metropolitans was prohibited. Many fear for the future in this unprecedented historical moment, and Africans do too. However, while they will certainly also go through a tough period, they should see this crisis as an opportunity to fast track the process of decolonisation (Mwambari 2020). Therefore, African officials have become confrontational due to the pressure they are facing from the public in the wake of the increasing death toll and economic devastation. In response to Covid-19, the region's governments are tapping into public frustration about the virus's foreign origins, the shallowness of the international response, and overbearing public health guidance from countries that are failing to curb their own outbreaks (Devermont 2020). Covid-19 has dented the Western governments' brand enormously. The West has become the epicentre of the pandemic, turning the tide from China to Europe and now the United States of America. Thus, the western neoliberal and neo-colonial systems have suffered severely from what is regarded as a slow and haphazard response to the pandemic. In South Africa, when Ramaphosa(2020b) announced behavioural changes, he said,

We reiterate that the most effective way to prevent infection is through basic individual behaviour and hygiene changes. We are, therefore, once more calling on everyone to: wash hands frequently with hand sanitisers or soap and water for at least twenty seconds; cover our nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing with a tissue or flexed elbow; avoid close contact with anyone with cold or flu-like symptoms. Everyone must do everything within their means to avoid contact with other people. Staying at home, avoiding public places, and cancelling all social activities is the preferred best defence against the virus. Over the past week, as we have been implementing these measures, the global crisis has deepened.

Whilst there was a malicious attempt to the African continent as lacking in basic hygiene, his pronouncement served to reinforce the seriousness of his actions. Although there are undeniable weaknesses in many African states and economies, including healthcare, this does not mean that there is no infrastructure or services, preparedness, resilience, creativity, local knowledge or innovation that are utilised in normal times and times of emergencies (Mwambari 2020). Surely, Ramaphosa's back to the basics approach signified a leader willing to educate the nation on basic hygiene practices..

### **3. Realities of Imposing Strict Lockdown Conditions in South Africa**

Covid-19 has devastated societies and reversed human development gains, triggering humanitarian and socio-economic crises. Every day, the magnitude of the crisis is becoming clear. The crisis has impacted human rights, peace and security, and human development heavily. The livelihoods of individuals have been disrupted, and inequality has been exacerbated. The ordinary people who earn their living menial jobs have found it difficult to eke a living. Unfortunately, the hard reality is that many lives will be lost before the pandemic is brought under control, and its wider ramifications will be felt for years to come. Its immediate and long-term impact on the developing world is expected to be massive (Erondu 2020). Due to its vulnerability, South Africa needs aggressive and concerted intervention to curtail the crisis. The increase in the number of people catching the virus has serious socio-economic ramifications. Therefore, a global approach to dealing with the crisis needs to be extended to South Africa and Africa in general. The African Union's Centres for Disease Control and Prevention has confirmed the increase in Covid-19 cases with a significant number of recoveries. Owing to a lack of testing capacity across the continent, with some countries having inadequate resources for conducting the tests, the numbers may be underestimated. To deal with the issue of testing, Ramaphosa (2020a) announced that his government would

further strengthen the health response: Government is strengthening its surveillance and testing systems. We are in process of identifying isolation and quarantine sites in each district and metro. Capacity is being increased at designated hospitals in all provinces. We are also increasing the capacity of

existing contact tracing processes. We are partnering with the private sector to set up a national tracking, tracing and monitoring system of all people infected with the coronavirus and those they have been in contact with. Because of the severity of this virus and its rapid spreading, government will make funding available to capacitate the sectors dealing with the national response to the Coronavirus outbreak.

The above pronouncement shows that African countries have shown leadership individually and collectively. The African Union has established an Africa Taskforce for Coronavirus (AFTCOR) to develop a unified continent-wide strategy and sectoral strategies to combat the virus. Its impact is being developed, and the African Member States are taking several measures to contain the spread of the virus and mitigate its socio-economic impact (Erondu 2020). The progression of the disease the world over shows that modelling an immediate, swift and extraordinary action is required to stop enormous human catastrophe. South Africa has made a significant effort in slowing down the virus using the rule of law. The provincial legislature plays an important role during this time as their constitutional mandate demands that they remain accountable to the legislature even in the execution of its authority at the national and provincial levels (Merten 2020). Although there were complaints regarding the chapter nine institutions, such as reports on violence, abuse and desperation, the South African institutions have performed exceptionally under the circumstances.

