perspectives

POLITICAL ANALYSES AND COMMENTARY

AFRICA

South Africa
Emerging Power or Fading Star?
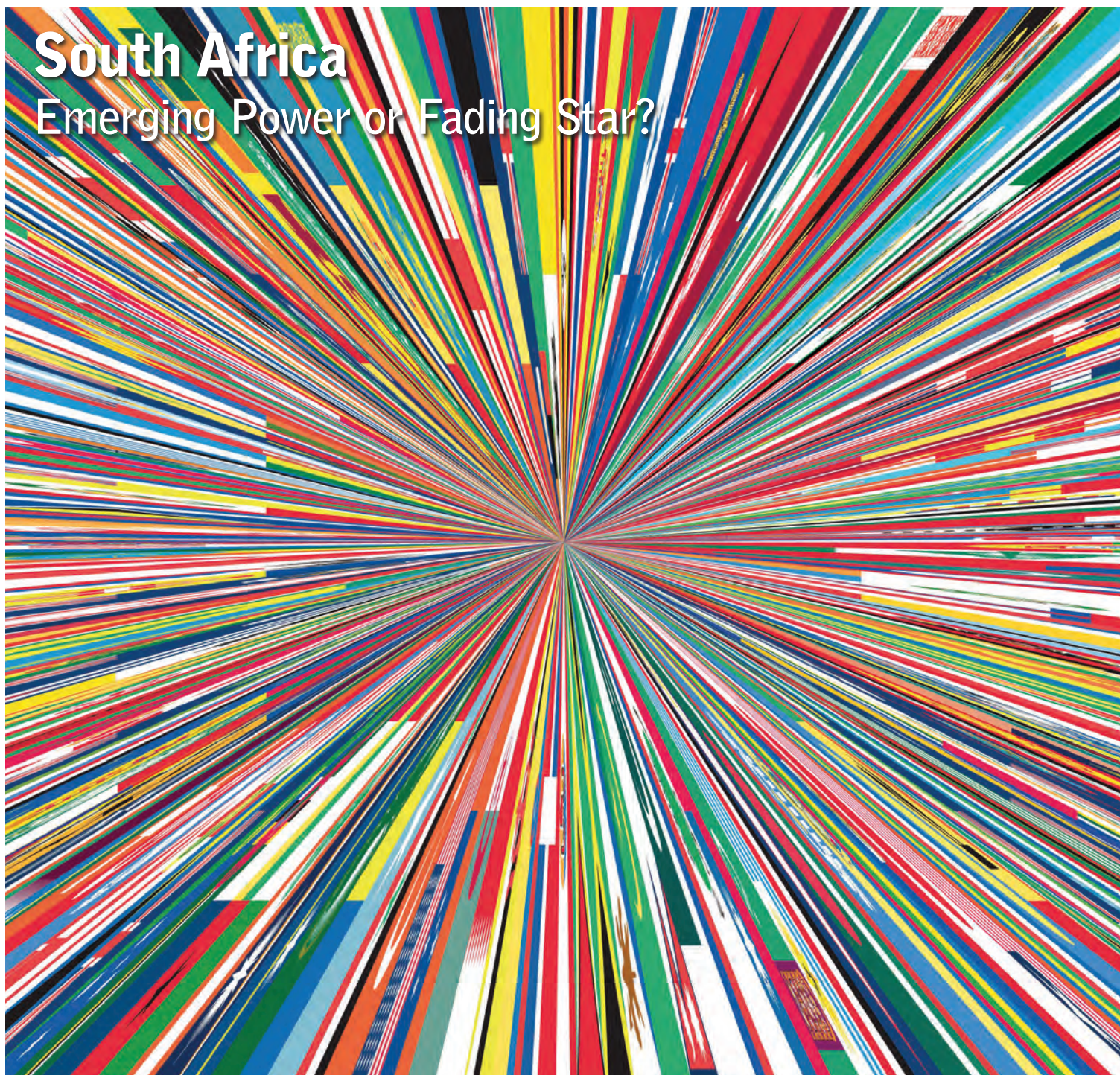
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Editorial

South Africa, 2006. The country's GDP growth rate stands at 5.6 percent, the highest since the first democratic elections in 1994. After supporting the transformation of the Organisation of African Unity into the African Union at the beginning of the millennium, President Thabo Mbeki's vision of an "African renaissance" of peace, stability and development is glowing with vitality. In July, the Democratic Republic of Congo holds its first multiparty elections in 41 years, following a peace deal that Pretoria helped to broker in 2002. In September, the India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) Dialogue Forum meets for the first time in Brasilia. A month later, South Africa is elected non-permanent member to the United Nations (UN) Security Council (2007–2008), with 186 out of 192 votes. Given its economic prowess, regional influence and international aspirations, South Africa cements its role in the world as an "emerging power" and the most influential player in Africa.

Fast-forward ten years. Although Africa has experienced a decade of rapid economic growth, the expectation that the continent's most sophisticated economy would remain its most prominent has not been fulfilled. Instead, fast-growing African economies like Ethiopia and Kenya have begun to take the limelight. Once by far the largest African economy, South Africa now changes ranks with Nigeria and Egypt, depending on the current valuation of their currencies against the US dollar. In 2016, South Africa's economic growth is close to zero and Standard and Poor's sovereign risk rating puts the country just one notch above sub-investment grade – so-called "junk status" – with many economists expecting a downgrade in 2017.

While the current commodity price downturn has put a damper on Africa's growth prospects, the international community's belief that South Africa can speak on behalf of the continent in global fora is increasingly contested. And although South Africa was granted a second stint at the UN Security Council in 2011–2012, its aspiration to become a permanent member has been challenged in its own region. While President Jacob Zuma's administration managed to gain access to the Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC) Forum in 2010, and it remains the only African country represented in the G20, South Africa's foreign policy seems to lack any coherent strategy. The country is consumed by its domestic politics, which are mired in corruption scandals, institutional erosion and increasing public unrest. As a result, the international moral and democratic legitimacy that South Africa enjoyed following the transition from apartheid is waning, and its long-term stability is in danger. In short, South Africa's star looks to be fading.

Both of these snapshots are, of course, incomplete and deliberately polarised. Nonetheless, as the international terrain begins to change, so have perceptions of South Africa. Informed by the discussions at an international conference jointly organised by the German Development Institute, the Heinrich Böll Foundation and Stanford University on "Emerging Power or Fading Star? South Africa's Role on the Continent and Beyond", held 12–14 July 2016 in Cape Town, the articles gathered in this edition of *Perspectives* shed light on some of the nuances and challenges that define South Africa's place in the world today.

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Emerging Powers, Clubs and Equality

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For many years now, debate around new "emerging powers" in the developing world has focused on blocs with colourful acronyms that range from construction material (BRIC – Brazil, Russia, India and China) to herbs (MINT – Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria and Turkey) and insects (TICK – Taiwan, India, China and Korea).

The BRIC acronym was a creation of Goldman Sachs, a member of the investment-banking sector that is so enamoured with the idea of "emerging markets". The bank's Jim O'Neill coined it, thinking that "the global economy in the coming decades would be propelled by the growth of four populous and economically ambitious countries"[1]. Goldman Sachs was not suggesting that these countries would necessarily act in concert as a coherent force in global politics – or economics, for that matter – but it did argue that future global economic governance would not be effective without them. With the establishment of the BRIC Forum in 2009, the group graduated to greater political and diplomatic significance, often seen as standing in opposition to the established Western powers, albeit still nascent in its impact.

With the exception of South Africa and (sometimes) Nigeria, African countries are not counted as "emerging powers". Indeed, with their small markets, limited purchasing power and persistent internal and cross-border instability, many African states have very limited influence on the global agenda and economy. However, some countries in Africa can be regarded as regional powers on the basis of such criteria as

- significant economic and market growth
- leadership in the region
- greater voice in the international arena
- soft power through their history, institutions and political and economic success.

