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## The weak domestic base of South Africa's good global citizenship

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The self-appointed role of good international citizen that South Africa has played since 1994 is the external corollary of its supposed good governance at home. Weaknesses in domestic governance have, however, been evident since early in the life of democratic South Africa. These problems have become more acute, and internal dissatisfaction with and external awareness of 'poor service delivery' in South Africa have grown since 2009 when Jacob Zuma became president. The article illustrates that South Africa fails to meet core criteria of good governance and considers the implications of weak governance for the Republic's good international citizenship.

**Keywords:** South African foreign policy; good governance; good international citizenship

### Introduction

'Something is rotten in the state of contemporary SA [South Africa]', ran the headline of an opinion piece by Gerrit Olivier in a local newspaper in November 2012. 'The country is losing its way', Olivier lamented, 'the abnormal has become "normal", mediocrity and underperformance are the benchmark' and the ruling elite has created 'a huge and corrupt reward system'. Noting the interconnectedness of domestic politics and international relations, Olivier was especially concerned about 'the negative effect of what is happening on the home front on South Africa's foreign image'.<sup>1</sup>

South Africa is no stranger to the dictum that foreign policy begins at home. Apartheid had reduced white-ruled South Africa to the 'permanent status as the world's polecat', to quote the celebrated expression coined by *Die Burger* in 1960.<sup>2</sup> That position lasted until 1994, when apartheid gave way to black majority rule through a negotiated settlement. The new constitutional dispensation sanctioned not merely democratic governance, but good governance more broadly. These exemplary features and the saintly presidential presence of Nelson Mandela provided a solid domestic base and the self-confidence to pursue an ambitious, moralistic foreign policy. The international community in turn expected the 'new' South Africa – in whose liberation they had invested heavily over decades – to act as a paragon among states. South Africa obliged by donning the mantle of a good international citizen. Since this role was anchored in its domestic political order, South Africa's virtuous global citizenship since 1994 can be regarded as the external corollary of its commitment to democracy and good governance at home.<sup>3</sup>

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Olivier's suggestion that South Africa's good governance has fallen on hard times was shared by other commentators. He evidently took his cue from highly critical articles on South Africa that had appeared shortly before in two prominent Western newspapers. 'South Africa falters as unrest spreads', read the caption of an article in the *Wall Street Journal*. The labour unrest in the Republic's mining industry together with countrywide protests over the lack of public services were 'exposing a stark reality', the newspaper recorded: 'South Africa is falling behind, even in Africa' in the areas of poverty, unemployment and inequality.<sup>4</sup> In a leading article entitled 'Cry, the beloved country', *The Economist* conveyed much the same message. In contrast to the rest of the African continent 'clawing its way up', South Africa 'is on the slide both economically and politically'. *The Economist* diagnosed the 'incompetence and outright corruption' of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) as the main causes of 'South Africa's sad decline'.<sup>5</sup>

At about the same time that Olivier's article appeared, a group of local church leaders (including Anglican Archbishop Thabo Makgoba) took the ANC leadership to task for 'bad governance' marked by corruption, mediocrity and decay. In an open letter the clergy urged the ruling party to build 'a culture of good governance'. Leaders unwilling to rise to the challenge, the letter-writers advised, should 'step aside and make way for others who are able to reimagine what a healthy democracy in South Africa will look like'.<sup>6</sup> Unlike Olivier, the clerics did not allude to the effects that poor domestic governance may have on the country's international reputation.

What had, however, been harming South Africa's international standing at the time, was its failure to 'walk' the human rights 'talk' in its own foreign relations. During its first stint as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in 2007–2008, South Africa refused to support resolutions condemning serial human rights violators like Iran, Myanmar, Zimbabwe and Sudan.<sup>7</sup> A Human Rights Watch officer regretted that South Africa 'often aligns with global enemies of human rights',<sup>8</sup> while *The Economist* deplored the country's 'see-no-evil foreign policy' that tarnished its record as 'a shining beacon of human rights'.<sup>9</sup> For two American observers, democratic South Africa's 'friendliness toward odious dictatorships' resembled that of its 'infamous predecessor'.<sup>10</sup> Other analysts branded the Republic a 'rogue democracy' for the international company it kept.<sup>11</sup> These commentators clearly saw a contradiction between South Africa's record at the UN and the lofty political ideals South Africa proclaimed abroad (as befitted a good global citizen) and also upheld at home (notably democracy and human rights). What they and other critics evidently overlook is the weakness of a critical domestic element of the Republic's good international citizenship, namely its quality of governance.

Against this backdrop the present article's principal aim, to which the bulk of the inquiry is devoted, is to illustrate that South Africa's standards of domestic governance fall short of core criteria of good governance. Second, it will be argued that the Republic's poor governance undermines its self-proclaimed good international citizenship. Although contradictions between external ambition and internal achievement have been evident since the early days of the 'new' South Africa,<sup>12</sup> the discrepancies have become pronounced since Jacob Zuma's presidency began in May 2009. This article will therefore focus on Zuma's period in office. Finally, consideration will be given to how South Africa could bring consistency between its domestic governance and global citizenship.

