

South Africa, Europe and Africa: Building bridges across barriers?

Asmita Parshotam and Dr. Damien Helly¹

Key messages

South Africa's interests are distributed between i) forging political solidarity with the global South and the African Agenda, and ii) partnering with the EU, its Member States and other 'Western' actors.

Platforms such as the South Africa-EU Dialogue Facility can help foster a mature relationship through strong technical cooperation and transparency for development, providing both parties with the opportunity to strengthen partnerships at a diplomatic level, building from the bottom up.

At the European level, engagement on shared challenges and knowledge exchange is necessary for continued engagement with South Africa, as a strategic partner.

The conditions are in place for the EU, its member states and South Africa to lay down a building block, a bridge - if not an engine - for EU-AU relations.

Introduction

Following the European Union (EU) High Representative/Vice President (HP/VP) Federica Mogherini's visit to South Africa in February 2016 and the April 2016 AU-EU Commissions' College-to-College meeting in Addis, this paper aims to provide an understanding of current trends in EU-South Africa relations and their implication for Africa's integration process. This Briefing Note first looks at the main features of South Africa's foreign policy under President Zuma. It then provides an update on the EU-South Africa Strategic Partnership and, lastly, it focuses on the continental level and the interplay between the African Union (AU), South Africa and the EU.

1. South African foreign policy amidst economic slowdown

Recognised as one of the larger economic and political players on the continent and the only African country to share a Strategic Partnership with the EU, South Africa has, for two decades, assumed a leadership role for the collective African voice. However, the context of South Africa's current engagement

¹ The authors would like to thank their colleagues Andrew Sherriff, Faten Aggad, Anna Knoll and Sean Woolfrey for their guidance and useful contributions. The views expressed in this study are those of the authors only and should not be attributed to any other person or institution.

with the EU and Africa is currently under transition. On the tail of rising African powers such as Algeria, Nigeria, and Ethiopia (to name but a few), Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma assumed presidency of the AU Commission (AUC) in 2012, potentially increasing South Africa's ability to influence continental politics. South Africa's foreign policy has to combine its African Agenda, its membership of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, China, India and South Africa) grouping, speaking as one of the voices for the global South,² and its partnership with other actors like the EU and the United States. Where does South Africa position itself, and where does its foreign policy lie in a changing domestic political landscape?

1.1. Domestic politics and constraints: an uphill battle for South Africa

In transitioning from President Mbeki to President Zuma's administration, South Africa's foreign and domestic policies have undergone several changes. The 2008 financial crisis highlighted South Africa's socio-economic challenges: concerns over a lack of skilled labour, insufficient foreign direct investment (FDI) and difficulties in implementing policies to achieve economic growth have continued to plague the country in recent years.³ South Africa has also borne the brunt of an economic slowdown amongst its major trading partners owing to their prolonged austerity.⁴ The World Bank has forecast growth at less than 1% for 2016, and junk status for South African bonds⁵ looms on the horizon.⁶ Youth unemployment and access to quality education remains an ongoing challenge for South Africa's future prosperity. Some analysts see a disjuncture between how these domestic factors constrain South Africa's foreign policy objectives, particularly in respect of the more active role South Africa seeks to assume on the international stage.⁷ The rise of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) offers political rivalry to the ANC's rule: its leader, Julius Malema, is an outspoken critic of ANC policies and of Jacob Zuma. The EFF is also offering more radical solutions to South Africa's problems, which includes land redistribution without compensation and nationalisation of the mines- raising international concerns over these policies.⁸

The country's domestic politics have done little to address the concerns of international investors amidst corruption allegations and the sporadic December 2015 nomination of two Finance Ministers within one week. This unexpected change to the ministerial cabinet caused the Rand to plunge on global markets and raised concerns about increasing levels of nepotism within the government's executive branch. Moreover, alleged outside meddling within South Africa's executive branch and ministries continues⁹ and, with civilian frustrations mounting, the upcoming local elections could result in the ANC becoming a rural party that controls the country, but none of its major cities.¹⁰ Compounding this domestic upheaval has been the government's unpredictable approach to South Africa's foreign relations, as discussed below.

1.2. Foreign policy objectives: the search for an ambivalent balance?

On paper, South Africa's foreign policy appears well aligned with national interests underpinning its African Agenda,¹¹ and North-South and South-South dialogues seeking to combat poverty and the marginalisation of the global South.¹² In its 2011 White Paper on Foreign Policy, the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) identified South Africa's foreign policy priorities to include strengthening the

² According to the UNDP definition, the global South "refers to all developing countries primarily situated in the Southern hemisphere. "South-South cooperation is collaboration among developing countries in the political, economic, social, cultural, environmental and technical domains."

³ Bernstein, A. 2014. South Africa's Key Challenges: Tough Choices and New Directions.

⁴ Bernstein, A. Ibid.

⁵ "Junk status" refers to the grading of investment bonds below "BBB" by the rating agency, Standard & Poor.

⁶ Hart, Chris. Polity News article, March 2016.

⁷ <http://www.polity.org.za/article/chris-hart-nothing-can-prevent-sas-slide-to-junk-2016-03-16>

⁸ Alden, C. & Schoeman, M. 2013. South Africa in the company of giants: the search for leadership in a transforming global order. Bernstein, Alden and Schoeman find the 2012 National Development Plan does not account for South Africa's African agenda.