South Africa, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Kenya, Angola and possibly Algeria or Egypt might qualify, each having played an important role in support of continental or regional institutions or conflict resolution initiatives. They have displayed leadership by putting resources into what might be considered regional public goods.

However, their resources are more limited than emerging powers elsewhere in the world, as is their voice when compared to a China, an India or a Turkey. Many of these African regional powers face significant domestic political and economic challenges, while the security of others is being undermined by violent extremism. In South Africa, persistently high levels of unemployment and inequality have been exacerbated by significant attempts from within the ruling elite to undermine and weaken the constitutional foundations of the state.

Club Governance: Effectiveness and Legitimacy

The constant challenge in broadly inclusive multilateral forums like the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the United Nations or even the African Union is that consensus necessitates adopting the lowest common denominator. In contrast, "club" governance – whereby members of a club come to agreement on key decisions concerning a global or regional public good – can facili-

tate leadership by example. Still, it does not mean that everybody is on board simply because the bigger countries have said so. Furthermore, club governance (especially in the G20) has not been as effective since its initial successes after the 2008–09 financial crisis. Agreements on key global economic public goods among the 20 members have been fraught, and often honoured more by omission.

The concept of a club has its roots in the private upper-class gentlemen's clubs of 18th- and 19th-century Britain. Since the mid-1970s, club governance in the worlds' economies has been synonymous with the Group of 7 (G7). The dominance of these seven most powerful Western countries was such that their informal annual summits could ensure stability in the system and overcome crises that threatened their prosperity. As power relations have shifted, and "emerging powers" entered the lexicon of international relations, club governance had to evolve. And so, out of the global financial crisis emerged the G20, a grouping made up of the G8 plus twelve systemically important emerging powers.

Other forms of club governance have been very effective over the years. For example, the Franco-German partnership drove the European Union project from its earliest days as the European Coal and Steel Com-

munity to the creation of the Eurozone.

Effective club governance requires members that are indispensable to the system, whether regional or global. While the complexity of the world today has introduced many more variables into the power equation, the exclusion of systemically important states usually means policy or implementation paralysis. The inability or unwillingness of formal global governance institutions to adapt has led to a blossoming of clubs as alternative centres of global policy development.

Clubs may form around a common interest, such as agricultural issues (Cairns Group), or a much more ambitious objective, such as reforming the global system (IBSA – India, Brazil, South Africa – although now overtaken in this by BRICS).

While smaller systemically important groupings can come to consensus and move decisions forward at the global or regional level, they can also be perceived as exclusive and their legitimacy limited. Yet, if the outcome of such exclusive deliberations is global or regional public goods, then club governance does have *outcome legitimacy* – even given the likely lack of unanimity on the definition of global public goods. Kaul, Blondin and Nahtigal[2] define them as commodities that enjoy global application in terms of use, cost or both, but there

are bound to be winners and losers. Losers are unlikely to believe that the states that pushed through such decisions were imbued with output legitimacy.

Clubs as Levers of Influence in Africa?

In recent years, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad) could be considered a step in the direction of club governance for Africa. Its membership was intended to be voluntary and to focus on addressing Africa's chronic economic underperformance and poor governance.

President Mbeki secured agreement on Nepad by working with systemically important African states with the continental clout to ensure its adoption. In that way, his approach was similar to the Franco-German partnership that led to the Treaty of Rome in 1957.

Under South Africa's President Thabo Mbeki, a group of five leaders (South Africa, Egypt, Nigeria, Algeria and Senegal) played a significant role in advancing the objectives encompassed in the Nepad founding document and Africa's voice was heard in global forums where it was previously marginalised. The case for Africa's governance and development agenda was made very compellingly by President Mbeki at a series of G8 meetings, leading to the Kananaskis Summit's Africa Action Plan in 2002 and Tony Blair's Commission for Africa in 2005. But Nepad has since been integrated into the organs of the African Union and no longer drives this process as it did. In the absence of regional power champions, the political momentum on fundamental issues in Africa – like improving state governance and accountability, removing impunity, and developing economic partnerships with the North that would accelerate development – has come to very little.

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Should such a club governance arrangement be pursued more formally in Africa?

Africa's biggest challenges lie in the area of peace and security. Recent developments in South Sudan, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo illustrate the need for external pressure to deter recalcitrant leaders from their default desire to stay in power. A group of like-minded countries, committed to the regional public goods of peace, security and accountability, could act jointly to manage violent conflicts and ensure adherence to national and continental codes of conduct adopted through the power of persuasion. To some extent, the African Union's Peace and Security Council (PSC) was intended to recognise the role of big states.

However, Burundi offers a cautionary tale. While the PSC's ambassadors agreed to deploy a force to Burundi to stop the escalating instability and insecurity, the council members' heads of state reversed the decision a month later. Would the existence of club governance have helped in such a situation? If key leaders believe that they cannot act in concert, even in the face of threats to human security, because it would constitute interference in the affairs of a state, then a club of countries does not provide the answer either.

It might be worth considering a model similar to the European Union, where a core group of countries (led principally by Germany and France) informally caucused on items on the formal multilateral agenda, in order to create consensus on a way forward. However, at the global level, South Africa has always been riled by the WTO's "green room" negotiations, which (at least according to one narrative) exclude many WTO members in the interest of achieving consensus on particular issues before taking them to the bigger forum.

More recently, under President Jacob Zuma, South Africa has been far more assertive in some areas on the continent. Two specific examples come to mind. The African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC) was a South African initiative that initially did not have the support of countries such as Nigeria, but was pushed through the African Union in 2013. The other, of course, was the country's campaign to get Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma elected as chair of the African Union Commission. It was not clear in either of these cases that South Africa had adopted a coalition-building approach with the key regional powers (apart from support from the southern African region), which is different from the

approach adopted for Nepad by Mbeki and Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo.

South Africa's economic and political status 22 years after freedom has changed substantially. Not only has the burnish of the "miracle transition" worn off, the African landscape has also altered. There are now more self-confident and rising regional powers vying for leadership, and South Africa's own socio-political woes work against an easily acceptable influence or dominance. Thus South Africa's role in convening such a club might be severely circumscribed and would need to be preceded by significant consultation and co-development with other key African states.

Lastly, there is one abiding element in African politics that cannot be ignored. With a history of exploitation, African countries have an enduring suspicion of closed "smoke-filled" rooms where a small group of people decide the fate of the many. And while African leaders have often done little to endear themselves to their own people, in terms of inclusive and accountable governance, they do expect such treatment at the international level among their "peers".

But can club governance in Africa be used to build concentric circles of consensus? Should Africa have a Club of Seven? Is it time to drop the commitment to equality among states, seeing that this is not the case anyway?

1   O' Neill J. 2013: *The Growth Map: Economic Opportunity in the BRICS and Beyond,* Portfolio Penguin: London.
2   Kaul I, Blondin D and Nahtigun N. 2016. 'Understanding global public goods: Where we stand and where to next?' in Kaul I (ed.). *Global Public Goods,* Cheltenham: Edward Elgar. Cited in Klingebiel S. 2016. 'Rising powers and the provision of transnational public goods: Conceptual considerations on a global common good and distinctive features of South Africa as a case study', unpublished paper.

South Africa on the Global Stage:

Between Great Expectations and Capacity Constraints

Philani Mthembu

Following the end of apartheid, South Africa ceased to be known as a pariah state and rapidly became integrated into the global political and economic order. Given its largely peaceful transition to democracy, progressive constitution and sophisticated economy, the international community expected the country to play an important role on the African continent and at the global level. These expectations were only heightened by the government's own proclamations for "the promotion of democracy worldwide" and making human rights issues a central pillar of its foreign policy, as expressed by the country's first president, Nelson Mandela, in a much cited article in *Foreign Affairs* written in 1993[1].

