

## The Strategic Goals of the Jacob Zuma Government's Foreign Policy: A Retrospective Assessment

Chris Landsberg and Oscar van Heerden\*

*Professor and Chair of the NRF SARCHi Chair: African Diplomacy and Foreign Policy; and Director of Research, Mapungupwe Institute for Strategic Reflection (MISTRA), Johannesburg, University of Johannesburg, South Africa*

*\*Corresponding Author: Chris Landsberg and Oscar van Heerden, Professor and Chair of the NRF SARCHi Chair: African Diplomacy and Foreign Policy; and Director of Research, Mapungupwe Institute for Strategic Reflection (MISTRA), Johannesburg, University of Johannesburg, South Africa*

### ABSTRACT

As South Africa reached the abrupt, yet predictable, end of the second term of the Jacob Zuma-led government following the ANC's Congress in Nasrec Johannesburg in December 2017, two years hence provides an opportune time to unpack and understand some of the policy trajectories, and analyse the policy courses of this former administration. In this policy essay, we shall do an appraisal of this government's foreign policy and unpack the foreign policy priorities and strategic objectives of the new Jacob Zuma-led administration, placing emphasis on assessment of the foreign largely economic interest driven policy agenda or dominant diplomatic priorities of that government. The questions are therefore most interested in a simple yet cardinal question: what were the major strategic political and economic priorities of the Zuma government?

### INTRODUCTION

One of the major weaknesses with South African foreign policy analysis is that scholars typically adopt a critical approach and end up telling what is wrong with foreign policy, without telling us and explaining what the foreign policy is in the first instance, and what the strategic rationales are which underscores such foreign policy. It is for this reason primarily that we resort to an explanatory, textual analysis, grounded theory approach in which we shall seek to explain what the motives and driving forces, as well as strategic intentions of South Africa's foreign policy is. Grounded and interpretive approaches allows us to scan and digest the information and analysis embedded in primary material and statements and views of decision-makers and to draw important theoretical, conceptual and empirical insights from the data. One of the most basic, yet neglected areas of the study of foreign policy is that of unpacking the goals and aims which states pursue in relation to other states and actors in the international system<sup>1</sup>. Leaders

pursue foreign policy goals "on behalf of the nation"<sup>2</sup>. A foreign policy "goal" or "objective" is typically a vision of a future state of affairs that policy makers aspire to bring about to influence the behaviour of another state or non-state actor. Foreign policy goals or objectives could be very concrete or vague and abstract<sup>3</sup>. "What purposes do all governments have in common?", asked KalHolsti<sup>4</sup>. His answer: "...we have at least four purposes that are common to all contemporary states: (1) security; (2) autonomy; (3) welfare, broadly considered and (4) status and prestige"<sup>5</sup>. But it is important to provide some Africanist perspective on foreign policy goals and what their determinants are. On this score, Gilbert Khadiagala and Terrence Lyons argued that "African foreign policy at the beginning of the twenty-first

<sup>1</sup>KJ Holsti, *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis*, Seventh Edition, Prentice Hall, 1995, pp. 83-114.

<sup>2</sup> B. Russett, H. Starr, and D Kinsella, *World Politics: The Menu of Choice*, 8<sup>th</sup> Edition, Thomson Wadsworth, Belmont, California, 2006, p. 135.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 135-136.

<sup>4</sup>KJ Holsti, *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis*, op. cit., p. 84.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

century is still dominated by overarching constraints on the survival of the weak state”<sup>6</sup>.

Invoking Christopher Clapham, they argued that “the imperative of state survival...force elites to use foreign policy to garner political and economic resources from the external environment”. They went further to assert that “contemporary African elites, like their predecessors, are preoccupied with political stability, legitimacy, and economic security issues, whose importance seems to increase rather than diminish”<sup>7</sup>. Again, we will zero in on how on how the ANC as party came to assert itself more directly in foreign policy processes beyond the role of the government.

In this piece we revert back to old fashioned Foreign policy analysis theory, and in particular that of goals or primary aims as pursued by states to come to grips with some of the motive forces which underscores South Africa's strategies towards other states, organisations and non-state actors during the Jacob Zuma years (2009-2017).

### FOREIGN POLICY GOALS AND THE EMERGING FOREIGN POLICY AGENDA OF THE ZUMA GOVERNMENT

The consequences for governance of the ANC's 52<sup>nd</sup> National Conference in Polokwane in 2007 when control of the party was wrested from the then President Thabo Mbeki and handed to Jacob Zuma has dogged government since, even after Zuma's departure<sup>8</sup>. Not only has there been a sense of instability in government, but it has been very difficult to discern the goals, and decipher the actions of government's diplomacy in practice. Much of the controversy has revolved around whether the change in leadership at Polokwane constituted a shift merely in personalities or actual policy goals as well<sup>9</sup>. In contributing to the debate, this paper focuses on the foreign policy goals of the Zuma government. In this sense we have witnessed the foreign policy version of the

“Polokwanisation” of policy, politics and diplomacy; meaning that the fall-out from the Polokwane skirmish spilled over into the diplomatic and statecraft arenas as well.

Mbeki had pursued a four-pronged approach of strategic goals in which he sought to combine foreign and domestic policies. The much vaunted ‘African Agenda’; South-South co-operation; North-South dialogue; and socio-economic and politico-security all incorporated the country's post-apartheid move to combining domestic growth with the replacement of international isolation by continental and overseas links, and notions of global governance.

