The Evolution of South Africa's Democracy Promotion in Africa: From Idealism to Pragmatism

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Abstract: *South Africa is an emerging power with fairly strong democratic institutions that were crafted during the transition from minority to majority rule twenty years ago. How has South Africa used its position and power to promote democracy in Africa? Against the backdrop of debates on democracy promotion by emerging powers, this article probes attempts by successive post-apartheid governments to promote democracy in Africa. We argue that although democracy promotion featured prominently in South Africa's policy toward Africa in the immediate post-apartheid period under Nelson Mandela, the administrations of Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma faltered in advancing democratic norms. This is largely because South Africa has confronted pressures to maximize pragmatic national interests, which have compromised a democratic ethos in a continental environment where these values have yet to find steady footing.*

Introduction

For the past 20 years, the promotion of democracy, human rights and good governance in Africa has featured in South Africa's foreign policy. Since the successful transition from minority to majority rule benefitted from global pressures for democratization and human rights, post-apartheid governments have grappled with fostering democracy in Africa to contribute to peace, stability and prosperity. In principle, successive administrations have tried to pursue democratic governance in their African engagements, but there have been tremendous obstacles to realizing these principles. These difficulties have reflected competing priorities in South Africa's foreign policy and differences in the styles and personalities of the leaders in power. The ability of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) to advance democracy in Africa has been hampered largely by its enduring liberation ethos, policy divisions about the value of these efforts, and long-standing alliance commitments in Africa.

This article probes the experiences of Nelson Mandela (1994-1999), Thabo Mbeki (1999-2008) and Jacob Zuma (2009-present) in democracy promotion in Africa in the face of domestic constraints and global expectations. Through a review of government policy documents and academic analyses of South African foreign policy, we argue that although the Mandela Administration set the moral tone of infusing democratic values in its international affairs, this short-lived period was succeeded by administrations that have focused on pragmatic objectives with tenuous links to democratic objectives. Overall, despite heightened expectations about its democratic transition, South Africa has accumulated a disappointing record on democracy promotion because its leaders have prevaricated on democracy building and squandered the opportunity to lead on democratic values.

In the first section, we place South Africa's faltering democracy promotion efforts in Africa in the context of broad debates about democracy promotion by emerging powers. [A2]The second section contextualises the analysis by reflecting on the sources of and constraints to South Africa's democracy promotion. The third section highlights critical moments in the three administrations to reveal distinctive policy postures toward fostering democracy in Africa. We conclude with a reflection on possible future trends in light of the record of the past two decades.

Democracy[A3] promotion in South Africa's foreign policy

After South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994, the ANC declared its commitment to the promotion of human rights, democracy and good governance in Africa for two reasons. First, the ANC had framed its political struggle against apartheid as a campaign against the suppression of human rights.

Writing on the eve of the elections, Mandela stated that the new South African government would 'not be indifferent to the rights of others', declaring that 'human rights will be the light that guides our foreign affairs' (Mandela 1993, 88). Mandela subsequently echoed these views at the UN General Assembly, where he urged 'the empowerment of the ordinary people of our world freely to determine their destiny, unhindered by tyrants and dictators' (Landsberg 2000, 107; Barber 2004). In a December 1994 foreign policy document, the ANC reiterated South Africa's resolve to remain a vanguard of the global campaign against tyranny and discrimination because 'just and lasting solutions to the problems of the world can only come through the promotion of democracy worldwide' (ANC 1994[A4]).

Second, South Africa sought to promote democracy and human rights because these principles dovetailed with its foreign policy objectives to safeguard its security, stability and prosperity. The new South Africa tried to distinguish itself from the past by embracing a political culture that privileged diversity, tolerance, social justice and respect for human rights. For the new ANC leadership, nurturing and preserving these values was important to reinforce its emergence as a responsible international actor (Department of International Relations and Cooperation 2011, 10). In addition, the leadership saw democracy promotion as an important element in the restoration of stability and progress throughout Africa. As Mandela warned, South Africa 'could fall victim to the forces that have brought ruin' to various parts of Africa without investing in Africa's regeneration. Africa's transformation (a policy that Thabo Mbeki later articulated as the African Renaissance), hinged on the lesson 'that accountable government is good government' (Mandela 1993, 88). After Mandela left power in 1999, Mbeki and Zuma continued to invoke the primacy of human rights and the advancement of democracy (Geldenhuys 2012, 32).

Despite these commitments, post-apartheid governments confronted problems in translating them into effective foreign policies. In 1997 the ANC acknowledged the difficulties involved in navigating the global scene on the basis of a principled and ethical foreign policy (ANC 1997). Among the key constraints were domestic pressures, a complex African regional environment and the challenge of navigating between the claims of liberal internationalism and Third World solidarity.

Domestic constraints on foreign policy
Addressing the historical legacies of inequities in the provision of basic needs and services to the majority of the population has been the most dominant factor in South Africa since 1994[A5]. As many analysts have pointed out, the ANC government inherited a weak economic and social base, characterized by gross inequalities (Alden and Le Pere 2009[A6], 145-169; Graham 2012, 405-203). Thus, successive administrations have focused on how economic diplomacy [A7]could contribute to the domestic needs of socioeconomic transformation. Over the years, domestic expectations have also influenced South Africa's aspirations to promote democracy and human rights abroad. South African policymakers have been faced with the dilemma of promoting commercial interests in a competitive world without conferring legitimacy to undemocratic states. For example, throughout Africa, South African companies have been accused of engaging in business activities that undermine the country's diplomatic priorities (Alden and Soko 2005, 367-392).