The stringent measures are taken to control the virus had a significant impact on rights, freedoms, and the repression of human rights. With a broad range of restrictions enshrined in the constitution, the army's use assisted in maintaining law and order. However, the deployment of the army was heavily criticised in some quarters. Ramaphosa's rhetoric has communicated the government's intention of managing the virus. The conflicting messages and communication breakdown between the Presidency and the Ministers showed the complexity of politics. The resistance shown by people in certain instances showed a lack of consultations regarding certain lockdown restrictions. Although the government's intention of sending messages was good, remote communities did not have access to information and in some cases practising safe distancing was not possible in informal settlements.

The economic impact of the lockdown restrictions reached a humanitarian



crisis, and in some cases, the lockdowns had more severe consequences than the pandemic they were meant to address. People in informal settlements lost their sources of income which was compounded by unemployment and poverty resulting from retrenchments. Many people became desperate for food, water, and other necessities. Furthermore, poor communities had challenges accessing health care services, medication, professional counselling, or helplines, particularly those with chronic illnesses and/ or disabilities who struggled to gain access to vital medications, assistive devices, counselling, and other services (Merten 2020). To deal with this problem, Ramaphosa (2020c) said,

We have introduced an economic and social relief package worth over R500 billion to help companies in distress, save jobs, and provide some income to informal workers and poor households. As of today, the R200 billion Covid-19 Loan Guarantee Scheme, which is guaranteed by the government, has begun to process applications from small and medium-sized businesses.

On their own, these negative economic shocks are sufficiently large to push many households into positions of food insecurity and led to an induced reduction in household capabilities resulting in severe shocks to household income rather than a shock to food availability, such as in a drought (Mwambari 2020). Since food insecurity was a result of a collapse in earnings, income transfers were done through social protection to counter the economic effects of lockdowns. The impacts of the crisis were minimised substantially through government transfers.

#### **4. Rhetoric of a Coordinated African Response to Covid-19**

Two opposing narratives emerged when the virus attached the Global North about Covid-19 and Africa. There was an assumption that the increasing number of people with the virus and the uncontrolled increase of Covid-19 infections and death would lead to the collapse of the health systems in Africa. The other school of thought was premised on the early action by African governments to limit the spread of the disease. Thus, subduing the disease was possible because of the young population and blocking the import of Covid-19 cases. However, to ensure regional and international cooperation, African countries

need to work together to protect human rights and the right to health of all Africans. Africa must collaborate in many areas, including accountability and transparency in using financial resources and dealing with mismanagement and corruption to understand the scale of the virus. To turn the tide of this virus, African governments need to respond appropriately to the virus. In dealing with the impact of the virus, Ramaphosa (2020a) said,

In the last few weeks, we have seen a dramatic decline in economic activity in our major trading partners, a sudden drop in international tourism and severe instability across all global markets. The anticipated effects of the decline in exports and tourist arrivals will be exacerbated by both an increase in infections and the measures we are required to take to contain the spread of the disease. This will have a potentially severe impact on production, the viability of businesses, job retention and job creation. Cabinet is therefore in the process of finalising a comprehensive package of interventions to mitigate the expected impact of COVID-19 on our economy.

Whilst the pronouncement by Ramaphosa may give some hope in South Africa and across Africa's fragile economic and health systems, environmental and social challenges. Therefore, this scenario is still concerning for individual countries that have, in general, overstretched healthcare systems during non-epidemic times (Erondu 2020). The African Union's Centre for Disease Control (ACDC) has responded to and mobilised resources, offering specialist training and government-specific guidelines. However, bigger tasks of caring for respiratory infections across Africa remains a challenge. President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa conceded that the pandemic and resulting lockdown measures have 'evoked a lot of anger and opposition' in his country. Many Africans have bristled under Western-style lockdowns are viewed as inappropriate in an African context (Devermont 2020). As shown above, the continent's economy lies mostly in the informal sector. As such, restrictive lockdowns as public response measures could result in serious livelihood damage that Covid-19 itself.

