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South Africa’s Role in the BRICS Cooperative and the United Nations Security Council: A Representative of Africa?

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Department of Politics and International Relations

of the
Faculty of Humanities
at the
University of Johannesburg

by

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201304846

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for the Degree of
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Supervisor: Prof. S Graham
ABSTRACT

Shortly after the 1994 elections, South Africa was faced with the challenge of repositioning itself as a prominent regional and global player in international affairs. The country had to demonstrate that it was “…peaceful and responsible neighbour, committed to regional, continental and global development and cooperation” (Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME), 2014:148). Through such a commitment, the country sought to be an active and critical player in the areas of economic growth and development, as well as peace and security. Twenty-five years down the line, South Africa has undeniably increased its influence and presence on the global stage. The country has joined, and is also participating in a number of influential global multilateral forums such as the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and Global South forums such the Brazil Russia India China South Africa (BRICS) cooperative.

A key theme that has featured in South Africa’s post-apartheid foreign policy is the country’s commitment to Africa. Since 1994, there have been several pronouncements made by the South African government of its intention to promote the interests of Africa on the global stage. The country sought to do this through the promotion of its own African agenda. “The African Agenda outlines a bold strategy through which South Africa aims to ensure that Africa’s people and its interests are not forgotten or ignored by humankind” (ANC, 1994:4). Through the promotion of the African Agenda, South Africa aims to position itself as a representative of the continent and a champion of Africa. This image of a representative and champion of Africa has helped the country acquire membership into the BRICS grouping and take up terms on the UNSC for three terms (2007-2008; 2011-2012; 2019-2020). South Africa has committed itself to promoting to the African Agenda in the BRICS and the UNSC.

This thesis seeks to examine whether or not South Africa is representing the interests of Africa in the BRICS and UNSC, respectively. It seeks to determine the extent to which South Africa is promoting the Africa agenda in these two multilateral bodies. The study will use the Role Approach as a theoretical framework to help determine whether or not South Africa is representing Africa in the two above-
mentioned multilateral forums. The findings of this study indicate that South Africa is a self-appointed representative that faces a difficult task of balancing between its own interests and those of the continent.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Unlimited praise goes to the Almighty for the wisdom, determination and discipline He has entrusted upon me. He has made me grasp the essence of education, hard work and responsibility; with Him nothing is impossible!

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My two sisters, Angela and Mapule, and niece, Zintle, for their constant support and encouragement.

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<tr>
<td>AMISOM</td>
<td>African Union Mission in Somalia</td>
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<td>AMU</td>
<td>Arab Mahgreb Union</td>
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<td>ANC</td>
<td>African National Congress</td>
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<td>ARC</td>
<td>African Regional Centre</td>
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<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>Association of Southeast Asian Nations</td>
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<td>AU</td>
<td>African Union</td>
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<td>AUPSC</td>
<td>African Union Peace and Security Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>APRM</td>
<td>African Peer Review Mechanism</td>
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<td>BASIC</td>
<td>Brazil, South Africa, India and China</td>
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<td>BRIC</td>
<td>Brazil, Russia, India and China</td>
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<td>BRICS</td>
<td>Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa</td>
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<td>CAR</td>
<td>Central African Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td>COP</td>
<td>Conference of Parties</td>
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<tr>
<td>DFA</td>
<td>Department of Foreign Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIRCO</td>
<td>Department of International Relations and Cooperation</td>
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<tr>
<td>DPME</td>
<td>Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>Democratic Republic of Congo</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECA</td>
<td>United Nations Economic Commission for Africa</td>
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<td>ECASS</td>
<td>Economic Community of Central African States</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECOWAS</td>
<td>Economic Community of West African States</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>FNL</td>
<td>Forces nationales de Libération</td>
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<td>G8</td>
<td>Group of Eight</td>
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<td>G20</td>
<td>Group of 20</td>
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<td>G77</td>
<td>Group of 77</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<tr>
<td>GNU</td>
<td>Government of National Unity</td>
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<tr>
<td>IBSA</td>
<td>India-Brazil-South Africa</td>
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<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>IGAD</td>
<td>Intergovernmental Authority on Development Dialogue</td>
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<tr>
<td>IGD</td>
<td>Institute for Global Dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MINURSO</td>
<td>United Nations Mission for Referendum in Western Sahara</td>
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<td>MONUC</td>
<td>United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAM</td>
<td>Non-Aligned Movement</td>
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<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>NDB</td>
<td>New Development Bank</td>
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<td>NEPAD</td>
<td>New Partnership for Africa’s Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>NPT</td>
<td>Non-proliferation Treaty</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>PIDA</td>
<td>Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>POLISARIO</td>
<td>Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Humra and Rio de Oro</td>
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<tr>
<td>REC</td>
<td>Regional Economic Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>SACU</td>
<td>Southern African Customs Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>SADC</td>
<td>Southern African Development Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAGI</td>
<td>South African Government Information</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAIIA</td>
<td>South African Institute of International Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>SANDF</td>
<td>South African National Defence Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>TDCA</td>
<td>Trade Development and Cooperation Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TNC</td>
<td>Transitional National Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNAMID</td>
<td>United Nations-African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNGA</td>
<td>United Nations General Assembly</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNHRC</td>
<td>United Nations Human Rights Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNMEE</td>
<td>United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNOCI</td>
<td>United Nations Operations in Côte d’Ivoire</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNSC</td>
<td>United Nations Security Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
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<tr>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>Union of Soviet Socialist Republics</td>
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<tr>
<td>WEF</td>
<td>World Economic Forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>WTO</td>
<td>World Trade Organisation</td>
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 CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION, METHODOLOGY AND STRUCTURE

1.1. Introduction

“Africa’s economic giant” and the “Champion of Africa’s development” (Alden and Schoeman, 2013; Smith in Ebert and Flames, 2018:116) are some of the many labels that have been attached or associated with South Africa for the past decade or so. This has been because of South Africa’s visible and rising international presence. The objective and purpose of this study is to determine whether or not South Africa is representing Africa in multilateral platforms and more specifically is it a champion of Africa (own emphasis)? It will do so by examining two case studies: South Africa’s representative role in the Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (BRICS) Cooperative and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for its first two terms, respectively. However, having said that, it is of great importance that one offers a brief background of South Africa’s status post 1994.

Shortly after the 1994 elections, the newly elected African National Congress (ANC) government was faced with the challenging task of repositioning and restoring South Africa’s image in the region, on the continent and in the world after many years of isolation from the international stage. Just a year before the 1994 elections, the then ANC president, Nelson Mandela published his renowned article entitled “South Africa’s Future Foreign Policy” which outlined several core principles that would be at the heart of the country’s foreign policy. Some of the key principles outlined in the article included a commitment to an African Agenda and the promotion of economic development through regional and international cooperation (Mandela, 1993:87). These key foreign policy principles would help South Africa restore its fragile relations with its neighbours and countries in the continent and with the rest of the world. According to a report by South Africa’s Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) entitled “South Africa in the Global Arena” (2014:148), “South Africa had to demonstrate that it was a peaceful and responsible neighbour,
committed to a regional, continental and global development and economic cooperation”.

After only serving one term in office, Mandela handed over the baton to his successor, Thabo Mbeki, who would continue with the quest of reintegrating South Africa to the international system. The Mbeki administration developed a foreign policy which would be guided by four strategic themes, namely, “the so called ‘African Agenda’; South-South co-operation; North-South Dialogue; and socio-economic and politico-security” (Landsberg, 2012:76). According to Landsberg in the Mail and Guardian (2007), the main aim of this ‘African Agenda’ is to “integrate the continent into the global economy on the basis of ‘mutual responsibility’ and ‘mutual accountability’”. Tshwane has adopted its own unique ‘African Agenda’ that transcends the mere aim of integrating the continent into the global economy but involves a wide range of efforts to accelerate the economic growth and ensure peace and security in Africa.

The Department of International Relations and Cooperation’s (DIRCO) 2012-2017 Strategic Plan defines the [South African] African Agenda as a key concept established to describe a very significant purpose underpinned in the country’s foreign policy which “rests on five pillars which are to: contribute to regional and continental peace, security, stability and sustainable development…; advance Africa’s socio-economic development…; seek co-operation through international partnerships in support of Africa’s development; and develop regional economic communities (RECs)”.. Furthermore, Landsberg and Kondlo (2007:1) note that under the rubric of the African Agenda, South Africa sought to be an active and critical player ensuring peace and security, as well as development in Africa. The Republic’s foreign policy over the years has reflected an attempt to assume to the role of mediator in Africa, and a ‘champion of Africa’ on the international stage. Prioritising these themes would assist the country in strengthening its relations on the continent and the rest of the world. However, with that said, there have been growing concerns in some diplomatic quarters that with its unique ‘African Agenda’, Tshwane is harbouring its aims of being the continental and regional hegemon. This study will specifically focus on the African Agenda as set out in the Republic’s strategic plans.
The Jacob Zuma (2009-2018) administration adopted similar foreign policy priorities to that of the Mbeki administration but had a strong focus on strengthening political economic relations as well as participating in the global system of governance (Landsberg, 2012: 75). The concept of the ‘African Agenda’ also featured in the Zuma administration’s foreign policy. This is reflected in the 2010-2013 DIRCO Strategic Plan, where the country stated that “at the multilateral level South Africa engages with countries of the North in the context of promoting the African Agenda and the Agenda of the South through participation at summits…” (DIRCO Strategic Plan, 2010:14). It was further noted that the country’s engagements with countries of the North have been aligned with the nation’s national interest and the African Agenda.

Twenty-five years down the line, South Africa has undeniably increased its international presence on the global stage. The Republic, over the years, has joined, and/or is also participating in influential global governance forums such as the UNSC and Global South forums such as the BRICS cooperative. Boulle (2011:137) adds that “…despite South Africa having no direct mandate there have been pronouncements in the diplomatic quarters that the country should seek to ‘represent’ the continent”. In any democratic dispensation, a representative is usually legitimately authorised through an election process. However, the complexity of politics in this day has made it difficult for one to provide a standard answer to the question of who can legitimately claim to be a representative. While many can easily say that a representative ought to be duly elected, this answer has, however, become increasingly insufficient. This is because there has been an increasing number of actors who ‘self-appoint’: they make claims and pronouncements that they represent others without being formally elected or mandated by those they claim to represent.

According to Montanaro (2012:1096), a “self-appointed representation is a subset of non-electoral political representation that occurs primarily in civil society and the public sphere and is disconnected from the coercive political authority of the state, whether or not that authority is organized through electoral democracy”. With that said, there have been several pronouncements made by the South African government in some quarters that it seeks to represent and pursue African interests
in key multilateral forums. In her budget vote speech delivered on the 3rd May 2016, then Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, affirmed South Africa’s commitment to the Africa Agenda when she stated that:

Our cooperative partnerships with emerging economies complement other existing platforms which we utilise to pursue the African Agenda. Since we joined the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) formation, Africa’s developmental needs and aspirations have been fully incorporated into the BRICS agenda.

Furthermore, in his inaugural Africa day speech delivered on the 25 May 2018, President Cyril Ramaphosa reaffirmed South Africa’s efforts of championing Africa’s interest in multilateral forums when he stated that:

South Africa will continue to champion the interests of Africa within the BRICS formation and will, in this regard convene an Outreach Session with African leaders (DIRCO, 2018).

From the above, South Africa can therefore be labelled as a self-appointed representative of Africa. South Africa officially joined the BRICS grouping after receiving an invitation from the People’s Republic of China in December 2010 to join the multilateral forum. The Republic also served as a non–permanent member of the UNSC in 2008-2009 and 2011-2012 and has been elected for the 2019-2020 term. In the latter example, South Africa was duly elected by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to represent Africa on the UNSC for these three terms.

It is worth noting South Africa’s membership and involvement in these influential bodies for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is to recognise and appreciate the country’s role in regional and global activism. Secondly, what stands out from South Africa’s membership is that it is the only African country in the BRICS, and it is the only African country that would have served three terms as a rotating non-permanent member in the UNSC after its tenure in 2019-2020. Furthermore, should UNSC reform take place South Africa is seen as a potential candidate for permanent membership. Chidley (2015:4) notes that South Africa’s role within these forums, coupled with its regional and continental role, has raised the country’s profile as a key global player in the international system. In these forums, South Africa lays claim
to be a representative of Africa by trying to advance the African Agenda. However, South Africa’s role in these institutions has been highly questioned and criticised. According to Boulle (2011:136), some African states have raised questions about South Africa’s ‘representative’ role in Africa and, in terms of South Africa’s BRICS membership, about the ‘gateway into Africa’ issue, given the relatively small size of the Republic’s economy in the BRICS context. Against this background, the dissertation will explore and analyse South Africa’s role in championing the African Agenda in the BRICS and the UNSC.

1.2. Research Objectives

Considering the above background this study is motivated by the primary objective of assessing South Africa’s role as a representative of Africa in these global forums, specifically in the BRICS and the UNSC for the terms 2008-2008 and 2011-2012. The study’s research objectives are as follows:

- This paper will try to determine whether South Africa is indeed the champion of Africa. To this end, the study will investigate how South Africa, being a member of these influential global forums, has carried out its representative role in championing the African Agenda as set out in the country’s strategic plans. This will be achieved by using two case studies: South Africa’s role in the BRICS and the UNSC, to determine and gather evidence on whether South Africa is championing the African Agenda in these two institutions.
- Some of the research questions that will assist the researcher to gather evidence include:
  - How and to what extent has South Africa promoted or put forward the issue of the African Agenda on the Agenda of the BRICS and the UNSC?
  - How has South Africa’s decisions and actions in the BRICS and the UNSC reflected those of the African Agenda?
  - Has South Africa’s representative role produced any visible results, in the form of resolutions or public policies committed to the principles behind the African agenda (African development, economic policy, and peace and security in Africa) in the BRICS and the UNSC, respectively?
1.3. Literature Review

The literature below has covered South Africa’s ‘representative role’ in two multilateral institutions: BRICS and the UNSC. It has also examined Holsti’s role approach as an analytical framework that can be used to analyse South Africa’s ‘representative role’ in the aforementioned institutions.

An abundance of literature on South Africa’s membership and role in the BRICS exists. While many scholars have written on South Africa’s controversial inclusion in the BRICS (O’Neill, 2011; Daniel, 2014; Besada et al., 2013; Oliver, 2013; Kahn and Karodia, 2014), some scholars have focused on specific themes relating to South Africa’s role and membership in the BRICS. Some of these themes include South Africa’s role in the BRICS as a form of strengthening South-South relations (Moore, 2012), an assessment and comparison of South Africa’s membership in the regional bodies and the BRICS (Shoba, 2017). Certainly, one cannot ignore the literature that exists on the debate of South Africa’s role in the BRICS as a representative of Africa or as a ‘gateway to Africa’. Scholars such as Games, (2012; Kahn, (2011); Soko and Qobo, (2016); Moore, (2012); Lumumba-Kasongo, (2015) have written on South Africa’s role in the BRICS, but they have not tackled the question whether South Africa is indeed championing Africa’s interests in these global institutions.

Prominent scholars such as Alden and Schoeman (2013); Kornegay and Masters, 2011 and Vickers (2013) have published some works on South Africa’s growing alliances with emerging powers. Such alliances offer developing countries such as South Africa opportunities to increase their geopolitical power as well as opportunities to pursue economic and political interests. Zondi (2012) views South Africa’s move to align itself with dominant powers as the country’s political rationale of its inclusion in the BRICS. However, with that said, such alliances can also equally pose serious foreign policy challenges and complications. South Africa over the years has been seen to be undergoing a reorientation of its foreign policy to align and reflect its growing image as regional leader.
A study by published by Anthony et al. (2015) indicates that South Africa's changing foreign policy can be linked to the influence of China and other emerging powers. According to Alden and Schoeman (2013:112), the BRICS-orientated foreign policy pursued by South Africa is “…reflected in, among other things, a new white paper on foreign policy, and position papers on the BRICS by the Treasury and the Department of Trade and Industry”. This has signalled a significant shift for South Africa in terms of global power. While South Africa is not mandated to act as a representative of Africa in the BRICS, the country, however, on several occasions puts forward and acts as an advocate of the African continent to address issues that may fall within its African Agenda.

Peace and security have become an essential exercise for many, if not all, countries in the world. This is as a result of the many conflicts (civil or political) that have dominated the international space for many years. The UNSC, as a multilateral forum, has been regarded as the “highest custodian of peace and security in the international community” (Du Plessis, 2013:1). South Africa, over the past decade or so, has been actively involved in peace and security efforts in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region and the African continent. Furthermore, as indicated earlier in this chapter, South Africa has served two tenures as a non-permanent member of the UNSC and is currently serving a third term. Several contributions on South Africa’s role in the UNSC have been made.

However, there remains a serious need to develop more literature on this subject. South Africa’s two tenures in the UNSC can be easily labelled as controversial. This controversy arises from the decision-making and voting behaviour of the country relating to African issues during its two tenures. In her chapter entitled “South Africa’s voting behaviour at the United Nations Security Council: A case of boxing Mbeki and unpacking Zuma?”, Graham looks into South Africa’s controversial voting behaviour and positions taken during its two tenures in the UNSC. She unpacks the decisions taken during the Mbeki and Zuma presidencies. One of the positions she highlights in this chapter is South Africa’s controversial decision of voting in favour of Resolution 1973, which permitted for a no-fly zone over Libya’s airspace (Graham in Masters et al., 2015:77). Cilliers et al. (2010) look into South Africa’s second term in the UNSC. They unpack what would be expected of South Africa during its second
term and how it should go about correcting its wrongs or even dealing with these expectations.

Key to the subject of South Africa and the UNSC is reform. There has been a heated debate on South Africa's role in advocating for reform within the UNSC. In a research report by the Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD) (2012), Matshiqi (2012) writes an interesting piece on South Africa promoting the African Agenda in the UNSC. He argues that South Africa's positioning in the UNSC, should be “understood in more in terms of the complexity of her foreign policy choices and less in terms of the criticism that she is pusillanimous in her relations with countries such as China and Russia” (Matshiqi in IGD, 2012:41). South Africa faces a difficult task of balancing its foreign policy priorities and advancing the African Agenda - which it has declared publicly is its aim.

South Africa’s representative role can be studied and analysed through the lenses of Holsti’s role conception. His renowned article entitled “National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy” (1987) sets out a framework within which one can understand how countries carry out their said roles in the international arena. According to Sekhri (2009:425), states have adopted various prominent roles. These range from liberation supporter; regional leader; faithful ally; mediator; peacemaker; anti-imperialist agent; and model amongst others (Sekhri, 2009:425). Scholars such as Aggestam (1999); Campbell (1999); and Walker (1987) have written on the Role model or Role Theory. Sofiane Sekhiri, whose article will be used in this study, explains how the role approach can be used as a theoretical framework in analysing the foreign policies of developing countries. From the afore-mentioned roles, South Africa foreign policy makers can be said to have adopted a number of roles for the country, including ‘Continental and regional leader in Africa and Southern Africa’ respectively, ‘Peacekeeper and Mediator in Africa’, ‘Liberation supporter’ in the case of Palestine and Israel, among others. However, for the purpose of this dissertation the author will draw from the available literature to develop the term ‘representative role’ to best describe the role adopted by the South African government. Representative in this context can be explained as a role adopted by a state whereby it acts as a representative of a specific region or the continent. It takes on
the task of pursuing or advancing the interests of that specific region in the international arena or influential global forums.

1.4. Research Methodology

This research takes the form of an exploratory study that seeks to answer, by means of a literature review and analysis, the question of whether South Africa is the champion of Africa through its representative role in multilateral forums. Conducted within the qualitative paradigm, the study relies on primary and secondary sources, including government publications, published books, academic journal articles, policy documents, summit declarations, speeches, annual and strategic reports, newspaper articles, media reports, internet sources as well as other relevant literature. The study uses the case study method to serve a supportive role in gathering evidence which will be useful in answering the question of whether South Africa is a champion of Africa. The instrumental case study method is the method adopted in this study. According to Youla (2009:4), “the instrumental case studies are cases examined to provide insight into some issue”. The study is confined to two cases: South Africa’s representative role in the BRICS, and the UNSC for its first two terms. These cases serve as useful in the examination of South Africa’s role of championing the African Agenda in these two multilateral institutions. The data analysis method used in this study is the content analysis method. According to Bhatia (2018), the content analysis method “is used to analyse documented information in the form of texts, media, or even physical items”.

1.5. Structure of the Study

- Chapter 2 presents an analytical framework of the study. The study will begin by unpacking the term South Africa’s ‘African Agenda’. The study will then use the role approach as an analytical framework to analyse South Africa’s ‘representative role’ in the BRICS and the UNSC.
- Chapter 3 will analyse South Africa’s representative role in the BRICS. It will address South Africa’s responsibility to act as a gateway to the continent and how it has used this platform to address the issues of development in Africa.
• Chapter 4 will explore South Africa’s representative role in the UNSC. It will also include analysis of South Africa’s efforts of placing or prioritising Africa’s peace and security issues on the UNSC agenda.
• Chapter 5 will provide an overview of the findings from chapters three, four and five and draw some conclusions.
CHAPTER 2: THE AFRICAN AGENDA AND THE ROLE APPROACH

2.1. Introduction

The purpose of the study is to determine whether South Africa is a representative of Africa in the BRICS cooperative and the UNSC. This chapter will lay the foundations for the rest of study by undertaking an in-depth analysis of the notion of the African Agenda. “The African Agenda outlines a bold strategy through which South Africa aims to ensure that Africa’s people and its interests are not forgotten or ignored by humankind” (ANC, 1994:4). Since the dawn of the new democratic South Africa, there have been several pronouncements made by South African Statesmen and government ministers of South Africa’s intention to promote Africa’s interests on the global stage. As referred to briefly in Chapter 1, these intentions are clearly manifested in South Africa’s vision of the African Agenda. Tshwane has adopted its own unique African Agenda that transcends the aim of merely integrating the continent into the global economy but involves a wide range of efforts to accelerate the economic growth and ensure peace and security on the African continent. Through the promotion of the African Agenda, Tshwane seeks to represent the interests of the continent. This chapter will explain the concept of South Africa’s African Agenda and then explore the tensions and challenges in implementing the Agenda. The chapter will also analyse the role approach and use it as a framework to explain South Africa’s role as a ‘representative’ of Africa in global multilateral institutions.