Kagwanja (2009, 7-8) has identified two ideological camps that have competed to influence [A8]South Africa's domestic and foreign policies. The first camp is what he calls ANC 'liberation diplomats' made up of idealists with strong pan-African and liberal impulses. Although quite small, this group was influential during the presidencies of Mandela and Mbeki. The second camp is made up of diverse groups that share the view that South Africa's foreign policy should advance economic interests rather than grand political ideals. This group has emphasized the need to address widespread poverty and social exclusion instead of expending meagre resources on Africa's regeneration. This view is shared by radical, socialist and populist [A9]elements in the ANC and also by the conservative segments in the business sector. As Marthoz observes, 'the failure of successive ANC administrations to profoundly transform South Africa and uplift its black majority from poverty…[has contributed to reinforcing support for a] "realistic" and "pragmatist" foreign policy where economic necessity and developmental interests

inevitably trump idealistic values' (2012, 3). As we argue below, the shift from a principled and ethical diplomacy to one defined more by domestic development concerns began during Mandela's presidency and has become more pronounced in the current Zuma Administration.

The complexity of the African environment
Since 1994, successive administrations have prioritized Africa because of the view that Africa's stability and development is central to South Africa's economic development, national security and global ambitions (Sidiripolous and Hughes 2004, 61-62). Styled as the African Renaissance, this policy hinged partly on African commitments to democracy, human rights, and good governance (Habib 2009, 143-59; Geldenhuys 2012, 33). Under Zuma, the idea of the African agenda replaced the African Renaissance. The African agenda 'seeks to promote peace and security on the continent, strengthen the pursuit of good governance and democracy, deepen regional integration, develop skills and build capacity within the organs of the [African Union], and advance Africa's development agenda' (Geldenhuys 2012, 33).

However, South Africa's bid to transform the political landscape in Africa has faced numerous difficulties, particularly resistance from authoritarian and anti-democratic regimes. Cloaking themselves [A10]in the norms of sovereignty, non-interference and African solidarity, many African states have been reluctant to be lectured by South Africa, which they regard as the 'new kid on the block[A11].' Countries such as Angola, Nigeria and Zimbabwe have been apprehensive about Pretoria's leadership role in Africa; moreover, these countries harbour their own aspirations for regional or continental leadership (Alden and Le Pere 2009, 145-169; Bischoff 2003, 183-201). South Africa's ability to promote democracy in Africa has been equally circumscribed by the influence of external actors in Africa. For example, South Africa has often accused France of undermining its diplomacy in countries such as the Central African Republic (CAR) and Cote d'Ivoire. In addition, although offering new opportunities for development, the economic roles of new powers such as China and India inhibit South Africa's policies in Africa[A12] (Kagwanja 2009, 28-29).

Liberal internationalism versus Third World solidarity
The contradictions surrounding the ANC as the ruling party of a modern democratic state, on the one hand, and a former liberation movement beholden to liberation ethos, on the other, have compromised South Africa's efforts to promote democracy in Africa. In power, the ANC has exhibited a dual identity: invoking both the modernist values of liberalism and human rights and its global South orientation. The liberal internationalist tradition privileges democracy and human rights while the tradition of solidarity with the Third World is suspicious of any policy that undermines sovereignty and independence. Marthoz has captured this tension: 'South Africa's foreign policy doctrine reflects a complicated quest for identity after decades of wrenching apartheid policies and centuries of Western colonization, and expresses the tension between two major ingredients of the anti-apartheid struggle: democracy and human rights, on the one hand, and anti-imperialism and South-South solidarity, on the other' (2012, 2). To demonstrate the significance of South-South cooperation in its foreign policy, South Africa acceded to the Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) between 1998 and 2001 and acted as host of the September 1998 NAM summit in Durban (Cooper 1998, 717).

Mandela's brief experiment with liberal idealism in Africa, 1994-1999
Nelson Mandela's presidency was defined primarily by the objective of reconstructing the identity of South Africa in the image of a liberal democracy. The democratic ideals of the new South African state paved the way for Mandela's quest to influence the political behaviour of its African neighbours. However, these democratic impulses soon ran against the ANC's Pan-African allegiances, strong resistance from African states and the proliferation of South African commercial and business interests in Africa. These competing pressures on policy, in turn, emboldened the pragmatic voices at the expense of moralistic positions on the promotion of democracy in Africa. According to Evans, under Mandela,

'sharp divisions over the direction of foreign policy pitted pragmatists who sought to anchor South African policies closely to nationally-defined objectives against the 'solidarists' who sought an avowedly normative stance where justice, democracy, and human rights lay at the heart of policy' (1996 263).

