



OCCASIONAL PAPER NO 186

South African Foreign Policy and African Drivers Programme

May 2014

South Africa's Regional Policy: The Link Between Normative Anchors and Economic Diplomacy in SADC

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South African Institute of International Affairs

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This Occasional Paper forms part of a project entitled "South Africa's economic diplomacy and the promotion of democracy, good governance and human rights in SADC: The cases of Zimbabwe and Swaziland" that was funded by the Open Society Foundation for South Africa.

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ABSTRACT

South Africa's foreign policy identity is grounded in the values of good governance, democracy and human rights, as a consequence of its own transition to democratic rule in 1994. However, the past two decades have witnessed lacunae in the manner in which these values have been articulated in its economic diplomacy in Southern Africa. This paper argues that South Africa's economic diplomacy interacts with the normative anchors of Pretoria's foreign policy within a framework that is informed by South Africa's own history and world view, as well as by the regional context in which it operates. It argues that the regional context and the constraints this imposes on South Africa have led to an inconsistent and potentially weak linkage between the country's norms and its economic diplomacy as two interactive sides in the country's regional policy.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ANC	African National Congress
AU	African Union
BNCs	bi-national commissions
DIRCO	Department of International Relations and Co-operation
dti	Department of Trade and Industry
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
GDP	gross domestic product
SACU	Southern African Customs Union
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADPA	South African Development Partnership Agency
UNSC	UN Security Council
WTO	World Trade Organization

Our vision is an African continent, which is prosperous, peaceful, democratic, nonracial, nonsexist and united, and which contributes to a world that is just and equitable.

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INTRODUCTION

In the foreword to the White Paper on South Africa's foreign policy, *Building a Better World: The Diplomacy of Ubuntu*,¹ South Africa's Minister of International Relations and Co-operation, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, specifies pan-Africanism and South–South solidarity as the central tenets of Pretoria's foreign policy. While these pan-Africanist and 'Southernist' precepts underscore South Africa's ambitions as a major foreign policy actor in Africa and the global South, they also highlight more broadly the primacy of the African continent and the marginalised South in South Africa's emancipatory external relations. Moreover, in framing the preamble to the White Paper on Foreign Policy in these terms, South Africa expresses a view in which its prosperity is inextricably linked to the African continent and the global South. If the White Paper affirms in its preamble the universality of its values through the notion of Ubuntu and the championing of human rights, democracy and reconciliation (as well as the eradication of poverty and underdevelopment), it also emphasises the importance of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) as the entry point for an emancipatory foreign policy. The White Paper is explicit on this latter point:²

The integration of SADC remains critical for the economic development of the region and for South Africa's global competitiveness. Regional economic cooperation offers an opportunity for regional industries to overcome the limits of small national markets, achieve economies of scale, and enhance competitiveness as a platform to participate in the global economy. South Africa will therefore advance a developmental integrated agenda in southern Africa that combines trade integration, infrastructure development and sectoral policy coordination that will correct imbalances in current trade relations. The region must be allowed to determine its own regional integration agenda and pace, without external interference.

This highlights certain near-permanent features of South Africa's external conduct, with the neighbourhood serving as an anchor of the country's external outreach, in both political and economic terms. The White Paper implies that the country's articulation of its national interests will be conducted through a diplomacy that serves as both a voice for and guarantor of regional interests against external interference. The ambition to act as voice and guarantor derives from the material and normative sources of South Africa's foreign policy. These two sources are central to the operationalisation of the country's foreign policy toward SADC, the African continent (through the African Agenda³) and the global South. In light of the country's democratic struggle, its external conduct in the region and beyond is not divorced from the values codified in South Africa's constitution and Bill of Rights.

Drawing on and providing a critique of Hedley Bull's⁴ concept of 'civilian power Europe', Ian Manners depicts the EU as a foreign policy actor intent on shaping, instilling, diffusing – and thus 'normalising' – rules and values in international affairs through non-coercive means.⁵ South Africa's external actions, particularly in Africa, have assumed a similar profile by virtue of the country's 'exceptionalism'. The normative basing of the country's external action has been emphasised over the years, creating a certain type of exceptionalism.

