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Leading the African agenda or following the African consensus? South Africa's implementation
of the African agenda in the United Nations Security Council

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It
is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the
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Abstract

Throughout South Africa's post-apartheid history, the country's foreign policy has highlighted its commitment to the African continent. The ANC's "Foreign Policy Perspective in a Democratic South Africa" states that "with fellow Africans we share a vision to transform our continent into an entity that is free, peaceful and vibrant – a continent which is capable, given the opportunity, to make an abiding contribution in all fields of human endeavour – particularly in the sphere of international relations."¹ South Africa has sought to play a driving role in the continent's regeneration, and the African agenda charted a course by which this could be achieved.

By playing such a pivotal role in the propagation of this agenda and the establishment of Africa's regional structures South Africa has promoted the image of itself as a regional leader, a champion of Africa and an emerging middle power. It was as a result of this positioning that South Africa was twice mandated by the AU to take up terms on the UN Security Council and to pursue and promote the African agenda in that influential forum. South Africa has served two terms as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council: from January 2007 to December 2008, and from January 2011 to December 2012. During both of these terms, Pretoria undertook to use the opportunity to promote the African agenda.

This thesis seeks to determine the extent to which South Africa achieved this objective. It looks at how South Africa understood the African agenda, how it attempted to implement it while serving on the Council. The attribution of emerging middle power status to South Africa by its government and by the international community provides a useful framework for understanding these dynamics. South Africa's emphasis on multilateralism, its attempts to 'punch above its weight' and many other aspects of its foreign policy can be understood using this framework.²

The thesis found that despite South Africa's rhetorical commitment to the promotion of the African agenda, the country has not always been successful in implementing it during its terms on the UN Security Council. South Africa attempted to represent the voice of Africa by deferring to the AU's position in most circumstances, and made great efforts to strengthen the AU and promote African solutions to African problems. However, Pretoria prioritised some aspects of the agenda, such as African unity and sovereignty, over others, particularly the promotion of democracy. South Africa also had difficulty balancing its pursuit of the African agenda with its efforts to achieve its other objectives. On occasion this resulted in actions that undermined the African agenda.

¹ ANC, "Foreign Policy Perspective in a Democratic South Africa", p. 5

²Van der Westhuizen, "South Africa's Emergence as a Middle Power", p. 437

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background

Nelson Mandela wrote in 1993, as he outlined the foreign policy intended for the new South Africa, “South Africa cannot escape its African destiny. If we do not devote our energies to this continent, we too could fall victim to the forces that have brought ruin to its various parts”.³ Mandela’s administration was facing the daunting task of constructing a foreign policy to bring South Africa out of the isolation imposed on it during apartheid. Throughout this process policymakers embraced the prospect of the country engaging with the continent in a way that would promote development and growth as opposed to the exploitative relationship South Africa had had with the continent in the past. This desire for inclusion sprang in part from ideological dictates of the pan-Africanism of the 1960s. In part it was also a result of the realisation that the continent’s problems would have repercussions for South Africa, in terms of refugee flows, the potential spread of conflict and resulting impact on investor confidence. Regional integration came to be seen as a solution to development. The promotion of the African agenda was also a strategic interest for South Africa, as it contributed to the country’s image as a regional power and continental leader. Thus a commitment to Africa and Southern Africa in particular became a cornerstone of South African foreign policy during Mandela’s term in office. During this time the concept of an African Renaissance began to gain currency in the foreign affairs establishment, largely driven by Thabo Mbeki, who was Deputy President at the time.

The primary tool for spreading and implementing the ideals of this vision of regional integration was South Africa’s policy of multilateralism, which has been a primary strategy throughout the new South Africa’s history. This approach is consistent with the country’s emphasis on unity and solidarity with the rest of Africa, as multilateral organisations provide a forum in which these ideals can be built. Multilateral relations also provide a means for South Africa to influence the agenda and policies of other African states without appearing to be dictatorial or bullying. The AU and New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) were therefore critical vehicles for cooperation. In the international system as well, South Africa promotes multilateralism as “the best means of maintaining global order, addressing global problems, mitigating the domination and unilateralism of powerful states, and empowering weaker countries”.⁴ South Africa has undertaken to pursue the interests of Africa and the South in the multilateral organisations of which it is a member. South Africa therefore sees organisations such as the United Nations (UN) as ideal forums for promotion of the African agenda.

³ Mandela, “South Africa’s Future Foreign Policy”, p. 87

⁴ Nathan, “Consistencies and Inconsistencies in South Africa’s Foreign Policy”, p. 365

Since 1994, South Africa has made an effort to involve itself in the UN and its various organs and bodies. This is in keeping with its policy of multilateralism and international cooperation. South Africa hopes to contribute to the promotion of the African agenda, of development of the Global South, and reform of the world order by gaining credibility and respect in international forums such as the UN. This is also in keeping with its aspirations for middlepowership and leadership of the African continent.

A term on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) puts South Africa in a better position to be able to strive for these goals, and bring issues to the attention of world leaders, and it is thus a coveted position. South Africa has clinched two UNSC terms. It was first elected onto the Council for the 2007-2008 term with overwhelming support. The country was voted in with a majority of 186 votes from the General Assembly, and many countries, non-government organisations (NGOs) and other onlookers had high hopes that South Africa would have a hugely positive impact. South Africa's moral authority, undertaking to promote democratic values and aspirations for a permanent seat were expected to culminate in an exemplary term.⁵ However, South Africa proved to be a controversial player, opposing resolutions condemning human rights abuses in Myanmar and Zimbabwe, increasing sanctions against Iran and including the issue of climate change on the Security Council agenda.

Despite this South Africa was re-elected, again with a significant majority, to the Council for the 2011-2012 term. Again high expectations accompanied South Africa's term, as the 2011 membership included Brazil, India, Germany and Nigeria as well as South Africa – all countries with ambitions for permanent membership. Gabon was also elected, completing the trio of African representation: South Africa, Nigeria and Gabon. South Africa was therefore accompanied by a number of countries with which it shared special relationships. Its India-Brazil-South Africa group (IBSA) partners were both present, and it strove for consensus with its African counterparts.⁶ Characteristically, South Africa's agenda for this session was ambitious relative to its position in the international system.⁷

2011 brought a number of challenges to the Security Council agenda, and South Africa's actions were again controversial. South Africa's position during the Côte d'Ivoire election dispute was troubled by miscommunication and indecisiveness. Pretoria's initial stance was reported to be pro-Laurent Gbagbo, the incumbent, but South Africa was then forced to align itself with the AU's position, which was in favour of the opposition candidate Alassane Ouattara.⁸ None-the-less South Africa continued to push for a moderated response over more interventionist suggestions, helping to water down the March resolution calling for sanctions and pushing for a negotiated settlement.⁹ Over Libya, South Africa initially backed the UN resolution authorising a

⁵Serrão, "South Africa in the UN Security Council 2011 – 2012", p. 2

⁶Ngwenya, "A Critical Year Ahead for South Africa at the UNSC", p. 1

⁷Serrão, "South Africa in the UN Security Council 2011 – 2012", p. 2

⁸Patel, "A Tough Year for South African Diplomacy", p. 1

⁹Ibid.

no-fly zone and military action to protect civilians, along with Nigeria and Gabon. Shortly afterwards however, South Africa made a policy ‘u-turn’, vocally criticising North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)-led forces for abusing the resolution to effect regime change.¹⁰ In addition, South Africa voiced regret that the NATO response had largely ignored AU efforts to resolve the crisis, which had been led by Jacob Zuma and had been working in pursuit of a negotiated settlement.¹¹

South Africa’s second term on the Council has been characterised by apparently inconsistent and indecisive behaviour and a failure to build African consensus. Although South Africa’s foreign policy claims to be guided by a promotion of human rights and the African agenda, its behaviour has received criticism with regard to these issues. In addition, the country’s performance during both terms caused many to wonder whether South Africa could be said to be speaking for Africa when Africa was struggling so much to form a consensus on what it wanted said. It seemed that ‘acting in Africa’s interests’ was an impractical goal when Africa’s nations were defining their interests so differently. It is these issues that this thesis intends to explore by assessing the extent to which South Africa has acted on its commitment to the African agenda while on the Security Council.

1.2. Research Questions

South Africa hoped to use its first term as a non-permanent member of the Council to promote the African agenda. Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane said in 2010, “bearing in mind that a substantial focus of UNSC activities and agenda items are on the African Continent, South Africa will continue to champion and advance the African Agenda and collaborate with other African member states (Gabon and Nigeria) currently serving on the UNSC in pursuing issues of mutual benefit.”¹² This chapter will assess whether South Africa was successful in implementing that goal by asking the following questions:

- Did South Africa put issues of African conflict resolution on the UNSC agenda?
- Did South Africa coordinate its voting with other African countries on the Council and with the African Union?
- Did South Africa’s strategy while on the Council promote peace and security in Africa?

1.3. Theoretical Framework: Middlepowerism

The concept of middlepowerism will be useful to this discussion as it is one that is often applied to South Africa, and thus may help to explain the country’s foreign policy behaviour. Middle

¹⁰Fabricius, “SA Risks Red Face in AU Commission Bid”, p. 1

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Nkoana-Mashabane, “South Africa’s Second Term as a Non-Permanent Member of the UN Security Council”.

powers are those countries that are neither great nor small in terms of power, capacity and influence, and that promote cohesion and stability in the international system. The middle power country was conceived as a moderate power which had ambition not for hegemony or dominance but for independence from more powerful neighbours, and for a stable and predictable world order.¹³ Cox notes that “all middle powers display foreign policy behaviour that stabilises and legitimises the global order, typically through multilateral and cooperative initiatives”.¹⁴ Mid-range economic and military capacity is a necessary condition to play the role, as is a degree of autonomy from major powers, a commitment to orderliness and security, and a will to take on the responsibility. Cox notes that the middle power role has come to be associated with the development of international organisation.¹⁵ Importantly, middlepowering is not undertaken as an act of altruism. Rather, Cox explains that it stems from an “awareness that the primary national interest¹⁶ of the middle power lay in an orderly and predictable world environment that embodied some limits to the ambition and the reach of dominant powers”.¹⁷

Traditionally, countries like Australia, Canada, Norway and Sweden were labelled as middle powers. Although geographically disparate, these countries had much in common in that they were all stable, first-world countries with democratic norms and values. Increasingly, however, countries like Argentina, Brazil, South Africa and India have been included in the middle power bracket, as their behaviour also shows a desire to promote the global status quo, and to achieve compromises and agreement through the use of existing multilateral institutions. These “emerging” middle powers, however, have little else in common with the traditional ones, in terms of their capacity, influence, levels of development and their behaviour. Several academics became concerned that the concept of a middle power had become too broad, making it vague and ineffective. Authors such as Maxi Schoeman and Eduard Jordaan have made a significant contribution to the understanding of middle powers by distinguishing between the traditional understanding of middle powers and the newer term ‘emerging middle power’.¹⁸

Jordaan identifies both constitutive and behavioural differences between emerging and traditional middle powers.¹⁹ He summarises:

¹³Cox, “Middlepowermanship, Japan, and Future World Order”, p. 826

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶The concept of national interest is a contested one. It is used, particularly by political realists, to indicate what is best for the nation in its relations with other states. The realist use of the term tends to focus on security concerns, though it may also refer to economic, diplomatic or cultural goals and ambitions. The phrase is controversial because of the lack of any agreed methodology for establishing what the best interests of the nation are. In the absence of this, the concept is open to interpretation, or manipulation, by policymakers. In addition, the idea of one unitary national interest does not take into account the wide variety of actors within a state, and their various ambitions and objectives.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Schoeman, “South Africa as an Emerging Middle Power”, p. 1

¹⁹Jordaan, “The Concept of a Middle Power in International Relations”, p. 165

Constitutively, traditional middle powers are wealthy, stable, egalitarian, social democratic and not regionally influential. Behaviourally, they exhibit a weak and ambivalent regional orientation, constructing identities distinct from powerful states in their regions and offer appeasing concessions to pressures for global reform. Emerging middle powers by contrast are semi-peripheral, materially inegalitarian and recently democratised states that demonstrate much regional influence and self-association. Behaviourally, they opt for reformist and not radical global change, exhibit a strong regional orientation favouring regional integration but seek also to construct identities distinct from those of the weak states in their region.²⁰

It is this relationship with the region that Schoeman focuses on in differentiating the various concepts. Traditional middle powers work within the broader international system, operating on a world scale. Cox noted that middle powers have no “special place in regional blocs,” and Wight has distinguished between regional powers and middle powers.²¹ Emerging middle powers, however, tend to be regionally orientated. Schoeman emphasises the distinction between emerging powers as middle powers in the international arena, and emerging powers as regional powers. As Schoeman points out, while traditional middle powers operated in the broader international system with no geographical ties, emerging middle powers differ from this in that the emphasis is on regional leadership. Emerging middle powers are powerhouses in their own regions, economically, politically and militarily. But not only are they constitutively dominant regional powers, their behaviour is orientated to their regions as well – instead of acting on a ‘world scale’ their actions are primarily orientated towards a specific geographical space. Thus Schoeman argues that emerging middle powers exhibit a dual role.

On the one hand, due either to their economic size, military power or geopolitical importance, the role of regional leaders seems to be specific, if not special, and they are supported by the major powers. On the other hand, because moral standing may be a defining characteristic of their power status, as in the case of India and South Africa, emerging powers would also seem, in turn, to strive for broader roles in the global system.²²

Emerging middle powers are expected to be peace makers in their region, to promote rules and norms, and to exert influence and pressure on their neighbours.²³ Not having the power to enforce their own agendas, they work collaboratively to build consensus around certain issues and gain influence.²⁴ Middle powers therefore take on the role of supporting and promoting the rules and norms of the global system, and strengthening global organisation. This role created the

²⁰ Jordaan, “The Concept of a Middle Power in International Relations”, p.165

²¹ Wight, *Power Politics*, p. 63

²² Schoeman, “South Africa as an Emerging Middle Power”, p. 5

²³ Ibid. p. 3

²⁴ Ibid. p. 1

expectation of middle powers exerting a type of moral influence, which they have traditionally accepted and lived up to.²⁵

Because the emerging middle powers are generally the powerhouses of their regions, the middle power role of regulator and promoter of norms is related specifically to their region. Schoeman explains:

Emerging middle powers seem to play or are expected to play the role of regional peacemakers and police; they have the responsibility for keeping their backyard neat and orderly with a measure of support from the big powers. These powers, at the regional level, seem to be expected to support and promote acceptable rules and norms in terms of which international politics and relations are conducted.²⁶

The moral expectations of traditional middle power are also projected onto emerging middle powers, which are expected to encourage certain values amongst the countries in their realm of influence. Schoeman notes that “sometimes they are called upon to exert an influence in specific cases where big power influence does not seem to be sufficient to find solutions to problems” as was the case when Nelson Mandela was asked to intervene in the Lockerbie crisis.²⁷

A number of authors²⁸ have labelled South Africa an “emerging middle power”, as it displays typical middle power behaviours. South Africa has performed many of the activities associated with middle powers since Mandela’s presidency began. This was initially focused on the ‘peace-brokering’ initiatives that South Africa undertook during this time, which were largely driven by the Mandela persona and South Africa’s reputation for peaceful transition.²⁹ However, it has extended beyond that as well, taking various forms though most notably mediating and peacekeeping. This is in part related to South Africa’s geopolitical position – while semiperipheral in the world system, regionally South Africa’s economy dwarfs that of its neighbours.

South Africa’s early diplomatic activity in the region made it clear that the country saw itself as a conciliator or mediator. There are numerous examples of this, under Mandela’s leadership South Africa intervened to prop up democracy in Lesotho, it employed ‘quiet diplomacy’ to ensure Zambia’s 1996 election would be free and fair, and attempted to mediate between Mobutu Sese Seko and Laurent Kabila in what was then Zaire.³⁰ Mbeki’s African Renaissance is the clearest

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Schoeman, “South Africa as an Emerging Middle Power”, p. 1

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Schoeman, “South Africa as an Emerging Middle Power”; Flandes, “Emerging Middle Powers' Soft Balancing Strategy: State and Perspectives of the IBSA Dialogue Forum”; Jordaan, “The concept of a middle power in international relations: distinguishing between emerging and traditional middle powers”; Van der Westhuizen, “South Africa’s Emergence as a Middle Power,”

²⁹ Van der Westhuizen, “South Africa’s Emergence as a Middle Power”, p. 435

³⁰ Shillinger, *Africa’s Peacemaker? Lessons from South Africa Conflict Mediation*, p. 10

expression of South Africa's leadership role in the region.³¹ The country's strategic geo-political importance was demonstrated by its central contributions to enterprises like the NEPAD and the African Union (AU). Mbeki has been involved in mediations in Zimbabwe, the DRC, Sudan, and Côte d'Ivoire.

Beyond the continent, South Africa has also made strides to increase its status globally, and has sought to earn a reputation as a representative of the Global South. For example, South Africa was prominent in the Doha Round of the World Trade Organization (WTO). The country has engaged in such issues as the Israel-Palestine peace process, the conflict in Northern Ireland, and the East Timor question.³² Alfred Nzo commented while Foreign Minister that South Africa's role in the extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, "dispels any doubt of the appreciation from all quarters of South Africa's bridge-building role".³³ Throughout its history as a democracy, South Africa has emphasised "the promotion of international peace and security and therefore highly values participation in international organisations, particularly those concerned with arms control and disarmament".³⁴ In serving on the UNSC South Africa perpetuates this image.

The attribution of middle power status to South Africa by its government and by the international community provides a useful framework for explaining its foreign policy behaviour. Its emphasis on multilateralism, its attempts to punch above its weight and many other aspects of its foreign policy can be understood using this framework.³⁵ Thus middlepowership will form the theoretical basis of this thesis, and will be applied to South Africa's actions at the UN Security Council to assist in understanding the country's motivations and the extent of their commitment to Africa. The thesis will focus on the concept of the *emerging* middle power, as this is of particular significance for South Africa because its middlepowership is distinctly regional, and its relationship with Africa is crucial to the legitimacy of its leadership. This dynamic is therefore crucial to the understanding of the African agenda.

1.4 Methodology

This thesis will be a qualitative assessment of South Africa's foreign policy behaviour at the UNSC. It will make use of secondary material such as academic writing on the topics of South Africa at the UN, South African foreign policy, and theory on the topic of multilateralism. An array of primary sources will also be used. This will include government publications and policies. I will also look at speeches from relevant persons in the South African government and from officials at South Africa's Permanent Mission to the UN. Sources from the United Nations such as voting records, press releases, speeches and resolutions will also be examined.

³¹ Schoeman, "South Africa as an Emerging Middle Power", p. 5

³² Van der Westhuizen, "South Africa's Emergence as a Middle Power", p. 435

³³ Nzo, quoted in Van der Westhuizen, "South Africa's Emergence as a Middle Power", p. 437

³⁴ Schoeman, "South Africa as an Emerging Middle Power", p. 7

³⁵ Van der Westhuizen, "South Africa's Emergence as a Middle Power", p. 437

It is difficult to measure the extent to which South Africa has delivered on its rhetorical commitment to the African continent as it is not easily quantifiable. In attempting to measure this I have looked at South Africa's voting record at the UNSC, focusing on how South Africa voted on issues of relevance to Africa, how often there was consensus between South Africa and the other African nations on the Council, and whether South Africa's vote was in line with general African opinion. I will also look at the South African delegation's justifications and explanations of its vote. Aside from voting, other actions at the Council will be assessed, such as issues that South Africa has brought to the agenda, initiatives undertaken while on the Council, conferences held, and so on.

1.5. Significance

Much has been written about South Africa's foreign policy, its preference for multilateralism and the apparent contradictions in its behaviour. However, there is little literature focusing specifically on South Africa in the United Nations or in the UN Security Council.³⁶ This thesis provides an analysis of South Africa's participation in the United Nations Security Council and its attempts to promote the African agenda. In doing so it identifies shortcomings and contradictions within South Africa's behaviour and attempts to evaluate South Africa's efforts to promote itself as a middle power and as a regional leader, and the policy repercussions of this image. This is highly relevant in light of South Africa's recent completion of its second term on the Council, and its continued efforts to present itself as a middle power. It is important for South Africa's performance to be evaluated so as to gain greater insight into its foreign policy priorities.