Because of the bitter fraternal fight between the Mbeki and Zuma factions, the post-Mbeki government tried very hard to distance themselves from anything associated with their predecessors. However, tried as they wish to distance they from the Mbeki domestic and foreign policy legacies, the new Jacob Zuma-led splintered coterie were heavily influenced by the foreign policy legacy of Mbeki. It was against this background of a well-crafted foreign policy architecture, that the August 2009 *Medium-term Strategic Framework to Guide Government's Programme for the Electoral mandate Period 2009-2014* was announced, signalling that the Zuma administration would champion its Foreign policy under the broad rubric of “Pursuing African Advancement and Enhanced Co-operation”<sup>10</sup>.

In 2012, the then Minister of International Relations and Co-operation, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane outlined the macro goals of the Zuma government's foreign policy. She stated that “...our foreign policy [was] based on four central pillars”<sup>11</sup>:

- We give priority to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Africa as a whole;
- We work with countries of the South to address shared challenges of underdevelopment and promote global equity and social justice;

<sup>6</sup> Gilbert M. Khadiagala and Terrence Lyons (eds.), *African Foreign Policies, Power and Process*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, Colorado, 2001, p. 7

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Chris Landsberg and Suzanne Graham, “South African Foreign Policy formulation, 2009-2016”, in Chris Landsberg and Suzanne Graham (eds.), *Government and Politics in South Africa: Coming of Age*, Fifth Edition, Van Schaik Publishers, 283.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Chris Landsberg, “The emerging Africa strategy of the new Jacob Zuma administration”, in Siphamandla Zondi and Lesley Masters (eds.), *The future of South Africa's foreign policy: Continuity and Change*, IGD and FES, 2010, p. 56.

<sup>11</sup> Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, Letter from the Minister, in *Ubuntu*, Issue 1, 2012, Pretoria, p. 7.

- We work with countries of the developed North to develop a true and effective partnership for a better world; and
- Finally, we play our part to strengthen and transform the multilateral system, to reflect the diversity of our nations, and ensure its centrality in global governance.

A 2014 Centre for Conflict Resolution policy report, titled, "Post-apartheid South Africa's Foreign Policy After Two Decades" correctly observed that "since 2009, president Jacob Zuma has continued these [read: Mbeki's] policies, but has more aggressively pursued a leadership role in SADC...and more openly championed investment into South Africa as the 'gateway' to the continent"<sup>12</sup>. The Zuma-led government clearly focussed more on its immediate near-abroad and strengthening ties with Luanda ranked as a major priority.

Economic interest has been pushed to the front-burner in the Zuma government's foreign policy matrix. In 1966 already, Andrew M. Karmarck wrote in relation to African foreign policy: "the economic forces at work and the economic structure of a country are important in both its domestic politics and its foreign policy. Very simply, to survive you must eat"<sup>13</sup>. The Zuma government used the rhetoric that it was committed to pursuing a developmental and economic driven foreign policy, but this rhetoric soon became cover for a vigorous push for economic interests under the banner of "Open for business...in a big way!"<sup>14</sup>. There was a point about the investment 'gateway' in the foreign policy of the Zuma government which is suggestive of the idea of the Zuma government having pursued a more utilitarian, self-interested, economic interest driven foreign policy. Self-interested economic goals featured more prominently during the Zuma government's foreign policy. Writing in 2015, Smith and Landsberg opined that, "over the

past few years, we have been concerned about the stock response, both from inside and outside government, to some aspects of the articulated International Relations agenda of South Africa, which is premised on a new utilitarian, crude economic driven response"<sup>15</sup>. We reminded the reader that "some critics go so far as to paint our involvement on the continent as purely part of a sub-imperialist agenda. Both domestically and abroad, it has been said that South Africa is pursuing a narrow national interest driven foreign policy"<sup>16</sup>. Government would counter this charge and argued that it in fact operated on the basis of African interests.

The Zuma government regarded the invitation for it to join the Brazil-Russia-India-China (BRIC) constellation to become BRICS as its greatest foreign policy achievement, albeit that plans for this move started long before the Zuma government assumed office. The government's BRICS strategy was very much in line with this notion of South Africa buying into the idea of the Republic being a "gateway" into Africa, as well as its strong economic interest pursuit. Even though BRICS countries have little in common politically or economically, Zuma in fact tried to reduce BRICS to the fulcrum of South Africa's foreign policy. In this context South Africa portrayed its presence in BRICS as beneficial for Africa: In the words of Clayson Monyela, DIRCO spokesperson at the time, "if South Africa could also lead the rest of the continent in the search of its own standards where these are high, Africa would be on an accelerated path to greater economic might. By exploring cross border expansion in trade and infrastructure, as well as improvements in domestic productivity, South Africa will have more than justified its role as a BRICS member"<sup>17</sup>. We will return the centrality about BRICS later on in this paper.

Doubts were raised about whether South Africa's entry into the BRICS constellation club was based on rational decision-making and strategic calculations. Siphamandla Zondi put it thus: "another concern has been the assumed lack of clear policy thinking behind the decision to join BRICS, causing decision-makers to wonder South Africa was just looking for

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<sup>12</sup>Centre for Conflict Resolution (CCR), Post-apartheid South Africa's foreign policy after two decades, Policy Research Seminar Report, Cape Town, South Africa, J Vernon McKay (ed), une 2014, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Andrew M. Kamarch, "Economic determinants", in "African diplomacy: Studies in the determinants of foreign policy, Prager Publishers, New York, 1966, p. 66.