The country's two stints on the United Nations (UN) Security Council (2007–2008 and 2011-2012), which it used to promote a closer working relationship between the United Nations and the African Union, affirmed its leadership role on the African continent and its emerging power status. In addition, its admission as the only African country to the G20 and the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) Forum confirmed the international view of South Africa as a pivotal state, if not the voice of the continent on the global stage.

Although Tshwane (Pretoria) continues to host the second largest concentration of embassies after Washington DC[2], highlighting the continued international interest in the country, not all is well with Africa's leading diplomatic power. Against the background of the "Africa Rising" narrative of recent years, South Africa's lead in terms of social transformation, economic growth and development has begun to be questioned. The present article outlines some of the country's domestic institutional and political constraints and suggests how South Africa can overcome them in order to more effectively shape important global debates and live up to the great expectations for its foreign policy, both at home and abroad, in the post-apartheid era.

South Africa: No Longer the Only Game in Town

Notwithstanding its continued prominent position on the world stage, the story of Africa is not just about South Africa anymore. The very idea that South Africa can speak for Africa – which, although contested within the continent, has been allowed to persist both within the country and abroad – has tended to reinforce the idea of South African exceptionalism and unintentionally patronised other increasingly confident states looking to exercise greater agency. It also reinforced the myth of Africa as a homogenous geographic space. With approximately 2000 languages and a vast cultural diversity among 54 nations[3] on a continent large enough to fit the United States, China, India, Japan, the UK, Italy, Germany, France, Spain, Portugal and Eastern Europe within its physical borders[4], no single country can claim to speak for the entire continent.

Few would argue with the fact that post-apartheid South Africa has sought to play a constructive role and used its proximity to the challenges facing the continent to add a unique voice to the global political landscape in different fora. Through Thabo Mbe-

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ki's African Renaissance project, the country played an active role in peacekeeping and peace-building across the continent. In more recent years, South Africa's presence in the G20 has ensured greater development and infrastructure funding on the continent than would have been the case without representation from Africa. It promoted development issues in the Doha Round of negotiations at the World Trade Organisation (WTO), and has worked effectively with fellow emerging powers to enhance their collective bargaining position in the trade negotiations. In the climate talks, South Africa negotiated strongly for the principle of "common but differentiated responsibility" between polluting countries and the rest. The Common Africa Position advanced in the post-2015 development agenda negotiations also ensured that developmental issues of importance to Africa, such as peace and security and domestic resource mobilisation, have a higher prominence in the Sustainable Development Goals.

Yet South Africa's frontrunner position has not been without tension. The African Union's Ezulwini Consensus[5], which calls for two seats for the continent on a reformed UN Security Council, demonstrates a clear pushback against South Africa once again being elevated above everyone else.

In the first decade of the 21st century, a number of African states, referred to by McKinsey Global Institute as "lions on the move"[6], used the peace dividend of the post-Cold War era to rapidly grow their economies and build more legitimate forms of government. Countries such as Ethiopia, Tanzania, Nigeria, Kenya, Mauritius, Botswana, Namibia and Rwanda, despite some persistent challenges, have played an

important role in showcasing to the world that South Africa is not the only gateway to Africa, but merely one of them.

Troubles at Home

In stark contrast to some of its peers, South Africa's growth rate is currently close to zero percent and the country faces the possibility of a credit downgrade to "junk" status at the end of 2017. Socio-economic challenges such as poverty, corruption and inequality persist, while the heterogeneous #FeesMustFall student movement's call for free decolonised education[7] has brought the university sector to a near halt. Lasting solutions to these pressing problems will

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be difficult to attain in the immediate term, especially as the leadership of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) continues to lose the moral high ground of the early post-apartheid era. The weak showing at the recent local government elections clearly confirmed that voters are increasingly losing patience with the ANC. The tripartite alliance (including the ANC, Congress of South African Trade Unions and the South African Communist Party) continues to be divided and the government appears to

be "at war with itself"[8], reacting to events rather than leading and shaping them.

South Africa's emphasis on South–South cooperation and African solidarity increasingly tends to stress the importance of state sovereignty and non-interference in the domestic affairs of fellow nation states, leaving Western powers in particular concerned about the direction the country is taking. Given the fact that most foreign direct investment in South Africa still comes from EU countries[9], the frustration in some Western capitals is understandable, as it seems that South Africa has effectively downgraded its political relations with them.

Much of this critique refers to the 2015 ANC discussion document on international relations, which condemns the West for some of its actions (such as bringing NATO into the conflict in Libya) while defending Russia and China in the unfolding geopolitical landscape. Having been a strong advocate for the International Criminal Court (ICC) prior to its founding, South Africa has recently tendered its notice of withdrawal from the ICC to the United Nations, in line

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with the policy document's thinking. This has been met with concerns at home and abroad that the country is abandoning its core values and principles. The decision to withdraw follows the legal and political embarrassment the government faced last year, after allowing ICC fugitive President Al-Bashir of Sudan to enter and leave South Africa for an African Union Summit. This action was subjected to great public scrutiny and a court challenge that confirmed the government had broken its own laws.

Addressing Capacity Constraints

Some serious rethinking is required to develop a coherent South African global strategy under tough economic conditions. This may mean downsizing the number of foreign embassies in line with the current focus on economic diplomacy within the department of international relations and

cooperation (DIRCO). Difficult questions are already being asked about the sustainability, utility and rationale of South Africa's above-average number of embassies. Some missions will remain politically important, but resources should be reallocated to those parts of the world with a realistic potential to assist with the country's domestic and regional priorities. Bold cuts appear to be unlikely for the moment. The government still considers the embassies to be integral to the country's foreign policy architecture and its ability to influence global debates.

Reform is also needed to improve coordination at the inter-ministerial level and to facilitate broader focused consultation with various foreign policy actors through the newly formed South African Council on International Relations (SACOIR), a ministerial advisory body that includes representatives from academia, business, labour and civil society. This coordination effort must also include an improved communication strategy. Public diplomacy has not been a strong feature of South Africa's foreign policy, leading to the government finding itself unnecessarily on the defensive due to an inability to communicate the country's foreign policy or decision making processes to the South African public and its international partners.

The South African National Defence Force (SANDF) also faces serious challenges. If the country wants to keep up its strong peacekeeping role, the military will need more funding and better equipment. The 2014 defence review states that the SANDF is effectively 24 percent underfunded and recommends "either a greater budget allocation or a significantly scaled-down level of ambition and commitment which is aligned to the current budget allocation"[11]. Given the centrality of peacekeeping in South Africa's foreign policy and the clear linkage between peace and development, the state will have to address the budget shortfall to prevent further decline.

Ongoing efforts to train the next generation will also be essential to ensure that the country has a rising cohort of young and capable diplomats. The newly created Mediation Support Unit (MSU) within DIRCO's Diplomatic Training, Research and Development (DTRD) branch has engaged in several training programmes for young people and women focused on diplomatic practice and conflict resolution. It is equally important that the young trainees have opportunities for mobility within DIRCO

in order to keep them in the department. This should be done by continuously professionalising the diplomatic career and reducing the number of political appointees who may not be the best equipped for these positions.

The Association of Former Ambassadors, High Commissioners and Chief Representatives, launched simultaneously with SACOIR, will also be a useful knowledge resource if it is well organised. Those ministries that play a central role in implementing South Africa's foreign policy – such as environmental affairs in the climate change negotiations, and trade and industry in advancing the country's trade agenda and economic diplomacy – and the department of defence also have leading roles to play in this re-assessment of foreign policy.