The parameters of the investigation should be stated clearly. It is essentially a study of the domestic sources of South Africa's foreign policy, highlighting those elements that have a bearing on its good international citizenship. Some foreign policy implications of weak governance performance will also be explored. The article is therefore not another wide-ranging examination of the theory and practice of good international citizenship or of good governance, nor of South Africa's ethical foreign policy in general.<sup>13</sup>

To start, the concepts of good governance and good international citizenship should be clarified, and the link between the two notions and their appropriation and application by South Africa's rulers need to be explained. Thereafter the deficits in the country's domestic governance will be investigated.

### Good governance

The World Bank introduced the term 'good governance' in a 1989 report on sustainable growth in sub-Saharan Africa. Since then scores of states and some multilateral organisations have embraced good governance as a universally applicable formula for the 'exercise of power or authority to manage a country's resources and affairs', as the UN Development Programme defined 'governance' in 1997.<sup>14</sup> The first criterion of good governance, according to Good Governance Africa, is that 'citizens must have a say in how the country is run', which in turn requires democracy, accountability, transparency and inclusiveness. Second, the rule of law (including an independent judiciary and an incorruptible police force) and human, civil, minority and property rights need to be observed and enforced by 'a legitimate government with separate, independent branches of power'. Third, the government 'should pursue inclusive, growth-oriented policies' to improve human well-being (health, education and life expectancy).<sup>15</sup> Finally, the civil service and public services need to be effective and efficient, according to Van Doeveren.<sup>16</sup>

*The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996*, does not use the term 'good governance', but contains provisions fully consistent with the above tenets. Most importantly, the founding provisions (Article 1) declare that South Africa is a democratic state based on 'values' like human rights and freedoms; supremacy of the constitution and the rule of law; 'a multi-party system of democratic government', and 'accountability, responsiveness and openness'. One of the principles of cooperative government, enumerated in Article 41, obligates the national, provincial and local spheres of government to 'provide effective, transparent, accountable and coherent government for the Republic as a whole'. In like vein the values and principles governing public administration (Article 195) include efficient, economic and effective use of resources; development-oriented public administration; the provision of services in an impartial, fair, equitable and unbiased fashion; accountability in public administration; and the fostering of transparency 'by providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information'.

In 1998 the Presidential Review Commission presented a report to President Mandela on the reform and transformation of South Africa's public service. The report was, instructively, entitled *Developing a Culture of Good Governance*.<sup>17</sup> Successive South African governments have since 1994 embraced the notion of good governance, often in the broader African context. In 1997 Mandela spoke of 'Africa's rebirth' (also styled an African renaissance), which he said required a commitment by African countries to 'the principles of democracy, respect for human rights, and for the basic

tenets of good governance'.<sup>18</sup> In like vein President Thabo Mbeki in 2007 acknowledged that 'good governance and respect for human rights' were fundamental to ensuring that the masses of African people across the continent 'escape from the clutches of poverty, underdevelopment and dehumanisation'.<sup>19</sup> In 2011, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Maite Nkoane-Mashabane affirmed that 'democracy and good governance have to continue to spread and flourish on our continent for Africa to occupy its place this century'.<sup>20</sup>

The link between good governance and development has also been made explicit in the ruling party's support, since the early 2000s, for the notion of a (democratic) developmental state.<sup>21</sup> The ANC's 2009 election manifesto stated unequivocally that the developmental state 'will play a central and strategic role in the economy' and pledged to create 'a more effective government' to 'ensure effective service delivery'.<sup>22</sup> The main characteristics generally attributed to a developmental state include the prioritisation of rapid and sustainable economic growth; a relatively autonomous, meritocratic and capable bureaucracy; the development of human capital and social infrastructure by giving priority to education and health; and embedded autonomy, meaning social ties that bind the state to society and create channels for the ongoing negotiation of public policies.<sup>23</sup>

The National Development Plan (NDP) of 2011 devotes an entire chapter to 'Building a capable and developmental state' to bring about economic and social transformation in South Africa and so address the dual challenges of poverty and inequality. Building state capacity to deliver 'consistently high-quality services', the NDP acknowledged, 'is the most important step to achieve a developmental state'. The report furthermore recognised the importance of constructing a capable developmental state 'within a vibrant democratic system'.<sup>24</sup>

Several elements of good governance feature in these statements on a democratic developmental state. Apart from the critical element of a democratic political order and the associated aspects of rule of law, human rights and accountability, both agendas call for building efficient and stable public institutions and improving state capacity to enhance institutional performance and hence service delivery on the ground.<sup>25</sup> In short, good governance is a cornerstone of a democratic developmental state.

