

## South Africa:

### Optimising the Currency of Soft Power in the International Arena

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A conscious and consistent adherence to the currency of soft power could enable South Africa to push through a national, an African and a more humane global agenda of immense magnitude in the overall international arena. However, effective communication is critical for the maximisation of soft-power attributes, as there is a symbiotic relationship between domestic and foreign policy. With reference to South Africa's pledge of US\$2 billion (R16,5 billion) at the G20 meeting in June 2012 to the firewall fund of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the recent election of Dr Dlamini-Zuma, in July 2012, as chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission, this policy brief gives an outline of how South Africa can optimise its soft-power attributes within the shifting global order. This policy brief puts forward the view that South Africa's soft power cannot be evaluated without looking at the country's history, its multilateral diplomacy, engagement with civil society and the media, trade relations and domestic politics. This policy brief recommends that the South African Government needs to have the support of its diverse population in order to be able to use soft power. The government must ensure that the majority of the population that lives in poverty fully enjoys the benefits of democracy, freedom, human dignity and technological development to fight poverty and inequality, not only in South Africa but in Africa and the developing world.

#### Introduction

Although there is no radical change to the hierarchical set-up of the global capitalist society, globalisation and interdependence within the neoliberal context have elevated the utility of soft power. There are a number of opportunities for

South Africa to position itself to play an important global role, including the global power shift<sup>2</sup> in leveraging its influence in the international arena. South Africa has been identified as a regional power among the other BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) nations and Mexico, Indonesia, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Turkey.<sup>3</sup> A

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## South Africa is the only African country in the G20

regional power with a relatively large population has influence in a given region and possesses the capacity for regional and global action.<sup>4</sup> It should also over a period achieve relatively high growth rates, above the regional average (although South Africa's average growth rates are only two per cent, according to IMF estimates), and provide a growing market for the region. A regional power increasingly provides public goods in the form of a stable currency, a reliable monetary policy and development assistance. South Africa plays an important role in trade within the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) and the continent. It is taking on a growing role in the governance of the region, particularly with respect to regional cooperation agreements, and uses its network power to influence development on a global and regional scale.<sup>5</sup> South Africa is the only African country in the G20, which – although an informal forum for discussion – is a 'global steering committee' for discussing economic and financial cooperation. South Africa is one of the countries that represent 90 per cent of global gross domestic product (GDP) and make up two-thirds of the world's population.

Therefore, optimising national wealth and influence could enable South Africa as a nation, despite its antecedent economic and ideological contradictions and violent and oppressive past, to maximise its soft-power attributes to impose some specific outcomes on targeted actors in the international arena. South Africa has the soft-power attributes to avoid the use of coercion by taking cognisance of its racial past; the richness of its diverse culture; the contradictions in socio-economic development; the fight against poverty and inequalities; and adherence to constitutionalism and the rule of law in setting the agenda and ensuring that the multilateral system can implement policies that are people-centred. In making its voice heard and participating in global economic and development policy, the country needs the support of its citizens and the ability to keep a conscientious balance between civic responsibility and government obligations.

### The currency of soft power in international relations

Academic discourse has been devoted to the definitions of power and deciding which nations have power in the international arena. Some political scientists distinguish between two types of power: hard and soft; the former is

coercive, while the latter is attractive.<sup>6</sup> These categorisations, while controversial at times, have led to the world being defined in hierarchical terms and power being used to define the status of certain countries either as middle powers, regional powers, or emerging powers, depending on their military, economic, technological and cultural assets – power being based on the particular material tangible assets that a state possesses.<sup>7</sup> The concept of soft power has grown significantly over the past decade, but has been described as a soft theory. Nonetheless, decision makers are encouraged to use it in their foreign-policy strategies.<sup>8</sup>