The reluctance by the ANC to distance itself from its liberation allies such as Cuba, Libya, Iran and North Korea severely compromised democracy promotion efforts. In southern Africa, Mandela faced resistance from Angola and Zimbabwe, which were averse to the values of inclusive politics that underpinned Mandela's doctrine in Africa (Landsberg 2000, 109-111; Kraxberger and McClaughry 2013, 15-16). South Africa's refusal to join other Southern African Development Community (SADC) member states to send troops to the DRC to defend the besieged government of Laurent Kabila led Zimbabwe to complain about Pretoria's domineering and arrogant attitude. As Barber asserts, Zimbabwe's resistance to South Africa's peaceful approach to stabilizing Africa stemmed partly from the fact that 'Mugabe resented the star treatment given to Mandela, and at South Africa having ousted Zimbabwe as the leading regional state' (2005, 1086).

[A13]   In September 1998, alongside its SADC partners, Botswana and Zimbabwe, South Africa took the unprecedented decision to use armed force and demonstrate its power by intervening in Lesotho to restore democratic order following political skirmishes (Cooper 1998, 729; van Nieukerk 1999).   Since the mid-1990s, Lesotho had been convulsed by political instability occasioned by power contests between the military and civilians. The 1998 intervention yielded a quick military victory for South Africa and its partners. However, the victory was overshadowed by the fallout with other African leaders over South Africa's policy toward Nigeria. In November 1996, South Africa unsuccessfully exerted diplomatic pressures on the government of General Sani Abachato to stop the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni leaders who had been agitating for human rights in the Niger Delta. Jolted by the execution, which occurred during the Commonwealth Heads of State summit in Auckland, New Zealand, Mandela led belated calls for Nigeria's suspension from the Commonwealth and the imposition of economic sanctions, only to find himself isolated by African states (Barber 2005, 1086; Evans 1996, 261; Cooper 1998, 711-712; Alden and Le Pere 2004, 289). Besides exposing the resistance of African leaders to South Africa's human rights and democracy campaign, the Nigeria incident also highlighted the complexity of democracy promotion. Most African countries accused Mandela of being the West's proxy by campaigning for Nigeria's suspension from the Commonwealth.

Apart from resistance from African leaders, Mandela faced economic constraints in his efforts to pursue human rights and democracy. For example, while advocating a negotiated solution to the conflict in the DRC, South Africa sold arms to Uganda and Rwanda, whose militaries were actively involved in the conflict. This worked to undermine Pretoria's credibility as promoter of democracy in Africa (Le Pere 6). Due to these constraints, South Africa made policy adjustments midway into Mandela's presidency. Key among the ANC's policy adjustments was the redefinition of human rights as a culturally-sensitive concept; although its promotion was not to be abandoned, the ANC felt that 'rather than being supported as a separate "core concern", "human rights" [should] be incorporated within "good government" and "democracy"' (Barber 2005, 1087). More importantly, South Africa sought to align democratic ideals more closely to the advancement of economic prosperity and political security, adjustments that were captured in the 1997 ANC policy document.

Mbeki's multilateral approach to democracy promotion in Africa, 1999-2008
The pitfalls faced by Mandela in balancing the aspirations of fostering democracy and the projection of national interests influenced the Mbeki Administration as it crafted the African Renaissance. As deputy president, Mbeki had expressed strong opposition to one-party rule in Africa, suggesting that the present generation of African peoples 'must resist all tyranny, oppose all attempts to deny liberty. . . In Africa, the people must govern' (Landsberg 2000, 107). Various accounts of internal ANC debates in the early days of majority rule, however, have indicated that Mbeki was one of the leading sceptics of a policy based on the promotion of human rights and democracy (Vale 2010; Graham 2012, 417). According to

Gervisser, Mbeki argued that 'while such high-minded principles might befit a liberation movement, they were entirely impractical for the government of an emerging power, struggling to re-enter the global economy' (2007, 816).

These contradictions dominated Mbeki's multilateral diplomacy which was inspired by reversing the plight of the continent (Cooper 1998, 173; Vale and Maseko 1998, 271-287; Habib 2009, 143-149; Bischoff 2003, 183-201). Galvanizing a multilateral effort that was spearheaded by[A14] Africa's regional powers – Algeria, Nigeria and Senegal – Mbeki injected urgency in the ideas of the African Renaissance founded on four pillars: continental integration through the African Union (AU); political renewal through democracy and good governance; economic revival through the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD); and peacemaking initiatives to reverse the scourge of civil wars (Landsberg 2010, 209-241; Bongmba 2004, 291-316). During the launch of the AU in Durban in 2002, Mbeki called on Africa to 'proclaim to the world that it is a continent of democracy, a continent of democratic institutions and culture – indeed a continent of good governance where the people participate and the rule of law is upheld' (Olivier 2003, 817-818).

The efforts at African integration dovetailed with a normative framework anchored on shared responsibilities, commitment to democratic principles and African ownership of African problems. Through the Constitutive Act of the AU, Mbeki and his colleagues sought to reinvigorate the principles of building democracy and accountable governance to signal the departure from old authoritarian practices. The momentum was further captured in the adoption of critical instruments, such as the African Charter for Democracy, Elections, and Good Governance; the AU Principles Guiding Democratic Elections in Africa; and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). In southern Africa, South Africa took the leadership role in positioning the SADC as a vehicle for economic integration and forging common values on democracy and human rights through the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections. Leadership through multilateralism reflected the realities of a South Africa that was beginning to understand the complex nature of African interstate relations and the limits to its leverage. As Alden and Le Pere contend, Mbeki's 'pan-African revivalism' faced considerable constraints, particularly ambiguities over South Africa's identity and scepticism among African partners about South Africa's aspirations to continental leadership (2004, 283-284).