Underlining this exceptionalism in a 1993 piece in *Foreign Affairs*, South Africa's then President Nelson Mandela normatively undergirded South Africa's foreign policy by stating: 'Human rights will be the light that guides our foreign policy.'⁶ Framing foreign policy in these strong normative and prescriptive terms suggests that South Africa has the means to effect change in the behaviour of others. This view is not only based on economic weight but, perhaps more importantly, is also anchored in the force of the ideas underlying the country's own transformation, its transition to democracy and its liberal, democratic constitution.⁷ However, even if South Africa positions its external identity in democratic terms, countries in the SADC region and Africa in general have amply demonstrated their ability to withstand external interference. Underscoring this point, the African National Congress's (ANC) International Relations Discussion Document presented at its Mangaung Conference in December 2012 highlighted the glaring failure of regional integration in Southern Africa and the continent. In the document, the ANC argues that weak regional institutions, relatively weak leadership and 'poorly shared values', including weak links between regional and continental institutions, have compounded Africa's challenges in international affairs.⁸

This occasional paper seeks to understand and highlight those policy initiatives of the South African government that link the country's normative agenda to its economic diplomacy within the SADC regional context. It will use three central prisms through which to establish the link between a normative agenda and economic diplomacy. First, the paper will highlight the evolving nature of South Africa's normative posturing since 1994 in order to illustrate the degree to which the country's regional diplomacy is anchored in a normative framework. Second, the paper will discuss the objectives, including the implementing institutions and specific initiatives, underlying the foundation of the normative agenda in the country's regional economic diplomacy. Third, the paper will argue that a very inconsistent regional picture based on the shaky marriage between the country's normative framing of its external relations and its economic diplomacy has emerged two decades after the advent of democracy.

EVOLVING NATURE OF SOUTH AFRICA'S 'NORMATIVE' FOREIGN POLICY

Since Mandela's release from prison on 11 February 1990, the ANC and consequently the ANC-led government grounded South Africa's foreign policy within a specific normative framework, which was eventually codified in successive texts. In May 1992, the ANC released a document entitled *Ready to Govern: ANC Policy Guidelines for a Democratic South Africa*.⁹ It sets out four rudimentary foreign policy goals. First, the document speaks about the transformation of South Africa's foreign policy with the view to democratising

the country's international political and economic relations. Second, it emphasises the integration of South Africa as a full member of the international community. Third, it highlights the development of a foreign policy that will promote regional co-operation, peace and security. Fourth, the document emphasises the need to transform a foreign policy-implementing bureaucracy that had been engineered to defend and serve apartheid interests.

In 1994, human rights, democracy and development were strengthened as important identities in South Africa's foreign policy in another ANC policy document entitled *Foreign Policy Perspective in a Democratic South Africa*.¹⁰ The 2011 White Paper on Foreign Policy, *Building a Better World: The Diplomacy of Ubuntu*, merely took stock since the transition to democracy without altering the core values of democracy – it rather sought to better manage and consolidate them. South Africa has dedicated its foreign policy to a democratic and an equitable global order. The domestic resonance of this message is expressed in some of the publications by the Department of International Relations and Co-operation (DIRCO), including a book in honour of Johnny Mfanafuthi Makhatini entitled *Diplomacy for Democracy, a Collection of Keynote Speeches and Contributions by Mr Johnny Makhatini at the United Nations in New York, towards the Liberation Struggle of South Africa*.¹¹ While this is not explicitly stated in the country's constitution, South Africa's external relations are clearly a manifestation of the domestic order, with the founding provisions of the constitution making explicit reference to the Republic of South Africa as a sovereign, *democratic* state founded on the following values:¹²

- human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms;
- non-racialism and non-sexism;
- supremacy of the constitution and the rule of law; and
- universal adult suffrage, a national common voters roll, regular elections and a multi-party system of democratic government, to ensure accountability, responsiveness and openness.