As the current African Union (AU) chairperson, Ramaphosa claims that the advent of Covid-19 has demonstrated that Africa can work together in solving its problems. Ramaphosa has blamed the West for handling the crisis, particularly the United States of America and Europe. However, the RECs could have done

better in sharing information expertise and streamlining the procurement of essential supplies across the continent. Even though the closing of borders had a devastating effect on the African economies, over forty-two countries closed their borders. An integrated African content could have led to the revival of economic activities if there was a carefully monitored re-opening. Thus, developing common agreements and quantifying financial risks amongst RECs is one rational thing to do. Existing free trade agreements within RECs could minimise losses and leverage the continent to economic prosperity. In one of his addresses, Ramaphosa (2020b) said,

We must therefore do everything within our means to reduce the overall number of infections and to delay the spread of infection over a longer period, what is known as flattening the curve of infections. Our analysis of the progress of the epidemic informs us that we need to urgently and dramatically escalate our response. Without decisive action, the number of people infected will rapidly increase from a few hundred to tens of thousands, and within a few weeks to hundreds of thousands.

Whilst Ramaphosa's focus was on South Africa, he needed to see beyond his own country. Orchestrating an intra-African recovery could bring a lifeline to the continent and revive the travel industry. Thereby preserving jobs, boosting imports and exports and mitigating Covid-19 macro-economic effects. Since the duration of the pandemic is unknown, the continent needs to make use of the trade blocs. Ramaphosa's emphasis should be on operating in a globalised world to ensure that Africa is politically and economically viable. While Africa may be at the begging of the trajectory, the AU should start to mobilise its sub-regional structures to coordinate and strengthen the continent's Covid-19 response strategy.

## **5. Some Implications Beyond Covid-19**

The post-Covid-19 period presents the continent with several things to ponder, particularly the economic and health policies. Clearly, the situation now demands a more nuanced and critical reconsideration of both national policy and international practice that simultaneously transcends the rhetorical smokescreen

erected by African leaders and directly challenges the traditional ambivalence of the international community (Oloka-Onyango, 1995). The pandemic has presented South Africa with an opportunity to step up and take the lead on issues to do with international politics. Countries like Kenya and South Africa have taken the lead on the blue economy, Gabon has distinguished itself on climate change and environmental problems. Through RECs, countries like Zimbabwe and Sudan have clamoured for the removals of sanctions. While this new crisis might be another challenging moment for African peoples, after the epidemic is over, the continent will have the chance to become more autonomous and self-reliant, as the West focuses on its own survival (Mwambari, 2020). The pandemic presents an opportunity to wean itself off neo-colonial relations that is exploitative in nature.

The African Union has an opportunity to integrate its economic pillars into the Africa-wide response strategy by using Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the sub-regional blocs of African countries that have existed for decades (Erondu 2020). The RECs include the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), the Eastern African Community (EAC), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC). These existing relationships, shared social and cultural characteristics and tied economic and trade interests can be a strong foundation for a larger and better-resourced African Covid-19 response (Erondu 2020). Pan-Africanism will also need to be rejuvenated. Following decades of shortcomings, it has to be reconciled. While the progress on continental integration has been slow, the reason has much to do with an orientation informed by the orthodoxy of market liberalism (Sayed and Singh 2020). The response to the crisis shows a lack of collective action in Africa.