2.2. The African Agenda

Over the past two decades the advancement of the African Agenda has been a central priority in Tshwane’s foreign policy formulation. According to the Department of International Relations and Cooperation’s (DIRCO) 2010-2013 Strategic Plan, one of the key principles underpinning South Africa’s foreign policy, is “a commitment to
promote the African Agenda in world affairs” (DIRCO Strategic Plan, 2010). The department has, on several occasions, echoed the fact that Africa remains at the heart of the country’s foreign policy. South African foreign policy-makers have ensured that South Africa strategically aligns itself and strengthens its relations with key countries in different regions of the continent in order to advance this agenda. Landsberg and Kondlo (2007:1) note that in order to ensure the successful implementation of the African Agenda, South Africa would require the support of key allies from various regions within the continent. Through the vision of the African Agenda, South Africa sought to develop new strategies and ways that would see Africa take a new direction towards its governance, development, and economic positioning.

The advancement of the African Agenda has prominently featured in the foreign policies of all former presidents of democratic South Africa - Nelson Mandela, Thabo Mbeki, Kgalema Motlanthe (during his nine-months as caretaker President), Jacob Zuma and Cyril Ramaphosa more recently. However, it is during the Mbeki presidency that the implementation of the African Agenda was more evident. This can be observed through the vision of the African Renaissance, the establishment of the African Union (AU), the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), and the formulation of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD). Tshwane played a fundamental role in the formulation of these important organisations. These initiatives are seen as central projects in pursuit of the African Agenda by the South African government. According to the Munzhedzi (2017: 23), “these initiatives had little to do with a South African project and focused on developing institutions within the continent which would deal with peace, security and economic relations”.

The African Renaissance forms a fundamental basis of South Africa’s ambitions of advancing the African Agenda. McGurk (2013:14) notes that the “The African Renaissance, with its ‘Pan Africanist pedigree’, informs the African Agenda and South Africa’s ambition vision for the continent”. The above view suggests an inextricable link between South Africa’s African Agenda and the African Renaissance. This account is supported in Landsberg’s (2010:149) observation where he notes that during Thabo Mbeki’s tenure as president, the African Agenda in
Tshwane’s foreign policy was put forward through the formation of an African Renaissance and the Millennium African Recovery Plan.

While Mbeki may be largely credited for advancing the African Agenda during his tenure as president, former President Nelson Mandela, the first president of a democratic South Africa, also demonstrated, through his pronouncements, a commitment towards the advancement of an African Agenda for South Africa. In his inaugural address to the United Nations in 1994, the former president stressed that as part of the Republic’s commitment towards peace and security in the continent, South Africa would prioritise Africa through regional and continent structures such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the AU. He promised that South Africa would effectively play its role in the efforts by these institutions to build a continent and a region that is peaceful and prosperous (Mandela, 1994).

The notion of the African Agenda is not new, there have been other African Agenda’s before democratic South Africa’s noble or self-appointed initiative. Zondi argues that the notion of the African Agenda did not begin in South Africa’s post-1994 external policy but can be linked as far back as the development of African Nationalism in South Africa (Zondi, 2015:98). He further notes that African Nationalism was somewhat similar to the liberal ideas borrowed from the African-American political organisations. He posits that Thabo Mbeki translated the ideas and the notion of African Renaissance into South African external policy during his tenure as president. Bohler-Muller (2012:8) further adds that the Pan Africanist ‘grand idea’ of the late President of Libya, Muamar Gaddafi also intended to integrate the African continent, in a kind of agenda for Africa.

South Africa’s African Agenda objectives are clearly outlined in the Department of Foreign Affairs’ (at the time) 2005-2008 Strategic Plan. These objectives include:

- Strengthening the African Union and its structures (i.e. supporting regional bodies, NEPAD, Pan African Parliament etc.);
- Ensuring South Africa’s effective participation in regional bodies of Southern Africa such as the South African Customs Union and the Southern African Development Community (SADC);
• Ensuring the successful implementation of NEPAD;
• Ensuring that there is peaceful conflict resolution of wars and conflicts riding the continent, and also promote reconstruction and development after conflicts have occurred;
• Improving and strengthening democratisation within the region and continentally;
• Ensuring strengthened bilateral relations;
• Ensuring and strengthening South-South dialogue through bodies such as the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Partnership, the Group of 77 (G77), and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), and
• Promoting North-South dialogue focused on the African Agenda through multilateral institutions such as the Group of Eight (G8); the European Union, (EU); Bretton Woods Institutions, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the World Economic Forum (WEF) (DFA, 2005:66).

Through the advancement of the African Agenda, South Africa sought to establish structures and processes that will ensure peaceful conflict resolution in Africa, and also creating favourable conditions for sustainable economic and social development in the continent. South Africa, under the banner of the African Agenda also sought to position itself as a regional hegemon and critical agent of change in the continent and in world affairs. Bohler-Muller (2012:8) adds that “in promoting its African Agenda, South Africa has proclaimed itself both the leader and bridge-builder on the continent and, through its membership of BRICS, the primary ‘gateway’ to Africa”.

In 2004 then Foreign Affairs Minister, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma (2004) emphasised South Africa’s role as a driver of the African Agenda on the global stage, saying “that South Africa is part of Africa and … therefore the priorities of Africa and developing countries are also our priority”. The above statement suggests that South Africa views its own interests and priorities as inseparable to that of the continent. Marius Fransman, then Deputy Minister of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation, emphasised this in a round table discussion held at the University of South Africa that “our [South Africa] foreign policy posture moves from
a premise that there is an extricable link between our future and that of Africa- for the
greater good of our continent” (Fransman, 2012:8). While South Africa seeks to
promote social and economic development, peace and democratisation
domestically, the country also seeks to extend those commitments externally, into
the continent and world affairs. Landsberg and Kondo (2007:2) provide a convincing
account of this noting that the “…values to which the country [South Africa] aspires
at home are the same values it hopes for in the rest of the continent”. The African
Agenda aims to promote integration and good relations among African states.

2.2.1. Continental Integration and Regionalism

The formation of the AU, born from the dissolution of the Organisation of African
Unity, in 2002 arose from a strong need to promote integration within the African
continent, and South Africa, as an integral player in the advancement and promotion
of the African Agenda, played an influential role in its formation. The Mbeki
administration believed that through the formation of multilateral institutions the
vision of the African Agenda could be achieved and would be able to assist South
Africa to emerge as a prominent actor in the global stage. According to McGurk
(2013:16), “Mbeki and the South African delegation strongly influenced the new AU’s
orientation and aims and have been strong supporters of continental cooperation”.
These efforts saw the AU move from its primary aim of integration, to prioritise and
strengthen its efforts towards conflict resolution and mediation, peace and security in
the continent.

Multilateralism has been a key feature in South Africa’s foreign policy since the new
democratic dispensation. According to McGurk (2013:17), it has “…allowed South
Africa to influence the priorities and policies of fellow African States, attempt to forge
consensus amongst them, and enhance cooperation, all without appearing to
dominate or dictate policy”.

Continental and regional integration has been a key goal of the African Agenda, and
as such, South Africa has ensured that the African Agenda is embodied in the AU,
SADC, NEPAD, and APRM. South Africa was an instrumental player in the formation
of these institutions and has used its influential position to shape Africa’s developmental agenda. The South African government has through the notion of the African Agenda adopted an African posture that seeks to promote development, strengthen governance, promote democratisation and ensure peace and security within the African continent. This African Agenda further tries to promote strengthening relations and good ‘neighbourliness’ among African states and also allows South Africa, as a leading champion of the African Agenda, to advance Africa’s interests on the global stage.

2.2.2. NEPAD

The pursuit of its African Agenda has positioned South Africa to become a critical player in drafting a socio-economic development strategy for the continent. South African foreign policy makers, have therefore, been critical players in the development and articulation of plans aimed at modernizing and developing the continent. According to Landsberg and Kondlo (2007:4), in 2001 foreign policy makers from South Africa, Nigeria and Algeria developed a mechanism to be known as the NEPAD. This forum would act as a negotiating platform for partnerships between and Africa and the rest of the world.

NEPAD aims to ensure that there is progressive growth in Africa’s development. It is believed that Africa’s lack of, or failure in, development is as a result of bad governance, conflicts and the historical legacies of colonialism. NEPAD has identified five main action plans that will help to strengthen Africa’s development. These include “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” (NEPAD, 2002: 11). NEPAD emphasised that in order for development to take place it first required social, political and cultural factors. The APRM was tool designed to promote democratic governance throughout the continent. It was envisaged that through the formation of these mechanisms and institutions, a new dispensation of a democratic, peaceful and stable Africa would be created.
As part of advancing the African Agenda on the global arena and in global multilateral institutions, South Africa took it upon itself to exclusively promote NEPAD internationally as Africa’s developmental strategy. In 2002, NEPAD was accepted as Africa’s development strategy by the UNGA. According to Landsberg and Kondlo (2007:5), South Africa promoted NEPAD in other multilateral and sub-regional platforms such as the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the Southern Common Market or MERCOSUR (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay), and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). In line with advancing Africa’s interests internationally, NEPAD placed huge emphasis on negotiating international trade-off partnerships and agreements with partners and stakeholders abroad. South Africa and NEPAD partners introduced an idea of ‘mutual accountability’ and ‘mutual responsibility’ between the continental partners and its partners abroad.

This would see Western governments commit to opening up the markets for African traders to trade their goods; creating conditions for free and fair trade, debt relief and the provision of resources that will be able to assist Africa with its peace and security operations. African partners on the other hand will have to commit to take responsibility for ensuring that good governance and democratic practices take place in the continent, ensure that the peacekeeping operations take place, decisive steps are taken to fight corruption and create favourable conditions for economic growth and development (Gentle, 2003: 21).

2.2.3. The African Peer Review Mechanism

As part of its commitment to promote democratisation in Africa, South Africa alongside its continental partners developed a programme to be known as the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). The APRM is a tool that aims to promote democratic conduct in Africa. It is an instrument that aims to promote democracy, rule of law, and good governance practices, but also most importantly to ensure and encourage African states to adhere to these practices. The mandate of the APRM is to:

“ensure that policies and practices of participating Member States conform to the agreed political, economic and corporate governance values, codes and standards
contained in the African Union Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance. As a voluntary self-monitoring instrument, APRM fosters the adoption of policies, standards and practices that lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and accelerated regional and continental economic integration through sharing of experiences and best practices, including identifying deficiencies and assessing the needs for capacity building" (APRM, 2003).

The APRM was established in 2003 as a tool which African states would voluntarily sign up to, and by doing so, they would be committing to comply with the priorities, values and goals set out in the AU Constitutive Act and other resolutions that may be adopted in the AU and NEPAD (Adebajo et al., 2007:27). Furthermore, by signing up, states would be agreeing to be monitored on their progress towards meeting the goals of NEPAD. While signing up is voluntary, Tshwane believes that ideally, all African states should sign up to the mechanism as this would help advance the practice of good governance on the continent (Landsberg, 2009:14). Improving governance is seen as prerequisite for social and economic development.

There were great expectations of success in South Africa’s Peer Review process in 2005/2006 as the country was an instrumental player in Africa’s emerging governance plan to the world. This was also because South Africa, along with its continental partners, such as Nigeria and Mozambique, had invested so much in the APRM and the success and credibility of the mechanism largely depended on the review of those countries. According to Landsberg (2007:6), South Africa, in September 2005, officially launched its peer review process. The process was marred with controversy and was characterised by tensions between government and civil society. This is because civil society believed government was dominating the process and lacked public dialogue, engagement and participation. With the pressure for civil society, the South African government then opened up the process to involve public participation. However, while civil society may be seen to have played a critical role in the process, they may equally be criticised for their conduct of casting aspersions on the APRM exercise as a whole. Landsberg (2007:7) notes that “while the APRM has accorded NGO’s [non-governmental organisations] rights and privileges, these groups also had a major responsibility to help consolidate South Africa’s APRM process and to address the enormous political, socio-economic, and developmental challenges faced by South Africa and the broader African community of states”. A lesson that could be taken from the South African experience is that all
member states, when undergoing the process, should ensure the participation of all stakeholders.

The establishment of the APRM mechanism came as a response to the economic, social, political governance challenges faced by Africa since the 1960s after many African states attained independence. For many decades, African states relied heavily on external actors, multilateral donors, western countries and others, to solve their issues of poor and bad governance. According to Landsberg (2007:14), “South Africa is firm in the view that the APRM should make a link between governance, democracy, peace and security”.

2.2.4 SADC

One of the key objectives of the African Agenda is to develop strong policy that will promote and ensure regional integration. South Africa’s African Agenda, with its aim to promote and increase participation in regional bodies, is seen as an important framework that will help end the marginalisation of the continent from the rest of the world. Regional Economic Communities (REC’s) are considered as important building blocks for integration in the continent. They are also regarded as key actors in the implementation of the AU programmes and projects. According to Landsberg (2007: 3), “the African Agenda favours sub-regional bodies like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development Dialogue (IGAD), The Economic Community of Central African States (ECASS), the Arab Mahgreb Union (AMU) and others”. These regional bodies are important platforms to promote and to realise the objectives of regional integration, peace and security, democracy, and progressive economic growth and development. Therefore, the formation of SADC, with its commitment to regional integration, are seen as key pillars in South Africa’s African Agenda. Through SADC, South Africa envisages the highest form of economic cooperation, collaborative peace-keeping efforts, collaborative planning and implementation of regional development programmes, and finding lasting solutions to political, social and environmental problems in the region.
Democratic South Africa has always supported the gradual move towards regional integration in the Southern African region. The Republic has for a long time emphasised the importance of regional cooperation and how it could play an important role in the acceleration of development in Southern Africa. According to Bekoe (2002:8), “Since 2000, much effort and energy has gone into restructuring SADC, and Pretoria has pushed for the articulation of protocols, while stressing the implementation and operationalisation of such protocols, particularly those on free trade, Politics, Defence and Security Co-operation”. Great emphasis has been placed on efforts to try to boost investor confidence and attract investors to the Southern African region. This is part of the region’s aim to create a free trade area that will see the reduction of trade barriers to ensure increased trading, and also a customs union, that will allow for the formation of a SADC common market.

South Africa has been at the forefront in negotiations for Free Trade Agreements between SADC and MERCOSUR, and it is expected that negotiations between the South African Customs Unions (SACU) and United States of America (USA) will continue under USA President Donald Trump’s administration (Mhonyera et al., 2019: 10). In his 2017 State of the Nation Address, former President Thabo Mbeki stated that “SACU’s largest economy (South Africa) will continue to cooperate with the USA on issues of mutual interest including full renewal of AGOA in 2025” (South African Government (SAG), 2017). Furthermore, South Africa has vowed to start with preparations to negotiate a Free Trade Agreement between China and SACU. According to Landsberg (2007:4), “a challenge for the ‘African Agenda’ is the regional trade balance in favour of South Africa; it is often said that this economic and trade dominance undermines South Africa’s position in the region”. It is therefore important that South Africa pushes for a trade regime and a situation where it balances its trade in order to deal with the above issue.

2.2.5. Conflict Resolution

A key principle underpinning South Africa’s foreign policy is that of being a peacemaker and mediator in the conflicts in Africa. According to McGurk (2013:17),
South Africa has positioned itself to be an instrumental player in the area of conflict management and resolution. Promoting peaceful conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction and development are two objectives of the African Agenda that speak to this. Tshwane’s African Agenda strategy has been to push for peaceful negotiations and inclusive governments to resolve conflicts. This strategy is heavily influenced by the country’s experience of its transition from an apartheid government to democratic dispensation in 1994. This strategy involved, in some instances, practices of quiet and preventative diplomacy, and also reaching settlements through negotiations. In 1999, the Mbeki government employed ‘quiet diplomacy’ tactics to the crisis in Zimbabwe in an attempt to persuade and encourage Zimbabwean president, Robert Mugabe, to opt for a negotiated solution towards the crisis. South Africa through this posture has made a name for itself as ‘Mediator’ or ‘honest broker’ of African conflicts. Landsberg and Kondlo (2007:9) note that “as early as 1994, President Nelson Mandela sought to broker ‘inclusive’ peace deals in Angola, stave off a coup d’état in Lesotho, and prevent a civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) through peace diplomacy”. South Africa was also an instrumental mediator in the conflicts in Cote d’Ivoire, Burundi, Eritrea, and Sudan. These conflicts will be further discussed in the context of South Africa’s role and voting actions in the UNSC in Chapter 4.

In achieving its African Agenda objectives, South Africa has demonstrated an inclination towards negotiated solutions rather than involving its military. In the rebellion against Mobutu Sese Seko, Congolese President from 1965 to 1997, Tshwane chose not to involve its military and again opted for a negotiated solution by trying to get the involved parties to reach a settlement (Kabemba in Landsberg and Baregu, 2004: 187). South Africa’s image as peacemaker in the continent has been boosted by its missions in the Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Kabemba (1999:24) notes that since 1999, Tshwane has been instrumental in its attempts to try to bring an end to the violent conflict in the DRC. Rather than opting for military action, South Africa instead deployed troops to assist the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC).
Although quiet diplomacy is famously known to be a tactic of Mbeki and his administration, his predecessor, Mandela and his administration, also employed it during the 1995 Nigerian Crisis after the jailing of Olusegun Obasanjo and the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa, the Ogoni Leader (Landsberg in Adebajo et al., 2004:176). Quiet diplomacy failed as Ken Saro-Wiwa was executed. However, one of the most notable contributions by the Mandela government with regards to peace and security was its diplomatic negotiations between the West and the Gaddafi Government. The Mandela administration did not only manage to broker a deal between the two parties, it also went on to help end Libya’s seclusion and tainted image in the West (DFA, 2007:4). South Africa’s use of diplomatic practices has helped the country realise some of its African Agenda objectives.

### 2.2.6. Democracy

The African Agenda holds the belief that finding lasting solutions to Africa’s myriad problems can only be realised under the stewardship of democratic governments. It is for this reason that one of the key objectives of South Africa’s African Agenda is to promote democracy regionally and continentally. The promotion of democracy has been a major theme that has featured in South Africa’s foreign policy since 1994. In his renowned article “South Africa’s Future Foreign Policy”, Mandela outlined the key principles that would guide South Africa foreign policy post-1994 and one of these pillars was the promotion of democracy, not only regionally but globally too. He noted “that just and lasting solutions to the problems of humankind can only come through the promotion of democracy worldwide” (Mandela, 1993:87). Both Mandela and his successor, Mbeki, shared the belief that the only way peace and stability could be realised on the continent, was to have strong and healthy democracies. Mbeki condemned all authoritative regimes and dictatorships in the continent, and urged all Africans living under such regimes to rebel against them, and advocate for democratic governments where the rule of law is respected (Adebajo et al., 2007:26).

It is no doubt that South Africa’s experience of an oppressive apartheid government had a strong influence in the new government’s commitment towards the promotion
of human rights and democracy. Tshwane took it upon itself to ensure that human rights of all people are respected, and that democracy is promoted not only domestically, but also internationally. Although Mandela’s personal relationship with leaders linked with human rights abuses, for example Cuba’s Fidel Castro and Indonesian President Suharto, was controversial, the promotion of human rights became a key principle guiding the Mandela administration’s foreign policy (Lyman, 2014:21). South Africa, during the presidency of Mandela was at the forefront of global efforts aimed at promoting human rights and advocating for democratic governments worldwide (Alden and Le Pere, 2003:12). South Africa’s global commitments towards the promotion of human rights were also evident domestically. Sections 1 and 7 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996 stipulate that human rights make up one of the key principles upon which the new South Africa is founded and remain a key foundation of its democracy.

The African Agenda stresses the promotion of democracy in Africa. The democratic peace theory forms a fundamental basis from which this objective is derived. The notion of the democratic peace theory is “the idea that democracies do not go with war with one another; that democracy is fundamentally more pacific than other forms of government” (Landsberg, 2007:2). This notion sought to promote the building of democratic governance systems worldwide that would address the challenges of peace and security, economic growth and development as well ensure stability in the African continent. In its continued prioritisation of the African continent, South Africa, in its 2010-2013 DIRCO Strategic Plan noted that “through continued and regional bodies, [it will] work towards the entrenchment of democracy and the respect for human rights on the African continent” (DIRCO, 2009). An example of this is South Africa and the DRC, in 2004, signing a three-year Memorandum of Understanding to strengthen democracy in both countries. Furthermore, South Africa provided assistance to the electoral body in the DRC to facilitate the elections there (DFA, 2004).