This textual and rhetorical commitment to a democratic domestic agenda becomes a crucial part of South Africa's identity in its external relations, by virtue of the country's dominant position in the region and, more importantly, its moral suasion in light of its transition and history. The constitutionally codified democratic emphasis has an impact on behaviour and modifies the actions of South African policymakers when they are out in the field implementing the country's foreign policy. After almost two decades of freedom and democracy, the integration of South Africa as a democratic country in the international community has mostly been achieved. South Africa is a respected 'model and bona-fide global citizen' and plays an important role in supporting peace, security and development.

The country participates in some of the most important alliances and institutions of global governance, including the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) grouping, the Non-Aligned Movement, the British Commonwealth and the Group of 20 industrialised countries. Moreover, South Africa has served on two occasions (in 2007–08 and again in 2011–12) as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council (UNSC). It now has 126 embassies, up from 34 in 1994, which arguably explains why the country has been the most active African state on the international scene, worthy

of inclusion in key multilateral governance forums. South Africa is the home of four Nobel Peace laureates, which gives the country an important civilian and normative voice and soft power. It has also achieved success in the cultural and sporting arenas over the past two decades, including winning the Rugby World Cup and being the only African country to have hosted the FIFA World Cup, in 2010. These successes are highlighted by policymakers, including the minister of International Relations and Co-operation, as having made South Africa 'a respected global player'.¹³ It is these successes, coupled with a growing sense of South Africa's place as an essential African player in international affairs, that have arguably created Pretoria's 'sense of entitlement' to leadership in Africa. In order to consolidate its voice, the country's White Paper on Foreign Policy places the African Agenda at the core of its foreign policy priorities. This African perspective of the country's foreign policy is further accentuated in the National Development Plan 2030, which places a much stronger emphasis on the necessity of having the country's external relations serve domestic developmental imperatives.¹⁴ However, when one investigates regional perceptions¹⁵ of South Africa's role on the continent, an interesting paradox emerges.

South Africa is accepted as a continental leader with the requisite diplomatic capacity to elevate African concerns to global platforms. In light of this expectation, South Africa shoulders an important burden in dealing with continental challenges. By virtue of its diplomatic resources, matched with its economic weight relative to that of other continental actors, the country has appropriated an important bridge-building role between African and external actors through its presence in global forums. Furthermore, as the 'continental business gateway', South African corporates dominate the African corporate landscape. Their role is most pronounced in Southern Africa, where South African companies such as Old Mutual, Standard Bank, Sanlam, Pick n Pay and Shoprite export an unmatched retail savoir-faire to the SADC region and beyond.

The prioritisation of Africa, phrased as the 'African Agenda' in DIRCO's diplomatic parlance, is informed by the redistribution of power and resources in order to give credence to and promote the development of the African continent. This element is crucial in South Africa's external relations, as the country views its fate as being inextricably linked to that of the continent. This explains why South Africa has worked hard to build stronger institutions in Africa, including SADC, albeit with limited success. An increasing amount of energy has been invested in continental governance by, among others, former President Thabo Mbeki, who had pushed for the transformation of the Organisation of African Unity into the African Union (AU) in 2002. Moreover, under Mbeki the country had also played a critical role in the formalisation of NEPAD (the New Partnership for Africa's Development), whose secretariat is hosted in Midrand, South Africa.

The country has played an important role in mediation, peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction in Africa, including in Burundi (2000–2009), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC, 2000 to the present) and Zimbabwe (2000–2013). President Jacob Zuma, while serving as deputy president, successfully acted as a facilitator in the Burundi peace process. Under the Mbeki administration, South Africa also facilitated the DRC peace process from the late 1990s, and in 2013 sent a military contingent of an estimated 1 000 men and women as part of a SADC intervention force to the eastern DRC. South Africa has been leading the regional mediation process on the fragile political situation in Zimbabwe, with Mbeki serving as mediator from 2001–2009, and his successor Zuma leading the process until the July 2013 elections. Mbeki's office continues to serve as a

point of facilitation for the South Sudan–Sudan dialogue. Prior to the Zuma and Mbeki presidencies, Mandela had also tried, albeit unsuccessfully, to mediate between Western powers and Libya.

