



South Africa Office

**Foreign Policy Academic Sector  
Discussion Summary and Addendum  
Submission for the 5th National Policy  
Conference  
July, 2017**

**An Assessment of the ANC's International Relations Discussion Document  
Towards the 5<sup>th</sup> National Policy Conference**

**1. Background and Context**

Post-apartheid South Africa's foreign policy was marked by normative activism, with the country's newly elected leaders keen to play a visible international role. However, this lasted no longer than Mandela's first term of office. Upon assuming presidency, Mandela actively championed human rights and expressed commitment to multilateralism. This is not to suggest that South Africa's foreign policy under Mandela was unadulterated, but human rights and active involvement in multilateral processes were the most glaring theme of foreign policy.

Overall, the thrust was to be seen to be doing the right thing – to promote human rights and international peace. On the multilateral front, South Africa was actively involved in both regional bodies such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and now the African Union (AU), and international processes beyond the continent, such as the Non-Aligned Movement, the World Trade Organisation, and the United Nations system.

**2. ANC and Progressive Internationalism**

The current discussion document of the ANC uses the notion of "progressive internationalism" as a defining feature of its International Relations perspective. Indeed the ANC has had a remarkable history of international activism, in particular its work under the external mission beginning in the early 1960s, where it assiduously cultivated an international profile, until its banning orders were lifted in the early 1990s.

Underscoring the ANC's progressive internationalism, Oliver Tambo the then Acting President-General of the ANC was present at the first multilateral conference that brought together newly independent Asian and African countries, and hosted by

Indonesia's President Sukarno in the city of Bandung in 1955. This conference paved the way for the establishment of the Non-Aligned Movement in Belgrade in 1961. Tambo would then be designated at Bandung as the Vice-President of the African National Movement.<sup>1</sup> This marked the ANC's commitment to international struggles against colonialism in Third World countries on terms defined by normative boundaries, even though the actual execution of the armed struggle years later would diverge, of necessity, from some of these terms.

The extensive diplomatic engagement that spanned over three decades of ANC's banishment would be a key source of inspiration for the ANC's foreign policy upon assuming government in 1994. According to Chris Landsberg, the ANC also drew on its various historical documents to bolster its diplomatic thinking during the early years in power: the Freedom Charter of 1955, the Constitutional Guidelines of 1988, the Harare Declaration of 1989, and the ANC's Foreign Policy Perspectives of 1994.<sup>2</sup> The diverse streams of perspectives from which the ANC sourced its normative inspiration – Third World movements, pan-Africanist struggles, and universalistic rights discourse - would in later years conflict in ways that would force South Africa towards unprincipled pragmatism.

Today, it would seem that the ANC's idea of progressive internationalism is backward-looking, and fails to comprehend a world that is marked by fluidity and power redistribution.

It makes little sense today to craft pursue an international relations perspective that treat other liberation movement as if they are inherently ethical and progressive in their conduct in power. This runs the risk of looking past principle, and building relations based on a sense of nostalgia for the history of liberation movement, thus failing to comprehend opportunities for renewal and retooling for relevance in new times.

The ANC paper argues that in advancing this progressive internationalism, the ANC-led government has strategically positioned South Africa in the BRICS platform whose importance is expanding. For the ANC, the establishment of the BRICS Bank represents an alternative definitive way of providing alternative sources of support to poor countries, and South Africa being home to the Africa office of the BRICS Bank, strengthens efforts to implement the vision of an African Renaissance while deepening south-south cooperation.

None of the BRICS countries, other than South Africa, places primacy on this grouping in the way that South Africa does. As important as it is for forging common positions and to mobilise resources for infrastructure development, the vitality of the BRICS project is contingent upon domestic stability, good governance, and a genuinely progressive

---

<sup>1</sup> Scott, *The Diplomacy of Liberation*, 95-96.

<sup>2</sup> Landsberg, *The Diplomacy of Transformation*, 81.

(socially inclusive) growth model adopted by various BRICS countries. It is a forum that is as legitimate as its constituent governments are legitimate in the eyes of their citizens.

The BRICS grouping was launched when the full effects of the global financial crisis were not yet felt, before emerging economies suffered the strain of commodity price declines, and when China's growth model hinged firmly on export-led growth. Today China is rebalancing focusing on addressing domestic disequilibrium. Externally, it is preoccupied with the One Belt and Road Initiative.

Even a country such as India that historically had been an active champion of NAM and G77, has its sights set on advancing its ambitions to become a fast-growing, modern, and competitive industrial economy. Ideas related to Third World nationalism no longer hold such a strong force amongst the political elite in the way that the notion of progressive internationalism in its backward character seems to be enjoying currency within the ANC.

