

**COMMERCIAL DIPLOMACY AND BUSINESS FORUMS FOR STAKEHOLDER
COLLABORATION IN SOUTH AFRICA: THE KIMBERLEY PROCESS CERTIFICATION SCHEME**

By

SIPHO MANESE

Student Number: 20789450

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Supervisor: Prof Victoria Graham

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

FULL NAME: Siphon Manese
STUDENT NUMBER: 20789450

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ABSTRACT

In this study, the use of business forums in stakeholder collaboration to enhance commercial diplomacy effectiveness is examined. According to some scholars, commercial diplomacy is a component of economic diplomacy that focuses more on the facilitation of trade agreements, exports, and investments. Hence commercial diplomacy is seen to be effective if its objectives of increasing investments, imports, exports, and global trade are realized. This study uses a qualitative research design, case study, literature review and desktop-based approach in terms of data collection. The research methods expose the gravity of exploring the success of trade deliberations among key role players. Crosscutting analysis conducted informs activities of commercial diplomacy. The case study methodology focuses on South Africa as one of the founding members of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme in 2003, and later as Kimberly Process' Chair of Working Group on Monitoring from 2017. In the light of findings, recommendations were made, and among others was that business forums will assist to alleviate mistrust between state and businesses in South Africa. The fact that for effective commercial diplomacy to take place, there must be formal use of business forums for stakeholder collaboration, which will in turn lead to policy certainty. The other matter is Covid-19, which necessitated the use of digital platforms for commercial diplomacy activities, as coronavirus contributed towards negative economic growth in South Africa. South African government can use this study's findings and recommendations to promote South African businesses globally. Dimensions of further scrutiny incorporate the use of digitalization in the African continent in stimulating commercial diplomacy.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACP	African Caribbean Pacific
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Agreement
AEP	Africa Economic Platform
AGOA	Africa Growth and Opportunity Act
ANC	African National Congress
APP	Annual Performance Plan
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
AsgiSA	Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa
AU	African Union
BBC	Black Business Council
BMF	Black Management Forum
BLSA	Business Leadership South Africa
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa
BSA	Business South Africa
BUSA	Business Unity South Africa
CAHOSCC	Committee of African Heads of state and Government on Climate Change
CD	Commercial Diplomacy
CFA	Commercial and Financial Accountants
CFIR	Consultative Forum on International Relations

CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DDM	District Development Model
DEEC	Diamond Exchange and Export Center
DHA	Department of Home Affairs
DIRCO	The Department of International Relations and Cooperation
DMR	Department of Mineral Resources
DPME	Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
DSDB	Department of Small Business Development
DTIC	The Department of Trade, Industry, and Competition
DTRD	Diplomatic Training, research and Development
ECA	(UN) Economic Commission for Africa
EDS	Export Development Support
EMDE	Emerging Markets and Developing Economies
EU	European Union
EPA	Economic Partnership Agreement
FABCOS	Foundation African Business and Consumer Services
FOCAC	Forum on China-Africa Cooperation
FOSABU	Forum of South Africa Businesses in Uganda
GATT	General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade
GCR	Global Consular Forum
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GDV	Government Diamond Value

GIBS	Gordon Institute of Business Science
HSRCSA	Human Science Research Council of South Africa
IGD	Institute for Global dialogue
IGF	Internet Governance Forum
IIPSA	Infrastructure Investment Program for South Africa
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ITC	International Trade Center
JBS	Johannesburg Business School
KP	Kimberly Process
KPCS	Kimberly Process Certification Scheme
MERG	Macroeconomic Research Group
MICC	Meridian International Corporate Council
MTSF	Medium Term Strategic Framework
NAFCOC	National African Federated Chamber of Commerce and Industry
NDB	New Development Bank
NDP	National Development Plan
NEPAD	New Partnership for africa's development
NEDLAC	National Economic Development and Labour Council
NSA	Non State Actors
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSS	One Stop Shop
PAC	Partnership Africa Canada

PBF	Progressive Business Forum
PICC	Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission
RECs	Regional Economic Communities
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SACOIR	South African Council on International Relations
SACU	South African Customs Union
SADC	Southern African Development Community
ASDPA	South African Development Partnership Agency
SADPMR	South African Diamond and Precious Metal Regulator
SAGCCI	South African-German Chamber of Commerce and Industry
SAIIA	South African Institute for International Affairs
SALGA	South African Local Government Association
SDT	State Diamond Trader
SMME	Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises
SOE	State Owned Enterprise
TDCA	Trade, Development and Cooperation Agreement
TIPS	Trade and Industrial Policy Strategies
TIWG	Trade and Investment Working Group
TNCs	Trans-National Corporations
TRALAC	Trade Law Centre for Southern Africa
UDASA	United Diamond Association of South Africa
UK	United Kingdom

UCLG	United Cities and Local Governments
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nation
USA	United States of America
WDC	World Diamond Council
WGM	Working Group on Monitoring
WEF	World Economic Forum
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

The research examines the use of business forums for stakeholder collaboration in relation to effective commercial diplomacy in South Africa. The concept of diplomacy is referred to as the administration of global relations between states and non-state participants with the main drive being to secure the objectives of the foreign policy that benefits all players (Berridge 2015). Albeit in over two decades of post-Cold War, the international order's stability was already highly disturbed (Murray 2015) and the global economic crisis of 2008 also had a negative impact on South Africa. It was evidenced when South Africa's economy went into recession and millions of jobs were lost in 2009 (Rena & Msoni 2014). Moreover, Africa, and South Africa in particular, which had already experienced technical-economic depression, has not escaped the negative economic impact of coronavirus (Mills & Hartley 2020).

In dealing with these economic challenges, non-state actors like business and state actors, for example the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) and the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC), have increasingly practiced commercial diplomacy (Weiss *et al.* 2013). Commercial diplomacy (CD) is seen as the evolution of trade policies and the promotion of economic stimulus for the internationalization of domestic business operations (Aleidan 2019). It is anticipated that the challenges brought about by Covid-19 can be tackled through the use of business forums like the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) and the G20 platform (Yaya *et al.* 2020). Business forums are seen as platforms created for business owners to establish themselves as experts in their different industries (Carlson 2018).

Researchers, such as Wood (2020), refer to business forums as a platform where similar-minded entrepreneurs can share business experiences, plans for engagement, and networks. Hence commercial diplomacy is seen as an activity conducted by state representatives with diplomatic status in view of business promotion between a home and a host country (Naray

2008). The researcher further indicates that there are different actors in a commercial diplomacy that ranges from the high-policy level (head of state, prime minister, minister or a member of parliament) to ambassador and the lower level of specialized diplomatic envoy (Naray 2008).

The other expression, namely 'stakeholder collaboration' is "A process through which groups with similar or different perspectives can exchange viewpoints and search for solutions that go beyond their own vision of what is possible" (World Wildlife Fund 2000: 20). For example, there is a view that the South African government and its stakeholders should redefine its foreign policy with the particular goal of alleviating the impact of coronavirus on the South African economy (Le Pere 2020). According to Gondwe (2020), the policy reaction propositions need to be advanced to diminish the jolt of the pandemic's impact, such as implementing stimulus packages. Fundamentally, since 2020, Covid-19 has back-pedaled any attainments made in South Africa since the dawn of democracy and exacerbated unemployment, poverty, and inequality in the country (UNDP-SA 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic can be regarded as a 'marker of change', as Holsti (2004) would label it, as it is transformative in its nature and has consequences at the macro and micro levels of society.

Economic diplomacy focuses more on lessening trade terms mostly in multilateral platforms, while commercial diplomacy is more effective in bilateralism to promote domestic business interests internationally (Makokera 2015). The launch of the AfCFTA in May 2019, for example, has challenged South Africa to take advantage of the expanded market access (DIRCO 2019).

1.2 Identification of research theme

The concept of a research theme is defined as the characteristics of participants' versions attributing certain perceptions and experiences that the researcher identifies as applicable to the research question (Vaismoradi *et al.* 2016). According to KostECKI and Naray (2007), commercial diplomacy influences the improvement of global trade and encourages, foreign

investments. Kostecki and Naray (2007: 16) further confirm “commercial diplomacy being a government service...” to non-state actors with an interest in business internationalization.

The research theme in this study is to explore the use of business forums to promote commercial diplomacy for stakeholder collaboration in South Africa. The overarching aim is to examine use of business forums in relation to the benefit of both state and non-state actors, such as business. According to Thomas and Hodges (2010), a research aim is a sentence that states the purpose or aim of the research project. The challenge is observed with government departments that are charged with the responsibility of fulfilling commercial diplomacy, end up having different policies and strategic plans (Swartz 2019), such as DIRCO and DTIC. In South Africa and globally, the concept of diplomacy is seen as a necessary tool of foreign policy and encompasses the promotion of national interests (Nanjira 2010).

The other important concept is the research question, which is defined as the specific area of concern or inquiry that a study or research project aims to answer (Bryman 2012). Therefore, the research question to be responded to during this study is: ‘how can the use of business forums enhance commercial diplomacy for stakeholder collaboration in South Africa?’ The business forum such as the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) is the case study chosen for this research. Furthermore, the concept of the research objective is defined as a clear statement of what the researcher aims to achieve through the study (iEdunote 2021) and addresses the purpose of investigation inclusive of the type of knowledge to be produced.

1.3 Research methodology

Research methodology refers to specific approaches or methods used to recognize and examine analytically the data about a specific subject (Bahcekapili *et al.* 2013). A qualitative study is an approach that depends on the analysis of narrative information to generate an explanation of certain identified patterns of behavior (Ospina 2004). This research study is a qualitative study that pays attention to commercial diplomacy policies and activities conducted by South African stakeholders in both the public and private sectors. Besides the researcher’s

case study of chairing the International Working Group on Monitoring (WGM) in KPCS, other research methods are used to triangulate the data. Desktop research is used in this study to review previous research findings to gain a better understanding of the research problem. The existence of Covid-19 during this study (2020/2021) has made desktop research the best research method to follow.

According to Travis (2016), a desktop study is defined as the collection of secondary data, which may be assembled without fieldwork. Therefore, the existing data is summarized and collated to increase the overall understanding of the field of study. A literature review as research methodology concept is embrasive research and explication of literature that addresses a particular topic and helps readers in comprehending the entire accessible research on the subject matter (McCombes 2019). This means that a literature review refers to the search for relevant literature; the selection and evaluation of sources; and the identification of debates in different themes.

The narrative method to review literature is used as it is defined as a standard or traditional analysis of literature furnished as background perusal (Pautasso 2013). Therefore, the three key research methods utilized to collect data in this study are literature review, desktop research, and a case study relating to the personal experience of the researcher. Research case studies can also be inclusive of explanatory, descriptive, and exploratory case studies (Haradhan 2018).

The personal experience of the researcher is taken into account when he served as the Board Chairperson of South African Diamonds and Precious Metal Regulator (SADPMR) from 2016 to 2019. He also served, as the International Chairperson of WGM (for KPCS) where the focus was on the beneficiation and global trade in diamonds (WGM 2017). In Swartz (2019), it is acknowledged that personal experience to research does provide necessary insights. It was taken into account in this research study that elements of bias and subjectivity may have played a role due to the researcher's experiential knowledge attained during his terms in both the SADPMR and KPCS. According to other researchers, in qualitative methodology the researcher is motivated to reflect on the values and objectives that one brings to the research project (Ratner 2002).

Sandstrom (2018) indicates that the researcher should confirm the use of secondary data and the credibility of its sources and how usable it can be for the study in question. The data collected in this study and its interpretation is guided by secondary data analysis, which is defined as reorganization or re-analysis, reviewing, or interpreting of data that was collected for other purposes (Johnston 2014). Therefore, the use of existing information is to find an answer to the question that was different from the original work (Tripathy 2013).

