CRITICAL THEMES IN SOUTH AFRICA'S FOREIGN POLICY: AN OVERVIEW

Garth L le Pere
Gabriel & Associates and
Department of Political Sciences,
University of Pretoria, South Africa

Abstract

This article represents a synthetic overview of the key themes which have animated scholarly research in South Africa's foreign policy over the last two decades. These themes will be addressed and are situated against the broad contextual background of important philosophical challenges, transitional developments, and managerial dilemmas during the formative presidential periods of Mandela and Mbeki. This context provides the analytical parameters for the focus on six themes which arguably shape debates and thinking about the conduct of South Africa's foreign policy, namely: the institutional dynamics at the level of the state; the multilateral and global agenda; trade and economic diplomacy; the peace, security, and mediation dimension; the donor and development assistance role; and the scourge of xenophobia. These themes will continue to exercise a profound influence on the collective endeavour of South Africa's foreign policy community to sustain its standing as a middle-power with soft power assets that is able to shape African and global agendas. Arising from these thematic considerations, some concluding thoughts highlight on-going normative, substantive, and policy challenges for the Zuma administration.

1. Introduction

In his state of the nation address on 14 February 2013, President Jacob Zuma re-iterated some of the essential *leitmotifs* which have shaped

South Africa's foreign policy since 1994 and echoed very similar values, emphases, and priorities as those which underpinned the presidencies of his predecessors, Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki. He talked, *inter alia*, about contributing to a stronger African Union (AU), supporting efforts to build a more stable and peaceful continent, building the pillars of South-South cooperation through BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), and strengthening North-South relations particularly with the United States (US), Europe, and Japan (Zuma, 2013). In short, President Zuma was referring to the very strong foreign policy foundation and legacy he had inherited in promoting South Africa's international engagements and external relations, a foundation that is essentially held together by the mortar of its moral capital, normative agency, and political stature.

However, there are legitimate concerns that this capital, agency, and stature are fast depreciating because of recent missteps and strategic blunders in the conduct of South Africa's foreign policy, especially under President Zuma's watch (Le Pere, 2013). While obviously subject to debate and contestation, reference is often made to South Africa's controversial tenure on the United Nations (UN) Security Council, the ongoing Dalai Lama visa debacles, the misguided and divisive campaign to win the chair of the AU's Commission, and the tragic military misadventure in the Central African Republic. But probably most egregious was the embarrassment of 'Guptagate' when a planeload of private wedding guests arriving from India was allowed to land at a secure military base in Pretoria, officially designated as a 'national key-point' rather than the international airport outside Johannesburg. Media innuendo flew fast and furious that the plane was allowed special landing-rights at the military base since the wedding guests were family and friends of the dynastic Gupta family who not only had accumulated enormous wealth since settling in South Africa but were closely associated with Jacob Zuma who allegedly had sanctioned circumventing official protocol.

These are worrying trends since the country's foreign policy over nearly two decades since its democratic transition is, arguably, one of the most successful and inspiring areas of post-*apartheid* public affairs and has been built on the paradoxical legacy of the racialised *apartheid* state and the values of the African National Congress (ANC)-led liberation movement. Above all, South Africa's activist foreign policy agenda since 1994 has been premised on a belief in the compatibility of human

rights, democracy, solidarity politics and its own development needs. This is buttressed by multilateralism and adherence to international law and conventions as the strategic anchors for pursuing foreign policy goals and implicitly, by the enduring notion of South Africa's presumed status as one of the *de facto* leaders of the African continent and indeed, of the global South (Alden and Le Pere 2009).

The orthodoxies and axioms which guided the first two presidential periods it seems, have been maintained and affirmed in the era of Zuma albeit with a more streamlined and less ambitious menu and shorn of the ideological and crusading shibboleths that had characterised the Mbeki presidency. At least this is what the last two ANC party conferences resolved at Polokwane in December 2007 and at Mangaung in October 2012. The Zuma era has thus been adaptive and continuous in terms of the normative charters which guided his predecessors, with the centre of gravity less concentrated in the Presidency than was the case during the Mbeki years. The Zuma Presidency was itself a product of intense intra-party politics and factionalism but which ultimately sought to place renewed emphasis on the welfare concerns of the ANC's broader constituencies, particularly in addressing the legacies of poverty, inequality, and unemployment. There has thus been a stronger gravitational pull of domestic concerns as manifested in the social contract-like National Development Plan with foreign policy, as has been argued, "…relegated to a lower position in national priorities" (Olivier 2012 180).

Overall, the broader historical and contemporary narrative of South Africa's foreign policy over the last two decades has been shaped by a complex mix of normative, substantive, circumstantial, and managerial imperatives. These, in turn, have inspired a fecund cottage industry of creative theorisation, analytical deconstruction, critical exegesis, and even polemical contestation (see Nel, Taylor, and Van der Westhuizen 2001; Alden and Le Pere 2003; Sidiroupolos 2004; Nel and Van der Westhuizen 2004; Carlsnaes and Nel 2006; Landsberg 2010; and Landsberg and Van Wyk 2012).

This article is inspired by such scholarly research over the last two decades and is situated against the broad contextual background of the formative presidential periods under Mandela and Mbeki. This provides the analytical parameters for six themes which arguably shape debates and thinking about the conduct of South Africa's foreign policy.