As South Africa has so recently finished its second term in the Council, there is not yet a wealth of writing on the country's performance. This thesis adds to that important gap in the literature. In addition, much of the writing on South Africa's performance in the Council has focused on its human rights agenda, with less emphasis on its African agenda. It is important to explore this agenda, not only because it has far-reaching implications for the continent, but also because it is so strongly emphasised in the rhetoric of the foreign policy establishment. The extent to which South Africa is living up to its commitments to Africa in the Security Council is an important topic for study, particularly in light of South Africa's claims as a leader of the African continent and its aspirations for a permanent UNSC seat.

³⁶ Cornelissen, "Displaced Multilateralism? South Africa's participation at the United Nations"; Serrão, "South Africa in the UN Security Council 2011 – 2012"; Bowland, "Coming into its own: an analysis of South Africa's voting patterns and the achievement of its foreign policy goals in the UNSC;" Kornegay, "South Africa's Second Tenure in the UN Security Council: A Discussion Paper;" Masters, Lesley, *South Africa in the UN Security Council 2011 – 2012: A Report on the Government-Civil Society Strategy Dialogue*.

1.6. Limitations

The time frame of analysis is limited to September 2007 to August 2008 – the duration of South Africa’s first term on the UNSC; and in its second term from September 2011 to February 2012. This is only the first half of the 2011 – 2012 term but time constraints prevent me from analysing the second half. The length of this thesis did not allow for an in-depth discussion of every African case that came before the Security Council during South Africa’s terms. In order to narrow down the cases used, the thesis has delved into only those which proved contentious during voting or, in other words, only those which did not receive unanimous votes.

Due to the lack of availability of South African officials at the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO), formal interviews could not be conducted. However, speeches, televised interviews and transcribed interviews were used to supplement this as far as possible.

There is little literature on South Africa’s role in the UN,³⁷ and as South Africa has only recently finished its 2011 – 2012 term, writing is yet to emerge on the topic. This proved to be a limitation while researching this thesis, but primary sources were used as far as possible to make up for this.

1.7. Thesis Outline

Chapter two will define the African agenda and discuss its limitations and origins as a concept. It will locate the emergence of the African agenda within South Africa’s policy towards the continent since 1994 and discuss some of the tensions that the agenda encapsulates and creates.

Chapter three and four will discuss South Africa’s role at the United Nations Security Council. They begin by examining South Africa’s objectives within the Council. Chapters three and four will then look specifically at South Africa’s actions in the Council during its 2007 – 2008 and 2011 - 2012 terms respectively. Firstly they will examine the initiatives that South Africa has brought to the agenda, for example its continued promotion of debate on cooperation between the UN and regional bodies. Secondly they will examine South Africa’s voting record, its reaction to the tabling of controversial resolutions, its explanation of its votes and its justification of controversial decisions.³⁸ This will be done in chapter three for its 2007-2008 term and in chapter four for the first half of its 2011-2012 term.

The final chapter will reflect on the findings in chapters three and four, make conclusions and analysis, and highlight potential areas for further research.

³⁷ Serrão, “South Africa in the UN Security Council 2011 – 2012”, p. 2

³⁸ For the purposes of this thesis, resolutions will be considered “controversial” if more than one country voted against the resolution or abstained from voting.

Chapter Two: The African Agenda

2.1. Introduction

From the very beginning of the new South Africa's foreign policy it was acknowledged that South Africa could not develop without Africa, or as Mandela put it, "South Africa cannot escape its African destiny".³⁹ It was made clear that the country's prospects were tied to the continent and in particular to Southern Africa. The African National Congress (ANC) acknowledged its "special relationship" with the peoples of Southern Africa, recognising that apartheid and its destabilisation policies had devastating effects on South Africa's neighbours.⁴⁰

The vision of the African agenda was to map new strategies for the improvement of Africa's economy, governance and development. A central objective of the agenda was to position South Africa as a central figure in shaping Africa's development agenda. Pretoria played essential roles in the design of the AU and development of NEPAD, as well as many other important bodies in Africa's regional architecture. The African agenda positions South Africa as a regional power, a pivotal state in Africa and an important player in the Global South. The miracle of South Africa's transition and its commitment to peace, human rights and democracy have given the country greater clout and status than its size and economy dictate, allowing it to punch above its weight in global affairs. The African Renaissance, with its "Pan-Africanist pedigree", informs the African agenda and South Africa's ambitious vision for the continent.⁴¹

Commitment to the African continent was therefore identified as one of the "four pillars" of foreign policy which were conceived while the ANC was still a liberation movement, before it had even become a part of the Government of National Unity (GNU). These pillars remain to this day as the cornerstones of South African foreign policy:

- a commitment to multilateralism;
- deepening South-South cooperation;
- promotion of democracy and good governance;
- and a commitment to the African continent

A number of beliefs and principles were identified which were to guide and inform the development of foreign policy. These included:

- A belief in, and preoccupation with, Human Rights which extends beyond the political, embracing the economic, social and environmental;

³⁹ Mandela, "South Africa's Future Foreign Policy", p. 87

⁴⁰ ANC, "Foreign Policy Perspectives in a Democratic South Africa", p.4

⁴¹ Landsberg and Kondlo, "South Africa and the African agenda", p. 1

- A belief that just and lasting solutions to the problems of human kind can only come through the promotion of Democracy, worldwide;
- A belief that Justice and International Law should guide the relations between nations;
- A belief that international peace is the goal to which all nations should strive. Where this breaks down, internationally- agreed peaceful mechanisms to solve conflicts should be resorted to;
- A belief that our foreign policy should reflect the interests of the continent of Africa;
- A belief that South Africa's economic development depends on growing regional and international economic cooperation in an independent world;
- A belief that our foreign relations must mirror our deep commitment to the consolidation of a democratic South Africa.⁴²

These beliefs and principles remained largely unchanged over the next 18 years, despite three changes in administration.

This chapter will focus on the final pillar of South African foreign policy – the commitment to the African continent. It will look at how the concept of the African agenda has emerged out of this commitment, how it can be defined and what its various objectives are. It will also discuss some of the tensions that the concept encapsulates.

2.2. What is the African agenda?

The upliftment and development of the African continent has undoubtedly been one of, if not the, most important goal of South African foreign policy since the ANC came to power in 1994. It was one of the “four pillars” of foreign policy outlined by Mandela in 1993, and remains a key priority under Zuma’s administration. However, it was under Mbeki that this expanded and flourished, with the articulation of an African Renaissance. It was during this time that the term “African agenda” began to appear in the discourse of state officials and government leaders.⁴³

Policy documents refer to the African agenda as being “based on the understanding that socio-economic development cannot take place without political peace and security”.⁴⁴ In its strategic plan of 2005-2008, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) listed the goals of the African agenda as including:

- Strengthening the African Union and its structures

⁴² ANC, “Foreign Policy Perspectives in a Democratic South Africa”, p.4

⁴³ Rapoo, “Perspectives and Hidden Ambiguities in the ‘African Agenda’”, p. 1

⁴⁴ ANC, “Foreign Policy Perspective in a New South Africa”, p. 4

- Facilitating South Africa's participation in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Southern African Customs Union (SACU)
- Promoting the implementation of NEPAD
- Promoting the peaceful resolution of conflicts and encouraging post-conflict reconstruction and development
- Successfully implementing ongoing peace processes
- Enhancing and strengthening democracy regionally and continentally
- Strengthening bilateral relations
- Promoting South-South cooperation through the India-Brazil-South Africa Partnership, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the G77 South Summit and promoting Asia-Africa cooperation, and
- Promoting North-South co-operation in support of the African agenda through the G8, the Commission for Africa, the Africa Partnership Forum, the UNO, the European Union (EU), the OECD, the WTO, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank and the World Economic Forum⁴⁵

Rapoo defines the African agenda as “integrated socioeconomic, political, security and other strategies to address Africa’s deep-seated and long standing developmental and governance challenges. Included in this is a strong desire to put in place institutions and processes for the peaceful resolution of conflicts around the continent, thus creating conditions for sustainable peace and security”.⁴⁶ This is suggested by the three goals listed above which emphasise the multilateral organisations as mechanisms for development and conflict resolution: strengthening the AU and its structures; facilitating South Africa’s participation in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Southern African Customs Union (SACU); and promoting the implementation of NEPAD.

2.2.1. Regionalism

Mbeki’s administration viewed multilateralism as the primary means through which his vision of the African Renaissance and South Africa’s emergence as an important player on the global stage could be enacted. The formation of multilateral organisations in Africa became the hallmarks of his administration. Pretoria has been a prominent actor in the AU and played a central part in its rebirth when it replaced the Organisation for African Unity in 2002. Mbeki and the South African delegation strongly influenced the new AU’s orientation and aims, and have been strong supporters of continental cooperation. African Renaissance philosophy has therefore thoroughly permeated these organisations. Mbeki has been a driving force behind NEPAD, which stresses political, social and cultural factors as prerequisites for development. The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) was designed to monitor and promote democracy and good

⁴⁵ DFA, *Strategic Plan: 2005 – 2008*, p. 72

⁴⁶ Rapoo, “Perspectives and Hidden Ambiguities in the ‘African Agenda’”, p. 2

governance, and was also credited as the brain-child of Mbeki.⁴⁷ It was envisaged that together these would contribute to a new era of democratic stability and a better life for all Africans. SADC, the AU and NEPAD were considered the “entry points” for achieving South Africa’s goals.⁴⁸

As a key feature of South Africa’s post-apartheid foreign policy, multilateralism has allowed South Africa to influence the priorities and policies of fellow African states, attempt to forge consensus amongst them, and enhance cooperation, all without appearing to dominate or dictate policy. Regionalism was therefore both a tool and an objective of the African agenda, and was embodied in the AU, SADC, NEPAD, and the APRM. By playing a central role in the development of these regional organisations, South Africa positioned itself as a critical player in shaping the development agenda of the continent.

2.2.2. *Conflict Resolution*

South Africa has also positioned itself as a key player in the realm of conflict resolution. Two of the African agenda goals speak to this: promoting the peaceful resolution of conflicts and encouraging post-conflict reconstruction and development; and successfully implementing ongoing peace processes. Pretoria prefers the use of peaceful negotiation and mediation to resolve conflict, and has sought to make a name for itself as a renowned mediator or honest broker. “As early as 1994, President Mandela sought to broker ‘inclusive’ peace deals in Angola, stave off a coup de tat in Lesotho, and prevent a civil war in the DRC through peace diplomacy.”⁴⁹ In Burundi South Africa made contributions to the Arusha Process and made great efforts to maintain the ceasefire, including providing military training for the protection of the interim government. In 1999 Mbeki famously used ‘quiet diplomacy’ to encourage Mugabe towards negotiations during the Zimbabwe crisis. He also played a critical role in the Sudan Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) peace process and in negotiations to end the civil war in Liberia.⁵⁰

2.2.3 *Democracy*

The agenda aims to “enhance democracy regionally and continentally”. A major theme running through this agenda is the promotion of ‘democratic peace’ and the promotion of democracy was central to foreign policy, which held that enduring solutions to Africa’s problems could only be achieved under the leadership of democratic governments. Mandela advocated that “we should cease to treat tyranny, instability and poverty anywhere on the globe as peripheral to our interests and to our future”.⁵¹ Democratic peace theory formed the basis for much of the South African

⁴⁷ Adebajo, Adedeji and Landsberg, *South Africa in Africa: The Post-Apartheid Era*, p. 27

⁴⁸ DFA, *Strategic Plan 2006 – 2009*, p. 9

⁴⁹ Landsberg and Kondlo, “South Africa and the African agenda”, p. 9

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Adebajo, Adedeji and Landsberg, “South Africa in Africa: The Post-Apartheid Era”, p. 25

thinking at the time, and both Mandela and Mbeki shared the belief that the key to peace and stability on the continent was healthy democracies. Mbeki has condemned one-party rule and personal dictatorships, urged Africans to rebel against tyranny, and advocated for governments to rule legitimately by the will of the people.⁵²

South Africa's experience of apartheid strongly influenced the new government's determination to promote human rights and democracy, both domestically and internationally. Mandela had himself written an article in *Foreign Policy* magazine in 1993 which detailed South Africa's future foreign policy. He wrote that "human rights will be the light that guides our foreign affairs", that "issues of human rights are central to international relations" and that South Africa would be "at the forefront of global efforts to promote and foster democratic systems of government".⁵³

This commitment was enshrined in the Constitution, which stated that human rights constitute one of the values upon which the new South Africa is founded and are an important cornerstone of its democracy.⁵⁴ The ANC policy perspective document also stated that "the rise of a non-racial, non-sexist democratic South Africa from the ashes of apartheid will not terminate our quest for human rights". In this document a commitment is made to let the country's relations with other countries be guided by human rights principles. The document states, "in this we shall not be selective nor, indeed, be afraid to raise human rights violations with countries where our own and other interests might be negatively affected. South Africa's experience, we believe, shows how damaging policy can be when issues of principle are sacrificed to economic and political expediency".⁵⁵

2.2.4. Self-Reliance and the African Renaissance

The African agenda has been informed by the ideas of self-reliance that are most strongly articulated in the African Renaissance. Mbeki first used the term 'African Renaissance' when addressing a group of business leaders in April 1997. Since then the concept has filtered into the popular consciousness with the active support of the President's Office. Mbeki's 1996 "I am an African" speech, delivered on the occasion of the adoption of the new Constitution expounded a vision of common heritage amongst the people of Africa. He said, "my mind and my knowledge of myself is formed by the victories that are the jewels in our African crown, the victories we earned from Isandhlwana to Khartoum, as Ethiopians and as the Ashanti of Ghana, as the Berbers of the desert... being part of all these people, and in the knowledge that none dare contest that assertion, I shall claim that - I am an African." This idea underpinned the concept of the African Renaissance, which was portrayed as a communal, fraternal initiative.

⁵² Adebajo, Adedeji and Landsberg, "South Africa in Africa: The Post-Apartheid Era", p. 26

⁵³ Mandela, "South Africa's Future Foreign Policy", p. 87

⁵⁴ See sections 1 and 7 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996.

⁵⁵ ANC, "Foreign Policy Perspective in a Democratic South Africa", p. 5

The African Renaissance refers to “a wide range of measures to make democratic political systems, peace and security, and accelerated economic growth the basis of development in Africa”.⁵⁶ The ANC’s “Developing Strategic Perspectives on South African Foreign Policy” discussion document of 1997, had identified the following as the key element of the “African Renaissance”:

- The recovery of the African continent as a whole
- The establishment of political democracy on the continent
- The need to break neo-colonial relations between Africa and the world’s economic power
- The mobilization of the people of Africa to take their destiny into their hands thus preventing the continent [from] being seen as a place for the attainment of the geo-political and strategic interests of the world’s most powerful countries; and
- The need for fast development of people-driven and people-centered economic growth and development aimed at meeting the basic needs of the people.

The emphasis of the African Renaissance was therefore independence from ‘neo-colonialism’ and the manipulation of outside powers. The ideology of the African Renaissance espouses certain values such as self-respect and autonomy as central to fortifying African identities; constructing African institutions; and formulating African solutions to African problems.⁵⁷ The core focus of Mbeki’s renaissance was “a deep concern with the position of the continent within a rapidly globalising world economy”.⁵⁸ This emphasis on self-reliance was crucial to the African agenda, and to the way it was implemented in the UN Security Council.

2.3. Tensions within the African agenda

While widely used in policy documents and speeches, the concept of the African agenda is not clearly defined. Rapoo has commented on a “lack of precision”⁵⁹, which could render the concept unhelpful. Used broadly to apply to almost all policy toward Africa, the concept encompasses a number of different foreign policy paradigms. This results in several tensions. For example, South Africa’s role as leader of the African agenda is a source of controversy within the continent, and reception of the agenda is mixed. Some of the ideals that the agenda promotes are not necessarily widely accepted on the continent. These problems present challenges for South Africa’s implementation of the agenda.

⁵⁶ Landsberg, “South Africa and the Making of the African Union and NEPAD: Mbeki’s ‘Progressive African Agenda’”, p. 195

⁵⁷ Ndinga-Muvumba and Mottiar, “HIV/AIDS and the African Renaissance: South Africa’s Achilles Heel?” p. 188

⁵⁸ Ajulu, “Thabo Mbeki’s African Renaissance in a Globalising World Economy: The Struggle for the Soul of the Continent”, p. 27

⁵⁹ Rapoo, “Perspectives and Hidden Ambiguities in the ‘African Agenda’”, p. 2

2.3.1. Defining South Africa's Role in Africa

The key paradox within the African agenda relates to South Africa's role. The discourse of the agenda spoke to the dominant paradigm of the time which was an Africa-centred perspective.⁶⁰ This paints South Africa as a fellow collaborator amongst equal African states, all working towards a common, collaborative vision around which there is consensus. At the same time though, the African agenda is informed by South Africa's desire to position itself as a crucial player on the continent. By being the driving force behind the agenda Pretoria takes on a leadership role and positions itself as a continental leader. This, combined with South Africa's economic, political and military dominance on the continent brings up questions of whether the concept of the African agenda merely serves to disguise South Africa's efforts to pursue its own foreign policy goals and economic interest.

Some have questioned whether the African Renaissance is truly Pan-Africanist. Or, as Chris Landsberg and François Kornegay ask, "Is the renaissance a Pax Pretoriana thinly disguised as a Pax Africana? Or is it genuine Pax Africana?"⁶¹ This is reflective of a general suspicion throughout the continent of South Africa's ambitions for continental hegemony and whether Mbeki's initiative for Africa was indeed an articulation of African solutions to African problems or merely an attempt to disguise the government's efforts to pursue its own interests on the continent.

Economically, South Africa is obviously a dominant force in the region. The country contributes about a third of Africa's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and increasingly has a hand in the economies of other African states. Landsberg and Kondlo give an account of South Africa's dominance:

Trade with the rest of Africa jumped 328% between 1993 and 2003. For example, of South Africa's R 20.3 billion trade with the member states of SADC in 1999, R 17.7 billion was exports to the region. This is an imbalance of almost 7:1. Total trade with Africa in 2001, excluding the Southern African Customs Union, amounted to \$856 million in imports and \$3.7 billion in exports, an imbalance of nearly 5:1.⁶²

South Africa is also dominant in other areas. South Africa's military, though downsized after 1994, is still one of the largest and best trained in Africa, and has air and naval capacity which extends its military power far beyond its borders. Culturally and politically, South Africa's

⁶⁰ Rapoo, "Perspectives and Hidden Ambiguities in the 'African Agenda'", p. 2

⁶¹ Landsberg and Kornegay, "The African Renaissance : A Quest for Pax Africana and Pan-Africanism", p. 1

⁶² Landsberg and Kondlo, "South Africa and the African agenda", p. 9

experience of transition, and the domestic and international charisma of Nelson Mandela, set it apart as an example of democratisation and reconciliation.⁶³

Many view the expansion of South Africa's private sector into Africa, and its displacement of local industry, as exploitative. Alden and Soko summarise the disgruntlement with South Africa's private sector with the following question: "Is South Africa, the dominant economic force on the African continent, a benevolent hegemon providing public goods to a region bereft of economic prosperity, or is it an exploitative power actively undermining the economies of its neighbours in the service of national and international capital?"⁶⁴ While they argue for a more nuanced view than this dichotomy presents, they point out that it nonetheless reflects fairly accurately the "deepening division" between how South Africa's role in Africa is viewed amongst policy-makers, academics and African citizens. Accordingly, the African Renaissance and its neoliberal institutions are often seen as vehicles for the promotion of South Africa's business interests.