2.2.7. Self-Reliance and the African Renaissance
The idea of self-reliance has been another major theme running through South Africa’s African Agenda. The notion of self-reliance has been strongly pronounced in the African Renaissance. The idea of the African Renaissance refers to a “… wide range of measures to make democratic political systems, peace and security, and accelerated economic growth the basis of development in Africa” (Landsberg, 2010, 195). According to McGurk, some of the key elements of the African Renaissance include:

- the recovery of the African Continent as a whole; the establishment of political democracy on the continent; the need to break neo-colonial relations between Africa and the world’s economic power; the mobilization of the people of Africa to take their destiny into their hands; and the need for fast development of people driven and people-centred economic growth aimed at meeting the needs of the people (McGurk, 2013:119).

It is clear from these key elements that the African Renaissance sought to create conditions where Africa no longer relies on the external powers to assist with its development but ensures that Africa itself creates conditions for it to self-develop and address the needs of its own people. The idea further encourages and promotes principles of self-respect and independence. It echoes Mbeki’s articulation of coming up with ‘African solutions to African problems’. Stressing the idea of self-reliance is essential in the realisation of the objectives of the African Agenda.

2.3. Implementation Challenges of the African Agenda

As noted above, the African Agenda has been a widely used concept in democratic South African policy documents, speeches by government officials, and government press releases and statements. While the concept has been widely referenced, there is no single definition and observers and authors hold differing perspectives on it. Rapoo in his article “Exploring hidden ambiguities in the ‘African Agenda’” explores the two perspectives, that is the Africa-centred perspective and the national interest perspective. Such ambiguities result in tensions and create implementation challenges for the South African government. According to Rapoo (2007:1), “a closer examination of the use of this concept [African Agenda] by a range of state commentators in South Africa, points to its inherent complexity and its potentially problematic nature, mainly due to the lack of precision among those routinely
invoking it as a concept through public pronouncements, speeches, articles and press releases”. The lack of clarity of the notion creates a condition where the concept now becomes all things to all people, posing a potential risk of the notion becoming unhelpful.

Another serious challenge in the implementation of the African Agenda relates to South Africa’s role. While Pretoria has accepted and owned its role as a leading champion of the African Agenda, such a role has fuelled controversy within the continent, and thus creating a condition of mixed feelings regarding the Agenda. Some of the objectives reflected in the Agenda are not widely accepted by some countries in the continent. From an Africa-centred perspective, South Africa is seen as an equal contributor and collaborator in efforts by African countries to address the continent’s longstanding developmental challenges. While this perspective may very well be the most accepted, Pretoria, through the promotion and implementation of the African Agenda, sought to position itself as a key player in the African continent. This role makes South Africa a continental leader. According to McGurk (2013:20), South Africa’s role as a continental leader coupled with its “economic, political and military dominance on the continent brings up questions of whether the concept of the African Agenda merely serves to disguise South Africa’s efforts to pursue its own foreign policy goals and economic interest”. Equally, Mbeki’s ambitions for an African Renaissance have raised questions and suspicions on whether South Africa sought to be a fellow contributor towards finding solutions to Africa’s problems or whether Mbeki’s efforts are an attempt to position South Africa as a continental hegemon and pursue its national interest on the continent.

South Africa remains a dominant force politically, culturally, military, and economically in the continent (Alden and Schoeman, 2015:242). This places the Republic in a better position to lead in the continent’s developmental agenda. According to Landsberg (2007:8), “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”. There is a dominating view that South Africa’s move to expand its private sector into the continent, is a move motivated by tendencies of exploitation. Alden and Soko (2005:368) note that such a view represents a growing division of how Tshwane’s role in Africa is being perceived by African policy makers.
It is clear that Tshwane’s economic advantage could possibly undermine its pursuit of the African Agenda, because it can be easily said that the country’s push to promote this Agenda is an attempt to maintain its economic advantage. More often than not, the African Renaissance initiative has been viewed by African commentators and policy makers as a tool for South Africa to pursue its business interests.

This view is lamented in Alden and Soko’s (2005:368) analysis that posits that South Africa’s ambitions of being a hegemonic power on the continent “are most obvious in its ideological promotion of the African Renaissance and NEPAD”. The use of these structures represents a clear ambition of Tshwane to become a middle power on the continent. According to Rapoo (2007:4), South Africa’s promotion of the African Agenda amounts to an uncomfortable and self-effacing compromise [which enables Pretoria to play] a collegial role with its African counterparts, while at the same time allowing for the country’s natural pursuit of its own interests”. In an attempt to address this issue of its intention of being a middle power, South African foreign policy makers need to come up with an inclusive and solid approach to Africa which dispels the suspicions and fears of fellow African states without compromising the country’s ability to pursue its national interest in the process.

Without such a framework, Tshwane’s efforts of advancing the African Agenda will remain to be seen as an attempt to pursue its hegemonic attempts in the continent. South Africa, in an attempt to address these concerns of hegemony in the continent, has weighed down on its dominance in the Southern African region. The country has instead advocated and demonstrated an increased commitment towards multilateralism and co-operation. Greater economic integration and regional collaboration is seen to be a beneficial practice for the Southern African region. Tshwane has emphasised that this integration should be on an equal basis to collectively achieve the desired outcomes. Mutual cooperation, without any imposition or intervention from external actors outside the region, is posited to be one of the ways to ensure this integration (Alden and Soko, 2005:368).

In an attempt to respond to the concerns of South Africa’s efforts to become a continental hegemon, the ANC, in an official statement stressed that South Africa
had no intentions of becoming a hegemon that sought to exploit other states in Africa. The ruling party stated “it should resist all pressure to become the regional power at the expense of the rest of the sub-continent, instead, it should seek to become part of a movement to create a new form of economic interaction in Southern Africa based on principles of mutual benefit and interdependence” (ANC, 1994:5). This statement was motivated by the primary aim of South Africa’s commitment towards regional integration and that it should not be seen as vehicle to pursue Tshwane’s national interest, but rather, be a balanced mutually beneficial relationship.

McGurk (2013:23) notes that “another tension within the African Agenda is that it encapsulates a broad set of ideals, not all of which have wide currency in Africa, and some of which are found to be, in practice, contradictory”. There are notable contradictions in South Africa’s foreign policy objectives and the ideals embodied in its African Agenda. The African Agenda, with its African Renaissance underpinning, embodies two types of foreign policy concerns. These include, on the one hand, to promote integration through RECs, respect sovereignty of states and efforts to safeguard judicial rights of territorial integrity, non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and ensure the peaceful conflict resolution and management in the continent. On the other hand, the promotion of democratic ideals and human rights throughout the continent has gained much traction but is more often than not overridden by the principle of state sovereignty. These types of concerns have not always complemented each other, thus creating a condition of conflict. A clear example of the clash of these concerns is when the Mandela administration tried to stop the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa by the Abacha regime as mentioned earlier in this chapter. While Tshwane’s efforts to stop the execution were part of the country’s efforts of promoting the respect of human rights worldwide, this practice was seen by the Nigerian government as an infringement of the principle of state sovereignty and non-interference. The principles of sovereignty and non-interference are highly valued by African leaders, while not all are in favour of democracy.

The tensions between South Africa’s external policy and the African Agenda arise from the approaches and ideals adopted by the country. On the one hand, the Mandela administration, as part of its efforts to reintegrate South Africa back into the
global economy, adopted an approach that widely accepted the ideals of democracy, globalisation, and unipolarity. On the other hand, the country sought to adopt an approach that embraces Afro-centric ideals and demonstrates a commitment towards ethics. These two different approaches have not always been compatible, thus creating policy tensions. McGurk (2013:24) further explains that “while the Africanist and anti-imperialist paradigms are complimentary, both have at times come into conflict with the democratic paradigm”. Tshwane’s commitment towards promoting democratic governance in the continent has come into conflict with elites in the ANC who prefer an ideologically based external policy. Many in the ANC have retained their strong commitment towards idealism and socialist tendencies. Their strong attachment to these socialist ideals was motivated by the ANC’s strong ties with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). According to Evans (1999:624), “the ANC as the ruling party has not yet resolved the basic contradictions that have bedevilled its international thinking since it came to power”.

A clear example of the tensions and contradictions in South Africa’s external policy manifests itself in its inconsistent policy positions in the Lesotho and Zimbabwe cases (Schoeman, 2007:102). In 1998, Pretoria chose to intervene in Lesotho favouring the promotion of democratic ideals over respecting the principle sovereignty and non-interference. In 1999, Pretoria took a completely different policy position in the case of Zimbabwe, where it opted not to intervene while the people’s rights were being violated by the Mugabe regime. These evident tensions between Tshwane’s endeavours to promote democracy on the continent and its multilateralism in Africa, which is aimed at overcoming South Africa’s restraints of limited capacity and influence, is seen as a key restraint in pursuit of its national interest and its African agenda. The Republic’s position on the Zimbabwe case could be regarded as one guided by the Africanist paradigm, as principles of non-intervention and sovereignty are held on high regard on the continent. By adopting such a position, South Africa could be seen as increasing its role and capacity as a representative of Africa.
2.4. The Role Approach

South Africa’s continental dominance economically, culturally, politically, and also developmentally has raised a number of questions over what its role on the continent is and what it ought to be. Both the international community and fellow African states have expected South Africa to play a number of roles in the global arena. According to Schoeman (2007:92), “these roles emerge from the expectations that other states have of South Africa, as well as from South Africa’s own conception of its role and how it has acted to appropriate a role, particularly in Africa”. These expectations have increasingly influenced the objectives and principles outlined in South Africa’s foreign policy.

On the one hand, a strong and dominating expectation from African states is that Tshwane should use its position in influential global multilateral forums to advance African interests and end the continent’s marginalisation in global affairs. On the other hand, there has been extensive pressure from the West for South Africa to lead the drive for democratisation on the continent and be an exemplary figure in terms of the promotion of human rights, the respect of the rule of law, and the political and economic liberalism. African policy makers, officials, the media, scholars and literature, have characterised South Africa as middle power and a pivotal state. There is a general consensus in the African diplomatic corridors that Tshwane “…holds a particularly special significance in Africa, though debate abounds on whether this amounts to hegemony, emerging middle power, or a ‘pivotal’ state (McGurk, 2013:22). By examining the role approach and using it as an analytical framework, it will assist one in categorizing and identifying which role, if there is one in particular, that South Africa has assumed.

In broad terms, the role approach is a theoretical framework dedicated to the discipline of behaviour using the notion of role. According to Sekhri (2009:424), “in the field of foreign policy, decision makers imagine and suppose that their state should adopt and accomplish a range of duties, tasks and commitments in the international system or in subordinate regional systems”. These duties, tasks and
commitments, according to supporters of the role approach, in the field of International Relations and foreign policy are known as roles. Sekhri (2009:425) further notes that states can assume a number of various roles, these include “Liberation Supporter, Regional Leader, Regional Protector, Active Independent, Anti-Imperialist Agent, Defender of the Faith, Mediator, Developer, Model, Peace Maker, Policeman, Faithfull Ally and Anti-Terrorism Agent”. States can assume several roles simultaneously. South Africa, for instance, has been labelled as playing a variety of roles since the advent of democracy. It has been an active peacekeeper, mediator, liberation supporter, and even a regional leader and protector (Barret, 2016, Adetiba, 2017, Mhanda, 2002, Alden and Schoeman, 2011, Sidiropoulos, 2007).

Holsti analyses the role approach in the lenses of foreign policy decisions and actions emerging from the conceptions of foreign policy makers. According to Holsti:

factors, including domestic needs and demands, critical events or trends in the external environment, the expectations of other governments, legal norms, general usage, and treaties shape foreign policy orientation, create role perceptions and place the state in a position whereby the government is expected to carry out certain roles (Holsti, 1987:117).

Such an analysis could be easily applied to the South African government and its foreign policy makers. Africa’s expectation of South Africa to represent its interests globally have shaped Tshwane’s external policy. South Africa has ensured that it develops a policy that speaks to these expectations through its African Agenda. It has adopted a representative role which seeks to represent the continents needs internationally.

Interestingly, while there have been several proclamations made by South African Statesmen and government officials, the country has not received any formal or official mandate from the continent to represent its needs abroad. In an opinion piece, then Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Maite Nkoane-Mashabane, noted that “it is incumbent on us [the South African government] to continue championing the African Agenda, as well as ensuring sustained effective and efficient running of the continents affairs”. She further noted that “The African
continent will thus remain high on the agenda in our engagements with other partners across the globe” (Nkoana-Mashabane, 2016). Accordingly, to be identified as a representative, an individual, interest group, political party or organisations, needs to be duly elected. Montanaro (2012:1094) accounts to this stating that “representation is usually the authorisation of a constituency [individual, interest group, or organisation] through election”. However, interestingly, over the past decades, there has been a growing number of actors who ‘self-appoint’: making claims of representing others without being actually elected or mandated to do so. Such a scenario can be applied to the South African government. It can be said that Tshwane has become a self-appointed representative of Africa in global affairs.

2.4.1 Self-Appointed Representation

The concept of a ‘Self-appointed representation’ is a “subset of non-electoral political representation that occurs primary in civil society, and the public and international sphere and is disconnected form the coercive political authority of an [individual, state or international body], whether or not that authority is organised through electoral democracy” (Montanaro, 2012:1096). Self-appointed representation is an act of claiming to represent the interests of a particular group or organisation. A self-appointed representative acts and speaks on behalf of others without a direct mandate from those represented. According to Montanaro (2012:1096), a claim of self-appointed representation consists of four features. First, the actor identifies themselves as the one to provide political stewardship on behalf of others. Second, the claim identifies a group that the claim may represent or affect, for example, Africans states. Third, the claim identifies a need that supports the claim to be authorized, for example, the need for a strong actor, African country, to represent and pursue the continent’s interests globally, strengthen the African voice in the international arena and bring an end to the marginalisation of Africa in global affairs. Lastly, the self-appointed representative identifies an audience of a group, organisation or forum that recognises the need for there to be a self-appointed representative, for example, leaders in influential multilateral institutions such those in the UNSC and BRICS
From this analysis, it is clear that self-appointed representation not only requires an actor to merely self-proclaim their role as a representative, but rather requires support from other actors. This means that there needs to be an audience that accepts the self-appointed representative as a representative of a particular grouping. For instance, South Africa’s self-appointed representative role of Africa is accepted because an audience in a relevant group, members within BRICS and the UNGA, which elects members onto the UNSC, has recognised and accepted the claim that South Africa is a representative of Africa. It can be said, through the above analysis, that South Africa has been conferred political power to represent Africa on the basis that first, it sees itself as a candidate to provide political leadership for Africa on global affairs, secondly, the fact that Africa needs a global representative, thirdly, the need to strengthen the African voice and end marginalisation, and lastly, that leaders of multilateral platforms recognised the need for Africa to be represented globally. Also, South Africa has been elected onto the UNSC to ‘represent’ Africa on three occasions now to ‘represent’ Africa, its reputation is established to talk for the interests of Africa.

It is important to note that the role of representation comes with elements of responsibility and accountability. When an individual, state, or international body has assumed the role of being a representative, it is expected that the representative exercise their mandated tasks with great responsibility to represent the interests of the people. In the case they fail to do so, they may easily be held accountable by those that have elected them into power. Castiglione and Warren (2006:1) note that “representation invokes a principal-agent relationship (representatives ‘stood for’ and ‘acted on behalf of’ the represented), mainly though not exclusively on a territorial and formal basis, so that governments could be said to be responsive to the interests and opinions of people”. Accordingly, representatives need to allow those represented to have some influence on decisions and positions as well as how they exercise their roles to respond to the interests of the represented. In the case of South Africa, this is quite tricky because the country is a sovereign state and being told how to exercise its role will be seen as an infringement or disregard for the country’s sovereignty. However, South Africa has adopted a consultative approach, where the country consults with the AU and on certain positions and decisions. This will be discussed in full in Chapter 4.
2.5. Conclusion

It is clear in the above chapter that through the policy of the African Agenda, South Africa aims to transform Africa into a continent that is driven by ideals of democracy, progressive development, political stability, peace and security. The objectives outlined in South Africa’s African Agenda demonstrate a strong commitment towards the promotion of regional and continental integration on the continent, strengthening the structures of the AU, democratisation, the fight for a peaceful continent and an endeavour to advance Africa’s interest globally. While South Africa’s role on the continent has raised a number of questions and suspicions, the country has used its position as regional leader to champion the African Agenda globally.

This chapter has explored South Africa’s role as a representative of Africa. It is clear that while South Africa may be easily labelled as a self-proclaimed representative, there has been a growing need for the continent to be represented in global affairs. South Africa has therefore taken it upon itself to pursue and promote the interest of the continent in influential global multilateral forums. Now that this role has been established, the next step is to consider whether or not South Africa has consistently acted in this role in multilateral forums in two cases. The next chapter will examine South Africa’s representative role in the BRICS cooperative.
CHAPTER 3: SOUTH AFRICA IN THE BRICS

3.1. Introduction

A key principle that has featured in South Africa’s foreign policy since 1994 is that of advancing the African Agenda. South Africa has always emphasised that its participation in global forums is not only aimed at advancing its own interests, but also those of the African continent. Tshwane’s participation in the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) is no different. After its inclusion into the group, South Africa declared itself as a representative of Africa and committed itself to promote the continent’s interest in the BRICS. This chapter seeks to explore and discuss South Africa’s role as a ‘representative’ of Africa in the BRICS. It will begin by discussing South Africa’s inclusion into the BRICS. It will then go on to analyse whether South Africa’s inclusion into the group has altered the Agenda of the BRICS from an economic to a political forum. Next, it will explore South Africa’s representative role in advancing the African Agenda in the grouping. The chapter will then explore the trade and investment benefits for the continent. This will be followed by a discussion on the economic implications for the continent. A detailed discussion on the geopolitical implications for the continent will follow. These discussions are important as they will assist in determining whether South Africa has being able to able put Africa on the agenda of the BRICS and whether the continents interests are represented by South Africa in the grouping. Lastly, a summary of the chapter’s key points will conclude the chapter.

3.2. South Africa’s Inclusion into the BRICS

In September 2010, foreign ministers of Brazil, Russia, India and China converged in New York to discuss the inclusion of South Africa into the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) grouping. The appellation BRIC was a term coined by Goldman Sachs economist, Jim O’Neill, in 2001 which referred to a grouping consisting of key global
emerging markets. According to O'Neill (2001), the BRIC countries would have a strong potential of achieving high economic growth in the future based on the size of their population and economy, and also their growth performance. This grouping would also be regarded as an investment category. South Africa’s aspiration to be a member of the BRIC grouping dates back to 2009 when the country’s foreign minister, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, wrote a letter to BRIC foreign ministers and Head of States, expressing South Africa’s desire to become a member of the group (Malcomson, 2011). This letter was followed by a series of diplomatic efforts by the country’s Head of State, Jacob Zuma, to convince the BRIC participants to consider South Africa’s aspiration of joining the grouping.

These diplomatic efforts started in April of 2010, where the President of South Africa at the time, Jacob Zuma, during an IBSA (India, Brazil, South Africa) Summit held in Brazil, got an opportunity to hold bilateral meetings with the leaders of Brazil and India to discuss South Africa’s desire to join the grouping. In August of the same year President Zuma “took a delegation of cabinet ministers and more than 100 South African business people to Russia, where he sought to promote trade ties and his country’s inclusion into the BRIC alliance” (Steunkel, 2013:311). In the same month, the Republic took a delegation of 11 ministers and 400 businessmen and women to China to sell the idea of South Africa joining the BRIC grouping.

These visits formed part of South Africa’s systematic diplomatic efforts to promote and help the country to become a member of the BRIC grouping. In December 2010, South Africa received its much-anticipated invitation from the Chinese government to join the forum. South Africa was subsequently invited to attend the 3rd BRICS Summit to be held in Sanya, China, in April 2011. South Africa’s inclusion and participation in the group would entail a change in the name of the group from BRIC to BRICS. The invitation was welcomed and widely celebrated in South Africa but was also met with widespread criticism and scepticism by domestic and international commentators (Naidu, 2013).

The criticism of South Africa’s inclusion into the BRIC grouping stemmed from the fact there was no rationale behind South Africa’s membership because the country, in terms of the criterion of the size (economic and population size) and economic
growth, did not meet the standards for being a member of the BRIC grouping. This is because South Africa, when compared to its BRIC counterparts in terms of size, has a very small population and economy. According to Harrison (2014:69), South Africa “accounts for a mere 1.7 per cent of the combined population of BRICS, and an only slightly higher 2.6 per cent of the combined value of economic output”. However, even before South Africa’s inclusion into the grouping, a considerable variation already existed in the grouping in relation to population size and economic growth. For example, when comparing the population sizes of the two BRICS giants, Russia has a meagre population 143 million people as compared to China’s 1.35 billion total population.

3.3. The BRICS: An Economic or Political forum? Or both?

South Africa’s inclusion in the BRICS group significantly altered the nature of the forum in that the BRICS grouping was no longer only viewed as an economic and investment grouping, but now as a political forum which sought to develop a geopolitical influence as an alternative to the Western powers. Armijo (2007:9) affirms this claim stating that the BRICS countries “… have a similar type of influence in, or equivalent implications for, the international economic or political system”. The BRICS grouping is now seen as an alliance of emerging economies with a stronger influence and voice to speak on behalf of the developing world. Yanshuo (2011:1) notes that emerging economies, such as the BRICS, have a critical role to play in reforming economic, political and financial institutions to become more representative and unbiased.