The kind of values that should define this progressive internationalism are not clearly laid out in the ANC document. It is important that the paper places a premium on our Constitutional values as guiding light for progressive internationalist politics. This includes accent on human rights (including protection of the rights of citizens against excesses by unaccountable governments), democracy, equity, and socio-economic development. The character of countries with which to build shared platforms should also be values-based rather than be chosen on geopolitical basis.

### **3. ANC International Relations Posture since 2009**

What has been very difficult to identify in South Africa's foreign policy articulation since 2009, and this is also glaring in the ANC's International Relations perspective, is a sign of powerful and animating ideas. The backward-looking notion of progressive internationalism is not sufficient. The ANC's perspective has to advance in lock-step with the shifts in the global system, and offer a perspective on renewed multilateralism at a time when this is under threat. It has to offer a clear values framework that are consistent with its Constitutional ideals. There seems to be values dissonance in the governing party. The ANC's rhetoric in recent times betrays a shift towards racial nationalism, and the party is increasingly becoming parochial, and losing its moral and intellectual hegemony. Consistent with the emergence of backward-looking, anti-imperial posture in foreign policy thinking, since 2009 parochial nationalism has been on the rise in governing party with values such as non-racialism no longer feature as prominently as they used to as if the 1969 Morogoro Consensus crashed at the 2007 Polokwane moment.

While economic nationalism has reared its head most recently with the popularisation of radical economic transformation, the ANC's foreign policy posture has been adopting a stringent anti-Western tone for some time. At the institutional-bureaucratic level there has not been much renewal of foreign policy thinking and tools since the articulation of human rights and broadly values-based foreign policy thinking during the time Nelson

Mandela was president (1994 – 1999), and the African renaissance perspective articulated by President Thabo Mbeki (1999 – 2007).

Beyond norms, the kind of pragmatism that is often evident in diplomatic practice seem unprincipled. A case in point is South Africa's flirtations with Russia over nuclear deal, despite limited normative convergence between South Africa and Russia and despite the fact that trade and investment relations between the two are shallow. Activities such as deployment of South African soldiers in the Central African Republic has had very little to do with promoting national interest, but advancing commercial interests of individuals. Relationships with Angola and the DRC are not so much pursued to advance the African agenda. Rather their rationale is ambiguous and not part of a grand foreign policy perspective. South Africa's African Agenda seems to lack ideational content.

Even the National Development Plan has bemoaned South Africa's declining stature in the world, and the country's loss of respect among its African peers. It is difficult to discern a coherent set of ideas that inform what the ANC characterises as a "progressive internationalism", which is a cornerstone of its discussion document on International relations. What is apparent though is that domestic governance and institutional challenges have had a negative effect on the country's ability to assert itself confidently in global affairs. The shift towards a narrowly nationalistic foreign policy seems to coincide with the institutional challenges confronting the country, including persistent weaknesses in its economy.

#### **4. The Relationship between the Domestic and the Global domains**

The ANC's International Relations discussion document is wide ranging in its observation of global changes, the relationship between the domestic economy and global developments, South Africa's role in the African continent, and various conflict spots around the world. What is not clear, however, are the kind of ideas and values that South Africa champions in a post-crisis world, and how the country could set out to improve its profile in the changing global order.

The ANC's document makes an observation that the current global economic crisis is a mere symptom of the unjust nature of global capitalism, which it claims is used to advance the narrow interests of powerful states and poses risks to the goals of ending poverty, unemployment, and inequality. The document views South Africa and much of the developing world as merely victims of global changes, and even blames the external environment as singularly responsible for the country's own economic difficulties.

While the document is correct in pointing out that the current economic conditions have nudged powerful countries towards protectionist policies, it does not put forward proposal on how to rebuild global confidence and get major economies (including both developed and emerging economies) to provide global leadership.

## **5. Key Challenges Highlighted by the ANC Discussion Paper**

In the ANC paper, five challenges are identified: first, is with respect to foreign policy's ability to respond flexibly to global developments. It is difficult to demonstrate flexibility when foreign policy is parochial and pursues one-sided type of alliances in a fluid world. Further, there is no evidence that there has been renewal in foreign policy thinking in the past 10 years since President Jacob Zuma ascended to office. What has been glaring, rather, is the crisis of ideas and the absence of robust and open debate on foreign policy and South Africa's place in the world.

The second challenge highlighted in the paper must do with the capacity of South African institutions, including diplomatic services to take advantage of growing South-South cooperation. By all accounts, South Africa's diplomatic presence is ubiquitous, stretching to over 120 countries. The lack of a strategic focus in South Africa's foreign policy means that there is a lot of wastage in this corpulent diplomatic presence at a time when the country needs to conserve its resources and deploys them wisely.