South Africa does not carry out these initiatives in a policy vacuum. Certainly, an active foreign policy provides the country with prestige and other material advantages. However, it is also important to remember that South Africa's actions and participation in regional and continental processes are anchored in the country's democratic values and norms. South Africa's leadership and search for active diplomacy on the continent and beyond is grounded ethically. The country is a signatory to international and continental treaties that seek to guarantee practices promoting human security and human rights, including the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the AU Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. South Africa is also a signatory to various other international treaties, including the Agreement on Trade-Related Investment Measures, which guarantee or constrain its economic and commercial diplomacy to sound business practices in the region and beyond. Moreover, South Africa is also bound to respect UNSC resolutions related to sanctions under the UNSC's Sanctions Committee.

A priori, pursuing both an ethical and normative foreign policy and economic diplomacy is not contradictory in the modern state system, nor does it necessarily translate into the omission of national interest. Even if economic diplomacy is a somewhat contested terrain, Berridge and James¹⁶ defines the concept broadly as an activity that shows concern with economic policy issues, including the work of delegations at standard-setting organisations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO). The authors further posit that economic diplomats monitor and report on the economic policies of other countries and offer the home country advice on how to best influence them. Economic diplomacy employs economic resources, either as rewards or as sanctions in pursuit of a particular foreign policy objective. The latter takes on the form of economic statecraft, which great powers such as the US and its European allies have used to great effect in cases where international law or their foreign policy objectives have been flouted.¹⁷

Within the context of South Africa's regional engagements, the emphasis on the use of economic resources as 'rewards' or 'sanctions' in the pursuit of foreign policy objectives provides an inlet through which the country's regional policy can be understood. As has been argued previously, through DIRCO's Chief Directorate: Southern Africa, South Africa has a regional policy whose 'efforts are to develop understanding and support for South Africa's position in respect of democracy, good governance and respect for human rights'¹⁸. This is a central point because relations between states are underpinned by rules, commonalities and shared values. States are under no obligation to conduct economic transactions with states that they do not like or those with which they do not share any particular values. However, *realpolitik* and the exigencies of statecraft in a complex and economically interdependent world impose certain constraints. This applies to even the most discerning of states when it comes to a normative agenda that elevates democratic values to a high canon in their external identity and engagement. For a relatively new entrant on the global scene, South Africa's immediate neighbourhood constitutes an important terrain for validating a foreign policy that creates a node between its normative canon (values and norms) and economic diplomacy as a rational or self-interested activity whose imperatives are domestic development.

PRIORITISING THE IMMEDIATE NEIGHBOURHOOD: SOUTH AFRICA'S ETHICAL CASE FOR A ROLE IN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Institutions, actors and processes in regional diplomacy

As the largest economy in Southern Africa with a gross domestic product (GDP) three times that of the other SADC member states combined, South Africa's reach in the region is unmatched. The country also deploys various tools to extend its political footprint and consequently its economic hegemony. South African policy rhetoric frames the SADC region as a priority. The country's past destabilising role in the region has had a profound impact on post-apartheid South Africa's developmental perspective of the region. In 1993 Mandela affirmed this point while locating South Africa's future role in a new framework when he argued that South Africa would 'shoulder our share of the responsibility for the whole southern African region, not in the spirit of paternalism or dominance but [in] mutual co-operation and respect'.¹⁹

South Africa's regional engagements in Southern Africa are multifaceted. First, the country takes a mini-lateral economic perspective in the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) with the push for the transformation of this institution. To this end, South Africa would like to see SACU becoming 'a vehicle for advancing and deepening developmental integration, particularly as an anchor in the SADC region'.²⁰ Second, and arguably in the same vein, South Africa provides a SADC-wide vision for how such transformation can take place by putting emphasis on the development of common trade and industrial policies, including strategies to create value chains and regional infrastructure initiatives across member states.²¹