Collective action from the BRICS countries is imperative to push for reforms in international governance and financial institutions. According to Yong,

BRICS countries as a whole have a great potential for reform of the existing international economic and political order, and the mechanism of the BRICS co-operation would attract other emerging market countries to join, thereby joining breaking the monopoly of developed countries in the world economic and political governance mechanisms (Yong, 2012:11).
To push forward this agenda of global governance reform, it is important that BRICS countries gain the trust of concessions from the developed countries on issues relating to global economic governance.

Zondi (2012) notes that there is an unstated political aim of the BRICS which stems from the neorealist idea where states join forces to form an alliance in a systematic attempt to ensure external balance of power that would be recognized as an alternative to dominant forces of global power. The BRICS configuration is seen as a force of emerging powers seeking some space for flexing their muscles in a western dominated global order. One dominating feature in the current international system is the rising role of emerging powers and how they are gaining more space to become influential players in global affairs. The BRICS alliance has largely been identified as a force aimed at shifting the global balance of power (Haibin, 2012:1). One notable commonality about the BRICS countries is that they are all prominent leaders in their regions who play a significant role in dealing with economic, peace and security challenges in their regions. The BRICS countries have individually been identified as regional powers with great political influence.

Haibin (2012:1) notes that their regional leadership is more often than not contested by other countries both within the regions and outside of the regions. For example, South Africa, China and Brazil’s hegemonic status is often contested within their regions. The influence of the BRICS has traditionally only been at a regional level. It is worth noting that the rise of the BRICS has seen these countries becoming key global players in the international system. For example, China has become a dominant economic influence in global economic affairs (Yong, 2012:6). The rise of the BRICS is now being noticed across the globe. According to Haibin (2012:1), “given their expanding economic size and increasingly active diplomacy, the BRICS countries are gradually gaining greater influence over the international decision making process”.

It is under the political construct of the BRICS that South Africa finds its place in the grouping. According to Alden and Schoeman (2013:115), South Africa “shares the broad aspirations and objectives of these countries [BRICS], and it uses international credentials still emanating and resonating from its transition from apartheid, and the
perception of South Africa as the ‘natural’ or ‘obvious’ leader of the African continent, to justify its inclusion in the BRICS”. The BRICS grouping has been criticised as being an uncomfortable political construct comprising of three functional democracies (South Africa, Brazil and India) working with two contrasting regimes: an authoritarian state (Russia) and a one-party dictatorship (China). According to Armijo (2017:12), “the danger for South Africa, India and Brazil is that, rather than influencing the BRICS collective towards greater democracy, they will be politically trapped in an ‘anti-liberal coalition’ dominated by Russia and China”. While there is a need for an alternative force to ensure a more balanced and equitable geopolitical order, there is a great concern that the BRICS contribution should be one that is emancipatory rather than to be seen as anti-liberal influencers.

For South Africa, participation in the group meant greater opportunities for increased trade and investment, greater political status and a greater voice and power in the international arena. One may argue that being a member of the BRICS grouping came with benefits for every member, such as strengthening each country’s power and role in international affairs, providing additional authority and legitimacy and increasing their status and being viewed as established powers. Such benefits are the very reasons which prompted South Africa to lobby for membership into the grouping. According to the former International Relations and Cooperation minister, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane (in Steunkel, 2013:311), South Africa’s participation in the BRICS is “premised on three levels of engagement: firstly, national, where we advance our national interests; secondly, regional, where we promote regional integration and interaction with specific emphasis on the African Union mandate given to President Jacob Zuma to promote infrastructure development across the continent; and, thirdly, on a global level, where we advocate for a more inclusive global governance system”.

It is clear from this statement that one of the reasons that led South Africa to seek membership of BRICS is that the country wanted to increase its regional and international status and be regarded as an emerging power. It can be argued that the move by the BRIC countries to invite South Africa into the BRICS underscored the BRIC countries’ concerted effort and commitment to reinforce their presence in the African continent, and an effort to portray themselves as key African allies in the
broader context of South-South cooperation. Steunkel (2013:313) notes that “Brazil, India, Russia and China are rapidly increasing their presence in Africa, fundamentally altering the power dynamics on a continent that was once seen as little more than a recipient of Western aid”. The BRICS nations respectively, have become Africa’s largest trading partners. In 2010, China, a superpower within the grouping, took over the USA position as Africa’s largest trading partner (Steunkel, 2013:313).

Habib (2009:144) notes that with great military, economic, political and diplomatic capabilities, as compared to other African countries, South Africa automatically defines itself as a regional leader. With this hegemonic position on the continent, South Africa has pushed forward this narrative that it is a representative of Africa, and stands not only for itself in the BRICS, but also for the African continent. In her article titled ‘The ‘S’ in BRICS: an African perspective’, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane noted that: “We [South Africa] want to ensure that our membership of BRICS also benefits the entire continent. The Fifth BRICS Summit scheduled for 26-27 March 2013 in Durban will constitute another high-level opportunity to further support key priority areas of the African agenda” (Nkoana-Mashabane, 2012). The South African government has stressed that its foreign policy objectives are linked to that of the African continent. Unlike their BRICS counterparts, who do not claim or pronounce to represent their respective regions, the South African government has given itself a task to regularly consult with other African states before pronouncing their strategy at the BRICS summit.

Apart from its economic leadership in the continent, Tshwane has positioned itself as a political leader in the continent. Its political influence is seen through the election of its former foreign affairs minister, Nkosazana Dhlamini-Zuma, to head the AU in 2012. The confidence by African states in South Africa’s political leadership was also evident in 2010 when African states under the aegis of the AU endorsed South Africa’s candidacy for its non-permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for 2011-2012 term (Serrao, 2011:3). South Africa does not only have a strong political influence in the continent. Tshwane has played a huge role in efforts aimed at reshaping Africa’s developmental and socio-economic agenda, as well as its active peacekeeping and conflict resolution efforts on the continent.
While Jim O’Neill openly and categorically stated that South Africa did not deserve to be in the BRICS grouping, he did concede that:

South Africa can justify its position as a representative for Africa. The continent has the combined number of people and GDP size to be regarded as a true BRIC…now that South Africa is present in the BRICS group, I think it is incumbent on the country to be at the forefront of trying to help Africa, at least economically, to pursue goals of behaving as a continent (O’Neill, 2012).

The task of representing the whole continent in the BRICS grouping is a rather ambitious one and one that is not easy to carry out. Representing 55 contradicting interests is an extremely difficult task to take on. The reality is many, if not all, African countries are facing tough economic, financial and developmental challenges, and it can be argued that when South Africa pronounced that it would represent the continent in the BRICS, it was motivated to use the platform to address Africa’s economic and developmental challenges.

3.4. South Africa and the African Agenda in the BRICS

As part of its lobbying for entry into the BRICS, South Africa projected itself as being a gateway to Africa and portrayed this domestically as part of Tshwane’s quest to promote its African Agenda. Landsberg and Moore (2013:10) note that “Tshwane has made it no secret of its intentions to use the BRICS relationship to further the African Agenda”. One of the key objectives of the African Agenda is the strengthening of South-South dialogue through global south multilateral bodies, such as BRICS. South Africa, through its BRICS membership, would ensure that it enhances and strengthens the engagement between Africa and the BRICS, hence promoting its African Agenda.

In his diplomatic campaign of marketing the country, former President Jacob Zuma declared South Africa’s position as a gateway saying “South Africa provides the institutional stability, depth of financial markets, and regulatory efficiency that many corporates will look to capitalise on as a base for wider pan-African operations” (The Guardian, 2011). In his response to a parliamentary question on the benefits of
South Africa’s membership in the BRICS, former President Jacob Zuma again argued that South Africa’s membership was a move towards strengthening “our role as a gateway to Africa” (Zuma, 2011). Allowing South Africa entry into the group also meant more opportunities for Africa in terms of investment. In her address to investors in Japan, former South Africa Deputy Director-General of Trade and Industry’s, Pumla Ncapayi, noted that South Africa with developed services and financial sectors, “represents a gateway to Africa for many potential investors” (South African Government News Agency (2013). In her response to South Africa’s inclusion into the BRICS former DIRCO Minister, Nkoana-Mashabane noted:

We will be a good gateway for the BRIC countries. While we may have a small population, we don’t just speak for South Africa, we speak for Africa as a whole... we bring the most diversified and most advanced economy on the continent. We may not be the same size, but we can open up opportunities for them and through that, we can complete our economic integration on the continent (Freemantle and Stevens, 2011:5).

The above assertions by South African government officials demonstrate the relationship between South Africa, Africa and the BRICS countries, at least from the perspective of South Africa.

South Africa has openly projected itself as the leading partner for emerging countries in their political relations with African states, citing its active role in the establishment of key initiatives on the continent, such as the AU and the APRM, and also being the only African country in the Group of 20 (G20). The G20 is “the premier forum for international cooperation on the most important aspects of the international economic and financial agenda. It brings together the world’s major advanced and emerging economies” (Boule, 2011:136) The idea of South Africa being the spokesperson or representative of Africa in the context of BRICS aims to portray the BRICS setup as a more globalised forum representative of all four continents, making South Africa’s representative role more logical. According to Qobo and Soko (2011:411), South Africa’s proclamation as the leader and voice of Africa in the international stage has stirred up a number of reactions, with commentators criticising South Africa for not consulting African states on this position and yet it claims to represent the interests of the continent. After becoming a member of the
BRICS, South Africa was faced with the task of justifying its membership with regards to its African counterparts.

In 2013, at the fifth BRICS summit held in Durban, South Africa took the opportunity to respond to the criticism of its aim of promoting the African Agenda in the BRICS and “convened discussions at a parallel conference entitled ‘BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Development, Integration, and Industrialisation, which brought together African leaders and representatives of regional organisations such as NEPAD and the African Union” (Soulé-Kohndou, 2013:37). This move signalled a strong commitment by South Africa to be at the forefront of strengthening relations between BRICS countries and African states. The conference also afforded the BRICS countries an opportunity to announce their intentions and present opportunities for African states, particularly in the areas of trade and investment, as well as infrastructure development.

South Africa’s decision of inviting leaders of the various regional bodies and AU structures was a strategic move by the country to both respond to the criticism of its BRIC inclusion and an attempt to convince the African states that its inclusion in the BRICS was to promote the African Agenda. In July 2018, South Africa hosted the 10th BRICS summit under the theme “BRICS in Africa: Collaboration for Inclusive Growth and Shared Prosperity in the 4th Industrial Revolution”. The South Africa government noted that it will use this summit to align policies adopted in regional forums, such as the AU’s Agenda 2063, with those of the BRICS. In her address as a key note speaker at public lecture at the Sol Plaatjie University, Deputy Minister Reginah Mhaule reaffirmed South Africa’s commitment towards the promotion of the African agenda in the BRICS when she noted that “we can, once again, underscore that our 2018 Chairmanship of the BRICS forum has been guided by our commitment to ensure that the African Agenda, as well as that of the Global South, remain on the Agenda of the BRICS, particularly as it relates to garnering BRICS support for industrialisation and infrastructure development” (DIRCO, 2018).

Just like in 2013, as hosts of the Ethekwini Summit, Tshwane once again, under the margins of the 2018 summit, convened the BRICS-Africa Outreach wherein the BRICS leaders met with African Heads of States, Chairpersons of the AU and
NEPAD as well as the various African regional blocs to reflect on partnerships between Africa and the BRICS. The outreach held discussions representing a “continuation of the 2013 BRICS-Africa discussions, wherein BRICS pledged to support African development, industrialization and infrastructure development, as contained in the NEPAD programmes and the African Union’s Agenda 2063” (DIRCO, 2018). According to Steunkel (2013:316), South Africa’s inclusion in the BRICS can also be understood from the perspective that BRICS countries wanted to show the world and other emerging powers that they sought to engage with Africa in a different manner as opposed to the Western approach towards Africa. The BRICS sought to do away with the exploitative relationship between Africa and the West. The BRICS sought to offer Africa an equal and mutually beneficial relationship rather than an unequal and sometimes exploitative relationship, characterised by conditionalities and donations, represented in the relationship between Africa and the West.

South Africa’s role in the BRICS in the forum was also motivated by another key foreign policy principle which is to strengthen South-South cooperation. South-South Cooperation is a notion that is aimed at promoting equal and mutually respectful relations among emerging countries (Moore, 2012:12). “Considering the long-term economic and strategic interest the BRIC countries have in Africa, [South Africa’s inclusion into the BRICS was] also meant to improve emerging powers’ reputation in Africa, countering the notion that the BRIC countries are merely substituting the West in exploiting Africa’s resources” (Steunkel, 2012:316). During the Sanya BRICS Summit in 2011, the BRICS Heads of State expressed their intentions of supporting infrastructure development projects in Africa. This was a clear signal that relationship between the BRICS countries and Africa was to be based on equality and mutual benefits. As part of its efforts of including Africa in the Agenda of the BRICS, South Africa, during the 3rd BRICS Summit held in Durban, proposed for the creation of a BRICS development bank, which would help finance infrastructure development projects in Africa (Soulé-Kohndou, 2013:38). Additionally, the bank would also provide funding for sustainable development projects in Asian countries as well.

With South Africa included in the group, the BRICS has strengthened its global prominence and could be regarded as a voice of the emerging world. According to
Davies (2012:36), South Africa’s inclusion into the BRICS is regarded as a major foreign policy achievement by the country since 1994, and its membership can be seen as an important move towards establishing itself as a hegemonic powerhouse in the continent and a representative of Africa. Some commentators have argued that given that Nigeria recently overtook South Africa as Africa’s largest economy, it was the best candidate to join the BRICS and best suited to be Africa’s representative on the global arena. However, in terms of geo-politics and global economic influence, it can be said that South Africa occupies the leading position on the continent and is, arguably, the best candidate to represent Africa. Draper (2011:209) notes that given South Africa’s “relative economic weight in Africa and the soft power bequeathed by its peaceful transition to democracy, [the country] has assumed the role of the go-to partner in Sub-Sahara Africa”. Pheko (2011) adds that while South Africa may be the small economy in the BRICS grouping “…it comes with a great deal of political influence and economic potential both domestically, in SADC and the African continent. It is after all the major investor and political player in the continent”. It is also worth noting that Nigeria faces difficult challenges domestically and internationally. These challenges include corruption, lack of infrastructure development, peace and security issues (for example, Boko Haram) (Oladiran, 2014:49).

Considering these challenges and many others, South Africa may be well placed as the most reasonable representative of Africa. However, Naidu (2011:1) notes that South Africa’s ability to speak on behalf of the continent in multilateral forums and being regarded as a gateway to Africa in the BRICS is questionable, because it is not clear whether African countries actually regard South Africa as their representative. Another challenge of South Africa being a representative of Africa lies in the fact that the country has no formal or direct mandate from African states. The notion of South Africa being a gateway to Africa has been highly criticised by commentators in the region. According to an article in the Mail and Guardian (2012), the notion of South Africa being a gateway to Africa is not entirely true, because African states have been, even before South Africa’s inclusion into the BRICS, accessing international markets with their resources on their own without the help of South Africa.
This position of being a gateway to Africa may complicate and hurt South Africa’s business and interests on the continent. According to Moore (2012: 15), “rather than attracting competitors from BRIC countries to enter Africa’s markets, South African firms should first strengthen their own presence in the region”. The BRIC countries’ move into Africa poses a threat to South Africa’s business interest in the region, particularly in the markets that the country has not tapped into. According to Steunkel (2013:318), “both India and China regard expanding their presence in South Africa’s immediate neighbourhood as a key aspect of their expansion on the continent”. The expansion of the BRIC countries’ economic presence in the region creates a condition where South African businesses are in competition with their BRICS counterparts for access into African markets that have not been penetrated by South African firms.

Even before joining the BRICS, Tshwane has played the role of gateway of Africa when it comes to financial markets. According to Harrison (2014:78), “in 2009 the State-owned Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) acquired a stake of about 20% in Standard Bank which gave the Chinese access to the near continent-wide footprint of the Standard Bank”. There is a growing concern that the BRIC countries’ interest in Africa may signal a move towards neo-colonial trajectory between the BRIC countries and Africa.

Bond (2013: 253) notes that the BRICS’ interest in Africa may be prompted by the continent’s wealth in natural resources and raw materials, such as oil and minerals. Africa’s role as a commodities producer may be reinforced by its partnership with the BRICS countries. This will in effect help lift the poverty and growth patterns of the continent. A report by the United Nations’ Economic Commission (ECA) for Africa notes some the risks of the Africa-BRICS engagement being that the partnership “…could lock African countries into specializing in primary commodities, crippling the strong productivity gains needed to sustain high growth and sharpening socio-economic inequalities, side-lining some people from the benefits of participation” (United Nations’ Economic Commission for Africa, 2013:3). However, with that said, it is important that Africa uses its resource wealth to create opportunities and use these commodities to have a great influence in its partnership with the BRICS countries.
3.4.1 Trade and Investment benefits for the Continent

To have a significant and impactful influence in its partnership with BRICS countries, Africa needs to improve its strategies and capacities when dealing with the BRICS, particularly when it comes to negotiating favourable trade agreements with the BRICS and ensure that the BRICS countries fully understand the needs of African countries. African countries should develop a BRICS-Africa strategy founded on mutual benefits and respect. According to the ECA (2013:30), “… African leaders should approach BRICS without submissiveness or gratuitous hostility, rejecting any self-portrayal or portrayed by other as victims or underdogs in the international system”. A constructive and beneficial relationship between Africa and the BRICS would require a condition where no country appears to be begging or inferior to other. The African strategy towards the BRICS should be one that aims to improve the welfare of its citizens and create business opportunities for African entrepreneurs and firms. It is clear that a partnership between Africa and the BRICS may present positive opportunities for the continent. However, the realpolitik that exists in Africa, may prevent the continent from engaging as a collective. It is therefore important that South Africa, being a full member, and the only African country in the BRICS, be at the forefront of representing the interests of the continent.

South Africa’s inclusion in the BRICS presents positive benefits towards Africa’s development. According to Besada et al. (2013:4), South Africa’s inclusion into the BRICS grouping is beneficial for the African continent as it could help expand to sub-Saharan African markets, increase infrastructure development projects, and increase tri-lateral cooperation on the continent. In terms of economic benefits, the inclusion of South Africa into the BRICS means greater trade and investment opportunities, not only for the country, but also the continent as a whole. Already, trade relations between African states and the BRICS is growing significantly and a trade surplus in Africa has been evident (Besada et al. 2013:4). This is also reflected in the ECA 2013 report indicating that “the cooperation between Africa and the BRICS has gained new momentum and generated much interest in recent years…and merchandise trade has doubled to $340 billion in 2012”. Freemantle and Stevens
(2013) also note that “Africa-BRICS trade is projected to reach $500 billion by 2015, around 60 percent of it being trade between Africa and China”. The increased trade relations between Africa and the BRIC’s have resulted in a decrease in consumer good prices, such as clothing and footwear. According to the ECA:

The impact of trading with the BRICS on growth in Africa has led to higher demand for commodities, improved terms of trade for Africa and a financial contribution to infrastructure development, all of which have had a beneficial impact on Africa’s growth. Demand from the BRICS supported many African countries in maintaining fairly robust growth during the financial crisis (ECA, 2013:7).

Over the past years, the Chinese have been dominating the importing of manufactured goods into Africa. Chinese firms have increased their roles on the continent, particularly in terms of technologies, manufactured goods, and infrastructure. Besada et al. (2013:5) notes that “major Chinese companies such as ZTE and Huawei are investing and establishing their African headquarters in [South Africa], and Beijing has located the African Headquarters of the China-Africa Development Fund in Johannesburg”. While this may be seen as a positive move, there is a growing fear that South Africa may lose out on its African market share to its BRICS counterparts because they are more industrialised, particularly China. However, other commentators view the increased participation of the BRICS in Africa potentially resulting in increased growth patterns particularly in terms of trade and economic development as stated previously in this chapter. According to former South African Trade and Industries Minister, Rob Davies, “the trade relations between South Africa and China have been positive” (Davis in Anderlini, 2010). He further concedes that the country needs to expand its trade relations with China from just exporting natural resources and extend the partnership to include infrastructure and green industries exchange (for example knowledge around waste management).

Just like China, India too has increased its role on the African continent. Indian firms have dominated the services sector on the African continent. According to Kahn (2011:493), Indian firms, such as Tata and Mahindra have begun to expand their role and have started to make inroads into the African markets. Brazil, meanwhile, in recent years has been actively increasing its role as key infrastructural development, mining and agrarian trade partner of Africa. According to Ncube et al. (2011), “from
2000 to 2008, Brazil’s trade with Africa increased more than six-fold from US$44.2 billion to US$25.9 billion, and currently ranks as Africa’s third-largest trading partner behind India and China, and ahead of Russia, at fourth at US$3.5 billion*. Brazil’s imports from Africa mainly comprise of minerals and oil, while Africa’s imports from Brazil include a variety of goods, including agricultural goods, machinery and vehicles. Brazilian investors and firms have shown a keen interest in Angola and Mozambique. Trade relations between Brazil and these countries are far more important because of the cultural and historical links between the countries. Brazil’s increasingly active role and participation in these two Lusophone countries increases the levels of competition between South African firms and Brazilian firms.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, trade relations between Russia and Africa have been limited. However, over the recent years, Russia has shifted its attention towards improving its relations with Africa. According to Besada et al. (2013:7), “Russian investment in Africa has not yet been significant, but according to the country’s officials, Russian companies are expanding their activities throughout the continent. The government also extended a US$500 million development assistant package to the region in 2008, representing a marked increase in interest in the region”. Unlike China, Russia does not intend to direct its investment efforts towards resources, because the country is already a rich with resources. However, the country has expressed its desire to invest and establish partnerships in the energy sector, particularly in nuclear power and energy, throughout the continent.