Greater attention to soft power reflects the changing landscape of international relations. A positive image in world affairs that endears a nation to other nations generates respect and admiration, which in turn renders nations that have soft power more endearing to the eyes of other nations.<sup>9</sup> Endearment is a term that is most representative of soft power; this does not necessarily mean that all the actions, qualities, and policies of soft-power nations are necessarily endearing and liked by all. It means that some nations can exercise soft power in terms of agenda control.<sup>10</sup> Soft power is derived from two general sources: international sources (foreign policy and actions) and domestic sources (domestic policies and actions).<sup>11</sup>

International and domestic sources of soft power should reflect an emphasis on policies and actions that exemplify justice, collective concern, and rules of fair play. South Africa at the international level has what it takes for the foundation of soft power: respect for international laws, norms and institutions; fundamental reliance on multilateralism (or cooperation between nations); willingness to sacrifice short-term national interests in order to contribute towards the collective good; and liberal foreign economic policies.<sup>12</sup> Soft power is created by 'social cohesion, an elevated quality of life, freedom, abundant opportunities for individuals, and tolerance'.<sup>13</sup> While South Africa has strong foundations of such soft-power attributes, which include democracy and constitutionalism, it has to enhance and work at some of the issues, such as social cohesion, and creating an economic environment conducive to abundant opportunities for individuals, and tolerance in the domestic sphere.

Soft power has its critics, and its exercise evokes criticism as well. For example, giving international aid may enhance a nation's image but at the same time evoke criticism for supporting certain regimes, or being seen as bailing out

capitalists. So the exercise of soft power may affect a nation's image negatively or positively. For example, donating US\$2 billion to the IMF firewall fund might be seen as supporting imperialist institutions, while giving support to Swaziland or Zimbabwe in a different context might be seen as supporting undemocratic regimes. Some critics might condemn such a step, while for others it would be an important foreign-policy objective.

While South Africa occupies an important geopolitical position, it needs to confidently exercise its values, culture, policies and institutions and use these effectively in attracting other nations to want what South Africa desires for its people; this is the ultimate display of soft power. South Africa is part of the international community and needs to position itself strategically to influence global affairs. Although the pledge of US\$2 billion to the IMF firewall fund is small compared with that pledged by other BRICS nations, the gesture has immense diplomatic value. The Eurozone crisis being faced by Greece, Spain, Portugal and Italy presents an opportunity for South Africa to consolidate its position as a soft power and secure itself a place in tomorrow's global economic order. Most of the 37 countries that have so far pledged money to the IMF's firewall fund are emerging nations, which is symbolically important, signifying the shift in global power relations. The BRICS nations are demanding much deeper changes in IMF governance and policies. Brazil, Russia and India each pledged US\$10 billion, making the total from the BRICS nations US\$75 billion (including China's contribution of US\$43 billion). The BRICS are calling for the reform of the IMF, and the funds were provided in anticipation that all the reforms agreed upon in 2010 will be fully implemented in a timely manner, including a comprehensive reform of voting power and reform of quota shares.

### **South Africa's role in a multipolar world**

South Africa has moved from a past in which hard power was used to oppress the majority to a future that embraces soft power and advances a multilateral agenda in which it is taking a leadership role to build common norms and values in Africa and the world at large. While poverty and inequality continue to be pressing issues, the Mandela, Mbeki, Motlanthe and Zuma governments set out to transform the global order from its Western bias to becoming more sensitive to the needs of Africa and the global South, by

emphasising cooperation and interdependence.<sup>14</sup> The South African Government's foreign policy, as clearly stated in its 1996 policy document, pursues the ideal of a new global order based on greater peace and prosperity for all mankind, working to reform the United Nations (UN) and other international institutions to serve as more efficient instruments in the service of such a global order.<sup>15</sup> The government has continued to emphasise the importance of multilateralism and the urgent need to revitalise and reform the UN and international financial institutions by allowing the developing world to gain a voice in such Western-dominated institutions.<sup>16</sup>