In playing a catalytic role to end conflicts in Africa, the Mbeki Administration focused on peacemaking in the Great Lakes region, notably Burundi and the DRC. Beginning in 1999, Mbeki encouraged high profile mediation of the Burundi conflict by Mandela and Zuma that led to various peace agreements among the Burundian factions. South Africa was also instrumental in initiatives that prepared the ground for a UN peacekeeping mission in Burundi that contributed to stability and national elections in 2006 (Landsberg 2006; Khadiagala 2013). Similar efforts marked Mbeki's diplomacy in the DRC where South Africa worked with the UN and the AU to produce a series of peace agreements to end the war (Khadiagala 2009, 67-80). The elections of Pierre Nkurunziza in Burundi and Joseph Kabila in the DRC were major contributors to building democracy through proactive peace-making and peace-building, but they were among few successes in Mbeki's foreign policy in Africa.

Democratic breakthroughs in the Great Lakes region belied the formidable dilemmas Mbeki confronted in using multilateral forums to advance democracy. With an elaborate set of principles on democracy and good governance, SADC seemed the ideal institution for South Africa's democracy promotion, particularly because its economic weight potentially gave it more leverage in its regional neighbourhood. SADC, however, undercut [A15]South Africa's leadership on strengthening democratic values. As Alden and Le Pere have stated:

> Whereas concerns for democracy and human rights have been able to feature in the debate on foreign policy in the immediate post-apartheid period, recourse to SADC – despite its formal commitment to these issues – has tended to circumscribe substantive action in support of these values. This in turn has had a direct effect upon the selection of tools available to policymakers

in Pretoria, limiting them to public statements through SADC that emphasized organizational cohesion over expressions of concern or condemnation of actions by fellow member states (2004, 289-290).

Apart from alliance constraints, the enduring power of liberation ethos and the sense of obligation towards friends compromised regional pro-democracy efforts. Mbeki's tolerance of undemocratic regimes in Angola and Swaziland revealed a reluctance to stand out in the face of defiance of regional norms on democratic governance. But the imbroglio surrounding Zimbabwe since the late 1990s best illustrates South Africa's dithering on democracy promotion in the region (Adelmann 2004, 249-276; Moore 2010, 752-757; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2011). The emergence of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) triggered a violent political backlash from the government of Robert Mugabe in the lead-up to the parliamentary elections in 2000 and to the presidential elections in 2002. Violence was also meted out against white farmers following a spate of forcible seizure of land, resulting in international condemnation and Western-led economic sanctions. Amidst the deteriorating economic conditions, the Mbeki government provided Zimbabwe with an R1 billion economic rescue package and refused to join in the international condemnation; as Mbeki's Foreign Affairs Minister, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma remarked, 'We are not going to be combative with Zimbabwe...We will exercise responsibility. As long as the ANC is in power, Mugabe will never be condemned' (Olivier 2003, 819). Despite political repression and electoral fraud in the presidential elections, the ANC gave unqualified endorsement to the South African election observer report that the elections had been 'credible' and 'legitimate' (McKinley 2004, 360).

Throughout the mid-2000s, what became known disparagingly as Mbeki's 'Quiet Diplomacy' on Zimbabwe was an attempt to nudge Mugabe to reduce internal repression while avoiding the international pressures for strong action (Hamill and Hoffman 2009, 1-12; Lipton 2009, 331-346). In refusing to publicly criticize Mugabe's authoritarian practices, South Africa insisted that change would emanate from SADC's diplomatic efforts that recognized Zimbabwe's sovereignty. But with no end in sight for the crisis, Mbeki agreed to lead SADC mediation in 2007 in anticipation of the 2008 elections. Although distrusted by the opposition for his leanings toward Mugabe's government, Mbeki as a mediator carved a distinctive niche as the voice of SADC that sought to find political compromises that would benefit all parties before the 2008 elections. After the violently-contested election of March 2008, the MDC claimed it had been denied victory and boycotted the subsequent June 2008 presidential run-off. Mbeki renewed his diplomatic initiatives and encouraged the government and opposition to sign the Global Political Agreement (GPA) in November 2008 that created the Government of National Unity (GNU). For the Mugabe government, the GPA and GNU were tactical compromises to gain time to re-organize after losing the March 2008 elections, prevent more Western economic sanctions and appease SADC, which was tired of the political impasse. The opposition, on the other hand, had no room for maneuver because its strength had dwindled in the face of organized repression. To Mbeki, the GNU was a victory of sorts, not only in demonstrating regional resolve to ward off the overreaching hand of international actors interested in 'regime change' in Zimbabwe, but also in restoring stability that would allow the parties to negotiate new constitutional order (Moore 2010, 753; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2011).