It is worth noting that this increased participation by the other BRICS countries is posing a serious challenge for South Africa both in terms of trade and investment. By playing its role as an economic and political link to Africa, Tshwane faces market competition between itself and its BRICS counterparts, particularly in the steel, textile, clothing, and automotive industries. Based on China and India’s increasingly growing export base to the rest of Africa, South Africa faces the difficult task of competing with the two countries export expansion into Africa. According to Khan (2011:493), before joining the BRICS grouping, South Africa was Africa’s largest investor, before being replaced by China in 2011. By 2011, in terms of trade, South Africa occupied third position in the BRICS as Africa’s largest trading partner. However, South Africa is now gradually losing its market share in agrarian goods to
its BRICS counterparts in most African countries, while China is increasingly gaining its market share as compared to South Africa in relation to the export of manufactured goods to African states (ECA, 2013:31). However, an article in the Daily Maverick on the 10th BRICS Summit held in Johannesburg, notes that since joining the BRICS grouping in 2011, South Africa’s trade figures have slightly improved. It indicates that:

Exports to BRICS of manufactured goods showed a small overall upward trend, from 13% of all exports in 2011, then a dip to 11% in 2012 and after that a steady incline to 13, 15, 18 and 21% in each of the successive years (Daily Maverick, 2018).

South Africa also faces challenges also in terms of BRICS intra-trade. According to Harrison (2014:80), “there is a concern in South Africa that ‘unfairly incentivized’ imports from BRICS counterparts (especially China, India, and Brazil) may be having a negative impact on South Africa’s already stressed manufacturing sector”. With an open economy like South Africa’s as compared to other BRICS countries, the country is highly vulnerable when it comes to competition of imports.

With that said, South Africa’s inclusion in the BRICS does, however, provide the country with new market opportunities. South Africa’s membership in BRICS offers the country an opportunity to expand its exports to its BRICS counterparts. Another benefit for South Africa in terms of trading with other BRICS countries is that South Africa’s role as a commodity exporter in the global economy will be reinforced. The African continent also stands to benefit from the BRICS through the promotion of the inter-regional trade. African countries too, will get an opportunity to expand their exports into Asian, Latin American, and Middle East markets. In 2011, African leaders signed an agreement to initiate discussions on the establishment of an African free-trade area. The proponents of the free-trade area argued that this grand plan would reduce trade tariffs and also afford small countries an opportunity to access regional markets. According to Besada et al. (2013:8), African leaders argued that the free-trade area would allow Africa to benefit from the BRICS inter-regional trade agreement and will increase South African collaboration and relations with the rest of the continent.
Besada et al. (2013:4) further notes that the BRICS’ interest and presence in Africa will also help bring new technology and innovation into the continent and will also bring about the necessary expertise to support infrastructure development. The BRICS partnership with Africa will present opportunities for technology transfer. According to D'Angelo (2011), “with higher levels of technological innovation in the other BRICS nations, it is expected that membership will provide technology sharing, joint manufacturing, marketing and research projects, and exchange programmes for skills and training for South Africa and Africa”. South Africa seeks to use its membership to look for opportunities, collaboration, and partnerships with its BRICS counterparts that will benefit the country and the continent and also expand the South African market. Increased access to larger markets means South Africa will be able to facilitate and finance trade flows between continents.

South Africa’s role in the BRICS is to play a vital role in increasing the engagement between BRICS countries and Africa states in order expand economic and infrastructure development opportunities on the continent. This increased engagement is necessary because it may present significant gains for the continent in terms of job creation and economic development. Hartzenberg (2011:24) notes that a serious challenge faced by many African countries is that their industrial sector, more especially manufacturing, does not contribute much towards their gross domestic product (GDP). Notshulwana (2012:5) adds to this stating that “most countries in Southern Africa are characterised by the predominance of small industrial units which produce mostly for the national and regional markets”. The essential differences in capital, technology and natural resource endowments between BRICS member states (particularly China and Russia) and Africa makes the BRICS-Africa engagement an essential partnership for promoting economic development for both parties.

3.4.2 Economic Implications for the Continent

South Africa’s role as a representative of Africa on international forums is, on the one hand, supported by the country’s policies and in statements made by its officials in various influential platforms, such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO) urging
countries to lower trade barriers for African countries. However, on the other hand, South African critics argue that the country does not, and should not represent the continent's interest, definitely not all the time, particularly if they are not in line with the country's foreign policy goals. While South Africa regards itself as a representative of Africa in the BRICS, other African countries do not see it as such. As stated earlier in this chapter critics argue that the benefits of South Africa being a member of the grouping for the continent will only be minimal. Van den Bosch notes that South Africa being in the BRICS

...could provide diversity in investments and increased markets for African industry, as well as a rise in tourism from countries other than the UK and Western Europe, but not the widespread infrastructural growth and economic investment that many project by continuing to reinforce a pattern of resource extraction by the wealthier BRIC nations (Van den Bosch, 2011).

However, it is worth noting that the partnership between African nations and BRIC investors could be harmful for the continent because it may ease the process of capital encroachment by South African firms on the continent.

There is a concern that South Africa's inclusion in the BRICS could entail a move towards neo-colonialism by the BRICS nations on the continents. Critics concede that increased access to Africa markets by the BRICS nations could present detrimental consequences for the continent. Van den Bosch (2011) notes that given that the continent is yet to develop its own industrial base, African countries run the risk of establishing irregular patterns of trade, where countries will only depend on the export of commodities. South Africa's continued promotion of liberal trade policies could have even more detrimental consequences for African countries, many of which have small industrial bases and depend on one resource to grow their economies. In order for smaller African countries to grow their economies and expand their industrial base they would have to promote liberal economic policies. However, it should be noted that BRICS countries themselves have promoted protectionism trade policies among themselves. For example, India has imposed anti-dumping measures against Chinese firms (Van den Bosch, 2011). This has hindered strong cooperation among BRICS countries.
3.4.3 Geo-political Implications for the Continent

The expansion of regional integration mechanisms and influential geopolitical and economic forums, such as the BRICS have brought about a shift in the global political and economic order. Yong (2012:5) notes “with their newly earned economic power and their strengthening will of political unity, the BRICS have gradually increased their influence in global and political affairs”. The BRICS as a grouping are expected to play an influence role on issues relating to global economic governance, development, peace and security. While the inclusion of South Africa in the grouping, the BRICS generates geographic representation for Africa. As the only African member in the group, South Africa is expected to use its membership to represent the interests of the continent. The BRICS, as a forum representative of four continents, believes as a forum of the global South speaks on behalf of the developing countries.

Regional integration at an inter-continental level is important as it may present both economic and developmental opportunities for the African Continent. According to Besada et al. (2013:9), “many analysts within South Africa argue that economic growth on the continent has been constrained due to low levels of regional and continental economic integration”. For African economies to grow, it is important that they expand and integrate their economies into the global economy. A key challenge faced by many African countries in terms of attracting foreign investors is the political instability and security concerns that exist in many African states. Good foreign investors look for environments where there is peace and to some extent political stability.

It is, arguably, for this reason that many investors who have an interest in investing in Africa see South Africa as a base for investment before expanding into the continent. South Africa holds membership in a number of regional blocs on the continent. These include the AU, the NEPAD, the SACU and the SADC. Regional integration in the form of SADC has been quite positive both politically and economically, with a significant increase in the flow of minerals and oil between the countries in the region.
Some analysts have argued that sometimes regional integration clashes with South Africa’s national interests, and the country often chooses to integrate into the global economy at the expense of its neighbours. Amos (2010:128) provides a convincing account to this stating that South Africa signed the European Union-South Africa Trade Development and Cooperation Agreement (TDCA) agreement with full knowledge that it would have an overwhelming impact on its SADC counterparts. In the context of SACU, before signing the agreement South Africa was accordingly supposed to consult with other SACU members states to approve the agreement. However, Tshwane went on to sign the agreement and acted independently to maximise the country’s interests at the expense of the SACU member states.

With that said, one of the key sectors that South Africa should pursue alliances on behalf of the continent in the BRICS grouping is that of renewable energy and technology. Russia has already expressed its desire to invest and establish partnerships focusing on nuclear energy. Rosatom, a Russian state-owned company that deals with nuclear assets worldwide, has “…signed nuclear power agreements with Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and Uganda that cover a number of arrangements, including financing, skills development, and the actual development of nuclear power technology” (Sah et al., 2018:13). Russia has also built research reactors in Libya and Egypt. It is clear that Russia’s interest in Africa is growing. With South Africa in the BRICS group, the country can assist in terms of negotiating agreements related to the energy and technologies. Globally, there is a growing need by countries to develop their renewable energy sectors. South Africa can also use its membership in the BRICS to influence the agenda of renewable energy. This can be done through the negotiation of trade-off agreements that focus on the environment and sustainable development. According to Besada et al. (2013:9), South Africa has committed itself to use its membership in the BRICS to strengthen its global campaign on climate change and find ways to develop the country’s green economy.

3.4.4 Climate Change on the Agenda of the BRICS

In terms of environmental sustainability, BRICS nations do not perform very well. According to Downie and Williams (2018:398), “the BRICS are among the largest
emitters in the world due to their enormous production and consumption of fossil fuels. South Africa and Russia are most notably the worst performers compared to their BRICS counterparts. This, of course, can be linked to the two countries’ dependence on fossil fuels. China, to a lesser extent, is also not performing well in terms of environmental sustainability and climate change. This may be attributed to the large population and the fact that it is a highly industrialised country. India on the other hand is doing relatively well. Harrison (2014:72) notes that of the four BRICS countries, Brazil is the best performing country when it comes to environmental sustainability, because the country does not heavily depend on fossil fuels. South Africa has made several controversial decisions in the past (before joining the BRICS) with regards to the climate change agenda.

In 2009, at the climate change conference held in Copenhagen, Tshwane took a foreign policy position which received widespread criticism from both its environmental minister and African states. Nhamo notes that:

    South Africa’s heavy hand during the Copenhagen 2009 would have not come as a surprise to many, as the country felt it should do more in terms of their fair sharing of the responsibility to address climate change. This position has left the country with many enemies on the African continent and in the G77- China group, as some felt that South Africa had dragged them into unnecessary climate compromises and group conflicts (Nhamo, 2011:10).

In a statement, former South African environmental affairs and tourism Minister, Marthinus van Schalkwyk, expressed his disappointed in South Africa’s failure to produce a legally binding agreement at the Copenhagen conference. He went as far as saying that it was ‘unacceptable’ (Government News Agency, 2009).

Qi (2011:300) further notes that “widely expected to represent the African continent in Copenhagen, South Africa’s alignment with the small BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India and China) Group and its role in jointly drafting the non-legally-binding Copenhagen Accord disappointed many African countries, and led to an accusation of South Africa’s betrayal of African interests”. This statement indicates that South Africa may face the challenge of balancing its own national interest with the continents in different international forums. Against this, South Africa’s hosting of the COP-17 (Conference of Parties), a climate change conference, in 2011 intensified the country’s climate change campaign. Through the hosting of COP 17, South
Africa was seen as a significant actor in influencing the global climate agenda and also a demonstrated the country’s ability to act as a bridge between the North and South. The success of COP17 was viewed by many as Tshwane’s attempt to fix its mistakes in Copenhagen.

Given that the BRICS group is a key player in global affairs, it is expected that the group play a crucial role in shaping the global climate change agenda and other environmental issues.

According to Downie and Williams (2018:400), “…there are signs that the BRICS are exploring the possibility of cooperation on environmental issues. One indication of the increasing salience of environmental issues for intra-BRICS cooperation was the establishment of the first meeting of BRICS environmental ministers in April 2015”. In an effort to collaborate and forge relations on environmental issues, the BRICS environmental ministers met in Russia for an environment forum, which aimed to identify priority areas of collaboration in relation to the environmental affairs. In a statement by BRICS environmental ministers, they indicated that they would explore the possibility of approaching the New Development Bank (NDB) to finance their environmental projects (BRICS, 2015).

The NDB has become a key financial institution for the developing world and has drawn the interest of many African countries. This is obviously because of the need to develop their economies. South Africa was at the forefront for pushing for the establishment of the NDB and of a regional branch on the continent. At the negotiations for the creation of the NDB, South Africa pushed that the Bank should prioritise African states and that it should widely focus on the continent. Former South African Finance Minister, noted that the bank would support both public and private sector infrastructure and sustainable development projects; regional projects, provide technical assistant for the preparation and implementation of these projects and establish the Africa Regional Centre to be based in Johannesburg, strategically located to enable access by other African countries to the NDB (Nene, 2015).

The Minister’s announcement was welcomed by many African countries who expressed their views that with positive credits their countries would be able to expand their trade relations with the BRICS countries and also help them improve their infrastructure development. The BRICS countries also pushed hard for the NDB
to ensure that it supports infrastructural development programs, particularly in terms of railway and airport infrastructure, as well as the development of industrial bases, on the African continent. In 2014, during the sixth BRICS summit in Sao Paulo, the BRICS members signed an agreement for the establishment of the New Development Bank with an initial capital of US$50bn, and is expected to grow up to $100bn once contributions from other countries have been received (Daily Maverick, 2014).

Subsequently, the African Regional Centre (ARC), which would serve as a regional branch of the New Development Bank, was officially opened in August 2017. This ARC would provide financial assistance for infrastructure development projects in the SADC region and the African continent as a whole. This was a major African Agenda achievement as African development is a key objective of the African agenda. In her reflection on the outcomes of the 10th BRICS Summit, Deputy Minister Reginah Mhaule noted that establishment and operational of the ARC “has brought closer alternative project funding institution to our people and the continent” (DIRCO, 2018). She further noted that “infrastructure and sustainable development project funding by the BRICS bank will also be extend to countries that are not members of the formation, and therefore African countries will benefit a great deal” (DIRCO, 2018).

According to a report by the ECA (2014:36), four priority areas that should guide the BRICS-Africa engagement should be technology; environmental sustainability (including climate change), renewable energy, and job creation. Many have argued that BRICS countries need to be encouraged to use the African continent as a production base. Cooperation with the BRICS countries is important for African because these countries have already embarked on a process of developing their economies through technology and innovation. The ECA believes that “Africa can emulate these lessons through cooperation in human capacity, development, financing, fair trade, infrastructure development and the transfer of cleaner technologies” (ECA, 2013:27).

To ensure greater collaboration between Africa and the BRICS, it is important that there be improved coordination and integration of the already existing bilateral partnerships between the BRICS and African states within the broader Africa-BRICS
engagement. Another key area where Africa and the BRICS need to cooperate is in research. The exchange of knowledge is particularly an important for Africa with its engagement with the BRICS. This could be done through universities and research institutes. In her address to BRICS education ministers at the 10th BRICS Summit in South Africa, then South African Minister of Higher Education and Training, Naledi Pandor said:

We can strengthen integration by sharing knowledge and information research, development and innovation. If universities in BRICS collaborate successfully on research and teaching in student and staff exchanges, we can make a significant contribution to global knowledge... Through its research partnerships, the BRICS Network University, can help reduce the poverty, unemployment and inequality that characterize many countries in the developing world (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2018).

While the BRICS is seen as more meaningful in terms pushing for global governance reforms, the group also allows Africa’s voice to be “better heard” in influential global forums. Sidiropolous et al. (2018: 5) notes that “many global governance reforms pushed by the BRICS, although not directly speaking for Africa, are intended to assist the developing country bloc and their success would have a positive impact on Africa”. There is growing concern that the BRICS-Africa engagement might replace the already existing bilateral relations between individual BRICS countries and Africa. Analysts believe the BRICS countries and their African counterparts need to find a way to coordinate and integrate these bilateral strategies with the greater BRICS-African engagement.

3.5. Conclusion

South Africa’s inclusion into the BRICS can be seen as one of the country’s major foreign policy achievements. Its inclusion into the BRICS intensified its foreign policy goal of being a continental leader, that it represents and speaks on behalf of the continent in influential global forums. However, as a representative of Africa in the BRICS, South Africa faces the challenge of balancing its own interests with that of the continent. It is clear from the discussion that South Africa’s invitation into the grouping was not based on economic size or growth, but because of geopolitical reasons. Again, it is clear that the country shares common interests with its BRICS
counterparts. This is seen in the foreign policy positions taken by the country over the past years. It is also clear that South Africa’s inclusion in the group significantly changed the Agenda of the group. Its inclusion in the group may pose serious challenges for South Africa. Despite these challenges, South Africa’s inclusion in the grouping provides benefits both for the country and the continent in various sectors. The next chapter will examine South Africa’s role in attempting to advance the African Agenda in the UNSC.
CHAPTER 4: SOUTH AFRICA IN THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

4.1. Introduction

The African Agenda outlines South Africa’s vision of integrating the African continent into the global economy and aims to ensure that there is peace and security, accelerated economic growth and development on the African continent. Following its reintegration into the international system in 1994, South Africa was faced with the challenge of repositioning itself as a prominent regional and global player in international affairs. It was expected that the country would become an integral player in efforts aimed at resolving conflicts on the continent and further afield (Neethling, 2003:95). Tshwane was further expected to increase its role and participation in both regional and global multilateral forums to influence the peace and security agenda (South African Government Information (SAGI), 1996, Adebajo et al., 2007:22).

Since then, the country has established itself as a critical player by joining and serving on a number of influential peace and security multilateral forums both regionally and globally, namely the African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) and the UNSC. By sending peacekeeping troops into conflict-ridden countries on the continent and acting as a mediator in African conflicts, Tshwane demonstrated her willingness to engage in conflict resolution and mediation efforts on the continent. The South African government has also articulated that it will use its membership in multilateral forums to promote and maintain peace and security both regionally and globally. This chapter aims to analyse South Africa’s role in the UNSC during its first two terms. The chapter seeks to establish to what extent South Africa is pursuing the African Agenda on the UNSC.
4.2. South Africa and Peacebuilding

The promotion of peace and security on the continent has been a key foreign policy priority that has featured in South Africa’s foreign policy since 1994. This commitment is reflected in the country’s 1998 White Paper on Peace Missions and the 1999 White Paper on South Africa’s Participation in International Peace Missions (Department of Foreign Affairs, 1998, 1999). The country’s increased involvement in peace-keeping and mediation on the continent in countries such as the DRC (1997), Central African Republic (CAR) (2013), and Sudan (2013), demonstrated its leadership role in peacekeeping on the continent as well as its commitment towards its African Agenda objective of ensuring peace and security on the continent. The country’s leadership role on peace and security issues was further tested in the conflict in Lesotho in 1998 and Burundi in 1999. South Africa played a critical role in leading the mediation efforts in both countries to reach peace agreements between the parties involved. According to Carvalho (2018:4), “South Africa’s approach to peace, security and development in Africa is rooted in several pillars, including the country’s history and transition to democracy, its own perception of its global position and domestic socio-economic considerations”. South Africa’s post-apartheid foreign policy has proved to have a significant focus on African issues. In his article entitled “South Africa’s Future Foreign Policy” in foreign affairs, former President Nelson Mandela stated that “the concerns and interests of the continent of Africa should be reflected in South Africa’s foreign policy choices” and that the country could not “escape its African destiny” (Mandela, 1993:87).

Furthermore, South Africa’s commitment towards peace and security in Africa and globally is further reflected in one of the six pillars outlined by Mandela in 1993 that the country would seek to promote peace regionally and globally through non-violent means (Mandela, 1993:87). This commitment is further outlined in the 2006 country foreign policy document that states that South Africa still remains committed to “international peace and to internationally agreed upon mechanisms for the resolution of conflicts” (DFA, 2006:13). Since 1994, the country has been seeking
peaceful solutions towards conflicts on the continent. According to Landsberg, during the mid-1990s, former President Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki proclaimed that “the ANC-Led government [was] more than willing to embark on transforming Africa into a stable zone of peace through a process of democratisation” (Landsberg, 2000:108). Since 1994, the South African government has emphasised that long lasting development on the continent can only be achieved in a peaceful and secure Africa. It is against this backdrop that the South Africa government has committed itself to being a leader in efforts aimed at ensuring peace and security on the continent.

According to Tjemolane (2011: 134), “the way in which the new South African leadership has approached continental forums mirrors some extent of humility with regard to the need for a lucid approach to Africa’s problems”. However, with that said, the country has been very cautious in leading continental peacekeeping and mediation efforts, as this may cause political problems where the country may be seen to be infringing on another country’s sovereignty. The South African government has noted that its peacekeeping approach is based on principles of deterrence and effective operations.