<sup>14</sup>Chris Landsberg and Richard Smith, "South Africa's foreign policy for sale?", in *The Thinker*, Vol. 65, 2015, p. 24.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Clayson Monyela, The Editor's Note, "Let's talk SA's foreign policy", in *Ubuntu, Diplomacy in Action*, Issue 1, 2012.

significance, stage and a seat at the high table of world affairs...<sup>18</sup>. Zondi's point here is in line with KalHolsti's view that states are also driven by a quest for "status" and "prestige".

Zuma was almost obsessed with BRICS, and even believed that accumulating economic dividends from its ties with African states ranked as a major new foreign policy goal of the Zuma government. But it should be stated frontally that although South Africa has often paraded as the "representative" or "spokesperson" of the African continent in the BRICS group, there is little evidence to suggest that its economic and political interests are aligned with those of its immediate neighbours or other African states.

### ESTABLISHING A SOUTH AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Foreign aid has long been more than just a noble gesture exercised by powerful donor countries vis-à-vis poor and developing countries. Aid and foreign assistance have been key instruments and tools used in diplomacy to achieve strategic foreign policy goals, including serving the economic and political interests of givers to receiving states. Another Mbeki legacy that Zuma tried to pick up was that of SADPA. So, apart from the name change from DFA to DIRCO, what else was new in terms of South Africa's motivations vis-à-vis Africa, and in the realm of aid in particular. An idea communicated by the new Zuma-led government was the establishment of a South African Development Partnership Agency (SADPA), with the aim of promoting developmental partnerships. According to Minister Nkoana-Mashabane, the then government intended to bring together the work of several departments into one more practical unit. The view emanating from Pretoria-Tshwane was one of 'cooperation', 'co-ordination' and 'coherence'; practice and reality suggested otherwise. In August 2009, the Minister confirmed rather ambitiously that SADPA was operational, and would "contribute to capacity and institutional building, as well as support socio-economic and human resource development" However, while the idea of SADPA was touted as bringing order to previous chaos, it was not a new one.

<sup>18</sup>Lesley Masters and Jo-Ansie van Wyk (eds.), *South African Foreign Policy Review, Foreign Policy Change and the Zuma Years, Volume 3*, Africa Institute and HSRC Press, 2019, p. 25.

The ARF effectively propelled South Africa in the direction of challenging the hegemony of the established donors. Its aim was "to promote cooperation between the Republic of South Africa and other countries by granting loans and/ or granting of other financial assistance in respect of development projects in other countries"<sup>19</sup>.

The question is therefore how far this policy was continued by Zuma and how far it was replaced by a new one. By about 2012, there was growing concern of just how committed the government was to realizing the goal of establishing its agency amid a global Economic recession, as well as pressing socio-economic challenges at home. As well as a major service delivery crisis, the ANC government was under attack from its traditional support base, the trades unions, and is currently locking horns with the media as it tries to muzzle freedom of speech in a vain attempt to prevent disclosure of criticism of the president and the wide spread corruption that has permeated every level of government and the civil service. Of major concern was whether the government was truly committed to realizing the ambitious goal of setting aside 0,7% of GDP to go toward said, when its own peoples are participating in growing unrest at what is widely perceived, rightly or wrongly, as shambolic governance.

The plan to declare itself as a donor country that can compete with the OECD countries was also born out of the flirtation with the new "Diplomacy of Ubuntu"

But the effects of the 2008 global financial crisis and its own economic weaknesses at home, including foreign credit downgrades and tittering on the brink of economic junk status by 2017 meant that this idea was still born and more a case of delusions of grandeur.

Masters and van Wyk argued in the 2019 edition of the *South African Foreign Policy Review* that, "strategic partnerships were not defined or embraced as a tool in the diplomatic toolbox, and the South African Development Partnership Agency [was] not yet out of the starting blocks"<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>19</sup>Clayson Monyela, The Editor's Note, "Let's talk SA's foreign policy", in *Ubuntu*, op. cit.

<sup>20</sup>Lesley Masters and Jo-Ansie van Wyk (eds.), *South African Foreign Policy Review, Foreign Policy Change and the Zuma Years, Volume 3*, Africa Institute and HSRC Press, 2019, p. 5.

In the end SADPA was left hanging in limbo due to an ailing economy at home, including sliding into “junk” economic status, aggressive attempts to establish a parallel state through “state capture”, and very tough economic conditions abroad, and the Zuma government found it exceedingly difficult to justify investing so much in extra-South African initiatives. Little came of SADPA as accusations of “state capture” and economic junk status, and there was a symbiotic relationship between politics on the one hand, and the performance of the economy on the other.

### IN SEARCH OF AFRICAN IDENTITY

All states pursue key political, security and economic goals in relation to their immediate neighbourhoods, and again, South Africa is no exception<sup>21</sup>. A key plank of the Zuma administration's foreign policy was stability in, and economic benefit from its “near-abroad”. The Zuma government has identified the “continued prioritisation of the African continent”, pursued under two broad the matic areas: continental and improving political and economic integration in SADC (The South African Development Community).

South Africa has long sought to endear itself to the rest of the continent, and in an interview in 2014, President Zuma proclaimed that “Africa has remained at the centre of our foreign policy. We have worked hard to strengthen support for the African Union, SADC and all continental bodies whose purpose is to achieve peace and security”<sup>22</sup>, asserted the President. South Africa wanted a peaceful region so that market economics and growth can flourish. The President went further to assert that “we have also prioritised the promotion of regional economic integration, and sustainable development in the continent”<sup>23</sup>. It is important to stress here that Zuma had in mind not comprehensive integration that will transcend borders, but a narrow, developmental, pro-GDP growth paradigm.