Importantly, it is not clear what the return on diplomatic investment is for South Africa at a time of economic strain, and when the majority of its citizens facing economic deprivations. There is no clear strategic focus and prioritisation of South Africa's diplomatic engagements that would allow for greater rationalisation, and enable the country to transform its limited resources for greater effect and gains. The ANC needs to be open about what has been the politicisation of diplomatic missions, where over 70 percent of the missions are headed by political appointees with no proper expertise or preparation on the demands of modern day diplomacy, including the importance of pursuing commercial diplomacy. In addition, there is a need to revamp and renew institutions that are charged with executive foreign policy, beginning with improving capacities within DIRCO, and developing a new cadreship of foreign policy practitioners. Finally, strategic thinking, leadership, and replenishment of ideas are urgently needed.

The third challenge set out by the paper is that of growing the economy in the current global climate. This is not going to be easy when there is no clearly defined development strategy, and explicit links created between this and articulation of economic diplomacy abroad. In addition - or as a complement - to economic diplomacy, grounded in a coherent economic development strategy and reinforced by strategic trade and investment drive, it is also important that new dimensions of diplomacy related to innovation and science and technology are factored in the thinking about leveraging foreign policy for economic development. Managing structural change under the current global economic circumstances also calls for a new dialogue, domestically, about exploring new sources of growth (innovation-led growth); a new thinking about industrial policy; and a structured engagement between government, business, and civil society on a new social compact.

Fourth, the paper identifies the need for harnessing activism of non-state actors and different spheres of government such as provinces to expand beneficial international relations as the fourth challenge. Harnessing non-state actors will need government to be more open and engaging rather than isolates itself. Many civil society organisations, including think-tanks, academics, and business groupings, would welcome such as dialogue, especially if it is on an all-inclusive basis rather than cherry pick those actors that are likely to echo the ruling party's thinking.

The space of para-diplomacy is complex, since these entities have constitutionally guaranteed right to undertake certain international relations activities. Establishing a healthy spirit of cooperative governance, and working with provinces and the cities on a mutually respectful basis could help in consolidating South Africa's external engagements. Some of the cities are no longer under the ruling party, and this may become the case with some of the provinces, and therefore an adversarial relationship between the different spheres of government, especially on party political lines, could fragment and weaken South Africa's foreign policy articulation and branding abroad.

Finally, the discussion document emphasises the importance of developing national interest. This is an elusive concept. In a country that is fragmented along race and class lines, and where there are still lingering tensions over the terms of transition, it is difficult to identify concretely a unifying idea of national interest. Yet the search must continue, with emphasis placed on national economic interests and promotion of national economic prosperity.

Leadership plays a pivotal role as a unifying factor. Norms, policies, and programmes that are deliberately developed to ensure political and economic inclusion can go a long way in cultivating a shared sense of national interest.

## **6. Concluding Observations**

What is troubling about what seems to be the outlines of progressive internationalism defined in the ANC paper is that the party sees the world as static, and the tools with which to deal with the world look the same as those that were applicable over six decades ago. There is obsession in this paper with state sovereignty, but nothing of the rights of people against excesses by the very state elites who use the cover of sovereignty against external powers.

The paper makes over-generalizations about the rise of neo-Nazism in the North, and neo-conservative elements in the South, without any elaboration of what these mean. It sees the opposition as undermining a progressive international agenda. It is not so clear how it is progressive to shield Al-Bashir, or to be in alliance with United Russia – a right-wing party that pays lip service to civil liberties, or to vote against human rights in international forums. It will be important for the ANC discussion paper to reflect more on the

institutions that are key to driving South Africa's foreign policy, and set out a framework for foreign policy making process, as this is not always clear.

What has been lacking so far, not just in the ANC, in the current global order is a clear set of compelling ideas that come from the developing South regarding the character of global governance, leadership, and the nature of institutions that should anchor it.

### **Addendum Part One**

#### **Anchoring foreign policy in our domestic policy frameworks and preferences**

*Anthoni van Nieuwkerk Wits School of Governance and member of SACOIR*

The 2017 document speaks about the historical mandate of the ANC – progressive internationalism – and its implications for foreign policy. This means the philosophical approach the ANC takes in determining its international relations agenda impacts directly on the foreign policy of the South African government as exercised through the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) and related departments and agencies.

As the document notes, the choices of the movement with a direct impact on government's policy positions include: the ideological outlook of foreign policy and the relationship between values and interests; relations with the North and cooperation with the South; so-called regime change agendas; South Africa's role in Africa: building continental and regional integration, peace-making and peace-keeping. The 2017 document spends most of its time on an analysis of the international environment within which South Africa has to conduct its international relations. The document is silent, however, when it comes to the question of the instruments and capacity available to the movement and government in exercising external power and influence. This lacuna needs addressing, as well as the question of the proper identification and conceptualization of the domestic base of its foreign policy.