There is a growing realisation that the divisions into industrialised and poor developing countries are no longer valid, as many developing countries are catching up.<sup>17</sup> The idea of a poor and impoverished third world that carried with it political, power, and pejorative<sup>18</sup> connotations has become a disused concept in the development discourse since the end of the Cold War and the emergence of new global players. Former President of the World Bank, Robert Zoellick, fittingly called for the modernisation of multilateralism and the recognition of other global players in the interests of a 'healthy, dynamic flexible system for finance, trade, movement of ideas, people, the environment and strong multilateral institutions'.<sup>19</sup> He recognised the role of the developing countries in the global architecture and urged the world to stop using old concepts; he said, 'It is time to put old concepts of first and third worlds, leader and led, donor and supplicant, behind us'.<sup>20</sup>

The World Bank and IMF might not have changed their ideological underpinnings and ethos, but these institutions have realised the growing role of Africa and the need to recognise different perspectives and circumstances. There is indeed a rise of emerging economies and regional powers such as South Africa, India, Brazil and China, which do not necessarily challenge the capitalist neoliberal system but seek to reform some of the institutional dynamics in support of national and regional interests. As soft power includes economic dynamism, attractiveness to foreign direct investment, geography and positive relations with neighbours can lead to an increase in growth, technological spill-over, vertical networks and regional integration.

South Africa is dominant in the SACU, with an anchor currency which has existed since 1910, and the Common Monetary Area (CMA). It has a significantly higher per-capita income than the regional average in the SADC. Furthermore, South African businesses seem to dominate the

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regional value chains, department stores and producer-driven chains, for example in the areas of breweries and textile production.<sup>21</sup>

South Africa is playing an important role in regional trade – although China's involvement is growing very fast, owing to its use of its soft-power attributes in a proactive manner. Furthermore, China is an influential economic and political actor and networks strongly internationally, with growing influence in supranational institutions such as the IMF, World Bank, and the World Health Organisation (WHO).<sup>22</sup>

South Africa can use its role as it again heads the Forum for Africa-China Cooperation (FOCAC) as from July 2012. It can address issues of trade relations with China and present Africa's role as an equal partner, explaining how trade with China can also add value to African and Chinese relations. Already the signing of a code of conduct between Chinese entrepreneurs and Africa, committing Chinese conduct on the continent to social responsibility, is a good start in the building of mutually beneficial social and economic relations, based on equality, for the long-term development of Africa.

China has been successful because of its state-led industrialisation based on a planned economy, protectionism, and reliance on market mechanism. South Africa is the most important investor in the region, and could be playing the same role as China; its limited global role so far could be a result of its limited economic growth, due partly to its internal economic problems and partly perhaps to the frailty of its economically weak neighbouring countries.<sup>23</sup> However, South Africa's major challenges as a regional power have been labelled as difficulties in catching up technologically; low levels of education; and internal weaknesses and vulnerabilities.<sup>24</sup> Both the BRICS countries and those in the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) dialogue forum could become more powerful and 'shift global distribution and end western domination'.<sup>25</sup> In addition, 'they can also be strong partners in the global economic order, by becoming more powerful, reshape the world and contribute to global and regional solutions to problems including climate change, energy security, peace, stability, monetary integration, poverty reduction and development'.<sup>26</sup> Having espoused the values of cooperation and democracy, South Africa has enough soft power as it is, and needs to develop self-confidence in foreign policy as it pursues the regional SADC agenda, cooperates with the regional economic communities and drives the African agenda.

## **Opportunities for South Africa to exercise soft power**

During the global financial crisis of 2008 to 2009, which also coincided with President Motlanthe's seven-month stint as president, South Africa stressed the importance of global political and financial reforms. Furthermore, President Motlanthe was determined to 'position South Africa strategically as an effective force in global relations',<sup>27</sup> a position the Zuma administration has continued, as exemplified by the South African Government's upholding of multilateral diplomacy and its participation in numerous peace missions and the search for solutions to Africa's developmental and political problems. Examples are South Africa's involvement with other players in the search for the peaceful and democratic resolution of the political problems in North Africa, and its involvement in the roadmap to the democratisation processes in Zimbabwe, Swaziland, and Madagascar through the SADC and the AU mechanisms.