This is not only an economic dynamic but also an ideological one. Alden and Soko comment that South Africa's "hegemonic aspirations in the sense of seeking out a position of 'structural power' on the continent are the most obvious in its ideological promotion of the African Renaissance and NEPAD".⁶⁵ The use of African Renaissance structures to promote South African norms is a clear indication of South Africa's middle power ambitions.

Rapoo concurs that the African agenda amounts to an "uncomfortable and self-effacing compromise" by which South Africa attempts to play a collegial role with its African counterparts, while at the same time allowing for the country's natural pursuit of its own interests.⁶⁶ South Africa's foreign policy establishment needs to formulate a comprehensive and cohesive approach to Africa which allays the fears of the country's neighbours and allies without compromising its ability to pursue its own interests. In the absence of such a policy, the African agenda is used to paint over the cracks in South Africa's approaches to the continent.

In an attempt to address these concerns South Africa has been careful to downplay its regional dominance, and to emphasise instead its commitment to multilateralism and collaboration. Closer regional cooperation and economic integration was posited as beneficial to the region as a whole. South Africa made it clear that this integration should be conducted on an equal and fair basis as a collective endeavour. Integration was not to be imposed by forces within or outside of the region, but to arise out of mutual cooperation. The ANC was at pains to emphasise that South Africa had no intentions to be an exploitative hegemon, stating "it should resist all pressure to become the regional power at the expense of the rest of the sub-continent; instead, it should seek to become part of a movement to create a new form of economic interaction in Southern Africa

⁶³ Schraeder, "South Africa's Foreign Policy: from International Pariah to Leader of the African Renaissance", p. 230

⁶⁴ Alden and Soko, "South Africa's economic relations with Africa: hegemony and its discontents", p. 368

⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 383

⁶⁶ Rapoo, "Perspectives and Hidden Ambiguities in the 'African Agenda'", p. 2

based on principles of mutual benefit and interdependence.”⁶⁷ Integration was not to be a self-interested vehicle for South African interests, but should instead be balanced and mutually beneficial. South African trade should not undermine industrial development or existing trade between other countries of the region.⁶⁸

South Africa’s continental dominance has caused much speculation over what its role on the continent is and what it should be. The country has been expected to play numerous roles by the international community and its fellow African states. “These roles emerge from the expectations that other states have of South Africa, as well as from South Africa’s own conception of its role and how it has acted to appropriate a role, particularly in Africa”.⁶⁹

Role expectations from fellow African countries as well as the international community as a whole have had a profound impact on South African foreign policy. South Africa has been characterised by the literature as a “regional power”, “middle power”, and a “pivotal state”.⁷⁰ A strong expectation was expressed from Africa that South Africa would utilise its special status to promote the common African foreign policy goals. From the other side of the world, pressure was also mounted on South Africa from the West, who hoped that the country could be an example of successful political and economic liberalism and promote democracy on the continent.

There is broad consensus that South Africa holds a particularly special significance in Africa, though debate abounds on whether this amounts to hegemony, emerging middle power, or a ‘pivotal state’. A hegemon is “a global or regional leader in military, political, economic and often cultural affairs”, while a pivotal state is one that is important enough to the region that its economic progress and stability is crucial to the development and security of the entire region.⁷¹ Habib argues that the key difference is that while the concept of a pivotal state is merely descriptive, the concept of a hegemon implicitly involves leadership, so that “it goes beyond mere description to emphasize the role of agency.”⁷²

South Africa has been branded an “emerging middle power” due to its enactment of behaviour characteristic of this group of states. Its commitment to multilateralism and participation in international forums is an example of this, as Pretoria places a high value on the advancement of peace and security through these organisations.⁷³ South Africa’s strategic geo-political importance is indicated by its contributions to initiatives such as NEPAD and the AU.⁷⁴ There

⁶⁷ ANC, “Foreign Policy Perspective in a Democratic South Africa”, p. 5

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Schoeman, “South Africa in Africa: Behemoth, Hegemon, Partner, or ‘Just Another Kid on the Block?’” p. 92

⁷⁰ Ibid. p. 93

⁷¹ Habib, “Hegemon or Pivot?” p. 3

⁷² Habib, “Hegemon or Pivot?” p. 3

⁷³ Schoeman, “South Africa as an Emerging Middle Power”, p. 1

⁷⁴ Ibid.

are clear signs that South Africa harbours ambitions for continental leadership. According to the ANC Strategy and Tactics document: “In these efforts [towards Mbeki’s African Renaissance], we should not overestimate ourselves as a small middle-income country. Neither should we underestimate the relative influence we enjoy deriving from our democratic project, the strategic location of our region and the resources and potential it commands”.⁷⁵

South Africa’s interest in being on the Security Council is a continuation of these attempts to present itself as a regional leader. While on the Council, South Africa’s attempts to advance the interests of the developing world, and particularly of Africa, can be seen as a contribution towards its image as spokespersons of the Global South. South Africa’s terms on the Security Council can therefore be seen as a chance for it to prove itself as a middle power or emerging hegemon worthy of representing the continent on the global stage.

2.3.2 Contradictions

Another tension within the African agenda is that it encapsulates a broad set of ideals, not all of which have wide currency in Africa, and some of which are found to be, in practice, contradictory. Schraeder identifies two types of foreign policy concerns embodied in the concept of the African Renaissance. There are a number that he calls “classic” African foreign policy concerns. These include the promotion of regional integration and development, support for nuclear non-proliferation, a strong desire to protect the juridical rights of territorial integrity and state sovereignty, and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Newer themes are also the more contentious ones. Liberal economic policies have also spread, and were a main feature of Mbeki’s administration. Democratic values and respect for human rights have gained currency on the continent, but generally take second place to the principle of sovereignty.⁷⁶ These two groups of concerns are not always complimentary and thus conflict arises.

The clearest example of these tensions became clear when South Africa clashed with Nigeria in 1995/1996. General Sani Abacha of Nigeria executed Ken Saro-Wiwa, a leading activist, and eight of his followers in a public crackdown on the opposition. Mandela was outraged and, in keeping with the ANC’s policy to promote human rights and democracy everywhere, he condemned Abacha’s actions, and called on the imposition of oil sanctions and Nigeria’s expulsion from the Commonwealth. His humanitarian stance “failed spectacularly to gain African support, and South Africa found itself diplomatically isolated”. The rest of Africa chose the values of non-interference and African solidarity over those espoused by South Africa. Mandela was roundly criticised for his ‘un-African stance’, Walter Ofonagoro, the Nigerian Minister of Information at the time, called Mandela “the black president of a white state”,⁷⁷ and

⁷⁵ ANC, “50th National Conference: Strategy and Tactics - as amended by conference”.

⁷⁶ Schraeder, “South Africa’s Foreign Policy: from International Pariah to Leader of the African Renaissance”, p. 233

⁷⁷ Vale, “*South Africa and the African Renaissance*”, p. 273

the limits on South Africa's hegemony became clear. The country learnt the strength of the non-interference norm, and this has since had a pronounced influence on the development of foreign policy.

The question of whether or not South Africa's foreign policy objectives are compatible is one that has preoccupied many observers. Its foreign policy has been roundly criticised in the domestic media, by foreign diplomats and by academic observers for its apparent inconsistencies. Many feel that the ideals and values that underscore the African agenda are not compatible with South Africa's other objectives.

For example, authors such as Evans⁷⁸ and Van der Westhuizen⁷⁹ explain the apparent ad-hoc and unclear foreign policy during Mandela's years as a result of the historical development of the ANC's thinking on foreign policy. During the transition period, several members of the ANC, led by Mbeki, came to realise that the ANC's traditional attachment to revolutionary socialist ideals was anachronistic in the post-USSR era. In the new international order Western liberal democratic values were becoming universal norms. Many in Pretoria therefore began to embrace a pragmatic approach which accepted unipolarity and globalisation, and focused on bringing Africa and South Africa out of the margins of the global economy.⁸⁰ Thus a division emerged between these pragmatists, and those who preferred an ideologically based foreign policy, driven by ethics and in solidarity with Afro-centric ideas.

In 1999 Evans commented that "the ANC as the ruling party has not yet resolved the basic contradictions that have bedevilled its international thinking since it came to power".⁸¹ In large part Mbeki's presidency came to be associated with the pragmatic approach to foreign policy. But despite this, many ANC members and many members of parliament retained strong socialist tendencies and strong ties to idealism and liberal internationalism.⁸² Thus policy tensions remained. Evans attributes the vacillating nature of South African foreign policy to the "push/pull effect of this competing triad of theoretical perspectives and the lack of consensus the tensions between them have generated within the ranks of the ruling party".⁸³

Nathan explains these conflicts and contradictions as a result of South Africa's foreign policy under Mbeki guided by ideals that do not always complement each other. "Mbeki is as much an ideologue as a pragmatist, his outlook rooted in three paradigms: democratic; Africanist; and anti-imperialist." While the Africanist and anti-imperialist paradigms are complementary, both

⁷⁸ Evans, "South Africa's Foreign Policy After Mandela", p. 624

⁷⁹ Westhuizen, "South Africa's Emergence as a Middle Power", p. 435

⁸⁰ Evans, "South Africa's Foreign Policy After Mandela", p. 624

⁸¹ Evans, "South Africa's Foreign Policy After Mandela", p. 623

⁸² Schraeder, "South Africa's Foreign Policy: from International Pariah to Leader of the African Renaissance", p. 238

⁸³ Evans, "South Africa in Remission: the Foreign Policy of an Altered State", p. 266

have at times come into conflict with the democratic paradigm.⁸⁴ South Africa's commitment to promoting democratic governance came into conflict with other strong norms. While not all African leaders value democracy, the principles of sovereignty and non-interference are strongly established on the continent. These values have in several instances clashed, creating inconsistencies in South Africa's foreign policy choices. For example, while South Africa favoured the promotion of democratic norms over non-interference when it invaded Lesotho in 1998 to establish a democracy, in the case of Zimbabwe South Africa's response has been exactly the reverse.⁸⁵

Thus Nathan notes "especially strong tensions between multilateralism in Africa and a commitment to democracy",⁸⁶ arguing that multilateralism "which is intended in part to overcome South Africa's constraints of limited capacity and influence, is itself a significant constraint in the pursuit of its objectives",⁸⁷ This idea will be discussed further with specific reference to issues on the UN Security Council agenda during South Africa's terms, as will South Africa's efforts to balance the multiple objectives that it wished to achieve while on the Council.

2.4. South Africa's Objectives in the UN Security Council

The Department of Foreign Affairs identified "[contributing] to the resolution of lingering conflicts and stabilisation of post-conflict situations on the African continent" as South Africa's main objective for its first term on the UNSC. The Department also emphasised multilateralism, respect for international law, the prioritisation of diplomacy, broad consultation and transparency.⁸⁸ Prior to South Africa's election for its second term, spokesman for the Department of International Relations and Cooperation, Kgomotso Saul Molobi, said in a statement, "if elected to the UNSC, South Africa will be guided by its commitment to multilateralism, advancement of the African agenda and the peaceful resolution of conflicts". On taking up South Africa's seat at the Security Council in 2011, International Relations and Cooperation Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane committed the country "to upholding international law and universal values and to helping others protect or achieve their inherent and inalienable rights".⁸⁹

These sentiments were embodied in South Africa's objectives for its tenure in the UNSC. Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane said "our role in the Security Council will be informed by the central thrust of our foreign policy which stands on four pillars – that is:

⁸⁴ Nathan, "Consistencies and Inconsistencies in South Africa's Foreign Policy", p. 161

⁸⁵ Schoeman, "South Africa in Africa: Behemoth, Hegemon, Partner, or 'Just Another Kid on the Block?'" p. 102

⁸⁶ Nathan, "Consistencies and Inconsistencies in South African Foreign Policy", p. 172

⁸⁷ Ibid. p. 366

⁸⁸ DFA, *South Africa within the United Nations Security Council*, p. 2

⁸⁹ Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, "South Africa's Second Term as a Non-Permanent Member of the UN Security Council".

- Promoting and advancing the interests of our continent, including the SADC sub-region;
- Working with countries of the South to address challenges of underdevelopment, our marginalisation in the international system, and the promotion of equity and social justice globally;
- Work with countries of the North to develop a true and effective partnership for a better world;
- Do our part to strengthen the multilateral system, including its transformation, to reflect the diversity of our nations, and ensure its centrality in global governance”.⁹⁰

In numerous other speeches and policy documents South Africa’s objectives emerged more specifically as: the promotion of the African agenda; the peaceful resolution of conflicts; representing the Global South, particularly by improving the transparency of the UNSC and limiting the powers of the Council; and finally, casting South Africa as a good global citizen (and middle power) through the perpetuation of global norms.

2.4.1. African agenda

South Africa won its AU and SADC endorsements, and therefore its seat on the Council, on the ticket of representing Africa’s voice and promoting the African agenda during its tenures. This formed part of the vision for continental development that would be mutually beneficial for both South Africa and for the continent as a whole. Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane said in 2010, “bearing in mind that a substantial focus of UNSC activities and agenda items are on the African Continent, South Africa will continue to champion and advance the African Agenda and collaborate with other African member states (Gabon and Nigeria) currently serving on the UNSC in pursuing issues of mutual benefit”.⁹¹

By casting itself as a representative of the continent, South Africa sought not only to benefit Africa, but also to achieve relative gains by legitimising its position on the Council. South Africa downplayed perceptions of it as a hegemon or regional leader, appearing instead as a representative or voice-piece. This not only legitimises South Africa’s election to a non-permanent seat, but also its ambitions for a permanent place as the African representative at the Council. It also serves the country’s image as a middle power, representing its region, as India and Brazil claim to do.

It is for these reasons that one of South Africa’s primary aims, and the theme of both of its Presidencies of the Council, was to enhance AU-UN cooperation. DIRCO stated “we will

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, "South Africa's Second Term as a Non-Permanent Member of the UN Security Council".

continue our efforts aimed at bringing greater alignment to the work of the Security Council and that of the African Union, especially the AU Peace and Security Council of which South Africa is currently a member. Concerted and dedicated efforts will be made to achieve stability and security in our Continent and all other regions of the world”.⁹²

2.4.2. Peaceful Resolution of Conflicts

Nkoana-Mashabane committed South Africa to making a contribution to the work of the Council in the maintenance of international peace and security, especially in Africa, and outlined the peaceful resolution of conflict as the preferred way of doing this. Deputy Minister Ebrahim Ebrahim emphasised this at a discussion held by the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) on ‘South Africa and the United Nations Security Council: Promoting Peace in the Middle East and North Africa’, 3 September 2012:

What is often forgotten is that the Security Council should at all times promote the pacific settlement of disputes and that it should act preventively. The provisions under Chapter VI of the Charter encourages parties to a conflict, as well the Council, to first and foremost seek negotiated settlements, through mediation, conciliation, arbitration or even judicial means. The Charter even anticipates that initial measures might fail, encouraging the Council to recommend an adjustment to the proposed settlement if this happens – the aim is thus to exhaust the options for the pacific settlement of disputes with the emphasis on prevention - not response.⁹³

This commitment to the pacific resolution of conflict has long been a feature of South African foreign policy. Stemming from South Africa’s own peaceful negotiated transition, both the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) and its successor, the Department of International Relations and Cooperation, preferred mediation, persuasion and diplomacy over the use of coercion. This has been the applied in Burundi, the DRC, the Comoros, Cote d’Ivoire, Sudan and Liberia. Nathan explains that although South Africa has not ruled out the option of force altogether, “force is viewed as a limited tool, applicable only in exceptional situations, and then chiefly in order to provide space for state diplomacy and intrastate negotiations”.⁹⁴ Negotiation is believed to be the key to more durable peace. As the Minister said, “dialogue is important to South Africa and we therefore hold the view that in preventing lapse and relapse back into conflict, the importance of creating and maintaining peace through inclusive dialogue, reconciliation and re-integration must always be underscored”.⁹⁵

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Ebrahim, “South Africa and the United Nations Security Council: Promoting Peace in the Middle East and North Africa”.

⁹⁴Nathan, “Consistencies and Inconsistencies in South Africa’s Foreign Policy”, p. 365

⁹⁵Nkoana-Mashabane, “Optimizing the Use of Preventive Diplomacy Tools: Prospects and Challenges in Africa”.

2.4.3. South-South Alliance

“Pretoria’s dominant geopolitical and ideological reference group resides in the non-West amongst emerging powers and the Global South, including AU member states”.⁹⁶ The ANC has long held ties with Non-Aligned Movement and identified strongly with the Global South. This is a result of South Africa’s geographical positioning, colonial history, stage of development and the support the ANC and Communist Party received during the anti-apartheid struggle. Cooperation amongst the Global South to address underdevelopment, marginalisation in the international system, and a more equitable and just global system has been a key foreign policy objective since 1994.

This group of countries, South Africa included, place particular importance of values such as non-intervention, national sovereignty and territorial integrity.⁹⁷ South Africa’s ideology remains strongly anti-imperialist, with Nathan arguing that foreign policy is influenced by “a visceral anger at historical and contemporary manifestations of imperialism and racism”.⁹⁸ This overriding respect for sovereignty and fear of post-colonial intervention is a large part of the reason for South Africa’s commitment to negotiation rather than intervention, and its promotion of peaceful methods of conflict resolution.

This ties into South Africa’s will to limit the power of the P5 and democratise the Security Council. South Africa sought to prevent mandate creep and abuse of power by the P5. In the face of seemingly intractable challenges to UN reform, South Africa has adopted a more immediate strategy of trying to advance the African agenda and the interests of South by making the Council more transparent and consultative. Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane noted that “Security Council membership will provide an opportunity for South Africa to work towards the achievement of a representative, legitimate and more effective Security Council”.⁹⁹ This was to be achieved through a broadly consultative approach and through cooperation with regional groupings and respect for their wishes.

During South Africa’s second term, the presence of IBSA and the Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa partnership (BRICS) meant that the emerging power identity became central to South Africa’s strategy, and offered opportunity for greater weight in the Council. Nkoana-Mashabane has said that “the fact that we will be in the Council at the same time with the IBSA and BRIC countries should help benefit the work of the Council in advancing the broad agenda of the United Nations and the enhancement of a rules based international system”.¹⁰⁰ This also presented challenges for South Africa, which had to balance the sometimes divergent interests of

⁹⁶ Matshiqi, “South Africa’s foreign policy: promoting the African agenda in the UN Security Council”, p. 38

⁹⁷ Kornegay, “South Africa’s Second Tenure in the UN Security Council: A Discussion Paper”, p. 11

⁹⁸ Nathan, “Consistencies and Inconsistencies in South Africa’s Foreign Policy”, p. 363

⁹⁹ Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, “South Africa’s Second Term as a Non-Permanent Member of the UN Security Council”.

¹⁰⁰ Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, “South Africa’s Second Term as a Non-Permanent Member of the UN Security Council”.

the emerging powers, the African agenda, and South Africa's own national interest. Human rights observers, both domestically internationally, were concerned that South Africa's membership of BRICS would further drive its normative standpoint away from the democratic values promoted by the West and toward the "amoral normative neutrality" which prioritised sovereignty.¹⁰¹

2.4.4 Good Global Citizen

Despite South Africa's clear alignment with this ideology, historically, South Africa's foreign policy has always been committed to the promotion of human rights. And ostensibly this is still the case. In a speech delivered at the University of Pretoria Nkoana-Mashabane assured listeners that "President Jacob Zuma's Administration will not depart from the vision that Madiba outlined of an international system that is firmly grounded on human rights values and principles as espoused in relevant legal instruments".¹⁰² The promotion of human rights has a strong moral imperative within the formation of South Africa's foreign policy, but it also serves to present South Africa as a good global citizen – one which would work to promote international norms such as human rights, democracy, and good governance. This is a reputation that would serve South Africa's ambitions as a middle power and for a permanent seat on the Council.