At its most essential, foreign policy is the extension of domestic policy, and therefore involves the promotion and protection of the country's interests abroad. The movement and government's approach to international relations must be established on the foundation of domestic policy imperatives. Increasingly, foreign policy decision-makers and diplomats need to be able to respond with speed to international dynamics and whilst one acknowledges the need for our representatives to 'think on their feet' when confronted with events that might impact on the country's immediate interests, one also wants to recommend the conduct of our foreign representatives to be guided by a basic understanding of domestic policy imperatives. This calls for the alignment of foreign and domestic policy positions and orientations. What are these domestic policy orientations upon which our foreign policy representatives must build?

Three sets of policy frameworks are in place that provides an overall vision of the direction of the country and the priorities of government in steering society: the National Development Plan (NDP), the National Interest strategy of 2013, and various departmental policy frameworks and strategies, for example the Foreign Policy White Paper, the Defence Review, the IPAP, and so on. The overall policy framework of the ruling party is the NDP, and is discussed below, especially its implications for foreign policy. The NDP aims to eliminate poverty and inequality by 2030. According to the NDP, South Africa can realise these goals by drawing on the energies of its people, growing an inclusive economy, building capabilities, enhancing the capacity of the state, and promoting leadership and partnerships throughout society. What is the convergence between the strategic objectives of the NDP and of South Africa's foreign policy?

Chapter seven of the NDP was recast by a task team appointed by the Minister of DIRCO after it was found that the original chapter was overly economic in its interpretation of the country's international standing and tasks. The 'strengthened' chapter seven of the NDP suggests that in order to pursue and implement an effective foreign policy, which is linked to the country's domestic priorities, South African decision-makers must be guided by eight key-points. These are: the national interest, Africa as a priority, strengthened multilateralism, improved human security, mutually beneficial trade, integrated foreign policy making, and prioritisation of new foreign policy themes such as science and technology, culture and education. Following the identification of these eight key decision-making imperatives, the chapter spends some time on principles.

The chapter argues that South Africa's evolving international engagement is based on two central tenets, Pan-Africanism and South-South solidarity. Government's international relations work must endeavor to shape and strengthen national identity; cultivate national pride and patriotism; address the injustices of past, including those of race and gender; bridge the divides in society to ensure social cohesion and stability; and grow the economy for the development and upliftment of all South Africans.

South Africa's unique approach to global issues is in addition expressed through the concept of Ubuntu:

*The philosophy of Ubuntu recognises that it is in our national interest to promote and support the positive development of others. Similarly, national security would, therefore, depend on the centrality of human security as a universal goal, based on the principle of Batho Pele (people first). In the modern world of globalisation, a constant element is and has to be our common humanity. We, therefore, champion collaboration, cooperation and building partnerships over conflict.*

This recognition of our interconnectedness and interdependence, and the infusion of Ubuntu into the South African identity shape our foreign policy. These concepts inform government's particular approach to diplomacy and shape its vision of 'a better world for all'. From this perspective, South Africa's national interest is not narrowly defined and includes the development and upliftment of its people; stability of the Republic and the



constitutional order; growth and development of the South African economy; growth and development of Southern Africa; a stable and prosperous African continent; and a just and equitable world order.

Chapter seven advises that a high-level, high-impact task team should be convened to further investigate South Africa's national interest. In addition, the identification and defence of strategic national priorities should guide research. The strengthened chapter 7 of the NDP spells out a strong approach to Africa. Its thrust can be summarised in the following five policy statements:

1. South Africa's political engagements on the continent should be informed by the necessity to uphold its founding values as a non-racial and non-sexist democracy, by its economic and security interests, as well as by international expectations of its role on the African Continent.
2. The strengthening of bilateral relations with all African countries is an essential contribution to continental efforts to build peace, security, prosperity and stability. Sustaining these must be a core objective of South Africa's foreign policy in Africa.
3. South Africa's policies relating to African integration must be based on an understanding of, and mutual concern for, common African values of respect, integrity and commitment to continental well-being. Deepening ongoing engagements with NEPAD and the AU is an enduring priority.
4. South Africa must continue its support for multilateral efforts to foster peace on the continent and to continue its support for continental efforts to sustain peace-building efforts. To achieve this, all government departments should engage with universities and research institutes both within the country and the continent.
5. South Africa's educational and research institutions should also be encouraged to undertake vigorous academic exchange programmes with the rest of Africa.

The chapter also spends considerable time problematising Africa's attempts at integration. It notes that after years in gestation, moves by founders of the AU to reform the regional economy have stalled. Since the introduction of NEPAD as the AU's economic blueprint, little has been done to implement the reforms recommended by the document. What have been palpably absent, according to the chapter, are the building blocks for strategically broadening and deepening African integration. What seems clear is that the discussion on economic and political integration lies in intra-African trade and the influence of South Africa as a catalyst for greater unity. With these issues in mind, South Africa should aim to deepen the Continent's economic integration on three fronts simultaneously; regionally, continentally and globally.

