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**In search of global influence, order and development:
South Africa's foreign policy a decade after political
apartheid**

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1. INTRODUCTION

In April 2005, South Africa's post-settlement order and politics reached the eleventh year mark. During this time South Africa incrementally developed a foreign policy orientation that mainly sought a new global standing as a good world citizen and activist state seeking to bring about a new, rules-based global order. For South Africa's post-apartheid rulers, the liberated state's global standing and authority would come from negotiating for such rules-based order at home, in the rest of Africa and abroad. South Africa's foreign policy gradually engaged this idea of defending a more just and equitable world order, assuming the role of peacemaker and negotiator in Africa, being a champion of Africa's interests, becoming a bridge-builder for South-South partnerships and bargaining for new, equitable partnerships between Africa and the northern industrialised powers and between the South, more generally, and the North.

Over the past decade, South Africa's African and global strategies have gradually become so ambitious and elaborate that the Republic has begun to 'punch above its weight'. While in real terms South Africa is a middle ranked power, it has demonstrated an influence in world affairs usually reserved for great powers such as the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, the G-8 and other industrialised democracies. Since 1994 the country has sought to play in the premier league of world affairs and its diplomacy has typically tried to influence what it perceived to be a divided world. It has used multilateral platforms such as the United Nations (UN), the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and in Africa it has used the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African Union (AU). It played a key role in helping to establish and shape the AU. Its diplomacy has portrayed the country as a 'voice of reason' in world affairs.

Whereas the Nelson Mandela government (1994-1999) sought to give expression to an ethical foreign policy, the Thabo Mbeki government (1999-) is pursuing a largely pragmatic foreign policy with a core concern: the articulation of an ambitious African posture, official dubbed "The 'new' African agenda: in search of development, peace and security, governance and economic growth". During the Mandela years, South Africa's principle-driven foreign policy and diplomacy stressed human rights, democratisation and a respect for international law. It rejected hegemonic ambitions in Africa and emphasised the need for South Africa to engage the continent as partner, not some arrogant power bent on assuming a civilising mission on the continent. This non-hegemonic posture was fine-tuned by the Mbeki government. Indeed, the Mbeki government, and the president in particular, have pursued a grander foreign policy in search of international status. During the first five-year Mbeki term, South Africa pushed for a rules-based global order; it saw itself as bridge-builder between the developed and developing worlds and as a spokesperson for Africa in international forums. It openly rejected unilateralism and energetically promoted multilateralism. It was the premier norms-and-values-maker in Africa and pushed for mechanisms and rules in defence of governance, democratisation, peace and security; it did

this through efforts such as the AU, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and a proposed African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM).

2. THE DOMESTIC AND REGIONAL SOURCES OF SOUTH AFRICA'S GLOBAL INFLUENCE

South Africa's post-apartheid rulers deliberately tried to base its global role and influence on certain of the country's perceived 'strengths'. Government has, for example, articulated what it sees as a number of "perception-based strengths"¹, including domestic assets such as South Africa's successful transition from apartheid autocracy to democracy, its commitment to political and racial reconciliation and its constitution which accommodates local, provincial and national needs. The belief is that the country's transition gives it a moral authority in world affairs, as the transition is generally celebrated as a positive example in world affairs. The strong emphasis on leadership and institutions and the leadership and aura of President Mandela in particular, has served as an image builder for South Africa abroad. President Thabo Mbeki's leadership in Africa, especially his mediation and negotiating role in helping to resolve Africa's conflicts, has been recognised internationally.

According to the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), South Africa also boasts what it calls "dynamic strengths"², notably the country's "strong", natural resource-based economy and its "sound" fiscal and macroeconomic policies over the past decade.³ Government regards its macroeconomic policy - and the fact that the economy requires no international assistance for structural adjustment - as a major advantage, one that imprints a certain competitive image on the country.

Another strength is its position as a special "middle ranked" power; its status derives from its geographic, geo-political and geo-strategic role in Africa. Many foreign governments and investors seeking opportunities in Africa regard the Republic as "a gateway" to the rest of the continent.

The country's perceived "vote-pulling" capacity and influence in multilateral institutions is regarded as yet another strength.⁴ The country's great commitment to finding negotiated solutions to international problems, as well as its strong predisposition to avoid or minimise discord in foreign relations, have led many countries into voting with South Africa. A

¹ Department of Foreign Affairs. 'Foreign Policy Review Seminar: Deliberations and Recommendations.' 9-10 September 1996: 17.

² Department of Foreign Affairs. 'Foreign Policy Review Seminar: Deliberations and Recommendations.'

³ Ibid.

Also see Kornegay Francis, Landsberg Chris. 'From Dilemma to Détente: Pretoria's policy options on the DRC and Great Lakes.' Centre for Policy Studies: Policy Brief 11: 2.

⁴ Ibid.

testimony to this idea of “vote-pulling” is that the Republic is referred to by some as the “negotiating capital” of the world.

It would, of course, be unwise to suggest that the country only boasts strengths and no weaknesses that impact negatively on its prestige and influence. Government itself has identified such weaknesses. These weaknesses include what DFA calls “resource-based weaknesses”: cuts in government budgets, notably to DFA and the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) that have typically resulted in downsizing, which in turn have created capacity problems. These capacity problems make it difficult for government to effectively manage its diplomacy and foreign affairs. Likewise, the DFA and the country’s diplomatic network suffer from their own weaknesses, such as inexperience and inadequate research and analytical capabilities.

