

South Africa's foreign policy: 2010 overview

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Introduction

For most South Africans, regardless of their interest in foreign policy, the advent of 2010 signalled a major and distinctly foreign engagement: South Africa's hosting of the FIFA¹ World Cup. This much anticipated event, hosted for the first time on the African continent, induced a frenzy of infrastructural projects, security arrangements and reorganisation of other national priorities. The imperious presence of FIFA officials in the country during the preparation for and staging of the World Cup irked many observers, both domestic and foreign, and fed into a simmering International Relations (IR) debate on the behaviour of powerful non-state actors. The increasing ability and even inclination of such actors to encroach on state sovereignty in pursuit of commercial gain has generated concern, particularly in the developing world. As Jakkie Cilliers points out, FIFA commands governments to spend billions of dollars on sport infrastructure 'literally irrespective of local development needs' while the net beneficiary of all this expenditure is FIFA itself.² In South Africa's case, this concern is underlined by the fact that the 2010 World Cup turned out to be FIFA's most profitable ever.³

But cynicism about FIFA's developmental agenda did little to dampen a groundswell of patriotism among South Africans during and immediately after the World Cup. Contrary to media scepticism about the country's ability to deliver on its mandate the event proved to be a success and South Africans of all persuasion basked in its afterglow.

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¹FIFA is the French acronym for the International Federation of Association Football and in this article all abbreviated references to its 2010 World Cup refer to the trademarked '2010 *Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup TM*'. South Africa hosted the event from 11 June to 11 July 2010.

²Cilliers 'The rise of the FIFA man' in (2010) 8/August-September *African.org* at 1.

³FIFA's own declaration, during June 2010, of unprecedented profit. Noted *inter alia* by Cilliers n 2 above.

The stage-managed first half of 2010 managed to mask – albeit temporarily – a number of noteworthy trends and developments in South Africa's foreign policy. These include a new sense of realism, not only about the nature of global politics, but also about the imperative of heeding domestic constraints on foreign policy; less hubris and more pragmatism in engagement of other foreign policy stakeholders at the domestic level, more strategic and less ideological behaviour in multilateral settings, and (perhaps unexpected, in terms of what was projected about the new Jacob Zuma presidency) a relentless determination to be reckoned as an emerging power. Even during the heady run-up to the World Cup, President Zuma was executing a schedule of international visits to 'strategic partners'. The new, business-like mode in South Africa's foreign policy yielded results: before the end of 2010, the country was elected to a second term as permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC)⁴ and invited to become a member of the powerful emerging power bloc, known as BRIC.⁵

It is perhaps fitting that the year ended on a 'multilateral high' for South Africa, as multilateralism has been a cornerstone of the country's post-apartheid foreign policy, and arguably the determining element in its global diplomatic stature. South Africa's multilateralism has also, since 1994, become synonymous with certain guiding principles and themes: *inter alia* the primacy of an 'African Agenda'; norm-entrepreneurship at the global level, especially in terms of the reform of global governance; and ideological solidarity with other developing countries. This article will investigate the salient foreign policy trends and developments that manifested during the course of 2010, and gauge whether the principles mentioned continue to guide South Africa's relations with the rest of the world.

The 'two-level' game

In 1988, Robert Putnam⁶ put forward a rather simple idea that has since become perennial to foreign policy analysis: he used the term 'two-level game' to explain the compromises made by foreign policy executives in dealing with

⁴On 12 October 2010 the UNGA elected South Africa as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for a two year period (2011-2012) beginning on 1 January 2011.

⁵The acronym BRIC was coined in 2003 by Jim O'Neill, a former chief economist at Goldman Sachs. It identified Russia, China, Brazil and India as having the greatest growth trajectories, based on their large and growing populations that provide markets for both domestic produce as well as for foreign trade; their high expenditure on research and development; development of human capital, positive economic fundamentals, and the ability to exploit resource assets, such as oil. See van der Merwe 'BRIC and South Africa: Can it become BRICS?' in *TradeInvest South Africa* 25 November 2009, accessed 1 December 2010 at http://www.tradeinvestsa.co.za/feature_articles/345544.htm.

⁶Putnam 'Diplomacy and domestic politics: The logic of two-level games' (1988) 42/3/*Summer International Organization* 427-460.

the simultaneous and often contradictory imperatives of strategising at the domestic and international levels of policy. Putnam sought to move away from state-centric theories of foreign policy analysis by acknowledging ‘the inevitability of domestic conflict about what the “national interest” requires’,⁷ thereby ensuring that attention to the systemic (or structural) context of foreign policy, as determined by the external domain, would not be done at the expense of taking into account the domestic context.

The two-level game has been and remains pivotal to any analysis of South Africa’s foreign policy. A concern during the months before the World Cup was speculation that the event would be followed by an outbreak of xenophobic violence. During 2008, media coverage of atrocities against foreigners in South Africa had shamed the country, and a repeat thereof during a year as seminal as 2010, amounted to a foreign policy nightmare. The dreaded jingoism did not materialise, but what followed directly after the sporting event was a paralysing civil servants’ strike of unprecedented scale. This followed on and coincided with several scandals surrounding the person of President Zuma, problems that emanated from the presidency⁸ and yet more scandals involving certain of his family member.

At the height of the strike, the president was out of the country, attending to a diplomatic campaign to ensure South Africa’s inclusion in the new, dynamic BRIC forum. Zuma ensured that he paid state visits to each of the BRIC countries, even fitting in three of these in the hectic three month period that spanned the World Cup, and despite the presence of scores of visiting heads of state and government in the country during that time.⁹ Zuma thus defied initial expectations that he would be less internationally ‘visible’ than his globe-trotting predecessor. The *Mail and Guardian*, in its annual ‘Cabinet Report Cards’, wryly noted that Zuma, like Thabo Mbeki, had discovered ‘the joys of world statesmanship’.¹⁰

The point has been made elsewhere that former president Mbeki had become a victim of his own international ambition when, at the domestic level, he was

⁷*Id* at 460.

⁸Among other challenges for President Zuma, 2010 saw the departure of two top officials, former ANC spokesperson and the chief operations officer in the presidency Jessie Duarte, and former spy boss Vusi Mavimbela, Director-General in the Presidency. See the annual ‘Cabinet report cards’ of the *Mail & Guardian* 23 December 2010 to 6 January 2011 at 4.

⁹Zuma paid state visits to New Delhi, Moscow and Beijing in the three-month period June to August 2010. Having already visited Brazil at head of state level during October 2009, the visit was reciprocated by President Luiz Inacio Lula during July 2010. Beyond these visits, Zuma also visited the UK, France, Sweden, Mexico, Egypt, Libya, Belgium, Namibia and Zimbabwe. See register of state visits undertaken by and scheduled for Jacob Zuma, contained in websites of the SA Presidency (<http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/>) and the DIRCO (<http://www.dfa.gov.za/>).

¹⁰*Mail and Guardian* n 8 above at 4.

perceived as 'aloof and increasingly out of touch with the sentiments of ordinary South Africans'.¹¹ This eventually led to his forced resignation during September 2008. Jacob Zuma evidently kept this lesson in mind and when labour unions threatened¹² to mete out the same punishment to him unless he returned to South Africa to face the turmoil caused by the strike, he heeded their warnings. Not only did he return, but he took forceful steps to re-exert discipline and ensure that his own political house was in order. Among the actions he took was a radical cabinet shake-up, unprecedented in post-apartheid history. Nic Dawes, editor of the *Mail & Guardian*, observed that the changes in the executive team were prompted by 'the president's political management instincts' rather than the performance record of individual cabinet members.¹³ Tellingly, the foreign affairs portfolio was not affected, confirming the strong working relationship between Zuma and his foreign minister, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane. In fact, the ministry was rewarded with the addition of a third deputy-ministry, a nod to the increasing scope of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation's (DIRCO's) global responsibilities.