2. The context of foreign policy

In terms of the country's dramatic rehabilitation from international pariah to bastion of African democracy, the primary challenge during President Mandela's era was repositioning South Africa on the global stage. Of particular importance was full representation and membership in international and regional organisations, establishing a global diplomatic presence, and transforming its instruments of foreign policy and the vocabulary of its diplomacy. Of course, all these processes were greatly facilitated by Mandela's own international reputation and larger-than-life persona (Barber 2004).

Yet one of the enduring dilemmas for the government then and now has been how to balance the calculus of financial, commercial, political, and defence interests with its role as moral crusader on behalf of worldwide human rights, social justice and democracy (Vickers 2008). In the view of critics at the time, the absence of conceptual and ethical coherence between these poles and an underlying strategic framework caused the Mandela foreign policy to "lean all over the place" (Mills, 1997). There were also other constraints that inhibited and circumscribed South Africa's ambitious foreign policy agenda in southern Africa, Africa, and globally. These included a pressing need for financial resources and investment; limited institutional capacity due to difficulties experienced in transforming key foreign relations and security institutions of the state; continuing misapprehension on the part of its officials about the complexity of Africa's political terrain and the content of its international relations; and persistent ambiguity over the nature of South Africa's identity as an African country (Le Pere and Van Nieuwkerk 2006).

President Mbeki was to provide a steadier compass by reshaping the contours of foreign policy with a stronger sense of purpose and vision and by giving further substance to closer engagement with multilateral partners in Africa as well as with developing and developed countries. He invigorated South Africa's foreign policy in terms of a broader value-driven continental and global agenda that conformed in the first instance with the requirements of a developing country on the world's most impoverished continent. In global terms, let us bear in mind that South Africa is a medium-level country with a medium human-development ranking. Moreover, income inequality, and rising levels of poverty and unemployment continue to be among the highest in the

world, seriously impairing its growth and development prospects, and leading to a growing sense of popular despair, cynicism, and alienation (see Marais 2011).

Secondly, and linked to President Mbeki's vision of an 'African Renaissance', was his effort to engage more earnestly and vigorously with the forces of globalisation and the agents of the liberal world order as a means for improving South Africa and Africa's growth and development opportunities as well as those of developing countries more generally. For improved policy coordination and effective implementation of his initiatives, President Mbeki also consolidated the instruments of foreign policy through a reworking and clustering of government decision-making structures (Masters 2012).

However, the crucible upon which South Africa's post-*apartheid* foreign policy would be judged has been in the regional and continental contexts where its leadership has often contested and its society viewed with suspicion, especially following the xenophobic attacks and the spasm of anti-immigrant violence in mid-2008. The southern African region — thought to be the area where South Africa could readily exercise its influence — has proven to be a much more problematic theatre of operation than expected (Alden and Le Pere 2003). While South Africa has made great strides in promoting positive trade and development agendas, this has been somewhat compromised by the challenges that come with continuing authoritarian and repressive tendencies among governments, some post-war reconstruction challenges, fragile peace and democratic transitions, mounting levels of poverty, sluggish economic growth, and the tragic effects of the HIV/Aids pandemic (Le Pere 2012).

Whereas concerns about human rights and democracy featured quite prominently in the immediate post-*apartheid* period, recourse to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) — despite its formal commitment to these issues — has tended to circumscribe substantive action in support of these values. For example, the diplomatic approach towards Zimbabwe and South Africa's tortuous and desultory mediation efforts has underscored the limitations to overtly challenge the non-interventionist norm in SADC, while at the same time South Africa's 'quiet diplomacy' approach was informed by the maxim that the problems in that country should be resolved by Zimbabweans themselves. Here foreign policy values collide nakedly with political interests (SALO 2013).

At the continental level, Africa has faced its own economic conundrums and political paralysis stemming from decades of misrule, resource wastage and corruption, civil wars, and environmental degradation (Le Pere and Ikome 2012). In terms of its 'Africa Agenda', South Africa's diplomacy has sought to reconstruct and promote a new institutional architecture to address such problems. Central to this thrust has been the establishment of the AU as the governance custodian and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad) as its socio-economic blueprint. South Africa's participation in these continental initiatives inspired leaders of developed countries, especially the G-8 to give unprecedented attention to President Mbeki's messianic idea of an 'African Renaissance' (Landsberg 2010). The G-8 Action Plan for Africa (adopted at Kananaskis, Canada in 2002) was in large measure a result of Mbeki and other African leaders' advocacy at G-8 summits, starting at Cologne, Germany in 1999 with debt relief and thereafter, broadening the ambit of engagement on the basis of the Action Plan (Smith 2012). At the bilateral level, President Mbeki also forged close links with South Africa's main trading partners, especially the US and the European Union (EU) but increasingly with China, Brazil, and India with whom high-level bi-national commissions were established.

It should be borne in mind that forging and nurturing the diplomatic interface with these emerging powers very much served as the incubators for South Africa helping to shape and then join the India, Brazil, and South Africa Dialogue Forum (IBSA). Quite crucially, this logic later informed and was elaborated in South Africa's aggressive pursuit of membership in the BRIC club which it joined in 2010 (Kornegay 2012). In terms of developing a new South-South axis of cooperation, President Mbeki elevated South Africa's commitment to and solidarity with other developing countries to another important foreign policy value and priority. Their marginalisation and increasing poverty in the global system has been and continues to be of particular concern. All three presidents, for example, have been outspoken about the role of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) in perpetuating crises and poverty among developing countries. Moreover, their undemocratic structures and practices have militated against more open, fair, and participative forms of global governance (Qobo 2012).