The reform of the financial institutions at the G20 remains a burning issue, and the pledging of R16,5 billion to the IMF firewall fund is an important gesture in order to stave off a crisis that might engulf the developing world. The hosting of COP 17, the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), as well as the lobbying for the support of the African continent and winning the position to lead the African Union for the next four years, are both examples of a country that is willing and able to maximise the multilateral agenda.

In positioning its brand or mark on issues of global governance, South Africa is quite cognisant of the fact that the world capitalist system, of which it also partakes, is a contested hierarchy which favours the 'haves' against the 'have-nots'. The challenge for South Africa is to intervene by effectively coordinating the support of its domestic constituencies and those of Africa, and not to be perceived as acting alone on issues of global governance. The marginalised and those living in poverty need to be convinced that they will benefit from the policies the elites negotiate in the global arena. South Africa needs to find clear ways and various channels of communicating this, reassuring domestic constituencies that participating in restructuring the UN or supporting the IMF and World Bank will pave the way to putting South Africa and the African continent on a sustainable path.

In other words, the idea of contributing to the IMF firewall fund can be seen as a continuation



of South Africa's policy of negotiating a global compact between developing and developed countries, based on the idea of mutual responsibility and mutual accountability towards which both sides of the development divide have obligations.<sup>28</sup> South Africa has aptly used its relations with countries of the North to put issues such as free and fair trade on the international agenda, and used its soft power to call for 'global solidarity'.<sup>29</sup> Although concerns have been raised, both internally and externally, about South Africa's internal economic contradictions and 'punching above its weight in global affairs',<sup>30</sup> the country needs to harness public participation and servant leadership at home and abroad in the enhancement of its soft-power attributes.

### Increasing public participation in the optimisation of soft power

South Africa has indeed increased the level of participation of the domestic population in its policy-making process. Opportunities for public participation in the process of policy making and governance in South Africa have expanded through different frameworks such as the ruling party, government and stakeholder consultative processes, the presidential hotline, parliament, and the Chapter 9 institutions. In some ways, however, this has been counter-productive, leading to high levels of domestic protest and violence. The increase of government participation with the public, regarded as a form of co-optation and co-governance which has led to failure of both participation and substantive transformation, has led to citizens using protest as a self-initiated, bottom-up form of participation.<sup>31</sup> This is evidenced by the numerous violent protests on issues of service delivery and even xenophobic violence. For example, citizens continue to question the benefits to their wellbeing of certain policies and involvement in organisations such as BRICS, and the pledging of the funds to the IMF firewall fund; they set these against issues of service delivery, youth unemployment, and the non-delivery of textbooks in Limpopo.

The mixed reactions to government's positions on foreign policy, and the disjuncture between government foreign policy and domestic economic policies, show the need for more communication and participation with the public in order to enhance soft power. In a country that places great value on public participation, marking a departure from the authoritarian past, it is important that citizens feel that they have participated

and that they have been consulted on certain policy decisions, and that those who are able to participate feel that they have been listened to. Protest is now used as a popular rejection of participation as a mere ritualistic procedure, in favour of the instrumental notion of participation as a measure for response and delivery.<sup>32</sup> It is important that this challenge be addressed.