The two-level game was acutely visible when, on 25 September 2010, Nkoana-Mashabane delivered a speech on behalf of the president to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). This was the first time¹⁴ since 1994 that the South African president did not address the annual UNGA session in New York. The 2010 summit was of specific importance because it served as a global progress review with regard to the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Also, the fact that Zuma had personally just a few months earlier launched the *One Goal Education Campaign* 'to strategically draw attention to the MDGs'¹⁵ had created an expectation that he wanted to be associated with this global cause. However, Zuma stayed at home, choosing instead to attend a party-political policy conference¹⁶ where he used the opportunity to restore his own authority.

His former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, who had been reassigned the portfolio of Home Affairs during 2009, seemed also to have learnt from her 'two-level game' experiences, especially as concerns the international fall-out of her new Department's notorious corruption and mal-

¹¹Spies 'Trends and developments in South African foreign policy: 2009' (2009) 34 *SAYIL* 270.

¹²See 'Unions gun for Zuma' in *Pretoria News* 25 August 2010 at 1.

¹³Dawes 'Reshuffling the deck chairs' *Mail & Guardian* n 8 above at 4.

¹⁴The only exception being September 2008, when President Mbeki's scheduled trip to New York had to be cancelled at short notice, after he had been forced to resign, leaving in place a caretaker President Kgalema Motlanthe.

¹⁵Nkoana-Mashabane 'Statement by the South African Minister of International Relations and Cooperation to the Millennium Development Goals High Level Plenary Meeting' UN New York, 22 September 2010.

¹⁶The ANC's 2010 National General Council was held in Durban, South Africa from 20-24 September.

administration.¹⁷ She implemented tough measures to shore up service delivery by Home Affairs and during 2010 also launched a project to register the thousands, if not millions, of illegal Zimbabwean migrants who live and work in South Africa.

2010 thus witnessed a more concerted attempt by foreign policy leaders to maintain focus on domestic imperatives. It was noted elsewhere that South African foreign policy during 2009 took on board government's 'big five' domestic priorities, namely job creation, education, health, crime prevention, rural and land reform.¹⁸ During 2010 the DIRCO ensured that foreign policy rhetoric remained infused with explicit references to these priorities.¹⁹ However, several critics observed that the country's domestic economic policy continued to be insufficiently linked, at a strategic level, to its international economic diplomacy. The point has also been made that despite impressive economic diplomacy at the executive level – for example Zuma's lobbying of BRIC states – the initiatives are not supported by an institutional bulwark. As Mzukisi Qobo warned in an April 2010 article, SA lacks 'the kind of foreign policy activism found in other countries where government strategy and corporate objectives for expansion abroad are mutually supportive'.²⁰ He made the point that this weakness in the country's foreign policy would 'limit South Africa's ability to respond to regional and global changes, especially those posed by emerging powers', *inter alia* because 'there is not sufficient linkage of the pursuit of power and wealth aggregation in the conduct of the country's foreign policy'.

A key development in addressing similar concerns has been the release on 23 November 2010 of the New Economic Growth Path (NGP), which outlines a comprehensive strategy to enhance South Africa's comparative advantage in the international economy.²¹ The NGP has been greeted with cautious optimism by commentators, and in some case even enthusiasm: Nobel

¹⁷*Inter alia* with the effect that the British government during 2009 introduced visa-duty for South African passport holders.

¹⁸Spies n 11 above at 276.

¹⁹See, eg, Nkoana-Mashabane 'South Africa's second term as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council' Speech by the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation at the University of Pretoria 15 October 2010.

²⁰Qobo 'Refocusing South Africa's economic diplomacy: the "African agenda" and emerging powers' (2010) 17/1 *South African Journal of International Affairs* at 17. Qobo proposes the following building blocks for enhanced economic diplomacy: 'the identification of strategic foreign policy priorities; greater institutional co-operation among agencies dealing with economic and foreign policy development; synergies between corporate strategies and government's foreign policy objectives; and the need for South Africa to develop a stronger leadership ambition in the African continent, both to contribute to Africa's development and to pursue its own economic interests'.

²¹South African Department of Economic Development 'The new growth path: the framework' media release 23 November 2010, accessed 7 January 2011 at <http://www.info.gov.za/speech/DynamicAction?pageid=461andsid=14787andtid=24857>.

Economics laureate Joseph Stiglitz has described the NGP as holding out 'the most promise of leading the country on the path of sustainable, equitable and democratic development for which it has long been striving'.²²

But certain domestic aspects of foreign policy have remained problematic, and in some cases worsened. 2010 witnessed a rancorous domestic debate about the rights of civil society, especially the media, to freedom of expression and access to information. This was unleashed by the ruling African National Congress' (ANC's) claims that media self-regulation had failed and that existing watchdogs like the Press Ombudsman were not effective in deterring irresponsible reporting.²³ The resultant proposals for a Protection of Information Bill (POI) and Media Appeals Tribunal (MAT) provoked a chorus of condemnation. A broad coalition of civil society entities warned that the proposals threatened South Africa's liberal constitution which boasted a regulatory framework moulded on international precedent as established by thriving democracies.²⁴ As concerns the POI, the ANC's assertion that it would be crucial to national security and to protect the country from becoming 'a playground for foreign intelligence' was met with scorn.²⁵ The public exchange was so heated that even United States (US) Ambassador Donald Gips, in a speech to the South African Institute for International Affairs (SAIIA), ventured into the debate and expressed his concern about the protection of media freedom in South Africa.²⁶

In an ironic twist of fate, the US government itself became embroiled in a brouhaha over freedom of access to information, when the whistleblower website WikiLeaks during November 2010 posted hundreds of thousands of classified US documents and cables from its network of diplomatic missions, just months after leaking documents on the US war in Iraq and Afghanistan, and supplied these documents to leading newspapers. The US government

²²As quoted by Habib 'Focus on new growth path' *Sunday Times* 19 December 2010 at 5.

²³The ANC discussion document on 'Media Transformation, Ownership and Diversity' was prepared for the 2010 ANC National General Council held from 20-24 September in Durban. The document can be accessed at <http://www.anc.org.za/docs/discus/2010/mediad.pdf>.

²⁴See Chutel 'How will South Africa talk democracy without a free press?' *SAIIA Diplomatic Pouch* 10 December 2010, accessed 31 December 2010 at <http://www.saiia.org.za/diplomatic-pouch/how-will-south-africa-talk-democracy-without-a-free-press.html>.

²⁵In a critique of the ANC's position on the POI, John Higgins speculates that Karl Marx might have remarked, as he did in 1841, that 'government hears only its own voice, it knows that it hears only its own voice, yet it harbours the illusion that it hears the voice of the people, and it demands that the people, too, should itself harbour this illusion'. See Higgins 'Censorship and Karl Marx' *Business Day* 6 August 2010, accessed 6 August 2010 at <http://www.businessday.co.za/articles/Content.aspx?id=117296>. See also De Waal 'ANC and SANEF agree to continue to disagree' *The Daily Maverick* 10 September 2010, accessed 1 February 2011 at <http://www.thedailymaverick.co.za/article/2010-09-10-anc-and-sanef-agree-to-continue-to-disagree>.

²⁶Gips 'Address by the US Ambassador to South Africa at SAIIA' Johannesburg 18 August 2010.

predictably reacted angrily to the exposé, claiming that it endangered the lives of officials and sources.²⁷ But it was not the only government to be shamed by WikiLeaks: Among the many thousands of confidential cables reporting on conversations with politicians and other individuals, one quoted South African Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, as labelling Zimbabwean President Mugabe ‘a crazy old man’ and expressing the view that Zimbabwe’s opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) should be supported.²⁸

So much for government secrets. Press Ombudsman Joe Thloloe made the point in August 2010 that ‘rapidly advancing technology will make the ANC’s proposed changes redundant’.²⁹ The same argument can be applied to international diplomacy, and the South African government will not be immune to investigative journalism, cybercrime or even cyber war. The answer therefore lies in government nurturing a broad network of stakeholder support for its foreign policy so as to avoid a ‘them and us’ standoff in these inevitable policy quandaries.