Restructuring of the UN Security Council and the reform of the UN system have also been critical multilateral themes and have weighed heavily in South Africa's foreign policy discourse. South Africa's alli-

ances with emerging powers in IBSA and BRICS have augured well for cooperation in other multilateral forums such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and in climate change negotiations (Olivier 2013). It has also joined the G-20 (a mix of developed and developing countries) which is an important portent for shifting the balance of power globally such that the developed countries can no longer steer global issues and concerns unilaterally. With this as broad context, we now turn to our six themes.

3. The institutional and diplomatic dimension

In the process of exorcising the memory of almost four decades of *apartheid* international relations, mainly aimed at insulating the country from opprobrium and sanctions, the new government had to restructure the institutional architecture of foreign policy in a manner that would allow it to pursue a diplomacy of active internationalism in a changed post-Cold War global order (Le Pere and Van Nieuwkerk 2002). Thus by 1995, South Africa had established 93 resident missions abroad, and indicative of its continental focus, established full diplomatic relations with 46 African countries. By the end of 1994, there were 136 countries with representation in South Africa. South Africa joined or was re-admitted to 16 multilateral organisations, concluded 86 bilateral agreements and acceded to 21 multilateral treaties (Muller 1997). President Mandela could therefore justifiably proclaim in 1999: "for a country that not so many years ago was the polecat of the world, South Africa has truly undergone a revolution in its relations with the international community" (Mandela 1999).

But it was no easy task to change the institutional culture. The move to achieve representative racial and gender balances in the original Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) was a particular source of tension and acrimony. The resentments caused by racial criteria in the composition of the department were further compounded by the antithetical world views of its old- and new-order officials (Williams 2000).

Another challenge for post-*apartheid* foreign relations was the emergence of multiple actors in shaping, determining, and finally implementing policy. This presented the DFA with serious problems of coordination, reflecting the impact and even relevance of globalisation on international affairs. In this regard, DFA often found itself at odds, if not in diametrical opposition with a range of other actors, including parlia-

ment and other state departments such as Trade and Industry, Defence, Intelligence, Environment, and Finance. (These tensions have persisted with greater intensity it would seem under the DFA successor and renamed Department of International Relations and Cooperation — DIRCO.) This gave rise to accusations of incoherence and opaqueness in policy formulation. The critical voices of academics, research institutes and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) formed another site of scrutiny and debate, often resulting in recriminations and often tense relations with government (Le Pere and Vickers 2004). Moreover, in those early years President Mandela's command and seeming domination of every major foreign policy decision and issue was so complete as to almost overshadow the roles of DFA, his senior colleagues in the Government of National Unity, the cabinet, and parliament (Barber 2004).

In Mandela's time in office, criticism often focused on the strategic ambiguities and incoherent approaches to policy. There was, for example, a palpable tension between South Africa's perceived commercial, trade, and political interests and its role as a moral crusader in promoting global human rights and democracy. However, when Thabo Mbeki assumed the presidency in 1999, he brought a stronger sense of purpose and a more embracing vision to foreign policy. As Mandela's deputy, Mbeki had a distinct internationalist outlook as the ANC's chief diplomat in exile and hence was very influential in shaping the contours of foreign policy. However, he was also fully aware that he could not fill Mandela's shoes and had to carve his own niche in matters of personal style, his strategic and operational impulses, and political temperament. Following the country's second democratic election in 1999, Mbeki secured overwhelming political control at the hands of the ANC, placing him and a close circle of trusted colleagues and confidants at the helm of policy-making (Alden and Le Pere 2003).

The change in leadership sparked by the controversial ANC's Polokwane Conference in December 2007, which ultimately led to the infelicitous ousting — or to use the euphemism of the time, the 'recall' — of Mbeki in 2008, marked a new shift towards establishing greater scrutiny and control over foreign policy making by party stalwarts at the ANC's headquarters in Luthuli House. Moreover, the Conference and the following one in 2012 at Mangaung established Jacob Zuma as a master of Machiavellian intrigue in controlling and manipulating institutions of the state with profound implications for the conduct of the

country's foreign policy and South Africa's global stature. Under Zuma, "… the substantial ideological-intellectual overlay Mbeki introduced in foreign policy made way for pragmatism, boiling down to what seems to be a mixture of the Mandela and Mbeki policies, but lacking in the qualities such as leadership, depth, sophistication, clear-headedness, authority and resolve to be expected from a country like South Africa" (Olivier 2012: 180).

4. Multilateral activism

South Africa's principled belief in multilateralism stems from the possibilities of promoting global justice and equity through international cooperation and upholding the canons of international law. Through both presidential periods, reform of the multilateral system has been an important impulse but more so during the Mbeki era as part of a more clearly defined strategic calculus (Le Pere and Van Nieuwkerk 2006).