Regarding Southern Africa, the chapter advises that a specially established government task team must immediately assess the following policy directions:

1. The economic rationale for a new regional economic bloc with specific consideration of the future of SADC and SACU and their possible unification into a single entity;
2. The relationship between institutions, processes and regional market dynamics;
3. The value and significance of the Tripartite Free Trade Area for the country's long-term future;
4. Greater macroeconomic and financial coordination in the Southern African region and on the continent; and
5. The identification of regional comparative advantages and their roles as catalysts for economic integration within a free trade area.

Chapter seven also focuses on international economic diplomacy. South Africa's economic diplomacy should adopt a holistic approach commencing from an international political economy perspective.

South Africa's economic diplomacy must address the economic and commercial needs to address our domestic priorities and cannot be compartmentalised into individual line-function role and responsibility of departments and sectors, including trade and investment, communication, marketing and branding tourism, science and technology cooperation. It recommends –

*In positioning the country, our missions abroad are our widest footprint and should be geared to act as the beachhead of our growth into new and emerging source markets.*

It also addresses the question of skills and capacity:

*DIRCO should add value to domestic programmes through its understanding of external relations and international partnerships and through its own political leverages in both bilateral and multilateral fora. While diplomats need general marketing and analytical skills, sectoral departments provide critical technical expertise in their areas of work and such complementarity is necessary.*

The same argument is true for the private sector and the non-governmental organisation community.

The chapter also makes an explicit link between stability and development. It adopts the view that without peace and security (and democratic governance), no development is possible. It uses the human security paradigm to identify themes and issues in need of attention: poverty and inequality, both globally and nationally; cross-border crime, including human trafficking, organised crime syndicates, the proliferation of small arms, the spread of illegal narcotics, the rise of terrorism, piracy and the spread of counterfeit goods; pressures on natural resources, especially on both food and water and the impact of climate change; the voluntary and involuntary movement of people; and the spread of communicable diseases. 2

Chapter seven addresses the question of whether the country's organisational and intellectual diplomatic architecture is optimally designed to give effect to government's vision of creating a better world for all. It recommends that government should embark on a strategic assessment of the country's diplomatic footprint across the world. The assessment of the cost and benefit of maintaining or expanding South Africa's 125 embassies, consulates and offices must be raised in the context of how each of these missions contributes to the achievement of our key domestic priorities.

It further proposes –

*Our missions and structured bilateral engagements must, therefore, be oriented towards seeking opportunities for sustainable job creation, responsible trade and investment, and partnerships for health, education, crime prevention and rural development.*

In conclusion, the strengthened chapter seven of the NDP suggests that success will hinge on the ability of government to coordinate all sectors that are involved in foreign policy. All this will require the harmonisation of trade, foreign policy, and defence and security frameworks with an eye to pursuing a policy, which is both robust and imaginative.

## **Addendum Part Two**

### **Progressive internationalism and the national interest**

*Jakkie Cilliers*

*Institute for Security Studies*

The 1990-1994 settlement process, the stature of Nelson Mandela and the character of the African National Congress (ANC) that had been honed in exile provided post-apartheid South Africa with unprecedented global standing and influence. By 2017 South Africa's star has faded and its current foreign policy direction is unclear. In the words of former director-general of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) Siphosiso Pityana: 'Nobody knows where we stand, what our vision of our international system is.'<sup>3</sup>

A recent paper by the Institute for Security Studies, *Life beyond BRICS? – South Africa's future foreign policy interests*<sup>4</sup>, reflected on the extent to which the beliefs and orientation of each successive president has been a determining factor in shaping the country's foreign policy, and speculates on how the outcome of the factional struggle within the ANC would impact upon South Africa's foreign policy beyond December 2017.

---

<sup>3</sup> Siki Mgbadeli, Winds of change hit the SABC, Pityana tells national radio: Zuma is corrupt, BizNews.com, 28 April 2017, [http://www.biznews.com/interviews/2017/04/28/winds-of-change-hit-the-sabc-pityana-tells-national-radio-zuma-is-corrupt/?utm\\_source=BizNews.com&utm\\_campaign=3760852e12-dailyinsider&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_d5e2e8a496-3760852e12-100572145](http://www.biznews.com/interviews/2017/04/28/winds-of-change-hit-the-sabc-pityana-tells-national-radio-zuma-is-corrupt/?utm_source=BizNews.com&utm_campaign=3760852e12-dailyinsider&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_d5e2e8a496-3760852e12-100572145).