South Africa’s “dynamic weaknesses” include an increase in crime (and perceptions of the state losing the battle against crime), a technology gap and the restructuring of the economy, especially with regard to the pace of development.⁵ “Perception-based weaknesses” include growing Afro-pessimism abroad and the resultant negative impact on foreign investment, which tends to affect South Africa as much as other countries on the continent. “Capacity-based weaknesses” in turn, are mainly in the domain of human resources. These are human development backlogs, education and training weaknesses, diminishing research capability and demands for restructuring the state and other institutions.⁶ Government will have to address these weaknesses if it is to realise its lofty foreign policy goals.

3. WORKING FOR A RULES-BASED WORLD ORDER

While the Mandela government often stressed the need for a more “just world order”, Thabo Mbeki saw great merit in working for “a rules-oriented world order” and a more equitable “world order”. While Mandela stressed the need for international law to be taken seriously, Mbeki placed the emphasis on the great need to overhaul the world politically and economically. In Mbeki’s own words, there was a need to “...create a new international political and economic order”.⁷

South Africa’s quest for this “just”, “equitable” and “rules-based” global order is captured in various key, strategic foreign policy documents:

- A Memorandum of 1996 from the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) titled *National External Security Strategy (NESS): Draft Input to the Growth and Development Strategy*

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Mbeki Thabo. ‘Statement at a banquet in Honour of President Zemin of the Republic of China.’ Pretoria, 25 April 2000: 3.

- *South African Foreign Policy Discussion Document*, Department of Foreign Affairs, Pretoria, 1996
- *Transformation Document: Core Business of the Department of Foreign Affairs*, Department of Foreign Affairs, Pretoria, December 1998
- DFA Strategic Plan, March 2004
- DFA Strategic Plan, 2005-2008.

There is almost congruence between most of these documents, expressing the key tenets of South Africa's foreign policy as it evolved over the past decade. For example, some of them promote an external strategy stressing "cooperation with other partner states and international organisations with the aim to foster a regional, continental and global environment of peace and stability in which growth and development, democracy and respect for human rights can prosper."⁸ The belief is that South Africa's transition from apartheid gives the Republic a "special niche in world diplomacy."⁹ The country's foreign policy is concerned with the "globalisation of the economy and bloc formation" as well as the "growing importance of multilateralism".¹⁰ It is just as concerned with the "modern electronic communication" revolution.¹¹

When government embarked upon the transformation of South Africa's macro- and meta-foreign policies in 1998, the idea emerged that the experience gained after the brief post-1994 period had enabled the government to begin to more clearly and specifically define South Africa's global role. It was the belief that the country's active response to the expectations of the international community had enabled it to gain early practical experience in the nature and complexity of issues facing international society. The 1998 inventory and subsequent documents discerned the following features, and sought to construct South Africa's foreign policy around these features and trends:¹² globalisation; multilateralism; regional and continental co-operation; the electronics revolution and information superhighway; the growing gap between North and South; a focus on good governance, human rights and democratisation; and a redefinition of international security to encompass greater dimensions of human security.

⁸ Department of Foreign Affairs. 'National External Security Strategy (NESS): Draft input to chapter six of the National Growth and Development Strategy.' Occasional Paper no. 1, 1996: 16.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Department of Foreign Affairs. 'South African Foreign Policy Discussion Document.' September 1996: 7.

¹¹ Department of Foreign Affairs. 'South African Foreign Policy Discussion Document.' 11.

¹² Department of Foreign Affairs. 'Transformation Document: The Core Business of the Department of Foreign Affairs.' Pretoria, 18 December 1998: 4.

The DFA concluded that South Africa's focus should fall squarely on linking its domestic interests, its regional and continental objectives and the development of a coherent agenda for the South. This consolidation of foreign policy priorities singled out relations with Africa, and the promotion of the continent's international relations as the number one priority.¹³

Foreign policy came to stress a new priority: "fundamentally" altering "the relationship between Africa and the North, while strengthening the relationship between Africa and the South".¹⁴ The clear goal is to bring about international redress by playing a bridging role between these divided blocks.¹⁵ Pretoria came to promote "global governance" by emphasising the centrality of the United Nations (UN) in global affairs. It stressed the need for a strong disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation global regime and pushed for the restructuring of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Policy consistently asserted that "Africa remained the core focus of South Africa's foreign policy".¹⁶ In 2002, the minister of foreign affairs, Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, stated that South Africa should act "...to articulate and defend the interest of Africa and the developing South in the foray of the developed countries".¹⁷ Policy identified "...the principal challenge of transforming our continent economically, socially, politically and culturally". South Africa wished to be at the forefront of reversing the image of Africa "...as the unfathomable disaster - the netherworld"¹⁸.

3.1 Influence through values and principles

In the aftermath of its own negotiated settlement in 1994, the new government quickly moved to make the promotion of democratisation in Africa the central tenet of international public policy. Under the banner of an "African Renaissance," foreign policy stated that the lasting solutions to problems in the world "can only come through the promotion of democracy throughout the world."¹⁹ Former President Mandela, in an address to the United States of America's Congress on 6 October 1994, advocated that "...we should cease to treat

¹³ Pityana Sipho. 'Address to the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA).' 5 June 2000: 6-7.

¹⁴ Department of Foreign Affairs, 'Report-back to the people.' Annual Report 2001-2002, Pretoria, 2002: 3.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Department of Foreign Affairs. 'Report-back to the people.' Annual Report 2001-2002, Pretoria, 2002: 1.