Foreign policy thinktanks and civil society organisations must go out into the community to raise public awareness of the importance of global politics to the aspirations of the country. In the long run, South Africa's openly ambitious foreign policy may be hamstrung by its citizens' lack of awareness of the issues.

South Africa certainly still possesses the institutional capabilities to shape global debates, but it must continue to deal with institutional decline and improve its ability to coordinate different stakeholders to implement a coherent foreign policy. It must also resolve the diplomatic community's longstanding unease with the country championing its domestic values on the global stage. In order to be more effective, South Africa must focus its diplomatic energy on a consistent narrative centred on peace and security in Africa, domestic and foreign resource mobilisation to meet its development challenges and those of its immediate region, and elevating the socio-economic rights it enshrines in its own constitution, which is among the most advanced in the world.

The country does not possess enough material capabilities to compete with the great powers or to unilaterally shape debates on the African continent, but it should not underestimate the utility of being known as a soft power that champions the interests of those who are often unheard or ignored on the global stage. Indeed, there is much material benefit to be gained by merging its domestic values with its foreign policy interests. This can only be accomplished if the country is not diverted by longstanding struggles among the great powers and instead maintains an independent, non-aligned foreign policy on the world stage. ▪▪

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5   Cilliers, J. 2015: When will Africa abandon the Ezulwini consensus? ISS Today. Available at: https://www.issafrica.org/iss-today/when-will-africa-abandon-the-ezulwini-consensus.

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8   Mahr, K. 2016: South Africa's government is at war with itself, The Washington Post, October 15. Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/10/15/south-africas-government-is-at-war-with-itself/.

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Still a Champion?
South Africa's Economic Diplomacy

Catherine Grant Makokera

The day-to-day work of diplomats and the many other stakeholders in the international relations community covers an increasingly wide range of issues, many of which are economic in nature. In acknowledgement of this, and prompted by increased competition for foreign direct investment on the continent, the South African department of international relations and cooperation (DIRCO) devoted a chapter of its 2011 foreign policy white paper to economic diplomacy. In comparison, for example, peacebuilding only received a few scattered references. The white paper recognises that effective economic diplomacy requires cooperation between the government and the private sector. This has become even more critical in recent years as South Africa has seen lower levels of growth than its neighbours, making it less appealing to both domestic and foreign investors.

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Economic activities like trade and investment remain largely driven by business, but there is an important role for government in pursuing policies that support private sector actors as well as negotiating the "rules of the game" that enable such activities to flourish. This includes the negotiation of various international agreements, such as free trade areas; the provision of government financed support for exporters and investors; and the maintenance of a legal environment that protects private property and the rule of law.

Considering that cross-border linkages are a fundamental factor in the growth and development of a highly interconnected economy like South Africa, sound economic diplomacy is essential. The country is strongly networked into global trading and financial markets, making it relevant and necessary for South Africa to play a leading role in international economic governance forums. The overall goals of South Africa's economic diplomacy are not defined in specific terms but are broadly anchored in supporting national development priorities through increasing exports, particularly of value-added or industrial products, and facilitating foreign direct investment that provides job opportunities and contributes to growth.

Economic Diplomacy Actors and Agenda

There is no doubt that South Africa is pursuing economic diplomacy initiatives on a regular and consistent basis. This is not just the responsibility of DIRCO. There are other key government departments actively involved in promotion activities as well as setting the rules of the game at the multilateral level. This includes the department of trade and industry (DTI), National Treasury and the Presidency, although the role of the latter has declined under President Jacob Zuma. It is also worth noting the increasing levels of activity in the area of economic diplomacy by provincial and municipal government agencies, such as the development of provincial trade strategies and the investment incentives offered by some city administrations. This proliferation of actors increases the challenges of coordination and also runs the risk of encouraging competition among sub-national players who are all seeking to attract greater levels of trade and investment in their respective locations.

Mr. Rob Davies, Minister of Trade and Industry, at a round table hosted by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Author: UNCTAD (Creative Commons 2.0)

At the global level, South Africa's economic diplomacy agenda has remained relatively consistent in recent years. This is largely because the national priorities for economic development and the tools put in place to achieve them have not changed greatly, despite the major impacts of the 2008/09 world financial crisis and persistently low levels of growth. The South African government remains strongly wedded to the notion of a "developmental state" and an industrial policy that focuses on the creation of jobs through the growth of the manufacturing sector. The Industrial Policy Action Plan is regularly revised but at its heart is the idea that key sectors are worthy of government support due to their potential to add value to natural resources and move South Africa up the supply chain. Trade policy is firmly stated to be a tool of industrial policy and the hierarchy is clear in the economic diplomacy activities of the DTI in particular.

Without considering the strengths and weaknesses of South Africa's industrial policy per se, it has certainly been a basis for engagement in global economic rule-setting activities, from regional debates in the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to those on the global stage of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the G20. For example, South Africa has been involved in the development of regional industrial policies and regional value chains in southern Africa. The selection of the first manufacturing sectors for this work in SADC are in line with South Africa's own domestic priorities: minerals beneficiation, strengthening capacity to locally produced pharmaceuticals, and adding more value to agricultural commodities.

In the WTO, South Africa was a leading actor in the NAMA (Non-Agricultural Market Access) group of 11 countries that argued for policy space for advanced developing countries or emerging economies to pursue industrialisation through reduced commitments for the liberalisation of tariffs on non-agriculture or industrial products in the Doha Round. Before the WTO

negotiations stalled, South Africa had made progress in getting acknowledgment from other members of its special circumstances, as was reflected in draft texts on NAMA. More recently, South Africa has supported G20 interactions on the role of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in global value chains. Again, this is in line with the national focus on strengthening the small business sector in South Africa.

South Africa's Economic Diplomacy Capacity

The strong domestic-policy grounding of South Africa's economic diplomacy activities at the regional and multilateral level makes it a conscientious and active player in global economic governance forums. The capacity of DIRCO itself is fairly limited in the area of economic diplomacy but this has been recognised and there are steps underway to provide more training for foreign policy officials at all levels, from ambassadors to cadets. A number of other departments, such as science and technology, environmental affairs, and health, also have international policy expertise that enables South Africa to play an active role in economic diplomacy initiatives such as tobacco control and the square kilometre array telescope project.

> Although some observers bemoan a lack of strategic direction in foreign policy in recent years, South Africa's economic diplomacy has remained an area of real strength, particularly at the global level where the rules of the game are set.

The role of individual personalities is often overlooked when assessing the "soft power" of a country like South Africa in the area of multilateral economic diplomacy. There are, however, numerous examples where the standing of particular negotiators and senior officials has contributed to the perception of the country's capacity as an effective partner. For example, South Africa's trade negotiators are acknowledged as some of the best at the WTO and in bilateral negotiations such as the SADC-European Union Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) and the renewal of market access to

the United States under the African Growth and Opportunities Act (AGOA). In both these cases, South Africa was able to secure preferential access for its exports to these important trading partners while making limited reciprocal concessions. South Africa continues to be asked to co-chair a number of working groups in the G20 (including the Development Working Group), which is in part a recognition of the professional capacity of the government officials participating in these processes.

Voice of Africa?

South Africa's capacity is one of the reasons it is invited to join global economic governance clubs, whether as a member (G20) or an observer (OECD). As the largest economy on the continent, South Africa was usually seen as the African representative in such forums. This reasoning has some merit but South Africa's economy has stalled over the last few years and it is now of a similar size to Nigeria and Egypt. South Africa's staying power as a participant in economic rule-making at the global level has more to do with the sophistication of its economy, including the financial services sector, and its ability to actively participate. Other African countries find it harder to prioritise diplomatic activities, such as attending international meetings and establishing strong missions abroad, due to the overwhelming importance of other issues more directly related to domestic economic development. This is reflected in the poor participation by successive African Union (AU) chairs in the G20 processes where they have permanent observer status.