South Africa's multilateral credentials were certainly enhanced by a demonstration of its principled commitment and activism as a "norm entrepreneur" (Geldenhuys 2006). It played leading and important roles in the 1995 indefinite extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the 1997 Ottawa Process on the banning of land mines, and the 1998 adoption of the Rome Statute to set up the International Criminal Court. By voluntarily relinquishing its nuclear arms capability, South Africa led the finalisation of a text to declare Africa a nuclear weapons-free zone which resulted in the adoption of the Treaty of Pelindaba. Its disarmament leadership helped to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention, it played a leading part in the New Agenda Coalition on nuclear disarmament, and participated actively to control the spread of conventional weapons in Africa and globally. For this it was rewarded with election to the standing UN Conference on Disarmament (Nel, Taylor, and Van der Westhuizen 2001).

Concurrently, South Africa began to assume leadership roles in multilateral institutions but had a controversial tenure as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council from 2007 to 2008, especially with regard to contentious human rights issues in Myanmar and Zimbabwe. Probably chastened by lessons learnt during its first stint, another less controversial tenure on the Security Council ensued from 2011 to 2012 albeit tarnished by its about face on Libya. In the WTO, as a member of both the Africa Group and the G20, South Africa

became a vocal advocate with other likeminded countries in promoting a fairer and more balanced outcome in terms of the undertakings of the Doha Round.

The global and regional conference circuit — where South Africa's popularity ranked 22nd — has benefited in building South Africa's reserves of 'soft power' (Van der Westhuizen 2006). The country was thus able to host major international conferences such the UNAIDS conference in 2000, the UN Conference on Racism in 2001, the inaugural summit of the African Union in 2002, the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, and the UN Climate Change conference under the remit of the 17th Conference of the Parties (COP 17) at the end of 2011. South Africa also hosts and funds the infrastructure of the Pan-African Parliament (PAP), a body that still labours under managerial shortcomings and jurisdictional constraints. Major international sports competitions in rugby and cricket have also taken place in South Africa, the high-water mark being the successful hosting of the FIFA soccer World Cup in 2010.

South Africa has played a major role in the Kimberley Process for regulating 'conflict diamonds' which have fomented some of Africa's worst and bloodiest conflicts in countries such as Sierra Leone, Liberia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). It hosted a major conference on the subject in 2000, and helped to draft the 2003 certification scheme. As a champion of the interests of Africa and the global South, President Mbeki was credited with putting trade, aid, and debt relief squarely on the agenda of the G8. South Africa also started examining the possibilities of progressive South-led tactical alliances for enhancing global governance and as such, hosted a 'Third Way' conference in 2006 with India, Brazil and the Nordic countries. This type of engagement was made possible by the role South Africa played in establishing the IBSA Dialogue Forum in 2003 which helped to pave the way for it joining BRICS in 2010. South Africa's ascendance into the club was symbolised by its hosting of the fifth BRICS summit of heads of state in March 2013.

This heady record of activism, however, is not without contradictory tendencies. Essentially, the government's normative impulses often collide with the instrumental needs of the state and, at times, the ANC as the ruling party. South Africa's faith in the ethical foundations of multilateralism must do battle, on the one hand, with its own domestic requirements and how its national interests are expressed through

foreign policy; on the other, it comes up against political pressure to conform in ways that undermine its avowed commitments to multilateralism and human rights (Nel 2006). For example, in March 2009, a storm of mainly civil society protest erupted after South Africa refused to grant the Dalai Lama a visa to participate in a soccer-sponsored peace forum with other South African Nobel Peace laureates Desmond Tutu, Nelson Mandela, and FW de Klerk. The reason was that South Africa came under considerable pressure from Beijing and feared alienating its major trading and strategic partner and one which, reportedly, provided electoral funding support to the ANC. In 2011, the Dalai Lama was again barred from delivering a lecture as part of celebrating Desmond Tutu's 80th birthday. A similar diplomatic fiasco occurred in September 2014 when the Dalai Lama was refused entry to South Africa to attend a summit of Nobel peace prize-winners in Cape Town, the third refusal in five years (News 24).

Further compounding the changing international perceptions of South Africa was its record as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council between January 2007 and December 2008. Western expectations that South Africa would take a leading role in criticising human rights violations in Zimbabwe and Myanmar/Burma were misplaced as Pretoria sought to carve out a position in defence of national sovereignty. Stung by a torrent of criticism, the South African government struggled to explain its stance in terms which sounded to NGO ears as excessively technical and devoid of normative concerns. This related to arguments about locating expressed concerns in the Human Rights Council as the proper locus for discussion and debate. South Africa again found itself in the cross-hairs of criticism on Libya's civil war in 2012 after it initially supported UN Resolution 1973 but later joined the anti-Western diatribe against the manner in which the Resolution was imposed, arguing that it represented regime-change and the removal of the Gaddafi government by other means.

5. Trade and economic diplomacy

Multilateral trade policy and economic diplomacy have been very important vehicles for not only spurring the country's economic growth but also as a means through which South Africa has tried to assist in reversing the economic marginalisation of Africa through its own investment and development initiatives and by supporting market access for

African goods into key developed country markets. The normative dimensions of government's economic policy very much take account of the extent to which these are sensitive to the entropic and asymmetric tendencies in global markets (Vickers 2012 and in this issue).

In seeking to address the legacies of *apartheid* deprivation and high-levels of social and economic underdevelopment, South Africa has deliberately adopted an outward looking trade and economic policy. A practical element of this is to engage in different international and multilateral economic forums on the basis of partnership, cooperation, and mutual benefit. This also takes into account the structural bases of its economy that cries out for diversification: it is one overwhelmingly oriented to services (accounting for up to 70 per cent of Gross Domestic Product — GDP), with a fairly efficient and robust commercial agricultural sector, and a capital intensive 'minerals-energy complex'. A relatively strong manufacturing sector contributes about 18,5 per cent of GDP but suffers from supply-side, competitive, and entrepreneurial deficiencies and recently growing labour unrest (Marais 2011).