¹⁷ Department of Foreign Affairs. 'Strategic Plan 2002-2005.' Pretoria, 2002.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ African National Congress. 'Developing a Strategic Perspective on South Africa's Foreign Policy.' ANC Discussion Document Johannesburg, Shell House, 1994: 60.

tyranny, instability and poverty anywhere on our globe as peripheral to our interests and to our future.” Mandela declared that “it is perhaps a common cause among us that everywhere on our globe there is an unmistakable process leading to the entrenchment of democratic systems of government.”²⁰

A major theme running through foreign policy became the promotion of “democratic peace”²¹. Under Mandela, Pretoria openly subscribed to the idea that democracies do not go to war with one another, and that democracy is fundamentally more pacific than any other form of government. Mbeki too, even before he became president, was committed to “building of stable democratic systems...and making a contribution to the challenge of peace, democracy, development and stability in the rest of our continent.”²² For Mbeki, “the dream of peace and stability, of democracy and human rights” are intertwined. He has repeatedly said that southern Africa must transform into a “zone of peace” by means of “building stable democracies.”²³ He has strongly attacked one party rule and personal dictatorship in Africa and has proclaimed that “the one party system and military governments will not work.”²⁴ He has called for Africans to “rebel” against and “resist all tyranny.”²⁵ Instead, “the people must govern.”²⁶ He often stated that governments should “derive their authority and legitimacy from the will of the people,” as well as become fully representative of women.²⁷

But there were limits to the Republic’s moralistic, pro-human rights foreign policy. DFA has long insisted that South Africa’s stance on human rights must be determined by the Republic’s identity: a middle-income, developing country.²⁸

With consideration to the tensions between democratisation and human rights on the one hand and economic priorities on the other, Pretoria gradually moved to the position that

²⁰ Landsberg Chris. ‘Promoting democracy: The Mandela-Mbeki doctrine.’ *Journal of Democracy*. July 2000.

²¹ Ibid.

²² This is a theme that runs through most of Mbeki’s speeches on the African Renaissance and African affairs over the past five years.

See also the internet site <<http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mbeki>>

²³ Mbeki Thabo. ‘A National Strategic vision for South Africa.’ Address to the Development Planning Summit, hosted by the Intergovernmental Forum. Pretoria, 27 November 1995: 2-4.

Mbeki Thabo. ‘Africa: the time has come.’ Address to the Corporate Council on Africa’s Attracting capital to Africa summit. Chantilly, Virginia, United States of America, 19-22 April 1997: 2-4.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Mbeki Thabo. ‘The African Renaissance Statement.’ South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). Johannesburg, Gallagher Estate, 13 August 1998: 4.

²⁶ Mbeki Thabo. ‘The African Renaissance Statement.’ 6.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Department of Foreign Affairs. ‘Seminar Deliberations and Recommendations.’ Foreign Policy Workshop for the Foreign Policy Review. Randburg, 9-10 September 1996.

the issue of human rights should be approached on a case-by-case basis - evidence of a move towards greater pragmatism in its diplomatic and foreign policy strategies. It has aligned itself with those sideline states (eg the Nordic states) that enhance the international mechanisms designed to strengthen human rights instruments globally. These states place a great premium on the strength of global instruments and the internationalisation of human rights.

South Africa sought to use its unique success at negotiating an end to racial conflict as a tool in international policy and plans for democratisation and human rights.²⁹ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was of the view that South Africa's human rights image "is probably its only comparative advantage in this regard."³⁰

3.2 Prestige derived from Regional and Continental Integration

Given its commitment to ending Africa's international marginalisation, South Africa over the past decade built a strong policy in defence of regional integration and development. The 1996 *Draft Discussion Document on a Framework for Cooperation with the Countries of the Southern African Region* DFA stated: "South Africa should strive to achieve regional economic development by utilising the instrument that is ready at hand, in the form of the Southern African Development Community." The draft discussion further stated that South Africa's vision for the South African Development Council region is one "of the highest possible degree of economic cooperation, mutual assistance where necessary and joint planning of regional development initiatives, leading to integration consistent with socio-economic, environmental and political realities."

South Africa's stance on regional integration favoured a "cautious and step-by-step" approach towards regional development in southern Africa. The emphasis was thus initially on cooperation rather than full-fledged integration. Policy was based "on the principles of equity and mutual benefit", a denunciation of domineering postures towards the region and the belief that an emphasis on partnership and fairness would more effectively realise foreign policy goals. Effort and energy went into restructuring the Southern African Development Community (SADC)³¹, and Pretoria pushed for the articulation of protocols but also stressed their implementation and operationalisation, particularly those on free trade, politics, defence and security cooperation.³² A great deal of focus was placed on boosting

²⁹ 'Seminar Deliberations and Recommendations.' Public document, Foreign Policy Workshop.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Bekoe Dorina A. 'Peacemaking in Southern Africa: The Role and Potential of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Task Force Meeting, International Peace Academy and the Centre for Africa's International Relations. Johannesburg, October 2002.

³² Landsberg Chris. 'Building a regional society in southern Africa: The institutional governance dimension.' Policy: Issues and Actors. Centre for Policy Studies, Vol 15, No 1.

international investor confidence and attracting Foreign Direct Investment to the regional economy.