South Africa faced strong pressure from international, continental and domestic commentators to uphold the global norms of social justice and human rights. South Africa's commitment to doing this would be a key assessor of their performance. After the first term on the Council, observers criticised South Africa for having sacrificed human rights for sovereignty and African unity, leaving South Africa with even more pressure to conform during its second term. "This will be judged in South Africa's every move within the UNSC, and checked against the international narrative of North-South issues, the emerging powers discourse and the African agenda focus, in terms of how Pretoria aligns and advances its foreign policy principles and agenda within the crux of these competing interests and global ambitions".¹⁰³

2.4.5. UNSC Reform

One way for South Africa to pursue Africa's interests and encourage increased equality in the global system of governance is to push for a more representative Security Council. The composition of the Council has created an impediment to the ability to bring about normative change, redistribution of power, and increased equality within the UN. The creation of the P5 and the provision of the veto cemented the distribution of power within the organisation, creating a time warp in which the 19th Century balance of power is perpetuated well into the 21st Century.

¹⁰¹ Kornegay, "South Africa's Second Tenure in the UN Security Council: A Discussion Paper", p. 11

¹⁰² Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, "South Africa's Second Term as a Non-Permanent Member of the UN Security Council".

¹⁰³ Matshiqi, "South Africa's foreign policy: promoting the African agenda in the UN Security Council", p. 38

As a result, changing distributions of power in the global system are not reflected within the UN system.

South Africa's official position is that the Council lacks legitimacy because of its unrepresentative composition.¹⁰⁴ As the majority of the SC's peacekeeping operations are played out on the African continent, it is vital that there be a permanent African seat in the SC, so that the continent can have a hand in the way that its own conflicts are managed. Ambassador Dumisani Kumalo, permanent representative of South Africa to the United Nations from 1999 to 2009, made this clear in 2000 when he told the General Assembly, "We are constantly reminded that many of the issues of which the Security Council is seized are African conflicts. However, fifty-five years after the formation of this Organisation, African decision-makers have not been afforded equal representation on the highest decision-making Organ on conflict prevention. This situation cannot be allowed to continue".¹⁰⁵ South Africa's difficulty is that it is tied to the common African stance, embodied in the Ezulwini Consensus, which claims two additional non-permanent seats, as well as two permanent, veto-wielding seats for Africa.¹⁰⁶ This ambitious claim is seriously unlikely to ever be realized, putting South Africa in the difficult position of having to either support a position that it knows to be untenable, or break ranks with Africa, thereby undermining its legitimacy as a representative of Africa – the very justification it offers for deserving a seat.

South Africa casts their ambitions for reform as in keeping with the African agenda and as in the interests of Africa as a whole. The Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation said in a speech at the University of Limpopo: "More than 70 percent of Security Council deliberations are centred around African conflict situations, while six of the UN's fourteen peacekeeping operations and nearly 80 percent of its peacekeepers are deployed in Africa, including the United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) with 23, 383 personnel and United Nations/African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) with 27, 501 personnel. Despite this – and the fact that Africa is a huge continent that has 54 countries, representing more than one billion people – not a single African country is a permanent member of the UN Security Council".¹⁰⁷

However, South Africa's demands for reform are not purely intended to give Africa more agency in the international system, but are also aimed at improving South Africa's stature. While the country has not put forward any particular state as a candidate, and has supported the idea of rotating seats, South Africa has still made its ambitions for a permanent seat clear. As early as

¹⁰⁴ Venter, "Reform of the United Nations Security Council and South Africa", p. 35

¹⁰⁵ Kumalo, "Address to the General Assembly".

¹⁰⁶ Serrão, "South Africa in the UN Security Council 2011 – 2012", p. 1

¹⁰⁷ Ebrahim I Ebrahim, as quoted in Bowland, "Coming into our own: an analysis of South Africa's voting patterns and the achievement of its foreign policy goals in the UNSC", p. 2

1994, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs was daring enough to suggest that South Africa should get a permanent seat.¹⁰⁸

2.5. Conclusion

The ANC's "Foreign Policy Perspective in a Democratic South Africa" dedicated South Africa's foreign policy to "helping to ensure that Africa's people are not forgotten or ignored by humankind".¹⁰⁹ The document goes on to say that "with fellow Africans we share a vision to transform our continent into an entity that is free, peaceful and vibrant – a continent which is capable, given the opportunity, to make an abiding contribution in all fields of human endeavour – particularly in the sphere of international relations".¹¹⁰

The African agenda outlines a bold strategy through which to do this. The goals reflect South Africa's own domestic objectives. There is a strong commitment to multilateralism which is both a goal and a strategy, and is seen as the strongest vehicle for the furtherance of Africa's interests. South Africa's commitment to democratic values is reflected in the goal to "enhance and strengthen democracy", as well as in the structures of the AU, such as the African Peer Review Mechanism, which seek to encourage good governance and democratic principles. South Africa's outlines for itself a crucial role as a mediator of conflict, aiming to replicate its own experience of transition. The over-riding aim is for Africa to be free from the machinations of the global powers, able to resolve its own problems and to pursue its own development and growth without dependency.

In leading this endeavour, South Africa is positioned as a regional leader, a champion of Africa and an emerging middle power. It is as a result of this positioning that South Africa was mandated by the AU to take up terms on the UN Security Council and to pursue and promote the African agenda in that influential forum. In order for South Africa to do that successfully, it must negotiate the tensions within the agenda, while at the same time balancing its ambitions for middle power status with its need to avoid being perceived as bullying and hegemonic. It must also successfully balance its other objectives, which are often perceived as being contrary to aspects of the African agenda. South Africa would have to act in concert with the wishes of the African continent, the human rights standards of the West and the new emerging power agenda – an extremely challenging objective.

¹⁰⁸ Venter, "Reform of the United Nations Security Council and South Africa", p. 36

¹⁰⁹ ANC, "Foreign Policy Perspective in a Democratic South Africa", p. 4

¹¹⁰ ANC, "Foreign Policy Perspective in a Democratic South Africa", p. 5

Chapter Three: SA and the UN Security Council 2007-2008

3.1. Introduction

South Africa served its first term as an elected non-permanent member of the UN Security Council from 1 January 2007 to 31 December 2008. Its candidature was endorsed by the AU, and South Africa and Italy both garnered 186 recorded votes, the highest number ever recorded. "We declare our readiness to serve the peoples of Africa and the world," said Foreign Affairs Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, reacting to the election. She emphasized South Africa's ties with the continent and the Global South, "we humbly accept the mandate thrust upon us by the peoples of Africa, the South and the world in general in electing us to this position of responsibility."¹¹¹

South Africa hoped to use its first term as a non-permanent member of the Council to promote the African agenda. This chapter will assess whether South Africa was successful in implementing that goal by asking the following questions, set out in chapter one:

- Did South Africa put issues of importance to African conflict resolution on the agenda?
- Did South Africa coordinate its voting with other African countries on the Council and with the African Union?
- Did South Africa's strategy while on the Council promote peace and security in Africa?

In order to answer these questions the chapter will look at South Africa's approach to the issues of UN-AU cooperation, proposed sanctions on Zimbabwe and the International Criminal Court (ICC) in Sudan. These cases were selected because of their relevance to the African agenda.

3.2. Putting African Conflict Resolution on the Agenda

3.2.1. *The UN and Regional Institutions*

One of the main achievements of the South African 2007 – 2008 term on the Council was the progress the delegation made in advancing the interests of the AU. The theme of both of South Africa's Presidencies of the Security Council (in April 2008 and January 2012) was "the relationship between the UN and regional organisations – and in particular the African Union – in terms of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter," which South Africa linked to conflict resolution issues on the continent.¹¹² South Africa revitalised the debate on cooperation between the UN and regional bodies and provided impetus for action on this issue.

¹¹¹The Good News SA, "South Africa secures seat on UN Security Council".

¹¹² DIRCO, "President Thabo Mbeki to preside over UN Security Council Summit".

The Charter provides a framework for cooperation between regional groups and the UN. Chapter VIII states that “the Security Council shall, where appropriate, utilize such regional arrangements or agencies for enforcement action under its authority.”¹¹³ However, there is great scope for the improvement of this relationship. In a number of cases, for example in Burundi, Darfur and Somalia, the AU and sub-regional organisations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) were required to take the lead in responding to crises in Africa as the UN was perceived as unable or unwilling to do so.¹¹⁴ These operations have, however, often been hindered by a lack of funding or by limited logistical capabilities. African responses do not have the same capacity, resources or financial support that UN operations enjoy. Thus South Africa pursued increased UN-AU coordination as a way to address this problem and enable African organisations to more effectively manage their own conflicts, leaving them dependant on developed states.

South Africa took several proactive measures to improve cooperation. The most notable of these was the Summit of Heads of State and Government which was held on 16 April, 2008, during South Africa’s Presidency of the Council. South Africa played an important role in the authorisation and implementation of the Secretary-General’s report on the topic of cooperation between the UN and regional organisations, and in particular the AU. The report addressed a variety of practical issues important to the AU’s ability to respond to crises, such as the division of responsibilities with the UN, coordination and consultation mechanisms, financing, conflict prevention and mediation, support of peace building, and post-conflict reconstruction. President Mbeki hosted a meeting of the Council in the presence of the wider UN membership on the topic of this report, the result of which was Resolution 1809 (2008). This resolution endorsed the report and the proposal to set up an AU-UN panel to look into how to support AU peacekeeping operations established under a UN mandate.¹¹⁵ As a result, the AU/UN Panel of Distinguished Persons was established by the UN Secretary-General and began work in 2008.

During South Africa’s Presidency it succeeded in attaining a resolution on improved cooperation between the UN and regional bodies, organising the AU/UN Panel of Distinguished Persons and hosting a meeting between the UN Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council. Because of South Africa’s position they were able to keep up momentum and pressure the Council into making this happen. This was a significant contribution to strengthening the AU and by giving it increased opportunities to receive funding, capacity building and operational support.

Through promoting UN-AU cooperation South Africa successfully put issues of concern to Africa on the topic of conflict resolution on the UNSC agenda. South Africa advanced the interests of Africa, resulting in a positive development and a real success for its own foreign

¹¹³ United Nations Charter, Chapter VIII, Article 53

¹¹⁴ Department of Foreign Affairs, *South Africa in the United Nations Security Council*, p. 22

¹¹⁵ United Nations Security Council, *Security Council Resolution 1809 (2008)*

policy. In addition, it plays into its efforts to consolidate support as a regional leader and legitimate spokesperson for Africa.

3.3. Coordination with Africa

If South Africa was to present itself as a continental leader and as a legitimate representative of Africa then it would have to coordinate its approaches with the other African countries on the Council, and with the consensus on the continent. In 2007 South Africa was joined on the Council by Ghana and Congo, in 2008 they were replaced by Burkina Faso and Libya. South Africa sometimes struggled to build consensus even amongst the three African countries on the Council and could not rely on their support during controversial votes. Voting in line with the position of the AU, or other relevant regional organisations, spoke to the African agenda goal of strengthening the African Union and of resorting to African solutions to African problems. It also enacted the South African intention to be the mouth piece of Africa and the Global South, and aimed to increase the legitimacy of the Security Council by encouraging responsiveness to and consultation with regional concerns. This approach was markedly consistent throughout South Africa's first term.

3.3.1. Ghana, Congo, Burkina Faso and Libya

In order to assess South Africa's level of cooperation with the other African countries on the Council tables have been compiled of all the votes during 2007 and 2008 which were not unanimous (See Tables 1 and 2). It can be assumed that if South Africa and the other African countries were working together closely then they would have voted the same way, even when there was division in the Council. During South Africa's 2007 – 2008 term there were nine votes which were not unanimous. South Africa voted in unison with the other African countries on six of them. It should be noted however that these six votes, although included because they were not unanimous, were not particularly contentious, and had only one abstention each.

Table 1¹¹⁶

	Belgium	China	Congo	France	Ghana	Indonesia	Italy	Panama	Peru	Qatar	Russia	Slovakia	South Africa	UK	USA
Draft Resolution S/2007/14															
9-3-3 vetoed by China and Russian Federation	Y	N	A	Y	Y	A	Y	Y	Y	A	N	Y	N	Y	Y
Myanmar															
S/RES/1757 (2007)															
10-0-5	Y	A	Y	Y	Y	A	Y	Y	Y	A	A	Y	A	Y	Y
Middle East Situation - Special Tribunal in Lebanon															
S/RES/1762 (2007)															
14-0-1	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	A	Y	Y	Y	Y
Iraq															
S/RES/1775 (2007)															
14-0-1	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	A	Y	Y	Y	Y
International Tribunal - Yugoslavia															
S/RES/1776 (2007)															
14-0-1	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	A	Y	Y	Y	Y
Afghanistan															

¹¹⁶ Based on the voting records from "Actions Taken in the Security Council 2007", United Nations Security Council, accessed 7 February, 2013, <https://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/resguide/scact2007.htm>.

Table 2¹¹⁷

	Belgium	Burkina Faso	China	Costa Rica	Croatia	France	Indonesia	Italy	Libya	Panama	Russia	South Africa	UK	USA	Vietnam
S/RES/1803 (2008)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	A	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
14-0-1 Non-Proliferation - Iran	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	A	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Draft Resolution S/2008/447	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	A	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N
9-5-0 Zimbabwe	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	A	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N
S/RES/1828 (2008)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	A	Y
14-0-1 Sudan	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
S/RES/1850 (2008)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	A	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
14-0-1 Middle East Situation - Palestine	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	A	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

South Africa used its right to abstain from voting or oppose a resolution sparingly during both its terms on the Security Council. During the first term, of the 121 decisions taken, 118 saw South Africa voting with the rest of the Council, differing on only three issues: Zimbabwe, Myanmar and Lebanon.¹¹⁸ During 2007 the country voted against only one resolution, draft resolution S/2007/14 on the situation in Myanmar, and abstained from voting on Resolution 1757 (2007) on a Special Tribunal in Lebanon. In both cases the South Africa delegation felt that the situation was not a threat to international peace and security and was therefore outside of the UNSC's mandate. This was not in conjunction with the other African countries. South Africa, Ghana and Congo disagreed over the two contentious resolutions. Ghana supported draft resolution S/2007/14 on Myanmar while Congo abstained. Ghana and Congo both supported Resolution 1757 on the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, while South Africa abstained from voting (See Table 1).

The only resolution that caused greatly divided votes in 2008 was draft resolution S/2008/447 on Zimbabwe, which South Africa opposed. South Africa found an ally in Libya, which also opposed, but complete consensus among the African countries was not achieved, as Burkina Faso was in favour. There was also some disagreement over S/RES/1850 (2008) on Palestine, which Libya abstained from voting on, while South Africa and Burkina Faso supported it.

Interestingly, South Africa and China voted the same way on every resolution during South Africa's first term, including its contentious vote against draft resolution S/2007/14 on Myanmar and the abstention from Resolution 1757 on the Special Tribunal for Lebanon. Russia voted with China and South Africa on these votes, but also abstained from Resolution 1762 on Iraq, 1775 on a tribunal in Yugoslavia and 1776 on Afghanistan, which China and South Africa voted in favour of. In 2008 South Africa, Russia and China voted together on every resolution, most notably on

¹¹⁷ Based on the voting records from "Actions Taken in the Security Council 2008", United Nations Security Council, accessed 7 February, 2013, <https://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/resguide/scact2008.htm>.

¹¹⁸ DIRCO, IGD and SAIHA, "South Africa in the UN Security Council 2011 – 2012: A Report on the Government-Civil Society Strategy Dialogue", p. 20

draft resolution S/2008/447 on Zimbabwe. This high correlation with China could be explained by South Africa's opposition to mandate creep, which was shared by China. It also points to tensions between South Africa's multiple foreign policy goals, which will be discussed later.

These patterns of voting show that South Africa, Ghana, Congo, Burkina Faso and Libya could not reliably depend on each other's support on controversial issues. At times their interests and strategies differed. This is surprising, given South Africa's commitment to the African agenda, and Pretoria's claims that the African agenda represents the interests of the whole continent. It suggests that the assumption of consensus on which the African agenda is based is flawed and that South Africa can not necessarily claim to speak for the whole continent.¹¹⁹

3.3.2. African Union

The term saw a total of 68 resolutions pertaining to security in Africa. Of these, 50 were renewals or extensions of previous mandates, leaving 18 'new' resolutions. Little can be revealed from the extension of an already-existing mandate so the voting patterns on these 'new' resolutions have been assessed to determine if South Africa was coordinating with the AU.

South Africa did not vote against AU consensus on any issue. Many of the resolutions were favourable to the AU and the promotion of African solutions to African problems. S/RES/1769 (2007) authorised the deployment of a UN-AU 'hybrid' peace operation in Sudan; S/RES/1765 (2007) commended and encouraged the efforts of the AU and ECOWAS in Côte d'Ivoire. The bulk of the 'new' resolutions were concerned with combating piracy and insurgency in Somalia. Many of these, including S/RES/1744 (2007) and S/RES/18114 (2008) detailed assistance the UN could provide the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).

The clearest example of South Africa's rigidity on this policy was Resolution 1828 (2008), which extended the mandate of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur for 12 months. It was passed less than two hours before UNAMID's mandate expired, after extensive consultation, with only one abstention from the United States. South Africa supported the resolution along with the majority of Council members. There was little controversy over whether or not to extend UNAMID's mandate, the extensive discussion was caused by disagreements over the question of whether to act on the ICC Prosecutor's proposal to indict the President of Sudan, Omar Al-Bashir. Some delegations, such as Belgium and the United States, would have preferred to see stronger language on fighting impunity, voicing support for the work of the International Criminal Court and its pursuit of international justice.

South Africa fought to keep mention of the ICC warrant out of the resolution, largely because of a recent African Union Peace and Security Council Communiqué which warned that the ICC

¹¹⁹ The votes of smaller, less powerful countries like Ghana, Congo and Burkina Faso are also more susceptible from pressure from the P5

warrant for Al-Bashir would undermine efforts to promote a peaceful resolution of the conflict and called for its deferral. In the communiqué the council expressed its conviction that:

In view of the delicate nature of the processes underway in the Sudan, approval by the Pre-Trial Chamber of the application by the ICC Prosecutor could seriously undermine the ongoing efforts aimed at facilitating the early resolution of the conflict in Darfur and the promotion of long-lasting peace and reconciliation in the Sudan as a whole and, as a result, may lead to further suffering for the people of the Sudan and greater destabilization with far-reaching consequences for the country and the region;¹²⁰

The AU was not alone in these concerns: the International Crisis Group expressed apprehension that the indictment would pose, "major risks for the fragile peace and security environment in Sudan, with a real chance of greatly increasing the suffering of very large numbers of its people".¹²¹ This was part of a wave of anti-ICC sentiment in the AU which was largely fuelled by Sudan and Libya. Muammar Qaddafi would later become chair of the AU and use his position to rally both African and Arab states to oppose the Court, culminating in the statement adopted by the AU in 2009, which called on members not to cooperate in efforts to arrest al-Bashir and turn him over to the ICC.¹²² The Arab League also came out strongly in support of al-Bashir. This was part of a broader pattern of Arabic opposition to the ICC, with only Jordan, Djibouti, and the Comoros Islands having ratified the Rome Statute.¹²³

South Africa publicly touted the AU view that the indictment would undermine the peace process. In an interview with the South African Broadcasting Commission (SABC), Mbeki expressed his support for the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and the Abyei roadmap, saying, "I don't know how they would do that if an International Criminal Court says here's a person who has been indicted, because they then must stop interacting with him because this is a wanted criminal, and I don't know how you then implement all of those things".¹²⁴

This was despite the fact that South Africa's efforts to curtail mention of the warrant were in contrast with previous policy. South Africa is itself a signatory to the Rome Statute and played an active role in the negotiations leading up to the Statute, which it ratified the very day it went into force.¹²⁵ On top of this, South Africa, along with Nigeria and Gabon, the other African

¹²⁰ Communiqué of the 142nd Meeting of the African Union Peace and Security Council

¹²¹ Maweni, "Sudan's President Omar Hassan al-Bashir indicted by the ICC: What's Next?" Citizens for Global Solutions".