Failure to take a strong and principled stance on Zimbabwe from the outset affected South Africa's campaigns to embed democratic values in institutions across Africa. As Zimbabwe became the global barometer for South Africa's inability to live up to the values of democratization, Mbeki took a defensive foreign policy posture, using every opportunity to condemn external criticisms as imperialist ploys for 'regime change[A16]'. Furthermore, although South Africa had opted for multilateral stances in Africa to conceal its inability to promote unilateral pro-democracy objectives, Mbeki's defensiveness against the West ended up compromising the very limited gains from such multilateralism. In the context of the standoff over Zimbabwe, it became difficult to sell credible democratic values to authoritarian and anti-democratic regimes such as Algeria, Egypt, and Libya, despite the declaratory statements that emanated

from the AU. Equally important, the achievements of enshrining democratic norms in African continental institutions were nullified by the absence of clear South African leadership on ratification and domestication of these instruments. Although Mbeki's supporters have claimed that he was merely a pioneer in the foundational stages of incorporation of democratic principles in continental institutions, South Africa missed a grand opportunity to use Mbeki's stature to link the broad crusade on African Renaissance to the implementation of democratic norms. Despite sustained multilateralism, there were few converts to democratic governance and the rule of law at the end of the Mbeki era, signalling South Africa's lack of effective means to translate its capabilities into hard and soft power[A17]. Although war had been brought to an end in countries like Burundi and the DRC, moving towards multiparty democracy remained a serious challenge. At the end of his term, Mbeki's African policy was defined more by Zimbabwe than the other lofty goals that he had tried to articulate (Olivier 2012; Kraxberger and McClaughry 2013, 17).

Zuma[A18] in Africa: muddling through democracy promotion, 2009-present

The incremental shift from the normative principles in South Africa's engagement with Africa that started with Mbeki has been sharpened in Zuma's Africa policy. [A19]After the ouster of Mbeki from the ANC leadership in 2008, there were growing demands for more attention to domestic welfare than grandiose foreign policy schemes. Although it has resisted pressures for scaling down Mbeki's policies, the Zuma administration has paid little attention to democratic values in foreign policy and has, in some instances, adopted more unilateral approaches to dealing with Africa. The draft 2011 White Paper on South Africa's foreign policy reiterates the significance of a 'united, peaceful, and prosperous' Africa. But other than invoking the need to strengthen the APRM and discourage unconstitutional changes of government, it is silent on advancing democratic values (DIRCO 2011, 20-21; Thipayane 2011, 3-5; Landsberg 2012, 75-102). The expectations that Mandela established in 1993 for a South Africa at the 'forefront of global efforts to foster democratic systems of government' have gradually disappeared from official policy discourses[A20]. This silence dovetails with the Zuma Administration's inconsistent and wavering approaches to democracy and human rights promotion in Africa. Furthermore, some of Zuma's actions, such as voting with the AU to condemn the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the vote to abolish the SADC Tribunal, have undercut the foundations laid by the previous administrations. Increasingly, these changes in foreign policy have coincided with growing fragmentation within the ANC governing alliance and the rise of new opposition parties.

One year into the Zuma presidency, South Africa's response to the electoral conflict in Cote d'Ivoire signalled the start of unilateral and pragmatic initiatives that would unmask any pretence of an ethical [A21]policy towards Africa. Following the presidential elections in November 2010, a stalemate ensued between Laurent Gbagbo and Alassane Ouattara when Gbagbo refused to relinquish power. As the main interlocutor[A22] in the crisis, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) adopted a principled position from the outset, in line with its protocol on democracy and good governance, endorsing the position of the Ivorian electoral commission and UN observers that recognized Ouattara's victory. South Africa's response was less principled; Pretoria, joined by Angola and Uganda, questioned ECOWAS' stance on the elections and hinted at a power-sharing arrangement as a possible solution to the crisis, a move that attracted the ire of both Nigeria and ECOWAS (Cook 2011, 34-37). Critics have pointed to South Africa's position in the Ivorian electoral crisis as a reflection of the Zuma Administration's preoccupation with preserving and consolidating strategic or historical alliances in Africa without regard for the potential political trade-offs, particularly in promoting democratic governance. Zuma's perceived support for Gbagbo, a long-time West African ally of South Africa, has partly been attributed to the influence flowing from the rapprochement between Pretoria and Angola (Adebajo 2012). Since the relations with Angola hold immense economic benefits for South Africa, Pretoria has been reluctant to condemn the autocratic regime of President dos Santos (Roque 2009).

South Africa's responses to the political crises in Libya and the Central African Republic (CAR) further underscored the fact that, like his predecessor, Zuma appears to have prioritised stability over democracy promotion in Africa. More importantly, they point to the growing impact of geopolitical considerations and fractured governmental machinery on the consistency of the country's foreign policy. Seeking to avoid the initial unilateralism in Cote d'Ivoire, Zuma joined four other presidents in an AU High Level Ad-hoc Committee on Libya (AHCL) that was established in early March 2011 to mediate in the violent conflict between the government of Muammar Gaddafi and Benghazi-based rebels organized as the National Transitional Council (NTC). As part of the efforts to handle the Libyan crisis through an African-led initiative, the AHCL unveiled a roadmap on 10 March 2011, which advocated a negotiated solution to the crisis. However, on 17 March 2011, the UN Security Council (UNSC) passed Resolution 1973 authorising a no-fly zone over Libya, ostensibly to protect civilians, effectively overshadowing prospects for a negotiated settlement.