The Government of South Africa has just held a National Cohesion Summit in June 2012, led by the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC), which brought some people together in order to discuss the issues that divide or unite the South African society. The stakeholders' summit has led to the production of a strategic document entitled *Creating a caring and proud society: A national strategy for developing an inclusive and cohesive society*.<sup>33</sup>

### The importance of domestic policies to the enhancement of soft power

Reduced to its fundamental ingredients, foreign policy consists of two elements: national objectives to be achieved and the means for achieving them. The interaction between national goals and the resources for attaining them is the perennial subject of statecraft. In its ingredients the foreign policy of all nations, great and small, is the same.<sup>34</sup>

Domestic policies are important to the enhancement of soft power, as the ANC spokesperson, Mr Jackson Mthembu, has said in relation to the IMF firewall fund:

It is therefore in our national interest that we invest in this initiative to prevent future reoccurrence. We believe that while this is an obligation confronting the world economy's ills, it is also a secured investment owing to the credibility of the IMF and the interest it will earn for South Africa. ... We believe that as we want to transform the world multilateral fora, including the IMF, WTO and the United Nations, we cannot do so on the basis of claiming 'poverty'.<sup>35</sup>

While South Africa straddles the international arena in the realisation of its national goals, it is well aware of its internal economic problems and hopes that by participating in the international arena it can place resources at the service of its domestic interests as well. Yet while South Africa

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participates in the global agenda in pursuit of its domestic interests, it should effectively invoke gender, sovereignty, and regional or African representation as a justifiable rationale by making tactical alliances on the continent, so that it will not be seen to be pursuing a narrow agenda.

For example, President Jacob Zuma, in his communication to the nation at the election of Dr Dlamini-Zuma as the AU Commission chairperson, reiterated the attributes of soft power which South Africa is admired for and also aspires to achieve: '... the appointment of Dr Dlamini Zuma will build on the work of her predecessors, including Dr Jean Ping, and ensure a more efficient and effective AU Commission, particularly on the implementation of decisions pertaining to unity, peace stability, development and the upliftment of women and children'.<sup>36</sup>

The advancement of women in politics and decision making is one of the values for which South Africa is admired, ensuring that women participate fully in the political and socio-economic development of Africa. Furthermore, as the limitations that hamper the smooth governance of the AU, such as lack of decisive leadership in socio-economic and political development; weak institutions; poor implementation of developmental and democratic frameworks; power struggles and factionalism, are a reflection of what most countries experience, it will be left to Dr Dlamini-Zuma to steer these issues realistically in the quest for sustainable development.

### **South Africa optimising power on the international relations frontier**

Since becoming a democratic nation in 1994, South Africa has propelled itself into the global arena as a respected nation concerned about developmental issues, which seeks to integrate economic development, social development and environmental protection as interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development, and sees the need for a reformed multilateralism to fight the global ills of poverty, inequality and under-development. The name change from the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) to the Department of International Relations and Co-operation (DIRCO) has signified South Africa's readiness to take on the monumental task of prioritising developmental interests together with the African agenda and representing the voice of the poor at home, in the continent and the developing world in general.<sup>37</sup> Communication and

meaningful consultative processes between the ruling party, big business, trade unions, academia and think-tanks are critical, and managing these diverse interests in the realisation of the national and continental interests is the ultimate goal of statecraft.

As part of its credentials on the international scene, South Africa has spent human and capital resources at its disposal by hosting ground-breaking conferences and high-level meetings, one of which was the World Summit on Sustainable Development or Earth Summit (Rio+10), held in 2002, which laid out the Johannesburg Action Plan.<sup>38</sup> The issues laid out in the Johannesburg Plan of Action, such as peace and security, stability, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the right to development and cultural diversity, are at the core of most of humanity's concerns and require a multilateral approach and also the use of soft power in achieving them, rather than coercive power or hard power. South Africa has driven the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) agenda, which prioritises partnerships, resource mobilisation, and research and knowledge management for the development of the African continent. South Africa, with other African nations, has also participated in peace initiatives in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Burundi, and driving the African Renaissance.