Africa needs to have a well-defined strategy on public health governance, socio-economic issues and public policy. Thus, Africa needs a strong commitment to regional integration and multilateralism. For instance, Ramaphosa's decision to press the international financial institutions to support the region's fragile economies (Devermont 2020). Africa will need to re-evaluate best practices from the West and reconsider alternative future actions. RECs could play a part in coordinating the monitoring of border crossing activity, especially to align non-pharmaceutical interventions such as curfews, lockdowns, and rules on social

gatherings (Erondu 2020). At the same time, other trade arrangements within and outside the continent should be fast-tracked to ensure that continental trade is strengthened, which could allow the African Union or African regional blocks to assert their agency more globally (Mwambari, 2020). Coupled with this is the development of regional initiatives, covering, among other things, the human rights arena, the area of migration and refugees, as well as a renewed focus on conflict resolution and peacebuilding (Oloka-Onyango, 1995). Surely, these initiatives will lay a foundation for Africa to prioritise African markets, embark on innovative business approaches to local production and bring to an end the ‘resource curse.’ A major overhaul is needed across the continent to transition economies from relying on the extraction and sale of raw materials to the West (and East – i.e. China) and building up local industries that utilise local resources and turn them into value-added products for export (Mwambari, 2020). For instance, Ramaphosa (2020a) indicated,

Foreign funding should be gradually substituted with national funding drawn from taxation, repatriation of funds and new higher-value exports. It will also mean that African countries will have to stop importing foreign ‘saviours’ to help solve African problems. The continent has enough local talent and educated experts at home and in the diaspora to tackle challenges in a variety of fields and they would do it better than foreigners, because unlike them, they actually know very well the local context and specificities.

Africa has to generate value from its export and reduce over-reliance on borrowing. Whilst Africa has material and human resources to build its capacity for a prosperous continent for everyone, lack of political will and the extractive practices of external actors has been used as an excuse for inaction. However, the challenge for Africa is not about the restoration of its intellectual freedom and a capacity to create but sovereignty. Africa has to break away with the outsourcing of its sovereign prerogatives, to reconnect with local configurations, to break with sterile imitation, to adapt science, technology and research to its context, to elaborate institutions based on its specificities and resources, to adopt an inclusive governance framework and endogenous development, and to create value in Africa in order to reduce systemic dependence (Sayed and Singh 2020). Africa needs to start to solve its own problems. African leaders have to take a

radical direction to change the status quo. Covid-19 presents lessons to Africa to build its fiscal resources in good times to respond timeously during a crisis. As such, despite its devastating effects, Covid-19 is a wake-up call to African leaders to be innovative and adaptive to various situations.

## 6. Conclusion

The unprecedented effects of Covid-19 have been felt in the whole world. The impact of the pandemic has drawn sharp fault lines of the world's inequalities. Covid-19 has changed social life in the Global North and Global South, respectively. The impact of the pandemic was anticipated to have serious ramifications in Africa. Covid-19 has devastated societies and reversed human development gains, triggering humanitarian and socio-economic crises. The Covid-19 crisis has impacted human rights, peace and security, and human development heavily. The livelihoods of individuals have been disrupted, and inequality has been exacerbated. The ordinary people who earn their living through menial jobs have found it difficult to eke a living. The pronouncement by Ramaphosa may give some hope in South Africa and across Africa's fragile economic and health systems environmental and social challenges. However, the scenario is still concerning for individual countries that have, in general, overstretched healthcare systems during non-epidemic times. Clearly, the situation now demands a more nuanced and critical reconsideration of both national policy and international practice that simultaneously transcends the rhetorical smokescreen erected by African leaders and directly challenges the traditional ambivalence of the international community. The pandemic has presented South Africa with an opportunity to step up and take the lead on issues to do with international politics.

While this new crisis might be another challenging moment for African peoples, after the epidemic is over, the continent will have the chance to become more autonomous and self-reliant, as the West focuses on its own survival. The pandemic presents an opportunity to wean itself off neo-colonial relations that is exploitative in nature. Africa's profound failings are noticeable in public health, food security, governance and infrastructural development. Effective coordination of the Covid-19 crisis requires functioning state institutions, functioning state, application of judiciary norms, and balancing power for the practice to be adapted to the realities across the African continent. The second

wave of Covid-19 requires the African Union to use this opportunity to integrate its economic pillars into the Africa-wide response strategy by using Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the sub-regional blocs of African countries that have existed for decades. The paper concludes that various isolated efforts made by African countries to deal with the disease and the failure of the continent to adopt a coordinated effort in responding to disease, Covid-19 remains a major challenge.

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