Another research concept is the research problem, which refers to a general statement about the area of study that needs to be improved and refers to the need to present the research project (Walliman 2006). Therefore, the research problem in this study is to identify a specific gap in the literature on the usage of business forums in stakeholder collaboration for promoting commercial diplomacy. South Africa's economic growth pre and during Covid-19, has been undesirable and unemployment has been getting worse while inequality remained unchanged. Thus, government needs to consider a series of economic reforms that can improve South Africa's economic growth and therefore create a globally competitive economy (Ramaphosa 2020). That is to be done in an effort to modernize network industries that will promote competitiveness and inclusive growth.

There has been observable progress in finalizing master plans that ensure that stakeholders (government, labor, and business) collaborate to develop practical strategies to drive economic growth at the sector level (Ramphosa 2020). Hence it is important to refer to the units of analysis, which are the main variables that are given attention to in the research project and are the main focus of study, (Roller & Lavrakas 2015). Thus, as an example, the units of analysis could be a group of people or individuals or objects and is the 'who' or the 'what' of analysis. In this study, the units of analysis are commercial diplomacy; stakeholder collaboration; and several South African business forums that pursue their commercial interests nationally, in Africa, and globally.

1.4 Secondary data and ethical considerations

Confidentiality is defined as the distinction of any personal and identifying data sponsored by the participants in the study and ensures anonymity (Allen, 2017). In keeping with the notion, an assumption is also made in this study that if data is freely available on the Internet, in books, and public platforms, permission for further use and review of that data is implied (Houston 2019). It can be argued that challenges associated with confidentiality can be avoided by carefully considering the audience for one's study (Kaiser 2009), and the issue of deductive disclosure is closely monitored in this study.

Deductive disclosure, which is also known as internal confidentiality, refers to the situation when characteristics of participants or groups make them identifiable in the research study (DSDR 2021). It needs to be understood in handling secondary data, that participants' right to privacy is the function of generally accepted social norms and one's expectations relating to which data about oneself should be kept confidential (Petrova *et al.* 2014). The research proposal of this study was submitted accordingly to faculty's ethics committee and was approved.

1.5 Literature review and study limitations

Chapter three is dedicated to a review of the literature. Furthermore, Chapter five is dedicated to the Kimberly Process (KP), which is a joint government, industry, and civil society initiative created to stem the flow of conflict diamonds, which are rough diamonds used by rebel movements to finance wars against legitimate governments (WGM 2017). As per SADPMR (2019), in 2018, KP members accounted for approximately 99.8% of the global production of rough diamonds. The mission of this study is to establish the importance of the use of business forums in stakeholder collaboration, and KPCS (and WGM) is referred to as a key model case study in the successful use of business forums.

It must be noted that the existence of the Covid-19 pandemic during this study, may have posed a limitation in examining in more detail the relevant government policies. Most of government officials during emergence of different viruses of Covid-19, were working from home. It was difficult to access unpublished government policy documents, due to various lockdowns and restrictions at work places and also for the safety considerations of both officials and the researcher (Mitchell 2021). Policies that are explored online relate to commercial diplomacy and businesses' collaborations with the state.

Admittedly, more attention was paid to a comparative study of how relevant government departments unleash their commercial diplomacy activities, and the researcher examines the involvement of business forums in stakeholder collaboration. The outcome of this research could be used to formalize and institutionalize the use of business forums as a strategic method within state departments to pursue stakeholder collaborations. The literature review in this study focuses on the understanding of commercial diplomacy in relation to economic and political viewpoints. Other researchers are of the view that the understanding of commercial diplomacy as a phenomenon is limited in terms of existing theories that seek to explain and predict its formulation (Zuidema 2011).

1.6 Research structure

This research study consists of five chapters, where the first chapter presented the background of the study covering the introduction; the identification of the research problem and methodology; secondary data and ethical considerations; study limitations, research structure, including the research question and objectives that are to be given attention and addressed systematically in the study. The purpose of the second chapter is to examine and define key concepts in this study like commercial diplomacy, business forums, and stakeholder relations and to explore activities and interests of different stakeholders involved in commercial diplomacy and the evolution of commercial diplomacy as a concept. Brief attention is also given

to Covid-19 as the 'marker' of change for transnational and international trade activities, which resulted in new ways of doing things.

Chapter three presents the literature review, which outlines the search for relevant literature; identification and evaluation of different commercial diplomacy-related sources. Findings were analyzed from other researchers in relation to how commercial diplomacy operations were conducted. The use of business forums to promote stakeholder collaborations in relation to conducting commercial diplomacy in South Africa was also examined. In the process of gathering data and selection of debates in the chapter, more gaps are identified in the literature that require further research and support the need to undertake this study on activities of commercial diplomacy. Chapter three further provides for the presentation of data from desktop research and outlines data observations of commercial diplomacy activities and various platforms of using business forums for stakeholder collaborations.

The case study in Chapter four utilizes the KP as a practical example of how states and business forums collaborate internationally to achieve their commercial and economic interests. The main stakeholders in KPCS are different states, the World Diamond Council, and civil society. These stakeholders collaborated and agreed on international implementation requirements on the diamond trade. Chapter five focuses on presenting key findings and recommendations of the study that can be used to influence the CD policy position of South Africa and other countries. In this chapter, recommendations consider linkages made during data collection and therefore advance possibilities for further research in commercial diplomacy's effectiveness.

CHAPTER TWO

KEY CONCEPTS AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides definitions of key concepts and outlines the theoretical framework that underlines the main question for this study. Furthermore, it pays attention to the potential relationship between effective commercial diplomacy and the use of business forums for stakeholder collaborations. According to Ruel and Zuidema (2012), the effectiveness of commercial diplomacy can be determined by two main factors, namely: businesses preparedness to access global markets, and being assisted by commercial diplomats' expertise and the cognitive institutional environment in the host country relating to information availability.

Donnelly and Crocker (2019) indicated that close collaboration between state and business, direct involvement of most senior state officials, and the establishment of a fully supportive institutional environment could determine effective commercial diplomacy. Governments seek to implement new policies to make their diplomatic operations effective and adapt to the 'new normal', (Labott 2020). This means that South Africa, like any other country, needs to adapt its diplomatic policies to accommodate the mastery of digital tools.

The commercial activities of diplomats have been inclusive of business interest and therefore state-business links have been formalized in diplomatic institutions (Lee & Hudson 2004). Political economy has become one of the key concepts in commercial diplomacy, as in June 2020, the World Bank reported that Covid-19 was pushing the global economy into the worst recession since World War II (Sümer 2020). Furthermore, diplomats' mindsets play also a crucial role in commercial diplomacy, as it refers to their competencies and how they manage multiple stakeholders at home and abroad (Willigen 2020).

2.2 Evolution of the concept of commercial diplomacy

Commercial diplomacy is defined as “an activity conducted by state representatives with diplomatic status in view of business promotion between home, host country and globally. Therefore business development is encouraged through a series of business promotion and facilitation activities”, (Naray 2008: 2). Other researchers (see for example Mercier 2007) define commercial diplomacy, as the crisscross of government and private sectors that manage commercial relations using diplomatic means and procedures. This means that, in commercial diplomacy, business actors are merged with state actors to ensure that commercial diplomatic representatives serve both public and private interests. It is noted that there is some confusion in differentiating between economic diplomacy and commercial diplomacy (Swartz 2019). Economic diplomacy focuses mostly on improving terms of trade for businesses and operates mostly in multilateral platforms, while commercial diplomacy prioritizes roles played by diplomats in bilateral talks to promote the commercial interests of local businesses (Hocking 2018).

According to Berridge (2015), commercial diplomacy focuses on the advancement of exports and foreign direct investments and securing a master plan to access unprocessed resources. Commercial diplomacy is effective if prosperity as its ultimate goal is achieved inclusive of the objectives of increasing import, exports, and international trade (Ruel *et al.* 2012). There are differences in terms of how various government departments are given the responsibility to carry commercial diplomacy activities (Mercier 2007).

2.3 Business forums for stakeholder collaborations

The World Bank Group, as a business forum, works with different states to ease trade-related obstacles and provide support for the realization of market access, international collaboration, and trade competitiveness (World Bank, 2018). The other view is that developing countries were identified as having challenges that relate to complex regulatory business environments that do not support new investments and do not encourage competitive business activities

(Rodrigo 2005). Therefore, the involvement of business groups may be pursued as a strategy to lead towards policy certainty and establishment of business trust for economic growth (Spicer 2016). The other challenge that affects developing countries is the Eurocentric thinking that prohibits the expression of experiences, aspirations, and needs of people in the peripheral areas of the Western world (Zondi 2016). Hence what is regarded as central to the concept of diplomacy is communication, interaction, maintaining contact, and negotiating with state and non-state actors (Noguera 2012).

The state of Penang in Malaysia, as an example, became a major export hub and attributed that to the existence of active business forums like the Penang Development Corporation (PDC) for public-private partnerships (Sen 2015). Another success story was the formation of the South African business forum in Uganda (FOSABU – Forum of South African Businesses in Uganda) and the importance of special attention given to its structures and formation (Swartz 2019). These business forums are seen to be effective in resolving many investment climate issues and, therefore, South Africa should arguably consider establishing similar forums. South Africa's low economic growth is an undesirable occurrence and as such, government needs to consider economic reforms like modernized collaborations that can improve South Africa's economic growth rate (National Treasury 2019). Progress is noted in finalizing master plans that ensure that stakeholders (government, labor unions, and businesses) collaborate to develop practical strategies to drive economic growth at the sector level (Ramaphosa 2020).

2.4 Some South African business forums in commercial diplomacy

DIRCO prioritized commercial diplomacy through economic diplomacy as the strategy to give support to South Africa's trade and investment objectives, in its strategic plan of 2020 to 2025 (DIRCO 2020). The government activities to promote both exports and inward investments relate to what commercial diplomacy is all about (Mercier 2007). This means that the importance of examining the challenge that commercial diplomacy is often faced with from the state's point of view, and from the private business' point of view, should not be neglected

(Aleidan 2019). The approach will help to combat related obstacles that impede the country's efforts to attract and benefit comprehensively from more anticipated foreign trade and investments (Workneh 2012).

Valsamakis (2012) reveals that different countries use different economic and CD strategies to identify specific business activities through existing multi-stakeholder formations. Makokera (2015) indicates that several activities that constitute commercial diplomacy are mostly in the private sector, and as a result require close collaboration between state, business, and other non-state actors (NSA) to agree on national policy imperatives.

TABLE 2A: State Actors and Non-State Actors as per different Clusters

CLUSTERS / GROUPS / ASSOCIATIONS / ORGANIZATIONS	NON STATE ACTORS / BUSINESSES / SMMEs / CORPORATIONS	STATE ACTORS / GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS / SOEs	MISSION / COMMITMENT
Political Organizations	i) ANC ii) PBF		Progress Internationalism / Strive for foreign policy identity Collaboration platform between State and Business.
Business Associations (Industry-Based)	i) SACCI ii) CFA iii) NAFCOC iv) BMF v) BSA & BUSA		Contribute towards economic growth. Contributing towards policy making processes. Promoting black industrialists and small businesses.
Research and think tank	i) SAIIA		Developing the trade capacity of

institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii) IGD iii) TIPS iv) GIBS v) HSRCSA vi) SAGCCI vii) JBS viii) TRALAC ix) PICC 	AfCFTA	<p>SA's bilateralism.</p> <p>Promoting policy networks and bridge a gap in policy engagements.</p> <p>Highlights importance of International affairs.</p> <p>Ensuring that businesses are a force of economic growth.</p> <p>Encouraging trade law, training, treaties, protocols and dispute settlements</p> <p>Developing infrastructure plans</p> <p>Platform for investment strategies</p>
Government stakeholders		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) DTIC ii) DIRCO iii) SADC iv) AU v) EPA vi) SACU 	<p>Export promotion, business facilitation, investment promotion, government-to-government cooperation.</p> <p>Negotiating Africa trade agreements</p> <p>Enforcing diplomatic legal cooperation</p> <p>Economic Partnership Agreements</p>

A few categories of business forums (and/or non-state actors) and more details relating to above table 2A are highlighted in the following subsections.