According to South Africa’s White Paper on Defence (1996:22), “…the government’s preferred and primary course of action is to prevent conflict and war. South Africa will only turn to military means when deterrence and non-violent strategies have failed”. Through this commitment, over the past decades, the South African government has hoped to position itself as a leader in peace keeping and mediation on the continent. Tjemolane (2011:135) notes that “based on its international political transformation and its commitment to regional peace and security since the mid-1990s, there are increasing hopes on the continent and further afield that it would assume a leading mediatory and peacekeeping role in Africa’s conflicts”. South Africa’s commitment towards peace and security on the continent is further reflected in the country’s ’1999 White Paper on South African Participation in International Peace Missions’, which states that:

South Africa’s emerging national interests are underpinned by the values enshrined in the Constitution, which encompass the security of the state and its citizens, the promotion of the social and economic well-being of its citizenry, the encouragement of global peace and stability and participating in the process of ensuring regional peace, stability and development (Department of Foreign Affairs, 1999: 22).
The country has thus committed itself to offer ‘civilian assistance’ and ‘armed forces’-in the case where deterrence has failed- in efforts aimed at resolving conflicts on the continent and further afield (Department of Foreign Affairs, 1999: 22).

Since 1994, South Africa’s peace-keeping role has been more dominant in regional and continental multilateral organisations in the form of SADC and the AU. At a more regional level, South Africa’s intervention in Lesotho in 1998 is regarded as a great contribution by the country in efforts directed at ensuring peace and stability in the Southern African region. However, Selinyane (2006:78) notes that “South Africa’s successful intervention in Lesotho in 1998 was one way to hegemonic intervention and a stronger state perpetrating a weaker neighbour in an attempt to create regional peace and stability”. Neethling (2003:105) adds that:

South Africa’s involvement in the SADC intervention operation in Lesotho clearly illustrated, in a very practical manner, factors that need to be considered prior to the deployment of South Africa troops … firstly, any future deployment in either a peace mission or an intervention operation will have to consider the following: The extent to which all the major role-players within government have been informed and/or involved in both the preparation and planning for the operation; The extent to which key members of the legislature are informed of such impending action. Secondly, for regional deployment it is clear that a range of factors need to be considered. The legal and procedural mandates governing the participation of countries in the region need to be determined (Neethling, 2003:105).

At a continental level, South Africa’s intervention in the Somalia, DRC, Burundi, Sudan, Cote d’Ivoire and the Comoros Islands conflicts are seen as major foreign policy achievements when it comes to peace and security on the continent (See, for example, Neethling, 2003; Hudson, 2007, Cilliers, 2018). According to Neethling (2004:144), “South Africa’s incremental involvement in peacekeeping has undoubtedly enhanced the country’s image in the eyes of the international community”. Countries such as Egypt and Angola have in the past had large military forces, but South Africa is allegedly known to be the most powerful, effective, and capacitated military force on the continent. Sidiropoulos (2007:2) notes that South Africa’s “hegemonic status, premised on its superior economic and military strength, remains a source of discomfort for other large African states, such as Angola and Nigeria” (Landsberg and Adebajo, 2003:172).
Globally, South Africa’s leadership role in peacekeeping has been minimal as compared to its contribution regionally and continentally. This can be attributed to Africa’s lack of representation in influential global peace and security institutions, such as the UNSC. While there have been various efforts aimed at reforming the UN system, Africa to date still remains the only region without a permanent seat on the UNSC. The UN is regarded as the custodian of peace and security in international Affairs. With its leading role in conflict resolution and mediation on the continent, many commentators put forward South Africa as one of the “potential African countries that could represent the continent if there were to be such a space” (Tjemolane, 2013:139). However, there are sceptics who maintain that no African country will be afforded an opportunity to occupy a permanent seat on the UNSC in the near future. Over the years, there have been tensions between South Africa and its African counterparts, Nigeria and Egypt in particular, as to who would be the best suited candidate to represent the continent on the UNSC if the opportunity were to arise.

South Africa, however, has on three occasions been elected to serve on the UNSC as a non-permanent member during the periods 2007-2008, 2011-2012, and again during 2019-2020. Furthermore, South Africa was elected to serve as rotating chairman of the UNSC in March 2007 and April 2008. South Africa’s delegation to the UNSC is without a doubt based on the country’s successful diplomatic peace and security efforts on the continent. Tjemolane (2011:140) adds to this noting that South Africa’s election to the UNSC was based on the Republic’s peacekeeping and mediation experience on African countries. Another reason could be because of the country’s highly commended moral international status of being the first country to voluntarily de-nuclearise and South Africa also signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in the early 1990s. This significant move demonstrated South Africa’s commitment towards the promotion of democracy, human rights and protecting the environment (Spies, 2008:12). South Africa’s nomination to the UNSC was seen by many as “proof of her importance and ability to contribute to change in international affairs and promote her chances of obtaining a permanent seat on the SC” (Bischoff, 2009:99). Spies (2008:112) adds that South Africa’s participation on the UN
demonstrated the country’s willingness to become a key player in efforts aimed at the addressing contentious international issues.

4.3. South Africa’s Vision and Objectives in the United Security Council

After South Africa’s election onto the UNSC in October 2006, the South African government noted that it would seek to use its membership of the Security Council “to help promote multilateralism and respect for international law as the most appropriate means of achieving global political and economic stability and security” (DFA, 2006:3). The country further committed itself to using its membership in the Security Council to advance the African Agenda. One of the key objectives of the African Agenda is to promote peace and security on the African continent and also to ensure that there is reconstruction and development after the resolution of these conflicts. In preparation of the country’s first stint on the UNSC, former foreign Affairs minister, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma noted “South Africa (would) prioritise African conflict resolution and improve the relationship and coordination between the African Union (AU) and the United Nations (UN)” (DFA, 2006:3). This objective was again emphasised by former Department of International Relations and Cooperation’s (DIRCO) Minister, Lindiwe Sisulu, in her response to South Africa’s re-election onto the UNSC for the 2019-2020 period when she stated that the country would “encourage closer cooperation between the UN Security Council and other regional and sub-regional organisations particularly the African Union” (DIRCO, 2019).

In a media statement on South Africa’s assumption of its non-permanent seat on the UNSC for 2019-2020 period, the department noted that “South Africa’s term will also be an opportunity for the country to work towards the AU’s goal of “Silencing the Guns” on the Continent by 2020” (DIRCO, 2019). Before its first term on the UNSC, the South African Department of Foreign Affairs further noted that it would ensure that its contribution in the Security Council would be aimed at addressing the lingering conflicts in Africa and ensure there is stability on the continent (DFA, 2006:2). As part of DIRCO’s lobbying for a second term on the UNSC in 2010, the Department noted that, if elected onto the Security Council, the country’s objectives on the UNSC would be guided by its commitment towards seeking peaceful
resolution to African conflicts, the promotion of the African Agenda, and its commitment towards multilateralism (DIRCO, 2010).

Former DIRCO minister, Maite Nkoane-Mashabane outlined South Africa’s objectives in its second term on the Security Council as being informed by the country’s foreign policy. According to her, these objectives are based on four pillars which guide the country’s foreign policy which include:

- Promoting and advancing the interests of our continent, including the SADC sub-region;
- Working with countries of the South to address challenges of underdevelopment, our marginalisation in the international system, and the promotion of equity and social justice globally;
- Work with countries of the North to develop a true and effective partnership for a better world;
- Do our part to strengthen the multilateral system, including its transformation, to reflect the diversity of our nations, and ensure its centrality in global governance (Nkoane-Mashabane, 2010).

It has been made clear from various policy documents, statements, and speeches by government officials that South Africa’s objectives and vision on the Security Council seems to be that of advancing the African Agenda, increasing the voice and representation of the Global South by leading the fight for reform in the UNSC, and contributing towards the finding peaceful solutions to conflicts globally.


In October 2006, South Africa was elected by an overwhelming majority of 186 UN member states to serve as a non-permanent member of the UNSC from 1 January 2007 to 31 December 2008. South Africa’s election onto the Security Council was seen by many as an opportunity for the country to represent the African continent. Tshwane’s candidature to occupy the non-permanent seat on the Security Council received the endorsement of both the AU and SADC. South Africa’s occupation of the non-permanent seat came with many expectations from its African counterparts. These ranged from increasing the continent’s influence on decision-making on the Security Council to enhancing cooperation between the UNSC and Africa’s Peace and Security architecture. Responding to South Africa’s election onto the Security
Council, former Foreign Affairs Minister, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, declared that the country was “ready to serve the peoples of Africa, the South and the world in this capacity” (Dlamini-Zuma, 2006).

She further noted that “the government and people of South Africa humbly accept the mandate thrust upon us by the peoples of Africa, the South and the world in general in electing us to this position of responsibility.” (Dlamini-Zuma, 2006). According to McGurk (2013:32), “South Africa hoped to use its first term as a non-permanent member of the Council to promote the African Agenda”. The country had noted in various in policy documents and in speeches by government officials that South Africa’s interests were tied to those of the African continent. South Africa’s White Paper on Foreign Policy (2011) titled the ‘Diplomacy of Ubuntu’, reaffirms South Africa’s commitment to Africa. The White Paper indicates that “our struggle for a better life in South Africa is intertwined with our pursuit of a better Africa in a better world. Its destiny is inextricably linked to that of the South African region. Consequently, Africa is at the centre of South Africa’s foreign policy” (White Paper on South Africa’s Foreign Policy, 2011:20).

This meant that every decision and action taken by South Africa would have to be in line with its foreign policy objectives. Furthermore, the country would be expected to take up the responsibility of representing the interests of the continent on the Council. Outlining South Africa’s objectives on the Council, Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma noted that during its tenure on the Council, “South Africa (would) strive in conjunction with the African Union, to create synergies between the work of the African Union Peace and Security Council and the UN Security Council with a view to the prevention of outbreaks of violence and conflict in the continent of Africa" (Dlamini-Zuma, 2006). A key priority in Tshwane’s contribution as a member of the Security Council was to align the already existing conflict resolution programmes on the continent with those of the UNSC. This was because by 2006, 12 out of 28 conflicts in the UNSC agenda emanated from the African continent.

According to Adebayo (2006), “the continent [was] the subject of more than 60 percent of the UN Security Council deliberations, seven of the UN’s 17 peacekeeping missions and nearly 90 per cent of its peacekeepers are deployed in
Africa”. It was clear that South Africa wanted to use its membership on the Council to increase its influence in promoting peace and security on the continent and push for reform of the UNSC.

By taking up this seat, Tshwane realised that it would have to deal with the challenge of the long-existing power-imbalances on the UNSC and ensure the country’s presence was felt on the Council. Kagwanja (2009:47) notes that “sadly, African countries have no ability to influence decision making significantly because of the power imbalances, despite African issues dominating the UN Security Council agenda”. In his maiden speech, South Africa’s representative to the UN, Ambassador Dumisani Khumalo, unequivocally pointed out in 2007 that South Africa was not happy with the UNSC’s biased political approach towards conflicts. He highlighted how the UNSC was yet to change its structure in terms of membership and stressed how the Security Council should not impinge on the responsibilities of other UN structures or multilateral institutions. He noted that the developed states, who had a powerful influence on the Council, tended to use their positions to undermine the sovereignty of the smaller states, particularly in Africa.

Khumalo further emphasised that issues such as poverty and underdevelopment, which have proved to be the main causes of conflicts, needed to be addressed through the other various UN structures. He noted that the Security Council should respect the functions and roles of the other UN organs and that the Council should seek to establish relations with regional bodies to ensure peace and security (Khumalo in Graham, 2015:76). During its two terms as chairman of the UNSC, South Africa made a commitment to use its position to improve the cooperation between the AU and the UN. According to Bischoff (2009:100), during its chairmanship “South Africa supported a process where in detailing the evolution of the relationship between the UN and regional organisations, previous commitments made to the AU were highlighted and coordinated efforts with the SC in building regional capacities to maintain international peace and security were put forward”. The South African government would ensure that it aligns the programmes of the UNSC with that of the African Union Peace and Security Council as a concerted effort to ensure peace and stability on the continent.
During its term as chairperson, South Africa took very notable and important steps towards enhancing cooperation between the UN and the AU. The most notable contribution was South Africa’s pivotal role in the approval and implementation of the United Nations Secretary General’s report on enhancing relations between the UN and regional bodies. According to McGurk (2013:33), “the report addressed a variety of practical issues important to the AU’s ability to respond to crises, such as the division of responsibilities with the UN, coordination and consultation mechanisms, financing, conflict prevention and mediation, support of peace building, and post-conflict reconstruction”. By strengthening and enhancing cooperation between the AU and the UN, South Africa created a platform to table issues pertaining to Africa on the Security Council agenda.

Enhanced cooperation would assist the AU in terms of capacity building, financial backing and operational support in order to deal with some of the situations on the Continent. Through these lenses, South Africa’s contribution could be seen as advancing the interests of the continent and of course as major foreign policy achievement. Furthermore, it can be said that Tshwane’s contribution on the UNSC during its 2007-2008 tenure was to be underpinned by a quest of ensuring the sovereignty of smaller states was respected and ensure that the Security Council desisted from infringing on the functions of other UN organs. This is seen in the position taken on the Côte d’Ivoire situation which will be discussed further later in this chapter. McGurk (2013:29) notes that “after the first term on the Council, observers criticised South Africa for having sacrificed human rights for sovereignty and African unity, leaving South Africa with even more pressure to conform during its second term”. This quest to champion African sovereignty may have come at the expense of the Republic's human rights focused post-1994 reputation and therefore somewhat damaged the country’s image of being a democratic state.

As noted previously, since 1994, strengthening stability in Africa has been a key theme in South Africa’s foreign policy. It was therefore expected that the country would use its membership on the Security Council to consolidate its African Agenda and ensure that there is peace and stability on the continent. South Africa’s endorsement by the AU and SADC to join the Security Council represented the continent’s confidence in the country to act as a representative of the continent on
the Council and also use its membership to promote the African Agenda during its term on the Security Council. In her address as keynote speaker to the South African Institute of International Relations (SAIIA), former Minister Lindiwe Sisulu, reflected on South Africa’s first term on the UNSC and noted that:

South Africa’s first tenure as an elected member of the United Nations Security Council commenced on 1 January 2007 and ended on 31 December 2008. The candidacy of our country was endorsed by the Africa Group and South Africa was elected unopposed onto the Council by the UN membership, securing the highest number of recorded votes during the election (186 votes in favour). That should show you the confidence the world has in us (Sisulu in SAIIA, 2019).

South Africa’s membership on the Council was seen as a move that would benefit both South Africa and the continent on the peace and security agenda. In support of this, former Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane noted that “bearing in mind that a substantial focus of UNSC activities and agenda items are on the African Continent, South Africa will continue to champion and advance the African Agenda and collaborate with other African member states currently serving on the UNSC in pursuing issues of mutual benefit” (Nkoana-Mashabane, 2010).

By being a representative or the voice of Africa, South Africa would then be able to legitimise its position on the UNSC. Instead of being viewed as regional or continental hegemon, appearing as representative speaking on behalf of the continent legitimises the country’s membership on the Council. According to McGurk (2013:26), South Africa’s position as a representative of Africa on the Security Council not only legitimises the country’s “…election to a non-permanent seat, but also its ambitions for a permanent place as the African representative at the Council”. This position as representative would intensify South Africa’s image as a middle power, representing the interests of its region on the Council.

One of the key objectives for South Africa during its 2007-2008 tenure on the Security Council was to make an impactful contribution towards finding lasting and peaceful solutions to conflicts, particularly in Africa. Former President Thabo Mbeki “…considered South Africa’s spot on the Council a ‘tour of duty’ and pledged South Africa’s best efforts in contributing to international peace and security” (Graham, 2015:77). Such a contribution would form part of the UNSC’s greater goal of ensuring international peace and stability.
4.4.1 South Africa’s voting behaviour on African Situations in the UNSC (2007-2008)

South Africa’s voting behaviour during its first term on the Security Council was, at the very least, characterised by controversy. According to Bischoff (2009:101), not much of South Africa’s principled position was seen in her voting patterns on resolutions taken during her first tenure on the Security Council. The 2007-2008 UNSC term evidenced the adoption of 121 formal resolutions (Graham, 2015:77). Of the 121 resolutions taken, South Africa abstained in only one of the resolutions and voted in favour of the other 120 formal resolutions. South Africa, along with China, Qatar, and Indonesia, abstained to vote on the resolution pertaining to the situation in Lebanon, which involved a series of protests and sit-in by civilian groups and smaller parties opposed to the government of Fouad Siniora (then Lebanese Prime Minister) (Norton, 2007:485). The resolution called for the establishment of a Special Tribunal for Lebanon. According to Bischoff (2009:101), South Africa abstained “because she felt that a Special Tribunal opposed by the Lebanese presidency but supported by the Lebanese parliament and cabinet, would constitute interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign state”. Not much coordination was seen by the African countries serving on the council during this term.

Ghana and Congo, the two African countries serving on the council in 2008, voted in favour of the SC Resolution for the establishment of a Special Tribunal for Lebanon, while South Africa abstained to vote on the Resolution. This voting behaviour sent across a message that the interests of the African countries on the Council at times differed and would not really rely on each other’s support, particularly when it came to contentious issues (McGurk, 2013:35). Of course, this was in contradiction to South Africa’s assertion that it represented the interests of the continent by advancing the African Agenda. During the same term, South Africa threatened to abstain again on a resolution relating to Iran. It took an intervention by the US government through the sending of a USA envoy to Pretoria to convince the South African government to agree to vote in favour of the resolution. Tshwane was of the view that the Iran case was not an issue of the UNSC because Iran’s nuclear
programme did not pose a threat to international security. However, after engagements with the USA government and the USA agreeing to amend Resolution 1747, Tshwane finally agreed to vote in favour of the formal resolution.

South Africa’s 2007-2008 tenure on the Security Council saw the country make two controversial votes. These included the votes on the draft resolutions that condemned human right abuses in Myanmar and Zimbabwe. Both these resolutions did not materialise. According to International observes, South Africa’s votes on Myanmar and Zimbabwe were not consistent with the country’s constitution and foreign policy. However, in defence of this, South Africa’s International Relations and Cooperation Minister, Lindiwe Sisulu noted that

South Africa believed that the Western countries, led by the United Kingdom wished to “undermine” regional efforts pursued by the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and the AU, including the South African-led facilitation process. Like in the case of Myanmar, the European members with the support of the USA favoured punitive measures against the government in Zimbabwe and did not fully endorse constructive dialogue as a long-term solution (Sisulu in SAIIA, 2019).

Graham (2015:77) notes that of the 121 adopted resolutions, 85% referred to country-specific situations, while two-thirds concerned situations in Africa. It was therefore important that South Africa use its membership on the Council to intensify its peacekeeping efforts in the conflicts on the continent and ensure peaceful and lasting Resolutions on African situations are adopted. During South Africa’s chairmanship in 2007, a resolution to lift the sanctions in Rwanda was adopted. The resolution (SC resolution 1749, 2007) called for the Rwandan government to “mark and register and notify to the Committee all imports made by it of arms and related material” (United Nations, 2007).

Prior to occupying its non-permanent seat on the Council in 2007, South Africa was already a key player in the peacekeeping negotiations in Burundi, the DRC Sudan. During its second stint as chairman of the UNSC, South Africa used its role to focus on the situation in Burundi. Graham (2015:78) notes that “whilst on the Council, South Africa voted in favour of UNSC Resolution 1791, which called on the Government of Burundi and the Palipehutu-Forces nationales de Libération (FNL), the two parties to the September 2006 Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement, to
refrain from any action that might lead to the a resumption of hostilities and to resolve outstanding issues in spirit of cooperation”. This resolution aimed to stop the confrontations between the Burundian government and the FNL forces to bring peace and end the hostility in the country. During this period, South Africa also focused on the conflict in Cote d'Ivoire. According to Kagwanja (2009:52), South Africa endorsed the Ouagadougou Political Agreement and the approval by the Ivorian authorities of the proposal from the Independent Electoral Commission to organise the presidential elections on 30 November 2008. With regards to the situation in the DRC, South Africa had already been involved in the peacekeeping processes in the country, through the deployment of military personnel to assist the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo or MONUSCO mission in the DRC, before its tenure on UNSC. The South African government vowed to continue to support the peace processes in the DRC and ensure that it uses its time on the Council to also lobby the UN to support the DRC’s reconstruction and development (Graham, 2015:78).

South Africa also used its term on the Council to focus on the Eritrea-Ethiopia conflict. The two parties, for many years failed to negotiate a political settlement. Even the intervention of the UN had been hampered on several instances because of the tensions over the boundaries of the buffer zone. According to the United Nations, Eritrea’s continued “obstructions towards the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) threatened to undermine the basis of the mission’s mandate, compelling the UNMEE to temporarily relocate” (UN, 2008). Eritrea’s obstructions limited the UN mission’s freedom of movement. South Africa’s representative to the UN and UNSC president of the time, Dumisani Khumalo, expressed South Africa’s willingness to place its focus on supporting the peace talks and the UN peacekeeping mission in the form of the UNMEE (Kagwanja, 2008:52). Another conflict that was prioritised by the South African government was that of Somalia. Khumalo noted that he hoped that the Council would adopt Resolution 1744/2007, which would authorise for an AU-Mission to be deployed in Somalia for a period of six months to assist with the peace processes and reconciliation in the East African country (United Nations, 2007).
In 2007, South Africa went on to vote in favour of UNSC resolutions 1754 and 1783 which concerned the situation of the territorial dispute between Morocco and the people of Western Sahara. The resolutions called for an extension of both of the 1991 United Nations Mission for Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) mandates for another six months (Graham, 2015:78). The vote was prompted by the failed peace talks and political settlements between the Moroccan government and the leaders of the Sahrawi national movement regarding the future of Western Sahara. “Morocco claimed the territory as its own while the Front [Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Humra and Rio de Oro (POLISARIO Front)], based in Algeria, was working for the territory’s independence from Morocco” (Graham, 2015:78).