South Africa has earned positive titles, such as 'bridge builder', but has also been charged with 'punching above its weight' on developmental and peace and security issues. It has also been criticised for its policy of 'quiet diplomacy' in Zimbabwe, its stance on Myanmar during its chairing of the UN Security Council and accommodation of deposed former president of Haiti, President Aristide.<sup>39</sup> It took up an ambiguous position in supporting the UN Security Council Resolution 1973, which authorised 'all necessary measures to protect civilians in the escalating conflict in Libya' in March 2011, a resolution which led to the bombardment of Libya by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).<sup>40</sup> Rather than being guided by an anti-imperialistic stance, South Africa's position on this matter raised mixed reactions within the wider context of the allegedly 'lethargic' stance of the AU in handling the crisis. The Arab League had suspended Libya, together with the condemnation of the Libyan leader by Western leaders. One could argue that this was a delicate situation in which South Africa defended due process, since it was a UN resolution in support of a multilateral intervention and at the same time created problems for the

claim of seeking solutions to Africa's problems, multilateralism and protecting civilians. The lack of a united position among the African states on Côte d'Ivoire also exposed the fault lines in the AU.

Academic discourse has focused on the fault lines and ambiguities in South Africa's foreign policy and the tensions between its human rights stance and its realist and interest-driven approach<sup>41</sup> to global politics. However, it can be observed that even in a democratic and ethical foreign policy, the making of foreign policy is usually the executive's prerogative. Nevertheless, communication of the rationale remains key, as ANC spokesperson Mr Mthembu stated after the pledging of the funds to the IMF: 'Our working together with the world to intervene in future economic crises will put us, as a country, in a better position to advance our transformation objectives within the international community'.<sup>42</sup>

### Working with civil society in the optimisation of soft power

There are arguments that non-state actors are sidelined in the making of foreign policy.<sup>43</sup> However, in the optimisation of soft power the role of non-state actors and communication with a supposedly 'ignorant' public is equally important. While the pledge of the US\$2 billion to the IMF raised mixed reactions from the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu), Business Unity South Africa (BUSA), the Democratic Alliance (DA), the ANC Youth League (ANCYL) and a few other sectors in the South African society, there are arguments that a greater voice for domestic interests would not lead to a more open and qualitatively better foreign policy.<sup>44</sup> The tensions and misunderstandings raised over the government's pledge of R16,5 billion illustrate how complex the role of civil society is, how many differing interests there are and how pragmatism should be used in the articulation of these interests.

Furthermore, the fact that certain interest groups objected to the IMF pledge indicates not that the citizens are ignorant about the workings of the economy, but rather that government had not communicated effectively about why the loan was given, nor pointed out that these were foreign reserves, which were not going to be used to deal with domestic issues in the first place. This shows that it is important for the South African government, in its drive for the national and global agendas, not to take the masses for granted or make a blanket assumption that the masses are

by definition ignorant.<sup>45</sup> The interests of domestic constituencies such as political parties, social movements, and business groups are important in the optimisation of South Africa's soft power. Better communicating the rationale behind certain policy decisions that might be deemed controversial by certain groups in society could maximise the effectiveness of soft power.

Domestic groups might not necessarily agree on certain foreign policy agendas, as evidenced by Cosatu's position on Zimbabwe and the Swazi monarchy: the support which Cosatu gives to Zimbabwe's Congress of Trade Unions and Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), and its solidarity with Swazi social movements that are demanding the liberalisation of political parties and the opening up of their democratic space.

### Leading by example in the optimisation of soft power

In enhancing soft-power attributes, a leadership role is critical, as well as leading by example at home and abroad, as soft power is defined as 'the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than through coercion'.<sup>46</sup> This power is cultivated in many ways, which include economic assistance and cultural exchange, which result in more favourable public opinion and credibility abroad.

This form of power is cited with reference to China and South Africa in foreign debates today. It involves leading by example and attracting others to achieve what you want, such as a better life for all, education, health care, opportunities and a sense of dignity, an ideal that South Africa has placed on the international agenda. A country may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries admire its values, emulate its example and aspire to its level of prosperity and openness.<sup>47</sup> This soft power can be drawn out of South Africa's values of democracy and human rights, when as a country it lives up to them; and its policies, when policies are consultative and involve the views and interests of others. Contemporary challenges such as climate change and the energy crisis compel community-based policing to rely on making the policy sufficiently friendly and attractive at home and abroad.