As a result, South Africa is often required to walk a line between its national interests and being the "voice of Africa". The latter role has not been formally given and there is no mandate for its participation on behalf of other countries in these debates. That does not take away from South Africa's responsibility to be aware of its position and to use its economic diplomacy tools skilfully. South Africa can put issues of broader interest to the rest of the continent on the G20 agenda and share information about changes that will result from decisions by the Group. Structured consultation mechanisms would go some way to achieving the balance in South Africa's economic diplomacy between national and regional or continental interests. There have been attempts in this regard, including through the Africa Group

structure in the WTO and G20 briefings held in Addis Ababa for AU members. A detailed Africa strategy for South Africa could usefully consider these options and more.

Work Remains to Be Done

Although some observers bemoan a lack of strategic direction in foreign policy in recent years, South Africa's economic diplomacy has remained an area of real strength, particularly at the global level where the rules of the game are set. Additional work is required to address the balance between the national interests of South Africa and those of other African countries who might not always have a seat at the table themselves. It is also crucial to ensure that capacity remains strong even after particular individuals move on or change positions.

Fundamentally, successful economic diplomacy builds on a strong national consensus and the biggest challenge facing South Africa currently is the apparent weakness in this regard. Economic diplomacy takes place in the context of broader state-business relations, which are fraught with divisions. The government has shown an ongoing mistrust of parts of the business community in South Africa, especially those firms that are "white-owned" and viewed as not supporting the development and transformation objectives of the government. This is demonstrated by attempts to establish some code of conduct to govern investment in neighbouring African economies.

However, there is also no vocal business constituency pushing for more effective economic diplomacy, such as through a meaningful regional integration strategy. Organised business structures in South Africa are weak, and public-private dialogue is largely built on responses to crisis situations, such as the engagements that followed the unexpected removal of the finance minister at the end of 2015. Without structures in place for firms to regularly and collectively engage on policy matters, including economic diplomacy, there is little follow-through on any of the discussions that take place. The risk of vested interests being able to dominate the engagements with government also increases, with the concept of "state capture" by business gaining significant traction in the South African media in 2016, resulting in discussions within the ruling African National Congress and an investigation by the public protector.

The South African government is clear that it will continue to play an active role on the continent to promote Africa's development and growth as well as in other economic diplomacy initiatives where national interests can be pursued, such as the WTO and the G20 agenda on tax reforms. This is one area where a more focused strategy for engaging South African business could show real dividends, not only in development terms but also in commercial gains. South Africa also needs to learn from its competitors, including traditional powers like France and the US as well as emerging partners such as China and India, all of whom are working to build effective public-private partnerships around mutually agreed economic diplomacy goals. ▪▪

South Africa's Status as a Regional Power:
A Nigerian Perspective
Interview

Victor A.O. Adetula

Victor A.O. Adetula is a professor for International Relations and Development Studies at the University of Jos, Nigeria. He is also Head of Research at the Nordic Africa Institute in Uppsala, Sweden. Victor previously held the Claude Ake Visiting Professor Chair at Uppsala University.

HBF: In global governance fora such as the G20 and the BRICS Forum, South Africa has been perceived and invited as Africa's leading emerging power and a legitimate representative of the continent. How is this received in Nigeria and how does the country itself view South Africa?

Adetula: Contrary to some media reports, the Nigerian government welcomes South Africa's rising status and fortune in global politics. At the same time, there is a sense in Nigerian public discourse that the country does not receive the recognition it deserves from key members of the international community – especially given the prominent role Nigeria has played in the "Africa Rising" narrative. Official pronouncements and declarations of Nigerian authorities suggest a desire for global recognition as an important regional power.

Although Nigeria is well-established in fora for South–South cooperation, such as the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group of states, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Group of 77 plus China, the Africa–South America Cooperation Forum and the Forum on China–Africa Cooperation, its aspiration for membership in some global governance fora – for example the G20 – has not received the blessing of powerful "gatekeepers", notably Western powers and to some extent the BRICS [Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa]. The gap between how Nigeria views itself and outside perceptions has become a source of frustration for the country.

South Africa–Nigeria relations have gone through periods of outright hostility but also cooperation. How would you describe the current state of relations between the two?

Nigeria–South Africa relations have gone through four phases. During the first phase of the 1970s and 1980s, Nigeria's diplomacy was mostly dominated by issues that were directly or indirectly connected to the decolonisation of Africa. As such, Nigeria supported the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa and liberation movements in Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe. Nonetheless, the relationship between Nigeria and South Africa experienced serious tension immediately after the latter's independence, marking the second phase in the relationship. In 1995, President Nelson Mandela called for the suspension of Nigeria from the Commonwealth and the imposition of an arms embargo, oil embargo, and other sanctions against the military authoritarian regime of General Sani Abacha.

Thirdly, Nigeria's relations with South Africa improved significantly again from 1999, when the country returned to civil rule under Olusegun Obasanjo, the same year that Thabo Mbeki was elected as president of South Africa. The two countries became core drivers for

A man enters a customer's mobile phone sim card details on an MTN Group Ltd. registration machine at a roadside kiosk in Lagos, Nigeria.
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the development of the African continent. For example, the establishment of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad) was due to the joint initiative of Presidents Mbeki, Obasanjo, Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria and Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal. Together the two countries also sought international support to address the myriad problems wracking the continent, including the protracted wars and ballooning foreign debt. Their cooperation in the area of trade, investment and more recently defence has also increased significantly since 1999. For example, bilateral trade between South Africa and Nigeria increased from a total of ZAR 20.5 billion in 2010 to ZAR 66.2 billion in 2014. Nigeria is South Africa's seventh-largest trade partner in terms of total trade in Africa, and the country represents over two-thirds of the market share for South African exports and investments in West Africa. Also, Nigeria's privatisation programme attracted many investors from South Africa.

However, in the most recent phase of relations between Nigeria and South Africa, tensions have begun to resurface. A section of the Nigerian foreign policy elite thought Nigeria was not getting commensurate rewards for its diplomatic investments in Africa, such as the country's contributions to the anti-apartheid struggle. The harassment of Nigerians during the xenophobic attacks of 2015 in South Africa further contributed towards the pressure on the Nigerian government to demand more reciprocity in its bilateral relations. This also set the context for the recent sanctions the Federal Government of Nigeria imposed on South African telecommunications giant MTN after the company failed to deactivate 5.1 million

> **The harassment of Nigerians during the xenophobic attacks of 2015 in South Africa further contributed towards the pressure on the Nigerian government to demand more reciprocity in its bilateral relations.**

unregistered SIM cards. The initial USD 5.2 billion fine imposed was applauded by many Nigerians as very timely and appropriate, while most South African felt it was too harsh. It is, however, important to note that Nigeria and South Africa quickly set in motion high-level diplomatic processes, which included the visit by President Jacob Zuma to Nigeria, to resolve issues.

There are good reasons to perceive both countries as leading regional powers. Nigeria, for example, has Africa's biggest population and second largest economy in GDP terms. South Africa offers the more modern economy and advanced infrastructure, among other factors. How could the two countries strengthen their cooperation in order to leverage their respective front-runner positions on the continent and beyond?

It is important to understand that the two states stand much more to gain from cooperation than from trying to out-compete each other. Nigeria and South Africa must recognise and respect each other as important regional powers and partners in the task of building a politically strong, peaceful and economically viable African continent. Both Nigeria and South Africa have the economic strength, military capacity and political legitimacy to play this role. They however need to rediscover their political willingness and vision. They again need to serve as hubs for regional development initiatives on the continent, and invest more in the promotion of regional security and good governance.