South Africa's foreign policy elite furthermore viewed themselves as interlocutors and were key in negotiating the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). NEPAD was an initiative to spur Africa's development after decades of failure as a result of the legacies of colonialism and the Cold War, bad governance, unsound economic policies and management, and destructive conflicts.³³ The NEPAD plan of action identified five critical issues as essential for bolstering Africa's development chances. These were:

- democracy, governance and peace and security;
- economic and corporate governance;
- infrastructure and information technology;
- human resource development (notably health and education); and
- agriculture and market access.³⁴

Foreign policy was strongly in favour of continental integration and South Africa was thus a key actor in establishing the African Union (AU). The Union made provision for the establishment of some 18 new organs; the key ones amongst these, according to Article 5.1 of the Constitutive Act of the Union, include:

- the Assembly of the Union;
- the Executive Council;
- the Pan-African Parliament (PAP);
- the Commission;
- the Permanent Representative Committee;
- the Specialised Technical Committees;
- the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC); and
- the Financial Institutions.³⁵

³³ Bekoe Dorina A, Landsberg Chris. 'NEPAD: African Initiative, New Partnership?' International Peace Academy (IPA), IPA Workshop Report. New York, 16 July 2002.

³⁴ NEPAD Secretariat. 'NEPAD at Work.' Summary of NEPAD Action Plans. Midrand, July 2002.

³⁵ Landsberg Chris, Mackay Shaun. 'Is the AU the OAU without the O?' South African Labour Bulletin. August 2003; Vol 27, No 4

With South Africa's influence, the AU began to emphasise the need to strengthen capacity and action in conflict prevention, management and resolution, with special emphasis on African missions such as that in Burundi.³⁶ The areas through which South Africa sought to maximise its global prestige and influence included campaigning against the illicit trafficking of light weapons, anti-personnel landmines, child soldiers and human security. This issue of human security is an interesting one: in its foreign policy, and through the AU and NEPAD, South Africa's policy-makers sought to move away from strict notions of militarily defined state security to a greater emphasis on human security and social justice. This made for some important discussion and reflection. The country has been a key voice in favour of new modalities for resource mobilisation, such as better and more effective levels of aid. South Africa and its African partners specifically campaigned for international support to enhance the continent's peace support operations capabilities.³⁷

As far as the political issues of governance, democratisation and the rule of law were concerned, the AU wanted to ensure greater political participation, pluralism, transparency, accountability and freedoms for the citizenry in order to entrench democratic governance processes.³⁸ In this respect, the following issues were highlighted: establishing and strengthening organs and mechanisms of good and democratic governance such as the PAP, the ECOSOCC, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the participation of civil society.

This policy promoted adherence to democratic benchmarks and governance indicators set up by Africans for Africans in order to benefit from the renewed focus on African ownership. The policy had, for example, been instrumental in setting up an African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) to promote democratic conduct in Africa.³⁹

4. SPEAKING SOFTLY DESPITE CARRYING THE BIG STICK

Outside perceptions counted for much in South Africa's global perception and quest for prestige and influence. Outside perceptions of the Republic's conduct impacted greatly on policy preferences. A cursory look at official documentation emanating from the DFA in Pretoria would suggest that the ANC-led government sought to balance international expectations and its own fear of dominance in the southern African region. Thus, while many outsiders viewed South Africa as a hegemon - a regional superpower in the sub-region and more broadly on the continent of Africa - the ANC-led government was quick to denounce

³⁶ Landsberg Chris, Mackay Shaun. 'The African Union: Political will and commitment needed for new doctrine.' Centre for Policy Studies. Synopsis. Vol 7, No 1.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Chris Landsberg, 'Building sustainable peace requires democratic governance', Centre for Policy Studies, Synopsis, vol. 7, number 1, April 2003.

³⁹ The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), NEPAD workshop on Indicators, Benchmarks and Processes for the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), Cape Town, 7-8 October 2002.

such ideas. Instead, it believed that the Republic's status and prominence in Africa and in world affairs more generally would be enhanced by not reinforcing, but by downplaying such bossy-ness. As early as 1996, therefore, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Aziz Pahad, stated that "...we must carry our relations with the region in a way that is not a big brother relationship. This means that because of our relative strength we don't simply impose ourselves."⁴⁰ Pahad cautioned: "[t]his does not mean that we are not sensitive to the Big Brother or Big Sister syndrome. However, it also means that South Africa cannot afford to sit on the sidelines. There can be no debate about this issue."⁴¹ African leaders "...have indeed warned that if South Africa continues to hide behind the rhetoric of not wanting to play a leadership role, Africa would indeed suspect a hidden agenda."⁴²

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. South Africa chose to portray a strategic and defensive non-threatening military posture. The belief was that such a posture is the best route to enhancing security and confidence within southern Africa and beyond. The country's defensive military strategy is based on both deterrence and effective military capability. That is why, between 1997 and 1999, South Africa entered into arms trade deals of more than R 30 billion. Those deals involved Italy, Britain, Germany and Sweden. It is estimated that in exchange for purchasing military equipment from these states, they would in turn directly invest in the country to the tune of some R 100 billion. This was thrice the value of the original deals, and more importantly, would create jobs that would make inroads into South Africa's unemployment rate of 35% - 45 %. The arms deals unleashed a storm of criticism by civil society actors and parliamentary opposition at home. Many critics argued that Pretoria faced no real military threats in the post-apartheid, post-Cold War context; that the overhaul of its military may send the wrong message to its smaller neighbours and thus trigger a new arms race in southern Africa.

South Africa's purchase of new artillery did trigger anxiety in many regional quarters and it was duty-bound to reassure its neighbours that its massive arms purchases were not intended as a threat to them, but were truly acquired merely as a means to modernise its capabilities.