2.4.1 Political organizations (for example, the ANC)

Whytock (2015) indicates that the diplomatic approach is informed by the ANC's commitment to progressive internationalism and its quest to gain a foreign policy identity. The ANC-led government, positioned South Africa to join BRICS and this was regarded as a principal foreign policy success and personal success for former President Jacob Zuma (Soule-Kohndou 2013). The notion of progressive internationalism had become the main theme in ANC discussion documents on its international relations, which can be related to the internationalism of the Bandung Conference in the 1950s (Landsberg *et al.* 2017). In line with this thinking, the ANC internationalizes its idealism on issues of human rights, democracy, fairness, and equity. Therefore, this notion of the ANC's progressive internationalism entails opposition to continued global imperialism, global North dominance over the South and the world, and structural international poverty and inequality (Fabricius 2017).

Fabricius (2017) further challenged the ANC to reconsider the politicization of its diplomatic missions, where political appointees head over 70 percent of its missions in over 120 countries with no expertise to pursue commercial diplomacy in particular. The ANC established a forum for business engagement in 2006, which was referred to as the Progress Business Forum (PBF), specifically to create a collaboration platform between state and business (Van Wyk 2009). However, the international Monetary Fund (2020: 4) noted that: "After May 2019 elections, market expectations for growth-enhancing reforms were high. However, sluggish implementation and persistent policy uncertainty did not validate those expectations, and business confidence is now close to all-time lows". Therefore, it is important for commercial diplomacy to effectively assume the role of providing governments with strategies to increase their international trade and stimulate their national economies (Ruel *et al.* 2013).

2.4.2 Business associations, industry associations, and business groups

Business associations are formed when two or more people with common interests collaborate. In South Africa, there are some hundred associations, some of them being industry-based (Khumalo 2021). The following associations are mentioned as examples: Chamber of Mines (from 1887), Association of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (SACCI since 1892), Institute of Commercial and Financial Accountants (CFA), Foundation for African Business and Consumer Services (FABCOS since 1988), National African Federated Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NAFCOC since 1964), Black Management Forum (BMF since 2010), Business South Africa (BSA), and Business Unity South Africa (BUSA since 2003) (Valsamakis 2012).

It is important to note that most of these associations were informed by racial and ethnic groupings, and a belief that improving the marketing skills of ethnic entrepreneurs will reduce unemployment and contribute towards economic growth (Van Scheers 2010). The South African Local Government Association's national directorate of economic development and planning is responsible for integrated economic development and represented local government in AsgiSA and other forums (Mahlawe 2010).

Trade associations are associations that are founded and funded by businesses operating in a specific industry with the intention of playing a role in policy-making processes (Chappin *et al.* 2008). According to the SA minister of Trade, Industry and Competition (Patel 2021a), promoting black industrialists and small businesses is urgent and important, and a master plan implementing a transformation strategy totaling R9 billion will be rolled out in November 2021. It is noted that many of the industry associations are members of BUSA, and focus mostly on local policy matters (Davies 2018).

2.4.3 Research and think tank institutions

Several South African think tank (research) institutions play a critical role in developing the trade capacity of SOUTH AFRICA's bilateralism and establishing ways to build on core strengths (Christoplos *et al.* 2015). According to the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (2021), some of the

following think tank institutions operate in South Africa: the South African Institute for International Affairs (SAIIA), the Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD), Trade and Industrial Policy Strategies (TIPS), the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS), the Human Science Research Council of South Africa (HSRCSA), the South African-German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SAGCCI), Johannesburg Business School (JBS), and the Trade Law Centre for Southern Africa (TRALAC), among others.

SAIIA aims at informed awareness of the importance of international affairs and contributes significantly to policy issues through a targeted dissemination approach (Sidiropoulos 2013). The Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission (PICC) was established to develop a National Infrastructure Plan across government departments (Ramokgopa 2021). GIBS is also one of the many think tank institutions in South Africa that are committed to ensuring that businesses can and should be a force for economic development in the country (Pogrund 2016).

Perusing the main objectives of these think tank institutions, it supports the view that central to commercial diplomacy is policy-making and business support (Ruel 2012). For example, Business Leadership South Africa (BLSA) is one of the forums that includes South Africa's biggest multinational corporations, and advocated that infrastructure development should be central in boosting economic growth in South Africa (Maseko 2021). Three other think tank institutions are TRALAC, TIPS, and IGD, which can be recognized as institutions promoting the importance of policy networks among other stakeholders (Valsamakis 2012). As a result, think tank institutions should be able to transform themselves into 'policy hubs' that bridge the gap between policymakers and community inputs.

TRALAC focuses on encouraging engagements on trade law, training, and policy matters in Africa and these are inclusive of regional trade agreements, treaties, protocols, and dispute settlements (Nauman 2021). TRALAC facilitates dialogues that relate to the legal regimes of the eight Regional Economic Communities (RECs) recognized by the AfCFTA (African Continental Free Trade Area) agreement and need to consider overlapping membership and jurisdictional implications (Erasmus 2021). Jurisdictional implications of each investment should be examined and now with AfCFTA in place, all its member states will at long last belong to a continent-wide

regime for trade in goods and services (Albert 2019). Consequently, the signing of the AfCFTA agreement in 2018 creates a platform for investment strategies, trade facilitation plans, trade infrastructure programs and it is the largest free-trade agreement since the signing of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1964 (Maliszweska *et al.* 2021).

TIPS' core responsibilities are to examine the quantitative and qualitative aspects of trade policy, like assessing trade flows and tariff structures with the intention of securing a technical input to engagement processes (Robb 2020). Furthermore, TIPS is a non-profit research institution that was established in 1996 by the DTIC and facilitates policy development dialogues across trade, industrial policy, inequality, and economic participation. It also quantifies the extent of illicit financial flows and, it was noted in 2011, that most of the illicit capital flows in South Africa resulted from transfer pricing from the mining sector (Signe *et al.* 2020). In 2018, a foreign policy review panel was established to create a platform for South Africa's international and continental engagements in pursuit of SOUTH AFRICA's foreign policy values and objectives (Muresan & Kornegay 2020).

2.4.4 Government stakeholders

The DTIC's mandate reflects strategic objectives inclusive of export promotion, business facilitation, investment promotion, strengthening resilience, and government-to-government cooperation (Patel 2021b). The DTIC has a division specifically for trade policy, negotiations, and cooperation, which aims at promoting trade and investment in key economies and working towards the African Union's Agenda for 2063 (Pere 2017: 6): "Agenda 2063 has been developed through a broad-based consultative process among a range of African stakeholders ... and in Africa, growth and development challenges have multiplied and become more complex with regard to addressing the legacies of poverty, unemployment, and inequality".

The DTIC has another division that deals specifically with African economic relations and international trade development. African economic relations had its focus on negotiating African trade agreements as a business unit consisting of multilateral economic platforms like

AU, SADC, and SACU (Patel 2021b). Albeit, South Africa was seen to be lacking capacity to negotiate trade very broadly, at bilateral level, and lacked the capacity to handle market access, service type agreements, and regulatory services experienced by the services sector (Valsamakakis 2012). For example, around 2012, SA was seen to be delaying the SADC Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) and through the use of business forums, SA was able to join in the signing of the SADC–EPA in 2016 (Mizner 2016).

Business forums, such as the National Development Trade Policy Forum (NDTPF) created a platform for businesses and non-state actors to participate in the economic partnership agreements like SADC and ESA APA (Rusare 2005). According to this researcher, there should be increased participation and institutionalization of businesses or non-state actors in commercial negotiations as in the EPA, where commercial diplomacy is practiced. The role of the influence of business forums in the development of economic and commercial policies can be traced back to the work of the Macroeconomic Research Group (MERG) in South Africa (Michie & Padayachee 2018). This business forum put together progressive policy proposals that aimed at combating the economic and social legacies of the apartheid era.

South Africa's international diplomatic missions had to be reduced from 122 missions to 112, due to the continued economic impact of Covid-19 in 2021 (Pandor 2021). Pandor (2021) further indicated that one of the key priorities of DIRCO is to ensure the successful implementation of AfCFTA, which provides for more productive capacity, economic and new trade opportunities. It is indicated that a close working relationship has been established between DIRCO and businesses operating globally, particularly in Africa, to identify commercial and economic benefits that enhance national economic development (Gamede 2012). The establishment of AfCFTA is the world's largest single market of over 1.2 billion consumers with a gross domestic product of US\$ 3.4 trillion (DIRCO 2020).

In DIRCO's five-year strategic plan (2020 to 2025), the lack of cooperation with key stakeholders is entered as a risk and should be mitigated by strengthening working relations with stakeholders by signing MoUs and enforcing diplomatic legal cooperation (DIRCO 2020). In their plan, DIRCO also mentioned the establishment of a diplomatic training and research academy,

aiming at providing world-class training and producing well-rounded diplomats (Calland 2019). In 2019, the SA president ordered a review of foreign policy that prioritizes economic diplomacy (Domiro 2019). However, the emergence of Covid-19 in 2020 was the most consequential international catastrophe terrifying the globe (Ameer & Ibrahim 2020), and furthermore, anticipation was that the world would never be the same.

2.5 Covid-19 as a ‘marker’ of change

In December 2019 Covid-19, a disease that was brought about by coronavirus was reported for the first time by officials in Wuhan City in China (WHO, 2020). In March 2020, the World Health Organization declared the coronavirus a pandemic due to its ramifications to the global population and world economy (World Bank 2020). We have learned that major events in some parts of the world, such as the end of apartheid in South Africa, 11 September 2001 in the USA, and the 2008 global financial crisis, resulted in new ways of doing things, referring to new thinking, new institutions, and possibly new rules and norms of interaction (Hosti 2004; Valsamakis 2012). The different states should start to make sense of what could be possible changes to operations of international institutions like commercial diplomacy, international relations, and foreign policies in light of the emergence of the coronavirus pandemic.

The occurrence of Covid-19 can be regarded as a major event and marker of change as outlined by Holsti (2004) when he indicated that change becomes essential or more important when it is or becomes transformational. The United States of America under then President Donald Trump’s administration was criticized as being unable to combat the spread of the coronavirus, and China was positioning itself as the global leader in the pandemic response (Peters 2020).

The possibility exists that the USA should realize that the coronavirus could resemble another ‘Suez moment’ (that marked the end of the UK as the global power), where the USA could also lose its position as the global leader (Campbell & Doshi 2020) and that will reshape the world order. Campel and Doshi (2020) further indicate that China’s relations and the USA are the most important bilateral relations in the world, which actually determine peace, stability, and

development in the world. The possibility is that these world dynamics and developments will affect the implementation of commercial diplomacy (Wang Yi 2021).

2.6 Digital platforms as the new world order in commercial diplomacy

Research has indicated that digital communications technologies invite businesses and multinational corporations as non-state actors to be part of international relations (Sevin & Dinnie 2015). Digital tools, such as online conferencing and social media, have become central in conducting commercial diplomacy. One of the key instruments that influence multinational corporations strategies, is networking with external stakeholders, and this clearly relates to how multinational corporations coexists with commercial diplomacy (Egea *et al.* 2020).

Other countries, such as Switzerland (Kurbalija 2021), focus on digital foreign policy strategy and Switzerland established the Internet Governance Forum (IGF).

As a result, Switzerland ended up chairing the UN Open-Working Group on cyber security (OEWG). Furthermore, according to Kurbalija (2021), countries like Singapore, Estonia, Rwanda, and the Netherlands are also playing a crucial role in the development of significant digital governance internationally, and the revitalization of diplomatic services begins with the deployment of tech, digital, and cyber ambassadors. IGF has become a UN forum for multistakeholder policy engagements on Internet governance matters and IGF's role is to increase access to information and communication technology (Pessoa 2015). These reveal that IGF has significant roles in both digitalization and commercial diplomacy.