<sup>4</sup> Jakkie Cilliers, Southern Africa Report no 9, June 2017, <https://issafrica.org/research/southern-africa-report/life-beyond-brics-south-africas-future-foreign-policy-interests>

Domestic priorities, growth, inequality and unemployment are, however, likely to squeeze out most other considerations. Policy incoherence and poor implementation have accentuated the impact of the 2007/8 global recession and South Africa will most likely experience limited growth despite being located in a high-growth sub-region.<sup>5</sup> Forecasts by the ISS are for average future growth of 2.3% over the next decade or more, significantly below that of the region and national potential, unless the ANC (and the country) is able to change its current divisive and growth-detracting policies. Instead of expanding its international footprint (including the number of embassies), providing development assistance in Africa and peacemaking it is almost inevitable that South Africa will have to scale back and establish clear future priorities that more closely align with its purported national values and developmental interests.

Clearly, membership of BRICS, on top of South Africa's existing membership of the G20 group of major economies, is the most important foreign policy achievement of the Zuma administration. It elevated South Africa to the big league where it rubs shoulders with the purported alternative club of global leadership. However, this has come at the cost of efforts to reform global power relations (including agitating for a possible seat on a reformed Security Council in partnership with non-African countries) as well as South Africa's previous role as a bridge between the developed and the developing world. Despite the continued strength of economic, social and cultural ties with many countries in the West, when it comes to 'high politics', South Africa today sides with the BRIC countries, specifically China and Russia, and appears to have largely abandoned the idea of an alliance of democratic middle powers (the Nordics or indeed regional democracies elsewhere) and to develop progressive alliances to advance rules based global governance.

Beyond a general lack of coherence in government policy the single most serious setback to South Africa's stature in Africa has been the impact of the widespread and repeated incidents of xenophobic violence. These events have, in turn been informed by low growth, high levels of inequality and poor national leadership. In addition, national and foreign policies are often at odds with key values espoused in the Constitution and the basis of the historic settlement from 1990 to 1994. These reflect those of a liberal democracy, a respect for human rights and a positive internationalism – values shared with India and Brazil, but not with Russia or China, key partners within BRICS. Every survey that the Afrobarometer project does in Africa confirms the demand of the majority of African citizens for democracy as their best guarantor to free them from the scourge of bad governance and exploitation at the hands of the Big Men of Africa (women are generally not allowed). Today South Africa does not serve as a proponent of these values

---

<sup>5</sup> Janis van der Westhuizen, *Brazil and South Africa: the 'odd couple' of the South Atlantic?*, *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 54:2, 238, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14662043.2016.1151169>. Also see David R Black & David J Hornsby (2016) *South Africa's bilateral relationships in the evolving foreign policy of an emerging middle power*, *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 54:2, 151-160, DOI: 10.1080/14662043.2016.1151164.

and even its rhetorical commitments have waned. In fact, from a governance perspective South Africa shares many of the afflictions characteristic of Africa's low-income countries (South Africa is an upper-middle income country). Thus, the ANC policy document on international relations reflects, repeatedly, on the need for state sovereignty, but 'nothing of the rights of people against excesses by the very state elites who use the cover of sovereignty against state powers.'<sup>6</sup>

The result is a country that is often not even-handed in its commentary and engagement on African and international developments and that undermines international rule of law to its own long-term detriment. Instead of an approach that is in accordance with applicable customary international law, the precedents that are being set will come to haunt it in the future.<sup>7</sup> For much of Africa, South Africa is rapidly becoming a disappointment. DIRCO has also had to accommodate a stream of politicians in senior foreign postings that had fallen foul of domestic politics and almost completely squeezed out competence and the appointment and promotion of career diplomats. The lack of interdepartmental cooperation and coordination between DIRCO and other government departments and state-owned enterprises is legion, as is the lack of economic diplomatic skills and engagement – as originally pointed out in the National Development Plan.

Looking to the future, South Africa's foreign policy priorities should be clear: how foreign policy can facilitate economic growth, jobs and reduce inequality at home, good relations with all our important trading and investment partners (not only the BRIC countries), global reform and the advancement of a rules-based system (as indeed nominally reflected in the White Paper on South Africa's Foreign Policy). To the end of facilitating economic growth, South Africa should actively pursue regional integration in Africa and the development of regional value chains as its most important foreign policy priority. Africa is and should remain the focus of our foreign and economic policy for our development and security depends upon a stable and growing southern Africa.

Membership of BRICS is a smart, pragmatic move to encompass changing geo-political and economic realities. BRICS has served as a global disrupter, for it has changed the stark developed-underdeveloped world divide, led to greater flexibility within the global financial system and opens the opportunity for a greater balance of power and, eventually, stability. But its future is uncertain and it is time that South Africa starts thinking of life beyond BRICS. It is also unlikely that South Africa will be able to remain relevant to the BRICS grouping along its current expected development trajectory unless

---

<sup>6</sup> Chris Landsberg, Mzukis Qobo and Francis Korneygay, Reflections on the ANC NEC International Relations Sub-Committee Discussion Document, June 2017, p 6

<sup>7</sup> For example, on 22 June 2016 DIRCO issued an apparently innocuous media statement on the territorial dispute regarding the South China Sea that called on the countries concerned to resolve their dispute 'through direct consultations and negotiations, on the basis of respecting historical facts and in accordance with international law, as well as to maintain peace and stability in the South China Sea'. The critical phrase here are the words 'direct consultations and negotiations', since this is a formula that implicitly rejects the ruling by the Court of Arbitration.

a new president and cabinet is able to unlock significantly higher rates of growth and recapture a sense of responsible internationalism.