Broadening foreign policy stakeholder involvement

In her comment on the WikiLeaks furore, Lauren Hutton observes that states are being forced ‘to reconsider when and how to keep secrets in an age marked by massive and instantaneous flows of information across borders. It also calls into question our understanding of what should be kept secret and when national security can legitimately be used as a justification for restrictions on open, democratic governance processes’. She proffers that the information revolution provides ‘opportunity for greater involvement of national and global peripheries’ and proposes that greater access to information could change the dynamics of relationships between rulers and their citizens or between global elites and those of the margins of power.³⁰

In the arena of diplomacy, the co-operative pursuit of certain objectives by state and non-state actors is known as ‘polylateral’ (or ‘catalytic’) diplomacy.³¹ Under the Zuma administration, and in stark contrast with the heavily centralized Mbeki presidency that preceded it, foreign policy leaders have

²⁷Chutel n 26 above. Also see Hutton ‘WikiLeaks and national security in the 21st century’ Institute for Security Studies Website: ISS Today, accessed 2 December 2010 at http://www.iss.co.za/iss_today.php?ID=1074.

²⁸See Sparks ‘SA needs strong-arm tactics to turn the page for Zimbabwe’ *Business Day* 22 December 2010 at 5.

²⁹Chutel n 26 above.

³⁰Hutton n 29 above.

³¹See Wiseman ‘“Polylateralism” and new modes of global dialogue’ in Jonsson and Langhorne (eds) *Diplomacy II* (2004) 37.

started a 'public participation programme'³² to ensure that more stakeholders of South Africa's foreign policy can contribute to the development and implementation thereof. This started tentatively during 2009 and gained momentum during 2010, as government engaged with political, business, academic, non-governmental organisation (NGO) and civil society leadership to debate foreign policy issues. As part of the process, during 2010 the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation undertook interactive sessions, or her 'roadshow' as she refers to it, to at least five provinces.³³

The emphasis on communication with a broader public, both at home and abroad, led to the elevation of public diplomacy to that of a distinct 'branch' within DIRCO, implying more dedicated resources and a higher level of institutional and strategic management. On 24 November 2010 Cabinet approved the appointment of a new Deputy Director-General, exclusively dedicated to public diplomacy, to head up this division.³⁴

The more focused stakeholder involvement in foreign policy formulation was also stepped up, building on the *ad hoc* policy dialogue started in 2009. During October 2010, a series of consultative meetings were called by DIRCO, on a draft South African foreign policy discussion document, destined to be crafted into a White Paper on foreign policy.³⁵ The document did not reveal any dramatic changes in the direction of South Africa's foreign policy and reaffirmed the known values that underpin it, even if contextualised in a somewhat more realist tone.³⁶

In the discussion document and subsequently confirmed in public addresses,³⁷ DIRCO also announced that it was in the process of establishing a Foreign

³²See Nkoana-Mashabane Speech by the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation on 'South Africa's foreign policy focus today and in the future' at the University of the Free State 30 March 2010, accessed on 12 December 2010 at <http://www.dfa.gov.za/docs/speeches/mashabane.html>.

³³Fransman 'Achieving a permanent representation for Africa in the key international institutions' Address by the Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation to the Inaugural Ma-Holo Foundation Lecture Cape Town 26 November 2010.

³⁴DIRCO 'DIRCO confirms the appointment of Deputy Director-General Public Diplomacy' media release Pretoria 25 November 2010, accessed on 31 January 2011 at <http://www.dfa.gov.za/docs/2010/publicdiplomacy1126.html>.

³⁵DIRCO 'South Africa's foreign policy: Meeting the challenges of the future' Draft discussion document towards a White Paper on foreign policy (mimeo) October 2010.

³⁶Author's own impression of the contents of the document and the discussion that were attended. In light of the fact that this was a mere discussion document, and not circulated publicly, no extracts from it will be quoted.

³⁷Provisionally named in the draft discussion document as the 'South African Council on International Relations' (SACOIR), and as discussed by Nkoana-Mashabane in 'The relationship between South Africa and the Emerging Global Powers' Speech by the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation to the SAIJA Johannesburg 1 November 2010.

Policy Council which would allow the South African foreign policy community to engage with DIRCO and allow for a more direct civil society impact on the development and implementation of foreign policy. This initiative followed a recommendation made by parliament's Portfolio Committee on International Relations during April 2010, for the establishment of 'an independent, multifaceted, scholarly group assisting in dissemination and engagement of different sectors of our society on foreign policy issues'; an entity that would mirror the reputable Council on Foreign Relations of the US.³⁸

Parliament's international relations watchdog issued this guideline at least in part to remedy what it called an emerging perception 'that South Africa is disengaging from the human rights basis for its foreign policy'.³⁹ It was referring *inter alia* to South Africa's controversial voting behavior during its first ever (2007/2008) term as non-permanent member of the UNSC during which, as Jakkie Cilliers *et al* assert, South Africa seemed to prioritise ideological solidarity and resorted to 'moralistic platitudes that infuriated rather than informed influential civil society groupings as well as key countries in the developed world'.⁴⁰

In an interesting choice of words, the Portfolio Committee questioned whether DIRCO had 'developed tools of listening and conversation; and what tools of persuasion are put in place to achieve this', and concluded that there had been 'a lapse of the public diplomacy strategy and national democratic accountability'. Its report insisted on the development of a more coherent public diplomacy strategy, echoing its own concerns expressed a year earlier, that despite a hive of activity through conferences etc, 'there is still limited public engagement in issues around the Department's mandate'.⁴¹

There have been indications from foreign policy leaders that a more transparent and deliberative approach will be adhered to during its second term on the UNSC. As Nkoana-Mashabane said in a speech at the University of Pretoria just days after South Africa's re-election to the Council:

... we have taken necessary measures as a country to ensure that we indeed learn from our 2007/08 experience. We are going to need a strong coordination effort on the part of Government to enable us to improve on our capacity to respond rapidly and effectively when required to do so. We will be communicating more, better and faster with our people, every step of the way, especially

³⁸Parliament of South Africa 'Report of the Portfolio Committee on International Relations on the DIRCO's Annual Report 2008/9' 20 April 2010 at 5, accessed on 7 January 2011 at www.parliament.gov.za/live/commonrepository/Processed/.../217020_1.doc.

³⁹*Id* at 3-4.

⁴⁰Cilliers *et al* 'South Africa's second term at the UN Security Council: Managing expectations' Institute for Security Studies Situation Report 8 December 2010 at 3.

⁴¹Note 40 above at 4.

regarding positions we will take on debates within the Security Council. We will not trade our constitutional values and the rich tradition of struggle against injustice for political point-scoring. South Africans have to trust our judgment and never doubt our loyalty to our Constitution.⁴²

Her promise was promptly followed up with an invitation to academics and other foreign policy commentators to a 'government-civil society strategy dialogue in preparation for South Africa's 2011-2012 United Nations Security Council non-permanent seat'.⁴³

South Africa's new 'club' diplomacy

In the 21st century, the monopoly over information is but one of many new challenges facing governments. The contemporary global system itself is in flux, with power relationships challenged across the board. Richard Haas contends that labels such as unipolarity, bipolarity, even multipolarity are becoming fluid and obscure, as the traditional hegemony of the Western powers is eroded by globalisation-driven interdependence, and an increasing number of issues on the global diplomatic agenda are entering the domain of global governance.⁴⁴ As the author has argued elsewhere,⁴⁵ an appropriate description of the emerging polarity of global politics that Haas refers to, could be 'polypolarity'. Rather than a system of multipolarity, which many observers contend has become the new structure of global power, polypolarity implies situational power and centres of gravity (or 'poles') that are fluid, and even overlap, depending on the issue.

But polypolarity does not denote the simple demise of state-centric foreign policy. To the contrary: in the post-cold war era, there are more sovereign states than ever before, and many of these exert 'soft' rather than 'hard' power in the global arena. *Inter alia* this means that they resort to diplomacy rather than military alliances to impact global power relations. Many of these states are 'emerging' powers, or global South leaders, that advance agendas of reform in pursuit of a post-Western world order.⁴⁶ This they do in an increasingly material manner: the G20, which at the end of 2009 succeeded the Group of 7 (G7) industrialised nations as engine of global growth,⁴⁷ is leading global

⁴²Nkoana-Mashabane n 15 above.