In terms of its external thrust, South Africa's engagements are framed by four concentric circles: within the Southern Africa Customs Union (SACU), SADC, Africa, and the WTO.

SACU is the oldest customs union in the world, established in 1910. One of South Africa's priorities, as part of its post-1994 regional trade agenda, was to renegotiate an arrangement which would benefit the smaller and more fragile economies of Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, and Swaziland (BLNS) in terms of a revised revenue-sharing formula. South Africa thus provides considerable and generous compensation to these countries — in some cases, accounting for 70 per cent of budget support — for the trade benefits that flow to its economy as a consequence of the customs union (the so-called 'polarisation effect'). In 2008/2009, South Africa contributed R45 billion to the SACU revenue pool but this declined significantly to R28 billion in 2009/2010 due to the negative effect of the global financial crisis (Partridge 2013).

In SADC, South Africa has played a major role in reforming the region's trade and economic regimes. By 2000, with investment exceeding R50 billion at today's prices, South Africa was by far the largest investor in the region. While there is enough criticism about the dependent and skewed linkages between South Africa and its 14 SADC partners, defined in a hub-and-spoke model, South Africa has made major asymmetric commitments in the trade protocol which came into

effect in 2008, particularly as these relate to the reduction of its industrial tariffs in order to offset regional trade imbalances. Both SACU and SADC are involved in multi-pronged negotiations with other countries and regional blocs to establish free trade areas and preferential trading arrangements. In this regard, South Africa has stood up to the divisive effects of the EU's Economic Partnership Agreements, which are designed to eliminate non-reciprocal EU trade concessions and establish free trade regimes that are WTO compatible but which could undermine the growth, development and integration prospects of the region. This is particularly serious since the EU is SADC's largest trading partner and South Africa represents the largest share of SADC imports from and exports to the EU. After almost a decade of protracted negotiations, in July 2014 six countries as a SADC sub-group, including South Africa, signed a trade agreement with the EU which would improve market access for many products, especially in the agricultural sector (Magwaza 2014).

It is in Africa, however, where South Africa's economic conduct is the most controversial. (South Africa accounted for a third of sub-Sahara Africa's GDP and is currently Africa's second largest economy after being overtaken by Nigeria in 2014 after the latter's rebasing exercise.) In 2003, exports to Africa, mostly manufactured goods stood at R59 billion (at current prices), while imports were a mere R12 billion, an unacceptably high imbalance of nearly 5:1. Two way trade increased from R230 billion in 2011 to R260 billion in 2012 (Partridge 2013). Often labelled neo-mercantilist, the six key sectors of the South African economy have been reproduced across the African economic landscape: in mining, retail, construction and manufacturing, financial services, telecommunications, tourism and leisure. A perception persists that South Africa enjoys an unfair economic advantage and that its companies behave in manner that is arrogant, disrespectful and careless. The often unbridled pursuit of profit and market penetration, coupled to an expansionist corporate drive, comes up against a foreign policy that is dedicated to promoting development and contributing to peace and resolving conflict (see section 6 below).

In the WTO, alongside countries such as India and Brazil, South Africa has played a commendably assertive and active role in advancing the trade and development objectives of the Doha Round. As such, it is committed to promoting a rules-based multilateralism to achieve fairer trade and more balanced trade governance. This approach char-

acterised its coalition-building diplomacy in the G-20 to achieve greater trade equity in agriculture as well as the Non-Agricultural Market Access (NAMA)-11 to develop a more pragmatic formula for balancing industrial tariff reductions (Vickers 2009). For an economy that is marginal in global terms, South Africa has emerged as an important geo-strategic player in Africa and globally.

6. Peace, security and conflict mediation

South Africa's security policy has been defined by frameworks that were adopted in the 1990s, namely, the 1996 White Paper on National Defence; the 1998 Defence Review; and the 1999 White Paper on Peace Missions. Several review attempts have resulted in the draft 2012 South African Defence Review whose main objective is to support peacekeeping missions in Africa. As early as 1997, the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) participated in Blue Hungwe, the first multinational peacekeeping exercise for SADC member states. Its increasing continental responsibilities have been cited in the R70 billion arms procurement package. This has been mired in controversy and allegations of corruption, fraud, and mismanagement, including the cancellation of eight new A400M Airbus aircraft meant to provide transport support for peacekeeping. It is for these reasons as well as public clamour that President Zuma established the Arms Procurement Commission in October 2011 chaired by Judge Seriti of the Supreme Court of Appeal.

Problems of transforming the defence establishment and integrating the military wings of the liberation movement and former homeland formations continue to plague the effectiveness of the SANDF, currently made up of 30 500 regular uniformed personnel, and augmented by 4 500 civilians and a reserve force of 11 000. Aggrieved black junior officers who stormed the Union Buildings over terms and conditions of service in August 2009 are symptomatic of transformation tensions. Added to this are an over aged military force, serious problems of HIV/Aids in its ranks, a reluctance to serve abroad, and racial tensions, all of which have an impact on the country's crisis response capability. South Africa faces no real conventional threat, other than the scourge of high crime at home with an estimated 370 transnational syndicates operating in the country. Rather it is an ensemble of new security threats that it has to contend with, most of which originate in its

immediate region and on the continent such as environmental problems, water shortages, food insecurity, poverty, illegal migration, money laundering, small arms proliferation, and cross-border criminal networks (Le Pere and Vickers 2011).