¹²² Pesking, "The International Criminal Court, the Security Council, and the Politics of Impunity in Darfur", p. 307

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Sudan Tribune, "Mbeki raises voice to suspend Bashir's indictment".

¹²⁵ Wheeler, "Africa and the International Criminal Court".

countries on the Council at the time, voted for Resolution 1970, which authorised the ICC to investigate Gaddafi.¹²⁶

This human-rights oriented position became untenable for South Africa in the face of intense opposition to the warrant from both the African Union and the Arab League. As seen repeatedly in South African foreign policy, when the human rights paradigm came into conflict with the Africanist paradigm, South Africa sided with African consensus. It consistently took its policy cues from the position of the local regional organisation, such as the AU or the Arab League. The desire to be seen as a voice piece of the African continent and the Global South trumped the desire to be a 'good global citizen' or bastion of human rights and promotion of democracy. This case also demonstrates South Africa's commitment to the pacific approach to conflict resolution, emphasising negotiations and the maintenance of good relations with incumbent regimes, as opposed to condemnation.

3.4. Pacific Approach to Conflict Resolution

The African agenda seeks to promote peace, security and democracy in Africa. This is an objective that South Africa has pursued energetically on the continent, and continued to pursue in the Council. However, it is also an area which South Africa received a lot of criticism for, because when the Council sought to apply pressure to errant states, South Africa preferred to avoid condemnation in favour of negotiation. South Africa opposed draft resolution S/2008/447 on Zimbabwe based on the belief that condemnation from the Council would undermine on-going peace processes.

3.4.1. Zimbabwe

South Africa's pursuit of this goal on the Security Council proved controversial, as many felt that more coercive measures should be used to induce democratic change. South Africa's response to the crisis in Zimbabwe being brought before the Council clearly illustrates this. In July 2008 the UK sponsored a proposal on the crisis in and brutality of the state in Zimbabwe. The draft resolution proposed that sanctions be imposed against Zimbabwe's President, Robert Mugabe, that an arms embargo be imposed on the country, and that a travel ban and financial freeze against the president and 13 senior government and security officials considered most responsible for the violent crisis there be enforced. The proposal was vetoed by China and the Russian Federation. Also opposed were Libya, South Africa and Vietnam. Belgium, Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, Croatia, France, Italy, Panama, the United Kingdom and the United States voted in favour of the resolution, while Indonesia abstained. Commentators argue that South Africa was influential in getting China and Russia to use their veto for this resolution.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Kornegay, "South Africa's Second Tenure in the UN Security Council: A Discussion Paper", p. 9

South Africa rejected the draft resolution on three grounds: firstly, Pretoria felt that the matter was not a threat to international peace and security and so fell under the mandate of the Human Rights Council and not the UNSC; secondly, it was felt that a confrontational response would undermine the mediation process which South Africa was spearheading; thirdly, South Africa emphasised that sanctions were not condoned by the AU and that it was bound to act in accordance with the wishes of that institution.

Although apparently out of kilter with South Africa's purportedly human-rights-centred foreign policy, this vote was consistent with the country's positions on a number of resolutions. As noted above, the technical argument for voting against the resolution was used repeatedly during this term on the Council, and was part of a broader strategy to limit the Council's mandate creep. This fear of the UNSC being abused by the P5 was clearly reflected in the comments of Ambassador Kumalo, who said "we didn't want human rights used as a tool: 'If I don't like you I trot out human rights violations that you may have', but when it is Guantanamo Bay they keep quiet and you know when it is Gaza they keep quiet." Kumalo claims that the West intentionally mischaracterised South Africa's actions. "We didn't do things the way the British and the Americans wanted us to do them and if you don't do it like the big ones, the French and the Americans and the British, the way they want to do them, then you are a cheeky African. Well, I am happy being a cheeky African."¹²⁸

The second justification, that a confrontational response would undermine the mediation process, was typical of South Africa's 'quiet diplomacy', and characteristic of the way in which the government was handling the crisis in general. The crisis in Zimbabwe had been called "the most prominent example of South Africa's preference for soft diplomacy."¹²⁹ Pretoria took the approach of engagement and dialogue rather than condemnation in an attempt to find a mediated solution to the problem. It was felt that a confrontational approach would only serve to increase the regime's impliability.¹³⁰ Mbeki responded to those calling for a more hard-line approach by saying, "they seem to believe that if we issued some instructions to the political leaders of Zimbabwe, as determined by themselves, this leadership would meekly obey what the *baas* across the Limpopo would have told them. We remain convinced that the people of Zimbabwe must decide their future."

Nathan explains that this was a result of a broader attitude:

Pretoria is convinced that pacific forms of conflict resolution are the most viable methods for achieving durable peace and stability in the context of civil wars and similar crises on the continent. This position stems from the success of South Africa's negotiated settlement and from Mbeki's personal

¹²⁸ As quoted in Kornegay, "South Africa's Second Tenure in the UN Security Council: A Discussion Paper", p. 10

¹²⁹ Nathan, "Explaining South Africa's Position on Sudan and Darfur", p. 9

¹³⁰ Ibid.

style of politics. He prefers the art of persuasion, and negotiations that he can direct, to the blunt and unpredictable use of force.¹³¹

Mediation has therefore featured heavily in the African agenda implementation. South Africa has led mediation efforts in a number of African countries, including Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Zimbabwe. Pretoria has avoided resorting to force and views military interventions as a “limited tool” to be used only as an absolute last resort, and only to provide the space for diplomatic intervention.¹³²

The approach is informed by South Africa’s own experience of transition, which is widely celebrated as an example and model of peaceful negotiation. This is reflected in comments by Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, who has said “our own national experience has taught us the value of seeking negotiated solutions to problems, no matter how intractable they may at first seem, and of engaging all the relevant role players in a dialogue”. She acknowledged that this had greatly affected South Africa’s actions during its UNSC term.¹³³

What is not acknowledged is that South Africa’s negotiations took place under intense pressure from the international community, including a sanctions regime. A replication of South Africa’s experience should therefore include a coercive element as well as a pursuit of dialogue. Pretoria’s hesitance to be heavy-handed can be partly explained by its desire to avoid being perceived as hegemonic or neo-colonial. In 2001 a senior member of the ANC explained that the government wanted to avoid a repetition of Mandela’s stand against Nigeria, when “everyone stood aside and we were isolated”.¹³⁴ This was a reference to an incident early in Mandela’s presidency when he angered the Organisation of African Unity by calling for international sanctions and condemnation of the Abacha regime in Nigeria. Mandela’s stand was perceived as bullying and ‘un-African’ throughout Africa. Mbeki as well emphasized that South Africa had no intentions of dictating an outcome, saying “for our part, we will never treat Zimbabwe as the tenth province of South Africa”.¹³⁵

In a statement made on the occasion of the vote over this referendum, Dumisani Kumalo underscored South Africa’s consonance with the AU, SADC, and the Pan-African Parliament. All three bodies had declared that Zimbabwe’s election was not fair or transparent. However, on the 28-29 March 2007 the SADC Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation had called for the removal of sanctions on Zimbabwe, placing their faith in the negotiation process.¹³⁶ In addition, the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government, in its extraordinary session on 30 June–1 July 2008, had

¹³¹ Nathan, “Consistencies and Inconsistencies in South African Foreign Policy”, p 364

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Nathan, “Explaining South Africa’s Position on Sudan and Darfur”, p. 8

¹³⁴ Ibid. p. 9

¹³⁵ Mbeki, “The people of Zimbabwe must decide their own future”.

¹³⁶ UN Secretariat, *Resolutions and Statements of the Security Council*, 2008 (Press Release SC/9396)

“appealed to States and all parties concerned to refrain from any action that may negatively impact on the climate for dialogue”, but had not called for sanctions.¹³⁷ Kumalo concluded by saying “South Africa, as a member of both SADC and the African Union, was obliged to follow the decision of those regional bodies. For that reason, the South African delegation would vote against the draft. Nonetheless, the Zimbabwean party’s commitment to dialogue was encouraging. It would lead to the improvement of the humanitarian and economic situation, thereby contributing to a better life for all Zimbabweans. The Security Council must give space for implementation of the African Union Summit’s decision.”¹³⁸ This statement illustrates South Africa’s strict adherence to the AU position.

The comments made by the US Ambassador to the UN in response to the vote on Zimbabwe gives an accurate picture of the disappointment many groups felt with South Africa’s choices and the detrimental impact this had on its international reputation:

But I do want to say a word or two about the performance of South Africa. It was particularly disturbing also because given the history of South Africa, a country that has emerged from a very difficult period of history, apartheid, where international sanctions played an important role in encouraging transformation negotiations to bring about this new development, the change in South Africa. For its representative to be protecting the horrible regime in Zimbabwe—a regime that’s responsible for not only a political crisis but a humanitarian crisis in the country—and to work with that regime to fragment the opposition to it; that is particularly disturbing.¹³⁹

Domestic opinion was also critical of Pretoria’s policy toward Zimbabwe and generally of their human rights record while in the Council. While the media, academia and civil society lamented the loss of moral high ground in the country’s foreign affairs. Corrigan wrote in his article “Human Rights and Wrongs”: “has South Africa squandered its enormous moral capital and its commitment to human rights to side with some very questionable regimes?”¹⁴⁰ While Francis Kornegay and Tom Wheeler asked “Is South Africa living up to its responsibility as Africa’s leader?”¹⁴¹ The South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) both denounced quiet diplomacy.¹⁴²

This shows that what South Africa views as a strategy to promote peace, stability and eventually democracy through the use of a negotiated settlement is viewed by others as being opposed to democratic transition. For South African diplomats though, this is an African, non-

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ UN Secretariat, *Resolutions and Statements of the Security Council*, 2008 (Press Release SC/9396)

¹³⁹ Khalilzad, “Remarks by Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, U.S. Permanent Representative, on Zimbabwe, at the Security Council Stakeout, July 11, 2008”

¹⁴⁰ Corrigan, “Human Rights and Wrongs”.

¹⁴¹ Kornegay and Wheeler, “Is South Africa living up to its responsibility as Africa’s leader?”

¹⁴² Fabricius, “Cosatu blasts ANC’s quiet diplomacy in Zim”.

interventionist, non-imperialist solution to conflict, which is entirely consistent with the African agenda. This vote is therefore the clearest example of South Africa prioritising its African agenda goals – consistency with the AU and a pacific, mediation-focused approach to conflict resolution – above its reputation as a defender of human rights and democracy. This strategy does however serve the image South Africa is trying to promote of itself as a representative of the African continent and servant of the peoples of Africa, unafraid to stand up to the West in defence of Africa's interests.

3.5. Conclusion

This chapter shows that South Africa's commitment to pursue the African agenda strongly influenced the strategy South Africa implemented at the UN Security Council. South Africa used its time as President of the Council to put issues of concern to Africa on the UNSC agenda. The delegation worked hard to increase UN-AU cooperation, an issue which is essential to the achievement of African solutions to African problems. This served the African agenda goals of "strengthening the African Union and its structures", promoting African solutions to conflict, and "promoting North-South cooperation in support of the African agenda".¹⁴³

South Africa sometimes struggled to get the other African countries on the Council to support its positions. This was despite following the AU's position on all issues, even when this caused inconsistencies with other foreign policy, as was the case with the ICC involvement in Sudan. This was intended to strengthen the AU's voice on issues which affected the continent, and to make the Council more transparent and responsive to the desires of the relevant region. South Africa attempted to promote peace and security in Africa while on the Council. However, the non-confrontational, mediation-based approach which the DFA preferred was controversial, and was perceived as hindering the implementation of democratic reform.

During its 2007-2008 term on the Council, the DFA was consistent in promoting its interpretation of the African agenda at the UNSC. However, as the resolutions on Zimbabwe and Sudan showed, this has often come at the expense of other goals of South Africa's foreign policy. South Africa had difficulty managing the tensions between its Africanist policies, its anti-imperialist tendencies and its commitment to promoting democracy and human rights. In addition, certain aspects of the African agenda, for example, enhancing and strengthening democracy regionally and continentally were not pursued with same level of urgency as others, such as strengthening the AU.

¹⁴³ DFA, *Strategic Plan: 2005 – 2008*, p. 72

Chapter Four: SA and the UN Security Council 2011

4.1. Introduction

Shortly after South Africa's first term, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) again elected South Africa as a non-permanent member of the UNSC for a period of two years beginning on 1 January 2011. South Africa was again elected with overwhelming support, garnering 182 votes out of a possible 190. Colombia, Germany, India and Portugal were elected for the same period as non-permanent members. The other five non-permanent members, Bosnia, Brazil, Gabon, Lebanon and Nigeria, continued their term on the Security Council through to the end of 2011. South Africa's seat on the Council was endorsed by the African Union and the Southern African Development Community, legitimating South Africa's claims to speak for Africa on issues that concern the continent.

The Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, promised during her campaign for the Security Council seat that South Africa's role in the Council would be informed by the four pillars of the country's foreign policy, namely:

- Promoting and advancing the interests of the continent, including the SADC sub-region;
- Working with countries of the South to promote its voice on issues of international peace and security in the international system and the promotion of equity and social justice globally;
- Working with countries of the North to develop a true and effective partnership for a peaceful world
- Contributing to the strengthening of the multilateral system, and promoting a rules-based global governance system, including its reform, to reflect the diversity of our nations, and ensure its centrality.¹⁴⁴

South Africa identified its primary objective on the UNSC as contributing "to the resolution of conflicts and the maintenance of international peace and security, and the stabilization of post-conflict situations, in particular on the African continent". In this context, South Africa undertook to "actively engage with all issues on the UNSC agenda pursuant to the global mandate associated with Council membership".¹⁴⁵

As South Africa came onto the Council at the beginning of 2011, the South Sudan referendum was dominating the agenda. However, this was quickly overshadowed by the electoral crisis in Côte d'Ivoire and then by the spreading impact of the Arab Spring, out of which the Libyan

¹⁴⁴ DIRCO, IGD and SAIHA, "South Africa in the UN Security Council 2011 – 2012: A Report on the Government-Civil Society Strategy Dialogue", p. 20

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 21

situation created the most controversy in the Council. As is so often the case, Africa dominated the agenda of the Council and was the recipient of major investments of time, energy and resources.¹⁴⁶ Other key African items on the agenda included unresolved issues around the sovereignty of Western Sahara, and the possibility of down-scaling or cancelling peacekeeping missions in the DRC and Central African Republic.¹⁴⁷

This chapter will discuss South Africa's role and actions while serving as a non-permanent member of the UNSC during 2011 and whether these actions contributed to the African agenda. It will look specifically at those issues of particular relevance to the African Agenda, such as efforts to enhance UN-AU Cooperation and the responses to the situations in the Côte d'Ivoire and Libya.

This chapter will ask, as the previous one did:

- Did South Africa put issues of concern to African conflict resolution on the UNSC agenda?
- Did South Africa coordinate its voting with other African countries on the Council and with the African Union?
- Did South Africa's strategy while on the Council promote peace and security in Africa?

4.2. Alliances

South Africa was joined on the Security Council in 2011 by a number of strategic allies and the composition of the Council in this year was crucial to understanding South Africa's actions. Nigeria and Gabon were the other two African states, and so these three countries together represented Africa's collective voice. In addition, all of South Africa's IBSA and BRICS partners were present. High expectations were raised for the performance of the non-permanent Council members in 2011, with political heavy-weights such as Brazil, India, Germany and South Africa all present– all countries with ambitions for a permanent seat. Although in general non-permanent members have little influence on agenda setting, it was felt that this group would accomplish more than was usual.¹⁴⁸ Francis Kornegay commented that for this term the Council could “be viewed as a veritable microcosm of global geopolitical conflicts and accommodations shaping the strategic landscape perhaps well beyond 2011-12”.¹⁴⁹

He outlined the following groupings:

- IBSA Trilateral Dialogue Forum: India, Brazil, South Africa
- BRICS Forum: Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa

¹⁴⁶ Kornegay, “South Africa's Second Tenure in the UN Security Council: A Discussion Paper”, p. 14

¹⁴⁷ Ebrahim, “South Africa and the United Nations Security Council: Promoting the African Agenda”.

¹⁴⁸ Serrão, “South Africa in the UN Security Council 2011 – 2012”, p. 2

¹⁴⁹ Kornegay, “South Africa's Second Tenure in the UN Security Council: A Discussion Paper”, p. 12

- BASIC (climate talks): Brazil, South Africa, India, China
- RIC ministerial group: Russia, India, China
- G4 Security Council reformers: Germany, India, Brazil (minus Japan)
- African agenda: South Africa, Nigeria, Gabon (whose former foreign minister, Jean Ping, chairs the AU Commission)¹⁵⁰

South Africa therefore had to navigate amongst three agendas: the African agenda, the agenda of the Western P3, and the agenda of the emerging powers, including China, Russia, India and Brazil.

South Africa's primary allegiance was to Africa, and the AU and SADC endorsements obliged South Africa to promote their interests. Dr Siphamandla Zondi argued that South Africa brought two elements to the Council, "the first is a commitment to enhancing the integrity of the UN and its organs; the second is to put Africa and the Global South at the centre of the UN agenda."¹⁵¹ The presence of Nigeria, another key power in Africa, presented a test for the two countries, which would have to take joint leadership in order to increase their ability to promote Africa's interests. For this, South Africa's take on the African agenda would have to align with Nigeria's strategies for the continent and garner that country's support, in order for the agenda to gain African and international credence.

Commentators thought it likely that South Africa's second term on the Council would involve an attempt to re-establish its standing with the Western P3 members and with its own domestic critics, while at the same time maintaining its status as a leader of the Global South.¹⁵² Many anticipated that the Zuma presidency would want to assert that it had not lost its moral responsibility. A report by the Institute of Global Dialogue (IGD) commented, "on the one hand, membership brings with it the opportunity to play an enhanced role in contributing to international peace and security, especially in Africa. On the other hand, the country needs to be cognisant of the responsibility and challenges that face members of the Council in being at the forefront of the international community's efforts to resolve some of the most pressing issues on the international agenda".¹⁵³

At the same time, Kornegay reminds us that "the South African struggle was not simply an anti-apartheid struggle for human rights as much as, more fundamentally, a national liberation struggle against a Western-aligned and often Western-supported, anti-communist, racist regime". This struggle was strongly tied to the non-aligned movement and the rise of South-South solidarity, a movement which was often critical of the West. In addition, the ANC and the

¹⁵⁰ Kornegay, "South Africa's Second Tenure in the UN Security Council: A Discussion Paper", p. 12

¹⁵¹ DIRCO, IGD and SAIHA, "South Africa in the UN Security Council 2011 – 2012: A Report on the Government-Civil Society Strategy Dialogue", p. 11

¹⁵² Serrão, "South Africa in the UN Security Council 2011 – 2012", p. 1

¹⁵³ DIRCO, IGD and SAIHA, "South Africa in the UN Security Council 2011 – 2012: A Report on the Government-Civil Society Strategy Dialogue", p. 11

South African Communist Party both remembered with gratitude the military and capacity-building assistance that had been received from Communist Russia and Maoist China during the apartheid years. The assumption, therefore, that South Africa's commitment to human rights and democracy automatically aligned it with the West was a flawed one, and South Africa's position in the geopolitical environment was in fact much more complex.

This South-South allegiance took on new forms in the 21st Century through loose multilateral partnerships such as IBSA and BRICS. IBSA was formed in 2003 between the three member states, India, Brazil and South Africa. BRICS was formed in 2009 and South Africa was admitted to BRICS in 2010 after a zealous diplomatic offensive. Kornegay refers to these groupings as "limited strategic partnerships."¹⁵⁴ While these countries share certain attributes, such as a Southern-oriented outlook and varying degrees of emerging power status, they also have deeply different national interests in some respects, and the extent to which these countries would coordinate their strategies and give these groupings meaning was questioned.

Despite the overlapping membership, IBSA and BRICS have distinct orientations. IBSA is oriented towards Global South cooperation and development. All three countries consider themselves to be leaders of their region (although this is not uncontested), and all three source their legitimacy from their democratic credentials. BRICS however, identifies as a grouping of 'emerging powers', and is a "geopolitical statement in counterpoint to the traditional powers of the West".¹⁵⁵ The inclusion of China and Russia also means that the norm of democracy is replaced by norms of neutrality and non-intervention.