### **Good international citizenship**

Although the concept of 'good international citizenship' may have been pioneered by Canada's governor-general in 1967,<sup>26</sup> former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans (in office 1988–1996) popularised the notion and gave political and intellectual content to this particular form of ethical statecraft. Still, there is no single, generally accepted definition of good international citizenship.<sup>27</sup> Setting the bar quite high, a good international citizen among states has been conceived as a law-abiding member of the world community that: (1) champions a rule-governed international order; (2) meets its international obligations; (3) values multilateral cooperation for the common good; (4) places the welfare of the international community above the uncompromising pursuit of national interests; and (5) promotes democracy, human rights and other aspects of good governance as a logical extension of its fundamental national values and best practices.<sup>28</sup>

As Evans put it, good international citizenship 'is the area of foreign policy in which community values most influence the pursuit of national interests'.<sup>29</sup>

Emanating from the principles of democracy, human rights and good governance, good international citizenship thus 'brings together domestic politics and foreign policy'. An implication of this linkage, Wheeler and Dunne point out, is that 'a government which espouses these values abroad must have a good track record on these issues at home'.<sup>30</sup> If not, the government concerned could be accused of hypocrisy – professing standards contradicted by actual conduct – and so compromising its credibility.<sup>31</sup> And credibility, Evans maintained, 'is, simply, the most important asset a country can have in the pursuit of good international citizenship'. Hence his insistence that the fundamental obligation of good international citizenship 'is to ensure that our own house [in this case Australia] is in order before we raise issues on the international scene'; the domestic record on matters like democracy, human rights and quality of governance comes into the picture.<sup>32</sup> By stressing the domestic politics–foreign policy nexus, advocates of good international citizenship broaden the understanding of the domestic sources of foreign policy to include not only the type of government but also its quality (i.e. good or poor governance).<sup>33</sup> Virtuous global citizens after all try to globalise their domestic virtues, of which good governance is a key element.<sup>34</sup>

Understood in this way, exemplary international citizenship involves far more than a high international standing or a good reputation; the state actor tries to influence others through its own example, thus drawing on its soft power resources. As originally conceived by Nye, soft power refers to a state's ability to influence others through appeal and attraction.<sup>35</sup> Good governance can be regarded as a form of soft power that gives the particular state the credibility to promote these standards internationally.

It must be acknowledged that not all states practising good governance at home necessarily assume the role of good global citizens. Conversely, states suffering poor domestic governance may well subscribe to much of the multilateral agenda championed by good international citizens like Australia, the UK and Sweden.

Democratic South Africa immediately embraced the letter and spirit of good international citizenship and acknowledged its link with good governance. In an address to the UN Security Council in May 1994 shortly after the ANC came to power, Mbeki, then deputy president, gave notice that South Africa 'as a responsible citizen of the world' would 'live up to its obligations' in promoting international peace, security and stability.<sup>36</sup> In its foreign policy the new South Africa also from the outset propagated human rights, multilateralism, a rules-based international order, the peaceful resolution of conflict and nuclear non-proliferation, among other themes typically associated with exemplary global citizenship.<sup>37</sup> Having by its own account met international expectations by playing 'a meaningful role in the region, on the continent and globally' in advancing 'values of human rights, democracy, reconciliation and the eradication of poverty and underdevelopment', in the words of the 2011 white paper on South Africa's foreign policy, the Republic donned the mantle of 'a good international citizen'.<sup>38</sup> The quality of the Republic's internal governance – a building block of its good global citizenship – will now be investigated.

### **South Africa's domestic governance I: International comparisons**

South Africa has for 20 years now been formally committed to the practice of good governance at home and the role of a virtuous citizen internationally, and has acknowledged that these are interdependent assignments. The country's title to good governance is, however, being undermined by serious deficiencies in key areas

of governance, notably in providing public goods relating to welfare and security and ensuring clean and accountable government. Two sets of facts and figures will illustrate these weaknesses, without claiming to present a definitive evaluation of South Africa's quality of governance. The first, recorded in this section, are comparative international indices of aspects of governance. They are chosen because rankings and ratings that assess the performance of states are, as Cooley found, 'playing an increasingly important role in the domains of international relations and public policy'.<sup>39</sup> In the next section, selected problem areas of government service delivery will be examined. For the sake of brevity, only recent data will feature in the two sections.

The Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance uses 95 indicators grouped into four categories, namely safety and rule of law, participation and human rights, sustainable economic opportunity, and human development. Scoring ranges from 0 to 100. From 2010 to 2014 South Africa's overall score remained remarkably consistent at around 73. In the latter year the Republic ranked fourth out of 52 African states, behind Mauritius, Cape Verde and Botswana. The weakest of South Africa's four 'pillars' of governance has for some years now been safety and the rule of law; in 2014 its score of 68.1 in that category placed it eighth in the continent.<sup>40</sup>

The World Bank in its Worldwide Governance Indicators focuses on voice and accountability; political stability and absence of violence; government effectiveness; regulatory quality; rule of law; and control of corruption. The scores, ranging from -2.5 to 2.5 (best), were based on perceptions. In the 2012 survey, South Africa's average for the six categories was 0.20, placing it on par with Seychelles and fifth out of 54 African states. In the category for political stability and absence of violence South Africa scored 0, and it scored -0.15 for control of corruption. Mauritius, with 0.83 overall, was top of the African league.<sup>41</sup>