Three impulses drive the country's regional engagement. First, its entry point, arguably masking its hegemonic ambitions and obliging the country to shoulder its share of responsibility, is the historical destabilising role played by the apartheid regime from 1949 to 1992. In essence, some of the cosmetic changes that have taken place within the South African government have been aimed at creating a stronger sense of regional and international partnership. Among others, following the ANC's Polokwane Conference in 2007, the Department of Foreign Affairs was renamed the Department of International Relations and Co-operation. Nkoana-Mashabane claimed that this was 'largely motivated by international trends ... which require states to put emphasis on co-operation over competition, and collaboration over confrontation'.²² However, this positioning cannot be divorced from South Africa's own incremental role as a development actor in the region and on the continent. In light of the latter, one should question the extent to which the transformation of the weakly constituted and underfunded African Renaissance Fund, which had a more post-conflict reconstruction mandate into the development-focussed South African Development Partnership Agency²³ (SADPA), was driven by the search for a stronger SADC neighbourhood role. This is likely to illuminate the degree to which South African priorities are truly framed in a regional context.

Second, South Africa pursues a somewhat tacit hegemonic regional policy, using its large and sophisticated economy as a tool to shoulder a greater regional burden than other Southern African states. This point is conditioned by South Africa's history, geography

and economic prospects. These material conditions afford South Africa real influence, which remains a basic reference in its regional diplomatic engagements. Pretoria sees its relations with Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland in the SACU framework as clear testimony of the country's benign designs for the region. The country views itself within this context as a facilitator of and/or catalyst for regional industrialisation.

Third, South Africa pursues, at least in terms of important policy documents and rhetoric, an active regional policy, placing regional developmental concerns at the apex of its diplomatic outreach. It does so at a time when regionalism and the regionalisation of foreign policy seem to have become one of the most important diplomatic solutions for a regional hegemon seeking to engage effectively with the international system. South Africa is a middle power on the African continent, and arguably the only African country whose aspirations of rank and greatness have persisted over the past two decades. These general aspirations in international affairs, with the region acting as a launch pad, have endured through the various presidencies – from Mandela to Zuma.

Arguably, the centrality of the ANC as the custodian of these aspirations has ensured the semi-permanence of certain values and norms, including the deployment of the country's diplomacy, both in its high and low politics, to give credence to a South African voice underwritten in those norms and values. Still, while the legacy of the past and the messianic tone of the ANC post-1994 elevated South Africa to a principled position that could serve as a guarantor of certain norms and values, the past two decades provide a 'portrait in motion' of the country's regional diplomacy. This portrait highlights the tensions between the guiding principles of norms and values and their defence (or lack thereof), particularly through the use of economic sanctions. This suggests that South Africa's democracy has not always followed its external engagements in so far as the guiding foreign policy values are concerned. Moreover, the modalities of engagement under the different presidencies have been markedly different, with at times devastating consequences for South Africa's prestige and stated commitments to a peaceful and democratic SADC region.

Institutionalising economic diplomacy and the normative bases in South Africa's foreign policy

Karl Holsti argues that all contemporary states have the same basic objectives in international relations, including security, autonomy and prestige.²⁴ In view of these foreign policy objectives, South African policymakers have constructed the country's external actions over the past two decades on the basis of a certain idea of the country's specific realities, including the role of regional and international solidarity in forging the country's post-apartheid identity. Therefore, norms, values, ideals and the manner in which they are represented determine to a certain degree South Africa's conduct in the region. However, this does not imply a seamless representation of either South Africa's aspirations or realities, or describe how such values should be projected in a regional context. There is an emerging body of scholarly and policy analysis of South Africa's realities that allows the country to pursue a higher status in the region, thereby allowing it to preserve and guarantee its national interests on the basis of a normative and ethically aspirational foreign policy. Even if South Africa's regional policy is not stated as hegemonic, like that of many similar regional powers with global pretensions (France or the UK) it is constructed

around the maintenance of privileged influence. South Africa promotes the expectation that it should play a leading role in SADC, through both SADC's policy processes and institutions. This leading role extends to SADC's operations through peace missions and commercial diplomacy, which positions South African businesses as dominant actors in the regional economic landscape.