Naidu notes that one of the key questions observers debated over South Africa's second tenure was whether "Pretoria will seek to be a leader in its own right or will be influenced by the competing interests of its emerging power allies".¹⁵⁶ South Africa therefore had to juggle its desire to uphold its diplomacy as part of its emerging power alliances, while at the same time asserting itself as a legitimate actor in pursuit of the African agenda. The challenge was to demonstrate that it could act as a "sovereign state that is guided by an independent foreign policy shaped by a profound understanding of the changing character of the world".¹⁵⁷

4.3. Putting African Conflict Resolution on the Agenda

4.3.1. The UN and Regional Institutions

South Africa again used its Chairmanship of the Council to focus attention on AU-UN cooperation. This was a key part of South Africa's strategy during its first term, but the progress

¹⁵⁴ Kornegay, "South Africa's Second Tenure in the UN Security Council: A Discussion Paper", p. 12

¹⁵⁵ Naidu, "The Emerging Powers Dimension of South Africa's Second Tenure in the UN Security Council", p. 29

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

made in this area was largely overshadowed by its controversial votes.¹⁵⁸ The Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation explained that,

The AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) and the UNSC convene annual meetings to deliberate on issues on their respective agendas. The two organs also collaborate on key peacekeeping missions and conflict situations, including in the Sudan (UNAMID) and Somalia (AMISOM). Both the AU Commission and the UN Secretariat have made significant progress in terms of supporting operational deployments and long term capacity building as well as the desk-to-desk cooperation. Another notable achievement has been the establishment of an AU-UN High Level Panel to explore the possibility of enhancing the predictability, sustainability and flexibility of financing for AU peace operations, a factor that remains the most important constraint that limits Africa's capacity to resolve its own conflicts.¹⁵⁹

In 2008 a joint AU/UN panel produced 'the Prodi Report' on modalities for support to AU peacekeeping operations. The report provided an overview of the main issues on the increasing engagement of the AU in conflict prevention, peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction. The panel recommended that the UNSC establish a framework to facilitate convergence in the strategic and political visions of the Council and the AU. Since then, however, little progress had been made.

South Africa served as President of the Council during January 2012. The country was simultaneously chair of the AU Peace and Security Council, perfectly positioning it to strengthen the strategic partnership between the Council and the AU, building on the work done in this area during South Africa's first term. Part of South Africa's strategy for its presidency was to move the attention of the Council from emergency response and toward establishing a structural framework for dealing with conflicts in a way that addressed the underlying issues.¹⁶⁰

South Africa convened a High-Level debate on 12 January on the topic of "Strengthening the relationship between the UN and regional organizations, in particular the AU, in maintenance of international peace and security". President Zuma addressed the Council during this debate, presenting the argument that Africa, despite dominating the Council's agenda every year, was not represented by a permanent member. One way to remedy this imbalance would be close cooperation with the AU's Peace and Security Council, thereby allowing space for African solutions to African problems.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ Nganje, "South Africa's Presidency of the UN Security Council: What to make of it", p. 2

¹⁵⁹ Ebrahim, "South Africa in the United Nations Security Council: Pursuing the African Agenda".

¹⁶⁰ Nganje, "South Africa's Presidency of the UN Security Council: What to make of it", p. 2

¹⁶¹ UN Secretariat, *Resolutions and Statements of the Security Council*, 2012 (Press Release SC/10519)

President Zuma said the AU had made significant contributions to the improvement of peace and security and to the advancement of democracy and human rights in Africa. It had made great efforts to implement the idea of cooperation with regional organizations that had been outlined in the UN Charter. He argued that this type of cooperation was beneficial to all parties, as regional organisations had certain advantages such as proximity, local knowledge, and a greater understanding of the issues.¹⁶² Zuma also commented on the Council's response to the crisis in Libya (which will be discussed in greater detail below). He felt that the AU's proposed road map could have helped reconcile the crisis had it not been side-lined for the NATO intervention. "The lesson we should draw from the Libyan experience is that greater political coherence and a common vision between the African Union and the United Nations are critical in the resolution of African conflicts". He added: "Africa must never be a playground for furthering the interest of other regions ever again".¹⁶³

An assessment report by the UN Secretary-General was discussed at this meeting. The report noted the increasing role that regional organisations were playing in maintaining peace and security in general, and in particular the critical work that had been done by the AU and sub-regional organizations in Africa under the Charter's Chapter VIII. The report suggested that the two organisations build on these accomplishments so as to "successfully face our common peace and security challenges in Africa together".

The result of the High-Level debate was Resolution 2033, adopted on 12 January 2012. The resolution committed the Council to enhancing its partnership with the African regional and sub-regional organisations and called for the UN Secretary-General to maintain close consultations with the AU and Regional Economic Communities (RECs), while also encouraging "the improvement of regular interaction, consultation and coordination, as appropriate between the Security Council and the African Peace and Security Council (PSC) on matters of mutual interest".¹⁶⁴ The resolution thus recognized the AU's greater understanding of African conflict issues, and the greater interest that its members had in seeing their peaceful resolution. It was considered a diplomatic coup by South Africa and was seen by some as the "culmination of the country's promotion of the African agenda during its second term".¹⁶⁵

Nganje warned that "a close examination of the debate and resolution of the UNSC on the subject suggests that much still needs to be done to translate commitment to real action on the ground".¹⁶⁶ There were still basic political obstacles that needed to be addressed before real progress could be made in this area. The P5 has put forward a number of reasons for its hesitance. The most obvious stumbling block is the AU's lack of capacity and resources. The

¹⁶² UN Secretariat, *Resolutions and Statements of the Security Council*, 2012 (Press Release SC/10519)

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Nganje, "South Africa's Presidency of the UN Security Council: What to make of it", p. 3

¹⁶⁵ Bowland, "Coming into our own: an analysis of South Africa's voting patterns and the achievement of its foreign policy goals in the UNSC", p. 4

¹⁶⁶ Nganje, "South Africa's Presidency of the UN Security Council: What to make of it", p. 3

organisation is still highly dependent on Western funding to carry out some of its basic operations.

In addition, the AU's decision-making process requires consensus. This can dramatically bog down the organisation's ability to respond to crisis situations. One of the key issues remains that there is often little consensus within Africa on how to respond to crises. This became obvious as the AU was slow to make its position on the no-fly zone in Libya clear, and divided over how to deal with the Côte d'Ivoire issue. Not only does this slow down the AU's ability to respond but it also undermines its claims to be the first port of call when searching for solutions.

Some of these problems are not insurmountable. For example, the capacity of the AU could be built with help from P5 members or the Council itself. Furthermore, the problem of slowness to respond is not unique to the AU, but is a problem that plagues the UNSC itself. The lack of response to Somalia, and the deadlock between the P3 and the P2 over Syria, illustrate that the Security Council is not always the most agile actor. What is more difficult to address, and what Nganje argues is the stronger reason for the P5's hesitance, is the resistance to the basic idea of divulging power to bodies outside of the UNSC.

One of the basic points of contention remains disagreement over whose mandate to respond to crises in Africa should take preference. South Africa and other African countries feel that the African solution to African problems should be prioritised. Ebrahim explained, "We have followed the principle of continental ownership for the achievement of sustainable peace, which is grounded on the reality that regional bodies are best positioned to understand the dynamics of a conflict because of their proximity to and stake in the situation, and know which solutions will work and how to implement them."¹⁶⁷ However, the UN Charter does give primacy to the SC if the crisis is a threat to international peace and security. P5 members thus maintain that Africa should not be the sole purview of the AU.

As things stand, the UN Security Council is the only international body entitled to authorise the use of force in situations not involving individual or collective self-defence, as defined in Article 51 of the Charter, or to enforce the Responsibility to Protect doctrine. Both these actions, which present exceptions to a country's right to sovereignty, are highly contentious when it comes to implementation. The value placed on sovereignty in the international community and the power and ramifications associated with the use of force make the P5 highly reluctant to divulge this power, even in part, to regional organisations.¹⁶⁸ In addition, the fact that the UNSC and the AU's Peace and Security Council are often discordant over the type of response that should be launched presents an impediment to cooperation.

¹⁶⁷ Ebrahim, "South Africa and the United Nations Security Council: Promoting the African Agenda".

¹⁶⁸ Nganje, "South Africa's Presidency of the UN Security Council: What to make of it", p. 4

Nganje outlined a number of things that South Africa and the AU could do to operationalise the normative agenda of Resolution 2033. The report of the Chairperson of the AU Commission made several recommendations for the AU and the Security Council, and South Africa would need to provide the impetus and pressure needed for these recommendations to be followed. As a leading player on the continent, South Africa will need to work hard to build consensus in Africa and in the continent's decision-making bodies.¹⁶⁹ Further consensus-building would be required in strengthening the agreement on the underlying ideas of the resolution. Nganje argued that a real commitment to a partnership that would dilute the UNSC's mandate was unlikely to happen under these circumstances. South Africa could work around this, however, by strengthening bilateral relations and by using forums like BRICS, the Forum for China African Cooperation and the EU-Africa strategic partnership.

South Africa has clearly devoted much time and effort to the promotion of this issue, both during its first and second term. This shows a distinct commitment to the African agenda, and a determination to strengthen the AU, promote African solutions to African problems and promote peace and stability on the continent. It also serves to democratise the operations of the Council and increase consultation and inclusiveness. These actions serve the African agenda while at the same time serving South Africa's national interest. It promotes the image of South Africa as a negotiator on behalf of the continent and as a responsible global citizen, working as a broker of reform. However, if this initiative is to be successful it will require South Africa to go beyond this role of representative at the UN and take on more of a leadership role within the AU. If the AU is to be a more effective peacekeeping force on the continent it will need cohesion and a much stronger stance on democracy. This can only be achieved through stronger leadership.

4.4. Coordination with Africa

4.4.1. Coordination with Gabon and Nigeria

Of the 69 resolutions voted on in 2011, five were not unanimous. Only two resolutions were opposed: draft resolution S/2011/24 on the Palestinian question, which the United States of America vetoed, and draft resolution S/2011/612 on Syria, which was vetoed by China and the Russian Federation. There were numerous abstentions on these votes, and also on the votes for S/RES/2023 (2011) on sanctions in Eritrea and S/RES/1973 (2011) on the situation in Libya. Lebanon alone abstained from S/RES/1984 (2011) on non-proliferation.

Gabon and Nigeria voted in favour of every resolution. South Africa voted in favour of every resolution except for draft resolution S/2011/612 on the situation in Syria. There was therefore a high level of correlation amongst the votes of the African countries (See Table 3).

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 5

Table 3¹⁷⁰

	Brazil	China	Colombia	France	Gabon	Germany	Herzegovina	India	Lebanon	Nigeria	Portugal	Russia	South Africa	UK	USA
Draft resolution S/2011/24															
14-1-0	A	A	Y	Y	Y	A	Y	A	Y	Y	Y	A	Y	Y	N
Middle East situation - Palestine															
S/RES/1973 (2011)	A	A	Y	Y	Y	A	Y	A	Y	Y	Y	A	Y	Y	Y
10-0-5															
The Situation in Libya															
S/RES/1984 (2011)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	A	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
14-0-1															
Non-proliferation															
Draft resolution S/2011/612															
9-2-4 vetoed by China and the Russian Federation	A	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	A	A	Y	Y	N	A	Y	Y
Middle East situation - Syria															
S/RES/2023 (2011)	Y	A	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	A	Y	Y	A	Y	Y	Y
13-0-2															
Peace and Security in Africa - Sanctions Eritrea															

The two resolutions which proved to be controversial for South Africa were the resolution on Libya and the draft resolution on Syria. South Africa voted with its African counterparts on the Libya vote, supporting the resolution. This was despite the fact that its IBSA allies abstained from the vote. For the vote on Syria, however, South Africa abstained, siding this time with India and Brazil.

During 2011 all of the ten resolutions that South Africa sponsored were co-sponsored by Nigeria and Gabon. This was a distinct increase from the previous term, in which only two were co-sponsored in 2007 and four in 2008. This suggests that South Africa's cooperation with other countries on the Council was improving in general, but also that it had effective cooperation with the other African countries.¹⁷¹ Most of these resolutions were co-sponsored with India, which not only indicated effective South-South cooperation but also cooperation amongst the two IBSA allies.¹⁷² Bowland notes, "While none of these co-sponsored resolutions could be described as exclusively South-South initiatives having attracted support from Northern members as well, it is noteworthy that all of the resolutions co-sponsored by South Africa were also sponsored by Nigeria and Gabon."¹⁷³ The high correlation of votes and the number of co-sponsored resolutions suggest that there was better collaboration during this term with the other African countries. This could be a result of South Africa's improved experience and increased skill in cooperation. It could also be a result of Pretoria's attempt to redeem its human rights record, which would more closely align it with the majority of states, or of a better relationship or more shared interests with Nigeria and Gabon than was enjoyed with the other African states which had been on the Council.

¹⁷⁰ Based on the voting records from "Actions Taken in the Security Council 2011", United Nations Security Council, accessed 7 February, 2013, <https://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/resguide/scact2011.htm>.

¹⁷¹ Bowland, "Coming into our own: an analysis of South Africa's voting patterns and the achievement of its foreign policy goals in the UNSC", p. 4

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

4.4.2. Coordination with the AU

Although cooperation with the other African countries was improved, voting in line with the position of the AU proved problematic during the second term. 2011 saw a total of 46 resolutions pertaining to security in Africa. Of these, 23 were renewals or extensions of previous mandates, leaving 23 ‘new’ resolutions. Again, these ‘new’ resolutions have been assessed to determine if South Africa was coordinating with the AU. In general South Africa did its best to coordinate its position with that of the AU, despite the difficulties presented by a lack of consensus in the organisation. This is best illustrated by the case of Côte d’Ivoire. However, crucially, Resolution 1973 on the situation in Libya contradicted the AU PSC’s declaration that there should be no military intervention. This highly unusual move by South Africa was heavily criticised by many in Africa. The two cases will be discussed in more detail below.

4.5. Promotion of Peace and Security

South Africa’s vote on Resolution 1973 also broke from a consistent policy towards the promotion of peace and security. A hallmark of Mbeki’s government, Pretoria continued to prefer negotiation over coercion during Zuma’s tenure. South Africa sought to achieve this aspect of the African agenda by offering its services as a mediator and attempting to broker peaceful settlements. This was seen as the most stable and durable method for resolving conflict, and was also preferable as it did not infringe on the principle of sovereignty.

In 2011, South Africa applied this philosophy to a number of situations, including the illustrative case of Côte d’Ivoire. Zuma himself also formed part of the Ad Hoc High-Level Committee for Libya, formed to mediate between Gaddafi and the Transitional National Interim Council (TNC) as part of the AU’s roadmap for Libya. This roadmap was a typical example of the type of intervention preferred by South Africa. In voting for Resolution 1973, however, South Africa supported a military intervention of the kind that the country had always eschewed. This surprising move, and what it means for the African agenda, will be discussed in detail below, as will the more typical response to the situation in Côte d’Ivoire.

4.6. Côte d’Ivoire

The situation in the Côte d’Ivoire was a crucial foreign policy challenge for South Africa. This was primarily because of the urgent need to protect civilians, but this particular case was also important because a number of elections were scheduled for 2011 in Africa, which meant that the international community’s response to the electoral crisis in Côte d’Ivoire took on broader ramifications. The reputation of the AU, ECOWAS and even the Security Council would be at stake if a weak precedent concerning Côte d’Ivoire was created in a year when the African continent was going through a high number of crucial elections. Strong leadership was needed, but, in the eyes of many, South Africa failed to deliver.

President Laurent Gbagbo of Côte d'Ivoire lashed out in a series of attacks against civilians in December 2010, after UN-certified results from the election commission declared his opponent, Alassane Ouattara, as President. The results were reversed by a pro-Gbagbo legal body, which cited fraud in the pro-Ouattara north of the country. The international community responded in an unusual display of consensus by condemning the violence against civilians, and calling for Gbagbo to step down. This call was unanimous amongst ECOWAS, the AU and the UN. The only African countries to recognize Gbagbo's presidency were Ghana and Angola, both close allies of Gbagbo's regime. South Africa initially backed this verdict, but later back-tracked, adopting a 'neutral' position and pushing for a government of unity to resolve the stalemate. In effect this indicated that it did not recognise Alassane Ouattara's legitimate victory. This position was only altered in March 2011 when South Africa endorsed the AU PSC's call for Gbagbo to step down.¹⁷⁴

South Africa's first statement on the issue was released on 4 December 2010, and said that the country would consider the outcome of the AU Peace and Security Council's debate before releasing a decision. The next statement of 9 December responded to Côte d'Ivoire's suspension from the AU and ECOWAS by calling for restraint, national reconciliation and unity. Many criticized these responses as unfitting for a country with a leadership role on the continent.¹⁷⁵ The timing of all three statements, and the deference to the AU Peace and Security Council in their content, suggest that South Africa was waiting for the AU position to become clear before taking a stand. This seems to be a very clear case of Pretoria following the African consensus rather than leading the African agenda. A much stronger response would have been expected from a country which is, on paper, so strongly committed to promoting human rights and democracy on the African continent. In this case, however, as has happened before, the pacific approach to conflict resolution and an adherence to the African agenda were prioritised over a strong condemnation of challenges to democratic principles.

Motsamai explains that South Africa's response was determined by Pretoria's preference for a negotiated solution with South Africa as mediator. South Africa had learned from mediating conflict in Cote d'Ivoire between 2004 and 2006 that the *Forces Nouvelles* would reject South African mediation at the slightest suggestion of partiality. Pretoria felt that to sever relationships with Laurent Gbagbo during the ongoing AU-led mediation would jeopardise the peace process. Lastly, Gbagbo had genuine supporters amongst his own ethnic group in the south of the country, and they would have to be included in the mediation in order to secure a lasting settlement.¹⁷⁶

This support for a political response to the problem and propagation of a negotiated settlement was typical of South Africa's method of conflict resolution on the continent. Hopes were pinned

¹⁷⁴ Naidu, "The emerging powers dimension of South Africa's second tenure on the UN Security Council", p. 32

¹⁷⁵ Motsamai, "The Importance of South Africa's Position on the Ivorian Political Crisis".

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

on the High Level Panel named by the AU to find a solution to the problem. Zuma himself was a member of this panel, chaired by Mauritanian President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz. Other members included the heads of state of Burkina Faso, Chad, Zimbabwe and Tanzania. The commitment to democratic principles of these panel members was called into question, as the freedom of their own countries was mixed. The Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA), asked “how people who are not democratically elected in their own country are going to make sure that the verdict of the Ivorian people is respected”.¹⁷⁷ Kohnert argued that the panel was the worst possible method for finding a solution, bemoaning that “the loser of the election now has the power to question legitimate election results and force a so-called compromise, which is neither legitimate nor legal. It shows the contradictions in the African Union and the international community”.¹⁷⁸

Nigeria, however, with the backing of ECOWAS, was pushing for military intervention through ECOWAS’s Economic Community Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan was said to see “intervention as a way of asserting Nigeria’s role in African foreign policy”.¹⁷⁹ Many felt that South Africa’s rivalry with Nigeria (also present on the UNSC) to lead the African response resulted in a missed opportunity for an African solution.