South Africa’s vote, can arguably, be said to be inspired by the country’s historical colonial legacy of apartheid, which saw the violations of human rights of its black community. The promotion of human rights globally has been a key theme that has been at the heart of South Africa’s foreign policy since 1994. This vote was seen as a move inspired by its foreign policy to ensure the respect of the Sahrawi’s people’s human rights, although the resolution did not explicitly acknowledge the violation of the human rights of the Sahrawi people. However, with that said, Tshwane has not been so consistent with her ‘human rights’ posture. This inconsistency is evidenced in its vote concerning the Myanmar human rights situation. The South African government argued that the Myanmar situation was better suited as a matter of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) rather than that of the UNSC. This move signalled a rather inconsistent approach to South Africa’s promotion of human rights when it was in a prominent position to properly communicate its concerns over this issue in the UN’s most powerful body, the UNSC, and failed to do so.

4.4.1.1. The Zimbabwe Vote

South Africa’s 2007-2008 tenure on the UNSC witnessed a contestation between Western powers and African countries (led by South Africa) over the Zimbabwean situation. The Zimbabwean government’s suppression of the opposition in March 2007 and the forced mass exodus of Zimbabwean nationals from the country to
South Africa and other neighbouring countries due to the repressive state prompted a need for South Africa to swiftly response to the crisis as the chairperson of the UNSC during the time. In addition to the suppression, the economy of Zimbabwe was declining sharply with the country's inflation levels reaching hyperinflation. In accelerating the crisis in Zimbabwe, Nichols (2007) notes that Britain urged the “UN Security Council to accelerate action on Zimbabwe to match that of the European Union and regional organisations such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC)”. However, South Africa took a completely different position on the matter, siding with its African representatives on the council, noting that the situation in Zimbabwe did not constitute a threat to international peace and security. The South African government held the view that the situation in Zimbabwe was a domestic issue that did not require the intervention or assistance of the UN Security Council and believed that President Mugabe would peacefully step down at the right time.

South Africa reiterated its statement made on the Myanmar situation that it held the view that the situation in Zimbabwe was not a matter for the UNSC Security because it did not pose a threat to international peace and security. Bischoff (2009:102) notes that South Africa opposed the Security Council’s suggestion to send a fact-finding mission to Zimbabwe in order to:

- minimise the internationalism of the issue as much as possible and keep the internationalisation of the issue as much as possible and keep the issue within the region, where a host of conservative states intent on safeguarding the sovereignty of the Zimbabwean state as well as their own, were more likely to be able to control events in favour of the status quo of the entrenched ZANU-PF government and keep an elected MDC form claiming outright executive power (Bischoff, 2009:102).

Additionally, in 2008 South Africa also opposed a draft resolution, which called for sanctions to be imposed against Zimbabwe because of the continued violations of human rights on its people and the controversial results of the presidential elections. As stated earlier on, this was because the South African government believed that external intervention would undermine the existing regional processes by the AU and SADC that were already underway.

During its tenure on the Security Council, it was clear that South Africa had taken the African position of strongly opposing Britain’s attempts of bringing Zimbabwe’s
situation to the attention of the Security Council. South Africa instead opted for regional diplomatic approach to the Zimbabwean crisis. According to Nichols (2007), the European Union Parliament in 2007 asked the Security Council to report all human right violations in Zimbabwe and to do so promptly. Civil society organisations lobbied for sanctions to be imposed on Zimbabwe as they believed the Zimbabwean government was committing crimes against humanity. However, Kagwanja notes that “Africa has counted on the Chinese and Russian veto to block the West’s effort to bring Zimbabwe onto the UN Security Council Agenda” (Kagwanja, 2009:50).

Again, in March 2008, South Africa and China opposed efforts by the UK and its Western allies to include the Zimbabwe Crisis on the agenda of the Security Council. Pasipanodya (2008) notes that South Africa’s position “…backed by China, Russia, Vietnam, and the two Africa members, Libya and Burkina Faso, argued that Africa should take the lead and SADC should be given the opportunity to mediate in the Zimbabwe situation”.

South Africa believed, in the interests of stability, the best way to resolve the crises in Zimbabwe was to hold peace talks with the involved parties and let regional resolutions and positions unfold. Former Foreign Affairs minister, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma stated that “our own national experience has taught us the value of seeking negotiated solutions to problems no matter how intractable they may at first seem, and of engaging all the relevant role players in a dialogue” (Dlamini-Zuma, 2007). In a statement explaining its vote on the Zimbabwean situation during its UN Security Council presidency, the South African government noted that:

It is for this reason that the South African delegation would vote against the draft [resolution]. It would lead to the improvement of the humanitarian and economic situation, thereby contributing to a better life for all Zimbabweans. The Security Council must give space for implementation of the African Union Summit’s decision (UN Security Council, 2008).

The Zimbabwe crisis continues to be an area of contestation between Africa and the West in the Security Council. In 2008, The AU Summit Resolution on Zimbabwe expressed its appreciation to SADC and President Thabo Mbeki for their efforts of
facilitating dialogue between the political parties in Zimbabwe (AU Summit Resolution on Zimbabwe, 2008).

4.4.1.2. Sudan Situation

In 2007, during its tenure on the Council, South Africa again took an African position that backed Sudan, in which the country rejected a draft resolution aimed at imposing sanctions against combatants who attacked civilians and hampered the peace efforts of the United Nations-African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) - a joint peacekeeping operation by the United Nations and the AU (Nathan, 2008:2). South Africa’s voting patterns during this term demonstrated one of coordination with the AU. In 2008, the South African government, along with its African member states on the Council (Burkina Faso and Libya) requested that SC Resolution 1769, which called for the extension of the UNAMID mandate, include a request for the International Criminal Court (ICC) to put off any request to prosecute then Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir for 12 months.

Hauben in (Bischoff, 2009:104) notes that while the request was not approved by all Security Council members, “there was an agreement to include language which would take note of the AU request and that would state the desire to consider this issue in the SC at a later time”. The USA and Belgium, on the other hand, wanted to see stronger language supporting the ICC’s consideration of prosecuting al-Bashir and language supporting the fight against impunity. While the USA and Belgium’s request did not succeed, South Africa fought hard to keep the ICC’s consideration of indicting President al-Bashir out of the resolution. This was largely because of the AU Peace and Security Council’s decision to defer the ICC warrant of arrest for al-Bashir because it was seen as an effort to undermine the peacekeeping efforts of the Council. In a statement, the AU Peace and Security Council expressed its view that:

The delicate nature of the processes underway in the Sudan, approval by the Pre-Trial Chamber of the application by the ICC Prosecutor could seriously undermine the ongoing efforts aimed at facilitating the early resolution of the conflict in Darfur and the promotion of long-lasting peace and reconciliation in the Sudan as a whole and, as a result, may lead to further suffering for the people of the Sudan and greater destabilization with far-reaching consequences for the country and the region (AU Peace and Security Council, 2008).
This view was supported by the International Crisis Group, who also held the view that a decision by the ICC to indict al-Bashir would pose major risks to efforts aimed at ensuring peace and stability in Sudan and could result in the situation in Sudan becoming even worse (Maweni, 2013). South Africa came out in full support of the AU’s conviction and ensured that it publicised the AU’s view that the ICC’s decision to indict al-Bashir would undermine the peace talks and efforts in Sudan.

Just like the Zimbabwe crisis, South Africa held the view that the Sudan situation should be resolved through efforts of the regional multilateral bodies in the form of the AU to minimise intervention from the West. “South Africa advanced African common positions, where relevant, and sought to secure international support for the African Union’s peace and security architecture and its peacekeeping missions” (DFA, 2009:6). South Africa’s desire be a ‘good global citizen’ has always clashed with its desire to be a representative of the African continent. Every time South Africa takes a Pan-Africanist posture or sides with the African consensus, it more often than not, conflicts with its stance on human rights. This suggests that in order to legitimise its role as a representative of the continent, South Africa would have to compromise on certain aspects of its own foreign policy, such as the promotion of democracy and human rights, as these have proved to be difficult to pursue when siding with African position.

4.5. South Africa in the UNSC 2011-2012

In 2010, South Africa achieved two major foreign policy goals, namely its inclusion into the BRICS cooperative and its re-election as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for the 2011-12 period. Just like her first term in 2007-08, South Africa was again elected with overwhelming support, with 182 UN member states electing her as a non-permanent for a second stint on the UN Security Council for the 2011-12 period. South Africa was joined by India, Colombia, Portugal and Germany as non-permanent members for the same period. South Africa’s candidacy for a second stint on the Council was again endorsed by the AU at its 14th Ordinary Session in the beginning of 2010. Tshwane also received the backing from the SADC. As such South Africa’s claim to speak on behalf of the
continent and represent the interests of the Africa on the Security Council was legitimised by the endorsement of the continent. According to Serrao (2011:3), South Africa’s endorsement by the AU and SADC meant that South Africa, along with Nigeria and Gabon were mandated to represent the continent’s interests on the Council. The three African countries, led by South Africa, were expected to represent the collective voice of the African continent. Given that most of the situations on the Security Council’s agenda were from Africa, it was expected that South Africa shoulder responsibility in representing the continent’s voice on matters of mutual concern.

Although it is often stated that the non-permanent members in the UNSC have little influence over setting the agenda on the UN Security Council, the year 2011 held promise of difference as the non-permanent seats were occupied by heavy political giants such as Germany, Brazil, India and South Africa. All these countries had the desire to obtain a permanent seat on the UNSC and as such they would want to make their presence felt on the Council (Ngwenya, 2010:1). Quite a number of geographical and strategic geo-political alliances existed on the Council during this period, particularly for South Africa. South Africa, Nigeria and Gabon represented the African (AU) geographical alliance, while the strategic geo-political alliances were represented in the form of BRICS, IBSA (India, Brazil, and South Africa), and BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India and China) (Kornegay, 2012:12).

During this term, South Africa was faced with the difficult task of navigating amongst a number of agendas, namely the BRICS agenda, the BASIC agenda which involved climate change, the IBSA agenda, and the African Agenda. While South Africa had indicated that it would be more committed to the African Agenda, the task of balancing between these competing agendas presented proved itself to be a difficult task for the country and this was evidenced in the voting patterns of the country during this period on the Council. Nigeria’s presence on the Council presented a challenge for South Africa’s ambitions of taking the lead in representing and advancing African interests on the Council (Patel, 2012). Tshwane was forced to work with Nigeria to ensure that they advance the interests of the continent. This meant that South Africa would have to align its African Agenda with the strategic objectives of Nigeria to ensure that they represented a collective African voice. This
was an attempt to manage its hegemonic aspirations and its competitive friendship with Nigeria.

In late 2010, just before officially joining the Security Council for its second term, the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) in partnership with the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) and the Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD) convened a strategic panel discussion in preparation of Tshwane’s second stint on the Security Council. It was at this panel discussion that South Africa’s former permanent representative to the UN, Ambassador Khumalo, reflected on the country’s lessons during its first tenure on the Council (Graham, 2015:84). He emphasised the need for improved coordination, especially amongst African states on the Council (Graham, 2015:84). South Africa’s first term on the Security Council witnessed a lack of coordination among African states on the Council. As part of her lobbying for South Africa’s second term on the Council, then Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane stated that South Africa’s foreign policy on the Security Council would be driven by the primary aim of:

- Promoting and advancing the interests of our continent, including the SADC sub-region;
- Working with countries of the South to promote its voice on issues of international peace and security in the international system and the promotion of equity and social justice globally;
- Working with countries of the North to develop a true and effective partnership for a peaceful world;
- Contributing to the strengthening of the multilateral system, and promoting a rules-based global governance system, including its reform, to reflect the diversity of our nations, and ensure its centrality (DIRCO; IGD and SAIIA, 2011:20)

The Minister further noted that South Africa would seek to work closer with other African non-permanent members on the Council to represent the interests of the continent. She also noted that South Africa would ensure that it continued with its efforts of enhancing relations between the AU Peace and Security Council and the UNSC (Maite Nkoana-Mashabane in Bowland, 2012:1). Tshwane identified contributing to “…the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the maintenance of international peace and security, and the stabilization of post conflict situations, particularly on the continent” as its main objective on the UNSC during its 2011-2012 tenure (DIRCO, IGD & IGD, 2011:2). As South Africa assumed its non-permanent seat at the start of 2011, the South Sudan referendum was already a priority on the
Security Council’s agenda. According to McGurk (2013:43), the South Sudan issue was quickly overshadowed by the political crisis in Côte d’Ivoire, where then President Laurent Gbagbo refused to leave office after losing to opposition leader Alassane Ouattara in the 2010 presidential elections. The situation in Libya, human right violations and the killing of civilians by the Gaddafi regime, also dominated the UNSC, diverting focus from the South Sudan referendum. Other African situations that dominated the agenda of the Security Council were those of the Western Sahara territorial dispute and the peacekeeping missions in the CAR and the DRC. The Western Sahara dispute involves the illegal occupation by Morocco of the Sahrawian territory. According to Zoubir (2010:86):

The occupied region [by Morocco] is often misrepresented as an empty desert, although the territory does in fact boast rich resources and a 700-kilometer Atlantic coast of strategic importance...this territory has one of the richest fishing waters in the world. Valuable minerals such as iron ore, titanium oxide, vanadium, iron and possibly, oil may be abundant throughout the territory (Zoubir, 2010:86).

The abundance of resources found on the occupied land have made conflict resolution efforts more complex. The CAR has faced a number of civil conflicts and military coups since its independence in the 1960s. South Africa, under the Presidency of Jacob Zuma, deployed 400 soldiers to assist with military training of CAR soldiers, but were later withdrawn after 13 South African National Defence Force (SANDF) troops were killed by CAR rebels (Business Insights, 2013). The DRC has been at war for over two decades. According to reports from the ground, South Africa’s peacekeeping efforts, combined with those of the UN mission in the DRC, have been positive (Hogg and Louis, 2013).

4.5.1 South Africa’s Chairmanship of the UN Security Council (2012)

In January 2012, South Africa held the presidency of the UNSC. Holding presidency of the Council allows the elected state to prioritise and pursue its issues of interest to a much greater extent than an ordinary non-permanent member. As rotating president, the non-permanent member is afforded the opportunity to release presidential statements. Bischoff (2009:100) adds that the elected member is afforded an “…opportunity to make an imprint on developing SC policy”. Just like its presidency in its first term on the Council, the South African government noted that
the primary objective during its presidency would be to enhance relations between the UN Security Council and the AU. According to Nganje (2012:3), South Africa’s aim of strengthening cooperation between the Security Council and the AU and its Peace and Security Council was to “overcome African problems on the basis of a stronger space for African-led solutions”. With this line of thinking, regional forums, who are much closer to these conflicts, better understand those conflicts and would work towards finding lasting and peaceful solutions to those conflicts.

These sentiments were also echoed by former President Jacob Zuma, when he argued that closer cooperation between the UN and the AU would be advantageous, as regional organisations have closer proximity and better understanding of the issues at hand. He also noted that neighbouring countries often felt the consequences of the conflicts that occurred in the neighbourhood and it was therefore important to have strengthened relations between the two bodies (UN Secretariat, 2012). During this time Zuma also commented on the Security Council’s response to the Libyan Crisis. He noted that “the lesson we should draw from the Libyan experience is that greater political coherence and a common vision between the African Union and the United Nations are critical to the resolution of African conflicts”. He emphasised that the views of the AU should be listened to and taken seriously to ensure enhanced cooperation and the prevention any further conflict situations. He further cautioned that “Africa must never be a playground for furthering the interest of other regions ever again” (UN Secretariat, 2012). This stems from the belief that African conflicts could be manageable without any external intervention. In her appeal for greater and improved cooperation between the AU and the Security Council, Tshwane appeared to have gained support from within and outside the Security Council.

Nganje (2012:3) notes that not only did South Africa advance an agenda that the AU would support, but she also “responded to the findings of an assessment report by the UN Secretary-General, which among other things underscored the significant contributions regional organisations, most notably the AU, have made to the work of the UN in maintain global peace and security”. The resolution acknowledged the fact that the AU was familiar with the conflict issues on the continent and its interest in ensuring the peaceful resolution of African conflicts.
While serving as Chairman of the Security Council, South Africa was also serving as chair of the AU Peace and Security Council. As such, South Africa’s strong focus on the strengthening cooperation between the AU and the UN Security Council made perfect sense, as this would help the two bodies to coordinate their work on the conflict situations in Africa. Former Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Ebrahim Ebrahim, noted that South Africa would ensure it used its chairmanship to enhance cooperation between the AU and UN in pursuit of ensuring international peace and stability. The Council, with the unanimous votes of all council members adopted a resolution (SC Resolution 2033) which detailed the UNSC’s commitment to ensuring it takes effective steps to strengthen its relations with African regional forums. During its Presidency, South Africa led efforts aimed at the adoption of Resolution 2036, which called for the expansion of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). Resolution 2036 authorised AMISOM “to reduce the threat posed by Al Shabaab and other armed opposition groups in order to establish conditions for effective and legitimate governance across Somalia” (UNSC in Freear and de Coning, 2013:3).

4.5.2 South Africa’s Voting Behaviour on African Situations (2011-2012)

In March 2011, South Africa voted in favour of the controversial SC Resolution 1973, which authorised a ‘no fly zone’ over the Libyan airspace and that UNSC members adopt all necessary steps that will ensure that all Libyan civilians were protected from the Muammar Gaddafi regime (Graham, 2015:85). The resolution saw North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) forces bomb Libya and effectively instituting a regime change in Libya. The adoption and the implementation of this resolution caused a lot of controversy. This resolution saw South Africa’s BRICS alliance partners abstain from voting. Graham (2015:85) notes that “the abstentions highlighted concern over the authorisation of far-reaching measures under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter”. Many on the Council were divided on how the resolution was implemented, others believed that the manner in which the resolution was implemented represented an act of aggression against the Libyan people, while others felt that the actions taken were conducted within the means of the notion of the responsibility to protect (McGurk, 2013:55).
South Africa was one of the countries that believed that the resolution protected the rights of Libya’s civilians. These tensions represented the deep ideological differences that continued to exist in the Council with regards to the respect of a country’s sovereignty. This issue posed serious challenges for South Africa’s aim of promoting the African Agenda and also revealed inconsistencies in its foreign policy positions. South Africa had in the past stated that it did not believe in the use of aggressive military intervention methods to resolve conflicts and more often than that, ridiculed such actions. South Africa’s vote in favour of the resolution contradicted a number of central tenets of the country’s foreign policy. According to Moore, these tenets include:

Non-intervention in the domestic affairs of other states, (especially African states); a reticence to agree to the use of force in resolving international crises, especially in the absence of a cease-fire and host government approval; and, its recent (under former president, Thabo Mbeki) proclivity for obstructing UNSC resolutions aimed at military action in, or even strongly worded resolutions on, events in third countries not considered to be threats to international peace and security (Moore, 2011:1)

This move raised many questions as to why Tshwane opted to vote in favour of the resolution, instead of siding with its BRICS and IBSA counterparts, who abstained from voting.

South Africa’s decision to vote in favour of the resolution could be understood in the context of the AU’s slow footedness regarding the Libyan crisis and also the Arab League’s decision to suspend Libya. While the AU PSC had declared that there should be no military intervention in Libya, South Africa still took a decision to support the Resolution 1973. South African policy observers deduced that South Africa’s support of the resolution suggested a move away from Mandela’s human rights driven foreign policy. Months after the implementation of the resolution, South African government officials came out to say that the country regretted its decision. DIRCO’s Director-General, Jerry Matjila conceded that the country lacked clarity over how the resolution would be implemented at the time of vote and that the country regretted voting in favour of the resolution. The South African government stated that NATO had exceeded its mandate and that the process of enforcing a ‘no
fly-zone’ over Libya had to be restricted to the protection of civilians and not harm the very civilians it sought to protect. President Jacob Zuma condemned the killings of innocent civilians and noted that South Africa did not support the regime change in Libya and that the country still respected the sovereignty of countries (Mkokeli and Radebe in Business Day, 2011).

South Africa’s African Agenda has always sought to find African centred solutions for African conflicts. In 2011, as a response to the escalating Libyan Crisis, the AU PSC produced a roadmap which would seek to deal with the situation in Libya. However, the roadmap did not succeed as it was rejected by the Transitional National Council (TNC), a structure that represented the rebels in Libya. The road map was rejected primarily because it did not guarantee that Gaddafi would leave, and it failed to explicitly state that the departure of Gaddafi was its primary aim. The manner in which NATO undermined the AU’s efforts of dealing with the Libyan crisis angered many observers on the African continent.