The UN Development Plan's Human Development Index (HDI) – measuring life expectancy, education and income – in 2013 calculated South Africa's HDI value as 0.658 (compared with 0.654 in 2012), placing the country at 118 out of 187 and hence in the category of medium human development. South Africa found itself behind seven other African states, four of which – Algeria, Tunisia, Seychelles and Mauritius – fell into the league of high human development. Life expectancy in South Africa stood at 56.9 years in 2013 (down from 61.4 in 1995) compared with 73.6 in Mauritius and 75.9 in Tunisia.<sup>42</sup>

In the Fund for Peace's Failed State Index (renamed the Fragile States Index in 2014), South Africa consistently scored around 67 (120 = least stable) between 2009 and 2014. Only three African states were better placed than South Africa, namely Mauritius (46.1 in 2014), Seychelles (63.7 in that year) and Botswana (64.5).<sup>43</sup> Globally, in contrast, South Africa's overall ranking was 115 out of 178 countries in the 2014 index. South Africa ended up in the 'warning' category, more or less on par with Ukraine, Macedonia and Malaysia. Six social and economic indicators and six political and military indicators are used to compile the Fragile States Index.<sup>44</sup>

South Africa's recent rankings in the Global Peace Index confirm that it faces severe problems of governance. It was placed 122 out of 162 countries in both 2013 and 2014 (wedged between Eritrea and Mauritania in 2013 and immediately behind Niger in 2014). These findings left South Africa in the middle ('medium') of five categories of peace.<sup>45</sup> As the 2014 report explained, South Africa 'is categorically not a peaceful state'. Conflict in the preceding five years was driven by 'poverty, inequality, and the slow pace of reform by government', hence the high incidence of crime, violent strikes and political confrontation.<sup>46</sup>

The Global Competitiveness Index, compiled by the World Economic Forum, rests on 12 pillars that include infrastructure, macroeconomic environment, health and primary education, higher education and training, and labour market efficiency. On a scale of 1–7 (most competitive), South Africa scored 4.37 in 2013–2014 and ranked 53 out of 144 countries, making it the second highest placed African state behind Mauritius. In the 2014–2015 index South Africa dropped to the 56th position (out of 144 states) with a score of 4.35. The individual pillars where South Africa's rankings were below its overall placing of 56 in 2014–2015, are infrastructure (60th position), macro-economic environment (89), health and primary education (132), higher education and training (86), labour market efficiency (113) and technological readiness (66).<sup>47</sup>

One reason for including The Heritage Foundation's Index of Economic Freedom is the assumption of a correlation between economic freedom and prosperity. Another is that this index measures freedom from corruption, government spending (and debt), business freedom and labour freedom among its 10 'economic freedoms'. On a scale of 0–100 (absolutely free), South Africa's overall scores and rankings were 62.7 (70th out of 179 countries) in 2012; 61.8 (74th out of 177) in 2013; 62.5 (75th out of 178) in 2014; and 62.6 (72th out of 178) in 2015. These scores place South Africa in the 'moderately free' category, mostly behind a handful of other African countries (Botswana, Rwanda, Cape Verde and Ghana). Consider the 2015 report's observation on South Africa: 'Pervasive corruption jeopardises the rule of law. Rigid labour market regulations and the inefficient regulatory framework perpetuate high unemployment and underemployment'.<sup>48</sup>

Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index reveals that South Africa's record was again respectable in African terms, but far from exemplary on the global plane (see Table 1). Scored on a scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean), these findings provide a comparative perspective on corruption in South Africa.<sup>49</sup>

A big discrepancy between South Africa's ranking globally and continentally is also evident in the Rule of Law Index compiled by the World Justice Project. Eight indicators are used, including absence of corruption, order and security, open government, regulatory enforcement, and criminal justice. In 2014 South Africa's overall score was 0.55 (1 = best), placing it at 40 out of 99 states surveyed worldwide, but third among the 21 African states included (beaten by Botswana and Ghana, while Mauritius was omitted).<sup>50</sup>

A less conventional international survey to gauge government performance, but increasingly relevant in this day and age, is the biennial Environmental Performance Index (EPI) compiled by the Yale Center for Environmental Law & Policy and the Center for International Science Information Network at Columbia University in

Table 1. Transparency international scores for South Africa, 2012–2014

Year	Countries surveyed	SA score	SA rank globally	SA rank Africa
2012	176	43	69	8
2013	177	42	72	8
2014	175	44	67	8

Source: Transparency International Annual Reports 2012, 2013, 2014, [www.transparency.org/cpi](http://www.transparency.org/cpi)



collaboration with the World Economic Forum. The EPI applies 22 performance indicators in 10 ‘policy categories’ that include environmental health, air pollution and water resources. Scoring ranges from 100 to 0. In 2010 South Africa’s score of 50.8 gave it a ranking of 115 out of 163 countries, placing it behind 19 other African states. By 2014 South Africa’s overall score had risen to 53.51 and its overall ranking jumped to 72 out of 178 countries. Over a 10-year period South Africa’s environmental performance had improved by over 6%, but in 2014 it still lagged behind four fellow African states.<sup>51</sup>