⁹ EFF website. March 2014. Malema allays business sector fears of EFF policies.

¹⁰ <http://www.economicfreedomfighters.org/malema-allays-business-sector-fears-of-eff-policies/>

¹¹ In reference to the Gupta family and their ties with the President. BBC. "The Guptas and their links to South Africa's Jacob Zuma." 17 March 2016. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-22513410>

¹² Major cities include: Pretoria, Johannesburg, and Port Elizabeth. Africa Confidential, 57(1). 8 January 2016. Political Earthquakes Ahead.

¹³ The African Agenda focuses on the AU, strengthening its institutions and bolstering Africa's unity and development

¹⁴ Landsberg, C. 2014. The Concentric Circles of South Africa's Foreign Policy under Jacob Zuma.

multilateral system, developing effective partnerships with the North, addressing socio-economic challenges facing the global South, and affording importance to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region and the wider continent by providing Africa with a voice within global affairs.¹³ However, South Africa's foreign policy remains constrained by its unresolved identity that straddles "Western" and "African" values, and domestic limitations on its resources and capabilities.¹⁴

Experts have observed South Africa's foreign policy portfolios' diversification (beyond DIRCO).¹⁵ For instance, local and provincial governments engage in foreign policy directly.¹⁶ The National Treasury coordinates development cooperation whilst DIRCO has only limited engagement with the technical aspects of development cooperation.¹⁷ Although steps are currently underway to address this (for example, the long-awaited creation of the South African Development Partnership Agency), South Africa's coordination of its trilateral development cooperation (TDC) continues to be the subject of ongoing debates.¹⁸

The most notable change has been South Africa's increasing allegiance with the BRICS grouping. A counterweight to Western political and economic hegemony, South Africa sees its involvement in BRICS as a way to strengthen its relations with non-traditional emerging economies and has increased its diplomatic and commercial relations accordingly: since becoming President in 2009, President Zuma has visited Russia more than any other country.¹⁹ Membership of BRICS also offers South Africa the opportunity to pursue its national interests:²⁰ targeting job creation is a focal point for its economic ties with China²¹ and South Africa is exploring the possibility of Russian-constructed nuclear energy stations to address its domestic energy supply crisis.²² However, it is questionable whether (i) South Africa's membership of BRICS comes at the price of its international credibility and (ii) BRICS is a suitable forum within which to raise African concerns as each BRICS member has its own regional agenda and geopolitical interests²³ and is facing unprecedented economic challenges of their own.

South Africa's decision-making in multilateral fora has, at times, also been inconsistent. Whilst voting in favour of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1973 to establish a no-fly zone over Libya did little to earn support from within the AU and BRICS, it did appease France, the United Kingdom and the United States.²⁴ Similarly, although South Africa's refusal to arrest Al-Bashir reinforced international perceptions of South Africa as a country veering away from "Western values", it did little damage to its image within Africa. If anything, its actions were positively received by African counterparts, who interpreted South Africa's actions as a defiance of Western pressure.²⁵ These examples illustrate the existing tensions within South Africa's foreign policy as an African state that straddles African/Southern and European/Western alliances.

¹³ Bohler-Muller, N. 2012. Nuanced Balancing Act: South Africa's National and International Interests and its "African Agenda".

¹⁴ Alden, C. & Schoeman, M. Ibid.

¹⁵ Alden, C. & Schoeman, M. Ibid.; Interview with South African consultant, 03 March 2016.

¹⁶ Interview with South African consultant, 03 March 2016. Other departments have also begun to play a much stronger role in international relations- for example, the Department of Health is known to have a very good international relations team that continues to keep these relationships going. See also Masters, L. 2014. Building Bridges? South African foreign policy and trilateral development cooperation.

¹⁷ Masters, L. Ibid.

¹⁸ The UN regards TDC "as a form of cooperation whereby donors or multilateral organisations provide development assistance to Southern government to execute projects/programmes with the aim of assisting other developing countries." Masters, L. Ibid.

¹⁹ Qobo, M. & Dube, M. 2015. South Africa's Foreign Economic Strategies in a Changing Global System.

²⁰ Landsberg, C. Ibid.

²¹ Zuma stresses on job-creation as new goal of China-SA ties. 21 February 2016. <http://thebricspost.com/zuma-stresses-on-job-creation-as-new-goal-of-china-sa-ties/#.Vvp-BJ95UN>

²² CNBC News Africa 16 March 2016. Russia confident of winning South Africa nuclear power bid. <http://www.cnbc.com/news/southern-africa/2016/03/16/russia-confident-of-winning-south-africa-nuclear-power-bid>

²³ Bohler-Muller, N. Ibid.

²⁴ Alden, C. & Schoeman, M. Ibid.

²⁵ Interview with South African researcher, 16 March 2016.

2. SA – EU foreign relations: a slow strategic deepening

South Africa's relationship with the EU grew in the immediate post-Apartheid era, giving rise to the Trade, Development and Cooperation Agreement (TDCA) of 2000 and the joint Strategic Partnership of 2007.²⁶ Despite ongoing bilateral engagements, South Africa's realignment of its political relationships has impacted relations with the EU. In recent years South Africa has become more outspoken in its engagement with the EU: President Zuma's non-attendance of the April 2014 EU-Africa Summit and South Africa's criticisms of the Common Agricultural Policy displays a less deferent and more confrontational South Africa.²⁷ The burning question is thus whether South Africa and the EU can forge a mutually beneficial relationship that caters for a transforming global order.