While South Africa was at pains not to be seen as the "bully" in political, diplomatic and military terms, it was nonetheless seen as the economic "bully" in the region.⁴³ The republic

⁴⁰ Interview with the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, interview conducted by Kevin Humphrey, in *Towards Democracy* (1st Quarter 1996): p. 7.

⁴¹ See Claude Kabemba and Chris Landsberg, "South African Diplomacy: Ten Lessons from Africa," *Policy Brief 2* (Johannesburg: Centre for Policy Studies, 1998).

⁴² Landsberg Chris, Kabemba Claude. 'South African Diplomacy: Ten Lessons from Africa.' 3.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

enjoys skewed trade relations with the rest of the region, and this has greatly undermined its political democratisation project in the region. South Africa's economic expansion into the continent has been both private sector-driven and government-promoted. Trade with the rest of Africa jumped 328 % between 1993 and 2003.⁴⁴ For example, of South Africa's R 20.3 billion trade with the member states of SADC in 1999, R 17.7 billion were exports to the region. This is an imbalance of almost 7:1.⁴⁵ Total trade with Africa in 2001, excluding the Southern African Customs Union, amounted to US\$ 856 million in imports and US\$ 3.7 billion in exports, an imbalance of nearly 5:1.⁴⁶ That there is a serious trade imbalance is illuminated further in the table below.

BusinessMap estimates that South African companies invested an average of US\$ 435 million a year in the 13-member SADC between 1994 and 2003.⁴⁷ Investment opportunities on the continent climbed gradually after 1994, but took off from about 2000 - helped in part by the South African government's relaxation of foreign exchange controls for businesses investing in Africa.⁴⁸ Shoprite Checkers' more than 72 stores in 13 African countries outside South Africa do business that accounts for 12 % of the group's turnover.⁴⁹ Retail trade, banking, telecommunications, hotel, tourism, mining and other infrastructure industries and sectors are areas of focus. South African firms have significantly expanded their mining operations into Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Zambia, as well as in light industries such as breweries and bottling plants. South African companies continue to dominate the food service industry in the SADC region, as well as the banking and finance sectors.

Mozambique has replaced Zimbabwe as South Africa's largest trading partner in the region and recipient of major investments. South Africa initiated the Maputo trade corridor, expected to boost Mozambique's exports significantly. Between 1997 and 2001, South African companies have reportedly invested R 9 billion in Mozambique and created some 43 000 jobs.

Even as far a field as east Africa, Kenya feels threatened by this country's economic penetration, while in turn being unable to gain access to South African markets. Countries such as Zimbabwe and Kenya complained in the past about the fact that South Africa runs a trade surplus with them (into the tens of millions of rands).

⁴⁴ Quoted in Centre for Policy Studies. 'South Africa in Africa: The post-apartheid decade.' Seminar report, 29 July-1 August 2004. Stellenbosch, November 2004: 22.

⁴⁵ Daniel J, Naidoo V, Naidu S. 'The South Africans have arrived: Post-apartheid corporate expansion into Africa.' Daniel J, Habib A, Southall R (eds). State of the nation: South Africa 2003-2004. Human Sciences Research Council, 2003: 376.

⁴⁶ Ibid.
Quoted in Business Day 17 April 2002.

⁴⁷ Stoddard E. 'SA's economic growth shows way for the rest of Africa.' Business Day. 11 May 2005.

⁴⁸ 'South African business sees opportunities up north.' Business Day. 9 July 2004.

⁴⁹ Christianson D. 'South Africans doing business in Africa: The new imperialists.' Enterprise. December 2004: 78.

4.1 North-South and South-South Partnerships as stature

No other country's foreign policy in recent years has elevated the idea of a "partnership" between North and South and between Africa and the industrialised North to such a high strategic plane as that of post-apartheid South Africa. This quest for a strategic partnership between Africa and the North is probably the one issue which brings to bear South Africa's influence and prominence in world affairs, more than any other. South Africa's foreign policy over the past decade, and especially during the Mbeki administration, has boldly conveyed the idea that it is a "bridge-builder", a partnership builder and a dealmaker between North and South. The country has identified numerous international platforms, notably the multilateral forums, to promote this partnership.

The report of the Commission for Africa (CfA), released on 11 March 2005, is an example of this quest for partnership between North and South. The CfA reiterates, like NEPAD, the need for substantial enhancement of resource inflows, debt cancellation and fostering the realisation of the Doha Trade Agreement, particularly in creating greater market access to African countries.

South Africa and its southern partners used platforms such as the annual G-8 Summits to engage the developed countries of the North on issues of development. At these meetings the developing nations sought "a more equitable, fair and just international system". These included debt issues, market access within the framework of the Doha agenda and official development assistance.

So, in terms of influence and prestige, South Africa sought to use its unique relationship with the North to put issues such as free and fair trade on the international agenda. The South African government has repeatedly pleaded to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) for free and "fair" trade,⁵⁰ and as such acted as a voice for the developing world. Reintegration of Africa into the global economy was a chief concern and Mbeki and his government saw the Republic as a defender of a new global order as he pushed for a new "global solidarity" with Africa and the South. He strongly encouraged countries of the South to fight for the democratisation of the international financial architecture and trading system.⁵¹

The G-7, the major industrialised powers of the world, have since 1994 rhetorically backed South Africa's quest for foreign investment and trade expansion. The USA's State Department has labelled it one of the world's ten most important "big emerging markets." However, rarely has the rhetoric translated into reality, and direct foreign investment at best came in dribs and drabs.

⁵⁰ Kabemba Claude, Landsberg Chris. 'South African Diplomacy: Ten Lessons from Africa.' Centre for Policy Studies. Policy Brief 2.