The UNSC’s initial response was Resolution 1967, authorising the deployment of an additional 2000 troops for the United Nations Operation in Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI)¹⁸⁰ Resolution 1975, passed unanimously on March 30, 2011, called for an end to the violence against civilians in Côte d’Ivoire. Targeted sanctions were imposed against recalcitrant former President Laurent Gbagbo and his close associates, and the mandate of the UN mission there to protect civilians, including preventing the use of heavy weaponry against them, was reaffirmed. The UNSC condemned the decision of Mr Gbagbo not to accept the overall political solution proposed by the High-Level Panel put in place by the African Union, and urged him to “immediately step aside”.¹⁸¹

South Africa joined its BRICS partners in forcing changes to the resolution, removing sections which emphasized “the need to seize heavy weapons” from Côte d’Ivoire militias. This was typical of South Africa’s commitment to protecting sovereignty and avoiding coercive measures. In commenting, Ambassador Baso Sangqu, permanent representative of South Africa to the UN, emphasized the role of the AU in helping the country find a way out of the crisis. The AU Commission had appointed a High-Level Panel for the resolution of the crisis.¹⁸² This was in line with South Africa’s stated goals of promoting AU-UN cooperation.

¹⁷⁷ Knight, “New panel aims to resolve intractable Ivory Coast problem”.

¹⁷⁸ Kohnert, Dirk, as quoted in Knight, “New panel aims to resolve intractable Ivory Coast problem”.

¹⁷⁹ Patel, “2011: A Tough Year for South African Diplomacy”.

¹⁸⁰ United Nations Security Council, *Security Council Resolution 1967 (2011)*

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² AU PSC, *Communique of the African Union Peace and Security Council*.

South Africa thus acted according to its principles of promoting the African agenda, abiding by AU consensus and taking a pacific approach to negotiations, but failed to show strong leadership. As a result of seeking consensus within the AU instead of adopting an independent position, South Africa seemed, not for the first time, to be supporting an illegitimate regime, taking a position which was opposed to the UN, ECOWAS and Nigeria. This commitment to multilateralism and the AU was consistent with South Africa's implementation of the African agenda. However, this strategy proved itself flawed due to the indecisiveness and slow responses of the AU. Matshiqi comments that "the fact that the result was a divided AU is not entirely South Africa's fault".¹⁸³ It does demonstrate, however, that South Africa does not have the soft power to guide the AU to a consensus that reflects its national interest and values. It is therefore reduced to following the African consensus into controversial positions, rather than leading the African agenda.

4.7. Libya

The UNSC's response to the Libyan rebellion proved to be hugely controversial, revealing much about the actions and interests of states in the shifting global order. The cause of this controversy was UNSC Resolution 1973, which authorized the imposition of a no-fly zone over Libya and the adoption of "all necessary measures" to protect Libyan civilians from Muammar Gaddafi. The implementation of this resolution by NATO forces divided the Council between those who felt that the implementation had been an act of aggression against the people of Libya and those who felt that the actions taken had fallen within the responsibility to protect doctrine. The episode reveals the deep ideological tensions that remain in the Security Council over respect for sovereignty, and which have significant implications for South Africa's strategies in promoting the African agenda.

In February of 2011, when Gaddafi responded to peaceful demonstrations in Benghazi with violence, the UNSC responded by unanimously passing Resolution 1970 which condemned the attacks, referred the situation to the ICC, imposed an arms embargo on the country as well as a travel ban and assets freeze on the family of Muammar Gaddafi and certain government officials. Nonetheless violence intensified in the coming weeks and on 17 March 2011 the UNSC adopted Resolution 1973. The resolution was sponsored by France, the UK and Lebanon, with consultation and support from the US and NATO. It authorized the imposition of a no-fly zone over Libya and the use of "all necessary measures" to protect Libyan civilians.

The resolution was adopted with a vote of 10 in favour to none against, with 5 abstentions from Brazil, China, Germany, India, and the Russian Federation. South Africa voted in favour of the resolution. The vote was uncharacteristic given that the country has typically positioned itself against military intervention and has expressly disavowed it in a number of policy documents.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ Matshiqi, "South Africa's foreign policy: promoting the African agenda in the UN Security Council", p. 41

¹⁸⁴ Nganje, "The UN Security Council Response to the Libyan Crisis: Implications for the African Agenda", p. 2

The vote diverged from a number of key tenets of South Africa's foreign policy, including an over-riding respect for the sovereignty of other states (particularly those in Africa) and a resistance to intervention in their domestic affairs; a preference for political solutions, negotiations and mediation over the use of force in resolving conflicts; and opposition to UNSC resolutions which propose strong actions against African countries (for example, South Africa's refusal to support sanctions in Zimbabwe).¹⁸⁵ Not only was the vote at variance with South Africa's own policy, but it was also not in line with its BRICS and IBSA partners, who all abstained from voting.

It seemed that South Africa was trying to make amends for the criticism it had received during its previous term on human rights issues.¹⁸⁶ South Africa's support of the resolution has also been interpreted by some to suggest that foreign policy under Zuma would take a harder line towards human rights abuses, and could be willing to compromise on the policy of state sovereignty that was held by Mbeki so unfalteringly.¹⁸⁷ The ANC National Chairperson commented, "For South Africa, we were not going to take a neutral stance when one of our own was crying out for help."¹⁸⁸

However, mere days after the resolution was passed, South Africa made what was seen as a policy u-turn by criticizing NATO for overstepping the mandate of the resolution. South Africa argued that the resolution had been used to legitimize NATO's bombing of Libya and the provision of assistance to the rebels.¹⁸⁹ The official line of the government from then on stated that the NATO campaign had overstepped its mandate and that operations to enforce the no-fly zone should be limited to the protection of civilians. Zuma commented, "They should not harm or endanger the civilians that Resolution 1973 sought to protect. As South Africa, we say no to the killing of civilians, no to the regime change doctrine, and no to the foreign occupation of Libya or any other sovereign state."¹⁹⁰ Deputy Minister Ebrahim Ebrahim commented at a discussion hosted by SAIIA on 03 September 2012:

Yes, South Africa voted in favour of Resolution 1973 last year mandating a no-fly-zone, because the information available at the time indicated that a massacre was about to occur in Benghazi. Preventing mass atrocities is well within the mandate of the UN Security Council. However, regime change by foreign military intervention is not and it was this aspect that South Africa objected to.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁵ Moore, "South Africa's about-turn on Libya: Is speaking with the AU/BRIC majority defending the indefensible?" p. 1

¹⁸⁶ Serrão, "South Africa in the UN Security Council 2011 – 2012", p. 4

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Mbete, "We can't take a neutral stance", p. 3

¹⁸⁹ Nganje, "The UN Security Council Response to the Libyan Crisis: Implications for the African Agenda", p. 2

¹⁹⁰ Mkokeli and Radebe, "Zuma rejects Libyan regime change objective".

¹⁹¹ Ebrahim, "South Africa and the United Nations Security Council: Promoting the African Agenda".

These policy “acrobatics”¹⁹² on the part of the South African diplomatic establishment drew severe criticism, particularly in light of the fact that the country’s foreign policy was widely considered to be generally inconsistent. The response to this has been that South Africa, along with many African countries which criticised the intervention, including its fellow members of BRICS, was “defending due process in multilateral interventions, which includes a degree of deference to regional bodies and their efforts at conflict resolution; the circumspect use of force; and the creation of conditions for negotiation, which do not include attempting to bomb the sitting head of state”.¹⁹³

Naidu argues that this response is nullified by the fact that had South Africa, India or Brazil voted against the resolution it would not have passed, and of course it could have been vetoed by either China or Russia. All five countries should have been aware of the human rights consequences of military intervention. She comments, “all four ‘BRIC’ members on the Council had reason enough not to go against the Euro-American-Arab ‘consensus’ and, in effect, acquiesced in a multilateral war of humanitarian intervention while reserving the option to openly condemn its execution which, indeed they have done.”¹⁹⁴ Naidu, along with many other observers, sees South Africa’s u-turn as an effort to realign itself with this group.

This episode can therefore be seen as South Africa’s clumsy attempt to restore its human rights credentials and prove itself a ‘good global citizen’ in the eyes of the West; while at the same time remaining aligned with the emerging power agenda. In the process of trying, and failing, to marry these two objectives, South Africa neglected the African agenda.

One of the central tenants of the African agenda is that there should be ‘African solutions to African problems’. The African solution to the Libyan crisis was the road map, produced by the AU on March 10, 2011. This roadmap called for:

An urgent African action for: (i) the immediate cessation of all hostilities, (ii) the cooperation of the competent Libyan authorities to facilitate the timely delivery of humanitarian assistance to the needy populations, (iii) the protection of foreign nationals, including the African migrants living in Libya, and (iv) the adoption and implementation of the political reforms necessary for the elimination of the causes of the current crisis.¹⁹⁵

The AU PSC decided to establish an AU Ad Hoc High Level Committee on Libya comprising five heads of state and mandated to “facilitate an inclusive dialogue among the Libyan parties on

¹⁹² Naidu, “The emerging powers dimension of South Africa’s second tenure on the UN Security Council”, p. 21

¹⁹³ Moore, “South Africa’s about-turn on Libya: Is speaking with the AU/BRIC majority defending the indefensible?” p. 4

¹⁹⁴ Naidu, “The emerging powers dimension of South Africa’s second tenure on the UN Security Council”, p. 21

¹⁹⁵ AU PSC, *Communique of the 265th Meeting of the Peace and Security Council*

the appropriate reforms”.¹⁹⁶ This plan of action eschewed military intervention and proposed a political solution and expressed its “rejection of any foreign military intervention, whatever its form”. Despite this rejection of forcible regime change, the aim of the roadmap was for Gaddafi to step down and hand over to an interim government.¹⁹⁷

De Waal argues that the AU was in the unique position of being able to make the case to Gaddafi to halt hostilities and step down with some credibility. This, combined with the threat of coercion from NATO, could have provided the basis for a negotiated settlement. Whether or not this was the case, the possibility was not explored. By this time Resolution 1973 had been passed, and the no-fly zone came into effect. This prevented the Ad Hoc Committee’s first scheduled visit to Libya, and complicated subsequent meetings with Gaddafi and the opposition. The Ad Hoc Committee pressed on with negotiations, but events overtook it when the opposition took control of Tripoli, and key African governments recognised the TNC government.

The AU roadmap was by no means guaranteed success. The TNC rejected it on the basis that it did not guarantee Gaddafi’s immediate departure. It did not explicitly state that this was its aim, nor did it discuss how or when it would be achieved. Thus the political solution was “seen as tantamount to a continuation of business as usual under Gaddafi” by both the rebels and the Western powers.¹⁹⁸ This points to perceptions of the AU as a club of political elites whose primary goal is to protect one another. Africa was not completely unanimous on the issue, with some leaders such as Museveni and Mugabe sympathetic to Gaddafi, while on the other end of the spectrum Sudan staunchly supported the TNC.

Despite this, African states were resentful of being excluded from the process and having their proposed roadmap overlooked. In an interview with Stephen Sackur of the BBC, Jean Ping, Chairperson of the AU Commission, said that the AU had been “totally ignored” by the UNSC – “Nobody talked to us. Nobody consulted us”.¹⁹⁹ Other African notaries complained of a Western conspiracy to ignore Africa’s attempts at peace-making. Mugabe delivered a speech at the 66th General Assembly meeting saying that the AU’s mediation strategy had been “deliberately and blatantly excluded”, while Mbeki commented in an article published in *The Star* entitled *How the West Won Africa* that the Security Council had ensured that it “ignored Africa’s views on what needed to be done to resolve a crisis in a member state of the AU”.

President Museveni of Uganda charged that African members of the SC had voted for Resolution 1973 despite the AU’s Africa Peace and Security Council having decided against it previously.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁶ AU PSC, *Communique of the 265th Meeting of the Peace and Security Council*

¹⁹⁷ De Waal, “The African Union and the Libya Conflict of 2011”.

¹⁹⁸ Moore, “South Africa’s about-turn on Libya: Is speaking with the AU/BRIC majority defending the indefensible?” p. 3

¹⁹⁹ Ping, *Hardtalk*.

²⁰⁰ Museveni, “Libya needs dialogue”, p. 6

This was denied by South Africa's Baleka Mbete, the ANC National Chairperson.²⁰¹ But while the AU made no official pronouncement on its position with regard to the no-fly zone, the communiqué of 20 March clearly stated the AU's rejection of foreign military intervention, "whatever its form".²⁰² If South Africa was attempting to demonstrate that it was committed to representing the African consensus and African solutions to African problems, then it badly misjudged the African consensus, and also ultimately undermined African solutions to African problems, as the AU roadmap was complicated by the NATO intervention.

In voting for the resolution South Africa abandoned its policy of non-intervention and negotiated settlements, which had been so consistently upheld throughout the previous tenure on the Council and Mbeki's presidency. This sent mixed messages about the kind of human rights policy that the Zuma administration sought to implement in Africa. Although clearly eager to restore South Africa's reputation in this regard, the u-turn only served to confuse Pretoria's position. Both methods – the responsibility to protect approach and the negotiated settlement approach – could be justified as serving the African agenda goal of promoting peace and stability. Vacillating between the two, however, showed a lack of leadership and a lack of clear policy on how the African agenda would be implemented in the face of authoritarian regimes and human rights abuses. The anger and frustration felt by many African leaders at having been ignored by the Security Council showed that South Africa had failed in its efforts to represent the views and wishes of the continent. As Moore comments: "South Africa's rhetorical commitment to Africa as a foreign policy priority, through the African Union, must find meaning in tough conditions, such as the Egyptian, Tunisian and Libyan uprisings and the recently concluded stand-off in Cote d'Ivoire, if external powers are not to assume the lead."²⁰³

4.8. Conclusion

South Africa has clearly devoted much time and effort to the promotion of this issue, both during its first and second term. By promoting better cooperation between these the AU and the UN Security Council it showed a distinct commitment to the African agenda, and a determination to strengthen the AU, promote African solutions to African problems and promote peace and stability on the continent. It also serves to democratise the operations of the Council and increase consultation and inclusiveness.

South Africa has allowed its policy positions to be guided largely by AU positions, in accordance with its policy of deferring to the relevant regional bodies on issues before the Council, and also in accordance with its self-image as a representative of the continent. The fact that South Africa was on the AU Peace and Security Council for the duration of its 2011 term on the UNSC facilitated effective linkages. South Africa also improved its working relationships with the other

²⁰¹ Mbete, "We can't take a neutral stance", p. 3

²⁰² AU PSC, *Communique of the 265th Meeting of the Peace and Security Council*

²⁰³ Moore, "South Africa's about-turn on Libya: Is speaking with the AU/BRIC majority defending the indefensible?" p. 4

African countries on the Council since its previous term, and in general cooperated more effectively with other Council members. Ebrahim therefore argues that “In all its engagements at the Council therefore, South Africa has worked hard to set forth the African perspective and act in concert with the other African members to be a countervailing force in defence of Africa’s aspirations.”²⁰⁴

These actions serve the African agenda while at the same time benefiting South Africa’s national interest. It promotes the image of South Africa as a negotiator on behalf of the continent and as a responsible global citizen, working as a broker of reform. South Africa’s ability to do this, however, is limited by the lack of consensus amongst African countries and the resulting slow-movement and indecisiveness of the AU. The poor democratic credentials of some leaders, and the unwillingness of others to condemn actions that undermine democracy, further delegitimises African solutions. These issues are major obstacles to Africa providing solutions to its own problems.

South Africa’s approach to promoting peace and security in Africa was inconsistent in 2011. Pretoria’s response to the crisis in Côte d’Ivoire was typical of South Africa’s normative value-laden approach of non-interference, as it sought a negotiated solution, preferably with itself as a key player in the mediation. Consistent with South Africa’s commitment to multilateralism, it was ensured that the AU was fully in support of any action before South Africa took a stand. In the Libya situation South Africa’s approach wavered. Outside of the Security Council, South Africa responded typically, propagating the AU roadmap as a solution to the crisis and forming part of the high-level delegation mandated to lead negotiations. Within the Council, however, South Africa voted in favour of Resolution 1973, breaking from the commitment to the pacific resolution of conflict. Both of these responses show a commitment to promoting peace and security on the continent, what differs is the strategy by which South Africa aims to accomplish this.

²⁰⁴ Ebrahim, “South Africa in the United Nations Security Council: Pursuing the African Agenda”.

Chapter Five: Analysis and Conclusions

5.1. Introduction

The preceding chapters have shown that despite South Africa's rhetorical commitment to the promotion of the African agenda, the country has not always been successful in implementing it during its terms on the UN Security Council. South Africa attempted to represent the voice of Africa by deferring to the AU's position in most circumstances, and made great efforts to strengthen the AU and promote African solutions to African problems. However, Pretoria was often criticised for its weak stance on democracy, despite the fact that its promotion on the continent was an African agenda objective, and on occasion took actions that undermined the African agenda in pursuit of its other foreign policy objectives.

This chapter will reflect on the conclusions made in previous chapters, and on some of the issues identified in chapters three and four, specifically the tensions between the African agenda and South Africa's other foreign policy objectives. It will look at how South Africa's position as an emerging middle power has influenced these tensions, and draw on middle power theory to help explain South Africa's behaviour. Because of the position of emerging middle powers as "interlocutors bridging the space between the powerful and powerless in the international system"²⁰⁵ they are particularly vulnerable to being caught between the expectations of the West and of their regions. This chapter will explore the effect that this has on South Africa's actions. It will also reflect on the significance of the study, and make recommendations for further research.

5.2. Conclusions from Chapters Three and Four

In order to assess South Africa's commitment to the African agenda during its terms on the UN Security Council, chapters three and four asked three questions of South Africa's behaviour:

- Did South Africa put conflict resolution in Africa on the agenda of the Council?
- Did South Africa coordinate its policy positions with the other African countries on the agenda and with the African Union?
- Did South Africa promote peace and security in Africa?

On the first question – raising issues of importance to Africa to the agenda of the UNSC – South Africa performed well. The theme of both of South Africa's Presidencies of the Security Council was "the relationship between the UN and regional organisations – and in particular the African Union – in terms of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter."²⁰⁶ This relationship would incorporate cooperation on issues including "conflict prevention, resolution and management, electoral

²⁰⁵ Schoeman, "South Africa as an Emerging Middle Power", p. 1

²⁰⁶ DIRCO, "President Thabo Mbeki to preside over UN Security Council Summit".

assistance and regional conflict prevention offices.”²⁰⁷ South Africa succeeded in ensuring that two reports on the topic were thoroughly discussed, and that high-level debates occurred to work through the challenges and opportunities. Two resolutions were passed: Resolution 1809 (2008) which set up an AU-UN panel to investigate how the SC could assist AU peacekeeping operations which had been established under a UN mandate,²⁰⁸ and Resolution 2033 (2012), which committed the Council to enhancing its partnership with the African regional and sub-regional organisations.²⁰⁹ AU-UN cooperation would enhance the ability of African states to respond to conflict on the continent in a manner that was African-owned, instead of relying on foreign powers to intervene, if and when their interests dictated it. Through cooperating with the UN, the AU would have greater capacity to respond to conflict and to have a greater say in the terms of this response.

These efforts certainly contributed to the African agenda. They strengthened Africa’s ability to respond to conflict and to prevent it, thereby contributing to peace and security on the continent, and doing so in a way which gave African responses agency. They also placed South Africa firmly in the role of a representative of Africa’s voice, using its position on the Council to advance issues of importance to the continent and to garner support and recognition of the African agenda from the rest of the world. South Africa’s efforts in changing the agenda of the Council contributed to African agenda goals such as strengthening the AU and its structures, promoting the peaceful resolution of conflict, and promoting North-South cooperation in support of the African agenda. Despite these successes, however, as discussed in chapters three and four, there is only so much that South Africa’s diplomatic representatives at the UNSC can do to promote these objectives without changes taking place outside it. For example, while South Africa made great leaps within the Council on the issue of UN-AU cooperation, the Council will remain hesitant to rely on the AU for solutions to African problems unless that body becomes more responsive, more unified, and more visibly committed to “Western” norms such as the promotion of human rights and democracy.

South Africa made a clear effort to coordinate its policy positions with the African consensus, but this presented two major challenges. Firstly, as has been noted throughout this thesis, consensus amongst African countries is extremely difficult to achieve. This is reflected in the mixed success South Africa had in achieving this objective, both when attempting to coordinate with the other African countries on the Council and with the AU position. Secondly, South Africa sometimes found it difficult to reconcile its own foreign policy objectives with the AU position. During both terms on the Council South Africa understood coordination with the African consensus as coordination with the position of the AU. This was the clearest way to indicate South Africa’s commitment to speaking for Africa, and also its intention to make the

²⁰⁷ Ebrahim, “South Africa and the United Nations Security Council: Promoting the African Agenda”.