2.1. South Africa and the EU as global partners

Europe, too, faces a changing landscape. Russia is once more seen as a threat, growing challenges surround migration, and the recent terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels have elevated the already-burning issue of continental security to the forefront. The threat of a Greek exit from the euro last year, coupled with a possible Brexit in the near future, have shaken the core of the EU's foundation as an all-inclusive political and economic union. With right-wing nationalist political parties on the rise and countries battling domestic concerns such as youth unemployment, deflated salaries and stagnating economies, the EU faces an uphill battle to respond to citizens' concerns. The EU has also shifted its political focus from sub-Saharan Africa towards the Neighbourhood region of North Africa and the Sahel, with the aim of addressing the security threats within the region itself and towards Europe.²⁸ The EU has been increasingly caught in a mode of often ill-thought-out political firefighting, with European heads of government increasingly focusing on bilateral domestic solutions, rather than investing in sustainable Europe-wide approaches. The appetite for "more Europe" as a solution to global, continental and domestic challenges is limited, even though evidence that purely national solutions will work, is scant. With the increasingly inwards perspective of EU foreign politics, addressing domestic concerns is foremost priority for the EU and its Member States.

Across the various EU institutions there appears to be consensus that South Africa provides an important link between the EU and the global South.²⁹ South Africa has also participated in fora addressing issues of global concern, such as the transparency agenda within the G20,³⁰ finding common ground with the EU's stance at the Paris COP 21 Climate Change Conference, chairing the G77 group, as well as playing a role at the negotiations of the Sustainable Development Goals.³¹ As a country that straddles both the developed and developing world as a result of its middle income country (MIC) status, South Africa could engage in North and South dialogue processes at multilateral level, thereby contributing towards finding compromises between diverging principles and expectations present in multilateral fora.³² Viewed from the EU, the global partnership between the EU and South Africa is thus a win-win.³³

2.2. Bilateral political dialogue: a maturing conversation?

Political relations between the EU and South Africa have undergone a lack of political engagement in the last two years although cooperation continues at a bureaucratic level.³⁴ The EU's desire to reignite official relations with South Africa is most recently represented through HR/VP Mogherini's visit to South Africa in

²⁶ The TDCA is a free trade agreement addressing EU-SA cooperation on trade (access to goods and services), development, economic cooperation and political dialogue.

²⁷ Fioramonti, L. & Kotsopoulos, J. 2015. The Evolution of EU-South Africa Relations: What influence on Africa?

²⁸ In March 2011 the EU adopted its Strategy for Security and Development, which views development and security as mutually supportive, and that the challenges facing the Sahel requires a comprehensive, regional answer.

The European Union and the Sahel - factsheet http://eeas.europa.eu/factsheets/news/sahel-european-union-factsheet_en.htm

²⁹ Interviews with various EU officials, March 2016.

³⁰ Interview with South African consultant, 3 March 2016

³¹ Interview with EU official, 11 March 2016.

³² Masters, L. Ibid. Masters also refers to South Africa's bridge building within the framework of TDC and a North-South-South approach to development cooperation.

³³ Interview with EU officials on 3 and 6 March 2016.

³⁴ Interview with South African researcher, 16 March 2016.

February 2016. Compared to HR/VP Ashton's tenure, the depth and range of topics discussed during HR/VP Mogherini's visit indicates the possibility for collaboration on a wider range of issues. Her visit significantly differs from the routine (and expected) meetings held in the previous years.³⁵ Nonetheless, ideological differences present challenges towards forging a mature relationship: Mogherini voiced the EU's concern to move beyond the colonial past towards issues of future collaboration.³⁶ The idea of the EU as the imperialist power has also gained traction and remains a part of South Africa's foreign policy ideology,³⁷ which adds a further layer of complexity to this relationship.

The February 2016 State of the Nation address by President Zuma saw a softening of the anti-West rhetoric, and a nod to the EU as South Africa's largest trading partner.³⁸ Whether this symbolises a change in approach towards the EU for the immediate future remains to be seen. It could coincide with (i) diminishing Chinese economic growth; (ii) domestic pressure to mitigate against adverse economic effects from Chinese involvement within South Africa;³⁹ and (iii) a realisation on the part of South Africa of the potential economic gains that could ensue from its ties with the EU.

Effective technical and development cooperation offers a possible way for the relationship to continue and deepen on issues such as health, youth unemployment, culture and science and technology.⁴⁰ One notable mechanism is the Dialogue Facility, which provides an important meeting ground for collaboration and cooperation on developmental challenges facing South Africa. Designed to facilitate cooperation between the EU institutions, its Member States and South Africa, the 18 to 22 different dialogues fall within the framework of the Strategic Partnership.⁴¹ When it garners trust at technical level, cooperation contributes towards better political relations, thereby helping to drive a mature partnership. Based on such success, there are plans to increase the number of dialogues.

Youth unemployment and irregular economic migration are examples of challenges that impact both parties and present an opportunity for equal engagement and problem solving in a time of changing political landscapes. That development aid from the EU is widely valued by South African development practitioners⁴² illustrates the discrepancy between political dialogues and working relations. Yet development assistance from the EU institutions is less than a quarter of the amount it has been in the past, with the future of long-term bilateral assistance post 2020 in question, given the EU's commitment to graduation of MICs in its development policy.