⁴³The consultative deliberations were held on 18 November 2010 at DIRCO Pretoria.

⁴⁴Haas 'The age of nonpolarity: What will follow US dominance?' (2008) 87/3 May/June *Foreign Affairs* 44.

⁴⁵Spies 'South Africa's multilateral challenges in a "polypolar" world' (2010) 45/4 December *The International Spectator* 74.

⁴⁶See Kornegay 'IBSA, BRICS and BASIC – as they relate to SA's global South and emerging power diplomacy' paper delivered at the Institute for Global Dialogue and Friedrich Ebert Foundation seminar 'South Africa and emerging Power Alliances IBSA, BRIC, BASIC' Pretoria 5 November 2010.

⁴⁷G20 'Pittsburgh Summit: Leaders' Statement' 24-25 September 2009, accessed 2 January 2011 at http://www.g20.org/Documents/pittsburgh_summit_leaders_statement_250909.pdf.

recovery after the 2008 financial crisis, and coordinating responses to prevent it from becoming a global depression. Simon Freemantle and Jeremy Stevens refer to this development as a ‘seismic alteration’⁴⁸ in the global economic centre of gravity, as global economic growth, for the first time in two centuries, is driven by emerging powers. This in turn opens up space for these powers to muscle their way into political structures of global governance.⁴⁹

Something that is gaining currency in international relations is the phenomenon of ‘club diplomacy’. There is as yet no fixed term to describe the phenomenon, and descriptive terminology such as ‘mini-lateral’ groups or ‘limited multilateral strategic partnerships’⁵⁰ are also used. Loosely described, diplomatic clubs are groups of states that are not established by treaty and coalesce around converging issues and national interests rather than common ideology. This allows for much more flexibility in foreign policy choices, and a ‘buffet’ style selection of diplomatic association. Indeed, Francis Kornegay points out that such clubs ‘may contain very fundamental and unresolved conflicts of interest occasionally bordering on confrontation’.⁵¹

A progressively stronger preference for club diplomacy can be observed in the foreign policy of South Africa during 2010, manifesting in more flexible positions driven by pragmatic-economic concerns rather than ideology.⁵² As Nkoana-Mashabane remarked during November 2010, the South African government is ‘aware that history has marched on’. She quoted Robert Axelrod’s contention that ‘friendship is hardly necessary for cooperation ... under suitable circumstances, cooperation can develop even between antagonists’ and noted that ‘in this complex and fluid global system we live in today, nurturing conditions for cooperation is crucial if we are to construct a different global order where power is more diffused and responsibilities are appropriately shared’.⁵³

⁴⁸Freemantle and Stevens ‘Is there a BRIC-IBSA business future?’ Standard Bank Economics Research Paper prepared for the IGD and FES seminar ‘South Africa and emerging Power Alliances 5 November 2010 at 1. See also Fabricius ‘Rebranding the begging bowl?’ *Pretoria News* 12 November 2010 at 13.

⁴⁹Nkoana-Mashabane at SAIIA n 39 above.

⁵⁰Kornegay n 48 above.

⁵¹*Ibid.*

⁵²As the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation observed, ‘ideology is no longer a primary driver of state behavior’. Nkoana-Mashabane ‘Balancing national, regional, continental and international interests – where does the Republic of South Africa draw the line through its foreign policy?’ Lecture at the Tshwane University of Technology 10 September 2010, accessed 10 January 2011 at <http://www.dirco.gov.za/docs/speeches/2010/mash0910a.htm>. See also Zondi ‘Contributing the South African perspective’ in Altinay (ed) *Does fairness matter?* Brookings Institution Global Economy and Development Working Paper 40 (April 2010) at 29. Zondi notes that South Africa ‘may be setting aside its idealism in the conduct of its international relations’.

⁵³Nkoana-Mashabane at SAIIA n 39 above.

The foreign minister's blending of normative goals (creating a more equitable world order) with realist strategy (the end justifies the partners) reflects another trend in South Africa's foreign policy, and one which was consolidated in 2010: the identification and insertion of national interest in foreign policy rhetoric. In a speech at the Tshwane University of Technology, the minister soberly informed the students that:

to emphasize solely issues of shared values and common interest in foreign policy at the expense of national interest and the reality of power in international relations, may prevent one from seeing when the interests of one's own country are at stake; or when others exercise their power to dominate your country and the entire international system.⁵⁴

In the same speech she nevertheless tried to tone down this realist tenor by emphasising the normative principles of South Africa's foreign policy:

We nevertheless note that to give primacy to issues of self-interest, national security and power in foreign policy at the expense of shared values and common interest in international relations may prevent a country from working with others – states and non-state actors – to build an equitable and humane world system.⁵⁵

On balance, sentiment among foreign policy leaders had clearly changed in favour of a less romantic approach to the world. During April 2010, DIRCO was reminded not to lose focus of its domestic priorities, when the parliamentary Portfolio Committee demanded an impact assessment on DIRCO's participation in international conferences, indicating clearly 'how national interest was infused into the final product'.⁵⁶

Foreign policy documents have indeed, over the past few years, reiterated the importance of South Africa nurturing strategic relations with a select group of emerging powers, including Brazil, India and China.⁵⁷ Two of these, Brazil and India, had been tied into a diplomatic club with South Africa, when the India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum (IBSA) was established in 2003. IBSA members share a certain ideological identity: the forum evolved from Thabo Mbeki's initial lobbying for a 'G8 of the South', an attempt to counter the dominance of the G8 (of the North) in economic global governance fora.⁵⁸

⁵⁴Nkoana-Mashabane at TUT n 54 above.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*

⁵⁶Parliament of South Africa n 40 above at 5.

⁵⁷First articulated in Resolution 8(23) of the ANC's 52nd National Conference, December 2007, and subsequently echoed in foreign policy statements of the South African government.

⁵⁸See Kornegay n 48 above and also Soko and Qobo 'South Africa and the BRICs: A crisis of identity in foreign policy' *Mail & Guardian* 7 January 2011, accessed 15 January 2011 at <http://www.saiia.org.za/great-powers-africa-opinion/south-africa-and-the-brics-a-crisis-of-identity-in-foreign-policy.html>.

When an overlapping club, the Brazil-Russia-India-China (BRIC) quartet was launched at summit level during June 2009, South Africa's exclusion rankled. There was no argument with the fact that South Africa's economy was dwarfed⁵⁹ by each of the BRIC members. However, seen from the perspective of an increasingly realist South African foreign policy leadership, the fact that the BRIC signaled a new power pole in the global political economy, and straddled both the North-South and East-West divides, rendered membership irresistible.⁶⁰

Andrew Cooper describes BRIC as 'economism of size with an overlay of realism' and notes that the club claims no ideational or value-driven mission, explaining why it is 'largely silent on most political, strategic and social matters'.⁶¹ He concurs with Mills Soko and Mzukisi Qobo who point out the group's 'unorthodox economic policies, which have eschewed the neo-liberal nostrums embodied in the now discredited so-called Washington Consensus'.⁶² In the case of Africa, for example, each of the BRICs has employed aggressive economic diplomacy to court the continent's 53 states – an attractive political target group, as Africa represents the largest bloc from any region in the UNGA. The *Chinese People's Daily* reported that BRIC's trade with Africa increased more than seven-fold from 2000 to 2008, and that in 2008, the BRIC trade with Africa accounted for nearly twenty percent of Africa's total foreign trade volume.⁶³

In an attempt to join the club, Minister Nkoana-Mashabane wrote to each of her BRIC counterparts during 2009,⁶⁴ and followed up on this with visits to each of the states. As mentioned, the diplomatic offensive thereafter culminated in President Zuma's marathon state visits to the BRIC nations during 2010.

Thus it was a triumphant moment when, on 23 December 2010, China (acting in its capacity as current chair of the BRIC) formally invited South Africa to become a full member of what would become BRICS.⁶⁵ The decision took

⁵⁹Prompting Freemantle and Stevens to call the South African government's stated desire to become a member of BRIC 'deeply misplaced' n 50 above at 3.