Moreover, South Africa's bilateral relations are used to shape certain outcomes, which are reflected and positioned as common regional aspirations. The latter could be in the form of developmental efforts through South African initiatives. Even if the region is a priority, there is a caveat, with certain policy documents arguing that South African policymaking should not lose sight of the emergence and increased influence of countries such as Turkey, Indonesia, Mexico, Colombia and Venezuela in global political economic affairs.²⁵

In order to give effect to regional development, South Africa has in recent years placed greater emphasis on economic diplomacy. There are differing views about what constitutes economic diplomacy and the purposes it ought to serve in the country's foreign policy. At the most basic level, economic diplomacy seeks to establish the link between power and wealth in international relations. For South Africa as a middle power, at least in regional terms, this implies that the country not only seek to promote prosperity at home but also manipulate its foreign commercial and financial relations in support of broader foreign policy goals, when the occasion demands and opportunity permits. The emphasis on economic diplomacy in South Africa's external engagement has in recent years become more pronounced. This has been a consequence of the shifts that have occurred in the conduct of foreign policy with the intensification of globalisation in the 1980s.

Since the globalisation of commerce, economic diplomacy has become a major theme in the external relations of virtually all countries. At home, economic ministries, trade and investment promotion bodies, chambers of commerce and foreign ministries are all participants in economic work. Current trends include increasing collaboration between state and non-official agencies, increased importance given to WTO issues, the negotiation of free trade and preferential trade agreements, and accords covering investments, double taxation avoidance and financial services. Embassies, consulates and trade offices deal with an ever-expanding economic diplomacy agenda. The main focus is on promotion, to attract foreign business, investments, technology and tourists. Thus economic diplomacy connects intimately with the political, public and other aspects of diplomatic work.

South Africa seeks to give credence to its exporting its norms by grounding its economic diplomacy in these norms, both formally and informally. The formal grounding refers to the state-driven initiatives by DIRCO and various other government actors, including departments such as Trade and Industry (dti), Defence and Public Enterprises and state-owned enterprises/agencies such as the Development Bank of Southern Africa, the Industrial Development Corporation and SADPA. While these agencies do serve the immediate neighbourhood, their mandates also go beyond SADC.

Since economic diplomacy is about governments' actions, this suggests that most if not all government departments and agencies are in one way or another involved in economic diplomacy. However, these institutions and their processes are grounded in various policy initiatives, including the country's foreign policy as codified in the White Paper on Foreign Policy and other crucial texts. The implementing agency of this policy is DIRCO. More specifically, while various actors – including Africa Bilateral – interact in a regional setting,

the region as a whole, notably its regional institutions, is managed within DIRCO by the Africa Multilateral desk. However, the Africa Bilateral desk is crucial to South Africa's regional policy in light of the fact that South Africa has elevated all its bilateral relations with SADC member states to the level of bi-national commissions (BNCs). This illustrates their elevated rank in the country's external relations. Second, in overseeing the largest economy in the region, the dti's *Trade Policy and Strategy Framework* continuously shapes Southern Africa's economic destiny, with important implications for the country's foreign policy.

The South African government thus deploys a complex web of tools and institutions in its regional diplomacy, with BNCs and presidential visits to various countries in the region serving as essential pivots to give life to an ethical foreign policy that – at least in theory – does not divorce economic diplomacy from the country's normative commitments to democracy and human rights. The BNCs, which South Africa now has with the majority of countries in SADC, serve as springboards for discussions of difficult issues in the bilateral relationship and potentially open avenues for a convergence of views.