2.3. Commercial relations: the cooperation imperative for growth and jobs

This section briefly examines two examples of recent engagement in order to understand the complexity underpinning EU-SA economic relations: the EU-SADC Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) negotiations and South Africa's changing approach towards bilateral investment treaties (BITs) and FDI.

In July 2014 the EU and South Africa (as a member of the SADC group) finalised the SADC-EU EPA, which will replace the trade provisions of the TDCA. Considered a success by the EU camp, the EPAs offers a step forward in hopefully normalising relations between the EU and Africa and transitioning from a

³⁵ Interview with South African official, 14 March 2016.

³⁶ Africa News Agency. The George Herald. 26 February 2016.

<http://www.georgeherald.com/news/News/International/158657/EU-foreign-minister-says-Africa-should-focus-on-staying-on-EU-agenda>

³⁷ Interview with South African consultant, 3 March 2016.

³⁸ President Zuma State of the Nation address, 11 February 2016. <http://www.gov.za/speeches/president-jacob-zuma-state-nation-address-2016-11-feb-2016-0000>

³⁹ Anthony, R., Tembe, P., Gull, O. 2015. South Africa's changing foreign policy in a multi-polar world. Centre for Chinese Studies, Stellenbosch University. For example, COSATU has challenged China on labour issues within the steel industry and the adverse impact of Chinese goods on the South African textile industry.

⁴⁰ On cultural relations between South Africa and the EU, see Fisher. R., 2014, South Africa Report, EU Preparatory Action on culture in EU external relations, <http://cultureinexternalrelations.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/South-Africa-country-report-05.03.2014.pdf>. see also PPMI, NCRE, NFG, Analysis of the perception of the EU and EU's policies abroad, http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/fpi/documents/showcases/eu_perceptions_study_final_report.pdf. Interview with South African consultant, 3 March 2016; Interview with EU official, 5 March 2016.

⁴¹ Interview with South African official, 14 March 2016.

⁴² Interview with EU official, 18 March 2016.

traditional donor-recipient relationship towards more equitable trade and commercial relations between the two continents.⁴³

The official narrative in SA is that the country's involvement in SADC-EU EPA negotiations arose from a combination of interests: the advantages of improved market access to the EU market (especially for agriculture) and the need to preserve SACU's coherence (given that South Africa had signed a TDCA on its own with the EU while the remaining SACU countries had signed an interim EPA).⁴⁴ Being partied to the EPA negotiations also provided South Africa with an opportunity to improve its own standing by securing important concessions relating to the exports of certain agricultural products, as under the TDCA South Africa had liberalised its agricultural markets more than the EU.⁴⁵ Lastly, South Africa was also able to leverage the experience it gained from negotiating the TDCA in securing an agreement with terms that some consider to be favourable towards the needs and concerns of its neighbours too.⁴⁶ From the EU perspective, South Africa's involvement was welcomed given its economic weight within the region,⁴⁷ and the SADC-EU EPA can also provide an opportunity for the EU to capitalise on improving and furthering its trading relations with South Africa owing to the recent drop in South Africa's trade with BRICS.⁴⁸ However, trade relations between the EU and South Africa are not without hurdles. Current challenges include sanitary and phytosanitary concerns (citrus black spot disease, guazatine usage) as well as standards setting for goods entering the European market.⁴⁹ Nonetheless, a long list of trade concerns between the EU and SA also reflects a maturing relationship, displaying an active trading relationship between the two blocs and emphasising the need to work together in addressing such issues.⁵⁰

South Africa is still regarded as the "gateway to Africa" for many European businesses wanting to gain a foothold in sub-Saharan Africa,⁵¹ and European investment remains one of the largest sources of FDI for South Africa.⁵² However, South Africa's recent unilateral cancellation of its BITs with some EU Member States⁵³ left the EU "feeling aggrieved".⁵⁴ South Africa has since replaced the BITs with the Promotion and Protection of Investment Act 22 of 2015 (Investment Act).⁵⁵ The Investment Act does not provide investors with recourse to international arbitration before having exhausted domestic remedies. It provides for "fair administrative treatment" instead of the broader "fair and equitable treatment" provisions of the BITs.⁵⁶ Nonetheless, foreign investors' concerns should also be weighted against the government's desire to implement legislation that addresses issues of public policy concerns (such as health and environment safety and social equality). This is particularly important where foreign investors have invoked BITs to

⁴³ Fabricius, P. Relations with the EU are going swell. October 2015. <http://www.iol.co.za/sundayindependent/relations-with-eu-are-going-swell-1924677>; The SADC-EU EPA is one of several EPAs entered into between the EU and African regional economic communities. <http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/press/index.cfm?id=1135>; Interview with EU official, 5 March 2016.

⁴⁴ ICTSD. Bridges Africa Magazine, 17 March 2014. Interview with Xavier Carim, Ambassador to the WTO. <http://www.ictsd.org/bridges-news/bridges-africa/news/bridges-africa-talks-to-xavier-carim-from-south-africa>; Interview with South African official, 19 April 2016.

Because of their membership in SACU, Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland were de facto parties to the reciprocal trade agreements that South Africa had with EU in terms of the TDCA. The SADC EPA includes Mozambique too. Murray-Evans, P. 2015. Regionalism and African Agency: negotiating an Economic Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the SADC-Minus.