Although the focus of this section was on weaknesses in South Africa’s public service delivery, it is worth noting how it fared in rankings of democracy and human rights; these are, after all, key components of the good governance agenda and areas in which South Africa is generally believed to excel. The annual Democracy Index of the Economist Intelligence Unit is based on the rating for 60 indicators organised in five categories, including the functioning of government. South Africa in 2010, 2011 and 2012 attained an overall score of 7.79, on a scale of 0–10, improving to 7.90 in 2013. In the latter year South Africa was ranked 29 out of 167 countries, dropping from 31 out of 167 in 2012. All these scores placed South Africa in the category of ‘flawed democracies’, behind Botswana and Cape Verde. Mauritius was the only African state to be classified among the ‘full democracies’ in 2012 and 2013.<sup>52</sup> In Freedom House’s Freedom in the World index (where a score of 1 denotes free and 7 not free), South Africa received a score of 2 for both political rights and civil liberties in 2013, placing it in the ‘free’ category. Cameroon, Gambia and Mauritius scored 1 on political rights, and five other states also earned 2 for political rights. In the field of civil liberties South Africa was again beaten by Cameroon and kept the company of seven other African countries with a ranking of 2.<sup>53</sup>

A clear pattern emerges from the various comparative indices: South Africa fares well in the African context but poorly on a wider international stage. The Republic typically ranks among the five best governed African states (behind the likes of Mauritius and Botswana) but in universal terms its performance is mediocre. These conclusions hold true even when allowing for the divergence in findings among the many indices owing to their different methodologies. Expressed in terms of soft power, it could be said that South Africa’s quality-of-governance resource would be rated highly within Africa, but decidedly modestly at the global level. Unsurprisingly, South Africa does not feature in Portland’s new (2015) ‘ranking of the strength of national soft power resources’. In fact, not a single African country appears among the top 30 states in any of the five categories used for this composite index (digital, culture, enterprise, global engagement, education and government).<sup>54</sup>

### **South Africa’s domestic governance II: selected problem areas**

Eight critical areas have been selected to illustrate current deficiencies in governance in South Africa. Most of them have been touched upon in the comparative indices recorded above, but here they are examined more closely. The problem areas are public administration; poverty, inequality and unemployment; crime; education; electricity; water; ecology; and wildlife.

Serious deficits in government performance at national, provincial and municipal levels are detailed in the annual reports of the auditor-general. In the 2011–2012 financial year, the auditor-general recorded, only 22% of over 500 government agencies investigated received a clean (unqualified) audit; a mere three out of 38 national

departments fell in this category.<sup>55</sup> An official audit of 469 government departments and public entities for the period 2013–2014 revealed an increase (over the previous financial year) in unauthorised and irregular expenditure; the total involved was around \$6.2 billion (SAR65 billion). Of the institutions then audited, only 25% received a clean bill of health. The worst offenders were the departments responsible for providing key public services: health, education, human settlements and public works.<sup>56</sup>

The quality of municipal governance has been even worse than that at national and provincial levels. The number of municipalities receiving unqualified audits from the auditor-general stood at 13 (out of 283 municipalities) in the 2010–2011 financial year, and the amount misspent or wasted was \$1.4 billion (R14.6 billion).<sup>57</sup> The auditor-general's report for 2011–2012 recorded a marginal increase to nine clean audits among the existing 278 municipalities, still a woeful 3% of the total.<sup>58</sup> In the 2012–2013 financial year, 22 (9%) of 319 municipalities and other local entities received clean audits. Audit findings for 2013–2014 revealed that irregular and unauthorised expenditure and wastage by municipalities ran into more than \$2.2 billion (R23 billion).<sup>59</sup> According to the auditor-general the main reasons for the lack of clean audits included the appointment of unqualified personnel to manage municipal finances, a failure to rectify such problems, and the absence of consequences for wrongdoing.<sup>60</sup>

Specific mention should be made of the persistent financial and operational crises and corruption scandals plaguing state-owned enterprises. Eskom (the power utility), South African Airways, the Post Office, the Passenger Rail Agency (Prasa), the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) and Telkom, among others, have become what a journalist described as 'a sorry spectacle of sleaze, malfunction and underperformance, giving credence to those who assert that these entities are a lucrative site for looting on a grand scale'.<sup>61</sup>

Poverty, inequality and unemployment are, in the government's view, the three critical domestic issues to be addressed. Progress since 1994 has been modest at best, even allowing for the legacy of apartheid and international factors beyond South Africa's control, especially the state of the world economy.