LOCATING NORMATIVE FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES AND ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY

Implicit in the practice of economic diplomacy is the promotion of certain norms in commercial transactions across borders. A priori, since South Africa can only pursue a dualistic foreign policy by virtue of its status as a developing country, it is tempting to argue that South Africa's economic engagement with the African continent, particularly Southern Africa, is accompanied by a broad conception of human rights, including democracy, development and good governance. However, it can be difficult to discern a formalistic link between the constraining capacities of the South African government and the activities and commercial transactions of South African businesses in the region. Moreover, the South African government's commitment to curtail economic activities with countries that violate the norms it promotes is yet to be manifested. However, the economic argument to do so is there. South Africa has run a trade surplus with the rest of Africa since 1994. This trade surplus increased from ZAR²⁶ 6.3 billion (\$602 million) in 1994 to a massive ZAR 40.86 billion (\$3.9 billion) in 2012, peaking at ZAR 47.35 billion (\$4.5 billion) in 2011.²⁷ The surplus is mainly driven by increased exports to Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe and the DRC over the past two decades. The question is: does the South African government have the capacity to direct South African businesses with or ground its commercial transactions with countries in the region in a normative agenda?

In short, are economic sanctions or other punitive measures an integral part of South Africa's diplomacy and policy arsenal when the normative agenda that it seeks to promote has been compromised? The literature on this question is scant, but some have sought to provide a general perspective on how South Africa's foreign policy is implemented. The few authors who have sought to address this question, albeit in passing, include Mzukisi Qobo, who argues: 'There is not sufficient linkage in the pursuit of power and wealth aggregation in the conduct of the country's [South Africa's] foreign policy.'²⁸ Dale McKinley²⁹ and Merle Lipton³⁰ critically analyse South Africa's policy toward Zimbabwe

while Peter Draper and Sören Scholvin³¹ unpack South Africa as a gateway and take the country's economy as a unit of analysis. Others, including Siphamandla Zondi,³² have sought to explain South Africa's posture in the region as non-hegemonic, while Narnia Bohler-Muller³³ locates the debate in the tension between South Africa's external engagements and its national interest. In addition to these, media articles and opinion pieces have proliferated in the years since the advent of democracy. They ask what is left of South Africa's moral authority, and potentially its ability to promote its values and norms in the region and beyond.³⁴ Broadly speaking, the writings oscillate between pointing out the diminishing moral suasion and lack of economic diplomacy in South Africa's diplomatic practice and defending the ANC government as an experienced diplomatic actor.

When senior South African government officials engage in the complex processes of summits and BNCs, the optimistic view is that they are not oblivious or indifferent to the country's own commitment to democracy, human rights and good governance. Specifically, since South Africa is a regional power, demonstrating these values and norms within the region would arguably position the country as a credible and responsible continental leader. However, for these values and norms to gain traction there must equally be a demonstrative effect within the domestic context. Moreover, the regional environment must also be open to the import of values that are diffused by a regional hegemon, including its punishment of countries that veer from what it seeks to promote.

The first key challenge facing a middle power like South Africa with a history of struggle where democracy and human rights were key objectives, is reconciling these with the regional pursuit of economic diplomacy. Second, this reconciliation is particularly challenging in view of the absence of strong, shared values across the various SADC member states. Third, the ANC's history of struggle and liberation is strongly embedded in an anti-colonialist liberation tradition in Southern Africa. This history includes close ties with the ruling SWAPO (South West Africa People's Organisation) in Namibia, the ruling MPLA (People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola or Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola) in Angola, the ruling ZANU-PF (Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front) in Zimbabwe, the ruling CCM (Party of the Revolution or Chama Cha Mapinduzi) in Tanzania, and the ruling Frelimo (Mozambique Liberation Front or Frente de Libertação de Moçambique) in Mozambique.