⁴⁵ ICTSD. Interview with Xavier Carim, Ambassador to the WTO. Ibid.

⁴⁶ Interview with South African consultant, 3 March 2016.

⁴⁷ Interview with EU official, 3 March 2016.

⁴⁸ Fabricius, P. Ibid.

⁴⁹ Interview with South African official, 14 March 2016.

⁵⁰ Interview with South African official, 19 April 2016.

⁵¹ Interview with EU official, 3 March 2016.

⁵² <http://www.dirco.gov.za/foreign/saeubilateral/tdca.html>

⁵³ South Africa's termination of BITs with European countries included Belgium, Luxembourg, Spain, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland.

⁵⁴ Fabricius, P. Ibid.

⁵⁵ In terms of section 16, the Investment Act will become operational on a date determined by the President by proclamation in the Government Gazette.

⁵⁶ Woolfrey S. November 2013. South Africa's Promotion and Protection of Investment Bill <http://www.tralac.org/discussions/article/5345-south-africa-s-promotion-and-protection-of-investment-bill.html>; In terms of section 15(1) of the Investment Act, "Existing investments that were made under bilateral investment treaties will continue to be protected for the period and terms stipulated in the treaties."

protect their investments, regardless of the greater public good a policy measure is designed to achieve.⁵⁷ The South African government stated that the new Investment Act provides sufficient protection to foreign investors' rights through its Constitution, and will create a predictable business environment for potential investors.⁵⁸ It also appears that EU scepticism is waning, and there are plans to offer workshops within the confines of the next EU-SA summit to clarify the purpose and intention of the Investment Act.⁵⁹ Lastly, South Africa's new approach towards FDI could provide another avenue for collaboration on a more equal footing in the field of economic diplomacy, as the EU faces similar challenges in regulating state-investor dispute mechanisms within the confines of the TTIP Agreement with the United States.⁶⁰

3. A common African agenda?

Although much of the existing analysis describes South Africa's foreign policy as "ad hoc" or "without direction",⁶¹ the official message remains one of consistency between South Africa's African Agenda and its commitments to universal values such as human rights, rule of law, and transparency.⁶² South Africa views itself as a soft power leader and feels well positioned to voice African concerns at global platforms.⁶³ It would appear that *acceptance* amongst fellow African states is still something that South Africa is working towards attaining⁶⁴ and aligning itself more with African positions on international issues might offer South Africa a way towards achieving continental support. This offers a possible explanation as to why South Africa's foreign policy navigates a careful line between leadership and consultation.

Since her widely commented-upon election in 2012,⁶⁵ Dr. Dlamini Zuma has managed to develop an ambitious African Agenda with which the EU is aligned. Her term at the AUC resulted in more demanding African positions on the partnerships with the EU, in line with South Africa's pan-African visions.⁶⁶ Although South Africa and the EU share many common goals, they may also have different perspectives on AU funding, independence and their division of labour. Consequently, several contentious issues remain in the triangular South Africa-EU-AU relationship.

3.1. EU-SA-AU coordination: room for cooperation?

The EU and the AU cooperate across an array of issues ranging from enhanced political dialogue, peace and security, a twinning programme for the exchange of personnel at Commission levels, trade, and increased technical cooperation and coordination.⁶⁷ Such intense cooperation agenda and its prospects were discussed at the last College-to-College meeting held on 7 April 2016 in Addis Ababa.⁶⁸

⁵⁷ Woolfrey, S. November 2013. Ibid. See also Minister Rob Davies speech, 17 November 2015. Debate on the Protection of Investment Bill, 2015 <http://www.gov.za/speeches/minister-rob-davies-debate-protection-investment-bill-2015-17-nov-2015-0000>

⁵⁸ Minister Rob Davies. Ibid.

⁵⁹ Interview with South African official, 19 April 2016

⁶⁰ Interview with South African official, 19 April 2016

⁶¹ Helly, D. 2012. The EU-SA Strategic Partnership: Changing Gear? European Strategic Partnership Observatory.

⁶² Interview with South African official, 14 March 2016; Interview with AU official, 11 March 2016

⁶³ Interview with AU official, 11 March 2016

⁶⁴ Alden, C. & Schoeman, M. Ibid.

⁶⁵ Institute for Security Studies (ISS Africa), 18th AU summit elections at the African Union Commission, <https://www.issafrica.org/futures/other-publications/18th-au-summit-elections-at-the-african-union-commission>

⁶⁶ Opening remarks by H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma on the Occasion of the 8th AUC-EC College to College Meeting. 7 April 2016. http://au.int/en/sites/default/files/speeches/27525-sp-auc_chairpersons_opening_remarks_8th_auc-ec_college-to-college_-_7_april_2016.pdf

⁶⁷ Helly, D. et al. ECDPM. March 2014. The Implementation of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy: Rebuilding Confidence and Commitments, Policy Department Study for the DG for External Policies of the Union, EXPO/B/AFET/2013/42.