²⁰⁸ United Nations Security Council, *Security Council Resolution 1809 (2008)*

²⁰⁹ Nganje, “South Africa’s Presidency of the UN Security Council: What to make of it”, p. 3

UNSC more transparent and consultative by referring to the wishes of the relevant regional bodies.

The aims of the AU include achieving “greater unity and solidarity between African countries and the peoples of Africa” and promoting and defending “African common positions on issues of interest to the continent and its peoples”.²¹⁰ As such, Article 7 of the Constitutive Act of the AU declares that “the Assembly shall take its decisions by consensus or, failing which, by a two-thirds majority of the Member States of the Union”.²¹¹ Despite these intentions of unity and common interest, the AU has 54 member states, each with different values and interests. Articulating a common voice is therefore problematic and difficult to achieve. As Sidiropoulos points out, the idea of “a core group of states representative of [Africa’s] regions, who share values and have developed a common strategy and set of tactics to tackle politically contested issues... seems utopian at the present for all the rhetoric about African unity and solidarity”.²¹²

As a result there were times when the AU struggled to reach a unified position, making its pronouncements slow to come. The AU’s decision-making processes are notoriously cumbersome and it struggles to respond quickly and decisively in a crisis. As a result, South Africa was on occasion left playing for time before the AU’s position became clear. The crisis in Côte d’Ivoire is an example of this, when South Africa was forced to release a number of statements saying it would wait for the outcome of the AU PSC. The difficulty in uniting the African position was also revealed by the voting records of South Africa and the other African countries on the Council, which showed that South Africa could not coordinate very effectively with the other African countries on controversial votes.

The second challenge was that South Africa’s own foreign policy objectives sometimes came into conflict with the AU position. In many of these cases, South Africa’s commitment to representing the African voice was so strong that it contradicted its own policy in order to comply with the African consensus. The clearest example of this was that South Africa fought to keep mention of the ICC warrant out of Resolution 1828 (2008) because of the AU Peace and Security Council Communiqué calling for the ICC warrant’s deferral. This was despite the fact that South Africa had always been an active supporter of and signatory to the Rome Statute. In Resolution 1973 (2011) on Libya, South Africa’s desire to be seen as a good global citizen and to repair its human rights reputation contradicted the AU’s preference for mediation and non-intervention. In this case, however, South Africa broke from its usual commitment to representing the AU. This inconsistency will be discussed further below.

South Africa believes in obtaining peace and security through the peaceful resolution of conflict, using mediation and negotiation. This is argued to be the most effective way of ensuring durable

²¹⁰ African Union Constitutive Act, Article 3

²¹¹ African Union Constitutive Act, Article 7

²¹² Sidiropoulos, “South Africa’s audacity of hope? The geopolitics of consensus and rivalry in the African Union”, p. 1

peace and stability. While generally attributed to the success of South Africa's own negotiations, this strategy also serves South Africa's interests of downplaying its dominance on the continent and emphasising its non-aggressive stance. It complements the values of non-intervention and sovereignty that are so important to African leaders. As Landsberg and Kondlo explain, "the approach adopted by South Africa's policy-makers suggested that the best way to gain status and enhance its reputation was to reassure its neighbours that it did not harbour any threatening or aggressive intent. Instead, it chose to portray a strategic and defensive non-threatening military posture".²¹³ This strategy therefore allows South Africa to pursue its goals of promoting peace and security in Africa and the strengthening of democracy on the continent while doing so in a manner that was non-threatening to other African elites, and therefore acceptable to the African consensus. South Africa pursued this strategy with remarkable consistency, preferring mediated solutions in the cases of Zimbabwe, Côte d'Ivoire and Sudan. The only exception was in Resolution 1973 on Libya.

This policy enhanced South Africa's reputation in Africa, but in the West, and in some domestic South African opinion, this 'quiet diplomacy' has been strongly condemned for not effecting real change, playing into the hands of incumbent leaders and not taking a strong enough stance on human rights abuses and the need for democracy. In criticising Mbeki's 'constructive engagement' with Mugabe, for example, Western and South African domestic opinion was that the approach was too soft and undermined South Africa's commitment to promoting democracy on the continent. Observers criticised Mbeki for not being "prepared to stand by the principles he is espousing in terms of NEPAD and a vision on an African Renaissance".²¹⁴ The policy fuelled criticisms of African cronyism and undying loyalty to liberation era allies,²¹⁵ causing a loss of faith in the ability of Africans to resolve African problems.

South Africa therefore successfully put African issues on the agenda of the Council; it coordinated its policy positions with the other African countries on the Council and with the AU with mixed success; and it promoted peace and security in African by means of a pacific approach to conflict resolution. The African agenda was clearly a priority for South African diplomats at the Council. However, South Africa's behaviour amounted to an implementation of the African agenda which differed from what had been expressed on paper. The DFA's *Strategic Plan: 2005 – 2008* identifies the African agenda objectives as:

- Strengthening the African Union and its structures
- Facilitating South Africa's participation in SADC and SACU
- Promoting the implementation of NEPAD
- Promoting the peaceful resolution of conflicts and encouraging post-conflict reconstruction and development

²¹³ Landsberg and Kondlo, "South Africa and the African agenda", p. 7

²¹⁴ Hussein Solomon as quoted in Author Unknown, "Mbeki playing a dangerous game with Zim".

²¹⁵ Adelmann, "Quiet Diplomacy: The Reasons behind Mbeki's Zimbabwe Policy", p. 251

- Successfully implementing ongoing peace processes
- Enhancing and strengthening democracy regionally and continentally
- Strengthening bilateral relations
- Promoting South-South cooperation through the IBSA Dialogue Forum, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the G77 South Summit and promoting Asia-Africa cooperation through the Asian-African Sub-Regional Organisations Conference (AASROC), and
- Promoting North-South co-operation in support of the African Agenda through the G8, the Commission for Africa, the Africa Partnership Forum, the EU, the OECD, the WTO, the IMF and World Bank, and the World Economic Forum²¹⁶

However, at the Council South Africa did not pursue the African agenda as a holistic package in which these various objectives were interdependent. Instead, certain aspects of the African agenda were prioritised over others. A distinct understanding of the agenda emerged which prioritised compliance with the AU's stance, ideals of non-intervention and sovereignty, and the promotion of the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Objectives such as enhancing and strengthening democracy regionally and continentally were often compromised or were not pursued with the same urgency.

This can be explained with reference to South Africa's role on the continent as a regional power or emerging middle power. The flaws and inconsistencies in South Africa's pursuit of the African agenda at the Security Council are influenced by its attempts to punch above its weight. This effects the country's commitment to following the African consensus, even when this is not in line with its own policy, and also helps to explain the inconsistencies in its behaviour while on the Council.

5.3. Middle Powership and the African Agenda

As an emerging middle power, and particularly because of the moral weight garnered from the transition, South Africa was expected and encouraged by the West to play the role of leader, regulator and moral example. In some ways, South Africa has taken up this mantle. For example South Africa influenced the emphasis on democracy, human rights and good governance in the AU's constitutive document, and subsequently in NEPAD and the APRM. The problem for South Africa is that many of these norms are perceived throughout Africa as being Western and 'un-African'. Their promotion therefore leads to accusations of being a 'lackey of the West', punishment and ostracism.

This became clear after Mandela's reproach of the Abacha regime after the executions of political opponents in November 1995. As discussed earlier, this caused a wave of criticism from other African countries, but criticism was not the only response, South Africa was also actively excluded from the SADC meeting on the crisis in the DRC in August 1998. The perception of

²¹⁶ DFA, *Strategic Plan: 2005 – 2008*, p. 72

Western influence was damaging enough to prevent South Africa from playing a positive role in this crisis.²¹⁷

Hegemony requires not only hard power but soft power as well, and it is this that South Africa lacks in sufficient amounts. The norms that South Africa subscribes to are thinly adhered to by African elites. There is resentment towards the country's promotion of neo-liberal policies, embodied in the African Renaissance and its institutions.²¹⁸ Adebayo Adedeji has argued that NEPAD strengthens the grip of neo-imperial powers over Africa "by tying the African canoe firmly to the West's neo-liberal ship on the waters of globalization".²¹⁹ Issa Shivji adds that to this analogy, saying that "South African capital provides the rope painted in the colour of the African Renaissance".²²⁰ In addition to this resistance towards neo-liberalism, South Africa struggles to promote the norms of good governance, democracy and human rights amongst African leaders, the majority of whom do not have clean records themselves. This was clearly illustrated by South Africa's experiences in the UN Security Council. Thus Matshiqi asks "is South Africa's African agenda Africa's African agenda?"²²¹

The case of Ken Saro-Wiwa's execution in Nigeria illustrates a significant aspect of hegemony: "leadership/hegemony can work only as long as the hegemon is a genuine leader whose rules and values are generally accepted by others."²²² The reactions to the crisis in Nigeria showed that for South Africa hard power was not sufficient to achieve hegemony, but it was also necessary for others to ascribe to the hegemon's goals, rules, ideals and values.²²³ The incident reveals that Pretoria does not have enough soft power to enable it to set the rules of conduct on the continent and influence the foreign policies of its fellow African states.

As noted in chapter two, there is an important distinction to be made between "roles given" or assigned by other states, and "roles taken" or appropriated by the state for itself.²²⁴ This is certainly the case with South Africa. Although Pretoria aspires to be a regional leader, fighting for the African agenda, and a middle power, upholding international norms, this role is not accepted by the region. South Africa's soft power is limited, as the rest of Africa does not necessarily buy into the values that South African foreign policy is predicated on. Thus Landsberg and Kondlo comment that the "strategic conundrum that South Africa faces in its interactions with the continent. On the one hand it is a continental powerhouse, especially

²¹⁷ Schoeman, "South Africa as an Emerging Middle Power", p. 1

²¹⁸ Alden and Soko, "South Africa's economic relations with Africa: hegemony and its discontents", p. 368

²¹⁹ Adedeji, Adebayo as quoted in Shivji, "Pan-Africanism or Imperialism? Unity and Struggle towards a New Democratic Africa", p. 218

²²⁰ Shivji, "Pan-Africanism or Imperialism? Unity and Struggle towards a New Democratic Africa", p. 218

²²¹ Matshiqi, "South Africa's foreign policy: promoting the African agenda in the UN Security Council," p. 38

²²² Schoeman, "South Africa in Africa: Behemoth, Hegemon, Partner, or 'Just Another Kid on the Block?'" p. 103

²²³ Ibid. p. 103

²²⁴ Ibid. p. 92

economically, and on the other, it is resented or regarded as an unwelcome hegemon on the continent.”²²⁵

South Africa, in its pursuit of middle power status, has to work to legitimise its place on the continent and have its role as regional leader accepted by the rest of Africa. Pretoria must prove itself ‘one of us’ rather than ‘one of them’. In practice this has often meant that South Africa’s foreign policy has followed the African consensus rather than leading an African agenda. Breaking from the African consensus is seen as too costly, and so certain aspects of the African agenda, such as democracy, good governance and respect for human rights, cannot be pursued with as much vigour as other aspects which are more palatable to African leaders, such as African solutions to African problems.

Following the African consensus prevents South Africa from taking the strong stand on human rights that is expected of it. Pretoria uses its own example of peaceful transition to justify this – omitting to recognise the immense international pressure which helped to bring the apartheid government to the negotiating table. This flaw in the logic suggests that South Africa’s commitment to peaceful negotiations is becoming a means by which to avoid a strong stance and the recriminations from other African leaders that would accompany it.

In examining South Africa’s attempts to implement the African agenda in the Security Council it becomes clear that during both terms South Africa was dogged by foreign policy tensions. South Africa’s ambitions for middle power status complicated these dynamics, as emerging middle powers are, perhaps more than other states, caught between wanting to please the West and their own region. South Africa in particular is caught between promoting “Western values” like human rights while not wanting to be seen as “un-African”. Pretoria attempted to balance the African agenda with other foreign policy objectives such as promoting human rights and democracy, promoting South Africa’s image as a good global citizen, and pursuing an anti-imperialist, emerging power agenda.

In South Africa’s second term these tensions really came to the fore. The presence of South Africa’s IBSA partners in the Council and the country’s recent membership of BRICS added to the pressures on South Africa, which was now pulled in different directions by its loyalty to Africa, pressures to conform with the West, and its eagerness to bring meaning to the BRICS and IBSA alliances. Kornegay notes that South Africa was attempting to navigate between two agendas during this term – the African agenda, and also “that of the emerging power dynamics reflected in decisions taken by the UNSC as they relate to existing limited multilateral partnerships such as IBSA, BRICS and the P4”.²²⁶ South Africa also had to manage its competitive friendship with Nigeria, which also had leadership aspirations for the continent.

²²⁵ Landsberg and Kondlo, “South Africa and the African agenda”, p. 9

²²⁶ Kornegay, “South Africa’s Second Tenure in the UN Security Council: A Discussion Paper”, p. 16

South Africa struggled to manage these tensions, leading to a number of decisions that were widely viewed as inconsistent. This is illustrated by the Think Africa Press article entitled “South Africa’s Janus-Faced Foreign Policy” which says that South Africa’s foreign policy is “the sum of the country’s contradictory foreign allegiances and subsequently lacks clear direction”.²²⁷ The article explains:

There is no doubt that the country is struggling with an inconsistent identity in the global arena and this has been a problem for South Africa since 1995. South Africa has tried to adopt a leading hegemonic role while also remaining faithful to the idea of African solidarity, a difficult balancing act which it is struggling to maintain. At the same time, it is trying to live up to its democratic constitutional values while supporting autocratic regimes.²²⁸

The Economist made a similar argument, noting that:

South Africa often appears to be pursuing two contradictory sets of values. At one moment, Mr Zuma is upholding the principles of national sovereignty and non-interference dear to despots around the world. At the next, he insists that his ‘primary objective’ is to contribute to the ideals of democracy, human rights and justice. The result is a mishmash of unpredictable responses to apparently similar situations in different countries.²²⁹

This was a reference mainly to South Africa’s u-turn on Libya, which fuelled accusations of inconsistencies. In general South Africa’s performance was found by analysts to be “mixed, fraught with ambivalence and contradictions”.²³⁰ This episode was evidence of the difficulty South Africa experienced in reconciling the African agenda with its emerging power diplomacy and its desire to regain its human rights credibility. Landsberg and Moore’s article on how foreign policy is decided explains that the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation was “fiercely lobbied by her ‘close’ friend, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton” while Zuma was “fiercely lobbied by the American and French presidents, as well as the British prime minister”.²³¹ They argue that the decision making process, which excludes parliament and the Department of International Relations and Cooperation, results in South Africa fluctuating between competing foreign policy objectives. In this case, as a result of this lobbying, and the criticism South Africa had received in the past on human rights votes, the desire to be seen as a good global citizen trumped the African agenda. South Africa’s credibility as a middle power took preference.

²²⁷ Petré, “South Africa’s Janus-Faced Foreign Policy”.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ *The Economist*, “South Africa’s foreign policy all over the place”.

²³⁰ Kornegay, “South Africa’s Second Tenure in the UN Security Council: A Discussion Paper”, p. 18

²³¹ Landsberg and Moore, “How is South Africa’s Foreign Policy Decided?” p. 75

Another result of South Africa's middle power ambitions was that, as middle powers act as interlocutors between 'the West and the Rest', or the 'P5 and the Rest', South Africa wished to present itself as an independent actor, strong enough to vote independently in pursuit of its goals and to pursue the role of "pragmatic broker".²³² Kornegay argues that South Africa's decision to vote against the resolution on Myanmar, rather than abstaining and "saving itself the trouble" was "a display of foreign policy independence vis-à-vis the West and like opinion within South Africa itself among a constituency historically aligned with the West".²³³ Similarly, South Africa's out-of-kilter Libya vote has been suggested by some to have been a "show of 'strategic autonomy' and foreign policy independence vis-à-vis BRICS", after commentators suggested that South Africa's new BRICS membership would result in China dictating Pretoria's actions.²³⁴

South Africa's desire to be seen by the world as a responsible global citizen, worthy of its middle power position and potentially of a permanent Security Council seat, can explain the inconsistent and dramatic shows of commitment to upholding global norms and values, as was seen with the Libya vote. These dynamics hindered South Africa's ability to follow a cohesive African agenda policy, and its attempts to coordinate with the position of the AU resulted in hesitant and unconvincing responses from DIRCO. South Africa has struggled to balance the objectives of promoting the African agenda with promoting itself as a regional leader and global middle power. Lacking the leadership to encourage and promote these values on the continent, Pretoria instead allowed its policy to be dictated by the stances of the AU in an effort to prove itself 'African'.

As a result, South Africa has not pursued the African agenda as a holistic package underpinned by democratic peace theory, as it was originally envisioned. In an attempt to be seen as a legitimate regional leader, South Africa has instead pursued those aspects of the African agenda which are uncontroversial amongst African elites: African solutions to African problems, the strengthening of the AU, the peaceful resolution of conflict without condemnation or intervention. This resulted in some decisions which were inconsistent with its own foreign policy and with the African agenda and ultimately meant that South Africa was following the African consensus rather than leading the African agenda. This was done consistently during South Africa's first term, but during the second term South Africa on occasion prioritised its other objectives, such as the desire to be seen by the West as a good global citizen, causing deviations from the path of the African consensus.

5.4. Areas for further study

As this thesis was written during South Africa's second term on the Council, it was not possible to comment on the second half of the term. Now that the full term is over, a more complete

²³² Matshiqi, "South Africa's foreign policy: promoting the African agenda in the UN Security Council", p. 38

²³³ Kornegay, "South Africa's Second Tenure in the UN Security Council: A Discussion Paper", p. 9

²³⁴ Ibid. p. 20

analysis of South Africa's performance can be conducted. 2012 saw a number of developments on the Council which were significant for the implementation of the African agenda. These need to be explored in order to gain a full understanding of this topic. In addition, the uncharacteristic vote on Libya suggests that Pretoria's voting strategies may be changing. This could be explored further through a comparative study of the behaviour and voting strategies in the first term and those in the second. It would also be interesting to see if South Africa's pursuit of the African agenda in other organs of the UN produces similar strategies or behaviours. A quantitative study recording and analysing the country's voting patterns in the General Assembly or the Human Rights Committee could reveal a lot about South Africa's overall commitment to the agenda.

Both India and Brazil face similar challenges to South Africa, as they are also emerging middle powers seeking to gain recognition from the West, while at the same time retaining their regional identities. A comparative study of how these three countries manage these tensions in the Security Council would be revealing, and may present solutions or strategies for South Africa.

5.5. Final Thoughts

This thesis has illustrated that South Africa's ambitions for Africa and its ambitions for itself cannot be viewed independently, but in fact are closely intertwined and share a complex relationship which is occasionally symbiotic and occasionally destructive. Throughout both of the country's terms on the UN Security Council, those actions that it has taken in the name of the continent have not been guided by altruism or good-neighbourliness. South Africa's efforts to strengthen the continent's ability to respond to its own conflicts and dictate its own course are linked to a strong belief in the principle of African self-reliance, but the more immediate goal is to promote the country's image as a regional leader, thereby strengthening its claims to middlepowership and allowing it to punch above its weight. The African agenda is therefore not an objective in itself, but a strategy by which to increase South Africa's geopolitical influence.

This conclusion is highly significant not only for the understanding of South Africa's behaviour within the Council, but also for the implementation of the agenda more generally. Viewing the agenda as a means to an end, rather than as a mutually beneficial development strategy, has ramifications for the understanding of South African foreign policy, its bilateral and multilateral relations with the continent, and its behaviour in global governance. This suggests that middlepowership and regional leadership are extremely important to Pretoria, and other foreign policy objectives should be evaluated through this lens.

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