The proportion of South Africans living in relative poverty (people in households with incomes less than the poverty income for the particular year) declined from a peak of 49.1% in 2002 to 39.7% in 2010 and 35.9% in 2012; in the latter year 18 777 566 people of all races fell in this category. The proportions by race (2012) differed profoundly: under 1% for whites; 11% for Indians; over 24% for 'coloureds'; and nearly 42% for black Africans.<sup>62</sup>

South Africa's Gini coefficient, a measurement of income inequality on a scale of 0–100 (the latter representing total inequality), has remained virtually unchanged at around 62–63 between 2008 and 2013. The Republic compares poorly with other countries at the medium level of human development like Indonesia (34) and Egypt (30.8), and with its BRICS partners Brazil (54.7), India (33.4) and Russia (40.1).<sup>63</sup>

As regards unemployment, the World Bank's World Development Indicators of 2014 recorded that 25% of South Africa's total labour force had been unemployed in the period 2008–2012.<sup>64</sup> In mid-2015 the official unemployment rate stood at 26.4% or 5.5 million people; when those who had given up searching for employment were added, the figure was 36.1%.<sup>65</sup> Unemployment among the youth (15–24 years old) typically exceeds 50%.<sup>66</sup> The International Labour Organization in January 2015 predicted that South Africa would feature among the 10 countries with the

highest unemployment rates during that year: at 25% South Africa ranked eighth, with Mauritania in the worst position with an expected 30.9% unemployment.<sup>67</sup> Its relatively high unemployment was the main reason for South Africa occupying the eighth highest position (out of 89 countries) in the 2013 Misery Index compiled by Harvard professor Steve Hanke,<sup>68</sup> and third highest in the 2015 Bloomberg index of economic misery.<sup>69</sup>

The Republic has the dubious reputation of being one of the most crime-ridden countries in the world. Its crime profile displays some rather unique features. First, it is the only country in which the murder rate exceeds the road death toll.<sup>70</sup> Second, South Africa is one of only 16 countries (out of 188) in which violence is among the five main causes of death; the other 15 countries are in South America and the Caribbean.<sup>71</sup> A third distinguishing feature is the degree of violence involved in crime in South Africa: 37% of all reported crimes are violent, including murder, rape and grievous assault – a figure far exceeding that in most other states.<sup>72</sup> Fourth, although South Africa may not be exceptional in this respect, the low rate of prosecution of crimes is a further disturbing feature of the crime situation. According to South African Police Service (SAPS) data released in 2011, only 52% of crimes reported to the police were solved and a mere 31% of these cases ended up in a court of law. The respective figures for murder and armed robbery were even lower.<sup>73</sup>

In the 2011–2012 financial year, 30.9 people per 100 000 were murdered in South Africa. The year 2012–2013 saw an increase to 31.1 and a further rise to 32.2 per 100 000 in 2013–2014. The actual number of murders stood at 17 068 in 2013–2014, according to SAPS figures.<sup>74</sup> In comparative terms, South Africa has the eighth highest murder rate per 100 000 people, a 2012 United Nations report revealed.<sup>75</sup>

Official figures for rape are much higher than those for murder: 100 per 100 000 people in 2009–2010; 98.5 in 2010–2011; and 94.9 in 2011–2012.<sup>76</sup> In the latter period, according to SAPS statistics, 48 003 rapes were reported to the police. The Medical Research Council, however, estimated that 1.2 million people were raped in South Africa in 2011–2012. This figure translated into 3 287 rapes per day. Equally worrying was the state's poor record in prosecuting alleged rapists. The Tshwareng Legal Advocacy Centre calculated that in only 50.5% of the 48 003 reported rape cases in 2011–12 were suspects arrested; of these incidents, 17.3% led to court trials; and a mere 4.1% of the cases ended in convictions.<sup>77</sup>

Education is another area in which the state remains sorely deficient notwithstanding impressive advances in access to primary, secondary and tertiary education for black South Africans since 1994. One is the problem of learner throughput. Of the 1.26 million learners in grade 1 in public schools in 2002, a mere 34.8% obtained their matric certificates in 2013.<sup>78</sup> The corresponding throughput rate for the grade 1 class of 2003, passing matric in 2014, increased to around 45%.<sup>79</sup> A further problem is the quality of education. The World Economic Forum's competitiveness index highlighted the weakness of South Africa's primary school education, which earned a dismal 133rd position out of 144 countries in 2014.<sup>80</sup>

South Africa's frequent electricity blackouts, or load-shedding to use the official euphemism, come at a high price for the economy. The Department of Public Enterprises informed Parliament in March 2015 that load-shedding by the state-owned power utility costs the economy anywhere between R20 billion and R80 billion per month.<sup>81</sup> Eskom's shortcomings were not confined to its inability to keep South Africa's lights on. A lack of confidence in the company's corporate governance and

credit profile caused Standard & Poor's Financial Services to downgrade Eskom's credit rating to junk status (from BBB- to BB+) in March 2015.<sup>82</sup>

Water is another basic commodity under threat. Being semi-arid, South Africa counts among the 30 driest countries in the world.<sup>83</sup> Fully 98% of available water supplies are already being used. However, 37% of fresh water is being lost owing to decaying infrastructure, lack of maintenance, poor management and persistent wastage, the Department of Water and Sanitation reported in 2014.<sup>84</sup> (Unofficial estimates put the loss of clean, drinkable water at between 50 and 70%.<sup>85</sup>) In addition, according to official figures, almost 40% of the country's waste water treatment was in a 'critical state' – causing the discharge of polluted water into rivers used by poor communities and for crop irrigation.<sup>86</sup> There have not surprisingly been dire warnings of South Africa facing imminent 'water-shedding' alongside the deprivations of (electricity) load-shedding.<sup>87</sup>