South Africa has adopted a proactive approach towards the climate change challenge, with the full realisation of its energy and developmental challenges. The country has played a major role in achieving progress in international negotiations on climate change towards a fair and equitable

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global regime after 2012. The country itself had committed itself to ambitious goals with the objective of promoting a low-carbon economy. At the UNFCCC conference in Copenhagen in 2009, President Zuma pledged to reduce South Africa's greenhouse gas emissions by 34 per cent by 2020 and 42 per cent by 2025. These commitments were made on financial and conditional technological transfer from the developed nations. South Africa could be said to have held a successful COP 17, which led to the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action, setting the future direction of a climate regime by initiating a new round of negotiations to be concluded by 2015 and operationalised by 2020. The Durban text also recognised the need to strengthen the multilateral rules based regime.

On Africa Day, 25 May 2012, South Africa also held the First African Diaspora Summit, which was a result of a consultative process with a variety of stakeholders, led by DIRCO. The declaration recognised the importance of a common vision of a united Africa based on partnerships between governments and all segments of society in order to strengthen cohesion and solidarity among the peoples. The summit resulted in a programme of action to enhance South-South cooperation through collaboration between the AU and all intergovernmental entities in regions of which the African diaspora is part. The African Diaspora Summit Action Plan stated the problems that bedevil African nations and suggested ways to tackle them, which include the mobilisation of an African Diaspora Investment Fund; partnerships in business; the promotion of science and technology institutions and innovation; knowledge transfer and skills; mobilisation in infrastructural development; information gathering and dissemination; and the establishment and support of African-centred institutions of knowledge and education, which are critical to Africa's development.<sup>48</sup>

The economic crises, especially the Eurozone economic crises, show that multilateralism matters; the contribution by South Africa to the IMF shows the shift in global power realities. While the developing world has not been part of the crisis of capitalism or climate change, it is prepared to play a part in the search for solutions. Africa needs to realise its priorities and also create a harmonious society which is diverse but well informed, understanding that economic and political decisions have to be taken in the interests of maximising growth and reducing poverty in a competitive world.

Furthermore, pragmatism, flexibility and exchange of ideas are important in foreign

policy, and South Africa seems to be moving in the right direction as it keeps pressing forward, putting pressure on modernising multilateral institutions, building coalitions and networks, exercising leadership at the UN, the G20, the IMF and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The Minister of International Relations and Cooperation has confidently expressed South Africa's national and foreign policy interests: 'the elevation of Dr Dlamini Zuma to the position of AU chairwoman is another cap of SA's foreign policy achievements ... our membership of BRICS ... is another'.<sup>49</sup>

South Africa has now truly taken its place as a global player, as pointed out by the same minister:

SA enjoys recognition as a dedicated and committed global and regional player. Our constructive role in global governance structures, as well as our position within organisations such as the AU, the Group of 77 and China and the Non Aligned Movement (NAM) is appreciated by BRICS and other like-minded partners. SA is also the only African country represented in the G20, which has become an important institution on the reform of the financial and economic global governance architecture.<sup>50</sup>

'We are not punching above our weight in global affairs; we are punching within our weight'.<sup>51</sup> These are the words of a country that is taking on the world as a global player.

## **Conclusions and recommendations**

There is a wide range of factors that influence the making of certain foreign policy decisions; foreign policy is indeed an evolutionary process, which at times takes into consideration the actions of different civil society interests, but it is crucial that government communicate certain policy decisions, especially if it is to have support in the exercise of its soft-power capabilities. Furthermore, sometimes there are certain decisions that government takes that are sensitive to national security; one hopes that government takes these in the national interest. There is a need to communicate to citizens the reasons behind certain government policies, to create public awareness and to seek greater public participation in some of these policies and processes. For example, the presidency could have explained, as it later did to the nation, 'Like China and India, South Africa is a responsible global citizen. We



are in the G20 to support global stabilization and growth. We need to continue to do our duty'.<sup>52</sup>