Accordingly, the Internet revolution has also affected international relations and therefore commercial diplomacy as a key focus area of foreign policy that needs to be transformed to keep up with this revolution (Adesina & Summers 2017). The geo-political and geo-economic environment, in which commercial diplomacy operates in South Africa, remains significant. Landsberg and Van Heerden (2021) also indicated that BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China) members singled out SA as an important stakeholder in approaching Africa from geo-economic, geo-political, and geo-strategic angles. Furthermore Landsberg and Van Heerden (2021) even

regarded BRICS as a potential alternative to the western capitalist order. In 2021, According Fakir and Sidiropolous (2021), when SA, India, South Korea, and Australia were invited to the G7 leaders' summit, SA saw the G7 summit as an opportunity to put climate diplomacy at the center of transforming SA's energy and other economic interests.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the concept of commercial diplomacy and outlined the different types of SA business forums that operate in a commercial environment. Different industry sector associations, or forums, that impact the practice of commercial diplomacy were outlined and briefly highlighted. Covid-19 as the significant factor that affected the international trade, investments, and policy development, was also highlighted. Digital geopolitical and geo-economic developments that influence globalization were noted as important components in promoting domestic production in business internationalization.

The next chapter focuses on the literature review and identification of core themes and arguments in terms of how researchers analyze SA's commercial diplomacy policies and practices. Reference is made to consider how other states utilize business forums to promote stakeholder collaboration to benefit local companies in the context of geopolitical, geo-economic, and geostrategic implications.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW: IDENTIFYING CORE THEMES AND ARGUMENTS

3.1 Introduction

The first part of this chapter outlines a literature review of relevant sources examined during the study. There is evidence that indicates that little research has been conducted on commercial diplomacy compared to economic diplomacy and studies in commercial diplomacy are seen as a recent phenomenon (Naray 2008; Ruel *et al.* 2012; Swartz 2019; Visser 2017; Zuidema 2011). According to Visser (2017: 17), collaboration is one of the core functions of commercial diplomacy: “It involves stakeholders ranging from international public institutions to private actors, its organization depends on overall policy framework”. Furthermore, the importance of utilization of business forums in stakeholder collaboration is crucial to the success of any business as it includes key stakeholder opinions and insights (O’Brien & McQuillan 2017).

The other part of the chapter elaborates on the presentation of data collected from desktop research. According to Ruel and Zuidema (2012), the measures of the effectiveness of commercial diplomacy are determined by two main factors, namely: 1) businesses’ preparedness in terms of commercial diplomats’ experience, skills, and knowledge; and 2) the cognitive institutional environment in the host country relating to information availability. Kshetri (2010: 7) indicates that: “cognitive institutions are arguably most closely associated with culture”, and therefore, “cognitive elements constitute the nature of reality and the frames through which meaning is made”. It is interesting to note that the US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, made commercial diplomacy a foreign policy priority and highlighted six elements that inform effective commercial diplomacy (Donnelly & Crocker 2019).

3.2 Explored empirical literature

According to Egea *et al.* (2020), commercial diplomacy relates to the capacity to win the hearts and the minds of important stakeholders in achieving business or government objectives. Hebert (2018) argues that an effort should be made to engage continuously with stakeholders to prioritize their interests, communicate government activities regularly, and maintain institutional knowledge. According to Zollinger (2009), in certain countries, businesses have legal obligations to protect the work environment and support employees' volunteer efforts. Both investors or states and stakeholder groups, also recognize stakeholders that voluntarily associate themselves with the company.

The business forum, Meridian International Corporate Council (MICC) in the USA, was used to convene Washington diplomats, the private sector, and USA Government to advance commercial diplomacy (Devlin 2018). Devlin (2018) further argues that this forum became helpful when former US President Trump advocated for America's first trade policy, and many USA businesses were worried about their interests in countries affected by this policy. Torres-Bennet (2018) also indicated that irrespective of who is in government in the USA, MICC continues to promote public-private partnership, innovation, economic growth, and a global presence.

FOCAC (Forum on China-Africa Cooperation) is seen as a business-lobbying forum between China and Africa established for the economic interests of both Africa and China (Taylor 2010). Due to the existence of this forum, China has become Africa's most crucial trading partner that strengthens cooperation in industrialization and infrastructure development (Naji 2018). Naji (2018) further indicated that this collaboration between these stakeholders have about 10 000 businesses active in Africa at a given time, generating \$60 billion per year in industrialization, and \$122bn in trading activities. As a result, this business unit is successfully being utilized to maximize stakeholder collaboration to promote commercial diplomacy, as an example.

The International Trade Center (ITC) is a joint venture between WEF and the UN to assist the continent's small businesses to become more competitive in global markets through Africa E-

commerce Action Agenda 2025 (Grow Global 2020). Grow Global (2020) further indicates that three of the seven action plan themes of this forum are to create three million jobs in Africa by 2025, promote investment in digital infrastructure by 2030, and promote the digital trade activities from the current 1% to 10% by 2025. The other forum that regularly and successfully convened stakeholders for business deals, investments, and trade is African Diaspora Business Dialogue (Nganjo 2019). In this statement made by Nganjo (2019), collaboration with the diaspora is central in mobilizing economic resources.

In Namibia as another example (Ngwangwama *et al.* 2019: 17), “business organizations are seen as the engine for economic transformation and growth”. As result, the involvement of stakeholders in Namibia complies with proactive stakeholder management to ensure effective stakeholder relations (Chata 2010). Therefore, corporate governance stimulates benefits to multiple stakeholders and the stakeholders’ formal involvement gained recognition in corporate governance (Mrabure & Abhulimhen-Iyoha 2020).

Various developed policy documents by DIRCO during 2019 to 2021 (during Covid-19) were examined and highlighted important priorities of the department as one of the departments impacting commercial diplomacy. Lalbahadur (2020) argues that for South Africa to remain relevant in international platforms, with specific reference to nuclear security engagements, it needs to work with stakeholders and form reliable partnerships. This view is supported by Denner and Oosthuizen’s (2021) study, where it prioritizes the business-driven approaches over a state alone approach. According to DIRCO’s five-year strategic plan, the department needs to manage and coordinate other stakeholders that contribute to the achievement of South African foreign policy objectives (DIRCO, 2020). DIRCO (2020) further indicates that South Africa has participated in different global stakeholder forums to advance its national interests.

Cooperation between the EU and South Africa was formalized in 1999 by the signing of the TDCA (Trade, Development and Cooperation Agreement), which was the first Free Trade Agreement that SA established post-apartheid (Masters & Hierro 2016). The business forum called IIPSA (Infrastructure Investment Programme for South Africa) was established for the duration of 2013 to 2022 to boost the economy, ITC and social sectors, and it contributed R1.3

billion (Musyoki 2017). Alden and Soko (2005) indicate that building modernized infrastructure is seen as being crucial towards SA's economic growth, expansion of trade and investment. South African trade with Africa has increased from R11.4 billion in 1994 to R420 billion in 2017, and remained a leading investor in FDI (foreign direct investment) up to R298 billion in 2015. Therefore, stakeholder forums, such as AfCFTA, will impact commercial diplomacy by increasing regional income by 7% or \$450 billion and promoting positive economic growth by boosting foreign direct investment, enhancing Africa's exports by \$560 billion, increasing intra-Africa trade by 81%, enabling consumer and business spending of \$6.7 trillion by 2030, and lifting about 30 million people out of poverty by 2035 (Kende-Robb 2021).

The first layer of para-diplomacy (within ADARIU), which is the involvement of provinces and municipalities in international relations, relates to activities of attracting foreign investment, attracting global businesses to the country, and aiming at new markets for exports (Magam 2018). The OECD (2020: 8) relates to this matter by emphasizing the importance of stakeholder collaboration even at this governance level, in indicating that "the importance of stakeholder engagement in local governance and collaborative partnerships to boost civic engagement and leverage the role of the private sector in decision-making at the local level (citizen participation and feedback; co-creation and co-production models; citizen-centered services and engagements platforms)".

The Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME 2020: 52) coined a theme in relation to investing for accelerated inclusive growth that says, "Investment contribution and partnerships by the private sector, labor, and civil society". Monyela (2020: 11) supports the concept of partnership by indicating that, "Every conversation held at the World Economic Forum's annual meeting represents an opportunity for stakeholders to recommit to working together to solve pressing global issues".

Monyela (2020) further recommends that for SA to achieve its goals, greater stakeholder collaboration is a key to success. A study by Giones *et al.* (2020) also confirms that multilateral cooperation help stakeholders to identify interdependencies to create a sustainable innovative

value chain. This also serves as an indication of how business forums can lead towards effective commercial diplomacy.

According to the DTIC's (2020b) five-year Strategic Plan (2020–2025), global economic growth was projected to be -3% in 2020. In Ramaphosa (2021), the SA State President highlighted the importance of the social compact between private and public sectors, where the state has to stimulate and support private businesses through policy development and economic recovery plans.

During April 2020, there was a sharp deterioration in economic activities in SA, which also resulted in uneven recovery patterns among SA's trading partners (PWC, 2021). As per the DTIC's annual performance plan (APP) (2021a), funds were released from other programs to mitigate the economic effects of coronavirus. Furthermore, program two of the DTIC, which is 'trade Policy, negotiations, and cooperation', prioritized the use of a high-level forums on investment in infrastructure and industrial development on the sidelines of the 13th extraordinary summit of AU in SA, as a strategy for export promotion. Makokera and Makokera (2020) confirmed that Covid-19 impacted international trade and that South Africa also needed to survive this reality by strengthening collaborations among all stakeholders (government, business, and civil society) and supporting forums like NEDLAC.

According to Echandi and Sauve (2020), involvement of stakeholders through the use of forums like the Trade and Investment Working Group (TIWG) of G20, is crucial for consultations with investment stakeholders to deal with challenges encountered by investors and relevant stakeholders in commercial activities. Through participation in various global forums, SA became a member of several global economic treaties and agreements in areas of trade, development, regulatory environment, and so on (Voller 2020).

According to the White Paper on SA Foreign policy (DIRCO, 2011), SA needs to formalize and ensure proper coordination of all stakeholders in international relations through the use of forums like the Consultative Forum on International Relations (CFIR), the South African Council on International Relations (SACOIR), and the South African Development Partnership Agency

(SADPA). As an example, the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) was formally recognized in January 1997 as a national organization representing local government, as per section 2(1) of the organized Local Government Act No. 52 of 1997 (Steyn 2016). SALGA further participated in global forums like United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) to advance its influence beyond national borders.

Muresan and Kornegay (2020) emphasize the importance of formalizing coordination of stakeholders through foreign policy forums like CFIR, SACOIR and SADPA. The State President of SA chaired the forum called African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), which had the mandate to monitor the implementation of AU Agenda 2063 and UN Agenda 2030 (Presidency, 2020). The Presidency's APP (2021) highlights the importance of new innovation of the sixth administration, which is the District Development Model (DDM). DDMs can be used to integrate three spheres of government and ensure that planning integrates all stakeholders even at the local level.

3.3 Data collected from desktop research

Effective commercial diplomacy, according to Donnelly and Crocker (2019), relates to the following determining factors: the importance of global commerce and economics; direct involvement of most senior officials; intensified close partnership/collaboration between state and businesses; a need for well-coordinated platforms for society, state, and commerce; the importance of the involvement of cities for local workforce and infrastructure; and the establishment of a fully supportive government program for national businesses. For example, direct involvement of most senior officials in government departments determines the effectiveness of CD. The research question to be responded to in this study has been to establish how can the use of business forums enhance stakeholder collaboration and make commercial diplomacy more effective in South Africa?

The following sub-sections in this chapter highlight summarized themes and arguments identified in the reviewed desktop research data. Themes relate to commercial diplomacy and

business forums, stakeholder collaboration, DIRCO's strategic focus, and the DTIC's policy position on trade, investments, imports, and exports.