⁵¹ President Mbeki. Address as Chairperson of the Non-Aligned Movement at the opening of the South Summit. Havana, Cuba, 12 April 2000: 2.

Pretoria became a strong proponent of negotiating the debt question, negotiations at the WTO for a fairer trade deal, post-Lomé negotiations with the European Union, attracting capital from the countries of the North, radically increasing the levels of productive and profitable investment, technology transfers and the volumes and use of overseas development assistance. Mbeki believed that progress on all these contentious issues could be achieved through establishing “strategic partnerships” with the industrialised North. He insisted that the industrialised powers needed to take “extraordinary measures” to encourage larger flows of foreign direct investment (FDI) into Africa.

During the 2003 trade negotiations in Cancun, Mexico, South Africa formed part of the Group of 20+ which pushed the industrialised powers to make significant shifts in farming subsidies. On the developments at Cancun, Mbeki said that “structural fractures that characterise the architecture of global governance” “need the intervention of these strategic partners acting in concert with many other partners from different parts of the world”.

Pretoria encouraged inter-regional cooperation on issues of mutual concern. As such, cooperation between SADC and the EU, SADC and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and SADC and Mercosur, were encouraged.

At the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit in 1998, South Africa tried to end the dialogue-of-the-deaf (a historical flaw of the organisation wherein neither side appeared to be listening to the other) between North and South by openly suggesting that there was need for a new strategic engagement between the two sides. In a rare moment for North-South relations, South Africa made history by inviting, for the first time, representatives from the G-7 and other industrialised powers to attend the NAM summit in Durban, South Africa. The idea was explicit: to influence both North and South and cajole them in the direction of a different, more engaged relationship.

At the opening of the South Summit in April 2000 in Havana, as Chairperson of the Non-Aligned Movement, President Mbeki again pushed for “a constructive and purposeful relationship between ourselves and other countries of the North.” He campaigned for “the challenge to reinforce the interaction and exchanges amongst ourselves as the countries of the South, to strengthen South-South cooperation.”

But North-South partnership-building was not South Africa’s only focus; government placed just as a high a premium on South-South cooperation. For example, policy systematically sought to increase relations with Nigeria, Algeria, Egypt, Brazil, India and outside this group China. In fact, South Africa came up with the innovative idea of establishing Bi-National Commissions (BNCs) with countries from both the North and South. These countries included the USA, Germany, Britain, India, Nigeria, Japan and most recently, China. Through these Bi-National Commissions, South Africa hopes to guide and coordinate all government-to-government relations with the countries involved.⁵²

⁵² Department of Foreign Affairs. Strategic Plan. Pretoria, March 2004.

South Africa has touted the idea of a G-8 of the South with the explicit intent of developing a coordinated approach to globalisation and ensuring that the developing South plays a more active and meaningful role in global institutions. In June 2003, Brazil, India and South Africa established the Tri-lateral Dialogue Forum in an effort to collectively address issues of global concern around development, trade and global governance.⁵³ These three, for example, developed coordinated responses on UN and UN Security Council reform, and a quest for permanent representation of southern powers on this body. When South Africa hosted the 2nd IBSA (India, Brazil and South Africa) Trilateral Commission in Cape Town from 10-11 March 2005, the Ministerial segment focussed on political dialogue amongst the three countries. The Ministers' discussions also focussed on how IBSA programmes and projects could be strengthened and the IBSA Business Council was launched, indicating that there is a focus on more than just foreign policy matters.

A more recent example of the consolidation of the Mbeki government's South-South strategy was the formation of the Asia-Africa Summit. Mbeki, and his African and Asian partners established a New Asian-African Strategic Partnership, and they appealed for political will and commitment to forge a new strategic partnership between the two continents. They emphasised the need for trade and the development of infrastructure and transport sectors between African and Asian countries.

Multilateralism was a key means for South Africa to exercise influence in the areas of international peace, stability and security. Policy held that institutions such as the UN, AU, Commonwealth and other multilateral bodies, were vital for the promotion of security, arms control and international peace. Indeed, a clear foreign policy doctrine has been to reinforce the role of multilateral institutions, particularly the UN, as the custodian of international peace and security. Foreign minister Dlamini Zuma is of the opinion that South Africa should work "...together with other countries both developed and developing", so as to work "...vigorously for the democratisation of governance of international institutions to reflect the new realities of our time".⁵⁴

Pretoria was steadfast in critiquing the Bush administration's policy of aggressive unilateralism and go-it-alone tactics.⁵⁵ In the run up to the second Iraq war that started in March 2003, South Africa's foreign policy tried to impress upon both the United States and the Saddam Hussein regime that they should fulfil their international obligations. Saddam Hussein was encouraged to cooperate with weapons inspectors and fulfil UN Security Council mandates, while the United States was encouraged to respect the authority of the UN and

⁵³ For an official perspective see the address by the President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, on the occasion of the 3rd Alfred Nzo Memorial Lecture to the Indian Council of World Affairs, SAPRU House, New Delhi, 16 October 2003.

⁵⁴ Department of Foreign Affairs. Strategic Plan 2002-2005. Pretoria, 2002.

⁵⁵ For a perspective on South Africa's post-September 2001 foreign policy in relation to the war on terror, see the briefing by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Aziz Pahad, at the GCIS Parliamentary Briefings, Cape Town, 10 September 2003.

desist from unilateral tendencies. Foreign policy emphasised an approach to global and international problems and issues that would reinforce rather than undermine the role of multilateral organisations.