However, South Africa's diplomacy has been severely tested in the crucible of managing and resolving some of Africa's more difficult conflicts. One of South Africa's great 'soft power' attributes has been the attraction and power of its transition, given harbingers at the time of an apocalyptic future and fears that the country was destined for a racial Armageddon. This has given South Africa a certain moral authority and prestige to play critical roles in conflict resolution and mediation (Van Nieuwkerk 2012). The quest for peace, mostly embedded in the African environment and its state system, has provoked ongoing debate about South Africa's foreign policy disposition: whether it acts as a pivotal state in promoting partnership, consensus and cooperation or has aspirations of becoming hegemonic by aggressively pursuing its own economic and trade interests? Indeed, it has been in Africa where South Africa's peace diplomacy has been severely tested. It has played an important role in norm-setting where the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) took a rather sclerotic approach in matters of governance. In particular, South Africa has helped to shape a new ethical frontier by insisting that the AU abide by the different code of conduct. The result was the famed Article 4(h) of the AU's Peace and Security Council Protocol which empowers the AU to intervene in African countries where there are war crimes, crimes against humanity, or cases of genocide.

These developments were preceded by a lengthy period where South Africa came face to face with the difficult and often intractable realities of African politics in crisis situations such as Nigeria, Lesotho, and Zimbabwe. It had to begin negotiating a steep learning curve if it was to be an effective peace advocate, starting with General Sani Abacha's brutal execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and his Ogoni cohorts in 1995. A military intervention in Lesotho in 1998 still casts a long shadow that is reminiscent of South Africa's aggressive destabilisation campaign during the *apartheid* years. Recently in August 2014 and as chair of SADC's Organ for Politics, Defence, and Security Cooperation, South Africa has again been called on to mediate in Lesotho following an attempted *coup* against the government of Prime Minister Tom Thabane. The crisis in Zimbabwe, fuelled by Robert Mugabe's repressive autocracy, directly affected South Africa's immediate interests and

challenged its ambitions to continental leadership (Alden and Le Pere 2003). South Africa has attempted to develop its diplomatic resources with recourse to mediating in conflicts such as occurred in Zimbabwe, the DRC, Côte d'Ivoire, Burundi, and Sudan as well as supporting post-conflict reconstruction and development in these countries (Van Nieuwkerk 2012).

Major peacekeeping deployments started in 2002 with 650 troops sent to Burundi and 1 270 to the DRC in 2003. By the end of 2003, there were 2 300 South African peacekeepers variously deployed across Africa. The numbers have since increased: for example, in 2005 an infantry company of 200 soldiers were sent to Sudan. By May 2008, there were over 3 000 South African troops involved in AU and UN missions in Burundi, the DRC, Côte d'Ivoire, Darfur, Eritrea/Ethiopia, Uganda, Sudan, and Uganda, making South Africa the 17th largest contributor to UN peacekeeping efforts. Its future role in this regard could, however, be compromised by declining defence expenditure: the average has dropped from three per cent of GDP in the late 1990s to 1.2 per cent in 2013 (SA Defence Review 2014).

This overall record of trying to sue for peace in Africa and attempting to become a virtuous paragon of human rights promotion has been sullied by South Africa's controversial sale of arms. Part of the ANC's 'ambiguous inheritance' was an arms industry that in 1994 was the 10th largest in the world. By 1997 it was selling weapons to 61 countries, accounting for R1.2 billion in export earnings. However, notwithstanding preventive benchmarks, arms sales continued to dubious clients and it emerged that there were loopholes in the government's export approval system. This made sales to the Rwandan Hutu government possible despite a UN imposed arms embargo. In late 1996, there were reports that South African weapons were being used in Zaire's civil war. Its rocket launchers were helping to fuel conflict in Congo-Brazzaville. A year later, it was reported that South African manufactured weapons were being used by both the government of Sudan and its opponents, the Sudanese People's Liberation Army. South Africa's relations with the government of Angola took a turn for the worse following reports that it was secretly supplying arms to the rebel movement UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) of Jonas Savimbi. In North Africa, human rights abuses in Algeria did not stop a R300 million arms package for its government. In the Middle East, much larger shipments took place such as a R8.5

billion artillery system to Saudi Arabia, regarded as one of the world's best systems (Alden and Le Pere 2003). A shrinking global market rather than human rights imperatives has resulted in greater attention to defence conversion processes.

7. Development assistance

Hidden in the interstices of its more high profile engagements in Africa and on the global stage is South Africa's emergence as a donor. As a matter of fact, its total multilateral and bilateral development assistance surpasses the UN target of 0,7 per cent of GDP, a remarkable achievement for a middle income country with its own raft of socio-economic and growth challenges. South Africa's aid flows to Africa have been impressive. By one estimate, South Africa contributed between R7.3 billion and R9.5 billion as a basis for its development assistance programme in Africa (Vickers 2012: 540). The bulk of these funds came from the Defence Department to underwrite South Africa's peacekeeping obligations. Importantly, the statutory African Renaissance and International Cooperation Fund located in the DFA/DIRCO was established in 2000 to enhance cooperation with other African countries, to promote democracy and good governance, and to assist with conflict resolution and socio-economic development. The Fund started with R210 million but by 2012/2013 had funded projects worth R1.1 billion (DIRCO 2013-2014).