The ecology also suffers from official acts of omission and commission. In 2012 the government's draft national water resource strategy revealed that fully 60% of South Africa's 223 river ecosystems were under threat and 25% were critically endangered.<sup>88</sup> A serial offender in the destruction or pollution of water systems is the mining industry, which appears to violate official mining conditions with relative impunity.<sup>89</sup>

Staying with the natural environment, reference must be made to rhino poaching in South Africa. The total number of rhino poaching deaths in South Africa (with the number killed in the iconic Kruger National Park in brackets) for five successive years is as follows: 2010, 333 (146); 2011, 448 (252); 2012, 668 (425); 2013, 1004 (606); and 2014, 1215 (672). Over the same period the number of arrests of alleged rhino poachers increased from 165 (2010) to 386 (2014), but this is scant compensation for the seemingly unstoppable wholesale slaughter of these animals for their horns.<sup>90</sup>

Given the stubborn problems of poverty, inequality and unemployment on the one hand and the underperformance of the public sector on the other, it is not surprising that service delivery protests have been a feature of the South African scene since 2004. Before then, public protests were organised mostly by social movements, but from 2004 whole communities began 'rising up in rebellion',<sup>91</sup> turning South Africa into the 'protest capital of the world'.<sup>92</sup> According to police figures, 33 521 protests occurred between 2009 and 2012, over 3 000 of them violent.<sup>93</sup> Official statistics recorded that the police responded to 10 517 peaceful and 1 882 violent protest actions in 2012–2013; the respective figures for 2013–2014 were 11, 601 and 1 907.<sup>94</sup>

### **Dealing with dissonance**

It would be disingenuous and factually incorrect to suggest that the story of governance in South Africa since 1994 is one of decline only. There has been commendable progress in providing public services to millions of previously disadvantaged South Africans. Equally important, the discrimination and oppression of apartheid have been replaced by universal human rights and freedoms. In many respects 'South Africa has a good story to tell', to quote a favourite slogan of the Zuma government.<sup>95</sup> Yet the achievements cannot mask the fact that democratic South Africa has long been experiencing poor governance over a broad front. It is fair to say that the standards of domestic governance since 1994 have never been as good as South Africa's rulers would have liked to convince the world. The Republic could, however, for some years draw on a set of extenuating circumstances: the legacy of apartheid; universal euphoria showered on newly liberated South Africa; foreign and local tolerance of

the ‘teething problems’ of a new and inexperienced black ruling elite; and of course the Mandela factor. The post-apartheid dividends, as Olivier’s article and those in the *Wall Street Journal*, *The Economist* and *The Times* suggested, have over time waned if not vanished. South Africa’s lack of good governance is being unveiled to the world for what it is: a serious dereliction of duty by its rulers. As a result, an important South African soft power resource is being diminished.

Cynics may well dismiss South Africa’s governance deficits as par for the course in Africa; predictably, on this view, the Republic is turning into another stereotypical African state where poor governance is the rule rather than the exception. An extension of this opinion is that their domestic weaknesses do not constrain other African countries in pursuing grand foreign policy objectives like changing the distribution of power and wealth in the world. Why should South Africa be any different?

Such attitudes can be challenged on several grounds. First, they are deterministic and defeatist; a core group of African states shows that relatively good national governance is not beyond the reach of the continent. African governments also owe it to their peoples to improve standards of governance and in democracies the voters are moreover legally empowered to demand effective, responsive and accountable governance. Second, South Africa’s government is constitutionally obligated to meet the standards of good governance and has reaffirmed this commitment in policy statements. Third, the Republic consistently portrays itself as an exemplary state, based in large measure on its supposedly miraculous democratic rebirth in 1994 and on Mandela ‘magic’ (first his presidency and thereafter his legacy). In 1996 the (then named) Department of Foreign Affairs spoke glowingly of the new South Africa’s ‘unique moral authority’ in the world.<sup>96</sup> Nearly a decade later the department still invoked the Republic’s ‘particular moral authority’, said to be derived from the country’s ‘principles, policies and priorities’ – presumably domestic and foreign.<sup>97</sup> This is not the language of the lowest common denominator, but instead an assertion of exceptionalism. The claim to unique moral authority – which incidentally confirms that South Africa’s foreign policy is an extension of its domestic policies and practices – should be read together with the earlier quoted 2011 White Paper on South Africa’s foreign policy, which extolled the country’s role in promoting human rights, democracy and reconciliation elsewhere. True, the new South Africa faced high external expectations of exemplary conduct at home and abroad, but these were matched by the country’s self-proclaimed grand designs in the two domains.