3.3.1 Businesses as non-state actors (NSA)

Valsamakis' (2012) study is the empirical work that contributes to the debate of economic diplomacy, which is inclusive of commercial diplomacy, as per earlier definitions of both economic and commercial diplomacy in this study. This study seeks to assert the crucial role of NSAs in diplomatic operations and uses a multi-stakeholder diplomacy to determine the extent and forms that corporate or business actors can be engaged in.

One central theme or conclusion that needs to be highlighted in Valsamakis' study (2012) is that in countries' economies; businesses have a crucial role to play in diplomatic activities particularly in economic and commercial diplomacy as NSAs. Furthermore, it is indicated that NSAs have the potential to bridge the gap between diplomacy and international relations. Mercier (2007) argues in support of this view by indicating that NSAs merge with state actors to ensure that commercial diplomatic representation serves both public and business interests.

The literature review in this study revealed that there are different types of NSAs. The ANC, as the ruling party in South Africa, is also identified as an NSA, according to Whytock (2015). He further indicates that the ANC's commitment to advance progressive internationalism and foreign policy identity, determines the diplomatic approach in SA. The literature reveals that this NSA has a crucial role to play in the determination of SA's economic and commercial diplomacy. According to Van Scheers (2010), there are different types of business groups in SA that are also NSAs, such as the SA Local Government Association (SALGA), the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC), Business Unity South Africa (BUSA), etc.

Chappin *et al.* (2008) also argue that business associations as NSAs have a clear mandate of influencing foreign policy-making processes. The other NSAs revealed in this study are research and think tank institutions like the aforementioned SAIIA, TIPS, HSRC, SAGCCI, IGD, etc.

Christopolos *et al.* (2015) argue that think tank institutions as NSAs play a crucial role in developing the trade capacity of South Africa's bilateralism. Sidiropoulos (2013) supports the view by indicating that NSAs also aim at informed awareness of the importance of international relations.

Ruel (2012) raises the issue that core to commercial diplomacy is policy-making and business support and this argument relates to the role of NSAs as think tank institutions. Maseko (2021) reveals that NSAs are also key in boosting economic growth in South Africa. Valsamakis (2012) further argues that multi-stakeholder diplomacy highlights the synergy between state and NSAs and that there was increasing recognition of NSAs in diplomatic operations, policy-making processes, and offering expertise. This supports Ruel (2013) when raising the fact that commercial diplomacy is highly needed in international business through stakeholder collaboration.

3.3.2 DIRCO and DTIC as state actors

In 2019, DIRCO officials agreed (during interviews conducted in Swartz's study of 2019) that DIRCO was using outdated systems to monitor and evaluate its commercial diplomacy activities. DIRCO's annual report (2019) recognizes the issue of the outdated system by indicating that DIRCO will continue to improve its economic diplomacy strategy and increase investment in SA. In addition to that, Swartz (2019) further indicated that commercial diplomacy was measured purely for compliance and auditing purposes instead of effectively measuring the impact of commercial diplomacy through a project-based approach.

Dossani's (2020) argument is in support of this view by indicating that a portfolio or project-based approach includes among its six elements: the incorporation of the preferences of in-country stakeholders and promoting trust-building mechanisms. DIRCO's strategic plan (2020) supports the argument of stakeholder collaboration by revealing the need to combat the lack of cooperation with key stakeholders by signing MoUs and enforcing legal diplomatic cooperation.

In this study, the matter of commercial diplomacy effectiveness is seen to be determined by national businesses' level of preparedness to access international markets and improved capacity among diplomats to handle complex regulatory trade environment (Ruel & Zuidema 2012). Rodrigo (2005) argues in support of this view, in relation to effectiveness, by indicating that there is a need for improved capacity among government officials to handle complex regulatory trade environments. According to acting DG, Ambassador N. Losi in DIRCO's Annual Report (2021), DIRCO embarked on an organizational structure review to ensure that DIRCO is 'fit for purpose' and by implication conducts effective commercial diplomacy. It is the view of the author of this study that at this process of restructuring DIRCO, commercial diplomacy should be placed in the highest level within the department.

One other issue that was revealed by Swartz (2019) is the importance of macro-relations between government departments like DIRCO, DTIC, and the Department of Home Affairs (DHA). Interviewees in the Swartz study (2019), for example, referred to their frustrations with SA's visa regime towards business actors. The question that was asked that led to those responses was " Does the South African government need to consider adopting different policies or strategies to be more supportive of its companies expanding on the continent "? (Swartz 2019, P53). Patel (2021a) argues in support of the interviewees' frustrations by emphasizing that the DTIC's mandate is inclusive of promoting government-to-government cooperation, hence the importance of cooperation within government departments themselves. In DIRCO's Annual Report (2021), it is clearly indicated that there are structured quarterly meetings with stakeholders and the DHA is reflected as one of the key stakeholders, to engage regularly on visa regime matters. The report (DIRCO-AR 2021) also refers to the possibilities of cultivation of partnerships towards visa extensions for businesspersons.

Lack of coordination within government departments was also highlighted as one of the key issues that affect negatively commercial diplomacy activities (Swartz 2019). Fabricius (2021) argue in support of the view by highlighting that if SA, through DIRCO, is to promote trade and investment (focus on commercial diplomacy as a component of economic diplomacy) and insists on foreign policy that is fit for purpose for economic growth, then government

departments and all stakeholders have to work together. Specifically, on DTIC and DIRCO, Fabricius (2021: 4), makes a vivid recommendation, that: “There is a broad consensus that it needs to better coordinate the different elements – including business – which have a role to play in economic diplomacy, broadly defined. One way of doing this would be to merge DIRCO and Department of Trade, Industry, and Competition into one department managing South Africa’s economic relations”.

Swartz (2019) revealed that it is important for the SA government to make it easy for SMMEs to move goods, people, money, and deal with the challenge of SA legislation being a barrier to investing outside the country. Siwela (2019) (Chairperson of the parliamentary committee on the Department of Small Business Development – DSBD) argue in support of this observation and highlights that the biggest challenge is that bureaucratic red tape was a hindrance to small businesses’ sustainability and growth. Furthermore, Siwela’s (2019) states that an unstructured economic framework and result in SA businesses are monopoly controlled and therefore the government should try to break down monopolies through legislation. This means that commercial diplomacy activities will be advanced if barriers to investing outside SA are tackled.

The matter of barriers was clearly articulated to include registration of companies, the opening of bank accounts, tax registration, and obtaining immigration permits (Swartz, 2019). She further indicated that Africa states established investment authorities as ‘One-Stop Shop’ (OSS), to address administrative issues to ease the flow of trade and investment. Daya et al (2017) also confirmed that former SA President Jacob Zuma launched the national OSS to provide investors with investment promotion, marketing, and facilitation services. Therefore, the OSS is aimed at increasing qualitative and quantitative foreign and domestic direct investments. It was also revealed that SMMEs were not aware of various bilateral agreements between governments and, therefore, there is a need for the SA government to avail information on signed agreements to facilitate and ease trade (Swartz, 2019). Matto *et al.* (2020) argue that agreements play a crucial role in international trade and there is limited information on what their features are and how they operate practically.

One other issue raised in DIRCO's SP (2020), is that DIRCO's mandate is to strategically position South Africa to effectively engage in international politics, international treaties, trade, and advance South African priorities and the African agenda. Molete and Hudson (2005) argue in support of DIRCO's mandate by indicating that South Africa's interest toward the continent is in the promotion of increased trade and investments, which are key activities of commercial diplomacy. Molete and Hudson (2005) confirm that there is a relationship between foreign trade and commercial diplomacy, as a component of economic diplomacy.

In implementing its strategy, DIRCO has ensured that its diplomatic academy becomes a center of excellence for South Africa's foreign policy and that all interaction with businesses is aligned to DIRCO's approved digital strategy. The Department plans to increase FDI pledges to R50 billion through stakeholder engagements or collaboration (DIRCO 2020b). Therefore, the commitment to the use of forums to advance South African and African priorities through stakeholder engagements in South and North groupings is placed at 100%.

DIRCO is to focus on the seventh MTSF priority of SA's sixth administration, which is 'A better Africa and world' through the execution of economic diplomacy of which commercial diplomacy is one of its components. Thus, in pursuit of socio-economic development, Africa is at the center of South Africa's foreign policy, hence renewed commitment from South Africa is needed to honor obligations towards AU and SADC forums. South Africa has signed 131 structured bilateral mechanisms (an important component of commercial diplomacy) which prioritize diplomatic consultations (through stakeholder engagements), trade and investments, and promote increased manufacturing to enhance the export-orientated economy.

DIRCO Minister Pandor (2021), in her budget speech, indicated that DIRCO plans and priorities had to be reviewed due to the emergence of Covid-19 that led to budget cuts (from R6.8 bn to R6.3 bn). One of the key priorities for 2020\2021 was to give support to the implementation of AfCFTA (business forum) and APRM. Furthermore, the coronavirus pandemic led to low levels of economic growth and declining investments in South Africa leading to constrained international activities. Albeit, according to the Minister more has been done in 2020\21 to focus missions on economic diplomacy in different countries.

The South African President as Chair of AU used this business forum to appoint the economic envoys for coordinated African responses to the economic impact of Covid-19. The Minister was encouraged to indicate that in alleviating the impact of coronavirus in her 2020/21 vote, multilateralism (use of business forums) in global stakeholder collaboration is confirmed to be of most critical importance (DIRCO 2021). Reality confirmed South Africa's approach and belief that stakeholder cooperation and multilateral institutions matter in resolving international challenges. It is confirmed in minister's vote statement that international stakeholder collaboration can boost Africa's capacity to respond effectively to a global pandemic like Covid-19 (Pandor 2021).

In support of South Africa's economic interests, more attention is directed to economic diplomacy in order to increase trading opportunities (DIRCO-APP 2020). Increased attention to commercial diplomacy as a component of economic diplomacy, trading with Asia and the Middle East has increased from R45 bn (1990) to R984 bn (in 2020) (DIRCO-AR 2021). DIRCO's Annual report (2021) further indicates that the BRICS forum has been vibrant even under difficult pandemic circumstances and South Africa was able to secure US\$2 billion from BRICS' banks in response to Covid-19, and the IBSA forum funded poverty alleviation projects in 22 countries of the global South at over US\$32 million. Therefore, business forums continue to be used effectively to enhance effective commercial diplomacy.

DIRCO works closely with the DTIC to ensure that Africa's free trade area is successfully implemented through the AfCFTA forum. This implies that commercial diplomacy is effectively implemented for many African countries to be more productive, and have enhanced economic infrastructure and new trade opportunities. DIRCO continues to employ diplomacy to secure trade relations with countries like USA, UK and other European countries who remain significant South African trading partners.

The global economic outlook was projected in 2020 to be at -3% and one of the key risks in the outlook was the international spread of Covid-19. Some of the other economic risks were higher tariff rates between US and China, and negatively affected fiscal space in Emerging Markets and Developing Economies (EMDEs). In Quarter 4 of 2019, the GDP contracted by 1.4%

resulting in the economy moving to technical recession. However, the global economy was already in the technical recession during the emergence of the coronavirus and the 2019 annual GDP growth was just 0.2%.

SA's GDP also did not escape the negative impact of the emergence of Covid-19, as IMF and WB 2020 indications reduced SA's GDP growth forecast to -5.8% in 2020 and 4 % in 2021. The DTIC's Strategic Plan and Annual Performance Plan 2020/21 also notes that the SA economy lost about 108 000 jobs on a year-to-year basis and the trade sector suffered the biggest loss of 159 000 jobs. However, the use of forums like SADC and SACU, resulted in South Africa's exports to Africa producing a trade surplus of R51 billion (from R41 bn to R93 bn) in Q4 of 2019. The use and realization of business forums like AfCFTA will lead to export penetration to other Sub-Saharan Africa economies and expansion of export trade beyond the SADC region.