Speculation has also been rife as to the future of NEPAD, the brainchild of former President Thabo Mbeki, under the scattergun approach to foreign policy of the Zuma coterie. It came as

clarifying news when government started by about 2014 to state in the open that it remained committed to NEPAD, having been silent on this issue, and so considered as ambivalent. For a while there was a real risk that the country, which had been the lead state in the formation of NEPAD, ran the risk of distancing itself for domestic political reasons a supposed to sound foreign policy motivations. In committing itself, grudgingly, to NEPAD, and to improving the regional climate for growth and development, as well as placing the development requirements of the continent on the global agenda, it is signifying that it will continue to use Mbeki's vehicles, the G8-Africa Action Plan, and the African Partnership Forum<sup>24</sup>. What policy there was stating that NEPAD remained the main frame of reference for intra-African relations and Africa's partnership with international partners. By the time the Zuma government had reaffirmed its commitment to NEPAD, we could safely work on the assumption that the goal is to help Africa increase its levels of growth for development so that Africa could become what Minister Rob Davies and others have called the “new frontier”, and others have referred to as the “next growth point”. Indeed, South Africa's participation in initiatives like the EU-Africa Strategic Partnership, the Forum for Africa-China Partnership (FOCAC), and of course BRICS, seem to be driven by this desire to help put Africa on a growth path.

South Africa has repeatedly stated that a key goal in Africa is the democratisation of states in the continent and ensuring that Africa adheres to good governance<sup>25</sup>. If that is the case, then South Africa should not allow a key governance and democracy instrument like the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) to just drift. It should show leadership in reclaiming and restoring the APRM<sup>26</sup>. It acted rather belatedly to fill the void left by the departure of Chris Stals as South African representative on the APRM Eminent Persons Group, and appointed former ANC Chair Baleka Mbete as representative, it only woke up late to ensure that the APRM processes resumed in earnest and that governance and democracy promotion

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<sup>21</sup>KJ Holsti, *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis*, op. cit, p. 84.

<sup>22</sup> *The Thinker*, Dr. Essop Pahad Interviews President Jacob Zuma, Vol 62, 2014, p. 13.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

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<sup>24</sup> See Chris Landsberg, *South Africa's “African Agenda”*: Challenges of Policy and Implementation, Paper prepared for the Presidency Fifteen-Year Review Project, 2009. ,

<sup>25</sup> *The Thinker*, Dr. Essop Pahad Interviews President Jacob Zuma, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

in Africa continues, when it appointed Prof Eddy Maloka as the new head of the APRM Commission. At home, the creditability of the instrument needed to be restored, and Maloka's appointment was appointed as the new CEO to restore the credibility of the programme and South Africa's champion status.

In a characteristically vacuous piece, policy stated that it would, through continental and regional issues, work towards the entrenchment of democracy and respect for human rights on the African continent. Suffice it to point out here that the balance between a human rights and justice versus a peace, security and development approach has been a difficult one for this country to achieve during the course of the past fifteen years.

There was also a strong emphasis on pursuing the Republic's political and economic goals through bi-lateral ties. Policy stated that, "pursuing the African Agenda required establishing and strengthening bi-lateral relations with almost all African countries"<sup>27</sup>.

### Pax-Pretoriana under Zuma

All states in the world seek security from both internal and external threats, and a *Pax South Africana* also contained conflict resolution strategies that were crafted with these ends to enhance internal and external security in mind<sup>28</sup>. No country wished to be attacked by another at home.

Whereas apartheid South Africa was a ruffian state, post-apartheid government sought to portray themselves as peacemakers and promoters of stability and security. It was bent on not pursuing a confrontational and bellicose posture vis-à-vis the region and other states. Writing in 2012, Minister of International Relations and Co-operation made a strong case for South Africa as a champion of peace and security, and the peaceful settlements of disputes. She opined that "our country emerged from conflict to become a peaceful democracy and we are now working for peace on the continent and in the world"<sup>29</sup>. She continued to observe that "we participate in peace and security matters in SADC, such as in Zimbabwe

and Madagascar. As part of the AU, our peace efforts include Libya, Sudan and Cote d'Ivoire, and in the Great lakes region, participating in efforts in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of continent and other countries"<sup>30</sup>.

The new Zuma administration steered clear of using the evocative and controversial idea of "quiet diplomacy" as a means to promote conflict resolution in Africa<sup>31</sup>. Distancing itself from this controversial concept was an attempt to show a break between itself and the Mbeki administration, yet apart from ditching the term "quiet", in practice the conflict resolution posture adopted by Zuma was similar to that adopted by the Mbeki administration<sup>32</sup>.

The 2014 CCR report referred to earlier noted that, "under the presidency of Jacob Zuma since 2009, Tshwane has increasingly 'deployed' its own officials within the African Union – including Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma as Chair of the AU Commission in 2012. South Africa has also adopted a more militaristic approach to peace processes in the Great Lakes region, leading a 3 000-strong SADC armed intervention into the eastern Congo in 2013 with Tanzania and Malawi"<sup>33</sup>.

The new government vowed to contribute to the promotion of peace, security and stability, by among others, sustaining involvement in peace keeping operations in Africa. It went on to say that South Africa would assist in the reconstruction and development of the African continent, especially in post-conflict countries such as the DRC, Sudan, Burundi, Western Sahara and Zimbabwe. But how and where would the focus lie?