How, then, can South Africa from a policy perspective deal with the dissonance between internal performance and external aspiration? There are at least four options.

The first is to soldier on. Just as all states fail to live up to moral standards they set themselves, South Africa is not perfect either. The crucial consideration, under this option, is that the country’s intentions are honourable: it has a solemn commitment to good governance, has made considerable progress in this direction, acknowledges at least some of its failings and works to rectify them. By facing up to its weaknesses, South Africa is moreover setting an example to others. The Republic can therefore in good conscience carry on with its good international citizenship, with the promotion of good governance abroad remaining part of the package. Because the cracks in the domestic base of its ambitious foreign policy – and hence the erosion of its soft power – may be temporary and repairable, the country’s exemplary global citizenship should remain intact.

The second possible response is for South Africa to ‘take time out’ to get its house in order. This option is based on a simple principle articulated by Wheeler and Dunne:

'States which speak the language of good international citizenship will be mistrusted if they do not uphold principles of democratic governance at home'.<sup>98</sup> Such countries would also expose themselves to charges of hypocrisy. Under the second option democratic governance is not detached from the other elements of good governance; they are still treated as interconnected. While working to improve its standards of domestic governance, South Africa should suspend or at least moderate its advocacy of good governance abroad. Once the country improves its rankings in Africa and the world at large in the various indices measuring aspects of governance, it can (re)claim the moral high ground that a credible good international citizen needs. The remedial action should then enhance South Africa's soft power resource of effective and efficient governance. Incidentally, in following this course South Africa will in effect acknowledge that international rankings 'are designed to exert normative pressures on states to promote change in a country's performance or improve some aspect of its domestic institutions or policymaking'.<sup>99</sup>

South Africa could in the third place choose to realign its international ambitions with its defective standards of internal governance. Many of the indices discussed earlier rank South Africa highly in an African context but modestly on the world stage. Instead of playing the part of a good global citizen, South Africa could lower its sights to being a good African citizen. The Republic is well placed for the role: although flawed, its domestic governance is still far superior to that of 90% of African countries. This option would not require a major change of course for South Africa since the continent has long been the focal point of its foreign policy and Pretoria has sufficient soft and hard power resources to assume a leading political role in Africa.

The fourth response would see South Africa continue playing a prominent role on the global stage but in a different guise. Instead of being driven by a desire for (or the vocation of) good international citizenship as an extension of its domestic political order, South Africa's international role would be built on its status as a regional power or hegemon. With it comes 'a set of privileges, obligations and responsibilities'<sup>100</sup> that are fully compatible with South Africa's existing revisionist international agenda. That agenda includes major reforms to the system of global political and financial governance, a quest that will align South Africa closer with the countries of the global South and distance it from Western powers.<sup>101</sup> This option amounts to a renunciation of the role of good international citizen and would by the same token free South Africa of the domestic prerequisite of clean and efficient governance. The Republic could, however, retain some lofty tasks associated with good international citizenship, like participating in multilateral peacemaking and peacekeeping efforts and supporting disarmament. At the same time South Africa could place increasing emphasis on the promotion of typical national interests like wealth and security through its foreign policy (rather than championing higher values such as democracy, human rights and good governance).<sup>102</sup>

## Conclusion

The preceding analysis leads to three main conclusions. The first is that charges of poor governance in South Africa, levelled by Olivier and several others mentioned in the introduction, are substantiated by international indices of government performance and a range of problem areas investigated in this article. This is not to suggest that South Africa falls short on all criteria of good governance, which include

democracy, human rights and the rule of law. In these domains the country fares relatively well internationally. Its critical weaknesses lie in the provision of public goods by a civil service that is ineffective and inefficient. Here South Africa typically ranks poorly in global terms but is highly rated among African countries. For as long as the Republic portrays itself as an exemplary – even exceptional – state in Africa and a virtuous citizen globally, its record in domestic governance deserves to be judged on universal terms.

Second, South Africa's deficits in government performance on the home front have implications for its self-proclaimed role of good global citizen. Recall the observation of Wheeler and Dunne, cited earlier, that contradictions between what a state professes internationally and practices domestically expose it to accusations of hypocrisy. South Africa lacks the credibility to preach good governance abroad while failing to adhere to its critical standards at home.

South Africa could, finally, consider a number of ways of dealing with the patent inconsistency between its domestic governance and the pursuit of exemplary international citizenship. The country is presently following the first of the four options identified, namely business as usual on the domestic and international fronts. This means that the policymakers do not see any need to improve governance performance at home to a level consistent with the demands of good global citizenship (option two) or, conversely, to scale down their external aspirations to match their internal performance (option three). Should there however be a continuous 'depreciation of the country's moral and political currency'<sup>103</sup> – owing not least to poor domestic governance – this may result in pragmatism increasingly trumping moralism in the Republic's foreign policy, as envisaged in the fourth option. To be sure, option four does not mean that South Africa will abandon its aspirations to international leadership; as a regional hegemon it can exert influence within Africa and beyond on behalf of Africa, largely unconstrained by its failings in domestic governance.

### Notes on contributor

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