While the two countries are doing very well in the areas of trade, there is a need to include other areas of human endeavour, especially in the cultural domain where some social values that are common to all Africans, regardless of where they live, find easy expression. This could encourage citizens to see the good in the other country and thus strengthen support for increased cooperation.

Is there a case to be made for "club governance" in Africa?

Africa has taken a regional approach to development, conflict prevention and management, and the promotion of good governance. Regional bodies such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have already moved the continent into this direction. The inability of many national governments to effectively address problems that have cross-border dimensions, such as global warming, HIV/AIDS, drug and human trafficking, has pushed them to embrace regionalism. However, this approach relies on the contributions and leadership role of regional hegemons and pivotal states to be effective.

This in turn suggests the need for African regional powers, notably Nigeria and South Africa, to again improve cooperation, on which effective club governance for Africa could be built within a framework of multi-level governance. Both countries need to advance Africa-centred goals in the international system. ▪▪

Prioritising Justice and Accountability in South Africa:
The Al-Bashir Saga

Angela Mudukuti

In June 2015, Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, who is wanted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, arrived in South Africa for the 25th African Union Summit. His mere presence, and then his infamous "escape", precipitated a rule-of-law dilemma in South Africa. As a signatory to the Rome Statute and having domesticated the Rome Statute, South Africa was duty bound by both international and domestic law to arrest President Bashir for subsequent transfer to The Hague. The South African authorities decided not to arrest Bashir, and this failure to comply with legal obligations, along with the subsequent announcement to withdraw from the Rome Statute, raises serious questions about the government's priorities and management in matters of accountability and justice.

The following article will shed light on why the state's conduct was unlawful, the implications of their failure to arrest an international fugitive, and several pivotal moments that presented opportunities for the government to act in accordance with the law.

Bashir's alleged crimes stem from the conflict in Darfur that has resulted in the loss of an estimated 300 000 lives and the displacement of hundreds of thousands more since it began in 2003. Having identified that the situation in Darfur warranted international attention, the United Nations (UN) Security Council, in Resolution 1593, referred the situation to the ICC in 2005. The ICC found that six people, including Bashir, were seemingly "most responsible" for crimes committed.

With no police force of its own, the ICC relies on its member states to apprehend suspects found on their territory and transfer them to The Hague. Member states who sign and ratify the Rome Statute are legally obligated to cooperate with the Court and failure to do so is not without consequences.

When South Africa signed the Rome Statute in 1998 and then ratified it in 2000, it committed to cooperate with the ICC in the fight against impunity. South Africa took its commitment to the next level when it elected to domesticate the Rome Statute by way of the Implementation Act of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (the Implementation Act) in 2002. The preamble refers to atrocities committed throughout the history of humankind and in South Africa in particular, and commits South Africa to "bringing persons who commit such atrocities to justice". Thus South Africa's duty was twofold: in terms of both international and domestic law, Bashir ought to have been arrested in South Africa.

In 2009, Bashir was invited to attend the President Zuma's inauguration. Dr Ayanda Ntsaluba, the then director-general of the department of international relations and cooperation, made it publically clear that President Bashir would be arrested if he was found in South Africa. As a result, Bashir did not attend. The South African government also domesticated the first ICC arrest warrant for Bashir, effectively making it a domestic warrant.

The 25th African Union Summit is the first critical moment where the South African government could have avoided the disaster that ensued. South Africa should not have allowed Bashir to come to the country, even if it meant relinquishing the opportu-

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nity to host the Summit. In 2012, then President Joyce Banda of Malawi refused to host the Summit for as long as Bashir remained on the AU guest list. Citing her commitments in terms of international criminal law, Banda had the foresight to prevent the difficult situation that would be created by Bashir's presence in an ICC signatory state. South Africa had the same option. No member state of the AU is obligated to host a summit, and any member that decides to host does so on its own terms, in accordance with its own law.

Another opportunity to abide by the law was provided when the Southern Africa Litigation Centre (SALC) wrote to several government departments in May 2015 to remind them of their obligations in terms of domestic and international law. SALC received one response, from the chief state law advisor, indicating that the government was aware of the situation. Then Bashir arrived and was not arrested. Despite its attempt to constructively engage the government, and left with no alternative, SALC was forced to approach the North Gauteng High Court, seeking the implementation of the ICC arrest warrant.

During the first hearing, the government requested a postponement. SALC agreed but insisted that an interim order be made that would prevent Bashir from leaving the country pending the finalisation of the legal process. The court subsequently ordered that all

ports of entry and exit be informed accordingly. Resuming the next day, the court ruled that Bashir should be arrested immediately. Only after this ruling was handed down did the state inform the court that Bashir had already left the country.

This marks the third critical moment where the South African government could have remedied the situation. The fact that Bashir was able to move from his hotel in Sandton to the Waterkloof Air Force Base means that organs of government were aware of, and indeed facilitated, his movement. Government authorities directly contravened a court order, bringing the rule of law into disrepute. As noted by Gauteng Judge President Dunstan Mlambo, "A democratic State based on the rule of law cannot exist or function if the government ignores its constitutional obligations and fails to abide by court orders."

The next pivotal moment occurred when the government insisted on taking the matter to the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA), advancing an argument that Bashir was protected by head-of-state immunity. Before the High Court and the SCA, this argument was found wanting. The Implementation Act (which, significantly, came into being after the Diplomatic Immunities and Privileges Act) makes it very clear that the fact that the suspect is a sitting or former head of state does not constitute a ground for refusing an order that the suspect be surrendered to the ICC.

Despite two court rulings that the failure to arrest Bashir was unlawful, the government continued to use taxpayer rands to take the matter to the Constitutional Court. The government applied for leave to appeal the SCA judgment on 8 April 2016 and the matter was to be heard on 22 November 2016. Roughly a month before the scheduled hearing date, after all the legal written arguments had been prepared and submitted, the state decided to withdraw from the Constitutional Court process. In essence, this was a concession that they had acted unlawfully. The SCA judgment is therefore the final judgement on the state's actions.

Despite the withdrawal of the case, questions concerning the government's conduct and its impact on the nation's reputation and constitutional democracy remain important. In addition to damaging public confidence in the rule of law, the Bashir matter led to an unprecedented meeting between the judiciary and the executive where matters pertaining to respect for the

judiciary and the separation of powers were discussed.

The Bashir case has also been linked to the ANC's call for a withdrawal from the Rome Statute, which was announced at the October 2015 National General Congress. This call turned into action when South Africa submitted its notice of withdrawal to the United Nations Secretary-General on 19 October 2016.

Domestically, withdrawal from the ICC means that the Implementation Act will also have to be repealed. This would have serious negative implications for the progressive domestic legislative framework that exists, and for the ability of South African courts to bring justice to victims of egregious crimes. The withdrawal is also the subject of a legal action that challenges the constitutionality of the notice of withdrawal.

Internationally, the failure to arrest Bashir and the announcement of South Africa's withdrawal from the Rome Statute have done great damage to the country's reputation. A former champion of international justice has fallen from grace. Given the nation's history and sensitivity to crimes against humanity, its unwavering commitment to accountability and human rights is essential.

Post-apartheid South Africa proclaims itself a constitutional democracy seeking to uphold the rule of law, yet the failure to arrest Bashir and its moves to abandon the only available permanent mechanism for international accountability couldn't be further at variance. The entire debacle raises grave concerns about the current government's priorities and ability to uphold the rule of law and protect human rights.

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The Bashir case and withdrawal from the ICC also highlight the intersection between politics and law. Whilst law does not operate in a vacuum, it should not be tainted by political considerations that favour one leader or one political party. Justice, accountability and the promotion and protection of human rights should be far higher on the government's list of priorities.