Here there may be evidence of a break with policy between the two presidents. Starting with the bilateral questions, in particular Zuma's choice of first state visit to Angola in August 2009, he was accompanied by 11 Cabinet ministers, senior government officials, and the largest business delegation to accompany ahead of state on a state visit since 1994. Zuma was

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> See Chris Landsberg, "African solutions for African problems: Quiet diplomacy and South Africa's diplomatic strategy towards Zimbabwe", *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 40, No. 2, 2016, pp. 126-148.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Centre for Conflict Resolution (CCR), *Post-apartheid South Africa's foreign policy after two decades*, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>27</sup> The Presidency, *Twenty-Year Review*, South Africa 1994-2014, Pretoria-Tshwane, 2015, p. 148.

<sup>28</sup> KJ Holsti, *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis*, op. cit., p. 84.

<sup>29</sup> MaiteNkoana-Mashabane, *Letter from the Minister*, in *Ubuntu*, Issue 1, 2012, Pretoria, p. 7.

determined to restore solidarity with Angola, a country with whom relations had been severely strained during the Mbeki years. Angola did not like South Africa's hegemonic status in the region, and Angolan President Dos Santos never responded positively to Mbeki's overtures for closer relations<sup>34</sup>. Utilitarian, economic interests loomed large during this trip.

Against the backdrop of these charges, and a generally frosty relationship between Luanda and Pretoria-Tshwane, it was not surprising that Zuma chose Angola as his first destination for a state visit after becoming head of state. On a positive note, the idea of elevating South African-Angola ties to a more strategic plan sounds like a welcome move, and there are certainly bilateral benefits to be had economically. On a more curious level, the question arose whether there was a storiation of ties signals a geo-continental shift in policy away from the likes of Nigeria, Algeria, Ethiopia, Tanzania and Ghana.

There was predictably little change in policy vis-à-vis Zimbabwe, and we finally experienced a general election which took place and President Manangag was sworn in as the new President, after almost 4 decades of Mugabe rule, which apart from an explicit commitment to work towards a free and fair election at the earliest possible date. It seemed to be business as usual in Pretoria, and there was little to suggest that the Zuma government's stance differed from that of the Mbeki government quiet diplomacy strategy. Zuma has said he would work with all parties in the Zimbabwe unity government, Zanu-Pf, MDC-T svangarai, and MDC- Mutambara, to address "potential fault lines" within the inclusive government to resolve their differences and ensure that this government works more effectively. This includes resolving differences over issues such as the Governor of the Central Bank and the Attorney General. However, the government of national unity (GNU) was a fragile one and the three parties involved in the pact were reluctant participants; in the end the pact came unstuck. The GNU went through many fits and starts, and there were even occasional walkouts staged by some of the parties, especially the two MDC factions. By the end of 2017, the Zuma-led government was so consumed with domestic ANC politics, that there was a palpable lack of a

Zimbabwe strategy. Ironically, Zuma's own departure from office coincided Mugabe's departure as head of state after 40 years in Zimbabwe, and as Mugabe was replaced Managagwa, so Zuma was replaced by Emmerson Managagwa.

As far as the DRC is concerned, the Zuma government continued to use the vehicle created by the Mbeki government to engage the central African country in managing its post-colonial civil conflicts, namely the South African-DRCB i-National Commission (BNC). In engaging the DRC, South Africa would focus on examining progress on the implementation of projects and key issues related to post-conflict reconstruction and development, in particular helping the DRC building its capacity with in the police and security forces, and building state institutions to govern more effectively.

One area of policy which the Zuma government made no attempt to disguise its having continued along the Mbeki route was a preference for negotiating inclusive government son the continent. For instance, it supported the work off or mer Mozambique President Joachim Chisano as SADC appointed mediator to try and resolve the crisis in Madagascar, which has been dubbed by SADC and the AU as an example of "unconstitutional change of government". This is a practice that has been rejected by these continental institutions. Determined to reverse the unconstitutional practice and restore rule in Madagascar, Pretoria-Tshwane came out in support of Chissano's push for an inclusive government that would see Ravalomanana as president, with the person who ousted him, Rajoelina, as participating in such a government. Both would be allowed to stand in an ew presidential race after the transitional period.

A huge anomaly in the Zuma administration's *Pax-South Africana* strategy was South Africa's conduct vis-à-vis the conflict in Libya in 2011. To the surprise of many, South Africa voted in favour of UN resolutions 1970 and 1973 which help to give NATO the mandate to take military actions against Muammar Ghaddafi. This ultimately resulted in "regime change" as South Africa appeared to be going against the grain of the position by the AU. Some even suggested that South Africa adopted this position in an attempt to pacify NATO, and Washington, Paris and London in particular. In relation to the Libya debacle, Siphamandla Zondi argued that, "at that point, the discourse on the foreign

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<sup>34</sup>Adekeye Adebajo, *The Eagle and the Springbok: Essays on Nigeria and South Africa*, Jacana Media, 2018.

policy of the Zuma government shifts from seeing a promising pragmatic turn to disappointment over an ideological slide<sup>35</sup>. Alongside this”, asserts Zondi, “are perspectives that view this change of position to be indicative of clumsiness and naivety in South Africa’s expectations that Western powers would reciprocate its overtures in the form of a vote in favour of a French-sponsored resolution to allow the African Union (AU) to find a political solution first and a military solution later”<sup>36</sup>. The point is that Zuma behaved as if the AU had to play second fiddle to western actors and this created deep discontent in African quarters about South Africa’s position in relation to Libya.

One cannot conclude any assessment of *Pax-South Africana* under Jacob Zuma without a reference to policies and tactics towards Sudan. Sudan is another country and challenge over which South Africa had invested much political capital in trying to resolve political and security issues.