⁶⁸ Joint Communiqué between the AUC and the EC at their 8th College to College Meeting. 7 April 2016. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-16-1301_en.htm

3.2. Differences in perspectives?

By providing a large percentage of the AU programmes' budget, the EU and its Member States converge with South Africa in supporting the AU's Agenda 2063 which, in the long term, includes working towards the AU's financial self-sustainability. Whilst the EU might encourage the AU working towards financial independence, the reality remains that many projects remain funded primarily by contributions from EU Member States and EU budget. This also initially raised concern on the joint character and ownership over programmes such as the Pan African Programme, despite EU efforts to consult widely and even informally with African partners.⁶⁹ Diverging interpretations and practices of ownership and EU visibility over financing show a tussle for the AUC between maintaining autonomy over continental decisions and projects (alongside the South African vision for the organisation), whilst simultaneously lacking the financial capabilities to implement such projects independently.⁷⁰ Moreover, the involvement of some EU Member States in the electoral process of the AUC Chairperson in 2012 was not always appreciated on the African side, potentially heightening Anglophone and Francophone tensions on the continent.⁷¹

Peace and security, governance and international criminal law provide platforms for EU-AU-South African cooperation and dialogue. As an illustration of cooperation, under the principles of universal jurisdiction, the trial of former Chadian leader Hissène Habré is the first African-led trial of an African leader, constituted within the confines of the Extraordinary African Chambers, a body of the AU.⁷² With financial support from the EU and AU, such AU sanctioned courts of justice could present an opportunity for Africa to resolve its own human rights violations and war crime allegations.⁷³ As demonstrated in Lesotho⁷⁴ and Burkina Faso,⁷⁵ the AU,⁷⁶ EU and South Africa⁷⁷ have all undertaken coordinated efforts to work closely with all political parties involved in situations of unrest and move towards constitutional processes.

Burundi offers an example where South Africa has successfully balanced its African Agenda with its Western relationships and received positive reception for its involvement in mediation efforts. Its re-election to serve on the Peace and Security Council (PSC) within the AU is an indication that, at an institutional level, there is some acceptance for South Africa's role in conflict prevention and resolution on the continent.⁷⁸ South Africa's engagement with the EU in discussions on Burundi was also seen as a necessary step towards ensuring synchronicity between EU and South African approaches towards the conflict and within the wider continental efforts.⁷⁹

However, the EU and South Africa also have had diverging approaches towards certain continental conflicts, as illustrated by the Cote d'Ivoire and the Central African Republic (CAR) conflicts (not to mention Libya in 2011). The South African government's announcement to withdraw its military troops from the CAR in April 2013 came amidst the death of its troops in the civil war,⁸⁰ and strong political backlash from

⁶⁹ Helly, D. et al. Ibid.

⁷⁰ On 7 April 2016 AUC Chairwoman Dlamini Zuma emphasised the danger of binding agreements with the EU that would be in contradiction to what Africans think is necessary to diversify their economies. Opening remarks by H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma on the Occasion of the 8th AUC-EC College to College Meeting. Ibid.

⁷¹ Interview with AU official, 11 March 2016.

⁷² Louw-Vaudran, L. 5 August 2015. Will Hissene Habre receive a fair trial? <https://www.issafrica.org/iss-today/will-hissene-habre-receive-a-fair-trial>

⁷³ Louw-Vaudran, L. Ibid.

⁷⁴ Statement by the Government of South Africa on the unfolding situation in Lesotho, 19 June 2014 <http://www.gov.za/government-media-statement-unfolding-situation-lesotho>

⁷⁵ Statement by the Government of South Africa on the situation in Burkina Faso. 31 October 2014. <http://www.dfa.gov.za/docs/2014/burk1031.html>

⁷⁶ AU Peace and Security Council. 29 April 2014. Press statement of the 432nd meeting on unconstitutional changes of governments and popular uprisings in Africa <http://www.peaceau.org/en/article/press-statement-of-the-432nd-meeting-on-unconstitutional-changes-of-governments-and-popular-uprisings-in-africa>

⁷⁷ European Union External Action (EEAS). 7 November 2014. http://eeas.europa.eu/statements-eeas/2014/141107_02_en.htm

European Union External Action (EEAS). Statement of the spokesperson on the situation in Lesotho. 03 June 2015. http://eeas.europa.eu/statements-eeas/2015/150603_01_en.htm

⁷⁸ Interview with South African researcher, 16 March 2016.

⁷⁹ Interview with South African official, 14 March 2016.

⁸⁰ Hengari, T. April 2013. South Africa after the Central African Republic: saving the African agenda. <http://www.saiia.org.za/opinion-analysis/south-africa-after-the-central-african-republic-saving-the-african-agenda>

its African peers for its initial involvement within the war-torn country.⁸¹ South Africa's involvement was worsened by the fact that its presence was not politically sanctioned by the UN or AU, and was based on a bilateral agreement alone.⁸² The EU's involvement in CAR took the form of a humanitarian assistance programme in coordination with partner organisations and providing temporary military support mandated by UNSC Resolution 2134.⁸³ In Cote d'Ivoire South Africa also faced criticisms for adopting an ambivalent position on the disputed presidential election results in November 2011, compared to the AU, EU and UN's firm response in explicitly supporting Ouattara's electoral victory.⁸⁴

4. Conclusion

At first glance, relations between the EU and South Africa have probably enjoyed less status and time from the South African side in the last 3 years. A reorientation of foreign policy away from the West has seen South Africa simultaneously nurture relations within BRICS and the global South instead. However, recent trends suggest that in times of commodity crisis and economic slow down amongst major investors and partners such as China, a stronger partnership with those tied to socio-economic benefits matters the most. As such, South Africa remains interested in increasing its engagement with the EU and its Member States on matters relating to trade (as demonstrated by the EPA), joint political interests in Africa (on peace and security and governance), and addressing common global challenges such as climate change and development goals. Further investment and engagement with the EU could also present long-term opportunities towards addressing the country's domestic challenges. With impending local elections and internal divisions within the ANC party mounting, South Africa will need strong economic gains from abroad to counteract the instability that could ensue from domestic political turmoil.