⁶⁰As Fabricius puts it, 'in Pretoria's thinking, power trumps democracy'. See Fabricius 'SA prefers power over democracy' *Pretoria News* 13 August 2010 at 15.

⁶¹Cooper 'Labels matter: Interpreting rising states through acronyms' in Alexandroff and Cooper (eds) *Rising states, rising institutions: Challenges for global governance*. (2010) at 69.

⁶²Soko and Qobo n 60 above.

⁶³'South Africa's entry into BRIC to reshape world economy' *People's Daily Online* 30 December 2010, accessed 1 January 2011 at <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90780/91421/7247209.html>.

⁶⁴DIRCO 'Minister Nkoana-Mashabane on SA full membership of BRICS' press release 24 December 2010.

⁶⁵*Ibid.* For this purpose, President Zuma will thus attend the 3rd BRICS Leaders' Summit to be held in China in 2011.

many observers by surprise, given the relative size of the South African economy (it had not even been included in the so-called 'next-11' emerging economies).⁶⁶ Even Goldman Sachs Asset Management chairman Jim O'Neill, who coined the term BRIC, expressed his surprise at BRIC's decision, noting that it seemed to be motivated by political reasons rather than economic reasons, as 'South Africa's economy, with a gross domestic product of about 285bn, was more in the league of the lesser developing economies, such as South Korea (833bn), Turkey (615bn) and Mexico (875bn)'.⁶⁷

From both the South African and BRIC's sides, however, comment on the decision to admit South Africa was normatively couched. As Nkoana-Mashabane explained:

The rationale for South Africa's approach was in consideration of a matter of crucial importance to BRICS Member States, namely the role of emerging economies in advancing the restructuring of the global political, economic and financial architecture into one that is more equitable, balanced and rests on the important pillar of multilateralism.⁶⁸

It is probable that BRIC's decision had been informed by less altruistic considerations – and not even for predominantly political reasons, as O'Neill opined. It can be argued that the BRIC had decided to take on as economic and political partner the entire continent of Africa 'all for the price of one' state – South Africa. In a sense, this decision confirmed a strategy South Africa had been pursuing in its economic diplomacy, namely the idea that it offers a 'gateway' to the rest of the continent.⁶⁹

The South African government has deftly exploited the strategic advantages of being a continental gatekeeper, particularly in the context of the powerful new G20, of which it is the only African member. The reality is that the region boasts the third fastest growth in the world, after China and India, and a total population of about one billion⁷⁰ which matches the much touted giant populations of China and India respectively. Moreover, Africa has a larger percentage of middle-class households (defined as those with incomes of

⁶⁶Apart from the BRIC, Goldman Sachs has also identified the 'next 11' emerging markets – Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Korea, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Turkey and Vietnam – that have fast-growing populations and the economic potential of the BRIC countries. South Africa is conspicuously absent from the list.

⁶⁷'SA not big enough for BRIC, says "founder"' *Business Day* 30 December 2010 at 1-2.

⁶⁸DIRCO press release n 66 above.

⁶⁹Nkoana-Mashabane, quoted by *Business Day* n 69 above. Also see the *People's Daily Online* n 65 above.

⁷⁰Zuma 'Address by the South African President to G20 business leaders on partnering with Africa's dynamic markets' Toronto 24 June 2010, accessed 7 August 2010 at <http://www.dfa.gov.za/docs/speeches/jzuma.html>.

US\$20 000 or above) than India.⁷¹ In a telling demonstration of how South African foreign policy leaders have drawn on this expanded mandate, President Zuma in a speech to G20 business leaders on 24 June 2010, mentioned the African continent fifty-three times, while referring specifically to his own country only seven times!⁷²

As the largest and best regulated economy on the continent,⁷³ South Africa is an undisputed regional power.⁷⁴ In this regard, its involvement in a diplomatic club such as BRIC holds practical advantage for the other members. Simon Freemantle and Jeremy Stevens observe that:

South Africa Inc's superior ability to negotiate the often challenging African commercial terrain; benefit from enabling trade and investment incentives under an increasing range of regional agreements; and leverage its base in one of the world's soundest environments in terms of corporate best practice positions the country optimally to form a bridge for non-African entities looking to engage more wholesomely in the continent's growth trajectory.⁷⁵

At a political level, South Africa's inclusion in BRIC was probably boosted by its membership of IBSA, a grouping that has generated considerable interest among IR scholars on account of its normative influence⁷⁶ as a global-South power pole. As Kornegay puts it, IBSA's staying power can be explained *inter alia* by the 'geo-strategic logic in its Gondwanan connectivity'.⁷⁷ Another consideration might have been South Africa's membership of another overlapping club, BASIC. The latter includes all the BRIC members except for Russia, and was formed in December 2009 at the Copenhagen Conference on Climate Change, when South Africa, along with Brazil, India and China, formed the alliance 'as a counter-weight to the collective influence of the advanced world in issues relating to shared environmental concerns and obligations' and to coordinate their participation in the climate talks that South Africa will host in 2011.

However, not all commentators have been enthusiastic about South Africa's quest to join BRIC during the course of 2010. One criticism has been that South Africa stands to gain little trade and investment benefit from being a

⁷¹Freemantle and Stevens n 50 above at 6.

⁷²Zuma n 72 above.

⁷³Freemantle and Stevens n 50 above at 1.

⁷⁴Shaw, Cooper and Chin observe that South Africa has the credentials to be included in global power blocs on account of 'its representational role as a regional power'. Shaw *et al* Emerging powers and Africa: Implications for/from global governance? (2009) 36/1 April *Politikon* 36. Indeed, Cooper n 63 above at 66 says that the BRIC and IBSA member states have in common that they are all 'too big for their neighbourhood'.

⁷⁵Freemantle and Stevens n 50 above at 6.

⁷⁶Cooper n 63 above at 65.

⁷⁷Kornegay n 48 above.

BRIC member, given the existing and extensive bilateral relations with each of the other members. Seen from this perspective, there would probably be more advantages to be gained by the rest of the BRIC members who are all enthusiastically participating in the 'new scramble' for Africa's resources.⁷⁸ Moreover, the BRIC states are also fierce commercial rivals – and compete with South Africa, especially in Africa.⁷⁹ Another concern is that the financial and human resources implied by yet another diplomatic club membership, will impact negatively on the sustainability of South Africa's diplomacy.

Several critics have pointed out the lack of a common identity among the BRIC states, in particular the absence of any normative undercurrent in its alliance.⁸⁰ It has been intimated that South Africa's enthusiasm for BRIC might lead it to neglect other multilateral alliances, especially those with a transformative policy agenda, such as IBSA. In this regard, Soko and Qobo offer a scathing criticism of South Africa's motives for wanting to join BRIC, suggesting that the country's foreign policy suffers from an 'identity crisis' and alleging that

... the spectre of South Africa rejoicing at being invited to join an amorphous entity such as the BRICs is plainly degrading and it is an affront to our national pride'.⁸¹

These concerns speak to a recurring theme in analyses of South Africa's foreign policy, namely the extent to which policy abides by principle rather than expediency. The country has since 1994 consistently championed multilateralism and has taken a leading role in pursuing normative goals at the international level. South Africa's stature as a norm entrepreneur⁸² and its growing role and influence in the international arena informed its election, by the vast majority⁸³ of UN member states, to a second term on the UNSC. The

⁷⁸See Habib 'Western hegemony, Asian ascendancy and the new African scramble'(2010) 7 June-July *African.org* at 39, and Soko and Qobo n 59 above.

⁷⁹Cilliers *et al* n 42 above at 5. See also Freemantle and Stevens n 50 above at 2 and Kornegay n 48 above as well as Soko and Qobo n 59 above.

⁸⁰Cooper n 63 above at 69, for example observes that the deep rich-poor schisms in the individual members of BRIC, and issues of good governance, are ignored.

⁸¹Soko and Qobo n 59 above.