The Minister for international relations confirmed that South Africa has “an important contribution to finding a lasting peace in the Sudan as we chair the Ministerial Committee on post-conflict reconstruction in that country”. She confirmed that South African troops are an important component of the AU-UN peace-keeping presence in Darfur ”and that “former President Thabo Mbeki is leading a High-level Panel of the AU whose work should help us to address the challenges of justice and reconciliation in that country.” In 2014 Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa was appointed as mediator in South Sudan’s civil war, as South Africa wanted to counter the perception that it no longer took peace and security issues seriously.

By 2015, we saw a real fork in the road with regard to the International Criminal Court (ICC) brought about by the impasse with regard to indicted Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir. Contrary to obligations under the Rome statute, Pretoria-Tshwane did not only failed to arrest the Sudanese leader while attending an AU Summit in Johannesburg, but the government flatly ignored a decision by its High Court

<sup>35</sup> Siphamandla Zondi, “Debates on South Africa’s Foreign Policy and Ideology: An Afro-Decolonial Mediation on the Mbeki-Zuma Years”, South African Foreign Policy Review, op. cit., p. 25.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

which found that it acted contrary to the spirit of the Constitution. The al-Bashir saga demonstrated that South Africa’s foreign policy under Zuma was trapped between “Afro-Southern solidarism and lofty cosmopolitan values”, including a stated commitment to human rights<sup>37</sup>. There were in fact signs that the Zuma government was moving towards a “post-human rights” foreign policy and the al-Bashir crisis highlighted that “...when the time comes for choosing between moral, ethical prescripts that contradict understanding of national interest, South Africa will invariably go for the national interest”<sup>38</sup>. Siphamandla Zondi argued in similar fashion that when he stated that “...the question is the idea South Africa has moved away from a premise where human rights were once placed at the centre of its foreign policy”<sup>39</sup>. Peter Vale articulated a perspective about how South Africa’s stance vis-à-vis the ICC and al-Bashir when he argued that “one of the things that is worrying the West about South Africa is that South Africa is in danger of becoming an outlier state”<sup>40</sup>. Whatever ones views on the Zuma government’s then stance in relation to the ICC and the al-Bashir stand-off with the courts, that position had perilous implications for the Republic’s reputation as a defender of human rights in foreign policy.

### IMPROVING POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC INTEGRATION OF SADC

Economic interests rank as a major goal pursued by states, including developing countries<sup>41</sup>. In an increasingly globalising world, states also look to their immediate “near-abroad” as they search for economic markets and opportunities to maximise political and economic gain. Regional integration strategies are also motivated by such aims, and South Africa integration strategies vis-à-vis SADC was no different. In this regard, it is pertinent to consider South Africa’s planned

<sup>37</sup>See Chris Landsberg, “South Africa’s foreign policy in context”, in Al-Bashir and the Crisis in South Africa’s Foreign Policy: Problems and Prospects, Proceedings Report, South African Chair in African Diplomacy and Foreign Policy and Johannesburg Institute for Advanced Study (JIAS), 22 July 2015., p. 6.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>41</sup>KJ Holsti, International Politics: A Framework for Analysis, op. cit., p. 87.



strategies for improving political and economic integration of SADC, the new government's prioritization of which should be viewed within the context of its regarding regional economic communities (RECs) as the pillar institutions of continental union.

The new government promised to focus on making a contribution towards political cohesion and strengthening governance and capacity in SADC, especially in the Secretariat, including deploying personnel to strategic positions within the Secretariat. It is worth pointing out here that this has been a vexing question in foreign policy since the end of apartheid, namely the gap between intentions and capacity.

The Zuma government had also stated that it will move towards enhanced regional economic integration and address sources of disagreement among members of SACU on issues such as trade policy and revenue. The question that begs, however, is whether that administration genuinely planned to continue with the Mbeki government's innovative policy paradigm, introduced towards the latter years of the previous administration, namely that of development regional integration.

The closest there is to an explicit developmental idea is to be found in government's stated policy towards EPAs, articulated in the 2009 MTSF, where in the idea was mooted that South Africa would seek to ensure that EPA shave a development agenda and support regional integration. However, there continues to be a major difference amongst SADC states over how to respond to EPAs, with some being apprehensive about embracing this platform and others viewing it as an important rigger for development<sup>42</sup>. Either way, there is a need for SADC common positions over EPA sand other trade instruments.

### South-South Solidarity

Part of South Africa's goal of global transformation or international system reorganisation was the pursuit of "South-South" cooperation. In government's "Twenty-Review: South Africa 1994-2014", it professes that "democratic South Africa has always partnerships with countries of the global South, regarding them as important for the

<sup>42</sup>See Reinet Loubser, "The SADC EPA in the current economic climate", CCR Policy Brief, Cape Town, October 2017.

development of the country and the continent, and for creating solidarity in the global struggle against poverty, underdevelopment and the marginalisation of emerging economies"<sup>43</sup>. Strong links are made with development imperatives here<sup>44</sup>. While during the apartheid decades white-ruled South Africa was ostracised to the point of its international relations being effectively reduced to relations with western powers, post-apartheid governments set out to broaden their international relations and sought solidarism, new economic interactions, and new market opportunities with countries of the South. The third foreign policy pillar of the Zuma administration to consider is that of "strengthening South-South relations"<sup>45</sup>. The main rationale under scoring the South-South cooperation strategies of the Zuma government would be to "ensure the creation of political, economic and social spheres necessary for the fight against poverty, under development and marginalization of the South"<sup>46</sup>. Again, Minister Nkoana- Mashabane as good as admitted to following Mbeki when she stressed that "South Africa will continue to build relations based on solidarity and cooperation with regional and sub-regional groups in the South such as the Non-aligned Movement (NAM), Forum for China-Africa Co-operation (FOCAC), Africa-India Forum, G77 plus China, the India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum, and the New Asia-Africa Strategic Partnership (NAASP) in pursuit of the consolidation of the African Agenda"<sup>47</sup>.