As for the South Africa-EU common African Agenda and beyond commonalities on the global level, room for improvement lies in closing the gap between "partnership and ownership", reducing the AU's financial dependency on the EU, and also forging more equitable and therefore more mature relations. The coming years will hopefully provide indications as to whether the cooperation agenda that both the SA and the EU could jointly support will deliver concrete economic and political gains. If the Strategic Partnership is to mature and grow in the coming years, the EU family should engage on a level playing field, whilst South Africa could also work towards developing a political narrative that encourages engagement with the EU.

Political movements and shifting allegiances both within the EU and its Member States, and South Africa will have to play a determining role for this to happen. The conditions are in place for both parties to play within a global arena on the African continent, working beyond and with their differences and cooperating on areas of mutual interest and concern. This will provide the greatest stepping-stone towards a maturing and equitable relationship; a building block and a bridge - if not an engine - for robust EU-AU relations.

⁸¹ Bello, O. April 2013 Resource geopolitics fuelling external rivalry in the CAR. <http://www.saiia.org.za/opinion-analysis/resource-geopolitics-fuelling-external-rivalry-in-the-car>

⁸² Hengari, T. Ibid.

⁸³ European Union External Action (EEAS). EU reinforces its support for the Central African Republic. 17 March 2014. http://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/un_geneva/press_corner/all_news/news/2014/20140317_car_en.htm. The EU would eventually hand over its military support to MISCA (the AU-led operation) or to a UN peacekeeping mission.

⁸⁴ Motsamai, D. January 2011. The Importance of South Africa's Position on the Ivorian Political Crisis. <https://www.issafrica.org/iss-today/the-importance-of-south-africas-position-on-the-ivorian-political-crisis>

Bibliography

- Alden, C. & Schoeman, M. 2013. South Africa in the company of giants: the search for leadership in a transforming global order. *International Affairs*, 89(1): 111-129.
- Anthony, R., Tembe, P., Gull, O. 2015. South Africa's changing foreign policy in a multi-polar world. Centre for Chinese Studies, Stellenbosch University.
- Bernstein, A. 2014. South Africa's Key Challenges: Tough Choices and New Directions. *The Annals of the American Academy*: 20-47.
- Bello, O. April 2013 Resource geopolitics fuelling external rivalry in the CAR. South African Institute of International Affairs. <http://www.saiia.org.za/opinion-analysis/resource-geopolitics-fuelling-external-rivalry-in-the-car>
- Bohler-Muller, N. 2012. Nuanced Balancing Act: South Africa's National and International Interests and its "African Agenda." South African Institute of International Affairs. Occasional Paper No. 120.
- Department of International Relations and Cooperation. Trade, Development and Cooperation Agreement. <http://www.dirco.gov.za/foreign/saeubilateral/tdca.html>
- The European Union and the Sahel - factsheet http://eeas.europa.eu/factsheets/news/sahel-european-union-factsheet_en.htm
- Fabricius, P. Relations with the EU are going swell. October 2015. <http://www.iol.co.za/sundayindependent/relations-with-eu-are-going-swell-1924677>
- Fioramonti, L. & Kotsopoulos, J. 2015. The Evolution of EU-South Africa Relations: What influence on Africa? *South African Journal of International Affairs*, 22(4): 463-478.
- Fisher, R., 2014. South Africa Report, EU Preparatory Action on culture in EU external relations. <http://cultureinexternalrelations.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/South-Africa-country-report-05.03.2014.pdf>.
- Hart, Chris. Polity News article, March 2016. <http://www.polity.org.za/article/chris-hart-nothing-can-prevent-sas-slide-to-junk-2016-03-16>
- Hengari, T. April 2013. South Africa after the Central African Republic: saving the African agenda. South African Institute of International Affairs. <http://www.saiia.org.za/opinion-analysis/south-africa-after-the-central-african-republic-saving-the-african-agenda>
- Helly, D. 2012. The EU-SA Strategic Partnership: Changing Gear? European Strategic Partnership Observatory, Policy Brief No. 7.
- Helly, D. et al. ECDPM. March 2014. The Implementation of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy: Rebuilding Confidence and Commitments, Policy Department Study for the DG for External Policies of the Union, EXPO/B/AFET/2013/42.
- ICTSD. Bridges Africa Magazine, 17 March 2014. Interview with Xavier Carim, Ambassador to the WTO. <http://www.ictsd.org/bridges-news/bridges-africa/news/bridges-africa-talks-to-xavier-carim-from-south-africa>
- Institute for Security Studies (ISS Africa). 18th AU summit elections at the African Union Commission, <https://www.issafrica.org/futures/other-publications/18th-au-summit-elections-at-the-african-union-commission>
- Joint Communiqué between the AUC and the EC at their 8th College to College Meeting. 7 April 2016. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-16-1301_en.htm
- Landsberg, C. 2014. The Concentric Circles of South Africa's Foreign Policy under Jacob Zuma. *India Quarterly*, 70(2): 153-172.
- Louw-Vaudran, L. 5 August 2015. Will Hissene Habre receive a fair trial? Institute for Security Studies. <https://www.issafrica.org/iss-today/will-hissene-habre-receive-a-fair-trial>
- Masters, L. 2014. Building Bridges? South African foreign policy and trilateral development cooperation. *South African Journal of International Affairs*, 21 (2), 177-191.
- Minister Rob Davies speech, 17 November 2015. Debate on the Protection of Investment Bill, 2015 <http://www.gov.za/speeches/minister-rob-davies-debate-protection-investment-bill-2015-17-nov-2015-0000>