China too appears to be thinking beyond BRICS. For the next five to ten years China's foreign policy will be focused on the One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative that aims to revitalize the ancient Silk Road that ran from China to Europe through Central Asia.<sup>8</sup> Africa is a marginal player in OBOR. Recently China also endorsed the idea of BRICS Plus, aimed at an outreach with other developing countries that would inevitably dilute South Africa's membership of this exclusive club.<sup>9</sup> The reason for this potential dilution is not difficult to fathom. South Africa's contribution to the combined BRICS economies is set to decline from 3% in 2010 to 2% in 2030 and 1% by 2050. In fact, the Chinese socialist market economy adds the total size of the South African economy to its gross domestic product every eight months. BRICS is, of course, not much of a trading bloc – trade among the BRICS nations is less than 5% of their total global trade or about \$300 billion out of \$6.50 trillion.<sup>10</sup> Its members also have very different governance systems. Whereas the original leadership in India and Brazil was left-leaning at the time of the establishment of the grouping, both Narendra Modi (elected in 2014) and Michel Temer (as from 2016) are from conservative or centrist parties (the Bharatiya Janata Party and Brazilian Democratic Movement Party respectively).

Within the BRICS grouping, the relative share of the various economies is also changing, with the contribution of China forecast to increase from 51% to 65% by 2030 but marginally declining to 63% by 2050. By 2050, India should constitute 27% of BRICS GDP, having increased from only 13% in 2010. But it is very unlikely that the current BRICS configuration will still exist by then. Despite South Africa's strong trade relations with Europe, North America and Japan, South Africa's 'Western' partners have gradually lost profile and traction with successive ANC governments. The West features only to a limited extent in South Africa's current foreign policy narrative and the sense of unease, distaste even, amongst many in the ANC for the USA and to a lesser extent much of Europe, is palpable. Yet in 2015, the value of EU-South Africa trade was almost double its trade with China, although it only accounts for a 1.3% share of total EU trade. This relationship is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future and despite the decision by the UK (an important trading partner for South Africa in its own right) to exit from the EU in 2019. This dichotomous relationship is well captured in the distinction between high and low politics. Whereas South Africa's high politics is avowedly pro-China and pro-Russian, low politics of trade, investment and aid relations tells the opposite story where the EU, UK

---

<sup>8</sup> Jeremy Stevens, OBOR and Africa, Standard Bank, 19 May 2017, 1, [https://ws15.standardbank.co.za/ResearchPortal/Report?YYY2162\\_FISRqWkWXsjoLNloFp3Zff19eRITTI7ZeYATQ8TyLc+WGGamA70at6bNCLM7jspT/xoiITm+eZxvGcE6UxHkpQ==&a=-1](https://ws15.standardbank.co.za/ResearchPortal/Report?YYY2162_FISRqWkWXsjoLNloFp3Zff19eRITTI7ZeYATQ8TyLc+WGGamA70at6bNCLM7jspT/xoiITm+eZxvGcE6UxHkpQ==&a=-1).

<sup>9</sup> Saibal Dasgupta, China wants 'BRICS Plus' to include 'friendly' countries, plan might hurt India's interests, The Economic Times, 8 March 2017, <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/china-wants-brics-plus-to-include-friendly-countries-plan-might-hurt-indias-interests/articleshow/57542669.cms>.

<sup>10</sup> At the October 2016 BRICS Trade Fair, India's Commerce and Industry Minister noted that.

and others continue to play an important, even dominant, role. South Africa therefore has something of a split personality with different groupings within the government and the business community agitating for relations with the West and others with China. This tension also detracts from growth.

Beyond the call for greater balance in South Africa's engagement with its Western trading partners such as the EU and the United States, a new South African president will inevitably have to look at expanding South Africa's role beyond a singular foreign policy focus on BRICS whilst refocusing its efforts on Africa.

### **Addendum Part 3**

#### **The Question of National Interest**

*Richard Smith*

*Board member of the Southern African Relations Office (SALO)*

*Steering Committee of the conflict transformation ACTION Support Centre (ASC)*

The ANC International Relations discussion document places the concept of Progressive Internationalism at its centre. This concept provides a useful starting point for an engagement on international relations that goes beyond discussing national interests and the Diplomacy of Ubuntu, outlined in the White Paper on South Africa's Foreign Policy.