It should have been clearly communicated at the outset why the Eurozone crisis was of major concern to South Africans and why it would be in South Africa's favour to stave off this continuing recession. South Africa is currently the largest trading partner in Africa of the European Union (EU). In 2010, South Africa's exports to the EU were at €17912 million. The Eurozone currently accounts for 33 per cent of South Africa's net trade. Thus, South Africa has a vested interest in the EU's stability. The economic problems in Greece and Spain will have a negative impact on the South African economy in the long run. In the 2008–2009 financial crisis, it was estimated that South Africa lost about 1 million jobs, which has an adverse impact on the wellbeing of South Africans and those living in poverty.

Furthermore, it is also important to have a well-informed civil society that is well organised and is able to speak with a common voice on developmental issues in order to participate effectively in the making of foreign policy. It can be at times difficult for civil society and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to adopt a common position (witness the mixed statements from civil society as regards the sum pledged to the firewall fund), but it is important for civil society bodies to be well organised and to present themselves as stakeholders that government can engage with. The government's responses to the protests show that South Africa is prepared to gain support on the global stage, despite its internal economic problems, and be a willing player in issues of international economy although these might be unpopular with certain interests at home.

This brief makes the recommendation that the government revisit the institutions and processes of participation to ensure that they function in such a manner that those who need to be represented are heard sincerely,<sup>53</sup> in order to bridge the gap between unrealistic expectations and the deficits in delivery, as well as the general outcomes of governance. South African decision makers need to factor into consideration the fact that public participation and effective communication through different channels, including the media, working with civil society, and leading by example are major ingredients in the exercise of soft power, as power is not exercised in a vacuum.

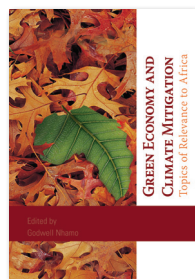
There is also the need for continuous evaluation and feedback, and a constant evaluation of the intended outcomes in a world of complex

interdependence. Optimising endearment and influence by setting a good example; epitomising commonly accepted human values; and effectively communicating and disseminating these values nationally, continentally, and globally will lead to the currency of soft power being supported by the diverse population.

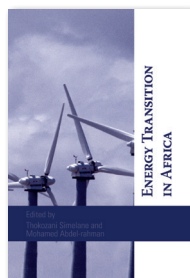
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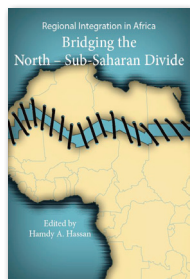
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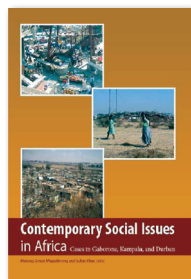
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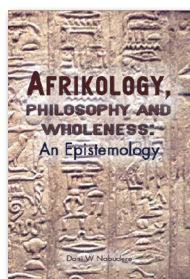
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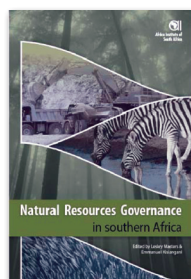
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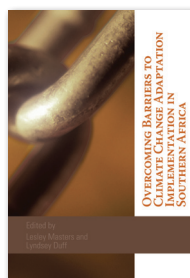
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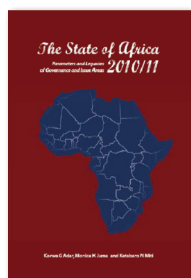
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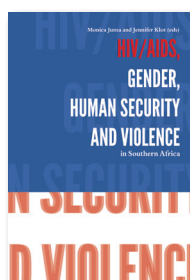
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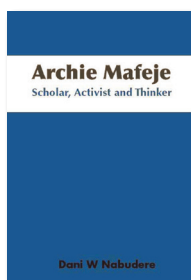
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