The ANC's alliances with these former liberation movements have resulted in its having less space to pursue a strong normative regional policy that marries good governance and democracy with South Africa's regional economic agenda. Therefore, the question since the advent of democracy and the resultant ambitious normative tone in South Africa's foreign policy, is to what degree these normative anchors should converge with the country's economic interests in its external actions. More importantly, how should these two (occasionally conflicting) aspects of foreign policy be articulated in the country's regional and external engagement? The case of SACU, where South Africa enjoys a dominant trading position, is instructive. Trade statistics with the Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland grouping for November 2013 recorded a trade surplus of ZAR 10.01 billion (\$961 million). The cumulative surplus for 2013 rose to ZAR 80.25 billion (\$7.716 billion) ZAR 76.13 billion (\$7.320 billion) in 2012.³⁵ But even within SACU, where South Africa has a large trade surplus, Pretoria has failed to use its dominant economic position to secure political reform in Swaziland.

CONCLUSIONS

When one analyses South Africa's actions as a regional diplomatic actor, a picture emerges of an incomplete marriage between the normative foundation of its foreign policy and its economic diplomacy. Since the advent of democracy in 1994, South Africa has pursued a strong developmental and security agenda for the region, but the economic drivers are not implicitly tied to the normative drivers of the country's foreign policy, which include human rights, good governance and democracy. South Africa has not married these values in a tight node that would imply the country sacrificing economic considerations were another Southern African country to undermine the political anchors of South Africa's external identity. The weak institution of these linkages in South Africa's foreign policy mainly result from its short history of diplomatic practice, which has focussed on building a new positive regional role for South Africa after years of regional destabilisation by the former apartheid regime. Another reason for the weak institution of norms and economic diplomacy is a diplomatic practice that has not focussed intensively on economic diplomacy, but rather on regional institution- and state-building. Third, by virtue of its historical ties with other ruling parties in the region the ANC has limited the avenues for robust 'carrot and stick' diplomatic practices that would elevate political conditionalities as essential tools in the country's regional economic diplomacy.

However, the abovementioned does not imply a policy of indifference on the part of the South African government when it comes to norms and the potential application of 'rewards' and 'punishments' when countries in the region undermine those values central to Pretoria's external identity. The country's regional diplomacy and potential ability to give credence to its foreign policy values and norms are mostly located within multilateral frameworks.

ENDNOTES

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- 3 The African Agenda in South Africa's foreign policy is premised on the view that the economic development of Africa cannot take place without peace and stability on the continent. To this end, South Africa will work toward strengthening the African Union and the Regional Economic Communities. Moreover, South Africa will also play an active role in conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction.
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- 17 *Ibid.*
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- 19 See Mandela N, *op. cit.*, p. 5.
- 20 See DIRCO, White Paper on Foreign Policy, *op. cit.*, pp. 5 and 23.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 23.
- 22 See DIRCO, *The DIRCO: From Past ... to the Present ... into the Future, Celebrate! Ke Nako ...* Foreword by Ms Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, 2011.
- 23 SADPA is still a work in progress, but the mandate of the institution is not framed in regional terms and thus cannot be considered to be tailored to meet Southern African demands. For more information on SADPA, see O' Riordan A, 'South Africa North of the Border: The South African Development Partnership Agency (SADPA)', SAFPI Policy Brief, 41, July 2013, http://www.safpi.org/sites/default/files/publications/SAFPI_Policy_Brief_41.pdf, accessed 7 September 2013.
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SAIIA'S FUNDING PROFILE

SAIIA raises funds from governments, charitable foundations, companies and individual donors. Our work is currently being funded by, among others, the Bradlow Foundation, the UK's Department for International Development, the European Commission, the British High Commission of South Africa, the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the International Institute for Sustainable Development, INWENT, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Royal Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the Canadian International Development Agency, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the African Development Bank, and the Open Society Foundation for South Africa. SAIIA's corporate membership is drawn from the South African private sector and international businesses with an interest in Africa. In addition, SAIIA has a substantial number of international diplomatic and mainly South African institutional members.

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