⁸²As recently as December 2010, South Africa demonstrated that it was willing to break ranks with other African states on normative issues in multilateral settings, when it (joined by Rwanda) supported an amendment to a resolution that would recognise sexual orientation as a group vulnerable to extrajudicial killings and summary executions. Whereas reference to sexual orientation was dropped from the resolution during November, the first time in a decade, a last-minute amendment introduced by the US ensured its inclusion in the final document, despite resistance by the Arab and African blocs. South Africa had initially toed the African line, infuriating human rights groupings, but changed its position during the final vote in the UNGA, noting that its vote was 'guided by our constitution'. See Sherwin Bryce-Pease 'SA supports UN amendment to resolution on sexual orientation' *SABC News* 22 December 2010, accessed 22 December 2010 at www.sabcnews.co.za

⁸³The UNGA elected South Africa with 182 votes from 190 voting members. The final ballot in the UNGA is secret, therefore it is not known which eight states voted against South Africa.

need for transformation of global governance, which is considered to be structurally skewed to the detriment of developing countries, is repeatedly emphasised in foreign policy rhetoric. As Minister Nkoana-Mashabane told students and academics at the University of the Free State during March 2010:

A closer and incisive study of our Foreign Policy, reveals that its dominant values are about peace, peaceful resolution of conflicts, peace-making and peace-keeping activities, mutually beneficial strategic partnerships, a multilateral developmental agenda in pursuance of the African Agenda, the building of strong institutions in the Continent and the reform of others internationally, and a desire to influence global political issues.⁸⁴

She admitted, however, towards the end of 2010 that ‘the emerging powers will also have the challenge to ensure that their dominance is for the general good of the South and the entire humanity’.⁸⁵ This observation speaks to yet another concern that has surfaced in criticism of South Africa’s membership of an apparently hegemonic diplomatic club such as BRIC, namely the extent to which it actually continues to identify with the global South. Throughout 2010, South African foreign policy leaders emphasised the extent to which the country continues to advocate for the developing world.⁸⁶ One example has been the consolidation of a pro-development caucus within the G20, where South Africa co-chairs the Development Working Group with South Korea. The latter, who hosted the G20 summit during November 2010, was persuaded by South Africa to ensure that the summit would incorporate, and permanently take on board, a strong development focus.⁸⁷ A statement issued by the G20 leaders after the summit, declared the organisation’s commitment to achieve the MDGs and ‘to make a tangible and significant difference in people’s lives, including in particular through the development of infrastructure in developing countries’.⁸⁸

Nonetheless, many international matters are defined not in North/South terms but manifest as an East/West divide. Some commentators have indentified a growing association by South Africa with the East, prominently evidenced by its relations with China. Dirk Kotzé observes that during its 2007/2008 stint on the UNSC, in several contentious debates (such as on Iran, and Myanmar/Burma) South Africa followed the voting lead of Russia and China, in contrast to the two other African members, Angola and Ghana, who aligned

The country received only four fewer votes than when it was elected for its first UNSC term (2007/2008).

⁸⁴Nkoana-Mashabane University of the Free State n 34 above.

⁸⁵Nkoana-Mashabane at SAIIA n 39 above.

⁸⁶‘In doing all these, we want to demonstrate that through sustained and focused efforts we can collectively transform the political and socio-economic landscape of our region, our continent and the world’. Nkoana-Mashabane University of the Free State n 34 above.

⁸⁷Fabricius n 62 above, at 15. See also Fransman n 35 above.

⁸⁸Paragraph 9 of the G-20’s Seoul Summit Leaders’ Declaration *op cit.* ???

their voting with that of the western powers on the UNC. He surmises that South Africa in those instances did not abide by either its stated African or global-South identity.⁸⁹

Whither the African agenda?

A key component of SA's broader foreign policy identity is its alignment with African interests. Kornegay cites 'concerns about Pretoria striking a balance in the Africa-emerging powers equation ... informed by perceptions that BRIC and emerging powers may be overshadowing South Africa's African agenda'.⁹⁰

South African political executives and officials have, since 1994, consistently emphasised the primacy of the African continent in the country's foreign policy, and the rhetoric during 2010 proved no different: the argument was reiterated that opportunities in its multilateral diplomatic endeavours are all used to promote the 'African Agenda'. This includes representation of Africa in key international institutions, and ensuring 'that the needs of Africa are noted and realized in these fora as a means towards charting a path towards the development of the continent'.⁹¹ At the domestic level, this was reinforced by President Zuma's appointment of the internationally respected and competent Trevor Manuel as his 'point man in the New Partnership on Africa's Development (NEPAD) to help Zuma develop a political vision for the development of continental infrastructure'.⁹²

Despite lingering accusations of South Africa playing a sub-imperial role in Africa, the fact is that the country is not a self-appointed leader of Africa. Its election to a second term on the UNSC happened as a result of being the sole candidate endorsed by the African Union (AU). By the same token, its candidacy was also endorsed by the South African Development Community (SADC).⁹³

Notwithstanding its Afro-centric foreign policy rhetoric, it has become clear that South Africa's commitment to underwrite pan-African aspirations has waned since the advent of the Zuma presidency. During 2010 comments on a potential continental Union Government, as envisaged in the AU Constitutive Act, have been guarded.⁹⁴ This is a decisive move away from previous genuflection to the African consensual model and unity – which according to

⁸⁹Kotzé *Imagination and association: Interactions between state identity and national identity in South Africa*. Paper delivered at a College of Human Sciences Seminar series, UNISA, 3 November 2010 at 7-9.

⁹⁰Kornegay n 48 above. The same concern voiced by Kotzé n 92 above.

⁹¹Fransman n 35 above. See also Nkoana-Mashabane at the University of the Free State n 34 above and at the University of Pretoria n 20 above.

⁹²*Mail & Guardian* n 8 above, at 5.

⁹³Fransman n 35 above.

⁹⁴Also noted by Kotzé n 92 above.

Paul-Simon Handy 'has reached its limits'.⁹⁵ Handy deconstructs the African unity debate, which he says is 'mostly dominated by sentimentalism, wishful thinking and mythology instead of ideas and scholarship'. He observes that the AU's problems with efficiency, common values and norms are rooted in the organisation's inclusive approach to membership, which renders geography the only criterion for membership. As a result, the AU suffers the same fate as the UNGA, 'looking for the most common and therefore weakest consensus at the cost of efficiency'. South African foreign policy leaders have come to realise not only this multilateral deficit, but also the reality that there are deep bilateral schisms between it and several other African states such as Nigeria, Egypt, Libya and, in the sub-region, Angola and Zimbabwe.⁹⁶

It should be noted that South Africa's emphasis on an African agenda is not necessarily an idealistic element of its foreign policy. Adam Habib notes that the continent absorbs a major share of South Africa's industrial output and differs from other regions in the world in that South Africa maintains a trade surplus with it. He says 'this is in part why South Africa's political elite has spent so much energy and time trying to help resolve Africa's conflicts and stabilise the continent ... its own prosperity is tied to the continent's stability'. In the same vein, if expressed somewhat more diplomatically, Nkoana-Mashabane notes that 'a united Africa will leverage its one billion people as a resource and market for the growth of our economies'.⁹⁷

In this regard, another idea that has been gathering steam during 2010 is the notion of a diplomatic club of core African engine states. The idea was mooted by the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee early during 2010 when it advised DIRCO to

provide the Committee with a report on the measures that can be developed to identify countries in Africa with which South Africa can foster strategic partnerships for development, with the aim of pursuing mutual benefit and realisation of domestic priorities.⁹⁸

The identities of these African strategic partners have not been determined. However, it has been hinted at by the Minister of International Relations and

⁹⁵Handy 'A G5 for Africa?' (2010) 8/August-September *African-org* 18.

⁹⁶Towards the end of 2010, Angola publicly and controversially sided with discredited Côte d'Ivoirian President Laurent Gbagbo. As concerns Zimbabwe, long-simmering tension between the two neighbours was obvious in the embarrassing WikiLeaks information regarding foreign minister Nkoana-Mashabane's comments about Robert Mugabe. Her comments were 'reciprocated' when equally unflattering comments about the South African government, allegedly made by Mugabe, were also revealed. For a discussion on friction in South Africa's bilateral African relations, see Kotzé n 92 above.