Between 2003 and 2007, projects worth R400 million were funded. Examples included support for the elections in Zimbabwe, the Burundi peace process, post-conflict reconstruction in the DRC and Comoros, humanitarian assistance in Western Sahara, building public administration capacity in southern Sudan, helping the transitional government in Liberia, support for the AU's Commission on Terrorism in Africa, small business development through the SADC Chamber of Commerce and Industry, finance for a conference on united cities and local government in Africa, and the preservation of the Timbuktu manuscripts.

All these activities have led to an exploration of new institutional arrangements and common principles to better manage a growing development assistance regime as well as an expanded mandate. Thus when President Jacob Zuma delivered his state of the nation address in 2009, among others, he announced that a South African

Development Partnership Agency (SADPA) would be established. By 2013, all legal, technical, and institutional process had been completed for the Agency's formal establishment. It will be charged with better harmonisation and rationalisation of activities in the core areas of promoting socio-economic development and good governance, supporting peace and post-conflict reconstruction and development, and strengthening regional integration in southern Africa. How this is managed under the remit of SADPA and in line with the aid-delivery regimes of the 2005 Paris Declaration and the 2008 Accra Agenda of Action to which South Africa subscribes, will present a new set of challenges for South Africa's diplomacy in Africa (Besharati 2013).

8. Xenophobia

South Africa's noble goals in Africa and further afield as well as the celebratory legacy of its transition have been severely compromised and undermined by the treatment of the many foreigners, migrants, and refugees from Africa and other developing countries such as Pakistan and Bangladesh who have come to the country in search of a better life and improved economic prospects. Migratory welfare pressures and settlement patterns since 1994 have been compounded by the harsh existential realities still experienced by the majority of black South Africans in the form of high-levels of poverty, crime, disease, unemployment, violence, insecurity, and inequality. Most migrants and refugees become hostage to these but also find themselves caught in a Darwinian cycle of competition with local populations in meeting their basic needs (Harris 2002). The spasm of anti-immigrant violence that erupted across poor townships and informal settlements around mid-2008 bore testimony to and was symptomatic of how deeply intolerant and resentful South Africans have been towards foreigners but with tragic irony in the case of those from Africa where the country has concentrated so much diplomatic energy and financial resources.

The ruling ANC was very mindful that it had to extend a hand of friendship to African countries and their citizens in the same manner and spirit that made possible the hospitality, and material and moral support which it enjoyed during its difficult years in exile across many African countries. It was not surprising, therefore, that the post-*apartheid* Constitution and relevant legislative interventions embed progressive rights and legal entitlements for refugees in conformity with international

standards and requirements. What the government could not and did not anticipate were the successive waves of migrants beyond asylum seekers and recognised refugees who began streaming into South Africa's metropolitan areas from 1994, swelling already congested informal settlements, urban areas, and squalid townships (Harris 2002).

The once stable migrant population in the entire country of about 600 000 — mainly from Nigeria, Somalia, DRC, Angola, Mozambique, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, and Cameroon but also from Pakistan and Bangladesh — witnessed a rapid expansion of refugees from Zimbabwe starting in 2000 as that country's economy experienced a meltdown. Zimbabweans streamed into South Africa as they fled economic hardship and generalised political violence at home. Currently, it is estimated that more than two million Zimbabwean citizens have settled legally but mostly illegally in South Africa (Patel 2013; SALO 2013). Their plight has hardly been relieved by the administrative bungling, irregularities, corruption, and incompetence of the Department of Home Affairs which is responsible for determining their status and issuing critical documents. Under such circumstances, it has become difficult for migrants to gain access to basic services, let alone health and welfare, and employment and housing opportunities. This state of utter despair and the sheer imperative of survival have led many a migrant down the path of criminal activity, while others have fallen foul of improper detention and deportation or police harassment, extortion, and brutality.

The government's response to the dismal circumstances and difficult dilemmas experienced by migrants from Africa and elsewhere has rather been desultory and often given to platitudes. At all levels of government — national, provincial and local — this indicated a lack of urgency and seeming indifference in confronting a looming crisis which traversed the spectrum of ethnicity, citizenship, and legal status. Attacks, beatings, and in some cases the murder of migrants were treated as isolated incidents. Evidence, however, showed that the short fuse of xenophobia had reached the powder keg. As the daily economic conditions and hardships of country's predominantly poor African citizenry were deteriorating, anti-foreigner rhetoric was becoming more strident, inflammatory, and vulgar (see Landau 2011).

The government was thus caught unaware in May 2008 when riots and mob anger targeted at migrants erupted with violent ferocity, killing many, destroying their property, and displacing thousands. Under

the current Zuma administration, a more concerted effort is being made to improve the legal, administrative, and social infrastructure for migrants in South Africa, but they remain a vulnerable population. Consequently, South Africa's claims to continental leadership will increasingly ring hollow and doubts about its sincerity and bona fides in Africa will continue as long as migrants from the continent experience the intense levels of xenophobic resentment they have been subjected to.