South Africa's post-September 2003 foreign policy asserted that the Republic should respond to the fight against terrorism, preventive strikes and the unilateralism versus multilateralism debate with 'confidence' and creativity.⁵⁶ It undertook to continue building strong relations with the developed world, expand and consolidate South-South relations, and continue with economic diplomacy.

4.2 Moral Authority from Championing issues of Arms Trade and Proliferation

Issues of arms control, nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear reduction had been identified by South Africa as unique niches for it to develop an international and particularly moral standing and stature. Scarcely one year into the post-apartheid order saw the Republic in 1995 asserting a new nuclear arms and nuclear non-proliferation posture as the country played a prominent role in the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Permanent Extension Conference at the UN. Pretoria pushed for a compromise between nuclear and non-nuclear powers. Essentially, it pushed for non-nuclear powers making commitments in defence of non-proliferation while nudging the nuclear powers to commit to weapons reduction.⁵⁷ Here too, South Africa sought to play a 'bridging' role.

The Republic's decision in the early 1990s to "voluntarily" give up its nuclear arsenal boosted its moral stature on the nuclear question. After the 1995 NPT conference, the country's policy on non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control formed an integral part of its international justice policy.⁵⁸ A key goal was to promote the Republic as a responsible producer, processor and trader of advanced technologies in the nuclear and biological weapons markets and missile-delivery-systems, and simultaneously as a chief proponent of a ban on anti-personnel landmines.⁵⁹

During both the 1998 and 1999 PrepCom planning meetings for the 2000 NPT Review Conference, Pretoria played crucial roles in both substantive and procedural issues pertaining to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. After much behind-the-scenes negotiations

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Landsberg Chris, Masiza Zondi. 'Fission for Compliments? South Africa and the 1995 Extension of Nuclear Non-Proliferation.' Policy Issue and Actors. Johannesburg: Centre for Policy Studies, September 1996; Vol 9, No 8: 14.

⁵⁸ Landsberg, Masiza 20.

⁵⁹ Masiza Zondi. 'Hunting with the Hounds or Running with the Hares? South Africa and Nuclear Export Control Regimes.' Foreign Policy Series. Johannesburg: Centre for Policy Studies, 1998; Vol 11, No5: 17.

with key states in the run up to the Review Conference South Africa persuaded many actors about the need to create two subsidiary bodies.

It became a member of the *New Agenda Coalition*, comprising also Mexico, New Zealand, Brazil, Egypt, Ireland and Sweden, a group that proposed “unequivocal undertakings on the part of the five nuclear weapons states to the total elimination of their respective nuclear arsenals.”⁶⁰ The coalition appealed for greater transparency on all nuclear disarmament matters, including the inspection of sites and verification of alleged disarmament measures. They called for putting nuclear weapons on de-alert and the separation of nuclear warheads from delivery vehicles.⁶¹ The coalition called for the withdrawal and elimination of non-strategic nuclear weapons as well, and Pretoria tried to nudge India and Pakistan in this direction.⁶²

5. INFLUENCE THROUGH NEGOTIATED SOLUTIONS AND INCLUSIVE GOVERNMENTS

It is almost trite to suggest that South Africa’s worldview and quest for international influence and prestige is heavily influenced by the experience of its transition from apartheid to democracy. Policy was predisposed towards quiet diplomacy and preventive diplomacy, notably the settlement of disputes through negotiations. Both the Mandela and Mbeki governments emphasised the need for regional reconciliation following decades of tension and destabilisation by the apartheid state.

Until 1999, the ANC-led government ruled out the military option in international affairs and the preferred strategy to broker peace pacts amongst belligerents in conflict situations. Such pacts were often fashioned along the lines of South Africa’s own so-called “miracle,” its Government of National Unity (GNU) of 1994.

As early as 1994, President Mandela sought to broker an “inclusive” peace deal in Angola’s two decades-old civil war and he urged president Dos Santos to seek an “accommodation” with the rebel leader and declared warlord, Jonas Savimbi of UNITA (União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola). He likewise encouraged Savimbi to accept the government under Dos Santos, instead of seeking to topple the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA).

⁶⁰ ‘Review Conference of the Parties of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation Treaty of Nuclear Weapons.’ Final Report of the Preparatory Conference. United Nations, 21 May 2000: 23.

⁶¹ South Africa Department of Foreign Affairs. Cluster 1 Issues: Article VI of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, working paper, 1 May 1998.

⁶² Hill Felicity. ‘NPT Opens, and a Good START Too.’ Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, UN Office. News clip, 24 April 2000.

In the mountain kingdom of Lesotho, the Mandela government joined Botswana and Zimbabwe in an effort at preventive diplomacy by encouraging elections in order to stave off a constitutional crisis. Rebel soldiers in that country demanded a doubling of their pay and looked set to overthrow the government of Prime Minister Ntsu Mokhele. On 22 September 1998, South Africa and Botswana even deployed 8 000 troops under the banner of “Operation Boeas” to roll back a mutiny against the government. The military intervention followed the failed attempts of South Africa’s shuttle diplomacy.

In another bold display of Pretoria’s “peacemaker” philosophy, Thabo Mbeki (then South Africa’s deputy president) played an active role in seeking an end to the rebellion against Zairian dictator, Mobutu sese Seko. Mbeki’s approach involved an intriguing application of inducement strategies (ie, a combination of carrots and sticks), to try to nudge the parties to a settlement. He applied conditionalities - suggesting that in exchange for an agreement South Africa would help rebuild the war-ravaged country through substantial post-conflict reconstruction.