A Fading Peacemaker?
The "Dark" Side of South Africa's Contribution to Peace, Security and Governance in Africa

John Akokpari

Since the historic transition from apartheid to majority rule in 1994, South Africa has promoted peace, security and democracy in Africa. Pretoria contributed financially and materially to conflict resolution, such as by providing troops to African Union (AU) and United Nations (UN) missions in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Darfur. South Africa has also led mediation efforts and talks among warring factions in Ivory Coast, the DRC and Lesotho, and, mandated by the Southern African Development Community (SADC), brokered peace in Zimbabwe and Madagascar. It has been at the forefront in condemning human rights abuses in Nigeria and Swaziland.[1]

However, in the last few years, especially under the presidency of Jacob Zuma, South Africa has tarnished its enviable record in conflict management and peacemaking in Africa. Pretoria has not only pursued foreign policy positions contradictory to broader AU peace and governance efforts, but also shown less commitment to making a positive contribution to the restoration of peace and security on the continent. This article highlights some of these episodes in South Africa's foreign policy, and argues that South Africa's changing stance is largely dictated by a desire to promote and protect its national interest.

South Africa's Concern with Peace and Security in Africa

In 1994, South Africa's new governing party, the African National Congress (ANC), adopted a seven-point policy document

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that served as the cornerstone of the country's post-apartheid foreign policy. The document underscored the country's belief in human rights, democracy, international law and justice, peace, and the sovereign equality of states.[2] While conflict resolution was not specifically named, it was apparent that South Africa's belief in peace implied its distaste for conflict. Having witnessed the horrors of violence and the insecurity of black South Africans under the obnoxious apartheid system, the new South Africa was determined to ensure that similar atrocities were never perpetrated or suffered by any country on the African continent. Since then, South Africa's public officials have trumpeted that Pretoria's foreign policy is informed by these values.

Yet there were other compelling reasons for South Africa to prioritise peace and good governance in Africa. First, as a relatively industrialised country, South Africa had no illusion that the fortunes of its economy depended not just on a southern Africa that was free of conflict, but also on a peaceful African continent. For example, Pretoria's interest in stabilising the DRC at the beginning of the new century showed trappings of economic interest, including in mining, agriculture, construction, fishing and technology. Trade between the two countries has increased dramatically during the last decade, with the DRC ranking as South Africa's tenth largest trading partner.[3] Second, upon attainment of majority rule, South Africa recognised the regional and international expectations for it to play a leading role in conflict resolution, peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction in a region that had become the undisputed global epicentre of conflicts.

Thus, it could be plausibly argued that both economic and moral considerations were central to South Africa's active contributions to building the so-called "African peace and security architecture" under the roof of the AU since 2001. While the rhetoric about its commitment to the AU programme remains, Pretoria has not exactly gone along with the continental body in key moments.

The AU and Peace and Security in Africa

To promote peace and security, the Constitutive Act of the AU established a framework for a new and comprehensive continental peace and security architecture. Article 3(f) of the Act lists the promotion of "peace, security, and stability on the continent" as a key objective of the AU, while Articles 3(g) and 3(h) respectively seek to promote democratic governance and human rights. Two provisions of the Act are particularly relevant to the peace and security architecture. First is Article 4(h), which, consistent with the United Nations' doctrine of the "responsibility to protect", authorises the Union to intervene in member states "pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity". Second, Article 4(j) grants "the right of Member States to request intervention from the Union in order to restore peace and security". These provisions, in contrast to the position of the defunct Organisation of African Unity (OAU), marked a fundamental shift from "non-interference to non-indifference".[4]

The central institution of the peace and security architecture is a 15-member Peace and Security Council, mandated to assume responsibility over security issues, including the deployment of AU troops. Equally notable is the greater responsibility devolved to sub-regional organisations in conflict management. However, while the peace and security architecture is laudable in theory, the AU has faced challenges in applying its principles in practice. These challenges include the lack of adequate funds and logistics, as well as the lack of genuine commitment from AU members. Yet a further – and much more troubling – challenge has been the contradictory posture of South Africa in some of the AU's key security and governance initiatives.

Episodes of South Africa's Contradictory Stance

Although South Africa has been a key player in the creation of the AU's peace and security architecture, it has sometimes taken positions in direct contradiction to it. In the process, South Africa's credentials as a leading architect of peace and security in Africa have come under serious scrutiny. A few such high-profile contradictions are noted here.

Quiet diplomacy in Zimbabwe

By 2007, the crisis in Zimbabwe was marked by extreme levels of inflation and joblessness, the absence of basic consumer goods, and the escalation of human right abuses by Robert Mugabe's ZANU-PF government against supporters of Morgan Tsvangirai and his oppositional Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). South Africa was mandated by the SADC and the AU to mediate in the crisis. Pretoria adopted an

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approach that came to be known as "quiet diplomacy": a process of mediation, often held behind closed doors, that aimed to persuade rather than compel Robert Mugabe to change course. While it led to a government of national unity that included ZANU-PF and the MDC after the presidential election of 29 March 2008, it failed to abate the continuing crisis in the country. Supporters of quiet diplomacy argued that, given the prevailing conditions, it offered Pretoria the best chance to mitigate the deepening crisis and the tension between ZANU-PF and the MDC.[5]

South Africa, the mandated mediator, obstructed efforts to bring ZANU-PF into compliance with the objectives of the SADC and the AU. Pretoria ought to have flexed its muscles and used all available diplomatic, and even economic, instruments to effect change in Zimbabwe. Instead, its intervention not only failed to spawn change in Zimbabwe, it openly resisted calls to pres-

Robert Mugabe attends the 12th African Union Summit in Addis Ababa. Author: Jesse B. Awalt (public domain)

sure Mugabe. In February 2003, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, then South Africa's minister of foreign affairs, stated emphatically, "we will never criticise Zimbabwe"[6]. The trend of being accommodative rather than critical of Robert Mugabe has continued under the presidency of Mr Zuma.

Pretoria's failure to come down hard on Mugabe had consequences for peace, security and governance in Zimbabwe. First, the unity government in Zimbabwe was fragile, as it was more or less a marriage of convenience. Second, it encouraged Mugabe's obstinacy – to the extent that he organised Zimbabwe's 2013 presidential elections on his own terms, in defiance of AU and SADC recommendations for a credible election that included an updated electoral roll and the cessation of intimidation and violations of the rights of opposition supporters. Despite concerns expressed by Human Right Watch, Amnesty International and local NGOs about the fairness of the elections, South Africa led SADC to depict the polls as credible and violence free. In spite of its commitment to human rights and peace and justice, Pretoria failed to uphold these central AU principles in Zimbabwe.

Pretoria's choice of quiet diplomacy as a tool of engagement with Harare has to be seen in both economic and historical contexts. Economically, Pretoria could not afford a full-on confrontation with Zimbabwe, which currently remains its largest market in southern Africa. Moreover, South Africa was not oblivious to Mugabe's ability to carry threats through, including his capacity to summarily deport "undesirable" foreign nationals. Pretoria certainly did not want to become a victim of Mugabe's autocratic policies. Quiet diplomacy was thus chosen to demonstrate that it was engaging Mugabe and ZANU-PF, while avoiding a possible backlash from putting real pressure on Harare. Pretoria's national interest was clearly at play here. ZANU-PF and the ANC are also bound by a shared history of anti-colonial struggle, which perhaps made it logical for South Africa to deal leniently with Mugabe, even at the risk of compromising its claim to be a champion of human rights and democracy.