Consequently, African countries should take advantage of economic opportunities brought by consensus reached in the implementation of the AfCFTA agreement. South Africa's trade with BRICS countries totaled R134 billion in Q4 of 2019, but there was a huge trade deficit valued at R26 billion in 2019Q4. DTIC (2020) clearly indicates that with intensified stakeholder collaboration (state and business level) participation (use of business forums), intra-BRICS trade could increase significantly, boosting South Africa's economy.

The practice of commercial diplomacy as the major component of economic diplomacy could lead to significant growth of South Africa's economy. The South African state intervention of implementation of the R500 billion Covid-19 economy recovery package and investment projects in South Africa will improve economic growth prospects. The use of a high-level forum on investments was again considered on the margins of the 13th Extra-Ordinary Summit of the AU in South Africa. The DTIC's Program Two on trade policies, negotiations, and cooperation aspire to build an equitable international trading system.

Effective commercial diplomacy by implication in the DTIC document (Program Two) is the strengthening of trade and investment links with key economies and focus on African development cooperation. Therefore, stakeholder collaboration using business forums could

lead to an increase in intra-Africa trade to advance African regional development and take effect of trade agreements to support market access. All these agreements are driven through business forums or platforms like, SADC–EU EPA (Economic Partnership Agreement), SACU-Mozambique EPA with the UK, AGOA, BRICS, G20, WTO, and AfCFTA.

In relation, the DTIC’s Program Seven platforms like EMIA (Export, Marketing and Investment Assistance) and EDS (Export Development Support) are to be used to achieve accelerated export sales of value-added products and services. These funding mechanisms were realized through stakeholder cooperation in particular states and businesses. The DTIC’s Program Eight, targets inward investment attraction, facilitation, and aftercare and is planned to achieve stakeholder collaboration through investment summits. Cooperation of stakeholders will enable the establishment of OSS of investment facilitation in the provinces and strengthen Presidential envoys in attracting investments. The DTIC had a total budget of R11 billion in 2020/21 of which R6.8 billion was for incentives to public corporations and private enterprises’ programs.

3.3.3 Use of business forums to promote commercial diplomacy

The EU is SA’s largest trading partner, largest foreign investor, and the partnership is based on the shared values of free and fair trade. The EU contributes R1.3 billion to South Africa’s Infrastructure Investment Programme (IIPSA). In 2020, SA signed 131 structured bilateral mechanisms with 106 courtiers through diplomacy in advancing national priorities, which have an economic component. This means that South Africa’s network of global missions targets the promotion of trade and investment in Africa. Trade and investment between South Africa and the continent moved from R11.4 billion in 1994 to R420 billion in 2017 in favor of South Africa.

South African exports value-added goods to Africa as opposed to raw material and that highlights the strategic importance of Africa to South Africa’s economic development. Public participation programs (similar to business forums) have been used to strengthen South African relations with various stakeholders and create a platform for SA foreign policy engagements.

Digitalization has changed and influenced the way information is shared and engaged on between the state and NSAs. DIRCO (2020) highlights that SA was ranked number one in digital diplomacy in Africa and 51st in the world, and therefore South Africa is leading in using digital diplomacy assets in Africa. Saif (2020) argues that digital diplomacy is inclusive of all activities conducted under the diplomacy umbrella with economic and commercial diplomacies being a part thereof. Nevertheless, Saif (2020) further highlights that economic diplomacy experienced a lag in digitalization, as most activities remained traditional in face-to-face bilateral trade interactions for the past twenty years.

In 2017, a business forum called Global Consular Forum (GCR) nominated South Africa to become the only African country to serve as a Steering Committee Member of the GCF (DIRCO 2020). Therefore, a forum was used for awareness of consular services available to assist South African citizens who travel abroad and find themselves in distress. Furthermore, DIRCO (2020) as a strategic plan indicates that a forum was established through the DTRD for the positioning of the diplomatic academy as the center of excellence in Africa for African Diplomatic Academies, Research Institution, and Universities. The Academy also developed the Economic Training Approach, which led to the establishment of the Economic Diplomacy Forum (EDF). As such, commercial diplomacy as a component of economic diplomacy is taken into account in the training approach.

The EDF as business forum was used to promote export-led growth and increase foreign direct investment. SA's sixth democratic administration developed the Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) 2019 to 2024 and its priorities aim to address national challenges of unemployment, poverty, and inequality in South Africa (DIRCO 2020). Economic diplomacy was made a key strategy in DIRCO's five-year strategic plan 2020–2025, to help realize the MTSF's priorities. The reader needs to be reminded, for the purpose of this study, that commercial diplomacy is the crucial component of economic diplomacy that focuses on the facilitation of trade agreements, exports, and investments.

As emphasized in DIRCO-AR (2021), one of the DIRCO's objectives is to increase FDI into South Africa and Africa in line with the National Export Strategy and in collaboration with other

stakeholders. DIRCO aims to promote exports of South African products to access traditional and new markets to support economic growth and job creation (DIRCO 2020). All these activities are in pursuit of effective commercial diplomacy. Through the use of forums like AfCFTA, South Africa plays a key role in rationalizing RECs targeting to reactivate business forums like NEPAD, APRM, and SADC's RISDP. South African chairmanship of forums like CAHOSCC and APRM in 2020 was used to advance economic development in Africa. All of these activities highlight the important role of commercial diplomacy and the use of business forums.

South Africa collaborated with forums like NAM (Non-Alignment Movement) and Africa Groups to ensure that the WTO promotes an open and fair trading environment and opposes protectionism. It is noted that global financial institutions like the WTO, WB, and IMF can be transformed through stakeholder collaboration like the joint Africa-EU Strategy. DIRCO's five-year strategic plan clearly indicates that its objective to promote Africa Agenda, will engage with different business forums like WEF, OECD, and WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization).

According to DIRCO's strategic document (2020b), trade, investment and presidential investment initiatives should be diplomats' priorities and they should focus on transforming the South African economy. The SADC is used as a forum to develop a Common Position Paper with three fundamentals: trade and investment; development cooperation, and political dialogue and this is key in removing trade barriers. Furthermore, stakeholder partnerships between the EU and the African Caribbean Pacific (ACP) aim to promote ACP-EU trade and investment, which leads to poverty alleviation. SADC-EU-EPA partnership was also formed to promote trade and investment in the region.

According to DIRCO five-year strategic plan (2020: 42), "South African economic diplomacy efforts focus on market entry and positioning of South African companies to benefit from favorable growth and future economic growth projections of the region". Therefore, SA collaboration with different stakeholders through business forums leads to SA acquiring the biggest investment partners and which, in turn, contributes to industrialization, reduced unemployment, and infrastructure development.

3.4 Conclusion

The review of different policy documents of government departments like DIRCO, the DTIC, the Presidency and so on, reveal that commercial diplomacy is recognized under economic diplomacy and not yet treated as a separate concept. The success of commercial diplomacy in South Africa and globally is driven through participation in different local and international forums that are seen as strategies to ensure maximum stakeholder collaboration. The formalization of management and coordination of all stakeholders with interests in commercial diplomacy is noted as the way forward in advancing foreign policy implementation in South Africa.

DIRCO, in consultation with the Presidency, is the lead department on all matters relating to international relations, and DTIC also plays a critical role in advancing issues of the global economy. Research conducted on commercial diplomacy and its components, such as trade, investments, and exports within Africa and South Africa, are explored further. Data explored from different sources relating to different stakeholders revealed that those stakeholders agreed on several crucial matters, albeit it from different perspectives. These agreements were exposed in their common approach information of business forums in dealing with complex matters of domestic or international economic cooperation. It was established that the effectiveness of commercial diplomacy depended on commercial diplomats' knowledge and information availability in cognitive institutions.

The use of business forums was examined as means to enhance the experience, knowledge, and access to business information for stakeholders' collaboration. There were indications in this chapter that commercial diplomacy in other states is made a priority for foreign policy. Other researchers felt that the close relationship between state and business (micro-level relations) does determine effective commercial diplomacy. It is revealed in Valsamakis (2012) that the element of mistrust between government and business in South Africa remains a challenge.

Responses from interviewees from Swartz (2019) revealed that coordination among government departments (DIRCO, DTIC, DAFF, NT, and the Presidency, i.e., macro-level relations), in relation to commercial diplomacy activities was still ineffective. The interviewees were drawn from SMMEs and Business Chambers, and were responding to question, “Do you think that government and business can be smarter when trading and investing on the continent?”(Swartz 2019, P60) Therefore, a platform needs to be provided to ensure that government departments are well coordinated in impacting trade agreements, exports, and investments. Certain sources identified that business associations play a critical role in complex multilateralism (Valsamakis 2012; Swartz 2019; DIRCO 2020).

All three main stakeholder relations seem to be supplementing one another with both state-business relations and private-to-private relations (meso relations) and state-state relations. The importance of forums for collaboration is expected to reduce challenges experienced among different stakeholders. Interviewees in Swartz (2019) highlighted the critical role of commercial diplomats in using business forums to enhance stakeholder collaboration. The interviewees felt that meetings only became effective when attended at ministerial level.

Research data revealed that trade, exports, and investments should be DIRCO’s priority and focus of commercial diplomats should be to transform South Africa’s economy (DIRCO-AR 2021). Different business forums, for example, SADC-EU-EPA, ACP, WEF, OECD, etc. were used to promote trade, exports, and investments. It was noted in DIRCO-AR (2021) that the emergence of Covid-19 affected SA’s economy negatively and intensifying cooperation among business forums became crucial. Chapter four will refer to the case study and, subsequently, findings and recommendations will be outlined in the final chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

KIMBERLEY PROCESS CERTIFICATION SCHEME (KPCS) AND ITS WORKING GROUP ON MONITORING (WGM): 2017 TO 2018

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) as an example of how a forum can be used to promote the international diamond trade, which forms part of commercial diplomacy in South Africa, Africa and internationally (SADPMR-WGM 2017). KPCS is a forum consisting of governments, industry, and civil society with an objective to stem the flow of conflict diamonds – rough diamonds used by rebel organizations to finance wars against legitimate states (SADPMR 2019). The Kimberley Process (KP) is a multilateral trade system; member states implement safeguards on the shipments of rough diamonds and commit to removing conflict diamonds from the international supply chain (Haufler 2010).

The WGM is one of the 2017 four working groups within the KP, which focuses on monitoring implementation and compliance of the KPCS minimum requirements by all participants (SADPMR-WGM 2017). The WGM does this by ensuring that member states can only legally trade with KP members. This means that the international shipment of rough diamonds may only be processed with a KP certificate to guarantee that they are conflict free (SADPMR-SP 2020). The researcher was appointed as KP-WGM Chair, on behalf of South Africa in 2016 by DMR Honorable Minister Mosebenzi Zwane, as he was already serving as the SADPMR Board Chairperson from 2016 to 2019.

One of the SADPMR's legislative objectives is to ensure compliance to the KPCS and the South African Department of Mineral Resources (DMR) had appointed SADPMR as the focal point of the KPCS from 2000 (SADPMR-SP 2020). Furthermore, in 2016, South Africa was appointed by KPCS as the new Chair of WGM at the KP Plenary meeting held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (SADPMR-WGM 2016).

4.2 Background and functions of KPCS and WGM

South Africa, as one of the founding members of KPCS, met in May 2000 with other African diamond producing countries, the diamond industry (WDC), and a coalition of civil societies, to look at ways to prevent trade in conflict diamonds (SADPMR 2018). Those engagements culminated in the United Nations (UN) General Assembly Resolution A/RES/55/56 in December 2000, supporting the creation of KPCS and further endorsed by the UN Security Council Resolution 1459 passed in January 2003 (UN 2004).

South Africa continued to participate in all KPCS working groups and committees. Around 2016, South Africa headed the scientific sub-group tasked with conducting foot and fingerprints on diamonds intercepted in Mali from Cote d'Ivoire, working with EU and USA as project coordinators (SADPMR-WGM 2017). South Africa was also engaged in the responsibility to conduct the foot and fingerprint on rough diamonds from other regions, a process that helped the KPCS to determine the origins of the rough diamonds aimed at ensuring that conflict diamonds do not contaminate the legitimate diamond value chain (SADPMR 2018).