It should be remembered that the Southern formations which the Zuma government chose to prioritize were the very ones in which Mbeki government played pivotal roles in revitalizing and strengthening, including IBSA and NAASP, and NAM and the G77 plus China formation. Minister Maite Nkoana- Mashabane put it thus: "South Africa participates in various multi-lateral forums, including SADC, the AU and the Non-Aligned Movement, G77 plus China, the Commonwealth, the BRICS bloc, the India-Brazil-South Africa forum and the UN"<sup>48</sup>.

<sup>43</sup> The Presidency, Twenty-Year Review, South Africa 1994-2014, op. cit., p. 153.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, Address to the Heads of Missions Conference, Sandton, 13 August 2009.

<sup>48</sup> Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, Letter from the Minister, in Ubuntu, Issue 1, 2012, Pretoria, p. 7.

Indeed, the Zuma administration reached a point at which it no longer even pretended to deny the strong political and economic ties Mbeki had cultivated with India, Brazil and China, as providing opportunities to diversify its international relations, especially in the political realm. It continued with the positions and posture of the Mbeki government in terms of South-South co-operation, as it did with respect to other areas of foreign policy.

### Ambivalence towards the North

In terms of relations with the Northern industrialised powers, the Zuma government's policies were perplexing and blurring as we witnessed a pronounced gap between rhetoric and reality in terms of the Zuma government's foreign policy posture. It should be remembered that seeking welfare and prosperity in foreign relations, while ensuring the policy autonomy of a state is a key objective championed by states in foreign policy. The Zuma government has been quite ambivalent about its relations with the West in particular, the industrialised North in general<sup>49</sup>. A key goal which motivated South Africa's relations with industrialised powers, all the negative anti-West rhetoric notwithstanding, was that it sought political autonomy from the west, but close and intimate ties economically. The government was cynical about relations with the industrialised powers. On the one hand government wanted economic closeness, yet on the other hand it wanted maximum political distance. While the Zuma government shared a major plank of the Mbeki government in terms of a commitment to engaging the Northern industrialized powers and their associations, there was also this heightened tensions between Pretoria-Tshwane and many of the western capitals. This rationale behind this fourth pillar of the Zuma administration's foreign policy was to continue to engage the industrialized powers.

Very early on during the Zuma administration's era, the visit in August 2009 by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton confirmed South Africa's wish to cement close ties with Washington and strategic economic relations in particular, and it wished to take "full advantage of the US Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA)". It should be remembered that, during the Mbeki

and George W. Bush presidential eras in South Africa and American respectively, the bilateral relationship between the two countries cooled off significantly because of differences over US unilateral conduct globally and the illegal American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. On the other hand, there was American irritation over South Africa's 'quiet' approaches to the crisis in Zimbabwe.

Reaching out to the EU was another example of South Africa's determination to bolster its relations with the North. The EU is South Africa's leading trading partner, and it wished to turn this reality into benefits for itself and for the African continent in the main, South Africa has committed itself to advancing AU-EU relations by taking the 1<sup>st</sup> Africa-EU Action Plan implementation process. The Zuma administration could have taken a leaf out of the book of its predecessor, which had learned some tough lessons from the TDCA negotiations with Europe, above all how not to go it alone.

### Participate in the Global System of Governance

Kal Holsti reminds us that many states "dream of world reorganisation", of changing and transforming world politics and the constellation and distribution of world power and world resources in ways that would not be antithetical to their interests<sup>50</sup>. As such, some states prefer the global status quo more than they prefer changing it depending on their belief that such a global order serves their interests and advance their economic, social and political ideas. The fifth pillar of the Zuma government's evolving foreign policy was that of "participating in the global system of governance", remarkably similar to Mbeki administration's "global governance" strategies<sup>51</sup>. When the Zuma government talked about "participation in the global system of governance" they had in mind attempting to help altering global order in a manner that it would become friendlier to African interests and the concerns and aspirations of the South. In the early part of this treatise, dealing with foreign policy strategies of the Mbeki government, we advanced the argument that the South African government from 1999 to 2008 essentially followed a

<sup>49</sup> S. Firsing and L. Masters, "South Africa's foreign policy and the West: the art of foreign policy balancing", in L. Masters, S. Zondi, J. van Wyk, and C. Landsberg (eds.), *South African Foreign Policy Review*, Vol. 2, Africa Institute of South Africa Press, 2015, pp. 208-225.

<sup>50</sup> KJ Holsti, *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis*, op. cit., p. 109.

<sup>51</sup> See Chris Landsberg, "The foreign policy of the Zuma government: pursuing the 'national interests'". In *South African Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 17, No. 3, 2010, pp. 1165-1181.

transformational and developmental foreign policy<sup>52</sup>.

The transformational aspirations of government as articulated here targeted for reform and transformation both political and global financial institutions. Invalidating the idea of a developmental foreign policy, the 2009 MTSF stated that "strategic relations with the North", the Zuma government's "global system of governance" strategies were geared towards ensuring "that the developmental objectives of the developing world are addressed"<sup>53</sup>.

Just as its views regarding BRICS, South Africa clearly saw itself as the articulator of Africa's interests abroad, and would particularly champion this cause in multi-lateral for abroad. It is for this reason that it saw itself as fundamentally committed to global compacts like the MDGs. It should however be said that the continent seemed, and continues to be, divided on this hegemonic role South Africa takes on, indeed some actively welcomes it whilst others do not.