Alongside Gabon and Nigeria, South Africa voted for Resolution 1973, but soon repudiated it after NATO's military intervention, which it considered to have overstepped the bounds of the resolution. Zuma's back-pedalling on Libya raised questions about policy consistency, particularly with regard to Pretoria's commitment to democratisation on the continent. South Africa squandered the opportunity provided by the Arab Spring to reassert its leadership on democracy promotion, particularly since Libya and most of North Africa for a long time had remained islands of authoritarianism in Africa. Instead, South Africa's policy discourse was dominated by pouting [A23]over NATO's 'regime change.' Zuma maintained that NATO and the UN had undermined African efforts, arguing that 'the AU was not given space to implement its roadmap and to ensure an African solution to the Libyan question' (*Mail and Guardian*, 14 June 2011). [A24]Even after Gaddafi's demise, South Africa vigorously opposed UNSC efforts to unfreeze $1.5-billion in Libyan funds to assist with reconstruction. It only relented when the Council resolution omitted reference to the NTC. Similarly, South Africa led efforts within the AHCL to deny recognition to the NTC on the claims that its rise to power had violated the AU's doctrine of unconstitutional change of power. South Africa changed course in September 2011 after several African countries, including Nigeria, recognized the NTC.

The experiences in Cote d'Ivoire and Libya partly shaped South Africa's single-minded pursuit of the position of the Chairperson of the AU Commission, now occupied by its candidate, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma. Dlamini-Zuma's election gave South Africa a new leadership role at the AU with promises to refocus on a policy that prevents inordinate Western interference in African affairs. In what seemed like a bid to regain some of its radical [A25]credentials that were lost in its support for the UNSC Resolution 1973 on Libya, South Africa couched the victory for the AU Chairperson position as an anti-Western crusade. In a briefing after the AU vote, the Minister for International Relations and Cooperation, Nkoana-Mashabane, stated that South Africa had been very clear that 'we want very good cordial relations with our co-operating partners, not based on colonial relations'. The ANC Secretary-General Gwede Mantashe was more explicit, noting that 'we have shaken the AU because we have disorganised the French who always had a stronghold on the continent' (*SABC News*, 1 February 2012).

South Africa's intervention in the CAR that led to the death of fifteen soldiers in March 2013 further epitomized the perils of unilateralism that have dominated Zuma's African forays. Critics have pointed out that with no strategic significance to South Africa, foreign policy toward the CAR has reflected two objectives that have dominated policy in Africa: first, the fixation with asserting South Africa's political and economic muscle in Francophone Africa in an effort to check French influence; and second, the growing significance of ANC-linked commercial interests in countries with authoritarian regimes (Fabricius 2013). These objectives converged in a combustible context of civil conflicts in the CAR, which South Africa foreign policymakers have only started to fathom. Like the previous precipitous actions in Cote d'Ivoire, the policy on the CAR has also called into question South Africa's commitment to promoting democracy on the continent, including its ability to coordinate with regional actors.

Zuma also inherited three political conflicts—Zimbabwe, the DRC, and Madagascar—that over the years have afforded South Africa space to exercise leadership in entrenching democratic governance in the SADC region. However, with the exception of Madagascar, South Africa's leadership in these crises has produced few democratic outcomes. In Zimbabwe, South Africa and SADC were guarantors of the Global Political Agreement (GPA), including holding the Zimbabwean parties to their promises amidst continuing mistrust and acrimony. Under Zuma, SADC, with the exception of Botswana, continued to express reluctance to strongly criticize Mugabe to fully implement the terms of the GPA; instead SADC adopted what Ndlovu-Gatsheni has termed a 'regionalized version of quiet diplomacy' and led the crusade to end of Western-imposed sanctions (2011, 7). After steering the Zimbabwean parties through a three year constitution-making process, SADC unsuccessfully tried to convince Mugabe to postpone the elections scheduled for July 2013 to give more time for the preparation of a credible electoral roll and implement security sector reforms. The opposition parties made frantic appeals to SADC to prevail upon [A26]Mugabe because of the absence of conditions for holding free and fair elections. Mugabe, however, adroitly used the constitutional court to checkmate SADC and held the elections at the end of July 2013. During the standoff with SADC, relations between South Africa and Zimbabwe worsened when Mugabe called Zuma's chief mediator Lindiwe Zulu, 'some stupid, idiotic woman[A27]'. In an attempt to mollify Mugabe, Zuma reprimanded Zulu for imposing her personal views on Zimbabwe and failing to operate within SADC procedures (Kotch 2013). In the elections that ended the five-year coalition government, Mugabe secured a landslide victory, against the backdrop of concerns about the voter's roll, intimidation of voters and military interference in the poll. Zuma congratulated Mugabe for the 'profound victory in the harmonized elections[A28]'. Botswana led a lone battle to challenge the electoral results by demanding an independent audit of the results, but it was silenced at a SADC summit in August 2013 in Malawi that endorsed the elections as 'free, fair, and generally credible[A29]'. As one political analyst pointed out, SADC was quick to endorse the elections because it considers stability to be more important than democracy: 'The region aspires for democracy. But where this threatens stability, they would rather go for stability' (Makova 2013).