Central to the functions of the KP Chair is to create a platform for all stakeholders in the diamond trade to meet and collaborate twice a year, by hosting a mid-year (May) intercessional conference and end of the year (November) plenary conference (SADPMR-PPC 2019). Makokera (2015), in support of the KP approach, argues that effective commercial diplomacy (through economic diplomacy) requires collaboration among stakeholders and further indicates that this approach was acknowledged by DIRCO in its White Paper on foreign policy. The ultimate goal of KP stakeholder collaboration conferences is to review and facilitate the drafting of the 'Final Communiqué' that regulates global diamond trade for years to follow (SADPMR 2019).

Although there are some critics to KPCS, starting with the fact that KPCS is not international law or global instrument that is legally binding as a treaty, it is a voluntary procedure, which relates to soft law and that is enforced by national laws (Minier 2021). According to Mercer (2020), the

diamond industry has reached a broad consensus that block-chain diamond tracking is the way to go to ensure accurate traceability by creating a digital twin of every diamond.

Functions of the WGM include the organization and facilitation of KPCS review visit missions, the determination and compilation of a list of countries to receive review missions, the selection of heads of review visit missions, ensuring that heads of review missions compile reports, follow up on the implementation of review visit recommendations, and organization of international teleconferences and their reports (SADPMR-WGM 2017).

The other core function of WGM is to report member states that are non-compliant with the KPCS minimum requirements (SADPMR-WGM 2016). Therefore, South Africa membership to KP ensures that South African diamonds are traded globally and legitimately in line with KP requirements. KPCS as a business forum contributes towards commercial diplomacy by ensuring compliance to minimum requirements.

4.3 KPCS's and WGM's impact on diamond trading

KPCS as a global forum has contributed positively to stamping out conflict diamond trade and reducing rough diamonds used by rebels to sponsor wars against legitimate governments (SADPMR 2018). Program Two of SADPMR is diamond trade, and it ensures the facilitation of local trade, and the export and import of diamonds in accordance with the KPCS (SADPMR-SP 2020). According to this report, there are two more sub-programs of the diamond trade and that is the DEEC (Diamond Exchange and Export Center) and GDV (Government Diamond Value). GDV ensures fair market value is lodged and promotes skills initiatives from industry stakeholders (SADPMR 2019).

The DEEC drives a percentage of compliance to KPCS requirements and diamond producers may be exempted from a 5% export levy if diamonds are offered to the DEEC (Moumakwa 2014). The impact on the use of business forums for stakeholder collaboration in the diamond industry is observed in activities of the DEEC that relate to commercial diplomacy. The DEEC facilitated a

trade of 5.9 million carats valued at US\$989 million in 2019, which reflects an increase in the volume of carats offered when comparing 3.8 million carats facilitated in 2018 (SADPMR-PPC 2019).

The increase in accessing global markets, as indicated earlier in this study relates to the determination of effective commercial diplomacy. Furthermore, South Africa exported 10.6 million carats of rough diamonds valued at more than US\$1.4 billion, and that reflects an increase of 700 000 carats from 9.8 million carats valued at US\$1.4 billion in 2021. Research statistics show that in 2020, Russia mined 19 million carats of diamonds and Australia produced 12 million carats (Garside 2021). According to Garside (2021), there is an increasing demand for rough diamonds worldwide, and this is expected to reach a tune of 292 million carats by 2050.

In a SADPMR's annual report (2019 P6) it is indicated that: "South Africa will complete its term as Chair of WGM, having changed the landscape of reporting within the Kimberley Process (KP) in the following ways: stricter reporting measures of annual statistics of diamond trading and production were introduced; long-standing incomplete review visit reports were finalized and submitted; long-standing compliance challenges in countries such as Central African Republic, Liberia, Ivory Coast, and Sierra Leone were alleviated".

As in many other industries, Covid-19 prompted structural changes in the diamond industry like the establishment of more partnerships or intensified stakeholder collaborations (Bains & Company 2021). Therefore, flexibility in the industry led to innovative new approaches to customer engagement like an online digital-enabled supply chain in diamonds. According to Krawitz (2021), the diamond industry remained in its healthier state for over a decade, as a direct result of effective commercial diplomacy, and it performed better than other industries.

4.4 Constraints of South Africa's diamond businesses

The challenges in the SA mining industry have always had their root causes in factors like, for example, the international demand for minerals due to recession, mining structural character

and the Marikana disaster (Bilal 2013). In the Marikana massacre, South African police killed 34 mineworkers who were protesting and demanding a wage increase (Hill & Maroun 2015). The emergence too of Covid-19 hit South Africa hard – South Africa was already in a recession and the mining sector, in particular, declared force majeure that relates to suspended activities and inability to meet contractual obligations (Cook 2020). Cook (2020) further indicates that forums like BRICS and IMF intervened through the approval of loans to South Africa to mitigate the impact of the pandemic.

Furthermore, through platforms, such as the United Diamond Association of South Africa (UDASA), the government and diamond industry were able to finalize legislation that caters to industry needs and beneficiation. South Africa's beneficiation policy enforced 10% of diamonds be sold to SDT (State Diamond Traders) to employ more people in the cutting and polishing industry (SDT, 2020). Therefore, stakeholder management, global market analysis, and the creation of market intelligence are undertaken with all compliant diamond producers. SDTs (2020) further indicated that despite challenges worsened by Covid-19, the entity was able to participate in Hong Kong Jewellery and Gem Fair Forum and that resulted in their clients reporting 21% growth in sales. Therefore, the use of business forums in the diamond industry continues to show the crucial role that forums play in stakeholder cooperation for the commercial interests of all involved parties. ALROSA's Extended Management Leadership Team Forum acts as the organizer of Russia-African collaboration in the diamond industry, of which they both account for 75% of global rough diamond production (ALROSA 2019)

The diamond industry has become more technologically dynamic and that has complicated challenges faced by industry players (Rarick & Angriawan 2017). According to SARINE (2019), collaboration between gemologists and technological innovators provides the world's most accurate diamond grading information. Thus, collaboration among key diamond stakeholders, being influenced by commercial diplomacy, provides solutions to challenges and turns them into opportunities.

4.5 Diamonds and commercial diplomacy

Before the use of business forums like KPCS and its working groups like WGM for stakeholder cooperation, African countries like Angola, DRC, Liberia, and Sierra Leone were engaged in civil wars during the 1990s (ADTS 2016). Rebel groups captured diamond production to finance insurrections referred to as ‘blood diamonds’ or conflict diamonds. The situation led to instability, repressive illegitimate governments, the death of millions of innocent people, and threatened legitimate diamond trade (Price 2003). Tamm (2002: 2) describes the blood diamond experience as follows: “I don’t know how to tell this story. There are no words to describe what I have seen in Sierra Leone. My mind tells me to block out the really bad stuff, to deny the impossible reality. However the images of the amputee camp haunt me and the voices of the victims cry out. ‘Tell them what has happened to us,’ say the survivors, ‘show them what the diamonds have done to us’”.

Consequently, global bodies, in their strategy to stop the trade of blood diamonds, had to devise a global certification scheme through the cooperation of all diamond industry stakeholders (Price 2003).

Pretorius (2011) indicates that KPCS was accepted as a diplomatic move, which accommodates interaction between states and NSAs and provides space for NSA to influence the diplomatic outcome. KPCS further ensures a determination of NSA involvement and provides a platform for multi-stakeholder diplomacy (Reuvers & Ruël 2012), which relates to commercial diplomacy.

In KPCS there is participation by NGOs like PAC (Partnership Africa Canada), which according to ADTS (2016), contributed significantly towards resolving the problem of trade in conflict diamonds. A company like De Beers, which was once responsible for 80% of global diamond production, got involved in KPCS through WDC and stopped buying diamonds from Sierra Leone as an example (ADTS 2016).

In August 2020, a KP administrative decision was taken due to the worldwide spread of Covid-19 on the postponement of Russia’s Chairmanship to 2021 and Botswana’s Chairmanship 2022 (Rapaport News 2021). According to the Russian Deputy Finance Minister Moiseev (Rapaport

News 2021), the biggest challenge is that virtual events are not practical for all KP participants. As per the KP (2020), the diamond businesses could only be monitored in 2020 through KP working groups and both crucial face-to-face sessions of KP could not take place.

4.6 Conclusion

The virtual intercessional meeting of KP working groups on 21–25 June 2021, under the chairmanship of Russia, proposed the establishment of a separate subgroup on digitalization of rough diamonds certificates to be established under KP (WDC 2021). South Africa’s rough diamond production had declined in the 21st century and cost the country part of its international share and this is because, among some reasons, there is a lack of new discoveries and the changing demand profile for diamonds (SADPMR 2019).

Therefore, this industry as a job creator and contributor to the country’s economic development may be seriously challenged and complicated by the emergence of the coronavirus (WDC 20210). One other issue revealed in this research is that KP, as a global certification scheme that regulates trade in rough diamonds, needs to have permanent offices and permanent personnel to administer its important mandate. The next chapter provides an overview of research findings and recommendations, as per data collected in the desktop research conducted on commercial diplomacy, business forums, stakeholder collaboration, and the case study on KPCS-WGM.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The research study was conducted to highlight the importance of use of business forums to enhance commercial diplomacy through intensified and formalized stakeholder collaboration. This research highlighted the essential role played by business forums in strengthening commercial diplomacy through formalized stakeholder collaboration, as per research question in this study. South Africa has placed economic diplomacy as a priority in foreign policy and commercial diplomacy is regarded as one of its components. Commercial diplomacy focuses on trade, exports, and investments to impact positively on the country's economic growth.

Initially, economic diplomacy and commercial diplomacy were seen to be the preserves of state actors, but recently business associations are identified to be crucial in complex multilateralism. The question is no longer whether multiple actors in diplomacy play a role in commercial diplomacy and international relations, but rather how and toward what effect? For example, the discovery of diamonds in South Africa, led privately owned mining houses to become important role players in South Africa's commercial diplomacy. Therefore, mining companies elevated SA to become an essential stakeholder in global engagements, as mining drove South Africa's first impact of rapid economic growth.

There is a general view that commercial diplomats need to support South African businesses to identify credible partners or stakeholders in global platforms. The academic view further indicated that missions should only exist where South Africa could have the greatest returns in trade. There was a strong view relating to a need for multi-actors in commercial diplomacy to be well coordinated within DIRCO to be smart in trading, export, and investment.

The qualitative research desktop approach was used in this study to develop a comprehensive understanding through the convergence of information from different sources to respond to the research question that led to numerous findings. Subsequently, research, a case study, and

literature review resulted in a collection of secondary data and identification of debates in different sources relating to the study's research theme and question. However, central findings are presented on themes like trade, export, investments (commercial diplomacy activities) in relation to stakeholder collaboration, and use of business forums to alleviate or survive the impact of Covid-19. The findings address the matters of the lack of integrated approach among government departments responsible for commercial diplomacy, and strategies for enhancing effective commercial diplomacy through stakeholder collaboration.

The emergence of Covid-19 is taken into account in the worsening socio-economic factors in South Africa, Africa, and the rest of the world. In the process of examining issues, emerging supplementary threads from reviewed sources are paid attention to before the main findings are tabled. Findings are presented with a motive of identifying linkages in the data presented throughout this research study. This is done with the view to determine whether consistency exists in the literature reviewed on commercial diplomacy, stakeholder collaboration, and the use of business forums. In the end, the recommendations and conclusion with highlights on possible areas of further research are outlined. The case study has used an example to show how a business forum like KPCS is used to promote the diamond trade globally.