The ANC is built on a foundation of Pan-African internationalism and the assertion of a value based, principled approach to engagement with international actors, is confirmed by the paper as a priority of the movement. The historical global alliances that supported the ANC during the liberation struggle were woven together around the rights of the oppressed. Internationalist struggles against the oppression of African people, solidarity between oppressed groups, anti-imperialism, land rights, unity of Africa and the reform of the international political economy were part and parcel of the ANC liberation agenda.

Progressive internationalism contains an attempt to reassert the underlying principles and values associated with an historical legacy that recognises the interconnected systemic nature of national and international struggles. Building on this principled foundation, the discussion paper seeks also to assert a pragmatic positioning and engagement that recognises both the imperative of driving a domestic economic agenda and the current state of flux of international power relations.

Pragmatic progressive internationalism acknowledges the increasing influence of domestic economic interests in the implementation of foreign policy. The growing influence of private sector interests challenges the integrity of a principled foreign policy. Economic diplomacy needs to be aligned to the broader principles of our international relations agenda, serving social and political interests as well as those dictated by the markets, or short-term profit driven interest. Our African development priorities must

contribute directly to domestic economic development plans, including the NDP, the New Growth Plan (NGP), and the Industrial Policy Action Plans (IPAP). These plans need to be integrated into an African agenda guided by AU Protocols, NEPAD and Agenda 2063.

Interpreting our national interests as best served through economic growth, and short-term profit and market expansion agendas, must be balanced against our long-term interests. South Africa's national development and human security interests are interconnected with an African integration and industrialization agenda. More widely South Africa's global positioning must remain principled in its efforts to build alliances and institutions that reflect a new rules-based world order. As much as this informs our responsibilities on the continent, it also guides our engagement at global level.

While multilateralism is not inherently progressive, it provides an important alternative to the rise of unilateralism that circumvents or distorts international agreements to justify unilateral militarised action. Libya, Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan, Palestine and Iraq all provide useful relevant examples of the potential long-term harm these forms of action can induce. The rise of rogue states, acting outside of agreed international law, threatens human security and the interests of a progressive internationalist agenda.

Multilateralism also works against exploitative or unfair trade deals and trade relations. An insistence on a more equitable global trading system is linked to the solidarity-based principle of common but differentiated responsibility in dealing with inequality, poverty and the impact of intentional underdevelopment on global markets. Multilateral agreements on climate change and environmental commitments form part of the same principled efforts to challenge the international dominance of developed nations.

Progressive Internationalism also recognises that alongside North South partnerships, South-South alliances are essential as an effective response to the current global order. While BRICS is only one of several new emerging alliances between countries of the global South, it remains an important opportunity for South Africa. BRICS has the potential to drive an infrastructure and industrialization agenda on the continent.

To ensure this engagement benefits the continent South Africa needs to establish, consolidate and advance alliances with African Union member states through the strengthening of the African Union institutions, and the integration of a regional agenda that builds multilateral platforms for engagement. This includes integrating lessons learned from post-liberation political parties in SADC, and the role these movements play in post-colonial societies, and providing party-to-party leadership that complements state driven international relations efforts to consolidate a stable, democratic and prosperous region.

A major focus from within the ANC on an African regional integration and democratisation agenda would contribute directly to its own transformation. South Africa's role as the incoming chair of the Organ on Politics Defence and Security provides an opportunity to



stay focused on the unfinished business of SADC in relation to the DRC, Mozambique, Madagascar, Lesotho and Zimbabwe. As new challenges emerge, SADC provides the multilateral instrument through which South Africa must engage.

Progressive Internationalist engagement in the SADC Region will contribute to a regional balance of forces that consolidates and deepens a progressive regional agenda. South Africa has a key role to play in driving and guiding regional efforts:

- Establish a multilateral trade bloc and provide incentives for inter-state trade and beneficiation
- Strengthen calls for democratic, peaceful and credible electoral systems
- Allow for the free and unrestricted movement of citizens
- Assert the underlying values and principles contained in the SADC Treaty.

The SADC Treaty, adopted in 1992, recognises the sovereign equality of all member states as part of a set of principles that commit all members to act in accordance with the values of solidarity, peace and security, human rights, democracy and the rule of law, equity, balance and mutual benefit and commits member states to the peaceful resolution of disputes.

These principles create space for a progressive ANC agenda that recognises that it is by building and strengthening the SADC region that South Africa can best serve its long-term domestic and international agendas. International Relations occupies a niche in policy that enables it to remain focused on this long-term agenda, even as it accompanies other policy areas that seek to advance the short and medium term strategies towards a shared long-term vision. Progressive Internationalism focused in this manner on advancing an African agenda would be paying respect to the Pan-African roots from which it has emerged.