The same could be said of the Zuma Administration's engagement in the DRC. In pursuit of what Landsberg has described as a 'utilitarian foreign policy' (2010, 263), South Africa has resorted to the promotion of low-intensity [A30]democracy in this conflict-ridden but economically strategic SADC member state. Under Zuma, South Africa's support for the faltering democratization process in the DRC has been glaringly reduced to securing a stable environment and a friendly government in Kinshasa, arguably to advance its economic and other strategic interests. This is evident, for instance, in Pretoria's endorsement of the flawed general elections of 2011, which controversially returned President Kabila to power. Zuma and Angola's dos Santos have positioned themselves as Kabila's major regional backers, an alliance that appears to have given Kinshasa a lifeline to restore a sense of stability in the restive eastern DRC, but which could equally prove to be an impediment to the DRC's democratisation process. In February 2013, a Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC and the region was signed in Addis Ababa by eleven concerned states and intergovernmental organizations. The framework came with two major responsibilities, one specific to the DRC government to reform state institutions and deepen democracy and another for the entire region to address the insecurity across the DRC's borders. With regard to the latter, South Africa, Tanzania and Malawi, working through SADC, were instrumental in securing the deployment by the UN of a special peace enforcement unit, the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB), which within a relatively short period of time was successful in altering the military dynamics in Eastern DRC. The relative stability in Eastern DRC brought by regional military support has, however, not been accompanied by a corresponding diplomatic effort to pressure Kabila to undertake political and governance reforms.

Since 2009, South Africa and SADC have also been engaged in mediation of the constitutional crisis in Madagascar that resulted from the ouster of elected President Marc Ravalomanana by Andry Rajoelina in March 2009. Soon after Rajoelina took power and constituted a High Transitional Authority (HTA)

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government, SADC and the AU suspended Madagascar in line with the provisions on unconstitutional change in government. As political tensions led to widespread violence, SADC appointed Joaquim Chissano, former Mozambican president, to lead a Joint Mediation Team comprising the UN, the AU and the International Organization of the Francophonie (IOF). The core objective of the negotiations was to launch an inclusive dialogue aimed at creating a political environment for the return to constitutional normalcy (Ancas 2011; Zounmenou 2009, 72-75). After relentless diplomatic engagements, SADC mediators announced a Roadmap for Ending the Crisis in Madagascar in September 2011, which proposed a transitional government that would establish a new electoral framework leading to democratic elections. By January 2012, the parties had implemented provisions of the roadmap, including the appointment of a new prime minister, cabinet, legislature and electoral commission, but persistent differences forced additional SADC mediation. In July 2012 talks in Seychelles mediated by Zuma, Ravalomanana and Rajoelina led to an agreement to prepare for elections that would exclude all the former leaders of Madagascar; this decision was later reaffirmed by the electoral court, paving the way for the elections in October 2013 (Deville 2013). The election of Hery Rajaonarimampianina as president after a December 2013 run-off poll, including the endorsement of the outcome by international observers, lent some credence to SADC's (and South Africa's) efforts to promote democracy in the region. Madagascar would also perhaps be judged as the only ray of light in South Africa's leadership of pro-democracy at the regional level, after the disappointing policies toward Zimbabwe, the DRC and Swaziland.

At the continental level, the Zuma Administration has reversed the fight against impunity by joining in condemnations against the ICC. The tensions between the AU and ICC started in July 2009 at an AU Summit in Libya when the AU opted not to cooperate with the ICC in the arrest of indicted Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir. At the AU summit in Ethiopia in January 2011, the AU escalated the anti-ICC war by siding with the decision of Chad and Kenya not to arrest Al-Bashir for the sake of regional 'peace and security' (AU 2011). At the same meeting, the AU supported Kenya's request to the UN Security Council for the deferral of the ICC's investigation and prosecutions in relation to the 2008 post-election violence in which the current president, Uhuru Kenyatta, and deputy president, William Ruto, have been indicted. In contesting the legitimacy of the ICC, the AU has continually invoked the need to support African efforts at peace and reconciliation, even though there are only tentative steps on the continent to create credible legal mechanisms for accountability and the fight against impunity. Matters came to a head at the May 2013 summit in Ethiopia where the AU (with the exception of Botswana) voted unanimously to refer the Kenya cases back to Kenya to allow the establishment of a 'national mechanism to investigate and prosecute the cases under a reformed Judiciary provided for in the new constitutional dispensation, in support of the on-going peace building and national reconciliation processes, in order to prevent the resumption of conflict and violence in Kenya' (AU 2013).