### Strengthening Political and Economic Relations

A basic conceptualisation of foreign policy is that it denotes the pursuit of goals vis-à-vis states and external actors in the international system. The Zuma government also harboured political, economic and strategic goals towards "key", individual states, particularly those states that could help it attain its economic and developmental goals. The emerging foreign policy trajectories of the young Jacob Zuma administration not only focused on multi lateral dimensions and institutions but also placed an emphasis on the need to strengthen bi-lateral political and economic relations. Here too the Zuma administration took its cue again from the Mbeki government's foreign policy priorities, as it placed major emphasis on economic diplomacy, and strengthening economic relations with as many states as possible. In her address to the Heads of Missions Conference in Sandton in August 2009, the minister of International Relations reminded heads of missions and diplomats about the imperatives of economic goals, and pursued through the

economic diplomacy in particular<sup>54</sup>. She said: Among our main challenges in the pursuit of our foreign policy objectives is the alignment and co-ordination of South Africa's economic diplomacy across all spheres of government; strengthening economic diplomatic capacity in our Missions; and improving efforts aimed at marketing the brand South Africa and Africa abroad<sup>55</sup>.

Stated policy held that South Africa's economic diplomacy strategy would continue to focus on strengthening economic relations with traditional and established economic partners; expanding trade relations with emerging markets in Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe; and the promotion of intra-Africa trade so as to enhance economic development on the continent.

The stress on economic interests was palpable. This emphasis on economic diplomacy came as no surprise as the new government set out from the onset of its new terms to close the domestic-foreign policy divide and to introduce strategies that would make it better possible for DIRCO to make a more effective contribution to help meet the national strategic goals identified by government, and economic diplomacy was a key instrument in achieving this. The Minister was emphatic: "our foreign policy also entails effective economic diplomacy. We work to attract investments and tourism, remove barriers to trade, support the development of larger markets in Africa and expand the markets for South Africa in Africa"<sup>56</sup>. There was in a real sense something of what Adebajo called a "mercantilist" foreign policy agenda by South Africa as it went searching for investment and markets.<sup>57</sup> Here we could note that South Africa's mercantilist, utilitarian, self-interested, regime-driven foreign policy often landed the country in precarious situations. Lesley Masters and Jo-Ansie van Wyk's singles out the desperate search for a nuclear deal and opines in the 2019 *Foreign Policy Review* that "the Zuma administration saw an incremental change to emphasis in foreign policy in practice, particularly

<sup>52</sup>See Chris Landsberg, "Thabo Mbeki's legacy of transformational diplomacy", in Daryl Glaser (ed.), *Mbeki and after: Reflections on the legacy of Thabo Mbeki*, Wits University Press, 2010, pp. 220-236.

<sup>53</sup>Chris Landsberg, "The emerging Africa strategy of the new Jacob Zuma administration", in Siphamandla Zondi and Lesley Masters (eds.), *op. cit.*,

<sup>54</sup>Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, Address to the Heads of Missions Conference, Sandton, 13 August 2009.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup>Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, Address to the Heads of Missions Conference, Sandton, 13 August 2009

<sup>57</sup> See Adekeye Adebajo, "South Africa in Africa: messiah or mercantilist", *South African Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 14, Issue 1, 2007, pp. 29-47.

during President Zuma's second term (2014-2018) when nuclear diplomacy began to unravel, with South Africa's nuclear deals under the spotlight following corruption scandals"<sup>58</sup>.

### CONCLUSION

Both domestically and in terms of foreign policy there had been a clear shift in the approach of the Jacob Zuma-led government to a more utilitarian, economic, interest driven posture. It could even be argued that under the banner of "national interest" a crude "regime interest" paradigm was followed by the Zuma administration. Regime interests and interests of the economic elite came to play important parts in driving foreign policy, especially in the economic realm. The mantra "Open for business...in a big way" came to drive foreign policy motives a lot.

In terms of the external motives, South Africa was determined to continue to punch above its weight in foreign policy. Its stated foreign policy continued to harbour presence in African, South-South, North-South, and global governance positions and structures. But we have seen a situation where positional presence became a more important drive than the actual strategic contribution made by South Africa. The Zuma government therefore appeared more interested in enhancing its global prestige and reputation as a key global player than making a real difference in these structures such as BRICS, the G20, BRICS, the G77 Plus China, and other formations.

South Africa's stated policy was that joining such groupings had a lot to do with seeking to bring about a transformed global order, one that would better serve the interests of Africa and developing countries. However, joining these constellation was not backed up by clear strategies on the part of the Zuma government. So, while Russia had clear geo-political and geo-strategic motives for why it wanted to join BRICS, and China's crude economic motives were palpable, South Africa often struggled to articulate a clear view as to why BRICS was in its interest. Zuma regarded BRICS and the invitation for South Africa to join this constellation as his greatest foreign policy triumph.

We saw a reversion back to bi-lateralism by the Zuma government, in which it would seek close political and economic ties with key countries so as to maximise its political and economic interests, including those of the ruling ANC party.

In short, the Zuma government will be remembered for having introduced a crude economic dimension in foreign policy, with a more pronounced emphasis on the Republic's national [read: self-] interest, and the African Agenda, South-South solidarism, and multi-lateralism were shifted to the margins as economic and regime interests were elevated to the position of *primus inter pares*.

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<sup>58</sup>Lesley Masters and Jo-Ansie van Wyk (eds.), *South African Foreign Policy Review*, op. cit., p. 5.