⁹⁷Nkoana-Mashabane at SAIIA n 39 above.

⁹⁸Parliament of South Africa n 40 above at 4.

Cooperation when she told an audience 'our strength is in how we will marshal our collective muscle that will bring together countries such as Angola, Nigeria, Egypt, Algeria, Kenya and Uganda – into a formidable force'.⁹⁹

The idea is supported by a number of foreign policy analysts. Qobo has called for South Africa to play a more assertive leadership role in Africa by focusing on 'a core group of states that also hold promise for commercial benefits' in order to respond to external threats and opportunities.¹⁰⁰ This would amount to a form of club governance by a group of continental leaders, or as Handy puts it, 'a sort of African G5 or G7'. Handy is upfront about the fact that club-diplomacy does not necessarily indicate shared norms, and as Qobo also argues, is of the opinion that it would have to rely on economic power, bureaucratic and diplomatic capacity, and 'the will and ability to exert authority, as well as to look beyond the national dimension to embrace issues of Africa-wide importance, both in the continent and in international fora'. He argues that in the African context, club governance would 'reinstate the idea of merit and discipline at the centre of African integration rather than geography and other considerations'.¹⁰¹

South Africa as donor state

A matter that has been growing in prominence on the South African foreign policy agenda is the country's role as a donor state – a consideration that problematises its identity as a developing state but fits in well with its profile as an emerging power.

Brendan Vickers and Michele Ruiters explain that the international discourse on development assistance has been impacted significantly by the advent of 'emerging donors' (or 'rising donors') such as Brazil, China, India and the Arab Gulf States. The manner in which these donors go about official development assistance (ODA) and their common history of resistance to western hegemony in the global political economy, has rendered development diplomacy a major part of global-South collaboration. These donors are also more flexible when it comes to dispensing aid, and are less inclined to attach western style prescriptive normative conditionality to aid.¹⁰² Development diplomacy has indeed become a flagship of global-South multilateralism, and South Africa has embraced the concept: At the 2010 UNGA, IBSA was lauded for its 'breakthrough model of South-South technical cooperation' and was awarded the prestigious MDG Award for innovative and successful projects

⁹⁹Nkoana-Mashabane at SAIIA n 39 above.

¹⁰⁰Qobo n 21 above at 26.

¹⁰¹Handy n 98 above at 19.

¹⁰²Vickers and Ruiters 'Heroism and pragmatism: South Africa as African development partner' (2011) 1 *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* (forthcoming).

launched by its Hunger and Poverty Alleviation Facility (known as the IBSA Trust Fund) in countries such as Cambodia, Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, Haiti, Burundi and Palestine.¹⁰³

South Africa's donor strategy, however, differs from that of traditional and even rising donors, as Vickers and Ruiters observe, in that the country's development aid is less extensive and more focused on building partnerships and providing technical assistance. In that sense, South Africa seeks to act as development partner rather than donor. The authors note that its role as development partner incorporates a particularly wide range of activities, ranging from peacekeeping and capacity building as part of post-conflict reconstruction, to regional integration projects. This allows South Africa to extend its soft power into the continent and to export its norms and values of democracy and good governance.¹⁰⁴

The inevitable question that arises is whether South Africa is ready or willing to become part of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Ross Herbert says that as an emerging donor, South Africa is currently part of the 'enhanced engagement' process that the OECD has initiated with a number of other developing countries including China, India and Brazil, as a precursor to possible membership.¹⁰⁵ This despite the fact that South Africa 'does not neatly fit the "donor" category of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC)',¹⁰⁶ given the size of its economy and its own formidable socioeconomic challenges. South Africa also continues to be a recipient of development aid, especially from western powers.

Vickers and Ruiters mention that 'on a per capita basis, South African aid contributions at least match if not exceed those of the rising donors'. As they point out, this is particularly true as concerns the rest of the continent where 'contrary to popular wisdom, South Africa – and not China – was the biggest emerging market investor in Africa between 2006 and 2008, with US\$2,6 billion of average annual foreign direct investment flows. China invested US\$2,5 billion in Africa between 2006 and 2008, a fraction of its overall outward investment'. Moreover, the country's 'comparative advantage in understanding Africa's peace, governance and development nexus' provides it with the credentials, and a potential niche area in economic diplomacy, to facilitate trilateral partnerships with the traditional and rising donors.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³Nkoana-Mashabane at SAIIA n 39 above.

¹⁰⁴Vickers and Ruiters n 106 above.

¹⁰⁵Herbert 'The incentives and informal forces of development co-operation: key challenges for South Africa to consider' (2010) 17/1 April *South African Journal of International Affairs* at n 10.

¹⁰⁶As Vickers and Ruiters suggest n 106 above.

¹⁰⁷Vickers and Ruiters n 106 above.

Chris Alden and Garth le Pere also emphasise the massive relative volume of South African aid flows to Africa,¹⁰⁸ and Qobo notes that even the revenue transfers that are channelled to the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) annually, an estimated R25 billion, comprises nearly 1% of South Africa's gross domestic product (GDP).¹⁰⁹ South Africa has consistently increased its contributions to UN development agencies since 1994, and is also now among the top twenty contributors to UN police and peacekeeping operations.¹¹⁰ Alden and Le Pere proffer that the country's total bilateral and multilateral assistance spending actually surpasses the UN target of 0,7 per cent of GDP. This would imply that the South Africa not only matches but exceeds the performance of many OECD states.¹¹¹

The Zuma administration has signalled its intention to manage and coordinate activities stemming from development aid more effectively, notably through the envisaged South African Development Partnership Agency (SADPA) which will replace the African Renaissance and International Cooperation Fund (ARF).¹¹² The policy framework for the operationalisation of SADPA had been commissioned by cabinet during 2008 and expectations were that it would become operational during 2010, but this did not materialise, and tentative indications are that 2011 will see the establishment of the agency.¹¹³

Herbert observes that, like South Africa, many states have created aid agencies in an attempt to gain foreign policy influence and prestige, especially in a regional context. He warns against repeating the mistakes of traditional donors that have caused, over the past six decades, global development cooperation to be dogged by ineffectiveness and contention. One problematic area in particular is that aid is dispensed with the expectation that it will engender goodwill among the recipients, something that does not necessarily happen.¹¹⁴ On the contrary, aid projects are sometimes even equated with mercantilist ventures.

There is also a real sense of concern among policy makers that 'South Africa's aid spending in the continent is not delivering significant return'¹¹⁵ – despite the fact that South Africa has underwritten the prohibitive costs of post-conflict reconstruction and development in various part of the continent. Qobo

¹⁰⁸Alden and Le Pere 'Strategic posture review: South Africa 2010' (2010) May *World Politics Review* at 5.

¹⁰⁹Qobo n 21 above at 26.

¹¹⁰Nkoana-Mashabane at the University of Pretoria n 20 above.

¹¹¹Alden and Le Pere n 112 above at 5.

¹¹²The ARF was established in 2000 and has been administered by the DIRCO. During December 2007, at the ANC's Polokwane Conference, the idea was mooted to transform the ARF into a fully-fledged development agency.

¹¹³Noted also in the DIRCO Draft Discussion Document n 37 above.

¹¹⁴Herbert n 109 above at 29.