In 1998, South Africa refused to send military troops to fight alongside any of the two blocs operating in the DRC: the Mugabe-Angola-Namibia-Kabila axis and the Museveni-Kagame sponsored rebels. It opted for a peacemaker role instead.⁶³ The erstwhile Foreign Affairs Minister, Alfred Nzo, said at the time that South Africa’s policy was to encourage the Congolese to “sit around a table and determine the future of their country.”

Even Nigeria, which had been in the vanguard of the African anti-apartheid offensive, became a target of South Africa’s international public policy objective of democratisation. Pretoria preferred a “quiet diplomacy” posture vis-à-vis Nigeria. President Mandela and then Deputy President Mbeki, fought the Abacha regime for the release of jailed leader, Olesegun Obasanjo (who has subsequently become president in July 1999), as well as the lives of Ogoni leader, Ken Saro-wiwa and nine others.

Since 1999, the Mbeki administration has taken over from Mandela’s government and singled out peace in the DRC as its number one priority. Pretoria was instrumental in efforts to ensure a successful Inter-Congolese Dialogue (ICD), which commenced at Sun City (South Africa) in February 2002. South Africa, contributed troops to the United Nations Mission in the DRC, MONUC. Pretoria played a key role in negotiating the interim government arrangement in the DRC and has continuously called on the international community to help implement the peace process; it has coordinated these efforts closely with the UN.⁶⁴

In Burundi, South Africa sought to strengthen the Arusha Process and Deputy President Jacob Zuma played a key facilitation role in backing the efforts of Julius Nyerere and Nelson

⁶³ Kabemba Claude. ‘Whither the DRC? Causes of the Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Way Forward.’ Foreign Policy Series Johannesburg: Centre for Policy Studies, 1999; Vol 12, No 1.

⁶⁴ Briefing by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Aziz Pahad, at the GCIS Parliamentary Briefings, Cape Town, 10 September 2003.

Mandela. One of its key policies was to ensure the cease-fire of June 2004. South Africa provided specific training to Burundi to provide an internal protection unit for members of the interim government, while soliciting support for the deployment of an international peacekeeping force.⁶⁵

The Republic has continued to engage both Israeli and Palestinian authorities in seeking a resolution of the conflict in the Middle East. It started a Spier Peace Retreat aimed at strengthening the “peace camps” in Israel, Palestine and elsewhere in the Middle East.

The Zimbabwe question forced itself onto the agenda before 1999 and South Africa opted for a strategy of ‘quiet diplomacy’ vis-à-vis Harare. Mbeki also tapped into his strategic relationship with Nigeria’s Olesegun Obasanjo to cajole Robert Mugabe in the direction of a negotiated end to the Zimbabwe crisis. Pretoria encouraged peaceful, free and fair democratic elections in March 2002, through the participation of election observers under the auspices of the SADC Parliamentary Forum and the multi-sectoral South Africa Observer Mission (SAOM). South Africa also assisted both a political rapprochement between the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), in order to ensure peace, stability, and economic recovery in Zimbabwe.

South Africa supported and encouraged the Sudan Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) peace process and the Egyptian/Libyan Initiative; it, however, favoured the IGAD process as key.⁶⁶ South Africa was mandated by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1998 to address the constitutional crisis in the Comoros and South Africa’s Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) provided assistance to the relevant authorities in the Comoros.

Foreign affairs officials stressed the importance of realising the Horn of Africa UN Settlement Plan for Western Sahara; South Africa again supported multilateralism by defending the IGAD-led peace process aimed at bringing an end to the 18-year old Sudan civil war. As the chair of the AU, Mbeki participated in negotiations to end the civil war in Liberia which resulted in the departure into exile of former President Charles Taylor in August 2003.⁶⁷

6. CONCLUSION

Over the course of the past eleven years, South Africa has sought to gain international prestige and influence mainly through balancing principles and ethical considerations with

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

pragmatism and the search for strategic partnerships with external powers. It has stood for firm international principles such as the centrality of international law, democratisation of the global order and a commitment to multilateralism and regional integration. It, similarly, tried to follow an independent and non-aligned foreign policy posture in the context of a western-dominated international society. It viewed itself as a bridge-builder as it sought to cultivate strong ties with the industrialised North, while at the same time reaching out to, and speaking on behalf of, Africa and the global South.

Why did South Africa believe it was uniquely qualified to pursue an ambitious foreign policy orientation in search of a new world order, one that is rules oriented, and based on the values of justice and equity? In Pretoria's scheme of things, South Africa's political transition, based on a hard-won negotiated settlement and power-sharing political arrangement, served as a precedent for international compromises and conflict resolution efforts in Africa, the Middle East and elsewhere. This inspired Pretoria to export its purported 'miracle' to other parts of the continent. This has conjured up notions of South Africa's presumed "indispensability" and what Mahmood Mamdani has called, its "exceptionalism."

Secondly, South Africa's emphasis on cultivating positive ties with both sides of the international divide, the established powers and developing countries, has spurred it to pursue the role of international negotiator with the main objective of negotiating international pacts in favour of development, peace and security. Its positions on issues such as nuclear non-proliferation, political democratisation, Third World debt relief and market access, were aimed at bringing about international redress between the developed and developing worlds. Thus, South Africa had sought to pursue a positive, independent foreign policy posture, underscored by a desire to tackle difficult problems in Africa and the developing community generally. South Africa has truly "punched above its middle weight" in a world dominated by superpower "heavy weights".