5.2 Fundamental threads divulged in reviewed sources

In the process of examining different sources and data in different policy documents, numerous threads surfaced from different stakeholders. The arguments raised by stakeholders are both supportive and divergent insights in commercial activities relating to commercial diplomacy components like trade, exports, investments, business forums, and stakeholder collaboration. It is important to note that numerous stakeholders agree on a number of issues in particular a need for the development of a South African strategy towards commercial diplomacy. The supportive insights further emphasize the importance of national strategy in ensuring South Africa's success in securing business opportunities in Africa and globally.

There is a clear indication that for effective commercial diplomacy to take place, there must be an institutionalized approach (or formal use of business forums) for stakeholder collaboration. Supportive insights agree that business forums will assist to alleviate mistrust between state and business in South Africa. The divergent insights on the theoretical definition of commercial diplomacy in the context of South Africa were seen to be attracting more attention. Interviewees in Swartz (2019) and Valsamakis (2012) indicated that most South Africa businesses were not getting support from SA missions. According to Swartz (2019), Interviewees who were SMMEs were even afraid of ‘sabotage’ to report their abroad business to government. Interviewees that expressed this view in Valsamakis (2012, P245) , were representatives from research institutions and think tanks, “Business stakeholders found their access to government and formal state-led diplomatic processes more constrained”. There was the consideration of institutionalized business forums to enhance trust between state and business in relation to the information.

The following highlights of supportive and divergent insights are referred to during the presentation of five central findings of this research study:

- Commercial diplomacy is one of the important modes of economic diplomacy and commercial diplomats are viewed as invisible servants of the world economy. There are fundamental reasons for prioritizing commercial diplomacy, for example when practicing commercial diplomacy, 80% of purchasing power is outside the host country. The world provides for more aggressive competition, and we live in a world of globalization.
- Business forums work with different states to ease trade-related obstacles, market access, global collaboration, and trade competitiveness. The use of business forums for stakeholder collaboration may lead to policy certainty. For example, the ANC created a PBF (Progressive Business Forum) specifically to create a collaboration platform between the state and businesses. China has become Africa’s most crucial trading partner that strengthens cooperation in industrialization and infrastructure development, due to the use of business forums like FOCAC (Forum on China-Africa

Cooperation). The use of forums like TIWG (Trade and Investment Working Group) of G20 is crucial for consultation with investment stakeholders to deal with challenges encountered by investors.

- South Africa needs a more stakeholder-centered approach and businesses should make time to understand stakeholders. DIRCO needs to manage and coordinate other stakeholders that contribute to the achievement of South Africa foreign policy objectives and South Africa to participate in different global stakeholder forums to advance South Africa's national interests.
- Covid-19 disrupted national and global businesses and it became clear that people-to-people engagements were lost or weakened. Covid-19 has become a marker of change as it has led to some adjustments to a way of life.
- The use of digital tools has become central in conducting commercial diplomacy and, therefore, the Internet revolution demands a review in the practice of international relations.

It is important to note at this stage of the study that findings coincide with the research gap outlined earlier in this study on the effectiveness of commercial diplomacy that can be enhanced through the use of business forums in promoting stakeholder collaboration. Both supportive and contradictory insights are referred to through the presentation of five central findings of this research study.

5.3 Central Findings and Recommendations

5.3.1 South Africa's foreign policy should make commercial diplomacy a priority

Researchers on South Africa's commercial diplomacy as a component of economic diplomacy disclosed a need for clear identification of factors that enhance effective commercial diplomacy. This study confirms that in policy-making statements in South Africa, commercial diplomacy continues to be considered as the sub-component of economic diplomacy. In his speech (Ramaphosa 2020), the South Africa President instructed the review of SA's foreign

policy and that concurred with arguments presented by Domiro (2019) that South African foreign policy required a review so as to prioritize economic diplomacy and commercial diplomacy in particular.

Therefore, commercial diplomacy in South Africa and Africa needs to be elevated in policy position platforms and stop being addressed under the shadow of economic diplomacy. In the DTIC, the deputy director general heads commercial diplomacy instead of being placed directly in the highest office of the head of administration – being the director general or ministerial level. Interviewees in Valismakis (2012) indicated that engagements become effective if attended at the ministerial level. Interviewees that revealed this view were from research and think tank institutions or associations like TRALAC, TIPS, SACU and SAIIA, NAFCO, BLSA, and other similar organizations.

Information provided by interviewees (Valismakis 2012) also concur with arguments presented by Donnelly and Crocker (2019), that there are fundamental reasons for prioritizing commercial diplomacy as 80% of global purchasing power lies outside the host country and that the world provides for more aggressive competitive foreign competition and policy. They (Donnelly & Crocker, 2019) further indicate that the US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo made commercial diplomacy a US foreign policy priority.

Lalbahadur (2020) indicated that South Africa operates in the complex environment of limited economic growth, less achievement in meeting developmental goals, and soft power constraints. Minister Pandor confirms this situation in DIRCO's five-year plan (2020 to 2025) that there are complex networks of an industry that need to be well managed and formalized. As such, for effective commercial diplomacy to take place in South Africa, the literature review in this study revealed that the effectiveness of commercial diplomacy is realized when the state is able to give support to domestic businesses to be able to access global markets and stimulate national economies.

The view of effective commercial diplomacy concurs with Ruel and Zuidema's (2012) insights that effective commercial diplomacy relates to national businesses' preparedness to access

international markets and being assisted by the cognitive institutional environment in the host country. Donnelly and Crocker (2019) clearly indicate that, for effective commercial diplomacy to take place among other factors, there must be intensified close partnerships/collaboration between state and businesses, through well-coordinated platforms (business forums) for society, state, and business.

5.3.2 Business forums help to create policy certainty

The literature review in this study confirms that business forums can be used to ease trade-related obstacles, provide support for global market access, provide a platform for international stakeholder collaboration, and fair trade competitiveness. In 2018, the World Bank used the World Bank Group as a business forum to advance its objectives. The responsibilities of these business forums of the World Bank Group, concur with arguments presented by Rodrigo (2005) that developing countries were identified to be experiencing challenges that relate to the complex regulatory business environments. Rodrigo (2005) further argues that a complex regulatory environment does not support new investments and prolongs monopoly practices that do not encourage competitive business activities. Spicer's (2016) arguments support a finding that business forums can be used successfully to establish policy certainty and reduce the level of mistrust between state and businesses in South Africa. Robison and Gonzalez (2020) also presented an argument that indicated that there was a need to pay attention to mistrust between government and business.

This means that business forums need to be institutionalized within DIRCO. Ramaphosa (2020) also concurs with the important use of business forums for stakeholder collaboration by indicating that South Africa needs to finalize master plans that will ensure that stakeholders collaborate to develop practical strategies to enhance economic growth. According to Van Wyk (2009), as long ago as 2006, the ANC established a forum called Progress Business Forum to specifically create a collaboration platform between state and business.

5.3.3 Formalizing platforms for stakeholder collaboration

SA needs to work with stakeholders and form reliable partnerships that contribute to South Africa foreign policy objectives (DG in DIRCO's five-year plan, 2020). He further indicated that South Africa's participation in different global business forums helps to advance South Africa's national interests. Meaning that once the business forums are institutionalized as recommended above, that would ensure that the lead departments like DIRCO and DTIC also formalize stakeholder collaboration.

Furthermore, the department plans to advance South Africa and Africa's priorities through formal stakeholder collaboration as per APP (2020/2021) by prioritizing to give support to business forums like AfCFTA and APRM. Another interesting finding as per reviewed literature from DTIC's SP (2020 to 2025), confirms that realization of AfCFTA will lead to export penetration to other Sub-Sahara Africa economies and expansion of export trade beyond the SADC region. DTIC (2020) further confirms that the intensified stakeholder collaboration such as intra-BRICS trade will enhance South Africa's economy.

Reviewed literature in Swartz (2019) also reveals the importance of considering amalgamation of DIRCO and DTIC, as the two departments responsible for commercial diplomacy. Visser (2017) also confirmed the importance of government departments to reconsider their structures and organizational arrangements in relation to the implementation of CD.

5.3.4 Effective commercial diplomacy strengthens its central components

The crucial issue is that commercial diplomacy is seen to be effective if prosperity and its objectives of increasing investments, imports, exports, and global trade are achieved. Workneh (2012) revealed that South Africa should overcome complex regulatory environment to attract foreign trade and investment, and prioritize commercial diplomacy. One interesting finding that was highlighted by Swartz (2019) is that there are divergent perceptions relating to the duties of commercial diplomats. But more importantly, is that it is essential for the SA government to ensure that more diplomats receive specialized training in commercial activities.

Divergent views continue to exist in relation to roles of DTIC officials and DIRCO officials where DTIC officials are expected to conduct specialized trade and investment work and DIRCO ones to discharge a political role.

A clear finding of this study is that the roles of all state actors from different departments (DTIC, DIRCO, DAFF, NT) should have their roles vividly spelled out in relation to commercial diplomacy components (trade, investments, imports, and exports). The finding is that there are gaps in South Africa's foreign missions as far as commercial diplomacy is concerned. Departmental officials are generally viewed by South African businesses, as not being well trained and being under-resourced. Business forums such as BUSA, continue to be used to close the capacity gap and managed to finalize several agreements like NAMA negotiations in WTO, and TIPS that successfully influenced the conclusion of the SACU-MERCOSUR Preferential Agreement (PTA).

5.3.5 The use of digital tools in commercial diplomacy

Covid-19 also necessitated the use of digital tools in commercial diplomacy. In line with the definition of what can be regarded as the marker of change by Holsti (2004), Campbell and Doshi (2020), presented an argument that confirms that the occurrence of Covid-19 can actually shape the world order by affecting the relations between China and the US. Another clear finding is that the emergence of the coronavirus, among many things, has led to the use of digital tools that have become central in conducting commercial diplomacy. Kurbalila (2021) indicated that countries like Switzerland, Singapore, Rwanda, and the Netherlands focus on digital foreign policy strategy and have established the Internet Governance Forum (IGF). Adesina and Summers (2017) confirm the argument that digital and Internet activities can contribute significantly to promoting countries' foreign policy locally and globally.

DIRCO (2020b) also concurs with the arguments presented by indicating that their interaction with stakeholders is aligned to its approved digital strategy. Due to the use of digital tools, like

e-commerce, online payments, and mobile e-commerce, South Africa's trading with Asia and the Middle East has increased from R45 billion to R984 billion in 2020 (DIRCO 2020b).

Conclusion

In response to the research question, one can conclude that the institutionalization and formalization of business forums in stakeholder collaboration can lead to enhanced or effective commercial diplomatic activities. The emergence of Covid-19, as a challenging event, also necessitated intensified utilization of business forums to boost economic growth in South Africa by promoting trade, investments, exports, and imports. The research concurs that coordination among state actors (DTIC and DIRCO) is weak and the roles of officials from these departments need to be clarified. DTIC is seen to be a state actor that has officials with technical expertise, while DIRCO's officials play a political role. The study further shows that there is a need for personnel placed at South Africa missions abroad to be trained or capacitated in relation to commercial diplomacy operations. When it comes to South African government and businesses, the element of mistrust remains a challenge – the study supports the use of business forums to enhance formalized stakeholder collaboration, which will lead to improved commercial diplomacy.

In order for the South African government to be trusted globally, it first needs to be trusted locally. Another finding of Valsamakis (2012) is in line with this study for enhanced commercial diplomacy, and relates to the need to ensure that trade matters are given high priority; and a need for a high central point to prepare for trade negotiations, and have a dedicated forum for business-state consultations. The finding in this research also confirms the argument presented by Sevin and Dinnie (2015), that digital communication technologies should become central for stakeholder collaboration in international relations.

Further research could be considered in relation to how commercial diplomacy can be used to stimulate national economies. In this study, SMMEs and TNCs felt that their success was directly linked to the policies of the state. Therefore, stakeholders in South Africa need to ensure that they have the same platform to approach the government. There is a need for the

assessment of the semblance of business associations that exists in South Africa. The other area of potential further research is to examine the use of a project-based approach in evaluation of commercial diplomacy by state actors.

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