9. Conclusion

Foreign policy during the Mandela presidency was driven by a heady mix of idealism and messianic aspirations. But it soon became evident that these were poor anchors in the often stormy and turbulent waters of international relations and African politics. During this period, South Africa resembled an overburdened and overstretched state trying to come to terms with a precarious world order and a fragile but politically charged African environment. By virtue of its widely extolled transition, South Africa was also expected by the international community to punch above its weight. While the 'embedded idealism' was retained in the course of the Mbeki administration, there was a decided turn to pragmatism and moderation in goals, means and ends through recourse to more technocratic management of the foreign policy agenda.

South Africa's foray into assisting with conflict management and mediation comes up against the many morbid symptoms of Africa's own political terrain, including hunger, poverty, famine, human insecurity, weak state institutions, militarised violence and so on. The picture that emerges is strongly suggestive of the limitations on the scope and efficacy of the country's action in an environment where the sanctity of sovereignty and regime security are more important than cosmopolitan values such as human rights and democracy. While having many of the trappings of a hegemonic power, South Africa has thus struggled to translate these attributes into concrete foreign policy gains simply by resorting to its 'soft power' assets. Where it has been successful, Mbeki's role in asserting South Africa's unambiguous African identity has certainly been a factor. Dealing with the dialectic of identity construction has also boosted South Africa's legitimacy and credentials along the South-South and North-South axes. However, the pathologies of xenophobia have critically dented South Africa's image at home and abroad and reversed somewhat the gains registered in making South Africa an

attractive interlocutor and development partner in African affairs. Even its positive overtures to Africa in providing development assistance have to contend with a *realpolitik* that comes up against what it could reasonably accomplish compared to what more established Western and emerging donors such as China and India are better able to offer. A major challenge in this regard will be how South Africa defines and identifies those multiplier effects that could potentially flow from trilateral cooperation.

South Africa's multilateral and foreign policy agendas have very much been driven by a collective search for a form of global developmental and redistributive justice that both widens and deepens the range of engagements started during the Mandela era and which were then robustly consolidated during the Mbeki presidency. However, the terrain which South Africa has chosen for cultivating its foreign policy objectives is not an easy one. Several challenges persist which continue to test South Africa's foreign policy resolve and capability and these challenges in turn raise critical questions about the direction of South Africa's foreign policy under President Zuma whose first term has hardly been reassuring both at home and abroad.

Several issues, questions, and conundrums thus persist in this regard. As an avowedly continental power can South Africa provide more assertive leadership in strengthening regional and continental security, especially as far as peacekeeping and conflict mediation are concerned? By its own example, is it capable of deepening democracy in the face of manifest reversals in many African countries? And given their unsteady and highly politicised genesis as well as huge resource constraints, can South Africa really rely on the AU and NEPAD to drive the pan-African security, governance, growth and revival agendas? Is South Africa's faith in the ethical foundations of multilateralism a sufficient base from which to address the North-South divide and the growing gap between rich and poor countries? And can South Africa's global governance reform discourse succeed in a world where the dictates of asymmetric power and influence still hold strong sway, and where unilateral militarism by the US is still practiced with impunity?

These matters must be posed against the backdrop of South Africa as a country that is still undergoing a daunting transition, exacerbated and scarred by poverty, social unrest, unemployment, and inequality. But what has been truly remarkable is its unusually strong commitment to play an activist role on the global stage as a "norm and

value entrepreneur", a role that is unfortunately not as redolent or assertive as it once was. This acute sense of global mission for a better world and a better Africa is of course a product of its own successfully navigated transition from the cusp of an impending civil conflagration.

However and prior to its enforced revision, the section dealing with foreign policy in the National Development Plan made some pointed judgements about South Africa's current standing in the world. It observed that the country's diplomatic capacity was overstretched, its power and influence in the world had declined in relative terms, it had a poor image and acted in bad faith in its regional neighbourhood, and as a consequence, it had suffered material losses in bargaining power as well as in trade and investment opportunities in the region and more broadly, in Africa. Over his next five-year term from 2014-2019, President Zuma will therefore have to navigate the ship-of-state through what are bound to be stormy and turbulent waters on both the domestic and external fronts. This comes at a time when there are recurrent doubts about his ability to do so and cynicism about whether the Zuma doctrine that "South Africa is open for business" is no more than an empty platitude in an increasingly depressed and fractious domestic economic environment.

Notwithstanding the putative depreciation of the country's moral and political currency, we would nevertheless do well to remember those values which have inspired its transition and its place on the global stage (see Mandela 1993). It therefore still matters a great deal how South Africa sustains a world-view which is driven by an ethical foreign policy and how it promotes the belief that the coin of idealism still holds value in a disorderly, mercurial, and increasingly disenchanted world. While it might struggle to hammer out its foreign policy values on the pragmatic anvil of means and ends, those foundational values expressed by Zuma in his state of the nation address still provide South Africa with the normative centre for dealing with the cold and often intractable realities of African and international politics and must be pursued with greater vigour and purpose than is presently the case. They can only be abandoned at great peril since South Africa's foreign policy increasingly appears bereft of what Immanuel Kant called a 'categorical imperative', namely, ethical behaviour that could form the basis of some universal principle and practice.

It might be apt to end with an injunction from the high priest of international relations realism, because of its resonance for South

Africa: "Remember that diplomacy without power is feeble, and power without diplomacy is destructive and blind … Remember that no nation's power is without limits, and hence its policies must respect the power and interests of others" (Morgenthau 1951: 241).

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