The Ivory Coast post-election conflict
Conflict erupted in the Ivory Coast when President Laurent Gbagbo, who was widely believed to have lost the 28 November 2010 presidential polls, refused to cede power to his victorious rival, Alassane Ouattara. While both the Economic Community of West

African States (ECOWAS) and the AU were unanimous that Gbagbo had lost, and were contemplating the use of force to enforce the will of Ivorians if he continued to cling on to power, South Africa's Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Maite Nkoana-Mashabane maintained that the outcome of the election was inconclusive.[7]

As a result, amidst mounting regional and international calls for him to quit, Laurent Gbagbo felt emboldened to claim that he could still rely on seven of the 53 members of the AU, including Angola, the DRC, Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Ghana, South Africa and Uganda.[8] Gbagbo's intransigence prolonged the conflict between supporters of the rival candidates, which claimed over 3 000 lives and led thousands to flee their homes.[9] Gbagbo was eventually arrested on 11 April 2011 by a combined contingent of opposition and French forces, ending a stalemate that threatened the long-term stability of Ivory Coast. Thus, although Pretoria was not directly involved in the mediation efforts, its position contradicted that of ECOWAS and the AU.

It was not immediately clear why South Africa sought to offer a different, if not contradictory, perspective on the polls and conflict in the Ivory Coast. It could have been part of a grand design to extend Pretoria's influence: a successful intervention in the conflict would have significantly enhanced South Africa's regional status in West Africa. Relatedly, there was no secret about the rivalry over Ivory Coast between France, which has remained dominant in the politics of its former colony, and South Africa, which has sought to establish its dominance in the continent. If South Africa's position prevailed, this would have marked an important step in Pretoria's attempt to supplant Paris as an active player in Ivorian domestic and international affairs. However, if Gbagbo had succeeded in remaining in power, Pretoria would have risked a major diplomatic confrontation with ECOWAS, which remained adamant that Gbagbo should vacate the presidency.

The Libyan conflict of 2011
If South Africa undermined regional efforts in the resolution of the Ivory Coast post-election conflict, it betrayed the AU in the Libyan crisis. In early 2011, the rebellion against long-time leader Muammar Qaddafi was gathering momentum. In an effort to end the conflict, the AU proposed a roadmap for talks between rebels and the belea-guered Libyan leader that would culminate in democratic reforms. Although promising, the roadmap was rejected by rebels who did not want Qaddafi to play any role in Libya's future. Meanwhile, as the numbers of civilian injuries, casualties and refugees mounted, France, Britain and other Western governments proposed UN Security Council Resolution 1973 to establish a no-fly zone over Libya. It also authorised the use of "all necessary measures" to "protect civilians".

The African Union resolved not to support this Anglo-French-sponsored resolution that authorised the use of external military force in Libya. A few days later, on 17 March 2011, South Africa, along with Gabon – two of the 10 non-permanent members of the UN Security Council – controversially voted in favour of it. Pretoria's support for Resolution 1973 did not only contradict the collective position of the continent, it seriously undermined the AU's peace proposals for Libya. Pretoria subsequently justified its vote on the grounds of protecting civilians.[10] Given the West's obsession with regime change in the global South, South Africa ought to have known that a resolution authorising the use of "all necessary measures" would provide both the context and pretext for the removal of Muammar Qaddafi. Pretoria's subsequent effort to stop NATO military operations by accusing the West of abusing Resolution 1973 came too late.[11] Qaddafi was captured and killed on 20 October 2011, underscoring one of South Africa's controversial acts of foreign policy.

Conventionally, foreign policy decisions are meant to achieve certain objectives. The critical question is: what was Pretoria trying to achieve by departing from the official AU stance in the Libyan conflict? It appears that South Africa sought to ingratiate itself to the West by projecting itself as the champion of human rights and Western values in Africa. President Zuma did not want to present himself as a typical African leader with no regard for international norms. Further, the West has expected South Africa to serve as a regional leader in the promotion of good governance and democracy in Africa, and Pretoria has sought to behave in ways that confirm this leadership responsibility. In addition, it was apparent that Pretoria wanted to preserve cordial relations with Western countries. It could not vote against Resolution 1973 without risking their displeasure. Here again, national interest seemed to influence South Africa's contradiction of the AU.

The election of Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma as AU Commission chair in June 2011

South Arica's notoriety in contradicting and even defying the AU was further heightened in the election of Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma as chair of the AU Commission. Historically, an unwritten agreement existed among AU members that the Commission should not be chaired by anyone from the "big five" countries – Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Nigeria and South Africa.[12] At the conclusion of the term of Gabon's Jean Ping, however, South Africa departed from this standing tradition and advanced Dlamini-Zuma as his successor in 2011. Controversial and strange as

And at the heart of all these debacles, failures and contradictions lies South Africa's unwillingness to sacrifice its national interest for the greater good of Africa.

Pretoria's decision was, she failed to secure the votes of all SADC countries at the first, inconclusive round of voting in January 2011. A second round of voting took place in June 2011 at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, where the South African-backed candidate eventually secured the two-thirds majority votes needed to claim the position. Dlamini-Zuma's victory followed intense diplomatic lobbying that took President Zuma to a number of African capitals. Pretoria's defiance of established convention was another classic episode in its increasing disposition to contradict policies of the AU.

Pretoria's surprising retreat from the conflict in CAR

The conflict in the Central African Republic (CAR) further revealed the vacillating posture of a country supposed to be a leading star in the promotion of peace and security on the continent. By late 2012, the political situation in the CAR was deteriorating rapidly. The anarchy in the country deepened when atrocities committed by the mainly Muslim Seleka rebels caused the rise of mainly Christian rebel groups to counter the threat. While South Africa claimed to be a champion of peace, its initiatives in

the CAR remained minimal and without publicity. In fact, only the department of defence knew the country had troops in the CAR. Most South Africans only heard about the conflict and the involvement of South African National Defence Force (SANDF) personnel in March 2013, when 14 South African troops were killed by Seleka rebels. In response, and under growing domestic pressure, South Africa withdrew its soldiers from the CAR.[13] Critical observers were concerned that Pretoria's decision raised questions about South Africa's genuine commitment to the promotion of peace, security and governance in Africa. Why would a country that projected itself as a leading peacemaker and peacekeeper run away from a situation where peace needed to be made?

Conclusion

The AU peace and security architecture was a novel initiative to address the perennial and often intractable security and governance challenges facing Africa. As a key actor in it, Pretoria's subsequent contradiction of certain AU positions looks like the proverbial driver who accelerates and brakes at the same time, leading the car nowhere. It also presents additional challenges to the continental body. In Ivory Coast and Libya, Pretoria's errant position deprived the AU of a common voice in the management of those conflicts, which may have helped to escalate rather than ameliorate them. Pretoria's inclination to defy AU principles and traditions were also highlighted by the candidature of Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma for the AU Commission chair and the failure to hold Mugabe to account in Zimbabwe. Add to this South Africa's decision to run away from the CAR conflict – a conflict that required bold and decisive leadership to bring it under control – and the country shows itself not as a rising star in the promotion of peace and good governance, but a progressively fading one. And at the heart of all these debacles, failures and contradictions lies South Africa's unwillingness to sacrifice its national interest for the greater good of Africa. ▪▪

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About the Cover Artist

Meschac Gaba was born in 1961 in Cotonou, Benin. He studied at the Rijksakademie voor Beeldende Kunsten in Amsterdam in 1996-97.

It was at the Rijksmuseum, Leiden, in 1997 that Gaba inaugurated his major work, the Museum of Contemporary African Art, a project in which the artist installed 12 "rooms" of a nomadic museum in various institutions over a period of five years, culminating with his presentation of a "Humanist Space" at Documenta 11. Other "rooms" include the Museum Restaurant (shown at W139, Amsterdam, in 1999), the Games Room (shown in Besançon, France, in 1999 and in Brussels and Gent in 2000), the Library of the Museum (Witte de With, 2001), and the Salon (Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 2002).

The Museum of Contemporary African Art (1997-2002) was acquired by Tate and exhibited at Tate Modern, London, in 2013. The Library of the Museum was donated by Gaba to the city of Cotonou as part of his project Musée de l'Art de la Vie Active (MAVA).