- Motsamai, D. January 2011. The Importance of South Africa's Position on the Ivorian Political Crisis. Institute of Security Studies. <https://www.issafrica.org/iss-today/the-importance-of-south-africas-position-on-the-ivorian-political-crisis>
- Murray-Evans, P. 2015. Regionalism and African Agency: negotiating an Economic Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the SADC-Minus. *Third World Quarterly*, 36(10): 1845-1865.
- Opening remarks by H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma on the Occasion of the 8th AUC-EC College to College Meeting. 7 April 2016. http://au.int/en/sites/default/files/speeches/27525-sp-auc_chairpersons_opening_remarks_8th_auc-ec_college-to-college_-_7_april_2016.pdf
- President Zuma State of the Nation address, 11 February 2016. <http://www.gov.za/speeches/president-jacob-zuma-state-nation-address-2016-11-feb-2016-0000>
- Qobo, M. & Dube, M. 2015. South Africa's Foreign Economic Strategies in a Changing Global System. *South African Journal of International Affairs*, 22(2): 145-164.
- Woolfrey S. November 2013. South Africa's Promotion and Protection of Investment Bill. Trade Law Centre (TRALAC). <http://www.tralac.org/discussions/article/5345-south-africa-s-promotion-and-protection-of-investment-bill.html>
- Africa Confidential, 57(1). 8 January 2016. Political Earthquakes Ahead. http://www.africa-confidential.com/article-preview/id/11413/Political_earthquakes_ahead
- Africa News Agency. The George Herald. 26 February 2016. *EU foreign minister says Africa should focus on staying on EU agenda*. <http://www.georgeherald.com/news/News/International/158657/EU-foreign-minister-says-Africa-should-focus-on-staying-on-EU-agenda>
- BBC. *The Guptas and their links to South Africa's Jacob Zuma*. 17 March 2016. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-22513410>
- The BRICS Post. 21 February 2016. *Zuma stresses on job-creation as new goal of China-SA ties*. <http://thebricspost.com/zuma-stresses-on-job-creation-as-new-goal-of-china-sa-ties/#.Vvp-BJ95UN>
- CNBC News Africa 16 March 2016. *Russia confident of winning South Africa nuclear power bid*. <http://www.cnbcafrica.com/news/southern-africa/2016/03/16/russia-confident-of-winning-south-africa-nuclear-power-bid>
- EFF website. March 2014. Malema allays business sector fears of EFF policies. <http://www.economicfreedomfighters.org/malema-allays-business-sector-fears-of-eff-policies/>
- AU Peace and Security Council. 29 April 2014. Press statement of the 432nd meeting on unconstitutional changes of governments and popular uprisings in Africa <http://www.peaceau.org/en/article/press-statement-of-the-432nd-meeting-on-unconstitutional-changes-of-governments-and-popular-uprisings-in-africa>
- European Union External Action (EEAS). 7 November 2014. http://eeas.europa.eu/statements-eeas/2014/141107_02_en.htm
- European Union External Action (EEAS). Statement of the spokesperson on the situation in Lesotho. 03 June 2015. http://eeas.europa.eu/statements-eeas/2015/150603_01_en.htm
- European Union External Action (EEAS). EU reinforces its support for the Central African Republic. 17 March 2014. http://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/un_geneva/press_corner/all_news/news/2014/20140317_car_en.htm
- PPMI, NCRE, NFG, 2015. Analysis of the perception of the EU and EU's policies abroad. http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/fpi/documents/showcases/eu_perceptions_study_final_report.pdf
- Statement by the Government of South Africa on the unfolding situation in Lesotho, 19 June 2014 <http://www.gov.za/government-media-statement-unfolding-situation-lesotho>
- Statement by the Government of South Africa on the situation in Burkina Faso. 31 October 2014. <http://www.dfa.gov.za/docs/2014/burk1031.html>

ECDPM Briefing Notes

ECDPM Briefing Notes present policy findings and advice, prepared and disseminated by Centre staff in response to specific requests by its partners. The aim is to stimulate broader reflection and debate on key policy questions relating to EU external action, with a focus on relations with countries in the South.

This publication benefits from structural support by ECDPM's following partners: The Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Luxemburg, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, Austria and the United Kingdom.

info@ecdpm.org
www.ecdpm.org
KvK 41077447

HEAD OFFICE
SIÈGE
Onze Lieve Vrouweplein 21
6211 HE Maastricht
The Netherlands *Pays Bas*
Tel +31 (0)43 350 29 00
Fax +31 (0)43 350 29 02

BRUSSELS OFFICE
BUREAU DE BRUXELLES
Rue Archimède 5
1000 Brussels *Bruxelles*
Belgium *Belgique*
Tel +32 (0)2 237 43 10
Fax +32 (0)2 237 43 19