Moore (2011:2) notes that there were two problems that were not dealt with sufficiently. “The first is the patent incapacity of the [AU] to launch credible military campaigns, especially those of the kind require to enforce a ‘no-fly zone’”. The second, is that the “two best-resourced regional bodies, ECOWAS and SADC, have no jurisdiction over Libya and would therefore have found it difficult to mount arguments in favour of involvement”. While many were anger by NATO’s intervention, it raised questions over the effectiveness of the AU. Many have labelled the AU as an institution where African political elites protect one another. Mhaka (2018) provides a convincing account to this by noting that the decision by African leaders to elect Abdel Fattah el-Sisi (a known human rights abuser) to the helm of the AU is “…not at all surprising for anyone who is familiar with the organisation’s history of protecting and even promoting Africa’s strongmen”. A common trend in African conflicts, is that the AU is more often than not on the opposing end of the conflict with the rebels, resulting in many failed diplomatic efforts aimed at resolving conflicts.
4.5.2.1 Côte d’Ivoire situation

As South Africa re-joined the Security Council in January 2011, the Côte d’Ivoire situation dominated the agenda of the Security Council. South Africa faced the difficult task of not repeating the same mistakes of its first tenure on the council. For South Africa, it was important for the country to take a stance that aimed to protect the civilians in Côte d’Ivoire. For the Council, given that many countries were due to hold elections during that year, its response to the electoral crisis in Côte d’Ivoire would have greater implications (Motsamai, 2011). It was expected that any decision made on the Côte d’Ivoire situation would subsequently set the tone for the other upcoming elections. President Laurent Gbagbo of Côte d’Ivoire refused to leave office after losing to opposition leader Alassane Ouattara in the 2010 presidential elections (Motsamai, 2011). In response to this, civilians in Côte d’Ivoire took to the streets calling for Gbagbo to vacate office. Gbagbo launched a series of violent attacks against innocent civilians in response to these demonstrations and a pronouncement by the UN that Ouattara was the legitimate President of Côte d’Ivoire (Naidu, 2012:32).

McGurk (2013:53) notes that the “International community responded in an unusual display of consensus by condemning the violence attacks against civilians and calling for Gbagbo to step down”. African regional organisations in the form of the AU and ECOWAS also supported the call. South Africa also supported this decision, but later changed its stance, and chose to take a neutral position, suggesting that the Côte d’Ivoire government should opt for a Government of National Unity (GNU). This move can be interpreted in two forms. First, that the country remained committed to the respect of countries sovereignty, but at the same time did not want to be seen as promoting the violations of human rights. On other hand, that the move by the country was inspired by its peaceful transition in 1994 and hence opting for a peaceful resolution of the conflict a GNU. The UNSC’s response to the situation was the adoption of Resolution 1967, with called for the deployment of an extra 2000 soldiers to assist the United Nations Operations in Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI) (United Nations, 2011). South Africa along with its BRICS counterparts pushed for amendments to the resolution, requesting for the removal of sections which stressed the ‘the need to seize heavy weapons’ from the Ivorian military. This position
demonstrated South Africa’s commitment to the respect of countries’ sovereignty and its stance of desisting from using coercive means. South Africa’s decisions were in line with its commitment to promoting the African Agenda. This is evidenced by its decision to stand by the AU position and taking a conciliatory approach to resolving conflicts.

4.6. Conclusion

This chapter has looked into South Africa’s role in promoting the African Agenda during its two terms on the UNSC. While it is true that the South Africa has made a number of controversial votes while on the UNSC, the country has also made significant contributions in advancing the African Agenda. The country has on several occasions allowed its foreign policy positions to be guided by the African consensus. These include its position on the situations in Sudan, Zimbabwe and Côte d’Ivoire. The country made significant strides in enhancing relations between the AU and UNSC during its Presidency on both terms. These efforts were in line with its declared African Agenda and it was clear that the country wanted to increase its role in peace and security initiatives on the continent. South Africa also improved its coordination with other African countries during its second term. The country stood firm in ensuring that African-centred solutions to African conflicts are found, ensuring lesser intervention form Western powers. South Africa’s position of siding with the AU and resorting to African-centred solutions can be seen as a key move by the country in pursuits of its African Agenda objective of strengthening the African Union. Also, South Africa’s position of resorting to African-centred solutions is also motivated by the fact that external intervention appeared to be undermining the continent’s efforts in pursuit of peace and security.

The final chapter will provide an analysis of key findings and conclusions of the previous chapters. It will also provide concluding remarks and recommendations.
CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1. Introduction

This study set out to determine whether South Africa has been a representative of Africa, through the advancement of the African Agenda, in the BRICS cooperative and the United Nations Security Council. It has carefully examined both rhetoric and actions of the South African government in terms of its representative role or being the self-appointed ‘voice of Africa’ in influential multilateral platforms. The study has examined South Africa’s role in both the BRICS cooperative and the UNSC to determine whether the country is indeed representing the continent in these influential global multilateral forums.

As stated at the outset, Tshwane sought to represent the continent through the advancement of its African Agenda in these multilateral forums. In both groupings, South Africa has attempted to represent the interests of the African continent, although at times its African positions, particularly in the UNSC, have often been met by widespread criticism. Tshwane has made great efforts in promoting the African Agenda, although its actions have at times been in conflict with democratic values and its foreign policy objectives. Equally, in some cases where the Republic chose to pursue its foreign policy objectives, these undermined its pursuit of promoting the African Agenda.

This chapter will reflect on the conclusions of the preceding chapters, and analyse the key findings and issues identified in these chapters. A key issue that has stood out in terms of South Africa’s representative role has been the need for balancing between competing interests, that is, its national interests and ‘the African’ interest and what that might be characterised as. The chapter will examine how South Africa has attempted to strike a balance between these competing interests. It will also attempt to explain the country’s behaviour in terms of its foreign policy positions. The
Chapter 1 introduced the study. Chapter 2 developed the conceptual framework of how South Africa defines the African Agenda and its pursuit thereof. This was then applied to the two case studies in Chapters 3 and 4. Chapter 2 also examined South Africa’s role as a representative of the continent. The chapter found that through the advancement of its own African Agenda, South Africa aims to transform Africa into a continent that is driven by ideals of democracy, progressive economic and infrastructural development, and political stability, peace and security. As noted in Chapter 2, “factors, including domestic needs and demands, critical events or trends in the external environment, the expectations of other governments, legal norms, general usage, and treaties shape foreign policy orientation, create role perceptions and place the state in a position whereby the government is expected to carry out certain roles” (Holsti, 1987:117). There is evidence to suggest that after South Africa became a democracy, there were expectations placed on South Africa, by African states, to represent its interests globally and this has shaped South Africa’s external policy. However, whilst there have been several proclamations made by South African statesmen and government officials of South Africa’s representative role, the country has not received any formal or official mandate from the continent to represent the continent’s needs abroad. Chapter 2 found that accordingly, representatives are duly elected and mandated. However, based on the analyses of the role approach, it was found that South Africa is a self-appointed representative of Africa in influential multilateral institutions in global affairs. With that said, despite the controversies behind South Africa being a representative, the chapter demonstrated that there has been a growing need for the continent to be represented in global affairs. South Africa has therefore taken it upon itself to pursue and promote the interests of the continent.

The overall study asked three important questions that would help determine whether or not South Africa is representing Africa in the BRICS cooperative and the UNSC. These questions were as follows:
• How and to what extent has South Africa promoted or put forward the issue of the African Agenda on the Agenda of the BRICS and the UNSC?
• How has South Africa’s decisions and actions in the BRICS and the UNSC reflected those of the African Agenda?
• Has South Africa’s representative role produced any visible results, in the form of resolutions or public policies committed to the principles behind the African agenda (African development, economic policy, and peace and security in Africa) in the BRICS and the UNSC, respectively.

On the first question, Chapter 3 attempted to investigate how and to what extent South Africa has promoted the African Agenda in the BRICS. Tshwane made it clear at the outset that it wanted to use its BRICS membership to advance the African Agenda (Landsberg and Moore,). In 2013, as hosts of the BRICS summit, Tshwane wasted no time in its pursuit of the African Agenda and “convened discussions at a parallel conference entitled ‘BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Development, Integration, and Industrialisation, which brought together African leaders and representatives of regional organisations such as NEPAD and the African Union” (Soulé-Kohndou, 2013:37). The South African government invited various African leaders from the AU and regional structures on the continent. This move was seen as Tshwane’s efforts to include the African Agenda onto the agenda of the BRICS and also legitimise its role as a representative of Africa within the grouping. The parallel conference also aimed at increasing and strengthening the engagement between Africa and the BRICS countries.

As noted in Chapter 3, South Africa used the conference to give the BRICS countries an opportunity to announce their intentions and to present opportunities for African states, particularly in the areas of trade and investment, as well as infrastructure development. This strategic move by the South African government was seen as an effort by the country to strengthen South-South relations, between Africa and the BRICS, which is a key objective of South Africa’s African Agenda. The BRICS also sought to do away with the exploitative relationship between Africa and the West. The BRICS sought to offer Africa an equal and mutually beneficial relationship rather than an unequal and sometimes exploitative relationship, characterised by
conditionalities and donations, represented in the relationship between Africa and the West. South Africa, during the 3rd BRICS Summit held in Durban, also proposed for the creation of a BRICS development bank, which would help finance infrastructure development projects in Africa (Soulé-Kohndou, 2013:38). This was a significant move in pursuit of the African Agenda given that African development was one of the key objectives of the African Agenda. Additionally, as hosts of the 10th BRICS summit in Johannesburg 2018, South Africa once again noted that it would put Africa at the centre of the BRICS agenda and this was demonstrated in the theme of the summit “BRICS in Africa: Collaboration for Inclusive Growth and Shared Prosperity in the 4th Industrial Revolution”. During this summit, the BRICS leaders once again reaffirmed their commitment and support towards African development and said:

We acknowledge the importance of infrastructure development and connectivity in Africa and recognise the strides made by the African Union to identify and address the continent’s infrastructure challenges, inter alia, through the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) and the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA). We support the importance of stimulating infrastructure investment on the basis of mutual benefit to support industrial development, job-creation, skills development, food and nutrition security and poverty eradication and sustainable development in Africa. We therefore reaffirm our support for sustainable infrastructure development in Africa, including addressing the infrastructure financing deficit.

The South African government can certainly be seen as making significant contributions towards promoting the African Agenda. While its inclusion into the BRICS grouping was met by widespread criticism on the continent and internationally, it is clear from the discussion in Chapter 3, that South Africa’s membership in the BRICS grouping provides a number of potential gains for both the country and the continent.

The country has positioned itself as an interlocutor of Africa, as problematic as that may be, in the BRICS grouping and its fellow BRICS counterparts have accepted it as one. This role, however, has proved to be replete with challenges because the Republic has had to balance between its own interests and those of the continent. Unlike its other BRICS counterparts, South Africa cannot escape its region. Virk in Adebajo and Virk (2018:465) notes that “India, China, and Russia are located in parts of the world where regionalism is not as potent or as well-developed a driving
force; while Brazil is able to play a role within BRICS ‘without having to obtain consensus from the region’”. South Africa has also on many occasions, through statements made by senior government officials, proclaimed that the country’s interests are tied to that of the continent. This is evident in its foreign policy proclamations and its pursuit of the African Agenda. While balancing the tensions of the African Agenda and its national interest has been a challenge, the country has made great strides in leveraging between these competing interests in the BRICS forum. As part of its representative role in the BRICS, South Africa has positioned itself as a gateway to Africa. As the only African country in the grouping, the country has claimed that it does not only speak for itself, but for the African continent as a whole.

In terms of the UNSC, Chapter 4 demonstrated that South Africa made significant strides in putting forward the African Agenda on the agenda of the UNSC during its two terms of the Security Council (2007-2008 and 2011-2012). During all its terms as President of the UNSC, South Africa successfully ensured that it strengthens cooperation between the AU and the UN. This was seen in the adoption of Security Council Resolution 2033, which called for the UNSC to strengthen its relations with African regional and sub-regional forums and the approval and implementation of the United Nations Secretary General’s report on enhancing relations between the UN and regional bodies. “The report addressed a variety of practical issues important to the AU’s ability to respond to crises, such as the division of responsibilities with the UN, coordination and consultation mechanisms, financing, conflict prevention and mediation, support of peace building, and post-conflict reconstruction” (McGurk, 2013:33).

The report also acknowledged the fact that the AU was familiar with the conflict situations on the continent and as such would be better suited to come up with better informed, peaceful responses and solutions to end the conflicts. Enhanced cooperation between the AU and the UN would assist the AU in terms of capacity, financial backing and operational support to deal with some of the situations on the continent. It would give the AU the ability to have a greater say in terms of the approach and methods of response. As discussed in Chapter 4, this AU-UN cooperation could hopefully ensure that the response to conflicts reflects African-
based solutions, minimising intervention from foreign actors. Furthermore, this cooperation could increase Africa’s ability to respond to conflicts and to a greater extent prevent these conflicts from happening. This was seen as a significant contribution towards a number of African Agenda objectives such as promoting North-South dialogue; ensuring that there is peaceful conflict resolution of wars and conflicts affecting the continent and strengthening the AU and its structures.

Despite these successes, it is important to note that South African permanent representatives to the UN could only do so much in promoting the Republic’s pursuit of advancing the African Agenda on the Council. While key resolutions and reports were passed, particularly on enhancing the AU-UN cooperation, compliance and implementation may prove challenging. For example, there is debate over whether or not African solidarity, that is protection of political leaders across the continent, would overshadow the AU’s commitment to advancing or protecting human rights in Africa. The AU is also known for its slow and sometimes split responses. As noted in Chapter 4, when it comes to decision–making, the AU is notoriously cumbersome and is slow to make pronouncements on its position on UNSC Resolutions. It was found that this is also caused by its failure to reach a unified position amongst its African member states. This weakness has resulted in South Africa making controversial votes in the UNSC. Another consequence of this slowness is that it often gives more power to the UNSC to act swiftly on situations in Africa.

In answering the second research question, South Africa made meaningful contributions and decisions in the BRICS that reflected its pursuit of the African Agenda. As noted in Chapter 3, South Africa was at the forefront of pushing for the establishment of the NDB and of a regional branch on the continent. The bank would help fund infrastructural projects on the continent. During negotiations for the creation of the NDB, South Africa pushed that the bank should prioritise African states and that it should widely focus on the continent’s infrastructural developments projects. Former South African Finance Minister, Nhlanhla Nene, noted that the bank would “support both public and private sector infrastructure and sustainable development projects; regional projects, provide technical assistant for the preparation and implementation of these projects and establish the Africa Regional Centre to be based in Johannesburg, strategically located to enable access by other African countries to the NDB” (Nene, 2015). South Africa’s decision to sign an
agreement for the establishment of the bank in 2014, signalled a serious commitment by the country towards infrastructural development. The opening of the African Regional Centre, a branch of the NDB, in 2017 was seen as a major African Agenda achievement for the country and the continent as the bank would provide funding for African infrastructural development projects on the continent.

Another key decision taken by the South African government was the signing of the African free-trade area. As discussed in Chapter 3, African leaders argued that the free-trade area would allow Africa to benefit from the BRICS inter-regional trade agreement and will increase South African collaboration and relations with the rest of the continent. These can be seen as successful contributions in advancing the African Agenda.

In terms of the UNSC, during its two tenures on the Council, particularly in its second term, South Africa made notable efforts in coordinating its foreign policy with the African consensus. This of course presented a number of challenges. The first challenge, as noted throughout the dissertation, is that reaching an African consensus has proved to be an extremely difficult task. This is seen in South Africa’s attempts at coordinating with its African counterparts on the Council and also with the AU position. During its two tenures, the South African government understood that the only way to achieve an African consensus was through the coordination or adoption of an AU position. This was the clearest way in which the South African could be seen to be representing the interests of the continent, and its aim of making the Security Council more transparent and consultative by advancing and tabling the concerns of relevant regional forums.

Another challenge has been South Africa’s attempts at balancing its own foreign policy goals with the AU position on issues. It was found that in some instances where South Africa wanted to pursue its own foreign policy objectives it sometimes came into conflict with the AU position. For example, in 2011, Tshwane voted in favour of Security Council Resolution 1973, which authorised a no-fly zone over Libya, while the AU had preferred a process of peaceful mediation and non-intervention. Again, Tshwane’s decision to request that SC Resolution 1769, which called for the extension of the UNAMID, included a request for the ICC to put off any request to prosecute then Sudanese President Omar-al-Bashir for 12 months came
into conflict with its foreign policy objective of promoting human rights. This is because Tshwane sided with the AU position that held that the prosecution of al-Bashir (a known human rights abuser) by the ICC should be put off. This move suggested that South Africa was representing the interests of the continent but at the same time protecting a human rights abuser.

South Africa has adopted a non-aggressive stance towards the resolution of conflicts on the African continent. This stance can be attributed to the success of its own negotiations pre-1994 which resulted in a peaceful transition of government. This strategy has been employed by the South African government inside and outside the UNSC in its pursuit of promoting peaceful resolutions to conflicts. Despite its controversial vote on the Libyan situation, South Africa has consistently pursued its stance of peaceful mediation, non-interference and a non-aggressive posture towards conflicts on the African conflict. The clearest example of this is seen in Tshwane’s actions on the situations in Zimbabwe, Cote d’Ivoire and Sudan where the country opted for mediated solutions on these conflicts. This non-aggressive and peaceful posture has been acceptable to the African consensus. The AU-UN cooperation has given the AU the ability to find African solutions to African problems. Some of the notable successes of South Africa’s chairmanship during its 2007-2008 tenure was the adoption of UNSC Resolution 1749 in March 2007, which called for the lifting of sanctions against the Rwandan government.

Also, during its stint as chairman of the Security Council, South Africa voted in favour of UNSC Resolution 1791 concerning Burundi’s situation. South Africa also used its term on the Council to focus on the Eritrea-Ethiopia conflict. The South African government expressed its willingness to place its focus on supporting the peace talks and the UN peacekeeping mission in the form of the (UNMEE (Kagwanja, 2009:52). Another conflict that was prioritised by the South African government was that of Somalia. The Council adopted Resolution (1744/2007) which authorised for an AU-Mission to be deployed in Somalia for a period of six months to assist with the peace processes and reconciliation there. These Resolutions adopted during South Africa’s tenure on the council significantly contributed to the country’s aim of ensuring that there is peaceful conflict resolution of wars and conflicts affecting the continent, which is a key objective of the African Agenda. South Africa has therefore successfully prioritised and put forward the African Agenda on the UNSC and the
BRICS cooperative; it has coordinated its policy positions, decision and actions with those of its African Agenda; and its commitment towards the advancement of the African Agenda has allowed the country to represent the continent’s interests in the BRICS and as a result it has produced tangible results.

However, with that said, South Africa’s behaviour and actions at times have sometimes contradicted its African Agenda objectives. It can be deduced that pursuing the African Agenda holistically can be extremely difficult. It was clear that South Africa, particularly in the UNSC, did not pursue an African Agenda in every decision taken. The country in some instances prioritised other objectives of the African Agenda over others. For example, coordinating with the AU position; strengthening North-South dialogue; strengthening the AU and regional structures and ensuring that there is peaceful resolutions of conflicts emerged as the most prioritised objectives of South Africa’s African Agenda, while the promotion of democracy on the continent and globally was often compromised in pursuit of these prioritised objectives. In the context of BRICS, South Africa also could not pursue all objectives of the African Agenda as a whole. This is in part due to the nature of the grouping and its agenda, which is more economically orientated. However, the country has been able to advance certain aspects of its African Agenda, such as promoting Africa’s socio-economic development, and seeking co-operation through various global platforms in support of Africa’s development.

5.3. Recommendations for future studies

While this study has only examined South Africa’s representative role in the BRICS and UNSC, further research can be done along the same lines to examine South Africa’s pursuit of the African Agenda and its representative role in another influential global forum such as the G20. Such a study will be essential as it will provide more information on the impact of the G20 on Africa’s economic policy and what South Africa’s contribution has been on the Grouping in terms of representing Africa’s economic interests.
Since this study was done within the qualitative research paradigm to explain South Africa’s role and actions, a quantitative study could be conducted to record the views of South African foreign policy makers and compare these with the decisions and voting trends of South Africa in the BRICS and the UNSC, respectively. Such a study will help reveal whether there is coherence in the country’s articulated policy and its actions.

Since this thesis was written during South Africa’s third term on the Security Council for 2019-2020, an interesting study could be a comparative analysis of South Africa’s voting decisions during its 2011-2012 term and 2019-2020 term. This study will help reveal whether South Africa’s is still pursuing its African Agenda or whether its voting patterns have changed.

5.4 Concluding remarks

This dissertation has demonstrated South Africa’s ambitions for Africa and its desire to be a representative of the continent on influential global forums. It has argued that while South Africa may want to simultaneously pursue its foreign policy goals along with the interests of the continent in platforms such as BRICS and the UNSC, this has turned out to be a difficult and ambitious task. This is because it is almost impossible to practically represent the interests of 54 nations. Another challenge is that the AU as a continental organisation fails to reach a unified position on certain issues is because of its division within the organisation. Through the analysis of its decisions and actions in two cases studies it became clear that South Africa’s pursuit of the African Agenda was also a strategic attempt by the country to increase its geopolitical influence and position itself as a continental leader in global affairs. This is more evident in its role in the BRICS. The country has positioned itself as a gateway to Africa. South Africa’s membership in the BRICS cooperative presents potential gains for the continent, but even more opportunities for the country itself. The country benefits from intra-BRICS trade and by virtue of being a BRICS member the country has increased its influence and image in global affairs. In this sense, South Africa is a less a champion of Africa as it is a champion of itself. More
charitably, it could be argued that by ‘representing’ Africa, even if this role is self-appointed, both South Africa and the continent are likely to benefit.
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