Although South Africa has domesticated the Rome Statute that created the ICC, the Zuma Administration has remained silent in the face of the onslaught of opposition toward the Court. [A31]South African officials have claimed that this posture does not denote a departure from the tenets of international criminal justice and that decisions at the AU are reached through sufficient consensus (Thipanyane 2011, 3-4). Nonetheless, the vote in May 2013 was an abdication of its leadership in Africa because it amounted to appeasing the anti-ICC block at the AU at the expense of commitment to international norms. South Africa's international standing was further compromised when it backed the AU's October 2013 decision calling for sitting African heads of state to be exempted from prosecution and requested the UN Security Council to defer the trials of Kenyatta and Ruto (*Xinhua* 2013). Previously, South Africa's commitment to international human rights norms had been put into question in May 2011 when it joined its regional partners to abolish the SADC Tribunal[A32]. In 1992, the treaty that created SADC made provisions for a SADC Tribunal as an integral part of the organization. The Tribunal was formally inaugurated in November 2005 and heard its first major case in 2008 when a white Zimbabwean farmer lodged a complaint against the Mugabe government for land dispossession. The Tribunal ruled

that the Zimbabwe government had violated the human rights provisions of the SADC treaty in using race as the basis of land dispossession. When the Zimbabwean government twice refused to adhere to the ruling, the Tribunal referred the matter to the SADC summit for 'appropriate action'. With Zimbabwe's rejection of the ruling, SADC appointed an independent expert to review the role, responsibilities, and terms of reference of the Tribunal. In May 2011, SADC ignored the recommendations of the expert, which reiterated that the Tribunal was lawfully constituted and its decisions would be binding to signatories. In effect, SADC sided with the Zimbabwean government in rejecting the jurisdiction of the Tribunal and demanded a revision of its mandate. At the SADC Summit in September 2012, leaders approved the decision to dissolve the SADC Tribunal, an action decried by human rights advocates (Matyszak 2012).

Conclusion

This article has sought to contribute to debates about the promotion of democracy by emerging powers. It has revealed that, for emerging powers, democracy promotion is an expensive enterprise which, because of competing priorities, they can barely afford. [A33]Often they are torn between the liberal internationalist conviction that democratization fosters peaceful and stable neighbourhoods and the Third World mind-set against intervention and respect for sovereignty. As they straddle these contrasting postures, emerging powers frequently settle for the comfort of leadership by example rather than by prescription: they would prefer more countries in their neighbourhoods to subscribe to democratic tenets and practices, but they do not devote any significant resources and energies in contributing to democratic outcomes. They proclaim fealty to democratic values but are defensive when outsiders prescribe these values to their undemocratic allies and neighbours. South Africa's vacillation on democracy promotion in Africa is thus typical of the obstacles emerging powers face in reconciling these contradictory trends.

Over the past two decades, South Africa has gradually learned to mobilize its population toward foreign policy objectives that remain contested. [A34]Years of insularity and isolation created a wide gulf between the domestic and international arenas, yielding widespread scepticism about external entanglements, particularly in Africa. Democracy promotion, like other foreign policy objectives, hinges on a measure of domestic consensus about roles, responsibilities and resources. In the same vein, given the competitive nature of priorities, policymakers often have to make trade-offs around a whole array of foreign policies. The death of Mandela in December 2013 has strengthened the posture dominant since the early 2000s of the priority of pragmatic national interests over promotion of democracy and human rights in Africa. [A35]Pressures to maximize intrinsic national interests have compromised democratic ethos in an African environment where these values have not found steady footing. While there are many more democracies in Africa than in previous years, South Africa has only played a perfunctory role in the propagation and advocacy of democratization on the continent. The Mbeki Administration made significant strides in the construction of African institutions that sought to underpin the shared values of democratic governance, human rights observation, and the rule of law. Providing leadership on these issues was important, but more could have been done by Mbeki and the Zuma Administration to popularize the entrenchment of these values across Africa, despite the difficulties of navigating the terrain of Africa's interstate relations. At a minimum, the Zuma government needed a firm determination to reinforce these values rather than presiding over their demise.

As an emerging power South Africa is dependent on multilateral institutions to effect change, but this has come at a heavy price on democracy promotion. Multilateralism helps to overcome weaknesses embedded in emerging power status, but it subjects foreign policy to the vagaries[A36] of decisions made by others. Finding a balance between unilateralism and multilateralism has been the biggest obstacle in South Africa's pro-democracy efforts in Africa. Moreover, as the diplomacy around the ICC reveals, having sponsored its candidate to Chair the AU, South Africa is now held hostage to the multilateral decisions emanating from Addis Ababa, decisions that may invariably compromise and diminish national

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values. [A37]Ultimately, therefore, democracy promotion abroad is, at its heart, an outcome of adherence to solid democratic norms and practices at home.

Following the May presidential 2014 elections, Zuma and the ANC won with a reduced majority in parliament partly because of the growth of opposition groups disenchanted with Zuma's domestic policies. Since his re-election, Zuma has hardly reversed the policies that pay little attention to the principles of democracy and human rights promotion in Africa. In fact, in the context of growing dissatisfaction with the socioeconomic performance of the ANC and Zuma's entanglement in publicised corruption scandals, voices that have agitated for a more inward-looking and economic-oriented diplomacy continue to prevail. Moreover, given the fierce geopolitical and economic challenges that South Africa faces in Africa from Western powers and other emerging powers, it is likely that Pretoria will become far less inclined in the future to pursue democracy and human rights in its foreign policy.

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