¹¹⁵Vickers and Ruiters n 106 above.

observes that South African companies are often sidelined in favour of non-African tenders when lucrative capital projects are awarded, including those financed by the World Bank's International Finance Corporation. He blames this partly on the South African government's short-sighted economic diplomacy and failure to support and engage at a strategic level with the country's business sector.¹¹⁶

Another concern is that South Africa's development diplomacy may be unsustainable, in light of the country's own domestic socioeconomic realities, such as pervasive unemployment and poor service delivery. Vickers and Ruiters warn that this could *inter alia* fuel xenophobic tension at the domestic level, driven by 'perceptions that foreigners take valuable jobs and drive down wages'.¹¹⁷

Much of the criticism of South Africa's development diplomacy, despite its impressive volume and reach, stems from a perceived lack of transparency thus far regarding associated policy. As Loyiso Langeni observes,¹¹⁸ neither the criteria for provision of aid, nor the mechanisms to audit proper application thereof, have been shared with the public. Qobo, as do Vickers and Ruiters, cautions that SADPA's developmental strategy needs to be clearly defined so as to fit in with broader objectives of South Africa's economic diplomacy.¹¹⁹ Not only should the policy be clear, but its underlying strategy should be communicated to the public. This will, according to Langeni, 'go a long way to placating any suspicion that the government is wasting much-needed financial resources abroad'.¹²⁰

The South African government would be well-advised to heed these warnings, and ensure that, as Herbert proposes, SADPA is endowed with 'well-designed monitoring and evaluation systems, significant in-house research capacity, well-crafted enabling laws, systems to focus aid in a few productive areas, and efforts to identify and confront the perverse incentives that many aid agencies have preferred to ignore'. He recalls that despite noble intentions, many South African aid projects have been 'unrealistic about capacity, complexity, political will, and the social and economic support habits needed for sustainability'.¹²¹

Full OECD membership would obviously hold status for South Africa as the organisation is renowned for its discipline in monitoring members' economic and political standards. However, in the case of South Africa some policy

¹¹⁶Qobo n 21 above at 23.

¹¹⁷Vickers and Ruiters n 106 above.

¹¹⁸Langeni 'Big spender's plans to help poor countries' *Business Day* 29 December 2010 at 2.

¹¹⁹Qobo *op cit* at 26.

¹²⁰Langeni n 122 above at 2.

¹²¹Herbert n 109 above at 44.

makers and commentators are concerned that full OECD membership would jeopardise the country's membership of developing world organisations such as the G77 and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Peter Fabricius observes that this would 'badly damage its stature as a champion of Africa and the developing world'.¹²² In turn, South Africa's diplomatic stature as a champion of the global-South – a position that has arguably ensured the country a place in diplomatic clubs such as IBSA, the G20 and BRIC – could be threatened.

Conclusion

The hegemonic label is one which SA's policy makers for a long time were loathe to embrace even if the reality had borne overwhelming evidence thereof. Yet 2010 has witnessed a more sober, realistic and perhaps cynical view of international relations, than has been evident thus far in the post-apartheid democracy. This has manifested in willingness on the part of South African foreign policy leaders to embrace the country's emerging power profile with more *sang-froid* and less self-effacing inclination to hide behind a 'collective' African or even global-South identity. When Jacob Zuma ascended to the presidency in 2009, dogged by personal and political controversy, commentators were pessimistic about the country's continued stature on the world stage. The events of 2010 have taken many by surprise¹²³ with not just government officials, but Zuma himself, playing a more prominent role in international relations than first envisaged. Apart from the undisputed success of hosting the FIFA World Cup, South Africa scored two major diplomatic victories during 2010: re-election as non-permanent member of the UNSC, and the invitation to become a full member of BRIC.

Both of these achievements will offer opportunity for South Africa to consolidate foreign policy trends that have become clear in the course of 2010. In the first place, the executive's attempt to master the two-level game – that is, to deliver on performance expectations of both their domestic constituency and foreign partners, without squandering policy opportunities. Indications are that the DIRCO and the Presidency are much more inclined to take on board the input of the broader stakeholders in the South African foreign policy community – and they will need the advice. 2011 will be fraught with challenges, especially in the context of the UNSC which will be burdened with a number of crises, many of them in South Africa's continental backyard: the unprecedented wave of civil uprisings against undemocratic regimes in North Africa and the Middle East, South Sudan's secession process, the disputed presidential election and standoff in Côte d'Ivoire, contentious upcoming elections in Zimbabwe and several other states in Africa, and the host of other longer-standing problems that continue to populate the UNSC agenda.

¹²²Fabricius 13 August 2010 n 62 above at 15.

¹²³*Mail & Guardian* n 8 above at 8.

South Africa's 2011/2012 term will also coincide with an unprecedented confluence of emerging power constellations represented on the UNSC. Among these are IBSA, BASIC, BRICS, and many members of the G-20. Kornegay calls it 'a veritable cockpit of global geopolitical conflict and accommodation that will shape the strategic landscape perhaps well beyond 2011-2012'.¹²⁴ The simultaneous presence of regional powers such as Brazil, Nigeria, Germany, India and South Africa, all of them declared candidates for permanent seats on a reformed UNSC – could prompt a surge in pressure to reform the UNSC membership structure to reflect the power realities of the 21st century, as Cilliers *et al* point out. The authors note, however, that competing regional and national interests have in the past foiled attempts to reform the Council.¹²⁵

In this regard, it should be interesting to see to what extent South Africa will align itself with other aspirant permanent members. In a joint statement on 12 October 2010 the IBSA group noted the historic occasion in 2011 in which all three IBSA countries will serve on the UNSC and expressed the 'urgent need' for the Council to be reformed 'so as to become more representative and reflective of the needs and priorities of developing countries'.¹²⁶ By the same token, in a communiqué after their April 2010 summit in Brazil (and of course before the decision was taken to admit SA) the BRIC implicitly endorsed the candidatures of India and Brazil.¹²⁷ Will this BRIC endorsement be widened to include the candidature of South Africa, and how would such a powerful alliance with two of the five permanent UNSC members impact on South Africa's historical support for the rigid demands of the 'African Common Position' (Ezulwini Consensus)? South Africa has certainly ratcheted up the rhetoric in this regard and the foreign minister, addressing the UNGA on 25 September 2010, reiterated the need for fundamental reform of the UN Security Council to address the 'travesty of justice' that Africa's absence represents.¹²⁸

Another pertinent policy issue will be the extent to which South Africa heeds its own African Agenda. With two-thirds of the UNSC's agenda comprised of African crises, the country's continental leadership role will be under the

¹²⁴Kornegay n 48 above.

¹²⁵See, eg, Cilliers *et al* n 42 above at 4. The authors also make the point that the imminent presence in the Council of so many competitors, 'rather than providing a source of strength could become a source of inertia' and argue that the non-permanent members 'may compete for the lowest common denominator to demonstrate their credentials as global "good countries" for when their candidature is eventually put to the vote within the UN General Assembly'.

¹²⁶IBSA 'Press statement on the occasion of the election of India, Brazil and South Africa as non-permanent members of the UN Security Council' New York 12 October 2010.

¹²⁷Cilliers *et al* n 42 above.

¹²⁸Nkoana-Mashabane 'Statement by the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the South Africa at the General Debate of the 65th Session of the United Nations General Assembly' New York 25 September 2010.

spotlight, including its relations with other African countries on the Council, notably Nigeria. Will it assume independent foreign policy positions or seek to harmonise positions with these other African representatives, or defer to collective continental (AU) policy? More specifically, will it continue to shield African governments that default on human rights obligations, from UNSC scrutiny? Nkoana-Mashabane has tentatively answered this question when she indicated during October 2010 that:

We cannot afford to betray the confidence of the UN Member States and the international community at large in our ability to contribute and further advance the cause of international peace and security and international law during our tenure on the Security Council.¹²⁹

The 'utterly realist calculus' of the UNSC,¹³⁰ as Kornegay refers to it, and its powerful composition during 2011 will offer South Africa ample opportunity to demonstrate its willingness to convert its increasingly realist-informed foreign policy rhetoric into practice. The country's new club diplomacy and its strategic partnerships, including the formation of a potential African mini-lateral alliance, will be under the microscope. It should be interesting to see whether foreign policy leaders are going to rise to the challenge issued by parliament's Portfolio Committee on International Relations, expressed during April 2010:

Furthermore, is South Africa ready to advance a strategic intervention to set the agenda rather than mere participation in the global power structures like the G20 and G8? Does the Department take advantage of polarisation in the world politics and act as a moderator, engaging soft power tools to surface as an alternative emerging power, while keeping momentum for the promotion of the African Agenda and contributing to developing a more equitable system of global governance.

¹²⁹Nkoana-Mashabane at the University of Pretoria n 20 above.

¹³⁰Kornegay n 48 above.